

CLAIMING CHICAGO SHAPING OUR FUTURE

A Vision for the Chicago History Museum

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A Vision for the Chicago History Museum

In the fall of 2006, the Chicago Historical Society marked its 150th anniversary with a new name—the Chicago History Museum—and a grand reopening of its building after a major renovation of more than 70 percent of the public space. New exhibitions and interpretive experiences, a robust schedule of programs, a new website, and a grand event space were intended to forge new relationships with the Museum’s audiences.

But time does not stand still, nor does our role as a public institution in a vibrant urban environment. Wanting to ensure a

vital future for the new Chicago History Museum, President Gary T. Johnson organized a Visioning Committee shortly after the reopening. Composed of staff and trustees, the team was charged to imagine: “What can a history museum hope to be in ten years and beyond?”

Our vision for the Chicago History Museum is the culmination of a process of self-reflection and discovery and is rooted in and inspired by our enduring core purpose and values. At the same time, it strives to capture our imagination and challenge us with bold aspirations for our future.

“CHM needs a strong sense of itself and what it’s trying to do and who it’s trying to reach.”
CHM staff member

“We should never want to be at status quo.”
CHM staff member



MOVING FORWARD

DISCOVERY
CREATIVITY
EMPATHY
AUTHENTICITY
INTEGRITY
SERVICE
COLLABORATION

Charting a course to our future requires that we first know where and who we are in the present.

The Chicago History Museum’s workforce—trustees, staff, volunteers, and interns—represents a diverse pool of talents, professional experience, personalities, and backgrounds, yet we are united by a shared set of values. During an extensive period of reflection and many conversations between staff and members of the Visioning Committee, the committee identified these core values: discovery, creativity, empathy, authenticity, integrity, service, and collaboration.

These values are at work in the Museum today, and we cannot imagine a future without them. Articulating these values gives us a common language as we work to express our identity and fulfill our vision. Drawing on these values in our daily work and demonstrating them to the public will enable us to build upon our existing strengths as we chart a course toward the future.

DISCOVERY
CREATIVITY
EMPATHY
AUTHENTICITY
INTEGRITY
SERVICE
COLLABORATION

DISCOVERY

We value the “ah-hah” moment when a person makes a meaningful connection with the past, objects, ideas, Chicago, other people, and the world. We understand the thrill of discovery both at the scholarly and the personal level. We treasure these moments in our own work and strive to facilitate the public’s ability to make connections that add meaning and understanding to their lives. We believe that we have as much to learn from our audiences as they have to learn from us. Discovery can only be achieved when we embrace wonder and curiosity.

“ I believe that museums have the power to affect your curiosity, imagination, and sense of wonder; a good museum provokes questions. ”
CHM staff member

“ ... Discovery is also the ongoing process of acquiring new knowledge, new insights, new approaches—broadening one’s horizons. ”
CHM volunteer

“ Connections are what help people to manufacture their own meaning and motivates them to care. ”
CHM staff member

CREATIVITY
EMPATHY
AUTHENTICITY
INTEGRITY
SERVICE
COLLABORATION
DISCOVERY

Creativity is the quality that allows us to take chances, try new things, and be original. Everything we do comes from a process of exploration, idea generation, and problem solving. People do their best work, learn better, and are at their happiest when they are allowed and encouraged to use their imaginations and turn their ideas into action. Creativity is a natural resource, ready to be tapped. Creativity drives us to generate new and innovative products and experiences and imagine different ways of meeting people's needs and expectations.

CREATIVITY

“ I'm passionate about Chicago. I want to pass along that knowledge and passion to others. I need my creativity to make that happen, to reach new audiences. ”
CHM staff member

“ Creativity is important because it is about how to make history more interesting for visitors and more fun for visitors. Through working creatively, the Museum can come up with ways to present history that differs from what could be done in a book. ”
CHM staff member

EMPATHY
AUTHENTICITY
INTEGRITY
SERVICE
COLLABORATION
DISCOVERY
CREATIVITY

EMPATHY

Empathy is the ability to see things from other people's perspectives and understand why that matters. Empathy is at the heart of our ability to get along, work collaboratively, and care about the stories of other people. Empathy is the emotional element that connects people to history. It inspires us to value different voices and makes us better historians, colleagues, and members of the civic community. It also enables us to anticipate rather than just respond to people's needs and wishes.

“ The biggest thing is to feel connected with the past and that people would understand themselves and others better. Empathy is the desired outcome. ”
CHM staff member

“ I want to have a good experience, so I imagine others want the same thing. Our time is valuable, so we have to respect people's time. ”
CHM staff member

AUTHENTICITY
INTEGRITY
SERVICE
COLLABORATION
DISCOVERY
CREATIVITY
EMPATHY

Authenticity means embracing and expressing one's history and character, being genuine and true to one's roots. Authenticity is unembellished, unfiltered, and demands impeccable scholarship. We believe that our ability to facilitate authentic experiences with the physical evidence of our past, the real city of Chicago, and real Chicagoans becomes all the more valuable in an era when technology puts so much questionable information at our fingertips.

AUTHENTICITY

“ We try to express history as it was, but I suppose we don't know for sure that we're accurate or if people of that time would have seen it the way we do, but in the effort to find out, we become better citizens. ”
CHM staff member

“ Treat everyone like you've known them for years. Have a good time. Be honest, truthful, the real deal. People come here to meet nice, down-to-earth Chicago people. We represent Chicago people. We're it. We're it! ”
CHM staff member

INTEGRITY
SERVICE
COLLABORATION
DISCOVERY
CREATIVITY
EMPATHY
AUTHENTICITY

INTEGRITY

Integrity means being honest, ethical, and fair. Our integrity is the foundation of trust on which our relationships, reputation, and authority are built. We demonstrate integrity in our work ethic, business practices, internal and external relationships, and scholarship. We believe that integrity is of paramount importance in meeting our public trust responsibilities.

“People trust our voice—trust museums in general. We’re not academia, but we’re a source of knowledge and truth in learning.”
CHM staff member

“I’m not paid a lot, but I wanted to come into public service. I work just as hard as I would getting paid ten times as much.”
CHM staff member

SERVICE
COLLABORATION
DISCOVERY
CREATIVITY
EMPATHY
AUTHENTICITY
INTEGRITY

Service is a shared commitment to improving people’s lives and the means by which we create our value to the public. Excellent customer service makes people feel safe, comfortable, welcome, and receptive to our offerings. A commitment to service also means that we care about how many people we serve across our different platforms. At the same time, we value service to each other as colleagues, recognizing the need to be responsive, supportive, and aware of our dependence upon one another.

SERVICE

“ When I’ve helped people I feel like I’m doing my job, earning my keep. I value making connections between collections and visitors and researchers. ”
CHM staff member

COLLABORATION
DISCOVERY
CREATIVITY
EMPATHY
AUTHENTICITY
INTEGRITY
SERVICE

COLLABORATION

Collaboration is the way we work together to unlock our full potential. It is being inclusive, sharing our ideas and abilities, seeking the contributions and viewpoints of others, and reflecting this input in our work. Collaboration requires shared authorship. It means valuing teamwork and multiple perspectives, both internal and external.

“The teamwork approach is a better way of doing things. You’re working on something that is larger than you. There is dialog and feedback—sometimes too much, but that’s okay. It’s important to have an intellectual life and dialog in the institution and then turn that into a product that can be shared with the public.”
CHM staff member

“Museums have the potential to involve the community in telling their own story, to include more voices. We help give voice to people’s history. Telling their own story makes people see that they have some power.”
CHM staff member

DISCOVERY
CREATIVITY
EMPATHY
AUTHENTICITY
INTEGRITY
SERVICE
COLLABORATION

“ I see [these seven] values manifested in the professionalism of the staff, the integrity and creativity of the exhibitions, and the innovation of the Museum as a whole. ”
CHM volunteer

OUR PURPOSE

The Chicago History Museum's purpose is to help people make meaningful and personal connections to history.

A vision grows from a sense of purpose. Our institutional purpose is an expression of our core values. As with our values, identifying and articulating our purpose begins with a process of self-discovery. **Understanding our purpose is necessary to build our vision for the future, since what we strive to become must be a logical extension of who we already are.**

During extensive interviews conducted by the Visioning Committee, staff working in all areas and at all levels of the Museum expressed a belief in the power of history to bring meaning to people's lives. The Museum offers a unique opportunity to meld historical scholarship,

educational goals, and memorable experiences in ways that empower the public to understand the value of their own stories, forge their individual and group identities, consider the world from different perspectives, and hone their ability to think critically. History bridges our personal stories and experiences to our collective memory. It reminds us of our common humanity and inspires change by making us aware that our choices and actions have the power to shape our future.

Our belief that we add value and meaning to people's lives through history is the source of the passion we bring to the Museum.

“ History provides us with a context that gives meaning to our lives. ”
CHM staff member

“ History changes hearts. ”
CHM staff member

“ If we don't do it, who will? It's our duty to present the history of this city, this region. ”
CHM staff member

IMAGINING OUR FUTURE

As the foremost interpreter of metropolitan Chicago's history, we will enable the public to understand more about the city's past and present and to shape its future.

Our vision **reinforces** our long-standing identity as the keeper of the history of metropolitan Chicago and **inspires us** to play a more vital role in shaping the city's future. In conversations with a number of Chicago's civic leaders, we have learned of challenges to be met in the city's future and leadership opportunities for the Museum to seize.

These conversations remind us that:

- As the city grows so too grows the need for independent, fair-minded, public institutions to provide a platform for community voices from throughout the metropolitan area.

- Collaborations focusing on history can bring multiple perspectives to bear on critical civic issues.
- Building an informed and engaged populace—one that is conversant with the past, grounded in the present, and energized about the future—is an obligation, not an option, for an institution graced with our resources.

What we have heard from these civic leaders reinforces the importance of our mission and confirms our belief in our vision.

“ History helps us to not be so selfish and self-absorbed, helps inform the future, helps us to imagine something bigger than just our own time and circumstances. It's not that knowing history enables us to avoid repeating it, but it does enable us to imagine a different future worth fighting for. ”
CHM staff member

“ I want to bring people together to learn from each other, exchange ideas and communicate, and be inspired to share their stories and history, to make things happen, to get things stirring. ”
CHM staff member

OUR VISION

Our vision can be expressed through seven guiding principles.

These principles emerged through the Visioning Committee’s process of discovery. They express our core values, dovetail with our core purpose, and have implications for future decision making and planning throughout the Museum. Each suggests ways our organization must be aligned to support our vision, and each comes with resource demands that may require a reevaluation of existing priorities. **Our vision will influence our identity, products, services, scholarship, and understanding of the audiences that we are here to serve.**

1 History has the power to shape our future.

We will recognize our responsibility to help build a better future—locally, regionally, nationally, and globally—through history. We will bring a credible and authoritative historical perspective to bear on civic issues, and we will help to shape the future by fostering historical scholarship and understanding.

- The Museum will be the center for the continual investigation of metropolitan **Chicago as an ongoing urban experiment**—in both human terms and as a natural and constructed environment. As of 2007, more than half of the world’s population lives in cities. We will see Chicago as an important resource for investigating regional, national, and global urban issues; shaping the debate about our common concerns; and creating partnerships with other organizations to explore shared issues and plan for our collective future.

“ History helps people to take control of their lives. How can you be a part of a democracy if you don’t understand that you can shape history and events? ”
CHM staff member

- Our work will be inspired and informed by the **highest level of scholarship**. We will value scholarship and embrace our role as the creators of new historical thinking, practitioners of innovative approaches to teaching history, generators of new research and perspectives on the role of museums in civic life, and a resource for developing new ideas about Chicago and history.
- We will **recognize everyone in every community as a history maker** and demonstrate the value of history to help us address current issues, inform our individual and collective identities, and encourage civic participation.

“ It is inspirational to see the failures, the struggles, the perseverance, and the successes of history. It becomes evident that the city is the summation of people’s decisions, of how and why we decided to do the things we did. The message is that the future can be shaped by our decisions. A kid can see that and say ‘I want to be a decision maker.’ ”
CHM staff member

- **Youth and families will be a priority.** Members of the younger generation are tomorrow’s decision makers, and we will commit ourselves to helping them prepare for that role. As a resource and a partner for families and schools, we will challenge ourselves to inspire young people to value history, understand their role in civic life, and become active and informed participants in shaping our future.

² Chicago is our most prized artifact and we will be its foremost authoritative interpreter.

We claim Chicago. We will leverage our history, expertise, collection, location, and reputation to stake our position as the best resource for understanding the city and its place in the United States and the world.

- **We will be fiercely Chicago.**

We will understand that our most valuable contribution to local, regional, national, and global issues stems from our scholarship grounded in Chicago's history and our ability to make this history meaningful to our audiences. Our services and amenities will express the character and history of Chicago in support of our programmatic offerings.

- The physical **walls of the Museum will not constrain us** as we develop strategies to draw the vibrant, creative city into the Museum and bring the knowledge, energy, and resources of the Museum into the city.
- We will seek new ways to **reflect the authentic voices of our communities** and embrace them as our partners in building our collection and interpreting and preserving history.

- We will recognize that the history of Chicago provides important **insights for understanding our nation's story**, and we will demonstrate how the city can be understood more fully in the context of our state and our nation and as part of the ongoing American experiment in democracy.

“ No other place can cover the history of Chicago. ”
CHM staff member

“ We are purveyors of all things Chicago. ”
CHM staff member

3 Our collection is a unique resource requiring our imagination and discipline to reveal its potential.

We will develop a more meaningful and usable collection by building our capacity and commitment to understand and interpret the historical materials in our care; developing a vigorous, purpose-driven collecting and deaccessioning program; and improving physical and intellectual access to our historical material.

- We will commit ourselves to **collecting materials and documenting their context** to provide future generations with the tools they need to tell the many stories of metropolitan Chicago.
- We will seek new opportunities to **utilize and showcase the Museum's premier collections**, such as our unparalleled collection of Abraham Lincoln materials; increase public awareness of the Museum as an important, world-class resource; and make these materials available to the public through multiple platforms.

“ The collections are critical; they are the gold standard. They give value and credibility to the Museum. ”
CHM staff member

- We will challenge ourselves to discover the emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic **power of original historical materials**. We will use our imaginations, scholarship, new technology, and collective expertise to tap our collection's full potential as an interpretive and educational tool and a resource for historical understanding.
- We will focus on **collecting primary historical voices** as well as physical evidence to add meaning and integrity to our collection and extend its potential for use by broader audiences.

“ The story of an object is powerful and important. ”
CHM staff member

“ Our collection is the very soul of Chicago. ”
CHM staff member

- All acquisition and deaccession decisions will be based on an assessment of the material's ability to **engage people in making meaningful and personal connections to history**, whether through research, education, or experiences.
- We will commit ourselves to processing and cataloging our collections to **improve access and maximize use**.

4 We are a service organization.

We will create a pervasive, institution-wide culture of service that anticipates the needs and wishes of our public, seeks to maximize our impact, and fosters an internal network of support. We will embrace service as a way to make a positive difference in people's lives.

- We will **create experiences with history that are meaningful, memorable, and accessible**—physically, cognitively, emotionally, culturally, and economically—to serve the diverse needs of our audiences.
- We will **identify the educational needs of our audiences and meet those needs** through a range of experiences for teachers, students, researchers, and scholars.

- We will apply our creativity to **eliminate barriers** to the Museum’s offerings, providing thoughtfully designed physical and virtual environments, reaching out to diverse and underserved communities, and accommodating multiple learning styles.
- We will embrace an institution-wide model of service that measures our **success in terms of outcomes and impact**. To that end, we will start our work by identifying the desired outcomes of our products, services, and activities and align our efforts to achieve those goals.

- **Service will be the responsibility of the entire Museum workforce.**
We will define and develop service goals in four critical interdependent relationships: institution to audience, institution to partners, management to staff, and peer to peer.

“ Everyone has to see their role in creating a positive experience for visitors. ”
CHM staff member

“ We serve each other in order to better serve the public. ”
CHM staff member

“ Everyone [at the Museum] has been extremely kind and seems to really respect and appreciate the service volunteers provide. ”
CHM volunteer

5 We must understand and meet the needs of our audiences to maximize our impact.

We will actively seek to understand our audiences, investigate what people need to help them make meaningful and personal connections to history, use that understanding to shape our products and services, and evaluate our work to improve our future efforts.

- We will **invest in regular, thorough research of target audiences** and tailor our products and services to effectively meet their needs, desires, and abilities.
- We will **use frequent, critical, and objective evaluation**—front-end, formative, and summative—to develop imaginative new concepts; choose the right interpretive product to align our desired outcomes with our targeted audience; and influence the development of new products and services. We also will commit ourselves to analyze our finished work to evaluate our performance and use that information to achieve excellence in future projects.
- We will track and evaluate **patterns of use as a key measure of our success** to confirm that we are valued across all Chicago communities.
- We will **engage our audiences as collaborators, storytellers, history keepers, and supporters**. We will recognize our audiences as participants in shaping knowledge and understanding—more than just consumers of historical information. They will bring authenticity, knowledge, experience, wisdom, and resources to the Museum and help others make meaningful and personal connections to history.
- We will **embrace learning as a dynamic process** that is self-motivating, emotionally stimulating, and personally rewarding and understand the historical process as one that welcomes wonder, curiosity, fun, and imagination.
- We will **encourage and facilitate dialogue between visitors**, serving as a safe and inviting social space where people can share ideas and experiences, challenge one another’s assumptions, and value multiple perspectives.

“Connections are what help people to manufacture their own meaning and motivate them to care. If you don’t create an emotional connection, people will just walk through without caring.”
CHM staff member

“It is not about my experience here. It is about our visitors’ experiences.”
CHM staff member

6 Our workforce is the catalyst for achieving our vision.

We will recruit and develop a workforce—trustees, staff, volunteers, and interns—that is inspired to achieve greatness, works collaboratively, challenges one another, brings diverse skills and perspectives, reflects the community, and is driven to maximize our impact. We will foster a culture of lifelong learning, creativity, and work-life balance.

- We will attract, develop, and retain a **highly qualified and motivated workforce** that is deeply committed to the Museum’s purpose and embodies its core values.
- We will rededicate ourselves to developing a **diverse workforce** that more accurately reflects—and is better able to serve—the city’s heterogeneous population.
- We will **educate our trustees about the Museum’s activities and inform them about our work and plans** so that they can perform their governing role to the best of their abilities. We understand that the breadth of their experiences enriches the life of the Museum, and their connection to the Museum enriches their lives.
- We will **reward innovation** and allow people room to experiment. We will expand opportunities for professional development and encourage staff to be active players in the museum profession.
- We will invest in and develop staff to achieve their potential by **encouraging the well-being of the whole person**. We will support staff in their need to maintain a balance between their professional and personal lives.
- We will **cultivate an expanded volunteer workforce** that will enable us to extend our institutional resources and impact.
- We will **create a nurturing and creative environment that encourages teamwork and collaboration** to more effectively tap the existing strengths of our entire workforce and develop innovative ways of serving our audiences.
- We will support and promote our workforce as **ambassadors for history and agents of change**.

“ Good things are generated by people who are able to work together, who are genuinely interested in the subject matter, wanting to do their job and come to work every day. ”
CHM staff member

“ Elders need to be sources of wisdom, not obstacles to innovation. ”
CHM staff member

⁷ We cannot
do it alone.

Every museum needs help to achieve its vision. Fortunately, we are not alone in wanting to help people make meaningful and personal connections to history. Throughout greater Chicago, there are many who share this passion. We need their help.

- We will **share our vision with the wider community**. Our belief in the transformative power of history can be infectious.
- Our ongoing **partners** include our sister museums as well as the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Public Schools, and the myriad other collaborators who help us reach and represent the entire Chicago metropolitan region.
- In addition, we will **reach out** to those who care about our particular offerings and those who appreciate our indispensable civic role, and we will ask them for help.
- We will tap our **communities of support** for their energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to our shared vision.
- Working with our supporters, we will have a **greater impact**.

“ This Museum should work to forge new relationships and create opportunities to collaborate with others. If we want people to care about the Museum, we need to start with their communities. ”

CHM staff member

Conclusion

Embodying this vision will require action, discipline, and rigor. **Action** takes form as we identify the strategic initiatives that best express our values; **discipline** is displayed when we are true to our vision, making choices that advance our purpose; and **rigor** is found in our daily attention and commitment to our process and products.

Fuel for advancing our vision is tangible in the dedication of our trustees and in the passion and commitment that staff and volunteers bring to their work. We believe that our collective effort has the power to transform the Chicago History Museum. With the help of our supporters in the community, we will make our vision a reality. **We will claim Chicago and shape our future.**

THE VISIONING COMMITTEE

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OUR PROCESS

Getting Started

The initial meetings of the Visioning Committee served as opportunities to establish individuals from different parts of the organization into a team and stimulate discussion among members. Early meetings were held off site to remove the group from the distractions of our jobs, and assignments were made to foster reflection on our own practices. Discussions included identifying a place or space that best captures Chicago's identity; sharing a memory of a personal connection with an object; imagining ourselves on a task force to create a new history museum; and identifying the priorities for that museum. We also spent time discussing our future work as a team and settled on a biweekly meeting schedule.

Research

Drawing on recommendations by committee members, our readings represented a range of sources and disciplines, broadened our thinking, and challenged us to imagine new possibilities (see selected bibliography, pages 38–41). Spread throughout the process, day-long retreats allowed the team to focus on critical topics. In January 2007, the committee held its first retreat at which team members identified a set of priorities, defined a research plan and the role of each team member, and discussed the possibilities for the visioning report. The discussion explored topics relating to the relevance and importance of history, definition of audiences and the expanded use of audience studies, current and future museum services, and allocation of the Museum's resources.

During this retreat, the committee identified five priorities—history, audience, civic engagement, innovation, and service—and divided into teams to research each one. Research teams were charged to identify the following resources relating to their priority: people we should talk to—museum professionals as well as others outside the museum field; places we should visit or contact for further insight and inspiration; and articles, books, or websites for review and reference. Subsequent meetings allowed the teams to share their findings.

Staff Interviews

As part of our research, the team recognized the value of looking inward and reflecting on who we are in order to determine who we might be. Wanting to include additional voices at the table, we conducted face-to-face interviews with

our colleagues. The interview script included seven questions designed to solicit thoughts on work at the Museum, identify moments of pride, consider the importance of the Museum’s work and purpose, reflect on personal values, and imagine the possibilities for a history museum in the future (see staff interview questions, page 44). Five interview teams conducted personal interviews with thirty staff members, including the senior managers, department heads, and select other staff representing the diverse functions of the Museum. Interviews were staged with one team member posing the questions and prompting the interviewee to expand on their responses by repeatedly asking, “Why is that important?” The other team member recorded the discussion and responses. All interviews were typed and posted for the full committee to review; the identities

of interviewees were not associated with the transcribed interviews. In order to reach out to the entire staff, written surveys were sent electronically to staff and hard copies placed in strategic areas throughout the Museum (see all-staff questionnaire, pages 42–43). All in all, forty-three staff members submitted their input to the committee during this phase of work. Both the face-to-face interviews and the written surveys became invaluable primary sources for capturing colleagues’ thoughts and attitudes and informing the final components of this report.

Core Purpose and Values

The work of Jim Collins—namely *Built to Last* and *Good to Great*—greatly influenced the committee’s process. Collins’s work introduced the team to key concepts in creating a vision, including the need to define our core purpose and

envision the future based on what the Museum might do best. Drawing on the data and insights collected from interviews with our colleagues, we moved into a critical phase of self-definition.

The team contracted museum consultant John Durel from QM2 to serve as a coach and facilitate subsequent retreats. In preparation for our second retreat in May 2007, we read and analyzed interview transcripts and written surveys looking for patterns of values widely embraced at the Museum and the beliefs or principles that guide our work. Using this information, we drafted statements to define our core purpose and identified words that expressed the Museum’s values. As we defined our values, we turned once again to Collins’s work for a seven-question exercise to test if each value was actually a “core value” (see Jim Collins’s Vision Framework, page 45).

To further confirm the validity of our core purpose and values statements, we turned to our colleagues once again. The team scheduled two check-in meetings with all staff and a third meeting for senior managers and department heads. We shared the purpose statement and values and gave staff an opportunity to read, review, and reflect. The meetings were designed as discussions where staff could respond to and debate the committee's work. At the conclusion of each meeting, those present were asked to personally evaluate each value by completing a questionnaire designed around Collins's questions. The committee asked staff to consider how the values take form in their daily work and how the Museum manifests these values. Additionally, staff was invited to suggest additional core institutional values (see staff-input questionnaire, page 46).

As valued members of the Museum's workforce, some of these same questions were posed to the Museum's volunteers in the form of a survey, which encouraged volunteers to consider how the purpose and values take form in their work at the Museum (see volunteer questionnaire, page 47).

Civic Leader Interviews

Ready to envision the Museum's future, the committee began to postulate where Chicago might be in the future. Similar to the staff interview process, the team identified a list of civic leaders, who represented diverse perspectives on questions focusing on the future of Chicago. The interview script was refined to seven questions (see civic leader interview script, page 48). Interviewees reflected on the opportunities and challenges posed by the Olympics, the

aging baby boomer population, and the disappearance of ethnic neighborhoods to gentrification. Their responses mirrored the themes that had emerged during committee discussions, including service, civic engagement, technology, and education. Interviewees addressed how civic responsibility for future changes lies in the hands of residents and businesses:

- Good decisions about our future course require a well-informed and engaged community.
- Both public and private activism is required for long-term solutions.
- Vigilance is required to provide quality education to Chicago youth and adequate resources for classrooms.

Interviewees also warned us that the struggle for affordable housing and employment is creating an unhealthy economic segregation between the city's haves and have-nots.

Envisioned Future

With the insights gained from our research, discussions at meetings, and conversations with our colleagues and local civic leaders, team members were ready to envision what a history museum in a vibrant urban environment could become in ten years and beyond:

- How are the issues faced by the city relevant to the Museum's future?
- How should the Museum devote its resources for the future?
- What is the Museum's role in fostering change in Chicago?

Since we agreed that the Museum is passionate about “helping people make meaningful and personal connections to history” (our purpose) and we are “the best resource for interpreting the past and making it relevant to Chicago's present” (our “best at” statement), the team was now ready to express a vision for the Museum's future.

As a first step, each team member was challenged to draft a one-sentence vision statement that captured what he or she thought the Museum should or could be in the future and describe two ways this vision could be manifested at the Museum. The committee then entered into a series of lengthy meetings filled with lively debates, personal reflections, flip charts capturing emerging concepts, and finally, draft descriptions of the Museum's future. We looked inward at ourselves and outward to the larger community to consider our physical building and places where one might find the Museum other than at the corner of Clark Street and North Avenue; our understanding of current and potential audiences; the organization of project teams to create a range of interpretive products; and collaborations with one another to foster a vibrant work environment.

During a retreat, a draft version of the report was vetted with senior management and revised based on their recommendations. The team worked closely with senior management to plan a staff and volunteer rollout and schedule follow-up discussions to provide forums where staff could begin to envision the implications of the report's guiding principles. The final report reflects our hopes and passion for history and Chicago and the collaborative spirit of working with our colleagues and diverse audiences. The confluence of meeting discussions, research, interviews with our colleagues and civic leaders, and a profound understanding of ourselves is embodied in the principles that will guide the Museum and its staff moving forward.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brown, John Seely. “Growing Up Digital: How the Web Changes Work, Education, and the Ways People Learn.” *Change*, March/April 2000: 10–20.

For the past decade, talented and award-winning faculty members have expressed concern that they could no longer hold the attention of their students. Brown, chief scientist at Xerox and director of its Palo Alto Research Center, hired a group of fifteen year olds to design future work and learning environments. He observed that the students did not conform to the traditional image of learners as permissive sponges. His findings require us to rethink and redesign education for the digital age.

Cameron, Fiona. “Criticality and Contention: Museums, Contemporary Societies, Civic Roles, and Responsibilities in the 21st Century.” Center for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney.

Cameron’s article examines the roles of museums as credible sources of information in an increasingly complex contemporary society. The author scrutinizes the notion

of “museum information” and asks hard questions about how information is used and by whom, about the learning process, and about the role of museums in influencing and shaping decision making. Cameron concurs that museums can operate as powerful places of engagement and social transformation as long as audiences engage topics on their own terms and are given the freedom to resolve issues in their own minds.

Collins, James C., and Jerry I. Porras. *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visioning Companies*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994.

Collins and Porras demonstrate that visionary companies do certain things very differently from their duller rivals. In large part, these policies focus on the internal rather than the external and have little to do with technology or number crunching. Among these are having “cultlike cultures”; adhering to an ideology that goes beyond the simple pursuit of profits; relying on homegrown management; focusing on creating a lasting organization; and having the ability to see things as more than “either-or” propositions.

Collins, James C. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don’t*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001.

A follow-up to his bestseller, *Built to Last*, Collins examines eleven companies—including Fannie Mae, Gillette, Walgreens, and Wells Fargo—and discovers common traits among them that challenge conventional notions of corporate success. At the heart of these rare and truly great companies, Collins identifies a corporate culture that finds and rigorously promotes disciplined people to think and act in a disciplined manner.

Durel, John, and Anita Nowery Durel. “A Golden Age for Historic Properties.” *History News* 62, no. 3 (2007).

If historic sites update their decades-old business practices, Durel and Durel predict an upcoming golden age for those organizations. Specifically, they argue that historic sites and properties should abandon the cultural tourism model that targets large numbers of one-time visitors in favor of a model that targets smaller groups of people with whom the institution can build intimate relationships. The authors offer several

suggestions including building affinity groups, targeting baby boomers who are intensely thinking about their legacy, facilitating as opposed to interpreting historical content, and appealing to the spiritual as well as intellectual needs of their audiences. If historic properties can accomplish such objectives, they will build relationships that benefit both the members and the institution.

Falk, John H., and Beverly K. Sheppard. *Thriving in the Knowledge Age: New Business Models for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: Altamira Press, 2006.

In their study, Falk and Sheppard bring together two strands of knowledge: (1) a deep understanding of museums and (2) a comprehensive awareness of business practices and ideas. The central notion in the book revolves around the need for a new business model for museums. The authors argue that the industrial age business model was linear, top-down, static, internally focused, and isolated the organization from the world around it. They contrast this model with a knowledge age business model that

is bottom-up, changing, flexible, audience centered, and open to the discontinuous change occurring in society.

Forum. “Grand Theft Education: Literacy in the Age of Video Games.” *Harper’s Magazine*, September 2006.

A published transcript of a forum conducted in 2006, this article discusses how video games are ushering in a “virtual revolution” that will change the way people learn to write. The article posits questions about the kinds of writing we hope to teach and how new forms of literacy will change established notions of authorship.

Gardner, James B., and Sarah M. Henry. “September 11 and the Mourning After: Reflections on Collecting and Interpreting the History of Tragedy.” *The Public Historian* 24, no. 3 (2002).

This thoughtful article addresses how historians can actively reconcile the tension between their obligation to record the historic nature of recent traumatic events and the concern that they are too close to the events to be able to judge what is truly historically

important. The article shows how to embrace the opportunity to help museum visitors understand tragic events and contribute to the nation’s healing, while remaining true to an obligation to enrich the historical record.

Gladwell, Malcolm. “Brain Candy.” *The New Yorker*, May 16, 2005.

Gladwell’s review of Steven Johnson’s *Everything Bad Is Good for You* posits that statistically rising IQs might be due to the complexity of pop culture. His argument hinges on the notion that current television programs put “greater cognitive demands” on viewers today than they did thirty years ago. There is a similar perceived trend in video games—steadily increasing complexity putting ever-greater intellectual demands on the player.

“The Historian in the Museum: An Interview with Eric Foner.” *Museum News*, March/April 2006: 45–49.

During this interview, Foner describes the ways in which museums can present history more effectively. He states: “They [curators] know their audience is not an academic one;

it's not the same as a scholarly convention or scholarly classroom. But I think they often don't give enough credit to the audience for being able to tackle complicated ideas, so there is frequently a tendency toward oversimplification."

Koster, Emlyn. "The Relevant Museum: A Reflection on Sustainability." *Museum News*, May/June 2006.

Koster explores the often-used term "relevancy" first by highlighting the efforts of significant museum theorists to push the field further by confronting the issues that reflect the present and the possible future. One of the key arguments of Koster's essay is the assertion that "museums would perform a more valuable public service . . . if they increased attention to the issues that confront their regions and the world, now and into the future." Koster gives examples of contemporary issues addressed by museums and cites discipline-specific ways that institutions can move beyond theory into practice.

Levering, Robert, and Milton Moskowitz. "What it Takes to Be #1: Genentech Tops the 2006 100 Best Companies to Work for in America List." Great Places to Work Institute, Inc., 2006. http://resources.greatplacetowork.com/article/pdf/why_genentech_is_1.pdf

Genentech, a biotechnology and pharmaceutical company, was voted the top place to work in 2006. The authors explain the dimensions that make up the Great Place to Work model—credibility, respect, fairness, pride, and camaraderie—and describe the ways Genentech fits the model through the various programs they offer employees. More significantly, the authors show how Genentech's programs flow directly from its mission and how their practices fit together coherently to translate into a people-oriented culture.

Mangan, Mark. "Loosen Up or Sue Me." *Museum News*, November/December 2006.

Mangan outlines the tremendous power of the web to reach huge numbers of people. As evidence, he cites the wide availability of blogs and online networking opportunities.

The web presence of most museums, however, is irrelevant because many museum websites and collections are closed off, protected, or run like the museum itself—museums are caught in another era. The author argues that if museums want to compete with such readily available diverse content, they have to get into the web game in new ways. Suggestions include offering entire collections on the web and posting exhibition and programming information on blogs and event calendar tools.

Munley, Mary Ellen, and Randy Roberts. "Are Museum Educators Still Necessary?" *Journal of Museum Education* 31, no. 1: 29–40.

Munley and Roberts trace the revolution that put education at the core of museums' missions and educators in a central leadership role in the 1970s. Their essay focuses on the uneasy place museum education finds itself in the new millennium as a more business-model approach takes hold within museums, forcing them to quantify their results in ways not always compatible with the nature of the institution. The authors challenge educators to not retreat to their technical abilities but to exercise their skills—community building,

increasing access, reaching out to new audiences—to create new strategies for civic engagement and demonstrate the public value of museums.

National Endowment for the Arts.
“The Arts and Civic Engagement.”
<http://www.arts.gov/pub/CivicEngagement.pdf>

Based on data from the 2002 NEA Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, this study demonstrates that “Americans who read books, visit museums, attend theater, and engage in other arts are more active in community life than those who do not.” It lists ten key findings, most alarming a twenty-year decline in youth and young adult participation in literature, the performing arts, and even sports. This decline is concerning because the current and future engagement levels of youth, or more specifically Generation Y, “will determine the viability of our arts and our communities.”

Pekarik, Andrew. “The Power of the Object.” *Curator* 45, no. 2: 89–91.

This essay is about the importance of evaluation. Contrasting the Hope Diamond’s

theatrical staging with the almost non-existent staging of stardust at the National Museum of Natural History, Pekarik examines how an object’s importance is often shaped by convention and the preferences of museum professionals. He challenges museums to reevaluate the icons of their collections by questioning visitors about those icons’ perceived power, since visitors are the ones who will ultimately make meaning of what they see.

Weil, Stephen E. “Transformed from a Cemetery of Bric-a-brac.” Chap. 7 in *Making Museums Matter*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002.

Weil examines what he sees as two revolutions in the museum world in the past century: museums have become outwardly-oriented and public expectations about the purpose of museums have shifted. The later is the focus of much of Weil’s discussion about the effectiveness of museums in this new climate. He argues that museums need to replace their old modes of measuring success and service in terms of output with a new model that defines and measures success and service by outcome. Ultimately, Weil argues

that effectiveness, or the museum’s ability to meet intended outcomes (success), will be the key to the public’s continued support of museums. He concludes that this will not happen without a defined purpose that goes beyond the traditional functions of the museum.

Yokoyama, John, and Joseph A. Michelli, *When Fish Fly: Lessons for Creating a Visioning and Energized Workplace from the World Famous Pike Place Fish Market*. New York: Hyperion, 2004.

Yokoyama and Michelli’s text explores how a powerful vision and the commitment of a small staff to that vision transformed a small enterprise into a world-famous business. *When Fish Fly* presents a clear example and effective strategy for achieving renowned results.

Appendix

All-Staff Questionnaire

Visioning Committee Questionnaire

April 13, 2007

The Visioning Committee is seeking input from all staff members to help us build a vision for the Chicago History Museum. In order to forge a path to a new place we must first know where we are, and perhaps more importantly, who we are. Your participation is essential to that effort.

Please fill out this form, print it, and place it in the drop box near the museum's north door by **Sunday, April 22, 2007**. If you don't have access to a computer, please participate by writing out your responses on a hardcopy of this document. To ensure confidentiality, do not sign your form.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to help us plan for the future of the Chicago History Museum. We will be back, seeking more input and feedback in the coming months. In the meantime, if you have any questions please contact one of the Visioning Committee staff members (Lynn McRainey, John Russick, Alison Eisendrath, Joy Bivins, Dan Oliver, Rob Medina, or Nat Arata).

1. Can you describe a moment when you felt pride in the work of the museum? This could be something you observed, or something that happened to you personally. Describe what happened?

1A. Why did it affect you in the way it did?

2. What do you think is the most important thing that CHM does?

2A. Why is this product, service or function important?

2B. Who benefits from it and how?

2

3. What core values or guiding principles do you personally bring to your work? Why is this important to you?

4. If the Chicago History Museum disappeared today, what would be lost? Why would that matter?

5. What do you think is the purpose of the Chicago History Museum?

6. It is the year 2010, and you are among a group of people asked to create an urban history museum. What would be the three priorities for this museum? Why?

ADDITIONAL NOTES/COMMENTS:

3

Staff Interview Questions

Visioning Committee Interview Questions

March 21, 2007

The Visioning Committee has selected you for a face-to-face interview. Two members of the committee will meet with you and ask you the following questions. These seven questions were developed to spark a conversation, so the committee members may follow up these questions with a further inquiry to build on or clarify your answers.

1. Can you describe a moment when you felt pride in the work of the museum? This could be something you observed, or something that happened to you personally. What happened? Why did it affect you in the way it did?
2. What do you think are the most important products, services, or functions that CHM provides or performs? Why?
3. What core values or guiding principles do you personally bring to your work?
4. If the Chicago History Museum disappeared today, what would be lost? Why would that matter?
5. What do you think is the purpose of the Chicago History Museum?
6. It is the year 2010, and you are among a group of people asked to create an urban history museum. What would be the three priorities for this museum? Why?
7. Is there anything that you'd like to add?

All of your responses will be confidential although they will be shared with the other members of the Visioning Committee. Thank you in advance for your willingness to help us plan for the future of the Chicago History Museum.

Jim Collins's Vision Framework

Jim Collins's work is available at JimCollins.com. Chicago History Museum staff used the techniques outlined in the “Building your Company's Vision” page of the “Laboratory” section of the website.

Staff-Input Questionnaire

VISIONING COMMITTEE – STAFF INPUT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please take a moment to answer the questions below, circling “Y” or “N” for each of the following values:

	Authenticity	Collaboration	Creativity	Empathy	Integrity	Service	That “Ah-Ha” Moment
Should CHM continue to stand for this value 100 years into the future, no matter what changes occur in the outside world?	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Should CHM continue to hold this value, even if, due to changing circumstances, CHM were to be penalized or placed at a competitive disadvantage for living this value?	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Do you believe that those who do not share this value simply do not belong at CHM?	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N
Would you personally continue to hold this value even if CHM did not reward you for holding it?	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N	Y / N

Please circle the values below for which you answered “Y” to each question:

Authenticity Collaboration Creativity Empathy Integrity Service That “Ah-Hah” Moment

2. In what ways do you manifest the values you circled in your day-to-day work at CHM?

3. In what ways does CHM manifest the values you circled?

4. Are there any other values that you feel are core institutional values that are not on this list? If so, what are they?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND INPUT!!

Volunteer Questionnaire

Chicago History Museum Reflections on Core Purpose and Values

Our Core Purpose

The Chicago History Museum's purpose is to help people make a meaningful personal connection to history.

Our Values

Collaboration Service Empathy Authenticity

Integrity Creativity Discovery

1. How does the purpose resonate with your work at CHM?

2. In what ways do you manifest these values in your day-to-day work at CHM?

3. In what ways does CHM manifest these values?

Please submit your responses by Monday, January 7. You can simply return your form to the box that will be in the Volunteer Lounge on the first floor, near the Visitor Services offices.

Civic Leader Interview Script

Chicago History Museum Visioning Committee Questionnaire

1. What are the biggest challenges/opportunities the Chicago region is facing now?
2. In the next five years, do you think these challenges/opportunities will change or be addressed? Will there be new challenges/opportunities that will top the region's agenda 5 years from now? How will these challenges/opportunities and the responses to them affect the lives of people who live here?
3. How will Chicagoans shape our city's future? What opportunities and barriers does the City present to its residents?
4. How is your organization planning for the future?
5. What role do you see the city's museums and cultural institutions playing in the future?
6. Which projects and people in the city show great vision? Why?
7. Is there anything else you wish to add?

Interview candidate:
Interview date and time:

“ I’d like to live in a city where the people felt self-determining, understood their past, would not take injustice lying down, and had mutual respect for each other. ”

CHM staff member

The logo for the Chicago History Museum, featuring the word "Chicago" in a serif font, "History" in a bold sans-serif font, and "Museum" in a serif font.

Chicago**History**Museum

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