

**INTERPRETIVE SKILLS II**

**LESSON PLAN:** 9

**SESSION TITLE:** WAYSIDE EXHIBITS

**SESSION LENGTH:** 1 Hour    **PREPARED BY:** E.D. Miller 1/92

**REVISED BY:** L. Young 1/92

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

1. List at least three reasons why wayside exhibits are used;
2. List three advantages and disadvantages of wayside exhibits;
3. List three criteria for site selection for wayside exhibits;
4. Describe the key steps in Harpers Ferry Center's wayside exhibit planning process and the role played by parks/sites.

**TRAINING AIDS:** Flip charts, slide projector, screen, handouts

**HANDOUTS:** See attachments for your choice: sample Wayside Exhibit Plan

| Content   | Method  | Time    |
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| Introduction: Provide Session Overview, course content & objectives.  | Lecture   | 2 Min.  |
| I. Defining the media. Wayside Exhibits Are:<br><br>A. Interpretive media that convey the stories of a park or site to visitors. They seldom provide in-depth information, but may provoke visitors to want to know more. Other interpretive media - audiovisual programs, interpretive programs, publications and museum exhibits - provide detail for those wanting more information.<br><br>Compare wayside exhibits with other interpretive media:<br><br>1. Wayside exhibits interpret the essence of a scene, habitat structure or event.<br><br>2. Museum exhibits interpret objects from the site.<br><br>3. Film interprets subjects within a chronological framework.<br><br>4. Publications provide in-depth analysis in print. Other media are primarily graphic. | Slides<br>Lecture,<br>Participative<br>Discussion | 10 Min. |

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| <p>Wayside exhibits are outdoor media. The environment is provided; the exhibit interprets it.</p> <p>Wayside exhibits connect visitors to a story through the on-site interpretation of features, structures, or events. A wayside may also communicate basic park/site rules and orientation information.</p> <p>Other: (class generates additional a\ideas about the value/concept of waysides.)</p> <p>B.Wayside Exhibits Are Not:</p> <p>1.Signs. Signs convey a single message: information, warning, or guidance, for example. Waysides provide explanations in addition to those kinds of messages and incorporate interpretive graphics as well.</p>   |   |                |
| <p>II.Selecting and Using Wayside Exhibits Successfully.</p> <p>A.Why Waysides?</p> <p>1.They off another way to reach visitors with interpretation, park information, or safety messages.</p> <p>2.Waysides provide on site interpretation on a continuing basis throughout the day.</p> <p>3.Visitors receive interpretation at their own pace and experience a sense of personal discovers.</p> <p>4.Waysides are cost effective. They provide interpretation to large numbers of visitors without the expense of a uniform\ed employee.</p> <p>5.Others (class generates additional ideas)</p> <p>B.Guidelines for use of wayside exhibits</p> <p>1.Each wayside exhibit should interpret subjects or themes directly related to the overall theme(s) of the park/site.</p> <p>2.Wayside exhibits interpret concrete objects, landscapes and experiences on site. Learning is most effective when it is closely associated with the feature/experience.</p> | <p>Slides,<br/>Participative<br/>Lecture,<br/>Flipchart</p> | <p>10 Min.</p> |

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| <p>3. Wayside exhibits should be visually compatible with the site. They should enhance the on site experience, not detract from it. Careful thought should be given to selection of materials, proper placement of the exhibit, and overall design.</p> <p>4. Visitors want to experience the site and might ignore long, complex, didactic messages. Resist the urge to add subject matter. The best interpretation is short and concise.</p>  |                               |                |
| <p>C. Site Selection Criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use waysides when there are features or events that demand an explanation of some sort. Do these phenomena generate visitor questions that would otherwise go unanswered?</li> <li>2. When significant numbers of visitors are attracted to a particular area, justifying the need for on site interpretation.</li> <li>3. When a wayside exhibit would not detract from the site or invite the public into a fragile or sensitive area.</li> <li>4. When there is a safe and convenient place for people to stop.</li> <li>5. Sites should be easily located and clearly related to the point or theme.</li> <li>6. If several sites are being considered for a particular theme, select the best site based on visual appeal.</li> <li>7. Do not overcrowd an area -- or a park/site in general -- with exhibits.</li> <li>8. Avoid placing exhibits in dangerous locations (seasonally flooded areas, rockfalls, hazardous traffic patterns, etc.)</li> <li>9. Select sites that will not be damaged by visitor use.</li> <li>10. The feature or event being interpreted must be clearly visible from the site or directly associated with it.</li> </ol> | <p>Discussion,<br/>Slides</p> | <p>15 Min.</p> |

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| <p>III. Advantages and Disadvantages of Waysides</p> <p>A. Advantages</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provides concise interpretation.</li> <li>2. The user controls the pace of interaction with the media and environment.</li> <li>3. Because waysides are site specific, they are especially useful for interpreting resource management, visitor safety or other management concern.</li> <li>4. Waysides provide an immediate, direct connection between visitors and park/site resources.</li> </ol> <p>B. Disadvantages</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wayside exhibits are subject to vandalism and weathering. Rates depend on the characteristics of the site and park in general.</li> <li>2. If poorly planned and designed, visitors will not use them (no "books on a stick").</li> <li>3. May be expensive to produce initially.</li> <li>4. Require periodic maintenance.</li> </ol> | <p>Discussion<br/>Flip Chart</p>          | <p>5 Min.</p>  |
| <p>IV. Wayside Exhibit Planning/Working with Harpers Ferry Center</p> <p>A. Parks may produce their own wayside exhibits (the end results are seldom up to NPS quality and standards), or they more typically work with planners and designers at Harpers Ferry Center. A third method (not to be described in detail here) is using contractors for design and production of waysides from the firms on HFC's indefinite quantity contract list.</p> <p>The following process focuses on working with HFC as the planner/designer and is described in broad terms. This is an idealized process; in reality, each park's role and relationship will be dictated by unique circumstances and needs.</p>  | <p>Prepared<br/>Flipchart<br/>Lecture</p> | <p>10 Min.</p> |

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| <p>B.The first step in the process is preparing an Interpretive Prospectus or IP. This document can be written by HFC or the park. It outlines the scope of interpretive media in general, defining themes and locations for exhibitry and other nonpersonal interpretive services.</p> <p>C.Next, a 10-238 is written by the park. This will result in a Wayside Exhibit Plan, or portion of a Plan, to be placed in the system for funding. The 10-238 is prioritized within the park, then prioritized within the Region, and finally prioritized Servicewide.</p> <p>D.Harpers Ferry Center selects form the top servicewide priorities for the upcoming year or years.</p> <p>E.Once funding is available to begin planning, a planner from HFC is assigned to work with the park. This typically begins with an on site visit by the planner to the park. Before this visit, do your homework.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Visit all possible sites, existing and potential, and evaluate based on the criteria for site selection and appropriate use of wayside exhibits. Edit and revise your list, eliminating obviously inappropriate sites.</li> <li>2.Develop an intimate understanding of each site, noting unusual attributes, seasonal phenomena, etc.</li> <li>3.Identify the theme or subject and purpose of each potential exhibit.</li> <li>4.Investigate the facts. Locate basic reference material and think about appropriate graphics. Are these materials available in the park/site?</li> <li>5.Look at the site from the visitor's perspective. Observe and listen to visitor behavior. How does the site look from the perspective of a child or wheelchair-bound person? Make an effort to address accessibility concerns as well as cross-cultural interpretive issues at this stage of planning, keeping them in mind throughout the process.</li> <li>6.Refine your themes/purpose.</li> </ol> |        |      |

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| <p>7.Visit each site with the planner. Be open to his/her expertise and objective perspective.</p> <p>8.First review document is the Wayside Exhibit Proposal, in which all potential site, themes purposes, and wayside exhibit types are listed. This will serve as the foundation of the Wayside Exhibit Plan.</p> <p>9.Wayside Exhibit Plan: the development of text, selection of graphics and creation of panel layouts. The HFC planner manages this process with input from the park. Send succinct information, brief but best available references on subjects. Send an assortment of graphics for consideration.</p> <p>10.Draft Plan Review: evaluate text for accuracy. Are the graphics appropriate? Circulate the plan among other interpreters, resource managers, scientists, etc. for review. This is a critical stage in the process. Manage the review to include those who are truly knowledgeable about the resources and medium. Carefully consider whether to involve outside groups/organizations (e.g., with accessibility issues). One person should coordinate the review and determine what will be incorporated into suggested revisions. Be sure to keep the use of wayside media in mind at all times -- resist the urge to create "books on a stick."</p> <p>11.Comments return to HFC and a final Plan is produced. When production funding is available, exhibits will be produced. At this stage, be prepared to review final art, maps and illustrations carefully and quickly.</p> <p>12.Your new exhibits are shipped to the park -- local maintenance crews install them according to the instructions provided by HFC.</p> |   |               |
| <p>F.Maintenance/Rehab</p> <p>1.Exhibits will require upkeep/maintenance depending on the rate of weathering and vandalism. Observe this initially to develop a schedule of maintenance.</p>  | <p>Slides of shoddy wayside exhibits /Lecture</p> | <p>5 Min.</p> |

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| <p>2.HFC's Emergency Rehab Program exists to provide assistance with vandalized exhibits or those requiring interpretive upgrades (old, out of date text, etc.) Most Regions also have exhibit cyclic maintenance programs which fund rehab projects -- check with your Regional Chief of Interpretation. Your park may also fund rehabilitation through its ONPS or Cooperating Association funds.</p> <p>3.Major Rehabilitation - complete replacement/renovation of interpretive media - requires a 10-238 and follows that system described earlier. The normal cycle of wayside media is considered to be 15 years, then replacement. In reality plan for much longer.</p>  |         |        |
| <p>IV.Summary/Conclusion</p> <p>Wayside Exhibits fill a particular niche in the overall park interpretive program. They provide visitors with a direct connection to the park story through site specific interpretation. Wayside exhibits tell one element of the story or historic/natural scene: text should never be lengthy they off simple, easily understood interpretation at the visitor's pace, are available throughout the day, and require no FTE or salary.</p> <p>Choose wayside exhibits with careful thought about their characteristics, appropriate site selection, and be mindful of their advantages and disadvantages.</p> <p>Do you homework before working with HFC. Have a well-researched and planned IP. Consider the perspective and expertise of the HFC planner. Review Plans for accuracy, relevance and adherence to overall purpose and objectives. Provide timely, succinct input.</p> | Lecture | 2 Min. |

## References

Good Show! A Practical Guide for Temporary Exhibition, Lothar p. Wittenborg, Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution, 1981.

This book is the best source for information about setting up temporary exhibitions. It gives clear, detailed information about how to plan an exhibition, buy or build panels and cases, and covers other topics such as handicapped access and security.

American Association of State and Local History Technical Leaflet Series.

"Exhibit Labels: A Consideration of Content," Leaflet #60, Don W. Wilson and Dennis Medina, History News, Vol. 27, No. 4, April 1972.

This eight page booklet explains a philosophy of label writing and gives examples of how labels can be rewritten to be more effective.

Designing Your Exhibits: Seven Ways to Look at an Artifact," Leaflet #92, Fred Schroeder, History News, Vol. 31, No. 11, November, 1976.

The seven ways explained in this eight page booklet should stimulate new ideas that can be used in planning and designing an exhibit.

Making Exhibit Labels, A Step by Step Guide, Beverly Serrell, AASLH, Nashville, Tennessee, 1983.

Everything you ever wanted to know about writing and producing exhibit labels.

Signs, Trails, and Wayside Exhibits: Connecting People and Places, Suzanne Trapp, Michael Gross and Ron Zimmerman

Good overview of wayside exhibits, signs and interpretive trails as outdoor interpretive media.

The Graphics of Communication, A. Turnbull and R. Baird

Excellent beginners text on graphic design for effective visual communication.