

INTERPRETIVE SKILLS I

nnLESSON PLAN: 14

SESSION TITLE: INTERPRETATION THROUGH VISITOR SERVICES

SESSION LENGTH: 3.5 Hours ORIG. PREPARED BY: L. Olson 1/83
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REVISED BY: W. Morris 1/92

OBJECTIVES: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify and describe at least 8 visitor center facilities/functions;
2. List and describe at least 5 techniques for providing adequate and accurate information/orientation for the park visitor;
3. List at least 5 elements that could be used to evaluate a park's visitor contact area;
4. Describe and demonstrate at least 2 techniques of a successful interpretive roving contact.

TRAINING AIDS: Flip chart, blackboard, film, corresponding equipment.

HANDOUTS: Handouts on evaluation of visitor center facilities, giving directions and dealing with people.

Content	Method	Time
<p>I. Introduction</p> <p>Beyond our formal interpretive programs, where do we come into contact with park visitors?</p> <p>1. Visitor Center</p> <p>2. Fee Collection Station</p> <p>3. Entering/leaving park</p> <p>4. Roving</p> <p>5. Etc.</p>	Brainstorming	15 Min.
<p>All of these situations are opportunities for visitor services interpretation.</p> <p>Since visitor center duty is a somewhat specialized application, we will discuss this separately. Then we will look at the interpretive rove, which illustrates all of the other situations.</p> <p>--Highlighting: Importance of visitor services (such as most visitor contacts are in VC; sometimes the <u>only</u> visitor contact; our chance to influence visitor behavior; our chance to gain support for NPS). Quote from NPS-6: "The provision of basic services for all park visitors must be the <u>first priority</u>. All other programs and amenities, however urgent or desirable, should be subordinate to this priority."</p>	Lecture	10 in.

Content	Method	Time
<p>II.Visitor Center Facilities</p> <p>--Highlights: Using the handout/worksheet, "Important Visitor Center Facilities", work the trainees through the facilities in priority order. Discuss what's good and what's bad about each.</p> <p>A.Signs B.Access C.Comfort Stations D.Drinking Fountain E.Public Telephone F.Information desk and staff G.Brochures and maps H.Exhibits I.Museums J.Sales facility (Coop. Assoc.) K.Audio-visual presentations L.Emergency Stations and procedures M.Dispatch operation</p>	<p>Lecture</p>	<p>Con't.</p>
<p>III.Your role in the operation of the visitor center facility.</p> <p>--Highlights: Referring back to the handout in Part II, Letter F is "information desk and staff". Discuss what the staff must do to operate the facility (how to give information is covered in Section IV). Continued group discussion</p> <p>A.Opening and closing procedures (on time, lights, flag, etc.) B.Informational brochures and maps (in adequate supply, accurate, timely, references) C.Check operation of any audio-visual presentations (fix, if necessary, present on time) D.Perform any minor maintenance and check the area periodically (especially the info desk area) E.Check any bulletin boards and exhibits. (timely, neat, accurate, etc.) F.Provide accurate information (possible place for break of 10 minutes)</p>	<p>Group Discussion</p>	<p>10 Min.</p>
<p>IV.Information/orientation function and YOU.</p> <p>--Highlights: Introduction to film to illustrate attitudes; use humorous handout;</p> <p>A.YOU personally</p> <p>1.Appearance (neat, clean, uniform) 2.Attitude (friendly, courteous, patient, helpful, thick-skinned (in other words, <u>professional</u>).</p>	<p>Film, One Small Step. Lecture Discussion</p>	<p>30 Min.</p>

Content	Method	Time
<p>B.YOU professionally</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Must meet the human needs and wants first. 2.Initial contact with visitor. Break the ice with a greeting and a smile. Be available and ready to serve. 3.Clarity is a virtue. Make concepts more clear by using terms, phrases, and examples your visitor can relate to. 4.Be fair to all. Equalize time spent with each visitor during peak busy times. Acknowledge those who are waiting and get right to them. 5.There's no such thing as a foolish question. Laugh all you want to in the back office, but never embarrass the visitor. 6.Know your visitor. No stereotypes 7.Use surroundings to help rather than hinder. (ex. time of day, temp., outside distortions.) 8.Handling the problem visitor <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a.get the facts b.put out the fire (calm him down) c.follow up (formal written complaints or verbal, follow up--the guy has probably got your name!) 	<p>Handout on Directions</p> <p>Role playing (participants formulate scenario)</p>	<p>50 Min.</p>
<p>V.Evaluation of visitor center operations and facilities</p> <p>-Highlights: Give out checklists on evaluating the visitor center function and on the facilities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.List some ways to increase the visitor services in your visitor center. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a.museum tours b.short orientation talks in or out of visitor center c.roving interpretation on grounds or in parking lot or museum d.short walks around the adjoining grounds 2.Elements to look for in helping evaluate a visitor contact area (see handout). 3.Have trainees go and actually evaluate a visitor contact area if time allows or have them do it for their own area. 	<p>Lecture</p>	<p>15 Min.</p>

Content	Method	Time
<p>VI.The Interpretive Rove</p> <p>Thinking back to our brainstorming at the start of this session, there are various places beyond the visitor center where we come into contact with park visitors. (Refer to flipchart.)</p> <p>Some of these have characteristics similar to those of the visitor center and utilize the skills we learned for working there. (Discuss these.)</p> <p>Some of these contact locations are vastly different and require a different set of skills. Overall, we can refer to these situations as the interpretive rove. (Discuss examples from the field when we may be put into a situation of roving.)</p>	<p>Discussion Flip chart</p>	<p>10 Min.</p>
<p>VII.Skills for the Interpretive Rove</p> <p>A.All portions of a roving contact require fast thinking (thinking on your feet), which is difficult because speed and good judgement are usually mutually exclusive entities. Your first requirement for fast thinking is the <u>decision whether or not to approach</u> a visitor or group of visitors.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. respect privacy -- if visitors look like they want to be left alone and as long as they aren't jeopardizing themselves or the resource, leave them alone! 2. determine why you want to approach <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a need to modify behavior b. an opportunity to INTERPRET 3.if you can't determine a need to approach, make yourself approachable. (same skills as in the Visitor Center) <p>B. You decided to approach the visitor - Make some observations before and during the contact. Use the information gained. (Reference knowing your visitor.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.age and composition of group 2.license plates on vehicle 3. recreation equipment (skis, binoculars, field guides, packs, cameras, etc.) 	<p>Participative Lecture</p>	<p>20 Min.</p>

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<p>4. T-shirt slogans</p> <p>C. Openers</p> <p>1.Avoid "yes" or "no" questions.</p> <p>2.Use friendly greetings with questions which will gain you even more information about the visitor.</p> <p>3.The ice-breaking question should make you sound available, not pushy. (Give and ask for examples from your group.)</p> <p>D.Assess the situation and determine your next move:</p> <p>1. Wish them a good visit and leave!</p> <p>2. Provide requested information only.</p> <p>3.Provide INTERPRETED information.</p> <p>4.Invite visitors to join you.</p> <p>VIII.Roving Interpretation</p> <p>A.Assessing how much people need -- More information than interpretation, but look for or ask for feedback.</p> <p>B.Interpret briefly, but be ready to expand if the visitor expresses interest.</p> <p>IX.Protective Action</p> <p>A.Your initial observations may indicate that the visitors are jeopardizing themselves or possibly harming the resource. You need to say something to the visitor without undue embarrassment. This situation requires maximum skills of judgement, yet they also present the highest potential for interpretation.</p> <p>X.Know what you're getting into On occasion you may encounter a situation where you need extra help:</p> <p>A. crime scene</p> <p>B. first aid emergency</p> <p>C. resource emergency (injured animal, etc.)</p>	<p>Participative Lecture</p> <p>Flip chart</p>	<p>Con't.</p>

Content	Method	Time
<p>Take action as your training allows and as you feel comfortable, document what you saw and what you did (and report it to your supervisor), call for help, and perhaps most important, know when to back away completely.</p> <p>XI.Tools for Roving</p> <p>Beyond your vast array of communication tools, interpreters need to take along the proper equipment (and know how to use it) when you go out on a roving assignment :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.park radio 2.first aid kit 3.clothing appropriate to the weather 4.park brochures/maps 5.trail guides 6.interpretive props 7.small work projects <p>If you have a work project with you (filling brochure racks, posting items on the bulletin board, resource monitoring, visitation data gathering, etc.), this will allow you to fill in the quiet moments. This could also make you more approachable; if visitors come upon you "at work", they may be intrigued by what you're doing and have questions. Make sure you look approachable!</p>	<p>Flip chart</p> <p>Flip chart</p>	
<p>XII.Putting It All into Action</p> <p>Just as we did with the skills of working at the visitor center, we are going to practice the skills of roving interpretation through role playing.</p> <p>(The roles should be assigned. Situations may either be left up to the creativity of the class or you can set them up by handing the players a sheet describing the situation. Make sure to cover all types of roving situations. This is an excellent opportunity to apply it directly to the home parks of your class.)</p>	<p>Role Playing</p>	<p>30 Min.</p>

Content	Method	Time
<p>XIII.Summary</p> <p>Throughout this session, we have been looking at visitor services interpretation -- those opportunities beyond our formal interpretive programs. We focused on the skills of working at a visitor center. Then we looked at the interpretive rove as a broad example of the communication that takes place in the park.</p> <p>(Revisit handouts, flipcharts as appropriate. Remind class of successes during role playing. Review the session objectives.)</p>	Lecture	10 in.

IMPORTANT VISITOR CENTER FACILITIES

M/Ms Park Visitor are making their first visit to Podunk Corner National Park. What are some things they need, to be able to find Around-The-Corner Visitor Center?

They have been traveling for four hours without a stop. What visitor center facilities will probably be their first priorities when they stop?

As M/Ms Park Visitor are new to the area, what visitor center facilities-functions will help eliminate the stress or confusion caused by unfamiliarity?

Now that the Visitors are feeling more relaxed with this new area, what other parts or facilities in the visitor center will be interesting/useful to them?

Oops! Ms Park Visitor just got hit in the eye by a spit ball shot from the hands of Ornery, son of M/Ms Obnoxious Visitor (no relation). What visitor center facility or facilities might she need?

DEALING WITH PEOPLE

What are some personal characteristics exhibited by the players useful in visitor center operations?

What are some professional characteristics noted?

Are there personal or professional characteristics which we should exhibit NOT noted in the film?

AT THE NPS INFORMATION DESK, YOU MUST HAVE THE:

Cheerfulness of a cricket.

Adaptability of a chameleon.

Vision of an eagle.

Stamina of a bill collector.

Skin of a rhino.

Wits of a fox.

Blindness of a bat.

Courage of a lion.

Innocence of a lamb.

Silence of a sphinx.

Tenacity of a bulldog.

Determination of a Brooklyn cab driver.

Simplicity of a jack-ass.

Complacency of a camel.

Diligence of a beaver.

Nerves of a cow.

Brass of a monkey.

Curiosity of a cat.

Friendliness of a child.

Energy of a pup.

Wisdom of an owl.