

Component for Module 311

Project Definition and Planning

PURPOSE

Managing the complexity, time requirements, and cost investments of media development can be a daunting challenge, even for experienced media professionals. The best way to ensure that a media product will provide a valuable addition to the park's interpretive program is through an integrated planning process that defines the interpretive purpose, target audience, desired outcomes, expectations, project needs and constraints for a proposed media product. Park interpreters who understand how this process works will be able to participate effectively in park media planning.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this component, learners will be able to:

--apply an integrated project definition and planning model to any media project that they are assigned;

--participate effectively on a media planning team;

--communicate effectively with HFC, other media contractors, or park partners about the purpose, expectations, and constraints of a project to which they are assigned.

APPROACH

This component presents an ordered thinking/planning process for park interpreters when embarking on any media development project. The more integrated a media project is with the park's interpretive and other planning documents, including a media plan if one exists, the more likely the project will produce successful results. A well-defined and integrated project reduces stress and uncertainty by forcing park staff to carefully consider the need, function, and constraints of a project before the endeavor begins. Work with contractors and cooperators, if involved, runs more smoothly, minimizing the risk of unmet expectations. Simple in-house interpretive projects risk being ineffective if these basic project definition elements have not been clearly identified.

When park interpreters propose new media products, or are assigned to assist in developing media, a discussion to define the elements and issues (presented in this component) will help clarify the degree of complexity and level of expertise the project requires. This can help determine whether to seek the advice/ involvement of professional media specialists. In addition, Harpers Ferry Center specialists, other contractors, subject experts, and technical advisors can provide more effective input if these elements can be clearly articulated at the outset of their involvement.

Once the basic parameters of a media project have been established, a further definition of the interpretive elements is the next important step. See the related component in this module entitled *Meaningful Media* for guidance in this critical part of the planning process. It should also

be noted that the project definition process suggested in this module fits into the larger interpretive planning process as presented in [Module 310, Planning Park Interpretation](#).

CONTENT OUTLINE:

I. Identifying interpretive need or purpose

A. Describe the interpretive need for this media project

B. Determine this project's connection to park planning documents, legislation, and/or guidelines, including how the project supports/accomplishes park objectives and GPRA goals

C. Describe how this project integrates with existing and other planned park media

D. Determine why a media product for this interpretive need should be developed at this particular time

II. Audience, outcomes, and expectations

A. Who are the intended audiences?

B. Define the desired outcomes

1. for park visitors

2. for park resources

3. other potential outcomes (e.g. for park operations, park neighbors, regional/global concerns)

C. How and where would this media product be presented and why?

D. Are park partners/cooperators or other outside interests involved and how?

E. How do their expectations for this project differ from the park's?

III. Project needs and constraints

A. What is the budgetary support?

B. What are the time constraints?

C. Identify the needed and known resources the project will require

1. physical resources including

a. specific research materials/documents

b. specific graphic resources (photos/illustrations/maps)

c. exhibit objects/artifacts/specimens

d. archival materials

- e. permission to use copyrighted/protected material
- 2. development/production assistance
 - a. research and/or text writing
 - b. content editing
 - c. photo/graphics/objects searches
 - d. curatorial services
 - e. concept development/preliminary design
 - f. subject expert consultation
 - g. facility/site consultation
 - h. safety/compliance oversight
 - i. construction/fabrication/installation assistance
- D. What level of staff time investment/involvement is park management willing/able to commit?

RESOURCES

Everyone's Welcome: Universal Access in Museums, video, American Association of Museums, 1996.

Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach, Beverly Serrell, AltaMira Press/AASLH, 1996.

Harpers Ferry Center Exhibit Planning and Design Standards, www.nps.gov.....

Harpers Ferry Center Planning and Design Database, www.nps.gov....

Harpers Ferry Handbook on Interpretive Planning.

Help for the Small Museum. Arminta Neal, Pruett Publishing, second edition, 1987.

Information Design: Tools and Techniques for Park-Produced Publications. National Park Service. 1998. Proceedings based on the workshop of the same name that was held in December 1995 at Cuyahoga Valley NRA.

Interpretive Master Planning, John A. Veverka, Falcon Press Publishing Company, Inc., 1994.

User Friendly: Hands-On Exhibits That Work, Jeff Kennedy, Association of Science-Technology Centers, 1990.

SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

1. Do a survey of existing media products in your park. How well integrated are they with each other? Can you easily identify how each one addresses specific interpretive needs of the park and the desired outcomes? Do existing interpretive planning documents identify the need for each existing project?
 2. Look through your park's current interpretive planning documents. What kinds of media development needs are identified, and what are the desired outcomes? Are some existing products slated to be replaced when funding becomes available and why?
 3. Start a list of contact people who have expertise in media planning and development. Locate and study the Harpers Ferry Center web site to determine what types of technical assistance are available.
 4. Interview interpretive planners in your regional support office about their positive and negative experiences working with park media projects.
 5. Investigate the possibilities of attending a media planning meeting at another park as an observer. Discuss the idea with your supervisor and regional/ support office interpretive planners.
 6. Put out a query on the In-Touch bulletin board for parks in your region that are currently operating with an approved park media plan. Obtain a copy to study and keep as an example.
 7. Find out if any of your park's current GPRA goals deal with media needs. What are the identified goals and how do they affect the park's desired outcomes for visitors and/or resources?
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ATTACHMENT

Preliminary Media Development Worksheet

Complete the following questionnaire before the first planning meeting with Harpers Ferry Center media specialists or contractors. This information should be used as a starting point for definition, discussion, and decision making for any media project. If you plan to contract locally for media services, or have staff expertise to produce the media in-house, HFC may still be able to provide technical assistance.

Section I -- Needs, Outcomes, and Expectations

1. Describe the interpretive need for this media project.
2. What are the desired outcomes for this project?

Outcome(s) for park visitors

Outcome(s) for park resources

Others

3. Cite connections of this project to park planning documents, legislation, and/or guidelines.
4. How will this media project support/accomplish park objectives and GPRA goals?
5. Why develop a media product for this interpretive need at this particular time?
6. What is the budgetary support for this project?
7. Are park partners/cooperators or other outside interests involved and how?
8. How do their expectations for this project differ from the park's?
9. What are the time constraints for this project?
10. List other factors or constraints for this project.
11. Who are the intended audiences for this media product?
12. How and where does the park envision this media product would be presented and why?
13. Is the medium pre-determined, or is there flexibility in selecting a medium to best meet the interpretive need within known constraints?

Section II - Interpretive Content

1. List the primary subject matter areas or information concepts related to this interpretive need.
2. Are the primary information concepts simple or complex, concrete or abstract, or mixed?
3. Are there multiple perspectives to convey?
4. What types of known resources/materials (tangible resources) are available for conveying these information concepts (i.e., objects/artifacts, photos, slides, first-hand accounts, stories, historical quotes, video, music, maps, graphics, physical site locations/resources such as historic buildings or natural features, primary research documents, research databases)
5. Brainstorm and list all the intangible meanings and universal concepts which can be linked to the relevant tangible resources.
6. What possible themes emerge from the previous question?
7. Choose and list one or two potential overall themes for the product and sub-themes as

appropriate.

Section III - Park Involvement

1. What level of involvement in this media project is the park interested in pursuing?

2. What staff resources might the park be willing to provide?

Staff time for: --research and/or text writing

--content editing

--photo/graphics/objects searches

--curatorial services

--preliminary design concept development

--subject expert consultation

--facility/site consultation

--safety/compliance oversight

--construction/fabrication/installation

3. List the specific pertinent physical resources that the park can provide/loan to HFC planners and designers:

--specific research materials/documents

--specific graphic resources (photos/illustrations/maps)

--exhibit objects/artifacts/specimens

--archival materials

4. What budget considerations affect the park's involvement level in this project?

5. Do time constraints affect the park's involvement level with this project?

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<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/311/projdef.htm>

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Component for Module 311

Meaningful Media

PURPOSE

The interpretive aspect of media development involves the integration of complex elements and layers that make conceptualizing, planning, and organizing much more complicated than for personal services presentations. While the core of concept development is the same for any interpretive product, the added and overlapping components of a media project require an additional level of knowledge about the interpretive function and structure of media. In addition, since visitors cannot "ask" an exhibit or brochure for clarification of a concept, it becomes imperative that intent is focused so interpretive opportunities are successfully conveyed.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completing this component, learners will be able to:

- apply an understanding of the difference between the function of personal vs. non-personal (media) services in park interpretation;
- engage in an effective, systematic approach to interpretive concept development for assigned media projects;
- visualize the interpretive structure of media for application to concept and design development;
- articulate an interpretive vision for an assigned media project to media advisors, designers, producers, and other contractors.

APPROACH

Interpreters must understand the potential uses of media compared to personal services to make wise recommendations and decisions about new media development. The advantages and disadvantages must be considered in light of budget/time constraints, as well as intended interpretive purpose and need. Once the choice to use media has been made, an understanding of media function and structure can facilitate the process of determining interpretive focus and concept development.

This component introduces a suggested interpretive concept development phase of media planning. This interpretive element is often overlooked when a park embarks on a new media project, but represents the best chance for a completed product to communicate a meaningful message to its audience. The elements identified in this process can provide a bridge between the overall project definition planning phase (component: [Project Definition and Planning](#)) and the beginning of the design phase (component: [Principles of Design](#)). Interpreters who participate in this process will be able to apply a specific vision for the product's purpose and concept to its in-house development, or effectively communicate that vision to media advisors, designers, producers and other contractors.

Through this concept development process, the interpretive need is connected to the broad subject-matter content. This in turn, is distilled down to the most significant and meaningful elements, which are linked to universal concepts for effective interpretation for the intended audience. The process then leads naturally to the development of meaningful themes and objectives to creatively guide both content and design development. Determining the interpretive focus for a product must also take into consideration the general interpretive structure of media, as expressed in the tenets for media concept development.

CONTENT OUTLINE:

I. Interpretive function - media characteristics compared to personal services

A. Advantages and limitations of personal services programs

1. real person experience

- a. the audience can ask questions
- b. the interpreter's personality can enhance or detract

2. adjustable experience

- a. the interpreter can tailor the experience to each audience
- b. can personally engage individuals within the audience

3. Linear presentation of concepts

- a. the audience must follow along the linear path the interpreter presents
- b. interpreter has more control over direction of audience thinking and experience

B. Advantages and limitations of media (overview - see also the component: [Choosing Appropriate Media](#))

1. audience has control of experience

2. greater freedom to choose own level of participation and exposure

3. visitors/audience select what they will focus on and when/how/if they will interact

4. greater opportunity to appeal to different learning styles and attention spans

5. increased options for interpretive effectiveness

6. greatly increases the complexity

7. multi-dimensional and multi-directional access to the concepts presented

8. can provide access to unseen time and space

9. much more complex to develop because of integrated elements, overlapping layers, and audience options

10. not easily adjustable

II. Interpretive focus

(The following is a suggested method to identify and focus interpretive content and intent, in order to choose the most appropriate type of media for an identified interpretive need, and to most effectively provide interpretive opportunities)

A. List the primary subject matter areas or information concepts related to the identified interpretive need (see component: [Project Definition and Planning](#))

B. Are the primary information concepts simple or complex, concrete or abstract, or mixed?

C. Are there multiple perspectives to convey?

D. What types of known resources/materials (tangible resources) are available (i.e. objects/artifacts)?

E. Brainstorm and list all the intangible meanings and universal concepts which can be linked to these relevant tangible resources (see [Module 101](#))

F. What possible thematic concepts emerge from the step this list?

G. Identify one or two potential overall themes for the product and sub-themes as appropriate.

H. Articulate/distill the potential objectives that emerge as the interpretive "so what" is defined in steps E, F and G

I. Determine what type of media product could most effectively convey selected thematic concepts and objectives (see component: [Choosing Appropriate Media](#))

III. Interpretive structure of media - tenets for concept development

A. An effective media product is an organized framework of smaller tangible/intangible links that support more meaningful tangible/intangible links and universal concepts, to facilitate connections between visitors/audience and park resources.

B. Interpretive media development involves effectively creating, altering and/or manipulating a physical space or environment in order to facilitate connections between visitors/audience and park resources.

C. Media concept development applies the requirements of the "[Interpretive Equation](#)" (see Module 101) in two equally important integrated layers to create interpretive opportunities:

1. content - info/graphics/objects/resources (tangibles); meanings, significance and universal concepts (intangibles); themes and objectives; interpretive hierarchy; conceptual accessibility

2. space/environment - basic design elements; flow/direction; interactive design; organization and structure (hierarchy and layers); interrelationships; use/presentation of tangibles; physical

and conceptual accessibility

IV. Interpretive effectiveness

A. Understand the difference between interpretive opportunities and interpretive outcomes (see [Module 101 component: How Interpretation Works](#))

B. Using evaluation to increase interpretive effectiveness

1. front-end evaluation - before a project gets under way in detail
2. formative evaluation - during development and draft writing
3. summative evaluation - after completion of the product

RESOURCES

Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach. Beverly Serrell. AltaMira Press/AASLH, 1996.

Harpers Ferry Center, publication of Harpers Ferry Center, 1997.

The Interpreter's Handbook, Russell K. Grater, 1976. Southwest Parks and Monuments Association. Chapters 6 and 9.

Interpreting the Environment, Grant W. Sharpe, John Wiley and Sons, 1976. Chapter 5, 13, and 16.

Matching Media and Need, Interpretive Skills II, Lesson Plan 2, L. Young and N. Dickey, 1992.

User Friendly: Hands-On Exhibits That Work. Jeff Kennedy. Association of Science-Technology Centers, 1990.

Visitor Surveys: A User's Manual. Randi Korn and Laurie Sowd. American Association of Museums, 1990.

SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

1. Choose a major subject-matter theme at your park that is presented to visitors through both personal and non-personal interpretive services. Determine which format seems to most effectively convey the meanings/significance associated with the subject information. Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of media that apply in this situation.
2. Ask your supervisor if you can facilitate a brainstorming discussion at your next division staff meeting to generate new theme and objective ideas for interpreting one or more park resources. Follow the proposed interpretive concept development steps presented in Section II, E-H, of the component outline above. Be prepared to assist staff members in defining the terms "tangible," "intangible," and "universal concept."

3. Choose a panel or section of an existing interpretive exhibit or page from an interpretive publication in your park and analyze its interpretive structure, based on the tenets outlined in Section III of the component outline above. How have the space and content of the panel/page been structured/arranged to maximize interpretive effectiveness? Identify all the tangible/intangible links and universal concepts that are presented and if/how they are arranged in a hierarchy to maximize interpretive effectiveness. Apply the elements of the Interpretive Equation - how is knowledge of the audience and knowledge of the resource reflected in the spatial and content structure of the product? Are identifiable interpretive techniques a part of the structure? How could the spatial and content structure be made more effective?

4. Use the assessment rubric from this competency module to evaluate several media products in your park. Invite co-workers to participate and volunteer to lead a group discussion. Help participants articulate how the elements of each media product did or did not "work together to create opportunities for the audience to form their own intellectual and emotional connections with the meanings/significance inherent" in the park resources being interpreted.

5. Use the attachment "Critical Appraisal Checklist for Exhibits" to practice evaluating exhibit media in your park or at another site. Determine how these appraisal elements contribute to the interpretive effectiveness of each exhibit you appraise.

Critical Appraisal Checklist for EXHIBITS

1) CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION

___ Is there a label telling what the exhibition is all about?

___ Is the label short?

___ Is the message clear?

___ Is the label placed in a location where it will be read?

2) PHYSICAL ORIENTATION AND CIRCULATION

___ Is it clear how visitors are expected to circulate through the exhibition?

___ Are there choice points that confuse the visitor or create a chaotic flow?

3) LABEL TEXT

___ Are the text labels short (50-75 words)?

___ Do labels fall easily within the visitor's line of sight?

___ Do label titles stimulate thought and interest?

___ Is there adequate lighting? No glare?

___ Are letter sizes adequate?

___ Is there good contrast between letters and background?

___ Is the layout of labels consistent? (same type of information in the same place from one label to another).

___ Are labels in a location where one can look at the object and read at the same time?

___ Are labels written in a friendly, lively style?

___ Do labels help focus visitor attention on important aspects of objects?

___ Can labels be easily understood?

4) FACTORS WITHIN EXHIBIT DISPLAYS

___ Are the goals of the exhibit display obvious? Do they get across to the visitor?

___ Is it easy to understand the organization of the display elements?

___ Is the focus of the exhibit appropriate? (focus produced by design, lighting, layout, etc.)

___ Can the message be communicated in a brief period of time?

___ Do the exhibit elements work together to accomplish the goals of the exhibit?

___ Are hands-on elements effective? (visibility, feedback, conceptual model, minds-on, etc.)

5) FACTORS BETWEEN EXHIBIT DISPLAYS

___ Do exhibit displays compete for attention with one another?

___ Is it clear how the exhibit displays are organized?

___ Is it clear where one exhibit ends and another begins?

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Component for Module 311

Choosing Appropriate Media

PURPOSE

In this component interpreters will gain an understanding of how media is used to connect the meanings of the resource and the interests of the visitor. Interpreters will be able to select media based on strengths and weaknesses and potential linkages each creates between tangibles and intangibles. By applying this understanding to their knowledge of the resource and knowledge of the visitor, interpreters can choose an appropriate media mix, and advise supervisors and managers of media options.

OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this component, the learner will be able to:

- evaluate existing media treatments for their effectiveness;
- recommend the appropriate media to communicate interpretive messages, for park, HFC, or contracted projects;
- participate as part of a media development team.

APPROACH

In Module 101 of the Interpretive Curriculum, the ["Interpretive Equation"](#) identifies the importance of balancing audience, resource, and techniques. Interpretive media provides an opportunity to address diverse learning styles, provide uniform information, and reach more people. Successful interpretive media arrange sometimes complex and sophisticated elements (i.e., text, graphics, objects, space, site resources) into relationships that facilitate connections to the meanings of the resource. Evaluating these complex relationships through assessment of existing media is critical to both teaching and learning the concepts in this component.

CONTENT OUTLINE:

- I. Universal factors in selecting media
 - A. Environmental
 - B. Desired interpretive outcomes
 - C. Potential links between materials and meanings
 - D. Maintenance needs and abilities
 - E. Fiscal
 - F. Management constraints
 - G. Accessibility

H. Compliance

I. Staff abilities and numbers

II. Publications

A. Site bulletins

B. Newspapers

C. Magazines and books

D. Rack cards

E. Brochures

F. Posters

G. Newsletters

H. Advantages of publications

1. portable

2. depth of subject

3. detailed reference information

4. different languages

5. present sequential or complex material

6. visitor reads at own pace

7. income source

8. revise at a reasonable cost

9. souvenir value

10. used before, during, after park visit

11. treat the same subject for different audiences

12. may be appropriate for stories lacking supporting artifacts or photographs

I. Limitations of publications

1. discourage audience participation with lengthy and/or complex texts

2. generally require that user be literate

3. require periodic revision to remain current and accurate

4. can be a source of litter

5. may require facilities and maintenance (such as dispensers)

J. Interpretive potential of publications

1. tangible, intangible, universal linkages

K. Typical uses of publications

1. orientation and route information

2. mail-out for pre-site planning

3. quickly changing resource information

4. seasonal information

5. marketing

6. safety and activity information

7. self-guided walks/tours

III. Waysides

A. Orientation panels at trailheads

B. Safety and resource management trailside panels to interpret buildings, locations, features

C. Advantages of waysides

1. available 24 hours a day

2. use real objects and features in their own setting

3. can be designed to blend with the site environment

4. provide on-site interpretation of specific sites and stories

5. can depict a place as it appeared many years before

6. can show a feature from a view unattainable by visitors

7. can illustrate phenomena that invisibly affect a resource

8. establish a park identity at remote, unstaffed locations

9. alert visitor to safety or resource management issues at the point of danger or environmental impact

10. some media can be replaced relatively quickly and inexpensively

D. Disadvantages of waysides

1. limited amount of text and graphics per panel
2. may not work well for complex subject matter
3. to some degree intrude on a park's visual landscape
4. information can become obsolete
5. material can be relatively expensive to replace
6. may not be practical at sites with climatic or environmental extremes
7. susceptible to vandalism
8. expensive site preparation may be needed at some locations

E. Interpretive potential of waysides

1. tangible, intangible, universal linkages

F. Typical uses of waysides

1. along walking routes in historic areas
2. trailside areas to point out particular features
3. trailheads
4. boat ramps and picnic areas
5. in combination with bulletin boards

G. Exhibits

1. multimedia
2. interactive
3. dioramas
4. panels
5. models
6. relief maps
7. object cases
8. advantages of exhibits
 - a. multimedia format reaches multiple learning styles and interests
 - b. viewed at visitor's own pace

- c. designed in all shapes, sizes, colors and textures
 - d. display objects associated with the site
 - e. incorporate artifacts, resource features, or mixed media to produce desired atmosphere and effects
 - f. transcend language and cultural barriers
 - g. promote visitor participation
 - h. designed for both indoor and outdoor applications
 - i. well suited for ideas which can be illustrated graphically
 - j. permanent exhibits can be grouped with rotating or seasonal temporary displays to provide a sense of change
 - k. provide experiences of varying complexity, allowing visitors to select the depth of their involvement with the information
9. limitations of exhibits
- a. are sensitive to agents of deterioration
 - b. require security and maintenance
 - c. must be housed in adequate facilities
 - d. visitor interest is not always linear
 - e. are limited by the artifacts and materials of which they are made
 - f. exhibit materials may have high commercial value, making them targets for theft
 - g. curatorial standards for exhibit of collection items must be met
 - h. can be very expensive
 - i. inexpensive may look amateurish
 - j. technology and materials can overwhelm the message
 - k. can compete with park resources for the visitor's time and attention
10. interpretive potential of exhibits
- a. tangible, intangible, universal linkages
11. typical uses of exhibits
- a. visitor centers

b. museums

c. galleries

d. contact stations

e. nature centers

f. environmental education centers

g. travelling/off-site

H. Audiovisual and electronic media

1. slide programs

2. CD-ROMs

3. movies

4. oral history tapes

5. video projection

6. interactive computer displays

7. World Wide Web pages

I. Advantages of audiovisual and electronic media

1. capture realism and provide emotional impact

2. reach many visitors at one time

3. well suited to the presentation of chronological and sequential material

4. provides opportunities for dramatization

5. portable for off-site use

6. provides views of places, animals, plants, and seasons otherwise unavailable or inaccessible

7. create a mood or atmosphere

8. adaptable can be adapted to provide service for physically impaired visitors

9. illustrate before-and-after affects

10. produce in different languages

11. excellent educational outreach tool

12. potential sales item

J. Limitations of audiovisual and electronic media

1. cannot be used everywhere
2. require back-up equipment, periodic maintenance, and regular monitoring
3. may be visual or auditory intrusion
4. offer little opportunity for visitors to browse or study an item in depth
5. repetitious sound tracks can stress staff
6. production and maintenance costs can be expensive
7. people usually have high expectations of audiovisual media; low-budget products can fall short of expectations
8. can potentially compete with actual park experiences for visitor's time and attention
9. may be difficult to provide large amounts of information
10. difficult and expensive to update

K. Interpretive potential of audiovisual and electronic media

1. tangible, intangible, universal linkages

L. Typical uses of audiovisual and electronic media

1. visitor center auditoriums
2. orientation to a site
3. pre-site information and marketing
4. interactive exhibitry
5. information stations
6. exterior audio stations

RESOURCES

Choosing Appropriate Media, Attached as Supplemental Reading. Compiled, 1997.

Creating Environmental Publications, Jeffrey Zehr, Michael Gross, and Ron Zimmerman, UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc., 1991. More of a how-to, but valuable in the many examples provided.

Harpers Ferry Center, publication of Harpers Ferry Center, 1997.

The Interpreter's Handbook, Russell K. Grater, Southwest Parks and Monuments Association,

1976. Chapters 6 and 9.

Interpreting the Environment, Grant W. Sharpe, John Wiley and Sons. 1976. Chapter 5, 13, and 16.

[Matching Media and Need](#), Interpretive Skills II, Lesson Plan 2, L. Young and N. Dickey, 1992.

National Park Service Publications Profile, Division of Publications, National Park Service, Interpretive Design Center, Harpers Ferry, WV.

Presenting Archaeology to the Public, John H. Jameson, Jr., ed, 1997. Altamira Press, Walnut Creek, CA. Chapter 7-Sites Without Signs, by Karen Lee Davis

Signs, Trails and Wayside Exhibits, Suzanne Trapp, Michael Gross, and Ron Zimmerman, 1994. UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc. More of a how-to, but valuable in the many examples provided.

Wayside Exhibits, Division of Wayside Exhibits, National Park Service, Interpretive Design Center, Harpers Ferry, WV, 1996.

World Wide Web

Waysite, Division of Wayside Exhibits web site, www.nps.gov/waysite

HFCINSITE enter Web Page

Other Harpers Ferry Center web sites will be coming online soon.

SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

1. Identify an interpretive need that is not currently addressed by media in your park. Identify and analyze alternative media treatments for this message by addressing the following questions:

--How could your message be conveyed by two different types of interpretive media? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of using these media types to convey your message?

--What logistical constraints would influence your final interpretive medium choice (available funding, special legislation such as wilderness, compliance issues, safety, resource degradation, etc.)

--Choose your recommended medium and write a brief paragraph supporting your decision.

2. Interview someone who has participated on a media development team or has developed media in your park or in a nearby park or museum. Ask them how they selected their media. What did they learn about the selection process that provides you insights?

3. Check with your division chief or regional/support office interpretive specialist to find a park that is currently developing media. Ask to participate in planning and review meetings.

4. Use the attached Media Evaluation Form (Attachment A) to evaluate media at your park or some other site.

NAME _____

ATTACHMENT A

INTERPRETIVE MEDIA EVALUATION FORM

Type of Media: _____

Location: _____

Intended Audience: _____

Is the content relevant? Well written? Is the information current? Does the content reflect multiple points of view?

Does this product as a whole effectively link tangible resources with intangible meanings and/or universal concepts?

Is the medium appropriate for the message? Why? Why not?

Does the design contribute to the overall interpretive effectiveness? Why/why not?

Does the text communicate effectively? Does it provide intangible links and demonstrate good interpretive principles? Is it understandable to general audiences? Are sentences clear and concise?

Do the graphics complement the message that is communicated by the medium?

Assess the lifespan of the medium:
(What problems do you think may arise? Are there potential or preventable problems?)

Have accessibility issues (Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards, Americans with Disabilities Act) been considered and addressed? How?

Other comments or observations related to this evaluation:

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<http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/311/choosemedia.htm>

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Component for Module 311

Principles of Design

PURPOSE

Design is the "body language" of visual communication. Good design in any medium promotes the smooth and effective transfer or flow of ideas. It facilitates and enhances the interpretive experience. Incorporating good design principles allows the audience to easily navigate through the document, web site, exhibit, or other medium. Poor design is as bad as a mumbled oral presentation, destroying chances to convey interpretive messages. This component introduces some basic principles of design that should be applied to all visual communication. It also addresses the distinguishing needs/characteristics of interpretive design for NPS media products.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this component, learners will be able to:

- recognize and articulate the characteristics of good interpretive design for NPS media products;
- apply basic principles of design to a given medium.

APPROACH

Design for NPS media products involves integrating basic design principles with principles of NPS interpretation, for the ultimate goal of providing a variety of interpretive opportunities. Design is a tool for the interpreter to use to develop relationships between the "things" or information (tangibles) being presented and the ideas or meanings (intangibles) they represent (See [Module 101](#)). Proper design applied to the appropriate medium, therefore, offers the opportunity to facilitate both intellectual and emotional connections between park media audiences and park resources.

Design for NPS media also involves designing for the visual image continuity and recognition of media products that represent NPS standards. Just as the ranger uniform should represent the image of quality personal service throughout the Service, so should continuity of design support visual image quality standards for all non-personal services, from simple signs to elaborate publications, exhibits, and electronic media.

It is not the intent of this component to develop media design specialists. However, through exposure to basic elements of media design, along with the analysis of a wide variety of applied examples, this component sensitizes the learner to recognize why some designs are visually, functionally, and interpretively effective and why some are not.

CONTENT OUTLINE:

I. Design concepts

A. Definitions of design

B. Visual identity and continuity

1. within a park
2. throughout the NPS

C. Form follows function

1. intended use, function
2. visitor/audience "work load"

D. Hierarchy of information

E. Subject matter/content-based design and the interpretive message

1. design themes
2. message-enhancing "mood", atmosphere, tone

II. Basic design principles (see Glossary below)

A. Proximity

B. Alignment

C. Repetition

D. Contrast

III. Applications related to design elements

A. Text/typography

1. typefaces
2. readability/size
3. appropriateness
4. consistent application
5. use of fonts (text attributes)

B. Graphics

1. Line art/illustrations
2. photographs
3. quality
4. copyright

C. Special effects

1. bars/lines
2. boxes
3. pull quotes/side bars
4. shading

D. Color

1. advantages
2. disadvantages

E. Layout

1. use of grids
2. balance
3. white space

F. Three-dimensional design

1. objects/artifacts
2. spatial arrangements

G. Interactive design

H. Accessibility

1. visual elements
2. audio elements
3. mobility/spatial elements
4. conceptual

[Portions of this component are based on concepts presented in *The Non-Designers' Design Book* by Robin Williams. Learners will need to refer to it or a similar publication to understand some of the concepts presented.]

GLOSSARY

Proximity: Place related things, such as headings and related text, close together. Grouping elements creates a visual unit and helps to organize the information and reduce clutter.

Alignment: Aligning various visual pieces of a document ties it together visually. Consider, for instance, how alignment is used in a unigrid folder.

Repetition: Establishing and then repeatedly using elements in a piece of media fosters a comfort level in the viewer. When someone turns a page in a publication or turns a corner in an exhibit, they find familiar design elements, typefaces, colors, and layout that allow immediate continuation of the experience without the need to reorient.

Contrast: If you're going to make something different, make it really different. Having an obvious hierarchy of type sizes, for instance, allows the audience to quickly scan topics and then, if interested, move to the next level. Don't make the audience wonder; make the hierarchy readily apparent.

[above 4 definitions taken from the Non-Designers' Design Book, Robin Williams]

Balance: Striving for equal portions of text, graphics, and white space. (Rule of Thirds)

White space: Not space left over; it is a planned element, a place that allows your eye to rest; helps to set text and graphics apart from each other; helps in the organization of elements within a space.

RESOURCES

All Visitors Welcome: Accessibility in State Park Interpretive Programs and Facilities. Erika R. Porter. California State Parks, 1994.

Creating Environmental Publications. Jeffrey Zehr, Michael Gross, and Ron Zimmerman, UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc., Stevens Point, WI, 1992. Ch. 3.

Design Guidelines for Accessibility. Harpers Ferry Center.

Designing With Type. James Craig, Watson-Gulphill, New York, NY, 1971.

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Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach. Beverly Serrell. AltaMira Press/AASLH, 1996.

Harpers Ferry Center Exhibit Planning and Design Standards, www.nps.gov.....

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Help for the Small Museum. Arminta Neal. Pruett Publishing, second edition, 1987.

Interpretive Skills II; Lesson Plan 3, Mark Wagner, 1/92.

Information Design: Tools and Techniques for Park-Produced Publications. National Park

Service. 1998. Proceedings based on the workshop of the same name that was held in December, 1995 at Cuyahoga Valley NRA. The Non-Designers' Design Book is included as part of the package. Copies of this book were distributed to every park and central office in 1998. Additional copies may be ordered from the Association for Partnerships on Public Lands (APPL).

Looking Good In Print. 3rd ed. Roger Parker, Chapel Hill, NC, Chapters 1-6.

The Non-Designers' Design Book. Robin Williams. Peachpit Press, Berkeley, CA, 1994.

Pocket Pal: A Graphic Arts Production Handbook. International Paper, 1992.

Site Bulletin Folder. National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, 1985.

Unigrid Folder. National Park Service, Harpers Ferry Center, 1985.

User Friendly: Hands-On Exhibits That Work, Jeff Kennedy, Association of Science-Technology Centers, 1990.

SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

1. Study *The Non-Designers' Design Book* and the other materials available in the packet from the *Information Design: Tools and Techniques for Park-Produced Publications* workshop. Do one or two of the exercises suggested in the book such as: Select an advertisement in your local newspaper or phone book and, with tracing paper and pencil, trace the elements in the ad one at a time and reorganize the design to create a more effective advertisement.
2. Look at a Harpers Ferry-produced Unigrid park folder and determine where and how each design principle was applied, and, perhaps, where the principles were intentionally not applied for effect.
3. Collect a number of rack cards or other print media from a local tourism center and analyze their effectiveness in getting your attention. Determine if they are effective and whether the designer effectively targeted the audience and applied the principles of good design.
4. Analyze media in your park or at a local museum to determine how well "form follows function." On a scale of 1-5 rate the visitor/audience "work load" -- how difficult is it and how much effort/time must the visitor invest to "get the message."
5. Analyze a variety of media examples for content-based design influences which facilitate/enhance the interpretive message, i.e., an exhibit or brochure about a historic structure that uses the architectural style elements of the building as the unifying design theme. Do the design themes and style elements set a message-enhancing mood or tone?
6. Analyze the accessibility of various media for audiences of different ages, cultural backgrounds, physical disabilities, etc. How could the media be designed to communicate more effectively to a broader audience?

7. Identify how the design of an existing park brochure or exhibit organizes the information into a hierarchy using typefaces, colors, graphic elements, etc.
8. Start a collection of effective publications or photographs of other media (waysides, exhibits, etc.) that you can use for future reference.
9. Visit a local or regional museum/exhibit and, using an example of existing media there, use a sketch, tracing, or photo of the medium as a starting point, rework the design based on what you have learned in this component.
10. Adopt the park bulletin board. Rework the design and rearrange of items using good design principles. An internal (administrative, lunchroom, etc.) bulletin board may be substituted if park does not have a visitor bulletin board. Evaluate whether this has made a difference in the effectiveness of the bulletin board. Search the Internet and the World Wide Web and identify several web sites/pages and evaluate why they attract you. Do they use good design or just gimmicks?

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