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Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Receives Prestigious \$319,809 National Leadership Grant

It was announced today that the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System is the recent recipient of a significant National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum & Library Services (IMLS), a Federal agency. A two-year project grant of \$319,809 was one of 52 National Leadership Grants awarded in late 2012 to museums and libraries across the nation.

The project being funded, ***The Public Library as Digitized Commons – A Demonstration Project***, expands upon work begun in 2009 to create a first-ever inventory of resources (including artifacts, documents, photographs, buildings, artworks, oral histories, music, and stories) related to Buffalo and Western New York's Depression-era history; connect those resources in a searchable digital "collection of collections"; and employ several innovative new models for full access civic engagement program design and delivery in our libraries via selected technologies. First phases of the project were funded through a Digital Humanities Start-Up grant from the **National Endowment for the Humanities** and a programming grant from the **New York Council for the Humanities**.

The momentum and successful testing in the project's initial phases encouraged the Library and its early partners the **Randforce Associates of the University at Buffalo Technology Incubator** and the **Center for Public History & Digital Humanities, Cleveland State University** (both national leaders in innovative technology), to broaden the vision, reach, partnerships, and array of included digital resources in its approach to IMLS. New partners include the **University at Buffalo Center for Urban Studies**, collaborator with the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority on public history and resource education for the community-changing Perry Choice Neighborhood Project; and the **Buffalo Broadcasters Association**, initiators of Buffalo's television broadcast archive. The intersection of local history, innovative technologies and public discussion based in libraries will over the project's next two years create a series of demonstration models that can be replicated nationally.

Announcing the award with Library System Director Mary Jean Jakubowski were Michael Frisch of Randforce Associates and Mark Tebeau of the Cleveland State University Center for Public History & Digital History, the project's chief technology partners; Dr. Henry Taylor of the UB Center for Urban Studies; and Dave Gillen, President of the Buffalo Broadcasters Association. Anne Conable of the Library's Development & Communications Department is project director; historian Margaret Milliron is project researcher.

"We are sincerely grateful for this grant award from IMLS which not only will inspire the Library's ongoing planning for its digital future and for new types of programming in our libraries, but will also give us the opportunity to be significantly visible on a national level, creating innovative models that can be replicated elsewhere," stated Jakubowski. "We anticipate that this project will have a positive impact on this institution, its collections and throughout our community. This project will generate deeper collaborations, new types of access to Library and regional resources, and new ways to share the stories of our local heritage."

Jakubowski added, "This project is exciting and critical to the advancement of our Library. At the same time, we continue to struggle with present-day budget realities and providing the critical basic services Erie County residents' demand of their Library System. We believe this grant will give us some vital tools to plan for future opportunities to ensure the Library will be relevant for generations to come."

The Institute for Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Through grant making, policy development, and research, IMLS helps communities and individuals thrive through broad public access to knowledge, cultural heritage, and lifelong learning.

The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System has more than 2.6 million materials available for borrowing including books, eBooks, DVDs, music and more. Free library card applications can be downloaded and taken to any of the 37 local public libraries for processing. A valid form of identification and proof of address is necessary. For more information call 716-858-8900 or visit www.BuffaloLib.org.

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