

ONLINE EXHIBIT RESEARCH PROJECT

This quarter, you will be conducting research from a variety of sources in order to develop the content for your online exhibits. Your exhibit, like most exhibits, will have a theme and will be driven by central questions. The theme you choose and the questions you have about the topic area will determine your the type and quantity of research you gather. You'll conduct this research on campus, in local and regional archives and libraries, and online. You'll collect primary and secondary source materials, photographs, government documents, and will be conducting oral history interviews, etc. The data you collect will be summarized, interpreted, synthesized and presented on your site.

So how is this going to actually work?

OVERVIEW

Choose a Theme or Topic Area: read over all of the theme areas in this handout and combine and refine ideas and areas you're interested in to decide on a thematic area you would like to explore.

Develop Questions: Why are you interested in this theme in the first place? What do you know? What do you want to know? What are you curious about, or have always wondered about your topic? These questions will drive the formation of your thesis, which we'll begin Week 4 and forms the foundation text of your site.

Collect and Record Data: this will be an ongoing process, probably all the way up until you publish your site. The evolution of your questions, website outline, and writing will influence the type and quantity of information you collect as you go forward.

Use Data: You will go back and forth between collecting and using data throughout the project. Not everything you collect will be used--at times you'll discover that you collected the wrong type of information, or a new area opens up in your work that you need to explore.

Explain and format findings related to questions: You'll be interpreting, synthesizing, and writing about connections among the data you find that relate to your central questions/thesis.

There are several required sections that you should plan on including on your site:

- ✧ An Introduction to your entire site
- ✧ About the Exhibit/Exhibit Overview
- ✧ An orienting Timeline or Chronology
- ✧ Background Information on your topic or theme to place it in an historical context
- ✧ Some form of Primary Source Documents
 - Maps
 - Legal Documents
 - Letters
 - Photographs
 - Oral Histories
 - Artwork
 - Newspapers
 - Public Records: birth and death certificates, sale of property
 - Legal documents: court transcripts, legislation, court papers
- ✧ Links to other related sites
- ✧ Bibliography of sources cited and used
- ✧ Image Galleries
 - Maps
 - Objects
 - Photographs
- ✧ Contact Information

Your research will become the content of your website, which will become a permanent part of the Olympia Historical Society website. No matter how beautifully designed or technically elaborate your site is, nothing can overcome merely descriptive or superficial content. Your work will also be added to the Local Knowledge Resource Center, an archive on campus that collects and shares student research relating to--you guessed it--local research. Just as you may use the work of past year's students from the Center, we hope to further that work for future programs' use, developing a sense of institutional memory in the process.

In other words, the research you do this quarter is not merely an exercise, but will be used for a variety of real world purposes.

Organization

There are interlocking dimensions to working with the data you'll collect :

WHEN: Chronology and Time

You will need to ground your content in the time context during which it took place. Think of it as the skeleton (form) that you'll flesh out (content). The way you organize your data may be by decade, by important points along a narrative storyline, as a timeline, or devise your own unique organizational structure. The point is that the reader will need a framing device in order to connect with and make connections among the ideas in your content.

WHO: Identities

If applicable, supply the reader, or visitor to your site, a sense of the background of who you are talking about. Include a sense of who they are within their cultural context as well as within society at that time as a whole.

Gender

Class

Ethnicity

Country of origin

Occupation

Age

WHAT: Thematic Areas

This is by no means an exhaustive list, though it is darn long! If certain areas give you other ideas, feel free to develop your own theme, You may also choose to combine or layer several of the concepts presented below.

- **Home Life**

Who lived where?

What kind of shelter: materials, architectural styles

Daily Activities: food and food sources, family roles, school, clothing

Family relationships

Celebrations: birth, death, kinship rituals, marriage

- **Work**

Industrial workers or workplaces

Agricultural: migrant workers, farmers, major crops, markets and trade

Health and medicine

Domestic labor

Construction and artisans

Education: teachers, the public school system, the development of area colleges

- **Community**

Organizations: social, not-for-profit, civic groups, public commissions, ethnic organizations

Religious groups

Cultural Organizations: art, music, theater

Political: major political figures, activist movements and groups, local interpretations of national or international events

Recreation and leisure activities

- **Pivotal Events**

The naming of Olympia as the State Capitol

The Chinese expulsion

Conflict: wars, riots, strikes

Natural disasters: earthquakes, floods, storms, volcanoes

Japanese internment

- **The Environment**

The built environment

- Architecture: Commercial, school, home, church,
- Place: how did places' names change over time? Why did people settle where they did?
- Transportation: the railroad as a force in development, paved roads, public transportation personal forms of transit, history of the highway system
- Development of city infrastructure: streets, water, electrical, phones, etc.

The natural environment

- Natural resources: their presence and use/misuse
- Animal life
- Plant life
- Waterways
- Landforms

WHY: The most important part!

The why of your research is the most important part. In developing your thesis question(s), you will be beginning to establish the direction your content will take. Through research and writing, you will be providing an interpretation of the answer to those questions that will need to interest the reader into wanting to discover the answers along with you. We'll brainstorm some questions together, and it's important to begin recording your questions as we go along so that you can begin to develop your own.

Criteria for the Assignment: Questions to ask yourself as you go along, and which will be used to evaluate your work

- Is it interesting--to you, to other students, to other historians?
- Is it significant--does it capture key events, people, places, important trends or historical themes?
- Is it useful--is it an original idea/area of study, or is the same info already out there? To students, teachers, townspeople, people from elsewhere?
- Is it analyzed versus being merely collected? Is the commentary and interpretation/organization insightful, accurate, and supported with documentation?
- Does the design of the website in which the information is collected reinforce the structure of the content? Is there good organization of information, and is it accessible to the audience for whom it is made?
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