



Baker-Berry Library Exhibits

a manual for exhibit curators



Baker-Berry Library

Exhibits Manual



Baker-Berry Library
Dartmouth College
Hanover, New Hampshire

I: Conceiving the Exhibition	1
II: Text Guidelines	2
III: Item Labels	3
IV: Timetable and Deadlines	4
V: Miscellaneous Style Issues	5
VI: Installation and Production	6
VII: Exhibit Case Specs	7
VIII: List of Illustrations	8

All exhibitions are different, and many different styles can work. This manual provides some general recommendations and guidelines to help you curate an exhibition, but it should not be seen as prescriptive.

For a detailed Exhibits Policy please refer to our publication, *Baker-Berry Library Exhibits - Policies & Guidelines*, available at http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/leo/exhibits_policy_06_2009.pdf.

I: Conceiving the Exhibition

IDEA AND SPACE

The Baker-Berry exhibitions spaces pose particular challenges to exhibition curators. Attention should be given to the layout of the space and its limitations at the initial planning stages of the exhibition. The space is not right for all exhibits, and your first job is to decide if the concept you want to communicate can be exhibited in these spaces. Walk through the area and try to envision your idea played out in the cases.

AUDIENCE

You will be curating for a very diverse audience with varying levels of interest and expertise in your subject area. Most will be students, faculty and staff passing through the space who stop to take a look at something that interests them. Most will be well educated (or in the process of becoming so), intelligent, and interested in anything intellectually stimulating. You will also have a much smaller audience of highly critical experts.

THINK IN TERMS OF CHAPTERS OF A STORY

Your audience is likely to dip in and out of your exhibition. Only a dedicated few will start at the first case and systematically work their way through to the end reading all of the text and looking at all of the items.

One effective strategy for dealing with a casual audience is to make each case stand alone, so a viewer can step up to case six and absorb

a concept without having read the other cases. If you break your theme down to a series of chapter-like concepts, you can create stand-alone cases that deliver to the casual viewer. Sometimes this demands some redundancy for key facts or concepts.

You also want to reward your ideal viewer, the one that is interested in the topic, has made the exhibition a destination, and will start at the beginning and read it all. So, while you want chapters, you may also want overarching themes that all of the cases amplify. Each case's narrative can contribute to a larger narrative.

THINK ABOUT TRAFFIC PATTERNS

The Main Hall has seven large cases spread over the entire length of the hall and broken in the middle by the entrance and information desk. This means that most of your potential audience will first encounter the exhibition in the middle, either at case three or case four—if you have particularly eye-catching materials, think about using them as hooks for the

rest of the exhibition in the cases flanking the information desk.

REMEMBER THE LIMITATIONS OF THE CASES

The Baker Main Hall cases are very shallow, and books with wide or stiff bindings usually cannot be displayed easily. The books must also be standing, so books with heavy text blocks may need considerable preservation work to make them work in the cases. The cases are very tall. The upper 1/4 is inaccessible to most of your audience, so you may want to use that space for large graphics.

BE AWARE OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Exhibitions are seen as reflections on the ideals of the institution that hosts them. We are very fortunate that we are on a college campus that encourages free discussion of complicated ideas and adventurous critical thinking. But, critiques need to be formulated so they are effective, and that means being sensitive to the tastes and social mores of a diverse community.



II: Text Guidelines

KEEP IT SHORT AND KEEP IT SIMPLE!

This is always frustrating. You have a complicated and intensely interesting story to tell, but, as we noted before, most viewers of these exhibitions are casual viewers who will not invest a lot of time in reading the text. It is usually helpful to keep your text brief if you want your viewers to read most of it.

Keeping the text down to 150-200 words per case, and less than 1000 words for the total exhibition (excluding item labels) is a good basic guideline. The text should avoid specialized jargon and be accessible to a general audience. Because many viewers simply skim the text, complicated sentence structures can be problematic. Simple sentences are more likely to deliver crucial information quickly and effectively.

It is a good idea to have a second reader who is not involved in the exhibition. That person can help you to see where you have made leaps due to your own familiarity with the material.



III: Item Labels

Item labels fall into two categories: those that simply identify the item and those that identify the item and expound on it.

Whichever form of label you choose, you should work with an established style manual to create your identifications. The Chicago Manual of Style works well across disciplines, but any good style guide will work—just be consistent. Use the bibliography format (rather than footnote style), but do not reverse the name.

So:

Leonardo Bruni. *Historia Florentina*. Venice: Jacobus Rebeus, 1476.

rather than:

Bruni, Leonardo. *Historia Florentina*. Venice: Jacobus Rebeus, 1476.

In some instances, it is helpful to add the dates when the author was alive—but if you do it on one label, do it on all of them.

If the item is a gift or a loan, place an acknowledgment statement below the citation.

Leonardo Bruni. *Historia Florentina*. Venice: Jacobus Rebeus, 1476. Gift of Mark Lansburgh '49

Or

Leonardo Bruni. *Historia Florentina*. Venice: Jacobus Rebeus, 1476. On loan from the Hood Museum of Art

Many viewers like descriptive item labels. Shorter entries are more likely to be read, but feel free to explore in more detail those pieces that are pivotal to the exhibition's themes.

Left to right:

Issac Singer. Maurice Sendak, illustrator. *Zlateh the Goat*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

This story carries a classic representation of death and rebirth. Aaron's family is very poor, so they must sell their goat. Aaron sets out for the village with the goat, but he soon overtaken by a terrible snow storm. He and Zlateh find refuge by burying themselves deep inside a haystack. Here they stay for three days, and Zlateh keeps the boy warm and nourishes him with her milk.

Brothers Grimm. Maurice Sendak, illustrator. *The Juniper Tree and other Tales from Grimm*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1973.

The title story tells the tale of Ann Marie, whose older step-brother has been murdered by her mother. Ann Marie buries his bones under the juniper tree, where his own mother is buried, and a bird sings of his fate from the tree's branches.

John Milton. *The History of Britain, that part especially now call'd England. From the first traditional beginning, continu'd to the Norman Conquest. Collected out of the antientest and best authours thereof by John Milton.* London, Printed by J.M. for James Allestry, at the Rose and Crown in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1670.

IV: Suggested Timeline

This is based on a July 1 opening for Baker-Berry exhibitions. Each exhibition is different, and the timelines will vary, but expect everything to take longer than you think it will.

January 1: Meet with Designer to discuss ideas and formulate a draft case plan and deadlines

January 1-March 31: Select materials and begin drafting text

January 1-March 31: Alert Designer and Preservation department of any selections that may require special preparation for exhibition

April 1: Preliminary selections and case descriptions for meeting with Designer

May 1: Layout and design meeting with Designer

May 1: Solid draft of text and item labels

May 15: All materials to Preservation and Designer

June 1: All item labels and text to Designer (Director will arrange for final proofreading of all text)

June 1: Publicity information (title, blurb, and image) to Marketing Committee

June 8: Remove previous exhibition

June 15: Installation begins

July 1: Opening Day!



V: Dartmouth-specific Style Issues

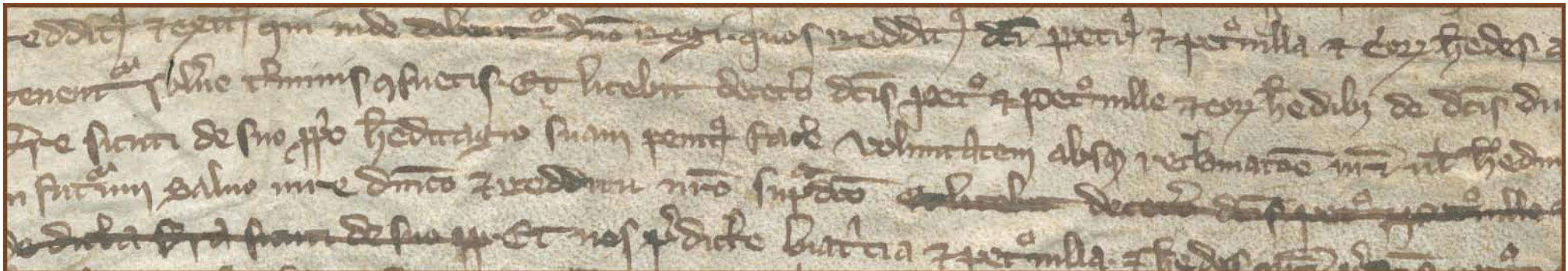
When referring to the Dartmouth College Library in a shortened form, Library should be capitalized. If you are referring to many libraries (Feldberg, Rauner, Paddock...) libraries should be lowercase.

Names of alumni should always be accompanied with their year, preceded by an apostrophe. If the alumni graduated before the 20th century, the full year should be included. For example:

- » Mark Lansburgh '49
- » Milton Ochieng '04
- » Daniel Webster 1801.

Individuals who received honorary degrees, or who are parents of Dartmouth students and alumni are indicated as follows:

- » Maurice Sendak H91 (H for honorary degree)
- » Perc S. Brown P41 (parent of a Dartmouth student).



VI: Installation and Production

Design, production and installation of exhibits are the responsibility of the Exhibits Designer, given materials and text curated by the curator.

Large exhibit posters are printed on the HP DesignJet inkjet printer in Evans Map Room. Paper stock is limited to the heavy-coated stock available in the Map Room, on 36" and 42" rolls. Posters and other inkjet prints are available to the exhibitor after the exhibit closes, with the caveat that these prints are not archival quality.

Smaller inkjet prints are produced as needed for reproduction of images, item labels, etc., as needed.

When an exhibit has an outside budget, the costs will be charged to that account. In other cases the Library usually can cover the cost of printing materials.

Matting and/or special handling of exhibit materials is the purview of the Library Preservation department and will need to be coordinated within the exhibit preparation schedule. See Section IV: Timetable and deadlines (p. 6) and "Preservation considerations" (below).

MULTIMEDIA CONSIDERATIONS:

One of the Berry display cases is equipped with a large plasma screen, computer and sound dome for exhibiting multimedia mate-

rials. The audio portion of a video or other multimedia piece can be played in an otherwise quiet study area by using an overhead dome that isolates the sound and limits spill-over.

Jones Media Center staff and student techs are available to advise on preparing multimedia materials for Berry exhibits.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR MULTIMEDIA EXHIBITS:

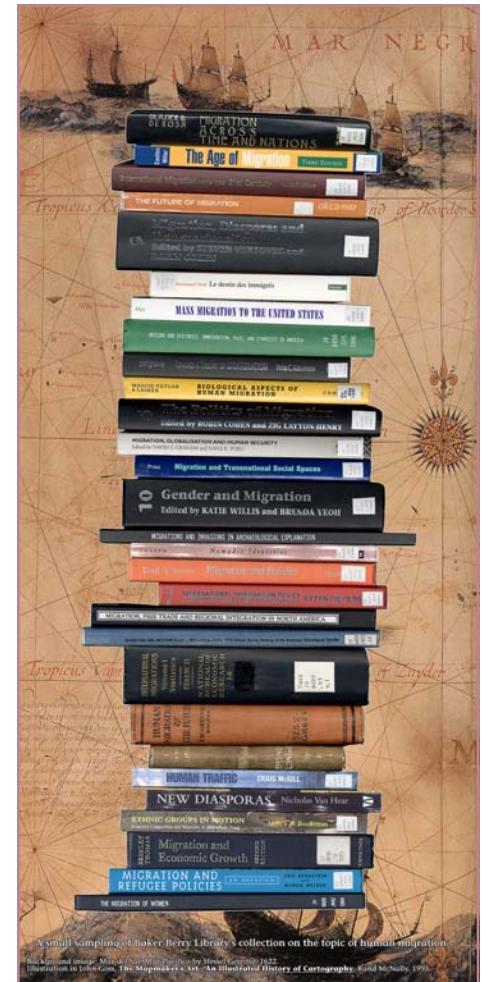
- » The visual materials must be of sufficient quality to be played on a large screen, high resolution display and capable of being "looped" for continuous play.
- » The audio must be of high quality and "equalized" across the entire piece so that it can be played at a fixed volume level. This is particularly critical if the video comprises segments or excerpts taken from a variety of sources.
- » Ideally, the piece would include captions to accommodate the hearing impaired and to assist all patrons in understanding unusual accents or other speech that is difficult to hear or understand.
- » Multimedia materials need to be tested in the display case, a day or so before the exhibition is scheduled to open.

PRESERVATION CONSIDERATIONS:

- » Exhibit prep work from preservation staff will only be given to library or college materials
- » Preservation staff can provide consultation on material for exhibition
- » Preservation staff member needs to review

material for exhibit as soon as it is selected, within the third or so meeting with exhibitors

- » Preservation will provide limited hours for exhibit prep. This will be determined at the time of the initial meeting.
- » Any material costs should be covered by the exhibitor
- » Items used for exhibits should be checked out to the library exhibit account.



VII: Exhibit Cases Specs

BAKER MAIN HALL CASES:

7 available cases
76" height X 68.5" width X 8" depth

Each can accommodate glass shelves of varying lengths in a variety of configurations.
The glass shelves are 8" deep.

The windows have UV protection lamination and the fluorescent bulbs in each case have UV protection filters.

Each case is locked and alarmed.



BERRY MAIN STREET CASES:

4 display cases
1 Sound dome

Each case measures 94" height X 70" width X 14" depth
Each case is locked and alarmed.

Shelves: 32 shelves with brackets are available.

Each shelf is equipped with a fluorescent lighting fixture for illuminating material below shelf.

Each shelf is 35" wide X 12" deep

ELECTRONIC MEDIA:

Each case has an electric power strip along both inside edges of case.

Each case has Ethernet, coaxial and phone connectivity.



VII: List of Illustrations

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COVER:

- » Top: Baker Main Hall, Jay Satterfield teaching a class on *The Collector's Hand - Gifts of Mark Lansburgh '49* exhibit, May 2006.
- » Bottom: Berry Main Street, Tom Luxon, Cheheyl Professor and Director Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning, and Callie Lawson '09 with Luxon's *Poetry and Prose of John Milton* class at the exhibit, *In Antient and Modern Books Enroll'd: John Milton at 400*, April, 2009.

PAGE 1:

- » Student in Baker Main Hall viewing the exhibit, *Representing War & Peace - Images from the Russo-Japanese War and the Portsmouth Treaty of 1905*, November 2005.

PAGE 2:

- » Baker Main Hall exhibit case with portion of exhibit, *Facing The North Wind - The Morton E. Wise Collection Of Maurice Sendak*, 2008.

PAGE 3:

- » Examples of item labels from the exhibits, *Facing The North Wind - The Morton E. Wise Collection Of Maurice Sendak*, 2008 and *In Antient and Modern Books Enroll'd: John Milton at 400*, 2009.

PAGE 4:

- » Baker Main Hall exhibit cases with portion of exhibit, *Now Performing At Webster Hall - The Pilobolus Dance Theatre Archive*, 2007.

PAGE 5:

- » Exhibit poster for *The Collector's Hand - Gifts of Mark Lansburgh '49*, 2006.

PAGE 6:

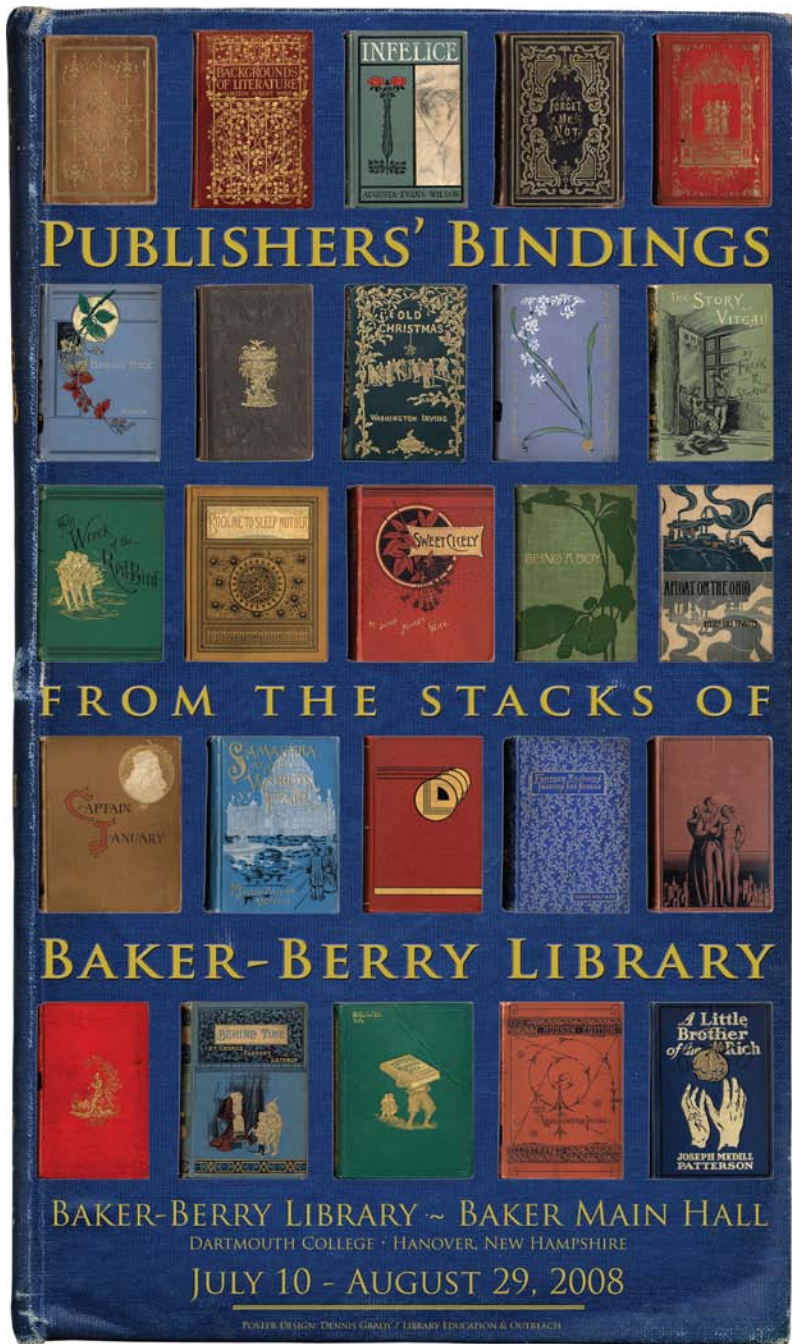
- » Panel from Berry Main Street exhibit, *Migration - The Human Journey*, 2005.

PAGE 7:

- » Top: Baker Main Hall exhibit case with portion of exhibit, *The Book By Its Cover - Seven Selected Surfaces from the Stacks of Baker-Berry Library*, 2006.
- » Bottom: Berry Main Street, two exhibit cases from *Latinos and Latinas at Dartmouth: Community, Culture, and Scholarship*, 2008.

PAGE 9:

- » Exhibit poster for *Publishers' Bindings - From the Stacks of Baker-Berry Library*, 2008.



This manual was written by Laura Barrett, Director, Education & Outreach; Jay Satterfield, Special Collections Librarian; and Dennis Grady, Baker-Berry Library Exhibits Designer.

For a detailed Exhibits Policy please refer to our publication, *Baker-Berry Library Exhibits - Policies & Guidelines*, available at http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/leo/exhibits_policy_06_2009.pdf.