

Proposal for Hosting Midwest Archives Conference Fall Symposium at The Ohio State University Libraries (Columbus, Ohio) in 2017

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Introduction

Most archivists are faced with creating exhibits, from one case displays to multi-layered exhibits, but often do not have the necessary training to build ones that are efficient and effective. The Ohio State University Libraries proposes hosting the 2017 MAC fall symposium titled “Transitioning from Good to Great Exhibits.” The symposium will be held at the William Oxley Thompson Memorial Library (Friday) and the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum (Saturday). Both locations were recently renovated and showcase new display and exhibition areas. They are ideal venues to explore best practices and to discuss new ways for archivists to achieve their institution’s exhibition goals. (Listings of upcoming exhibits are located at: <http://library.osu.edu/projects-initiatives/exhibits/gallery-exhibits/> and <http://cartoons.osu.edu/exhibits/>)

The instructors from Ohio State will be Erin Fletcher, Exhibitions Coordinator, Jenny Robb, Curator of the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum, and Justin Luna, Exhibitions Preparator. Outside experts to approach are Sara Sterkenburg, Vanderbilt University, and Dr. Molly Schwartzburg, University of Virginia. We propose providing sessions that will cover planning and development, engagement, learning opportunities, assessment, and outreach (please see draft schedule below). Attendees are encouraged to bring samples of exhibition text at their institution and redesign it during the symposium in order to have the most impact.

Schedule (Suggested)

Friday, October 12

Location: William Oxley Thompson Library, Room 150 A&B

7:30-8:30 AM: Registration and breakfast

8:30-9:00 AM: Welcome, Introductions, Logistics

9:00-10:30 AM: The Basics: Good to Great Exhibit Development

- Planning and Development
- Hands on activity – create the focal point for your exhibit
- Design/Accessibility – selection, formatting, display design

- Installation 101 – props, labels, and materials
- Hands on activity – take a label/caption and fix it

10:30-10:45 AM: Break

10:45 AM-12:30 PM: Early Engagement Strategies for Strong Exhibits

- Collaborating across departments
- Identifying an audience and learning goals
- Planning Interactive elements: Audio tours, augmented reality, options for videos or audio clips, GIS

12:30-1:30 PM: Lunch

1:30-3:00 PM: Exhibits as a learning process

- Working with students to create exhibits
- Working with Teaching Faculty and familiarizing them with collections
- Skill development for archives and library staff

3:00-3:15 PM: Break

3:15-4:30 PM: Take a look at the Special Collections display area and Thompson Gallery exhibits and see if they can see some best practices or areas for improvement. Use assessment worksheet to assess Thompson Library exhibit.

4:00-4:30 PM: Wrap up of day: What did you see that related to what you learned today?

Saturday, October 13

Location for Saturday: Billy Ireland Cartoon Library & Museum (BICLM), Schulz Lecture Hall

7:30-8:30 AM: Breakfast

8:30-9:30 AM: Assessment

- Formative or Front-end Evaluation to improve exhibits
- Quantitative Assessment: Tracking attendance
- Qualitative Assessment: Visitor Surveys
- Summative Evaluation to assess effectiveness of exhibits

9:30-10:00 AM: Hands on activity – use assessment worksheet to assess BICLM exhibit

10:00-10:15: Break

10:15 AM – 12:00 PM: Leveraging Exhibits for Outreach

- Entrepreneurialism and Donors
- Effective Marketing: cross marketing strategies, effectively using social media
- Programming: case study - John Lewis program and the Civil Rights Exhibits

12:00-12:30 PM: Wrap up and parting thoughts

Possible Added Opportunity for Attendees

The opportunity to see a variety of exhibit venues and different kinds of exhibits in Columbus is rich. The OSU Libraries have 4 museum quality galleries, 1 special collections display area, several subject oriented cases around the main library. The Wexner Center for the Arts is within steps from the Billy Ireland Cartoon Library and Museum, while there are several other campus and downtown venues where participants can view exhibit applications and use the skills developed at the workshop for knowledge enhancement. The OSU Libraries team would be glad to offer a ½ day (Thursday afternoon or Saturday afternoon) extension of the workshop to include these other exhibit exploration opportunities, if MAC feels that would be appropriate.

Additional Information:

About the Outside Experts

Sara Sterkenburg, Cataloging & Exhibition Services Librarian at Vanderbilt University, gave a recent presentation at RBMS called “Leveraging Exhibitions as a Needs-Based Skill Development Program in Libraries: a Case Study at Vanderbilt University Libraries.” During the presentation, Sterkenburg discussed Vanderbilt’s new orientation toward the 21st century technologies demanded widely by users. In 2014, Vanderbilt’s exhibition team designed the current season around this idea, leveraging exhibits as a skill-development program. They focused on teaching XML markup, version control using Github, copyright, open access, and descriptive metadata. Instead of seeing exhibits as a finished product, the Vanderbilt team sees exhibits as processes, and a skill building exercise and opportunity.

Dr. Molly Schwartzburg, University of Virginia earned her PHD in American Literature from Stanford in 2004, with a specialization in modern and contemporary poetry and the avant-garde. Schwartzburg previously worked at the Harry Ransom Center, and has embraced an interdisciplinary approach to exhibits that explores both literature and the visual arts. Swartzburg approaches exhibits from a comparative perspective, drawing on both the resources of a library and practices of museums.