

## World Archaeological Congress 4

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### **Symposium: "THE FORM, PHYSIQUE AND FITNESS OF EDUCATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY; IS IT WORKING OUT?"**

#### ***The National Park Service Archaeologist–Interpreter Shared Competencies Curriculum***

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

An U.S. National Park Service (NPS) project is underway to strengthen the relationship between archaeology and public interpretation and ultimately to improve how archaeology is presented to the public. Archaeologists, interpreters, and educators are collaborating in developing a curriculum that can be used by NPS in training employees in the three career fields. They will be trained together in the skills and abilities (shared competencies) needed to carry out a successful interpretation program. Among the main precepts of the curriculum are the needs for interdisciplinary communication and for sensitive interpretation to multicultural audiences. The initiative stems from a service-wide push to improve training and development of its employees and from efforts of the Southeast Archaeological Center (SEAC) of NPS to promote better methods for interpreting archaeological resources.

#### **THE ORIGINAL TRAINING COURSE**

NPS has coordinated and sponsored an annual interagency 40-hour training course entitled "Issues in the Public Interpretation of Archaeological Sites and Materials." This course, a component of SEAC's Public Interpretation Initiative, was designed to provide the "basic tools" necessary for interpreters, archaeologists, and program managers and specialists for developing effective presentations that meet federal standards and agency missions. In addition to National Park Service and other federal agency personnel, the course has been offered to persons working in state and local government as well as private institutions.

The course was effective in addressing seven major factors thought important in the public interpretation of archaeology:

- (1) Initial planning procedures;
- (2) Mutual understanding of archaeological technical information by interpreters, exhibit designers, and archaeologists;
- (3) The archaeologist's and interpreter's respective roles;
- (4) NPS and non-NPS case studies;
- (5) On-site program/exhibit critiques;
- (6) The importance of an interdisciplinary approach and the interaction among the interpretive team players in developing goals and principals; and
- (7) The effective application of interpretative methods in public programs.

In light of newly revised standards and strategies for NPS-sponsored training courses, SEAC and the NPS Mather Employee Development Center are redesigning the course to meet the new requirements. The new standards are competency-based; we are developing a curriculum for a new training module and multidisciplinary "shared competencies" among archaeologists, interpreters, and museum educators.

[Handout #1 - Essential Competencies for Archaeology; posted on the WWW at URL <http://www.nps.gov/training/npsonly/RSC/archeolo.htm#I1>]

[Handout #2 - Essential Competencies for Interpretation; posted on the WWW at URL <http://www.nps.gov/training/npsonly/INT/1interp.htm#I1>]

## COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING

NPS has recently developed a new training strategy for all organizational levels in the development and delivery of the full range of training courses, alternative delivery methods, and techniques necessary to meet the educational goals of NPS. This strategy embraces many issues that fall into six categories: essential competencies, career development and professional growth, training opportunities, partnerships, monitoring and evaluation, and funding.

The purposes of the new training strategy are to:

- (1) Provide definition to NPS employees and their supervisors about the essential competencies required for them to perform their jobs at the entry, developmental, and full performance levels;
- (2) Give employees insights into the full spectrum of job requirements in the Service so they can better plan their careers; and
- (3) Enable the Service's Training & Development Community to base its programs on essential needs identified by employees and supervisors.

A comprehensive training program is being developed that addresses the identified essential competencies — knowledge, skills, and abilities — for each career field. Essential competencies and training needs are being established at the basic, intermediate, and advanced levels for most fields within NPS, including archaeology and

interpretation. A Core Curriculum and methods of delivery are being developed for each career field.

## Training Strategy

The mission of the new NPS training strategy is as follows:

*The National Park Service is committed to the professional growth and continuous learning of all its employees, and will provide them with a comprehensive, mission-focused training and development program.*

The *Strategy* also identifies six goals that identify ways to accomplish the mission statement. Two of the goals articulate ways to develop and implement competency-based training:

**Goal 1:** Develop and deliver a comprehensive training program to address the identified essential competencies—knowledge, skills, and abilities—for each career field. This goal includes defining essential competencies necessary for each career field; conducting training needs assessments to determine specific development needs; developing comprehensive training program to address identified competencies; and developing core curricula and methods of delivery.

**Goal 5:** Establish a process for validating training courses and developmental programs to assure that they result in the organizational and individual benefits for which they were developed. This goal includes developing an evaluation method to determine whether a training course, program, or activity has produced the intended results; and identifying procedures for establishing and recognizing certification and benchmarks for specific competencies.

The *Strategy* changed the NPS Training and Development Program by focusing on the delivery of competency-based training to employees. The strength of this approach is that it is outcome based and learner driven, provides for clear performance (competency), aims for professional growth, and encourages the developmental process.

The [Employee Training and Development Career Planning and Tracking Kit \(1996\)](#) defines a competency as "A combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities in a particular [career field](#), which, when acquired, allows a person to perform a task or function at a specifically defined level of proficiency." An essential competency is a competency that forms part of the *vital* knowledge, skills, and abilities for an individual career field. NPS employees can obtain competencies several ways, including life experience, formal education, apprenticeship, on-the-job experience, self-help program, mentoring program, and training courses, programs, and activities.

Since 1995, essential competencies for over 225 occupational groups in 17 career fields have been identified at the entry, developmental, and full performance level. The *Tracking Kit* includes the essential competencies for each career field. Training Manager positions have been established to represent each major career field and have the responsibility for developing and implementing Servicewide training and development programs.

As the NPS Training and Development program continues to implement the *Strategy*, it will become necessary to develop curricula that address "shared competencies." A shared competency is an essential competency inherent to one Career Field that crosses over into one or more additional Career Field(s). This is the intent of the **Archeologist-Interpreter Shared Competency Curriculum**.

## Terminology

For clarification, the terms "competency," "essential competency," and "shared competency" as used in this paper are defined as follows:

Competency: A combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities in a particular [Career Field](#), which, when acquired, allows a person to perform a task or function at a specifically defined level of proficiency.

Essential Competency: A competency that forms part of the vital knowledge, skills, and abilities for an individual career field; an essential competency is critical for an employee to perform effectively at his or her level in a Career Field.

Shared Competency: An essential competency inherent to one Career Field(s) that crosses over into another Career Field.

[[Handout #3](#) - Draft Archaeology/Interpretation Shared Competency Module]

## DEVELOPMENT OF A SHARED COMPETENCY CURRICULUM MODULE

Using the history of the 40-hour course and new NPS training standards as guides, two interdisciplinary work groups have developed a draft curriculum during the past year. The overall goal of the groups was to develop a service-wide standard for the public interpretation of archeological information and resources. The focus of the workgroup was on the premise that archeologists and interpreters share the responsibility of presenting archeology to the public using methods that interpret stewardship of resources. The workgroups were composed of a balance of archeologists and interpreters from parks, offices, and centers. The workgroups have labored to produce the draft curriculum module ([Handout #3](#)) consistent with the NPS [Employee Training and Development Strategy \(1995\)](#) that stresses the commitment of the NPS to professional growth and a mission-focused training and development program.

## Results

The resultant draft shared-competency-training module is composed of three main parts:

- (1) A general description of purpose and approach;
- (2) A component for training archaeologists; and
- (3) A component for training interpreters.

*The purpose of this training module emanates from the relationship of archaeology and public interpretation as separate but reciprocal fields. Archaeology is a science based on academic research and analysis. Interpretation is an art based on specific skills and techniques. Interpretation of the archaeological record presents to the audience a variety of perspectives to reach a greater understanding and appreciation of human behavior and activities. Archaeologists and interpreters collaborate and use their knowledge and skills to create opportunities for the audience to form intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance of the archaeological records and the peoples who created them.*

We have attempted to design the module to achieve three main outcomes:

- (1) Interpreters gain knowledge and skills in archaeology necessary to develop presentations and media about cultural resources;
- (2) Archaeologists gain knowledge and skills in interpretation necessary to develop presentations and media about cultural resources; and
- (3) Dialogue and interactions between archaeologists and interpreters are created for joint development of effective public interpretation of archaeology.

In addition, upon completion of the curriculum, the archaeologist-participants should be able to:

- (1) Convey archaeological information to interpreters in an understandable and usable manner;
- (2) Suggest sources and resources for discovering multiple perspectives to interpreters;
- (3) Assist interpreters with developing programs and texts about archaeological subjects; and
- (4) Develop presentations and/or media about archaeological subjects to a variety of audiences.

In turn, interpreter-participants should be able to:

- (1) Accurately utilize archaeological information in presentations and media;
- (2) Identify and appropriately present multiple perspectives or direct audiences to sources for discovering multiple perspectives; and
- (3) Assist archaeologists with developing programs and texts about archaeological subjects.

Akin to the topics addressed in the 40-hour course, the curriculum will address:

- (1) Basic archaeological principles; identifying appropriate information and concepts for audiences;
- (2) Laws, regulations, and policies regarding cultural resources protection and preservation;
- (3) Identifying and defining “multiple perspectives;”
- (4) Comparing and understanding scientific fact, tradition, lore, culture, and religion;

- (5) On-site involvement(s);
- (6) Philosophy of interpretation;
- (7) Basic interpretive skills and techniques;
- (8) Development of interpretive presentations;
- (9) Development of various interpretive media; and
- (10) Park interpretive themes.

Delivery modes: Training can consist of classroom lectures, courses, workshops, videos, practical exercises, dialogue, self-study, and interpretive products.

How do we assess that the competency has been achieved? For archaeologists, an interpretive presentation or media development is evaluated by interpreters for the appropriate use of interpretive skills and techniques, by archaeologists for accuracy of archaeological information, and by an outside "audience" to include such people as the park superintendent, the administrative and maintenance staffs, and local neighbors. For interpreters, an interpretive presentation or media development is evaluated by archaeologists for accuracy of archaeological information, by interpreters for appropriate use of interpretive skills and techniques, and by an outside "audience" to include such people as the park superintendent, the administrative and maintenance staffs, and local neighbors.

An alternative procedure would entail collaboration of archaeologists and interpreters to develop a presentation or interpretive media. The presentation or product is evaluated by their peers for appropriate use of interpretive skills and techniques and for accuracy of archaeological information, as well as by an outside "audience" to include such persons as the park superintendent (director), the administrative and maintenance staffs, and associated non-NPS "neighbors."

We have proposed that there be two tiers (or levels) of measurement:

- (1) An overarching tier where a trained review panel looks at national standards and competency attributes and evaluates/approves the overall program for competency attainment;
- (2) A second level evaluates skills, techniques, content, accuracy, and balance in a focused assessment of component elements in regard to developed skills and expertise.

***Archaeology for Interpreters Component: Developing an Interpretive Archaeology Knowledge Base***

[General description – refer to handout #3]

***Interpretation for Archaeologists Component: Interpreting the Archaeological Record***

[General description – refer to handout #3]

## **DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS**

### **Handout #3:**

## **Draft Archaeology/Interpretation Shared Competency Module**

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### **THE ARCHAEOLOGY/INTERPRETATION SHARED COMPETENCY MODULE: Developing Skills for Archaeologists and Interpreters through Cross-training**

#### **Introduction**

In response to the new NPS training strategy, an interdisciplinary work group of Archaeologists and interpreters has developed a shared-competency-training module. The module is composed of three main parts: a general description of purpose and approach; a component for training archaeologists, and a component for training interpreters.

#### **Purpose**

Archaeology is a science based on academic research and analysis. Interpretation is an art based on specific skills and techniques. Interpretation of the archaeological record presents to the audience a variety of perspectives to reach a greater understanding and appreciation of human behavior and activities. Archaeologists and interpreters collaborate and use their knowledge and skills to create opportunities for the audience to form intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance of the archaeological records and the peoples who created them.

#### **Design**

This module has a three-part focus: (1) It allows interpreters to gain the foundation of knowledge and skills in archaeology necessary to develop presentations and media about cultural resources; (2) It allows archaeologists to gain the foundation of knowledge and skills in interpretation necessary to develop presentations and media about cultural resources; and (3) It promotes dialogue and interactions between archaeologists and interpreters for jointly developing effective interpretation of archaeology and cultural resources.

#### **Participants**

The shared competency is apropos for interpreters and archaeologists with responsibilities for conveying archaeological information in an interpretive manner to a wide variety of audiences.

#### **Objectives**

Upon completion of the curriculum, archaeologists to be able to: (1) Convey archaeological information to interpreters in an understandable and usable manner; (2) Suggest sources and resources for discovering multiple perspectives to interpreters; (3) Assist interpreters with developing programs and texts about archaeological subjects;

and (4) Develop presentations and/or media about archaeological subjects to a variety of audiences.

Upon completion of the curriculum, interpreters will be able to: (1) Accurately utilize archaeological information in presentations and media; (2) Identify and appropriately present multiple perspectives or direct audiences to sources for discovering multiple perspectives; and (3) Assist archaeologists with developing programs and texts about archaeological subjects.

### **Topics**

The curriculum will address: basic archaeological principles; identifying appropriate information and concepts for audiences; laws, regulations, and policies regarding cultural resources protection and preservation; identifying multiple perspectives; comparing and understanding scientific fact, tradition, lore, culture, and religion; on-site involvements; philosophy of interpretation; basic interpretive skills and techniques; development of interpretive presentations; development of various interpretive media; and park interpretive themes.

### **Delivery Modes**

Training can consist of classroom lectures, courses, workshops, videos, practical exercises, dialogue, self-study, and interpretive products.

### **Competency Assessment**

Archaeologists: an interpretive presentation or media development to be evaluated by interpreters for appropriate use of interpretive skills and techniques, by archaeologists for accuracy of archaeological information, and by an outside "audience" to include such people as the park superintendent, the administrative and maintenance staffs, and local neighbors.

Interpreters: an interpretive presentation or media development to be evaluated by archaeologists for accuracy of archaeological information, by interpreters for appropriate use of interpretive skills and techniques, and by an outside "audience" to include such people as the park superintendent, the administrative and maintenance staffs, and local neighbors.

Or: Archaeologists and interpreters collaborate to develop a presentation or interpretive media, to be evaluated by their peers for appropriate use of interpretive skills and techniques and for accuracy of archaeological information, as well as by an outside "audience" to include such people as the park superintendent, the administrative and maintenance staffs, and local neighbors.

### **Two tiers (levels) of measurement:**

First Tier (overarching) where a trained review panel looks at national standards and competency attributes (evaluates and approves overall program for competency attainment);

Second Tier (specific skills, techniques, content, accuracy, and balance) of focused assessment of component elements in regard to developed skills and expertise (evaluates and approves skills and expertise).

## MODULE COMPONENTS

- **Archaeology for Interpreters Component: Developing an Interpretive Archaeology Knowledge Base**

### *Purpose*

This component contains basic archaeological principles and preservation laws, as well as determining correlations and interrelations between pieces of the archaeological record. The interpreter must include this knowledge in preparing archaeological programs to provide a cohesive presentation of relevant ideas to maximize interpretive opportunities.

### *Objectives*

Upon achieving the competency, the learner will be able to: (1) Demonstrate an understanding of the principles of archaeology; (2) Identify concepts and details too complex to be incorporated into basic interpretive programs and services; (3) Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of pertinent laws, regulations and policies; (4) Present programs with factual content, as well as programs that explore the concepts of multiple points of view; and (5) Demonstrate knowledge of on-site resource preservation activities.

### *Approach*

With the guidance of goals, themes, and objectives, knowledge of basic archaeological information is a vital element that allows an interpreter to mold archaeological concepts into an interpretive talk that develops ideas in a cohesive, relevant manner.

Certain archaeological principles are the basis for determining correlations and interrelations between pieces of the archaeological record. Understanding these principles will help interpreters make informed decisions about the cultural record and resource for interpretation to the public.

Archaeology is a complex science. Data recovery, analysis, and interpretation often bring conflicting results. Interpreters need to know how to find out which information or interpretations are appropriate for their audiences and which are not.

The public is largely unaware that cultural resources are explicitly protected on federal lands. Knowledge of the Federal laws and regulations will help interpreters present them enforce them appropriately and inform the public about the need for maintaining these resources.

Interpretive programs must have content based on acknowledged archaeological facts. Additionally interpreters must be aware of multiple points of view - scientific, traditional, cultural, i.e. ethnographic and religious - and these points of view must be considered and utilized in interpretive programs as appropriate.

Interpreters must develop and maintain dialogue with archaeologists to gain knowledge of on-site activities that inventory, monitor, stabilize, preserve, excavate and/or research cultural resources. Interpreters must also become directly involved in these activities as skill levels allow.

#### Content Outline:

- I. Concepts of Culture and Archaeology (science of inquiry)
- II. Americanist Archaeology
- III. Time - A Unidirectional Phenomenon
- IV. Space
- V. Content/Context
- VI. Taxonomy/Classification (esp. in a museum setting)
- VII. Method and Theory (What you need to know and not to know)
  
- VIII. Laws, Regulations, and NPS Policies
- IX. Preservation and Stabilization Activities
- X. Program Development
- XI. On-Site Activity Involvement
- XII. Site Discovery
- XIII. Environmental Archaeology

#### Resources:

1. General
2. Site specific

#### Developmental Activities:

1. For entry-level understanding of basic archaeological principles, view park videos and take park based training programs. Discuss both with supervisor.
  
2. For developmental full performance level, attend NPS course or Archaeology 101 at accredited college and participate in activities that demonstrate archaeological principles i.e. excavations, class room simulations, field trips and regional conferences. Of particular importance are the identification of complex information and the knowledge of basic cultural resource laws, regulations and policies. Successfully complete NPS sponsored/sanctioned knowledge class with a 70% or higher score on tests and practicums.
  
3. Present talks with factual information from the archaeological record. Produce outline including introduction, body, transitions, conclusion, and citation of references indicating an understanding of pertinent facts and multiple points of view. Prepare and present National evaluation standards (NPS or DOI standards) in conjunction with archaeological specialists. Final product to be an oral presentation, audio/visual program, written document, and/or museum display.
  
4. Demonstrate knowledge of on-site archaeological activities. Interview local/regional archaeologist, ARPA ranger, Park sections 106 specialist. Review management documents and maintenance participation in site preservation plan. Include

preservation activities in presentation and have presentation evaluated by subject matter expert. Successfully explain park/NPS archaeological collection/preservation activities as they relate to laws, regulations and policies that drive preservation.

5. Initiate dialogue with archaeological specialist to convey interpretive program information and to seek out archaeological needs. Outline possible responses to the archaeological needs and discuss with the archaeological specialist.

6. Identify relationships between park themes and the archaeological record. Prepare short synopsis of several contributions that the archaeological record might make to these themes. Discuss with archaeological specialist ways that these contributions might be developed from the archaeological record to be integrated into the products relating to these themes.

7. Involve an archaeological specialist in several interpretive planning activities from beginning to end

8. Integrate into interpretive products at least two technical points of view and one other cultural perspective or non-archaeological point of view on one or more components of the park's archaeological record. Discuss with archaeological specialist strategies for positively presenting and responding to these points of view.

9. Participate with archaeological specialist to help produce cultural resource project design that would result in useable educational components and interpretive products as part of the project.

- **Interpretation for Archaeologists Component: Interpreting the Archaeological Record**

*Purpose*

This component introduces the archaeologist to the fundamental philosophies and techniques of interpretation that includes; (1) Why we do interpretation to meet the NPS mission; (2) What interpretation is: tangibles, intangibles, and universal concepts; and (3) How Interpretation Works: The Interpretive Equation.

Also addressed is the archaeologist's responsibility to provide interpretation and education opportunities to increase public awareness and develop a constituency who desires to protect the archaeological record of America's heritage.

*Objectives*

Upon achieving the competency, the archaeologist will be able to:

- describe ways in which meanings may be revealed by creating linkages through tangibles and intangibles to the archaeological record;
- explain the interpreter's role to facilitate the visitors' experience and relationship to the resource, and how this relationship provides an opportunity for stewardship;

- explain the archaeologist's role in interpretation to facilitate the visitors' experience and relationship to the archaeological record, with an understanding that interpretation moves beyond a recitation of scientific data and chronologies;
- describe how interpretation and education meets the National Park Service and park site mission and objectives;
- describe how the 'interpretive equation' affects the success of interpretive efforts;
- establish a personal foundation to develop interpretive effectiveness through understanding interpretive purpose and techniques;
- establish a mission-driven approach to interpretation of archaeological resources, which incorporates both park management outcomes and audience revelation; both of which lead to enhanced stewardship.

### *Approach*

Protection of America's archaeological resource is dependent upon public recognition, understanding and stewardship. Through interpretation, visitors are afforded opportunities to make emotional and intellectual connections with archaeological resources, which leads toward resource stewardship.

This will be a joint venture (adventure) in professional development. The archaeologist must have a firm foundation and understanding in the purpose, philosophy and techniques of interpretation, and the interpreter must have a basic understanding of archaeological principles and techniques. Together, both professions must create compelling linkages to cultural resources, based on current factual research and creative interpretive techniques.

This component develops a basic foundation in the art and science of interpretation for the archaeologist, which can be refined throughout one's career. It addresses our obligation to provide public interpretation and education opportunities to the ever-increasing global visitor, to ensure protection of America's archaeological record now and into the future.

### Content Outline:

- I. Why we do interpretation, and how it meets the NPS mission (use [Module 101](#)).  
Note: Additional interpretive modules support skills such as the interpretive talk and walk, informal roving interpretation, interpretive planning and interpretive writing.
- II. The archaeologist's role in interpretation
  - A. Provides relevant research and resources necessary to create successful interpretive presentations that create emotional and intellectual connections to archaeological resources. Discuss examples
  - B. Seeks out intangible and universal meanings in archaeological resources that provoke imaginations, and build constituents with strong stewardship ethics. Use examples of interpretive programs that illustrate intangible and universal meanings in tangible archaeological resources.

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|---|---|
| C. Knows park interpretive themes and identifies relationships to the archaeological record.  | Use a case study  |
| D. Ensures the archaeological heritage in national park units is accessible and available to all people   | Cite examples from national park units  |
| Provides experiences that strengthen recognition, understanding, enjoyment, and preservation of the nation's archaeological heritage  | Cite examples from national park units  |
| F. Creates opportunity for audiences to ascribe meanings to archaeological resources, leading to concern for protection of the resource; this revelation is the seed of resource stewardship; this is the goal of archaeology interpretation, not simply a recitation of research data, and scientific facts. | Use example of interpretation that may result in stewardship through revelation |
- III. Teamwork
- A. Joint participation produces well-balanced holistic interpretive plans that accurately reflect management concerns, attention to all resources, and addresses major park themes.
  - B. Archaeologists actively seek to integrate current archaeological information into personal and non-personal interpretive services by understanding interpretive themes, techniques, and opportunities.
  - C. Actively contributes or solicits input from other experts to produce or present well balanced, multiple perspective interpretive media.
  - D. Frequently interacts and discusses with interpreters about status of archaeological projects, programs, actions, and how they might be relevant to interpretative programs.
  - E. Provides training opportunities (formal or informal) to park interpreters, keeping them apprised of current research, new theories and possible conflicting explanations about the park's archaeological record.
- IV. Personal and professional responsibilities
- A. Present archaeological information in understandable, jargon-free language.
  - B. Evaluate archaeological research and/or projects for inclusion of interpretive and educational components that relate to park themes and significance.
  - C. Knows how the archaeological profession contributes to the goals of interpretation and actively seeks ways to meet these common goals.
  - D. Demonstrates multiple methods to contribute to public education programs, while meeting the mission of the National Park Service.
  - E. Contributes to interpretative and education programs, to develop strong public support and stewardship for increased protection of archaeological resources nationwide.
  - F. It's only right that these two professions work together to meet common goals to ensure public support for protection of these irreplaceable archaeological resources - archaeological research in itself cannot protect them.

## V. Sensitivity

- A. Develops awareness and acknowledgement of multiple intangible meanings connected to archaeological resources, and shares these viewpoints with interpreters and the public.
- B. Provides interpreters with resources and information on traditional interpretations of archaeological resources.
- C. Understands that traditional perspectives exist and may contradict or disagree with archaeological research, but recognizes traditional perspectives as alternative interpretations, resulting in a more balanced presentation of the whole story.

### *Suggested Developmental Assignments*

1. Learner can evaluate the effectiveness of interpretive programs that address archaeological themes in their park, using their acquired knowledge from Module 101 (Fulfilling the NPS Mission: The Process of Interpretation).
  - Observe several interpretive talks or walks – Identify methods and techniques used to create intangible connections with tangible archaeological resources. Discuss with interpreter(s) other techniques and methods that may also enhance visitor connections to cultural resources.
  - Evaluate wayside exhibits or other printed materials – Identify methods and techniques used to communicate information about archaeological resources. Discuss with interpreter how it succeeds or fails to create emotional and intellectual connections for the visitors to the resource. Make suggestions and/or initiate new media for accomplishing NPS Mission of preservation through interpretation.
  - Assist at visitor center desk (where major themes address archaeology) and observe visitor questions, interpreter’s answers, visitor interaction and response to exhibits and other interpretive media. Demonstrate by example, techniques for interpreting the park’s archaeological record to interested visitors in the visitor center. Discuss with interpreters, additional methods and techniques that may be used to effectively convey accurate archaeological information through answers and other available media within the visitor center.
  - Provide training session(s) for interpreters, and/or seasonal/cooperating association employees, addressing archaeological topics and issues of concern. Brainstorm ideas for various techniques, methods and gimmicks to interpret these subjects, creating relevant connections for visitors.
  - Develop useful synopsis of archaeological research or recent project that provides understandable information and identifies universal concepts that make connections to the resources.
  - Prepare and present an interpretive program (talk, walk, demonstration, etc.) for the public. Program should include interpretive concepts acquired from Module 101.

2. Actively maintain dialogue with interpretive specialist to convey information and better understand interpretive needs. Outline and discuss possible actions that may address interpretive needs and help to initiate solutions.
3. Identify relationships between park themes and the archaeological record. Prepare synopsis with examples of how these relationships may be integrated into interpretive programs and products.
4. Actively seek out opportunities to participate in interpretive planning process.
  - Comprehensive Interpretive Plan
  - Wayside Exhibit Plan
  - Interior Exhibit Plan
  - Audiovisual Program Planning/Development
  - Environmental/Heritage Education Curriculum Plan/Program
  - Outreach and Special Events
  - Temporary/Seasonal Exhibits
  - Publications
  - World Wide Web Pages
5. Prepare useable synopsis on one or two areas of the park's archaeological record that identifies current scientific and technical view points, and one or more traditional/cultural points of view. Discuss/explain to park interpreters. Address methods of integrating multiple points of view into interpretive programs.
6. Coordinate with Interpretive Specialist while designing cultural research projects, to include interpretive components that result in useable products for public education.

Resources:

In addition to RESOURCES listed in INTERPRETATION MODULE 101:

1. "Archaeologist as Storytellers" Historical Archaeology Vol. 32, #1
2. Archaeology Magazine
3. "The Blooming of Historical Archaeology" by Mary C. Beaudry, Archaeology March/April 1998.
4. "The Business(es) of Interpretation and Environmental Education" Edward M. Mahoney in What is Past is Prologue 1990 National Interpreters Workshop Charleston, South Carolina, David L. Kulhavy and Michael H. Legg 1990.
5. Digging through Darkness. Carmel Schrire, University Press Virginia 1998.
6. Intrigue of the Past, Shelly J. Smith, Jeanne M. Moe, Kelly A. Letts, and Danille Paterson, BLM Utah.
7. Invisible America Unearthing Our Hidden History, Mark P. Leone and Neil Asher Silberman Henry Holt New York.

8. Presenting Archaeology to the Public: Digging for Truths, John Jameson, ed. Altamira Press 1997.
9. Native Americans and Archaeologists: Stepping Stones to Common Ground, edited by Nina Swidler, Kurt E. Dongoske, Roger Anyon and Alan S. Downer; AltaMira Press; Published in cooperation with the Society for American Archaeology; 1997
10. Protecting the Past, edited by George S. Smith and John E. Ehrenhard; CRC Press, Inc., 1991

[Below for Module 101 posted on the World Wide Web on 1/22/97 at URL  
<http://www.nps.gov/interp/curriculum/index.htm> in ZIP format  
 by Dave Dahlen, Mather Training Center]

## Entry Level Park Ranger Interpreter

### MODULE 101

#### Title: FULFILLING THE NPS MISSION: THE PROCESS OF INTERPRETATION

**PURPOSE** This is the cornerstone module of the curriculum which establishes the foundation for ALL that follows in an interpreter's professional development. It is a natural evolution in thinking about the art and science of interpretation, which combines the essence of the past with the dynamism of the present to shape the future of our profession. Every decision an interpreter makes for any interpretive effort (talk, walk, tour, wayside, publication, etc.) must be based on the fundamental philosophies contained within this module. Moreover, a successful interpreter, or interpretive supervisor/manager will be able to articulate the value and effect of their interpretive choices to others through a sound grasp of the principles contained within this module. Each essential competency for interpreters reflects elements of Module 101, therefore, it is strongly recommended that the study of any module/component of the curriculum include connections to Module 101.

**DESCRIPTION** This block of instruction introduces all interpretive and non-interpretive park rangers to interpretive PURPOSE, and provides them with the foundation to successfully demonstrate interpretive competency requirements throughout their professional development. These concepts are fundamental to successful interpretation, regardless of the method of delivery.

**AUDIENCE** All park rangers and other NPS staff with public contact responsibility, both permanent term and seasonal, as well as cooperating association employees, volunteers, concession employees, and park partner employees

**OBJECTIVES** Upon completion, learners will be able to:

- describe ways in which meanings may be revealed by creating linkages through tangible and intangible resources;
- explain the interpreter's role to facilitate the visitors' experience and relationship to the resource, and how this relationship provides an opportunity for stewardship;
- describe how interpretation meets the National Park Service and site mission/objectives;
- describe how the "interpretive equation" affects the success of interpretive efforts;
- establish a personal foundation to develop interpretive effectiveness through understanding interpretive purpose and techniques.

**TOPICS** Interpretive purpose, mission, and who you speak for/represent; tangible/intangible linkages and universal concepts; characteristics of an effective interpreter; the interpretive equation; the visitor "Bill of Rights;" 3-Ms of interpretation, stewardship through interpretation.

**DELIVERY** Park or cluster level seasonal or group training; mentoring, independent study, part of servicewide training offering; university sources; can use video, classroom, satellite uplink.

**COMPONENTS**

- [Why We Do Interpretation: Meeting the NPS Mission](#)
- [What Interpretation Is: Tangibles, Intangibles, and Universal Concepts](#)
- [How Interpretation Works: The Interpretive Equation](#)

**TARGET** Within first six months of appointment to interpretive duties.

## Component for Module 101

### Why We Do Interpretation - Meeting the NPS Mission

**PURPOSE** This component establishes the foundation for *Module 101: Fulfilling the NPS Mission: The Process of Interpretation*, by defining the interpreter as integral to the development of the profession. It provides a set of ground rules to establish a personal interpretive philosophy and articulate ways in which interpretation contributes to resource protection and stewardship.

**OBJECTIVES** Upon completion of this component the learner will be able to:

- begin to develop a personal philosophy of interpretation connected to the evolution of the craft;
- explain his/her personal obligation to establish a professional foundation for day-to-day decisions about interpretive methods and contributions to the NPS mission;
- establish a mission-driven approach to interpretation which incorporates both park management outcomes and audience revelation, both of which lead to enhanced stewardship of the resource.

### APPROACH

Every interpreter must consider fundamental principles when selecting an interpretive strategy for a program, for a project, or when deciding how an interpretive effort can contribute to resource protection. Important choices are encountered throughout an interpreter's career, and must be effectively articulated to supervisors, managers, superintendents, and the public.

Previous approaches to training for new interpreters included a detailed introduction to significant names and dates, and references to important books. Often this introduction was coupled with an exercise in writing a personal definition of interpretation. This component, *Why We Do Interpretation*, incorporates many important aspects of the former approach with a strengthened sense of individual responsibility. Interpreters must search for understanding of the process of interpretation, its roots, its purpose in fostering resource stewardship, and the direction which they will take both as individuals and as professionals. Interpreters must be able to articulate the outcomes of interpretation so they can make personal choices in approach and establish the relevance of interpretation for managers making resource decisions. In this way the contributions of interpretation may be added to the other important functions in resource protection. The interpreter needs a clear understanding that interpretation moves beyond a recitation of scientific data, or historical names and dates, or chronologies, or descriptions of how tall, deep, wide or big. Public recognition and support of their resource stewardship opportunities is the larger role of interpretation.

This journey in professional development lasts throughout a career. This component covers the present by laying a foundation for why we do interpretation and by identifying personal and professional obligations of the interpreter. Additional components in this module continue the study of the art by exploring essential elements of interpretation in specific detail. This component may be approached through mentoring, self-study, a detail assignment, or formal instruction.

### CONTENT OUTLINE:

## I. WHY WE DO INTERPRETATION

### A. Quick overview of the agency's mission

1. Changes in socio/political climate between 1916 and present;
  - a. evolving concept of stewardship

### B. How interpretation helps meet the National Park Service mission (the profession's mission)

1. Perpetuates and represents the heritage of the nation reflected in national park units;
2. Ensures the natural, cultural, and recreational heritage reflected in the national park units is available and accessible to everyone;
3. Provides experiences that strengthen the recognition, understanding, enjoyment, and preservation of the nation's heritage;
4. Creates the opportunity for audiences to ascribe meanings to resources, leading to concern for the protection of the resource. This revelation is the seed of resource stewardship. This is the goal of interpretation, not simply information or facts.

### C. How the interpreter helps promote the National Park Service mission (the individual interpreter's mission)

1. Uses the "through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation preservation" process;
2. Meets management objectives through facilitating public participation in the stewardship of the resource
  - a. Uses established primary and secondary park themes to convey principle resource messages to public;
  - b. Helps the public understand its relationship and impact on resources;
  - c. Encourages the public to develop personalized, proactive stewardship ethic;
  - d. Empowers the public to influence policy to fulfill the National Park Service mission.

### D. Personal and professional obligations of the successful interpreter

1. Accountability to the profession
  - a. Clearly defines the distinctions between orientation/information, education, and interpretation and the role each plays in moving audiences toward stewardship outcomes (an information/interpretation continuum). All staff, volunteers, cooperating association employees, and concession employees help make or break a visitor's opportunity to move toward those stewardship outcomes;
  - b. Develops a working knowledge in all methods and modes of delivery, communication, and props, not just in areas of personal preference;
  - c. Continually improves resource knowledge base and skill levels to be competent in the broad range of interpretive environments;
  - d. Chooses and uses the appropriate vehicle based on professional judgement, not personal preference;
  - e. As a representative of the National Park Service, projects a professional appearance and manner at all times;
  - f. Understands that the profession has evolved over time and that external/internal influences continue to affect that evolution.
  - g. Understands the principles of professionalism and practice

standards indicative of a profession.

2. Sensitivity

- a. Is sensitive to the fact that resources have multiple intangible meanings;
- b. Approaches audiences from multiple points of view;
- c. Acts as a facilitator and motivator;
- d. Makes interpretive connections that are broad based and accessible both intellectually and physically. Efforts are designed to touch a broad audience intellectually and/or emotionally, and crafted in a way to allow physical access.

3. Analytical / evaluative

- a. Constantly evaluates the effectiveness of programs, and audience needs and capability, and adjusts them as needed to maintain professionalism;
- b. Engages in ongoing, constructive self-evaluations.
- c. Incorporates influences of past leaders such as Tilden, Muir, Mills, Lewis and others.

4. Teamwork

- a. Actively participates in park operations beyond the interpretive division;
- b. Takes responsibility for integrating the interpretive program into park operations;
- c. Actively solicits and uses the input of others (both NPS and non-NPS) in all aspects of the interpretive operation;
- d. Does not become territorial to the detriment of overall park operations.

## RESOURCES

*Adventures of a Nature Guide*, Enos Mills, New Past Press, 1990.

*Environmental Interpretation*, Sam H. Ham, North American Press, 1992. Chapter One compares instruction to interpretation, and discusses audience discretion.

*Interpretation in the National Park Service - A Historical Perspective*, Barry Mackintosh, NPS publication, 1986. This document summarizes the development of the agency's interpretive efforts, its media approach, and threats to interpretation through the years.

*Interpreting for Park Visitors*, William Lewis, Acorn Press, 1989. This is a quick reference from one of the contemporary leaders in the field. Easy reading, yet thoughtful and well written.

*Interpreting Our Heritage*, Freeman Tilden, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1957. Long considered the standard. Tilden's words have found resonance in this module of the curriculum.

*Interpretive Skills Lesson Plans*: "The Role of Interpretation in Park Operations" by Gillett, 1992; "Advanced Interpretive Philosophy" by Jack Spinnler, 1982; "Evolution of the Interpretive Philosophy and Profession" by Tom Danton, 1988.

*Interpretive Views: Opinions on Evaluating Interpretation in the National Park Service*, Gary Machlis, ed., a collection of 24 essays by interpretive professionals on how to evaluate the effectiveness of the interpretive opportunity for visitors.

*NPS Strategic Plan, 1996, Mission Statement, p. 5.*

*The Interpretive Journey, essay by Cynthia Kryston, 1996. Curriculum essay.*

## **SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS**

Learner should read at a minimum the texts listed above by Tilden, Lewis, and Mackintosh, and read the curriculum preface essay by Kryston.

Learner should carefully research the authorizing legislation of her/his site, including the congressional reports and supporting documents for the legislation. Learner should also study the management plans for the site, including the primary and secondary themes, principle preservation issues, and the desired futures.

Learner must identify site's primary sources which support the development of interpretive ideas, and become thoroughly conversant with these sources before planning their programs. This is an ongoing process.

Each learner should write a personal contract for interpretation. This contract should be brief, and include commitment to subject matter, dedication to audience, perfection of skills, and personal desired outcomes of his/her interpretive efforts. This is not a definition of interpretation, but a statement of what he/she stands for and wants to accomplish through interpretation. (At its best, such a contract should start, "I believe. . .") This contract should explore the concepts of interpretation in the context of resource preservation and stewardship. Without a personal grounding in what they stand for or represent, and why they do interpretation, interpreters will be hard pressed to explain how their contributions to help meet the mission of the agency.

Learner may lead a discussion of interpretive views, outcomes, and the contribution of the "team" to meet the mission of the agency and/or specific site. This discussion can be conducted with other divisions, with partner organizations, or within interpretive division.

Learner may visit other sites to identify three interpreters whom he/she considers effective in creating meaning through use of tangible to intangible to universal linkages. Afterward, learner should write a summary of why those individuals were selected, and identify key interpretive attributes of these individuals. This list should be updated when appropriate. Learner is encouraged to establish a mentor relationship with at least one of these individuals to help develop professional abilities through discussions, comparative examples of their work.

### **Component for Module 101**

#### **What Interpretation Is - Tangibles, Intangibles, and Universal Concepts**

**PURPOSE** This component describes the relationship between the resource and the audience and how interpretation, by presenting broadly relevant meaning, facilitates the connection of the two.

**OBJECTIVES** Upon completion of this component the learner will be able to:  
 --describe the role of the resource, audience, and interpreter and their relationships to one another and preservation;

- list tangible resources, intangible resources, and universal concepts of their site;
- identify and make tangible/intangible linkages of lesser and broader relevance.

## APPROACH

The tangible/intangible linkages and universal concepts (TIU) model should be viewed as a description of effective interpretation. It does **not** measure or provide a method for developing specific programs.

The TIU model addresses the "so what" of interpretation by describing the content of interpretive products: relevance and provocation, information, and technique. This model is not the only way to describe interpretation, but is suggested as a useful way to get at the "meanings" of the resource.

Effective use of the TIU model requires discipline and ongoing practice. Practice allows the learner to internalize the concepts and more easily identify interpretive opportunities. The learner should be exposed to a variety of real interpretive products and presentations and should identify the tangible/intangible linkages and possible universal concepts for each. The learner should also present several interpretive products exhibiting tangible/intangible linkages for peer review.

Finally, the definitions of the words: tangible, intangible, and universal concepts should be viewed flexibly. Some intangibles that are not real things can be used in very tangible ways to help the audience access broader meanings. Likewise, it is open to debate whether some concepts are truly universal. The learner should not allow that debate to eclipse the fact that some concepts provide broad relevance to a very diverse audience. The actual categorization of a particular resource as tangible, intangible, or universal concept can provoke interesting discussion, but should not be allowed to sidetrack the model. Learners should ultimately be allowed to categorize specifics as they choose to.

## CONTENT OUTLINE:

- I. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESOURCE, AUDIENCE, AND INTERPRETATION
  - A. Definitions and Roles
    1. Resources possesses meanings and relevance.
      - a. purpose of resource is meanings - resources act as icons for meanings
      - b. individuals see different meanings in the same resource
    2. Audience seeks the special--something of value for themselves.
      - a. entertainment and fun are part of it
      - b. audiences are on their own time
      - c. audiences are receptive to the special
    3. Interpretation facilitates a connection between the interests of the visitor and the meanings of the park.
      - a. primary goal is not to provide information, but to provide access to meanings
      - b. interpretation must occur on the terms of the audience -  
- the audience is sovereign
      - c. providing accurate and balanced information about multiple perspectives is the responsibility of the interpreter - this is a tool that allows for respect and communication

- d. the interpreter must be able to subjugate his or her own passions for and understandings of the resource in order to allow the audience to form theirs

B. Role of Interpretation in Preservation

- 1. Audiences must care about a resource before they value the preservation of the resource.
- 2. The primary goal of interpretation is not to preach preservation but to facilitate an attitude of care on the part of the audience.
- 3. Preservation depends on audiences' access to the meanings of the resource.

II. LINKING TANGIBLE RESOURCES TO INTANGIBLE RESOURCES AND MEANINGS

- A. All parks have tangible resources like physical features, buildings, artifacts, etc.s
- B. All parks have intangible resources like past events, people, systems, ideas, values, etc.
- C. All effective interpretation can be described as linking tangible resources to intangible resources in order to reveal meanings.
- D. Some intangible anecdotes, events, people, and easily understood concepts can be used in a tangible way.
- E. Tangible/Intangible linkages provide varying degrees of relevance for the audience.
- F. Tangible/Intangible linkage graph
  - 1. A tool: a graph represented by an x,y axis.
    - a. horizontal axis = "Tangible: information, narrative, chronology"
      - further represents the time the audience interacts with an interpretive product
    - b. vertical axis = "Intangible: meanings"
      - further represents relevance of the product to the audience
    - c. The relationship (links) of tangible to intangible or of information to meanings in an interpretive product can be conceptually plotted on this graph.
  - 2. Interpreters can use the graph to describe intended tangible/intangible linkages as well as identify information and interpretive techniques that support the effective delivery of an interpretive product.
  - 3. Audience reception of interpretive products can also be graphed.
    - a. differences between interpreter and audience graph should be expected
    - b. as long as audience accesses meanings and comes to care for the resource, the audiences linkages do not have to mirror the interpreter's intended relevant content
    - c. interpreters must realize interpretive intent, technique, and presentation remain a critical element of effective interpretation

4. The graph is only one description of interpretation and should not be viewed as an inflexible structure.
5. An alternative illustration: a wheel
  - a. hub = tangible
  - b. tire or rim = intangible
  - c. spokes = information and interpretive technique

### III. UNIVERSAL CONCEPTS

- A. Universal concepts provide the greatest degree of relevance and meaning to the greatest number of people.
- B. Universal concepts are intangible resources that almost everyone can relate to. They might also be described as universal intangibles.
- C. Not all people will agree on the meaning of or share the same perspective towards a universal concept, but all people will relate to the concept in some significant way.
- D. Universal concepts make meanings accessible and the resource relevant to a widely diverse audience.
- E. The implications of and techniques for presenting universal concepts (universal concepts don't necessarily have to be explained to be experienced or understood) will differ from resource to resource. However, all interpretation seeks to place the visitor in relationship with broad meanings.
- F. Tangible/intangible/universal concepts can be captured and illustrated well by the theme of the interpretive product. The cohesive development of a relevant idea or ideas within an interpretive effort of any kind is enhanced by making links between tangibles, intangibles and universals.

Example: The rocks (tangible) of Yosemite tell many stories of beauty, danger, and mystery (intangible).

### REFERENCES

*Achieving Excellence in Interpretation: Compelling Stories Thinkbook*, Rudd, Connie, 1995. A workbook designed to help interpreters discover the compelling stories and intangible and universal meanings associated with the resources.

*An Interpretive Dialogue*, Larsen, David, 1996.

*The Interpretive Revolution*, brochure, Mayo, Corky, 1996.

Generic Lesson Plan: "Connecting Tangibles, Intangibles, and Universal Concepts"  
David Larsen, January 1997

*Interpreting Our Heritage*, Tilden, Freeman, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1957. Long considered the standard. Tilden's words have found resonance in this module of the curriculum.

### SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS

#### Tangible/Intangible Linkages

Learner should compile a written list of the reasons why people do and should care about their sites. Then learner should identify an object or place, a tangible, that represents their site. Learner should make a list of six events, systems, values, ideas, universal concepts or other intangible resources that can be linked to their tangible. Do the links reveal meanings? Will those meanings help people care about the site as described on the first list? Learner should discuss this assignment with fellow interpreters and/or supervisor--do they see meaning in the linkages?

### **"An Interpretive Dialogue" and Freeman Tilden**

Learner should read "An Interpretive Dialogue" and Freeman Tilden's "Interpreting Our Heritage." Learner should write down thoughts that compare one or more of Tilden's six principles to the tangible/intangible model. Are they compatible? What might Freeman Tilden say to Harold Durfee Nedlit?

### **Tangible/Intangible Graph**

Learner should graph a current interpretive product. Learner should identify linkages, the information that connects the linkages, as well as the interpretive techniques used to present the product.

Learner should create a new interpretive product using the graph model.

Learner should graph interpretive products created by other interpreters and then, if possible, compare their own graph with the observed interpreter's graph.

Learner should have other interpreters graph one of their own interpretive products and then compare their graph to the graph used to develop the product.

### **Universal Concepts**

Learner should create a list of universal concepts and then study each item on the list and determine what it means in the context of human history and culture versus what it means in the context of Nature. What are the differences? What are the similarities? Will the conclusions allow for more fully integrated universal concepts in interpretive products?

### **Tangibles, Intangibles, Universal Concepts**

Learner should make a list of tangibles, intangibles, and universal concepts specific to their resource. Learner should choose items from each list and try to connect them to the other two lists? Do any ideas for interpretive products emerge?

Learner should keep the three lists handy as they research or physically explore their site. When the learner is provoked or finds personal relevance or meaning in the resource, the learner should identify the tangible, intangible, and universal concepts involved in their own provocation. Do any ideas for interpretive products emerge?

## Component for Module 101

### How Interpretation Works - The Interpretive Equation

**PURPOSE** This component introduces the interpreter to the five basic elements of the interpretive process through the use of a formula known as the "interpretive equation."

**OBJECTIVES** Upon completion of this component the learner will be able to:

- list the five basic elements of the interpretive equation and describe what they mean;
- explain how the various elements of the equation relate to one another;
- demonstrate how the elements of the equation relate to all interpretive planning, activities, programs and projects;
- apply the equation concepts to all subsequent interpretive activities.

### APPROACH

The interpretive equation is a quick shorthand method that helps the learner remember basic concepts that relate to all interpretive activities. Whichever approach is used to present information, it is imperative that the learner thoroughly understands the five elements of the interpretive process and how they relate to actual interpretive work.

Because this component is meant to give interpreters a grounding in concepts that they will use throughout their career, it is recommended that many actual park examples illustrating the concepts be provided as part of the learning experience. This will enable the learner to gain experience in applying these somewhat abstract concepts to real-world situations and concerns.

## CONTENT OUTLINE:

### I. THE INTERPRETIVE EQUATION

#### A. $(KR + KA) \times AT = IO$

(Knowledge of the Resource + Knowledge of the Audience) x Appropriate Techniques = Interpretive Opportunities

1. The interpretive equation applies to all interpretive activities
2. It is important to keep the equation elements in balance

#### B. "Grading" or assessing the desired **OUTCOMES** of the equation

1. The interpreter must regularly evaluate whether interpretive activities are providing effective interpretive opportunities (small "o" outcomes), and whether these opportunities result in the ultimate desired outcome of a stronger stewardship ethic in the audience (large "O" Outcomes).

### II. THE FIVE ELEMENTS OF THE INTERPRETIVE EQUATION

#### A. KNOWLEDGE OF THE RESOURCE (KR)

1. Knowledge is more than just the **facts** about the resource. Interpreters must identify and be fully aware of the many different **intangible and universal meanings** the resources represent to various audiences.
2. Interpreters must possess a very broad knowledge of the history of the park beyond just the enabling legislation. They must be knowledgeable about past and contemporary issues, and the condition of the park and its resources.
3. Interpreters should not use their knowledge of the resources and the intangible/universal meanings associated with them to offer only bland recitals of non-controversial "safe" facts. Interpretation embraces a discussion of human values, conflicts, ideas, tragedies, achievements, ambiguities, and triumphs.
4. Interpreters must accommodate and present multiple points of view in their interpretation and not presume to expound what they think is the only "official" or "true" version of the resources and their meaning.
5. Interpreters must be careful to rely on accurate information when developing interpretive material and avoid the tendency to exaggerate or slant information to present a personal or particular viewpoint.
6. Interpreters should use their knowledge to convey the park's approved resource-related themes.

## B. KNOWLEDGE OF THE AUDIENCE (KA)

1. **IMPORTANT!** The definition of audience includes more than just those individuals who actually visit a park. We have a professional responsibility to reach out and provide interpretive opportunities for those who will never visit a park, as well as to actual park visitors. There are many ways to be a visitor to a national park. One can visit a park in person, electronically via computer, through a program in a classroom, or by reading a book about the park.
2. There is no such thing as the average visitor.
3. Not every visitor requires an "intensive" interpretive experience.
4. Interpreters must recognize and respect the specific personal values and interests visitors associate with resources.
5. Interpreters should keep in mind the "visitors' bill of rights." Whether visiting a park on-site or off, visitors have a right to:
  - a) have their privacy and independence respected;
  - b) retain and express their own values;
  - c) be treated with courtesy and consideration;
  - d) receive accurate and balanced information.
6. Interpreters should recognize the "visitor continuum." The ultimate goal of interpretation is to provide opportunities for visitors to forge compelling linkages with the resources that they develop an active stewardship ethic. Visitors generally fall into a continuum in one of the following five categories, any of which may lead to increasing awareness of the relationships between tangible resources and their intangible and universal values:
  - a) recreation/"trophy hunting;"
  - b) nostalgia/refuge/isolation;
  - c) information/knowledge;
  - d) connections/linkages;
  - e) stewardship/patrons.

The interpreter's job is to ensure that visitors have a positive experience at any of these levels, and to try to help visitors reach a deeper and richer level of understanding if possible. No matter where the visitors are on the continuum, the interpreter should strive to give them something of value to take home.

## C. KNOWLEDGE OF APPROPRIATE TECHNIQUES (AT)

1. There are many interpretive techniques, none of which is inherently

better than any other. Determination of the appropriate technique results from analysis of the resource themes and audience profile. The interpreter should never choose a technique without first identifying the theme, goals, and objectives and the prospective audience to determine if it is an appropriate "fit." Choosing techniques willy-nilly or because the interpreter personally enjoys them may mean that programs are only reaching a small portion of the audience.

2. Whichever technique is chosen, whether personal or non-personal, on-site or off-site, interpreters should ensure that it addresses the tangible/intangible/universal linkages of the resource.
3. Interpreters must stay current on communications and delivery techniques and new media possibilities, and use them as appropriate.  
However, beware of adopting new techniques simply because they are new. See #1 above.
4. Interpreters must regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the techniques used, and replace and update them when they no longer achieve the desired outcomes.

#### D. THE INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITY (IO)

1. To provide interpretive opportunities to the widest possible array of audiences, the interpreter must be proficient in as many techniques as possible, and should ensure that the overall park interpretive program offers the interpretive themes through as many different techniques as are appropriate.
2. The effect of the interpretive opportunity may not be immediately apparent to either the interpreter or the visitor. Interpretation may have both a long-term and/or a short-term effect. Interpreters should not always expect to see an immediate reaction in the visitor.

INTERPRETATION IS A SEED, NOT A TREE.

#### E. THE INTERPRETIVE OUTCOME

1. Outcome evaluation must be **visitor-based**.
2. Evaluations should examine both short-term and long-term outcomes.  
Evaluations of short-term outcomes focus on whether an effective interpretive opportunity was offered to the audience (i.e., was the information correct, was an appropriate technique used).  
Evaluations of long-term outcomes focus on whether the larger NPS mission goals

of perpetuating the nation's natural and cultural heritage and promoting a stewardship ethic in the public are met. (See Module 101 component "Why we do Interpretation, section I.)

3. Although outcome cannot always be measured immediately or quantitatively, the interpreter still has a professional responsibility to measure the effectiveness of the various interpretive opportunities being offered to the public to see if they are successful or need revising or updating.
4. Interpreters must seek feedback from the audience to gauge the effectiveness of the interpretive theme, content, program, etc. The degree to which the audience forms effective linkages to the resources, not the amount of information conveyed, audience applause, or the personal satisfaction of the interpreter, is the measure of an effective outcome.
5. Evaluation of interpretive outcomes can occur through a variety of mechanisms such as focus groups, visitor "report cards," and visitor surveys.

### III. A FINAL THOUGHT

Although not specifically included in the interpretive equation, the interpreter's attitude is a vital element in ensuring that the equation works properly. The interpreter must care about both the resource and facilitating interpretive opportunities and outcomes if he or she wishes to inspire caring in others. In short, those who appreciate resources protect them.

## RESOURCES

Park legislative histories, records of Congressional hearings related to the park, records of public meetings, newspaper articles, local governmental, press, and community group archives. Current and historical park correspondence files. (These sources can provide good insights into how the public, particularly the local community, views the park and the types of values and meanings they associate with the resources.)

## BOOKS

*Achieving Excellence in Interpretation: An Introduction to Compelling Stories*, (National Park Service, 1995). A workbook designed to help interpreters discover the compelling stories and intangible and universal meanings associated with the resources.

*Interpreting Our Heritage*, Freeman Tilden (University of North Carolina Press, 1957). Excellent discussion of the concepts represented by the interpretive equation.

*Interpretive Skills Lesson Plans: "The Role of Interpretation in Park Operations"* by Maria Gillett, 1992; "The Park-Visitor-Interpreter" by SER, 1983; "Identifying and Understanding the Visitor" by Linda Olson, 1983.

*Interpretive Views: Opinions on Evaluating Interpretation in the National Park Service*, Gary E. Machlis, ed. (National Parks & Conservation Association, 1986). Collection of 24 essays by interpretive professionals on how to evaluate the effectiveness of the interpretive opportunity for visitors.

*Islands of Hope*, William Brown (National Recreation & Park Association, 1971).

*On Interpretation: Sociology for Interpreters of Natural and Cultural History*, Gary E. Machlis & Donald R. Field, eds. (Oregon State University Press, 1992). Twenty essays discussing the wide variety of visitor needs and reactions to interpretation.

*Personal Training Program for Interpreters*, vintage 1976 NPS training package, available for loan from Mather Training Center.

*Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*, Edward Linenthal (University of Illinois, 1991). An intriguing look at some of the intangible meanings (religious, political, social, and personal) associated with American military sites. Includes chapters on Lexington, Concord, Gettysburg, Little Bighorn, and USS Arizona.

*Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold (Oxford University Press, 1949). Includes a wonderfully personal account of how the author moved through a similar "visitor continuum," coming to recognize wildlife as more than a hunter's prey.

*The Fifth Essence*, Freeman Tilden (National Park Trust Fund Board, 1950). Short narrative exploring the intangible essence which makes parks unique.

*The Past is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal (Cambridge University Press, 1985). Excellent scholarly examination of what cultural resources represent to people and why. Full of examples from around the world. Particularly strong on exploring why people adopt a nostalgic view of history.

## VIDEOTAPES

Focus Groups: A Tool for Evaluating Interpretive Services, Nancy Medlin & Gary Machlis (Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho, 1991). A videotape and manual, a practical step-by-step guide to evaluating interpretive services using the focus group technique.

Self-Critique: A Tool for Evaluating Interpretive Services, Nancy Medlin, Gary Machlis, & Jean McKendry (Cooperative Park Studies Unit, University of Idaho, 1993). A training video and manual on how an interpreter can assess the effectiveness of interpretive programs.

## **SUGGESTED DEVELOPMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS**

1. Prepare a list of ten things you will try to do in the next two months to enrich the interpretation at the park and enhance your skills as an interpreter. Meet with your supervisor at the end of the two months to review the progress of your efforts and to prepare a new list for the next six months. Projects should not be part of assigned work duties, but small extra things which will help you to try out and evaluate ideas and concepts presented in the component.
2. Attend a Compelling Stories workshop or complete the Compelling Stories workbook.
3. Prepare material for the park's home page on the Internet which goes beyond information and explores the resource's intangible meanings for off-site visitors.
4. Begin a "life list" of interpretive techniques, observing others and recording what you think are the advantages and disadvantages of each.
5. Write your own personal contract for interpretation, describing your personal philosophy of interpretation and how you will strive to help others forge personal connections with the resources you interpret. If you have done this in the past, revisit your contract and consider its intent with this component in mind.
6. Actively participate in a Visitor Services Project or a visitors' focus group.
7. Review your park's entire interpretive program and try to determine at which level of the visitor continuum the programs and projects are aimed. Help the programs and projects if you find they are all aimed at one audience or if they are all aiming at levels below the "connections/linkages" step.
8. Review your park's interpretive programs and projects to see if they reveal, either directly or indirectly, some of the intangible and universal meanings associated with the resources. Help to enhance programs or projects which are weak.