

George A. Smathers Libraries Exhibit Style Guide

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Background:

The George A. Smathers Libraries have an active exhibition program that shares, interprets, and promotes the collections. Exhibits support and enhance the Libraries' role as an intellectual center of the university. Challenging and innovative exhibitions are carefully developed in order to support the mission of the Libraries and the University. They promote interdisciplinary approaches to research and teaching and stimulate intellectual curiosity. Items included in exhibits are primarily from the Libraries' collections and supplemented, as appropriate, with materials from other sources.

The Libraries also create and host online exhibitions (<http://exhibits.uflib.ufl.edu/online.html>) which complement physical exhibitions and highlight the collections. Online exhibitions are freely available and accessible year round.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Exhibits Coordinator works with subject specialists and collection curators to develop and support exhibits across the Smathers Libraries, including the branch libraries, departmental libraries, and the Health Sciences Center Libraries as well as online and traveling exhibits.

Responsibilities of the Exhibits Coordinator include:

- Exhibit scheduling
- Exhibit coordination between branches
- Coordination of traveling exhibits
- Coordination of incoming and outgoing loans for exhibits
- Design and technical support for Library exhibits
- Design and printing coordination of collateral materials for exhibits
- Multimedia companion content design and creation/coordination for physical exhibits
- Online exhibit design
- Exhibit installation and de-installation assistance
- Ensure adherence to Exhibits Policy and Style Guide

Responsibilities of the exhibit curator(s) include:

- Determine exhibit theme and central topics
- Select materials for exhibit inclusion
- Write all exhibition text
- Propose and confirm related programming
- Follow exhibit timeline to complete activities for planning, installing, opening, promoting, and closing an exhibit

Labels

Procedures:

The exhibit curator(s) will write all exhibition text. The exhibit curator(s) should have friends or 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 Coordinator.

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

Label 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.

“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)

Exhibition text should be engaging and accessible to a wide audience 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 lines and/or panels are not just for donors, they are essential for staff accountability and morale.

Text Style:

- Do not use exclamation points
- Do not use all caps
- Do not hyphenate 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 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 names

Fonts:

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

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 approx. 50 is ideal

If using bilingual 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 and 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

Example

ID label

Lawton Chiles walking during the campaign for election to the U.S. 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 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Now imagine eating them for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. How many of these 150 recipes sound palatable and appealing?

Caption