

JOHN TESSITORE

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Creative, strategic leader and program manager whose work bridges academia, the arts, government, business, and the non-profit sector. Collaborative manager, team-builder, and skillful negotiator. Energetic, hard-working colleague with extensive writing and communications experience.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Principal, *First Idea Communications, LLC*, Framingham, Massachusetts, 2015-present

- Content strategy and project management, specializing in academia, non-profits, and public policy.
- Launches national campaigns, researches and writes new books, drafts reports, and strategizes digital content.
- Clients include the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Harvard Business School, MIT, EMC, Amgen, the Travis Manion Foundation, and the Partnership for Historic Bostons.

American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2008-present

Program Director for the Humanities and Education, 2013-2015

Senior Program Adviser, 2015-2021:

- Managed the Initiative on the Humanities and Culture, including the blue-ribbon Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences (humanitiescommission.org) and a follow-up commission on language learning (amacad.org/languages), both requested by members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. Coordinated outreach activities – organized large public events, facilitated private discussions, led government outreach, directed public relations communications – in over 30 states. Commissioners included university presidents, business leaders, federal and Supreme Court judges, a former governor, retired military leaders, filmmakers, and others.
- Served as lead writer for all Initiative communications, including the influential *Heart of the Matter* report of the Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences and *America's Languages*, the report of the Commission on Language Learning. Nearly 300,000 copies of the *Heart of the Matter* and over 100,000 copies of *America's Languages* have been circulated online and in print.
- Wrote grant proposals, cultivated relationships with donors, and developed project budgets up to \$2.5 million. Responsible for combined project budgets up to \$8 million annually.
- Led an effort of five international academies to create a first-ever joint statement on the importance of learning languages other than English: <https://www.amacad.org/news/global-languages-importance>
- Supervised the Humanities Indicators project (humanitiesindicators.org), a comprehensive, national data resource for educators, administrators, and policy-makers. Led a redesign and relaunch of the website in 2014, including a new publication program.
- Oversaw all business and education projects including The Lincoln Project: Excellence and Access in Public Higher Education (amacad.org/lincolnproject). Coordinated outreach activities – primarily private discussions between public university leadership, state legislators, and business leaders – in over 20 states.
- Launched the Commission on the Future of Undergraduate Education (amacad.org/undergraduate), wrote several sections of its final report, and strategized government and public outreach.

- Directed three initiatives on legal access for low-income Americans including the first-ever open access issue of the Academy journal *Daedalus* on *Access to Justice*, (amacad.org/daedalus/access-to-justice), and wrote *Civil Justice for All* (amacad.org/publication/civil-justice-for-all) a new national report with recommendations for solving the crisis in civil justice.
- Created and oversaw new projects on philanthropy in K-12 education, financial literacy, and American civic institutions, among others.
- Coordinated public outreach and press opportunities for a variety of Academy projects. Developed communications strategies and managed external public relations consultants.
- Developed and maintained relationships with key officials in relevant government agencies, including federal departments and Congress.
- Strategized and planned new directions for Academy humanities and education work.
- Worked directly with the Academy Board to set project goals and evaluate outcomes.
- Directed the Visiting Scholars residential fellowships program and its Bellagio travel fellowship.
- Supervised 8 employees, had direct oversight of 3-5 consultants each year, and was primary liaison to about 100 project committee members each year.

Senior Advisor to the President, 2014-2015:

- Contributed to Academy-wide strategic planning and personnel decisions.
- Managed presidential initiatives including international conferences, corporate collaborations, media partnerships, and outreach activities.
- Oversaw the University Affiliates program, a consortium of universities that provides annual support for Academy work. Developed plans to achieve program revenue targets. Cultivated and maintains relationships with affiliate institutions.
- Coordinated activities and staff in other project areas and departments.
- Represented the Academy publicly to generate wider support for initiatives.
- Coordinated the Academy's social media platforms.

Special Assistant to the President, 2008-2013:

- Writer/editor of most Academy communications including executive speeches and correspondence, press materials, grant proposals, and published reports.
- Responsible for advancing long-term goals and personnel decisions.
- Served as primary liaison between the President and thirty-five Academy staffers.
- Coordinated day-to-day operations of the executive office and served as liaison between the president and a staff of 40 employees.

Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2004-2008

Lecturer/Teaching Fellow in the History and Literature Program, 2004-2008

Committee on Instruction in History and Literature, 2006-2008

Hoopes Committee, selecting the best undergraduate theses, 2007

Freshman Advisor, 2007-2008

Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts, 1999-2003

Lecturer/Teaching Fellow in Writing, History and American Studies Programs

University of Massachusetts, Boston, Massachusetts

Lecturer in American Studies, 2002 and 2008

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Boston University, American Studies Program, January 2006

B.A. Harvard University, Committee on Degrees in History and Literature, 1996

COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION

Town of Framingham, Framingham, MA
Cultural Council, 2017-2018

America's Languages Working Group, Washington, DC
Chair and convener, 2017-present

The University of Maine, Orno, Maine
Provost's Signature and Emerging Areas Review Team, 2014

National Humanities Alliance, Washington, D.C.
Nominating Committee, 2014 and 2015

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

Reports

America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2017)

Public Research Universities: Recommitting to Lincoln's Vision-An Educational Compact for the 21st Century (American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2016)

The Heart of the Matter: The Humanities and Social Sciences for a Vibrant, Competitive, and Secure Nation (American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2013)

Dissertation

Whitman's Men: Free Thinkers and the Poetry of Free Religion (Boston University, 2006)

Academic Articles

"'Keep Me From the Gallows Pole': Langston Hughes, Leadbelly, and the Folk Tradition" *The Langston Hughes Review* (Winter 2011)

"The 'Sky-Blue' Variety: William James, Walt Whitman, and the Limits of Healthy-Mindedness," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* (March 2008)

"'Plainness is Purity': Leaves of Grass, Free Religion, and Boston's Morals Campaign," *The Mickle Street Review* (<http://micklestreet.rutgers.edu/index.htm>, Issue 19/20)

Introduction and Chronology, with Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Cambridge History of American Literature* Volume 3 (Cambridge UP, 2005)

"Columbia," "Airplanes," and "Lyceum and Chautauqua" in *The Encyclopedia of American Studies* (Grolier, 2001)

Books

100 Young Americans by Michael Franzini (Harper Collins, 2007): collaborative editor

The Cambridge History of American Literature Volume III (Cambridge, 2005): collaborative editor

Extraordinary People in American Literature (Scholastic / Children's Press, 2004)

F. Scott Fitzgerald: The American Dreamer (Scholastic / Franklin Watts, 2001)

John Steinbeck: A Writer's Life (Scholastic / Franklin Watts, 2001)

Kofi Annan: The Peacekeeper (Scholastic / Franklin Watts, 2000)

Muhammad Ali: The World's Champion (Scholastic / Franklin Watts, 1998)

The Hunt and the Feast: A Life of Ernest Hemingway (Scholastic / Franklin Watts, 1996)

Poems

"Where the Water Runs" (*American Journal of Poetry*, summer 2019)

"Interstate 84" (*The Wallace Stevens Journal*, forthcoming)

"Metamorphosis" (*Canary*, forthcoming)

SELECT TALKS & PRESENTATIONS

- "Language Access and the Civil Justice Gap" Language Advocacy Day conference February 2021
- "Improving Access to Language Education: An Introduction to The America's Languages Working Group" (panel with Richard Brecht and Gail McGinn) Interagency Language Roundtable plenary session, January 2021
- "Mapping America's Languages" (panel with Trey Calvin) Language Advocacy Day conference, Washington DC, February 2019
- "Languages, the C-Suite, and Society: Increasing Awareness in the U.S. and Worldwide," (panel with William Rivers and Sonia Zamborsky) Globalization and Localization Annual Conference, Boston, March 2018
- "*The Heart of the Matter Redux*," (panel with Jeff Braden) Annual Meeting of the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences, San Antonio, TX, November 2014
- "Are Higher Education Humanities Majors Really Declining?" (radio panel with Ben Winterhalter and Jonathan Rothwell) Radio Boston, NPR, June 2014
- "The Humanities and Public Policy," (panel with Steven Kidd and Felicia Knight) Maine Humanities Summit, Augusta, ME, May 2014
- "Anglophone Country Perspectives," (panel with Maureen McLaughlin, Anne Pauwels, and Nigel Vincent), Languages for All Conference, College Park, MD, August 2013
- "Keep Me From the Gallows Pole': Langston Hughes, Leadbelly, and the Folk Tradition" (paper) Annual Meeting of the American Literature Association, San Francisco, CA, May 2008
- "'Plainness is Purity': *Leaves of Grass*, Free Religion, and Boston's Morals Campaign" (paper) Annual Meeting of the American Literature Association, Boston, MA, May 2007
- "Bruce Springsteen in American Culture" (radio interview) Galey-Zahal (Israeli Army Radio), Tel Aviv, Israel, December 2003

HONORS

Advocacy

2014, Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences Advocacy Award, on behalf of the American Academy Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences

Teaching

2007, Thomas Temple Hoopes Prize for Outstanding Thesis Advising, Harvard University
2006, Stephen Botein Prize for Excellence in Teaching, Harvard University
2000 & 2001, Outstanding Teaching Fellow Award, Boston University

Writing

2000, Muhammad Ali: The World's Champion (1998) selected by the New York Public Library for their "Books for the Teen Age" list
1999, Muhammad Ali: The World's Champion (1998) selected by *Booklist* as one of the year's Top 10 Youth Sports Books

OTHER EXPERIENCE

43,000 Feet, Boston, Massachusetts

Freelance branding writer for technology corporations, 2012-2016

The Dilenschneider Group, New York, New York

Writer for select client projects and contributor to public relations trend reports, 2011-2013

Dennis Publishing, New York, New York

Assistant Editor, 1996-1998:

- Member of magazine start-up team.
- Commissioned, edited, and supervised freelance writers.
- Wrote features, sidebars, and reviews.
- Coordinated magazine production.

- Promoted magazine articles on national television and radio.
Contributing Editor, 1998-2000

Christian Science Monitor, Boston, Massachusetts

Contributor to the "Books" and "Ideas" sections, 1995-1998