

Public Trust, Public Value, Tough Issues: IMLS and Contemporary Museum Practice

Creating a Nation of Learners



INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES



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What Is IMLS?

- Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is a U.S. federal government agency.
- The Institute's mission is to help build the capacity of libraries and museums:

To connect people to information and ideas

- The Institute is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums.

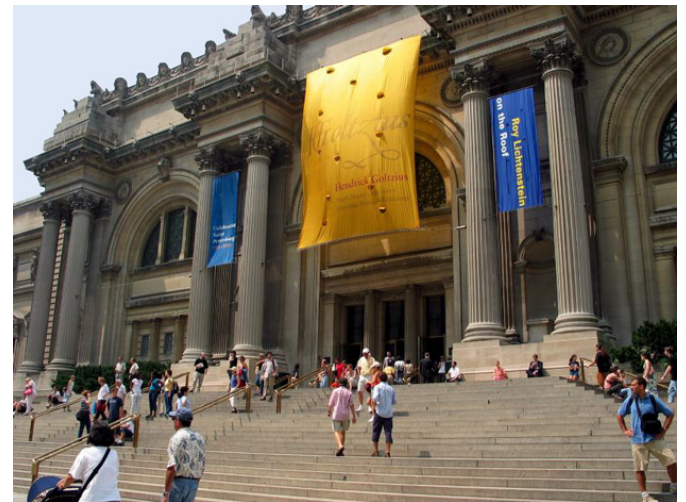


Federal Support for Culture

- “Democracy demands wisdom and vision in its citizens. It must therefore foster and support a form of education, and access to the arts and the humanities, designed to make people of all backgrounds and wherever located masters of their technology and not its unthinking servants.”
- “The arts and the humanities reflect the high place accorded by the American people to the nation’s rich cultural heritage and to the fostering of mutual respect for the diverse beliefs and values of all persons and groups.”

U.S. Museums and Libraries

- 17,500+ Museums
 - Art
 - History
 - Science
 - Youth
 - Aquaria
 - Planetaria
 - Arboreta
 - Zoos
 - Botanical Gardens
- 123,000 Libraries
 - Public
 - Academic
 - School
 - Research
 - Archives



IMLS

- Grants to eligible organizations, principally museums, libraries, universities
- Initiatives: Connecting to Collections; Museums, Libraries, & 21st Century Skills
- Publications
- Research
- Data collection

Goals

- IMLS has three key goals:
 - Sustain cultural heritage and knowledge;
 - Enhance learning and spur innovation; and
 - Support professional development of library and museum paid and unpaid staff

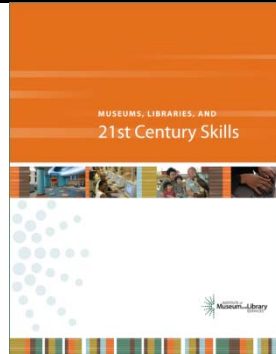
Decision-Making Process

- Peer Review
- Staff analysis and recommendation
- Director with final decision-making authority

Criteria for support

- Needs assessment: why important to museum's strategic plan and mission?
- What institutional and community needs will the project fulfill?
- Project design, schedule, team, budget
- Evaluation: what will success look like?
- Sustainability

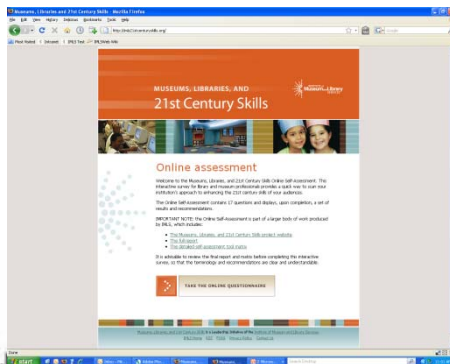
Museums, Libraries & 21st Century Skills



- *Museums, Libraries, and 21st Century Skills Report*



- Self-Assessment Tool



- Online Self-Assessment Tool:
www.imls21stcenturyskills.org

The 21st Century Museum/Library Shift

20th Century Museum/Library	21st Century Museum/Library
Primarily content driven	Combination of audience and content driven
Mostly tangible objects	Tangible and digital objects
One-way	Multi-directional
Focus on presentation and display	Focus on audience engagement, experiences
Acts independently	Acts in highly collaborative partnerships
Located in community	Embedded in community
Learning outcomes assumed, implied	Learning outcomes purposeful

John Cotton Dana, 1920

- “All public institutions [and museums are not exceptions to this rule] should give returns for their cost; and those returns should be in good degree positive, definite, visible, measurable....A museum is good only insofar as it is of use....”

-- From *The New Museum: Selected Writings by John Cotton Dana*, edited by Stephen E. Weil (Newark, NJ: The Newark Museum Association and the American Association of Museums, 1999).

Museums in Today's World

- Three examples:
 - Race
 - Climate Change
 - Immigration

Understanding Race and Human Variation

Science Museum of Minnesota

- *RACE: Are We So Different?*: National traveling exhibit
- Theatre production: *Voices*
- Talking Circle Room, forums, community conversations
- Educators Guide
- New partnerships
- Teacher workshop



-- Photo courtesy
of www.smm.org

Immigration

International Coalition of Sites of Conscience

- Build the capacity of 12 immigration history museums to facilitate dialogue around community immigration issues
- Professional development for museum staff



-- Photo
courtesy of
www.sitesofconscience.org

Immigration

- Angel Island Immigration Station
- Arab American National Museum
- Chicago Cultural Alliance
- Ellis Island Immigration Station
- Jane Addams Hull-House Museum
- Japanese American National Museum
- Levine Museum of the New South
- Lowell National Historical Park
- Lower East Side Tenement Museum
- New Americans Museum
- University of Texas El Paso
- Wing Luke Asian Museum

Educating About Climate Change

New England Aquarium

- National Aquarium in Baltimore, Monterey Bay Aquarium, Aquarium of the Pacific, Birch Aquarium at Scripps, and the Vancouver Aquarium
- Goals
 - Expand capacity to to address ocean change
 - Enable the interpreters to increase public awareness



-- Photo
courtesy of
www.neaq.org

Stephen E. Weil: "A Success/Failure Matrix for Museums"

- "If [a museum] fails to provide a social benefit, it wastes society's resources. To produce a social outcome—to provide a positive benefit to its targeted audiences—must be such an organization's first responsibility."
- Museums must "not merely do things right." They must "do the right things."

IMLS E-communications



The screenshot shows the IMLS Primary Source e-newsletter interface. At the top left is the IMLS logo. The main header is orange with the text 'Primary Source' and 'Vol. 12, No. 3; April 2010'. Below this is a 'contents' section with links for 'Featured Project Profile', 'Director's Message', 'The Latest News', and 'IMLS on the Road'. A 'briefs' section follows, with a sub-section for 'About the Institute of Museum and Library Services' and a 'Grants.gov' section. The 'primary source' section is highlighted in blue and contains a 'Subscribe/Unsubscribe' notice. The main content area features a 'Featured Project Profile' for 'Speaking Our Language: Preserving the Saginaw Chippewa Dialect' with a photo of people at a table. Below that is a 'Director's Message' from a woman, with text about broadband plans and library services.

- www.ims.gov
- **Primary Source:** Free monthly e-mail update, sent to over 9,000 subscribers.
- **Twitter:** @US_IMLS
- **IMLS RSS Feed:** www.ims.gov/rss.xml
- **IMLS Podcasts:** www.ims.gov/podcast.xml
- msemmel@ims.gov