Creating Online Exhibits

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What is an exhibit?

An exhibit is a story
interpretation
context
scholarly content
Exhibits are also experiences

What visitors do & feel is important

*Marina performing “Artist is Present” at the MoMA in May 2010* by Shelby Lessig
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What story do you want to tell?
What makes a good exhibit?

An aspect of the exhibition is innovative

Offers a new perspective, new insight, or new information on a topic

Synthesizes and presents existing knowledge and/or collection materials in a provocative way

Indicators of exhibit excellence from the National Association for Museum Exhibition (NAME)
What makes a good exhibit?

Includes innovative uses of media, materials, and other design elements

Is exceptionally capable of engendering a personal, emotional response, and/or profoundly memorable in a constructive way

Indicators of exhibit excellence from the National Association for Museum Exhibition (NAME)
What makes a good exhibit?

Evokes responses from viewers that are evidence of a transforming experience

The exhibition was an eye-opener

It was haunting

Sent shivers down my spine

I'll never see [that] in the same way again

Indicators of exhibit excellence from the National Association for Museum Exhibition (NAME)
Good exhibits...

- Are easy to explain
- Make the subject come to life
- Are conceptually simple
- Emphasize connections among things
Why create an online exhibit?

Education - Mission fulfillment

Bring awareness to hidden/low usage materials

Share new findings, new acquisitions, new relationships among items

Broaden audience
Why create an online exhibit?

Display fragile items

Link to multimedia content

Permanent/semi-permanent resource
Considerations

Funding needs

Site maintenance

Copyright

Design

Browsers/Mobile compatibility
Selecting an exhibit theme

Pick a compelling story that the materials support

Think beyond directly commemorative months, milestones, anniversaries

Concrete ideas not requiring a lot of background information, too much explanation
When selecting items do not choose solely on visual appeal but rather choose an item for its inherent information, story advancement.


Labels

Introductory (Curator Statement)

ID (tombstone)

Caption

Group

ID Label

Are not interpretive

Basic bibliographic information about an item

Creator (first last name) (Nationality, birth-death)
Title
Date
Publisher
Dimensions
Call number/Accession number
Credit line
Introductory Label

Also referred to as the curator statement

introduces the big idea

sets up the organization and tone of the exhibit

50 - 200 words
Caption Label

Are not a visual description of an item

interpret individual items

sometimes the only ones visitors read

20 – 100 words, approximately 50 is ideal
Group Label

Are more general

explain/interpret a grouping of items

introduce sub-themes

20 – 150 words
Interpretive Labels
(Introductory, Caption, Group)

Conversational & narrative

Just enough details to tell the story

Avoid tech, specialized terms, or anything that requires lengthy explanation

Not for your academic peers
Don’t expect visitors to spend more than 10-20 minutes in exhibit
The magic of exhibitions is at the intersection of design and curation. Not one or the other.
Audience

Who are they? What are they like? Why are they coming?

What do you want them to do?

Unintended audiences are common online
Evaluation

Formal or informal

Have someone who is unfamiliar with subject navigate site, read labels, etc.
Promotion

Press releases, social media, etc.

If possible, also offer in house
Copyright

AAM-D fair use for thumbnails

low resolution, less than commercial quality

less than 250 x 300 px

Don’t let it scare you!
Omeka

Omeka.net

Web-publishing platform that allows anyone with an account to create or collaborate on a website to display collection and build digital exhibits

No in depth technical skills or special server requirements are necessary

Hosted solution
Omeka

Omeka.org

Original downloadable version of Omeka platform

More flexibility in look and functionality

Requires server & technical support

Medieval Scrolls at Harvard: Scrolls in the Codex
Getting it online

Adobe Muse:
Some design familiarity necessary, no coding

Past Perfect online exhibit module
Must have Past Perfect, includes templates
HTML

Full control, coding necessary

The Gathering Storm: Jewish Life in Germany and Eastern Europe in the 1930s: Germany early 1930s and Korean Art: Collecting Treasures: General Van Fleet
Access, Analytics, and SEO

Worldwide vs. local audience

ADA web compliance

SEO

Keywords & links

Periodically review stats
Keys to Online Exhibits

Avoid too many links out to other sites, viewers get lost/don’t come back

Keep copy extra short, a lot of competing content online

When possible link to full resource online
Does digital content negatively impact physical visitorship? NO
Resources

Omeka http://www.omeka.net

Omeka showcase of sample sites http://info.omeka.net/showcase/

Smathers Libraries Resources for Curators http://exhibits.uflib.ufl.edu/resources.html

Smathers Libraries Online Exhibits http://exhibits.uflib.ufl.edu/online.html

Label tips http://exhibits.uflib.ufl.edu/docs/labels.pdf

ID label templates http://exhibits.uflib.ufl.edu/docs/IDlabels.pdf

National for Museum Exhibition (NAME) http://name-aam.org

AAM Curators Committee Excellence in Exhibition Label Writing Competition – past winners http://www.curcom.org/curcom_comp_labels.php


Smithsonian Library & Archival Exhibitions on the Web List http://www.sil.si.edu/SILPublications/Online-Exhibitions/

Copyright terms in U.S. http://copyright.cornell.edu/resources/publicdomain.cfm

Turning Views into Visits http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00014171/00001/pdf

Support materials from past exhibits (object lists, labels, press releases, posters, etc.) http://ufdc.ufl.edu/exhibitmaterials/all
Thank you

http://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00022788

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