

Sarah Bartlett

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Profile

With more than 15 years of experience developing exhibitions, I have achieved national recognition for my engaging and approachable work. As a content developer and writer, I excel at bringing exhibit ideas, stories, and goals together into compelling visitor experiences. My projects have received awards from the American Alliance of Museums, the American Association for State and Local History, and the National Association for Interpretation. In 2013, I received an Excellence in Label Writing award for my text. I am also an NAI Certified Interpretive Planner.

Skills

Interpretive Planning

Facilitate collaborative charrettes to brainstorm exhibit ideas and determine themes, storylines, and outcomes.

Communicate and respond to partners and stakeholders.

Exhibition and Content Development

Develop framework and creative vision for interpretive projects.

Devise dynamic interactives and media treatments.

Interpretive Writing

Strategize content messaging and voice

Research, write, and edit engaging exhibit labels.

Leadership and Content Management

Refine and review exhibition process and deliverables.

Create systems to track content, images, and artifacts.

Ensure exhibitions meet project budgets and schedules.

Provide advocacy and vision for content development and writing.

Experience

Independent Exhibit Developer and Interpretive Writer – 2017–present

Content developer and writer for exhibitions, waysides, and websites.

Responsible for research, writing, visitor advocacy, content management, creative ideation, communication, and coordination.

Select projects: Claudia Workman Wildlife Education Center; Florida State Parks; Lovers Key State Park; Ozark Highlands Nature Center; Pacific Grove Museum

of Natural History; Roseville Utility Exploration Center; South Carolina State Parks; Stockton Children's Museum.

Exhibit Developer, Split Rock Studios; Minn. – 2006–2017

Oversaw exhibit development department staff and subcontractors.

Earned firm its first AAM award for Excellence in Exhibition, as well as two AASLH awards and five NAI awards.

Led content development efforts on more than 30 exhibitions.

Key member of leadership team to create branding, vision, and mission statements and revise exhibition process.

Select projects: Carlsbad Caverns National Park; Custer State Park; Desert National Wildlife Refuge; Ford's Theatre Center for Education & Leadership; Heart Mountain Interpretive Learning Center; Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park; Oshkosh Public Museum; Poarch Band of Creek Indians Museum; Zoo Miami.

Education

University College, London, UK – MA, Museum Studies

Wesleyan University, Conn. – BA, Medieval Studies

National Association for Interpretation – Certified Interpretive Planner

Articles/workshops

Interpretive Writing Workshops

Florida State Parks, 2019, 2020, 2021

California State Parks, 2018

Articles

"The Hemingway Effect," *Exhibition*, spring 2016

"Measuring the Rule of Thumb: How Much Do Exhibitions Cost?" *Exhibition*, fall 2012

"Can Museums Take a Stand?" *Exhibition*, fall 2011

Conferences and Presentations

Label Writing and Audience Engagement, AAM webcast, 2015

"Stories Without Words: Constructing Narratives Through Objects and Artifacts," AAM Annual Conference 2013

"Think With Your Hands: Connecting Museums and Makers," AAM Annual Conference 2012

"Referendum on Dioramas: Dusty Relics or Dynamic Displays for the Museum of Tomorrow?" AAM Annual Conference 2011



ZOO MIAMI

Conservation Action Center

Miami, Florida
Permanent exhibition
Opened 2021
Designer: Split Rock Studios

This lively, hands-on exhibition at Zoo Miami focuses on wildlife conservation projects supported by the zoo around the world.

The displays draw on recent research on empathy design. Exhibits juxtapose human and animal habitats in humorous, offbeat ways to connect visitors with the natural world around them.

Dynamic interactives convey complex content through open-ended games and other activities.

Writing Sample, Story Panel

How do you give a hippo an ultrasound?

When Kelsey the pygmy hippo got pregnant in 2018, staff taught her to stand still for weekly ultrasounds. She stayed still when vets examined her left side, but she'd kick, kick, kick when they touched her right side. Maybe she was ticklish?

ZOO MIAMI

Conservation Action Center

Writing sample

Fun is the name of the game in this exhibition, so the text needed to match! The writing drew from current research on empathy building. For instance, the text references individual animals—often

calling them by name—as well as species as a whole.

I worked closely with zoo scientists to ensure accuracy of content.



PEOPLE OF THE WATERS

Oshkosh Public Museum

Oshkosh, Wisconsin
Permanent exhibition
Opened 2017

Designer: Split Rock Studios
Award winner: AASLH, NAI

This permanent exhibition spans millennia, telling the stories of the many people who have depended on the rich natural resources of the Lake Winnebago Region.

Visitors can enjoy engaging electronic interactives, explore a Menominee longhouse, touch hands-on displays, and view hundreds of fascinating artifacts.

The team worked with Native communities and local stakeholders to ensure the authenticity and relevance of exhibit content.

Writing Sample, Exhibition Intro Panel

Meet the People of the Waters

This is a land shaped by ice and water.

Massive ice sheets, two miles high, gouged and flattened the land. A giant lake covered where you stand.

These are people connected by water.

People arrived as the ice receded. They adapted as climates warmed and cooled. They fished Lake Winnebago and gathered rice along its banks. They paddled the Fox River, carrying goods and knowledge and stories to others far away.

This is a story of people and place.

Discover how early people used the region's rich natural resources. Discover the People of the Waters.

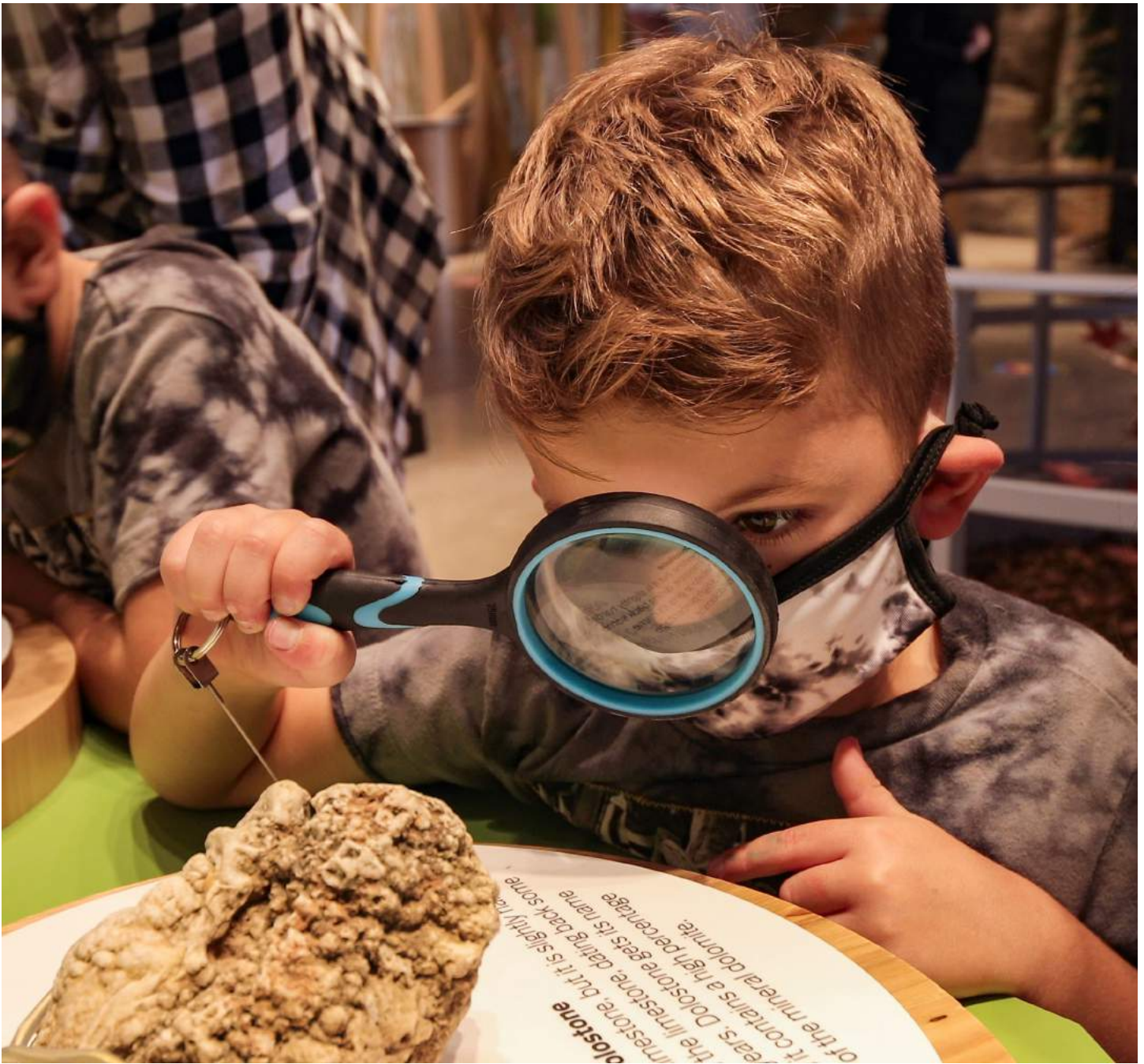
PEOPLE OF THE WATERS

Oshkosh Public Museum

Writing sample

The text for the exhibition aimed to connect visitors—whether locals or tourists—to the people and places of the Lake Winnebago Region. The tone for the exhibition introductory panel was

intended to be evocative and descriptive, setting the stage for the displays that visitors could explore and enjoy.



OZARK HIGHLANDS

Nature Center

Springdale, Arkansas
Permanent exhibition
Opened 2020
Designer: Split Rock Studios

In Northwest Arkansas, hunting and fishing are woven into the fabric of the community. This nature center aims to celebrate that tradition and share its joys with a new, diverse audience.

Through high and low-tech interactives, the engaging displays let visitors of all ages learn about wildlife and Arkansas Game & Fish Commission's management of native habitats.

In one spot, visitors can splash through a digital stream that runs across the floor and ends in a real aquarium. Combining digital and physical experiences, the exhibits encourage exploration.

Writing Sample, Intro Panel

Seasons and Cycles

Can you find scratches and tracks in the dirt and know what mammal has passed by?

Can you hear the song of birds fly overhead and know when winter is on its way?

Can you feel the tug of a fish on your line and know when to reel it in?

When we live in cities and towns, many of us feel apart from nature. But when we hunt and fish, hike and paddle, explore and care, we connect with those wild places.

Come explore Northwest Arkansas through the seasons, and become a part of nature.

OZARK HIGHLANDS

Nature Center

Writing sample

This introductory panel aims to articulate the big idea of the exhibition: that there is a connection between hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and conservation. Here visitors are prompted to think

about the natural cycles and rhythms of natural environments and to consider hunting and fishing as part of those cycles.



DESTINATION: SPACE

Stockton Children's Museum

Stockton, California
Permanent exhibition
Opened 2021
Designer: Weldon Exhibits

This exhibition at the Stockton Children's Museum encourages children to reach for the stars!

Inspired by astronaut José Hernández, who grew up in

Stockton, the displays look at what it is like to live and work in space.

Durable, low-tech interactives give children the chance to imagine themselves as

astronauts and explorers. The exhibition encourages free-choice learning and imaginative play.

Writing Sample, Focus Panel

Long-Term Living

You can't go to a store when you need something in space. Resupply missions bring cargo to the space station and remove trash. But what will happen when people explore farther? Astronauts have started growing plants and making tools onboard so they can stay in space longer.

DESTINATION: SPACE

Stockton Children's Museum

Writing sample

Aimed at children and their caregivers, the text for this exhibition is friendly and enthusiastic. Prompts throughout the exhibition pose questions to visitors

about living and working in space.

The text is presented in both English and Spanish to meet the needs of the museum's diverse audience.



HEART MOUNTAIN

Interpretive Learning Center

Powell, Wyoming
Permanent exhibition
Opened 2012
Designer: Split Rock Studios

Located in the remote Wyoming landscape, this educational exhibition interprets a WWII Japanese-American internment camp site. The exhibits move through a chronology from

before WWII to the legacy that followed the closing of the camps. Visitors can explore themed environments and experience first-hand accounts of life at camp.

Since the experiences and voices of survivors and their families are central to the exhibition, I worked closely with the community.

Writing Sample, Topic Panel

Close Quarters

"They had the bathtub and the showers all in this one building... You had to just close your eyes and say, 'Well, we are all the same.'"

—Katie Hironaka

A barracks room like this might have held as many as seven people—adults and children.

Think about how crowded this room would have become when everyone was home. Would you have had any privacy? How would you have entertained yourself? Can you imagine trying to sleep while all around your family stirred and snored and sneezed and spoke?

Privacy

We tried to create a little privacy for ourselves in the barracks. We strung up blanket and sheet partitions in our rooms. We held personal discussions outside. Everyone was in the same position, so we tried to respect the need for privacy.

A number of Nisei entered Heart Mountain as newlyweds. Can you envision having your honeymoon in a prison camp? Even so, there were 550 babies born at Heart Mountain during the three years we were here.

HEART MOUNTAIN

Interpretive Learning Center

Writing sample

In writing the text for the exhibition, I explored several voices. With the support of the board and team, I ultimately landed on a first-person plural voice.

This "we" voice both reflects the community-focused culture of Japanese Americans and welcomes visitors to share this personal story. The experiences and

voices of former internees are central to the exhibition.



CARLSBAD CAVERNS

National Park

Carlsbad, New Mexico
 Permanent exhibition
 Opened 2015
 Designer: Split Rock Studios

Working closely with the National Park Service, I developed this exhibition for the park's existing visitor center.

Through artifacts, hands-on displays, maps and models, and interpretive graphics, visitors can explore the natural and cultural history of the park—above and below the surface.

Writing Sample, Topic Panel

Science Under Your Feet Research at Carlsbad Caverns National Park

Imagine a creature that lives in darkness and spends its entire life eating minerals in the bedrock. It's not science fiction—it's fact.

Microscopic organisms living in these caves may help scientists understand life on Earth. In caverns untouched by the sun, cave microbes have developed free from our influence. These microbes, which until recently had never encountered humans, may help us fight disease.

CARLSBAD CAVERNS

National Park

Writing sample

While researching the content, I was struck by the poetic and evocative language used by the first explorers of the cave—even modern scientists working at Carlsbad seem to find

themselves awestruck by the alien scenes underground. The text pays homage to this dramatic and eerie landscape, while encouraging visitors to think of themselves as modern explorers.



FORD'S THEATRE

Center for Education & Leadership

Washington, DC
Permanent exhibition
Opened 2012
Designer: Split Rock Studios

This exhibition tells the story of Abraham Lincoln's enduring and changing legacy. The center is located across the street from Ford's Theatre, where Lincoln was

shot. The story picks up in the aftermath of the president's assassination, moving through two floors of immersive environments, media, and artifacts.

A changing gallery gives visitors an opportunity to explore the topic of leadership and define for themselves what true leadership means.