



Smithsonian Institution Libraries

A Focus on Service

Strategic Plan

2009-2013

Our Mission

As the largest and most diverse museum library in the world, SIL leads the Smithsonian in taking advantage of the opportunities of the digital society. SIL provides authoritative information and creates innovative services and programs for Smithsonian Institution researchers, scholars and curators, as well as the general public, to further their quest for knowledge. Through paper preservation and digital technologies, SIL ensures broad and enduring access to the Libraries' collections for all users.

- Smithsonian Directive 500, June 20, 2007

Our Vision

SIL creates a compelling environment for connecting, collaborating and exploring across disciplines and information boundaries.

SIL enhances and eases the discovery of information in our collections for SI scholars, researchers, scientists, and the larger world of learners.

SIL understands and meets user needs, serving users where they live and work.

SIL builds expertise on information discovery, navigation and management.

SIL ensures its success through increased financial strength, effective administrative support, and organizational excellence.

Our Values

Excellence in Process,
Procedures, and
Services

Constant
Experimentation,
Innovation, Creativity,
and Flexibility

Responsibility in our
Personal Actions

Responsible
Stewardship of
Resources and
Collections

Leadership in
Collaboration

Continuous
Improvement through
Ongoing Learning for
Individual and
Organizational Growth

A Focus on Service

In January 2008, Smithsonian Institution Libraries sought a strategic plan that demonstrated and fostered the Libraries' leadership role as information broker in an era of rapidly changing technology, while aligning the Libraries with the goals and mission of the Smithsonian Institution.

In November 2008, the Smithsonian Secretary G. Wayne Clough announced an Institution-wide planning effort. The final document, [Inspiring Generations through Knowledge and Discovery](#), lays out four grand challenges:

- Unlocking the Mysteries of the Universe
- Understanding and Sustaining a Bio-diverse Planet
- Valuing World Cultures
- Understanding the American Experience

Under these themes in its next five years, the Smithsonian seeks to broaden access, revitalize education, cross boundaries, strengthen collections and attain organizational excellence. The SI Libraries plan, "A Focus on Service," aligns perfectly with these priorities as we



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continue to carry out our mission to provide authoritative information and create innovative services and programs for the Institution and the general public.

Service is a core value in the Institution's plan. For SI Libraries, the plan signals a shift to a more continual and interactive engagement with users as a crucial part of planning services. It encourages experimentation and trial projects. We seek to provide a collaborative atmosphere and to actively engage with researchers and the public through on-site and web-based communities. We want to continue supplying information sources that are critical to SI work while bolstering interdisciplinary efforts.

SIL sees our plan as a dynamic springboard for multiple actions that will inspire continual learning and improvement individually and collectively.



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From the beginning, the entire SIL staff and SIL Advisory Board were encouraged to participate in the planning process. We hired the firm of Lou Wetherbee & Associates LLC., to facilitate the planning process. The consultants worked with a Steering Committee chaired by Deputy Director Mary Augusta Thomas. By reaching out to their colleagues in universities and research institutions, staff working groups conducted environmental scans to develop the content for a two-day planning retreat in July, 2008. The retreat included key stakeholders from across the Institution and the SI Libraries Advisory Board.

We are working under the principle that 20% of our enterprise should be spent on keeping things going and 80% should be spent on things that move the Libraries toward its goals. To engage in informal and formal learning in collaboration with our colleagues, SIL created a speaker series, co-sponsored by the Chief Information Officer and the Office of Smithsonian Archives. Guest speakers presented topics related to the future of libraries and web2.0 technologies and played a role in wider SI strategic thinking. We are continuing the series in an effort to constantly refresh our thinking about the necessity for change and adaptation.



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Staff is now encouraged to experiment with new tools and to try new techniques, including wikis, blogs, *YouTube* videos and other social networking methods. The Smithsonian’s plan cites the use of social networking to deliver information in customized ways along with digitizing collections and making them accessible as critical to the Institution’s strategy. Town hall meetings, departmental meetings, volunteer forums, online surveys, wikis and hallway discussions gave everyone an opportunity to contribute to the process.

Libraries’ staff view our plan as a work in progress and will report on, and share information about, their implementation projects several times a year and in different forums. As one of the retreat participants summed it up:

“The cooperative generation of meaningful ideas, with everyone contributing, and no one too dominating, was truly amazing. We are on our way to producing a document which enables the Libraries to move in new directions, utilizing evolving technology, improved communication and our outstanding staff. This is a rare achievement.”

—Nancy E. Gwinn, Director



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GOAL 1 COLLABORATING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

SIL creates a compelling environment for connecting, collaborating and exploring across disciplines and information boundaries

STRATEGY 1.1 SIL connects users to people, information, and programs

- INITIATIVE A: Position SIL as a center for research activity with physical library and virtual research content environments that promote collaboration
- INITIATIVE B: Situate SIL internally within SI as the center for networking and exchange of ideas
- INITIATIVE C: Adopt new technologies to remove boundaries, encourage collaborative research, and include users in the process
- INITIATIVE D: Extend outreach and collaboration by enhancing existing and forging new relationships between SIL and other SI units as well as local institutions
- INITIATIVE E: Create ways for SIL staff to make their areas of expertise (e.g., information fluency and information organization) accessible and better known within SI
- INITIATIVE F: Make SIL one of the first points of contact for newly hired employees by inserting SIL into employee orientations

STRATEGY 1.2 SIL exchanges information and fosters interdisciplinary research nationally and internationally

- INITIATIVE A: Develop a Web of SI Research that fosters interactive research networks
- INITIATIVE B: Create a Technology Advisory Group (TAG) to discuss innovative ways to exchange information
- INITIATIVE C: Develop SI Research Online as a site to provide access to all SI produced content
- INITIATIVE D: Collaborate to make SI scholarship available worldwide
- INITIATIVE E: Expand and improve SIL's contributions to the Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL)

GOAL 2 DISCOVERING INFORMATION

SIL enhances and eases the discovery of information in our collections for SI scholars, researchers, scientists, and the larger world of learners

STRATEGY 2.1 SIL builds partnerships with other individuals and departments in the Institution who are developing an SI-wide digitization strategy

INITIATIVE A: Enhance the SIL digital infrastructure for both the creation and presentation of digital content

INITIATIVE B: Enhance the metadata associated with SIL web content to increase and facilitate findability of SIL digital resources

STRATEGY 2.2 SIL increases awareness of SIL content and expertise through rapid prototyping of discovery tools and new technologies

INITIATIVE A: Experiment with emerging technologies to develop content that engages participants and users

INITIATIVE B: Experiment with new, faster means of delivery of resources to users

STRATEGY 2.3 SIL builds, sustains, protects, and shares world class collections, making decisions about acquisitions and preservation of print and digital collections informed by a deepening understanding of users' current and future needs

INITIATIVE A: Identify and highlight hidden SIL resources and collections

INITIATIVE B: Align SIL collection development and distribution of SIL resources and staff with SI research priorities and directions

INITIATIVE C: Fast track digitization efforts to aid preservation and access, especially of rare materials

INITIATIVE D: Explore means by which SIL could take a role in the future research data storage needs of SI

INITIATIVE E: Ensure the future use of our collections by preserving information for continued accessibility

GOAL 3 CONNECTING WITH USERS

SIL understands and meets user needs, serving users where they live and work

STRATEGY 3.1 SIL looks to user generated evidence for its decision-making framework

- INITIATIVE A: Collect and analyze users' current usage data (focus groups, interviews, etc.) while respecting their individual rights to privacy
- INITIATIVE B: Develop profiles of SIL core user groups and their typical characteristics, likes and needs using internal and external third party research
- INITIATIVE C: Generate mechanisms that will reveal patterns of customer use and perceived value of SIL services based on user needs
- INITIATIVE D: Invite users to collaborate and refine SIL programs, products and services for continuous improvement based on user feedback
- INITIATIVE E: Identify and reach out to potential users of SIL

STRATEGY 3.2 SIL engages the public and research communities to foster diverse learning experiences and offer opportunities to increase knowledge

- INITIATIVE A: Create collaborative learning experiences with other museums, libraries, federal agencies, and universities
- INITIATIVE B: Integrate technology and social media into audience engagement strategies
- INITIATIVE C: Evaluate strategies used to engage audiences

GOAL 4 BUILDING EXPERTISE

SIL builds expertise on information discovery, navigation and management

STRATEGY 4.1 SIL continuously develops and refines the competencies and skills needed to meet the challenges of the libraries' changing role in an ever-changing information landscape

- INITIATIVE A: Raise the minimum knowledge and skill level of SIL staff members to be consistent with what users expect from a center of expertise
- INITIATIVE B: Allocate resources and staff to support new goals and initiatives through performance plans and managerial structure
- INITIATIVE C: Determine best means of providing access to and sharing internal SIL communication, documentation and collective knowledge

STRATEGY 4.2 SIL teaches people how to discover, navigate and manage information effectively

- INITIATIVE A: Create a toolkit of common processes for accessing and distributing information that can be deployed depending on the needs and preferences of individual users
- INITIATIVE B: Create resource-discovery workshops tailored to the information needs of individuals and specific groups in the SIL user community

GOAL 5 ENABLING OUR MISSION

SIL ensures its success through increased financial strength, effective administrative support, and organizational excellence.

STRATEGY 5.1 SIL increases its financial strength

- INITIATIVE A: Create innovative opportunities to increase funds for operations and programs
- INITIATIVE B: Increase revenue from sales of goods and services
- INITIATIVE C: Develop innovative methods to build collections

STRATEGY 5.2 SIL increases effective administrative support

- INITIATIVE A: Strengthen management of resources: financial, property, et cetera
- INITIATIVE B: Ensure Library spaces support SIL's strategic objectives working in collaboration with building managers, OFEO and other stakeholders
- INITIATIVE C: Work to ensure a safe, healthy and secure environment for its workforce
- INITIATIVE D: Strengthen internal controls

STRATEGY 5.3 SIL promotes organizational excellence

- INITIATIVE A: Ensure trust through strong and exemplary leadership, creating a healthy organizational culture
- INITIATIVE B: Promote a strong, diverse workforce