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President Clinton Signs Museum and Library Services Act

Washington, DC - On 30 September 1996 President Clinton approved legislation creating an Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Enactment of H.R. 4278 establishes IMLS to improve museum, library and information services. The new Institute consolidates federal programs of support for museums, which are currently administered by the Institute of Museum Services (IMS) and programs supporting libraries, currently administered by the Department of Education. The legislation takes effect in FY 97 (beginning October 1, 1996), but FY 97 will clearly be a year of transition.

Under the new law the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) will add to its responsibilities the role of advising the Institute on general policy related to financial assistance for library and information services. The National Museum Services Board will continue to provide policy advice on museum programs.

Speaking about the IMLS, Diane B. Frankel, IMS Director and the new IMLS Director said, "This new agency sends a strong signal about the contribution museums and libraries make to education and to communities across the country. I look forward to working with libraries and museums to ensure that the tremendous power they have to enrich our lives is realized.

"I look forward to working closely with members of both the museum and library worlds to assure a smooth transition to the Institute of Museum and Library Services."

Jeanne H. Simon, NCLIS Chairperson, expressed satisfaction with the new arrangement: "NCLIS Members are very pleased about the prospects for increased cooperation between libraries and museums. We are also gratified that the important
federal role supporting libraries will continue through the new Library Services and Technology Act."

Provisions of the Museum and Library Act of 1996 include the following:

- Authorize an annual appropriation of $150 million for libraries and $28.7 million for museums (note: appropriations for library and museum programs continue to be the responsibility of different Congressional committees)
- Continue museum programs to encourage and assist museums in their educational role
- Renew and reorganize provisions contained in the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) and the Higher Education Act (HEA) title II into a new Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)
- Establish a directorship of the Institute of Museum and Library Services with a four-year term that will alternate between people from library and museum backgrounds
- Transfer functions from IMS Director and Director of Library Programs at the Department of Education to the IMLS Director
- Establish two deputy directors, one for the Office of Museum Services and one for the Office of Library Services
- All of LSTA funding to states via state library agencies
- Provide national leadership competitive grants and contracts for education and training, research and demonstration, preservation or digitization of library materials, and model cooperative programs between museums and libraries.

The U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science is a permanent, independent agency of the federal government composed of sixteen members. NCLIS is charged by law (P.L. 91-345) to advise the President and Congress on national and international library and information services policies and plans.