

MUSEUM CENTENNIAL PROJECT PLANS
“Fighting for Statehood: The Arizona Constitutional Convention of 1910”
A Feasibility Study

Background

L Thomas Frye, a thirty-five year veteran Museum Curator, assessed the mission, vision, exhibition and other public programs of the Arizona Capitol Museum in 2004.

Subsequently, Mr. Frye focused on the expansion and revitalization of the Constitutional Convention exhibit in the Museum. The proposed treatment plan for the new exhibit was much more ambitious and far-reaching than the existing installation, with implications spreading beyond the museum itself. What we envisioned is nothing less than a major experiential, multimedia exhibit based in the marriage of the best historical scholarship and convincing application of technology.

A multi-disciplinary team embarked on a phased approach to exhibition development, the first phase of a four month Feasibility Study to thoroughly test the concept before making a decision to commit to the exhibit itself.

The Design Concept

What can be done to bring this important experience in the history of Arizona to life? An answer that we are considering is recreation of a moment in time at the convention through a dramatic sound and light presentation: using photographs and holograms of delegates at their desks in the chamber; creating an interpretive audio narrative for a sophisticated multichannel audio program keyed to the location of speakers; having the lighting system spotlight the delegate addressing the convention; and the audience witnessing the program from the visitor’s gallery up above.

This production, 15-20 minutes in length, would have highly developed theater values—narrative, voices, sound, and lighting. Visitors would be brought in as a group for the performance. A discussion might be held following the presentation—especially if this is a school group. Such a program could be one of the **signature** visitor experiences at the museum and be based on the narratives in the historical record. This is theater “speaking on the record!” This is the Convention come to life!

The preliminary exhibit concept outlined above is but the beginning point for discussion and testing. Changes and adjustments to the concept may well emerge from the Feasibility Study.

Advised by Mr. Frye, Museum, Archives, Research Library and volunteer team members have been working since July to evaluate two dozen overarching issues, from resources to storyline to the relationship of the project to other planned Centennial events. Other questions address the cost and time required for completion for the project. Identifying and acquiring resources for completion of this unique exhibit is a major issue facing the team and our agency.