



INSTITUTE of  
**Museum and Library**  
SERVICES



## Update: International Strategic Partnership Initiative

**Strengthening Connections, Advancing Global Understanding**  
May 2010

Above: Group photo of Salzburg Global Seminar attendees.

**“Simple exchanges can break down walls between us, for when people come together and speak to one another and share a common experience, then their common humanity is revealed. We are reminded that we’re joined together by our pursuit of a life that’s productive and purposeful, and when that happens mistrust begins to fade and our smaller differences no longer overshadow the things that we share.”**

— President Barack Obama, Tophane Cultural Center  
Istanbul, Turkey, April 7, 2009

As emerging information technology and the wide-ranging impacts of globalization make the world a smaller place, increased global and cultural awareness and competency have become essential skills for 21st century U.S. citizens. In addition, the ethnic composition of the nation is rapidly changing because of increases in immigration; if it continues at this pace, by 2050 fifteen per cent of the U.S. population will be foreign-born.<sup>1</sup>

Museums and libraries are portals to the world. Valued nearly everywhere as trusted community organizations, they are well positioned to help foster cross-border and cross-cultural communication and enhance global awareness. These institutions are centers for intercultural learning, ideal venues for cross-cultural communication, and prime partners for international collaborations. They are rich in collections, exhibits, programs, digital networks, and other resources and have the ability to connect people, institutions, and communities across the globe.

Throughout its history, IMLS, the largest source of federal support for the nation’s museums and libraries, has emphasized the important role that museums and libraries play in facilitating global understanding and the sharing of experiences. Through establishing partnerships with overseas cultural agencies and ministers, initiating programs with international components, participating in international policy meetings, hosting foreign museum and library professionals, and convening U.S. professionals to explore ways to connect with their global counterparts, IMLS encourages dialogue that is critical in our increasingly globalized world.

Global awareness has been identified as a core 21st century theme, from the schoolroom to the corporate boardroom. Recent IMLS publications, including *Museums, Libraries, and 21st Century Skills*, *The Future of Museums and Libraries: A Discussion Guide*, and *Connecting to the*

*World's Collections: Making the Case for the Conservation and Preservation of Our Cultural Heritage* highlight and explore the roles that museums and libraries have played and can continue to play in the global knowledge society. In addition, the Institute's strategic goals, all of which are aimed at building the capacity of museums and libraries to serve their communities, can also serve to enhance global awareness and cross-border communication:

- **Sustaining Culture, Heritage, and Knowledge:** IMLS helps libraries and museums to preserve and manage their collections, including born-digital information.
- **Enhancing Learning and Innovation:** Success in society requires information literacy, self-reliance, and a strong ability to collaborate, communicate effectively, and solve problems.
- **Building Capacity:** IMLS helps to build leadership capacity by supporting the development of a highly skilled museum and library workforce.

In June 2008, IMLS established the International Strategic Partnership Initiative, with the principal goal of strengthening connections between U.S. museums and libraries and their global counterparts.

During the course of 2009, IMLS convened three meetings to help the agency move forward in its international work. This update provides information about these meetings and other recent IMLS international activities.



Above: "Museums and Libraries Advancing Global Understanding" convening.

## Convenings

### Museums and Libraries Advancing Global Understanding May 15, 2009

IMLS brought together a diverse array of leaders to explore the role of museums and libraries in increasing global understanding. The leaders—including museum and library directors; representatives of foundations, government agencies, national membership organizations, policy groups, and youth exchange organizations; and cultural officers from several foreign countries—engaged in a day-long discussion focused on three major goals:

- Inspiring collaboration, engaging in long-term cultural exchange planning, and identifying common goals and challenges;
- Building bridges among museums and libraries and organizations whose experience includes cross-cultural communication and the development of global understanding; and
- Developing awareness in the international exchange and citizen diplomacy community of the potential of museums and libraries to foster global understanding and enrich programs already in place.

In advance of the meeting, participants submitted descriptions of successful projects already taking place. The schedule included both plenary sessions and working groups, allowing for the examination of such issues and questions as the availability of good models in the field, both within and outside of the U.S.; opportunities for partnership; and the role of museums and libraries in fostering both youth development and community development in the area of global understanding.

Several core themes emerged as a result of the broad and engaging dialogue that took place during the day. Participants agreed, for example, that this is a unique moment in time, representing a major opportunity for museums and libraries to forward global understanding. They noted that there are important opportunities for American institutions to learn from work in other countries and to learn how to be an equal

**"Consider the importance of connecting around truly global issues, not just culture-to-culture issues."**

**"Global awareness is an excellent theme that will force organizations to collaborate and break out of silos."**

—Statements from "Museums and Libraries Advancing Global Understanding" participants



**“One of the greatest assets of museums and libraries is that they are accessible to everyone—a safe and neutral zone. Promote that in whatever way you can”**

—Suggestion from a “Youth Voices of a Global Knowledge Society” participant



partner in such ventures. The lack of work translated from other languages was also seen as a key issue, as was the need to use new technologies to enhance and enrich person-to-person connections. The participants thought that communities, especially young people, need to be kept at the center of the focus and consulted in the development of programs. Finally, the group agreed that an effective and appropriate “curriculum” must be developed to train library and museum personnel in the area of global awareness. One attendee suggested, “Consider the importance of connecting around truly global issues, not just culture-to-culture issues.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, the participants offered many suggestions, including:

- Clarify the focus of expanding global awareness, especially given the limited resources available for such efforts;
- Include additional voices in the conversation, especially young people and youth organizations;
- Create partnerships with such organizations as UNESCO, Sister Cities, and foreign embassies;
- Test the ideas that have emerged in the meeting with international colleagues;
- Undertake a full scan of what is already happening in the field and create a central information center to collate information; and
- Play the role of cheerleader, convener, and investor in this area, continuing to raise awareness among museums and libraries of the possibilities and rewards of engaging in activities that forward global understanding.

As one participant summarized, “Global awareness is an excellent theme that will force organizations to collaborate and break out of silos.” Read the IMLS press release, with a full list of meeting attendees, at [www.imls.gov/news/2009/052109a.shtm](http://www.imls.gov/news/2009/052109a.shtm).

**Youth Voices of a Global Knowledge Society  
August 4, 2009**

Based on a suggestion from the May 15th meeting, IMLS convened a meeting of young adults to hear their observations on the role of museums and libraries in global awareness. The 12-member youth panel consisted of recent high school graduates, university students, and graduate students working as interns in the Washington, DC, area. The group shared its knowledge on global issues, experiences with world cultures, and openness and curiosity about the people of other nations and the world around them.

The conversation focused on four questions:

- How can museums and libraries become places where more young people want to spend time?
- What do young people need to connect to their global counterparts?
- What role can (or should) museums and libraries play to help people effectively communicate with those who hold different views and experiences?
- How can young people strengthen the capacity of museums and libraries to address challenges of intercultural dialogue, and how can museums and libraries effectively include young people in planning programs for this purpose?

The panelists all agreed that technology plays a central role in their lives, and they find it easier to connect with an organization that is technologically accessible. They encouraged museums and libraries to capitalize on social networking and other technologies as a way to draw youth through the doors, as well as to facilitate virtual connections to other places and cultures. One participant explained, “Nowadays, most people are in touch with people from other cultures. For those who are not in touch with other cultures, one can visit museums and libraries for these experiences. Taking the museum outside the walls is important...” The panelists voiced great interest in learning from other cultures and were eager to experience international town hall meetings or global museum and library collaboratives. They also recognized the power of museums and libraries to connect diverse populations that already exist in U.S. communities and help bridge misunderstandings about other cultures. As one participant noted, “One of the greatest assets of museums and libraries is that they are accessible to everyone—a safe and neutral zone. Promote that in whatever way you can.”

Lastly, the participants voiced their desire to be partners in helping museums and libraries facilitate intercultural dialogue. One participant described his experience with a cultural nonprofit and shared the information that he was, “... part of a youth leadership council which was a great vehicle for youth to voice their opinions. It helps to cultivate spokespeople for organizations and engage youth at a higher level. Involving people of all ages is so important.”

**Salzburg Global Seminar  
October 28–November 1, 2009**

*Connecting to the World's Collections: Making the Case for the Conservation and Preservation of Our Cultural Heritage* occurred October 28–November 1, 2009, in Salzburg, Austria, and built on the themes and lessons learned from IMLS's major initiative on conservation, *Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action*, extending them to an international audience. Attended by 60 cultural leaders, policymakers, and conservation professionals from 32 countries, the seminar—a partnership between IMLS and the Salzburg Global Seminar—addressed central issues in the care and preservation of the world's cultural heritage. Co-chair Vinod Daniel (Australia) noted in his opening remarks that no previous meeting of conservation professionals had been “as diverse as this, with people from as many parts of the world as this, as cross-disciplinary as this.” In her welcome to the group, co-chair Debra Hess Norris (U.S.) emphasized the need for new and regular communication strategies within the profession and for sustained opportunities for international collaboration.

The schedule included not only six plenary sessions, based on the major themes of the conference, but also five working groups, the latter structured in a way that resulted in a series of practical recommendations. For example, the working group on “New Preservation Approaches” recommended that the conservation community “Design and carry out research to address the threat induced by environmental changes” and outlined five specific areas of needed research. In addition, the Fellows engaged in invigorating conversations and presentations on conservation in the developing world; the newly



Above: Lonnie Bunch, Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, delivers the keynote address.

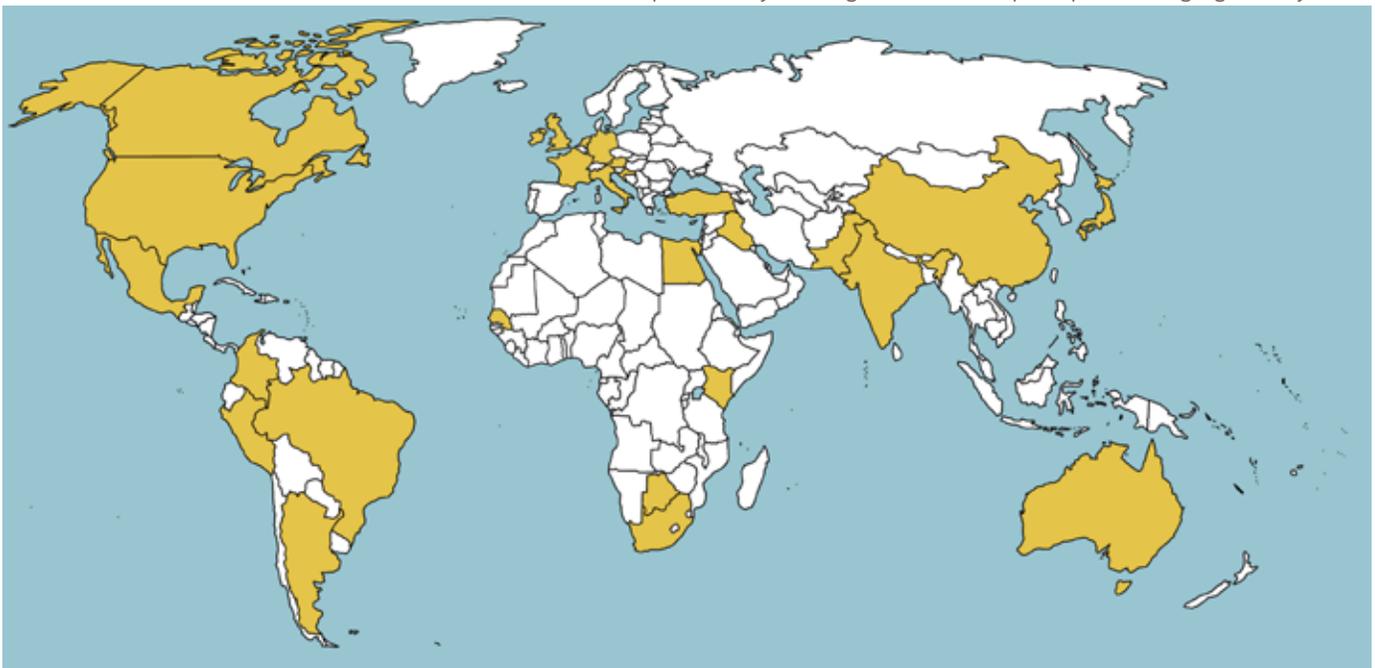
discovered “Anglo-Saxon hoard” in Staffordshire, England; and community-scale conservation projects in villages in India.

The points of view of participants from many parts of the world—Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America—and from both museums and libraries resulted in lively exchanges, long conversations over meals and during breaks, and new and exciting ideas for collaborative projects. Activities of the seminar were broadcast daily via a blog hosted by the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.

Some of the major themes that resonated throughout the gathering included:

- A paradigm shift away from traditional perceptions of culture as “elitist”;

Below: Countries represented by Salzburg Global Seminar participants are highlighted in yellow.





*Above Left:* Seminar Co-Chair Debra Hess Norris (U.S.). *Center:* Margie Johnson Reese (U.S.), Anupam Sah (India), Kay Raseroka (Botswana). *Right:* Seminar Co-Chair Vinod Daniel (Australia).

- Building international connections among preservation professionals and with policymakers and the public;
- Listening to and learning from indigenous peoples regarding the safeguarding of their cultural heritage;
- Avoiding the storage of knowledge in separated silos;
- Using social media and other technological resources to engage both professionals and the general public in discussions about the preservation of our cultural heritage; and
- The pressing necessity for heritage conservation to be represented in existing and forthcoming international agreements and treaties.



*Connecting to the World's Collections*, the report from the Salzburg Global Seminar, is available online at [www.ims.gov](http://www.ims.gov), or printed copies can be requested by e-mailing [imsinfo@ims.gov](mailto:imsinfo@ims.gov).

At the conclusion of the seminar, the Fellows unanimously endorsed a *Salzburg Declaration on the Conservation and Preservation of Cultural Heritage* that affirmed the importance and value of cultural heritage to cultures and societies globally. They also made individual commitments for future action in their own countries and organizations.

There has been a great deal of activity worldwide since the conclusion of the seminar. For example, the Declaration has been translated into Arabic and Croatian and widely distributed to the heads of cultural agencies administrators and conservation professionals throughout the world. Promising projects for training, education, and documentation are being discussed, participants are planning visits and workshops in other colleagues' countries, and articles have been published worldwide. The keynote speech by Lonnie Bunch, Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, is available on both YouTube and ForaTV, and a full report on the seminar is available both on the Web and in published form.

## Recent Activities

### National Medals for Museum and Library Service

The National Medals for Museum and Library Service, which honor outstanding institutions that make significant and exceptional contributions to their community, were expanded in 2009 to include an honor for libraries and museums that are advancing global cultural understanding. Nomination forms are available on the IMLS Web site at [www.ims.gov/medals](http://www.ims.gov/medals).

### IMLS and China: A Partnership for Cultural Exchange

Building on a June 2007 cultural accord, in November 2008 IMLS entered into a Partnership for Cultural Exchange with the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China to strengthen cultural cooperation between the two countries. The agreement calls for sharing best practices in library and museum services, including enhancement of public service and access to information in libraries, promotion of youth engagement, education in museums, and applications of new technologies in libraries and museums to engage audiences and increase the availability of information online. Two major components of this partnership are an American/Chinese librarian exchange program and a professional development exchange opportunity for Chinese museum professionals.

### Think Globally, Act Globally— A Library Professional Exchange

Under the auspices of the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program, IMLS is funding the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign Libraries, in partnership with UIUC's Mortenson Center for International Library Programs, the Library Society of China, and the Chinese American Library Association, to develop a three-year partnership between librarians in the U.S.

and China. The project is providing workshops for Chinese librarians and library educators, in both the U.S. and China, on American practices in library public services. Conversely, U.S. librarians are learning about Chinese resources that can be made available online to meet a growing demand for Chinese-language information about China. The project has developed a Web-based portal at [www.library.illinois.edu/China](http://www.library.illinois.edu/China).

### Museum Professional Exchange

With support from the U.S. Department of State, collections care professionals from China participated in the IMLS *Connecting to Collections* initiative. IMLS hosted five representatives from museums and libraries in China at National Tour forums held in Denver, CO; San Diego, CA; and Buffalo, NY. Each of these forums catered to specialized collections care issues, and nearly 1,000 participants attended the four nationwide forums.

### Project: 20/20

For the last four years, Project: 20/20, an international filmmaker and film exchange program of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, has helped foster cultural dialogue and engage global audiences. In the program, U.S. and international filmmakers are paired and sent to U.S. embassies all over the world, and to U.S. domestic film venues, art theaters, museums, and libraries in underserved communities, to screen their films, hold educational workshops and panels, and engage local audiences. In fall 2010, the program will be re-launched with new partnerships, and a major screening event will happen on the National Mall in Washington, DC, in spring 2011.

*Below left:* Mary Chute, IMLS Deputy Director for Libraries, and Li Dongwen, Director General of the Chinese Ministry of Culture's Bureau for External Cultural Relations, sign the *Partnership for Cultural Exchange* agreement. *Right:* IMLS Acting Director Marsha L. Semmel speaks at the Organization of American States's Fourth Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Culture and Highest Appropriate Authorities in November 2008.



### **Closing the Digital Curation Gap: An International Collaboration to Integrate Best Practice, Research & Education**

Scientists, researchers, and scholars across the world generate vast amounts of digital data, but the scientific record and the documentary heritage created in digital form are at risk— from technology obsolescence, the fragility of digital media, and the lack of baseline practices for managing and preserving digital data. The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Science, is collaborating with IMLS and Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), which supports innovation in digital technologies in U.K. colleges and universities, and its funded entities, the Strategic Content Alliance and the Digital Curation Centre on the Closing the Digital Curation Gap project. The goal of the project is to establish baseline practices for the storage, maintenance, and preservation of digital data to help ensure their enhancement and continuing long-term use.

### **Valued Resources: Roles and Responsibilities of Digital Curators and Publishers**

IMLS is collaborating with the University College London's Centre for Publishing and Department of Information Studies for the next two years to co-sponsor the Bloomsbury Conference on E-Publishing and E-Publications. The aim of the conference is to promote productive relationships among librarians and publishers in the increasingly digital environment of scholarly communications. The 2010 and 2011 conferences will also be designed to encourage collaboration among U.S. and U.K. library and information science researchers, practitioners and publishers. The theme of the 2010 conference, to be held in London, is "Valued Resources: Roles and Responsibilities of Digital Curators and Publishers." For more information see [www.ucl.ac.uk/infostudies/e-publishing](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/infostudies/e-publishing).

### **International Meetings**

IMLS staff members participate in international meetings on policy issues relating to cultural stewardship and engagement, education, access to information and the knowledge economy, cultural diversity, and promotion of the role of museums and libraries in the global society. Hosts of these international meetings include the United Nations Agencies, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Intellectual Property Organization, as well as other Intergovernmental Organizations, including the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) IMLS participated the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and in drafting Digital Content and Public Sector Information Policy Principles, which were adopted in June 2008 by the Member States of the OECD. In addition to promoting international engagement, IMLS's efforts in this area help develop partners throughout the government who can recognize and leverage the important role of museum, library, and information services in achieving national and international priorities.

### **21st Century Skills**

Based on the IMLS *Museums, Libraries, and 21st Century Skills* report, The American Embassy in Rome invited Marsha Semmel to present at its annual Spring Event for librarians, an all-day symposium for almost 200 libraries from Italy. In addition, Semmel fielded questions from around the world at a State Department initiated webinar and explored partnership opportunities with Italian government officials and foundation representatives.

*Left:* Visitors from the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program visit the IMLS offices in July 2009. *Right:* During her visit to Rome, Marsha L. Semmel (center) visits with Paul Arenson (left) and Mounir Bouchenaki (right) from the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property.



## Conclusion

In its role as the largest source of federal support for the nation's museums and libraries, IMLS helps these institutions connect people to information and ideas worldwide, through both technological and traditional means. Projects on global topics and cross-border collaborations can further strengthen museums and libraries, supporting professional development activities and community projects that create opportunities for lifelong learning and for sustaining heritage, culture, and knowledge. For example, IMLS invites applications that incorporate or emphasize 21st century skills, including global awareness, in their programs and services.

The purpose of the agency is to promote museum, library, and information services, and to serve the American people. International partnerships should be developed with this in mind, in particular by demonstrating how the knowledge gained by such international activities can directly support American museums and libraries in their missions.

While IMLS does not make grants to non-U.S. libraries and museums, such institutions located abroad may partner with eligible U.S. institutions on an IMLS-funded grant project. For example, IMLS can support education or continuing education activities, such as exchange programs, for a combination of U.S. and non-U.S. library and museum professionals, so long as the project is consistent with the criteria of the particular grant program and the scope of the project, and demonstrates service to the American people. In addition, IMLS grant funds may be used for travel outside the U.S. under certain conditions, and grant-funded workshops may be offered in non-U.S. locations. More specific information for each grant program can be obtained by contacting individual program staff at the agency.

In short, IMLS encourages American museums and libraries to explore ways of increasing global awareness for their communities. This report and the activities described herein chart the agency's expanding emphasis on the important role that museums and libraries play in "Strengthening Connections, Advancing Global Understanding."

## About IMLS

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to 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 sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov).

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<sup>1</sup> Capps, Randy, Jeffrey Passel, Daniel Perez-Lopez, and Michael Fix. *The New Neighbors: A Users' Guide to Data on Immigrants in U.S. Communities*. The Urban Institute: Washington, DC (2003), 4.