

# NATIONAL OUTREACH AND

## HistoryWired

A popular new website invites virtual visitors to wander through the Museum's storage areas for a glimpse of objects they can't see on public display. Launched on August 15, 2001, *HistoryWired: A Few of Our Favorite Things* attracted more than 180,000 visitors in its first two months—nearly 40,000 of them in the first two days.

*HistoryWired* was developed in collaboration with SmartMoney.com using mapping technology adapted from

investment and personal finance sites.

Visitors to *HistoryWired*, at [historywired.si.edu](http://historywired.si.edu), explore a

grid representing 450 featured objects, organized by category and searchable by time frame and various topics. Clicking on a square brings out more details about an object from the Museum's curatorial records, along with information culled from other Smithsonian resources.

“One of the best things about the program is that everyone seems to find something that appeals to him or her personally,” says the Museum's Web director, Judy Gradwohl. “Serendipity is such an important part of a museum visit, and with *HistoryWired* we can provide that same opportunity on the Web.” Visitor feedback is constantly reshaping the site. The size of an object's square on the grid indicates visitor ratings of the objects they explore. Political figures and popular culture generate the most interest, and Kermit the Frog is at the top of many visitors' lists.



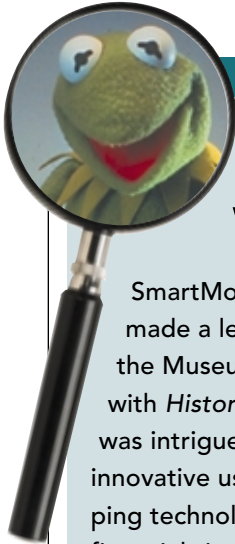
The *HistoryWired* website takes visitors on a journey of discovery through the Museum's collection. This search reveals more details about the Kermit the Frog puppet.



historywired.si.edu

# EDUCATION

*Learning and discovery for all ages*



## A CLOSER LOOK

### A winning technology partnership

Working with technology designers at SmartMoney.com, Museum staff made a leap forward in replicating the Museum experience on the Web with *HistoryWired*. SmartMoney.com was intrigued by the idea of finding innovative uses for the specialized mapping technology it has developed for financial sites. The Museum—with its collection of 3 million objects, most of them not on public view—was an ideal

candidate for the experiment.

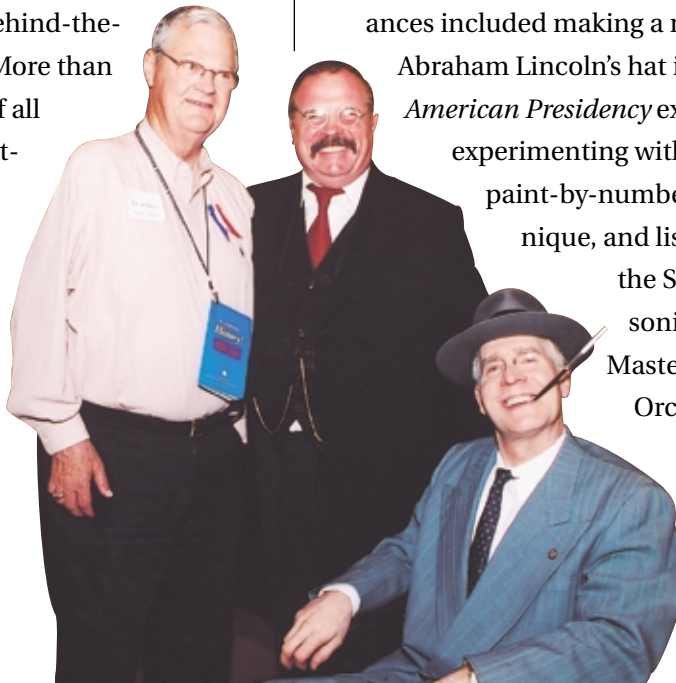
SmartMoney.com's technology designers listened to the Museum's needs and then adapted the mapping interface at no cost as an in-kind donation. The technology is "a great tool to explore and discover rich sources of information," says Marc Frons, SmartMoney.com's editor and chief technology officer. "We are honored to be able to contribute to the Smithsonian's efforts to present its vast collection in new and interesting ways."

### Congressional Family Night

The Smithsonian's sixth annual Congressional Family Night, held this year at the National Museum of American History, linked the Museum to its largest group of supporters—members of Congress. "A Passport to History" provided an evening of family-oriented behind-the-scenes activities. More than 700 participants of all ages enjoyed a first-hand look at the Museum, a chance to meet Museum experts, and a sneak preview of coming attractions.

Kermit the Frog—brought out of storage for the evening—delighted children and adults alike. As they made their way through the Museum, visitors could "Ask an Expert" about immigration, electricity, the Star-Spangled Banner, jazz, and a multitude of other topics. Hands-on activities, demonstrations, and performances included making a replica of

Abraham Lincoln's hat in *The American Presidency* exhibition, experimenting with the paint-by-number technique, and listening to the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra.



ROBERT F. HEMPHILL JR.  
Board member

"The electronic age is no longer the future—it's the present. The National Museum of American History has a powerful potential to connect people with history in ways that once defied the imagination. As we transform the Museum, technology can revolutionize our capacity to engage, inspire, and delight."

Rep. Ike Skelton (D-Missouri) enjoying Congressional Family Night



**IRENE Y. HIRANO**  
Board member

“Reaching people where they live is an excellent way to link the nation’s history museum with more Americans.

Affiliations, partnerships, traveling exhibitions, educational programs and resources—there are many creative possibilities for giving this Museum a purpose and a presence throughout the nation.”

### Taking *The American Presidency* into the Classroom

The 60 teachers from the Washington, D.C., area who attended the Museum’s workshop on *The American Presidency* returned to their classrooms inspired, excited, and equipped with practical ideas for lessons and activities. Using a teacher’s manual for grades 4–12 developed by the Museum in collaboration with The History Channel, they planned effective strategies for connecting their curriculums to this major new permanent exhibition.

The half-day workshop began with a guided exhibition tour and a session with Museum director and exhibition co-curator Spencer Crew.

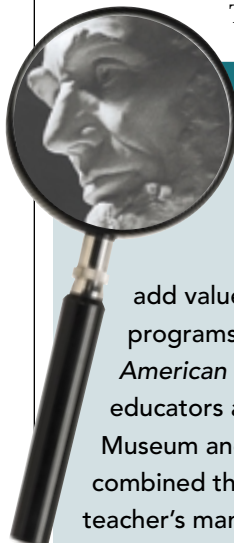
Then the participants

began concrete planning and brainstorming. In small groups, they shared ideas for using the lesson plans and the pre- and post-visit activities for the docent-guided school tour of the exhibition. Each participant received a teacher’s manual along with a free bus trip to the Museum for his or her class.

In the classroom and in the Museum, the workshop made a difference. “The materials...were amazing!” one teacher said. “The students really enjoyed the activities and the variety in approaches used to present the

information.” Another teacher said the classroom preparation gave students “a framework for the pieces of the exhibit.”

*The American Presidency* workshop, held in December 2000, was one of 15



FROM ABOVE RIGHT: Abraham Lincoln’s top hat; detail of Daniel Chester French’s Lincoln Memorial statue

## A CLOSER LOOK

### Creating teaching resources

Practical curriculum resources for teachers add value to the Museum’s programs and exhibitions. For *The American Presidency*, a team of educators and historians from the Museum and The History Channel combined their expertise to develop a teacher’s manual for grades 4–12. Lesson plans and activities offer creative

strategies for linking the exhibition to the study of American history. The History Channel published the manual and distributed 17,000 copies nationwide. It is also available online at [americanhistory.si.edu/presidency](http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency) and at [thehistorychannel.com/classroom](http://thehistorychannel.com/classroom). This was the Museum’s second educational partnership with The History Channel.

teacher workshops developed and presented by the Museum's education office this year. Altogether, more than 500 teachers participated.

**A Nobel Laureate's Innovative Life**

Science fascinated William Phillips from an early age. He peered at household "specimens" under a toy microscope, created mechanical devices with his Erector set, and won honorable mention in a junior high school science fair for his project on measuring radiation. His innate curiosity led him to pursue a career in physics—and in 1997, he shared the Nobel Prize in physics with two colleagues for their development of

techniques to "supercool" and trap atoms with laser light.

Phillips was an inspiring role model for seventh-graders from three Maryland and Virginia schools who attended a Lemelson Center "Innovative Lives" program during Nobel Week at the Museum in April 2001. He captivated them with demonstrations of "super cool" science using liquid nitrogen and showed them how he uses a Levitron to study magnetism. As he answered questions about his career and his research, his enthusiasm was contagious. Teachers reported that the students returned to their classrooms energized about science and eager to follow the



**GEORGE M. FERRIS JR.**  
Board vice chairman

*"The Museum's collections are the starting point for an incomparable journey of the mind. 'Real things' leave indelible marks on our memory, and the stories they contain help us understand and appreciate both past and present."*



Nobel laureate William Phillips and seventh-graders in a Lemelson Center "Innovative Lives" program

Conservator removing stitches that held the Star-Spangled Banner to its 1914 linen backing, a delicate job that required special tools (BELOW).



**DOROTHY LEMELSON**  
Board member and  
Lemelson Center co-founder

*"Young people need inspiration and encouragement to follow their dreams. The Museum is a marvelous resource for teaching and learning. What better place is there to introduce them to the innovation and creativity that are so central to the American story?"*

progress of Phillips's current research, which includes atomic-clock experiments aboard the International Space Station in 2005.

"Innovative Lives" introduces middle-school students to inventors and scientists, who talk about their research and share personal stories. The programs provide a rare opportunity for conversations with noted scientists while supporting the Lemelson Center's mission to encourage inventive creativity in young people.

### **A "Field Trip" for 3.9 Million Middle Schoolers**

What can historians tell us about the Star-Spangled Banner? Why is the flag so fragile today? And how are Museum conservators planning to preserve this national treasure for posterity?

An electronic field trip—one of five held during 2000—gave middle-school students a chance to explore these questions on a "visit" to the Museum with their science and social studies classes.

Some 3.9 million students in 39 states learned about the history and science of the flag from Museum experts involved in the Star-Spangled Banner Preservation Project. The program aired live on the Fairfax Network in March 2001.

Suzanne Thomassen-Krauss, chief conservator for the project, showed students some of the things conservators looked for when conducting their detailed examination of the flag. In their classrooms, students could follow along with their own flags. Museum historian Lonny Taylor provided the history of the



famous flag and shared anecdotes about the detective work he did in researching the story of the Star-Spangled Banner. Francis Scott Key, played by a costumed interpreter, talked about how he was inspired to write the poem that became the national anthem. Both Thomassen-Krauss and Key fielded students' questions submitted by e-mail and telephone.

Two weeks before the broadcast, an estimated 130,000 teachers reviewed field-trip lessons in a 30-minute orientation session with Museum staff. A videotape of the electronic field trip is available to teachers through the website, [americanhistory.si.edu/ssb](http://americanhistory.si.edu/ssb).

### Young Scientist Challenge

Middle-school scientists from across the country, finalists in the Discovery Young Scientist Challenge, took on the "Star-Spangled Banner Challenge" during competition week at the Museum in October 2000. Working in teams with Museum staff as resources, they analyzed samples of cloth bunting at the Hands On Science Center and then reported their observations about the samples' history and condition.

Communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills were all put to the test.

This national competition, sponsored by Discovery Communications and administered by Science Service, Inc.,

culminates in three days of team challenges and individual oral presentations at the Smithsonian. Finalists were treated to a behind-the-scenes tour of the Star-Spangled Banner conservation lab, where they talked with Museum experts about the science of textile preservation.

Forty finalists from 23 states came to Washington to compete for more than \$30,000 in scholarships and other prizes. The Smithsonian Young Innovator award—a discretionary prize presented by the Museum—went to eighth-grader Neal Amin of Lansdale, Pennsylvania. Neal attended an invitation-only forum on innovation at the Lemelson Center and had lunch with Phillip Sharp, 1993



**CARLO PARRAVANO**  
Executive director of the Merck Institute for Science Education

*"A visit to the Hands On Science Center is a great way to stimulate a young person's natural curiosity about science. Merck is pleased to support the center's innovative interactive programs, which contribute to the solid science education that is so essential for a productive life."*



Young scientists take the "Star-Spangled Banner Challenge."