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Fact Sheet

Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

Director: Michael Atwood Mason

Total Full-Time Employees: 44

Annual Budget (federal, trust and business activities) FY 2014: \$8.8 million

Background

Rooted in principles of cultural democracy and social equality, the Smithsonian [Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage](#) supports the understanding and sustainability of cultural heritage and diversity in communities across the United States and around the world. The Center produces the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, maintains and makes accessible the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, produces extensive research and educational materials and promotes cultural heritage policy for the benefit of communities around the United States and the world.

To support its various activities, the Center receives funds from federal appropriations, Smithsonian trust funds, grants from state and national governments and foundations, gifts and revenue from the Festival and Folkways.

Smithsonian Folklife Festival

- The annual [Folklife Festival](#), which began in 1967, highlights grassroots cultures across the nation and around the world through performances and demonstrations of living traditions.
- The Festival, which occurs for two weeks every summer on the National Mall, attracts 1.3 million visitors on site and online. It has brought more than 23,000 musicians, artists, performers, craftspeople, workers, cooks and storytellers from more than 90 nations and the United States to the nation's capital to demonstrate their skills, artistry, knowledge and wisdom.
- Programs have featured U.S. cities and states (including Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin and Hawaii); countries (including Colombia, Mexico, China and Bhutan) and special themes ("One World, Many Voices: Endangered Languages and Cultural Heritage," "Creativity and Crisis: Unfolding the AIDS Memorial Quilt" and "The Silk Road: Connecting Cultures, Creating Trust").

Smithsonian Folkways

- [Smithsonian Folkways](#) is a nonprofit record label that aims to document community-based music and to preserve historical recordings of both music and the spoken word. Beginning in 1948 as Folkways Records, it now produces about 12 new recordings annually, some from the archives, and others from contemporary documentation and recording projects.

- Included in the more than 3,000 albums are the recordings of Woody Guthrie, Lead Belly, Pete Seeger and Doc Watson; civil rights movement songs and speeches; the poetry of Langston Hughes; historical Native American traditions; varied regional and immigrant songs; and music and spoken word traditions from across the globe.
- Highlights include the Grammy award-winning *Anthology of American Folk Music, Jazz: The Smithsonian Anthology* that traces the turning points of this 20th-century tale through its legendary innovators and notable styles, *Woody at 100: The Woody Guthrie Centennial Collection* that highlights the breadth of Guthrie’s artistic accomplishment and *Lead Belly: The Smithsonian Folkways Collection* the first career-spanning box set for the influential artist.
- Smithsonian Folkways has won seven Grammy awards and 22 additional nominations. The label has also received a Latin Grammy award and 11 Folkways artists have received Grammy Lifetime Achievement Awards. The label has won numerous other awards, including Parent’s Choice Gold Awards, Independent Music Awards and Crossroads Music Awards.

The Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections

- The Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections contain an extensive collection of audio material, visual assets, and artifacts that documents American and world traditions. Particularly strong are collections of traditional music, occupational folklore, narrative, immigration and family folklore. American regional and ethnic cultures—Native American, African American and Latino culture—are well-represented. The archives contain fieldwork and documentation from every Folklife Festival program, as well as the source material for most Smithsonian Folkways albums.
- Through various grants, including two Save America’s Treasures grants, the Archives has supported large-scale processing and preservation digitization efforts every year since 2009. These grants have enabled the Archives to support forward-thinking work, improving access while caring for fragile and unique archival materials, spanning the history of the Center, the Festival, and the countless traditions that help us to understand the American experience and value world cultures.

Cultural Heritage Research, Education and Policy

- The Center is a leader in partnering with communities and institutions to support intangible cultural heritage and cultural sustainability efforts. Projects have focused on revitalizing endangered languages in Europe, documenting and supporting traditional minority cultures in China and intangible cultural heritage capacity building.
- 12 members of the CFCH have doctorates and their books include *Living Santería: Rituals and Experiences in an Afro-Cuban Religion* (Michael A. Mason), *Mariachi Music in America: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (Daniel Sheehy), *The Stone Carvers* (Marjorie Hunt) and *Living Archives: A Community-based Language Archive Model* (Mary Linn).
- It actively collaborates with a variety of national and international agencies and organizations in the analysis and research-based formulation of cultural heritage policy. Its joint conference and ensuing publication with UNESCO—“Safeguarding Traditional Cultures: A Global Assessment”—contributed to the development of the 2003 International Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

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