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## **Indianapolis Museum of Art Announces Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant to Develop Open-source Mobile Tour Software for Wider Museum Community**

*Grant will allow the IMA to fully realize the concept of TAP mobile tours developed in 2008*

**INDIANAPOLIS, IN**, September 28, 2011 — The Indianapolis Museum of Art announced a \$420,000 National Leadership Grant awarded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), to support the development of tools and specifications for building, sharing, and preserving mobile content that all museums can use to create and deploy museum experiences on mobile devices. The project will address significant challenges facing many museums that are creating similar mobile experiences ensuring that the content created for these can be integrated with a variety of platforms, is shareable with other museums, easily migrated between authoring tools, and supports the long-term sustainability of content. The final products—TourML specification and TAP Mobile Toolkit—will provide a complete front-to-back and open-source mobile tour system for museums, enabling those who lack the financial and software development resources to reach to new audiences.

Featuring a diverse collaboration between a variety of museums and commercial software vendors, the project will also facilitate building a consensus about the nature of mobile tours, and will offer a powerful model for how open-source and proprietary systems can coexist within the museum community. The IMA will work with project partners from art, history, and science museums, including important partnerships with the Balboa Park Online Collaborative; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Dallas Museum of Art; National Air and Space Museum; The Smithsonian Institute; Minnesota Historical Society; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; and Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art.

“This project will help museums identify smart strategies for creating reusable mobile content and will leverage open-source software to provide a suite of tools that can be recombined to create a variety of engaging mobile experiences,” said Robert Stein, IMA Deputy Director for Research, Technology, and Engagement. Stein will serve as project director for the two-year IMLS grant.

Since 2009, the IMA has led discussions within the museum community to develop a specification—or a common language—called TourML, which describes mobile tours, their content and the experiences they provide. Software using the TourML specification will allow the same tour to be used on a variety of mobile devices regardless of hardware or operating system and will allow museums to share the content and structure of a tour with other museums offering related content. The TourML specification continues to be refined with contributions by the wider museum community to reflect the needs and ideas of a broad cross-section of museums.

A leader in integrating technology into the museum experience, the IMA created and released the TAP mobile content management system in 2008 under an open-source license. In addition to serving as a simple means for creating mobile content, TAP provides interfaces for web-based mobile tours and simple native applications for an iPod-based tour. This grant will support the further technical development of TAP by creating a TAP Mobile Toolkit to support the TourML specification recommended by the museum community.

### **Technology at the IMA**

The Indianapolis Museum of Art has been at the forefront of integrating technology into the museum experience and has received numerous awards for its digital efforts. In addition to the development of Artbabbble.org, an online community created to showcase art-based video content with more than 25 partner institutions, the IMA was one of the first museums to make live statistics available online. The Museum's web dashboard, [dashboard.imamuseum.org](http://dashboard.imamuseum.org), includes real-time tracking of IMA key facts and figures such as attendance, works of art on loan, expenses, and other institutional measures of success. The IMA has a significant presence on Flickr, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, as well as an expanded blog on its website ([www.imamuseum.org/blog](http://www.imamuseum.org/blog)), which features regular contributions from IMA staff.

### **About the Indianapolis Museum of Art**

Encompassing 152 acres of gardens and grounds, the Indianapolis Museum of Art is among the 10 largest and 10 oldest encyclopedic art museums in the United States, and features significant collections of African, American, Asian, European and contemporary art, as well as a newly established collection of design arts. The IMA offers visitors an expansive view of arts and culture through its collection of more than 54,000 works of art that span 5,000 years of history from across the world's continents. The collections include paintings, sculpture, furniture and design objects, prints, drawings and photographs, as well as textiles and costumes.

Additionally, art, design, and nature are featured at 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park and Oldfields—Lilly House & Gardens, an historic Country Place Era estate on the IMA grounds. Beyond the Indianapolis campus, in May 2011 the IMA opened to the public the recently acquired landmark Miller House and Garden in Columbus, Indiana. One of the country's most highly regarded examples of mid-century Modernist residences, Miller House was designed by Eero Saarinen, with interiors by Alexander Girard, and landscape design by Dan Kiley.

Recognizing the IMA's positive impact on its community, the Museum was named a recipient of the 2009 National Medal for Museum and Library Services – the nation's highest honor for museums and libraries. The IMA's commitment to free general admission, programming for schools and teachers, environmental leadership and online initiatives were among cited community contributions in the Museum's selection for the award.

Located at 4000 Michigan Road, the IMA and Lilly House are open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The IMA is closed Mondays and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's days. For more information, call 317-923-1331 or visit [www.imamuseum.org](http://www.imamuseum.org).

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