

George A. Smathers Libraries Exhibit Style Guide

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Labels

Procedures

The exhibit curator(s) will write all exhibition text. The exhibit curator(s) should have colleagues read labels before submission to ensure they are easy to understand and convey the intended message. After reviews, the exhibit curator(s) submit the exhibition text to the Exhibits Department for peer review and editing.

Before sending it for production, the Exhibits Department will review the text for content, word count, style, and typographical accuracy. The Exhibits Department will send curator(s) suggested edits before final submission.

* See the *Exhibit Procedure Guide* for more detailed information

1. Write for your audience, not your colleagues
2. Adhere to the word count
3. Engage with the object as it relates to the exhibit theme
4. Ask questions, admit unknowns
5. Write as you would speak
6. Write a story, not an annotated bibliography

Content

Interpretive labels (introductory, group, and caption) tell stories. They are narratives, not a list of facts. Interpretation should strictly align with the exhibit theme and be as direct as possible. Write as you would speak, avoiding extraneous or repetitive information. More lengthy interpretation can be made via handouts, brochures, and catalogues. See page 4, for further explanation of label types.

The Big Idea

“Interpretive labels will be easier to write and will make more sense to visitors if the exhibition has a single focus that unifies all its parts. Good labels are guided by a strong cohesive exhibit plan – a theme, story or communication goal – that sets that tone and limits the content.” (Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*. 1996, 1)

So what?

Think of your audience when you are writing labels. Why should the care about the story(ies) being shared? Our exhibitions are in an academic library and as such most of our audience are college students. Exhibition text should be accessible and engaging to a wide majority of them without diluting the content. Information should be up to date and free of technical or industry specific jargon. Labels are not written for ourselves or our colleagues. Use short paragraphs with varying lengths of sentences. Think of questions visitors would ask themselves, as these are usually the best questions to be answered by labels.

Credit

Credit lines and/or panels are not just for donors, they are essential for scholarly credit, staff accountability, and morale.

Text Style

- Do not use all caps
- Do not hyphenate words at line breaks
- Do not use citations or footnotes
- Avoid quotes
- Avoid centuries, using decades instead (i.e. “between 1950 and 1970,” not “in the mid 20th century”)
- Use an s without an apostrophe to indicate years (i.e. 1900s not 1900’s)
- Approximate dates should be circa 1930 or c. 1930 not c. 1930s
- When a date is unknown use n.d.
- Use exclamation points and italics sparingly
- Use ragged margins, do not center or justify text
- Use single space after periods
- Use contemporary place names for the period being discussed, with the modern name in parenthesis
- Use accents where appropriate for foreign words or names
- Abbreviate the United States as U.S. not US
- When writing about height, weight, or other dimensions, spell out words such as feet, miles, etc.

Fonts

All exhibit text (excluding the title) will be printed in Arial font, unless otherwise agreed upon by the curator and the Exhibits Director.

Text Size

- ID label (tombstone): min. 18pt - max. 20pt
- Caption label: min. 16pt - max. 18pt
- Group label: min. 18pt - max. 22pt
- Introductory label on wall: min. 30pt
- Introductory label in case: min. 20pt

When ID and caption text are included on the same label, there is a 2pt difference between each, with the ID being larger. ID and caption text are separated by a line break.

All labels are printed single spaced, in black text on a white background.

Citations and Attribution

Citations, quotations, and use of images, multi-media or other data in exhibitions made under Fair Use or with permission of the copyright holder must acknowledge their source.

Interpretive labels are the curator’s interpretation of an item or subject, therefore citations should not be used in them. Citations may be used as needed in catalogue essays and should adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style.

Label types and word count

Every exhibit must have a title. Every item must have an ID (tombstone) label.

Exhibit Title	Gives the exhibit an identity and theme	1 - 10 words
ID label (tombstone)	Must be included with each item Not interpretive Contains identifying information (creator, date, etc.)	

Interpretive labels (introductory, group, and caption) tell stories. They are narratives, not lists of facts. Interpretation should strictly align with the exhibit theme and be as direct as possible.

Introductory label (curator statement)	Introduces the big idea Sets up the organization and tone of the exhibit	50 - 200 words
Group label	Is general Explains/interprets a grouping of items Introduces sub-themes	20 - 150 words
Caption label	Is not just a visual description of an item Interprets individual items Sometimes the only ones visitors read	20 - 100 words 50 is ideal

If using multi-lingual labels, keep copy close to the lower end of the word count.

ID labels

ID labels, also referred to as tombstone labels, contain identifying bibliographic information (creator, date, etc.) and are not interpretive. They can be combined with caption labels. When combined with caption labels they are separated by a line break.

Minimum font size is 18pt in Arial font.

Book	Creator (first last name) (Nationality, birth-death) <i>Title</i> Date Publisher (name only, do not include location) Dimensions (inches, do not include if physical display) Call number/Accession number Repository Credit line
Artwork from book (book displayed open)	Creator and Artist (first last name) (Nationality, birth-death) <i>Title of Illustration</i> From Author <i>Title</i> Publisher Date Medium Dimensions (inches, do not include if physical display) Call number/Accession number Repository Credit line
Artwork	Creator (first last name) (Nationality, birth-death) <i>Title</i> Date Medium Dimensions (inches, do not include if physical display) Call number/Accession number Repository Credit line

Sample

ID label

Lawton Chiles walking during the campaign for election to the US Senate **Title (italics)**
1982 **Date**
Gelatin silver print **Medium**
Lawton Chiles Senate Collection, Special & Area Studies Collections, **Repository**
George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida
Gift of Senator Lawton Chiles **Credit Line**

ID

ID and caption label

Guadalupe Hechaverría, Editor (Cuban, 1953 -) **Creator (bold)**
150 recetas de huevos **Title (italics)**
1984 **Date**
Editorial Oriente **Publisher**
TX 745.C5 1984 **Call number** **Repository**
Rare Books Collection, Special & Area Studies Collections,
George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida
Gift of Lillian Guerra **Credit Line**

ID

An unpredictable and insufficient food supply requires creativity to survive. Eggs were often widely available and not rationed during the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's. Now imagine eating them for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. How many of these 150 recipes sound palatable and appealing?

Caption