Paving the Way for STEM in History Museums
Writing About Science for a History Museum Audience (When You’re Not a Scientist)
Webinar Goals

By the end of this webinar you will:

- Understand how interpretive writing techniques can be powerful tools in making technical topics accessible
- Be equipped with multi-disciplinary approaches to storytelling
- Walk away with concrete examples of how STEM can be incorporated into history-based exhibits

During the discussion group you will:

- Work through a specific example of the concepts covered in this webinar, getting a chance to try techniques out for yourself
What is interpretation?

"a mission-based communication process that forge emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource."

"Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation does include information."

"the way that museums engage their audience with collections, information, and ideas"

"a professional explainer"
What is interpretation?

Interpretation is about more than simply providing information. It teaches.

Interpretation focuses on emotional and intellectual connections with information.

Interpretation connects new information to larger contexts.

Interpretation relates to the visitor and what they care about.
What is interpretation?

Ultimately, interpretation is active and is about CHANGE.

Interpretation is about BUILDING BRIDGES between your content and your visitor’s lived experience.

Interpretation provides a method to help determine what you would like visitors to THINK, FEEL, and DO after having visited your site.
Interpretive Goals
Interpretive Goals

- What do you want visitors to learn?
- Why is this topic important?
- What’s the story you want to tell?
- Who is your audience?
- Are there any particularly fascinating stories or facts that will draw visitors in?
Themes

- Themes are complete ideas that express a message or point of view (like a thesis statement).
- Themes connect tangibles and intangibles, things and ideas.
- Themes are not the same thing as topics.
- Themes are brief. The more concise you can be the more likely your audience will remember.
- Themes help you limit what your interpretation is about, and limits are good.

Remember: If someone is confused or challenged, they will disengage, give up, and miss out on everything you’re trying to do.
Relevance

- Relate to universal concepts
- Connect with something the visitor already understands
- Multi-disciplinary writing provides two chances to think about relevance
Creativity

- Use every space you have for interpretation
- Get your visitor to change their thinking by physically changing their perspective
- Give visitors space to think creatively and connect to their own exploration, perception, confidence, and aesthetics
Structured Storytelling

Stories:

- have specific structure
- have a beginning, a middle, and an end
- have a conflict
- engage the viewer/reader/listener/visitor and take them on a journey
Structured Storytelling

What are the benefits of storytelling as a technique?

- Motivations
- Relevance
- Conflict
- Curiosity
Limitations

- How much space do you have?
- What and who are you writing for?
- What is your target reading level?
- How many words can you use?
- Do the details support your learning goals?

In other words: Just because you can, doesn’t mean you should.
Ready to put these concepts into action?
Join the Discussion this week

Thursday, 10am or 2pm
Friday, 10am