

## **IMLS and China Strengthen Cross-cultural Connections**

Washington, DC. The U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the Ministry of Culture of the People's Republic of China signed an agreement establishing the Partnership for Cultural Exchange between museum, library, archive, and information services at a November 16 ceremony at the Library of Congress. The memorandum of understanding was signed by Mary Chute, IMLS Deputy Director for Libraries, on behalf of IMLS Director Anne-Imelda M. Radice, and Li Dongwen, Director General of the Chinese Ministry of Culture's Bureau for External Cultural Relations. The ceremony was part of the 64th annual meeting of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities of which IMLS is a member.

"At IMLS, we recognize that today's technology makes it is easier than ever to share our cultural heritage and information resources. But our agreement with China allows us to share more than information, ideas, and cultural treasures. It allows us to encourage dialogue and understanding between the Chinese and American professionals -- the artists, scholars, archivists, museum professionals, and librarians -- who are concerned with our cultural heritage," said Chute.

"The Chinese government attaches great importance to the cultural relations between China and the U.S., regarding it as a key component of the overall relations between the two countries," the new Chinese Minister of Culture, Cai Wu, said at the ceremony.

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.

One component of the new partnership is an agreement establishing a cooperative and cultural exchange between American and Chinese librarians, which was announced and formalized at the November 16 ceremony. Professor Paula Kaufman, University Librarian and Dean of Libraries at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Dr. Zhan Furui, Director of the National Library of China and President of the Library Society of China, signed the "Think Globally, Act Globally" agreement. The two-year project, supported by IMLS with additional support provided by the Chinese Society of Libraries, will introduce Chinese librarians and library educators, and managers of library technology to American practices of public library service. U.S. librarians will also work with their Chinese counterparts to identify publicly available Chinese information resources that are or could be made available via an online portal developed by the project team. The training will take place both in the United States and in the People's Republic of China. The Chinese American Librarians Association is also a project partner.

Also under the new partnership, IMLS is supporting training opportunities for collections care professionals from the People's Republic of China as part of the agency's Connecting to Collections: A Call to Action initiative. The initiative is designed to raise public awareness of and inspire action around caring for the collections held by museums, libraries, and archives. The parties will cooperate on the exchange and dissemination of information to promote best practices in the care of collections.

The Partnership for Cultural Exchange builds on the June 2007 cultural accord signed between the U.S. Government and the People's Republic of China and reflects IMLS's enhanced commitment to strengthening cross-cultural connections between U.S. museums and libraries and their global counterparts.

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