Exhibition Development
Basics, Tips, and Tricks

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Community Engagement

- Know your community
- Listen to your community
- How can you tell stories that are meaningful to all (or most) of the people in your community, both old and new?
- Are there people or groups in your community who know more about the story you want to tell than you do?
- Be prepared to let go of your own preconceptions

The Exhibit Team

- Think beyond the traditional exhibit team
- Broader "curatorial" voice
- Project manager
- Designer
- Educator
- Who else?

The Big Idea

- A short, active statement of what the exhibit will be

- What will you see? Do? Find out about?

- Not a topic - gets into the why

So what?

- We know you think the exhibit is important, but why should/would your audience(s) care?

- Articulating this can help you focus your exhibit, and bring out the most engaging and relevant stories.

- An important part of this is deciding on your audience(s) for the exhibit.

The Exhibit Plan

- One tool to organize the logistical details
- Very handy for fundraising and for communicating across your organization
- Includes very concrete information about deadlines, responsibilities, and budget

The Exhibit Plan

- Title & dates
- Project manager and team
- Location
- Big Idea/Thesis Statement
- Educational Goals
- Strategic Goals (if you have a strategic plan)
- Stakeholders
- Audience

The Exhibit Plan

- Boundaries
- Timeline/deadlines with responsible team member
- Budget and funding sources

Tips: Accessibility

- NPS accessibility resources: https://www.nps.gov/subjects/hfc/accessibility.htm

- Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design: https://www.sifacilities.si.edu/ae_center/pdf/Accessible-Exhibition-Design.pdf

- Concept of universal design

Tips: Accessibility

- Physical access

- Visual access

- Accessible media

- Neurodiversity

- Culturally accessible

- Others?

Tips: Accessibility

Accessible Type by Probable Viewing Distance		
Probable Viewing Distance	**Interpretive exhibits minimum type size (Helvetica Regular)**	
	X-height mm (in)	Set size (point)
Less than 75 mm (3 in)	4.5 (3/16)	24
1 m (39 in)	9 (3/8)	48
2 m (78 in)	19 (3/4)	100
3 m (118 in)	28 (1-1/8)	148
Courtesy Parks Canada, Design Guidelines for Media Accessibility		

- Also think about font style, color, contrast

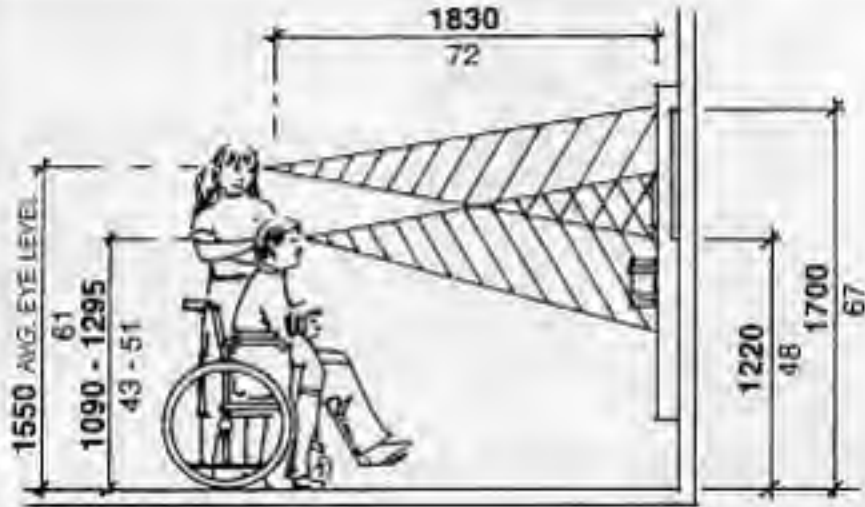# Tips: Accessibility

Fig. 3 Average viewing sightlines

- Minimum 36" wide openings

Fig. 6 Height of table case

Tips: Sustainability

- Design exhibits to re-use exhibit furniture and display cases
- LED lighting – good quality LED lighting, with the right color temperature
- Choose technologies that are affordable to install AND to maintain
- Motion sensors for lighting (also helps protect light-sensitive materials)
- Light-filtering shades, available at most major building supply stores (reduce light and solar gain)

Tips: Choosing Materials

- Durability
  - Handling
  - Will it be traveling?
- Building limitations
  - Presence or lack of climate control
  - Light levels
- Conservationally-sound
  - if in contact with original documents or objects

Tricks: When you can't hang things on the wall…

Tricks: When you can't hang things on the wall…

Tricks: Find a great local carpenter…

Tricks: when you don't have enough wall space…

Tricks: when you want to make quick and easy changes…

Questions?

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