

## Labelling Artifacts/Objects in a Museum Collection

In museums there are two types of labels that are connected to artifacts/objects displayed in exhibits. These labels are used to tell visitors information about the exhibit.

### Type 1: Identification Labels

These labels provide basic information about the artifact/object including:

- A. its name
- B. its age
- C. its place of manufacture/creation
- D. the name of the museum/institution that owns it
- E. an artifact number

(Note: This information is always written in point form)

#### For example:

Ex. Djembe drum

2000

Mali

CMC Artifact

2000.24.3

### Type 2: Interpretative Labels

These labels are more detailed and include in-depth information, such as:

- A. an explanation of why the object was important or significant to someone
- B. justification for why it is part of the museum's collection
- C. the reason why the artifact was created (its function or purpose)
- D. an explanation of the process used to make the artifact/object
- E. an explanation of the historical, social, political, economic, and/or cultural context of the object, or the circumstances for which the artifact/object was used or kept

#### For example:

This djembe drum belongs to Soungalo Coulibaly, a well known djembefalo (name for a djembe player) musician. It is one of two djembes in the museum collection and was donated by Coulibaly's family. This musical instrument is made in the traditional goblet shape using hardwood native to the region; it is covered with goatskin affixed with rope runners. The djembe is used to accompany traditional Malian dancers and each djembe has been handcrafted by a skilled artist.

**According to the History Museum of Canada, a good label text:**

- Answers questions about what you see
- Answers other questions that you have about the artifact
- Is relevant; connects to your life
- Does not contain too much information; one main idea per text
- Is concise, quick to read
- Is easy to read
- Uses proper grammar
- Uses active verbs rather than passive verbs
- Uses people friendly words
- Uses short sentences
- Uses easy to understand words
- Uses vivid words: visual, concrete nouns, things you can see
- Tells you to look, using words like notice, find, look for
- Uses appropriate tone for the artifact: light, serious, bold, friendly, fun, witty, authoritative, caring

Source:

<http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/tresors/immigration/docs/imy0200/ime907pe.pdf>