

FEATURE
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New technology shines light on historical artifacts

SALEM—Modern lighting technology has no better showcase than in museums displaying historical objects.

Sensitive artifacts require special precautions regarding light and heat. New light-emitting diode (LED) technology is proving far superior to incandescent and halide lamps to illuminate valuable historical artifacts and specimens.

The Douglas County Museum, built in 1969 in Roseburg, is home to Oregon's largest natural history collection on display. The collection is comprised of over 8,640 items that illustrate Umpqua Valley history. The 24,000-square-foot (10,000 square feet of exhibit space) museum also holds an extensive photograph collection of more than 35,000 images going back as early as the mid-19th century, as well as a botanical research herbarium with nearly 3,000 catalogued specimens. Needless to say, a museum with such varied collections has very specific lighting needs.

The Energy Trust of Oregon performed an energy audit on the museum in June 2009. The audit recommended installing LED lighting, but the replacement cost was prohibitive for the county at that time. In August 2009, the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) announced that federal stimulus funds were available for energy projects in public buildings in a competitive application process. The timing was perfect.

Douglas County Museum Director Gardner Chappell submitted the application to replace 320 inefficient quartz halogen light bulbs with 7- and 11-watt LED lighting. ODOE named the museum as a sub-recipient of \$12,784 in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds through the State Energy Program.

“We were thrilled,” said Chappell.

The benefits of the LEDs over traditional lights are significant:

- No exposure to harmful UV rays
- Greatly reduced heat output
- Reduced maintenance and labor costs (LEDs last for 10 years)
- 80 percent reduction in electricity
- Savings of \$2,886 per year on electrical costs
- Reduction in carbon emissions, and
- Better directional light coverage

Visitor reaction to the new lighting has been positive, according to Chappell. He noted that the museum opened its first art exhibit on November 19, 2010 and the new lighting was a big attraction for visitors and contributing artists alike.

“Artists are very particular about the display of their work,” said Chappell. “We heard ‘Wow!’ a lot. They were thrilled.”

ODOE provided stimulus funds to another museum, according to Paul Egbert, Acting Manager for the department’s ARRA team. The Grant County Historical Museum in Canyon City received one award of \$97,790 for a new heat pump, window replacement and insulation installation, and a second award of \$21,842 for photovoltaic installation. As of December 2010, the HVAC project is just getting underway, while the solar project has been completed.

“These museums hold valuable artifacts of our past,” said Egbert. “It’s nice that they could reduce their energy usage, ensure that exhibits are safely displayed, and benefit from the stimulus funds.”

A list of all Oregon counties that received ARRA funds and amounts awarded is available at www.oregon.gov/ENERGY/Recovery/Funding.shtml#State_Energy_Program_and_Block_Grant_Awards_by_County

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