



VIRTUAL MUSEUM  CANADA



Guidelines for Writing Press Releases Concerning the Virtual Museum of Canada

Based on the experience gained from launching several virtual exhibits over the past years, the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) is pleased to share with its member museums the following guidelines designed to facilitate the writing of a press release that references, directly or indirectly, the Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC).

As part of the launch efforts for any new virtual exhibit or interactive game, we strongly encourage exchanges between member museums and other stakeholders, and the VMC, in order to ensure proper messaging and maximize media and public awareness.

For any media operation concerning the launch of an online product related to the VMC, member museums are invited to share their media plan with CHIN. Museum members are encouraged to:

- ✓ Draft a press release and present it to CHIN for revision of references and content.
- ✓ Disclose to CHIN broadcast times and plans for local media relations.
- ✓ Inform CHIN of media outcomes following the broadcast.

Writing a Press Release

Presented below are a few reference points and customary recommendations for writing press releases and media advisories.

- If an activity is planned to announce the launch of a virtual exhibit or interactive game, plan the distribution of a media advisory, via press wire, one day prior to the event. If the activity is held on a Monday, the distribution of the advisory should be carried out the previous Thursday.
- For the launch of an online product without an activity, a press release distributed on the morning of the launch is sufficient.
- It is not recommended to broadcast information to media representatives on Fridays, unless it is substantially newsworthy.
- Content : a press release must always respect the following format:
 - a) A title that presents the object of the announcement.
 - b) A sub-title containing complementary information (optional).
 - c) The date and city in which the activity is held or the announcement is made.
 - d) The first paragraph must always:
 - 1. name the museum making the announcement;
 - 2. present the highlights of the announcement;
 - 3. mention the partnership with the VMC;
 - 4. mention the museum's and the VMC's URL addresses.
 - e) The following paragraphs specify :
 - 1. the object of the virtual exhibit and its description;
 - 2. comments from the main stakeholders, in the form of a quotes.
 - f) The last paragraphs are always reserved for the corporate signature of the institutions making the announcement, i.e. a short presentation of the VMC, in conformity with usage guidelines, followed by a short description of the museum. If deemed

appropriate, a list of partner organizations should also be included.

- g) Entering of a symbol characteristic to press releases, following the last paragraph, centred: — 30 —
- h) Include the name and coordinates of two contacts, one from the museum and one from the VMC. (The VMC contact is the individual who assisted with the virtual exhibit).
- Press releases must be brief, concise and favour the distribution of a clear and precise message.
 - Media advisories are used to announce, ahead of time, an activity/event and are simply an invitation to the media. A media advisory must – aside from the title and short paragraph containing highlights of the press release – specify the date, time and place of the activity, as well as the names of participants that can be interviewed by media representatives. A museum contact must also be identified.
 - Press releases are intended to broadcast news when it happens.
 - Since member museums submit proposals to the *VMC Investment Program*, the awarded contracts are consequently deemed an investment. Therefore, terms in a press release announcing a new VMC online product, always avoid using terms such as *concession, contribution, grant, and financial support*.
 - Any reference to a received investment, when applicable, must mention the VMC or indicate the museum's participation in the *VMC Investment Program*.
 - Given that the online product is available in both official languages, it is recommended to broadcast the media advisory and the press release in both French and English, whenever possible.
 - Newsrooms receive dozens of press releases each day. Therefore, it would be in your best interest to place a follow-up call with local journalists potentially interested in your activity and keen to publish your news.

VMC's Corporate Signature and Contact

Please inquire with CHIN to obtain the VMC's the latest corporate signature and the name and phone number of the VMC contact that will appear on the press release. (The VMC contact is the individual who assisted with the virtual exhibit).

Examples for the First Paragraph

- ❑ The *<name of museum>* and the Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC) invite you to visit the virtual exhibit *<name of virtual exhibit>*, now available at the *<name of museum>* Web site, at *<URL address>*, and through the VMC gateway at www.virtualmuseum.ca.
- ❑ *<Name of museum>*, in collaboration with the Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC), invites you to experience its latest virtual exhibit *<name of virtual exhibit>*, now available at the *<name of museum>* Web site, at *<URL address>*, and through the VMC gateway at www.virtualmuseum.ca.
- ❑ It is with great pride and enthusiasm that *<name of museum>*, in collaboration with the Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC), launches online the virtual exhibit *<name of virtual exhibit>* at www.virtualmuseum.ca.

Examples of quotations by the VMC

1. "CHIN is extremely excited about this new exhibit," said Namir Anani, Director General of the Canadian Heritage Information Network, the organization responsible for the VMC. "We are always seeking new ways to bring cultural content to audiences and this virtual exhibit is a excellent achievement in this regard. It is a treasure that will engage both first-time and repeat visitors' interest for countless years to come."
2. "CHIN is excited to bring this unique and educational exhibit to the public through the VMC," said Namir Anani, Director General of the Canadian Heritage Information Network, the organization responsible for the VMC.

3. “CHIN is proud of this outstanding virtual exhibit. It’s rich content and exceptional design presents excellence that makes it worthy of public recognition,” said Namir Anani, Director General of the Canadian Heritage Information Network, the organization responsible for the VMC.
4. “CHIN is delighted with this unique and exciting new exhibit,” said Namir Anani, Director General of the Canadian Heritage Information Network, the organization responsible for the VMC. “It is our hope that visitors will gain a whole new perspective.”

Examples for the Last Paragraph

- The Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC), created by the Department of Canadian Heritage, in collaboration with more than 1200 museums across the country is an important element of the Government of Canada’s strategy to produce and promote Canadian cultural content online.
- The Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC) is a unique gateway featuring innumerable stories and treasures entrusted to Canadian museums. The VMC was created by the Canadian Heritage Information Network, a federal agency reporting to the Department of Canadian Heritage, in collaboration with over 1200 museums, other government agencies, educational institutions and the private sector. The VMC is part of the strategy of the Department of Canadian Heritage, which seeks to promote the presence of Canadian cultural content in cyberspace.

For additional information on writing a press release concerning the VMC, please do not hesitate to communicate with the Canadian Heritage Information Network.

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