



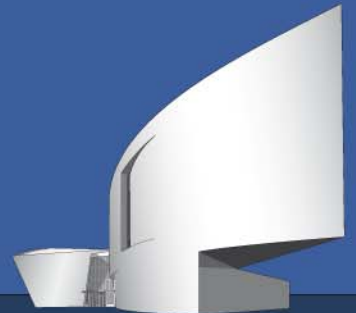
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
MUSEUM OF THE NORTH

Writing and Editing

For Clarity and Comprehension In an Exhibit Setting

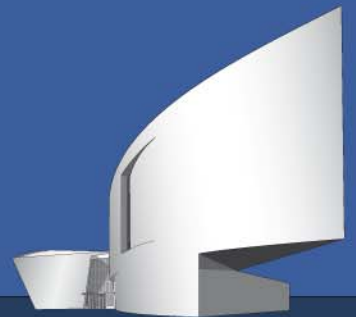
Kirsten Pickard

Multimedia Specialist, Exhibition and Design
University of Alaska Museum of the North



Overview

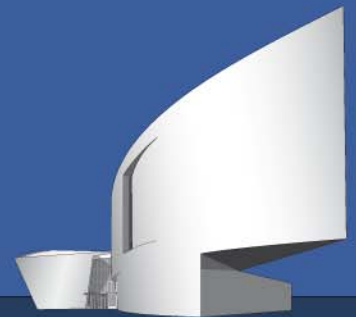
- Choose an Approach
 - > Organize your research into a few clear ideas.
- Edit your Information
 - > Choose what to keep and what to set aside.
- Write for an Audience
 - > How to be read and understood in an exhibit environment.



Choose an Approach

One of the challenges of your exhibit is to **make a large amount of information easy and quick to understand** for a diverse audience.

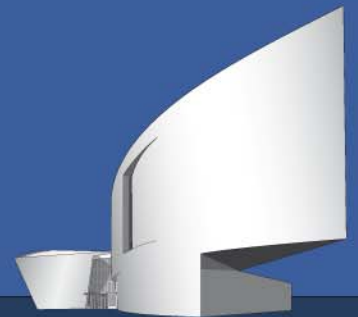
Choosing how you approach that information is important.



Choose an Approach

Step 1: Frame the Subject

- **What is the story behind your topic?**
Write down good ideas for framing your topic as you research.
The “So What” Test: What makes this important, worth caring about?
- **Use a central place to record these ideas.**
As well as titles, sub-headings, color choices, images and typefaces, etc.
- **Don’t get too attached to any one idea!**
The idea that seemed great early on may not best represent your work now.

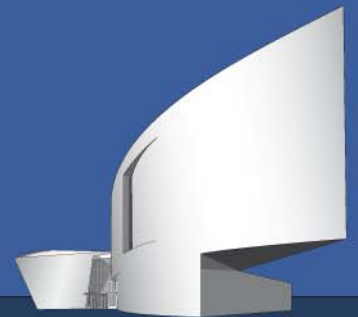


Choose an Approach

Step 2: Define the Central Concepts of your Topic

How to Choose Your Central Concepts

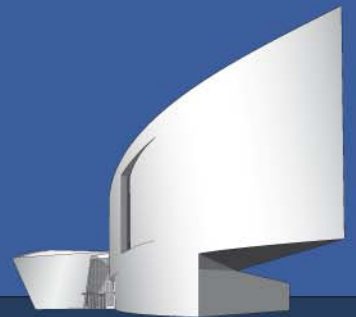
- Central Concepts are like the chapters of your story.
- Work from the NHD Theme! ‘Answer the Question Asked.’
- Choose effective divisions for your topic and keep the number low – two or three main ideas.
- Keep ideas SIMPLE and BROAD.
 - Past, Present, Future
 - Central idea, Affirming Viewpoint, Negating Viewpoint
 - Central event, Historical reasoning, Viewpoint today.



Choose an Approach

A Hands-On Exercise

Use this exercise to start to connect your content with its visual presentation, and to save time on your outline.



Choose an Approach

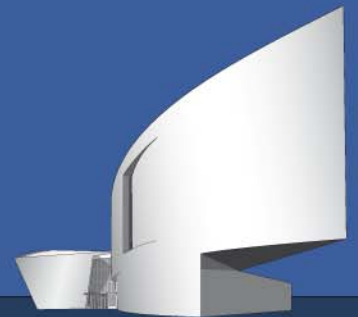
A Hands-On Exercise

Past

Present

Future

Pile of
Info Cards



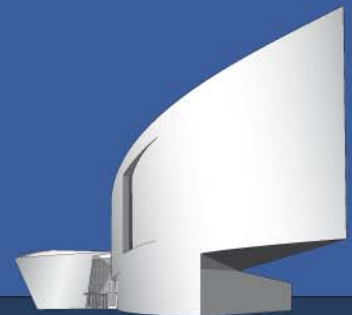
Choose an Approach

A Hands-On Exercise

Past

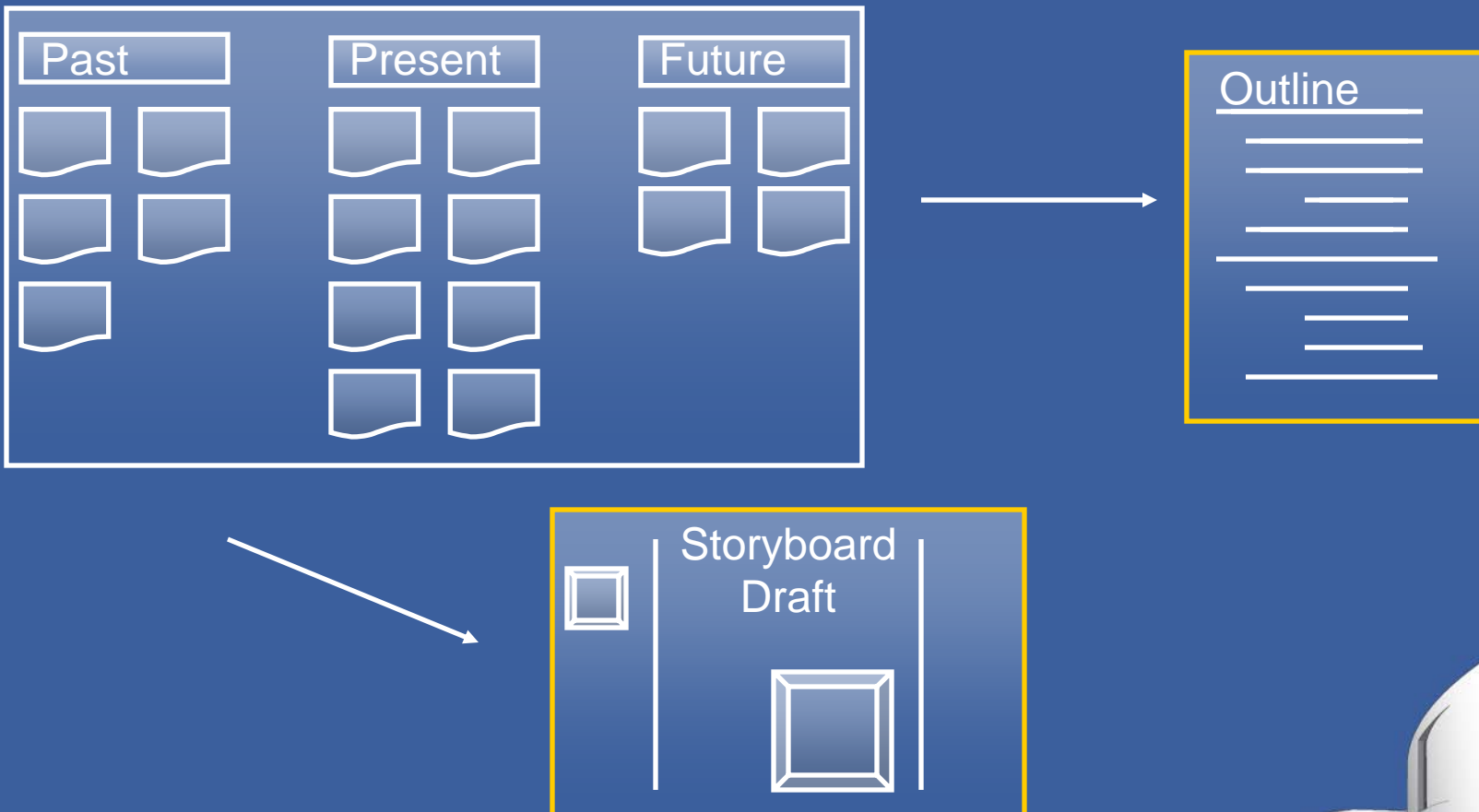
Present

Future



Choose an Approach

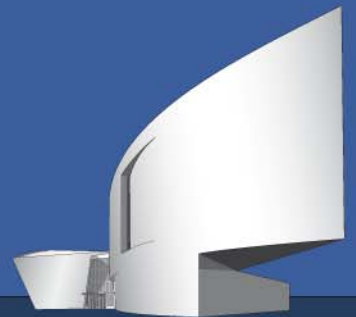
A Hands-On Exercise



Edit Your Information

“Perfection is achieved not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away.”

-Antoine de Saint-Exupery

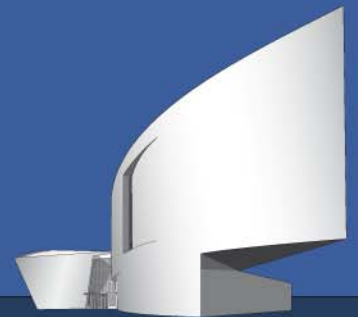


Edit Your Information

Keep Relevant Key Information

- Does the info support a central concept?
- Is it from an important source; do you need the source for your bibliography for diversity or another reason?
- Would the argument still stand if you took this piece of information out?
- Theme Relevance is key information! Would removing this information mean you didn't relate to the NHD theme as well?

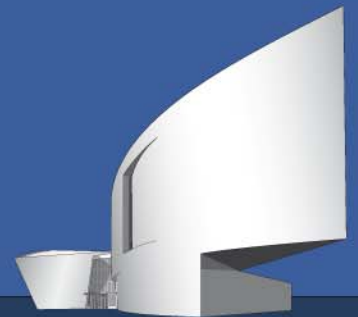
**Don't miss
the related
handout!**



Edit Your Information

What can go?

George Washington was a General, the first President of the United States, and wore dentures made of Hippopotamus ivory.



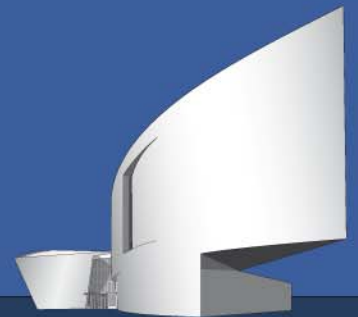
Edit Your Information

Keep Some Attention-Grabbing Information

- Interesting Information
- Anecdotes
- Quotes
- Data
- Charts
- Illustrations
- Photographs
- Titles, subtitles, and captions

The “Hey Mom/Hey Dad” Test

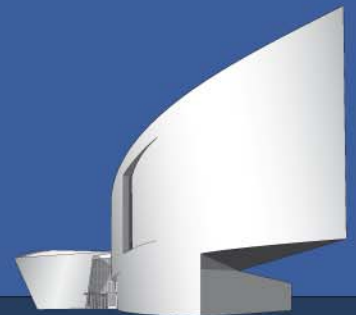
Is this interesting enough to point it out to someone you know?



Edit Your Information

Keep Some Attention-Grabbing Information

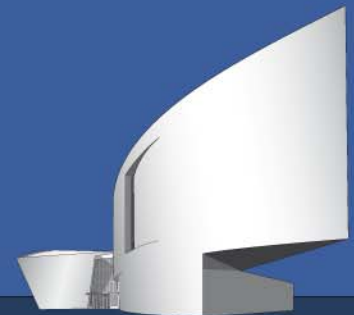
- Attention Grabbers are used to
 - Guide the Reader into your presentation (Point of Access)
 - Navigation, Headlines, Subheadlines, Pull Quotes, etc – use your attention grabbers as bold strokes in your visual design!
 - Capture and maintain readers' interest/attention
 - Make your presentation memorable – one readers will think of later.



Edit Your Information

Set Aside Fluff and Filler

- Set Aside unrelated information, even if it's interesting.



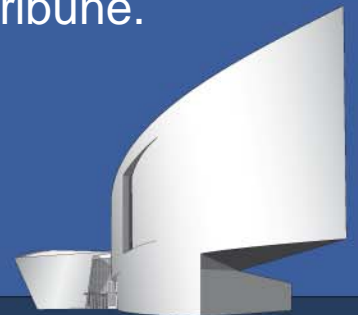
Edit Your Information

Set Aside Fluff and Filler

- Multiple sources that say the same thing are filler
 - Use the strongest source, or the earliest citation only.
 - Use the primary resource whenever possible.
 - Use multiple sources as a support instead of citing each one.

Example:

The New York Times reports that George Washington's dentures were actually made of hippopotamus ivory, not wood. This was corroborated by CNN, Popular Science, and the Chicago Tribune.



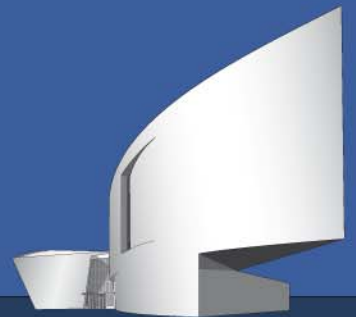
Edit Your Information

When Things Get Tough: Discarding Good Content

When good information is overwhelmingly abundant, you may have to discard good information for the sake of space.

Choosing what to discard

- Narrow the focus of your content (remember theme relevance!) to say something more specific.
- Discard details that provide interest but don't tell the story.
- Choose which ideas are more important to tell the story.



Edit Your Information

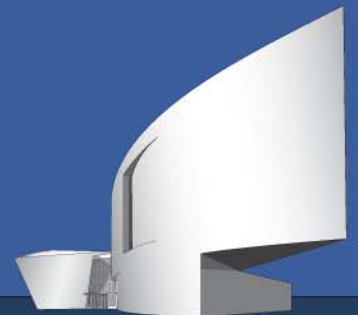
An Exercise in Editing for Word Count

Alaska Classics Label – 100 word target.

Howard Weyahok Rock (1911-1976)

Howard Rock, the son of Sam Weyahok (Uyaġak) and Emma Keshorna (Kisauna), was born near the village of Tigara (Tikiġaq). He learned to sketch and paint at the White Mountain Vocational School in Nome and later studied art at the University of Washington. After serving as a radio operator in North Africa during World War II, he worked as a jewelry designer and ivory carver in Seattle. Upon returning to Alaska he founded in 1962 the *Tundra Times*, a newspaper which provided information and a voice for Native rights, especially in Alaska's lands claims settlement with the federal government. He served on the Indian Arts and Crafts Board and was a founder of the Institute of Alaska Native Arts.

117 words



Edit Your Information

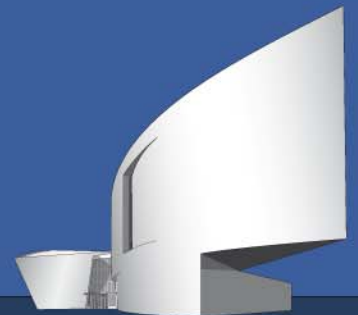
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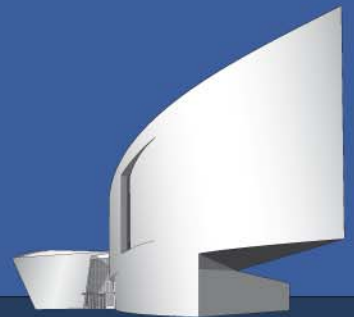
105 words



Write to an Audience

Why Write to an Audience?

- To make reading your presentation easy and enjoyable.
- So readers stay at your exhibit, read and learn more about your topic.
- To make your presentation stand out in people's memory.

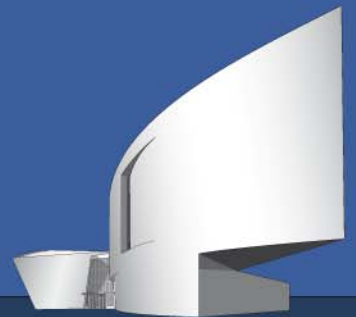


Write to an Audience

Consider your Audience: Who are they?

Visitors may

- Be Teachers, Community Members, or Students of all ages.
- Speak English as a second language only.
- Have poor vision or hearing, or have a disability.
- Not be familiar at ALL with your subject.

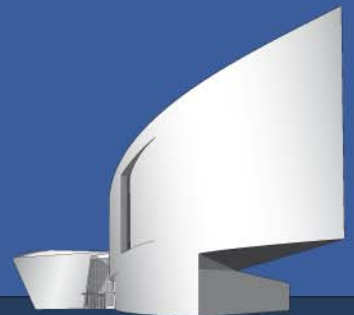


Write to an Audience

Consider your Audience: Mindset, Environment, etc.

Visitors will be

- On their feet, reading at a non-standard angle – not comfortably sitting.
- Surrounded by information at all sides.
 - There will be a feeling of 'browsing' for visitors. Judges follow the judging sheet.
- Not reading page-to-page but seeing everything at once.

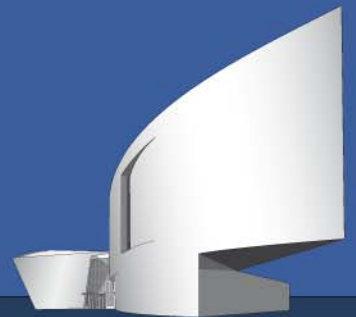


Write to an Audience

Consider your Audience: Conclusions

With this Audience

- Reading for a long time or digesting complex ideas is not likely.
- Visitors are looking for something interesting, Judges are carefully following the judging sheet.
- Reading style is more newspaper-like than book-like – readers may not start at the beginning, they can jump in at any point since it's all visible!
- Word choice and type size are important!



Write to an Audience

How to Write Well for Your Audience

- **Write an Outline** and stick to it as best you can.
- **Be Succinct** – write clearly with simply stated ideas.
- **Don't bury your ideas in too many flowery words.**
- **Maintain a quiet tone of relevancy.** Use key words as reminders.
- **Strategically use Attention-Grabbers** throughout your piece.
- **Edit, *edit*, edit.** Ask teachers and family members for review.
Edit more than once!
- **Remember to check your word count.**

**Don't miss
the related
handout!**

