



Land, Life, People, Art

125 Years of the Illinois State Museum

The Illinois State Museum (ISM) has been located on the third floor of the Capitol, the State Arsenal, the Centennial Building, and its current location at Spring and Edwards Streets. It also has increased its number of locations over the 125 years with the addition of the Dickson Mounds Museum, in operation for 75 years, the Lockport Gallery, the Illinois Art Gallery and Artisans Shop in Chicago, the Research and Collections Center and the Southern Illinois Artisans Shop and Visitors Center and Southern Illinois Art Gallery at Rend Lake.

The presence of the Illinois State Museum is not limited to its physical locations, but is reached by people, not only in Illinois but nationally and internationally as well via its Web site. In fact, over 175,000 people visit the ISM Web site each month.

Just as Illinois' landscape, cultural, physical and otherwise, varies according to season and region, so does the Museum as it offers continually changing exhibits that enlighten us about Illinois' past and present. Visitors to Illinois will see dramatically different scenery depending on when they come here. In the same way, the Illinois State Museum experiences surprising changes in its exhibits throughout the year. The Museum has much to celebrate as it marks its 125th year. The Museum has changed its location a number of times and its name once, but it has never varied from its purpose. The ISM fills a niche that no other

museum provides. It is not just a history museum; it deals with the subjects of natural history, anthropology, cultural history and art as it pertains to Illinois. Essentially, "the Illinois State Museum tells the story of Illinois." The ISM is unique because it is the only museum to focus on Illinois. People will be amazed at what they discover upon visiting the Museum and its extensive Web site www.museum.state.il.us. The Museum is not some cumbersome, dark building warehousing myriad displays of rocks and fossils; many displays actually call for interaction with visitors, and sometimes even challenge the audiences' perceptions of what life was like centuries ago. For example, a computer set up in the *At Home in the Heartland* exhibit asks the user to imagine what life was like for historical figures in varying circumstances. The user selects responses to questions about these persons



First home of the Illinois State Museum, State Capitol, 3rd Floor, West Wing, Circa 1887. Photo courtesy of the Illinois State Historical Library.

based on his or her notions of the past.

The Museum has demonstrated a lengthy tradition of reaching out to educate as many people as possible. Imparting knowledge and fostering a curiosity about one's history and environment has long been a trademark of the Illinois State Museum. The ISM exhibits and educational programs are built upon a foundation of extensive scientific research, collections, and data accumulated over the years. Putting together the displays and assembling the collections involves a great deal of behind the scenes

labor of the Museum's teams of experts in the disciplines of anthropology, art, natural history, and cultural history. The quality of the collections amassed over the last 125 years and expertise of the Museum staff have formed the basis by which ISM can offer its numerous educational programs. The ISM has strived to make information easily-accessible using various methods. Many of the Museum's accomplishments attest to its efforts to be accessible in its educational mission. A self-contained traveling museum called the Museumobile, the first in the country, began touring Illinois in 1949. For the next 22 years, a Museumobile visited numerous rural schools, festivals, and county fairs. By 1971, it was decided it would require at least three Museumobiles to cover all the elementary and secondary schools. Additionally, after the museum opened in 1963 at its current location, it was decided that many more people visited the new facility than could possibly be reached by the Museumobile, so it

was disbanded. The Museum specifically focused on children from early on. The first Modern Youth Museum was established in 1940 at the corner of Second Street and South Grand Avenue in Springfield. The Museum published its magazine *The Living Museum*, another valuable educational tool, in Braille over 50 years ago, the only magazine of its type to do so in 1949.

The emphasis on education continues to this day using some of the same resources, but in wholly different ways. ISM's online educational programs have played an enormous role in expanding the ways the Museum is able to serve and educate people from students and teachers, to researchers, potential tourists, and the merely curious. The State Museum has instituted an enormous array of programs over the years to facilitate their efforts to inform as many people as possible, from pre-school kids to senior citizens, about the natural, cultural, and artistic treasures at the museum. Kids aged three ½ to five years can participate in age-appropriate programs. Workshops give children a fun look at science, nature and history. Young

visitors from four to eight years old can enjoy free, hands-on activities with an educational theme. These Super Saturday events take place every month in the "Place for Discovery". The programs take less than an hour, and each participating child takes home a craft project to remember the experience. Tens of thousands of school children visit the Museum each year as part of their field trips to the capital city.

In order to provide many of the educational programs over the years, the Illinois State Museum has formed partnerships or working relationships with numerous other state agencies, corporations, universities, and national scientific organizations to enhance the educational opportunities available to teachers and students everywhere. Following is a description of some recent educational programs that have been successfully implemented and completed, and the results of which are continually being felt. These programs were made possible by



Museum Tech Academy students tour the casting lab at the Research and Collections Center. Photo courtesy of Illinois State Museum.

a wide range of grants from state and federal agencies and the private sector.

The *GeoExplorer Institute*, a two-year program geared to middle school science teachers, provided training in geology and technology with the idea that the teachers would be able to integrate the two in their classroom settings. Other state agencies, universities, and State Museum scientists were involved as workshop presenters and advisors. The Institute gave teachers the ability to bring "real world" applied geology and technology into their classrooms.

Museum Link Illinois, funded by the United States Department of Commerce, provided twelve underserved schools with equipment, computer software and training necessary for online interactive instruction. The Museum developed partnerships with other state agencies, local communities and schools to provide K-12 students the opportunity to learn about the State's art, environment, and culture, including Native American heritage. As a result of the online modules or subsites, the Museum was



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Illinois Artisans Program

The Museum in Springfield has much to offer in its 100,000 square foot space. Besides the exhibits, Auditorium, and Place for Discovery, one of the most unique shopping experiences is located within the Museum. Situated near the entrance, the Museum Store is not your typical gift shop. Sure, it contains the usual assortment of plastic snakes, gemstones, books, and t-shirts, but it also contains an additional feature that may not be that well-known. People working or visiting anywhere near the Capitol have no further to walk than the ISM to find one of a kind gifts handcrafted by Illinois' own artisans. These treasures include paintings, jewelry, pottery, and photographs, among other things. The presence of artisans' works in the Museum Store is part of a much larger ISM program.

The Illinois Artisans Program sponsored by the Illinois State Museum promotes the fine crafts made in Illinois. It brings state and national recognition to Illinois crafts. Nearly 1,500 artisans have been featured in the Museum's artisans' shops since the program's inception in 1985 when the first shop was opened in the State of Illinois Building (James R. Thompson Center in Chicago). The other not-for-profit shops can be found at Dickson Mounds Museum (Lewiston), the Southern Illinois Artisans Shop at Rend Lake, and the Illinois State Museum (Springfield). The Illinois Artisans Program was an initiative of former Governor Thompson, who sought to have the artisans' shop and art gallery placed in the State of Illinois Building in Chicago.

Illinois artisans have received recognition for their work in that their crafts have sometimes been offered as gifts to dignitaries, including a Bowie knife and presentation box for the knife given to former President George H. Bush. Other presentation boxes have been given to foreign heads of state. A number of artisans have also

received the honor of having their handcrafted ornaments grace the White House Christmas tree over the years, all which serves to reveal the talent that our state has to offer. First Lady Lura Lynn Ryan has also been instrumental in furthering the cause of talented craftspeople. Under her leadership, *Made In Illinois – An Artisan Gallery* was published in cooperation with the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs and other organizations.

This work functions in part as a tourism guidebook, while also featuring a large selection of artisans from around the state. This book allows artisans the opportunity to express in their own words reflections about their work and accomplishments. The artisans contribute artistically, as well as financially to the state's economy.

The artisans who are selected to have their work featured in the shops are chosen through a formal, jury-selection process twice a year. Their goods are placed on

consignment in the shops, which are run by the Illinois State Museum Society. The treasures found in these shops are not mass-produced in a factory, but crafted individually slowly and meticulously, often in traditional ways. The works are traditional to contemporary and include media such as basketry, fiber, glass, drawing, photography, woodcarving, ceramics, sculpture, and jewelry.

The Artisans Program goes beyond merely selling fine crafts in a shop setting. Additionally, artisans offer educational workshops and participate in festivals and exhibitions. At some events, the public is invited to witness the artists demonstrating their skills as they work on projects. The Southern Illinois Artisans Shop is particularly noted for initiating many of these events and has experienced tremendous support from the communities it works with. These activities go hand in hand with the Museum's philosophy of educating people in any way possible.



Example of Illinois artisans work available at the Illinois State Museum Store. Photograph courtesy of the Illinois State Museum.

Illinois State Museum Timeline

- 1877 Museum created and established in the State House
- 1903 Moved from State House to the newly completed State Arsenal (2nd and Monroe)
- 1917 Museum became part of the newly created Department of Registration and Education
- 1923 Museum moved to the Centennial Building
- 1940 Museum opened Modern Youth Museum in the Payne Mansion (South Grand Ave.)
- 1963 Current Museum building dedicated on the corner of Spring and Edwards Streets
- 1979 Museum became part of the Institute of Natural Resources (later renamed Department of Energy and Natural Resources)
- 1995 Museum became part of newly formed Department of Natural Resources



Little Known Facts About the Illinois State Museum

- The state museum was created by statute in 1877. Its original home now hosts the third floor Statehouse offices of the Senate Minority Leader.
- The nation's first museum on wheels, the "Museumobile" traveled the State from 1949-1971 bringing artifacts and exhibits from ISM to school children and county fairs.
- Braille versions of the Museum's magazine, *The Living Museum*, have been produced for over fifty years.
- ISM was one of the first museums to earn accreditation in the 1970s. Only 10% percent of American museums are accredited by the American Association of Museums.
- ISM is a founding member of the American Association of Museums.
- ISM houses an internationally significant Ice Age mammal fossil collection. Casts of the Museum's prized mastodon have been produced for nine other museums.



Illinois State Museum Locations

Illinois State Museum
Spring & Edwards Streets
Springfield, IL 62706-5000
(217) 782-7386
Mon.-Sat. 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM
Sun. Noon – 5:00 PM

Research & Collections Center
1011 East Ash Street
Springfield, IL 62703-3535
(217) 785-0037

Illinois Art Gallery
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
Suite 2-100
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 814-5322
Mon.-Fri. 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Illinois Artisans Shop
James R. Thompson Center
100 West Randolph Street
Suite 2-200
Chicago, IL 60601
(312) 814-5321
Mon.-Fri. 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Lockport Gallery
Norton Building
201 West 10th Street
Lockport, IL 60441-2878
(815) 838-7400
Tues.-Sat. 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Sun. Noon – 5:00 PM

Dickson Mounds Museum
10956 North Dickson
Mounds Road
Lewiston, IL 61542-9733
(309) 547-3721
Daily 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Southern Illinois Artisans Shop &
Visitors Center
Southern Illinois Art Gallery
14967 Gun Creek Trail
Whittington, IL 62897-1000
(618) 629-2220
Daily 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM



literally at the students' fingertips. These modules are now accessible to anyone visiting the ISM Web site.

The Illinois State Museum and Brookfield Zoo teamed up with students from 42 Illinois schools to develop online projects drawing from the rich resources of the ISM's natural and cultural resource collections and databases and the living exhibits found at the zoo. The project called *Museum in the Classroom* allowed participants to examine the great biological diversity in Illinois and world ecosystems. The students chose one aspect of natural and cultural diversity and focused on how the roles of people, animals, and the environment have changed over time. Students were able to discuss their ideas with professionals in the fields of geology, archeology, cultural history, biology, as well as other scholars while developing their online projects. The *GeoExplorer Institute* and *Museum in the Classroom* were funded by the State Board of Education.

At Home in the Heartland Online is a collaborative effort with the State Board of Education and classroom teachers geared for grades 3 to 12 that integrates the students' school-based curricula with virtual field trips to the State Museum. *At Home in the Heartland Online* is a project funded in part by Ameritech. During this online educational program, students learn about objects, stories, and the activities of people who settled in the Heartland over the last 300 years. Students participate in age-appropriate activities to help them understand the kinds of decisions and choices people make and the consequences of those choices.

Much of what the Museum attempts to accomplish would not be possible without the involvement of the Illinois State Museum Society. This not-for-profit organization, marking its 50th year in operation this December, provides much needed support for the artistic, educational and scientific programs of the ISM. Sixty percent of the Museum's funding comes from the State. That leaves 40% that is derived from external sources. The ISM Society remains instrumental in raising the funds needed to promote the continuing research, educational, and outreach aspects of the Museum.

Exciting changes are in store for the Museum in Springfield as the first floor of the location at Spring and Edwards will sport a new look later this year. Renovations begun last October are slated for completion in November of 2002. The new exhibit, *Changes: Dynamic Illinois Environments*, will reveal a glimpse at Illinois environments from 500 million years ago to today. Initially, visitors will be introduced to the tools and approaches researchers use to analyze environmental change

in Illinois. Visitors will be invited to "Join the Staff" as they explore how the Illinois environment has changed over various time periods and then view the evidence of those changes. Sections of the exhibit will include Tropical Illinois, Frozen Illinois, and Interglacial Illinois, which covers the most recent 12,000 years of environmental change. The large scale dioramas that have long been a favorite are being refurbished in the new exhibits. In addition to the dioramas, hands-on interactive elements, video and audio, and object-rich cases will complete the new first floor scheme.

Research and Collections Center

People are usually aware of the existence of the Illinois State Museum. However, the public is probably not quite so familiar with the Museum's other facility in Springfield on Ash Street. The Illinois State Museum's ability to serve the general public, students, teachers, scholars and researchers was dramatically improved with the acquisition of a 97,000 square foot facility, the Research and Collections Center (RCC) in 1988. Upon opening in 1994, the RCC almost doubled the Museum's size, which meant that collections could be better maintained, and it even permitted the Museum to accept more collections. Possible donors, who like to be reassured their collections will be cared for and exhibited properly, should be thrilled with the state-of-the-art climate-controlled collections areas. Recent additions to the Museum's collections include the Orozco doll collection, which Joy Orozco collected over a 50 year period, and a major collection of Illinois Amish quilts from Arthur, IL.

The RCC currently houses over 8.5 million scientifically and historically significant objects. The collections are arranged in the appropriate areas, e.g., anthropology, art, botany, geology, or zoology. The collections are stored in the center of the building with the various research laboratories along the walls surrounding it. Middle school and high school students, teachers, visiting scholars, and community groups are all privy to the rich resources the RCC has to offer.

The Museum's Technology Learning Center is located within the RCC. The Technology Learning Center is used for a wide range of educational programs for students, teacher training, and public programs. For example, in 2001 the Museum launched the Museum Tech Academy, which is held at the Technology Learning Center. The Museum Tech Academy is an after school program for at-risk middle school students, where students have the opportunity to learn about technology, science, art, and career opportunities. Some of the more popular public

programs held at the Technology Learning Center have dealt with panoramic photography, digitally restoring old photographs, and Global Positioning Systems.

The Museum launched its Web site in 1994. The Web site has a wealth of information about natural and cultural history and Illinois Art, which is used extensively by students, teachers, scholars, researchers, and people with specific interests. The Museum recently received a National Leadership Grant for Museums Online from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (one of only six grants nationwide) to better integrate the Museum's collections and associated databases with online educational resources and improve overall navigation on the Web site. For example, if a teacher logs on seeking information geared towards him or her, the ISM would like to make it possible for an educator to easily access the teacher education aspects of the Web site.

Another little known gem found at the RCC is the North American Pollen Database. Funds from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) allowed the Museum to develop and maintain the North American Pollen Database. Museum scientists track long-term climatic changes by collecting fossilized and contemporary pollen samples. This comprehensive project

will have significant national and international implications in the study of our planet's changing environment.

Illinois State Museum 125th Anniversary Celebration

A series of lectures and other events celebrating the life, land, people, and art of Illinois will take place at various ISM facilities throughout the year in honor of the Museum's 125th Anniversary. However, on May 25, 2002, a special program will be offered from 6 PM to 10 PM from Spring to 2nd Street to commemorate this milestone. Following is a summary of some of the anticipated festivities:

- 3-D Movie
- Museum Store Porch Sale
- Creature-Feature Kids' Activities
- Music
- Miniature Circus
- Museum Tours
- Prize Drawings
- Food at Old-Time Prices
- Fireworks



In Memorium

Former state Senator **Richard Newhouse** died on April 25 at the age of 78. He served over two decades in the legislature from 1967-1991.

PEOPLE IN TRANSITION

Senator John W. Maitland, Jr. (R-Bloomington) who was an Assistant Majority Leader, retired effective the end of April. Bill Brady has been appointed to serve the remainder of the term in the 44th District.

Lisa Groesch is leaving the Senate staff to become executive director of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Commission.

