

**Do you videoconference?** If so, then we want to know! Affiliations will be keeping a log of all videoconference-capable Affiliates, and can suggest ways to tap distance learning programs at the Smithsonian's American Art and Air & Space Museums, among others. Please contact your coordinator with information about your capability.

**Below, a highlight about programs offered through the Smithsonian's American Art Museum:**

American Art has an [extensive videoconferencing program](#) for schools and museums and has recently launched an initiative to reach out to Scouts. Using your videoconference equipment at your Affiliate site, Scouts connect in real-time with American Art to complete all or partial badge requirements in a variety of badges from American art to American history; from "To See is To Think" to technology. Some badge requirements are completed with the videoconference; other requirements are completed at the Affiliate site.

"We're open to discuss with Affiliates what their strengths are to meet Scout badge requirements and marry our strengths to theirs," according to American Art Education Director Susan Nichols. "At our American Art Museum, our 300 years of American art is a window on the American experience. Our Renwick Gallery features contemporary American decorative arts and crafts." Existing American Art programs can be modestly tailored depending on troop levels and badge requirements.

**Mike Irwin, Distance Learning Coordinator, Durham Museum, Omaha, describes the Museum's collaboration with American Art to offer a Scout program on April 4, 2009:**

***Girl Scouts "Go the Distance" for a Merit Badge***

Group Programs Manager, Molly Gruber walked into the Distant Learning Coordinator's office at the Durham Museum and asked, "Can we connect girl scouts with experts to talk about the security of rare and priceless art objects?"

Two months later on a chilly April morning there was a good bit of excitement as 74 Girl Scouts sat in The Durham Museum's Stanley and Dorothy Truhlsen Lecture Hall waiting to be connected to the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Most of the girls had never been in a distant learning video conference and really didn't know what to expect. With a click of the button, Sara Rouse and Susan Nichols appeared on a 25 ft screen in front of a backdrop of the outside entrance to the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The girls, seeking some of the information that they needed to complete their merit badge in museum studies, were immediately at ease with this technology and engaged from the beginning. In unison the girls shouted "hello" and the program was underway. Susan introduced a great selection of slides showing very unique art pieces with background on the artist and format before security issues of each piece were discussed. When it came time for questions all was silent until one scout sheepishly raised her hand but when the microphone was passed to her she had forgotten her question. She smiled and kept thinking. The ice was broken and hands went up all over the lecture hall anxious to ask a question. The questions asked were thoughtful indicating that this group did, in fact, really pay attention. The girls were really impressed with being live and interactive and asked "when can we do this again!"

It was only natural to contact the Smithsonian's American Art Museum to develop this video session. The Durham Museum, a Smithsonian Affiliate, had already collaborated with SAAM for two very successful distant learning programs, finding the staff responsive and willing to create or modify a current program to meet specific needs. With a broad range of pre-packaged programs attaching national standards and the ability provide specific content, The Durham Museum certainly intends to use this valuable distance learning resource well into the future.



A scout at the Durham Museum.



Scouts meet SAAM.



Scouts analyze a landscape in SAAM's collection.



On their way to badges!