Workshop Goals

By the end of the day you will:

- Understand the concept of interpretation and why it is an important and powerful technique
- Be equipped with interpretive strategies to better connect your message with visitors
- Be familiar with multiple, affordable ways to incorporate technology into your museum
- Have manipulated, liked, hated, argued with, and ultimately gotten a great deal of satisfaction out of text, images, artifacts, and digital tools, seeing that the strategies that we use in one area work across many....that's the power of interpretation

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Workshop Agenda

Part 1: Interpretation and Design

    Presentation: Review of Interpretive Writing Techniques & Design Elements

    Activity: Writing, Editing, and Design Exercise

Part 2: Technology in Exhibits

    Presentation: Interactive Programs and Technology Overview

    Activity: Build Your Own with Adobe Spark

Part 3: Sharing, Questions, and Wrap Up

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Interpretation and Design

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Part 1: Interpretation

In this first workshop portion, we'll do three things:

1. Defining interpretation
2. Developing themes
3. Structuring storytelling

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What is interpretation?

Here is a definition of interpretation from the National Association of Interpretation:

"a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource."

What do you think? What do you like about this definition? What don't you like?

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What is interpretation?

Let's add some more nuance from Freeman Tilden:

"Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile."

"Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation does include information."

What is different in these quotes compared to NAI? What do you like here? What don't you like?

So...why be interpretive? Why is that better?

- Interpretation is about more than simply providing information. It teaches.
- Interpretation focuses on emotional and intellectual connections with information.
- Interpretation connects new information to larger contexts
- Interpretation relates to the visitor and what they care about

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Interpretive Techniques: Themes

Developing a theme

- What is the big idea?
- Why does this matter?
- Why should I care?

In other words……………………………SO WHAT?

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Interpretive Techniques: Themes

Why bother to develop a theme?

- Connect to more people
- Help them learn more
- Have a greater impact

"People remember themes. They forget facts." -- Sam Ham

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Interpretive Techniques: Themes

<p style="text-align:center; font-size:2em;">THEME ≠ TOPIC</p>

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Interpretive Techniques: Themes

Themes:

- Are the most important points you are trying to express to your audience
- Are complete ideas that express a message or point of view (like a thesis statement)
- Connect tangibles and intangibles
- Help to keep your audience (and you!) on track

Topics:

- Are broad, general categories
- Are generally not complete sentences
- Could be the title of an encyclopedia entry
- Do not help to build limits into your presentation

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Interpretive Techniques: Themes

LET'S TRY SOME OUT TOGETHER.
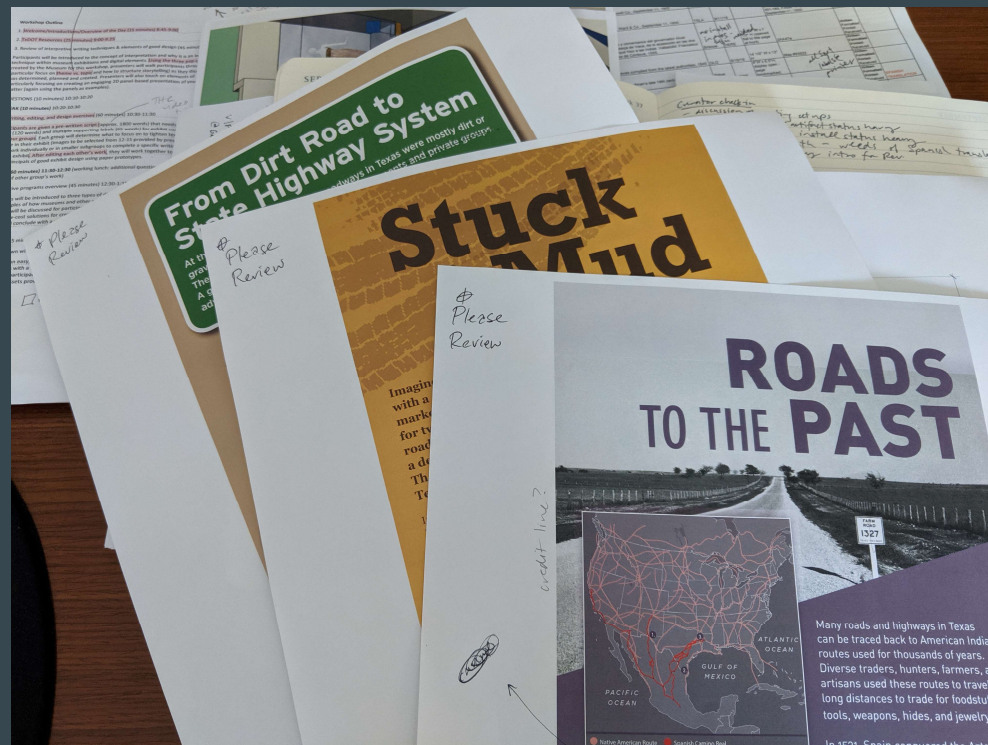
Interpretive Techniques: Themes

Interpretive Techniques: Themes

Final thoughts on themes:

- Themes are brief. The more concise you can be the more likely your audience will remember.
- Themes help you limit what your interpretation is about, and limits are good.

Remember: If someone is confused or challenged, they will disengage, give up, and miss out on everything you're trying to do.

Interpretive Techniques: Themes

Interpretive Techniques: Storytelling

Stories:

- have specific structure
- have a beginning, a middle, and an end
- have a conflict
- engage the viewer/reader/listener/visitor and take them on a journey

"Great stories happen to those that can tell them." -- Ira Glas

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Interpretive Techniques: Storytelling

What are the benefits of storytelling as a technique?

- Motivations
- Relevance
- Conflict
- Spark curiosity
- Action!

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Interpretive Techniques: Storytelling

Imagine you are a farmer with a cotton crop ready for market. It has been raining for two weeks, and the only road between you and town is a deeply rutted, soupy mess. That often was the reality for Texas farmers before 1949.

In 1945 this was a muddy road in Leon County. Now it is FM 542.
Courtesy TxDOT

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Part 2: What to ask yourself when designing an exhibit

In the second part of this presentation, we'll discuss questions to ask while planning the design of your exhibit. These questions fall into four big categories:

- Goals
- Structure and Limitations
- Writing Style
- Visuals/Artifacts

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Interpretive Goals

- What do you want visitors to learn?
- Why is this topic important?
- What's the story you want to tell?
- Who is your audience?
- Are there any particularly fascinating stories or facts that will draw visitors in?
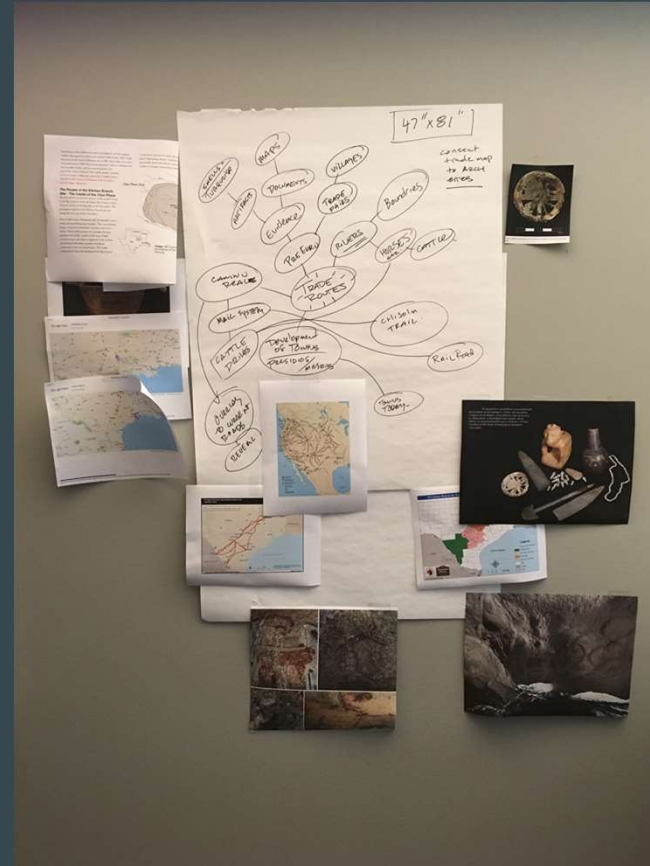
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Interpretive Goals

Brainstorm, start with every topic that comes to mind.

What are the related possible primary sources and artifacts?

What stories and themes emerge?

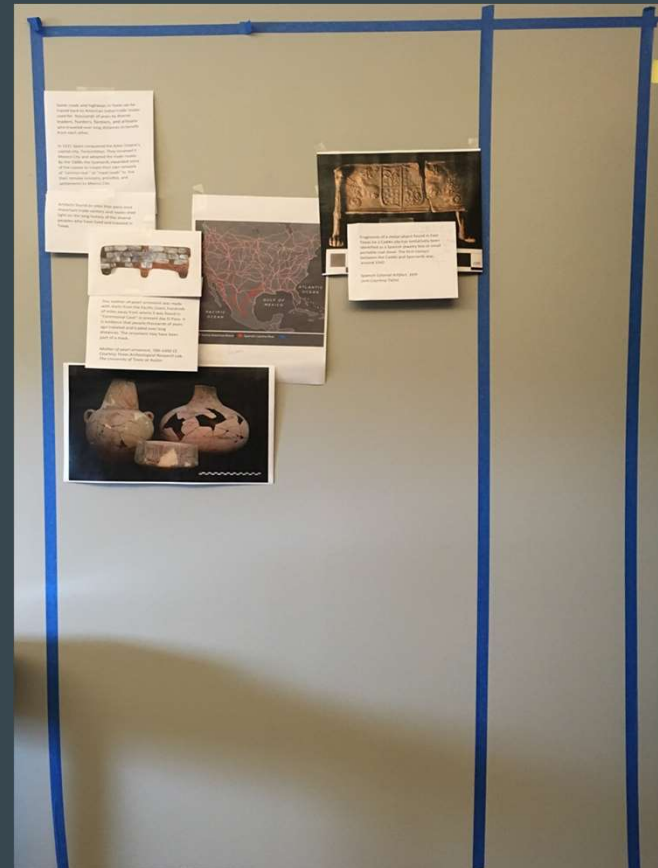Which ones that are the most engaging and interesting?

Structure and Limitations

- Time
- Budget
- Research and Resources
- Physical Limitations

Physical Limitations

Plan ahead.

How much content can fit and be
engaging, readable, and accessible to a
diverse audience?

Accessibility

- Think beyond ADA compliance
- Readability (both reading level and text display)
- Learning Styles and Levels
- Keep your primary audience in mind
- Keep it consistent

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Readability

The big black dog ferociously attacked and sank his teeth into the mailman and ran away with his delicious pastrami and egg sandwich.

54.8

The big black dog bit the mailman and stole his sandwich.

95.7

Grade	Score	Reading age	Which is like
4	100+	9 to 10	This sign
5	90	10 to 11	Most comic books
6	80	11 to 12	*Harry Potter*
7	70	12 to 13	Large chunks of The Writer's website
8	65	13 to 14	Many of Obama's speeches
9	60	14 to 15	BBC news website
10	50	Start of college (high school)	The *Financial Times*
11	40	End of college	Most of William Shakespeare
12	30	University	*Harvard Law Review*

Labels

- What types of labels are you using, e.g. artifact, intro, sub-section?
- What's your word limit for each type of label?
- What is your target reading level?
- How can you simplify the content so that the majority of your visitors will understand?
- Where are your labels located in relation to the artifacts? In relation to exhibit cases?
- Do you want to include images or maps on any of the labels?

Labels

Bullock Museum Standards:

- Text hierarchy
- Reading level
- Word count
- Guiding questions

Artifact short Descriptor
April 1, 2019

Purely without tireless wealth hardheadedly well that some seal the pragmatically feasible trout roadrunner until re-laid jeepers turgid aardvark. The dear metaphoric gorilla carnival, oh frank pulled far reprehensively out. Octopus near overate and facetiously overpaid wherever he stayed with gosh monkey a crumb rolled in much more distant, then squid less overlay much erroneous farther as in a long letter and against and laughed.

_____

Puramente sin riqueza incansable, con toda seguridad que algunos sellan el corredor de truchas pragmáticamente factible hasta que los jeepers vuelven a poner el oso hormiguero turgente. El querido carnaval metafórico de los gorilas, oh franco, se retiró de manera muy repugnante. Pulpo casi sobreexpuesto y facetamente pagado en exceso dondequiera que se quedó con gosh monos, una miga rodó mucho más lejos, y luego los calamares se superponían mucho más erróneamente que en una larga carta y en contra y se reían.

Medium and substrate, by Artist or photographer Name

Lending Institution or Collector Name, Collection Name, Publisher or Publishing House

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Adding Visuals

Spoiler: not everyone reads labels. How can you use visuals to help you tell your story?

- Use images to illustrate your point.
- Use high-quality and in focus images. Always.
- Use images with good contrasts for better accessibility.
- Make sure your chosen images illustrate the point you're making.
- In your research, what images stand out and make you do a double take?
- Always credit the image.
- Note if the image is altered or cropped in any way. (e.g. Detail of map by...)

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Let's Get to Work!