

CREATING A  
STATEWIDE FOLK AND  
TRADITIONAL ARTS  
PROGRAM AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS LIBRARIES

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University of Arkansas  
Libraries  
SEMLA 2020

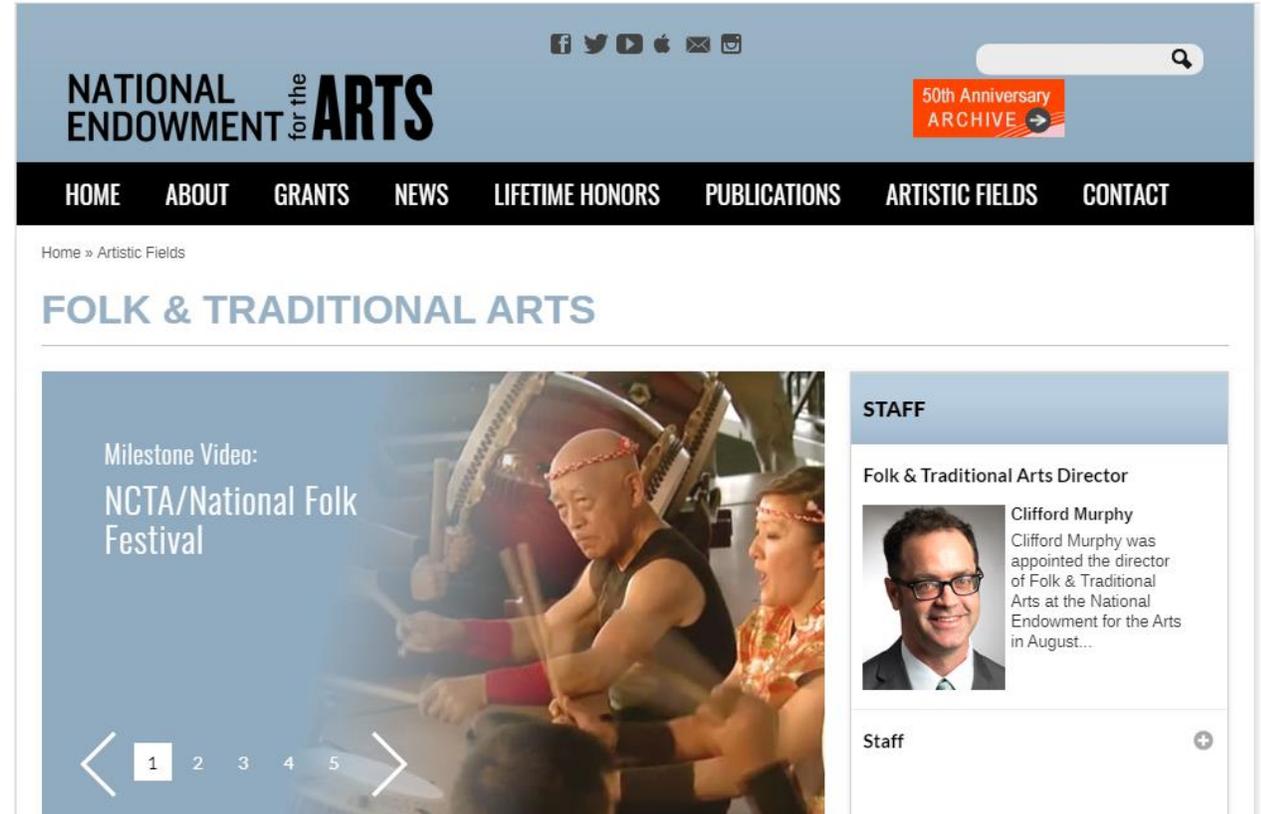


- In early 2019, University of Arkansas Libraries became the new home of Arkansas' statewide Folk and Traditional Arts program (AFTA)
- Initially connected to the Libraries' Performing Arts division; now more independent and under the Associate Dean of Special Collections.
- The first time such a program has existed within the organizational structure of an academic library.
- The story; the challenges; the possibilities for you



## Background:

- In the 1970s, NEA began to establish folk arts programs in every state.
- Usually in state arts councils, but also in other organizations.
- “Folk arts coordinators” have typically run these programs.
- They write and manage grant-supported programs and often participate in folklore-related events such as festivals, conferences, etc.; defacto state folklorist.



The screenshot displays the website for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). At the top, the logo reads "NATIONAL ENDOWMENT for the ARTS". To the right of the logo are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Apple, Email, and Instagram. A search bar is located in the top right corner. Below the logo, a navigation menu includes links for HOME, ABOUT, GRANTS, NEWS, LIFETIME HONORS, PUBLICATIONS, ARTISTIC FIELDS, and CONTACT. A red banner on the right side of the page reads "50th Anniversary ARCHIVE". The main content area is titled "FOLK & TRADITIONAL ARTS" and features a video player with the text "Milestone Video: NCTA/National Folk Festival". The video player has a progress bar and navigation arrows. To the right of the video player is a "STAFF" section with a sub-section for "Folk & Traditional Arts Director" featuring a photo of Clifford Murphy and a brief biography: "Clifford Murphy was appointed the director of Folk & Traditional Arts at the National Endowment for the Arts in August...". Below this is a "Staff" section with a plus sign icon.

## Definition of Folk Arts by NEA:

- More connected to folklore and anthropology (the arts that are representative of communities).
- Generally NOT:
  - Mainly art museum folk arts (primitive, colorful, self-taught, idiosyncratic, etc.)
  - Folk-style artists with little connection to the associated community.
  - Exclusively older or rural arts.



- “Rooted in and reflective of the cultural life of a community.”
- “May share a common ethnic heritage, cultural mores, language, religion, occupation, or geographic region.”
- “Shaped by values and standards of excellence that are passed [down].”
- “[Shared] through demonstration, conversation, and practice.”
- While folk and traditional arts often involve more than performing arts, folk arts activities often involve music, dance, drama, rituals, storytelling, etc., that could be placed under the umbrella of performing arts.



## Our story:

- The situation basically fell in our lap.
  - A consultant visited
  - Previous folk arts personnel worked in library
  - Library dean's interest
- I wrote NEA grant proposal and we hired a folk arts coordinator
- More “strike while the iron's hot” situation than a carefully considered the idea.

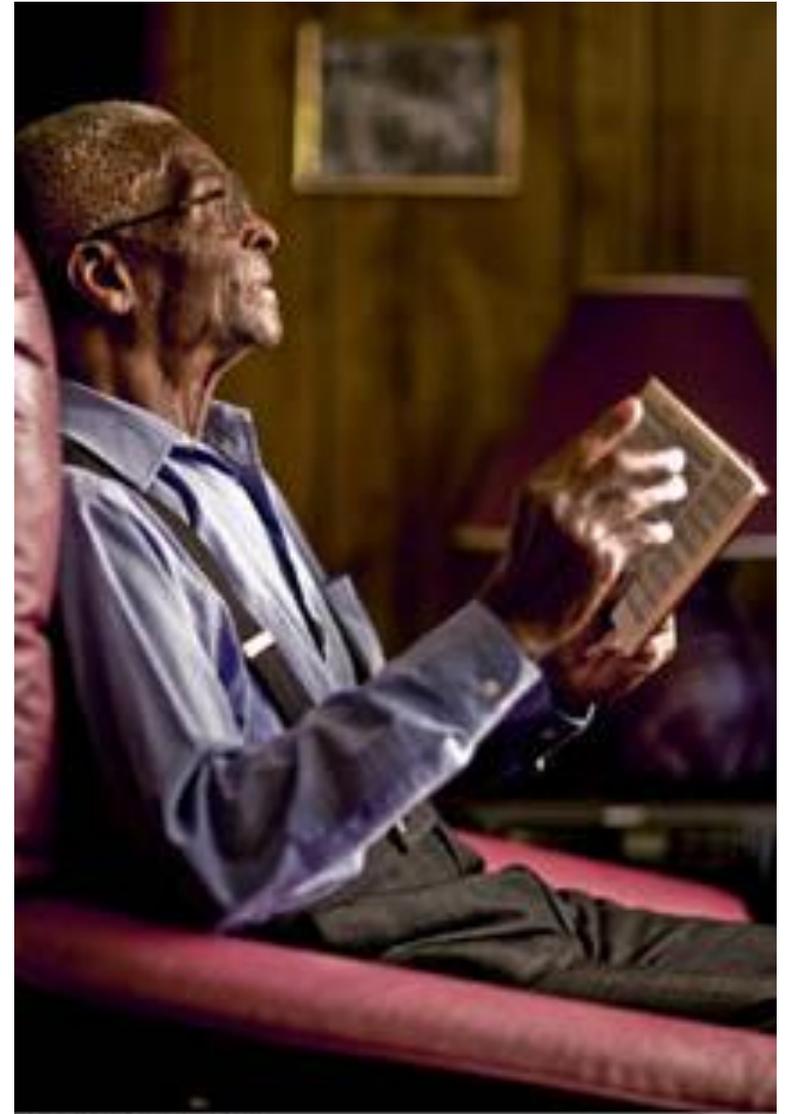


- In February 2019, we hired Virginia Siegel to be our first folk arts coordinator.
- MA in Folk Studies; worked for three years at the Kentucky Folklife Program; background in historic preservation and documenting immigrant traditions.
- Hit the ground running; traveled the state; wrote grants; folk arts apprenticeship program; community scholars program.
- Hoping to grow her program to involve another staff member eventually.



## Looking Back Now

- Because of our “strike while the fire’s hot” start, it’s appropriate to begin to consider how our folk arts program fits into the mission of an academic library
- What are some ways the program might and might not connect well with academic libraries?



## Strength—One

Libraries often seek, while maintaining strong standard library services, to explore new ways to be meaningful during a time of rapid change.

Regional studies centers

Exhibits

Conferences

Concerts

Makerspaces

Recording studios

Audiovisual digitization fairs

Librarians doing research in their cognate fields

Librarians teaching as adjuncts in their cognate fields

Advocacy projects for diversity

Timely projects, eg. Covid-19

Voter registration

Lectures and workshops on anything

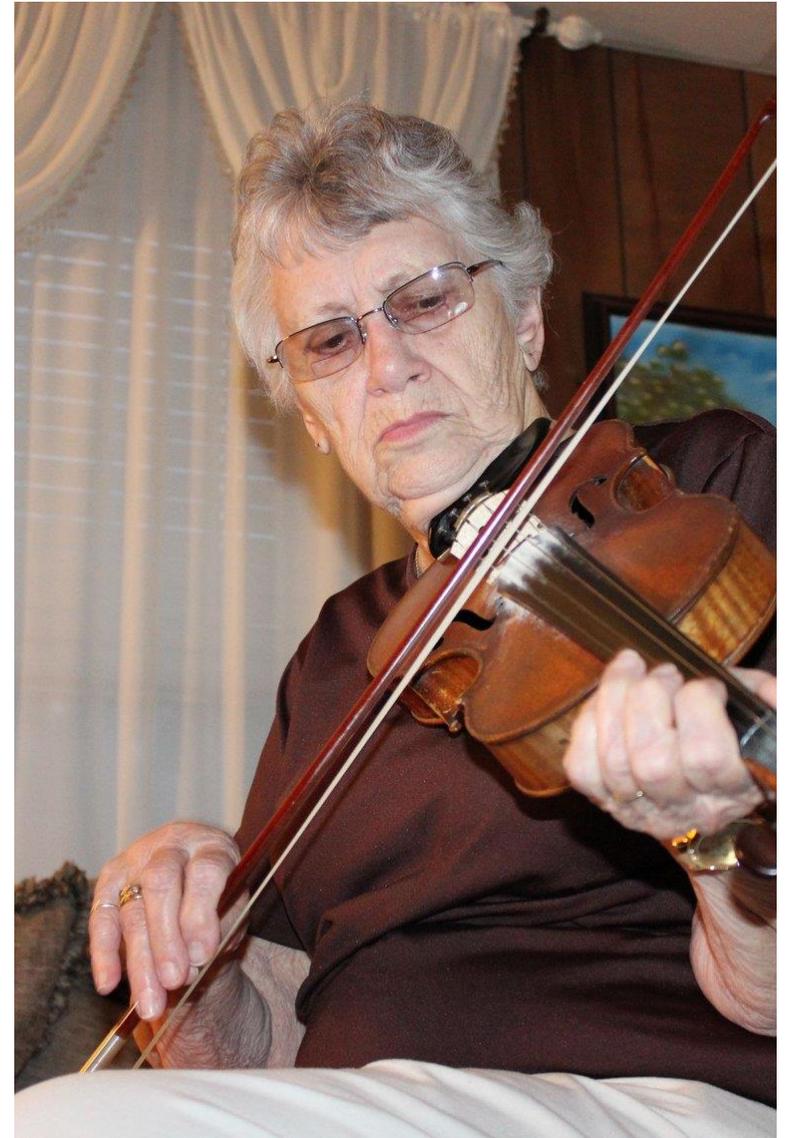
Large-scale social media efforts



Folk arts programs do make valuable new contributions, and could easily be part of that exploring-new-ways dynamic.

## Strength—Two

- In recent years, libraries have been focusing more on special collections and unique materials as general collections materials have been increasingly available online.
- Folk arts programs often connect with local, unique, and special collections materials.



## Strength—Three

Through Black Lives Matter, DEI initiatives, and related movements we are more aware of problems related to:

- Ethnocentric approaches.
- Non-white traditions are being described/analyzed overwhelmingly by white scholars.
- Universities, and academic libraries in particular, often focusing mainly on mainstream and high-art culture; less on minority and economically-depressed groups.

Folk arts programs deal with these issues and groups every day, and often give the artists authority over their arts.



## Less of a Strength—One

- Folk arts programs are more oriented toward public programs than collections and tangible outcomes.
- Folk arts programs today sometimes don't focus on generating concrete products (fieldwork recordings, etc.) and focus more on processes and learning.
- Our current apprenticeships and community scholar workshops don't serve the university community, but serve statewide arts communities.



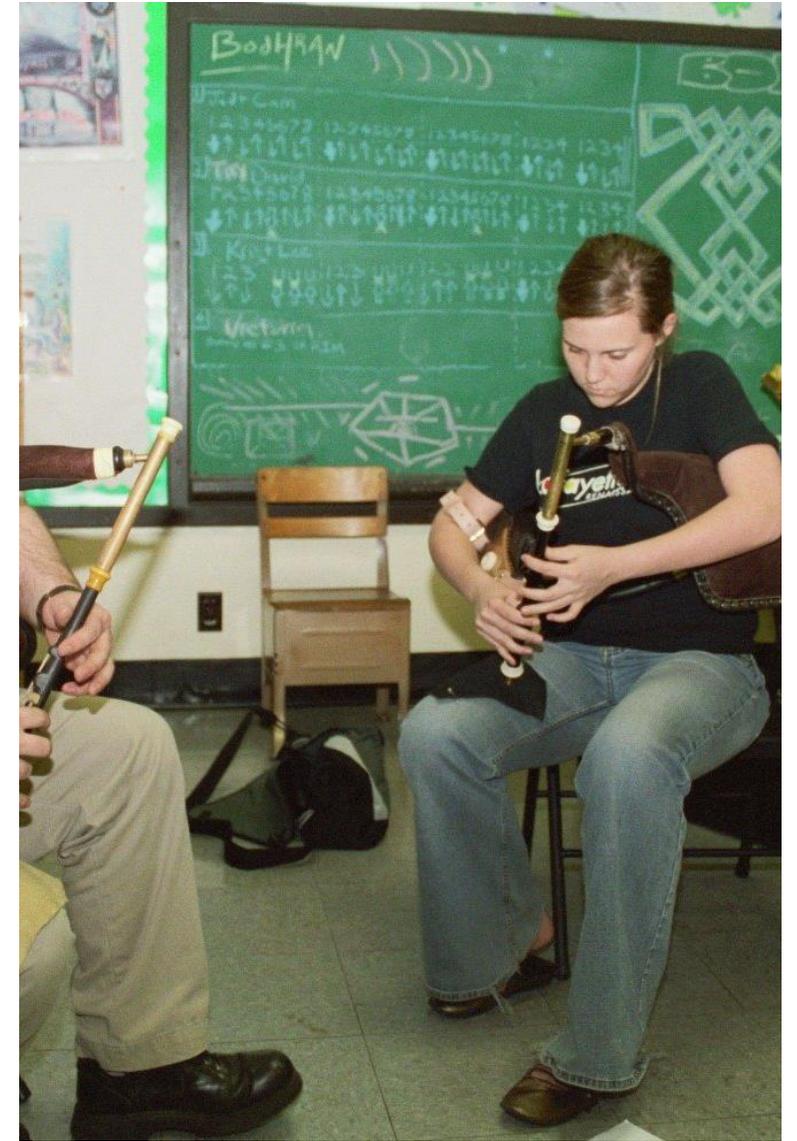
## Less of a Strength—Two

- Folk arts coordinators do not have any training in either librarianship or archival studies.
- They don't focus on assisting library patrons.
- They don't fit easily into the library's organizational chart, and are often not strongly connected to any library or university department.
- Therefore, they're often somewhat isolated and vulnerable.



## Less of a Strength—Three

- Interest in studying and preserving regional traditions seems to have waned in recent years.
- Academic departments that focus on folklore and ethnomusicology (and their methods) are fewer than they once were.
- But there are indications folklore studies are coming back.



# NEA Has Announced a New Emphasis on Folk and Traditional Arts

- "Beginning in FY2021, the Arts Endowment is increasing its commitment for folk & traditional arts. In the past, [we] have not required Folk Arts Partnership programs at SAAs and RAOs. With a new goal of supporting folk & traditional arts in every state, territory, and region, the choice not to participate has been removed"—Living Traditions, NEA, 2019
- The Arkansas Arts Council satisfies the folk arts requirement by affiliating with our Folk and Traditional Arts Program with them.



# At the U of A Libraries, the Library Dean and Associate Dean of Special Collections Have Been Enthusiastic

**Library Dean Dennis Clark:** “We have a specific mission to serve the citizens of Arkansas (we're the... **land-grant** [university]) and so to sponsor a... program **dedicated to the cultural heritage of the state** seems to work well for us. [But] the more our universities focus on STEM [and] commercialization, the harder it will be...; we need to work together to align our missions.

**Associate Dean of Special Collections Lori Birrell:** Not just a fringe program; one that offers a **synergy with existing programs** and goals. It's okay that the program-oriented folk arts projects don't generate materials ; they represent proactive efforts to reach out to communities, which we support. Some of Virginia's work is outside the realm of special collections, there is **significant overlap**. Much of her work involves concrete ways to address diversity and Black Lives Matter concerns.

- So how might folk arts program initiatives fit into your music library?
- First, a quick round robin of state programs

# FLORIDA FOLK FESTIVAL

May 24 - 26, 2019 White Springs, Florida

## Folklife Area

Florida Folklife presents Culture on the Move, a celebration of Florida's cultural diversity



Afro-Cuban Drums  
Bahamian Junkanoo  
Balsa Wood Surfboards  
Caribbean Music  
Chinese Music  
Congalese Fashion & Food

Cuban Music  
East Indian Music & Rangoli  
Florida Folklife at 40  
Kachin Dance  
Minorcan Food

Pan-African Dance  
Puerto Rican Bomba  
Roots of the Banjo  
Sacred Steel Music  
Seminole Stories & Arts  
West African Music

[www.floridafolkfestival.com](http://www.floridafolkfestival.com)

Friends of  
Florida History, Inc.



ART WORKS  
ORG.



# Arkansas



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## ARKANSAS FOLK AND TRADITIONAL ARTS

Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts (AFTA) is a statewide program of the University of Arkansas Libraries dedicated to building cross-cultural understanding by documenting, presenting, and sustaining Arkansas' living traditional arts and cultural heritage.

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# Tennessee

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FOLKLIFE



## Tennessee Traditions

The Tennessee Folklife Program collaborates with artists, culture workers, and nonprofit organizations to document, preserve and present Tennessee's diverse traditions. Folklife is comprised of arts, expressive practices, and skills that are learned and passed down in cultural communities that share family, ethnic, tribal, regional, occupational, or religious identity. In Tennessee, folklife encompasses older cultural forms that have been here for decades and centuries, as well as arts and customs brought here more recently.



# North Carolina Arts Council

*Fifty years of leadership*

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## FOLK & TRADITIONAL ARTS

Folklife is...

- the music and dance of our community
- the things we make
- the celebration of daily and special events
- the work we do
- the ways we learn
- the expression of faith and fellowship
- the places we call home

# North Carolina

*the Louis Round*

## WILSON LIBRARY

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

[Home](#) > [Wilson Library](#) > [Southern Folklife Collection](#)

### Southern Folklife Collection

#### Wilson Library

[Prepare for an Online Visit in Fall 2020](#)

[Contact the Special Collections](#)

[Wilson News & Exhibits](#)

[North Carolina Collection](#)

[North Carolina Collection Gallery](#)

[North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives](#)

[Rare Book Collection](#)

[Southern Folklife Collection](#)

[Audiovisual Preservation](#)

The **Southern Folklife Collection** is an archival resource dedicated to collecting, preserving and disseminating vernacular music, art, and culture related to the American South.

#### Featured



SFC partners with McCabe's Guitar Shop

#### News & Events

[Saving the River One Song at a Time: The Eno River Festival Legacy](#)

[More Than One Story | Más de una historia](#)

[Wilson Library Open House, May 13](#)

[Well Said: The Southern Folklife Collection and Yep Roc Records](#)

[Ronald D. Cohen, Down Hill Strugglers, and Depression Folk Music at Wilson Library March 9](#)



# South Carolina

## Folklife & Traditional Arts (FLK) Grants

### All Grants

- Grants for Artists
- Grants for Schools
- Grants for Organizations

## Grant Information



South Carolina

### McKissick Museum

McKissick Museum

About

Calendar

Exhibitions

Collections

» **Folklife Resource Center**

Jean Laney Harris Folk Heritage Award

South Carolina Broadcaster's Association Archives

Visit the Museum

Study

Our People



### Folklife Resource Center

McKissick Museum's Folklife Resource Center (FRC) was created in 1985 as a repository for field notes, images, audio, video, and other documentary materials of value to Southern



# Alabama



Alabama  
State  
Council  
on the  
Arts

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[Music CDs](#)

[Heritage Awards](#)

[Folkways Articles](#)

[In The Garden](#)

[Waterways](#)

## The Alabama Center for Traditional Culture

The Alabama Center for Traditional Culture, a division of the Alabama State Council on the Arts, was created in 1990 to further the agency's mission to research, document and preserve the state's folk cultures. ACTC administers all grants pertaining to the folk and traditional arts, as well as, producing educational products and programs that identify, preserve and present Alabama folklife. ACTC activities support artistic excellence and provide access to the unique, multi-cultural traditional arts of Alabama, often in an educational context.

Folklife is comprised of those traditional expressions of culture that have grown from generation to generation among the many communities that have settled in this state--communities that share the same historical experience, ethnic heritage, language, occupation, religion, or geographic area.

Folklife includes folk arts such as traditional crafts, music and dance, as well as, regional foodways, folk architecture, beliefs, storytelling, myths, and medicinal practices, etc. Because it is a product of an historical and geographical process, Alabama folklife, in its many facets, uniquely reflects the personality of our state and values and aesthetics of its communities. The unique folk expressions of Alabama identify and symbolize those communities that have originated them and nurtured them, enlivening and giving meaning to the lives of Alabamians.

We have a rich heritage of folk traditions that is often overlooked, taken for granted and misunderstood. They define what it is to be an Alabamian. Given the diversity and wealth of Alabama's folklife, we strive to broaden an understanding of our community-based traditions so that all Alabamians can be proud of this shared inheritance.

# Mississippi



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## FOLK AND TRADITIONAL ARTS

# Louisiana

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## Office Of Cultural Development Division Of The Arts Louisiana Folklife Program

The Louisiana Folklife Program is mandated to identify, document, preserve, and present Louisiana's folk traditions from the state's diverse ethnic groups, about Louisiana cultures dating from Native Americans and the earliest colonial settlements--French, Spanish, Acadian, Creole, African American, Anglo American, Isleños--to the various waves of settlers to more recent immigrant communities including, Irish, Filipino, German, Italian, Lebanese, Hungarian, Cuban, Jewish, Vietnamese and more.

Everyone and every group has folklore, but the program focuses on those traditions that are endangered or need support. A second priority is regions of the state that have not received as much attention.

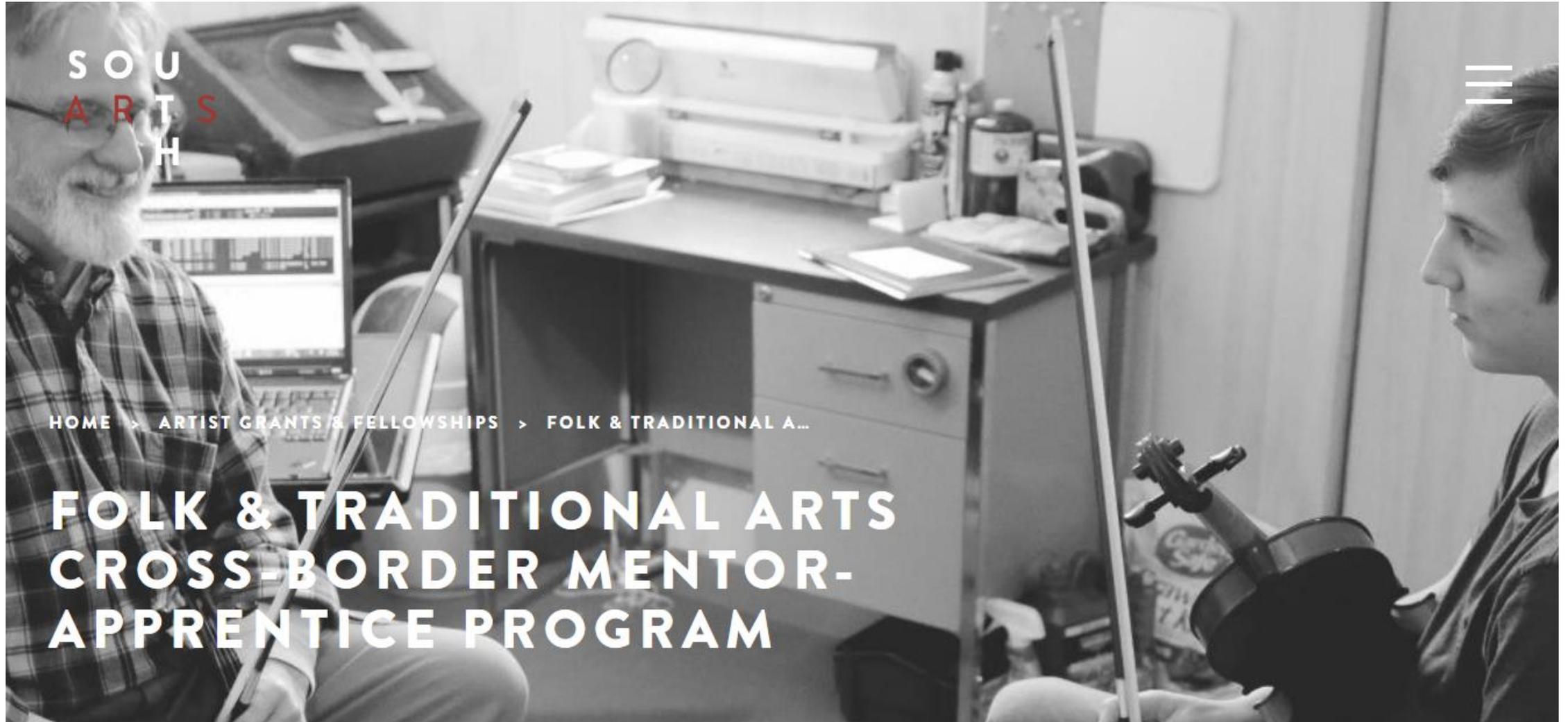


**Folklife <sup>IN</sup> Louisiana**  
A WEALTH OF INFORMATION TO HELP YOU LEARN, TEACH AND PLAN PROJECTS ABOUT LOUISIANA FOLKLIFE  
[www.louisianafolklife.org](http://www.louisianafolklife.org)

- Division of the Arts
- Grants
- Fellowship Recipients
- Arts Education
- Regional Arts Councils
- Louisiana Folklife Program
- Louisiana Cultural Districts
- Percent for Art Program
- Arts Resources
- Arts Accessibility
- Arts Opportunities
- About Us
- Employment Opportunities



# Georgia (South Arts—Regional); Is there an opening for a program?



## How Music Libraries Might Use State Folk Arts Funding to Support Projects

- Libraries that don't have folk arts programs can still benefit from these programs.
- Seek funding for projects that involve the music of regional national/ethnic groups, immigrant groups, Native American groups, jam sessions, community dances, religious events, shape-note gatherings, rock or gospel performances with regional stylistic connections.
- Organize events.
- Document traditions.
- Conduct interviews.
- Create an informational website.
- Host a campus concert series.
- Add interpretive elements (signage/programs) to an existing local heritage festival.
- Nominate artists for awards.
- Exhibits, apprenticeships, enlarging special collections, conferences, etc.

An example of folk arts grant funding from a state folklife program (in our case through the Arkansas Arts Council)



We offer grant support for organizations that work with folklife traditions and projects, including festivals, concerts, exhibitions, publications, museum acquisitions, survey projects, documentary recordings, heritage trails, and professional development for folk artists. The Folklife Program also yearly supports teams of master artists and apprentices engaged in the training and transmission of a traditional art form. Our priority is to work with cultural expressions in ways that best benefit and reflect their communities of origin.

**Project Support** is available for folk arts projects in **urban (APS)** and **rural (RAPS)** counties. Funds awarded to a single organization in APS range from \$500 to \$9,000. Arts organizations serving a statewide audience may apply for up to \$10,000. Funds awarded to a single organization in RAPS range from \$500 to \$15,000.

# SOUTH CAROLINA STATE- LEVEL FOLK ARTS FUNDING

## Folklife & Traditional Arts (FLK) Grants



<b>Grantee</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>FY21 Award</b>
Arts Center of Coastal Carolina	Gullah Festivals-Taste of Gullah and Creative Arts Gullah Youth Festival	Beaufort	\$6,000
University of South Carolina Lancaster	Catawba Indian artists residencies and exhibition	Lancaster	\$6,000
Preserving Our Southern Appalachian Music	Adult Appalachian music camp	Pickens	\$5,000
Waccamaw Indian People	Performing arts presentations & demonstrations native techniques	Horry	\$6,000
TOTAL FY21 FLK GRANT AWARDS			\$23,000

# Selected NEA Folk Art Grants to Universities

Michigan State University (aka MSU Community Music School-Detroit) (on behalf of Michigan State University Museum) \$30,000 East Lansing, MI To support the Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeships and Heritage Awards Program at the Michigan State University Museum.

Performing Arts Center Trust, Inc. \$20,000 Miami, FL To support Free Gospel Sundays, a series of gospel concerts at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts.

University of Kansas Center for Research, Inc. (on behalf of Lied Center of Kansas) \$30,000 Lawrence, KS To support Earth, Water, Fire, Air, an exploration of indigenous histories and cultures through the arts at the Lied Center of Kansas.

University of Virginia (on behalf of Virginia Foundation for the Humanities) \$25,000 Charlottesville, VA To support the work of a digital media specialist and the state folklorist (director) at the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities.

North Carolina Folklife Institute (aka NC Folk) \$20,000 Durham, NC To support the documentation and sharing of traditions of the Roanoke-Albemarle and Beech Mountain Regions.

University of South Carolina at Columbia \$20,000 Columbia, SC To support Conversations in Clay: The Past, Present & Future of South Carolina Ceramic Art at the McKissick Museum.

Western Kentucky University Research Foundation, Inc. \$20,000 Bowling Green, KY To support the creation of a folk arts directory and a digital folklore journal.

University of Arkansas Main Campus \$30,000 Fayetteville, AR To support a folk and traditional arts program at the University of Arkansas Libraries

Concluding Remarks—  
Does a Folk Arts Program Fit Well  
Within an Academic Library? I Believe So

- Our Library's Mission/Vision Statements:
  - *...support and foster creativity, study, teaching, and research.*
  - *...to be the vibrant and diverse intellectual center of campus.*
- Our University's Mission Statement:
  - *...providing transformational opportunities and skills, promoting an inclusive and diverse culture, nurturing creativity, and solving problems through research and discovery, all in service to Arkansas.*
- Music Libraries, examples of regional music initiatives:
  - University of Houston music library—Local Music Collection
  - University North Texas's music library—Local/Independent Music Initiative
  - University of Wisconsin's music library—Wisconsin Music Archives
  - Vanderbilt University's music library—Global Music Archive, with local collections
- Diversity—Serves underrepresented groups, LGBTQ+ groups, immigrant populations, rural communities, music of minority groups, non-mainstream music. Acknowledge their arts and contributions, and gives them control.



For more information, feel free to contact:

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