



Exhibit Goals: *K is for Kansas* is designed to: (1) foster a statewide “sense of place” for Kansans whether urban or rural; (2) appeal to elementary-age children and also accommodate multigenerational audiences; and (3) promote exploration and reading while supporting social studies and science standards established by the Kansas Department of Education.

Exhibit Concept: *K is for Kansas* uses an alphabet theme to explore the cultural and natural history of Kansas. The exhibit team chose words representing a Kansas person, place, thing, plant and animal for each letter of the alphabet with one “key” word receiving in-depth interpretation.

Exhibit Components: The exhibit is built of 26 modules consisting of a pair of alphabet blocks. An 18” high block displays the upper and lower case letter of the alphabet, six words beginning with that letter, and the key word. This block functions as the shipping container for a second block which lifts up, swivels and locks into position as if stacked on the base block. The top block features the key word which is interpreted through maps (S for Santa Fe Trail), models (D for dust bowl), hands-on items (H for hognose snake--made of wood with a faux-earth burrow), recorded sound (P for prairie chicken), the real artifact (V for Vornado fan invented in Kansas), or historic photographs (E for Amelia Earhart). The concept of exploring is linked to interactive components such as flippers labeled “pests” and “partners” which visitors lift to learn about G for grasshopper. Similarly, a slider conceals and reveals the definitions and pictures of “harvesting,” “threshing” and “combining” on the C for combine block. All words on the base blocks are interpreted in a folding A-B-C booklet.

The 26 alphabet modules are grouped around an 8’x16’ carpet map of Kansas which is marked with major rivers and rainfall regions. The map provides a place to gather as well as a basis for mapping activities. Four photographic murals (fabric 96” high by 48” wide) provide dramatic views of Kansas--rolling prairie hills, an old grain silo, a brilliant sunset, a wheat field. The exhibit components can be arranged to fit exhibit spaces of varying sizes and shapes. Local hosts have individualized their installation--adding a blackboard for visitor feedback or a companion alphabet on local county history.

Accompanying the exhibit are a notebook of grade-related programs, activity packs with materials for young families, Kansas books for preschool through adult readers with storage blocks and bean bag chairs for a reading nook, and two carpet-covered blocks for extra seating. Because the blocks nest and the map and murals can be rolled, all exhibit components can be transported in a small truck and installed in three hours.

Exhibit Awards: The 28-page folding *K is for Kansas* A-B-C booklet received First Place in the 2004 American Association of Museums Publications Design Competition and the 2004 Award for Excellence in Publication from Mountain-Plains Museums Association (for content, relevance, and presentation of region-related topic). The complete exhibit project received a 2004 Kansas Museums Association Award for Excellence and a 2006 American Association for State and Local History Award of Merit (their highest award).