



Institute of Museum and Library Services Funding Changes Lives

"The library is my favorite place in Davis," says one young learner from District 4.

IMLS FUNDS AT WORK: STRENGTHENING OKLAHOMA LIBRARIES IN EVERY DISTRICT



DISTRICT 1: Congressman Hern

Small Business Support with Statewide Online Resources: *Entrepreneurs in Tulsa City-County Library's Grow Academy rely on Business Source Elite to build and expand their businesses.* This invaluable resource provides insights, competitor analyses, and company profiles that help small business owners—from Etsy sellers to construction firms—develop effective strategies. Business Source Elite is part of the EBSCO suite of databases that ODL secures through IMLS funding, ensuring all public, university, K-12, and tribal libraries have access. By negotiating a statewide contract, ODL saves taxpayer dollars, reducing costs for local communities while maximizing impact. In FFY23, Oklahomans conducted nearly 118 million searches in EBSCO. By supporting small businesses, fostering job creation, and ensuring access to critical market research, this investment strengthens Oklahoma's economy.



DISTRICT 2: Congressman Brecheen

Building Stronger Libraries, One Leader at a Time: *Funded by IMLS and led by ODL, the Public Library Academy program (PLA) equips rural library staff with essential skills ensuring they can better serve their communities and expand opportunities for Oklahomans.* For the Southeast Oklahoma Library System (SEOLS), this program is more than just an educational opportunity—it is a lifeline. Despite challenges such as geographic isolation, limited budgets, and fewer routes to higher education, SEOLS staff remain committed to providing high-quality services. The PLA sets them up for success. Workshops cover a range of important topics from library administration to technology. Local library staff, who would otherwise have limited access to such training, rely on these essential resources. SEOLS Executive Director Mike Hull illustrates the immense value of this IMLS-funded program, estimating that thousands of dollars are saved with each semester of PLA. Online access to qualified instruction equips library branches to retain skilled employees who are passionate about their work. The PLA program not only makes this training affordable but also tailors it to meet the unique needs of rural systems like SEOLS. Located in a rural, underserved community, the dedicated staff at Nelda Clark Myers Public Library was honored as the Oklahoma Library Association's Library of the Year. Hull attributes their success, and the ongoing vitality of rural libraries, to the PLA program. "For libraries like ours, this kind of support is irreplaceable" he explains. "We are deeply grateful to IMLS, ODL, and all who made this partnership possible... as it has allowed us to build a more knowledgeable, capable, and confident team."

IMLS-Funded Resources that Save Lives: *At Bartlesville Public Library, an English language learner and single father took an IMLS-funded health class—where he discovered he needed urgent medical care.* In the class, participants learned how to track their blood pressure using an arm cuff. This hands-on lesson revealed his dangerously high levels, prompting him to seek treatment. Thanks to the library, he took action, showing the life-changing power of access to information.



DISTRICT 3: Congressman Lucas

E-Rate and Digital Connectivity: *The E-rate program provides a 1Gbps connection at all seven Western Plains Library System branches, ensuring reliable, high-speed internet access for rural communities.* This connection is essential for remote employees of multi-national corporations. At the Minnie R. Slief Library, it's common to see energy company trucks in the parking lot each evening as workers utilize the library's Wi-Fi to update critical business records. During the day, landmen frequently use the library's internet to research courthouse records, as it is significantly faster than the connection at local county offices. Additionally, IMLS funding for Category 2 of the E-rate program has been invaluable for many rural libraries in providing the essential equipment for internal connections. This investment ensures that libraries remain vital hubs of connectivity, supporting local businesses and individuals who need high-speed internet for work or school.

A World of Learning at Your Fingertips: *The Oklahoma Virtual Library (OKVL) is one of the greatest tools that IMLS affords this state's rural constituency.* IMLS provides approximately 40% of the funding for OKVL, a consortium of 99 libraries representing over 900,000 Oklahomans and members from multiple First Nations. OKVL is a lean, efficient program, and Oklahomans depend on this service for access to reading material. Given the high price of ebook and eaudio, only a handful of the OKVL libraries could support even a small online collection individually. 55% of these libraries have a population of 5,000 or less, but OKVL had 1,223,308 checkouts in FFY23, putting its use on par with two of the three largest Oklahoma library systems. Together, with support from annual IMLS funding, these libraries provide reading opportunities that level the playing field for rural Oklahomans.



DISTRICT 4: Congressman Cole

Correctional Facility Libraries: *IMLS funding has been a catalyst for learning at Lexington Assessment and Retention Center (LARC).* ODL uses funds from IMLS to purchase books for prison libraries statewide, giving inmates access to reading materials that inspire personal growth. Pioneer Library System has deepened that impact by providing additional books and engaging inmates in a regular book club and the annual Summer Learning Challenge. Since 2021, LARC inmates have logged over 1 million learning minutes every summer—proving that access to books fuels a love of reading and lifelong learning.

Technology Grants: *IMLS funding provided the Southern Oklahoma Library System with over \$40,000 for essential and innovative technology, directly benefiting rural communities.* In Davis, Kelly used the library's computers to create a resume and land a job, while young Hudson explored 3D printing and podcasting equipment, sparking new interests. These investments aren't luxuries; they provide job seekers with the tools to succeed and give students hands-on learning experiences often unavailable in small towns. By ensuring rural libraries remain hubs of opportunity, IMLS funding strengthens communities, supports workforce development, and helps Oklahomans build brighter futures close to home.



DISTRICT 5: Congresswoman Bice

Keeping Kids Learning, All Summer Long: *Summer Reading Programs are a vital investment, ensuring children retain key skills over school breaks—preventing learning loss and building a stronger foundation for future success.* In 2024, nearly 20,000 participants logged over 13 million Summer Reading minutes in Oklahoma County alone! Printed materials, paid for by IMLS, were a major contributor to that remarkable outcome. Continued IMLS support is crucial to the Summer Reading program and empowering children to succeed.

Oklahoma Statewide Online Resources: *IMLS funding powers access to essential library databases, providing schools across the state with reliable, age-appropriate research tools.* These resources, such as EBSCO, provide students with the facts, knowledge, and confidence they need to turn curiosity into creation. This year, five students from Shawnee Middle School qualified for the Oklahoma National History Day state competition; they built their award-winning projects with these trusted tools. Their success is a clear example of how libraries invest IMLS funds directly into equipping Oklahoma's next generation of leaders, professionals, and educators to learn with confidence. Digital tools supported by IMLS open doors to lifelong research skills and community engagement for students.