

Illinois State Museum's Gen X Exhibition Earns Accolades from Statewide Museum Group

by Erika Holst

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SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois State Museum's groundbreaking *Growing Up X* exhibition earned two awards from the Illinois Association of Museums, the state's top museum organization.

Growing Up X won an Award of Superior Achievement, the highest award given in the exhibits category, and the Innovation Award for the interactive rec room component of the exhibit.

Growing Up X explored the toys, technology, and cultural touchstones familiar to those born between 1965 and 1980 in their youth. It was the first museum exhibition in the country to focus on Generation X.

In bestowing the Award of Superior Achievement, the awards committee applauded the museum for “a new look at a generation not normally seen in history exhibits” and declared that the exhibition “successfully connected individual visitors with their place in this cultural and historical context of the United States while also deploying technology and hands-on elements in new and fun ways.”

The interactive rec room component of the exhibition invited visitors into an entirely hands-on recreation of a 1986 rec room, complete with vintage video game and stereo equipment, games, magazines, and an ugly floral couch. When bestowing the Innovation Award for this space, the awards committee said they “loved that the open format of the space gave guests the agency and opportunity to experience the space on their own terms.”

“*Growing Up X* was a special blend of nostalgia and history. Our curator of history and those who helped make the exhibit so special with crowd-sourced GenX stories created something truly unique and innovative,” said Jenn Edginton, interim director of the Illinois State Museum. “We’re excited that IAM honored our exhibit with these two awards.”

Although *Growing Up X* ended its Springfield run in October 2023, visitors can experience the exhibit at the Illinois State Museum’s Lockport Gallery through June 15, 2024.

About the Illinois State Museum: Established in 1877, the Illinois State Museum is a dynamic institution that inspires the exploration of Illinois' past and present to inform and enrich everyday life and promote stewardship of cultural and natural resources. Headquartered in Springfield with branch facilities in Lewistown and Lockport, the Illinois State Museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is a proud member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience.