

How Do We Know What We Know About How We Think About Photography?

Out of Frame: Who Took Renton's Photograph

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Opportunity Strikes!

What if we equipped visitors to be critical in their consumption of interpretation?

Critical thinking is widely agreed upon as a valuable skill directly useful in every facet of our lives (Bowers, 2006, p.10). However, it is a difficult skill to impart (Rudd, 2007, p.46). It takes time to slow down, to assess credibility, to ask why things are the way they are.

Museums could create that time and space. In fact, museums are particularly well situated as publicly trusted institutions considered to be credible sources of information (Dilenschneider, 2019). Yet they haven't. Very few museum exhibits include aspects of critical thinking. Still fewer exhibits are designed with critical thinking at the forefront.

Critical thinking is the application of knowledge to new situations, the consideration of different viewpoints, the evaluation of options and evidence, and having the motivation and willingness to think critically.

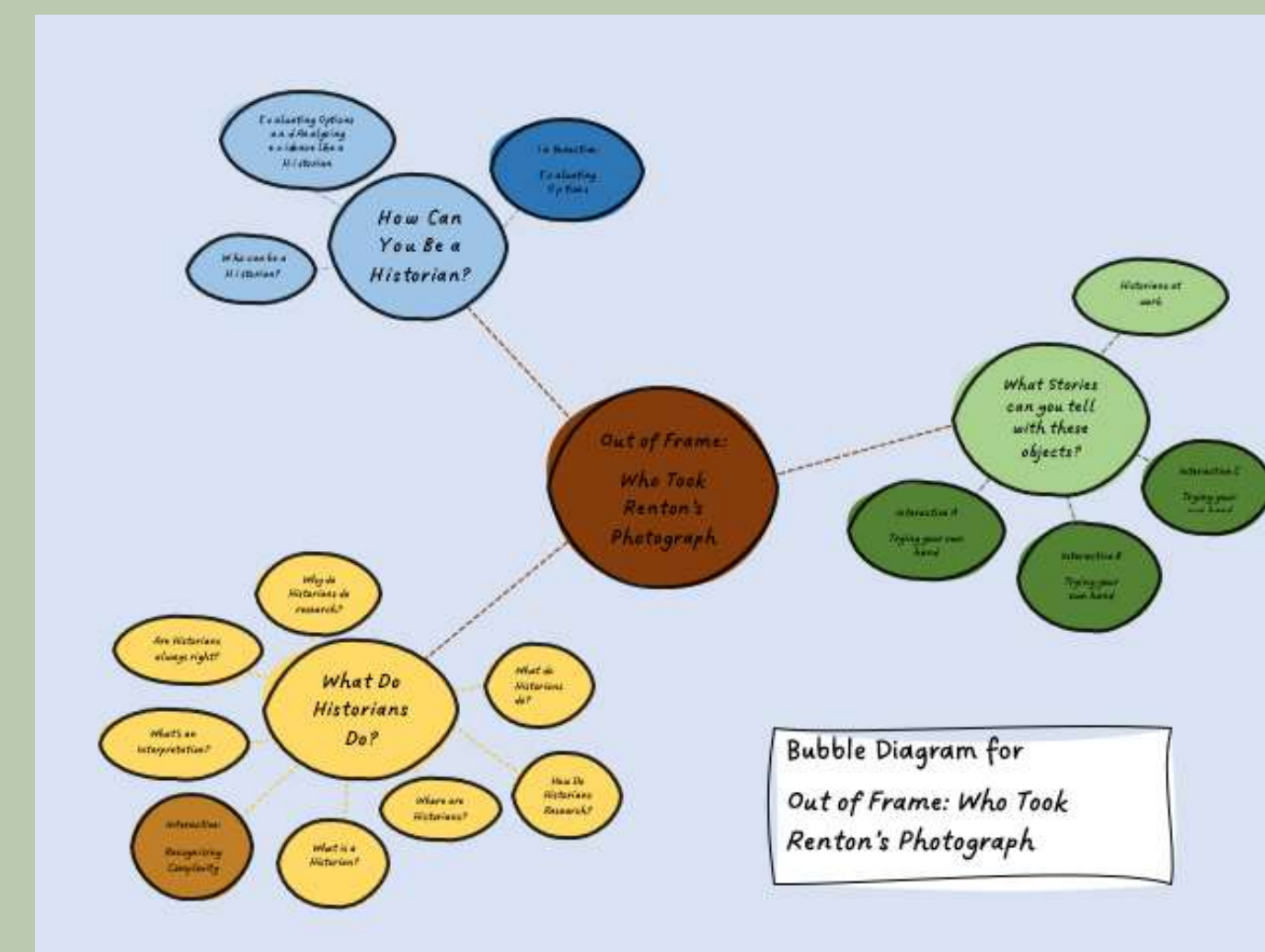
Adapted from Thonney and Montgomery's 2019 definition of critical thinking

What & How

The **purpose** of this project was to create an exhibit for a history museum that is intentionally designed to foster critical thinking.

The exhibit's **concept** is "Peering through a critical thinking lens; there's more than what meets the eye through the viewfinder."

Thinking critically **about...** For an engaging twist into thinking critically, visitors are invited to 'think like a historian' about photography.



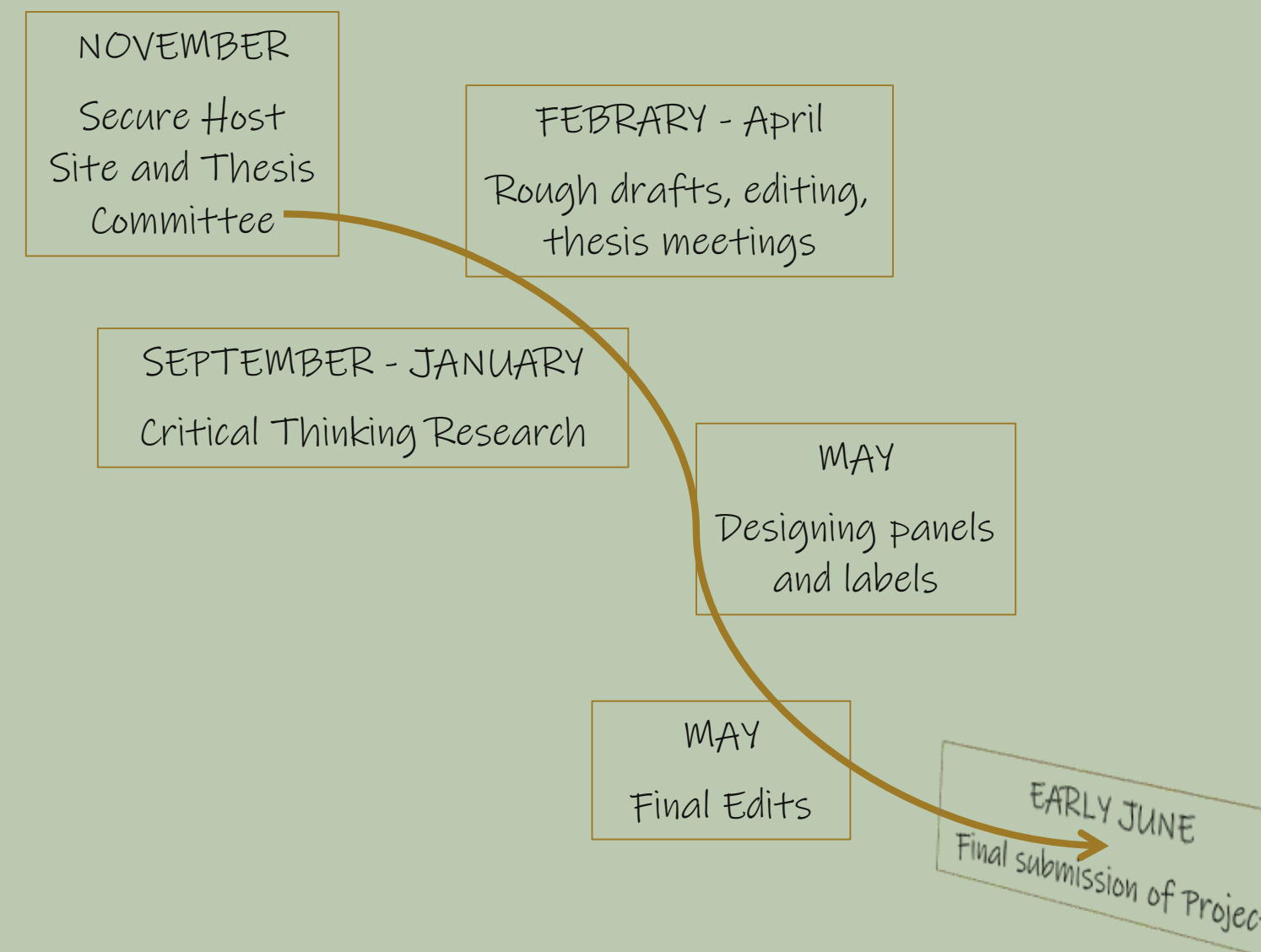
The Deliverable

The finished product is a fully developed exhibit plan that is ready to install delivered in the form of a PDF document.

A selection of what the exhibit plan includes: individually designed introductory and text panels, interactives directly associated with components of critical thinking, artifacts chosen from the Renton History Museum collection, and implementation instructions.



Timeline of Key Phases



Section 2 Interactive:

Evaluating Options and Analyzing Evidence like a Historian



In this section, about halfway through the exhibit, visitors are presented two contradictory labels for the same image. This is an opportunity for visitors to practice the critical thinking skills thus discussed through intentional tangible action by casting a token to vote for the interpretive label telling the more whole story. Try it yourself! Read the two labels below and measure them both against what you already know to be true. Which label would you vote for? Why?



NEXT...

Unfortunately, this exhibit was not able to be physically installed in the space for which it was designed. Alternatively, the next steps would be to install the exhibit and evaluate the effectiveness of the interactives in action to pleasantly communicate opportunities to think critically.

Relevant References to Return to

Bowers, N. (2006). Instructional Support for the Teaching of Critical Thinking: Looking Beyond the Red Brick Walls. *InSight: A Collection of Faculty Scholarship Park University*. [Instructional Support for the BOB BAB Teaching of Critical Thinking Looking Beyond the Red Brick Walls.pdf](#)

Dilenschneider, C. (2019). Ghosts of Data Past: Five Major Trend Updates For Cultural Organizations. KYOB. <https://www.colleendillen.com/2019/10/30/ghosts-of-data-past-five-major-trend-updates-for-cultural-organizations-data/>

Rudd, R. D. (2007). Defining Critical Thinking. Techniques: Connecting Education & Careers. [Defining Critical Thinking.pdf](#)

Thonney, T., & Montgomery, J. C. (2019). Defining Critical Thinking Across Disciplines: An Analysis of Community College Faculty Perspectives. *Columbia Basin College*, 67(3), 169-176. <https://doi.org/10.1080/137567555.2019.1579700>