



## **Museums Without Borders**

Los Angeles, it has been said, is where the future happens first.

L.A. is a cultural **crossroads** like no other, a meeting ground of north and south, east and west, the past and the present. It is the first and largest “majority-minority” city in the United States: the Hispanic or Latino/a community numbers 47% of the L.A. county population, while Caucasians are 29%. L.A. has the nation’s fastest-growing Asian-Pacific Islanders community. The region is one of the country’s youngest, too: 28% of L.A. county’s 10 million residents are under 18 and 36% were born outside the U.S.

The Los Angeles region is a leader in technology, entertainment and innovative responses to environmental issues.

And it is a city where many of the conventional borders between people, nations and even ways of thinking have disappeared.

In May 2010, Los Angeles is the city where the museum community will meet to take stock of its present and focus on shaping its future. Can we be a community of museums without borders?

The young 21st century is about **connectivity**. Not only in the technical sense through the Internet but through the explosion of virtual access and social networking. We now share information instantly on every conceivable topic.

Connectivity has helped to dismantle borders—social, cultural and geographical. It has made us more aware of our dependence on one another and on the physical world around us. This new perspective changes old views on issues from the environment to the food supply, education and healthcare. Yet interdependence brings risks as well as rewards. In the new global economy, the recession that began in 2008 affects every region and every nation. No one is immune.

Museums are positioned to be among society’s most active participants in this new interconnected world. We represent history, culture and knowledge and are trusted sources of relevant, valuable information. We are dynamic manifestations of societal views and communities. Museums can be the connectors and bridge-builders, helping visitors of all ages, backgrounds, nationalities and locations better understand one another.

Every museum visit offers a journey, the potential to arrive at new ways of thinking and learning. If imagination knows no borders, can the same be said of our museums?

In a world without borders, is the world itself our **community**? Should it include the new virtual community of people everywhere interested in our information and collections?

Can connecting better help us make a greater impact on people's lives and on communities around the globe where our visitors live, work and play? Can it make us more socially responsible institutions?

Can our new connectedness lead to better business models to sustain our institutions? The Internet and social networks offer small and remote museums the opportunity to increase their reach and impact. How can we help make that happen more broadly?

How should we balance local needs and concerns with the potential to develop new international audiences of members and donors?

From an institutional perspective, what lessons can we learn from our colleagues abroad? Which operational models should we emulate? What are the models of transnational partnerships that can work for our museums?

Does diversity take on a new, more urgent meaning in an interconnected world?

"Green" issues are especially interconnected. Energy consumption, climate change, the health of rivers and oceans are local and global in scope—as is the search for solutions.

"Connected" does not have to come at the expense of "local." What are the most pressing, on-the-ground issues for museums right now, and what tools can we provide to meet the needs? Economic issues, of course, are urgent. Can local collaborations be a way to survive the recession?

Crossroads. Connectivity. Community. We invite you to imagine with us a museum profession without borders in this global city.