American School for the Deaf Bicentennial Exhibit  
April 28 – October 21, 2017  

Project Scope  

Exhibit Dates  
- Official public opening on Friday, April 28  
- Exhibit closing date: Saturday, October 21  

Exhibit Title:  
*Language, Culture, Communities: 200 Years of Impact by the American School for the Deaf*  

Big Idea  
The American School for the Deaf established the first permanent school for the deaf in America. It created a new standardized language, resulting in a deaf community and culture that continues to advance equality. As a leader in developing educational methods and embracing technology for people who are deaf, ASD has impacted personal lives and American culture and has formed local, national, and global connections with deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing communities.  

Audience  
1. CHS museum goers of all ages, families, and history enthusiasts  
2. ASD supporters, students, teachers, alumni, and families  
3. Attendees of ASD Bicentennial events  
4. Visitors who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind  
5. Local Hartford community  

Project Goals  
1. The exhibit will be accessible and meaningful to the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind communities.  
2. The exhibit will be a destination for people attending the various ASD Bicentennial events in the Hartford area  
3. The exhibit will focus on the history and impact of ASD, including stories from past and present members of the ASD community. The exhibit will not be a general overview of deaf history.  

Takeaways (Learning Objectives)  
1. Visitors will understand that ASD established the first permanent school for the deaf in America and created a new standardized language, resulting in a deaf community and culture that continues to advance equality.  
2. Visitors will understand that ASD has and continues to transform and enrich the lives of people in their community, as well as form connections between deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing communities.  
3. Visitors will gain empathy and a greater understanding of the challenges and successes of people who are deaf or hard of hearing.  
4. Visitors will understand that ASD has embraced, debated, and advanced the use of technology and educational methods.  
5. Visitors will understand that ASD and its legacy have played a role in shaping American culture (its influence on racial integration, special education, technological innovation, gender equality, and ASL as a major world language).
Themes (Exhibit Sections)

1. Language, Culture, Communities (Introduction)
   a. Introduce the theme of language and communication. ASD’s great legacy is establishing a new standardized language that brought people together and continues to elevate the deaf community within larger society.
   b. Will include a graphic/map (print or digital TBD) of CT/USA/World showing ASD’s geographic reach and legacy

2. The Beginning of Deaf Education (Origin & Early History)
   a. Historical context, the role of religion and progressivism, and the personal motivations behind the school’s founding
   b. Overview of the benefactors, founders, first students & teachers (including the stories and relationships of Alice Cogswell, Thomas Gallaudet, and Laurent Clerc)
   c. How ASD shaped Hartford (monuments, street names, buildings)
   d. Historical teaching methods & early curriculum
   e. Early teaching tools

3. Responding, Innovating, Empowering (ASD meets the education and communication needs of deaf students and the deaf community)
   a. ASD’s educational philosophy (meeting the needs of students)
   b. ASL as the defining element of Deaf Culture
   c. Current issues/challenges to deaf education and examples of compelling/innovative ASD programs/initiatives
   d. Using technology to teach, to bring people together, to advance equality, to shrink disparities. (medium-size section)
   e. Accessibility equipment (with an emphasis on the positive stories of technology bringing people together & connecting communities, as well as those technologies in which ASD may have had a direct role in developing)

4. Impacting Lives and Culture for 200 Years
   a. Deaf Culture and establishing a national identity
   b. Social and political movements, progressivism
   c. Historic and current legislation
   d. Personal stories: alumni from various time periods, as well as current students

*Themes 3-4 should evidence the past, present, & future, showing that ASD remains relevant today.

Stakeholders
CHS staff & leadership
ASD staff & leadership
Focus group participants
ASD scholars & consultants
Exhibit audiences
Funders/Sponsors
Marketing teams (CHS & ASD)
Artifact lenders (other institutions)
Exhibit Components

Exhibit script
- Labels
- Wall quotes
- Graphics

Artifacts
- Objects, portraits, sculptures, teaching tools, etc.
  - ASD objects, CHS objects, loans from other institutions

Historical images
- Reproduced photographs (ASD and CHS digital archives)

Other exhibit graphics (e.g. printed or digital U.S. map/timeline showing ASD and subsequent deaf schools)

Videos (interviews with ASD staff, students, alumni)

Video interviews with ASD teachers, alumni, and students
- CHS conducts video interviews, asking people of different ages, gender, and ethnic/cultural backgrounds
  - How has ASD impacted your life?
  - How does technology affect your life?
  - How do you define Deaf Culture, what does Deaf Culture mean to you?

Interactives (ideas)
- Some sort of ASL learning/practice activity?
- For little kids: purchase building blocks with signs and braille

Participatory Elements (ideas)
- Engaging questions to encourage visitor response & feedback in different exhibit sections. Such as:
  - How has ASD made a difference in your life?
  - Something about misconceptions, such as: What do you wish hearing people knew/understood about deaf culture/your experience?
  - How would you define Deaf Culture or What does Deaf Culture mean to you?

Important considerations for exhibit accessibility
- All video footage to include captioning
- Adequate museum/exhibit signage provided throughout the building
- CHS staff trained to assist deaf and hard of hearing museum visitors
- Coordination with ASD to offer exhibit tours to deaf and hard of hearing visitors
- The scholars focus group mentioned the importance of accessibility to deaf-blind visitors, and this was echoed in subsequent ASD-CHS team meetings. Need to talk about what this involves. How do we become equipped to provide this? What organizations can we work with, perhaps to offer scheduled deaf-blind tours with a trained docent?