

1. Introduction

Welcome to "Interpretation for Archeologists: A Guide to Increasing Knowledge, Skills and Abilities!" By working through this guide and associated materials archeologists may gain a firm foundation in and understanding of the purpose, philosophy, and techniques of interpretation.

This guide and its counterpart, *Archeology for Interpreters: A Guide to Knowledge of the Resource*, support *Effective Interpretation of Archeological Resources: The Archeology-Interpretation Shared Competency Course of Study (Module 440)*. An interdisciplinary work group of archeologists and interpreters, led by John Jameson, Tony Knapp, and Dave Dahlen, developed this training module in response to the *NPS Employee Training and Development Strategy*. Through this joint course of study archeologists and interpreters can be trained together in the skills and abilities needed to carry out effective interpretation of archeological resources.

Interpretation for Archeologists: A Guide to Increasing Knowledge, Skills and Abilities is not a substitute for *Effective Interpretation of Archeological Resources*. Rather, it introduces the purpose, philosophy, and techniques of interpretation that the *Archeology-Interpretation Shared Competency Course of Study* more fully explores. Know, as well, that although the training course concentrates on *Module 101, Fulfilling the NPS Mission: The Process of Interpretation*, we encourage archeologists to continue independently by pursuing other modules and competencies. *Interpretation for Archeologists* gets you started through many recommendations of links and readings to learn more about incorporating interpretation into your archeology toolkit.

Try It Yourself

Effective Interpretation of Archeological Resources: The Archeology-Interpretation Shared Competency Course of Study (Module 440)

Effective Interpretation is a professional development opportunity. Use its training tools to help archeologists and interpreters at your park work together to provide effective and accurate interpretation of archeological information and resources to the public.

Archeology for Interpreters: A Guide to Knowledge of the Resource

This interactive on-line guide complements *Interpretation for Archeologists*. It creates the opportunity for interpreters to learn about archeological methods, to explore how archeological interpretations are made, to ascribe meaning to archeological resources, and to increase public understanding and concern for the preservation and protection of archeological resources. It provides an excellent perspective on the kinds of knowledge people need in order to understand archeology, and provides information on resources to peruse.

For Your Information

NPS Interpretive Development Program

The Interpretive Development Program is designed to foster professionalism in interpretation in the National Park Service. Check out the web site for immediate access to the latest curricula, resources, contacts, FAQs, and other information to develop your own personalized training program for interpretive excellence.

NPS My Learning Manager

Use the Learning Manager site within the NPS to find out about web-based training opportunities and to apply for training events. Many different training opportunities are available to enhance archeologists' skills and knowledge - be sure to take advantage of them!

Cultural Resources Stewardship Career Field

The Cultural Resources Stewardship Career Field enhances knowledge, skills, and abilities for employees and partner organizations who work in cultural resources and are associated with them. Visit the website to learn about competencies, training, and the specialized needs of cultural resources managers.

Guide Purpose

Interpretation for Archeologists: A Guide for Increasing Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities aims to train archeologists in the development of public interpretation and educational programs. The guide creates the opportunity for you to learn about the concepts behind interpretation, to explore how interpretive programs are made, and to acquire techniques to ascribe meaning to resources. *Interpretation for Archeologists* also aims for archeologists to see the value and fun of interpretation not only for the public, but also as inspiration for themselves.

This guide has another significant purpose of encouraging archeologists to realize the important role they play in guiding visitors to feel concern for resource preservation and protection. Archeologists as interpreters increase the public's understanding of the ways archeological resources enrich the telling of the stories of our nation. We can build on visitors' curiosity about archeology and archeologists by engaging with them in dialogue about the meaning of the past to the present and their role in stewardship and the proper protection of the resources.

Interpretation for Archeologists enables archeologists to develop a basic foundation in the art and science of interpretation. Web links and suggested interpretive strategies in the **For Your Information**, **Case Study**, and **Fun Fact** boxes present examples of how archeological resources may be effectively interpreted in the national parks. Look for **Try it Yourself** and **Use What You Know** boxes to practice what you learn. Included are special **Use What You Know: Assess Your Knowledge** boxes to help you to apply the concepts to your own work. Take note that when this online course is used in a formal educational setting, answers to these (and possibly additional) assessment questions may be evaluated by instructors. Use the questions so they will best benefit you.

Use the guide to learn about:

- How interpretation and education meet the NPS and park mission and objectives
- Ways archeologists may interpret meanings by creating links through tangible and intangible meanings associated with the archeological record
- Identifying multiple perspectives
- Basic skills and techniques for developing effective interpretive presentations
- Developing various interpretive media to present park archeological themes
- Examples of how NPS archeologists and interpreters encourage stewardship by facilitating visitors' experience with and relationship to archeological resources.

Who is This Guide For?

Interpretation for Archeologists is for archeologists who are interested in learning more about interpreting archeological resources for the public. The National Park Service developed the program in particular for its archeologists, cultural resource managers, and other staff who investigate, interpret, preserve, and share with the public information regarding archeological resources. We encourage professionals outside of the NPS who want to increase their own ability in interpretation to also take advantage of the guide.

Interpretation for Archeologists is primarily designed for self-motivated learning, so you can learn at your own pace. Read through the information, visit the links, and answer the assessment questions as quickly or as slowly as your time allows. Our goal is for you to increase your base of knowledge about archeological resource interpretation with every visit to the guide.

In the end, we hope you find in this guide a number of valuable resources for further exploration, particularly through the numerous links we provide to other significant sources of on-line activities, case studies, and related information. We plan to periodically update those links as we discover relevant new materials about and methods for effectively interpreting archeological resources. Please continue to check in with the guide and the Archeology and Ethnography Program web site for information, examples, case studies, professional guides, and more.

Format

We hope you find *Interpretation for Archeologists: A Guide for Increasing Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities* both informative and fun to use! Some points to help you get started:

- The guide consists of nine sections, including this introductory section and a final section of resources. Each section has a focus, such as the interpretive process or issues of sensitivity.
- If you know little about interpretation, we suggest that you go through all sections in the order they are presented.
- The time it takes to work through the entire guide depends on how much knowledge you wish to extract. A basic approach involves reading all the text, linking to and reading the case studies, and exploring all the links in each section. It will take longer to pursue the developmental opportunities needed to gain competency in the joint course of study.
- Throughout the sections are **Use What You Know** boxes with questions to help assess your knowledge and understanding.
- The web addresses provided in **Case Study**, **Fun Fact**, and **For Your Information** boxes are current at the date of guide publication but may change beyond the control of the NPS. Also note that the NPS Internet policy does not permit linking to commercial web sites (URL that ends in .COM). Therefore, this guide only links to web sites of educational institutions, non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies.
- Some sections include in-text activities, links to on-line activities, or case studies. These activities further develop some or all of the concepts or methods discussed in that section. Where possible, the case studies represent work undertaken within a national park.
- The term "park" is used here in a broad sense to include any site with archeological materials. Other places under the "park" umbrella include but are not limited to landmarks, sites, state and regional parks, nature preserves, museums, and historic houses.
- The term "public" or "visitor" refers to the people who may participate in the interpretive opportunities. These words also refer to a broad range of audiences including but not limited to on-site visitors, exhibit-goers, web site users, wayside text readers, self-guided tour takers, tours, school groups, families, volunteers, and Elderhostel participants.
- As a final note, the spelling of "archeology" and its derivatives follows the conventions of the Federal government. The spelling commonly used in academia and in publications for the public, "archaeology," is used by most of the non-federal resources found in this guide.

Navigating the Guide

This guide is designed to be user-friendly. The top of each page is clearly marked with the title and number of the section you are in, and the title of the currently active subsection appears in bold above the text. Some of the features of this online guide that crosscut or are present in all sections are:

- A navigation column with all the section titles. It allows you to quickly jump between and within sections in order to match the course to your current needs.
- A sub-menu on the navigation column that appears for the current section. The sub-menu provides active links to all the sub-sections, as well as to online activities and case studies, and the section bibliography and resources.
- Left- and right-arrows at the bottom of each page. These allow you to move through the entire course from beginning to end, or through an entire section.
- A print version of each section. Quick reference printable guides are included for specific elements of some sections.

For Your Information

Please send questions or comments about this guide to [Barbara Little](#).

References

Portions of this chapter were adapted from:

Childs, S. Terry and Eileen Corcoran

2000 *Managing Archeological Collections—Technical Assistance*, Archeology and Ethnography Program, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

National Park Service

2000 *Effective Interpretation of Archeological Resources: The Archeology-Interpretation Shared Competency Course of Study, Final Draft*.