TOURISM INTERPRETATION
Manual for Planning and Management

A manual for destination and attraction managers to assist in the development of interpretation

Green Door Solutions
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TOURISM INTERPRETATION:
Manual for Planning and Management

A manual for destination and attraction managers to assist in the development of interpretation.

Financed and written by Green Door Solutions (www.greendoorsolutions.net)

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PREFACE

The *TOURISM INTERPRETATION: Manual for Planning and Management* is intended to provide destination and attraction managers with a guide to the process and the essential role of interpretation in tourism planning and development, as well as highlighting the importance of human and financial resources to ensure quality interpretation. The presents case studies based on the authors' and their teams' development and research work in Southeast Asia, demonstrating the importance of interpretation and storytelling.

Destination and attraction managers include not only those who are responsible for the management and operations of a destination or attraction, but also the owners and those responsible for the stewardship of a destination or attraction. (In this instance, the use of the term 'owners' is intended to encompass government departments, municipal bodies, or non-profit and commercial groups/entities who are responsible for the management of a destination or attraction.)

In order, to provide a focus for the publication, destinations and attractions referred to are primarily historical, natural and intangible in nature, largely within the public and non-profit sectors. This manual takes as a basic premise that interpretation:

- Must be integrated into the management structure of a destination or attraction;
- Is a professional activity requiring careful research, design and implementation; and
- Ensures that the objectives of a destination or attraction are being met in an effective manner.

The manual is not designed as a textbook, but is rather a go-to guide, highlighting salient points of which a destination or attraction manager should be aware.

Originally developed for the Department of Tourism/Ministry of Tourism and Sports in Thailand, the manual recognizes the financial realities that many destinations and attractions face and therefore focuses on cost-effective approaches to interpretation and storytelling.

The authors believe that interpretation can play a much larger role in the overall development of destinations and the visitor experience. In addition, the processes of traditional interpretation development can also be easily adapted to enhance marketing and advertising initiatives.

The manual which is a work in progress will be periodically updated as the authors and other experts continue to enhance and add to the content. Based on the authors' experience an article was published in the *Tourism Development Journal,* Interpretation and Tourism Destination Planning and Management, in June 2017, which can be accessed at www.greendoorsolutions.net/projects-publications.

If you are interested in contributing to any section of the manual, in providing insight through a case study, or simply commenting on the content and objectives of the publication, please write to Michelle Jamieson at mj@greendoorsolutions.net – she would welcome your emails.

Thank you in advance and we look forward to hearing from you.

FOREWORD

The more connected and engaged visitors are with a destination and/or attraction – whether natural, cultural, or man-made – and the more memorable, unique, accessible and authentic their experiences are, the longer they are likely to stay in the destination, and the more likely they are to return. It is widely recognized that tourism can help generate economic benefits for a destination and respective surrounding community, so longer stays and repeat visitation are beneficial. In addition, when these visitors return home, they are more likely to tell friends and family about their experiences, motivating further visitation.

Figure 1 highlights the different types of destinations and attractions that benefit from interpretation. Just as investment is seen as critical from a tourism development perspective, there is also a societal obligation to ensure that both domestic and foreign visitors leave any destination or attraction with a higher level of knowledge and appreciation of the nature of the resource.

Figure 1: Different Types of Destinations and Attractions

In the same way that translators interpret from one language to another, managers of destinations and attractions can interpret their attributes so that they are meaningful across diverse cultures. Interpretation – in other words storytelling, or explaining a destination and/or attraction's story in an engaging, vibrant way – is a vital tool for tourism destination management. It can be used to encourage respect and appropriate behavior from tourists and can also promote feelings of pride and awareness within a community.

Developing a program of interpretation also ensures that destination and/or attractions take control of how their stories are presented to others. Many other stakeholders are involved implicitly or explicitly in building a destination's brand. The challenge for destination managers is to ensure that a consistent message is put forward, telling an authentic and a locally based story. An interpretive program also encourages tourists to

appreciate and value destinations and attractions, which can lead to a successful, healthy and sustainable tourism industry.

An interpretive strategy and program can also help monitor tourist behavior and influence expectations. If, for example, certain attractions or ceremonies are considered to be private or inappropriate for tourists, and site managers decide not to open them to the public, tourists may well resent it. But they are likely to be much more sympathetic to the decision if the reasons for it are clearly explained.

Many tourists – sometimes referred to as 'experiential tourists' or 'creative tourists' – are looking for more than a whirlwind trip to a large city, or a few days on the beach. They want to learn about, and have a real sense of, the places they are visiting, to get to know and understand local communities. They are interested in experiencing other ways of life, and interpretation can help heighten these experiences. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that these tourists do consider themselves to be on vacation, not on a school or study trip. They do not need to become experts. But thoughtful interpretive programs offer the visitor a more meaningful experience than just a sunny beach or a nice view and, in the process, these programs reinforce and celebrate local heritage.

Interpretation planning and development require a multi-stakeholder approach involving a wide range of individuals and organizations. For interpretation to be really successful, destination and attraction managers should be able to balance the need for conservation and preservation with the needs and wishes of visitors. They should consider themselves not only guardians of the destinations and attractions they manage, but also responsible for developing a customer-centric approach to visitor management.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETATION

What is Interpretation?

Defining interpretation is challenging, especially given widely differing perspectives and perceptions. Freeman Tilden, in his ground-breaking *Interpreting Our Heritage*, envisaged it as comprising three key elements, as seen in Figure 2.
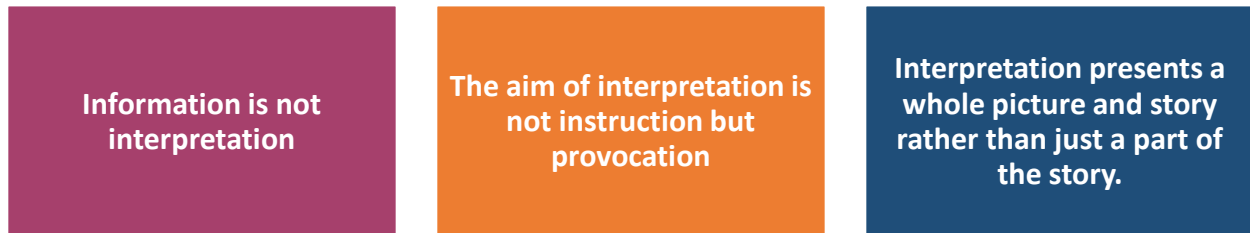
Information is not interpretation	The aim of interpretation is not instruction but provocation	Interpretation presents a whole picture and story rather than just a part of the story.

Figure 2: Freeman Tilden's Three Elements of Interpretation

Given this definition of interpretation, there are two ways to communicate with visitors: in a factual or an interpretive style. The difference lies in *how* information is presented, as opposed to *what* information is presented. An interpretive style reveals a story or a deeper message, whereas a factual style presents mostly facts.

The goal of interpretation should be to change attitudes and behavior, to motivate and inspire, and to make information meaningful and exciting. Ultimately, using interpretation techniques to present information can make visitors more sensitive, more aware, and more understanding of a community's point of view.

The following is an example of the difference between factual and interpretive styles of communication.

A European woman touring a temple complex points at a Bodhi tree and asks her guide "What kind of tree is that?" If the guide opts for a factual style, he/she will answer "A Bodhi tree" and leave it at that.

Opting for an interpretational style, he/she might say: "This is a Bodhi tree. This species of tree is very important to Buddhists because the Buddha sat under a Bodhi tree as he achieved Nirvana, a state of enlightenment that is the ultimate goal of Buddhism, in the same way that heaven is the ultimate goal of Christianity. We believe that every Bodhi tree is holy because it is connected to the original one. People often decorate the tree and offer incense to it as a Christian might light a candle to a statue of a saint."

Which answer would the woman remember? Which one would spark her interest in the destination and attraction she is visiting?

Interpretation is not just a matter of producing a glossy brochure, or developing appropriate signage, or a well-edited video; it is the art of telling the story of a destination and attraction. This 'story' is a collection of selected facts and experiences that can be given emotional and sensory meaning. All five senses can be used to enhance the experience of the visitor environment. As an example, the audience may be directed to feel the cool marble of a temple floor, smell a distillery or market, and hear the cries of street vendors. All too often the focus is solely, or almost exclusively, on sense of sight when presenting a new destination or attraction, even though it is through all the different senses that a visitor is able to fully understand an environment.

Effective interpretation has the power to inspire further exploration. Once a main tourist area has been visited, visitors may be directed on a self-guided tour to explore the destination more fully for themselves.

Understanding the Audience

An important part of interpretation planning and development is ensuring that a visitor's travel experience includes elements that are already familiar to him/her by using familiar comparisons and background information that will help the visitor identify with the message.

It will often be necessary to interpret across cultures and deal with gaps in knowledge, and it is therefore helpful to know something about who the visitors are and where they come from. Each region of the world has a different way of understanding family, religion, food, time, etc. As an example, if most visitors to a community know a great deal about Buddhism, the interpretation for these tourists will be different than it would be for the average international tourist who knows little about the topic.

In some cases, a familiar destination or attraction may need to be reinterpreted to interest the local population. Schoolchildren touring a temple complex, for example, may be inspired and interested by stories about the lives of novice monks throughout the ages. A site can be endlessly reinterpreted because there are many stories and perspectives from which to view it. However, each story should be consistent with the unique sense of place the destination, attraction and community want to convey.

In general, visitor profiles are changing and so the type of interpretation adopted also needs to adapt to the changing visitor. In some cases, visitors depend entirely on technology to access information, which inevitably influences how they are able to interact with a site. Visitor profiles need to be carefully researched and understood as interpretation plans are developed and redeveloped.

Resources Inventory

The first step a site manager should take is to research and make an inventory of the resources and attributes of the destination and/or attraction, working with subject specialists and visitor management experts. These resources may include historic

buildings or everyday elements such as food preparation, a system of community land ownership, religious practices, festivals and customs, or natural ecosystems. The objective is to determine what stories to tell. If this inventory is omitted, there is a danger that the interpretation will focus solely on the most obvious features, not recognizing the special, yet more subtle, qualities that give a community its distinctive sense of place. A methodical search of a destination/attraction's physical and cultural features should be made, and areas/activities not appropriate for tourists should be noted.

Subjects of Interpretation

Good interpretation can make even everyday resources interesting by turning daily realities into interesting activities. In Thailand, an interpretive project run by the Thai Volunteer Service developed experiences that highlight daily life in several villages. Travelers have the opportunity of participating in activities such as grinding corn, working the fields, picking fruit, catching crabs, or learning cooking techniques. In the villages participating in this project, there are no temples or archaeological sites to draw travelers, but the project has worked to develop other resources from the village – the experiences of daily life. Travelers feel and experience very strong emotions when immersed in the daily life of a local village – emotions that are quite different to anything they might feel visiting a poorly interpreted temple.

If a region or community does not have a major destination and attraction, other elements of the region or community can be discovered through imagination and brainstorming with various stakeholders. It may be surprising to many residents, and even politicians and administrators, to hear that visitors from other countries are interested in the daily life of the communities they visit, but it is often true. Cooking and building methods, for example, may be very different from those in the visitor's home country. Presenting these aspects of heritage through interpretation creates a richer picture of the community. What residents may consider boring everyday life may be fascinating to tourists, and unlike anything they have seen before.

Who Decides What to Interpret?

Everyone will have a different opinion about which heritage sites, living heritage resources, natural environments and artifacts are important, and how they should be interpreted. Experts in the fields of architecture, history, nature, ecosystems, music, etc. will have diverse but interesting perspectives. It is important to note that there may also be conflicting ideas and opinions within the region or community itself. A minority group, for example, may feel its contribution to the history and heritage of a region or community is undervalued. By working with experts and stakeholders who hold diverse views, however, all stakeholders can be represented, and a holistic vision of the destination and attraction can be presented to visitors as well as to the local public.

Who Are the Visitors?

In order, to interpret a destination and/or attraction in a way in which visitors can relate, it is important to keep track of who those visitors are. In fact, depending on how the interpretive program is planned, a destination/attraction is able to control the types of tourists it attracts. The more information that can be gathered about visitors –e.g. where they come from and the motives and expectations of their visit – the easier it will be for planners to create programs and services that relate to visitors' real needs and experiences.

Knowing the type of visitor a site/destination will likely attract also helps to determine what type of interpretive presentations should be used. If a significant share of a destination and/or attraction's visitors are older tourists on a bus tour, a long, self-guided walking trail would not be the most effective style of presentation. However, if most visitors are young, healthy backpackers, this type of trail is ideal.

In many situations, statistics on tourism are not often available, so alternative means of information gathering may need to be developed. It is possible to evaluate the success of an interpretive program by asking local tour guides to survey tourists about what they learned and felt after their visit. And hotel owners can also get feedback from guests. If most tourists are on day visits, talking to bus or ferry-boat operators can help gather enough information to understand who is coming to the region or community and what kind of experiences they are having. Not only does this information help with planning interpretation projects, but it can also contribute to the design of strategies to increase or change the type of tourists that come to a destination.

Who Decides the Theme?

In some situations, it is not the managers, but rather the owners' and managers' objectives, that will determine what stories to tell. There are often outside pressures to develop a theme that may not seem appropriate to the local population. National governments and commercial groups, such as tour companies, may want to choose a highly symbolic or political theme at the expense of popular forms of cultural expression of locally defined importance.

The UNESCO World Heritage Site Luang Prabang in Lao PDR, for example, may represent the old Lanna Kingdom to Thai visitors, or the colonial era to French visitors, but may also holds deep religious significance for Laotians. The combination of these attributes contributes to Luang Prabang's sense of place, and interpretation may focus on the connections between these three different perspectives. Ultimately, however, site managers working with the local community should decide what to present as the most significant attributes or part of the destination's story.

Ideally, to ensure representation, all stakeholders should be consulted and be able to participate in the interpretive planning process. The dangers of not taking control of the development of a community's theme are discussed in the following section.

PART 2: PLANNING FOR INTERPRETATION

Developing and ultimately implementing an interpretive plan requires a great deal of co-ordination and organization. It may not be possible to do everything at once and a good plan should allow for gradual development. There are two ways to plan for interpretation. The most common is 'defensive' planning: problems have already occurred, and planning is an attempt to fix them. However, it is generally better to plan ahead and anticipate things that might go wrong after the plan has been implemented – changes in the types of visitors, or in funding and budget, for example. This 'offensive' planning allows for expansion or modification of existing interpretive services.

When developing a plan for interpretation of the attraction, tourists' needs for rest areas, shade, toilets and safety, as well as their interpretive requirements (how to interest and engage them in what they are seeing), must be considered.

Organization

An important aspect of interpretive planning is to co-ordinate with private companies and government agencies that have a stake in developing an interpretation plan. Local government may be the deciding factor in what a community can or cannot achieve, and local personnel are cultural brokers who need to be trained to understand the significance and benefits of tourism. Stakeholders, as discussed earlier, can also be national governments, cultural and natural environment agencies, economic development experts, etc. All stakeholders should be included when developing an interpretation plan so that, regardless of which agency is developing the interpretive plan, it truly represents the community.

A community or region needs a varied and rich mix of attractions and site managers must recognize their responsibility and contribute to that mix. If attractions and the communities in which they are located can co-operate instead of competing with other local attractions and communities, by offering slightly different experiences, each can identify a theme and establish a niche market. It is essential that travel agents, tour operators and guides become sensitive to these concerns because they have a major influence on the economic and social relationship that develops between the tourists and hosts, as well as on the behavior of the visitors. Mechanisms must be developed to ensure that the tourism industry is involved at all levels of site preservation.

It is also important to consider who will be involved in the planning process. There is great value in tapping into the imagination and creativity of others. Consideration must be given to the possibility of having the following people on a team:
- Project or team leader: This person is responsible for making the plan happen. He or she would develop the outline of the plan's content and project timeline and be the interpretive expert for the project. The leader is the ultimate writer or editor for the final planning document.

- Staff: Support staff can be brought in whenever needed. Staff should review draft materials to ensure the content is correct and that interpretive services will not damage a site (such as at delicate or ecologically sensitive sites).
- Experts and specialists: The input from specialists like biologists, archaeologists, historians, conservationists and designers will provide the essential fact-based materials needed to develop the theme and objectives for interpretation.
- Local experts: local experts are generally familiar with community folklore and stories should be included in decision-making and implementation.

At the beginning of the planning process, the project leader should explain exactly what each person's role will be in the planning process and lay out a timeline.

The Planning Process

A typical interpretive planning process includes a number of steps, as can be seen in Figure 3. It must be recognized that if innovation and creativity are to guide the interpretive planning and development process, there need to be opportunities for testing and prototyping.
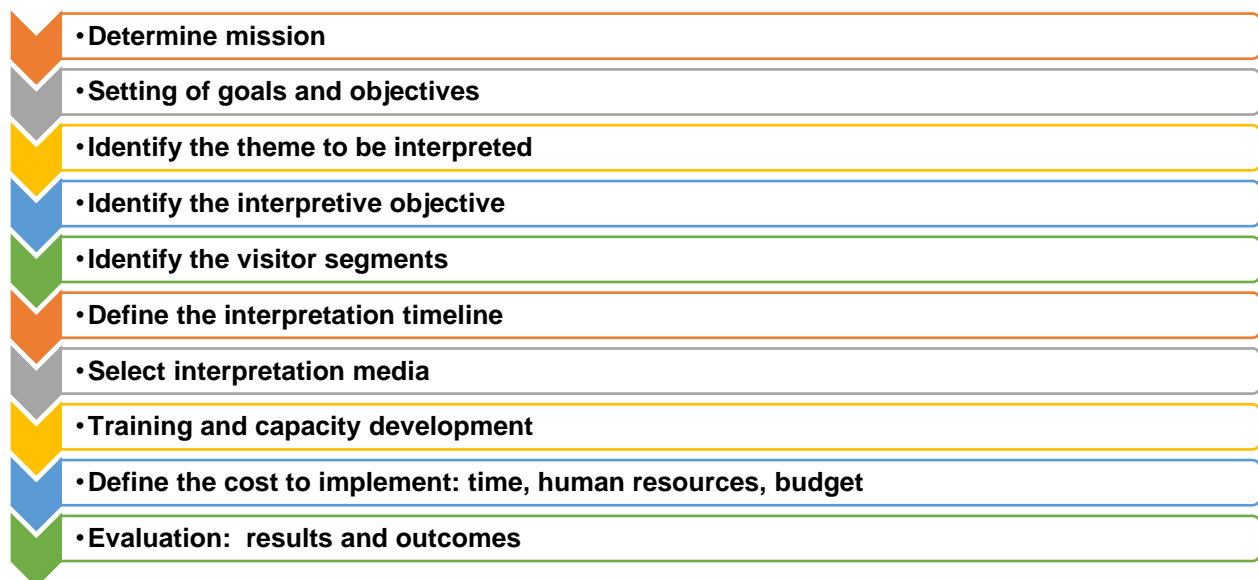
- **Determine mission**
- **Setting of goals and objectives**
- **Identify the theme to be interpreted**
- **Identify the interpretive objective**
- **Identify the visitor segments**
- **Define the interpretation timeline**
- **Select interpretation media**
- **Training and capacity development**
- **Define the cost to implement: time, human resources, budget**
- **Evaluation: results and outcomes**

Figure 3: Typical Interpretive Planning Process

Developing the Mission Statement

A mission statement summarizes the overall goals of a project and should direct all the interpretive services and programs. It is meant to be a general statement and sets out (i) who is organizing the project (ii) what the project aims to accomplish and (iii) why the project is important. It should reflect the individuality of the attraction and the goals of the specific interpretive program. Typical elements of a mission statement can include the objectives identified in Figure 4.
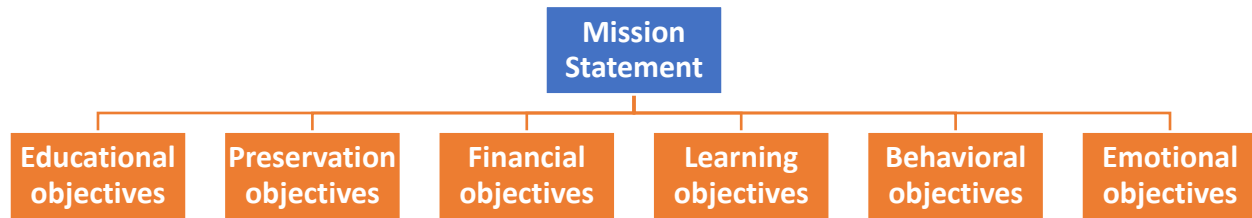
Figure 4: Mission Statement Objectives

It is useful to look at the mission statement of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Hue, Vietnam, project for 'Preservation and Presentation of Hue Monuments Complex from 1996-2010', which states:

"The planning project aims to present all precious values of Hue's cultural heritage, which includes those of the tangible and intangible cultural heritages, the cultural urban heritage and the natural landscape and townscape in educating people for the maintenance of tradition, national cultural identity and in improving their cultural enjoyment."

Setting Goals and Specific Objectives

There may be a variety of goals to be achieved as a result of an interpretive program. The goal may be, for example, to raise funds in order to build a visitor centre, to educate local schoolchildren, to increase visitors' length of stay, or all three! These objectives are an important feature in interpretive planning. All objectives should be consistent with the mission goals and not undermine the principles and philosophy of the project. It may be necessary to adjust the goals to fit the mission statement. Mass international tourism, for example, may not fit into a village that aims to produce a unique and authentic experience of daily village life.

The objectives of the 'Project for Preservation and Development of the Value of Heritage in the Hue Old Capital City from 1996-2001' are:

"To preserve the cultural heritage in Hue old capital city; to bring into play all precious values of this heritage including the material cultural vestiges, the intellectual cultural heritages, the cultural value of the environment, landscape of the city and Nature, in educational works to preserve the traditional national cultural identity, and to increase the standard of cultural enjoyment of the population…"

Specific objectives need to answer a range of questions.

- Financial: How is the interpretive program to be funded? Will it be self-supporting? Who will benefit financially? For example: To secure capital through public-private sponsors to build a heritage trail, signs and accompanying brochures.

- Preservation objectives: How can interpretation enhance heritage preservation (in terms of public support and funding)?

- Learning objectives: What information should visitors be given? What specific information will the visitors learn through interpretation? These are important in stimulating the behavioral objectives. They help the visitor feel anger, surprise, pride or other emotions related to the site.

- Behavioral objectives: How should/will visitors behave?

Identifying the Themes and Stories to be Interpreted

Developing themes and stories is clearly the task of specialists, whether interpretive designers or content specialists such as historians, naturalists or ethnologists. The first step is to determine the significance of the attraction or site. Sometimes this is carried out at an international and national level.

However, many sites are not designated and this is where the importance of heritage and natural specialists is determined. The themes and stories must initially flow from the statement of significance assigned to the attraction or site.

John Veverka defines a theme as "the central or key idea of any presentation. When communicating with your visitors, the audience should be able to summarize the main point of the program in one sentence. Development of a theme provides organizational structure and clarity of purpose of the program. Once the main interpretive or story line message theme has been decided, everything you do in presenting the program or service to the audience falls into place. The main strategy then of the interpretive program is to illustrate the theme statement."

Characteristics common to all primary themes and subthemes include:
- Each is based on the significances of resources.
- Each is the essence of a story used to help visitors explore the multiple significances of resources.
- Each connects resources to larger ideas, meanings, beliefs and values.
- Each is best stated as a single sentence that includes tangible and intangible elements. Single-sentence structure forces theme writers to focus their ideas. An interpretive theme is never stated as a topic. While topics can be useful in organizing a body of work, topics alone do not provide sufficient interpretive focus. Since topics are written in one or several words – such as geology, Southwest history, wildlife architecture, etc. – their meanings are too ambiguous to be useful as themes. Structuring themes as complete sentences ensures a more coherent development of related ideas.
- Each incorporates universal concepts: big ideas that mean something to everyone, although not necessarily the same thing to everyone. The use of universal concepts enables a wide and diverse range of people to find personal paths of connection to the stories of the place and its resources.
- Each provides opportunities for people to explore the meanings of the place and its resources, without *telling* people what resources *should* mean to them.

A chronological theme could focus on a group of historical features or include a story about how historical figures responded to an event in a particular setting. The display and interpretation should unfold in a sequence of episodes, so that each episode communicates a complete notion on its own or can be linked to other events, past and present, to form the whole story.

Storytelling

Storytelling is one of the oldest forms of communication and has long been an honored tradition for humans. People have told stories to convey and share ideas, beliefs, values and traditions and to remember the past, or to pass on the past, which has influenced how people live today. It continues to be an effective communication tool, especially as it relates to explaining the significance, history and the culture of a site or area. Stories use creative approaches to interpretation. Stories can inspire people to further explore a specific topic, theme, cultural or historical event. Storytelling also plays an important role in connecting people with the past.

Storytelling does not only need to be words. A story can be created through the use of pictures, objects, video, or even hieroglyphs. The important part of delivering content through storytelling is to deliver facts or the history of an object or place, but to be effective in delivering this information, the story needs to connect the audience with the subject/object.

There are nevertheless straightforward ways of telling a story. History happened from many different perspectives and, to highlight this, it is important that stories are told from those different perspectives. As an example, a story of a mining village would generally focus on the miners. However, in that village there are families and other supports that helped to maintain the village. The perspective of the wives may provide a more revealing story of the environment and key issues than if the story were told from the perspective of the miner, the husband.

Creating Storylines

The secret to successful interpretation is to capture the essence of something – the site, history, event, culture, resource. And if there are three or four interesting aspects, it is important to try to link them together in a way that is memorable for the visitor. To focus efforts and avoid visitor overload, it is useful to organize the thoughts into a few 'storylines'. These constitute the main messages to deliver to visitors and the ones that they will hopefully carry away with them at the end of their visit.

Storylines are crucial to interpretation because they give visitors clear threads to follow, rather than a series of disconnected facts. For instance, a storyline could help a tour guide structure a tour, and choose where to stop along the way. Without a storyline, a tour can become a collection of random stops with no link. No matter what type of resource is being interpreted, an interesting story can be developed that will capture visitors' attention.

Some key aspects that make a good storyline are:
- Something significant about the resource needs to be communicated.
- This should be in the form of a complete sentence focusing on a single message that is important for visitors to remember.
- The story should go beyond a mere description of facts.
- It should be presented at a level of detail that is appropriate for the audience – something that is interesting, but not too specialized.
- Tangible things need to be linked to intangible ideas (for example, by explaining how different aspects of the resource reflect ideas, meanings, beliefs and values). Visitors must be allowed to decide for themselves what the resource means.
- Visitors must be given an opportunity to discover a few things on their own.

Identifying the Different Visitor Segments

There can never be just one story presented to all visitors; a series of stories needs to be developed. A wide range of factors will clearly affect the interest and ability of a visitor to absorb the content of a discussion of a site or intangible heritage. The site manager working with specialists is responsible for ensuring that an interpretive approach is used to ensure that the appropriate messages are communicated to different visitors. Basing interpretation on visitors' country of origin is not a useful or dependable way of understanding what visitor are looking for, and how they can leave and attraction or site with a higher awareness of the significance of the site and the role that it plays within the larger environment. The motivations of visitors vary significantly, often based on their interests, knowledge of the history of the site, their wider awareness of the significance of a resource, etc. It must be remembered that the analysis of visitor segments should not only be for visitors actually visiting the site, but also for the visitors management hopes to attract.

A useful way to segment visitors is by:
- Age group (young, teens, adults, seniors);
- Culture, ethnicity, race and religion;
- Distance from the attraction (local residents, day-trippers or vacationers from some distance away);
- Reason for traveling: business, shopping, family gathering, attending a special event;
- Level of interest and expertise: novices who know nothing about the subject matter, amateurs who know a little bit about it, and experts who already know a lot about the stories surrounding the attraction.

Defining the Interpretation Timeline

Very often the decision is made to tell the story of an attraction or site from its earliest beginnings. For some attractions and sites this may be appropriate but there needs to

be an understanding that, depending on the audience, more recent stories and themes may be of greater interest for certain segments. Once a timeline for interpretation is selected there needs to be a rigorous adherence to this period of time in terms of storytelling and the actual techniques used.

Selection of Interpretation Media

As will be discussed later in this manual, there is an increasing range of tools for telling a story. From a practical perspective, decisions are sometimes based on the level of financial and human resources. Clearly, sites with modest budgets and capacity will have to adopt low-tech approaches. Attractions and sites with appropriate budgets are able to choose from a wider set of media approaches that will be discussed later in this manual.

Training and Capacity Development

Interpretation is both a science and an art. Defining significant themes and stories is often the domain of specialists assisted by the managers of the site or attraction. Operationally, staff must be made aware of the significance and history of the site and its place within the regional environment, and they must be able to tell a deeper story than simply facts. Depending on the interpretation sophistication of the attraction or site, staff must be trained in interpretive guiding techniques. Volunteers must also be trained and should in fact be seen as employees from the dimension of interpretation.

Visitor Management

Every site has a carrying capacity that is both vital to protecting the environmental areas and to creating an enjoyable environment for visitors to experience the site. Both factors play a major role in the longevity and success of a site. The environmental issues clearly determine in large part where visitors can go and how many visitors the site can handle. Once a site is damaged due to a lack of visitor management, the site may never recover, especially if it is a heritage site that requires special attention in terms of preservation and maintenance. Determining the carrying capacity of the site is therefore vital to ensuring the protection of the site for all stakeholders – the local community, employees, investors, visitors, etc.

Defining the Implementation Cost: Time, Human Resources, Budget

Defining the capital costs of developing an interpretation strategy is straightforward. The more difficult budgeting task is to develop medium-term operational budgets that take into account both the salaries and benefits for training along with the need to carry out maintenance and updating of various media.

This manual recognizes that financial and human resource constraints are real and are an issue almost everywhere. Creativity and innovation become an important part of finding the necessary resources to carry out the interpretive mandate of a site or attraction. Volunteers are an obvious source, whether they are professionals or local people from within the community willing to donate their time and expertise to universities and colleges who are often looking for opportunities to involve their students in meaningful exercises. Historical and natural environment societies are reliable sources of information. Partnerships with the private sector are important. It must be remembered that the tourism industry depends on the quality of attractions at sites and the experiences they provide, and should be relied on to help support various interpretive initiatives. Suppliers such as IT companies are a natural source of support for helping to develop software and providing hardware. Often this will form part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Being able to depend on their support provides invaluable short- and medium-term benefits.
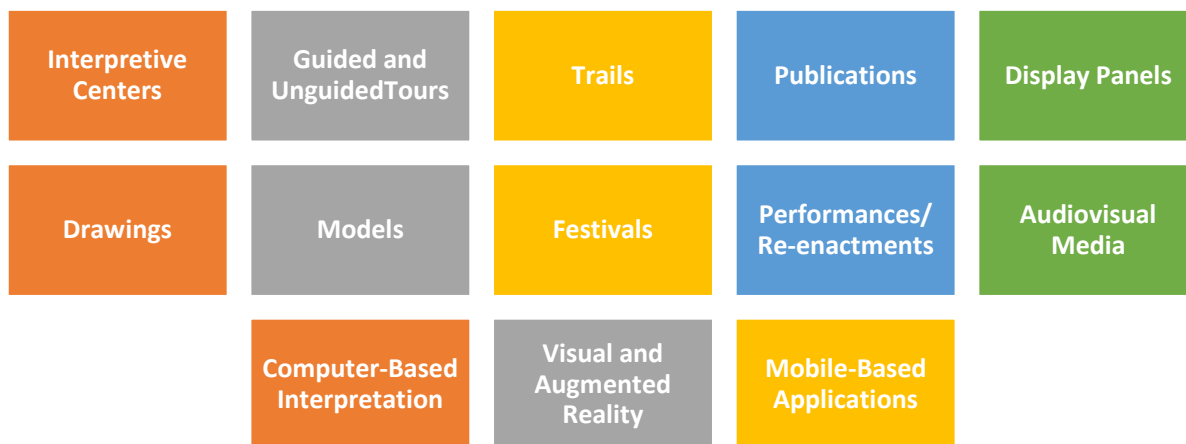
Evaluation: Results and Outcomes

There is little use in implementing an interpretive program if it is not monitored regularly. It is important to re-evaluate objectives regularly, at least on a yearly basis. It is important to find out which elements of the program visitors enjoy and why, and which do not achieve the interpretive goals set for them. Were the visiting times inconvenient? Was the trail too long? Was it too hot in the visitors' centre to concentrate on the video? It may be necessary to modify the program accordingly. The interpretation style may need to be adjusted to achieve the project's goals and objectives (and it is also important to make sure the objectives are reasonable). Again, if dependable statistics are not available, the informal techniques mentioned in the previous section (e.g. checking with hotel registers, tour operators, etc.) should provide some basic information.

PART 3: INTERPRETATION POSSIBILITIES

As discussed earlier in this manual, there are a number of factors that must be considered in choosing an interpretation approach. In some cases, human and financial resources will dictate the approach to be used but, in other cases, a process of decision-making must be undertaken to determine the most effective way of telling the story(ies). While individual approaches will be presented in this part of the manual, it must be remembered that more than one mode of presentation can be used. For example, a brochure could contain a map accompanied by a walking trail. A computer program could refer to a walking trail, and brochures could be distributed at a performance, or they could be displayed outside the performance space. Case study examples are introduced throughout the text. Unless otherwise identified, the images are those of the team.

The manual examines a wide range of interpretive techniques, as illustrated in the Figure 5.

Interpretive Centers	Guided and UnguidedTours	Trails	Publications	Display Panels
Drawings	Models	Festivals	Performances/ Re-enactments	Audiovisual Media
	Computer-Based Interpretation	Visual and Augmented Reality	Mobile-Based Applications	

Figure 5: Interpretive Techniques and Approaches

Once budget considerations have been considered, deciding on the appropriate approach will be determined by the audience mix and their expectations. The possibilities presented in the manual are both traditional and more innovative in their approach for presenting interpreting and attraction oversight.

Figure 6 presents a decision-making approach that can be used in determining what techniques to use. As is illustrated in Figure 6, the first decision to be made is whether there will be an interpretive center for the site or attraction. This is a significant decision since the existence of an interpretive center will provide the visitor with a comprehensive view of the site and of its objectives in a consistent manner and in a more comfortable environment. Attractions and sites without a visitor center must rely more heavily on a range of interpretive techniques to present the story.

Museums are a major tourism attraction in many communities. The mandates of museums are complex and recognize that there is an ongoing tension in the design and operation of a museum since it carries with it a number of objectives in part wo preserve and restore the tangible heritage of a society as well as provide education to both local

people as well as visitors. The philosophy of the preservation and restoration of artifacts has a number of different approaches that need to be considered. Tourism officials and directors of museums must carefully consider a wide range of issues in the interpretation philosophy employed in a museum.
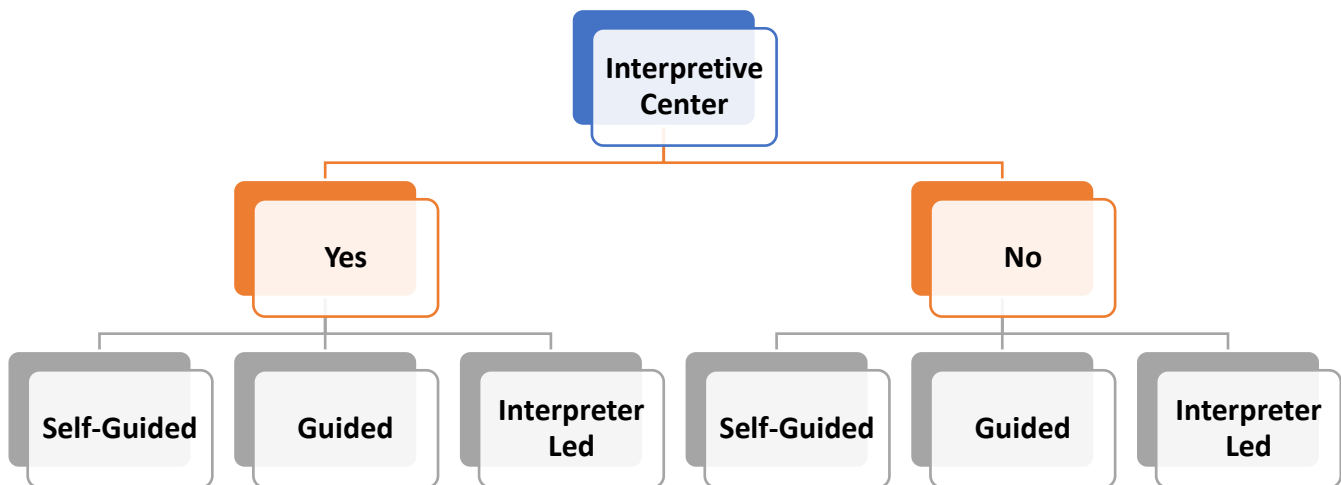

Figure 6: Overview of a Decision-Making Approach to Determining Media

Factors to Consider in Making a Choice about Media

There are several factors that need to be considered in making the decision about which interpretation media best fits the need of the specific resource. It is important to discuss these factors before exploring the different interpretation medias to develop a well-rounded understanding of the potential of each media. Every site has unique set of characteristics that need to be considered, and this uniqueness does not allow for a 'one size fits all' package on which in selecting the appropriate interpretation media.

Moving forwards, the following factors need to be considered as they will influence the decisions as to the most suitable media to be used for interpretation of the particular site:
- Audience characteristics along their interests;
- Theme development as it relates to what is specific to the site, what is specific to the period being interpreted, and how to link to the larger environment;
- The site's environment – destination terrain and size;
- Advantages and disadvantages of each of the interpretative media;
- Budget;
- The level of visitor services and infrastructure to accommodate visitors;
- The human resources and expertise available to deliver the interpretation media.

Whether a strategy can assist in the dispersion of visitors to avoid overcrowding in certain areas. This is part of effective visitor management. If there are interpretation options that allow visitors to start in different areas, it can help eliminate issues with too many visitors at a certain point at the site. This will of course depend on the site and its possible configuration.

Short-Term Interpretive Techniques and Approaches

In planning for budgets and interpretive activities, the following techniques and approaches are categorized as short-term in terms of their potential for quick implementation along with reasonable budget requirements. Many sites and/or attractions already have a variety of these techniques incorporated into their short- and even long-term budgets. The costs associated with these techniques vary depending on the size and implementation process for each site and/or attraction.

3.1 Interpretive Centers

A good interpretive center can offer valuable services to both a community and its visitors. It can introduce the content of a museum or destination/site, entertainment, and the services of a tourism information center. There is no doubt that visitors want to learn about the stories of an attraction or community and a visitor or interpretive center can be an effective way to present this information. An interpretive center need not be expensive. Depending on the resources of the attraction or site, it can be anything from an open-air shelter with a few wall-mounted display panels and maps, to a multi-level air-conditioned building.

There are a number of reasons to consider the development of an interpretive center – to:
- Tell the story of the attraction or site;
- Illustrate a story that cannot be told in depth onsite;
- Bring artifacts and stories to where the people are;
- Display and protect valuable artifacts;
- Allow visitors to discover the story at their own pace;
- Encourage visitors to further explore the attraction or site;
- Meet the information needs of tourists;
- Serve as a 'home base' for tourists.

There are as many ways of illustrating themes as there are different interpretive centers. An interpretive center takes the themes and objectives and concentrates them in one place. An interpretive center can be combined with a museum or information center, and can also serve as a place to distribute maps, guides and brochures about local accommodation and restaurants. It can house commercial ventures, retail space for tour operators, or a café. It can serve as the starting point for a heritage trail. When planning a center, objectives will need to be determined, just as they were for the attraction's interpretive plan.

Converting an existing heritage building into an interpretive center creates a comfortable and local ambience. Often an old building such as town hall, post office or railway building can be converted into a museum or interpretive center. The cost of purchasing a building may be avoided if the property is not currently a viable commercial building and the owner

agrees to a long-term lease at a low rent, or to sell it for a modest price. Local governments often own some of these properties. If the building is declared a historic site, some funding may be available from national governments. Division of the display space using existing rooms instead of one large area presents a story in itself and will maintain the spatial integrity of the building. As well as providing offices for the center's management, space should also be provided for toilets, storage, workshop, a staff room, meeting rooms and retail space. A new building can be designed for better security, proper lighting, and to satisfy the standards of museum display. It should, however, incorporate or refer to local building styles in its design to reflect the character of the established buildings. This is the most expensive option and is dependent on a consistent and substantial source of funds for construction, maintenance and operation.

If managers take some time to find out who the visitors will be, the center's displays and programs can be related to their background and experience. It will also be possible to determine if different presentation levels, such as a different language or interpretation for children, will need to be developed to target main visitor groups.

Funding and Organization of Interpretive Centers

Many attractions may realize that they do not have the money to develop any sort of interpretive center. However, by looking beyond municipal and other public coffers, a broad array of funding sources may be found. One of the most lucrative partnerships can be made between the public and private sectors. There are two major components in the financing of an interpretive facility: capital and daily operating costs (including the costs associated with updating exhibits).

Capital

When raising capital, it is interesting to look at the list of benefactors that is usually displayed in an entrance to a large museum. This lists the names of private and corporate donors as well as government agencies. Donating to a 'good cause' such as an interpretive center provides a public relations opportunity for large companies that are seeking to develop a positive public reputation. Individual donors may receive tax benefits for giving money to establish a new public institution. Foreign funders who are involved in partnerships with your country may also be sources of capital. Funding may be available from a town or provincial government if it is interested in (and able to) contribute to a valuable cultural and tourism resource.

Day-to-day Costs/Revenue

By sharing interpretive center space with private enterprises, the center can continue to generate funds. There are different ways to accomplish this, such as sponsorships and advertising, for example with sporting events. Particular attention must be paid to displaying sponsors in a responsible manner consistent with the attraction. Shops, restaurants and tour companies can be housed in the same building as the center. The non-profit cultural attraction is a key and inseparable component. The interpretive aspects become the honest, non-commercial thematic draw and the businesses pay the overhead. Operations can be paid for out of earned income – primarily rents charged to tourism booking offices, small craft retail shops, or maybe a weekly/monthly market day

– and other tourism-related services and government departments. It may also be possible to charge an admission fee to visit the interpretive component, but this depends on scale and quality: there must be sufficient perceived value to encourage visitors to part with more than a symbolic fee.

Other potential sources of funding include local industry, community initiatives such as market fundraisers, or special events and local tourism taxes. A retail space may be operated by the interpretive center itself. The sale of promotional material can supplement an entrance fee. The curiosity of the visitor, which has been aroused by a visit to the area, can be satisfied by providing more information on related themes. In a smaller center, care must be taken not to compete with existing booksellers and retailers, especially if they are housed within the same building or complex as the interpretive center.

If such an arrangement is carefully established, and assuming there are enough tourists/local visitors to populate the center, it should be possible to break even on operations. It can be a beneficial situation for both the local businesses who receive more bookings, small craftspeople and vendors who increase sales, and the visitors who are provided with a place in which to learn about the region. But maintenance and day-to-day costs need to be considered. Before installing air conditioning in a building, for example, it is important to calculate the expense of running it daily. There are concerns about maintenance, gardens, replacing old displays and damaged or faded panels. Staffing costs will also vary widely depending on whether volunteers are available to serve as staff.

Displays and Exhibits in an Interpretive Center

Many different forms of presentation are available for use in displays such as three-dimensional artifacts, panels, maps, photos, re-creations of interiors and exteriors, computers and audio-visual displays. One should bear in mind that hundreds of books have been written about interpretive center exhibit design. These books and, ideally, professionals in the field should be consulted. Interpretation at the center should be straightforward and should avoid overloading the visitors with too much information before they have had a chance to look around a community. A display is interpretive if it makes the topic come to life though visitor involvement and relevance to the everyday life of the viewer. It should provoke interest or curiosity, relate to the visitor's everyday life and reveal the story through a unique viewpoint. It should also reflect the attraction's themes and objectives and lead the visitors to further exploration.

Exhibit design can start with a workshop with a range of stakeholders can contribute to exhibit display to determine what the subject areas of the interpretive center should be. Issues include what will be the main theme and subthemes? All exhibits should support these themes. The visitor should also be considered as you plan your exhibits. Why would a visitor want to know this? How should the visitor use the information being shared or interpreted? This is also relevant when planning the life span of the displays. If they are expected to attract many locals, displays will need to be rotated more often than if the tourists are annual visitors.

The following principles may need to be considered when deciding how and what to present in the exhibits:

- Visitors bring their pasts to the present.
- First impressions are especially important.
- Different people have different perceptions of the same thing.
- Simplicity and organization clarify messages.
- A picture can be worth a thousand words.
- Many people learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process.

Interactive Exhibits

Interactive displays are also very good at engaging visitors – children and adults alike. Giving visitors an opportunity to try their hand at a traditional instrument, board game, cooking or artistic technique, often leaves them with a strong impression. Reproductions of old artifacts or contemporary artifacts can be used, depending on the type of artifact and its usage. This type of display can be part of a guided tour of the interpretive center or can exist in an adjoining space. School programs can be developed based on supervised interaction with artifacts, or may include instructors who interpret dance and music with the children.

Case Example: Port Arthur, Australia

http://portarthur.org.au/

On purchasing an entrance ticket at this former convict settlement, each visitor is assigned a 'convict identity' in the form of a playing card. He or she then follows this character through a life as a convict, beginning with a courtroom sentencing scene. The following exhibits are made up of sounds and artifacts (or reproductions) displayed in diorama form. Each exhibit is accompanied by interpretive texts, one of which will apply specifically to the visitor's identity. In this interactive exhibit, artifacts and reproductions become relevant in terms of the visitors' characters as they get caught up in the life of their temporary identities.

The Use of Artifacts in an Interpretive Center

Designers may have to resist the temptation to automatically display local artifacts which have been donated. The artifacts may have some historic value but can confuse the presentation unless they are pertinent to the theme. On the other hand, artifacts do not have to be ancient. Interesting displays can be created, for example, with everyday cooking instruments. Tourists rarely have an opportunity to see into local kitchens and interpretation of these items can be used to discuss topics such as women's roles, religious festivals and ceremonial foods.

Artifacts can be displayed in glass cases or in recreated rooms or shops. The Museum of Macao even features a cross-section of a trading ship full of spices. Artifacts placed in their context have more relevance to the visitors than if they are displayed as individual pieces in distinct cases, as they would be in an art gallery. In an interpretive exhibit, the artifact may be very interesting, but its presence may serve a larger purpose – to encourage a deeper understanding of the community's heritage. Individual cases can be

used to highlight a particularly impressive piece of workmanship or a very valuable artifact. Architectural artifacts can be interpreted by using scale models alongside pieces of old buildings, so that visitors get the effect of the original scale.

Case Example: US National Park Site in Lowell, Massachusetts, USA

https://www.nps.gov/lowe/

This is an urban interpretive center designed to introduce the community of Lowell to the visitor. The interpretive center serves as a springboard to exploring this fascinating industrial archaeological site. It is located in a building which is the center of the story and utilizes a low-tech approach to telling its story using static displays and artifacts.

Entry

Display panels

Information drawers

Case Example: Museum of Macao, Macao, China

http://www.macaumuseum.gov.mo/

The Museum of Macao incorporates the past and present throughout the building. The entrance foyer displays an excavated wall, which makes up part of the 20th century structure. Outdoor escalators take advantage of Macao's pleasant climate. Inside, the facades of old buildings, both in Western and Chinese style, are reconstructed on an almost full-size scale. The museum is also built so that, on leaving, visitors can see a view of modern Macao and place the museum within its broader context. It uses a wide range of interpretive techniques and a well-designed and presented building.

ExteriorinteriorModelArtifact

Interior

Model

Artifact

Case Example: Vat Phou World Heritage Site, Lao PDR

http://www.visit-laos.com/champasak/wat-phu.htm

As part of the planning for this World Heritage Site a small interpretive center and trail were developed. This is an example of low-cost interpretation combining an interpretive center and a trail.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Interpretative Centers
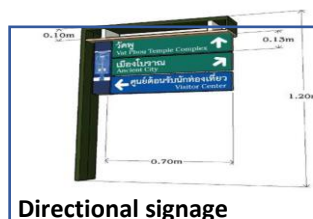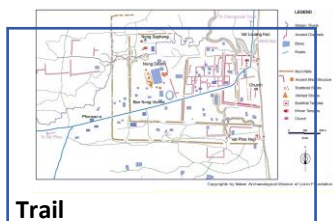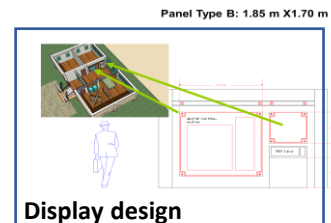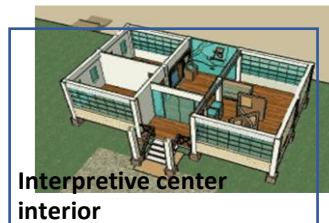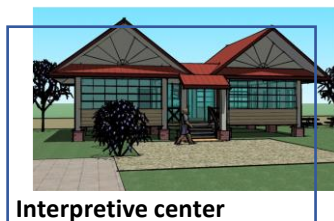
ADVANTAGES

Interpretive centers can:

- Display artifacts and other three-dimensional materials;
- Be multi-sensory;
- Be interactive;
- Incorporate a range of materials (which include all the techniques and approach mentioned in this manual);
- Ensure an all-weather facility;
- Provide a good introduction to the site and the issues involved;
- Include retail and catering elements that generate income and create jobs.

DISADVANTAGES

Interpretive centers may:

- Require major investment and planning;
- Require staffing for security and must be opened and closed every day;
- Have exhibits that require careful and continuous maintenance;

Interpretive center

Interpretive center interior

Display design

Trail

Model

Information signage

Directional signage

- Not appeal to repeat visitors on a second or later visits;
- Require resources for regular maintenance, updating and refurbishment.

3.2 Self-Guided, Guided, Interpretive-led Visitor Experiences

Whether there is to be an interpretive center or not, the next set of decisions are related to whether the visitor will be on (i) a self-guided tour of the attraction or site, (ii) will have access to guides who will bring the visitor around the site or visitor center, or (iii) in some cases will have an interpreter-led visit.

- Self-guided tours, as implied from the title, require the visitor to find their way around an attraction or site or visitor center using whatever media brochures, signage, trails, etc. are deemed to be appropriate and feasible given resource availability.
- Guided tours offer the opportunity of having the site presented by a trained staff person who can also be involved in demonstrations of various aspects of life and times at the site. A guide can be the most important part of a visitor's interaction with an attraction since he/she can open the door to new levels of understanding.
- The most intense visitor experience is one through which the site is presented in an authentic way led by interpreters and 'actors' dressed in costumes to reflect the historical period, or even a historical persona, being presented. This is often called first-person interpretation for which the interpreter is trained to provide unique insights into an attraction or site. The identification and training of human resources for costumed and first-person interpretation is expensive and requires significant management intervention and guidance.

A guide certification program can ensure that guides present the most interesting and accurate information to visitors and that they are trained in interpretation and how best to engage visitors on their tours. Certifying and training guides ensures they are operating according to specific guidelines about service and interpretation. If tourists are informed about the certification they may try to seek out trained guides. Certification also keeps money and control within the site and its surrounding region instead of dispersing it to outside guides who do not have local knowledge or a stake in presenting the community according to the locally defined theme. Students, seniors and those with an interest may be recruited as volunteer guides in communities and attractions.

Different Guided Experiences

The guides are equipped with audio devices that enable them to speak to small groups. This also allows for guides with multiple language skills to deal with different visitor groups in an effective way. In some cases, the interpreter can be in costume and actively involved in demonstrating traditional crafts. This meets the needs of many visitors who like to witness more active presentations – i.e. things being done. Having this type of interpretation is especially important for younger visitors.

Guides in uniform in Leshan China

Interpretator in US natural site

Costumed interpreter demonstrating a skill

Hands-on expereince

Costume Interpreters and First-person Interpretation

The ultimate interpretive experience can be achieved using costumed interpreters. These are examples from Williamsburg in the United States where the staff are highly trained with some of them working in first-person interpretation.

Case Example: Williamsburg, VA USA

http://www.visitwilliamsburg.com/

Costumed interpreters

Costumed interpreters

Costumed interpreters

Case Example: Plimoth Planation, MA USA

https://www.plimoth.org/

First-person interpretation is costly and requires very special staff who must be extensively trained. Burnout is certainly an issue. Plymouth Plantation is recognized by many as the best example of this type of interpretation, certainly in North America. Many

sites are now using this as a way of demonstrating an intense immersion and learning experience for the visitor.

Entry

Site map

First person interpreters

Re-enactment

Advantages and Disadvantages of Guided and Unguided Tours

ADVANTAGES

Guided tours:

- Can attract more people – visitors will warm to a good guide who gives a human dimension to a visit. A well-led tour can feel like being given a privileged and authentic 'insider view'.
- This is the most flexible and responsive interpretive approach. A good guide can adapt the style and content of the presentation to suit the visitor' needs and interests.
- A good interpreter can help visitors understand complicated processes/issues that would be hard to convey on a panel or in print.
- Guided tours allow for a wide range of events and can be very creative and entertaining.
- They can be charged for and generate income.
- They can provide employment.

Unguided tours:

- Allow visitors to go at their own pace through the information.

DISADVANTAGES

Guided tours:

- May require considerable management to maintain reliability and consistency.

- Capacity may be an issue if this is the only form of interpretation. Guides need to be able to cope with both large and small groups.
- A commitment to maintaining quality and developing new events and programme is critical.
- Staff requires support and training.

Unguided tours:
- May not allow for visitors to obtain all the necessary information.
- May leave visitors with unanswered questions.
- Can prevent site management to take advantage of unexpected occurrences during the tour.
- May not allow for visitors to follow up on specific interests and information.

3.3 Trails

A walking or driving trail is one of the most suitable interpretation tools for many larger attractions and communities. It presents the subject first hand so that visitors are encouraged to explore the site for themselves. Subjects of a trail usually include buildings of historic interest or ecological systems, and should include information about planning, history, industry and related social issues.

Self-Guided Trails
A self-guided trail relies on a printed brochure and a map to direct the visitor around a route which may not be otherwise be marked. This is the least expensive type of trail to produce and it also allows for the option of a guide.
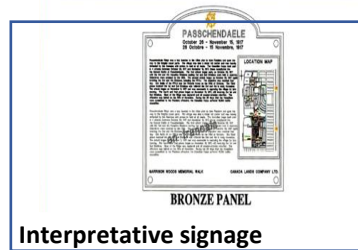
Case Example: Canadian Forces Base Legacy Walk, Calgary Canada
The following examples are from a project in Canada which sought to interpret a military site. The project utilized different levels of visitation and provided examples of how signage can be discreetly incorporated into the landscape. This type of trail is marked by display panels at key points. If a printed guide is not provided, the route will have to be clearly indicated along the way. A simple map can be provided on each panel, but the visitor should not be expected to rely on that alone. Markers or display panels along the trail route are very useful for orientation and interpretation. The cost of a signed trail will vary widely depending on how elaborate it is. Furniture, inset metal studs in the sidewalk, or even painted footprints on the sidewalk (although quite obtrusive) can provide markers for the trail. It is not necessary to mark each building that is part of the interpretation individually. A panel may describe a collection of buildings on a street or ask the visitor to be aware of certain urban features.
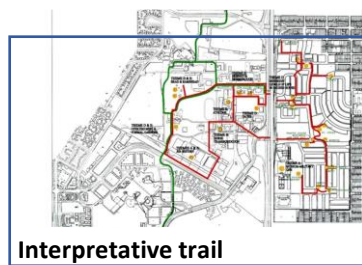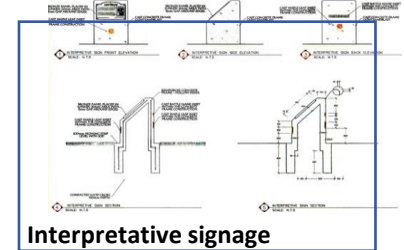
| Interpretative trail | Interpretative signage | Interpretative signage |

Advantages and Disadvantages of Trails

ADVANTAGES

Trails can:
- Give visitors the opportunity to experience the site first hand;
- Provide an interactive experience.

DISADVANTAGE

Trails may:
- Require expensive costs for maintenance.;
- Impose environmental impacts if they are not properly developed and signed;
- Pose potential problems to the overall site if is not properly managed;
- Not be suitable for all weather and would be susceptible to seasonality problems;
- Not be accessible to all people, such as the disabled, elderly, etc.

3.4 Publications

Brochures and Maps

Brochures are the easiest and least expensive way to get information to a visitor. Even a simple collateral can provide information on where to go, what to see, and why those places and activities are significant to the community.   Hotels, restaurants, tour companies, visitor centers and museums can distribute brochures. They can be designed to include various types of information, including guidelines for behavior and politeness. They can be tailored for specific events, such as festivals or dance performances, or even for an individual site. Brochures should illustrate and support the theme and objectives of an interpretive plan. Often a map and brochure are given out together, in which case the brochure can include interpretation, e.g. for a self-guided trail.

The cover design of a brochure is very important. It conveys to the visitor the essence of the story and provokes interest in the rest of the brochure. It must have 'attraction power', i.e. something to make it stand out from other brochures in its appeal to tourists. There are many other design considerations, for which it is best to consult a professional designer. For example:
- What color/weight/texture of paper?
- What color of ink?

- How many photos and graphics?
- How will the brochure be marketed? (Will it be given out at an information desk or put in a brochure rack? If it is for a brochure rack, you should remember that only the top third of the rack is usually visible.)

There are a number of advantages to using publications, especially where budgets are in short supply: They (i) can treat the subject in detail; (ii) can provide detailed reference information; (iii) can be produced in different languages; (iv) can be read at an individual visitor's pace; (v) can be revised at a reasonable cost; (vi) can be used before going to a site or after returning home; and (vii) can be directed at different audiences.

Case Example: Old Sturbridge Village
www.osv.org
The following two illustrations are from a living museum called Sturbridge Village. This brochure is an excellent example of a publication that seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the site. It also deals with seasonal variations and helps the visitor to understand the temporal dimensions of the attraction.
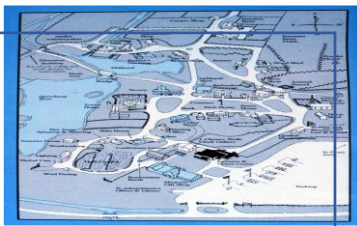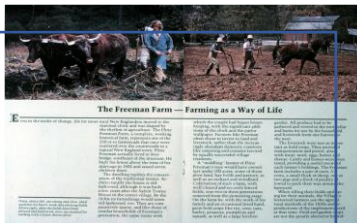

Village plan
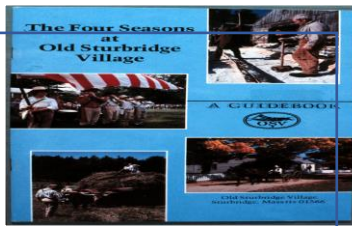
Brochure cover

Brochure inside

Brochure inside

Various brochures

Advantages and Disadvantages of Publications
ADVANTAGES
Print materials can:
- Explain to visitors how they can get the most from their visit;
- Provide an overview of the stories that the resource presents;
- Allow visitors to absorb information at their own pace;
- Provide detailed information about the resource;
- Tell visitors how to access additional information about the resource;
- Be useful in presenting a sequential or especially complex story;
- Be useful in situations where there are no objects to display;

- Provide a self-guided tour of the resource, where appropriate;
- Show what the resource looks like at different times of the year;
- Go home with the visitor, which extends the interpretive message off site, provides a souvenir, and encourages return visits;
- Generate income, if offered for sale;
- Be published in different languages and specifically for different audiences;
- Be affordable.

DISADVANTAGES
Print materials may:
- Discourage people who do not like to read;
- Create litter;
- Require frequent revision to remain up to date;
- Require a distribution system.
- Be expensive, if writing and design consultants are involved.
- Clutter up inventory stock if they don't sell well.

3.5 Display Panels

Display panels are two-dimensional signs which can contain interpretive information, maps, photographs and graphics. They have a practical application for attractions because they are relatively inexpensive and are easily designed and mounted. The panels should provide a balance between text, pictures (such as reproductions of paintings), new and historic photographs, graphics and blank space. Blank space provides a rest for the eyes. A photograph can reduce the need for a lot of text. The design of the signs should be consistent throughout the attraction or site; it is helpful to have a professional designer create an easily recognized sign system. Hiring a specialist is worth the cost since a well-designed sign system will provide a positive image of a town while presenting the interpretive message in the best possible light. There are a number of issues that must be considered in choosing a sign system: the location of the signs, their size and shape, the type of illustrations, the nature of the maps and text, concerns about vandalism; and the kind of panel to adopt – all of which are best left to experts.

The size of the panel should relate to the scale of the site or building. It should not be too small or it may be lost on a very large wall. An interpretive panel which seems huge inside on a desk will seem much smaller when installed outside. The choice of color will also be influenced by the constraints of the site. In some locations strong colors may not be appropriate, while in others subdued colors could be too dull. Directional signage on the highway or point-of-interest signs may have to be brightly colored so that they can be seen from a rapidly approaching car. However, once the visitor is at the site the signs should not dominate the surroundings. The following are examples of effective signage.

Street oriented panel

Street-oriented panel
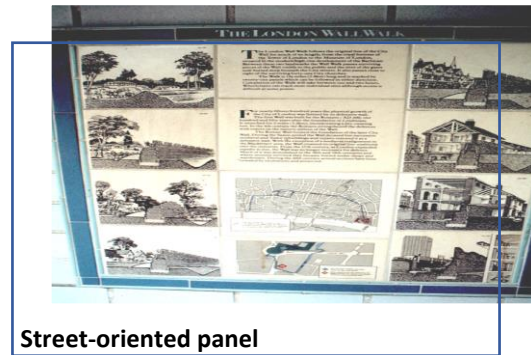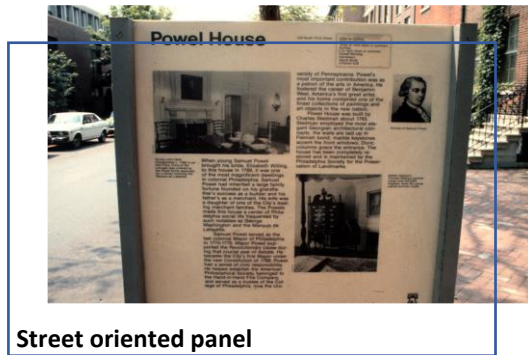
Advantages and Disadvantages of Display Panels

ADVANTAGES

Panels and/or banners can:

- Welcome visitors when no one is available to greet them;
- Help to establish an identity for the resource;
- Provide orientation to the resource and tell visitors where they are allowed to go;
- Provide interpretation at any time of the day and exactly where it is needed;
- Interpret objects in their own setting, providing visitors a more direct experience with the resource;
- Make visitors aware of resource management issues such as environmental impact or dangerous conditions;
- Be designed to blend in with the local environment;
- Show a feature from a view that is difficult for visitors to reach;
- Integrate pictures and diagrams with text – for instance, show how a scene the visitor sees today might have looked in the past, or how a geological formation was created over time, or how invisible phenomena affect the resource;
- Be relatively inexpensive;
- Be replaced relatively quickly and inexpensively, because they are products from digital files that are easily produced.
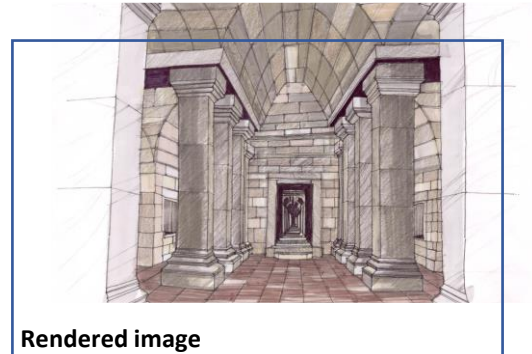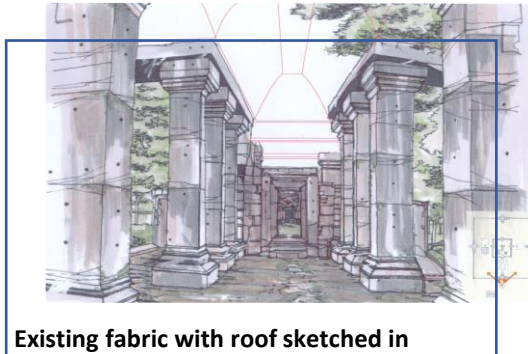
DISADVANTAGES

Panels and/or banners may:

- May be intrusive in some settings;
- Be difficult for groups of people to read at the same time;
- Frustrate visitors who have additional questions;
- Be inadequate for interpreting complicated stories because the space available for graphics and text is limited;
- Seem static when compared with multimedia presentations;
- Be subject to vandalism and wear, especially under extreme conditions;
- Require expensive site preparations before installation.

3.6 Drawings

In many cases the actual artifact or physical dimension may be lost and it is necessary to

use drawings to help illustrate what the area or site might have looked like. The following are some simple examples re-creating a portion of a temple site at Phimai archaeological site in Thailand.

Existing fabric with roof sketched in

Rendered image

Advantages and Disadvantages of Drawings

ADVANTAGES

Drawings can:
• Provide alternative views/perspectives of a site artifact;
• Be accessed by everyone and do not require language translation;
• Be digitalized to allow for easy reproduction and to be shared online to a larger audience.

DISADVANTAGES

Drawings may:
• Be subject to vandalism or damage;
• Be expensive to commission.

3.7 Models

For many people two-dimensional drawings may not present them with a good understanding of the artifact or site. Computer-generated or actual physical models are often found to be the most effective. Computer-generated models can be very expensive but are increasingly possible with new technology. Physical models are less expensive but require special skills.

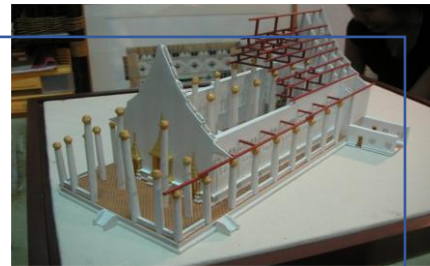Computer-generated model of Phimai archaeological site in Thailand

Physical model of a temple

The following is a sequence of the actual model-building process for a temple. It is especially important for children as they can see the building developing and how it is constructed.

Base of the temple model

Partial walls

With roof

Complete model

Advantages and Disadvantages of Models

ADVANTAGES

Models can:

- Provide a 3-D perspective of a site or object;
- Provide a time lapse to the past and to the future;
- Visually explain a site or object in ways not possible with other media;
- Be interactive and show layers to a site or object.

DISADVANTAGES

Models may:

- May be expensive to create;
- Need to be maintained;
- May be subject to vandalism or damage.

3.8 Festivals

Festivals are a spectacular way for tourists to learn about a community because they appeal to all the senses and often celebrate important cultural events. They incorporate rituals, ceremonies and other examples of living heritage such as food, religion, clothing, dancing and music. Interpretation is important for festivals; tourists will want to learn about the myths or religious meaning behind a ceremony, and why a community acts the way it does at festival time. When taking inventory of the community's resources, one should remember that some festivals may not be appropriate for tourists – for example observers may not be welcome or non-initiates may not be able to participate. Safety may also be an issue. Some festivals will present a community better than others and be more accommodating of tourists.

3.9 Performances/Re-enactments

Local music and dancing can be performed and interpreted for tourists. Activities and rituals such as large formal dinners with traditional food, drink, seating and utensils can give visitors an idea of what life is like in the community. These initiatives can also serve to fund and support cultural traditions. Tourism has, in some cases, inspired a revitalization of artistic traditions because it produces a demand and economic support for the arts. However, when these traditions are taken out of their usual context, such as when a ritual dance that is traditionally performed only in temples is performed in a large hotel, it can become more important as an economic tool than a meaningful religious offering.

Re-enactments of daily life or traditions often use actors and focus on historic, not contemporary, life and do not address real community problems. On the other hand, re-enactments or folk villages do not interfere with a community's daily life and lessen the impact of tourism by keeping it separate from living communities.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Festivals and Performances/Re-enactments
ADVANTAGES
Festivals and Performances/Re-enactments can:
- Be entertaining and sustain the attention of the visitors;
- Be creative, evocative and dramatic;
- Provide an interactive experience for visitors;
- Be multi-sensory.

DISADVANTAGES
Festivals and Performances/Re-enactments may:

- Require a great deal of management;
- Not be multilingual.

Long-term Interpretive Techniques and Approaches

Looking to the future and the potential of a site and/or attraction, there are many great multi-sensory techniques that can be used. It is recognized that some of these require a longer planning period, either based on the implementation activities or based on budgetary restrictions. These techniques have been clustered as they can be incorporated into the long-term planning for the site. Using a variety of these more sensory and, in some instances, newer technologies can add a new dynamic to how the site and/or attraction can be presented and appreciated by visitors.

3.10 Audio-Visual Media

A presentation using sound and images is the most dramatic way to tell a story. Visitors seem to absorb more information from an audiovisual presentation than by reading about it. However, these types of media, such as videos and slide presentations, are also the most expensive. A film or slide show can serve as an introduction to the site or provide most of the interpretive display. It can be copied and distributed to tourist or education centers as a way of attracting more visitors to the site. There are a number of advantages to using audiovisual media, including: (i) they are well suited to the presentation of chronological and sequential material, (ii) they capture realism and provide emotional impact, (iii) they provide opportunities for dramatization, (iv) they provide views of places and people that are inaccessible, (v) they create a mood or atmosphere and can be adapted to physically impaired visitors, (vi) they can illustrate before- and after-effects, and (vii) they can be produced in different languages.

Multi-media Shows
These spectacles combine dramatic special effects with performances of dance, music and theatre to produce a sensory experience aimed at capturing a feeling of a particular time and place. Although these shows may transmit some facts through dialogue or song, their main function is to appeal to the visitors' emotions and senses. Multimedia shows are expensive and may not be appropriate for every community. If a community hosts a high volume of tourists on bus tours, this may be a good approach. Distinctive dance, dress, music and theatre can be incorporated into this type of performance to give the viewers a sense of the unique performing arts of a community. It can, however, be difficult to interpret this type of living heritage as it is out of context and not necessarily authentic.

Light and Sound Displays
This type of display incorporates a sound and light show in an exterior location after dark. An open area with a good panorama allows the audience to see certain features, either buildings or details, emphasized by spotlight. Little commentary need accompany this presentation, as music will probably be more appropriate. Even though no direct

message may be communicated, there is value in seeing the urban features in a new light. It may simply heighten the awareness of the town. Spectacular effects have been achieved with the use of laser lights to highlight buildings, streetscapes and ruins. This type of presentation is probably only effective as a unique extravaganza to celebrate a centennial or the beginning of a large festival.

Audiovisual Displays

An audiovisual display can provide an imaginative presentation and in some cases, it may be more appropriate to devote most of the budget to one very sophisticated audiovisual presentation than to an assortment of different media. It can also be used as one element in multimedia display. A description of various audiovisual media follows.

Film and Video

We all understand the story-telling capacity of film – it holds an audience's attention, it is a familiar medium to most people and it is dynamic, featuring moving pictures and sounds. An interpretive film can capture the historic and dramatic qualities of a community. Remember to contact local colleges and universities for assistance. Film students may be looking for an opportunity to produce a film. Historic film footage or stills can come alive with skilful editing. Visual images should be allowed to speak for themselves and the spoken portion should be concise and broken up by music and sound. A detailed audio description of the pictures should not be required. For example, a voice from the past can describe how the main street flooded every year, while the picture demonstrates how the street looked during everyday commerce.

The audio portion includes music, sound effects, narration and historical voices from the past. A community group will usually have some of the images which will be used in the film. If the community has prepared an inventory of its resources, much of this material will have been found. The producer will probably need more images, comprising new and historic photos. He or she should be sensitive to the quality of the historical interpretation and avoid a commercial approach.

Slide Presentations

A slide presentation is similar in most considerations to video and film. It is also one of the least expensive audiovisual presentations. A minimum of three projectors is required to present a dynamic show. Two projectors can work together while a third is cued up and ready to go. The various techniques that can expand the range of the material include multiple images and wind-down images. Sound is provided by a cassette player synchronized to the slides. A slide show can also be transferred to video.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Audio-Visual Media
ADVANTAGES
Audiovisual media can:
- Create a mood or atmosphere;
- Tell stories with excitement, drama, special effects and music;
- Capture actual events and provide emotional impact;

- Speed up time (200 years of history), slow it down (the flight of a hummingbird, for example), or illustrate 'before' and 'after';
- Provide views of places, features or seasons not otherwise accessible;
- Excel at the presentation of chronological and sequential material;
- Provide consistently high-quality performance – and good control over the message;
- Present interpretation in other languages;
- Present lots of layered information in a relatively small space;
- Be easily transported for use off site;
- Reach many visitors at once;
- Be adapted for visitors with physical challenges.

DISADVANTAGES
Audiovisual media may:
- Not be appropriate in all locations;
- Make the interpretation more spectacular than the resource itself;
- Seem isolating, cold, or impersonal compared with guided tours or other face-to-face interpretation;
- Distract visitors or annoy staff, especially if a presentation is shown repeatedly;
- Disappoint visitors who like to browse, study an item in depth, or proceed at their own pace;
- Not work for many people at once (as in the case of interactive computer stations).

3.11 Computer Based Interpretation

The main advantage of computer programs is that they offer a wide range of material to the audience. Their large storage capacity allows users to access more detailed interpretation if they are interested in a deeper analysis of the site's story. The terminals can be set up so that even people with little computer knowledge can use them to call up text, slides or motion picture presentations, while more details can be asked for by simply touching definitions on the screen. Even one computer can become an interactive display. If computer-based interpretation is used, there should be a locally available technician to help with any problems that may arise.

Interactive Kiosks
An interactive kiosk is a computer terminal with specialized hardware and software that provides access to information and applications for communication, commerce, entertainment and education. Museums, historical sites, national parks and other tourist/visitor attractions often engage kiosks as a method for conveying information about a particular exhibit or site. Kiosks allow guests to read about – or view video of – particular artifacts or areas at their own pace and in an interactive manner, learning more about those areas that interest them most. Some kiosks use touchscreen technology and others even provide a test to see how much the visitor has learned about a site.

Example of an interactive kiosk

Example of an interactive kiosk

Example of an interactive kiosk

Advantages and Disadvantages of Computer-Based Interpretation

ADVANTAGES

Computer-based interpretation can:

- Reach people who cannot physically visit the site;
- Offer good control over the message;
- Offer interactive media to engage visitors;
- Provide a platform for visitor feedback and inquiries;
- Be easily developed in phases as funding permits;
- Offer visitors the opportunity to research the subject matter in more depth, if links are provided to other material.

DISADVANTAGES

Computer-based interpretation may:

- Require a large initial investment, especially if professional designers are involved;
- Create additional demands on management because it must be kept current and constantly updated;
- Create a bad impression if is not well designed and maintained;
- Require additional investment and development if new technologies are involved;
- Can diminish interaction with visitors;
- Be difficult to use for older generations who are not computer literate.

Alternative Media Options

It is also vital to mention a variety of other types of technology-led interpretation media that are becoming more mainstream and affordable.

The alternative media types are being mentioned as part of a long-term view of interpretation at various sites. In some instances, implementing these types of technologies can be expensive and require specific expertise. However, given the fact that some technologies are becoming more mainstream, more opportunities to access them are becoming available.

3.12 Virtual and Augmented Reality

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are portals to other places and time (real or imagined) assisted through visual technologies. Any reality can be created for visitors to experience. VR and AR provide different experiences, but what is key for a site or attraction is the ability to re-create a broken temple, or build an entire village through AR and VR that allows visitors to experience the past reality of the site or attraction.

Virtual Reality

Virtual reality is described as a medium that transports a user to a wholly digital, simulated environment – an imaginary world, or a recreation of the real world, past and present. There is a full sensory reaction to VR. The worlds that VR has created are fully immersive. While the technology was primarily developed and utilized in the gaming world, the applications for VR are far reaching and have many applications for education and for assisting access to places.

VR has enabled people anywhere in the world to do a tour of, for example, the Grand Palace in Bangkok, experience sights and sounds and move through the site through VR.

In addition to just experiencing environments, some research has indicated that VR could help people to understand their impact on the environment, reduce conflict by letting people inhabit the lives, situations and identifies of others and more.

Augmented Reality

Augmented reality is more sophisticated as it adds digital information to the real sensory input from the world around us – pasting content and information on top of what we see or hear. The real world is augmented (or supplemented) with computer-generated inputs such as sound, video, graphics, or GPS. The contrast of VR and AR is that VR replaces the current reality while AR embraces the current reality and enhances the perception of that reality.

It is not possible in some instances to have all the information displayed at a site or attraction and AR will change this dynamic. AR provides a site or attraction to add an extra level of information for visitors through tools that can be used on smartphones. There are also additional opportunities to interact with the content and to supplement real objects with virtual additional information.

There are very affordable options that can be explored, such as the Google Cardboard, which is a VR experience that allows for a cardboard viewer to be used in place of expensive goggles.

3.13 Mobile-based Applications

There are possibilities to incorporate AR on mobile devices that are easy for visitors to use, since they are already familiar with them. The mobile-based application using AR is

one to add to the natural interactions at a site or attraction and should not distract visitors from experiencing the real environment.

Case Example: The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)

LACMA is the largest art museum in western USA with more than 100,000 works of art. The mobile-based application that they have employed features an interactive map that shows the location of the exhibitions and events at the museum, interactive guided tours from which to choose, and location-aware alerts for special exhibits.

Case Example: The British Museum

The British Museum has developed a mobile-based application that includes a fully interactive map of the museum's floors, a virtual walk of the top galleries, high-resolution images of the objects, a detailed history of key artifacts, and information on current events and activities.

Key to Implementation

Something that has been discussed throughout the manual are partnerships and creative access to talent, which will be key to the implementation of these types of media in the short and long term. It is not the job of the site or attraction management to know about these technologies.   Specifically, in Thailand, there are many large technology companies, which have invested greatly in talent, that are experts in such media as AR and VR, and who may be interested in partnering to assist in delivering AR or VR to the visitors for a site or attraction. Another alternative to explore for implementation of these technologies is to approach a local high school or university to employ creative and tech-savvy youth to develop the technologies and strategies for the site or attraction.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Alternative Media Options

ADVANTAGES

Technological media options can:
- Enable access to experiences for people with disabilities;
- Provide a whole new perspective for a site or attraction;
- Develop new ways of interacting with the site or attraction;
- Use the changing technologies with which younger generations are familiar;
- Provide easy access to additional information.

DISADVANTAGES

Technological media options may:
- Be expensive to implement;
- Be difficult to implement without key expertise or strategic partnerships;
- Not be easily integrated into the existing mix of interpretation media;
- Not be practical due to access to the Internet and other connections;
- Not allow everyone to participate if a mobile device is required, because not all visitors will have one.

Case Example: Ancient Pompeii

In order, to envision what life in the city of Pompeii, an ancient city in Italy, was like, researchers from Lund University in Sweden digitally reconstructed a house that had been destroyed in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. The 3-D model created is one of the first that the research team has produced to document and preserve the city. Following a catastrophic earthquake in Italy in 1980, which shifted the tectonics under the ancient city, causing the remaining ruins to deteriorate even further, curators from the city of Pompeii launched a call seeking international researchers to help document and preserve the city. As a result, in 2000, the Swedish Pompeii Project was founded.

"By combining new technology with more traditional methods, we can describe Pompeii in greater detail and more accurately than was previously possible," says Nicoló Dell´Unto, digital archaeologist at Lund University.

Advanced digital archaeology created 3D models that are interactive and can be explored on their website to see every angle of the model. http://bit.ly/2lL9yRW

Summary of Interpretation Possibilities

There are many different formats and techniques for interpreting a site's unique heritage dimensions limited only by a site's management resourcefulness and imagination. A well-planned and appealing interpretation program can have far-reaching positive implications for attractions.

The essence of good interpretation requires the site/attraction itself, in all its complexity, to define the themes and resources of interpretation and decide how its people and heritage are represented. This manual seeks to present and briefly discuss the wide range of options. Quite clearly each of these could take up a manual, but for the purposes of this manual the attempt has been to provide managers and key decision-makers with sufficient information to develop overall strategies and to develop work plans and budgets.

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