

Visitor Observation for Interpretation

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Introduction

Years of experience have probably taught you a great deal about the visitors to your area. Now you need to transfer this information into a system that provides the weapons needed to fight the accountability struggle. The system proposed here probably can't beat your own system for providing data about the visitor, but it can get the data into a format that you can use to justify your program and meet the needs of your visitor.

The system described here is a tool, not an answer. It provides a way to find out more about the park visitor while respecting governmental guidelines. It will require that you observe visitors and transfer the observations into useable information which can aid your interpretive effort.

Observable visitor characteristics do not show a complete picture of the visitor. They can be misleading. Therefore, we caution you to refrain from stereotyping visitors. Visitors simply will not always fit into the slots provided. They sometimes fit only if you force them, but then would probably not attend the interpretive effort designed for them. Naturally, not all visitors will attend interpretation. We are not advocating that they do, only that they be provided the opportunity.

We can talk about accountability and pleasing the visitor forever, but the real benefit from this system will come from you and your staff spending the time in the field observing visitors in a systematic manner. The system can be used to evaluate on-going programs and determine where there is a need for expansion or change. Most importantly, it can get interpreters to acknowledge the visitors as individuals, catering to their interests and providing knowledge that is uniquely designed for them.

The methods described in this handbook provide a way to look at visitors to eliminate bias and stimulate thought. You will observe the following characteristics.

Characteristics

Observation Type puts your data in context for comparison. It tells you who is participating in interpretation, who's not, and who's in the park.

Time helps you to identify program conflicts with other activities and patterns of visitor use. What are people doing during the time of your program?

Day may determine who's in the park according to weekday, weekend, and holiday use. Does visitation change within the week?

Temperature influences comfort. Comfort may influence participation in leisure activities such as interpretation.

Other Environmental Factors also influence comfort and therefore participation.

Number in Group provides group size. Large groups often don't seek out interpretive activities since many of their social and interpretive needs seem to be met within the group.

Social Groups often have different requirements and interests. Individuals take on certain roles depending on the group they're in. Are you catering to select groups and not to others?

Origin may imply cultural differences, language barriers, and differing interpersonal behavior. Each potentially affects interpretation.

Special Populations need consideration to reduce barriers (language, physical, and emotional) between them and the resource you're interpreting.

Month shows seasonal variations in visitor use for planning and staffing.

Park Use implies the visitors' familiarity or interest in the park. They may have visited the park before, suggesting the need for a changing program. If they are repeat visitors, do they already know the material you are presenting or, if they are first time users, can they understand the program context?

Activity lets you know what the visitors do while they're not attending interpretive programs. It indicates visitor interests that may expand or alter your program.

Location helps you find visitor concentrations and potential locations for interpretive activities. A program presented quite a distance from visitor concentrations does not attract the casually interested visitor who may not know what is going on.

Interpretive Activity gives you a breakdown, by activity, of attendance for certain program types. You can determine the costs of program types in relation to their popularity and function.

This handbook is divided into two sections: Method and Application. The Application section is more interesting and exciting than the Method. But the method is needed for the results. Therefore, we have provided as much as you should know to get results.

The Method section covers how to observe, when to observe, and what to observe. An appendix describes in greater detail materials needed for observation and collection.

The Application section asks questions, suggests

Method

applications for data, and explains some examples from past work.

One final note before presenting this process—a number of people contributed to this effort. The most beneficial contribution was provided by the staff from the National Park Service areas that tested the system during the summer of 1978. We thank them.

Observational Methods

The observational methods described here do not require OMB approval. You simply watch and record visitor group characteristics on a card. (A visitor group can be identified as those folks traveling together.)

Visitor groups are observed in three different situations as:

Participants—those visitor groups going to programs during the time you sample

Non-Participants—those visitor groups not attending the program, but located near the program area

All Park Visitors—those visitor groups that either pass by a point of sample (generally an entrance station or visitor center) or that you pass while traveling through the park

The observational methods compare data using either Participants and Non-Participants or Participants and All Park Visitors. Data gathered for each observational method is basically the same, only collection times and locations differ. The methods are used for different purposes and in different situations. You can use both, but usually one method or the other is best suited for a situation. You begin each method by observing Participants so you can understand who is using the interpretive activities. This Participant data is then compared with either Non-Participants or All Park Visitors, depending upon your park situation and how you want to use the data. You will need to decide which method is best for your park after reviewing the methods and your situation.

The Participant/Non-Participant method compares visitors attending with those not attending interpretive programs but in approximately the same time and place. This comparison will help you understand who your interpretive program is serving and who it is not serving. In addition, this method provides information on what the Non-Participants are doing and where they are located. This information can be used to select times, locations, and content for programs to reach the Non-Participants with data on everyone using the park. This allows you to determine if your Participant group is representative of the overall park population. Otherwise, you may be looking at only those visitor groups in the park during interpretive activities. You could be missing visitors who want interpretation.

The Participant/Non-Participant method is more

useful in small parks. A small park often has either a concentrated visitor area that is easily accessible or a low visitation that is easily counted. The main criteria for using this method is whether or not most visitor groups in the park will be counted if both Participant and Non-Participant data is collected.

Ft. Union was able to count every visitor group in the park during the time of the sample as a participant or non-participant.

The Participant/All Park Visitor method is generally used in larger parks when there is little opportunity to get non-participants. A large park is usually more diverse in its visitor concentrations and has enough visitors to be difficult to observe them during one observation period.

Observers at Arches were unable to travel to both ends of the park before the program was completed; therefore, the observer had to be careful not to count visitors returning from the program as Non-Participants.

Any park can use a combination of both methods and derive the benefits of both.

Rocky Mountain used the Participant/Non-Participant method for evening programs, observing Non-Participants in the campground. They used Participant/All Park Visitor with several guided walks that departed from roadside parking lots that were not near any other visitor concentration.

Before deciding which method to use, consider that the Participant/Non-Participant method compares data on folks visiting the park at the same time and in the same approximate location. For example, if young couples represented 50% of the Non-Participants and only 5% of the Participants, you may not be reaching the young couples in that area with that program.

On the other hand, the Participant/All Park Visitor method attempts to determine if the Participants are representative of the total park population. For example, if young couples at all programs represented 50% of the audience and 60% of the park visitation, you are probably addressing a representative portion of young couples.

You need to decide which method is best for your situation, or how to use a combination of the two. Please consider the following and then decide.

1. A small park has low visitation, making observation easy, or central visitor concentrations, making observation accessible.

2. A large park has high visitation, making observation difficult in a limited time, or diverse visitor concentrations, making observation locations difficult to get to.

3. The Participant/Non-Participant method compares visitors in approximately the same place and at the same time.

4. The Participant/All Park Visitor method compares visitors attending programs with everyone entering the park.

5. Both systems can be worked into one. You can collect Participant, Non-Participant, and All Park Visitor data and compare them.

We would suggest these methods for the following types of parks.

Participant/Non-Participant: Lyndon B. Johnson, Ft. Union, Canyonlands

Participant/All Park Visitor: Padre Island, Arches
Combined Methods: Rocky Mountain

The system used to collect this data involves not only selection of an observational method, but also recording the data on a card for fast accurate analysis. The card system is explained in detail in Appendix A.

DECIDE WHICH METHOD IS BEST FOR YOUR SITUATION BEFORE GOING ON.

Sample Selection

The observation of selected parts of a total population is a sample. Sampling permits you to gather information about a total population while only looking at a few pre-designated cases. This saves time, money, and effort. In this case, you will sample interpretive programs.

Normally, you will sample every month during the first year the program is in operation. After the first year, sample selectively to address special problem areas, to see if program changes are achieving goals, and to monitor other changes in the visitor/interpretive program relationship.

Selecting Programs to be Observed

Only a few interpretive programs are observed from each interpretive program type, therefore, those few must be carefully selected. When you implement the following steps, your sample should provide a reliable estimate of your population of Participants, Non-Participants and/or All Park Visitors.

1. Prepare a sampling schedule (refer to Example

Sampling Schedule, page 9) as you prepare your monthly interpretive program schedule. Do this by listing each program type given during the month.

A program type is interpretation in the same interpretive category, given on the same time of day and in the same location. One program type is the evening program presented nightly at the amphitheater. Another is the exhibit area in the visitor center. To make sure you sample all programs being presented, we have broken program types into two categories: scheduled and continuous.

Scheduled programs are presented on a regular basis, although not given constantly. They are usually presented by an interpreter (i.e. evening talks, guided walks, living history scheduled three times a day).

Continuous programs are presented constantly during the day or so often as to appear constant to the visitor. They include most nonpersonal programs, as well as continual programs (i.e. self-guided trails, wayside exhibits, living history on a continual basis).

2. Now list the number of times each program type is offered each month. Scheduled programs are listed the actual number of times offered during the month (i.e. the evening talk at the amphitheater is presented 30 times in June). Continuous programs are listed the number of times they are offered during the month. For sampling purposes, we suggest listing by the number of two-hour blocks they are available 30 days, times 4 two-hour blocks [9am to 5pm] = 120 two-hour blocks.) This means your exhibits are "offered" times during the month.

3. Use 2% as your sampling rate. Take 2% of the total number of times each interpretive program type is offered. This is the number of times you will sample that interpretive program during the month. Always round off the figure to the next highest whole number (i.e. .032 becomes 1).

To calculate sampling the evening amphitheater talk:

$$\begin{array}{lll} 30 \text{ programs} & \times .02 & = .60 \text{ rounded up to } 1. \\ (\text{times given} & (2\% \text{ rate} & (\text{number of evening} \\ \text{in June}) & \text{of sam-} & \text{amphitheater talks to} \\ & \text{pling}) & \text{sampled in June}) \end{array}$$

To calculate sampling your exhibit area:

$$\begin{array}{lll} 8 \text{ hours} & \div 2 \text{ hours} & = 4 \text{ blocks} \\ (\text{full day}) & (\text{sampling} & (\text{possible sampling} \\ & \text{block}) & \text{blocks per day}) \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{lll} 4 \text{ blocks} & \times 30 \text{ days} & = 120 \text{ blocks} \\ (\text{sampling} & (\text{in June}) & \text{sample in June}) \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{lll} 120 \text{ blocks} & \times .02 & = 2.40 \text{ rounded up to } 3. \\ (\text{possible -} & (2\% \text{ rate} & (\text{number of two-hour} \\ \text{sampling} & \text{of sam-} & \text{sampling blocks} \\ \text{blocks}) & \text{pling}) & \text{scheduled for June}) \end{array}$$

Therefore, you sample two-hour blocks of the exhibit area three times in June.

4. All park Visitors are sampled in a similar manner to continuous programs. If your entrance station is open 10 hours each day, you will have potentially 150 possible sampling times.

$$\begin{array}{lll} 10 \text{ hours} & \div 2 \text{ hours} & = 5 \text{ blocks} \\ (\text{full day}) & (\text{sampling} & (\text{possible sampling} \\ & \text{block}) & \text{blocks per day}) \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{lll} 5 \text{ blocks} & \times 30 \text{ days} & = 150 \text{ blocks} \\ (\text{sampling} & (\text{in June}) & (\text{possible times to} \\ \text{blocks/day}) & & \text{sample in June}) \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{lll} 150 \text{ blocks} & \times .02 & = 3. \\ (\text{possible} & (2\% \text{ rate} & (\text{number of two-} \\ \text{sampling} & \text{of sampling}) & \text{hour sampling blocks} \\ \text{blocks}) & & \text{for June}) \end{array}$$

Therefore, you sample All Park Visitors 3 times in June by either observing visitors as they exit/enter the entrance station or as you travel through the park.

5. Now you need to select sampling dates. List programs the number of times each is to be sampled (2% of the total). Determine sample dates by using the random date table on page 33. Start by picking an arbitrary place on the table (close your eyes and drop a pencil on the numbers, select the closest date to the tip of the pencil). Write that date opposite the first program to be sampled. Continue down the list of dates, assigning a date to each program to be sampled.

6. If you have interpretive programs that are offered more than once on the days you have selected to sample, you need to determine which program will be sampled. Choose times or programs to provide data from a wide range of situations (i.e. use the first date for sampling the morning program, the next date for the afternoon program; or sample All Park Visitors once each in the morning, early afternoon, late afternoon).

Example of Sampling Schedule

<i>Master List</i>	<i>Number of Times to be Sampled</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Times</i>
	Visitor Center		
1	Exhibit Area:	1 June 14	9 - 11 am
2		2 June 3	1 - 3 pm
3		3 June 27	3 - 5 pm
4	Evening Program	1 June 8	
5	All Park Visitors	1 June 17	3 - 5 pm
6		2 June 19	1 - 3 pm
7		3 June 26	9 - 11 am

7. Develop a master list of the programs to be sampled during the month by assigning each program a number (far left column). This will serve as a reference for later use by corresponding to a master card for each sample. You will be able to sort for selected programs at any time by knowing the month and the assigned number.

Data Collection

Before Data Collection

1. Decide on an observational method
2. Prepare a master list of programs to be sampled. Randomly select a sample of programs.
Assign and train a specific individual or individuals to collect observations. Remember, you can collect the data yourself.
Rocky Mountain used their park librarian, A YACC, to collect observations.
Canyonlands used SCA's and seasonals.
Ft. Union used a VIP.
The interpretive technician and interpreters at Padre Island collected data.
The mule skinnners and bus drivers at LBJ collected data.
The district ranger and ranger/interpreter collected data at Arches.
5. Review the appendices in the back of this handbook to familiarize yourself with Keysort and the Variable Definitions.

Guide to Data Collection

The Observation Guide on page 11 will give specific direction to implement the two observational methods.

The top half of the guide provides details for the Participant/Non-Participant method and the lower half addresses the Participant/All Park Visitor method. Information is given on where, who, and when to observe. Example situations are also provided.

Guidelines for Observers

1. Wear civilian clothes when observing.
2. Select observation locations where you can easily observe all social group members, but not be obvious.
3. Answer any questions politely, but keep observing.
4. In most cases, it's possible to be an interpreter and an observer at the same time. Only at parks where all populations are visible during the time of the program and the number is small, might the interpreter be able to do both.
The interpreter at Canyonlands found this simple to do in the evening because of the small number in the campground and the location of the program.
5. Enter any special comments on the back of the card (i.e. type of physical handicap observed, overheard reason for not going to the interpretive program).
6. After collecting data, return to the office and edge punch the holes adjacent to the items you marked during observations. One person may be appointed to punch and check all cards.
Canyonlands and LBJ used office staff to punch the cards. Where this is done, make sure your cards are legible before you turn them in.

Participant/Non-Participant Method

	Where	Who	When	Stop
<i>Participants</i>	Collect the observations at the interpretive program site where all groups arriving can be easily observed.	Observe all social they arrive to take interpretive program.*	groups as part in the For scheduled interpretive programs, arrive at the site 45 minutes prior to the start of the program. For continuous interpretive programs, observe for one hour, beginning at an assigned time.	At the end of one hour or the beginning of the interpretive program, stop observing.
<i>Non-Participants</i>	Collect observations in all visitor concentration areas easily accessible to the interpretive program sites, or where you can see a decision being made, such as a tour ticket desk. If you look at a map of your area, visitor concentration areas are usually obvious. We suggest traveling to as many concentrations as possible, while staying close to the program site.	Observe all social taking part in the program.	groups not interpretive Begin observing non-participants when the interpretive program starts, or for continuous programs, begin at assigned times (usually the second hour after collecting participants).	When you have completed your route past all the groups in the approximate area, stop observing.
<i>Example</i>	At Padre Island, Non-Participants were collected during an evening program in the campground. LBJ collected Participant and Non-Participant data at the same time at the tour desk where visitors picked up tour tokens. At that point the decision to participate or not to participate was obvious.			

Participant/All Park Visitor Method

<i>Participants</i>	Collect the observations at the interpretive program site where all groups arriving can be easily observed.	Observe all social they arrive to take interpretive program.*	groups as part in the For scheduled programs arrive at the site 45 minutes prior to the start of the program. For continuous programs, observe for one hour, beginning at an assigned time.	At the end of one hour or the beginning of the interpretive program, stop observing.
<i>All Park Visitors</i>	Collect observations at a location where most visitors will pass (i.e. entrance station) or collect the sample as you move through the district, unit, or park, traveling to all visitor concentration areas.	Observe all social encountered.	groups Observe for two hours beginning at assigned times.	At the end of two hours, stop observing.
<i>Example</i>	At Arches, All Park Visitors were collected at the entrance station. At Chickasaw NRA the Platt Unit was traveled from one end to the other sampling all visitor concentration areas.			

*For example, you estimate about 200 people will take part in a program. Past experience tells you there will be an average of 4 persons per group, giving you an estimate of 50 social groups. You think you can observe 25 groups per hour, so you will need a second

observer to collect an observation on each group. (Experienced observers can probably observe 50 groups/hour, but it may take practice to attain that level.)

Application

If you've started thinking of all the possible comparisons you could make between variables, you can see it's quite a list. Our purpose here is to show you a few major comparisons that will be helpful in most park situations. Generate other questions to answer any park specific questions you might have.

The data is most useful when analyzed according to Observational Method. Comparisons should be made in the context of Participant/Non-Participant or Participant/All Park Visitor. Either method will tell you about Participants. Participant/Non-Participant allows you to compare Participants with visitors nearby, but not participating. Participant/All Park Visitor tells you how users of the interpretive program compare with overall park use.

Begin by sorting your data into two stacks, either Participant/Non-Participant or Participant/All Park Visitor. Then answer the following questions by continuing to sort for the variables described and placing the data into tables.

Tables can be developed by counting the number of cards for a selected variable using the Keysort system. The tables suggested here are developed by sorting and counting each variable below (i.e. sort for Social Group in both Participants and Non-Participants).

<i>Social Group</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Non-Participants</i>
Young Couple		
Middle Couple		
Old Couple		
Peer Group		
Nuclear Family		
.		
.		

Data Application

Participant/Non-Participant Analysis

(Sort for Social Group in both Participants and Non-Participants, as set up in the table example above.)

*Is the distribution of Social Group among Participants the same as among Non-Participants?

If a difference exists, who is the program serving who is not represented? Interpretive activities might be redesigned or added to broaden appeal to social groups not represented.

In many parks' interpretation, nuclear families generally represent a high proportion of participation as opposed to non-participation. Can you broaden the appeal? Extended families and multifamilies quite often do not come to interpretive programs and seem content in their own social group.

(Sort for Time, Day, and Month in both Participant and Non-Participant.)

*How do Participant/Non-Participant ratios vary with time (during day, during week, during season)? Low Participant rates during certain times should encourage you to change times, days, or seasons. Are temperatures and environmental factors having a detrimental effect on your program? Can you make the situation comfortable?

Park visitors seek out interpretation at convenient, comfortable times. You need to know typical visitor schedules and mesh this with your interpretive schedule.

(Sort for Activity and Location in Non-Participants.)

*What are Non-Participants doing and where are they during interpretive activities?

Activities and Locations should give you a good idea of what the Non-Participant is interested in. Can you develop a program on that interest or in that location?

Evening campground strollers might be offered an evening wildlife observation walk, or a roving interpreter.

(Sort for Social Group in Interpretive Activities among Participants.)

*Does Social Group distribution vary among Interpretive Activities?

Certain interpretive program types have a limited appeal to some Social Groups. Review your program to ensure persons seeking interpretation to have alternatives.

Long hikes may attract few Older Couples.

Evening programs attract few Peer Groups.

(Sort for Time, Day, and Month in Social Group among Participants.)

*How does Social Group among Participants vary with Time (during day, during week, during season)?

Time/Social Group relationships might suggest time changes or altering program format and content.

Families with young children are less likely to attend late evening programs. Families attend less frequently during the week.

rt for Origin in both Participants and Non-Participants.)

*What is the distribution of Origin among Participants and Non-Participants?

If differences exist, your program may be presenting cultural barriers. Is language a barrier? Do different Origins have different activity interests? Do you publicize and present programs in ways and where different origins could attend?

Interpretation generally seems to be a white, middle-class American phenomenon.

(Sort for Special Populations among Participants and Non-Participants.)

*What is the distribution of Special Populations among Participants and Non-Participants?

Interpretive programs often present physical or social barriers to participation for non-English speaking park visitors and persons with mobility or other handicaps. If special populations are represented among the Non-Participants, have you attempted to eliminate barriers?

Acknowledge the handicap by offering help where needed, i.e. "We'll have ramps at each stop along the bus route to help you on and off."

Discussion

This method will show differences between the Participant and Non-Participant. Once these differences are acknowledged, you can make changes adapt your existing program to your visitor.

changes may include placing more emphasis on a successful program, providing programs at different times and locations, or experimenting with new programs for groups not reached by interpretation. The results of this study should also provide the basis for cost benefit analysis of your program. Not only can you provide numbers associated with particular interpretive program types, but you will be able to comment on how the programs fit into the overall interpretive effort for visitors.

Participant/All Park Visitor Analysis

(Sort for Social Group in both Participant and All Park Visitor.)

*Is the distribution of Social Group among Participants the same as among All Park Visitors?

If a difference exists, who is the program serving, who is not represented? Are interpretive programs available and attractive to those persons not served?

Remember you are dealing with ratios, not actual numbers here.

Older couples are found in the park but not as frequently at interpretive activities. They may retire early in the evening or have a hard time hearing you. Are you telling them anything worth coming to hear?

(Sort for Activity and Location in All Park Visitors.)

*What are All Park Visitors doing and where are they located?

Visitors generally concentrate at major interest points or service centers. Do your publicity and program efforts take advantage of this?

A visitor can't attend a program if she/he doesn't know about it!

(Sort for Origin in both Participants and All Park Visitors.)

*What is the distribution of Origin among Participants and All Park Visitors?

If a difference exists, your program may not be available on topics other Origins can make use of. The program may also present cultural barriers.

Other origins are often found in the park, but are seldom participating in interpretation. If you have a population not represented, contact someone or a group that can help—you might have a staff member or hire one to help provide adequate interpretive services for these visitors.

(Sort for Special Populations in Participants and All Park Visitors.)

*What is the distribution of Special Populations among Participants and All Park Visitors?

Interpretive programs often present physical or social barriers to participation for non-English speaking park visitors and person with mobility or other handicaps. If Special Populations are represented among All Park Visitors, have you attempted to eliminate these barriers. Are programs available at locations suitable for Special Populations?

Once again, let the visitor know you can help by symbols or verbal communication.

(Sort for Park Use in both Participants and All Park Visitors.)

Is the distribution of Park Use among Participants the same as among All Park Visitors?

Many interpretive programs seem to serve the first time, out-of-state visitor best. Does your program appeal to the repeat or local visitor? This can not only help to build a strong local constituency, but may also address the visitor

populations responsible for most incidents.

Variety may be the spice of life, especially for repeat visitors. Quite often the repeat visitors are also repeat users of interpretive programs. Also, most visitors are proud of their home; comments on their state (from license tags) can make the program more personal.

Discussion

This method shows differences (if there are any) between the Participant and All Park Visitor. These differences may suggest times and locations when you might reach the visitors not in the park during interpretive programs. Although the above comments may seem to be directed at providing interpretation for everyone, we do not advocate that all visitors must attend. We're simply advocating that most visitors should have an opportunity to attend interpretive activities responsive to their needs. This is your job, to provide the most effective interpretive effort to support resource management and to get the most out of budget dollars.

Future Possibilities

Generating New Questions

The process of answering the questions in the previous sections has probably raised more questions about your park visitor. Some of these may not be answerable through this system of visitor observation. However, through additional informal and formal research programs you can continue to expand your understanding of park visitors.

You can address questions your data have raised through directed observation or informal conversation. For example, if your data shows older couples are not attending your evening programs, make it a point to observe what they're doing during those program times or to talk with them. You can ask, within a conversation, how your program can serve the needs of park visitors like themselves.

Formal research projects can be designed to handle broader questions. For example, your data might have shown few minorities attending interpretive programs, although many were in the park during the programs. You may choose to develop a research project which studies minority cultures to determine if interpretation can be of interest to those cultures,

and what modifications are needed. Some of your questions might also be incorporated into other research studies. If you have special questions, you can integrate them into a different study. Data from your visitor observations may facilitate other studies or direct research efforts.

Use With Other Data Systems

The strength of your data can be increased by combining it with other available information. Monthly and annual public use reports give total numbers of visitors participating in certain activities. Your visitor observations can tell you approximate percentages of handicapped and minorities being served, in relation to total numbers.

The Park Visitation Census now being proposed for future Servicewide use is designed to use age, social group, origin, and special population breakdowns similar to those you've collected. Your data and the census will permit you not only to understand who is doing what, but also how many activities, interpretive and otherwise, they're involved in and in what order they're doing them.

Extending your data through other systems has an obvious pitfall. The data will not always be comparable. Just remember that the purpose is not to make statistical summaries, but to gain insights on visitation and to provide better interpretive services.

Sell Your Program/Support Your Decisions

Combined with staff and budget information, your visitor observations can give you relative costs to provide interpretive services and to communicate with visitor groups.

Requests for new programs or staff can be supported with data pointing out a clientele not being served or a time when visitors are present and staff are not available to provide interpretive services.

Statement for Interpretation

Finally, your visitor observations will give you data to "fill in the blanks" in the visitor use portion of the Statement for Interpretation. After you've collected data for a year, you'll be able to provide most of the needed information for Visitation Analysis.

Remember, when the Statement for Interpretation is reviewed by those above, it can be a valuable tool for you, reflecting changes and needed responses.

Identifying visitor characteristics for interpretation is a step toward understanding the role and function of the interpretive process. The action of incorporating these answers into your programming efforts is your responsibility. The techniques suggested in this report require a commitment of time, thought, and action. Sampling reduces the time commitment while providing reliable data. Answering the suggested questions and reviewing the implications provide a stimulus for thought about your own interpretive situation and a basis for action.

Properly applied, the process suggested in this report will provide:

1. a firsthand look at visitors as they relate to the park and specifically to interpretation,
2. data, systematically collected, which you can use to make interpretive programming decisions, and
3. a basis for intergrating other data systems into interpretive programming.

Keysort System

The keysort system allows you to record your visitor observations on a printed card, to store the data on the card indefinitely, and to retrieve your data from the card, quickly, without a computer.

Recording Observations

Observe the visitor groups and mark the box identifying the characteristics you observed. When necessary (i.e. comment, environmental factor, special population, origin, other), write any comments you might have about the variables you observed or couldn't observe, on the back of the card in the space provided.

Recording your Observations

When you return to headquarters, use the edge punch to notch the observed characteristics.



Record on the back of one card in each sample (Participant, Non-Participant, or All Park Visitor) the information requested about the sample. This is the Master Card.

Once the data has been punched, you can group all cards together for storage until you are ready for analysis.

Retrieving your Data

To sort the cards, stack all cards and drive the Keysort needle through the desired hole. The punched cards will fall out. The cards that are not punched will stay in the stacks. After dropping out the punched cards for each variable, count the number of cards and record it in your table for analysis (See page13).

front

back

DATE START	DATE END	ALL PARK VISIT	MUSEUM VISIT	ART VISIT	ENVIRONMENTAL VISIT	WEEK END	WEEK END	HOLIDAY DAY	LESS DAY	BOAT DAY	OVER BOAT	ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS
WALKS TOURS												
TALKS												
SELF-GUIDED TOURS												
OTHER NON-PERSONAL												
ATTEND STATION ROVING												
HISTORIC DEMONSTRATION												
RECREATION DEMONSTRATION												
PRESENTATION												
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION												
OUTREACH												
A												
B												
C												
D												
E												
F												
G												
MAINTENANCE												
RELAX REST												
RECREATION												
TRAVEL												
SIGHTSEEING												
REPEAT												
FIRST TIME												
IN STATE												
OUT-OF STATE												
MASTER												
JAN												
FEB												
MAR												
APR												
MAY												
JUN												
JULY												
AUG												
SEPT												
OCT												
NOV												
DEC												
COMMENT												

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
VISITOR OBSERVATION
FOR INTERPRETATION

NUMBER

DATE _____

TITLE OF PROGRAM

TYPE OF PROGRAM

LOCATION

NAME

ORIGIN (WRITE IN NUMBERS)

_____ BLACK
_____ SPANISH-AMERICAN
_____ NATIVE-AMERICAN
_____ ORIENTAL
_____ OTHER _____

SPECIAL POPULATIONS (WRITE IN NUMBERS):

NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING
PHYSICALLY DISABLED
SENSORY DISABLED
MENTALLY DISABLED

COMMENTS

Appendix C

Variable Definition

Variables are groups of items on each card that are to be checked as observed. The front and back of the card have variables relevant to each visitor group observed, therefore, complete as many as possible with each observation. Remember, one card per visitor group is completed. Usually you will check only one item per variable in the appropriate box (exceptions are explained).

Variables are described according to their position on the card.

Top Front

Observation Type

- *Participant. A social group attending an interpretive program.
- *Non-Participant. A social group not attending the program but has had the opportunity to know about it and is still nearby. (It is difficult to define near for every situation, therefore, you must use your judgement to sample visitor concentration areas that you consider nearby.)
- All Park Visitor. A social group using the park.
- *If some in a group are Participants and others are not mark both Participant and Non-Participant and note the number of each on the back of the card, in comments.

Time of Day

- Morning. Before noon.
- Afternoon. From noon until sunset.
- Evening. After sunset.

Type of Day

- Weekday. Monday through Friday, but not a holiday.
- Weekend. Saturday or Sunday, but not a holiday nor a holiday weekend.
- Holiday. Official holiday, including locally designated holiday (non-business weekday) and associated weekend days.

Temperature

- Estimated outside temperature in degrees Fahrenheit.

Environmental Factors

Environmental factors which may influence the attendance or presentation of a program. Check this box when necessary and note on the back the type of factor (i.e. mosquitoes, winds, rain, gnats).

Left Front

Interpretive Activity

These categories are the same as those used for zero budgeting and the Statement for Interpretation.

- Walks/Tours. Interpreter-led walks and tours requiring visitors to move from location to location.
- Talks. Interpreter presentations often using a lecture format with the audience normally seated. May use audio-visual support, but few actual objects.
- Self-Guided Tours. Visitor guided from location to location by a non-personal means of interpretation (written or recorded messages).
- Other Non-Personal. Interpretation provided through non-personal media such as exhibits, audio-visual media, and signs; generally not requiring extensive visitor movement.
- Attended Station/Roving. Either an interpreter is stationed at a point in the park for the purpose of giving information/interpretation or is assigned to randomly move throughout an area providing information and interpretation.
- Historic Demonstrations. Interpretation of historic craft, practice, event, etc. using objects and normally in period costumes.
- Recreation Demonstrations. Interpretation of park resource-based recreational activity using actual objects.
- Presentation. Program by performing artists.
- Environmental Education. Formal education program in the park, normally for school groups.
- Outreach. Out-of-park interpretive programs.

Location

These seven spaces are left blank except for letters A through G to code as you wish for locations in your park. Suggested locations to develop a key for are:

- A) Campgrounds
- B) Lodges
- C) Recreation Areas (lake, picnic grounds)
- D) Interpretive Areas (trails, visitor center)
- E) Back Country (by road, unit, or district)
- F) Support Services (store, gas station)

It is important that you develop these codes for your park or district before sampling begins and use the same code throughout all sampling. It is also important that they are relevant to the sample. Think about the relationships between interpretive programming and location.

Activity

If part of the group is doing one thing and part another, mark both and note on the back of the card, in Comments.

Maintenance. Meals, setting up or taking down camp, food preparation, clean up.

Relaxation/Resting. Reading, passive games, sleeping, talking.

Recreation. Active games and park resource-based activities such as swimming and hiking.

Travel. Movement in some vehicle that can't be directly classified as a recreational activity.

Sightseeing. Movement by vehicle for the purpose of seeing the park.

Jse

Mark each applicable category. You will have to listen to conversations, look at license tags, guest registers, etc. to get this information. Whenever possible make comments about the group (i.e. group divided).

Repeat. Those visitors who have been to the park before. (Make comments if you know when they last visited or how often)

First Time. Those visitors who have not been to the park before.

In-State. Residence in the same state as the park. (May be obtained from license tag of vehicle.)

Out-of-State. Residence in another state.

Bottom Front

Master

Only one master card should be completed for each sample (Participant, Non-Participant, or All Park

Visitor). It will serve as a reference of all your sampling. Mark the first card in each sample and complete location, date, and program detail on the back.

Months of the Year

Mark the appropriate month.

Comment

Note if some unusual conditions or observations may influence interpretive programming. Write them on the back in as much detail as possible. Include the suggested variable information and other detail such as an overheard conversation or volunteered comments. Be sure to notch "comment" on the front of the card.

Right Front

Age and Sex of Each Group Member

Record the number of group members in each age category according to sex (i.e. if there were two male senior citizens in the group, record a 2 in the lower lefthand box).

Number in Group

The blanks are numbered 1 - 6 to fill in the total number of visitors in the group. If the number is over 6, write in the total.

Social Group*

Alone. One person, not visibly associated with a group.

Young Couple. One male, one female; approximately the same age—under 25.

Middle Couple. Age 25 to 65.

Old Couple. Over 65.

Peer Group. Two or more persons, approximately the same age, not meeting other group criteria.

Nuclear Family. Mother, father, and children.

One-Parent Family. One parent with children.

Extended Family. A family with other family members, (i.e. grandparents, other relatives).

Over One Family. More than one family group.

Usually obvious by more than one set of parents.

If a group is sampled (one woman, 25-65, and one boy, 13-19=single parent family) and you later realize it is part of another group (one man, 26-65, and two girls, 13-19), go ahead and redo the card (1 man, 1 woman, 25-65, plus children = nuclear family).

Origin

If it is a group of mixed origin then check both categories and record the numbers on the back of the card.

Anglo-America. A caucasian inhabitant of the United States. Other. (See back of card).

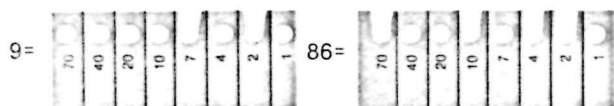
Special Populations

Check this box if there are any noticeable special characteristics for anyone in the group (see back of card).

Sample Number

The next eight boxes are marked to permit numerical ordering of programs sampled *by month*. For example, the *first* program you sample is a Talk on Tuesday, June 3. After marking June on the bottom of the card, you will mark this '1'. If you do a Non-Participant sample also, number this '1'. The next program being sampled should be clipped '2'. At the beginning of the month start numbering again. These numbers should be designated when determining the schedule so everyone will be on the same system and so they will correspond with the master list.

To record this number, four holes are used for each set of numbers from 0 - 9. These four holes are assigned the values of 7, 4, 2, 1. By notching either a single number or combination of numbers any number from 0-9 can be expressed. Two sets of numbers are provided, the ones, marked 7, 4, 2, 1; and the tens, marked 70, 40, 20, and 10. Using combinations of both sets permits 99 samples to be numbered each month.



Blanks

Blank spaces are provided for your use. You will need to determine what additional variables you want to collect (some interpreters wanted vehicle type), then list the categories you want marked (i.e. auto, van, pickup camper, travel home, trailer, other). These must be standardized before observation begins and each observer must use the same categories.

Back

Environmental Factors

Fill in the blanks with any factors influencing program attendance or presentation (usually negative factors, like mosquitoes).

Canyonlands cited wind and insects as seasonal problems.

Padre Island cited shark infestations as an occasional problem.

LBJ cited wet pavement as a problem for their horse-drawn freight wagon tours.

Comments

Fill in the blank with special remarks and comments about the group (i.e. Did the group split up? Were there any special characteristics? Did you overhear any comments that might help?).

Origin

Fill in the *number* of people per item.

Black. Persons with dark colored skin.

Spanish-American. Persons of Hispanic descent.

Native American. Includes American Indians and Eskimos.

Oriental. Includes Japanese, Chinese, etc.

Other. Write in the nationality you believe the visitors are. (You may overhear a comment or recognize a language.)

Special Populations

Fill in the *number* of visitors per item.

Non-English Speaking. Overheard conversation

Appendix D

entirely in a foreign language.

Physically Disabled. Mobility handicap (i.e. wheel-chair, braces).

Sensory Disabled. One or more of the senses severely impaired (unable to hear, speak, or see).

Mentally Disabled. Lacking some normal mental function (mentally retarded).

Master

A master card must be filled in for each sample, but only one is needed per sample (Participant, Non-Participant, All Park Visitor). It will be used in the future for referencing particular programs and should correspond with the information on the master list. Mark the front Master variable and complete the following on the back of the card:

Number. The number assigned the program when scheduled for sampling.

Date.

Title and Type of Program. The advertised title and description of the program.

Location. Where the program was presented.

Name. Name of individual taking the sample.

Bibliography

Interpretation for Handicapped Persons: A Handbook for Outdoor Recreation Personnel

Jacque Beechel. 1975

Visitor Groups and Interpretation in Parks and Other Outdoor Leisure Settings

Donald R. Field, J. Alan Wagar. 1973

Interpreting Parks for Kids—Making it Real

Gary E. Machlis, Donald R. Field. 1974

Children's Interpretation: A Discovery Book for Interpreters

Gary E. Machlis, Maureen McDonough. 1978

Interpretation for Retired Park Visitors (forthcoming)

Renee Renninger.

Order publications at the following address:

National Park Service

Cooperative Park Studies Unit

College of Forest Resources

University of Washington

Seattle, WA 98195

Keysort Notching and Sorting Manual

Litton Business Systems, Inc. 1975

Order this publication from the following address:

McBee Systems

Division of Kimball Systems

Route 50 East

Athens, Ohio 45701

Appendix E

Table of Random Dates

23	30	5	29	14	3
7	31	15	22	2	4
10	13	8	21	11	24
25	1	9	17	16	6
31	16	15	29	6	9
18	23	17	26	2	13
28	8	5	10	11	20
21	4	28	1	27	7
10	11	14	13	22	12
31	6	29	3	25	21
7	17	24	15	9	30