



Making an Impact

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Exhibition Planning & Design for Namibian Museums - May 2015

Museums Association of Namibia & District Six Museum



EMBASSY OF FINLAND
WINDHOEK



Be Bold & Use Your Imagination

"My first introduction into exhibition making and design was really by default. I remember making so many 'unintentional mistakes' that often led to some of the most imaginative creations and solutions".

- **Tina Smith (District Six Museum)**

"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new"

- **Albert Einstein**

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Introduction: The Museum Effect

If we take a suitcase and put it into an Art Gallery or a Museum it is no longer just a suitcase. It is an Exhibit. Perhaps it will even be mounted on a pedestal and lit by a spotlight. As visitors we look at the suitcase with expectation – perhaps it is on display because of its beauty, its cost or its biography. We look at the suitcase no longer as an ordinary object, but an extraordinary object.

It is this transformation that Svetlana Alpers has dubbed ‘The Museum Effect’ (1990: 26). Indeed, if you visit the Independence Museum in Windhoek one of the artifacts that you will find on display there is a battered, old suitcase. However, it is a suitcase with a history. It was the suitcase that Chief Hosea Kutako gave to the Founding Father, Sam Nujoma, when he left Namibia. He came with the same suitcase when he returned from exile almost thirty years later.

Ivan Karp argued that there are two basic models for an exhibition. An exhibition is either “. . . a vehicle for the display of objects or a space for telling a story”. Karp argued that this reflects the basic difference in display techniques between art museums and cultural history museums. Art museums tend to show an object with minimal text, whilst other museums often surround an object with text to provide context. It can be debated whether this difference in approach to exhibition style is necessary. However, in both settings it is the way in which objects or artworks are displayed and interpreted (explained) that transforms a cluster of artifacts or artworks into an exhibition. Unfortunately, MAN is aware that very few museum workers in Namibia have

received any training in the crucial area of exhibition planning and design.

One of the criticisms of our museums that the Museums Association of Namibia has discovered (through activities such as the annual survey conducted at our Tourism Expo) is that visitors complain that our museums are static and unchanging. The International Council of Museums states that “A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of its society and of its development, and open to the public which: Acquires, Conserves, Researches, Communicates and Exhibits for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment”. Exhibiting should, therefore, be one of a museum’s five core functions. Acquiring (collecting) objects, images and information for the museum’s permanent collection should also be linked to present and future exhibition plans. The tourist industry strongly argues that museums that have permanent exhibitions should consider updating or changing their exhibitions and developing mobile exhibitions. Mobile exhibitions create a ‘museum without walls’ that can be displayed in public spaces, such as shopping malls.

Namibian museums also need to find ways to use their collections better as exhibits. Philip Hughes explains that in the past “Many museums felt bound to show as many of their artefacts as they could physically cram into display cases; often the exhibits were impressively comprehensive, but very difficult for the ordinary observer to take in.” (2010: 13) Improved display techniques and stronger

storylines can help Namibian museums to make better use of the unique artifacts in their collections. In response to the needs of the museum sector and the feedback that we received from visitors to Namibian museums it was decided to approach the Embassy of Finland for assistance. The Embassy of Finland generously provided funding for a two year project to support exhibition development in Namibian museums. One component of the project was capacity-building for museum curators and to start this process a national training workshop was held in Tsumeb on 10th-11th February, 2015. The workshop drew 29 participants from all over Namibia. This Handbook has been developed from the workshop with the aim of making the information available to MAN members who were unable to attend the workshop. The Handbook aims to help our regional museums to plan and develop new exhibitions and also to reconsider the process used to create an exhibition.

In the past exhibitions in Namibia were often planned, designed and constructed by one person. However, over recent years, there has been a move towards greater community involvement in exhibition planning and design. The shift away from 'curatorial authority' reflects the concern in new museology for communities to be involved as producers, and not just consumers, of exhibitions. As Steven Lavine argues "Voice has emerged as a crucial issue in the design of exhibitions . . . How can museums make space for the voices of indigenous experts, members of the communities represented in exhibitions, and artists? (1990: 152). The aim of this Handbook is, therefore, not only to encourage a new wave of museum exhibitions in Namibia, but also a new, more inclusive, approach to exhibition planning and design.

"The exhibition is inevitably . . . contested terrain . . . The struggle is not only over what is to be represented, but over who will control the means of representing" (Karp, 1991: 15)

"A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of its society and of its development, and open to the public which: Acquires, Conserves, Researches, Communicates and Exhibits for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment"



Thinking About Exhibitions

Whilst we will work in a team to create an exhibition it is often the case that members of the team will have different opinions about the style and content of a planned exhibition. Once you have assembled a team you might find the following exercise useful to start discussion within the group about the kind of issues that you might encounter when working on your exhibition. It is useful to obtain an indication of the different perspectives within your team.

Spend 10 minutes thinking about the following five statements. If you agree totally with a statement give a score of 10. If you totally disagree with the statement give a score of 0. Otherwise if you mainly agree or mainly disagree, but with some conditions, give a score on a scale of 1 to 10. Write a number by each statement, but also try to jot down some points to explain your position. After ten minutes compare your scores and explain the reasons behind your choice.

A) Exhibitions in Art Galleries and Museums are the same.

B) In the twenty-first century it is important that museum exhibitions take advantage of audio-visual technology.

C) The 'unique selling point' of a museum is the 'authenticity' of the artifacts in its collection. Objects will always be at the centre of a good museum exhibition.

D) The 'Power Stone' should be displayed in an Exhibition in the new King Mandume Museum at Omhedi.

E) Museum Exhibitions should only deal with topics that are relevant to the local community.

F) The human remains that were returned from Germany should be displayed in the Independence Museum as evidence of the atrocities committed by the Schutztruppe during the 1904-1908 war.

G) Exhibitions should be objective and reflect the truth about the past and never deal with controversial topics.



“The strength of others lies in the depth of their research and the original historical information that the History Club produces.”

Learning from Experience: The School Clubs and Museum Exhibitions (SCAMX) Competition

The Museums Association of Namibia runs an annual school competition that encourages learners to research, design and mount a small exhibition about a subject relating to the history and culture of their region. The competition has run since 2004 and we are happy that a number of learners and teachers who have taken part in the competition have been inspired to pursue internships, further studies and even a career in the museum section.

The aim of the competition is to give learners practical experience of exhibition making. However we can all learn from experience. We believe that all of us have a feeling of what looks good in a display. Exhibitions in our SCAMX competition all have different strengths and weaknesses. The strength of some lies in their design and attractive presentation and their choice of objects and/or images.

The strength of others lies in the depth of their research and the original historical information that the History Club produces. Whilst others demonstrate skill in the way they write text that make their material easy to understand for the viewer.

Whilst this Handbook will give you lots of useful advice on planning and designing your exhibition we think it will be useful for you to look at some displays and reflect on what you like or dislike about them. For this exercise we will use some photographs of sections of some of the displays produced by school History Clubs for the SCAMX competition in 2009. Look at the photographs and jot down some notes about your own views of what you think works well and what doesn't work well. The exercise is not focusing on content, but on Visuality – the way that the exhibition is presented. Look at things such as the spacing, the use of colour, the size of titles and sub-titles and the use of images. You will already be thinking about Exhibition Design !!! If you would like to see some of the comments that the judges made – you can find them at the end of the Handbook.

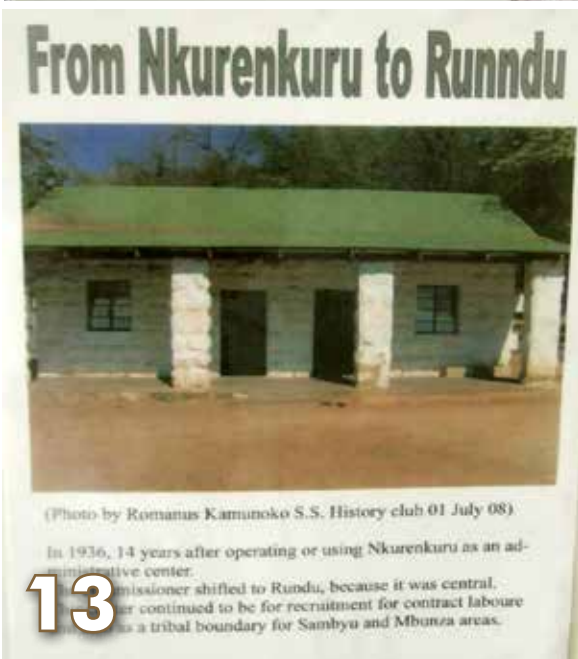




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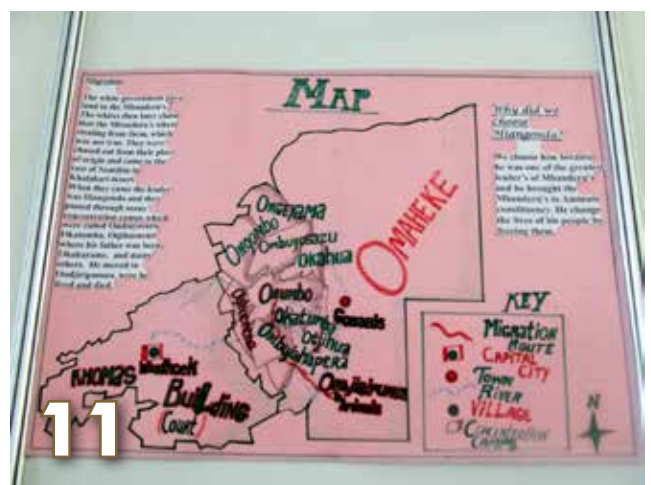
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Ten Steps in Developing an Exhibition

This MAN Handbook is designed to help you work through the process of planning and designing a new exhibition. We have designed the Handbook to particularly suit small museums as most of our member museums only have a small staff. We would like to recommend a ten stage process to mounting a new exhibition.

1. **Conduct `Front-end' Visitor Survey**
2. **Establish Exhibition Planning Team.**
3. **Identifying an Exhibition Subject.**
4. **Thinking About Six Core Questions.**
5. **Sketching the Available Space.**
6. **Drafting a Skeleton Plan & Drafting a Lay-Out**
7. **Drafting a Storyline and Making a `Shopping List'.**
8. **Develop the Design (In House or in Graphic Designer)**
9. **Mounting the Exhibition**
10. **Conduct `Back-End' Evaluation and Exhibition Report.**

“Museums might also involve the community that they serve in the process of exhibition development at this early stage of the process.”

Step One: Front End’ Visitor Survey

Museums should always think of their visitors as customers. When people visit your museum they have expectations of what they would like to see there. Often our exhibitions satisfy visitors, but sometimes they feel that there are ways in which our permanent exhibitions could be improved or that there are new stories that could be told. This information is crucial to help us to improve our existing exhibitions or to identify potential subjects for new permanent or temporary exhibitions. It should be research that comes at the ‘Front-end’ of the process. What methods can we use to obtain this information ?

Museums can make use of MAN’s Namibian Museums Visitors Survey which is contained in our previous publication Making Museums Matter: A Marketing Handbook for Namibian Museums. Copies of the survey have been distributed to all Namibian museums. If we analyse the information provided by visitors who complete this Survey we can get good ideas to help us make improvements or to create new exhibitions.

Whilst a lot of visitors may not have time to complete the two page survey, most will write in the museum’s Visitors Book. Whilst some books provide a limited space for comments they can give an indication of the profile of the type of visitor that come to the museum and this should also influence the way in which you create an exhibition.

The staff of the museum might also Interview visitors, formally or informally. If you speak to visitors it is important to put them at ease that you will not be offended if they offer their opinions about the way in which the exhibitions in the museum could be improved.

Museums might also involve the community that they serve in the process of exhibition development at this early stage of the process. Resources are always limited and so you might want to ask visitors and/ or the local community to vote and choose from a number of options to see which is the subject that people feel will be most important/ interesting. You might also use a simple exhibition questionnaire to help to identify people who have objects, images or stories that might be useful for the new exhibition or who might have tips about where relevant information or materials can be obtained.

The Visitor Bill of Rights

When we are working on a new exhibition it is easy for museum curators to focus on the content of an exhibition and to forget about our audience. Our visitors are our customers, our consumers. It is, therefore, also useful to keep in mind the `Visitors Bill of Rights' (provided by Graham Black in The Engaging Museum) when developing our exhibition.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Comfort | "Meet my Basic Needs" |
| 2. Orientation | "Make it easy for me to find my way round" |
| 3. Welcome | "Make me feel welcome" |
| 4. Enjoyment | "I want to have fun" |
| 5. Socialising | "I came to spend time with my family and friends" |
| 6. Respect | "Accept me for who I am and what I know" |
| 7. Communication | "Help me to understand and let me talk too" |
| 8. Learning | "I want to learn something new" |
| 9. Choice and control | "Let me choose; give me some control" |
| 10. Challenge and confidence | "Give me a challenge I know I can handle" |
| 11. Revitalisation | "Help me leave refreshed, restored" |

(Black, 2005: 32)

Step Two: Forming an Exhibition Planning Team

"Failing to plan is Planning to Fail".

-Alan Lekain

It is important to form an enthusiastic and effective Exhibition Planning Team to help to produce a timebound action plan to ensure that the research, design and production of an exhibition is completed BEFORE the date that has been announced for the launch of the exhibition. If the team has the right mix of skills, knowledge and experience it will achieve this goal. It should ensure that problems and potentially sensitive issues are anticipated and discussed in a timely manner to avoid a last minute crisis.

Otherwise . . .

We will hear some of the complaints and excuses that are caused by insufficient planning

"We went over budget."

"We just weren't ready by the opening date for the exhibition."

"We assumed..."

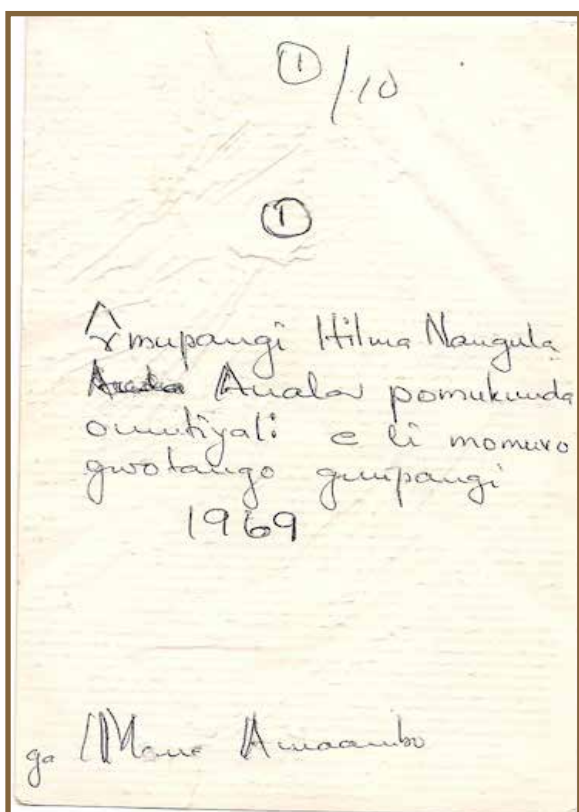
"We were up all night installing the exhibition."

"We did not have the resources to do the job properly."

"We didn't get the funding we were counting on."

"We just did it and did not have the time to document the process"

"This was the way it was always done in the past."



Community archives. A photograph provided to Onandjokwe Medical Museum by a local resident.

Who Should Be the Members of the Exhibition Planning Team ?

Curators may have a lot of information about their collection and/or the topic that they would like to create an exhibition about. However, to engage the full range of resources, knowledge and skills that are required to create the best possible display it is best to create a small Exhibition Team or 'Working Group'. Normally the Working Group would have five to ten members. The Team might be involved in identifying the theme for the exhibition (and then expanded once the theme is finalised) or it might be brought together after the theme has been selected. When assembling a team some of the factors to consider are:

- **Source Communities.** If the museum is developing an exhibition about Efundula (a traditional ritual for teenage girls in Oukwanyama) than it is important to have at least one person from the kingdom on your team who is familiar with the cultural context.
- **Specialized Knowledge.** Often an exhibition will focus on a topic where there are specialists (beyond the walls of the museum) who have expert knowledge that should be included on your team. For example, an exhibition about Whales would benefit from the input of a marine biologist.
- **Relevant Collectors.** The team might need to include one or more people/institutions who have materials that you might wish to acquire or borrow for the exhibition. For example, if you were developing an exhibition about philately (postage stamps) in Namibia you might want to include local collectors who have rare Namibian stamps and Nampost on your team.
- **Local Community Representatives.** The team should include local community members since the museum should always be developing exhibitions that are relevant and interesting to the community that it serves.
- **Educators/Youth.** Museums today are increasingly valued as educational resources. It is, therefore, important that museums try to involve teachers and young people in exhibition development.
- **Funders.** Not all funders will want to be directly involved in exhibition design. However, it is wise to invite them to participate in the Working Group. Municipalities, for example, might wish to link the exhibition to other events or activities that are being planned, such as marketing their town to the tourism industry. Sponsors may want to be involved if they are concerned that the content of the exhibition has the potential to be controversial.
- **Business Community.** The development of a new exhibition might provide an opportunity to involve a local business if the theme of the exhibition relates to their work. For example, an exhibition about the diamonds might provide an opportunity to involve a local jewellery shop. Such links might translate into sponsorship or other forms of support later.
- **Artists/Graphic Designers.** Whilst some museums develop a 'brief' of what they want and then approach a designer it is best, if possible, to involve the person who will work on the design and lay-out as early as possible.

District Six Museum: A Community-based Museum.

District Six was an area in the centre of Cape Town which, like the 'Old Location' in Windhoek is remembered, nostalgically, as a multicultural and vibrant community. However on 11th February, 1966 the Group Areas Act was applied and the community were then forcefully removed from their homes and dispersed around new townships in the Cape Flats. The houses were demolished and all that was left standing were the churches and the mosques.

The land remained largely vacant, but its future use was contested and, as property developers sought the right to develop the land the protests by former residents became increasingly vocal. The 'Hands Off District Six Campaign' was launched in 1988. The importance for the community of preserving the memory of the District Six community was strongly linked to the politics of urban land rights. One of the outcomes of this 'politics of memory' was the establishment of the District Six Museum in 1994. The launch of the museum has been clearly described by Ciraj Rassool and Sandra Prosalandis:

"The District Six Museum opened its doors in the old church of the Central Methodist Mission at 25A Buitenkant Street on 10 December, 1994. The exhibition with which it opened as a museum was called Streets: Retracing District Six. Described as an archaeology of memory', the Museum was the culmination of years of planning, dreaming and imagining on the part of the District Six Museum Foundation. The Foundation was one of a range of organisations, institutions and cultural projects which had emerged between the 1970s and 1990s to preserve the memory of District Six, the area of inner-city Cape Town at the foot of the mountain, which had seen the forced removal of 60,000 people from the heart of the city.

Streets was due to be open for only a couple of weeks. However, since that day in December 1994 when ex-District Sixer and then Minister of Justice, Dullah Omar, opened the exhibition, the District Six Museum was not able to close its doors. As funds were raised, the Museum grew in complexity, as an institution and in its museum work of collecting, exhibitions and education. While the Streets exhibition became the core of its exhibitionary work for more than four years, a number of other exhibitions were curated alongside it, expressing the Museum's desires to tell more complex stories, to work with different mediums, to address specific audiences and even to go beyond the story of District Six. (Rassool and Prosalandis, 2001: 7)

The Streets exhibition was created from a collection of the old street signs that had been removed from the streets of District Six when it was demolished. A municipal employee had kept the signs and donated them to the new museum. The museum has constantly sought ways to involve the former residents of District Six in the construction of the exhibitions in the museum that link the objects on display to the memories of the community.

One of the most famous examples of this was a huge enlarged plan of District Six which was placed on the floor of the museum. Former residents who visited the museum could document the location of their homes or of shops and other features that they remembered. A 'Memory Cloth' was also provided where visitors could write their names and, if they wished, add details of their former address and their memories of District Six.



A map of District Six around the 1930s.



A view of District Six in the 1960s with Table Mountain in the background

The museum regularly invites former residents of the museum to share stories of their life in District Six. The museum has encouraged some of the former residents to create 'Memory Boxes' which contain items that provide reminders of life in the area. For example, a line with clothes pegs which conjures up a memory of the lines of washing that used to hang across many of the streets.

However Ciraj Rassool, a member of the District Six Museum's Board, argues the process used in creating the exhibitions at District Six was anchored in the community. Rassool is critical of a process where exhibitions are created by external experts without the involvement of the community whose history and culture is being represented in the museum. Rassool challenges the "Curatorial magic of the expert who is parachuted in and who flies out once the contract is completed". He argues that 'The emphasis on expertise, outsider skills, and the mystique of design precluded the possibility of effective participation in the curatorial process by surrounding communities for whose benefit the museum was created' (Rassool, 2007: 310, 320). The argument is that effective mechanisms need to be found to directly involve the community in the processes of selection, collection, design and memory work that help to create an exhibition.

Namibian museums need to reflect on the process of exhibition planning and design as well as the product if we are to succeed in creating sustainable community-based museums. Local communities should not only be proud of their local museum, but also regular visitors to it.



The Gamba Band. One of the popular groups that performed in District Six



By 1979 all the residents had been removed leaving a scar on the landscape



An installation showing the street signs in the museum



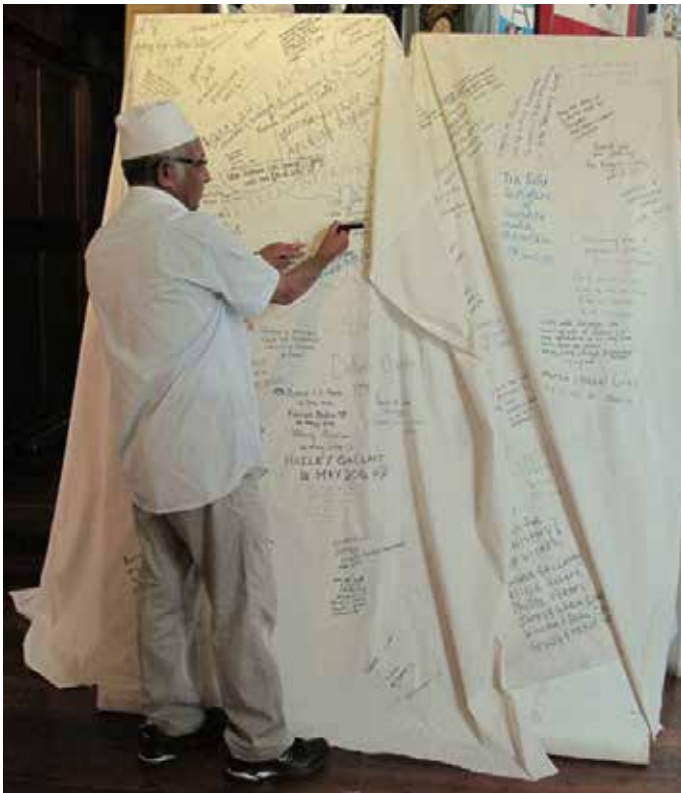
The Gamba Band. One of the popular groups that performed in District Six



Visitors look at the Floor Plan of District Six



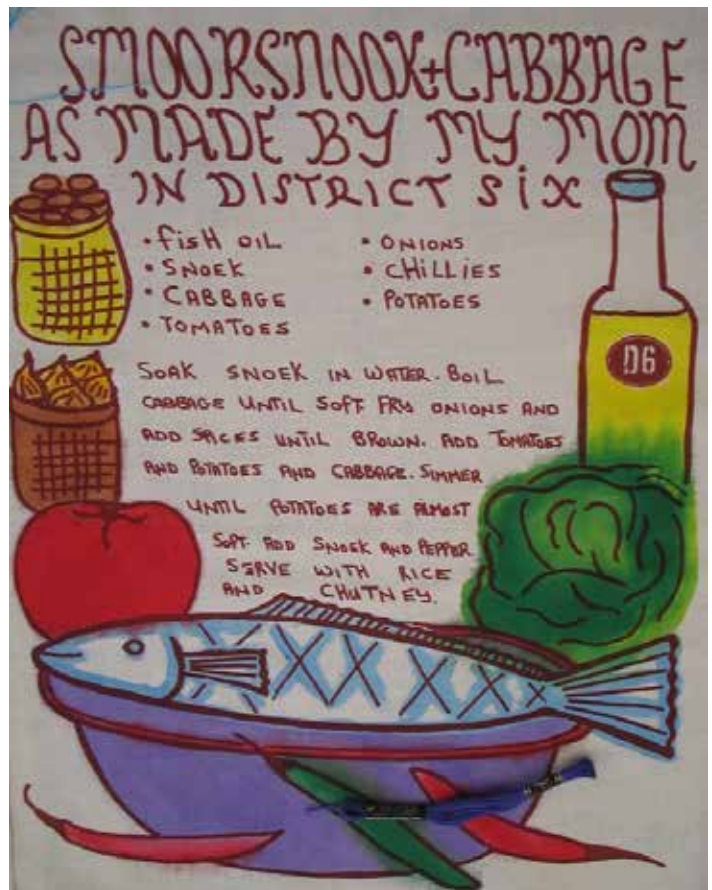
The homes in District Six were gradually destroyed



A memory cloth >



The Digging Deeper exhibition included literature and artwork to evoke the spirit of District Six



Keeping Intangible Cultural Heritage alive through food



<< A poster promoting the Streets Exhibition which launched the museum

Step Three: Conceptual Development

When we are 'brainstorming' about possible topics for a new exhibition we should keep a number of points in mind.

1. Does it fit our 'Mission' ? Every Namibian museum is striving to develop its unique identity. Any new exhibition should be relevant to the core focus of the museum. For example, it would make no sense for a military museum to create a new exhibition about the history of karakul sheep in Namibia.
2. Will it be linked to an event ? Museums may well want to develop an exhibition to support a particular event. For example, World Water Day or a Namibian public holiday such as 'Independence Day'. Sometimes the museum may wish to create an exhibition to mark a local anniversary, such as the centenary of the death of a local hero.
3. Will it be linked to a particular place or object ? Sometimes an exhibition might be designed to give information about a particular site. For example, a museum might want to inform the public about a new archaeological or rock art site that has been discovered in their region. Alternatively, the museum might receive an exciting new donation, such as a collection of ekipa (traditional ivory/shell decorative jewellery for women found in the Ovambo kingdoms). An exhibition can raise awareness of the significance of new acquisitions.
4. How might we include Intangible Cultural Heritage ? Museums have, traditionally, been associated with the authenticity of the artifacts in their collections. However, in Namibia, much of our heritage is passed on orally, such

as the knowledge of plants and animals, oral traditions and stories, craft skills such as carving or hut-building, music and dance. How might we include these aspects of our heritage into our exhibitions ?

5. Is there a donor or funding source ? Whilst the themes for new exhibitions should not be dictated by donor-funding it is important for museums to be aware of funding possibilities. For example, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) has a Fund which museums could apply to for support for an exhibition dealing with local oral tradition, dance, music, indigenous knowledge, craft skills etc. The lack of funding is a major limiting factor that prevents many Namibian museums from developing new exhibitions. Museums should, therefore, be 'streetwise' and seek synergy (actions which can be mutually beneficial). Museums should have a 'wish list' of exhibition topics that they think would be inspiring and instructive and also fit their mandate. It should think, whether there are local or international funders who might have an interest. For example, MAN wanted to do an exhibition about the impact of the First World War on Namibia and identified the British High Commission as an institution that might be able to support this initiative.



Interpretation

Whilst the Exhibition Planning Team will be responsible for the planning and finances of the exhibition, it is important that they realise that their core task will be guiding the process of 'interpretation'. What do we mean by interpretation?

One Definition of 'Interpretation':

"Interpretation is the process of explaining to people the significance of the place or object they have come to see, so that they enjoy their visit more, understand their heritage and environment better, and develop a more caring attitude towards conservation" (Society for the Interpretation of Britain's Heritage, 1992)

In other words, in a museum context, interpretation generally refers to the methods we use to give meaning to the objects and images on display. The main way in which visitors are guided in the way they look at an object or an image is through text that is provided as a caption and, often, as more extensive explanations.

The Six Principles of Effective Interpretation Interpretation should:

1. Make a personal connection with or be relevant to, the intended audience (my emphasis).

"Well-designed interpretive signs and exhibits have clear, simple explanations that bridge the gap between new information and visitors' existing knowledge and experiences"

2. Provide or encourage novel and varied experiences.

"... people tend to mentally 'switch off' in environments that have repetitious signs, exhibits, displays, or information". So exhibitions need to include variety to sustain the interest of the visitor.

3. Be organized with clear, easy-to-follow structures.
- "Some visitors read signs and view exhibits in depth*

(known as studiers), some browse through exhibit areas (known as strollers or browsers), and some skip from exhibit to exhibit, spending only a few seconds at each one (known as streakers or skaters).

So – "Once you have developed an eye-catching title that clearly states your theme, organize text into a hierarchy using headings and sub-headings. Important information and key messages can be presented in a larger font to attract attention." A 'layered approach' provides a 'mental scaffold' which "... allows visitors to quickly decide which signs or sections of signs to read".

4. Be based on a clear theme.

A theme is the 'underlying idea' or 'take-home message' about a topic. "The key to developing appropriate themes is to ask, 'If I were the visitor, what would I really want to know about this object'".

5. Engage visitors in the learning experience and encourage them to take control of their own learning.

"... visitors enjoy activities requiring some form of participation, and ... are more likely to remember activities with more interactive elements"

6. Demonstrate an understanding of, and respect for, the audience.

Audiences are varied in age, nationality and interest levels. The 'Visitors Survey' that has been provided to MAN members can be used to help identify the main types of visitors that come to a museum and interpretation should cater for the different needs of these different groups, but might also be a means to attract demographics who are NOT visiting your museum.

(Moscardo, Gianna; Roy Ballantyne and Karen Hughes, 2007, *Designing Interpretive Signs*, Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, pp. 4-12)

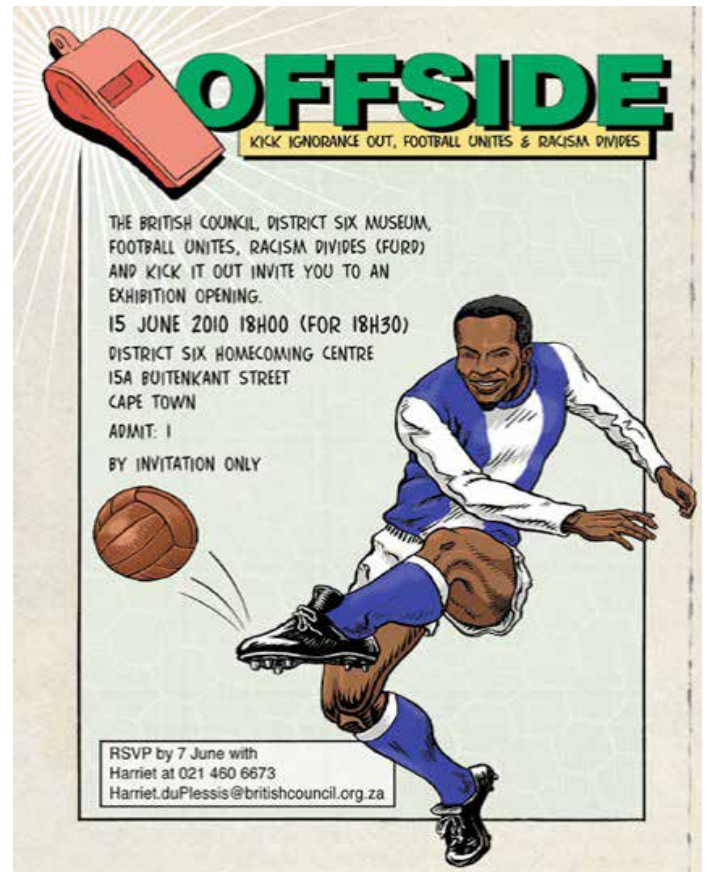
Offside: A Case Study

Offside was an exhibition that was developed by District Six Museum to coincide with South Africa's hosting of the FIFA World Cup in 2010. The exhibition obviously focused on football, but presented a unique perspective on the history of the sport. The exhibition told the story of the experience of African footballers who played internationally and also of the ongoing struggle against racism in football. District Six Museum therefore made a partnership with the 'Football Unites and Racism Divides' project based in Sheffield in the United Kingdom and also linked the exhibition to FIFA's own 'Kick Racism Out of Football' campaign.

The exhibition documented the experiences of Arthur Wharton from Ghana who, it is believed, was the first black professional footballer in the world, when he played for Rotherham and Sheffield United in the UK (1889-1895). The main features of the exhibition included a display with information about the experiences and achievements of some of the famous South African footballers who went to play overseas. One of the features of the exhibition was the reconstruction of a tunnel leading onto the pitch, complete with the sound effects of the crowd. Walking through the tunnel provided visitors with a sense of the sensation felt by a player running onto the pitch at the start of a big game.

The exhibition is noteworthy in design in two major ways. Firstly it was created without any actual artifacts, but relied heavily on artwork to convey the storyline. Secondly, it does not rely exclusively on text to convey the storyline, but also uses the listening posts and a giant comic. After walking through the exhibition visitors were invited to leave comments about their own football memories, their impressions of the exhibition or express their

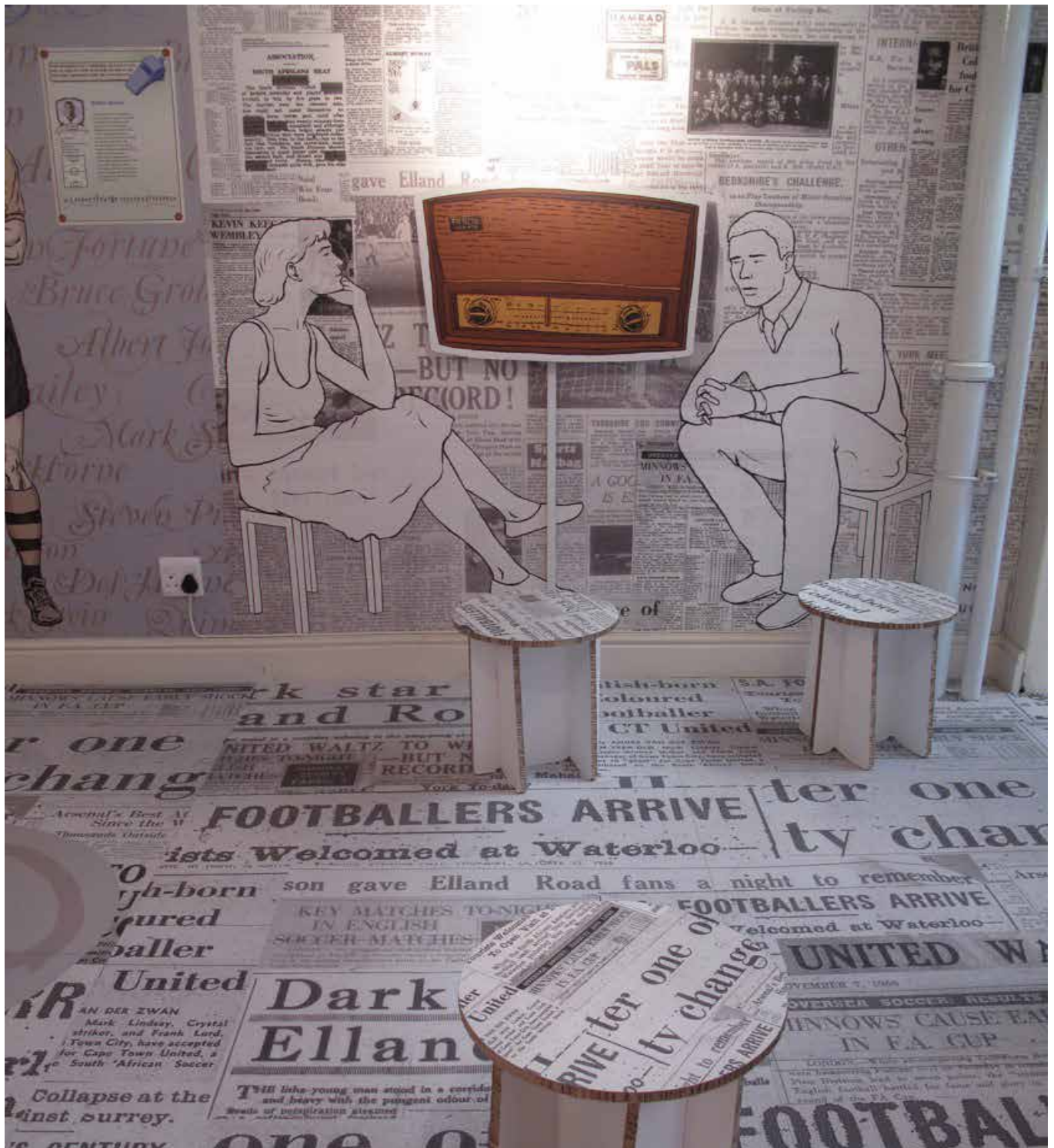
own opposition to racism in football. The Offside exhibition was a good example of the way in which a museum used an international event, but provided local content and addressed a contemporary issue of concern to the community.



Poster advertising the Offside Exhibition



A giant comic with football shaped beanbags



A listening post where people could sit and hear interviews and radio coverage of old games
 << Gary Bailey was one of the South African footballers who featured in the exhibition

Step Four: Thinking About Six Core Questions

When the Exhibition Planning Team meets to develop a new exhibition the task may seem daunting. It is useful if the Team can start by making some initial decisions about the core issues regarding the exhibition before they start focusing on the detail of the exhibition itself. Six core questions should be considered:

Why ? What ? Where ? When ? Who ? How Much ?

1. Why do you want to make this Display (in less than 250 words !)?

Try to explain why you feel there is a need for a new exhibition. What is the main idea behind it ? Does it have a particular educational aims ? It is hard to create a good exhibition unless you begin with a core idea that summarises the goals that you want to achieve.

2. What Type of Display Do you Want?

Is the display going to be permanent or temporary ? Will it contain images or objects – or a mixture of the two ? Will you need special display cases or stands for the objects that you want to display ? Are there any ‘centrepiece’ objects/models that will need to be acquired ?

3. Where will the new display be located?

Describe the space where the exhibition is to be mounted. Make a sketch to indicate the area of display space available. What is the size of the available space ? Make sure that you note any restrictions on the space. Where are the power sockets ? Where do windows cast light ? Are there low ceilings or parts of the space that cannot be used ?

4. When does the exhibition have to be completed by ?

If an exhibition has to be created in a temporary exhibition space the exhibition has to be ready to fill the space when it is available. New permanent exhibitions are often planned to be launched on a particular date or anniversary. Once you have a launch date you can create an initial timeline based on the time required for each stage of the design, research and construction of the new exhibition.

5. Who are the target audience?

Before you start working on an exhibition it is important that you decide who you would like to attract to the exhibition. The answer to this question will have implications for your design. For example, if you are designing an educational display aimed at children who are under the age of 10 then this will have a major impact on the language used and the length of texts. If you are doing a display about a particular cultural group you may want to ensure that your text is inclusive by providing it in the language of that group.

6. How Much is it going to cost

It is important to create a draft budget as soon as possible. Once you have answered the previous questions you should have a clearer idea of the number of days of research, the number of display panels needed to fill the selected space, the number of objects/photographs that you will need to ‘collect’ etc.

We have prepared a work sheet for the core questions that you can photocopy and use to help you think through your own exhibition.

Why ? What ? Where ? When ? Who ? How Much ?

Why do you want to make this Display (in less than 250 words !) ?

What Type of Display Do you Want ?

Where will the new display be located ?

When does the exhibition have to be completed by ? [Can you set key milestones ? Use and adapt this template to suit your needs]

Milestone	Date
Exhibition Brief Completed	
Exhibition Planning Team Assembled	
Exhibition Skeleton Completed	
Detailed Plan and `Shopping List' Completed	
Research and Image/Object Collection Completed	
Texts & Images to Graphic Designer	
Exhibition Marketing materials/invitations to launch circulated	
Mounting of Exhibition Completed	
Exhibition Launch	

Who are the target audience ?

How Much is it going to cost ?

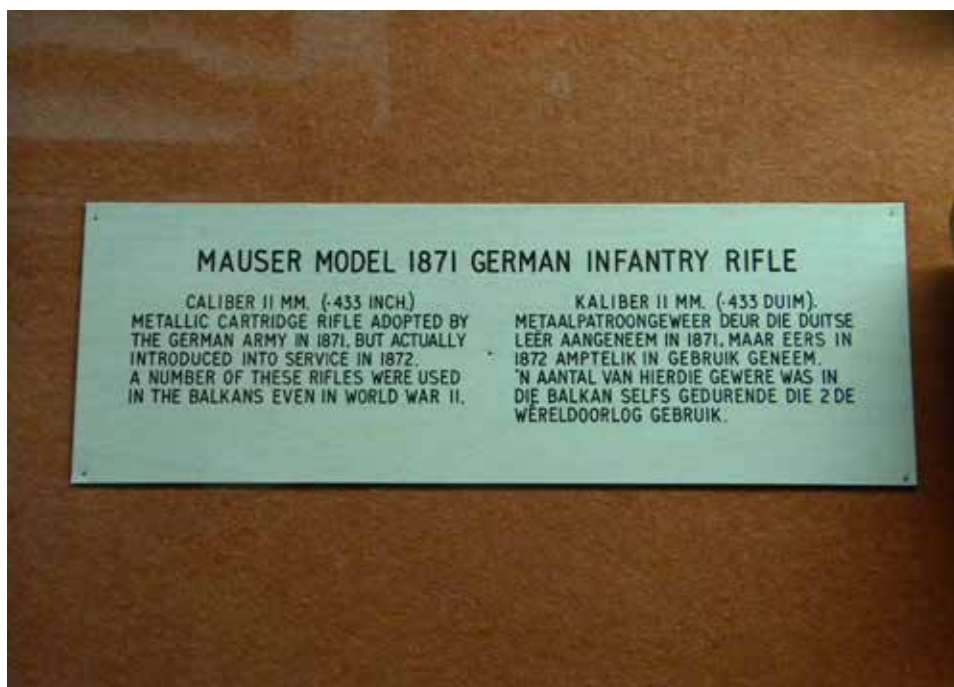
Materials or Service	Units	Cost



Multiculturalism is celebrated at the South African Museum of Cultural History



<< A multilingual caption at Keetmanshoop Museum



<< A multilingual caption from the old Namutoni Museum.



<< Display cases must be designed so that objects fit and can be easily seen by visitors. A cabinet in Keetmanshoop Museum.

Step Five: Sketching the Available Space

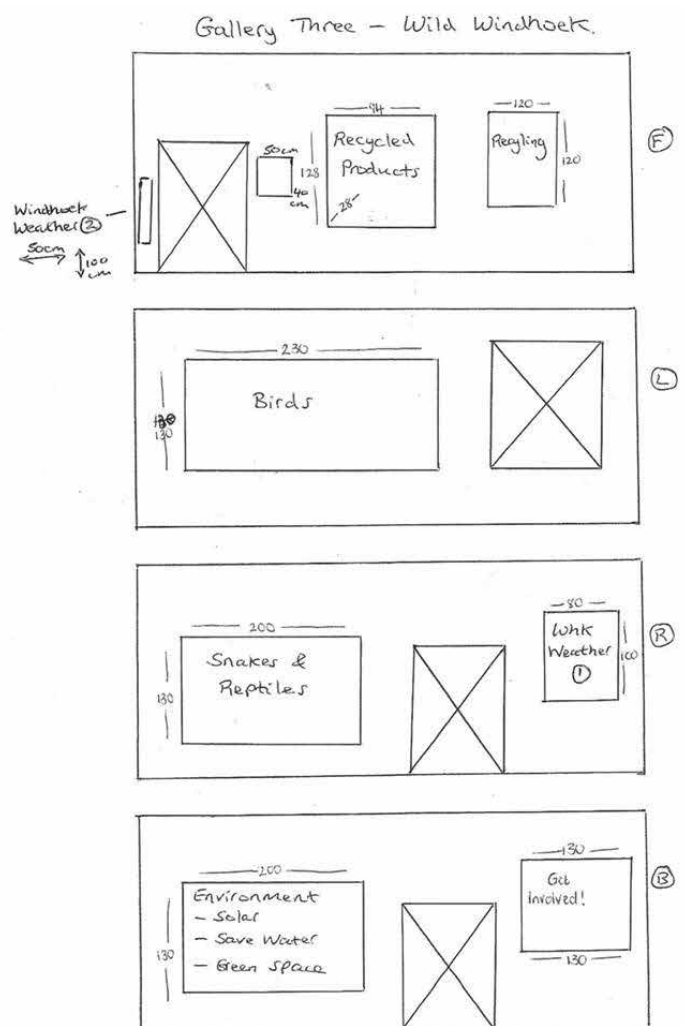
It is crucial when planning to work within the constraints of the available space. A sketch map showing the dimensions of the available room(s) is an important starting point. If the exhibition is purely relying on materials that will be hung on the wall than it is important to obtain a scale drawing of each wall. The scale drawing should show doors and windows and other fixed obstacles (such as radiators or fire places) that might hinder hanging.

If objects are to be displayed in the exhibition than it will also be important to draft a view of the room from above showing the planned location of objects and display cabinets. The most important reason for doing this is to make sure that the exhibition that you are planning will fit the space available. A morning with a tape measure, a rule and a pad of paper is a good investment in the exhibition planning process.

Whilst some of us are challenged by the concept of drawing a plan to scale there are also opportunities to use technology to overcome our artistic shortcomings. The internet opens up lifelong learning for us all. A number of softwares are available that can be used to create simple scale plans of rooms or buildings. One that is available on the internet is Goodle Sketch-up Make which can be downloaded for free (<http://www.sketchup.com/download/all>).

If the Help function is not helpful enough, you can also find a tutorial, Google Sketch-up for Dummies, on You Tube. There are many other useful softwares that can be used for museum exhibition design available on the web. If you find one that is useful why not let MAN members know through our Facebook page ?

The sketch on the next page shows an example of a sketch made of the walls in a room in the planned City of Windhoek museum. The sketch shows all four walls drawn to scale and marked Front, Left, Right and Back. The three doors in and out of the room are marked as rectangles with an X – to show that this is not useable space. The one window is also marked with a box with an X in it. The sketch has been used to identify the size of the interpretative panels that will fit on each of the available walls and these spaces have been linked to a skeleton plan indicating the topics that the museum wishes to cover. It is planned that the gallery will cover environmental topics in the city under the provisional gallery/exhibition title - 'Wild Windhoek'.



Step Six: Drafting a Skeleton Plan and the Lay-out.

The Skeleton Plan is a draft list of the Headings and Sub-headings for an exhibition. It is important to have the sketch of the available space at hand when drafting the skeleton plan. The sketch plan will show the size and shape of the space that will be available for an exhibition. If you are working with an existing building there will be little that you can do to alter the area that you have to work with. If you are creating a mobile exhibition on pull-up banners or rectangular or square banner walls you will be limited, financially, to a number of banners. Either way, you should be able to determine the amount of useable space available. If you are working with an old building it is important to walk through the space.

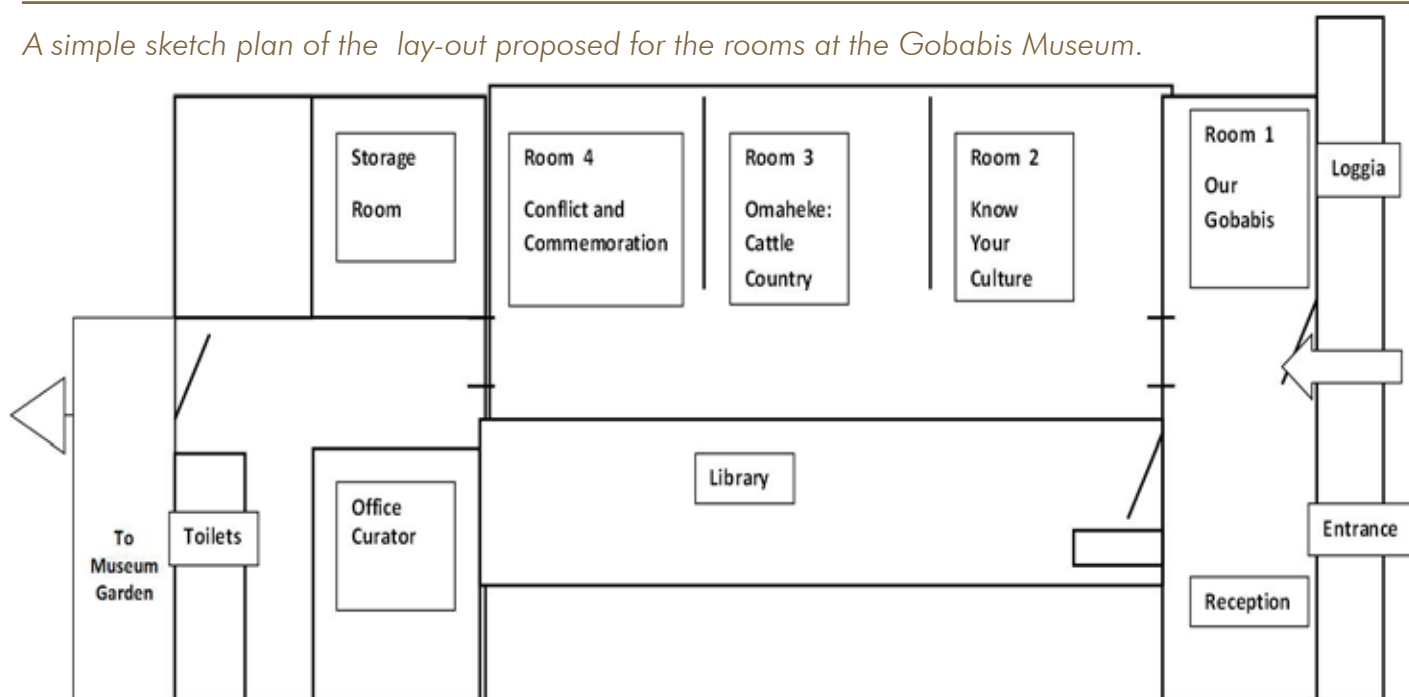
An Example of a Skeleton Plan for Gobabis Museum

When working on a Skeleton Plan with Gobabis we numbered each of the available wall spaces in each room, identified the theme for that space and then drafted a shopping/`things to do' list. Not all rooms are simple rectangles.

Gallery One (`Our Gobabis') had 11 wall spaces that could be considered for display purposes. Eight walls gave sufficient space for display. In this case, consideration was given that the larger wall spaces should be used for the topics with the most material/significance.

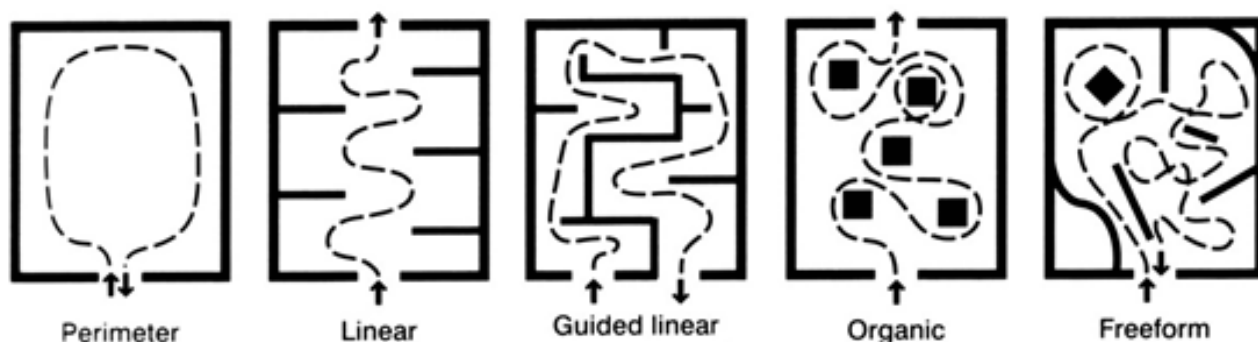
- Wall 1** **Local News**
- Wall 2** **Twinning with Smallerland**
- Wall 3** **Wall space too small for significant display**
- Wall 4** **Built-in Shelves (x 2) & Gobabis Museum Quilt**
- Wall 5** **Wall space too small for large display**
- Wall 6** **Wall space too small for large display**
- Wall 7** **Sponsors Corner**
- Wall 8** **Google Earth Map of Gobabis**
- Wall 9** **Old and New Gobabis**
- Wall 10** **The Meaning of Gobabis**
- Wall 11** **Know your Council**

A simple sketch plan of the lay-out proposed for the rooms at the Gobabis Museum.



The Lay-out and Ergonomics

When drafting an exhibition lay-out it is important to think about 'Ergonomics'. What we mean by this is that the design of the exhibition should aim to make it comfortable for people to view it. For example, the eye level of an average Namibian is 1.6 metres above the ground. If you are hanging a painting on a wall for an exhibition it will be most comfortable for most people to look at if the centre of the painting is at that level. If you have a display case that is at a comfortable height to lean on then you should anticipate that people will lean on it !



The lay-out also plays an important role in determining the way in which people will walk around an exhibition. If the room is empty, people will tend to turn right when they enter. If they encounter another door they tend to walk through it, even if they have not viewed all the displays in the room. In other words the lay-out of an exhibition can be used to direct the 'flow' of visitors so that they encounter information in a particular sequence.

In the example above the gallery space can be broken up in different ways. Some designs encourage the visitor to take a particular route, whilst others give the visitor options. Look at each design and to identify the spaces that the visitor will see first when they enter the room. Remember that an attractive 'Landmark' object or image will draw visitors towards it like a moth to a light.

THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS



<< A strong image such as this UN poster can create a central focal point for an exhibition. (BAB Poster Collection 030)

The ball and chain in Keetmanshoop Museum is a good example of a 'Landmark' object that attracts the attention of visitors>>



Step Seven:

Making a `Shopping List' and Drafting the `Storyline'.

Once the Skeleton Plan has been agreed on there will be a list of sub-headings which have to be populated with objects, images and text. The next step that we take as an Exhibition Planning Team is to try to create a shopping list of things that need to be obtained to provide content to each section of the exhibition. We can call this our `Shopping List' and it will be a dynamic list. Items might be deleted if an object or image cannot be found, whilst new ideas might be added. We can look at the first shopping list that was drawn up for a Gallery for a proposed museum for Gobabis. As the museum was a new initiative it also noted the research and collecting tasks that would be required to complete the exhibition. The theme of the exhibition planned for this room was to be `Our Gobabis'.

Gallery One: Our Gobabis

When working with the Skeleton Plan for Gobabis Museum we numbered each of the available wall spaces in each room, identified the sub-heading for that space and then drafted a shopping/`things to do' list.

Space 1 *Local News*

1. Obtain good quality Photos (and accompanying stories) of significant events in Gobabis e.g. the flood, Heroes day Celebrations, First car accident in Gobabis, the famous Bank Robbery . Appeal to the community. Draft release/loan form for donors.
2. Get board to display photos (1.5m)
3. Send digital copies of images collected from the community to MAN for printing

Wall 2 *Twinning with Smallerland*

1. Information and images to be provided by Smallerland in the Netherlands (Twinned with Gobabis). Perhaps initiate a letter/email exchange between learners in the two towns ?
2. Letter or email to Smallerland requesting information (dimensions of space available must be provided).
3. What do we want to show? Information about Smallerland and the Netherlands
A map showing Holland in the world, a map showing Smallerland in Holland,
4. Can they attend the official opening of the museum?

Wall 3 - Wall space too small for display

Wall 4 *Shelves for Products & Gobabis Museum Quilt*

1. Obtain quotes for 1 shelf (dimensions?) (possible sponsorship or partnership)
2. Letter to Ms J, Obtain quote for quilt. Locally made quilt to display key places and events of Omaheke Region – as `Introduction' to museum (possible sponsorship or partnership)
3. What materials will be displayed and sold at the museum? Research craft products made

in the Omaheke Region ? What souvenir products might be obtained/made for Gobabis and Gobabis Museum.

Wall 5 & Wall 6 - Wall space too small for display

Wall 7 Sponsors Corner

1. Need to obtain logos – enlarge.
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
German Cultural Association
Museums Association of Namibia
National Museum of Namibia

Wall 8 Google Earth Map of Gobabis

1. MAN to assist by obtain large Google earth map of Gobabis

Wall 9 Old and New Gobabis

1. Get shortlisted images scanned at NAN (Cost?). Final selection to be made by Gobabis Museum Advisory Committee.
2. 12 Images to be selected, printed and framed.
3. MAN can assist with the printing

Wall 10 The Meaning of Gobabis

1. What is the meaning of Gobabis? (Entails some Research - MAN)
2. Locate Thomas Baines book for first drawing of Gobabis (MAN)
3. Obtain good quality photos of the Spring today.

Wall 11 Know your Council

1. Obtain photos of all current Council members (municipality to assist with photos)
2. Draft questionnaire for information that is needed for brief biography of councillors
Beyond biography. Ask two questions to add flavour to the sketches ie
What is your fondest memory of Gobabis? What is your vision for Gobabis?

Frames? Can the Municipality provide the frames for the Councillors?

Drafting the Storyline or Script

We use the concept of the 'Storyline' to describe the text that is written for an exhibition, although other writers have used the concept differently. The storyline will provide the thread that ties together an entire exhibition, but (just as a book is divided into chapters) an exhibition will be divided into sections with sub-headings.

We have already seen that visitors have different levels of interest and so it is important to 'layer' the text. Text should, therefore, be of an appropriate size and length. The visitors who are 'skaters' and move very quickly through the exhibition should be able to read the title and sub-titles of displays from the far side of the room. The visitors who are 'browsers' should be able to read an introductory panel to each section easily so that they can decide which sections interest them. Finally the studiers should be able to find sufficient information to satisfy their curiosity.

When writing the Storyline it is important to not only think about content, but also about Font Size and Word count

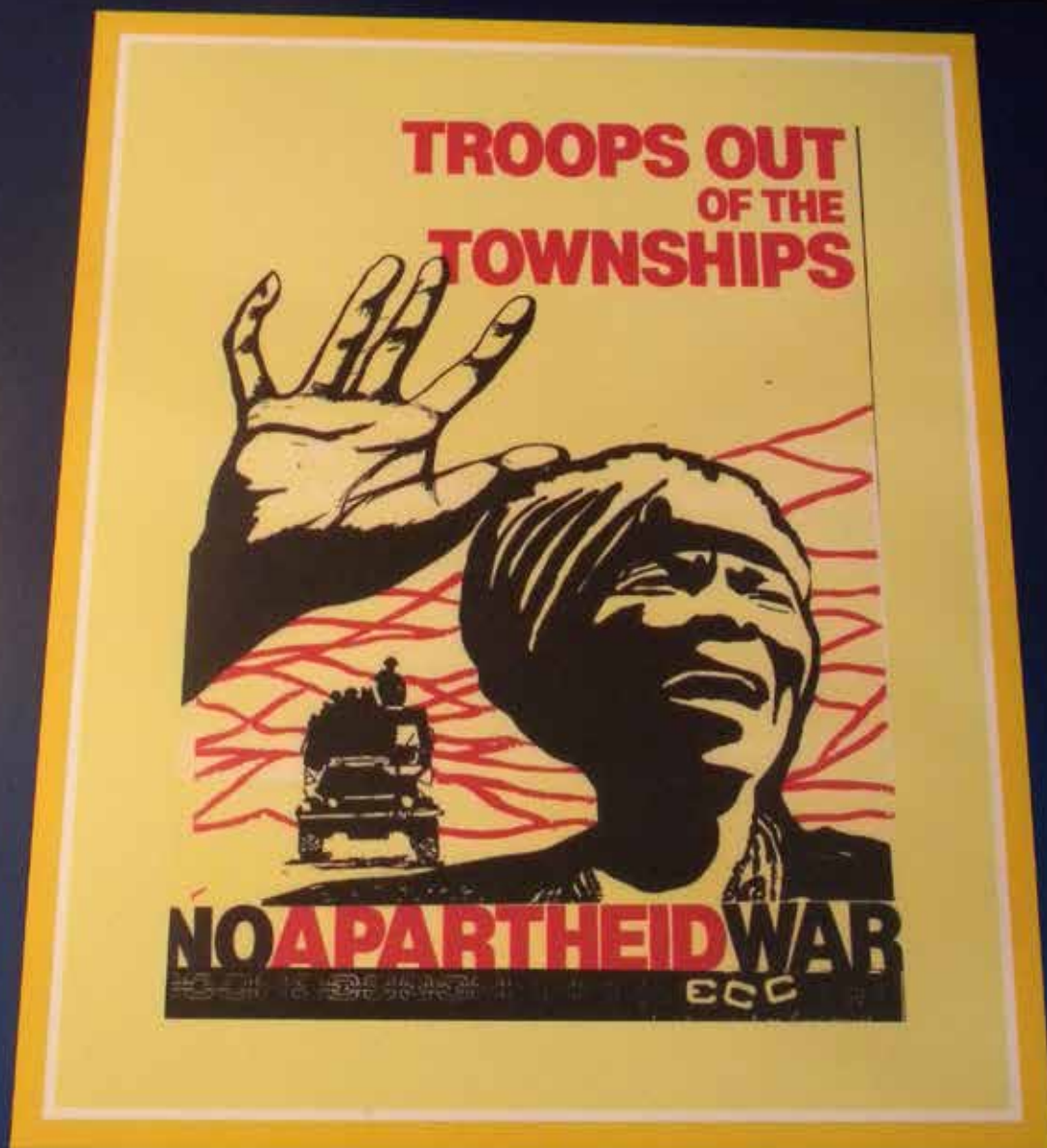
Whilst the title of the exhibition may vary according to the context of the gallery space available it is suggested that there are four main levels of text that are used in a storyline. In an exhibition no rules are rigid, but these guidelines may be useful.

- * Main Title: 3-10 words (usually 5-7 cm)
- * Sub-titles: 10-25 words (over 72 point) – Signposts to reader ! (Level 1)
- * Group text: 50-60 words (30-40 point). Explanation of cluster of images. (Level 2)
- * Detailed Text: 60-80 words (24-32 point) (Level 3)
- * Captions: 10-20 words (18-22 point). Description of individual image or object. (Level 4)

In our experience historians, scientists and anthropologists want to write too many words, whilst graphic designers don't want any !

Have a look at the examples below.

Example of a Title.	'Life and Death in the Old Locations' (7 words)
Example of a Sub-title.	'Mapping the Past: Where were the Old Locations in Windhoek ? (10 words)
Example of a Group Text.	'The growth of towns during the colonial period was marked by increasingly formal forms of racial segregation. Early scattered clusters of housing for black workers were consolidated into two large locations. The locations were demolished in the 1960s after their residents were forcefully removed. The once vibrant settlements only survive today in a few faded maps and photographs.' (58 words)
Example of Detailed Text.	'In 1912 a site was chosen for the 'Main Location' and this remained the area of Windhoek where most of the residents who were classified as 'Non-European' (ie. African) were to live until 1968 when the location was finally

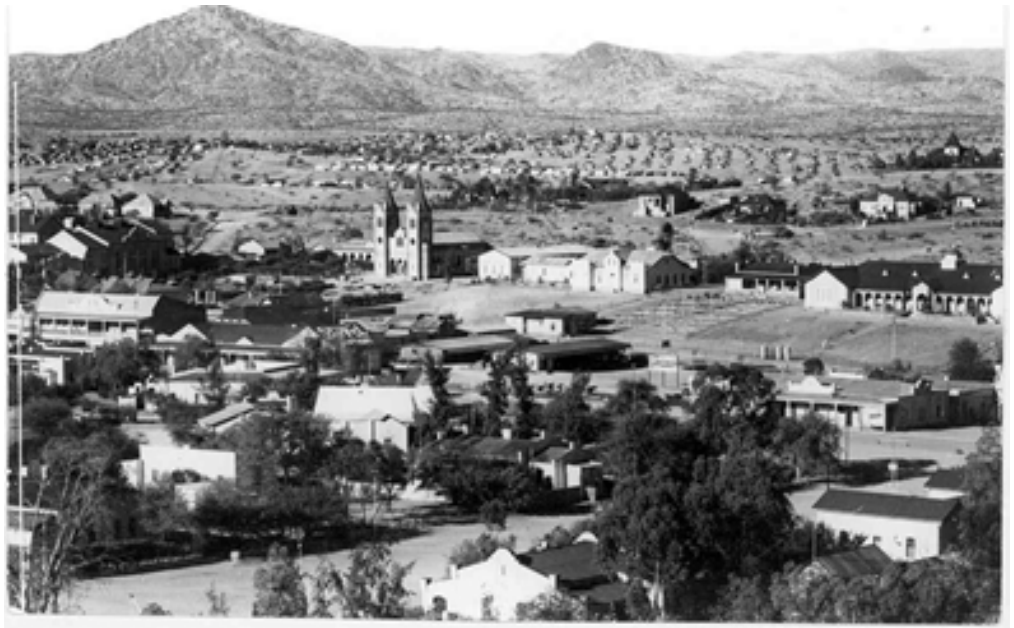


'Troops out of the Townships' End Conscription Campaign Poster

An ECC poster urging the SADF to withdraw its troops from the townships. The SADF widely deployed troops in the townships in 1984. The ECC was a dynamic organisation that produced striking posters, publications and other paraphernalia. It also placed a great emphasis on cultural activities to promote and publicise its stands and very quickly entrenched itself at many South African universities.

A poster at the South African Museum of Military History with a caption and a more detailed text

destroyed and the last occupants moved to the new townships of Khomasdal and Katutura. After this it became remembered, nostalgically, as the 'Old Location' (61 words)



Example of a Caption.

Windhoek Panorama, 1954. Can you work out where the 'Old Location' was in relation to the centre of Windhoek today? (NAN 10013) (20 words)

Sentence Length.

Exhibition script writers argue that readers prefer sentences that are short (some say 15 words are enough). Compare the two sentences below which are both taken from an Interpretative Panel at the South African Museum of Military History. Which one do you think is easier to read.

'Many conscripts felt their military service had been or would be a waste of time' (16 words)



An exhibition in the Red Location Museum in Port Elizabeth featured dozens of portraits of local activists. Each text box had around 180 words.

'Amongst the more common of the moral/'political' concerns that were voiced at the time were: that the SADC was helping to prop up the Government's apartheid system and (especially after 1984, when the troops were widely deployed in the townships was waging a war against the country's own people, that the SADF were fighting an unjust and/or unnecessary war in South West Africa (later Namibia) and Angola, and that South Africa was destabilising South Africa's neighbours' (78 words)

Step Eight: Developing Your Exhibition Design

Few museums in Namibia have the luxury of an in-house graphic designer. However, MAN would like to encourage all the curators in our regional museums to improve their design skills by trying to develop new exhibitions. Design is not just about graphic design, but also the way in which you display the material available for an exhibition. If you do work with an external graphic designer it is still useful to provide them with a sketch giving some direction and indicating if there are particular objects or images that you want to be given prominence.

Top Tips On Exhibition Design

1. Remember that Location is Important. It might sound obvious, but the location and size of a sign to accompany an image, object or view is important. Even in a gallery space there are certain 'Hot Spots' which are directly in the line of sight of a visitor.
2. Think How You Might Add the Third Dimension. Whilst some exhibitions are 'Object Centred', some are based on a simple combination of visual images and text. Find ways to break up the space or, perhaps, models or contextual objects that add depth to your exhibition.
3. Think About Light and Shadow. Some museums have laminated captions that when placed in a glass case reflect light and become difficult to read. The impact of both artificial and natural light sources in a gallery should be anticipated.
4. Grab the Visitors' Attention. Think how you are going to attract people. Very large letters in a title, bright colours or noise can be ways to draw people towards an exhibition.
5. Include Interactive Elements. "Visitors retain 10 percent of what they hear, 30 percent of what they read, 50 percent of what they see and 90 percent of what they do" (Hooper-Greenhill (1994).
6. Highlight Significant Objects. Many Namibian museums have an 'open shelf/storage' style> However, visitors can be

"If you do work with an external graphic designer it is still useful to provide them with a sketch giving some direction and indicating if there are particular objects or images that you want to be given prominence."

“Colour can be an important element in an exhibition. Not only may it make the exhibition more attractive, but it can also compliment the theme or mood of the exhibition. ”



A raised base can give prominence to objects. Ovambo amulets at the Museum of Ethnography in Zurich. (2)



Google Earth image of Swakopmund Cemetary shows the unseen, the mounds of a forgotten graveyard.

encouraged to pay more attention to an object if it is individually mounted or specially lit.

7. Use Questions, Unexpected or Provocative Statements. Moscardo et al (2007) give the example of two possible titles for an Exhibition: ‘Extinct Species’ or ‘Dead as a Dodo’. Which is more interesting as an exhibition title? Likewise consider: ‘Life in Windhoek in 1915’ or ‘Travel back in time to Windhoek in 1915: What would you miss the most ?’
8. Make Colour Work For You. Colour can be an important element in an exhibition. Not only may it make the exhibition more attractive, but it can also compliment the theme or mood of the exhibition. For example, an exhibition about an old shipwreck might use browns (reflecting the old ship timbers) and blue (to evoke a sense of the sea).
9. Strive for ‘Visual Harmony’. The ‘White Space’ within an exhibition space is very important. It creates division between sections of an exhibition. Visual balance is important.
10. Consider the Needs of the Disabled. Most people will experience a partial or full loss of movement or limited use of one of their five senses during their lifetime. You could consider ways to make your exhibition accessible to a wider range of the public. For example, sound narratives can assist those who with poor eyesight.

Producing an Interpretive Panel

An 'Interpretive Panel' is a mixture of words, images and graphics. A good Interpretive Panel tells a STORY about an object or a place. It combines text and visual images, but the most important ingredient is often IMAGINATION. As museum curators and people with a passion for the subject that is being described it is very easy for us to try to cram a lot of information on to each panel. We might produce panels that contain everything anyone might want to know about, for example, an elephant's toenail, but if we have created a wall of words, than most of our visitors will walk past and neither learn nor wonder at all about our elephant's toenail ! So try to remember the following rules:



Interpretive panels with images and text at the Workers Museum in Johannesburg. Does the pattern create a sense of cohesion or repetition

Rule Number One: Keep It Simple

- Short and Sweet. Each text panel should contain only one or two central messages. Scottish Natural Heritage try to use less than 200 words on each panel that they produce. It is also important that the design should be simple, but attractive.

Rule Number Two. Layer Your Text

- Consider Levels of Interest. Whatever we might hope, not everyone is going to read everything. Research has shown that visitors look at a panel in the following order (the figures in brackets are the scale of letters that Scottish Heritage recommend for different purposes – compare these with our earlier recommendations).
- The Headline (use minimum 12mm, 60-72 point text size)
- The Main Picture
- Sub headings (use minimum 8mm, 48-60 point text size)
- Bullet points
- Further illustrations
- The Main Text (use minimum 5mm, 24 point text size)

Rule Number Three: Select Visuals Carefully

- Be Conscious of Copyright. Museums should be cautious about copyright, if you are reproducing an artwork or a photograph it is important to try to obtain written permission if copyright applies to the image.
- Connect with Local Artists. Artwork can be an attractive way to illustrate something that can't be seen, but Namibian museums have been slow to work with local artists. Museums should try to maintain a contact list of local artists (or consult MAN) and consider how artwork might be used in a new exhibition. Remember to budget enough time if you commission an artwork.
- Select Images That Link to the Text. Photographs and images should relate directly to the text, but

should have their own captions and references.

- Convert Statistics into Graphics. Few visitors will study long tables of figures. For example, the alarming increase in poaching of Rhinos and Elephants in Namibia could be shown immediately by converting the figures into a Bar Chart covering a ten year period.

Rule Number Four: Write Accessible Text.

- Keep sentences and paragraphs short. If you are using a lot of commas in a sentence than it is, usually, too long to be a good display text !
- Avoid technical language. A good guideline is to assume that the text will be read by a 10-12 year old. If a word is uncommon than think of ways of explaining it simply.
- Try to Connect with the Visitor. At one level you can use inclusive language ie. 'You can see the signature if you look closely at the bottom left of the painting'. You can also use familiar comparisons. For example, 'The meteorite is the same weight as 40 male Africans standing on top of each other'. Humour can help, a visitor is enjoying their visit if a caption or text makes them smile !
- Check and Edit the Text. It is always good to get other people to read and comment on your text. They can tell you if it is clear and interesting, but might also spot mistakes with your spelling or grammar that might slip through otherwise.
- Ask Questions. Asking questions encourages the reader to think ! For example, rather than telling people what Baobab fruit can be used for, you might ask them and then tell them that later in the exhibition there is a display case that shows some of popular uses and products.

Rule Number Five: Map It!

- Ask Yourself Whether a Map is Necessary. Visitors understand some topics better if they can see the geographical context and the distance between places that are mentioned in the exhibition. You do not always need a map. So think carefully about whether you need one, and if so, what it needs to show.
- Create or Find Simple and Clear Maps. Depending on the topic of an exhibition your options might be to look for a relevant map at the National Archives of Namibia or the Survey-General's Office – or to create a new one. Maps can be very cluttered and may not give a clear message, so you might enlarge a section that features the area being referred to in your exhibition or design a simplified map which only shows the information that the visitor requires.

Readability: How to Do a Cloze Test

One way to test whether your text captions are easy to understand is to do a Close Test. Simply take a sample of your text and delete every fifth word. Give it to a number of people who did not work on it and ask them to fill in the missing words. Try the example below, a caption for a photograph showing a historical famine in northern Namibia:

A number of serious _____ are remembered as having _____ place in northern Namibia _____ the past. The Finnish _____ feared that the increase _____ migrant labour, after the _____ of diamonds in 1908, _____ a contributing factor. The _____ of late 1911 is _____ as having been particularly _____ and having swept away _____ of victims.

For this exercise we will 'mark' the first ten gaps. If you have the correct word allocate one mark – you can then multiple your total mark out of ten to obtain a percentage. You should then collect all the marks from everyone who took part in your sample and obtain an average percentage which will give you an indication of the readability of your text. The results can be translated as follows:

Over 60%	People will probably have a high understanding of the text.
40%-60%	People will understand the text if provided with some instructional support (such as illustrations).
Less than 40%	People are likely to be frustrated and the text may not be effective in communicating its message to your visitors.

Sometimes peoples' suggestions for alternative words might even give you an idea of alternative wording that will make your text easier to read!

The words that were used in the original caption can be found at the end of the Handbook.

Three Quotations to Make You Think about Images

Illustrations

"... research in education and psychology ... has found that people find it easier to understand and remember text when it is accompanied by illustrations"

The Power of the Image

"The best use of illustrations is to show visitors what they can't actually see (eg. inside a camera, a beaver's den, or a rocket ship) or to give them an idea of what a particular place or structure may have looked like in previous times".

Making Connections

"Too often illustrations are used simply to fill up space or to make signs 'pretty'. This rarely works well, as unnecessary illustrations tend to make signs look cluttered and can distract visitors from the main interpretive message . . . illustrations are there to support the theme and messages, not the other way around"

(Moscardo et al, 2007: 77-79)

The selection of the right images for an exhibition is a very important part of the process. The most powerful photographs in an exhibition should be made larger to attract the visitors' attention and to make visual points that will reinforce the storyline. Photographs can be effectively used to show us details that might not be seen with the naked eye or places that are too removed in time or space for visitors to see for themselves.



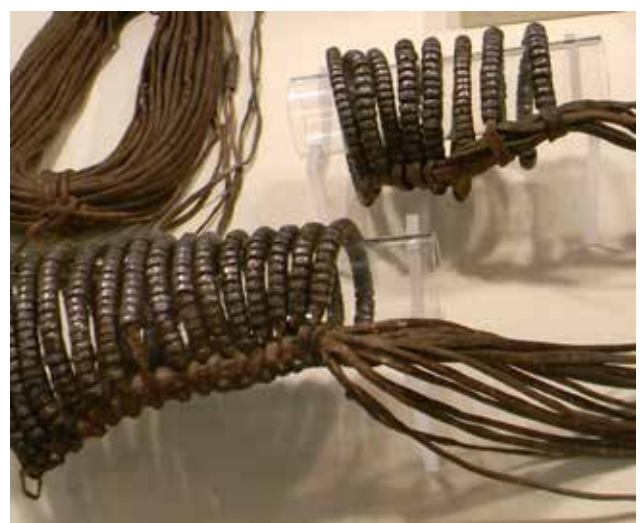
Colour can be an important ingredient in an exhibition. A celebration of craftswomen at the South African Museum of Cultural History.



Do photographs need to be arranged symmetrically to give a sense of balance or visual harmony in an exhibition



Do these photographs from a display in Grootfontein Museum need captions



Purpose built shapes can help display objects clearly.

Step Nine: Mounting the Exhibition

Plan in Advance for Technical Challenges.

After all the planning it is important that you have people with the technical skills to mount the exhibition – so that it does not fall down during the launch ! Give yourself enough time to decide on a hanging system that is suitable for the venue. A mobile exhibition will normally be printed already on banners so that it is quick and easy to put up and take down. A permanent exhibition may be more challenging. MAN worked with Onandjokwe Medical Museum on their exhibitions. However, the museum is in an old building with original walls and we did not want to damage these. Our solution was to hang wooden beams from the roof rafters and to hang our photographs from screws in these beams.

Think of Public Programming.

The mounting of the exhibition can (and should) be linked to a number of other museum activities that will attract visitors to the museum and increase income. A new exhibition might be accompanied by souvenir products, such as t-shirts or a catalogue. The museum might offer guided tours or special educational activities for school groups who visit the exhibition. The museum might also host talks or other activities that relate to their new exhibition. A new exhibition is, in short, a great new opportunity for a museum to market itself.

Good Housekeeping.

An exhibition may look great on `Opening Night`, but imagine if you come back in two months time. The objects have a layer of dust, two photographs have fallen down, a wooden drum has holes left by an insect and one of the baskets in your exhibition is missing. If this happens it means you have failed to adequately maintain your new exhibition. Museums should have a regular cleaning rota. However, with new exhibitions it is also important to check that any objects on display are adequately protected from theft or damage.

“An exhibition may look great on `Opening Night`, but imagine if you come back in two months time.”

“The curator responsible for a temporary exhibition should always produce a short report at the end of its run”

Step Ten: Back-End Evaluation and Exhibition Report

We can all learn from experience. However, it is important to involve our visitors in the evaluation of an exhibition. MAN has designed an Exhibition Review Form which can be used during and after an exhibition has been mounted to identify possible areas for improvement.

It might be possible to work with local school learners or students to help you evaluate your exhibition using the form. If the exhibition is a temporary exhibition it is always useful to have a ‘Comments Book’ which can also provide you with feedback, compliments and criticism from visitors.

The curator responsible for a temporary exhibition should always produce a short report at the end of its run. The purpose of the report is not just to complete a bureaucratic exercise. It is important for the curator to identify any concerns with the exhibition and recommend any changes that might be made.

MAN believes that temporary exhibitions should not be a ‘once off’ event in Namibian museums. Exhibitions should be made in mobile formats that can circulate within the country and, perhaps, even beyond our borders.

Exhibition Review Form

Museum Name:

Exhibition (or Gallery) Name:

Museum Curator:

Review Date:

Note: The Exhibition Review Form is a tool that has been developed by the Museums Association of Namibia to assist curators to review their existing exhibitions and to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each exhibition. The tool is intended to assist with exhibition development and to help MAN and individual curators write exhibition reviews. Individual museums will decide whether they wish to try to introduce any of the changes that might be suggested in a review. The review should be accompanied by a sketch plan of the lay-out of the exhibition and photographs.

1. EXHIBITION OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 Was/is there a clear statement of why the exhibition is being planned and the target audience that the exhibition is aimed at ? If so, please attach a copy of the Exhibition Brief.

- 1.2 What school subjects/topics might the exhibition be relevant to ?

2. EXHIBITION PLANNING

- 2.1 Who is/was involved in the planning and design of the exhibition ?

- 2.2 Is there a sketch and/or 'skeleton plan' of the lay-out of the exhibition ? If not, draft a plan and attach it to the review form.

3. ACCESSIBILITY

- 3.1 Look at the words used in the exhibition. Do you think that the language is accessible to a Grade 10 student ? Are there any examples of words or sentences that you think are too difficult for the average reader?

- 3.2 What language(s) are texts and captions written in ? Is there any provision for information to be shared with other language groups (eg. Handout sheets, curator's ability to guide in other languages, audio-visual equipment etc.)

- 3.3 What measures are in place to make the exhibition accessible to differently abled visitors ?
eg. Large texts for the visually impaired, wheelchair access etc.

- 3.4 Is the content of the exhibition of interest to all sections of the community ? If not, do you have any suggestions about additional material that might be added to make the exhibition more interesting to a wider audience ?

4. EXHIBITION STRUCTURE / LAYOUT AND CONTENT

- 4.1 Is there a clear structure to the exhibition ? For example, are visitors guided to view the exhibition in a particular sequential narrative ? Are there clear sub-headings that divide the exhibition into sections ?

- 4.2 Do you think that the exhibition makes a good visual impression from a distance ? Comment on the use of colour and the spacing between texts, images and objects.

- 4.3 Does the exhibition use different font sizes for headings, introductory texts, narrative texts and captions ? Can you photograph examples ?

5. ARTIFACTS (OBJECTS) & VISUAL IMAGES

- 5.1 What measures are in place to protect the exhibition from the following threats – a) Theft; b) Vandalism; c) Fire; d) Water damage; e) Insect damage f) Light ? Are there any improvements that you would recommend to the existing measures ?

5.2 Are the artifacts on display mounted with sufficient light and space and an appropriate pedestal/backdrop to be easily viewed? Try to take photographs of objects that you think are particularly well displayed or poorly displayed.

5.3 Do the objects and images on display look clean and well maintained ? Is there any noticeable damage to displays that could be repaired ?

5.4 Do the images and artifacts on display fit into the storyline of the exhibition ? Give a couple of examples of objects that fit (or do not fit) the storyline.

5.5 What are the most prominent/striking images and objects in the exhibition ie. Photographs that have been printed in the largest size, objects that are most noticeable when you walk into the exhibition ?

6. Visitor Interaction

6.1 Are there any sections of the exhibition that encourage interaction with visitors ? If so, describe them. If not, are there any ways in which visitors might be encouraged to participate in the exhibition ?

6.2 Does the museum/exhibition have a comments book that encourages visitors to make comments and suggestions about the exhibition ?

Additional Comments:

[illegible]

Further Recommended Reading

All the readings below can either be accessed via the internet or consulted at the Resource Centre of the Museums Association of Namibia. References to any other publications used during the module will be cited when necessary. Please remember that it is essential to make an appointment if you wish to read publications in MAN's Resource Centre as we only have limited space and can accommodate no more than two people at a time.

Alexander, Edward, P (2008, 2nd Edition) 'To Exhibit', Ch. 10 in *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, Lanham, Toronto and Plymouth: Altamira Press, pp235-256.

- The chapter provides a useful short introduction to the different stages of exhibition planning and design and the challenges involved. If you are new to exhibition design that this is a good place to start to obtain a clear overview of the process.

Ambrose, Timothy and Crispin Paine (2012, 3rd Edition) *Museum Basics*, London and New York: Routledge.

- The standard manual for museums containing 107 units. Units 28-42 cover all aspects of collections interpretation and presentation

Ballantyne, Roy, Karen Hughes and Gianna Moscardo (2002) 'Interpretive Signs: Principles and Practices', 2002. Web site - <http://www.talm.uq.edu.au/signage/>

- This web site is produced by the authors of 'Designing Interpretive Signs' (see below). You can not only use it to access information that is contained in their publication, but also to

Karp, Ivan, Christine Kreamer and Steven Lavine (eds), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* Smithsonian Institution Press: Washington DC. , 1991.

- The first of three volumes of essays that explore the relationship between museums and communities in relation to a wide range of issues, including the development of collaborative exhibitions.

Lord, Barry and Gail Lord (2002) *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions* Walnut Creek: Rowman Altamira.

- One of a set of manuals from Lords. Lord Cultural Resources provided the keynote speaker at a MAN AGM in 2004 (when they presented a design proposal for the King Nehale Cultural Centre). The manual is better suited for larger museums and art galleries, but gives good advice on the development of large new exhibitions and the setting up of an exhibition planning and design team.

Moscardo, Gianna; Roy Ballantyne, and Karen Hughes (2007) *Designing Interpretive Signs: Principles in Practice*. Fulcrum Publishing; Golden, CO.

- The book is one of the best texts currently available providing practical information about getting and maintaining visitors attention, selecting illustrations, writing 'text that visitors understand', designing 'family exhibitions' (with provision for children) and evaluating exhibitions.

Rassool, Ciraj and Sandra Prosalandis (2001) Recalling Community in Cape Town: Creating and Curating District Six Museum. Districts Six Museum, Cape Town.

- A well illustrated publication containing a range of short articles by many of those directly involved in the creation of District Six museum. The articles provide insight into the methodology behind the creation of the museum as well as detailed accounts of the way in which members of the community were involved in the creation of exhibitions.

Rassool, Ciraj `Community Museums, Memory Politics and Social Transformation in South Africa: Histories, Possibilities and Limits' in Ivan Karp, Corrinne Kratz, Lynn Szwaja and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto,

Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations, Duke University Press: Durham & London, 2007.

- The chapter gives a good introduction to the process that established District Six museum. The development of the museum is placed within a broader overview of the philosophy behind the notion of the community museum and its potential role in engaging with contemporary issues of concern to local communities.

Roberts, Kate. Getting Visitors' Attention: Writing Exhibit Labels. Minnesota Historical Society Tech Talk: Web Site -http://www.mnhs.org/about/publications/docs_pdfs/ExhibitLabels.pdf

- One of a set of brief, but useful, guides on a wide range of subjects that has been produced by Minnesota Historical Society. The advantage of these guides is that they are aimed at small museums and heritage sites which are comparable to scale of most regional heritage institutions in Namibia. The 2-4 page briefings provide a useful and reader friendly introduction to a range of topics for those who do not have much time to read !

Serrell, Beverly Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach. AltaMira Press; Walnut Creek, CA, 1996

- Almost twenty years old, but still an extremely useful guide to the science (or art !) of writing labels and texts for exhibitions. It contains a great deal of useful advice about reading levels, bilingual labels, the optimum number of words to use and the ways to link words and images productively.

Smithsonian Accessibility Program, Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design,

An extremely practical set of guidelines to help exhibition teams ensure that their exhibitions are accessible to as wide a range of visitors as possible. The guidelines cover issues of mobility, lighting, text size and location and the use of audiovisuals to assist those who might not have good eyesight or hearing. It also addresses ways to cater for visitors who experience difficulty in reading English.

Useful Contact Details

The Museums Association of Namibia can provide Exhibition Planning Workshops or advice and assistance with exhibition design.

Museums Association of Namibia

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112 Robert Mugabe Avenue
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Phone: +264-61-302230
Fax: +264-61-302236
Email: museums@iway.na
Web: www.museums.com.na

Specialised information about art works, historical documents and photographs, historical artifacts, specimens of flora and fauna or heritage sites can be obtained from the following institutions:

Arts Association Heritage Trust

106 Robert Mugabe Avenue
Tel: +264-61-302261
Email: aaht@iway.na

National Archives of Namibia

Private Bag 13349
Robert Mugabe Avenue
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Tel: +264-61-293-5211
Fax: +264-293-5217
Email: nlukileni@gmail.com

National Art Gallery of Namibia

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National Botanical Research Institute

Private Bag 13184
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Email: silker@nbri.org.na

National Heritage Council

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nwglibrary@iway.na

Some Judges' Comments (SCAMX 2009)

1. **Artwork.**

We were struck by the beautiful linocut of Omukwaniilwa lipumbu ya Shilongo. However, viewers were required to make the link with a photograph of the king elsewhere in the display.

Imagination. Often the ingredient that makes a display special. Here we are sure that the hat with the feather is not that of the king, but it is evocative as many people remember this hat.

2. **Artwork & Imagination.**

Many times in history there was no photographer to document an event. Here a learner has recreated a scene from the arrest of lipumbu with a drawing.

3. **Sections.**

Sometimes a number of images can be grouped together to show that they form a distinct section. For example here a selection of photographs of the memorial to Ushona Shiimi have been put together.

4. **Imagination.**

The paper maché sculptures added a different dimension to the display.

5. **Design.**

Here the History Club made a highly attractive design using the unusual combination of purple and green. The use of banners and protest style writing to give the title of the exhibition are evocative and give a 'feel' to the display.

6. **Interactive.**

An exhibition is often more interesting if visitors can interact with it. Perhaps they can be asked their opinions, take part in a simple quiz or do something. In this example visitors could taste the fruit of the Baobab Tree that featured in the display.

7. **Size of Text.**

An exhibition is not a book, although we historians tend to want to include a lot of text. Here the captions are brief and easy to read from a distance.

8. **Title.**

The use of colour and large letters here makes the heading and sub-heading stand out in the display.

9. **Presentation.**

Here the artifacts are arranged beautifully. Artifacts should also be displayed attractively. However is there enough text to explain the significance of each object?

10. Sub-headings.

We know that not all schools have access to the same technology to print text, but here is an example of a display where good handwriting can be clearly read from a distance.

11. Research.

In this display a beautiful clear map was drawn based on original research and showing the location of places of relevance in Omaheke Region.

12. Size of Text.

In this display the text was easily readable from a distance.

13. Sub-headings.

The sub-heading is clear and there is not too much text to read. The learners also indicate when the photograph was taken.

14. Interactive.

Romanus Kamunoko School provided a Visitor's Book which is another way of interacting with visitors, especially when the exhibition is put up locally. A photograph album showing the learners on their research trip also helps give a sense of the research done by the members of the History Club.

15. Use of Space.

The display makes a pattern linking text, image and objects about Nama traditional medicine.

16. Colour.

The aim of using colour is to make an exhibition look attractive, although you must be careful that bright colours do not draw attention away from the images and text.

Readability: Revealing the Hidden Text.

Ondjala yeKomba ('The Famine that Swept')

A number of serious famines are remembered as having taken place in northern Namibia in the past. The Finnish missionaries feared that the increase in migrant labour, after the discovery of diamonds in 1908, was a contributing factor. The famine of late 1911 is remembered as having been particularly deadly and having swept away thousands of victims.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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