



INSTITUTE *of*  
**Museum** *and* **Library**  
SERVICES

# **IMLS Strategic Plan FY 2007 - 2011**

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## **Introduction**

The nation's libraries and museums play an essential role in the educational and cultural life of our country. Every day millions of Americans benefit from the resources and experiences these institutions deliver. They are unmatched in their ability to complement formal education and to deliver informal learning experiences throughout a lifetime. As stewards of cultural heritage, information, and ideas, museums and libraries help spur innovation, exploration, and ingenuity. Increasingly they draw on the latest communications technologies to deliver high-quality information resources in every field and discipline and to reach audiences in new places and in new and interactive ways.

Studies have repeatedly shown that libraries and museums have the strongest public trust. Respected locally and nationally, they help create an informed and educated citizenry and create strong partnerships with families, community organizations, business, media, and educators.

## **Mission**

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), created ten years ago by merging two long-standing federal library and museum programs, is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 122,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Its mission is to work at the national level and in coordination with state and local organizations to enhance learning and innovation; to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge; and to strengthen the professional development of library and museum workers—in short, to connect people to information and ideas.

The Institute helps produce and disseminate the latest research about learning in the museum and library context. It helps the nation's libraries and museums offer unparalleled value to the public by creating important spaces for civic engagement, and by fueling knowledge sharing to energize our economy, creativity, and competitiveness. The Institute, with the insight and guidance of the National Museum and Library Services Board, provides leadership, data analysis, and funding to help libraries, museums, policy makers, and the American people keep the American ideal of open access to information and ideas flourishing.

## **Strategic Plan**

This Strategic Plan shows how the Institute can invest valuable federal resources to increase the capacity of libraries and museums to provide the highest quality service to the American people.

## **From Plan to Action**

The Strategic Plan guides the Institute's helps to ensure that all agency activities link directly to IMLS's mission, and goals. Implementation of this plan is the responsibility of all IMLS managers and staff. Annual metrics that track our progress will appear in the annual budget and the Performance and Accountability Report. The overall strategic goals and objectives are set by the Director of the Institute with the policy advice of the National Museum and

Library Services Board in consultation with the agency management and with guidance from the Office of Management and Budget and Congress. Future activities will be assessed based upon their alignment with strategic goals, available budget as well as the potential to leverage collaboration and funding.

## **IMLS Statutory Role**

The Museum and Library Services Act authorizes the Institute to

- promote improvements in library services in all types of libraries in order to better serve the people of the United States;
- facilitate access to resources and in all types of libraries for the purpose of cultivating an educated and informed citizenry;
- encourage resource sharing among all types of libraries for the purpose of achieving economical and efficient delivery of library services to the public;
- encourage and support museums in carrying out their public service role of connecting the whole society to cultural, artistic, historic, natural, and scientific understandings that constitute our heritage;
- encourage and support museums in carrying out their educational role, as core providers of learning and in conjunction with schools, families, and communities;
- encourage leadership, innovation, and applications of the most current technologies and practices to enhance museum services;
- assist, encourage, and support museums in carrying out their stewardship responsibilities to achieve the highest standards in conservation and care of the cultural historic, natural, and scientific heritage of the United States to benefit future generations;
- assist, encourage, and support museums in achieving the highest standards of management and service to the public, and to ease the financial burden borne by museums as a result of their increasing use by the public;
- support resource sharing and partnerships among museums, libraries, schools, and other community organizations; and
- carry out and publish analyses of the impact of museum and library services.

## **Values**

As the Institute of Museum and Library Services, we are

- leaders;
- dedicated to excellence;
- broadly inclusive; and
- accountable.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Strategies**

In this period IMLS will work to further the Administration's efforts in four essential areas:

- I. Sustaining Heritage, Culture, and Knowledge through Libraries and Museums
- II. Enhancing Learning and Innovation in Museums and Libraries
- III. Building Professional Capacity in Libraries and Museums
- IV. Increasing the Agency's Administrative Capacity for Excellence

## **I. Sustaining Heritage, Culture and Knowledge through Libraries and Museums**

Our nation's museums and libraries serve as stewards of our cultural and intellectual heritage. Their collections illustrate, interpret, and embody the great events, ideas, and individuals that contribute to America's history and culture. These irreplaceable resources help us understand, experience, explore, discover, and make sense of the world. Collectively, through their collections and the services they build around them, museums and libraries tell our nation's story and ensure that knowledge is passed on to future generations.

Unfortunately, collections are highly vulnerable to loss due to deterioration, theft, and natural and manmade disasters. Virtual resources are susceptible not only to physical destruction, but to loss through technology change.

The Institute helped fund 2005's A Public Trust at Risk: The Heritage Health Index Report, the first study to document the preservation needs of collections in museums, libraries, and archives, which shows that roughly 190 million objects held by archives, historical societies, libraries, museums, and scientific organizations are in need of conservation treatment; that 65 percent of collecting institutions have collections damaged by storage in environments that expedite deterioration; that 80 percent of institutions have no current plan to protect collections in the face of emergency or calamity; and that 40 percent of collecting institutions allocate no funds in their annual budgets for preservation or conservation.

In this period IMLS will increase attention to address the perilous state of museum and library collections. In FY 07, IMLS will launch a series of national and regional conservation summits and initiatives to build a national preservation and conservation initiative. Targeted grants, activities, and learning resources will enable museums and libraries to create protective storage environments, develop emergency plans, build the corps of skilled staff, and dedicate funding for preservation. IMLS will continue to promote the role of digital technologies in stewardship of cultural heritage collections and to build strategies and solutions to ensure the preservation of digital resources.

Objective 1: Strengthen personnel capacity to manage conservation and preservation efforts in our nation's libraries and museums.

### Strategies:

- Expand the availability, efficiency, and effectiveness of strategies and choices for safeguarding collections.
- Build personnel skills for digital asset management, conservation, and preservation.
- Strengthen personnel skills in small to mid-sized institutions for collections management, preservation and conservation planning, and emergency practice at the

institution level.

Objective 2: Address high-priority needs identified by the Heritage Health Index.

Strategies:

- Enable museums, libraries, and archives to carry out collections-wide preservation and conservation planning, to treat identified high-priority problems, and to serve as national models and sources of information.
- Enable museums, libraries, and archives to plan for and implement risk reduction, emergency response, and recovery of collections.
- Support the development and creation of statewide disaster plans.

Objective 3: Galvanize attention and promote public-private partnerships to preserve the nation's collections.

Strategies:

- Convene national and regional summits to galvanize awareness of the condition of the nation's collections and the implications of their loss, and to develop plans to address the problem locally and nationally.
- Encourage and form partnerships at the federal, state, and local levels to address conservation and preservation needs.
- Build a program of public awareness activities.

## **II. Enhance Learning and Innovation in Museums and Libraries**

Learning is more important than ever for success in today's global economy. It includes in- and out-of-school learning; learning at all ages; and, in addition to basic mathematics, reading, and science, a new set of twenty-first-century skills that include creative problem solving, ability to work in teams, information literacy, and communication skills in multiple formats. Libraries and museums not only contribute to these necessities, they play an important role in efforts to build strong communities.

Over the past twenty years an explosion of research has shown how people learn, from infancy through the senior years. We know that children are never too young to learn and we know that lifelong learning extends the quantity and quality of life. We also know that a thriving competitive economy depends upon innovation and the opportunity to learn effectively not only in the classroom, but on the job and throughout one's lifetime.

Libraries and museums offer obvious and important resources for information and learning experiences to support this development, especially among the now-retiring "baby boomer" generation.

IMLS programs and activities are shaped to address learning needs for individuals, students, parents, and families across all types of communities through all types of museums and

libraries. IMLS grants, in particular National Leadership Grants, are intended to serve as models within the museum and library fields and at the local community level. The agency's funding will continue to support a broad range of programs, services, and research.

Objective 1: Increase the excellence, availability, and use of museum and library programs and services for learning.

Strategies:

- Strengthen local programming and services, and widen the adoption of effective practices to address identified national issues.
- Strengthen the ability of libraries and museums to increase their own knowledge and improve programs, and support local replication and adaptation of models that evaluation shows to be effective.
- Disseminate data on effective management and practice to strengthen learning through museum and library services.

Objective 2: Increase the number and variety of partnerships among museums, libraries, and other community entities

Strategies:

- Support collaborations to extend the impact of libraries and museums in meeting their communities' needs.
- Create new partnerships with federal agencies and non-governmental organizations to maximize federal support and serve as a model for good practice in collaboration.
- Support collaborations at the state level.

Objective 3: Increase the number of museums and libraries that use contemporary technology tools to deliver programs and services

Strategies:

- Help library and museum staff to adopt new technologies, particularly for improving management, operations, and services in small to mid-sized museums.
- Support research and demonstration to develop new tools and services to increase online access to collections.
- Develop models to allow seamless digital searching across library and museum collections.

Objective 4: Strengthen technology competencies across and within all community segments.

Strategies:

- Support research and demonstration to expand tools and services that address contemporary learning needs.

- Develop a digital readiness assessment program to help small to mid-sized libraries and museums establish or strengthen digital collection programs.
- Strengthen knowledge for effective management of Grants to State Library Agencies.

### **III. Building Professional Capacity in Libraries and Museums**

Training a twenty-first-century library and museum workforce is a top priority for the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Both the library and museum sectors face impending retirements in the baby boom generation. In addition, the rapidly changing environment of the knowledge society, the possibilities provided by new technologies, the increasing diversity of the population, and the need to demonstrate public value and accountability, require an expanding portfolio of skills for library and museum professionals at every level.

IMLS will continue to build leadership capacity by supporting the development of a highly skilled workforce in libraries and museums, particularly through the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian program and the 21st Century Museum Professionals program. IMLS also spurs innovation, supports diversity, and strengthens expertise for design and management of library and museum service.

Objective 1: Strengthen skills and knowledge of museum and library personnel for management, program design, partnership, planning, and leadership.

#### Strategies:

- Strengthen skills of existing library and museum personnel at all levels.
- Expand the leadership pool of library and museum personnel.
- Increase collaboration and build collaboration skills.
- Develop educational programs to meet the specific needs of Native American, Native Hawaiian, and African-American culture through eligible museums, libraries, cultural centers.

Objective 2: Increase the number of people who undertake formal education and internships in libraries and museums.

#### Strategies:

- Support recruitment and education at the library and information science master's and doctoral levels.
- Support the recruitment and professional development of museum personnel.
- Support innovative learning programs such as internships and exchanges to increase the availability of skilled museum and library staff.

Objective 3: Increase the diversity of staff in the library and museum fields.

#### Strategies:

- Partner with national museums, federal agencies, and national professional organizations to support recruitment and professional development to increase diversity in museum and library employment.
- Build leadership and skills necessary to address the current and future needs of museums and libraries to reflect and serve the increasing diversity of the nation. Support historically black colleges and universities to develop knowledge and skills to preserve and share African American history and culture through internships.

#### **IV. Increase Administrative Capacity for Excellence**

At the direction of the Office of Management and Budget in FY 08, IMLS will incorporate the policy advice role and other activities of the National Commission on Library and Information Sciences and will assume the Public Library and State Library Statistics Programs of the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics. In this period IMLS will also pilot statistical collections for the nation's museums, an essential element to meet its responsibility to assess and report the national impact of museum services.

Objective 1: Achieve the highest level of excellence in federal management, operations, and service.

##### Strategies:

- Continue to build IMLS staff expertise and service to the museum, library, and related communities.
- Make full use of the knowledge and expertise of the members of the National Museum and Library Services Board.
- Maintain and improve the Institute's peer review process for competitive grant programs.
- Maintain and improve the Institute's oversight of Grants to State Library Agencies, including online assistance, site visits, and regularly conferences.
- Streamline application and award management through transition to Grants Management Line of Business; develop human capital to maximize use of these systems and to assist applicants and grantees in their use.
- Continue to improve IT operations.
- Expand resources and technical assistance to support high-quality planning and evaluation for grantee organizations.
- Evaluate IMLS programs on a regular basis, apply findings to program improvements, and share models to improve practice.

Objective 2: Become the key source of information for and about museum and library service to support strong policy decision-making at all levels.

##### Strategies:

- Explore desirability, feasibility, and structures needed for a state-based formula grant program for museums.

- Continue the consolidation of information policy and library statistics.
- Explore desirability, feasibility, and structures needed for a museum statistics program.
- Gather, analyze, and broadly disseminate data about key museum and library needs, trends, and developments.
- Disseminate models of best practice and analysis of library and museum services.
- Develop resources to strengthen museum and library practice and project management.

Objective 3: Achieve high levels of customer satisfaction.

Strategy:

- Gather, aggregate, and analyze customer satisfaction data from the museum and library fields, and apply findings to improve IMLS programs and services.