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Evaluation of LSTA Grant “Oregon History on the Road: Two Traveling Exhibits for Libraries,” for the Oregon Historical Society (OHS).

Summary of Evaluation

The LSTA-funded grant project “Oregon History on the Road: Two Traveling Exhibits for Libraries” is designed to “position libraries to help build strong communities by offering two traveling exhibits that will connect Oregonians with historical information resources and with each other.” The project defines four objectives and five additional outcomes. Oregon Historical Society meets the objectives and provides data and anecdotes in the form of surveys filled by librarians after hosting one of the exhibits to support the conclusion that they meet their five additional outcomes as well. A few minor problems are reported, but overall the project appears to be a success.

Project Evaluation

Project Objectives

As listed in the Grant Proposal, the four objectives of this project are:

1. “Contract with an exhibit fabrication firm to convert congruent panels of OHS's recent stationery exhibit, *Landmark Legislation* into a traveling display that can be hosted with the full 16-panels or as a two-panel exhibit by even the smallest library.”
2. “Convene an advisory group of three public librarians to serve as program advisors to develop a comprehensive list of relevant program options for local customization and implementation.”
3. “Contract with a graphic artist to design and print 10,000 attractive promotional bookmarks for shared use by hosting libraries.”
4. “Coordinate the booking, shipping, and loan schedule of the 32 panels that will comprise *Landmark Legislation* and *Oregon: 150 Years of Statehood, 150 Million Years in the Making* [abbreviated to *Oregon: 150 Years...* in this report] to an estimated eight requesting libraries each month.
5. Additional expected outcomes relating to the impact of the project, not necessarily measurable, include:
 1. Strengthen communities as libraries become centers of community life
 2. Increase the number of Oregonians who become aware of Oregon's history of landmark legislation and geology
 3. Expand market awareness of exhibits, programs, and educational opportunities through partnerships and co-marketing
 4. Increase the number of established strategies to educate students and the

general public, increase visibility, augment exhibits and programs, and grow meaningful collaborations

5. Improve working relationships with area libraries and other cultural organizations
6. Increase civic engagement activities at public libraries
7. Increase and improve OHS educational efforts statewide

Project Method

The nature of this project necessarily requires an evaluation of two different phases the - creation phase and the execution phase.

In the creation phase, the goal was to create two exhibits that would be interesting and informative and would provide a “centerpiece” for a library around which events could be planned; that could be packaged for shipment; and were flexible regarding the amount of space a public library would have to set aside to host one of the exhibits.

To meet the goal, an advisory group of three librarians was convened to provide input on the features of the exhibits, and to help devise related materials and programs that would be made available to libraries to utilize the exhibit during the period of the exhibition and beyond.

The materials for the panels in each of the two traveling exhibits come from a collection supported by subject experts. The panels for the *Landmark Legislation* exhibit are curated by Dr. Stephen Dow Beckham, a prominent Oregon historian; the materials in the *Oregon: 150 Years...* exhibit have been developed by professional geologists from multiple institutions around the state.

The materials presented in the exhibit were fabricated into panels that could be set up and taken down by local librarians following provided instructions. After the panels for the displays were assembled and tested, inquiries were solicited from public libraries to host either of the displays. The response was quite positive, and a number of libraries around the state were chosen to host, and then scheduled. Panels were prepared and shipped, associated materials were provided, and the exhibits “went live.”

The execution phase commenced at this point. Each host library was asked to host events around these exhibits during the time that the exhibits were available in their library. Librarians were also asked to fill in a survey regarding attendance, the quality of the displays, and other factors useful in evaluating the impact of the project. Librarians were also advised of other resources available through OHS to help supplement their offerings and to increase the role and visibility of the library in its community. The survey used for these exhibits may be found online at

<https://app.e2ma.net/app2/survey/32549/30411/d3b9d9cfc8>

After the exhibit time finished, librarians would pack up the display and it would move along to the next library, to repeat the process.

Project Results

Data for these direct results come from the evaluative surveys completed by a librarian after an exhibit was hosted at their library.

For the libraries hosting *Landmark Legislation*:

There were six libraries (Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, Cottage Grove Public Library, Lake Oswego Public Library, Salem Public Library, Sherman County Public/School Library, and The Dalles-Wasco Public Library) in this group; their survey responses indicate that an estimated 107,951 patrons had the opportunity to view this exhibit in the library. Quantifiable survey responses include:

Public Libraries Hosting the Exhibit (selected survey responses)

Survey Evaluations	Corvallis - Benton County	Cottage Grove	The Dalles - Wasco	Lake Oswego	Salem	Sherman County Public/School
Overall impression	Excellent	Excellent!	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Information/Text 1 (low) to 5 (high)	5	5	4	5	5	Excellent
Layout/Design 1 (low) to 5 (high)	5	5	5	5	5	Excellent
Clarity/Visual Images 1 (low) to 5 (high)	5	5	5	5	5	Excellent
Appeal 1 (low) to 5 (high)	5	5+	4	5	4	Excellent
Helpfulness of OHS staff	Extremely	wonderful	very good	Very	Very helpful	Excellent service

Clearly, the host libraries were very pleased with this exhibit.

For the libraries hosting *Oregon: 150 Years...*:

There were eight libraries (Beaverton City Library, Cottage Grove Public Library, Harney County Library, Lebanon Public Library, Stayton Public Library, Tualatin Public Library, and The Dalles-Wasco Public Library) in this group; their survey responses indicate that an estimated 100,673 patrons had the opportunity to view this exhibit in the library (Tualatin Public Library did not report an estimated number of visitors). At the time of this review, the exhibit is being hosted at Siuslaw Public Library; no survey is available from Siuslaw at this point in time.

Quantifiable survey responses include:

Public Libraries Hosting the Exhibit (selected survey responses)

Survey Evaluations	Beaverton City	Cottage Grove	The Dalles Wasco County	Harney County	Lebanon	Stayton	Tualatin	West Linn
Overall impression	Good	Excellent	Good	Good	Good+	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Information/Text 1 (low) to 5 (high)	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
Layout/Design 1 (low) to 5 (high)	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5
Clarity/Visual Images 1 (low) to 5 (high)	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5
Appeal 1 (low) to 5 (high)	4	4	4	4	“4.5”	5	5	5
Helpfulness of OHS staff	You were great	Always wonderful to work with	You were Great	...accommo- dating, helpful and efficient	We didn't have any problems	Excellent!	...very helpful...	Communic- ation... was timely and helpful.

Libraries hosting this exhibit had a moderately decreased positive evaluation.

Two of the host libraries, Cottage Grove and The Dalles-Wasco, hosted both exhibits.

Project Impact

“The goal [of this grant project] is to position libraries to help build strong communities by offering two traveling exhibits that will connect Oregonians with historical information resources and with each other.”

The two exhibits have been traveling through the state for the past year, visiting public libraries and being viewed by a substantial fraction (somewhere between 5% and 10%) of the state's population, at locations throughout the state, during that time. That statistic, by itself, suggests that the project met its goal, by giving host libraries an opportunity to bring

in members of their service communities who may not ordinarily have come into the library.

The surveys that librarians submitted to OHS as a part of their hosting duties, mentioned above, provide some supporting details. Cottage Grove Public Library partnered with Lane Community College; the College's Geology department brought in "a wonderful collection of rocks to supplement the geologic info[rmation] in the exhibit." LCC students and local elementary and middle school groups came to see the exhibit. (Personal note – I viewed the exhibit at the Siuslaw Public Library the day after my daughter had borrowed a mineralogy collection from Eugene Public Library. That kit performed a similar service for me, and I liked the conjunction of materials). The librarian (and librarians from several other libraries) went on to note that supplementing the exhibit with "interactive" displays such as rocks and artifacts would have been helpful, even beyond the text and graphics provided by OHS. Local community colleges seem to be good resources in this regard.

The Dalles-Wasco County library offered a program covering the archaeological test excavations at "Chinatown" in the Dalles. The librarian there also noted that the display covered enough space in their library that it sparked attention just from the volume of material presented. Another note offered an anecdote regarding a boy who was reading the text closely enough to question the accuracy of some of the materials displayed.

Stayton Public Library tied their Summer Reading Program to the exhibit, and incorporated appropriate materials from their collections into the exhibit (as did Siuslaw Public Library).

Tualatin Public Library notes that a Boy Scout troop came into the library for a tour while the exhibit was on display, and became quite engaged with the displays.

Sherman County library offered the Annual Read Aloud program during the visit of *Landmark Legislation*, and then supplemented both with displays of materials relating to Oregon's legislative history and government. Local teachers brought classes in to view the materials as well. Apparently, patrons with knowledge of both East Coast and West Coast beaches were quite interested in the history of the issue of access to beaches.

Salem Public Library was able to bring the Secretary of State in to give a well-received talk about legislative issues and history. The also received plenty of compliments on the exhibit, and no complaints (a rarity in public libraries).

Lake Oswego noted that positioning the *Landmark Legislation* display in their reference area, they increased foot traffic in that area considerably.

Cottage Grove simply observed "It [the *Landmark Legislation* exhibit] brought something wonderful to our community! Thank you so much!"

Corvallis-Benton County tied the visit of *Landmark Legislation* to a (previously scheduled) presentation by Dr Jackson B. Miller regarding Oregon's citizen-led ballot initiatives; the display was referenced by Dr. Miller and the audience several times during the course of the presentation.

Anecdotally, librarians seem to feel that the project had a positive effect for their

libraries. In some cases the impact was serendipitous, in other cases the result of planning.

A few more notes from this reviewer:

One of the panels in the *Oregon: 150 Years...* exhibit had a error on the second panel, middle section – a sentence that read “Oregon has been building westward over the past 150 own as subduction” I believe that this noticeable problem led to the lower ratings for the exhibit when compared to *Landmark Legislation*.

I was unable to find, on any of the display panels I viewed, credit for funding or support to LSTA or to the Oregon State Library. It is possible I overlooked this, but I was looking in places with other credits and thanks and did not see any such mention in those places.

One of the features I really appreciated in the display I saw is the inclusion of names and “at work” photographs of some of the many people who participate in exploring Oregon's geology and natural resources. These photos showed people who were obviously doing work that most of us don't do and often don't understand.

Several survey respondents noted that the *Oregon: 150 Years...* display would have benefited from interactive features (such as touchable samples of rocks); the libraries which connected with their local community colleges to provide those interactive features seem to have benefited from the relationship. Future schedulings of this exhibit might suggest that public libraries partner with their local community colleges or other entities to help bring the displays more to “life.”

Many of the librarians, in their survey responses, thanked Nicole Yasuhara by name for her invaluable assistance.

I enjoyed the exhibit that I saw, learned quite a few things about our state's geology, and commend OHS for putting these works on display. Thank you to LSTA for providing funds for the project, and thank you to Ann Reed of the State Library for inviting me to evaluate this grant.

Scott Gallagher-Starr