

12-2011

## The New Writing Series, Spring 2012

English & National Poetry Foundation

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**CULTURAL AFFAIRS/DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES**  
**GRANT APPLICATION**

I. Applicant/Organization: English & National Poetry Foundation

II. a. Responsible Organization Officer: Steve Evans

b. Title: Associate Professor; New Writing Series Coordinator; Director, National Poetry Foundation

c. Campus Address (include Email and Telephone): 313 Neville; 1-3818; steven.evans@maine.edu

III. Summary of program requiring funding (title; featured artist(s); speaker(s); scheduled date(s):

**The New Writing Series | Spring 2012**

Six events featuring eight writers

Fiction writers: Matt Bell, Joanna Howard, Justin Taylor

Poets. Elizabeth Arnold, Jaap Blonk, Joshua Edwards, Devin Johnston, Ish Klein

Events take place on Thursdays at 4:30pm in the Soderberg Auditorium.

All events are free & open to the public.

*Innovative & diverse literary programming on the  
University of Maine flagship campus since 1999*



IV. Budget Proposal Form must be attached. *See attached.*

**Funding for current application is contingent upon submission of reports for any previous grant awards, including final budget and attendance figures.**

**SEND COMPLETED APPLICATION VIA EMAIL TO:** [wcarr@maine.edu](mailto:wcarr@maine.edu)

For questions regarding the Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series, please contact Wanda Madden-Carr at 581-1516

<b>Event Expenses</b>	honarium	travel by	travel from	trav allotment	accommod	meals	total
writer							
Jaap Blonk [P]	\$500	plane	Minneapolis (?)	\$700	\$82	\$100	\$1,382
Joshua Edwards [P]	\$500	plane	SF	\$700	\$164	\$100	\$1,464
Ish Klein [P]	\$500	td	Amherst, MA	\$700	\$164	\$100	\$1,464
Devin Johnston [P]	\$500	plane	St Louis/Chicago	\$700	\$164	\$100	\$1,464
Elizabeth Arnold [P]	\$500	plane	Chicago	\$700	\$164	\$100	\$1,464
Matt Bell [F]	\$500	plane	Ann Arbor MI	\$700	\$164	\$100	\$1,464
Justin Taylor [F]	\$500	plane	NYC	\$700	\$164	\$100	\$1,464
Joanna Howard [F]	\$500	plane?	Providence	\$700	\$164	\$100	\$1,464
	<b>\$4,000</b>			<b>\$5,600</b>	<b>\$1,230</b>	<b>\$800</b>	<b>\$11,630</b>
<b>Fixed Expenses</b>							
agent	expense						
To be determined	\$250	Publicity					
University Relations	\$800	Digital Archive					
Pulp & Paper Foundation	donated	Room Rental	(\$300 value)				
total	<b>\$1,050</b>						
<b>Total Series Expenses</b>							
Event Expenses	\$11,630						
Fixed Expenses	\$1,050						
Total Expenses	<b>\$12,680</b>						
<b>Overview of Funding</b>							
English Dept (Elliott Fund)	\$6,180						
English Dept (Ellis Fund)	\$500						
Honors College (Gift Fund)	\$1,000						
CA/DLS Request	\$5,000						
	<b>\$12,680</b>						

## Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series Fund Budget Proposal Form

Applicant/Organization: English Department & National Poetry Foundation  
 Responsible Officer: Steve Evans, Assoc. Prof., New Writing Series coordinator  
 Event Title: The New Writing Series, Spring 2012  
 Event Date: Thursday afternoons throughout the spring semester

Total Program Budget:	\$12,680
Amount Committed by Applicant Organization:	\$6,680
Total Amount Requested from Other Funding Sources:	\$1,000
Please List Sources & Amounts below:	
<i>Honors College</i>	\$1,000

Amount Requested from CA/DLS Committee:	\$5,000*
Revenues, if any, expected (fees, ticket sales):	\$0

Budget Breakdown of Expenses and funds to be used:	CADLS	OTHER
Honoraria/Services (explain below)	\$2,000	\$2,000
<i>Please see attached</i>		
Travel	\$3,000	\$2,600
<i>Please see attached</i>		
Lodging	\$000	\$1,230
Meals	\$0	\$800
Advertising	\$0	\$250
Printing	\$0	\$0
Supplies and Materials	\$0	\$0
Other (must specify below)	\$0	\$800
<i>Digital videotaping through the University Relations office</i>		

Total Expenses from CA/DLS funds:	\$5,000*	
Total Expenses from other funds:		\$7680
(These two totals should equal the "Total Program Budget" listed above)		

\*These amounts should be identical and should not exceed 50% of the total program/event budget. Please note that CA/DLS funds may not be used for receptions and do not normally fund UM employee wages. If an award is granted based on this proposal, reimbursement of expenses will not exceed the total CA/DLS request and will be limited to the types of expenditures outlined above.

December 1, 2011

Dear Members of the Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series Committee,

I write to request the Committee's support for the spring 2012 New Writing Series, an innovative literary arts program sponsored by the English Department and the National Poetry Foundation.

The amount we request, \$5,000, is less than one-half of the projected operating budget for the fall Series of \$12,680. The majority of the financial support for the Series will be provided by the English Department through its Elliott and Ellis Funds. I am happy to report that the Honors College recently renewed its collaborative agreement with the Series for another academic year, promising \$1000 per semester to support the Series. In renewing the arrangement, Dean Charlie Slavin spoke appreciatively of the work the Series does "to enrich the atmosphere of UMaine." We're grateful for the vote of continued confidence. The detailed budget appended to this letter provides an overview of projected expenses and revenue sources. Per the Committee's recent request, I have adopted the standard budget form and supplemented it with a spreadsheet that itemizes projected expenses.

The spring 2012 line-up will feature eight writers—five poets and three fiction writers—in CA/DLS-supported events.

As the brief biographies appended to this letter demonstrate, the writers we propose to bring to campus represent a wide range of literary activity and achievement. We are especially excited at the prospect of hosting Jaap Blonk, an internationally renowned performance poet whose spectacular recreations of such works as Kurt Schwitters's "Ursonata" and Hugo Ball's Dada sound poems have dazzled audiences in Europe and elsewhere since the mid-1970s. We hope to add UMaine to the prestigious list of institutions hosting Blonk on a US tour this March. The poet Devin Johnston's new book *Traveler* just appeared with FSG, perhaps the most prestigious of the big New York houses. He is also the publisher of Flood books, and we've paired him with Flood author Elizabeth Arnold, whose third volume of poetry, *Effacement*, is a haunting poetic essay on "damaged, disfigured, or surgically altered heads and bodies," occasioned in part by the poet's own bout with cancer. Poet Joshua Edwards's first book *Campeche* appeared earlier this year to warm notice. Like Johnston, Edwards also directs an excellent independent publishing house, Canarium, and we plan to pair him with one of his recently published authors, Ish Klein. In addition to these poet-publisher pairings, we'll host three fiction writers in events that have been curated for the NWS by Assistant Professor of Creative Writing Gregory Howard, who just joined the English Department this fall. Writer Matt Bell's work is situated at the cusp of literary fiction and the fantasy genre; Justin Taylor's *Everything Here Is the Best Thing Ever* was a New York Times Editors' choice; and *Publisher's Weekly* has praised the "tales of startling description and beauty collected in Joanna Howard's *On the Winding Stair* (her second book). To this lively mix of nationally-known writers, we will be adding local voices to the Series in several additional events for which we are not requesting CA/DLS support.

New Writing Series programming has always been guided the principles of innovation, collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and diversity. From the start we have also worked hard to maximize the impact of real-time events within the rapidly-changing new media context. For example, the NWS blog has received more than 55,500 page views since its creation in fall 2006 (up from 38,000 this time last year). Our Facebook group, created in the fall of 2007, has more than 140 members and reaches many more people with event and Series information. The Flickr page on which we document events has received roughly 44,700 views to date. And we have been making NWS content (sound and video files) available both through our blog and through UMaine's iTunes U since April of 2008. (A list of the URLs for these projects is appended to this application.) The real-time event in front of a live audience remains our Series' anchor point, but using the web to extend brief visits into lasting on-line presences is an effective way of maximizing the return on the investment it takes to bring people to campus.

Some other reasons for supporting the NWS:

- **A cutting-edge research university with an institutional commitment to innovation deserves literary arts programming that is diverse, daring, and original.** The New Writing Series is such a program. While all modes and methods of writing fall within its ambit of curiosity, we take care to ensure that writers whose work departs from, and perhaps even challenges, dominant commercial and aesthetic assumptions are given a fair hearing. Our programming is consistently among the most diverse on the campus (and by extension in the region), foregrounding ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic, and sexual diversity (see the appended document "About the New Writing Series" for details). And our programming is original: no other institution in Maine, and only a few others in the country, have shown the kind of commitment the New Writing Series has toward the full-range of contemporary literary practice. We seek to confer recognition with our programming, not just to ratify judgments made somewhere up the literary food chain.
- **The New Writing Series does a lot with a little.** For what would be a modest honorarium if paid in a lump sum to a single celebrity on campus for one evening, the New Writing Series creates a coherent sequence of events that adds a distinctive dimension to the intellectual and artistic climate on campus and in the region. The honoraria we offer are low (between \$250 and \$1000) and we economize in every way we can on other expenses (see appended budget). Because the Series has an established identity—in terms of time (Thursday afternoons), place (the Soderberg Center Auditorium), and "look" (MaJo Keleshian's bold designs, echoed in our electronic publicity)—we get more out of each individual event. This has been a key to our successful audience development. Inertia is the enemy of artistic creation: the New Writing Series creates momentum around the act of literary creation, stirring up lively conversations that resonate beyond the cube-like walls of the Soderberg Auditorium.

• **The New Writing Series has a strong local audience, but it also brings national visibility to the University of Maine.** The off-campus publicity for the New Writing Series always spotlights UMaine (rather than the English Department or the NPF): our goal is to keep Orono on the national map when it comes to the literary arts, and to emphasize that the UMS flagship campus is at the leading edge of literary artistic practice. No other college in the state or campus in the UM system can demonstrate the depth of commitment and ongoing excellence that the New Writing Series, with the Committee's support, has achieved.

• **Literary culture is an important piece in the "creative economy" puzzle.** A university campus that fails to stay in touch with contemporary literary practice is depriving itself of access to the fresh thinking that writers, often in advance of their colleagues in other disciplines, bring to the world around us. The literary arts are essential to the creation of an atmosphere of free exploration of any and all aspects of contemporary existence, an atmosphere as decisive in the sciences as in the humanities.

• **The "New" in New Writing Series.** We have been fortunate to receive Committee support for the NWS in the past and we are deeply grateful for it. But the enduring institutional framework of the Series should not mask the fact that we bring new voices and visions to campus with every fresh season of the NWS. We are, in other words, offering "new programming" for the Committee's consideration, programming that will disappear from the cultural calendar without your support.

I have included an itemized budget (using an Excel spreadsheet to supplement the also provided standard form) for the spring 2012 New Writing Series. In keeping with CA/DLS policy, we strive to offer the lowest honoraria compatible with a writer's reputation and standard fee. I will note that our typical "ceiling" of \$1000 is well below what some poets and most fiction writers (and their agents) will consider. Our standard travel policy allots to invited writers "up to \$700 for travel" (raised from \$500 in light of recent fare hikes and hidden luggage fees) and we work with individuals to minimize that expense whenever possible. Accommodations are provided by University Inn in Orono and are estimated at the appropriate seasonal rates. Meal and reception expenses **do not** factor into our request for Committee support: they are included here for informational purposes only. In those cases where scheduling or other difficulties preclude a proposed writer from participating in the Series, we seek replacements of comparable rank and reputation to fill the slot. I believe that the other items should be self-explanatory, but I am more than happy to answer any questions that may arise.

This proposal has the support of English Department Chair Naomi Jacobs, who exercises discretion over the Elliott and Ellis Funds. Both she and I are cognizant and fully supportive of Judith Hakola's intent to request CA/DLS support for a poetry reading by Maine Poet Laureate Wes McNair.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Dr. Steven R. Evans  
Associate Professor of English  
New Writing Series Coordinator  
Acting Director, National Poetry Foundation



### **Bio-bibliographical information** (alphabetical)

**Elizabeth Arnold** has published three books of poems, *The Reef* (University of Chicago Press, 1999), and *Civilization* (Flood Editions, 2006), and *Effacement* (Flood Editions, 2010). Her poems have appeared in *Conjunctions*, *Paris Review*, *Poetry*, and *Slate*. She is on the MFA faculty at the University of Maryland and lives in Hyattsville, Maryland.

**Matt Bell** is the author of *How They Were Found*, a collection of fiction published by Keyhole Press in 2010, and *Cataclysm Baby*, a novella forthcoming from Mud Luscious Press in 2012, as well as three chapbooks, *Wolf Parts*, *The Collectors*, and *How the Broken Lead the Blind*. His fiction has appeared in *Conjunctions*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Willow Springs*, *Unsaid*, and *American Short Fiction*, and has been selected for inclusion in anthologies such as *Best American Mystery Stories 2010* and *Best American Fantasy 2*. His book reviews and critical essays have appeared in *The Los Angeles Times*, *American Book Review*, and *The Quarterly Conversation*. He works as an editor at Dzanc Books, where he also runs the literary magazine *The Collagist*. He teaches writing at the University of Michigan.

Hearing **Jaap Blonk** for the first time can be an ear-opening experience. Born in 1953 in the Netherlands, Blonk is a self-taught, self-described sound poet, who twists and bends language (English and others) in engagingly disturbing ways. Working solo, and with different sized groups, Blonk has performed extensively, particularly in Europe, where he has collaborated with John Tchicai, Tristan Honsinger, and Matts Gustafsson, among others. Blonk founded and leads *Splinks*, a small orchestra that plays his compositions, and *BRAAXTAAL*, an avant-rock trio with synthesizer and drums. A concert by Blonk falls under the rubric of Performance Art, as he shows remarkable stage presence. Using original poetry as well as the words of others, Blonk clicks, blurts, and snaps his voice, creating unusual sounds and noises, mimicking nature and often injecting offbeat humor. While his performances sometimes offend, and they are not easily categorized, they nonetheless reflect considerable creativity and often contain large amounts of improvisation.

**Joshua Edwards** is the director and co-editor of *Canarium Books*. His poems and translations have appeared in *Chicago Review*, *Colorado Review*, *CROWD*, *Slate*, *Skanky Possum*, and elsewhere, and his translation of Mexican poet Maria Baranda's book-length poem, *Ficticia*, was published by Shearsman Books in September 2010. He's received grants and fellowships from the Fulbright-Garcia Robles Program, Vermont Studio Center, Zoland Poetry, University of Michigan, and Stanford University, where he's currently a Stegner Fellow. He lives in Berkeley with his partner, the poet Lynn Xu.

**Joanna Howard** is the author of *On The Winding Stair*, a collection of short prose works, published by Boa Editions. Her work has appeared in *Conjunctions*, *Chicago Review*, *Unsaid*, *Quarterly West*, *American Letters and Commentary*, *Fourteen Hills*, *Western Humanities Review*, *Salt Hill*, *Tarpaulin Sky* and elsewhere. A chapbook, *In the Colorless Round*, with artwork by novelist and artist Rikki Ducornet, is available from Noemi Press. She lives in Providence, Rhode Island.

Born in Canton, New York, **Devin Johnston** grew up in Winston-Salem and received his PhD from the University of Chicago. Johnston is the author of several collections of poetry, including *Sources* (2008), a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, *Aversions* (2004) and *Telepathy* (2001). His prose writing includes the critical study *Precipitations: Contemporary American Poetry as Occult Practice* (2002) and *Creaturely and Other Essays* (2009). A former poetry editor for the *Chicago Review* from 1995-2000, Johnston co-founded, and co-edits, *Flood Editions* with Michael O'Leary.

**Ish Klein** is a poet and filmmaker. She is an alumna of Columbia University and the Iowa Writers' Workshop for Poetry. Her poems have appeared in numerous magazines and her films have played at festivals around the world. Canarium Books published her first book, *Union!*, in 2009 and will publish her next book, *Moving Day*, April 1, 2011. She lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.

**Justin Taylor** edited the acclaimed short fiction anthology *The Apocalypse Reader*, and is the author of *Everything Here Is the Best Thing Ever*, a New York Times Editors' Choice. *The Gospel of Anarchy* is his first novel. He lives in New York.

## About the New Writing Series — A Brief History

The New Writing Series was formally inaugurated in the spring of 2000 when a proposal drafted by Steve Evans in consultation with Benjamin Friedlander and Burton Hatlen received unanimous approval from the English department's Speaker and Special Events Committee, then chaired by Welch Everman. In the twenty semesters of its existence, it has served as an instrument for investigating the state of contemporary writing here in Maine, in the U.S. and Canada more broadly, and to some extent the world (Nigerian, Australian, Jamaican, English, Chilean, and other writers have come to Orono through the Series). The Series receives primary funding through the English Department's Lloyd H. Elliott fund and has received consistent administrative support from the National Poetry Foundation, matching funds through the Cultural Affairs Committee, and co-sponsorships from a wide variety of departments and programs (the Honors College, Art, Multicultural Programs, Women in the Curriculum, Wilde Stein, Modern Languages & Classics, and others).

The primary objectives of the New Writing Series are (i) to make contemporary poetry and fiction a valued part of the cultural life at the University of Maine, (ii) to broaden the University's local, national, and international reputation as a site of vibrant cultural exchange and creativity, and (iii) to cultivate links within the University as well as between the University and area secondary schools that foster imaginative approaches to thinking about contemporary literary practices. Whereas developing an audience for individual events can be difficult, a Series creates an ongoing context for the exploration of contemporary writing and signals a more serious level of commitment to the inclusion of the literary arts in the cultural repertoire of campus and community life.

Since 2000, the Series has hosted more than 160 events, featuring more than 210 individual writers, and it has earned a loyal local audience (typical event attendance ranges between 40 and 150 people) as well as a strong national reputation. Extended residencies by Robert Creeley (between 2000-2003) and Alice Notley (2004) have been coordinated in conjunction with the Series, as has a Libra Professorship that brought four African American poets—Jay Wright, Jayne Cortez, Lorenzo Thomas, and Amiri Baraka—to campus in 2001.

A Series weblog was created in the fall of 2006 and a substantial archive of materials of research and pedagogical value (countless hours of sound recordings, videotapes of live readings, forty professional quality digital-video "Poet Profiles" of NWS participants) has been carefully gathered and organized over the years.

## **The New Writing Series on the Web**

The New Writing Series blog (main source for NWS news)  
<http://nwsnews.wordpress.com/>

The New Writing Series on Facebook (registration required)  
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2511086192>

The New Writing Series on Flickr  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/thirdfactory/>

The New Writing Series on UMaine's iTunes U  
<http://www.umaine.edu/itunesu/>  
(click "Open Umaine on iTunes U" in upper right, then scroll to  
"Courses—English—New Writing Series")

The New Writing Series on YouTube  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/npfvideo>

The New Writing Series on LibraryThing Local  
<http://www.librarything.com/venue/18404/UMaine-New-Writing-Series>

***Cultural Affairs Committee***  
***and***  
***Distinguished Lecture Series***  
***c/o Wanda Madden-Carr***  
***201 Alumni Hall***  
***University of Maine***

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January 4, 2012

To: Steven Evans

From: Melissa Mayard & Dan Sandweiss, Co-Chairs

On behalf of the Cultural Affairs Committee and Distinguished Lecture Series, it gives us great pleasure to inform you that your proposal, New Writing Series Spring 2012, has been awarded \$5000.00

Please contact Wanda Madden-Carr at 1-1516 to discuss the procedures in place for the submission of financial expenses related to this award at your earliest convenience.

The following acknowledgement is required on ALL promotional material: ***This event was supported in part by a grant from the Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series.***

Attached is a form for your use to summarize the benefits derived from this grant. This form should be submitted within 30 days after the conclusion of the event. Timely submission of your summary will be considered as part of any future funding requests.

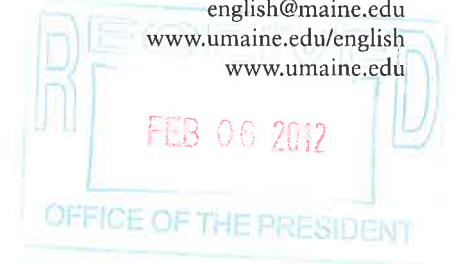
The Cultural Affairs Committee members congratulate you and wish you much success on this project.

cc: Stella Santerre

Department of English



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**To:** Wanda Madden-Carr  
**From:** Stella Santerre *Stella*  
**Date:** January 24, 2012  
**Re:** Cultural Affairs Grant for the New Writing Series – Fall 2011

The New Writing Series was awarded a Cultural Affairs Grant of \$5000 for Fall 2011. Qualifying expenses totaling \$5000 are listed below and the supporting paperwork is attached.

<b>Honorariums</b>	
Charles Edwin Robetson	1000.00
Laura Mullen	300.00
Pierre Joris	600.00
Theodore W. Pelton	750.00
<b>Travel</b>	
Laura Mullen	453.80
Pierre Joris	477.40
Charles Edwin Roberson	472.80
Joshua Corey	601.80
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
Videotaping	\$344.20
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5000.00</b>

Please let me know if you have any questions or if you need additional paperwork to process this transaction.

Thank you!

cc: Steve Evans

Enclosures