

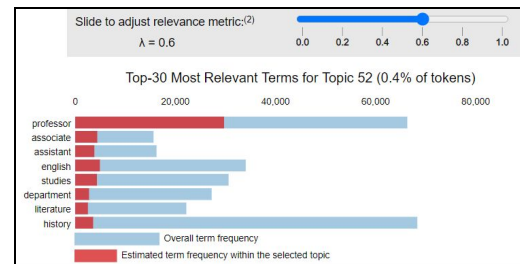
## Literature has a split personality in the media. It is tied to the academy, yet bridges to public life in everyday book & reading events.

WE1S's findings suggest that the humanities, especially in comparison to the sciences, appear in the media to be siloed in the academy (see [KF-5-2](#)). There seem to be few bridges from the humanities as they are studied to the broader humanities experienced in society. Literature is no exception. The media portrays it both as a hermetic academic activity and as a robust milieu of everyday social activities related to books and reading--e.g., book talks, poetry readings, announcements of literary prizes, and obituaries of poets and writers.

In a topic model ([C-1.250](#), 250 topics) of our [Collection 1](#) (82,324 articles from U.S. journalistic media mentioning *humanities*), the [top topics associated with the word literature](#) include (ranked by percentage weight in the model)<sup>1</sup>:

- 0.7% -- [#166](#) (obituaries of writers/ literary critics), [#196](#) (book events)
- 0.6% -- [#42](#) (debates in literary theory)
- 0.4% -- [#52](#) (academic news in student discourse)
- 0.2% -- [#220](#) (classic literary works), [#156](#) (poetry readings and obituaries)

The top terms in an academically-oriented topic like #52 (see top right) are words like *professor*, *associate*, *assistant*, *english*, *studies*, and *department*, indicating that “literature” in this context is almost purely an inside-the-academy phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>



**Top terms for topic #52 on academic news and announcements in [pyLDavis](#)** (ranked at a “relevance metric” of 0.6 relating a term’s frequency in a topic vs. overall frequency in the collection) ([click for larger graph](#))

Higher-weight topics like #166, with other lower-weight topics like #156, represent the broader profile of literature in society. A telling case study is topic [#156](#), which groups together event announcements of poetry readings and notices of poets’ deaths (see top documents: [larger screenshot](#)).

Such a topic indicates that literature outside the academy circulates as an everyday public literary lifestream of

readings, author events, and the life and death of people identified with literature. In the public view, literature, on the one hand, is a specialized academic field, and, on the other hand, is a shared public love of writing and reading. (See also [KF-5-3](#): “The humanities are the art of ordinary life.”)

Top 20 Documents	
1	"Poetry readings, writing workshops set for May," <i>The Advocate</i> (Baton Rouge, Louisiana)
2	"Poet assigned to read work Thursday at College of Chas.," <i>The Post and Courier</i> (Charleston, SC)
3	"Poet Carl Sandberg to read at Norman depot," <i>The Daily Oklahoman</i> (Oklahoma City, OK)
4	"NO ORDINARY EVENING," <i>Hartford Courant</i> (Connecticut)
5	"John Ashbery, celebrated and challenging poet, dies at age 80," <i>The Boston Herald</i>
6	"Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey to deliver 2014 commencement address," <i>The Knox Student</i> (Knox College)
7	"John Ashbery, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, at 80," <i>The Boston Herald</i>
8	"Poet Larry Berman will read from his work in Norman," <i>The Daily Oklahoman</i> (Oklahoma City, OK)
9	"Former U.S. Poet Laureate Rita Dove Gives Reading," <i>Emory Wheel</i> (Emory University)
10	"OBITUARIES," <i>Los Angeles Times</i> (14 months)

**Document collection studied:** [C-1](#) ([start page](#))

**Topic model studied:** [C-1.250](#) (250 topics)

**Interesting sample topics:** [166](#), [220](#), [42](#), [196](#), [156](#)

**Representative Articles:** N/A

**Evidentiary documentation for this key finding:**

Documentation Node [ID#], [WE1S report](#)

<sup>1</sup> Percentage figures indicate the proportion of Collection 1 associated with a topic.

<sup>2</sup> We note also from our case-study survey at one of the WE1S project’s campuses that students and others perceive literature as more difficult and more prestigious than the humanities in general (see [KE 9-6](#)).