



CAL

HUMANITIES

Searching for Democracy

| CALIFORNIA READS

DIALOGUE FACILITATION TRAINING

Spring 2012 (date TBD)

Cal Humanities is offering interested California Reads grantees the chance to have staff trained in humanities-based community dialogue facilitation. This is an opportunity to strengthen your ability to lead engaging conversations about the meaning of democracy as part of your program activities, as well transform how both staff and community see the value of the library now and in the future. Training fees will be covered and travel stipends available, but space is limited.

Now We're Talking is Cal Humanities' program to strengthen libraries as "community living rooms" and hubs of civic life. To learn more about the training, please read on.

Now We're Talking

Where can people go to talk about things that really matter—not just with friends, but also with strangers, people you normally wouldn't get a chance to meet? We think there may be no better place than a public library for these community conversations. In a library, there are people from every walk of life, and everyone is welcome.

Now We're Talking (formerly known as Making A Difference) is a program of Cal Humanities to train staff at libraries to facilitate meaningful dialogue—where life experiences and personal values can be shared by community members—in a no shouting/deep listening zone. By coming together for discussions around deep, nuanced topics, communities can express and reflect on the beliefs and values that they hold and thereby foster a better understanding of and improved relationships with others, and more thoughtful and effective engagement in community life. Using short pieces of literature (such as stories, essays, speeches, or poems), videos or film clips, and visual art as springboards to reflect on issues in a civic environment has had wonderful and some surprising results.

We know that carefully facilitated dialogue taps into emerging community efforts...We have seen community members emerge as civic reflection facilitators in their own right and watched their neighbors lifted by the experience of compassionate thoughtful dialogue focused on serious concerns.

—a branch librarian

We loved this program. It was in some ways a wrenching experience, but one that forced our staff from the branch librarians up through senior management out of their comfort levels and stimulated not only conversations among the public in the libraries, but among library staff about the types of programming we do and how that can shift and change.

—a jurisdiction administrator

Now We're Talking is for library staff who are interested in being active agents for creating a safe space for community exchange and facilitating meaningful dialogue. The program will: 1) train and support programming staff to use active listening and thoughtful questioning to become effective dialogue facilitators for their communities (a skill also transferrable to internal library uses as well), 2) familiarize them with an alternative programming model that focuses on creating possibilities for inter-personal reflection and dialogue about community concerns (different from exposure programs—e.g., lectures and film screenings—that are informative, but less interactive), 3) open new ways of forming community relationships and partnerships, 4) form and connect a growing group of library-based dialogue facilitators across the state, and 5) encourage buy-in at both branch and jurisdictional levels.

We have been collaborating closely with our training partner, the Project on Civic Reflection (PCR), utilizing their training model as the foundation for the program; and with advice from the California Center for the Book and our library partners, customizing PCR's model for libraries.

The Now We're Talking professional development program includes:

- a two-day workshop in facilitation and resources, such as the PCR facilitators' handbook and sample readings and content resources to use in programming,
- in-service technical assistance and trouble-shooting,
- a web-based resource site for posting materials and hosting threaded conversations among program participants, and
- program planning and self-evaluation tools.

For more general information about the Project on Civic Reflection's model of facilitation trainings, see <http://civicreflection.org/training/>

This program was developed in collaboration with the Riverside County, Salinas, and Yolo County library jurisdictions, and with the support of the California State Library through its LSTA program, and sponsorship of Califa; and the National Endowment for the Humanities.