

MUSEUM COMPUTER NETWORK

MCN Strategic Plan for 2007–2010

January 2007

Executive Summary

The Museum Computer Network's (MCN) *Strategic Plan for 2007–2010* reflects a re-examination of MCN's role in museums and in the larger cultural heritage community. Faced with an ever-changing membership and a technology arena that both challenges and invigorates cultural institutions, MCN is addressing questions that go to the core of its mission and activities. *Who* is MCN's audience? *Whom* can it serve best? And *how* can it best serve them?

The *Strategic Plan for 2007–2010* addresses these questions by redefining MCN's purpose through revised mission and vision statements. To better align the organization with its purpose, the Plan focuses on the following six strategic areas:

Leadership: Steps are outlined for making MCN leadership more effective, for enhancing Board/member communications, and for more effectively recruiting members into leadership positions.

MCN's Niche: MCN's role with its membership, with other cultural heritage organizations, and with the field of museum information work is clarified and expanded. Measures are outlined to diversify membership, leverage strengths with other allied organizations, and actively foster professionalization in the field.

Services: Strategies are proposed for expanding member services without overburdening the MCN volunteer base. Methods for solidifying and strengthening current programs are detailed.

Finances: Financial planning and management will be strengthened to provide long-term fiscal stability and allow for the expansion of programs and services.

Administration and Management: MCN's decentralized operations will be clarified and made more transparent so that administration and management can be streamlined to yield greater efficiencies.

Membership: Member needs will be re-examined and strategies will be developed for effectively meeting these needs. Steps are outlined for making membership in the organization more vital and engaged.

These strategic areas are addressed in the Plan through a series of goals, recommendations, and action items that are specific to each area. The Plan concludes with a procedure for oversight, administration, and review of all action items proposed.

The MCN *Strategic Plan for 2007–2010* is a work in progress. MCN's Board welcomes comments from the membership and seeks its advice on ways to refine the Strategic Plan to make the organization more effective in helping museums embrace technology in creative, cost-effective, and mission-fulfilling ways.

Introduction

The Museum Computer Network (MCN) is pleased to present the organization's *Strategic Plan for 2007–2010*. The Plan reflects a re-examination of MCN's role in museums and the larger cultural heritage community. Its timing is fortuitous: having emerged from a period of fiscal challenges, MCN can look optimistically into the future at a time when culture and technology are intersecting in exciting and unexpected ways.

Strategic planning is first and foremost a process. For MCN, the process began with the Board of Directors, who reviewed the organization's history and present status, and then assessed its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities. Based on this assessment, the Board developed a set of goals and action items that are outlined in this Plan.

The Strategic Plan has gone through many drafts to reach its present state. It will continue to evolve as circumstances develop that require MCN to be flexible about how it achieves the goals and priorities outlined here.

MCN thanks its membership, its past and present Board members, and its partners in the cultural heritage community for their support of the organization and its strategic planning process. Ultimately the Strategic Plan will make MCN more effective at helping museums embrace technology in creative, cost-effective, and mission-fulfilling ways.

Strategic Directions

The Museum Computer Network's mission and purpose have changed many times in its history. Founded in 1967 as an organization of art museums dedicated to creating a union catalog of art museum objects, MCN has also been a system developer ("GRIPHOS"), as well as a software user group. Its current incarnation—as a membership association of individuals and institutions interested in all aspects of technology in museums—emerged in the mid-1980s.

Today the organization is at a crossroads in terms of the communities whose interests intersect with those of traditional MCN members. Recent conferences and activities have included not only museum professionals but also many librarians, archivists, lawyers, and educators. These changes present MCN with a number of central questions: *Who* is MCN's audience? *Whom* can it serve best? And *how* can it best serve them?

Mission Statement

The Museum Computer Network (MCN) supports the greater museum community by providing continuing opportunities to explore, implement, and disseminate new technologies and best practices.

- MCN is an international nonprofit membership organization.
- Since 1967, MCN has been a leader in helping museums incorporate technology into all aspects of museum operations.
- Members have diverse and complementary interests, and include collections managers, web specialists, new media developers, information technology managers, other museum technologists, registrars, system developers, visual resources and imaging professionals, individuals from digital technology industries, cultural policy makers, intellectual property specialists, educators, archivists, librarians, and other professionals in allied fields.

Vision Statement

The Museum Computer Network strives to enable collaborations that explore new technologies and their applications in the museum community. We seek to leverage our decades of experience to foster discussion, learning, and sharing among an international community of museum professionals who work at the intersection of technology and information.

We recognize that museum professionals need new and continually evolving skill sets to successfully consider and implement technology in their institutions, and we will provide programs and opportunities for learning and experimentation to help fill this need. We will be responsive to the fast-paced and ever-changing technology environment and make it our duty to introduce, mediate, and interpret emerging trends. We will serve as a professional resource for individuals facing institutional technology mandates. Furthermore, we will use our respected role in the museum community to work as a facilitator and trusted partner with other communities wishing to address cross-disciplinary issues.

We will collaborate with other professional associations, educational institutions, and international forums to develop, define, and advance the emerging profession of museum information work. In all our endeavors, we will strive for open dialogue, flexibility, and timeliness to serve our constituency and the broader cultural heritage community of which we are a part.

Strategic Areas

To fulfill its mission and achieve its vision, MCN will focus on six strategic areas which are key to the organization's success. These areas are:

- Leadership
- MCN's Niche
- Services
- Finances
- Administration and Management
- Membership

A series of goals, action items, and time frames has been identified for each strategic area. Action items have been assigned to individual(s), committee(s), and group(s) that are charged with their implementation. Readers will note that many action items address specific changes in procedure rather than broad actions. While seemingly mundane, these specific changes are critical for the organization to effectively implement its goals.

Crosscutting all six strategic areas are the common themes of enhancing communication, transparency, and reporting throughout the organization. Goals and action items consistently address the need for MCN to communicate more frequently and effectively, to increase accountability, to clarify reporting structures, and to make the organization more engaged with its membership.

1. LEADERSHIP

Context: MCN Board Members have long conducted the day-to-day work of the organization, resulting in little time and energy to plan the “big picture,” develop new programs, pursue fertile collaborations, and serve the organization in a traditional leadership capacity. It has been difficult to recruit new members to Board and other leadership positions in the association, in part because leadership roles and responsibilities have never been adequately defined. To change these circumstances, the role and activities of the Board need to be reconsidered. MCN must engage its membership in the activities of the organization in a way that will encourage more members to take up leadership positions. Board Members, Committee Chairs, and all others who work on behalf of the organization must be empowered to perform their duties and they, in turn, must be more open in their activities and communicate more frequently within MCN’s leadership structure.

Goal 1: Shift the Board’s focus towards visionary planning, oversight, and guidance, and away from day-to-day administration.

Recommendations:

1. Increase Board efficiency in the following ways:
 - a. Focus Board conference calls on two or three key topics or issues. To foster greater communication between the Board and the membership, and to get more member input on issues facing the Board, include relevant non-Board members (e.g., SIG or Committee Chairs) in all calls that involve issues or activities relevant to their constituencies and work.
 - b. Focus all Board meetings on action items, the Strategic Plan and its milestones, and the long-term vision of the organization.
2. Move routine administrative tasks undertaken by the Board either to a new staff position or to MCN’s association management company. (See section “5. Administration and Management” for further elaboration on this recommendation.)
3. Review all positions of leadership within MCN: specifically, review current job description for each position, identify levels of expertise needed, clarify reporting structures, and develop new job description for each leadership role.
4. Establish a Leadership Development Committee, to be chaired by the Vice President of the Board, to recruit new Board members and to develop/encourage committee chairs and members from within the ranks.

Action Items for Executive Committee

- Conduct the work outlined in the above recommendations. (Early 2007 and ongoing)

Specifically:

- Evaluate and revise all job descriptions and make recommendations to the Board for changes (including tasks that should be transferred to the association management company).
- Oversee implementation of Board-approved job descriptions (April 2007), including:
 - Adding this information to the New Board Member guide
 - Posting information to the website
 - Recruiting non-Board members for new or open Committee positions (via the Web and MCN-L).

Action Items for Board Vice President/Leadership Development Committee Chair

- Select a slate of candidates for the Leadership Development Committee from current and past Board members. (February 2007)
- Submit the slate to the Board for their approval. (March 2007)
- Convene the Leadership Development Committee and lead it in fulfilling its mandate (Recommendation 4). (April 2007 and ongoing)

Action Items for Board

- Establish a Leadership Development Committee consisting of candidates recommended by the Vice President of the Board, with the Board's assistance. (March 2007)
- In consultation with the Finance Committee and MCN's association management company (and after section "5. Administration and Management, Goal 1, Recommendation 1" has been completed), review the list of administrative tasks that should be moved to a position of staff assistant or to the association management company. (Spring 2008)

Action Items for Committee Chairs, SIG Chairs, and other non-Board positions

- Write job descriptions for their respective positions and submit these descriptions to the President. (Immediately)

Goal 2: Develop new ways to recruit members into leadership positions within the organization.

Recommendations:

1. Identify better ways to “recruit through the ranks” by examining how other organizations mentor potential leaders and encourage members to take on leadership positions.
2. Diversify the Board by drawing candidates from a larger pool of individuals representing the full range of museum categories (i.e., history, natural history, anthropology, science, etc.) as well as from professional communities whose interests crosscut those of the museum community.
3. Incorporate the new Board job descriptions (see Goal 1, Recommendation 3 above) into the nominations process for new Board Members.

Action Item for Nominating Committee

- Incorporate the revised Board job descriptions into the nominations process for new Board Members. (Beginning with the recruitment of the 2007 Board slate)

Action Items for Leadership Development Committee

- Examine how other organizations mentor potential leaders and attract newcomers to leadership positions. (2007)
- Identify new recruitment strategies and implement them. (2008)

Goal 3: Improve communication between Board Members and the membership.

Recommendations:

1. Provide members access to regular Board meeting minutes and Committee reports to the membership.
2. Ensure that all MCN-related work uses the organization’s technological infrastructure as needed. Those who work on behalf of the organization should make use of password-protected areas of the MCN website, listserv, wiki, survey account, existing conference calling capabilities, etc.

Action Items for Board Secretary

- Post official versions of all Board minutes on the “Members-only” section of the website. (After in-person Board meeting, Spring 2007 and ongoing)
- Post all Board minutes of meetings and conference calls on the MCN Board wiki. (Immediately)

2. MCN'S NICHE

Context: The past decade has witnessed a transformation in the arena of cultural heritage and digital technologies. During this tumultuous period, many organizations representing the broad interests of the cultural heritage community have proved unsustainable. Yet, in the wake of these setbacks, many positive developments also have emerged. Formerly disparate communities—such as those comprising libraries, archives, and museums—began pursuing common goals, resulting in new attempts to leverage efforts and foster collaboration. Grant agencies and foundations, previously slow to recognize digitization issues in the cultural heritage community, are now actively supporting such efforts. MCN will reassess its role in this changing environment and refocus its efforts on its core community of museums, which continues to have inadequate representation in the larger library, archive, and museum arena.

Goal 1: Refocus the organization on its core museum constituency, but diversify this constituency to include a broader range of museum categories.

Recommendations:

1. Provide conference scholarships that encourage participation by individuals from diverse types of museums.
2. Undertake aggressive outreach to museums currently under-represented in the organization by:
 - a. Using personal connections between Board members and known individuals from natural history, history, science, anthropology, living history, and other types of museums to get input into how MCN can serve particular types of museums.
 - b. Diversifying contributions to the Musematic blog (<http://www.musematic.net>) by including writers representing different types of museums.
 - c. Developing conference sessions that focus on similarities/distinctions in technology needs and uses in different types of museums.
 - d. Working with the Small Museum SIG to develop concrete ways to engage individuals in small museums.
 - e. Reviewing possible collaborations with the American Association of Museums' (AAM) Standing Professional Committees (SPCs), Professional Interest Committees (PICs), and Council of Affiliates.

Action Item for President

- Oversee association-wide institutional diversity efforts, coordinating with various committees about targets and activities to ensure continuity and reduce duplication of efforts. (2007 and ongoing)

Action Items for Board

- Contact individuals in non-art museums to identify ways in which MCN can serve their specific types of museums. (Early 2007)
- Communicate the results of these discussions to the entire Board (mid-2007); review ideas and implement action plans for follow-up. (2008 and ongoing)

Action Item for Blog Committee

- Identify representatives from distinct types of museums to write specifically about their unique information and technology needs on the blog. (Immediately, and at ongoing intervals)

Action Item for Scholarship Committee

- Identify scholarship opportunities that will increase conference participation by individuals from different types of museums; work with the Finance Committee and others (as necessary) to identify ways to fund these additional scholarships. (2007)

Action Item for Conference Program Committee

- Develop and solicit sessions that focus on similarities/distinctions in technology needs and uses in different types of museums. (2007 and ongoing)

Action Item for Board SIG Liaison

- Work with the Small Museum SIG Chair and its members to develop concrete ways in which MCN can assist small museums (2007); report results to the Board. (Post-conference 2007)

Action Item for AAM Media and Technology Liaison

- Contact heads of AAM SPCs and other AAM Committees to discuss possible collaborations with their constituencies (May 2007 in conjunction with the AAM annual conference, and ongoing); report back to the Board on possible opportunities. (Summer 2007 and ongoing)

Goal 2: Clarify MCN’s role vis-à-vis other organizations, and collaborate strategically with organizations to leverage strengths and reduce redundant efforts.

Recommendations:

1. Identify organizations that MCN should work with more closely
 - a. Explore the possibility of pre-conference workshops with other organizations (e.g., AAM or other national or regional conferences)
2. Conduct a joint meeting between MCN and AAM’s Media and Technology SPC Boards to discuss each group’s focus, and where it could best put its resources and efforts.

Action Item for Executive Committee

- Identify and prioritize opportunities for collaborating with allied organizations.

Action Item for AAM Media and Technology Liaison

- Contact the President of AAM’s Media and Technology SPC to arrange for a joint meeting of Board members from both groups; oversee and implement meeting arrangements; oversee findings and their implementation. (May 2008 and ongoing)

Action Item for Board

- Identify duties for the Program Committee that extend its focus beyond conference programming, including collaborating with other organizations on pre-conference workshops at their conferences. (2007)

Goal 3: Increase the professionalization of the field.

Recommendations:

1. Address the technology skill sets that museum information professionals need by developing a series of sessions on this theme at both MCN and other professional conferences.
2. Conduct “due diligence” to see what other efforts are being undertaken to professionalize the field.
3. Survey current MCN and AAM Media and Technology SPC membership to identify where these members received their technology training.
4. Assess the results of all these efforts (Recommendations 1–3) to develop a grant-fundable project that furthers professionalization of the field.

Action Item for Program Committee

- Develop a panel session on professionalization for the MCN conference (2007)

Action Items for Ad Hoc Committee on Professionalization

- With the Media and Technology Liaison, develop a session on professionalization for museum information professionals at the AAM conference. (2008)
- Identify what other efforts are underway in the community to professionalize the field of museum information work. (2007)
- Survey MCN and AAM Media and Technology SPC members to identify where they received their technology training. (2007)
- Consider developing a themed conference on professionalization. (2009)

Action Item for AAM Media and Technology Liaison

- Coordinate the development of a session on professionalization for the AAM conference (with the Media and Technology SPC). (2008)

Action Item for Development and Marketing Committee

- Explore what the results of these Recommendations reveal about professionalization of the field. Identify possible areas MCN can pursue to foster professionalization, and how these areas could be developed into grant fundable proposals. Submit a report on various grant ideas to the Board. (2010)

3. SERVICES

Context: Over the years MCN's services have included conferences, workshops, print and electronic publications, special programs, and informational contacts for members. MCN's ability to provide and expand its services has been limited by the volunteer nature of the organization, fiscal uncertainties, and a decentralized management and administration structure. Providing new services requires carefully identifying members' needs and prioritizing them within the broader context of workloads, sustainability, and current services.

Goal 1: Provide greater opportunity for member engagement.

Recommendations:

1. Develop and implement MCN mentoring program.
 - a. Survey members about the mentoring opportunities they would like to see in place.
2. Engage the SIGs in more advisory capacities and request their assistance with MCN work that falls within their special interest purview.

Action Items for Membership Committee

- Advertise all MCN positions to the membership (2007 and ongoing) and recruit non-board members to fill more committee positions (2008 and ongoing).
- Identify new mentoring opportunities for the membership. (2008–2009)

Action Item for Metrics and Evaluation SIG

- Work with various Committee Chairs and Board Members to identify opportunities to solicit member feedback. (2007 and ongoing)

Action Item for Board

- With the SIG Liaison, identify areas where individual SIGs can be engaged in a more advisory and active capacity for the organization. (2007 and ongoing)
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Goal 2: Evaluate and optimize all electronic services (i.e., the website, blog, listserv).

Recommendations:

1. Assess the current state of all electronic services. Consider their present status, their maintenance needs and costs (human and financial), and how they can be refined or

enhanced with additional resources. Also consider whether their current administration can be undertaken more efficiently.

- a. Begin this assessment with an evaluation and review of the current website and hosting services.
2. Include website content and functionality questions on annual member survey.
3. Conduct user testing of electronic resources.
4. Conduct a survey of online resources offered by various organizations to gain insight into how other organizations serve their membership via their websites.

Action Items for Ad Hoc Joint Committee on Electronic Services

- Ensure that MCN’s technological infrastructure adequately supports Board, Committee and other member needs for conducting organizational business. (Immediately and ongoing)
- Work with Metrics and Evaluation SIG to incorporate website content and functionality questions on the annual member survey. (2007)
- Conduct a survey of online resources offered by other organizations to gain insights into how they serve their members via these technologies. (2008)
- Conduct an assessment of all electronic services. (2007–2009)
- Report results and recommendations to the full Board. (2009)

Action Item for Board SIG Liaison

- Discuss with the Metrics and Evaluation SIG the need for the SIG’s assistance in helping MCN test and evaluate its electronic resources. Coordinate this process with the ME SIG Chair. (Mid-2007)

Goal 3: Enhance relationships with vendors.

Recommendation:

1. Identify new ideas for the conference Exhibit Hall.

Action Items for Development and Marketing Committee

- Work with the current marketing consultant or management association to document marketing efforts conducted with vendors on behalf of MCN. (Immediately)

- Develop links to vendors and services on the MCN website. (2008)
 - Continue to identify new ideas for the conference Exhibit Hall and report on ideas to the Board. (2007–2008)
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Goal 4: Bring greater continuity to the conference program.

Recommendations:

1. Formalize the duties of the conference planning committee, which includes the Conference Chair, Conference Vice-Chair, Program Chair, Program Vice Chair, Local Arrangements Chair, Publicity Chair, Silent Auction Chair, and Workshop Chair.
2. Review the conference planning committee structure to ensure that all necessary functions have chairs overseeing them.

Action Items for Conference Planning Committee

- Review job descriptions for all conference committee positions noted above in Recommendation 1 and submit them to the President and Executive Committee. (Immediately)
- Select the first slate of candidates for these positions and submit it to the Board. (2007)
- Post-2007, advise the Board on the selection of candidates from among all applicants. (2008 and yearly thereafter)

Action Item for Board Executive Committee

- Review conference committee structure in light of newly established Programs/Education Committee. (2007)

4. FINANCES

Context: Like many nonprofit organizations, MCN has experienced periods of fiscal soundness and periods of deficits. Historically, its operating income has come from grants, membership and conference fees, and occasional donations, but there has never been a business plan that considers sustainability and finances over the long term. More financial planning is needed to provide fiscal stability and to create funds that can be used to expand the organization's programs and services.

Goal 1: Improve financial planning and management.

Recommendation:

1. Establish a Finance Committee to set financial policies and procedures, develop a business plan, and share accountability with the Treasurer.

Action Items for Board Treasurer

- Select a slate of individuals for the Finance Committee who are knowledgeable about budgetary processes, finance, and administration. (Immediately)
- Submit the slate to the Board for approval. (Immediately)
- After Board approval, convene the Finance Committee to begin addressing the mandate outlined in Goal 1, Recommendation 1, above. (Early 2007)

Action Item for Board

- Vote on proposed candidates for the Finance Committee. (Immediately after the slate of candidates is received from the Treasurer)
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Goal 2: Establish a cash reserve equal to one year's operating expenses.

Recommendations:

1. Create reserves fund in a separate, interest-bearing account with access restricted to limited representatives of the organization.
2. Allocate \$30,000 from 2006 fiscal operations to the reserves fund.
3. Contribute 10% of the annual operating budget to the reserves fund every year until reserves fund reaches the equivalent of one year's operating expenses (presently \$200,000).

4. Create policies and procedures for when and how monies can be withdrawn from the reserves fund.

Action Items for Board Treasurer

- Set up a reserves account and direct initial monies (\$30,000) from 2006 fiscal operations into the account. (Immediately)
- Contribute 10% of annual operating budget into account each year until reserves are equal to one year's operating expenses (presently \$200,000). (2007, and yearly thereafter)

Action Items for Finance Committee

- Develop policies and procedures for withdrawing funds from the reserves. (Mid-2007)
- Submit proposed policies/procedures to the Board for approval. (Late 2007)

Action Item for Board

- Review and vote on the Finance Committee's proposed policies on withdrawals from the reserves fund. (Late 2007, Fall Board Meeting)

Goal 3: Increase alternative revenue sources to reduce dependence on conference income.

Recommendations:

1. Increase advertising sales.
2. Conduct a feasibility study to see if the organization should consider selling items from its website.
3. Investigate the possibility of different fundraising endeavors such as an annual fund drive and bequests.

Action Items for Finance Committee

- Work with Executive Committee and conference personnel to evaluate 2006 conference marketing strategy. (Post 2006 conference)
- Based on the above evaluation, identify ways to sell more advertising and discover new marketing sources. (Late 2006 / Early 2007)

Action Items for Development and Marketing Committee

- Investigate the feasibility of different fundraising endeavors such as an annual fund drive, bequests, etc. (2009–2010)
 - Oversee a study to determine the feasibility of selling items from the website (mid-2008); present results to the Board (Fall 2008 Board meeting).
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Goal 4: Continue to control conference expenses.

Recommendations:

1. Select conference venues that are attractive but relatively inexpensive.
2. Determine whether the conference registration fee can be reduced.
3. Depending on results of Goal 3, work with additional personnel (as necessary) to increase conference sponsorships and the number of vendors in the conference Exhibit Hall as a way to offset conference costs.
4. Identify and “lock in” conference venues two to three years in advance in order to secure lower rates for future conferences.

Action Item for Finance Committee

- Identify ways to increase conference sponsorships and other sources of conference revenue. (Immediately and ongoing)

Action Items for Conference Committee

- Identify conference venues that meet the criteria of being relatively inexpensive but attractive for MCN members. (2007 and ongoing)
- Working with other conference personnel, identify host cities and contract with hotels with two to three years’ lead time. (2007 and ongoing)

Action Item for Board

- Reconsider the conference registration fee in light of comparable fees and the organization’s success in procuring new sources of conference sponsorship that offset existing conference costs; work with the Membership Committee to assess these findings in light of their own research about member benefits. (2007 and ongoing)

Goal 5. Create funds for conference scholarships.

Recommendations:

1. Dedicate all Silent Auction proceeds to a scholarship fund with the goal of contributing \$1200 to the fund from the 2007 Silent Auction.
2. Promote the Silent Auction as a scholarship fundraising event to generate more interest and potential contributions.
3. Contact vendors about sponsoring conference scholarships.

Action Items for Scholarship Committee

- Work with the Silent Auction Chair to promote the Silent Auction as a scholarship fundraising endeavor. (2007 and ongoing)
- Work with the Development and Marketing Committee to solicit scholarship sponsorship from vendors. (2007 and ongoing)

Action Item for Board

- Earmark all Silent Auction proceeds for scholarships. (Immediately)

5. ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

Context: MCN's management and administration is highly decentralized: the work of the organization is conducted by a number of individuals on the Board of Directors, in Committees, among various active members, and by the employees of a professional association management firm. This decentralized structure emerged with little planning and foresight, resulting in a situation where both MCN's operations and the responsibilities of individuals are not clearly defined. To clarify the state of its operations, MCN needs to review all its projects, programs, and tasks in order to increase operational transparency and efficiency, clarify expectations, identify stakeholders, and elucidate the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the work of the organization. It also must establish a history of Board activity that new Board members can build upon and that provides the organization with a level of continuity and institutional "memory." With this knowledge in hand, MCN will be in a better position to initiate new programs in a sustainable manner.

Goal 1. Continue to refine an operations matrix that can be used as a planning tool for the organization.

Recommendations:

1. Develop a mechanism for periodic review and refinement of the operations matrix.
2. Use the matrix as a planning tool when considering new initiatives, or when discontinuing current projects, programs, or tasks.

Action Items for Ad Hoc Committee on Administration and Management

- Develop initial drafts of the operations matrix until it has reached a state where it accurately depicts MCN's current operations. During this process, gather input from the entire Board, the association management company, Committee and SIG Chairs, and all others who work on MCN projects. (Immediately, through 2007)
- When the matrix has reached a state of maturity, identify administrative tasks that should be turned over to the association management company, outsourced, or given to other paid staff. Present this task list to the Board for its review. (Early 2008)
- Relinquish long-term maintenance of the operations matrix to the Board Secretary. (Early 2008)

Action Items for Board Secretary

- After the Administration and Management Working Group has refined the matrix (as stated above), assume responsibility for oversight of the matrix, including:
- Revising the matrix accordingly whenever a new project, program, or task is initiated or discontinued. (Early 2008 and ongoing)
- Initiating and overseeing a bi-yearly review and update of the entire matrix. (2010 and in alternate years thereafter)

Action Items for Board

- Review and vote on the various administrative tasks (identified by the Administration and Management Working Group [as noted above]) that should be transferred to either the association management company or other paid staff. (Early 2008 at Spring Board Meeting)
- Submit the final list of such tasks to the association management company for a cost quote. (Early 2008 after Spring Board Meeting)
- Vote on the Finance Committee's recommendations for the most cost-effective way to handle the administrative tasks that MCN would like to offload. (Late 2008 at Fall Board Meeting)

Action Item for Association Management Company

- Develop an estimate of costs should the company assume additional administrative tasks on behalf of MCN. Deliver the cost estimate to the Finance Committee Chair. (April 2008)

Action Item for Finance Committee

- Review the cost estimate from the association management company. Conduct a cost comparison of the value of transferring various administrative tasks to the association management company versus alternatives such as outsourcing or independently hiring staff to assume this work. Make recommendations to the Board on how to proceed. (Summer 2008)

Goal 2: Make the work of the organization more transparent to the membership.

Recommendations:

1. Post all MCN job openings on the MCN website and on MCN-L.

2. Include more information in the “About Us” section of the website (e.g., what the Committees are and what they do, who their current members are, etc.).
3. Add more information to the “Members Only” section of the website (e.g., public versions of Board meeting minutes, conference Business Meeting minutes, Committee meeting reports, results of member surveys, etc.).
4. Allow for more seamless member feedback via an interactive comment form on the website.
5. Make the Strategic Plan accessible to the membership by:
 - a. Regularly updating the website with information about the planning process.
 - b. Providing feedback opportunities for members via the blog, the website, the listserv, etc.

Action Items for all Committee and SIG Chairs

- Provide public versions of all Committee and SIG meeting minutes to the Board Secretary within three weeks of each meeting. (Immediately and ongoing)
- Send all MCN job postings to the Board Secretary two weeks prior to the desired “post” date. (Immediately and ongoing)
- Once an MCN job posting has been placed on the MCN website, the Committee or SIG Chair is to post the announcement on MCN-L. (Ongoing)
- Work with the Web Editor to add more information about the work of each MCN Committee and SIG to the website. (Mid-2007 and ongoing)

Action Items for Board Secretary

- Post proposed public versions of Committee and SIG meeting minutes and proposed MCN job postings to the Board wiki for review.
- If there is no comment within a reasonable period of time (normally one week), send reports or job postings to the Web Editor for posting on the appropriate portion of the website. (Immediately and ongoing)

Action Items for Web Editor

- Post all Committee and SIG reports and MCN job descriptions received from the Board Secretary to the appropriate sections of the MCN website. (Immediately and ongoing)

- Notify the appropriate Committee or SIG Chair when her or his report or job posting is on the website. (Immediately and ongoing)
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Goal 3: Improve MCN's operating efficiency.

Recommendations:

1. Review and re-evaluate all Committee descriptions. Where necessary, merge, streamline, add, or discontinue Committees.
2. Develop an organizational chart for the association, based upon revised job and Committee descriptions.
3. Increase accountability and communication between Committees, SIGs, and the Board by creating a formal reporting process between Committees/SIGs and the Board that coincides with the Board's semiannual meetings.
 - a. All Committee chairs are to submit reports on their work to the Secretary of the Board two weeks prior to the Board's semiannual meetings.
 - b. All SIG chairs are to submit reports on their work to the SIG Liaison two weeks prior to the Board's semiannual meetings.
 - c. The Board will review all Committee and SIG reports prior to its semiannual Board meetings and respond, in writing, to Committee and SIG Chairs with follow-up questions, action items, or other tasks the Board wishes to charge to a Committee or ask a SIG to take on.

Action Item for SIG Chairs

- Submit written reports of SIG work to the Board prior to each Board meeting. Reports must outline the SIG's purpose, activities over the past six months, projected activities over the next six months, and any SIG issues that require Board action. (Ongoing, two weeks prior to each Spring and Fall Board meeting)

Action Items for Committee Chairs

- Write descriptions of their respective Committees, to include each Committee's purpose and goals, members, tasks, work accomplished to date, work in progress (with projected completion dates), and ad-hoc or ongoing nature. (Immediately)
- Send Committee descriptions to the Board Secretary. (Immediately)
- Submit written reports of Committee work to the Board prior to each Board meeting. Reports must outline the Committee's purpose, members, activities over the past six

months, projected activities over the next six months, and any Committee issues that require Board action. (Ongoing, two weeks prior to each Spring and Fall Board meeting)

Action Items for SIG Liaison

- Oversee the SIG description review process by informing SIG Chairs of the need to check their SIG mission statements and update them as needed, then following up and collecting all descriptions. (Early to mid-2007)
- Notify all SIG Chairs at least one month in advance that their semiannual reports to the Board are due two weeks prior to the Board's semiannual meeting. Collect all SIG reports, issue reminders to SIGs that are late in reporting, and post reports to the Board wiki for review. (Immediately and ongoing)

Action Items for Board Secretary

- Oversee the Committee description review process, from informing Committee Chairs of the need to develop Committee descriptions, to following up and collecting all descriptions. (Early to mid-2007)
- Create an ad-hoc review committee to evaluate Committee descriptions and make recommendations to the Board. (Fall 2007)
- Oversee implementation of Board-approved Committee descriptions (Late 2007), including:
 - Adding this information to the New Board Member guide
 - Posting to the website
- Notify all Committee Chairs at least one month in advance that their semiannual reports to the Board are due two weeks prior to date of the Board's semiannual meeting. Collect all reports, issue reminders when to Committees that are late in reporting, and post reports to the Board wiki for review. (Immediately and ongoing)

Action Items for Board

- Vote on Committee descriptions recommended by the Secretary's ad hoc review committee. (Mid-2007)
- Review all Committee and SIG reports received prior to the semiannual Board meetings and discuss any issues. Respond to each Committee and SIG Chair with followup questions, action items, or other tasks the Board wishes to charge to the Committee or SIG. (Ongoing, within three weeks after each Board meeting)

Goal 4. Evaluate planning process and create plan for 2010–2013*Recommendations:*

1. Evaluate 2007–2010 planning process.
2. Examine notable planning successes so they can be continued.
3. Create new three year plan.

Action Items for Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning

- Compile planning process evaluations from previous Board meeting. (2007–2009)
- Create RFP for new planning process. (Late 2008)
- Hire planning consultant as appropriate. (Early 2009)
- Hold planning retreat at least six months in advance of new plan’s commencement. (Mid-2009)

6. MEMBERSHIP

Context: MCN's membership is the organization's heart and soul, yet its composition and needs remain elusive. Member retention could be improved and current member categories and benefits may no longer meet the needs of MCN's constituency. Member surveys about benefits and programs are inconclusive: more feedback is needed from members about what MCN should be doing for them and their communities.

Goal 1: Reconsider membership categories and benefits.

Recommendations:

1. Define benefits for both members and the broader public.
2. Review current membership categories for their appropriateness; create a student membership category.
3. Review membership categories and benefits of similar organizations.
4. Collaborate with the Ad Hoc Joint Committee on Electronic Services to identify additional electronic services MCN could provide (e.g., podcasts or other electronic delivery of conference sessions for members, e-publications, etc.)
5. Assess the pros and cons of making MCN-L a members-only benefit.

Action Items for Membership Committee

- Review and propose membership categories and benefits as outlined in above Recommendations. (2008–2009)
- Work with the Finance Committee to assess its findings about conference expenses and projected income needs in light of possible member benefits (such as reduced registration fees). (2008–2009)

Action Item for Finance Committee

- Work with the Membership Committee to evaluate conference expenses and projected income needs in light of possible member benefits (such as reduced registration fees). (2008–2009)

Action Item for Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning

- Review and evaluate member feedback from Strategic Planning comment period on restricting MCN-L to members only. (Early 2007)
-

Goal 2: Broaden & expand membership.

Recommendations:

1. Build membership.
2. Conduct outreach to Museum Studies programs.
 - a. Review the AAM guide to Museum Studies programs. Target the top fifteen programs to promote the conference, make compelling offers for membership (with a student membership rate and conference rate, a student conference scholarship program, etc.).
 - b. In each future year, focus outreach on Museum Studies programs in the city/region where the conference is to be held.
 - c. Begin outreach efforts to establish relationships with MLIS/IS/MLS programs.

Action Items for Membership Committee

- Working with the Leadership Development Committee, create a plan for increasing membership; submit the plan to the Board for approval (2008–2009); implement the plan on predetermined schedule (2009 and ongoing).
 - Undertake concerted outreach to Museum Studies programs. In particular, identify individuals who will liaise with the top fifteen Museum Studies programs (in the US and Canada) on behalf of MCN, and oversee their efforts in this area. (2007)
 - Undertake concerted outreach to Library and Information Science programs. (2009)
 - Recruit among Museum Studies and LIS programs yearly, focusing on programs in the city/region of the annual conference. (2007 and every year thereafter)
-

Goal 3: Improve member retention rates.

Recommendations:

1. Communicate better with members by:
 - a. Frequent and timely updates about MCN operations on the website.
 - b. Following up with individuals whose membership has lapsed.

2. Use SurveyMonkey™ and a Web comment form to solicit member feedback at frequent intervals and on special issues of concern.
3. Communicate back to the membership any changes that were made as a result of member comments, feedback, and survey responses.

Action Items for Membership Committee

- Communicate member feedback to other committees to inform development of new content. (2009–2010)
- Follow up with lapsed members to identify reasons why these individuals chose not to renew, and to encourage them to continue renewing. (2007 and ongoing)
- Communicate all survey and feedback results to the membership at appropriate intervals, using the listserv, website, or other relevant communication methods. (2008 and ongoing)

Action Items for Committee Chairs

- Whenever a new program or project is initiated, work with the Metrics and Evaluation SIG to develop methods for soliciting member feedback and evaluation. (Immediately and ongoing)
- Work with the Membership Committee to develop more “Members only” content about each respective Committee for the website. (2008 and ongoing)

Action Items for Metrics and Evaluation SIG

- Develop and interpret all member surveys in conjunction with the appropriate Committee Chairs or Board Members. Report results back to the Board. (Immediately and ongoing)
- Work with the Web Committee to create Web comment forms. (2008)

Action Item for Web Committee

- Refresh website content at frequent and planned intervals. Define circumstances when immediate content changes need to take place. (Ongoing)

Appendix A: Strategic Plan Roll Out Schedule

(To be implemented by the Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning)

Late September/Early October 2006

- Create a member survey for the Strategic Plan on SurveyMonkey™ (Metrics and Evaluation SIG to oversee this task).
- Revised Draft Strategic Plan sent to Web Editor (for posting on MCN site).

Mid-October, 2006

- Place the Draft Strategic Plan on the MCN website.
- President to send an email to the membership announcing the Draft Plan's availability (with link to the Draft Plan on the website) and to the survey.
- President to post notice of the release of the Strategic Plan to MCN-L and Musematic as a means of generating member interest.
- Member survey should be ready for release.

November 2006 conference

- Hold a Town Meeting (after the annual Business Meeting) to formally unveil the Draft Plan to the membership and allow members to comment (open microphone).
- Administrative support staff or Board Secretary to record member comments and discussion.

December 1, 2006

- Draft Plan is removed from the website and the comment period officially ends.
- Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning evaluates member comments from all sources (Town meeting, surveys, solicited and unsolicited email, personal communications to Board Members, etc.).

January 15, 2007

- Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning reports results and recommendations to the Board (in writing).

January 26, 2007

- All-Board conference call to discuss changes and officially sign off on the Plan.
- Plan officially begins implementation, January 2007 – January 2010.

February 2007

- Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning updates the Strategic Plan, shares the updated version with the Executive Committee for approval, and then posts the revised Plan in a public section of the website.
- President emails the membership (or announces on the listserv) the availability of the revised Strategic Plan, emphasizing changes made based on member input.

March 2007

- Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning develops criteria for measuring success for each goal in the Plan.

April 2007

- Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning submits measurement criteria for review to the Board and to the various Committees charged with oversight of the Plan.

May 2007

- Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning revises criteria, submits to the Board for final approval, and then distributes the final set of criteria to all those who oversee the Plan.

Appendix B: MCN Leadership Positions

The following list contains the MCN leadership positions that exist as of October 2006. The number of positions and their structure among committees may change during the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Board Positions

Board Member — President*

Board Member — Vice President/President-Elect*

Board Member — Secretary*

Board Member — Treasurer*

Board Member — Past President

Board Member

MCN Board Liaison to AAM Media and Technology SPC

Special Interest Group (SIG) Liaison

* *Executive Committee members*

SIG Chairs

Digital Media SIG Chair

Information Technology SIG Chair

Intellectual Property SIG Chair

Metrics and Evaluation SIG Chair

Small Museum SIG Chair

Standards SIG Chair

California SIG Chair

Pacific Northwest SIG Chair

Taiwan SIG Chair

UK-Ireland SIG Chair

Committee Chairs

Blog Committee Chair

Conference Committee Chair

Conference Sessions Chair

Conference Local Arrangements/Special Events Chair

Conference Silent Auction Chair

Conference Workshops Chair

Conference Publicity Chair

Membership Committee Chair

Nominating Committee Chair
Scholarship Committee Chair
Web Committee Chair

Newly Proposed Positions

Communications Chair
Conference Arrangements/Logistics Chair
Conference Exhibit Hall Chair
Conference Program Vice-Chair
Development and Marketing Committee Chair
Finance Committee Chair (to be filled by Treasurer)
Leadership Development Committee Chair
Program Chair

Key Contracted/Other Positions

Association Management Company Conference Organizer
Association Management Company Membership Administrator
Association consultants and vendors (e.g., Web hosting company)
Website Editor