



August 2006

## About the USA – Virtual Classroom Newsletter for English Teachers

### In this Issue:

- 1 The Guggenheim Is Not A Place - Guggenheim Goes Global
- 2 2006: Year of the Museum
- 2 How Are The Arts Financed in the United States?
- 2 Summer Vacation – Never Stop Learning:  
Summer Travel - Education on the Road | Summer Reading Programs
- 4 This Month in History: Saturday Morning Cartoons | Media Literacy | News Sources for Kids
- 4 Upcoming Programs & WebChats

### The Guggenheim Is Not A Place – Guggenheim Goes Global

Industrialist and philanthropist Solomon R. Guggenheim established the Guggenheim Foundation in 1937. The German baroness Hilla Rebay shaped to a large part his art collection. She was also the driving force behind the idea of a museum to house the collection of modernist, abstract art. In 1943, Rebay contacted Frank Lloyd Wright. She perceived him to be a kindred spirit and suited to design the museum of her dreams, "a temple to non-objectivity." Rebay explained to him, "I want a museum that goes slowly up. No staircase, no interruptions." The result can be seen on New York's Fifth Avenue. It did not open until 1959. By that time, both Guggenheim and Wright had passed away. Rebay was no longer museum director, and she reportedly never set foot in the museum she helped to create.

Following the tradition established by the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed museum building, Thomas Krens, director of the [Guggenheim Foundation](#) since 1988, has commissioned many of the world's leading architects to design additional museums in Europe and the U.S. Today the Guggenheim Foundation has five locations -- in New York, Venice, Berlin, Las Vegas and Bilbao. In Bilbao, the Frank Gehry-designed museum has been credited with reviving the region's fortunes.

In July 2006, it was announced that a Gehry-designed Guggenheim museum will be built in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. The combination of the Guggenheim and Abu Dhabi is an example of the global reach of the Guggenheim (or to some critics, McGuggenheim) name. When asked how the boldness of contemporary art can be reconciled with conservative Muslim values, Guggenheim Krens replied: "Our objective is not to be confrontational, but to be engaged in a cultural exchange. There are things that we don't do in New York because we feel that it is not appropriate to do them in [that] city."

#### Read more:

★ [Interview with Hilla Von Rebay. Smithsonian Archives of American Art Oral History Interviews, 1966.](#)

★ Museums and Globalization. Saloni Mathur. Anthropological Quarterly, Summer 2005. A UCLA professor of art history looks at the phenomenon of the globalizing museum. [Request article.](#)



Featuring 200 modern and contemporary works from the collections of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation.



Architectural models and plans of 23 projects and competitions illustrate the development of museum architecture, as reflected in the Guggenheim's past and present.

Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland  
[www.kah-bonn.de](http://www.kah-bonn.de)



Architect Frank Lloyd Wright, left, looks over his spiral-shaped building for a proposed Guggenheim Museum with arts patron Solomon R. Guggenheim, right, and artist Baroness Hilla Rebay, director of proposed museum, in New York City, Sept. 20, 1945. (AP Photo)



[www.aam-us.org/sp/yom/](http://www.aam-us.org/sp/yom/)

**More information at:**

- ★ There are an estimated 16,000 museums in the United States.
- ★ 2.3 million people visit American museums every day. That's 865 million visits per year, more than all ticket sales to professional baseball, football, and basketball sporting events combined.
- ★ 1/3 of Americans have visited a museum within the past six months.
- ★ Museums rank in the top 3 family vacation destinations
- ★ Museums care for over 750 million objects and living specimens.
- ★ Museums annually spend more than \$1 billion to provide over 18 million hours for educational programs.
- ★ Zoos and aquariums invest \$51 million in scientific research each year.

**Read more:**

- ★ [www.aam-us.org/aboutmuseums](http://www.aam-us.org/aboutmuseums)
- ★ [eyelevel.si.edu](http://eyelevel.si.edu)

## 2006: Year of the Museum

The story of the Guggenheim is just one part of the story of American museums. During the past century, U.S. museums have become the cultural landmarks of American society, institutions that educate, inspire, and lead their communities. 2006 marks the 100th anniversary of the [American Association of Museums](#) (AAM), the national service organization representing the American museum community.

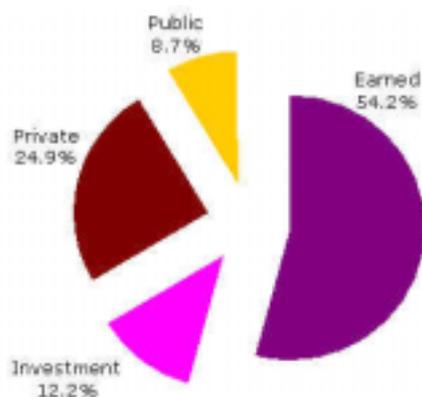
America's oldest museum is the [Charleston Museum](#) in South Carolina. It was founded in 1773. In the 1920s, museum director Laura Bragg stood up to the town's segregation laws by opening the institution's doors to African Americans. The city overturned her efforts, passing a statute decreeing that the "the museum and its use is for the white citizens of Charleston." But she was not deterred. She developed traveling kits to circulate to black schools, and established an apprenticeship program to train women in how to run small, community-oriented museums.

Museums have changed along with society, striving to become more inclusive and responsive institutions at the center of their communities. Today, ethnic museums — from [El Museo del Barrio](#) in New York City to the [Japanese American National Museum](#) in Los Angeles to the [National Museum of the American Indian](#) in Washington DC and the soon-to-be [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) — are part of the fabric of American life. Thousands of people have visited the new joint [Smithsonian American Art Museum/National Portrait Gallery](#) since it reopened July 1 after a six-year renovation but the museum is reaching out beyond its walls via a [blog \(Eye Level\)](#).

Surveys show that Americans from all income and education ranges visit and value museums. Americans view museums as one of the most important resources for educating children and as one of the most trustworthy sources of objective information.

## How Are the Arts Funded in the United States?

During the twentieth century, the United States evolved a broad network of nonprofit performing and visual arts organizations, along with other nonprofit cultural organizations such as science, history and children's museums. The funding of these organizations is broadly diversified.



- ★ Earned income (e.g., ticket sales, memberships, advertising)—54.2% of revenue.
- ★ Private sector contributions (individuals, foundations, corporations & other private)—24.9%.
- ★ Investment income (interest, endowments)—12.2%.
- ★ Public sources (federal, state, and local governments) —8.7%.

In making cultural funding choices, both public and private agencies pursue policy agendas that reflect the interests of the constituencies to whom they are accountable. Government agencies have a mandate to fund projects that will reach as broad an audience as possible, including audiences in rural communities. Foundations may have articulated objectives and strategies that reflect formal policies or the personal interests set by board members who may be founders or family members of the founders. Corporate philanthropy is usually motivated by a combination of "good citizenship" and often the personal interest of the chief executive. There are no direct expectations of a business quid pro quo. However, corporate philanthropy does, increasingly, seek to mirror the corporation's business interests in a general way. The audience members who choose to purchase services including tickets to performances or museums have, however, the most influence on funding.

As of 2004, there were more than 68,000 foundations in the United States. According to the latest update on funding for the arts by foundations and corporate giving programs (jointly published by the Foundation Center and Grantmakers in the Arts), philanthropic support for culture from a sample of the 1010 largest foundations, arts grants represented 12.5% of all grant dollars awarded.

Three key sources of government grant dollars for the arts in the United States are the National Endowment for the Arts, state arts agencies, and local government funding. Hidden contributions of government, particularly the federal government, to the arts are vastly greater than the level of direct subsidy. Some portion of every individual and corporate gift and every foundation grant to a cultural organization or activity would otherwise be paid in taxes to the government. In addition, non-profit organizations are exempt from sales and real estate taxes.

**Read more:**

**Articles/Reports:**

- ★ [Arts Funding Snapshot 2003: Vital Signs](#) (The Foundation Center and Grantmakers in the Arts, 2005)
- ★ Does America Have an Arts Policy? Tyler Cowen. (Chronicle of Higher Education, June 16, 2006) [Request article.](#) A comparison of arts policies in the U.S. and Europe.
- ★ [National and Local Profiles of Cultural Support](#) (Americans for the Arts, The Ohio State University, Arts Policy and Administration Program, 2002)
- ★ [Policy and Philanthropy in the United States Cultural System](#) (Marian A. Godfrey, Culture Program, The Pew Charitable Trusts. March 2003)

**Websites:**

- ★ [About the USA: Arts & Entertainment](#) (US Embassy)
- ★ [Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation](#) (U.S. Census Bureau)
- ★ [Foundation Center: Arts & Culture News](#)
- ★ [National Endowment for the Arts](#)
- ★ [National Endowment for the Humanities](#)

## Summer Vacation – Never Stop Learning

**Summer Travel: Education on the Road**

[edsitement.neh.gov/monthly\\_feature.asp](http://edsitement.neh.gov/monthly_feature.asp)

EDSITEment provides examples of how summer travel experiences can be used to learn about new places and the historical and/or cultural significance of vacation sites.

When taking a vacation, students can ask themselves:

- ★ What's special about this place?
- ★ Who comes here to vacation?
- ★ Do people live here, year-round?
- ★ What was this place like 100 years ago?
- ★ What will it be like 100 years from now?

**Summer Reading on the Web**

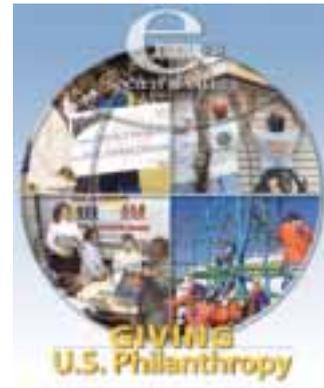
[www.educationworld.com/a\\_curr/curr244.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr244.shtml)

Examples of summer reading lists created by U.S. schools and libraries. Here's what the research says on the importance of summer reading:

- ★ Kids who don't read over the summer fall back to the reading level they were at as much as three months before.
- ★ Just 4 or 5 books are enough to stave off losses.
- ★ The "summer slide" disproportionately affects low-income children.

**Read more:**

- ★ [Center for Summer Learning, Johns Hopkins University, School of Professional Studies in Business & Education.](#)



[Giving: U.S. Philanthropy.](#)  
[eJournal USA: Society & Values](#)  
 Vol 11, #1, May 2006

This e-journal highlights several forms of giving and the activities of a variety of philanthropic organization. It also contains resources for those who want to learn about nonprofit management and grant-writing.



[edsitement.neh.gov](http://edsitement.neh.gov)

Online humanities resources from some of the world's great museums, libraries, cultural institutions, and universities for classroom use.



[www.educationworld.com](http://www.educationworld.com)

Education World's goal is to make it easy for educators to integrate the Internet into the classroom.



Father reading newspaper, two children viewing television. New York City, July 1950. Gottscho-Schleisner, Inc.

Image from [American Memory/Library of Congress](#).

#### Read more about media literacy:

- ★ [About the USA: Media](#) (US Embassy)
- ★ [Alliance for a Media Literate America](#)
- ★ [Center for Media Literacy](#)
- ★ [Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds](#) (Kaiser Family Foundation Report, March 2005)
- ★ [Media Literacy Classroom](#)
- ★ [Media Literacy Online Project](#)
- ★ [Statistical Abstract: Information & Communications](#)
- ★ [Trends & Tudes: Youth and Reality TV](#). (Harris Interactive, June 2006)

#### Selected News Sources for Kids:

- ★ [New York Times News Summaries](#)
- ★ [Public Agenda Issue Guides](#)
- ★ [VOANews.com](#) *News on different topics and regions in multiple media formats.*

## Webchat Station

#### Recent Webchats:

- Aug 1-[Hip Hop and International Diplomacy](#)
- Aug 2-[Native Plant Conservation](#)
- Aug 3-[Campaigns, Elections "U.S. Style"](#)

#### Upcoming Webchats:

- Aug 8-[Understanding International Law](#)
- Aug 10-[Elections and the Media](#)
- Aug 14-[Studying and Working in the U.S.](#)

## This Month in History:

★ On August 19, 1950, the first Saturday morning television shows for children were aired in the United States. Watching Saturday morning cartoons has become a ritual in many homes.

★ At midnight on August 1, 1981, MTV was launched with "Video Killed the Radio Star." The rock music video channel was a new concept and in the last 25 years, it has done "everything from dictate fashion trends to sway political elections."

Today, even though children and teens are spending an increasing amount of time using "new media" like the Internet and interactive video games, they are not cutting back on the time they spend with "old" media like television, radio, music and print. Instead, by using more than one medium at a time (for example, going online while watching TV), they're managing to pack increasing amounts of media content into the same amount of time each day. The digital age is transforming the quantity, range and speed of information and communication in our lives. Emerging technologies, the global economy and the Internet are changing what it means to be literate. In the 21st century, the ability to interpret and create media is a form of literacy as basic as reading and writing.

### InfoAlert - For More on Trends and Current Events in the United States

[infoalert.usembassy.de](http://infoalert.usembassy.de)

InfoAlert highlights recent articles and reports from leading U.S. journals and provides informed commentary on international and domestic issues.

## Upcoming Programs

### September 7 and 8, 2006

[The "Coming of Age": Cultural Construction of Age\(ing\)](#)  
[The Embassy of the United States of America in cooperation with the British Council and the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation](#)  
[Akademie der Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Berlin](#)

### October 27 - 30, 2006:

[U.S. Embassy Teacher Academy 2006](#)  
["The American South"](#)  
[Zentrum für USA-Studien \(ZUSAS\) der Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg](#)



[usa.usembassy.de](http://usa.usembassy.de)

*About the USA* is a digital collection of background resources on American society, culture, and political processes. In addition to featuring selected websites, it provides access to documents in full text format (E-Texts) on topics ranging from the history of German-American relations, government and politics to travel, holidays and sports.

*About the USA* is maintained by the Information Resource Centers/U.S. Diplomatic Mission to Germany. For information about this and other information products and services, see:

[www.usembassy.de/germany/irc/](http://www.usembassy.de/germany/irc/)  
Contact: [IRCBerlin@state.gov](mailto:IRCBerlin@state.gov)