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# Creating Exhibits for Small History Museums on a Limited Budget

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# Creating Exhibits for Small History Museums on a Limited Budget

Keywords: Exhibition Development, History Museum, Small Museum, Small Budget,  
Museum Studies

by  
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Capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Museum Studies

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University of San Francisco

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You have made my experience in San Francisco truly memorable.

## **Abstract**

In this capstone project, I study the process of developing an exhibition for small history museums. Working with the Treasure Island Museum, a small history museum in San Francisco, I explore the different options for developing exhibitions for small history museums, with small budgets, in contrast to the more well funded practice that larger museums have the opportunity to produce. For museums, exhibits are the media used to communicate with visitors, and it is important to install new ones regularly. Being limited by budget and staff constraints this can be a challenge, but I argue that the benefits from the exhibits are greater than the disadvantages from devoting resources to the project. The paper examines best practices for exhibition development and project management and offers a solution to bringing costs down so that smaller, financially challenged museums can create well-constructed exhibitions on a regular basis.

Key words for this paper are: Exhibition Development, Curation, History Museum, Small Museum, Small Budget, Museum Studies

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## Introduction

According to the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), about 57 percent of their members are museums with 0-3 Staff members. Another 21 percent have 4-10 employees (AAM, 11/25/2016). According to this standard, this means that the majority of the museums in America are small. Having limited staff members and resources becomes a challenge when attempting to achieve the best practices in creating an exhibition. This struggle leads to staff having to prioritize how to allocate their resources.

Exhibition development can be one of the projects that fall under the low-priority category. Exhibit projects can be extremely costly and time-consuming, and it is understandable how some museums choose not to prioritize them. In this paper, I will examine the best practices for exhibition design and development, and discuss the different components in order to get a better understanding of what goes into these projects. I will analyze the different components, and determine what exactly it is that makes projects like this expensive, and possible ways to reduce the costs. Based on this information, I can adapt the best practices framework to fit smaller museums and show that exhibitions can be created on any budget.

Further, I propose a project that will aid in facilitating changing exhibition programs for small museums, which are adaptable to the museum's size, meaning the number of employees, budget, and space. This project addresses the museum's responsibility to be open to the public and allow them access to the collection. As public areas, the museums should be available to everyone, and they should strive to be relevant. New exhibits will regularly contribute to bringing visitors back to the museums and continuing growth of the institution.

The project will have three overall goals to fulfill:

1. To create an exhibition for a small museum on a limited budget.
2. To tell the story of the music and performing arts at the Treasure Island Museum.
3. To create a guide on the development of exhibitions for museums on small budgets, that can be used for direction when developing the next exhibition project.

The first part of the paper will address the museum's best practices. Focusing on literature from projects where large budgets were available provides an insight to what the best case scenario for exhibitions would be. With this in mind, I can break down the components and determine what is necessary for an exhibition to succeed. Crucial components like time management, a good idea, and good content, are essential elements for any exhibition work, and it does not depend on the size of the budget. I will also discuss why it is important for museums to have exhibitions and the responsibility it has to share the collection with the community and fulfilling its mission.

The second part of the paper is a proposal for a museum-based project addressing this issue. I am proposing an exhibition for the Treasure Island Museum that will use the principals from the literature review to plan a suitable project for the museum's size and budget. Treasure Island Museum is a small history museum located on Treasure Island in the San Francisco Bay. The Island was created to hold the World's Fair in 1939, and the museum opened inside of the original main building on the island in 2007, devoted to telling the story of the island. The museum's mission is "to engage visitors and island residents with Treasure Island's rich cultural legacy, the natural wealth of Yerba Buena Island, and the islands' future sustainable development, to explore innovative solutions

to the challenges of living in harmony with our environment” (Treasure Island Museum, 2016).

This section addresses the history and purpose of the Treasure Island Museum, and why this project is important for the institution. It is followed by an action plan, describing every step of the exhibition process, from start to end, and the milestones along the way.

At the end of the paper, you will find the appendices, including additional information about the project stakeholders, an example of a SWOT analysis, and the project schedule.



# **Chapter 1: Literature Review**

## **Creating Exhibits for Small History Museums on a Limited Budget**

### **Introduction**

History museums provide a place for entertainment as well as for people to engage with the past and further their education. The exhibits are the tools the museum uses to accomplish those goals. Headlines are drawing the people inside, and the content is making them stay and interact (Bedford 2014). From personal experience, I know that museums are fun places for learning, and I love spending time there. However, no matter how much I love an exhibit, I will eventually grow tired of looking at the same objects repeatedly. I like to experience different exhibitions and what they have to offer. If the museum is not changing their exhibitions frequently enough, I will stop coming back, and they have lost an interested guest. The museum is relying on the public's interest to succeed, and in order to bring them back for future visits, the museums need to give them a reason to want to return. Making museum guests come back is a major step for further development of the institution, and regularly changing exhibits is one way of accomplishing this. The problem with this is that exhibitions can be costly to develop, and not all museums have the luxury of being able to afford expensive exhibition designers to create impressive new exhibits on a regular basis.

In this paper, I will first examine the literature written on best practices for exhibitions. Following that, I will break down the different components in order to better understand what makes a great exhibition. I want to determine the key points of what makes an exhibition successful. Using this information, I can adapt the scale of the

project to fit a smaller institution, and prove that it is possible to have a changing exhibition program on a limited budget.

Starting off, I wanted to look at a few museums' missions. The mission serves as guideline for what the museum is and should be doing. Reviewing this will give me a better understanding of the museum's responsibility of engaging the public, and how exhibitions are a great way of accomplishing this.

**Mission 1:** "The Treasure Island Museum engages visitors and island residents with Treasure Island's rich cultural legacy, the natural wealth of Yerba Buena Island, and the islands' forthcoming sustainable development, to explore innovative solutions to the challenges of living in harmony with our environment".

(Treasure Island Museum, 2016)

**Mission 2:** "The mission of the Chevy Chase Historical Society is to collect, record, interpret and share materials relating to the history of Chevy Chase, Maryland, one of America's first streetcar suburbs. The organization provides resources for historical research and sponsors a variety of programs and activities to foster knowledge and appreciation of the community's history".

(Chevy Chase Historical Society, 2016)

**Mission 3:** "The mission of the Bay Area Electric Railroad Association is to preserve the regional heritage of electric railway transportation as a living resource for the benefit of present and future generations."

(Bay Area Electric Railroad Association, 2016)

**Mission 4:** "The Missouri Historical Society serves as the confluence of historical perspectives and contemporary issues to inspire and engage our audiences".

(Missouri Historical Society, 2016)

The reason why I chose these three museums is because they are historical museums similar to the Treasure Island Museum. They vary in size and budgets, which makes it interesting to look at what they are trying to achieve. Looking at all four missions, we can see that each of the institutions have similar goals related to preserving cultural heritage for the future, and methods of "sharing" and "engaging" their collections with the public. Based on their missions, the public programs should be

a high priority and something they should spend resources on improving. Fulfilling a mission is more than just engaging with the public. However, because the museums have different sizes and budgets, they also have different grounds for achieving similar goals. Creating an exhibition can be the solution to satisfying these missions, but this project will be easier to realize if you have more resources you can devote to the project.

If you wish to utilize exhibitions as a way of successfully fulfilling your mission and build a stronger relationship with the community it is important to give this project priority. This is equally important for all four museums, and independent on the institutions size and budget.

### **Creating an Exhibition**

There are many sources available that discuss exhibition development in the museums. Bogle (2013) and Matassa (2014) wrote two very different books on the subject; however, together they compliment each other well. Although both authors are writing about the same things, Matassa's book presents as an easy to use guide, while Bogle's book is a more technical manual, providing two different ways to approach an exhibition project.

Chicone & Kissel (2014), Walhimer (2015) and Bedford (2014) have also written about creating exhibitions. Subsequently, I will look into some of their work, and discuss the processes in order to understand where the major costs are, and how to adjust them for smaller projects.

It is essential to understand the framework of the project when you are creating an exhibit. Firstly, understanding this can prevent you from making unnecessary mistakes that would otherwise cost time and money that you don't have. Secondly, by knowing

where to begin and how to conduct the project, you can more efficiently use the resources available, manage your project better, and create a better product in the end.

### **“The Big Idea:” What is the Exhibition About?**

Before starting the exhibition planning it is important to have an idea of what the theme of the exhibition will be (Walhimer, 2015)(Matassa, 2014). This idea will be the red thread through the exhibit, so it is important to have a well-formed thought that will tie everything together. The big idea will also help sort out the content for the exhibit. If there are objects you want to use but are unsure of, ask yourself if they are in line with the idea. If they are, you can use them.

Once you have your idea, you need to start planning the practical aspects. This list of tips and mistakes taken from Matassa’s book on organizing exhibitions neatly summarizes the information found in the literature used for this project.

<b>Top 10 tips for a successful exhibition</b>	<b>Top 10 mistakes</b>
1. Good planning and organization	1. Unclear purpose
2. Adequate budget	2. No single person in charge/ no clear lines of responsibility
3. Documentation	3. No budget/ over budget
4. Teamwork	4. Poor communication
5. Good communication and negotiation	5. Leaving everything to last minute
6. Keeping to the schedule	6. Ignoring the small details
7. Clear areas of responsibility	7. Verbal agreements /keeping everything in your head
8. Emergency response	8. No contingency plan
9. Good maintenance	9. Display becomes tired/ shabby/uncared for
10. Legacy	10. Losing interest once the exhibition opens, 'now on to the next one'.

Figure 1. "The successful exhibition" (Matassa, 2014 p.xxiii)

Bogle presses the importance of planning out the different phases and sticking to the schedule. Every aspect of the project has to be planned out, and it is important to know who is in charge of getting the tasks done (Bogle, 2013). I agree with Bogle on the importance of schedules and deadlines. This planning allows you to know if your project is on track, ahead of schedule, or falling behind. It also makes it easier to know when something is not going the way it should, or if your project needs to be adjusted.

Matassa and Bogle do not directly disagree on anything, but they are presenting the materials in two very different ways, which makes it helpful to read both books. Matassa's book is giving you the outline of the exhibition development process, and a

very easy manual to read, but it is not providing too much in depth information. This is, however, something you will find in Bogle's book, but in a more theoretical layout.

## **The Team**

Before deciding on a team for the exhibition project, there are multiple points to consider. How large is your budget? How many people can you afford to have on your team? What type of qualities and skills do you need for your team? Will you have outside consultants? Do you have the resources in-house, or do you need to outsource some of the tasks? Best practice suggests that your team would consist of a project manager, exhibition developer, content specialist, exhibition designer, registrars, educators, evaluator, exhibition fabricator, IT staff, media designers, visitor services managers, and marketing specialists (Chicone & Kissel, 2014). However, having such a huge team is expensive, and not all museums can afford it. Playing off one another's knowledge, experience, and background can be very helpful, and save you a lot of money. What's most important is that you have a project manager or someone to direct the project, so that there is a clear leadership (Chicone & Kissel, 2014; Matassa, 2014; Melton, 2008). As for the rest of the team, it is not necessary to fill all the roles listed above individually. Depending on the project's size and available staff, instead of one person only responsible for the content of the exhibition, they could have multiple roles such as content specialist, registrar and exhibition fabricator. By making people wear multiple hats, you can safely cut more of the expensive contract positions.

The problem with cutting corners is that the product will not have the same high quality as if you hired professionals to do the same job. Substituting people with years of experience with staff members that have little to no experience will definitely impact the results, but it does not mean that the exhibition won't be good enough. There are also

more important reasons for creating new exhibits than wanting the results to be exceptional. The museum's responsibility to its mission is the biggest and most important argument for developing new exhibitions. The mission is the purpose of the museum, and many museums have statements related to education, sharing of objects and/or engaging with the community. If you succeed in create an exhibit that is supporting the mission and engaging visitors this will be good enough.

## **Project Management**

As Matassa pointed out (see figure 1, "the successful exhibition"), good planning and organization are important for a successful project (Matassa, 2014). A solid plan for managing the project will make your end result stronger, and therefore I wish to look at literature discussing the management of projects.

Bogle writes about the importance of good time management, and she accomplishes this by dividing the project into different phases (Bogle, 2013). Doing this, she creates a clear list of tasks that needs completion, and in what sequence, those tasks get completed throughout the project. Every phase and every task coincide with a deadline, and by using this system, you can easily keep track of how your project is doing in terms of time and milestones.

To compare the museum practice for managing an exhibition planning process, I wanted to look at project planning in a more general context. Melton (2008) wrote about how a well-managed project can deliver a good product, but her approach to accomplishing the project is different from the phases addressed by Bogle. Melton is using a project delivery plan, which tells you *what* your project is aiming to do, *what if* (potential scenarios that could impact the project), *who* is involved in the project, and *how* will you achieve your goals (Melton, 2008). She is also using a Project Delivery Plan

(PDP) to identify potential problems that can occur during the project. The PDP system is an evaluation where you notice (1) symptoms, that will lead you to (2) root causes, and then (3) solutions (Melton, 2008). Ultimately it does not necessarily matter what system you use for managing your project, as long as you know how to implement it. The concept is that you know your project and your timeline well enough to identify when something is wrong so that you can deal with the problem sooner rather than later. This concept is equally important if you are working for a small museum or a large for-profit.

The PDP system is allowing the user to identify potential problems, but the challenge is that not all problems can be predicted. It is great to have a system for handling problems that *could* occur, but unforeseen problems that *do* occur need to be handled as well. Successfully preventing every problem from happening is the optimal way of conducting a project, but it is also unrealistic. Not every problem can be predicted, and it is important that the team is prepared to deal with them as they happen, as well as working to prevent them.

One thing I noticed from reading Melton's book and comparing it to project management of museum exhibitions, is the distinctive focus on a mission, limited resources, and budget in a for-profit project. These are crucial considerations for the museum to recognize, and it would be a huge issue if the project dimensions were to change. Melton's book showed less concern over potential changes as their for-profit business model would be able to cover extra expenses and justify their reasons for going over budget. Melton also presents the benefits of using a SWOT analysis to analyze the project and institution before starting a project (Melton 2008). A SWOT analysis is a tool to help identify the institution's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Identifying the strengths of your project can help achieve better utilization of the resources at hand. At the same time, you become aware of the institution's weaknesses,



and ways you can use that to your advantage (Melton 2008). The analysis can be filled out in a clearly organized form, and make potential problems more transparent. It can also be used to figure out how to turn a weakness into an asset by making the user truly analyze the weaknesses and threats, instead of just focusing on the strengths. For an example of the SWOT analysis form, see Appendix C.

Martín-Cáceres and Cuenca-López (2016) also discuss the use of SWOT analysis, and they use it to strategize the communication of cultural heritage in the museums. They chose a historical museum as an example and divided different aspects of the museum (heritage, staff, utilities, community, relationships with the community, funds, educational programs, etc.) into categories that could be individually analyzed in a SWOT matrix. The results they got from these SWOT analyses were further used to conduct an assessment of the entire institution, and we can see the result in figure 2 (Martín-Cáceres and Cuenca-López, 2016)

<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient budget for educational activities</li> <li>• Little staff involvement</li> <li>• Insufficient management training</li> <li>• Facilities not up to scratch</li> <li>• Antiquated and decontextualized teaching resources and materials</li> <li>• Academic purpose</li> <li>• Exceptional patrimony given precedence over social and identity heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personalization of interest in educational programs</li> <li>• Administrative changes in Museum hierarchy</li> <li>• Budget cuts in current scenario</li> <li>• Non-inclusion of school curricula may end up reducing them to mere anecdote</li> </ul>
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General consideration of need to address formal and non-formal education</li> <li>• Staff interest and involvement, because the educational framework is on the front line of museum needs</li> <li>• Fostering visitor participation in workshops</li> <li>• Imagination in collaboration to come up with interesting and motivating activities with scant budget</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population and visitors need and call for educational and cultural activities</li> <li>• Important heritage kept, although not exhibited, which could become a user attraction</li> <li>• Locality with quantitatively and qualitatively relevant heritage</li> </ul>

Figure 2. "Table 10. Outcomes highlighted by SWOT system" (Martín-Cáceres and Cuenca-López, 2016 p.312)

Based on the analysis in Figure 2, we can see that the museum's weakness is mostly related to insufficient funds, and many of the items listed under this category can be addressed if the museum had more financial support. They do however have many strengths listed that could potentially help grow an institution that is better equipped to address the weaknesses. The SWOT analysis is also listing opportunities for the museum as well as potential threats that might impact the museum's status.

Conducting this analysis is making visible to the museum the issues they need to address, and the opportunities they might not be exploiting sufficiently. It is also easier to prioritize where to spend money when you can see where the biggest problem is, and

you can create a strategy for improvement. For the museum that Martín-Cáceres and Cuenca-López are studying, the educational program might be a thing the museum would like to improve.

### **Exhibition Labels and Label Content**

Writing the perfect exhibition label can be difficult, but when you do it right, it will benefit both the visitors and the overall exhibition. The different labels (see figure 3) have notable roles to play in the exhibit, but they also work together to give the exhibit a clean look and well-organized information. As we see in figure 3, Title Labels are recommended to have a length of 1-7 words. Its purpose is to grab the visitor's attention and provide information about what the exhibition is about in a short and engaging way. To provide a more informative text about the exhibits "big idea" you need Introductory Labels. These can be longer and more descriptive, but should not exceed 300 words.

Beverly Serrell wrote a book on exhibit labels in 2015, in which she breaks down the different types of labels, what function they serve, and how people interacts with them (Serrell, 2015). Her research provided very detailed results that transformed label writing from an interpretive practice to a science. Serrell found that people's attention span is limited, and in order to allow the visitor to get the most out of the labels, there are specific lengths and label types that are preferred over others.

<b>Main types of interpretive labels</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Number of words</b>
Exhibition titles	To attract attention To inform the theme To identify	1-7
Introductory labels	To introduce the big idea To orientate visitors to the space	20-300
Group Labels	To interpret a specific group of objects To introduce subtheme	20-150
Caption labels	To interpret individual objects, models, phenomena	20-150

Figure 3, Labels (Serrell, 2015, p.33)

Judy Rand's article, "Less is more. More is less.", supports Serrell's research, and points out that the visitor will not necessarily spend more time in front of a label if there is more text to read. It is more likely that they will skip ahead without reading it. To prove her point, she uses the USS Constitution Museum near Boston where they tracked and timed visitor behavior through two exhibits. In the first exhibit, where they had long text panels (more than 4,500 words) the families spent an average of 7 minutes per exhibit. Whereas, in the second exhibition, there was only a total of 1,500 words on activity cards and labels combined, and the families spent nearly 22 minutes (Rand, 2016).

The information provided by this experiment suggests that long and highly descriptive labels can overwhelm the visitor and make them skip the text altogether. When the labels are shorter, they will take the time to read the information, spend more time in the exhibition, and generally have a better experience.

Katherine Liss Saffle (2013) agrees with Serrell on the length of exhibition labels. Nevertheless, she is making a point out of using technology as a supporting tool with which the visitors can voluntarily access more information than what exhibition labels provide (Liss Saffle, 2013). The museum should work to provide a satisfactory experience to every visitor, and the preferred lengths of labels are highly subjective. For accommodating the visitors that want lengthy labels with additional information technology can be a great tool. The downside to this is that technology is an expensive option, and not all museums can afford to provide this extra service.

All three authors have spent considerable time analyzing the ideal label and trying to come up with a permanent guide make it easier to write good labels in the museum. However, this proves to be more challenging, when every exhibition is different, every object requires a different amount of context, and every visitor prefers different amounts of information. In the end it is challenging to write the perfect labels, but the research provided will help to break down the components and get the process started. This will make the writer better equipped to make decisions on the length, content and media that should be incorporated in the exhibition.

## **Promoting**

Promoting your exhibition is necessary in order to tell the public what you are doing. There are two methods to advertise your museum that I would like to examine. One option is to launch a marketing campaign (Walhimer, 2015); another would be to promote your museum on social media (Allen-Greil, 2013). In "Museums 101" Walhimer presents a guide to creating a successful marketing campaign for museums. He lists important points like targeting a primary audience, a description of why visitors should come to the museum, a "look" that is supporting the description, and a platform to

launch the campaign, such as social media, print, radio, and TV. In addition to this, he also writes about the usefulness of attaining samples, audience testing, revision and feedback (2015). These are all critical components of a successful campaign, but going through all of these platforms will cost you a lot of time and money.

Promoting your museum is crucial for its success. It's a tool for the museum to remind the potential visitors that is there, why they should visit, and what is new at the institution. If no one knows what your museum is doing, you can question the reason for doing anything at all. What is the point of having exhibitions and being a museum if nobody is aware of it?

One alternative is to launch a campaign with which you make your museum visible over multiple social media platforms and gain the attention there. This method allows one to reach out to potential visitors and promote exhibits without spending lots of money. Having social media accounts for your museum does not cost anything, and it's a way to reach out to a more diverse audience. In addition to this, you create a dialogue where people can communicate with the museum. Allen-Greil wrote about this in her article "Learning and Sharing Expertise with Social Media"(2013). She presents the three C's: *Consume*, *Communicate*, and *Collaborate*; by this, she states that the user can access information about the museum whenever they want to, communicate by asking questions to both the staff and other visitors through posts, and collaborate by connecting with the users and staff to form mutually beneficial relationships.

Social Media is allowing users to engage with the museum and strengthen the connection between them, which creates a huge benefit for the museum. Earlier I talked about the importance of the public's interest in order to have a successful exhibit. Social media is contributing to a relationship where relevant parties can take notice in what your institution is doing. This is fundamental for all types of museums, but for a small

museum with limited funds, this curiosity can make a significant difference. If the community is showing an interest, you have a better argument for spending resources, like time and money, on projects that will benefit the public, like exhibitions. These antecedents can also be a potential source of income for the museum.

### **Critique of the Finished Exhibition**

Markopoulos (2012) is committed to the evolution of exhibition design and writes about the advantages of reviewing previous exhibitions to develop new methods and practices. It is crucial to review your product both during the process and upon its completion. By analyzing your work, or having other people do it, you can understand and learn from your mistakes and successes. Looking at other people's exhibitions can be equally beneficial. Markopoulos, supported by Matassa (2014), Walhimer (2015), and Bogle (2013) all agree that exhibitions should be evaluated to improve future exhibits. By examining the completed product and the process of creating the work, museums can identify what strategies were successful to their exhibits' development. Reviews of exhibitions show where did you make mistakes, and what can be done better next time. All of these are important things to take with you into your next exhibition project, and can greatly improve the exhibition process and overall methods. For small museums the critique of the exhibition process is crucial. When the museum does not have the resources to hire outside experts, it essential that they learn from their own work. This is the best way for the staff members to insure that the product will improve, and that they are expanding their knowledge about exhibition projects.

## Cases

To support the argument that it is possible to create engaging products without the traditional resources, I would like to look at a few case studies:

### *Skolnick Case*

This was a three-day master class taught by Lee H. Skolnick in 2006 on exhibition design. Skolnick divided the class into teams and gave them a location, a theme, and a selection of tools that they all had at their disposal. The point of the assignment was to create something that was different from the conventional interpretation of content and explore the potential of doing something innovative (Skolnick, 2014). At the end of the class, they were left with an impressive presentation of the works, showing that you don't need to be an exhibition designer to curate a successful exhibition.

This master class is a small-scale project, but it does demonstrate a major key point. By allowing people to work together and think creatively they are able to produce outstanding and innovated results. The students had a limited time frame and few resources, but they were still capable of creating engaging products at the end. This supports the argument that small-scale exhibition projects can be successful. The team looked at the tools they had available, brainstormed and worked of each other's ideas and experiences, and came up with strong ideas for exhibits. If you know in the beginning of the project that you only have a few resources to work with and a short timeframe, you don't have time to worry about all the things you wished you had available. The finished product is the only thing that matters.

### *Historic St. Mary's City Case*

On the same subject, but on a larger scale, Historic St. Mary's City, a state-owned and operated outdoor living history museum (HSMC), managed to build a timber frame pavilion by using their already existing staff and local resources (Faden, 2012). Due to



their budget cut, they could not afford to hire an exhibition designer for their new project. What the HSMC did have was a broad and varied staff pool they could utilize. The museum could also utilize the near by surroundings; local resources like Amish mills in the neighborhood would provide cheaper timber for the project, and the museums relationship with the community gave them the opportunity to raise funds for their project. Combining these resources they were able to lower the project expenses and pulled off a successful project.

I chose this case study because of how it demonstrates what kind of benefits the museum's relationship with the community can provide. Community relations offer crucial resources to having prosperous museum. Without the public's interest in the museum, they would never be able to get timber below market value or raise money for the new pavilion, proving that this connection with the neighborhood can be central for a museum's success. Without these connections the entire budget could potentially have been shifted, and made it impossible for the museum to finish the exhibit.

#### *Southern Oregon Historical Society Case*

The third case I wish to look at is how the Southern Oregon Historical Society (SOHS) rebuilt itself after losing all its government funding. In order to avoid bankruptcy the museum had to reinvent itself to make up for the loss of financing. In 2009, they were operating with a \$35,000 deficit, tourist season was ending, and the museum did not have any income. The board suspended public operations for six months and fired a majority of the staff, but still, the museum was losing money. SOHS had to reestablish itself, and they accomplished this by using the "three R's in museum management, relevance, relationships, resources" (Weiss, 2012). While the museum viewed the financial situation as its biggest problem, like Weiss pointed out, there were more

intrinsic issues at hand that would have to be addressed before the museum could start growing again.

“Lack of funding was the symptom of the underlying problem, which was a lack of widespread community engagement and support. In order to win back the community, it was essential to involve the community in the process of rebuilding the historical society and overcome the tendency to take the society for granted.”

(Weiss, 2012)

The SOHS reached out to their community and recruited volunteers. They also reached out to other historical societies in the area and built relationships with them. By doing so, they gained resources that would help their museum regain their financial and social stability. They also found ways of using their facilities as a resource, such as renting it out for events. This allowed them to gain another income, and at the same time strengthened their relationship with the community (Weiss, 2012).

The case with SOHS proves how important it is to have a partnership with the community. Relevance, relationships, and resources are not only crucial for a museum that were to lose all funding, but can also strengthen a museum’s existing position in the first place. The three R’s are as necessary for exhibition development as they are for managing the museum.

Looking at these three cases you can see that the nearby surroundings, community and individual interests, are potential resources for your museum, and it is therefore important to nurture this relationship. While small museums can face many challenges, especially when it comes to money and funding, good relationships and partnerships within the community can help the institution expand and generate resources. Also, the community is often the most important audience for museums, and the general target

for exhibition visitors. These types of relationships will generate interest for your museum and will result in a healthy and successful museum. The reason why I chose these museums for this case study is that they demonstrate how the museums successfully can take advantage of the connections with the community. Treasure Island Museum should explore the opportunity of strengthening similar connections and how this can contribute to building a stronger museum. Looking at the examples, we can see that there are multiple potential benefits by having strong relations with the community. The SOHS might not have found themselves in such a bad situation if they had made more of an effort to be relevant to the community before they had to reinvent themselves to avoid bankruptcy. HSMC did exploit its connections and were able to realize a project they originally did not have the resources to do. Treasure Island Museum can learn from this and should work to improve their relationship with the community.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The biggest gap in the literature appears to be the lack of published articles written about history museums and creating strong exhibits on small budgets. I have been looking for relevant articles, but it has proven to be difficult. A gap in literature does not mean you cannot approach this challenge, but that you need to approach it with creativity and draw from your own experience and resources to get it done. By having workshops with your colleagues you can create a pool of knowledge that will help solve the problem, and you can develop your own standards, making it easier to do the same type of project in the future (Lacher-Feldman, 2014). Nonetheless, the lack of articles available on the field suggests that there is a demand for further research on this topic.

By expanding the research to science and natural history museums, I was able to find a few more sources, but the literature pool is still very limited.

## **Conclusion**

Even though the literature on exhibition development does explicitly not say how much it costs to create an exhibit in line with best practices, it is clear that the entire process can end up being very costly for museums. However, there are ways to cut costs if you are willing to think creatively and your team is prepared to help out wherever it is needed. For example, you can use already existing staff instead of hiring outside professionals or talk with the community and see if you can benefit from connections that can provide discounted materials for your projects. One can use the literature that is out there, such as the books and articles from this literature review, to develop a customized framework to your budget, size, and need. This shows it is possible to create a successful exhibition program for smaller museums. You might not end up with a revolutionary, groundbreaking, exhibition, but by following the standards and using the resources you have available, the results might be more than satisfactory.

In conclusion, you can save a lot of money on your exhibition project by taking advantage of the staff and other connections you have available. The literature that is available on project management is detailed enough to turn any person into an adequate project manager. Your nearby community is also a useful resource that can help you succeed. Volunteers and interns are excellent for getting tasks done without having a high cost.

Promoting your museum and what you are doing does not need to be an expensive aspect of the project. By using social media, you are presenting your museum in a more visible way, and promoting it without paying for more than general staff expenses.

The bottom line is that as long as you are creative and willing to use whatever resources you have at hand, it is possible to create an exhibition program for small museums and build a healthier institution.

## **Chapter 2: Proposal of a Museum Solution**

### **Identification of the Problem**

Exhibitions are the most common way for museums to interact and communicate with their visitors and the surrounding community. The problem is that many museums operate with a small budget, and exhibition development can be very expensive. Operating a museum is costly, and it is very easy to prioritize tasks other than exhibitions. Spending money on the museum management, and other back-of-house expense can be smart, but it does mean the exhibition space will stay the same until it receives priority down the line. As discussed in the literature review, this is not in line with many museum missions. Museums have a responsibility to provide engaging content for visitors, and to keep the exhibits interesting they should regularly be changed. New exhibits can contribute to bringing visitors back regularly, which again will help the museum build a stronger relationship with their community, and strengthen the museum's reputation and community status.

According to my research, exhibition development can in many cases be very costly. However, by being smart with the money, it is possible to cut costs and make new exhibits cheaper. Operating on a small budget is therefore not an excuse to neglect the exhibition programs. If the determination, time and commitment are present, it is possible to develop a program for regularly changing exhibitions.

### **A brief background of Treasure Island Museum**

The Treasure Island Museum (TIM) was established at Treasure Island more than 40 years ago. The Island was built to be the location for the Golden Gate International Exposition in 1939, which was later extended to 1940. After the fair closed, the island

was intended to be the new international airport, but due to the outbreak of the Second World War, the island was instead left to the U.S. Navy and turned into a naval base in 1941. The Navy used the island as a base until 1997. In 2007, following a decade of negotiations, the U.S. Navy sold Treasure Island back to the City of San Francisco, and the Museum opened inside of the original Building 1, one of the few remaining buildings from the World's Fair. During the Navy's time at the Island, there was a Navy Museum in Building 1. Treasure Island took over parts of this collection, and consider the Navy Museum a part of TIM's history. Today the museum is a small history museum dedicated to conveying the history of the island, and the building in which the museum is housed. They are using a small room in the entrance hall as their exhibition gallery, and their one paid employee mainly manages the collection. They also have a board consisting of 11 members (Treasure Island Museum, 2016).

### Mission Statement

“The Treasure Island Museum engages visitors and island residents with Treasure Island's rich cultural legacy, the natural wealth of Yerba Buena Island, and the islands' forthcoming sustainable development, to explore innovative solutions to the challenges of living in harmony with our environment” (Treasure Island Museum, 2016).

### **Reason for Proposing a New Exhibit**

The current exhibition, “Wish You Were Here! Postcards from GGIE”, at Treasure Island Museum opened on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The exhibit contains postcards and memorabilia from the Golden Gate International Exposition. Since the exhibition opened, the museum has not devoted any resources to maintaining or updating the exhibit space. The exhibition has been open for a long time, and while the board wishes

to change it out, they feel the process would be costly and demand precious resources, like staff and time.

At the same time, the board is getting ready for a fundraising project that will take up a lot of the museum's resources for the following years. Treasure Island is being redeveloped, and the museum is preparing for the new environment and a new phase that will allow the institution to grow into a bigger museum. As a consequence of this focus, the board is not prepared to spend many resources on exhibition development. Still, they do wish to signal the continuing management of the current museum, and they see the benefits of having new exhibitions in their gallery.

This project will further the values and goals of the museum field. While I was researching the topic for the previous literature review, I was struggling to find relevant sources describing exhibition projects in small museums. This research leads me to believe that not many small museums are documenting, or at least publishing papers, on exhibition projects with limited funds and resources. This makes it difficult for other similar institutions to learn from each other's experiences. This project will attempt to fill some of that gap in the literature, by combining best practices and experiences, document, and evaluate the current exhibition project, to develop a guide that can be used specifically in small history museums. By providing this guide, we are proving that it is possible to create exhibits on small budgets, and can inspire similar institutions to update their exhibit practice, instead of neglecting it. This will also contribute to making the project easier to continue for future practice so that it can easily be adapted to the museum's growth.



## **Project Proposal**

I propose a four-month long project to renew the current exhibition space at the Treasure Island Museum. The new exhibition will be about the music and performing arts at the Golden Gate International Exposition, and it will allow the visitors to interact with a new piece of history from the 1939-1940 World's Fair. The project will be carried out on a low budget and will be managed by the museum's intern, under the supervision of the Office Manager. Drawing from best practices, they will adapt the tradition of exhibition development to Treasure Island's size and budget, and create a new exhibit for their gallery.

## **Goals and Objectives**

**Goal 1:** Create a changing exhibition program for small museums with a limited budget.

- **Objective 1A:** Establish a sustainable changing exhibition program.
- **Objective 1B:** Design and conceptualize the first exhibition for the program.
- **Objective 1C:** Create a marketing strategy.

**Goal 2:** Tell the story of the music and performing arts at the Treasure Island World Fairs in 1939 and 1940 using the museum's collections.

- **Objective 2A:** Use the museum's collection to communicate the history through objects and photographs.
- **Objective 2B:** Create well written text panels to support the exhibit content.

**Goal 3:** Create a guide on low-budget exhibition development for small museums, which will be used for future exhibitions.

- **Objective 3A:** Evaluate the first exhibits outcome and establish what worked and did not work.
- **Objective 3B:** Provide a manual on how to create future exhibits, which can be used by the museum, and similar institutions in the future.

## **Conclusion**

A museum has a responsibility to its mission and visitors to provide compelling content and educational materials. Creating exhibitions is a way for the museums to approach this responsibility, and at the same time build a stronger institution. Providing new exhibits will draw more people to the museum, which again can lead to higher ticket sales or possible donations. The museum can use this income to build new exhibitions, or on other programs that may benefit the visitors. Starting this process can be challenging and intimidating if you don't have people on your staff with experience from similar projects. For a small museum with a small budget that won't allow you to hire professional consultants, it can seem difficult. The lack of literature from similar projects is also an obstacle that must be addressed, but analysis of literature related to bigger projects can be used for inspiration and professional guidelines.

It is important to remember why you are doing the project, and what you are getting out of it. Opening new exhibits regularly proves that your institution is working to fulfill its mission, and wants to be a place where visitors can engage with history. There are other aspects of museum management that can be prioritized like collections care or updating cataloging systems, but this will not serve the public at the same level as an exhibit.

For this project proposal, I am addressing the issue of creating an exhibit on a small budget. Just because the exhibition development and design can be challenging

and expensive, it doesn't mean the gallery should be neglected. By prototyping a program for creating exhibitions regularly, you are serving your mission as well providing methods that can be used by similar institutions, and creating a new practice your institution can benefit from in the future.

## **Chapter 3: Project Plan**

### **Project Title**

Creating Exhibits for Small History Museums on a Limited Budget

### **Project Purpose**

This project will allow museums with small budgets to update and change their exhibitions on a regular basis. By doing this, it is establishing a more relevant position in the community, as well as fulfilling its mission.

### **Background and Strategic Context**

Museums operating on small budgets can easily prioritize other operating expenses instead of exhibits. The general assumption is that exhibitions are expensive and not worth doing with limited resources. This project challenges that opinion, creating a program where new exhibitions will regularly be developed on a limited budget.

The strategy behind this exhibition project is that more people will be devoted and interested in the museum if they provide new content and a reason to visit, which will ultimately benefit the museum. In addition to reflecting a thriving and interesting museum, the new exhibition program can help the museum support its mission by engaging with the community.

### **Priority**

The museum board is prioritizing the project, but as the museum is already committed to a very time and resource-demanding project. When the resources are tied up in a different project, this makes it difficult to devote too much money or time to the

exhibition. The project will, therefore, be conducted as a side project of the museum's daily activities.

### **Other Related Projects**

Treasure Island Museum is getting ready for a major fundraiser and a future new phase in a rehabilitated building. This project is taking up most of the board's resources, and programs like lecture series and other events have been temporarily suspended. There is still a desire to keep the daily management of the museum going, and proving to the community that the museum is still operating during this phase.

### **Scope including key deliverables**

For this project to succeed, I am starting off by making a few assumptions. The first assumption is that the museum is willing to devote time and money to the project. For it to fit into my proposal of creating exhibitions on a small budget, the budget should be limited, but it must cover staff expenses, and leave a little room for supplies and services. Second, I assume that the museum has a collection that can provide content for the exhibition.

There are also restrictions to consider. For the exhibition at Treasure Island Museum, the theme will be music and the performing arts at the 1939-1940 World's Fair. Anything that does not strengthen this story will not have a place in the exhibition. The same goes for anything that is not in line with the museum's mission. The mission states that the museum should engage with visitors and the island's community, and the exhibition should, therefore, be directed at this audience.

The project is also constrained by the budget, staff size, available time, and space. The challenge is to take advantage of the resources that are available and make the project fit within the parameters.

The deliverable will be the finished exhibition, and a plan for future exhibitions at the institution.

## **Governance**

***Project Client/Owner:*** *Treasure Island Museum, Board of Trustees*

***Project Department:*** *Collections department*

***Project Manager:*** *Museum Employee*

***Manager of the Project Manager:*** *Department Manager*

## **Project Team Members and percentage of time they will work on this project**

The project is intended to be managed by a team of two part-time employees at the museum. One project manager will be responsible for conducting the majority of the exhibition tasks but will consult with the office manager, who will serve as an additional resource. They will both work part-time, one will approximately work 20 hours/week on average, and the other will work 5-6 hours/week.

In addition, one volunteer board member will work with the project manager to manage the marketing aspect. Another employee can also fill this position if that is applicable.

Three board members will serve on the advisory committee; offer advice, feedback, and assistance during the project. The Board of Trustees will have the final say on major decisions. They will receive project reports regularly.

## **Schedule**

Start date: August 1. 2016

End date: December 16. 2016

For more details, see action plan

## **Budget**

Personnel	\$ 10,400
Supplies	\$ 20
Services	\$ 250
Other	\$ 0
<hr/>	
Total	\$ 10,670

All expenses will be covered under general operating expenses.

Note: the expenses listed above are intended for a low budget project, with very limited funds devoted to it. If more money is available, a larger budget will be created, and more services can be acquired. When a long-term project is established it might be relevant to spend more money to invest in a printer to do all printing in-house, and thereby bringing long-term costs down.

For projects with more funds available, it might be desirable to consult with a designer for a more professional look.

## **Future Projects**

This project will be a continuing program for the museum and serve as a first step towards creating new exhibits regularly. If this project is a success, the museum will develop future exhibitions.



## Chapter 4: Action Plan

Following is the list of actions required to complete the project. For a complete list of tasks and timeline, see the Gantt Chart in Appendix D.

**Goal 1: Create a changing exhibition program for small museums with a limited budget.**

**Objective 1A:** Establish a sustainable changing exhibition program

**Actions:**

1. Research previous exhibition at the institution
2. Research museum's collection
3. Talk to stakeholders and establish their interest and expectations for the program.
  - Collections department
  - Board members
  - Visitors/Community
4. Conduct SWOT analysis
5. Create advisory committee
6. Create exhibition team
7. Create exhibition theme options
8. Decide on an annual budget
9. Decide on number of exhibits to create per year, based on budget
10. Create schedule for the changing exhibitions
11. Provide themes for the first year of exhibits so that they can build on each other
12. **Mini-Milestone:** Get advisory committee's approval
13. **Milestone:** Get board approval

**Objective 1B:** Design and conceptualize the first exhibition for the program

**Actions:**

1. Write out the expected budget expenses
2. Establish a timeline for the project

3. Put together an exhibition team, including: Office Manager, Project Manager, and Marketing Manager. The team members will be responsible for finishing their own tasks and work together to accomplish the project goal.
4. Identify task that must be completed in order to reach the project goals
5. Divide tasks and responsibilities between team members
6. Research necessary skills required to complete project
7. Brainstorm possible exhibition themes
8. Identify exhibition theme and submit to Advisory Committee for approval
9. Research exhibition theme
10. **Milestone:** Advisory committee approval
11. Public announcement of exhibition theme on website/ social media
12. Identify extra collection research, off site
13. Identify possible loans
14. **Mini-Milestone:** Decide on object list for exhibit
15. **Milestone:** Advisory committee approval

**Objective 1C:** Create a marketing strategy

**Actions:**

1. Establish a budget for marketing
2. Chose Marketing manager. For this low-budget project, this will be part time position filled by a member of the staff.
3. Write a timeline for announcements, and decide what type of media that will be used
  - Museum website
  - Social media
  - Museum newsletter
  - Newspapers
  - Flyers
4. Write a detailed schedule for announcements and posts in social media. Other possible marketing platforms will also be included in this detailed plan. The posts will announce the exhibition, provide status updates about the exhibit, show “behind the scenes” photos and videos, and other relevant information about the upcoming exhibition. The social media posts will be posted on platforms like

Facebook, Instagram and the museums website regularly, with the goal to make the potential visitors interested.

The Marketing Manager will also be present on social media and respond to activity on the accounts.

5. **Mini-Milestone:** Advisory committee approval
6. Write first draft for each social media announcement
7. Advisory committee feedback
8. Second draft for each announcement
9. **Milestone:** First public post. Will be announcing the exhibition and the exhibition theme
10. First social media post about exhibition. This post will provide more in-depth information about the upcoming exhibition, and will be complimenting the announcement the week before.
11. Meet with exhibition team to receive update on exhibition progress. This information will be used in the following posts
12. Second post, about exhibition progress
13. Third post, announcing the exhibition opening
14. **Milestone:** Send out invitations to exhibition opening
15. Forth post, about the opening of exhibition
16. **Milestone:** Analyze marketing strategy, write a report

**Goal 2:** Tell the story of the music and performing arts at the Treasure Island World Fairs in 1939 and 1940 using the museum's collections.

**Objective 2A:** Use the museum's collection to communicate the history through objects and photographs

**Actions:**

1. Research the exhibition theme
2. Research collection items relevant to the exhibition theme
3. **Mini-Milestone:** Establishing a storyline for the exhibition. Write a report
4. **Milestone:** Advisory committee approval on storyline
5. Determine if loans from other institutions will be required

6. If loans are required, reach out to institutions and draw up terms and conditions for loans
7. **Mini-Milestone:** Loan agreements
8. **Mini-Milestone:** Finalize object list
9. **Milestone:** Advisory committee's approval on object list
10. Deadline for adjustments made to storyline and object list
11. First draft for exhibition layout and design
12. **Mini-Milestone:** Feedback from advisory committee on design
13. Second draft on layout and design
14. **Milestone:** Advisory committee approval of design and layout
15. Provide options for printing services
16. Decide if printing of posters can be done in-house or has to be outsourced
17. Decide on printing service
18. Order prints
19. Take down current exhibition
20. Cleaning of exhibition space
21. **Milestone:** Installation of exhibit
22. Evaluation of exhibition
23. Extra time to conduct any changes that must be made to the exhibit before opening
24. **Milestone:** Opening of exhibit
25. **Milestone:** written report on exhibition process and result
  - What went well?
  - What did not work well?
  - What changes should be made to make the exhibition even better?

**Objective 2B:** Create well written text panels to support the exhibit content

**Actions:**

1. Research best practices for label writing
2. Write first draft for label content
3. Proofread label content
4. Second draft of label content
5. **Mini-Milestone:** Label content completed

6. Design options for labels
7. **Mini-Milestone:** Provide two different options for label design to be approved by advisory committee
8. **Milestone:** Final approval of finished labels
9. Print out label text
10. Mount labels to backboards
11. **Milestone:** Install labels in exhibition

**Goal 3:** Create a guide on low-budget exhibition development for small museums, which will be used for future exhibitions.

**Objective 3A:** Evaluate the first exhibits outcome and establish what worked and did not work

**Actions:**

1. Team meeting
  - Every person involved in the first exhibition will gather and talk about their experiences with the first project
2. Evaluate and identify the problems from the first exhibition
3. Evaluate and identify what worked well with the first exhibitions
4. Evaluate budget expenses
5. Identify 5 ways the budget might be spent differently to improve the project
6. Evaluate marketing strategy
7. Identify 5 ways the marketing strategy could have been improved
8. Brainstorming
  - What thoughts do the team members have about things that could have been done differently?
  - What ideas do they have for the next project
9. Provide alternative methods and ideas for the things that did not work well with the first exhibition
10. Evaluation of the exhibits overall success
11. **Mini-Milestone:** finish evaluation, and write a report

**Objective 3B:** Provide a guide on how to create future exhibits

**Actions:**

1. Identify the necessary steps for creating an exhibit
2. Establish budget
3. Identify potential expenses and risks that might impact the budget
4. Establish recommended timeline
5. Identify potential risks that might impact the timeline
6. Provide a list of resources that might be used to keep expenses down.
7. Include list of past exhibition themes, and ideas for future exhibitions, determined in the planning phase (Objective 1a)
8. Include the marketing strategy (Objective 1b)
9. Provide a guide for writing labels
10. Include reposts and examples from previous exhibitions that can be used as a reference
11. **Milestone:** The product is finished

## **Conclusion**

### **Evaluating the Projects Success**

The success of this project can be challenging to measure. There are multiple factors that can be considered successful. The first option would be to measure the responses of the targeted audience. The problem with this method of determining whether or not the project has been successful is that people have different experiences within the museum. Each person experiences things differently, and each guest will, therefore, also have a different experience in the exhibit. There is also no wrong or right way to interpret the content, so every visitor has a valid opinion that is relevant for measuring the success of an exhibit. While standardized forms are an easy way to measure feedback its downfall is that you are not receiving an accurate representation of your data pool. This method would also involve devoting time to gather and analyze the comprehensive data, and it depends on every visitors being willing to participate in this evaluation process in order to gain a holistic understanding of the exhibit's effectiveness.

Another way to measure the success of this type of project is to review the execution of the project, such as, planning, scheduling, and maintaining the budget. This is equally important for this type of project where time and resources are limited. If the project stayed within these set parameters, then it could be considered a successful endeavor.

The third criteria for success will be if the museum board approves the plan for future exhibitions. The first exhibition will function as a pilot to see how successful an exhibit can be on a tight budget. It will also provide valuable information to the staff on

methods and procedures that can be adapted for the next project to be equally, or even more, successful. If the result is satisfactory to the board, the project can continue as a changing exhibition program and the museum can benefit from having multiple exhibitions in the near future.

After the project has ended all of this should be considered in determining the success of the project. Having exhibits is important for history museums, and it is the best way for visitors to engage with the museum. It is, however, unclear whether or not small museums are willing to make the exhibitions a priority on a regular basis. Even with low costs, it is still necessary to devote staff time to the project. This loss of time will have an impact on some of the other tasks within the museum. However, dedicating this time will help the museum support its mission.

What I have learned from this project is that creating an exhibition is very exciting endeavor. It is also not dependent on having a large budget attached to it. While I was reading about exhibition design and development, it did not explicitly discuss how much this would cost the museum. It did, however, provide a list of things that will have to be done and suggested hiring outside experts. Hiring experts and paying for supplies can be expensive, and these examples told me that exhibition projects are expensive. If you want to create something that has never been done before, and you want everything to be in line with best practices, you need to understand that these types of projects come with a large cost. By keeping a smaller staff and in housing tasks it to be manageable on a tight budget. By reading the literature and the case studies, I learned that there is a framework that needs to be in place in order to conduct an exhibition project. You need to have a staff member that can manage the project from start to end. You need to have an idea for the exhibit. You need to have a collection as content for the exhibition, and



you need to have labels. Besides from this it the rest is pretty flexible. With well-exploited resources, like budget, staff size and skills, imagination and good project planning, any project can be successful. By creating the first exhibit, you are also expanding your knowledge on these types of projects, which will better equipped you for the next one.

The purpose of this project was to see if it is possible and beneficial for small history museums to create exhibits, even under the constraints of a tiny budget, and from what I have found I would say that it is.

## Appendix A: Annotated Bibliography

Allen-Greil, D. (2013). Exhibition studies: Learning and sharing expertise with social media. *Exhibitionist*, Fall 2013, 86-90.

This article is about using social media in the museum, and the three C's: Consume, Communicate and Collaborate. Social media can be used for multiple things like reaching people where they are, lowering the threshold for interaction, as well as networking and keeping up to date on the newest trends. The article challenges the practice of sharing research with professors and peers, and encourages museum professionals start to share their research on social media instead. That way, more people get the benefits from the research, and more people can collaborate and share their knowledge. Promoting your exhibition is important, and social media is an excellent tool. It is available to people, it can be very affordable, and everyone can do it. For my paper I am exploring the opportunities the museum has to promote themselves and their exhibits. The key is to promote and create on a low budget, and the museum needs to be able to reach their audiences without spending a lot of money. This paper provides an argument for using social media to achieve the attention they need as well as providing a platform for conversation and feedback.

Bedford, L. (2014). *The art of museum exhibitions: How story and imagination create aesthetic experiences*. Left Coast Press.

The first part of this book is about the educational purpose of exhibitions and the different kinds of visitor engagement with the exhibition. The book also reviews a handful of other people's work with museum practices, including Nina Simon and participatory design (engaging the community and visitors to create a more dynamic and more relevant museum), and Jay Rounds and Identity work (Making the visitors reflect on their own identity as well as how other people identify themselves), the alternative exhibition method vs. educational method (the purpose of the exhibition being to educate the visitor), story (providing a story to the visitor), and imagination (allowing the visitor to use their imagination and creativity in order to understand the exhibition). Telling a story is important for the exhibition to be interesting, but so is leaving room for imagination. Let the visitor engage with what they see and read to maximize the educational experience. This book relates to my project because it is discussing different exhibition practices, and what you can accomplish with each of them. It is always good to be educated and have knowledge about the effect of different practices, and this knowledge can be used to create a good product. At least it can help me as an exhibit designer to reflect over the choices I am making, and to understand the results I might get from that.

Bogle E. (2013). *Museum Exhibition Planning And Design*. Lanham, Maryland. AltaMira Press.

This book also covers the aspects of exhibition design for a museum, but in a more technical and in depth way. I feel that this book compliments the Freda Matassa book on organizing exhibitions. The two books talk about a lot of the same issues, but where

Matassa provides an easy step-by-step, how-to book, Bogle gives more of an academic description of the steps and provides a deeper understanding of what is going on. My project is about creating exhibitions on a low budget, and to be able to provide a guide on how to accomplish this it is necessary to understand how exhibition planning and designing works, and what is required for an successful exhibit. This book in combination with other readings on the subject will provide a solid base for me to understand the process of creating exhibits, which again will help me to provide a conclusion for my capstone.

Chicone, S. J., & Kissel, R. A. (2014). *Dinosaurs and dioramas: creating natural history exhibitions*. Left Coast Press.

Most of my literature on exhibition development and design is focused on art installations. This book offers a different point of view by writing about exhibitions in natural history museums. Whereas art museums are object focused without necessarily providing a larger context, natural history museums are focusing on telling a story from an educational point of view, where the history is the most important part, and the objects play the supportive role to the story. The audience is visiting the exhibitions to learn something, and this is an important thing to keep in mind when creating exhibitions for a historical museum.

This is still another book on exhibition design and planning, but it is closer to what I am actually trying to do, and is therefore relevant. The other exhibition books I have are about exhibition design in general. This book is directly focused on natural history, and as stated above, there is a difference between curating for art museums, natural history- and history museums. The other thing I like about it is that it is more descriptive of the steps in exhibition development and is discussing different ways of working, like the benefits of group work, who to include and how to divide roles.

Faden, R. (2012) Creative Adaption: Exhibitions in the Downturn. *Exhibitionist* Fall 2012, 58-63.

This article is about a history museum with a small budget. Historic St. Mary's City is a state owned and operated outdoor living history museum. By using their already existing staff in new ways, not hiring assistant exhibition designers, and using local students as additional resources, they were able to complete their pavilion project for half its projected cost. The article is a good read in order to get some tips on how to get a project up and running even when you are a small history museum with limited funds. Limited funding is one of the key words for my paper, and I feel that reading about other projects where creative or controversial decisions were made in order to cut costs are relevant in order to provide inspiration, and to show that it actually is possible to accomplish.

Lacher-Feldman, J. (2014) Creating the Curator: Teaching and Learning Exhibition Development for Special Collections Librarians and Archives. *Exhibitionist*, Fall 2014, 54-58.

This article talks about the author's experience with curating exhibitions for special collections librarians and archives. She found that there is a difference in the way a grad student is trained, and the education the librarians and archivists have, and that the

latter must learn on the job. She also experienced the lack of research and books written about curating for archives. Because of this she had to rely on her own experience in the field as well as collaborating with other professionals to develop the workshops and research she wanted.

I also found that there is very little published about small history museums in my research, and I thought this article was very interesting. She figured out how to get around the problem by doing her own research and contributing to the field, and she gives some great advice at the same time.

For my paper this is relevant because I imagine a lot of museum professionals are facing similar challenges, and I thought this had to be recognized. I found there is a gap in research related to small history museums and exhibition design, and this article is explaining how this one person managed to get around the obstacles. The other reason for including the article is that Special Collections and Archives are quite similar to a historic collection, and what she is writing can be applied in my paper.

Liss Saffle, K. (2013). Reinventing Museum Labels: Overcoming an Archetype with Technology and Visitor-Centered Label Writing. *Journal Of Museum Studies*, 7(1), 1-15.

This article discusses the different practices of label writing. When every visitor has different preferences in media, length and content, it is extremely difficult for the museum to reach everyone. Liss Saffle provides a good article on how to optimize the experience, and catch the visitor's attention. The article also asks how the label can open communication with the visitors and not only provide static information, and if technology is the solution for some of these problems. What makes this a good article is that the author is discussing the function of the exhibition label, and what different options we have to provide additional information for the people who want it. However, because we have the possibility of providing more information doesn't necessarily mean that we should. In relation to my thesis this debate is interesting because not all museums have fun to provide fancy labels or expensive technology for visitors to use. There are less expensive ways to create labels, and those options might be just as effective.

Markopoulos, L. I. (2012). The Accidental Exhibition: Chance as Curatorial Critique and Opportunity. *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, 1(1), 6-24.

This article is about the curatorial practice and what can be learned from studying other exhibitions in pursuit of a better way to curate. Looking at other exhibitions can be helpful to learn more about what's working, and what's not, and it can also be good for inspiration. This article criticizes other people's work in a constructive way, and reading this is helpful to understand what makes a good exhibit. People learn from experience, but it does not have to be their own. By getting feedback and criticism from outsiders you learn more about what is working. And by sharing the experience and critique more people can learn for that.

Matassa F. (2014). *Organizing Exhibitions: A Handbook For Museums, Libraries And Archives*. London, Facet Publishing.

This book is a handbook explaining how to create and organize an exhibition. Starting with top ten tips for success and top ten mistakes, the book takes the reader through every aspect of creating an exhibition, and the things to consider when making decisions. I really like this book because it is so easy to apply to real life. It is providing relevant information on what makes a good exhibit, tips on how to succeed, common mistakes to avoid, and the order of when to do what. The book can be consulted when you have a problem, and you will get a practical answer. The book is not focused on creating large, impressive exhibition either, so it can easily be applied in smaller museums, which is highly relevant for my thesis.

Melton, T. (2008). *Real project planning: developing a project delivery strategy*. Amsterdam, Boston, Butterworth-Heinemann.

This book is not directly about museum work, but covers how to conduct a successful project. Good planning is an important skill for any type of project, and this book walks the reader through the stages, from the initial idea to the project delivery and benefits. Both writing a capstone paper and creating an exhibit are projects that need to be planned properly, and this book will teach me to keep on track.

The reason why I chose to use a book instead of a book about museum project management is that I wanted to get a different point of view on the subject. I already have sources about exhibition planning for museums, and I wanted to combine the different types of literature to see if there is anything this source might offer that the museum once did not think about. This book taught me that project planning and projects for a for-profit is slightly different from museum project planning. The framework is basically the same, but the for-profit will always have the possibility of expanding their budgets to get a better result. This book was stressing the successful project more than how much it would cost to get it.

Miller L. (2011). *Music And Politics In San Francisco: From The 1906 Quake To The Second World War*. Berkeley, University of California Press, pp. 247-265.

This chapter presents practical information about the San Francisco World's Fairs: visitor numbers, opening dates and the creation of the Island. It also covers the musical differences between the 1915 and 1939-40 fairs. The chapter goes into detail on what bands and musical numbers performed at the fairs, comparing them, and putting them in a social context. My capstone supports the exhibition I am creating for the Treasure Island Museum, which is focused on the music of the 1939-1940 fair. This reading is a highly relevant source, and therefore also relevant for my capstone.

Rand, J. (2016). Less is more. More is less. *Exhibition*, Spring 2016, 36-41.

This article is about the benefits of writing short labels, and the importance of editing. Judy Rand presents different research on exhibition labels and the visitor's attention span to prove that less text is more beneficial for the visitor. She also provides a ten-step list to edit the exhibition labels to shorter and better panels. The bottom line is that

visitors want the information fast, and they don't have the time or motivation to read a long essay. The article also presents facts to support her opinion that short is better. This article is relevant for a better understanding of how to write labels, and what makes a label good. Because a label is such an individual preference, it is important to have different research to support and understand the choices you make for the final labels.

This article is relevant to my capstone because it is talking about how to write good exhibit labels. For my paper to provide a guide to creating good exhibitions on a low budget, it should also include a section on writing good labels. That way the museum is not depending on outside resources to create the exhibition labels.

Serrell, B. (2015). *Exhibit Labels: An interpretive Approach*. London, Rowman & Littlefield.

This book breaks down the different labels in an exhibition, and how they should be written in order to capture the reader's attention. The bottom line is that not all labels should be the same, but they all need to contribute something meaningful. Label writers should write about something meaningful in an interpretive way. People like to think and visualize, so the label should give you the tools to do just that. The art of writing good labels is extremely difficult, but this book breaks it down nicely. In order to create a good exhibit, you also need really good labels that the reader can engage with. This is also a relevant chapter for my thesis. A good exhibit is depending on great labels, and this article is providing information on how to accomplish this. In combination with J. Rand and K. Liss Saffle's articles I am confident that I have a good background to discuss the importance of labels when designing an exhibition.

Skolnick, L. H. (2014) Master Class: Design as Interpretation. *Exhibitionist*, Spring 2014, 74-78.

This article is about a practical master class for thirty people in which they all created exhibitions in teams, supplemented by informative lectures and readings. Each team was given a location and theme for their exhibit, and was set to work. Each team also received the same tools they could use. They found that the teams worked really well, and they were not scared of using the tools creatively to explore new ways of curating. I think this article is relevant for my capstone because it challenges the standard ways of creating exhibitions. It presents a case in which teams can work together in a creative way, use what they have available, and get a good result at the same time.

Walhimer, M. (2015). *Museums 101*. London, Rowman & Littlefield

This book breaks down the museum in a way that is easy to understand. It covers every aspect from what a museum is, to how to create a museum, to how to run it successfully. This book covers a little bit of everything. Pretty much all the tasks and issues you might come across in the museum field are covered, and there is also a toolkit in the back for how to deal with them. Because the author write about the museum in a general way, and it is not focused on any specialized field like art, history or natural history, it can be applied to any kind if institution.

The reason I chose to include this book in my literature is that I wanted a general source that talked a little bit about everything. This book is providing just that, and is talking about exhibition design, costs, fundraising, specifics about being a small museum, and creating a museum marketing campaign. These subjects are all related to my paper on creating exhibitions for small history museums, and is connecting the different issues my paper has to touch on.

## **Appendix B: Project Stakeholders**

- Treasure Island Museum
- The Community of Treasure Island
- The Museum's Donors
- The Museum's Members
- Visitors of the 1939-1940 Words Fair and their families
- Similar small history museums that can be inspired by the exhibition model

The stakeholders will play a central role in this exhibition project. The museum members, donors, and other visitors are the targets for the exhibition, and for future programs happening in the museum. These people are a part of the community, and the museum desires to have a beneficial relationship between the museum and the community. If the project is a success, the community at Treasure Island can enjoy multiple exhibits about the history of the island they are living on, and also contribute with ideas for future exhibits. This partnership will give the museum itself a strong audience base, and a solid plan for fulfilling its mission.

Other similar history museums have a stake in the project because it is intended to inspire them to do exhibition programs themselves. This pilot is leading by example, proving that it is possible to create exhibitions on small budgets, and hopefully other museums will be inspired to do the same.

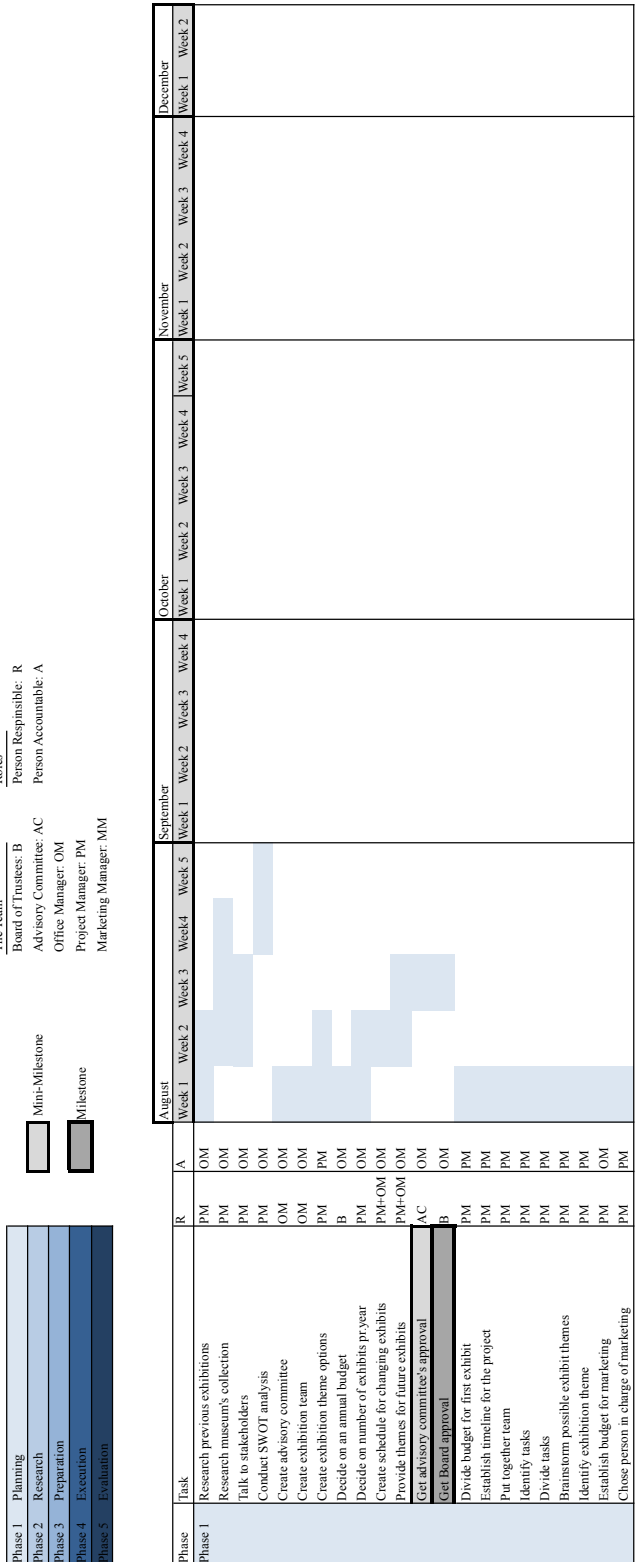


## Appendix C: SWOT Analysis

Planning Toolkit - SWOT Table		
<b>Project:</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Project Manager:</b>	
SWOT identification and analysis		
Strengths	Ranking	How to strengthen?
<Insert an identified project strength>	<Insert ranking>	<If this is ranked in the top 3 then insert the action plan to further strengthen this area>
<Insert strength n>		
Weaknesses	Ranking	How to eliminate?
<Insert an identified project weakness>	<Insert ranking>	<If this is ranked in the top 3 then insert the action plan to eliminate this weakness>
<Insert weakness n>		
Opportunities	Ranking	How to maximize?
<Insert an identified opportunity for the project>	<Insert ranking>	<If this is ranked in the top 3 then insert the action plan to maximize this opportunity>
<Insert opportunity n>		
Threats	Ranking	How to minimize?
<Insert an identified threat to the project>	<Insert ranking>	<If this is ranked in the top 3 then insert the action plan to minimize this threat>
<Insert threat n>		
SWOT summary		
<Insert a summary of the analysis and the ability of the project to resource action plans, thus reducing the risk profile for the project>		

SWOT Table. Melton, 2008 p. 165

# Appendix D: Gantt Chart



**The Team**  
 Board of Trustees: B  
 Advisory Committee: AC  
 Office Manager: OM  
 Project Manager: PM  
 Marketing Manager: MM

**Roles**  
 Person Responsible: R  
 Person Accountable: A

Mini-Milestone  
 Milestone

Phase 1 Planning  
 Phase 2 Research  
 Phase 3 Preparation  
 Phase 4 Execution  
 Phase 5 Evaluation

		August					September					October					November					December					
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2				
Phase 2	R	A	<p>Research skills required to complete project</p> <p>Research exhibition theme</p> <p>Advisory committee approval</p> <p>Write timeline for announcements</p> <p>Write detailed schedule for posts</p> <p>Advisory committee approval</p> <p>Write first draft for each announcement</p> <p>Advisory committee feedback</p> <p>Second draft for announcements</p> <p>Public announcement of exhibit online</p> <p>Research collection items</p> <p>Establish a storyline - Report</p> <p>Advisory committee approval</p> <p>Research best practices for label writing</p> <p>Determine if loans will be required</p> <p>Identify extra collections research, off site</p> <p>Identify possible loans</p> <p>Establish media to be used in exhibit</p> <p>First post about exhibition</p> <p>Decide on object list for exhibit</p> <p>Advisory committee approval of object list</p> <p>Reach out to relevant institutions for possible loans</p> <p>Loan agreements</p> <p>Finalize object list</p> <p>Advisory committee approval</p> <p>Deadline for adjustments made to storyline</p> <p>Provide options for printing services</p> <p>Decide if printing will be outsourced</p> <p>Decide on printing service</p>																								
Phase 3	R	A	<p>First draft for layout and design</p> <p>Feedback from advisory committee</p> <p>Meet with exhibition team to receive update</p> <p>Second post</p> <p>Second draft for layout and design</p> <p>Advisory committee approval</p> <p>Order prints</p> <p>First draft for label content</p> <p>Proofread label content</p> <p>Second draft of label content</p> <p>Label content completed</p> <p>Design options for labels</p> <p>Third post</p> <p>Advisory committee approval</p> <p>Final decision on labels</p> <p>Send out invitations to exhibition opening</p>																								

		August					September					October					November					December	
		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 1	Week 2
Phase 4	Task	R	A																				
	Print labels	OM	OM																				
	Mount labels	OM+PM	OM+PM																				
	Take down current exhibition	OM+PM	OM+PM																				
	Clean exhibition space	OM+PM	OM+PM																				
	Install exhibition	OM+PM	OM+PM																				
	Install labels in exhibition	OM+PM	OM+PM																				
	Evaluation	PM	PM																				
	Time for changes	PM	PM																				
	Tooth post	MM	MM																				
	Opening date	PM	OM																				
Phase 5	Task	R	A																				
	Written report on exhibition results	PM	PM																				
	Marketing strategy report	MM+PM	PM																				
	Team meeting	PM	PM																				
	Evaluate problems	PM	PM																				
	Evaluate what worked well	PM	PM																				
	Evaluate budget	PM	PM																				
	Identify 5 ways to improve budget	PM	PM																				
	Evaluate marketing strategy	PM	PM																				
	Identify 5 ways to improve MS	PM	PM																				
	Brainstorming	Full Team	PM																				
	Provide alternative methods and ideas	PM	PM																				
	Evaluate exhibition success	PM	PM																				
	Finish evaluation, write a report	PM	PM																				
	Identify necessary steps for creating exhibit	PM	PM																				
	Establish budget	PM	PM																				
	Identify potential risks in the budget	PM	PM																				
	Establish recommended timeline	PM	PM																				
	Provide list of resources	PM	PM																				
	Include list of past and future exhibit themes	PM	PM																				
	Marketing strategy	PM	PM																				
	Provide guide for label writing	PM	PM																				
	Include reports from previous exhibits	PM	PM																				
	Finish product	PM	PM																				

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