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Exploring Scientific Storytelling using Museum Curation Techniques

adelaide.edu.au

seekLIGHT

The Scenario

- Environmental biology teaching laboratories were housed in the Jordan building, built in 1963
- In 2012 the old Union Theatre was demolished and the new building was constructed – The Braggs
- Two floors of The Braggs building were dedicated to teaching laboratories
- Opportunity to build customised storage and display facilities for the teaching collection of skeletons, fixed specimens and models

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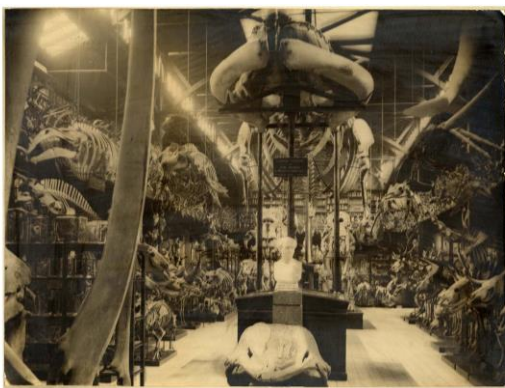
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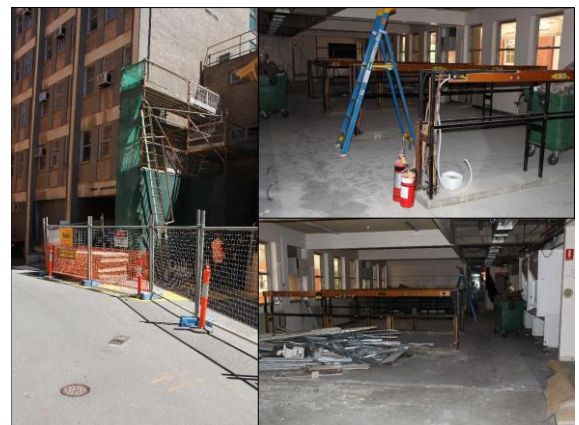


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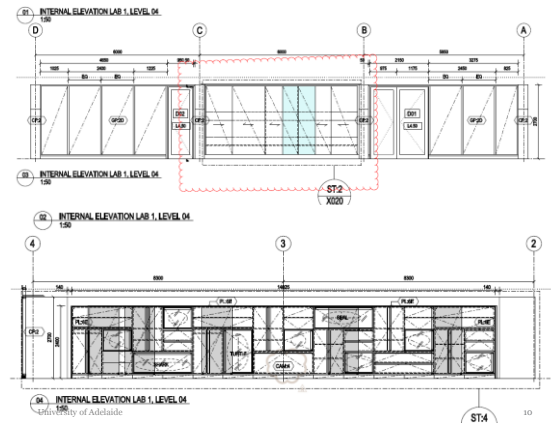
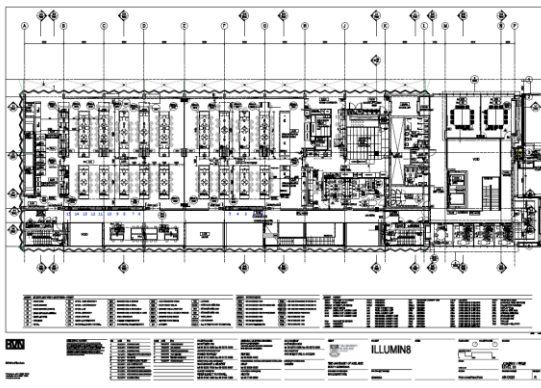
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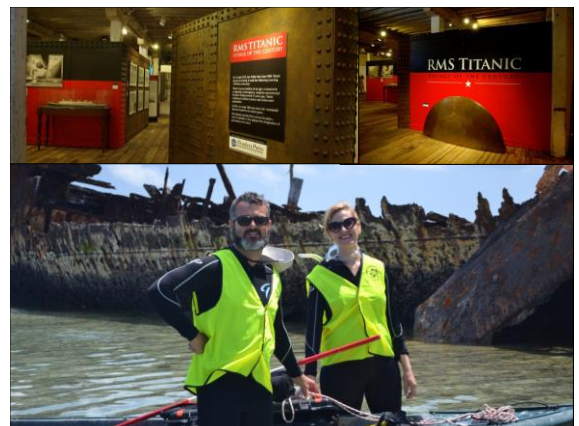
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Step 1: Use your networks

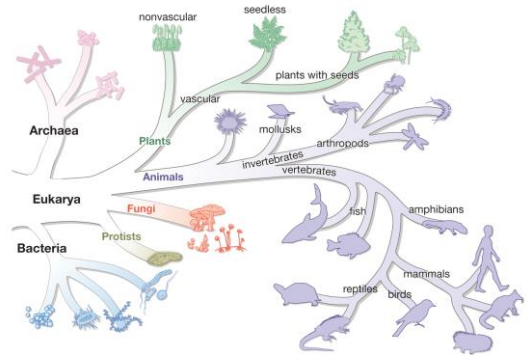
Dr Emily Jateff

- Curator at the SA Maritime Museum
- Studied maritime archaeology
- Highly experienced in creating temporary exhibitions





Step 2: Learn from the best



Step 2: Learn from the best

Objects can be sorted by:

- Chronology
- Themes
- Taxonomy
- Forms
- Materials
- Geography
- Function



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Step 2: Learn from the best

Emily shared her knowledge in the following areas:

- Choosing which stories to tell
- How to design the displays
- Effective labelling
- Tools of the trade
- Timelines

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Step 3: Choose your stories

Ideas included:

- Highlight research within the School
- Tell stories of the history of the School
- Groupings of objects based on evolutionary traits and differences
- Some object collections that already tell a story



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Step 3: Choose your stories

Final display choices were:

- Fish research project
- Comparative anatomy
- History of the teaching collection
- Human evolution
- Embryology
- Thermogenic plants research project
- Dentition
- Bird nests research project

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Tools of the Trade

- Museum Putty
- Display and label production
 - Professional production
 - Archetype
 - In-house production
 - Print labels
 - Mount on wood blocks
 - Plinths for objects

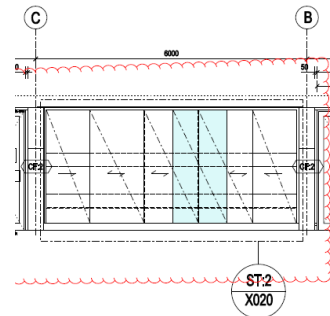


F-pattern eye tracking



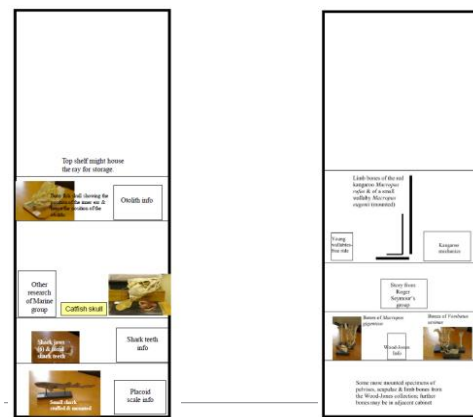
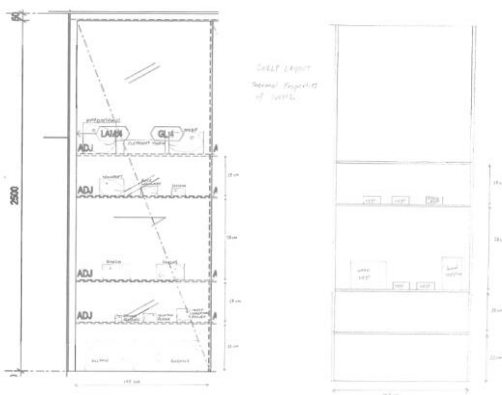
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Writing for your audience

- Undergraduate science students
- University visitors and tours
 - Conferences
 - School groups
 - Bright Sparks holiday program
- Displays facing out into corridor, rather than in to lab
- Estimated 5-10 minutes looking at displays
- Have the most important objects and labels at eye level

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Labelling

“Visitors will read text yet don't want to be overwhelmed by it: well written text that is clear, simple, interesting and easy to read will be read, enjoyed and retained by most visitors.”

Lynda Kelly, Australian Museum, 2015

Design

- Keep same design throughout displays
- Matte
- Label stands vs decals on glass
- Edit, edit, edit!
- Cut out big words
- Several people to proofread the label text to make it more concise

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Labelling

Story label

- 100-200 words
- Split into min. 2 paragraphs
- Introduce the topic or theme

Introduction

This label says what your exhibition is about. It can be as big as you like.

Theme label

This label introduces a major section of the exhibition. It carries general information and ideas.

Subtheme label

This label explains a topic within a theme. It is more specific than a theme label.

Object label

This label gives information about a specific object or range on display.

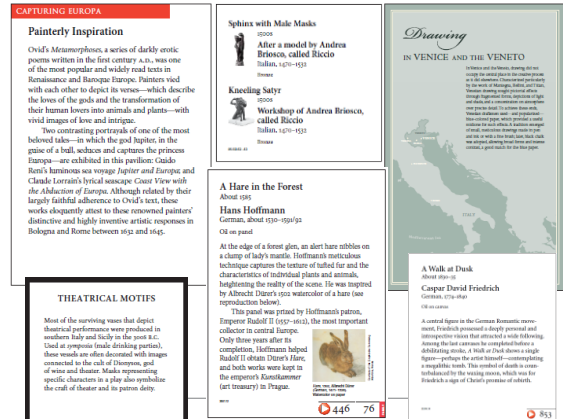
Object label

- 30-50 words
- Object-specific

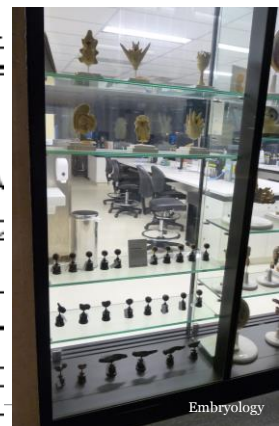
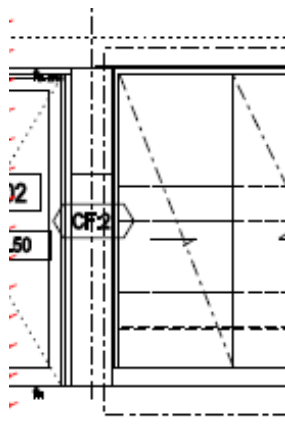
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Human Evolution



History of the School



Fish otolith research



Comparative Anatomy



Bird nest thermoregulation

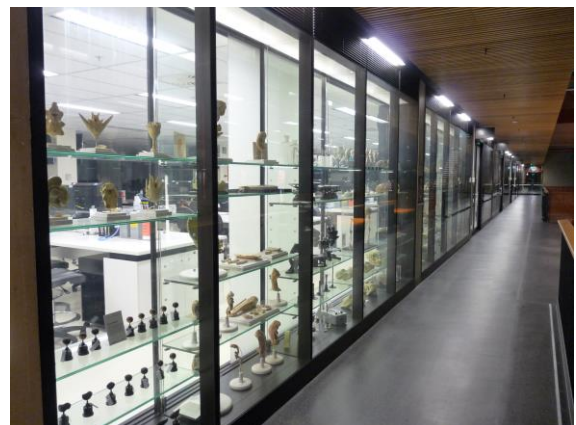
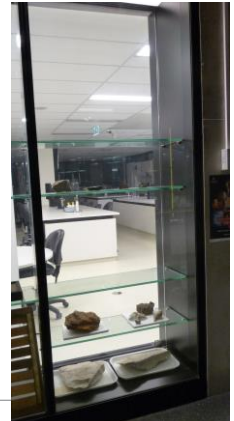


Dentition

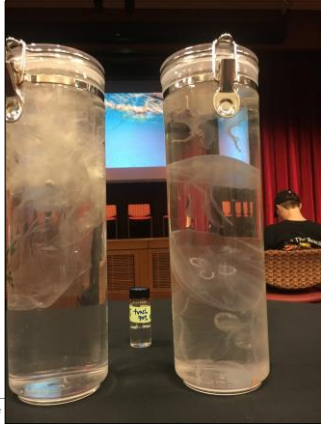
Timelines

- How often will displays be changed?
- How many stories can be told?
- How much material is available?
- Budget?
- Researchers leaving the School

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Bay Aquarium

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Harvard Museum of Natural History



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Harvard Museum of Natural History



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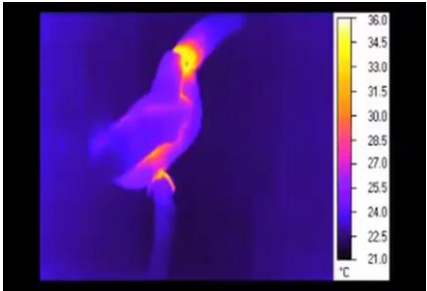


Harvard Museum of Natural History



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