



## 2023 McCreight Lecture in the Humanities

### Cory Doctorow

**B**ig Tech has been on the nation's mind this year. Whether it's the growing availability of so-called "artificial intelligence" and "machine learning"

tools or Congress banning TikTok on government devices, no doubt you've read or heard how the digital world is crossing over into every aspect of daily life.

These trends raise unprecedented questions, especially in rural states that depend more heavily on a narrow range of technological services but often lack the resources to fully realize them. Do we need to catch up to avoid being left further behind socially and economically? How can we leverage tech's potential to serve West Virginians from all backgrounds? What other concerns should we have?

A striking aspect of these debates is how often the outcomes seem beyond our control. Tech giants—Google, Microsoft, Amazon, and the like—are so immense that we must simply accept their decisions. Or so it appears.

Seen in this light, this year's 41<sup>st</sup> annual McCreight Lecture in the Humanities could not be more timely. We hope you'll join us at **7:30 p.m., Thursday, October 19, at the University of Charleston's Geary Auditorium** to welcome distinguished speaker Cory Doctorow. An author, journalist, tech humanist, and digital rights advocate, Doctorow has an array of insights into how we interact with technology as a society and the very real alternatives available to us. His lecture will offer new perspectives on how we got here and the important role of the humanities in tackling a digital future.

Doctorow, a 2020 inductee into the Canadian Science Fiction Hall of Fame, has written more than two dozen fiction and nonfiction titles.

For decades, he's been deeply involved in the nascent field of digital rights, supporting the liberalization of copyright laws, platform interoperability, and the freedom of everyday users to change platforms when they want. His recent nonfiction book, *Chokepoint Capitalism* (coauthored with Rebecca Giblin), highlights how a



Photo: Cory Doctorow

Jonathan Worth

lack of market competition is rapidly narrowing Americans' technological choices and infringing on privacy rights. His new finance crime technothriller, *Red Team Blues*, will soon be accompanied by a sequel, *The Bezzle*, expected in February 2024. His nonfiction book, *The Internet Con*, was released in September of this year. In short, if there was ever a time to see Cory Doctorow, it is now.

His lecture will be followed by a book signing and refreshments. Admission is free to the public. The Council's Board of Directors established the McCreight Lecture series to honor the leadership of Betsy Keadle McCreight, who died in 1985. McCreight was a founding board member and served the Council as treasurer, vice president, and president. She believed that the humanities were at the heart of a democratic society and a necessary source of wisdom and vision.

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Folklife



Check out our special insert of *The Broad Side* for more information about this year's McCreight Lecture.

**The West Virginia Humanities Council** is a nonprofit institution governed by its Board of Directors. The next Board meeting is October 20, 2023, in Charleston, and is open to the public.

Megan Tarbett, President  
*Hurricane*

Leslie Baker

*Beckley*

George "Gib" Brown

*Clarksburg*

Patrick Cassidy

*Wheeling*

Bob Conte

*Union*

Laurie Erickson

*Morgantown*

Cicero Fain III

*Huntington*

Rosemary Hathaway

*Morgantown*

Rita Hedrick-Helmick

*Glenville*

Margaret Mary Layne

*Huntington*

Charles Ledbetter

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*Martinsburg*

Lisa Rose

*Morgantown*

Tom Sopher

*Beckley*

Pam Tarr

*Charleston*

John Unger

*Martinsburg*

Bryson VanNostrand

*Buckhannon*



## From the Executive Director

As you can see, we've been thinking a lot lately about the intersections between the humanities and digital technology. Through digital platforms, the Council now offers and supports more educational programming than at any time in its history. We deliver that programming to more and wider audiences than ever before. In terms of fulfilling our mission, that's good news indeed.

As a former teacher, I'm old enough to remember when the "digital humanities" was discussed most enthusiastically in terms of its potential to give students (and, it was assumed, people anywhere) access to historical documents, art, music, and the world's cultures in ways that static media couldn't, at least not to the same degree of resolution. Much of that optimism turned out to be well founded. Generally, our experience of the world is infinitely more complex than it once was. The world feels louder, faster, more diversified in its possibilities and in the stories we hear about it.

But in 2023 it's surely clear that digital technology as we encounter it in daily life isn't a content-neutral delivery platform, but a space in which our experience of the world is mediated and shaped by many kinds of influences. That space is both virtual and real, coloring the world as we perceive it and, inevitably, as we must live in it. And that technology is, for most (not all) of us, constantly within reach, as near as the phone in our pocket or the tablet on the kitchen table.

If "the humanities" constitute all of the ways in which we try to tell the complex story of our human experience, then the humanities should have much to say about how we use the technologies that influence and shape that experience. Whether we're talking about AI, social media and online shopping algorithms, deepfakes, broadband access in rural communities, or any other iteration of that topic, the core questions remain: To what uses, healthy or otherwise, might it be put? Who has access? How do we stay informed, empowered, able to separate signal from noise, truth from misinformation?

Author Cory Doctorow has spent two decades considering how individuals and communities can determine their own access to technology and information. On October 19 at the University of Charleston, he'll discuss some of the ways West Virginians, and people everywhere, might chart their own paths forward, wherever those forward paths lead.

—Eric Waggoner

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**The West Virginia Humanities Council welcomes nominations for its Board of Directors.** Board members are chosen from all parts of West Virginia and serve without compensation, although expenses are reimbursed. We also welcome nominations for Program Committee citizen members, who are elected from the general public. The Program Committee recommends funding and program decisions to the Council's Board of Directors.

Please send recommendations with brief biographical information to [stringer@wvhumanities.org](mailto:stringer@wvhumanities.org). The deadline for nominations is December 15, 2023.



West Virginia native Neema Avashia is one of the featured speakers at this year's Book Festival.

## Book Festival Returns October 21

The West Virginia Book Festival returns this fall for a one-day event, **Saturday, October 21, at the Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center**. The festival, which began in 2001, celebrates reading and books for people of all ages. It features presentations from bestselling national, local, and regional authors; writing workshops; family activities; a marketplace for booksellers, including opportunities for book signings; and an enormous used book sale. All events and programs are free and open to the public.

This year's featured speakers are *New York Times* bestselling fantasy author R. F. Kuang (Poppy War trilogy, *Babel: An Arcane History*, and *Yellowface*), mystery novelist William Kent Krueger (Cork O'Connor mystery series and other historical and crime fiction novels), novelist Mary Kay Andrews (*Homewreckers*, *The Santa Suit*, *The Newcomer*), children's author Sherri Duskey Rinker (*Construction Site: Farming Strong*, *All Year Long* and *Construction Site: You're Just Right*), and West Virginia native Neema Avashia (*Another Appalachia: Coming Up Queer and Indian in a Mountain Place*).

The West Virginia Humanities Council is a charter sponsor of the Book Festival. Visit [wvbookfestival.org](http://wvbookfestival.org) for more information and a schedule.

## Storytelling Showcase

Seven West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship pairs have been learning, practicing, and passing on folk and traditional art forms and creative practices. Two showcases by traditional artists and their apprentices have been held to date: one in Elkins featuring fiber arts, soul food cooking, and mushroom foraging and one in Fairmont on old-time fiddle music, clawhammer banjo, and fiddle instrument repair. The Appalachian Storytelling Apprenticeship Showcase will be held at **Clarksburg's Robinson Grand Performing Arts Center, 444 West Pike Street, Sunday, November 5, at 3:00 p.m.**, with Bil Lepp of South Charleston and James Froemel of Maidsville. Between the two, they have won the prestigious Vandalia Gathering's Liars Contest Golden Shovel eight times. The free showcase is open to the public. For more information and to RSVP, visit [wvfolklife.org](http://wvfolklife.org). Contact State Folklorist Jennie Williams with questions at 304-346-8500 or at [williams@wvhumanities.org](mailto:williams@wvhumanities.org).



Storytellers Bil Lepp and James Froemel take the stage in Clarksburg on Nov. 5.

Jennie Williams





## New *Born of Rebellion* Exhibit Opens in Buckhannon

### LINCOLN'S DILEMMA

Seizing the stroke of Lincoln's pen was easier said than done. After the statehood bill passed the House of Representatives, the President agonized over the legislation for weeks.

Was it constitutional to create out this new state, when most of Virginia had not yet seceded? Or were the demands of war enough to set this national precedent?

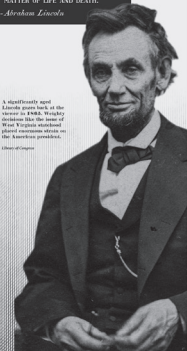
The question of the president's choice was easily decided. The final decision on whether to sign or veto that Congress requested was made almost immediately. It was decided during the time in between that Lincoln could not wait to decide. On December 8, Governor Pickens passed a declaration of secession. Lincoln's options, claiming a veto "would be disastrous to the Union" and "endanger Virginia."

In fact, Lincoln decided for his the government could not remain within Virginia's borders. Even if seceding from the Union for all government. Signing the bill, Lincoln stated that the "secession of one state was the death blow to the Union. The Virginia secession was a blow to the Constitution, to the Union and to the Union's existence upon the cause of the rebellion."

### WE CAN SCARCELY BRING WITH THE AID OF WEST VIRGINIA IN THIS STRUGGLE.

His brave and good men regard the admission with the Union as a matter of life and death."

— Abraham Lincoln



**“W**est Virginia’s journey to statehood was anything but simple” is the opening headline of the Council’s revamped flagship traveling exhibit debuting this month at West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon. The above quotation might just as easily be applied to the exhibit itself.

If *Born of Rebellion* sounds familiar to longtime Council supporters, that’s because the original launched in 2005 as our first major traveling exhibit. An identical, more lightweight version was reproduced to support West Virginia’s Sesquicentennial in 2013. In 2020, however, Council staff realized that missing parts and wear necessitated the exhibit’s retirement.

We embarked on a two-year mission to create a revitalized version. Merely reprinting the original was out of the question. Visuals needed to be updated, and it would have been academically irresponsible to ignore nearly two decades of excellent Civil War scholarship that has elapsed since 2005. Just as importantly, a change in scope felt necessary.

The original *Born of Rebellion* focused almost exclusively on the legal process and constitutional questions surrounding West Virginia statehood. Its cast of characters consisted mostly of the delegates, lawyers, and other decision-makers in Wheeling who gradually wrangled their way toward separation from Virginia. This time, the Council asked the exhibit’s writers and researchers to widen the lens and include the diverse perspectives of everyday soldiers and civilians.

One such civilian was Sirene Bunten, a teenage girl from French Creek, Upshur County, who carefully recorded many of her wartime experiences in a diary. Excerpts from it are included in the new statehood exhibit. Later donated to West Virginia

Wesleyan College, her diary was transcribed and edited by Wesleyan history professor Dr. Stephen Cresswell, then published in 1993 by the college as *We Will Know What War Is*.

In a bitterly divided border state such as West Virginia, where towns were frequently threatened with enemy occupation or marauding guerrilla bands, major issues of warfare and statehood were far from abstract. Bunten’s anxiety when Confederate soldiers stopped at her family farm to demand food was very real, as was her grief at the loss of two brothers serving in the U.S. Army—one to starvation and disease at the infamous Andersonville Prison.

Appreciation of firsthand perspectives like Bunten’s are precisely why the exhibit’s debut in Buckhannon is so fitting. It acknowledges the importance of institutions like West Virginia Wesleyan College, whose archives preserve and protect primary source materials, which are the foundations of history.

*Born of Rebellion* will open with a public reception on **Friday, October 6, at 6:30 p.m., at West Virginia Wesleyan’s Annie Merner Pfeiffer Library** in Buckhannon. The free exhibit may be viewed Mondays through Fridays, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Weekend hours may vary. For more details about the exhibit and tour information, visit [wvhumanities.org/programs/traveling-exhibits/](http://wvhumanities.org/programs/traveling-exhibits/) or contact the library at 304-473-8013 or [librarian@wwvc.edu](mailto:librarian@wwvc.edu).

*Born of Rebellion’s* development was made possible with financial support from West Virginia American Water and the NEH’s *A More Perfect Union* funding initiative.

### SWEAR LOYALTY SIGN HERE!



THE NEW STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA and "not under" to establish the reality of its culture during and after the war. Constitution and regulations were required to sign the oath in order to regain the right to vote. As for the question of the "loyalty" form, the oath was not very effective. By 1870, the state legislature had passed a constitution which required that all citizens to swear loyalty to the new state.

Will you declare your loyalty to West Virginia? Or do you swear another to make your oath?

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| I hereby swear my loyalty to the State of West Virginia and to the Constitution of the same. | I hereby swear my loyalty to the State of West Virginia and to the Constitution of the same. |
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## West Virginia National Cemeteries Project

The second year of the Council's National Cemeteries Project continued with support from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Legacy Grant Program. The project guided students from Grafton High School in conducting primary-source research on servicemen and



Michael Keller

*Grafton students display their veteran biographies at an April 2023 capstone event.*

women interred in West Virginia's two National Cemeteries, both located in Taylor County. Their research took them to West Virginia University, the West Virginia State Archives, and the Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hall & Museum in Pittsburgh, as well as the University of Pittsburgh. In addition to helping students contextualize American history through the experiences of the individual veterans, the project also gave them a deep dive into research practices and information literacy.

In April, a capstone event hosted by the Taylor County Historical and Genealogical Society in Grafton honored the students and their work. The full-length biographies, which they researched and wrote about the veterans' military and personal lives, were compiled into a keepsake book for them. The Council's Facebook page featured a different veteran biography each day counting down to July 4<sup>th</sup>. The biographies are also available on the Humanities Council's website.

The summer 2023 issue of *Humanities*, the magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities, profiled the project in an article written by Council Executive Director Eric Waggoner. The project has been approved by the VA for a third year, which will include the work of more students from Grafton and, for the first time, students from University High School in Morgantown.



*(Left-right) Current and former State Folklorists Jennie Williams and Emily Hilliard.*

## West Virginia Day 2023

The Council hosted an open house during our annual West Virginia Day celebration in Charleston on June 20. Before a packed house, current and former State Folklorists Jennie Williams and Emily Hilliard discussed folklife research methods in West Virginia.

Their dialogue focused primarily on two chapters from Emily's book, *Making Our Future: Visionary Folklore and Everyday Culture in Appalachia*, addressing the cultural significance of the hotdog and independent pro wrestling in the Mountain State. The discussion was recorded and will be posted online.

Visitors also were treated to tours of the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House by Grants Administrator Erin Riebe.

Michael Keller

## Grant Categories

*The Humanities Council welcomes applications in the following grant categories.*

**Major Grants** support humanities events such as symposiums, conferences, exhibits and lectures.  
Maximum award: \$20,000  
Due: Feb. 1, Sept. 1

**Minigrants** have a budget of \$2,000 or less and support small projects, single events, or planning/consultation.  
Due: Feb. 1, April 1, June 1, Oct. 1

**Fellowships** of \$3,000 support research and writing projects for humanities faculty and independent scholars.  
Due: Feb. 1

**Media Grants** support the production of electronic or film materials, or a newspaper series.  
Maximum award: \$20,000  
Due: Sept. 1

**Publication Grants** are available to recognized nonprofit and academic presses and support only the production phase of a completed manuscript.  
Maximum award: \$20,000  
Due: Sept. 1

**Teacher Institute Grants** are available to colleges and universities and the state Department of Education, and support summer seminars for secondary and elementary teachers.  
Maximum award: \$20,000  
Due: Sept. 1

*For more information, applications, and guidelines visit [wvhumanities.org](http://wvhumanities.org), email [riebe@wvhumanities.org](mailto:riebe@wvhumanities.org), or call 304-346-8500.*

## In Their Own Country

In 2002, a Humanities Council grant funded the national award-winning series *In Their Own Country*. It featured audio segments about 14 of West Virginia's most acclaimed writers: Irene McKinney, Denise Giardina, Richard Currey, Cynthia Rylant, Keith Maillard, Jayne Anne Phillips, Sandra Belton, Pinckney Benedict, Breece D'J Pancake, Maggie Anderson, Marc Harshman, Davis Grubb, Stephen Coonts, and Mary Lee Settle.

West Virginia Public Radio broadcast the program and it was released on CD. Through a recent Council grant to Step by Step, the series has now been converted into a free website: [wvstories.com](http://wvstories.com). The site includes interviews with some of the authors and readings of original material. Classroom activities are being developed and will be unveiled in the near future.



(Left-right) Irene McKinney, Marc Harshman, Denise Giardina, and 11 others are featured on a new website dedicated to West Virginia authors: [wvstories.com](http://wvstories.com).

## Cemetery Preservation Workshops

The Preservation Alliance of West Virginia will host a series of free West Virginia Cemetery Preservation Workshops this fall, funded in part through a grant from the Humanities Council. The project helps volunteers of all ages and backgrounds learn how to preserve, survey, and document historic cemeteries for current and future generations. Each workshop is divided into a half day of classroom presentations and a half day of fieldwork, where participants gain hands-on experience in preserving and documenting a local historic cemetery. Workshop leaders recommend bringing gloves and wearing closed-toed shoes and clothing that may get a little dirty.

While some dates are yet to be announced, upcoming workshops will be held on October 6-7 at Bethel Memorial Park on Norway Avenue in Huntington and on October 14 at the Jones Cemetery in the Bellview section of Fairmont. For more information about these and future workshops, visit the Preservation Alliance website: [pawv.org](http://pawv.org).

## Holiday Open House

Join us for our annual Holiday Open House at the historic MacFarland-Hubbard House in Charleston on Friday, December 8, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. We'll be gathering together for some holiday cheer, and to enjoy seasonal decorations and refreshments!



Michael Keller



**W**e truly value our members' dedication and commitment to the West Virginia Humanities Council. Your generous support has allowed us to expand our cultural and educational programs, initiatives, and grantmaking. We look forward to continuing to promote the humanities, thus enriching communities throughout the Mountain State. If you haven't renewed your membership yet, we ask you to consider supporting us today. Every gift counts and makes a real difference in our ability to reach more West Virginians where they live.

For more information about available donation options, please contact Development Director Michelle Parsons at [parsons@wvhumanities.org](mailto:parsons@wvhumanities.org) or call 304-346-8500.

### Donations April 1 - July 31, 2023

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(give-every-month)  
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For those of you who have enjoyed our West Virginia Folklife Program cryptid pins—the Mothman and the Flatwoods Monster—we have a big surprise coming in October! We're unveiling a brand-new pin for GEM donors who give at least \$5 per month to the Council. For \$15 per month, donors will receive all three. Watch [wvhumanities.org/donate/gem](http://wvhumanities.org/donate/gem) to learn more.

- ☐ Please drop my name.
- ☐ Please change my name/address as indicated at right.
- ☐ I receive more than one copy.

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Please add my friend at the above address.

The West Virginia Humanities Council gratefully acknowledges support from the National Endowment for the Humanities; the West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture & History; and foundations, corporations, and individuals throughout the Mountain State and beyond.

## State Folklorist Collaborates with Augusta Heritage Center

State Folklorist Jennie Williams participated in the Augusta Heritage Center's three-week-long summer workshops during July, assisting the Augusta staff with their social media while working remotely for the West Virginia Folklife Program. Jennie had the privilege to play in music jams, sit in on classes, attend nightly dances and concerts, connect with professional musicians and experts in their traditions, and present the experience of engaging in the Augusta Heritage Center's programs via their Instagram and Facebook stories and posts.

The Augusta Heritage Center, located in Elkins in Randolph County, is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of providing rich educational programming that highlights folk and traditional arts. On the campus of Davis and Elkins College, Augusta has held annual workshops in the summer, each week inviting instructors and participating guests from West Virginia and beyond to spend a week (or more) learning about music traditions, craft, dance, and foodways. Week one centers on classic country, swing, and Cajun music; week two on bluegrass and vocal traditions; and week three on old-time music and dance, and blues. The workshops also offer cooking classes, craft classes, and classes for kids.

Some of her highlights included learning from folklorist and former Augusta Heritage Center Folk Art Coordinator Gerry Milnes when he taught a class on West Virginia ballads and folklore, listening as vocalist Ginny Hawker pulled musicians around her to sing Hazel Dickens's "West Virginia My Home" during a late-night porch jam, and watching NEA Heritage Fellow and blues harmonica player Phil Wiggins perform on stage.



Jennie Williams

*Rachel Eddy (third from right, with fiddle) leads a jam session for all ages at the Augusta Heritage Center.*

While the music events can at times overshadow the craft classes, the crafting students completed incredible projects in a short period of time. Artist Wendy Clark, owner of The Yarn Basket in Philippi, taught students how to weave kitchen towels on a loom using a waffle weave technique. The towels are created in one extended length before being cut and washed, which shrinks them, making them absorbent. Wendy's students selected colors, learned to wind their warps—threads specially measured and put on the loom—and finished their projects all in one week.

At the end of the day Friday, when most workshop participants were packing up to head home, Jennie returned to see the weaving students remove their finished projects from the loom. The students laid out their projects for a grand reveal, at which point the assembled group gasped at their stunning beauty. Wendy folded each weaver's project up and, using a ribbon that kept track of their weaving measurements, ceremoniously tied a bow around the woven towels, presenting each one to the student like a gift. Emotional and inspiring, this is the sum of what the experience of attending the Augusta Heritage Center's summer workshops can be.