



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Hartford History Center wins National Sparks! Grant**

**Hartford, Connecticut (August 6, 2012)**– The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in Washington, DC, has announced that the Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library has just been awarded a Sparks! Ignition Grant, ***one of only thirteen awarded nationally***. Sparks! Grants support the deployment, testing, and evaluation of promising and groundbreaking new tools, products, services, or organizational practices.

The History Center will receive \$25,000 to build a prototype for an online interactive program that will serve as an electronic “field guide” to one of Hartford’s historically rich parks, Keney Park.

“The Library and its History Center have documented and archived the park system since the 19<sup>th</sup> century,” said Hartford Public Library Chief Executive Officer Matthew K. Poland. “With the support of the IMLS, we now have an opportunity to blend modern technology with historical artifacts to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century guide to the magnificence of our park system, starting with Keney Park.”

Entitled “History Shines on New Media,” the Hartford History Center’s winning Sparks! Grant will serve as a tool for individual and collective exploration of Keney Park, a public space of more than 600 acres designed by Hartford native Frederick Law Olmsted’s landscape firm during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Working in partnership with the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology Inc., the interactive application will allow users to explore Keney Park via an iPhone/iPad/iPod or Android application, as well as through a mobile-friendly website. Users will discover points of interest through a web interface (available from anywhere) that will include high-quality video and photography, as well as access to digital images that would elaborate on the history, science and public use of the park.

Hartford History Center Curator Brenda Miller said she developed the idea because the history center has extensive materials on the city’s parks, and because library visitors expressed curiosity about the history of the parks.

“Hartford has something very special in its public parks,” Miller said, “and I thought it would be great if we could develop a new way to look at one of our city’s most venerable parks. I wanted to guide city youth and adults toward our library’s resources and to help assist them in

developing new-media skills. Keney Park is a wonderful story and a wonderful platform for us to try this on," she said, adding that work on the prototype will begin in October.

The thirteen national awards, chosen from among 69 applications, received a total of \$304,866.

Alicia Willett, Director of Humanities PreK-12 at Hartford Public Schools, said the proposed interactive field guide will allow public school teachers and their students to explore Keney Park using 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and technology. "As the district begins the process of developing and revising the History/Social Studies curriculum, one of the priorities is to integrate the use of the Hartford History Center's Hartford-specific historical collections," Willett said.

"This grant will help the Library produce innovative digital resources that will improve the productivity of teachers and students alike, leading to successful learning outcomes," said Matt Poland who, in addition to his role at the Library, serves as the chairman of the Hartford Board of Education. "Continuing to build a collaboration between the two institutions is a tour de force strategy for success."

"Sparks! Ignition Grants are designed to help libraries and museums solve challenging problems," said Susan Hildreth, director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. "They promote creativity and innovation by supporting promising new approaches to issues affecting libraries and museums across the country. This grant program has tremendous potential to turn small investments of funds into nationally significant projects."

#### **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 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Through grant making, policy development, and research, we help communities and individuals thrive through broad public access to knowledge, cultural heritage, and lifelong learning. Please visit [www.ims.gov](http://www.ims.gov).

#### **About [Hartford Public Library](#)**

The Hartford Public Library traces its roots to 1774. It operates 10 locations in the City of Hartford. The Library receives more than 860,000 visits per year. Services include access to a large collection of materials for reading and research, as well as music and video. Programs provide education, information and enrichment to the people of Hartford in such areas as citizenship training, literacy, business skills and cultural awareness. The mission of Hartford Public Library is to provide free resources that inspire reading, guide learning, and encourage individual exploration. Visit [hplct.org](http://hplct.org) and the library's new blog at [blogs.hplct.org](http://blogs.hplct.org)

#### **About the [Hartford History Center](#)**

Hartford History Center at Hartford Public Library, collects, preserves, and makes available materials and information relating to the history, literature, and culture of Hartford. The holdings include, but are not limited to books; scrapbooks; pamphlets; the City of Hartford archives; the Hartford City Parks collection; image collections; maps; fine and graphic arts, including paintings, posters, prints and drawings; and memorabilia – those materials that preserve and share the story of Hartford, Connecticut - its place, its people, and its past. Located on the third floor of the Downtown Library, 500 Main Street, the Hartford History Center is open 1:00 – 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. For more information, please call the Center at 860-695-6297 or visit online at <http://hhc.hplct.org/>.