

## Transcript of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills podcast episode

August 11, 2010

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When we discuss the “21st Century Skills,” what do we mean? We are talking about learning and innovation skills like critical thinking, creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration. We are talking about fluency in information, media and technology skills, the ability to analyze information and the ability to think critically about that information that is bombarding us from so many media sources every day. We’re talking about life and career skills like flexibility and adaptability, like initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills. And we’re also talking about some 21st century themes – themes that have to do with environmental literacy, health literacy, financial literacy and global awareness.

Where did the 21st Century Skills movement come from? Really this is a national and international conversation that has arisen with the rise of the global economy, with the enabling of a whole new set of technologies that allow people to be connected in different ways, the need to understand non-routine, non-repetitive work and the need to be able to do that work. So the skills that are associated with doing those sorts of jobs have to do with innovation, problem solving, creativity, the mastery of the new information and communication technologies.

Where do libraries and museums fit in the 21st Century Skills movement? Libraries and museums have always been about education and learning. They have always provided important collections, powerful experiences and sources of knowledge and information. So libraries and museums have been evolving and changing to meet changing learning needs. They’ve been evolving from places that simply present knowledge and information to places that share knowledge and engage their communities and work with their communities to co-create experiences.

The IMLS Initiative on Museums, Libraries and 21st Century Skills, which we’re also calling “Making the Learning Connection,” is really about positioning museums and libraries in this larger conversation that’s occurred in classrooms, in corporations, in workplaces, in government agencies as powerful places for learning 21st century skills and promoting the 21st century skills. Our project provides a portal, a website, a self-assessment tool and a community learning scanning document that provides information for people outside the museum and library field to know more about what museums and libraries can contribute to the 21st Century Skills movement, but provides valuable tools for people who work in museums and libraries to intentionally position their institutions to provide, promote, deliver these kinds of skills.

Our point is that for a museum or a library to truly be a 21 century skills organization, they have to look across the entire scope of their organization. There are implications for who they hire, for how they present their programs and how they create their programs, for how they include different – and invite different communities and change their definitions of access, for how they demonstrate and define their accountability and measure their outcomes and for how they work in collaboration with a whole set of learning institutions that can range from the school system to

the university system to the chamber of commerce to social service organizations and to various types of businesses.