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National Museum of Ireland
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

National Museum of Ireland

Exhibition Guidelines – Labels

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NMI Exhibition Guidelines – Labels

The National Museum of Ireland has a separate **Exhibitions Policy** that outlines the approach to exhibitions in NMI and exhibitions by NMI at other venues. The following Guidelines are part of a series that should be followed when developing such exhibitions. The content of labels is a matter for the NMI staff preparing the exhibition. These Guidelines address the general issues of graphic design only.

Introduction

The delivery of services and outcome of policies and strategies pursued by the Museum ultimately impact on a wide array of visiting audiences. The Museum’s main client and customer base is extremely broad and varied, it comprises but is not limited to:

1. General Public
2. Families
3. Formal Education Sector
4. Informal Education Sector
5. Tourists – domestic and overseas
6. Visitors with a variety of languages, not always proficient in English
7. Experts in particular subject areas
8. Visitors with special needs

As stated in the **Master Vision Statement 2018-2032** (NMI 2018), a core value of the museum is Accessibility, and a key Principle is “To make NMI’s sites, exhibitions and interpretations fully accessible for all people”. It is important that labels are designed and written to address the needs of museum audiences.

Museum exhibition labels must provide information which is accessible and legible to all of these various groups. In particular, the physical location and size and design of labels should ensure they are easily viewed and read. Design and placement within cases should ensure that they are accessible for those visitors that have extra physical and visual access needs, such as wheelchair users.

Whilst following the conservation needs of the objects the design and position should be such that all labels have sufficient lighting so that they can be read.

These guidelines are intended to cover the subject of Exhibition Labels only and do not cover general object labels.

Standards

Languages

For the purposes of communicating information relating to the collections and the disciplines they represent, all exhibition labelling will be in both Irish and English. Labels for incoming exhibitions may not be subject to this requirement where the imported exhibition comes with its own panels and labels. NMI applies the following guidelines from the office of An Coimisinéir Teanga (the Irish-language Commissioner):

1. The text in Irish shall appear first.
2. The text in Irish shall be as prominent, visible and as legible as the text in English.

3. The letters in the text in Irish shall not be smaller in size than the letters in the text in English.
4. The text in Irish shall communicate the same information as the text in English.
5. A word in the text in Irish shall not be abbreviated unless the word in the text in English, of which it is the translation, is also abbreviated.
6. Where the text is too large a separate label should be used.
7. Labels are to be age appropriate, with a general audience of 12 years of age being the ideal target.

Scale

1. In line with standard museum practice, the minimum font size for labels should be 18pt, with 22pt leading and should be in a Sans Serif typeface. A Sans Serif typeface, is a type of font that will ensure legibility and where comprehension of lettering is prioritised. For accessibility reasons, the NMI's preference will be to use the sans serif typeface FS Me Pro.
2. The minimum point size that should be used for wall labels is 18pt. This is in instances where a visitor can get right up to the label to read it. 24pt should be used when a label has to be read from a distance.
3. Where the viewing distance is 3m or more, the height of the capital should be should be between 100mm and 170mm.

Positioning

1. Labels should always be created or positioned to contrast with their background. Type colour should contrast strongly against label background colour to ensure easy legibility.
2. Labels should be printed on eggshell, matte, or other non-glare surfaces
3. Label and location should be situated so that the reader does not block their own light
4. Label location should not be obscured by barriers, protruding objects, stairs, or the swing of a door
5. Labels should be mounted at consistent angles to the front of a case depending on height above the floor.
6. Labels should also be as close to the front of the case as possible. Labels on the back wall of a case should be avoided. If used, the font size should be increased
7. Wall labels should be mounted between 1220 mm and 1675 mm with a centreline at 1370 mm above the floor
8. Locate labels in consistent locations throughout an exhibition

Lighting

1. Museum lighting will be set to suit objects and may be low throughout an exhibition, or in particular areas. This means that contrast between label text and background colours is important for legibility.
2. Check lighting levels with the Conservation Department before making assumptions on illumination levels in any given case or gallery area.
3. Avoid positioning labels where shadows from nearby objects or from portions of the exhibit case may hinder legibility

Materials

1. All materials used in production should comply with current conservation standards and NMI Guidelines.