

Oral History of Illinois Agriculture

Illinois State Museum

Agriculture is a vital way of life to people living in Illinois, and it has been for thousands of years. The Illinois State Museum is launching a new program to explore the history of agriculture in Illinois. The initial goal of the program is to develop comprehensive educational material on the origins and evolution of agriculture. This information will be made available on a new internet Web module focusing on Illinois' agricultural history. Long-term goals include a major expansion of the Museum and its exhibit space. Among the exhibitions planned for the Museum expansion will be a new *Hall of Illinois Agriculture*.

The Web module on Illinois agriculture will be developed in two phases. The first phase, supported by a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), is recording digital oral histories of people with agricultural experiences and making them available on the internet. The second phase will be supported by a second IMLS National Leadership Grant. This project will develop the **Agricultural History Fair** — a comprehensive Web history of Illinois agriculture extending from prehistoric times (3000 B.C.) to today. The information will be organized within five broad themes: land, plants, animals, people, and technology.

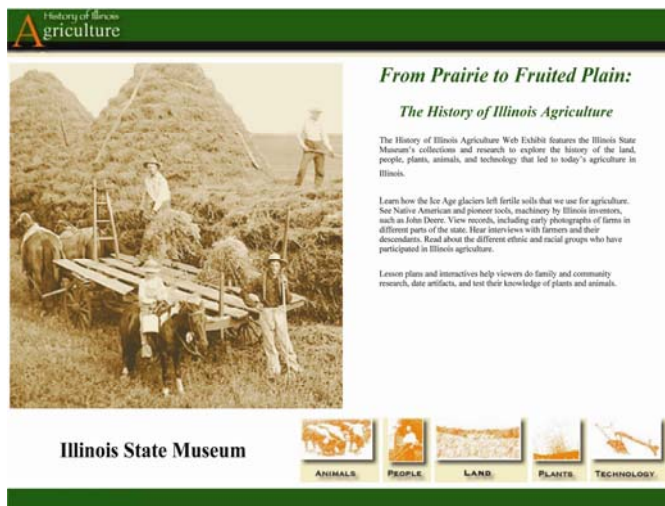


Grant Support

- **IMLS National Leadership Grant:** Principal Investigators: Dr. Robert E. Warren (ISM) and Dr. Mark R. DePue (ALPLM)
 - Develop digital oral-history interviews and place on Web module
 - Grant award: \$564,651 (announced September 25, 2007)
 - Duration 2 yr (October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2009)
- **IMLS National Leadership Grant:** Principal Investigator: Dr. Robert E. Warren (ISM)
 - Develop Web module on the history of Illinois agriculture
 - Application: February 2009
 - Duration 2 yr (2009-2011)

IMLS National Leadership Grant, 2007-2009

This project is creating an interactive Web module — the **Audio-Video Barn** — featuring digital oral-history interviews with people involved in various aspects of agriculture and rural life in Illinois. Some of the interviews are from audio tapes archived in libraries at the University of Illinois at Springfield and Northern Illinois University. In conjunction with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, the project is also recording new interviews with a diverse array of people of various ages from throughout the State of Illinois. Most of the new interviews are recorded on digital videotape so that images as well as sounds can be made available on the Web module. All of the audio and video files are being digitized, edited for sound quality, and transcribed. We are also indexing the recordings by theme, topic, and geographical location so people can search them interactively for subjects of special interest. The interactive *Audio-Video Barn* will give Museum and Web visitors a rich, personal view of Illinois agriculture—past, present, and future.





Partners:

- **Stephen Leonard**, (Co-Principal Investigator)
Director of Oral History, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM)
- **Dr. Michael Frisch**, Principal, Randforce Associates LLC, University at Buffalo Technology Incubator (SUNY)
- **Cindy Ditzler**, Acting Director, Regional History Center, Founders Memorial Library, Northern Illinois University (NIU)
- **Thomas J. Wood**, Archivist, Brookens Library, University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS)

Oral History Consultants:

- **Dr. Jane Adams**, Professor, Depts. Anthropology & History, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIUC)
- **Dr. Cullom Davis**, Emeritus Professor, Dept. History, University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS)
- **Dr. Michael Frisch**, Professor, Depts. History & American Studies, University at Buffalo (SUNY)
- **Dr. Deborah McGregor**, Professor, Dept. History, University of Illinois at Springfield (UIS)

Agriculture Consultants:

- **Dr. LeRoy Biehl**, Emeritus Professor, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Illinois (UIUC)
- **Charlyn Fargo**, Bureau Chief, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Springfield (IDA)
- **Dr. Douglas Parrett**, Assoc. Chair, Department of Animal Sciences, University of Illinois (UIUC)
- **Dr. Edward Runge**, Professor, Department of Soil & Crop Sciences, Texas A&M University (TAMU)
- **Dr. Debra A. Reid**, Associate Professor, Department of History, Eastern Illinois University at Charleston (EIU)
- **Steven A. Simms**, Promotion and Graphic Arts Director, Illinois Farm Bureau, Bloomington (IFB)

Project Evaluator:

- **Dr. Tom Clark**, TA Consulting, Springfield, Illinois

Interview Subjects:

- We are conducting 50 new interviews, most recorded on digital video tape.
- Interview subjects are diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender, age, and geographic location.
- Interview subjects have experience in many different aspects of agriculture.
- Examples: John Ackerman (pumpkins), Jacqueline Jackson (author), Lloyd Johnson (African-American farmer), Paul E. Shuman (grain farmer), Jody Heavner (elk rancher)

ISM-ALPLM Partnership:

- ISM and ALPLM co-hosted an Oral History Workshop at the ISM-RCC (Jan 2008)
- Each institution is sending out its own teams to conduct oral-history interviews
- Interview recordings are being transcribed by outside contractor
- ISM is processing Audio-Video recordings (sound quality, digital indexing, Web formatting)
- Duplicate copies of digital Audio-Video files will be archived at ISM, ISM-RCC, and ALPLM

ISM-Randforce Partnership:

- Randforce is providing software and training for indexing Audio-Video files
- ISM is indexing Audio-Video files to make them searchable on the *Audio-Video Barn* Web site

ISM-UIS Partnership:

- ISM is indexing 45 digitized audio tapes archived at UIS Brookens Library
- ISM will make indexed files available to UIS archives

ISM-NIU Partnership:

- ISM staff will digitize 18 relevant audio tapes archived at NIU Founders Memorial Library
- ISM will process tapes and provide copies for NIU archives

ISM Staff:

- **Dr. Robert E. Warren** (Principal Investigator), Michael Maniscalco (Project Coordinator), Sue Huitt, James Oliver, Pat Burg, Doug Carr, Dr. Erich Schroeder, Beth Shea

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Project Web Module: www.museum.state.il.us/avbarn
January 3, 2009

