

Beth Redmond-Jones is President of Redmond-Jones & Associates. She may be contacted at beth@redmond-jones.com.

Many thanks to Wendy Pollock and Jim Spadaccini for their contributions to this edition of exhibits NEWSline.

ExhibitFiles

Have you ever wished there was a central resource that provided information about a really cool exhibition or exhibit that you saw a few years back or one that you have heard about over the years? Ever wonder who developed and designed it? How much it cost? What was the team's process? Did their exhibit process falter, and if so, how was it resolved? Now, thanks to the Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC), we finally have a web site, *ExhibitFiles* (www.exhibitfiles.org), where you can find and contribute such information.

ExhibitFiles, a community-based collaborative web site for the exhibit field, opened in late April 2007. It's the goal of the site to preserve and share experiences and materials that are often unrecorded, temporary, and hard to locate. Many museum exhibitions, especially in science centers, have relatively short lifespans. As exhibitions are replaced and staff change, knowledge is often lost. *ExhibitFiles* is a way to capture that valuable information for all of us.

Development of *ExhibitFiles*, which is supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation, is based on two premises:

- exhibit practitioners, like research scientists, should build on prior work, subject to review by peers; and
- innovation is best supported by open access to knowledge and an active community of practice.

What can you find at *ExhibitFiles*? When you log on to the home page, you can see a featured exhibition, browse recent case studies and reviews, see who has recently joined, and log in (or become a registered user). Anyone can look at the site but only registered site users

can contribute case studies and reviews of exhibitions (and single exhibits).

Using the tabs on the upper right side of the page, you can find more information about current members; browse case studies and reviews; add a case study or review; return to the home page; and after you have joined, access your personal profile page. The meat of *ExhibitFiles* is the case study feature. Members



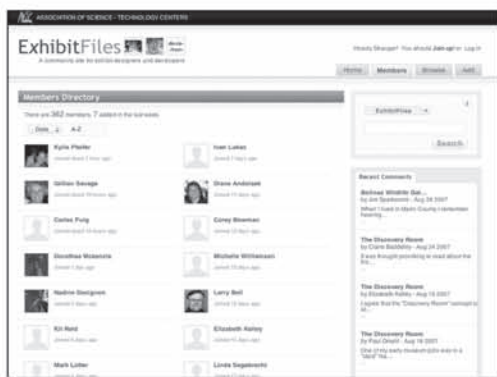
ExhibitFiles home page

can input a case study of an individual exhibit component or an entire exhibition. At first glance, when I began to input my first case study, I was a little overwhelmed by the amount of information that was asked of me. But then I realized that only critical fields needed to be filled out in order to publish the case study: Exhibition name, Museum/organization that produced this exhibition, Exhibition opened in year, Exhibition description and goals, Development process and challenges, Lessons learned, and Mistakes we made (and what we did about them). This made the task less daunting, but as I was filling it out, I realized that including information in the other fields (such as Funding sources, Estimated cost, Size, Images, Evaluation reports) would provide answers to those questions that my colleagues and I are often asking.

Another rich and growing resource is the access to personal profiles of *ExhibitFiles* members. These may include personal statements;

positions; weblinks; feeds from blogs and a photo-sharing site, Flickr; and contacts. This is a great way to see what your colleagues are up to, see what's on their favorites list, look at case studies and reviews they have contributed, and check out some of their Flickr photos. You can also see the latest comments from members.

The exhibition reviews are great to read. They vary considerably from the more formal



The member's directory is a great way to connect with exhibit colleagues

“this is what I saw” to an exhibit person’s journey through an exhibition, to an informal description of experiencing an exhibition with one’s family. It provides insights and reflections, and has made me visit a couple exhibitions that I hadn’t planned on seeing as well as made me wish I had seen a now closed exhibition.

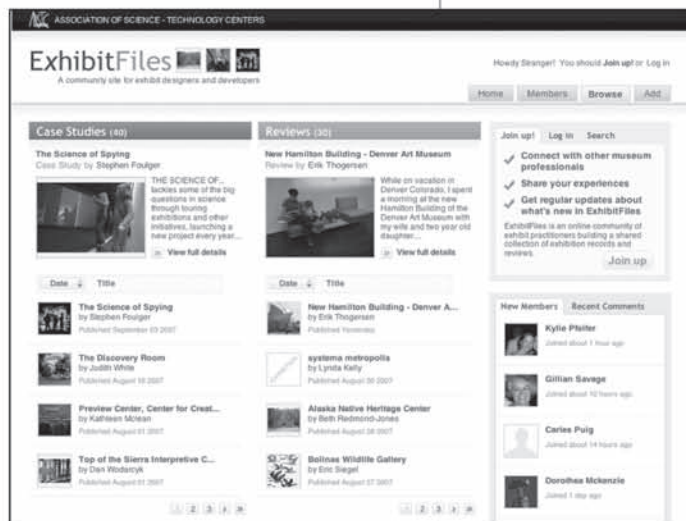
A great deal of thought, evaluation, and development went into *ExhibitFiles*. Project



Massive Change, an exhibition review by Kathleen McLean

Co-PIs Wendy Pollock of ASTC and Kathleen McLean of Independent Exhibitions along with media developer Jim Spadaccini of Ideum and a group of exhibition practitioners from around the country met several times to discuss the critical elements to include on the site. These prototyping workshops, in addition to front-end studies, helped the core team define the elements needed from titles, opening dates, and square footage to outcomes and lessons learned. Other aspects that were requested included the ability for *ExhibitFiles* members to be able to post comments and “favorite” case studies and reviews. As feedback continues to come from the group of exhibition practitioners and other site users, ASTC will take this information to continue to improve and enhance the site over coming months.

With 439 members and counting, and 80+ case studies and reviews on topics ranging from nanoscale science to wildlife art, I hope that you will take an opportunity to check out the site, join up, and contribute to this continually growing resource. I look forward to seeing you on *ExhibitFiles*! ✨



From the browse tab, viewers can select an exhibition or review to browse