BRETT BOBLEY FINAL WRAP-UP

MR. BOBLEY: Let me just briefly wrap up with a couple of comments before we adjourn.

I'd like to talk briefly about funding opportunities. Obviously, that is what the NEH does: our job is to fund the humanities. The NEH cannot directly fund non-U.S. institutions. However, we often fund projects that involve collaborations between American and foreign institutions.

I say this because many of the projects that we've heard about today are taking place in Italy and other parts of the world and are very important to the humanities community as a whole. And many of them are the types of projects that the NEH would be very much in favor of funding. So we would certainly encourage international collaborations. We encourage our Italian friends to work with American institutions if they are interested in talking to the NEH about possible funding opportunities.

Many of the projects we talked about today involve infrastructure for the humanities. And that's a very important part of what the Digital Humanities Initiative here at the NEH does. One of the things we're striving to do is to help put in place the technology infrastructure necessary for humanities scholarship today and in the future.

We have planned for the next year or two a number of interesting projects, workshops, and conferences to discuss many of the issues that we've talked about today, things like scholarly editions. We are looking very carefully at this idea.

What are the best practices for digital scholarly editions? How can we ensure that scholarly editors, whose expertise is not necessarily in technology, are working with the technology people and have the infrastructure in place to put up high quality digital scholarly editions? Editions that are interoperable and permit searching across multiple archives and the like? We want to make sure that the infrastructure is in place so that these editions are being built properly for today and for the future.

We're also looking very carefully at many other infrastructure issues. We're looking at doing a conference some time in 2008 to discuss what I'd call grand challenges in the digital humanities. What should our research agenda be? What are the things that need to be built over time to ensure that scholarship can continue forward?

We learned about a lot of important projects today. For example, the Pleiades project is a great example of an infrastructure project that will be extremely useful to many other humanities scholars. But what are some of the other big datasets and big projects that need to be tackled that can be shared across the humanities community worldwide?

One thing we have noticed time and time again is the importance of collaboration. Infrastructure projects can't be done by the lone scholar. We want to make sure we bring people together so they are aware of projects going on around the world. I thought Arne

Flaten made a very good point today when he talked about how important it was for him to learn about these other great projects, many of which touch upon – and could positively impact – his own project. But it's not always easy to know about what projects and tools are being developed and how to share them.

One project that the NEH is working on with our colleagues at two other funding agencies, the National Science Foundation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, is looking at the idea of creating a curated archive for data driven scholarship.

In other words, it would be a place where any scholar who's building an open source tool or data repository can place a copy in one master library that could be shared around the world. It would be a place where scholars can communicate with one another. Where they can improve tools and upload new versions of them and ensure that we're not constantly reinventing and refunding the wheel.

And we hope that by getting three major U.S. funding agencies and hopefully international participation as well that we can create a curated site that would be the authoritative place to go -- kind of a SourceForge for the humanities, if you will.

And one last project we're looking at over the next year or so is high performance computing and how that can be useful in the humanities. The United States government has spent many millions of dollars building grids of supercomputers that are used almost exclusively by the sciences today. But that infrastructure should not be used only by the sciences. We feel it's important to start introducing humanities scholars to high performance computing so they can see in what ways that level of computation can be used to parse and process humanities datasets, which are often quite complex and quite different from science datasets.

There are certain obvious applications and certainly 3D rendering is one obvious example of things that require very high performance computing. But there are many other areas which will emerge over time. I believe that in the future, humanities scholarship will take great advantage of this high level of computation.

And I think it's important that the humanities have a voice in how computation moves forward. It should not be solely the sciences driving the way our infrastructure is built. And that's part of what this Digital Humanities Initiative is about: getting the humanities involved in the conversation of how technology infrastructure is built going forward.

Thank you.