# Traveling exhibitions

## Providing endless cultural programming opportunities

by Pamela A. Goodes

College and universities have long been a clearinghouse for libraries seeking humanities scholars in a variety of fields to serve as discussion leaders for programs geared for adult audiences. In an effort to promote their role as a culture center, many academic libraries are increasingly becoming part of the action by hosting cultural programming for the public in conjunction with ALA's traveling exhibition program.

The traveling exhibition program, administered by the ALA Public Programs Office, has grown steadily during the past decade. The exhibitions serve as a focus for library-based public programs, such as lectures, film series, book discussions, concerts, and educational activities for students in local communities. They attract audiences of all ages and are the focus of community-wide attention. Exhibitions in libraries stimulate the public's interest in the world of ideas. They are not ends in themselves, but starting points for substantive programming, discussion, and study.

One goal of ALA exhibitions is to encourage visitors to go beyond the images and to explore exhibition themes in others areas of the library collection, with the help of programs and bibliographic aids offered by host libraries. A related goal is to help libraries strengthen their role as an intellectual forum and central cultural and educational institution in the community.

Exhibitions are developed in cooperation with curators and staff of partner cultural institutions and are based on the collections and major exhibitions of those institutions, bringing ideas and images to a broad national audience through local libraries. Most of the funding for ALA exhibitions is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

Exhibition topics have covered such issues as the Japanese Americans and the U.S. Constitution, the music of Duke Ellington, the Congress of the United States, the making of the federal constitution, and censorship in libraries.

Current exhibitions are "The Jazz Age in Paris: 1914–1940," now traveling to 28 designated public and academic libraries through February 2001, "The Frontier in American Culture," and "The Many Realms of King Arthur."

### Meeting the requirements

All traveling exhibitions comprise freestanding panels arranged in thematic sections and require approximately 1,500 square feet for optimum display. Libraries must not charge fees to view the exhibition. Exhibitions must be open to the public. Host libraries are required to display exhibitions appropriately in a minimum-security environment. Minimum security means that when the library is open to the public, the exhibition should

**About the author**

*Pamela A. Goodes is project coordinator/publicist in the ALA Public Programs Office, e-mail: pgoodes@ala.org*

be monitored by an authorized library staff member as frequently as is reasonable for the library, but at least every half-hour during peak use times, and hourly at less busy times.

Libraries are required to ensure equal access to the exhibition for the disabled. Suggestions include providing space for wheelchairs, preparing large-print versions of publicity materials and program handouts, offering signed tours and signing at exhibition programs, providing audiotape of exhibition text, and making library staff members available to walk though the exhibit with people in wheelchairs and the visually impaired.

## How to get involved

There are two ways academic libraries can host an ALA traveling exhibition.



The Eau Claire High School Band
at Columbia College in South Carolina.

First, libraries can submit an application for an upcoming exhibition for a six-week loan period. Selected libraries pay no fees for the exhibition or for shipping and insurance. An expense-paid seminar brings together all site coordinators before the tour for orientation to exhibition themes and planning of local programming. Libraries receive posters, brochures, publicity packets, reading and discussion theme materials, and other programming and educational resources. Banners, video presentations, and interactive video programs travel with some exhibitions.

Selected libraries must commit to hosting an opening reception for the exhibition, public programs associated with exhibition themes, and, in some instances, prepare an outreach plan to new and underserved library audiences. A dedicated staff member

is required to coordinate the exhibition and to attend the planning seminar. Libraries must provide an overview of creative public programs related to the exhibition and have the resources and community support to successfully carry them out.

The Public Programs Office is notified of grant proposal approvals from the NEH around July of each year. Interested individuals should keep abreast of the Public Programs Office's Web site or subscribe to the discussion list for updated information.

Second, interested libraries also have an opportunity to host exhibitions for eight-week runs for a one-time fee that includes shipping and insurance. The fee includes supplementary materials specifically packaged to help libraries promote the exhibition and programming suggestions. The fee-based exhibitions have completed the initial tour.

## Use your resources

Most academic libraries have unique collections and local history related to exhibition themes. For example, the university library at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis will use original sheet music from Eubie Blake and Noble Sissel with 78 and 33 ˙ rpm recordings to supplement its upcoming "Jazz Age in Paris" exhibition, scheduled for September 21–November 2, 2000. College and university libraries also have a wide variety of scholarly expertise and usually have the required space.

There are a number of key things to consider when deciding to host an exhibition.

• **Pursue funding sources to supplement exhibition programming.** Many state humanities councils award "mini-grants" or "resource grants" to support free-admission public humanities programs of short duration. In most states, programs must involve a humanities scholar to qualify for a grant. For example, Columbia College, in South Carolina, received more than $8,000 from the South Carolina Humanities Council for their "Jazz Age in Paris" exhibition held March 4–April 16, 1999. The Cultural Council of Richland/Lexington Counties contributed another $1,000.

• **Involve staff members at all levels in program planning.** It pays off not only in new ideas but also in support and enthusiasm. Hold a mini-workshop or brainstorming session before submitting programming plans. Emphasize the potential for recruiting new users and building support for the library. Communicate the goals for your program: what audiences you want to reach, what you want to accomplish. Assign staff with various interests/talents to work in small groups to carry out your goals. Share your program plans with the library director, board, and other library support groups. Invite their ideas and cooperation.

• **Decide what audiences you would like to reach.** Develop an audience profile: Where do they work? What restaurants do they visit? What other community activities do they take part in? Include members of your target audience on your program planning committee. Go to meetings of the groups your audience belongs to and talk about the program. Call or meet with community leaders and church leaders who deal with your target audience.

• **Partner with community organizations or the local library.** For example, the Missoula Public Library and the University of Montana, in Mansfield, will partner in February 2000 for the "Jazz Age in Paris" exhibition. The two facilities are located a few blocks from each other. The exhibition will be housed at the public library. Programming will be held at both the public and university libraries. Partners may also be willing to contribute to the exhibition and related programming.

• **Invite special guests and heads of target audience groups to your opening reception, special press party, or kick-off wine and cheese event.** Include local politicians (especially state and federal legislators), business leaders, and others for a special showing of the exhibition.

• **Ask your college, university or local newspaper; TV, cable and radio station; or state humanities council to of-** ficially cosponsor exhibition programming. They can assist with promotional fliers, free public service announcements or ads, as well as coverage before, during, and after the exhibition period.

## Success stories

"The exhibit enriches the facility." "Added opportunity for showcasing library materials." "Should always have an exhibit in the library." "Wonderful opportunity to build 'learning community'-based class programming." "Exhibit is truly a 'liberal arts' education itself."

These were the comments from those attending the "Jazz Age in Paris" exhibition at the J. Drake Edens Library at Columbia College. Mary Robinson Cross, systems librarian, reported that an estimated



Visitors enjoy "The Many Realms of King Arthur" traveling exhibit at York College.

1,000 individuals visited the exhibit. An estimated 6,400 people and nearly 400 students viewed the "Jazz Age in Paris" exhibition at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania March 6–April 16, 1999.

"The tradition of providing cultural programs for the campus is rooted deeply in the library's history," said Lisa McNamee, Reserves/Copyright coordinator at Gettysburg.

"Several wonderful by-products emerged from hosting the exhibit," McNamee said. "We have expanded our CD and book collection considerably to represent the period. And, after the exhibit was completed, we were contacted by the Adams County Public Library about partnering for a Pennsylvania Humanities

# ALA traveling exhibition opportunities

Academic libraries are invited to submit applications for two upcoming ALA Public Programs Office traveling exhibitions. Two other exhibitions are available to interested libraries for a one-time fee.

"Go Figure!" developed in cooperation with the Minnesota Children's Museum, will tour 75 libraries in the United States for six-week periods between September 2000 and December 2002. The National Science Foundation provided major funding for the exhibit, with additional support from Cargill and 3M.

**The deadline for applications is December 17.**

"Go Figure!" includes an interactive exhibition as well as interpretive and educational materials that bring the world of math and its everyday uses to children 2-to-7-years old and their parents through children's literature.

"The Great Experiment: George Washington and the American Republic," a 1,000-square-foot 30-panel exhibition developed in cooperation with the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, and funded by NEH, will tour 15 libraries in the United States for six-week periods between September 2000 and September 2002.

"The Great Experiment" will encourage visitors to understand the George Washington behind the myths.

**The deadline for applications is January 10, 2000.**

Libraries nationwide are also being offered the opportunity to host "The Frontier in American Culture" and "The Many Realms of King Arthur," traveling exhibitions for eight-week periods for a fee of $1,500 each.

Participating libraries receive six freestanding panel units requiring approximately 1,000 square-feet of display space; two two-color indoor/outdoor banners; a Site Support Notebook containing installation and dismantling instructions, programming ideas and bibliographies, and public relations materials; up to 1,000 full-color brochures; up to 25 full-color exhibition posters; and one full-color exhibition catalog. Additional brochures, posters, and catalogs may be purchased. Shipping and insurance are included in the fee.

"The Frontier in American Culture" examines how stories and images of the frontier and the settling of the West has shaped American identity and values.

"The Many Realms of King Arthur" explores the legends of Arthur from its origins in the Middle Ages to its 20th-century representations. The story of Arthur, Queen Guinevere, Lancelot, and the knights and ladies of the Round Table is presented visually.

For more information, contact the ALA Public Programs Office at (312) 280-5045. E-mail: publicprograms@ala.org or visit the Public Programs Office Web site at http://www.ala.org/publicprograms.

---

Council grant for joint public/college programs about the 1940s. The grant was successful."

Nearly 23,000 people visited "The Frontier in American Culture" exhibition December 31, 1996–February 6, 1997, at the University of Washington (UW) in Seattle.

"The exhibition was a signal success in our eyes," said Richard H. Engeman, photographs and graphics librarian at UW.

"In light of the university's current efforts to provide services to a wider public, and to reach beyond an audience of students and faculty, the exhibition was very valuable.

The link with the College of Education and, through them, to local Social Studies teachers and students, was a most worthwhile experience that promises future rewards. The exhibition also helped to solidify an emerging partnership with the Department of History and its Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest."

For more information about the ALA Public Programs Office traveling exhibition program visit the Web site at http://www.ala.org/publicprograms, or call (312) 280-5045. ■

# If a Picture is Worth a Thousand Words, a Map Must be Worth a Million
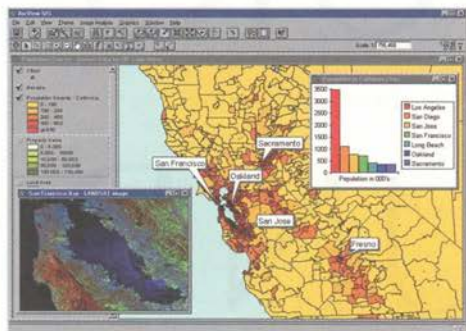


Libraries are the campus nerve center, tying all departments and disciplines together by their common need for information. As a clearinghouse for all kinds of information, libraries need to provide tools that make information easy to access and understand. One of these is a geographic information system (GIS). A GIS turns ordinary databases into interactive maps and provides tools to query those databases in ways not possible with traditional spreadsheets. A GIS is useful to students and researchers in any discipline from agriculture to zoology. Providing a GIS workstation at the library makes these tools available to the entire campus community, not just one or two departments.

ESRI offers a range of GIS packages for libraries, from ArcView® GIS to the Spatial Database Engine™ (SDE™)—client/server software for managing large spatial databases. For more information about ESRI® GIS solutions, call us today.

## 1-888-531-9220
## www.esri.com/libraries
### E-mail: info@esri.com