



WOLFSONIAN

1001 Washington Avenue
Miami Beach, Florida 33139

wolfsonian.org

tel 305.531.1001 fax 305.531.2133

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WOLFSONIAN–FIU MEDIA CONTACT:

Susanna Temkin

305.535.2632

susanna@thewolf.fiu.edu

**WOLFSONIAN–FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
CO-HOSTS NATIONAL WEBWISE CONFERENCE IN D.C.**

350 Top Technology, Museum, and Library Professionals Drawn to “remarkable” event

MIAMI BEACH, FL (March 9, 2009)—For three days, from February 25-27, The Wolfsonian–Florida International University played co-host to some 350 museum and library professionals at the annual Institute of Museum and Library Services WebWise Conference, held in Washington D.C. As digital technologies become a way of life, the WebWise Conference serves as the only event that brings together professionals from museums, libraries, archives, and academia to discuss the impact and promise of digital technology on cultural institutions. Through a \$499,702 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), The Wolfsonian was cast in the national spotlight before its peers as co-host/co-organizer with IMLS of this and last year’s conferences. In 2008, The Wolfsonian convened participants in Miami Beach for *WebWise 2.0: The Power of Community*. Building on the success of that event, the 2009 WebWise Conference: *Digital Debates*, brought together top technology leaders, representatives from museums and libraries engaged in digital initiatives, and project leaders funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation through their Digital Media & Learning Program.

Through the theme of *Digital Debates*, the WebWise Conference addressed the “Big Issues” at stake for museums and libraries in terms of technology. Keynotes featured Michael R. Nelson (Visiting Professor of Communications, Culture and Technology, Georgetown University) on “The Crowd, the Cloud, and 3-D Internet: Implications for Cultural Organizations,” and John Palfrey (Harvard Law School and Berkman Center for Internet & Society) on “Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives.”

The main sessions, “Debates,” focused on topics such as copyright issues, accessibility to online collections, and community involvement through social media sites like Facebook and Flickr. In addition to the debate format sessions, the conference included an “Iron Chef” competition featuring mash-ups and social media strategies, and project demonstrations from IMLS grant recipients. Conference participants, who travelled from places ranging from Hawaii to Australia, overwhelmingly declared the 2009 WebWise a success. Responses to the evaluation survey called the conference “invaluable,” “inspiring,” “remarkable,” and “a crucial event for our professional and institutional communities.” One

person Twittering from the event claimed the 2009 WebWise the “the best one I've been to!”

The WebWise Welcome Reception, which kicked off the event, was supported by the MacArthur Foundation and featured demonstrations by MacArthur project leaders in the field of Digital Media & Learning. MacArthur President Jonathan Fanton’s keynote address from the 2008 event inspired the theme of *Digital Debates*. Cathy Leff, director of The Wolfsonian, cited the participation of MacArthur project leaders as a particularly important feature of the 2009 WebWise Conference, as it provided “museums and libraries professionals with the opportunity to meet with researchers who are exploring how digital media is changing how young people learn, play, socialize, and participate in civic life—all of which are critical to the future of cultural organizations.”

Throughout WebWise, participants Twittered and discussed issues raised by conference panels on an online backchannel communications site; these conversations may be viewed at <http://todaysmeet.com/webwise>. Additionally, all of the main sessions from the 2009 WebWise Conference were digitally recorded and an official proceedings book will soon be made available for download or request through the WebWise and IMLS websites (<http://webwise2009.fcla.edu> and <http://www.imls.gov>).

The 2009 WebWise Conference marks the final year of The Wolfsonian’s grant with IMLS to serve as the WebWise Conference co-host. “Working with the IMLS on this project has been such a great professional challenge and a wonderful experience for The Wolfsonian,” notes Leff. Citing The Wolfsonian’s *Thoughts on Democracy* blog (<http://thoughtsondemocracy.blogspot.com>) as a small example of the museum’s use of Web 2.0 technologies, Leff added, “we have learned so much about the possibilities of digital technology in terms of how audiences might want to access and use our collection, and how we can deploy social media to reach new audiences. We all need to reconsider how we do business to remain relevant to 21st century audiences.”

About The Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. The Institute’s mission is to create strong libraries and museums that connect people to information and ideas. The Institute works at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; enhance learning and innovation; and support professional development. Information on past WebWise conferences can be found at: <http://www.imls.gov/webwise>. To learn more about the Institute, please visit www.imls.gov.

About The Wolfsonian—Florida International University

The Wolfsonian is a museum, library, and research center that uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design. The collections comprise approximately 120,000 pieces from the period 1885 to 1945 — the height of the Industrial Revolution until the end of the Second World War — in a variety of media, including: furniture; industrial-design objects; works in glass; ceramics; metal; rare books; periodicals; ephemera; works on paper; paintings; textiles; and medals. The curatorial goal is to explore what it means to be modern, and to tell the story of social, historical, and technological changes that have transformed our world.

The Wolfsonian is located at 1001 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, Fl. Admission is \$7 adults; \$5 seniors, students, and children six-12; free for Wolfsonian members, State University System of Florida staff and students with ID, children under six, and Miami Beach residents with ID. The museum is open Monday, Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday from noon-6pm; Thursday and Friday from noon-9pm; and is closed on Wednesday. Contact us at 305.531.1001 or visit us online at www.wolfsonian.org.

The Wolfsonian-FIU receives ongoing support from the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council; the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; the City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council; the Arthur F. and Alice E. Adams Foundation; William J. & Tina Rosenberg Foundation; Continental Airlines, the Official Airline of The Wolfsonian-FIU; The Miami Herald; Miami.com; Bacardi U.S.A., Inc.; Robert Mondavi Winery; and Pistils & Petals.

###