



TECHNICAL PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

INTERIOR SIGNAGE FOR HISTORIC BUILDINGS

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INTRODUCTION

Letting people know where they are and where to go will help make a successful first impression in any building. There are many types of signs: directional, locational, regulatory, identifying, and greeting. In an historic building it is particularly important to carefully consider the location and design of signage so as not to interfere with the original aesthetic intent of an historic space. In an historic building, materials, color and consistent graphics are of paramount importance. In addition, flexibility is often required when dealing with government buildings. Too often signage is added as an afterthought without regard to its environment.

In a cohesive signage package for an historic building, there should be an emphasis on consistent graphic design and a selection of colors and materials that blend with the original historic fabric. If original signs exist, they should be retained and made current. Original signs may be used as a design model and point of departure for new signs. In designing signage, sensitivity to the building details and the architect's intent for the building is required, as well as acknowledgment of changing needs.

In addition, signs should be installed in a way so as not to harm historic materials. This brief will provide guidelines to encourage minimal disruption of historic fabric dur-

ing sign installation. We have created this brief to provide guidance to GSA building managers, tenants, contractors and lessors, in partnership with your Regional Historic Preservation Officer (RHPO) to help you make good preservation choices regarding signage.

GUIDE 1.1
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INTERIOR SIGNAGE



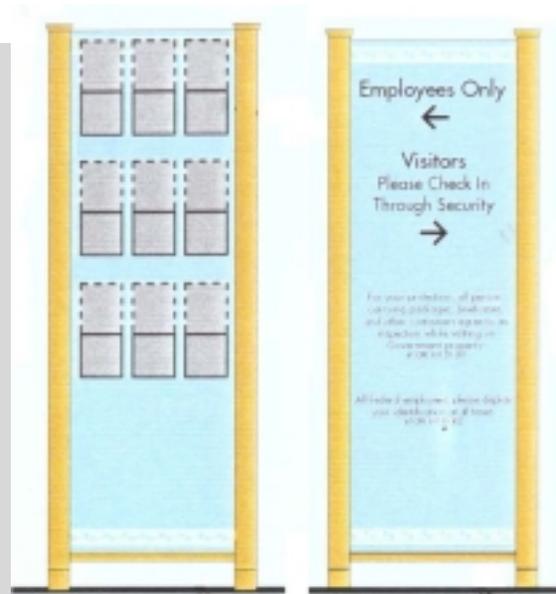
Fig.1: US Courthouse, New Haven, CT

SIGNAGE GUIDELINES

These guidelines apply primarily to Preservation, Restoration, and Rehabilitation Zones, as defined by GSA Historic Building Preservation Plans and Historic Structure Reports. For other zones, consult the Regional Historic Preservation Officer.

1. Sign placement, size and appearance (design) must be approved by the GSA Regional Historic Preservation Officer (RHPO). All alteration projects in historic buildings need to be approved by the RHPO.
2. Retain historic signs whenever possible. Where original signs no longer serve their intended purpose, consider reusing existing signs for new purposes. For example, an empty directory can be used for permanent interpretive exhibits. (Fig. 1)
3. Attach signs so they cause no permanent damage to the building. Anchor into mortar joints if necessary, rather than drilling into stone or brick. Consult manufacturers on adhesive removal procedures and choose only removable adhesives for mounting.

4. Use original signage as a model for color, finish and lettering style choices when designing new signs. (Fig. 2)



Wilbur Cohen Building, DC. Examples from proposed signage package. (Gensler)

Ariel Rios Federal Building, DC. New room sign using seriph type face.



US Dept. of the Interior, DC. New room sign. Buffalo's head symbol based on original doorknob design.



Fig. 3



US Dept. of Justice, DC. Original room sign.

Kinneary Courthouse, Cincinnati, OH

US Dept of the Interior, DC.

Fig. 2

5. Design new signage using one cohesive approach. Consult a design professional for a comprehensive signage package. (Fig. 3)
6. Allow for various types of signage where it may be necessary. For example, room identifiers may be on doors, on stanchions, or on perpendicular "fin" type signs (Fig. 4), often backlit, to provide visibility from a distance.

7. Provide a location for temporary announcements and notices for building tenants which will have minimal impact on historic spaces.



Fig. 4: Ariel Rios Federal Building, DC.
Small "fin" sign to indicate suite entrance.



Fig. 5: Ad-hoc signage at elevators.

8. Discourage ad-hoc signage. (Fig. 5)
9. Consolidate signs where possible.
10. Use the mandatory sign list, researched and developed by the GSA Signage Task Force, to determine minimum lobby signage requirements. (Fig. 6)

RECOMMENDED READING

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (*general guidance*)
www.achp.gov

GSA Environmental Book (*explains Section 106 process*)
www.gsa.gov/pbs/pt/call-in/envbook/page63.htm

National Park Service Technical Preservation Services *Preservation Briefs Series* (*information on exterior signage*)
Brief 25: The Preservation of Historic Signs
www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/briefs/brief25.htm

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines (*for signage information see Preservation, P. 40, 44*)
www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/standards/index.htm

First Impressions Web Site (*GSA access only*)
http://insite.gsa.gov/firstimpressions/takingaction/unify_signage.html

Mandatory sign list

Location	Sign Content	Purpose	Mandatory	Presidential Directive	Tradition
Lobby entry doors	No Smoking (plus symbol)	Smoking restriction	✓		
Lobby entry doors	Access (plus symbol)	Accessible entry identification	✓		
Lobby security approach	Weapons prohibited... Title 18, Section 930	Federal weapons warning	✓		
Lobby security station	Subject to search... 41 CFR 101.20-301	Federal security warning	✓		
Lobby security station	Display federal identification... 41 CFR 101.20-302	Federal security warning	✓		
"Conspicuous" location in each lobby entrance	Rules and Regulations Concerning Public Buildings and Grounds... Title 41, 101-20.3	Federal building regulations	✓		
Lobby, business center, or cafeteria, etc.	Photos and names	Missing children posting		✓	
Security approach, lobby, or business center	President / V. President photos	Executive branch identification			✓
Lobby, business center, or cafeteria, etc.	Bill of Rights, Constitution, Declaration of Independence	Charters of Freedom display			✓

Fig. 6: Mandatory Lobby sign list
(From First Impressions web site: <http://insite.gsa.gov/firstimpressions/signage/introduction/page6a.html>)