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Robin S. Tryloff

Sarah Z. Rosenberg

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INTRODUCTION TO FEDERAL AND STATE ARTS AND HUMANITIES AGENCIES

Since 1965 the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), along with the state arts agencies (SAAs) and state humanities councils, as those were established, have been arguably the most influential of all institutions affecting the arts in the United States. As executive directors of, respectively, the Nebraska Arts Council and the Nebraska Committee for the Humanities we daily witnessed the impact of our institutions on the arts of the Great Plains. The following brief introduction to NEA and NEH provides the background for our individual articles about the types of agencies we administered.

In 1965 Congress created the NEA and the NEH as independent grant-making organizations. By this date eighteen states had already formed state arts agencies (SAAs), and in January of 1966 the states were all invited to send representatives to a meeting in Chicago to formulate the relationship between the NEA and the existing or planned SAAs. By the end of 1967, all fifty states and three special jurisdictions had established SAAs.¹ Since then, three more special jurisdictions have been formed, bringing the total to fifty-six. In 1971 the NEH established experimental councils in six states, and by 1975 all fifty states had established NEH-affiliated councils aimed at involving citizens

in the study of issues in "the humanities and public policy."² In the early years of public arts support the NEA was a catalyst not only in terms of grants to individuals and organizations but in the formation of the SAAs themselves. The relations of the national and state humanities councils were somewhat more vexed. The concept that state councils should bring the disciplines of the humanities to bear on such issues as, for example, arms control, land use, and prison reform was met with considerable skepticism. In 1976, the state councils were authorized to fund any of the kinds of humanities programs that the NEH supported, a change that allowed the state councils both to diversify the kinds of programs they developed and funded and to work more closely with cultural institutions within the states.³

ROBIN S. TRYLOFF
SARAH Z. ROSENBERG

NOTES

1. James Backas, *The State Arts Council Movement* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Arts, 1980), pp. 3-6.

2. Stephen Miller, *Excellence and Equity* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984); Ron Berman, *Culture and Politics* (Lanham, Md: University Press of America, Inc., 1984).

3. "Introduction to State Programs," (Washington, D.C.: NEH, 1986). Reprinted pamphlet.