Dear Friends,

The Spurlock staff has been busy this year planning new exhibits and programs for our community to enjoy! The Big Read kicks off in January and we hope you will join us as we all read *The Namesake*, by Jhumpa Lahiri, and learn more about India. Whether your interests lie in literature, film, food, or the arts, you are sure to find a program that will offer a memorable experience.

Changes to our Americas Gallery are currently underway, and will officially reopen the gallery in mid-2019 with many new exhibits and objects to share with you. Changes include a broader representation of cultures from the Americas, objects on loan from the Illinois State Archaeology Survey, and exhibits curated by graduate students.

Additionally, our staff is spending this year engaged in strategic planning and we are very grateful to have the opportunity to speak with our community and collaborators in order to evaluate our Museum’s impact. We look forward to sharing the results of this process with you, and working together to be a wonderful space for inspiration, engagement, and exploration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth A. Sutton, PhD
Director
AWARDS & NEWS

The Museum is delighted to welcome new Security officer Reina Chacon to our team.

Staff member John Holton (shown second from the right), was named to the Forty Under 40 list by The Central Illinois Business Magazine. John was recognized for his efforts at the Spurlock, serving as a 40North Champaign County Arts Council board member, and a volunteer at the Daily Bread Soup Kitchen.

The Museum has received a grant for $20,200 from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

In partnership with the International and Area Studies Library at the University, the Urbana Free Library, the Champaign Public Library, and the Indian Cultural Society of Urbana-Champaign, the Museum has received a National Endowment for the Arts Big Read Grant. This community reading program will focus on The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri, and programming begins January 27, 2019. See go.illinois.edu/TheNamesake for a full list of programs and information on how to pick up a free copy of the novel. NEA Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest. Learn more about the Big Read in this issue.

The Museum has re-earned Green Shield Certification for its low-risk, sustainable pest control practices. Green Shield Certified’s standards are based in Integrated Pest Management principles, long-term, preventive strategies employed to deny pests the food, water, and shelter they need to survive. Inspection is always the first step, followed by intelligent measures to dominate pest-friendly conditions. Pesticides are used rarely and judiciously—only those pesticide products meeting strict low-risk criteria may be used, and only when applied in a way that reduces potential for exposure. The independent nonprofit IPM Institute of North America awarded the facility the certification renewal after reconfirming compliance with its standards via a rigorous on-site reevaluation.

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1) Coin, Indore and Ratlam, Madhya Pradesh, The Seymour and Muriel Yale Collection of Coins of the Ottoman Empire and Other Middle East States, 1971.15.3350.
2) Ramatanka Temple Token Temple Token, India. The Seymour and Muriel Yale Collection of Coins of the Ottoman Empire and Other Middle East States, 1971.15.3588.
4) 1 Rupee Coin, Arcot, India, 1759-1806. The Seymour and Muriel Yale Collection of Coins of the Ottoman Empire and Other Middle East States. 1971.15.3341.
5) Coin, Khilji Dynasty of India, 1295-1316. 1900.96.0019.


Buddha Figurine or Architectural Fragment, Nepal. Early 20th c. Gift of James B. Sinclair and Elmer A. Uselmann. 2007.08.0004.

The Doris A. Derby Collection

The Museum works closely with the 6th grade teachers and students at Champaign’s Edison, Franklin, and Jefferson Middle Schools—a partnership that began 14 years ago. The collaboration includes both a Human Connections program the students experience at the Museum and multiple classroom presentations each year by Education staff. Until recently, the in-school programs covered ancient civilizations, but a new curriculum called Big History has led to exciting changes.

The Big History Project (https://school.bighistoryproject.com/bhplive) covers 13.8 billion years of history in one school year, beginning with the Big Bang and ending with thoughts on the future of Earth and its inhabitants. The multi-disciplinary classroom activities are designed to build critical thinking skills in students. As the ancient civilizations covered in the former year-long social studies curriculum are discussed during only 3 weeks of Big History, Spurlock collaborated with teachers on a new set of outreach programs. Together, they decided that topic-based programs would be the best approach.

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The topics chosen were Origin Stories, Writing, Money, Climate, Stimulants and Trade, Water, and Gold and Salt. Because the curriculum covers all of human history, the programs are created to encompass a wide variety of cultures and time periods. With the exception of the Origin Stories program, which focuses on folktales, classroom visits include opportunities for students to examine artifacts and enjoy other hands-on activities. Ancient written sources and oral traditions serve as prompts for discussions and writing assignments.

The most exciting change involved in moving to Big History has been the new stimulus for expanded collaborations. Through support from the College of Education, the programs are now being taught by University of Illinois graduate students. On each program day, one or two of the graduate students spend the whole day presenting to all of the social studies classes of one teacher—that means they interact with about 125 6th graders in one day. By visiting the classrooms of all 6 social studies teachers in the Champaign middle schools, the graduate students teach 750 students about once a month. In addition, the most recent Big History collaboration is the inclusion of the sixth-grade classes from Urbana Middle School, which began in November. With this new partnership, Big History programs will reach over 1,100 students!

Two areas of continued expansion are currently being discussed. One is offering the Big History programs to schools in nearby towns. The other is finding a way to bring undergraduate Education students into the Big History experience by inviting them to observe, evaluate, and aid in program presentation. They can translate this opportunity for classroom experiences with objects into lesson plans they write for their own classrooms in the future.

Above: Cuneiform Tablet. Sixth graders learning to write ancient cuneiform can hold a replica of a Mesopotamian student’s practice tablet.

Left: This hat from the Philippines is part of a discussion in the Climate program on how some farmers have decided to move from farming during the heat of the day to farming at night, when it is cooler and more comfortable.

Students are always amazed at the colorful currency of other countries, like these bank notes from Romania and New Zealand.

Graduate students Nimra Burney and Sadia Mazid are in their second year teaching Big History Museum programs.

By Kim Sheahan
1) Horse Blanket, Rewari Culture, India, late 20th c. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2010.01.0527.
4) Women’s Kameez (Shirt), Delhi, India, 1990s. Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2010.01.0527.
5) Cow Decoration, India, late 20th c., Kieffer-Lopez Collection. 2010.01.0507.
11) Camel Bell, India. Lynn and Michael Noel Collection. 2013.05.0604.
The NEA Big Read Comes to Champaign-Urbana
By Beth Watkins

A partnership among the Spurlock Museum, the International & Area Studies Library, the Urbana Free Library, the Champaign Public Library, and the Art Theater is a recipient of a grant to host the NEA Big Read in Champaign-Urbana. A national initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, the NEA Big Read is a community reading program in the winter of 2019. The NEA Big Read in Champaign-Urbana will focus on The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri. Other project partners include the Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, the Indian Cultural Society of Urbana-Champaign, the Asian American Cultural Center, the Asian Educational Media Service, and Krannert Art Museum and Kinkead Pavilion.

“NEA Big Read is proud to support opportunities for communities across the nation, both small and large, to take part in the NEA Big Read,” said NEA Acting Chairman Mary Anne Carter. “This program encourages people to not only discuss a book together, but to introduce to new perspectives, discuss the issues at the forefront of our own lives, and connect with one another at events.”

The NEA Big Read showcases a diverse range of contemporary titles that reflect many different voices and perspectives, aiming to inspire conversation and discovery. The main feature of the initiative is a grants program, managed by Arts Midwest, which annually supports dynamic community reading programs, each designed around a single NEA Big Read selection.

Programming will take place in Spring 2019. Major events include a kick-off with keynote address on January 27, a talk by Nepali author Samrat Upadhyay on February 3, a screening of the 2006 film adaptation of the novel on February 5, a panel discussion about the novel on February 22. There also be programming for all ages: book discussions at all partner libraries, an event at Champaign Public Library, teen arts and crafts programs at The Urbana Free Library, and a 6-part “Get to Know India” series at Spurlock. See the full list online at go.illinois.edu/TheNamesake.

Spurlock is supplementing our grant programming with a special display in the Campbell Gallery entitled From the Subcontinent to the Prairie: Objects of Immigration and Identity that will run through May 19. The International and Area Studies Library will host an exhibit of Indian cinema in February, as well as NEA Big Read. The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri will be on display in the Marshall Gallery (first floor of the Library). Krannert Art Museum opens From Hand to Hand: Indian Painting and the Animation of History on February 28.

Since 2006, the National Endowment for the Arts has funded more than 1,400 NEA Big Read programs, providing more than $19 million to organizations nationwide. In addition, Big Read activities have reached every Congressional district in the country. Over the past eleven years, grantees have leveraged more than $44 million in local funding to support their NEA Big Read programs. More than 4.9 million Americans have attended an NEA Big Read event, approximately 82,000 volunteers have participated at the local level, and 59,000 community organizations have partnered to make NEA Big Read activities possible. For more information about the NEA Big Read, please visit arts.gov/neabigread.

About the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and Arts Midwest

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America’s rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. Visit arts.gov to learn more about NEA.

Arts Midwest promotes creativity, nurtures cultural leadership, and engages people in meaningful arts experiences, bringing vitality to Midwest communities and enriching people’s lives. Based in Minneapolis, Arts Midwest connects the arts to audiences throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. One of six non-profit regional arts organizations in the United States, Arts Midwest’s history spans more than 25 years. For more information, please visit artsmidwest.org.

Wherever we went, I collected art, music, folktales, books, puppets, batik fabric, and more. With these artifacts, I shared with my students the culture and history of the many fascinating places we visited.

Our experiences in Southeast Asia included visits to Java, Bali, Borneo, Thailand and Southern China. In central Java near the city of Yogyakarta, we saw the temple of Borobudur, one of the greatest wonders of the world, UNESCO World Heritage. Borobudur is one of the largest Buddhist monuments in the world. It is still in my memory as one of the most astounding sights.

Yogyakarta is an important center for classical Javanese fine arts, such as dance, drama, music, literature, poetry, woodcarvings, painting, and batik fabrics. We saw the amazing Javanese wayang kulit (shadow puppet) performance with the Gamelan music.

I was so entranced that we went to see how the artists made the puppets! I brought both the wayang kulit and the wayang golek puppets back to share with my students.

Why did you begin volunteering with the Spurlock Museum?
We have continued to travel to many new places. On one of our later travels to Australia, I found aboriginal folktales that were illustrated by the children who wrote these stories as told from their grandparents.

Because of our many wonderful experiences with people in Southeast Asia and around the world, it is exciting and an honor that I might share my enthusiasm for the many cultures of the world through the Spurlock Museum activities and tours.

What is your favorite Spurlock Museum gallery?
My favorite is the Southeast Asia Gallery. We saw the Barong Dance in Bali. In the story of the Barong Dance, Barong (Good) will overcome Rangda (Evil). But it is also used to bring harmony. We could use a Barong dance to bring harmony to our nation at this time.
2) What skills do you hope to develop through your work researching and curating exhibits?

Lisa Mercer: One of my main goals is to develop skills for reading material objects in historically accurate ways so that I can reconstruct reliable pictures of the past in my own work. I also want to learn more about the artistic side of artifact presentation. I don’t have a background in art, so I’m really interested in understanding how features like color, texture, and light influence the ways that museum professionals select and arrange objects for exhibit. Another goal I have is to learn the system by which historical artifacts are secured, attained, assessed, labeled, and organized in the museum’s physical archive.

3) What has been your favorite object(s) that you have researched or come across since working with the Spurlock’s collections?

Lisa Mercer: The Spurlock has thousands of fascinating artifacts, but I was particularly excited to find that the museum has five beautiful pieces of pottery made by descendants of the famous Hopi-Tewa artist Nampeyo.

In 1974, Oscar Martinez and a group of Latinx students painted powerful imagery covering an entire room of the newly formed Latino Cultural Center (510 East Chalmers Street in Champaign). Many decades later, the murals needed to be removed and conserved because the house was scheduled for demolition. You can see a 3-D view of the room as it stood on Chalmers at this link: go.las.illinois.edu/la-casa-murals

Funding for the project was shared by the Office of the Chancellor, the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Illinois Union and the Spurlock will be displaying newly framed components of the murals next year.

All images are courtesy the University of Illinois Board of Trustees, with special thanks to Facilities & Services at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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OF THE SPURLOCK MUSEUM

The Spurlock Museum thanks the many individuals and companies for their generous support.

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Helen C. Burch
Michael C. Blum and
John L. and Jeannette G. Beck
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Allen Avner
Margo Faletti Anderson
and companies for their generous support.


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We are pleased to introduce Joseph Baldwin as the new Assistant Director of Development for the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences and the Spurlock Museum, in particular. Joseph worked most recently in the development office in the UIUC School of Music and as the Development Director for Three Spinners, a local nonprofit that provides scholarships, housing, and emergency support to immigrant and refugee families in Illinois. He is also the Music Director of the Banque Artists of Champaign-Urbana and previously served as a faculty member in the music departments at Smith College and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He holds degrees from Northwestern University and the University of Michigan. Joseph very much looks forward to getting to know the Spurlock’s many loyal donors! He can be reached at jbaldw2@illinois.edu or (217) 300-5967.

Woman’s Wedding Dress, Balochistan, Pakistan, 20th c.
Mrs. Alan K. Laing, Historic Clothing Collection. 1998.06.0244.