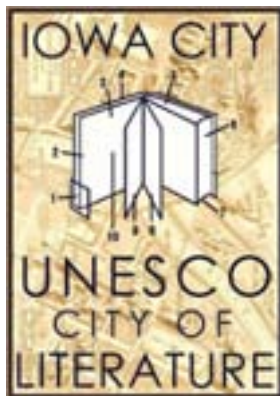


UNESCO Presentation



December 27, 2011

TO: City Council of North Liberty, Iowa
FROM: Jeanette Pilak, Executive Director
RE: Annual Update for the City of Literature USA

In addition to the review of accomplishments from the past year and a look toward 2012, I've also included a copy of Regenia Bailey's report to the Iowa City Council from her trip to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network annual conference in Seoul, Korea, November 2011.

Three years ago this November, Iowa City was declared the third City of Literature in the world by United Nations Education, Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In April 2010, staff was hired. Since then, the non-profit has created engaging programs and dozens of fruitful collaborations throughout our community.

Awareness of the area's literary heritage and participation in activities that create the readers and writers of tomorrow are being strengthened by these programs and partnerships:

- **300 children** in at-risk schools benefit from the reading tutoring and mentorship of UI student athletes in our Hawkeye Readers program. In 2012, the program will expand to include four more UI athletic programs with the goal of year-round reading tutoring in more schools.
- **3,500 readers and writers** of all ages, coming from 7 different Midwestern states, attended the 2011 Iowa City Book Festival presented by the University of Iowa Libraries. The number of out-of-town visitors to this festival continues **to grow by 25% each year**.
- More than **53 authors** read to standing-room-only crowds in venues throughout the city at the 2011 "A Day in the City of Literature".
- **162 people** from the Eastern Iowa corridor heard United States Poet Laureate (1997-2000), translator, essayist and teacher **Robert Pinsky** read at the annual UNESCO World Book and Copyright Day celebration.
- More than **150 English and Language Arts educators** from high schools in the Eastern Iowa corridor introduced their students to Paul Engle's autobiography, "A Lucky American Childhood." **Four high school students** read their winning essays at Prairie Lights Books.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation for the City of North Liberty's support and participation in our year-long **Book Marks – Book Art in Johnson County™** project. When we began this project in the fall of 2010, we had three goals:

1. To publicly celebrate the area's historic literary culture and educational leadership that fuels our love of reading;
2. To drive the local economy by encouraging visitors to stream into town to see the statues from June through October 2011; and
3. To benefit the City of Literature USA and the Coralville Public Library, Iowa City Public Library and the North Liberty Community Library.

With North Liberty's energy and support, we were successful in achieving each of these goals:

- The amount of publicity and press coverage the statues, artists and sponsors received over 11 months is a testament to the project's success in raising awareness in and interest for the area's literary cultural heritage.
- Hardly a week passed without meeting visitors and families posing for pictures with our statues. We know visitors came from Ames, Fairfield, Cedar Rapids, Mason City and Dubuque and from the neighboring states of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois.
- During the three weeks online People's Choice voting for BookMarks, hosted by the Iowa City Press-Citizen, 5,579 votes were submitted !
- Through sponsorships and auction sales, the project netted more than \$32,000 to benefit the City of Literature USA and the three libraries.

Going forward, the City of Literature USA looks to growing our established events and setting the foundation for new collaborations:

January 13-15, 2011 One Book, Two Book Children's Literature Festival in the City of Literature

The collaboration with the North Liberty Community Library, particularly in conjunction with the Sunday, January 15th Hawkeye Express Train Excursion is demonstrative of the City of Literature's vision of how we wish to develop collaborations that animate each of our communities through cultural, creative tourism.

With the further development of **Renshaw House**, we look forward to the opportunity to create more opportunities for destination creative tourism with the staff and citizens of North Liberty.

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to working with you in the months and years to come.

Date: November 22, 2011

To: City Council

From: Regenia Bailey

RE: UNESCO Creative Cities Conference November 2011

Introduction

Last week I traveled with Jeanette Pilak, Executive Director of Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature, to Seoul, South Korea to represent the City of Literature USA Board of Directors and the City of Iowa City at the UNESCO Creative Cities Conference. It was a valuable and beneficial experience, providing an opportunity for conversations among the UNESCO Creative Cities, the cities working toward designation, and most importantly, conversations among the cities of literature.

Before I outline some of the activities and ideas from the trip, I want to thank Josh Schamberger and the Iowa City/Coralville Convention and Visitors Bureau for providing funding for my participation in this conference. I also want to thank all of you for your flexibility in rescheduling council meetings so I could participate in the trip without neglecting my fundamental council responsibilities.

City of Literature Conversations and Collaborations

All the Cities of Literature (Edinburgh, Melbourne, Dublin, and Reykjavik) sent delegations to the conference. In addition to discussing programming ideas and opportunities, we discussed policies that support and advance the City of Literature branding. I was particularly interested to hear that Edinburgh works closely with their Municipal Improvement District (comparable to a SSMID here) to advance their city's brand and promote City of Literature activities. I see opportunities for the DTA (or the SSMID board, in the event of the ordinance passing) to explore policies and practices that might benefit our community as we work to promote and brand the City of Literature USA.

In addition to discussing best practices, there was discussion among the Cities of Literature about collaborating on an economic impact study to examine the benefits and return on investment of the UNESCO designation. Given that all the Cities of Literature have major research institutions, this seems like a manageable and feasible project that would provide significant data to the policy makers of these communities.

Cultural Tourism

As I listened to the presentations and talked with other delegations, it became clear that there are a variety of opportunities in cultural tourism that Iowa City and the City of Literature organization can pursue. These include exchanges among the other Creative Cities, especially within the Cities of Literature network. Other ideas involve more focused promotion of Iowa City as a City of Literature within the state, the region, and nationally. Iowa City has connections throughout the world, primarily through ties to University programs. The City of Literature organization works to strengthen these connections to promote Iowa City as a destination for education and cultural opportunity, but as with most opportunities, there is more that we can do.

If we embrace the City of Literature designation as an international acknowledgement of the distinct literary culture that we have in this community due to the intense and fertile collaborative relationship between the City and The University of Iowa, we can see that although the designation brings focus to literature, the collaborative environment that fosters it is the fundamental attractor. We know that this environment draws writers, sports fans, academics, and others to our community. As a City, we should do more to capitalize on this environment and the designation that acknowledges it. We should include cultural tourism as part of our economic development strategies and develop additional approaches to work with the City of Literature organization and other entities to promote our community in ways that bring a return to the City through hotel/motel tax and the additional economic vibrancy that is a result of strong visitor and tourist activity.

City Branding

Somewhat related to the cultural tourism piece is the notion of how the City itself promotes its brand. As a governmental entity, our approach to branding will be different than that of a commercial enterprise, but we can't overlook it altogether. Something as simple as including the City of Literature designation with our logo on business cards and letterhead throughout our City departments would help promote the distinct nature and culture of Iowa City.

Additionally, inclusion of the City of Literature distinction on the City's website would be a logical and cost effective way to promote Iowa City's unique culture. Including links to the City of Literature website from the City's site would enable us to promote the City of Literature designation and programs with little additional work on our own site.

As we move into strategic planning, I hope that we can develop additional ideas to develop the City's brand identity as a City of Literature and consistently promote it through the City's printed and virtual materials.

Conclusion

As we have all noted, the UNESCO City of Literature designation is a significant international honor. As leaders of this City of Literature, we need to work to ensure that we use this designation to promote and grow our community in ways that benefit our citizens. There are numerous opportunities—small and large—to do this and it is important that we lead the way in their implementation.