

MINUTES OF THE MAY 2, 2011, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROGRAMS COMMITTEE MEETING

The Strategic Planning and Programs Committee (“the Committee”) of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution held a meeting on May 2, 2011, at 11:00 a.m. in the Smithsonian Castle in Washington, D.C. Participating were Committee Chair France Córdova* and Committee members Judy Huret, John McCarter*, and Paul Neely. Committee members Senator Patrick Leahy and Shirley Ann Jackson were unable to participate. Staff in attendance included Secretary G. Wayne Clough; Chief of Staff to the Secretary Patricia Bartlett; Assistant Secretary for Education and Access Claudine Brown; Consortium for the American Experience Director Michelle Delaney; Office of the Regents Program Officer Grace Jaeger (recorder); Under Secretary for History, Art, and Culture Richard Kurin; Chief of Staff to the Regents John K. Lapiana; General Counsel Judith Leonard; Director of Communications and External Affairs Evelyn Lieberman; Assistant to Senator Patrick Leahy Kevin McDonald*; and Under Secretary for Science Eva Pell.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 11:03 a.m.

REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Dr. Córdova opened her first meeting as Chair, taking over from Representative Doris Matsui to whom, Dr. Córdova noted, the full Board expressed its deep gratitude at the April 11, 2011, Executive Committee meeting. She discussed the agenda for the Committee meeting, which included a briefing by Ms. Brown on the development of the Smithsonian’s pan-Institutional education strategy and a review of a proposed exhibition calendar to identify potentially sensitive and/or controversial exhibitions.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Updates were provided on the following topics.

International Museum Professional Education Program

Haiti. The Smithsonian is proud of the successful efforts taking place in Haiti to save and restore art and artifacts in the wake of the 2010 earthquake.

Abu Dhabi. Secretary Clough and Dr. Kurin visited Abu Dhabi and met with the leadership there in 2010. Abu Dhabi is now a donor to the Kennedy Center and an ally in the United Nations’ mission in Libya. The Regents authorized management to develop and negotiate a Term Sheet for the International Museum Professional Education Program. The term sheet is under review by leadership in that country and is being received favorably. Dr. Kurin noted that it is currently “on hold” until the government in Abu Dhabi determines how much money it must invest in the project and finishes a reorganization of its Cultural Heritage Section to join the country’s cultural and tourism sectors. Talks are under way with the British Museum and with New York University as the project may develop into a broader partnership.

* *participated by teleconference*

“Flashpoints and Fault Lines: Museum Curation and Controversy” Symposium

Dr. Kurin reported that the April 26–27, 2011, symposium was extremely successful. It included several well-respected panel members and lively discussions on issues related to curatorial freedom and being a public museum with national stakeholders.

Asian Pacific American Program

After the retirement of Asian Pacific American Program (APAP) Director Franklin Odo, the program was evaluated by a panel that included Asian Americans from across the country. Dr. Konrad Ng was hired as the new APAP director. Dr. Ng was a professor at the University of Hawaii, has board and fundraising experience, and will be able to work collaboratively with the Asian American community. He also is married to President Obama’s sister.

National Museum of the American Latino Commission

The Commission will report to Congress on May 5, 2011, with the likely recommendation that the new museum should be operated by the Smithsonian with a public/private partnership for its funding. A site other than the Arts and Industries Building will be suggested for the museum’s location. It is estimated that the building will cost \$450–500 million. Authorization and appropriations must come from Congress.

Civil War Anniversary Commemoration

The Secretary introduced Consortia Director Michelle Delaney, who spoke about the planned events and exhibitions at the Smithsonian to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Civil War.

American Folk Art Museum

The Smithsonian has been contacted about acquiring the collections of the American Folk Art Museum (AFAM), a private, non-profit museum in New York, New York, which is in financial trouble. The collection of over 5,000 items is particularly strong in American folk art and craft of the 1700s and 1800s and would complement the current collections at several Smithsonian museums, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum. AFAM has identified a buyer for its building in New York City, which will help relieve the time and financial pressures of finding a home for the collection. There are many legal, logistic, acquisition, and financial issues to be resolved before a proposal is brought to the Board of Regents.

SMITHSONIAN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

Dr. Córdoba introduced Assistant Secretary Claudine Brown, who presented the current draft of the Smithsonian Education Strategic Plan. The Executive Committee has been discussing the plan’s development and will rely on the Committee to keep up the momentum so that a final draft plan can be brought to the full Board for approval at its September 19, 2011, meeting. Ms. Brown explained the organizational structure of education at the Smithsonian. Units that report directly to her office include the National Science Resources Center, Smithsonian Affiliates, Smithsonian Associates, Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies, and

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibitions. In addition, over 200 educators, 100 public programs staff, and numerous volunteers and collaborators across the Institution are involved in education.

The Smithsonian's strategic plan calls for revitalizing education and broadening access. Ms. Brown contributed to the development of the plan and sees her work evolving from it. Internal partnerships with scholars and researchers help form the educational programs and external partnerships provide funding. She discussed the many physical and online educational programs the Smithsonian provides and the millions of people across the country who use them. She also discussed informal, inquiry-based, active-learning opportunities at the Smithsonian. Technology will be the key to broadening access to the Smithsonian in the 21st century and reaching a generation that is ready to learn in different ways.

She discussed the plan's four phases: Assessment, Goal Setting, Broadening Access, and Going to Scale, and what each entails. She noted that success in revitalizing education at the Smithsonian will be achieved when the delivery of quality curriculum and learning opportunities increases; the number of learners served increases; learning experiences that incorporate inquiry-based and active learning and design thinking experiences are created; online projects and products that foster mastery of 21st century learning skills are created; and projects that impart skills that are useful at work are developed and disseminated.

Committee members commented favorably on the plan and offered suggestions for improvement. The next draft will be presented to the Committee at its September 2011 meeting.

EXHIBITION CALENDAR

Secretary Clough and Drs. Kurin and Pell presented the proposed exhibition calendar. A pan-Institution exhibition calendar was proposed in the wake of the *Hide/Seek* exhibition controversy as a way to identify potentially sensitive and/or controversial exhibitions at an early stage. Committee members were asked to provide feedback on the format of the calendar as well as the listed exhibitions themselves. Members felt the calendar was a useful tool and offered minor suggestions to the format.

HIV AND AIDS THIRTY YEARS AGO AND SHIPWRECKED: TANG TREASURES AND MONSOON WINDS EXHIBITIONS

Two upcoming potentially controversial exhibitions were discussed by Dr. Kurin. The first, *HIV and AIDS Thirty Years Ago*, will open on June 4, 2011, at the National Museum of American History (NMAH). The exhibit case will recognize the 30th anniversary of the identification of HIV/AIDS and will feature documentary materials such as pamphlets and posters as well as an HIV test kit and drug vials. The exhibition has been the subject of an SD 603 review and its content and accuracy have been reviewed by the Centers for Disease Control, the National Library of Medicine, and the George Washington University. Two sensitive aspects of the exhibition were identified: the subject matter and the treatment of affected groups, political figures, and religious groups in the display.

The *Shipwrecked* exhibition at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery of Art is scheduled for 2012, depending upon the results of an SD 603 review. The uncertainty concerns the status of the treasures to be exhibited and the ethical and reputational concerns they raise. The treasures were discovered by fishermen in 1998 off the coast of Indonesia and document the existence of the maritime Silk Road and trading between China and West Asia. The retrieval method of the items was problematic as the Indonesian government licensed the ship's salvage to an Indonesian company, which then partnered with a German salvage company. The use of commercial salvage companies is a practice decried by professional archaeologists and cultural preservation groups.

Singapore, which believes the cargo demonstrates the ancient role of its region as a hub of international trade and cultural exchange, purchased most of the collection through one of its subsidiary public companies and mounted an exhibition of the items in 2005. The Singaporeans and the Sackler Gallery conducted research on the collection and planned to mount a worldwide tour of the collection, and the Sackler published the exhibition catalogue *Shipwrecked* in anticipation of hosting the exhibition.

Reaction to the exhibition plans emerged in late 2010 with the opening of the Singapore exhibition. The global underwater archeological community is opposed to salvagers being hired to excavate underwater archeological sites because it believes that the practice encourages commercially driven "treasure hunting," can shortchange scientific excavation and work and often leads to the dispersal of collections for profit. Professional archaeological societies and preservation groups have ethical codes that discourage commercial exploitation of underwater archaeological sites. While the archaeological community is firmly of the opinion that the Sackler should not mount the exhibition, others, particularly from Asia, Australia, and Great Britain, recognize the significance of saving these artifacts in a largely intact collection and support their public display for its immense educational value. The sides of this debate are also evident internally at the Smithsonian. The Freer and Sackler Galleries see the historical importance of the collection and its display as inspirational and educational, and believes that Singapore undertook the correct action in light of the problematic retrieval. The Smithsonian Congress of Scholars expressed its concerns but did not oppose the exhibition. However, the exhibition is opposed by archaeologists in the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) Department of Anthropology, the underwater archaeologist at the NMAH, and those in the scientific diving program.

On April 25, 2011, Dr. Kurin held a meeting with Freer and Sackler Galleries Director Julian Raby, the vice chair of the Galleries Board of Trustees, and staff; underwater archeologists from professional associations; experts from U.S. governmental organizations and archaeological museums; the heads of the American Association of Museums and the Association of Art Museum Directors; NMAH and NMNH archaeologists; a representative from Singapore; and other key Smithsonian stakeholders. The purpose of the meeting was to review and clarify the facts of the case, discuss the application of professional ethical principles and best practices, consider the Smithsonian's reputation, and advise on the proper course of action. It is doubtful that full consensus will ever be achieved, but points of contention were narrowed so the final decision on whether or not to mount the exhibition will be clearer.

Members asked that the topic be included in the agenda for the June 2011 Regents' meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chair thanked the Committee members and staff for their participation. The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
France Córdova, Chair