

EXHIBITS HANDBOOK

University of Oregon Libraries

Exhibits Handbook: A
Guide to Planning,
Designing, and
Installing an Exhibit

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON LIBRARIES

Exhibits Handbook: A Guide to Planning, Designing, and Installing an Exhibit

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1501 Kincaid Street
Eugene, OR 97403-1299
Phone 541.346.XXXX • Fax 541.346.XXXX

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Exhibit Design

A number of factors will determine the design of the exhibit, including the amount of material to be exhibited, the format of the items exhibited, whether reproductions will be used and, of course, budget considerations. Regardless of budget constraints, however, some basic design considerations can make any exhibit appealing and informative.

1. Basic design considerations

An exhibit is successful when it combines the physical (objects displayed) and the intellectual (the interpretation of the object). How the items are displayed also has an effect on the viewer. It's very important to remember that the average exhibit viewer will not have time to read everything that is exhibit or to read all the narrative text produced by the exhibitor. It's a good idea to consider these basic guidelines:

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2. Case and Panel Layout

The west and east wall cases in the Knight Library corridors are the exhibit cases we use to mount exhibits. Although they are well positioned to attract attention from library users since these corridors receive heavy foot traffic (particularly the west corridor), they are also problematic. The cases are divided into three sections. The right and left glass doors slide to the center (which means that only one glass door can be open at a time). These doors, however, are removable (ask someone to show you) and some exhibitors prefer to remove them to make mounting easier. The center panel, unfortunately, is stationary, making it difficult for the exhibitor to place and position items in the center panel. Mounting materials against the wall takes a combination of strength, dexterity, steadiness, and patience.

3. Exhibit case “footprint”

An exact paper plan or “footprint” of the exhibit wall cases is available for use by exhibitors. This footprint can be laid out on a large table so that items to be displayed can be positioned

4. Spatial Issues

5. Using a variety of formats

6. Dimensionality

Exhibit Prep: Mounting Originals

Preparing Items for Display

The goal of an exhibit is to display materials in the library that represent a variety of holdings. Often these original items are textual manuscripts, graphic documents, photographs, ephemera, books, or even artifacts.

Whenever possible, originals should be displayed. The instructions below are used when originals are displayed. However, if facsimiles are created for display purposes, the mounting procedures can be, and usually are, different.

1. Cutting Mat Board Backing

Backing for the original to be displayed must be of standard mat board. It must be stiffer than “poster” board. The backing must be cut slightly larger than the original, as the Mylar strips that will be strapped around each corner must not crimp or bend the original. A ¼” around the edge is usually a sufficient “border.”

Mat board should be cut on the board shear in the Preservation lab, or on the cutter in the Materials Processing Unit.



Insert here picture of board shear

Instruction from Preservation staff or an Exhibits Committee member is required prior to independent use by the exhibits preparer.

2. Strapping Originals to Backing

The following steps are taken to strap original documents or photographs to the backing. Pictures that demonstrate each step follow the written instructions.

Step 1. Place the original on the backing board to make sure at least a 1/4 “ margin exists.

Step 2. Cut four strips of Mylar at least 3” long. For large items, or items that are extremely thin and/or flexible, a longer length is required.

Step 3. Select a corner to begin. Lay the Mylar strip diagonally across the corner. Place your finger on the center of the Mylar strip to keep it in place, and turn the board over.

Step 4. Fold over one end of the Mylar and, using a strip of cellophane tape, tape down the Mylar strip to the mat board.

Step 5. While holding the original piece in place, pull over the other end of the Mylar strip to the back, gently pulling so that the Mylar strip is snug yet not too tight.

Step 6. Lay the Mylar strip down, and check to see that the Mylar strip is laying flat, and not puckered up.

Step 7. Tape the other end of the Mylar strip down on the board.

Step 8. Apply more cellophane tape perpendicularly across either end of the strip of Mylar, to make sure it stays in place. Another strip of tape across both strips will ensure that the Mylar will not come off.

Step 9. Continue the same steps with the other three corners.

Keep in mind that the size and weight of the item being strapped affects the length of the Mylar strip, as well as how far down the strip needs to be placed in the corner.

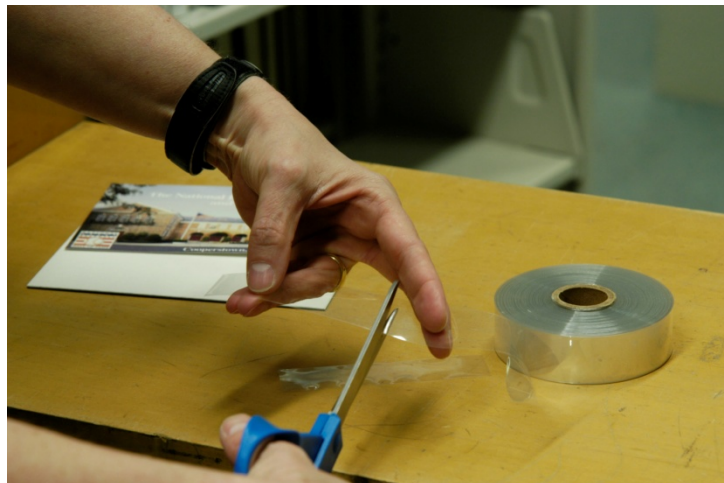
White cotton gloves must be worn when original photographs are mounted.



DESIGN CUSTOMIZATION



Tools for strapping originals to mat boards



Cutting Mylar strips

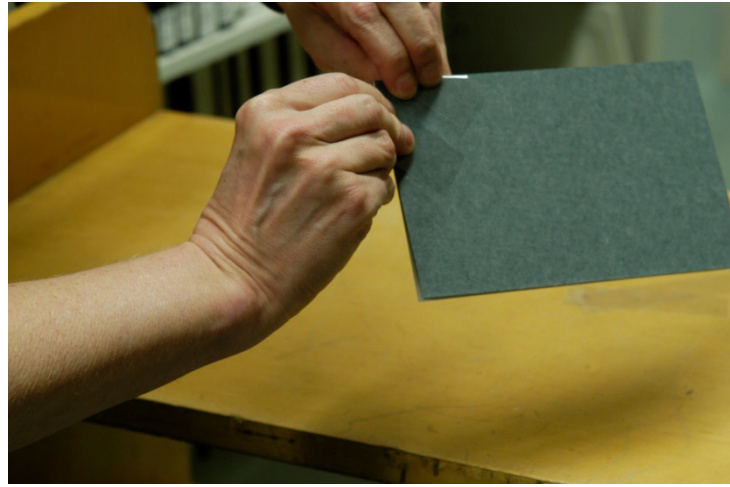
DESIGN CUSTOMIZATION



Post card to be mounted to board; board onto which post card will be mounted



Laying a Mylar strip on the corner of a document



Folding the Mylar strip around the board



Cellophane tape is applied to the Mylar strip on the back of the board

DESIGN CUSTOMIZATION



Applying more cellophane tape perpendicularly across the Mylar



A strapped original ready for installation in the exhibit case

4. Displaying Originals in the exhibit case

Items to be displayed can either be placed on the glass shelves with proper support to keep them upright, or they can be mounted to the exhibit wall.

4.1 Mounting Plates

The strapped item to be displayed must be attached to a mounting plate, which is attached to the back of the exhibit case.

A mounting plate is simply cut poster board. It needs to be sturdy but does not need to be expensive mat board. Standard poster board available at the UO Bookstore is sufficient for the purpose.

The mounting plate needs to be smaller in size than the board onto which the original item is strapped (the mounting plate should not be visible beneath the item displayed). Depending on the weight of the item to be displayed, the mounting plate should be at least 1 inch smaller all around than the mat board onto which the original is strapped.



A mounting plate positioned against the exhibit case wall

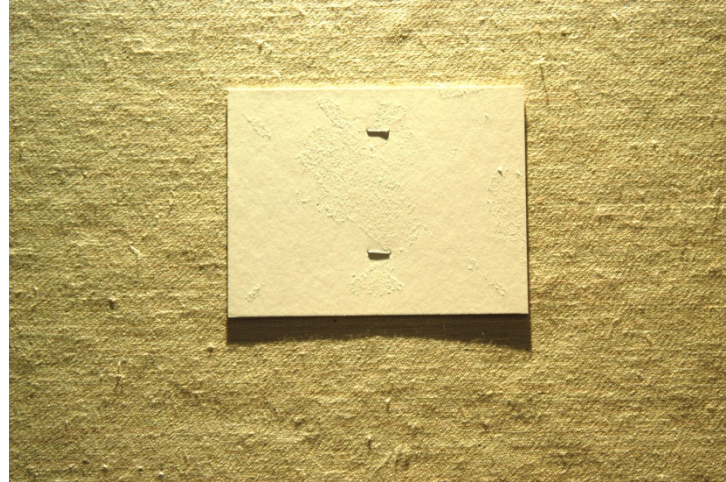
DESIGN CUSTOMIZATION



The staple gun



Stapling the mounting plate to the exhibit wall back



Mounting plate stapled to the wall

4.2 Double-sided Tape

Double-sided foam tape is used to attach the strapped items to the exhibit case walls. At least two strips of foam tape are needed to attach items to the mounting plate. Each should be about 2 inches long. Foam tape sticks very well, but judgment is needed to determine how much foam tape should be used. Larger and/or heavier pieces require longer strips or more strips. Follow the steps below to attach foam tape.



Cutting double-sided tape

Step 1. Cut a strip of foam tape and apply it to the mounting plate.

Step 2. Press hard along the length of the tape to make sure it is adhered throughout.

Step 3. Repeat with another strip, or as many as are needed.

Step 4. Remove the liner paper from the foam tape.

Double-sided foam tape having been laid on top of mounting plate; liner about to be taken off

Liner removed from double-sided foam tape

4.3. Attaching mounted materials to the mounting plate

Mounting materials to the mounting plates on the exhibit case walls is a two-person team effort. One person standing in the corridor will be able to tell the person who is holding up the mounted item whether the item looks level, and whether it needs to be shifted to the left or the right. Follow the steps below to mount the strapped item to the mounting plate.



It's important to keep in mind that the backs of the exhibit cases are curved; therefore, mounting the items to the back of the wall so they are precisely level (i.e., actually using a level) will not make the items look level to the viewer. Mounting the items really requires eyeballing the items before attaching them.

Step 1. Hold the mounted item in front of the mounting plate to judge how the item needs to be adjusted up, down, right, or left.

Step 2. Have the second person stand back in the corridor to judge how much the item needs to be adjusted.

Step 3. Gently press the item onto the foam tape.

Step 4. Step back and look again. If the item still needs to be adjusted, it can probably be shifted slightly, depending on how gently the item was initially pressed against the foam tape.

Step 5. Press more firmly against the item to attach it completely to the foam tape.

5. Exhibiting Books

Books from the circulating collections may be displayed closed on the metal display stands. Rare books or books from the Oregon Collection cannot be displayed on the metal display stands, but must be displayed in cushioned supports.

If books are to be displayed open, Mylar strips must be strapped around the text block to hold the book open. Even books that are not tightly bound and tend to open easily should be strapped with Mylar because loose pages may fly open due to the slight breeze inside the exhibit case.

When strapping the text block to the book's boards, we will strap a group of pages together on each side—right and left of the open book—and leave several pages on top out of this initial strapping so that there is not too much pressure on the entire text block.

Follow the following steps to strapped Mylar around the text block and binding so the book is adequately supported:

Step 1. Open the book to the pages that are to be displayed.

Step 2. Cut a strip of Mylar long enough to go around a group of pages and around the book's boards; make the Mylar at least one inch longer than that length.

Step 3. Wrap the Mylar around the text block and board by beginning on the back of the book. Continue wrapping the Mylar up and around so that ends match in the back. There should be enough Mylar so that you can overlap a bit. It's important that the cellophane tape not touch the book board, but rather only touches the Mylar strip; this is why overlapping the Mylar strip a bit will ensure that the tape does not touch the book board.

Step 4.

DESIGN CUSTOMIZATION

