

Celebrating 10 Years of the BYU Humanities Center

by Rex Nielson, Director (Luso-Afro-Brazilian Literature & Culture)

This year we celebrate 10 years since the founding of the BYU Humanities Center, a major institutional initiative originally sponsored by Dean John Rosenberg. Under the creative and inspired direction of Professor Matthew Wickman (Scottish Literature, Interdisciplinary Literary Studies), the center's founding director, the Humanities Center has grown and evolved while developing a wide variety of activities that have advanced the influence of the College of Humanities. Through its 10 years of evolving programs, its mission has remained consistent: to promote innovative scholarship and teaching in areas pertaining to the language, literature, thought, culture, and history of the human conversation.

One of the things that makes the Humanities Center at BYU so remarkable is that less than three percent of higher education institutions have one. The fact that BYU sponsors the center highlights the university's deep commitment to valuing a humanities education that prepares students to address some of the most pressing issues in society today. The center also highlights the leading roles BYU humanities faculty are playing in contributing to humanities scholarship, teaching, and public service.

The BYU Humanities Center currently sponsors a broad array of creative activities that foster scholarship, interdisciplinary connections, and student development. For example, we host a weekly research colloquium where College faculty present new scholarship and works in progress. Distinguished guests and faculty from other institutions regularly come to our campus to work with faculty and students and share new research. We also support a yearly symposium of student-driven research projects in addition to other workshops and meetings to discuss current issues facing the humanities. We're especially proud to sponsor projects like the Cambodian

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English professor Matthew Wickman hosting the BYU Humanities Center's *Faith and Imagination* podcast. Photo by David John Arnett (Photography '24)

Oral History Project, directed by Professor Dana Bourgerie (Chinese) and Assistant Research Professor Brian Croxall (Digital Humanities, American Studies), which represents some of the best ways that humanities scholarship can contribute to preserving memory, connecting generations, and enriching Cambodian culture.

Additionally, we sponsor 10 different research groups that bring together faculty working on different topics, including medieval and Renaissance studies, the digital humanities, education and leadership, translation theory, and many more. And we partner with a number of other entities around campus to promote collaborative, interdisciplinary projects.

While promoting teaching and scholarship at the university, the Humanities Center also actively looks for ways to contribute to local and national (and even international) conversations. This past summer, for example, we sponsored six lectures and workshops at BYU Campus Education Week, where hundreds of attendees were enriched in a variety of topics from finding Christ in the devotional writings of a remarkable Italian Renaissance woman writer to how a humanities education led one of our colleagues to the gospel from Myanmar to India to Utah. We also regularly connect faculty with opportunities to speak at local public libraries; publish articles on faith, scholarship, and the liberal arts in the *Humanities Center Blog*; and produce our far-reaching podcast, *Faith and Imagination*.

Now 10 years into its existence, the BYU Humanities Center occupies a central role in the College of Humanities; we look forward to the opportunities ahead in helping faculty and students enrich our university community and beyond. **H**

For more information about the Humanities Center, please visit our website or contact the center director, Professor Rex Nielson. For free access to the publications mentioned here, along with other humanities-related resources, go to our website at humanitiescenter.byu.edu.