



MUSEUMS LIBRARIES ARCHIVES  
COUNCIL

# Museums, Libraries and Archives Corporate Plan 2008 to 2011



## Introduction

**This is a challenging time for museums, libraries and archives.** The impact we can make on the quality of life of individuals and communities is clearer than ever. Museums, libraries and archives inspire people and play a critical role in supporting learning and skills development making an important contribution to sustainable communities. This role will be brought into sharp relief during the run up to the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, and the Cultural Olympiad. This makes 2008 to 2011 a really exciting time for the Museums, Libraries, and Archives Council (MLA) to be shaping the future.

Our Corporate Plan starts with our aspirations for the sector and goes on to set out the role of the MLA in achieving it. It also gives an overview of the substantial change programme for the MLA. This will be the most far-reaching reorganisation that MLA has undertaken since the decision nearly ten years ago to form a single body to oversee the development of the sector. The 'new MLA' aims to win a reputation for effectiveness at a national level, to be strong in the English regions, and to acquire capacities that can extend its relationships to other nations both in the UK and further afield.

***Mark Wood, MLA Chair***



## **What should the museums, libraries and archives of the future look like?**

The MLA believes that museums, libraries and archives make a measurable and substantial contribution to the quality of life of us all. They support the well-being of individuals and society as a whole by helping to create a shared identity and sense of community and place. They play a vital role in generating prosperity by supporting learning and skills, providing access to knowledge and resources, and by helping to make places inspiring and attractive to live in, work in and visit.

The MLA believes that the best museums, libraries, and archives:

- Integrate with other forms of culture, the arts, sport and local services to offer essential resources that meet the needs of people, communities and places.
- Embed excellence, scholarship, creativity and diversity.
- Innovate, are entrepreneurial and adapt to new working methods.
- Ensure sustainability and continuous improvement is at the heart of all they do.
- Broaden and deepen access to their information and resources.
- Perform to the highest levels and champion continuous professional development.
- Are engaging and enjoyable places for people to visit and use.

**Our vision** is that all museums, libraries and archives in England should achieve this high standard.



## **What is MLA's role in achieving this vision?**

### **Strategic Leadership**

The MLA is government's agency for the sector, engaging internationally, regionally and locally, and business to business.

MLA will advocate best practice and help those who fund museums, libraries and archives. It will continue to provide clear, authoritative leadership for Renaissance in the Regions and other national programmes.

Our objectives are to shape policy and influence the operating context, and to help our sector add value for places, communities and people of all ages and backgrounds, whether residents or visitors, for this generation and for the future.

### **A source of expertise, advice and knowledge**

MLA will:

- Promote best practice in delivery to consumers, develop and uphold standards through supporting the delivery of the National Improvement Strategy, Accreditation, Designation and other tools for improvement.
- Help to extend the application of new technologies to support improvement and innovation; and look for new ways to deliver services and to challenge traditional thinking.
- Encourage transformed working practices and a performance culture, foster professional development and a diverse and healthy workforce, backed by more effective models for leadership, governance and operations.
- Champion access for all; and pursue positive social, economic and environmental outcomes for this and future generations.
- Support expert management, care and sharing of collections and the application of knowledge and information.

## **Research**

MLA advocates evidence-based decision-making. We will use research to drive policy and strategy development, understand and monitor performance, support, strengthen and improve the sector, and demonstrate impact.

## **International collaboration**

MLA will collaborate proactively with partners across the UK and internationally in order to ensure that its responsibilities are framed in the widest possible context so that the sector can benefit from the exchange and application of world-wide experience, expertise and best practice.



## Strategic priorities

The MLA has identified three strategic themes that we will highlight in all that we do:

1. **Learning and skills** – we will work with the sector to increase opportunities for learners to progress and achieve their creativity and unlock their potential.
2. **Communities** – we will ensure museums, libraries and archives are inclusive and support sustainable communities, particularly in their work with young people.
3. **Excellence** – we will strengthen capacity in the sector to innovate and continually improve across workforce, collections, services, funding and partnerships. We will also make the MLA an excellent and efficient organisation.

## A period of rapid change for the MLA

The DCMS funding settlement for 2008-2011 has provided a disciplined context for the development of the MLA.

During 2008/09 we will significantly reduce staff numbers and take the first major step towards our target of transferring two-thirds of our operations to Birmingham, retaining a small policy base in London. At the same time, the independent Regional Agencies that have made up the MLA Partnership will be replaced by a smaller, integrated, and re-focused presence in the regions. In autumn, we will review the governance of the MLA Council in order that it meets our changing needs.

We will develop the ability to manage our performance in new and better ways, and work more efficiently including the setting of targets for energy efficiency and reducing our consumption of resources and carbon year on year. MLA will absorb the full cost and impact of all these changes within our reduced funding settlement. This will be a challenging time for the MLA and its staff.

As the new organisation emerges, we will invest in our staff at all levels. Their leadership, commitment to excellence and teamwork, professional expertise, good judgement and skills are the vital components that will deliver success. We are dedicated to recruiting and retaining high quality staff, and to training and developing them. MLA will support each individual to deliver to the best of their ability and fulfil their personal aspirations while building the reputation of the 'new MLA'.

There is a strong commitment to making the changes in as an efficient and effective way as possible, both for the sector and MLA staff. The year 2008/09 is one of transition – balancing the impact of the introduction of plans for the future against the capacity for delivery now.

### **Specific challenges and opportunities**

The single biggest challenge for 2008/09 will be to deliver the new MLA priorities, and to build our reputation with Government and the sector, while achieving rapid and far reaching organisational change at every level. The Council is committed to creating a new, unified MLA that is fully functional today and fully fit for tomorrow.



Current news, developments and information on our activities are available to view or download from our website.

[www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)

Copies of this publication can be provided in alternative formats. Please contact MLA Publications on 020 7273 1428.

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