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On How to Create a Digital Exhibit

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On How to Create a Digital Exhibit

Matthew Chase, MASP, MLIS

PURPOSE OF EXHIBIT

An exhibit is a collection of items (e.g., images, texts, videos, etc.), centered on a specific focus or theme to advance community discourse and engagement.

The exhibit is a work of scholarship and research, informed by the scholarly literature.

The exhibit should demonstrate in-depth research in the texts, references, and interpretations provided.

Digitizing the exhibit instills enduring value to the work, preserving the scholarly significance and impact of the exhibit.

PLANNING THE EXHIBIT

Questions to consider when developing an exhibit:

- What is the theme or focus of the exhibit?
- What are the criteria for identifying and selecting the exhibit's collection of items?
- Where will the exhibit be stored digitally?
- How will the exhibit be assessed?
- Will there be an interactive component to the exhibit to invite community participation?

ENGAGING WITH EXHIBITS

Digital exhibits offer a variety of opportunities and spaces to engage your communities:

- 1) Use the exhibit to foster critical discussions about relevant issues and topics. For example, faculty and librarians can engage students with exhibits as classroom discussion prompts, in person and online.
- 2) Exhibits can serve as prompts for reflection, writing, art, and presentations among your communities.
- 3) Your community can create "mini-exhibits" or digital artifacts based on an existing exhibit or of their own initiative.
- 4) Digital exhibits can be used for mindfulness practices (e.g., beholding activities).
- 5) Community members and students can work together to create an exhibit.

EXHIBITS IN ACTION – USAHS LIBRARY DIGITAL EXHIBIT SERIES



The University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences (USAHS) Library's Digital Exhibit Series launched in June 2020, partly due to COVID-19 pandemic and campus closures.

The digital exhibit series started with two exhibits, adapted from the Library's 2019 and 2020 on-campus exhibits: *Theater of the Body* exhibit and *Cures and Curses* exhibit.

The exhibit series aims to advance the discourse and knowledge regarding the sociocultural impact of medicine. The *Theater of the Body* exhibit addressed the history of modern anatomy with a collection of Renaissance-era anatomical illustrations, while the *Cures and Curses* exhibit discussed the history of U.S. pharmaceutical advertising with a collection of 19th- and 20th-century patent medicine trade cards.

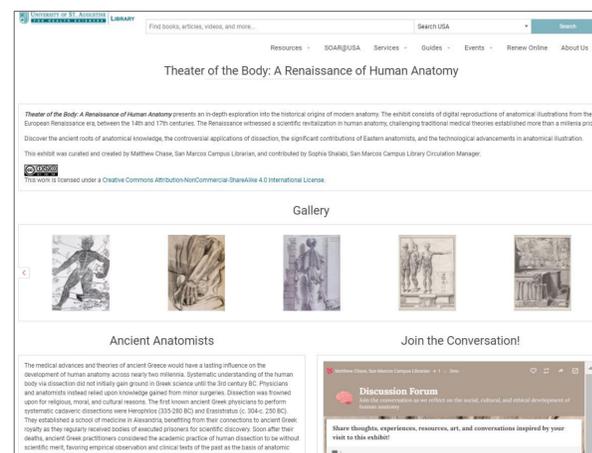
Digital exhibits preserved and accessible in the Library's website. Collections in exhibits derived public-domain materials, courtesy of U.S. National Library of Medicine.

Text in the exhibits are informed by and cited from the scholarly literature.

All exhibits are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Library staff promoted the exhibits with faculty development workshops, virtual tours, community dialogue events, and social media posts.

Exhibits are assessed using Google Analytics and a standard ACRL Project Outcome digital & special collection survey.



RECOMMENDED STEPS

Step 1) Define a central theme to guide the focus of your exhibit's collection, discourses, and evidence-based information.

Step 2) Curate the exhibit collection based on your established criteria. Potential collections could derive from historical and archive materials, items created by your community, etc.

Step 3) Develop metadata for each collection item (e.g., title, publication information, rights, etc.).

Step 4) Preserve the exhibit. Store the exhibit work in the library website, institutional repository, Omeka site, etc.

Step 5) Explore and cite the scholarly literature and evidence-based information to contextualize and inform different aspects of the exhibit's theme.

Step 6) Incorporate interactive components to the exhibit. Install discussion forums, organize spaces for community to create and contribute materials inspired by the exhibit, etc.

Step 7) Promote the exhibit.

- Organize community events such as receptions, tours, and dialogues.
- Share collection items on social media.
- Train faculty to use the exhibit as teaching and learning tools in their courses.
- Invite students to contribute to the exhibit.

Step 8) Assess the exhibit with surveys, site visit counts, and other documentable data.

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