

Testimony of I. Michael Heyman, Secretary  
Smithsonian Institution  
before the  
Senate Committee on Rules and Administration  
July 28, 1999

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution and to present a summary of our activities and our fiscal year 2000 budget request.

As you may be aware, after considerable deliberation, I will step down as Secretary at the end of 1999. I do this with regret, of course, but also with pleasant anticipation. I regret departing from the Institution that is so important in our national life, and from those people who are responsible for what it does. But I look forward to returning home to California and reestablishing my ties to the University of California and the San Francisco Bay Area.

I have tried to use my years as Secretary to promote a greater sense of the combined strength of the Smithsonian as a positive force in providing quality research and education programs for the nation. My priority as Secretary has been to maintain the quality of the programs offered by the Smithsonian and to enhance the visitor's experience while touring our museums and utilizing our research facilities. I have been equally dedicated to sharing that experience with people outside of Washington and to making our programs and collections more accessible to the nation. Increasing the Institution's outreach to other educational institutions and the general public is crucial in meeting this priority.

Three Smithsonian programs that seek to promote outreach to every American have been particularly important to me during my tenure with the Institution – the Affiliations Program, the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), and electronic access to the collections. The goal of the Affiliations Program is to promote greater public access to the Institution's collections by providing an alternative means for their exhibition outside of Washington. Since the inception of the Affiliations Program in 1996, there have been more than 150 separate inquiries from organizations interested in forming affiliations. There are currently seven active affiliations and 20 ongoing affiliations projects. And, in the early spring a long-term agreement with the National Museum of Industrial History in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was finalized, and a 19th-century locomotive and hundreds of other industrial artifacts from our collections were moved to that site.

Since 1952, the Smithsonian Institution Exhibition Service (SITES) has been sharing the wealth of the Institution's collections, research, and exhibitions with audiences around the world through short-term exhibitions of collections and representations. Each year, millions of people beyond Washington, D.C., experience these programs. SITES popularity has been significantly enhanced as it continues to secure substantial corporate and foundation support for its programs.

Two new projects highlight this success: a grant to host an interactive traveling science exhibition *Microbes: Invisible Invaders, Amazing Allies*, which opened Memorial Day weekend on the National Mall and an alliance with a theme park located in Branson, Missouri, to present the children's geography exhibition, *Earth 2U, Exploring Geography* and the exhibition, *American Glass: Masters of the Art*.

In recent years, SITES has developed a rural initiative in partnership with the Federation of State Humanities Councils. Called Museums on Main Street, this program has brought SITES exhibitions to more than 100 rural communities across the country and has generated tremendous enthusiasm and participation.

In many ways, Internet-based learning is rapidly changing the nature and scope of education in America. The Smithsonian has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of people who access our Internet website. At a rate already in excess of 30 million "hits" per month, our objects, databases, research, virtual exhibitions, lesson plans, and visitor services are being made available to schools, businesses, libraries, and individuals around the nation and the world. It is our goal to bring a large portion of our display collections on-line, making it possible for anyone with access to a computer to see and study these objects. We believe this evolving technology greatly enhances our ability to make Smithsonian programs and museums publicly accessible. We are pleased that the Administration has recognized our efforts in this area and has identified the Smithsonian as a key partner in its Digital Library initiative.

The cornerstone of these important institutional outreach activities is education. The National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) is expanding its efforts to become a national hub for science education. Last fall, six school districts around the nation began testing *Mammals in Schools*, a program to promote museum-style, object-based learning in middle school science classes. An electronic classroom with two-way videoconferencing links between the Museum's exhibition labs and classrooms enables teachers and NMNH scientists to assist students as they analyze mammal specimens, study their habitats, and build exhibitions based on what they have learned. Electronic field trips that simultaneously link several classrooms to Museum science labs via video-conferencing equipment are also being developed. For more than a year, the Museum has been providing an after-school learning program based on NMNH research on the ice age which has been presented to more than 10,000 young people in 25 states.

Also on the education front, the National Science Resources Center (NSRC) has received a grant in support of its Leadership and Assistance for Science Education Reform (LASER) Project. During the next six years, LASER will help local leaders introduce and implement inquiry-centered kindergarten through 8th-grade science curriculum materials in more than 300 school districts that serve approximately one million students nationwide. To accomplish this, NSRC has formed partnerships with eight regional sites located in Alabama, California, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Washington.

Now, to highlight some of the Smithsonian's achievements in the past year. We are pleased to report that there were more than 31 million visits recorded at the Smithsonian museums and the

National Zoo in 1998, an increase of more than 4 percent from the 1997 total and the highest recorded total attendance since 1984.

The National Air and Space Museum, the most visited museum in the world, attracted almost 10 million visits in 1998. This level of attendance last year is a credit to the success of *Star Wars: The Magic of Myth*, an exhibition commemorating the 20th anniversary of the *Star Wars* trilogy. During its 15-month run, nearly one million people viewed the exhibit. The IMAX feature, *Everest*, has also enjoyed a very successful run at the Museum's Langley Theater. Since the movie premiered in March 1998, more than 110,000 people have attended, making *Everest* the best-selling film ever in the evening schedule.

Visits to the National Museum of American Art and the National Portrait Gallery increased last year, in part due to the revival of downtown Washington and the 7th Street art district. Hoping to build on this momentum, both Museums are now participating in Third Thursday, a monthly art celebration organized by the downtown business and arts community, with special evening hours and guest lectures.

In the past year, a number of exhibitions suggested the array of programs available at the Smithsonian: *Theodore Roosevelt - Icon of the American Century*, *The Jewels of Lalique*, *Celebrity Caricature in America*, *Faces of Time: 75 Years of Portraits from Time Magazine*, and *Speak to My Heart: African American Communities of Faith and Contemporary Society*. Also, a series of concerts was preformed by the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Duke Ellington. In November 1998, the "Rock Hall" opened at the NMNH, completing the final piece of the major, permanent exhibition complex that makes up the *Janet Annenberg Hooker Hall of Geology, Gems and Minerals*.

On December 1, 1998, the National Museum of American History witnessed a virtually flawless "takedown" of the Star-Spangled Banner from its display in Flag Hall to begin a major conservation and preservation project. The History Channel, in collaboration with Museum staff, aired a documentary on the history of the flag and the preservation project, which is the largest textile conservation project ever undertaken by a museum. In October, the preservation project began in earnest when walls were erected to enclose the conservation and exhibition area, and a NASA expert, using near-infrared spectrometry, began assessing the amount of moisture and surface dirt on the flag. The flag has now been relocated to the conservation lab, which serves, itself, as an exhibition area, allowing visitors to observe the preservation project in progress.

Following a four-year renovation, the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum and its Design Resource Center in New York re-opened in June 1998. With its state-of-the-art environmental systems and storage equipment, the Center is a model for managing museum collections and making them more accessible to the public, while maintaining the integrity of the historic structure.

The Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) in Edgewater, Maryland, ushered in a new era of learning for school groups with the opening of its new Philip D. Reed Education

Center. The Education Center also doubles as a visitor center, featuring an orientation hall, a teacher resource library, office space, and an 80-seat multipurpose room. In order to provide school groups and the public with the latest information about SERC research, the building will be connected to SERC labs via video and audio networks.

This research facility on the Chesapeake Bay provides a unique opportunity to study a variety of interconnected ecosystems whose impact is felt across the globe. Scientists at SERC have identified non-native species of bacteria, from ballast water on ships in the Chesapeake Bay, that can cause cholera. These studies are an integral part of the largest U. S. research project dealing with the origin and impact of alien, invasive species in coastal and estuarine systems. As you are aware, non-native species pose a serious threat to native species, can disrupt food chains, and cause environmental and infrastructure damage exceeding, according to one estimate, \$120 billion in 1998. SERC's research has produced tools and strategies that may be a crucial means to control invasive species. SERC has played a leading role in research that determined that streamside forests and restored wetlands can be instrumental in reducing nutrient runoff into coastal waters. In addition, collaboration with other institutions has enabled SERC to find ways to detect and quantify the toxic organism *Pfiesteria*, which can kill fish and poison humans.

In the past year, the Smithsonian has made tremendous advances as well in other ongoing research efforts. Scientists at the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO), in partnership with the Harvard College Observatory, have developed low-field magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) that extends the technology to areas in the human body that could not previously be imaged, including the lungs and sinuses. This technology will have applications ranging from detection of hard-to-reach tumors to use by people with pacemakers.

Research efforts at the Smithsonian benefitted from John Glenn's historic return trip to space last fall. The Shuttle flight carried Spartan 210, a solar physics experiment package that included an ultraviolet coronagraph spectrometer (UVCS) built by SAO, to observe the Sun's outer atmosphere. In addition, NASA's Submillimeter Wave Astronomy Satellite (SWAS) carried an instrument, designed by SAO scientists, to observe the heavens in submillimeter radiation and study the birth of stars. And, NASA is scheduled to launch, aboard the space shuttle the 45-foot telescope Chandra, an x-ray observatory that is the third in a series of four planned orbital "great observatories" designed to study the most violent and extreme phenomena in the universe in 10 to 100 times the detail as previously possible. Chandra was developed under the director of SAO scientists.

At the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI), studies revealed new data on conditions that support species diversity in ecological systems such as rainforests, grasslands, coral reefs, and lakes. Research conducted in a Panamanian rainforest on Barro Colorado Island has led to developing methods for sustaining endangered species that are threatened with depletion and destruction.

The 1999 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, featuring the State of New Hampshire, was a great success, receiving accolades from New Hampshire officials and citizens on the presentation of the state's traditions and culture. As with the 1997 Festival featuring Mississippi and the 1998

Festival featuring Wisconsin, this festival will be replicated back in the home state. The Folklife Center is currently completing work on a cultural education kit for school children in the Mississippi Delta growing out of the 1997 Festival. A documentary, *Wisconsin Folks*, based on the 1998 Festival, aired on Wisconsin public television stations in December. In the year 2000, the Folklife Festival will feature the District of Columbia, the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo Basin (largely Texas and New Mexico), and a program on Tibetan culture.

In order to continue and support the Institution's programs and operations, for Fiscal Year 2000 the Smithsonian has requested: for all operating and capital accounts we seek a total of \$447.4 million, an increase of \$35.1 million above the fiscal year 1999 appropriation. Of this amount, \$380.5 million is for Salaries and Expenses, and \$66.9 million is for our capital program.

Of the requested increase in the Salaries and Benefits account, 58 percent is attributable to mandatory costs to sustain base operations, with the remainder for priority program requirements. For FY 2000, these program priorities total \$14 million and 25 position, and include activities related to the Dulles Center of the National Air and Space Museum, the Mall museum building of the National Museum of the American Indian, access to collections information and modernization of the Institution's security system. The following provides a more specific breakdown of those priorities:

- \* For the Dulles Center, \$2 million and 14 term positions would be used for the preparation of artifacts for relocation from the Garber Facility in Suitland, Maryland, to the new site in Virginia.

- \* For the National Museum of the American Indian, \$5 million and 11 positions are required for operational support at the new Cultural Resources Center in Suitland, Maryland, the move of objects from New York to Suitland, and exhibition development associated with the opening of the Mall museum.

- \* For access to collections information, \$5 million is needed to support the electronic capture and digitization of object and specimen images, enrichment of related data, and storage, as well as retrieval, of that material.

- \* For security system modernization, \$2 million is necessary to continue replacement of the Institution's current security system, and to provide engineering support for and staff training on a new system as well as its installation, testing, and documentation.

In this request the Institution has consolidated its capital accounts, thus unifying all repair and restoration activity in one account and all construction in a separate account. Within the consolidated accounts, \$47.9 million is identified for Repair, Restoration, and Alteration of Facilities and \$19 million is identified for Construction. The \$47.9 million requested for repair and restoration will target:

- \* The repair and restoration of buildings on and near the Mall as well as buildings at the National Zoological Park;
- \* Major capital renewal projects at the National Museum of Natural History and the renovation of the old Patent Office Building, which houses the National Museum of American Art and the National Portrait Gallery

For renovation of the Patent Office Building, the Institution requires \$8 million in FY 2000 and requests advance appropriations in order to award a single \$60 million contract for this project. Receipt of the additional advance funds will allow cost-effective and time-critical renewal of the structure. We propose that \$17 million of the advance appropriation become available on October 1, 2000; another \$17 million on October 1, 2001; and \$18 million on October 1, 2002.

Finally, in the Construction account, the Institution requests \$19 million for the Mall museum building of the National Museum of the American Indian. Of that amount, \$13 million will be used to complete construction and \$6 million will be used to equip the building. This final increment of funding will complete the Federal share – two-thirds of the building cost – authorized in the legislation enacted on November 28, 1989. The other third, which totals \$36.7 million, has been raised through the generosity of individuals, tribes, corporations, and foundations in this country and around the world.

As you can see, Mr. Chairman, 1998 was an active year for the Smithsonian and, thus far, in this my final year, we have largely achieved four chief priorities I outlined earlier this year. First, with the groundbreaking now scheduled for September 28, we can look forward to the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian on the National Mall in 2003. Secondly, the Institution's capital campaign has been significantly defined. Thirdly, we have acquired an additional facility in close proximity to downtown Washington for the activities presently located in the Patent Office Building, with settled plans for renovation and appropriate organizations and programs. Finally, Smithsonian Business Ventures has been created as a separate entity within the Institution to carry on our business activities and its chief operating officer selected. Members of the Business Ventures Board of Directors have extensive experience in commercial fields, and the first CEO brings to the organization a unique combination of skills and experience in establishing retail and entertainment centers within a well-known non-profit organization.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today, and I have enjoyed working with the Committee for the past five years. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you and the other Members of the Committee may have concerning the Smithsonian's activities and operations. Thank you.