Cascadia Poetics LAB

Annual Report 2025

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Mission

Cascadia Poetics LAB seeks to empower people to practice poetry and build community in ways that deepen connections to place, self and the present moment.

Cascadia Poetics LAB is a vibrant community whose workshops, festivals and opportunities for connection can open the door for transformative experiences in the 21st century. We believe poetry is the nexus at which self-knowledge, bioregionalism and expansive creativity converge. Based in Seattle, our programs and events are held in the Pacific Northwest and the Cascadia Bioregion.

Message from the Founding Director

As I look back at 2025, our 31st year of existence, I see moments like the panel at the 9th Cascadia Poetry Festival, "The Practice of Self, the Practice of Cascadia." That the festival was held for the first time in Rainier Beach, the most diverse neighborhood in Seattle, helps me understand the basics of bioregionalism, which Gary Snyder, paraphrased, said was: "Stay put, watch what happens," as I've lived here for 8 years. When we stop living here like invaders; when we commit to here, we start to begin our own practice of becoming human, which our poetics seek to aid. So, to create events at Kubota Garden, the jewel of the Rainier Beach neighborhood and to hear that many participants in the festival had never even visited the garden before our festival was one huge success for me. How our festival here could combine elements of open form and Black culture was summed up by Robert Lashley's workshop: "Open Churchyard: Lyric and Form for People Who Hate Lyric and Form."

Having a role in the groundbreaking anthology of resistance, Winter in America (Again also displays our own literary heritage by its nod to Gil Scott Heron, whose own poetry of resistance we seek to channel. Producing online workshops on Robert Duncan's H.D. Book and Sam Hamill's Narrow Road to the Interior also help delineate parts of our literary heritage as did interviews with people like Anne Tardos, Linda Russo and Sharon Thesen, among others.

Getting Cascadia 2050 started was also a huge accomplishment, as we seek to help guide the 20-40 year old generation to be able to continue this work as many of us seek to transition to a life beyond the day-to-day operation of a heritage literary non-profit organization. Helping coordinate 2050 participation in the Rain Shadow Poetry Festival on Vancouver Island was a true joy and we continue to be involved in BC poetry organizing.

The Postcard Fest and the Cascadian Prophets podcast projects continue and remain a huge part of how we accomplish our mission. When you see us at a booth in Rainier Beach or elsewhere in the future, come by and experience the joy of poetry collage and poetry postcards. It's addictive and we are dedicated to expanding the Joy of Postcards to as wide an audience as possible.

Message from the Founding Director (cont.)

Regarding the podcast interviews, there was one podcast in particular, with SUNY Graduate Student Sam O'Hana who talked about Beat and Black Mountain literature: If you look at the post-war era... (end of World War II) and throughout the 1970s, you see there's a generation of writers and artists who arise not from elite backgrounds, but from working and middle class backgrounds... They came from families where money was not available to support them indefinitely... the cost of attending college back then was not so great that it would leave these students indebted for the rest of their lives. So, low-income students with high ability and high levels of conscientiousness could become eligible... through such programs as the GI Bill to take part in higher education without needing to go into debt, which would cause you in turn to choose a subject that might earn you a great deal of money. And so that particular era opened up an opportunity for young people to take part in poetry in a way that would not burden them for the rest of their lives.

Paul Nelson: And for the first time, we see something like a working class intellectual as Charles Olson has been described.

Sam O'Hana: Yeah, that's absolutely right. Charles Olson was the archetypal example of the success of what we call the New American Poetry nowadays... His father was a mail carrier... spent a lot of time battling against his employers in relation to union formation... So, Olson was very tall, very able, very smart, very well-read, and enthusiastically encouraged by his parents to go and take part in higher education.

That CPL poetics have a rich tradition in the vein of USAmerican working class intellectuals says so much about our values, tenacity, capacity for resistance and our dedication to opening up in individuals the possibilities of achieving their own deep poetry gesture. Postcards are just the gateway drug.

Paul E Nelson

16 September, 2026
Seattle, WA



2025 Board Development

The Cascadia Poetics Lab Board of Directors held a Board retreat on March 22, 2025, at Founding Director Paul Nelson's home in Rainier Beach, Seattle. At the retreat, the board adjusted the organization's mission to include an emphasis on community building. In addition, the board focused on developing a new draft of the strategic plan. Marketing consultant Megan Durham and finance consultant Adam Morrow joined the retreat to discuss outreach and funding opportunities with the board.

Board meetings are held monthly on the second Tuesday in the evening, via Zoom. Usually we do not meet in July or August, sometimes both.

Board Members 2025

Paul E. Nelson, B.A., M.A. Founding Director
Diana Elser, Interim Board Chair
Shelly Rogers, Treasurer
Matt Trease, M.A.
Dr. Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs
Zach Charles
Laura Anderson

Staff 2025

Veronica Martinez, Administrative Assistant
Roberta Hoffman, Web & Graphics Designer
Lowell Murphree, Grant Writer
Megan Durham, Digital Marketing

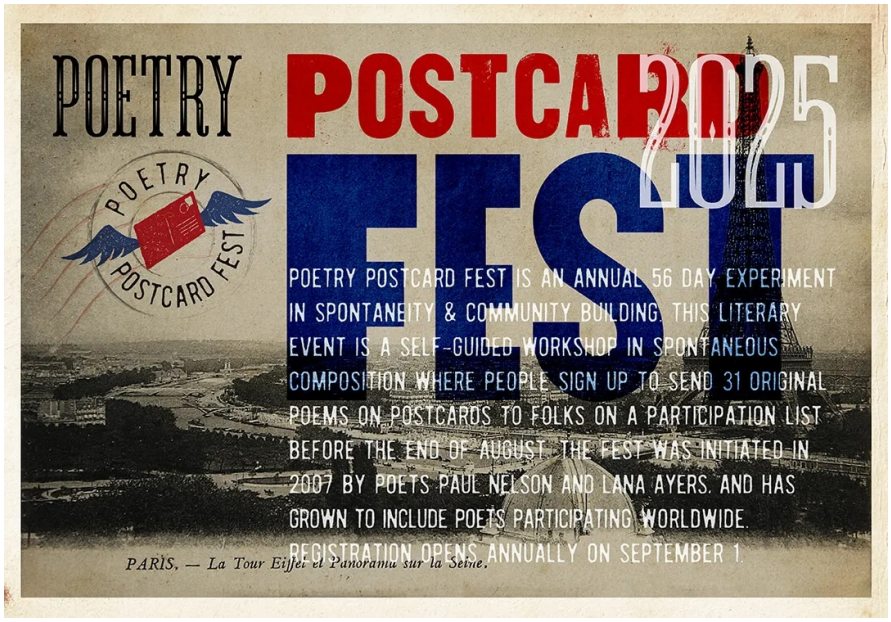
Key Volunteers 2025

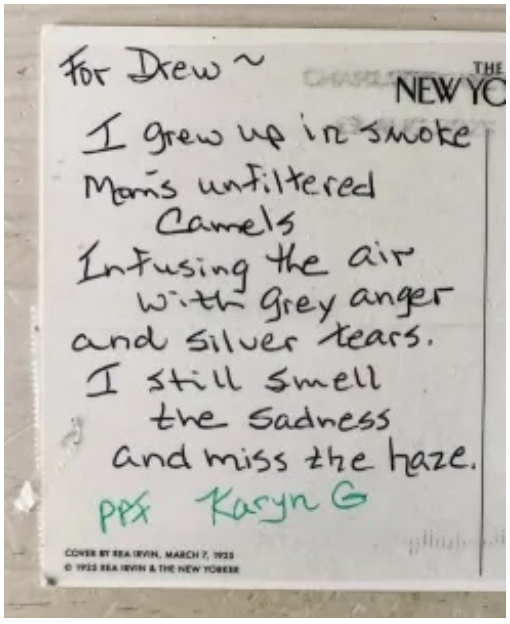
Joe Chiveney
Sally Hedges-Blanquez
Roxi Power
Zaylan Jacobsen
Cathy Visser
Ankober Yewondwossen
Leszek Chudinski
Dorothy Lemoult

2025 Major Achievements

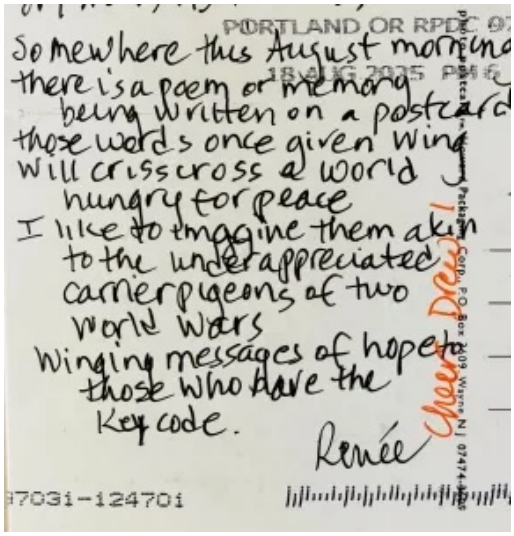
19th Poetry Postcard Fest

The Poetry Postcard Fest was founded in 2007 by Executive Director Paul Nelson and poet Lana Ayers. The event is a 56-day exercise in spontaneity and community in which poets send 31 first-draft poems on postcards to a list of fellow poets around the world. The 19th Poetry Postcard Fest in 2025 saw 493 participants spanning 46 U.S. states and Canadian provinces and 9 countries around the globe: Canada, France, The United States, Italy, Ireland, Great Britain, Australia, Japan and Austria.









2025 Major Achievements

Postcard Events



This year, the Poetry Postcard Fest community engagement extended past the fest itself as we introduced and expanded upon in-person and online poetry events. We hosted the second Postcards from Mapes Creek gathering on June 8, 2026 at Be'er Sheva Park in Rainier Beach, with a postcard making table available to the public and live music by Jim O'Halloran and Susan Pascal. On July 13, 2026, we hosted our second Postcards from Here pop-up at the Olympic Sculpture Park, where over 60 park-goers joined us for postcard making in the park.

We also introduced new postcard events for our poetic community this year, beginning with the first Postcards for Incarcerated Poets online workshop on May 21, 2025, facilitated by Katie Sarah Zale, Judy Kleinberg, Paul Nelson and Matt Trease. The facilitators held a panel discussion on building community through spontaneous composition and postcard writing, specifically for writing to poets that are currently incarcerated. Following the panel, the facilitators led participants in a community writing exercise. The workshop was in partnership with Free Time, a "volunteer program focused on correspondence with writers who are incarcerated, offering support and mentorship, and building relationships one letter at a time."

On November 22, 2025, we invited longtime postcard poet Tim Mateer to facilitate an online workshop for early bird registrations of the upcoming 2026 Poetry Postcard Fest. Mateer discussed his relationship with writing postcards in order to support the U.S. Postal Service, how postcarding has helped him build community and techniques on designing beautiful postcards.

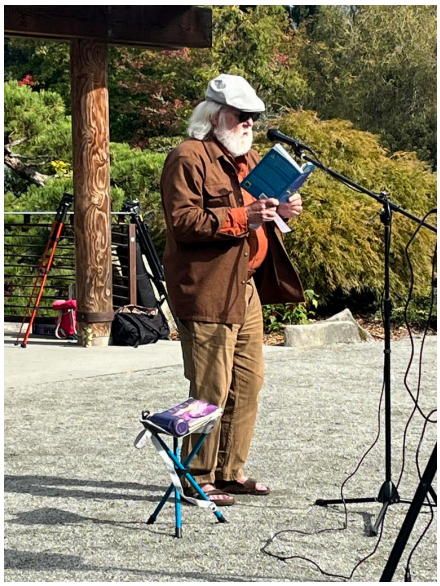




2025 Major Achievements

9th Cascadia Poetry Festival







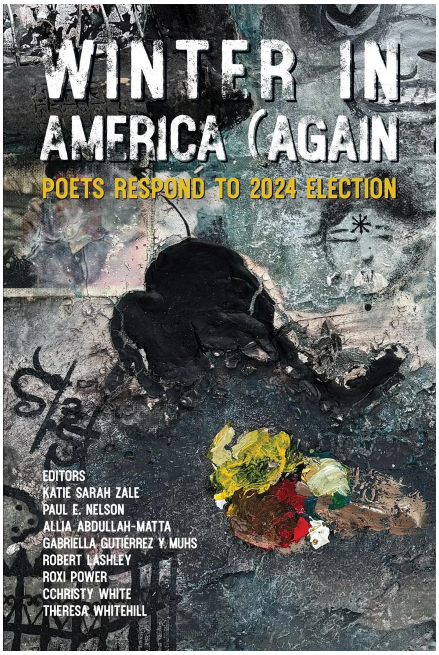
The 9th Cascadia Poetry Festival was a three-day gathering October 10-12, 2025. The Cascadian poetic community gathered at the Rainier Beach Community Club, Kubota Garden, Deadhorse Canyon and Jude's in the Rainier Beach. With this festival, Cascadia Poetics Lab endeavored to bring poetic and bioregionalist culture to the southern neighborhoods of Seattle, WA, and succeeded in doing so through connections with fellow arts and culture organizations Rainier Beach Action Coalition and La Sala.

The festival opened on Friday, October 10 with workshops "Ekphrasis: Writing Inspired by Visual Art" facilitated by Brenda Cardenas and Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, "Writing Poetry: A Narrow Path to the Interior" facilitated by Katie Sarah Zale, "Poetry as Interventionist Event" facilitated by Roxi Power, "Investigative Poetry" facilitated by Sharon Thesen, "Open Churchyard: Lyric and form for people who hate lyric and form" facilitated by Robert Lashley, and an eco-poetics workshop facilitated by Brenda Hillman. Following the workshops, poets Robert Lashley, Sharon Thesen, Roberto Harrison and Brenda Hillman read their work for the keynote reading.

The following day on October 11, 2025, we continued our festival at the Rainier Beach Community Club with the panel "The Practice of Self, the Practice of Cascadia" featuring speakers Roberto Harrison, Alicia Hokanson, Lorin Medley, Brandon Letsinger and Robert Michael Pyle, followed by a panel on "Creative Resistance" featuring speakers Roxi Power, Katie Sarah Zale, Brenda Cardenas and Brenda Hillman. Carbonation Press publisher Greg Bem then presented a reading featuring poets published by the press: Rhea Melina, Zach Charles, Matt Trease, Theresa Whitehill, Paul Nelson and copy editor Josh Massey. Following the Carbonation Press reading, poets Lorin Medley, Jim Dott, Katie Sarah Zale and Brenda Cardenas read some of their work. We closed out the second day with a Cascadia Mono Poem: one poem per poet with no introductions, featuring students from Seattle University and emceed by Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs. Greg Bem and Zach Charles hosted an after party at Jude's that night, with featured poetry readings from CPF participants.

The final day of the 9th Cascadia Poetry Festival, October 12, 2025, opened with a reading at Kubota Garden featuring Alicia Hokanson, Roxi Power and Robert Michael Pyle. We closed the festival with a final reading at Jude's to celebrate Winter in America (Again, published by Carbonation Press. The reading featured poets reading their work from the publication.

2025 Major Achievements

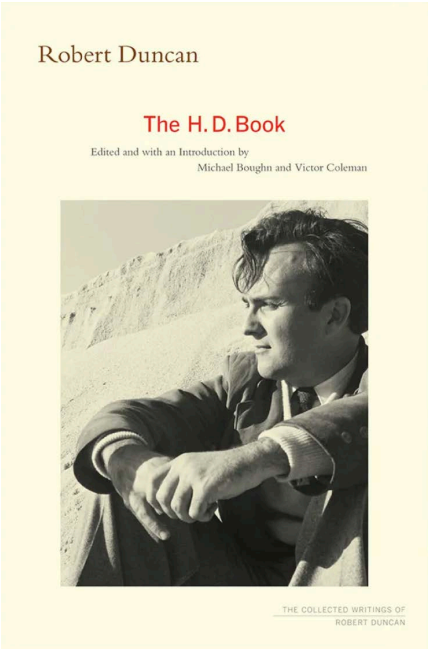


Winter in America (Again

Following the 2024 USAmerican election, Paul E. Nelson and poet Katie Sarah Zale conceived an idea to create a poetry anthology in response to the election and publish it in time for the January 2025 inauguration. They invited co-editors allia abdullah-matta, Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, Robert Lashley, Roxi Power, CChristy White and Theresa Whitehill and collected poetry with "thoughtful reflection and compassion for the loss we feel for ourselves and this country." Winter in America (Again was published by Carbonation Press in January of 2025.

Featured Winter in America (Again editors and poets presented their work at multiple readings throughout Cascadia, including virtual readings and workshops, a reading at Seattle University, Elliott Bay Book Company and a mini book tour that included readings on Lopez Island, Chimacum, Bainbridge Island and Columbia City Gallery in Seattle. The sequel anthology Winter in America (Still is forthcoming in 2026.

Workshops



We introduced new workshop offerings and welcomed guest facilitators to share their knowledge in 2025. Along with continuing our workshops "Poetry as Cosmology" and "Life as Rehearsal for the Poem," both facilitated by Paul E. Nelson, we began the year by introducing "Sam Hamill's Narrow Road to the Interior," facilitated by Katie Sarah Zale. The workshop explored the ways in which ancient poetic traditions still define quality poetry, along with the political poetry and the role of reflection and emotion in poetry.

In Fall of 2025, we welcomed poet and teacher Michael Boughn to facilitate "Robert Duncan's H.D. Book: The Roots of Modernism," an exploration of Robert Duncan's encounter with imagist poet Hilda Doolittle that led him into the depths of history, mind and soul. Poet and CPL board member Matt Trease continued his 2024 workshop series "Poet as Radio" and introduced "Thinkingwith: Writing Strategies for Connecting to the Earth," which focuses on writing exercises for both poetry and prose that assist in connecting further to the earth and the living being surrounding us.

2025 Major Achievements



Cascadia Bio-Fi

Cascadia Poetics Lab celebrated Cascadia Day on May 16-18 by presenting at Cascadia Bio-Fi at the Georgetown Steam Plant in Seattle, hosted by Regenerate Cascadia. The three-day conference gathered leaders in "finance, circular economy, land regeneration, indigenous rematriation, community art, technology, and participatory governance to co-create pathways for bioregional funding ecosystems within the Cascadia bioregion." Robert Lashley, Dr. Jason M. Wirth, Paul E. Nelson, Dr. Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs and Matt Trease, all representing Cascadia Poetic Lab, participated in the panel "Co-Creating a Bioregional Funding Ecosystem" and read poetry from Cascadian Zen Vol. I and II and Winter in American (Again.



Cascadia 2050

In 2025, Cascadia Poetics Lab's youth initiative Cascadia 2050 facilitated workshops and readings throughout Seattle and Cascadia. In March of 2025, Cascadia 2050 members Zach Charles and Veronica Martinez spoke to Seattle University poetry students about bioregionalism, poetics and how they connect to a more sustainable future. Also in March, Paul E. Nelson hosted poetry workshops for students at Jackson High School in Mill Creek, WA and Cristo Rey High School Jesuit High School in Seattle, WA. In October, Zach Charles participated in Cascade K-8's literacy night in Shoreline, WA, guiding young students through exquisite corpse poetry exercises.

2025 Major Achievements

Rainshadow Poetry Festival



In August of 2025, Paul Nelson and members of the Cascadia 2050 youth initiative traveled to Cumberland, British Columbia to present at the Rainshadow Poetry Festival. The poetry festival was founded by previous attendees of the Cascadia Poetry Festival who decided to host their own version of the festival north of the American border. The festival featured talks and workshops by Robert Bringhurst, Jan Zwicky, Harold Rhenisch and more. Cascadia 2050 members Zach Charles, Zaylan Jacobsen and Veronica Martinez presented their personal experiences and work engaging with bioregionalism through poetry. Paul Nelson facilitated a workshop and reading to close out the festival.

Humanities Washington Award



Thanks to a nomination from Winter in America (Again co-editor Katie Sarah Zale, CPL founding director Paul E. Nelson won a Humanities Washington 50th Anniversary Award! Paul and Cascadia Poetics Lab were awarded a Central Puget Sound Humanities Washington Award in the small organization category for “outstanding contributions to the public humanities” in celebration of 50 years of Humanities Washington as an organization.

Cascadian Prophets Podcast



In 2025, Paul E. Nelson continued to interview insightful voices from Cascadia and beyond through the Cascadian Prophets Podcast. Featured interviews from this year include poet Anne Tardos, poet and translator Andrew Schelling, poet Sharon Thesen, essayist Linda Russo, CUNY researcher Sam O’Hana, community liaison Rhea Miller, CPL board member Matt Trease, off-the-grid educator Stephan Torre, Winter in America (Again contributors allia abdullah-matta, Jim Dott, Dane Cervine, Lorin Medley and poets Tess Gallagher and Gary Copeland Lilley.



In addition, audio assistant Zach Charles interviewed Paul E. Nelson on the Poetry Postcard Fest and remastered archived interviews from the 32-year archive of Cascadia Poetics Lab interviews. Remastered interviews included Peter Levitt (2019), Jewell James (2014), Jack and Adele Foley (2000), George Draffan (2003), Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun Lets’lo:tseltun (2016), Beaver Chief (1999), Sallie Ann Glassman (2000) and El Habib Louai (2013).

2025 Operations and Fundraising

Expanding our Reach

To continue pursuing our strategic goal of expanding the Cascadia Poetics Lab reach, the CPL board raised the hours of administrative assistant Veronica Martinez from part-time to full-time in the second half of 2025. Veronica's contributions to online copywriting, event organization, social media marketing, fundraising and communication with sponsors and supporters are vital in our efforts in both maintaining our established relationships and expanding the programming and reach of Cascadia Poetics Lab.

In addition, the Cascadia Poetics Lab board hired Megan Durham to engage in part-time marketing operations in 2025. Megan had previously worked sporadically for the organization and in 2025 began regularly meeting with Paul Nelson, Lowell Murphree and Veronica Martinez to determine the organization's online marketing needs. Megan has done a fantastic job of promoting CPL's programming to academic programs, writer's groups and creatives in and out of Cascadia, along with providing tech support and social media marketing expertise to aid Veronica's efforts.

Finance and Fundraising

In 2025, Certified Public Accountant Shelly Rogers joined the Cascadia Poetics Lab Board of Directors as the board's treasurer. Within her first year as the board's treasurer, Shelly has reconciled 5 years of 990 nonprofit financial filings to reflect accuracy and consistency from year to year. In addition, she made many overdue improvements to bookkeeping and accounting practices, referring the board to Jessenia Solario, who was hired as bookkeeper in mid-2025. Shelly also worked meticulously with the board to create a yearly budget, providing year-to-date budget reports with the board every month and calculating average monthly cash flow to accurately have a sense of CPL's monthly financial needs.

Thanks to Shelly's hard work, Cascadia Poetics Lab has gained financial confidence grounded in reality, providing a foundation to establish a Fundraising and Finance Committee. The Committee, which includes board members Shelly Rogers and Matt Trease alongside grant writer Lowell Murphree and volunteers Shelly Hedges-Blanquez and Leszek Chudinski, focuses on developing fundraising plans that support the Cascadia Poetics Lab mission and goals.

2025 Operations and Fundraising



We opened the year with our Spring Fund Drive, which took place from March to June of 2025. Other fundraising efforts in 2025 included Give Big, May 6-7 and Giving Tuesday on December 2. In late 2025, we also organized a fundraising effort to support the Cascadia Poetics Lab Annual Fund, which covers ongoing operational costs such as supplies, employee salaries, utilities and other overhead costs. This fundraising effort included sending personalized postcards designed by graphic designer Roberta Hoffman to previous donors and supporters.

2025 Strategic Planning

At the board retreat on March 22, 2025, the Cascadia Poetics Lab finalized and adopted the organization's first strategic plan, giving the board an explicit set of project priorities for establishing goals and budgetary needs.

2025 Strategic Goals

#1 Organizational Legitimacy

CPL aims to prioritize building systems and procedures that will add administrative and operational functionality while also building a strong organizational foundation from which to grow and thrive.

Desired Outcome: CPL will have the fundamental components of a well-run business in place:

- financial infrastructure and process
- strict budgetary planning
- consistent financial tracking and
- oversight
- clear lines of authority and decision-making
- an adherence to best-practice Board governance convention

2025 Operations and Fundraising

#2 Financial Stability

We recognize that CPL can thrive only if it has the resources necessary to adequately compensate its employees, cover its expenses, and grow responsibly. All revenue sources, current and potential, must meet agreed upon Return-on-Public Benefit (ROPB) requirements: money doesn't get spent unless there is direct line-of-sight to public benefit. All fundraising and community engagement activities will have clearly stated and realistic monetary outcome goals.

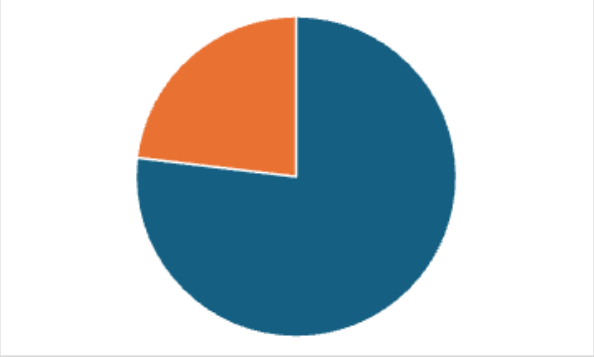
Desired Outcome: CPL will make and execute plans to drive revenue, limit un-resourced activities, and keep organizational solvency top of mind, while meeting the mission.

#3 Spin Off Watershed Press

Watershed Press to be launched into its own 501c(3).
Desired Outcome: Watershed Press becomes a stand-alone organization with active strategic ties/benefits to CPL. WP has begun to move towards independence, filing its incorporation papers with the state, and establishing its own bank account.

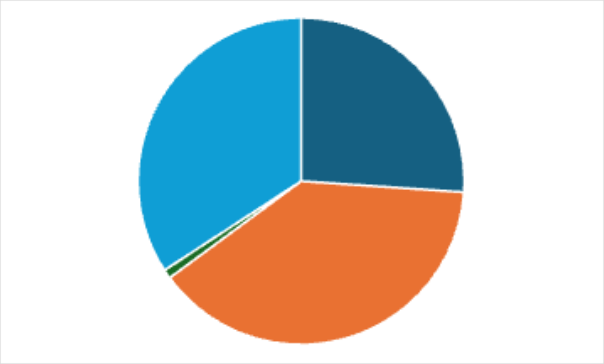
2025 By the Numbers

2025 Operating Revenue:
$163,820



77% Contributions and Grants
23% Program Service Fees

2025 Operating Expenses:
$170,017



26% Compensation
39% Professional Fees
1% Program Expenses
34% Other Expenses

Financial Summary

Cash and Cash Equivalents	$2,649
Total Net Assets	-$10,211

Revenue

Contributions and Grants	$126,725
Program Service Fees	$38,095
Total Operating Revenue	$164,820

Expenses

Salaries and Compensation	$44,337
Professional Fees	$66,038
Program Expenses	$1,525
Other Expenses	$58,117
Total Operating Expenses	$170,017

Poetry Postcard Fest Attendance

493 Participants
9 Countries
42 U.S. States
4 Canadian Provinces

Cascadia Poetry Festival Attendance

31 Featured Readers
80 Participants

Cascadian Prophets Listeners

5,698	listeners	in	2024
1,992	listeners	in	2025

Community Testimonials

"For a poet who has long invested time and energy in communities relating poetics to the land, to trees, to water, the Cascadia Poetry Festival is a high point–the opportunity to interact and hear and converse with poets who share a sense of the intrinsic connection between poetry and the earth, to have a chance to witness, hear, take in, poets of such a high caliber is deeply satisfying and inspiring."

- *Theresa Whitehill, 9th Cascadia Poetry Festival poet*

"This was my fourteenth year as a postcard poet, but the first year that I've participated with a family member. And we weren't the only pair of family members in our group! My experience was richer than ever, sharing poems sent and received with my teenage son, and I loved watching him look for inspiration and prepare his cards with care—on a typewriter, no less. There aren't a lot of activities these days that are truly unplugged and truly intergenerational, but the postcard poetry fest is one!"

- *Libby Maxey, 19th Poetry Postcard Fest Participant*

Contributions

Thank You

Thanks to the dedicated support of our Sponsors, Funding Partners and Business In-Kind Donors, Cascadia Poetics Lab saw an 8.7% increase in revenue from 2024, providing us with resources to pay modest stipends to poets and expand our programming. We are grateful for the generosity of our community of donors that make pursuing our mission possible. We are funded primarily by public grants and individual donations from many supporters who extend their generosity to give what they can.

2025 Sponsors and Funding Partners

- Seattle Department of Neighborhoods
- Prolific Writers Life
- Poets & Writers
- ArtsFund
- Paul G. Allen Foundation
- Seattle Office of Arts & Culture
- National Endowment for the Arts
- Humanities Washington
- Creative West
- 4Culture
- La Sala
- Subud Greater Seattle/Spring Street Center
- Arts WA
- White River Valley Museum & Mary Olson Farm

2025 Business In-Kind Donors

- Joe & Cathy - catering & food
- Shelly Rogers - volunteer accounting
- Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs - catering & food
- Greg Bem - technical
- Savannah Bulloch - technical
- Ra'naan David - technical
- Megan Durham - volunteer marketing

Thank You to Our Sponsors

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