

Maryland Historical Society

Strategic Plan 2007-2013

10/13/2008



Executive Summary

In response to a demonstrated nationwide trend of declining attendance and donor support in historical societies and museums, a new model is vital to the continuation of the field, now more than ever.

The Maryland Historical Society (MdHS) will demonstrate the need for history, personalize it, and make it accessible. MdHS will build upon the thoughts and convictions of its founders and garnish all resources to create better citizens through history's lessons.

Building upon a foundation created by a small group of Trustees that met during December 2005, a board-appointed Strategic Planning Committee was formed in early FY 2007. The outcome of this committee's work, a multi-year effort, has resulted in the first Strategic Plan for MdHS since FY 2005.

MISSION: The Maryland Historical Society promotes understanding and appreciation of Maryland's history and culture.

VISION: Teach the lessons of Maryland's past to build a better future.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Create an organization that innovates naturally and frequently, adapts to the need for change, and is responsive to the community it serves.
- Reestablish MdHS as a leader in the community for historical events of significant, statewide importance, teaching the lessons and legacies from these events—with emphasis on the upcoming War of 1812 Bicentennial.
- Revitalize institutional advancement activities and identify new revenue streams to increase operating support and provide a foundation of fiscal health for the maintenance and growth of mission activities.
- Foster strategic alliances to increase access to collections, expand digital assets and research tools, and generate new revenues.

In seeking to accomplish these objectives four working teams will be created to provide historical guidance for the institution, identify new means of serving existing markets, serve new audiences, and implement new methods for engaging all constituencies. The staffing structure of the past, though it may appear different after recent restructuring has only continued to support the traditional divisions and will be rebuilt to maximize resources, meet strategic objectives and remain responsive to an ever evolving cultural community.

The organization will need to invent and innovate more dynamically and, as part of the ongoing strategic planning process, will annually consider a detailed level of organization planning. The Director will detail plan specifics into actionable items and assign responsibilities to individual staff.

FY 2009 GOALS:

- Create work teams to establish directional guidance.
- Establish a strategic partnership with the Maryland State Archives for shared mission delivery and new revenue generation.

Message from the Director

“History will die if not irritated. The only service I can do to my profession is to serve as a flea.” This quote, from Henry Adams, serves to convey a reality. The importance and role of memorializing and interpreting history within our culture requires continual renewal. John Spear Smith, first president of the Maryland Historical Society (MdHS), praised Maryland’s past glories in our first annual address and declared that children would look upon our work as “shining examples,” reminding our members that they bore a “sacred duty . . . not to be neglected.” Now, 164 years later, we continue our founders’ efforts in this noble tradition.

Many of you know that I see things as relative, often comparing ourselves to others as a point of reference, and now I take comfort in our current state. We are positioned well financially as compared to many of our peers. We began the struggle of adjusting to financial difficulties several years ago – much sooner than many now just beginning their own struggle. We, however, are fresh from a break-even fiscal year, our capacity is now strong - in board, staff and volunteer commitment – in collections and our top-tier museum, library, publishing and educational programs – and our proven track record and recognized relationship with school systems such as the Maryland State Department of Education. Now, as we implement this strategic plan, we will begin to adapt to our changing environment employing our many resources to accomplish our goals in new ways and methods.

Some have, and will, argue that interest in history, its role and its function, is increasing. However, we see the environment changing. We see a steady decline in the background given to younger generations on history. No Child Left Behind’s emphasis on “Reading First,” and current methods of classroom instruction, has resulted in a predictable drop in students’ familiarity with heritage, our heritage. New priorities in education are compounded by changes in our approach to work and family life, technology, the ever-increasing fragility in the economy and political endeavors. Regretfully, a clear trend is evident and demonstrated nationally as attendance at historical societies and history museums declines. A new model for historical societies is necessary, now more than ever: a transformative model. We will demonstrate the need for history, personalize it and make it accessible. Building upon the thoughts and convictions of MdHS’s founders we garnish all resources to Teach the lessons of Maryland’s past to build a better future.

In seeking to accomplish this great goal, I would be remiss in my own duties if I failed to take a lesson from our past in this endeavor. We can draw from many lessons, but I will highlight only one. At a comparable time length in our nation’s history, just over 160 years after the founding, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, accepted a re-nomination and committed to transform the country and realign to the changing environment. Mr. Roosevelt did so while also taking lessons from the past – from the first great transformation, the American Revolution, and issued a call to the nation. His famous speech to “bring back a dose of that irrepressible American spirit--that revolutionary spirit” trumpeted that “the rendezvous with destiny awaits.” This set forth a tone for renewal with the country but also challenged his administration, and the American people, to rethink the current norm and use our innate American nature to create something new, stronger and lasting for all.

MdHS will fulfill its vision of creating better citizens through history's lessons as it achieves the goals within the strategic plan and action-level items in the operational plan. To accomplish this we will adapt our very activities, shifting our view from the traditional approach that considers the Museum, the Library and Publications & Education as the legs we stand on, to a new ethos based on Learning, New Media and Connections, as avenues of public engagement, all of which use the resources of all of MdHS for success. Where before the Museum, Library and Publications & Education were the main public benefits of MdHS, we now recognize that they are our most important features in support of our public benefit: a strengthened citizenry using history's lessons.

Four working teams, comprised of staff, Trustees and volunteers, will be created to invent and innovate:

- 1. Content:** A team to provide context, direction, and guidance by prioritizing historical topics and lessons.
- 2. Learning:** A team to work within, and alongside, established venues for history and segments of the population drawn to history. This team will work to supplement the curricula of No Child Left Behind and demonstrate the importance of history as a component to create a more competitive America. The team will seek partnerships with schools and universities to foster history adult education and outlets.
- 3. Connections:** A team that will seek to meet the ever-changing needs and interest of our culture and its changes in demographics and population. This team will personalize a history experience to both individuals and groups, ensuring that MdHS is accessible and valued by all.
- 4. Emerging media:** A team to work toward engaging the community through new outlets, methodologies and technology. The Internet and the contemporary venues of a Facebook presence, blogs and texting will be only the initial tasks of this emerging outreach team.

Together these teams will create a new environment of planning, implementation and work. Organizational structure will subsequently adapt and evolve to meet the organization's changing needs and priorities, creating a new model for historical societies. Our own rendezvous with destiny awaits.

Strategic Planning Process

The Maryland Historical Society's (MdHS) long-time director resigned as MdHS neared completion of its FY 2002-FY 2005 strategic plan. Five trustees met to establish immediate and near-term priorities and, in anticipation of his departure during December 2005, the Board of Trustees postponed a larger planning process until a replacement could be found.

Trustees reengaged in a planning process with an interim director in place, after an unsuccessful hire, and appointed a Strategic Planning Committee under the guidance of Martin Sullivan, Director of Historic St. Mary's City, Trustee, and long-time museum professional with in-depth planning experience through the American Association of Museums.

Mr. Sullivan gathered a committee early in FY 2007 charged with collecting data to answer questions about MdHS's present and future, soliciting input from staff and board to identify the organization's strengths, weaknesses, trends, and conditions. The committee revisited the institution's vision and mission, and identified priorities necessary to establish a strategic direction for the organization's future. These priorities, identified as "strategic elements" to serve as a foundation for the planning process, included: (1) assuring sufficient operating support to achieve MdHS's core mission; (2) restoring the good will and confidence of donors, members, and community leaders; (3) evaluating and acting upon a number of recommended efficiencies; and (4) selecting a new director. Once complete, the first draft of these elements was brought forward for consideration in a March 2007 Trustee meeting, as the committee simultaneously recommended action on several "key elements." These recommendations included a recommendation for the new director, the closures of two satellite museum operations, relinquishment of a restricted house and property previously bequeathed to MdHS, lease of one building (previously used for staff offices), refinement of the collections, and endowment campaign planning.

Trustees adopted these key elements for action and the committee continued the planning process, broadening its scope beyond their initial foundational work. With a working draft, Trustees and staff circulated the document for revision and further feedback incorporating thoughts and comments into its framework.

MdHS engaged an external consultant and facilitator in late FY 2008 to revisit the draft, as it had evolved. A small working group of Trustees, staff and others met to clarify and simplify the mission and vision and to propose a few bold steps to set a new direction for the organization. These bold steps, together with a summary of this latest planning, were presented to the Board of Trustees at the June 2008 meeting. Staff were subsequently charged to revisit the planning document in both form and content, creating a final draft to be considered for adoption at the September 2008 meeting. Staff convened to review those strategic goals and to brainstorm ideas for implementing them. In the meeting, facilitated by Greg Conderacci of Good Ground Consulting LLC, the staff surfaced a host of ideas around each of those goals. These ideas will serve as the foundation to the work teams as they are created as well as assist in crafting the operational plan.

Current Situation

The Maryland Historical Society (MdHS) is entering the next era of service to the Maryland community. The organization will adapt and begin to view its traditional components -- the museum, the library, publications and educational programs -- as resources and means to an end, rather than ends within themselves. MdHS will fulfill its vision of creating better citizens through history's lessons by creating a working culture based on content, learning, connections, and emerging media as avenues for public engagement, which will require all of MdHS's resources for success. MdHS will personalize the history experience for both individuals and groups, ensuring that MdHS is accessible and valued by diverse audiences as the organization monitors and responds to the ever-changing appetites and interests of our culture and its dynamic demographics.

Mission Delivery

MdHS preserves a significant collection of Maryland cultural artifacts with more than 50,000 objects and 7 million books, manuscripts, photographs and documents (exclusive of archeology objects, the majority from the Baltimore Center for Urban Archeology and acquired from the Baltimore City Life Museum transaction). MdHS provides educational services to its diverse audiences with exhibitions and programs, serving more than 73,000 Marylanders statewide in FY 2008. Patrons participate in educational programs, visit MdHS, use the library or partake of one of MdHS's services. Over 60,000 students from 345 Maryland schools and 2,080 teachers from counties statewide participated in MdHS programs. For more than a century MdHS has published its highly-acclaimed Maryland Historical Magazine, issued quarterly, and has been committed to publishing original works on the State's history and material culture, with 35 titles currently in print. MdHS also has launched Friends of the Press, an organization dedicated to supporting new publications.

State of the Society

Over the past ten years, MdHS has undergone some of the greatest transition during its 164-year history. The Proudly We Hail capital campaign, launched during that ten-year period, successfully addressed three critical needs identified within the scope of MdHS' long range plan, including (1) preserving and protecting MdHS collections, (2) increasing space for additional exhibitions, education programs and library resources and (3) increasing visibility and assisting in the stabilization of Baltimore's Mt. Vernon cultural district and neighborhood. MdHS redeveloped its campus through a combination of new construction, building acquisitions and renovating antiquated facilities to meet professional standards and ensure collection preservation. MdHS also assumed control of two satellite museums and acquired the collections of the Baltimore City Life Museum, a museum forced to close for financial reasons. Now, with Proudly We Hail completed, MdHS faces a new set of challenges: increased building and property costs, significantly reduced staffing and a dramatically expanded collection. MdHS has begun a course of action to address current needs through a strategic planning effort identifying goals and objectives for the next several years.

Membership Trends

Memberships have guided museums' approaches to attracting and connecting with visitors for nearly a century. Gradually museum audiences have diversified and grown more complex, as have benefits services offered to members, yet the traditional membership format has not kept pace. MdHS completed an intensive membership survey in August 2007 and the results demonstrate great opportunity for MdHS to broaden its audience and diversify on numerous levels. Conclusions drawn from this survey include:

- The member base is nearing retirement age (65% of members being over age 61).
- Members are well educated and affluent (82% having a college education, 44% with postgraduate work and a median household income of \$82,400).
- Members are likely to be married (69%), retired (52%), and not have dependent children living at home (89%).
- Most members live in the Baltimore metropolitan area (62%), are Caucasian (95%) and over half of members interviewed are female (56%).

MISSION

The Maryland Historical Society promotes understanding and appreciation of Maryland's history and culture.

- MdHS engages the people of Maryland, and those interested in Maryland history, through the collection, preservation, and interpretation of comprehensive materials that represent Maryland history.
- MdHS is a steward of a comprehensive library and museum collection that is central to the State's history, a promoter of scholarship through publications and a provider of educational services at our own campus and throughout the state.

VISION

Teach the lessons of Maryland's past to build a better future.

- MdHS seeks to utilize its many resources to create better citizens through history's lessons.

VALUES

- Importance of History – MdHS views the interpretation, dissemination, and teaching of the State's history as central to all our efforts.
- Statewide Service – MdHS emphasizes a continued and expanding approach to geographic diversity within the state and a continued departure from MdHS's Baltimore-centric past.
- Self-Sustainability – Financial and fiscal responsibility is now considered within, and is core to the outcome of, all decisions.
- Collaborative Attitude – MdHS will partner with other entities, seeing MdHS as one of many resources to accomplish a common goal.
- Professional Integrity – MdHS will continue to emphasize quality and prioritize meeting industry standards and principles.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND SUPPORTING GOALS

- ***Create an organization that innovates naturally and frequently, adapts to the need for change, and is responsive to the community it serves.***
 - Through research, surveys and emerging media, MdHS will develop creative programming and venues to break the “traditional mold” and increase interest, membership and funding.
 - Personalize the history experience and connect in new ways to the communities it serves.
- ***Reestablish MdHS as a leader in the community for historical events of significant, state-wide importance, teaching the lessons and legacies from these events.***
 - Exercise a leadership role in the War of 1812 Bicentennial Celebration.
 - Champion Maryland history utilizing MdHS’s many resources (educational programming, library, museum, and publishing).
 - Improve access and control of collections (library and museum) and gain a better foundational understanding of these collections to better serve the mission and meet plan goals.
- ***Revitalize institutional advancement activities and identify new revenue streams to increase operating support and provide a foundation of fiscal health for the maintenance and growth of mission activities.***
 - Strengthen financial and institutional capacity.
 - Identify, maintain and enhance essential property assets for infrastructure needs.
 - Restore community confidence and improve visibility.
- ***Foster strategic alliances to increase access to collections, expand digital assets and research tools, and generate new revenues.***
 - In partnership with other organizations, schools, colleges, and universities, MdHS will be recognized as essential to the teaching and learning of history within the state.
 - MdHS will digitize collections, and creatively use emerging technologies to increase the accessibility of its resources and generate new sources for revenue.

ACTION AREAS and IMPLEMENTATION

Responsibility Timeline

Foundational and Stabilizing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail plan specifics into actionable items and assign responsibilities to individual staff. 	Director	October 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address collection (library and museum) needs, strengthening stewardship and accessibility and refine collections. <i>Emphasis on:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - library collections humidity control; - Pratt House restoration (to accommodate new revenue opportunities); and - prioritizing digitization projects. 	Chief Registrar	March 2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address facility needs in terms of space utilization, revenue generation, condition and maintenance. 	Buildings & Grounds Committee	December 2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and implement a plan to foster relationships with the curricula developers and teachers across the state and expand content-driven educational materials for use in K-12 curricula. 	Deputy Director for Educational Outreach	March 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen publishing efforts through the ongoing partnership with the Johns Hopkins University Press, establishment of a publishing endowment and new methods of publishing (on-line, on-demand, and other). 	Publications Committee	Ongoing (Initiated in FY 2008)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an affordable and creative exhibit schedule over the next three to five years that responds to MdHS's vision and priorities, reflects the interests of MdHS' constituency; showcases MdHS's collections. 	Deputy Director for Collections	December 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase outreach activities and scope and timeliness through the use of web site content. 	Information Technology Manager	Ongoing (Detailed Plan March 2008)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broaden public programming efforts in frequency and geographic location. Improve attendance by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reconsidering admission charges; and - producing an organization-wide marketing plan and promote greater visitation. 	Deputy Director for Special Projects Ongoing	(Detailed Plan March 2008)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce an overall, organization-wide development plan for aggressive revenue growth, emphasizing the launch endowment campaign. 	Chief Development Officer	March 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assume a leading position within the State's Bicentennial War of 1812 celebration and prepare and implement activities for the War of 1812 Bicentennial 	Director	December 2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop constituent survey capabilities for exhibition, programming and mission delivery with evaluation mechanisms for audience analysis. 	Membership Manager	December 2008

Transformative

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create Content, Learning, Connections ,and Emerging Media work teams to establish directional guidance on historical priorities and lessons (Content) and identify 2-3 new strategic areas of focus within established history-related venues (Learning), connect with new audiences (Connections), and new methods for mission delivery (Emerging Media).• Explore strategic partnerships with the State Archives and other institutions, to include new methods of revenue generation and joint development of exhibitions and educational programming.	Board President and Director	October 2008 Director FY 2009
--	------------------------------	----------------------------------

Items Completed During the Planning Process

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Terminate participation in Fells Point and Civil War satellite museums; assess opportunities for reinstalling those exhibits on the MdHS main campus or elsewhere.• Identify and implement an action plan for the Turnbull property.		
---	--	--

SUMMARY OF CRITICAL FUNDING OBJECTIVES

2007-2013

Endowment:

Endow senior staff chairs/naming opportunities	\$5,200,000
Exhibition endowment	2,000,000
Endow free admission	5,000,000
Public programming endowment	800,000
	\$13,000,000

Capital:

Fire and security systems upgrades	\$400,000
Library and Thomas & Hugg humidity control	1,000,000
Steam boiler installation	600,000
Pratt House renovation and restoration	2,500,000
	\$4,500,000

Programmatic:

Refurbish and reinstall Looking for Liberty	\$100,000
Expand educational content and exhibitions on-line	100,000
Exhibition on Maryland's Civil War (Sesquicentennial)	200,000
Exhibition and programming on Maryland's War of 1812	300,000
	\$700,000
Total	\$18,200,000

Strategic Plan Projections FY 2009 FY 2010 FY 2011 FY 2012 FY 2013					
	Budget	Projection	Projection	Projection	Projection
Revenue and other support					
Admissions	\$ 16	\$ 6	\$ 6	\$ 6	\$ 6
Endowment draw and investment income	1,281	1,115	1,213	1,393	1,576
Gifts, donations and memberships	1,054	1,244	1,243	1,368	1,269
Grants	626	738	707	701	825
Auxiliary enterprises	837	972	1,060	1,129	1,188
Net Assets released from restriction (and current-year restricted activity)	98	100	103	107	110
Total revenue and other support:	\$ 3,912	\$ 4,176	\$ 4,332	\$ 4,704	\$ 4,975
Expenses					
Salaries, benefits, and taxes	\$ 1,959	\$ 2,018	\$ 2,079	\$ 2,141	\$ 2,205
Supplies	46	48	49	51	52
Postage	52	54	55	57	59
Printing, photographs, design fees and copying	95	97	100	103	106
Travel and entertainment	41	42	43	45	46
Non-professional fees	3	3	3	3	3
Heat, light and water and building costs, including permits	902	855	832	824	774
Equipment, repairs and maintenance, including software maintenance	68	70	73	75	77
Telephone	29	30	31	32	33
Insurance	68	70	73	75	77
Advertising and public relations, including website maintenance	87	90	92	95	98
Professional fees and outside contractors	197	203	209	215	222
Miscellaneous (including bank fees & dues)	52	129	101	134	200
Donor and volunteer cultivation, campaign startup costs and event cost	110	178	228	280	354
Additional exhibitions and acquisitions	170	215	271	429	592
Cost of goods sold and royalty payments	29	68	70	72	74
Total expenses	\$ 3,909	\$ 4,169	\$ 4,308	\$ 4,630	\$ 4,971
Subtotal before other non-operating and capital-related items	3	7	24	74	4
Add:					
Capital-related bond bill authorizations and campaign pledges	\$ 250	\$ 0	\$ 250	\$ 0	\$ 2,000
Capital-related net assets released from restriction/new capital grants	100	550	250	0	2,000
Unrestricted bequests	0	0	0	0	0

Less:

Depreciation	564	644	677	677	944
Deferred maintenance, campus and collection relocations	27	0	0	0	0
Operating change in net assets [operating surplus/(deficit)]	\$ (238)	\$ (87)	\$ (153)	\$ (603)	\$ 3,059

Projection Notes and Assumptions FY 2010 FY 2011 FY 2012 FY 2013

	Projection	Projection	Projection	Projection
--	------------	------------	------------	------------

Revenue

General assumption of 3% increase per year (reflected for all revenue lines with the following noted exceptions):				
Anticipated draw decrease from rolling three-year rolling average of endowment	(166)	(108)	(8)	(225)
Additional endowment draw (4% of new monies raised)	0	40	120	520
Contributions for free admission (City, County and Private)	275	275	275	125
Contributions solicited for Civil War and War of 1812 exhibit/programming	75	50	150	175
Activities underwritten by new grants	125	75	50	125
Greyhound Terminal lease (\$10/sq ft/nnn)	56	250	250	250
Income from new product development and new activities	125	75	75	75
Increase in bike event income (or new special events)	125	50	50	100

Expense

General assumption of 3% increase per year				
Additional donor cultivation/campaign expense	15	20	25	30
Civil War and War of 1812 exhibit/programming expense	40	50	150	150
Expenses incurred by new grant activity (reflected under misc. expense in projection)	75	45	30	63
Expense savings from Greyhound Terminal lease (\$10/nnn)	75	49	33	75
Product development expense/cost of goods sold	38	26	26	26
Increase in bike event expense (or new special events)	50	25	20	35
Non-operating activity				
Capital-related bond bill authorizations and campaign pledges/payments	0	250	0	2,000
Capital-related net assets released from restriction/new capital grants	550	250	0	2,000
Change in depreciation (estimate based upon FY 2009 budget + 15-year life for additions)	80	113	113	380