

## THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION IN THE 21st CENTURY

For more than 160 years, the Smithsonian Institution has remained true to its mission, “the increase and diffusion of knowledge.” In that time, it has become the largest museum and research complex in the world, the most respected provider of museum experiences supported by authoritative scholarship, and an international leader in scientific research and exploration.

The Smithsonian Institution’s collections, containing more than 136 million objects and a like number of documents, are staggering in their breadth and depth. Consequently, by a large margin, more people visit the Institution than any other museum complex on Earth. The Smithsonian offers the world a picture of America and America a picture of the world. Visitors come to the Smithsonian to experience their historical, scientific, and cultural heritage.

The Smithsonian takes its task of serving the American public very seriously, and last year we kept that commitment. During fiscal year 2006, millions of Americans enjoyed the continuing success of the National Air and Space Museum’s (NASM) Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia, the National Museum of the American Indian on the National Mall, and, in the renovated, historic Patent Office Building, the newly opened Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture, which is home to the National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. It opened to the public July 1, 2006, and more than 18,000 people were there to celebrate the event.

Visitors continue to flock to major attractions such as the annual Folklife Festival on the National Mall; the National Museum of Natural History’s (NMNH) *Hall of Mammals*; and the NASM exhibition, *The Wright Brothers and the Invention of the Aerial Age*. Although the National Museum of American History (NMAH) is closed for an extensive revitalization, its work continues. Research, traveling exhibitions, and public programs throughout the country are planned, as well as a special exhibition of more than 150 iconic objects, *Treasures of American History*, which is now open at the NASM.

The Smithsonian’s National Zoo is home to our giant pandas, Mei Xiang and Tian Tian, and their cub, Tai Shan. More than 12 million visitors have come to the Zoo to see the pandas. And more are coming to see our new Asia Trail—home to seven different Asian species, which opened in October. Work on Asia Trail II: *Elephant Trails*, which is a new home for our Asian elephants, is under way.

Our large and diverse collections of art continue to attract numerous visitors. Some of the greatest works of art in this country—and the world—are at the Smithsonian, even more so now that we have secured the fabulous

Disney-Tishman collection of African art, one of the finest collections of African art in the world. The Smithsonian's art museums, the Freer, the Sackler, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the National Museum of African Art, the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York City, the Smithsonian American Art Museum and its Renwick Gallery, and the National Portrait Gallery, collectively, are the fourth most visited art complex in the United States.

The pioneering establishment of Smithsonian Networks, a joint venture with CBS-Showtime, and the launch of Smithsonian on Demand, promise to revolutionize how the Institution shares its vast collections with the American people and educates them about the richness of Smithsonian-sponsored discoveries in science, the arts, and the humanities.

Our continuing commitment to "the increase and diffusion of knowledge" has raised new challenges. Today, we are determined to meet them and to transform the Smithsonian into a modern, 21st century institution that serves all Americans across the country.

The Smithsonian's reputation rests on a strong foundation that enables us to continue with our great plans for the future. For example, at the NMNH, we will open a new, live *Butterfly House* this year and an *Ocean Hall* in 2008. The *Ocean Hall* is part of our more-than-\$70 million Ocean Science Initiative project. A new endowed Chair for Ocean Science research and an Ocean Web portal for educational outreach are the two other components of the project. We will also open a new and unique *Hall of Human Origins* and then embark on a huge project, a complete renovation of our paleontology exhibits in the massive *Dinosaur Hall*. In addition, the Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard, the signature space for the Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture, will be completed late this year.

We plan to open a new home for the Star-Spangled Banner and completely redesign the central core of the NMAH. This will be followed by renovation of the East Wing of NMAH, the opening of *America's Story*, a timeline of American history, and then a major exhibit on sports and entertainment in American life. Following that, we will completely renovate *The American Presidency* and *First Ladies' gowns* exhibits.

Farther into the future, we will open the doors of our 19th museum, the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). Part of that Museum is up and running right now, with a website and special programs. For example, at our annual Folklife Festival, NMAAHC produced a special evening concert series, *Been in the Storm So Long*. It featured African American musical traditions, including New Orleans jazz, brass bands, rhythm and blues, Mardi Gras Indians, and gospel, from the region devastated by Hurricane Katrina.

Yet, unfortunately, the Smithsonian is also an institution with a severely deteriorated infrastructure, outdated technology, and many aged, outmoded exhibitions. The Smithsonian has buildings that range in age from brand new to nearly 160 years old. More than half of the buildings, and the heating, air-conditioning, and electrical distribution systems and controls required to operate them, have served well beyond their normal, useful life spans.

Although considerable progress has been made, the April 2005 report of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) made it clear that the Institution has a well-documented and compelling need for substantial increases in funding for facilities revitalization and maintenance. The GAO report indicated that current funding levels are not sufficient to produce the \$2.3 billion that is needed to fix and maintain the Institution's facilities.

International and domestic events of the last few years have adversely affected attendance. Today's challenge is to build on the Smithsonian's reputation, rebuild the physical plant, increase our visitation, and thereby expand the reach of a great and trusted institution.

The Smithsonian is a unique entity—an independent trust instrumentality—that depends on the Federal Government for approximately 80 percent of its funding, including Government grants and contracts. Ever mindful of and grateful for this support from the American public, the Smithsonian will continue working with both OMB and Congress to provide them with the information necessary to justify their continued support. The Institution continues improving its performance in line with the President's Management Agenda, and has numerous initiatives under way to advance financial management, use e-Government wherever possible, improve human capital planning and management, and more closely integrate budgeting with long-term performance goals.

Scientific expertise and leadership are at the core of the Smithsonian's reputation for excellence and are central to achieving our mission to promote the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." The Smithsonian's 500 scientists have pioneered efforts to explore the universe and improve our understanding of how the Earth and similar planets were formed. We are internationally recognized for our expertise in systematics, paleobiology, ecology, and biological conservation, and we are uniquely situated to explore the loss of biodiversity and to respond to governmental initiatives on climate change, tropical forest conservation, control of invasive species, and protection of endangered species. Our scientists are world leaders in the fields of anthropology, ethnology, and archaeology, including the fields of forensic anthropology and human origins.

Scientists in these fields are ready to pursue new opportunities, ranging from examining the effects of current—and even past—development and modernization in transforming cultures, to examining biological and cultural

adaptations and recent human impacts on the environment. The Smithsonian's distinctive combination of talent, collections, and resources makes the Institution a valuable asset for leading America's exploration, discovery, and understanding of the natural world and our place in the universe.

The Institution is making great progress in revitalizing science. However, diligence is needed to ensure that the Smithsonian does not fall behind other prestigious academic institutions in its ability to recruit, mentor, and retain the next generation of promising young scientists, or in its efforts to procure the cutting-edge research equipment that is vital to its basic scientific mission. It is essential to ensure that the Smithsonian retains its place among the world's pre-eminent scientific institutions as a leader in scientific disciplines of national importance.

In the context of public service, the reach of everything the Smithsonian does—in both the research and the museum activities—is expanded exponentially by websites and education and outreach programs. The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) is the largest traveling exhibition service in the world, and reaches roughly five million people throughout the nation every year. In 2007, the 55th anniversary of SITES, we will have approximately 53 exhibits on tour. They will travel to about 201 locations in 44 states and the District of Columbia. Additionally, SITES has collaborated with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to create smaller, poster-based exhibits that celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Coast Survey, which will extend the Smithsonian's outreach to nearly 400 locations and all 50 states.

The Smithsonian's electronic outreach has been equally impressive. Our Web presence has expanded dramatically in a short period of time. Five years ago, we had half as many visits to our websites as physical visits to our museums. Now, visitation on the Web is nearly 500 percent of our museum visitation, with 145 million visits to our various websites.

Furthermore, we have been engaged in a major national outreach program. We now have 152 affiliates in 39 states, Panama, Puerto Rico, and Washington, DC. In an attempt to present as many items as possible of the Smithsonian's collections in storage to the American public, we lend impressive objects to these local affiliate organizations, in addition to the many artifacts that tour nationwide as part of the SITES exhibits.

The Smithsonian agenda is ambitious but focused. Given these successes, concerns, and budget realities, the Smithsonian's first priority is funding to keep the Institution's museums in operation, collections safe, and research programs intact (i.e., covering mandatory costs). These costs include requirements for staff salaries and benefits, legislated pay raises, utilities, postage, communications, and rent.

The Smithsonian's second priority is funding for security for the Institution's staff, visitors, collections, and facilities, and for protection against terrorist actions. This request includes funds to: correct security deficiencies identified by the Inspector General (IG); construct permanent physical barriers around the National Museum of American History; and begin design for blast mitigation at several Smithsonian museums.

The Institution's third priority is to secure funding increases for National Academy of Public Administration-recommended activities, especially to address the Institution's critical facilities revitalization and information technology needs. This budget continues base funding for the maintenance and cleanliness of the Institution's most frequently visited museum facilities.

The Smithsonian's fourth priority is funding for collections care to correct serious deficiencies in the storage, conservation, preservation, and accessibility of the national collections. This budget continues base funding for critical needs in collections care and preservation by supporting the highest priorities throughout the Institution to improve the overall stewardship of Smithsonian collections.

The Institution's fifth priority is its new museums, and specifically the fund raising for and planning and management of the recently authorized National Museum of African American History and Culture. Finally, the request includes several initiatives to support critical IG requirements, improved animal welfare, and workforce restructuring.

The Smithsonian plays a vital role in our country's civic, educational, and cultural life. Using art, artifacts, history, and science, the Smithsonian tells a comprehensive story—America's story. Now, more than ever, this is an important public service to perform. The Smithsonian is committed to reaching more Americans with such seminal stories by continuing to transform itself into a true 21st century institution. The Smithsonian Institution faces significant challenges if it is to continue serving the public in an exemplary manner, with both engaging, modern exhibitions backed by authoritative scholarship and groundbreaking scientific research and exploration. What follows is our plan to meet these challenges as efficiently and effectively as possible.