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Announcement of the Partnership Between the Uffizi Gallery and Indiana University

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President, Indiana University

Uffizi Gallery

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much, Director Schmidt.

It is truly a great honor and an immense privilege to be here today at the historic Uffizi Gallery, one of the world's oldest art galleries, and a gallery that has been rightly praised as one of the very finest in the world.

The preservation of the historical artifacts of a civilization, whether they are manuscripts, historical documents, sculptures, or other works of art or architecture, is a formidable challenge. Preserving such material—and making it accessible—is, however, vitally important. Our understandings of ourselves as cultures depend on the robust engagement with our pasts.

## 2. THE DIGITAL PRESERVATION OF THE UFFIZI'S COLLECTION OF GREEK AND ROMAN SCULPTURES

Indiana University and IU's Virtual World Heritage Laboratory are enormously proud to be able to announce today that we are partnering with the Uffizi over the next five years to create high-resolution, 3-D models of the museum's entire collection of 1,250 pieces of irreplaceable Greek and Roman sculptures, and to make them freely available online by the year 2020.

The project will be led by IU Professor of Informatics, Bernie Frischer, who is with us today. Professor Frischer directs IU's Virtual World Laboratory and was one of the first scholars in the world to use 3-D computer modeling to reconstruct cultural heritage sites and monuments. Working closely with Professor Frischer will be Professor Gabriele Guidi, a distinguished Florentine engineer, who is also with us today; University of Florence Professor Paolo Liverani, one of the world's leading experts on classical art and archaeology; and Dr. Fabrizio Paolucci, the Uffizi's archaeologist.

The 3-D models of these magnificent sculptures will be made freely available on a number of online sites, where they will be viewed and studied by a broad audience, including scholars, museum professionals, students, and the general public.

The data generated by the project will be stored on the Digital Preservation Network. The Network's mission is the ultra-long-term preservation and curation of digital material and objects, not just for decades, but for centuries. Its goal is to ensure that digital images of irreplaceable objects and other material of enormous cultural and scientific importance and value to the human race can survive disasters of war, nature, and terrorism.

The project we have announced today is an historic and hugely ambitious project, and one that will generate unparalleled opportunity for scholarly engagement.

This project also marks the beginning of a partnership between the Uffizi and Indiana University's newly named Sidney and Lois Eskenazi Museum of Art, one of the foremost university art museums in the United States. It is our hope that this partnership will, in the future, entail the mutual loan of art works, the development of temporary joint exhibitions, and the creation of new virtual gallery tours.

### 3. CONCLUSION

On behalf of Indiana University, I want to express our most grateful thanks to the Uffizi Gallery; its director, Eike Schmidt; to all members of the gallery's staff, especially Professor Frischer's partner, Dr. Fabrizio Paolucci, the archaeologist of the Uffizi; to the members of the project's scientific advisory committee; and to Italy's Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Indiana University has a long and extensive history of international partnership and engagement, much of it based in Europe. We are very pleased and honored to build upon that history with today's announcement of this historic partnership with the magnificent Uffizi Gallery.

Thank you very much.