I. Transmittal and Summary of Report

BY

THE BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON THE
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY

MARCH 2002

FOR:

THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE UNITED STATES, CHANCELLOR
AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

THE SECRETARY OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
FOR AMERICAN MUSEUMS & NATIONAL PROGRAMS

THE BOARD OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY

THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
AMERICAN HISTORY

Dear Mr. Chief Justice, Members of the Board of Regents, Mr. Secretary,
Madame Under Secretary, Members of the NMAH Board, and Mr. Acting
Director:

On June 29, 2001, the Smithsonian announced our appointment by the
Board of Regents as members of a Blue Ribbon Commission on the
National Museum of American History. We feel privileged to have been
asked to serve in this capacity. Our charge was to advise on "the most
timely and relevant themes and methods of presentation for the Museum
in the 21st century." We were asked to report early in 2002. Accordingly,
we are pleased to provide you with this Report.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attack of September 11th, Americans
have experienced a renewed sense of patriotism. Understandably, they
have been interested in affirming what it means to be an American. You
appreciate, as do we, that the question, "What does it mean to be an
American?" cannot be answered meaningfully without a sense of history -
and history's answers cannot be quite as clear and straightforward as
the simply stated question. Most Americans associate America's identity with ideas of freedom, democracy, and opportunity. But, of course, these ideas have meant different things to different people. For some, at times, they have been more aspiration than reality. And they have changed significantly as America itself has changed. The United States was conceived as a creative experiment, requiring practical adaptation over time. That process of adaptation is still underway. It cannot be well understood without reference to what has gone before.

Some of us have been reminded of another traumatic time, when fear of anarchists was high following the assassination of President McKinley. In that context, on December 3, 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt delivered his first State of the Union Address to the Congress. His opening sentence referred to "the shadow of a great calamity." He then described a condition of "grave alarm among all loyal American citizens." After addressing this fundamental concern, he went on to discuss other priorities. High among these was the Smithsonian Institution -- its fundamental mission, its important work, and its "urgent needs" for support. We are inclined to suggest that if the Smithsonian merited such respectful attention and support a century ago -- as it certainly did -- the case for its support (and particularly, support for its National Museum of American History) is even stronger in today's context.

A well-informed sense of American history is of obvious importance. And the National Museum of American History (NMAH) has a fundamental role to play in helping Americans develop that well-informed sense. In fulfilling this role, NMAH has many distinctive strengths: its unrivaled collections, location, well-earned professional reputation, access to both public and private financial support, place of trust in the public mind, and special status as the only national museum of American history.

But the Museum requires what its own leadership has described as a "transformation." It lacks aesthetic appeal, organizational coherence, and the perception of substantive balance. It must address these problems in an especially challenging context. It is in search of a Director. Its urgent needs exceed currently available resources. It has been fortunate to have received large recent donations. But with these has come public controversy about the possibility of excessive donor influence upon the content of the Museum. Amidst one such controversy that disturbed both professionals and donors, a large gift was recently withdrawn. Yet if this controversy were not a focus of current public attention, other difficult issues likely would be. The Museum inescapably must deal with important issues of national identity, which lend themselves to scholarly and political argument. These issues matter. So, the public cares -- often quite intensely. And rightly so: the interpretation of history can itself shape history.

We believe it is important to address the obvious problems the Museum faces. But to do so effectively, we believe it is useful -- probably, essential -- to understand the complexity of the challenges facing the
Museum. We, therefore, respectfully commend to you our assessment of
"NMAH Strengths, Problems, Constraints, and Challenges" in the section
that follows. The list of problems and challenges is long. (Please see
Section II.) But we would not want its length to obscure three essential
points of perspective:

- First, because NMAH holds a very special place in American culture,
  there is a special obligation -- and duty of care -- to be attended to
  by those who would attempt to help shape its future.

- Second, even as it is -- even with the long list of problems and
  challenges -- NMAH is now one of the world's great museums. Our
  recommendations are intended to build on what is already a very
  strong base.

- Third, we believe that the problems and challenges we have
  identified are difficult, but manageable.

To help address the problems and meet the challenges, we have provided
twenty recommendations for your consideration. (Please see Section III.)
As you intended, we are a diverse group. Each of us might wish to
emphasize one problem or intended solution more than others might wish
to do. Some might have been inclined to go farther (or less far) than
others in one area or another. This is a natural corollary of our diversity.
Yet we have assumed that, in the current context, our work would be
most helpful if it enjoyed a wide base of support. We have, therefore,
sought to develop consensus recommendations. So, while our individual
points of analysis or emphasis would differ somewhat, we are pleased to
be able to present you with recommendations that enjoy the full
Commission's support. They are grouped in relation to these basic
purposes:

- to improve the architectural and aesthetic setting for exhibits
  (Section III.B.);

- to improve visitors' substantive orientation (Section III.C.);

- to assure appropriate balance in exhibit themes and content
  (Section III.D.);

- to increase the Museum's reach (Section III.E.); and

- to enhance the prospect of effective implementation (Section
  III.F.).

It is our view that implementing these recommendations would not only
help assure that NMAH remains one of the most visited museums in the
world, with important and irreplaceable collections that help define the
American experience. We believe their implementation would also help
assure that the National Museum of American History is aesthetically
appealing, intellectually responsible, thematically interesting,
educationally effective -- a worthy focus of compelling interest and a
justifiable source of national pride.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide our analysis and recommendations to you, and hope you may find them of value.

Respectfully submitted,

RICHARD DARMAN, Chair
TOM BROKAW
ELLSWORTH BROWN
SHEILA P. BURKE, *ex officio*
SPENCER R. CREW
LONI DING
DAVID HERBERT DONALD
ERIC FONER
DIANE FRANKEL
RAMON A. GUTIERREZ
NEIL HARRIS
K. TSIANINA LOMAWAIMA
ROGER MUDD
DON T. NAKANISHI
CHET ORLOFF
MARC PACTER, *ex officio*
WILLIAM F. RUSSELL
RICHARD NORTON SMITH
JOHN KUE WEI TCHEN
CHARLES H. TOWNES
LAUREL THATCHER ULRICH
G. EDWARD WHITE
DON WILSON

(For background on Commission methodology and membership, please see Appendix A.)

Table of Contents | II.A. A Challenging Context --
Table of Contents

I. Transmittal and Summary of Report

II. A Challenging Context—NMAH Strengths, Problems, Constraints, and Challenges
   A. A National Treasure
   B. The Problem
   C. Contextual Realities
   D. Architectural and Aesthetic Concerns
   E. Constraints
   F. Management Challenges

III. Recommendations
   A. Perspective on the Problems and Their Solution
   B. Recommendations to Improve the Architectural and Aesthetic Setting for NMAH Exhibits
   C. Recommendations to Improve the Substantive Orientation of Visitors to the Museum
   D. Recommendations to Assure Appropriate Balance in Exhibit Themes and Content
   E. Recommendation to Increase the Museum's Reach—Through Digitization and Use of the Web
   F. Concluding Recommendations With Regard to Implementation

IV. Appendices
   A. Commission Methodology and Membership
   B. Overview of NMAH Collections
   C. Current NMAH Exhibit Floor Plan
   D. NMAH Budgets: Fiscal Years 1993-2002
   E. Logistical and Contractual Constraints
   F. NMAH's Initial Version for Transforming the National Museum of American History
      1. Introduction
      2. Interpreting History
      3. Visitors to NMAH
      4. Developing Exhibitions
      5. Education and Public Programs
      6. Advanced Information Technology
      7. Essential Elements
      8. Conclusion
   G. NMAH's Planned and Funded New Exhibits (March 2002)
   H. NMAH's Revised Future Floor Plan (As of March 2002)

Comments

Section I: Transmittal and Summary -->

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/contents.htm
II. A Challenging Context—NMAH Strengths, Problems, Constraints, and Challenges

A. A National Treasure

The Smithsonian has often been described as a national treasure -- not only as suggested by President Theodore Roosevelt a century ago, but also by millions of visitors who have since come from across America and around the world to explore its wonders. Within the Smithsonian, the National Museum of American History (NMAH) has itself earned the same favorable description. In both public perception and fact, it is a national treasure. As such, it is unquestionably worthy of all that the phrase "national treasure" implies: pride, preservation, protection, respect, support, and creative attention.

The National Museum of American History is distinctive in several important respects:

- NMAH is America's only national museum of American history.

- NMAH is America's largest history museum. It currently has about 200,000 square feet of exhibition floor space. Its collections are comprised of more than three million objects, which occupy an additional 265,000 square feet of storage space.

- NMAH's collections amount to a unique and irreplaceable representation of America's social, cultural, scientific and technological history. They include some of the most important -- and some of the most popular -- American reminders and artifacts. Among these, for example, are Thomas Jefferson's desk, on which he drafted the Declaration of Independence; and the Star-Spangled Banner, which flew over Fort McHenry during the War of 1812, inspiring Francis Scott Key to write the poem that became America's national anthem. The collections range widely: from a Samuel Morse telegraph and the Lewis and Clark compass to Duke Ellington's sheet music; from John L. Sullivan's bare-knuckle championship prize fighting belt to Muhammad Ali's boxing gloves; from a two-and-a-half ton Mormon sunstone to fragile ceramics; from unrivaled collections of scientific and medical instruments to the wooden puppet, Howdy Doody; from early locomotives and streetcars to Richard Petty's stock car and Lance Armstrong's bicycle; from the Woolworth's lunch counter at which protesters sat in the Greensboro sit-in of 1960 to the chairs that Archie and Edith Bunker filled in All in the Family. (For an overview of the NMAH collections, please see Appendix B.) If NMAH were no more than a repository for these collections, that fact alone would assure its status as an extraordinary national treasure.
- NMAH is, of course, much more than a mere repository. Its collections are studied, protected, enhanced, interpreted, and exhibited by a staff of professionals who enjoy a high degree of respect among their peers. Committed to both scholarship and education, they are themselves a valuable national resource.

- NMAH enjoys one of the most desirable locations in America. It is at the heart of the national mall, in dramatic proximity to the Washington Monument, with direct views of the Smithsonian castle and the Lincoln Memorial.

- NMAH also enjoys a special place of trust in American culture. Its national charter and association with America's identity have given it a special claim. Generation after generation of teachers and parents lead what amounts to pilgrimages to Washington. Their purpose is typically to acquaint each rising generation with a deeper sense of what it means to be "American." And NMAH is often viewed as an essential station on the intended journey of education and inspiration. Indeed, it is said that a typical visitor will come to NMAH thrice in a lifetime: once as a child with parents; again as a parent with children; and then again as a grandparent with grandchildren. This may not be literally correct. But it serves to underline the special place that NMAH may hold in American culture.

- NMAH is the third most visited museum in the world. Prior to the terrorist attacks of September 11th, it was visited at a steadily increasing rate that exceeded six million visits per year. In the aftermath of September 11th, the number of visits has fallen sharply. But the upward trend is expected to resume as confidence in air travel and travel to Washington is restored.

- Last, but not least, NMAH is the beneficiary of both public and private financial support. Given NMAH's special mission and place as America's only national museum of history, it seems unlikely that either the Congress or major private donors would allow the Museum's support to fall below a minimum necessary level. The current level of support is not sufficient to achieve the potential that we and many others envision. But it does at least provide a significant and relatively secure base on which to build.

For all these reasons, NMAH can reasonably be assumed to have a promising future. Its collections, its location, its professional staff, its special place of trust, its access to public and private support -- all these strengths assure that Americans will hope and expect that the Museum should meet a very high standard of excellence. These evident strengths also increase the probability that NMAH -- along with the many public and private constituencies that support it -- may muster the vision, resources, and leadership necessary to meet the high hopes and expectations it has earned.

Table of Contents | II.B. The Problem -->
B. The Problem

In spite of its many strengths, however, NMAH will not find it easy to meet the high standard that is reasonably demanded of it. The Museum faces difficult problems in a context that is highly challenging.

Indeed, there is a threshold challenge in just getting a clear view of how "the problem" (or problems) should be conceived. One might start with concern for the visitors' perspective. At a superficial level, recent surveys suggest that visitors to NMAH are not disappointed. This is understandable. Although they may complain quite legitimately about logistics, the almost inescapable reality is that most people can find something or other of at least passing interest at the NMAH. But that, of course, is a rather low standard. Achieving it does not assure that the Museum is meeting what some might take to be its responsibilities to educate or inspire. To meet this higher standard, the Museum would first have to pass a test of comprehensibility. It would not -- and many say it should not -- have to be didactic. But it would presumably have to be structured to present either a coherent set of provocative questions, or a coherent set of possible thematic interests, or a coherent sequence of topics and Museum experiences.

The problem of "incoherence"

As it is now, the Museum does not seem to meet any obvious test of comprehensibility or coherence. Indeed, in the most basic physical sense, visitors frequently have difficulty orienting themselves. Even some curators who have spent their entire professional lives in the NMAH building get lost. Signs have recently been added to try to help provide some direction. But the problem goes beyond signage. Many serious observers and most members of the Commission believe that the problem has to do, more fundamentally, with the Museum's content and the organization of its presentation. Visitors often expect that a history museum should have a clear chronological structure. They cannot find this at the NMAH. It does not exist. Nor is any other organizing principle evident. It is unclear why particular exhibits are where they are in relation to each other. It is also unclear why some subjects are treated by the Museum when others that seem more important are not. A distinguished American historian has said, "I have been coming to NMAH for more than twenty-five years, and I still find it incoherent."

Some correctly argue that a degree of incoherence is natural -- a
consequence of a museum's organic growth over time. Some correctly argue that fostering a degree of cognitive dissonance or mystery among visitors may stimulate questioning and learning. And some correctly argue that there may be undesirable costs associated with too much coherence: imposing any one person's conception of order upon an interpretation of American history risks doing injustice to other people's. But that said, there is still a balance to be struck. And it is the Commission's strongly held view that, in its current condition, the NMAH is tilted too far toward incoherence.

If forced to choose, many (not all) members of the Commission would identify this problem of incoherence as number one -- an important place to start. But, of course, the incoherence problem might be understood as merely a symptom of other problems. Or it could be understood as a problem whose solution might simply expose other problems more clearly. In any case, it is not the only serious problem facing NMAH. Several other problems, constraints, and challenges must be understood as part of the larger contextual difficulty. These are grouped below under four headings: Contextual Realities; Architectural and Aesthetic Concerns; Constraints; and Management Challenges. Together, this set amounts to a much larger dilemma than the obvious problem of incoherence. Its complexity is not easily captured by a single heading.

Table of Contents | II.C. Contextual Realities -->

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/2b.htm 11/12/2008
(II. A Challenging Context—NMAH Strengths, Problems, Constraints, and Challenges)

C. Contextual Realities

Like all human institutions, NMAH must be understood in relation to its historical and cultural context. Unlike most institutions, however, NMAH cannot work out its difficulties quietly and privately within the larger context. Its enviable status as a national treasure has obvious costs. It is highly visible, centrally located in the nation’s capital, addressing matters at the heart of the nation’s self-concept. It does not enjoy the luxury of anonymity. To some degree, the nation’s problems and challenges must play out within its walls. And what plays out within its walls must be viewed -- often in real time -- by the rest of the nation. That reality makes all of the following more sensitive and difficult to address than they might be ordinarily.

The history of shifting concepts of the Museum

NMAH is rooted in the nineteenth century foundation of the Smithsonian itself. In the 1950s, with the planning for its current building, it experienced a rebirth of sorts. Initial planning for the new space conceived the museum as an American equivalent of the great London and Munich museums focused upon Science and Technology. Early decisions about collections, curators, and physical layout reflected this conception. Later in the planning process, a decision was made to include social and cultural history. This decision was reflected in the composite name, "Museum of History and Technology." Still later, the concept shifted further toward a broad emphasis on history (and an implied de-emphasis on technology), as reflected in the current name, "National Museum of American History." Notwithstanding these shifts, the early concept and associated decisions became a powerful inertial force. That force is reflected in the emphasis on science and technology that characterizes the first floor of the Museum today. Cultural and political history has, in effect, taken over the second floor. And the third floor is, by and large, the locus of "other." This physical division of turf has a certain stability to it. It avoids the logistical complications and expense of moving heavy equipment. And it offers a home for each major camp within the curatorial staff. At the same time, however, this conceptual division -- Technology-Politics&Culture-Other -- provides a framework that may inhibit the development of crosscutting themes or any alternative framework for the presentation of history. (For a current NMAH exhibit floor plan, please see Appendix C.)

The problem of under-represented subjects and themes
Although the Museum may seem incoherent, it has in fact made choices. It has necessarily given greater attention to some subjects and themes, and lesser attention to others. In thinking about what has been omitted, it is instructive and useful to consider questions such as these:

- Given the importance of religion in both America's founding and in her subsequent development, why is this subject largely untreated?

- Given the importance of immigration and immigrants in the American experience, why is this subject not addressed directly?

- Given America's clear (some would say defining) association with the struggle for freedom, the expansion of democracy, and the quest for equal opportunity, why isn't there more attention to these themes (whether one views them as triumphal achievements, unfulfilled aspirations, or something in between)?

- Given the importance of slavery in colonial and antebellum America, given the struggles for emancipation and equality, and given persistent problems with race relations, why isn't there more attention to African-American experience and the continuing quest for improved race relations?

- Given the importance of Spain in America's early development, the continuing influence of a shared border with Mexico, and the large and growing Hispanic-American population, why is the subject of Hispanic-American interconnection not explicitly treated?

- Given the rise of America as a Pacific power, why isn't there more attention to America's westward reach, to Asian Pacific cultures, and to the experiences of Asian Pacific Americans?

- Given the importance of capital and capitalism in America's rise to power, why isn't there more attention to the history of American capital formation, the access to capital, and its relation to the growth of a broad middle class? (Similar questions might, of course, be put with respect to agriculture or labor.)

- Given the mythic power of "the American cowboy," why isn't there more attention to cowboy culture in the American experience? Or, if this seems too narrow a subject, why is there not more attention to the general issue of the nature and power of mythic and heroic themes in American culture?

- Given the importance of -- and conflict about -- diversity in the American experience, why is the history of "diversity" itself not treated directly?

- Given the importance of universal public education in the American experience, given America's development of one of the finest higher education systems in the world, and given the increasing importance of human intellectual capital to economic competitiveness and the quality of life, why is the history of American education not given more attention?
Unfortunately for those who must wrestle with the problem of choosing subjects and themes, the list of worthy-but-untreated candidates could go on and on. To some degree, many of the choices that have been made by NMAH are a result of the fact that the Museum's exhibits are rooted in its extraordinary collections. Thus, one finds remarkable displays of ceramics in one exhibit, coins in another, scientific instruments in yet another, transportation equipment in still another, and so on down a long and impressive list. But, of course, the NMAH collections are not fixed. They are augmented over time. And if a particular subject or theme merits greater attention, that can become an important guide for additional collecting. The inescapable dilemma for NMAH is that, as America's national museum, it must be broadly and fairly representative; while, at the same time, it cannot be all things to all people without risking either blandness or incoherence -- or a regrettable combination of both.

The challenge of achieving fairness, accuracy, and appropriate inclusiveness in the treatment of race, ethnicity, and gender

This problem is, in part, a variant of the prior problem: under-represented subjects and themes. It is hardly peculiar to NMAH. It has permeated America's history and the academic treatment of that history. It has been, and remains, highly controversial. The very language used to describe the challenge can elicit contentious debate. But even if the subjects of race, ethnicity, and gender were judged to be represented in sufficient volume, and with appropriate accuracy and sensitivity, there would remain a difficult problem: Should these important subjects be addressed as significant parts of other (almost all) subjects and themes treated by the Museum? Or do they require separate treatment as distinct subjects in their own right? This issue is hard enough as presented. But the issue becomes still harder when one considers a related problem. Many of those who would choose the "separate and distinct" option might really prefer the more inclusive alternative -- provided they could be assured that the "inclusive" option would, in practice, meet appropriate standards of fairness, accuracy, and sensitivity. These standards would have to start from the premise that issues of race, ethnicity, and gender are not mere add-ons to American history; but rather, they are essentially inseparable from responsible scholarly treatment of American history. Yet, with regard to this proviso, there is a significant problem of distrust. It is, of course, possible to combine both large inclusive exhibits and smaller specialized exhibits in a single Museum. But the challenge is not merely to find a politically balanced solution; it is to assure that in addressing these sensitive issues, the highest standards of scholarship are met.

The reality of divergent interpretations of American history

One of the many great virtues of American history is the liveliness of argument about it. Such argument exists -- and is often heated -- among professional scholars. Among the general public, the conflict between
divergent interpretive frameworks is less scholarly, but no less intense. The stakes are not trivial. Interpretations can help shape history. And this reality presents a serious challenge for NMAH management. Advocates inclined to emphasize the role of heroic individuals vie with those who would concentrate on less powerful figures and the larger historical forces that shape their lives. There is tension between those inclined to celebrate American achievement and those inclined to focus on America's failures to meet her declared aspirations. There is a related tension between those who see American history as a series of leaps from triumph to triumph and those who see the history as a more difficult and troubled journey. And there is a basic difference of perspective between those who see American values and experience as in some positive sense "exceptional" and those who do not. The opposition between these points of view is genuine. It is sometimes rooted in analysis and evidence, and sometimes rooted in contemporary politics. There is often heartfelt distrust among competing advocates. They do not allow their differences to be washed over. Still, it is possible -- often necessary -- to use a combination of competing perspectives to produce a responsible historical presentation. So, the challenge for NMAH is to attend fairly to divergent frameworks -- and to use legitimate arguments about interpretation to help make exhibits more interesting and engaging. That is more easily said than done.

The problem of lagging investment in new information technologies

This problem has been common among many publicly funded and non-profit organizations, where adoption of new technologies has historically been slower than in the private for-profit sector. At NMAH, the issue is especially relevant. NMAH has great potential to take advantage of digitization and the web in the diffusion of knowledge. But that potential is still largely undeveloped. Resource allocation decisions have given short shrift to new information technology. The problem is only partly one of budgets, however. It raises important issues about the Museum's intended reach: How important is it to serve the people who cannot easily get to Washington, but who would benefit from exposure to NMAH collections? It raises issues about the relative importance of direct physical exposure to objects: In what ways can electronic communication best substitute? And it raises issues about the relative importance of educational programming: Is it worth the investment (or collaborative activity) to structure learning experiences that can take advantage of digital access to NMAH collections? To be fully appreciated, the problem of lagging investment in technology must be understood as having conceptual, bureaucratic, and cultural dimensions.

The challenge of attending to diverse visitors' demands

The millions of NMAH visitors represent a broad, global cross-section. This presents the obvious challenge of engaging people from diverse backgrounds. But that is just part of the challenge. Grandparents may
want grandchildren to see what they saw. Young people want exhibits that compete favorably with video games. Some want it simple; some subtle; some moving; some dramatic; and so on -- all while NMAH is urged to be fresh, intellectually responsible, and coherent!

Table of Contents | II.D. Architectural and Aesthetic Concerns -->
D. Architectural and Aesthetic Concerns

The Commission was not chosen for its architectural expertise; nor does it pretend to any. However, it was asked to consider "methods of presentation." In doing so, it could not fail to note two of the Museum's obvious architectural and aesthetic characteristics that confront every visitor with a challenge that is far from pleasant.

The mixed blessing of physical scale

NMAH has the benefit of enormous collections. As America's only national museum of American history, it has an obligation to address a very broad scope. So it is necessary and appropriate that the Museum is housed in a building that provides 200,000 square feet of exhibition space. A consequence, however, may be to compound the problem of incoherence.

The large scale makes it difficult to apprehend or comprehend the museum visually from any few points internally. This problem is exacerbated by an absence of open lines of sight (either horizontally or vertically). It has been made still worse by the steady addition of countless interior exhibition walls in the pursuit of additional display space. The practical effect is to eliminate any sense of vertical or horizontal openness, and to make it extremely difficult for visitors to orient themselves. Further, the sheer volume of floor space makes it impossible to visit even a substantial fraction of the museum in the amount of time that a typical visitor has available to spend (an hour and forty minutes). This, in turn, means that visitors cannot be provided with a single directed route through the museum. That technique is used by many smaller museums to impose a sense of intellectual order; or to provide, as some museums do, a powerful emotional experience. But the option of providing a single route through the Museum is simply not practicable for NMAH. Individual exhibits within NMAH can and often do employ the ordering techniques available to smaller museums. Yet that alone cannot address the question of the physical (and possible intellectual and emotional) relationships among the large number of individual exhibits that inhabit the NMAH.

The attic effect -- the problem of clutter, darkness, and confinement

Perhaps because of the pressure to reflect the fullness of American history, NMAH has taken the metaphor of "America's attic" to a
regrettable extreme. Its building was originally designed with large glass window spaces that provided wonderful vistas -- views of the mall and the major monuments. The vistas are still there. But access to them -- visitors' ability to look through the glass -- has been blocked. The Museum is vast; but it seems confined. The problem is made worse by low levels of artificial lighting and the proliferation of interior walls. In meeting the ever-expanding demands for display space, the Museum has become cluttered. Lines of sight are often obstructed or short. Routes from one exhibit to another are often difficult to see. The sheer abundance of objects in close proximity to each other sometimes inhibits a visitor's ability to appreciate individual objects fully. And while the clutter of an attic may have its charm, at museum scale the charm is lost. The clutter can seem aesthetically repugnant, even oppressive, almost claustrophobic. It can discourage reflection and compound the impression of incoherence.

Table of Contents  | II.E. Constraints -->
E. Constraints

In attempting to remedy its problems and meet its challenges, NMAH has access to far more in the way of human and material resources than most museums do. But of course, it also has significant constraints. Among the many constraints, these three are particularly important:

Inherent subject matter complexity and political sensitivity

As a national museum, NMAH has a responsibility to present, in some reasonable measure, the fullness of American history. That history is complex. It covers many centuries, hundreds of interesting and important theme lines, and a near-limitless number of topics. Its fair and accurate interpretation is not always straightforward, unambiguous, or uncontested. In order for NMAH to fit presentations within its available physical space, selections must be made. And in order to present exhibits that are readily comprehensible, a degree of simplification is required. So choice and interpretation are inescapable. Yet they have costs. Not every subject, point of view, aesthetic preference, or style of engagement can be accommodated. When meaningful choice is made, some people are bound to be disappointed. Because the Museum is a national museum, because its subject matter is tied to issues of national identity, and because national identity is rightly a matter of intense public concern, this disappointment is not merely private. At NMAH, the necessity for choice bears with it -- at all times -- significant potential for public controversy. That controversy can and should be kept within reasonable bounds; but the risk of exceeding such bounds is ever present.

Financial demands in excess of currently available resources

The Museum's basic plant is in need of repair. Many of its important exhibits and collections require renewal. This is partly because the passage of time naturally dictates requirements for updating. Renewal is also needed to take advantage of new presentation techniques for the benefit of all audiences -- especially young audiences, which have become accustomed to exciting, interactive, visual displays. The architectural and aesthetic concerns noted above require attention. Decommissioning or moving old exhibits with large, heavy objects bears special logistical costs. Important emerging claims require attention as well: accelerated digital storage and retrieval of collections; increased educational programming; and more creative use of web-based technology.
Throughout its history, NMAH has benefited from the generosity of private donors. Recently, it has attracted several unusually large private contributions -- without which it would be impossible to advance the process of renewal in a significant way. But the important and legitimate claims that are evident exceed currently committed resources. These claims are made in a context of restraint upon federal discretionary budgets (for expenditures not directly related to security) and increased competition for scarce charitable contributions. (For a summary of NMAH funding, please see Appendix D.) The practical fact of the matter is that the Commission recommendations offered below would require substantial increases in both public and private funding in order to be implemented.

**Long-term contractual obligations**

In order to achieve its mission, NMAH is required to seek private funding. This would be true even if federal funding were substantially increased because federal funds are limited not only in amount, but also in purpose. In general, federal funds have been oriented toward the support of basic operating expenses and infrastructure, not the development of exhibits *per se*. (While Congress and the President could change this limitation, many have welcomed it as a protection against possible partisan or parochial politicization of Museum content.) Private funding often requires long-term contractual commitments. These commitments must be honored as a matter of law and as a matter of prudence (with an eye toward future donations). The accumulation of such commitments is now considerable. (Please see Appendices E and H.)

Recent long-term commitments will allow the Museum's substantial renewal to move forward. And in general, long-term commitments can help relieve NMAH curators and exhibition staff from what might otherwise be excessive time demands for future fund-raising. But the accumulation of long-term commitments also has costs.

These costs can be exacerbated by the major long-term exhibition syndrome. In the competition for public attention and acclaim, many museums and donors have been led to support large, highly promoted "major exhibitions." The Smithsonian community (and NMAH within it) has not shown immunity to this tendency. That is understandable. Such exhibits can increase museum funding and attendance, and help provide a focus around which other museum activities may be organized. To this extent, they have obvious appeal and merit. At the same time, however, two of the unintended costs they may entail are especially noteworthy. First, insofar as they involve long-term contractual commitments of large amounts of floor space, they may limit the museum's ability to change in the future (even though they may serve as helpful change agents in the near term). Second, they not only reduce the museum's ability to adapt in the future; they also decrease the space available for smaller and shorter-term exhibits. They thus reduce the number of exhibition topics the museum may treat, and limit its ability to develop new exhibits in
emerging areas of interest or capability. This, in turn, may have two further undesirable consequences. It may reduce the museum's ability to address a broad and representative range of topics and themes. And it may reduce the number of opportunities for creative expression by the specialized curators the museum must attract and retain in order to fulfill its long-term mission. So, as with many of these problems, a reasonable balance must be struck between short- and long-term commitments.
(II. A Challenging Context—NMAH Strengths, Problems, Constraints, and Challenges)

F. Management Challenges

Clearly, the problems and constraints noted above amount to a major management challenge. That challenge is compounded, however, by four additional challenges that seem noteworthy in the current environment.

The challenge of managing transition

One might imagine an important national museum that, within a short period of time, experienced three things: major new gifts; rising public interest in its themes and content; and an orderly nation-wide search for a new director. This could be viewed as highly beneficial -- a wonderful opportunity for creative change, building on past success. But it would nonetheless constitute a major practical problem, the challenge of managing transition. That would be true if all were well to begin with. For the NMAH, however, the problem is more complicated. The large challenge that is ordinarily presented by transition is even larger for NMAH.

The challenge of building and sustaining the trust of the general public, professionals, and donors

Museums in general enjoy a bond of trust with the public. Among museums, NMAH enjoys a special and precious trust. It is visited by millions of school children for experiences recommended by their parents and teachers. It bears the implied imprimatur of national legitimizing authority. NMAH's special position of trust is one that many institutions would aspire to reach -- one very much harder to gain than to lose.

In the context of recent public controversies, the challenge of building and preserving trust might be seen as especially sensitive and important for NMAH. Private funds must be raised in large amounts without creating the perception or reality of excessive donor influence (discussed further below), and without succumbing to the general societal tendency to indulge excessive commercialism. And first-class historians and museum professionals must be attracted and retained in order to assure that exhibits not only have public appeal, but also are rooted in first-class scholarship.

The challenge of building and sustaining morale among museum professionals

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/2f.htm 11/12/2008
Evident anecdotal evidence suggests that many of the Museum’s professional staff are experiencing a sense of alienation or discontent. According to public statements by some, this is related, in part, to criticism of the terms of some recent gift contracts and the processes by which these were developed. Several other explanations -- ranging from budgetary pressures to vision -- also seem applicable. The Commission did not investigate and analyze the extent and causes of the morale problem. But its existence is obviously relevant as an additional challenge for management.

The challenge of managing donor relations

Managing relations with donors is a challenge for most museums. It is, in some ways, especially demanding for NMAH. The Museum not only enjoys a special place of trust that must be preserved as it seeks additional public and private resources to transform itself. But also, with the Museum’s special place of trust, there is a special obligation: to strive to be fair, accurate, sensitive to American values and the diversity of American experience, and broadly representative of what informed and responsible people take to be historical truth. This obligation cannot be transferred to any external parties -- though many share a commitment to it. To attend to this obligation, the Museum must retain control of content. This is not only a matter of ultimate responsibility. There is a complex set of internal and external processes that the Museum must coordinate in order to develop exhibit concepts and translate them into first-class historical exhibitions. Such exhibitions must be satisfactorily funded, rooted in scholarship, and capable of engaging and educating a large public audience. Throughout the process of developing them, the Museum must manage donor relationships with its obligations in clear and consistent view.

This ever-present challenge has recently been complicated by press attention and professional criticism with respect to issues of donor influence upon exhibits' content. Public attention has been sustained notwithstanding the Smithsonian's firm assertion that its policies and practices retain for the Museum all ultimate decision-making and control with respect to exhibit content. (See Appendix I.)

The recent withdrawal of a major gift in the face of disagreements between the donor and the Museum has been particularly visible to the public. This may have helped restore a degree of public confidence in the Museum's attention to its responsibility for control. But in the process of moving from the gift's announcement to its withdrawal, confidence has been undermined among both scholars and donors. That confidence must be restored.

It is, however, important to note the following as points of additional perspective:

- It is almost inescapable -- and not unreasonable -- that donors
have views about the use of their gifts. This is not new. It is at least as old as museums. It has lately become fashionable for some donors to make grants highly conditional, and to provide "hands-on" attention to management. This style of philanthropy presents special challenges for institutions that pride themselves on their independent integrity.

- Both public sector and private sector donors are capable of attempting to impose views that, in some cases, may not be fairly representative or academically responsible. On the other hand, donors may have the ability to provide valuable conceptual contributions (in addition to financial contributions). The Museum does not have a monopoly on good ideas. What the Museum does have is a responsibility to assure that the content of its exhibits meet certain standards of scholarship, quality, and integrity.

- In the context of scarce resources -- that is, for the foreseeable future -- the artful management of relations with both public and private donors will remain a demanding challenge.

- Although some find fault with recent management of Museum-donor relations, most of the Museum's major problems -- visible today -- antedate the gifts that have been the subject of recent press attention. So, while the artful management of donor relations is and will remain an important challenge, meeting it -- however well -- will not suffice as a means to address the Museum's need for what it has termed "transformation."

There is, finally, this additional complication for the management of the Museum:

**The challenge of assigning decision-making responsibility, and aligning the interests of those upon whom implementation must depend**

In the complicated current context, the challenge of deciding upon subjects and themes for exhibits -- and the related challenge of bringing a sense of coherence to the Museum -- may seem daunting. And because there is no limit to the number of possible ways to imagine ordering or re-ordering the Museum, any decision may be vulnerable to criticism for being somewhat arbitrary. But still, decisions must be made in order to bring vision and clarity to the process of renewal.

For both philosophical and practical reasons, therefore, it seems desirable that responsibility for decision making be well defined, and that the responsible decision maker(s) should command a sense of legitimizing authority -- both scholarly authority and political authority.

Some may tend to look outside the Smithsonian for decisions. The Congress, for example, may seem natural as a legitimizing political authority for a national museum. But the Congress is only partly responsible for NMAH funding. And, on the whole, it has been appropriately disinclined to get into matters of exhibit content. The NMAH
Board may seem another reasonable candidate. But while it engages in program review, it has been focused on issues of finance, technology, and governance more than content. As currently composed, its members are more expert in the former than the latter. In any case, it is strictly advisory. Few would suggest that private donors (or, for that matter, voluntary commissions) are appropriately representative. So, by both default and good reason, the conclusion emerges that, in some sense, "the Smithsonian" itself should decide.

But the Smithsonian is a large and complex organization. In looking within it, two considerations argue for placing substantive decision-making responsibility at the level of the Museum. One is the need for appropriate scholarship. The other is the need for substantial engagement in a dynamic process -- not merely a discrete one-time decision.

Decision making of the type that is required is, in fact, a complex and dynamic process that must extend over a long period. It is an iterative process, which must produce a reasonable degree of alignment both vertically and horizontally within the Smithsonian. Curators have an obviously important role to play. But curators at the Museum are, by design, organizationally divided according to areas of special competence. Therefore, the coordination of the integrative work of deriving or imposing coherence across organizational lines tends to fall to the Museum Director, along with his or her key staff. So, too, does the important challenge of managing the integration of internal and external points of view. But at the moment, although led by a very able and distinguished Acting Director, the Museum is without its official Director. That is a problem, which a nation-wide search is intended to remedy.

The search process for a new Director, therefore, is of fundamental importance in determining the effectiveness with which NMAH will meet the formidable challenges it faces. . . .

Table of Contents | III.A. Recommendations -->
III. Recommendations

A. Perspective on the Problems and Their Solution

Although the problems and challenges outlined above might be viewed as daunting, the Commission strongly believes that they are manageable. NMAH has the potential to retain its special place of trust within American culture, to sustain its unrivaled position as a repository for American historical collections, and to remain one of the most visited museums in the world. But its potential goes far beyond maintaining these important distinctions. It can also be transformed into a museum that is architecturally compelling; aesthetically appealing; engaging; celebratory; balanced; intellectually responsible; educationally effective; and readily comprehensible. The recommendations that follow are intended to help advance such a transformation.

The recommendations are presented under five headings: Architecture and Aesthetics, Visitor Orientation, Substantive Balance, Reach, and Implementation. Argument for the recommendations here is limited. (The Commission is prepared to supplement this Report with oral discussion, and looks forward to doing so.) The recommendations follow directly from the Commission's view of the Museum's problems. Indeed, the Commission's first two recommendations concern the conception of the Museum's problems.

RECOMMENDATION (1) re: THE PROBLEM

IN ORDER TO FOCUS ENERGY, RESOURCES, AND EFFECTIVE ACTION ON SOLVING THE MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING NMAH, THOSE PROBLEMS MUST BE SIMPLY CONCEIVED AND CLEARLY STATED: IN SPITE OF ITS GREAT STRENGTHS AND ITS JUSTIFIABLE POSITION AS ONE OF THE MOST VISITED MUSEUMS IN THE WORLD, NMAH IS IN NEED OF TRANSFORMATION. IT LACKS AESTHETIC APPEAL, COHERENCE, AND THE PERCEPTION OF SUBSTANTIVE BALANCE.

RECOMMENDATION (2) re: CARE IN ATTENDING TO THE COMPLEXITY OF SOLUTIONS

IN ORDER TO ADDRESS THESE SIMPLY-STATED PROBLEMS WITHOUT CREATING NEW PROBLEMS (OR COMPOUNDING EXISTING PROBLEMS), THE ELEMENTS OF SOLUTION MUST BE DEVELOPED AS A SET -- WITH SENSITIVITY TO THE COMPLEXITY OF INTERACTIONS AMONG PROBLEMS AND WOULD-BE SOLUTIONS.

That is, though stating the problems may be simple, solving them is not.
The plan for coherence must itself be coherent. Its execution requires special care. Including more subjects for exhibits can risk decreasing coherence. Attending to one school of thought can risk losing the confidence of others. Using private donations to relieve funding constraints can risk losing a special bond of public trust. Gaining long-term funding commitments can decrease future flexibility. Reducing the "attic effect" can decrease display space. And so on. The point here is obvious -- but no less serious for being so.
(III. Recommendations)

B. Recommendations to Improve the Architectural and Aesthetic Setting for NMAH Exhibits

The problem of "incoherence," while partly substantive, seems also to be a natural reaction to the physical incomprehensibility of the Museum -- and to its cluttered "attic effect." NMAH and the Smithsonian have commissioned preliminary work for architectural re-design. The Commission has had access to that work in process. The recommendations that follow derive, in part, from review of that work -- with an eye, especially, toward improving the visitors' perception of NMAH coherence.

RECOMMENDATION (3) re: OPENING THE CORE

THE COMMISSION AFFIRMS THE DESIRABILITY OF OPENING UP THE MULTI-STORY PHYSICAL CORE OF THE MUSEUM. Doing so would not only increase the aesthetic appeal of the museum. It would also reduce the sense of clutter, and increase visitors' ability to see where they are -- and where they might wish to go -- within the Museum.

RECOMMENDATION (4) re: A CENTRAL ICON

THE COMMISSION AFFIRMS THE MUSEUM'S INTENTION TO TREAT THE RESTORED STAR SPANGLED BANNER AS A CENTRAL ICON -- TO RETURN IT TO THE VISIBLE CORE OF THE MUSEUM AND PRESENT IT IN CONJUNCTION WITH AN INTERPRETIVE EXHIBIT ON THE FLAG'S MEANINGS AND USES THROUGHOUT AMERICAN HISTORY. Note: While special measures must (and will) be taken to assure that the flag is preserved and protected, it is also desirable that it be highly visible.

RECOMMENDATION (5) re: ADDITIONAL HIGHLY VISIBLE ICONS

THE MUSEUM SHOULD:

- (5-a) IDENTIFY SEVERAL OTHER EXTREMELY IMPORTANT AND POPULAR ICONIC OBJECTS IN THE NMAH COLLECTION, AND FIND WAYS TO HIGHLIGHT EACH OF THESE IN MAJOR SECTIONS OF THE MUSEUM;

- (5-b) ASSURE THAT HORIZONTAL LINES OF SIGHT ALLOW UNOBFSTRACTED VIEWS OF THESE ICONS FROM CONSIDERABLE DISTANCES, AND USE THEM AS ADDITIONAL MEANS TO IDENTIFY LOCATIONS AND TO ENCOURAGE THE DISPERSION OF VISITORS THROUGHOUT THE MUSEUM; AND
• (5-c) PROVIDE VIEWING AND SEATING SPACE NEAR EACH OF
  THESE ICONS (AND ASSOCIATED INTERPRETIVE EXHIBITS) IN
  ORDER NOT ONLY TO HIGHLIGHT THE ICONS, BUT ALSO TO
  ENCOURAGE A PAUSE FOR UNCLUTTERED REFLECTION ABOUT
  THEM.

Note: NMAH has appreciated the Commission's view on the need to
highlight a carefully chosen set of important and popular icons, and has
begun to incorporate this view in plans for the design of future floor
space. (Ten locations for "Landmark Artifacts" are identified in floor plans
in Appendix H.)

RECOMMENDATION (6) re: LIGHT

NMAH SHOULD RADICALLY IMPROVE THE MUSEUM'S LIGHTING BY
UPGRADING ITS ARTIFICIAL LIGHTING, AS NECESSARY, AND
RESTORING THE MUSEUM'S ACCESS TO NATURAL LIGHT THROUGH
SUCH GLAZING AS WAS PROVIDED IN THE MUSEUM'S ORIGINAL DESIGN
-- DOING SO IN A WAY THAT ALLOWS VISITORS TO BENEFIT FROM THE
EXTRAORDINARY VIEWS OF THE MONUMENTS AND MALL. Note: The
Commission appreciates the risks that light poses for the preservation of
some objects, but believes that this recommendation can be implemented
in a manner that attends responsibly to such risks.

RECOMMENDATION (7) re: ADDITIONAL EXHIBIT SPACE

THE MUSEUM SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE EXTRAORDINARY SCARCITY
VALUE OF ITS FLOOR SPACE ON THE MALL, AND SHOULD FIND
OPPORTUNITES TO MOVE TO OTHER LOCATIONS THOSE FUNCTIONS
THAT DO NOT NEED TO BE ON THE MALL OR IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO
THE EXHIBITS. Note: An example of the type of function that would be a
prime candidate for relocation is telephone response service. Similarly,
there would appear to be opportunities to gain precious space by
reconfiguring the existing basement cafeteria and shop, and, perhaps, by
selectively relocating stored materials that are not used frequently. This
is not meant as a broad or indiscriminate recommendation. The
Commission appreciates the value of maintaining certain research and
restoration capabilities and certain stored collections near exhibits.

RECOMMENDATION (8) re: CLUTTER

NMAH SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT BECAUSE COLLECTIONS AND THE
DESIRE TO DISPLAY THEM WILL CONTINUE TO GROW, ONE-TIME
EFFORTS TO REDUCE CLUTTER WILL NOT SUFFICE; AN INTERNAL
MECHANISM MUST BE ESTABLISHED TO RESIST CONTINUOUSLY THE
INEVITABLE PRESSURES TOWARD CLUTTER. Note: Opening the vertical
core, providing clear horizontal lines of sight, improving the lighting, and
increasing available exhibit space all may reduce the sense of clutter. But
any space can be filled or over-filled. It will take aesthetic discipline and
authority to counter-balance the understandable interest in displaying as
much as possible of NMAH's vast and growing collections.
RECOMMENDATION (9) re: SPACE FOR AN INTRODUCTORY EXHIBIT

THE COMMISSION STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THAT ARCHITECTURAL AND DESIGN CONTRACTS PLAN EXPLICITLY FOR THE INCLUSION OF A SUBSTANTIAL INTRODUCTORY EXHIBIT THAT IS READILY ACCESSIBLE TO VISITORS UPON ENTRY TO THE MUSEUM -- AS IS DISCUSSED FURTHER BELOW.

Table of Contents | III.C. Substantive Orientation of Visitors -->
(III. Recommendations)

C. Recommendations to Improve the Substantive Orientation of Visitors to the Museum

The recommendations above would open the Museum's vertical core, use several distinctive and highly visible icons to help orient visitors, improve lighting, provide access to recognizable external vistas, and reduce clutter. All this will help reduce visitors' sense of being lost physically. But the Commission also seeks to assure that visitors are not lost substantively.

Descriptive pamphlets, thematic maps, audio tapes, signs, and information booths all have obvious and important roles to play in helping orient visitors substantively. But at NMAH, more is required. Many parents and teachers who bring children and students to the Museum would welcome a serious -- and engaging -- substantive introduction to the full sweep of American history. At a minimum, many seek some sort of chronological orientation. But NMAH is not organized chronologically; and even if it were, it is too large for most people to walk through in a single visit. What is required is a substantive Introductory Exhibit. Accordingly, the Commission strongly recommends as follows.

RECOMMENDATION (10) re: CHARACTER OF INTRODUCTORY EXHIBIT

FOR BOTH EDUCATIONAL AND PRACTICAL REASONS, NMAH SHOULD DEVELOP AN INTRODUCTORY EXHIBIT THAT IS READILY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL VISITORS AS THEY ENTER THE MUSEUM, AND THAT HAS THE FOLLOWING BASIC CHARACTERISTICS:

- **(10-a) SUBSTANCE.** THE INTRODUCTORY EXHIBIT SHOULD BE SUBSTANTIVE, NOT MERELY A PHYSICAL GUIDE TO THE MUSEUM.


- **(10-c) APPEAL.** ALTHOUGH SUBSTANTIVE, THE EXHIBIT SHOULD BE HIGHLY ENGAGING. IT SHOULD USE, AS APPROPRIATE, VIDEO ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND OTHER COMMUNICATION DEVICES THAT ARE CAPABLE OF ATTRACTING AND SUSTAINING THE ATTENTION OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY VISITORS (WHILE RECOGNIZING, ALSO, THAT MANY VISITORS, SATURATED WITH ELECTRONIC DISPLAYS AND VIRTUAL REALITIES, MAY ALSO WELCOME DIRECT
EXPOSURE TO HISTORICAL OBJECTS).

- **(10-d) SCALE.** THE INTRODUCTORY EXHIBIT SHOULD BE LARGE ENOUGH TO SERVE AS A SERIOUS SUBSTANTIVE INTRODUCTION, BUT SMALL ENOUGH TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO VISIT SOME OTHER PARTS OF THE MUSEUM WITHIN THE 1.5 TO 2 HOURS THAT MOST NMAH VISITORS HAVE AVAILABLE. (Note: the working assumption is that this would mean an exhibit of 20,000 square feet.)

- **(10-e) THEMES.** THE EXHIBIT SHOULD INTRODUCE A FEW CENTRAL THEME LINES FOR THE EXAMINATION AND INTERPRETATION OF AMERICAN HISTORY -- THEMES WIDELY RECOGNIZED TO BE OF DEFINING IMPORTANCE FOR AMERICA: LIKE FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY, OPPORTUNITY, AND ENTERPRISE. Note: As suggested in the transmittal, above, such thematic concepts have had different meaning to different people; and their meaning has changed significantly over time. Further, these thematic concepts have been the subject of disagreement and conflict as well as the focus of unity. Responsible treatment of these points should not only help assure that the Museum meets its scholarly obligations; it may also serve to make the Introductory Exhibit more lively and engaging.

- **(10-f) BALANCE.** IN ADDRESSING SUCH THEMES, THE EXHIBIT SHOULD CELEBRATE AMERICA'S REMARKABLE STRENGTHS AND ACHIEVEMENTS WHILE ALSO TREATING FAIRLY AND RESPONSIBLY THE WAYS IN WHICH AMERICA MAY HAVE FAILED TO MEET THE HIGH STANDARDS IT HAS PROCLAIMED FOR ITSELF.

- **(10-g) LINKAGE.** IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE AND POWERFUL INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN HISTORY, THE EXHIBIT SHOULD USE STATE-OF-THE-ART MEDIA AND ROUTE-PLANNING TECHNIQUES TO HELP GUIDE VISITORS TO OTHER PARTS OF NMAH (AND THE SMITHSONIAN) THAT WOULD ALLOW THEM TO EXPLORE IN GREATER DEPTH SUBJECTS THAT MAY BE OF SPECIAL INTEREST.

Note: This concept of an Introductory Exhibit -- and a sense of its importance in addressing NMAH's problems -- emerged at the Commission's first meeting. It was greeted positively by NMAH staff, which then developed a series of papers describing elements of a proposal for such an exhibit. It was obvious, of course, that developing an appropriate and effective Introductory Exhibit would be costly -- and that NMAH had no funds committed for the purpose. It was also obvious that the exhibit would require precious floor space to which other funded commitments might make some claim. Nonetheless, the Commission took the view that the value and power of the proposed Introductory Exhibit was so compelling that the exhibit should be capable of attracting the interest of private donors.

Sharing the Commission's enthusiasm, NMAH explored the proposal with a principal benefactor of the Museum, who generously agreed with NMAH on the following: The best way to assure that the Introductory Exhibit is

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/3c.htm

11/12/2008
developed is for it to be funded with funds previously committed for another exhibit of about the same size (an exhibit which, in its original concept, was to have been focused principally on a set of American heroes). The Commission strongly endorses this conclusion. For the current version of NMAH's concept of an Introductory Exhibit -- largely consistent with the Commission's recommendation -- please see Appendix G.

Table of Contents | III.D. Assure Appropriate Balance -- >
(III. Recommendations)

**D. Recommendations to Assure Appropriate Balance in Exhibit Themes and Content**

There are many obviously relevant topics that seem to be underrepresented at NMAH. Among these (as noted in Section II) are: religion, immigration, slavery, America's westward expansion, Asian and Hispanic cultural influences, education, the role and mechanisms of capital formation -- and a long list of other subjects that are worthy candidates for inclusion. In addition, there are many themes that would seem to be central to America's self-concept, but underrepresented at NMAH. Obvious examples among these are: the struggle for freedom, the expansion of democracy, the quest for equal opportunity, and the incentives for enterprise and innovation. These have, of course, had different meanings at different times and for different groups. But it is exactly such differences that may help deepen the understanding of their meaning and importance.

One might easily imagine reorganizing NMAH in ways that would give greater emphasis to any or all of these underrepresented topics and themes. Indeed, there is a limitless number of ordering frameworks that might be applied to the Museum. That fact does not justify a decision to avoid choosing a clear ordering framework of one sort or another. It simply means that no choice will be wholly satisfactory. A well-ordered framework is bound to seem more coherent than a set that is random or the result of ill-conceived compromise and accommodation. And NMAH would be well advised to settle on such a well-ordered framework soon. But coherence is not the only relevant test. Because NMAH is inescapably involved with sensitive issues of national identity, and because NMAH is a national museum, it must assure that its process of developing themes and topics is perceived as having legitimacy. It must also assure that the product of its choosing meets certain tests of balance.

This may be particularly important in the current context. Public controversy has arisen about whether NMAH, having allegedly become inattentive to traditional concepts of American strength, may now be entering a process of over-correction under the alleged influence of recent donors. Such controversy is understandable. In some degree, it may be healthy. But it is obviously important to assure that, in working through such issues, NMAH and the Smithsonian should not lose the special trust and respect they have earned in their distinguished and celebrated history. It is with this objective in view that the Commission has decided it is important to articulate a set of guiding principles for developing themes and topics.
Before turning to these, it is important to emphasize three points of perspective:

- **NMAH is well aware of the need to be guided by principles.** In 2001, with the prospect of major new gifts in view, NMAH undertook an internal planning process that resulted in a plan titled "Transforming the National Museum of American History" (Appendix F). In the Commission's view, this plan did not go far enough to bring a defensible coherence to NMAH. As it should, the Museum continues to modify this plan. But it is noteworthy that the start of its "Transforming" plan (Section 2) articulates four principles -- stating that NMAH's presentation of American history must be informed, complex, diverse, and accessible. The Commission would affirm these principles.

- **NMAH curators are well aware of the general requirements for good exhibits.** A statement prepared for the Commission on behalf of a majority of the curators reads in part as follows: "[F]or us, exhibits should be educational and they should rely on objects. The subject matter is history, and it should be good history. We don't believe that there is much point in doing exhibits without these characteristics. But of course we also want people to come to see the exhibits and to learn from them. Therefore they need to be attractive and engaging. . . . There are some general rules: clear theme, uncluttered presentation, good lighting, easily-understood text. These are rules that can be broken, but only for good reasons. . . . It is important to note that we should not expect, or even want, every exhibit to appeal to all of our visitors. We should have diversity to match the diversity of needs of those that come through our doors. . . ." The Commission would affirm this general statement.

- **The four major new NMAH exhibits that have been funded and are being developed present interesting opportunities and serious challenges.** (Please see Appendix G for NMAH's summary descriptions of these exhibits.) Not least among the challenges is meeting the tests of balance discussed further below. This is especially important given recent public controversy. Yet it is important also to note that if the tests of balance are applied, the exhibits that are actually moving forward should prove to merit less controversy than early publicity suggested. Two of the new exhibits ("America on the Move" and "The Price of Freedom") do not treat new subjects; they promise to be major upgrades and renewals of exhibits that have long been popular at NMAH. A third exhibit, "For Which It Stands," has been previewed by the Commission. It promises to be well balanced, highly engaging, and professionally rooted in sound historical scholarship. A fourth major new exhibit was originally conceived as a presentation of American heroes. That conception has been replaced by the Introductory Exhibit recommended by the Commission and developed by NMAH. And the exhibit that was most controversial, focused on achievement and recent American achievers, is no longer planned. Differences between the Museum and the donor over the extent to which the exhibit should be historically rooted and the extent to which the donor should be involved in its development led to a withdrawal of
funding for this exhibit.

That said as a matter of perspective, it is nonetheless the case that NMAH is entering a challenging period of major change -- not only with the four new exhibits that are funded, but also with others that remain to be planned and financed. In this period of transformation and controversy, it is especially important that NMAH be perceived to be -- and in fact be -- guided by principles of the type that are recommended here under the general heading: balance.

RECOMMENDATION (11) re: BALANCE IN AND AMONG EXHIBITS

IN MAKING CHOICES ABOUT THE CONTENT OF INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITS AND THE SET OF NMAH EXHIBITS TAKEN AS A WHOLE, NMAH MUST STRIKE A REASONABLE BALANCE IN MEETING EACH OF THE FOLLOWING CHALLENGES:

■ (11-a) NMAH MUST IMPOSE A COMPREHENSIBLE SENSE OF INTELLECTUAL ORDER WHILE AVOIDING GROSS SIMPLIFICATION OR INATTENTION TO IMPORTANT SCHOOLS OF HISTORICAL THOUGHT.

■ (11-b) NMAH MUST STRIVE TO BE FAIR, ACCURATE, AND SENSITIVE TO AMERICA'S TRADITIONAL VALUES AND ASPIRATIONS AS WELL AS THE REALITY AND DIVERSITY OF AMERICAN EXPERIENCE.

■ (11-c) NMAH MUST NOT ONLY BE ATTENTIVE TO DIFFERING SCHOOLS OF HISTORICAL THOUGHT AND INTERPRETATION. IT MUST ALSO USE THESE DIFFERENCES AS ADDITIONAL MEANS TO ENGAGE VISITORS' INTEREST.

■ (11-d) NMAH MUST FAIRLY AND ACCURATELY TREAT ISSUES OF RACE, ETHNICITY, GENDER, CREED, AND OTHER DIMENSIONS OF DIVERSITY AS INEXTRICABLY ENTWINED WITH THE AMERICAN HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE, WHILE REDUCING POSSIBLE TENDENCIES TOWARD AN ARTIFICIAL SEPARATION OR SUB-CATEGORIZATION OF GROUPS WITHIN OR AMONG EXHIBITS. Note: If sufficient space is available (see Recommendation 14-c below), the Museum may proceed with a combination of large exhibits with broad historical sweep, in which issues of diversity are treated as an integral part; and smaller, specialized exhibits in which related sub-topics are also appropriately treated. This combination approach has merit. But Recommendation (11-d) is intended to apply whether the Museum uses the combination approach or moves mainly toward exhibits with broad historical sweep.

■ (11-e) IN PURSUIT OF THESE ELEMENTS OF BALANCE, NMAH SHOULD NOT MERELY SEEK COMPROMISES THAT SEEM TO RECONCILE THE INTERESTS OF CONFLICTING PARTIES. NMAH SHOULD SEEK TO ASSURE THAT ITS RESOLUTIONS OF ISSUES OF BALANCE MEET THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF SCHOLARSHIP.

Note: The processes of striking a balance often run the risk of
finding resolution in facile compromise or mere combinations of this and that. Clearly, NMAH must avoid this tendency. It must pursue the more difficult course of working its way toward resolutions that meet these general tests of balance while, also, meeting tests of moral, aesthetic, and intellectual integrity -- and achieving necessary clarity and force.

RECOMMENDATION (12) re: DONOR RELATIONS AND PUBLIC TRUST

RECOGNIZING THAT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DONORS WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE ESSENTIAL ROLES TO PLAY IN HELPING ADVANCE THE NMAH MISSION, AND RECOGNIZING THAT NMAH HAS SPECIAL TRUST OBLIGATIONS, WHICH DERIVE FROM ITS STATUS AS A NATIONAL MUSEUM, THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THE FOLLOWING WITH REGARD TO THE MANAGEMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH DONORS:

■ (12-a) VISION AND PLAN. NMAH, ITS BOARD, AND ITS NEW DIRECTOR SHOULD HAVE WELL IN MIND THAT, IN THE PURSUIT OF FUNDING, NMAH WILL GAIN POWER AND APPEAL BY DEVELOPING AND ARTICULATING A COMPELLING VISION AND PLAN. THAT IS, THE MUSEUM’S EFFECTIVENESS IN ATTRACTING DONORS ON THE MUSEUM’S PREFERRED TERMS WILL BE INCREASED TO THE EXTENT THAT THESE TERMS ARE CLEAR IN ADVANCE. IN GENERAL, SOLICITATION OF GRANTS SHOULD FOLLOW THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUBSTANTIVE CONCEPTS AND PLANS. Note: While Museum plans may be adapted where donors (or other outside parties) have ideas with merit, the burden of leadership in developing a compelling vision and plan is the Museum’s. In any case, NMAH substantive staff should be closely involved from the outset in the development and refinement of exhibit concepts.

■ (12-b) SMITHSONIAN CONTROL. THE SMITHSONIAN AND NMAH SHOULD CONTINUE -- AND GUARD AS FUNDAMENTAL -- THE POLICY THAT RESERVES TO THE MUSEUM FINAL CONTROL AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR ALL MATTERS OF EXHIBIT CONTENT. THEY SHOULD ALSO ASSURE THAT THE INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO THIS PRINCIPLE IS CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD BOTH INTERNALLY AND EXTERNALLY.

■ (12-c) SMITHSONIAN NEGOTIATING ADVANTAGE. WHILE RECOGNIZING THE SPECIAL IMPORTANCE OF DONORS IN A CONTEXT OF RESOURCE SCARCITY, THE SMITHSONIAN AND NMAH SHOULD REMAIN MINDFUL THAT THEIR SPECIAL NATIONAL STATUS, ENORMOUS VISITORSHIP, AND REPUTATION FOR EXCELLENCE GIVE THEM A COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE IN NEGOTIATING WITH POTENTIAL SPONSORS, AND IN RESISTING THE GENERAL TENDENCY TOWARD COMMERCIALIZATION. THE SMITHSONIAN SHOULD NOT AND NEED NOT BE REDUCED TO LOWEST-COMMON-DENOMINATOR STANDARDS. Note: There are lines beyond which gifts said to be charitable in their motivation look more and more like promotion and advertising; and in the world of charitable giving generally, those lines are frequently
crossed. By resisting this general tendency, the Smithsonian not only helps preserve its credibility; it also helps increase the prestige value of sponsors' discrete association with the Museum.

- **(12-d) PUBLIC INFORMATION.** WITH AN EYE TOWARD REDUCING WHAT MIGHT OTHERWISE BE PUBLIC MISINFORMATION, AND INCREASING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE REALITY OF SMITHSONIAN CONTROL AND THE QUALITY OF SMITHSONIAN DECISION MAKING, THE SMITHSONIAN AND NMAH SHOULD:

  (i) REVIEW AND STRENGTHEN THEIR POLICIES FOR THE TIMELY PUBLIC RELEASE OF INFORMATION DESCRIBING THE CONCEPTS AND CONTENTS OF PLANNED EXHIBITS, ALONG WITH RELEVANT SUMMARY INFORMATION CONCERNING ASSOCIATED CONTRACTUAL TERMS; AND

  (ii) IN ANTICIPATION OF THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION ABOUT FUNDING SOURCES, HELP DONORS PREPARE FOR THE UNUSUAL (OFTEN UNFAMILIAR) DEGREE AND CHARACTER OF PUBLIC ATTENTION THAT ASSOCIATION WITH A NATIONAL MUSEUM ENTAILS.

- **(12-e) BALANCE.** GIVEN THE PUBLIC CONTROVERSY THAT HAS DEVELOPED WITH RESPECT TO SOME RECENTLY FUNDED OR PROPOSED EXHIBITS, AND GIVEN THEIR IMPORTANCE IN THE COMING STAGE OF THE MUSEUM'S DEVELOPMENT, SPECIAL CARE SHOULD BE TAKEN TO ASSURE THAT THE TESTS OF BALANCE RECOMMENDED HEREIN ARE APPLIED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW EXHIBITS.

- **(12-f) NEW DIRECTOR.** THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING DONOR RELATIONS AND RELATIONS WITH BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONSTITUENCIES SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD TO REQUIRE EXTRAORDINARY SKILL ON THE PART OF A NEW NMAH DIRECTOR -- A FACT WHICH (ALONG WITH MANY OTHER IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS) MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE CURRENT SEARCH. Note: These challenges are always demanding. In the current context, however, there is a special need for the new Museum Director to build and sustain the trust of Museum professionals, donors, and the public. (See related Recommendations (16-c) and (17-c), Section III.F.)

Principles that may guide the planning of exhibits and the management of donor relations are important, but abstract. They take on more concrete meaning as they are translated into real exhibits occupying real floor space. On the way to that reality, the development of specific exhibit floor plans is an obviously important step.

NMAH's floor plan for current exhibits (Appendix C) must be transformed. That is partly because the current layout is widely viewed as unsatisfactory, and partly because new exhibits must be accommodated. With the need for transformation in mind, NMAH developed several new floor plans and presented them to the Commission for review.
Commission is aware of the logistical and contractual requirements that act as constraints upon NMAH (Appendix E), and the many challenges NMAH faces in trying to accommodate new ideas. So it is especially appreciative of NMAH's continuing efforts to develop a satisfactory future floor plan. The latest NMAH iteration available to the Commission (floor plan "H") is at Appendix H. The following recommendations are partly a response to this floor plan. At the same time, the recommendations are generally relevant for the further development of future floor plans.

RECOMMENDATION (13) re: VIRTUES OF FLOOR PLAN "H"

THE COMMISSION AFFIRMS THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS OF NMAH'S LATEST FLOOR PLAN ("H"), AND RECOMMENDS THAT ANY FUTURE VERSION SHOULD, AT A MINIMUM, HAVE SUCH CHARACTERISTICS.

- **(13-a) EXISTENCE.** A SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED FUTURE FLOOR PLAN MUST (AND NOW DOES) EXIST. Note: This is not meant as a flippant suggestion. If the Museum is to control its future, and make incremental decisions that are ultimately to come together as a coherent whole, it must seriously plan for that future -- one measure of which is a floor plan to which the institution is committed.

- **(13-b) COMPREHENSIBILITY.** THE FLOOR PLAN MUST BE (AND IS) COMPREHENSIBLE, AND (SOMEWHAFT) CONCEPTUAL.

- **(13-c) INTRODUCTORY EXHIBIT SPACE.** THE FLOOR PLAN MUST PROVIDE (AND DOES PROVIDE) SUFFICIENT SPACE FOR THE INTRODUCTORY EXHIBIT THAT THE COMMISSION HAS RECOMMENDED -- IN A LOCATION THAT IS READILY ACCESSIBLE TO VISITORS UPON ENTRY TO THE MUSEUM.

- **(13-d) CLUSTERING.** THE FLOOR PLAN SHOULD (AND DOES) GROUP RELATED EXHIBITS AND ACTIVITIES TOGETHER. (Note: In floor plan H, such groupings include a cluster comprised of the related matters of Orientation and Introduction (both near the main floor entry); a combination of First Ladies and the American Presidency; and a single floor largely committed to Learning, Science, Medicine, and Invention.

- **(13-e) VISUAL ORIENTATION.** TO INCREASE THE SENSE OF OPENNESS AND FACILITATE VISITORS' SPACIAL ORIENTATION, THE FLOOR PLAN SHOULD (AND DOES):

  (i) OPEN THE VERTICAL CENTRAL CORE OF THE MUSEUM;

  (ii) LOCATE THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER AND ITS ASSOCIATED EXHIBIT CENTRALLY;

  (iii) PROVIDE HIGHLY VISIBLE SPACE FOR SEVERAL ADDITIONAL DISTINCTIVE ICONS IN THE SIX MAJOR SEGMENTS OF THE MUSEUM, ALLOWING THESE ICONS TO SERVE AS ORIENTATION POINTS, WITH OPEN HORIZONTAL LINES OF SIGHT TO THEM; AND
(iv) INCREASE VISITORS' VISUAL ACCESS TO WONDERFUL EXTERNAL VISTAS.

- **(13-f) CHANGING GALLERIES AND ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS.**
  NMAH MUST PROVIDE SUFFICIENT SPACE FOR SEVERAL SMALLER GALLERIES TO ACCOMMODATE CHANGING NMAH EXHIBITIONS -- IN ORDER TO ALLOW A LARGER NUMBER OF SUBJECTS TO BE TREATED, AND TO PROVIDE A CREATIVE OUTLET FOR CONTINUING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT BY NMAH PROFESSIONALS. Note: Many highly important historical subjects remain untreated in Plan H. It provides two changing galleries on the main floor -- one principally for visiting exhibits developed elsewhere, and one that is largely set, focused on the processes of collecting. It provides an additional changing gallery on each of the other two floors. These are all desirable. But they may not be sufficient. NMAH would suggest that changing spaces should also be provided within the larger, fixed, long-term exhibits. Unless such spaces are identified and secured, it seems unlikely that they may develop in the manner that is hoped.

**RECOMMENDATION (14) re: ADDITIONAL FLOOR PLAN REQUIREMENTS**

WHILE FLOOR PLAN "H" REPRESENTS A USEFUL STEP FORWARD, IT STILL LEAVES SEVERAL IMPORTANT ISSUES THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED BY NMAH AND ITS NEW DIRECTOR. AMONG THESE ARE THE FOLLOWING:

- **(14-a) RACE, ETHNICITY, GENDER, CREED.** AN OBJECTIVE FOR NMAH SHOULD BE TO TREAT ISSUES OF RACE, ETHNICITY, GENDER, AND CREED FAIRLY AND ACCURATELY AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF AMERICAN HISTORY. THAT IS, THESE ISSUES SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD AS INEXTRICABLY ENTWINED WITH THE TREATMENT OF MOST MAJOR SUBJECTS THAT NMAH WOULD BE EXPECTED TO TREAT, RATHER THAN AS REPRESENTATIONAL ADD-ONS OR ENTIRELY SEPARATE SUBJECTS. IN MOVING TOWARD FULFILLMENT OF THIS OBJECTIVE, HOWEVER, NMAH MUST BE SENSITIVE TO THE NEED TO MANAGE THE PROCESS OF TRANSITION IN A WAY THAT DOES NOT ALIENATE INTERESTED GROUPS, BUT RATHER, EARN THEIR TRUST. Note: Floor plan "H" does not directly address Recommendation (14-a) with respect to issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and creed. It could be understood as intending to move in the direction of the stated objective. Yet, it is not clear that it intends to do so. Even if it were clear, a statement of intent would still be a long distance from actual implementation. So, as it is -- or viewed in isolation -- floor plan "H" may entail an undesirable and unnecessary risk of alienating groups NMAH does not mean to alienate. As NMAH develops its major new exhibits -- intending to treat issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and creed appropriately within them -- it must take care to assure that its plans are well-known and credible. Sufficient credibility must be established to assure that any necessary decommissioning of exhibits that now may represent particular racial or ethnic groups is neither misunderstood nor alienating.
(Please see a related Note at recommendation (11-d).)

- **(14-b) THEMES.** WHILE APPRECIATING THAT FLOOR PLAN "H" IS AN ADVANCE RELATIVE TO THE STATUS QUO, NMAH SHOULD CONTINUE TO WORK TOWARD A MORE THEMATIC, ENGAGING, AND ACTIVE CONCEPTUAL LOGIC. Note: This does not require radical adjustment. Working with floor plan "H", it might simply mean shifting from an inert series of topics like "Science, Medicine, and Technology" to a more active version of the same subjects -- say, "The Quest for Knowledge and Technological Progress." Similarly, it might mean shifting from "Timelines, Identities, and Introductions," to something like "The Struggle for Freedom, Democracy, and Opportunity." These are not merely semantic changes. They seem likely to encourage more engaging and educational treatments and experiences.

- **(14-c) ADDITIONAL EXHIBIT SPACE.** RECOMMENDATION (7) (which seeks the relocation of functions that need not be on the Mall) MUST TAKE ON ADDITIONAL SIGNIFICANCE IN LIGHT OF RECOMMENDATIONS (13-f), (14-a), and (14-d). THAT IS, ADDITIONAL EXHIBIT SPACE SHOULD BE FOUND NOT ONLY AS A MATTER OF OPTIMAL USE OF VALUABLE FLOOR SPACE. ADDITIONAL EXHIBIT SPACE WOULD ALSO HELP MEET THE NEEDS TO ADDRESS MORE SUBJECTS, RETAIN AND ATTRACT FIRST-CLASS PROFESSIONALS, INCREASE FLEXIBILITY, AND MANAGE TRANSITION SENSIBLY.

- **(14-d) LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS.** HAVING ALREADY MADE LONG TERM COMMITMENTS FOR A LARGE PROPORTION OF ITS FLOOR SPACE, NMAH MUST APPROACH ADDITIONAL SUCH COMMITMENTS WITH GREAT CAUTION IF IT IS TO PRESERVE FLEXIBILITY AND TREAT ADDITIONAL TOPICS -- ESPECIALLY IF IT IS UNABLE TO SECURE ADDITIONAL EXHIBIT SPACE.

Table of Contents | III.E. Increase the Museum's Reach -->
(III. Recommendations)

E. Recommendations to Increase the Museum's Reach—Through Digitization and Use of the Web

The Commission was charged to meet only a limited number of times. In its limited time, the Commission was able to identify more issues than it was able to address responsibly. The largest of the under-addressed issues involves the implications of new technology -- especially digital electronic communication -- for NMAH's role and reach.

At one level, the issue is straightforward. Millions of people visit the Museum in Washington. Many, many millions more people might benefit from exposure to the Museum's collections and programs -- but are unable to visit Washington. The rapid advances in digitization and electronic communication have made it technologically possible to use the web (and other media) to reach distant audiences at low cost (or no cost) to the "virtual visitors." Collections can be digitally photographed, stored, and retrieved. So, too, can exhibits. And, somewhat more ambitiously, interesting educational programs can be developed that draw upon NMAH collections and exhibits.

Thus, these questions naturally arise:

- Should NMAH modify its traditional conception of what it means to "visit" the Museum?
- Should NMAH radically expand its operative concept of its addressable audience?
- Should NMAH increase its relative emphasis on investment in the use of digital technology and programming to address the vast audience that is available electronically?

The Commission would answer all three of these questions, "Yes." The Museum's leadership would, also. It would note that exhibits and collections are now being digitally stored, and that initiatives have been taken in web-based communication. These are important first steps. But the reality is that the allocation of NMAH resources to digital technology and programming is insignificant relative to other NMAH activities (a fraction of one percent). And, perhaps more importantly, it is low relative to the opportunities that digital technology would seem to present. That much is clear to the Commission.

But exactly what should be done is not. The issues go beyond questions
of resource allocation. They include questions that are important and
difficult, such as the following:

- What is the relative importance of an active educational role in
  relation to the NMAH mission? (Note: This issue would be important
  in the absence of digital electronic technology. But the arrival of
  that technology -- and its enormous potential to increase the reach
  of NMAH -- give the mission question special relevance and
  urgency.)

- What is the role of the Smithsonian relative to other institutions
  involved with educational programming (both electronic and non-
electronic)? What are the Museum's comparative advantages?
  Under what terms should collaborative arrangements be struck with
  public educational institutions and authorities? Private not-for-profit
  institutions? Private for-profit institutions?

- And what is the best way to staff and organize for a much more
  substantial NMAH presence in the electronic domain? With what
  internal bureaucratic implications? And what implications for
  fundraising and budgeting?

The Commission would have required more time (and a broader base of
expertise) to address such questions with the depth of attention they
deserve, and to develop specific recommendations in which it could have
confidence. Given its limited tenure, however, the Commission offers only
this one general recommendation:

**RECOMMENDATION (15) re: DIGITIZATION AND REACH**

AFTER SOLICITING ADVICE FROM APPROPRIATE EXTERNAL EXPERTS,
NMAH SHOULD RADICALLY INCREASE INVESTMENT TO BRING ITS
COLLECTIONS AND PROGRAMMING TO THE VAST AUDIENCE IT MIGHT
REACH THROUGH DIGITAL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION.

Table of Contents | III.F. Implementation -->

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/3e.htm 11/12/2008
(III. Recommendations)

F. Concluding Recommendations With Regard to Implementation

The Commission is aware of the already extensive history of commission reports that have served only to fill bookshelf space -- no more. Quite naturally, this is one line of history to which this Commission would prefer not to add. With that concern in mind, the Commission offers these additional recommendations, which are intended to increase the chances that the foregoing Commission recommendations may have operational effect.

RECOMMENDATION (16) re: SEARCH FOR NEW DIRECTOR

RECOGNIZING THAT THE NEW NMAH DIRECTOR WILL BE, PERHAPS, THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT INDIVIDUAL IN SHAPING THE MUSEUM'S TRANSFORMATION, THE COMMISSION RESPECTFULLY RECOMMENDS THAT THE SEARCH COMMITTEE BE DIRECTED AS FOLLOWS:

- **(16-a) DISCUSSION WITH CANDIDATES.** THE SEARCH COMMITTEE SHOULD EXPLICITLY DISCUSS THIS REPORT WITH SERIOUS CANDIDATES FOR THE NMAH DIRECTORSHIP, AND SHOULD SOLICIT CANDIDATES' SPECIFIC VIEWS WITH RESPECT TO EACH OF ITS RECOMMENDATIONS.

- **(16-b) EXPLICIT ASSESSMENT.** IN ADVANCING TO THE SECRETARY AND THE REGENTS ITS OWN RECOMMENDATION OF A NEW DIRECTOR, THE SEARCH COMMITTEE SHOULD EXPLICITLY ASSESS THE PREFERRED CANDIDATE'S VIEWS OF THIS REPORT AND CAPACITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING ITS RECOMMENDATIONS.

- **(16-c) PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS.** THROUGHOUT THIS REPORT, PERSONAL QUALITIES AND CHARACTERISTICS ARE EXPLICITLY AND IMPLICITLY IDENTIFIED AS IMPORTANT FOR A NEW DIRECTOR. MANY OF THESE DO NOT LEND THEMSELVES TO MEASUREMENT VIA CONVENTIONAL CREDENTIALING, AND MUST BE ASSESSED IN A MANNER THAT REQUIRES ARTFUL JUDGEMENT. IN ADDITION TO QUALITIES THAT ARE NOT INDICATED BY FORMAL CREDENTIALS, HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT ALSO TO ATTEND TO TWO INESCAPABLE FACTS:

  1. AN NMAH DIRECTOR MUST KNOW AMERICAN HISTORY;
  2. AN NMAH DIRECTOR MUST COMMAND THE RESPECT OF PROFESSIONALS IN THE FIELDS OF HISTORY AND MUSEUM MANAGEMENT.

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/3f.htm 11/12/2008
Note: Most members of the Commission believe that, as a practical matter, this means that an NMAH Director should have superior scholarly and museum credentials.

RECOMMENDATION (17) re: ALIGNMENT OF VIEWS

RECOGNIZING THAT THE NEW DIRECTOR WILL REQUIRE THE SUPPORT OF THOSE ABOVE AND BELOW HIM OR HER IN A LARGE INSTITUTIONAL BUREAUCRACY, THE SECRETARY AND THE BOARD SHOULD ATTEMPT TO ASSURE THAT:

- **(17-a) VISION.** THEIR VISION OF THE DESIRED NMAH TRANSFORMATION AND THE NEW DIRECTOR'S VISION MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH EACH OTHER.

- **(17-b) STRATEGY.** THE SECRETARY, THE BOARD, AND THE NEW DIRECTOR MUST BE SATISFACTORILY ALIGNED WITH RESPECT TO THE STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING THAT TRANSFORMATION.

- **(17-c) SUPPORT.** THE NEW DIRECTOR MUST HAVE THE INSTITUTIONAL BACKING AND PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CAPACITIES NECESSARY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN THE SUPPORT OF NMAH PROFESSIONALS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY.

RECOMMENDATION (18) re: DIRECTOR'S TENURE

RECOGNIZING THAT A TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY THAT IS WORTH PURSUING WILL TAKE MANY YEARS TO IMPLEMENT, THE SECRETARY, THE REGENTS, AND THE BOARD SHOULD CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS REQUIREMENT FOR POSSIBLE TERMS, PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES, AND INCENTIVES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW DIRECTOR'S CONTRACT.

RECOMMENDATION (19) re: BALANCE TESTS

RECOGNIZING THAT THE COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDED PRINCIPLES FOR ASSURING EXHIBIT BALANCE ARE ABSTRACT, AND THAT THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITS IS LONG AND DYNAMIC, NMAH SHOULD STRUCTURE AN APPROPRIATE ADVISORY REVIEW MECHANISM TO ASSURE THAT THE TESTS OF BALANCE ARE REASONABLY ADDRESSED AT AN INTERMEDIATE REVIEW STAGE IN THE COURSE OF EXHIBIT DEVELOPMENT.

RECOMMENDATION (20) re: MONITORING

THE SECRETARY SHOULD REQUIRE THE ACTING DIRECTOR AND NEW DIRECTOR TO REPORT TO THE BOARD AND THE SECRETARY AS FOLLOWS:

- **(20-a) SPECIFIC PLANS.** THE ACTING DIRECTOR AND NEW DIRECTOR SHOULD DEVELOP SPECIFIC PLANS FOR THE
IMPLEMENTATION OR NON-IMPLEMENTATION OF EACH OF THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS.

- **(20-b) STRATEGY.** AFTER APPROPRIATE REVIEW OF SUCH PLANS, THE NEW DIRECTOR SHOULD PREPARE AND SUBMIT A LONG-TERM STRATEGY THAT ADDRESSES SPECIFICALLY THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN THIS REPORT.

- **(20-c) PROGRESS.** HAVING IN VIEW THE PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMISSION, AS WELL AS A LONG TERM STRATEGY AND PLAN FOR NMAH, THE NEW NMAH DIRECTOR SHOULD REPORT PERIODICALLY TO THE SECRETARY AND THE BOARD -- IN DETAIL -- ON PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING EACH COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION (OR APPROVED ALTERNATIVES THERETO).

In being educated about the Museum, and in preparing to draft this report, the Commission has been aided throughout by NMAH staff. They have been highly professional, consistently cooperative, and unfailingly constructive. Members of the Commission wish to express formally their appreciation, respect, and thanks for the excellent support afforded to the Commission by NMAH staff.

The Commission has concluded its deliberations with great respect for NMAH's extraordinary strengths; with a deeper appreciation for the complexity of the challenges facing the Museum; and with confidence that, as the problems identified here are addressed, NMAH will not only remain a fundamentally important national treasure. It will also be a museum of the very highest quality: aesthetically appealing, intellectually responsible, thematically interesting, educationally effective -- a worthy focus of compelling interest and a justifiable source of national pride.

Table of Contents | Appendix A: Commission --

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/3f.htm
Appendix A: Commission Methodology and Membership

Methodology

On June 29, 2001, the Smithsonian Institution announced the establishment of a Blue Ribbon Commission on the National Museum of American History (NMAH). Commission members were appointed by the Smithsonian’s Board of Regents. A list of members, along with brief biographical summaries, is provided further below.

The Commission was instructed to meet approximately three times over a six-month period. It has done so formally in Washington on June 29 and October 11, 2001, and on January 10, 2002. The Commission has also met via telephonic conference on November 28 and November 30, 2001. In addition, individual members and sub-groups of members have visited selectively with curators and NMAH administrators in order to pursue matters of special interest to them.

The Commission was asked to review NMAH's strategic plan, existing exhibits, and collections. It has done so. It has also reviewed audience studies and architectural design studies commissioned by NMAH. And it has been briefed orally and in writing on the following additional subjects: NMAH education programs, affiliates programs, traveling exhibits, digitization of collections, use of the web, plans for new exhibits, budgetary constraints, logistical constraints, future floor plans, policies with regard to naming opportunities and sponsorship, and internal processes for developing exhibits and determining exhibits' content. Some of the materials reviewed by the Commission are specifically referred to in the Commission Report, and are therefore included with the Report as Appendices. (The full set of materials reviewed by the Commission may be made available to interested addressees of the Report through the courtesy of the Office of the Director, NMAH.)

The Commission was charged "to advise on the most timely and relevant themes and methods of presentation for the Museum in the 21st century." In order to develop its views and recommendations with respect to this broad charge, the Commission has not only met and deliberated as noted. Members have also engaged in extensive e-mail correspondence, exchanging comments with respect to successive drafts of the Commission Report. Although the members of the Commission represent diverse perspectives, they have approached Commission deliberations with the objective of presenting a single set of recommendations that could be supported by the entire Commission. The Report with which this Appendix is associated enjoys such support.
The Commission has been assisted in all its efforts by NMAH staff. It is
the Commission’s view that throughout this process, NMAH staff have not
only been cooperative, well informed, helpful, and professional; they have
also been open, accessible, and highly responsive.

There are, of course, risks associated with a Commission proceeding on a
basis that seeks consensus and depends heavily on staff support from the
institution it is charged to review. The three principal such risks are
interrelated. The Commission might put bold or extreme positions aside
in pursuit of compromise; it might be co-opted by staff; and it might be
inclined toward incremental solutions, closer to the status quo than might
otherwise be the case. The Commission has been aware of such risks. It
does not believe it has fallen victim to them. Indeed, it is the
Commission’s view that there are countervailing benefits associated with
the basis on which it has proceeded. The principal such benefits are the
following. The work of the Commission may be more realistic for its being
informed by those who are directly involved with the institution, upon
whom implementation must depend. And the development of a broadly
based consensus may improve the chances that recommendations are
actually adopted and implemented.

The Commission was instructed to report early in 2002 to the
Smithsonian Board of Regents, the Secretary of the Smithsonian, the
Under Secretary for American Museums and National Programs, the
NMAH Board, and the Acting Director of NMAH. It is doing so. The
reporting deadline necessarily has meant that some important subjects
have been treated less thoroughly than they might have been. On the
other hand, the Commission has been mindful that not long after its
establishment, the Director of NMAH resigned. Recently, a nation-wide
search for a new Director commenced in earnest. Clearly, the new NMAH
Director must play a central role in addressing the issues about which the
Commission was asked to advise. The Commission has come to
appreciate that by reporting in early March, the Commission’s work might
help inform the search process, and thereby have more effect than might
otherwise be likely. Accordingly, the Commission has decided not only to
report in early March, but also to orient its Report in a manner that may
be especially relevant for the selection of a new Director.

In transmitting its Report, the Members of the Commission are thereby
officially terminating the Commission’s work. They have, however, offered
to elaborate orally upon their analysis and conclusions if the addressees
of the Report wish to have the benefit of such additional commentary.

Below please see a list of Commission Members along with brief
summaries of associated biographical information.

Members of the Blue Ribbon Commission on the National Museum
of American History

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4a.htm

11/12/2008
Richard Darman, Commission Chair. Richard Darman is a Partner of the Carlyle Group, a global private equity firm, and Public Service Professor (on leave) at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Darman served in the Bush cabinet (1989-93) as Director of the Office of Management and Budget. He is a member of the Board of the National Museum of American History.

Tom Brokaw. A resident of New York, New York, Tom Brokaw, anchor and managing editor of "NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw," has been the anchor of NBC news since 1981 and sole anchor since 1983. Among his accomplishments as a journalist, he can count conducting the first exclusive U.S. one-on-one interview with Mikhail Gorbachev, being the first anchor to report on human-rights issues in Tibet and interviewing the Dalai Lama, and the only anchor on the scene when the Berlin Wall fell, among many others. In December 1998, Brokaw wrote his first book, The Greatest Generation, an account of the generation of Americans born in the 1920s who came of age during the Great Depression and fought in the Second World War.

Ellsworth Brown. Ellsworth Brown was elected President and CEO of Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh, which includes Carnegie Museum of Art, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Carnegie Science Center, and the Andy Warhol Museum. He is also the President of the publicly funded, privately operated Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Dr. Brown has been a life trustee of Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh since his appointment in 1993. Immediately prior to this, he had been director of the Chicago Historical Society since 1981. Brown was president of the American Association of Museums from 1990 to 1992 and has chaired the Association's nominating committee and its governance task force. He was a Museum Assessment Program visitor and continues to chair and serve on visiting committees for the AAM Accreditation Commission. He has lectured and spoken often on museum issues to national conferences and symposia.

Sheila P. Burke (ex officio). Sheila P. Burke, MPA, RN, FAAN, is the Smithsonian's Under Secretary for American Museums and National Programs. She began work on June 2000. Before joining the Smithsonian Institution, Burke was executive dean and lecturer in public policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass. She served as the chief of staff to former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole from 1986 to 1996 and was elected to serve as secretary of the Senate in 1995. Burke served as deputy chief of staff to the Senate Majority Leader from 1985 to 1986, as deputy staff director of the Senate Committee on Finance from 1982 to 1985, and as a professional staff member of the committee from 1979 to 1982.

Spencer R. Crew. Spencer R. Crew, Ph.D. is the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer for the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. As a member of the National Museum of American History's staff, Dr. Crew curated the exhibition, "Field to Factory: Afro-American
Migration, 1915-1940." Dr. Crew was named acting director of the National Museum of American History in 1992 and in 1994 was appointed its director. During Dr. Crew's tenure, numerous exhibitions opened, including "Piano 300," "Fast Attacks and Boomers: Submarines in the Cold War," "Preserving the Star-Spangled Banner, The Flag That Inspired the National Anthem," "Within These Walls...," and "The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden." Dr. Crew served as one of the curators on the "American Presidency" exhibition.

**Loni Ding.** Loni Ding is a veteran independent filmmaker, television producer and university instructor with nearly 30 years experience creating prize winning programming designed for a broad viewing audience. Focused on creating public history, she has produced more than 250 broadcast programs, including five series, and four primetime specials for US public television and international broadcast on wide ranging subjects: children's multicultural series, archaeology, and Asian American history. Along with her independent productions, Ding has produced programs collaboratively for the California Historical Society, US Department of Education, San Francisco Opera Center, and KQED-TV public television. A former John Simon Guggenheim Fellow and Rockefeller Foundation Intercultural Media Arts Fellow, the San Francisco Examiner has called her "a master of her craft" and the National Asian American Telecommunications Association (NAATA, 2001) etched their 19th Anniversary crystalline tribute: "through her work, our true stories will live forever..." Ding teaches media analysis and hands-on production in the Comparative Ethnic Studies Department of the University of California, Berkeley, where she has been a part-time faculty member since 1980.

**David Herbert Donald.** David Herbert Donald is Charles Warren Professor of American History and Professor of American Civilization Emeritus at Harvard University. Among his many books are *Lincoln's Herndon* (1948; revised edition, 1989); *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War* (1974); and *Lincoln* (1995). He has received numerous honors, including two Pulitzer prizes for biography, the Lincoln Prize from the Lincoln and Soldiers Institute at Gettysburg College, a Christopher Award, and the Jefferson Davis Award of the Museum of the Confederacy.

**Eric Foner.** Eric Foner, DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University, received his doctoral degree in American history at Columbia University under the supervision of Richard Hofstadter. He has taught as a visiting professor at Cambridge University, as Pitt Professor of American History and Institutions; Moscow State University as Fulbright Lecturer in American History, and Oxford University as Harmsworth Professor of American History. Professor Foner's publications have concentrated on the intersections of intellectual, political and social history, and the history of American race relations. Dr. Foner has also served as president of both the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians.
Diane Frankel. Diane Frankel is program director for children, youth, and families at the James Irvine Foundation located in San Francisco, CA. Prior to joining the James Irvine Foundation, Mrs. Frankel was appointed by President Clinton to serve as director of the Institute of Museum Services in Washington, D.C. from 1993 to 1999. She is the founder and former executive director of the Bay Area Discovery Museum, former dean of the School of Liberal and Professional Arts at John F. Kennedy University, former associate director of education for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and served as an outreach educator for the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. Mrs. Frankel serves as a member of the Smithsonian Council.

Ramón A. Gutiérrez. Ramón A. Gutiérrez is Professor of Ethnic Studies and History, founder and Director of the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, and founding Chair of the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of California, San Diego. A John D. and Catherine MacArthur Prize winner, Gutiérrez is the author of a number of books, among them When Jesus Came the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846, Contested Eden: California before the Gold Rush, Mexican Home Altars, and Festivals and Celebrations in American Ethnic Communities. Gutiérrez was recently elected to the Society of American Historians, a national honor society that encourages literary distinction in the writing of history and biography. He was also a member of the National Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities between 1994-2001.

Neil Harris. Neil Harris is Preston and Sterling Morton Professor of History at the University of Chicago, where has taught since 1969. He holds degrees from Columbia, Cambridge, and Harvard Universities, and chaired the Smithsonian Council for part of the 1980s and 90s. A former Chairman of the Board of the American Council of Learned Societies, and a trustee of various libraries and museums, Harris has been a Getty Scholar and Guggenheim Fellow. His teaching and writings focus upon the evolution of American culture, high and low, and its supporting institutions.

K. Tsianina Lomawaima. K. Tsianina Lomawaima (Creek/Cherokee) is Professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona. Professor Lomawaima has written extensively on American Indian education, including the books They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School (1994, University of Nebraska Press: 1993 North American Indian Prose Award, 1995 American Educational Association's Critics' Choice Award) and Away From Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences (2000, Heard Museum) with B. Child and M. Archuleta, as well as articles in professional journals such as Harvard Educational Review and American Ethnologist. She also has co-authored, with David Wilkins, Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law (2001, University of Oklahoma Press). She has served as a proposal and fellowship reviewer for the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4a.htm

11/12/2008
the Udall Foundation.

**Roger Mudd.** Roger Mudd left academe with a Master's Degree in history for a 50 year long career in journalism. He began with The Richmond, VA, *News Leader*. For more than 30 years he covered Congress and Politics for CBS News, NBC News and the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour on PBS. After teaching at Princeton and Washington and Lee, he returned to television as the documentary host for The History Channel.

**Don T. Nakanishi.** Don T. Nakanishi is the Director and Professor of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. A political scientist by training (BA, Yale, 1971; PhD, Harvard, 1978, both in political science) he is the author of over 80 books, articles, and reports on the political participation of Asian Pacific Americans and other ethnic and racial groups in American politics; educational policy research; and the international political dimensions of minority experiences. A former national president of the Association of Asian American Studies, as well as co-founder of the interdisciplinary Amerasia Journal, he was appointed by President Bill Clinton to the Civil Liberties Public Education Board, which administered grants for public education and research activities relating to the 1988 Civil Liberties Act, which provided for a national apology and monetary payments to the surviving Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during World War II as a result of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066.

**Chet Orloff.** Chet Orloff is Director Emeritus of the Oregon Historical Society and Adjunct Professor of Urban Studies and Planning at the Portland State University. A former teacher (1972-75) in Afghanistan, he founded and edited the journal *Western Legal History* and was senior editor of the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*. He has been active in museum and historical agency affairs since 1970 at the regional and national level and now operates Oregon History Works, advising and consulting in historical interpretation and public history.

**Marc Pachter (ex-officio).** Marc Pachter, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, first joined the Gallery staff in 1974, serving as chief historian and assistant director. An author and editor with a particular interest in cultural history and biography, Pachter is regarded as the Smithsonian's "master interviewer." He was the Smithsonian's deputy assistant secretary for external affairs from 1990 to 1994, overseeing *Smithsonian* magazine, SI Press, and membership and development programs. Later, he was appointed counselor to the Secretary, with oversight of electronic media issues, chairing the institution's 150th anniversary, and facilitating key international partnerships. He was appointed director at the National Portrait Gallery effective July 2000. In September 2001, Mr. Pachter was asked by the Secretary of the Smithsonian to assume the position of Acting Director of the National Museum of American History, Behring Center while continuing to serve as the Director of the National Portrait Gallery.

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4a.htm

11/12/2008
William F. Russell. William F. Russell was voted by *Sports Illustrated* and HBO Sports as "the greatest winner of the 20th century." No one in any sport has ever equaled the achievements of William F. Russell including 11 world championships in 13 seasons, two NCAA championships, Olympic gold medal, six time NBA Most Valuable Player and 12 time All-Star. Mr. Russell was also the first African-American coach in any professional sports. Russell and his team are credited with creating the modern game of basketball. In 1987 as part of the NBA's 50th anniversary, Mr. Russell was also selected as "the most dominant player in history of the NBA." Mr. Russell's time is now divided between being a motivational speaker, a sports commentator, an advocate for mentoring and as an author. In 1969 *Go Up for Glory* became his first best seller. That was followed in 1979, when *Second Wind: the Memoirs of an Opinionated Man* was published and also became a best seller. In April, 2000, he was the subject of the HBO Documentary "Bill Russell: My Life, My Way" which was nominated for an Emmy award and in May, 2001 he published his third book, *Russell Rules...Eleven Lessons in Leadership from The 20th Century's Greatest Winner* which was on the NY Times best seller list for 12 weeks.

Richard Norton Smith. Noted presidential historian and award-winning author Richard Norton Smith has been named director of the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas. Smith is a nationally recognized authority on the American presidency and a frequent guest on PBS' News Hour with Jim Lehrer. He has written or collaborated on eight books, three of them with Dole. He was the executive director of the Gerald R. Ford Foundation in Grand Rapids, Mich., and previously served as director of the Ford, Reagan, Hoover, and Eisenhower presidential libraries.

John Kuo Wei Tchen. John Kuo Wei Tchen is an historian and cultural activist. Tchen is currently the founding director of the Asian/Pacific/American Studies Program and Institute at New York University, Associate Professor in the Gallatin School of Individualized Study and Associate Professor of History in the Faculty of Arts and Science. Before going to NYU, Tchen was director of the Asian/American Center at Queens College of the City University of New York, an associate professor of the Department of Urban Studies at Queens College, and on the Ph. D. faculty in Sociology at the Graduate Center (CUNY). In 1980, he and Charles Lai co-founded the New York Chinatown History Project, which has enabled the largest Chinese settlement outside of Asia to document and explore and share its 160-year-long history. It was recently renamed the Museum of Chinese in the Americas.

Charles H. Townes. Charles H. Townes was a staff member of Bell Laboratories from 1939-1947, then successively Associate Professor of Physics, Professor, and Chairman of the Physics Department at Columbia University between 1948 and 1961. In 1959-1961, he was in Washington as Vice-President and Director of Research of the Institute for Defense Analysis. He was Provost and Institute Professor at the Massachusetts
Institute of Technology from 1961-65, and University Professor at the University of California from 1967 to the present. In July 1986, he became University Professor Emeritus, and in 1994, Professor in the Graduate School. Dr. Townes' principal scientific work is in microwave spectroscopy, nuclear and molecular structure, quantum electronics, radio astronomy and infrared astronomy. He holds the original patent for the maser and with Arthur Schawlow, the original laser patent. He received the Nobel Prize in 1964 "for fundamental work in quantum electronics which has led to the construction of oscillators and amplifiers based on the maser-laser principle."

**Laurel Thatcher Ulrich.** Laurel Thatcher Ulrich is one of the nation's foremost historians of early America and a recognized pioneer in the field of women's history. Ulrich is currently the James Duncan Phillips Professor of Early American History at Harvard University and serves as director of the Charles Warren Center for American Studies. Her second scholarly manuscript, *A Midwife's Tale*, a meticulous reconstruction of the world of colonial Maine midwife Martha Ballard based upon Ballard's journal, garnered many honors including the 1991 Pulitzer Prize for History. PBS aired a documentary, "A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard," based upon Dr. Ulrich's work. Her latest work, *The Age of Homespun*, recreates the history of early New England through close study of museum artifacts.

**G. Edward White.** After a clerkship with U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren and a year as a visiting scholar at the American Bar Foundation, G. Edward White joined the Virginia law faculty in 1972. From 1990 to 1992, he was the Sullivan & Cromwell Research Professor, and from 1994 to 1997 the E. James Kelly Research Professor. He also has been a Guggenheim Fellow, twice a senior fellow of the National Endowment for the Humanities, a fellow at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a member of the American Law Institute. Of Dr. White's nine published books, four won American Bar Association Gavel Awards, one received the James Willard Hurst Prize, the American Historical Association's Littleton-Griswold Prize, the Scribes Award, and the Order of the Coif's Triennial Book Award from the Association of American Law Schools.

**Don Wilson.** Don Wilson has held a variety of administrative positions in both state and federal historical agencies. He served as Archivist at the Kansas State Historical Society from 1967 to 1969. In 1978 he was appointed the Associate Director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison, WI, a post we held until 1981. He then became the first Director of the Gerald R. Ford Library and Museum in Ann Arbor, MI from 1981 to 1987. In 1987 President Regan nominated him to be the 7th Archivist of the United States and he was sworn in to that office in December 1987. In 1993, Dr. Wilson left the nation's capital to assume the position of Executive Director of the George Bush Presidential Library Center at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX. He is currently President of Don W. Wilson and Associates, a consulting firm specializing

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4a.htm 11/12/2008
in the management of non-profit institutions, located in Staunton, VA.

Note: The composition of the Commission changed slightly between the time when its membership was originally announced and the time when the Commission reported. Three members found that they were unable to participate sufficiently, and concluded that they should withdraw. A fourth member, Spencer Crew, resigned as Director of NMAH in September 2001. Until that point, he had been an ex officio member of the Commission. Upon relinquishing his official position with NMAH, he was appointed as a regular member. Following Spencer Crew's resignation as Director, Marc Pachter was named Acting Director of NMAH, at which point he became an ex officio member of the Commission.

Table of Contents | Appendix B: Collections -->
Appendix B: Overview of NMAH Collections

The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History is responsible for the collection, care and preservation of more than 3 million objects. The collections represent the nation's heritage in the areas of science, technology, sociology and culture. The collections include: first ladies' gowns, a Samuel Morse telegraph, locomotives, tools, an Alexander Graham Bell telephone, flags, American-made quilts, Muhammad Ali's boxing gloves, Duke Ellington's sheet music, and TV puppet star Howdy Doody.

The Museum is organized into six collecting divisions. A description of the collections and the curatorial expertise in each division follows:

Archives Center

This division oversees about 9,000 cubic feet of archival and documentary materials that complement the Museum's collections of artifacts and support the study of related topics in American life. Some collections come as part of a larger donation that also include artifacts held in other divisions; other collections have information relating to artifacts, donors and other individuals represented in exhibitions and collections. Strengths of the Archive Center's more than 500 collections include:

- **Advertising** - These collections include 19th-century ephemera and print, radio and television advertisements documenting major post-World War II-era campaigns.

- **American Enterprise and Technology** - This collection includes the personal papers and business records of such figures as Allen B. DuMont (television), Earl S. Tupper (plastics), Tom Carvel (ice cream), and Leo H. Beakeland ("Bakelite").

- **American Music** - Highlights include the Duke Ellington collection of unpublished music, sound recordings, business records, photographs and other materials; the Sam DeVincent Collection of illustrated American Sheet Music; and the records of the Pratt Read (piano keyboards) and Wurlitzer (organs and other instruments) companies.

Cultural History

This division focuses on the everyday life of Americans. The collections and research specialties range from the material aspects of the home and

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4b.htm
workplace to traditional folk arts and 20th-century popular culture, visual arts, and music. The division has seven major collecting and program areas:

- **Business and Consumer Culture** - These collections consist of 20th-century merchandise from the Headville, W.Va, post office and general store, as well as artifacts from the Hills Bros. Coffee Company, Walter Landor Package Designs, advertisements, menus, shopping carts, handbills, and signage.

- **Education, Civic and Voluntary Organizations** - Artifacts from these collections are associated with teaching, scouting, youth and fraternal groups, police service, and fire fighting. The department houses two complete schoolrooms, each with teaching equipment, school desk patent models, textbooks, uniforms, and insignia.

- **Ethnic and Religious Communities** - These collections include artifacts produced by ethnic groups and are generally identified with their occupational, domestic, and religious activities. Among them are furniture, food-related devices, clothing, tools, ritual devices, decorations, and folk arts and crafts belonging to Europeans, Latinos, Arabs, Asians, Gypsies, Jews, and Christians.

- **Hand Tools** - This collection includes more than 5,000 traditional American tools, chests, and simple machines for working wood, stone, metal, leather, and shell largely from the 1800s and early 1900s. Trades represented include carpenter, stone carver, blacksmith, shoeshine man, ice cream cone maker, and garbage collector.

- **Musical History** - These collections relate to the history of music and the development of instruments and performance styles and techniques of European and American music. NMAH possesses approximately 5,000 keyboard, string and wind instruments -- one of the world's most comprehensive collections of musical instruments. Sound recordings, sheet music, jazz artifacts, memorabilia, and a growing iconographic file support the collections. The division is also home to the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra and the Smithsonian Chamber Music Society. These world-renowned performing arts organizations use original sheet music and period instruments from the collections.

- **Popular Entertainment and Mass Media** - These holdings include artifacts of 19th- and 20th-century commercial theater, film, radio, recordings, and television. Among the many objects are Hollywood props, movie posters and publicity stills, sheet music, puppets, theater programs, and 50,000 sound recordings from 1903 to the present.

- **Program in African American Culture** (PAAC) - The purpose of PAAC is to research, document, and preserve the cultural legacy of Americans of African descent through public programs, publications, and other media. Materials and documents associated with PAAC are housed in the Archives Center, where the most requested collections are the Civil Rights Movement and the Gospel Music
Collections.

- **Sports, Recreation and Leisure** - These collections focus on artifacts used in competitive sports and recreation on all levels, including equipment, clothing, awards, souvenirs, stadium objects, playing cards, camping gear, and fitness equipment.

**History of Technology**

This division is concerned with the history of technology and its relationship with American society and culture.

- **Agriculture and Natural Resources** - This collection includes 200,000 objects pertaining to the growth and development of the nation's farming, fishing, forestry, and mining industries. Of particular interest are documents and artifacts relevant to specific trends in particular regions and communities. The objects fall under six categories: Agriculture; Food Technology; Forestry and Wood products; Fisheries and Whaling; Mining and Metals; and Petroleum and Oil Refining. The natural resources collection consists of such items as a Kelly converter, oil drilling equipment, wood samples, miners' hats and safety lamps, and documentary material dating from the Civil War to the present. This is one of the largest collections at NMAH.

- **Armed Forces History** - These collections document the history of the men and women of the armed forces of the United States through superb collections of American and limited foreign ordnance, firearms and swords; U.S. Army, Navy Marine, Army Air Force, and Coast Guard uniforms and insignia; national and military flags and banners; military and naval accouterments; and naval ship plans and archives. Key objects include the Star-Spangled Banner, the flag that inspired the national anthem; and the Gunboat Philadelphia, sunk during the Revolutionary War.

- **Engineering and Industry** - This collection encompasses three areas: Mechanical and Civil Engineering, Manufacturing, and Mechanisms. The collection includes over 100,000 objects with strong emphasis on the process of industrialization and its social and environmental effects.

- **Transportation** - This collection documents the evolution of rail, water and road transportation. The collection holds more than 200 land vehicles, including locomotives, streetcars, motor vehicles, bicycles, and carriages, as well as other artifacts and apparatus related to vehicles and vessels. The objects are supported by a large archival collection that includes ship design plans, photographs, and locomotive models. Well known objects are the "John Bull" locomotive, built in 1841 in England for use in the U. S. and now the oldest operable locomotive anywhere; the 1866 Dudgeon Steam wagon, one of the earliest American cars; a Tucker Sedan; a 1913 Ford Model T; and Evel Knievel's motorcycle.
Information Technology and Society

This division develops, preserves, studies and interprets collections in the areas of computing and mathematics, electricity, graphic arts, numismatics, and photographic history.

- **Computing and Mathematics** - This collection includes computers and related electronic devices, software, records, and ephemera that document the evolution of computers and their pervasive effects on modern American society. The collection is particularly rich in 19th- and 20th-century objects pertaining to the history of mathematics.

- **Electricity** - These collections document the history of electricity, including lighting devices, motors and generators; communications technology, including telegraphy, magnetic recording, telephony, radio, and television; and lasers, transistors, and integrated circuits. Examples of Thomas Edison’s inventions along with other representatives of the early development of electrical power are part of this collection.

- **Graphic Arts** - This comprehensive collection includes 45,000 objects documenting the history and technology of printing and printmaking. The collection includes printing presses, type, matrices, engraving tools, and plates, as well as small collections of tools used in the related crafts of paper making and book binding. The holdings also include examples of printing for the blind, bank note engraving, and printed maps. The collection of prints contains work by artists of all nationalities and dates from the 15th-century to the present. The collection also documents the history of the news industry in this country, dating from colonial times.

- **Numismatics** - These collections encompass the entire spectrum of materials illustrating the historical development of money since early times. Particularly well represented are coins, medals and currencies from ancient Greece, the Far East, and Russia. The strongest areas of the collections are U.S. coins and currency, from colonial times to the present. In addition, the collections include a broad array of medals and commemoratives, as well as credit cards and debit cards, and one of the first ATM machines.

- **Photographic History** - This collection focuses on the worldwide history of the technology and practice of photography from its invention in 1839 to the present with special focus on photographic systems and photographic preservation. Photographs in this collection are directly related to the aesthetic, technical, or scientific history of photography. The collection includes over 150,000 images, 10,000 pieces of apparatus, and 300 patent models.

Science, Medicine and Society

This division is concerned with the history of science and technology as
they relate to American culture.

- **Biological Sciences** - These collections include molecular biology and biotechnology instrumentation; special apparatus and instrumentation used for field and laboratory research and in classroom education; artifacts documenting the social and political history of biology; artifacts relating to the roles of women and minorities in science; and trade literature associated with these areas.

- **Chemistry** - These collections include apparatus and instrumentation for inorganic, organic, and biochemistry. The focus is on natural and synthetic polymers (plastics).

- **Medical Sciences** - These collections are among the largest and most comprehensive of its kind in the world. They consist of objects related to many fields of the health sciences and areas of health care, such as dentistry, pharmacy, public health, and molecular medicine. These collections are supported by trade catalogues, advertising literature, posters, business records, and audiovisual and manuscript materials.

- **Modern Physics** - This collection consists of instruments and apparatus used in the study of elementary particles and particle acceleration; it also includes numerous artifacts related to quantum electronics such as atomic clocks and atomic magnetometers.

- **Physical Sciences** - These collections include apparatus of astronomy, chemistry, classical physics, meteorology, navigation, and surveying which are used for research, education, or practical purposes.

**Social History**

This division focuses on the public and private life of Americans from the 17th-century to the present.

- **Ceramics and Glass** - These collections contain more than 30,000 ceramics and glassware made, used and marketed in America, including table, kitchen, toilet, decorative, archaeological, and industry wares.

- **Costume** - These collections consist primarily of garments and accessories worn by Americans of all socioeconomic levels, from the late 17th-century to the present. They contain approximately 30,000 items that document what Americans looked like and how their clothing was made and sold.

- **Domestic Life** - These collections consist of approximately 40,000 objects documenting American home life from the time of European settlement to the recent past. They include houses and outbuildings, as well as objects used to maintain them, and objects of home activities such as food preparation, consumption,
recreation, and cosmetics.

- **Political History** - The more than 100,000 objects in this collection relate to the political history of the United States, including the largest collection in the nation for the study of political campaigning and political advertising—techniques, symbols, and devices. Also significant are collections associated with presidential campaigns, the White House and the First Ladies, and the women’s rights, labor, and Civil Rights movements.

- **Textiles** - These collections consist of more than 50,000 items such as organic and synthetic fibers, yarns and fabrics; woven objects such as shawls, baskets and linens; and machines, tools, and implements related to the history of textiles technology. The collections also house the National Quilt Collection of over 370 quilts, as well as over 4,000 patent models of 19th-century inventions.

Prepared by NMAH Staff
March 2002
Appendix C: Current NMAH Exhibit Floor Plan
Appendix D: NMAH Budgets: Fiscal Years 1993-2002

The chart below represents budget information compiled by NMAH staff. The following definitions and explanations are intended to help with interpretation.

FEDERAL BASE BUDGET:
A line item in the S.I.'s Budget to Congress; Until recent years was the primary source of support; Except for a special one year allocation of $2 million dollars for the Presidency exhibit in 01, museum has seen consistent Congressional & Castle cuts resulting in a decade of net reductions which, coupled with two buyouts, has cut the federal roles from 400 to 282 and eliminated many core museum functions.

FEDERAL POOLS:
Annual Castle allocations to support specific high priority programs like Information Technology, Latino Program, Research Equipment and Building Maintenance.

FEDERAL INDIRECT:
Best estimate of the federal support supplied indirectly by the Castle to cover infrastructure needs including building renovation, security, horticulture, utilities, general counsel, contracting, finance and many others.

SI DIRECT:
Annual Castle allocation supporting four positions (including Director) and misc. expense.

SI POOLS:
Annual allocations supporting research travel and special exhibitions.

BUSINESS ACTIVITIES:
Funds earned through individual entrepreneurial activities and jointed museum/SI business activity ventures.

ENDOWMENT REVENUE:
Fairly small number of endowments until recent years. Addition of the Lemelson, Hammond, Axlerod & Jackson endowments are the reasons for the sharp increase in revenue.

GIFTS:
Historically not very large until recent introduction of major capital campaign. Lemelson, Behring, Reynolds, Polo are most notable recent givers.

GRANTS/CONTRACTS:
Federal sources, usually very low. Exceptions include NPS support of SSB and DOT support of AOTM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEDERAL BASE BUDGET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY $ (000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY-94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY-95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY-96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY-98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY-99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY-00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY-01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$16,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$15,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$16,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$16,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$17,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$18,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$19,189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$19,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4d.htm

11/12/2008
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY-93</th>
<th>FY-94</th>
<th>FY-95</th>
<th>FY-96</th>
<th>FY-97</th>
<th>FY-98</th>
<th>FY-99</th>
<th>FY-00</th>
<th>FY-01</th>
<th>FY-02</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel</strong></td>
<td>148</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Other</strong></td>
<td>2,078</td>
<td>2,054</td>
<td>1,969</td>
<td>1,739</td>
<td>1,703</td>
<td>1,499</td>
<td>1,293</td>
<td>1,401</td>
<td>3,228</td>
<td>859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>$17,957</td>
<td>$18,111</td>
<td>$18,055</td>
<td>$17,395</td>
<td>$17,742</td>
<td>$18,423</td>
<td>$18,973</td>
<td>$19,960</td>
<td>$22,444</td>
<td>$20,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEDERAL POOLS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY $000</td>
<td>FY-93</td>
<td>FY-94</td>
<td>FY-95</td>
<td>FY-96</td>
<td>FY-97</td>
<td>FY-98</td>
<td>FY-99</td>
<td>FY-00</td>
<td>FY-01</td>
<td>FY-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>$230</td>
<td>$460</td>
<td>$571</td>
<td>$168</td>
<td>$440</td>
<td>$230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEDERAL INDIRECT</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY $000</td>
<td>FY-93</td>
<td>FY-94</td>
<td>FY-95</td>
<td>FY-96</td>
<td>FY-97</td>
<td>FY-98</td>
<td>FY-99</td>
<td>FY-00</td>
<td>FY-01</td>
<td>FY-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRUST BUDGET</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY $000</td>
<td>FY-93</td>
<td>FY-94</td>
<td>FY-95</td>
<td>FY-96</td>
<td>FY-97</td>
<td>FY-98</td>
<td>FY-99</td>
<td>FY-00</td>
<td>FY-01</td>
<td>FY-02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.I. Direct</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>909</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.I. Pools</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Activities</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endowment Revenue</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts**</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>2,351</td>
<td>10,470</td>
<td>16,716</td>
<td>98,430</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants/Contracts</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3,080</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>$3,847</td>
<td>$12,246</td>
<td>$21,658</td>
<td>$101,050</td>
<td>$42,509</td>
<td>$34,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>INA</td>
<td>$26,819</td>
<td>$36,129</td>
<td>$46,202</td>
<td>$126,178</td>
<td>$70,393</td>
<td>$59,854</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INA = Information Not Available
* estimated
** Includes new gifts, new pledges, non govt. grants, deferred gifts, sponsorship commitments and risk loans

Table of Contents | Appendix E: Constraints -->

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4d.htm

11/12/2008
Appendix E: Logistical and Contractual Constraints

The following listing of Logistical and Contractual Constraints has been prepared by NMAH. It represents:

- 4,820 square feet of objects the cost of moving which seems prohibitive
- 14,865 square feet of functional space the cost of moving which seems prohibitive
- 109,578 square feet of exhibition space that represents contractual obligations to donors
- 34,423 square feet of space that represents highly popular exhibitions which NMAH believe should remain

* Italics indicate future exhibit

### NMAH 1st Floor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Square Footage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lemelson Center</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>1,420</td>
<td>Endowed program with active major donor; agreement to expand space for programs, offices and exhibit to 10,000 sq. ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands on Science</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>1,973</td>
<td>Lemelson interest in sponsoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dibner Library and Gallery</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>3,870</td>
<td>Endowed program (SI Library)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmichael Auditorium</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>4,420</td>
<td>Largest program venue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Suite</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>5,642</td>
<td>Historical space that should not be moved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>America on the Move</strong> (Road Transportation; Railroad Hall; Bridges &amp; Tunnels; Maritime)</td>
<td><strong>East</strong></td>
<td><strong>42,658</strong></td>
<td><strong>Opens 2003</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Time</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>4,465</td>
<td>Gift from Timex; opened in 1999 with a 10-year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4e.htm

11/12/2008
NMAH 2nd Floor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Square Footage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Exhibit</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>Open 2006 (includes SSB lab space)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome Center</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>3,200</td>
<td>Gift from NMAH Board member; commitment to concept but not location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daycare Center (SEEC)</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>2,463</td>
<td>SI commitment but can be relocated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within These Walls...</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>4,775</td>
<td>Gift from National Association of Realtors; opened in 2001 with 15 year commitment; house cannot be moved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Washington Statue</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Difficult to move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flag Hall</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>5,297</td>
<td>Commitment with History Channel for video thru 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Which It Stands</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>8,295</td>
<td>$18 million grant from Polo Ralph Lauren, US Congress, Pew Charitable Trust includes portion of Flag Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Ladies</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>8,970</td>
<td>Permanent and most popular exhibit, but can be relocated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NMAH 3rd Floor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Square Footage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hall of Musical Instruments</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>2,340</td>
<td>Performance space renovated In 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The American Presidency</td>
<td>Center</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>Funding commitments; popular exhibit; can move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archives Center</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>5,453</td>
<td>Public research facility, Can be relocated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price of Freedom</td>
<td>East</td>
<td>18,400</td>
<td>Opens 2004; includes Fast Attacks and Boomers,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4e.htm

11/12/2008
A More Perfect Union

East 7,500 A popular exhibit

Total Committed Space: 180,195 square feet

Prepared by NMAH Staff
March 2002

Table of Contents | Appendix F: 2001 Vision -->

NMAH staff under the direction of Dr. Spencer R. Crew prepared the following document. It was completed in June 2001.

Transforming the
National Museum of American History
Behring Center

1. Introduction

In response to the commitment of Smithsonian Secretary Lawrence Small and our donors to transforming the Museum, the National Museum of American History, Behring Center, has reviewed both the larger goals of our exhibition program and the array of exhibition concepts currently under consideration. What should a new NMAH look like? What should our priorities be? What history should we interpret to the public? What kinds of experiences should we offer our visitors?

These are the questions we will explore as we seek to transform the Museum.

NMAH has identified five basic goals for transforming the Museum:

1. We want visitors to come away from their Museum experience thinking about the simple yet complex question, "What has it meant to be an American?" That question is at the heart of "American Identity," the thematic focus for our new exhibitions, programs, and
other activities.

2. We want visitors to feel a part of the Museum -- to be engaged and challenged; to connect with the past and find places for their own experiences and memories; to experience fun and wonder; and to feel at home. Toward that end, we recognize the need to be advocates for our visitors, not just for history.

3. We want to lead the Smithsonian in the development and use of leading-edge exhibition techniques and experiences. Toward that end, we need to assess the range of techniques available internally and externally.

4. We want the Museum to be an active and changing place. We are committed to providing opportunities throughout the Museum for the changing and temporary exhibitions and active programming essential to keeping the Museum fresh and stimulating. Toward that end, we must commit resources to more than just opening new exhibitions.

5. We must lead the Institution in fostering affiliations and promoting outreach. Toward that end, we will aggressively pursue opportunities to forge and strengthen relationships with other museums and cultural organizations.

These goals provide the context for the discussion that follows.
2. Interpreting History

First and foremost, the National Museum of American History is committed to history -- stories of real people in real places told with real artifacts.

Our goal is to present history that is:

**Informed.** Visitors rely on us to provide accurate and current ideas about the past. Therefore, our exhibitions should be informed by the best work of historical scholarship. History is a constantly changing field, with new insights, new interpretations, new topics that speak to our contemporary culture's concerns and interests.

**Complex.** We know that history is infinitely more complicated than can be captured in a label, in a historical setting, in an exhibition. But visitors need to appreciate the complex forces that have shaped, and continue to shape, America. As our mission statement says, we present "challenging ideas about the American past."

**Diverse.** Rather than present a master narrative or a simple story of shared experiences, we want to share many stories, from multiple points of view, celebrating the complexity and richness of the American experience. Different voices give us a fuller picture of American history, each story telling us something about all the others.

**Accessible.** We want visitors to make meaningful connections with the past, to see themselves as connected to history and makers of history. We want to share the process of history -- how we use evidence, what we don't know, how we form historical conclusions, and how our understanding of the past changes. We hope that what visitors learn from us will make them better historians of their own lives, families, communities, and nations.
Our focus is on the theme of American Identity. What has it meant to be an American? How have individuals and communities defined themselves as American? Is there a single American identity or are there many? Early in the 19th century, Alexis de Tocqueville framed the question in a letter to a friend:

Picture to yourself . . . if you can, a society which comprises all the nations of the world . . . people differing from one another in language, in beliefs, in opinions; in a word a society possessing no roots, no memories, no prejudices, no routine, no common ideas, no national character. . . . What is the connecting link among these so different elements? How are they welded into one people?

But while de Tocqueville asked how the revolutionaries' "E pluribus unum" might be achieved, others questioned whether such a melding was possible. President Theodore Roosevelt thundered: "There is room here for only 100 percent Americanism, only for those who are Americans and nothing else." From a very different American experience came Ralph Ellison's answer: "America is woven of many strands; I would recognize them and let it so remain. Our fate is to become one, and yet many -- this is not prophecy, but description."

By considering the historical debates over the nature and meaning of American-ness, we can not only better appreciate our history but also better understand America today. And NMAH has an important role to play in this discussion -- providing historical depth and understanding in a unique setting where Americans from all walks of life can join in.

![Men in buffalo robes, Fred Hustrand History in Pictures Archive, North Dakota State University, Fargo](http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4f2.jpg)

What is the connecting link among these so different elements? How are they welded into one people?

-- Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835

While we look at cultural and individual identities -- race, class, religion, gender -- we are also interested in other ways that identity plays out. These include:

- a sense of place -- America as a place of many places, with special attention to geography, borders, landscapes, and the built environment
- creating community -- how we create community and maintain a
civil society, including politics and government, the armed forces, religion, and civic and cultural organizations

- generations -- Americans at home and in daily life, from families to stages of life and life passages

- global connections -- America and the world, including cultural influences and exchanges, international collaboration and competition, and transatlantic communities

- business and work -- making a living in America, looking not only at who works but what they do and where

- leisure and entertainment -- America at play, including everything from sports and culture to travel and shopping

- quest for knowledge -- how Americans know and see, encompassing education, invention and innovation, and human and religious knowledge and values

These and other ideas about identity will inform and shape our exhibitions, linking stories across the Museum and providing opportunities for visitors to explore what it has meant to be an American.

Table of Contents | Appendix F.3. Visitors to NMAH -->
(Appendix F: Transforming the National Museum of American History, Behring Center)

3. Visitors to NMAH

We develop exhibitions and programs for our visitors, not for our own edification.

From existing studies of the Museum's audiences, we know:

- Visitors and potential visitors consider NMAH to be both an educational institution and a place of entertainment. Audience studies show that Americans identify NMAH with heritage education and that they want to share this heritage with their children and grandchildren. They think of the Smithsonian as: "the American experience" and "an important museum for passing on to the kids the sense of what being American means."

- Visitors and potential visitors to NMAH are increasingly sophisticated in their expectations. They want an active experience, not a passive one, and are looking for ways to make connections between what they see in the Museum and in their lives and today's world. They come with a sense of inquiry either consciously or unconsciously: "What's here for me?" "How can I connect this program or exhibition to who I am, what I'm interested in, or what I need to know?"

- Visitors come to NMAH for the social experience as well as an interest in American history. Visitors, whether first-time or repeat, expect to have experiences involving real things, learning new information, and spending time with friends or family.

- Visitors expect both physical and conceptual orientation. Visitors have expressed particular interest in time lines in order to understand the relative nature of history as well as where to find the exhibitions that represent the time periods they want to explore.

- Visitors are interested in diverse stories told from multiple perspectives. According to focus groups, the three top-ranking
expectations in a museum of American history are:
- "learning about famous Americans and seeing the things that belonged to them,"
- "learning how ordinary people lived in the past," and
- "learning about the diverse backgrounds and beliefs of the American people."

- Visitors appreciate different approaches to history and varied presentation media. Focus groups reveal that people enjoy opportunities to:
  - "learn how new information about our past changes our understanding of history,"
  - "see historical events from different points of view," and
  - "learn how technology works."
Both adults and children emphasize how much they enjoy hands-on experiences that help them understand concepts that cannot be conveyed solely through static artifacts and labels.

- Visitors to NMAH are increasingly diverse, and what they take away from the experience is highly individual and unpredictable. Successful experiences must incorporate the visitors' need both to find something personally meaningful and to learn something new or reaffirm previous knowledge or experience.

These understandings provide the context not only for conceptualizing new exhibitions and programs but also for the larger planning and redesign of the Museum.

Table of Contents | Appendix F.4. Developing Exhibitions -->
(Appendix F: Transforming the National Museum of American History, Behring Center)

4. Developing Exhibitions

As a history museum, our top priority is history. While we share history through a variety of educational and public programs, our primary interpretive vehicles are exhibitions.

We are committed to developing history exhibitions that are:

Collections-based. Our exhibitions should always use real artifacts.

About people. Our exhibitions should tell the stories of real people, both ordinary and extraordinary.

Inclusive. Our exhibitions should include a wide range of stories, and every exhibition should include diverse cultures and communities.

Story-based. Our exhibitions should be built around stories that are particularly revealing, interesting, or for which we have strong collections. The exhibition medium works best when it provides focused attention, not when it tries to cover everything equally.

Relevant. Our exhibitions should encourage our visitors to think about their own responses to the topic, relate to their life and today's world, and share their ideas and stories with the Museum staff and with each other.

Varied in topic and approach. Our visitors have a variety of interests, and all should find something here that interests them. Exhibitions can
serve a wide range of purposes; they can be celebratory, technical, commemorative, fun, challenging, and more.

**Educational.** Every exhibition should offer visitors the chance to learn and should appeal to audiences with diverse learning styles. There should be opportunities for social, object-based, cognitive, and reflective experiences.

**Engaging and enjoyable.** Our visitors are here to enjoy themselves, not to be lectured at. In order for our exhibitions to teach, they should make it fun to learn.

**Visual and interactive rather than text-based.** Learning history in a museum differs from classroom and textbook learning, and our exhibitions should address that. Visitors do not want linear presentations and intensive, text-based learning. Instead, they want an array of experiences fitted to their schedules, their individual or group goals for the visit, their levels of knowledge, and their expectations of the Museum.

**Expertise-based.** NMAH has the largest and best staff of history museum professionals anywhere, and our exhibitions must be based on that expertise.

We are committed to developing exhibitions where visitors can grasp key ideas easily, have their curiosities sparked by thought-provoking and engaging interactive experiences, and connect with the past in an emotionally compelling way.

Within that context, we have developed a series of draft exhibition concepts. In developing these, we looked beyond the footprints of existing exhibitions, did not consider any exhibition to be protected, did not worry about costs, and looked not just at content but also at visitor experiences.

We have five exhibitions well under development:

1. **For Which It Stands** -- a 5,000-square-foot exhibition looking at the history of the Star-Spangled Banner within the context of patriotism, citizenship, and national identity.

2. **America On the Move** -- a 20,000-square-foot reworking of the Museum’s transportation exhibitions, looking at the integral role of transportation in American history and in our culture from 1876 to the present.

3. **Global Connections** -- a 15,000-square-foot exhibition on global information networks as powerful forces of social change in America and the world.

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4f4.htm

11/12/2008
4. **American Legacies** -- a 10-12,000-square-foot hall with an introductory gallery telling the story of the Museum's collections and suggesting the many ways that objects connect us to American history, and a changing exhibition gallery to showcase Museum collections and mount temporary exhibitions.

5. **The Welcome Center** -- a 3,000-square-foot center designed to help visitors make the most of their Museum visit.

In addition, we are developing three exhibitions funded by Kenneth E. Behring and by the Catherine B. Reynolds Foundation:

1. **We the People: American Achievers** -- an 18-20,000-square-foot hall exploring American history through the lives of Americans, ordinary and extraordinary. Scheduled to open in November 2004.

2. **The Spirit of America** -- a 10,000-square-foot interactive exhibition focusing on individual American achievers and their relentless urge to improve themselves, the country, and the world around them. Scheduled to open in November 2004.

3. **The Price of Freedom** -- an 18-20,000-square-foot hall of military history, focusing on the ideas and issues Americans have fought for and the costs they paid to defend those ideals. Scheduled to open in November 2006.

Some current exhibitions may be retained in whole or in part, but three that we are committed to retaining in one form or another for the near future are:

1. **First Ladies, Political Role and Public Image**

2. **The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden**

3. **Within These Walls...**

We have also identified several topics on which we have begun work. These are at a very preliminary stage -- no more than a few pages each -- and will undoubtedly change or even be replaced in response to ideas raised by the Blue Ribbon Panel, the Museum's space plan study, and visitor studies.

1. **Inventing an American Nation** -- on the first two centuries of
American experience, focusing on the tension between national identity and the diversity of colonial and early national societies and cultures.

2. *The Making of Modern America* -- on work, business, and economics, focusing on the social and technological changes that propelled America from an agricultural economy in the 18th century to an industrial and post-industrial nation in the 20th.

3. *America Plays* -- three exhibitions on the history of sports and leisure, entertainment, and music and performing arts and their roles in the creation of a distinctive American identity, with a fourth component that looks at the links among them and the entrepreneurs and media connecting them to the public.

4. *You Are What You Eat: American Food and American Culture* -- on the history of American food and eating habits, exploring American Identity through examining Americans' ever-changing relationships with the foods they produce, preserve, consume, reject, or lack.

5. *Latinos in America: Communities, Identities, and Expressions* -- on what it means to be an American, using the lens of Latino history and culture to look at race, language, nativity, religion, class, and other differences at the heart of American Identity.

6. *A Sense of Place* -- on America as a place of many places, encompassing home, community, region, and nation.

7. *Quest for Understanding: The Frontiers of Science* -- on the important role that science has played, and continues to play, in American history and life, from the smashing of atoms to the decoding of human life.

8. *Uncommon Wisdom: The History of Health and Healing in America* -- on how aspects of everyday life have changed over time as a result of shifts in knowledge of the human body, from the changing shapes and sizes of our bodies, to the doubling of life expectancy since 1940 and concomitant problems of aging, to the latest medical technologies for peering into the body and replacing body parts.

9. *Higher Education in America: A Widening Vision* -- on the role

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4f4.htm

11/12/2008
of American colleges and universities in establishing equality of opportunity.

The Museum has discussed how these proposed exhibitions and topics might be linked or connected. Possible connecting themes include home and community, business and technology, and national ideals and institutions. However, while useful in organizing space, such themes are not critical to visitor experiences and should not be imposed in a way that restricts flexibility in the future.

We should emphasize the value of presenting different stories and perspectives, using technology and other orientation vehicles to provide visitors with opportunities to identify and connect topics or ideas across exhibitions.

Table of Contents | Appendix F.5. Education and Programs-->
5. Education and Public Programs

Nowhere is the Museum's commitment to making history accessible clearer than in its education and public programs.

From school tours to performances, from curriculum materials to websites, our focus is on making the ideas, people, and objects of the past come to life for our diverse audiences. We want to engage everyone in history: young, old, individuals, families, and groups, at the Museum or as part of our outreach across the nation, whether on vacation or in school groups.

NMAH is committed to developing education and public programs that:

- firmly establish the Museum as a place for learning, enjoyment, and social interaction for all ages and interests.
- reach out to new and underserved audiences.
- extend the Museum's message beyond the walls of the building.
- encourage people to make connections with the past and to see themselves as makers of history.
- promote visual literacy and critical thinking skills as they apply to historical understanding.
- promote lifelong learning for young people and adults and create supporters for the study and preservation of American history.

Our programs and materials offer opportunities to explore, observe, study, think critically, try out, contemplate, discuss with friends, classmates, or experts -- and to simply enjoy the Museum. In developing new offerings, we build on leading-edge ideas in history and museum learning, what we know about our visitors and visitation patterns, changing national demographics, and our long and successful track record in producing popular and engaging programs.

To achieve these goals, we develop and present a varied mix of programs.
and materials that:

*Are content rich.* Our commitment to history is as strong in our programs and materials as in our exhibitions. From demonstrations to symposia, every activity is firmly rooted in historical scholarship.

*Explore America's diverse and complex past.* Our programs not only celebrate our multicultural past but also engage more culturally diverse audiences.

*Engage visitors in both hands-on and minds-on activities.* We interpret the Museum's collections and enhance our exhibitions through demonstrations, discussions, inquiry tours, role-playing, storytelling, and object analysis.

*Provide multisensory experiences.* Music, drama, dance, oratory, storytelling, and crafts can enliven the Museum and communicate ideas about the past in fundamentally different ways than exhibitions.

*Encourage public debate and discussion.* We sponsor a variety of forums for public debate and discussion on issues of current political or social interest.

*Maximize collaborations with other cultural and educational organizations.* We believe in the importance of collaborating with museums, historical societies, libraries, archives, and other organizations that share our commitment to history. Nowhere is this commitment stronger than with schools -- we provide museum resources to supplement the curriculum and promote history teaching through primary resources and the stories of real people.

*Reach audiences not only in the Museum but across the region and nationwide.* While many of our programs are presented at the Museum, we also sponsor offerings at venues in the larger Washington, D.C., region.

To further this work, the Museum is committed to:

*Developing a Center for Education.* This 20,000-square-foot facility will include:

- Storytelling Theater -- An intimate venue for family, school, and adult programming featuring storytelling, living-history interpreters,
and other interactive presentations. It will provide a permanent home for OurStory, the Museum's popular children's literature and history program series.

Logo for the OurStory program

- Hands On Learning -- A place where walk-in visitors and scheduled groups may sample creative hands-on and minds-on activities that require a degree of focus and quiet that cannot be achieved elsewhere in the Museum. These activities will be updated regularly to highlight the Museum's newest exhibitions and collections.

- Exhibition gallery -- An innovative, theme-based exhibition gallery highlighting historical stories of special interest to teens and families.

- Workshop and classroom spaces -- State-of-the-art classroom and workshop spaces offering specialized programming for teachers, students, adults, and families and training for volunteers, accommodating a range of activities from low-tech arts and crafts and informal presentations on artifacts to high-tech teacher training sessions and electronic outreach to students that cannot be experienced in exhibitions.

- Education resource area -- In this setting, educators may access supplementary teaching units, self-guides, materials for classroom use, and other information on museum-based teaching.

Enhancing public program venues. To provide the level of programming the public expects, NMAH needs both well-thought-out spaces within exhibitions and a central venue with larger capacity, better program amenities, improved accessibility, and state-of-the-art technical equipment, including broadcast and distance-learning capabilities.

Broadening our audiences. NMAH will re-create or reshape programs and materials for dissemination nationwide as tours, radio and television programs, recordings, and websites. Partners will include not only other Smithsonian museums and offices (including SITES and the Smithsonian Associates), but also our nationwide networks of SI Affiliates.

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4f5.htm
Education and public programs enhance and enliven our collections and exhibitions and are central to our plans for transforming the Museum, reinforcing our commitment to making history accessible to its multigenerational and increasingly diverse audiences.

Table of Contents | Appendix F.6. Technology --
(Appendix F: Transforming the National Museum of American History, Behring Center)

6. Advanced Information Technology

Advanced information technology is an important tool for transforming the National Museum of American History into a premier 21st-century institution.

Information technology is central to providing multiple ways for individual visitors to personalize their interactions with exhibitions. This will expand the boundaries of their relationship to the Museum and make their visits more interesting and valuable. Through the use of information technology, we will:

- **Help visitors begin their connection to the Museum** before they come and extend it after they leave.

- **Make exhibitions more enticing, exciting, intriguing, surprising, and satisfying**. Exhibitions for the new century must feel like living and changing environments that respond to visitors as they explore and interact with them. In the future, the interactive technology itself will become increasingly invisible as it creates a wider range of sensory experiences.

- **Enhance the ways that visitors experience** the unique objects that are the core of the Museum’s collections. In the future, this will include not only adding video or computer screens to exhibitions, but also animating the exhibitions themselves with computer-controlled theater that involves lighting, sound, and special effects.

- **Provide access to objects, information, and other Museum assets** that are not on public display, both for visitors who come to the Museum and those who visit Museum sites on the World Wide

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4f6.htm

11/12/2008
Web.

- **Provide special ways to make Museum exhibitions** and other assets more valuable to teachers and students at all levels of study. A special area of focus is providing resources to students for research projects or for programs such as National History Day and Science Fair. Increasingly, students turn to the World Wide Web, not local libraries, for research materials to meet their needs, and NMAH assets should be readily available to them.

- **Provide better access to exhibitions** for foreign-language visitors or visitors with various forms of disability.

![Kiosk developed especially for the exhibition The Disability Rights Movement containing all the information from the exhibition in alternative formats](image)

- **Provide personalized information** on Museum products and services that may be of special interest.

To accomplish these goals, the Museum is:

- **Expanding our broadband computer network** to all the public spaces in the Museum. Attaching all exhibition computers and audiovisual equipment to the same network not only dramatically increases the creative ways we can employ them, but also provides a more effective way of monitoring their operation. An expanded network will be the essential foundation for our improved use of information technology in future exhibitions.

- **Exploring ways to link our emerging public network with our offerings on the Internet.** For example, in the future we hope visitors will be able to "tour" exhibitions using remotely controlled video cameras. We are also interested in encouraging visitors to link pre- and post-visit experiences on our website with actual Museum visits.

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4f6.htm

11/12/2008
- **Exploring what devices to link to our broadband network**, as well as how to link them. We want standardized touch screens that can be used as multimedia interactive labels. An extension of this idea is using touch screens to activate changes in an exhibition setting: lights, sound effects, actions. We will be exploring wireless as well as wired network connections, and remote sensors that will trigger exhibition actions.

- **Exploring the use of handheld computer displays** to help personalize visitor experiences, especially the newer devices that have audio and video capability. Such devices have the potential to extend personalized experiences to every visitor who walks through a gallery.

Our Museum is an information-rich environment. Advanced information technology has the power to make exploring that environment an unforgettable experience -- one that dazzles, inspires, fascinates, and entertains as it educates.

Table of Contents | Appendix F.7. Essential Elements -->

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4f6.htm 11/12/2008
(Appendix F: Transforming the National Museum of American History, Behring Center)

7. Essential Elements

The Museum has also considered what elements in addition to exhibitions should be on the public floors of the "new" NMAH.

![The National Museum of American History, Behring Center](image)

The following priorities have been identified:

**Orientation**

- **A grand space** that unites the three public floors -- an "aha" experience

- **Areas for gathering and rest** -- both small areas within exhibitions and larger common areas

- **Visitor orientation** -- both a central Welcome Center and kiosks throughout the Museum for making connections among exhibitions

- **A time line** providing chronological context -- not as a separate exhibition but as an orientation component, perhaps available online in the Welcome Center and at kiosks throughout the Museum or as a graphic at the entrance to each exhibition, providing grounding for each exhibition experience

- **Information technology** integrated throughout the Museum -- to make it possible for visitors to customize their exhibition experiences

**Visitor Services**

- **Decompression/transition** areas at the entrances

- **Areas for gathering and rest** -- both small areas within exhibitions and larger common areas
Brown-bag lunch facilities for school groups

Other Exhibition Spaces

- Multiple changing exhibition spaces and showcases -- within galleries in one or two cases but otherwise for maximum flexibility not tied to a particular topic -- perhaps one per floor (5-10,000 square feet each, which can be subdivided for smaller shows), with a supporting endowment

- Changing gallery and new acquisition cases/spaces devoted to showcasing collections

- A testing or experimental space -- including a media lab -- to test design, education, or curatorial concepts

Exhibition staging and swing space

Programs

- Performance spaces within exhibitions or in common areas -- if supported with continuing funding -- flexibly designed so that they can also serve as rest/gathering areas

- Hands-on learning opportunities within exhibition spaces -- some facilitated (with funding support) but others stand-alone (not staffed)

- Mid-sized lecture room (seating 100) -- flexibly designed with videoconferencing or computer-based multimedia technology

- Theater/auditorium (seating 300-500) -- like Carmichael but accessible without entering the Museum -- flexibly designed for orientation, performances, and conferences, with green room/dressing rooms

Nobel Prize winner Jack Kilby, with the integrated circuit "chip" he invented in 1958

Tommy Flanagan at the keyboard,

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4f7.htm

11/12/2008
Special Centers

- **Lemelson Center** (10,000 square feet) -- prominently located, recognizing its central role in the work of the Museum and including an exhibition gallery, hands-on science center, and staff office space.

- **Education center** (20,000 square feet) -- including hands-on learning spaces, a theater space for storytelling and first-person programming, two workshop/classroom spaces (flexible for use not only for low-tech family programming, docent training, and conferences but also for high-tech school-oriented programs), children's experimental gallery, a resource center for teachers, a docent lounge, storage for teaching collections, and education staff offices.

- **Museum reference center** -- combining the Archives Center, the Dibner Library, and a "Views into the Collections" exhibit/study area (for on-line access to the collections but also for staff-supervised object study).

The above does not include functions currently housed on the public floors (fellow and intern offices, emeriti offices, other staff offices, collections storage, etc.), that will need to be accommodated or relocated to other floors.
(Appendix F: Transforming the National Museum of American History, Behring Center)

8. Conclusion

NMAH developed this document as a basis for discussion, a starting point for transforming the Museum. These concepts and topics represent only where we are now, certainly not where we will be even six months from now. We look forward to working with the NMAH Board, the Blue Ribbon Panel, and other stakeholders to refine and reshape both the pieces (the exhibitions and programs) and the whole (the Museum experience).
Appendix G: NMAH's Planned and Funded New Exhibits (March 2002)

The following documents prepared by NMAH are brief descriptions of the National Museum of American History, Behring Center's planned and funded new exhibitions: *America on the Move; America's Museum, America's Stories* (Introductory Exhibit); *For Which it Stands*; and *The Price of Freedom*.

**America on the Move**

The Museum's first major transportation exhibition in over two decades, *America on the Move* will take visitors on a journey through the history of transportation in America since 1876. As they travel through *America on the Move*, visitors will encounter vehicles in historical vignettes, set in particular places and times, each vignette telling a story of national significance. Using multimedia technology, immersive environments, and other theatrical techniques, *America on the Move* will bring these trains, trucks, and automobiles back to life -- or, more accurately, back to history. For the first time, visitors will be able to see these artifacts as they once were: moving people and products from place to place, a vital part of the nation's transportation system, a vital part of our business, social, and cultural history. The history of transportation, so central to the American experience, is a complex and intriguing story, involving changing travel patterns and demographics, changing patterns of consumption based on increasingly complex distribution systems for food and goods, and changing cities, agricultural regions, and landscapes. *America on the Move* will tell of immigration and migration, cars and culture, the importance of cars, trucks, and trains in the nation's economy -- as well as the pleasures of hitting the road for a summer vacation.

A companion exhibit, *On the Water: Stories from Maritime America*, will explore the maritime dimensions of American life from 1600 to the present, focusing on those groups of people whose lives were defined by their relationship with America's oceans, rivers, lakes, and shores. The exhibition will draw visitors into these compelling stories of human interaction with the water by creating settings and spaces that reflect those maritime experiences.

In 1997, the Department of Transportation provided $3 million as seed money for *America on the Move*. That allowed NMAH to hire staff, contract with a design firm, bring in expert academic advisors, and complete, in 1999, the exhibit's conceptual design. That design, reviewed
by a wide range of outside advisors, was used for a successful fund-
raising campaign: NMAH has raised approximately $19 million of the $22
million this project requires. In December 2001, the Museum's Director's
Council gave approval to proceed to final design and assigned an opening
date of November 2003.

_America's Museum, America's Stories_

This new 20,000-square-foot introductory exhibition complex -- a
dramatic new theater experience, a chronological, biographical, and
thematic introduction to American history, an index to the rest of the
Museum's exhibitions, and a changing exhibition space -- will provide the
Museum's six million annual visitors with an overview of American
history. Located at the west end of the Museum with a spectacular view
of the mall and the Washington Monument, it will showcase some of the
Museum's most precious treasures to help visitors place the important
issues, events, and people in American history into historical context.
Together with the newly conserved Star-Spangled Banner, displayed in a
refurbished two-story space, and a grand new introduction and atrium
space on the second floor, the new complex will transform the visitors' experience of the Museum. The centerpiece of the Museum's
transformation, the anchor of the Museum experience, _America's
Museum, America's Stories_ will give visitors the opportunity to discover,
celebrate, and reflect on the history they share as Americans.

_America's Museum, America's Stories_ will have several parts. Most
visitors will want to visit the whole show, but the design will allow for
visitors to choose the areas they want:

- Behring Theater: A knock-your-socks-off experience -- perhaps a
  360 degree theater, perhaps a high-resolution movie, perhaps an
  "object theater" mixing artifacts, images and sound -- the Behring
  Theater will provide an introduction to America and Americans, to
  American history, and to the National Museum of American History.

- American Showcase: Visitors will see some of the Museum's most
evocative artifacts presented to answer a key question throughout
our history: What has it meant to be an American?

- Timeline of History and Biography: The centerpiece of the
  exhibition, a 10,000-square-foot chronological survey of American
  history built from artifacts, biographies, period settings, vintage
  motion pictures, photographs, and more. The timeline will feature
  the stories of Americans famous and unknown, those who
  accomplished great things and those whose achievements are less
  well known. It will include, in addition to the chronological backbone
  and biographical stories, an overview of some of the ideals that
  have shaped the nation -- democracy, freedom, and opportunity --
  and an index to other exhibits at the Museum, at the Smithsonian
  Institution, and around Washington.
- Behring Gallery: A 5,000-square-foot gallery to showcase the best exhibitions from museums around the country and changing exhibitions prepared by the Museum staff.

Since this exhibition will not open until late 2006, NMAH has just begun work on it -- the above establishes the components of the exhibit but the actual content is still to be developed. The project team has not yet been assembled, but the Museum has begun discussion within the Office of Curatorial Affairs regarding a potential project director, possible curators, and an educator.

**For Which It Stands: The Star-Spangled Banner**

Since 1998 the Museum has been undertaking the preservation of one of the nation's most precious artifacts: the original Star-Spangled Banner. Assuming success in raising the necessary funds, the Star-Spangled Banner will be reinstalled in 2005 as the centerpiece for a renewed NMAH and the focus of an important new exhibition on the history and meaning of the American flag in American life.

The exhibition, *For Which It Stands*, will use an array of artifacts, images, and personal narratives to explore the complex ways in which Americans have used the flag to express their ideas about patriotism, citizenship, and national identity. The exhibition title, taken from the Pledge of Allegiance, will provide a familiar starting point from which to explore the idea that the American flag has stood for different things, at different times, to different people. The flag holds many meanings -- it is more than a single statement of patriotic principles. It is a dynamic symbol, one that has assumed new meanings at critical periods in American history. As a shared symbol with many layers of meaning, the flag has been a focal point for declarations, dialogues, and debates about what it means to be American. And as a contested symbol, it has sharpened the discourse over our national ideals.

Through an exploration of the history and meaning of the flag from the Revolution to the present day, *For Which It Stands* will show how people have used this national symbol to define, promote, challenge, and lay claim to American identity and American ideals. It will examine rituals and traditions through which the meaning of the flag has been reinforced and passed down from one generation to the next. It will illustrate how, from folk art to high fashion, the flag has been personalized and popularized. And, most importantly, it will explore how through waving the flag, whether in celebration or in protest, we express our ideas and beliefs about what it means to be an American.

The Star-Spangled Banner will be installed in a new two-story space on the second floor, opposite the main door of the museum. *For Which It Stands* will be next to it, to its east, so that the large flag stands both on its own, as an icon, and also as part of the exhibition. The timetable of
For Which It Stands depends on fund raising and on the schedule for the renovation of the central core of the building. The collections and historical research for the exhibition is largely complete. A contract for the conceptual design has been signed with the design firm of Chermayef and Geismar, and serious design work should begin early in 2002. A proposal for funding -- an additional $12 million is needed for the exhibition and the flag display -- has been submitted to two major foundations.

The Price of Freedom

In late 2004 the Museum will open a new exhibit in its military history halls, tentatively entitled The Price of Freedom. This exhibition, one of two required in the gift agreement with Kenneth Behring, will allow the Museum to tell the important story of the role of the military in American history. It will replace a hodgepodge of exhibits -- including Fast Attacks and Boomers: Submarines in the Cold War, Personal Legacy: The Healing of a Nation, and World War II GI: The American Soldier's Experience -- with a coherent presentation. A More Perfect Union will remain, updated and with a new entrance and exit.

The Price of Freedom will explore the issues that Americans have deemed worth fighting for and the costs Americans paid to defend those ideals. Most Americans use the wars the country has fought as a way to understand the nation's history, and appropriately so, for our country has only gone to war when it thought it had something that seemed worth fighting for. Our wars define our history and reflect and shape our identity as Americans. The Price of Freedom will build on that popular understanding of history, putting our wars into context while at the same time letting visitors experience the horror of battle and the bravery of America's war fighters. It will tell the story of America's soldier and sailor heroes -- Congressional Medal of Honor winners as well as those who served their country behind the front lines. But it will not only serve to honor the American men and women who fought and died for our country; it will also explain why they fought. The story of America's wars reflects the story of America -- our ideals, our concerns, our industrial might, our political travails.

The Museum began substantial work on this 20,000 square foot exhibition in January 2002 by hiring a project director and convening a small meeting of academic military historians to advise us on the essential issues for this exhibit to address. Attendees included Brigadier General John Brown, D'Ann Campbell, Andrew Cayton, Dik Daso, Allan R. Millett, Michael Sherry, Russell F. Weigley and Ronald Spector, as well as Museum staff. In spring a design firm will be hired and a larger charrette or workshop will be held that will include not only academic advisors but also experts from museums and stakeholders from the military and veterans organizations. A conceptual design for the exhibition is expected by early fall 2002, with final design completed in 2003.
Appendix H: NMAH's Revised Future Floor Plan (as of March 2002)

The following represents the latest variation of a potential floor plan for the museum. Of the public space available, less than 50% has been contractually committed to long term exhibitions.

The floor plan indicates possible layouts of future exhibitions on floors one through three. For each floor there is an overlay (accessed via mouse rollover) that illustrates potential broad themes or topics that exhibitions illustrate. The potential for exhibitions in the basement and on the fourth floor will also be explored.

The museum intends to commence a comprehensive and inclusive dialogue among staff, board, architects, designers, donors, funders and members of the public to develop the optimum plan for the next decade. A mix of long term and changing exhibition spaces will allow for NMAH's vast and varied collections to be displayed.

Roll your mouse over the images to toggle thematic overlays.
NOTE:
This plan could change substantially if additional space is made available on the 4th floor and the basement.

http://americanhistory.si.edu/reports/brc/4h.htm

11/12/2008
NOTE:
This plan could change substantially if additional space is made available on the 4th floor and the basement.
NOTE:
This plan could change substantially if additional space is made available on the 4th floor and the basement.