

Planning Interpretive Exhibits

AAD 410/510, 2 credits, Pass/Fail

CRN: 15884 (410), 15883 (510)

October 4 and October 25, 2008 (Saturdays), 9:00 a.m.–4:50 p.m., 249 Lawrence Hall
Attendance at these two sessions is required for a Pass grade.

Instructor: Alice Parman, Ph.D., Museum Consultant • Organizational Coach
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Course Description

Interpretive exhibits bring objects, images, and ideas to life for visitors through storytelling, diverse presentation media, and learning opportunities that engage multiple intelligences. In this workshop you'll learn the basics of exhibit planning, organization, and text writing. Using examples from actual exhibit projects and working with real images and objects, you'll experiment with ways to make exhibit content meaningful and memorable for visitors. The instructor will share a proven approach to exhibit planning. Discussion, group work, and individual writing projects, with on-the-spot feedback, will give you a taste of the specialized, but growing field of interpretive exhibit development and design.

Objectives:

- Learn how to go about developing an exhibit concept
- Study examples of ways to organize and manage the exhibit design process
- Learn how to apply your research skills in the exhibit design arena
- Increase your ability to critique exhibit concepts and labels
- Try your hand at writing text for exhibits

Topics covered:

- Introduction to exhibit planning
- The narrative walkthrough
- A vocabulary of exhibit design
- Researching and writing the exhibit outline
- Working with exhibit drawings
- Researching and selecting images
- Selecting objects
- Writing exhibit labels
- Overview of exhibit evaluation

Materials

- Required text: Kathleen McLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*. ASTC, 1993, \$35. Available at UO Bookstore.

Handouts and a bibliography will be distributed in class.

Logistics

We'll break for lunch on our own from 12 to 1 p.m. on each Saturday. Since we'll be going on foot to a campus museum, please bring raingear as needed. There will be one assignment to be completed between the first and second class meetings.

Assignment (due October 25—no exceptions)

- Read as much as possible of McLean's book—at a minimum, chapters 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, and Appendix A.
- Visit a museum (other than the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art and UO Museum of Natural & Cultural History, which we will visit during the class). Nearby options include the Springfield Museum; Lane County Historical Museum, Oregon Air and Space Museum, Shelton McMurphy Johnson House, and The Science Factory in Eugene; Benton County Museum, Philomath; Gilbert House Children's Museum, Hallie Ford Art Museum, and Mission Mill Museum in Salem; Portland Art Museum, Oregon Historical Society, OMSI, the Children's Museum, the World Forestry Center, and the Oregon Zoo in Portland; Columbia River Maritime Museum in Astoria; The Museum at Warm Springs, Warm Springs; The High Desert Museum, Bend; Oregon Coast Aquarium and Oregon Coast History Center, Newport.
- Write a five-page, single-spaced paper. In two pages, develop a critique of an exhibit at the museum you visited. Discuss strengths of the exhibit as well as aspects that need improvement. In the remaining three pages, describe your suggested exhibit approach to the same (or similar) content. Your prospectus should include main message(s) and key themes, and brief descriptions of the proposed exhibit and the visitor experience. Show how you would use objects, graphics, audiovisual elements, and interactives.

Your paper should be in printed, hard copy form (no email submittals will be accepted). At the top of the first page, include a return address (campus mailbox or postal address), so the instructor can return the paper to you with her comments.

AGENDA

AAD 410/510, Planning Interpretive Exhibits

Saturday, October 4, 2008: 249 Lawrence Hall

- 9:00 a.m. Introductions, review agenda
- 9:30 Overview of exhibit development
- 10:15–10:30 Break
- 10:30 Introduction to interpretive exhibit planning
- 11:00 Exhibit planning exercise: Andas and Parmanns
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:00 Meet in lobby of Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art (on the main quad, NE of the Knight Library) for experiential exercise. (Please be prompt.)
- 2:00 Return to 249 Lawrence; break
- 2:30 Exhibit planning exercise: the Throne Room
- 3:00 A vocabulary for exhibit design
- 3:15 Exhibit planning exercise: Andas and Parmanns continued
- 4:15 Review bibliography and assignment
- 4:30 Questions and feedback to instructor

Saturday, October 25, 2008: 249 Lawrence Hall

- 9:00 a.m. Discuss assignment
- 9:30 Overview of the exhibit design process
(Break 10:15–10:30)
- 11:00 Writing interpretive text
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:00 Meet in lobby of UO Museum of Natural & Cultural History, 1680 E. 15th Avenue, for observation and analysis of interpretive text. (Please be prompt.)
- 2:00 Return to 249 Lawrence
Break
- 2:30 Text editing and rewriting exercise: Museum of Natural & Cultural History
- 3:15 Text writing exercise: Andas and Parmanns
- 4:15 Introduction to exhibit evaluation
- 4:40 Questions and feedback to instructor