



Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries
P. O. Box 22642
Philadelphia PA 19110-2642
215-985-1445 voice, 215-985-1446 fax
<http://www.pacscl.org/>

PACSCL Strategic Plan – 2007-2011

Contents

Executive Summary	Page 1
Key Goals, Strategic Objectives, and Initial Priorities	
Access	Page 3
Outreach	Page 4
Professional Development and Communications	Page 6
Governance and Sustainability	Page 6
Background	
History	Page 8
Environmental Factors	Page 10

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The thirty 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 the organization's 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 the region's role as the #2 heritage destination in the country, second only to our nation's capital; and the expanding opportunities for combining with other library and heritage consortia and groups locally, regionally, and nationally. Additional information on PACSCL, the history of the planning process, internal and external environmental factors, the organization's mission, 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 and share them.

As stewards of 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** through metadata to records for all materials in all media in the collections of PACSCL libraries via web-mounted catalog records or encoded finding aids, and to a growing inventory of digitized collections.
- **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.
- **PACSCL will work with other consortia** to these ends.

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

Focus for the Future

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

1. to make members; catalogs and other information about members' 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 members' collections for researchers, colleagues at other collecting and presenting institutions, students, and tourists;
4. to market PACSCL's 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, leveraging PACSCL's research and capacities through partnerships with other associations and consortia. .

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. PACSCL is also exploring collaborative relationships with the following associations and consortia: Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc. (PALCI); Palinet; The Office of Commonwealth Libraries; AccessPA; the Museum & Library Council of Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley; the Delaware Valley Archivist Group (DVAG); the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL); The Association of Research Libraries (ARL); and the Independent Research Libraries Association (IRLA). PACSCL is committed to working collaboratively with any other associations and consortia in the region whose missions overlap its.

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

Year 2-5. Refine and assess. Seek out, evaluate and (funding permitting) implement more robust interinstitutional search tools as they emerge.

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

Year 1: Participate in conversations with the various statewide and regional library consortia, and in particular with several leadership institutions in PACSCL and elsewhere, such as the University of Pennsylvania and University of Pittsburgh Libraries, on development of a collection digitization and federated searching project.

Years 1-2. Seek planning and/or implementation grants for such a system.

Years 3-5. Funding permitting, plan and/or implement the system; evaluate and assess.

Years 1-5: Recognizing that PACSCL is participating in initiatives that engage the full cultural and heritage community in its service area, including museums and historic sites: monitor any emerging technologies that would permit integrated searching of library and museum holdings with a view to expanding this project to include these new potential partners.

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

Consortial survey

Year 1. Following the protocols developed and applied by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania with support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, 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 (continuation of project begun in fall 2006). Conduct public program for area institutions to present the project and its progress.

Year 2. Complete survey/assessment project. Conduct symposium to share results of project.

Years 3-5. Publicize survey process and results to a professional audience via

presentations and publications; use the results of the project to develop priorities for additional work on unprocessed and underprocessed collections (see below)

Develop priorities for cataloging and collection care

Year 1: Contribute the findings of the consortial survey project to the national discussion of 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 members of area cultural organizations to develop an awareness of best practices for records management; encourage these organizations to deposit their archival records to appropriate repositories

Year 1. Seek funding for a grant to conduct records management workshops for cultural institutions.

Year 2. Funding permitting, conduct workshops for cultural institutions.

Years 3-5. Evaluate and assess.

D) Encourage users to consider collections and resources in new ways through a new portal that incorporates a Geographic Information System (see <http://www.philageohistory.org/>)

Year 1. Build on the work of earlier pilot project by researching individuals and organizations who lived or worked on one city block to aid partner libraries in identifying related resources in their holdings, and incorporate this information in the database. Share progress of the pilot project and a vision for the future through a publication in the Council for Library and Information Resource's "Burgundy Book" series.

Year 2. Plan and seek funding for a project to extend the range of partners and resources contained in the Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network

Year 3-4. Funding permitting, implement next project.

Year 5. Review and assess progress.

E) Coordinate a community-wide strategy for disaster preparedness for Philadelphia-area cultural and heritage organizations.

Year 1. Working with PACSCL member institutions, other associations of collecting institutions, the City of Philadelphia, relevant state and federal agencies, and the regional conservation/preservation community, plan and carry out a conference to identify issues, partners, and strategies in a community-wide disaster plan for cultural and heritage institutions.

Years 2-5. Seek funding to put such a plan in place; evaluate and assess.

II. COMMUNITY BUILDING: 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; reach out to library and other collecting institutions as well as their associations and consortia on a regional and statewide basis to expand the reach of collaborative projects.

PACSCL's target audiences can be classified in two broad communities: the researchers (senior scholars, faculty, graduate students); and younger students, lifelong learners, and the general public. In discussions with other committees it was concluded that PACSCL's community-building 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.

With funding from the William Penn Foundation, PACSCL began a redesign of its website in fall 2006 in preparation for the one-click search interface for member catalogs. Many of the community building and professional development 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. Continue site development begun in 2006 with funding provided by the William Penn Foundation. Identify and contact complementary collecting institutions and professional organizations for whom reciprocal links would be a logical cross-promotion.
Years 2-5. 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.
Years 2-5. Continue to identify and reassess target audiences.

C) Work through interconsortial partnerships to reach key audiences.

Beginning in late 2005, PACSCL has sponsored or been a leader in three collaborative conferences: one on Geographic Information Systems; one on library/museum collaboration; and one on Philadelphia-area heritage development. At the same time, it has built

relationships with several regional library consortia, notably the Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc. (PALCI) and Palinet. Because outreach to these overlapping sets of associations also yields significant benefits in the area of professional development, we have discussed them in both contexts in the Professional Development section of the plan. As part of the announcement of PACSCL's one-click search interface (see Goal I, section A), we are planning to have a meeting for public librarians and teachers to talk with them about our search engine and about how to use primary sources in classroom teaching as well as in their own research.

Year 1. Identify additional opportunities to communicate with key audiences. Assess additional activity as reflected in library visits, web site traffic, feature placement.

Years 2-5. Respond to publicity opportunities as they occur.

D) Reach out to K-12 students and their teachers through One Book One Philadelphia, National History Day, and other programs.

Years 1-5. Continue to encourage member participation in these and related initiatives. Provide staffing and scholarship support for National History Day. Periodically assess ways to expand this effort by reaching out to support additional programs.

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. Conduct 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 and other collecting institutions throughout the region, and in collaboration with other associations and consortia, 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 and in the larger field of collecting and heritage institutions. Such programming in the past has not only educated PACSCL members but also begun important conversations leading to new collaborative projects.

Year 1: Workshops: deaccessioning (March 2007); cosponsored workshops on disaster planning and preservation/digitization. Establish collaborative relationships with PALCI, Palinet, and the Office of Commonwealth Libraries and other partners. A preliminary report for local librarians and archivists about the consortial survey project. Public meeting on our Z39.50 interface..

Year 2: 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 3-5: Continue to work with consortial partners to identify professional development and training needs

C) Develop opportunities for member staff to network and become familiar with collections at other member institutions. Consider grouping members geographically for open houses.

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 self-study, 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 four years, membership has grown from 21 to 30. Given its geographic focus, dues structure, and mission, PACSCL sees the total universe of potential members as a relatively limited one. Although the institution of an Associate Member level, with lower dues and benefits, raises the potential upper limit of PACSCL membership from 30-35 to 50-60, including colleges, historical societies, and smaller independent research collections.

Year 1: Review survey of the Greater Philadelphia area to identify potential new members. Develop solicitations to increase membership from 30 to 35.

Years 2-5: Consider other new members as interest and opportunity suggest, with particular emphasis on associate membership for smaller or more distant institutions.

B) Periodically review dues structure. PACSCL raised its dues on an incremental basis over the period 2002-2006, and moved from a flat to a tiered dues structure. No increases are contemplated for 2007 at this time, but the issue needs to be reviewed annually.

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 executive 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

D. Review and revise committee structure to reflect new organizational priorities:

Year 1: Establish new committee structures as appropriate.

Years 2-5: Evaluate and assess.

E. Develop an introductory package for new members and new staff.

Background

History of PACSCL and the planning process

The thirty 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, more than twenty years later, PACSCL has grown in size to its present thirty 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, the Andrew W. Mellon 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:

- the surveying and assessment of more than 30,000 linear feet of unprocessed or underprocessed archival material in member collections (2005 and ongoing), funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (\$410,000);
- the completion of a pilot project to identify relevant collections and technical issues and build infrastructure for a geographic information system, The Philadelphia GeoHistory Network (2005), funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (\$50,000);
- the migration of six online member public access catalogs to a more robust platform and creation of one click access to member catalogs using the Z39.50 search protocol (2005 and ongoing), funded by the William Penn Foundation (\$250,000);
- 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)
- 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 Kriebel Delmas Foundation (\$125,000);
- 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);
- 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); and
- its **Legacies of Genius** exhibition and catalogue (1988), with generous support from many area funders (\$800,000);

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, topics explored in two 2006 conferences in which PACSCL was a participant: one on collaboration among libraries, museums, and historic sites and one on development

and marketing of the Philadelphia regions' heritage assets for the purposes of community engagement and economic development.

PACSCL is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of one representative from each member library. An Executive Committee consists 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. It 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 Research Collections Network" white paper, drawing together, and providing an implementation strategy for, the priorities identified in that preliminary plan. This plan was revised, following additional self-study, in September 2004.

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. The explosive growth of the Internet and related 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 both 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 research resources 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 historians, scholars, filmmakers -- those who create the programs that bring people to Philadelphia -- as well as for 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 scientific, 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 in the cultural life of our community and our nation among these external funders. PACSCL provides a successful example of collaboration over the long term.

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. Examples include 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, and this can slow down the speed with which the organization takes action in response to PACSCL initiatives. A survey of area funders, undertaken as part of the self-study, revealed that PACSCL was 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, follow-through, 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.