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| ***Results of Peer Review*** |
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| **Certification Assessment for Interpretive Research and Resource Liaison** |
| Product Number: 16106 |
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| **Results for this review:** |
| **The certifiers determined that this submission demonstrates the certification standards. The bibliography/essays in the submission...** |
| * Communicate that resource meanings have been thoroughly researched and referenced and the audiences' interests have been adequately identified, considered, and referenced. * Communicate that the resource meanings presented met the researched interests of the audiences and supported opportunities for those audiences to make their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance inherent in the resource. |
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| *Keep in mind that this is only a "point-in-time" assessment, and should not be construed as more than that. The standards for certification vary with each competency, and may take practice to understand and/or demonstrate consistently. The combined analysis of the reviewers is provided below.* |
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| **The certifiers identified the following ways in which the submission meets the certification standards:** |
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| Research of Meanings and Audience Interests **This submission provides evidence that resource meanings for Thomas Edison and the phonograph have been thoroughly researched and referenced and that the interests of each audience have been adequately identified, considered, and referenced. The annotated bibliography provides a breadth and depth of sources such as books, websites, workshops, and planning documents on Edison, the phonograph, and the science of sound and describes how ideas presented in the references are useful to interpreters. A pamphlet entitled “How Edison Invented the Phonograph,” written during Edison’s lifetime by his own company, and an 1892 book, "The Phonograph: And How to Construct it," provide primary sources on the subject. Several secondary sources from different decades examine Edison and his life of invention. The earliest biography referenced, "Josephson’s Edison: A Biography," dates from 1959 and the most recent biography, "Stross’ Wizard of Menlo Park," dates from 2008. The annotations describe how each source may be useful in interpreting Edison, the invention of the phonograph, and associated resource meanings such as innovation, technology, and change. The annotations also acknowledge the need for several secondary sources to provide a breadth of perspectives by remarking “…each author finds something different and interesting that the others missed.” Carlson’s book, Thomas Edison for Kids 21 Activities: His Life and Ideas, is described as being "used when brainstorming ways to explain sound recording to children in a way that they would understand when designing my phonograph exhibit and hands-on displays."   The interests for the three audiences seem to be adequately identified, considered, and referenced. The main entry in the bibliography relating to Audience A, the group of “visually impaired persons with their seeing eye dogs and sighted friends,“ lists the source as notes from a workshop on incorporating inclusion techniques into interpretive programming to provide understanding regarding the needs of these visitors. The bibliography identifies a range of sources for the expected audience of families (Audience B), from demographic statistics gleaned from the park’s visitor survey card data report and the Long Range Interpretive Plan to observations of several interpreters on staff at Edison National Historical Park as well as several sources describing how to make a phonograph (Kaner, Carlson, and the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation). Planning documents and reports seem to indicate an increase in attendance by this audience, and documented discussions with co-workers verified this audience’s interest in learning how the phonograph works. For the interests of Audience C, the class of third graders from a local elementary school in West Orange, the bibliography includes basic information on the developmental levels for this age group which were obtained by accessing the website “How Children Develop and Learn,” by researching the curriculum content standards for the group, and by consulting a Teacher-Ranger-Teacher familiar with this age group and with New Jersey schools. Socio-economic information about the school and the community was gathered from websites associated with the chamber of commerce, the public school district, and the National Center for Education Statistics.**   Research Supports Interpretive Opportunities **The essays show how the meanings of Edison and the phonograph were used to meet the researched interests of these three audiences and support opportunities for the audiences to make their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings of Edison’s innovation and the changes to the phonograph. The first essay identifies that the group of visually impaired visitors, Audience A, were interested in learning something about Edison and wanted to “develop their skills …adjusting to functioning comfortably in public settings with their impairment.” One part of the program emphasized Edison's success in overcoming his own impairment, a powerful way to appeal to the interests of this audience. The discussion of Edison's refusal to let his hearing impairment hinder the development of the phonograph creates an opportunity for an emotional connection to Edison's perseverance. Allowing the audience to touch the various recording materials purposely placed in a sequence helped facilitate an awareness of how quickly technology changed and how the phonograph "changed the way we thought about and enjoyed music." Doing this as a group activity supported the audience’s interest to participate in a social activity and helped provide an opportunity for them to feel comfortable in a public setting.   The exhibit created for Audience B provides a variety of opportunities for a portion of the park’s general audience (families) to understand how Edison invented the phonograph and how the phonograph works, as well as a variety of opportunities to feel amazement or excitement at this “special invention.” By creating a visual poster and a variety of hands-on exhibits, props, and demonstrations for families to explore, the exhibit provided opportunities to provoke revelation and awareness (intellectual connections) and inspire curiosity, amazement, and wonder (emotional connections) in revealing the mystery of how Edison utilized the mechanics of sound to create the first sound recordings. These opportunities seem appropriate to meet the specific researched interests of this audience as noted in reports, documented conversations, and books.   The essay for Audience C shows that the program for the third graders provided opportunities for them to form intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings of Edison, the phonograph and recorded sound, and the process of invention. Allowing the children to experience the various types of recording materials developed by Edison provided examples of how creativity and innovation affect the creation of new products. Comparing Edison’s inventions with recordings made today and explanations of the importance of Edison’s work in launching the music industry helped the audience evaluate the impact of inventions by prominent New Jersey residents. The questioning, explanations, comparisons, and demonstrations seemed to inspire intellectual connections such as awareness and revelation and emotional connections such as amazement, surprise, and wonder with these resource meanings. This interpretive program relates to the audience's interests of becoming aware that "creativity and innovation affect lifestyles, access to information, and the creation of new products and services" as stated in the New Jersey core curriculum standards.**   Suggestions or Additional Comments *The certifiers may not be familiar with your park or the specific constraints of your project. Their suggestions are intended to offer ideas which may or may not be adaptable for your situation. Please consider these coaching ideas with an open mind toward how your submission might be strengthened.*  **Though the interests of the various audiences described in the essays appear to have been adequately researched, additional study may have helped improve the interpretive products that were developed. The bibliography contains a single entry relating to the interests of Audience A. It does not seem to include specific material on Edison’s attitudes toward visually impaired people or how he felt his phonograph might help them, either as a separate source (are Edison’s journals or memoirs available?) or as part of the annotations of the several comprehensive biographies of Edison. Greater depth of knowledge of this audience could perhaps be gained from further research into issues important to advocates for blind and visually impaired persons. How does this community generally use legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 to enjoy access to public accommodations? How does this community generally view Edison and his invention of recorded sound, and has this view changed since 1877? When advanced knowledge of the resource, such as Edison’s views on blind and visually impaired people, and advanced knowledge of the audience, such as views on recordings, are adequately considered, a stronger interpretive product may result from applying the depth and breadth of knowledge of the resource to the interests of specific audiences.   When initial research into West Orange Elementary School (Audience C) revealed that “[t]he area is extremely culturally diverse creating a cornucopia of different beliefs and backgrounds amongst the children,” further research into specifics of this group may have been useful. A conversation with the classroom teacher (or a visit to the school only two blocks away) could have provided further relevant information on the classroom dynamics resulting from the students’ diverse beliefs and backgrounds as well as their prior experience with field trips and their reading levels. Acquiring advanced knowledge of this audience’s reading levels may be useful for a program during which students are asked to read materials sight unseen from randomly distributed index cards. A full-performance level interpreter in the National Park Service continually adds to his or her knowledge of the resource and knowledge of the audience’s characteristics, needs, and interests in an ongoing effort to provide relevance for specific audiences. Application of vigorous research skills to acquire new knowledge of both the resource and audiences is encouraged as future interpretive products are developed.** |
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| *Through this peer review program, and with the input provided above, we urge constant practice in order to continue professional development.* ***You can print this form as documentation of certification in this competency.*** *If you have questions about this review or the Interpretive Development Program, please contact the Training Manager for Interpretation and Education at Stephen T. Mather Training Center.* |
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