

Writer: **Larry Borowsky** Denver, Colorado

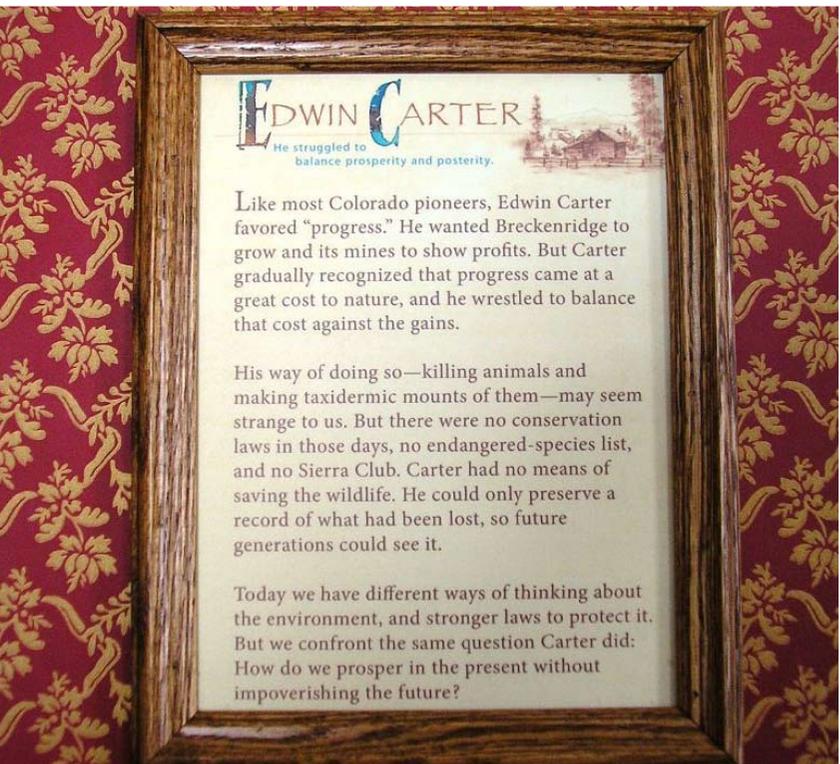
Exhibit Design Associates
Estes Park, Colorado

Edwin Carter Museum, permanent exhibits

Target audience: Local/regional residents,
K to 12 students, and tourists

Label type: Introductory

Edwin Carter Museum
Breckenridge, Colorado



Edwin Carter

He struggled to
balance prosperity and posterity.

Like most Colorado pioneers, Edwin Carter favored “progress.” He wanted Breckenridge to grow and its mines to show profits. But Carter gradually recognized that progress came at a great cost to nature, and he wrestled to balance that cost against the gains.

His way of doing so—killing animals and making taxidermic mounts of them—may seem strange to us. But there were no conservation laws in those days, no endangered-species list, and no Sierra Club. Carter had no means of saving the wildlife. He could only preserve a record of what had been lost, so future generations could see it.

Today we have different ways of thinking about the environment, and stronger laws to protect it. But we confront the same question Carter did: How do we prosper in the present without impoverishing the future?

Praise from the Jurors

This label makes use of an excellently written heading that says it all. Balancing “prosperity” against “posterity” is a subtle play on words and ideas. Without embarrassing apology, the writer addresses head-on the task of making the activities of a 19th-century taxidermist not only relevant but also sympathetic to today’s visitor and, at the same time, manages to suggest a thought-provoking parallel to contemporary environmentalism.

— **Marlene Chambers**

The Art of Taxidermy

The goal was to breathe life into dead matter.

Taxidermists today mount their specimens on machine-made, anatomically perfect polyurethane forms like the deer head to your right. The craftsmen of Carter's day had to build each mounting form by hand. With infinite patience and attention to detail, they turned wood into bone, straw into muscle, and putty into flesh. It wasn't enough merely to "stuff" the animal. The artful taxidermist restored it to life.

"The time is past when taxidermy should be called a trade," wrote the American Museum of Natural History's chief taxidermist in 1898. "It may now be placed on a level with painting and sculpture and be called truly an art."

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Juror's Choice

During the judging process, four labels inspired the enthusiasm of a single juror. These entries are included here as Juror's Choice labels.

This writer really understands that visitors come to museums to see things, not to read labels, no matter how well written. The label heading makes its point so succinctly that visitors don't even need to read the rest of the text in order to see the 19th-century taxidermist in a new light. Short and sweet, the goal of this label is transparent communication. It calls attention to the objects on view, not to the writer's superior knowledge or cleverness.

— **Marlene Chambers**

Writer: **Elizabeth Labor**

Editors: **Ava Ferguson, Raúl Nava, Melissa Snyder**

The Secret Lives of Seahorses

Target audience: General Aquarium visitors

Label type: Object

Monterey Bay Aquarium

Monterey, California



Potbelly seahorse Caballito barrigudo

Bigger is better for potbelly pouches

When it comes to a male potbelly's pouch, size matters. Bigger is better for attracting females, so courting males pump their pouches full of water. Rival males also jockey for dominance—you might see them butting heads, wrestling tails or jousting with their snouts.

Praise from the Jurors

The title again: “**Bigger is better for potbelly pouches.**” What we have here, poetry lovers, is something called dactylic trimeter. Such a remarkable awareness of words in this label, but that knowledge doesn't get in the way of some really juicy wordsmithing: all those butting heads, wrestling tails, and jousting snouts. I feel battered and bruised just reading it.

— **Brian H. Peterson**

This label makes its interesting point in short, snappy, colorful sentences without seeming to talk down to visitors. Its heading sentence is intriguing and pulls visitors into the information. Text gives them something to look for.

— **Marlene Chambers**

I like how this label concentrates on one theme—the size of pouches—with the rest of the seahorse that visitors might see. I enjoyed how the label anticipates visitor questions and succinctly explains the reasons for the potbelly.

— **Trevor Jones**

Shrimpfish

Pez pipa camarón

Young shrimpfish settle among spines

This seahorse relative drifts in tropical currents after hatching, but soon settles in an unlikely place—between an urchin’s sharp spines. Predators get the point and don’t risk a pierced lip. And see the shrimpfish’s nearly clear, finely striped body? That ghostly look helps a shrimpfish simply fade out of sight.

Writer: **Elizabeth Labor**

Editors: **Ava Ferguson, Raúl Nava,
Melissa Snyder**

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Target audience: General Aquarium visitors

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Monterey Bay Aquarium

Monterey, California

Juror’s Choice

During the judging process, four labels inspired the enthusiasm of a single juror. These entries are included here as Juror’s Choice labels.

I know I’m in good hands when I read the title—“Young shrimpfish settle among spines.” Eight syllables and four of them contain an “s” sound. Alliteration. The oldest trick in the book, but it still works. Not only is the label concise, it has humor (Predators get the point) and manages to be both conversational and informative. Nicely done!

— **Brian H. Peterson**

Writer: **Nancy Goodman**

Editor: **Judy Rand** Rand and Associates

Pacific Northwest

Target audience: Families with children
ages eight and up

Label type: Object

Shedd Aquarium
Chicago, Illinois



By spitting, belugas uncover crabs to eat

Watch for belugas spitting streams of water. They're not just playing! In the wild, belugas explore the seafloor, spitting to clear away sand and silt. That's how they find crabs, worms and octopuses to eat.

Praise from the Jurors

This label has a wonderful cadence that just rolls along and conveys good information about the belugas and ties what the visitor reads into what they may be seeing.

— **Trevor Jones**

If you're writing for kids, you have to think like a kid. And every kid likes to do stuff that's a little bit naughty. Stuff like spitting. Come on, admit it! Including the title, this label uses the word "spitting" three times. That's a lot of sand and silt cleared away—a genuine seafloor dredging operation. This is wonderful writing: deceptively simple, it draws me in with something colorful, then sneaks in some interesting information so smoothly that I don't know I've just been educated. Smooth, indeed!

— **Brian H. Peterson**

This label does a good job of directing the visitor's attention to the activities of the animals on view and explaining their conduct in short, simple sentences and easy-to-understand vocabulary.

— **Marlene Chambers**

Writer: **Nancy Goodman**

Editor: **Judy Rand** Rand and Associates

Pacific Northwest

Target audience: Families with children
ages eight and up

Label type: Object

Shedd Aquarium
Chicago, Illinois



Sunflower sea star

Pycnopodia helianthoides

Giant size and two dozen arms make this sea star a fearsome predator. When one arm senses a clam, the other arms swarm around it. Only the squirmiest prey can escape!

Praise from the Jurors

Including the genus and species was probably required, but I get the feeling that this writer let those convoluted Latinate syllables roll off the tongue. For some reason, “Giant size and two dozen arms” flows nicely after those eleven syllables, and I can see, really see, those fearsome arms closing inexorably around a hapless clam. In fact, I AM THAT CLAM! The arms are swarming, closing—but I’m not only a squirmy clam, I’m the Mohammed Ali of squirmy clams. I am the squirmiest! I am the squirmiest clam that ever squirmed! Thank you for that wonderful word: squirmiest. Thank you!

— **Brian H. Peterson**

Writer: **Kris Nesbitt**

Editor: **Judy Rand** Rand and Associates

Polar Play Zone

Target audience: Children ages 2 to 7
and their families

Label type: Other/Opposite story

Shedd Aquarium
Chicago, Illinois



Watch penguins **in** and **out** of water

In

In the water, penguins swim by flapping their wings as if they're flying.

Out

Out of the water, penguins slowly waddle and hop. They can't fly, even though they have wings.

Praise from the Jurors

This label for 2 to 7 year olds is deceptively simple. It effectively packs a ton of information about penguins and their behavior in just a few words, anticipates potential questions children may have about penguin behavior, and encourages adults to communicate with their children—all in only 38 words. Although the author makes it look effortless, it is very difficult to accomplish this!

— **Trevor Jones**

Conversational and friendly, the label gives clear informative directives to engage visitors in observing and comparing penguin behavior in and out of the water. While simple in language, it manages to pack a lot of content into a few short sentences. The strategy of using opposites (“in” and “out”) is developmentally appropriate for the target audience and a fun entry point for parents to investigate animal behaviors with their children.

— **Liza Reich Rawson**

This label encourages readers to observe the animals and make discoveries about them. It is short and does a good job of using a simple vocabulary aimed at its young target audience.

— **Marlene Chambers**

Writer: **Sarah H. Watkins**

Editors: **Matt Brenkle, Anne Grimes Rand,
Cathy Donnelly**

All Hands on Deck: A Sailor's Life in 1812

Target audience: Families

Label type: Object

USS Constitution Museum
Charlestown, Massachusetts



A cut above the rest

My uniform is cut to the latest regulations and perfectly fitted for me by a tailor. This is the first luxury connected to my new life as a Midshipman. I say luxury because it cost me the equivalent of five months pay!

Praise from the Jurors

Taking a personal approach to the labels for a military uniform, takes it from being a mere list of attributes to being a story that connects the visitor to the man who wore it. Adding the cost of the uniform (“five months pay!”) makes it relevant to visitors.

— **Liza Reich Rawson**

I like the idea of giving personalities to the seamen who manned this ship-turned-history-museum. This label seemed particularly successful and even alight with sly humor.

— **Marlene Chambers**

In a mere 50 words, I not only learn a lot—sailors had to pay for their own uniforms, for example—but I get the barest beginnings of a character sketch. I can see the jaunty Midshipman standing in front of a mirror and thinking, “Yup, a cut above the rest I am I am.” Pretty snazzy! One wonders where that uniform will be and what it will look like after a few months at sea.

— **Brian H. Peterson**

The scientist's story

Hmm, e-mail from Steve. Oh good. He's finished examining the anonymous mummy.

Weird case, that one. Why would they give someone a burial with full honors, if they didn't even know her name? Maybe the X-rays have some answers . . .

Hmm . . . pelvis is female . . . body seems healthy. No signs of hard labor—rules out slave girl . . . teeth are in good shape—no malnutrition . . . molars just coming in. That makes her only 16, maybe 18. Poor kid . . .

Odd—a couple of neck bones are out of line. Seems the body started decaying before they mummified her. Steve says that's typical for a body that's spent a few days in water.

Well, that explains it. A body pulled from the sacred Nile would get a special burial, even if anonymous. Also explains the religious symbol at her throat—the Sun with wings.

Steve says the cause of death is still unknown. No injuries or sign of disease. Could've gotten caught up in the rebellion. Or maybe she just slipped into the river and drowned.

I'd better enter this data. No name—guess I'll just use the museum ID number: ANSP1903.1a...

What's this last image? Steve had an artist reconstruct her face. Look at her—so young and full of life. Like she's laughing with her friends, or calling to her mother and father.

This girl is more than a number. She deserves a name. I'll call her "Annie."

Writer: **Eugene Dillenburg**

Editor: **Phil Freshman**

Lost Egypt: Ancient Secrets, Modern Science

Target audience: Families with children
ages 9 to 13; general

Label type: Other/narrative

COSI Columbus

Columbus, Ohio

Juror's Choice

During the judging process, four labels inspired the enthusiasm of a single juror. These entries are included here as Juror's Choice labels.

I love to see label writers embrace narrative in their work, and I found this particular approach compelling. Although I'm not convinced that this label is the best it could be, I was intrigued by it and wanted to recognize the writer/editor team for their efforts. We need more adventurous writing in our exhibition labels!

— **Liza Reich Rawson**

WHAT MAKES A SOUND, THAT IS NOT MUSIC, JEWISH?

THE SOUND OF PRAYER

For the most part, in Judaism prayer is a vocal and communal activity. Sometimes spoken, sometimes sung.

WHAT OTHER SOUNDS ARE JEWISH?

THE SOUND OF STUDY

The traditional method of public Torah study has a special name, *Pilpul*. It is a group activity and is infused with very vocal oral discussion and give and take. This learning method calls for the expression of the spoken voice, a sound of Judaism.

WHAT OTHER SOUNDS ARE JEWISH?

THE SOUND OF NOISE

Added to the sounds of voices in prayer and study are other sounds of Jewish ritual. During the holiday of Purim in the synagogue the noise of stomping feet and the loud ringing of the *Grogger*, the noisemaker that drowns out the vocalizing of the name of wicked Haman, are also uniquely Jewish sounds.

The *Shofar*—the ram’s horn—is sounded in the synagogue, as we stand at attention, during the holiest of days, to connect us to biblical generations who listened to the same sound.

When a bridegroom breaks a glass during a Jewish marriage ceremony the sound of the stamp of his foot and the breaking glass underneath signify an unbroken chain of Jewish life forged through sound and ritual.

WHAT OTHER SOUNDS ARE JEWISH?

THE SOUND OF NATURE

A shaken branch may just signify a rustling wind, but when that branch is part of a Lulav and is shaken in the Sukkah, it signifies a Jewish relationship to the changing seasons.

OUR SENSES ARE HEIGHTED AND OUR OBSERVANCES ARE ENRICHED THROUGH THE MANY SOUNDS OF JEWISH LIFE.

Writer: **Rita Rosen Poley**

The Eugene and Marie Collection of Jewish Music: *Summer Selections*

Target audience: Adult members of the affiliated synagogue; museum members; visitors from the community

Label type: Concept

The Temple Judea Museum

Elkins Park, Pennsylvania

Juror’s Choice

During the judging process, four labels inspired the enthusiasm of a single juror. These entries are included here as Juror’s Choice labels.

Although this label is probably a little too long, I very much appreciate what it’s trying to accomplish, and how well it is attuned to the sensibilities of the intended audience. The author has conveyed a lot of information in a friendly and joyful manner that makes the reader want to read on to the next section.

— **Trevor Jones**