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For Immediate Release

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh Makes Digital History

National grant takes "Iron and Steel" into the modern age

(PITTSBURGH, PA – September 2, 2008) A 2008 National Leadership Demonstration Grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) will enable Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh to digitally preserve more than 400,000 pages of historic materials related to the iron and steel industry and make them available to the public. The \$600,000 grant, awarded today by IMLS director Dr. Anne-Imelda M. Radice, will finance "The Legacy of Iron and Steel" project.

"Steel magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie's industrial legacy is found in the thousands of museums, universities and libraries he established," said Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh President and Director Dr. Barbara K. Mistick. "Pittsburgh's iron and steel industry was a key factor in the industrial revolution of the United States. As a public library it is our responsibility to connect customers through technology and provide access to our region's rich history."

With this grant, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh will demonstrate how a public library can use current technology to provide access to and excitement about a historic collection. Currently the library owns a large collection of historic books and other materials that document Pittsburgh's steel and iron legacy. Dating as far back as the 1800s, nearly 20 percent of the collection is too fragile to handle. By saving the materials in a digital format, the library can make them accessible to local students as well as national historians via computers and the Internet. A unique feature of the project incorporates the use of social networking software that will enable customers to comment upon and tell stories about the items. The software also has the capability to connect customers with each other.

Dr. Radice praised the project's significance in preserving history and making it accessible via current technologies. "Technology has great potential for restoring and preserving historical records. Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's project will be a benchmark in the utilization of computer technology to access historic collections," Radice said. To qualify for a national leadership demonstration grant, a project must preserve culture, heritage and knowledge while enhancing learning. Recipients earn the grant based on their ability to demonstrate innovation, collaboration and the potential for far-reaching impact.

Chairman and CEO of U. S. Steel, John Surma, also stressed the significance of making these materials accessible and creating a scholarly learning community. "The Library's plan to make these records accessible using modern, digital social networking tools is a great step in assuring that our region's heritage is preserved and shared," said Surma. "The young people of this community, and people around the globe, will have the ability to view and read and interact with a tremendous part of the region's historic documents."

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About Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

Building Communities, Enriching Lives

Established as a public trust in 1895, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh serves the citizens of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County with a distinguished history of leadership among the country's great public libraries. Through its 19 neighborhood locations, including Main Library and the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh is the region's most visited asset. Each year the Library provides more than 8,000 free programs, classes and other learning and training opportunities that are tailored to meet the dynamic and diverse needs of people living in Western Pennsylvania.

About The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute's mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. To learn more about the Institute, please visit www.ims.gov.