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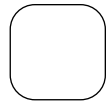
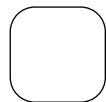
A Note from the Editor

This issue of the *Journal* is dedicated to a long-standing discussion and debate reaching far back into the historical evolution of the field of interpretation. Who should be practicing the art and science of interpretation? What standards, trainings, certifications, and accreditations should be put into place for the profession? Who should the gatekeepers be for each of those aspects? Is the practice of interpretation different than the profession?

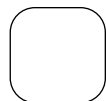
I have yet to attend an NAI event without this seemingly continuous discussion being held. Perhaps this is our profession's collective "tiger" that we must regularly grasp by the tail to continue in our development. There are no easy answers to these questions and many, in fact, only raise more issues than they solve. This issue of the *Journal* contains several pieces addressing some of the aspects of training, certification, and accreditation. Some are opinion pieces and others research articles. I hope they serve to continue the discussion and perhaps illuminate a path.

I look forward to the future developments of our field through your quality submissions to *JIR*.

—C



R E S E A R C H



Practicing What We Preach

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Abstract

Today, environmental, cultural, and historical sites are emphasizing educational and interactive visitor experiences. An institution's educational philosophy should form the core of volunteer training and in turn be reflected in public programs. This comparative case study examined two training programs at a history and art museum. Data were collected through interviews, training/ promotional materials, and observations. Analysis revealed that the learning theory touted to volunteers for use with the public is not applied by educators during training. Findings suggest a need for aligning an institution's educational philosophy with its training practices and assessing the impact of such alignment on volunteer training and program delivery.

Key Words

training, volunteers, museums, adult education, professional development, programming

Today, environmental, cultural and historical sites strive to provide a wide array of visitors with an engaging learning experience that promotes further discovery, return visits, and changes in attitudes (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a; National Park Service, 2004). To accomplish this, educators are encouraged to use a contextual model of learning that incorporates personal, physical, and sociocultural dimensions (Falk & Dierking, 2000). Museums, visitor centers, parks, and historic sites use the assistance of volunteers to make the visitor experience engaging and rewarding. With an emphasis on an interactive experience for visitors and volunteer interpreters presenting much of this to the public, it would seem appropriate for the institution's theory of learning to be consistent with volunteer training. But is it? A history museum and art museum, both with established volunteer programs, purport to offer training that exemplifies the broader educational missions of their institution. The purpose of this comparative case study was to discover how theory and practice interact in the docent training programs at two museums.

Review of the Literature

Studs Terkel once said that there is only one thing worse than training your volunteers and having them leave—and that's not training them and having them stay. This kind of sentiment has led to an increased emphasis on the training and development literature related to volunteers, and its proliferation is an indication that training is not simply a luxury but a necessity in volunteer organizations. According to Danoff and Kopel (1994) volunteers are equivalent to employees in terms of job descriptions, training needs, supervision, and rewards systems. Brudney (1990) argues that much like employee training, when organization, planning, and implementation are inadequate, volunteers can "burn out" and become frustrated, resentful, and disillusioned. Beyond sufficient planning and delivery, Cull and Hardy (1974) identify the significant cost for recruiting volunteers. As a result of the financial and administrative obligation needed for a successful volunteer program, there has been extensive research and literature written on the training, development, and management of this group.

Kerka (2003) states that volunteer development should be a comprehensive, continuous process for individuals to broaden, update, and adapt their knowledge and skills to improve their performance and potential. Specific to the preparation of volunteer interpreters, Merriman and Brochu (2004) stress that quality training of interpreters provide visitors with an opportunity to connect with the site in meaningful ways, promoting "stewardship of the resource" (p. 66).

A description of a model for volunteer management and development termed GEMS (Generate, Educate, Mobilize, Sustain) is one possibility for meeting the needs of those in volunteer administration. Kerka (2003) finds that volunteer development can be organized through four steps and 18 phases of the spiral GEMS model. *Generate* includes identification of an organization's needs for volunteers, which then are defined in written job descriptions, from which potential volunteers are identified, recruited, screened, and selected. The second category, *Educate*, involves orienting volunteers to the organization and their jobs. This includes protecting them from liability and risk by providing appropriate training, as well as human, material, and information resources and initial and ongoing learning opportunities. The last two GEMS elements are *Mobilize* (engage, motivate, supervise) and *Sustain* (evaluate, recognize, retain, redirect, disengage).

A small body of research currently exists on training and development of volunteers

in museums, with a somewhat more robust body within the larger field of interpretation research. Much of what was found in the review of literature was conceptual (i.e. Beck & Cable, 2002; Grinder & McCoy, 1985) or focuses on training for a specific technique or delivery method that can be applied to practice (see Cherry, 1989; Knapp & Benton, 2004; Kowalski, 1994; O'Brien & Pease, 2004; Wallace & Gaudry, 2002; Wendling, 1991; Wolens, 1986). Other research focuses on how different audiences respond to interpretation and content and how that research should be used by educators (see Beck & Cable, 2002; Ellenbogen, 2002; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1998; Hein & Alexander, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a, 1994b; O'Brien & Pease, 2004; Roberts, 1997; Sachatello-Sawyer et al., 2002; Widner Ward & Roggenbuck, 2003).

The aim of this article is to provide an opportunity for those responsible for the training and development of program and educational volunteers in cultural, historical, and environmental sites to reflect on their own espoused theories of practice and compare them to their actual theory in use in order to identify any discrepancy between the two that may result in costly, ineffective, and counterproductive training of interpreters. By examining the training programs in this study, causes for differences in the two theories, the role of reflective practice, and opportunities for improving existing training practices and design are discussed.

Although many educators working in environmental, cultural, and historical sites draw from a solid foundation of educational theory, still more display a disparity between their theory and their preparation of interpreters. Their "espoused theory" does not translate to their actual training practices or "theory in use" (Argyris, 1993, 2000; Argyris & Schön, 1974). These beliefs are, as Fang (1996) defines, a rich store of general knowledge that includes objects, people, and events and the interrelationship among them that influences planning decisions and actions in the facilitation of learning. Also referred to as "theories of professional practice" (Argyris & Schön, 1974), these beliefs are presuppositions about the purpose of teaching, the role of the teacher and the student, and the teaching practices themselves. While many decisions about the design and delivery of interpreter training are based on existing curricula and practices, the beliefs about and theory of education the educator holds play a role in how staff are prepared to work with visitors. Just as interpreters "must be able to articulate the outcomes of interpretation so they can make personal choices in approach and establish the relevance of interpretation for managers" (National Park Service, 2004, p. 1), educators must be thoughtful in their intended training outcomes and critically examine practice to identify those objectives in interpreter training.

Espoused Theory and Theory in Use

This study was guided by a theoretical frame based on the seminal work of Argyris and Schön (1974) of espoused theory versus theory in use, which examines conscious and unconscious reasoning processes. The theory is based on the belief that people are designers of action. Action is created by individuals to achieve intended consequences and examine if their actions are effective. In other words, Argyris and Schön (1974) and Argyris's later work (1993; 2000) claim that people devise mental models (Gentner, 2002; James, Leigh, Jeffrey, & Dedre, 1999; Jeffrey, Leigh, & Dedre, 2003; Leigh, Dedre, & Jeffrey, 2000) about how to plan, implement, and review their actions. They further assert that few people are aware that these theoretical maps for taking action are not the same as the theories they espouse.

Studies substantiate this theory as not simply a case of differences between what people say and what people do (see Griffiths & Tanns, 1992; Hillier, 1999; Rodriguez, 1993). Instead, research confirms a theory consistent with what people say and a theory consistent with what they do. Espoused theory is formed from our beliefs and experience and is about what we believe and experience. All new information either through experience or intuition (pattern recognition) enters here. Relative to the espoused theory is the theory in use. A theory in use is the “observed theory” as behavior. Even though behavior is not always representative of the espoused theory, it still exists.

For example, a curator may express her espoused theory while at the same time modeling something quite different in practice, her theory in use. If asked about how she would deal with a disagreement with a coworker, a curator might respond by first recognizing an understanding of the disagreement, then she and the coworker could list ways to resolve the disagreement, and finally both parties could choose one of the options. This represents the curator’s espoused theory for handling her disagreements with coworkers. In other words, it is the theory behind what she says. An observation of the curator in a situation similar to the example, however, reveals that she actually advocates her own point of view and discourages the coworker’s. This illustrates how her theory in use, or the theory behind what she did, more closely resembled her belief about power and control of the situation.

Argyris and Schön are suggesting that, in the example of the curator, she is often unaware that her theories in use are not the same as her espoused theories and that people are frequently unaware of their theories in use. Argyris (1987) finds that people design the action that they take and are therefore responsible for the design. He further contends that, although individuals design the action, they are often unaware of the design and of its difference from their espoused design. This can result in mixed messages to others, as the educators are unaware of gaps in their own philosophy and actions.

To examine how museums’ docent training practices reflect the educational mission of the museums and the educators’ espoused theory of learning, I observed and analyzed a history museum and an art museum in the U.S. with active docent programs, both in the midst of training docents for new exhibits. My analysis focused on identifying processes and activities within the trainings that supported or refuted the museum educators’ espoused theories of learning.

Methodology

In this study, the comparative case study method (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000) provides an opportunity for examining the training sessions at these two sites and comparing that practice to the espoused theories of the educator and the museums’ educational philosophy. The cases were the training practices of museum educators within the context of training current docents for new exhibits in a history museum and an art museum. Two training sessions for the same exhibit were observed at both sites and history and art institutions were selected to determine if the training practices crossed disciplines.

The sites, located in the southeastern United States, were chosen based on criteria that included: a docent corps of more than 50 active members, well-established tour programs using docents for both school and adult groups, and each providing more than 500 tours annually. In addition to these criteria, the institution had to employ a full-time

paid staff member responsible for docent preparation. Furthermore, the training programs for novice docents at each site are approximately six months long and each offers regular continuing education for all docents. Prior to the study, I contacted the museum educators at each site and explained that I was interested in learning about how they prepared docents for new exhibits. After receiving participation confirmation, I reviewed training and educational materials published by the museums and conducted a semi-structured interview lasting approximately one hour with the educator at each site about their theory of learning and the educational philosophy of their institution.

Interviews were conducted in a local coffee house with the museum educators and focused on how docent training is designed and delivered. Goals and objectives of the trainings and what docent characteristics are deemed important by the institutions were also discussed, both in general and specifically for the training developed for the new exhibit. The museum educators were also asked to provide information about their personal philosophy of education and learning and described those beliefs in relation to their museum's educational mission. Once interviews were completed I transcribed them and used inductive analysis to develop codes. These emergent codes were then collapsed to identify themes. Observations were then arranged for the upcoming trainings for the new spring exhibit at each museum. Moreover, follow-up interviews were conducted by phone with the educators to clarify comments from the initial interview and to provide further insight into the observations.

Two separate observations of training sessions for the new exhibits were conducted at each site. These observations, held in late February for docents who have previously completed a new docent preparation program, served as the primary data collection method for determining the museum educator's theory in use. Two sessions were held at each site for new exhibits. These were observed in their entirety allowing me to record extensive field notes by documenting the processes, environment, participant dialogue, and my reactions during and after each session. Each session lasted between one and four hours, with one occurring in the morning and the other in the evening to accommodate docent schedules. The purpose of the observation was to collect data to examine how the espoused theory of the museum educator was reflected in the docent training practices. The field notes were not deductive. Instead, I worked as a sponge to absorb all that was around me, leaving coding for after the observations. Once the observations were complete they were coded and themes emerged, which were joined with data previously collected.

Last, I returned to the materials used in novice and continuing docent trainings at the museums and the educational mission and programming at each site to review their content in relation to the interview and observational data. These items were gathered with assistance from the museum educator and provided additional insight into training design and delivery and included the museums' websites, marketing and advertising, group tour information, and docent promotional brochures and fliers. Additionally, materials, including docent training notebooks, supplemental handouts specific to the new exhibits being covered, information packets given to tour groups, exhibit brochures, and trainer materials, were examined, analyzed, and coded. Those codes were collapsed and themes were developed and combined with prior themes.

Data were analyzed inductively through individual-case and cross case analysis (Patton, 2002; Yin, 1994). Through careful examination of the data, I generated

common characteristics and themes (Patton, 2002; Yin, 1994) across the cases. A critical friend in the field of museum studies reviewed the data and subsequent themes to determine the strength and reliability of the analysis. The themes and supporting data were also shared with the two museum educators as a form of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Analysis of the two museums' docent training processes and methods suggest that the learning and educational philosophies maintained by the museums and the museum educators were not reflected in the practices relative to the docent education programs. Instead, the museum educators and their representatives exhibited a theory in use that contrasted with the espoused theory described during the interviews.

Findings

In the following sections the espoused theories of the museum educators responsible for docent training are explored. Additionally, the observations of the docent training programs are described and provide examples that are compared to espoused theories and reflect a theory in use. The analysis of the data suggests that a museum's espoused theory touted in the educational materials referenced by museum staff and marketed by the museum is not reflected in the training methods for docents, which leads to an inconsistency between talk and action.

Espoused Theories

Through an analysis of all the data collected it was determined that both museum educators' espoused theory and the educational philosophies of the institutions are based on current research in museum studies and general theories of education. Strategies espoused by the educators for how docents were to engage museum visitors included active inquiry and guided discovery. Based in constructivist theories of learning (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978) the museum educators referenced the work of Falk and Dierking and described an underlying premise that learning is an active process with visitors as active sense makers who seek to build coherent and organized knowledge (Mayer, 2004). An emerging body of studies focusing on the embodied activities in which participants engage as they explore museum exhibits supports these perspectives (Falk & Dierking, 1997, 2000; Hemmings, Randall, Marr, & Francis, 2000; McManus, 1987).

Furthermore, the museum educators described how training for new docents encouraged the use of well thought-out questions to stimulate critical, higher-order thinking and get visitors to discover something on their own in order to enhance understanding and long-term recall. Based on a review of the docent training materials, it was found that examples for successful facilitation of tours using constructivist theory was included in course readings, lessons, and video excerpts. The philosophy was also carried through the museums' promotional materials advertising tours that are active, engaging, and promote learning beyond the museum visit. When asked if the same educational philosophy was applied to training docents for new exhibits, both educators said yes, explaining that they engaged docents in question-and-answer sessions, reflective journaling, and encouraged self-directed learning and active inquiry. The educator at the history museum best summed up responses from both women: "I need them to have the content, but I want it to be fun, interesting, and engaging for them too."

In the case of the history museum, the institution emphasizes education as central

to its mission. The website, as well as marketing materials distributed to school and tour groups, provides examples of the museum's espoused theory. A brochure provided to groups interested in guided tours and the website state the following: "The museum is dedicated to teaching in a way that recognizes the worth of all visitors, while providing information about history in a thought-provoking manner." Additionally, the docent recruiting literature notes that becoming a docent is an exciting, rewarding, and integral part of volunteering at the institution. Both of these statements underscore a philosophy of engaging visitors and providing experiences that are exciting and rewarding for both the visitor as well as the docent.

The educational director at the history museum had previously been a classroom teacher, worked for more than 20 years in museums and had been at her current museum for the last 8 years. When asked what her educational philosophy was, she said, "As a classroom teacher, I believed that students should learn in a variety of ways. My job here is to create educational programs that incorporate a variety of teaching methods to meet the interests and needs of a variety of audiences." She continued by noting that the tour groups varied in age, experience, and background and that required the museum to consider how to accommodate all visitors. She also emphasized what she termed "thinking time," by stating, "We want our docents to stop talking and let people think. We give visitors a lot of information, and some of it is pretty deep. It's important for our docents to stop talking and let people take it all in. It's something we've really been working on."

When examining the materials used to prepare new docents at the history museum, including general training materials for both the trainer and the docents, the espoused theory of active discovery and engaging the audience was a consistent theme. The trainer's guide and docent notebook used in the training of novice docents had a syllabus that highlighted teaching techniques, incorporated modeling and practicing by docents, and included literature and references that addressed how museums successfully meet visitor needs and incorporated practices that actively engaged student and adult groups. The espoused theory was also apparent in the museum's two training sessions that I observed as part of this study. During both sessions for a newly installed exhibit, the museum educator reminded docents at least six times that they should ask questions of the visitors and give people time to think about the installations.

In the case of the art museum, the materials provided to the public describe the educational philosophy of the institution as one that encourages an appreciation of art through exploration, inquiry, and discovery. The art museum's promotional materials distributed to tour groups depict the docent corps as a specially trained group of volunteers who lead tours of the museum's permanent collection and temporary exhibition galleries. The website included the following: "Docent tours add a new dimension to the works in the galleries by offering visitors an engaging experience comprising background information and offering interactive ways of looking at art."

The art museum educator had worked as a curator and had a master's degree in museum studies. She had worked in museums for over 30 years, with four of those in her current position. During the initial interview she stated, "We have restructured our training program to sort of fit the museum's mission and our expansion philosophies to grow our audience and serve lots of people of various backgrounds and interest levels and so forth here at the museum. The shift we see happening in the training program is

that rather than focus on feature art history as the model for delivery in the galleries, we focus on looking at art appreciation, touring different age groups, dialoguing with the public, using questioning strategies, sort of basic teaching techniques that we've used continually in our current program, making that more of a feature and a focus, and then adding in the art history sort of as we go along."

Additionally, the art museum's education director emphasized a need for making the art history relevant to the collections in the context of where the docents do their jobs, but admits that lecture is the primary delivery method for her docent programs. This is juxtaposed with her statement later in the interview. When asked what her goal was for the docent training, she said, "I want them to have more experience and practice in the galleries, instead of just sitting [in] the classrooms and talking about it." She also spoke in detail about the new emphasis placed on docent use of inquiry-based discussion and guided discovery, "We want them to use methods that help people form their own narratives, promote reflection and discovery, and make people and students excited about the museum and coming back. These are great ways to do that and docents really seem to like them once they get over not lecturing all the time."

These strategies were also espoused during the training sessions of the art docents. While a curator led the program, the art museum educator stood by and on one occasion I observed her interjecting into the curator's lecture, reminding docents not to forget to use inquiry when introducing specific objects and reminding them about the importance of relating the objects to the visitors' experiences.

Based on the data gathered from both institutions, a set of common characteristics of the espoused theories of the educational philosophy of the museums as well as the museum educators' theory of learning can be identified. New docents receive training during their initial preparation programs about the use of interactive strategies such as guided discovery and inquiry and were urged to allow visitors to create their own interpretations of the objects and exhibits presented. The valuing of the experience and need of the visitor was encouraged. Additionally, subsequent trainings for all docents on new exhibits include reminders of these espoused techniques. Promotional materials describe how a visitor's experiences will be enhanced by an "interactive" tour and, throughout the materials for novice docent trainings, there are strategies offered for how to engage visitors with exhibits, with each other, and with the visitor's own ideas. These characteristics are now examined in relation to the observed theory in use for docents during their trainings at each site.

Theories in Use

Sanders and McCutcheon (1986) note that the only way to determine theory in use is through observation. In this case study, observations of the museum staff during training sessions were used to determine the museums' theories in use for docent training. As noted earlier, the materials provided during new docent orientation at the history museum espoused a theory that stressed engaging visitors with the exhibits through discussion and questioning. During both sessions at the history museum the materials distributed in preparation for the new exhibits were strictly content based and included detailed descriptions of the objects, articles reviewing the exhibits, and notes from the visiting curator and an artist whose objects were also part of the new installation.

None of the training materials for the new exhibit reflected the museum's espoused

theory of education. There was a lack of suggestions for questions to engage visitors, techniques for working with groups during those particular exhibits, or reference to the strategies that were outlined in the novice docent training. Moreover, neither training session at the history museum provided formalized opportunities for docents to reflect on the reading materials through discussion, questioning, or written response. Although it may be argued that this information was unnecessary in this venue, it should be noted that some of the docents had not attended the initial docent preparation program in over five years and one of the exhibits included installations that were groundbreaking for that museum, making the information and exhibit format new for all docents.

During one portion of the first training session at the history museum, 20 docents were observed preparing for eight large installations, 43 objects, and 15 panels of text. In the two-hour training, the curator, a visiting artist, and the museum educator lectured to the docents, read 28 labels for objects, and referred to the exhibit notebooks given to docents prior to the meeting. At no time did the trainers do what the museum educator stated in our interview, which was to stop talking and let people think. The rapid-fire delivery moved at a daunting pace and the docents struggled to keep up. At one point a docent commented to another docent, "Did you get that? I can't write this down fast enough."

The use of inquiry by the museum educator during the first session consisted of the statement, "If there aren't any questions, we'll move on." This statement was repeated at four different points in the training with no wait time. As it was noted previously, the museum educator reminded docents that they should ask questions of the visitors and give people time to think about the installations, yet the curator and museum educator never modeled the practices docents were expected to use in the tours of these new exhibits. Docents were not asked how the installation or exhibit could be shared with different age groups or how the object could be connected to other parts of the exhibit or how information related to their own experiences or even a visitor's experiences. The practice of the museum educator and curator did not reflect the espoused theory of the institution's educational philosophy and instead was purely didactic, gave minimal information, and at no time engaged the docents. The docents were the empty vessels, and the training was used to "fill them up."

The second observation at the same history museum involved a smaller portion of the same exhibit, including 20 objects and four panels of text and yielded similar observations. The museum educator lectured to 23 docents about the historical significance of each object and pointed out how the objects related to the museum's permanent exhibit. During the hour-long observation, docents asked four questions about who had owned the object and the use of the object, but the museum educator asked no questions of the docents.

This exhibit, which included toys from earlier time periods, was geared to children and offered an opportunity for docents to relate the objects to modern toys or similar toys that older adults may have owned. At one point, a docent commented to the group: "I used to have one just like that. It was my favorite. I played with it all the time until my brother broke it." That comment was greeted with smiles and nods by the other docents. The docent's comment was a chance for the museum educator to model her espoused theory by engaging docents in much the same way docents are expected to interact with visitors. Her espoused theory, based on our interview, stressed creating dialogue based on objects and personal experience, yet in this instance she neglected to act on that

theory. Instead, she simply said, “Yes, a lot of these toys might be familiar to you. Now in the case of this next object...”

In both training sessions, the program fell short of the museum’s educational mission of providing information about history in a thought-provoking manner and did not reflect the museum educator’s espoused theory of museum education—specifically, providing think time and encouraging a variety of teaching methods to bolster questions derived from the exhibits. There was a double standard; information and exhibits are presented one-way to docents and expected to be presented by docents another way.

In an interview following the observations, the museum educator was asked about the presentation of the new exhibits: “I know it wasn’t ideal. They know that that’s not what I want them to do, but we got it all in.” When asked if the docents would receive an opportunity to practice in the new exhibit or if there would be a separate training for presenting the new exhibits the museum educator explained that the docents could practice on their own, but most knew what to do. “I suppose they can walk through the floor on their own, but I think they can handle it. We don’t have a separate training for presentations. They just have to take what we gave them and make it work, you know, tie in what they learned from new docent training.”

In the first observation of the art museum, the docents received training for a new exhibit that included art and furnishings from a specific time period and geographical area of the U.S. The tour was conducted by two visiting curators, as well as the art museum educator, and was approximately four hours in length. Prior to the program, docents received a training manual with an overview of the exhibit and artifacts, sample scripts, label text, and historical information on the time period.

The 33 docents began the session at the entrance to the exhibit hall and were introduced to the visiting curator and given an overview of the entire exhibit. They were subsequently led from piece to piece and given details about each painting or artifact as well as any relevant art history and notable details. This information was delivered in a lecture. This delivery method was in contrast to the statement the art museum educator made in the interview, stating that docents are encouraged not to lecture. Additionally, the art museum educator espoused a theory that stressed using engaging teaching methods, yet these were not put to use in the docent training.

In the second training session, 30 volunteer docents were present. At the start of the tour, the visiting curator said, “I suggest you look for things in the exhibit that you like and highlight those, since you will never be able to cover all the objects in your tours.” This statement is ironic because the curator covered all 142 objects during the training session. She began with a 15-minute explanation of how the objects in the exhibit were used, where they were housed originally, how the art museum obtained the objects, and how the exhibit as a whole was designed. All of the information covered in this introduction was presented in the written materials and catalogue the docents received prior to the training. Because this was a very large exhibit and the training lasted almost three hours, docents could have been reminded that background information was available in their materials.

Although not instructed to do so, when the group was invited to move to the next piece of art, several stayed behind for more than five minutes to examine some of the paintings and objects more closely. They discussed with each other different aspects of the pieces including details and information on the object tags. One docent was over-

heard talking to another docent, saying, "I wonder if this is the same artist that did the sculpture in the first room. The Asian influence is really lovely and I think it will be great for our international groups. I hope we get to talk about the tours we already have planned for next week."

By staying behind, the docents seem to be indicating that they would have liked a few minutes to look through the exhibit prior to or just after the lecture. Instead, they were instructed to catch up with the rest of the group so the session could continue. If the opportunity to view the exhibit had been offered prior to the lecture, docents could have generated questions for the visiting curator, and the session would have been more interactive and reflective of the espoused theory offered by the art museum educator.

The art museum espouses a philosophy that promotes exploration, inquiry, and discovery, but this was not applied to the training of docents. The sessions consisted of direct lecture, with no questioning of docents or connection of the information to docent experiences or possible visitors. During the lecture the educator for the most part remained silent, letting the visiting curators conduct the training. This resulted in exactly what the educator had hoped her docents would not do; recite an art history lesson that ignored educational strategies and the connection of learning to the knowledge and experience of the visitor.

In the case of the history museum and the art museum, lecture was used as the primary method of delivering knowledge necessary for conducting tours. In both organizations, the docents were provided descriptions and explanations of objects in the exhibits, and written materials were distributed that docents were to learn on their own. The educators and curators did not develop a dialogue with the docents, nor did they facilitate learning about the relationships amongst objects or other installations. Notably missing was the integration of prior personal and museum experiences of the docents during the training. When these observational findings (the theory in use) are compared to the espoused theory of the museum educator and the institution, there is a clear discrepancy. Furthermore, it is important to note that follow up visits to each museum were made with observations of three separate tours in each of the two new exhibits. These randomly selected observations revealed that the docents conducted visits in a manner similar to their exhibit training, and were not reflective of the espoused theory of the institution. They used lecture methods consistent with their exhibit training, mirroring their own training experience.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how the espoused theories of education were represented in the preparation of docents for new exhibits in two museums. A constructivist approach to learning was espoused by both educators and the museums they represented, yet the docents in both organizations were taught through passive, linear modes of lecture. The following is a discussion of these findings and their implications for interpretation research and historical, cultural, and environmental sites.

This comparative case study provides a picture of how espoused and in-use theories operate in the practice of training museum docents. By juxtaposing two museums' and the museums' educators' espoused theories against the practices exhibited in four separate training sessions, a paradox between what an educator believes about learning in her institution and what is practiced with docents is presented. Both educators understood

the significance of contextually based learning (Falk & Dierking, 1997, 2000; Koran, 1991) in museums, but because the educators work within a traditional training structure that put the curator or subject matter expert in the power role, the docent preparation is more formalized and behaviorist in nature. Moreover, it is speculated that the training mimicked traditional collegiate lecture experiences in order to maintain a simple, familiar, and efficient way to deliver content. While the trainings observed in this study did achieve one goal, explaining the contents of a new exhibit, it did not model for the docents those skills they are expected to use when sharing that knowledge with visitors. Epstein (1991) contends that a person has both an experiential and a rational mind, and it is critical to attend to both by incorporating content and pedagogical process in order to develop interpreters that meet the challenge of facilitating visitor experiences. Training programs should be consistent with new docent preparation programs and address an interpreter's experiential mind through learning that is direct and quick, while recognizing the rational mind's ability to learn indirectly and deliberately (Epstein, 1991).

Causes for Disconnects Between Espoused Theory and Theory in Use

Much like the findings in this study, the work on college faculty by Fink (1989) and Kane, Sandretto, and Heath (2002), and Rowe's and Boyle's (2005) study of a mental health organization confirm an incongruous relationship between espoused and in-use theories. A variety of dilemmas result from a gap between espoused and in-use theories, as well as bring to the forefront the inconsistencies in the actions comprising one's theories in use. It is important to note that theories in use observed in the docent trainings are a response to the day-to-day work of museums, while espoused theories are generated under ideal conditions. The disjuncture between what the educators believe and what they practice could partly be influenced by what they believe they should say, and to some degree because their responses are based on what they would ideally like to see, but are unable to do in practice due to time and contextual constraints.

Another explanation for the disconnect between espoused and in-use theories may be the assumption that interpreters will delineate between the pedagogy used in their own preparation with the methods they are expected to use with visitors. There is a "do as I say, not as I do" philosophy underlying the training programs, yet interpreters will gravitate to lecture because it is their primary means of learning during their training, and, as one docent in this study noted after a tour, "If it is good enough for them, it is good enough for me."

The docents model the practices they have been shown, even though both museum educators made attempts to remind docents to actively engage visitors during tours of the new exhibits. This vicarious form of learning is supported by Bandura (1977), who found that learning occurs through observation of the reinforcing or punishing outcomes of other's behavior. When educators espouse the need for inquiry-based learning and guided discovery, and then use lecture almost exclusively to prepare interpreters, the credibility of the recommended methods can be diminished. The modeled behavior can have significant effects on interpreter performance and over time, patterns are likely to develop, permanently shaping behavior beyond any formally designed training program. As Luthans and Davis (1981) note, "Training methods that tell people how to behave may frequently be less influential than the examples that others set in the work group" (p. 23).

Moreover, Martinello et al. (1983) found in a study of museum volunteers that these guides generally have little formal teaching experience, but a wealth of life experience from which they base their work. Because their “knowledge of teaching is based on their experience as students in the classroom where linear presentations far exceed the nonlinear” (p. 55), they tend to replicate those methods in their tours. To develop models representative of ideal practice, it is critical that those working with interpreters take the lead in incorporating their espoused educational theories into training by setting clear expectations for program design with curators and subject matter experts. As Argyis (2000) finds, disconnects between espoused theories and theories in use occur, creating unintended results. In order to counteract such discrepancies it is necessary for managers and organizations to “walk the talk”.

Modeling an institution’s espoused theory of education should not only occur in the initial preparation of new staff, but be foundational to all aspects of program planning and implementation. Roberts (1997) finds that, while curators may hold technical and scholarly knowledge, this knowledge does not necessarily translate into a visitor’s way of knowing. Subject matter experts are just that, authorities on content, and it should not be assumed that they are capable of educating others through appropriate pedagogical methods. Educators cannot object to the use of passive forms of education, yet invite curators to walk docents through museums in a lecture format, thereby modeling for interpreters the very methods educators find ineffective (Wolens, 1986). Although both museums in this study provided extensive training on pedagogy and interpretation methods in their initial orientations and training of new volunteers, it was not reinforced in practice. Educators can work with curators, subject matter experts, and artists to create standards of preparation and devise approaches to informing and preparing staff in a way that encourages the espoused theory of the institution. Without this form of modeling, interpreters are likely to continue to lead tours in a manner that mirrors their prior learning experiences and what they see from peers.

Another consideration may be that many educators may adopt a passive style of readying staff for new tours not because they believe in it, but because they let others control the training format or practical concerns for preparing a large number of staff in a short time frame is necessary. While their educational philosophy may contradict behavioral methods, the apparent contextual constraints make it compelling and attractive. The design of interpreter training should be done with an eye toward balancing the presentation of information with approaches to delivering information in a way that is reflective of the educational mission and vision of the organization. By doing so, volunteers and staff could then be encouraged to develop a shared commitment and vision for future development of educational programming and services and be more responsive in presenting the institution in a manner indicative of its espoused educational philosophy. In the next section critical reflection is examined as a way for educators to acknowledge and work with real conditions in such a way that practice and theory can be brought in line with each other.

Reconciling Espoused Theory and Theory in Use

To counter lecture and other traditionally passive forms of interpreter preparation, more staff development and formal preparation for professional staff such as educators might be necessary in order to help them challenge or operationalize their role. One approach

to supporting educators in this process is the use of reflective practice. The extent to which experienced educators' beliefs and perceptions are consistent with their practice depends, to a degree, on the opportunity to reflect on their actions. Reflective practice is described by Vaughan (1990) as a state of mind that must be internalized by those practicing it. Schön (1983; 1987) defines a reflective practitioner as one who considers an experience by thought, feeling, or action that may occur simultaneously or after in order to create meaning. Through reflective practice, or what Argyris (1974) calls "double-loop learning" an individual builds off of reflective practice and goes beyond the detection and correction of errors. Double-loop learning involves questioning and modifying existing norms, procedures, policies, and objectives to change an existing knowledge base (Dodgson, 1993). By reflecting on their institutional mission and educational positions and actions, educators will gain new insight into their own assumptions and beliefs and determine how those translate into interpreter preparation. The result is the development of coherent rationales for their beliefs and staff development practices and greater awareness of viable alternatives rather than reliance on the familiar.

When preparing interpreters, it is critical to balance content knowledge with presentation of that information in order to provide an accurate model of practice. Critical reflection on action provides educators with an opportunity to compare their espoused theories with those in practice. For example, when preparing interpreters, the training program should be based in the greater interpretation goal of artistry (Tilden, 1957) that builds emotional and intellectual connections through an enjoyable, relevant, organized, and thematic presentation (Brochu & Merriman, 2002).

Just as interpretive outcomes require a sense of relationship and a sense of connection to something greater (Goldman, Chen, & Larsen, 2001), so do interpreter preparation outcomes. Educators can look for opportunities to link learning at both personal and interpretive levels (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1995), as well as chances to emphasize the meaning-revealing aspects of interpretation. Furthermore, educators can review current interpreter preparation practices to identify examples of universal concepts to build on the memories, values, and experiences (Silverman, 2000) of interpreters to increase retention of information and commitment to the organization. Interpreters fail if they do not reveal the meanings and relationships that lead to understanding (Alderson & Payne Low, 1995); similarly, educators fail if they do not do the same for those they train.

Silverman (2000) notes, "In creating museum exhibits and programs it is ...time for museum educators to take further steps beyond the expert/novice dichotomy to create more effective ways to share authority for the making of meaning in museums" (236). Although the espoused theory of the art museum educator was the need for creating an even playing field between docent and visitor, the theory in use when training docents more closely resembled the expert/novice approach described by Silverman. Much like the docents in this study, interpreters may resist using methods other than lecture because it is their primary means of learning during training. Interpreters must draw from a range of stories, activities, and engaging presentation skills (Roth, 1998) to co-create successful experiences with visitors. This is best achieved, not in isolation, but in conjunction with learning the content.

In summary, although museum educators claim to hold education as their central mission (Roberts, 1997), the findings of this study indicate that the mission is not applied

equally to visitors and volunteers. If a museum's educational goal is to teach visitors how to observe, contrast, classify, deduce, induce, hypothesize, and interpret (Gartenhaus, 1994), how can we expect docents to provide that opportunity if they themselves never see or experience the methods firsthand as learners themselves? This study fosters the hope that educators will incorporate their espoused theories and educational philosophy of the institution they represent into the design and delivery of training for interpreters.

Looking at two museums in particular pointed to some possible variance between the espoused education theory of the organization in terms of the approaches to engaging audiences in the museums and the theory in use in the preparation of volunteer docents. It would be interesting indeed to compare this study's findings on preparing docents to other organizations utilizing guides and interpreters such as visitor and welcome centers, parks, and historic sites.

The study also offered some insights helpful to practitioners wishing to stimulate and facilitate significant learning for volunteers, learning that has to do universal meanings (Silverman, 2000) and is based on constructivist approaches (Ballantyne & Uzzell, 1999). Educators working in environmental, cultural, and historical sites might draw on what we know about espoused theories and theories in use to foster reflective practices for themselves and meaningful and transferable learning for interpreters. Although clearly there is a practical dimension to training, this study points out the shared nature of the learning, the need for modeling of good practice, and opportunities to discuss and reflect on experiences.

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The State of Interpretation in Academia

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Abstract

This research reports on how future heritage interpreters are being trained in academic institutions in North America. Faculty and instructors from 130 colleges and universities were asked about the skills taught, textbooks used, types of degrees offered, certification, and accreditation. Respondents were asked about challenges to the profession and ideas for improving the academic arm of the profession. Colleges who responded teach interpretation courses in various academic disciplines around the continent, suggesting some inconsistencies for potential students interested in a professional career in interpretation. Challenges to the profession are discussed regarding the needs of future professionals in the field of interpretation and the potential need for academics to improve marketing of the profession and to collaborate more with professionals in the field who are interested in hiring the latest pool of graduates from colleges and universities.

Key Words

interpretation, academia, future interpreters, challenges to the profession

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Introduction

Many future interpretive professionals are being trained at various academic institutions throughout North America. According to Tom Mullin, Director of the College and

University Academics (CUA) section of the National Association for Interpretation (NAI), there are currently about 87 colleges and universities offering at least one course in interpretation in the United States (personal communication, 2008). The need exists for a current look at the state of interpretation in academia for the purpose of 1) determining consistencies and inconsistencies existing in curricula targeting future interpreters, and 2) to recognize the current trends of academic training as well as gaps that need to be addressed in the future. This updated account can benefit those in academia as well as professionals in the field who have a vested interest regarding how interpreters are preparing for their careers.

Identifying how heritage interpreters are being trained academically has been a topic of discussion over the years (Mahaffey, 1973; Risk, 1986; Vander Stoep, 1991). With regard to university programs for interpreters, professor Grant Sharpe stated that “the lack of a standard core curriculum and a professional degree are the most grievous problems, in my view” (Bevilacqua, 1993). The idea of developing accepted standards of practice continues to be discussed (Knudson, Cable, & Beck, 2003; Merriman & Brochu, 2006; Ward & Wilkinson, 2006).

The intent of this study was to identify the status of academic programs that prepare students to become natural and/or cultural history communicators with a focus on those institutions that offer at least one course related to heritage interpretation. Heritage interpretation is referred to here as natural and/or cultural interpretation. Although many programs offer both environmental education and interpretation classes within their curriculum, the intent here is to report only on interpretation courses.

Methodology

In the fall of 2006, a listing of colleges and universities in the United States and Canada was obtained from the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) College and University Academics (CUA) section. A questionnaire was designed to obtain detailed information about curricula and experiences offered related to interpretation. Within the questionnaire, respondents were provided the following clarification:

Academic programs that offer heritage interpretation courses are referred to using various related titles, to include environmental interpretation, environmental communication, environmental education, conservation education, outdoor education, etc. The goal is to identify the status of academic programs that prepare students to become better natural and/or cultural history communicators, that offer at least one course related to heritage interpretation. Heritage interpretation is referred to here as natural and/or cultural interpretation.

Nearly 130 questionnaires were distributed to college and university instructors, primarily using an electronic method of data collection. About 40% of the institutional contacts were made in Canada. Follow-up reminders were sent out to increase the response rate. If email addresses were undeliverable, a hard copy of the questionnaire was sent through the mail system.

Results and Discussion

Of those 129 questionnaires distributed to academics, 45% (N=58) responded. Nine

colleges indicated that no interpretation-related courses are currently offered at their institution, and four responded by declining to complete the questionnaire. As a result, the data summarized here is based on the responses from 45 academic institutions. Nine (20%) of the respondents are from schools in Canada. These results do not paint a complete picture because it is unknown what percentage of those institutions that did not respond include interpretation classes and which ones do not.

Academic Homes for Interpretation

Interpretation courses are offered in a variety of academic schools or colleges within institutions throughout North America, which can be challenging for potential students investigating opportunities for their educational experience. Respondents were asked to list the college, department, or program that heritage interpretation courses are offered in at their institution. Interpretation programs can be found within colleges or schools such as:

- Agriculture
- Arts and Sciences
- Education
- Environment
- Forestry
- Health
- Natural Resources
- Science
- Tourism

Department and program titles housing interpretation courses vary across the spectrum as well. Examples include:

- Environmental Studies Department
- Geography Department
- Geosciences Department
- Horticulture, Forestry, and Recreation Resources Department
- Human Dimensions of Natural Resource Management
- Outdoor Education
- Recreation, Park, and Tourism Studies
- Teaching and Learning

Of those academic institutions that responded, the number of interpretation courses offered ranged from one to seven classes. Many programs offer one or two classes. Either one broad interpretation course is taught, or two that address both personal interpretive skills and non-personal interpretation. Those schools offering more than two interpretation courses also cover interpretive methods courses, advanced courses, and practical experience courses.

A few programs offer a blend of natural and cultural interpretation together with their courses, one focused specifically on museum education, and another specifically on geoscience interpretation.

Skills Taught to Future Interpreters

As alluded to earlier, identifying the core skills necessary for future interpreters has been a challenge for the profession in the past.

Time and again we have found ourselves at a loss in coming to consensus on a single list of job skills or competencies. Which are core, and which are complementary, but peripheral? Should we focus on content or on planning and effective communication processes? Should we include management techniques, marketing, advocacy, and global perspective issues?

Vander Stoep & Capelle (1992)

Respondents were asked to outline the skills and knowledge gained by students enrolled in interpretation courses at their institution. According to results from this study, several of the skills and subjects are similar, with some variation reported. Some responses were more thorough than others with several not responding at all. Frequencies of responses are included in parentheses next to each set of skills/subjects:

- Interpretation concepts, principles, methods, philosophy, history (24)
- Develop and/or present interpretive talks, walks, illustrated talks (24)
- Evaluate interpretive presentations and products (21)
- Non-personal interpretive products such as exhibits, brochures, signs; interpretive planning (19)
- Written and oral communication skills (8)
- Arts in interpretation (8)
- Learning and communication theories (8)
- Interpretation as a management tool (7)
- Visit professional facilities and interpreters; explore careers (7)
- Diversity and special audience members (5)
- Interpreting history (5)
- Relevant issues facing interpreters (5)
- Certification systems and requirements; gain certification (4)
- Agencies and organizations involved with interpretation (4)

Other less-mentioned skills and subjects include natural history topics, grant writing, museum studies, and business issues related to interpretation projects.

Based on these responses, there are broad consistencies that exist among institutions

that responded, such as interpretation principles, demonstration of personal interpretation techniques, evaluation, and producing non-personal interpretation. Other topics are mentioned with less consistency. Additional information is needed about the peripheral courses required by academic programs. For example, what natural history or cultural history classes are required, and what social science courses are expected? It is important to identify how these core interpretation skills and subjects (as well as peripheral courses) offered in schools coincide with the needs of practitioners, managers, agencies, and organizations involved with interpretation. Bringing the practitioners, academics, and NAI together for a discussion about the core skills and subjects needed would be a start.

Types of Degrees Offered

Respondents were asked whether their academic program offers a major or minor degree in interpretation. Choices were provided for respondents. A majority (61%) of respondents stated that their school did not offer a major or minor degree, with about 18% equally responding that yes, both a major and a minor in interpretation are offered at their school. When asked whether a graduate degree in interpretation is offered, respondents primarily said “no” (70%). The remaining 30% that said “yes,” clarified that the graduate degree is typically granted under more broad headings, such as natural resources or recreation, parks and tourism, environmental education, animal ecology, forestry, or human dimensions. Typically the M.S. or Ph.D. is labeled as an emphasis, not an actual degree.

Interpretation as a Profession/Certification and Accreditation

The designation of interpretation as a profession has historically been and currently is a topic of discussion among field practitioners, managers, and academics (Beck & Cable, 1998; Merriman & Brochu, 2006; Mills, 1920; Vander Stoep & Capelle, 1992; Vander Stoep, 1993; Ward & Wilkinson, 2006). In *Adventures of a Nature Guide*, Enos Mills stated that “it is probable that nature guiding will become a nation-wide and distinct profession, and, though different, ranks with the occupations of authors and lecturers.” Gail Vander Stoep initiated the discussion of professionalism, certification, and accreditation in the early 1990s to help interpreters “seek clear identification, to justify their roles and contributions, and to negotiate for professional respect and fair compensation.” The challenges associated with not having universally accepted professional standards are low pay, lack of career paths, limited training opportunities, acceptance of unqualified candidates, and confusion by employing agencies and the general public about the nature of the profession (Vander Stoep, 1993).

What is meant by the term “profession”? Ward and Wilkinson (2006) suggest that characteristics include the following: A profession should be knowledge-based, should include standards of practice, accreditation, quality control, and continuing educational opportunities. To address the growing discussion about professionalism within interpretation, the National Association for Interpretation established a certification program in four categories in 1998. The National Park Service also initiated the Interpretive Development Program, certifying individuals on specific competencies in 10 categories to promote skill development and to demonstrate interpretation at a national standard. Developing a certification system is controversial, and as Beck and Cable (1998) suggest, most will agree about the need to increase professionalism, but do not agree about how to accomplish the task.

Certification is a fairly new offering from academic institutions, in addition to the

curriculum already provided to students. Academic programs have been offering certification either through the National Association for Interpretation (NAI), the National Park Service (NPS), or through their own university. Within the questionnaire, choices were provided for respondents. Of those who replied, nearly one-third (31%) are offering certification, while 62% are not, and about 7% are planning to in the future. Six responding colleges are currently certifying students through NAI and two plan to in the future. One school certifies through the NPS and two colleges have their own certification process.

Respondents were asked about their level of support for the idea that schools consider being accredited in interpretation. Accreditation is to recognize (an educational institution) as maintaining standards that qualify the graduates for admission to higher or more specialized institutions or for professional practice (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2008). This idea is similar to the Society of American Foresters and the National Parks & Recreation Association accreditation process. About one-third (32%) of respondents were either somewhat or very supportive of the idea; a similar percentage (31%) were either somewhat or very unsupportive, and about 37% said they needed more information.

Faculty Conducting Research

Of those faculty teaching interpretation courses, a majority (66%) stated that they actively conduct research, while about 34% do not (N=41). Respondents were asked to briefly describe their research program. Some respondents noted that their research efforts do not focus on interpretation specifically. Responses included, “not specifically interpretation,” “service-learning projects and outcomes,” “participatory action research directed at heritage interpretation,” “effectiveness of interpretation,” “optimal experience theory, learning theory, communication theory,” and “front-end studies, formative and summative evaluation, and human dimensions that inform the design of interpretation”.

Greatest Challenge to Profession

When asked what respondents considered to be the biggest challenge facing the field of interpretation today, many similar responses emerged. This question was posed in an open-ended format. The responses below include a number in parentheses indicating the number of comments that reflect that same challenge.

- Shrinking funding dollars to support research, evaluation, and program development (9)
- A credibility issue with agencies and managers and them not appreciating the value of interpretation (7)
- The profession is poorly understood (4)
- Insufficient salaries (4)
- A dwindling pool of interested students who will consider interpretation as a career and who are outdoor oriented (3)
- Lack of trained professionals in interpretive positions (3)
- Becoming relevant to diverse audiences (3)
- Lack of full-time positions (2)

- More jobs are relying on volunteers (2)
- Lack of practical field training (2)
- Lack of available free time for audience participants (2)
- Lack of evaluation (1)
- General lack of awareness of interpretation jobs (1)

One respondent stated, “Despite great progress in the past two decades, we still need a broader understanding of what interpretation is, its benefits/outcomes, and its multiple applications.” Some of these concerns mirror a concern of Merriman and Brochu (2006), who suggest that the “proliferation of jobs in the private sector without growth in academic programs has left many employers short of well-qualified employees.” National Park sites like Yellowstone and Yosemite often have unfilled openings before the beginning of a busy summer season.

Suggested Improvements to Academia

Respondents were also asked what they thought would improve the academic arm of the field of interpretation. This question was posed in an open-ended format. Responses include the following:

- Funding for research (4)
- More collaboration and better dialogue between practitioners and faculty (4)
- Standards/program accreditation/professional recognition (3)
- More emphasis on publications, including global publications (3)
- Better support and interest from NAI (2)
- Expand course offerings (2)
- Larger and more empirical studies/more and better interpretation research (2)
- Professionalism, but not accreditation (1)
- An increased voice for qualitative research (1)
- Better training of interpreters (1)
- More connection to NPS and NAI certification (1)

One respondent suggested that we need a “cohesive marketing campaign to explain the field to the general public and to make professionals more visible.”

Textbooks Used in the Classroom

The selection of textbooks used for interpretation classes is extensive and has certainly expanded in recent years (Merriman & Brochu, 2006). Questionnaire respondents were asked to list the textbooks used for their interpretation courses. The list below includes the number of respondents that use the same textbook in parentheses following the citation.

- Beck, L. & Cable, T. (1998 & 2002). *Interpretation for the 21st century: Fifteen guiding principles for interpreting nature and culture*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing. (8)
- Brochu, L. (2003). *Interpretive planning: The 5-M model for successful planning projects*. Fort Collins, CO: InterpPress. (3)
- Brochu, L. & Merriman, T. (2002). *Personal interpretation: Connecting your audience to heritage resources*. Fort Collins, CO: InterpPress. (7)
- Cornell, J. (1989). *Sharing the joy of nature*. Nevada City, CA: Dawn Publications. (3)
- Diamond, J. (1999). *Practical evaluation guide*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press. (2)
- Fazio, J. & Gilbert, D. (2000). *Public relations and communications for natural resource managers*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt. (1)
- Graham, B., Ashworth, G., & Tunbridge, J. (2000). *A geography of heritage: Power, culture and economy*. London: Arnold. (1)
- Gross, M. & Zimmerman, R. (2002). *Interpretive centers*. Stevens Point, WI: UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc. (3)
- Gross, M., Zimmerman, R. & Buchholz, J. (2006). *Signs, trails, and wayside exhibits*. Stevens Point, WI: UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc. (1)
- Ham, S. (1992). *Environmental interpretation: A practical guide for people with big ideas and small budgets*. Golden, CO: North American Press. (14)
- Heintzman, J. (1988). *Making the right connections: A guide for nature writers*. Stevens Point, WI: UW-SP Foundation Press. (1)
- Jacobson, S. (1999). *Communication skills for conservation professionals*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press. (2)
- Jordon, D.J. (1999). *Leadership in leisure services: Making a difference*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing. (1)
- Knudson, D., Cable, T. & Beck, L. (2003). *Interpretation of cultural and natural resources*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc. (8)
- Larsen, D. (Ed.) (2003). *Meaningful interpretation*. Fort Washington, PA: Eastern National. (3)
- Leopold, A. (1949). *A sand county almanac*. Oxford University Press, Inc. (1)
- Lewis, W. (1991). *Interpretation for park visitors*. Eastern National Park and Monument Assoc.: Eastern Acorn Press. (4)
- Moscardo, G. (1999). *Making visitors mindful: Principles for creating sustainable visitor experiences through effective communication*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore Publishing. (1)
- Regnier, K., Gross, M. & Zimmerman, R. (1992). *The interpreter's guidebook*. Stevens Point, WI: UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc. (4)
- Serrell, B. (1996). *Exhibit labels: An interpretive approach*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press. (3)

- Sharpe, G. (1982). *Interpreting the environment*. New York: MacMillan. (1)
- Strauss, S. (1996). *The passionate fact: Storytelling in natural history and cultural interpretation*. Golden, CO: North American Press. (2)
- Tilden, F. (1977). *Interpreting our heritage*. New York: Van Rees Press. (8)
- Trapp, S., Gross, M. & Zimmerman, R. (1994). *Signs, trails, and wayside exhibits*. Stevens Point, WI: UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc. (7)
- Veverka, J. (1994). *Interpretive master planning*. The Interpretation, Publication, and Resource Center. (1)
- Ward, C. & Wilkinson, A. (2006). *Conducting meaningful interpretation: A field guide for success*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum. (1)
- Williams, R. (2004). *The non-designer's design book* (2nd Ed.). Berkeley, CA: Peachpit Press. (2)
- Zehr, J., Gross, M. & Zimmerman, R. (1994). *Creating environmental publications*. Stevens Point, WI: UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc. (3)

Recommendations

No matter what the “academic home” is for interpretation programs at colleges and universities throughout North America, the results of this study and the ongoing discussion about increasing professionalism imply the need for a closer look at three areas: consistent standards, the need for collaboration, and recruiting/promoting academic programs for future interpretive professionals.

First, academic programs currently offer a range of interpretive skills and subjects, some more consistently than others. Yet it seems possible to develop a set of core competencies needed for classification, such as a heritage interpreter, possibly with an emphasis option for either natural or cultural interpretation. Even if a school offers one interpretation course, certain components should be included, thus increasing consistency among programs.

Second, determining these core competencies needed to increase consistency among academic programs requires collaboration between several groups. A discussion about aligning these core competencies is needed between academics, NAI, government agencies, members of the private sector, and other organizations providing interpretive services. While recognizing that there will always be site-specific or agency-specific components for training interpreters, it seems reasonable that core standards can be consistent among all groups.

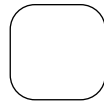
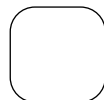
Finally, realizing the potential challenge for prospective students to identify schools offering programs in interpretation, due to the various titles, programs, departments and colleges that interpretation course are nestled within indicates the need for marketing scholastic programs in interpretation. For example, if an interested student were to search on the World Wide Web using “Google” as a search engine and typed “law schools,” a directory link of schools would be retrieved. If that student typed in “environmental education schools,” a directory of schools offering programs throughout the United States could easily be retrieved. If the student searched for “interpretation schools” or “heritage interpretation schools,” a comprehensive source is not found. Knowing the importance of the internet as a

source of information, this suggests that an academic directory of interpretation schools should be developed and marketed.

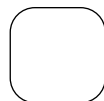
Trends of unfilled interpretation positions and the upcoming baby boomer retirements suggest an increased need for qualified interpreters at all levels within agencies and organizations. Colleges and universities, NAI, and agencies and organizations may need to make a concerted effort to recruit candidates to attend college programs offering interpretation courses. If the overall goal is to increase professionalism of interpretation, then more effort is needed to agree on how to accomplish the task. Increased professionalism should lead to improved research and program funding dollars, as well as improved credibility in the eyes of others.

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I N M Y O P I N I O N



**Should NAI
Develop a
Program to
Accredit
University
Curricula?
(Probably
Not Just Yet)**

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In the United States, accreditation of academic programs focused on professional preparation is typically conferred by organizations that are closely associated with the field. The NAI represents such a body, as do organizations such as the National Recreation and Parks Association, which accredits parks and recreation curricula, and the Society of American Foresters, which accredits forestry and forest management academic programs. Typically, accreditation is conferred to an undergraduate degree program (BA or BS, for example), but accreditation of minors and options (or “emphasis areas”) also occurs. In all cases, accreditation requires an exhaustive review and evaluation of course requirements, number of teaching faculty members, space, facilities, equipment, and financial resources, as well as certain operational factors (such as record keeping, maintenance of confidential records, etc.).

Anyone who has conducted or been through an accreditation process knows that a significant effort is required both by the program being accredited and by the accrediting body. And this effort is required not only for the initial accreditation review, but for each renewal or re-application thereafter. Therefore, a decision as to whether NAI and collaborating universities should enter into a new era of accreditation should be made cautiously with full and objective consideration of the likely benefits and costs. Accreditation of academic programs in interpretation is both a good and bad idea, depending on how one weighs the advantages and disadvantages associated with it. The primary considerations are outlined in Table 1 (page 40) and explained more fully in the following discussions.¹

Potential Upside of Accreditation

Because the ultimate purpose of accreditation is to help university programs do a better job of preparing tomorrow’s professionals, the most important potential beneficiary would be the interpretive profession itself. A more competent workforce of interpreters and a stronger profession composed of individuals who possess a consensually agreed-upon body of

	Potential Advantages	Potential Disadvantages
Interpretive Profession	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An interpretive workforce that is increasingly proficient • A stronger profession composed of individuals who possess a common agreed-upon body of knowledge and skills • Enhanced status of interpretation as a professional field of study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining too narrowly what the knowledge and skills a professional interpreter ought to be • The gradual weeding out of interpreters who do not possess a degree or other credential (e.g., a minor or emphasis area) from an accredited university
Educational Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More active interaction and dialogue with NAI with respect to professional directions and needs • Students with access to a defined body of coursework that has meaning for job placement and career advancement • Departments and faculties with increased leverage to secure financial and human resources, equipment, and space • Greater recognition in the academic community and profession • More and better job opportunities for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrofitting additional curricular requirements into degree programs that are already at capacity • Acquiring additional staff needed to teach new courses that are required for accreditation. • Paying for the cost of new or upgraded facilities, equipment, and operating expenses associated with new coursework • Paying the costs of self-study and accreditation reviews • Investing significant portions of time for self-study in preparation for accreditation reviews
NAI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased relevance to the academic community • More active interaction and dialogue with universities • Assurance to its membership that it is helping university programs to remain relevant to professional directions and needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation and funding of an accreditation committee that works with universities to develop accreditation criteria and policies • Administration and maintenance of the accreditation application and review process • Cost-sharing with universities to pay for expenses

Table 1. Potential Advantages and Disadvantages of Accreditation.

knowledge and skills is the endgame of interest. In addition, the stature and visibility of interpretation as a professional field of study would be enhanced were academic preparatory programs at universities made the focus of serious accreditation review.

Educational institutions themselves also stand to benefit from accreditation. Clearly, adherence to standards defined by the profession bodes well for academic programs that wish to remain relevant to what interpreters must be able to do in their work. Accreditation reviews would require dialogue and frequent interaction between educational institutions, NAI, and employers, thus keeping courses and faculty members current on real-world needs. Students would benefit from having access to coursework that is centrally relevant to the careers they are entering and which has real meaning for job placement upon graduation and career advancement thereafter. Departments and faculties could benefit from being able to leverage the prospect of attaining accreditation (or of avoiding losing it) in their efforts to secure the financial and human resources necessary to obtain and maintain accreditation.

NAI, itself, also stands to benefit from entering the accreditation business. Doing so would increase its relevance and professional stature in the academic community, thereby giving it access to more potential members as well as enhancing opportunities to interact with faculty and administrators responsible for designing and delivering interpretive education to students. The organization also stands to benefit within its own ranks by being able to demonstrate to members that it is serving the profession by helping university academic programs to be more relevant to the real-world needs of the interpretive profession.¹

Potential Downside of Accreditation

Along with the benefits of accreditation come some important costs. Perhaps the greatest potential disadvantage is to the profession itself. Before accreditation standards could be developed, NAI would need to work in close collaboration with universities and colleges around the country to achieve consensus on the skills and competencies that “define” a proficient interpreter, as well as on the kinds of courses that an academic program must offer in order to develop those competencies in students. Assuming that this difficult task could be achieved, the result would probably be a narrower definition of what constitutes a “competent” interpreter than some might be able to accept. If accreditation is to realize the many other benefits it promises, a first and necessary step will be that employers recognize and honor the competitive advantage of an applicant who has graduated from an NAI-accredited institution of higher learning. Were this recognition achieved, individuals who lack an accredited degree could, over time, effectively be precluded from entering our profession, or they might encounter obstacles to advancing in an organization they already work for, providing them an incentive to leave the profession. Yet one of the strengths often cited about the interpretive field is the diversity of individuals who wear the interpreter label. Some of the most talented interpreters are found among the ranks of biologists, geologists, historians, artists, musicians, performers, wine and beer makers, and so on. A conceivable scenario is that many of them could gradually be weeded out of the profession were accreditation taken seriously in the job market. And if it were not taken seriously, then one would wonder if it is worth doing at all.

Accreditation would also present some challenges to educational institutions seeking accreditation. Typically an accreditation review results in the accrediting body setting a series of requirements that the program must meet. These requirements may involve adding

to the content of existing courses or offering new courses altogether. Such retrofitting is often difficult for academic departments where interpretation is offered, not because they are reluctant to change, but because they serve many masters, not just the accrediting body. The result of these layered requirements is that departments have little flexibility in the number of credits they can require their students to take. Adding more sounds easy, but the practicalities are difficult since students are unlikely to enroll in a degree program that will take them an extra term or year to complete. Therefore, adding new requirements is problematic for most departments. A U.S. professor summed up the situation at her university:

At [my university] I've been able to get only *one* interpretation course. But it is a course option (in another certificate program)...

While there are a few exceptions, the situation lamented by this professor seems representative of universities across North America.² In addition, most faculties are already over-taxed in their teaching loads and the funds to hire additional faculty members to teach new courses can be exceedingly difficult to acquire on many university campuses.

Combined, these factors suggest that the courses of action required to meet accreditation standards might well exceed the capacity of many or most academic departments that offer interpretation coursework. As one senior university administrator put it:

The probable result would be that most of the universities now offering interpretation classes would not be accredited and the number of opportunities for interpretive training would diminish greatly if accreditation actually meant anything. There would likely be a great loss in the number of students and professors involved in the field. I could see accreditation being more harmful in the long run than it would be productive.

Other financial impacts are also a downside. For example, the costs of new equipment, facilities, and space (which are sometimes required to obtain accreditation) must usually be paid with money that currently doesn't exist. In addition, the costs of accreditation review itself can be significant. While it is generally expected that the accrediting body would bear some of the cost, it is usually the university that pays the lion's share, including the full costs of on-campus evaluations where a review panel's time, airfares, hotels, meals, and other expenses must be covered. Finally, the sheer time required to conduct a thorough self-study (a requirement of virtually all accreditation processes) can be enormous and must be carved out of the department's existing workload. As one interpretation professor candidly concluded:

"Accreditation" is often a painful, drawn-out, overly detailed endeavor where the effort put forth isn't worth the rewards that are gained. Departments are usually so worn out by the time accreditation is done that little or no action is taken to work on identified program deficiencies stated in the accreditation report.

For NAI, there would also be costs. A committee or council on accreditation would need to be created for the purpose of developing accreditation policies and defining the criteria for accrediting various types of programs. To achieve buy-in from the academic community,

this process would require long-term iterative deliberations in which educational institutions help the NAI accreditation council to arrive at consensus on at least three fronts: (1) the required competencies of a professional interpreter, (2) the required curricular content of academic programs hoping to produce this type of professional, and (3) the policies and procedures the council will follow in reviewing, evaluating, and making decisions about accreditation applications. Achieving broad consensus on these issues will require a significant time period and the cost of human resources, travel, and operating expenses necessary to carry out the process will need to be borne by NAI. Of course, once the accreditation program is in place, NAI would need to cover the costs of implementing, updating, and maintaining its various programs indefinitely.

The Question of Demand

Clearly, a range of important trade-offs must be considered before embarking on the road to developing an accreditation program. Accreditation promises a number of potentially important benefits to all the stakeholders and it engenders a number of significant costs. However, if the demand from universities and employers to develop accreditation programs is strong, then perhaps the potential benefits outweigh the costs. The question of demand cannot be overlooked, since ultimately, both employers of interpreters and academic preparatory programs must feel that there is net benefit to be gained from the effort and expense of developing accreditation programs. Without demand from both sides, pursuing the development of accreditation programs makes little sense.

To assess demand, one could reasonably look at the number of academic programs that might ultimately be accredited. Based on a recent study by Brenda Lackey (2008, pp. 27–36 in this issue) and figures provided by NAI, an estimated 50 to 90 North American learning institutions teach at least one course in interpretation. However, very few offer bachelors degrees specifically in interpretation. According to NAI, there are perhaps just 15 or fewer that offer a major with even a “concentration” or “emphasis” in interpretation, and many of these deliver only one or two courses in interpretation itself. These estimates are consistent with Lackey’s finding that just eight institutions reported offering both a major and a minor in interpretation and that many offer just one or two courses. While a somewhat larger number of institutions (about 34) currently offer NAI’s Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) course as part of their undergraduate curriculum, NAI reports that many of these programs offer only one actual course in interpretation, and some of these are two-year institutions that do not offer bachelors degrees. All things considered, the current demand for accreditation by the academic community itself seems modest. Therefore, barring a wave of strong discontent from employers about the quality of graduates entering the workforce, the demand for NAI to enter the accreditation business appears slim, particularly considering the many costs and obstacles it engenders for the various players. But to our knowledge, employers have not yet voiced any unified dissatisfaction of this type.

The Challenge of Reaching Consensus on Coursework

Discussions about whether academic programs in interpretation should be accredited have been ongoing for about 35 years. The idea was first tossed around in academic circles during the mid-1970s, shortly after Ben Mahaffey (of Texas A&M University) published his article “Curricular Guidelines for Environmental Interpreter Training Programs” in the *Journal of Environmental Education* (Mahaffey, 1973). Two of Mahaffey’s main objectives were to

determine which proficiencies were most important for professional interpreters and to propose curricular guidelines for the type of bachelors degree that would best prepare environmental interpreters to enter the profession. To do this, Mahaffey surveyed two populations (one composed of university degree programs in parks and recreation, and the other, the combined memberships of the two most prominent interpretive organizations at that time—the Association of Interpretive Naturalists and the Western Interpreters Association. While Mahaffey did not explicitly use the word “accreditation,” his focus on the coursework that a prototype bachelors degree might include certainly became the basis for a discussion on accreditation, at least in academic circles.

The results of Mahaffey’s analysis revealed the difficulty of achieving consensus on what a professional environmental interpreter should know and be able to do. Nearly 50 different courses were cited by his respondents as being desirable in a curriculum for interpretive education. Since his focus was exclusively on “environmental” interpreters, it was not surprising that these courses were dominated by the natural and physical sciences (57% including natural sciences, biology, natural resources, and physical sciences). Communication (including interpretation) made up just 11% of the recommended coursework. While the priorities reflected in these percentages are three decades old, it remains noteworthy that just two courses in interpretation were recommended out of an entire bachelors degree curriculum. Most of the remaining courses defined the technical content that environmental interpreters (at least in those days, but arguably today as well) would be expected to impart to their audiences. Thus the curriculum resulting from Mahaffey’s study resembled a sort of generalist natural science degree more than one attempting to prepare a communication professional. While this might sound reasonable to some, others would vigorously oppose the notion that what makes an interpreter “professional” is her or his technical subject matter breadth. Were we considering some other profession, say physicians, we as a society probably would not be satisfied with accreditation programs that focused 89% on bioscience and included just one or two courses in the practice of medicine itself.

Gail Vander Stoep (1991, 1993) has been at the forefront of more recent efforts to understand and define the skills and aptitudes required of contemporary interpreters. It is noteworthy that her work (Vander Stoep, 1991) has raised many of the same questions about minimum professional competencies that Mahaffey’s work raised nearly two decades earlier:

Which [competencies] are core, and which are complementary, but peripheral? Should we focus on content or on planning and effective communication processes? Should we include management techniques, marketing, advocacy, and global perspective issues?”

NAI’s evolution from the old Association of Interpretive Naturalists (AIN) was, in part, due to recognition in the late 1980s that interpreters are far more diverse than the label “naturalist” implies. Today, they interpret a growing range of technical content areas for their audiences—one that includes not only nature and the environment, but history, culture, technology, energy, manufacturing, industry, food, politics, society, art, music, and literature, to name just some. To expect any academic curriculum to do justice to this wide and growing range of possibilities seems futile, not simply because of sheer limitations on the number of course requirements an undergraduate curriculum can realistically impose on its

students, but because the types of courses such curricula might even include will depend in large part on the disciplinary home of the department or program seeking accreditation. Today, a university's interpretive courses are as likely to be found in departments of history, museum studies, geology, natural resource management, environmental science, agriculture, geography, parks and recreation, tourism, or communication as they are in a department related specifically to one of the pure life sciences (biology, zoology, botany, etc.).

Clearly, achieving consensus on the technical content an accredited program should require of its students is going to be difficult. Said an interpretation professor in a geosciences department:

If interpretive professionals would have been incorporating more content and insight on geological landscapes and processes into programs the past few decades, then perhaps there would not be a need nowadays for programs on why polar bears might become extinct in the not-too-distant future because of climate change.

When one considers the range of other technical content areas that would also be justifiable in an undergraduate curriculum for today's interpretive professionals, it is easy to see the difficulty we would face in reaching consensus on required coursework for accreditation. By virtually any objective measure, the core of what it means to be an "interpreter" is defined at some level by the activity that all interpreters must do—communication. But given the inflexibility of most academic departments to add interpretation courses to their already crowded curricula, one must face the fact that accrediting just the communication component of the curriculum would boil down at most universities to a maximum of just one or two courses specifically in interpretation. An accreditation program focused on such a small piece of the overall curriculum would be difficult to justify. So perhaps we should leave the issue of accreditation on the table for the time being and revisit it a few years down the road.

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Notes

- 1 Some of these discussions incorporate anonymous quotations from interpretation academics at North American universities and colleges who responded to a request for information and their opinions about accreditation. The names and affiliations of these individuals are withheld for reasons of confidentiality.

- 2 As explained in the next section (“The Question of Demand”), estimates by NAI and a recent survey of interpretation academic programs in the USA and Canada show that most universities offer just one or two classes in interpretation. Two exceptions are Humboldt State University and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, which offer impressive lists of interpretation courses to their undergraduate students. However, such specialization is generally not possible at more research-oriented universities, where departments often must accommodate a wide range of curricular demands and therefore enjoy less autonomy in designing their undergraduate curricula.

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Certification and the National Park Service

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The field of interpretation is transforming itself into a profession largely by establishing and measuring standards. The National Association for Interpretation (NAI), through a variety of certification programs, makes a huge contribution to the effort by establishing and applying benchmarks to a widely diverse and independent set of practitioners. Many National Park Service (NPS) employees benefit from NAI's teaching and credentialing. At the same time, the NPS operates a different but also important Peer Review Certification Program. That program, part of the Interpretive Development Program (IDP), can trace its impetus to two primary forces: 1) the desire of NPS interpreters to improve their work and professionalize their place within the NPS, and, 2) the human resource requirements of the federal government.

National Park Service Certification

The NPS Peer Review Certification Program is based upon the position management, classification, and park ranger/interpretation duties specified by the federal government. All federal jobs are tied to competencies. The NPS defines a competency as a group of knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors necessary to accomplish a given task. The early leaders of the IDP recognized that competencies identified in the universal job description for NPS interpreters provide an opportunity to articulate standards, develop training and learning based on those standards, and create an assessment program to help measure the appropriateness of a practitioner's career advancement. Subject matter expert groups defined the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors necessary at entry level (the interpretive talk, informal visitor contacts), developmental level (interpretive writing, conducted activities, etc), and full-performance level (planning, interpretive media, etc.). Field interpreters also established the Peer Review Certification Program. Certification hinged on rubrics, shared language that describes the successful accomplishment of a task. Certifiers were trained to

apply rubrics to measure a submitted interpretive product's standing against the national competency standard.

National Park Service certification has always been voluntary, but since 1996, interpreters and supervisors have used the program to document and develop individual abilities. More than 6,000 interpretive products (tapes of talks, examples of writing, log entries, etc.) have been assessed by trained certifiers. The annual Curriculum Coordinator Certifiers Workshop has become a career developing experience—often referred to as IDP “graduate school.” Many certifiers have moved on to more advanced positions of leadership in the parks and nationally.

Learning Verses Assessment

Because of operational demands, much of the IDP's early emphasis was on certification. The process itself provided a significant opportunity for development, particularly after certifiers learned how to skillfully write provisional coaching comments. Certification participants often described the personal sting that accompanied a letter announcing their work “approached competency standards” rather than “demonstrated competency standards” but many of those participants agreed that the comments helped them improve. However, it took too long to receive results after submitting and the IDP remained inconsistent in its offering of learning and training opportunities.

The effort of the last several years has been to help interpreters learn how to achieve those standards, regardless of any participation in certification. Most recently, the NPS has partnered with the Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands at Indiana University to create a distance-learning platform that will provide learning opportunities for interpretation competencies to anyone, NPS or non-NPS, who desires the training (<http://www.parktraining.org>). Developed by field-based subject matter expert groups and professional instructional designers, these courses provide updated understandings gleaned from more than a decade of training courses and the propulsion of an evolving shared professional language.

NPS Certification at a Crossroads

Three important factors suggest that NPS certification requires evolution and change.

First, the Peer Review Certification Program has reached its operational capacity. Despite successful efforts to maximize efficiency, the current program will soon be a victim of its own success. Each year, interpreters submit a record number of interpretive products. More effective training vehicles like the distance-learning platform and increasingly successful satellite events inspire practitioners to participate—fully two-thirds are seasonal employees. The IDP is no longer a new program that calls for adaptive change; rather, it is increasingly a part of the established NPS interpretation culture. As demand increases, submitters wait longer and longer for submission results. Unfortunately, it is not possible to train enough certifiers to keep up. Nor will it be possible to address the learning needs and accountability for the more than 70,000 volunteers, concession, and cooperating association practitioners who generally do not participate in the Peer Review Certification Program.

Second, the IDP/Eppley distance-learning platform provides real-time competency-based learning to anyone who wants it or is required to take it. For the first time, the IDP can train nearly all NPS practitioners, permanent employees, seasonals, volunteers, etc. to national standards with a consistent competency-based delivery vehicle. The distance-

learning platform also offers the opportunity for two levels of certificates. Interpreters may take the online course without the accompanying activities and pass an assessment of knowledge at the end. A successful test earns a basic certificate of completion. Additionally, an interpreter may choose to pursue the course activities with a registered competency coach. The successful completion of these activities allows the coach to award an advanced competency certificate. While the NPS is currently developing the coaching program, the hope is to encourage much enhanced learning coming from coach/supervisors and site-based practitioners. The result should be a more relevant, robust learning experience for a wider practitioner population.

Third, the NPS National Education Council has provided vision for 21st-century NPS interpreters. *The Interpretation and Education Renaissance Action Plan* suggests that permanent employee field interpreters embrace interpretation and education partners by leading, facilitating, and enabling them to do interpretive work at the competency standard. Many interpreters have already assumed this “leveraging” role by acting as coaches, mentors, and standard bearers. Twenty-first-century interpreters are called to maintain their skills as models, but should also evolve to spending much of their time multiplying the effects of interpretation by helping others to effectively do the work.

The Proposed Change

The NPS is exploring the possibility of limiting participation in the current Peer Review Certification Program to permanent NPS interpreters. Seasonals and anyone else who wants to or who a site requires to would be able to earn an advanced certificate through the distance-learning and coaching programs. This change will address the capacity challenge to the current system while ensuring that permanent employees are fully equipped to enable others to do work at competency standards. This change would also attempt to provide more timely and effective learning—and a resulting certificate to non-permanent practitioners. This change depends on acceptance of the field and the development of a strong field coaching network. The IDP community and stakeholders are currently discussing the proposed changes and beginning to train registered coaches.

This proposed program intends to establish an appropriate balance between learning and accountability. It also recognizes competencies and the ongoing and absolute NPS need to work within the human resource requirements of the federal government while allowing those outside those requirements to perform at professional standards—thus not cheating the visitor or the resource.

The learning and assessment opportunities offered by the distance-learning platform should be accessible to the entire profession. Currently, online courses can be taken by anyone. The NPS would like to establish partnerships that will grow additional coaching networks and provide greater access to advanced credentials.

The Future

The NPS and the interpretation profession will be best served by pursuing these standards and a greater degree of professionalism in partnership with NAI and other stakeholders. The NPS is eager to share its resources and mechanisms as well as learn from the insight of others. Certainly there are overlapping opportunities for the mutual recognition of credentials earned. For example, it may be appropriate to accredit the NPS certification program through an outside organization. Currently, no such system of accreditation is available. As

the level of professionalism grows, what the NPS has termed certification will, in all probability, become the standard set of proficiencies required of all NPS permanent interpreters. It makes sense to evaluate our program through standards set by an outside reviewing organization.

Perhaps it is time to explore the possibility of a larger accrediting board, chartered by NAI and composed of representatives from agencies like the NPS and other stakeholder organizations. Such an accrediting board could adopt, develop, and offer a variety of credentials that meet the needs of individuals, government agencies, and other organizations alike.

If the time is ripe, the spirit collaborative, and the benefits mutual, the NPS would certainly participate in such an effort.

Why We Should Communicate, Rather Than Interpret: A Call to Arms

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I became a national park ranger at age 19. I'm 28 now and have worked as a park ranger for six national parks, as a social science researcher for five others, and as a science communicator for a National Park Service natural resource inventory and monitoring network. I mention these things about myself because I began as a devout believer in interpretive philosophy as I learned it from the National Park Service (NPS). But now I have come to new conclusions about the problems faced by our field and how we should confront them. There is need for innovation.

As a young person, I am discouraged by the failure of the interpretive profession to have produced stable jobs and opportunities for those people who would seek them. We have become the omega dog, licking the teeth of our superiors and begging for scraps. I would like to offer some ideas about what I believe to be the most significant and relevant problems for our field in this moment in time, and some solutions that I also believe plausible. Let's begin with the problems as I see them.

Problem #1

The name "interpretation" itself does not communicate well—the word is too open for interpretation, and our field entails nothing more than general communication principles applied to informal settings.

Freeman Tilden (1977), Sam Ham (1992), and David Larsen (2003), some of the interpretive field's most well-known figures, have all provided different ways of defining what constitutes "interpretation." Granted, each of their "interpretations" shares similarities, but nonetheless, each one is also different. Several other leaders in the field, Larry Beck and Ted Cable recently stated that "like Freeman Tilden, we have been working with the concept of interpretation for about 25 years and have had some ideas and have written some definitions and principles. And like Tilden we still don't fully know what interpretation is" (Beck & Cable, 2002, p. 7).

To provide a conceptual tool to think about this issue, it seems appropriate to mention that the meaning of the field of "interpretation" fails something I would describe as "the

mom test.” To explain, although my mom has followed my accomplishments and career like any good mother should, she would describe my profession to other people as being that of a park ranger. If pressed further, she might explain that I lead programs and hikes as well as staff visitor centers. If she were asked what the term “interpretation” meant, then her answer would more than likely be one that could be found in a household dictionary. She would not be able to describe what I do accurately as an “interpreter” based upon our field’s own definitions for what we do. If you asked “interpreters” what the term means, likewise you will get different and often poorly articulated answers that might come out of the dictionary.

Perhaps the arrogance of our field is that we think we are somehow different. Is there really something unique about “interpretation?” Or is it merely our conceit to believe that by being in informal communication settings, where people seemingly only have their own interests as a motivation to act as communication receivers, that there are grounds to merit having a specialized field? I have come to the conclusion that, no, interpretation is not a special form of communication—and treating it so only diminishes our possibilities for utilizing a broader array of tools and communication strategies.

For you to better understand my position, I first must review what I and I believe most others think the foundational tools and knowledge we have gained from the field of interpretation are, from the time of Freeman Tilden’s publication of *Interpreting Our Heritage* forward (some would argue also to include the ideas of Enos Mills as a beginning of sorts).

- 1) Most people tend to forget facts. Therefore it is wiser to communicate one central idea or concept that people are more likely to remember. We call this a “theme.” Ideally all other information provided by a communicator should relate to a theme to help reinforce its ability to be remembered. Repetitiously communicating the theme—when possible—is encouraged. Organizing the program in a logical fashion and informing an audience of your theme up front and what you are going to be talking about—it’s a good thing. If you can say or restate the theme throughout the program, and then do it again at the end, bravo.
- 2) People come to informal settings with different agendas and different beliefs. We should therefore attempt to meet them where they are, and adapt our communication strategies based on their interests, background, and preferences—*when appropriate*.

Do we truly believe that we have contributed anything new or useful to the broader field of communication? I don’t think so! Almost all people could tell you that they regularly see advertisements, newspaper articles, speeches, or slogans where one central idea is communicated and repeated often. Most people also would easily agree that a communication strategy or topic that taps into their interests and background will of course be more effective. These two foundational principles of “interpretation” are nothing more than general facets known about communication.

Let’s move onto problem #2.

Problem #2

A vocal portion of professionals in our field are endorsing constructivist principles of communication that have moved our field and strategies too far toward an extreme. Essentially what has happened is that there is a general perception among many people in

our profession that a traditional didactic transmission-reception model of communication has failed us in informal settings (Gil-Pérez et al., 2002; Straits & Wilke, 2007). As one professor in the field once phrased this notion to me, “The American environmental movement shot itself in the foot by telling people what to do.” In other words, many people in our field believe that those who communicate in a manner that might be described as direct, bold, fact-based, or prescriptive are not communicating effectively, because they might be turning people off, or because they might not be appealing to diverse learning styles by using traditional “I will tell you the facts and you will hear” lecture style approaches. Instead, these advocates of constructivism believe that if we can tap into peoples’ interests and pre-existing mental schemas so that we might help them “construct” their own meanings for a certain subject matter, then we might build bridges and *subtly* introduce messages we want to communicate.

The most recent embodiment of these constructivist ideas comes in the form of David Larsen’s *Meaningful Interpretation* (2003) and the National Park Service’s Interpretive Development Program (IDP). Linking tangible resources to intangible ideas and utilizing universal concepts when possible is all the rage. For those unfamiliar with universal concepts, they are those things like love, hate, hope, family, and survival. Basically they are concepts that are probably “universally” appreciated and understood by most people, regardless of their background or cultures. Presenting multiple perspectives and invoking the power of universal concepts are thought to help build bridges among diverse audiences as well as slowly build support for a place, resource, or resources, all while not promoting an in-your-face message. Universal concepts are also deemed especially useful, because from a practical standpoint, we can only learn so much about our audiences at interpretive programs in so much time (usually just 30 minutes to an hour). Therefore, if universal ideas are presented in a thematic statement, then they might serve as a one-size-fits-all tool for communicators. But perhaps they also discourage us from thinking we need to work harder to understand our audiences (i.e., we don’t need research about our audiences, or it’s not possible to conduct research, so universal concepts provide a good solution to communicate to all).

Here’s what I see as bad about what I believe to be happening in the National Park Service (which, granted, is one of the leaders in interpretation) as a result of this shift toward multiple perspectives, constructivist communication, and universal concepts. “Politics” are being frowned upon as bad. Instead of the National Park Service defending its conservation and preservation values as written in the mission statements of each park or site, the preferred new story is about people’s feelings and personal interpretations of the meaning of these places, or the narrative is reduced to an oversimplified universal concept of why something is valued or important. While certainly there are different perspectives that should be voiced and considered, we are in fact trying to protect the resources of our national parks, aren’t we? For example, is global warming a reality that we should be addressing with our actions, or is it food for thought that we should be pondering before we go to sleep at night? Are we assuming too much to think that people are going to come to the right conclusion when multiple perspectives are endorsed by this kind of communication strategy? Is the visitor sovereign?

I think not. Here’s why I think that this communication strategy is also failing (assuming that “telling people what to do” failed) and why we need to move back to the middle of the communication spectrum.

The National Park Service (and the field of interpretation, to a large extent) has become an arbitrator between people and their perspectives about the value of natural, historical, and cultural resources. There is a false notion perpetuated—a myth, if you will—that national parks are run democratically and are universally owned by the American public and were created as such. In reality, many were created autocratically and have served the benefit of private and/or commercial interests since their inception. The battle for how they will be managed in this day and time, unfortunately, is still rather easily decided by power-brokers in Washington, D.C.

Don't get me wrong. I am not advocating a total shift of the pendulum. It is important that we respect, endorse, and appreciate multiple perspectives—but do so within boundaries. While intellectual or romantic appeals about the meaning of historical sites, parks, science, and other topics might be entirely appropriate under some circumstances, in some other parts of the world, people don't typically have the luxury to take interest in these kinds of communications (Ham & Sutherland, 1991)—and soon we Americans probably won't, either. For instance, a group of people in Guatemala who attend an interpretive program might rather learn how to boil water and kill parasites using the inexpensive energy of the sun, than hear about how people appreciate nature for different reasons and in different ways.

Let me propose the following questions: Are leaders and heroes those people who interpret the meanings/perspectives of others and attempt to pander to “universal concepts” and placate antagonistic interests? Or are leaders and heroes those people who have passion and conviction in their beliefs and through their actions inspire others to follow? I think that to be a leader in this day and age one must be a persuasive communicator. Those who wield power as leaders are not those people who struggle to choose or voice their beliefs for fear of antagonizing.

Is not “passion” the key ingredient to interpretation as articulated by Freeman Tilden? How is it possible for our field to produce any leaders to be reckoned with if we marginalize ourselves for fear of interpreganda, interpretation, advocacy, or any other such clever “distortion” of some peoples' beloved concept of interpretation? Will we always be unable to say what we think for worry of angering someone or losing our jobs in a time when jobs are scarce? Sure, interpretation at its best might ignite some sparks, but that does not mean we've made a fire to keep us warm. Our umbrellas have all but broken, and boy is it cold and raining hard right now. And while the National Park Service might serve the American people, informal communication occurs in many places that do not have to voice perspectives other than their own—for better or for worse.

Maybe a little propaganda or vigor and vim is what we need to inspire people to act! Propaganda has been used to create a general doubt among many in the world that global warming may not exist or that its effects will not be significant enough to merit action. Perhaps we should be putting on our war paint, and sounding the war cry. I think we should fight back and re-enter the political sphere. Gary Machlis (1989) suggested over 15 years ago that “in contemporary America, interpretation is a politic act, and is increasingly intertwined with the chaotic democracy that is American politics.... If politics is, as the eminent political scientist Mark Twain implied, “the devil's work,” the interpretive profession is now called upon to do the devil's work in God's country” (p. 246).

Or perhaps some people might think that we should continue encouraging people to think that if they choose to believe global warming is a myth that is “okay?” Do we really

want to be standing on a hill as glaciers melt with our weeping towels thinking to ourselves, “We knew it.” Or do we want to be leaders and produce leaders like those whom we most admire from history? To be effective communicators, I believe we must speak with passionate conviction and also give voice to multiple perspectives when appropriate—not the reverse. Universal concepts are an excellent tool, but should not be the final answer to how our communications are structured.

Problem #3

Most people are learning that there are currently few, if any, long-term viable possibilities to work in the field of “interpretation,” and if finding a job, then making a living, having a family, and staying in one place, are all unlikely.

I first must mention the well-known: the economic situation of our field is dire. Perhaps that is because we have not sufficiently proven our worth to the other divisions of our agencies and organizations, to politicians, and to the public. This problem (#3) I believe to be a symptom of the first two problems I discussed. David Larsen (2004) recently wrote that “many interpreters are frustrated—unable to communicate their purpose and worth.... The result is an insular group of professionals who do not compellingly articulate their own role” (p. 70).

I have seen something happen time and time again. A person spends his or her summer as a volunteer or an Student Conservation Association interpreter and hopes afterward that she or he will be able to find a job. These people (who are usually young) become disillusioned, attempting to find work in other fields and probably have little to put on their resume other than “gave interpretive programs” and “staffed visitor center”—not very useful experiences for finding other jobs. They begin to associate “interpretation” as somewhat inferior in its role at any agency or organization in relation to other more serious endeavors.

So, here is what I propose as some solutions that might help our field in the long term.

Potential Solutions to Problem #1

We first need to “retire” the use of the word “interpretation.” Approaching our field from the perspective that we provide a variety of communication and public relations services is infinitely more useful for garnering respect. Others have voiced this possibility before as well as questioned the utility of interpretation (Nyberg, 1977; Vander Stoep, 2004).

Vander Stoep (2004) suggested that one reason why “interpretation research is desperately needed ... [is] to challenge our thinking about whether interpretation is, in fact, something that is unique and different from communications or education or marketing, and/or how it relates to those areas of inquiry as well as to areas of application.... Interpretation often struggles for identity. Is it a field, a discipline, a practice, a profession, or a set of tools? While in our hearts, we may ‘know’ what it is, this does not help in the scholarly debate for research identity, the development of a theoretical foundation, or in building a research program specific to interpretation” (p. 58-60).

Nyberg (1977) went further, vigorously arguing that we should cease in our efforts to interpret (or perhaps even communicate!), by suggesting that the role we assume as “interpreters” is deceptive, manipulative, hindering, and dangerous.

In short, the environmental interpreter is in the business of “telling” reality, thus denying to all others present the inspiration of speculation.... The interpreter,

by telling a meaning, diminishes discovery.... Interpreters perceive their role far too ambitiously. It is not simply outrageous, it is dangerous as well. They tamper with the lives—mental, physical, and spiritual—of people. Interpreters take from people not only their definitions but their defining capabilities and processes too (p. 208, 211).

While Nyberg's claims are radical and should be considered with measure, he is correct that the ambiguity of our purpose as "interpreters" clouds the reality of how important and powerful our role *can* be, and perhaps *should* be.

Changing the name of our field will provide people with a language to better describe the skills they have accurately and credibly, that in turn they can use effectively in finding other jobs when work in a preferred setting is not available. Communication skills are a necessity everywhere, so in theory, there should always be work if a person is flexible. When people exit the informal communication field for lack of jobs and opportunities, perhaps later they can come back when jobs are available again, having a higher degree of respect and sense of worth for what they did as communicators while in informal settings such as parks, museums, science centers, zoos, and historical sites.

By moving beyond "interpretation" we will not be abandoning the skills and knowledge we have developed, but will simply be changing our way of thinking about what we do. Communication research will become more relevant again to our field, and perhaps more leaders will emerge who can bring more funding to our important profession and integrate our practice with the research that occurs.

We should also change the names of our professional organizations and publications. For examples, the National Association of Interpretation should become the National Association of Conservation, History, Science, and Cultural Communicators (perhaps a better title could be devised) and the *Journal of Interpretation Research* should become the *Journal of Conservation, History, Science, and Cultural Communication Research*.

Potential Solutions to Problem #2

I think that there are merits to both traditional didactic approaches toward communication, as well as to constructivist approaches toward communication. A middle ground is possible and should be endorsed. So what do I mean by middle ground? We should be closely following the mission statements of our sites to guide our communications when they are resoundingly science-based and/or fact-based; when these traditional forms of "knowledge" are deemed inconclusive or artless and dull in their ability to obtain the interest of audiences on their own, an open-minded approach where we discuss how people place different kinds of significance and meaning upon events and resources should unquestionably be used to complement the facts—not to overshadow them, or to replace the passionate reasons for which a site was originally created and/or protected.

An additional need is to obtain greater understanding of our audiences and the communications we use by conducting evaluation research in informal communication settings. We need to know when and where certain approaches work better than others, before we go too far toward either philosophical extreme of how we should communicate. This might come in the form of pre-testing and post-testing participants' knowledge of a subject matter, as well as their attitudes or conceptual modes of thinking about a given topic before and after viewing an exhibit or attending a program. This will help flush out what

people are gaining from our communications, and whether the strategies we use are achieving some or all of the intended goals we have.

It will also be crucial for the people who conduct research to have a better forum to share their findings with practitioners, in addition to academics. Far too often research has not been shared with practitioners—or more often, it has been watered-down for fear that communicators will not make their way through the technical information to understand the theoretical foundations through which our understanding of communication is based.

Potential Solutions to Problem #3

If somehow problems #1 and #2 are addressed effectively, then I think these actions will probably help our field create more long-term job positions that we can sustain. In other words, if we begin to promote ourselves as communicators and/or public relations specialists rather than interpreters, while also showing a broad range of passionate conviction for our subject matter that is splashed with a touch of open-mindedness and perspective, then I believe we will sufficiently prove our worth to others in our organizations and obtain the funding and perceptual importance needed to grow our field's long-term job market.

Once these tasks are accomplished, an effort to revamp our field's certification programs will aid us in our efforts to maintain our job market gains. Making certification goals more elaborate and versatile should help us to feel that we have stronger rigor in our professional standards. It will also lead us all to have higher morale as a group.

As an example of where a change in certification needs to be made, the National Park Service's Interpretive Development Program seems to have floundered—the statistics I have seen indicate to me an extremely low level of participation despite the IDP website's claims that “participation in the program continues at a high rate” (National Park Service, 2006). I can only speculate why this lack of interest has occurred, but I think that it is because the criteria for success, “making intellectual and emotional connections,” is vaguely defined and meets resistance from communicators who view these measures of evaluation as being quite subjective or coarse (yes, this is related to problem #2). Certification by the NPS's IDP also carries few, if any, real benefits for communicators at this moment in time. Making advantages a reality, such as offering preferential hiring to those who are certified or offering increased pay to those who are certified will encourage people to make the effort rather than approaching certification programs with resistance and antagonism.

Conclusion

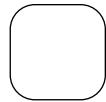
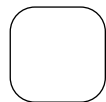
There is a need for innovation in the field of interpretation as daunting problems continue to escalate: a scarcity of stable jobs, a potentially damaging and powerful shift toward a constructivist orientation toward communication, and a long-lasting identity crisis manifested in a professional name that is humorously and dramatically open to “misinterpretation.” Addressing and fixing these problems is challenging, but not impossible to achieve. The place to begin is by changing the name of our profession to one that more accurately reflects our role as communicators and public relations specialists. Through measured evaluation research and pragmatic, appropriate use of both traditional didactic models of communication and constructivist models we can broaden and better understand our array of persuasive strategies. Finally, by proving our worth to others in our organizations and reforming our professional standards, we can have a greater possibility of creating the stable, long-term jobs our profession so desperately needs.

“Interpretation” is on the ropes. A combination of forces is about to throw the knock-out punch. Should we put on our war paint, beat our drums, sound the war cry, and inspire a call to arms? Or should we go dust off a copy of *Interpreting Our Heritage*?

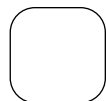
I know which one I am doing.

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I N S H O R T



NAI's Certification Program

A Decade of Growth and Change

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The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) began doing business under that name in 1988, following a consolidation of two organizations (Western Interpreters Association and Association of Interpretive Naturalists) that already had three decades of history behind them. For at least two of those decades, debates over the value of describing and promoting interpretation as a profession rose and fell among the members. When the two organizations became NAI, an important shift in the mission of the new organization took place, paving the way for this professional organization "to inspire excellence and leadership to advance heritage interpretation as a profession." No longer could there be any doubt about whether it was the organization's role to promote a growing profession, but the question of how to do that, specifically in regards to certification, was still a subject of debate.

After almost 25 years of discussions, surveys, focus groups, and task forces, a certification program was adopted by the NAI board of directors at its fall 1997 meeting, with the express intent of creating a peer-reviewed process of ensuring adherence to common standards of practice in four professional areas: management of interpretive sites, interpretive planning, training of interpreters, and delivery of personal and nonpersonal interpretive services and products. These four categories were based on a job analysis of NAI's membership at the time, and the ensuing standards of knowledge, skills, and abilities required to complete these credentials were established by a task force that consisted of academics, practicing interpreters, managers of both nonprofit and government sites, and consulting planners. The program began in 1998, and 10 years later, has certified more than 6,000 individuals and trained more than 8,000 using a flexible yet standardized program that adheres to the guidelines for certification programs established by the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA).

Along the way, NAI discovered that a large portion of

interpreters practicing at natural, cultural, and historical venues all over the United States were not receiving training in interpretation techniques. These individuals, often volunteers or seasonal workers with little or no experience in the field, had access only to the site's resource content in training, without guidance in how to deliver that content to the visiting public. Thus, NAI's training program for Certified Interpretive Guides (CIG) was born in 2000 to fill the gap for agencies and organizations that had no training program for the estimated 500,000 individuals who take on volunteer or seasonal roles. The program is designed to allow trainers to customize it for specific venues and content, but focuses primarily on the social science research that supports interpretation as a specific method of communication and techniques for audience-appropriate delivery of personal programs. The training program developed by NAI used, with their blessing, materials derived from National Park Service, Sam Ham, and other prominent trainers and written resources to ensure a balanced approach that transcends any single individual or agency bias.

The program expanded again in 2005 when another niche was identified—training of Certified Interpretive Hosts (CIH), which includes the volunteers or employees who have public contact but who do not deliver programs or tours as such. Working in partnership with Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the CIH program was developed for receptionists, maintenance workers, security personnel, sales clerks, drivers, and others to encourage a blend of customer service and informal interpretation that helps to communicate the mission of the organization.

Neither of these training programs was intended to replace a degree program from an accredited university; however, many universities and community colleges have adopted these trainings as an interpretive fundamentals course to help students earn a credential that has proven to be of value in obtaining seasonal or permanent employment. Currently, there are 34 academic programs who use the CIG or CIH curricula within their course offerings. Literally hundreds of other organizations and agencies are using NAI's training program to create a standard of proficiency include zoos and aquariums, museums of all kinds, government agencies at all levels, private concessionaires and tour companies, nature centers, and corporations. A list, last updated in 2006, can be found at www.interpnet.com/certification. Many organizations have come to rely on an NAI certification as a hiring or promotion requirement, while others consider it an optional enhancement of an individual's commitment to continuing personal growth and professional development.

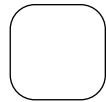
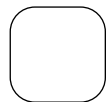
In any case, the two levels of NAI's certification program—the professional series, which requires four years of education or experience in the field for eligibility, and the training series, which only requires participants to be age 16 or older—continue to serve the profession by setting a standard of performance agreed upon by many varied viewpoints from the field. The competency-based professional series requires peer review of a number of requirements that demonstrate specific knowledge, skills, and abilities, while the training series requires demonstrated knowledge and application of course content before a credential is conferred.

NAI's certification program is currently in use throughout the United States and in many other countries, including Panama, Mexico, Canada, Kenya, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, China, Bahamas, Chile, Costa Rica, United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, and Denmark, with interest from several more. The program is cross-cultural with the flexibility to adapt to specific needs of specific countries while still maintaining the standards estab-

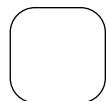
lished by the profession. A recent survey of CIGs found them working in 46 countries around the world.

The program will continue to evolve as new information emerges about the field and its role in formal and nonformal education and corporate venues around the world. As the profession adapts to changing economies and public demands, NAI will continue to assess the need for quality training and peer review of professionals and adapt its programs to meet those needs. Perhaps the next step will be to follow the recommendation of several sources, including NOCA and American Society of Association Executive's *Certification Law Handbook*, to create an independent certifying body as a subsidiary of NAI that includes an appointed board to represent the many varied voices in this unique and dynamic field.

For more information about NAI's certification program, visit the NAI website at www.interpnet.com/certification or contact the NAI office at 888-900-8283 (toll-free USA), 970-484-8283 (international), or naiprograms@interpnet.com.



A P P E N D I X



Manuscript Submission: Instructions to Authors

Purpose

The purposes of the *Journal of Interpretation Research* are to communicate original empirical research dealing with heritage interpretation and to provide a forum for scholarly discourse about issues facing the profession of interpretation. The *Journal* strives to link research with practice. The *Journal of Interpretation Research* is published by the National Association for Interpretation, the preeminent professional association representing the heritage interpretation profession.

General Information

The primary function of the *Journal* is to disseminate original empirical research regarding interpretation. However, the *Journal of Interpretation Research* takes a broad view of the field of interpretation and publishes manuscripts from a wide-range of academic disciplines. The primary criteria for deeming a manuscript appropriate for the *Journal* are whether it adds to the current state-of-knowledge for practitioners, researchers, academics, or administrators who work in the field of interpretation.

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- Margins should be 1” on all sides.
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