

## Why this Arizona museum and library got major national recognition — and how you can visit

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Two southern Arizona staples have been honored with the nation’s highest award for museums and libraries.

The Copper Queen Library in Bisbee and Tucson’s Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum are two of 10 organizations nationwide that received the 2024 National Medal for Museum and Library Service.

“These institutions and their dedicated staff are stepping up to anticipate and meet the needs of their individual communities,” said the Institute of Museum and Library Services in a news release. “From New York to Arizona, these 10 recipients are unparalleled sources of education, health, jobs, and cultural resources, bridging the gaps of distance, resources, and experience for community members.”

The award is given to museums and libraries that demonstrate excellence in service to their communities.

### Copper Queen Library's 'accidental librarians' honored

For the Copper Queen Library, which has served Bisbee since 1882, the award shows that rural libraries are not just surviving but thriving, said library manager Jason Macoviak.

“We are thrilled, humbled, and completely amazed at the recognition and completely satisfied too, of our hard work and the community’s hard work in making this place the place that it is today,” he said.

Macoviak runs the library with one full-time employee, three part-time staff and an “army” of volunteers who run day-to-day operations and facilitate programs, he said.



The Copper Queen Library located on downtown Bisbee’s Main Street won the nation’s highest award for libraries. The library is next to the red brick building on the right.

Joe Rondone  
*The Republic*

Bisbee's artistic, lively and engaged community makes the Copper Queen Library special, he said.

Macoviak and his staff are what he calls "accidental librarians" who do not have master's in library science.

"We're just really proud of the fact that these accidental librarians have just received the nation's highest honor," Macoviak said. "I can't say enough about our staff and volunteers. I'm just so proud of them."

He highlighted how the Copper Queen has overcome challenges that often plague rural libraries with the help of the community and partnerships. These challenges include smaller budgets, fewer staff and less recognition than the larger library systems.

In an effort to serve its community, the library strives to meet people where they are. That means offering much-needed programs like early childhood literacy and moving to locations where resources are most needed.

Macoviak said many of their early literacy programs take place in the library's annex location in the Unified School Administration Building in Bisbee's San Jose neighborhood, located far from the library's main location downtown, just four miles from the U.S.-Mexico border.

"The whole impetus behind that was trying to meet people where they were instead of trying to get people to come to us," he said.

Copper Queen also has a library of things, allowing people to borrow everything from internet hotspots, tools, birding backpacks and ukuleles to blood pressure kits, pickleball sets, and more.

These innovative programs were part of the reason the library was named 2019's best small library in America by Library Journal.

Macoviak also said the library aims to make sure people feel represented in the range of books the library offers.

"We spend a lot of time, being champions of the freedom to read ... we have spent a lot of time over the years ... making sure that we have representation across the board," he said.



In 1952, The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum was established with the mission to inspire people to live in harmony with the natural world.

*Visit Tucson*

## Popular Tucson destination also recognized

Tucson's Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum was also recognized as one of the 10 winners. The museum is a popular attraction for tourists and locals alike.

It is located 15 miles west of Tucson's downtown, past winding mountain roads dotted by cacti in the breathtaking desert landscape, adjacent to Old Tucson, Saguaro National Park West, and Tucson Mountain Park.

The world-renowned institution is part zoo, botanical garden, natural history museum, and art institute, and focuses on the Sonoran Desert, the most biodiverse desert in North America.

The museum collaborates with communities across the region on research, education, conservation and exhibits, said the museum in a press release. It serves about 20,000 local school children each year who participate in the museum's programs and field trips, while current conservation programs focus on endangered aquatic species, invasive species, pollinators and food systems. "The Desert Museum's selection as a National Medal recipient is extremely meaningful to our staff, Trustees, volunteers and other supporters," said Executive Director Craig Ivanyi. "It provides recognition for decades of work with regional communities, and inspiration to continue to foster partnerships that will increase accessibility, enhance mutual benefit, and achieve greater mission impact into the future."