



The Future of Museums and Libraries: A Discussion Guide



INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

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DEAR COLLEAGUE

I am pleased to present *The Future of Museums and Libraries: A Discussion Guide*. One of the most exciting things we do at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is provide a space where diverse institutions with complementary expertise and shared goals can explore common challenges.

This discussion guide is the result of a two-day meeting in which a diverse group of colleagues with many perspectives on the future came together to share and debate. Some interesting questions came out of those two days and we are interested in adding more voices to this conversation.

I hope you will use this guide to spark discussion in your institution, your community, or your professional group, and add your perspective on how the delivery of library and museum services will be impacted by technology, education reform, and societal and economic changes, and also how delivery of library and museum services will impact these policy areas.

Look for more opportunities to share your thoughts on the IMLS Web site in the coming months.

Sincerely,



Dr. Anne-Imelda M. Radice, Director
Institute of Museum and Library Services



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INTRODUCTION

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is committed to bringing together museums and libraries across the country for conversations dedicated to developing a better understanding of the roles of libraries and museums as providers of public service to communities. The Future of Libraries and Museums in the 21st Century Planning Meeting, which took place July 7–8, 2008, in Washington, D.C., was convened by the National Academy of Sciences and supported by IMLS to bring together voices across and outside the library and museum fields to debate, discuss, and question the future of museums and libraries and gain insight into how the conversation could unfold in subsequent discussions in the field at large. This meeting brought together leaders from across the disciplines in the library, museum, research, scientific, technology, and education fields to help define the central issues, challenges, and opportunities that libraries and museums are likely to face in the coming decades.

During the course of the meeting, participants considered three areas where significant change is anticipated over the course of the 21st century:

- The relationship among museums, libraries, and society
- The evolution of the role or roles of museums and libraries
- The future support, environment, and infrastructure for museums and libraries

This publication is intended to provide some structure for and spark ongoing conversation and dialogue among museum and library professionals, policy makers, funders, users, researchers, and partners from the private and public spheres regarding their own institutions, networks, and communities.

William A. Wulf, AT&T professor of computer science and meeting participant, provided a word of advice to guide these conversations. He stated, “Any predictions that we make about the future of libraries and museums have to start with asking what assumptions are we making. Let us make sure they are on the table.” Discussions about the future of libraries and museums will be better informed if the prevailing assumptions about these institutions and their roles are fully identified. This includes confronting the reality of the current economic climate and its short- and long-term impacts on the museum and library sector. In light of the current situation, the issues and questions posed in this publication attain greater significance as an introduction, a framing structure, and a launching point for the first of many continued conversations that IMLS will sponsor to encourage museums and libraries to think critically and strategically about their future.

THE PLANNING MEETING: INSIGHTS, QUESTIONS, & POSSIBILITIES

Over the course of the two-day meeting, participants shared their unique experience in the fields of education, museum services, library services, science, and technology and examined the challenges and opportunities that museums and libraries are likely to face in the 21st century. While museums and libraries as distinct entities may have equally distinct approaches to dealing with 21st-century issues, they also have common ground to stand on as organizations in the public trust and for the public good. Recognizing the tremendous diversity that exists across both entities, participants were encouraged to explore where synergy could occur between museums and libraries.

The following discussion notes comprise the key issues that emerged from that conversation. Quotations from the participants introduce each discussion note, followed by a series of questions for consideration and real-world examples from the field identified by the planning meeting participants as ways in which museums and libraries are already incorporating the ideas and practices into their services. Discussion themes 1–4 address issues that are probable for museums and libraries in the future, while themes 5–9 address situations and circumstances that are already beginning to have an impact on museums and libraries and where action is needed.

Much of this discussion is focused on changing conceptions of institutional authority, relationships between institution and audience, tools and modes of communication, knowledge transfer, information exchange and professional practice. In spite of all these changes, the unique responsibility that these institutions have to preserve and make accessible tangible and intangible original materials remains.

Museums and libraries have a unique role as the primary stewards of culture and heritage and, with this, a profound responsibility for ensuring that future generations have access to original materials. How best to preserve and provide access to these materials in a way that serves future generations should be a central question for museums and libraries in the 21st century.

“Overall, I believe visitors trust our nation’s libraries and museums and look to them for accurate, scholarly information and inspiring, educational experiences. We perform a vital public service in thousands of communities across the countries. To continue that service, reach new audiences, and stay useful, we’re going to have to experiment.”

—G. Wayne Clough, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution

DISCUSSION THEME #1: CHANGING DEFINITIONS & ROLES OF MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Radical shifts in the definition and role of museums and libraries will result from rapid societal changes occurring in the 21st century.

“Start by tossing out the idea of a museum or a library, and say this is what needs to happen. This is the service provisioning that is required and from there, the logical organization.”

—John Fraser, Director, Public Research and Evaluation,
Wildlife Conservation Society

“As we talk about connectivity, we need to talk about not only connectivity electronically, but connecting people and providing programs that reflect and meet the needs of the communities we serve.”

—Lawrence J. Pijeaux, Jr., President and CEO,
Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

The 21st century is predicted to bring about many major changes to society, including significant shifts in population demographics, community infrastructure, new technologies, economics, the development of new sources of energy, and other developments that may dramatically alter how people live in and view the world. These changes, which could have great impact on daily life and societal needs, will also alter the definition and role of museums and libraries as they adapt their services to meet changing community needs.

The discussion focused on how museums and libraries can identify the kinds of services that their communities need and align themselves to meet those needs in the most effective ways possible. This is a process starting not from the institution, but from the community itself. By identifying the unique assets of their institutions and listening to the needs of their communities, museums and libraries can work with the public to determine how those assets can most effectively serve a changing public.

Questions to consider from the planning meeting:

- In light of the opportunities and challenges that confront society in the 21st century, what new conscience, vision, and strategy are required of museums and libraries to best engage public interest, insight, and action?
- How does our thinking about the role of libraries and museums change when we place them in a larger societal discussion?

- What are the ways that museums and libraries contribute to the public good, and how can they do more?
- How can museums and libraries engage with their communities both in a local context and in the global knowledge society?
- Who are the future audiences for library and museum services? What factors determine the audience? What role does funding—public and private—play in identifying audience?

Example from the Field: Laboratory of Art and Ideas at Belmar

The Laboratory of Art and Ideas at Belmar (the Lab) defines itself as part museum, part think tank, and part public forum. Established within a mixed-use district to revitalize suburban Lakewood, Colorado, the museum was built as part of a community development plan to create a civic space for the suburbs. In this space, the Lab imagined what a museum could be in the 21st century, and how it could more fully integrate art and culture into the daily lives of residents. One way of doing this was to create a museum model that recognizes the cultural values of the community in addition to those of the contemporary art world. The Lab defines itself as “a non-profit institution dedicated to developing, presenting and disseminating creative research in contemporary art and thought. The Lab is a place for the general public to engage with artists and scholars and a forum for personal reflection, public dialogue, and creative experimentation around contemporary art and ideas.”¹

The Lab utilizes a unique programming that explores new ways to integrate with its community and move away from a strictly curatorial or educational model to a design-centered philosophy of creating unique visitor experiences. This emphasis on creative design is carried across curation, education, marketing and fundraising, replacing traditional divisions of museum practice with a broader approach to visitor experiences that seek to be part of the lifestyle of its audiences and a trusted source for their cultural and intellectual growth. For the museum, this means being open to new ideas, creating excitement, tension, and a spirit of inquiry in its programs, and giving voice to criticism as well as praise.

¹ As of February 2009, the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver Board of Trustees announced that Adam Lerner will be the new director of the museum and the Lab at Belmar will merge with MCA Denver.

DISCUSSION THEME #2: SHIFTS IN POWER & AUTHORITY

Traditional power structures and notions of authority in the transference of knowledge and information may no longer characterize the museum and library experience.

“The question for me about museums is whether we are going to change our view about accepting as legitimate multiple viewpoints, even dissenting viewpoints, within the very way in which we design our place without losing the trust people have for us as an institution. That is at least for me the current central question about all institutions of authority.”

—Elaine Heumann Gurian, Senior Consultant and Principal, Elaine Heumann Gurian, LLC

“If you can put it out there, does it have to be curated? If we are the portal, and we provide the content, is it terrible if it gets out there without context and without curation? Isn't that good too?”

—Maureen Whalen, Associate General Counsel, The J. Paul Getty Trust

Changes are already taking shape in the ways people search for and use information and in how they communicate with one another and with institutions. Rather than act as gatekeepers to knowledge, museums and libraries can be facilitators and teachers, providing the context, content, and tools that empower people to question, search, inform, and explore the worlds of information, experience, and memory. Increasingly, the museum and library of the 21st century are not one-way channels of information that flow from institution to audience. Rather, they are networks of many channels, institution to audience, audience to institution, and audience to audience.

Questions to consider from the planning meeting:

- How will museums and libraries balance making information and materials freely accessible and providing the amount of content and context appropriate to their audiences?
- Within museums and libraries, what will the relationship be between notions of excellence, authority, and standards and notions of inclusion, access, and acceptance of alternate worldviews?
- How will the emergence of digital social networking impact how museums and libraries deliver their services?

- What are the impediments to sharing and providing access to material? Can museums and libraries look at these impediments and change them?
- How will the changing nature of research and scholarship impact the stewardship and archival responsibilities of museums and libraries?

“It’s not so much about the institutions; it’s about the user and what the user is looking for in their life experience. I think there is huge power in our audience, and we can engage them across our institutions in a more fruitful way, so that they can learn themselves and also share with their communities.”

—Susan Hildreth, State Librarian of California,
California State Library

Example from the Field: Wing Luke Asian Museum

The Wing Luke Asian Museum developed its Community-based Exhibition Model to empower its community members to create their own exhibits and tell their own stories at the museum. The model is a core part of the museum’s mission “to engage the Asian Pacific American communities and the public in exploring issues related to the culture, art, and history of Asian Pacific Americans,” and integrates community members throughout the exhibition process. Rather than the museum’s telling the community’s stories, members of the community are given the space and tools to tell their stories themselves. Community Advisory Committees and other participating members of the community work with museum staff on exhibition planning and implementation. In the exhibition process, the community directs the message, theme, and content of the exhibition, which is developed through the professional and technical expertise of museum staff. These community representatives play a central role in every part of the exhibition process and in outreach and programming once the exhibition is complete. Community involvement extends beyond exhibitions to oral history projects, public programs, and a variety of public spaces created to integrate community voices into the operations of the museum. This model is an ongoing and evolving process, which the museum continues to develop, as well as sharing best practices and gaining feedback from other organizations interested or engaged in community-based arts and cultural work.

DISCUSSION THEME #3: MUSEUMS & LIBRARIES AS THE “THIRD PLACE”

Museums and libraries embody the “Third Place” as gathering spaces for social interaction and engagement. The challenge for museum and library leaders is to identify what the “Third Place” will look like in the future and how their institutions can enhance their positions as forces for civic engagement and social cohesion.

“What would happen if we almost for the sake of argument said it is neither a library nor a museum, but it is a third place. Not just a third place, but a third force if you will. I think our institutions inevitably are going to be forces as well as places.”

—Harold Skramstad, President Emeritus,
Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village

“One of the things that public libraries have done fairly well is to realize that their mission, their job, is about community building. Yes, they have this professional background; they have this understanding of information needs and how to scope that out. But it’s really about making a contribution to the community, looking at your institution as an asset to problem solving, and trying to develop that as part of the overall context.”

—Martín Gómez, President and CEO, Urban Libraries Council

In *The Great Good Place*,² Ray Oldenburg defines the significance of the third place in a healthy society. Neither work nor home, the third place is a neutral community space, where people come together voluntarily and informally in ways that level social inequities and promote community engagement and social connection. As public gathering places organized around public service and the transfer of information and ideas across individuals, museums and libraries are a unique form of the third place because of their distinct resources as easily accessible, low-cost barrier places rich in content and experience.

Participants identified museums and libraries as purpose-driven institutions—socially responsible and socially responsive. Museums and libraries already act as safe communal spaces for people to interact with one another. As opportunities for social engagement outside of private or working life and removed from the profit interests of commercial spaces,

² Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*, 3rd ed. (Jackson, TN: Da Capo Press, 1999).

museums and libraries have the ability to identify and respond to community needs in ways that other spaces cannot.

Participants highlighted the need for museums and libraries to explore how societal changes occurring in the 21st century will alter the unique needs of their communities, and in turn shape the kinds of institutional structures that will best meet those needs and serve as public gathering spaces. Museums and libraries can continue to be a distinct form of the third place in the future, but they may have to adapt to changes in what the third place looks like. For example, participants debated over whether or not communities will continue to need physical gathering spaces, or if virtual communities will grow ever more important? Alternatively, could the virtual and physical come together in the Third Place of the future? What role could museums and libraries play in creating physical and virtual places that provide safe and open places that foster civic engagement and create community bonds, and how might these two worlds even become one multilayered public gathering space?

Questions to consider from the planning meeting:

- What are the social purposes of museums and libraries and how will these be met in the future?

Example from the Field: Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute strives to be the nation's premier educational center for the study of the civil rights movement and the global struggle for human rights. Community and family involvement, afterschool enrichment, and civic engagement are key components to the programs and services provided by the institute. As a partner in the Birmingham Cultural Alliance Partnership in Birmingham, Alabama, the institute works in collaboration with six other museums and the public library to offer academic support and cultural enrichment to disadvantaged middle-school children and initiate family involvement in participatory activities with the cultural community. In addition, the partnership has initiated leadership training for teens and a youth performance group to educate others on the history of the civil rights movement. In its own work, the institute conducts community programming throughout the year, as well as an extensive oral history project to document the civil rights movement. It also maintains an open archive for public research and uses a variety of multimedia onsite and online resources to engage visitors in learning more about the historic struggle for human rights. Through its exhibits, partnerships, and programs, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is a community center focused on building tolerance, equality, and understanding in society.

- How might libraries and museums converge as social spaces of community engagement? What other words, metaphors, and descriptors could describe this kind of space?
- What makes museums and libraries different from other places in society? Why and how do they exist as a part of the value chain in society?
- How can museums and libraries foster a democratic society?
- What role can museums and libraries play in becoming part of a strong community network?
- What does it mean for museums and libraries to fulfill the educative process of a democracy (i.e., to strive for increased social justice)?
- What impact might changing community demographics (ethnic, cultural, economic, and educational) in America have on the social uses of museums and libraries?
- What are the barriers to and opportunities for leveraging social networking and other technologies to engage young people civically in the 21st century?

“To be successful (and hopefully essential), museums and libraries need to pursue new models in which they provide platforms for social engagement, transitioning from providing designed, controlled experiences to comfortable, open-ended venues for people and participatory discourse. The Web has given people the opportunity to dream up their own community spaces. If we [museums and libraries] can listen and remake ourselves into those dreams, we will finally become places for our audience.”

—Nina Simon, Founder, Museum 2.0

DISCUSSION THEME #4: TECHNOLOGY & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Rapid advances in technology during the 21st century will have a profound effect on how people access and use information. Museums and libraries will need to determine their role in policy developments for intellectual property, digitization, preservation, and content access.

“If U.S. society is to participate in the knowledge economy of the 21st century, and if the historical record of the U.S. is to be captured in the 21st century, then those who now control significant parts of the record will need to be brought into the conversation. Additionally, the complex web of content ownership will need to be simplified in the furtherance of society’s legitimate interest in the cultural record—either by statute or by agreement with content owners.”

—Ann J. Wolpert, Director of Libraries,
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

“We can push for change in intellectual property policies. We should be the advocates for understanding that access isn’t enough, that showing something on a screen is a start, but it is not the end of what we aspire to, the people we serve want to be able to do [something] with the material we are putting out.”

Joshua M. Greenberg, Director,
Digital Strategy and Scholarship, The New York Public Library

Museums and libraries have key roles in information technology development, access, use, and preservation—central components to their day-to-day operations. Technology products and capabilities are rapidly advancing and will continue to do so throughout the 21st century.

Intellectual property, digital preservation, and information access are the subjects of great debate in the world and will continue to be so. Museums and libraries have much to offer in this debate and have an essential leadership role to play in shaping future policy that will impact the stewardship of cultural heritage. Museums and libraries can play a leading role in intellectual property, digital preservation, and information access. Participants described the role that libraries and museums play in helping people find and use information through new technologies, and enrich public use of technology by providing the content and context around information resources.

Questions to consider from the planning meeting:

- What are the relationships between the missions of museums and libraries and trends in intellectual property and related regulatory issues?
- How do libraries, archives, and museums contribute to the creation of intellectual property? How should this contribution be defined? Can the amount and types of contributions made by libraries, archives, and museums be identified and quantified? How do these compare to those of the private sector and commercial entities?
- If libraries, archives, and museums are engaged in publishing, reproduction, and distribution of works and materials, what are the differences between what they are publishing and what rights holders are publishing?

Example from the Field #1: Library Research Group and DSpace

The mission of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Library Research Group is to “perform research in new technology-based systems and services on behalf of the MIT Libraries, and provide high-quality software development for new or existing systems commissioned by the Libraries.” One of its current projects is DSpace, software for building open-source digital repositories, developed in collaboration with Hewlett Packard.

DSpace is a freely available, customizable, open-source software that captures, stores, indexes, preserves, and redistributes research material in digital formats. It is designed to be flexible in order to accommodate an organization’s differing policies, practices, data formats, and standards. Communities of groups such as academic departments, research centers, and other institution-based administrative units contribute content to DSpace, determine their own guidelines for content and access, and share their collections among themselves or between multiple communities. DSpace continues to be adopted by organizations—academic, nonprofit, and for profit—to create open-source digital repositories and seeks to grow the number of communities using DSpace so that the software continues to be expanded and improved.³

³ In May 2009, the DSpace Foundation joined with Fedora Commons, an organization that also provides open-source software for managing and providing access to digital content, forming a new organization called DuraSpace. According to the DuraSpace press release, the new organization will sustain and grow the two flagship platforms as well as “offer new technologies and services that respond to the dynamic environment of the Web and to new requirements from existing and future users.” See www.duraspace.org.

- What are future strategies for ensuring the preservation of digital objects, especially those created in proprietary software?
- What impact will globalization have on libraries' access to information and their ability to process and disseminate information to all users within different information environments?
- If large, world-class collections are available online, what is the role for small collections in local museums?
- How can museums and libraries maintain their relevance and accessibility in the 21st century, when the electronic transfer of information has become a dominant factor in information retrieval and storage?
- What are the ways in which museums and libraries will manage and curate data in the future?

Example from the Field #2: Copyright Review Management System

Building on its experience in determining the copyright status of works typically presumed to be in copyright (books published in the United States between 1923 and 1963), the University of Michigan Library is developing a Copyright Review Management System that involves the collaboration of multiple institutions to increase the reliability of copyright determinations in order to aid the process of making more books available online to the public.

The library will develop the software for the Copyright Review Management System, which will be able to determine the copyright status of works at a speed far greater than manual determination and with greater accuracy, incorporating multiple mechanisms of review. The software will be open-source, and the library will incorporate partnership, outreach, and training into the project so that other organizations can participate and use the software. The project aims to facilitate the release of tens of thousands of works into the public domain over the course of three years.

DISCUSSION THEME #5: 21ST-CENTURY LEARNING & INFORMATION USE

Museums and libraries can continue to enrich the education and knowledge building of society by consciously adapting their services to the new ways in which people want to seek, gather, and interpret information and to create meaning in the 21st century.

“Perhaps unintentionally, these institutions serve us as barometers of our own collective humanity. It is here where our beliefs, our fears, our hopes, and ultimately our laws about how we collect information and share knowledge are realized publicly. It is the manifestation of the way we believe in the process of acquiring and sharing knowledge. To the extent that a populace uses its knowledge resources, so too can be predicted the society’s well-being over time. One of the most critical elements in building on lifelong learning and fostering a nation of learners is the success or failure of engaging broad swaths of our young people with our institutions in simple but meaningful ways.”

—Mark A. Wright, Director of Partnerships,
National Children’s Museum

Museums and libraries already provide strong support and enrichment for formal K–12 education and create a dynamic environment for free-choice learning designed to engage learners throughout their lifetime. However, developments in technology and information access combined with changes in methods of formal and alternative education will impact how museums and libraries deliver educational services. If museums and libraries seek to create the conditions for a nation of learners in the United States, it is their role to understand how people want to learn, build, and share knowledge in the 21st century and provide the services and creative environment necessary to meet those lifelong learning needs.

Questions to consider from the planning meeting:

- How can museums and libraries address the lifelong learning needs of their community, working with communities rather than for them?
- How do libraries and museums become the centers for community knowledge creation and development of productive inquiry?
- What can museums and libraries do to expand their use by our nation’s younger, more diverse generations who are accustomed to quickly adapting to new technologies and accessing information in different formats?

Example from the Field #1: HomeworkNYC.org

HomeworkNYC.org is a site launched in 2005 by the three public library systems of New York City. The site provides students ages 9 to 19 with a single entry point to the electronic resources of the libraries as well as librarian-generated content developed for young people that is tied to school subject areas. However, in 2006, a program evaluation of the project revealed that the site was not meeting the needs of students and that student users were having difficulty using and finding information from it. As a result, the project team for the libraries decided that they had to determine how best the site could meet those needs by consulting directly with students and teachers in the New York City boroughs.

Through their conversations with these primary users, the project team was better able to understand the Web-based homework and research practices of students and teachers. By using a planning method where young people's input and participation was an integral component, the team realized that they needed to integrate the libraries' homework support with existing tools that matched young people's information-seeking habits online. As a result, the libraries have begun a process of building and testing open-source widgets to address these needs and integrate the homework support within existing online environments for students. By incorporating student users into the design process of the project and taking into careful consideration the unique information-seeking habits and needs of this population, the libraries seek to create a more responsive resource tool that will expand the use of these services by young people.

Example from the Field #2: SciLINC (Scientific Literature Indexing on Networked Computers)

The Missouri Botanical Garden created Scientific Literature Indexing on Networked Computers (SciLINC), a developing public resource computer application that indexes digital scientific literature on individual computers while the computer is not active. This type of computing application capitalizes on unused computer processing power to analyze large quantities of data and can be used on an Internet-connected personal computer. Through this application, SciLINC will create a Web repository of scientific literature from the museum's library collection, enabling it to establish an integrated Web portal that will allow the public greater access to nationally significant scientific literature.

In addition to creating greater accessibility to the literature collection, the project also seeks to enhance the museum's digitized literature materials through improved annotation and keyword searching. The project also seeks to provide a model for the library community interested in employing similar applications. While public-resource computing applications are currently used in the research community, SciLINC aims to bring this technology to the greater library community and illustrate how these tools can help facilitate greater public access to significant library materials.

DISCUSSION THEME #6: NEW MODELS & STRUCTURES FOR COLLABORATION

Collaboration is essential to the sustainability and future growth of museums and libraries and can increase the ability of institutions to address 21st-century challenges and opportunities and meet community needs.

“It seems to me that the really creative thing to do is to couple the experience we have from the museum and library worlds with these new venues for dissemination and try to get something that is synergistic and more than the sum of its parts.”

—Francine Berman, Director, San Diego Supercomputer Center

As collaboration, collocation, and the blending of services continue, the boundary between museum and library will likely be less distinct. This does not mean that the unique mission and identity of an individual institution must disappear; rather, institutional goals can be expanded and enhanced through collaborations that combine resources, knowledge, and experience for mutual benefit. Museums and libraries can engage with a variety of individuals and organizations, such as researchers, universities, for-profit companies, and other cultural and community-based organizations. New models and structures for collaboration among museums and libraries and other organizations can work to develop effective solutions to the economic, social, and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

Questions to consider from the planning meeting:

- How is the relationship among museums, libraries, and for-profit institutions shifting?
- How do museums and libraries increase collaboration while retaining and respecting the historical and unique differences among and between cultural institutions? When is the public best served and by what methods?
- What new models for collaboration could be developed among museums, libraries, and other nonprofit and for-profit institutions in order to promote community development, generate greater access to information, or share resources?
- How can museums and libraries create collaborations that move beyond benefitting individual institutions to providing services for the greater good of society?

Example from the Field: The New Jersey Digital Highway

The New Jersey Digital Highway is a statewide repository and collaborative portal created by the Rutgers University Libraries, American Labor Museum/Botto House, New Jersey State Library, New Jersey Historical Society, New Jersey State Archives, and smaller libraries, museums, archives, historical societies, public broadcasting stations and schools. The project is a statewide digital infrastructure and online portal to the state's immigration history and ethnic heritage. Throughout the development of the portal, the project collaborators took a user-centered approach to provide information resources that meet the needs of students and teachers as well as librarians, archivists, and curators. The project seeks to promote access, learning, and engagement at the local and global level, with New Jersey history and heritage to the benefit of learners, educators, and cultural heritage organizations in the state.

In addition to access to materials for users, the project also provides resources to support heritage institutions to work with one another so that collections can be shared with greater audiences, while also retaining their institutional ownership. Through partnership strategies that engage any organization that can provide access to New Jersey cultural heritage materials, the New Jersey Digital Highway brings digitization strategies, practice, and technical knowledge to both large and small institutions. It promotes the preservation of an institution's unique identity and resources, while at the same time bridging the gap among those organizations that can provide digital access to materials and those that cannot.

DISCUSSION THEME #7: PLANNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Museums and libraries are in the process of defining and planning for a sustainable future, not just in terms of economics, but in their relevancy to the world they serve.

“I urge us to lift this discussion into its largest possible context, because if we don’t have missions that are expressly for some greater purpose than the collection we may have been endowed with, if we don’t have content that is proactive and trying to be resourceful to living, learning, and working in the area that surrounds you in some defined context that uses unique institutional assets for unique community needs, and if we don’t work hard at diversifying our audience, not just growing it but diversifying it, then I think we are not worthy as institutions that get lots of public money.”

—Emlyn Koster, President and CEO, Liberty Science Center

Perhaps the greatest question for museums and libraries today is what they will need to do to remain meaningful institutions in the future. The meeting participants spoke of sustainability beyond economic concerns, describing how true sustainability for museums and libraries lies in being relevant to the communities in which they reside. Museums and libraries will be relevant as long as their work is in service to the greater needs of society. As stewards of cultural heritage, as content and context providers of information, as central places for people to come together to learn and share with one another, it is here that museums and libraries will shape their future. The questions for these institutions to continually ask themselves are what makes us unique, what makes us matter, and who cares about what we do? These questions force us to consider what the needs of our communities are and how we can continue to meet them and be sustainable by being relevant to the world around us.

The financial stability of museums and libraries depends on their continued relevance to society; but the current economic situation threatens the short- and long-term health of museums and libraries, and some may not survive. It is uncertain whether traditional funding structures of support for museums and libraries will ultimately be sustainable in the long term. It will be, in fact may already be, vitally important for these institutions to consider their economic future and what alternative funding models and business structures may exist for their sustainability.

Questions to consider from the planning meeting:

- What is the economic future of museums and libraries? What are new vehicles for funding and sustainability of cultural and intellectual assets and practices?

- What kinds of resources are needed for the cultural institutions that serve the public good so that they can thrive in the long term?
- How do American traditions of support for and management of museums and libraries compare to those of the rest of the world? Are there other international models for support that could inform American fundraising practices?
- Beyond economic security, what other factors, like social relevancy and community needs, will define sustainability for museums and libraries in the future?

Example from the Field #1: Cultural Alliance of Southeastern Michigan

The Cultural Alliance of Southeastern Michigan brings together arts and cultural organizations in a seven-county area to work together in order to better equip individual organizations to achieve their missions. The goals of the alliance are threefold: to catalyze and facilitate collaborations, to provide professional development opportunities, and to serve as the collective voice of and advocate for arts and cultural organizations in southeastern Michigan. The alliance facilitates a variety of programs for exchange and collaboration among its members. One project combats the scarcity of resources and economic challenges that many of the organizations face in the region. The Sharing Resources Clearing House is an online system where participating members can post institutional assets available for use by fellow members. Sometimes freely given and sometimes traded, assets include buses, staffing, props, scenery, venues, consulting, and other goods and services. The system is one way in which these institutions are working together to support themselves as a cultural community rather than as isolated organizations competing to survive.

Example from the Field #2: OMEKA

The Center for History and New Media at George Mason University created the project OMEKA in order to enhance the ability of museums to share their collections and content online. OMEKA is a next-generation Web publishing tool that provides a standards-based interoperable system that allows institutions to share and use digital content in multiple contexts. OMEKA was designed specifically for smaller cultural heritage institutions without the resources to develop their own online tools, though its use is not limited to small organizations. A developing and dynamic project, OMEKA provides the resources and tools for online collections and content access that are cost effective, flexible, extensible, free, and open source.

DISCUSSION THEME #8: METRICS FOR EVALUATING SERVICE & IMPACT

Developing appropriate and effective metrics can be a critical tool for articulating the value of museums and libraries and ensuring their future success.

“Our job now is not so much to predict the future as to begin to make a better case for our relevance, our value and our possibilities, nationally and locally, in the future.”

—Steven K. Hamp, Consultant, Hamp Advisors, LLC

The metrics, both quantitative and qualitative, that are currently used to evaluate the impact of museums and libraries in society today may not be applicable to the kinds of services that these institutions will provide in the coming decades. If museums and libraries begin to integrate more with one another and collaborate more with other organizations in the public and private spheres, they may also begin to define themselves and their roles in new ways. Significant changes to the services that museums and libraries provide and their relationships to other fields and to their publics would necessitate redefining the impacts and outcomes of their operations. It is essential that as museums and libraries reevaluate their services, their communities, and the ways in which their use is changing in the 21st century; they must also consider how they will measure their progress in addressing these changes and articulating their value to society.

Questions to consider from the planning meeting:

- What are the appropriate measures of success for museums and libraries as partners to the research and education community in the information age?
- What is the best way to integrate evaluation into museum and library practice? What kinds of impacts are we looking for and how do we integrate data into our decision making?

Planning meeting participants highlighted the real need for museums and libraries to question how the progress and value of these institutions should be measured and evaluated in the future. Rather than provide examples of the current methods for articulating the value of museums and libraries, this discussion is directed toward the museum and library community to consider the questions and issues put forth on the future of museums and libraries and how conversations about developing new metrics might be framed by changes in services. Since there are many models currently in place for measuring the impact of museum and library services in communities, at this point it may be advantageous to institutions to consider what new models might emerge as services continue to evolve.

Example from the Field: Indianapolis Museum of Art Dashboard

The Indianapolis Museum of Art created its Dashboard (dashboard.imamuseum.org) as a Web-based tool to record and report out many different aspects of the museum's performance, operations, activities, and audiences. It takes a new approach to conceptualizing the workings and impact of the museum in many different arenas, combining both traditional and nontraditional metrics of museum performance. For example, in addition to reporting traditional measurements such as attendance figures, the number of museum memberships, and financial information, the museum also publishes information about its energy consumption, social networking activities, and curatorial work such as the number of artworks on loan, new acquisitions, and number of works with gaps in provenance during World War II. Measurements such as these provide a more complex portrayal of the museum as a living and breathing institution, engaging in physical and virtual communities, and actively publicizing its role in key contemporary issues such as energy conservation and cultural heritage debates.

The museum's Dashboard takes a multilayered and complex approach to communicating its identity as an institution to the public. It virtually opens the institution's doors to public examination of all its working processes, both in its day-to-day public activities and its behind-the-scenes activities. By doing so, the Indianapolis Museum of Art explores new ways for articulating the many functions of the museum and explores many different measurements that can convey the role and value of its services.

DISCUSSION THEME #9: THE 21ST-CENTURY MUSEUM & LIBRARY WORKFORCE

New generations in the library and museum workforce can make key contributions to planning for 21st-century institutions, practices, and policies.

“It’s vital, critical, for students to get engaged while they are in our programs [library science, information science, museum studies, etc.] if we expect them to be the change agents for the organizations we are envisioning. Are we ready for these students? These are the most engaged students since the 1960s. They don’t want to accept the status quo. They have lots of ideas about the changes they want to see in the world, and they want to be part of them. Are we ready for them when we hire them into our institutions?”

—Michèle V. Cloonan, Dean and Professor, Graduate School of Library and Information Science, Simmons College

The 21st-century museum and library professional will have a new set of skills and roles adapted to technological and information needs in communities. Institutions can attain greater relevancy to their communities by reflecting whom they serve through whom they hire and giving voice to underrepresented groups. Some meeting participants characterized students in academic programs in the museum and library fields as entering their studies with a history of deep engagement in libraries and museums that profoundly shapes how they view the world. Twenty-first-century leadership need not be confined to a top-down system of change but can emerge from all levels of the institution by encouraging risk and visionary thinking and empowering staff members to actively shape the future of their organizations.

Questions to consider from the planning meeting:

- What are the competencies required for professionals in museums and libraries to succeed in the information age?
- What are the changing and ongoing career development and training models needed for professionals in cultural and heritage institutions?
- What will be the effects of outsourcing and Internet open sourcing on the staffing models of museums and libraries? What traditional salaried positions will be retained and what positions will be invented, added, or augmented to make museums and libraries productive in a new workplace reality?
- What kinds of skills, knowledge, experience, and ideas are emerging leaders, students, and young professionals bringing to the museum and library field? How will they impact museums and libraries as their professional careers unfold? How can they be a part of planning for the future?

Example from the Field #1: Click University

The Special Libraries Association (SLA) administers an online learning tool for its members called Click University (CLICK: Continuous Learning to Improve Career Knowledge). The site provides a wealth of learning opportunities for special librarians to develop not only traditional library skills, but also the leadership, personal, and business skills that are needed in the 21st century. By offering a variety of resources, tools, and courses, Click University enables information professionals to decide their own course of continuing education in the way that best fits their professional needs. Among the programs in which members can participate are an Innovation Laboratory to learn how to use emerging technology tools and Web 2.0 resources, online libraries on leadership and knowledge management, webinars, leadership training, and a program called execuBooks that provides summaries of significant business literature. In addition, the program offers certificate courses in competitive intelligence, copyright management, and knowledge management open to members and nonmembers of the SLA. Through Click University, information professionals have access to flexible and collaborative resources of continuing education, tailored toward the 21st-century information environment.

Example from the Field #2: Project M-LEAD

The Pratt Institute School of Information and Library Science in partnership with the Brooklyn Museum has created a three-year project to fund a diverse group of 30 students to receive a master's degree in library and information science with a certificate in museum librarianship in Project M-LEAD (Museum Library Education and Digitization). This new project seeks to educate and equip students with the skills needed for museum librarianship in the digital age through a combined degree program that is the first of its kind in the United States and Canada. Students are taught by both museum and library professionals in courses based on curatorial and research skills, digital technology, education and outreach, and field experience. Students also complete internships at the Brooklyn Museum, focusing on projects in museum libraries, archives and in the museum's Digital Lab. The internship allows students to access the research collections of the museum as well as practical work experience in projects dealing with records, copyright law, outreach, and other issues inherent to museum librarianship. The program is also designed to facilitate the goal of the museum to use cataloging and online access to generate greater public access to the museum's collections, while at the same time equipping students with the skills necessary for leadership in their professional careers.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The common thread across these discussion notes is the call for museums and libraries to take a proactive and positive stance in facing the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. From changes in information access, use, and preservation to advances in technology, shifts in society and community needs, and evolving learning and development methods—from economic considerations to changing metrics and the emergence of a new generation of professional leaders in the field—museums and libraries have the ability at this moment to remain relevant and dynamic institutions well into the future. This is an opportunity for these institutions to work with their communities in defining their relationships with the publics they serve and chart a course for success. The planning meeting participants stressed that the future success of museums and libraries will come from these institutions working together and with their communities. Museums and libraries can do this by continuing to work with one another and in concert with the many voices and worldviews of the publics they serve, creating new partnerships and practices that place these institutions as vital centers of community life.

This publication is a starting point for museums and libraries to use in sparking a dialogue in their own institutions and communities. There are many ways in which this conversation can proceed, including but not limited to the following:

- Discussing this publication at staff meetings and board meetings at museums and libraries as part of institutional conversations about future roles and practices.
- Coordinating conversations across institutions to imagine the future of the museum or library sector as a whole.
- Involving emerging professionals and students in planning for the future at the front end of conversations.
- Bringing museums and libraries together to identify the ways in which their missions and services complement one another and how they can work together to envision the future.

“A librarian’s work is to connect people with ideas. We do this in a variety of ways: sometimes with books, sometimes with information, sometimes through the Web or special programs, or even using beautiful buildings. And in the future, connecting people with ideas will continue to be the work of librarians. This will not change. How we do this is changing.”

—Ginnie Cooper, Chief Librarian, District of Columbia Public Library

- Turning to communities to look at the future of libraries and museums from the outside in. Creating forums for community discussion of what future needs for cultural preservation and lifelong learning are, and actively responding to how communities foresee the kind of organization that will meet those needs.
- Giving voice to the individual users of these institutions who can define the ways in which museums and libraries can better serve them.
- Asking questions in institutions, in communities, and at the national level that provoke discussion and action toward imagining the definitions and services of 21st-century libraries and museums, and determining what the role of these institutions is in the 21st century and how they can use their unique strengths and resources to bring value to society.

IMLS is committed to fostering continued dialogue about the future of libraries and museums in the 21st century in partnership with museum and library professionals and the organizations and networks that support them and their institutions. One of the primary components of this process will be the contribution of this community of individuals and institutions, who will determine the direction and impacts of these conversations.

In an effort to engage this community and spark dialogue that extends the conversation beyond a traditional publication format, IMLS will be launching an online forum for the greater museum and library community to participate in and expand the discussions which took place at the National Academies planning meeting. It seeks to broaden the discussion and facilitate greater exchange across the field concerning 21st-century issues, ideas, challenges, opportunities, and real-world examples of practice for museums and libraries. As this discussion progresses, IMLS will encourage participation through new resources and forums to facilitate strategic planning for the long-term future of museums and libraries.

“All museums and libraries can address the social issues related to their own structure and governance. How museums and libraries themselves are organized, how a wide range of visitors is accommodated both physically and intellectually, and how museums collaborate with their communities are all components of the social responsibility of these institutions.”

—George E. Hein, Professor Emeritus, Lesley University

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