

Developing successful exhibitions

Glossary

Appraisal

In the context of this course, Appraisal is the initial research and evaluation work required to identify the assets of a project (for example existing collections, staff competences, tourist attraction, etc.) and also its weakness, in order to develop the most successful project considering the real context.

Audience

In the context of this course audiences are the different groups of people potentially interested in an exhibition, not only its visitors but, for example, people who can browse the website or related social networks, stake holders such as local politicians, industries, university researchers, the funders who are likely to expect public recognition.

Audience Advocate

An audience advocate is a member of the team that develops exhibitions (or programmes) and has the specific role to represent the interests of the audience or a sub-set of the whole audience (e.g. children, ethnic community, schools...) providing ideas, checking proposals, presenting communication needs, helping to define learning outcomes etc.

Bid

The offer (prices and items) you make when answering a tender (see) or a call for projects.

Brief

In the context of this course the brief is any document that includes aims, desires and requirement for a project.

Circulation

The flow of people and materials throughout the museum/exhibition building.

Concept

Concept is the governing idea of the exhibition, and includes not only main messages but the way in which they will be expressed in terms of approach: chronological, highly interactive, provocative, immersive, ...

Concept design

The first creative response to a Design Brief suggesting a design idea and approach for the exhibition. It is usually comprises initial circulation plans, sketches and mock-ups. At this stage there are likely to be no dimensioned drawings.

Content developer

The content developer is a professional who operates at the crossroad between subject experts, audiences and designers, and knows how to develop the exhibition's contents, provided by experts, in narratives that are of interest to the audience and can be translated into exhibits and interactives. They are normally a key member of a project team, working closely with other professionals such as designers, subject experts, and audience advocates. (see also Content development)

Design brief

The document that informs potential designers, contractors and other professional involved in the project of the requirements of the exhibition project (concept, audiences, approaches, themes, legal requirements,...). The document is focused on the desired results of design, not aesthetics. Design briefs are commonly used in consulting engagements, when an independent designer or a design company executes a design on behalf of a client.

Detail design

Detail design is the final step of the exhibition design. All the structural components are precisely drawn and defined in terms of dimensions, materials and contents so that fabrication companies can produce and build the work.

Display

A general term, which can refer to an individual exhibit, or group of exhibits or an entire exhibition.

Dwelling time (see stay-time)

Editor

Exhibition texts might be written by different people including experts and curators. The editor(s) produces the final version of texts taking care that they are correct, homogeneous in respect to a set of agreed rules (e.g. scientific names, numbers, use of Italic or Bold, etc.) and in accord to the style, tone and level of difficulty that have been chosen for the exhibition.

Evaluation

Research on the project's impact on visitors, such as appreciation and learning outcomes. It can be used also in early stages to develop a project that meets the needs and interests of the audience.

Exhibition or 3D designer

An Exhibition Designer is a professional who creates displays for events such as large public exhibitions, conferences, trade shows and temporary displays for business, museums, libraries and galleries.

An exhibition designer's work can include:

- presenting their ideas as sketches, scale plans, computer-generated visuals and models
- discussing their ideas with clients
- producing final specifications
- in smaller companies, overseeing the construction of the components (usually in workshops) and assembly and installation at the exhibition venue
- handling orders for supplies

- liaising with technical specialists such as lighting staff
- understanding and interpreting the correct materials and costs involved in constructing the design

Graphic designer

A graphic designer is a professional within the graphic design and graphic arts industry who assembles together images, typography, or motion graphics to create a piece of design. A core responsibility of the designer's job is to present information in a way that is both accessible and memorable.

Heritage

Heritage refers to something inherited from the past. The word has several different senses, including:

- Natural heritage, an inheritance of fauna and flora, geology, landscape and landforms, and other natural resources
- Cultural heritage, the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society: man-made heritage.

Initiation

It is the phase of a project in which an organization (for example a museum or any other client) decides aims and audiences of its project, its budget allowance, what other competences needs to achieve its goals (for example professionals and companies) and the process to acquire them.

Interpretation

“An educational activity which aims to reveal meaning and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information”.
Freeman Tilden

Learning outcomes

Explicit formulations about what a successful learner will know at the end of an educative experience

Media

Media are all means to convey content and experiences to visitors. They can be videos, photos, touch or multi-touch screens, projections, mechanical interactives, games, and much more.

Mission

A statement that expresses the underlying rationale of an organisation, for example a museum (the reason for its existence).

Outline

Frequently called Concept, see above.

Procurement

In the context of this course, procurement is the process an organisation (for example a museum) uses to acquire a service (for example a company that is able to develop the exhibition).

Programme

In the context of this course, a programme is a series of educational activities that an organization such as a museum offers to particular audiences with specific aims. Possible examples are: workshops for school pupils to support sciences education, conferences and science cafés for adults to promote public debate on sustainable development, etc.

Project manager

A project manager is the professional in charge of the planning, execution and closing of any project, typically relating to construction industry, architecture, or software development. A project manager is the person responsible for accomplishing the stated project objectives. Key project management responsibilities include creating clear and attainable project objectives, building the project requirements, coordinating staff and managing the constraints of the project, which are cost, time, scope, and quality.

Scheme design

The scheme design takes forward the development of the exhibition following approval of the Concept Design. This stage comprises initial shape and form of all the exhibits, the integration of media, display items and lighting, draft text narrative and images. If Formative evaluation is to be undertaken, this is a key stage to test proposals before starting the next stage (Detail design, see below).

Story

A story is an account of connected events in a sequence of written or spoken words, or in a sequence of pictures. The word “narrative” may be used as a synonym of story. In the context of this course “story” is what the exhibition can tell about an object or a phenomenon or event that is interesting, relevant, fascinating to the audience; it is usually consistent with the concept of the exhibition and reinforces it.

Static capacity

The maximum number of people an area can safely hold at any one time.

Subject expert

Subject experts are people who have deep knowledge of the topics that the exhibition focuses. They provide information and reference materials (e.g. scientific images, models) and guarantee the accuracy of the final exhibition contents.

Tender

An official, structured invitation to companies and/or professionals for the supply of goods or services. In the context of this course is a call for bids (see) by a client (for example a museum) willing to find companies and/or professionals able to provide the products are needed (design projects, exhibit development, media, etc.).

Theme

It can be used as synonymous of topic or subject or content. But in the context of this course, a theme is the result of the content development (see content development), i.e. a way to present and convey the content of the exhibition with a variety of stories that illustrate an aspect of the exhibition’s main subject.

Text panel

The text panel is a unit of written information that visitors can find inside the exhibition. There are rules and techniques for the length and style of text that depend on the content, the purpose of the panel and its positioning.

Vision

A statement that expresses the ethos and underlying ideas that gives substance and relevance to a project (a museum, and exhibition...). The capacity to envisage the organisation's future role and position and able it to plan accordingly.

Visitor circulation

The route a person is likely to take through a space.

Stay-time (dwelling time)

The length of time a person is expected to remain in an area.