

## Collection/Exhibit Facts Inventory

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### Worksheet 1B

Collection/Exhibit: \_\_\_\_\_

Contributor/Staff: \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: Designed to be used with projects still in development, this worksheet also can be used with existing collections and exhibits.*

#### General Knowledge

What is your favorite aspect of this collection/exhibit? For example, the one thing you want visitors to know about/see is. . . .

Where is the greatest visitor interest likely to be (and why)?

What stories (folklore, historical tales, potential visitor and staff memories, etc.) are best told here, and where should they be told?

What questions are visitors likely to ask about this collection/exhibit?

What do you think the public's perception (or misperception) of this collection/exhibit might be?

What are the challenges for interpretation in this collection/exhibit (accessibility/narrow paths, temperature, sounds, etc.)?

#### Historical Significance

What (if any) is the historical significance of this collection/exhibit (highlights, unique pieces)?

#### Plans for the Future

How will this collection/exhibit change over time?

What long-term plans will influence this collection/exhibit's future?

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Object/Plant/Animal	To whom does it appeal?	Why? (rarity, form, story, etc.)

#### Objects & Display

What was the inspiration for or motivation behind the design of this collection/exhibit? What impression do you hope it will make on the visitor?

Which objects (or plants, animals, etc.) are the "main attractions" for both you and the average visitor? Which objects do visitors ask about the most? Why?

What special care, preparation, or maintenance does this collection/exhibit require, both in storage and while it is on display?

#### Behind-the-scenes

Which special or behind-the-scenes operating systems, staff, or resources help you install and/or maintain this collection/exhibit?

#### Resources

If someone wanted to learn more about this collection/exhibit, what resources should they pursue? Please list favorite books, other museums, experts in the field, Web sites, classes, etc.

## Identifying Themes and Messages

### Worksheet 1D

**Program Topics** are the important ideas and story elements (usually a single word) that determine the most important overriding idea—the theme.

Important topics that the visitor should understand, learn, or be exposed to include:

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The **theme** is the overriding idea that the visitor should take away from the interpretive experience. The theme summarizes or unifies important program topics and tells the visitor what to expect. It is the plot in your story or thesis statement.

If there were one thing about this collection/topic that I want the visitor to remember, it would be:

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*This is your theme.*

**Messages** illustrate the theme through supporting evidence, such as stories, experiences, or concepts. Identifying the messages (sometimes called learning points) helps provide focus and limits excessive information that can dilute the interpretation.

I want the visitor to know that:

1. 

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2. 

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3. 

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*These are your messages.*

*Adapted from Environmental Interpretation (1992), page 37, with permission from the author, Sam H. Ham*

## Tour Transitions that Reinforce Theme/Messages

### Worksheet 12D

Theme (and Messages):

Stop Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Theme connection:

Transition:

Stop Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Theme Connection:

Transition:

Stop Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Theme Connection:

Transition:

Stop Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Theme Connection:

## Qualities of Successful Themes and Messages

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### Worksheet 1E

#### Qualities of a Successful Theme:

- Answers the question "so what?" or "what is worth exploring here?"
- Grabs attention by posing a challenge, confronting a myth, provoking thought, and/or having universal appeal.
- More than a single word or idea, but can usually be communicated in one sentence.
- Written in clear and familiar language that's easy for people (interpreters and visitors) to remember.
- Focuses attention on memorable/significant aspect of collection/exhibit.
- Addresses important information, feelings, behaviors, or values related to topic.
- Interpreter would be satisfied if visitor used this theme to answer the question, "What do you think this program/exhibit was about?"

#### Qualities of an Effective Message:

- Written in a familiar language/tone.
- Relates the theme to visitor's life; makes real and meaningful connections.
- Reveals facts and meanings by drawing attention to supporting (and sometimes surprising) evidence.
- Illustrates complex ideas by making analogies or comparisons with known (universal) concepts and objects.