

MCN Strategic Plan for 2007–2010: 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.