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Statement to the
Subcommittee on Education, Arts & the Humanities
Committee on Human Resources
United States Senate

Hearings on Authorizing Legislation

for the

Institute of Museum Services
National Endowment for the Arts
National Endowment for the Humanities

Submitted by

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June 28, 1979

on behalf of the

Association of Science-Technology Centers
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The Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) welcomes this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of science museums before the Subcommittee on Education, Arts, and the Humanities. ASTC's testimony is provided in conjunction with that of several national museum organizations, and we particularly endorse the statement of the American Association of Museums, representing the entire American museum community.

ASTC is an organization of science museums and similar institutions, often called "science-technology centers". Their common interest is the increase of public understanding and appreciation of science and technology and their place in our society through the use of exhibitions, special events, and ongoing educational programs. Members range from large science museums in major urban areas to small community science, industry, and natural history museums across the country. Their annual attendance of more than 35 million visitors is larger than that of art and history museums of comparable size and stature nationwide.

Science and technology are an integral part of our cultural heritage. In order to reason and live in our complex, changing society, access is needed through all institutions to the full range of our culture's richness and diversity. This cultural access provides reserves of aesthetic experience, ethical and philosophical thought, and appreciation of the phenomena of science and the powers and limits of technology. Such access within science centers and museums helps provide the bond of common values and common heritage that holds us together as a nation and as a people.

Federal science museum support has been provided by the Arts, and Humanities Endowments, National Museum Act, National Science Foundation, and new Institute of Museum Services. Although each agency has contributed to the health and vigor of science museums, and despite their record of cultural service to more than 35 million visitors of diverse economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, science-technology centers have not participated fully in America's expanding support for arts and culture. They received less than 6% of more than \$112 million in museum project support provided by NEA, NEH, NMA, and NSF between 1972 and 1978. Support has been limited because each funding agency has acted as if support for science centers was the primary responsibility of some other agency and that its own support was beneficial but secondary. Funding has been given science museum projects primarily when they fit within guidelines developed for other purposes.

Some of these issues have been addressed by the Museum Working Group of the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities. Their discussions with the museum field and efforts towards coordination of agency policy are significant and valued. These efforts have resulted in a recent "Memorandum of Understanding" in which, for example, the National Science Foundation indicated that it would play a somewhat larger role in support of science and technology in museums. A number of policy issues alluded to in the Memorandum require careful study, and may require administrative, legislative, and appropriations actions for their implementation.

Another outcome of the Museum Working Group has been increased coordination among agencies to insure that valuable interdisciplinary projects are not lost, and that applications submitted to more than one agency receive proper consideration. This coordination is particularly important for science museums, which often engage in multi-disciplinary projects. The request of the two Endowments for specific authorization for interagency cooperation and coordination will further strengthen their ability to provide this kind of assistance.

NEA and NEH Challenge Grants have been an unqualified success since their authorization in 1976 for the purpose of strengthening cultural institutions and organizations. Their impact on museums has been dramatic, resulting in improvements in museum planning, management, and financial stability, and in substantial increases in private charitable contributions. Science centers and museums receiving Challenge Grants have included the Museum of Science in Boston, the Franklin Institute Science Museum in Philadelphia, and the Exploratorium in San Francisco. Unfortunately, the number and amount of such Challenge Grants to science centers and museums has been limited, compared with those to art museums. As general institutional grants, Challenge Grants are of special importance to museums, and they should be accessible on an equitable basis to museums of all kinds.

It has been suggested that IMS General Operating Support Grants provide an alternative for categories of museums that have not received substantial Challenge Grant support. Challenge Grants are not ongoing support, and once granted, are considered one time, non-renewable grants, and their value lies in this rare opportunity to provide lasting benefit to the recipient institution.

Authorization for the Challenge Grant Program should continue, and care taken to insure that the broadest possible range of museums qualify for and receive such grant awards. Recently, it has been suggested that each Endowment restrict museum Challenge Grants to specific museum types, and authorizing language in the present Endowments' draft bill before the Subcommittee includes mildly restrictive language for NEA, but not NEH Challenge Grants. If allowed, the inclusion of the phrase "strengthening artistic quality by" would place NEA Challenge Grants on a separate footing from those of NEH, and would further reduce the abilities of non-art museums to qualify for Challenge Grants. There were no such restrictions in the original authorization, and none should be added now. If it is the intent of Congress to more carefully define Challenge Grant support and the kinds of cultural institutions and organizations which should qualify for it, then this should be done in a clear and comprehensive way.

Services to the field are an essential ingredient in federal museum support. These programs have strengthened America's museums through research, training, continuing education, and special programs by the Smithsonian, and grant support from the National Museum Act, NEA, and NEH to individuals, museums, and museum service organizations.

Only IMS at present lacks the authority to make grants to museum service organizations. The recent Federal Council's "Memorandum of Understanding" specifically assigns IMS greater responsibility for services to the field projects. Specific authorizing language is needed to allow IMS grants to museum service organizations and related non-profit groups. This authorization might, if necessary, be limited to project grants and exclude general operating support.

IMS is a crucial agency for museum assistance. IMS General Operating Support Grants (GOS) have been awarded to the widest range of museums, large and small, of all types, across the country. First year awards were made fairly and equitably, and provided support to science-technology centers and many other types of museums.

It is the unanimous view of the museum profession that present IMS support levels are inadequate. The problem may be seen dramatically when preliminary data from a survey of all museums is combined with the results of IMS's 1978 grant awards.

TABLE 1

TOTAL MUSEUM BUDGETS vs IMS SUPPORT

Museum Budget Size	<u>No. of Museums (preliminary)</u>	<u>Aggregated Budgets (estimated)</u>	<u>1978 IMS GOS Awards</u>	<u>Awards as % of Budget</u>
\$ below 100,000	3,120	\$110,000,000	\$ 559,991	0.5%
100,000-999,999	926	235,000,000	1,788,772	0.8%
above 1,000,000	168	455,000,000	1,170,251	0.3%
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TOTALS	4,214	\$800,000,000	\$3,519,014	0.5%

Note: Number of museums are from preliminary IMS Museum Survey data. Museum budgets are representative only, pending completion of IMS survey results. Tables I and II have been prepared by ASTC, are unofficial, and have not been reviewed by IMS.

Among those museums which do receive IMS support, large museums do not receive amounts sufficient to assist with even their most dramatic and essential needs. From the first year of IMS grants:

TABLE 2

FUNDED MUSEUM BUDGETS vs IMS SUPPORT

<u>Museum Budget Size</u>	<u>No. of Museums Funded, 1978</u>	<u>Aggregate Budgets (estimated)</u>	<u>\$ Amount of 1978 IMS Awards</u>	<u>Awards as % of Budget</u>
\$ below 100,000	83	\$ 3,634,000	\$ 559,991	15.4%
100,000-999,999	107	33,500,000	1,788,772	5.3%
above 1,000,000	53	172,000,000	1,170,251	0.7%
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TOTALS	243	\$209,134,000	\$3,519,014	1.7%

Future authorization and appropriation limits for IMS should reflect the evident wide gap between museum needs and present IMS support, particularly for larger museums. An immediate increase in the FY 81 authorized ceiling to \$35 million would provide less than 5% of museum budget support, ignoring inflation and increases in museums' constant dollar budgets. Future IMS increases should continue until IMS can provide between 5% and 10% of aggregate museum operating budgets.

Multi-year museum funding, under discussion at the Institute of Museum Services, would be a viable program that would allow long-range planning at museums and reduce the burden of grant applications at the applicant institutions and at IMS.

It has been the practice of the National Endowment for the Arts, in accordance with its legislative mandate, to encourage and assist the nation's cultural resources, including the strengthening of cultural organizations. NEA has supported exhibitions with aesthetic and cultural dimensions in museums of all kinds, and other grant categories have supported a limited number of quality non-arts projects related to museum education and to wider availability of museums. This breadth of view has been crucial during this time of growth, stress and rising pressures from the increased use of museums by public audiences.

Museums of all kinds are eligible for National Endowment for the Humanities support. In general, NEH has supported interdisciplinary projects involving the arts, humanities, and sciences. Its continuing efforts to encourage and to respond to such project applications is praiseworthy. Science centers and museums believe that the Endowment's ability to support science and technology projects which have historic, cultural, and values-laden dimensions to be essential for the public's understanding of the humanistic dimensions of science. Their joint partnership with NSF in reviewing and supporting ethics and values in science and technology proposals is a model for interagency cooperation.

Finally, recent investigative reports have charged the two Endowments with faulty management and bias in peer view panel grant decisions. Science museums have found no truth to these charges. Staff, panels, and councils of the two Endowments have maintained at all times the highest professional standards, and their granting processes are careful, considerate, and fair reflections of program policies.

Science centers join with more than 5,000 American museums as part of the larger community of institutions engaged in enriching cultural life in America. We see the need for support of cultural activities at all levels of government. We also see the benefits to our communities from federal support for arts and culture. Taken as a whole, federal initiatives over the last decade have significantly rewarded the cultural life of our citizens. The contributions of the two Endowments and of the Institute of Museum Services have been unequalled in our past history, and their continued viability and growth are of the utmost importance. Authorized funding levels for all three agencies should continue to be increased each year, for there is not yet a healthy balance between the richness and diversity of our culture and the economic productivity of the wealthiest nation on earth.