Pulling Back the Curtain: Sharing Exhibit Development Choices with Our Visitors
Friday, November 21, 8:45-10:15.

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Why do we want to be transparent to visitors? Just to say we were?
Would it be helpful (to whom?) to share with visitors our decision making process?
These are our questions for today.
○ Would more transparency about exhibit development/decision-making be useful?
○ Under what circumstances?
○ How is it useful?
○ And how can we actually design this into the visitor experience?

Break-out Group Discussions: Four Sample Exhibits
In your discussions about your exhibit, consider the following:
● Why would a museum want to be transparent about the process of developing this exhibit (or not)? Just to make everyone happy? Just to cover their butts in case of criticism?
● What elements of the exhibit development or decision-making process would be useful to share with visitors?
● What are our motivations? What do we hope to accomplish?
● How can you be transparent with visitors in an engaging and meaningful way? Consider techniques beyond signage.

Sample exhibit descriptions on next page . . . .
Sample exhibits:

1. “Revising our History” is an exhibit about the history of a New England town that takes pride in its historical contributions to the abolitionist cause. The exhibit includes more recent research that shows many townspeople had been slave owners, had helped chase down a person trying to escape from slavery, and that, at one time, half of the town’s government seats were filled by slave owners. Some members of the community believe the exhibit places too much emphasis on the history of slave owners over the history of abolitionists. 
   * Consider the differences in your approach to transparency if this exhibit were installed in a small community history museum, a regional children’s museum, or a state history museum.

2. “Foodways” is an exhibit about a *boucherie*, a communal pig butchery, which is regional Louisiana Cajun culinary tradition, one that is practiced by fewer and fewer people. The pig is killed and butchered, the blood is collected and sausages and other foods are made from the blood, meat and organs. The exhibit team has photographed and filmed a *boucherie*. The exhibit needs to balance sharing this tradition with the public and guarding something cultural and described as “sacred” by chefs. Photos of a boucherie can be seen here: [http://www.vice.com/read/blood-collection-the-cajun-way](http://www.vice.com/read/blood-collection-the-cajun-way)
   * Consider the differences in your approach to transparency if this exhibit were installed in as a temporary exhibit at a regional cultural festival, as an exhibit in an urban children’s museum, or in a state history museum.

3. “Boston Black” is an exhibition that engages visitors in a dialogue about race, ethnicity, identity, and community. It highlights the tremendous diversity within Boston’s Black community, shares the significant history of Black people in the city, and stimulates new ways for families with young children to talk about race and identity. Packed with fun and imaginative interactive experiences, the exhibit takes visitors through five of Boston’s neighborhoods. Staff from Boston Children’s Museum worked with designers, architects and artists from New York and Boston and advisors from all over the country to create Boston Black, including local communities and organizations. Since opening in 2004 the exhibit has garnered praise, but also criticism from visitors and the Boston community, who often note the lack of the professional class of lawyers, doctors, professors, etc. represented.
   * Consider the differences in your approach to transparency if this exhibit were installed at a National Park Service site, in an urban children’s museum, or a city history museum.

4. “Klima X” is a climate science exhibition that focuses on global climate changes. The museum’s position on climate change is that human activity is the cause and the exhibit overtly advocates for changes in human activity to diminish the environmental/climate effects. The museum does not employ an objective/neutral editorial voice that many science museums try to take. Some visitors don’t like this, and accuse the museum of taking political sides, but other visitors positively welcome this approach.
   * Consider the differences in your approach to transparency if this exhibit were installed in large urban science center, in a regional children’s museum, or small, regional science museum.