Additional Developmental Module

MODULE 110

Title: Visitor Needs and Characteristics

Recommended Pre-requisite: Module 101

Context
The need to understand the publics we serve, and have yet to serve, is basic to the successful management and operation of NPS areas. This philosophy is essential to effective communication and stems from Stephen Mather's and Horace Albright's earliest efforts to cultivate public support and understanding of America's National Parks and the issues facing them. This module explores the concept that visitor motivation is self-generated, and whatever their perspective or interest, they are potential stewards if they become concerned and interested in the site's resources. Interpreters should incorporate this philosophy into their duties to respond to immediate needs, serve greater publics, and foster a foundation of stewardship.

Description
Module 110 presents foundational information about the needs and characteristics of park audiences. This module, like Module 101, underpins and informs all other modules. An understanding of these concepts is essential to successful interpretation at all levels and will assist interpreters in meeting certification in the ten benchmark competencies.

Competency Curriculum
The following curriculum components outline the developmental learning elements that compose the skills set for this competency. From these outlines, 1) employees and their supervisors can determine learning needs and strategies, 2) instructors can develop sessions and lesson plans. Each component also contains a list of useful references and developmental activities.

- Constituency Building

- Strategies for Inclusion

- Quality Visitor Experiences

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

- Explain how and why visitor perspectives vary and have changed through time, and why interpretation must respond to these changing dynamics;

- Use basic understanding of audience perspective to create inclusive interpretive efforts to reach a wider range of audiences;

- Recognize the importance of quality visitor experiences, in any appropriate use, in establishing stewardship principles.

Topics

Value of constituency building in the NPS (such as: Mather/Albright efforts); value of multiple perspectives (and multiple truths and meanings) in furthering the protection and enjoyment of NPS resources; other topics, such as:

Understanding diverse values, beliefs, and cultures;
Reading your audience;
Diverse mental and physical abilities of visitors;
Understanding park communities (local, NPS, visitor, national, international);
Demographic trends (age groups, accessibility issues, ethnic groups);
Sources of information about audiences;
Basic social science theory;
Characteristics of a quality visitor experience.

Audience

All Entry Level Park Rangers. Also directed to other NPS staff with public interpretation responsibilities in National Park areas. Included are cooperating association employees and managers, volunteers performing interpretation and information services, and park concession and other partner employees performing interpretation and information services.

Delivery

Self-study; video materials; servicewide class for all new employees; cluster level course; directed readings.

Target

Within first year of appointment.

http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/110/module.htm

Constituency Building

PURPOSE   Throughout the history of the National Park Service, the approach to constituency building has evolved in response to external pressures and ever-changing demographics. Without continued strong, broad-based public support, park protection and stewardship may be compromised. This component traces the roots of constituency building and why the concept must keep pace with changing external pressures.

OBJECTIVES Upon completion of this component, the learner will be able to:
- describe the purpose in building constituency support in furthering NPS mission and park goals;
- recognize changing demographics in the United States (and locally) to identify the importance of multiple audiences in building constituencies;
- explain that multiple audiences include in-park customers as well as those outside the park.

APPROACH

The overlying concept for the module is the ability of the interpreter to recognize that constituency building is a "moving target" and that different audiences have different perspectives on the same resources. Activities and developmental efforts should focus on recognizing that each of the many publics we serve can develop a sense of importance and can place value on park sites from their own perspective.

Additional emphasis must be placed on motivations of audiences, and the reasons why they do or do not visit a site. Some potential audiences do not come to, or care about, individual sites. The skillful resource interpreter will make efforts to identify those which do not visit in attempts to include them both mentally and physically in the park story. Through this effort, new constituencies may be built which will create wider support for park preservation.

CONTENT OUTLINE:

    I. Constituency building
            A. Historical foundation
                    1. Mather and Albright
                            a. issues, external pressures

b. context
-historical perspectives of "value"

B. Value in constituency building
1. political influence
2. meeting mission

C. Evolving demographics
1. local, national, international
2. changes in national notion of "conservation"
3. development of preservation and stewardship ethics as separate notions
4. international perspectives on National Park idea
a. "conservation" in international context
b. multiple truths about NPS mission/values
5. importance of reaching NPS mission through continued use of fundamental Mather/Albright approach of meeting audience/non-audience needs

II. Multiple communities and potential audiences
A. NPS
1. within park (building relationships between divisions, partners, within divisions/districts)
2. between parks, partner organizations, and neighboring agencies
-interrelationships between parks, other agencies, and local communities
-"combining forces" with partners and neighboring agencies to convey a consistent message and meaning, where appropriate, to develop accurate informational resources to support each other

B. Non-NPS
1. immediate park neighbor groups (cultural, ethnic, political, geographic, special interest, etc.) with active interests in park resources, operations, policies, and other practices
2. immediate park neighbor groups with potential interests which have not demonstrated interest in park policies or practices
3. regional neighbors (within driving distance) who may or may not have potential interests with park practices and protection

III. Group process
A. Group process will vary according to audience

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1. dynamics of groups
　　　　　　　　　a. small group communication techniques
　　　　　　　　　b. inter-group dynamics when group makeup is diverse
　　　　　　　　　c. working with homogenous audiences from under-represented groups
　　　　　　2. strategies for dialogue
　　　　　　　　　a. connecting discussions to meanings for diverse audiences
　　　　　　　　　b. avoiding debate in a "meaningful" way
　　　　　　　　　　　1. questioning/discussional strategies

　　　IV. Getting help
　　　　　A. Sources of information about audiences
　　　　　　　1. Universities, graduate programs
　　　　　　　2. Visitor Services Project data
　　　　　　　3. U.S. Census statistics

RESOURCES

Interpretation and Inclusion, Ongoing series of articles by Costa Dillon (14 to date)

Interpretive Skills Lesson Plans: "Demographics" by Rebecca Warren/Karen Boucher, 1992; "Identifying and Understanding the Visitor" by Linda Olson, 1983; "Extending the Park Influence" by Sandy Early, 1983; "The Interpark Perspective" by Linda Olson, 1983; "Communications" rev. by Bill Fuchs, 1992.

The National Park Service Strategic Plan, NPS, 1996.

Visitor Services Project Annual Reports, ed., Gary Machlis.

Park, Visitor, Interpreter, NPS Workbook and Videos

Birth of the National Park Service, Horace Albright, Chapters 1-7, Howe Brothers, 1985.

The National Park Service, William Everhart, Chapters 1, 2, and 6. Westview Press, 1983.

Battling For the National Parks, George B. Hartzog, Chapters 1 and 20. Moyer Bell, Limited, 1988.

National Parks: The American Experience, Alfred Runte, Chapters 1, 2, and 11, Epilogue, University of Nebraska Press, 1987.

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Playing God in Yellowstone, Alston Chase, Harvest Books, 1987.

The State of the World's Parks, Gary Machlis, Chapters 2, and 5. Westview Press, Inc., 1985.

History of NPS Reorganization, an article

Principle Legislation Affecting the NPS, Information Bulletin #5, August 28, 1989, available from Wildlife and Vegetation Division, NPS.

SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

1. Identify and list specific, active audience types and the multiple perspectives which these visitors may have on the park themes. Describe how you would employ specific tangibles within your site to link to those perspectives through interpretive efforts.

2. Identify specific, non-active audiences which have not traditionally shown interest in visiting or supporting park resources. For each group identified, list specific tangibles within site which could be potential links for those audiences, and discuss with colleagues potential interpretive techniques appropriate to make linkages to those audiences.

Strategies for Inclusion

PURPOSE   Audiences have choices. They may choose to visit, or stay away from, parks. In a larger sense, these choices translate to conscious support and even stewardship. To develop broad-based support and a constituency which cuts across ethnic, cultural, racial, gender, and mobility lines, interpreters must develop an overriding concept of inclusion. It is often stated that "good planning is good planning for everyone." This applies to interpretation.

OBJECTIVES Upon completion of this component, the learner will be able to:
- describe the concept of inclusion and the opportunity for widespread support which inclusion techniques may create;
- demonstrate effective techniques in developing dialogue with multiple audiences, including elements of respect, balanced perspectives, and understanding of "multiple truths and meanings;"
- use a decision path to select an appropriate delivery technique for a specific story and audience, with a clear outcome in mind.

APPROACH

Effective interpreters must establish a universal approach to inclusion to serve all who have an interest in the physical, mental, and cultural aspects of the stories being told. The ideas should not be learned as "separate" concepts addressing accessibility, controversial issues, or multiple points of view, but rather as an inclusive planning approach in which doors are left open through which all may enter.

By examining aspects of inclusion, from physical, mental, emotional, and attitudinal, the interpreter will place his/her topic into the best context possible. The challenge is to create inclusive interpretation without burdening the program with lengthy, cumbersome descriptions of relevance for any specific group. Such an open approach to a story or idea by nature allows access by all those who desire it. This not only means making a program accessible both mentally and physically, but also skill at identifying and connecting to the meanings, beliefs, and values of each potential audience regarding the resources s/he is attempting to interpret. There is a central NPS "truth" or "belief" or position on any resource, BUT visitor's truths, beliefs, and other "facts" should be respected, and can be creatively recognized to engender universal support for park protection.

This effort will afford the interpreter the greatest opportunity to successfully address multiple points of view and avoid closing down channels of communication (and therefore potential support) without compromising the mission or positions of the NPS.

(3/12/98-NPS)

CONTENT OUTLINE:

I. What is inclusion?
      A. Traditional views of special populations

      B. Inclusion as a "universal" concept for interpreters

      C. Value of an inclusive strategy

II. Practical lessons
      A. Good planning and design is good for all
            1. variations: respect for multiple points of view,
            2. "access" to information/concepts is both a physical and mental concept

      B. Multiple points of view and changing (evolving) perspectives
            1. Whose park is it?
                a. the possibility of multiple meanings of resource
            2. Whose truth is it?
                a. discussion of perspectives on the story
                    1. "your truth vs. mine," "your meaning vs. mine"
                    2. audience, non-audience, interpreter's
                    3. exploring the differences (?) between truths and beliefs
                b. other filters which affect the interpretation of story

      C. Balancing act
            1. representing the NPS, its mission and policies
            2. creating interpretive or informational opportunities by embracing multiple points of view
            3. letting respect lead to dialogue

III. Respect for diversity
      A. Identifying and reaching new audiences with different points of view, including controversial issues; the broader context of a story

IV. Role that bias plays in interpretation
      A. Recognizing the effects of bias
            1. visitor
            2. historical/scientific record
            3. subjugating personal bias of the interpreter

V. Examining approaches for inclusiveness
      A. Choosing the story context

           1. researching multiple perspectives
           2. establishing your program based on park themes but grounded in important perspectives represented in audiences
           3. understanding and planning for "flash points" which lead to debate rather than dialogue

      B. Examining possible tangible/intangible connections
           1. brainstorming and researching connections for variety of audiences
           2. using connections which are universal to create "seamless" interpretation and incorporate diverse meanings
           3. using connections specific to one audience while illustrating an overall relevance for group

      C. Delivery methods to facilitate inclusion and meet the needs of the total audience
           1. activities
           2 questioning
           3. role play
           4. "devil's advocate-reversed" -taking on and defending a position which is contradictory or conflicting with either scientific or historical record, or in opposition to NPS positions.

  VI. Basic communication principles
      A. Group size and makeup
           1. tips for talking to one, several, or many

      B. Creating dialogue opportunities rather than debate

  VII. Outcomes - full spectrum of inclusion
      A. Nurturing support from <u>all</u> audiences, regardless of background, perspectives.

RESOURCES

Achieving Excellence in Interpretation: Compelling Stories, NPS workbook by Connie Rudd, 1995.

Interpretation and Inclusion, Ongoing series of articles by Costa Dillon.

Interpretive Skills Lesson Plans: "Programmatic Accessibility," by Michael Smithson, 1996; "Interpreting Diverse Points of View" by Arlene Jackson/Smitty Parratt, 1992; "Interpreting Critical Issues" rev. by June McMillan/Chuck Wahler, 1992;

"Biases and Behavior" by Barb Stewart, 1992; "Multi-Cultural Interpretation" rev. by Gayle Hazelwood, 1992; "Program Accessibility for Special Populations" rev. by Matt Graves/Gayle Hazelwood, 1992; "Identifying and Understanding the Visitor" by Linda Olson; "Role of Interpretation in Park Operations" rev. by Maria Gillett, 1992; "Communications" rev. by Bill Fuchs, 1992; "Cross Cultural Interpretation" by Dwight Madison, Anne Rasor.

Talking with Young Visitors in the Parks, Donald H. Ecroyd, Eastern National Parks and Monuments Association, 1989.

Other Sources:

Articles on changing demographics and multiple perspectives
Articles by Ed Linenthal
Agenda ideas from "Critical Natural Resource Issues for Interpretation" course
Agenda ideas from "Interpreting Military Resources in a Broader Context" course
Ideas of successes/failures on Hawaii Volcanoes, Everglades, USS Arizona Memorial, Manzanar, Andersonville, other sites/people

Harpers Ferry Center's "Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for Interpretive Media"

Bradford Woods; Ray Bloomer, and accessibility learning and instructional opportunities

SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

1. Identify and write a strategy for an interpretive effort to reach an under-represented user group.

2. Describe of ways to modify an interpretive service to incorporate new audiences.

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Component for Module 110

Quality Visitor Experiences

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PURPOSE   In the chapter "Conservation Esthetic" in Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (enlarged edition, with essays), Leopold described a series of levels at which individuals interact with a resource (concept also in *Module 101*). These levels encompass a broad range of expectations a visitor may hold when encountering a park interpreter. Visitors have chosen to invest time and money to visit a park site, and it is their right to simply want to "have a good time." Allowing for visitor enjoyment in the context of preserving park resources for future generations is a directive written into the NPS organic act. This component explores the concept of a quality experience, what an interpreter can do to facilitate this experience, and ways in which these types of experiences can and often do lead to the overall outcome of stewardship.

OBJECTIVES Upon completion of this component, the learner will be able to:
- use a decision path for identifying what an audience or individual visitor is seeking;
- properly place "simple enjoyment" in the spectrum of visitor wants and desires in visiting a site;
- effectively use the visitor center as a base for a complete range of quality visitor experiences.

APPROACH

In addition to skills leading to appropriate interpretive decisions, an effective interpreter must recognize when visitors merely seek to enjoy park resources in leisurely ways. Many visitors <u>want</u> to enjoy a park and <u>need</u> guidance in finding places of solitude, recreation, and leisure. These experiences are part of a spectrum of visitor interests and can be just as valid in building constituencies as interpretive devices.

Developmental approach should be built around information and support resources which interpreters have or can provide which enable visitors to enjoy park resources in a recreational or leisurely manner. Visitors who gain satisfaction through the appropriate recreational use of park sites may become stewards of those sites through their activities. Ultimate protection of any park site will depend on a broad based support of the many potential constituents.

CONTENT OUTLINE:

I. Quality visitor experience--Getting to their real purpose in coming
    A. Variety and relevance
        1. Visitors are sovereign--THEY make the choices
            a. *Module 101* revisited for various groups

        2. Visitor motivations come in many forms.
            a. any legal and appropriate use of resource can lead to meanings, regardless of what the visitor is seeking, and that enjoyment comes in infinite sizes and shapes
            b. stewardship ethic may grow from any satisfying use of park resource, not just interpretive efforts. Facilitating that relationship is an important role of interpreter

        3. Professionalism and quality service as ingredients

    B. Focusing on visitor wants
        1. limitations of time and money

        2. the question beneath the question
            a. probing to assure clarity
            b. limiting your response to the question asked

        3. resisting the urge to inflict interpretation and cultivating the concept of stewardship through leisure enjoyment

        4. delivering on the visitor's wants
            a. simple methods of giving directions (inclusive)
                --clear destination, give only necessary information, have visitor repeat back for clarity

II. Role of visitor centers as a foundation for a quality visitor experience
    A. Traditional roles
        1. Coordinated services with other sources

        2. Information management
            a. making regulations, compendium, other limitations clear and visible, and treating in a firm, yet even-handed manner

        3. Facility requirements

        4. Quality of resources and appearance

5. Basic Maslow theory

6. Orientation and information focused

    B. Changing roles
        1. Providing for wants as well as needs
           a. identifying wants

        2. Electronic wants

        3. Avoid tendency to inflict information

        4. Evaluating your visitor center for "friendliness" to all visitors

        5. Making your visitor center work as a partner with other
           information sources

    C. Connection of facility with opportunities throughout park/site to enjoy
        maps, photos, directions, etc.
        1. Using exhibits, site bulletins, and other resources to illustrate
           opportunities to enjoy site

    D. When the opportunity occurs
        1. Connecting an "enjoyable" visit to resource stewardship.

RESOURCES

Dealing with People, video available from Mather Training Center

Interpretive Skills Lesson Plans: "Interpretation through Visitor Services" rev. by
    Will Morris, 1992; "The Role of Interpretation in Park Operations" rev. by Maria
    Gillett, 1992.

Interpreting for Park Visitors, William J. Lewis, Acorn Press, 1989.

Component, Module 101: The Interpretive Equation

Legendary Service, video training package, available from Mather Training Center.

POSitively Outrageous Service, T. Scott Gross, Mastermedia Books, 1991.

Say, Ranger!, NPS information pamphlet. Available only through photocopies, Mather

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Training Center.

SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES

1. Study the types of activities which visitors participate in which <u>do not</u> include interpretation. Evaluate how and why these could lead to stewardship principles.

2. Analyze visitor centers within your area which provide information in support of leisurely and/or non-interpretive (recreational) activities at your site for clarity, focus, and support.

(3/12/98-NPS)