



Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries

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PACSCL Strategic Plan – 2005-2009

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The twenty-seven member libraries of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL) collect, care for, and share with a world-wide audience collections that, in their depth and variety, comprise an internationally important body of rare or unique materials for students, scholars, and lifelong learners. Since its founding in 1985, PACSCL members have worked collaboratively on such diverse projects as public exhibitions, cataloging initiatives, electronic access to catalog records and finding aids, and professional colloquia and workshops. Its member libraries, through their support of an international research community and their public programs for a local and regional audience, play an important role in the cultural life of the Greater Philadelphia area and in the nation.

External factors shaping PACSCL's plans for the future include the explosive expansion of information technologies and an expanded appetite for information among a broad range of publics, the Greater Philadelphia's preeminence as a national center of higher education, and its role as the #2 heritage destination in the country, second only to our nation's capital. Additional information on PACSCL, the history of the planning process, its analysis of internal and external environmental factors, and its mission and vision statements, can be found in the background section at the end of this document.

Mission. The Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL) encourages diverse audiences to explore and engage with member libraries' uniquely rich holdings and, through collaboration, strengthens these collections and the institutions that preserve them.

As stewards of our documentary heritage, PACSCL members seek to share their internationally important body of unique and rare materials so that:

- **The Philadelphia area generally and PACSCL in particular** will be known internationally as one of the nation's preeminent centers of rare books, manuscripts, photographs, prints, architectural drawings, and works of art on paper.
- **Every potential user worldwide will have access** to records for all materials in all media in the collections of PACSCL libraries via web-mounted catalog records or encoded finding aids.
- **The Greater Philadelphia educational establishment** will rely on PACSCL for resources and programs for curricula and curricular supports for students from early childhood through postdoctoral education and for life-long learners.
- **Tourists and the tourism professionals who serve them** will look to PACSCL and its members to showcase and illuminate the historical and cultural riches of the Philadelphia area

- **PACSCL members' staffs at all levels** will build and share in a rich community of common interests and involvements, will have collective access to the highest level of professional training in their disciplines, and also will become inspired and informed about the collections, resources, and available expertise at member libraries

In serving these functions and constituencies, PACSCL will gain growing recognition for providing a national model for regional collaboration among special collections libraries, including utilization of technology in program delivery.

Focus for the Future

PACSCL faces six key challenges that inform the strategic planning process:

1. to make our catalogs and other information about our collections finally searchable together;
2. to address the preservation and access needs of these holdings on a shared, prioritized basis;
3. to use information technologies to share elements of our collections for researchers, students, and tourists;
4. to market our value to these and other constituencies;
5. to strengthen the professional community doing all this work; and
6. to ensure the sustainability of these initiatives.

To address these challenges, PACSCL has developed a set of interlinked initiatives called “The Greater Philadelphia Research Collections Network.” These initiatives offer a vision of a regional network of libraries, museums and other collecting institutions working collaboratively to build access to, and awareness of, the rich resources in the Greater Philadelphia area. The initiatives in the strategic plan address three key areas: access, outreach, and professional development; and are supported by additional activities to assure sustainability.

KEY LONG RANGE GOALS, STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, AND INITIAL PRIORITIES

I. ACCESS: Expand public access to the rich cultural resources of PACSCL institutions.

A) Encourage use of collections by researchers, faculty, students, tourism professionals, and the general public by providing enhanced electronic access to collection records

Develop collective electronic search capabilities for member online catalogs

Year 1: Funding permitting, begin migration of six PACSCL members to a more robust OPAC platform capable of performing the complex searches appropriate to special collections and providing statistical feedback on usage. Develop strategy for using this platform in a portal to provide “one click” searching across all the OPACs of the consortium’s member institutions.

Year 2: Finish OPAC migration; begin implementation of the collective Z39.50 “one click” interface

Years 3-5. Refine and assess

Develop a consortium-wide capability to search other electronic records such as finding aids, online exhibitions, digital collections, and other resources

Year 1: Seek a planning grant to develop a PACSCL-wide portal for “one click” searching of finding aids, digital collections, online exhibitions, and other library resources, using the capabilities built into the Open Archives Initiative (OAI) that Penn and other institutions are pursuing. In the planning stages, consider expanding the materials available via the portal to embrace inventories, museum collection databases, and other holdings data that amplify and complement the catalog data in the OPACs.

Year 2: Funding permitting, begin work on planning grant

Year 3: complete planning grant; assess. Begin to seek funding for wider implementation

Years 4 and 5: Build PACSCL-wide OA portal; assess.

B) Encourage use of collections by identifying and cataloging important hidden collections.

Consortial survey

Year 1. Funding permitting, and following the protocols developed and applied by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, begin to survey and assess the preservation and access needs of approximately 3,500 archival collections, totaling approximately 35,000 linear feet, in twenty-one PACSCL member institutions.

Year 2. Continue survey/assessment project.

Year 3. Complete survey/assessment project and evaluate results.

Cultural records management

Year 1. Funding permitting, in partnership with the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance (GPCA), conduct a records management needs assessment among GPCA members.

Years 2-4. Funding permitting, help area cultural institutions preserve and share their histories on an ongoing basis by providing records management training; surveying and assessing the needs of the historical portions of these records still in the custody of the organizations that created them; arranging transfer, as appropriate, of historical records to repositories that can share them with the research public; and processing these records on a priority basis.

Develop priorities for cataloging and collection care

Year 1: Work with national programs, such as the Hidden Collections Initiative of the Association of Research Libraries, to develop appropriate standards and approaches for working with backlogs of unprocessed material.

Years 2-5. Based on priorities identified by the consortial survey initiative, seek funding for and implement cataloging and conservation of high value and/or high risk collections. Provide for cooperative collection development as appropriate.

C) Encourage users to consider collections and resources in new ways through a new portal that incorporates a Geographic Information System

Year 1. Funding permitting, develop plan to bring two members' related projects under a common umbrella and identify and prioritize other projects and collections. Begin concept demonstrations that will focus on a slice of time (the Civil War) and a specific place (Society Hill/Old City).

Year 2. GIS Advisory Group-sponsored "Historical Users Conference." Seek funding for expansion of GIS system.

Year 3. Incorporate GIS portal into PACSCL website and promote to key audiences.

Years 4-5. Continue to expand range of materials in GIS system; evaluate and assess usage and amend plans as necessary.

II. OUTREACH: Reach out to a local, regional, national and international audience of scholars, tourists and lifelong learners to encourage appreciation of and engagement with collections in PACSCL member libraries

In early 2004, the PACSCL outreach committee conducted a survey of audiences important to PACSCL member libraries. These audiences fell into two broad groupings: the international community of scholars and the higher education community of the region on the one hand; and K-12 students and their teachers, lifelong learners, tourists, and the general public on the other.

In discussions with other committees it was concluded that PACSCL's outreach goals should identify the overlapping constituencies potentially enriched by the shared strengths of the PACSCL institutions; target particular audiences through the PACSCL portals and GIS

project as well as curriculum development initiatives and related techniques; and use the publications of those audiences to promote these gateways to PACSCL collections. These goals and strategic objectives in turn fall into two broad groupings: one centering on the Network and its electronic portals; and one centering on PACSCL's other outreach opportunities.

A) Strengthen PACSCL website to support the Greater Philadelphia Research Collections Network.

The current site offers basic information on PACSCL member libraries and consortium programs. An expanded site with greater functionality, especially in search capabilities, is critical in supporting the new Network initiatives and in providing an essential tool in PACSCL's outreach efforts. Many of the additional outreach activities described below will have the goal of encouraging audiences to explore and engage with PACSCL member libraries via an initial contact from this website.

Year 1. Seek funding; identify consultant and/or vendor; start planning.

Year 2. Begin site development. Identify and contact complementary organizations for whom reciprocal links would be a logical cross-promotion.

Years 3-5. Continue site development. Evaluate, assess. Adapt to incorporate new resources and technologies.

B) Identify key audiences

Year 1. Survey member libraries to develop mailing lists (print and electronic) of the scholarly associations and interest groups that, collectively, serve as PACSCL's research audience. Funding permitting, select a PR consultant and develop a strategy for identifying key audiences within the Greater Philadelphia area

Years 2-5. Continue to identify and reassess target audiences.

C) Build targeted programs to reach key audiences.

Year 1.

In partnership with other Philadelphia area institutions, participate in creating a Philadelphia region for the National History Day program to engage students and their teachers. Funding permitting, work with PR consultant to develop a strategy to reach key audiences.

Year 2. Identify additional opportunities to communicate with key audiences; continue to implement PR plan; continue work on National History Day program. Assess additional activity as reflected in library visits, web site traffic, feature placement.

Years 3-5. Evaluate, assess, and amend as necessary; seek additional funding as necessary.

III. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS: Build skills, knowledge and community among member staff

A) Raise the skill and knowledge level of member staff and provide a mechanism for sharing expertise across institutions.

Years 1-5. Periodic update of PACSCL online member expertise directory and member survey asking about training needs. Continue to encourage formal and informal training and mentoring, especially with new technologies, among staff at member libraries.

B) Through programming for PACSCL members, allow a broad cross-section of member library staff access to conversations about the latest issues, challenges, and trends in the rare book library and manuscript profession. Such programming in the past has not only educated PACSCL members but begun important conversations on new collaborative projects.

Year 1: Two workshops per year (tentative topics: copyright, conservation)

Year 2: Two workshops per year

Year 3: Symposium on results of consortial survey initiative in context of other projects such as Hidden Collections and its implications for cataloging, conservation, and cooperative collection development.

Year 4 and 5: Two workshops per year.

C) Develop opportunities for member staff to network and become familiar with collections at other member institutions.

Years 1-5. Continue to expand on existing program of informal social events for PACSCL staff.

IV. GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY: Create a sustainable business model for the organization.

In its 2003-2004, PACSCL identified several areas for improvements in governance and organization and carried out many of the recommended initiatives: an articulated committee structure that reflected the mission and vision statement; a revision to the bylaws that set clear guidelines for decision-making; permanent office space and equipment for the central office and an increase in the executive director's weekly hours. PACSCL's long-range goals in this area are now directed toward developing funding streams to assure sustainability of day-to-day operations.

A) Build membership. PACSCL has already made great strides in increasing its membership base. Over the past two years, membership has grown from 21 to 27. Given its geographic focus, dues structure, and mission, PACSCL sees the total universe of potential members as a

relatively limited one. Its upper limit of membership is likely to be in the range of 30-35 members.

Year 1: Survey the Greater Philadelphia area to identify potential new members. Develop solicitations to increase membership from 27 to 30.

Years 2-5: Consider other new members as interest and opportunity presents.

B) Introduce dues increases on a sliding scale over several years.

Year 1: Increase dues to \$1,200/\$1,300/\$1,400, depending on size of special collections budget.

Year 2: Increase dues to \$1,200/\$1,400/\$1,600. Evaluate and assess impact on PACSCL and its member libraries.

Years 3-5: Revise dues structure as warranted.

C) Develop new funding sources:

Year 1: Survey members regarding potential corporate, foundation, government, and perhaps individual donors not previously considered as sources of funding for PACSCL. Charge the development committee with considering and making recommendations on the feasibility of building an endowment to support PACSCL's core functions.

Years 2-5: Implement and assess.

Background

History of PACSCL and the planning process

The twenty-seven member libraries and archives of the Philadelphia Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL) collect, care for, and share with a world-wide audience collections that, in their depth and variety, comprise an internationally important body of unique materials for students, scholars and lifelong learners.

The collections of PACSCL members include a total of more than 3,000,000 rare books, 200,000 linear feet of manuscripts and archival materials, and 9,000,000 photographs, maps, architectural drawings, and works of art on paper. PACSCL member libraries hold rich collections of materials on national, regional, and local history; the natural and social sciences; world history, literature and religion; art and architecture; medicine and technology; and business and industry.

PACSCL is unique among library consortia in this country. It was born out of the conviction that the extraordinary collections of Philadelphia area libraries deserved heightened visibility and support. In 1985, sixteen institutions came together to create PACSCL as an informal cooperative group with a shared agenda ranging from access to public programs and development. Now, almost twenty years later, PACSCL has grown in size to its present twenty-seven libraries and evolved into a formal organization with nonprofit status. During that period, PACSCL has compiled an impressive track record in developing projects and programs that have greatly benefited member institutions and their diverse constituencies. The world of learning is a core constituency of PACSCL's member libraries and hence of PACSCL itself.

With generous support from The Pew Charitable Trusts, the William Penn Foundation, the Delmas Foundation, and other foundations and corporations, PACSCL has demonstrated its commitment to the importance of rare book, manuscript, and archival collections and to their role in scholarship and in public life. Its accomplishments include:

- its **Legacies of Genius** exhibition and catalogue (1988), with generous support from many area funders (\$800,000);
- its **Initiative for the 1990s I and II** cataloging and access projects (1991-96), adding some 200,000 of consortium members' most significant bibliographic records to the major online bibliographic utilities, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts (\$4,250,000);
- the creation of a **Collaborative Online Public Access Catalog** for those member libraries without individual OPACs (1997-ongoing), initially funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Barra Foundation and others (\$500,000);

- a **Finding Aids Project** including EAD training, digitization of existing finding aids, and establishment of a unified search interface (1998-ongoing), initially funded by the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation (\$125,000);
- and the **Leaves of Gold** medieval manuscript exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Frist Gallery in Nashville TN, catalog, website, CD-ROM, and children's programming (2001-02 and ongoing at <http://www.leavesofgold.org/>), funded by The Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative of The Pew Charitable Trusts and The William Penn Foundation (\$375,000)

PACSCL also has shared its skills and expertise with the broader profession of librarians and archivists through a series of workshops and seminars on a variety of cataloging issues ranging from the description of nineteenth-century imprints to the intellectual control of ephemera. In December of 2003, PACSCL continued that tradition by gathering together some of the country's leaders in the field of research libraries to share ideas and insights on the benefits and challenges of collaboration not only with PACSCL institutions, but also with other library and museum colleagues. These workshops and seminars have in turn suggested new areas for collaboration among members and between PACSCL and other professional organizations.

PACSCL is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of one representative from each member library; an Executive Committee consisting of six elected members (four officers and two at-large members), the immediate past chair, and the chairs of the standing and ad hoc committees, provides oversight of programs and planning. The organization has a part-time executive director and offices housed at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Funding for the operation of the organization is provided by member dues.

The strategic planning process has arisen out of a recognition that in order to continue to serve its members, and to strengthen support from its members and external stakeholders, PACSCL must have a clear mission, a vision flowing from that mission, an awareness of the challenges and opportunities facing it, and both long range goals and strategic objectives. To that end, members engaged in self-study through a questionnaire and series of discussions at quarterly meetings in 2001, and in a day-long retreat concentrating on PACSCL's future in January 2002. Preparations for this day were carried out by a consultant in conjunction with the Executive Committee. Subsequently the consultant worked with the Executive Committee and with the full Board to assess the organization's response to the ideas generated at the retreat and to prepare for the creation of a strategic plan. A preliminary two-year plan, drafted in fall 2002 to guide the organization in 2003-2004, allowed for the development of a series of initiatives described in PACSCL's summer 2004 "Greater Philadelphia Regional Collections Network" white paper, drawing together, and providing an implementation strategy for, the priorities identified in that preliminary plan.

Important Environmental Factors

External Factors. Two important external trends underscore the importance of the materials in PACSCL collections to the city, the region, the nation, and an international community of scholars and suggest both long- and short-term priorities for the organization.

The first is the expansion of information technologies and in particular the Internet. The explosive growth of the Internet, the World Wide Web, and information technologies over the last ten years has transformed the research process, changing the way everyone from award-winning scholars to high school students, family historians and lifelong learners go about identifying relevant sources for their work. By now, nearly every academic library and large public library has replaced its traditional card catalog with a computerized system, searchable worldwide over the Internet. Moreover, the Internet has become the primary method of international scholarly communication, and high-speed Internet connectivity is now used by the majority of schools, libraries, and online U.S. households.

One result of this growth is an expanded appetite for information, together with an expectation that this information will be freely and immediately available. As technology grows increasingly more affordable, and the public and private appetite for information continue to increase, PACSCL's member libraries have a growing opportunity to meet an important cultural need through projects that provide online access to cataloging data and through digitization of rare or unique and significant materials.

The second trend is the Greater Philadelphia region's continuing emphasis on higher education and on cultural and heritage tourism as important economic engines. Philadelphia is now ranked the #2 "heritage" destination in the country, second only to Washington, DC.

The collections of PACSCL member institutions play an important role in the region's strength as one of the nation's pre-eminent educational centers. These collections represent a "Philadelphia campus" that transcends the resources of any single college or university, offering unparalleled for undergraduates, graduate student and faculty and making the region a particularly attractive research destination for recipients of fellowships and scholars on sabbatical.

Similarly, the raw stuff from which American heritage "products", such as books and documentaries that stimulate a desire to visit the region, are created is to be found in the collections of the region's museums and libraries. PACSCL members, in particular, are important information brokers for those who create the programs -- historians, scholars, filmmakers, educators, and interns. PACSCL collections provide both the information and in many cases the visual materials to help interpret the region's importance as the cradle of American government, as a philosophical, cultural and religious center, as an early leader in publishing, as a center of medicine and technology and the workshop of the world, and as a first home for successive waves of immigrants over more than three centuries. Moreover, many PACSCL institutions are themselves current or potential tourism destinations.

In responding to these trends, PACSCL is both challenged and supported by the need to secure external funding for collaborative projects. The funding base for such projects is almost exclusively from foundations and government sources, and funding priorities from these sources are changing. Along with changing priorities, however, comes a new recognition of the importance of collaborative efforts such as PACSCL's in the cultural life of our community and our nation among these external funders.

Internal Factors. PACSCL comprises the single largest collaborative center of special collections libraries in the country; it and its member libraries are respected as repositories of history and culture in our region; PACSCL is respected for its accomplishments by area funders and by special collections libraries throughout the world. PACSCL institutions have excellent staff members, many with national reputations. Many of the institutions are parts of internationally-recognized museums, cultural institutions, and colleges and universities, which means that PACSCL can draw upon a wide range of expertise and facilities beyond the special collections libraries themselves.

The diversity of the collections held by its member libraries allows PACSCL to pursue a broad range of initiatives, with no individual member obligated to participate in those projects not of interest to that organization, as demonstrated by PACSCL's online public access catalog, finding aids, and *Leaves of Gold* projects. This diversity of collections and organizational capacities creates a challenge insofar as it makes it difficult to structure an array of programs to meet all members' needs. It also makes it difficult to create programs that showcase all members at the same time, as with the inaugural *Legacies of Genius* exhibition.

From this diversity come other challenges to the organization's successful operations. PACSCL and special collections libraries have a low profile among the general public in the Greater Philadelphia area and some influential organizations and individuals. This hampers PACSCL's ability to gain funding for its projects. Among larger PACSCL institutions in particular, the PACSCL board representative may not be that institution's decision-maker, which can slow down the speed with which the organization can take action in response to PACSCL initiatives. A survey of area funders, undertaken as part of the self-study, revealed that PACSCL is perceived as lacking in follow-through. The earlier strategic plan recognized that PACSCL also has historically been challenged by its lack of funding for day-to-day operations, its lack of infrastructure, and its imprecise guidelines for decision-making. Considerable progress has been made on the decision-making and infrastructure issues, and some on the funding issue, but additional work needs to be done in this area.

Despite some of its internal and external challenges, PACSCL members see clear present value and future potential in the organization. PACSCL's record of success has created a sense of commitment to PACSCL among most of the member institutions.