Keynote Address: Funding Innovation: Scanning the Landscape
Marsha Semmel, Director for Strategic Partnerships, Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

In her keynote address, Funding Innovation, Marsha Semmel discussed current trends in learning and philanthropy, projects and publications demonstrating innovation, and some funding goals of IMLS moving into the future. A focus of emerging trends in learning was lifelong and life-wide learning. Trends in educational philanthropy included collaboration, innovation, attention to the whole person, STEM, and literacy initiatives. Publications highlighted included “A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change” by Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown, the Horizon Reports by the New Media Consortium, the U.S. Department of Education’s National Education Technology Plan “Transforming American Education: Learning Powered by Technology”, as well as “Atlas of New Librarianship” and “Expect More” by David Lankes. Projects included Project Tomorrow, the National Broadband Plan and the Digging into Data Challenge. IMLS initiatives discussed include Museums, Libraries & 21st Century Skills, Learning Labs, Building Digital Communities, and the National Digital Stewardship Residency Program (with Library of Congress). In the current atmosphere of shrinking budgets and strains on philanthropic funds, funders want to see that their dollars are making a difference. It is important to demonstrate impact, to measure success using evidence and evaluation, and to share results and/or generated data. The question and answer session provided additional advice to grant seekers, including the importance of letting your passion show through when writing proposals, sharing your draft with someone in an outside field to ensure clarity, and remembering that program officers are available to take your calls and answer questions.

Prepared by Jessica Evans Brady