The Museum Digital Licensing Collective, Inc. ("MDLC") is a Delaware non-profit, non-stock corporation formed to provide technical and financial assistance for digitizing museum collections, and to manage the storage, distribution, and licensing of digitized materials and related software to educational institutions, libraries, commercial companies, and the public. The MDLC will be organized and run in conjunction with museums to serve the entire American museum community.

The MDLC has a close affiliation with the American Association of Museums, which will always appoint a majority of the MDLC Board's museum, university, and library association Directors. Computer services will be performed under contract with major academic research libraries, and the initial contracts will be with the University of California at Berkeley and Cornell University. Sun Microsystems will also be an initial technology provider for the MDLC.

Most of the 8,200 American museums do not have the funding or technical resources to digitize large or important portions of their collections, develop related database and learning technology software, or manage an Information Technology department. There are also varying standards for digital documentation and imaging. No central and efficient licensing administration exists today to manage the distribution of large amounts of digitized museum collections to hundreds, and potentially thousands, of higher educational institutions, libraries, and K-12 school systems.

The MDLC will solve these problems by helping to fund the necessary technical services to handle all aspects of safely storing and distributing digitized museum materials, and licensing these images. The MDLC will help finance the digitizing by museums of significant museum holdings through grants and donated funds, then license these collections to build a stream of licensing income to fund continuing digitization projects and become self-supporting. A mutually-beneficial relationship will be negotiated between a very large set of potential users -- educational institutions, who are already seeking access to digitized content -- and museums with their vast repositories of cultural, artistic, historical, and scientific collections, but limited financial resources.

The first-year Organizing Phase will be devoted to: developing and negotiating the MDLC's structure and operating policies; defining procedures to digitize and document museum collections; testing computer and network systems to store, distribute, and display digitized museum materials; and furthering relations with appropriate museums, educational institutions, and associations. Task Forces of museum professionals, technical specialists, educational representatives, and consultants will research, review and negotiate the issues identified in this document.

The Organizing Phase will produce: a refinement of the MDLC's charitable and educational mission; a detailed business plan of on-going costs, needs, revenue projections, and timetables; appropriate operating plans, income and expense formulae, and licensing agreements; the development and testing of relevant technologies; computer services contracts with providers; rules of governance; and twenty founding museum members.

Future plans for the MDLC include the possible creation of for-profit subsidiary organizations. A subsidiary might handle the licensing of digitized museum materials to commercial entities, such as multimedia publishers, and gift and product manufacturers. Another subsidiary might propose and develop multimedia and other commercial productions.

The Organizing Phase will start this Spring after funding is secured. The MDLC has received recognition of tax-exemption under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The budget for the 9 - 12 month Organizing Phase is $750,000. The budget for financing the digitization of core collections and operating the MDLC over the following five years is estimated at $10 million.

Organizing Museum Participants

The following museums and original materials collecting institutions, selected for diversity in size and type, have agreed to help organize the Museum Digital Licensing Collective. They will work to develop the MDLC, but are under no obligation to join the MDLC. Formal invitations to museums to join as members will be issued only after the Collective's policies and rules have been set by the organizing participants.

Amon Carter Museum	The National Museum of American History
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and Freer Gallery of Art	North Carolina Museum of Art
Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh	The Children's Museum of Indianapolis
Chicago Historical Society	The Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum
Cornell University	The Heard Museum
Harvard University Art Museums	The Historic New Orleans Collection
Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village	The Historical Society of Washington, D. C.
Library of Congress	The New York Public Library

Museum of Science and Industry
Peabody Museum of Archaeology and
Ethnology

University of California at Berkeley
Worcester Art Museum

MDLC Board Members

The founding Board members are:

- Edward H. Able, Jr.
  President & CEO, American Association of Museums
  Washington, D. C.
- Barbara Franco
  Executive Director, The Historical Society of Washington D. C.
  Washington, D. C.
- Douglas Greenberg
  President & Director, Chicago Historical Society
  Chicago, Illinois
- Lyndel King
  Director, The Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum
  Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Gerald R. Singer
  General Counsel, The American Museum of Natural History
  New York, New York
- Susan Rosenblatt
  Deputy University Librarian, University of California at Berkeley
  Berkeley, California
- Sarah E. Thomas
  Carl A. Kroch University Librarian, Cornell University
  Ithaca, New York
- Duane E. Webster
  Executive Director, Association of Research Libraries
  Washington, D. C.
- Geoffrey Samuels
  Executive Director, MDLC
  New York, New York