

Saying it Differently

A handbook for museums refreshing their display

Alison Grey, Tim Gardom and Catherine Booth

There always seem to be good reasons to stay with the tone of voice that you know best. This is 'saying it again'. 'Saying it differently' involves going beyond what is safe for museums to write, and focusing on what visitors want to read.

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Contents

Using this handbook	2		
Foreword by Professor Jack Lohman	3		
Acknowledgements	4		
<i>Say it Again, Say it Differently</i> – The project	5		
<i>Say it Again, Say it Differently</i> – The participants	6		
How the handbook is structured	14		
1. Discovery			
Finding out what you are, who you serve and what you have	17		
What happened in <i>Say it Again, Say it Differently</i> ?	17		
You do: Discovery	18		
Discovery Questions:	18		
How big is your project?	18		
Who do you need to work with and what are their priorities?	18		
Who visits your museum now, and how much do they know?	19		
What do you want your audience to get out of their visit?	20		
What evaluation data do you have, and what do you need?	21		
What are the strengths and weaknesses of the collection?	23		
What are your other resources?	25		
Is your exhibition self-contained?	25		
What are your criteria for success, and how will they be measured?	25		
Digesting what you have discovered	25		
2. Creation			
What do you want to do or say? Who is going to listen?	27		
What happened during <i>Say it Again, Say it Differently</i> ?	27		
You Do: Creation and Interpretive Strategy	29		
Creation Questions:	29		
What is the exhibition about?	29		
Who is the exhibition for?	31		
What voice do you want to use?	32		
What variety of visitor experience do you want?	34		
What are your assets? What do you need?	35		
How will you structure your narrative?	36		
Creating your document	39		
3. Implementation – stage one			
Finding and briefing the team		41	
What happened during <i>Say it Again, Say it Differently</i> ?		41	
You do: Finding and briefing the team		43	
Writing your own creative brief		44	
Step 1: Orientation		44	
Step 2: Summary of interpretive strategy		44	
Step 3: Specific briefs for writers, designers and researchers		44	
Step 4: Response required to brief		45	
Step 5: Practical and Contractual Details		45	
4. Implementation – stage two			
Working with your team		49	
What happened during <i>Say it Again, Say it Differently</i> ?		49	
You do: Implementing your project		52	
Creating your script		52	
Running your formative evaluation		55	
Managing the project		55	
Implementation to Fruition		57	
5. Saying it differently			
Working with words		59	
What happened in <i>Say it Again, Say it Differently</i> ?		60	
You Do: Saying it Differently		62	
What role will text play in your exhibition?		62	
What language level will you use?		63	
What genre and characters will you use?		65	
Can you think outside the text box?		66	
Writing text your visitor wants to read		71	
6. Outcomes			
Measuring the success of your project		73	
What happened in <i>Say it Again, Say it Differently</i> ?		73	
You do: Measures of success		74	
Visitor numbers		74	
Visitor dwell time		74	
Informal comment boards		74	
Learning objectives		75	
Summative Evaluation		75	
Inspiration		75	
You do : Saying it again, saying it differently		80	
7. Tools and resources		83	

Using this handbook

Say it Again, Say it Differently is a London Museums Hub programme aimed at creating good practice methodology for scripted communication as part of a wider museum interpretation strategy. Through understanding the collaborative creative process and the range of options available, *Say it Again, Say it Differently* offers a 'hands-on, how-to' approach to meeting the challenges.

The programme steps are aimed at unlocking the information, ideas and skills of your museum team. The programme is widely applicable and can be used equally effectively at national museum scale as well as at the smaller local museum level.

Foreword by Professor Jack Lohman

The Say it Again, Say it Differently project, which has led to the compilation of this handbook, was an important activity for the London Museums Hub between 2004 and 2006. Written communication is fundamental to museums as the text presented on panels, labels, audio guides, computer interactives as well as on web sites is crucial to developing the messages and stories that audiences draw from displays and online resources. Research conducted as part of the *Renaissance in the Regions* initiative found that only 56 per cent of visitors to the four London Hub museums found displays easy to understand. Accessible text presenting a structured story, which is developed and tested with target audiences in mind, will engage visitors, encourage them to read or discover more information, stay longer and visit again. Practical suggestions on how to achieve this are presented in the handbook.

Say it Again, Say it Differently has been a collaborative project involving three Hub museums – the Museum of London, Geffrye Museum and London’s Transport Museum – and three partners – Grant Museum of Zoology, The Brunel Museum and Bromley Museum Service. There have been opportunities for colleagues from the six museums to learn together, share experiences and develop skills. The six museums represent just a selection of museums in London and, between them, offer interesting case studies with subject matter ranging from natural history and transport to social history; the physical challenges of densely-packed Victorian cases, restrictive historic buildings, and complete re-workings of the exhibition space, and target audiences ranging from families, key stage 2 school children, and adults interested in art and design.

I would like to acknowledge the support and guidance of the project consultants, Tim Gardom Associates Limited, who provided expertise on interpretative planning and scripted communication; Alison James and Nicky Boyd, and Susie Fisher Associates who helped colleagues with their new exhibitions through evaluation and audience testing; and Louise Doughty of the London Museums Hub who managed the project and assisted with the preparation of this handbook. Colleagues at the museums not only embraced the project with enthusiasm and energy but also provided honest and open assessments of the challenges and successes of exhibition re-development for inclusion in this handbook.

In presenting the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project methodologies and results, we hope museums across London and the UK will feel equipped to embark on their own *Saying it Differently* project. Not all museums can afford to re-display entire galleries, but updating their graphic panels, labels and online resources by following the techniques in this handbook represents an efficient and effective means of refreshing displays and re-igniting visitor interest in any museum.

Professor Jack Lohman

Director, Museum of London Group
Lead partner, London Museums Hub

Acknowledgements

The *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project was funded by the London Museums Hub, as part of its business plan for 2004-06.

The London Museums Hub is a consortium of four London museums funded by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council as part of the Renaissance in the Regions initiative. The London Hub museums are the Museum of London (lead partner), the Geffrye Museum, the Horniman Museum and London's Transport Museum. The Hub's aims are to develop new ways of working, deliver services to users of London museums and work with partners across the region.

Tim Gardom Associates Limited (TGA Ltd), a content development consultancy, was appointed in 2004 to provide expert advice, skills sharing and support on interpretative strategies, narrative structure and approaches to scripted communication.

Alison James and Nicky Boyd, museum evaluation consultants, conducted audience consultation, baseline, formative and summative evaluation at the Museum of London, Geffrye Museum, Bromley Museum Service, The Brunel Museum and Grant Museum of Zoology. Susie Fisher Associates conducted baseline evaluation and prototype testing for London's Transport Museum.

Funding from the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project supported the following elements:

- Bromley's Past – a new history gallery (formerly the Archaeology gallery) at Bromley Museum Service by Acme Studios
- The Brunel Museum by Hotrod Creations Limited
- Graphics, interpretation and evaluation of the re-displayed galleries, 1600 – 1800, at the Geffrye Museum
- Grant Museum of Zoology by Acme Studios
- Evaluation in the form of qualitative audience research into the design of new exhibition story frames and text at London's Transport Museum
- Testing, design and print costs of the graphics in the new Medieval London gallery at the Museum of London. Graphic designers were Lucy or Robert and gallery design was by At Large

This handbook was written by Alison Grey, Tim Gardom and Catherine Louisa Booth. It was edited by Louise Doughty and Darryl McIntyre.

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Tim Gardom Associates Limited

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Tim Gardom

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Say it Again, Say it Differently – The project

Say it Again, Say it Differently was one of the main projects delivered by the London Museums Hub between 2004 and 2006.

In early 2004 some 98 participants, from 38 London museums, received training on creating exhibition text devised and delivered by Dr Paulette McManus. Those participants were invited to apply to take part in a skills sharing project leading to the renewal of gallery interpretation. Three partner museums were selected to work alongside three Hub museums that had already embarked upon major gallery projects.

The project was designed to give Hub and non-Hub museums the opportunity to learn together and try new techniques for communicating with visitors, to share good practice in the field of written communication and to evaluate how much impact changing the tone of voice and scripted communication in an exhibition can have on the visitor experience.

This handbook reflects the culmination of two years' work on this project. Examples and learning points from each museum are presented, together with practical tips for museum professionals.

Words are often seen as an inexpensive way of reinterpreting exhibits. After all, it's the display element that can be most easily changed. They are only words, and anyone can write...

But although words are cheap compared to, say, a new interactive or display case, good and effective scripted communication is more than just words. It is words and ideas, communicated in the context of a 3D environment. This involves having a 'big idea', defining the information that needs to be communicated and developing a communication strategy, not just what you wish to say, but to whom and how. Saying it again and saying it differently is a creative process, not a paint by numbers exercise. This handbook shows how to get the most out of creative and collaborative working between the members of the museum team, visitors and consulting professionals.

Say it Again, Say it Differently – The participants





Who: Bromley Museum Service

Where: The Priory, Church Hill,
Orpington, BR6 0HH

What:

A small local authority museum, housed in a Grade II listed thirteenth century building. Temporary exhibitions are held in the Great Hall, and there are three permanent galleries.

How is it run?

The London Borough of Bromley employs three full time members of staff, namely the curator, the learning and access officer and the museum assistant.

Why re-display?

This was a local museum which didn't cover any local history between the Norman conquest and the twentieth century. The missing 900 years worried staff and visitors. The plan was to re-display the Archaeology gallery to tell the story of Bromley, from 500,000 years ago to the present day.

Tips from Bromley Museum Service:

Write an interpretive strategy

- Thinking about the audience the gallery is aimed at is absolutely key

Prepare properly for your evaluations

- Spend time with your designers and have text and prototype designs in a fit state to meet the public before your formative evaluation
- Use your baseline evaluation not just to look at what you've got, but to test out ideas for your new gallery too

Get help when you need it!

- We really wanted to write the gallery text ourselves, but when evaluation showed that we pitched the text at the wrong level we realised we needed the help of an editor

'The Say it Again, Say it Differently project came along at exactly the right time for us – we were thinking of redeveloping our Archaeology gallery to cover a broader period of time – this meant not only covering new historic periods, but also updating the graphic design and interpretation. This project gave us the opportunity to get the support we needed to do this.' Bromley Museum Service



Bromley Museum Service: H. Schneebeli



Bromley Museum Service: J. Neilgan



Bromley Museum Service: J. Neilgan



Bromley Museum Service: J. Neilgan

**Who: The Brunel Museum
(formerly Brunel Engine House)**

**Where: Railway Avenue, Rotherhithe,
London, SE16 4LF**

What:

A small independent museum celebrating the eighth wonder of the world – the tunnel Sir Marc Brunel and his son Isambard Kingdom Brunel built under the Thames. The tube ride through the world’s first-ever underwater tunnel comes as an optional extra.

How is it run?

One enthusiastic curator, a board of trustees and a team of volunteers.

Why redisplay?

The only displays available were geared towards engineers and knowledgeable Brunel enthusiasts. The museum needed material that could convey the excitement and magnitude of the Brunels’ achievements to family groups, non-specialist adults and especially, given that Isambard Kingdom Brunel is now on the curriculum, children visiting in school groups.

‘It’s been perfect for us as a project and as a piece of funding. What the display has done has changed what was a badly lit building with a technical display into quite a dramatic space. Working in a small museum with no staff team is quite an isolated experience, so for me it was a real thrill to have input from other creative energies. It was very exciting and a relief to have other people to work with. And it has been transforming. This was just a little understood building with tatty technical display boards. Now it is The Brunel Museum. The Trustees are delighted. This has been a momentous year for us. The project has been fab, and it demonstrates the transforming effect of professional input in a small museum.’ **The Brunel Museum**

Tips from The Brunel Museum:

- The installation is an event! Following Brunel’s 1826 precedent, we charged a ‘shilling’ to watch it, were listed as ‘Critic’s Choice’ in *Time Out*, and have since seen an upsurge in visitor numbers
- Think outside the box. The project, and the consultants, revolutionised our thinking
- Thank your volunteers
- New display, new organisation. A big project like this can change your organisation forever



The Brunel Museum: H. Schneebeli



The Brunel Museum: J. Neilgan



The Brunel Museum: J. Neilgan

Who: Geffrye Museum
Where: Kingsland Road,
London, E2 8EA

What:

Geffrye Museum is one of London's independent museums and part of the London Museums Hub. Housed in a close of Georgian almshouses, it shows the changing style of the English domestic interior in a series of period rooms from 1600 to the present day.

How is it run?

It is an independent charitable trust run by a board of trustees, with approximately six staff in the curatorial department and five staff in education, plus support staff.

Why redisplay?

At Home 1600-1800 is a major gallery improvement project by the Geffrye Museum to create new displays on seventeenth and eighteenth century domestic interiors, based on new and recent research, and to provide visitors with a fresh look at urban living conditions in the past. The project is a key part of a wider strategy to improve physical and intellectual access. The Say it Again, Say it Differently project funded investigation and evaluation of scripted communication as part of this wider project.



Geffrye Museum: J. Neilgan

'The feedback from the focus groups has been essential in helping us to form and hone our new approach to gallery interpretation. Their comments have been taken seriously and generated much discussion and debate on the project team, and more widely throughout the museum.' Geffrye Museum

Geffrye Museum: J. Neilgan



Geffrye Museum: J. Neilgan

Who: Grant Museum of Zoology,
University College London
Where: Gower St, London WC1E 6BT

What:

A small university museum, attached to the Biology Department at University College London. It was established in 1828 as a teaching collection, and the collection is still primarily used for teaching purposes. There is one L-shaped room, packed with bones and other specimens.

How is it run?

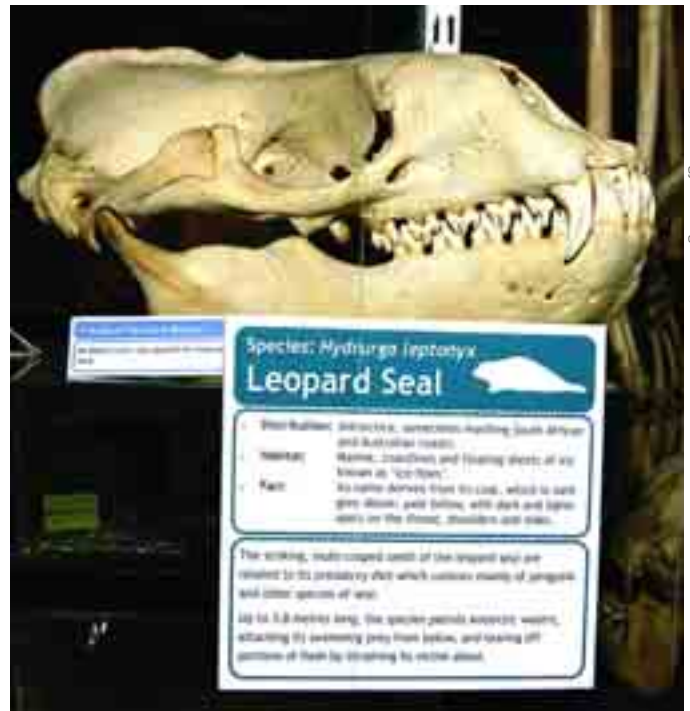
Two curators, one full-time, one half-time, both zoologists. Unpaid support from other members of university staff and students.

Why redisplay?

When the general public dropped in, they were baffled and bemused by the sheer number of exhibits and their scientific labels. The goal was to re-interpret the collection so that non-specialist visitors could appreciate it.

Tips from Grant Museum:

- Writing a design brief is crucial – it's the way a designer will get to know you, your collection and your aims
- Plan for yourself – set your own deadlines and meet them, so that other 'urgent' tasks cannot derail your project
- Get an independent evaluation group
- Write your strategy, to give you internal consistency



Grant Museum of Zoology: J. Neligan



Grant Museum of Zoology: J. Neligan



Grant Museum of Zoology: J. Neligan

'The chance to take part in the project was fantastic. We'd committed core funding over the past ten years to do re-interpretation, but without access to the expertise, so that everything, from writing the material to designing and mounting it, was attempted in-house, and frankly, it was a disaster. Being involved in *Say it Again, Say it Differently* gave us the momentum we needed, with deadlines to meet and expert input to keep us going. We learned key skills, such as how to write a creative brief, and that was truly helpful. We also had the opportunity to choose our designers, and to work closely with them, and that was an absolutely positive and productive process.' Grant Museum



Grant Museum of Zoology: J. Neligan

Who: London's Transport Museum

Where: Covent Garden Piazza,
London WC2E 7BB

What:

A major London museum interpreting the social and transport history of London, past, present and future.

How is it run?

The museum is owned and operated by Transport for London (part of the Greater London Authority), and employs around one hundred staff, including a large education department focusing on safety and citizenship education.

Why tackle the project?

In September 2005, the museum closed for eighteen months to undertake a major transformation of the building, exhibitions and services. It has been the museum's ambition to maintain the involvement of the visitor in the project team throughout, and *Say it Again, Say it Differently* funding enabled the Museum to test exhibition design and text with future museum audiences. This was done as part of a qualitative audience research strategy running through the duration of the project.

Tips from London's Transport Museum:

- Identify your target audiences and consult them regularly throughout the project
- Ensure the whole project team, including external designers, is committed to the process
- Schedule the consultation at a stage when sufficient information is available, but early enough to ensure audience feedback can genuinely influence the project
- Involve the staff who spend time working closely with audiences in the content development process



TfL/London's Transport Museum: J. Neligan



TfL/London's Transport Museum: J. Neligan

'Involvement in the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project has been of great value in the development of an innovative audience led museum. It has enabled us to test plans for exhibition design and text, and respond effectively to the needs and interests of identified museum audiences.'

London's Transport Museum

TfL/London's Transport Museum: J. Neligan



Who: The Museum of London

Where: 150 London Wall,
London, EC2Y 5HN

What:

A major London museum, looking at London's history and culture through different ages and perspectives.

How is it run?

Around two hundred and fifty people work at the museum. The Medieval London gallery project had a large cross organisation team, with a core team of curators, designers, conservators and access and learning staff.

Why tackle the project?

In 2004 the Museum of London embarked on creating a new Medieval London gallery. Funding from the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project provided opportunities to test ideas and prototypes through focus groups and evaluation, and ensured that the museum thought hard about the relationships between displays and information, the layering of information and the most appropriate means of communicating with visitors and meeting audience expectations.

Tips from Museum of London:

- Test ideas you are unsure about
- Listen to what the focus group says and make changes
- Make sure your designers take on board the results from focus groups
- Take the focus groups seriously and make good prototypes to test
- Identify your target audiences – essential



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'The Medieval London gallery plans were already well advanced in late 2004. It was initially difficult trying to fit our *Say it Again* commitments into well-developed plans. We worried that the focus groups would be too late in the process and that we wouldn't be able to use them effectively, but then it all worked out brilliantly. The main advantage of the project was that it gave us the chance to test ideas that the team had discussed and about which there was conflict or doubt. And the positive response of the focus groups meant that things which might have been considered less important, such as the children's captions and the interactives, didn't get cut when the crunch came. It also changed the way we wrote some of the text. It would have been good to have had the focus groups and the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* team involved at an earlier stage. The gallery is definitely materially different from what it would have been because of this project.' Museum of London

How the handbook is structured

1. Discovery – page 17

Finding out what you are, who you serve and what you have. The handbook suggests how to make an assessment of your existing offer, its strengths and weaknesses, and where to look for other things that your museum can offer visitors.

2. Creation – page 27

Working out what you want to do or say and who is going to listen. The handbook shows how your 'big idea' can be transformed into an interpretive strategy. This describes the vision and scope of your project in a shareable form for colleagues, funding bodies, designers, visitor advocates and other stakeholders.

3. Implementation – Stage 1 – page 41

Finding and briefing your team. The handbook looks at writing a creative brief and finding creative consultants, including designers, graphic designers, picture researchers and writers.

4. Implementation – Stage 2 – page 49

Working with others to make it happen. The handbook discusses working with the team to complete your project. This includes project management, agreeing a schedule, creating a script, considering the design stages, and planning for formative evaluation.

5. Saying it differently – page 59

Working with words in the exhibition space. Words in an exhibition are never seen in isolation – they are part of a three dimensional picture. The handbook looks at how to make the most of this opportunity through creative use of text, and gives examples of imaginative use of text for communication.

6. Outcomes – page 73

Measuring the success of your project against your evaluation criteria. The handbook uses examples from the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project to illustrate different ways to evaluate and interpret the results.

Tools and Resources – page 83

The handbook includes a range of useful templates, addresses and guidelines.





1. Discovery

Finding out what you are, who you serve and what you have

Developing a new exhibition, or revitalising an existing one, is an exciting opportunity. It is also a major challenge for everyone involved. New skills and thinking will be needed and the outcome is very public indeed.

The first chapters of this handbook are based on the three steps to preparing a new display:

- **Discovery** – finding out what you are, what you have and who you're for
- **Creation** – stating clearly what you want to say and be
- **Implementation** – working with others to make it happen.

What happened in *Say it Again, Say it Differently*?

During the discovery phase of the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* programme, TGA Ltd spent time with each participating museum. Together they discussed the proposed projects, shared ideas and began gathering answers to the discovery questions.

Each museum considered key items in their collection and how they would assess the strengths and weaknesses of what they had. They were asked about their visitor profile and about key players involved in the museum. Time was spent exploring the museum's perception of their role in the community and their overall ethos.

Formal baseline evaluations were carried out by professional evaluators at each of the participating museums. Focus groups were recruited, their impressions recorded and analysed, and the information fed back to the museums.

In the discovery phase you build baseline information about the museum as it is now. This gives you solid ground on which to build in later phases. The key to discovery is getting honest answers to the questions set out below. Answering means looking with fresh eyes at material you think you know. Cherished assumptions may be challenged and the status quo overturned.

What we learned during the discovery phase:

- People with authority to act need to be on board from the start
- Outsiders can help you see yourself differently
- Use your collective imagination
- Challenge every preconception about your museum and its collections, especially amongst those who work there

Here are some common preconceptions to look out for:

- Everyone loves the...(badly lit coin display)
- It's a very important...(inexplicable widget)
- You have to show the full set of...(stamps, shards, bottled slugs)
- People must be told...(the granular detail)
- Visitors come here for facts...

'Our visits to the museums were like speed dating – a first impression of personality and style, likes and dislikes, needs and ambitions. The speed was good – it took us straight to the main issues.' TGA Ltd

You do: Discovery

The discovery process involves gathering together baseline information about your museum as it is now. At the start you need to decide who takes responsibility for finding answers to the discovery questions. Time pressures may mean you give this job to a junior member of staff or a volunteer. If you do, make sure they have full backing from the top and guaranteed access to key personnel within the museum.

The discovery phase is also your first chance to test out your ideas for the new display. These ideas may be in quite loose form at this stage, but you can get really valuable reactions and input, especially if you have some initial visual ideas to share. Good questions when prompting discussions with different groups could include:

- What do you think is missing from the museum now?
- What would you like to know more about?
- What have you seen elsewhere that you think could work well here?

Discovery Questions:

How big is your project?

It is wise to agree parameters in writing at the outset, so that everyone is clear what is being attempted. Without this clarity the process may falter.

What is the scope of your project? Are you planning to refresh the entire museum, or simply the case in the corner? What is your known budget? Are funds available from anywhere else?

On a very practical level, what is the timescale for delivery? What progress milestones will show you are on track? And who is responsible for which aspects of the process?

Who do you need to work with and what are their priorities?

A broad range of people and organisations will have a stake in any exhibition project you carry out, and have potential to hinder rather than help you. It is wise to get them on board, so identify your museum's stakeholders, what their interests are and how they might be able to help you.

Consider those who have provided funding or elements of the collection, the museum staff team and volunteers, local authorities, trustees, school groups and regular users. What are their goals and priorities? Who needs to be consulted? How will you take their views into account? Who makes the decisions?

You may find that other groups have views about your museum that are very different from your own. This is a good opportunity to question assumptions about what you are, what you do and how well you do it.

Tips:

- If you want to keep things moving, appoint a project leader or co-ordinator
- Make sure your reporting system is robust. Keeping everyone in the loop is vital
- The discovery process takes up busy people's time, challenges assumptions and brings change. Whoever leads it must have the authority to move the project forward

'We set up an internal focus group, including representatives of all the regular users of the museum, to discuss ideas and find a way through. This meant that all the people with a vested interest were working together to achieve the re-interpretation of our collection.' Grant Museum

Grant Museum of Zoology: J. Neilgan



Grant Museum of Zoology: J. Neilgan



Who visits your museum now, and how much do they know?

Knowing who your visitors are, and why they are visiting, is key to ensuring that you have something enriching to offer them.

Are your current visitors mostly young or old, tourists or locals? Do they speak English? Does your museum attract the expert, who may have travelled a long way to see your particular exhibits, or the passer-by who has just popped in on a rainy day? Does it bring in teachers with groups of children, families on a day out, or adults seeking peace, quiet and enlightenment?

Pinning down just what your current visitors know about your subject before they visit the museum is tricky. The level of 'background knowledge' will be affected by, for instance, recent TV programmes, other media coverage and by the national school curriculum. It is worth taking a look at new and popular books, websites and magazines to check out how these deal with similar subjects. Misconceptions may be widespread, and you may need to take prevailing attitudes and prejudices into account.

Tip

- Talk to your visitors, or chat to staff, volunteers and enablers who know your visitors, to find their answers to these questions

TfL/London's Transport Museum: J. Neilgan



© Museum of London



© Museum of London

'The background knowledge about Isambard Kingdom Brunel was boosted by the *Great Britons* programmes of 2004, and most people are aware that there was a Victorian called Brunel who built things. However, knowledge of the Rotherhithe project is much lower.'

The Brunel Museum

Brunel © National Portrait Gallery



'There is a wealth of knowledge available through wildlife documentaries and newspaper articles. The difficulty for visitors is making the link between that knowledge and the specimen they see.'

Grant Museum

Fred Langford Edwards © Grant Museum



'If you leave pleasure out of the equation of what education is for, you've lost it.' Mary Warnock, BBC Radio 4

What do you want your audience to get out of their visit?

Visiting a museum may bring about a range of outcomes. When visitors come to your museum, what do you want them to get from the experience?

- Information, facts and figures
- Improved understanding
- Change in attitude or behaviour
- New skills
- Motivation to take action
- Inspiration
- Creativity
- Enjoyment

The public will only ask for things they know about, but you can give them more than that. What do you want the new display to achieve that's different? A woolly outcome, (e.g. 'to make a better gallery') won't bring edge and purpose to your plans.

Tip:

- The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) has developed material on Inspiring Learning For All (ILFA), which deals in detail with setting and evaluating learning outcomes. See www.inspiringlearning.gov.uk for a wealth of downloadable resources including a 'question bank' linked to generic learning outcomes. Specific learning outcomes were identified for their target audiences by the *Say it Again* museums
- The Visitor Studies Group offers regular training events and its website (www.visitors.org.uk) contains case studies, resources and lists consultants

What evaluation data do you have, and what do you need?

You may have an ongoing policy of collecting and analysing feedback from your visitors and of evaluating your displays. If so, take the time to review your data. You may need to start collecting information from non-visitors as well.

It's important to have some baseline evaluation of the museum as it stands now to see how visitors and non-visitors respond to the museum or exhibition before any changes are made. This is also an opportunity to gauge responses to some of your ideas for your new exhibition from your target audience. Their feedback should inform your future plans.

The baseline evaluation is the first of at least three stages of evaluation. Formative evaluation comes next, and is carried out when you can test your developing plans. Summative evaluation is carried out when your project is complete. Evaluation enables you to develop 'evidence led' interpretation and to check that you are meeting your objectives. You need a consistent structure for your evaluations, so that you can make valid comparisons and measure change.

Issues to consider include:

- who is going to do the evaluation?
- who is your main target audience?
- what evaluation tools will you use?
- what will you do with the data?

A proper evaluation, carried out skilfully, can give you vital information. It's a time-consuming business, involving the collection and analysis of data. You may undertake this yourself, or you might consider bringing in independent specialists.

'Obviously the tools you choose need to be appropriate to the audience. Children, for instance, need fun interactive evaluation activities.' Nicky Boyd

'Finding the right people for your focus group is challenging, especially when the museums want 'non-visitors'. Existing visitors, who you find in the museum itself, tend to be more motivated. I found people at local shopping centres, at other museums and especially at museum cafés. It all takes time, and you do have to be creative.' Jane Seaman

An effective evaluation will involve consulting your target audience about their impressions, interests and existing knowledge. It will also focus on the outcomes you want for this audience.

There are many evaluation tools to choose from, and using a combination is the best way to ensure your samples and findings are valid.

Focus groups were used as the main evaluation approach in the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project. They enabled the evaluators to collect rich qualitative data, such as evidence about impressions, ideas, feelings and perceptions.

They also allowed the evaluators to incorporate other evaluation tools, including brainstorming, using sticky post-it notes, the use of sticky dots to respond to flipchart questions, the use of visual material in the galleries and responses to prototypes. During the session, open-ended questions were used to encourage discussion, and unclear responses were clarified. The data collected was recorded, and later transcribed and analysed, and the end result was a snapshot of views held by those particular individuals.

See Tools and Resources for a chart showing Evaluation Tools.

'Focus groups require skilled management to ensure that the group remains focused on the task in hand. Facilitators need to be able to speak the right language; set an appropriate tone; ensure everyone has their say and that no single voice dominates; remain objective; manage the timing and bring the group back to the agenda if they go off at a tangent.'

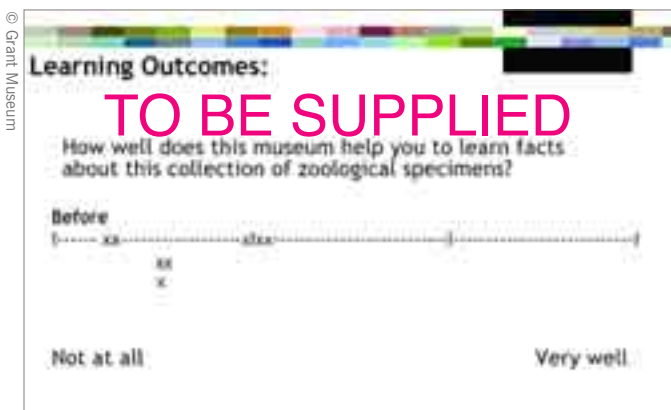
Alison James

Once you have collected your data, you need to present it to all the people who have a stake in the development of your exhibition. This is likely to include curators, designers, educational staff, funders and decision makers. Summarising your evaluation methods and findings in writing is always valuable, but you might also want to present your findings verbally and visually.

Warning: do not take the feedback personally! Listening to what visitor groups may have to say about your museum can be tough, but there is no point collecting the evidence if the museum is not prepared to consider it, and where appropriate, act upon it. This should be seen as an opportunity, not a threat. It's a chance to see with fresh eyes, to find out what your chosen audience really think, and to use the information gathered to shape your plans.

'Our baseline evaluation was so negative. We did know how bad it was, that's why we were so keen to do something about it, but our learning outcomes were quite spectacularly not met. That's never nice!

It made a huge difference having a professional evaluation team to recruit the focus group and run the sessions. People gave much more honest appraisals, and for us, that was much more useful.' Grant Museum



'The focus group wanted help on chronology and also wanted to know interesting stories people don't study in school. So along with discussions with TGA Ltd about our overall concept, the evaluation helped us to decide to widen our remit and cover as much as possible.'

Bromley Museum Service'

'We knew we needed to change when the audiences we wanted to attract said things like this: "London's Transport Museum is not at all creative. You think of the old past, slow, doesn't work, old and staid" (young adult); "Great for kids, or if you were an enthusiast, but nothing in between" (third age adult).'

London's Transport Museum



'For the Geffrye, used to working from a basis of research and scholarship, asking the visiting public to review what they wanted to see was a new and stimulating experience.' Geffrye Museum

'Some of their first focus group felt 'emotionally warm towards the museum', but they also wanted more, and different, information: "I want to know the social, economic and political context..."; "I could wish for more facts – especially odd, quirky snippets that stay in your mind".' Comments from baseline evaluation, Geffrye Museum

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the collection?

Honesty is important here.

Every item in your collection has a story. Times change, and what was interesting 30, or even 10 years ago, may no longer grip a new audience, but if you change the story, you may entrance them again. Alternatively, recent events may have added new lustre to the objects you have, and you need to make sure they shine.

It is stories that will hook your audience, so which of the many possibilities give you the best chance to develop a coherent and exciting narrative for the display as a whole?

Exercise:

Take any object you want to display (teapot, shell, spanner) and stand it in the middle of a large sheet of paper. Now write around it the different stories it can tell.

- Did it have a famous owner?
- Is there anything interesting about how it got here?
- Is it part of an important set?
- Who were the people who made or found it?
- Is it typical or unusual?

Tips:

- Can you still 'see' the collection clearly or is it too familiar? Borrow someone else's eyes to show you what you really have
- Staff and volunteers who see the public may know which items are presently most popular, and which are ignored
- Trying to explain your museum to an outsider using just 20 photographs can help you identify what's important

Your museum exists because it has something worth showing. You need to consider the strengths and weaknesses of your whole collection in order to create the overall narrative that will bind it together and intrigue your chosen audience.

You may have gaps, and taking note of these is the only way to ensure that somehow you can bridge them. Analyse carefully, think creatively about the weaknesses, and build on the strengths.

The Brunel Museum: J. Neilgan



'Our weaknesses include having very few objects, and no real personal items relating to either of the Brunels. However, what we do offer is a museum with a ride, an experience. There's been a big shift in the way we think about this. When people asked, "Can we go in the tunnel?", we used to say, "No, only with a tube ticket." Now we say, "Yes you can, with a tube ticket" and we offer special floodlit journeys.' The Brunel Museum

What's your story?

'The situation is complicated and made more challenging because each object in the collection has numerous and often extremely different meanings. The meanings may be as varied and useful as the questions asked.' Gaynor Kavanagh, 1999

Like most objects in a museum, these ones have many stories to tell:

	Part of set:	Personal association:	As an artefact:
<p><i>Thylacinus cynocephalus</i> (Tasmanian tiger)</p> 	Is part of taxonomically complete collection	Was dissected by Huxley, 'Darwin's bulldog', and part of his collection	A marsupial carnivore, now extinct
<p>The Thames Tunnel</p> 	Is one of a series of tunnels and bridges	Was built by Marc and Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Ruined the former and nearly killed the latter	The first ever underwater tunnel – 'The 8th wonder of the world'
<p>Church bell c.1340</p> 	Is part of a collection of medieval ironwork items	Made by Peter de Weston, whose wife Matilda and son Thomas both died of the Black Death	Still works after 650 years of use

© The Guildhall Library

© Museum of London

'Within the collection are various amazing individual items – dodo bones, a quagga, the exquisite Blaschka models... The challenge was to find a way to explain the taxonomy vividly while drawing out the individual stories behind the "hero" specimens.' Grant Museum



Fred Langford Edwards © Grant Museum



Fred Langford Edwards © Grant Museum

What are your other resources?

Your museum is likely to have resources other than the items in the collection. Noting these will enable you to play to your strengths. Remember the picture archive, oral history archive or items stored 'elsewhere' that are rarely displayed. The museum may be in a famous location or building, or there may be other attractions nearby.

The Brunel Museum



Intellectual capital and research capability are invaluable. Your 'other resources' audit should include the knowledge held by volunteers, staff, educators and other available experts.

Is your exhibition self-contained?

Will your exhibition stand alone, or will there be crossover with, and implications for, other sections of the museum's work? Consider here not just other galleries, but links with other sites and institutions, and also the museum's website and printed matter. Context is important when considering how you will communicate.

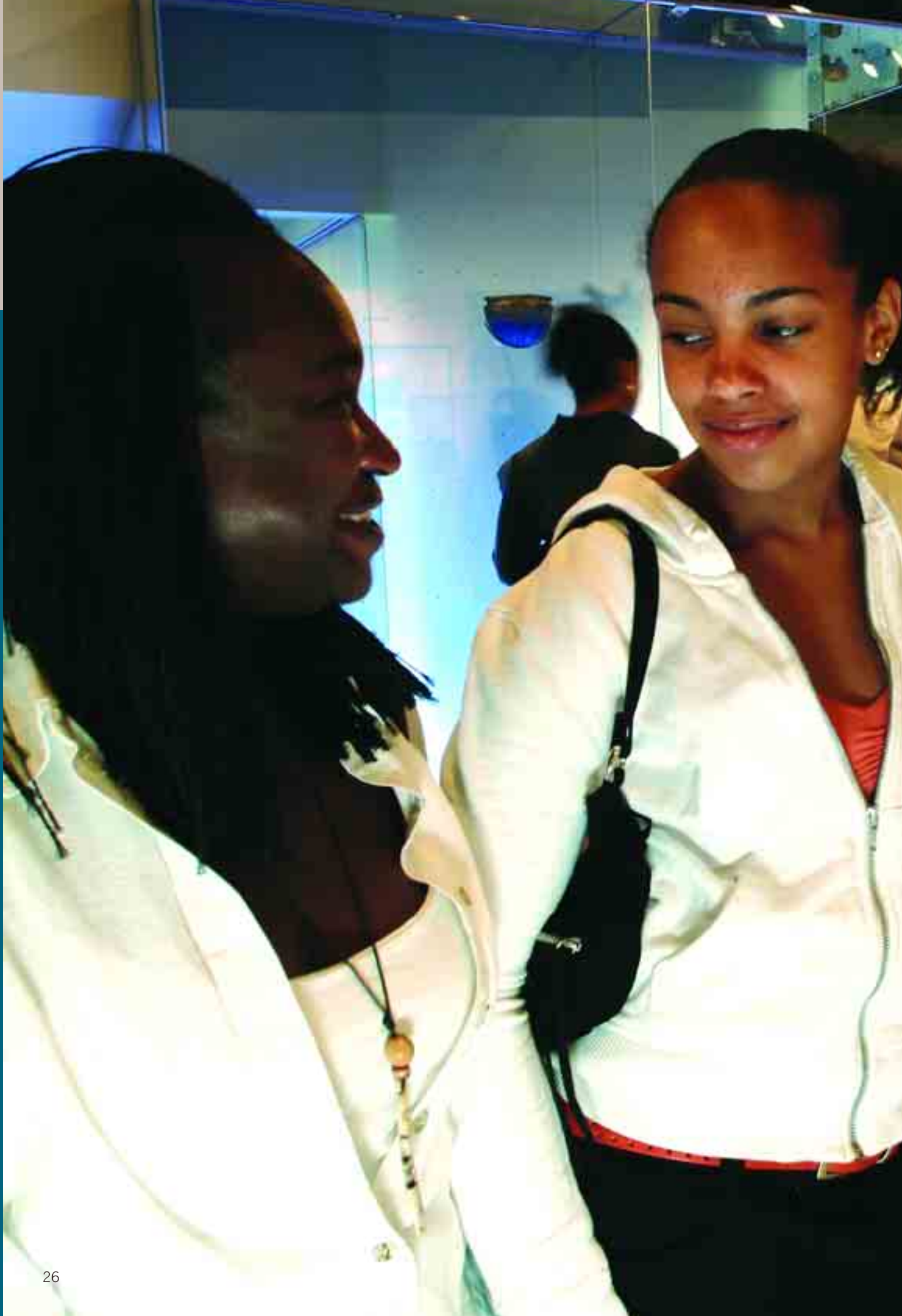
What are your criteria for success, and how will they be measured?

How you measure success depends on what you were aiming at. You might simply count the number of visitors, or check whether you have attracted your target audience. You could measure how long your visitors linger, or what they think of their experience. Evaluation has an important role to play, and checking learning outcomes is useful. See the final chapter, Outcomes, for a discussion of how the museums involved in *Say it Again, Say it Differently* measured up.

Digesting what you have discovered

Discovery is fascinating but not always comfortable. When you bring fresh eyes to your collection, they may see either more, or much less, than you would like. It can be dispiriting to hear that visitors walk straight past your most cherished items or that they never read your panels.

Think carefully about how you share the findings with your team. Everyone needs to see this as a liberating basis for moving forward. You can get to grips with the information you have about your museum as it is now and work with confidence on developing your interpretation in the creation phase.



2. Creation

What do you want to do or say? Who is going to listen?

During the creation phase of the project, you decide precisely what you want to do and who you are doing it for.

At the beginning of the creative process, it is vital to agree on the answers to some fundamental questions as to the nature and purpose of your new display. Once the answers have been agreed, they should be recorded into an interpretive strategy.

The interpretive strategy is a core project document which crystallises the aim and scope of your project ideas, and lets you share them with colleagues, funding bodies, designers and other collaborators. It also identifies what information, pictures and other resources you need to realise your vision.

An interpretive strategy describes:

- what your exhibition is about
- how it will tell this story
- who it will speak to
- which voice it will use
- and why.

What happened during *Say it Again, Say it Differently?*

Shortly after the discovery meetings, a workshop was held to kick-start the creative process. The workshop had several goals:

- creating consensus about pre-design thinking for each museum
- giving participants a clear structure to follow for their interpretive strategy
- sharing skills and generating new ideas within the group
- raising awareness of the variety of approaches available for scripted communication beyond 'museum style' text.

The participants then went back with a further list of questions, which can be seen below. Answering these provided the basis for the development of their interpretive strategy.

What we learned during the creation phase:

- change needs managing. People with authority to act need continued close involvement during the decision making process
- take the time to reach a consensus with your team
- it can take more than one workshop to open minds to the possibility of alternative texts for museums

Tip:

Check out the interpretive strategy documents in Tools and Resources

‘Our corporate plan lays out clearly our ideas and framework for developing the new galleries. *Say it Again, Say it Differently*, questioning from the outside, has prompted us to explain this thinking and answer some of the fundamental questions.’ **Geffrye Museum**



Geffrye Museum: J. Neilgan



Bromley Museum Service: J. Neilgan

‘Initially we thought the idea of an interpretive strategy was quite onerous. But as we were working on it I realised it was worthwhile because it did focus our minds. It made us start to think about some of the structures, about the layout of the gallery and the conceptual framework, about the cross-cutting themes. It proved very valuable. It was very good to do it in that way and also to tie it to the audience.’

Bromley Museum Service

You do: Creation and Interpretive Strategy

‘Decisions get made by the people who turn up. If you want something new to happen in your museum, you’d better be there to make your case.’ TGA Ltd

To develop your interpretive strategy, you will need answers to the questions below. The best person to find the answers is the project co-ordinator, but they need to be aware that it is a process of building consensus, which can be difficult. When people feel passionately about a subject, clashes are almost inevitable, especially when new ideas are involved. Hold on tight. That passion is the life-blood of the museum and can engage and inspire the visitor.

Tips:

- A brainstorming session can be a fruitful way to achieve consensus on different ideas
- Trouble thinking outside the box? Get an outsider in for a session or two. Journalists, publishers, radio or TV producers are good for this. Their input may awaken you to entirely new possibilities
- Make sure the interpretive strategy is seen, agreed and signed off by all key players

Creation Questions

What is the exhibition about?

This is the key question on which everything else depends, because without a clearly defined vision you are likely to pull in different directions and end up going nowhere. It is very helpful to create a single sentence or strapline summarising the exhibition. Inevitably, as you decide what the exhibition is, you are also deciding what it is not, and what you will have to leave out. Those decisions can be tough.

Tips:

- This question is a lot harder than it looks!
- Avoid lists of contents, objects and learning outcomes
- Think about your main themes and ideas. Prioritise, discard and combine until you have your one ‘big idea’
- Use a strapline

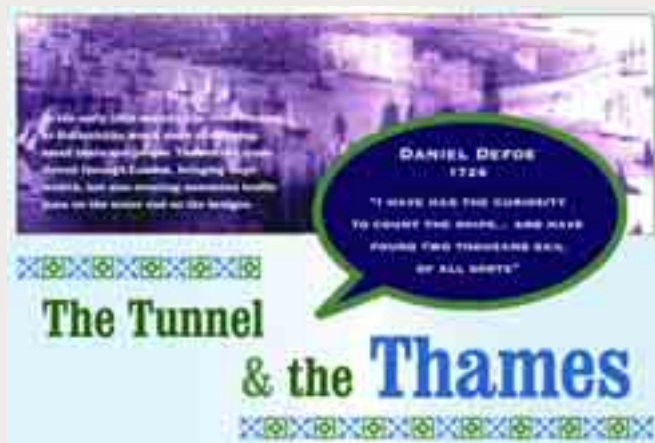
‘Every museum must have a “big idea”, a sentence or a statement of what the exhibition is about. Imagine that you are selling the exhibition to another person who didn’t know anything about it, how would you describe it?’

Lynda Kelley, 2004

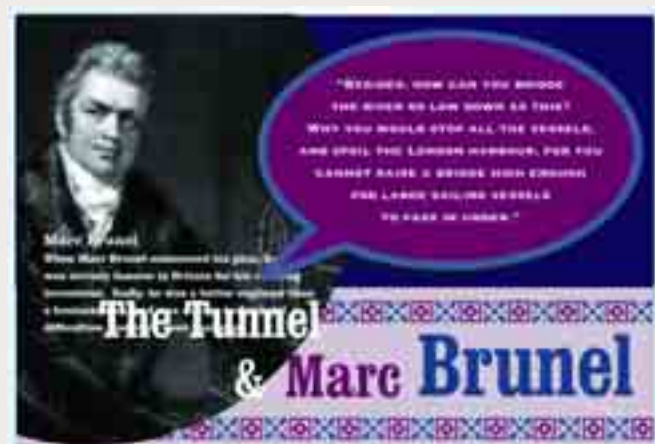
The ‘big idea’, expressed in a one sentence strapline, can give real focus to a diverse project.

The Brunel Museum’s ‘big idea’: ‘The Brunels’ Tunnel at Rotherhithe’

All the interpretation can be summed up as ‘The tunnel and...’ This enabled the museum to tell a wider range of stories about people and events, unconstrained by chronology.



The Brunel Museum © Hotrod Creations Ltd



The Brunel Museum © Hotrod Creations Ltd

Bromley Museum’s ‘big idea’: ‘A walk through the history of Bromley’

A stepping stone timeline on the floor takes the visitor from 5000 BC to the present day.



Bromley Museum Service: H. Schneebeli

Grant Museum’s ‘big idea’: ‘Explore the museum and find out for yourself’

The museum developed a method of interpretation to ‘convey the excitement and energy of exploring the many different and remarkable stories that lay behind even a single exhibit... putting the visitor in the role of finding out for themselves.’



Grant Museum: H. Schneebeli

Who is the exhibition for?

Museums are usually open to all, but the general public is not a homogeneous mass. Do you need to cater for a particular segment of the population, perhaps because your funding depends upon it, or because they are the people most likely to visit? Do you wish to attract a new group who have rarely made use of the museum before?

There are many reasons for wanting, or needing, one audience rather than another, but if you are going to be successful in your quest, your offering must appeal to them. Bearing your target audience in mind will inform the way you develop your exhibition, and how you use design and text.

‘Exhibition plans that do not specify intended audiences, and that do not include research into the knowledge and interests those audiences have in the exhibition themes, are likely only to attract those people whose level of specialist knowledge almost matches that of the exhibition’s curators.’

Eileen Hooper Greenhill, 1994

TfL/London's Transport Museum: J. Neilgan



‘Our challenge has been to target audiences who visit during quieter times and spread footfall throughout the year. These include pre- and post-family adults, particularly those who have already demonstrated interest in the museum’s art and design collections. Another important audience is Londoners eager to find their heritage and personal experience in Museum displays. The audience consultation project has enabled us to work with these audiences to uncover the ‘touch points’ between their interests and our collections.’ London’s Transport Museum

‘Because Brunel now features on the school curriculum, our focus is on attracting and informing school children at Key Stage 2 level, within walking distance and short travelling distance of the museum. The information in the museum itself needs a strong educational slant. For visitors with other specialist interests (Old Rotherhithe, Brunel and London) there will be print handouts available and suggestions for other places to visit.’ The Brunel Museum



© The Brunel Museum

‘Our previous interpretation didn’t work partly because we were trying to target a university audience as well as the visiting public. The museum is used for university teaching, by school groups, by the public at the weekend for fixed activities and by members of the public who drop in between 1 pm and 5 pm. But the first three groups are catered for, they have staff accompanying their visit, so we decided early on to aim our interpretation at the last group, who are mostly non-specialist adults.’ Grant Museum



Grant Museum: J. Neilgan

Grant Museum: J. Neilgan

'There are lots of ways to tell people to stay away from your museum. Making them feel stupid is one of the most effective.' TGA Ltd

What voice do you want to use?

Traditionally, museums have used the rational, measured voice of the museum expert. The suggestion that any other voice could be used often causes shock and surprise. Issues of authority and intellectual rigour clash with the need to reach and teach a non-specialist audience.

Visitors are much more open-minded about this than museums. Your target audience is used to a whole range of different voices, even if they haven't analysed them. They see newspapers, brochures, magazines and adverts, all using different voices to convey information. They know when slang or 'Txt Msg' speak is appropriate, and when a teacher or bank manager needs something more formal. In other words, today's visitors have the ability to glide from one voice to another without hesitation or confusion. So, before automatically opting for the 'friendly expert', think about whether it is the best way to reach and teach your chosen

audience. Will the 'academic/official' voice capture their attention and fill them with enthusiasm?

If not, try another.

Exercise:

Choose one of your favourite items or features in your collection. Imagine:

- 1) An expert from another museum has called in. Explain the item to them
- 2) An alert and earnest 7 year old sees it. Tell them about it

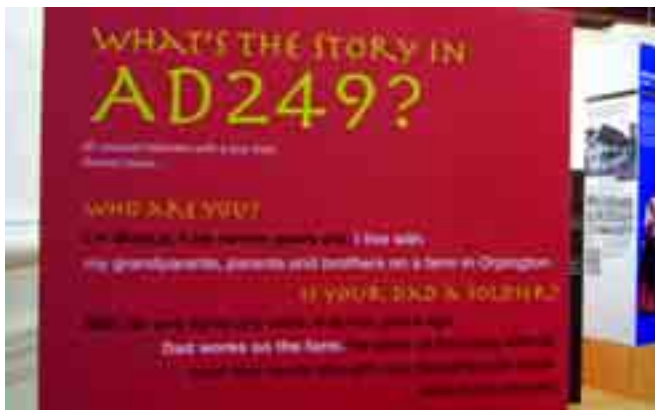
Have you used the same voice? What terms have you had to 'translate'? Have you managed to convey the essence of the item to the child? Have you caught their interest?

Now find a voice to intrigue:

- 3) A bored teenager
- 4) A friendly adult with no expert knowledge
- 5) An adult whose first language is not English

Other voices you could consider include the voices of people involved with an object or event. You might want to use first person accounts, third person or reportage.





Children and teenagers are primarily interested in what other children or teenagers have to say, so you might want young voices running through the gallery.

The voice(s) you use need not know everything. They could leave room for investigation and exploration, or room for the audience to draw their own conclusions.

Tips:

- Get together a test group including members of your target audience, and see what voices they would choose for your museum. Try not to load your questions
- Older children and teenagers enjoy being consulted. Intimidated by groups of kids? Ask local schools and teachers to help you
- Beware of knee-jerk reactions. If the topic fills you with alarm, and leaves you muttering about 'dumbing down'; 'lowest common denominator'; 'tabloid curating'; 'poorly educated visitors', think about why your reactions are so strong. Could you be leaving a comfort zone for something new?

Breaking away from the expert museum voice will have a real impact on how you treat objects, text and pictures in your display. Words aimed at children look different from those aimed at adults, and are also nearer the ground. If you are offering more than one answer to a question, how will you show the question? If you are presenting two different views about the same object (an Asian and a Western view about an East India Company document, for example) then you want that difference to register visually.

The choice of voice or voices within the display is absolutely crucial to the nature of the visitor experience you want to create. Everyone working on the project needs to understand and buy into this.

Could this quote, written about a museum label, apply anywhere in your museum?

'The language here suggests that the writer, and by implication the museum itself, has not seriously considered the readers at all... The museum has not considered the relationship between the knowledge it has produced and its use by real people. If asked who this text was written for, the writer would almost certainly respond: 'For the general public.'

Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, 2000

'We came up with three ideas to carry the children's voice and tested them at the baseline evaluation. The focus group liked the concept for the captions and wanted them to be bright and bold to catch their eye. They preferred the cartoon character to the original medieval character. They also wanted activities for the children, such as dressing up. The families really liked the 'lift the flap' panel – this is active learning and they liked finding the answers to questions. They wanted lots of them in the gallery.' Museum of London

What variety of visitor experience do you want?

Visitors often enjoy engaging in a variety of ways with the objects and text on display. Furthermore, as people have different learning styles (see *Tools and Resources*), it makes sense to provide a choice of approaches.



Tips:

- Variety is not an end in itself. Make sure what you are doing suits your audience, works with the narrative structure and supports your 'big idea' strapline
- Focus groups often want hi-tech interactives which may be out of reach of your budget. Can you provide any low-tech alternatives? Try:
 - Touch and feel investigations
 - Lift the flap/spin the wheel/guess what I am
 - Dressing up or role play

'If you are just going around and it's just ordinary information, I get bored. If there is some interactive thing just around the corner, it keeps you going.'
Child's comment, summative evaluation, Museum of London

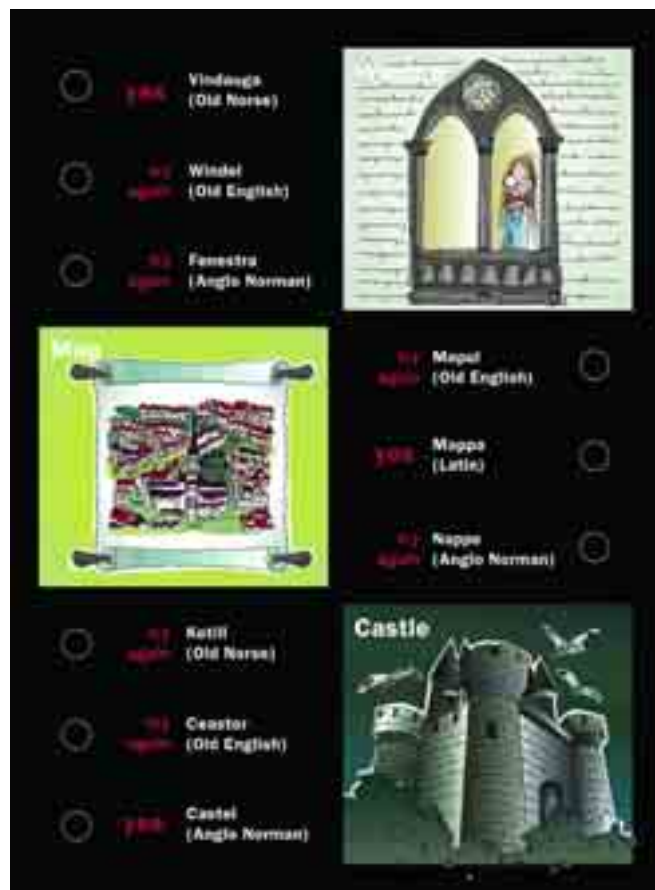
The terms interactive, or active learning, are often used by visitor groups as code for ‘show me, don’t tell me, let me make up my own mind or find out for myself’. So consider including:

- **Investigation**
Questions, problems, evidence that encourage visitors to think and work things out for themselves
- **Interactivity and fun**
Engages the audience with the material, encourages conversation and group interaction
- **Object-led interpretation**
Establishes authenticity. An experience you can only get in this one place
- **Expertise-led interpretation and live enablers**
People love to meet people, but your expert needs to be very good. They are the main voice of your museum for the visitors who meet them
- **News and development updates**
- **Archive access**

What are your assets? What do you need?

‘Assets’ is a useful moviemaker’s term used to describe all the components that must be assembled to make a film. In museum display terms this means objects, pictures, text, audio visual and interactive exhibits. It may also mean information and research as well as object conservation. Most important of all, it means people’s time.

You will need to do an audit of the assets you have in place and those you are going to need. It is important to be realistic here and not plan your display around assets you do not have. On the other hand you may well need to look for material outside your core collection if you want to tell broader, more people focused stories.



How will you structure your narrative?

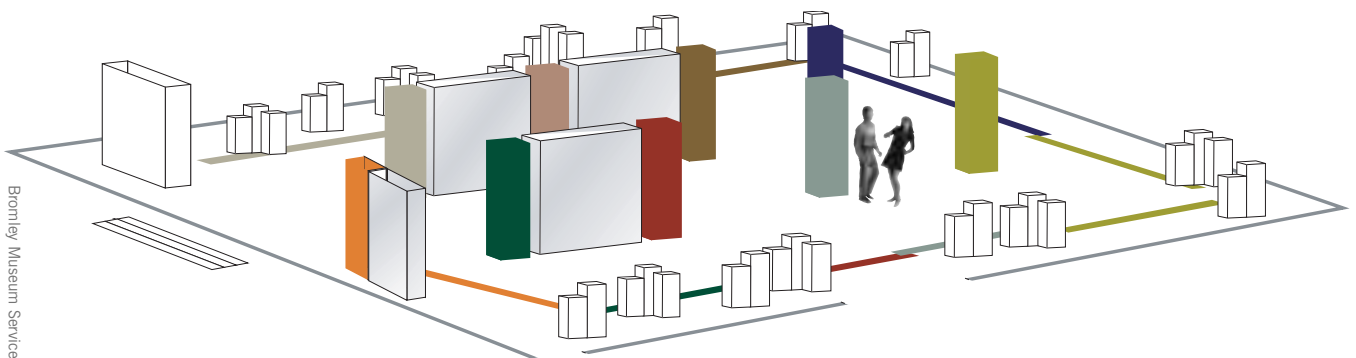
When your display is finished, your visitor will 'walk through' your narrative. They will physically start in one place and finish in another. For them, that will be the beginning and the end of your story. As they walk, certain pieces of information will be revealed. Structuring your storyline and the order and pace at which information is released needs to take into account the physical space. Take the opportunity to plan how you want to develop your themes and unfold your story. The impact of different pieces of information will depend on where within the overall space they are sited. What are the highs and lows of the experience? How will people know what comes first and where to go next?

Since the sequence of your story is important, the physical layout of the space can be used to some extent to encourage people to encounter it in the order you want. This is what 3D designers do best. Consult an expert if you can. A good designer will take your ideas and transform them. Now is the time to plan how you want your story to emerge. When you come to create the new display in three dimensions this will give a narrative logic to the physical structure. This applies as much to a single graphic panel as to a whole exhibition or even museum.

Sometimes there are physical limitations that you have to take into account. Brunel had to work around a vast, irrelevant engine. Bromley has a listed building, and has to be gentle with their historic panelled walls. Grant couldn't move their objects or cases at all. Nevertheless, they all found a narrative structure that made a virtue out of an apparent limitation.

'It became apparent that a chronological structure, covering the fifteen years it took to build the tunnel, would prove repetitive. Major events such as floods and bankruptcies occurred with alarming regularity. We decided to use the tunnel itself as the backbone, but link it to different themes, for instance 'The Tunnel and Dangers and Disasters', and 'The Tunnel and Marc Brunel'. Meanwhile, visitor flow was already determined by the structure of the museum so it was possible to work out a sequence for the presentation of different ideas.' **The Brunel Museum**

'As the layout and subject of the exhibition is evolved, a story shape emerges which shows how the text works within the three dimensional environment of visitors, cases, objects and viewing points.' **TGA Ltd**

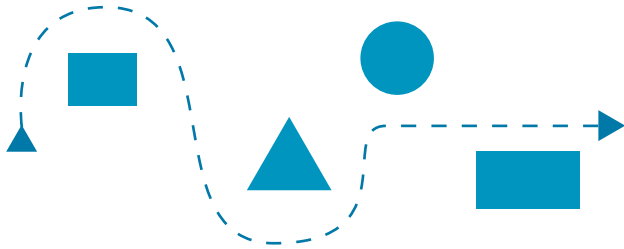


Whether you have the luxury of planning your display space, or the challenge of a fixed layout, it is worth being aware of how gallery shapes lend themselves to different forms of narrative. Here are some museum classics:

© TGA Ltd

The 'intestinal' route

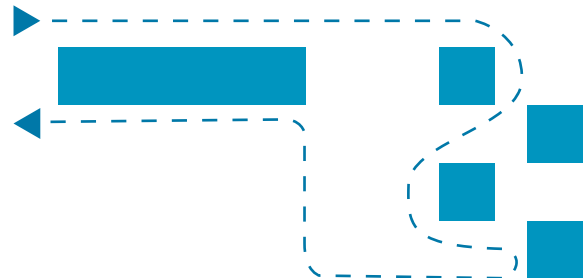
Fixed, one way route past exhibits



- The route is prescribed, with visitors passing the exhibits in a given order
- Great for a sequential narrative or for strict chronology
- Can feel like an unfolding adventure
- Poor for comparison of different parts of the story – no going back to look again

'there and back again' route

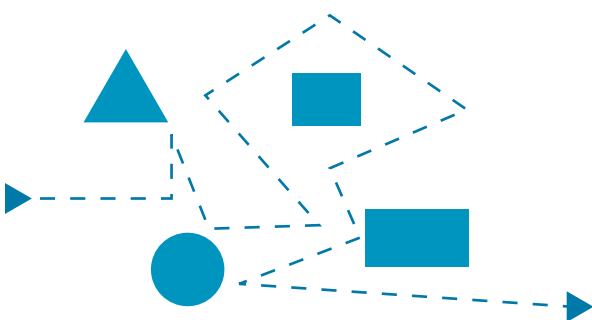
Go out past the first thing you saw – and see it with new eyes



- The visitor sees key items on their way in and then again on the way out, but with new eyes
- Powerful for key messages – for instance, a Georgian rum punch bowl and sugar loaf have a different meaning after walking round an exhibition on slavery
- Gives an awareness of changing perspective

The 'pinball' route

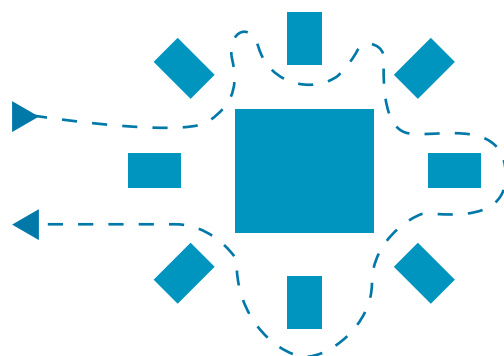
Choose where you go around an open space



- Visitor can choose to go anywhere, in any order
- Great for a thematic narrative and for comparison
- Gives a sense of exploration
- Doesn't suit chronology or a sequenced order of information release

'hero in the middle'

Everything refers back to a single idea



- A central hero object with everything leading to and away from it
- Good if you have one object of real significance
- Works well with a thematic approach
- Not good for chronology

Working out your narrative structure will not only give overall shape to your display, but also help identify the main sections of your story. Several factors come into play here. What are your 'star' objects? Where do you have good picture support? What are the exciting high points of the story? Where do you want visitors to stop and reflect?

To help determine a structure for your story, ask these questions about it:

- Do your visitors need to follow the story in a particular order, or can it be understood in any direction?
- Do they need to encounter key information at the beginning?
- Is chronology important, and if so, do you want to pin the exhibition around broad time frames or vital key dates? Do visitors need to follow a strict chronological sequence?
- Are themes important, and if so, do you want a more open structure that enables comparison?
- Is there a logical hierarchy to the material, such as scientific principle?
- Can you weave stories together, giving visitors a choice on which to follow?
- Can you layer your stories, so that at each stage in the narrative there are elements of fact, opinion, individual stories and interactive or investigative material?
- Do you want to leave things open, or reach a conclusion?

'Previously there was a pinball structure, with no obvious way to go round, and people just stopped, confused. When in the 1990s we introduced the KidZones, we found they provided a structure for adults as well. So now we're going to offer a fixed way round for everyone, basically a chronological journey.'

London's Transport Museum



TfL/London's Transport Museum: J. Neiligan

‘Initially we had an idea that the gallery might focus on particular time periods, on Romans, Tudors, WW2, to maximise on space and to follow the school curriculum. TGA Ltd made us think about the gaps. They asked, “What would be the glue?... What would be the overarching concept?”’ Bromley Museum Service

Bromley Museum Service: H. Schneebeli



‘There was a fixed way of interpreting our exhibits. It’s a taxonomic collection and has to be displayed taxonomically. But the antiquated way it is set out is actually a key strength, along with the fact that it offers such a variety of types of information.’ Grant Museum

Grant Museum: J. Neilgan



Create your interpretive strategy

If you have answered the questions in the *Discovery* and *Creation* chapters, you will have the information you need to create your interpretive strategy.

A few fireworks at this stage are not unusual as people’s goals and passions collide. Compromise will be necessary.

The importance of writing down what you have agreed cannot be stressed too strongly. Having an articulated and written shared vision will enable you to enthuse trustees, possible sponsors and other key players. It will also help you to engage with your creative consultants. With your interpretive strategy in place, you can begin to implement your plans.

Tips:

- Next time someone has a ‘brilliant idea’ for the exhibition, test it against your interpretive strategy. Is it in line with the exhibition aims, or will it draw you off course?
- If there is conflict in the team, think about using formative evaluation to run the contentious ideas past your target audience
- Formative evaluation is a great way to test all your decisions. Begin preparing for it now, although you won’t actually run it until you have some prototypes to test



3. Implementation – stage one

Finding and briefing the team

The implementation phase of the project generally requires you to work with creative consultants to make the project happen.

This phase has two stages:

I) finding and briefing the team

II) working with them to bring your project to fruition

Do not attempt to embark on a project like this alongside your existing duties. The *Say it Again, Say it Differently* partners received funding to employ extra staff to cover their posts whilst working on the project. Where possible, try to delegate specific tasks and mini-projects that will need little staff supervision, as this will free up your time more effectively.

Make sure you have enough time to be to be creative as well as managing your project. The many tasks of project management can make it hard to find periods of thinking time to work on your interpretative strategy, script or text production.

Consultation and ‘sign-off’ are time consuming. Whether you are planning to consult with members of the public, update your team regularly or make presentations to the board of trustees or the council, you need time to prepare and organise. And you must allow time for people to absorb and comment on proposals for your consultation to be meaningful.

What happened during *Say it Again, Say it Differently*?

Once the museums had completed their baseline evaluations and prepared their interpretive strategies, a second workshop took place. The goals of this workshop were to:

- provide guidance on writing creative briefs
- bring museum professionals and creative consultants together to talk about how they structure their work and what they need from each other at different stages
- understand the skills of the creative consultants to get the best value out of the relationship.

The small museums, that had previously had little or no contact with outside creative consultants, found the guidance on preparing a creative brief extremely helpful. Three designers were invited to tender for each job, and each museum chose the designers with whom they could work most comfortably.

'The density of our displays and type of material could not be changed. We were working within restrictions. One designer said it was 'all very grey and boring' and produced hideous garish posters. Acme Studios understood that, for us, the restrictions and limitations are positives, they're historical.' Grant Museum

Grant Museum © Acme Studios

**Grant Museum
of Zoology
& Comparative Anatomy**

Monday – Friday, 1-5pm
All are welcome

Admission is free

The Museum runs an active curriculum-linked education service, providing free hands-on workshops for schools, colleges and special interest groups.

The more information contact:
Grant Museum of Zoology
Darwin Building
Department of Biology
University College London
Gower Street
WC1E 6BT
Tel: 0171 509 2681
Fax: 0171 300 7090
Email: zoology@museum.ucl.ac.uk
www.grant-museum.ucl.ac.uk

UCL

Tips:

- If you don't know any designers, copywriters or picture researchers, ask your local Hub or a large museum nearby for recommendations
- Be clear about your total budget at the outset.
- Call potential companies prior to inviting them to tender to avoid sending out creative briefs and tender documents to companies who aren't interested

What we learned while finding the team:

- Design isn't just for large scale projects – it can transform small ones too
- Even smaller museums can put their projects out to tender with several designers, and find the one that most suits their needs
- Time spent preparing your creative briefs gives your whole project clarity

You do: Finding and briefing the team

Your first task is to find and then brief your team. Your new team members may include interpretive planners, picture researchers and designers, writers and graphic designers.

To write an effective creative brief:

- Hold fast to your interpretive strategy – different individuals will tend to pull you away from it. It is there to hold you all together
- Work out what consultants need to know – and that's not everything! Too much information is confusing. Try to inspire them. Make sure you have plenty of background information and resources to offer
- Take time to understand the special skills of your consultants. Check on their previous projects

Right from the start you need to consider how much time you actually have to put into the project, and what role you want the outside consultants to play. Outside consultants can either lead the creative process or execute an already well-developed plan. You can brief and collaborate closely, or leave your consultants more to their own devices. Realism is essential here. If you want this to be a collaborative project you must ring-fence some time to work on it with them. If you want the consultants to do more of the managing, you must have the money to pay for it.

So, decide what role you want each consultant to play in your project, and then prepare a brief, based on your interpretive strategy. Creative consultants can then respond to your brief by tendering for the work, and you can choose your future team.



Bronley Museum Service: H. Schneebeli

Tips:

- Your creative consultants will be working in the three dimensional space of your museum, and they need to be responsive to the opportunities that this gives
- The *Say it Again, Say it Differently* museums found that physical changes to panels, cases, space and layout were needed to hold the new scripting and text ideas
- Make sure that you have designers on board who are experienced in 3D design

Writing your own creative brief

The following structure is useful:

1. Orientation to the project, with brief method statement
2. Summary of interpretive strategy
3. Creative briefs for writers, designers and researchers
4. Response required to brief
5. Practical and contractual details.

Most of the necessary information will be found in the interpretive strategy. It is simply a matter of pulling out what is required for each creative consultant, bearing in mind that they don't need to know everything. A guide to what might be included follows below, but just how brief or detailed you make each section will depend on what seems appropriate for your particular project. Whatever happens, your interpretive strategy should be the guiding light for all the briefs, so that you don't lose direction or momentum.

Step 1: Orientation

The brief should open with an orientation for the reader:

- a description of the museum and the project
- size and scope of the project
- character of the museum
- origins of the project (e.g. HLF bid, important anniversary, new wing, redisplay)
- timescale for implementation and completion.

Followed by a short method statement to explain the museum's intentions and needs from its creative team:

- Degree of collaboration and scope for creativity
- Existing decisions/plans
- Museum team roles and responsibilities.

Step 2: Summary of interpretive strategy

As consultants are unlikely to read the interpretive strategy in full you need to prepare a summary of the main points:

- What is the exhibition about?
- Who is the exhibition for?
- Key messages and objectives.

Next provide a guide for the creative consultant on those areas where decisions have been taken which will affect how they carry out their work, for instance:

- what you want the visitor to experience
- voice and tone
- storylines.

Most important for everyone is:

- your list of potential material for display and the importance you give it. This will include your objects and available pictures, and also refer to other items, such as film, sound, live demonstrations and events, which are important to the visitor experience.

Step 3: Specific briefs for writers, designers and researchers

The brief should now focus on specific parameters for the design. You will need to clarify which areas are still open to suggestions from your creative partners, and which have already been decided.

All your creative briefs should open with an explanation of the desired visitor experience and the variety of elements you want to achieve this with.

You will now need to prepare a different creative brief for writers, designers and picture researchers.

Step 4: Response required to brief

The brief should include:

How the creative consultants should respond

You could ask for either:

- A creative response to the project. Set them a task to demonstrate their creative credentials, e.g. how they would approach the exhibition to ensure best results with the target audience
- Or for a basic presentation, focusing on their past work, with an explanation of how this experience and project history could be used in your exhibition.

How the response will be evaluated

- Indicate the scale of the response required, in line with the value of the project
- Prioritise the criteria the evaluation will use.

Step 5: Practical and Contractual Details

The final section of the brief should explain the tender process. It should also set out the project schedule, deliverables and any other project requirements. Helpful contractual information and contact details for all key players should be included.

This project did not specifically deal with the process for deciding which design company to choose during the tender process. Each museum has its own priorities and protocols, and in the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project they all made choices supported by the London Museums Hub. All museums were happy with the choices that they made.

Tips:

- Paying the creative consultant for their response to your brief (a 'paid pitch') gets them to focus properly on the brief. This is often money well spent
- Creative responses at this stage are just ideas! They will change after appointment as the agency becomes more aware of constraints and requirements. What you see at this stage is not what you will get as an end result, but a demonstration of how they work and think
- Choose creative partners you like and trust



© TfL/London's Transport Museum



© TfL/London's Transport Museum

Tips from a writer:

- Create a detailed background briefing pack with important details highlighted
- Get your writer on board early as part of the development team to help shape the interpretation. You are more likely to see eye to eye this way
- Be open-minded about style. A writer should be able to express your ideas but will not necessarily write like you do!

TGA Ltd

Insight from a writer:

‘As a writer, my job is to find the best way of interpreting content within the gallery, layering information to appeal to the browser and those with in-depth interest.’

At the end, each section can be different but it still creates a coherent, engaging and seamless narrative across all the scripted elements.’

TGA Ltd

Tips from a picture researcher:

- Be realistic about the size of your copyrights budget
- Use in-house image resources (archives and libraries) wherever possible to save money
- Set up a proper image review process

A picture researcher's brief should include:

- List of images required
- Size of copyrights budget
- Timescale
- Details of exhibition (where and for how long for licence agreements)
- Some guide to preferred image style (if developed)

Catherine Morton

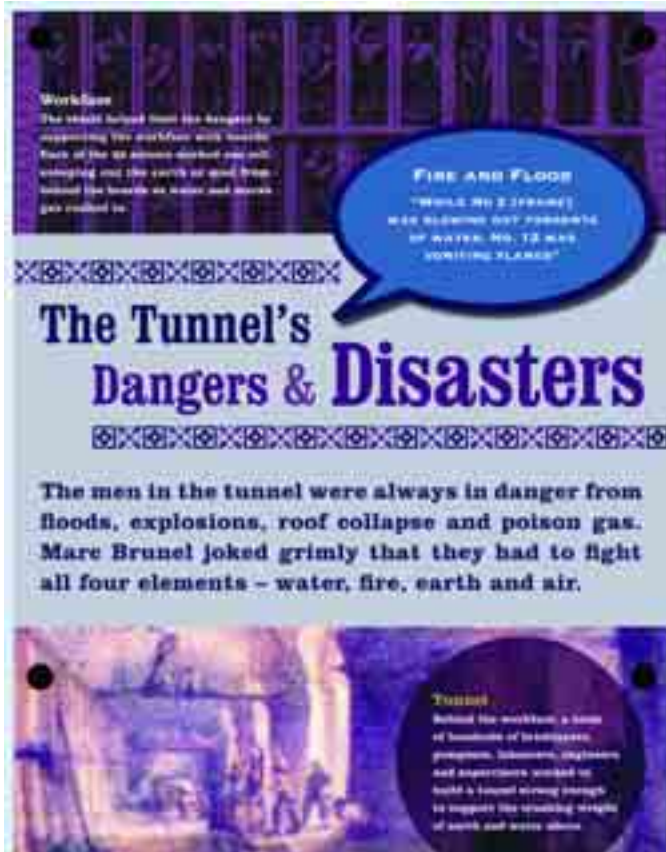
Insight from a picture researcher:

‘A picture researcher helps to develop the visual language of an exhibition through sourcing appropriate images, photos and illustrations.’

Catherine Morton

‘We realised later that we wanted lots of photographs. The Hub paid for an external photographer for two days to take pictures of objects in the gallery. We should have factored in time for a member of staff to take other photographs. We photographed people in costume, such as the Norwich dance group and people at the Battle of Hastings re-enactment. And of course, it all took lots of time.’

Bromley Museum Service



‘As curator, I probably do know more about this project than most people, but often the person who knows most about a project isn't the best person to distil information and write the story.’

The Brunel Museum



Bromley Museum Service © A. Green

Bromley Museum Service

Tips from a graphic designer:

Hot tips from Hotrod for your Graphic Design Brief

To achieve the best creative results, appoint your graphic design team when you appoint your 3D design Team.

Key points to cover:

- Project background
- Objective – key messages and themes
- Who are we talking to? Is there feedback from the target audience that may contribute towards the creative approach?
- What are we saying to them? – Concept script and storylines
- How do we want them to respond? Does the creative solution need to be engaging, informational, inspiring, educational or fun? Does the client prefer a specific graphic style, e.g. contemporary, linear, illustrational or historical? Are multilingual graphics required?
- What problem may this project need to solve? Are there any unclear existing issues that the project will highlight?
- What resources are available? Will the client provide any existing resources? Will the graphics team source pictorial elements? Are there strict brand guidelines?
- Likely deliverables – space, design and budget issues often determine the final output
- Project schedule and sign off dates
- Contact information

Hotrod Creations Ltd

Insight from a graphic designer:

‘The role of the graphic designer is to interpret the narrative in ways which best suit the museum content and visitor profile. Depending on the nature of the content and brief this may involve:

- Establishing a hierarchy of information (in collaboration with the writer)
- Developing a visual language that is coherent across all media
- Offering different methods to deliver the information, particularly for different target audiences
- Working with the content development team to find the best visual resources for display.’

Acme Studios



Tips from the Hub project manager:

- The brief is your future team’s first contact with you and the museum. An exciting, well-written brief will inspire potential designers. Include some visual material and generate enthusiasm for the project
- Try to get to know the potential designers in advance. Call them to explain the project and gauge their interest. Invite them to the museum, and make time to meet them
- Make sure you check out the necessary tendering procedures. These may be set by the body funding the exhibition re-development, or by your umbrella organisation

London Museums Hub



4. Implementation – stage two

Working with your team

The team is in place ready to implement your project. The key task now is for all members of the team to agree roles and deadlines for each stage of the design process, and to commit to meeting them.

Designers cannot do their work without input from museum staff, writers and researchers. You may have taken on a creative team to plan your whole exhibition, but if not, while your designers are developing their concept, you need to deliver the content.

During implementation, several things need to happen simultaneously. The project must be

managed, the design stages must be reached according to a pre-agreed schedule and a script must be developed. Formative evaluation should take place. All these processes are discussed below. Finally, the text should be written, either by museum staff or by a copywriter, and that process is discussed in the next chapter, *Saying it Differently*.

What happened during *Say it Again, Say it Differently*?

The smaller museums had very different experiences when it came to implementing their projects. All had successfully appointed their designers and were full of enthusiasm. They were all aware, after the workshop, of the importance of managing their process. For some this proved smoother than for others.

The Brunel Museum is run by one person, a board of trustees, several volunteers and masses of energy. They appointed Hotrod Creations Limited to do their designs and a writer, Mike Gardom, for scripting and text. A group of volunteers were tasked to complete the necessary research, review designs and provide feedback and input to writer and designer. It was a significant feat of co-ordination, but it came together on schedule, and opened on the anniversary of the banquet held in the Thames tunnel.

The Grant Museum has one full-time and one half-time staff member, one of whom is a qualified science communicator. They appointed Acme Studios for their design. Because of the specialist nature of their material, and the time it would take to explain it to a non-zoologist, Grant decided to create their own text. They had a clear vision for their project at the outset, had set aside time to complete it, and, learning from past experience, zealously kept to the deadlines.

Bromley Museum Service also appointed Acme Studios as designers. Bromley has three staff members, one of whom left half way through the project, which made meeting deadlines difficult. They did their own research, sourced pictures and began by writing their own text. When the formative evaluation gave them a tough time over their text, they took stock, reviewed their processes and brought in TGA Ltd to copy-edit material. Meanwhile, they also set to with paintbrushes to prepare the exhibition space.

The Brunel Museum and Hotrod Creations:

The Brunel Museum: 'Our design challenge to the designers was to make it more accessible, make it durable and expose the brickwork.'

Hotrod Creations Limited: 'The client's concept involved glass panels mounted a few inches from the walls, with copy and images printed to them, but there were issues with legibility, affordability and lighting. We tried lightboxes, and eventually discovered a company called Elumin8. What we created was a modern version of a stained glass window. This had the dual purpose of lighting the space as well as the graphic.'

The Brunel Museum: 'Hotrod came back with a new idea – NASA technology. It's a sandwich of perspex, silver and titanium, and phosphorus in the ink. When you pass a low voltage current through, the whole thing lights the phosphorous in the ink. It does look quite sexy. People wonder how it was done, they peer behind it. Using new technology is very Brunellian.'



The Brunel Museum: H. Schneebeli

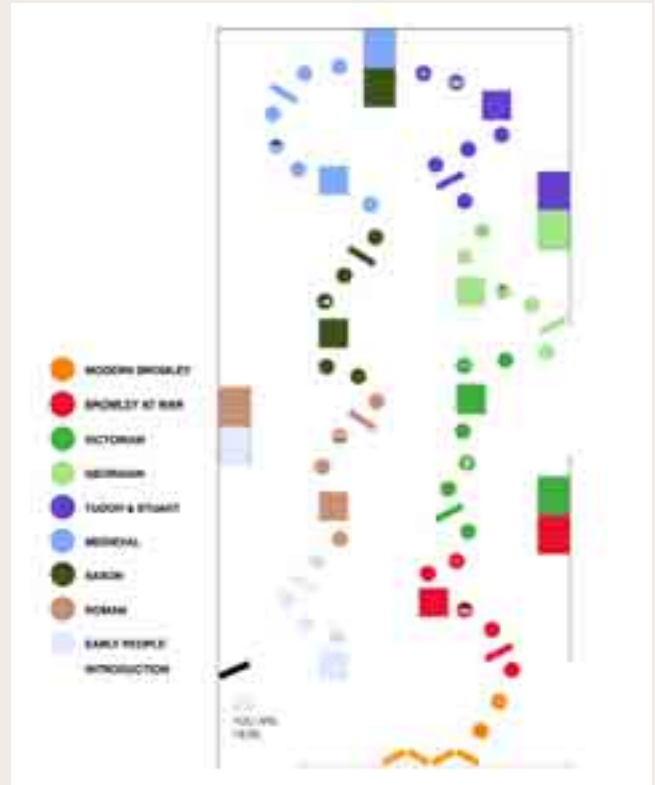
Hotrods' tips for working well

1. Always keep the client well informed. During the dark days when it seemed the budget could not stretch to completing all the design ideas that the client wished, Robert would find a volunteer and work could be completed free of charge.
2. We were lucky to be working with TGA Ltd, and their experience at producing both scripts for Key Stage 2/3 and understanding the design process was vital.
3. Allow time. The process from start to finish should have taken 6 months. However, unforeseen accidents, incidents with contractors and budgets meant that we still worked night shifts two days before the museum was officially opened to the public on November 10th.

Bromley Museum Service and Acme Studios:

Bromley Museum Service: 'In the end, we plumped for a more traditional narrative structure, based on chronology, with the broad sweep from 'pre-history to the present day'. Acme Studios came up with the idea of free-standing plinths, each plinth to represent a different period, and a floor-based time-line. Each plinth would hold one or more iconic objects from the period in question, and would also tell the story of the period.'

Acme Studios: 'This is as much a physical re-interpretation of the space as a re-working of the content. With the specific family audience and the special considerations of working in a listed building in mind, we opted for free-standing displays, accessible all round, with objects and panels at different heights. This enables visitors to explore the information and dip in and out of it. The floor graphics offer a way of structuring a visit and a fun way to navigate the gallery.'



Bromley Museum Service © Acme Studios



Bromley Museum Service: H. Schneebeli

Grant Museum and Acme Studios:

Grant Museum: 'The hardest thing for us was deciding which specimens within the groups to label. We had a specific problem of knowing how to structure the hierarchy. For instance, in one cabinet we have easily over 1000 specimens.'

Acme Studios: 'With such a fantastic collection of objects to work with the visual interpretation was quite an easy job. Our main challenge here was to establish a hierarchy of information that would satisfy both casual and academic visitors. That's why the factfile and quick reference wheels become an invaluable addition to the content in the displays.'



Grant Museum: H. Schneebeli



Grant Museum: H. Schneebeli

What we learned during implementation:

- It is possible to do amazing things with a small budget and some lateral thinking
- Creative input from experts is exciting and will open your horizons
- You can only run your project on schedule if you meet your own deadlines, and that requires you to find cover for your ordinary workload
- Trust the designer's judgement and your own!

You do: Implementing your project

The trick here is to establish your deadlines at the outset. Decide when you need your exhibition or display in place and work back, taking account of the time needed by each of the team at each stage. Formative evaluation will feed into this process, and you will need to prepare for your focus group and get ideas and prototypes ready. Time and resources need to be allowed for this in your schedule and budget.

So, what do you need to do?

- Agree the schedule with all the team
- Create the script
- Manage the project, making sure everyone has what they need to keep things moving forward and that deadlines are met
- Plan for formative evaluation
- Think about your text – see *Saying it Differently*.

Creating the script, managing the project and planning for your formative evaluation will occur simultaneously.

Creating your script

Scripting is a technical term for organising the way you tell your story. A script takes your narrative structure from your interpretive strategy and develops it into a set of defined components. It enables you to decide how those components fit together and how you tell/show your story to make an exhibition. It is the equivalent of a film-maker's storyboard, using words to describe the sequence of the visitor experience.

Tip:

Scripting and text writing are not the same thing. The script is the overall plan, and all the bits and pieces that go in it. Text is the words that appear in the display. It is essential to develop the first before you take on the second.



© Museum of London

After all your planning and theorizing now you begin to work out the nuts and bolts of making the gallery work. The script, like your interpretive strategy, will become a team document. You will need to work on it and refine it with your designer, writer and graphic designer. Here is a way to get the process started.

Divide a page in half. Put the heading 'narrative' on the left hand side, and the heading 'visitor experience' on the right. Under 'narrative', outline the parts of the story you want to cover. Under 'visitor experience', explain which objects, images, interactives, smells, feely boxes etc the visitor will see or encounter to 'show' or demonstrate this part of the narrative and support or replace the need for text. Choose a flexible structure, as this column may get very full!

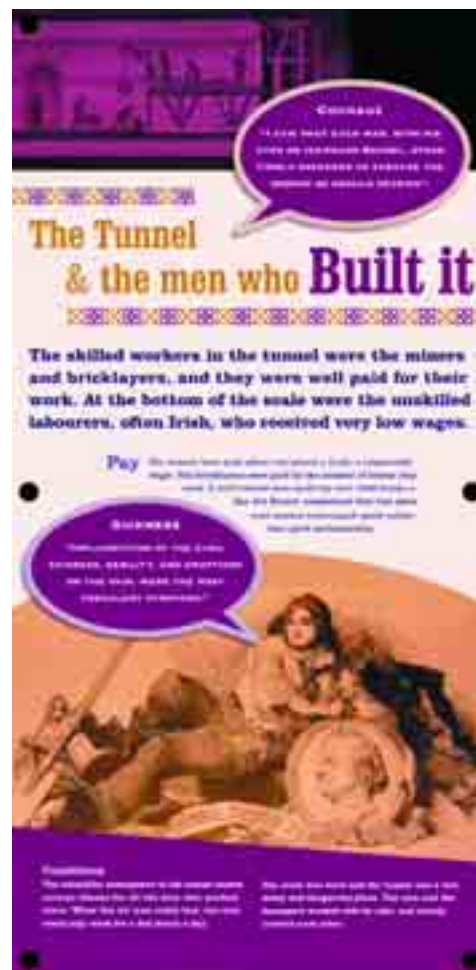
Use your imagination, or talk through with your design team how you might create an interesting visitor experience.

Put yourself in the visitor's shoes. Refer back to your interpretive strategy. What do you know about who the visitors are and what they need to know?

Your script will evolve over time as the team feeds in their ideas. You may find it changes radically after the formative evaluation, once your focus group(s) have taken a look at your prototype concepts. It will, however, need to be fully agreed and signed off by the detail design stage.

Tip:

Develop an effective method of tracking script drafts. Several people working from different versions can cause chaos!



The Brunel Museum © Horrod Creations Ltd

Storyboard ideas

The Narrative column shows the key information that this part of the exhibition delivers.

The Visitor Experience column organises your ideas about how this information might be delivered, supported or expressed. It combines known assets, style choices and good ideas.

The Tunnel and Marc Brunel

- Who built the tunnel?
- Who was Marc Brunel?
The man; explain early 19th century, Marc was one of the most brilliant inventors and engineers of his time French-born Brunel arrived in Britain in 1799
- His automated machines for making blocks (pulleys) for the Royal Navy made him famous
- Overshadowed by his more famous son, Isambard Kingdom Brunel
- Brunel's many inventions included machines for copying letters, making boots and shaping wooden blocks

Objects/images etc

Pictures (chose from):

- Mezzotint of Brunel with block-making machine
- Science museum engravings of block-making machines
- Statue of I.K. Brunel
- Engraving of Royal visit
- Photo of I.K. Brunel

Words:
Approx 75 words

Could use direct quotes as if written on a facsimile letter? Example:

'Ah, my friend, it is very easy to invent a machine, but its is not very easy to make it work!'
'Nevertheless, if I could start again, I would make it better'

Object:
Can we get hold of one of the working models of the block-making machines as a real object? Held by Science Museum

Touch:
The surface of a wooden block to see how smooth?

All these items might be available, and you will choose which are most appropriate here. Items might fit in more than one place in the exhibition, but be careful of double-booking your best objects!

Although you are not writing the text yet, it is good to have a realistic idea of the final word count.

Different voices and graphic styles can be suggested here for discussion with the designers.

At this stage you can script your exhibition around objects you want to acquire or borrow. This storyboard allows you to see if they add to the visitor experience.

Interactives are another way of communicating and can be as simple as touching a real object. This can be a great way to communicate without driving up your word count.

Keeping your ideas in bullet points allows you to refine your message before you have to refine your text. It is easier to edit ideas than paragraphs.

Note: No two storyboards look the same. If you find it useful, you can add in thumbnail images of the pictures you want to use, photographs of key objects, conservation data, or key information for labels. Find a format that is useful for your team without getting over complicated.

‘One of the great things about this project was it gave us the chance to test things that the project team had discussed but couldn’t agree about. Some people argued that a focus group is such a small sample of people, how can we possibly take their views as representative of the general visitors? There was a tendency to accept the focus group’s recommendations when it matched our own ideas and dismiss it when we disagreed. However, you can’t build a gallery in a vacuum and getting feedback from outside the team has been very useful.’ **Museum of London**

Running your formative evaluation

Formative evaluation gives you the chance to try out your ideas and experiment with new formats. The best way to do this is to work with your creative team to make prototypes, such as mock-ups of exhibits or text. You can test out content, format, style and images. Feedback from your target audience tells you if you have achieved learning outcomes and are really communicating with your visitor. Make sure your designers know that you are undertaking evaluation, and the implications of this, when you appoint them.

The timing of your formative evaluation is critical. It needs to be early enough in the process for the evaluation input to have a real chance to influence the implementation of your decisions, and to prevent you and the creative team from having to do expensive u-turns. On the other hand, if you embark on it too soon, you may not have ideas, text and prototypes in a sufficiently developed state to get useful feedback.

‘There is pivotal point when a focus group can inform the development of an exhibition, after which it starts costing to make changes. It is important to plan the timetable of audience research from the start, or it could have a major impact on schedule, and inevitably on costs.’ **London’s Transport Museum**

Bromley Museum Service: J. Neilgan



Managing the project

Managing a project means co-ordinating the work of everyone involved. Creating a shared timetable is essential. Included here is a short outline of project phases to show the input needed at each stage. To make this work you need:

Tips:

- How you do evaluation is discussed in more depth in *Discovery*
- See *Tools and Resources* for some useful websites

- An agreed list of completed work that you want to see from the creative team at each review stage (such as plans, style boards, text samples)
- An agreed list of inputs from the museum and dates for their delivery (such as script, research findings, images, object data)
- A robust sign-off process that makes clear what has been agreed, what needs to be developed and what is no longer subject to change.

The table below shows a format which is used by some design companies to structure their work.

Stage	Purpose	Designer needs:
1. Concept design	Designs at this stage illustrate the creative approach to the exhibition suggested by the designer. All elements open to discussion and alteration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the creative brief • familiarity with the space and your collections • ideas about your preferred storylines • access to a range of pictures and images
	<p>Concept design review: Gives feedback to enable creative team to respond to evolving client requirements.</p> <p>By the end of concept design stage the museum should have identified all the assets needed to complete the design, such as objects, research, images, new acquisitions, commissioned diagrams or illustrations etc.</p> <p>Formative evaluation of the concept design and specific exhibits or panels should begin immediately after this.</p>	
2. Schematic design	Designer works from the concept designs and feedback to evolve the layouts and elements of the exhibition. Substantial changes to design are still possible at this stage during discussions and in response to evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draft 1 script • draft 1 picture list • 75% of any additional research data needed to tell the stories
	<p>Schematic design review: Detailed feedback on the designs and how they fit the information and stories contained in the draft one script. Assessment of how well the designs respond to the evaluation findings.</p> <p>By the end of the schematic design stage, the museum should have confirmed possession of, and data on, all 3D assets to be included. Research data should all be in place and pictures identified (but need not yet be acquired).</p>	
3. Detail design	At this stage the designer designs in detail the exhibition elements and their graphic/interactive /AV requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • final signed-off script • agreed final list of pictures (with transparencies, credits, etc) • verification of all content
	Minor changes to text can still be made, but only at the level of spelling or punctuation.	<p>Detail design review: Typically this will happen in a number of phases as the individual display elements reach design completion.</p> <p>Copy checking and proofing of text will take more time than you think (always). Changes after sign off can be very expensive to put right.</p>
4. Production design	Agency works with suppliers to fabricate the exhibition elements from the designs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited content discussions between agency and client • practical decisions about project execution

‘A good sign off process has no reverse gear.’ TGA Ltd

Tips from a graphic designer:

- Develop content and graphics in parallel from the early stages. This makes it easier for content to be developed specifically with the visual display in mind and vice versa, which saves time later.
- Offer as many resources to the designer as possible at the start. Diagrams, maps, images, examples of objects, all help build a library of ideas from which to create.
- Allow for extra time in the programme. Remember it takes time to absorb information adequately enough to interpret it. Writing, editing and proof-reading always throw up more changes than anticipated.

Acme Studios

Implementation to Fruition

Throughout the implementation process you will be working with colleagues, designers, writers and picture researchers to bring your project to fruition. Naturally this may not be straightforward – team-work rarely is. People may get carried away by an irrelevant idea or have a brilliant new one that was not in the original brief. It will take diplomacy to handle the team's thinking about whether to accommodate it.

At the beginning, when you sit down with your diaries to pre-agree the schedule for each stage of the design process, it is wise to build in some slack to enable you to complete your various diplomatic missions and cope with the hitches and/or emergencies that so often arise. Implementation should nevertheless be a fun, demanding and exciting process, and so long as you stay with it, at the end you will have a project accomplished.





5. Saying it differently

Working with words

The first impulse when you know you have a story to tell is to reach for the word. Fight against it!

The text we see in a museum is not there to tell the story, it is there to support it. As we have seen in the previous sections, you are telling a story in a three-dimensional space, with objects and pictures to help you. These are likely to be more immediate and effective than any 'book on a wall'.

Having said that, within a museum you can be very creative with text. It is not just a matter of finding words for labels and panels. Text can be scenic. It can be used as an icon or to create an environment. It can shock or surprise. Text lies behind audio-visual material and soundscapes, it can be woven into interactive elements and around images. It can be used in fun, thought-provoking ways so that people really engage with what they are seeing.

This chapter offers a toolbox of ideas, some straightforward and some radical, designed to help you tell your story and prepare your text in ways that will engage your audience.

A point of order:

- Interpretive strategy – defines what your exhibition is about, who it will speak to, which voice it will use
- Narrative structure – conveys the order of the story
- Script – conveys the story as a whole, not just its order, but its tone and content and the effect you want it to have, the overall visitor experience
- Text – words (printed, written, projected or heard) that appear within the display

What happened in *Say it Again, Say it Differently*?

During the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project, the question of narrative structure, scripting and text was discussed during the workshops, and then again with each of the museums. Each museum found different solutions.

Bromley were very bold in their use of written communication. They divided the content into bite-sized chunks and used a magazine style format for their panels, with plenty of images. They knew they needed chronology so decided to use a stepping stone trail as a timeline on the floor. There is also a range of 'interviews' with people from the past talking about their lives.

The Grant Museum has been described as 'the mad collector's living room'. The curators were constrained by the fact that this is a teaching museum, laid out taxonomically, so that the overall structure and layout are fixed. Their challenge, therefore, was to find a way to make the material accessible, to use a hierarchy of labels to make the taxonomy understandable and visible, and to find a means to draw out the individual stories behind the items.

Grant and Acme decided on the use of a factfile. The opening page explains the layout, taxonomy and history of the museum. It then goes on to tell the stories behind individual 'hero' specimens, and to use colour photography and icon labels to help explain what they all are. This means that visitors can follow their own route around the museum ('pinball'), chancing on specimens that catch their eye, and have a ready means to find out more about them.



Bromley Museum Service: H. Schneebell

'I think people would want to take the factfile away with them. If you need the information it would be a great thing to have one of these'.
'(The Grant) has retained its academic feel which is quite nice, but you can still learn and now you don't feel stupid'. *Summative evaluation on Grant*



Grant Museum: H. Schneebell



Grant Museum: H. Schneebell

“Full along the length of this cavern, in little recesses, there are stalls of shops, most frequented by women, offering for sale... multifarious wares.”

The tunnel & its uses

When the tunnel opened in 1843 it was a miracle of engineering, but 15 years late and heavily in debt. Since company had no money to build access ramps for road traffic, the tunnel did not even solve London's traffic congestion problem. However, it has had many other uses over the years...

Foot tunnel
The tunnel was used by foot passengers to cross the Thames between Wapping and Rotherhithe. The fee was a penny and the passengers had to clear with a bag of money in the middle of each end.

Entertainment
The tunnel stalls were packed with books, games, toys, and other goods. The tunnel was a great place to see and be seen. The tunnel was a great place to see and be seen.

Banqueting hall
In 1870, the railway tunnel became a large banqueting hall. The tunnel was used for banquets, parties, and other events. The tunnel was a great place to see and be seen.

Underground railway
In 1863, the railway tunnel was used as an underground railway. The tunnel was used for the Great Northern Railway. The tunnel was used for the Great Northern Railway.

“THE ENGINEER DETERMINED TO CELEBRATE HIS SUCCESS... BY INVITING HIS FRIENDS TO DINNER UNDER THE RIVER.”

“THROUGH A WONDERFUL TRIUMPH OF ENGINEERING SKILL, IT IS AS A FOUR-LEGGED INSEPARABLE PAIR AND REASONS.”

AD 1100–1348

Most noble city

Industry, churches and government
London grew in wealth and importance. It was the largest city in Norman England, a great centre of trade and industry.

St Paul's Cathedral burnt down in 1097 and was rebuilt. Monasteries were established around the city.

Parliament began to meet regularly in Westminster. There was sometimes conflict between the king and the people of London, but by 1190 Londoners had their own chief magistrate, the mayor.

There were over 100 parishes in medieval London, and large parts of the city were occupied by monasteries, markets and other kinds of buildings.

The use of infographics showed the geographic and demographic changes in London at different points in its history. These panels reappeared through the gallery, forming an easily-grasped chronological backbone for the visitor.

- What we learned:**
- Writing text takes time – ring-fence time to do it, or bring in someone else
 - When you are knowledgeable about a subject, it is much easier to produce vast quantities of script that visitors don't want to read, than to produce finely honed copy that gets key points across and engages the audience

- Tips:**
- Don't tell, show
 - It can be hard for academics with specialist knowledge to accept that now is not the time to share it!

You do: Saying it differently

Whether you employ a writer or tackle the text yourself, you and the team need to consider how text will be used in your exhibition. The questions below will help you get your head round the issues involved.

What role will text play in your exhibition?

You can treat text as the primary means of interpretation, for instance where it is simply used as written material alongside the exhibits, but it can also be woven into an evocative experience. There are many ways of conveying the same message, and some will be more effective and interesting than others. In conjunction with your team, and especially with your designer and writer, you need to choose the right one or ones for the visitor experience you want to achieve. Think carefully about just where the text will be seen in the display and how you can get best value from variations of size, style, use of image and colour.

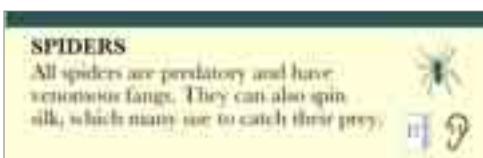
Some ways of using text:

- Labels/captions
- Panels
- Hand-held guides or factfiles
- Voices heard as part of a soundscape
- Sound guides
- Songs and lyrics as part of an audiovisual film
- Pull out panels and drawers
- Interactives
- Electronic interfaces and e-media

Tips:

- Translating text into electronic format is simple but be warned – easy does not mean useful! Text in this format can be indigestible. Edit down into bite-sized chunks.
- Pictures, diagrams and film clips may convey concepts more efficiently, and can prove a lot more fun. However, before you reach the tricky little diagram that says it all, you will need to explain your goal to the designer, step by step. A text 'storyboard' lies behind each frame of a film and each step of a diagram.

Grant Museum: © Acme Studios



The Brunel Museum: © Hotrod Creations

In the Medieval London gallery, 'The Black Death Experience' uses text in a variety of ways.

'Civilization both in the East and the West was visited by a destructive plague, which devastated nations and caused populations to vanish. The whole inhabited world changed.'

Arab historian Ibn Khaldun (1332 – 95)

Revealing historical quotes and images as well as maps are woven into an audiovisual presentation showing the inexorable spread of the disease, the rumours and the rising terror as it creeps closer and closer to London. The experience of the common people is made vivid by the use of a simultaneous soundscape, with names of the dead whispered and projected onto another wall. A church bell, appropriately, is the only artefact in the room. A caption notes that the wife and son of the bell-maker died in the plague.

'It's so atmospheric – it's almost like you are captured in it. You are mesmerised with the information and the pictures'

Summative evaluation, Museum of London



What language level will you use?

Alongside style and voice, you need to think about the language level you will use. Obviously, this depends on the audience you wish to attract and their likely reading age. Some of the tabloids, for instance, use a reading age of around twelve years, while most of the broadsheet papers expect a considerably higher level of reading ability. Things to consider include:

- sentence length
- sentence construction
- number of key elements in sentence
- vocabulary
- technical terms
- required background knowledge.

Check that the vocabulary you are using is within reach of the audience. You can introduce new words or technical terms, but when you do you need to explain them. Explanations do not need to be wordy – you can use diagrams or pictures. Children enjoy playing with new vocabulary, and learn it very rapidly, so long as the context enables them to understand it.

Finally, it is very easy to make erroneous assumptions about background knowledge, particularly when the material you are talking about is familiar to you. All this matters, because if you start at the wrong level, you will lose your audience.

Tip:

To get a feel for language level, take a look at:

- picture books
- early readers (5 – 7 years)
- story books (7 – 9 years and 9 up)
- tabloids
- broadsheets
- academic tomes

'We were surprised to find that audiences had not grasped a learning point that was fundamental to understanding the whole exhibition storyframe – after exploring the exhibition, people still didn't understand what a trolley-bus was. This threw people and meant they couldn't follow the material at all. It was necessary for us to look again at the design, structure and hierarchy of information communicated by the range of images, text and objects used.' London's Transport Museum on a result of their formative evaluation

'We didn't have time to prepare properly for the formative evaluation, so I rushed out some text, and the designers produced it, and it was given to the focus groups before we had a chance to see it. If we had, we would have spotted the problems. It was just too wordy, too long. I wrote text aimed at Guardian readers in their 20s or 30s, not quick snappy text for parents to read to their children. Of course they said it was 'boring, awful'. For us it was quite hard, very demoralising. We had to do some soul searching, but it did make us re-think how we did our text, so in the end we got a lot out of it.' Bromley Museum Service

© TfL/London's Transport Museum



'It's difficult to remember what is a scientific term and what isn't, because it's so familiar. For instance 'ungulates' came up at the first focus group – someone said 'I don't understand what that means'. What about 'vertebrates' and 'invertebrates'? It's difficult, working out exactly what level your non-specialist adults are at.'

Grant Museum



Bromley Museum Service focus group: J. Neilgan

'Curators know so much they forget what the level of most people's knowledge is.'

'Who in their right mind would read through all of that?' Baseline evaluation at Museum of London

'It's made me want to come back and have a proper look. I'd like to be able to spend some time reading the text'.

'I think the information is appropriate. It wasn't as detailed which is good. The English was really good, even a child could read it.'

Summative evaluation at Museum of London



Bromley Museum Service focus group: J. Neilgan

What genre and characters will you use?

The question of 'voice' has already been considered in the Creation chapter, and you will need to bear any decisions already made in mind when you consider the use of different genres and characters.

Museum visitors are sophisticated when it comes to written style. They face many different genres in the course of their everyday lives, including:

- Instruction
- Factual reporting
- Hot news reporting
- Science fiction
- Detective fiction
- Romantic fiction
- Lyrical writing
- Parody
- Humour

Just on the way to the museum they may encounter anything from the writing on the back of the cereal packet, through the newspaper lead article to the advertisements on the Tube. Even small children enjoy a wealth of genres, including a huge range of story telling styles, advertisements pitched directly at them, comic strip narratives and factual books involving anything from jokes to serious science.

'Our new boards are dramatic. Children and adult visitors alike look at them, whereas before they would glaze over.'

The Brunel Museum © Hotrod Creations Ltd



Now we have:

- a clear title for each board
- speech bubbles – it's what the teachers asked for
- layered information
- colour – previously very black and white.'

The Brunel Museum

Compared with all this, the 'museum-expert' genre can seem somewhat dull. It is up to you and your team to choose a style, or styles, that will engage your particular audience and hold their interest.

Characters can help tell a story, and their voices may add authenticity and variety, which can help capture your visitors. You may be able to bring in 'real' historical figures, perhaps speaking their own words or linked to their own objects. Alternatively, you might want to consider inventing a realistic generic character, and get them to tell parts of the story in a style appropriate to their age, background and time.



Bromley Museum Service © Acme Studios

Tips:

- Adults explaining museum text to children do so on the wing – they need to take in the message at a glance so that they can pass it on before Fred gets bored and Freda starts demolishing the next exhibit.
- Try out your material on a friendly audience of the right age and background. Do they understand it? If not, tease out whether the problem lies in what you're saying, or how you're saying it.
- Your formative evaluation should test whether the material is interesting as well as whether it is comprehensible.
- See *Tools and Resources* for useful websites.

Can you think outside the text box?

There always seem to be good reasons to stay with the tone of voice that you know best. This is 'saying it again'. 'Saying it differently' involves going beyond what is 'safe' for museums to write, and focusing on what visitors want to read. The words and pictures below are intended to stimulate ideas.

Active text

Active text makes the reader respond, for instance by asking a question or giving them a task.

Active text is familiar to younger readers. It works well as a set up to low-tech interactives (lift the flap, slide to reveal). It engages the visitor's brain with the material.

Dossiers:

Present the evidence and enable visitors to develop their own conclusions.



True or false?

Which are the real Viking names?

True or false?
Which are the real Viking names?

1 HAROLD REDBEARD
2 OLAF THE STOUT
3 KON SMELLY-FEET
4. IVAR THE BONELESS
5 SVEIN FORKBEARD
6. ODIN PUDDING-FACE
7 HAROLD BLUETOOTH
8. KEITH FLATNOSE
9 OLAF THE PEACOCK
10. RAGNAR HAIRY BREECHES
11. SIGURD SNAKE-IN-THE-EYE
12. RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSE
13. SIGTRYGG SILK-BEARD
14. SIGRID THE AMBITIOUS
15. FLOKI RAVENS
16. ASGOT THE CLUMSY
17. GLUM
18. CONAN THE LIBRARIAN
19. SIGTRYGG ONE-EYE
20. THOROLF BUTTER

Answer: All are true except 3, 6, 12 and 18

Text © Terry Deary. Illustrations © Martin Brown

Comments:

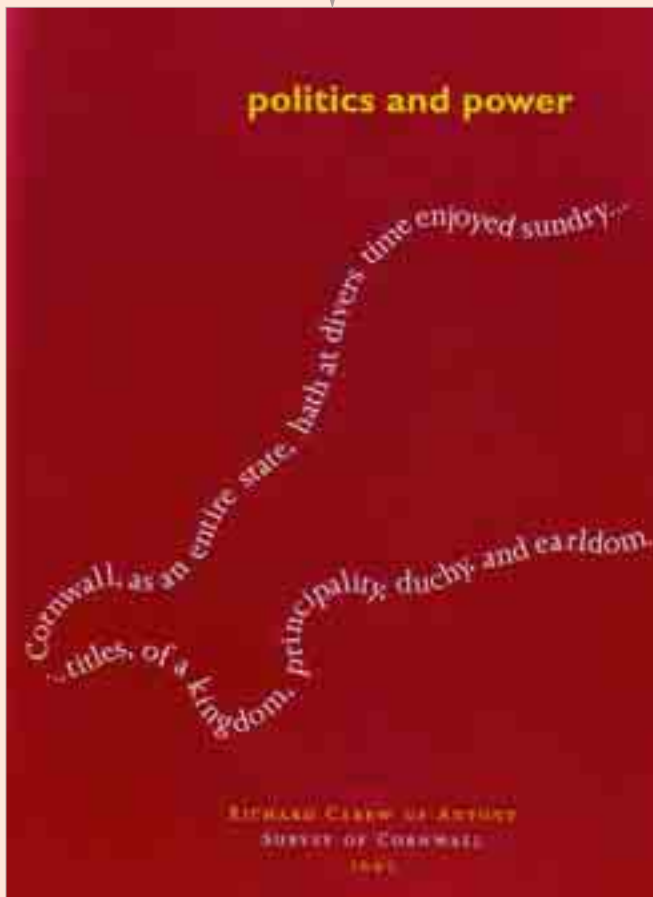
Visitors often surprise curators with their willingness to interact, discuss and select options in order to extract the interpretation. Active text encourages the visitor to think and explore. Visitors often find the approach rewarding.

Authentic Quotes

Authentic words carry credibility, meet visitor demand for ‘people stories’, and bring the interpretation to life. Archaic vocabulary, spelling and punctuation, and foreign languages, all need a degree of translation or re-quotation for a modern audience. There are many ways of using quotations, from embedding them into the main interpretive text, to presenting them as dramatic, free-standing words.

Turning words into things:

Here the quote is presented in the form of the coast of Cornwall. It is also a one-line summing up or introduction, which always invites the reader to make up their own mind. It implies, ‘Do you agree?’



© Cornwall Heritage Trust

Make text easy and interesting:

The interpretive text is split up by the eye-catching quotation, presented within a speech bubble. The quotation illustrates and supports the storyline.

New ways to combine words and images:

Titles, body text, image captions, quotes and bullet points are all woven together.



The Brunel Museum © Hobrod Creations Ltd

Turning text into an exhibit:

The imaginary catwalk illustration and the commentary on the left provide the context for the authentic quotations on the right. The subject matter is accessible for all ages, it's funny, and it makes a valid contribution to the subject of medieval life and lifestyles.



Text © Terry Deary. Illustrations © Martin Brown

Comments:

Quotations are not seen and dismissed as ‘blurb’. They are therefore useful hooks to get visitors to engage with text, and great for introducing new subjects, exhibitions and galleries.

Evaluation in the Say it Again, Say it Differently project showed that visitors like having the original spelling of the quotation, as long as there is a modern-day equivalent available to check the meaning.

Children's Voice

If you have children amongst your visitors, you either need to speak directly to them, or provide material of interest to children that an accompanying adult can interpret with them. Layering information in different genres enables the exhibit to speak to different visitors. The children's voice does not have to be of interest only to children!



The Brunel Museum © Horrod Creations Ltd

Borrowing from other familiar genres: The old newspaper layout gives visitors an instant clue that this is a headline story without too many words or complex facts. Reading about historical events as 'hot news' makes it more immediate.



Solve the puzzle: The subject of medieval medicine is approached through an active text cartoon, inviting the reader to match up the illnesses with the cures. The subject matter and means of delivery is very child-centred, while still accessible for adults.



Text © Terry Deary. Illustrations © Martin Brown

Comments:

The art of making an exhibit or gallery attractive to children without allowing the children's needs to dominate is one that needs to be pursued on many levels simultaneously. Children's voices and children's issues should be considered in all the scripted communication, and be part of the mix of interpretation available to suit a variety of learning styles.

Ideograms

Ideograms provide a visual interpretation of data for visitors which might otherwise appear in narrative or table form. How good they are depends on the clarity of the data and the quality of the graphic layout. Ideograms can save space in delivering comparative or repetitive data, and they can give the visitor a break from straight text blocks.

Comments:

Ideograms provide an alternative to text, and can be used to create complex arguments, but it is very important to get evaluation on their clarity during the design process to ensure they deliver the message effectively.

KISS – Keep It Simple Stupid:

This ideogram also attempts to make a more complex argument for the relationship between the price of oil and the vibrancy of the economy. Clear images explain the chain of consequences arising from fluctuations in the price of crude oil.



© Oxford University Press – PERMISSION STILL TO BE OBTAINED

Object Assemblage

Grouping objects and interpreting them as a set encourages visitors to see the relationship between them and their significance as a group, rather than seeing them in isolation. Where an exhibition is rich in objects, assemblages can help to populate the exhibit cases more densely. Visitors are given a change from examining objects individually.

Comments:

Object assemblage is a common technique in leisure and lifestyle magazines. The great advantage of using this approach in museum interpretation is that it gives visitors a format they are used to and find unthreatening. Museum professionals either love or hate this layout. The populist, magazine-culture look may not be appropriate to the subject matter, and some curators feel that it trivialises their work. However, for many visitors, it is precisely this accessible, familiar style that attracts them, particularly if they are not from traditional museum-going backgrounds.

The DK Eyewitness books provide excellent examples of object assemblage layout in print. Objects are diverse, but relate to a single theme. There is no main interpretive text at all – the entire interpretation is carried through extended object and picture captions. This means that a considerable quantity of text is easily absorbed and does not alarm the reader at first sight.



© The Trustees of The British Museum

Images of people

Images of people help to bring the storyline to life. The further back we go, the more challenging it is to find images of 'ordinary people'. However, the right choice of image gives the text a higher impact, and allows the visitor to create a stronger imaginative connection with the subject.

Dance of Death:

The conventions and style of images from other eras may need explaining like "three princesses dancing with skeletons?". It is great if you can identify the subjects by name.



When I was Young :

Black and white photographs contain a lot of contextual detail which can be drawn out by clever use of captions .



Commissioning illustrations provides valuable visual interpretation along the way. Be aware that artistic styles are evolving all the time and may date.

For this cartoon image, curators collaborated closely with the artist to ensure historical accuracy in dress and to show exactly the details they wanted.



How it might have been:

Using re-enactment photographs can give family and younger audiences a easy way to identify with people from the past.



Comments:

Identifying and sourcing the best images to support people stories is a major task, and few museums hold all the images they need in house. The evaluation from the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project underlined the popularity of people pictures, and suggested that audiences are interested in authentic illustrations when they contain sufficient detail that can be interpreted.

‘One of the most transforming learning outcomes from the research, was that in order to engage all our audiences, we would have to rely less on text, and find other, creative, ways of communicating messages.’ London’s Transport Museum, extract from research report

Writing text your visitor wants to read

There is abundant material available on how visitors to museums do not read the text, or worse, find it, and therefore the museum, intimidating. What is the point of writing text that nobody reads? What information is being conveyed if the audience switches off?

The great fear, of course, is ‘dumbing down’, but if you think carefully about the examples we have shown here, that is not what is happening. What we actually see is material being interpreted in a new, intelligent way that is appropriate for the audience. The content remains, but the way objects have been assembled, or text used, means that visitors want to learn about it. As many of the museums involved in this project found out, getting a positive response from your audience is well worth the effort involved.

Now is your chance to do something different, to find the right style, voice, content and language level for your particular audience and then to weave your text throughout your space in a multitude of ways, so that you are telling a compelling and coherent story. As The Brunel Museum found out, a ‘respectable word count’ can be broken up into easily digested snippets and woven into captions around objects and pictures so that reading the final text becomes effortless.

And if you have chosen the right narrative structure and have scripted well for your material and space, then your whole display will tell a story, and a story, properly told, will captivate and entrance an audience.

‘As a museum writer you don’t have to write down for a public audience, but you may need to write differently.’ Jennifer Blunden, 2004



6. Outcomes

Measuring the success of your project

Within eighteen months of the start of the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project, four of the six museums involved had completed their re-interpretation and opened their new exhibitions.

The remaining two museums, Geffrye and London's Transport Museum, used their Hub funding as part of larger scale projects involving their entire museums, and expect to open in late 2006 or 2007.

What happened in Say it Again, Say it Differently?

Bromley Museum Service once had an archaeology gallery that was 'pleasing to no-one'. Now a stepping stone timeline and a sense of space and colour draw people in. Visitors are keen to read stories, from prehistory to the present day, written in magazine-style format on free-standing plinths. Iconic objects secreted within the display add a sense of adventure, and children enjoy their own child-height plinths.

The Brunel Museum once had clutter, harsh inadequate lighting and panels that made even civil engineers glaze over. They now have an exciting, dramatic space, with the new panels using NASA technology not just to deliver the information, but to light the area. With a balance of pictures, quotes and captions, children and adults alike simply absorb information.

The offering from the Grant Museum of Zoology used to look like a confusing pile of old bones, with occasional ugly labels that baffled the non-scientist. Now new labelling, with a colour and icon system, enables the visitor to navigate around the complex taxonomy. The bones and other specimens now have meaning. The stories lying behind individual specimens are brought out in factfiles.

The Museum of London had a medieval gallery with serious, academic labels that nobody wanted to read. Now, in the new Medieval London gallery, evidence from the focus groups re-affirmed the decision to introduce a children's voice and interactives, and also made their written interpretation far more friendly, quirky and accessible.

You do: Measures of success

Quantifying success is complex, and many different measures can be used. Some possible measures are listed below. The results included as examples are of course preliminary, as they were collected shortly after the exhibitions opened. Evaluation remains a key tool, and the use of summative evaluation is also discussed below. The museums involved in the project plan to continue to collect data, evaluate the results, and act upon it.

Visitor numbers

Most museums wish to increase their visitor numbers. Reports from The Brunel Museum indicate that in the three months following their exhibition opening, visitor numbers increased by 50% (1800 visitors compared with 1200 visitors in the same period the previous year).



© The Brunel Museum

Grant Museum: H. Schneebeli



Visitor dwell time

If getting the visitor through the door is the first objective, then getting them to engage and stay must be the second. Grant Museum reported that visitor dwell time has 'rocketed', with many visitors reading the factfile from cover to cover before leaving.

Informal comment boards

Asking your visitors for feedback informally, whether verbally, in a visitor's book, or on cards on a comment board, is good practice. A review of the comments received at the Museum of London found them overwhelmingly positive.

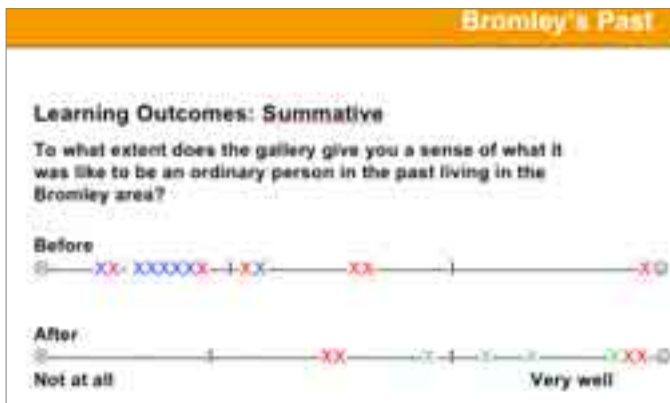


© Museum of London

Learning objectives

Learning objectives were identified at the baseline evaluation stage. During and at the end of the project it is important to find out to what extent you are meeting these objectives.

© Bromley Museum Service



Summative Evaluation

Reinterpretation should be planned with particular target audiences in mind. It makes sense, therefore, to check what they think of it. Evaluation in general is discussed in the Discovery chapter. Carrying out summative evaluation will enable you to see whether the final approach taken succeeds in meeting the identified learning objectives. If you are using the same evaluation methods as you used for baseline and formative evaluations, then you will also be able to compare results and measure change. For the museums involved in *Say it Again, Say it Differently* there was a distinct before and after trend, reflecting the hard work earlier to take comments on board.

Inspiration

One sign of a successful project is often that it inspires you to tackle other projects, and to apply the skills you have learned in a new way.

Inspiration from the *Say it Again, Say it Differently* projects:

- Brunel found the fact that the building can look 'stunning and impressive' has been a catalyst for changing the whole museum, so that they are now working on transforming the space downstairs and the empty shaft outside
- Other museums have checked out the Brunel panels with a view to installing their own
- Bromley has plans to improve the building and will tackle another space within it as soon as they have drawn breath after this project
- At the Museum of London, the curators were excited by the response of the focus groups and will now consider using focus groups, introducing a children's voice, and refreshing text to make it more accessible, when they refurbish elsewhere in the museum
- Grant found there is a demand for their factfiles, and are now contemplating publication with a view to selling them, rather than keeping them simply as a museum guide
- The *Say it Again, Say it Differently* project has inspired the Hub itself

Bromley Museum Service: comments from focus groups with families

Before:

'looks like what you'd expect a museum to look like, but nothing new – not much incentive to come back' (adult)

'boring, no colour and words I didn't understand' (child)

'needs to give you really interesting things that make you go 'wow!' (child)

BEFORE



BEFORE



After:

'When you walk in, it's all there. It's brighter and easier, and you don't necessarily have to follow the timeline. We just sort of mooched around and read each thing as it caught the eye' (adult)

'Very striking. It's very bright and a lot better than it was, which I think makes it more appealing to start with. It draws you in with the photographs too, on the tall plinths' (adult)

'A lot more about our area. You want to know about your area. There are loads of roads on there that I knew and it was very close to where I lived' (adult)

AFTER



AFTER



AFTER



The Brunel Museum: comments from focus groups with local teachers

Before:

- 'too much information, cluttered, not really organised'
- 'Need more colour generally – it's all very black and white in here'
- 'More imaginative use of lighting would help'

After:

- 'I like the lighting – it brings out the text, even the black and white pictures. Before where it was all black and white, there was no emphasis on it, but with that much colour you do then get the black and white ones standing out as well'
- 'There is a very good balance between text and pictures. It's really good because it's quite off-putting to a child to see a whole load of text'
- 'The new lighting and the panels will really encourage them to look at it all'

BEFORE



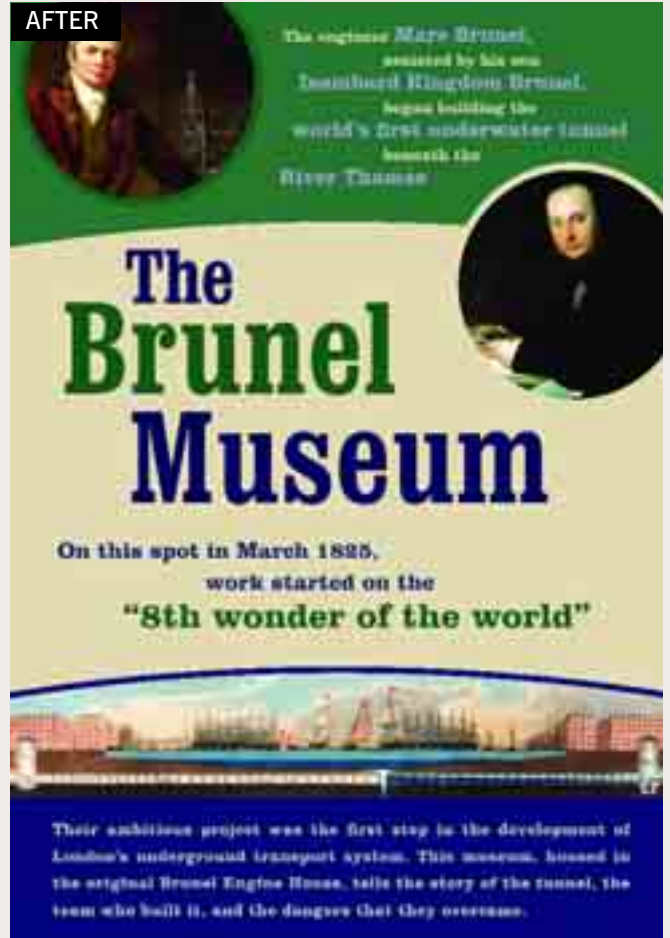
BEFORE



AFTER



AFTER



AFTER



Grant Museum of Zoology: comments from focus groups with adults

Before:

'It feels very cramped; like you've wandered into a mad collector's living room – jumbled together'

'There's a lot of information and if you wanted to I'm sure you could learn a lot, but...it doesn't engage you'

'I didn't feel like coming back because it was too confusing'

After:

'I think that this has now got the 'wow!' factor. I didn't even want to take my coat off as I wanted to look round immediately'

'We spoke about so many changes that would need to be made and we said no way would they be able to do all of them. There is surprise because they have managed to do all of that'

'Now it's more comfortable because you've got more access to information. You know how to do it'



Grant Museum: H. Schneebell



Grant Museum: J. Neilgan



Grant Museum: H. Schneebell



Grant Museum: J. Neilgan



Grant Museum: H. Schneebell



Grant Museum: H. Schneebell

The Museum of London: comments from focus groups with families

Before:

'It's very adult, not geared to children at all, it's sombre and brooding in here, I would want to get out quite quickly, it's too academic looking'

'very much pitched at adults' (adult)

'not much to do or touch' (child)

'I think the writing is small and even an adult wouldn't understand much of it and you wouldn't spend time understanding it...' (child)

After:

'I think it's much better. I find it very easy to lose quite a lot of time in here, and I felt that, as the parent, the amount of information they got through in the interactives in a fun way was good as well. There is a lot you could talk about'

'I feel it's worked because it's made me feel that I want to come back, and I didn't have that feeling when I came the first time' (adult)

'Child friendly, 'I'd come back here for the day' (child)

'It's much better than before. It's not as bunched up and it's like more colourful. Before it was kind of dull and browns' (child)

AFTER



© Museum of London

AFTER



© Museum of London

BEFORE



© Museum of London

BEFORE



© Museum of London

AFTER



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You do: Saying it again, saying it differently

‘A good museum exhibition is one of the most carefully considered spaces in the world. Nowhere else – supermarket, spaceship or operating theatre – has more care and thought been given to its purpose, look or how people will behave inside.’ TGA Ltd

Creating or revitalising an exhibition demands real creativity and attention to detail. ‘Good enough’ text is not good enough. The nearly right image is wrong. Visitors will notice the difference, even if they can’t quite articulate it. But when you get it right and see people in your new exhibition – engaged, learning, inspired people – then you’ll know you’ve made a place with the power to change perceptions, opinions and even lives.

The aim in writing this handbook has been to encourage more museums to tackle the challenge of ‘saying it again, saying it differently’. Experience on the project showed that small teams working with small budgets can do this brilliantly. The *Say it Again, Say it Differently* team hopes that you too will make use of the working method outlined here to take your story to your audience in powerful new ways.

‘The reason why museums can be so powerful for our memories is that they are also what Annis called ‘dream spaces’, where we as visitors respond to images, colours and textures in rather random yet highly personal ways.

When we walk through or around a museum we weave both our bodies and our minds through these spaces. Slipping in and out of the museum’s structures, we access a whole range of thoughts and feelings.

Sometimes, this is a deep and moving experience, often it is at surface level only. But the fact that this experience can be so profound, makes the role of the museum in opening up histories and prompting memories all the more significant.’ Gaynor Kavanagh, 1999





7. Tools and resources

Writing a brief *aide memoir* | Learning styles | Evaluation toolkit | Saying it differently
case studies: Case study 1: Grant Museum design brief; Case study 2: The Brunel Museum
interpretative strategy notes | Web resources | References | Contact List

Writing a brief *aide memoir*

Orientation to the project

A description of the museum and the project:

- Size and scope of the project
- Character of the museum
- Origins of the project (e.g. HLF bid, important anniversary, new wing, redisplay)
- Timescale for implementation and completion

A short method statement to explain the museum's intentions and needs for its design team.

- Degree of collaboration and scope for creativity
- Existing decisions/plans
- Museum team roles and responsibilities

Summary of Interpretive Strategy

Do not expect the designers to read the interpretive strategy in full. The design brief should contain an informative summary of the thinking to date.

The summary should cover:

- What is the exhibition about?
- Who is the exhibition for?
- Key messages and objectives

Include known/decided areas of implementation which should guide the creative agency, eg:

- Visitor experience and take out
- Tone
- Storylines
- Potential material for display, and their priority

Creative briefs for writers, designers and researchers

The brief should make it clear which of these areas have already been decided, and which are open to the creative partner to make suggestions.

This section of the brief should open with a detailed explanation of the desired visitor experience, as this will inform and guide all aspects of the creative response.

Description of the visitor experience:

- Does the exhibition want to explain issues to a passive audience, encourage them to explore, think for themselves, and choose from a range of evidence? How much variety/consistency is desirable?
- Is the exhibition word-led or picture-led?
- Will the text be read separately from the other interpretive items such as pictures and objects, or in conjunction with them?

Copywriting section

Role of the text within the exhibition:

- Is the text intended to be the visitor's primary means of interpretation or part of an evocative experience?
- Is the text part of a range of inputs e.g. voices in a sound scape, audio guides, songs and lyrics as part of an AV film clip, text as pull-out panels and drawers within an exhibit area?

How will the scripted communication be delivered?

Panels, AV, audio, in-case graphics?

Tone of voice

- What voice or voices would be appropriate for the audience and the communication?
- What has the evaluation shown about how the visitors want to receive the information?

Research and Material

- Does the museum have all the information and interpretation it needs for the storylines? Are further opportunities for research included in the copywriter's brief?
- How will the storylines and script be evaluated and the accuracy of the information/interpretation validated?

Picture researcher section

- What do you need from the picture researcher, and what do you have already?
- What is the status of the pictures and images held by the museum?
- How large a role will the pictures play in carrying the interpretation?
- How many pictures overall will need to come from outside sources?
- Budget constraints
- Format in which pictures will be required

What is the picture researcher's scope of works?

Which elements of the process will be carried out by the picture researcher:

- Liaison with project team
- Estimation of copyright budget
- Procurement of imagery
- Co-ordination between image suppliers, designers and client
- Negotiation of copyright clearance and licence agreements
- Co-ordination of picture credits

Graphic Design Section

What are the opportunities for graphic design, and what do they need to deliver?

A great deal of the graphic design brief is guided by the desired visitor experience. Additional areas to cover are:

- Description of graphic opportunities, if known
- Need to cross over to other formats (print, web, postcards)
- Evaluation material on content, reading age, access, etc
- Scope for further evaluation during the design process, and requirement for prototypes
- Current museum protocols for graphics which will apply (e.g. date formats, use of italics, point sizes, use of images)
- Number of languages to display

Response required to creative brief

How the agencies should respond, and how that response will be evaluated:

- **Ask the agency for a creative response to the project.** You set them a task to demonstrate their creative credentials, e.g. how they would approach the exhibition to ensure best results with the target audience
- **Ask the agency for a basic presentation,** focusing on their past work, with an explanation of how this experience and project history could be used in your exhibition

Give clear indications of the scale of the response required (commensurate with the value of the project) and prioritisation of the criteria that the evaluation will use.

Practical Details

The final section of the brief needs to be a clear explanation of the tender process, schedule of services, deliverables and other project requirements.

Learning Styles

There are different leaning styles: most people have a preference for one above others, but use a variety of strategies for learning. In some cases an individual will use different learning styles for different types of subject or task.

Diagram 1: Types of learning

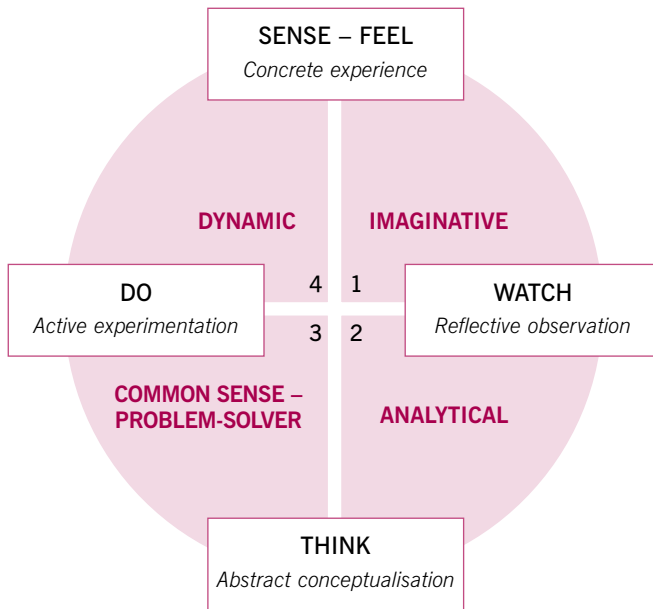
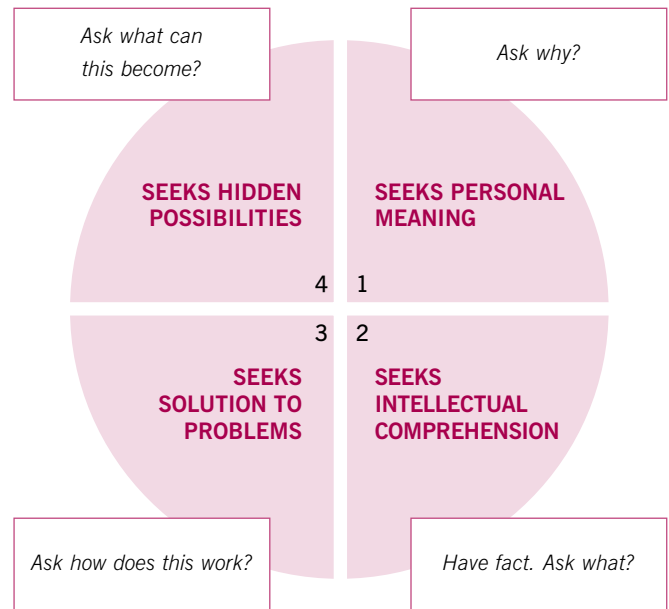


Diagram 2: Learning behaviour and learning styles

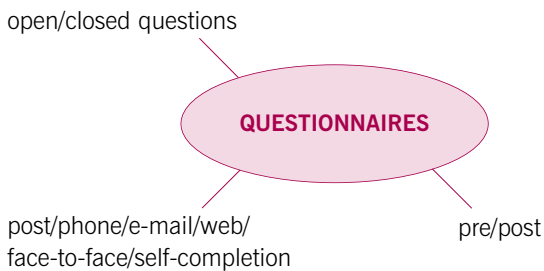
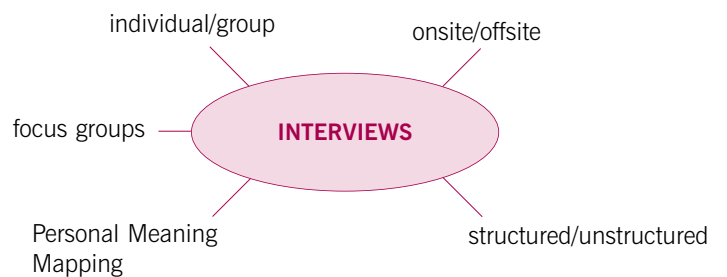
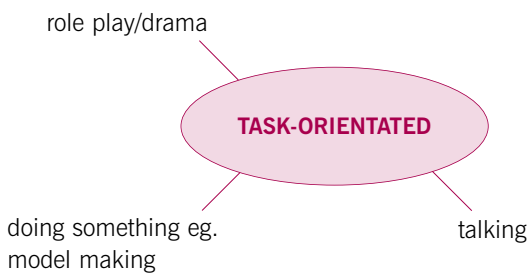
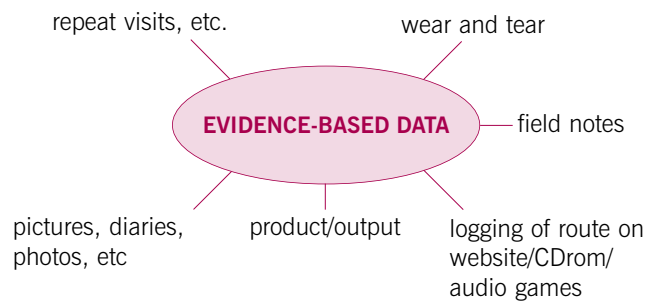
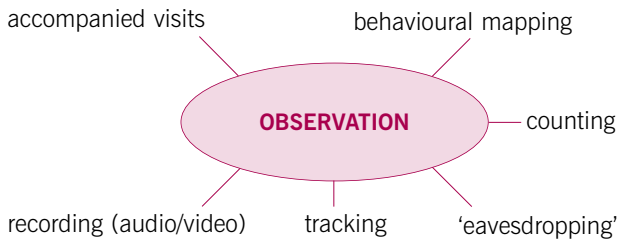


It is very easy for an institution to believe that there is only one way of delivering information – by didactic, authoritative logical explanation. A good exhibition offers a variety of styles and opportunities if it wants to be appropriate for a wide audience. Your visitors' learning styles could be influenced by the following factors:

- Only 5% of visitors will have relevant background or training in the subject
- 1 in 5 adults has functional literacy
- 25% of Europeans will be over 60 by 2020

Issues like these should be considered when the exhibition is developed. The baseline evaluation will help to get information about your visitors.

Evaluation toolkit



Case Study 1: Grant Museum design brief

“Say it Again, Say it Differently” Design Brief

Orientation

The Grant Museum of Zoology has been described as “the mad collector’s living room”. It is a small working museum with a definite Victorian air to it – it is still arranged in the way it was when founded in 1828 (taxonomically – all specimens are grouped with their relatives). In parts, the collection is extremely densely displayed due to lack of storage space, which has created problems when arriving at interpretive solutions.

The collection is largely comprised of animal skeletons and specimens preserved in fluid, with some taxidermy specimens and fossils. It was founded as a teaching collection and continues to play an important role in teaching at University College London and the wider community. Seven years ago the museum was opened to the public, but its interpretation has yet to catch up with the needs of its new users. This is one of the stimuli for this project.

The specimens are housed in around twenty cases and also some are on open display, all inside a single room.

Project objectives

The museum is engaged in a project to reinterpret the displays’ scripted communication for a non-specialist audience.

The outcome of this project is to produce labels and text panels for the contents of these displays, hand-held interpretation for key specimens, and a mounted introductory panel for the whole museum by the end of autumn 2005 (early-mid November).

The graphic design input falls into two parts:

1. Identifying approaches to scripted communication that will work effectively in the space and display cases available, which will fulfil the museum’s communication criteria. They will also need to design the way in which the labels are displayed and mounted.
2. Within the parameters defined by the point above, the designers should create labels and text panel formats to give the museum a distinctive look and a feel that runs through all of its resources.

Overall, the museum is looking for a ‘house style’ for a range of scripted communication formats likely to include labels, text-panels, hand-held information sheets, a floor plan, an introductory panel and leaflets and posters, which can then be used as templates for current and future displays.

Methodology:

The designers will:

- Work collaboratively with the museum staff to identify the best design solution for scripted communication within the space and display cases
- Produce a concept for development and discussion.
- Produce a set of prototypes after concept sign off in time for formative evaluation
- Proceed to detailed design to an agreed timetable, taking into account the findings of the formative evaluation
- Deliver to the museum a finished set of artwork for the scripted communication for the current display
- Deliver to the museum an integrated set of scripted communication templates, which they are able to use independently for future displays.

The museum will:

- Undertake all research and evaluation for the project
- Give clear briefing and specifications for their communication needs and display requirements
- Provide picture research and text to an agreed timetable
- Provide sign off of concept and detail design to an agreed timetable
- Specify the format in which the templates will need to be delivered, in consultation with the graphic designers.

The curator and assistant curator will be evaluating and signing-off the work at each stage.

Case Study 1: Grant Museum design brief continued...

Interpretive Strategy Summary

It is important to convey the fact that the Grant Museum and its specimens have a fascinating history as a working space. Teaching and research are carried out there, and many of the specimens have individually significant stories behind them.

The aim of the interpretation is not primarily to convey facts about natural history, but instead to show that the museum is a collection of specimens that each have discrete stories behind them. For example they may have been used in research by an historic scientist, be extinct, have been prepared in an interesting way, or show evidence of particular zoological processes. There is no centrally running theme through the museum – each specimen tells a different story, be it historical, mythological, museological, ecological or zoological.

The target audience of the interpretation created through this project is non-specialist adults. Most questions asked by visitors reflect that they are aware that the museum has an academic background. They appreciate that the staff are zoologists and can ask for facts about the specimens and the subject. This should be reflected in the voice of the scripted communication – it will not presume any prior knowledge and will not ask questions of the visitor. This is because, while some zoological statements may be slightly controversial within the scientific community, to form an opinion about them would require extremely in-depth knowledge. The aim is to stimulate curiosity about individual specimens and also to increase understanding and appreciation of the natural world. The exhibition is very much specimen-led.

Scope of work

There are three styles of display in the museum, which are in different areas:

1. **Invertebrate:** densely-packed cases of smaller animals
2. **Vertebrate:** less dense arrangements of larger animals
3. Specimens on **open display.**

We expect to use a hierarchy of scripted communication throughout the museum, consisting of the following elements:

- a) **Case panel:** for a large group of specimens. This interprets all of the animals in the case that belong to a single taxonomic group in a single paragraph with images
- b) **Detailed specimen label:** for a single specimen or a small group of closely arranged specimens which are very similar. This gives the name, an image and one or two sentences of interpretation
- c) **Small specimen label:** for a single specimen. This gives the name only
- d) **Friends of the Grant Museum label:** for a single specimen. This is for specimens adopted by members of the public. They would have the title “*Friends of the Grant Museum*” and also a sentence like “John Smith has adopted the elephant skull”.

The graphic scope of works is to produce one set of finished artwork for the existing displays, and a set of templates allowing the museum to produce elements for future displays.

All cases will have a “case label”, but specimens on open display will not. The invertebrate cases will use “detailed specimen labels” mainly for small groups of specimens and with very few “small specimen labels”. The vertebrate cases will use “detailed specimen labels” mainly for individual specimens and with “small specimen labels” on most or all of the remaining specimens. Individual specimens on open display have “detailed specimen labels”.

The vertebrate cases are double sided but there is no separation between the two sides: when looking at the display on one side of the case the visitor can see the backs of the specimens in the display behind them. This makes the visitor’s scene very busy, and the designers will need to take this into account when creating the way in which the labels are displayed. It is not necessary to see the labels of one display from both sides of the case.

Some specimens have an audio-guide segment and/or an associated information sheet. The designers will need to provide a system to make this clear to the visitor, possibly through the use of colour or icons on the specimen label.

Case Study 1: Grant Museum design brief continued...

Designers are responsible for the size of the labels, and all of the components therein (image size, font size, space for text). Also, we require a style of arranging and mounting these labels in the displays.

Information sheets

Some of the specimens require more written interpretation than is possible or sensible to put on a label and so information sheets will be available. The individual specimen label will need to indicate that the specimen has an associated information sheet. All the information sheets for the specimens in a single case will be housed on or near the case (the system for storing the sheets needs to be conceived).

For each specimen used there will be two to four discrete topics that will be discussed on the sheet. Depending on the specimen's story, the topics covered will be chosen from:

- About the specimen (e.g. famous scientists; how it came to be here)
- Natural history (e.g. habitat; diet)
- Mythology
- Conservation
- Science (e.g. cloning; biomedical research)

The information sheet will be double sided and include images, but all other design features are up to the designers. Again we need templates so that they can be produced in-house.

Floor plan

We already have a map showing the layout of the museum, but we would like it incorporated into a new floor-plan guiding people around the museum in style that ties in with the labels. Due to lack of budget this will need to be in such a format that it can be photocopied for distribution, most likely on double-sided A4 paper, unless other solutions can be conceived.

It will have a list of museum highlights with a short sentence on each of these specimens (three or four specimens) in one section. There is no necessary order in which the museum should be explored.

Information panel

We would like a panel introducing the museum as people arrive. This will have small text sections entitled "About your visit", "About the museum" (or similar headings) and a map. We have no preconception of format or position in the museum.

Leaflets and posters

We would like leaflets and posters that share the look and feel of the museum as a whole. Costing needs to be presented separately for this task. The style of design will also need to be transferable to other media such as postcards and websites, but these need not be produced under this project.

Copywriting

The text on all interpretation will be produced by museum staff. It will be communicated in an expert, authoritative voice. The information sheets, however, lend themselves to a more anecdotal style of writing.

The Assistant Curator will liaise with the agency throughout this project, and TGA, the London Hubs design consultants will also be involved.

We aim for visitors leaving the museum with a sense that they have seen something unusual and fantastic. In order for them to interpret the specimens requires labelling (it is not always easy to look at a skeleton and image the animal fleshed-out). To this extent the specimens cannot always speak for themselves.

Response required to creative brief

We would like to see a creative response from the agencies by producing creative approach to the task, including examples of a labels, logos, information sheets and other sample materials to demonstrate the unifying 'look and feel' required from the design approach. The text and images for the response is in a separate document that comes with this brief, or can be obtained electronically from the Assistant Curator, Jack Ashby. This material was produced at an earlier stage of this project; please ignore the style of design.

Interviews to select an agency to go ahead with this project will take place on.....

April 2005

Case Study 2: The Brunel Museum

- London Hub
- Say It Again
- Brunel Engine House
- Notes on Interpretive Strategy

	What is the exhibition about?
Notes	<p>How would you summarise the content/message/bid idea of the exhibition in a single sentence or strapline?</p> <p>The Brunel's tunnel at Rotherhithe and how it was used.</p>
	Who is the exhibition for?
Notes	<p>The focus is on attracting and informing school children at the Keystage 2 level, within walking distance and short travelling distance of the museum. The information in the museum should have a strong educational slant.</p> <p>For visitors with other specialist interests (e.g. Old Rotherhithe, Brunel and London) there will be handouts available at the door and suggestions for other places to visit.</p>
	Who are the other stakeholders and what are their priorities?
Notes	<p>The Lottery Fund has provided some funding for wall panels, and would expect these to form part of the interpretation mounting.</p> <p>The board of trustees has until recently had a specific dislike of focusing on I.K. Brunel, but this has now been relaxed. They are anxious to avoid 'dumbing down' the museum, but accept that the present display is outdated and too narrowly focused on engineering for the general public.</p> <p>Some visitors come with a particular interest in the engineering aspects of the project, the life of I.K. Brunel, or the history of old buildings.</p>

Case Study 2: The Brunel Museum continued...

	What do your audience know/feel about the subject already?
Notes	<p>The background knowledge about I.K. Brunel was boosted by the Great Britons programmes of 2004, and most people are aware that there was a Victorian called Brunel who built things. However, knowledge of the Rotherhithe project is much lower, even among people who live in Rotherhithe. People might know that a Brunel was involved in building it, but do not understand its significance or realise that it is still in use today.</p> <p>There is a general feeling that I.K. Brunel is an inspiring character who was responsible for building the greatest structures of the Victorian era, but considerably less knowledge about why he is so important or why his projects and designs were so innovative.</p> <p>In line with the trend in how history is taught and perceived, the evaluation group said that children are interested in the human stories of history. In this case, the life and lifestyle of Brunel and the men who built the tunnel.</p> <p>Reasons for visiting: Children doing the museum as part of the KS2 'Victorians' section, or as their 'Local History' option.</p> <p>I.K. Brunel is a suggested topic at KS2 for biographical study, but so far there seems to be very low takeup of this option. However, with the right resources, this could quickly change as the teachers showed some enthusiasm for the subject.</p> <p>Children doing QCA12 on how their area changed in Victorian times.</p> <p>Brunel enthusiasts who are doing all the sites.</p> <p>People following the Rotherhithe walk, which links several interesting sites nearby.</p> <p>Popular misconceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confusing Marc Isambard Brunel with Isambard Kingdom Brunel• Believing the tunnel they built is the current road tunnel• Thinking they are visiting the Pumphouse Educational Museum at Lavender Pond nearby

Case Study 2: The Brunel Museum continued...

	What do you want your audience to know/feel after visiting the exhibition?
Notes	<p>About the Brunels: Marc Brunel's contribution to the modern age (including machine tools) I.K. Brunel's connection with London (bridge, tunnel & ship) I.K. Brunel's lifetime contribution to engineering (steam ships, railway lines, bridges) I.K. Brunel's connection with the Rotherhithe tunnel The Brunels as innovative problem solvers (Great Egg Race) inventing technologies to achieve specific ends.</p> <p>About the tunnel Why the tunnel was necessary What engineering problems it had to overcome How the Brunels achieved this (i.e. how the tunnel was built) The labourers who built the tunnel, risks, working conditions Disasters and dangers faced by the tunnel team The flood of 18th May that nearly killed Brunel The 'whimsy' use of the tunnel for funfairs, dinners The tunnel's history and continued tradition as a tourist attraction</p> <p>Note also: Formal learning outcomes: Structures, bridge building, engineering, etc with KS3. The school groups do an element of design principles with the live enablers already, looking at shapes that give strength in building.</p>

	What evaluation data do you have, and what do you need to get?
Notes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do people like from the existing display? 2. Do they want to know more about: how it was built, why was built, or the people who built it? 3. Route that people take around the museum space and the key places for top line interpretation. <p>The evaluation group were positive about the fact that there is a genuine Brunel location in their area, and singled out the use of live interpretation as a strong plus factor.</p> <p>The images and text currently on display were criticised for being too monochrome and difficult to read, with dense text and old fashioned fonts.</p> <p>There was strong encouragement for giving more information about the lives and experiences of the people who built the tunnel, including the miners and labourers. There was also interest in knowing more about the social context of the Brunels – how did they live, what did they eat, etc.</p> <p>The lack of a clear route around the museum was criticised, with the need to give people a stronger sense of direction. Schoolgroups might be following a trail or filling in a pre-prepared visit task sheet, but the subjects and narrative still needs to be easier to understand and follow.</p>

Case Study 2: The Brunel Museum continued...

	What are the strengths and weaknesses of the collection?
Notes	<p>Strengths: Strengths in the collection include a (small) number of authentic nineteenth century items and a good collection of images connected to the different subjects around the tunnel.</p> <p>Objects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereoscopic ‘Peepshows’ showing the view along the length of the tunnel with small figures walking around • Pictures and illustrations of the tunnel from all eras • Models, including a large scale cross-sectional model of the tunnel construction and a smaller model of the tunnelling shield • Historical medals, souvenirs and guidebooks (in different languages) commemorating or talking about the tunnel • Painting of the banquet to relaunch the tunnel finances • A cheque and manuscript document signed by Brunel • Diagram by Marc Brunel of the river bed cross section, with tiny figure of I.K. Brunel in a rowing boat • Busts and statuettes of I.K. Brunel and Mark Brunel • First hand diaries, newspaper reports and accounts of the tunnel from its years of construction <p>Note: It may also possible to get some or all of the models of Marc Brunel’s block-turning machines from the NMM. While including these would bring Marc Brunel much more into the picture, they have no <i>direct</i> association with the tunnel.</p> <p>Weaknesses: No real personal items relating to either of the Brunels.</p> <p>Most of the lower floor is taken up with a large (moving) steam engine that has no association with the engine house, coming from the wrong location and era.</p>

	What non-collection assets can be used?
Notes	<p>The museum has a strong live interpretation policy, with staff dressing up as I.K. Brunel to give guided tours of the space. There may be scope to have a French volunteer do the live interpretation in the persona of Marc Brunel as well.</p> <p>There is a nearby area (Knot Garden) which gives a good view of the river, and provides a clear indication of the scale of the project.</p> <p>The building is the original building, and sits next to the original shaft.</p> <p>The enclosed area around the shaft has been decorated, and has a very attractive boat-shaped table with tiles illustrated from a wide variety of sources. The museum is working on funding to have benches built, in the shape of I.K. Brunel’s most famous bridges (Clifton, Saltash, etc)</p> <p>London Transport is co-operative with taking special guide tours through the tunnel. The tunnel lights are turned on, and the train passes slowly along, allowing the passengers to look at Brunel’s original work.</p> <p>The adjacent building contains a picture research library open to the public, which contains a good collection of pictures of the local area, mostly from 1940s. It also has an excellent film costume collection which is sometime open for viewing.</p> <p>The Brunel Enginehouse is on a walking route that takes visitors along a series of historic and important sites in Bromley.</p>

Case Study 2: The Brunel Museum continued...

	Relationship to other museum communication?
Notes	<p>At present the museum interpretation is self-contained, but the small gift and book shop have a number of Brunel books on sale. The most directly relevant of these is “Brunel’s tunnel and where it led”, and there is interest from Sir Alain Muir Wood in updating this at his expense. The interpretation and communication should be closely related between the museum and the book.</p> <p>The Enginehouse is beginning the process of building a website, which could be used to enhance or extend the interpretation.</p> <p>There are plans to develop a set of handouts for visitors with particular interests, where these are not featured greatly in the main interpretation. Subjects suggested for these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The life of Marc Brunel • I.K. Brunel’s later achievements • Technical data on the tunnel’s design and construction • I.K. Brunel’s connection with London (boat, tunnel and bridge) • The history of the Engine House • Modern urban transport in London • Nearby destinations worth visiting in Rotherhithe.

	What choice of voice do you want for the museum?
Notes	<p>What voice or voices would be appropriate for the audience and the communication?</p> <p>The current voice is rather formal, and the text is presented in large, dense blocks. The museum would like a more friendly approach. The information about the tunnelling and engineering aspects of the site need to be concise and accurate, but do not need to dominate the interpretation.</p> <p>The information should be in a form easily read by the target audience of primary and early secondary school children, and could use lists, bullet points and engaging ‘How to...’ style and tone. The voice should be ‘friendly expert’ level, demonstrating knowledge but gearing this towards a non-specialised audience. Quotations and pull-out key text will be used to break up text blocks and create a more dynamic and varied graphic panel view.</p>

Case Study 2: The Brunel Museum continued...

	What is the overall narrative structure/ storyshape?
Notes	<p>The story of the Brunels and the tunnel does not lend itself well to straightforward chronology, as the project had several periods of stagnation and different uses.</p> <p>The proposed treatment is for a thematic shape of the story, based on eight panels with text and graphics. The shape and layout of the museum interior will give visitors a logical, clockwise route around the entrance way and mezzanine, meaning that the panels are likely to be encountered in a particular order. The storylines will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rationale behind a tunnel under the Thames (i.e. commercial needs) • Marc Brunel, his background and his connection/contribution to the tunnel project (not its engineering details) • The engineering challenge of building a tunnel under a river • The miners and men who built the tunnel – their work, risks and welfare. • Disasters and dangers in the tunnel, i.e. flood, fire, gas • I.K. Brunel's work on the tunnel, and its role in launching his career (and nearly killing him) • How the tunnel has been used, and its use today • The tunnel as a tourist attraction.
	What variety of visitor experience do you want?
Notes	<p>How much variety/consistency is desirable? Do you want elements of:</p> <p>Most visitor experience will still be text-and-image driven.</p> <p>Interactivity is essential for viewing the 'peepshows' and may be built in to the cross-sectional model.</p> <p>There is a flat screen monitor in the upstairs section (soon to be driven by a DVD player) and a TV screen downstairs.</p> <p>Schools and public groups can walk up the river to the riverside and look at Tower Bridge (worked on by the third Brunel). When doing live interpretation, the tour starts out by the river embankment, to give a sense of the challenge and the need for the under-river route.</p> <p>The ship-table outside by the shaft provides a fun extension of the theme, and there are blank tiles in front of each place at the table for the children to draw their own additions. Looking at the different drawings and understanding their meaning is a fascinating activity for an adult, and many of the tiles are excellent pieces of design.</p> <p>On special days the museum organises a variety of activities for children.</p> <p>Group tours can be arranged with London Transport to do the length of the tunnel, with the lights on to view the hero object.</p>
	What are your criteria for success and how will they be measured?
Notes	<p>Will you judge the success of the project by:</p> <p>The main target is for increased use of the museum by local school groups.</p>

Web Resources:

www.visitors.org.uk

UK Visitor Studies Group website with case studies, good practice advice and list of consultants.

www.visitorstudies.org

US Visitor Studies Association website.

www.amol.org.au/evrsig

Australian website with useful articles and practical guidance on visitor research and evaluation.

www.amonline.net.au/amarc/faq

The site of the Australian Museum's Audience Research Centre with downloadable resources.

www.inspiringlearning.gov.uk

A UK website which is about how to inspire and measure learning in museums, archives and libraries with downloadable resources.

www.evaluationforall.org.uk

Scottish Arts Council website which includes a toolkit for working through the evaluation process.

Useful advice can also be found in *Museum Practice* issue 21, volume 7, no. 3, pp 53-73 (2002) (also available to subscribers online)

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Notes:

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Say it Again, Say it Differently is a London Museums Hub programme aimed at creating good practice methodology for scripted communication as part of a wider museum interpretation strategy. Through understanding the collaborative creative process and the range of options available, *Say it Again, Say it Differently* offers a ‘hands-on, how-to’ approach to meeting the challenges.

The programme steps are aimed at unlocking the information, ideas and skills of your museum team. The programme is widely applicable and can be used equally effectively at national museum scale as well as at the smaller local museum level.



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