Using Visual Storytelling to Add STEM to History Exhibits
Presentation Goals

By the end of this webinar you will:

- Understand how visuals can be used effectively and be challenged to think critically about visuals and creating visual stories
- Explore different types of visual storytelling
- Walk away with concrete examples of how STEM can be visually incorporated into displays at history-based sites
Overview

- Defining visual storytelling
- Storytelling as an interpretive technique
- What’s in a visual - visual elements and visual communication
- Creating meaningful visual stories
So what’s visual storytelling?

Oxford English Dictionary definition: “Sorry. The word you’ve entered is not in the dictionary.”

Any story told primarily with visual media including photographs, film, and illustrations and enhanced with text, graphics, music, or voice.

“A picture is worth a thousand words.”
Bookcase Credibility
@BCredibility

What you say is not as important as the bookcase behind you.

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Storytelling as an interpretive technique

Before you set out to create a visual story, create a theme.

- Themes are complete ideas that express a message or point of view (like a thesis statement)
- Topics are broad, general categories

**THEME**

Commercial and leisure opportunities drove the improvement of roads in Texas by requiring planning, new all-weather materials, and the establishment of highway naming system.

**TOPIC**

Texas roads
Storytelling as an interpretive technique

Before you set out to create a visual story, develop interpretive goals.

- What do you want someone to learn?
- Why is this topic important?
- What’s the story you want to tell?
- Who is your audience?
- Are there any particularly interesting aspects or unique features that will draw visitors in?
Effective storytelling

Stories:

- Have structure - a beginning, middle, and end
- Have conflict
- Engage and take you on a journey
“What do you want people to know? What do you want people to feel?”

- Pixar in a Box: The Art of Storytelling (2017)
Why visuals in STEM?

- Explain complex issues and concepts
- Highlight nuances and connections
- Reach visual learners and strengthen visual learning skills
What’s in a visual?

- Line
- Shape
- Color
- Value
- Texture
- Space
Visual communication
Creating a visual language
Creating a visual language

The tension from the steel rods **COMPRESSES AND STRENGTHENS THE CONCRETE** which allows it to **HOLD MORE WEIGHT.**

This was important for bridge construction as **TRAFFIC INCREASED** throughout the Lone Star state **AFTER WORLD WAR II.**
Creating visual stories - Develop a theme
Creating visual stories - Source the content

Great visuals for STEM topics:
- Maps
- Research images
- Action images
- Cross-sections

What non visual content can you adapt?
- Technical reports
- Complex systems and concepts
Creating visual stories - Source the content

- Use high-quality and in focus images. Always.
- Make sure your chosen images illustrate the point you’re making.
- In your research, what images stand out and make you do a double take?
- Always credit the image or media.
- Note if the image is altered or cropped in any way. (e.g. Detail of map by...)
Creating visual stories - Determine end product

- Videos
- Illustrations
- Swipe stories
- Photo essays
- Scrollytelling

Identify your constraints.

- Technology constraints
- Cost constraints
- Spatial constraints

Today, the Lone Star State is crisscrossed with a jumbled tangle of high-speed highways and byways. It was not always this way.

In the late 1800s and into early 1900s, the traveler had only dirt, gravel, and occasionally paved roads from which to choose. As automobiles became more popular, the demand for better and safer roads increased, leading to the Good Roads movement.
Creating visual stories - Determine end product
Creating visual stories - Determine end product
Creating visual stories - Determine end product

Round Rock, Texas
Creating visual stories - Adjust!

Constantly check against your goals to ensure they aren’t lost in the output or technology.

A planned photo grid template was the wrong choice. The images were too detailed to be shown at once and the learning point was lost.