UTAHHUMANITIES
Ideas in Action

WORKSHOP AGENDA
Writing Our Stories: Exhibit Labels
Monday, 1 May 2017, 9:00am–5:00pm

Dixie State University Library Room 570, DSU Campus, 225 South University Avenue, Saint George, UT 84770
Facilitators: Lisa Thompson (Natural History Museum of Utah) & Megan van Frank (Utah Humanities)

8:30–9:00 am	**Arrivals to Room 570 so we can start promptly**
9:00–9:30 am	**Welcome and Project Reports** (Megan and Everyone) • Thanks to hosts and housekeeping details • Report on progress of individual projects (~2-3 minutes each museum) • Overview of schedule, goals for today, standards addressed
9:30–10:30am	**Exhibit Labels: Getting from Research to Labels** (Lisa) • Catering to streakers, strollers, and studiers through hierarchy of labels • Options for content organization – narrative, mind map, storyboard, outline • Content Outline and Label Tracker Forms • Hands-On Activity #1: First stab at content outline for individual projects (30 minutes)
10:30–10:45 am	**BREAK**
10:45–12:00 pm	**Exhibit Labels: What Makes a Good Label?** • Writing interpretive labels that tell a story • Tips on length, hooks, tools • Writing and editing are not the same thing
12:00–12:45 pm	**LUNCH (provided)**
12:45–1:15 pm	**Group Critique: What Makes a Horrible Label?** (Lisa) • Hands-On Activity #2: Turn bad labels into good labels – "Artists as Workers"
1:15–2:45 pm	**Break-Out Session: Writing Your Own Labels** (Museum teams) • Hands-On Activity #3: Using Content Outline, Exhibit Planning Worksheet, and other documentation, each team writes a main Introduction Label and an Object Label for their exhibit. Swap labels with another team for feedback. Revise based on feedback (40 minutes) • Report from each group on labels they just wrote and group discussion (50 minutes)
2:45–3:00 pm	**BREAK**
3:00–4:45 pm	**Label Aesthetics & Production** (Megan) • Preparing professional-looking exhibit labels – design, placement, production • Demonstration of tools • Hands-on Activity #4: Break into two groups to mount and cut labels (45 minutes)
4:45–5:00 pm	**Wrap-up** (Megan and Everyone) • Questions? Comments? • Refer to syllabus – discuss assignments for next session • Post-workshop surveys and nametags to the basket please

WRITING OUR STORIES:
EXHIBIT LABELS

UTAHHUMANITIES
Ideas in Action

UTAH HUMANITIES HERITAGE WORKSHOP
May 1, 2017 – Dixie State University Library, St George, UT

#4 Writing

Writing Our Stories: Exhibit Labels

- ✓ Assemble information from various research sources to craft compelling and credible narratives
- ✓ Write different types of labels that work together to tell a story
- ✓ Hands-on practice designing and fabricating inexpensive, low-tech, professional-looking labels

Workshop Overview

SCHEDULE

Morning
- Reports & Housekeeping
- Quick Standards Check
- Getting from Research to Labels
- What Makes a Good Label?
- Hands-on Activities

Afternoon
- Label Critique
- Label Design and Fabrication
- More Hands-on Activities

Wrap-Up
- Questions & Comments
- Assignment
- Post-Workshop Survey

GOALS FOR TODAY

Writing Labels
- Consolidating information into outline form & then label form
- Structuring / layering information
- Writing for visitors
- Label aesthetics and accessibility

Physical Label-Making
- Creating good-looking labels
- Hands-on mounting & cutting

Thanks to our Hosts at the DSU Library (Special Collections & Archives)

DSU DIXIE STATE UNIVERSITY ST. GEORGE, UTAH

Interpretation

AASLH StEPS Standards

Interpretation for Programs, Exhibitions, Publications

1) The institution asserts its public service role and places education at the center of that role.
2) The institution clearly states its overall educational goals, philosophy, and messages, and demonstrates that its activities are in alignment with them.
3) **The institution understands the characteristics and needs of its existing and potential audiences and uses this understanding to inform its interpretation.**
4) **The institution's interpretive content is based on appropriate research.**
5) Institutions conducting primary research do so according to scholarly standards.
6) **The institution uses techniques, technologies, and methods appropriate to its educational goals, content, audiences, and resources.**
7) **The institution presents accurate and appropriate content for each of its audiences.**
8) **The institution demonstrates consistent high quality in its interpretive activities.**
9) The institution assesses the effectiveness of its interpretive activities and uses those results to plan and improve its activities.

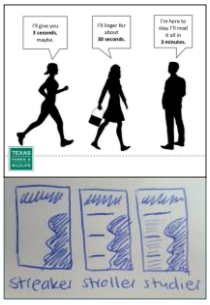
GETTING FROM RESEARCH TO LABELS

Lisa Thompson
Exhibit Developer
Natural History Museum of Utah
lthompson@nhmu.utah.edu

A System of Labels

NOT JUST A BUNCH OF LABELS

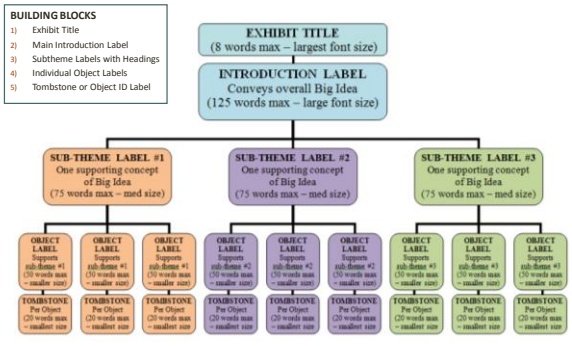
- A clear system helps visitors navigate your exhibit
- It provides layers of information
- Streakers, strollers, studiers model



Get Organized with a Hierarchy of Labels

BUILDING BLOCKS

1) Exhibit Title
2) Main Introduction Label
3) Subtheme Labels with Headings
4) Individual Object Labels
5) Tombstone or Object ID Label

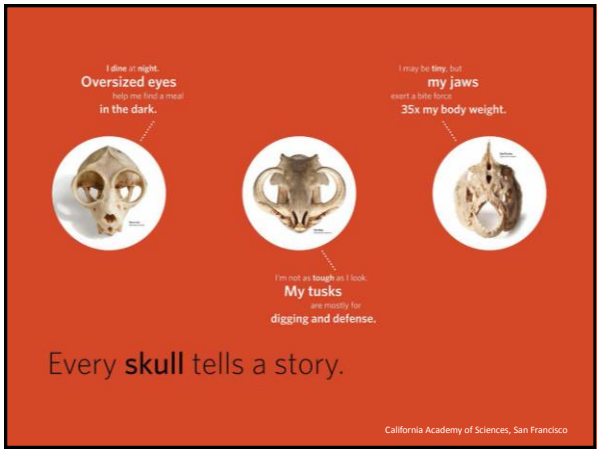


Uintah County Heritage Museum, Vernal

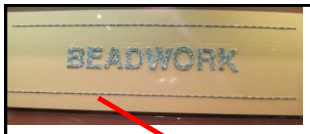
Exhibit Title

- Reflects the Big Idea and gives people an idea of what the exhibit is about.
- Make it catchy but not overly clever.
- Not too long; 1-8 words.
- Should be easy to read. Largest type so visitors can easily identify it.
- Test it to make sure others know what you mean and find it interesting.

Cache Valley DUP Museum, Logan



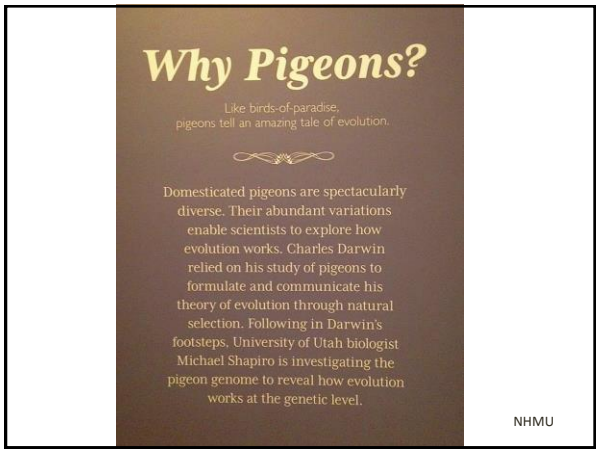
California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco



Message Unity
Title created in same material as the subject

Main Introduction Label

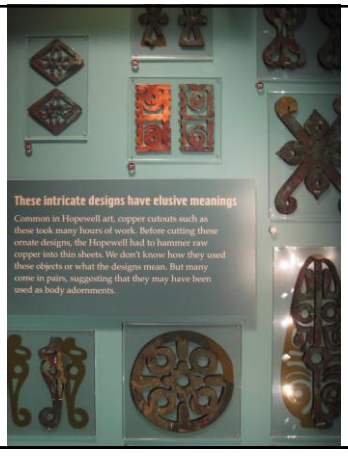
- Introduce the Big Idea
- Let visitors know what to expect. What will they see and do in this exhibit?
- Intrigue visitors… Make them want to know more!
- Usually larger so people know to read it first
- 20–125 words (shorter is better)



Subtheme Labels with Titles

- One of your Supporting Concepts
- Provides context for a group of objects
- Tells the story (your subtheme) that connects these objects to the Big Idea
- Use titles (headlines) to draw visitors' attention
- Print smaller than main label (not too small)
- 20-75 words

Denver Art Museum



Field Museum, Chicago

Individual Object Labels

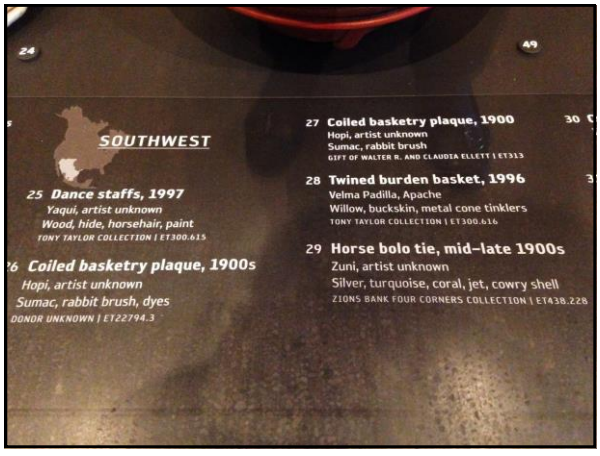
- Interpret individual objects / illustrations
- Focus on the object
  - ✓Talk about things visitors can see. Encourage them to look closely.
  - ✓Focus on the story the ties this object to your subtheme or Big Idea. Don't be tempted to digress.
- Smaller type than subtheme labels
- Generally 20–50 words

Bata Shoe Museum, Ontario

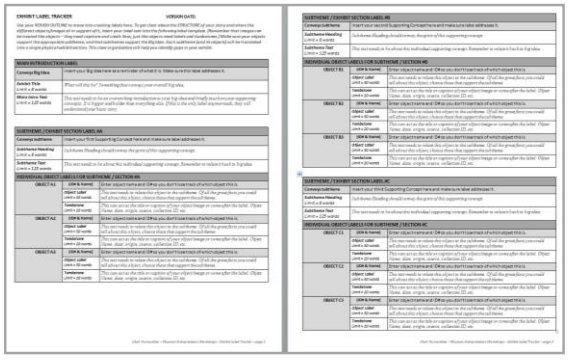
USS Constitution Museum, Charlestown, MA

Tombstone / Object ID Label

- What the object is, material, use, donor, date of donation, etc. – whatever is important information for your type of museum
- Consistent in form and order
- Can be combined with individual object labels to save space
- Place next to the object if used
- 10–20 words



The Amazing Label Tracker

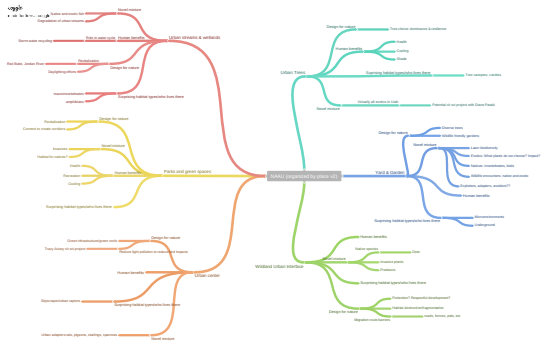


From Research to Labels

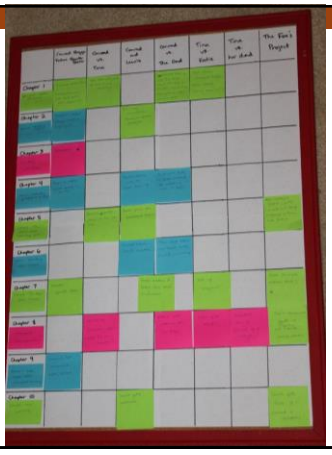
- Start by organizing your research content
- Pick a method that helps you explore the relationships between ideas:
  - ✓Narrative / exhibit walk-through
  - ✓Mind Map
  - ✓Storyboard
  - ✓Outline

Mind Map

TRY COGGLE https://coggle.it/



Storyboard



Outline

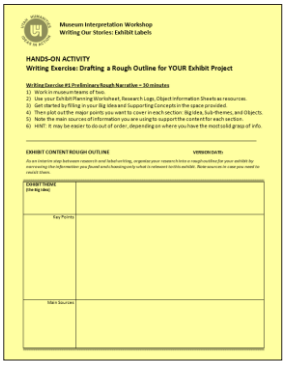
EXHIBIT CONTENT ROUGH OUTLINE **VERSION DATE:**

As an interim step between research and label writing, organize your research into a rough outline for your exhibit by narrowing the information you found and choosing only what is relevant to this exhibit. Note sources in case you need to revisit them.

EXHIBIT THEME (the Big Idea)		
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
EXHIBIT SECTION A (1st Supporting Concept)		
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
OBJECT A1	(ID# & Name)	
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
OBJECT A2	(ID# & Name)	
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
OBJECT A3	(ID# & Name)	
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
EXHIBIT SECTION B (2nd Supporting Concept)		
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
OBJECT B1	(ID# & Name)	
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
OBJECT B2	(ID# & Name)	
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
OBJECT B3	(ID# & Name)	
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
EXHIBIT SECTION C (3rd Supporting Concept)		
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
OBJECT C1	(ID# & Name)	
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
OBJECT C2	(ID# & Name)	
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	
OBJECT C3	(ID# & Name)	
	Key Points	
	Main Sources	

Now it's your turn!

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY


Museum Interpretation Workshop
Writing Our Stories: Exhibit Labels

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY
Writing Exercise: Drafting a Rough Outline for YOUR Exhibit Project

Writing Exercise #1 Preliminary Rough Narrative – 30 minutes
1) Work in museum teams of two.
2) Use your Exhibit Planning Worksheet, Research Logs, Object Information Sheets as resources.
3) Get started by filling in your Big Idea and Supporting Concepts in the space provided.
4) Then plot out the major points you want to cover in each section: Bigidea, Sub-themes, and Objects.
5) Note the main sources of information you are using to support the content for each section.
6) HINT: It may be easier to do out of order, depending on where you have the most solid grasp of info.

EXHIBIT CONTENT ROUGH OUTLINE VERSION DATE:

As an interim step between research and label writing, organize your research into a rough outline for your exhibit by narrowing the information you found and choosing only what is relevant to this exhibit. Note sources in case you need to revisit them.

EXHIBIT THEME (the Big Idea)

Key Points

Main Sources

INFO ORGANIZATION
Exhibit Content Outline

1) Work in museum teams of two.
2) Use your Exhibit Planning Worksheet, Research Logs, and Object Info Sheets as resources.
3) Fill out your Big Idea and Supporting Concepts to keep these ideas front and center.
4) Plot out major points you want to cover in each section: Big Idea, Subthemes, Objects.
5) Note the main sources of info you are using to support each section.
6) Time: 30 minutes

MORNING BREAK – 15 minutes

WRITING LABELS FOR VISITORS

Lisa Thompson
Exhibition Planner
Natural History Museum of Utah
lthompson@umnh.utah.edu

What Do Good Exhibit Labels Do?

- Help visitors connect with your Big Idea.
- Encourage visitors to look closely at objects.
- Help visitors make personal connections.
- Encourage conversations.

It's all about the visitor experience…

Most Importantly, Good Labels are Short

The research is conclusive.
Visitors skip long labels.

- Conversely, short labels increase the amount of reading visitors do in exhibits.
- This means less is more.
  - ✓More people will read three separate 50-word labels than one 150-word label (Bitgood)
- And more is less.
  - ✓Visitors have a limited attention and time.

What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of the recipient. Hence, a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.

Herbert Simon (the nobel laureate, not the owner of the Indiana Pacers)

How Short? Really Short

- Stephen Bitgood recommends 30-75 words.
- Beverly Serrell allows up to 125 words for an introductory label. 75 words for all others.

"50-word labels that people read are better than longer labels that visitors ignore."

Sarah Watkins, Curator
USS Constitution Museum

Which Would You Rather Read?

This label is only 50 words long. Visitor studies have shown that more visitors will read short labels than will read longer labels.

Smaller chunks of text capture more visitors' attention. Good design and provocative questions can draw people in. You can also highlight words to bring attention to them.

Which Would You Rather Read?

This label is 150 words long. It would take visitors three times as long to read this label—and that's only if visitors decide to take the effort.

Even if we break the content into smaller text blocks, longer labels result in a lower percentage of visitors who stop. Stephen Bitgood describes what he calls the "general value principle." That means that visitors weigh the costs of reading a label versus its perceived benefits. The costs of reading a long label may be somewhat offset by a visitor's interest, reading skill, and other personal factors—as well as the design of that label.

There are other factors involved.

Is the label in a good line of sight?
Is the font and size legible?
Are there numerous other distractions around?

There are many things we can do to encourage visitors to read. Reduce the effort required, and more people will read

COURTESY OF STEFFANY SCHMIT, SPLIT ROCK STUDIOS

Overmountain Victory National History Trail
Visitor Center, National Park Service
Abingdon, VA

What Else Keeps Visitors Engaged?

GOOD INTERPRETATION!

- Finding personal or emotional connections
- Discovering meaning
  - ✓What does this mean? How does it connect to other things I know?
- Connecting with objects
- Engaging, active writing
  - ✓A conversational tone

A Review: Labels Should Not Be Lists of Facts

Before
MIRROR FRAME
Painted Cartapesta (papier mâché)
Workshop of NEROCCIO DEI LANDI (1447–1550)
SIENNESE; last quarter of the 15th century
850–1884

This type of mirror frame, showing an emblematic female head, exists in several examples in various media; a maiolica version (C.2111-1910) is exhibited in room 14. This work is characteristic of NEROCCIO DEI LANDI, who trained under Vecchietta and was active in Siena both as a painter and a sculptor.

From *Gallery Text at the V&A: A Ten Point Guide*

Find the Stories Your Objects Tell

After
MIRROR FRAME
About 1475–1500
Workshop of Neroccio dei Landi (1447–1550)

The mirror, which is now missing, would have been a disc of blown glass or polished metal. As well as being an expensive novelty, mirrors were thought to reveal the inner truth. This frame invited a moral comparison, since the viewer's face appeared below the beautiful (and therefore virtuous) image above. [52 words]

Italy, Siena
Painted *cartapesta* (papier mâché)

Museum no. 850-1884

From *Gallery Text at the V&A: A Ten Point Guide*

Make it Personal

Inside you and every living thing is a full set of instructions for how to grow and live.

THE GENOME WITHIN US

Meet Your Genome

The human genome is a three-billion-part instruction manual written in the twisting, ladder-shaped molecule known as DNA. Despite its enormous size, your genome folds up so small that a copy fits inside every cell in your body.

National Museum of Natural History Washington , DC

Engineering Everywhere

Have you ever ridden a roller coaster? Known someone who had an artificial leg? Gazed up at a skyscraper? These are all examples of engineering.

Engineers **invent technology to solve problems.** They **ask questions, tinker, and create something new.** Engineers solve problems that **improve lives,** like how to get clean water to rural communities. And they solve problems that **make life more fun,** like how to make snowboarding boots comfortable and warm. Engineers also help scientists explore our Universe.

You could be an engineer, too. What problem would you like to solve?

National Center for Interactive Learning at the Space Science Institute, Boulder, CO

THE MVSKOKE WORLD

We all want to know where we come from. To see where our ancestors lived. To understand how our homelands shaped our bodies and our minds.

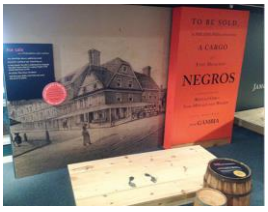
Step into the lands of the Mvskoke—ancestral home to the Poarch Creek. Listen to the babbling sounds of the river and of canoe paddles slicing through the water. From miles away you can hear the echo of wooden *keco* and *kecvpe* (mortars and pestles) pounding *vce* (corn) into meal. Smell the smoke from *totkv* (fires) burning at each family *cuko* (home).

If you understand where we came from, you may understand where we are going.

Apokvksci! Welcome!

Poarch Band of Creek Indians Museum, Atmore, AL

Create an Emotional Connection



Independence Seaport Museum, Philadelphia, PA

For sale
at a Philadelphia slave market

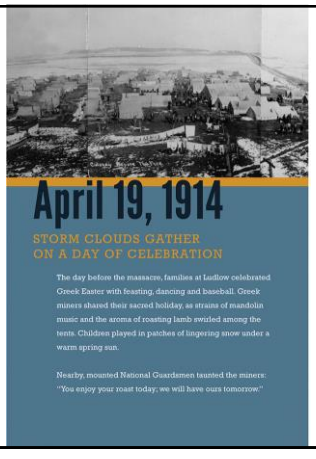
You stand high above a gathering crowd.

Everyone's staring at you. Inspecting you.

A man shouts. You don't understand his language. You don't know what he's saying. People in the crowd shout back at him.

He shouts. They shout. He shouts.

And then your child is torn from your arms, and you're in chains.



El Pueblo History Museum, Pueblo, CO

Appeal to the Senses

Minnesota Landscape Arboretum Chaska, MN

Help Visitors Find Meaning

Shedd Aquarium, Chicago

Upside-down jellies grow a garden of algae

These jellies shelter algae inside their cells

On the shallow sea floor, upside-down jellies face the sun, exposing their algae to plenty of light. The algae use the light to produce food, which the jellies eat. When different species cooperate like this, it's called symbiosis (sim-be-OH-sis).

Make the Abstract Concrete

How Long Ago Is 66 Million Years?

It's hard to imagine such a mind-boggling amount of time.

So try this: open and close your hands quickly. Each time you do it represents a year. Now picture doing this 24/7 for two years. That's how long you'd have to "flash" your hands to represent 66 million years.

Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History

Connect to Broader Contexts

Jackie Robinson's jacket
Courtesy of Rachel Robinson

A man puts on a jacket and makes history. Jackie Robinson bore the twin burdens of hope and hatred with legendary dignity and strength. A man of rare character and talent, Robinson bent the nation toward justice by excelling on the field. Proud of his race, his community, and his family, he asked nothing more of government than he asked of baseball: neither sympathy nor entitlement, but equal opportunity and a level playing field.

National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia, PA

Link the Unfamiliar to the Familiar

El Greco to Picasso from the Phillips Collection

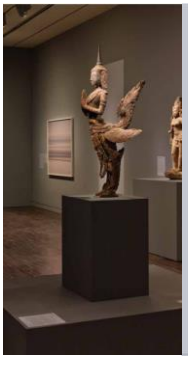
The contents of a stranger's shopping cart, the books in an acquaintance's living room—every collection of objects says something about its owner. This one is no exception.

Duncan Phillips put together his art collection like a host making a guest list—always searching for the right mixture, harmonious yet diverse. Looking through these rooms, you may notice his preferences. He had a weakness for color. He avoided art that he considered overly intellectual. He was drawn to emotion, wherever he found it: human gestures, haunting color, expressive brushstrokes.

What is it that makes you like the art you like? How much do your tastes match those of Duncan Phillips?

Kris Wetterlund, *If You Can't See It Don't Say It: A new approach to interpretive writing*

Encourage Close Observation



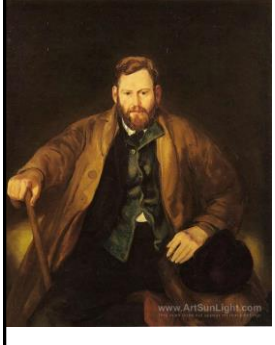
Mythical bird-man, approx. 1775–1850
Central Thailand
Wood with remnants of lacquer, gilding, and mirrored glass inlay
Asian Art Museum, Gift from Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Southeast Asian Art Collection, 2006.27.24

Full disclosure: this sculpture is included here because it's a favorite of mine. We humans always seem to have been fascinated by composite creatures, whether frightening ones like minotaurs or beguiling ones like mermaids. Often we fall in ill-fated love with the beguiling ones, as in *Swan Lake*, Southeast Asian tales of romance between mortal men and bird-women, or nearly any science fiction movie.

Among bird-men, this has got to be the handsomest. Look at the elegant plumage rising along the legs and the superb whiplashing tail feathers. Then the posture: how carefully the sculptor has leaned the torso forward to counterbalance the tail, and shown how strongly the creature pulls his shoulders back and stomach in to hold his upper body vertical. Finally there's his tender, intelligent face. For me, this work, more than any other in the exhibition, suggests the dreamed-for ideal of universal sympathy.

FMcG

Asian Art Museum, San Francisco



George Wesley Bellows (1882–1925)
Waldo Peirce, 1920

Oil on canvas

Museum purchase, gift of the Charles E. Merrill Trust with matching funds from the M. H. de Young Museum Society
67.23.1

Betraying No Emotion
by Ben Erickson, fourth grade, Ohlone Elementary School

Paint me sitting
on a wooden bench
holding a cane

Paint me with a dull brown
overcoat and a turquoise
sweater

Paint me with a yellow hand
resting on a wine red hat

Paint me betraying
No emotion

de Young Art Museum, San Francisco, CA

Engaging, Active, and Conversational

Ruth Asawa
Untitled ,1959
H. 93 in.
Collection of Oakland Museum of California, gift of the Women's Board of the Oakland Museum Association
A59.74

This is a hard working sculpture. It is defining an inside space without enclosing that space. It is turning its own shadow into art. It is showing you many faces as you circle it. It is taking the delicate art of crocheting and making it lift weights. Most of all, it is using one plain piece of wire to map a winding path of transformation.

Kris Wetterlund, *If You Can't See It Don't Say It: A new approach to interpretive writing*

Efforts Were Made to Avoid the Passive Voice

- Using the passive voice results is sentences that are boring, vague, wordy, and/or confusing.
  - ✓ Your bicycle was damaged.
  - ✓ It was heard by me through the grapevine.
- The active voice is clear, punchy, and direct.
  - ✓Megan damaged your bicycle.
  - ✓I heard it through the grapevine
- Telling the difference between passive and active sentences.
  - ✓In active sentences, the subject is performing the action.
  - ✓In passive sentences, the subject is being acted upon/receiving the action.

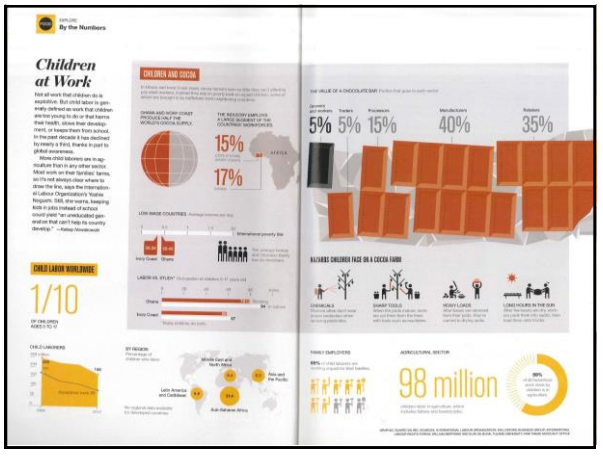
For Inspiration

Check out more winners of the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Excellence in Label Writing competition at:

http://aam-us.org/about-us/grants-awards-and-competitions/excellence-in-label-writing

Some Stories are Better Told with Visuals

- Use timelines, infographics, process graphics, maps, photos, or illustrations to show comparisons, change over time, process, and sequence.
- Check out National Geographic for infographic inspiration. (Use their photo captions as a model, too.)



Set up a Writing Process to Help you Succeed

Consider creating a style guide

- Provides consistency within and across exhibits
- Establishes the relationship you want to have with visitors
  - ✓Voice, tone, reading level
- Creates standards for punctuation, word use, and spelling
- Establishes a hierarchy of labels
  - ✓Types of labels, functions, word counts

When You Sit Down to Write

- Think about the labels in the context of all the other elements of your exhibit.
- Have the following items handy:
  - ✓Big Idea & Supporting Concepts (Exhibition Planning Worksheet)
  - ✓Visitor experience objectives (learning, feeling, doing)
  - ✓Content outline & research notes (make sure facts are correct)
  - ✓Exhibit layout plan and elevations
  - ✓Pictures of objects and visuals
- Use the Label Tracker
- Just do it! Getting started is the hardest part.

Write with Your Visitors in Mind

- Imagine you are a visitor with limited time
  - ✓What do you want to know first?
  - ✓What will intrigue you?
  - ✓What will keep you reading?
- Make it easy to find the important messages
  - ✓Break text on a label into chunks (more easily digestible)
  - ✓Highlight words to draw attention to them
  - ✓Use visuals
  - ✓Ensure labels make sense in any order

… Better to get important ideas to visitors than all the facts

Writing & Editing are Different Processes

- Allow yourself to **write** knowing it won't be perfect!
- Set your draft aside for a week or so if you can.
- **Edit** to hone and distill your stories to their essence. Your visitors will be glad.

Editing, Testing, and Refining

- How effective is this item in telling my story?
- Do I have other, similar elements? If so, which are the strongest? Most reliable? Least familiar?
- What additional information do I need to make this story come to life?
- Does my organization support my story?
- Are all of the elements in the right place?
- Do I need to cut or add text to meet my target length?
- Will my audience have the information it needs to understand the story?
- Can I make the prose more lively and engaging?

Taking It to the Next Level

IDENTIFYING & SOLVING PROBLEMS: FIRST STEPS

- Make sure your text remains focused on your "big idea." Eliminate anything that doesn't contribute to developing that idea.
- Address information gaps.
- Review your text against museum standards and your goals for this exhibit.
- Address the big issues related to your themes, your audience, your organization, and your voice first.

Taking It to the Next Level

IDENTIFYING & SOLVING PROBLEMS: NEXT STEPS

- When you have addressed the big issues, move to the next level of detail.
- Consider word choice, sentence structure, selection of quotes and examples, and tone.
- Aim for clear, direct prose.
- Eliminate jargon, passive voice, and unnecessary wordiness.
- Define unfamiliar terms.
- Revise long sentences and paragraphs so visitors can grasp them quickly.

Taking It to the Next Level

IDENTIFYING & SOLVING PROBLEMS: LAST STEPS

Finally, do a careful review of :

- Grammar
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Format
- Consistency

Test Drive your Labels

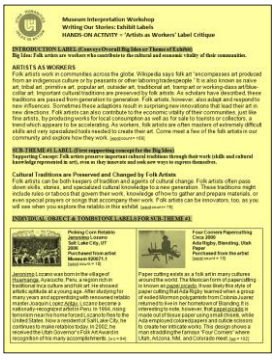
- Ask family, friends, and visitors to read your labels.
  - ✓Can they tell you what the exhibit is about in a way that reflects your Big Idea?
  - ✓Ask them what they found most interesting and least interesting? Was there anything confusing?
  - ✓Have someone read it aloud. Listen for stumbles and long sentences.
- Try Hemingway app www.hemingwayapp.com
- Edit again…

DON'T GO IT ALONE

Megan and I are happy to problem-solve, review, and lend a sympathetic ear as you make the journey from research to **awesome labels!**

LUNCH BREAK – 45 minutes

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY



Museum Interpretation Workshop
Writing Our Stories: Exhibit Labels
HANDS-ON ACTIVITY = "Artists as Workers" Label Critique

INTRODUCTION LABEL (Conveys Overall Big Idea or Theme of Exhibit)
Big Idea: Folk artists are workers who contribute to the cultural and economic vitality of their communities.

ARTISTS AS WORKERS
Folk artists work in communities across the globe. Wikipedia says folk art "encompasses art produced from an indigenous culture or by peasants or other laboring/trade people." It is also known as naive art, tribal art, primitive art, popular art, outsider art, traditional art, trash art or working-class art/blue-collar art. Important cultural traditions are preserved by folk artists. As scholars have described, these traditions are passed from generation to generation. Folk artists, however, also adapt and respond to new influences. Sometimes these adaptions result in surprising new innovations that lead their art in new directions. Folk artists can also contribute to the economic vitality of their communities, just like fine artists, by producing works for local consumption as well as for sale to tourists or collectors. A trend which appears to be accelerating. As workers, folk artists are often masters of extremely difficult skills and very specialized tools needed to create their art. Come meet a few of the folk artists in our community and explore how they work. (word count = 156)

SUB-THEME #1 LABEL (First supporting concept for the Big Idea)
Supporting Concept: Folk artists preserve important cultural traditions through their work (skills and cultural knowledge represented in art), even as they innovate and seek new ways to express themselves.

Cultural Traditions are Preserved and Changed by Folk Artists
Folk artists are the keepers of cultural traditions, but they also change. Folk artists often pass down skills, stories, and specialized cultural knowledge to a new generation. These traditions might include rules or taboos that govern their work, knowledge of how to gather and prepare materials, or even special prayers or songs that accompany their work. Folk artists can be innovators, too, as you will see when you explore the retablo in this exhibit. (word count = 78)

INDIVIDUAL OBJECT & TOMBSTONE LABELS FOR SUB-THEME #1

Picking Corn Retablo
Jeronimo Lizarro
Salt Lake City, UT
2006
Purchased from artist
Museum #2007/1.1
(word count = 116)

Jeronimo Lizarro was born in the village of Huancayo, Peru in 1966. Growing up in a traditional farming culture, Jeronimo showed artistic aptitude at a young age. After studying for many years and apprenticing with renowned retablo master Joaquin Lopez Antay, Lizarro became a nationally-recognized artist in Peru. In 1996, rising terrorism near his home forced Lizarro's family to flee to Salt Lake City, Utah where they had family. He continues to make retablos today. In 2002, he received the Utah Governor's Folk Art Awards in recognition of his many accomplishments. (w.c. = 84)

Four Corners Papercutting
Ada Ogden
Ada Ogden, Blanding, Utah
Paper
Purchased from the artist
(word count = 118)

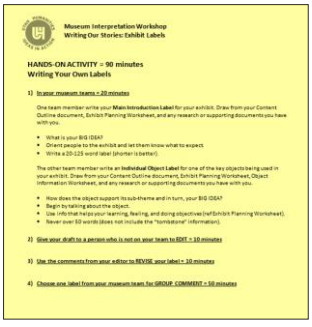
Paper cutting exists as a folk art in many cultures around the world. The Mexican art of papel picado is known as papercutting in many traditions, but this style of paper cutting is unique to Utah. Ogden learned when a group of exiled Mormon polygamists from Colonia Juarez returned to live in her hometown of Blanding. It is interesting to note, however, that papel picado is made out of tissue paper using small chisels, while Ogden uses scissors and a utility knife to cut paper. In order to create her intricate works, Ogden shows a map straddling the famous "Four Corners" where Utah, Arizona, NM, and Colorado meet. (w.c. = 112)

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!
Label Critique

1) Recalling what we learned today, review some draft labels from model exhibit ***Artists as Workers***
2) Group comments to help us turn bad labels into good labels!

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

WRITING YOUR OWN LABELS



Museum Interpretation Workshop
Writing Our Stories: Exhibit Labels

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY = 90 minutes
Writing Your Own Labels

1) In your museum teams = 20 minutes

One team member write your **Main Introduction Label** for your exhibit. Draw from your Content Outline document, Exhibit Planning Worksheet, and any research or supporting documents you have with you.

- What is your BIG IDEA?
- Orient people to the exhibit and let them know what to expect.
- Write a 20-120 word label (shorter is better).

The other team member write an **Individual Object Label** for one of the key objects being used in your exhibit. Draw from your Content Outline document, Exhibit Planning Worksheet, Object Information Worksheet, and any research or supporting documents you have with you.

- How does the object support its sub-theme and in turn, your BIG IDEA?
- Begin by talking about the object.
- Use info that helps your learning, feeling, and doing objectives (ref Exhibit Planning Worksheet).
- Never over 60 words (does not include the "tombstone" information).

2) Give your draft to a person who is not on your team to EDIT = 10 minutes

3) Use the comments from your editor to REVISE your label = 10 minutes

4) Choose one label from your museum team for GROUP COMMENT = 50 minutes

1) Divide into your museum teams of two.
2) For your own exhibit, write:
   - ✓ **Main Introduction Label**
   - ✓ **Individual Object Label**
3) Give your drafts to another team to offer suggestions. (You do same for them.)
4) Revise your label based on the feedback you receive.
5) Choose one label from your team for Group Comment.

AFTERNOON BREAK – 15 minutes

LABEL AESTHETICS & PRODUCTION

Megan van Frank
Museum & History Programs
Utah Humanities
vanfrank@utahhumanities.org

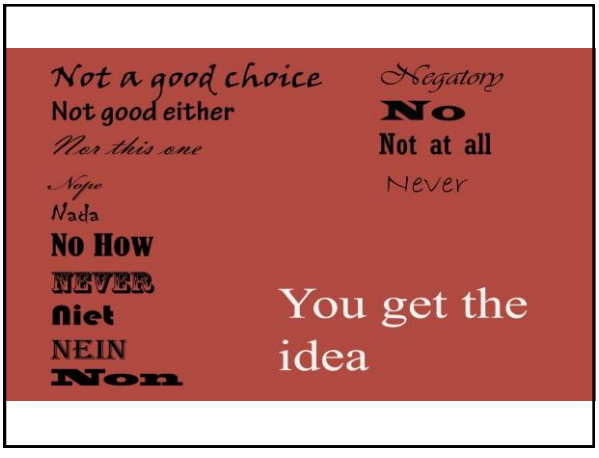
Create a Style Sheet

Provides consistency within and across exhibits

- Font styles
- Font sizes (minimums at least)
- Label sizes (minimums)
- Margin widths (between text and edge)
- Colors
- Tombstone format
- Caption format
- Word count limits

Label Design
FONTS

- Choose one that is easy to read
- Can be serif (Times Roman – T g y l)
- Or sans-serif (Arial –T g y l)
- Use **Bold** only in titles or to call out specific words
- Use only small amounts of *Italic*
- Use limited number of fonts (1-2 is good, 3 max)
- If using more than one font, be consistent in which is used for titles, text, captions, etc.



Label Design

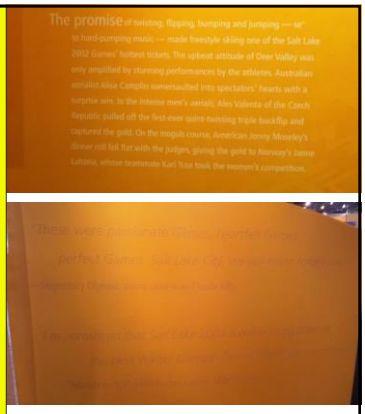
ColorColorColorColor

- Use strong contrast between text and paper
- Don't use opposite colors
- Can use different colors for different types of labels to show:
  - ✓Voice
  - ✓Different sub-themes
  - ✓Different levels of the label hierarchy

Blue on Red Makes Your Eyes Dance

Black on Blue is Hard to Read

White on Yellow Gets Lost



Salt Lake Olympic Winter Games Museum

White on Black Can Tire the Eyes

Salt Lake Olympic Winter Games Museum

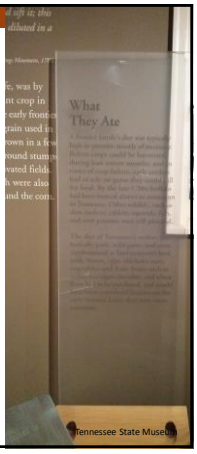
Words Vanish into a Busy Background
THE BLYTH & FARGO CO.
1886-1981
Uinta County Museum | Evanston, WY

Label Design
SIZE MATTERS
SL Olympic Museum | Tennessee State Museum

Label Design
SHINY SURFACES
SIZE IT UP
SALT
SALT
SALTLAKE 200
02
Salt Lake 2002 Olympic Winter Games Museum

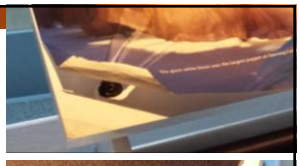
Label Design
GLASS & SHADOWS

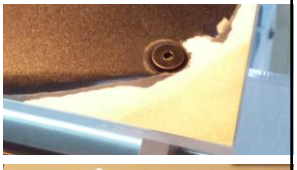
Billings Heritage Museum

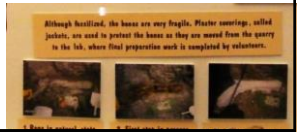


Tennessee State Museum

Label Placement
HOUSEKEEPING





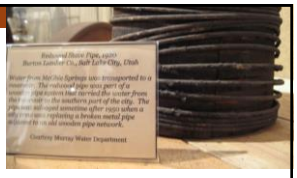


Peeling, crooked, dislodged, or faded labels distract from content.

Label Placement
OBJECT SAFETY

- No sticky tape, tacks, staples, glue, etc. attached to objects. No pins through textiles.
- Labels should not lean on or against objects.
- No high-acid paper directly on objects *(no high acid paper should be in exhibit anyway).*
- Use acid-free and archival quality materials.

Label Placement
GOOD PRACTICE



- Velcro, double sticky tape, 3M removable sticky tabs to attach label to **wall**, object **mount**, **shelf**, **case**, etc.
- Lay label flat, prop it up, or make a simple stand from archival materials.
- Acrylic stands come in lots of sizes and styles.
- If you absolutely MUST lay it on the object, make sure label is acid free or on an acid free liner, and that it is in subdued light to avoid fading (**avoid this if you can).**

Label Production
DIY TECHNIQUE

- Produce professional-looking labels
  - ✓on a budget
  - ✓in your own museum
- Ease of this technique makes it possible to redo labels whenever needed

Label Production
EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

- Computer and Printer
- Paper – light, pastel or earth tone, not flimsy
- Mounting Board – mat board or foam core
- Spray Adhesive – permanent vs repositionable
- Cotton gloves or roller or rubber scraper
- Mat Cutter – mounted or hand held
  (alternative = heavy ruler and exacto blade)

Label Production
PRINTING CONSIDERATIONS

- Shape label in a text block, not a line
- Print several small labels on one sheet, leaving 2 inches between each to allow for trimming
- Put a border box around each label as a guide to trimming — at **1/3" margin** for small labels; at least **1/2" margin** for large labels. Consistent!
- Minimum size for labels should be 3" x 1.5"

Label Production
CREATE A BORDERED BOX

- Insert Text Box in your 'Word' document.
- Type your label text inside the text box.
- Font should be simple and large enough size to read (ref ADA reading), and contrast with background color.
- Resize the box to the desired dimensions and give text equal internal margins on top and sides, with a slightly wider bottom margin.
- Click and drag box to where you want it on the page – remember 2" between boxes for room to trim.
- **Try CANVA graphic design software** www.canva.com

Label Production
MOUNTING BOARD

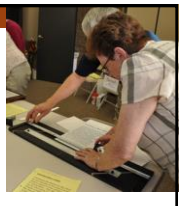
- Use 4-ply acid free **Mat Board**
- Or acid free **Foam Core** (white or black)
- **Self-adhesive** foam core (acid-free)
- Mounting board should be larger than the paper with the labels
- Ask your local framing store for their off-cuts

Label Production
MOUNT PAPER TO BOARD

- Spray Adhesive
  - ✓Use in well-ventilated space
  - ✓Label paper face down on newspaper
  - ✓Coat back of paper evenly with spray
  - ✓Make sure to hit edges and don't GLOP
  - ✓Place paper on board — use two people if possible with one laying it while the other flattens (rubs) with cotton gloves or a brayer (roller)
  - ✓Put under weight for good seal and cure 24 hours
- Self-adhesive foam core
  - ✓https://robertrodriguezjr.com/2014/12/10/video-tutorial-mounting-prints-onto-gatorfoam-board/
  - ✓Check out YouTube videos on spray or self adhesives – Foamboardsource.com has several

Same technique works for both small and oversized labels…

Label Production
TRIMMING

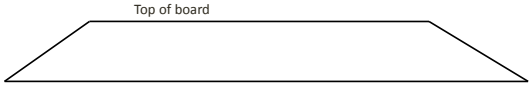


- Use the mat cutter (or heavy ruler with exacto blade)
- Cut *just inside* the text box (rather than on the box or outside the box because it is hard to control tidy margins and borders)
- If you did not use text box as a cutting guide, remember to leave even and adequate space around text (leave more space for larger labels)

Label Production
TRIMMING – BASIC STRAIGHT CUT

- Straight vertical cut is easy and can also be done with an exacto blade or box razor cutter along a heavy ruler.
- Foam core cuts easily; mat board also OK.

Label Production
TRIMMING – "ADVANCED" BEVEL CUT



- Use mat cutter so angle leads to outside
- This is opposite to normal mat cutting
- Use 4-ply mat board; foam core more tricky

Label Production
GETTING FANCY

- Use vinyl for titles
- Create a border box around text
  (use 2 boxes in printing labels – one for cutting guide outside border box)
- Mount trimmed label on colored card stock
- Stack labels on layers of foam core to create multilevel 3D effect

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

PRACTICE LABEL PRODUCTION

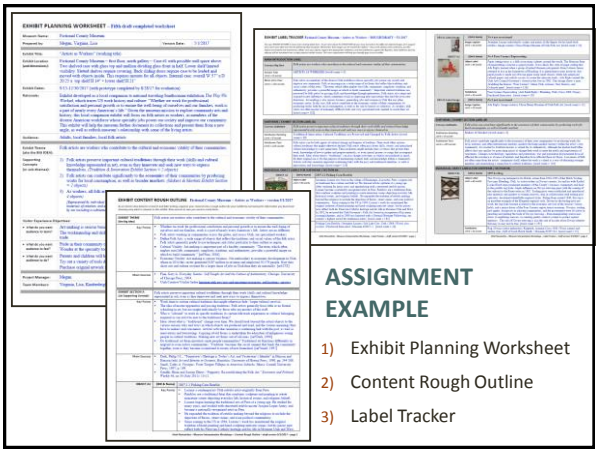
1) Divide into two groups
2) One group to **mounting** station, the other to **cutting** station
3) Try your hand
4) Switch in 20 minutes

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

SEE THE WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Start translating research into reality by creating a content outline and drafting exhibit labels.

1) Update **Exhibit Planning Worksheet** (EPWS) based on the continued research you're doing and feedback you're getting, and ideas learned today.
2) Compile research into a **Content Rough Outline**.
3) Use **Label Tracker** to create rough drafts of **Exhibit Labels** (main introduction, sub-themes, and individual objects).
4) Check out **readings** in your binder. Ask for **help** if needed.



ASSIGNMENT EXAMPLE

1) Exhibit Planning Worksheet
2) Content Rough Outline
3) Label Tracker

Wrap Up!

- **Support** for this project has been provided in part by the Utah Division of Arts & Museums, with funding from the State of Utah, as well as NEH.
- Thanks to our wonderful colleagues Laurel Casjens, Pam Miller, and Laura Bayer for prior **content development**.
- Thanks to AAM, AASLH, MGNSW, MAVIC for **valuable resources**.
- Hand in **evaluations** to the basket please.
- Questions? Anything else?

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