DISCOVERING THE LIBRARIES THROUGH EXHIBITIONS

Smithsonian Libraries
Showcasing Library Treasures

At the heart of every Smithsonian museum and research center is a library. There are 21, including one in Panama, and Smithsonian Libraries unites them all into the largest museum library system in the world. Each library is among the world’s greatest repositories of knowledge, and collectively, they are one of America’s most precious scientific and cultural resources.

Yet the majority of the Smithsonian Libraries’ books, manuscripts, letters, journals, catalogs and rare printed works are housed behind the scenes. Public exhibitions enable visitors to see and experience these hidden treasures firsthand. They illuminate our rich and distinctive collections in history, science, art and culture while putting the objects into context and telling their stories. They play an important role in educational offerings.

The Smithsonian Libraries produces three types of exhibitions: physical displays in our galleries and exhibition cases, online so anyone with an internet connection can enjoy them and traveling displays that reach U.S. libraries and other venues. The Libraries depends on private philanthropy for its exhibition programs, which are free and open to the public. We seek gifts to build an exhibition endowment and funds for immediate use, both of which will ensure opportunities to showcase our distinguished collections.

Your investment in our exhibition programs will enable us to share the Libraries’ diverse collections with the widest possible audience. It will fuel an understanding of the book as an artifact and vital transmitter of knowledge, indeed the world’s intellectual heritage.
The Smithsonian Libraries—more than 2 million volumes of books, vivid illustrations and historic documents dating from the 13th century to the present—is a vibrant resource for research and education communities around the world.

Exhibitions are the Libraries’ public face and a primary vehicle for sharing our scholarship, collections and ideas. Through exhibitions, visitors connect with these resources to better understand the world and envision the future.

New, inventive exhibition programs spark discovery in science, art and design, history, culture and the natural world, and each is enhanced by a permanent digital exhibition, which gives learners everywhere the opportunity to interact with Smithsonian treasures. Traveling exhibitions across the United States allow us to reach more diverse audiences with programs and events that deepen their knowledge and enrich their experience.

Since 2005, public and university libraries, private academies and Smithsonian affiliate museums have borrowed our traveling exhibition, Picturing the Words: the Power of Book Illustration (created from an exhibition in the National Museum of American History). They often display their own collections alongside it and use the exhibition to prompt lively discussion or map it to education standards for use in school field trips.

We seek private funding for gallery, online and traveling exhibitions and related programming, outreach and education. New exhibitions include:

Fantastic Worlds: Science and Fiction 1790-1910
Smithsonian Libraries Exhibition Gallery
National Museum of American History
JUNE 2015

Artists’ Books and Africa: Unique Visions
A collaborative exhibition by Smithsonian Libraries and National Museum of African Art
SEPTEMBER 2015

Color in a New Light
Smithsonian Libraries Exhibition Area
National Museum of Natural History
JANUARY 2016

Cultivating America’s Gardens
A collaboration with Smithsonian Gardens
Smithsonian Libraries Exhibition Gallery
National Museum of American History
NOVEMBER 2016

Discovering Alaska! Smithsonian Natural History Collections and the Purchase of Alaska
National Museum of Natural History
MARCH 2017

Gifts will support these and other exhibitions, and enable us to convert some into traveling exhibitions.
Investing in Library Exhibitions

The Smithsonian Libraries presents compelling and visually exciting exhibitions in many places, including permanent galleries in the National Museum of Natural History and the National Museum of American History, where the reopening of the west wing will bring Fantastic Worlds: Science and Fiction, 1780-1910. This exhibition will share 19th century ideas, discoveries and inventions, and highlight novelists like Jules Verne and Mary Shelley who created stories that forever altered how we live and view the world around us.

Exhibitions such as the recent Paper Engineering: Fold, Pull, Pop and Turn, which featured pop-up and movable books from the 1600s to today, build awareness of the breadth of the collections. Since rare books are fragile and can only be displayed for short periods of time, exhibitions must change frequently.

Private funding is critical to these endeavors and will support the conversion of some exhibitions, including our highly successful Once There Were Billions: Vanished Birds of North America, into traveling versions to share across America.

Your generous gift will allow the Smithsonian Libraries to plan future exhibitions, showcase its distinguished collections and develop programming with an immediate and profound impact. A gift to establish an endowment will provide a stable source of funding now and for the future.

Investments in library exhibitions will heighten visibility of Smithsonian treasures that would otherwise go unseen and enable visitors everywhere to connect with and learn from them. With your financial support, we can bring these rich resources to light and continue to inspire people and communities around the globe.
Giving Opportunities

Gifts at every level will support the design and creation of exhibitions and related educational programs.

$25,000

• Create a special, permanent website to complement an exhibition.
• Fund education and outreach programming such as lectures, film series and symposia.

$50,000

Convert a physical exhibition into a traveling banner exhibition, for loan to schools, libraries and museums across the country.

$150,000

Fund the design, editing, fabrication, conservation of objects and installation for a Smithsonian Libraries exhibition.

$250,000

Create a permanent endowment to support education and outreach for the Libraries Exhibitions Programs. This gift offers naming recognition.

$500,000

Create an endowment to support the Smithsonian Libraries Traveling Exhibitions Program. This gift offers naming recognition.

$1 MILLION

Create a permanent endowment to support the design and fabrication of exhibitions. This gift offers naming recognition.

$3 MILLION

Your gift to endow the Smithsonian Libraries Exhibition Gallery in the National Museum of American History would provide ongoing support for exhibitions, programs and educational outreach for the long term and offer prominent naming recognition.

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