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“FREE FOR ALL: THE PUBLIC LIBRARY” PREMIERES ON INDEPENDENT LENS ON TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2025

New Documentary Tells the Extraordinary Story of How a Simple Yet Powerful Idea Shaped a Nation, and the Quiet Revolutionaries Who Made It Happen

(San Francisco, CA) February 11, 2025—A beloved American institution, the public library’s founding principle is simple: build a place where anyone can enter, free of charge, and encounter a universe of ideas. “Free For All: The Public Library,” premiering on INDEPENDENT LENS on April 29, 2025, chronicles the fascinating evolution of the American public library’s trajectory, from the original “Free Library Movement” that began in the late 19th century to the present, when many libraries find themselves caught in the crosshairs of the culture wars and struggling to survive amid budget cuts and closures.

A film by Dawn Logsdon and Lucie Faulknor, “Free For All: The Public Library” will debut on PBS’s INDEPENDENT LENS on Tuesday, April 29, 2025, at 10 p.m. (check local listings.) The film will be available to stream on the [PBS app](#).

By the time she was 12, director Dawn Logsdon had visited over 100 libraries in almost every state as she and her teacher-parents road-tripped across America during their summer vacations. In “Free for All,” she and co-director Faulknor embark on a new journey—a fun and eye-opening jaunt from Louisiana to California, Massachusetts to Wisconsin, New York to Oregon, and more, visiting landmark sites in library history and uncovering the stories of the colorful personalities who shaped our libraries and the communities they serve. The film highlights inspiring librarians, past and present, mostly women dedicated to upholding the library’s integral position within our democracy, spreading literacy, offering solace and refuge, and uplifting their communities.

Among the stories discovered is that of Ernestine Rose, a librarian on New York’s Lower East Side who was one of the early pioneers in providing books in languages other than English; she also hired the New York Public Library’s first African American librarians, including Regina Andrews, who helped transform an uptown library branch into an intellectual and artistic hub of the Harlem Renaissance. Contemporary librarians include Elizabeth

Timmons, who knows all of her rural Wisconsin patrons by name and their literary preferences, and Tameka Roby, who drives the East Baton Rouge bookmobile, providing books and other services to kids, families, and seniors. And, in the nation's capital, Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden recalls becoming "all choked up," thinking about how she, a descendant of enslaved people, is now in charge of America's "temple of knowledge."

"Our hope is that this film inspires viewers to see libraries anew—as dynamic, vital institutions at the heart of democracy," said filmmakers Faulknor and Logsdon. "Libraries are more than places where stories are stored; they are where communities are built, where futures are imagined, and where dignity is upheld."

"Libraries are the beacon of communities where they provide access to knowledge, community, and engagement and are often overlooked, but 'Free For All' is the story of how a simple idea shaped our nation," said Lois Vossen, executive producer of INDEPENDENT LENS.

Visit the "[Free for All: The Public Library](#)" page on INDEPENDENT LENS to learn more about the film.

CREDITS

Director and Producer

Dawn Logsdon
Lucie Faulknor

Executive Producers

Lois Vossen
Nancy Blachman
Dominique Bravo
Stanley Nelson
Marcia Smith
Ellen Schneider

About the Filmmakers

Dawn Logsdon (Producer/Director/Editor/Narrator) has been dedicated to making films about civic issues and city life, particularly at the neighborhood level. She directed and produced "Faubourg Tremé: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans" (2008), which premiered at the Tribeca Festival and went on to win the SFIFF Golden Gate Award for Best Documentary and was a PBS Black History Month feature presentation three years in a row. Logsdon co-directed and edited "Big Joy: The Adventures of James Broughton" (2013) and "Lindy

Boggs: Steel and Velvet” (2006). She edited the Sundance Award-winning “Paragraph 175” by Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Freidman, Academy Award-nominated “The Weather Underground” by Sam Green, Emmy® Award-winning “Have You Heard from Johannesburg?” by Connie Field, and the Peabody Award-winning “The Castro” by Peter Stein. Short films she produced and directed include “Tomboy,” which was exhibited at the Whitney Museum and aired on PBS. Logsdon received a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy from UC Berkeley. Her honors include a Soros OSI Media Fellowship, California Arts Council Artist Residency, BAVC MediaMaker Award, Djerassi Artist Residency, Louisiana Division of the Arts Fellowship, New Orleans Contemporary Art Center Artist Fellowship, and the New Orleans Arts Council Award.

Lucie Faulknor (Producer/Co-Director) produced and researched “Faubourg Tremé: The Untold Story of Black New Orleans” and has worked with award-winning directors Dorothy Fadiman and Lynn Hershman Leeson in the areas of fundraising, publicity, outreach, and community engagement. Faulknor has also produced Dublin, Ireland's first Women in Film & Television film festival and presented a lecture series that included Laurie Anderson, Bobby McFerrin, Wayne Shorter, Sydney Pollack, and others. She has worked for a number of arts organizations, including City Arts & Lectures, SFJAZZ, Palace of Fine Arts Theater, the Irish Arts Foundation, Stern Grove Festival, Yerba Buena Gardens, Dublin (IRL) Fringe Festival, and for a number of individual performing and visual artists including Jim Campilongo, Storm Large, Tracy Snelling, and Kevin Woodson. She has a Master of Nonprofit Administration from University of San Francisco's School of Business and Professional Studies and a Bachelor of Arts Management from SFSU. Faulknor is a fourth generation San Francisco Public Library user.

ABOUT INDEPENDENT LENS

INDEPENDENT LENS is an Emmy® Award-winning PBS documentary series. With founding executive producer Lois Vossen, the series has been honored with 10 Academy Award nominations and features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by ITVS, INDEPENDENT LENS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Park Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, and National Endowment for the Arts. Stream anytime on the PBS app. For more visit pbs.org/independentlens

ABOUT ITVS



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Independent Television Services (ITVS) is the largest co-producer of independent documentaries in the United States. For more than 30 years the San Francisco non-profit has funded and partnered with documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning titles and premieres them on our Emmy® Award-winning PBS series, INDEPENDENT LENS. ITVS titles appear on PBS, WORLD, NETA, and can be streamed on various digital platforms including the PBS app. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Acton Family Giving, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, The Park Foundation, Wyncote Foundation. For more information, visit itvs.org.

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