

LAURA BUSH

welcomes you to

THE WHITE HOUSE COLLOQUIUM
ON
LIBRARIES, MUSEUMS,
AND
LIFELONG LEARNING

honoring the recipients of

THE NATIONAL AWARDS FOR MUSEUM
AND LIBRARY SERVICE



Tuesday, October 29, 2002

Opening Remarks by Mrs. Bush White House Colloquium on Libraries, Museums and Lifelong Learning

October 29, 2002

As Delivered

Thank you very much. And welcome to The White House Colloquium on Libraries, Museums and Lifelong Learning. I would like to welcome Dr. Bob Martin and our distinguished presenters, Dr. Jeffrey Patchen, Dr. Peter Marzio and Dr. David Carr. I would also like to welcome Congressman Ralph Regula and our Librarian of Congress, Dr. Billington.

And a special welcome to the 2001 recipients of the National Awards for Museum and Library Service. Would members of the following museums and libraries please stand so that we may congratulate you on your outstanding contributions to your communities and our country – the Alaska Resources Library and Information Services, the Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose, the Hancock County Library System, the Miami Museum of Science, the New England Aquarium and the Providence Public Library.

Today, more of America's finest museums and libraries will join your ranks as we present the 2002 National Awards for Museum and Library Service. We honor these museums and libraries for helping to build communities of character and a nation of lifelong learners. James Madison, our country's fourth president, knew that great institutes of learning were essential for the expansion of liberty and the preservation of democracy. He said, "Learned institutions ought to be favorite objects of every free people. They throw that light over the public mind." America's libraries and museums have been lighting the way to liberty and learning since our country's very beginning.

Today, they continue to reflect the history, the culture and the very spirit of America. In big towns and small, our museums and libraries serve as stewards of our history and ideas. Through exhibits, collections and discussion, they tell our nation's stories and connect generations of Americans to one another. But museums and libraries do more than provide us with information, they engage us in learning – learning for a lifetime.

Along with our homes and schools, museums and libraries provide the strongest foundation for learning in our communities. Children and adults know that when they have a question about the world, their local library is the place to go. And someone will always be there to help them find the answer – our dedicated librarians. I want to thank the museum directors and librarians here today for joining us. Your job is an important one. Museum directors and librarians educate and inform the public, and by doing so, you strengthen our great democracy.

Our award recipients today have strengthened and enriched their communities by finding innovative ways to expand public access to information, to bridge the digital divide, and to make learning an esteemed life-long pursuit. These museums and libraries have broadened our children's minds and imaginations, and they have ignited – **and** reignited the spark of learning in people of all ages.

Our award recipients are as diverse as the cultural landscape of our great country – from Bonners Ferry, Idaho, where in a community of more than 9,000 – 8,300 have cards for the Boundary County District Library. And they **use** them – logging more than 73,000 visits to the library last year alone. The library has strengthened its commitment to children with monthly bookmobile visits to daycare centers and by providing toddlers with their very first books. In New York, the Wildlife Conservation Society of the Bronx Zoo goes beyond animals and exhibits to provide reading programs for at-risk children and for homeless families. They also help young girls learn about careers in science through the Girls for Planet Earth program. In Connecticut, the Hartford Public Library provides children with even greater access to books and learning by building libraries right where children are – in schools. The library’s Creating Readers program provides family literacy education in 11 schools, while Family Place promotes the importance of reading aloud and provides parents with reading instruction.

In Philadelphia, the Please Touch Museum provides mentoring and work-based learning programs for teenagers. And through the Family Court Project, art therapists help make court-supervised visits between children and their non-custodial parents more engaging.

In southwestern Pennsylvania, the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art brings Mary Cassatt and Andy Warhol to life for 71,000 residents of this rural community. The Museum brought the joy of art to more than 35,000 students this year through programs like Preschool Art Hour and Kids Art Camp. They are already preparing to teach nearly twice that many next year.

Down South, the Southwest Georgia Regional Public Library’s motto is “Let your mind soar.” They are helping children and adults do just that with bookmobiles, summer reading programs, online homework help and a World War II Veterans History Project that shares the stories of local heroes with their community.

I want to congratulate our 2002 Museum and Library Service award winners. I commend you for serving as catalysts for civic engagement – for preserving our great history and democracy – and for helping generations of Americans realize the value of lifelong learning.

Our speakers here today know about the significant contributions museums and libraries make in our lives. As the director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Dr. Martin has been instrumental in helping to advance the mission and the role of America’s museums and libraries. His knowledge about museums and libraries is unsurpassed **and** well earned. I’ve been told he spends so much time in libraries and museums, he was once mistaken as part of an exhibit.

Ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Robert Martin.

Cultural Institutions and Civic Engagement by David Carr

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It is an important hour because as this morning spreads across the nation we can imagine the opening of about 40,000 doors and gates to 20,000 public and academic libraries, 16,000 museums, 3500 history centers and sites, 600 gardens and arboreta, 200 zoos and aquaria, many small archival collections and countless exhibitions in neighborhoods and centers of pride in place. [ii](#)

As we imagine these doors opening, we should also imagine the people of those American places entering and beginning to search for something they require.

The American Library Association, reporting data from the year 2000, gathered by more than 9000 public libraries, tells us that 1,146,284,000 visits were made to public libraries in that year.

ALA also reports a May 2000 survey of 1000 citizens, nearly all of whom “believe that libraries are places of opportunity for education, self-help and ... free access to all,” and that “libraries and librarians play an essential role in our democracy and are needed now more than ever.”

The American Association of Museums notes a 1999 report saying, “American museums average approximately 865 million visits per year or 2.3 million visits per day” -- probably five million hours per day.

Library users plus museum users equals 2 billion users each year in America.

So at this time of day -- in North Carolina, Indiana, Texas, New York, Arizona, California, Illinois, Hawaii, Alaska -- something is beginning, something is going on, in the cultural institutions of our nation.

What do such places, in such communities, contain?

Traces of individual lives, many lived right in that place, lives now over and done. They contain records of institutions, structures, and the faces of those who built them – perhaps ghostly faces in sepia photographs. Documents of the free associations that shaped that place: unions, congregations, high school debating teams, fire departments, immigrant societies, tribes, refugees, quilting circles. They contain art objects and forms of knowledge assembled and preserved in the name of the people, who use the collection for every reason, from overdue history paper, to nearby birdsong, to new job search, to a local artist’s sketchbook, to the email address for the President of the United States

Human beings are present as well, people who design and build these collections, who think constantly of the past living into the present and the present living into the future, and who opened the doors and gates today.

And there we find evidences of knowledge in the midst of mysteries, understandings of the responsibilities that linger whenever we associate with each other in service and mutual assistance, ideas of how work is done by human hands -- how one handmade life can be a breathing document of genius, and the cumulated experiences and insights of eyewitnesses, praise-singers, record-keepers.

And we find human beings who offer what only human beings can offer: voices, questions, encouragement, and the authentic keys to all our lives: integrity, generosity, and kindness.

In John W. Gardner's word, they offer us *self-renewal*; they encourage us to do the hardest thing: to think again. They confirm our place in a narrative: our own story, our family story, our community story, our national story. They provide evidence that we can become authors of our own knowledge. They make possible a fearless view of complexity.

They contain systems, living and not; objects, books to be read; books that are tools; works of craft and works of art. All of these are in conversation with us. Wendell Berry writes:

Works of art participate in our lives; we are not just distant observers of *their* lives. They are in conversation among themselves and with us. This is a part of the description of human life; we do the way we do partly because of things said to us by works of art, and because of things that we have said in reply. ⁱⁱⁱ

What are these conversations about? Every common theme in the life-course: family, home, affection, compassion, hope, ambiguity, change, complexity, crisis, frailty, conflict, despair.

Each life at the entrance of our institutions this morning is unfinished, bearing an array of questions and hopes. Each life carries its long and deep inquiries near at hand, begun in school or in religion or in reading or in personal conversation. The human life they occupy has carried them forward, renewed them, and given them energy and value today.

Each life holds a series of promises that will always lead learning forward, some continuous with the past and some revolutionary, among them the promise, through learning, of solace and strength. Every person steps across the threshold with an unspoken question: *What do I want to happen here for me today?*

As we live in the midst of generations, we know that learning never ends. Growing through our questions, it becomes deeper and more expansive at once. As any librarian has seen, people find courage, trust and insight in themselves as they find knowledge. Only by building ourselves among others can we become ourselves; only by believing in the value of others can we find value in ourselves.

What do cultural institutions mean to civic life? I think that every opportunity people have to gather information and establish a fair point of view nourishes consideration and conscience. The weaving together of our many-stranded experiences into a community narrative strengthens empathy and responsibility to others. As information and complexity increase, I believe the likelihood of understanding entire patterns of life increases as well.

When we are at our best we understand our duty to live up to what we have been given to know, and we go beyond it, we make something greater of it, and we make something more of ourselves through it. Alan Wolfe writes about “the capacity of Americans to reinvent their world ... to tinker with families, neighborhoods, and churches, searching for new forms that provide for both tradition and modernity, freedom and community.”^[iii]

For these reasons public cultural institutions are the treasures of the community, and the engaged citizen is the treasure of the institution. But the civic enterprise does not require giants; it requires learners. It doesn't require heroes; it requires the everyday habits of curiosity, maybe a little edginess and impatience. It requires people who are more than smart: they must know their empty places and how to fill them. But the civic culture will need people who are smart no more than it will require people who are generous, forgiving and kind.

Civic culture requires people who understand the motions of human experiences because our civic engagements are grounded in an understanding of other lives and other experiences than ours, and the understanding that we are united in equal possession and authorship of American culture. Our cultural institutions give us this: a concept of the whole enterprise of our world, vast and only partially charted, yet grounded in our towns and cities, and in us.

In cultural institutions, human beings are open, unfinished, works of art and craft. Each of us enters these places out of hope and will, and out of the desire for self-rescue. Emily Dickinson, model of the courage able to flourish in a still, small room, wrote, *I dwell in Possibility*.^[iv] Quietly extending this legacy, Eudora Welty wrote the final words of her memoir, *All serious daring starts from within*.^[v]

When the gates are open in cultural institutions it is never too late to dare, or to dwell in possibility. As we observe and explore, it is necessary that we become apprentices to each other at times, storytellers, mapmakers and craftspeople as well. We seek the outcome of our own stories, we look for convivial paths and tools, and we marvel when we are given a rare glimpse of mastery. We might come, in this way, to understand where in our *selves* mastery resides.

Jean Bethke Elshtain writes, “Civil society creates spaces for the enactment of human projects.”^[vi] She refers to “meaningful involvement in some form of community ... commitments and ties that locate the citizen in bonds of trust, reciprocity, mutuality, competence [and I will add fearlessness] for the task at hand.”^[vii]

As in individual lives, our community energies can be sustained only if we have learning and renewal in our neighborhoods, and anticipation at our edges, where we encounter each other in the civil play of civic engagement. In our museums and libraries we construct forums for the play of a culture – the emotions, the dramas, the games, the tryings-out of our untried lives.

In Tracy Kidder's *Home Town*,^[viii] we see that a living community is always in transition, not toward some great particular future, but in delicate adaptations to the immediate moment. Cultural institutions, though they are always secondary to human patience and courage, exist to help us to move ourselves, and therefore our communities to the edges of the possible.

In such ways democracy, based on the free exchange of information, works in our world. Our local institutions touch and magnify each other as we exchange information, because the table of our community is so small. When we sit around that table and present ourselves among each other, when we take our memberships and serve, we are more than ourselves alone.

Some part of democratic structures must always say to us: This is a form of constructive trust of which we all are capable.

We understand our community best by understanding what it wants to have happen, for itself and for all of its citizens, how it wants to nurture itself; by what objects and knowledge it keeps from generation to generation; by the regard for people embedded in its policies and values; and by how freely knowledge is shared as a community possession. These are acts that commit us to the future.

Why do we do this? Wendell Berry writes, "We are up against mystery."^[ix] He provides the fundamental argument for cultural institutions: "We are wholly dependent on a pattern, an all-inclusive form, that we partly understand."^[x]

Berry also writes about an artifact, an old bucket, hanging for fifty years on a fence post.

However small a landmark the old bucket is, it is not trivial. It is one of the signs by which I know my country and myself. And to me it is irresistibly suggestive in the way it collects leaves and other woodland sheddings as they fall through time. It collects stories, too, as they fall through time. It is irresistibly metaphorical. It is doing in a passive way what a human community must do actively and thoughtfully. A human community, too, must collect leaves and stories, and turn them to account. It must build soil, and build that memory of itself ... that will be its culture. These two kinds of accumulation, of local soil and local culture, are intimately related. ...^[xi]

When a community loses its memory, its members no longer know one another. How can they know one another if they have forgotten or have never learned one another's stories? If they do not know one another's stories, how can they know whether or not to trust one another? People who do not trust one another do not help one another, and moreover they fear one another.^[xii]

We turn toward the authentic, for strength and energy; toward lived lives and living experiences, for evidences of human integrity; and toward the mirror of our own questions, in order to see that *who we are* also allows us to imagine *who we might yet become*. We turn to these things in order to turn toward each other.

This is the America of Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson, grounded in the people of a place, finding regeneration and replenishment in conversations and artifacts of the physical world, in turn restoring to ourselves a wild, inspiring imagination of something previously hidden.

It is for that hidden thing that we may look as a culture. As we know now, in our throes of loss and resilience, public culture is a form of healing, a finding out of where one is, and of what one is a part.

We need to stop thinking of museums and libraries as places where we keep *things* safe; we need to see them as places where we are *ourselves* made safe, and strengthened, and where we may safely become what we have not yet been.

American cultural institutions are the most extensive civic structures in the world whose authority and integrity exist in order to convey vision, promise and trust to the lives of all citizens; which is to say, they are critical agents in our imagination of a democracy. Which of course is where democracy always begins.

And so, at this hour, people stand at the thresholds of our cultural institutions, in differing moments of anticipation and possibility; and then they enter, to become further different, renewed perhaps, and closer at this moment to the lives they imagine they were meant to lead, about to know better what they feel they were meant to know, and about to become what they know they must be.

Thank you.

^[i] The data that follow were gathered on October 8 and 16, 2002 from the websites of several organizations: the American Library Association (<http://www.ala.org>), the American Association of Museums (<http://www.aam-us.org/>), the American Association for State and Local History (<http://www.aaslh.org/>), the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta (<http://www.aabga.org/>), the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (<http://www.aza.org/>), and the National Park Service.

^[ii] Wendell Berry, "Style and Grace," in *What are People For?*, New York: North Point Press, 1990, page 64.

^[iii] Alan Wolfe, "Is Civil Society Obsolete?," in *Community Works: The Revival of Civil Society in America*. E. J. Dionne, Jr., editor. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1998, page 22.

^[iv] Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. New York: Little, Brown, 1960, p. 327.

^[v] Eudora Welty, *One Writer's Beginnings*. In *Stories, Essays & Memoir*, New York: The Library of America, 1998, p. 948. [Harvard University Press, 1984.]

^[vi] Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Not a Cure-All," in *Community Works: The Revival of Civil Society in America*. E. J. Dionne, Jr., editor. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1998, page 28.

^[vii] *Ibid.*, page 25.

^[viii] Tracy Kidder, *Home Town*, New York: Random House, 1999.

^[ix] Wendell Berry. *Home Economics*. New York: North Point Press, 1987, page 4.

^[x] *Ibid.*, page ix.

^[xi] Wendell Berry, "The Work of Local Culture," in *What are People For?*, New York: North Point Press, 1990, page 154.

^[xii] *Ibid.*, page 157.

Libraries, Museums and Lifelong Learning by Dr. Peter C. Marzio

Director, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

White House Colloquium on Libraries, Museums and Lifelong Learning

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Right now, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston as, I imagine, at many other museums around the country, staff members are meeting to plan grant proposals for the IMLS's 2003 Learning Opportunity Grants. The language of the Program Overview for these grants reads that "The Learning Opportunities funding program will encourage museums to invest in their abilities to use their collections and services to strengthen learning in the schools, in the home, and in partnership with other community organizations." Today, I would like to use this statement as a starting point for a discussion of libraries, museums, and lifelong learning.

What can museums contribute to learning both in their own buildings and in homes, libraries, and other organizations throughout their communities? The answer is both extraordinarily simple and overwhelmingly complex – we can help people learn "to look".

Over the past twenty five years, I have worked at two museums – the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Both institutions have a dual structure: museum and art school. In these schools teaching students to look is a daily concern. The classrooms are filled with men and women, with boys and girls all undergoing a significant transformation. It seems to me that visual education requires a depth of personal honesty and security that is not demanded in quite the same way by any other discipline.

At an early age we teach children to read, to write, and to calculate numbers; but we do virtually nothing to teach them "to look". Our environment today is a visual communications maze – we live with a surfeit of images all imperfectly apprehended. The man-made signs of our everyday life are a visual jumble and more and more the need arises to have within our brains a mechanism for visual order. Our psychological health demands it. And this is what artists do, they create and organize and represent things to us in a visual way that helps us think about the world around us.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the great educational philosophers and teachers believed that seeing was a key to a real education: Kant and Hegel, Pestalozzi and Montessori, to say nothing of Americans like Horace Mann and Henry Barnard (the first U.S. commissioner of education) argued that from childhood to old age a keen visual sense stimulated the brain and fed the imaginative faculties like a catalyst in chemical solution. Even practical minded souls of the nineteenth century argued that if men and women learned to see keenly, everything requiring design – from a hooked rug to a vast city – would improve.

Let me give you an example. Right now the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is hosting an extraordinary exhibition of quilts created over the past century by women living in the small community of Gee's Bend, Alabama. Located in southwest Alabama on a sliver of land five miles long and eight miles wide, the community is a virtual island surrounded by a bend in the Alabama River. Without a ferry service for decades, the river has confined the residents. The

trip to the county seat of Camden, directly across the river from Gee's Bend, takes one hour.

All the Gee's Bend quilters are women, working in traditions that have been handed down over the generations. Use of motifs, techniques, and textiles have endured and evolved over the course of the 20th century. The women were motivated to create the quilts by the need to keep their families warm, and they used rags and scraps of fabrics from their everyday lives—corduroy, denim, cotton sheets, and well-worn clothing. Like many American quilters, they transformed a necessity into a work of art—characterized by a unique bold, innovative approach to design that is unique.

These women had no formal art training, but they learned how to look, how to think visually, how to understand their materials, to make decisions and to trust their own creative judgments. One of the most famous Gee's Bend quilter, Annie Mae Young expresses her creative process:

“I never did like the book patterns some people had. Those things had too many little bitty blocks. I like big pieces and long strips. However I get them, that's how I used them. I liked to sew them however they be. I work it out, study the way to make it, get it to be right, kind of like working a puzzle. You find the colors, and the shapes, and certain fabrics that work out right. I always like cotton, but not the other stuff too much. Didn't like silk, or crepe, and didn't use wool much. I stayed with what I started with, old clothes that I could tear up. It always come out level.”

That Mrs. Young's quilts are today exhibited in major American art museums, points out the egalitarian roots of many museums in the United States. And demonstrates one of the great glories of art museums in America. While many cities decry that museums take objects out of their original context, museums create a new context in which art, which would never have co-existed in time and place, can be seen together, compared, contrasted to help us understand both what is unique and what is universal in great works of art.

For example, visitors to the Museum of Fine Arts, this fall can compare the rhythmic patterns of the quilts from Gee's Bend to the colors and patterns in American abstract art of the early 20th century. As visitors exit the Gee's Bend exhibition, they are next to a gallery with paintings by Stanton Macdonald Wright, Marsden Hartley, and others who are considered the pioneers of abstraction in American art. Or, by turning to the left, visitors can see a remarkable exhibition of photo collages by an almost unknown Japanese woman artist, Okanoue Toshiko. Working in the early 1950s, Okanoue cut and pasted images from American magazines much as the Gee's Bend quilters cut and sewed fabrics. While the quilts tell us about life in an isolated community in the rural American south, the photo collages provide insights into the life and work of a Japanese woman, a pioneering artist, commenting on the role of women in Japan, the displacements of war and its aftermath, and the unique skills of this remarkable artist.

This confluence of exhibitions reveals that American museums are wonderfully all encompassing in the art they collect and exhibit. History teaches us that museums in the United States were not established upon the lofty Greek tradition of a temple to the muses where men (and probably only men) could find inspiration. They did not begin as exalted seats of learning like the library at Alexandria. They do not trace their origins to royal collections, as does the

Louvre in Paris, nor were they envisioned as princely collections of curiosities and precious objects like the Dresden collection.

In America, museums began in the spirit of democracy. They were designed to serve the public, to give people access to the greatest works of art for the inculcation of political and social value. This mission encompasses an educational function as the charters of all major museums attest. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago all insist that education is a primary purpose for their existence.

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston began as an art-education, outreach program for the Houston Public Schools in 1900, when a group of women, many active suffragettes, formed the Houston Public School Art League. Using reproductions of great paintings and sculptures, they taught art appreciation in the schools. To support their educational efforts, they presented exhibitions and sponsored lectures. Soon, Houstonians began giving them works of art, and these original works were also taken into the schools as used for teaching. From this initial group of progressive volunteer teachers grew the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, which opened its doors to the public in April 1924, as a small art collection dedicated to the community and "...first and foremost to bring art into the everyday life of the layman."

How are American museums carrying those original missions now, in the early 21st century? There are of course as many answers as there are museums. Since, each city or county or town is different, and unique; each museum and each library has to learn how to forge effective partnerships within the context of its own group of communities. And to develop these partnerships it is necessary to know the history, culture, and values of your own institution, as well of the possible partner organizations in your region.

Because the origins of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston are so thoroughly rooted in education and in community outreach and partnerships, developing new programs and initiatives to encourage lifelong learning was a very comfortable, but nevertheless challenging, task. In the mid-1980s, the trustees reaffirmed a commitment to education and they began to build a strong museum education department as a complement to the extensive classes for adults and children offered at the Glassell School of Art. In 1984 the museum education program consisted of a curator responsible for education on a part-time basis, a tour scheduler, a part-time assistant, and about 50 docents. Today, the education department has a staff of 15 and 200 docents in addition to the faculty of 55 at the Glassell School of Art, and museum educators at our two house museums, Rienzi and Bayou Bend. In 2001-2002, the most recently completed fiscal year, participation in museum programs on site totaled over 295,000. Our outreach programs reached an additional 745,000.

When we looked for compatible community partners we turned first of all to the Houston Public Library. Like all large urban library systems, the Houston library has many branches. Libraries serve as centers of learning, as safe after-school havens, as social gathering places for seniors. The staff in these branch libraries really know the local communities, the adults and the kids, the new immigrants and the long-time residents.

The Houston and Harris County libraries are ideal partners for us. Since the museum is an institution with one central facility to serve the entire metropolitan area it is clear that we need satellites to carry out our message. In 1985, we began a program of exhibitions that traveled to branches of the public library. Because we wanted people to learn how to look, we sent original objects from our collections. Not reproductions, but original objects, something fairly radical for a major art museum to do. Library exhibitions included Native American pottery from the Southwest; American decorative arts; works of art with the theme of family; and photographs. And we worked with the library staff to develop special reading lists, designed shelves of books, programs for families, for schools, and for adults. And in 1998 we expanded the program to add the Harris County Public Library system. And in 2001, we sent the library exhibition to the small rural community of Beeville, TX, a town of 15,000 in a county of 30,000 located 150 south of Houston.

From this exhibition program grew an incredibly close partnership with the city and county libraries. The museum is now part of the Houston Library's after school initiative and summer reading program. We host family days for children who read a certain number of books. At the county libraries, summer art camps that include a visit to the museum have been enormously successful. One family, in July, walked a mile to and from their home to their library branch so that the children could take part in the art camp.

In 1999 we began to provide bus trips from the branches to the museum for tours, for lectures, and for family programs as a way to tie our activities in Houston's far-flung neighborhoods back to the museum. This was a difficult decision to reach and there was a lot of resistance, even among our education department. At the museum, the reasoning went, we offer so many programs at no cost to the participants, the least people could do was to get to the museum. Many of us were wrong because we were ignoring an important fact of life in Houston.

Houston covers 8,778 square miles, more ground than any other city in the country. In fact, Houston is bigger than the state of Rhode Island and the entire countries of Israel and El Salvador. Houston was built during the age of the automobile, without the transportation infrastructures of older cities in the east and the mid-west. We had to learn from our colleagues in the public library, and from our own experience, that many Houstonians are "transportationally deprived". Getting to the museum was the insurmountable barrier for most people.

So now, we include a visit to the museum as part of all programs that take place at library branches. Buses filled with adults leave library branches to attend Friday morning museum lectures. And in a sign of real commitment to this partnership, the Harris County Public Library has applied for and received a grant that pays for the transportation costs associated with the summer art camps.

And there is an added benefit to providing transportation – first-time visitors come to the museum with their friends, family, and neighbors. Our research has shown that many people from low-income areas, people without a lot of education, people who have never been to an art museum before, believe that art museums are not places that will welcome them. That they will not see other people like themselves at the museum. When the museum sends a bus to their

neighborhoods, the invitation and the welcome is unqualified. And when these first-timers arrive at the museum, accompanied by their friends and families and neighbors and the comfort level rises.

In 2001-2002, these specialized programs attracted an audience of almost 150,000 people. The vast majority would not have had the opportunity to learn about the great works of art, if we had not gone to them. To finish this discussion about partnerships with the libraries, when Houston's mayor promoted library use as a key goal of his first term in office, the museum responded by offering free admission on Saturdays and Sundays to any young person ages 6 to 18 who showed a Houston Public Library Power Card or any other public library card.

Let's get back to the idea of learning. Why care about bringing new audiences to the museum? Over the past 10 years audience development, underserved audiences have become buzzwords within the museum field. Reaching out to new audiences has become fashionable. But the question remains, why should we have to think about reaching people who have not had the educational and economic advantages often associated with the fine arts?

Because as institutions that benefit from public privileges we have public responsibilities. Because reaching these audiences, extending opportunities for lifelong learning about art and for the enjoyment of looking at art is the right thing to do. Not the easiest thing to do, but the right thing. And we in Houston have learned that this engagement with the myriad of communities which comprise America cannot be seen as either a project with a beginning and end, or a project that depends on grant money. A dedication to lifelong learning for the most diverse museum audiences must be the way that museums work everyday. It's as basic to a museum's existence as are as just as collecting, exhibiting, and preserving objects.

Something wonderful happens when new audiences encounter museums and the collections. We, the somewhat jaded professional staff, become affected by the sense of excitement and discovery new audiences bring to the museum. And this reminds us that, most importantly, we in museums have something to learn as well as teach and our work is unfinished unless we are doing both.

Let's think again about museums and libraries. You can feel very comfortable going to a library to learn about something new or unfamiliar. That is in fact often the reason that people go to libraries. They want to learn, by reading. Libraries can assist people in learning about everything from starting a small business, to wallpapering a kitchen, to researching a Ph.D. dissertation, to finding new books to read for pleasure. In a library, reference librarians, card and on-line catalogues, and many other resources guide the learner. There is even a system of interlibrary loan so learners can obtain books outside the collection of a particular library. In a library, the learner makes the decisions of which books to read, how many to read and when - in short, the library learner/user constructs his or her own curriculum.

What happens in an art museum? Too often the situation is very different. Art is displayed on the walls in a particular order, often to tell a certain story about the history of art, the relationship among works created at a particular time or place. Museums, especially art museums, are more rarified places, with collections more inherently precious because so many of the objects are unique. While a reader can place two books side by side and compare ways in which different

authors interpret an historical event, a piece of literature or a movie, visitors to a museum follow a path that an expert, the curator, has determined for them. Thus visitors to an art museum often come to believe that there is a certain body of knowledge that is required to understand the art on view, that there is an implicit or explicit curriculum to be mastered in order to have a “successful” museum visit. A successful experience at the library comes when a reader recognizes that he/she now understands a subject that was previously unfamiliar. The reader sets out the learning objectives, if you will, and understands when those have been achieved. In a museum, visitors often feel as if they are supposed to learn something the museum has predetermined but not stated overtly.

In 1996, in preparation for the construction of the new Audrey Jones Beck Building at the Museum of Fine Arts, we convened a panel of experts to advise us presenting and interpreting collections in the new Beck Building and in the existing Caroline Wiess Law Building. One of the wisest and most important pieces of advice came from David Carr, then a professor at Rutgers University, now on the faculty of the University of North Carolina. An expert in libraries and information studies, Dr. Carr noted that visitors should be “the authors of their own museum experience”. Orientation materials and information should enable visitors to explore museums on their own, to learn in their own ways, and most importantly to choose what to learn about and how to learn about it. He cautioned us to avoid any suggestion of a “curriculum”, of facts that must be mastered or ideas that must be absorbed in order to have a “successful museum experience.” No visitor should feel as though he or she can “flunk the museum.”

His words were a revelation to all of us in museums, trained in art history. We don’t think of our collections or exhibitions as having a secret, underlying meanings because we know that those meanings are. Professor Carr’s advice resonated with remarks by a participant in the June 1996 meeting of the American Association of Museum’s National Advisory Committee on Education. The report of this committee notes that as museum staff we “generally...see ourselves as our visitors. To try to get beyond that is one of the greatest challenges that we as professionals in this field have to face.”

Our goals, then, became clearer: we had to find ways to make the museum more like libraries, a place where visitors could go to set their own agenda, to focus their own learning. Like working with diverse communities, this is an on-going project, but we have made some important beginnings. We paid close attention to all of the didactic materials in our galleries, labels and wall texts. Words were carefully selected to be appropriate for a general audience. Sentences were short for easy reading when visitors were standing. And the texts for individual works of art point visitors back to the art, to look more closely, to see and understand, or to think about something that they might have overlooked. We developed audio tour stops for over 350 works in our collection in a random-access format so that visitors can pick and choose the works they want to learn about. These tours are available in both English and Spanish. We have developed teacher materials that are not pre-arranged in sets, but present information on individual works of art that teachers can mix and match to meet their specific curriculum needs. And we have, in our Kinder Foundation Teacher Resource Center, the staff to assist them. Finally, we have developed and are continuing to expand our web site with additional learning opportunities.

Note something very important here. The audio tour, the teacher materials, the web site are all resources visitors can choose to access. The galleries contain works of art, labels and short texts, and at the center, beautiful works of art. A gallery is not a classroom; a work of art is not an illustration in the printed book that should be surrounded with a lot of text. The experience of viewing great works of art is more than a learning experience. It is an encounter with beauty, an opportunity to step outside daily life and in a beautiful and elegant setting. We wanted to create an environment, in which people could look and through looking, think, imagine, and dream.

This is not as easy as it sounds. And we had to make some very practical decisions as well as artistic decisions to create this environment. We took care of the visitors' physical needs so that they could open themselves to art. Don't laugh, but we now have restrooms on all levels of the Beck Building. A full-service restaurant allows people to have a meal or a snack throughout the day, to refresh. And, Houston's education director insisted that I mention this, we put seating in almost every gallery, inviting visitors to stop, to be comfortable, to spend more time with the works of art. We are experimenting even, with rocking chairs in the galleries.

So what have our visitors learned about our collection? We have initiated a number of projects that have helped us to understand and share what it is that our visitors are learning. In 1999, we published a "community catalogue" focused on the art in the museum's permanent collection. The catalogue pairs works of art from the museum with writings or works of art by Houston artists, teachers, community leaders, and children. As we on the staff learn how others look at and make meaning from works of art, we learn something new about the richness of our collections.

For example, Father Antoine Campbell, formerly the Rector of St. James Episcopal Church in Houston looked at a painting of *Tancred Baptizing Clorinda*, by Dominico Tintoretto from the 1580s and wrote, "This painting touched me because it shows both the negative and the positive aspects of religion. The founders of all the world's great religions sought to give humanity a system under which people could live together in peace. After centuries, the founders' intentions got perverted and changed to benefit not all of humankind but, instead, a particular group. A faith that was meant to give life to all became an instrument of death for some. The painting depicts how we can take something good and turn it into something terrible. The hope in the painting is the light at the top. For me it symbolized the fact that God never gives up on humanity. No matter how we may pervert and abuse the gifts of life and creation..."

A couple in Houston, he is a state senator, wrote about Matisse's *Woman with a Purple Coat*. As students at Howard University, Angelique would take her future husband, Garnet Coleman, to art exhibitions. The first birthday gift she ever gave Garnet was a framed poster of *Woman in a Purple Coat*. She said "When I look at this painting, it brings back fond memories of the past and reminds me that to appreciate the arts, you don't have to have a lot of money or knowledge of the arts, just a love of beauty and insight. It's amazing how one work of art can bring so much to the eyes and hold such a place in the heart."

We have recently begun a new feature on the museum's web site. An on-line gallery compares works in our collection and responses to those works by children who have participated in museum programs. The most popular work of art in the museum, even surpassing *The Elder*

Sister, a highly realistic work by the late nineteenth-century French academic artist, Bouguereau, is *The Light Within*, an installation by James Turrell in a tunnel connecting the two museum buildings. Children write to us that they love the tunnel because “it changed colors”, “it was so scary, it felt like you were going to fall in the red and blue”, “it was 3-D.” The overall consensus is that the tunnel “is cool and I had never seen anything like it before.” Often children’s responses take us totally by surprise and move us deeply. One third grader drew her interpretation of Corot’s great painting *Orpheus and Eurydice* and wrote, “This picture reminds me of when my grandpa passed away.”

The only way a museum can begin to elicit these kinds of responses is to invite audiences to tell us what they are learning. We have begun this dialogue and it will continue. We know we have a lot to learn from our audiences and from our community partners, especially libraries. When we think about lifelong learning, it is crucial that we, the museum staff, see ourselves as lifelong learners about art and about people. There is a wonderful first grade teacher in Houston named Deanie Allen. She used to keep a table harp in her classroom. When visitors ask her if she plays the harp she replies that she loves music and has always wanted to be able to play music, but that learning music is very difficult for her. She keeps her harp in the classroom to remind herself that she, as a teacher is also a learner, and that learning, for her and for her students, can be difficult. We work to build new audiences for the museum for exactly the same reason.

Remarks for The National Awards for Museum and Library Service

Jeffrey H. Patchen. D.M.E

President & CEO

The Children's Museum of Indianapolis

White House Colloquium on Libraries, Museums and Lifelong Learning

October 29, 2002

NOTE: Remarks are accompanied by approximately 30 slides (images of children, families, teachers, schools, libraries and museums)

Introduction

Good Morning.

First Lady Laura Bush, National Museum Services Board Chairman Kinshasha Holman Conwill, Incoming National Museum Services Board Chairman Judy Rapanos, National Commission on Libraries and Information Sciences Chairman Martha Gould, Director Institute of Museum and Library Services, Robert Martin, members of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Sciences, members of the National Museum Services board, award winners, ladies and gentlemen.

As president & CEO of the largest children's museum in the United States it is indeed a great honor to greet all of you this morning on this special occasion to honor the award winners of the National Awards for Museum Service and the National Awards for Library Service.

I've been asked to speak to you this morning about "Museums, Libraries, Schools and Student Achievement."

I'd like to put forth three key ideas:

First -- museums and libraries have a key role to play in supporting high student achievement for our young in school and for nurturing outstanding teacher performance;

Second -- museums, libraries and schools are central components of a much larger continuum of family- and life-long learning that is key to our economic, social and human well-being in the decades ahead; and

Three -- by working together purposefully; museums, libraries and schools can have a significant impact on student achievement, on family learning and life-long learning for children and their families.

PART I - Similarities

What is the nature of this wonderful relationship between museums, libraries and schools? What are some similar characteristics?

we all know that through our schools and the learning activities that occur inside them, teachers deliver content, the knowledge and skills that children need to make their way in the world; museums and libraries also deliver content, sometimes to school groups, sometimes to children alone and sometimes to families. So, in this sense, each of these entities are content deliverers.

we also know that schools, museums and libraries are both physical places and virtual places – learning can take place “on-site” or in cyberspace;

all three of these entities play a role in lifelong learning, in family learning and learning that takes place in the formal education setting of school

PART II – Unique Differences

What is unique about museums, libraries and schools?

Museums play a bit of a unique role in the learning continuum. Filled with objects, artifacts, specimens, and/or interactive experiences for their visitors, their exhibits and the context they create can make abstract learning relevant and alive. Indeed, at The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, we house more than 100,000 objects from all over the world – we believe these objects can tell powerfully transforming stories, whether it’s the Liberty Bell 7 space capsule, a 65 million-year-old dinosaur fossil, electric trains, or Native American artifacts – these objects tell stories that can bridge generations, gender, race, religion and differences.

So in a sense, museums have the power to provide a socio-cultural context for children, adults and families – a context that goes far beyond the printed or spoken word. They provide a context that allows their visitors to make meaning for themselves about the world.

Libraries are not only our country’s richest intellectual mines, filled with information, contextual linkages and opportunities to search for knowledge; but they are also in a sense a vital ‘connector’ between the worlds of formal education and schooling, of museums and our everyday lives.

PART III – Informal/family learning/free-choice learning

Museums and libraries are part of a broader field of institutions engaged in informal education or, as Dr. John Falk of the Institute for Learning Innovation has described, a ‘free-choice’ learning environment. What do we mean by “free-choice learning”?

Think for a moment about just how much learning takes place outside of school. For the first thirteen years of schooling, children are in school only 50% of the year. Add to that, after-school time, family time, time spent watching television, reading, playing, etc., and you have an incredible amount of time where learning, I would suggest, is really determined by the interests of children and their families..in this sense, learning away from school is guided more by choice than any other factor. This ‘free choice’ learning environment then, can and should play a vital role in linking what goes on in school, with what is available in the community’s cultural resources, linked in many ways by our wonderful libraries.

Another way to think of this is that what I'm describing is a continuum of life-long learning that begins with parents and family at birth, that includes formal schooling, and it is nurtured, contextualized and made meaningful by parents and family, and by free-choice learning environments like museums and libraries.

PART IV – The TCM Example

I'd like to illustrate a practical example of my third idea– that by working together purposefully; museums, libraries and schools can have a significant impact on student achievement, on family learning and life-long learning for children and their families.

At The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, we are celebrating our second anniversary of building and operating a full-service public library in our museum – full of books, videos, learning kits and 24 computer stations fully accessible to museum patrons and non-paying visitors, we have been able to connect our museum to our library system to our school programs and most importantly, create a seamless free-choice learning network for children and their families.

Our museum library, InfoZone, has seen over 400,000 visitors in its first 18 months of service. Its hours extend beyond the museum's hours to include evening hours for neighbor children and their families. Linked to our library via computer kiosks, are our galleries...

In our 13,000 square foot gallery, Mysteries in History, visitors are able to link directly to InfoZone while they are in the gallery via a computer kiosk.. This kiosk can be programmed to ask visitors a series of questions or allow them to drill down into a host of topics and related materials that they can either pick up in the InfoZone library to take home, OR, order them for pick-up at their local library.

Our Teacher Learning Resource Kits are another resource that links the museum with schools throughout the Midwest. Each classroom kits contains hands-on specimens and artifacts, along with units of study for classroom teachers and homeschoolers...we've begun aligning these with the Indiana and national standards as well.

Our summer Professional Development Institutes for teachers are another way in which we introduce to teachers how museums, and our InfoZone library can connect their students and their students families to topics they are covering in their classrooms. Again, units of study tied to our galleries and exhibitions are provided which are matched with state and national standards.

Our Distance Learning Program links students and teachers to museum experts and our vast collection of artifacts. Programs on such topics as Egypt, mummies, fossils and introduction to biotechnology offer unique interactions between the schools and the museum.

SUMMARY

As you can see, for The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, it is indeed this three-way, purposeful relationship between museums, school and libraries that not only reinforces what goes on in schools tied to student achievement, but links children and their families beyond the school day to the vast free-choice learning environment that has the potential to nurture and sustain a life-time of learning.

I offer my heartfelt congratulations to all of the award-winners, and my deepest gratitude to IMLS and the White House for the opportunity to be with you this morning.

Thank you.

Closing Remarks by Mrs. Bush

White House Colloquium on Libraries, Museums and Lifelong Learning
October 29, 2002

As delivered.

Thank you for participating in the White House Colloquium on Libraries, Museums and Lifelong Learning. And thank you Dr. Martin, Dr. Patchen, Dr. Marzio and Dr. Carr for providing us with your insight.

Congratulations to this year's recipients of the National Award for Museum and Library Service. Thanks to you, our communities are enriched with history and literature, our children are engaged and excited to learn, and the promise of lifelong learning is as strong as America itself. Even as you strive to meet the demands of an information-hungry world, your greatest priority remains to strengthen families, communities and our democracy.

As we began with the words of President James Madison, we end with his words as well – and with great pride that our museums and libraries continue to fulfill the hopes and dreams of our founding fathers. Madison said, “What spectacle can be more edifying or more seasonable, than that of liberty and learning, each leaning on the other for their mutual and surest support.” America's great learned institutions support the principles that make our country strong and free – and they will continue to light the way to liberty and learning for generations. Thank you.

IMLS AWARD LINKS:

<http://www.ims.gov/>

2002 IMLS awards

<http://www.ims.gov/whatsnew/current/101702.htm>

June White House Conference info from IMLS

<http://www.ims.gov/whatsnew/current/060402.htm>

2001 Announcement IMLS Awards

<http://www.ims.gov/whatsnew/01archive/091101.htm>

2001 Cancellation IMLS Awards

<http://www.ims.gov/whatsnew/01archive/091301.htm>