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## Getting it Done

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### Keywords

fellowship applications, fellowships, fellowships in the humanities, funding, funding opportunities, funding strategies, humanities funding, humanities research, state of the profession

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The last five years have been particularly hard on the humanities and on the funding of the humanities within university structures. One of the most troubling developments has been the emergence of haves and have-nots, as wealthier universities have continued to acquire large databases to facilitate humanities research and poorer universities scramble to provide even basic library resources. At the same time, funding for travel to archives elsewhere has also become much more scarce at some universities, even as class sizes and in some cases teaching loads have increased, creating a challenging environment for those interested in pursuing research and writing.

Over the last seven years, I've been lucky enough to be a recipient of a number of long- and short-term fellowships and awards. What this has meant for me is that despite the imposition of a furlough as well as cuts to research funds at my university, I've been able to stay on track and to sustain my plans for research and writing.

In this space, I'd like, first, to share some of the strategies for funding that I've used in the past and, second, to articulate some strategies for corraling other resources that might be available in your university community.

### **ON FUNDING AND TIME; OR, TIME IS OUR MOST VALUABLE COMMODITY**

- 1) Try to think about your research in 3-year cycles; three years is generally the minimum allowable period of time between fellowships for most major funding sources such as the NEH, Mellon Fellowships, etc. Since you often have to apply more than once to get one of these fellowships, you don't want to miss your first year of eligibility.
- 2) Don't give up sabbatical time to a long-term fellowship if you're at a university that doesn't count fellowship leave against your sabbatical clock. You are entitled to this time away from teaching and administrative responsibilities, and you shouldn't give up any time that you have earned for research by conflating it with a fellowship leave. Space your leaves out strategically.
- 3) Short-term fellowships, on the other hand, are often especially useful during sabbatical leaves. On top of your paid sabbatical salary, you will receive short-term funding for travel to archives rather than have to pay out of pocket.
- 4) Think about where you are with your research and anticipate when might be the best time to apply for fellowships. Applying for fellowships is a huge investment of time upfront and you should always apply widely. Once you have the basic materials put together—abstract, project description, etc.—you will simply be able to adapt them for each application procedure.
- 5) Research your archives. Many archives and libraries have both long and short term funding for research, and they are not always well advertised. There are many small pockets of funds available that are undersubscribed. Once you have located your archive, check the website for funding opportunities. Two years ago, for example, I applied and was awarded a small sum for research by the Virginia Historical Society—enough to cover at least my lodging. I came across this funding opportunity by scouring their website.

6) Research the professional organizations with which you are affiliated. Many professional organizations, including ASECS, sponsor multiple competitions for short-term fellowships and research funds. Some of these funds are offered in conjunction with particular archives but others are offered independently—including those of the ASECS Women's Caucus. A few years ago, I received funding from the American Society for Theater Research for my first trip to the Virginia archives. Altogether, then, I was able to get at least partial funding for two trips to these archives by applying for small research grants.

7) Research your conferences; many professional organizations have funding available, especially for independent scholars, for travel to conferences.

### **COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES; OR, IT TAKES A VILLAGE**

1) Look for interdisciplinary opportunities that allow for pooling resources with other departments or other colleges or universities to sponsor programs in your area. Four years ago, I founded the Newberry Library Eighteenth-Century Seminar, building on the consortium of universities that are members of the Newberry Library Center for Renaissance Studies. At relatively low cost to our sponsoring institutions, we are able to sponsor three events a year and have built a solid core of attendees with 25-35 people at most of our events.

2) Think about what opportunities there might be at your home university to create an interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinary working group. These often require only a few faculty members and few resources beyond space. Working groups can sponsor works-in-progress sessions, brown bag talks, reading groups, or public lectures, depending on what funding sources you might be able to scrape together.

3) Explore opportunities for outreach to your local community organizations. What kinds of programs might you be able to help support; what kinds of programs might your local community organizations like to sponsor. Recently, for instance, I gave a talk for the Sarah Siddons Society, a local organization devoted to excellence in the performing arts; and they were one of the most engaged and appreciative audiences I've ever encountered. They were interested in my expertise, and I was interested in their efforts to rebuild and revitalize an organization that for the last fifty years has fundraised and sponsored scholarships for students in the performing arts and has recognized the outstanding achievements of actresses such as Helen Hayes, Jessica Tandy, Lauren Bacall, Julie Andrews, and Chita Rivera with the Sarah Siddons Award.

All of this is to say that it isn't easy, and the search for funding takes time and energy that could be devoted to research; but it is surely worth the effort when time and a bit of money arrive at the end of the day.