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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hartford Public Library Awarded \$50,000 to Connect Heritage Collections with Civic Service

HARTFORD, CT (March 27, 2015) – The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) announced Monday a grant in the amount of \$50,000 to Hartford Public Library in support of a collaborative project called “**Find Your Voice**” between the Library’s Hartford History Center and the University of Connecticut’s Digital Media Center to integrate cultural heritage collections with civic service.

The **Find Your Voice** project is a prototype designed to be a nationally replicable model for other libraries seeking effective ways to use interactive media to engage a diverse public in exploring historic individuals who found their civic voice through poetry, performance, and other expressive forms. The project’s primary goal is to engage under-served populations by connecting the stories of past individuals who were engaged with the civic issues of their times to the work of present-day role models who have likewise found that literacy, understanding a city’s shared history, and creative expression are pathways to personal and community enrichment.

“**Find Your Voice** is a powerful 21st-century innovation to close a widening gap between civic service in public libraries and their heritage collections,” said Hartford Public Library Chief Executive Officer Matthew Poland. “Hartford Public Library continues to explore innovative approaches to making impactful change in our communities, and we are thankful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for supporting the development of this exciting new model.”

Brenda J. Miller, Chief Cultural Affairs and Public Programming Officer for the Hartford Public Library, leads the team with the University of Connecticut’s Tom Scheinfeldt, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Digital Media and Design and Director of Digital Humanities, and Clarissa Ceglie, Ph.D., of the Digital Media Center. The project team also includes journalist and independent historian Anne Farrow and Shana Sureck, an award-winning filmmaker and photographer.

“We and our partners at the Hartford Public Library recognize that digital technology and the humanities both play transformative roles in contemporary life,” said Tim Hunter, Director of the Digital Media Center and Department Head of the School of Fine Arts’ Digital Media & Design Department. “**Find Your Voice** focuses this transformative potential to empower individuals and communities.”

“Find Your Voice” received the largest award of the six given in Connecticut. Earlier this year, this project received national funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

“In the 50 years since NEH’s founding, the Endowment has supported excellence in the humanities by funding far-reaching research, preservation projects and public programs,” said NEH Chairman William Adams. “The grants announced today continue that tradition, making valuable humanities collections, exhibitions, documentaries, and educational resources available to communities across the country.”

The award was one of 232 grants totaling \$22.8 million announced by NEH that support a variety of projects, including the development of new digital tools for study of the humanities, stipends and fellowships that support scholarly research, and the preservation of and access to historic collections. Nationally, the 2015 NEH awards include a major grant to support a 10-part documentary series by legendary filmmaker Ken Burns.

ABOUT THE [HARTFORD HISTORY CENTER](#)

The Hartford History Center (HHC) is a special collection of books, photographs, manuscripts and ephemera relating to over 300 years of community life in Connecticut’s capital city. The HHC is home to the Hartford Collection, which includes works by Mark Twain, Lydia Huntley Sigourney, Noah Webster, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Wallace Stevens.

The Hartford History Center is located on the third floor of the Hartford Public Library at 500 Main Street and is open Tuesday-Saturday from 1:00pm-5:00pm. Contact: 860.695.6297 or hhc@hplct.org

ABOUT [HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY](#)

As a finalist for the 2013 and 2014 National Medal from the Institute for Museum and Library Services, Hartford Public Library has been recognized as a national leader in redefining the urban public library in the 21st century as an innovative and stimulating place where people can learn and discover, explore their passions, and find a rich array of resources that contribute to a full life. Hartford Public Library provides free resources that inspire reading, guide learning, and encourage individual exploration. Serving the residents of Hartford and beyond at its nine branches and Downtown location, Hartford Public Library receives more than 860,000 visits per year from adults, children and families seeking early literacy opportunities, work skills training, civic engagement, arts enrichment, and so much more. Visit hplct.org.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at: www.neh.gov.