

Dan Cohen's Digital Humanities Blog » Blog Archive » Smithsonian 2.0

For the next two days (Friday-Saturday, 23-24 January 2009) I'll be at the [Smithsonian 2.0^{\[1\]}](#) meeting in Washington, D.C. From the description:

Smithsonian 2.0 is a two-day interactive gathering exploring how the Smithsonian can better and more effectively reach the younger generation (teenage through college students) with its collections, materials, and expertise through the web and web/new media-based interactive strategies. The focus is on SI resources—and how to make them accessible, engaging, useful, and valuable to the younger generation who will largely experience them digitally. The gathering brings over 30 active creative people^[2]—digerati—from the web/digital/new media world to the Smithsonian. Chosen because of their engagement of large audiences, including youth, and the thoughtfulness and educational consequences of their work, they will join 30 Smithsonian staff at the forefront of efforts to digitally expand the Institution's reach and impact.

Together the group will explore the Smithsonian's current work through discussions, electronic and actual visits behind the scenes with collections and staff. The gathering will generate an initial, but informed vision of what the new, digital Smithsonian—"Smithsonian 2.0"—might look like in the years ahead. The results of the gathering will be integrated into the Smithsonian's Strategic Planning process and forthcoming National Campaign.

Unfortunately the meeting is closed to the public, but I will try to provide

a live feed of some of what's going on [via Twitter^{\[3\]}](#) (follow me [@dancohen^{\[4\]}](#), where I'll also be gathering questions and comments), and I'll blog my standard wrap-up afterwards.

For the record, a month ago I asked [my very helpful followers^{\[5\]}](#) on Twitter to envision what Smithsonian 2.0 would emphasize. The top five answers:

- **Mobile.** The Smithsonian needs to think beyond the desktop/laptop computer and onto the mobile platforms that are becoming central to online interaction.
- **High-Density, Image-Focused Design.** When I asked which websites the Smithsonian should emulate, a lot of respondents mentioned sites like [Etsy^{\[6\]}](#) and technologies like [Seadragon^{\[7\]}](#), which pack a lot of images onto the page (without seeming overstuffed) in a way that encourages browsing and exploration.
- **Back-end Standardization.** Not as sexy as the first two, but many responses mentioned that the first two can only be enabled by standardizing and making interoperable (and web serviceable) all of the many (often creaky) legacy databases that the Smithsonian undoubtedly runs.
- **APIs.** Don't think that the Smithsonian can do it all. Provide application programming interfaces to those databases so that others can reuse, remix, and reenvision the riches of the Smithsonian.
- **Social Media.** Make it easy to share and connect Smithsonian holdings with social media like [Twitter^{\[8\]}](#) and [Facebook^{\[9\]}](#).

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References

1. [^ Smithsonian 2.0 \(smithsonian20.si.edu\)](#)
2. [^ over 30 active creative people \(smithsonian20.si.edu\)](#)
3. [^ via Twitter \(twitter.com\)](#)
4. [^ @dancohen \(twitter.com\)](#)
5. [^ my very helpful followers \(twitter.com\)](#)
6. [^ Etsy \(etsy.com\)](#)
7. [^ Seadragon \(livelabs.com\)](#)
8. [^ Twitter \(twitter.com\)](#)
9. [^ Facebook \(facebook.com\)](#)
10. [^ View all posts in Conferences and Workshops \(www.dancohen.org\)](#)
11. [^ View all posts in Museums \(www.dancohen.org\)](#)
12. [^ RSS 2.0 \(www.dancohen.org\)](#)
13. [^ leave a response \(www.dancohen.org\)](#)
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<http://www.dancohen.org/2009/01/22/smithsonian-20/>

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