



INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES



NATIONAL MEDAL

for Museum and Library Service

2022 PROGRAM



THE IMLS NATIONAL MEDAL
IS THE NATION'S HIGHEST HONOR
FOR LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS,
a tribute to how they are
making a difference in the lives
of individuals, families, and
communities around the country.

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

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From the IMLS DIRECTOR



As we've navigated challenges to reclaiming a sense of normalcy over the past two years, libraries and museums have brought us together in new and exciting ways. For over 25 years, the IMLS National Medal for Museum and Library Service has recognized museums and libraries that demonstrate significant impact in their communities.

During the pandemic and moving forward libraries and museums have redefined themselves. And in so doing have helped our communities redefine themselves. Enlightenment and self-development, and the pursuit of knowledge, for education, information, and entertainment are still at the center of our cultural institutions. But increasingly we see libraries and museums being asked and responding to the need to solve community problems. Words like equity and justice, civility and civic discourse, trust and comity are a part of the community's vision and expectation of our cultural institutions. Our six medalists profoundly reflect:

COMMUNITY AND CIVIC TRUST

Founded by the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries at Fisk University and now on Tulane's campus, the **Amistad Research Center** has one of the first and deepest archives on the history of slavery, the Civil Rights movement, and race relations. It serves a large community of scholars and increasingly the Civil Rights community nationally and locally.



Originally established by a community of artists, **Asheville Art Museum** has helped Asheville itself to become a community of, by, and for artists. Its exhibitions of 20th- and 21st-century American art are paired with art and artists of all kinds as community-engaged events.

Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture is located in Seattle on the campus of the University of Washington and has maintained a focus on nature and culture in and of the community since it was founded by teenage Young Naturalists in 1879. From the dinosaurs to the Coast Salish people to the current environment, the museum immerses Seattleites in their natural history.

Oakland Museum of California defines multidisciplinary in its collections, its programs, and its outreach. Its deep ties to the community come in every variety of art and learning, culture, and civic engagement. It is a public forum, an interactive museum, and a participatory space in many modes.

Close to finishing a dramatic capital expansion, the **St. Louis County Library** agilely responded to community need in the pandemic with drive-thru services, from diapers to dinner. As it turns to finishing that campaign with support of a grateful community, it is a national beacon of answering the need in difficult times.

Wilmington Institute Free Library, known for its excellent service and community focus, pioneered barbershop libraries and “Community Cool.” The library embraces and celebrates Wilmington’s diversity and offers impactful programming way beyond its downtown location.

Libraries, archives, and museums of all sizes and types, from all over the country, have stories of excellence that demonstrate their impact in the community. These programs would not be possible without all the dedicated library and museum professionals, volunteers, and critical partners.

On behalf of the IMLS staff, the NMLS Board, and our community partners, we congratulate all the finalists and six recipients, including their hard-working staff and volunteers, and the communities they serve.

Thank you.

CROSBY KEMPER
DIRECTOR
INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

THE AMISTAD RESEARCH CENTER

Thanks to Hollywood's portrayal of the story behind the landmark case, people worldwide may know the name "Amistad" and how enslaved Africans on a ship bearing that name worked with abolitionists to win their freedom once they arrived in the United States. That, however, is only one of the amazing stories visitors can find at the Amistad Research Center in New Orleans.

YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW

The Amistad Research Center contains a rich collection of information, articles, and artifacts related to *United States v. The Amistad*, which was argued and won in 1841. Its *Slavery and the U.S. Supreme Court: The Amistad Case* collection has more than 300 letters and documents written by the various people who played a role in the landmark decision. Beyond that, however, it has brought African American culture and experiences full circle, hosting exhibitions that cover more contemporary topics such as African American beauty culture, women leaders in New Orleans, and the civil rights movement. Its "Conversations in Color" cultural series features artists, educators, and community activists discussing their work and its impact on social change.

ARTS AND CULTURE

One of the center's goals is to help people understand the complexity of American experiences and our shared history; an effective way they do this is through collections and exhibitions highlighting the arts and African American culture. Amistad's extensive art collection boasts the works of artists from the 19th century through today from the likes of Henry O. Tanner, Elizabeth Catlett, Edward Bannister, and David Driskell. Among the best-known works are the 41 paintings that make up the *Toussaint L'Ouverture* series, completed in 1938 by Jacob Lawrence. These visual expressions are the real storytellers, allowing visitors to "walk in the shoes" of the artists as they experience conflict, peace, and beauty.

FOR ALL TO ENJOY

In 2015, Executive Director Dr. Kara Olidge challenged the Amistad staff to make the center a "library without borders" so that all could experience the rich tapestry of African American and Louisiana history no matter where they were. To engage globally, they had to continue to digitize their collections. They also conceived "Amistad on the Go"—an interactive and digital education program that supports the Common Core standards of grades 6 through 12 by providing humanities and arts-centered activities on themes such as Slavery & Abolition, the Reconstruction Era, and the modern civil rights movement. The hope is that through these opportunities, a visitor's landscape expands.





THE AMISTAD RESEARCH CENTER

Address: 6823 St. Charles Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70118

Phone: 504-862-3222

Web: amistadresearchcenter.org

Executive Director: Kara Tucina Olidge, PhD

“So often we observe people who have changed our lives—artists and activists—from the outside only. We see them through the media that is provided to us. Our gift at the center is to allow people to look ‘inside.’”

— DR. KARA OLIDGE
Executive Director

THE AMISTAD RESEARCH CENTER



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

The Fannie Lou Hamer Papers is one of the center’s foundational civil rights-era collections. The papers document this advocate and activist’s personal life growing up and sharecropping in Mississippi, as well as her incredible work to pursue civil rights, voting rights, and economic self-sufficiency in the segregated South. The collection also includes records of many organizations to which Hamer was attached, such as the Freedom Farm Cooperative that she founded with \$10,000 in 1969.

ASHEVILLE ART MUSEUM

When you walk into the Asheville Art Museum's atrium, you're surrounded by an installation of powerful artworks encompassing elements that set the tone for your experience. Always intentional about their framing, the community-based educational institution collects, preserves, and interprets artworks of Southern Appalachia and the Southeast in the context of American art history, which makes their collections and interpretation both place- and person-centered.

A REMODEL AND RESTART

The Asheville Art Museum opened their new facility in November 2019 only to close again in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The new large, airy, museum was basically a "no touch" facility to begin with, but before reopening in September 2020, a COVID-19 response team of staff and trustees developed safety procedures and accommodations, including signage and thinning of the collection, so that social distancing was easier. Now, back in person, the museum is excited for the opportunity for a restart and continued learning about their place in the community, how they connect, and where they can connect better.

INTENTIONAL, INVITING DESIGN

The museum's facility is on the most important historical corner of downtown Asheville; it occupies unceded land of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indian. Its full glass facade was specifically designed to welcome people into the world of American art. The exhibition space has large-scale installations and was created to be transparent so that you know where you are, where you've been, and where you're going. In this highly visual and intuitive space, a new traveling exhibition recently opened called *American Perspectives*, which looks at folk art from the 19th century to the present. It joins popular pieces such as Wesley Clark's *My Big Black America*, which is juxtaposed with Maya Lin's *Pin River–French Broad River*; Ken Fandell's digital, site-specific work, *The Sky Above Here*; and Kenneth Snelson's *Wing 1*.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH PURPOSE

With a community-driven approach, the Asheville Art Museum is building new partnerships in addition to their long-standing relationships with the local K–12 school systems and universities. They're also proud to have worked closely for many years doing outreach programming in the libraries, especially when they were under construction and not in their own facility. Although the museum wants to welcome everyone in the community into its new space, they recognize that bringing the museum programming out into the community is critical in terms of meeting new audiences and developing trust and partnerships.



ASHEVILLE ART MUSEUM**Address:** 2 South Pack Square
Asheville, NC 28801**Phone:** 828-253-3227**Web:** ashevilleart.org**Executive Director & Acting Director of Curatorial Affairs:**
Pamela L. Myers

“Creativity of makers working in all media in this region informed what was happening across America, and in turn was informed by outside influences. Historical and contemporary Appalachian craft and art of the region is integrated with American painting, sculpture, and photography to tell a much richer story. It’s not work made in isolation, but rather in a very vibrant and important dialogue.”

– PAMELA L. MYERS
Executive Director

This summer—much to the excitement of staff—the museum is hosting weekly in-person summer camp sessions for grades K–12. In North Carolina, where art education in school systems is underfunded, the summer camp provides opportunities for real, in-depth experimentation of ideas and hands-on learning. It also allows working artists the chance to teach classes and draw inspiration of their own from working closely with the students.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

BURKE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND CULTURE

Located on the land of the Coast Salish Peoples, the Burke Museum cares for and shares natural and cultural collections so all people can learn, be inspired, generate knowledge, feel joy, and heal. Through collaborative work and partnerships with institutions, communities, and people around the world, the Burke Museum contextualizes what's happening in our world and inspires people to value their connections with all life—and act to create positive change in the future.

PRESERVING THE PAST, IMPROVING THE FUTURE

As Washington's official state museum, the Burke is responsible for maintaining state collections of natural history and cultural heritage. In recognition of its colonial legacy, tribal consultation and community involvement are central to every aspect of the Burke Museum's work. Across its operations, the Burke is committed to patient, attentive relationship-building with historically unheard and marginalized groups that invites and values multiple histories, perspectives, traditions, and contributions.

INSIDE OUT

For over 130 years, the Burke Museum's greatest strength has been its community—the guests, volunteers, partners, and staff who inspire and enrich its work. Too often, museums have not been welcoming, accessible places for the people they serve. When former executive director Julie Stein started giving behind-the-scenes tours to special visitors and donors, she had an epiphany: Why not provide this experience to everyone? Since opening in 2019, the new Burke has used an innovative Inside-Out model that creates countless opportunities for visitors to engage up-close with the museum's research, exhibits, programs, and collection of more than 18 million biological, geological, and cultural artifacts. With working labs and storage spaces you can see into, an active Artist Studio, ever-changing pop-up displays, and galleries filled with curiosity and conversation, visitors see—and feel—a world alive.

ENGAGING EDUCATION

Offering everything from fossilized guano to mammal skulls and colorful beadwork, Burke education programs engage and delight pre-K through high school students with onsite field trip experiences as well as virtual museum visits and BurkeMobile and Burke Boxes, which bring the museum's educators, collections, and research to schools, libraries, and community centers across the state. These offerings introduce the Burke Museum to diverse audiences and help them meet their mission to serve schools and families throughout Washington.





BURKE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND CULTURE

Address: 4300 15th Avenue, NE
Seattle, WA 98105

Phone: 206-543-7907

Web: burkemuseum.org

Executive Director: Gabriela Chavarria

“We continue to motivate and excite new generations who study these things and learn from others. Our goal is for the museum to be a transformational experience, where science, history, and culture help shape visitors on a deep level—fostering individual knowledge and well-being, growing a sense of community, and connecting us with big ideas about who we are and the world we share.”

– GABRIELA CHAVARRIA
Executive Director



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

In 2015, Burke volunteer paleontologists on a dig in Montana discovered a 100% complete T. rex skull, one of only 15 in the world! Protected in a plaster “jacket,” the “Tufts-Love” T. rex was brought to the Burke, where the Inside-Out approach offered visitors the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see fossil preparators excavate the past in real time. Today, the T. rex enjoys engaging with guests in the Burke’s Fossils Uncovered gallery.

OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

Address: 1000 Oak Street
Oakland, CA 94607
Phone: 510-318-8400
Web: museumca.org
Director and CEO: Lori Fogarty

“We sit right in the heart of Oakland, adjacent to the diverse communities we serve. We’re proud that everyone who comes through our museum can feel a sense of welcome and learn about each other.”

– LORI FOGARTY
Director and CEO



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

In 2016, OMCA opened “All Power to the People: Black Panthers at 50” to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Black Panthers in Oakland. Many of the founders of the organization participated, relaying their stories and struggles in a deep and intensely personal way. The community responded in amazing ways; multiple generations of families came to experience the exhibit and learn the real story of the Black Panthers, making connections to current movements like Black Lives Matter.

ST. LOUIS COUNTY LIBRARY

Ten years ago, St. Louis County Library was a traditional public library that focused on literacy and computer resources. However, about eight years ago, a study was published about the social determinants of health in the St. Louis region. The library staff understood the impact on their patrons and that these factors were not only holding back a community population, but an entire region. They responded.

PUSHING THE DEFINITION OF A LIBRARY

With a 20-branch system, locations serve a range of demographics who may use libraries in different ways. St. Louis County Library decided to steer in a new direction that was based entirely on the needs of their individual communities. Today, it connects its populations to not only learning and educational opportunities, but also an array of programs that go way beyond books, including diaper distribution, meals in low-income areas, a mobile vision clinic, and a Metro Market—a supermarket on wheels. Community partnerships are key to this approach.

CHAMPIONING DIGITAL EQUITY

Like most of America, the St. Louis community was caught off-guard by COVID. People of all ages experienced a significant digital divide; those who lacked Wi-Fi and digital devices struggled to stay connected. St. Louis County Library received CARES Act funding from County government and used it to address a range of issues, one of which was social isolation among seniors. Enter “Grandpads”—a tablet that doesn’t require a user to have Internet access to function. These easy-to-use devices were essential connectors between families; grandparents were able to see and chat with grandchildren, while friends who were accustomed to socializing at a community center were able to text message. The library purchased 3,000 of the devices and gave them to community members ages 75 years old and older, which in the words of one recipient, “Changed my life.”

ENHANCING THEIR PHYSICAL FOOTPRINT

Right about the time they were reimagining their service model, the library was undergoing a physical change: They were renovating all 20 branches. It was the perfect opportunity to couple the stories of the new buildings with the new service priorities. These included adding comfortable seating, study rooms, quiet reading rooms, and dynamic spaces for children and teens; activating the outdoor space with community gardens and areas for children; and adding windows throughout the buildings. The facilities were transformed into dynamic buildings where people wanted to hang out all day long.





ST. LOUIS COUNTY LIBRARY

Address: 1412 South Spoeede Road
St. Louis, MO 63131

Phone: 314-994-3300

Web: slcl.org

Director and CEO: Kristen Sorth

“We are not a cookie cutter system. Our branches are not only diverse physically but so are our programs and services. Everything about our 20 branches reflects its community.”

*– KRISTEN SORTH
Director and CEO*



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

The library's Tap In Center is an innovative program to support people who are involved in the criminal justice system. Often, people have warrants for failing to appear in court—which can result from administrative errors like wrong addresses or simply not having access to technology. Many times these individuals don't even know about the warrants, which stack up quickly. In September 2020, the library worked with the Missouri Public Defender's Office, the St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney, The Bail Project, and other organizations to help individuals navigate the justice system. The Tap In Center has helped resolve more than 300 warrants.

WILMINGTON INSTITUTE FREE LIBRARY

Chartered in 1788, Delaware's Wilmington Library started as a subscription library for educated, wealthy, White men. In today's mostly Black Wilmington, it is a culture hub that brings inner-city and suburban residents together with cool live and virtual celebrity conversations, takes innovative reading strategies to the streets, and attracts new library and downtown investment.

CHANGING TRAJECTORY

The Wilmington Library is situated among some of the most distressed urban neighborhoods in the nation, with poverty, crime, violence, and mental illness pervasive and persistent. For decades, the library has been used mostly by those on the wrong side of the digital divide and those who needed shelter. Today, library assets are mobilized in bold, surprising, and inclusive ways to make a dent in the epidemic of illiteracy and to revitalize downtown public spaces for those who live there.

NEW DIRECTIONS

The staff organizes programs that illuminate the rich and varied nuances of Black and Brown culture. They host conversations with personalities from all fields who share their life stories—successes and struggles—with locals in a cool, comfortable library setting. From classic TV personalities to icons of activism, a broad variety of life experiences are explored, and worldviews expanded, live at the library or from the comfort of home, online. Actor Levar Burton visited the library and spoke about social cohesiveness. Former NFL star Benjamin Watson came to discuss the importance of fatherhood, while former NBA great Dennis Rodman talked about resilience growing up poor and on the streets. Anthony Ray Hinton, an innocent man who was on death row for 30 years, came to discuss his experiences and the need for criminal justice reform. The list goes on and on.

ADDING SWAGGER

Making reading and the library cool has transformed today's Wilmington Library into a living institution and an essential part of the urban social fabric. Outreach strategies that use local Black barbers to champion reading bring "swagger" to library efforts. When inner-city and suburban audiences make the downtown library a hive of civic conversations and culture celebrations, locals understand the nuances, complexity, and context of the world, news, and social media better.





WILMINGTON INSTITUTE FREE LIBRARY

Address: 10 East 10th Street
Wilmington, DE 19801
Phone: 302-571-7400
Web: wilmington.lib.de.us
Director: Jamar Rahming

“Ditch your strategic plan and be cool. Today’s library expands the definition of learning and community engagement. The world is complex and scary. But when a famous basketball player tells you how they crawled out of the projects or a local barber says it’s cool to read, people see the world differently, make different choices.”

– JAMAR RAHMING
Director



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

To reach young Black readers, the library leveraged the Barbershop Books Initiative—started in 2013 by Alvin Irby. These are essentially pop-up libraries in barbershops, where boys go often and feel at ease. As they wait for their haircuts, they can access materials and engage in reading in their neighborhoods. Combining books with getting a “fresh cut” is having an impact on kids as they lay down their phones and pick up a book. Likewise, barbers have become strong literacy and library advocates. This kind of street power can sustain library efforts for the long game. New partners, political clout, and financial resources amplify these effective library efforts.



NATIONAL MEDAL FINALISTS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2022 FINALISTS

Thirty institutions were named finalists for the 2022 National Medal for Museum and Library Service. From them, this year's six winners were selected. Through the online *Share Your Story* initiative, museum and library community members highlighted ways these remarkable institutions have transformed their lives.

LIBRARIES

- THE AMISTAD RESEARCH CENTER (New Orleans, LA)
- CENTRAL ARKANSAS LIBRARY SYSTEM (Little Rock, AR)
- COPPER QUEEN LIBRARY (Bisbee, AZ)
- DEARBORN HEIGHTS LIBRARIES (Dearborn Heights, MI)
- GLENDALE LIBRARY, ARTS & CULTURE (Glendale, CA)
- HIGH POINT PUBLIC LIBRARY (High Point, NC)
- INDEPENDENCE AREA PUBLIC LIBRARY (Independence, KS)
- KUSKOKWIM CONSORTIUM LIBRARY (Bethel, AK)
- MIAMI-DADE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM (Miami, FL)
- NEUSE REGIONAL LIBRARIES (Kinston, NC)
- PERKINS BRAILLE & TALKING BOOK LIBRARY (Watertown, MA)
- PFLUGERVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY (Pflugerville, TX)
- ST. LOUIS COUNTY LIBRARY (St. Louis, MO)
- WEST WARWICK PUBLIC LIBRARY (West Warwick, RI)
- WILMINGTON INSTITUTE FREE LIBRARY (Wilmington, DE)

MUSEUMS

- ASHEVILLE ART MUSEUM (Asheville, NC)
- BROOKFIELD ZOO (Brookfield, IL)
- BURKE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND CULTURE (Seattle, WA)
- CHILDREN'S MUSEUM OF MANHATTAN (New York, NY)
- EL PASO MUSEUM OF HISTORY (El Paso, TX)
- iEXPLORA! SCIENCE CENTER & CHILDREN'S MUSEUM (Albuquerque, NM)
- THE MARITIME AQUARIUM AT NORWALK (Norwalk, CT)
- MARJORIE BARRICK MUSEUM OF ART (Las Vegas, NV)
- MATTATUCK MUSEUM (Waterbury, CT)
- MUSEUM OF CRAFT AND DESIGN (San Francisco, CA)
- MUSEUM OF DISCOVERY AND SCIENCE (Fort Lauderdale, FL)
- NATIONAL LIBERTY MUSEUM (Philadelphia, PA)
- OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA (Oakland, CA)
- STAX MUSEUM OF AMERICAN SOUL MUSIC (Memphis, TN)
- THE WILD CENTER (Tupper Lake, NY)

THE NATIONAL MEDAL FOR MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICE

Since 1994, the National Medal for Museum and Library Service has honored outstanding institutions that have made significant contributions to their communities. Selected institutions demonstrate innovative approaches and a strong commitment to public service and community outreach. They are active in urban, rural, or tribal areas and engage with their communities in diverse ways, including by enhancing literacy, providing services to at-risk populations, supporting digital connectivity, and curating community narratives. The winners are selected by the director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services in consultation with the National Museum and Library Services Board.

THE INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. We advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. IMLS envisions a nation where individuals and communities have access to museums and libraries to learn from and be inspired by the trusted information, ideas, and stories they contain about our diverse natural and cultural heritage. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES BOARD

The National Museum and Library Services Board is an advisory body that includes the IMLS director, deputy directors of the offices of museum and library services, and general counsel, and presidentially appointed members of the general public who have demonstrated expertise in, or commitment to, library or museum services. Informed by its collective experience and knowledge, the board advises the IMLS director on general policy and practices, and on selections for the National Medals for Museum and Library Service.

BOARD CHAIRPERSON

Crosby Kemper III, Director, *IMLS**

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The mission of IMLS is to advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. The agency's four strategic goals are to Champion Lifelong Learning, Strengthen Community Engagement, Advance Collections Stewardship and Access, and Demonstrate Excellence in Public Service.

Learn more at: www.ims.gov/about

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