

# MASS POETRY ACTIVITIES REPORT



January 1 – December 31, 2016  
+ 2017 Projections

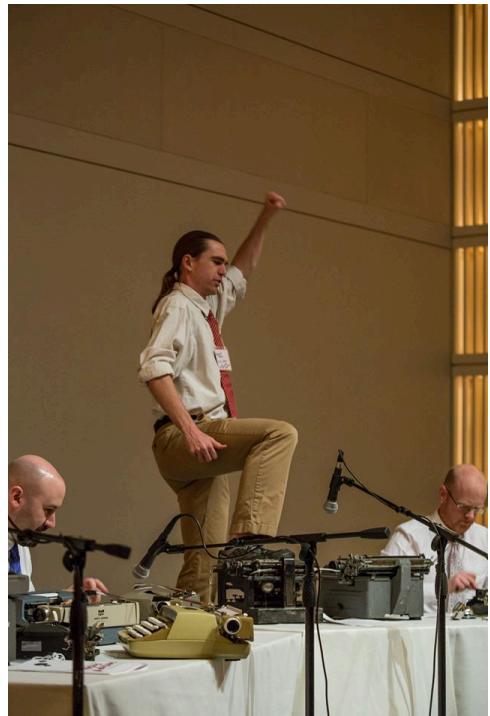


Mass Poetry supports poets and poetry in Massachusetts. We help to broaden the audience of poetry readers, bring poetry to readers of all ages, and transform people's lives through inspiring verse. We are a 501(c)(3) organization.

Words matter - spoken and written. When combined into a poem, into a form of art, they matter powerfully and beautifully. They move us to think, feel and act. To understand each other.

Mass Poetry's mission is to engage schools, communities and the general public in poetry programs that move people with the art of the word. Our programs' fundamental activities are reading, writing, performing and teaching. They develop students, teachers, and communities of people who have improved their powers of expression, literacy, and ability to connect with each other.

We envision a Commonwealth in which poetry serves as an essential literary art and form of communication that engages, inspires and transforms lives across a broad audience of citizens.



Dear Friends of Mass Poetry,

We are living in strange times. Poetry is not partisan. Yet in the aftermath of the 2016 election, we saw a dramatic spike in online searches for poems to download, read and share with friends. This is as it has always been: we turn to poetry in times of great joy and profound sorrow. We look to poetry for comfort and for a way to think about the topics that linear logic cannot help us understand. Humans have created poetry for thousands of years. In our troubled times we need it even more.

At Mass Poetry we are working every day to bring poetry to the people, to make it easier to access, to build the community of poets and poetry lovers, and to nurture the next generations of poets and poetry readers. In 2016 we had some remarkable successes. Our Raining Poetry project in Boston – revealing poems on the sidewalks in the rain – went viral with a video by NY Magazine reaching over 23 million viewers.

This past year we began building important foundations that will enable Mass Poetry to reach new heights in future years. One of those is a collaboration with Lesley University on a Poet Educator Certification. Through this program we will produce poets that can act as poets-in-residence in public schools throughout the Commonwealth, and we will work closely with the BPS Arts Expansion in particular for placements in Boston.

And as exciting as Raining Poetry has been, we are eager in 2017 to bring poetry to public places in new and exciting ways. We have recently established a partnership with Boston Properties, one of Greater Boston's premier property companies, to bring poetry to their spaces in a variety of ways.

Partnerships remain critical to Mass Poetry's large impact. We treasure our partnerships with WBUR and Salem State as well as with all of our poetry partners. Our collaboration with them enables us to have a larger reach than we would otherwise.

We are also delighted to be part of a new coalition of poetry organizations from around the country, dedicated to working together to promote the value poets bring to our culture and communities, and the important contribution poetry makes in the lives of people of all ages and backgrounds. Poetry Coalition members believe that by collaborating on programs, they will spotlight the art form's unique ability to spark dialogues, create opportunities to engage in meaningful conversation, discover unexpected connections with each other, and inspire new readers.

Our job at Mass Poetry is to bring poetry to people whenever we can, and to make it available and accessible. Our job is also to nurture the poets of today and assist the growth of the poets of tomorrow so that they will be continue to create poetry to comfort and uplift us, and to allow us to struggle with the challenges of our so very human existence.

We cannot do all that we do with out you. Your support and your faith in us is essential. Thank you.



## Mass Poetry Updates

2016 has seen incredible growth for Mass Poetry, both in regards to new initiatives as well as an expansion of existing programs.

Most significantly, we embarked upon the revolutionary Raining Poetry program, working with The City of Boston as well as Boston's Poet Laureate to stencil poems on the city's sidewalks, visible only in the rain. The project was picked up by numerous media outlets and we received requests from individuals and organizations all over the world (including England, The Netherlands, Finland, India and Australia, to name just a few) about replicating this project in their own communities.

We also began a Regional Representative Model, to create a more consistent Mass Poetry presence throughout the Commonwealth. We now work with between 1 – 4 Mass Poetry Ambassadors in each of Massachusetts' 14 counties to collect information on existing poetry programs and events as well as community organizations that could benefit from a relationship with Mass Poetry.

Mass Poetry continues to update the poetry community through our website, featuring new articles each week, our weekly newsletter reaching over 5,000 subscribers, and our Facebook and Twitter pages. We have continued to grow our poetry partnership program, welcoming several new partners this year. We are able to recognize a different partner monthly with our Poet in the Spotlight feature, allowing the partner to choose a poet we celebrate in the newsletter. We also happily promote authors with newly published poetry books on our New Books page.

### Mass Poetry Board

Michael Ansara, Chair  
Heather Coughlin  
Amy Gorin  
Gregg LeStage  
Don McLagan  
Nicco Mele  
Larry Weber

### Mass Poetry Staff

Sara Siegel, Program Director  
January Gill O'Neil, Festival Director  
Laurin Macios, Features Editor  
Sharon Amuguni, Program Assistant  
Katherine Lavoie, Program Assistant  
Lauren McCormack, Web Associate  
Heather Hughes, Writer  
Regie Gibson, Advisor - Student Programs

## Mass Poetry Partners

Amherst Live	The Marble Collection
Bagel Bards	MassLEAP/LTAB
Black Ocean	Noepe Literary Center for the Arts
Blacksmith House	The Newton Writing and Publishing Center
Boston Book Festival	Off the Coast Journal
Boston Literary District	Northampton Poetry
Boston Poetry Magazine	Perugia Press
Brookline Poetry Series	PoemWorks
Calliope Reading Series	Poetry Out Loud
Cape Cod Poetry Group	Poetry: The Art of Words Mike Amado Memorial Series
Cobscook Community Learning Center	Porter Square Books
The Colrain Poetry Manuscript Conference	Powow River Poets
The Concord Poetry Center	Salem State University English Department
Emerson College Writing Department	The Robert Creeley Foundation
Emily Dickinson Museum	The Robert Frost Foundation
The Favorite Poem Project	Shape & Nature Press
Florence Poets Society	Slate Roof Press
Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival and Program	The Smith Poetry Center
From the Bow Seat	Society of Urban Poetry
The Frost Place	Suffolk University Poetry Project
GNB Writers Block	Sunken Garden Poetry Festival (Hill-Stead Museum)
Grey Court Poets	The Syracuse Poster Project
Grolier Poetry Bookshop	The Tapestry of Voices
Grub Street	Tupelo Press
Harvard Book Store	UMass Boston MFA Program
Hedgerow Books	UMass Lowell English Department
Hill-Stead Museum	WBUR
Huntington Theatre Company	Whaling City Review
Ibbetson Street Press	The Woodbury Poets Room
Jamaica Pond Poets	Words Apart Literary Magazine
Loom Press	The Writers' House at Merrimack College
Massachusetts Center for the Book	

# SCHOOLS, STUDENTS AND TEACHERS



Mass Poetry works with students, schools and teachers throughout Massachusetts to bring poetry into the classroom, deepen the poetry curriculum, and foster a love of reading and writing poetry the entire school year.



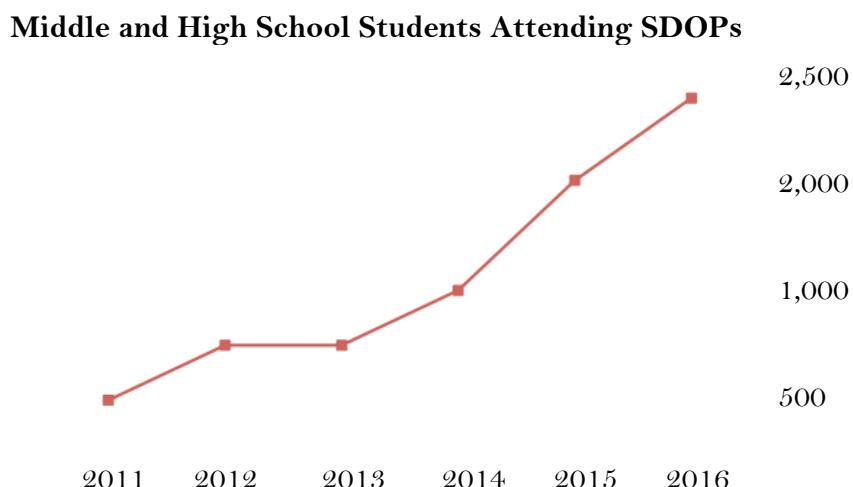
## Student Day of Poetry

In 2016 we hosted three Field Trip Student Days of Poetry – the Mass Poetry Festival SDOP on April 29, the Western Mass SDOP at Greenfield Community College on November 1, and the Statewide SDOP at UMass Boston on December 15 – and brought poets directly into 10 schools for In-School Student Days of Poetry.

“I enjoyed being able to **try new things** and write poetry without being afraid.”

-Student at Western Mass SDOP

Altogether, SDOP has grown from reaching 400 students in 2011 to over 2,500 middle and high school students from dozens of schools throughout Massachusetts in 2016, in addition to working with more than 75 poets.



Mass Poetry is currently working with Lesley University to pilot a Poet Educator Certification Course for the Fall 2017 semester. The course – open to Lesley students and alumni, other MFA candidates and non-MFA candidates alike – will certify poets to become poets-in-residence in public schools throughout the state. Starting in the 2017 – 2018 school year, we will work with select schools to bring poets-in-residence for week-long residencies, regular visits through the semester, or full-year placements.

We will continue to host multiple Field Trip Student Days of Poetry throughout the year as well as bring poets directly into schools whenever possible for In-School opportunities.



Following the 2016 Student Day of Poetry, **70%** of students who were previously not interested in reading poetry indicated that they are now interested. Of students who stated that they were previously not interested in writing poetry, **77%** are now interested.



## Professional Development

Mass Poetry's 2016 Professional Development program was held at Suffolk University from August 2 – August 4 and led by Regie Gibson. Seventeen educators from schools across the state joined Mass Poetry for this three-day workshop and came away with tools to bring the teaching of poetic craft and technique into their classrooms.

“I was struck time and again by the fact that I need to find a way to **incorporate more poetry** into the classes that I teach. Most, if not all, of the activities presented were ones that **I will try to include in my various courses** this year.”

-2016 PD Attendee

### Embedded Poem— "There are stories mothers cannot tell."

I was **there** but you never saw me

You were and **are** more about you than about your little girl

We are the **stories** we tell

But some **mothers** twist their tales

See me or not, I **cannot** be about nothing

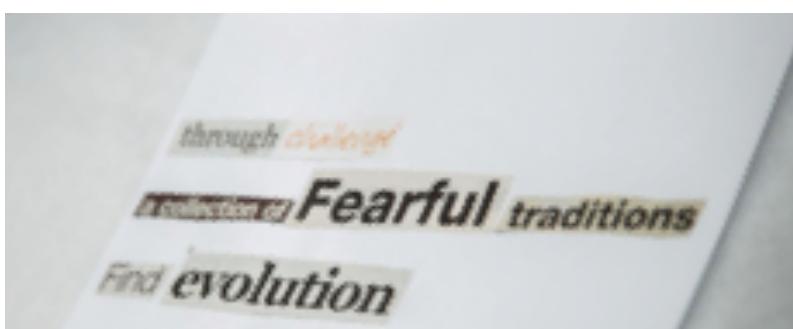
My tale I will **tell**, and you will be its villain.

*PD Attendee work sample*



# CELEBRATING POETRY

Mass Poetry celebrates poets and poetry throughout Massachusetts. The key ways we do this are through the Massachusetts Poetry Festival – the nation's second largest poetry festival – the U35 Poetry Reading Series, and the publication and promotion of Common Threads.



## 2016 Mass Poetry Festival



The Massachusetts Poetry Festival continues to broaden the statewide poetry landscape, attracting new audiences. This grassroots effort began in Lowell in 2008, and has since become a mainstay in Salem, attracting poets and poetry lovers on a local, regional, and national level.

For the past six years, the festival has worked in partnership with the Salem State University, the Peabody Essex Museum, the City of Salem, Destination Salem, Hawthorne Hotel, and other local businesses.

The 2016 festival took place April 29-May 1 and attracted 1,300 people for a weekend of over 100 poetry-themed readings, sessions, workshops, and events with nearly 200 poets and artists producing events.

In addition to Pulitzer Prize winner Gregory Pardlo and U.S. Presidential Inaugural poet Richard Blanco, the following highly acclaimed poets participated in various readings and poetry events: former N.Y. Poet Laureate Marie Howe, National Book Award-winner Mark Doty, Sandra Beasley, Martha Collins, Edward Hirsch, Ada Limón, David Rivard, Charles Simic, and Ocean Vuong.

As an essential part of programming, the festival hosted a Student Day of Poetry. The event took place on Friday morning before general admission. Roughly 200 students from across the Commonwealth participated in workshops and readings by poets and educators.

We also had the help of 90 volunteers, many of whom have volunteered for two or more years. It is because of our outstanding volunteer team—and the kindness and experience they bring—that the festival continues to operate at a high level while maintaining a community feel.



## An Evening of Inspired Leaders

Mass Poetry launched an Evening of Inspired Leaders in 2014, along with new media sponsor WBUR. In January 2017, we will host the third Evening of Inspired Leaders. This remarkable evening, Mass Poetry's principal fundraising event, brings together exceptional leaders from diverse fields to read a favorite poem and reflect on its connection to their life and work.



*A look back at 2015*

**David McCullough Sr.**, Pulitzer Prize- winning historian & author, *John Adams*  
**Diane Patrick**, Former First Lady of MA, Co-Managing Partner, Ropes & Gray  
**Robert Pinsky**, Former U.S. Poet Laureate  
**Julie Burros**, Boston's Chief of Arts and Culture  
**Andre Dubus III**, Guggenheim winner & author, *House of Sand and Fog*  
**Jody Adams**, Celebrity Chef of Rialto  
**Ed Harding**, Anchor WCVB TV (Channel 5)  
**Margaret McKenna**, Civil rights attorney & President of Suffolk University  
**Ed Davis**, Former Police Commissioner of the City of Boston  
**David McCullough Jr.**, Wellesley High School English Teacher & Author  
**Charles Kravetz**, General Manager, WBUR  
**Michael Brown**, Founder of City Year  
**Julianna Devasto**, City Year Boston AmeriCorps member  
**Joan Wallace-Benjamin**, President of The Home for Little Wanderers  
**Larry Weber**, Digital marketing pioneer and CEO of Racepoint Global  
**Peter Wolf**, Musician, songwriter  
**Tom Ashbrook**, Host of WBUR's "On Point"

*A look back at 2014*

**Deval Patrick**, Governor of Massachusetts  
**Michael Maso**, Managing Director of the Huntington Theatre Company  
**Robert Pinsky**, Former US Poet Laureate & Director of the Favorite Poem Project  
**Gloria White-Hammond**, Co-Pastor of Bethel AME Church & Executive Director of My Sister's Keeper  
**Ed Davis**, Former Police Commissioner of the City of Boston  
**Jo Shapiro**, Chief of the Division of Otolaryngology in the Department of Surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital  
**Gerald Chertavian**, Founder of Year Up  
**Ron Walker**, Executive Director of the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color  
**Joshua Boger**, Founder and former CEO of Vertex  
**Giles Li**, Executive Director of Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center  
**Barbara Harris**, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts (retired)  
**Bill Littlefield**, Host of "Only a Game" on NPR  
**Jackie Jenkins Scott**, President of Wheelock College  
**Porsha Olayiwola**, Enrichment and Recruitment Coordinator of Codman Academy  
**Paul Grogan**, President of the Boston Foundation  
**Robin Young**, Host of "Here & Now" on WBUR  
**Derek Lumpkins**, Executive Director of Discover Roxbury



## U35

Mass Poetry is proud to continue to support young poets in Massachusetts with the U35 Poetry Reading Series.

Every other month we feature three young poets under 35 who share their work with an audience at The Marliave in downtown Boston. We continue to promote the event to area colleges for their students to attend or sign up to read, as well as on events websites for the Greater Boston area.

### January Readers

Leslie Ahlstrand  
Taylor Butts  
Colleen Coyne

### March Readers

Dan Carey  
Ryan Heidorn  
A.J. Odasso

### May Readers

John-Paul Catenza  
DiDi Delgado  
Lora Straub



### July Readers

Mark Gosztyla  
Sarah Levine  
Bryan Parys

### September Readers

Curtis Emery  
Alana Folsom  
Rage Hezekiah

### November Readers

Hilary Vaughn Dobel  
Daniel Jackson  
Walter Smelt



## Common Threads

To facilitate poetry reading and discussion in community groups (such as libraries, churches, senior centers and homeless shelters) across the state, Mass Poetry publishes and promotes Common Threads, a publication of poems by poets with Massachusetts ties, edited by a Guest Editor.

*Common Thread*



2016

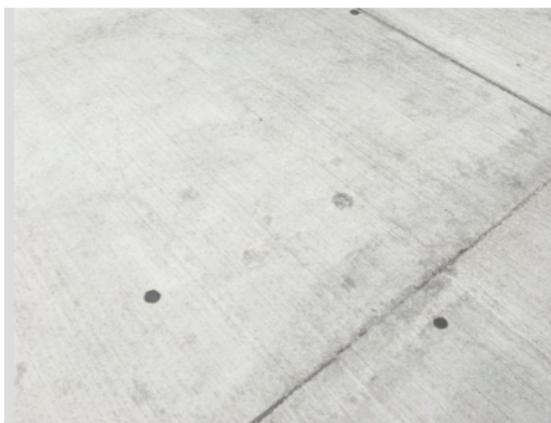
2016 Guest Editor – Alice Kociemba  
Cover Art – Molly Sidell

Poems by

Denise Levertov  
Susan Donnelly  
Alan Feldman  
Natasha Trethewey  
Danielle Legros Georges  
Robert Francis  
Seamus Heaney

# POETRY AS PUBLIC ART

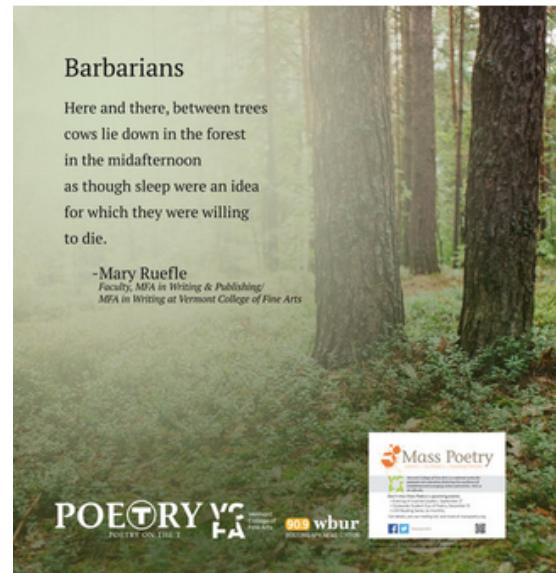
Mass Poetry brings poetry to the people. This means that rather than looking through libraries and bookstores for poetry, we give poetry a presence in public spaces. Poetry on the T and Raining Poetry are our key public poetry programs.



BEFORE



AFTER



## Raining Poetry

2016 saw the advent of our wildly successful Raining Poetry project. Working with the City of Boston and the Mural Crew, Mass Poetry made it rain poetry on the sidewalks of Boston. Boston Poet Laureate Danielle Legros Georges selected poems from Massachusetts-based poets that local artists stenciled. We installed these poems on the sidewalks of Boston with water-repellant spray so that the poems were invisible – until it rains.

Response was huge, including mentions in multiple media outlets, including a reference on *The Late Show with Seth Myers* and the creation of a video by New York Magazine which, to date, has received over 23 million views on Facebook. Individuals and arts organizations all over the country and the world reached out to Mass Poetry about having it rain poetry in their own communities.

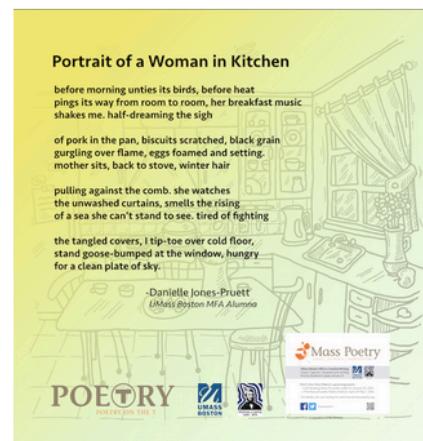
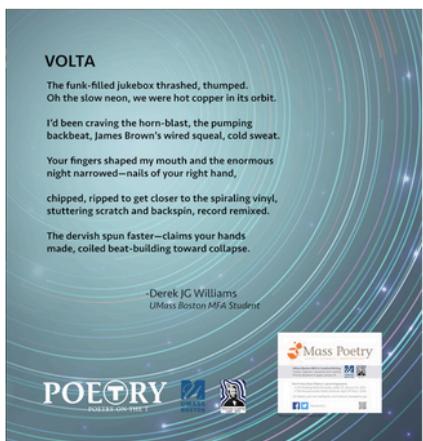


## Poetry on the T

In 2016 Mass Poetry continued its public poetry program showcasing poetry posters on the T in place of advertisements.

UMass Boston's MFA program sponsored the month of January on the Red Line, and The Vermont College of Fine Arts sponsored the month of September on the Green Line.

We are continuing to solicit sponsors – individual, partner organizations and corporate sponsors – to place Poetry on the T year-round on all 4 lines on the T.



"I read your beautiful poem [Danielle Legros Georges' 'Poem for the Poorest Country in the Western Hemisphere'] for the first time when I was **taking the T home last night.**

It was printed on a poster. Such a gorgeous prayer and beacon of hope for Haiti. I've sent it out to several friends this morning, one of whom spent time in Haiti. Just wanted to say **thank you for this inspirational poem and moment.**"

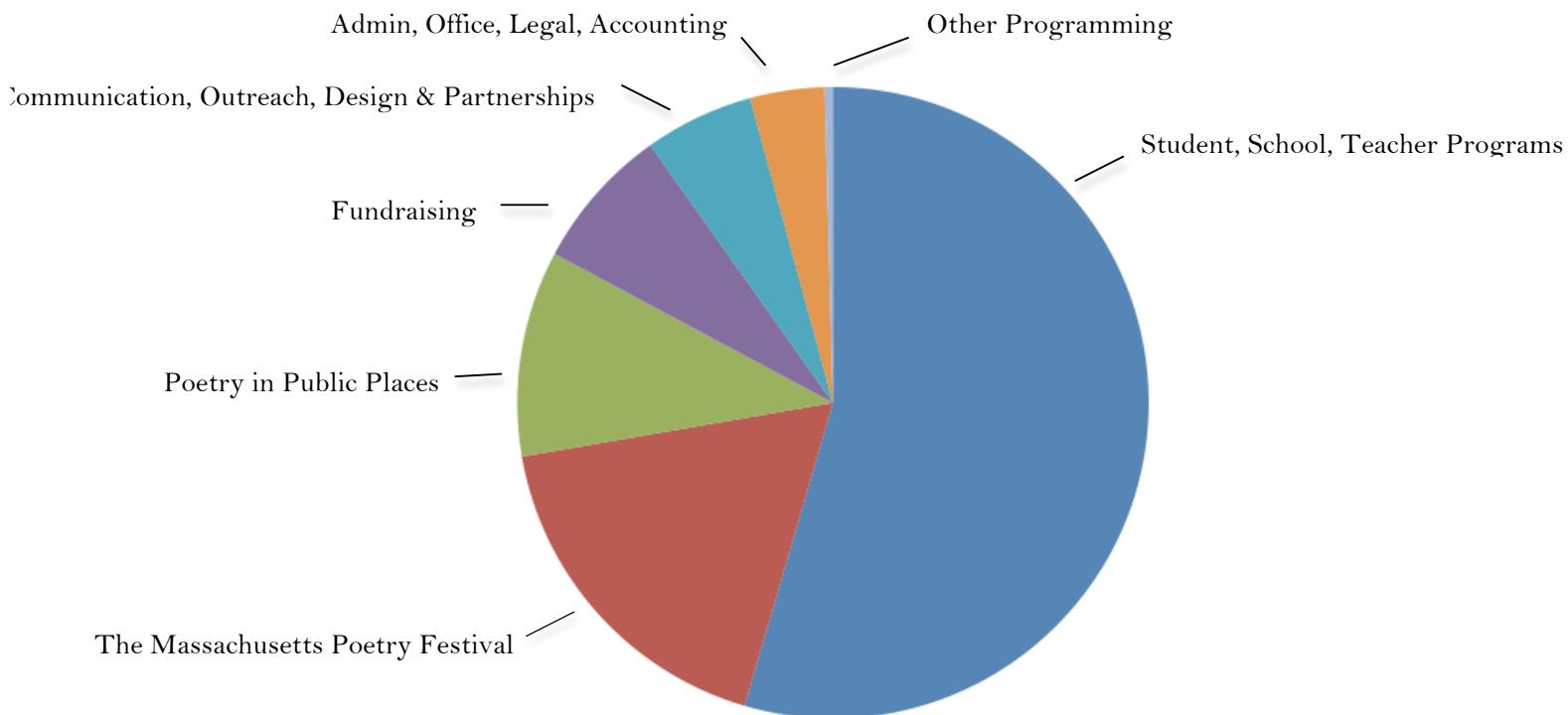
-T Rider

## 2016 Financials

### Mass Poetry Expenditures for 2016

Student, School, Teacher Programs*	\$105,535	(55%)
The Massachusetts Poetry Festival	\$34,361	(18%)
Poetry in Public Places	\$20,418	(11%)
Fundraising	\$14,260	(7%)
Communication, Outreach, Design & Partnerships	\$10,800	(6%)
Admin, Office, Legal, Accounting	\$7,361	(4%)
Other Programming	\$839	(<1%)

\*This includes SDOP, in school programs, teacher development programs, and fiscal support of the work of LEAP in the variety of their spoken word programs including Louder than a Bomb MA



Please consider supporting the work of Mass Poetry through a donation.  
Visit [www.masspoetry.org](http://www.masspoetry.org) and click on the Donate button.