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# ALA American Library Association

## Office for Intellectual Freedom

May 13, 2018

RE: Activating Community Opportunities Using Museums/Libraries as Assets - a National Leadership Grants Special Initiative

Dear IMLS Grant Team:

I am writing on behalf of the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom to endorse the Ray Bradbury Experience Museum's request for IMLS funding.

It happens that I was born and raised in Waukegan myself, spent hours every day in the ravine that features so large in *Dandelion Wine*, *Farewell Summer*, and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, and had the same fierce love for the original Carnegie Waukegan Public Library that sparked Bradbury's interest in writing. I also devoured every book and short story Bradbury ever wrote.

But my particular interest is Bradbury as a lifelong and passionate defender both of libraries and intellectual freedom. His *Fahrenheit 451*, first published in the first issues of *Playboy* magazine, sounded a brave note in a time then consumed by McCarthyism. The novel proved to be remarkably prophetic, with its focus on immersion in technology, government surveillance, and the crushing forces of censorship. And, of course, censorship is not just of one time; it returns, and must be confronted, many times over the years. That's just one of the many reasons his writings endure and resonate.

I had the pleasure of getting a sneak peek of the RBEM yesterday during a tour put on by the Waukegan Historical Society. I saw an impressive beginning for what could well become an important new cultural institution for the town. The walking tour of "Ray Bradbury's Green Town" was knowledgeable and heartfelt. The nascent space already has pulled its brand together: a focus on not just having people handle a variety of artifacts, but truly interacting with scenarios from Bradbury's fertile imagination. The group's short and long-term plans seem to me visionary, do-able, and worthwhile.

Ours has been an age in which institutions – with schools, universities, newspapers, and libraries chief among them – are under sustained attack. In that time, it is particularly commendable to see a group of passionate volunteers make intelligent partnerships with economic development groups and other cultural institutions in order to establish a powerful *new* institution. I believe that the RBEM is wholly deserving of funding, and that its message for today could not be more important.

I urge you to fund this project.

**LIBRARIES  
TRANSFORM™**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James LaRue". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

James LaRue  
Director  
Office for Intellectual Freedom  
American Library Association