

The National Museum of Language
Executive Office Building
7100 Baltimore Avenue, Suite 202
College Park, Maryland 20740

www.languagemuseum.org
(301) 864-7071
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August 2, 2014

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Dear Members and Friends of The National Museum of Language,

At its most recent meeting the Board of Trustees decided to move forward on two of our major strategic plans. Our mission is:

To inspire an appreciation for the magic and beauty of language.

First, we are launching a renewed effort to define and build a unique, robust, multi-faceted inter-active "museum place" -- a "Virtual Museum" which will educate and entertain a vast audience. Second, we are taking our physical museum "on the road" to new sites.

As I set out in my President's letter to the NML community just about a year ago, our four key initiatives are:

1. Expand our exhibits, artifact collections and other programs, reaching out with fixed, mobile, traveling and exchange programs, as well as other mobile curatorial experiments. A "Bricks and Mortar" Museum on the move, "**Bricks and Motor**";
2. Deploy advanced audio-visual technologies for interactive teaching and exposition: on-line; on-site; and on-the-road. The "**Digital Museum**";
3. Expand our "**Museum as Forum**" efforts -- speakers series, lectures, collaborative and sponsored conferences, workshops, symposia, etc.;
4. Build upon our prior success with our **Children's Summer Language Camp**.

Last September we decided to consolidate our exhibits at 7100 Baltimore Avenue and to move some of our artifacts into temporary storage. At the same time we announced that we would be seeking out other venues for our exhibits at schools, libraries, community centers, and other locations where we can expect a higher level of regular visitors than we have been able to attract to our current location. Since last September we have achieved some progress in using another venue for our presentations and other planned special events, in collaboration with other language and language-culture entities around the greater DC area. We also just concluded a very successful and expanded Summer Camp experience in collaboration with local public park organizations.

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On September 30 we will close our exhibit room for the indefinite future; a decision we make in part upon reflecting on another full year's disappointing data of the number of onsite visitors to our College Park facility. In view of our continuing need to deploy our limited financial resources towards the most effective measures to promote our mission, we will now refocus on outreach to other local venues and on creating a unique and engaging on-line museum attracting a wide viewership. We will seek alternatives for our administrative office.

Very importantly, I wish to emphasize that our Board's collective enthusiasm for the mission of the Museum remains higher than ever. As always, we will look for continued contribution of ideas and support from our members, docents, and friends, to continue to make the NML a special place, both on-line and on-site.

We ask for your continued support. Please feel free to contact any of the Trustees* if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "John-Joseph Smith".

John-Joseph Smith
Chairman of the Board and President
The National Museum of Language
College Park, Maryland

* trustees@languagemuseum.org

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Postscript: At this crucial time, we feel it is important to keep in mind the Museum's vision for the future. The message below is from Vice President Jason Teshuba, and represents the Board's perspective on the current transition point:

The National Museum of Language has a bold and exciting vision for the future. It is to be the largest and best museum devoted to language and culture in the world. Our grand goal is for the National Museum of Language to be one of the most highly trafficked museums in the world and inspire an appreciation for the magic and beauty of language in the hearts and minds of more than 5 million annual visitors from all over the world.

A brilliant vision for the National Museum of Language of the future includes impressive architecture and revolutionary exhibitions that demonstrate all facets of linguistics, language and culture in unique, creative and highly entertaining and engaging ways.

For those that say that this is impossible, I encourage you to look at the great and inspiring work that the Museum of Mathematics has done in New York City. They are the first and only Museum of Mathematics in the country. They raised a whopping \$22 million and opened up a 19,000 square foot museum in New York City near Madison Square Park. While I have great appreciation for Mathematics, I am a language lover at heart. As a passionate language lover, I believe that the magic and beauty of language is more majestic and enchanting than even mathematics. But there is no competition. There is room for a wonderful Museum of Mathematics and an awe-inspiring Museum of Language. This is our vision.

A very interesting fact about the Museum of Mathematics of today is that it was born “in response to the closing of a small museum of mathematics on Long Island, the Goudreau Museum. A group of interested parties (the “Working Group”) met in August 2008 to explore the creation of a new museum of mathematics — one that would go well beyond the Goudreau in both its scope and methodology.” (from the Museum of Mathematics website <http://momath.org/about/>)

The National Museum of Language is at a similar crossroads. We realize that in order to achieve our grand vision in the long run, we have to make wise strategic decisions in the short run. The fundamentals of our strategic plan are to apply our focus toward building a Virtual National Museum of Language. This is a web-based Museum that will contain interactive exhibitions aimed at inspiring an appreciation for the magic and beauty of language.

In order to be as focused as possible with our financial resources, the board has decided to close our current small brick and mortar museum. This will significantly reduce our overhead and allow us to build out the Virtual National Museum of Language of today while we continue to develop plans for the new and improved grand vision of the National Museum of Language of tomorrow.

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In summary, this is a very exciting time for the National Museum of Language. We are taking concrete steps to build one of the most inspiring museums in the world. This entails closing our "small" museum, focusing on developing our Virtual Museum and laying plans for the "big" museum of the future.

Jason Teshuba

Vice-President for Strategic Vision