



Smithsonian  
Institution

## SMITHSONIAN DIRECTIVE 111

March 5, 2008

### METRICATION

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#### **Introduction**

This directive affirms the Smithsonian Institution's commitment to integrating the metric system into the daily operations of the Institution as well as into its exhibitions and educational and other public programs.

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#### **Background**

The Metric Conversion Act of 1975, Public Law (P.L.) 94-168, as amended by the Omnibus Trade Competitiveness Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-418), designates the metric system as the preferred system of weights and measures for U.S. trade and commerce. The goal of P.L. 94-168 is to enhance the United States' position in competitive world markets where the metric system is the accepted standard of measurement.

Executive Order 12770, issued on July 25, 1991, ordered the use of the metric system for all federal Government procurements, grants, and other business-related activities, to the extent economically feasible, except to the extent that such use is impractical or likely to cause significant inefficiencies or loss of markets, by September 30, 1992.

The metric system has been integral to the conduct of scientific research at the Smithsonian for decades. Drawing on this experience, and recognizing the values inherent in the metric system, the Smithsonian supports

**Background**  
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and shall adhere to the spirit of these documents both in its internal operations and in its educational mission.

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**Policy**

It is Smithsonian policy to express weights and measures in metric system numbers to the extent possible in documents for public viewing, grant and contract solicitations and awards, exhibition signage, and public presentations. When directors of museums, research centers, and offices deem it to be more practical, weights and measures may be cited in written materials in traditional terms first, followed immediately by the metric measure equivalent in parentheses.

Directors of Project Management and Engineering Design and Construction Divisions may determine the measurement system to be used on a project-by-project basis, with appropriate documentation of the decision.

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**Objectives**

Specific objectives for metrication, in order of priority, are as follows:

- Use of the metric system in the daily operations of the Institution, particularly for procurements, grants, and other business-related activities
  - Education of Smithsonian staff in the use of the metric system
  - Incorporation of metric measurements into Smithsonian public programs in order to further public understanding of the metric system
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**References**

Additional information on the metric system may be viewed at the following websites:

- United States Metric Association — <http://mathforum.org/library/view/10339.html>
- National Institute of Standards and Technology — [http://ts.nist.gov/WeightsAndMeasures/Metric/mpo\\_home.cfm](http://ts.nist.gov/WeightsAndMeasures/Metric/mpo_home.cfm)

**References**  
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An automatic metric conversion calculator is available at [www.worldwidemetric.com](http://www.worldwidemetric.com) on the Internet.

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**CANCELLATION:**

SD 111, January 6, 2006

**INQUIRIES:**

Office of Contracting (OCon)

**RETENTION:**

Indefinite. Subject to review for currency 24 months from date of issue