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The Canadian Museum of Nature's old stone tower was replaced with a glass tower, which provides a transparent space for large-scale displays.

Photo by Eric Fruhauf

### Canadian Museum of Nature

Last year, Gottschalk + Ash completed phase one of a signage overhaul at the Canadian Museum of Nature (CMN) in Ottawa (see *Sign Media Canada*, February 2007, p. 72). The museum's outer shell was left intact, but the interior was completely redone.

There were some constraints on what the architects could do, due to heritage protection of parts of the 100-year-old building, but within the galleries, everything could be taken out and rebuilt.

The new wayfinding system was based around the theme of animals, which was carried throughout the museum, on its exterior and directional signs.

At the group entrance, lenticular stripes will be installed along the walls, showing images of animals that appear to move as visitors walk past them. When school classes arrive and teachers are arranging payment, students will have something interesting to look at. This is part of the second phase of the project, which is expected to be complete in 2010.

Gottschalk + Ash worked very closely with the architects on this project. Although Schliemann says they did not influence the overall architecture, they did help determine more minor details, like where a directory should be placed by the elevator, where the lenticular images should go and where the directional signage should be installed.

### Signage as an afterthought

Although many architects today collaborate with sign designers during the planning and construction phases, this was not always the case.

"For a long time, signage was an afterthought," says Markle. "A building would be completed and the facility owner would create his/her own signage."

Even today, there are many scenarios where signage is required for pre-existing spaces. In these cases, designers must find ways to work around predetermined conditions.

With an existing project, the client already knows how the space works and the problems that need to be dealt with, especially when it comes to wayfinding.

According to McCutcheon, the primary benefit of working on an existing facility is being able to experience the space, rather than just visualize it through an architect's drawing or rendering. Mock-up signs can be tested during a walkthrough or photos can be taken and used to create a Photoshop rendering.

One of the major challenges with any existing facility is it cannot be changed architecturally without incurring additional costs.

"We have had situations where there is a fire hose cabinet at a junction where a directional sign is needed," says McCutcheon. "In those cases, we have to compromise by moving the sign, but then it has less visibility and is therefore less effective because it is further away from the junction."

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Photos courtesy Reich + Petch

Some buildings are very poorly designed and are confusing to navigate around, but the client may expect wayfinding signs will solve the problem.

"We tell clients signs are not always the solution," says McCutcheon. "If a place is hard to find because the space does not work architecturally, no sign is going to resolve that."

It is most important to create a building that is intuitive, that people are naturally able to find their way through, and then signs should be used to support the process.

#### *Leamington District Memorial Hospital*

The Brothers Markle recently finished a signage redesign project at the Leamington District Memorial Hospital in Leamington, Ont., which had to be completed in phases due to budgetary constraints.

The hospital administrators created most of the internal signage themselves. It was confusing, cluttered and inconsistent.

"One of the people we worked with at Leamington told us she sometimes got lost in her own department because it was such a maze," says Markle.

In one area, there were many signs plastered with different colours and typefaces, but similar and sometimes contradictory information. The Markles were able to take down several signs and put up one that was clear and clean. They reduced the information to its essence to minimize visitors' confusion and lead them from one decision point to another, rather than telling them everything at once.

The hospital's main entrance was moving from one side of the building to another, which was confusing to visitors, so the Markles installed signs to make that change more clear. They then installed signage for the

The finishes and the styling of the Art Gallery of Windsor's signage were carefully considered to ensure compatibility with the space. Dark wood, metal letters and minimal use of colour fit in with the esthetic of the building.

third floor, which is made up of individual clinics for private doctors.

Last, they installed exterior directional signage and second floor signage for the patient care area of the facility.

They also designed a system that allows administrators to make changes to signs using their own computers. The Markles provided the electronic template, so the hospital staff can produce its own paper inserts that slide into the signs.

"As information changes, they can update the signs to correspond and remain up-to-date," says Markle. "More facility managers want to be able to update their signs themselves for things that change frequently, such as personnel and the functions of rooms."

#### *Art Gallery of Windsor*

The designers at Reich + Petch recently revamped signage at the Art Gallery of Windsor in Ontario.

"The space was very self-explanatory in design," says Li, "so implementing the signage was not overly challenging."

There are multiple floors and galleries within the building, so directional signage was required to guide visitors to specific galleries. The designers produced floor directories and exterior banners, so people passing by would know what to expect.

The finishes and the styling of the signage were carefully considered to ensure compatibility with the space. For the interior directional signs, they chose



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