

# The **Modern Era** Building on Unique Streets

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**D**uring the twenty-five-year period from 1977 to 2002, I have seen the Illinois State Museum gradually evolve from an institution focused on its inner strengths—research and collections—to one focused on better serving its diverse audiences and improving accessibility to its resources. Similar shifts were occurring at museums across the country, as documented by period issues of *Museum News*, a publication of the American Association of Museums (AAM). By the late 1970s, museums were responding to the changing social, political, and economic character of the emerging postindustrial era. The report of the AAM's Commission on Museums for a New Century, published in 1984, noted that museums were already experiencing the conditions predicted to become paramount in the twenty-first century: "...massive geopolitical shifts, changes in the distribution of material wealth, a technological revolution, demographic change, dramatic assaults on the ecosystem, rising levels of education, [and] a transition in the developed world to an economy based on information and the provision of services."

*Museums for a New Century* isolated four major forces of change in museums: the proliferation of voices in decision making, increased cultural diversity and pluralism, demand for educational reform, and the revolution of communication and information technology in the information age. The Illinois State Museum has faced these challenges and has evolved purposefully to continually re-create its niche in a rapidly changing world.

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## Building Inner Strengths—Research and Collections, 1977–82

Below: *Paleontological excavations at the Jones Spring site were a part of the Truman Reservoir Project, shown here in 1976. Photograph by James E. King.*

Bottom: *Highway salvage excavations at the Rench site, an archaeological site in Peoria County, Illinois, yielded new information and large collections of stone tools, animal bones, and plant remains. Photograph by Marlin Roos.*

In this interval the Museum's research programs flourished, and for the first time attention to collections care became a major focus. At this time the Museum comprised only two public facilities—the ISM-Springfield and Dickson Mounds Museum. Exhibition programs were standard for the time—a mix of object-based art, anthropology, and natural history exhibits, and world-class natural history dioramas in Springfield, and at Dickson Mounds Museum, object-based archaeological exhibits, with a few dioramas. Educational programs at both facilities incorporated traditional gallery-based school programs and a series of public programs including workshops, lectures, and field trips. In 1977, the Museum celebrated its 100th anniversary, and R. Bruce McMillan became museum director. With Dr. McMillan came an explicit endorsement of interdisciplinary approaches and an emphasis on professionalism in all museum endeavors. The Museum evolved and positioned itself in the forefront for both research and collections care.

Researchers in the Museum's Quaternary Studies Program attracted major grants from the National Science Foundation and other funding agencies and undertook numerous projects required by federal historic preservation and environmental protection laws. The many field projects yielded important collections and led to increased understanding of long-term environmental changes in the Midwestern United States. This thrust also changed the Museum's base of operations by diversifying funding and increasing the number of staff supported through grants and contracts. The Illinois State Museum Society grew in tandem, to accommodate the demands of the blossoming research programs.

Long-term interdisciplinary research by the Museum in west-central Missouri's Harry S. Truman Reservoir area continued to investigate human-land relationships. Paleontologists also worked at the Barnhart and Kimmswick sites near St. Louis. At Kimmswick they made a nationally significant discovery of Clovis spear points in association with mastodon remains. Scientists from the Museum and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee returned to Modoc Rock Shelter in southern Illinois in 1980 to initiate collaborative multiyear excavations and interdisciplinary research. In central Illinois, archaeologists began large-scale excavations at the Rench Village site and conducted some of the first predictive models studies of archaeological site locations in the Grand Prairie Region. The Museum also initiated a major study of long-term climate and vegetation change in Illinois, based on studies of fossil pollen. Researchers probed more ancient and modern records of plants and animals to create a record of long-term environmental change. A team of geologists excavated 320-million-year-old Pennsylvanian period plant fossils from an internationally significant upland site near Rock Island, Illinois. Museum biologists documented contemporary Illinois birds, insects, and endangered plants. All of these studies contributed to an understanding of the landscape history of Illinois and how the cultural, biological, and physical components of ecosystems interact—insights critical to modern studies of climate change, conservation biology, and land management.

In 1979 a state government reorganization moved the Museum and the Scientific Surveys from the Department of Registration and Education to the newly created Institute of Natural Resources (in 1981 upgraded to a cabinet-level department and renamed the Department of Energy and Natural Resources), which moved research from the background to the foreground. In 1980,





to accommodate the burgeoning research laboratories and natural science collections, the Museum leased and renovated the former J.C. Penney building on the Old State Capitol Plaza in Springfield.

By the late 1970s several reports drew national attention to the need to upgrade collections care, and museum personnel were becoming more aware of the importance of their curatorial function. The Museum's archaeological collections were growing rapidly as a result of the federally funded fieldwork required by the Archeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974. Collection growth also resulted from the transfer of collections from other institutions. For example, the Missouri Botanical Garden transferred an internationally significant collection of early cultigens from North American archaeological sites (the Cutler-Blake Ethnobotanical Collection). Published in 1977, *The Management of Archeological Resources: The Airlie House Report* highlighted institutional responsibility and needs for proper curation of the vast archaeological collections that were being assembled under the banner of federally funded projects. Director McMillan drew attention to curatorial issues at the Airlie House meeting and was one of the compilers for part of the report. During the same year, *Systematic Research Collections in Anthropology: An Irreplaceable National Resource* simultaneously highlighted the importance of museum collections and the imperative to improve their management and care. This report ultimately led to the establishment of the National Science Foundation's Systematic Collections in Anthropology grant program in 1978. The Museum upgraded the housing and curation of the comparative archaeozoology collection in 1979 under the auspices of this program. In 1980, another major study, *The Curation and Management of Archaeological Collections: A Pilot Study*, called attention to the plight of federally owned



*Environmental chambers manufactured by the Bally Corporation improved curatorial conditions for paintings and other objects. Photograph by Marlin Roos.*

archaeological collections. It suggested requirements and guidelines for the curation of federally owned collections and records. The Museum participated in the pilot study and Dr. McMillan and this author had input into the recommendations—substantiating the importance of professionalism and involvement of ISM staff at the national level.

The museum community provided ample evidence of the need for additional federal support to safeguard the collections—the record of our natural and cultural heritage. The federal government established the Institute of Museum Services (IMS) in 1977 to provide support for museum operations, including collections care. In 1980, the Museum received the first of a series of general operating support grants from IMS, and these funds often contributed to collections care. Cognizant of the need to upgrade curation facilities, the Museum established three state-of-the-art environmental chambers in 1981 to house the art and ethnographic collections. Constructed of steel panels filled with four-inch-thick urethane insulation, these environmentally controlled chambers were installed in existing rooms and offered precise control of temperature and humidity for the collections. Similar vaults were installed during the same period at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and at several National Park Service facilities.

When the American Association of Museums published *Museum Ethics* in 1978, which detailed ethical standards, including the need to have a clear collections policy, the Museum was once again in the forefront on this issue and had already produced its first formal collections policy manual in 1977.



*The LeConte's Sparrow is one of the many species documented in a long-term study of the birds of Sangamon County. Photograph by H. David Bohlen.*

## Building Inner and Outer Strengths—Expanding Facilities and Programs, 1982–93



Above: *The Peoples of the Past* exhibition, dedicated in 1984, presents results of decades of archaeological and paleoecological research.



Left: *The At Home in the Heartland* exhibition, opened in 1992, provides new insights into the role of choice in domestic life and engages visitors with interactive components, including computers.

Right: *The FOCI (Forms of Contemporary Illinois)* program was initiated in 1989 to present solo art exhibitions.



*The Harvesting the River* exhibition, mounted on the *Belle Reynolds*, traveled to ports along the Illinois River in 1989.



The AAM awarded the Museum its second accreditation in 1982, an endorsement of its overall success. By the early 1980s, the Museum was already wrestling with many of the trends and issues identified in the 1984 *Museums for a New Century* report. To use Stephen Weil's<sup>1</sup> dichotomy (*Rethinking the Museum and other Meditations*), there was a simultaneous interest in furthering not only the function of the museum—to collect, preserve, study, and interpret—but also the purpose of the museum—to serve society. In discussing the importance of museums in 1987, Weil noted that “their ultimate importance must lie not in their ability to acquire and care for objects—important as that may be—but in their ability to take such objects and put them to some worthwhile use.” Throughout this period the Museum put its research and collections to greater use by incorporating them into new educational and exhibition programming and by establishing new facilities to reach diverse audiences across the state.

Even though this was primarily a time of growth, the Museum faced difficult times in the early 1980s and again at the beginning of the 1990s. The economic recession in 1982–83 led to budget shortfalls and belt-tightening throughout state government and in the private sector. To conserve funds, the free audiovisual film loan program (which had been in existence since 1951) was eliminated, the professional and technical staff worked for a week without pay, and Dickson Mounds Museum was closed to the public for three months over the winter. All of these hardships emphasized the need to further diversify funding for the Museum. Working closely with the Museum Board, the Museum initiated a development program and hired its first development director in 1984. A second recession in 1992–93 led to downsizing of state government and seriously affected the Museum. Eighteen positions were lost, and state funding was eliminated for ISM art galleries in Chicago and Lockport. Appreciative of the galleries, the private sector stepped forward and provided the support needed to keep the facilities open during the year. Fortunately, state support for the galleries was restored in the following fiscal year.

As noted earlier, one of the Museum's goals was to better integrate its successful collection and research programs with the public educational and exhibition programs. To this end, the Museum developed major new exhibitions to illustrate the cultural history of Illinois from the time of the earliest Native American

1. Stephen Weil is Emeritus Senior Scholar at the Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies and the author of numerous books on museums.



inhabitants to the twentieth century. The *Peoples of the Past* exhibition, which opened in Springfield in 1984, effectively translated results of the Museum's interdisciplinary studies of human-land interaction for a public audience. The *Mississippian Lifeways* exhibition, which opened two years later at Dickson Mounds Museum, presented interpretations of Native American subsistence based on the Museum's studies of plant and animal remains from archaeological sites; *Mississippian Society* (opened in 1988) engaged collections and understanding derived from over fifty years of archaeological research to present social and political life. Four years later in Springfield, the Museum dedicated *At Home in the Heartland*, an exhibition presenting interpretations of domestic life from the late-seventeenth century through the modern era. *At Home* conveys how choices are influenced by the broader cultural milieu and uses integrated computer technology to actively engage visitors in historically accurate choice scenarios. With the computer interactives and other hands-on components, *At Home in the Heartland* creates a dynamic experience for visitors.

A series of transitional art exhibitions were developed to cultivate new audiences and feature contemporary media. The Museum introduced the FOCI (Forms of Contemporary Illinois) series of solo exhibitions in 1989 to feature the latest developments in contemporary Illinois art. Other transitional art exhibitions featured traditional and innovative approaches. In 1993, David Hammons, an internationally acclaimed African-American artist from Springfield, created ten installations in the ISM-Springfield Art Gallery. Using found objects, painting, and mixed media, he constructed thematic tableaux that conveyed themes of African-American family and community.

An innovative traveling exhibition broke new ground in 1989 when the Museum launched *Harvesting the River*. Mounted on the *Belle Reynolds* towboat, the waterborne museum told the story of human interactions with the Illinois River and reached river communities at eighteen ports from Chicago to St. Louis. River festivals and community museums that developed in conjunction with this program were so popular that some continue to this day.

Cognizant of its role as a state museum, the ISM expanded and diversified its audiences, by opening facilities in northern and southern Illinois and developing special exhibitions. *A Place for Discovery*, dedicated at the Springfield facility in 1982, provided a hands-on exhibit area for children of all ages. Three years later, the State of Illinois Art Gallery (now called the Illinois State Museum Chicago Gallery) opened in the newly completed Helmut Jahn-designed James R. Thompson Center in Chicago—offering for the first time a State Museum venue for art and anthropology exhibitions to audiences in densely populated



*A Place for Discovery* opened in 1982 to provide important new hands-on learning opportunities for children of all ages.

Right: The first Illinois Artisans Shop opened in 1985 in the James R. Thompson Center to promote craft arts.

Below: The State of Illinois Art Gallery (now called the Illinois State Museum Chicago Gallery) was dedicated in 1985 in the James R. Thompson Center in Chicago. Photographs this page by Marlin Roos.







*The Lockport Gallery opened in 1987 to offer a new venue for art and anthropology exhibits (shown here in its new quarters in the Norton Building).*



*The Southern Illinois Artisans Shop and Visitors Center at Rend Lake, dedicated in 1990, continues to present art, craft arts, and craft demonstrations to a diverse audience.*

*Teachers examined the Museum's insect collections during a 1990 scientific literacy workshop in the ISM Research and Collections Center. Photograph by Marlin Roos.*



upstate Illinois. During the same year, the Museum established the Illinois Artisans Program to promote the craft arts industry and opened the Illinois Artisans Shop at this Chicago locality. Governor James Thompson played an instrumental role in the founding of the Illinois Artisans Program and its shops, which bring state and national recognition to Illinois craft arts. The expansion of art programs continued with the 1987 opening of a gallery in Lockport (first in the Gaylord Building, then in 2001 relocated and expanded in the Norton Building) along the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Museum exhibitions featuring Illinois art and artists could now travel to Springfield, Lockport, and Chicago—reaching both urban and rural audiences. An Illinois Artisans Shop was established in the Executive Mansion in 1990 and relocated to the Lincoln Home Area in 1991. The Southern Illinois Arts and Crafts Marketplace at Rend Lake (renamed the Southern Illinois Artisans Shop and Visitors Center in 1996) was dedicated in 1990 and provided a premier venue for crafts made by Illinois artisans. The Southern Illinois Art Gallery opened within this same facility in 1993—extending the Museum's audiences for art and anthropology to southern Illinois.

To provide space for transitional exhibitions of art, anthropology, and for the first time, natural history, the Museum established an Arts and Sciences Gallery in the ISM-Springfield in 1987. The Museum also opened an exhibit in the Capitol Complex Visitors Center in Springfield in 1988 to promote Museum programs and exhibitions.

Capitalizing on its unique interdisciplinary thrust, active research programs, and extensive collections, the Museum further fine-tuned and amplified its educational programs. In 1982, it created a museum education internship program (sponsored by the Monticello College Foundation) that continues today. This program has launched museum careers for numerous young women. In 1990, the Lockport Gallery established partnerships with community centers to provide programs on cultural diversity and art awareness to underserved populations. That same year, the Museum initiated its first intensive professional development program for teachers. This initiative was in response to the call for educational reform from groups such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In line with national and state recommendations, the program was designed to increase the scientific literacy of elementary school teachers and encourage the use of interdisciplinary approaches to teaching science. It integrated Museum scientists and educators, offered hands-on opportunities with collections, and provided Illinois-specific information and resources for

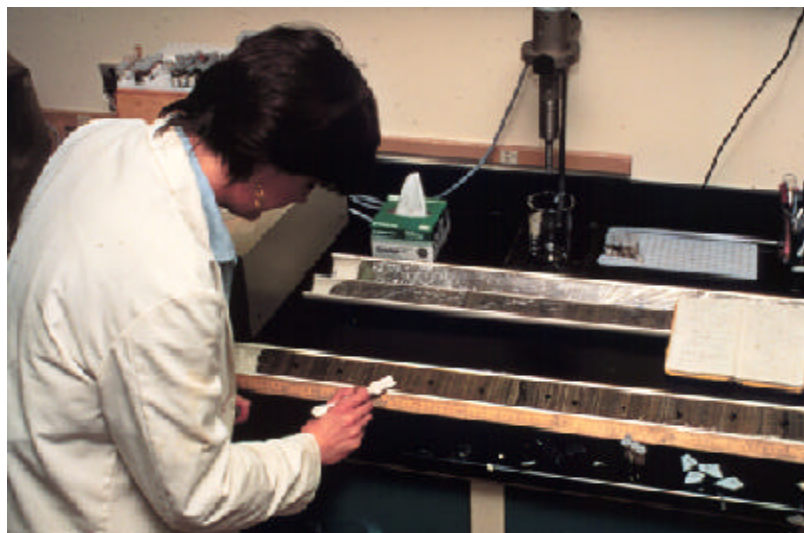


teaching geology, botany, zoology, and archaeology. By 1993, it had reached over 600 teachers from almost every county in the state.

The Museum's research program continued to flourish throughout this interval, and the results of this program fed directly into exhibition and educational programming. With major support from grants and contracts, the Museum conducted fieldwork at Modoc Rock Shelter, at the Morton Village and Norris Farms sites near Dickson Mounds Museum, along the corridor for the replacement of U.S. 51, in state parks, in the project area for the proposed Superconducting Super Collider in northern Illinois, in Illinois caves, and in a quarry near Rock Island. Two major collaborative research projects addressed postglacial climate and vegetation change in North America. From 1991 to 1993, Museum paleontologists initiated several studies on the timing of global warming at the end of the Pleistocene and its impacts on mammals. These studies of past global warming provided baseline data for modeling the effects of contemporary global warming. A Cooperative Research Program with the Russian Academy of Sciences, established in 1990, and a joint Russian-American workshop in 1993 allowed researchers to share information on mammoths and other animals of the Pleistocene and more recent periods. A genetics laboratory established in 1993 positioned the Museum to take advantage of technological advances that made possible the amplification of ancient DNA preserved in museum specimens. On other fronts, the Museum initiated a study of the Hines Emerald Dragonfly in 1989 that ultimately led to the species' listing as state-endangered in 1991 and federally endangered in 1995.



*Interdisciplinary fieldwork at the Tonica site yielded information on environmental conditions during the Late Ice Age and on a later Native American occupation. Photograph by Robert Warren.*



*Above: A Museum researcher sampled a core of lake sediment to recover fossil pollen for studies of climate and vegetation change. Photograph by Marlin Roos.*

*Left: The ISM genetics laboratory, established in 1993, facilitates studies of DNA from ancient and modern specimens.*

*Right: Museum entomologists documented the habitat requirements of the Endangered Hine's Emerald Dragonfly. Photograph by E. D. Cashatt.*





Curators in both the arts and sciences pursued research related to important collections and exhibitions. In 1987, cultural historians and folklorists collected oral histories from more than sixty residents in the Illinois River valley to document life, work, and crafts associated with the rapidly vanishing river culture. In 1988, researchers scoured original diaries, letters, and other records housed in museums, libraries, and historical societies across the state to document domestic life from the seventeenth- through late-twentieth centuries. They conducted forty-nine oral history interviews to examine choice in home and family-life decisions. Both of these oral history projects provided an archive of important historical information for future researchers.

In 1982, the Museum collaborated with the Illinois State Scientific Surveys to develop data for the newly formed Lands Unsuitable for Mining Program. The Museum established its Geographic Information Systems Laboratory in 1983 to create computer-generated maps and electronic databases for this program and produced a bibliography of Illinois archaeology and statewide archaeological and paleontological site files. The electronic archaeological site file is widely used by other state agencies for assessments of potential impacts of construction projects on cultural resources.

Capitalizing on new technologies and experiences with databases, Museum biologists also developed statewide databases for Illinois dragonflies and moths and butterflies. By 1990, the Museum initiated its first national database—FAUNMAP, a database of mammals from archaeological and paleontological sites—and its first continentwide database—The North American Pollen Database. Both of these resources provide important data for studies of long-term changes in climate and are used to model potential impacts of climate changes on plants and animals.

As a result of decades of fieldwork, collections growth continued at a fast pace. To house these objects, the Museum acquired a former State Revenue building in 1985 and initiated multiyear renovations to create the state-of-the-art Research and Collections Center (RCC). Archaeological and natural history collections and staff were centralized in this facility in 1988–89. Important components of the art collections were later moved to this facility. For the first time in the Museum's history, space was adequate for the systematic organization of the Museum's collections.

The superb facilities in the RCC also attracted additional important collections. When the federal government established rules for the curation of federally owned and administered archaeological collections in 1990, the RCC was one of the few Illinois facilities that met the federal guidelines. Given the excellent curatorial facilities in the RCC, the United States Army Corps of Engineers-St. Louis District established a cooperative curation agreement with the Museum in 1991 for significant archaeological collections from Illinois. Cooperative curation agreements were also established with a number of private consulting firms and other institutions, which contributed to the consolidation of collections from Illinois sites. Collections grew from other sources, as well. The Museum received the Oscar Hawksley collection of vertebrate fossils from Ozark caves in 1985, a large herbarium assembled by Dr. Paul Shildneck of Decatur in 1992, and in the same year, collections in history, anthropology, and geology from the former museum at Illinois State University. Museum curators brought in major grants to fund conservation surveys of the collections and upgrade care for historical photographs, paintings, textiles, ethnographic objects, the Cutler-Blake Ethnobotanical Collection, copper artifacts, vertebrate fossils, and minerals. Curators also completed electronic databases for a number of collections, thus increasing access to the data.

The Museum also developed creative ways to share its collections with broader audiences. A "Mastodon Factory," was initiated in 1987, with the fabrication of a life-size fiberglass replica of a mastodon skeleton for the Pink Palace Museum in Memphis, Tennessee.



*The Research and Collections Center (above), dedicated in 1994, provides space for the systematic organization of extensive archaeological collections (left), curation of other collections, and research and educational programs. Photograph left by Marlin Roos.*

By 1993 the Museum had created mastodons for nine museums in the United States and Canada, thus effectively sharing its extensive fossil collection with a broad North American audience.

While the Museum was making tremendous strides in managing and sharing its collections, one collection—the human skeletons—embroiled the Museum in a state and national controversy. In 1989, Governor James Thompson signed the Human Grave Protection Act, designed to protect unregistered prehistoric and historic graves, and in 1990, President Bush signed into law the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. These laws heightened sensitivity to Native American concerns about the study and exhibition of human skeletal remains. Museums across the country responded to Native American sentiments by removing human skeletons from display and implementing policies for the treatment and disposition of remains. The Museum had been closely monitoring this issue and in 1985 had already developed a policy on the disposition and treatment of human remains. After considerable internal deliberations, in 1989 the Museum recommended, with the unanimous approval of the Museum Board (September 12, 1989), the closing of the burial excavation exhibit of prehistoric Native Americans skeletons at Dickson Mounds Museum. In a January 3, 1990, press release the Museum announced its intent to close the burial excavation exhibit on February 1. The reaction of the local community to the news was immediate and in opposition to the closure, which prompted Governor Thompson to delay a fi-



nal decision on the closing of the exhibit. The Department of Energy and Natural Resources held a public hearing on the issue on February 6, 1990, in Peoria. Following the hearing, complex and sometimes contentious negotiations ensued between government officials, professional and avocational archaeologists, Native Americans, and local residents. These negotiations extended through the Thompson and into the Edgar administrations. On November 25, 1991, Governor Edgar announced plans to close and entomb the burial excavation exhibit at Dickson Mounds Museum and make major improvements to the Museum. The cemetery exhibit was officially closed to the public on April 3, 1992, and was later entombed. A record-breaking 15,000 people viewed the exhibit during the final week that it was open to the public. On September 4, 1993, Dickson Mounds Museum was closed to implement the major state-funded renovation.

*The Mastodon Factory has produced nine replicas of the American Mastodon for museums across North America. Photograph by Marlin Roos.*

## Readdressing Purpose—Increasing Access to Museum Resources, 1994–present

In preparation for another reorganization of state government, the Museum took an in-depth look at its mission and programs in 1994, culminating in an ongoing strategic planning process. The reorganization, implemented in July 1995, moved the Museum, along with the Scientific Surveys, into the newly created Department of Natural Resources, and the former Department of Energy and Natural Resources was abolished. The Museum's strategic plan, *A Museum for the New Millennium* (formally adopted in December 1996), strategically positioned the Museum for the twenty-first century. The refined mission statement emphasized purpose:

*The Illinois State Museum fosters an understanding and appreciation of Illinois by collecting and disseminating information on the state's natural, cultural, and artistic heritage. The purpose is served by preserving and utilizing collections and associated data to acquire new knowledge through*

*research and by promoting learning through exhibition and educational programs.*

With its fine-tuned statement of purpose and mission, the Museum effectively launched its programs into the information age. The research and collections programs remained strong, and education and outreach programs took a quantum leap. Three AAM publications, *Museums for a New Century*, *Museums for the New Millennium*, and *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimensions of Museums*, had stimulated museums across the country, including the Illinois State Museum, to review the effectiveness of educational programs relative to issues such as changing audiences, emerging technologies, and the need to more broadly share public service responsibilities. The Museum accepted these challenges and initiated a series of new educational programs, with greater consideration of audience needs and program effective-



ness, including greater integration of research and collections. The AAM awarded the Museum its third accreditation in 1997—this time with a positive evaluation for not only its function, but also its *effectiveness*. The 1997 AAM accreditation report noted that “The ISM is a national leader in the way it combines its unique collections, collaborative team approach, and specialized research capabilities along with cutting-edge technology applications in support of exhibitions, public programs, and publications.”

On October 15, 1994, the Museum launched its World Wide Web site, dramatically improving its capacity for outreach and education. Since the launching of the Web site, the Museum has embraced technology and distance learning to make its rich resources accessible to audiences far beyond those who visit its facilities.

Following the public dedication of the Research and Collections Center in 1994, the center has regularly served as the base of operation for innovative professional development workshops for teachers and for distance learning programs on Illinois art, cultural heritage, and the natural world. New educational programs were developed to capitalize on all of the Museum’s resources—specialized facilities, collections

and exhibits, data, and staff expertise. Collectively, these resources contribute real substance to the educational programs. The Museum launched its first Internet-based distance-learning program in 1995 (Museum in the Classroom). For this project, the Museum partnered with the Brookfield Zoo and worked with forty-two classrooms to codevelop Internet projects that explored biodiversity and human interactions with the environment. To further increase public access to Museum collections and other resources, the Museum launched its Technology Learning Center (TLC) in 1999. This facility, equipped with sophisticated computer equipment and Internet access, supports collection-based, technology-assisted education programs on the art, cultural history, and natural history of Illinois. Given the new facilities and technologies, the Museum perfected its professional development programs for teachers and integrated content, computer technology, and Internet resources to offer truly unique learning experiences. The TLC serves as the base of operations for student programs, such as a summer camp and after school programs for at-risk middle school students (the MuseumTech Academy, launched in 2001), and public workshops on topics ranging from restoration of photographs to use of handheld global positioning system units.

The Museum’s first comprehensive virtual version of a physical exhibition and associated Internet-based curriculum resources, *At Home in the Heartland Online*, was released in 1997, allowing online visitors and students to experience the exhibition and engage in interactive activities in the home or classroom. Additional Illinois-specific resources that supplement curricula, available on the *MuseumLink Illinois* Web site, cover all of the Museum’s disciplines—art, Native American heritage, and natural history. In addition to learning resources, the Web site offers images of objects from the collections and access to collections databases. In recognition of the ISM’s leadership role in distance learning, in 2001 the Institute of Museum and Library Services awarded the Museum one of six National Leadership Grants in the country. This grant will enable the Museum to integrate collections with online learning resources and improve the design and navigation of the Web site.

In 1994, the Museum rededicated the newly renovated Dickson Mounds Museum. Offering a new view of the past, new hands-on exhibitions (*People of the Valley* and *The Discovery Center*), a thought-provoking audiovisual program on the legacy of the past (*Legacy*), and an innovative multimedia program on the Mississippian world view (*Reflections on Three Worlds*) launched Dickson Mounds Museum into the twenty-first century.

Below: Teachers participate in a technology-assisted education program in the Technology Learning Center. In 2001, over 2,300 teachers used Illinois State Museum facilities across the state.



Right: A student in the MuseumTech Academy creates a digital image of a mineral in the geology collections range. In 2001, 71,882 students visited ISM sites.





Far left: *The 1994 renovation of the Lifeways exhibition at Dickson Mounds Museum added new lifecast human figures.*



Left: *The new Discovery Center facilitates play and social learning. DMM photograph.*

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and the controversy that spurred the entombment of the burial excavation exhibit ultimately led to dramatic improvements in museum exhibits and programs. The law and the controversy also stimulated closer working relationships with Native American tribes for exhibit and program planning and consultation on collections inventories developed for NAGPRA. The new relationships opened the door for Native American-presented educational

programs and Museum-sponsored internships for Native American students. A landmark cooperative curation agreement, established with the Peoria Tribe in 2001, allows the Museum to curate objects subject to repatriation under NAGPRA. The Museum worked collaboratively with the Peoria to select some of these artifacts to be displayed in a 2001 international exhibition in Montreal.

The Museum Store, dedicated in the ISM-Springfield in 1996, with its enlarged and upgraded physical space provided merchandise more closely tied to the Museum's mission. An artisans shop in the Lincoln Home Area had been closed several months earlier and was merged with The Museum Store, which for the first time offered a venue for Illinois craft arts in the Museum.

Transitional art exhibitions and innovative educational programs reached audiences across the state and featured important Museum collections, such as the Joy E. Orozco Doll Collection; Illinois Amish quilts; the WPA Collection of sculpture, paintings, and prints; landscape paintings; Native American textiles; Pueblo pottery; and a newly acquired African art collection, to mention a few. The Museum's galleries provided venues for works by Illinois artists—forty-five Chicago painters (the Bridges Collection), John Warner Norton paintings and murals, prints by Misch Kohn, contemporary quilts by Caryl Bryer Fallert and Joan Lintault, photographs and design work by Nathan Lerner, photographs of the Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor by Ed Ranney (*Prairie Passage*), a variety of works by Illinois women artists (*Illinois Women Artists: The New Millennium*), and computer and electronic media (*Electronic Immersions*)—to list a few examples. These exhibitions offered unique glimpses of Illinois art and artists.



*John Froman, chief of the Peoria Tribe (center), helped museum officials select objects for a 2001 Canadian museum exhibition.*





Above: *The recently acquired Amish quilts adorned the art gallery in the ISM-Springfield in 2000.*

Right: *The Museum launched the Dinomania! exhibition at a Springfield shopping mall in 1994. Photograph by Marlin Roos.*

Below: *In 1997, Journey to Other Worlds featured Siberian ethnographic collections from the Russian Museum of Ethnography in St. Petersburg.*



Some notable exhibit developments require special comment. During 1994, the Museum ventured to a Springfield shopping mall to launch *Dinomania!*, an exhibition that reached over 80,000 individuals. ISM audiences were also engaged by *A People at War: Americans in WWII*, an exhibition developed by the Tennessee State Museum. The *Healing Walls: Murals and Community* exhibition, which opened at the Illinois Art Gallery in Chicago in 1995, documented the Chicago mural movement from 1970 to today. The Museum produced its first CD-ROM version of the exhibition and distributed it to schools and other museums—thereby expanding the audience. In the same year, Dickson Mounds Museum developed its first traveling exhibition, *The Illinois Country, 1673–1846*, which premiered at Dickson Mounds and then traveled to three other Illinois museums. The Museum and the Russian Museum of Ethnography co-organized *Journey to Other Worlds: Siberian Collections from the Russian Museum of Ethnography*, which premiered in the ISM-Springfield and then traveled to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and the Houston Museum of Natural Science. In 1995, the Museum initiated a program to develop exhibits for Illinois State Parks—another avenue for sharing expertise and collections with audiences across the state.

Many Illinois museums have benefited from a new state public museum grant program that was initiated in 1998 and is administered by the Museum. This program has distributed nearly \$40 million in capital and \$18.5 million in operating grants to museums throughout the state over the past four years, and has enhanced interactions within the museum community.

The Museum launched a major renovation project to create new natural history exhibits in October 2001. The new exhibition, *Changes: Dynamic Illinois Environments*, slated to open in winter 2002, will present integrated interpretations of changes in climate, land, and life throughout Illinois' 500-million-year history. Visitors will “join the staff” to explore environmental change and the forces that cause environmental change in Illinois. The exhibition will incorporate dioramas, object-rich cases, hands-on interactive elements, video, audio, and high-tech computer exhibits such as the *RiverWeb*<sup>SM</sup> digital river basin (developed collaboratively with the National Center for Supercomputing Applications, the Science Museum of Minnesota, and the St. Louis Science Center). The *Changes* exhibition will present the science behind the exhibit, and with its long-term perspective, will engender better understanding of environmental change and environmental issues. In line with the latest thinking in the exhibition and informal-education fields, *Changes* is designed to be enjoyable,

engage multiple senses, reach individuals with different learning styles, promote social learning, and encourage visitors to make connections, and create what Bonnie Pitman<sup>2</sup> calls “personal meaning” (*Presence of Mind: Museums and the Spirit of Learning*).

More traditional functions of research and collecting continued at high professional levels, building on the Museum’s historical strengths and providing solid underpinnings for exhibits and educational programs. The Quaternary Studies Program, now called the Landscape History Program to more clearly express its function, collaborated with other institutions on studies of the responses of vegetation to aboriginal burning and climate change, including long-term droughts—all relevant to climate modeling and contemporary conservation and land management practices. Museum geologists initiated a major paleontological survey of Mammoth Cave and studies of bat distribution to allow for informed decisions about contemporary cave management and conservation. Following the trend toward increasing globalization, international collaborations proliferated. Museum scientists worked with colleagues in Mexico, Central America, and South America to create a database of past vegetation, and with colleagues in the Czech Republic to study the distribution of Coal Age plants. The Museum worked with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to familiarize representatives from other countries with the protocols of the



North American Pollen Database, so that their databases can be integrated into a Global Pollen Database—thus creating a unified body of data for studies of climate change. Museum researchers collaborated with colleagues from the Russian Federation on studies of faunal remains from archaeological sites in the Moscow area, the late extinction of mammoths on Wrangel Island in Siberia, and impacts of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster on animal populations. On the home front, Museum archaeologists conducted large-scale excavations at a threatened site near the Carlyle Reservoir in southern Illinois, and initiated studies of human skeletal remains potentially subject to repatriation under NAGPRA.

*Using a raft made from canoes, Museum paleoecologists cored sediments from the base of Sweeton Pond in southwestern Missouri as part of a study of past vegetation and climate. Photograph by R. Bruce McMillan.*

2. Bonnie Pitman is the deputy director of the Dallas Museum of Art and a former recipient of the AAM Education Committee’s Award for Excellence in Practice.



*The new Changes: Dynamic Illinois Environments exhibition will include marine exhibits in its Tropical Illinois section. Drawing by Joe Hennessy, ISM Exhibits Chief.*





Above: Russian colleagues examined a mammoth tusk on Wrangel Island in 1998. Photograph by Jeffrey Saunders.

Right: Ukranian colleagues paused in the foreground of the Chornobyl nuclear reactor site during a 1998 mammal trapping expedition to examine genetic alterations following the nuclear disaster. Photograph by James R. Purdue.



During this time, curators continued to build and study the collections to document the cultural and natural heritage of Illinois and provide the foundation for exhibits and educational programs. The Museum continued to attract major collections—a reflection of its professional reputation. After meeting with Museum staff, Enrique H. Orozco donated his wife's outstanding collection of over 1,000 antique and modern dolls (the Joy E. Orozco Doll Collection) in 1995. In 2000, with a lead gift from Illinois Power and grassroots support from across the state, the Museum acquired a historically significant collection of over 100 Illinois Amish quilts, made from the mid-1850s through the 1950s. Three large collections came to the Museum from Illinois universities—nineteenth-century historical artifacts from Sangamon State University's Clayville Museum, his-

toric clothing assembled by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and African ethnographic specimens (the F. Louis Hoover African Art Collection) from Illinois State University. The dolls, Amish quilts, and African art have already been featured in major exhibitions and educational programs. Original research was conducted on the Amish quilt collection, including studies of estate inventories and surveys of members of the Amish community around Arthur, Illinois, and is being incorporated into a book. Museum curators also continued to upgrade collections care and storage. Recent efforts focused on the Amish quilts, the doll collection, the mollusk collections, and World Heritage collections from the Cahokia site. The significance of the latter is highlighted by the fact that it was selected for conservation under the Save America's Treasures program.

## Conclusion

Over the last twenty-five years, the Museum has refined and strengthened its mission and initiatives and worked diligently to more carefully consider the diverse needs and interests of its statewide and international audience. The Museum continues to deliberate how to best serve society using both traditional and emerging technologies and approaches. As recommended in the statement below by Stephen Weil (*Rethinking the Museum and Other Meditations*), the Illinois State Museum strives to affect physical and virtual visitors in ways that transcend their visit:

*Beyond information, values, and experience, what else of social utility might museums provide to their public? Let me suggest two: stimulation and empowerment. Here we approach the museum visit not as an end in itself but as the starting point, rather, for a process intended to continue long after the visitor has left the museum's premises.*

The changes we have made over the past twenty-five years have stimulated and empowered visitors to explore and continue exploring the land, life, people, and art of Illinois. ☺



Museum programs of the modern era stimulate lifelong learning.

Above left: Annual field trips encourage participants to explore archaeology and natural history.

Above right: Exhibitions such as *At Home in the Heartland* stimulate family dialogue about Illinois history.

Right: Workshops engage young students in the creation of original artwork and other hands-on activities.



## Suggested Readings

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