

Cultural Ephemera

Instructions

You will assume the role of curator for an imaginary archival exhibit called “Ephemera are Culture Too,” that argues for the cultural significance of ephemera.

Your purpose will be to educate and persuade the audience of your exhibit that ephemera belong in museums as important cultural objects. (As with most museum exhibits, your audience will be interested members of the public. Your goal is to teach them that ephemera are significant to any understanding of culture.)

We will visit [a physical and/or digital archive], where you will see many objects related to the topics we’ve discussed in class about visual and print culture. You will choose three artifacts to include in your imagined exhibit. (You should take notes on your chosen artifacts and bring a device with a camera. You will receive a bibliographic list of artifacts to use as well.)

After our visit, you will write one 300-500 word “Introduction Label” for your exhibit as a whole, plus one 200-word caption (called “Object Labels”) for each of your three artifacts. You will arrange these captions in the order you would want a visitor to encounter the artifacts.

For your one “Introduction Label” you should:

- Tell your audience the purpose of your exhibit.
- Mention broadly what kind of objects your exhibit will include. For example, will it focus on three different types of objects (books, images, and posters), or several of the same (all photographs)?
- Describe why should members of the public should be interested in your exhibit. In other words, what do you hope visitors will take away from your exhibit?

For each of your three “Object Labels” you should address:

- What is this artifact and what is it made of?
- What was its original use/location?
- Why is this artifact culturally significant? (Either at its point of origin, now, or both.)
- What does this artifact say or reveal about culture or society? (Past and/or future.)
- How does the artifact connect to the rest of your exhibit? (Compare or contrast.)