

Developing Design Criteria for Exhibition Space

For any new museum building or for the expansion or renovation of existing galleries, both subjective and objective design criteria is instrumental in guiding development of facilities that meet exhibition needs.

1. Mission-Driven Design Criteria

Arises from the mission and mandate of the museum and its communication objectives and are embodied in a vision statement that expresses the ethos of the planned building or exhibition project. Some examples of this criteria are:

- a. Respond to and live in the architectural context of its surroundings and interact fully;
- b. Have spaces and places which appreciate views and vistas within the building envelope and towards the environs;
- c. Be inviting and welcoming to all;
- d. Provide a safe and pleasant environment for staff and visitors;
- e. Evoke the mission and vision of the institution;
- f. Respond to the adjacency issues and public facility requirements;
- g. Conform to all current codes, regulations, and standards and appropriately address equal access issues;

2. Functional Design Criteria:

These criteria must guide the architects, engineers, building contractors and exhibit designers working on the project. Some of these requirements are:

- a. Fulfilling all current codes, regulations, and standards;
- b. Meeting standards for climate control and security;
- c. Providing lighting and technical services;
- d. Planning for operational efficiency and safety;
- e. Considering future expansion options;
- f. Accommodating a phased development process.
- g. Addressing the spatial requirements of both permanent collection display and temporary exhibition programmes;
- h. Completing the project on time and on budget.

General Estimates of Space Requirements of Museums and Galleries

Thematic Exhibitions	25-35% occupied by exhibits	65-75% circulation and vista space
Closed Storage	60% occupied by collections	40% circulation space
Visible storage	40-50% occupied by collections	50-60% circulation space

Other Museum Requirements

- a) Design of the museum galleries and its exhibition graphics;
- b) Font, material, color, and location specifications of exhibition graphics;
- c) Exact sizing and indicative positioning of all graphics;
- d) Measurement of artifacts to be displayed in the museum;
- e) Proper flow and placement of all exhibition texts and graphics;
- f) Accurate, high-resolution reproductions of archival photographs, illustrations and visuals for exhibit
- g) Fabrication of exhibition mounts and other installation requirements;
- h) Display cases and in the case of original artifacts, properly secured;
- i) Actual installation of artifacts in display cases;
- j) Integrated narrative content with all interactive products;
- k) Integrated, consistent indoor and outdoor signage system;
- l) Visitor-friendly exhibition design and content;
- m) Lighting design to ensure the optimum lighting environment for the artifacts;
- n) Furniture for the museum galleries and facilities for the comfort of visitors;
- o) Provision of stanchion posts and other security features
- p) Disaster prevention equipment

References:

Lord, Barry and Lord, Gail Dexter.(2002).The Manual of Museum Exhibitions. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press.