

The following paper being of some nine pages is being included in *THE LECTURN* in two parts. The second part will be included in our next (November) issue. It is a benchmark upon which we can debate those things in the Craft which we all hold dear, and perhaps to have these comments included in the next issue. (Ed.)

## IT'S ABOUT TIME!

*Moving Masonry into the 21st Century*

A Publication of Masonic Information Center 8120 Fenton Street Silver Spring MD 20910-4785 Tel: 301-588-4010, Fax: 301-608-3457 email: msana@ix.netcom.com

The Masonic Information Center is a division of the Masonic Service Association. The Center was formed in 1993 by a grant from John R. Robinson, well-known author, speaker and Mason. Its purpose is to provide information on Freemasonry to Masons and non-Masons alike and to respond to critics of Freemasonry. The Center is directed by a Steering Committee of distinguished Masons geographically representative of the Craft throughout the United States and Canada.

*It's About Time*' is the report completing a study undertaken by a special task force of the Masonic Information Center Steering Committee. This report marks the beginning of a Masonic Public Awareness Program started at the request of the 2004 Conference of Grand Masters in North America.

The Task Force members who prepared this report are:

*John Boettjer	Editor <i>The Scottish Rite Journal</i>
Carolyn Bain	Consultant Bain Pugh Associates, Inc
Richard Curtis	Editor <i>The Northern Light</i>
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### MASONIC INFORMATION CENTER STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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**SPECIAL MEMBER** — Bernice Robinson

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## WHY A STUDY? - WHY A REPORT?

The 2004 report from the Masonic Information Center (MIC) to the Conference of Grand Masters focused on the need for Masonic Public Awareness. The collective body of Grand Masters gave over 90% approval to the MIC to move forward. No resources beyond those of the MIC were committed nor were any asked for at the time.

We accepted the challenge and established a highly qualified task force from the Steering Committee of the Masonic Information Center. Our group continues to meet on a regular basis.

The Task Force realized that past attempts at public awareness and promotional campaigns had produced disappointing results. If past campaigns with supporting budgets did little to solve the problem, how would our approach be different? Our group resisted the temptation to jump into the "fun" of a creative project, brainstorming activities and designing catchy slogans. We accepted the fact that a traditional PR campaign works only if you know what you want to communicate. The task for our group was to tackle the question of Masonic public identity.

## Foreword

*"When Memories exceed dreams, the end is near." - Michael Hammier*

### **Examining the need for Masonic public awareness**

It is no secret that participation in the Masonic fraternity has been dropping for at least 50 years. Evidence of our decline is the fact that our membership totals are at their lowest levels in more than 80 years. Hoping to stop the attrition. Masonic leaders have tried numerous initiatives: one-day classes, shortened proficiencies, and a lowered minimum age at which one can petition for membership. Grand Lodges have hired public relations firms and have paid for promotions in numerous media outlets, including newspapers, magazines, billboards, radio, and television. Each initiative, while hinting at success, has failed to arrest our declining numbers and has fallen short of rejuvenating our fraternal spirit.

For instance, one-day classes attracted many new members, but they did little to halt the ever-increasing numbers of demits and NPD's. We realized that getting new members was only a part of the challenge. Clearly, Masons were not satisfactorily addressing ways of keeping our members involved and enthusiastic about Masonry. The time had come for us to take full responsibility for our sad state of affairs and begin to move forward, embracing the fact that we have a lot of work to do.

The work began in 2004 when the Conference of Grand Masters asked the Masonic Information Center (MIC) to look into the possibility of creating a National Masonic Public Awareness Program. We accepted the challenge. By accepting that challenge, we assumed a greater responsibility: to test the integrity of what we wanted to communicate to the public about Freemasonry. We had to ask the tough question of ourselves: *Who are we as a fraternal organization within the context of the 21st century?*

There was little argument among our group that Masons were not the first organization wanting to improve their public image, and we knew that we could no longer gloss over our situation's complexity. In his book *The World is Flat*. Thomas Friedman quotes business organization consultant Michael Hammer:

*One thing that tells me a company is in trouble is when they tell me how good they were in the past. Same with countries. You don't want to forget your identity. I am glad you were great in the 14th century, but that was then and this is now When memories exceed dreams, the end is near.*

Our Masonic memories are to be treasured, but our Masonic dreams have faltered. Simply put, we have forgotten our Masonic identity so that our memories truly do exceed our dreams. *It is about time* we brought our actions in line with our aspirations.

Thus began our study. Over a year later, we offer this report as a fraternal call to action. It is neither a step-by-step plan nor a scholarly document. It is our way of communicating to our fraternity the need to focus on making Masonry relevant to our changing communities and our 21st century lives. The style of the report is conversational and easy-to-read, representing the deliberations, fact-finding, and talking points of the Task Force. We ask you, as fellow Masons, to heed the call and to take the initiative to participate in building our own destiny, brother by brother, lodge by lodge.

## **Part I - Introduction**

*"Change is the one constant and Freemasons have done little to keep pace with change." - MIC Task Force*

*"It's about time!"* When spoken forcefully, the phrase means an action is about to be taken addressing a situation needing immediate attention. Sometimes the words are said softly, *"It's about time; I don't have any,"* thereby making "time" the excuse for doing nothing. How best to illustrate this conclusion?

Since the end of World War II, population figures in North America have soared. Masonic membership increased also until 1959. Since that time, while the general population has had dramatic increases, Masonic membership has dropped.

To further illustrate this trend, the Masonic Service Association (MSA) has tracked membership figures for Masons in the United States since 1925. The numbers tell a very sad tale of the decline of one of the world's most important fraternal organizations, slowly fading away, as T.S. Elliot says, "not with a bang, but a whimper."

This chart illustrates the rise and fall of Masonic membership from the 1920s to the year 2003.

Even at our membership's lowest point in 1941, which included the Depression years (the worst depression in US history), Freemasonry still had 800,000 more members than we do today. In short, Freemasonry is at its lowest membership level in at least 80 years.

## Interpreting the numbers

Four familiar excuses have frequently been touted as the cause of the decline.

- **We are in a downward cycle.**

History demonstrates that fraternal membership is always cyclical. Although national membership statistics prior to 1925 are very difficult to compile, the figures that are available clearly show cyclical ups and downs. However, our current membership total is at its lowest point in 80 years. This clearly indicates that the trend is not of a cyclical nature and must be viewed with the clear understanding that other factors are at work.

- **We lost the Vietnam generation.**

The Vietnam generation resisted joining traditional mainstream organizations. This was a generation turned off by anyone over 35; to this group, any organization that embraced traditional values was distrusted. However, many years have passed producing diminished membership figures. We have no choice but to conclude the problem runs far deeper than one generation.

- **We are all so busy.**

Busy lifestyles complicate time commitments. No question about it. Where one spouse used to be the major source of the family's income, now both spouses work. When they come home in the evening, they want time together rather than separate functions to attend, if indeed there is a desire to participate at all. This clearly means that any organization wishing to attract members must offer something of great interest to even be considered worthwhile.

- **People no longer join the way they used to.**

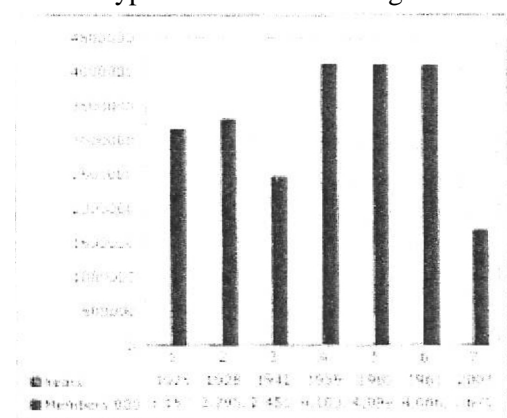
Joining is no longer fashionable. Clearly true. In his book *Bowling Alone*, Robert. Putnam conclusively shows that people simply do not join organizations as they did in the past. Since the World War II generation, volunteering (which is what we do when we join an organization) has become almost nonexistent. Every fraternal organization, many religious denominations, service clubs, and community organizations such as the PTA/PTO have all suffered membership declines.

While these are valid reasons (yes, they did contribute to a decline in membership), we have failed to accept the fact that the world is a different place than it was in the 1940s and 1950s. If you live in a metropolitan area, your 15-minute commute time to work is now 50 minutes-if you are lucky. We spend more time going to and from work than ever before. Current lifestyles often require two spouse incomes. Family time is squeezed into the evenings and very often the children have their own activities. The technology explosion has provided a source for entertainment/activity that competes with any organization requiring a time commitment. In short, change is the one constant. What have Freemasons done to keep pace with change? Very little!

Isn't it about time to be realistic about our membership statistics? Population figures in North America for the last 50 years have soared. At the same time membership figures for the Masonic population have dropped. This can only mean that Masons have simply not kept pace with our changing lifestyles. For example, communications technology has exploded-cell phone vs. landline: PC vs. typewriter: e-mail vs. regular mail. While these kinds of changes surround everyone living in a modern world. Freemasons still grouse about any increase in dues or per capita. It is time to readjust our thinking and come to realize that both time and money are necessary factors in creating a quality organization.

## Resisting and denying change

With few exceptions over the last several decades, we have been content to listen to excuses, avoiding examination of the complicated set of changes that has weakened Masonry's relevance to our contemporary lives. Even today, we want to think of "loss of membership" as our major problem. This



report argues that membership loss *is not* the major problem. In fact, our study asks that we shift our thinking to consider our loss of membership as merely a *symptom* of the problem.

Based upon its study, the Task Force proposes that our core problem is twofold:

1. *Loss of Masonic identity*
2. *Lack of energy invested in Masonry*

This means our fraternity has suffered a loss of Masonic identity as an observable way of life, and our lack- of energy invested in Masonry no longer makes the fraternity relevant to our busy contemporary lifestyles.

### ***Seeking a lost identity***

As Masons we have taken our fraternity's identity for granted, and we have allowed the general public to forget how important we are to the fabric of society. We forgot that what we DO for each other, our lodges, and ourselves enriches the quality of life for our families and communities. Only recently has Masonry found a new place in popular culture with the introduction of Dan Brown's book, *The Da Vinci Code*, and the movie, *National Treasure*. Now we see our public identity positioned in the context of historical fiction. We owe the public more than fiction; we owe them facts, and we owe them our best performance every day.

Members ask the familiar questions such as:

- *Can't we just purchase the solution to our image and membership decline?*
- *Can't we just fix lethargy with a new PR campaign, developed and implemented by outside PR agencies?*

It would be convenient if traditional approaches alone would change the status of Freemasonry in the minds of the general public. However, it would be like trying to convince the public that Pepsi without "fizzy" is just as satisfying. We know that it might be a fine drink, but the truth just wouldn't be Pepsi.

### ***Claiming our Masonic identity***

*The Masonic Information Center proposes that Masons must first take ownership of an identity that distinguishes Masonry from other men's organizations.* That is a complex but exciting challenge. It is time to face it: Freemasonry is not an off-the-shelf product whose value can be assessed only in quantifiable terms. One Task Force member reminded the group that Masons are not marketing soap or ketchup. Masonry is a process of lifelong learning and discovery that delivers a way of living a principled life, observable in the simplest behaviors, whether at lodge, at home, or in the workplace.

The task facing Masonry is to define our Masonic identity in a rapidly changing world. The public wants to know:

- *Who are the Masons?*
- *How do we know them in our lives today?*

When we can answer these questions, then we can move forward with traditional programs for public relations, marketing communications, membership, and more.

*It is about time that we did something as a fraternity for our fraternity - brother by brother, lodge by lodge.*

## **Part II - Facing the Facts and Accepting the Challenge**

*"Freemasonry evolved from 18th century European enlightened thinking. Today, Masonry is shaped by the 19th century concept of social benevolence and the 20th century emphasis on ritual as the completion of a Mason's education about the fraternity." MIC Task Force*

In order to evaluate present-day Freemasonry, we had to assess the Fraternity's strengths and weaknesses. The Task Force proceeded methodically to question Masonry's past, present and future. We asked a series of penetrating questions, listed our findings, and then completed each section with a summary formed by observations and conclusions. In order to properly determine a course of action for a Masonic Public

Awareness Program, we believe it imperative that we understand, as a fraternity, where we have been, where we are today, and what happened in the intervening years.

Forthright answers to the questions we posed did not come easily and required an enormous amount of soul searching and critical evaluation.

Much of the data used in this report came from United States sources because those were the ones most readily available and accessible to our Task Force. We have pointed out where data was specifically from a United States source, but we have reason to believe that data from Canada would be almost identical.

For instance, there were no Canadian membership statistics available to us unless we laboriously went through, year by year, the figures from each Grand Lodge to determine if the same trends occurred as in the United States. Because we have had many discussions with Canadian Masons, there is no doubt in the minds of the Task Force that the data trends are the same.

So this report needs to be considered in the context of North America, including the United States and Canada, even though, on occasion, we list a United States source.

### ***Exploring the patterns of Masonry***

The deliberations of the Task Force were lengthy and lively. Below are the questions that guided the discussions and the summaries of our findings.

#### **1. What has Freemasonry done in the past?**

For a fraternity that is centuries old, this question is extremely significant. It asks how Freemasonry developed and what Masonic affiliation meant to Masons of an earlier time. The Freemasons of the 1700's set a very high standard. In the late 1700s, Freemasons helped build two new nations founded on Masonic principles. Patriots chose to help create the United States; Loyalists chose to help strengthen Canada. Both groups had many Masons in their midst. For detailed information, we turned to the historians on our Task Force who led a review of our Masonic past. The key points and summaries are listed below.

*In the past, Freemasonry accomplished the following:*

- Provided camaraderie
- Created elite status
- Served as a stepping stone to military, arts, business and social contacts
- Attracted leaders to its membership

*Guilds of Masons (early labor unions) probably originated in Scotland in the 1600s. Early Masons concentrated on the following tasks:*

- Protecting workers' interests
- Helping Masonic families
- Operating lodges
- Opening lodges to non-stonemasons
- Formally ritualizing the method of creating new members

*In colonial America, Freemasonry provided leadership during the American Revolution and throughout the nation's history. It also provided a moral philosophy relevant to the individual and to communities. In early America, Freemasonry:*

- Promoted a philanthropic focus supporting fraternal kinship.
- Inspired authors to create a body of popular literature, offering satiric views, i.e. Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain.
- Stimulated thought consistent with Masonic values. Lodges became sites of Revolutionary debating, responding to contemporary thought.

*We looked for historical trends that reshaped our Masonic identity. We found several pivotal events:*

- Freemasonry evolved from 18th century European enlightened thinking.
- In the late 1800s, Victorian values influenced Masonic priorities both in Europe and North America by placing emphasis on heightening social awareness and stressing social idealism.
- Twentieth-century Freemasonry sustained Victorian idealism and reinforced philanthropic emphasis of fraternity.
- During World War II, President Truman said that men should join the Masonic fraternity before going to war, which reinforced a rise in Masonic membership.

- Masonic tradition became locked in ritual as an end, not as a process.
- Today Masonry is shaped by the 19th century concept of social benevolence and the 20th century emphasis on ritual as the completion of a Mason's education about the Fraternity.

**Summary:** Throughout history both European and North American Masonic values consistently influenced people's daily lives by encouraging the right to question existing dogma and by upholding our right to express one's own thoughts and ideas. These values promote toleration of all religious and philosophical views. The fraternity has been a constructive, stabilizing-, and enlightening force throughout history.

## 2. What is currently happening within Freemasonry?

Obviously, this question has no right or wrong answers because -like public opinion -it asks for personal perceptions and observations. The Task Force members agreed that there were and are tensions inherent in our organization today, including but not limited to the following perceptions:

- There is a slight movement toward wanting to educate the public about the fraternity.
- There is recognition that traditional communications tools have failed to heighten public awareness.
- The inclusion of family members at Masonic events has produced mixed results.
- Masonry is no longer identified as an elite organization.
- There are disagreements regarding priorities of financial commitments to Masonic buildings and charitable obligations versus starting new programs.
- Current Masons do not understand the true meaning of our fraternity.
- A reliance on historic heroes inhibits Masons from achieving contemporary significance.

## 3. How does the public perceive Freemasonry today?

In today's world of high-speed communications, the public's perception is often based on insufficient information. Research suggests that today more people are impressed by what they see and hear than by what they read. We believe that the public's perception and opinion of Freemasonry can be summarized briefly in the following ways:

1. *Confused.* Are the Masons a fraternity, a religious organization or an alternative religion?
2. *Mistaken.* Only grandfathers could be in such an old-fashioned organization as Freemasonry.
3. *Oblivious.* People are not even aware Masonry still exists.

**Summary:** Masons are not visible in the daily life of their communities. Their identity is frequently misunderstood and misrepresented in the press and by religious critics. There is little reserve of positive memories of Masonic activity remaining in our communities. Within eye and ear range of the public, Masons have failed to perform what they profess; consequently, they have lost their significance within the context of community.

## 4. What is the desired image of Freemasonry?

From our difficult discussions of the current environment in which Freemasonry finds itself, we turned to consider Masonry's identity under ideal circumstances. The model Masonic fraternity would be one that defines itself in terms of *thought*, *energy*, and *action*. Under perfect circumstances, the public would know Masons according to the following observable accomplishments:

- Building community based on shared Masonic values
- Constructing a positive environment for personal growth
- Encouraging education, idea sharing, and open discussion
- Welcoming diversity across religious denominations, ethnicity and age
- Growing leadership ability
- Establishing the relevance of Masonic values to contemporary life
- Advocating concern for the well being of other Masons and their families

*Ideally, Masons should be defined as members of a fraternity, that fits the following descriptions:*

- Masonry is a serious men's organization, dedicated to self-improvement coupled with community involvement.
- Masonry is a provider of camaraderie, trust in each other, instant fellowship, and brotherhood.
- Masonry brings together a group of people who emphasize individual excellence.

- Masonry is a provider of an atmosphere of inclusiveness.
- Masonry is an organization that makes good men better.

**Summary: The model Masonic fraternity member would be easy to identify in the community by his actions and words. Public awareness of Masonry begins at a grassroots level. Masons must be visible in the community to demonstrate Masonic values in many aspects of their lives.**

## **5. What are the benefits of Freemasonry within the context of our 21st century world?**

*Masonry offers an opportunity for a principled way of life rooted in the following Masonic values:*

- integrity      • Diversity
- Inquiry      • Community      • Vitality

**Summary: Masons are men who build community through brotherhood that is based on a principled lifestyle. A Mason's life is deeply rooted in a system of values. Masonry cannot be kept inside the individual; it is a philosophy of fraternity that must be shared in action through numerous experiences, which are lodge-based, personal, and professional.**

## **6. Who needs to be made aware of the message of Freemasonry?**

*Freemasonry's significance to our culture is timeless and offers a major stabilizing influence within our communities. The Masonic identity needs to be understood and observed by the following.*

- The general public, specifically the individuals who seek knowledge about themselves and their humanity
- Our existing members
- Potential members who need information about the fraternity's benefits
- Members of the media community
- Religious leaders who need to understand the distinction between Masonry and religion
- Civic leaders

## **7. Whom do we want to attract as potential members?**

*Masonry is a fraternity not limited by age, ethnicity, race or religious denomination. Masons are individuals who respect a quality of life, which is uniquely fulfilling. Among their many and diverse qualities, Masons are men who:*

- Seek fulfillment through multiple levels of experience, including body, mind, and spirit
- Enjoy brotherhood
- Desire a community enriched by participation, dialogue, and inquiry
- Are principled, disciplined, and compassionate

**Summary: Freemasonry wants to attract fellow journeymen who are seeking enrichment in body, mind, and spirit through participation in a brotherhood committed to good works and personal growth.**

## **8. What is at the core of our fraternity's identity?**

*Masonry, offers opportunity for expressing individuality, but at this critical time in our history, the Task Force strongly recommends that Masonic programs focus their efforts on constructing a fraternal identity that is true to the following themes:*

- Freemasonry must be lodge-centered, giving members opportunities to express themselves through activities that improve the experience of the lodge and benefit the life of the community.

Freemasonry sustains its viability as a fraternal organization through its performance of Masonic rituals and values. Masonic values guide Masons both in the lodge and through everyday life. As trustees of Masonry's rich and valuable heritage, members must continually invigorate their approach to Masonic participation, making it an experience that is rewarding, enriching, and *relevant to* its members, their families and the greater community.

**The paper concludes in our next issue with - Part III "Taking the Next Steps".**

## IT'S ABOUT TIME ! (Moving Masonry into the 21st Century)

The following paper being of some nine pages is being included in *THE LECTERN* in two sections. Parts I & II were included in our last (September) issue. This issue includes the second section viz Parts III & IV. It is a benchmark upon which we can debate those things in the Craft which we all hold dear, and perhaps to have any comments from members included in the next issue. (Ed.)

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MASONIC INFORMATION CENTER

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[Preamble:](#) Concluding the paper commenced in the last issue for September with Parts I & II.

## Part III - Taking the Next Steps

*"Our Masonic resources are great! Our resource management skills are rusty." - MIC Task Force*

### 1. Generating energy and transforming thought into action.

We acknowledged that our identity as Masons must include work on ourselves both as individuals and as a brotherhood. We recognized that our decline in membership over the past 50 years is merely a symptom of the loss of Masonry's relevance to our lives and our communities. We have individually and collectively allowed our lethargy to encrust the jewel of Masonry, which has been bequeathed to us to pass on to the future. Our focus on the past has blinded us to the challenges of the present And it is the *present* that we must address both as individuals and as a fraternal organization. Our reliance on former brothers' successes has weakened our commitment to achieving our own Masonic identities.

Without excusing our recent apathy, suffice it to say that we have been wooed by the world of clever advertising into believing that symbolizing something makes it so. We have succumbed to the agenda of corporate advertising. But we can no longer delude ourselves into thinking about Masonry from the outside in. We must look squarely into the challenge of *performing* Masonry to the betterment of our fraternity and ourselves.



The Square and Compasses, the best known symbol of a Mason, cannot replace the identity of living the life of a Mason, which is itself perpetually in a state of improving ourselves in body, mind, and spirit. Masonic imagery is a valuable resource when it inspires us to take new action consistent with our personal growth and enlightened thought. We must discover our own Masonic calling, our own place in the history of Masonry, by making authentic Masonic performance our top priority.

## **2. Breaking out of a pattern of lethargy**

Borrowing from our Masonic symbolism, we ask that Masons consider the *Rough Ashlar* that hides the natural beauty of the stone within. What values and actions have we allowed to slip out of sight? How can we find the resources to emerge from the layers of lethargy that block the natural beauty of Masonry from the general public? We must uncover the Mason within us so that we can present Masonry in fact and not in fiction.

Neither a public relations agency nor an advertising campaign will substitute for the personal journey that will establish the presence of Masonry in the public's view. Each of us has a responsibility to steward, our respected fraternity into the future, calling on our own spirit rather than deferring to those of our predecessors. We must exercise the same determination that we admire and celebrate in our heritage.

## **3. Assessing our tangible and intangible assets**

Relying on the *Rough Ashlar* as a metaphor for the Mason's journey toward enlightenment, the Task Force considered the now dormant natural resources of Masonry. From the value of the individual brothers who sit among us to the lodge-centered assets and systems that link us on a national and international level, we have a wealth of untapped Masonic resources. It is our work to uncover these resources for the immediate and long-term good health of our fraternity.

The Task Force recommends taking an inventory of individual lodge strengths in terms of tangible and intangible resources. Consider the assets that are within immediate reach of the lodge and can easily be adapted to meet new needs. These are just a few suggestions to help lodges take an inventory. They are not listed by priority.

*Tangible* resources may include the following:

- Existing physical structures
- Network of over one and one-half million Masonic members
- Extensive North American geographic coverage
- Lodge facilities with their community centrality-kitchens, libraries, collections, artifacts, exhibits, archives
- Existing programs
- Masonic clinics and hospitals
- Current Masonic publications
- Phone and e-mail networks
- Lodge-based websites
- Financial assets (even if limited)
- Contemporary books and films

Also consider the following examples of *intangible* resources:

- Our good name for doing good works
- Centuries of history in multiple countries
- individual talents of each brother
- Historical and contemporary cultural associations
- Community relationships
- Family links
- Educational and arts partnerships
- A legacy of leadership
- Respected values system
- Tradition of diversity • Rituals
- Mystery
- Symbols
- Opportunities for self-improvement
- Fellowship

- Recent positive media exposure through books and films
- Community history 4 Maximizing our resources

Once we inventory our resources, we need to find ways to manage them. We need systems to monitor our progress. We need ways of recognizing success, encouraging creativity, and rewarding accomplishments. Small actions, kind words, and expressions of concern for others are just a few examples. Our *work on Masonry's public image begins with work on ourselves*, using our wealth of resources to dislodge the sediment that has encrusted our riches and has diminished the value of our Masonic identity.

Our work begins by applying our resources and improving ourselves in the Masonic tradition of body, mind, and spirit. We need only look in the mirror or offer a handshake to crack the encasement of the *Rough Ashlar* that screens the natural beauty of the stone.

Our Masonic resources are great! Our resource management skills are rusty. The tools for honing the *Perfect Ashlar* are at our disposal, but they lie scattered across lodges; hidden in fading relationships, and atrophied by lack of use. We must put them to good use.

We urge each lodge to inventory its tangible and intangible assets, such as people, places, artifacts, relationships, and systems. Although each lodge has an individual and valuable identity within the context of Freemasonry, there is much to learn and share from one another's lodge-based activities. With more than one and a half million members in North America, Masons are poised to discharge our crews with the newly sharpened tools of our craft to improve ourselves and to fulfill the promise of the stewardship of Freemasonry.

The words from William Preston's Masonic lecture succinctly inform us of our Masonic identity in terms of action:

By the Rough Ashlar, we are reminded of our rude and imperfect state by nature; by the Perfect Ashlar, of the state of perfection at which we hope to arrive by a virtuous education, our own endeavors, and the blessings of God.

Masons are unique in their commitment to "virtuous education." By this we mean appreciating Masonry's commitment to life-long learning, self-improvement and personal growth. We are reminded that Masonic identity is distinctive because Masons are men of thought *and* action.

## **Part IV - Time to Energize Masonry**

*"What is a man without energy? Nothing. Nothing at all." -Mark Twain*

- *Take action now*

Beginning at the lodge level, plan meaningful activities that put Masonic values into action. Consider how you and your lodge can make each and every activity uniquely Masonic. Listed below are just a few suggestions that place a focus on using your time to its greatest Masonic advantage:

1. Apply concepts of education and self-improvement to current print and non-print communications tools of individual lodges, Grand Lodges, and national Masonic organizations and societies.
2. Improve the environment of lodge-based fellowship; refresh the look of the lodge; welcome new members; improve presentation skills; provide mentoring to study degrees; and strengthen communications skills.
3. Organize group activities based on education and self-improvement that can enrich lodge-centred fellowship such as: welcoming committees, lodge renovation and clean-up campaigns, leadership development conferences, mentor meetings, workshops on such things as Masonic ritual, history, symbolism, architectural works, arts and cultural works.
4. Initiate workshops on personal growth topics. Learn more about Masonry.
5. Call on local educational faculty: expert lecturers on topics of unique interest to the lodge members that enrich the body, mind, and spirit of the brothers.
6. Tap the talents of individual members and build a community of experts to help Masons to help themselves and their communities.

7. Improve community accessibility to Masonry through public outreach and program hosting.
8. Offer Masonic recognition and incentive programs for educational initiatives, visitor programs and Chambers of Commerce presentations.
9. Honor the Mason within yourself.
10. Share success stories with other lodges.

- *Move Masonry into the 21st century*

Our initial focus for our public awareness campaign requires imagination, openmindedness, and discipline- the discipline to say "Yes." Put aside old habits of saying simply, "Ah, that's been tried:" Or "Yes. but...:" Cast off negativism. Turn the objection around to a challenge. Encourage and reward open and positive communication throughout each stage of change. Share ideas and ask yourself to take ownership of transforming the identity of Masonry through each and every action, regardless of how small. Make it the fraternity that you want-brother by brother, lodge by lodge.

- *Make the commitment now for the future*

Our Task Force enthusiastically offers this report and our support to help move Masonry into the 21st century, upholding the honor of membership and the joy of a Masonic way of life. *It's about time* for us to take the concept of Masonry off the shelf and put the *values* of Masonry into action.

As we go forward moving Masonry into the 21st century by improving our lodges, personal Masonic skills, and community visibility, there will come a time when financial investments will be needed to support continued growth and public awareness.

Through this progress report, the MIC has shared with you our vision about Freemasonry. We felt it was absolutely critical that we examine our fraternity's past in order to properly understand our current needs. This was only the first step.

- *Call to action*

Now, we must move forward both individually and fraternally. We encourage you to think carefully about how you invest your time, which is everyone's most valuable asset, and we ask that you use your time on programs and actions that are uniquely Masonic. As we work together, we must ask each other how a program, a meeting, or an event improves and demonstrates our experience of being a Mason. *We have not a moment to lose.*

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