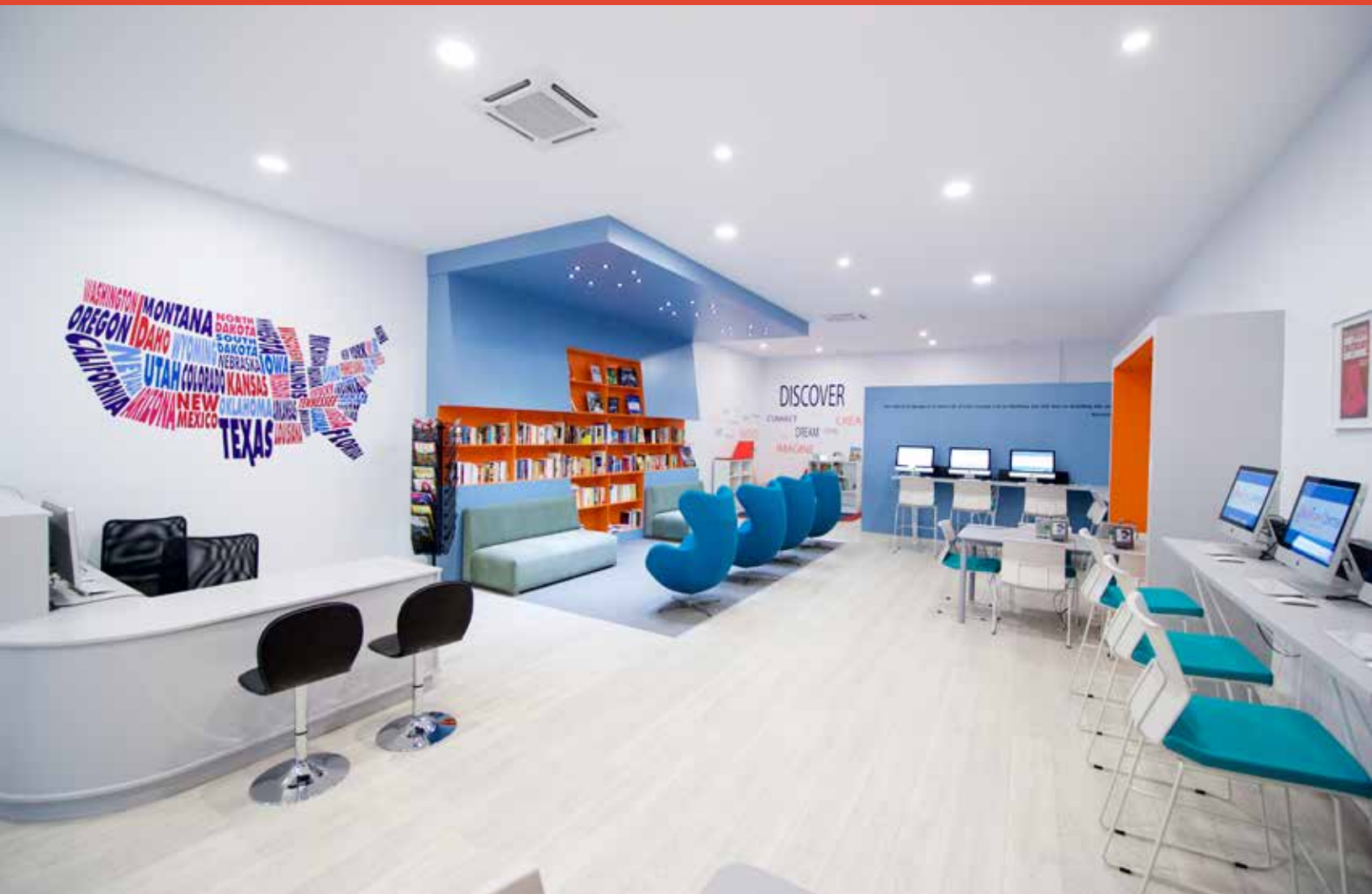


THE OFFICE OF AMERICAN SPACES 2015 ANNUAL REPORT



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS





The remodeling of the Brasilia binational center, Casa Thomas Jefferson, has enabled the premier American Space to become a dynamic platform for engaging young Brazilian audiences and advancing U.S. foreign policy. The update dramatically improved the maturing headquarters, which now exemplifies Smithsonian design.

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On the Cover: The U.S. Embassy in Antananarivo persevered through four years of complications and delays to open the American Center of Madagascar in September 2015. Along with Smithsonian Institution designs, the center's inspiring features include one of the most modern theaters in the country, a high-tech innovation space, a computer lab, English-language classrooms, a café and exhibition space.
Photo by ZEN Photography Madagascar



Located inside the Central Library in the central business district, the new American Corner Cape Town features high-speed Wi-Fi, iPad bar, laptop bank, makerspace studio, sound recording studio and video production equipment (iMac editing suite, broadcast quality cameras and green screen technology).

OUR MISSION

The Office of American Spaces develops and supports modern, effective physical platforms for public diplomacy engagement with foreign targeted audiences in support of United States foreign policy objectives.

WHO WE ARE

Established in 2011, the Office of American Spaces is the administrative support base that provides strategic direction, funding and training to the hundreds of American Spaces around the world. As diverse as the communities where they are located, American Spaces serve as the primary places of ongoing people-to-people connections between the United States and foreign audiences that are essential to advancing U.S. foreign policy objectives. The office is home to the 30-member Foreign Service Specialist corps of Information Resource Officers (IROs) who are strategically stationed around the world to provide expert assistance to embassies and consulates on means and ways of informing foreign audiences about the United States and its policy positions. Residing in the Bureau of International Information Programs, the Washington-based Office of American Spaces consists of 26 staff members (23 in Washington and three in the Vienna, Austria, satellite office) who provide services and support to American Spaces and the IROs and advocate for them across the State Department, with Congress and to other U.S. government agencies.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



*"We've set clear priorities, allocated resources in line with those priorities and made strategic investments in **platforms, people and programs** as the means and ways to deliver the ends our country requires."*

Fiscal Year 2015: Proving the Model of American Spaces as Preeminent Policy Platforms

This inaugural American Spaces Annual Report is intended to convey to our stakeholders, partners and funding authorities how resources were invested in the development of American Spaces worldwide during fiscal year 2015,* and the results in support of U.S. national interests that those and previous investments have yielded.

Tremendous strides have been made over the past few years in providing the modern engagement platforms the United States needs to conduct person-to-person public diplomacy with key targeted audiences in strategic locations around the world. The Bureau of International Information Programs and its Office of American Spaces have

moved from a bureaucratic to a business model for managing the American Spaces program. We've set clear priorities, allocated resources in line with those priorities and made strategic investments in platforms, people and programs as the means and ways to deliver the ends our country requires.

2015 marked the first year that a greater part of American Spaces Support Funds (ASSF) was invested in the most strategically important American Spaces in each region of the world. Setting these priorities in collaboration with the State Department's six regional bureaus provided a rational framework for investment of limited resources linked to policy impact.

This report highlights several American Spaces that were quickly transformed at relatively low cost into the kinds of dynamic modern engagement platforms worthy of the United States.

To ensure we are able to make the most of these upgraded platforms, we took an entirely new approach to training our people who manage and operate American Spaces, providing the vision and skills they need to create and evaluate compelling, policy-oriented programming for targeted audiences. In addition to the Information Resource Officers, we trained over 180 staff members from American Spaces, reaching 54 of the 60 strategically selected American Spaces, between March and September.

These investments in our platforms and people are aligned with increasing our capability to deliver programs that move beyond cultivating relationships and greater understanding of the United States to those that directly advance specific U.S. foreign policy objectives. We are focused on enabling American Spaces to deliver programming that is interactive and outcome-based and that leverages the latest digital technologies—this is how our targeted audiences engage with their world, so it is how we must engage with them.

Through partnerships with the Smithsonian Institution, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, non-governmental players and State Department colleagues focused on policy priorities from countering violent extremism to increasing trade, we are providing the inspiration and resources for American Spaces to realize IIP's mission of *Connecting People with Policy*.

My team and I are excited about the new direction we are taking American Spaces, and above all, what we are achieving. I hope this report both shows that we are wisely investing taxpayer funds in ways that are producing valuable results and spreads our excitement about making it all happen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CD', is centered within a white rectangular box.

Chris Dunnett
Director, Office of American Spaces
DunnettCG@state.gov

**References to any year, such as 2015, in this publication refer to the U.S. federal government's fiscal year—October 1 to September 30—unless otherwise noted. Fiscal year 2015 began October 1, 2014.*

2015: CONCRETE RESULTS



FORGING AHEAD

Encouraged by access to Model American Spaces resources, the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi did not wait for a Smithsonian site visit. With Jakarta's @america as inspiration, the embassy worked with a local designer and consulted peers to conduct its own high-tech modernization, quickly and at a moderate cost.

FROM TAKING CHANCES TO MAKING CHOICES: LINKING PLATFORMS, PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS TO RESULTS

In 2015, the Office of American Spaces capitalized on the momentum of existing programs, the promise of recent initiatives and the freshness of new ideas to make dramatic progress toward strengthening American Spaces as premier venues for achieving foreign policy goals through in-person engagement. Several parallel initiatives converged to advance a singular focus.

AMERICAN SPACES STANDARDS

While embassies and consulates manage their own American Spaces, the Office of American Spaces supplies considerable support funding. The American Spaces Standards provide embassies and consulates with guidelines for evaluating the performance of their American Spaces when applying for support funding. In 2015, the Office of American Spaces revised the standards to reflect changes in direction and to consolidate separate criteria for different types of American Spaces into one set that applies to all, simplifying the assessment process. The standards were effective January 1, 2016.

For example, more than ever, 2015 demonstrated the value of a multi-year partnership with the Smithsonian Institution. Known as the Model American Spaces project, the objective is to establish American Spaces as attractive, innovative, interactive and engaging on foreign policy themes. Several American Spaces proudly completed their renovations and achieved what had been a vague concept—building a common, modern identity and greater affinity across the American Spaces network.

This connection among American Spaces was strengthened through a new focus for training American Spaces staff. Aimed at cultivating a basic set of skills across all American Spaces, the training provided consistent direction, tools and resources to assist American Spaces in advancing foreign policy priorities.

Complementing these initiatives was an increased emphasis on public access, defined by a set of American Spaces Open Access Principles that coincided with the formation of the R-OBO-DS Working Group (see page 23).

All these objectives and others were instituted through the complete revision of the American Spaces Standards (see sidebar).

THE FIVE CORE PROGRAMS

In 2012, the Office of American Spaces created five programming pillars that an American Space must provide to qualify for American Spaces support funding. The pillars are as follows: provide accurate information about the United States and its foreign policies; offer opportunities for English language learning; promote study at U.S. universities; involve alumni of U.S. exchange programs; and present cultural programs. The pillars are defined in the American Spaces Standards. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs provides implementation assistance.

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES

In 2014, the Office of American Spaces asked the six geographic bureaus in the State Department to identify the 10 most strategically important American Spaces in each region based on foreign policy priorities. Those 60 American Spaces were designated to receive priority in the annual distribution of American Spaces Support Funds. In 2015, the Office of American Spaces allocated roughly 60 percent of the support funds to these priority American Spaces. (See graphs on page 16.)

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2015



POLICY RELEVANCE

American Spaces are moving beyond a focus on “mutual understanding” to become more dynamic and proactive platforms for convening discussion on issues relevant to U.S. foreign policy interests.

Employing the latest technology and focusing on user needs, @america engages young Indonesians on issues of strategic importance.



LOOK AND FEEL

The Office of American Spaces brought several projects to fruition through its partnership with the Smithsonian Institution (see page 14) to bring a cohesive American “look and feel” to American Spaces.

The American Center Korea in Seoul announced its Smithsonian-inspired reopening in September.



SMITHSONIAN CONTENT PROJECT

Casa Thomas Jefferson customized Smithsonian programming materials to demonstrate how content, as well as design resources, available through the partnership can increase the appeal of programs that promote U.S. foreign policy goals.

Brazil's 45 binational centers (BNCs) are transforming themselves into self-sustaining centers of knowledge-sharing that attract young audiences and promote U.S. policy.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2015



TECHNOLOGY EXPANSION

The Office American Spaces increased access to the Internet and interactive technology in American Spaces, enabling live connectivity with the U.S. and other American Spaces.

Reopened in the fall, American Corner Cape Town attracts targeted visitors with high-speed Wi-Fi, an iPad bar, a laptop bank and more.



OPEN ACCESS

In March, the Office of American Spaces convened the first official meeting of the R-OBO-DS Working Group (see page 23), created to guide construction, renovation and security of U.S.-government American Spaces.

Jean Manes, IIP principal deputy coordinator, joins students in breaking ground for a new fully accessible facility to house the most widely attended American Center in the world in Rangoon, Burma.



AMERICAN SPACES TRAINING

The Office of American Spaces implemented a new concept in training aimed at building consistent skills across the thousands of people who manage and staff American Spaces around the world.

Participants in an August programming session learn innovative methods to inspire critical thinking.

2016: THE NEXT LEVEL



OPEN, BRIGHT AND WELCOMING

With a high-tech feel plus the openness and accessibility that are associated with the United States, the new American Center Korea has vastly improved the programming capacity of the embassy's public affairs section and serves as a public interaction space for the entire embassy.

ACCELERATING THE EVOLUTION

Moving into 2016, the Office of American Spaces has identified specific areas for expanding on the accomplishments of 2015 and will continue to revise and refine a strategy that is achieving results. American Spaces are evolving quickly, and the Office of American Spaces intends to maintain that momentum.

IMPACT ANALYSIS: AMERICA HOUSE KYIV

Embassy Kyiv uses survey data to understand visitor needs and expectations and drive decisions on content, program scheduling and more. Data from professional surveys indicate America House, which opened in May 2015, is reaching its targeted audience of 18- to 35-year-olds and that most visitors believe the programming and resources support the development of civil society in Ukraine. Results also show that modern technology is an important factor in attracting that audience.



America House Kyiv renovated previous USG-owned consular space in downtown Kyiv, with design upgrades based on Smithsonian Institution recommendations.

Internet and Wi-Fi upgrades to equip American Spaces for digital engagement are priorities for funding of American Spaces in 2016, as is emerging technology that empowers the American Space to advance policy objectives. Examples include technology that provides offline access to digital tools in low-bandwidth environments and fosters critical thinking and entrepreneurship skills. In addition, technology that enables virtual programming produced at one American Space to be picked-up by others optimizes programming resources.

Combining technology with aesthetics, American Spaces will continue evolving into dynamic physical spaces that provide an American look and feel. Thanks to a productive partnership with the Smithsonian Institution (see *page 14*), 2016 will bring another round of specific design renovation recommendations for some American Spaces and a new catalog of ideas and tools available to all.

“American Spaces are ... critical to the advancement of U.S. foreign policy. Being able to interact daily with people is essential if we are to understand and influence behavior among thought leaders, peoples and government officials.”

- 2015 Comprehensive Annual Report
on Public Diplomacy, U.S. Advisory Commission
on Public Diplomacy

These technology and design tools will help maintain the excitement surrounding the 2015 opening of several new or significantly renovated American Spaces, further energizing the transformation. In addition, the American Spaces website, americanspaces.state.gov, will be upgraded to provide a stronger resource for all American Spaces around the world.

The process of determining how and where to best direct resources for the greatest impact will continue in 2016. As planned, the Office of

American Spaces will work with the regional bureaus to review the list of American Spaces designated to receive priority for development. Experience gained from priority projects will be applied to cost-effectively developing other American Spaces.

Partnership-building will take a prominent role throughout 2016. This includes expanding collaboration with intra-departmental partners, such as the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and GIST—the department’s entrepreneurship program. We will reach out to other agencies and private entities, such as USAID, the Agriculture department, the National Park Service, BrandUSA and Peace Corps. These partnerships extend reach, reinforce branding and bring a broader whole-of-government approach to advancing foreign policy goals. Of particular focus is maintaining the momentum of the R-OBO-DS Working Group (see page 23), an important cross-departmental partnership.

“In an era of diffuse and networked power... our diplomats and development professionals must focus on strengthening partnerships with civil society, citizen movements, faith leaders, entrepreneurs, innovators, and others who share our interests and values.”

- Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review
U.S. Department of State, April 2015

Maintaining momentum is only possible if the people operating American Spaces have the vision and skills to achieve the objectives. Building on the success of 2015, the core skill areas of management, programming and digital-first outreach—delivered in 2015 as separate courses—are being integrated into one streamlined five-day “basic” course.

The new course is experiential, practical and active, helping participants build a plan specific to their missions that they can apply in their American Spaces. In addition, the Office of American Spaces is offering a new five-day advanced course to provide additional skill development in one of the three major areas.

In 2016, stakeholders can look for American Spaces to emphasize or continue emphasizing training (of American Spaces staff and Information Resource Officers), aesthetics and branding, partnerships, programming resources, priority American Spaces re-evaluation, streamlined budget processes, policy revision, and metrics and evaluation. The team in the Office of American Spaces is dedicated to having an impact on advancing U.S. foreign policy goals.

TRAINING IN A “NEW DIRECTION”

In 2015, the Office of American Spaces developed and implemented a new concept for training American Spaces staff. Replacing locally developed courses, a centrally planned curriculum focused on building a consistent set of skills across all American Spaces in three primary areas: management, programming and digital-first outreach. The approach promoted a broader model of American Spaces as venues for implementing entire public diplomacy strategies. The courses were delivered in six nine-day sessions in Pretoria, Brasilia, Jakarta and Vienna, where three sessions were held.



In 2016, the Office of American Spaces is expanding the training program described above by offering the same course content at two levels—introductory and advanced—in nine one-week sessions throughout the year. All sessions are being held at the bureau's training facility in Vienna.

2015: FINANCIAL REPORT



A TOUGH ACT

As a model for Model American Spaces, @america celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2015. Created from scratch, its high-energy, easily accessible location in a busy Jakarta mall, combined with its appealing technological capacity, enables @america to attract targeted audiences to a wide range of policy-relevant programming.

BUILDING PREMIERE VENUES FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The Office of American Spaces was established in part to administer a budget allocated specifically to enhance the impact and sustainability of American Spaces—the embassies’ physical public engagement platforms—on advancing foreign policy priorities. The office distributes American Spaces Support Funds in consultation with the regional bureaus, the embassies and their assigned Information Resource Officers.

The ASSF budget was established in 2012 in recognition of the unique opportunity American Spaces offer to reach foreign publics through direct person-to-person engagement on key foreign policy topics. Support funds can be used for technology, facilities, resources (materials such as software), programs, non-recurring staffing and other non-recurring expenses.

While the number of American Spaces is 700 worldwide, those that do not meet performance standards are not eligible to apply for the annual distribution of support funds and others choose not to apply every year. Approximately 500 American Spaces applied for 2016 support funds.

THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION PARTNERSHIP

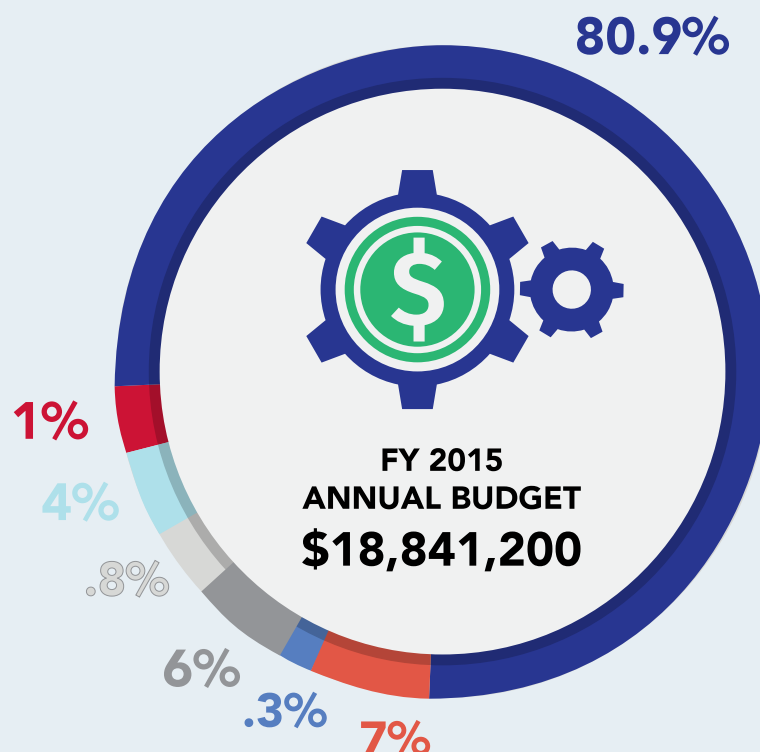
Since 2012, IIP and the Smithsonian have worked together to enable American Spaces to take advantage of the design and content resources of the world’s largest museum complex. The Model American Spaces program encompasses a vast range of design and programming resources aimed at helping American Spaces present an attractive, innovative “look and feel” that is common among American Spaces around the world—a brand that conveys a common purpose and shared mission. Through 2015, the program provided specific design and programming support to 18 American Spaces.



Housed at the D.S. Senanayake Memorial Public Library, American Corner Kandy (Sri Lanka) was a traditional space with large areas devoted to quiet reading and studying. Now interactive and collaborative, the renovated American Space hosts lively workshops in English and STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) education, entrepreneurship and youth leadership.

OFFICE OF AMERICAN SPACES 2015 ANNUAL BUDGET

The total Office of American Spaces budget for fiscal year 2015 was \$18,841,200. The budget was allocated as follows:



\$15,237,000* THE AMERICAN SPACES

\$1,276,217 INFORMATION RESOURCE OFFICERS TRAVEL & RELATED COSTS

\$1,124,624 PROGRAMMING MATERIALS & SUPPORT (MOTION PICTURE LICENSING, DATABASES AND COPYRIGHT ASSISTANCE)

\$768,143 TRAINING FOR THE STAFF OF AMERICAN SPACES

\$234,050 CONTRACTED STAFF

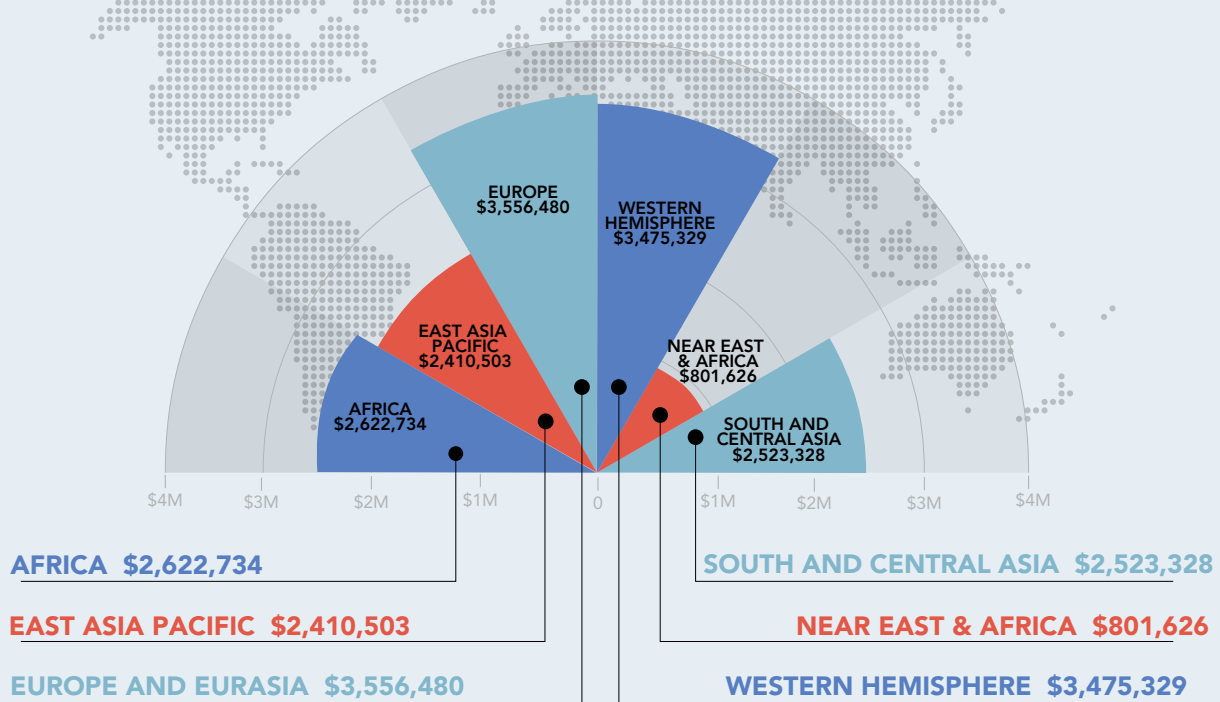
\$150,596 WASHINGTON-BASED STAFF TRAVEL

\$50,570 OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

* INCLUDES \$13,889,000 IN AMERICAN SPACES SUPPORT FUNDS

AMERICAN SPACES FUNDING BY REGION*

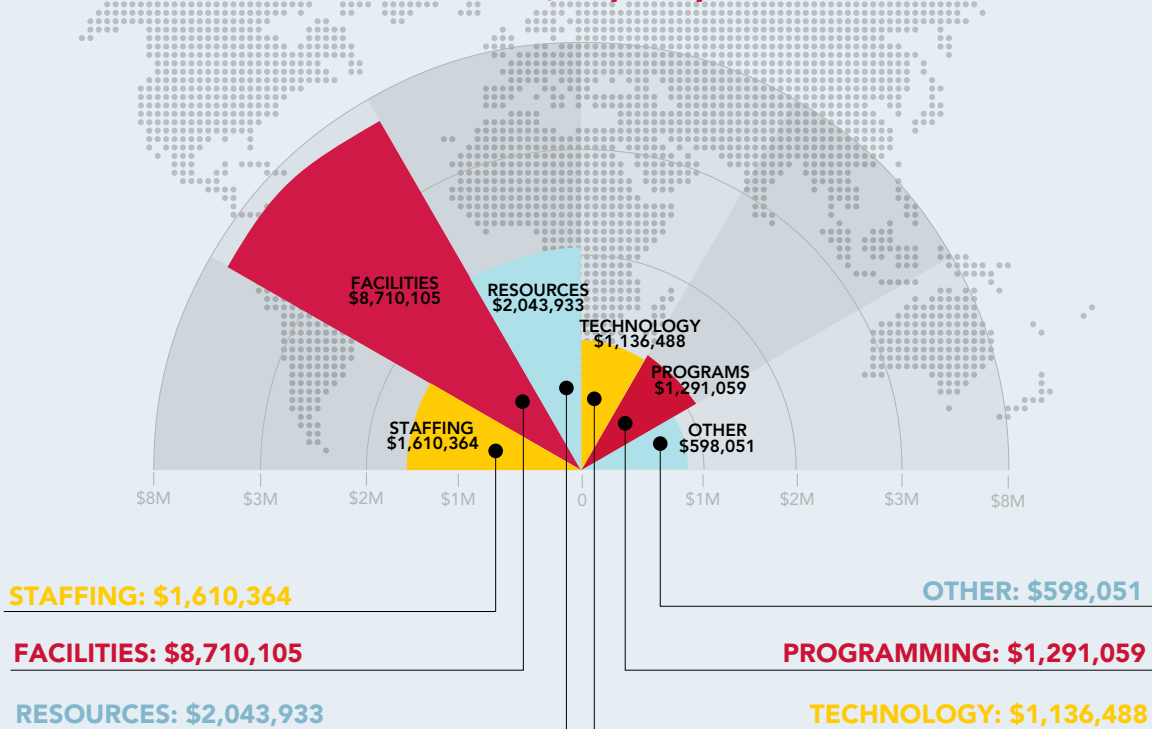
TOTAL: \$15,237,000**



*Instability and security issues limited capacity to implement projects in the Near East and Africa region.

AMERICAN SPACES FUNDING BY CATEGORY

TOTAL: \$15,237,000**



** Includes \$13,889,000 in American Spaces Support Funds. Total reflects a \$153,000 adjustment for funds returned at the end of the year.

AMERICAN SPACES

BY THE NUMBERS



Receiving more than 36.7 million visits in 2015, American Spaces provide means for the United States to have the two-way dialogues necessary for establishing and maintaining contacts and networks with major cross-sections of foreign societies, including minority and women's groups. These interactions are critical to national security and the accomplishment of foreign policy objectives. More than 4 million programs were attended nearly 31 million times, included topics ranging from learning American English to starting a business to holding free and fair elections to understanding rule of law.



TOTAL PROGRAM ATTENDEES

30,909,731



TOTAL PROGRAMS

4,079,851



33 AMERICAN CENTERS

U.S.-operated, typically largest with greatest program resources; located off-compound (or desirable to be so) for accessibility.



88 INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTERS

U.S.-operated, smallest with fewest program resources; on-compound, lowest accessibility; geared toward online research assistance.



117 BINATIONAL CENTERS

Fully independent, locally operated, oldest; most in Latin America; unique ability to advance policy through (American) English teaching.



472 AMERICAN CORNERS

Quasi-independent, newest; host-operated—library, school, university, etc.—through agreement with local embassy; ability to reach targeted populations beyond major cities.

TOP 20 INVESTMENTS IN AMERICAN SPACES IN 2015

1

KYIV, UKRAINE AMERICA HOUSE KYIV

COMPLETED: Opened in six months as a premier public diplomacy platform in response to a foreign policy priority. More than tripled target of 1,000 visits a month.



2

KANDY, SRI LANKA KANDY AMERICAN CORNER

COMPLETED: Redesigned space has captured national attention.



3

SANTIAGO, CHILE INSTITUTO CHILENO NORTEAMERICANO

IN PROGRESS: Advancing synergy of binational centers, yearlong renovation to start Spring 2016.



4

SEOUL, KOREA AMERICAN CENTER KOREA

COMPLETED: Updated look and new makerspace to inspire next generation of partners.



5

KINSHASA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AMERICAN CORNER LIMETE

IN PROGRESS: Current bland classrooms will get major renovation to be an inspirational, high-tech space by end of 2016.



6

JAKARTA, INDONESIA @AMERICA

COMPLETED: The crown jewel of American Spaces in mastering technology to advance policy.



7

MARACAIBO, VENEZUELA CENTRO VENEZOLANO AMERICANO DEL ZULIA

IN PROGRESS: Final design concepts delivered January 2016 to guide transformation.



8

CASABLANCA, MOROCCO DAR AMERICA

COMPLETED: A century-old institution comes into the 21st century, reaching 4,000-6,000 visitors per month.



9

STUTTGART, GERMANY GERMAN-AMERICAN INSTITUTE

COMPLETED: Targeted investments improve programming and social media outreach capabilities of leading policy center.



10

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA CENTRO CULTURAL NICARAGUENSE NORTEAMERICANO

IN PROGRESS: Investment in this BNC inspired city to pave the road leading to it.



TOP 20 INVESTMENTS IN AMERICAN SPACES IN 2015

11 CUENCA, ECUADOR CENTRO ECUATORIANO NORTEAMERICANO ABRAHAM LINCOLN

IN PROGRESS: Maintaining a historic building as a contemporary venue with modern technology.



KIGALI, RWANDA KIGALI AMERICAN CORNER

12

IN PROGRESS: Relocating to Adventist University of Central Africa's brand new campus; will draw from university population from entire continent.

13 KATHMANDU, NEPAL NEPAL BOOK BUS

COMPLETED: Highly successful model of flexibility. New bus arrived in December. Previous one (pictured) was accosted by an elephant.



GAZIANTEP, TURKEY GAZIANTEP AMERICAN CORNER

14

IN PROGRESS: Strategic project on Syrian border; should be completed in late 2016.

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA USINFO@CENTRAL AMERICAN CORNER

15

COMPLETED: Already added a range of new programs taking advantage of technology.



BRASILIA, BRAZIL CASA THOMAS JEFFERSON

16

COMPLETED: This flagship American Space in Brasilia is a hub of innovation for BNCs in Brazil and beyond.

PEREIRA, COLOMBIA CENTRO COLOMBO AMERICANO

17

COMPLETED: New auditorium increases embassy's public diplomacy programming reach.



KARACHI, PAKISTAN LINCOLN LEARNING CENTER

18

IN PROGRESS: Renovation to improve facility that reaches large and diverse cross-section of the public in Pakistan's largest city.

BATUMI, GEORGIA BATUMI AMERICAN CORNER

19

COMPLETED: Larger, technologically advanced, more dynamic programming platform debuted on national TV.



HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM AMERICAN CENTER HO CHI MINH CITY

20

COMPLETED: Seeing rapid rise in visitors since upgrade. A recognized face of America in Vietnam.

AMERICAN SPACES HISTORY AND STATISTICS



Photo Credit: Instituto Cultural Argentino-Norteamericano

ELEGANT ENERGY

Historically concentrated in Latin America, binational centers, often called BNCs, are the oldest type of American Space. The oldest operating binational center, Instituto Cultural Argentino-Norteamericano, founded in Buenos Aires in 1928, is the hub of programming for multiple BNCs in Argentina.

WHAT ARE THE AMERICAN SPACES?

Throughout their 100-year history, they've carried many titles, and their numbers have swayed in the political winds. But in countless shapes, sizes and styles, they have persevered, and support for them continues to cycle back.

Their descriptions and missions have varied from libraries to schools, even theaters, but one defining component has never changed: people.

American Spaces are, and have always been, places where people meet people, talk to people and listen to people. These are the places where people can and did learn and share ideas, express their thoughts or cordially debate a sensitive topic—often all while learning English.

The concept of what is now called an American Space—a term that encompasses several categories—formed at the advent of World War I as a means of countering disinformation and influencing international public opinion. When the United States began conducting public diplomacy in overseas buildings separate from official U.S. posts, American Spaces were born.

Various components of the U.S. government oversaw American Spaces throughout their history, but the U.S. Department of State managed them from the 1930s until the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) opened in 1953 and again after USIA closed in 1999. The types, missions and ownership varied with the countries, agencies or world events that spawned or guided them.

BINATIONAL CENTERS

Formed by private groups, binational centers were among the first American Spaces, and they are still a large contingent. Governed by local boards of directors, the more than 100 binational centers in the Western Hemisphere region are major hubs for English language learning and cross-cultural dialogue. Though U.S. support fluctuated over the years, most binational centers have continued to flourish. The Office of American Spaces provides support fund assistance.

Now a priority American Space (see page 7), the first binational center was the Instituto Cultural Argentino-Norteamericano, founded in Buenos Aires in 1928.

LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTERS

As guardians of free speech and enemies of censorship, libraries embody the principles of democracy and civil society, and they constitute a major theme running through the history of American Spaces. From World War II through the early 1990s, various numbers of American libraries—in binational centers and American Centers and free-standing—populated the globe.

A 1990s movement toward database storage and web-based services inspired a new name for some American libraries: Information Resource Centers. As security concerns pushed many of them onto enclosed embassy grounds (compounds) and closed them to the public, they continued reaching students and researchers through their web-based services.

The forced absorption of off-compound American Spaces into fortified embassy compounds under the 1999 Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism

Act (SECCA) presents significant challenges for public diplomacy engagement that the Department of State is trying to address.

While most IRCs remain on compounds, the Office of American Spaces is working to help them return to their roots as places of in-person interaction.

AMERICAN CENTERS

Contributing to perplexity surrounding the definition of American Spaces is the American Center, which dates to World War II. Historically free-standing and separate from embassy compounds, these flagship centers have been known as American Libraries, Information Resource Centers, American Cultural Centers, America Houses and more.

The defining factors are ownership and purpose. American Centers are U.S.-government facilities. They exemplify the American Space as a venue for a broad range of programming that reflects U.S. policy objectives. For many reasons, including budget and security concerns, most of these centers closed in the 1990s. But those that remain capture the essence of American Spaces.

AMERICAN CORNERS

Originating just past the millennium, the newest and by far most prevalent type of American Space is the American Corner. Innovative and economical, these are typically located in sections of buildings owned and operated by non-government organizations, schools, universities and other hosts who agree to provide space and staff.

American Corners vary widely in size and scope. Most have shown they can provide creative programming that builds understanding about the United States, its people and its policies—often reaching targeted populations outside the range of embassies in large city centers. In some areas, American Corners specialize in specific strategic programs, such as science, technology, invention and entrepreneurship.

INFORMATION RESOURCE OFFICERS

Based in strategic locations around the world, the Information Resource Officers are the linchpin of American Spaces. They advise, support and oversee the hundreds of American Spaces. IROs work with the public affairs sections of embassies and consulates to guide the development and use of all types of American Spaces. They regularly visit American Spaces in their regions to assess their needs as well as their potential as prime public diplomacy venues and to help ensure they are meeting the performance standards required to be considered for support funds.

ON THE FRONT LINES

Both the 2010 and 2015 reports from the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review—the State Department's long-term planning process—identified partnerships and direct engagement with community groups and individuals as critical components for advancing U.S. foreign policy objectives. American Spaces enable the implementation of these strategies.

Bearing a culture that is distinct from that of embassies and consulates, today's American Spaces promote this interaction by imparting an American spirit that feels positive and welcoming. By exemplifying freedom of expression and association, they counteract negative narratives and help develop new generations of global leaders. Throughout their history, American Spaces have offered places to reach out, inspire and illuminate, epitomizing the American ideals of freedom and opportunity.

The historical information in this article is based on Mark Tauber's 2013 article on the history of American Spaces. Tauber is a former director of the Office of American Spaces.

AMERICAN CENTERS BY LEVEL OF ACCESS

INSTILLING A CULTURE OF OPEN ACCESS

American Spaces can provide unequalled opportunities for American embassies and consulates to connect with targeted foreign audiences in ways that are meaningful to those audiences. They can impart an American spirit that feels positive and welcoming, encourage interaction, build bridges of understanding and inspire community activity.

Enabling American Spaces to motivate and influence requires investment, effort, and above all, accessibility. In 2015, the Office of American Spaces began working through a cross-departmental partnership—the R-OBO-DS* Working Group—to establish risk-management policies that consider the need for public access when planning new or renovated U.S.-government American Spaces.

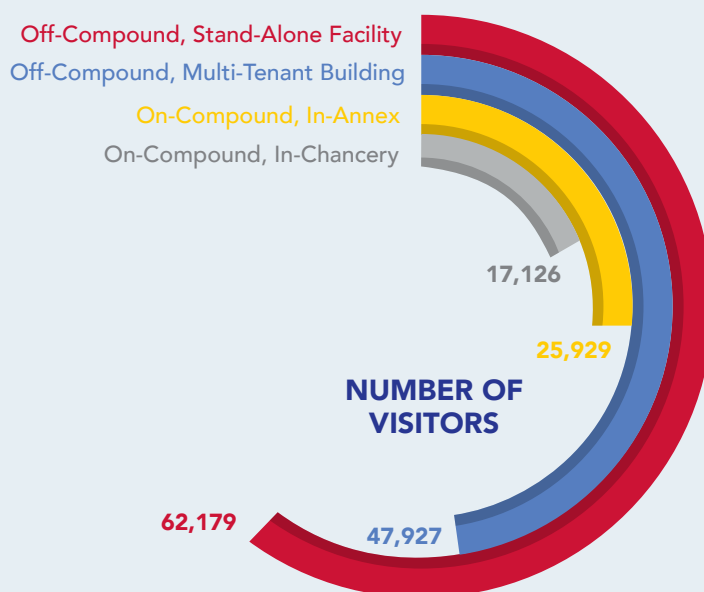
To guide these policies, the office developed a set of five Open Access Principles that call for

1. Open public access,
2. Unescorted access,
3. Separate security screening,
4. Personal electronic devices allowed and
5. Wireless internet access.

The Office of American Spaces also is stressing accessibility to existing American Spaces, regardless of type or location. The 2016 American Spaces Standards require all American Spaces to be accessible with notice of less than 24 hours. If this is not possible, posts should contact their IROs or the office for guidance.

*In Department of State parlance, "R" stands for the office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs; OBO is the Bureau of Overseas Building Operations; and DS is the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. Located in the Bureau of International Information Programs, the Office of American Spaces is part of "R."

American Centers typically are the largest of American Spaces. Because they typically have auditoriums, classrooms, Internet access and collaborative technology, they provide an optimal environment for integrating policy messages into programming. They are U.S.-government operated and typically staffed by embassy employees under the direction of the public affairs officer. Some are inside the enclosed grounds (compound) of an embassy or consulate. Others are in a separate building with or without other tenants. The graphic below illustrates the impact of levels of access on an American Center's visits.



ON-COMPOUND, IN-CHANCERY (MAIN BUILDING):

most restrictive access (close to consular affairs and other agencies).

ON-COMPOUND, IN-ANNEX (SECONDARY BUILDING):

less restrictive if separate entrances can be designed for unescorted access.

OFF-COMPOUND, STAND-ALONE FACILITY:

next level for ease of access, but physical security requirements vary.

OFF-COMPOUND, MULTI-TENANT LEASED SPACE:

least restrictive access (e.g. a high-rise office building).

“...[I]t is imperative that we reconsider how the relocation of free-standing American Centers to U.S. embassy, consulate and annex compounds can complicate the essential goals of public diplomacy to understand, inform and engage foreign audiences to advance U.S. foreign policy.”

- Public Diplomacy at Risk: Protecting Open Access for American Centers, United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, May 5, 2015

PRIORITY AMERICAN SPACES 2014-2016



YOUTH-SAVVY AND SMART

American Center Hanoi's self-guided renovation transformed the center into a modern facility with cutting-edge technology. The center features a glass-enclosed English lab with touchscreen computers, an iPad bar, a stage, a touchscreen smart board for Skype and interactive presentations, 35 portable cushioned chairs and ottomans, Wi-Fi, and a mini-museum with Americana items—all with an appealing red, white and blue theme.

PRIORITY AMERICAN SPACES BY REGION, 2014-2016

AFRICA

Cote d'Ivoire, Abidjan
Democratic Republic of Congo, Kinshasa, American Corner Limete
Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, Addis American Corner
Kenya
Nigeria, Lagos
Rwanda, Kigali, Kigali American Corner
Senegal, Thies, American Corner Thies
South Africa, Pretoria, American Corner Pretoria
South Africa, Cape Town, USinfo@Central American Corner
Zimbabwe, Bulawayo, National University of Science & Technology

EAST ASIA PACIFIC

Burma, Mandalay, Jefferson Center Information Resource Center
Burma, Rangoon, American Center Rangoon
China, Beijing, Beijing American Center
China, Chengdu, Chengdu Information Resource Center
China, Shanghai, Shanghai American Center
China, Shenyang, Shenyang Information Resource Center
Indonesia, Jakarta, @america
Korea, Seoul, American Center Korea
Vietnam, Hanoi, American Center Hanoi
Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, American Center Ho Chi Minh City

EUROPE

Bosnia & Herzegovina, Mostar, American Corner Mostar
Georgia, Batumi, Batumi American Corner
Germany, Stuttgart, German-American Institute
Greece, Xanthi, Xanthi American Corner
Moldova, Chisinau, American Resource Center
Portugal, Lisbon, Faculty of Science and Technology American Corner
Russia, Moscow, American Center Moscow American Corner
Turkey, Gaziantep, Gaziantep American Corner
Ukraine, Kyiv, America House Kyiv
Ukraine, Kharkiv, Kharkiv Window on America Center

NEAR EAST ASIA

Egypt, Cairo, Information Resource Center
Egypt, Cairo, American Corner Maadi
Israel, West Jerusalem, American Center Jerusalem
Jordan, Amman, American Language Center
Lebanon, Baakleen, American Corner Baakleen
Morocco, Casablanca, Dar America
Palestinian Territories, East Jerusalem, America House Jerusalem
Palestinian Territories, Ramallah, America House Ramallah
Tunisia, Tunis, American Corner Tunis
Algiers, Algeria, Algiers IRC (replaced Yemen)

SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

Bangladesh, Dhaka, Edward M. Kennedy Center
India, New Delhi, American Center New Delhi
Kazakhstan, Almaty, American Corner Almaty
Kyrgyz Republic, Bishkek, Bishkek America Borboru
Maldives, Malé, American Corner Malé
Nepal, Kathmandu, Nepal Book Bus
Pakistan, Karachi, Lincoln Learning Center
Sri Lanka, Kandy, Kandy American Corner
Tajikistan, Dushanbe, Dushanbe American Corner
Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, Information Resource Center

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Argentina, Buenos Aires, Instituto Cultural Argentino Norteamericano
Bolivia, Cochabamba, Centro Boliviano Americano Cochabamba
Brazil, Brasília, Casa Thomas Jefferson
Chile, Santiago, Instituto Chileno Norteamericano
Colombia, Pereira, Centro Colombo Americano
Ecuador, Cuenca, Centro Ecuatoriano Norteamericano Abraham Lincoln
Honduras, San Pedro Sula, Centro Cultural Sampedrano
Mexico, Mexico City, Benjamin Franklin Library
Nicaragua, Managua, Centro Cultural Nicaraguense Norteamericano
Venezuela, Maracaibo, Centro Venezolano Americano del Zulia

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