

San Luis Obispo Railroad Museum Exhibits Policy

Adopted October 10, 2017

1. The subject, location, space, and general form of each exhibit will be as shown in the Development & Operations Plan. (That plan need not provide equal levels of detail for each exhibit. For example, it may say simply that temporary or rotating exhibits will be presented in a general location within the Museum's building or grounds, or at remote locations.)
2. Exhibits will inform or convey a true story that serves the Museum's mission. Interpretive material will address the authenticity of the objects presented. Assumptions and points of view are to be clearly identified.
3. Exhibit design will follow from an understanding of the characteristics and needs of existing and potential Museum guests. The exhibit will take into account the intended guests' prior knowledge, interests, learning styles, and expectations about the topic. For major exhibits, potential museum guests should be involved in design of basic elements, particularly with any interactive components.
4. Approval of the Exhibits Committee is required for all displays (indoors and out), including concept design, signage, and any plan for restoration, in line with the Museum's Mission Statement. With Exhibits Committee approval, individuals or subcommittees may implement planned displays. Issues among standing committees (Events, Restoration, etc.) will be resolved by the full Board.
5. Proposals to the Exhibits Committee must include a project budget and, if not already covered in the Museum's annual budget, a funding source.
6. Design will be as approved by the Exhibits Committee. Committee review generally will be a two-step process, first a concept review followed by review of specific features. Details on technical aspects must be reviewed by experts in those aspects.
7. Each exhibit will have a specific, short title to be used by everyone and that is easily seen with the exhibit.
8. A variety of interpretive strategies, such static labels, interactive devices, video, and audio, will be considered while developing exhibit design and will be used when appropriate to the exhibit's goals, content, intended audiences, and budget. Exhibit design will strive to use new technologies to appeal to museum guests of the future. Heavy reliance on real-time docent interaction should be identified and avoided, unless intended as an aspect of a particular exhibit. Providing information mainly through action by a docent or a featured speaker is generally considered a *presentation* or a *program* rather than an exhibit.
9. Content will be up to date. If the current status of an historical feature shown or referred to changes substantially from the indicated status, new information will be provided.
10. Interpretive material will be free of jargon. Any specialized terms will be defined.
11. Graphic style (backgrounds, fonts, colors, etc.) will follow the approved standards, as modified with Exhibits Committee approval for a specific display (possibly an ethnic, period, location, or company focus).
12. Exhibit design will provide appropriate conservation and security for items on display.
13. Exhibit materials must be secured from damage or hazard to occupants during earthquakes.
14. One display must not block all views of another exhibit. If an exhibit is not on display it is to be removed from public areas.

15. A feature in an exhibit must not block views of other features in that exhibit, though views may take into account changing vantage points. Exhibits are not storage areas.
16. Temporarily attached features must be removable without damage to long-term or permanent features.
17. Temporary and traveling exhibits must meet the requirements for installation, dismantling, and travel.
18. Exhibits must not advocate or disparage a particular religious, ethnic, or political view, or serve as commercial promotion.
19. Sponsors or major donors for the overall exhibit should be recognized at the exhibit, but in a way that's secondary to the exhibit content. Donors of an exhibit's individual components generally will not be recognized within the exhibit, but sources for significant items may be noted in any QR-linked material.
20. Use of copyright material will be avoided unless permission has been obtained.
21. Photographers generally will be credited.
22. Sources of substantial bodies of information will be credited (such as books used to prepare QR-linked material).
23. The following information should be available for each artifact in an exhibit. Whether the information is part of the display or provided by link (such as QR code) depends on the importance of the item to the display's theme.
 - Name
 - Purpose
 - Significance
 - Railroad(s) operating on the Central Coast that use(d) it
 - Period used (such as "from about 1900 until the 1950s")
 - Where and how widely the type of item was used (such as: it's one of a kind, used only in Santa Margarita; only on the Central Coast; in the West; throughout the country...)
 - Maker and date of creation
 - Where any other examples or collections of the item are available
24. Space within and around the exhibit will allow audience members of varying sizes and abilities to navigate and interact with the exhibit as intended.
25. Exhibits and signage must maintain the code-required emergency egress. All exhibits will have access compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and its implementing regulations. (Both building egress and exhibit access generally require a path of travel that is at least 36 inches wide. Greater width is required for walkways and for turning situations as provided in the California Building Code and in the United States Access Board standards.) Where it is not feasible to provide such exhibit access (such as the exemption for historic rail cars) there may be alternative means of viewing the exhibit and interpretive information, such as a video display, at an alternate location.
26. Access to hazardous areas by Museum guests or others may be disallowed, especially for guests with reduced capability, and especially during unusual conditions such as rain or work underway. If a decision is needed, either initially or to back up a docent's call, the manager, assistant manager, or the Facilities & Operations Director, depending on who is available, will take responsibility.
27. The Museum will assess the effectiveness of its exhibits and interpretive activities, and use the results to improve existing exhibits and to plan new ones.

(Glen 2017.9.20)