Interp Guide

The Philosophy and Practice of Connecting People to Heritage

U.S. Dept. of the Interior
National Park Service

Essential Tools for Interpreters
Office of Interpretation and Education, Intermountain Region

Welcome

We wrote this publication for interpretation professionals — front-line interpreters, supervisory interpreters, and managers of heritage resources.

This publication offers guidance that is applicable to the entire array of public and private organizations that provide natural and cultural heritage interpretation. These organizations include, but are not limited to, national, state, and local parks, monuments, historic sites, forests, preserves, nature centers, zoological gardens, aquaria, museums, and other places that interpret heritage resources. (*Park* is used throughout this guide to generically refer to any of these entities.)

This guide speaks to interpretation at your site. We relate interpretive philosophy to real issues that arise daily in the performance of interpretive work. We explore how cutting-edge interpretive philosophy and practice can help interpreters and managers provide interpretive services that accomplish the mission of interpretation: *providing enhanced opportunities for visitors to explore their own intellectual and emotional connections to the natural and cultural resources that comprise shared heritage.*

This guide describes what heritage resources are and why people care about them, and care for them. It describes professional interpretation and its role in enhancing visitor understanding and enjoyment of heritage resources. It explores why scholarship must be made relevant to diverse audiences to achieve the mission of interpretation, and how this can be accomplished.

It serves to deepen the reader's understanding of the National Park Service Interpretive Development Program and its application to daily interpretive operations.

Within this publication, we have included excerpts from a variety of other sources. We've designed this guide to express ideas derived from others while clearly attributing the original authors. We hope you find this formatting easy to follow and useful.

One category of these excerpts is dictionary definitions. We use standard definitions[1] to establish a common base of understanding from which we can all springboard together into more complex issues and nuance. Here's an example:

> **her•i•tage** \ **2 a :** something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor **:** INHERITANCE, LEGACY **b :** TRADITION **3 :** BIRTHRIGHT

A second category of excerpts includes the work of historians, scientists, and others who are experts within their disciplines. These excerpts are also treated with special formatting:

> We've used a light, vertical rule and indented text — as indicated by this paragraph's formatting — to indicate these excerpted sections. We've also included footnotes so that the reader can review the original works and read them within their fuller context.

Regarding footnotes that include Internet addresses: All of the links herein were working as of the date this guide was published. However, as these are external links beyond our control, there are no guarantees that they will still be operational at the time you attempt to access them.

We intend to update this publication periodically and would greatly appreciate your feedback regarding how to improve this guide's interpretive approach and content. Contact information is located inside the back cover, where you'll also find information about related publications in the *Essential Tools for Interpreters* series.

We dedicate this work to all of you whose interpretive energy and enthusiasm continues to enrich the lives of countless others.

Richard Kohen & Kim Sikoryak
Lakewood, Colorado
January 2005 ••

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[1] Note: Definitions are excerpted from the following source unless indicated otherwise: ***Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged***, 1971.

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Heritage Resources

What are Heritage Resources?

her•i•tage \ **2 a :** something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor **:** INHERITANCE, LEGACY **b :** TRADITION **3 :** BIRTHRIGHT

"You mean they took off from *that track*?" Steven asked, pointing.

"That's *weird*," said his five-year-old sister, Laura.

"Uh-huh. Planes at that time didn't have landing gear with wheels — and there were no airports, no runways. That long rail *was* the runway," Dad explained to wide eyes.

"I want to see the picture again," Laura said. Dad kneeled down and unfolded the brochure.

"It looks like a kite with propellers," Steven described. "It says they flew 852 feet in 59 seconds."

Dad glanced over at Mom. She was still taking in the scene, watching the birds chase breakfast insects across the warm sand. The morning's breeze remained steady. The sun was bright. Who'd have thought that Wright Brothers National Memorial was such a cool place? This was definitely going to be a great summer vacation. And it had just begun.

People, places, events, and things can move us. They awaken the imagination and speak to our wonderment. They stir us and quiet us, affecting us spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and physically. They play a part in some of the most powerful and profound experiences of our lives.

As individuals, we assign power and honor, importance and significance to certain people, places, events, and things that are meaningful to us. As a society, we do the same. The people, places, events, and things with which we have some common connection, that possess significance to us communally — these are heritage resources.

Their greatest value is calculated not in dollars, but in importance: Heritage resources are among the best touchstones for exploring our personal and national identity and character. They rejuvenate our spirits, challenge and strengthen our beliefs, and provoke contemplation and discussion of our past, present, and future. They move us to become better stewards of each other and the world around us.

Perpetuating Heritage Opportunities

Organizations that interpret natural and cultural heritage provide a network of opportunities to explore self, society, and the world in which we live. They offer opportunities at local, state, regional, national, and international levels of importance. Parks, monuments, historic sites, forests, preserves, nature centers, zoos, aquaria, museums, and other places that interpret heritage resources do so because the resources they manage are inherently valuable to society.

Heritage preservation encompasses the activities that ensure perpetual access to these important resources, from generation to generation. Remembrances of people, places, events, and things are preserved as continuing links to our collective past. And natural systems and processes, plants, animals, and landscapes are also preserved as critical components of the world in which we live. Society assigns value to the assurance that substantially similar opportunities to experience heritage resources as we do today will be available for our descendants. The overarching reason for heritage preservation is to provide opportunities for people to enrich their lives and broaden their experience — to enjoy a more fulfilling existence.

Addressing this idea as it applies to America's national system of parks, and the government agency entrusted to administer it, the following recommendation was recently made.

> The National Park Service has a twenty-first century responsibility of great importance. It is to proclaim anew the meaning and value of parks, conservation, and recreation; to expand the learning and research occurring in parks and share that knowledge broadly; and to encourage all Americans to experience these special places. As a people, our quality of life — our very health and well-being — depends in the most basic way on the protection of nature, the accessibility of open space and recreation opportunities, and the preservation of landmarks that illustrate our historic continuity. By caring for the parks and conveying the park ethic, we care for ourselves and act on behalf of the future. The larger purpose of this mission is to build a citizenry that is committed to conserving its heritage and its home on earth.[2] ••

[2] ***Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century*** *— Conclusion;* The National Park System Advisory Board; http://www.nps.gov/policy/futurereport.htm (July 2001).

Interpretation Enhances Enjoyment of Heritage Resources

Interpretation

in•ter•pret \ **1 :** to explain or tell the meaning of **:** translate into intelligible or familiar language or terms **:** EXPOUND, ELUCIDATE, TRANSLATE **2 :** to understand and appreciate in the light of individual belief, judgment, interest, or circumstance **:** CONSTRUE

in•ter•pre•ta•tion \ **1 :** the act or result of interpreting: as **a :** explanation of what is not immediately plain or explicit **b :** translation from one language into another **c :** explanation of actions, events, or statements by pointing out or suggesting inner relationships or motives or by relating particulars to general principles

"Wow. Look at those colors," she said as they soaked up the sun's last rays.

"Hmmm," he said, gesturing skyward. "And the pink edge on that cloud — it was gold a minute ago."

For just a moment, then, the sun seemed to widen before it disappeared beneath the canyon rim's silhouette. The couple's gaze returned to the turkey vultures quietly soaring over the forest-topped cliffs. She noticed the chilling of the air, and pulled her hat further down over her ears. The waning autumn dusk continued unabated as they walked back to their rental car on noisy, brittle leaves, a warm dinner on their minds.

Did these park visitors need any external assistance for them to be able to meaningfully experience some of the park's spectacular natural resources? In some ways, the answer is *no*. They required no assistance to enjoy watching the sun set in such a majestic landscape. Perhaps this is a universally experienced aesthetic, touching something fundamental within all of us. People the world over are attracted to transitions — such as a sunset. In this sense, no external assistance was needed for this couple to derive meaning from their experience of sharing the transition from day to dusk in a special place.

In other ways, the answer to the question is *yes* — assistance enhanced their experience. These visitors planned their trip using materials sent to them before their visit. They surfed the park's Website. They used a map to arrive at this location, or could have asked for and been provided with driving directions to the best west-facing overlook. They read about the geographic place names of the landscape, and by learning the name of that peak on the left, derived an even greater pleasure from their sunset-watching experience.

This *Wow!* experience may only satisfy them for a few minutes, followed by an inevitable growth in curiosity. How old is that fire scar on the hillside? Why do those trees only grow on the north side of the canyon? Why does that butte have three different names? How was this marvelous landscape formed?

Seeking answers and explanations, they may turn to read a wayside exhibit panel at the overlook. In the waning light, the text and graphic elements of the wayside exhibit prompt them to consider the canyon's rock strata visible from here, and a host of ideas about how and when those geologic layers were created. The couple engages an interpretive service that has been located in this spot for this exact purpose: The wayside exhibit was designed to answer typical visitor questions as they view the landscape from this special vantage point.

Their visit might also be enhanced by interpretive influences that aren't always immediately apparent. The idea of enhancing visitor enjoyment of natural resources played a role in park management deciding that there would be a road along the canyon rim, and that it would be curvy with low speed limits to provide ample time for visitors to contemplate the landscape. Interpretive philosophy played a role in deciding to include road pullouts and their locations. It played a role in the decision to place wayside exhibits in some of the pullouts, and played a role in deciding to *not* place them in other pullouts. Interpretation played a role in deciding what content to include in each exhibit. It played a role in managers deciding that the park should close one hour *after* sunset, allowing for sunset experiences like those had by this couple. All of these decisions are predicated on enhancing the experiences that occur here — opportunities for people to create their own meaningful connections with heritage resources. Interpretive philosophy plays important roles in many such aspects of park decision-making.

The Profession of Interpretation

> **pro•fess•sion** \ **4 a :** a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive preparation including instruction in skills and methods as well as in the scientific, historical, or scholarly principles underlying such skills and methods, maintaining by force of organization or concerted opinion high standards of achievement and conduct, and committing its members to continued study and to a kind of work which has for its prime purpose the rendering of a public service

For the situations described above and all others like them, interpretation is the profession that offers enhanced opportunities for visitors to explore their own intellectual and emotional connections to the natural and cultural resources that comprise shared heritage. This is the mission of interpretation. This is the desired outcome. This is the goal. This is what it's all about. This is why the profession exists.

Interpretation is a profession. It adheres to an organized body of standards, best practices, traditions, skills and competencies, and ethics. Interpretation provides critical planning insight, context, and content that is vital to enhancing interaction between visitors and resources at all levels of planning.

Interpretation is conducted by interpreters, educators, rangers, visitor use assistants, volunteers, docents, and others that carry out the functions of a park's interpretation & education program.

Interpretation Invites Introspection

Interpretation is predicated on the values of preserving and interpreting natural and cultural heritage for the purpose of public enrichment. The intent of all interpretive services is to enhance opportunities for people to personally and meaningfully connect with heritage resources. In the exchange of ideas, people have an opportunity to grow and become more than they are.

Interpretation encourages the individual to make up his or her own mind about park resources. Interpreters facilitate informed introspection. Visitors are encouraged to weigh one perspective against another, one experience against another, layer upon layer. *They* consider the advantages of one choice over another, one behavior over another. *They* compare potential actions and short- and long-term ramifications of those actions. Visitors weigh the relative values of each, and decide for themselves what meanings are personally relevant to them. Such facilitation strengthens individuals and, by extension, society. Through this kind of spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical exploration of heritage resources, lives are enriched, both in this generation and beyond.

Visitor Behavior and Resource Protection

Although the profession of interpretation values visitors' opinions, and values visitors coming to their own conclusions about what resources mean, interpretation must sometimes counter the behavior that stems from visitor opinions in order to protect resources from undue impairment. If a visitor wants to walk off trail despite signs that say "Please stay on trail," or if a visitor wants to climb on the ancient wall, or sit in that historic chair roped off in the corner, or pick the pretty flower, interpretation plays an important role in curbing such behavior. This occurs not only in structured interpretive services, but also as interpreters rove the park and intervene as these kinds of incidents unfold in front of them. Helping visitors understand *why* such regulations as "Please stay on trail" exist can go a long way in modifying in-park behaviors that work against the preservation of important heritage resources. "Others should have the opportunity to enjoy that flower, too." Interpreters help visitors see that it is selfish for them to enjoy a resource in a way that reduces its integrity to a degree that denies that same opportunity to others. First and foremost for the interpreter is the necessity to preserve heritage resources so that *all* people are able to enjoy meaningful experiences with them.

Interpretation or Information?

> **in•for•ma•tion** \ **2 :** something received or obtained through informing: as **a :** knowledge communicated by others or obtained from investigation, study, or instruction

Informational services are distinctly different from interpretive services, but are critical components of an interpreter's duties. It is commonly understood that when someone refers to a park's interpretation & education program, such a reference includes both interpretive services and informational services.

Informational services involve the dissemination of facts with little analysis or value-connected investigation. For instance, orientation or way finding (directing a visitor to a specific area of the park) or providing safety information (Watch out for snakes!) are simple examples of informational communication. The desired outcome of this communication is to inform visitors regarding guidelines for a safe visit and avoiding negative impacts on resources, as well as familiarizing visitors with choices and opportunities available during their visit. "The best overlook for that cliff dwelling is Juniper Point."

Note: Please see the chapter "Overview of a Park's Interpretation & Education Program" for more information on this subject.

Interpretation or Advocacy?

> **ad•vo•cate** \ **2 :** one that argues for, defends, maintains, or recommends a cause or proposal

Advocacy is distinctly different from interpretation. Unlike interpretation, the motive of advocacy is to bring about or cause a specific course of action to be taken, or conclusion to be arrived at by visitors. Advocacy seeks to sway the opinions of visitors.

For example, an interpreter stationed at a frontier fort who fails to tell visitors about the United States government's role in various treaties will probably find himself or herself telling only part of the story, and in so doing, advocating one

perspective of the fort's history (such as that of the U.S. Army) over another (such as that of various American Indian nations and tribes).

An interpreter-turned-advocate takes unethical advantage of his or her position and aligns himself or herself with one idea or policy over another. This betrayal of public trust as an impartial servant and/or member of the profession of interpretation (by the nature of the position) should not be mistaken for professional interpretation.

Interpretation or Debate?

de•bate \ **2 a :** a contention by means of words or arguments **:** strife in argument **:** CONTROVERSY; *specif* **:** the formal discussion, argumentation, and resolution of a motion before a legislative assembly or other public deliberative body according to the rules of parliamentary procedure **3 b** (1) **:** a regulated discussion of a proposition between two matched sides as a test of forensic ability (2) **:** a course of study of the methods and techniques of such discussion often taught in schools and colleges

Debating is distinctly different from interpretation. In forensic debate, there are two sides. Each side attempts to prove (to an audience) the validity of their position while invalidating the position of the other side. The desired outcome of debaters is for their side in the argument to *win*, to be judged correct, to be considered more valid, and for the other side to *lose*.

To accomplish this goal, debaters craft communication strategies aimed at bolstering their own arguments and discrediting the arguments of the opposition. They craft *messages* tailored to this end. They *make points*. They use information that helps their *case* while consciously choosing to lead audiences away from information that may negatively impact their case.

Professional interpretation does none of these things. Instead, it exemplifies the complexity of real life and is, therefore, multi-faceted rather than two-sided. Interpretation acknowledges multiple perspectives — the idea that there are often more than two valid ideas or meanings associated with a particular resource. All of these ideas, as long as they have sound, scholarly support, deserve to be presented to and explored by the public. (This does not imply equal time, but does imply equal accessibility and inclusion.)

Interpretation does not *make points* or *convey messages* to achieve a predetermined outcome of winning, or even of persuading. If it did this, interpretation would essentially be attempting to drive the round peg of *our message* into the square hole of the public's brain. No matter how hard this is tried, the reality is that the sender of communication cannot dictate or guarantee how it will be received, or what actions may follow its reception. (Even if it could be done, this would no longer be interpretation; it would be brainwashing.) Interpretation, and assignment of personal meaning, can only occur within the receiver, by the receiver. While it is certainly true that some visitors will find elements of a given interpretive service to be persuasive (for them), this is very different from the interpreter *intending* to persuade the visitor to change his or her mind to match the interpreter's agenda.

Interpretation or Lobbying?

lob•by \ **1 :** to conduct activities (as engaging in personal contacts or the dissemination of information) with the objective of influencing public officials and esp. members of a legislative body with regard to legislation and other policy decisions

Lobbying is distinctly different from interpretation. Lobbying seeks to affect change through political support or opposition. While some organizations are free to engage in lobbying and, in fact, properly include this in their mission, it should be clearly recognized that lobbying activities are distinctly different from interpretive activities — which seek to promote a safe environment for exploring meanings.

Lobbying has specific import for employees of the federal government. Within the federal government, interpreters and all other civil servants are barred from engaging in lobbying while on duty; federal law prohibits the use of appropriated funds to lobby Congress.

Interpretation or Public Relations?

public relations \ **1 :** the promotion of rapport and goodwill between a person, firm, or institution and other persons, special publics, or the community at large through the distribution of interpretive material, the development of neighborly interchange, and the assessment of public reaction **3 a :** the art or science of developing reciprocal understanding and goodwill

Public relations work is distinctly different from interpretation. Public relations, public affairs, and public information are functions that are based on direction provided by a managerial hierarchy. The manager intends to establish goodwill among stakeholders of the site's resources. The manager intends the public to better understand why the organization conducts its mission as it does, the complexity of specific issues, and the steps being considered to address them.

Both public relations and interpretation are efforts to inform the citizenry, providing information needed by the public to arrive at informed opinions about resource management. However, public relations work focuses on management's agenda rather than on unfettered explorations of resource-related ideas. While both interpretation and public relations help citizens arrive at their own informed decisions, the rationale and guidelines directing public relations work are significantly different from those of the profession of interpretation.

Interpretation or Instruction?

> **in•struct** \ **1 :** to give special knowledge or information to: as **a :** to train in some special field **:** give skill or knowledge in some art or field of specialization **:** educate in respect to a particular subject or area of knowledge **b :** to provide with information about something **:** APPRISE

Instruction, teaching, and classroom education are distinctly different from interpretation. Providing instruction, and lecturing, teaching, and educating, are all curriculum-based endeavors that are designed to achieve the spirit and intent of the curriculum being taught.

Although all learning, including interpretation, has similar elements — such as the necessity to analyze, consider, and conclude, and using values in making judgments — interpretation is not based on presenting a curriculum that is designed *to be learned*. Instead, interpretation relies on the history of an individual visitor's experiences, in conjunction with their contemporary experiences with heritage resources, to provoke visitors to consider a broad range of ideas and perspectives about the resources, and to arrive at their own conclusions about them. Interpretation is not academically driven. However, the most effective learning and educational experiences often result from applying an interpretive approach to the presentation of a curriculum. A park's interpretation & education program distinguishes between interpretive and curriculum-based services on the basis of these differences as well as the different planning and logistical considerations that they require.

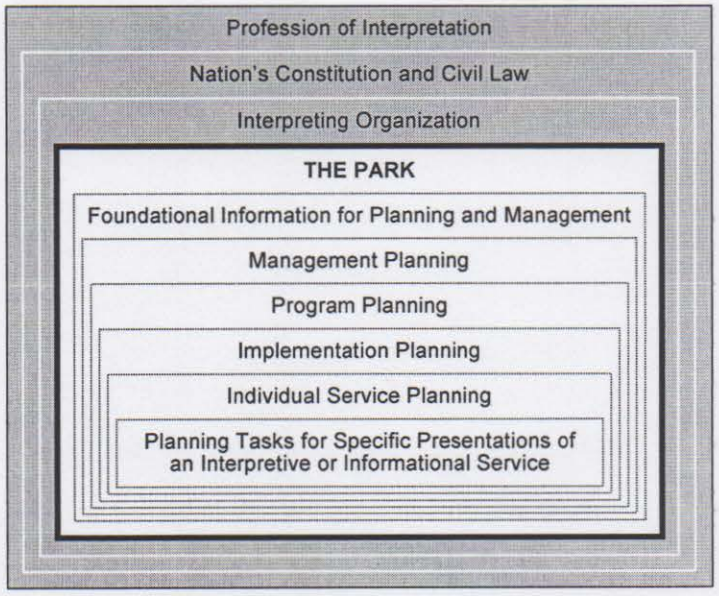
Recreational Demonstrations

Another kind of instruction — one that is usually *not* curriculum-based — is the demonstration of recreational activities and skills (such as snowshoeing, fishing, and backpacking). When simple technical instruction is the central intent of such a service, the service is not designed to be interpretive — it is instructional in nature. When the instruction provides a framework within which interpretive opportunities are intended to be provided, the service *is* interpretive. ••

Planning a Park's Interpretation & Education Program

Context for Planning a Park's Interpretation & Education Program

A park's interpretation & education program exists within a context much larger than the park itself. The contextual framework within which a park's interpretation & education program plans and operates might be diagrammed like this:



Profession of Interpretation

The profession of interpretation is larger than any single organization, including any country or its government. It is characterized by its mission, ethics, standards, and practices. The interpretation & education program of any organization that interprets heritage resources is — in large measure — conducted within the context established by the profession at large. This is not to imply that interpretation is above the law — it just has standards and practices that extend beyond political boundaries.

Nation's Constitution and Civil Law

In practice, the profession is influenced by the majority worldview of any society in which it is conducted. A nation's constitution, along with the body of laws that flow from it, embody its collective ideals and philosophy, and the pragmatic application of them. These things form the actual context within which interpretation operates. For instance, in the United States, the First Amendment to the Constitution provides guarantees that enable candid public discussions of ideas without fear of government reprisal — guarantees that also enable candid exchanges regarding resource meanings and their management.

Interpreting Organization

The interpretation function of an organization that manages heritage resources flows from the combination of the profession of interpretation at large, extant social architecture, and the organization's mission, policies, procedures, and traditions. For instance, the National Park Service is an interpreting organization.

The Park

Management activities of the park occur under the umbrella of the interpreting organization. The interpretation function of the park is directed by the park's mission, mandates, legislation, types of resources, their locations, and more.

Foundational Information for Planning and Management

All park planning stands upon the park's critical, foundational information. Against it, all park decisions will be measured. This information includes the park's purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, primary interpretive themes, mission, and mission goals. This information is developed with input from stakeholders and staff from each of the park's programs. Interpreters, by virtue of the work they do, are especially well-versed in discussing heritage resources with others and helping the workgroup arrive at consensus content for this critical park foundation.

Management Planning

Based on the foundational information for planning and management, the park's management plan defines the overall vision of how the park will be managed. It broadly describes desired future conditions for resources and visitor enjoyment, addressing these topics in a parkwide, comprehensive, multidisciplinary way. The management plan outlines how

the interpretation & education program fits into the larger park management picture. Interpreters correctly view their participation in this planning process as their most influential opportunity to help strategize a management approach that best enhances visitor enjoyment of resources while preserving the integrity of those resources in perpetuity. The management plan is the most expansive and far-reaching aspect of interpretation planning since all other levels beneath it are directed by its guidance.

Program Planning

Based on the park's management plan, each program plan describes how its subject program (function) will successfully implement the vision for park operations, visitor enjoyment, and resource preservation. Each plan provides direction for all management decisions for that program.

For a park's interpretation & education program, the program plan is often called the *Comprehensive Interpretive Plan* (CIP). All interpretive activities are based on it and coordinated by it. This plan defines what the program will accomplish and how it will be operated during the next five years or so. Its most important feature is the desired future interpretation & education program, which describes primary interpretive themes, informational topics, audiences, and the services that will best enable those audiences to meaningfully explore park resources.

Implementation Planning

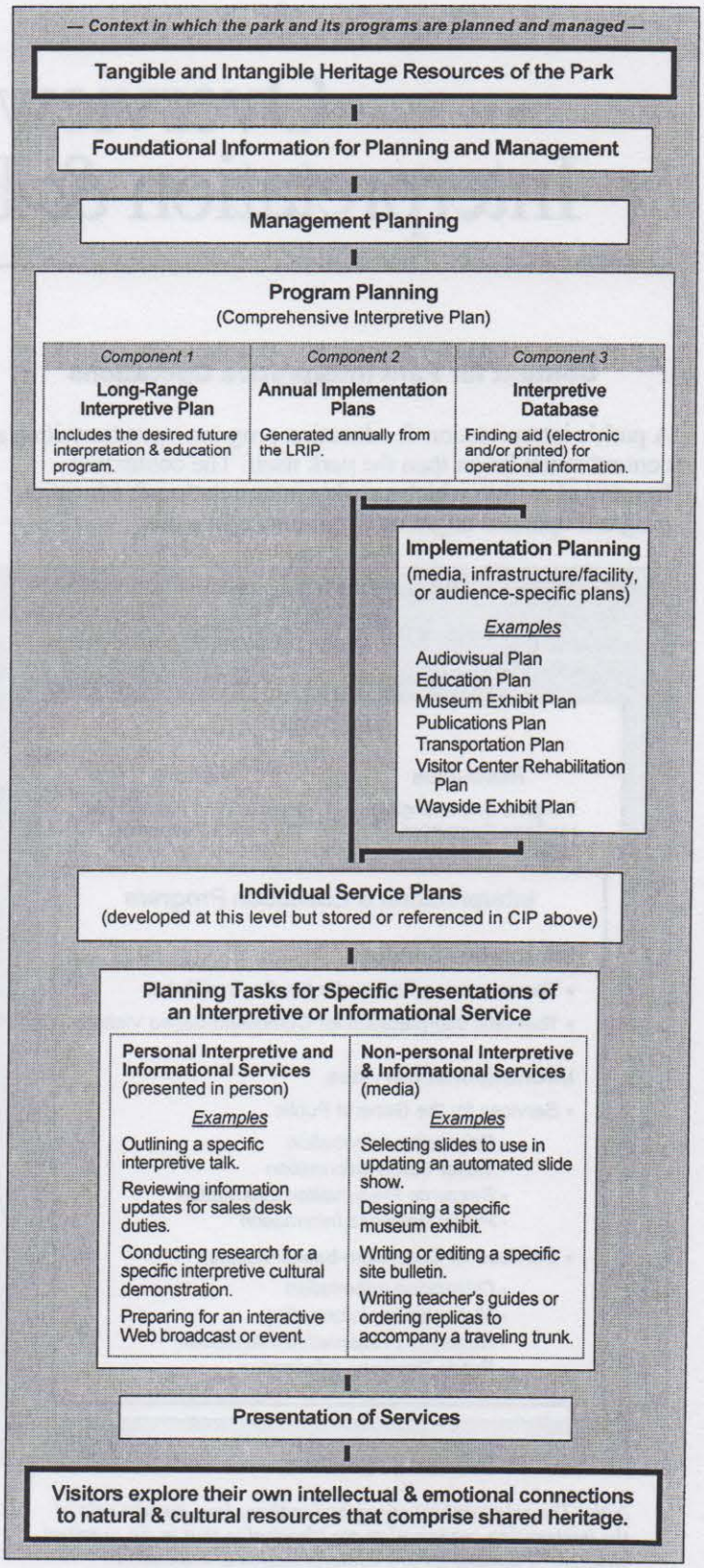
Program plans, such as a park's CIP, are often reinforced by implementation plans that provide additional detail about the program. For the interpretation & education program, implementation plans usually address media for which planning in sets is effective (such as a plan for a set of exhibits or publications) or interpretive facilities or infrastructure (such as a visitor center rehabilitation plan or visitor transportation plan). Implementation plans may also include audience-specific plans, such as a curriculum-based education plan.

Individual Service Planning

Like implementation plans, individual service plans (ISPs) provide additional direction and detail for the program. However, the scale of ISPs is smaller and of a different character than implementation plans. Each ISP describes one type of interpretive service, its locations, primary interpretive theme(s) or informational topic(s), and audience(s) addressed. It also outlines logistical and operational concerns for the service type. ISPs are generated for services as varied as evening programs, cultural demonstrations, site bulletins, bulletin boards, information desk duties, and classroom activities. These concise plans (often a single page) are especially useful to the individual interpreter assigned to present a particular service.

Planning Tasks for Specific Presentations of an Interpretive or Informational Service

The interpreter responsible for presenting a specific interpretive service (such as next Wednesday's guided hike) must make preparations to successfully achieve the desired outcomes of providing that service. Planning tasks are wide ranging and can include such individual actions as writing the outline for an interpretive talk, designing a page on the park's Website, writing a fourth-grade teacher's guide to accompany a traveling trunk, conducting interviews to prepare an illustrated program, and much more. This is the individual level of interpretation planning — the level that ultimately implements the CIP and the parkwide vision for visitor enjoyment that is envisioned in the management plan. ••

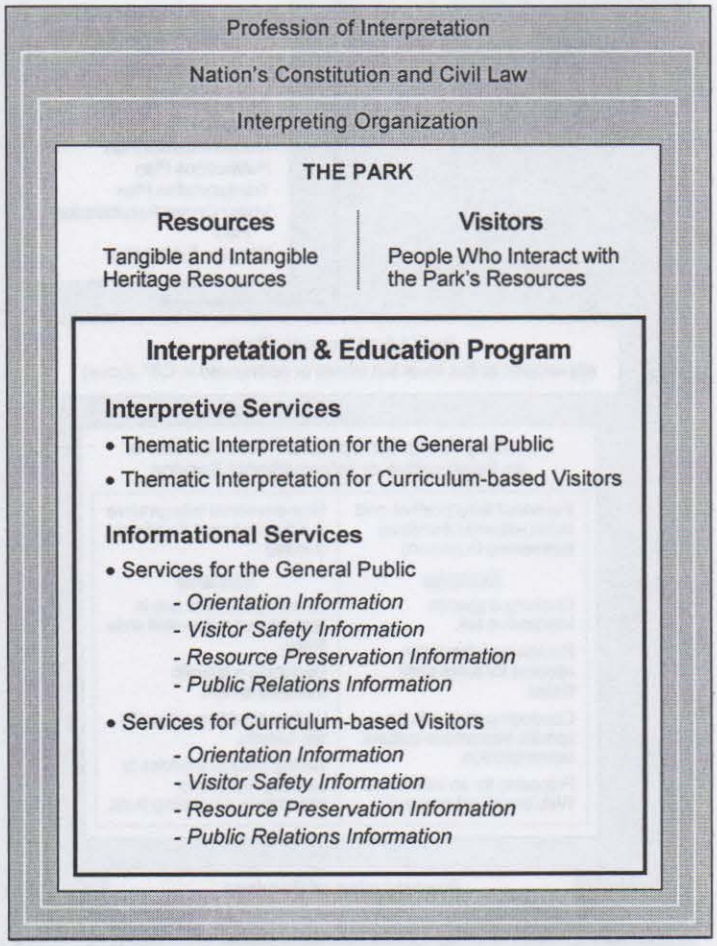


Note: *Please see the publication* **CIP Guide** *(part of the* Essential Tools for Interpreters *series) for more information on the process & outcome of comprehensively planning a park's interpretation & education program.*

Overview of a Park's Interpretation & Education Program

Context for Park Interpretive Operations

A park's interpretation & education program operates within a context much larger than the park itself. The contextual framework within which a park's interpretation & education program operates might be diagrammed like this:



Note: The relationships of professionalism, law, and the role of the interpreting organization are identical to that in the previous chapter, "Planning a Park's Interpretation & Education Program" — and so are not described below.

The Park

Management activities of the park occur under the umbrella of the interpreting organization. The interpretation function of the park is also directed by the park's mission, mandates, legislation, types of resources, their locations, and more.

Tangible and Intangible Heritage Resources. The park possesses resources that are valuable to the public, and are interpreted to the public. Interpreters must possess an in-depth understanding of park resources as a prerequisite to designing and presenting services.

People Who Interact with the Park's Resources. People visit the park, either physically or virtually, to experience something meaningful to them. Interpreters must possess an in-depth understanding of the needs and interests of park visitors. Considering audience characteristics when designing and presenting interpretive services is a critical component of effective communication.

Interpretation & Education Program

The park's interpretation & education program is usually thought of as serving two overlapping — yet distinct — audiences, and thus the name "interpretation & education program." In general terms, *interpretation* is habitually used as a reference to those aspects of the park program that serve the general public. These visitors are usually experiencing the park as a setting for casual fun. Many visitors are vacationing and visit the park in small, family groups.

Education is habitually used as a reference to students or others who experience the park as part of a formal, educational curriculum. These visitors tend to experience the park in large groups that are directed by leaders or teachers. These visits tend to be scheduled in advance. Their reason for visiting is to achieve specific educational objectives via experiences with the park's heritage resources.

These audience-based distinctions help park staffs decide what kinds of services most effectively meet the needs of both types of visitors. It should be noted that both audiences receive services that are thoroughly grounded in interpretive philosophy.

Interpretive Services and Informational Services

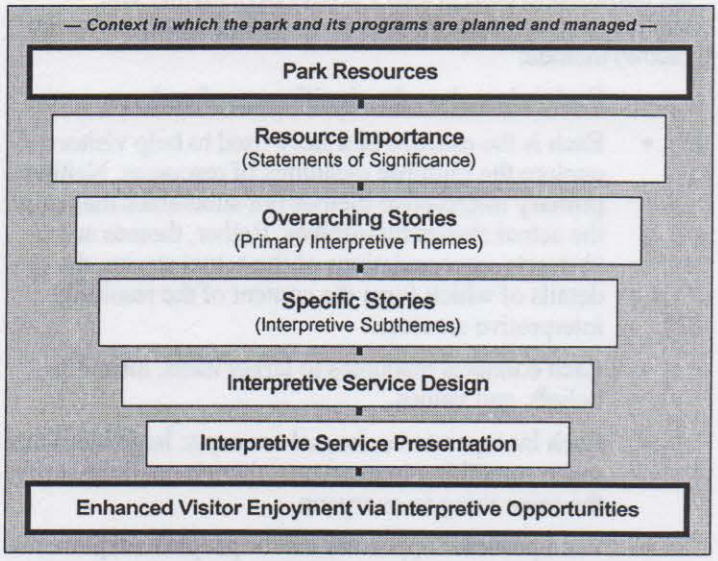
A park's visitors are most profitably categorized into these two types of audiences (general audience and curriculum-based audience). Each of these is generally provided with two categories of services: *interpretive* services and *informational* services. Both types of services play important roles in enhancing visitor enjoyment of the park's heritage resources while ensuring the perpetual integrity of these resources for the benefit of future generations.

Interpretive Services

A Framework for Thematic Interpretation

Interpretive services are thematic. They rely on the format of *story* to provide opportunities for people to explore their own intellectual and emotional connections to the natural and cultural resources that comprise shared heritage. In this way, a park's interpretive services enhance visitor understanding, enjoyment, and appreciation of heritage.

Thematic interpretation is a philosophy, framework, and process. It embodies the mission of interpretation and the context in which the mission is pursued. It entails a progressive flow of ideas. Each element in the framework connects to the next; lower levels nest within higher levels.



Park Resources

The resources themselves comprise the anchor to which all other levels in the framework are tethered. Park resources are always the initial level in thematic interpretation. These heritage resources (natural and cultural) help us remember, consider, affirm, and improve who we are — as individuals and as a society. Important people, places, events, and things facilitate our unquenchable exploration of meanings, ideas, beliefs, and values. Heritage resources possess a variety of characteristics: Some are tangible, some are intangible, and to some are ascribed meanings that tend to have a cross-cultural universality to them. Characteristics are assigned to these resources by individuals and groups. Characteristics and meanings may differ markedly among individuals or groups.

Tangible Characteristics. Most heritage resources have physical characteristics. They can be experienced through our senses: We can see, touch, hear, taste, and/or smell them. For example, trees, canyon walls, historic buildings, or ancient artifacts are examples of tangible resources.

Intangible Characteristics. All heritage resources are ascribed with intellectual, emotional, and spiritual characteristics. They are most often expressed as ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values. Natural processes (such as erosion, the water cycle, and wildland fire) and human activities (such as copper mining, architectural design, and religious traditions) are examples of intangible resources. They all have tangible manifestations (or we could not experience them in any shared way) but are especially important for the *whys* and *hows* behind their physical aspects. Their tangibility is the entrance into the world of the *whys* and *hows* that they represent.

Universal Concepts. Some intangibles are understood beyond cultural boundaries, almost at an innate level. These *universal concepts* are ideas to which we can all relate, although the meanings we independently assign to them may vary greatly. For instance, life, learning, cooperation, happiness, freedom, nature, and morality are all examples of universal concepts.

Note: Please see the section "Universal Concepts are Essential Elements of All Themes" below for more information.

Natural and Cultural Resources. As people study the world around us, and develop new methods and disciplines, it has often been useful to categorize subject matter more and more narrowly. Specialization facilitates studying specific aspects of the world in greater depth. It occurs in academic and scientific disciplines, and also occurs in the management of parks and other special places. This is often the reasoning behind dividing heritage resources into the categories of *natural resources* and *cultural resources*.

In the quest for increased knowledge, it has been habitual to identify *natural resources* as resources primarily significant for their lack of disturbance by people. *Cultural resources* are described as resources that are primarily significant for their associations with human action and manipulation. It is important for interpreters to remember, however, that no cultural resource is divorced from the natural world — and no natural resource is free of culturally associated ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values ascribed to it by people.

Dividing resources into strictly *natural* and *cultural* categories is detrimental to a holistic interpretive exploration of what resources in parks mean, to whom, why, and how these meanings change or endure. Professional interpreters take care to reintegrate resource knowledge to best facilitate visitors' exploration of those resources and the meanings they hold. To facilitate only a comprehension of the pieces, devoid of the context of the greater whole, is to limit opportunities for people to explore deeper and more meaningful connections to shared heritage.

Resource Importance — Statements of Significance

Significance is usually rooted in enduring resource

characteristics. The significance of places and things are embedded in their tangible and intangible characteristics: elements that are so attractive, interesting, and engaging that people choose to experience them time and again. At the same time, it's true that a cultural context always plays a role when societal values are described or acted upon. Accordingly, some aspects of the significance that society places on a site may evolve over time as a result of discoveries or other updates to knowledge about the place, events, people, and things, or if the values of society change in relation to the site's specific meanings, as represented by its resources. Nevertheless, such a place usually embodies a core importance that endures through time.

Describing Significance. The reasons for designating certain places as especially important to society can be gathered and described through public testimony or other initial studies or assessments of the resources' potential value to society. Thereafter, the characteristics of the resources are described for managerial and operational purposes.

The heritage resources of the park must be described in such a way that a common understanding (consensus) of the significance of these resources can be reached among those who have a stake in the resources of the place. This is crucial if responsible management of the resources is to occur. Almost all management actions, across all park functions, are derived from this common understanding and the mission to perpetuate the associated attributes of the resources.

Every organization that offers heritage interpretation describes, in some way, the importance of the places, events, people, and things that relate to their park. Significance descriptions can often be found in enabling legislation, a charter, mission statement, foundational statement, general management plan, or master plan. This description is most useful when it is more than just a resource list — when it includes relevant context that makes the items on such a list meaningful to the reader.

Such a description of resources is characteristically formatted as a set of *significance statements*. Significance statements, taken together as a whole, serve to describe the distinctiveness of the combined resources of the park, including natural, cultural, inspirational, scientific, historic, recreational, and other aspects. They include tangible characteristics and intangible meanings and ideas commonly ascribed to them. In most organizations, the mission of the organization and the set of significance statements combine to focus management actions and operations on the preservation and enjoyment of those attributes that most directly contribute to the importance of the place.

Overarching Stories — Primary Interpretive Themes

Attaching meanings to places and things is a fundamental human trait. We ascribe special significance to places, events, people, and things that rejuvenate our spirits, challenge and strengthen our beliefs, and provoke contemplation and discussion of our past, present, and future. Such resources provide opportunities to explore our shared heritage and help us define our character as individuals, communities, and societies.

Story is the communications tool most effective for facilitating an exploration of resource meanings. Societies depend on the power of story to explore, clarify, and share ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values that collectively constitute culture. *Story* is at the heart of human interaction and, consequently, at the heart of heritage interpretation.

Parks develop a set of overarching stories to organize the largest-scale ideas and meanings related to the park's resources. These stories are called *primary interpretive themes*. Each is written as a story abstract — an encapsulation of the actual, complex, specific stories of the place.

When developing primary interpretive themes, the writers should take care to assemble the ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values that seem to best fit together as related groups of thought, anchored to the specific resources of the park. The set is developed to fully capture, and express in story format, the content of the park's entire set of significance statements. The set is complete when it provides opportunities for people to explore and relate to *all* of the significance statements.

The set is usually comprised of a handful of primary interpretive themes — commonly three to five. Primary interpretive themes should be few enough in number to maintain focus for the park's interpretation & education program (including its management, practical implementation, and tracking needs) while numerous enough to compellingly represent the full range of park significance.

Characteristics Common to All Themes. Characteristics that are common to both primary interpretive themes and subthemes (*see "Specific Stories — Interpretive Subthemes" below*) include:

- Each is based on the significance of park resources.
- Each is the essence of a story used to help visitors explore the multiple meanings of resources. Neither primary interpretive themes nor subthemes make up the actual stories themselves. Rather, themes are abstracts, encapsulations of the actual stories, the details of which form the content of the resulting interpretive services.
- Each connects resources to larger ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values.
- Each incorporates universal concepts: large ideas that mean something to everyone, though not necessarily the same thing to everyone.
- Each provides opportunities for people to explore the meanings of the place and its resources without telling people what resources *should* mean to them.
- Each is best stated as a single sentence that includes tangible and intangible elements. Single-sentence structure forces theme writers to focus their ideas. Structuring themes as complete sentences ensures a more coherent development of related ideas. Within the sentence structure itself, content often tends to progress from tangible resources to intangible resources to universal concepts, moving from specific to general (this is traditional story format).
- An interpretive theme is never merely stated as a topic. While topics can be useful in organizing a body of work, topics alone do not provide sufficient interpretive focus. Since topics are written in relatively few words — such as geology, Southwest history, wildlife, or architecture — their meanings are too

general and ambiguous to be useful as stand-alone content guides to interpreters, supervisors, or managers.

Universal Concepts are Essential Elements of All Themes. Universal concepts are powerful: In just a word — love, family, war, time, honor, feminine, sacrifice — many different meanings are instantly thought of, felt, and experienced by visitors. Using universal concepts in both primary interpretive themes and subthemes is essential to effective interpretation, as this aids in the presentation of multiple perspectives and their relevance to visitors. Universal concepts enable a wide range of people with diverse life experiences to find personal paths of connection to the stories of the place and its extraordinary resources. People become engaged in the place, in the program, in the exhibit. They can relate the resources to important aspects of their own lives.

It should be noted that mechanically including universal concepts in an interpretive theme does not, in itself, guarantee that the theme will provide adequate guidance. Simply using words that convey universal concepts without appropriate context is too broad an approach to be useful. For instance, consider this interpretive theme:

- The swamp is teaming with life.

This interpretive theme isn't especially useful. Relying solely on the use of the word "life" as a universal concept does not provide adequate context to understand the idea the writer intends to explore. Here's a revised version:

- The swamp contains an unusually rich diversity of plants and animals interacting in one of nature's most vulnerable habitats, offering opportunities to consider the critical roles that water plays in the living systems upon which we all depend.

The revised statement clearly focuses on some specific ideas, while doing it in an inclusive way. It is both focused *and* serves as a useful umbrella under which multiple perspectives can be profitably explored. Although the word "life" is absent, the idea not only remains, but has taken understandable form. This theme statement provides a much clearer presentation of the author's thoughts.

Let's look at another statement, a rough draft of a primary interpretive theme:

- Residents sacrificed their homes and lands for the creation of a national park near a majority of the United States population.

The universal concept of sacrifice is very powerful, but is used in the statement without much explanatory detail or context. Such ambiguity may represent a partially-formed understanding of the park's underlying significance. It may also be shorthand for an in-depth understanding, but it's almost always best to be more specific in writing a theme upon which many different services will be founded. Specificity leads to clarity in theme writing. A more coherent expression of this idea occurs in this revised version:

- Established at the height of the Great Depression, and created through the displacement and disruption of many individuals and communities, Shenandoah National Park is an outstanding example of how people collectively struggle to balance the rights of individuals with the needs of society as a whole.

Although the universal concept of sacrifice is clearly represented in this version, the word "sacrifice" is not necessary. Instead, the concept is developed more fully to add detail and context, and to better connect it to the resources of the place. This creates a much richer opportunity for dialog about all of the ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values related to this universal concept, and the park resources that make this one of the best places in the nation to discuss these particular ideas.

Identifying universal concepts, and including appropriate context with them to enhance understanding, is not as difficult as it may sometimes seem. Examples abound in daily park operations.

Imagine this scene. A visitor is crouching down in front of an exhibit in your visitor center. He wants to see something up close. He looks at the object through the magnifying glass suspended in front of the object in the case. The object is a chunk of amber encasing a beautifully-preserved mosquito. For any person, of any belief system, seeing something that is delicate and ancient, encased in amber or rock, or transformed into something akin to rock itself, inspires wonderment. There's something inherently intriguing about seeing a living creature transformed in such a way. There are real universal concepts in play here — the workings of nature, processes, transformation, change through time, individual aesthetics, and more. The park staff, knowing this, set up the exhibit to capitalize on the universals inherent in this seemingly simple object. In this way, the staff prompts such an experience without needing to intervene in the interpretive moment.

Specific Stories — Interpretive Subthemes

Subthemes flow from primary interpretive themes. Each subtheme focuses on a part of a primary interpretive theme, providing more narrow and specific guidance for the development of an interpretive service. Subthemes represent in-depth treatment of primary interpretive themes. Unlike the foundational character of the set of primary interpretive themes, subthemes are developed as needed; every interpretive service is guided by a subtheme. There is no limit to the number of useful subthemes that can be derived from a primary interpretive theme. Like primary interpretive themes, a good practice is to write each subtheme as a one-sentence abstract that guides the development of an interpretive service, via which a particular story will be presented.

A subtheme, because of its narrower scope, provides an ideal focus for exploring ideas via a given interpretive service. Since effective storytelling usually moves from the specific to the general, interpreters routinely use subthemes to help visitors connect specific aspects of resources to larger ideas. Subthemes enable each interpretive service to achieve greater depth and interest. They help the interpreter assist visitors in exploring more subtle and complex aspects of park resources.

Note: *Please see the figures "Significance Statements and Primary Interpretive Themes" and "Developing Subthemes and Services from a Primary Interpretive Theme" below for more information. Also see the publication* **CIP Guide** *(part of the* Essential Tools for Interpreters *series) for more detailed information about writing and using themes.*

Significance Statements and Primary Interpretive Themes

Tangible and Intangible Heritage Resources of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Set of Significance Statements

- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park features Mauna Loa and Kilauea, two of the most active volcanoes in the world.
- Mauna Loa — measured from its base deep beneath the surface of the sea to its peak — contains more material by volume than any other mountain on Earth.
- The unusually high degree of approachability to the park's active volcanism affords opportunities for fundamental and detailed research not duplicated (or even approached) in any other park in the world, offering relatively safe experiences with lava flows, fountains, and other products of active volcanism.
- The long history and collaborative nature of the research performed by the USGS Hawai'i Volcano Observatory and others at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park have made Mauna Loa and Kilauea among the most studied and best understood volcanoes in the world.
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park provides critical living space in a wide variety of ecological zones for the highly endemic native biota, much of which is threatened or endangered, requiring active management of native and non-native species.
- The diversity and importance of the cultural resources in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park — and the protection of natural features and processes afforded by national park status — combine to make Hawai'i Volcanoes critically important to the perpetuation of traditional native Hawaiian religion and culture.
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park encompasses the largest expanse of Hawaiian natural environment managed as wilderness, with the associated wilderness values of natural sounds, lack of mechanization and development, natural darkness, and opportunities for solitude.
- The park's resources are so rare, valuable, and inspirational to all the people of the world that the United Nations has declared the park an International Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site.
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park protects the most extensive tract of protected montane tropical rain forest in the National Park Service.
- The structural complexity and isolation of the Hawaiian Islands and their active volcanic setting makes them a world-class living laboratory of biogeography and evolution. The protected status of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park lands offers important opportunities for this work to continue.

Set of Primary Interpretive Themes

A The approachable, active volcanoes of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park allow first-hand discovery of and connection with one of the most fundamental forces of our world — in both its creative and destructive roles.

B The journeys of the Hawaiian people, who continue to inhabit these rich and diverse lands, include cultural clashes, adaptations, and assimilations that provide enduring lessons about human resourcefulness, interdependence, and respect for the life of the land.

C In Hawai'i, active volcanism created an isolated home for a few immigrant species that gave rise to a rich yet fragile endemic biota; due to the accelerating change brought about by human actions, much of that unique heritage continues to be lost to extinction, challenging all of us to learn from the past and work together to preserve the remaining native plants and animals.

D Kilauea, the home of Pele, is sacred to many Native Hawaiians: it is a place of birth and the well-spring of many spirits and forces; the active volcanism, the features of the terrain, and the plants and animals that live there are all important to Native Hawaiian sense of identity, unity, and continuity.

E Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park provides an opportunity for people to experience the values of Hawai'i's diverse wilderness; the park's designation as a World Heritage Site and International Biosphere Reserve attests to its importance as a benchmark for monitoring environmental change.

Note: This information is extracted from the park's Long-Range Interpretive Plan: First Draft *(National Park Service, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, August 1999), pp. 2-5.*

Developing Subthemes and Services from a Primary Interpretive Theme

Tangible and Intangible Heritage Resources of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

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Subtheme

The unusually high approachability to the park's active volcanism not only affords opportunities for personal exploration, but for fundamental and detailed research that benefits us all.

Interpretive Service

A subtheme like this might best lend itself to an *interactive computer station* that graphically demonstrates how fundamental volcanic research benefits other scientific inquiries with which visitors are familiar, such as studies into dynamic global change like plate tectonics or climate patterns like the El Niño / La Niña effect.

Subtheme

Landforms created by the volcanic activity of Kilauea and Mauna Loa sensationally demonstrate the role of volcanism in shaping and reshaping Earth's surface, and deepens our understanding of other planetary bodies.

Interpretive Service

A subtheme like this might best lend itself to an *illustrated program* that shows varying landscapes of Earth, and then shows landscapes of other planets and moons (as mapped and photographed by NASA). Inspiring music might accompany the imagery, followed by an interpreter-led discussion about geomorphological similarities and differences in these landscapes.

Subtheme

Earthquakes, tsunamis, ash and debris fallout from eruptions — consequences of volcanic activity — have at times been disastrous for humans, but have also provided opportunities for people to thrive.

Interpretive Service

A subtheme like this might best lend itself to a *guided hike* across the flank of Kilauea, on a trail that passes places of agricultural significance to Native Hawaiians. The interpreter might draw visitors' attention to plant species that thrive in this environment, then discuss the connections of Hawaiians to these species — and how volcanic activity has created an environment more conducive to their success.

Subtheme

A civilization-enriching aspect of science is developing and testing new ideas: Mauna Loa and Kilauea exemplify the theory that volcanic activity above a fixed hot spot in the Earth's interior built the Hawaiian Islands, a relatively new idea.

Interpretive Service

A subtheme like this might best lend itself to a scheduled *interpretive talk*. Starting with the idea that the Hawaiian Islands are probably the best example on Earth of hot-spot volcanism, the interpreter might expand into procedures of scientific inquiry (hypotheses, testing, improved hypotheses), and end by asking about the range of impacts science has had on societies.

***Note:** This information is adapted from the park's* Long-Range Interpretive Plan: First Draft *(National Park Service, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, August 1999).*

Interpretive Service Design

Each specific story abstract lends itself to specific kinds of expression (interpretive services) that will best facilitate visitors' exploration of the park's resources and their many meanings. Intentionally developing an interpretive service to expand upon a well-crafted subtheme prevents the desired outcome of the service from being overshadowed or deflected by interpretive medium, technique, or personal style. After all, interpretation isn't about the gadget or the interpreter. Interpretation is about resources and meanings and enhanced visitor enjoyment.

Ideas for subthemes and specific interpretive services flow from an interpreter's familiarity with resources and visitors. Where are specific resources located? What is their condition; is there a carrying capacity issue? What are the needs and interests of the audience? Will educational objectives need to be taken into account to design the interpretive service? Is the service going to be provided by an interpreter, or a classroom teacher, or will it be a type of media? What facilities and/or staff will be needed for this service? What interpretive techniques will most effectively facilitate an exploration of the meanings of park resources? How can multiple perspectives best be woven into this service? Such questions are typically considered as an interpretive service is developed from a subtheme.

Interpretive Service Presentation

The interpretive service is presented, delivered, or otherwise made available to visitors. If the service will be presented in person, some questions arise even as the interpreter customizes the service on the fly. Where is the audience's attention? Did that story seem to make sense to them? Was the interpretive prop effective? The usefulness of feedback from the audience cannot be overstated. And for both personal and non-personal interpretive services, pre-evaluation, formative evaluation, and summative evaluation are requisite tools to gain knowledge of the audience and ensure increased effectiveness of services over time.

Enhanced Visitor Enjoyment via Interpretive Opportunities

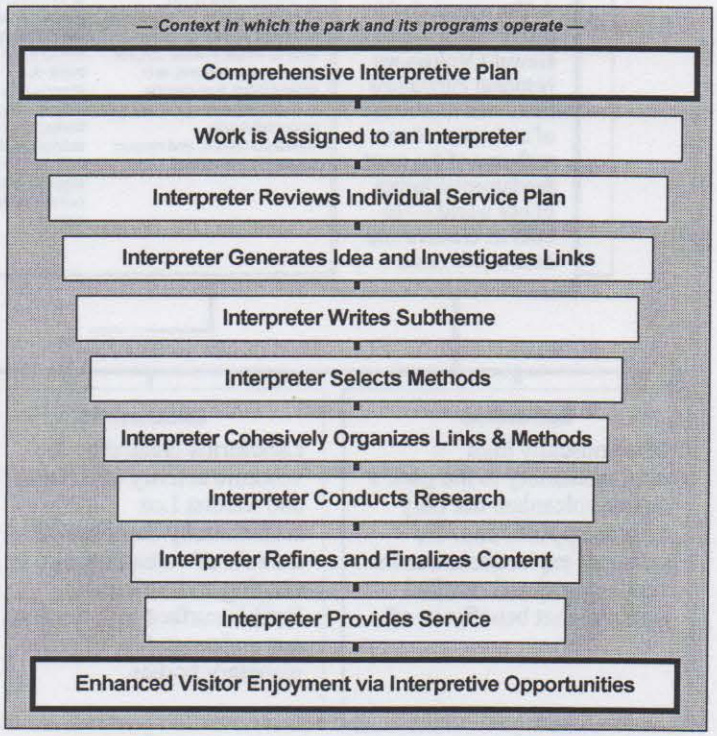
The thematic interpretation framework always culminates with interpretive opportunities that facilitate visitors exploring their own intellectual and emotional connections to the natural and cultural resources that comprise shared heritage. Enhancement of interpretive opportunities occurs at the conjunction of visitors, resources, and services.

Thematic interpretation, an outgrowth of the most fundamental of human communication systems (storytelling), appears to be the most effective method for successfully, consistently, and systematically facilitating these connections. Every interpretive service is based on a subtheme and guided by the strategic decision to tell a story that provides multiple opportunities for diverse audiences to explore meanings in park resources. Every subtheme is derived directly from a primary interpretive theme. The set of primary interpretive themes is derived from the set of significance statements, which describe the enduring importance of the park's heritage resources. This unbroken chain of content development is the hallmark of thematic interpretation.

Thematic interpretation guides us away from trivia ("Name two frogs..."), issue advocacy ("Three reasons why you should believe that wolves are wonderful and cows are evil..."), and shameless aggrandizement and self-promotion ("It's about us, love our organization, give us money..."). Thematic interpretation celebrates parks as places for intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical exploration and expression — forums for sharing experiences of self and community (in the broadest sense).

Developing Interpretive Services

Most interpreters develop an interpretive service via a structure similar to the one diagrammed below. That's not to say that every step is repeated in exactly the same way for every service. For instance, research and evaluation are likely to occur in *several* places. The more important idea is that all of these steps routinely occur in the development of an interpretive service.



Comprehensive Interpretive Plan

The interpretive manager, other park staff, and stakeholders develop the park's CIP. It directs the development of all interpretive and informational services via various components that:

- Describe park resources in story format via the set of *primary interpretive themes*.
- Describe *informational topics* of orientation, visitor safety, resource preservation, and public relations information.
- Describe *audiences* of the interpretation & education program.
- Describe the most effective ways to facilitate these audiences in an exploration of each primary interpretive theme and informational topic by specifying interpretive and informational *services*

and their locations for each combination of primary interpretive theme (or informational topic) and audience.

- Describe in *individual service plans* (ISPs) the operational details of each interpretive or informational service in the park's interpretation & education program.

Work is Assigned to an Interpreter

The interpretive manager assigns a front-line interpreter (either directly, or through a supervisory interpreter) to perform a specific service.

Interpreter Reviews Individual Service Plan

The front-line interpreter reviews the ISP for this service, which often includes the following information.

- Primary interpretive theme(s)
- Audience(s)
- Interpretive service type
- Service location(s)
- Management's intent for providing this service
- Operational details
- Record-keeping requirements (for evaluation and reporting purposes)

Interpreter Generates Idea and Investigates Links

The interpreter generates a core idea for the service and investigates links between tangible resources, intangible meanings, and universal concepts that relate to the primary interpretive theme on the ISP. A *link* is a designed connection between these tangible, intangible, and universal elements.

Interpreter Writes Subtheme

The interpreter writes a subtheme specifically for this service, and includes tangibles, intangibles, and universal concepts.

Interpreter Selects Methods

The interpreter selects methods that develop links into opportunities for connections to meanings, guided by the subtheme.

Interpreter Cohesively Organizes Links and Methods

The interpreter organizes the links and methods per the subtheme, creating the first viable service outline.

Interpreter Conducts Research

The interpreter gathers additional information, considers multiple points of view, seeks answers to questions, and verifies knowledge by conducting research — and consults appropriate park staff (and others as needed) to ensure that the service's content is acceptable.

Interpreter Refines and Finalizes Content

The interpreter revises, refines, and finalizes the service.

Interpreter Provides Service

The interpreter presents, publishes, posts, prints, or otherwise delivers the interpretive service, or transmits it to others for design, layout, fabrication, and installation or distribution.

Enhanced Visitor Enjoyment via Interpretive Opportunities

The development framework always culminates with interpretive opportunities that facilitate visitors exploring their own intellectual and emotional connections to the natural and cultural resources that comprise shared heritage. Enhancement of interpretive opportunities occurs at the conjunction of visitors, resources, and interpretive services.[3]

Analyzing the Effectiveness of an Interpretive Service

Ideally, evaluation is an ongoing effort — both for individual services and the program as a whole. Such evaluation is often organized as pre-evaluation, formative evaluation, and summative evaluation.

Front-end or *pre-evaluation* occurs before design of the interpretive service begins. It assesses the expectations and preferences of the intended audience. *Formative evaluation* occurs during the development of the interpretive service. It provides opportunities for visitors to influence the style and direction of the service. *Summative evaluation* occurs after the service has been delivered or made available. It allows visitors to critique the service, suggesting opportunities for improvement.

Informational Services

A Framework for Informational Services

In addition to interpretive services that provide thematic opportunities for visitors to enhance their experience, there are several types of *informational services* for which a park's interpretation & education program is usually responsible. Informational services create an environment in which enjoyment and appreciation of heritage can be enhanced for the visitor.

Most interpreters develop an informational service within a progressive flow of ideas. Each element in the framework connects to the next; lower levels nest within higher levels. (*Please see the diagram on the next page.*)

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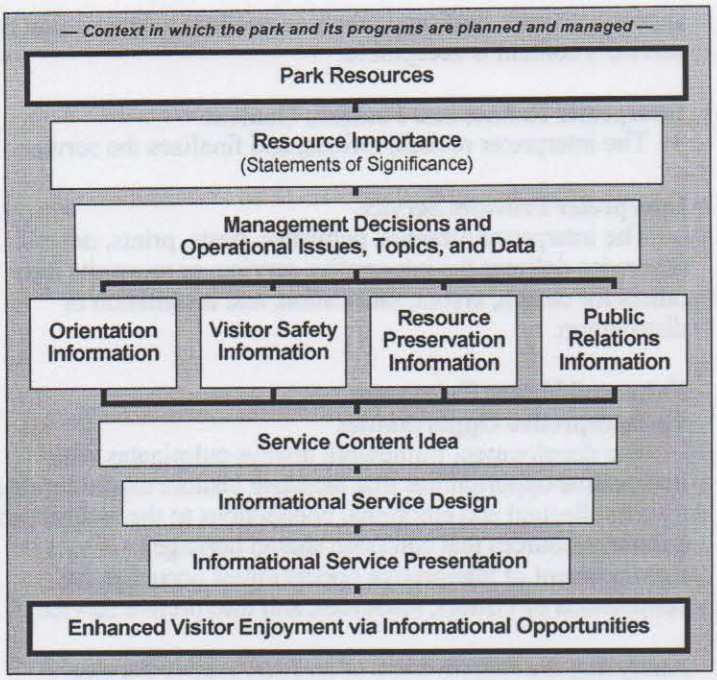
[3] Please see the following source for more information: ***Interpretive Development Program — The Process Model;*** National Park Service; http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/processmodel.pdf (December 2002).



Note: The relationship of park resources and resource importance are identical to the "Interpretive Services" section earlier in this chapter — and so are not described below.

Management Decisions and Operational Issues, Topics, and Data

This part of the framework is rather straightforward in that it represents the positions, concerns, challenges, and positive contributions of park management — and the communication of these ideas to the public.

The four topic areas below this layer categorize this information, and help guide its formulation and transmission to the public via informational services.

Orientation Information

Providing orientation information is part of the interpreter's job. This duty usually addresses information such as where the site is located, hours of operation, fees, rules and restrictions, way-finding on site, where to lodge, trip-planning queries, and more. This basic information can play an important role in visitors' enjoyment of their park experience. Effective orientation services can set the stage for learning, growth, enjoyment, and satisfaction. Poorly crafted services, inadequate customer service, or the absence of essential orientation information services can result in a frustrating, unsatisfying park experience.

Visitor Safety Information

Providing visitor safety information is part of the interpreter's job. This duty is focused on helping visitors help themselves in designing an experience that is as safe as possible for them. A site bulletin that addresses lightning hazards on summer afternoons, a poster on a campground bulletin board that informs visitors how to stay hydrated, rules on the park Website stating the need for visitors to keep arms and legs inside the train's passenger car, and discussions with visitors at the information desk about how to safely store food while in the backcountry — all of these are examples of this kind of information. So are signs cautioning visitors about leaving valuable possessions in their vehicles while they're hiking.

Visitor safety information is often communicated in tandem with resource preservation information. For example, the sign that reads, "Do not climb on fragile rock walls" is designed to protect visitors from falls and scrapes while also preserving resources from needlessly accelerated degradation and expensive repair work. Effective visitor-safety services can set the stage for learning, growth, enjoyment, and satisfaction. Poorly crafted services, inadequate customer service, or the absence of essential safety information services, can lead to increased risks and injuries — and park memories that are more painful than pleasant.

Resource Preservation Information

Providing resource preservation information is also part of the interpreter's job. This duty focuses on preserving the integrity of resources while providing visitor access to them. It often includes behavioral suggestions for visitors. Signs that ask visitors to stay on the trail, or warn about fines levied for graffiti, or asking visitors to report sightings of specific animals, are simple examples of this kind of information.

Providing information to visitors about why the park manages and preserves resources in the ways that it does is often more complex. Because of the greater potential depth of this subject matter, services for this type of information may vary widely. Helping the public understand what preservation practices are used, and why, and how choices are made, and why one organization does it differently than another — information about these subjects is communicated via many different types of services (such as informational talks, demonstrations by craftsmen, hands-on activities, brochures, or Website).

As mentioned above, resource preservation information is often communicated in tandem with visitor safety information. "Don't feed the wildlife" signs help maintain the balance of natural processes being preserved in the park while also protecting visitors from bites and disease. Effective resource preservation services can set the stage for learning, growth, enjoyment, and satisfaction. Poorly crafted services, inadequate customer service, or the absence of essential resource preservation information can adversely affect visitor experiences and severely damage resources that perpetuate our common heritage.

Public Relations Information

Public relations work may not be an official job of all interpreters but is an inevitable part of any direct contact with the public. It often includes providing information about the organization, its mission, this park and how it relates to the rest of the system (if applicable), management goals and actions, why certain resource-preservation decisions have been made instead of alternatives, and more. This information can support the growth of understanding among a constituency and be valuable in management's desire to have a particular issue understood or supported. Effective public relations services can set the stage for mutual understanding and sharing, growth, enjoyment, and satisfaction. Poorly crafted services, inadequate customer service, or the absence of essential public relations information services can lead to confusion, misunderstanding, and unnecessary conflict.

When conducting this work, interpreters must keep in mind the difference between interpretation and public relations, and perform these duties accordingly.

Note: Please see the section "Interpretation or Public Relations?" in the "Interpretation Enhances Enjoyment of Heritage Resources" chapter for more information.

Service Content Idea

The content idea in this framework is analogous to the subtheme row in the interpretive services framework. The *content idea* leads to the generation of the actual outline and substance of the specific service.

Informational Service Presentation

The informational service is presented, delivered, or otherwise made available to visitors.

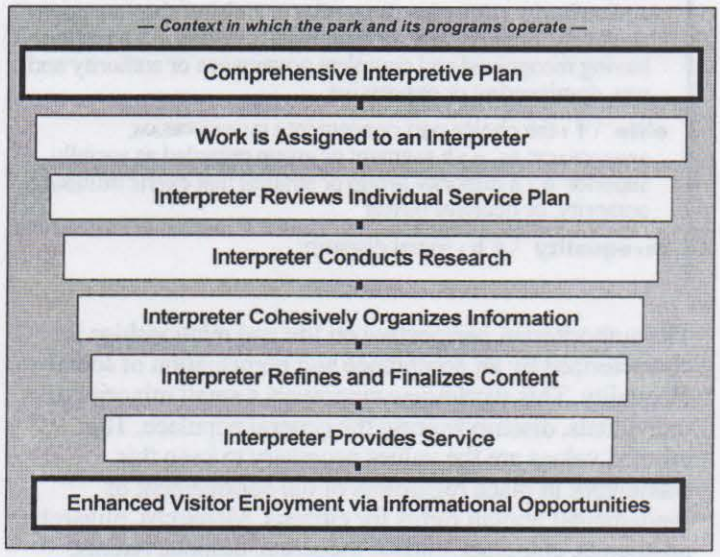
Enhanced Visitor Enjoyment via Informational Opportunities

The framework always culminates with *informational* opportunities that create an environment in which enjoyment and appreciation of heritage can be enhanced for the visitor. Enhancement of informational opportunities occurs at the conjunction of visitors, resources, and informational services.

Every informational service is based on a content idea and guided by the strategic decision to communicate information that provides multiple opportunities for diverse audiences to understand past, present, or potential future management actions and operational issues, topics, and/or data. These often relate to both visitors and resources in a variety of ways.

Developing Informational Services

This publication addresses informational services developed and presented by the staff of a park's interpretation & education program. Although other information work may be produced within a park by its public relations office or others, the structure below represents the process that interpreters often use to develop and present informational services. This diagram illustrates the steps that routinely occur in such a process.



Note: The relationship of the CIP and work assignment are identical to the "Developing Interpretive Services" section earlier in this chapter — and so are not described below.

Interpreter Reviews Individual Service Plan

The front-line interpreter reviews the ISP for this service, which often includes the following information.

- Informational topic(s)
- Audience(s)
- Informational service type
- Service location(s)
- Management's intent for providing this service
- Operational details
- Record-keeping requirements (for evaluation and reporting purposes)

Interpreter Conducts Research

The interpreter gathers additional information, considers multiple points of view, seeks answers to questions, and verifies knowledge by conducting research — and consults appropriate park staff (and others as needed) to ensure that the service's content is acceptable.

Interpreter Cohesively Organizes Information

The interpreter organizes the information, creating the first viable outline.

Interpreter Refines and Finalizes Content

The interpreter revises, refines, and finalizes the service.

Interpreter Provides Service

The interpreter presents, publishes, posts, prints, or otherwise delivers the informational service, or transmits it to others for design, layout, fabrication, and installation or distribution.

Enhanced Visitor Enjoyment via Informational Opportunities

The development framework culminates with informational opportunities that create an environment in which enjoyment and appreciation of heritage can be enhanced for the visitor. Enhancement of informational opportunities occurs at the conjunction of visitors, resources, and informational services. As with interpretive services, informational services should be regularly evaluated to improve effectiveness.[4] ••

[4] *Interpretive Development Program — The Process Model*, loc. cit.

The Interpreter's Worldview

Worldview Matters

view \ *noun* **2 :** a formal examination **:** INSPECTION **:** SURVEY **3 :** mode or manner of looking at or regarding something **:** CONCEPTION, GRASP **10 :** intellectual makeup **:** spiritual and cultural nature **syn** see OPINION

view \ *verb* **1 a :** to examine carefully or officially **:** INSPECT **b** *archaic* **:** EXPLORE **2 :** to look at attentively **:** SCRUTINIZE, OBSERVE **3 :** to consider esp. with earnest attention or with an attempt at wide or overall comprehension **:** take under consideration **syn** see SEE

world \ **1 a :** the earthly state of human existence **:** this present life **b :** a future state of existence **:** the life after death – usu. used with a qualifier **3 :** individual experience of or concern with life on earth **:** the sum of the affairs which affect the individual **:** course of life **:** CAREER **11 :** human society **:** the scene of the customs, practices, and interests of men as social beings **:** public or social affairs and occupations **:** social or business life, manners, and usages

Watching ocean waves crash against a rocky headland can often be a breathtaking experience for the watcher. Such connections between people and landscape seem to be innate, the individual needing little external assistance to derive personal meaning from the experience. Other types of heritage resources are not so universally appealing, nor their value so immediately and easily discernable. For instance, it might be difficult for visitors to understand why our government funds the perpetual curation of a common pillowcase — that is, until interpretation reveals to visitors that this is the very bedding upon which President Lincoln was laid following the assassination event at Ford's Theater. It's not a common pillowcase after all: The event and personages that were involved have forever altered its importance in societal memory. The profession of interpretation facilitates such connections between people and heritage resources. The interpretation & education program of a park, the individual interpreter, and the perspective from which he or she interprets the resources all play a part in every facilitated interpretive experience.

Everything an interpreter thinks, feels, believes, and does is rooted in how he or she views the world. Conception of self, relationship of self to all else, and a thousand internally-answered whys are woven together to form the fabric of a person's worldview. A thousand daily actions spring forth from it, including how an interpreter chooses to interact with visitors. This is true of both personally-delivered services (such as walks, talks, conversations at information desks, etc.) and media services (brochures, Web sites, films, exhibits). The interpreter's individual worldview sets the parameters for how he or she approaches the work.

That's not to say that a person doesn't distinguish between a personal and professional persona. A professional interpreter certainly does this. However, neither of these personas is devoid of the inescapable influence of that interpreter's worldview. And depending on the characteristics of an individual's worldview, their interpretive efforts will either be more or less effective.

In general, two predominant perspectives operate within the population of interpreters. One worldview is premised on the perceived existence of an *inherent inequality* among individuals; the other on an *inherent equality*. The subject is that simple, and that complex. These worldviews apply to individuals as well as the societal structures they create.

The Authoritarian Worldview

au•thor•i•tar•i•an \ **1 :** of, relating to, or favoring a principle of often blind submission to authority as opposed to individual freedom of thought and action **2 :** of, relating to, or favoring a political system that concentrates power in the hands of a leader or a small autocratic elite not constitutionally responsible to the body of the people – opposed to *democratic*

des•pot \ **2 a :** a rule with absolute or virtually absolute power and authority **:** AUTOCRAT **b :** a ruler exercising absolute power abusively, oppressively, or tyrannically **:** TYRANT **3 a :** a person having recognized and complete governance or authority and usu. domineering or oppressive

elite \ **1 :** the choice part or segment **:** FLOWER, CREAM, ARISTOCRACY: as **a :** a segment or group regarded as socially superior **c :** a minority group or stratum that exerts influence, authority, or decisive power

in•equality \ **1 b :** social disparity

The authoritarian perspective on life and relationships is characterized by an acceptance and perpetuation of social inequality. This worldview empowers a small minority of individuals, disempowering the general populace. The enacted values are the values necessary to keep this framework in place regardless of the abridgement of fundamental human rights for citizens. Monarchs, oligarchs, aristocrats, autocrats, elitists, theocrats, despots, tyrants,

dictators, fascists, and presidents-for-life all represent authoritarian social structures.

People who view the world through an authoritarian lens tend to place themselves in the empowered minority, the elite. The elite believe the public isn't smart enough, educated enough, or experienced enough to decide important social matters. They believe the values of the populace are not the same as their own, and they are correct in this. They believe the populace would make decisions that differ from the ones they would make: The basis for elite decision-making is to maintain elite social status whereas popular decision-making often has different goals in mind. The elite may concede some small points now and then, and may allow the public to make some few decisions to maintain their illusion of empowerment, but only when those decisions won't meaningfully conflict with the elite's ongoing exercise of power.

They believe there is little need to provide the public with relevant information about any public policy since citizens are generally not empowered to be decision makers. The only information that needs to be transmitted to the citizenry is the information that helps them adopt the perspectives of the elite, as this creates a climate best suited to the retention of power, prestige, and social status. Dissent from, and controversy about, elitist positions are to be avoided at all costs.

The elite believe others are incapable of attaining the successes they have attained. They believe in populating the social governance structure with people that agree with them and who promote and perpetuate the prestige of those in power. Few, if any, checks and balances are built into the system. This ensures that those citizens willing to question the position or status of the elites have little means to effectively do so.

Interpretive Manifestation of the Authoritarian Worldview

Some interpreters tend to look down on visitors, embracing their own views as "right" while seeing visitors' views as "wrong." They tend to value their own connections to heritage resources over the connections visitors have to those resources. They tend to validate only their own way of connecting to resources. They tend to be disrespectful and arrogant in their approach to the work — often through passive-aggressive behavior — and interpret from a position of authority.

For instance, an interpreter might possess an intense passion related to a specific resource issue, such as the reintroduction of wolves on park lands. This emotionally charged interest may be so personally important to the interpreter, that he allows this interest to overly influence his approach to the work. In these situations, the mission of the agency or organization, the park, and the mission of interpretation become overshadowed by the pursuit of a personal agenda. He becomes an advocate rather than an interpreter.

His internal authoritarian worldview, consciously or unconsciously, causes the interpreter to decide that *it's for the best* if visitors adopt his perspective rather than drawing their own, independent conclusions about proposed wolf reintroduction in the park. The interpreter reasons within himself that anyone who feels differently about this issue must be uninformed on the topic. If visitors only knew what the interpreter knows, they would surely come to the same conclusions about the importance of using park lands to reestablish wolf populations.

The interpreter is now functioning as if he has been imbued with some special social status. He feels that he is *above* visitors in regards to some social, ethical, moral, or other standard. His primary motivation is to change the minds of visitors, to convince them to arrive at a predetermined conclusion. He's betraying the trust that visitors place in him as an interpreter. The information provided to visitors becomes skewed, slanted, and incomplete. Visitor opportunities for exploring meanings of park resources are narrowed by the interpreter for the purpose of better framing his own arguments. This mindset causes him to present and argue a case rather than interpret.

This elitism can apply to organizations as well as individual interpreters — the underlying sentiments, causes, and rationales are the same. This perspective illustrates an institutional arrogance that *we* (the organization) know the truth and that our job is to *educate* or *correct* the uninformed and uneducated public. The attitude of the organization is that *we* are right and the public is wrong, and our job is to *make* the public right, to persuade them to agree with us.

The Democratic Worldview

dem•o•crat•ic \ **1 b :** of, relating to, or favoring a political system in which the supreme power is held and exercised by the people – opposed to *authoritarian* **3 :** relating or appealing to or having the characteristics of the broad masses of the people **4 :** favoring or disposed to favor social equality **:** disregarding or overcoming class distinctions **:** not snobbish or socially exclusive **5 :** favoring the assessment of individuals upon their own merits and capacities **:** emphasizing the individual's potentiality for development

equal \ **1 b :** like, as great as, or the same as another or others in degree, worth, quality, nature, ability, or status; *specif* **:** receiving or entitled to the same treatment or privileges any other individual has or is entitled to **c :** like, as great, or the same for each member of a group or class **:** uniform in quantity or quality, measure or degree

Individuals naturally tend to place higher value on serving their own needs first, and the needs of those close to them (such as family members), before serving the needs of strangers. Anyone who has raised, or been around, young children can attest to this. Social equality is difficult to achieve. It's difficult to maintain. It must be taught, modeled, learned, internalized, and practiced to be perpetuated. Yet equality remains an enduring ideal, and the fundamental underpinning of a free society.

Social equality is the antithetical perspective to the authoritarian worldview. A democratic worldview and societal structure requires the individual to widen perspective and consideration beyond self and family. It inherently requires compromise on the part of the individual. It requires the development of social consensus — a public that decides which ideas best represent a compromise that is acceptable to a majority of the group, but with which everyone in the

group does not necessarily fully agree. Compromise and consensus are necessities for achieving improved conditions and opportunities for the entire citizenry.

A democratic society requires that public policy codify key values held in common. These values comprise the law of the land. It requires the law to place an equality of value on each citizen under the law, and the opportunities afforded them within this structure.

A democratic society requires an informed citizenry that strives to achieve the ideals of democracy, of equality. Citizens are entrusted with the responsibility of public policy decision-making. This responsibility is enacted through citizen participation in free elections, and citizen participation in holding elective offices to serve the populace. A bond of trust must exist among citizens — trust that governmental decisions are generally made on the basis of best benefit to the democracy. Sympathetic to natural human tendencies, checks and balances are built into the system to ensure this trust. Lastly, relevant information must be available to decision makers (citizens) as a precursor to decision-making.

A democratic worldview espouses these principles. A core belief is that people are happiest and society works best when individuals are guaranteed the greatest freedom in their quest for personal enrichment consistent with the preservation of our shared natural and cultural heritage. The challenge is to balance the individual's drive to succeed with the equitable and sustainable use of resources necessary to assure the same opportunities to others, including our descendents. It's all about the inseparable ideas of equality and mutual trust.

Authoritarian Worldview vs. Democratic Worldview

These philosophies are at work behind the scenes, influencing societal structures and relationships between people. At the societal level, these philosophies lead to two very different systems of governance and social interaction: The authoritarian worldview is based on inequality and the maintenance of special status. It is necessarily oppressive. The democratic worldview is based on equality, individual liberty, consensus, and trust. It necessarily focuses on individual liberty as long as public consensus is not substantially violated or the rights of others inequitably abridged. Special status and oppression are prerequisites to authoritarian rule. Equality of opportunity and freedom are prerequisites to the democratic idea. Any attempt to significantly blend these two worldviews produces instability because such a societal system is internally inconsistent.

At an individual level, these two philosophies-in-opposition also give rise to two perspectives on how people approach and treat each other, personally. An interpreter can choose to believe that she possesses a position of some higher status than visitors that naturally leads her to try to persuade visitors to arrive at the same conclusions as the interpreter, and adopt the same perspective toward the resource. This is the authoritarian, elitist model at work — an inherent inequality applied to personal interactions.

Or, an interpreter can choose to trust visitors to arrive at their own conclusions and make decisions (rooted in visitors' value systems) that best benefit the society at large, premised on visitors receiving relevant information about the resource and meaningful opportunities for connection.

This is the democratic model at work. Interpretation conducted by agencies of a democratic government, or by organizations operating within the context of a democratic society, inherently places trust in the individuals that comprise the populace — its citizens.

Professional Interpreters Employ the Democratic Worldview

Society functions best if citizens continually strive to better understand different worldviews, including their own. The fabric of society is strengthened as individual citizens seek to more deeply understand their own motivations, and the consequences of their own actions. Considering why any of us think or act as we do is especially important for interpreters, who serve as guides for other citizens in their quest to experience heritage resources in meaningful ways. The interpreter's worldview inevitably influences interpretive work, and how it facilitates these experiences for others.

In America, we live and work in a representative democracy. Our institutions, governmental agencies, and private-sector organizations and businesses all operate within this overarching philosophical framework. Our society is continuously engaged in striving to achieve the ideals of equality. And professional interpreters operate from this democratic worldview. The remainder of this publication describes the daily complexities associated with interpreters supporting, enriching, and working within the context of, a free society. ••

Visitors and Multiple Perspectives

Audiences and Visitors

au•di•ence \ **3 a :** a group or assembly of listeners **b :** a group or assembly of spectators **c :** those attending a stage or film production or viewing a televised program **d :** the public reached by books, newspapers, magazines, or other similar media

vis•it \ **4 a :** to go to see or sojourn at (a place) for a particular purpose (as for business, pleasure, or sight-seeing)

vis•i•tor \ **e :** one that goes to or stays at a place for a particular purpose (as business or sightseeing) **:** TOURIST, TRAVELER

Organizations that facilitate people making connections with heritage resources refer to the people they serve as *audiences* and/or *visitors*. Although these terms are generally used interchangeably, *audience* tends to be used more often in conjunction with the performance of personal interpretive services, such as an interpretive talk. *Visitors* tends to be the more inclusive term overall. Generally speaking, *visitors* includes everyone who experiences heritage resources, whether they do that in person or remotely via the Internet, a brochure, an article, a film, distance learning materials, or through a curriculum.

Audiences Have Discernable Characteristics

Audience characteristics need to be taken into account in the design and presentation of interpretive services. This consideration enhances the effectiveness of communication between interpretive service and visitor. It helps ensure that the interpretive efforts of the park can most effectively facilitate visitors' explorations of the meanings of park resources. Factors to consider include the life experiences of the individual visitor or group of visitors, levels of education, learning styles, languages, socioeconomic status, cultural traditions, time available for interaction, and more.

Imagine this example of the kind of audience-based customization that occurs for a specific, personally-delivered interpretive service. "Good morning. Old Town Interpretation Office. This is Linda," the interpreter answers the telephone. After a brief discussion, Linda summarizes the conversation. "Hmm. A busload of visitors are on their way to the park. It's a tour group of 43 people. They'll arrive around 10:30 this morning. You want us to orient them and given them a short talk about the park's cultural resources. Well, we're slow this morning; we can do that. What else can you tell me about them? You'll get back to me? Okay. Thanks for the call. Bye." Linda starts thinking about the 20-minute talk she'll deliver to these visitors. She'll combine the usual several minutes of orientation with the talk she does on the weekend walking tours. That should work just fine.

"Old Town Interpretation Office. This is Linda," she answers 15 minutes later. It's the same tour organizer. "You have an update on the 10:30 group? What's that? They're a group of *college professors*. Okay, thanks again." With this new information, she updates the content outline in her mind. She chooses to include some slightly different information, replacing some of the original content. She's also revising (and rehearsing in her mind) the vocabulary she'll use for certain portions of the talk.

"Good morning. Old Town Interpretation. You have another update? The group doesn't teach a variety of subjects. It turns out they're all *history* professors. Okay. Thanks." The new information again causes her to update the content outline in her mind. She'll talk a little more about the house on the corner where one of the historic events occurred.

It's now 10:00 in the morning, and the bus should arrive soon. "Hi. Old Town Interpretation Office. You have one last update? Uh-huh. The group is composed of college professors, who teach *American* history, and they all teach *masters program* students. Well, that explains why they're coming to this district instead of the other. Okay, glad you called. I'll let you know how it goes. Bye."

Again, the updated information is useful (and better late than never). The interpreter now has a much better grasp of the audience for which she'll be giving this talk. She can now more carefully craft the interpretive talk to maximize its effectiveness and usefulness for the audience. She can now more finely hone the style of communication she'll use, and the approach to the subject matter. Her concept of what would be the best presentation style has shifted throughout the morning's calls, and the content has shifted, too — not based on telling the group what an average cross-section of the general audience wants to hear, but choosing different aspects of the park's resources, different terms, different sets of resource-based information and perspectives to convey to the group. Opportunities for visitor understanding and appreciation of park resources are likely to have increased by virtue of these additions to her knowledge of the group — and the interpreter's skill in using this information in the design and presentation of her talk.

Sometimes events unfold just like this example. Sometimes this kind of information is gathered by purposefully chatting with individuals in the visitor group immediately before presenting an interpretive talk. Sometimes visitor survey data provides useful insights into audience characteristics. Regardless of how it happens, considering audience characteristics is a necessary step in ensuring that intended communication actually occurs, that the interpretive service is relevant to as great a percentage of the audience as possible, and that opportunities for personal connection to heritage resources are maximized.

Most interpretive services are designed and presented to the *general audience*, assuming that the group is the same as (or identifies with) the majority culture of the society. The basis for categorizing interpretive audiences — either for strategic, programmatic purposes, or for the purposes of a specific interpretive service, such as a talk — lies in the degree to which a particular audience requires communication in a way distinct from that of the general park audience to maximize effective communication. A pragmatic balance must be considered between communicating more effectively with multiple specific audiences, and communicating more effectively with the general audience. The limited resources available to the park's interpretation & education program are always an important, real-life factor in such considerations.

Visitors Have Rights

Visitors to American places that interpret heritage resources do so within the context of our representational democracy. The democratic social philosophy that defines American ideals, premised upon an inherent equality among individuals, naturally extends *rights* to visitors. (This is especially true for government agencies that conduct interpretation.) Visitor rights guide the interaction between interpreters and visitors. It is incumbent upon interpreters to perform their duties based on an understanding that all visitors have the right to:

- have their privacy and independence respected;
- retain and express their own values;
- be treated with courtesy and consideration; and
- receive accurate and balanced information.[5]

Respecting Visitor Privacy and Independence. Imagine this scene. Two parents with their three children are visiting a state park. They're enjoying a picnic lunch under some large shade trees next to the visitor center. A veteran interpreter (Paul) is training a new seasonal interpreter (Jeanette). They're conducting roving interpretation, and notice the family at the picnic table. Without making eye contact or receiving any other sign that the family would enjoy visiting with them, Paul makes a beeline for the family (and Jeanette follows).

The veteran interpreter arrives at the table, puts his foot up on the end of the bench, and leans forward with his tie dangling precariously over the potato salad. Jeanette keenly observes how Paul greets and engages the family. She watches the family members' body language as they lean away from Paul and glance askance at each other.

Paul provides them with some information that they're not really interested in hearing. The veteran interpreter doesn't notice that the family members aren't clearly responding to what he's saying — he's just going through his routine greeting talk, believing that this is another good and useful interpretive contact.

Jeanette is trying not to look too embarrassed. Thankfully only a few more minutes pass before the interpreters depart. The family is relieved to be free of the interruption, although they do have a new topic to discuss once the interpreters are out of earshot: They confide in each other how rude that ranger was.

Paul never noticed his overbearing encroachment on the family's space and time together. He unwittingly provided Jeanette with a fine example of what *not* to do as a roving interpreter. When the privacy and independence of visitors is not respected by interpreters, an interpretive contact can be a negative experience rather than a positive one. Visitors have rights. Interpreters need to respect them.

Presenting Accurate and Balanced Information while Courteously Respecting Visitor Values. Imagine this scene. Miguel interprets at the historic home of a well-respected, famous politician. In the middle of his interpretive tour, he asks if anyone has questions or comments. One visitor, Steve, speaks up and says this politician lacked integrity. Steve is stating an opinion with which the majority of the audience initially disagrees. Miguel can see this as it plays across their faces.

Miguel acknowledges Steve's opinion with a polite nod and a smile, and asks him why he feels this way. Steve responds that the author of the book he just read contended that the politician wasn't really responsible for the things he's noted for doing; it was others who did the real work and the politician unfairly claimed the credit, just like all politicians do.

Miguel pauses, then cites two additional opinions from newspaper editorials written at the time of the event. The articles not only vary some from Steve's author's account, but also vary from the generally accepted account that was presented earlier in the interpretive tour. The articles also cast some doubt onto the matter regarding who really did what, when, and why. Some of the visitors' body language reveals their contemplation of these additional perspectives.

Miguel then says, "You can see that, although most of the contemporary writing of the time stated that [the politician] actually did these things, one account points to his staff, and other accounts point to politicians from another state. We'll never know for sure since the official records themselves are rather ambiguous, but most historians tend to think that the event, as most commonly reported, is the most accurate version. Consider this variety of opinion as we look at the documents in this next room, his study. The political cartoons on the desk are especially interesting...." And the tour continues.

The interpreter initially presented the perspective that most historians think is accurate. Later, other perspectives were interjected into the tour, some of these coming from the visitors themselves. The interpreter designed the interpretive

[5] *Interpretive Development Program — Visitors' Bill of Rights (B. Knowledge of the Audience (KA): 5.);* National Park Service; http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/101/howitworks.htm (August 2003).

service this way so that he could more effectively engage the visitors in the story and provide additional depth based on their interests and opinions. Steve's viewpoint was acknowledged, responded to in a respectful manner, courteously considered by the group, and then additional perspectives were also brought into play. The interpreter presented accurate and balanced information from multiple perspectives while enabling visitors to express and retain their own values, and did it all with the courtesy that visitors should expect of interpreters. The interpreter restated the view that most historians think is accurate, the one that has the best scholarly support. And the tour continued as the group mulled over these various accounts. This is an example of responsible interpretation.

Visitor Motivation. Another important tenet regarding visitors describes their motivation in simple terms: Visitors are motivated to visit heritage sites — to pursue park experiences — in order to find something of value for themselves. And the design and presentation of interpretive services sometimes play a significant role in aiding, or hindering, this pursuit.

The Democratic Worldview and Multiple Perspectives

mul•ti•ple \ **1 :** consisting of, including, or involving more than one **2 :** MANY, MANIFOLD, SEVERAL **5 :** having numerous aspects or functions **:** VARIOUS, COMPLEX

per•spec•tive \ **2 a :** the interrelation in which parts of a subject are mentally viewed **:** the aspect of an object of thought from a particular standpoint **:** CONFIGURATION — **in perspective 1 :** as viewed in the mind **:** in prospect **:** ANTICIPATED **2 a :** represented according to the principles or perspective **b :** viewed with a proper pattern of relationships as to value, importance, or other basic quality

point of view \ **1 a** (1) **:** a particular position (as in space, time, development) from which something is considered or evaluated **:** STANDPOINT, VIEWPOINT (2) **:** a particular manner of considering or evaluating something **b :** a particular reasoned mental attitude toward or opinion about something

view•point \ **1 :** an attitude of mind from which something is considered **2 :** a position from which something is observed

In a pluralistic, free society, interpreters have a responsibility to present subject matter from a variety of perspectives. The reasons for doing this are to aid in accuracy and increase the relevance of the resources to diverse audiences. The inclusion of multiple perspectives in the design and presentation of interpretive services respects the very idea of a pluralistic society. It provides visitors with a variety of opportunities to consider, explore, and engage ideas from multiple viewpoints.

Different from single-perspective services, multiple-perspective services provide more food for thought and contemplation. They reinforce existing beliefs and knowledge. They challenge existing beliefs and knowledge. They provide opportunities for thinking at deeper levels, or higher levels, or more-complex levels. They prompt more sharing, discussion, and interchange. They respect different ways of knowing. They better facilitate visitors personally connecting to things and places, events and people, because relevance to visitors is enhanced through the use of multiple points of view.

Relevance and Familiarity

Some of the perspectives presented in a specific interpretive service will be familiar to some visitors and unfamiliar to others. Familiar ideas tend to be more relevant to the recipient of the communication — visitors can relate the ideas to their own experiences. Such relevance creates an environment more conducive to establishing new personal connections, or enhancing existing ones. Familiar ideas provide a footing from which individuals can extend themselves outward to consider additional aspects of the material being presented.

Unfamiliar ideas also provoke contemplation, but are often approached more cautiously by the recipient since there is much less of a footing for them to use in considering the material being presented. If they haven't yet established a conceptual framework that allows them to understand these ideas, then the ideas don't seem relevant to them and have little meaning for them. Unfamiliar ideas travel different routes (than familiar ideas) through the various filters that people use internally to make sense out of the world. More testing occurs with unfamiliar ideas than with familiar ones, since familiar ideas tend to more neatly plug into predetermined receptacles in an individual's worldview.

Designing and presenting an interpretive service to include multiple, familiar ideas is likely to increase relevance of the service to visitors. This approach lays the groundwork for visitors' consideration of unfamiliar, less immediately relevant, ideas. (Learning occurs in this netherworld between familiar and unfamiliar as the individual creates connections to ideas that are new to them.) Designing multiple perspectives and universal concepts into an interpretive service increases the likelihood that, among a group of visitors, each will find some of the material familiar and relevant. It is, in some ways, a numbers game. More ideas increases the likelihood that each individual in an audience will recognize one or more of these ideas as familiar and relevant. Learning opportunities are primed. Ability to encounter and consider diverse ideas is enhanced.

Interpretive services built from a multiple-perspectives approach invite the active intellectual and emotional participation of visitors, resulting in interpretive services that are more accessible and meaningful to a greater percentage of the audience.

Multiple Perspectives vs. Polarized Positions

Presenting multiple perspectives does not mean presenting two polarized positions instead of a single position. Polarization causes people to react defensively. It causes visitors to mentally and emotionally shut down and reject ideas, rather than open up and welcome ideas. Polarization creates either/or, right/wrong, with/against us reactions that are frequently detrimental to the interpretive presentation of a variety of ideas worthy of consideration. Polarization may be good for television ratings, but is detrimental to the personal pursuit of meaningfully exploring ideas.

Polarization purposely eliminates a range of ideas in order to focus on a diametrically opposed subset. In reality, no subject or issue has only two points of view, or sides, or approaches. All topics can be appropriately considered from multiple points of view that overlap and intersect, yet retain their own shape and form, one view distinct from another. Some are slightly different from one another; others are markedly different. Contrast between ideas can vary widely, even without being polarized, since ideas fill the range between poles as well as establish the poles themselves. A responsible discussion and exploration of ideas will frequently include as many of these viewpoints as sound scholarship supports and circumstance allows. Since visitors will likely contribute both scholarly and non-scholarly information to the conversation, one of the interpreter's greatest challenges is to understand the difference and guide the discussion in such a way as to avoid embarrassing or offending the person(s) who voiced ideas that have less scholarly merit.

Perhaps one of the most important revelations of interpretive work is how people can experience the same resource and yet arrive at divergent opinions and conclusions about it. They assign different meanings to it based on their life experiences, personal beliefs, levels of education, cultures, learning styles, languages, socioeconomic status, and a host of other factors. One of the great strengths of a democratic society is that it creates a relatively safe environment for many divergent views to coexist. Interpretation consciously promotes such an environment.

The Perspective of Interpretation

Interpretation as a profession is not devoid of an overarching perspective itself. But not, perhaps, in the ways that might first spring to mind. Professional interpretation does not seek to reveal, or revere itself as purporting to know, *the truth*. It does not represent an *official* view of some event or phenomenon to the exclusion of other views. It does not communicate a *single* perspective to the exclusion of all other perspectives. It does not even represent *management's* view to the exclusion of other views.

Interpretation, like other professions, has its own culture. It is a subset of the society within which it functions. And cultures can be understood and characterized: Cultural traits include bodies of customary beliefs, social forms, and material aspects. Cultures have tenets, standards, ethics, boundaries, traditions, and often attract like-minded adherents to these traits.

By its very nature, the profession of interpretation echoes the values that society places on heritage resources as a whole. When a society places value on setting some resources aside for perpetual public enjoyment, or builds memorials that exemplify or commemorate some important aspect of culture, interpretation and interpreters exhibit a mindset that identifies with these values. For instance, interpretation supports heritage preservation, and public access to it, reflecting the values of a democratic society.

The profession of interpretation regards its role, in both society and the lives of individual citizens, from a viewpoint that fosters ideas like:

- Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are rights worthy of the effort needed to assure them.
- Every person has guaranteed rights.
- Democratic social structure necessitates accessible, balanced, and accurate information.
- Multiple perspectives are better discussed and considered rather than ignored or denied.
- Discussion is better than avoidance; yet valuing silence at the right time is golden.
- Curiosity is better than lack of interest.
- Learning is a lifelong process; there is more to learn than can be learned.
- Knowledge is better than ignorance.
- Heritage is worth preserving.

All of these ideas manifest themselves in professional interpretive work. If interpretation works toward persuading visitors of anything, it is these broad tenets of the democratic worldview.

But persuasion does not mean argument. Trying to argue someone into a point of view is ineffective. If people have an opportunity to explore resource-relevant ideas from multiple perspectives, the democratic worldview trusts that the majority eventually adopt perspectives that perpetuate values held in common by the group of people in question (family, community, state, nation, humans). Better-informed citizens make better decisions — a mandatory condition for the perpetuation of a democratic society and the liberties it safeguards.

Visitor Contacts

Interpretive Venue and Audience Size

Visitor contacts occur in a variety of venues. Some involve large audience groups, some small groups, and some only one visitor at a time. It's important for an interpreter to understand the dynamics of these different settings and situations.

Formal interpretive talks tend to be presented to larger groups of visitors. When an interpreter presents a talk to such a group, the group usually conveys a degree of authority and respect to the interpreter. This situation may feel to the visitors like a relatively safe way of gaining information about the park since no individual visitor stands out from the others.

Depending on the personality of the interpreter, he or she may also feel that this is a relatively safe venue because formal programs tend to have a predetermined format, are relatively well organized by the interpreter, and tend to offer much less of an opportunity for an unrestricted free-for-all than other types of interpretive situations. In this setting, if an audience member asks a question that might take the discussion in an unprofitable direction for the group, the interpreter must bring the conversation back to the organized content of the talk. The group venue necessitates this action.

By contrast, when an interpreter performs roving interpretation and encounters a single visitor who'd like to converse, the dynamics for this situation are substantially

more fluid than the example above. The visitor may or may not consider the interpreter an authority. The discourse will likely be more informal and candid. The encounter with a single visitor also lends itself to greater subject depth, since time constraints are usually less stringent. This differs from most other interpretive situations: The roving interpreter has an opportunity to participate in conversations that evolve organically with relatively few boundaries. This one-on-one exchange also provides an opportunity for the interpreter to customize the application of knowledge about resources and visitors to best fit the needs of this individual visitor.

Personality comes into play more directly here, too. For people who enjoy one-on-one conversations, this is a wonderful opportunity for a rich exchange of ideas. Conversely, the visitor may avoid such contact and telegraph this avoidance through a variety of behaviors. Unfortunately, this is also sometimes true of the interpreter — he or she may feel less safe in such a free-for-all conversation and may avoid making such a visitor contact, or once initiated, try to disengage as soon as possible.

The venue and size of the audience can vary greatly in interpretive work. They always play a part in determining what social dynamics apply to the situation, and how the interpreter can make the most of the interpretive contact for all involved.

Interpretive Moments

Visitor contacts occur in a wide variety of locations: They occur remotely on computer screens, through postal mail, in classrooms, in Rotary Club meetings and chambers of commerce breakfasts, and area hotels. They occur onsite at entrance stations, in visitor centers, at information or sales desks, in parking lots, on trails and overlooks, lakes and rivers, in frontcountry and backcountry. And the interpreter, in all of these settings, is performing a variety of duties and providing a variety of interpretive services ranging from roving contacts to formal talks, demonstrations to living history presentations. The professional interpreter in all of these situations is possessed of a certain mindset that guides his or her interaction with visitors.

Imagine this scene. "Hi," the interpreter greets the couple at the overlook. "Great weather we're having. Where y'all from?" This kind of informal exchange of pleasantries — small talk — is the most frequent way that visitor contacts begin. It's a fairly universal convention in human communication.

As the conversation continues, the interpreter is thinking about several things at once. Are the visitors willing to engage in dialogue, or should I move on so that they can continue their experience without interruption? Do they appear to be rushed? Is small talk the level of depth that they're comfortable with, or are they saying things or asking questions that prompt more detailed responses from me? What does their body language tell me about their interests in this personal exchange?

The professional interpreter is listening, watching, assessing, and determining what interpretive opportunities might be appropriate to offer to these visitors during this contact. To what extent can this contact be turned into something more meaningful for them? Is there an opportunity to go beyond small talk and delve deeper into potential resource meanings, turning this into more of an *interpretive moment*? If they only want to know the location of the nearest gas station, or where to go for lunch after they're done here at the overlook, that's okay. Interpreters routinely provide basic orientation, way finding, and safety information to visitors. If this is the case, the professional interpreter will answer their questions, wish them an enjoyable day, and move on — a solid informational contact.

Or, perhaps these visitors *are* interested in more in-depth information. Perhaps they're curious about the landscape features visible from here, and why that valley looks so different from the one on the left. *Why* is a most wonderful word, as it often signifies an interest in and curiosity about underlying reasons, causes, processes, actions, procedures, effects, and other interrelationships. The willingness of visitors to interact with the interpreter makes for the beginnings of an interpretive moment — a real opportunity for the interpreter to enrich and enhance the visitors' consideration of, and engagement with, meanings of park resources. However, what visitors want from an interpreter is not always so clear.

Imagine this scene. An interpreter (Keesha) is leading an interpretive walk through a redwood forest. As Keesha and the group of visitors move along the trail, she identifies the flowers in bloom and talks about forest ecology. They round a bend in the trail and pass a bench. The bench is made of wood. A visitor asks, "What kind of wood is that bench made of?"

Keesha says, "I'm not sure what kind of wood they used for that," and she continues to lead them along the trail. Oops, an interpretive moment — perhaps the most significant opportunity of the entire walk — may have just been missed by the interpreter. What happened?

Keesha, it turns out, is very comfortable identifying flowers, animals, and trees. She's comfortable talking about how the components of the larger forest system all interrelate. She is well aware that the bench is made of redwood. She is not, however, comfortable discussing anything that might be controversial, like conflicting values that people place on these resources. Because of this, she chose not to pursue the golden opportunity that occurred when the visitor asked about the bench.

Now imagine the conversation that could have taken place:

"What kind of wood is that bench made of?" a visitor asks.

"This bench is made of redwood," Keesha responds. "We didn't cut down a healthy tree to make this bench, though. Redwoods are sometimes uprooted and fall down, mostly through the action of winter storms. Sometimes they fall in the middle of the forest, where they are left to decompose naturally and recycle nutrients into the forest environment. Sometimes, though, they fall onto roads or across trails like this one. When that happens, we remove a portion of them to continue to provide visitor access on established trails." As Keesha speaks, she makes sure to engage the visitor group, her eyes roaming from one face to another.

"In fact, I think the tree used for this bench fell last year across the trailhead where we assembled this morning. Anyway, we use removed portions of downed trees in the park for trail signs and benches like this. In this way, we're managing the park so that visitors like yourselves can get

around and see this magnificent stand of redwoods, and we're also able to show what a beautiful wood this is when crafted into a bench."

In this version, Keesha was exhibiting the mindset of an interpreter. She was ready to respond in a meaningful way when an interpretive opportunity presented itself, even though it might be controversial. While some people seem to have this mindset naturally, other interpreters must cultivate it. Interpreters ready to capitalize on interpretive moments like this visitor's question about the bench inevitably provide richer experiences for visitors, better performing their duties as interpreters.

It's important for an interpreter to hear the question underlying what the visitor literally asks, and to strategically determine how to respond. Was the visitor really asking: "How can you use a redwood tree for something as mundane as a bench? Doesn't that conflict with what the park is supposed to do, ya' know, conserve the forest? Or keep it from being harvested for commercial use?" Keesha was challenged to determine what questions were on the mind of the visitor asking "What kind of wood is the bench made of?" — and probably on the minds of others in the group, too. So, whenever practical and appropriate, her response should address both the literal question and the potential questions.

Sometimes it's better for the interpreter to pretend that he or she *didn't* hear the underlying question. If the interpreter thinks the underlying question will not serve any useful purpose — if the visitor is being deliberately argumentative or disrespectful — the interpreter can choose to interact with that visitor on a literal level only, answering the actual question asked instead of what the interpreter, and everyone else in the group, thinks is *really* being asked. It is important for the interpreter to understand both sides of this dynamic, recognize them as they occur, and make intelligent and productive choices when responding. The mission of interpretation should remain the foremost guide in making these choices: While respecting visitors' rights and other tenets of the profession of interpretation, how can my response to the visitor's question best facilitate opportunities for visitors to explore their own intellectual and emotional connections to the natural and cultural resources that comprise shared heritage?

When Visitors Ask "What's Your Opinion?"

When On Duty. What should an interpreter do when asked his or her opinion? Or asked any other kind of personal question? When in uniform, the interpreter represents the heritage preservation organization, even when asked a personal question. Regardless of how an interpreter might answer such a question, the answer will almost always be viewed by the asker as representing the interpreting organization. It is within this context that interpreters answer such questions, and if they are good at what they do, they turn the personal question and answer into another interpretive opportunity.

Imagine this scene. The landscape of a battlefield park has changed over time and no longer represents the landscape in which the battle was fought. Not only do beautiful, large, old trees ring the battlefield (as they did during the historic battle), but over the park's 70-year history, management has also allowed trees to spring up and grow upon the military earthworks that were constructed as part of the battle. The public has come to know the park's landscape in its present form, appreciating the tall trees and, especially, the wildlife they foster. Terry, an interpreter on staff, shares that appreciation.

Recently, park management has decided to return the landscape to the form it was in at the time of the battle so that visitors can better understand and appreciate the battle event. This will necessitate removing the trees from the earthworks — trees that the public has come to associate with this special place. The park staff are generally in agreement with this decision. Terry, however, is personally opposed to the trees being removed on the grounds that preserving wildlife is equally important to the park's mission. She is an avid bird watcher and worries that removing the trees will adversely impact some of the species in the park.

"Any thoughts?" inquires Terry as she pauses in her interpretive talk.

"Terry, I've heard some of the rangers here don't want these trees to be removed, even though that's what the Superintendent wants to do. How do you feel about that, personally? I mean, look at all the bird life that will have to go elsewhere!" Mark, a visitor, exclaims as he motions to the canopy overhead. He continues, "I thought park rangers were supposed to preserve wildlife. Besides, it can get really hot here. Don't visitors enjoy the trail better if they're shaded in the summer?" he says, making eye contact with the others in the group.

"Well, like most decisions, there are several sets of values to be considered," Terry responds, addressing the entire group. "The mission of the park is to preserve the battlefield. The legislation is clear on that. But we're also supposed to preserve the wildlife and natural systems that support it. That's a large part of what our organization does. Sometimes, those two ideas are at odds and one needs to become a priority over the other. Ideas and values have to be carefully weighed."

"You've also raised the idea of what this park has come to mean for local citizens, some of whom — like you, Mark — have personal connections to it. How do the rest of you feel about this?" she inquires.

"I've got connections to it, too," Byron volunteers. "My great grandfather fought in the battle here." He pauses. "Frankly, I'd like to see the land restored to the way it was during the battle."

Multiple points of view have been voiced and Terry continues the conversation in such a way as to provide a safe place for an open exchange of ideas. Together, they explore each idea, the values behind it, its potential benefits and trade offs — including why the park thinks the removal action is necessary and appropriate.

Considering her options, Terry chose not to answer the original question directly because she didn't believe that indicating her personal opinion would enhance interpretive opportunities. It was too likely that providing her own opinion would be seen as taking sides, potentially dividing the group into *us* and *them*. Terry's personal opinion happened to match some of the visitors' views of these resources, but she did not identify it as such for the group. After all, this interchange is not about Terry, or her opinions. As an interpreter on duty, she is a guide for others, a facilitator of considerations and connections.

Instead, Terry chose to use the visitor's question as an opportunity to provide additional insights into how various perspectives exist regarding the trees. These insights provided ample opportunities for various members of this visitor group to think about how they, themselves, seek to understand the world, and how they personally internalize what having these trees around means to them. Each found relevance in her answer and the subsequent exchange of views. They could personally identify with at least some of what was said, while considering some of the more unfamiliar ideas, weighing them against their own values.

When Off Duty. Being asked personal questions during off-duty times, when not in uniform, and when not being paid as a park employee, is also an interesting and sometimes-complex facet of working as an interpreter. This may be especially true when the park is located in a relatively small community, and park employees become known and recognized by other community members. A chance meeting at the post office, on an interpreter's day off, sometimes has little bearing on how they answer such questions.

Imagine this scene. "Hi Frank. How's the family?" asks Frank's neighbor, George.

"Ellen and the kids are fine. How's Peter doing in school?" answers Frank, an interpreter at the park.

"He's finally catching on to geography," George replies, grinning. "Say, what's up with the [any park issue]? I hear the superintendent decided [any decision]."

Frank is not in uniform. He is off duty. George knows that Frank is an interpreter at the park, *and* that he's off duty. Frank has his own, personal opinion about the superintendent's decision. And he knows how the superintendent or public information officer has been answering this same question all week long in the local press. How does Frank answer such a question in this setting? What does he consider? How well does he know George?

"The superintendent laid it out for us this way: [explanation here]. It was a difficult choice but an open and honest decision," Frank says. He also goes on to voice his personal opinion about the decision. (Note that it might not matter if his personal opinion agrees with or disagrees with the decision. Either way, there is always something valuable at stake in human interaction — professionally and personally.)

What if George were not only a neighbor, but also a member of the city council? Would Frank still voice his own opinion? Would he do it differently, providing more context? Would he choose to represent only the superintendent's decision and why it was made, essentially serving a public relations role on his day off?

What if George was also the president of the local historic preservation society? Or, what if George was a newspaper reporter? Is Frank going to find this discussion, and his personal opinion, cited in Monday's column as background? Or quoted as an official park position?

All of these are real-life considerations for an interpreter. A professional interpreter is, to some degree, always on duty. He or she needs to consider the ramifications of sharing personal opinions *before* doing so. The interpreter can never know for sure if the asker is pursuing a personal, unvoiced agenda. Or, maybe the asker is just a curious citizen. There is no single best way for an interpreter to respond. It's always a subjective call on the part of the interpreter, and one not to be made in haste.

The Discomfort of Controversy

Controversy and disagreement can be uncomfortable. Disputes, contention, strife, and controversy can be unpleasant. And if the mission of interpretation were to avoid controversy, then interpreters would be justified in staying well clear of anything considered controversial. Every service they designed or performed would be safe, even reaffirming, for both the interpreter and the audience.

However, the avoidance of controversial ideas is not the mission of the profession. Interpretation is the profession that offers enhanced opportunities for visitors to explore their own intellectual and emotional connections to the natural and cultural resources that comprise shared heritage. The profession includes the presentation of multiple perspectives. It includes presenting some ideas that may be uncomfortable for some visitors (and interpreters). It includes presenting some ideas that affirm the perspectives of some visitors (and interpreters). It includes ideas that provoke thought and understanding and appreciation, and cause visitors (and interpreters) to contemplate their own perspectives. It always includes accurate and balanced information. And it all happens within the context of visitor rights.

To some degree, the idea of controversy is a matter of scope. Every subject is controversial for someone. In general, though, if meanings, values, and ideas are exchanged and explored, controversy will likely be a feature of the interpersonal dynamic. It simply goes with the job. The task is to embrace it and make it something useful.

Imagine this scene. Jan, a new seasonal interpreter, enters the office of the supervisory ranger, Corina.

"I saw your talk this morning and wanted to congratulate you. You handled that visitor pretty well. I couldn't believe it when he said 'I wouldn't mind owning a few slaves myself.' Good job with that. And your presentation style and delivery are improving, too."

"Thanks," said Jan. "It was interesting alright."

"Let's talk about your outline. I didn't hear any perspectives of slave owners or traders; you just talked about the lives of the slaves themselves. Why didn't you include some other perspectives?" Corina asks gently.

"Well, in doing my research, I *did* find the journals we talked about last week. But I just couldn't bring myself to use them. They were just so demeaning," she said. "Valuing humans as a commodity; how could one person do that to another? There just aren't any good reasons for a slave trade to have existed. I would be embarrassed reading anything from those journals," Jan concluded.

"Moral or not, good reasons or not, the ideas of state's rights, tradition, maintenance of a lifestyle, oppression of the powerless by the powerful — all of these played important parts in the slave trade. These are facts whether or not we agree with the ideas behind them. It happened; they're part of the story, *our* history.

"Remember, our job isn't focused on talking about only those ideas with which we can all agree. Are there really any of those, anyway? Every heritage resource is controversial in

one way or another. Talking about uncomfortable issues, or encountering controversy fueled by a visitor — these things go with the job.

"As interpreters, we can't ignore uncomfortable issues or ideas connected to the resources. Our job is to employ them in a balanced and accurate manner that is useful for visitors — useful for them to make their own connections. Appropriate to the resources of this site, we place this activity — slavery — into the context of its time. That means we have to include all of the valid perspectives, including the multiple reasons behind the slave trade. Why did some people consider it moral to own another human being? What ideas were behind that? If we don't address questions like these, we're improperly shielding the public from what really happened. We're presenting half-truths. We're denying visitors the opportunity to arrive at their own conclusions. We have to trust that being presented with the actual events, in depth, from multiple viewpoints, all based on sound scholarship, helps visitors deepen their understanding and appreciation of this site's history — and what it all means to them, individually. Does that make sense?" Corina concluded.

"Yeah, I think I'm getting your drift," Jan answered. "But if I do what you suggest, how can I trust visitors to eventually arrive at reasonable conclusions? After all, there are others out there like this guy, this wanna-be slave owner. How can you trust people so much?" Jan asked with a bit of exasperation.

"You're right," Corina responded, "Trust is a scary thing. But I'd like you to think about the alternative. You know, you can't *make* other people adopt your view on this — or on anything. There's no way to make that happen. And if we could, *should* we? The best we can do as interpreters is to make sure we provide accurate and balanced information, and do it in a way that's relevant to visitors in order to provide them with opportunities to reasonably consider multiple aspects of whatever resources we're discussing. You've gotta trust that all of us is smarter than any one of us, and that reasonableness wins in the end.

"One last thing," the supervisor said. "I didn't see it this way, either, when I started out as an interpreter twelve years ago. I thought I could change the world through sheer force of will and persuasion. But the more I dealt with visitors firsthand, the more I came to realize that trust really is at the heart of what we do — what societies like ours do.

"Okay, okay. I see your point. But I reserve the right to return and debate you on this," Jan said, smiling broadly.

"Okay Jan. My door's open anytime — you know that." Corina said, smiling just as broadly. "Why don't you bring me one of the journals. We'll look through it together and extract some of the more useful passages. Then, you can modify your outline before Thursday's talk," the supervisor suggested. "Oh, and Jan, be assured that now and then, you're going to encounter people whose values don't jibe with what most people consider the injustices of the past. Don't let them get to you. You did good today."

When placed in proper context, uncomfortable ideas can be immensely useful in the interpretive endeavor. It's important for interpreters to get comfortable with discomfort. It's important to truly internalize the philosophy of multiple perspectives, and understand why professional interpreters necessarily rely on this powerful tool.

Multiple Perspectives and Attribution

> **at•tri•bu•tion** \ **2 :** the process of ascribing to someone or something **3 :** the ascribing of a work to an author, date, or place; *esp* **:** the ascribing of a work of art to a particular artist

Often, the specific way that perspectives are presented can positively or negatively contribute to the visitor's park experience. For instance, a statement without attribution can sound dogmatic, judgmental, or absolutist — especially if it is misunderstood to reflect an organization's official position rather than representing sound scholarship. An attribution that adds appropriate and useful context to an interpretive statement can go a long way toward removing potential roadblocks to learning and appreciation.

Imagine this scene. One of a park's wayside exhibit panels includes the following statement.

- The reddish rock layer is 3.5 million years old.

This statement of age, which could appear as an organization-authorized declaration of incontrovertible fact, is likely to be seen by visitors who possess a faith-based understanding of time as deliberately disrespectful of their point of view. This writing style may reinforce negative feelings or thoughts in such visitors, reducing opportunities for learning rather than enhancing them.

The same sentence could include an attribution of this information for the specific purpose of providing additional context while maintaining the communication intent of the original statement:

- Geologists have calculated a radiometric date for the reddish rock layer at 3.5 million years old.

Although most visitors probably, subconsciously attribute the original statement to geologists, actually seeing it in print can reaffirm this assumption and help them know for sure *who* is making the statement (geological scientists), *on what basis* this statement was reasoned (scientific dating methods), and the *validity* of the analyses and conclusions (representing geologic scholarship).

It's important to note that a single, skillful attribution can serve to clarify a single caption, a whole exhibit, an entire exhibit suite — or whatever follows in sequence. For instance, early in an evening program, an interpreter might say, "There have been several new research studies completed here by hydrologists from the universities of California and Colorado. I'd like to share some of their findings with you this evening. They shed some new light on our understanding of the ancient environment here...."

These simple examples demonstrate how attribution can add useful and appropriate context and specificity to an interpretive service. It enables a more inclusive and open exchange of ideas, and can make interpretive services much more relevant and respectful to the widest possible diversity of visitors. Attribution is neither a disclaimer nor an apology — it just clarifies the sources of scholarship being referenced, thereby improving the effectiveness and relevance of the service.

Interim Updates to Exhibits

Because exhibits are very expensive to produce, opportunities to substantially update them do not occur very often. Outdated exhibits are often inaccurate, use insensitive language, lack multiple perspectives, and/or do not include new discoveries that have a bearing on the exhibit's content. In essence, older exhibits may no longer reflect current scholarship or interpretive philosophy.

In instances where funds for exhibit replacement are unavailable, parks can inexpensively update them in a way that explains how current scholarship has progressed beyond the original content. Such interim messages are usually produced in-house by the park's interpretive staff and displayed on or near outdated exhibits.

In effect, such an update interprets previous perspectives about park resources. The update can have a significant impact all its own in exploring larger ideas such as the evolution of scholarship, why people pursue knowledge, how knowledge progresses, how knowledge is communicated, and the ripple effects of new knowledge. These ideas, expressed through such interim measures for outdated exhibits, can offer new and powerful opportunities for learning and appreciation.

Multiple Perspectives and Jargon

jar•gon \ **3 a :** the technical terminology or characteristic idiom of specialists or workers in a particular activity or area of knowledge; *often* **:** a pretentious or unnecessarily obscure and esoteric terminology **b :** a special vocabulary or idiom fashionable in a particular group or clique

Every profession, be it composed of scientists, historians, theologians, or other specialists (including interpreters), uses jargon. The jargon of a profession is a profession-specific customization of common language. Professional jargons evolve over time to meet the specific communication needs of the members of a profession. The use of jargon within the profession allows for more meaningful dialogue in a shorter span of time, and in less effort being expended to have a useful exchange of ideas. Jargon is shorthand that includes abbreviated words, terms, and phrases that represent larger, more complex processes and meanings.

When interpreters conduct research in preparation for designing an interpretive service, they will likely encounter jargon in the specialists' papers or other communication materials that they are reviewing. In the translation of this material into a useful format for the public, interpreters should take care to understand the material in both its professional context, and from the perspective of visitors and the use of common language. Jargon either needs to be carefully explained to visitors (so they can comprehend it within an appropriate context) or eliminated from the interpretive service altogether on the basis that using confusing terminology is antithetical to interpretation. ••

Multiple Perspectives and Scholarship

Scholarship in Interpretation

fact \ **3 a :** something that has actual existence **:** EVENT **b :** an occurrence, quality, or relation the reality of which is manifest in experience or may be inferred with certainty; *specif* **:** an actual happening in time or space **c :** a verified statement or proposition; *also* **:** something that makes a statement or proposition true or false **4 a :** the quality or character of being actual or of being made up of facts **:** ACTUALITY **b :** physical actuality or practical experience as distinguished from imagination, speculation, or theory **5 :** an assertion, statement, or information containing or purporting to contain something having objective reality; *broadly* **:** something presented rightly or wrongly as having objective reality

know•ledge \ **syn** KNOWLEDGE, SCIENCE, LEARNING, ERUDITION, SCHOLARSHIP, INFORMATION and LORE agree in signifying what is or can be known. **KNOWLEDGE** applies to any body of known facts or to any body of ideas inferred from such facts or accepted as truths on good grounds. **SCIENCE** still sometimes interchanges with KNOWLEDGE but commonly applies to a body of systematized knowledge comprising facts carefully gathered and general truths carefully inferred from them, often underlying a practice, usu. connoting exactness, and often denoting knowledge of unquestionable certainty. **LEARNING** applies to knowledge gained by study, often long and careful and sometimes connoting comprehensiveness and profundity. **ERUDITION** usu. stresses wide, profound, or recondite learning, sometimes suggesting pedantry. **SCHOLARSHIP** implies the learning, careful mastery of detail, esp. of a given field, and the critical acumen characteristic of a good scholar. **INFORMATION** generally applies to knowledge, commonly accepted as true, of a factual kind usu. gathered from others or from books. **LORE** suggests special, often arcane, knowledge, usu. of a traditional anecdotal character and of a particular subject.

schol•ar \ **2 a :** one who by long systematic study (as in a university) has gained a high degree of mastery in one or more of the academic disciplines; *esp* **:** one who has engaged in advanced study and acquired the minutiae of knowledge in some special field along with accuracy and skill in investigation and powers of critical analysis in interpretation of such knowledge

schol•ar•ship \ **3 :** the body of learning and esp. of research available in a particular field **syn** see KNOWLEDGE

Professional interpretation is always based on scholarship — on knowledge that is commonly held by scholars to be relatively well established and, especially in the "hard sciences," statistically well established. The world of scholarship defines the appropriate knowledge base from which interpretive services about heritage resources are researched, designed, and presented. This idea is fundamental to interpretation organizations everywhere, including the National Park Service, whose policy states that "Interpretive and educational programs will be based on current scholarship and research about the history, science, and condition of park resources, and on research about the needs, expectations, and behavior of visitors. To accomplish this, a dialogue must be established and maintained among interpreters, education specialists, resource managers, scientists, archeologists, sociologists, ethnographers, historians, and other experts, for the purpose of offering the most current and accurate programs to the public."[6]

What is Scholarship?

Scholarship is the process that adds to and modifies a body of knowledge. It moves knowledge forward. Scholarship provides the context within which meaningful research occurs. At the same time, research is also an aspect of scholarly activity.[7]

> For any activity to be designated as scholarship, it should manifest at least three key characteristics: It should be public, susceptible to critical review and evaluation, and accessible for exchange and use by other members of one's scholarly community. We thus observe, with respect to all forms of scholarship, that they are acts of the mind or spirit that have been made public in some manner, have been subjected to peer review by members of one's intellectual or professional community, and can be cited, refuted, built upon, and shared among members of that community. Scholarship properly communicated and critiqued serves as the building block for knowledge growth in a field.[8]

In other words, scholarly work has the following characteristics: it has a purpose, follows prescribed methodology, contributes to a body of knowledge, undergoes

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6 ***Management Policies 2001*** *— 7.5.4: Requirements for All Interpretive and Educational Services: Research;* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, December 2000), p. 76.

7 Adapted from ***Research and Scholarship: Perceptions of Senior Academic Administrators;*** Ruth Neumann; School of Education, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia; http://www.aare.edu.au/90pap/neuma90.439 (1990).

8 ***Handout for Mansfield University Campus Conversation, February 17, 1999;*** Lee Shulman; http://www.mnsfld.edu/~effteach/definitions1.html (1999).

peer review and scrutiny, and is disseminated. Scholarly activity occurs in four areas:

- *Scholarship of Discovery*. This area concentrates on original theses, inventions, and innovations as part of a traditional research program.
- *Scholarship of Teaching*. This area investigates approaches and practices used to educate people and disseminate the body of knowledge.
- *Scholarship of Integration*. This area synthesizes concepts and methodologies from different research domains using interdisciplinary approaches.
- *Scholarship of Application*. This area applies methods and practices established in the body of knowledge to problems of interest.[9]

When an interpreter conducts research for use in designing and presenting an interpretive service, he or she is likely to encounter all four of these areas of scholarly activity. Knowing the difference can be useful to the interpreter by helping determine what direction to pursue in the investigation of heritage resources.

Among the scholarship conducted in different fields of knowledge, no single method or approach best suits all of them. However, commonalities are evident: Scholars in different disciplines all formulate questions and investigative strategies. They all evaluate and revise strategies, and describe what was learned.

Scholarship or Public Opinion?

Scholarship is distinctly different from public opinion. And it's this difference that causes professional interpreters to rely on scholarship, rather than public or majority opinion, as trustworthy sources of information.

A single interpretive service — constrained by time, money, staffing, resources, infrastructure, and visitor desires — could never address all of the information about a resource. So, on what basis does an interpreter decide what information to present?

Every population includes groups that support different ideas and beliefs, but where should the line be drawn between what to include and what *not* to include in an interpretive exhibit about a specific aspect of heritage? If twenty percent of the population support a certain idea, is that enough to include it in the exhibits, or is it below the line? Where's the line? On what basis is it drawn? Who draws the line, with what belief system themselves? Every person has some bias.

There usually exists a general stream of information that can be followed, with more divergent views extending to its edges and past its banks. The spectrum of park visitors represents this whole rather than just the main channel of the stream. This *mainstream* concept can often be a useful thing to society, but is never perfect. For instance, it wasn't long ago that law decreed that some of us were less human than others: Slavery was legal, and in the vicinity of the main channel for a long time. The mainstream clearly isn't always correct, or just. Majority opinion can be unreliable.

Interpreters depend on sound scholarship as the basis for understanding and appreciating heritage resources — partially because resource experts devote themselves to intensive study and analysis, partially because this is likely to be the most reasonable set of ideas within a pluralistic society, and partially because there really isn't any other equally valid and acceptable set from which to make a selection. It is of utmost importance, therefore, that interpreters understand what scholarship is and is not, and how best to tap its riches in designing and presenting interpretive services that include relevant, appropriate multiple perspectives.

Recognizing Scholarship

How does an interpreter recognize reliable scholarship? When researching a topic, on what basis does the interpreter validate a text as having scholarly merit, and therefore, being of more utility to interpretive work? An interpreter might initially approach these questions by first considering whether the information is easy to verify or difficult to verify. This rudimentary type of screen-out can be a valuable precursor to performing in-depth analyses.

Easily Verified Information in Scholarship

Interpreters are always well served by checking the basics, verifying the facts. This is the most efficient first step in the use of research time and resources. If the interpreter determines the text to be of little scholarly merit, no further time should be invested in it; go on to the next source.

Imagine this scene. Most historians say that a particular historic event occurred on a Wednesday, but the book being reviewed states that the event occurred on a Friday. This would seem to be an error in fact. If both sources state the date of the event as the 14th of the month, but state different days of the week, this controversy is relatively easy to investigate. Check a calendar and the issue will be resolved, one way or the other (unless several calendar systems apply).

If the book in question also calls the location "Bear Valley," but is cited by scholars as "Bear Canyon" (verified by checking appropriate historic maps, texts, and oral histories), this second factual mistake in the book begins to cause the interpreter to infer that the conclusions of the author may also be in error. And if other factually-verifiable information in the book is also inaccurate, the interpreter might likely conclude that the level of scholarship represented by the author is sloppy at best, and perhaps not useful to interpreters at all. Under conditions like these, the interpreter correctly decides to lend more credence to other research sources.

The interpreter should also research what other trusted scholars have said about this specific book. The opinions of peer scholars are always useful, though not necessarily always definitive, in aiding the interpreter in appropriately weighing content. The greater the number of respected scholars expressing a given opinion, the more confident the interpreter can be regarding judgment of the work in hand. Nevertheless, the history of scholarship is filled with instances in which the majority of scholarly opinion has later been shown to have been incorrect.

[9] Adapted from ***Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate***; E. Boyer; (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990).

Difficult-to-Verify Information in Scholarship

If the above screen-out procedure leaves the interpreter with several seemingly good sources, that is, they each *seem* to have scholarly merit, then what's next? Consider these standards for a more in-depth evaluation of scholarly work:

Clear Goals

- Does the scholar state the basic purposes of his or her work clearly?
- Does the scholar define objectives that are realistic and achievable?
- Does the scholar identify important questions in the field?

Adequate Preparation

- Does the scholar show an understanding of existing scholarship in the field?
- Does the scholar bring the necessary skills to his or her work?
- Does the scholar bring together the resources necessary to move the project forward?

Appropriate Methods

- Does the scholar use methods appropriate to the goals?
- Does the scholar apply effectively the methods selected?
- Does the scholar modify procedures in response to changing circumstances?

Significant Results

- Does the scholar achieve the goals?
- Does the scholar's work add consequentially to the field?
- Does the scholar's work open additional areas for further exploration?

Effective Presentation

- Does the scholar use a suitable style and effective organization to present his or her work?
- Does the scholar use appropriate forms for communicating work to its intended audiences?
- Does the scholar present his or her message with clarity and integrity?

Reflective Critique

- Does the scholar critically evaluate his or her own work?
- Does the scholar bring an appropriate breadth of evidence to his or her critique?
- Does the scholar use evaluation to improve the quality of future work?[10]

Multiple Perspectives within Scholarship

Another aspect of scholarship is that it is never monolithic. Even within perspectives that are commonly held to be well established or accurate, there are variations of analyses and opinions.

Imagine this scene. An interpreter's research efforts identify multiple sources of excellent scholarship that cite multiple names for a location (Bear Valley, Bear Canyon, Bear Cañon, Briarvale, etc.). No source seems to be more authoritative, or accurate, or significant, than the others.

Sometimes, timing is the answer. If one of these place names was the term most often used during the time of the event in question, then perhaps that's the name to use because (the interpreter determines) it is most likely to aid visitors' understanding of the context of the event.

Or, if one of these names was widely used by the specific culture in question, perhaps that's the place name to use (the interpreter determines) because it is most likely to aid visitors' understanding of that culture.

Or, the interpreter may want to use multiple versions, explaining along the way the context of each to support a variety of ideas. But the interpreter should only do this if doing so enhances interpretive opportunities.

It is these fascinating, different analyses of heritage resources, all occurring within the framework of current and accurate scholarship, that interpretation thoughtfully reveals to visitors.

Consideration, Inclusion, and Appropriate Treatment

The existence of a variety of perspectives about any given topic does not commit interpretation to presenting every one of these perspectives, nor to treat every one of them to the same depth. Blind equality is a trap best avoided. In some circumstances, such equitability of treatment would elevate lesser-quality work to the same level as better-supported scholarship. In other circumstances, such equality of treatment would provide a false picture to the public. Although there may be several valid ideas, scholars often cleave to one idea much more than to others. The presence of a mainstream opinion within a body of scholars is a real and important component that enables scholarship to progress.

Imagine this scene. If a predominant explanation exists, followed by three lesser-adhered-to explanations that still fall within the bounds of accurate, valid, and current scholarship, then the predominant explanation should receive a fuller exposition than the other three. However, the interpreter should also weave the other three into the interpretive service so that balanced, accurate, multiple perspectives are included in the service. People need relevant information — they need to have something to respond to that relates to them — for consideration of the fuller range of ideas to occur.

The range of ideas and potential explanations related to resources is virtually unlimited. If a predominant explanation is held by scholars, but a second idea receives no scholarly support, or is viewed by most scholars as inaccurate, the interpreter should not feel obliged to refer to the second idea. These constraints of scholarship separate the universe of ideas into those supported by current and accurate scholarship, and those not supported by scholarship. This intellectual filter

[10] ***Handout for Mansfield University Campus Conversation, February 17, 1999;*** Lee Shulman; http://www.mnsfld.edu/~effteach/definitions1.html (1999). *Note: This section of the Web page cites* Scholarship Assessed, *Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff, (1997).*

generally determines which perspectives are included in the design and presentation of interpretive services.

Addressing a similar topic, National Park Service policy states that interpreters "will present factual and balanced presentations of the many American cultures, heritages, and histories. Consultation with diverse constituencies is essential to the development of effective and meaningful interpretive and educational programs, because it (1) ensures appropriate content and accuracy, and (2) identifies multiple points of view and potentially sensitive issues.... Acknowledging multiple points of view does not require interpretive and educational programs to provide equal time, or to disregard the weight of scientific or historical evidence."[11]

The fact that different views exist is not, in itself, enough reason to include *all* of those views in the design of an interpretive service. The views that are interpreted must reflect the current, best scholarly understanding of the resources. Some of the most useful scholarship for interpretive purposes may be authored by ethnic scholars, or may be scholarship that looks at the events of history from the perspective of persons with lesser amounts of political, social, and/or economic power. Consulting a variety of sources is both appropriate and stimulating.

Imagine this scene. "But didn't the people who lived at Mesa Verde disappear abruptly? I've seen television shows that say aliens abducted them," the visitor inquires.

"Actually, today's analysis of the evidence points to more of a migration than a sudden disappearance. Although the idea of 'sudden abandonment' was in vogue about a century ago when archeology of these sites was still in its infancy, today we're pretty confident that people moved out of this site over some time. Some archeologists think the time span for emigration was about 40 years; others think it could have been as much as three times that, about 120 years. Either way, most contemporary archeologists agree that it wasn't a sudden event."

Although some people genuinely believe in alien abduction of ancestral Puebloans, such an explanation is not well-supported by current scholarship and is not, therefore, designed into the interpretive presentation as a valid explanation of events. If a visitor asks about it, the interpreter answers from a standpoint of sound scholarship and multiple perspectives. The interpreter may acknowledge that some people subscribe to that idea, but that an overwhelming majority of scholars do not consider it to be a reasonable explanation of events. The choices made by the interpreter in how he or she responds to non-scholarly viewpoints can lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of heritage resources among *all* of the audience members. Or, if the interpreter does not handle it appropriately and professionally, just the opposite can occur, and learning opportunities can be diminished. ••

[11] ***Management Policies 2001*** *— 7.5.5: Requirements for All Interpretive and Educational Services: Consultation;* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, December 2000), p. 76.

History Scholarship in Interpretation

What is History?

his•to•ry \ **1 :** a narrative of events connected with a real or imaginary object, person, or career **:** TALE, STORY; *esp* **:** such a narrative devoted to the exposition of the natural unfolding and interdependence of the events treated **2 a :** a systematic written account comprising a chronological record of events (as affecting a city, state, nation, institution, science, or art) and usu. including a philosophical explanation of the cause and origin of such events — usu. distinguished from *annals* and *chronicle* **b :** a treatise presenting systematically related natural phenomena (as of geography, animals, or plants) **3 :** a branch of knowledge that records and explains past events as steps in the sequence of human activities **:** the study of the character and significance of events — usu. used with a qualifying adjective

History is the study and interpretation of the recorded past. We often think of history as a set of dates, names, and facts to be memorized. Facts do help us study history, but they are nothing more than trivia until we try to make some sense out of them. Thoughtful, informed interpretation and synthesis of these facts will help us understand the development and interrelationships of human societies. History helps us understand many events that at first seem inexplicable, and it also helps us understand that the causes and effects of these events are often very complex.[12]

History is about change and continuity over time and space. We study the past from many perspectives; such as political, military and diplomatic developments, economic, social, and cultural development, and the role of religious ideas and beliefs in shaping human experiences. The range of topics open to historians is virtually endless. Some historians deal with global issues like the rise of capitalism or the origins of WWI, others take a microhistorical approach and closely study a small sect or community within a carefully bounded period of time so as to recover deeply buried experiences and meanings. The power of ideas in shaping past societies is a popular field, as is the impact of social and economic structures on such societies. Historians study the origins of conflict as well as the impact that such conflicts have upon those caught up in them. Some historians work on the very recent past: the origins of ethnic cleansing for example, while others may study societies in the far distant past....

With so many possible points of departure, historians must frequently look to other disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities to gain the necessary tools. For example, a study of a community in a time of change can often benefit from detailed demographic analysis while someone studying a particular historical document could gain by employing techniques of literary analysis.[13]

History is not a blueprint for the future but it is a means of understanding the past and present. Through the study of history we can develop a feel for the way in which society will develop in the future. History helps one to understand the immense complexity of our world and therefore enables one to cope with the problems and possibilities of the present and future.

History provides us with a sense of identity. People need to develop a sense of their collective past. Events in the past have made us what we are today. In one sense history is the only thing that is real. The way in which people identify and interact with one another is by and large a consequence of history, which shapes and conditions individuals and societies whether they fully understand it or not.

History is a bridge to other disciplines. In order to understand the other humanities and the sciences one needs an historical overview. Writers, artists, scientists, politicians and everyday people all are conditioned by the historical milieu in which they lived. Historical knowledge is a prerequisite for fully understanding any other type of knowledge and for understanding why events happened as they did.

History is magister vitae, "teacher of life." History prepares us to live more humanely in the present and to meet the challenges of the future because it provides us with understanding of the human condition. History is a means of disseminating and comprehending the wisdom and folly of our forbears.

History is fun. History fulfills our desire to know and understand ourselves and our ancestors. History allows one to vicariously experience countless situations and conditions, which stimulates the imagination and creativity.[14]

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[12] ***What is History?;*** J. Michael Beasley; Artzia.com, http://artzia.com/History/About/ (2003).

[13] ***What is History?;*** Department of History, University of Calgary, Canada; http://hist.ucalgary.ca/explicit/whathistory.htm (2003).

[14] ***What is History, and Why Study It?;*** Siena College, New York;

Philosophies of History

How can one define the philosophy of history? Hegel once said that the philosophy of history included little more than thoughtful reflection on the past. Although theorizing about history has been described in more general and ambiguous ways, the philosophy of history has come to represent far more than thoughtful reflections concerning history. In order to understand what is meant by the philosophical study of history, first it is important to reach some consensus as to what is meant by the word "history." A distinction must be made between two senses of the term "history." In one sense, history represents the entirety of events in human experience, or *history-as-event*. In another sense, "history" refers to the human practice of collecting (usually through the act of writing) and interpreting these events, or *history-as-discipline*. Michael Stanford has referred to these two different conceptions (though not in the exact same terms) as "history one" and "history two" respectively.

History (in both senses) has been of interest to a number of notable philosophers and historians.... Because there are two ways of conceptualizing history, there are two ways of conceptualizing the philosophy of history. The *philosophy of history-as-event* has tended to center around questions of a metaphysical nature, such as: is there a "plot" to history?, are there any definable "patterns" or "shapes", any ultimate ends or "goals" toward which events as a whole are developing? Some have seen the totality of *history-as-event* as a linear sequence of progress; others have attributed to it patterns of recurrent cycles. Still others have denied that there is any overriding organization or logical order to be found in the morass of historical events and have emphasized the importance of contingency and chance in the playing out of events. Although metaphysical speculation about the shape or "meaning" of history has fallen into disrepute, one cannot dismiss the lasting effect some speculative theories have had on the actual practice of historians and philosophers alike. The distinction between two types of philosophy of history is by no means new. What Maurice Mandelbaum called the distinction between "material" and "formal" philosophies of history, W. H. Walsh called "speculative" and "critical" philosophies of history.

The greater portion of philosophical reflection about history today focuses on the *philosophy of history-as-discipline*. While *philosophy of history-as-event* focuses on history as the totality of human experience, *philosophy of history-as-discipline* deals with philosophical questions pertaining to the human activity of recording and interpreting history-as-event. It eschews what are seen as the metaphysical issues of the past and deals more with epistemological and methodological concerns about the activities of historical research and the writing of history. *Philosophy of history-as-discipline* has also addressed concerns about the justification and limitations of historical objectivity, the truth of historical claims, and the nature of historical explanations. Are there any "proper" (formal/logical) methods that can be prescribed to the practice of history? What would such "proper" historical method look like? Can this question be answered in isolation of questions regarding the practical (i.e. political, ideological) purposes to which historical writing is applied? A good part of the twentieth century was devoted to a debate sparked by the philosopher of science Carl Hempel's claim that historical explanations — to be legitimate scientific ones — must conform to the "covering-law" model developed from the physical sciences. In contrast with Hempel's thesis, some, such as R. G. Collingwood and William Dray, have insisted that the historian is more concerned with understanding the motives of historical agents than with predicting (or retrodicting) events.

Many who have concerned themselves with questions about the nature of historical knowledge and interpretation of the past have spent a good deal of time studying the history of various historical concepts and ideas; and in doing so some have concluded that there are no absolute ideals of historical method or truth which can be isolated from their own peculiar historical and social contexts. This is the problem of *historicism*....[15]

http://www.siena.edu/history/whathist.html (2/7/2002).

Multiple Perspectives and History

Most people can agree on the framework of history, that is the names, dates, places, people and events that have determined the past. Few people, for instance, would challenge the veracity of the old school rhyme "Columbus sailed the ocean blue in fourteen hundred and ninety-two." The problem is not with "Columbus" or "1492" but with "sailed" (not with the fact that Columbus did sail but why he sailed). Historical disagreement usually revolves around causation or motivation. Some see Columbus as a courageous harbinger of a new world; others see him as an evil, genocidal imperialist.

How a person understands the past is partially determined by one's background, upbringing, biases, and prejudices. But this doesn't mean that history is unknowable. Historical understanding is analogous to the debates that sports enthusiasts often have over what team was the all-time best or who was the greatest player ever? The basic "facts," i.e. the points scored, batting averages, yards gained, wins and losses etc. are known, but individuals often disagree over what those "facts" mean. Still a basic consensus is often reached (Babe Ruth and Henry Aaron are the two greatest home run hitters ever) and the same is possible in history.[16]

Consensus occurs within historical scholarship just as it does in other fields of scholarship. Nevertheless, multiple perspectives also exist within historical scholarship, and even include such overarching aspects as the value, scope, and meaning of the historical endeavor itself. The following quotes illustrate the wide variety of opinion that has existed, and continues to exist, about history, historians, and the use of history as a way to better understand ourselves.

[15] ***A Brief Essay Concerning the Philosophy of History;*** Paul J. R. Murray, B.S., and Andrew Reynolds, PhD.; University College of Cape Breton, Canada; http://faculty.uccb.ns.ca/areynold/paul/introessay.htm (2003).

[16] ***What is History, and Why Study It?***, loc. cit.

Insights into What History Is

History is that form [in] which his imagination seeks comprehension of the living existence of the world in relation to his own life, which he thereby invests with a deeper reality. (Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*)

Hardly a pure science, history is closer to animal husbandry than it is to mathematics, in that it involves selective breeding. The principal difference between the husbandryman and the historian is that the former breeds sheep or cows or such, and the latter breeds (assumed) facts. The husbandryman uses his skills to enrich the future; the historian uses his to enrich the past. Both are usually up to their ankles in bulls[~]t. (Tom Robbins)

Here, then, awaiting our study, lies man's authentic "being" — stretching the whole length of his past. Man is what has happened to him, what he has done. Other things might have happened to him or have been done by him, but what did in fact happen to him and was done by him, this constitutes a relentless trajectory of experiences that he carries on his back as the vagabond his bundle of all he possesses. Man is a substantial emigrant on a pilgrimage of being, and it is accordingly meaningless to set limits to what he is capable of being. (José Ortega y Gasset, *History as a System*)

Genuine historical knowledge requires nobility of character, a profound understanding of human existence — not detachment and objectivity. (Friedrich Nietzsche)

Historical knowledge is not a variety of knowledge, but it is knowledge itself; it is the form which completely fills and exhausts the field of knowing. (Benedetto Croce)

For better or worse, I think one of the things I am supposed to do is challenge and even upset students. Not because unhappiness is good in and of itself. Far from it. But, increasingly, Americans are a people without history, with only memory, which means a people poorly prepared for what is inevitable about life — tragedy, sadness, moral ambiguity — and, therefore, a people reluctant to engage difficult ethical issues. Consumer culture is mostly about denial, about forgetting the past, except insofar as the past is pleasant and, thus, marketable. As historians, we occupy one tiny space where the richness of the past is kept alive, where its complexity is acknowledged and studied, where competing voices can still be heard. One of the most important things historians do is to bear witness to the past, including its horrors, in order to battle the amnesia that would sweep away all that is difficult or repugnant. The distinction between history and memory — that is, the distinction between knowledge of painful things, painfully arrived at, and notions of the past that flatter us with easy myths or cheap emotions — is at the heart of our enterprise. (Elliott J. Gorn)

Any good history begins in strangeness. The past should not be comfortable. The past should not be a familiar echo of the present, for if it is familiar why revisit it? The past should be so strange that you wonder how you and people you know and love could come from such a time. (Richard White)

What is past is prologue. (William Shakespeare)

History is concerned with time, space, and change. It is concerned with the unique person, with the unique event, and with their combination. (James C. Malin, *The Historian and the Individual*)

People are trapped in History, and History is trapped in them! (James Baldwin)

History may be divided into three movements: what moves rapidly, what moves slowly and what appears not to move at all. (Fernand Braudel)

There is properly no history; only biography. (Ralph Waldo Emerson)[17]

History is Philosophy teaching by examples. (Thucydides)

History is the intellectual form in which a civilization renders account to itself of its past. (Johann Huizinga)

History is indeed the witness of the times, the light of truth. (Cicero)

History is the "know thyself" of humanity — the self-consciousness of mankind. (Droysen)

History is an argument without end. (Peter Geyl)

History and myth are two aspects of a kind of grand pattern in human destiny: history is the mass of observable or recorded fact, but myth is the abstract or essence of it. (Robertson Davies)

All statements about the past can be considered as very crude ways of expressing possible, hypothetical judgments about future experiences. (Pardon Tillinghast)

Nothing capable of being memorized is history. (R.G. Collingwood)[18]

Historical Accounts and their Implications

Historical knowledge enables us to place our perceptions of the contemporary world into a meaningful context and to discern the cause-and-effect relationships between events that serve as the basis for future expectations. Without such knowledge we would be as bewildered as a quarterback entering the fourth quarter of a football game without knowing the score, the amount of elapsed time, or the successes and failures of plays and players. (Allan J. Lichtman and Valerie French)

[17] Adapted from the compilation ***What is History?***; Steven Kreis; http://www.historyguide.org/history.html (7/25/2002).

[18] Adapted from the compilation ***What is History?***; The University of North Florida, Florida; http://www.unf.edu/~clifford/craft/what.htm (7/16/2003).

A mature sense of historical-mindedness stimulates self-identity, enabling the individual to surmount, intellectually, his or her immediate environment and emancipating the individual, to some extent, from the pressures to conform to this year's vogues. He or she ceases to be a pawn of the social forces and their representatives. (Carl G. Gustavson)

History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illuminates reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity. (Marcus T. Cicero)

The world's history is the world's judgement. (Schiller, 1800)

Time in its irresistible and ceaseless flow carries along on its flood all created things and drowns them in the depths of obscurity.... But the tale of history forms a very strong bulwark against the stream of time, and checks in some measure its irresistible flow, so that, of all things done in it, as many as history has taken over it secures and binds together, and does not allow them to slip away into the abyss of oblivion. (Anna Comnena)

The value of history is, indeed, not scientific but moral: by liberalizing the mind, by deepening the sympathies, by fortifying the will, it enables us to control, not society, but ourselves — a much more important thing; it prepares us to live more humanely in the present and to meet rather than to foretell the future. (Carl Becker)

In lifting the bonds of time and place, in freeing us from the tyranny of the present, history gives greater freedom and becomes the instrument enhancing liberty. Of all learned endeavors, the study of the past can be the most exciting, humanizing, broadening — and hence the most liberating. (Stephen Vaughn)

One must always maintain one's connection to the past and yet ceaselessly pull away from it. To remain in touch with the past requires a love of memory. To remain in touch with the past requires a constant imaginative effort. (Gaston Bachelard)[19]

The study of history is the best medicine for a sick mind; for in history you have a record of the infinite variety of human experience plainly set out for all to see; and in that record you can find yourself and your country both examples and warnings; fine things to take as models, base things rotten through and through, to avoid. (Livy)

History is *for* human self-knowledge. Knowing yourself means knowing, first, what it is to be a person; secondly, knowing what it is to be the kind of person you are; and thirdly, knowing what it is to be the person *you* are and nobody else is. Knowing yourself means knowing what you can do; and since nobody knows what they can do until they try, the only clue to what man can do is what man has done. The value of history, then, is that it teaches us what man has done and thus what man is. (R. G. Collingwood)[20]

Not to know what has been transacted in former times is to continue always a child. (Cicero)

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. (Santayana)

A nation which does not know what it was yesterday, does not know what it is today, nor what it is trying to do. (Woodrow Wilson)

History is a people's memory, and without memory man is demoted to the lower animals. (Malcolm X)[21]

Limitations of History as a Way of Knowing

History is a myth we all agree to believe. (Napoleon)

To each eye, perhaps, the outlines of a great civilization present a different picture. In the wide ocean upon which we venture, the possible ways and directions are many; and the same studies which have served for my work might easily, in other hands, not only receive a wholly different treatment and application, but lead to essentially different conclusions. (Jacob Burckhardt)

History is a damn dim candle over a damn dark abyss. (W.S. Holt)

The very ink with which all history is written is merely fluid prejudice. (Mark Twain)

History: An account, mostly false, of events, mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers, mostly knaves, and soldiers, mostly fools. (Ambrose Bierce)

From their experience or from the recorded experience of others (history), men learn only what their passions and their metaphysical prejudices allow them to learn. (Aldous Huxley)

History, as an entirety, could exist only in the eyes of an observer outside it and outside the world. History only exists, in the final analysis, for God. Thus it is impossible to act according to plans embracing the totality of universal history. Any historical enterprise can therefore only be a more or less reasonable and justifiable adventure. It is primarily a risk. (Camus, *The Rebel*)

History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past, trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revive its echoes, and kindle with the pale gleams the passion of the former days. What is the worth of all this? The only guide to a man is his conscience; the only shield to his memory is the

[19] Adapted from the compilation ***History Quotations?;*** Historian Underground: Making History Relevant to Life; http://www.lemmingland.com/quote.htm (2003).

[20] ***What is History?;*** Steven Kreis, loc.cit.

[21] ***What is History?;*** The University of North Florida, loc. cit.

rectitude and sincerity of his actions. It is very imprudent to walk through life without this shield, because we are so often mocked by the failure of our hopes and the upsetting of our calculations; but with this shield, however the fates may play, we march always in the ranks of honor. (Sir Winston Churchill)

History will be kind to me for I intend to write it. (Winston Churchill)

If you do not like the past, change it. (William L. Burton)[22]

You have reckoned that history ought to judge the past and to instruct the contemporary world as to the future. The present attempt does not yield to that high office. It will merely tell how it really was. (Leopold von Ranke)[23]

If a man could say nothing against a character but what he can prove, history could not be written. (Samuel Johnson)

We teach history only when it can be made into an entertaining anecdote, a procedure which is about as sound as leaving the teaching of sexual hygiene to a commercial traveller. (Aubrey Maran)

History, real solemn history, I cannot be interested in.... The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars and pestilences in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all. (Jane Austen)

Comments about the Work of Historians

Anybody can make history. Only a great man can write it. (Oscar Wilde, 1893)

History repeats itself, says the proverb, but that is precisely what it never really does. It is the historians (of a sort) who repeat themselves. (Clemen F. Rogers, 1938)

Since history has no properly scientific value, its only purpose is educative. And if historians neglect to educate the public, if they fail to interest it intelligently in the past, then all their historical learning is valueless except in so far as it educates themselves. (M. Trevelyan)

The historian does simply not come in to replenish the gaps of memory. He constantly challenges even those memories that have survived intact. (Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi)

The function of the historian is neither to love the past nor to emancipate himself from the past, but to master and understand it as the key to the understanding of the present. (E. H. Carr)[24]

Faithfulness to the truth of history involves far more than a research, however patient and scrupulous, into special facts. Such facts may be detailed with the most minute exactness, and yet the narrative, taken as a whole, may be unmeaning or untrue. The narrator must seek to imbue himself with the life and spirit of the time. He must study events in their bearings near and remote; in the character, habits, and manners of those who took part in them. He must himself be, as it were, a sharer or a spectator of the action he describes. (Francis Parkman)

An historian should yield himself to his subject, become immersed in the place and period of his choice, standing apart from it now and then for a fresh view. (Samuel Eliot Morison)

That historians should give their own country a break, I grant you; but not so as to state things contrary to fact. For there are plenty of mistakes made by writers out of ignorance, and which any man finds it difficult to avoid. But if we knowingly write what is false, whether for the sake of our country or our friends or just to be pleasant, what difference is there between us and hack writers? Readers should be very attentive to and critical of historians, and they in turn should be constantly on their guard. (Polybius)[25]

Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past. (George Orwell)

The historian can learn much from the novelist. (Samuel Eliot Morison)

It has been said that although God cannot alter the past, historians can. It is perhaps because they can be useful to him in this respect that he tolerates their existence. (Samuel Butler)[26]

Historical Scholarship in Interpretation

When conducting research via history texts, oral history records, or humanities references, an interpreter should always keep several things in mind. Influences on our understanding of history include the perspective and biases of the individual relating the history, the characteristics of the culture in which they lived, their reasons for gathering and providing the information, and the tools available to them to facilitate their inquiry and understanding of the factors that played a role in that history. No historical account is free of these influences. Interpreters should understand that some groups or cultures feel that certain facts of their specific histories have been ignored, deleted, or otherwise been made invisible — for a wide variety of reasons. In addition to keeping all of these influences on history in mind when developing an interpretive service, an interpreter should also provide such contexts to visitors to enable them to use balanced and accurate information to personally explore the meanings of resources. ••

[22] ***History Quotations?;*** Historian Underground, loc. cit.
[23] ***What is History?;*** Steven Kreis, loc. cit.
[24] ***History Quotations?;*** Historian Underground, loc. cit.
[25] ***What is History?;*** Steven Kreis, loc. cit.
[26] ***What is History?;*** The University of North Florida, loc. cit.

Science Scholarship in Interpretation

What is Science?

sci•ence \ **3 a :** accumulated and accepted knowledge that has been systematized and formulated with reference to the discovery of general truths or the operation of general laws **:** knowledge classified and made available in work, life, or the search for truth **:** comprehensive, profound, or philosophical knowledge; *esp* **:** knowledge obtained and tested through use of the scientific method **b :** such knowledge concerned with the physical world and its phenomena **:** NATURAL SCIENCE **4 :** a branch of study that is concerned with observation and classification of facts and esp. with the establishment or strictly with the quantitative formulation of verifiable general laws chiefly by induction and hypotheses

The term "science" refers to both a *methodology of inquiry* and the *body of knowledge* obtained through that methodology. Science includes professional fields of inquiry such as archeology, biology, chemistry, geology, the social sciences, and many others. Sciences tend to be classified as "hard" or "soft" depending on the reliability of any specific science in drawing accurate and precise conclusions from its investigations. Those sciences that are more closely associated with mathematics are said to be the "harder sciences" and are listed toward that end of the spectrum since reliability is a mathematically-derived concept.

Science is a particular way of knowing about the world. In science, explanations are limited to those based on observations and experiments that can be substantiated by other scientists. Explanations that cannot be based on empirical evidence are not a part of science.

In the quest for understanding, science involves a great deal of careful observation that eventually produces an elaborate written description of the natural world. Scientists communicate their findings and conclusions to other scientists through publications, talks at conferences, hallway conversations, and many other means. Other scientists then test those ideas and build on preexisting work. In this way, the accuracy and sophistication of descriptions of the natural world tend to increase with time, as subsequent generations of scientists correct and extend the work done by their predecessors.

Progress in science consists of the development of better explanations for the causes of natural phenomena. Scientists never can be sure that a given explanation is complete and final. Some of the hypotheses advanced by scientists turn out to be incorrect when tested by further observations or experiments. Yet many scientific explanations have been so thoroughly tested and confirmed that they are held with great confidence.[27]

The tremendous success of science in explaining natural phenomena and fostering technological innovation arises from its focus on explanations that can be inferred from confirmable data. Scientists seek to relate one natural phenomenon to another and to recognize the causes and effects of phenomena. In this way, they have developed explanations for the changing of the seasons, the movements of the sun and stars, the structure of matter, the shaping of mountains and valleys, the changes in the positions of continents over time, the history of life on Earth, and many other natural occurrences. By the same means, scientists have also deciphered which substances in our environment are harmful to humans and which are not, developed cures for diseases, and generated the knowledge needed to produce innumerable labor-saving devices.[28]

Important Terms in Science

Terms that are used in public discourse are often thought of as having commonly-understood definitions. These same terms, however, can also have additional definitions, or be used in completely different ways, when used as jargon within any specific, professional discipline. So it is within the field of endeavor known as science; the following terms have specific definitions when used in the context of science.

***Fact*:** In science, an observation that has been repeatedly confirmed and for all practical purposes is accepted as 'true.' Truth in science, however, is never final, and what is accepted as a fact today may be modified or even discarded tomorrow.

***Hypothesis*:** A tentative statement about the natural world leading to deductions that can be tested. If the deductions are verified, the hypothesis is provisionally corroborated. If the deductions are incorrect, the original hypothesis is proved false and must be abandoned or modified. Hypotheses can be used to build more complex inferences and explanations.

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[27] ***Science and Creationism: A View from the National Academy of Sciences, Second Edition;*** National Academy of Sciences; (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999), p. 1.

[28] Ibid., p. viii.

Law: A descriptive generalization about how some aspect of the natural world behaves under stated circumstances.

Theory: In science, a well-substantiated explanation of some aspect of the natural world that can incorporate facts, laws, inferences, and tested hypotheses.[29]

Empirical: Relying on or derived from observation or experiment... verifiable or provable by means of observation or experiment.[30] *Empirical evidence* is "derived from experiment and observation rather than theory."[31]

Understanding Science

An accurate understanding of science has direct and important implications for how an interpreter uses scientific scholarship in the design and presentation of interpretive services. The better an interpreter grasps scientific intent, language, and technique, the better able that interpreter is to help visitors understand what science is, how it describes its work, how science is conducted, and what roles it plays in society.

Many studies have shown that the public — including interpreters — has a very poor understanding of science. Commonly-held misunderstandings about science are often due to a lack of well-grounded teacher training in science, non-integration of science philosophy with its practice, the lack of authentic science experiences for teachers and students, and poorly written textbooks. The interpreter has an opportunity to portray the world of scientific endeavor in a more realistic light when interpreting a park's resources.

The Relationships of Scientific Law, Theory, and Hypothesis

Although all three of these elements of scientific inquiry are related, there is no implied evolution among them. A hypothesis doesn't turn into a theory; a theory doesn't turn into a law. They are different kinds of knowledge. For instance, Sir Isaac Newton described the relationship of mass and distance to the attraction between objects. This is known as the law of gravity. But why does gravity operate the way it does? Even today, more than a century later, there is still no well-accepted theory of gravity, no consensus among scientists. Some physicists hypothesize that "gravity waves" can explain the law of gravity, but a clear understanding of how gravity could operate as waves has not yet been attained.

Induction Produces Knowledge that Can be Tested and Refined

All problem-solvers, investigators, and scientists collect empirical evidence and interpret it through induction. Induction is the process by which investigators attempt to formulate a general explanation through knowledge gained from a limited number of specific observations. Using the technique of induction, collecting and examining pieces of evidence leads to the discovery of scientific laws and/or the formulation of scientific hypotheses and theories. It also produces generalizations that permit predictions. Induction is the foundation of most scientific endeavors.

Although induction is extremely useful in scientific investigation, even a preponderance of evidence does not guarantee that absolutely valid knowledge will be produced. The limitation to induction is that it is impossible for a scientist to secure *all* relevant facts and make *all* necessary observations pertaining to a given situation through *all* time — past, present, and future. Scientists seek to formulate laws and theories that are described to hold *true* in all cases, yet the limits to observation make an absolute guarantee of infallible scientific prediction or explanation impossible. For this reason, induction leads to the production of knowledge that is likely valid, but which can never be viewed as completely valid. Scientists often use terms like "degree of confidence" to refer to the relative validity of a specific piece of scientific information.

Scientific Explanations are Limited and Always Subject to Falsification

Science is predicated on the understanding that scientific knowledge is tentative and remains open to new evidence and interpretation. Accumulated evidence provides support, validity, and substantiation for scientific laws and theories, but will never prove those laws and theories to be absolutely true in all cases. The only truly conclusive knowledge that science produces occurs when a notion is falsified.

For instance, the law of gravity states that more massive objects exert a stronger gravitational attraction than do objects with less mass when distance is held constant. This is a valid scientific law, in part, because it could be falsified: It would be proved false if newly-discovered objects operate differently with respect to gravitational attraction.

In contrast, there are many questions and ideas that cannot be verified or disproved using the methods of science. Moral, ethical, and metaphysical questions, for instance, are beyond the realm of scientific inquiry. Scientists could accurately predict the physical consequences of dropping an atom bomb on a major city — but could never scientifically determine whether it would be moral to do so.

Research Methods Vary but Creativity is Key

Scientists approach their work with creativity, perseverance, and application of prior knowledge. Like other problem-solvers or investigators, many scientists proceed by defining a problem, gathering background information, forming a hypothesis, making observations, testing the hypothesis, and drawing conclusions. Although these are common stages of inquiry, there is no single, uniform, universal "scientific method." Scientists imaginatively pursue solutions to their work without regard to how neatly their procedures may fit into a predetermined, step-by-step plan of action. Instead, they are likely to take advantage of unexpected outcomes, lucky breaks, and other unpredictable but exploitable circumstances.

Scientists, via induction, make use of individual facts that have been collected and analyzed. Scientists may then observe a pattern in these data and propose a scientific law or theory. There is no single logical or procedural method by

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[29] Ibid., p. 2.

[30] ***The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition***; Houghton Mifflin Company; Dictionary.com, http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=empirical (2003).

[31] ***WordNet 1.6***; 1997 Princeton University; Dictionary.com; http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=empirical (2003).

which such a pattern is always suggested. Only the creativity of the individual scientist leads to scientific innovation.

Experimentation is but One of Science's Tools

Scientific experiments involve carefully orchestrated procedures — along with control and test groups — usually designed to test a proposed cause-and-effect relationship. Experimentation is a useful tool in science, but is not the sole route to knowledge. Scientific knowledge is also acquired using tools such as observation, analysis, speculation, and library investigation. Many noteworthy scientists have used non-experimental techniques to advance knowledge. Moreover, in a number of science disciplines, true experimentation is not possible because of the inability to control variables. For instance, the science of astronomy is almost totally based on extensive observations rather than experiment.

Scientists Endeavor to be as Objective as Possible

Scientists routinely endeavor to be objective in the conduct of their work. They design and use procedures specifically aimed at removing subjectivity from their observations and analyses. That said, scientists are people too, and sometimes their individual or collective subjectivity or biases can enter into their work. Complete objectivity, while desirable, is simply unattainable in science. There are several reasons for this:

Scientists believe the advancement of science is best undertaken through the proposal of scientific laws and theories as conjectures, and then to actively work to disprove or refute these ideas. Verification often results in what may seem like a rather backward process: it results from the absence of disproof. This is seen by scientists as support for the idea. Although scientists agree that this theoretical model is important, in actuality, it does not occur to the extent that it might. There are few indications that scientists undertake extensive programs to search for disconfirming evidence.

Scientists, like other observers, hold a myriad of preconceptions and biases about the way the world operates. Held in the subconscious, these notions affect everyone's ability to make objective observations: Such "theory-laden observation" makes it impossible to collect and interpret facts without any bias. The history of science is replete with cases in which scientists failed to include particular observations in their final analyses of phenomena. This occurred not because of any fraud or deceit on the part of the scientists involved, but simply because these scientists possessed prior knowledge that either caused them to miss certain facts, or to consider them unimportant in the reporting of their observations.

Scientists also work within a research tradition or research paradigm. Shared by those working in a given discipline, this paradigm provides clues to the questions worth investigating, suggests what evidence is admissible, and prescribes the tests and techniques that are reasonable. Although the paradigm provides direction to the research, it may also stifle or limit investigation. Anything that confines the research endeavor necessarily limits objectivity. While there may be no conscious desire on the part of scientists to limit discussion, it is likely that some new ideas in science are rejected because they conflict with the current paradigm. Despite these pitfalls, it should be noted that such adherence to paradigms has led to many more advances in science than delays.

Such potential hindrances are unavoidable exceptions to what scientists endeavor to do: investigate the world as objectively as is humanly possible.

Scientific Peer Review — More is Better

Upon completing a research project, scientists communicate their results so that others may learn from and evaluate their research. This check-and-balance system is one of the processes that enables the kind of conjecture and refutation that is at the heart of advancing scientific knowledge. In reality, though, this process does not happen as often as it should. Errors in research may not come to light until other scientists build on the previous work.

Most scientists are simply too busy, and research funds too limited, for extensive review. The enormous amount of original scientific research published, and the pressure to produce new information rather than reproduce others' work (to verify it), dramatically increases the chance that errors will go unnoticed. Space limitations in scientific journals also adversely contribute to the thoroughness of peer review: Because space is limited, scientists rarely report valid, but negative, results. While this is understandable, progress is best served when those working in a particular scientific discipline have access to all of the information regarding a phenomenon — both positive and negative.[32]

Scientific Scholarship in Interpretation

Explanations offered by scientific scholarship remain some of the most useful ways for people within a pluralistic society to consider, explore, and discuss aspects of the natural world, including heritage resources. The implications of science range from understanding the literal functioning of systems and their components to philosophical implications of such explanations. Science is better suited to explaining the former part of that range. That is, the confidence of scientists is higher when regarding the functioning of systems and their components than when describing how that functioning should impact or connect to human values. In general terms, science properly remains understood by the majority of people within diverse societies as a useful way of understanding the natural world and how things actually work.

As interpreters conduct research about resources and audiences, design interpretive services, and present those services, they should consider the following.

- Science aims at understanding and explaining the natural world.
- Scientific explanations of the natural world are framed in terms of confidence, probability, and likelihood.
- Science evolves in response to changing knowledge that, through scientific methodology, accrues a higher degree of confidence than that accorded previous knowledge.

[32] Adapted from ***Ten myths of science: Reexamining what we think we know....***; William McComas; School Science & Mathematics; Vol. 96 (1/1/1996), p. 10.

- Science depends upon methodology that attempts to remove as much human bias and subjectivity as possible, basing its methodology on observing, hypothesizing, theorizing, and testing evidence.
- Science can inform, but does not answer, questions requiring moral or ethical judgments.
- Science is useful but is not all encompassing; it has limits.

Multiple Perspectives within Scientific Scholarship

Multiple perspectives also exist within scientific scholarship. Multiple working hypotheses regarding any natural feature or event is a normal part of scientific inquiry. If scientists report different conclusions about some aspect of park resources, yet all of these conclusions are supported by sound, juried scholarship, the interpreter should be ready to present all of these conclusions to the public because they all meet the test of supportability by scholarship. And in so doing, the interpreter is providing a range of valid ideas for visitors to consider. Science, as an open-ended method of study, makes no claim to representing absolute truth at any point in time. ••

Spirituality, Religion, and Interpretation

Spirituality and Religion

spir•i•tu•al \ **1 :** of, relating to, or consisting of spirit **:** of the nature of spirit rather than material **:** INCORPOREAL — contrasted with *earthy* **2 a :** of or relating to religious or sacred matters **b :** SACRED **c :** ecclesiastical rather than lay or temporal **3 :** of or relating to the moral feelings or states of the soul as distinguished from the external actions **:** reaching and affecting the spirit **4 a :** influenced or controlled by the divine Spirit **:** having a nature in which a concern for the Spirit of God predominates **b :** proceeding from or under the influence of the Holy Spirit **:** concerned with religious values **:** seeking earnestly to live in a right relation to God **c :** HOLY, DIVINE **d :** RELIGIOUS **5 :** related or joined in spirit **:** spiritually akin **:** having a relationship one to another based on matters of the spirit **7 :** of, relating to, or coming from the intellectual and higher endowments of the mind **:** INTELLECTUAL, MENTAL — contrasted with *animal* **8 :** highly refined in thought or feeling **9 :** SPIRITTED, CLEVER, WITTY **10 :** having to do with spirits, ghosts, or similar supernatural beings or with the world which they are held to people

re•li•gion \ **1 :** the personal commitment to and serving of God or a god with worshipful devotion, conduct in accord with divine commands esp. as found in accepted sacred writings or declared by authoritative teachers, a way of life recognized as incumbent on true believers, and typically the relating of oneself to an organized body of believers **3 a :** one of the systems of faith and worship **:** a religious faith **b :** the body of institutionalized expressions of sacred beliefs, observances, and social practices found within a given cultural context **6 a :** a personal awareness or conviction of the existence of a supreme being or of supernatural powers or influences controlling one's own, humanity's, or all nature's destiny

The terms *spirituality*, *religion*, *spiritual*, and *religious* have different but related definitions. Because these are deeply meaningful subjects, people overlay the common definitions with even more of their own values and meanings than they might for other topics. For some, religion might be described as a highly structured social convention. It could revolve around built structures and social activities. It might include tenets, ceremonies, traditions, and artifacts. For others, religion might be directly tied to specific landforms or geographic locations, and their stories. Religion could also refer to an individual's privately-held thoughts and feelings about his or her relationship to all else — rather than applying to a group of like-minded people. Religion might infuse all of a person's actions, or might only be tenuously connected to an activity that occurs on a periodic basis.

There are many, long established, major world religions, each with over three million followers...:

- Baha'i Faith
- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Confucianism
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Jainism
- Judaism
- Shinto
- Sikhism
- Taoism
- Vodun (Voodoo)[33]

In addition to these twelve religions, other forms of well-defined spirituality include Gnosticism, Native American Spirituality, Neopagan faiths (Asatru, Druidism, Goddess Worship, Wicca, Witchcraft), New Age (Self-Spirituality, New Spirituality, etc.), Scientology, Unitarian-Universalism, Zoroastrianism, and many others. Belief systems such as Atheism, Agnosticism, and Humanism round out this brief, broad overview.

Religious Scholarship

When interpreting religious perspectives, reliance is placed on scholarship generated by historians, anthropologists, archeologists, biologists, ethnographers, geologists, physicists, and other scholars for accurate, balanced, and relevant information. For some resources or circumstances, religious scholarship is also an appropriate and valuable tool for an interpreter.

Religious scholarship — like scholarship in the subjects of history and science — has a purpose, follows prescribed methodology, contributes to a body of knowledge, undergoes peer review and scrutiny, and is disseminated. Scholarly

[33] ***About Specific Religions, Faith Groups, Ethical Systems, etc. — "World" Religions;*** Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance; http://www.religioustolerance.org/var_rel.htm (3/5/2004).

activity occurs in the areas of discovery, teaching, integration, and application within a religious context.

Unlike the scholarship of history and science, religious scholarship is often predicated on specific religious precepts, commandments, laws, and ordinances — some of which are viewed as being more open to diverse interpretations than others. Some, in fact, may be viewed as inerrant. These ideas and values are directed, guided, and influenced by texts, traditions, sacraments, and rites. These premises of religious scholarship differ markedly from that of history and science, comparatively narrowing its appropriate interpretive use to specific types of situations.

Reasons for Interpreters to Explore Spirituality and Religious Perspectives

Religious scholarship is a fascinating subject that, for an interpreter, has several faces. The reasons for an interpreter to explore spirituality and religious perspectives as a part of the professional endeavor are twofold: to better understand and appreciate park visitors, and to better understand and appreciate heritage resources and the meanings commonly ascribed to them.

Better Understanding and Appreciating Visitors

An important reason to explore, study, investigate, discuss, and ponder spirituality and religion is to better understand visitor perspectives, thereby improving interpreter-visitor communication. Religious scholarship is appropriately researched and studied by interpreters for the purpose of enriching and deepening their understanding of audience characteristics. Learning about how people perceive the world helps interpreters better understand how the personally meaningful values of visitors guide their interaction with resources. Learning about the religious perspectives of those who visit an interpreter's specific heritage site helps the interpreter tailor his or her efforts more effectively. Such study helps interpreters become more adept at facilitating connections between visitors and heritage resources, and aids interpreters in selecting more effective audience-appropriate approaches, techniques, and content when developing and conducting interpretive services.

Imagine this scene. You're at a heritage site that preserves and interprets important fossil resources. The interpretation of time in the exhibit cases is based on scientific, geologic dating techniques. Rock and fossil samples abound, noted with their ages. Increasingly, a specific segment of this site's visitors (those who hold Young-Earth Creationist beliefs) consider the scientific data to be unreliable or untrue — and they express these thoughts to interpreters.

Having participated in a number of these visitor contacts now, yet not fully grasping these visitors' perspectives, one of the site's interpreters (Moshe) takes the time to learn more about Creationism from a variety of sources, including respected religious scholars. He intends to better understand the perspectives of these visitors so he can have conversations with them that are more meaningful to them. *More meaningful* does not imply pandering to their perspectives and exploring no others; rather, it means Moshe being able to better relate to "where they're coming from" in order for him to provide multiple perspectives and interpretive opportunities that create a higher-value heritage experience for these visitors.

When Moshe next converses with visitors who hold these perspectives, he relates to them better and the conversation is enriched by his deeper knowledge of similar viewpoints. He discusses the idea that there are actually quite a few different Creationism perspectives, and that some religions find science and spiritual views compatible and complimentary. Both he and the visitors enjoy their interchange. The visitors *are* respected, *feel* respected, and actually learn more about belief systems similar to theirs. This is valued by them. They also learn that some geologists hold a variety of professional opinions about the specific uses of scientific dating techniques, although most of them agree with the overall explanations of geologic time as established generally via the known range of fossils and described by current scientific scholarship. The visitors can better connect to this idea because earlier in the conversation, Moshe introduced the idea that within Creationism, or within the greater body of religions, some of these same traits (variation within general agreement) are also exhibited.

The visitors continue their visit, pondering the idea that "systems of knowing" might, in some ways, be more similar than different. Moshe's endeavor to learn more about visitor perspectives, via research into religious beliefs, has helped generate a more successful interpretive contact. His latest visitor encounter exemplifies the interpretive utility of learning about specific religions to better understand multiple visitor perspectives.

Better Understanding and Appreciating Heritage Resources

Another reason for an interpreter to research religious scholarship is to achieve an in-depth understanding of the heritage site and its resources. The scope of this research is more narrowly focused than the visitor research described above: It's limited to religious scholarship that will shed light on various aspects of this specific heritage site, especially its culture and history as relate to the park's resources.

Aspects of better understanding and appreciating heritage resources at your site are essentially twofold. The first aspect is focused on accruing useful information regarding background and context for the site. This may include religious movements, events, or activities occurring on any scale (worldwide, regionwide, local) that in some significant way influenced, or were influenced by, your site's resources.

The second focus is placed on religious scholarship that provides specific, meaningful information directly relevant to your site. Why did these stories occur in *this* place, in that way, in that time period? How was this artifact used? What do we think that activity meant to those who performed it? What were those people thinking when they...?

Obviously it might be difficult to draw a bright and shiny line between background and site-specific (or resource-specific) information, but that's okay. You don't need to draw such a line. You *do* need to ensure, however, that you cover the range — from background to specific information — when exploring scholarship regarding the religious or spiritual significance of your site. This helps achieve the goal of accruing a truly in-depth understanding and appreciation of the site's many facets.

How Visitors Benefit from an Interpreter's Preparation

Both of the reasons cited above for an interpreter to explore spirituality and religious scholarship directly affect the interpreter's approach to developing and conducting interpretive services — in their overall content as well as particular details. The insights gained through this type of research and study — including an understanding of the overall religious climate of a time period, or the noting of specific religious rifts, alliances, or events — can provide a critical backdrop upon which science and history interpretation is superimposed. And sometimes, the spiritual or religious information and perspectives are the primary subject matter themselves.

Through the appropriate use of religious scholarship, interpreters can help visitors explore the contextual setting within which the site's resources are explained and explored. They can help visitors understand the cultural character of the site. Thus enabled, interpreters are better positioned to facilitate opportunities for meaningful connections to occur and grow between visitors and resources.

Including Spiritual and Religious Perspectives in Interpretive Services

You've done the research. You possess information well-sourced by science scholarship, history scholarship, and religious scholarship. When and how is religious scholarship best used in performing interpretive work? What conditions must be considered? What influences these decisions? To what extent is balance necessary between perspectives based on scholarship in science, history, and spirituality?

When considering the appropriate use of religious scholarship in developing and conducting interpretive services, the primary considerations are: Will my research into, and use of, religious scholarship provide enhanced opportunities for people to form intellectual and emotional connections to the site's resources? Are opportunities for connection more accessible? Is the heritage site more relevant to visitors? In general, if the answers are affirmative, then these more-specific questions should be asked next:

- How is the interpreting organization structured and funded?
- Will the inclusion of spiritual perspectives lend important context to interpretive services that are mostly based on history scholarship?
- Will the inclusion of spiritual perspectives lend important context to interpretive services that are mostly based on science scholarship?
- Is the heritage site inherently religious in nature?

Structure and Funding Considerations

When it comes to interpreting spirituality, religion, and religious perspectives, considerations and constraints vary among different kinds of interpreting organizations. For instance, agencies of the federal government of the United States are prohibited by the First Amendment of the Constitution from establishing (or appearing to establish or endorse) religion, or one religion over another. Thus, organizations that receive some of their funding from the federal government may also find their programming similarly constrained. Privately-funded organizations may not be constrained by these Constitutional responsibilities. It's important for interpreters to understand the context within which their organization interprets since that context will guide their interpretive treatment of spirituality and religious perspectives.

Including Important Religious Context

The more an interpreter can accurately portray past events and figures, processes and activities, the more these things become alive in the minds of visitors. The inclusion of religious perspectives can add important balance, accuracy, context, and relevance to interpretive services. Religious context can be appropriately employed as part of history-based interpretation as well as a complement to science-based interpretation.

For instance, although historic persons could be treated interpretively without mentioning their individual religious viewpoints, such an approach could also give visitors an incomplete understanding of those figures. Interpretive services that include what we know of these persons' religious views and motivations are often more powerful. In fact, visitors might be surprised that these historic personages not only had some similar spiritual beliefs, but quite different ones, too. Visitors might discover insights into the politics of the time — and of today — as some political machinations are strongly influenced by religious beliefs and alliances.

Even though visitors may identify with, or eschew, some of these views themselves, interpretive opportunities are enhanced by including this material along with other content that is sourced through history scholarship. A more complete picture enhances enjoyment of the site by furthering opportunities for understanding and appreciation.

Another appropriate interpretive use of spiritual or religious views might be our attempt to better understand entire peoples and cultures. Through anthropology, archeology, ethnography, and other scientific pursuits, we attempt to understand what life was like in the past. What motivated people to do that? Why build here? How did they celebrate seasonal changes? What motivated the carvings over there? How has this culture changed over time? And if written records apply, we use history scholarship, too, to help us better understand and appreciate past lifestyles and cultures.

Our efforts to understand others, exemplified by questions like these, can't help but include considerations of the spiritual beliefs of these peoples. All people, in one respect or another, operate from a foundation of how they've made sense out of the world. Spirituality is often an important component of this foundation. Therefore, as the visitor strives to better understand and appreciate cultures, interpretation of spiritual and religious perspectives should be a part. Without this component, the picture is incomplete.

Consider the interpretation of an historic Catholic mission site. Responsible for helping visitors explore the site's resources and meanings, the interpreter relies on information from scholars in history and science and religion. What were the religious views of the indigenous peoples? What were their lifestyles like? Why was a mission built *here*, why at *that* time, by whom? For what political, religious, and other purposes was it established? How well did it achieve these

purposes? How did the cultures initially interact? How did life change for all involved?

How could visitors understand the site without an understanding of the material fabric that remains? Or the historical, social, political, economic, and religious contexts that existed during the mission's founding? Spain's desire to accrue political power in the New World while concurrently converting indigenous peoples to the Catholic religion were paramount reasons for the government of Spain to fund and support such ventures — critical information that promotes understanding and appreciation. Interpreting these stories using sound scholarship in science, history, *and* religion is the most thorough manner in which to provide opportunities for visitors to appreciate the meanings of the place and explore their own connections to them.

Heritage Sites that Possess Historic Ties to Specific Religions

In addition to religious scholarship playing important contextual roles in the interpretation of heritage, it can also play a central role for sites that are inherently religious in nature — those sites with historic ties to specific religions. The Catholic mission example fits into this category. So do Saint Paul's Church National Historic Site (New York) and spiritual sites of indigenous peoples such as Devils Tower National Monument (Wyoming). All three are rooted in specific spiritual values or religions, ideas, traditions, histories, and stories. They are spiritual places due to religious encounters, activities, traditions, or teachings. Many of their natural and cultural resources are products of these sites' spiritual contexts. For instance, in the mission example, even the buildings' architecture directly expresses the religious views and perspectives of those who founded the mission. These kinds of places are set aside, in part, for public enjoyment and contemplation *because* they possess characteristics historically tied to specific religions or spiritual beliefs.

For sites that are inherently religious, religious aspects of the site become the primary subject matter rather than only useful context or background information. Interpretive services informed by religious scholarship help visitors to the Catholic mission understand more about the beliefs of its founders, of the religion to which they belonged, of their religious order, regional variations in belief, and all this related to a specific time period. Such use of religious scholarship helps visitors understand the built environment, artifacts, and records. Such knowledge, placed in an understanding of the larger contexts of the time, is crucial to providing interpretive opportunities that enable visitors to make connections to the stories and meanings of the place. The pursuit of specific religious knowledge, and the interpretation of it as primary subject matter, are appropriate activities within the context of this kind of site's characteristics — because its resources and meanings are inherently religious in nature.

Inappropriate Use of Religious Scholarship

Imagine this scene. Referring to Moshe's fossil-based site above, another interpreter at the site (Erin) also had similar encounters with visitors who espouse a Creationist perspective. However, she decided to take a different course of action. With multiple perspectives in mind, Erin proposed adding an exhibit panel that portrays a Creationist point of view regarding the site's fossil resources and concept of time.

This is an inappropriate decision for Erin to have made. Here's why: This fossil-based site and its resources are *not* rooted in any specific religious tradition and are most appropriately interpreted using geologic scholarship. Unlike the mission example — where the significant resources of the site are historically tied to the Catholic religion — the significant resources of the fossil site are not. At the fossil site, religious perspectives can play various roles (especially where it lends useful context to scientific or historic interpretation) but adding a religion-based exhibit to *counterpoint* the scientific explanations of fossils and time would be inappropriate.

Looking at this issue from another direction, consider a fictitious "Sermon On the Mount World Heritage Site." At this site, it would be entirely appropriate to interpret Jesus' sermon and its ramifications (in its time and for us today) as primary subject matter. The interpretation of such a site would draw on history, science, and religious scholarship — probably leaning most heavily on religious scholarship to describe the larger context of Jesus' ministry, comparative interpretations of Bible verses, exploration of contemporary social issues to which the sermon has relevance, etc. Interpretive services would probably focus on these things. Conversely though, it would be inappropriate for an interpreter at the site to design an exhibit to *counterpoint* the sermon by explaining human interrelationships from a purely biological sciences perspective.

Appropriate Use of Religious Scholarship

Continuing with the fossil site example, a different conclusion about the use of religious scholarship might be drawn if the site's founding intent is recast as follows. If this site's founding for public enjoyment and scientific advancement includes an emphasis on both the fossil resources *and* the culture of an *indigenous* people, then the following criteria come into play.

If this site is claimed as important to the cultural history and spiritual life of an indigenous people, then interpreting their stories and perspectives about what has occurred here are valid and appropriate — *even if these stories contradict the scientific explanations of the site's resources*. Examples of this occurrence include places like Aztec Ruins National Monument and Canyon de Chelly National Monument (both in Arizona). Cultures associated with these two sites include ancestral Puebloans, Navajos, and others. If the people who had critical association with these places' resources were Christian Creationists or Buddhist monks, this caveat would still apply.

Setting the example site aside for public enjoyment because of its tremendous fossil *and* cultural resources (especially the historic cultural resources of a people long-connected to this place) creates an appropriate condition for interpreting religious aspects and explanations of the place *as primary subject matter*. Considerations of appropriateness and benefit to interpretive opportunities continue to be paramount in the exercise of interpretive judgement.

Attribution and the Representation of Complexity

As is the case for history and science, attribution goes a long way toward professionally interpreting spiritual or

religious aspects of heritage resources. For example, when interpreting the creation story of a people, it's always better to state "This is the creation story of *this* people" than to matter-of-factly state "This is what happened here." The first phrase correctly attributes the story to a specific group; the second phrase implies an absolute certainty equally applicable to all of us. Of course, this example suggests the idea that one uniform story is held *by a people*. In reality, there are significant distinctions within any large group of people regarding the nature and meaning of any specific belief, with smaller subsets emphasizing or differently defining some important aspects of the story or stories in question. The professional interpreter is always on guard to avoid oversimplification. Life is complex; the professional interpreter represents that complexity appropriately.

Religious Concepts and Science Concepts

In general, scientific explanations of specific, mechanical workings of nature engender relatively little controversy. We can all feel fairly confident that our kidneys work the way scientists think they do. However, when science explains more profound aspects of knowledge and experience and meaning (how animals *came to have* kidneys), greater differences in acceptance of scientific views arise. This happens because those aspects of life related to depth of time or origins or transitions or ultimate purposes — concepts central to how an individual defines self in relation to all else — are saturated in meaning for individuals and groups. These ideas engender a variety of responses from visitors.

Science assumes that nature can be understood through empirical evidence, induction, and theory — that which can be observed, measured, tested, and inferred. Science does not explain aspects of nature that do not depend on empirical evidence validated through scientific methodology. For instance, science does not address the existence of God or gods since it cannot use scientific methodology to reliably investigate this subject. Such an hypothesis cannot be falsified (proven false).

Therefore, scientists say that science is "silent" on religion, spirituality, and the supernatural. Science neither affirms nor denies things it is unable to reliably investigate. Science can only address the material universe. Some theologians say that science, by its very assumption that the world can be understood through the observation and testing of empirical evidence, removes the supernatural from the equation and, therefore, only seeks to (or is able to) explain a subset of the whole. Others believe there is no inherent contradiction in these two ways of knowing — they simply look at different aspects of existence from different philosophical and methodological viewpoints.

Interpreters should be aware of these different philosophical and methodological frameworks, and respond to their assertions appropriately and usefully in their interpretive work. When visitors ask questions that draw sharp distinctions between these types of ideas, such as between science and religion, an interpreter can use such opportunities to provide insights into multiple valid perspectives.

Imagine this scene. Following an interpreter's talk in the park's amphitheater, several visitors approach the interpreter to continue to explore the ideas expressed in the talk. These three visitors happen to hold different views related to science and religion, the same range of opinions as described above. In facilitating their park-based exploration of these ideas, the responsibility of the interpreter might be thought of (simplistically) in the following terms.

- The interpreter should help the science-invested visitor better understand the limits of science in addressing all aspects of humanity (including morals, ethics, and the supernatural) without attempting to convince the visitor that his/her perspective is wrong and another is right.
- The interpreter should help the religion-invested visitor better understand the difference between the worldview of naturalism and the philosophy of science (including methodologies and how terminology is used by scientists) without attempting to convince the visitor that his/her perspective is wrong and another is right.
- The interpreter should help the no-conflict-seen visitor better understand that the other two viewpoints, and others, exist, are valid within specific parameters, and sometimes strongly differ.

In working with all three visitors, the interpreter should probe and provoke with accurate, balanced, and relevant information to provide the visitors with tools for their continued personal growth, exploration, and introspection. The interpreter should aid them in considering other viewpoints as valid without invalidating the perspectives held by the visitors, or introducing his or her own biases into the equation.

Faith-based Ideas and Scientific Scholarship

When a park interprets its resources from a scientific viewpoint, some visitors raise questions about why other viewpoints, such as religious viewpoints, are not interpreted or used to explain the resources. This may or may not have anything to do with the level of professionalism found within the services provided by the park's interpretation & education program. These kinds of questions seem to be connected more to visitors' contention over what ideas are worthy of inclusion when explaining resources to the public, than to specific types of resources (although most interpreters encounter these kinds of questions when paleontological, geological, or biological resources substantially comprise the park's importance). Suggestions are often connected to perspectives that stem from the idea of a created world rather than one that evolved naturalistically.

Creationism, *Creation Science*, *Intelligent Design Theory*, and *Biblical Science* are among the names given Christian Creator-centered, faith-based viewpoints for understanding and explaining the world. Other religions also share some of these teachings. Interpreters in the United States are likely to encounter views like these expressed by park visitors.

Just as science can be said to have a core mindset in how it approaches its investigation of the world, as well as multiple explanations that are anchored to that viewpoint, the same is true for faith traditions. Although many faith traditions espouse a Creator-based paradigm, details can vary widely.

Faith-based and Naturalistic Explanations

> Religions around the world teach many hundreds of creation stories. Almost all religions believe and teach their own unique legend. Naturalistic evolution is also a popular belief, particularly among scientists. In North America, beliefs regarding the origins of the universe and origins of species of life mostly fall into three general categories....
>
> ***Creation Science.*** God created the universe during 6 consecutive 24 hour days less than 10,000 years ago, precisely as a literal interpretation of the Biblical book of Genesis would indicate. All of the various species of animals that currently exist (and that once existed) on earth are descendants of the animals that God created during the single week of creation....
>
> ***Theistic Evolution.*** The universe is about 14 billion years old. The earth's crust developed about 4.5 billion years ago. God created the first cell, and then used evolution as a tool to guide the development of each new species. The process culminated in human beings.
>
> ***Naturalistic Evolution.*** Beliefs are identical to that of theistic evolution, except that God is assumed to have played no part in the processes.[34]

Creation Science Belief Systems

The following description of Creation Science belief systems exemplifies some of the more mainstream views among Creationists. We provide this brief description to familiarize interpreters with these views and provide a basis for discussing how these religious views differ from science, and why that matters.

> The vast majority of scientific creationists, and all significant creation science organizations in North America are Christian. They assume that that the creation story/stories in Genesis are accurate. They believe that God created all life forms, the world, and the rest of the universe. Most believe that this happened fewer than ten thousand years ago. This belief in a new and created universe is common among Fundamentalists and other Evangelical Christians, because it is the only theory that is compatible with conservative Christians' belief in:
>
> - The inerrancy of the Bible. Each passage in the Bible is viewed as being without error, wherever it discusses theological, historical, spiritual, scientific or other matters.
> - Reliance on the literal interpretation of the Bible in most cases. Passages are interpreted literally, except when a symbolic meaning is obviously intended by the author.
>
> ...Modern day creation scientists are divided into many sub-groups, primarily according to their interpretation of the Hebrew word "yom" (day) in Genesis 1-3, and their belief on whether the six "days" were contiguous. All reject the possibility of biological evolution of the species:...[35]

The Institute for Creation Research is a useful source for learning more about one Creationist worldview. Information is posted at http://www.icr.org/aboutcr/tenets.htm. A useful naturalistic explanation is posted at Understanding Evolution, http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evosite/evohome.html.

"Creation Science" is Not "Science"

The characteristic description of Creationism cited above demonstrates how Creationism or Creation Science is clearly based on a set of different premises from science, and consequently, evince a different overall perspective related to explaining the natural world. For Creationists, a series of specific, religiously-derived premises create a framework which overrides scientific methodology. In science, the framework is based on empirical evidence and is not based on scripture, religious texts, or other authorities. The previous work of other scientists and what they have observed, investigated, and concluded is always subject to repetition, falsification, reinvestigation, and/or reinterpretation.

Legal Findings Regarding Creation Science. A variety of court cases have addressed similarities and difference between "science" and "Creation Science." A number of these cases have ruled that "Creation Science" is a set of religious beliefs distinctly different from "science" and should not be confused with, or misrepresented as, science. Those cases also established that science is not a religion.

> ***Six Significant Court Decisions Regarding Evolution and Creationism Ideas.*** The following are excerpts from important court decisions regarding evolution and creationism issues. The reader is encouraged to read the full statements as need and time allows.
>
> 1. In 1968, in *Epperson v. Arkansas*, the United States Supreme Court invalidated an Arkansas statute that prohibited the teaching of evolution. The Court held the statute unconstitutional on grounds that the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution does not permit a state to require that teaching and learning must be tailored to the principles or prohibitions of any particular religious sect or doctrine. (*Epperson v. Arkansas,* 393 U.S. 97. (1968))
>
> 2. In 1981, in *Segraves v. State of California,* the Court found that the California State Board of Education's *Science Framework*, as written and as qualified by its anti-dogmatism policy, gave sufficient accommodation to the views of Segraves, contrary to his contention that class discussion of evolution prohibited his and his children's free exercise of religion. The anti-dogmatism policy provided that class distinctions of origins should emphasize that scientific explanations focus on "how," not "ultimate cause," and that any speculative statements concerning

[34] ***3 Main Evolution & Creation Science Belief Systems;*** B. A. Robinson; Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance; http://www.religioustolerance.org/ev_world.htm (11/17/2002).

[35] ***Creation Science Belief Systems: Beliefs of Origins, Generally Based on the Bible;*** B. A. Robinson; Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance; http://www.religioustolerance.org/ev_world1.htm (5/26/2003).

origins, both in texts and in classes, should be presented conditionally, not dogmatically. The court's ruling also directed the Board of Education to widely disseminate the policy, which in 1989 was expanded to cover all areas of science, not just those concerning issues of origins. (*Segraves v. California,* No. 278978 Sacramento Superior Court (1981))

3. In 1982, in *McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education*, a federal court held that a "balanced treatment" statute violated the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution. The Arkansas statute required public schools to give balanced treatment to "creation-science" and "evolution-science." In a decision that gave a detailed definition of the term "science," the court declared that "creation science" is not in fact a science. The court also found that the statute did not have a secular purpose, noting that the statute used language peculiar to creationist literature in emphasizing origins of life as an aspect of the theory of evolution. While the subject of life's origins is within the province of biology, the scientific community does not consider the subject as part of evolutionary theory, which assumes the existence of life and is directed to an explanation of how life evolved after it originated. The theory of evolution does not presuppose either the absence or the presence of a creator. (*McLean v. Arkansas Board of Education,* 529 F. Supp. 1255, 50 (1982) U.S. Law Week 2412)

4. In 1987, in *Edwards v. Aguillard*, the U.S. Supreme Court held unconstitutional Louisiana's "Creationism Act." This statute prohibited the teaching of evolution in public schools, except when it was accompanied by instruction in "creation science." The Court found that, by advancing the religious belief that a supernatural being created humankind, which is embraced by the term *creation science*, the act impermissibly endorses religion. In addition, the Court found that the provision of a comprehensive science education is undermined when it is forbidden to teach evolution except when creation science is also taught. (*Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482, U.S. 578, 55 (1987) U.S. Law Week 4860, S. CT. 2573, 96 L. Ed. 2d510)

5. In 1990, in *Webster v. New Lennox School District*, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals found that a school district may prohibit a teacher from teaching creation science in fulfilling its responsibility to ensure that the First Amendment's establishment clause is not violated, and religious beliefs are not injected into the public school curriculum. The court upheld a district court finding that the school district had not violated Webster's free speech rights when it prohibited him from teaching "creation science," since it is a form of religious advocacy. (*Webster v. New Lennox School District #122,* 917 F.2d 1004 (7th. Cir., 1990))

6. In 1994, in *Peloza v. Capistrano Unified School District*, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a district court finding that a teacher's First Amendment right to free exercise of religion is not violated by a school district's requirement that evolution be taught in biology classes. Rejecting plaintiff Peloza's definition of a "religion" of "evolutionism," the Court found that the district had simply and appropriately required a science teacher to teach a scientific theory in biology class. (*Peloza v. Capistrano Unified School District*, 37 F.3d 517 (9th Cir., 1994))[36]

Creation Science in Interpretation

The importance of these legal cases to the interpreter, in part, regards the determination that "Creation Science" is not the same as "science" and should not be interpreted as such. The courts have also ruled that these two subjects are not to be treated as if both are religions. Because interpretation of natural and cultural resources almost always depends upon sound scholarship in science and history, Creationism would rarely be a predominant explanation of any of the resources in the park.

However, that does not mean that Creationism cannot be discussed with visitors. Rather, scientific scholarship always provides the predominant explanation, but subsequent conversation can include Creationism as an appropriate means of exploring multiple perspectives and meanings of the resources. Talking with visitors about Creationism or other faith-based explanations of how the world was formed, for example, can provide relevance to that discussion. And so can talking about other ways of explaining the world. Such explanations, though, must occur within the context provided for the discussion by scientific scholarship. Interpretive opportunities are always enhanced by the interpreter's intelligent use of resource- and visitor-relevant information.

Spiritual Traditions and Perspectives of Indigenous Peoples

As of this writing, there are 562 federally recognized tribal governments in the United States.[37] People identified as indigenous peoples, Native Americans, American Indians, Indian Tribes and Nations, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives are included in this group. Many heritage sites are connected to cultures that preceded the contemporary dominant culture of the United States, which is why interpreters should become familiar with this topic.

Among these populations, many different religious viewpoints exist. There is no *one* "Indian religion" — to suggest such is misleading and disrespectful. It is incumbent on interpreters to help visitors understand the distinct natures of these various peoples when interpreting associated resources. That's not to say that there are no similarities — there are. For instance, many of the religious views of these cultures are tied to specific aspects and features of the land. Similarities and differences *do* exist, and interpreters should facilitate an understanding and appreciation of this fact related to the heritage resources of their site.

To the extent that we can generally characterize the multiple viewpoints of these groups, they do not correlate their religious views with science. They do not attempt to use science to corroborate them and find this a rather alien idea. In this way, they are quite different from most Creationists.

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[36] ***Teaching About Evolution and the Nature of Science***; National Academy of Sciences; (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1998), pp. 121-122. Note: It can be read online at: http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/evolution98.

[37] **Bureau of Indian Affairs**; http://www.doi.gov/bureau-indian-affairs.html (2004).

Avoiding discussion of the spiritual worldviews of these groups, as relates to heritage resources, is often impossible. The traditional placement of the door (facing East) in a Navajo hogan is connected to a Navajo spiritual worldview. The nature and placement of markings found on rocks is often related to a people's spiritual worldview. The selection of village sites might be related to a people's spiritual worldview. And so on. The professional interpreter weaves these ideas into the context of what we think we know about heritage resources. And we forthrightly tell the public, "This is what we *think* we know."

Oral tradition — history passed on from generation to generation via its careful recitation — is an important social feature among many of these peoples. Ethnographers and others provide scholarship in this area that enables contemporary specialists and interpreters to construct more complete understandings of past events.

Spiritual Traditions and Perspectives

Natives today follow many spiritual traditions:

- Many Native families today have been devout Christians for generations.
- Others, particularly in the Southwest have retained their aboriginal traditions more or less intact.
- Most follow a personal faith that combines traditional and Christian elements.
- *Pan Indianism* is a recent and growing movement which encourages a return to traditional beliefs, and seeks to create a common Native religion.
- The *Native American Church* is a continuation of the ancient *Peyote Religion* which had used a cactus with psychedelic properties called peyote for about 10,000 years. Incorporated in 1918, its original aim was to promote Christian beliefs and values, and to use the peyote sacrament. Although use of peyote is restricted to religious ritual which is protected by the US Constitution, and it is not harmful or habit forming, and has a multi-millennia tradition, there has been considerable opposition from Christian groups, from governments, and from within some tribes.

The Inuit. The traditional *Inuit* (Eskimo) culture is similar to those found in other circumpolar regions: Northern Russia and the Northern Scandinavian countries. Life has been precarious; there are the double challenges of the cold, and the continual threat of starvation. (The popular name for the Inuit, "Eskimo," is not used by the Inuit.).

Their religious belief is grounded in the belief that *anua* (souls) exist in all people and animals. Individuals, families and the tribe must follow a complex system of taboos to assure that animals will continue to make themselves available to the hunters. Many rituals and ceremonies are performed before and after hunting expeditions to assure hunting success.

An underwater Goddess *Sedna* or *Takanaluk* is in charge of the sea mammals. She is part human and part fish. She observes how closely the tribe obeys the taboos and releases her animals to the hunters accordingly. There is a corresponding array of deities who release land mammals; these are *Keepers* or *Masters*, one for each species.

The *Angakut* or Shaman is the spiritual leader of each tribe. He is able to interpret the causes of sickness or lack of hunting success; he can determine the individual or family responsible and isolate the broken taboo. In a manner similar to Shamans in may other cultures, he enters a trance with the aid of drum beating and chanting. This allows his soul to leave his body and traverse great distances to determine the causes of sickness and other community problems.

Eastern Subarctic, Eastern Woodlands, Plains and Southwest Cultures. Native religions in these areas share some similarities, and differ significantly from Inuit culture described above. Tribes also differ greatly from each other. Spiritual elements found in some (but not all) non-Inuit native religions are:

Deity: A common concept is that of a dual divinity:

- a Creator who is responsible for the creation of the world and is recognized in religious ritual and prayers;
- a mythical individual, a hero or trickster, who teaches culture, proper behavior and provides sustenance to the tribe.

There are also spirits which control the weather, spirits which interact with humans, and others who inhabit the underworld. Simultaneously the Creator and the spirits may be perceived as a single spiritual force, as in the unity called *Wakan-Tanka* by the Lakota and Dakota.

Creation: Individual tribes have differing stories of Creation. One set of themes found in some tribes describes that in the beginning, the world was populated by many people. Most were subsequently transformed into animals. Natives thus feel a close bond with animals because of their shared human ancestry. Dogs are excluded from this relationship. This bond is shown in the frequent rituals in which animal behavior is simulated. Each species has its master; for example, the deer have a master deer who is larger than all the others. The master of humans is the Creator.

Emergence of the Tribe: This is a concept found extensively in the Southwest. The universe is believed to consist of many dark, underground layers through which the humans had to climb. They emerged into the present world through a small hole in the ground - the world's navel. Other tribes believe that their ancestors have been present in North America as far back as there were humans.

Sacred Texts: Many tribes have complex forms of writing. Other tribes have preserved their spiritual beliefs as an oral tradition.

Afterlife: In general, Native religions have no precise belief about life after death. Some believe in reincarnation, with a person being reborn either as a human or animal after death. Others believe that humans return as ghosts, or that people go to another world. Others believe that nothing definitely can be known about one's fate after this life. Combinations of belief are common.

Cosmology: Again, many tribes have unique concepts of the world and its place in the universe. One theme found in some tribes understands the universe as being composed of multiple layers. The natural world is a middle segment. These layers are thought to be linked by the World Tree, which has its roots in the underground, has a trunk passing through the natural world, and has its top in the sky world.

Shamans: Although the term "Shaman" has its origins in Siberia, it is often used by anthropologists throughout the world to refer to Aboriginal healers. Spirits may be encouraged to occupy the Shaman's body during public lodge ceremonies. Drum beating and chanting aid this process. The spirits are then asked to depart and perform the needed acts. Other times, Shamans enter into a trance and traverse the underworld or go great distances in this world to seek lost possessions or healing.

Vision Quest: Young boys before or at puberty are encouraged to enter into a period of fasting, meditation and physical challenge. He separates himself from the tribe and goes to a wilderness area. The goal is to receive a vision that will guide his development for the rest of his life. They also seek to acquire a guardian spirit who will be close and supportive for their lifetime. Girls are not usually eligible for such a quest.

Renewal Celebrations: The Sun Dance amongst the Plains Natives is perceived as a replay of the original creation. Its name is a mistranslation of the Lakota *sun gazing dance*. Other tribes use different names. It fulfilled many religious purposes: to give thanks to the Creator, to pray for the renewal of the people and earth, to promote health, etc. It also gave an opportunity for people to socialize and renew friendships with other groups. A sweat lodge purifies the participants and readies them for lengthy fasting and dancing. It was successfully suppressed in most tribes by the Governments of the U.S. and Canada. However, it survived elsewhere and is now being increasingly celebrated.

Sweat Lodge: This is a structure which generates hot moist air, similar to a Finnish sauna. It is used for rituals of purification, for spiritual renewal and of healing, for education of the youth, etc. A sweat lodge may be a small structure made of a frame of saplings, covered with skins, canvas or blanket. A depression is dug in the center into which hot rocks are positioned. Water is thrown on the rocks to create steam. A small flap opening is used to regulate the temperature. As many as a dozen people can be accommodated in some lodges.

Hunting ceremonies: these involve the ritual treatment of a bear or other animal after its killing during a successful hunt. The goal is to appease its spirit and convince other animals to be willing to be killed in the future.

Prophets: The Abramic Religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) trace their development through a series of patriarchs and prophets. Native religions do not have as many corresponding revered persons in their background. Some Native prophets include Handsome Lake in the Iroquois Confederacy, Sweet Medicine of the Cheyenne, and White Buffalo Woman of the Lakota & Dakota tribes.

Traditional housing: There were many variations across North America: conical wigwams or tipis, long houses, and cliff dwellings. The shape of the structure often represents a model of the cosmos.[38]

Multiple Perspectives, Religion, and Native American Origins

From where did Native Americans originate? There are at least four conflicting beliefs about the origin of Native Americans:

- There has been, until recently, a consensus among scientists that prior to perhaps 11,200 years ago, the Western Hemisphere was completely devoid of humans. They believed that:

  Much of the world's water was frozen in gigantic ice sheets.

  The floor of the Bering Strait between Siberia and Alaska was exposed.

  Big-game hunters were able to walk to Alaska They turned south, spreading out through the Great Plains and into what is now the American Southwest. Within a few thousand years, they had made it all the way to the tip of South America.
- Recent archeological discoveries have convinced some scientists that people may have arrived far earlier than about 9200 BCE "in many waves of migration and by a number of routes" — perhaps even from Australia, South Asia and/or Europe.
- Many native tribes contest these theories. Their oral traditions teach that their ancestors have always been in the Americas.
- Some Natives believe that their ancestors emerged from beneath the earth into the present world through a hole in the earth's surface.

Some Natives find the suggestion that their ancestors migrated to North America only a few tens of thousands of years ago to be quite offensive.[39]

The variations in ideas about origins provide interpreters with a variety of considerations. Among these are the veracity of information, according to what group or process, and how best to be inclusive and portray multiple points of view within the context of sound scholarship.

Spiritual Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The topic of spirituality and religious perspectives is addressed a little differently for indigenous peoples than for others. And there are a variety of reasons for this.

Location of Heritage Sites. Many of the heritage sites in the United States are places where indigenous peoples have traditionally conducted religious or spiritual activities. This fact carries with it a responsibility for the managers of these

[38] ***Native American Spirituality;*** B. A. Robinson; Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance; http://www.religioustolerance.org/nataspir.htm (2/20/2002).

[39] ***From where did Native Americans originate? —*** *Native American Spirituality;* B. A. Robinson, Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance, http://www.religioustolerance.org/nataspir.htm (2/20/2002).

heritage sites to provide appropriate access and opportunities to indigenous peoples to continue these traditions. This fact also carries with it a responsibility for interpreters to help the public understand the cultural necessity for such accommodation, and to explore together the complexities of indigenous worldviews when interpreting at one of these sites. The location of some heritage sites plays a part in how spirituality and religious perspectives are interpreted.

Protection and Preservation of Traditional Religions of Native Americans. In 1978, a Joint Resolution of Congress stated:

> Whereas the freedom of religion for all people is an inherent right, fundamental to the democratic structure of the United States and is guaranteed by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution;
>
> Whereas the United States has traditionally rejected the concept of a government denying individuals the right to practice their religion and, as a result, has benefited from a rich variety of religious heritages in this country;
>
> Whereas the religious practices of the American Indian (as well as Native Alaskan and Hawaiian) are an integral part of their culture, tradition and heritage, such practices forming the basis of Indian identity and value systems;
>
> Whereas the traditional American Indian religions, as an integral part of Indian life, are indispensable and irreplaceable;
>
> Whereas the lack of a clear, comprehensive, and consistent Federal policy has often resulted in the abridgment of religious freedom for traditional American Indians;
>
> Whereas such religious infringements result from the lack of knowledge or the insensitive and inflexible enforcement of Federal policies and regulations premised on a variety of laws;
>
> Whereas such laws were designed for such worthwhile purposes as conservation and preservation of natural species and resources but were never intended to relate to Indian religious practices and, therefore, were passed without consideration of their effect on traditional American Indian religions;
>
> Whereas such laws and policies often deny American Indians access to sacred sties required in their religions, including cemeteries;
>
> Whereas such laws at times prohibit the use and possession of sacred objects necessary to the exercise of religious rites and ceremonies;
>
> Whereas traditional American Indian ceremonies have been intruded upon, interfered with, and in a few instances banned: Now, therefore, be it
>
> *Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of American in Congress assembled,* That henceforth it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials and traditional rights.
>
> [Editor's Note: This Act was Amended in 1994 by the addition of 42 USC 1966a which provides certain protection for the "traditional Indian ceremonial use of peyote."][40]

Indian Sacred Sites. If your heritage site is managed by an agency of the United States government, a more recent order is also something with which you should be familiar. In 1996, an Executive Order titled "Indian Sacred Sites" was signed "to improve the internal management of the executive branch" of the United States government. It addresses accommodation of sacred sites, procedures, and property interests.[41]

Special Government-to-Government Relationship. In the United States, Native American governments do not consider non-endorsement of religion to be an issue or conflict for their peoples. Additionally, although many of these tribes and nations are physically located within the borders of the United States, they are accorded some of the rights of sovereign nations. The United States and its agencies consult with them on a government-to-government basis. These special considerations all play a role in how an interpreter of a heritage site with ties to one or more of these groups conducts their work. Governments, religions, and rights is a complex subject but one with which we, as interpreters and managers, must be familiar — and one with which the public should be familiarized through interpretive services at sites where this subject is applicable.

Misconceptions about Indigenous People

An aspect of interpreting ancestral peoples is the erroneous idea that many of these cultures mysteriously, suddenly, inexplicably vanished. Often a more accurate picture is that these cultures continue to exist. One culture may have merged with another, and now a new culture exists today in some modified form. Or the pueblo on the next mesa is populated by people whose ancestors lived in the structures we're walking through today. Separating current understanding from sometimes-popularized *mis*understanding is of paramount importance to interpretive work, to the extent that it can be accomplished. This is done through the appropriate use of sound scholarship.

Indigenous people have sometimes been idealized to have lived in perfect balance with nature. Some aspects of this idea may be truer than others, but it seems clear that this simplistic viewpoint has done harm to the construction of more accurate understandings of what life was like for people in ages past. The interpreter is responsible for conveying valid, culturally acceptable, current knowledge.

Indigenous Spirituality and Cultural Restrictions

Sometimes indigenous people cannot share knowledge about a specific topic. Sometimes their culture only allows a male to communicate a particular story to another male.

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40 ***American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978;*** Hamline University, School of Law; http://web.hamline.edu./law/lawrelign/sacred/airfa78.ssw.htm (2004).

41 ***White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Executive Order No. 13007 "Indian Sacred Sites," May 24, 1996;*** Office of Tribal Justice, United States Department of Justice; http://www.usdoj.gov/otj/sacred.htm (2004).

Sometimes they may choose *not* to tell you something about their own or another clan. Sometimes they'll tell you something but ask that you not tell others, or expect this of you without mentioning it directly. Maybe a specific story is only told during winter; never in summer. And so on. Cultural restrictions come in a variety of forms, and interpreters working with indigenous peoples or interpreting resources associated with them need to be aware of, and respect, such cultural taboos and share an understanding of such limitations with visitors.

Multiple Perspectives and Attribution

Sometimes interpreters conduct research into the history of an indigenous people via archeology, ethnography, or through other means that portray a different series of events than do the oral histories of the people themselves. How does an interpreter treat this information? Both sources have sound scholarship behind them to the extent they can: The archeologist did not live 450 years ago; members of the contemporary tribe did not live 450 years ago. The archeologist used science to help her understand the people; the descendents are the recipients of stories that have been passed on from one generation to another to preserve the memory of important past events.

The interpreter once again turns to the usefulness of attribution. He or she develops the talk outline to include what scientists think happened, and attributes these thoughts to the appropriate archeologists and ethnographers. The interpreter develops the talk to also include what the descendents say happened, and attributes these thoughts to the people who are connected to this place today. The public internalizes these multiple perspectives, visitor by visitor. Despite what some visitors may think, interpreters are not charged to have *the* answer, the *only* answer, or *only one* answer. Knowledge is inextricably connected to context and subjective perspective. One of the best things we can do is help visitors understand this idea. ••

Concluding Thoughts

The work of interpreters has become an increasingly challenging endeavor. Establishing clear communication and fostering active civic engagement is more complex than ever before. In this publication, we've attempted to explore interpretive theory and practice from a variety of perspectives to help interpreters and managers better accomplish the mission of their park's interpretation & education program.

The role of the heritage interpreter can be seen as akin to a sacred trust — guiding people to more deeply and thoughtfully explore the world, enhancing a sense of personal enrichment, and creating opportunities for more meaningful participation in society. Quality of life is inextricably tied to a sense of place in this world — and sense of place is intimately tied to personal and shared experience of heritage.

By fostering personal connections to heritage resources, the interpreter also facilitates the sense of stewardship necessary to guarantee that the integrity of those resources will be protected and maintained unimpaired to enrich the lives of generations to come. For those of us in the profession, there is great satisfaction in providing the public service that enhances understanding, appreciation, protection, and perpetuation of the resources we love. By helping others to search out their own place in the great tapestry of life, we can better find our own.

As learner, teacher, guide, caretaker, and public servant, the interpreter occupies a unique and valuable niche in modern society. Like the bard, sage, muse, and court jester of elder days, the interpreter uses storytelling to provoke thoughtful introspection and enhance enjoyment while carefully respecting individual perspective and independence.

That can often be a stern test of character. The degree to which most interpreters are emotionally and intellectually invested in the heritage resources they interpret can lead to impatience, overzealousness, and arrogance vis-à-vis the visiting public. It's all too easy for the interpreter to conclude that he or she knows best. We must constantly be aware of our own weaknesses and biases — and of the fact that people invariable decide for themselves what heritage resources mean. We must trust that an honest, professional, diverse, and sound presentation of ideas and perspectives will lead visitors to find value in heritage — and that once heritage is valued, it will be cherished and protected.

As daunting and humbling as it may be to take on the responsibility to help others discover meaning, the work of the interpreter is always thoughtful, challenging, and meaningful.

Do good work — and have fun with it. ••

Essential Tools for Interpreters

Interp Guide

The Philosophy and Practice of Connecting People to Heritage

This guide compellingly defines the profession of interpretation within the context of contemporary culture. It explores how cutting-edge interpretive philosophy and practice can help interpreters and managers provide services that accomplish the mission of interpretation: *Providing enhanced opportunities for visitors to explore their own intellectual and emotional connections to the natural and cultural resources that comprise shared heritage.* If you are a front-line interpreter, interpretive supervisor, or manager of heritage resources, this guide was written with you in mind. *January 2005 edition.*

CIP Guide

A Guide to Comprehensive Interpretive Planning

This guide describes how planners of the Office of Interpretation and Education, Intermountain Region (IMR), National Park Service approach comprehensively planning a park's interpretation & education program. It provides many insights into the planning process and is useful for anyone intending to conduct, or participate in, planning for interpretation. It also contains the detailed scripts used by IMR interpretation planners to organize and conduct comprehensive interpretive planning workshops, and contains other elements that are important to the process. These include a scope of work template, a planner-park checklist, a stakeholder invitation letter, sign-in sheets, agendas, workshop handouts, and more than 30 sets of significance statements and primary interpretive themes from a variety of parks. *February 2005 edition.*

Additional Electronic Templates. *CIP Guide* references four stand-alone electronic templates that are designed in Microsoft Word® XP format. These templates are available upon request and include the following files:

- Archive of the Comprehensive Interpretive Planning Process
- Foundational Information for Use Between Workshops
- CIP Component 1: Long-Range Interpretive Plan
- CIP Component 3: Interpretive Database

The publications in this series are periodically updated to reflect the ongoing evolution of the profession of Interpretation. These publications are intended to be freely distributed using electronic mail. They are designed to be printed by the recipient using Microsoft Word® XP computer software. Graphic designers will note that these publications use type families Times New Roman, Arial, and Arial Black, and that they're designed to print two-sided on 8½" x 11" letter-sized paper, portrait orientation, on a Hewlett-Packard LaserJet 5 Si NX printer. Page counts are measured cover-to-cover. All federal government employees can download these files at our Intermountain Region Intranet address: **http://im.den.nps.gov/den_interptools.cfm**

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Richard Kohen and Kim Sikoryak.

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