



INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES



Connecting People to Information and Ideas



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The Institute of Museum and Library Services, an independent federal agency, helps create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to enhance learning and innovation; sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; and support professional development.

For more information: www.imls.gov.

lifelong learning

A message from Dr. Anne-Imelda M. Radice, Director, Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute builds the capacity of libraries and museums to promote and support lifelong learning. A democratic society in the knowledge age demands that its citizens learn continually, adapt to change readily, and evaluate information critically. The nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums play a fundamental role in creating vibrant, energized communities that help us do just that.

As stewards of cultural heritage, museums and libraries have traditionally helped us to experience, explore, discover, and make sense of the world. Today these institutions are using the tools of the knowledge age to connect people to information and ideas like never before. Using new technology; creating strong partnerships with community organizations, business, and educators; and tapping into the latest research about learning makes it possible for libraries and museums to offer unprecedented value to the public, fueling knowledge sharing and energizing our economy, creativity, and competitiveness.

Respected in their communities, libraries and museums hold the public trust and play important roles in creating an informed and educated citizenry, transmitting the values of our democracy. Our role at the Institute is to provide libraries, museums, and policy makers with the resources they need to ensure that the American ideal of open access to information and ideas flourishes: leadership, data, analysis, and funding.

Sincerely,



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leading the

Leading the movement to create and sustain a nation of learners

In postindustrial America, lifelong learning is fundamental to who we are today and who we can be tomorrow. For America to remain competitive, we must recognize that formal schooling is only one part of the learning continuum. The brilliant variety of libraries and museums that support learning in school, out of school, and from infancy to old age is one of the hallmarks of American education.

The Institute builds the capacity of museums and libraries to serve the public in three strategic ways.

1

Sustaining culture, heritage, and knowledge

The collections in libraries and museums connect people to the full spectrum of human experience: culture, science, history, and art. The Institute helps libraries and museums to preserve and manage collections of artworks, books, and other cultural artifacts, animals and plants, and even born-digital information so that future generations will have a tangible link with knowledge.

Now, with the digitization of collections, educational resources can be seamlessly shared worldwide. One vital way we provide leadership is by helping institutions identify the best ways to create and provide access to their digital resources.

movement

2

Enhancing learning and spurring innovation

Success in today's economy requires information literacy, a spirit of self-reliance, and a strong ability to collaborate and communicate effectively and solve problems. Combining the strengths of traditional learning with robust investment in modern communication infrastructures, libraries and museums are well equipped to build the skills Americans need in the twenty-first century. Libraries and museums bring tremendous assets to communities engaged in matters ranging from parenting and student achievement to cross-cultural understanding and economic development.

As partners in the exercise of civic responsibility, libraries and museums are part of larger efforts to weave a stronger community fabric.

With our encouragement and funding, these institutions promote interaction between the generations and spur learning and literacy development from early childhood through old age.

3

Professional development

The need for lifelong learning applies to the staff of museums and libraries as well as their users. The Institute places a priority on building leadership capacity by supporting the development of a highly skilled workforce in libraries and museums. The Institute helps to spur innovation, support diversity, and build traditional library and museum service expertise.



public value

Enabling museums and libraries to create public value through critical funding, research, and analysis

The Institute supports the full range of museums, including art, history, science and technology, children's, natural history, historic houses, nature centers, botanical gardens, and zoos; and all types of libraries, including public, school, academic, research, and archival. Our robust capacity for research, evaluation, policy analysis, grantmaking, and partnerships help make it possible for libraries and museums to be leaders in their communities.

Museums and libraries are America's leading public institutions, making knowledge available to millions at little or no cost. As public institutions they must meet a very high threshold of mission accountability and use resources wisely for public good.

Through grants and information resources, we annually reach thousands of museums and libraries in myriad ways—from providing much needed technical assistance for small institutions to establishing national and replicable models, strengthening state networks, and supporting

professional development. To aid institutions in program design, we also provide tools for strategic planning and evaluation. Funding from the Institute helps museums and libraries operate effectively and give value to their communities. It also leverages additional public and private support.

Collecting and disseminating results from funded projects, engaging in research, and publishing reports enables the Institute of Museum and Library Services to make a significant contribution to library, museum, and information policy and practice in the United States.

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about us

A Timeline of Service

2006

Beginning September 27, the Institute celebrates its tenth anniversary with a yearlong series of celebrations and activities. See www.imls.gov/tenth for more information.

2003

On September 25, 2003 President Bush signed into law the Museum and Library Services Act of 2003. In addition to the authority to support museums and libraries, the legislation authorized the Institute to identify national needs and analyze the impact of museum, library, and information services.

In December 2003, Congress passed and President Bush signed the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act, which provided new authority for the Institute to support African American museums.

1996

The Museum and Library Services Act of 1996 established the Institute. The new agency combined the Institute of Museum Services, which had been in existence since 1976, and the Library Programs Office, which had been part of the Department of Education since 1956.

National Museum and Library Services Board

The National Museum and Library Services Board is a twenty-four-member advisory body that includes Presidentially-appointed and Senate-confirmed individuals with expertise in, or commitment to, library, museum, and information services. Informed by its collectively vast experience and knowledge, the Board advises the Institute's director on general policy and practices, selections for the National Awards for Museum and Library Service, and coordination with other federal agencies and offices.

For More Information

Please visit our Web site to subscribe to our free electronic newsletter, download publications, and learn more about specific programs, research, and trends that further our mission of connecting people to information and ideas:

www.imls.gov

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