



Interpretive Skills | Vision Paper

21st Century National Park Service





VISION PAPER

21ST CENTURY

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

INTERPRETER SKILLS

Prepared by

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George Washington University
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01

Children cultivate an appreciation for their rural roots at Oxon Hill Farm, Md. NPS photo.



KINDRED SPIRITS: SHARED ASPIRATIONS

Introduction by Carol B. Stapp, Ph.D.
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In May 2013, at the American Alliance of Museums Annual Meeting, two leaders in the stewardship of the nation's natural and cultural common wealth spoke together about maximizing their partnership to benefit the widest possible audience. Peggy O'Dell, Deputy Director of the National Park Service, and G. Wayne Clough, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, compared notes about the breadth and depth of the resources with which their agencies have been entrusted by the American people.

Their conversation, facilitated by Dr. Milton Chen, Senior Fellow and Executive Director, Emeritus, at the George Lucas Educational Foundation, addressed the public dimension implicit in—and *integral* to—each agency's mission, as established by Acts of Congress:

- National Park Service (1916)
[T]o conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations
- Smithsonian Institution (1846)
The increase and diffusion of knowledge

Further underlining both the NPS and the Smithsonian's commitment to the robust realization of their agency's public service mandate, Deputy Director O'Dell and Secretary Clough were introduced, respectively, by Julia Washburn, NPS Associate Director for Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers, and Claudine Brown, Smithsonian Assistant Secretary for Education and Access. Associate Director Washburn and Assistant Secretary Brown are the first to occupy their positions, created independently by each agency in 2010 specifically to marshal internal resources and external partnerships on behalf of all audiences—current and potential, visitors and non-visitors, in person and virtual, local and global.

Indeed, the dialogue between Deputy Director O'Dell and Secretary Clough in May 2013 is illustrative of the opportunity for like-minded practitioners within parks and museums to join hands as peers in fostering excellence within both communities of practice. In keeping with this concept, the National Park System Advisory Board Education Committee, chaired by Dr. Chen and comprised of 27 members with a spectrum of expertise, formed a 21st Century Interpreter Subcommittee to develop a vision paper that would bring together current thinking on the competencies that can inform the training, recruitment, and position management of ranger interpreters.

02

Research into the major trends in today's shifting social, economic, and cultural landscape was combined with gathering insights through interviewing and interacting with NPS personnel at all levels, as well as reviewing pertinent literature from both the park and museum communities of practice. In concert with the NPS Advisory Board Education Committee's counterpart, the NPS National Education Council 21st Century Ranger Interpreter Work Group, the report's thrust and content took form over two years.

The resulting vision paper originated with, and is now presented by, the NPS Advisory Board Education Committee as a resource, advisory in nature, to the field. A substantive section of the report explores three major trends affecting American society—lifelong learning, globalization, and the digital era—as challenges for the NPS in responding to the needs and interests of 21st century audiences. Each trend is defined, and its implications for 21st century interpretation are spelled out.

Within this context, a new paradigm for interpretation emerges for today's NPS, not only reflecting current exemplary practice, but also signaling profound shifts in both perspective

and action. In essence, the needs of the public for 21st century skills (e.g., critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, as well as communication and collaboration) call for 21st century interpreters with mastery of three key capacities—audience advocacy, innovative leadership, and disciplinary and technical expertise.

The narrative closes with recommendations for aligning NPS training, recruitment, and position management with the requirements for developing and supporting 21st century interpreters. Throughout the report, there are citations and links to strengthen and expand the text, further amplified by an appendix listing specific interpretative offerings that manifest the characteristics of 21st century intentions and competencies in action, as well as a particularly helpful table that compares definitions of 21st century skills.

While couched in reality, this vision paper was shaped by a sense of possibility, in recognition of the pivotal role of parks and museums in the 21st century. American—indeed, global—developments have positioned parks and museums as vital to the well-being of individuals, the strength of communities, the

Photo opposite page:
Children from Boston area youth groups participate in First Bloom at the Saugus Iron Works National Historical Site in Saugus, MA . Photo courtesy of Whitney J. Fox.

health of the environment, and the state of the world. Together, parks and museums can contribute to the nation's common wealth, offering unparalleled opportunities for people of all backgrounds, interests, ages, and experiences to choose the kind of engagement with natural and cultural resources they find meaningful.

The stewards of our national common wealth are ever mindful that members of the public bring a range of expectations about what constitutes personally rewarding and affirming encounters with parks and museums. Their diverse motivations justify superior offerings in multiple domains—recreational, spiritual, social, and intellectual. No one objective takes precedence over the others—some people seek respite, some exercise, and others family time. It is the charge of 21st century interpreters in parks and museums to answer the public's quest for lifelong learning.

To return to the beginning, in the best of all possible worlds, the May 2013 conversation between the Deputy Director of the National Park Service and the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution would have included Freeman Tilden and John Cotton Dana. These two luminaries

would lend even deeper meaning to the bond that unites the park and museum communities of practice. Tilden's six principles in *Interpreting Our Heritage* (published in 1957) serve as the enduring infrastructure for the Park Service's interpretive tenets, beginning with his profound pronouncement, "Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile" (p. 9). Dana's prescient views in *The New Museum* (published in 1917) strike a similar magisterial chord, advising museums to strive to enrich people's everyday lives by being "convenient to all, wide in. . .scope, varied in. . .activities, hospitable in. . .manner and eager to follow any lead the humblest inquirer may give" (p. 39).

With roots running deep in the past and eyes on the future, parks and museums are kindred spirits, with shared aspirations. This vision paper is intended to capture the moment and contribute to the advance of interpretation in both parks and museums through a unified community of practice that embraces the challenges of the 21st century as a springboard to excellence.



03

Student art inspired by the beautiful blossoms of the Lotus flower at Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens. NPS photo.



VISION PAPER: 21ST CENTURY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE INTERPRETER SKILLS

The purpose of this paper is to present a 21st century vision for National Park Service (NPS) interpretation that nurtures a citizenry of lifelong learners. This vision emerges from the intersection of three areas of shared interest and benefit to be derived from park resources: the desires of audiences, the needs of society, and the public service mission of the NPS.

The realm of *lifelong learning*, including the evolving professions of interpretation and education, is where these areas of interest overlap.

In addressing these mutual interests, 21st century interpretation in the NPS is called on to accomplish the following goals:

1. To facilitate meaningful, memorable experiences with diverse audiences so that they can create their own connections (on-site and virtually) with park resources (audience desires)

2. To encourage shared stewardship through relevance, engagement and broad collaboration (NPS mission)

3. To support global citizens to build a just society through engagement with natural and cultural heritage, by embracing the pursuit of life-long learning (societal needs)



The first two areas of interest clearly support the NPS legislative mandate to both preserve and provide for the enjoyment of park resources. But as this paper will demonstrate, interpreters will need to expand and transform their knowledge, skills, and attitudes, in order to meet the needs and expectations of 21st century audiences and to help new generations discover for themselves a variety of reasons why national parks are worthy of continued preservation.

The third interest reflects a broader understanding and recognition of the role that NPS sites, together with other informal learning venues, play in society. Rather

04



Raising awareness for environmental stewardship, pollution prevention, and water conservation through urban youth watershed education. NPS photo.

than preservation for its own sake, park resources were set aside because they represent who we are, what we value, and where we have been as a society.¹ They also help us chart a path to the future. A broad vision for interpretation and education involves using the cultural significance and personal relevance of national parks to help develop civic skills that are critical for addressing 21st century challenges.

Pursuing the vision to nurture a citizenry of lifelong learners will challenge interpreters to honor their hard-won expertise while simultaneously:

- letting go of the traditional role of primary expert
- considering personal biases
- making strategic choices
- taking informed risks
- partnering with community members and organizations to reach underserved audiences and provide for audience-identified needs
- embracing what visitors bring to the process of interpretation
- encouraging and planning for repeat visitation and involvement
- practicing facilitation methods with groups
- valuing process over product

Exemplars of 21st century interpretation within the NPS that demonstrate some of these characteristics already light the way. One holistic approach to interpretation in practice at several parks, is potentially applicable to all 401 NPS sites.



Left: Kids prepare to take the Junior Ranger pledge. *Right:* Visitors dance to salsa music at the International Migratory Bird Day event at Rock Creek Park. NPS photos.



Use of provocative “essential questions” in the planning and design of interpretation can propel NPS audiences -and interpreters- from a single story to a rich exploration of multiple perspectives that are relevant across the nation and the world.

How do we recognize a healthy ecosystem?

How does our world view influence our relationship to land and water?

How does gender influence the memory and telling of political events?

What do omissions in our historical record reveal?

How do we make decisions in times of crisis?

The articulation of these bold questions arose organically in response to 21st century demands, evident in both societal and audience changes. This paper explores these demands by looking at fundamental shifts brought about by the emergence of three mega-trends: lifelong learning, globalization and the digital era. It also recognizes that the field of interpretation, both in the NPS and in the wider community, is poised to seize the best new techniques and ways of thinking in order to break through old barriers and embrace the future.

This paper envisions NPS interpreters eagerly addressing the challenges of the 21st century. It draws on dozens of personal interviews with NPS staff including park rangers, volunteer coordinators, superintendents,

05

Members of the Dishchii' Bikoh' Apache Group from Cibecue, Arizona, demonstrate the Apache Crown Dance at the Native American Heritage Days at Grand Canyon National Park. NPS photo.





Photo above: Clementine Hunter worked as a cook at Melrose Plantation in the Creole community of Isle Brevelle and went on to become one of the South's foremost primitive artists. Hunter's life is explored and her murals are on display in the African House at Melrose Plantation, a National Historic Landmark originally established by a family of "gens de couleur libres" (free people of color) around the time of the Louisiana Purchase. Photo courtesy of the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission.

chiefs of interpretation, regional support staff, Washington Support Office (WASO) staff, education specialists, trainers, and the NPS Deputy Director as well as other professionals in both traditional education and free-choice learning environments such as museums. The paper also reflects the ideas of recent reports and studies from the NPS, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, the American Alliance of Museums' Center for the Future of Museums, the National Academies of Science, and the International Council on Monuments and Sites. It acknowledges developments spanning the 20th and 21st centuries and describes the need for the compelling role that the NPS can play in response to societal change. It also describes important capacities for 21st century interpreters and provides examples of interpretive programming that embrace facilitation methods, collaboration, and co-creation of programs and services. All audiences will be the beneficiaries of a new paradigm for current and future interpreters.

Finally, recommendations are made for NPS training, recruitment, and position management in order to support a culture dedicated to developing and applying 21st century NPS interpreter skills.

As futurist William Gibson said, the future is already present, it is just not evenly distributed.

06

Interpretation and Education in the Current Era

For NPS interpreters now is a time of vast possibility to support audiences to act as effective, humane citizens who place great value on natural and cultural heritage.

NPS interpreters have an unprecedented opportunity to help themselves and their audiences navigate the future with meaning and purpose. There are compelling reasons to do so:

First, *far-reaching and rapid movements in the social, environmental, economic, and educational fabric of the 21st century are transforming relationships between parks and people and the communities they serve.* Already, this century has witnessed shifts in the knowledge and skills that society values, the conspicuous effects of climate change, global economic upheaval, the development of new methods of teaching and learning, in addition to changes in the characteristics and diversity of audiences.² Twenty-first century audiences participate and seek to learn in new ways from 20th century learners, in part due to the proliferation of digital information sources.

Second, *parks are competing for peoples' time and attention.* To compete, parks need to be relevant. NPS interpreters can support voluntary and spirited public participation through identifying areas of shared authority. Audiences will become more engaged in stewardship and NPS interpreters will enjoy the benefit of a deeper partnership with the public as the owners of these special places. An added focus will be to demonstrate relevance to previously underserved audiences, who will soon come to make up the largest proportion of US demographics. Helping all Americans find value and meaning in natural and cultural heritage is critical to the sustainability of the National Park system.

Photo: Multilingual interns working with Gateway National Park's ¡Tu Parque! ¡Tu Salud! Your Park! Your Health! program encourages healthy lifestyle options and introduces local youth to reach personal fitness goals through use of their local national park. NPS photo by Francesca Simonde.



EVOLUTION OF NPS INTERPRETATION

National Park Service interpreters have a history of adapting to change and advancing a cherished mode of communication in the face of daunting obstacles. For the past one hundred years, the NPS' responsibility for, and implementation of interpretation, has expanded for all of its holdings, such as battlefields, parks, recreation areas, historic monuments, memorials, rivers, seashores, lakeshores and other designations. While the role and the value of interpretation continue to evolve, its legacy within the NPS, and its import in the 21st century, is undeniable.³

In 1918, Congress was reluctant to support park educational activities and it took Director Stephen Mather's determined efforts as well as outside advocates from the Smithsonian Institution, and later the American Association of Museums (now the American Alliance of Museums), to help facilitate the development and expansion of dedicated interpretive and educational offerings, including museums.⁴

The influence of an academic approach on interpretation proved formative with lecture-style programs emerging as a standard.⁵ With the guidance of enthusiastic supporters, interpretation grew into a recognized profession. The NPS became known for its cadre of dedicated interpreters, "flat hat rangers," who garnered deep public appreciation and respect. Highly knowledgeable and courteous, they often held audiences spellbound with their ability to craft master narratives of their sites. In the late 1950s, the field received a boost from one of interpretation's greatest champions, Freeman Tilden, through his now classic text *Interpreting Our Heritage*.

In the latter part of the 20th century, while popular and authoritative interpretive talks remained a mainstay of communication, hundreds of interpreters were also trained in the importance of delivery skills and the effective use of themes, goals and objectives. Then, in the mid-1990s, the evolution of Tilden's philosophy continued with the launch of the Interpretive Development Program (IDP), and many NPS interpreters began to be immersed in the language of "meaningful interpretation." Embodied in a desire to perceive the visitor as someone with his or her own ideas, the concept of the "visitor as sovereign" gained traction. Interpreters developed skills to help visitors explore linkages between themselves and the tangible and intangible meanings of NPS resources. National standards were developed that reflected this philosophical evolution, citing a core belief that successful interpretation must provide visitors with opportunities to make their own intellectual and emotional connections with NPS resources.

Recognition that audiences, both individually and collectively, have tremendous influence has gained strength over the last two decades. There has been a radical shift in how audiences choose to interact in social, technological, environmental, economic and political realms. With more immediate access to information, the public desires and rightly demands engagement in decisions by public trust agencies, and regularly uses social media to take part in

07

discussions and to provide input into all aspects of life. Therefore, the needs and interests of audiences are central drivers of change in the 21st century, and the field of interpretation the world over has begun a shift to audience-centered approaches.

NPS Interpreters and other informal learning educators who work in many venues - museums, botanic gardens, historic houses, parks, aquariums – are finding that the skills and values that were successful in the 20th century can be a vital foundation for building those that will best serve 21st century audiences.

Changes in American Society

Over the course of the 20th and early 21st centuries, the necessary skills for life and work evolved for American citizens. There has been explosive growth in knowledge-intensive work, such as in the technical, medical, legal and financial fields.⁷ Workplaces have emerged with flattened hierarchies and new organizational structures. Workers increasingly require advanced skills for professional and personal success.

Twenty-first century audiences living in multi-cultural communities (both actual and virtual) require the capacity to manage their professional and personal lives with greater consideration for the needs of a complex, interconnected society.

Immigration, increasing diversity, and a geographically mobile society have also brought to the surface new challenges and demands around creating and maintaining a civil society. For children and youth, a narrowing disciplinary focus in schools has reduced the availability of civics, social science, and other “non-academic” classes. In the broader context, entities such as the NPS that can foster a civic disposition are needed to help build and strengthen collaborative relationships and to nurture respect for the rights and duties of a diverse citizenry.

Environmental imperatives are also critical to consider in the larger scope of change. Climate change, biodiversity loss, invasive species, pollution, as well as major changes in conservation science

The chart on the opposite page suggests some of the inspiring ways that interpreters are building on their traditional skills:

Traditional Skills of 20th Century Interpretation provided the foundation for:	21st Century Interpretation further expands on traditional skills for:
creating effective interpretive products	thinking about interpretation as a process as well as a product
developing site-based, site-themed interpretive talks and programs and media for visitors	looking for ways to work directly with visitors/audiences/communities to identify needs and interests that are advanced by relationships with park content/ideas; identifying multiple stories and connections with other NPS sites and beyond
providing quality site-based interpretation for an authentic in-park experience	nurturing audiences as self-directed, with the ability to learn anytime, anywhere, on site, in the community, or online
functioning in the role of expert and a catalyst for audiences to find understanding and meanings	valuing the role of interpreter as facilitator and collaborator
providing authoritative and accurate communication	perceiving the experience of learning as multi-dimensional, social and interactive
crafting memorable stories and take-home messages	crafting programs that also function as catalysts for discussion and for depth of thinking for multiple audiences
closely linking educational programs to formal, curriculum-specific content guided by measures of success associated with formal education	experimenting by creating programs that focus on modeling intrinsically-motivated, open-ended learning that support individual abilities and socially positive behavior ⁶
offering expert presentations	embracing the notion of informed risk-taking and creative experimentation with two-way communication

such as landscape-scale conservation, nature corridors, coupled human-natural systems, and climate change restoration will also affect how natural and cultural resources may be interpreted, and require a multi-faceted network approach. In a healthy society it is critical for citizens to understand environmental complexity and interrelatedness in supporting efforts to reduce and reverse environmental damage.⁸

Competencies at a premium for 21st century citizens include an understanding of how to continually learn for one's-self, how to think through complex issues, and how to interact with disparate communities. New requirements for this post-industrial age with its frenetic technological advances include user-control, customization, and participation.⁹

Three mega-trends, **life-long learning**, **globalization**, and the **digital era**, largely account for accelerating societal changes and the motivation for new audience desires. Each mega-trend contributes to the need to revitalize the way in which the NPS fulfills its public service mission.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Harlem, in partnership with the National Park Foundation, is planting a seed for a stronger conservation ethic by connecting America's youngest citizens to nature through restoration of natural habitats in national parks and their local community. Kids participate in gardening at Hamilton Grange National Memorial. NPS photo.





Hawai'i Pacific Parks Association, the Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation, a Honolulu-based environmental stewardship foundation, have partnered with Haleakalā National Park to create summer internship opportunities that provide vital job skills and professional contacts in the areas of natural resource and science learning. Pictured here, middle school students are taught the historical and ecological significance of the islands' endangered Māmane tree. They learn propagating methods to ensure the trees future survival while developing life-long environmental stewardship.

Lifelong Learning

Over the course of a human lifetime, it has been estimated that five percent of learning takes place in the formal environment of schooling, whereas 95% takes place in informal environments (Falk and Dierking, 2010). In this context, parks and other sources of “free-choice” learning have much to offer a global society.

The United States is evolving beyond an era known for universal schooling and entering into the era of lifelong learning (Collins and Halverson, 2009). Societal shifts have flipped the learning landscape from an educational model primarily based on the transmission of knowledge to a 21st century model of individuals and groups taking an active role in *learning to learn* throughout the lifespan. Distinctions among traditional definitions of education, interpretation, and teaching are merging into a menu of opportunities for life-

09

long learning and discovery.

As affirmed by the National Academy of Sciences' *Learning Science in Informal Environments*, there is immense value in the experiences that occur beyond classroom walls - in parks, museums and nature centers, as well as through participation in clubs and other non-formal settings.¹⁰

In the professional realm, twenty-first century employee recruiters are mainly interested in critical thinking, analytical ability, and teamwork in diverse groups, problem solving, and proficiency in writing and oral communication.¹¹ To reach younger generations, the NPS may need to rethink how lifelong learning experiences are gained and valued. Learning that occurs in informal environments can also lend itself to alternative means of validation. Digital methods of credentialing will make it possible to affirm competencies acquired from places other than traditional educational institutions and a method already available in some museums and parks.

Recognition of lifelong learning is particularly significant for the world's aging population. National Park Service volunteering by adults

65 and older has been on an upward path increasing from 14.3 percent in 1974 to 23.8 percent in 2006.¹²

Beyond volunteerism, older adults will likely have two decades of life expectancy after retirement age. The terms "middlence," "the third act," and the "encore years," refer to a period when new kinds of pursuits can bud and undeveloped skills can be discovered and expanded. The National Center for Creative Aging notes a direct link between all forms of creative expression and healthy aging.¹³ As a growing force of social capital, older adults are highly likely to be deeply engaged in their communities as workers, volunteers, participants, and mentors.

On January 30, 2013, the National Park Service (NPS) became one of 13 signatories to the US Department of State *Declaration of Learning*, announced and signed by the outgoing Secretary of State, Hilary Rodham Clinton.¹⁴

The *Declaration of Learning* speaks to a 21st century mission: to bring the collective resources of both government and non-government agencies together to create tools for students, educators, and learners of all ages that will better equip the next generation of leaders.

Top photo: Seniors enjoy a stroll under the cherry trees on the National Mall and Memorial Parks Tidal Basin. NPS photo.

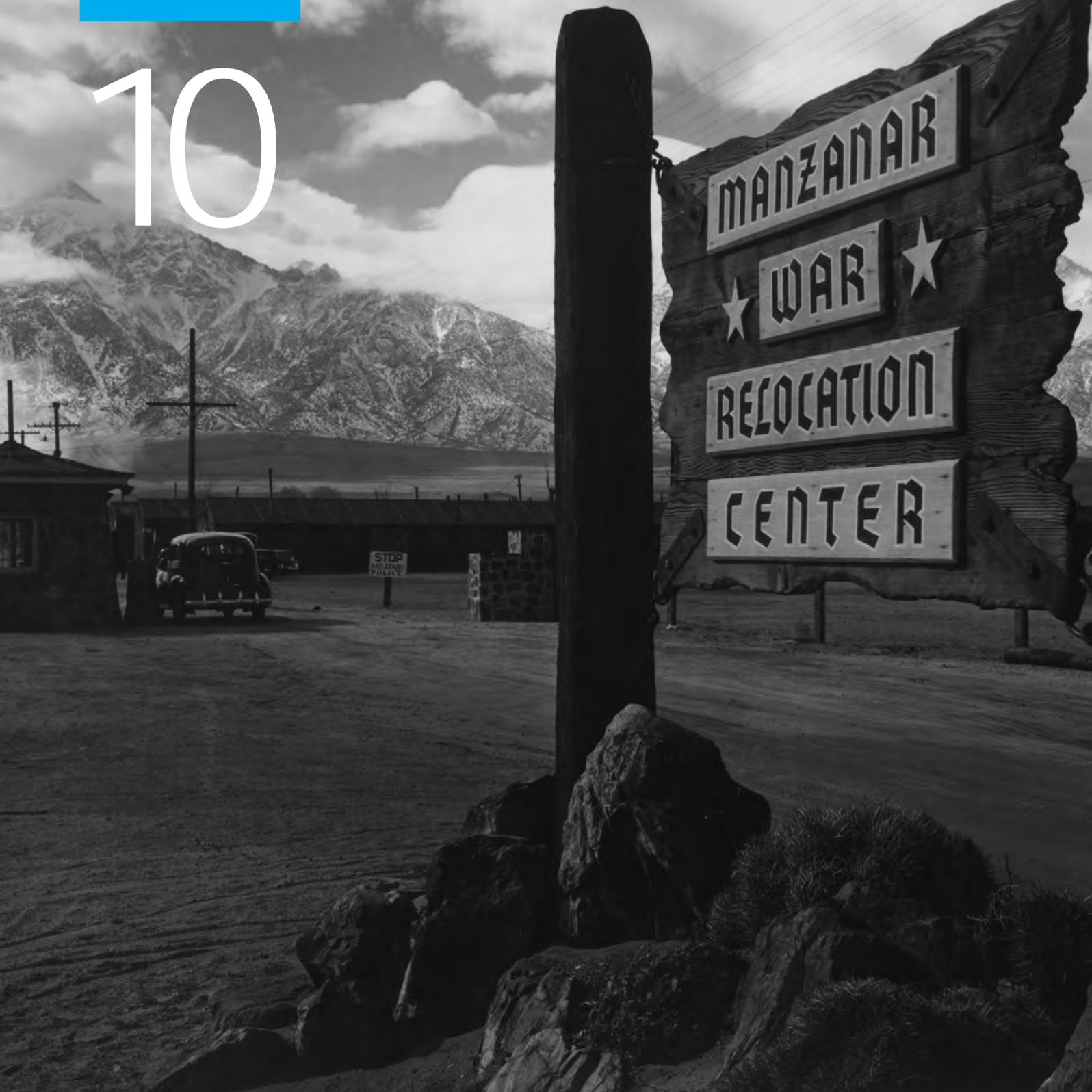
Bottom photo: Many retirees choose to remain active in their communities by volunteering. NPS photo.

The intent of this inter-agency coalition is to open up possibilities to all people, on-site and online, to explore history and culture and to more fully understand the events, ideas, and movements that have shaped the country and the world – and ultimately to be better able to address the complex challenges of a globalized and inter-dependent world.

Informing the *Declaration of Learning* are several powerful ideas that point the way forward for 21st century NPS interpretation. Learning spans formal and informal environments, blending home, schools, parks, museums, libraries and many other settings. Learning incorporates digital services and the Internet. Learning can occur anytime and anywhere. Learning is learner-centered, led by the interests and passions of the learner. All interpreters, and all NPS audiences, can count themselves as pursuers of lifelong learning.



10



STOP
MILITARY
POLICE

Difficult episodes in U.S. history—such as the incarceration of thousands of innocent Japanese Americans during World War II— provide powerful, deeply emotional interpretive opportunities to engage visitors in meaningful, provocative ways. Photograph from the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Ansel Adams Collection.

What the Concept of Lifelong Learning Means for 21st Century Interpreters

Engagement with parks can provide exceptional opportunities for NPS interpreters to leverage the ways that informal learning occurs¹⁵:

- informal learners choose how and where to spend their time; they are intrinsically motivated
- informal learning tends to be social and relationship-based
- informal learning occurs when learners manipulate and create knowledge
- informal learners value personalized experiences that respect the knowledge and values they already have
- informal learners desire to directly contribute to aspects of community/global life

Embracing Minds for the Future

Interpreters will benefit from gaining a deep understanding of how people learn in any environment. The field of mind, brain, and education is emerging as a potent force in providing context for how learning occurs. It is known that effective learning opportunities take into account previous experiences and prior knowledge.¹⁶ Mind/brain research suggests that thinking and perception is tightly linked to emotion and that significant brain plasticity allows for growth and learning over time.¹⁷ NPS resources connect directly to the most pressing issues of the planet (climate change, poverty, immigration, globalization, inequality) and provide an especially rich environment for grappling with ill-structured problems that require complex thinking, a capacity mentioned repeatedly in the literature about 21st century skills. In addition, all learning takes place within socio-cultural contexts that are influenced by particular norms and expectations.¹⁸ For example, NPS uniforms may contribute to an aura of authority that hinders some communication with a 21st century audience. Some NPS interpreters are taking this sensitivity into account when co-creating programs with communities, in some cases by working with partners who can directly engage without being bound by certain NPS protocols.

11

The Bracero program (1942 through 1964) allowed millions of Mexican guest workers to take temporary agricultural work in the United States. Although the program ended more than four decades ago, the experiences of bracero workers and their families provide an important backdrop to the current debates about immigration and migration, and makes it all the more important to understand this chapter of American history. Photo from the Smithsonian' Institute's *America on the Move* exhibit.



Owning the Past

As suggested in *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service*, the “NPS will be a better. . .interpreter of the nation’s. . .resources and a better partner with the public when it can more effectively interpret its own past.”¹⁹ Open discussion of NPS activities, such as nightly “bear shows,” where visitors were encouraged to watch bears eating piles of garbage while an interpreter on horseback gave an educational talk, or the involuntary displacement of residents to create parklands, can be provocative catalysts to open up thinking about how people and societies change their views and practices over time. By providing context, reframing stories, actively seeking multiple points of view, alternative narratives, and reconsidering the place of traditional narratives of individual sites, interpreters can look for larger relationships and cross-disciplinary themes that can help weave NPS resources into current life experience.

Facing History and Ourselves (www.facing.org), an organization that encourages reflection and dialogue and nurtures democracy, is highly adept at raising questions that encourage the examination of historical choices.

How does immigration shape identity?

How does knowing this history educate me about my responsibility today?

What does it mean to be “from” a place?

How does where we are from influence who we are?

Framing interpretation in this way provokes new insights for audiences and interpreters because it requires consideration of alternatives, weighing evidence, supporting ideas and justifying answers.²⁰ This approach underscores the interrelationships among resources that can be enriching for lifelong learners, moving “beyond consumption to true engagement – to the development of capacities of analysis that are transferable to many settings.”²¹

Informal learners appreciate being invited into deeply meaningful conversations about aspects of their individual, often day-to-day, experience. Interpreters can infuse knowledge of how informal learning occurs by further developing guided, open-ended opportunities in lively, participative social environments.

Globalization and a New American Reality

Global forces are challenging the American status quo in multiple sectors. Globalization, the process of intensifying economic, social and cultural exchanges across the planet, is making old boundaries, and the concept of cultural homogeneity, increasingly implausible.²² Profound change in American demographics, a result of globalization, is one critical aspect influencing actual and potential NPS audiences.

According to *Learning in the Global Era*, the US is experiencing its largest wave of immigration in history, with its foreign-born population equaling 12% of its total population.²³ In the last three decades, those who speak a language other than English at home have increased by 140% bringing the total to 20% of the US population.²⁴ In addition, the 2010 US Census found that 9 million people, about 3% of the population, reported being of more than one race, an increase of one-third from the decade before.²⁵ Moreover, in February 2013, Pew Research published figures showing that Hispanics and Asian Americans make up seven-in-ten of today's adult immigrants and about half of today's adult second generation immigrants.²⁶ Within two decades, it is expected that the majority of the US population will be multi-racial and multi-ethnic.

A worldwide trend towards urbanization contributes to diverse populations living and working in ever-closer proximity. North America's population is 82 percent urban and is expected to reach almost 90 percent in the next 40 years and it is predicted that by 2050, 75 percent of the world's population will live in cities.²⁷



2nd Nature is an innovative urban youth and community engagement partnership in Washington, DC between the National Park Service and the Latin American Youth Center's Art + Media House. Urban youth discover national parks in their own city while creating powerful art inspired by nature and green spaces in their community. NPS photo.

12

What Globalization Means for 21st Century Interpreters

As borders and markets become more fluid, a crucial task for society is integrating large and growing numbers of people from diverse backgrounds – not only to be aware of global issues, but also to see difference as the norm and to be competent in interacting with people of varied ethnic, religious, racial and cultural backgrounds.²⁸ Far beyond mere tolerance, an atmosphere of respect and valuing diversity is paramount for anyone working with the current and future public.

Partnering with Community Organizations

While the NPS acknowledges that the current composition of the American population is reflected neither by staff nor visitors, partnerships with organizations already rooted in a community may hold promise for connecting different populations with park resources. The Youth Ambassador Program (YAP) (<http://www.nps.gov/nebe/forkids/yap.htm>) out of New Bedford Whaling NHP is a partnership project between the park and Third Eye Youth Empowerment Inc. where local youth, including African Americans, Cape Verdeans, Dominicans, and Puerto Ricans, communicate national park themes through music, poetry and videos and connect them to issues they face in their day-to-day lives. These projects are then used extensively in other interpretive programming done by the park through live events and social media outreach, thus using the medium of this generation to communicate far beyond their own community.

Students in the Youth Ambassador Program explore the New England National Scenic Trail. NPS photo.



Engaging in Citizen Science and Citizen History

Another way in which various populations can connect with parks is through “citizen science” where volunteers with particular interests can be empowered to provide useful data for application to real-world problems. Increasingly, parks, museums and other informal settings are engaging audiences of all backgrounds to collect valuable information in events conducted under the direction of professional scientists or curators. Bioblitzes are 24-hour events in which teams of volunteer community members work together to find and identify as many species as possible in a different national park every year. Other examples of citizen science projects include sampling stream invertebrates, surveying for horseshoe crabs or tracking wood turtle movement to provide data to suggest turtle-friendly design for a new shopping

center development.²⁹

More recently, “citizen history” has emerged as a way to invite participants acting as citizen historians, to mine data from established sources like museums, parks or research institutions to help identify patterns or unearth new discoveries about events or artifacts.³⁰ Other content areas such as social histories, or gardening and culinary practices, might tap into interests for co-development projects with urban and immigrant populations. Relationships developed with underserved audiences can lead to the identification of shared goals for further exploration.



Health Initiatives

The NPS Healthy Parks Healthy People (HPHP) initiative works with multiple community partners to foster the health-related role that parks can play.³¹ HPHP focus on health-related opportunities, like supporting doctors who provide personalized, “park prescriptions” for recreational activity at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore or the healthy eating choices from sustainably sourced foods at a concessionaire in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

Facilitating Dialogue

Respecting audience’s broad experiences requires implementing innovative efforts to engage them, especially for parks that are farther from urban centers or for which a local community may not be readily accessible. This will require identifying connections to the themes that emerge from NPS resources—setting them within the larger story of a changing world.³²

Third graders from Neval Thomas Elementary School in Washington, DC kicked off the Healthy Parks Healthy People Greater Washington Area Initiative in front of the Lincoln Memorial. Dr. Robert Zarr, past President of the DC Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, wrote the students the first DC Park Prescription. They were the first to hike the National Mall and Memorial Parks’ TRACK Trail which is the first of 13 planned TRACK Trails in the Greater Washington National Parks. NPS photo.

13



Poster from the traveling exhibit, *RACE: Are We So Different?*

The traveling exhibit, *RACE: Are We So Different?*, developed by the American Anthropological Association, has been traveling the nation for several years. It describes race as a social construct rather than a scientific one, even as the tangible legacy of a belief in race remains palpable.

In several cities, the exhibit included auxiliary programming – “talking circles” based on a Native American tradition and facilitated by trained staff. Any visitor who experienced the exhibit could afterward choose to listen and speak in a safe, respectful space about the connections made through the shared experience of the exhibit. Visitors were offered the chance to discuss race from their personal perspective and hear from those around them.

A similar technique, called facilitated dialogue, is starting to be used in the NPS. The Mather Training Center has coordinated training sessions through experts with the *International Coalition of Sites of Conscience* (of which the NPS has institutional members) and support for these programs is gaining ground. A growing number of NPS sites are experimenting with structured facilitated dialogue techniques.

Some of the parks pioneering this approach include Little Rock Central High School NHS, Glacier NP, Independence NHS and Sequoia-Kings Canyon NP. Many NPS sites can provide a gateway to meaningful topics that lend themselves to enriched discussion and further action.

Increasingly, interpreters need the ability to bridge disciplines and link park themes with other parks and sites beyond the NPS. Critical issues - climate change, invasive species and migration of species, immigration and civil engagement - are not defined by environmental or political boundaries. Interpreters can consider how to help give coherence to audiences’ fragmented experiences in varied learning environments.³³ Interpreters will need the ability to unify ideas broadly through knowledge of broader historical, natural and cultural contexts, perhaps by fluency in more than one language, and provide opportunities where audiences from many backgrounds can interact and learn from one another.

Critically, interpreters will need to gain skills in cultural awareness and cultural competency. They will need to embrace the diversity of both



audiences and their colleagues. New interpretive hires should reflect greater diversity.

The need for expanding opportunities for inter-personal and intercultural learning is a natural outgrowth of a globalized society. Current and potential audiences will continue to represent diverse backgrounds with regard to culture, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic or sexual orientation. Being open to and understanding differences is a key 21st century mindset and skill.

In June of 1969, patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn in New York City staged an uprising to resist police harassment and persecution to which LGBT Americans were commonly subjected. This uprising marks a major turning point in the modern gay civil rights movement in the United States and around the world. Photo: New York Public Library.

14

THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Today's audiences have different expectations of how they will interact with all sectors of society. Customization, active learning, and participation generate an appreciation for sharing authority, which in turn has highlighted the value of teams and flexible coalitions such as crowd-sourcing for gathering information and resources and for accomplishing complex tasks.

Technological innovations have opened the door for millions of people to access formerly unimaginable opportunities for gaining knowledge and increasing communication. In 2013 the Pew Research Internet Project found that 87% of all adults, and 95% of all teens use the internet and 73% of all online adults use social networking sites.³⁴ Percentages are similarly high for groups of varying age, racial backgrounds and income levels.

Rethinking Education in the Age of Technology

Traditional learning culture

Uniform learning

Control by educator

Educator as expert

Reliance on knowledge in one's head

"Coverage" of material that is deemed important

Learning by absorption

Just-in-case learning

Learning at prescribed sites

Digital culture

Customization

Control by learner

Diverse sources of knowledge/ learning

Reliance on multiple resources

Knowledge explosion

Learning by doing

Just-in-time learning

Learning anywhere

An empowering view of digital media is to view “external” props or devices as *extensions of the mind* insofar as they help go beyond the mind’s functions and activities.³⁵ In this sense, a smartphone, for example, can be viewed not as “other” but “as an extension of the mind’s capacity to store information and communicate.”³⁶ In strong contrast with traditional methods, digital advances are shaping how individuals view learning and how they expect to learn.

In *Rethinking Education in the Age of Technology*, Collins and Halverson note several incompatibilities between the path followed by traditional learning experiences and digital culture, as shown in the text box to the left.

The characteristics of these digital culture preferences largely mirror the ways that informal learning occurs with its emphasis on intrinsic motivation and social interaction. As a result, the authors predict that the influence of traditional educational venues will diminish. In such an environment, parks, museums and other “free-choice” resources can grow in value and importance.

In keeping with the global trend toward high quality interpretive

standards, the first principle of the *International Council on Monuments and Sites* (ICOMOS) Ename Charter (http://www.enamecharter.org/principles_0.html) supports the concept of broad access: “interpretation, in whatever form deemed appropriate and sustainable, should facilitate physical and intellectual access by the public to cultural heritage sites.” Technology offers critical tools for providing this broad access. The NPS is already supporting digital media services including web media, social media, mobile applications, education technology and the Web Ranger program, but interpreters are the humans behind the keyboards who can embrace the emergent digital culture to nurture audience relationships.

What the Digital Revolution Means for 21st Century Interpreters

With access to social networking exploding for nearly all age groups, digital literacy is a critical tool for interpreters to meet audiences on common ground for parks local communities and those in more remote areas. A command of digital tools, and the skills needed to use them, should be a staple of the



15



interpretive tool kit, available to use as appropriate in relation to diverse audiences in diverse places.³⁷

Beyond a basic level of comfort in accessing and possibly participating in social media (Facebook, Twitter, texting and blogging), and a familiarity with trends, such as

- Digital badging
- Pinterest—<http://www.pinterest.com/cjm4e/national-parks/>
- Tumblr—<http://allthenationalparks.tumblr.com/>
- Snapchat
- Instagram—<http://instagram.com/usinterior#>
- Vine

interpreters can exercise thoughtful decision-making in consultation with audiences, determining which platforms will be most appropriate. Institutional support for building and maintaining digital connections with audiences is an ongoing challenge that will need to be overcome to facilitate effective interpretive choices.

Applying Apps

Familiarity with relevant smartphone mobile technologies is valuable, especially with those that offer users easy methods to engage with conservation activities that can contribute to solving social and environmental problems.

The NPS currently offers several effective examples using digital technology that could serve as models for many parks. The mobile iPhone app “IveGot1” developed via partnership between the Everglades and University of Georgia allows users to identify and report invasive plants and animals spotted in Florida. (<http://www.nps.gov/ever/parknews/ivegot1mobileapppr112911.htm>) Additionally, the NPS has partnered with the National Phenology Network (https://www.usanpn.org/educate/nn_curriculum#) to monitor the influence of climate on the periodic plant and animal life cycles – sometimes referred to as “nature’s calendar.” This partnership offers anyone the capacity to observe individual plants and submit their observations from electronic accounts via *Nature’s Notebook*. These observations provide scientists with information from multiple sources at once in settings such as National Parks, botanic gardens, neighborhood trails and nature centers. The data observed and related information is made freely available to assist with decision-making and adaptation to changing climates and environments.³⁸

Beyond the NPS, but closely aligned to its mission of preservation, the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s SeafoodWatch with Project FishMap helps users find, document and share the location of ocean-friendly seafood at restaurants and stores. (http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch/web/sfw_iphone.aspx) These are popular and effective ways to practice conservation, and discussion of their use could be incorporated into existing NPS interpretive programming.

Digital Badging

The concept of digital badging, or micro-credentialing, is another area ripe for consideration by the NPS and partners. Taking a cue from the realm of physical, sew-on badges for scouting youth, digital badging is a validated indicator of accomplishment, skills, quality or interest that can be earned in various learning environments.³⁹ A digital badge might document abilities ranging from the practical (proficiency in plant identification) to the academic (demonstrated competency in a subject area, like landscape design).

Already, many organizations, as varied as the US military (BadgesforVets.org), the YMCA of Greater New York (<http://www.ymcanyc.org/association/pages/y-mvp>) and the Smithsonian Institution (<http://smithsonianquests.org>) are experimenting with this type of certification.



16

Digital Storytelling

Access to social and environmental narratives of underserved communities are lacking for many park areas. A seminal event called *Stories with a View* using digital storytelling was created in partnership with the Tuzigoot National Monument, the Arizona Operation: Military Kids, a University of Arizona Cooperative Extension 4-H, and Department of Defense program. Children of military families from across Arizona spend time creating podcasts to tell their own stories, thereby leaving a digital marker linking resiliency and other life skills with the people who lived in the prehistoric pueblo at Tuzigoot.⁴⁰

Technology to the Rescue

Furthermore, social media can humanize and enhance emergency services in times of natural disasters and other distress. For example, during “Superstorm Sandy,” the powerful hurricane that hit the East Coast during October, 2012, the NPS Digest identified dedicated websites on hurricane response and recovery, a listing of resource needs for incident management teams, and a Facebook and Twitter page providing updates on response posted by the Eastern Incident Management Team.⁴¹

For most 21st century audiences, often the contact with NPS resources is a webpage or other online presence like Facebook or Twitter. The opportunity afforded by the digital revolution to interpreters, and all NPS employees who communicate with the public, is one of almost magically convenient communication and nearly unbounded reach across international borders, even to those living and working in Space. Since Congress does not allow the NPS budgets to be spent on marketing, social media provides opportunities to communicate with people who are new to parks and with underserved audiences. NPS Northeast Region Visual Information Specialist Michael

Liang suggests that digital media may serve as a kind of equalizer since all parks have the same design presence online; technically the George Washington NM has an equal online profile to Yosemite NP. Some barriers are breaking down and more collaboration can exist between resources with similar themes such as Civil War, Civil Rights, and environmental change. Members of the public have made such connections on their own in part because they don’t see the parks as isolated from one another in the way that institutions tend to operate.

It may also be said that for many visitors or potential visitors, “if you can’t find it online, it doesn’t exist,” thereby advocating for equal respect for online and in-person access.⁴² Despite the significant challenge of keeping up with technological changes, refreshing content, and potential responding 24/7, interpreters and partners in the 21st century will likely be called upon to embrace digital media for interpretive programming in some form.



A new wayside exhibit on phenology at Kenai Fjords' Exit Glacier visitor area, provides information and observations to stir the viewer's thinking, and provide a catalyst for informal interpretive conversations with rangers and staff about the relevance of changing climate.
NPS photo.

Vison Paper: 21st Century Interpretive Skills

17

CHALLENGES FOR INTERPRETATION

As with any vision and shift in priorities, there are challenges to be addressed from outside and inside the NPS. The status of interpretation within the NPS hierarchy is of concern. Lacking a legislative mandate to provide interpretation, NPS interpreters continue to suffer the brunt of budget and staff cuts. While interpretation, as it falls under the larger context of lifelong learning has developed steadily, within the NPS considerable skepticism about its ultimate value and professional integrity remains.

Although the essence of the term “interpretation” is meaningful communication, the word itself is not easily or widely understood. In fact the word has long engendered mixed reactions and its definition is still discussed, even debated. At present, both the Interpretive Development Program (IDP) and National Association for Interpretation (NAI) continue to promote definitions of interpretation (developed in 1996 and 2000, respectively) that the interpreter is a bridge builder, providing opportunities for audience members to find personal meaning in heritage resources.

Interpretation is a catalyst in creating opportunities for audience members to form their own intellectual and emotional connections with the meanings/significance inherent in the resource. (NPS IDP, 1996)

Interpretation is a mission based communication process that forges intellectual and emotional connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource. (NAI, 2000)

The continued use of the word “inherent” in both definitions of interpretation seems unnecessary - and possibly unhelpful - especially to new interpreters entering the field. Most seasoned interpreters recognize that a resource has many significances, so it would make sense to formally remove the word *inherent*, from the NPS definition, which suggests that a place or artifact has a particular meaning or significance, thereby overlooking

possible significance that audiences might derive through their own personal experience. While it may seem to be a minor point, for a profession that prides itself on effective communication and aspires to provide potent vehicles for discussion, a more accurate definition could better support interpretive theory and practice. In this way interpreters would continue to build on successes of the past and use the innovations of the IDP paradigm as a launching pad to move forward.

Despite broader interpretive offerings with an emphasis on connections with audiences, many parks continue to offer predominantly fact-heavy, often didactic presentations, in which opportunities for audience engagement and relevance are limited. Even in parks where interpretive programming is attempting to reveal universal concepts, some programs may benefit from a concerted focus on facilitation techniques that could potentially broaden the opportunities for audiences to share and express personal relevance.

Whereas formidable impediments to change in a bureaucracy like the NPS

exist, interpreters nation-wide have been inspired by new possibilities for their profession. They have begun to mobilize interpretation's broad social value beyond a powerful medium of communication, toward "a deeper reflection on the rights and proper role of the non-expert public in shaping an ever evolving vision of the past" and the future.⁴³ The broader interpretive profession has begun to adapt to new expectations, evident in some of the recent activities of the NAI and the IDP, like the development of co-created programs and inclusion of techniques like facilitated dialogue and digital tools.

Making interpretation relevant for 21st century audiences, given staff shortages, streamlined resources, and high expectations, will require strategic choices, prioritizing interpretive work and focusing on the most effective interpretive methods. Toward that end, interpretive leaders will want to employ a nimble, collaborative interpretive planning process. Experimentation and evaluation of new methods and techniques for audience engagement will be ongoing, and lessons learned will need to be continuously applied back into the planning process and the development of training for best practices.



18



Top: John Muir National Historic Site, in partnership with the Anza Trail and the Spanish Choir of Saint Catherine of Siena, share the history of Las Posadas (The Inns), a popular Christmas tradition that is performed throughout Latin America, Mexico, and most Latino communities throughout the United States.

Opposite page: The National Park of the American Samoa preserves *Fa'asamoa*, the Samoan way of life, which has tied the people of the Samoan islands to their natural world for centuries.
NPS photos.

THE ROLE OF THE NPS IN RESPONDING TO 21ST CENTURY NEEDS

In strengthening the NPS as “resource steward and educator, to articulate more effectively the values of its mission,” those who are charged with communicating and interpreting for the public have a fundamental role to play.⁴⁴ Nurturing a citizenry of lifelong learners requires that NPS Interpretation leverage 21st century knowledge, skills and attitudes to help integrate the NPS more broadly into American societal fabric.

In the same way that national parks are forever interrelated and affected by activities beyond their boundaries, the experiences of visitors and other NPS audiences are shaped holistically. Given the complexity of the environmental and societal issues facing citizens today, no single person, discipline, institution, or technique has a monopoly on the answers required to meet the challenges.

Successful interpretation will require close alliances internally and externally in order to make the most of interdisciplinary expertise. Internally, interpretive professionals can join forces with the larger NPS community to work more closely with staff from different divisions and organizational levels in order to bring their skills to bear and share ideas and expertise. Participation in interdisciplinary professional conferences and symposia (e.g. George Wright



19

The Iñupiat people have thrived for thousands of years in one of the harshest climates on Earth, hunting the bowhead whale, or “Agviq. The Iñupiat Heritage Center (IHC) in Barrow, Alaska, brings people together to promote and perpetuate Iñupiat history, language and culture. Photo courtesy of IHC.

Society conference) and writing for publications outside of the standard interpretive domain can help spur collective support and understanding. External collaborations and negotiated partnerships with other organizations and programs that are pertinent to NPS resources will also support the interpretive undertaking to build public support and strengthen new constituencies.

In order to be a meaningful part of community life, NPS interpreters can provide audiences with opportunities to engage in what the 21st century audience values, including learning and innovation, media and technology, as well as recreational enjoyment and life and career skills. At their core, if NPS interpreters, audiences and partners are more strongly united, mutual capacities can be built and nurtured. Interpretation will grow as a process of engagement and a pivotal medium for public discourse, environmental stewardship, and civic action.

Interpreters are known for lofty aims for audiences, and while enjoyment and care for resources remain a constant, expanded outcomes are called for in the 21st century. Programs could provide ways to build audience capacities for active citizenship, global consciousness, broad literacies (scientific, historic, digital, etc.) and processing and evaluation of information. These outcomes call for expansive thinking about the public value of the NPS and the future of interpretation.



Visitors and local community members share in fellowship, fun, and festivities at the Booker T. Washington National Monument's Burroughs Plantation for Juneteenth, a celebration of one of the most important moments in our shared national history, the emancipation of slaves.



A New Paradigm for Interpretation

A powerful paradigm for lifelong learning has emerged where interpreters can shift their focus from being primarily a “sage on the stage” to a “guide on the side,” from being largely the content expert among audiences to being a facilitator, from being the sole authority to being a co-learner and co-leader.

This robust reimagining and ongoing evolution of interpretation will continue its shift from a hierarchy to a network.⁴⁵ In place of vertical levels of expertise or techniques, interpreters can be more deeply interconnected and interrelated, associating as needed with other NPS staff, community organizations, partners, and audiences via in-person and digital webs.

In addition, the field of interpretation will focus more deliberately on *processes* of response and engagement *with* audiences than *products* formulated largely by interpreters for audiences.

These are profound shifts in both perspective and action. In this paradigm, parks take their place as resources of readily acknowledged public value, instruments of lifelong learning, integrated with diverse audiences’ cultures and practices, where interpreters and audiences address societal needs and aspirations and welcome the opportunity to challenge and engage with one another as co-learners. In this paradigm, interpreters share authority and discovery with audiences.

20

A unique partnership between the Mississippi River Fund, the National Park Service, Wilderness Inquiry, and Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures (UWCA), provides environmental education programs for youth in elementary, middle and high school—complete with guided day trips and overnight camping. NPS photo.

Key Capacities for 21st Century NPS Interpreters and Managers

To interpret at the highest level, interpreters require 21st century capacities that are varied and complex. As discussed earlier, in order to move from a hierarchy to a network, interpreters should access information and expertise from a variety of sources, both within and outside of the NPS. Not every individual interpreter needs to exhibit every capacity; rather they may be best represented within a particular unit, among interpretive staff, partners, etc. These capacities reflect multiple sources of thinking on 21st century skills, a review of current educational literature, and a synthesis of the thoughts and experiences of dozens of NPS interpreters, chiefs of interpretation, superintendents, museum educators and other professionals.

Effective 21st century interpreters will approach interpretation from a powerful perspective where interpreters and partners will build upon existing capacities and carry the torch in three principal areas, **audience advocacy**, **innovative leadership** and **disciplinary expertise**.

The Capacity for Audience Advocacy

- advocates for, and models, cultural competency – explores own unconscious biases, supports sustained contact with diverse audiences (internal and external); intentionally aware of, and focused on, possibilities for underserved populations to connect with the NPS
- partners with local communities – encourages dedicated alliances with individuals or groups for a common purpose (longevity)
- coalition-builders and collaborators - identifies affinity groups, like-minded and unlike-minded colleagues, organizations, knows and engages with the community, participates as a community member on such things as advisory boards, festivals, local conservation efforts.



The Capacity for Innovative Leadership

- project managers - directly oversees the work of NPS staff (volunteers, docents, seasonal employees, interns) and partnerships with community organizations in the development or implementation of temporary group activities for interpretive services designed to produce unique results; plays a role in initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and evaluating projects⁴⁶
- facilitators for both internal and external audiences – assists a group of people to realize common objectives and helps them to achieve them without taking a particular position in discussion.⁴⁷ Two-way, non-judgmental, empathetic facilitation of group discussion may be intentionally carried out via a staff meeting, a public review, partnership or a dialogue process with visitors on or off site⁴⁸
- reflective practitioners/evaluators –consistently reflects and seeks data on the effectiveness of their work from the perspective of the audience and implements changes, familiar with informal and formal evaluation methodologies

The Capacity for Disciplinary and Technical Expertise

- content/theory specialists – stays abreast of latest scholarship about resource and learning theory and practice, welcomes cross-disciplinary, complex thinking and contextual awareness and multiple viewpoints; practices expert thinking (historic, scientific, etc.) for individual discipline knowledge
- digital media communicators – utilizes social and other web media to connect and maintain relationships with audiences, partners, and collaborators; introduces/supports/integrates creative uses of digital media to further outcomes; recognizes opportunities for uncensored online civic dialogue

New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park's Shoreside Industries app takes visitors to the whaling city on a journey through time. The GPS-enabled walking tour app features historic photos, paintings, illustrations, and stories of triumph, tragedy, and perseverance—all available in the palm of your hand.
NPS photo.





Working collaboratively with the Hawai'i Pacific Parks Association, the National Park of American Samoa celebrated the grand opening of its new visitor center. The center features bilingual exhibits in Samoan and English and showcases the significance of the islands unique tropical rainforests, coral reefs, fruit bats, and Samoan heritage and culture. NPS photo.

- providers of audience-centered interpretation – maintains visitor-centered, resource-focused communication “in the moment” (often referred to as informal interpretation) backed by content and learning expertise; practices, and remains on the lookout for opportunities to personalize contact with audiences and connect them with relevant content and resources

Nurturing the 21st century mindset and these capacities will empower all those involved with interpretation - front-line, specialist and supervisor/chief - to reach for meaningful outcomes with audiences, and themselves, today and in the future. Interpretation will continue to move well beyond a largely authoritative conservation effort to become more and more “an informed and inclusive group activity... facilitated by professionals and non-professionals alike.”⁴⁹

Such complex and nuanced capacities require commitment, practice, and a willingness to take informed risks. They also are unlikely to be fully realized in any one person. The 21st century interpreter will be someone who is open to learning from others’ expertise, locating ideas and knowledge from both within and without the NPS, and finding ways to put it

A collaborative partnership between the NPS and NASA, fosters use of Earth science research results and extends the benefits of NASA exploration and science for the preservation, enhancement and interpretation of US natural resources.

This photo shows the Landsat Satellite image of Acadia National Park: This Landsat ETM+ Satellite image of Acadia National Park was produced on Sept. 2, 2002 by a project funded by the National Park Service’s Northeast Temperate Network Inventory and Monitoring program in partnership with NASA.



22

Volunteers are educated on ocean acidification by Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary staff and professionals from the West Coast National Marine Sanctuaries and Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute. NPS photo.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING 21ST CENTURY INTERPRETERS

to work.

What distinguishes any one NPS site from another is its physical space and unique history, but the skills needed to help an audience access and make meaningful connections are the same for every site. Therefore, every site and every interpreter would benefit from access to each of these capacities whether they come from NPS staff or community partners. Communities of practice and interpretive teams can become the norm for NPS sites. See the appendices of this paper for examples of interpretive programming that highlight these capacities.

With the goal of preparing for the second century of stewardship and engagement, the NPS and interpreters are in a position to renew the thinking and reimagine the mechanisms for creating, building and managing a stellar corps of interpretive professionals. The societal mega-trends of lifelong learning, globalization, and the digital revolution, have led to critical momentum that justifies significant changes within NPS interpretation

training, recruitment and development.

Training

Audience demographics and their expectations for customization and co-created experiences are motivation for the creation of a revitalized training environment. Interpretive training, in light of the 21st century imperatives requires a continuing evolution of interpretive competencies and new curriculum for learning and development.

I. Revise and expand curriculum for learning and development

- Fluency in current learning theory: how people learn and their motivations in informal environments based on research about free-choice learning

- Cultural competency: how to recognize one's own limitations and embrace valuing others' perspectives; how to use tools, methods and principles to understand diverse populations

- Interpretive facilitation skills

- Digital/interpretive media literacy: how to use interpretive media and make judgments about proper use in various circumstances

- Reflective practice: how to collect and apply audience responses to improve process and practice

II. Expand resources and learning opportunities

- Continue to identify external sources of training being provided through universities and other organizations that work in related fields (such as: *the American Alliance of Museums, International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, the National Association of Interpretation, National Council on Public History, Association of State and Local History*) to cross-fertilize with NPS field staff and make best use of limited resources.

- Provide high-quality, brief (8-32 hour) accessible, basic interpretive training for all that includes foundational interpretive principals (learning theory, audience-centered approaches), fundamentals of cultural competency, accessibility and collaborative methods.

- Provide high quality, brief (8-32 hour) accessible, basic resource training for all that includes resource knowledge and up-to-date scientific understandings

23

- Research the results of certification and training and adapt training accordingly.
- WASO leadership to initiate requirements that will hold managers and supervisors accountable for ensuring that employees have the skills and competencies needed to fulfill the requirements of their positions.
- WASO leadership to initiate requirements that will obligate supervisors, employees, and managers to regularly assess needs that provide learning opportunities of employees' current positions and develop their long-term goals
- Build on basic training that would be made mandatory for all interpreters, by considering a system of digital badging for 21st century interpretive capacities to allow a higher level customization of interpretive training.
- Broaden and document the extent of informal “training” sessions among NPS employees (beyond interpreters) that have been implemented to build inclusion and deepen discussions and further cross-cultural understanding

Recruitment

Diversity is an expansive concept, including differences in ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious heritage; sexual orientation; gender; urban and rural, backgrounds, age, etc. The role of the 21st century interpreter will resonate with all audiences – ideally a diverse range of lifelong learners, broadly literate, self-aware, with demonstrated experience using collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, people who are of various ages and bring multiple perspectives.

I. Recruitment methods

- Further develop and evaluate the mentorship program within the NPS to build capacity for, and a culture of, diversity.
- Identify potential partner organizations whose roles align with NPS values and who may be recruited for 21st century interpretive work.



Park ranger David Ruffner prepares for a Civil War 150th event at Manassas National Battlefield Park. NPS photo.

- Build relationships with community organizations to provide a possible path to employment or co-employment via grants and partnerships.

II. Attributes of Recruits

- broadly literate, culturally aware, willing to take informed risks and be lifelong learners,

- demonstrably curious, humble, communicative

- members of, or somehow culturally embedded in, communities that are in adjacent to or nearby parks

Position Management

Position Management of diverse interpreters who engage with the 21st century shift in interpretation requires strategic thinking that begins with well-conceived position descriptions and follows with methods of accountability.

I. Appropriate position descriptions

- Develop a portfolio of position descriptions that reflect basic interpretive skills in addition to 21st century audience engagement, facilitation and collaboration skills, and meet the needs of the diversity of NPS units.

II. Accountability

- Develop and educate supervisors and managers to understand and embrace 21st century hiring needs and increase capacity for hiring authorities that allow the hiring for professional level skill levels appropriate for professional interpretation

- Holistically examine relationships among divisions/program areas of interpretation, education, Rivers Trails Conservation Assistance Program, natural resources, cultural resources, and partnerships in order to leverage synergies and reduce duplication



CONCLUSION

This paper suggests how the NPS can move forward into its second century by:

- embracing new and established interpretive capacities
- co-developing programs with audiences
- building coalitions of diverse constituents
- partnering with new allies
- infusing digital media into interpretive communication/media,
- providing opportunities for all audiences to enjoy and value NPS resources and take actions of consequence for themselves and their communities.

In the 21st century, at the intersection of the NPS public service mission, society's needs, and audiences' desires, the concept of lifelong learning emerges as a dominant framework for thinking about the future. It is at that intersection where interpreters can advance a vision to nurture a citizenry of lifelong learners and support the capacity for all to build a just society through engagement with natural and cultural heritage. Now is the time to seize the opportunity to adapt to changing conditions. In the words of one Chief of Interpretation: "We all have the same challenges. It's about the will."

25

APPENDIX

Examples of Interpretation Demonstrating the 21st Century Interpreter Mindset and Key Capacities

Many of the interpreters who were interviewed and who developed projects mentioned here, recognized and were concerned about risk. They risked audience rejection. They risked uncomfortable emotional reactions, from audiences and themselves. They risked criticism from peers. They risked a potential lack of support from senior colleagues. These interpreters freely owned up to heartfelt concerns about moving into new realms of interactions with audiences. Their relationships with their communities and their programs are not simple or easy, but they pave the way for the future by deepening public value of audiences' interaction with NPS resources. All of the interpreters interviewed who took informed risks were buoyed by the results.

The following examples include programs from the field of informal education, both from NPS and other organizations. Some examples refer to partnerships, others refer to individual institutions, such as museums. As the NPS continues to enter into and sustain partnerships, however, it's believed that boundaries among institutions, ideas and programs will become more fluid in nature. The programs are grouped together by categories of purpose drawn from a Call to Action, other NPS reports, and the literature on 21st century skills. The programs are only a sampling of many across the NPS and elsewhere where interpreters have seized upon the 21st century interpretive paradigm.

- honoring expertise while letting go of traditional role as primary expert
- considering their own personal biases
- making strategic choices
- taking informed risks
- partnering with community members and organizations to reach

- underserved audiences and provide for audience-identified needs
- practicing facilitation methods with groups
 - embracing what visitors bring to the process of interpretation
 - encouraging and planning for repeat visitation/involvement
 - valuing process over product

A. Program Purpose: Create an internal NPS culture of inclusion and diversity as well as a community of learners

1. “Sawa Bona” – Northeast Region Office

A program that bridges difference and builds cultural awareness was inspired and initiated by Northeast Region, Community Planner, Keilah Spann (keilah_span@nps.gov) She wanted to build community close at hand – among her colleagues in the NPS office in Philadelphia. Keilah’s goal is to have every employee seen as a contributor to the NPS mission and vision. After she was inspired by a diversity training she and a colleague developed a compact but powerful program around a South African greeting “Sawa Bona” which means “I see you.” Respondents (NPS staff) say “I am here,” and then engage in program where an employee speaks briefly about his or her respective cultural background, community or country of origin with a 5 minutes question time allotted. See appendix or hyperlink to her description.



(<http://www.govloop.com/photo/albums/sawa-bona-part-iii>)

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, advocate for, and model of, cultural competency, facilitator

Related Call to Action themes and actions: # 36 Value Diversity; #35 Welcome Aboard; #39 Lead the Way

26

Photo opposite page:

From a very early age, Rich Wideman set his sights on someday becoming a park ranger. A nature enthusiast who grew up in Montana, Rich has spent the last 30 years living out that dream. As Assistant Director, Partnerships and Civic Engagement, where he currently serves, he recently stated that “To work at the national level on park-related needs is a privilege and an honor. We have a great agency with incredible people”. NPS photo.

2. “Cultural Fluency and Undoing Racism in the NPS – Mt. Ranier National Park

Staff participated in a pilot two-day workshop entitled “Cultural Fluency and Undoing Racism in the NPS” developed by Pacific West Regional Manager of Youth Programs, Charles Thomas and colleagues. Workshop participants spent their time in a safe, open, supportive environment abiding by group norms, discussing the formation of personal identities and social identity, the enabling legislation and demographics around parks, journaling about their experiences, and learning about mentoring skills. The workshop closed with a discussion of strategies such as mentoring and other methods can lead to employment and retention of a diverse youth population in the NPS. (Charles_h_thomas@nps.gov)

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, advocate for, and models of, cultural competency, facilitator, content/theory specialist

Related Call to Action themes and actions: # 36 Value Diversity; #35 Welcome Aboard; #9 Keep the Dream Alive; #39 Lead the Way

3. Facilitated Dialogue on Climate Change - Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Park

Facilitated dialogue is a powerful, inclusive method of open-ended but structured dialogue with audiences on significant and often controversial topics such as immigration, climate change, civil rights, national security, gender equality, educational equity or any other topic of community relevance. The *International Coalition of Sites of Conscience* is a strong supporter of this technique and provides training to NPS staff through the Harpers Ferry Stephen T. Mather Training Center. The conversations that emerge are often deeply meaningful for audiences and interpreters alike. At Sequoia NP Denise Robertson (denise_roberston@nps.gov) facilitated a staff dialogue on climate change for the first time in 2012. Her group included not only interpretation staff, but education technicians, resource staff and administrative staff. The program drew out broad points of view that the group looked at collectively. Denise reflected on her first attempt, revised the plan, and conducted the program again. She discovered within herself a broader appreciation for others’ points of view. She concluded that “maybe they don’t need ‘fixing.’”

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, facilitator, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator

Related Call to Action themes and actions: # 36 Value Diversity; #35 Welcome Aboard; #9 Keep the Dream Alive; #39 Lead the Way

4. Allies for Inclusion – National Capital Region and Washington Area Support Office

This program was initiated by NPS employees from the NCR and the WASO to embrace all forms of diversity by facilitating safe, open, field discussions on the meaning of privilege and how it impacts assumptions and behavior. The conversations take place over brown bag lunches and include the topics of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender privilege. Sangita Chari is the contact for Allies for Inclusion. (sangita_chari@nps.gov)

Capacities demonstrated: Facilitator, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator

Related Call to Action themes and actions: # 36 Value Diversity; #35 Welcome Aboard; #9 Keep the Dream Alive; #39 Lead the Way

5. NPS Workforce Diversity Web page

Voluntary contributions from Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender members of the NPS workforce make up this site that provides background on their work and accomplishments. The site functions to welcome and celebrate diversity within the NPS.

(<http://www.nps.gov/diversity/lgbt.htm>)

Capacities demonstrated: Advocates for, and models of, cultural competency, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator

Related Call to Action themes and actions: # 36 Value Diversity; #35 Welcome Aboard; #9 Keep the Dream Alive; #39 Lead the Way



27

B. Program Purpose: Develop and implement opportunities for external audiences to develop and practice skills that are highly valued in today's society including learning and innovation skills, technology skills, and life and career skills. (See <http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework>)

1. Project Write – Inspire Me! – Independence NHP and Edgar Allan Poe NHS

This 2012 Tilden Award-winning program by Park Ranger Renee Albertoli (renee_albertoli@nps.gov), is a writing enrichment program for high school students using the resources at Independence National Historical Park and the Edgar Allen Poe National Historic Site. During a two-week intensive workshop, participants explore essential themes such as “Power of the Press” or “House Divided/Nation Divided.” Students visit several historic sites, read primary source documents, discuss themes, and spend afternoons in writing activities. Students create a literary magazine and post blogs, tweets, photos, and videos on the park’s website, Facebook and YouTube sites. They develop skills in basic literacy, critical thinking, digital media skills.

(<http://www.NPS.gov/inde/forkids/teens.htm>)

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, facilitator, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator, digital media communicator, project manager

Related Call to Action themes and actions: #3 History Lesson, #10 Arts Afire, # 16 Live and Learn, #17 Go Digital, #5 Parks for People, #19 Out with the Old

2. Sit-in Training – (museum theater) National Museum of American History

Museum theater actors present an interactive re-enactment of a non-violent sit-in training based on a manual that was used during the 1960's. The training is an interactive session for families and other drop-in visitors that takes place in the museum in front of actual seats from the Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina Woolworth's where the first protests by students from North Carolina A&T took place.

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dgvFe3-vyE>)

Capacities demonstrated: facilitator, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator, digital media communicator (a video of the session is also available online), project manager, advocates for cultural competency

Related Call to Action themes and actions: (Non-NPS)

3. Inspiring Young Emerging Leaders (I-YEL) – Golden Gate NRA

I-YEL encourages, prepares, and challenges young people from diverse backgrounds to be advocates for environmental and social change. I-YEL is initiated, designed, and coordinated by youth, who receive support and training in planning and implementing projects that create positive change in their communities. Through leadership development, career exploration, and the future. The Associate Director, Youth Leadership is Ernesto Pepito (epepito@parksconservancy.org)

(<http://www.parksconservancy.org/learn/youth/leadership/>)

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, partner with local community, facilitator, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator, digital media communicator, project manager, advocate for cultural competency.

Related Call to Action themes and actions: #3 History Lesson, #10 Arts Afire, # 16 Live and Learn, #17 Go Digital, #36 Value Diversity, #5 Parks for People, #19 Out with the Old



Photo above: Participants in a re-enactment “sit-in” at the Museum of American History Museum in Washington, DC.

Photo below: I-YEL participants at Crissy Field, a unit of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.



4. Visitor Centers Addressing Holistic Themes

Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site Visitor Center invokes the modern Civil Rights movement using programs and artifacts to lead audiences to identify connections about other places around the world where oppression still holds people back. The Visitor Center exhibit encourages visitors to consider the past within the context of the present. Similarly, sites that commemorate the Civil War such as Shiloh National Military Park and the Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center offer open-ended interpretation that allows visitors to reflect on the idea that American identity is constantly in flux. Both sites address issues we face as a nation which remain unresolved 150 years after the Civil War.

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, facilitator, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator, digital media communicator

Related Call to Action themes and actions: #3 History Lesson, # 16 Live and Learn, #17 Go Digital, #5 Parks for People, #19 Out with the Old



Park ranger at Shenandoah National Park engages visitors in informal talk at a park overlook. NPS photo.

5. Professional Development Programs and Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons of the Holocaust - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Various federal agencies send leaders (GS 14, 15 and SES) to examine relevant case studies and discuss the Holocaust in order to reinforce participants' commitment to ethical leadership, to the ideals of public service, and to responsible decision-making. The Museum's professional development programs for high level government employees have become an integral component of the leadership training programs at the **Federal Executive Institute** and the **Partnership for Public Service**.⁵⁰

In addition, in 1998, the museum developed, in partnership with the Anti-Defamation League, **Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons of the Holocaust**. This program encourages law enforcement officers and cadets from police departments to draw lessons from Holocaust history that are relevant for their roles as enforcers of the law in a democracy.⁵¹

(<http://www.ushmm.org/museum/press/kits/details.php?content=99-general&page=04-educational>)

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, facilitator, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator, digital media communicator, project manager, advocates for cultural competency

Related Call to Action themes and actions: (Non-NPS)

6. On-Site Informal Interpretative Opportunities

Informal "Overlook" Interpretation - Shenandoah National Park

As a result of assigning rangers to be stationed at an overlook in the park to be available for informal interpretation, Chief of Interpretation Matt Graves (matt_graves@NPS.gov) notes that informal contacts skyrocketed from about 8,000 to more than 90,000 in 2012. This endeavor, which is an add-on to regular interpretive programming, is being repeated for the 2013 season.

Drop-in Youth Programs - Zion National Park

In these programs a ranger is stationed at a high use area of the park for a designated amount of time. The ranger is prepared with a nature theme in mind based on the location in question (e.g. effects of water on plant and wildlife) Visitors may stop by at any time and stay for a few minutes or an hour. (<http://www.NPS.gov/zion/parknews/upload/ZionSummerMG2013.pdf>).

29

Informal Interpretation Focus - Hovenweep National Monument

At Hovenweep, nearly all interpretation is informal, a function primarily of low visitation and the direction of the long range interpretive plan that advises against “over-interpreting” the park. Visitors can have as little or as much guidance as they choose. Todd Overbye (todd_overbye@nps.gov) is the Interpretive Lead overseeing this policy.

Capacities demonstrated: Facilitator, reflective practitioner, content/theory specialist, provider of informal interpretation

Related Call to Action themes and actions: #7 Next Generation Stewards, #6 Take a Hike, Call me in the Morning, #12 Follow the Flow

C. Program Purpose: Develop and implement opportunities for internal and external underserved audiences to participate and have a voice in the interpretation and management of natural and cultural heritage.

1. Summer Camp for youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) – Jefferson National Expansion Memorial

Director of Education, Julie Northrip (julie_northrip@nps.gov) and staff developed camp programs to provide safe, comfortable, and fun environment with activities focused on park themes and resources. The youth are given video and still cameras as ways of empowering them and providing an avenue for communication. The cameras will also allow the youth to record and share their park experiences. An America’s Best Idea grant was received for this summer program.

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, partner with local community, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator, project manager, advocate for cultural competency.

Related Call to Action themes and actions: #13 Stop Talking and Listen, #16 Live and Learn, #14 Value Added, #10 Arts Afire, #5 Parks for People

Photo opposite page:
Lakota Youth enjoy the view from atop the Empire State Building. The youth were representing Badlands National Park in New York City cultural exchange. NPS photo.

2. Families Together - Providence Children's Museum

In collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), the Providence Children's Museum offers a program for court-separated families. Families Together provides permanency planning and therapeutic visitation for children in state care and their families. Families play and learn together at the Museum with an emphasis on positive parent-child interaction.

(<http://childrenmuseum.org/familiestogether.asp>)

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, facilitator, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator, project manager, informal interpretation

Related Call to Action themes and actions: (Non-NPS)

3. Cultural Exchange Experience for Youth - Badlands NP

Student from three schools – Wall High School in Wall, SD, Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge, SD, and The Calhoun School in New York City participated in a week of cultural exchange and nature study at Badlands NP with a goal of fostering shared stewardship of public lands. The youth hiked, camped out and participated in interdisciplinary activities led by park scientists, teachers and park rangers. The youth were accompanied by the chairman of the Spiritual Formation Department at Red Cloud Indian School, a water-colorist Artist-in-Residence and a NY poet and photographer. This program is the result of a partnership between the NPS, the participating schools, Friends of the Badlands, Badlands Natural History Association and the NPF.

(<http://www.nps.gov/badl> or on Twitter @BadlandsEdu or @Badlands_Ranger)

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, partner with local community, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator, project manager, advocate for cultural competency.

Related Call to Action themes and actions: #13 Stop Talking and Listen, #16 Live and Learn, #10 Arts Afire, #7 Next Generation Stewards, #36 Value Diversity



30

Under blue skies and before a breathtaking view, 23 individuals from 12 different countries including, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Australia, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Venezuela, Vietnam and Zambia, became naturalized citizens on the south rim of the Grand Canyon. NPS photo.

4. Preparing for the Oath: U.S. History and Civics for Citizenship (website) - National Museum of American History - permanent residents on path to citizenship)

For permanent residents on the path to citizenship the museum collaborated with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to develop “Preparing for the Oath: U.S. History and Civics for Citizenship,” a web-based educational tool to use in preparation for the civics portion of the naturalization test. The interactive online resource offers videos and activities that showcase artifacts from the Smithsonian Institution collections. It includes the 100 possible questions on the naturalization test and provides answers and a mechanism to test oneself.

(<http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/?theme=14&question=77>)

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, facilitator, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator, digital media communicator, project manager

Related Call to Action themes and actions: (Non-NPS)

5. AFFINITY PROGRAM with Program #3 above: NPS Citizenship Ceremonies – Multiple NPS Sites

A program that is officially unaffiliated, but has a clear affinity with Preparing for the Oath, is a result of a partnership between the NPS and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services which encourages both agencies to co-host naturalization ceremonies at Citizenship Ceremonies. The opportunity for new citizens and their families and friends “to learn about and reflect on American identity and the responsibilities of citizenship.” During 2012, nearly 1,000 new immigrants celebrating their citizenship in such places as Jimmy Carter NHS, GA, Yosemite NP, CA, Crater Lake NP, OR, Homestead National Monument of America, NE, and Carl Sandburg Home NHS, NC. These two programs appear to lend themselves to further connections and multiple interpretive opportunities for collaboration.

(<http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/newcitizens.htm>)

Capacities demonstrated: Coalition-builder and collaborator, facilitator, content/theory specialist, reflective practitioner/evaluator, project manager

Related Call to Action themes and actions: #7 Next Generation Stewards, #14 Value Added, #36 Value Diversity



Chart of 21st Century Skills

Partnership for 21st century skills http://idp.eppley.org/getting-started	Institute for Museum and Library Services http://www.ims.gov/assets/1/AssetManager/21stCenturySkills.pdf	Competencies for Chiefs of Interpretation http://idp.eppley.org/competencies/chief	Five Minds for Future (Howard Gardner, 200) http://www.uknow.gse.harvard.edu/teaching/TC106-607.html
<p><i>Core Subjects and 21st Century Themes include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history, government and civics. <p><i>Schools should weave into core subjects 21st c. interdisciplinary themes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global awareness Financial, Economic, Business and Entrepreneurial Literacy Civic Literacy Health Literacy Environmental Literacy <p><i>Learning and Innovation Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creativity and innovation Critical thinking and problem solving Communication and collaboration <p><i>Information, Media and Technology Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Literacy Media Literacy ICT (Information, Communications and Technology) Literacy <p><i>Life and Career Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility and Adaptability Initiative and Self-Direction Social and Cross-Cultural Skills Productivity and Accountability Leadership and Responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical thinking and problem solving Creativity and innovation Communication and collaboration Visual literacy Cross-disciplinary thinking Basic literacy Information, Media and Technology skills Life and career skills Global awareness Financial, economic, business, and entrepreneurial literacy Civic literacy Health literacy Environmental literacy 	<p>Chief of Interpretation professionals in the 21st Century need to be able to demonstrate competency in each of the following areas. The competencies are grouped by Core Qualifications that are used consistently throughout the government.</p> <p>LEADING CHANGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexibility and Resilience* Leading the Change Process Communicating Vision and Change <p>LEADING PEOPLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflict Management* Teambuilding* Developing Others* Leveraging Diversity* <p>BUILDING COALITIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civic Engagement Political Savvy* Assessing the Need, Creating, and Building Coalitions and Partnerships <p>BUSINESS ACUMEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Management* Human Capital Management* Informational Technology Management <p>RESULTS DRIVEN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability* Customer Service* Technical Credibility* Problem Solving* Decisiveness* Entrepreneurship* Facilitate Meaning Making Enriching Lives 	<p>“The disciplinary mind – mastery of major schools of thought (including science mathematics, and history) and of at least one professional craft</p> <p>The synthesizing mind – ability to integrate ideas from different disciplines or spheres into a coherent whole and to communicate that integration to others</p> <p>The creating mind – capacity to uncover and clarify new problems, questions and phenomena</p> <p>The respectful mind – awareness of and appreciation for differences among human beings</p> <p>The ethical mind – fulfillment of one’s responsibilities as a worker as a citizen”</p> <p><i>Bold = defined for NPS Chiefs of Interpretation</i></p>

Approaches and Trends 2013

Desired Approach	Why — What We Gain	Dated Approach
Audience-Centered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-way communication. Shifts from “for audiences” to “with audiences”; flexible. • Programs focus on experiences and engagement. Multiple options to access content. • Audience expertise (learning theory, motivation) is highly valued by organization. • Shift from content-driven to combinations of audience- and content-driven; content is curated and co-created with audiences. Requires being comfortable with letting go. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-way information from institution to audience; static. • Programming focused on interpreter rather than on audience. • Deep subject matter expertise is highly valued by organization. • The organization controls content development.
Collaborate ...Work with and through others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently works across disciplines and organizations. • Leverages fiscal and human resources. Partner niche and networks used to advantage. • Mutually beneficial relationships among partners (with them). Requires shared control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee, division, or park tends to work independently. • Content developed primarily within the division or park. • Partnership tended to be for funding NPS goals.
Make Connections ...between places, stories, organizations, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes topical (“thematic”) connections across organizational and geographic boundaries. • Connects ideas, issues, places, and events to other sites or other geographical regions. • Provides context; explores cause and effects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary focus is limited to the site or the site story, without connections to larger stories, systems, issues, or places. • Acts independently rather than seeks others with expertise.
Free-Choice Learning ...Self-directed and informal learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis is on visitor experiences rather than formal programming. • Learning is flexible, informal, free choice learning and directed by audiences. • Junior Ranger facilitates family interaction and informal learning via site exploration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on formal, static presentations. • Purpose is to enhance audience knowledge. • Primary goal of Junior Ranger is to teach children about a site.
Connect to Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracts local people—especially children and families—as well as destination visitors. • Welcomes and meets people—intellectually and physically—where they are, not where the organization or its employees think they ought to be. • NPS functions within a community as a valued member rather than “reach out” to it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming designed primarily for destination visitors. These visitors tend to share employees’ values. • Seeks to transfer the organization’s values to audiences. • Approach is for NPS to “reach out” to communities.
Media and Technology are Integrated (not add-ons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media and technology are fully integrated into visitor experience and operations. • Online experiences may be the only interactions with a park. • Carefully matches media to message and audience. Does not start with media choice. • Limited time, resources, and more options require strategy, choices, and capacity. • Requires rethinking distribution of resources; has implications for position management. • Requires employees to have new and different skills and tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media and technology are treated as add-ons to existing operations, services and programming. Park experiences mostly limited to the physical site. • Technology is viewed as an end rather than as a means. • Media and technology duties are collateral assignments, only scheduled as time permits.
Data and Analysis Drive Decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions are based on application of data and analysis. Applies relevant, objective outside data (e.g. Pew Trusts demographic research) as well as project-specific data. • Aligns efforts; applies strategic thinking toward goals. New practices are not added on top of what exists; some practices are adapted and others are dropped. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions are based on assumptions or continue “what we’ve always done”. • Decisions are reactive; based on emotion or personalities.

32

Be Part of the Solution—to help move the NPS from where we are to where we need to be.

- **Develop External Awareness**—External awareness is a critical skill. Become aware of the larger forces at work in society and our organization.
- **Shed Old Ways**—We honor the past but are not bound by it. Shed systems and products that no longer work for our audiences or need to be adapted to accomplish the mission today. This may require some grieving for old ways but is part of the process to make the NPS stronger and more relevant.
- **Be Strategic**—Don't try to do everything. Make strategic choices. Work from each organization's niche and employees' strengths. Parks and programs will not be rewarded for doing everything; they will be rewarded for choosing carefully and matching goals with sustainable choices.
- **Experiment**—Take risks. Experiment for short periods of time. Review analysis and data. Base informed decisions about how to move on from there.



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33

ENDNOTES

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Rangers Kate Jensen and Patrick Allison enjoy a day of fun at a Public Lands Day event at Valley Forge National Historical Park. NPS photo.



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35

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⁵²Jon Jarvis quote in: <http://www.NPS.gov/aboutus>

Photo to right: Tracing their roots back to a time when American Indians helped shield runaway slaves, the Mardi Gras Indians are among the most colorful and mysterious of New Orleans' cultural phenomena. Today, major tribes continue to gather together to preserve and enrich their Indian culture. NPS photo.

Photo below: Traditional jazz musicians such as Wendell Brunios (below) reflect the unique fusion of ethnic groups—French, African American, Native American and Spanish— that continue to conserve and nourish the historic contributions of Creoles to our shared history. Photo from Old US Mint, LA.

Photo opposite page: Tourist enjoy a day at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. NPS Photo.





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