

Smith College Libraries

Exhibitions | Statement of Principles & Practice

Smith College Libraries staff acknowledge and thank Lourdes Santamaría-Wheeler, the Exhibits Director at the University of Florida George A. Smathers Libraries and Adjunct Assistant Professor in Museum Studies, whose [exhibition program work](#) our principles and practice are both drawn from and inspired by.

PURPOSE

This statement of principles serves to guide a comprehensive exhibition program for the Smith College Libraries. These principles align with and support the mission, vision, and values of the Libraries.

Exhibitions are at their core, a scholarly endeavor. Distinctive from general displays, the Libraries' exhibition program supports the sharing, interpretation, and promotion of collections and scholarship. Exhibitions support and enhance the Libraries' role as an intellectual crossroads of the College.

Smith College students are our primary audience and potential exhibit creators. Additional stakeholders and audiences for the exhibition program include College faculty, alumnae, staff, and administration, members of the Five Colleges community, College and Libraries donors, and the general public.

All exhibition proposals are considered in the context of these principles.

PRINCIPLES

1. Exhibitions highlight the varied resources and services of the Smith College Libraries

Exhibitions provide entry points into the extensive and varied resources and services provided by the Libraries, including but not limited to Special Collections. Items included in exhibitions are primarily from the Libraries' collections and supplemented, as appropriate, with materials from other sources. Exhibitions may highlight recent or notable acquisitions, gifts, and scholarship enabled by Libraries services and resources.

The Libraries do not develop or host exhibitions with the principal purpose of promoting agendas of organizations outside the Libraries. The Libraries do not display non-Smith College community unsolicited exhibitions.

Exhibitions are managed by Libraries staff or a designate. Smith students, faculty, staff and departments are encouraged to collaborate with each other on exhibitions.

2. Exhibitions create space for inquiry, exploration, and conversation

As the intellectual crossroads of campus, the Libraries seek to craft exhibitions that foster spaces for self-paced exploration, enjoyment, and learning. Exhibitions provide an opportunity to educate, raise awareness, and offer space for critical dialogue. They aim to inspire inquiry and foster imagination. Exhibitions enable the Libraries to share services and collections, celebrate achievements, and highlight connections.

The Libraries offer varied short- and long-term exhibitions, with diverse perspectives and content, so that a range of voices and conversations can emerge. To enable this diversity, exhibitions may be curated internally or in partnership with campus or other relevant partners.

The Libraries assess the effectiveness of interpretive activities and use results to plan and improve future exhibitions and other interpretive activities.

3. Exhibitions are inclusive and accessible

The Libraries strive to create exhibitions that are inclusive and accessible to all. Exhibitions should be spaces that enable all people to feel welcome regardless of their interest in or need to conduct research.

All exhibitions are open to the public and free of charge. Exhibitions are open during the same hours as the building in which they are housed, unless otherwise specified. The Libraries aim for universal design and aspire to provide accommodations with alternate modes for engagement.

The Libraries acknowledge that human bias and the individual perspectives of creators are embedded in all interpretative work, including exhibitions. The Libraries strive to be transparent about the perspectives we bring to exhibitions and are eager for conversations during planning, display, and assessment of the exhibitions.

4. Exhibitions provide context and thoughtful interpretation

Exhibitions allow the Libraries to contextualize materials and to build narratives and new knowledge. Exhibitions should present accurate content and provide pathways to deeper research and inquiry when possible. The Libraries' interpretive content is based on research conducted according to relevant scholarly standards. The Libraries endeavor to provide space for varied perspectives.

5. Exhibitions enrich the curriculum

Exhibitions are pathways to scholarly interpretation, production of new knowledge, and creative engagements that are embedded in and enrich the College curriculum.

Exhibitions may highlight scholarship generated by Smith College students, faculty, and staff, and the Libraries' role in that work. Smith College students, faculty, and staff are potential partners for Libraries' exhibition content creation and practice.