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Introduction

Authenticity is a social construct that people use to assess the realness and credibility of an object or experience (Wang 1999). The term and its implications have been widely discussed in the tourism literature, although neglected in that of interpretation (Hill and Cable 2006). Authenticity is a central criterion for the designation of World Heritage Sites (WHS), which is determined based on design, materials, function, techniques and traditions, settings, intangible heritage, spirit and feeling, and other internal and external factors (UNESCO World Heritage Center 2016). In a WHS, both staff and visitors actively question and judge the authenticity of the place. Experiencing authenticity helps the visitor to activate the imagination, to feel transported to a different place and time in the past, to get fully immersed in the experience in the present, or to envision a different future. Positive perceptions of authenticity have been linked to visitor satisfaction (Pearce and Moscardo 1986), subjective well-being (Reisinger 2013), place attachment (Ramkissoon 2016), loyalty, and purchase intentions (Castéran and Roederer 2013). However, authenticity is a complex construct that has continuously evolved over time, making it hard to define or measure. Although there is agreement that authenticity is a multidimensional construct, its operationalization is still developing. The goal for this study is to develop a multidimensional scale of the construct, and understand visitors’ perceptions of the multiple dimensions of authenticity of WHS.

Methods

The study will be developed in Guanacaste Conservation Area and the Precolumbian Chiefdom Settlements with Stone Spheres of the Diquís WHS in Costa Rica between July and December 2017.

An initial item pool will be pilot tested in June 2017 through convenience sampling of 200 students and faculty from KSU and one university in Costa Rica, to reflect the relevant population of local and foreign visitors in the WHS. The final scale will be administered through a survey between July and December 2017 to a sample of 600 visitors following a systematic design with a random intercept. Analysis and presentation of results will be developed December 2017 to August 2018.

Scale development

The development of the scale will follow these steps (DeVellis 2012):

1. Determine what is going to be measured (latent construct, five dimensions)
2. Generate item pool (clear, concise, no jargon, redundant, gender and culturally sensitive, cover all domains) based on literature and previous qualitative inquiry
3. Determine measurement format (5-point Likert scale)
4. Have item pool reviewed by experts (for content and face validity)
5. Use additional validation items (i.e. social desirability scale)
6. Pilot test with representative sample to optimize scale length. Test validity and reliability (i.e. reliability analysis, Cronbach’s alpha)
7. Administer final survey

The analysis of the scale will include the application of reliability and validity tests, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis to confirm how many empirical factors can be determined by the items, and the creation of composit variables and hypothesis testing.

Implications for park management and interpretation research

A scale for authenticity will greatly assist academics and practitioners in assessing visitor and manager perceptions of

Latent construct

A latent construct or variable is the phenomenon of interest that cannot be observed or measured directly (DeVellis 2012). In this study, authenticity will be considered a multidimensional, second-order factor with the following dimensions: natural, original, exceptional, referential, and influential authenticity (Gilmore and Pine 2007).

How authentic does it seem to you?

Scale development of perceptions of authenticity at Costa Rican World Heritage Sites

Marisol Mayorga
PhD candidate, Kansas State University

Dissertation Committee:
Ted T. Cable, Chair; Jeffrey Skibins, Ryan Sharp, Jessica Holloway-Libell

How authentic does it seem to you?

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authenticity at WHS in a more valid and reliable way.

Quantifying the multidimensionality of the scale will provide relevant information to better manage specific site conditions and visitors’ perceptions. Meeting audience expectations of an authentic experience can guide interpreters to provide opportunities for visitors to have better experiences, and make interpretation more meaningful and purposeful.

Most importantly, this could eventually link to the measurement of conservation behavioral intentions and actions.

**Bibliography**


In 1985, the First World Congress on Heritage Presentation and Interpretation established a World Society of individuals concerned with the conservation and management of world’s natural and cultural resources through the presentation and interpretation of such resources. The resulting document, the Banff Declaration and Recommendations suggested, among others, to stress “the importance of Interpretation as an occupation deserving professional status”; to call for a more cooperative approach to Interpretation; and to create and present “effective interpretive programmes” (Heritage Interpretation International 1988, 366)

In times of international competition rather than cooperation, however, the World Society on Heritage Presentation and Interpretation did not survive a decade. Thirty years later, the same issues of lack of professional status, cooperative approaches (for research, implementation, and evaluation), and lack of effective programs (or at least results that prove them effective) still resonate in developing countries, augmented by increasing threats to cultural and natural heritage due to both local and global pressures, like climate change, and the unprecedented increase of tourism around heritage sites.

Challenges and search of opportunities in the Mesoamerican Region

Particularly in Mesoamerica (understood here as a region that includes all the countries between Mexico and Panama), the profession has suffered many “ups and downs” during its development. For instance, when the US National Park Service, Peace Corps, FAO, academics, and private initiatives introduced interpretation to the region in the 1970s there was a lack of local practitioners and literature in Spanish which later resulted in confusion about the purpose and benefits of interpretation, as well as who should be in charge of developing this multidiscipline. In this case, because the national parks first took on the task, it was their administrators —typically professionals in natural or cultural resources (i.e. biology, forestry, archeology)— and later tourist guides who assumed the development of interpretive products. Since then, they have seen interpretation as an additional (and optional) activity in their fields, but not as a profession per se. Moreover, because designing and applying interpretation requires specific skills, this has often been perceived as a luxury limited to developed countries. Still today the region lacks of professional associations, few academic programs, and few interpreters in park systems, museums, and in the private sector.

For that reason, new options need to be explored both in the professional practice and the academia. In the professional practice, there is a need to continue adapting the model of interpretation to the Latin American context (Ham, Sutherland and Meganck 1993), and recruit more institutions and heritage sites to develop and apply interpretive planning and techniques. One example is the work done in Tirimbina Biological Reserve in Costa Rica.

Environmental Interpretation at Tirimbina Biological Reserve, Costa Rica

Tirimbina Biological Reserve is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of the forest in the North-Caribbean region of Costa Rica, through research, environmental education, and ecotourism. Like many other research-based sites, Tirimbina did not always rely in interpretation for the planning and design of its newly developed educational and touristic products. A few years ago, however, it was clear to the researchers that interpretation was necessary to appeal to the visitors’ needs and desires, as well as to the local communities with which the Reserve has education and extension programs.

Currently Tirimbina is paying more attention to the benefits interpretation brings to the site and the visitors, like an increase of visitor awareness and satisfaction with their programs. The Reserve has hired professionals with a degree with emphasis in interpretation for the educational and some of the ecotourism programs. This way, even though an interpretive plan and strategy for the entire Reserve has not been yet developed, many of the principles of interpretation are now applied during the implementation of its products and the design of new ones.

These are some of the products and activities the Reserve have recently developed or improved with better interpretive techniques for visitors and students:
• Bird Interpretive Trail: funded by the American Bird Conservancy. Designed for families that want to learn through interactive activities about local and migratory birds, as well as issues and conservation actions to protect them.

• Chocolate Tour: it shows the artisanal process of the chocolate while explains the story of pre-and post-colonial chocolate, and how to help with the conservation of the cacao and the well-being of the community.

• Bat Program: includes a multimedia presentation and a field demonstration about Tirimbina’s research with this group of mammals. It strives to create awareness about bats’ ecological role, myths, threats, and to create an emotional connection between visitors and bats.

• Butterfly Program: through this activity, students learn and apply butterfly research techniques that has been applied for 13 years in Tirimbina, and learn about conservation issues and actions.

In 2015 a NAI-CIG certification course was offered in Tirimbina for six guides and educators. In the near future, Tirimbina plans to develop an interpretive plan to create new interpretive products and evaluate and improve the current ones, based on similar plans and the principles and objectives of interpretation (García 2014).

A Commitment from Academia

In academia, there are currently scattered efforts throughout Mesoamerica. For instance, in Costa Rica, out of 53 private universities and 5 public universities that offer degrees in tourism, or others related to natural or cultural resource management, only 4 public universities offer one or more courses on interpretation, and only one offers a university degree (in Biology) with emphasis on environmental interpretation. Other countries have not even conducted a census, but none offers a diploma or degree on interpretation. Clearly, there is a need to increase the quantity and quality of programs, as well as the development of materials relevant to our audiences and bring further the philosophical, conceptual, and methodological construction of the discipline (Mayorga 2012). Beyond teaching, there is also an urgency to increase research and understanding of the role of interpretation for visitor experiences and conservation (Knudson, Cable y Beck 2003, Kohl 2005), and apply that understanding in extension and service projects that can benefit visitors, communities, and heritage sites, through partnerships with government, academia and the tourism sector (Rodríguez y Mayorga 2012). There is also an increasing need to create a regional network of interpreters to discuss local experiences, challenges, and solutions, and search for partnerships and grants from groups with a similar vision. The academia must commit and accept the leadership role to support these efforts.

References


Boost You Interpretation Repertoire: Awaken Curiosity About Butterflies (and Insects too!)

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See the benefits of programing for butterflies and participate in hands-on activities from the 4-H Project Butterfly WINGS curriculum. Bring your smart phone to experience interactive insect tutorials, quizzes and a game that can be used to prepare students for field experiences. You can develop tutorials too!

Participants will be asked to bring and use their smart phones during this session! They will experience interactive entomology tutorials and quiz programs which are posted on the Oregon State University 4-H Extension Entomology website. These interactive programs are developed in Articulate Storyline 2; commercially available software related to PowerPoint, which participants could use to create interactive programs for their own sites.

There are many open source and commercial products that can let intrepid interpreters delve into the world of interactive e-learning. On the Oregon 4-H Natural Science web pages a variety of on-line tutorials on tree identification (http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/projects/natural-science/forestry) and entomology (http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/projects/natural-science/entomology) and the new Junior Master Naturalis program (http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/projects/natural-science/junior-master-naturalist) are being used to prepare student for field experiences at the presenter’s site. In addition we are using this e-learning method to introduce learners to key concepts the should know before attending out 2017 Oahu Hawaii Study Tour (http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/programs/camps/hawaii/ed) After leading participants in an e-learning introduction to insects, the presenters will introduce some hands-on activities from the 4-H Project Butterfly WINGS curriculum.

Project Butterfly WINGS consists of a youth guide, leader guide and an interactive web site. Interpreters without previous knowledge of butterflies can participate as the program transforms them from a beginner to engaged citizen scientist. Information will be provided on to use the WINGS website, and other on-line resources, to generate a butterfly species list for each person’s specific site. The benefits of programing for butterflies will become clear as participant learn to facilitate lessons on butterfly field marks, identification, life cycles and metamorphosis, and rearing butterflies.

Key characteristics of the important butterfly groups the swallowtails, whites/sulphurs, skippers, brush-foots and gossamer wings will be introduced. They will learn how to design a butterfly garden and create way stations for endangered migrating monarchs. For sites that do programing with school science programs the alignment with Next Generation Science Standards Science Practices and Disciplinary Core Ideas will be provided.

Every interpretive site has insects and butterflies just waiting to enrich their natural science programming. The free 4-H Entomology and Project WINGS on line resources can be used to enrich on-site learning or prepare learners for a site visit. Using lessons from the WINGS curriculum interpreters can quickly become butterfly experts and awaken their learner’s curiosity about butterflies and conservation.

References

Oregon 4-H Butterfly and Insect Resources  http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/projects/natural-science/entomology

The Franklin Expedition Outreach Project: Sharing Stories and Building Bridges With Indigenous People North of 60

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Parks Canada is an agency of the Government of Canada that is mandated to protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage. With 46 national parks, 171 national historic sites and 4 national marine conservation areas from coast to coast to coast, Parks Canada strives to connect with Canadians in all 10 provinces and 3 territories. The newest and most northerly national historic site is the Wrecks of Erebus and Terror National Historic Site, located in Nunavut, one of Canada's three northern territories.

Parks Canada is working closely with Inuit (Arctic Indigenous Peoples) to determine how this national historic site will be managed and how the stories will be told. A digital interactive of the Erebus wreck site will be unveiled in London, England at the National Maritime Museum in July 2017 as part of a major exhibition on the Franklin Expedition of 1845. The team developing the interactive knew that it was essential to engage Inuit in the development of its content and travelled to Nunavut in November 2016 for a series of community meetings. What we learned was so much more than expected. This paper presents the planning process, the implementation, and the lessons learned from these meetings.

For centuries, explorers were determined to chart a polar shortcut from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In May, 1845, Sir John Franklin set off from England with two ships, HMS Erebus and HMS Terror, and 134 men. They were tasked with mapping the portion of the Northwest Passage that remained uncharted by Europeans. This expedition did not succeed, and the ships and the men vanished. For well over 160 years, search expeditions looked in vain for the lost ships. Finally, using historical research, Inuit knowledge, underwater and land archaeology, and modern technology, the wreck of HMS Erebus was found in September 2014 and two years later, HMS Terror was located. Shortly after the first discovery, Parks Canada created a small interpretation team to work collaboratively with a wide variety of experts to share the Franklin story with national and international audiences.

One of the largest outreach initiatives is a major travelling exhibition being developed in collaboration with the Canadian Museum of History in Canada and the National Maritime Museum in England. The exhibition includes a computer interactive with a 3D rendering of the Erebus shipwreck, which shows where artifacts were located on the ship. While much information is known about the artifacts, the team knew that Inuit living in communities near the wreck sites had valuable knowledge and perspectives that were important to include.

Generations of Inuit living near the recorded location of the abandoned ships have relayed detailed oral testimony about this lost expedition and the objects that were left behind. The project team felt that travelling to the communities nearest to the wrecks - Gjoa Haven on King William Island and Cambridge Bay on Victoria Island - would be a good way to bring these Inuit voices into our project. Working collaboratively with our colleagues in Nunavut and in the two communities themselves, we planned a 10-day trip in November 2016. Our key audiences were Elders, who knew the stories, and high school students, from whom we wished to gather questions and topics of interest related to the artifacts. In addition, we knew it was important to share the ongoing work on the project with these communities. The engagement techniques we chose were tailored to the audiences and venues, and consisted of plain-language, well-illustrated presentations and images of artifacts for the Elders and community groups, supplemented by laminated images and worksheets for the students. Local interpreters provided translation for Elder and community meetings.

We held 9 meetings and met with 72 high school students and 60 community members. From the students we learned which artifacts were of greatest interest and which were less so. We learned that the students had very concrete questions: How big are the artifacts?, How do they feel to hold them?, How much do they weigh?, and Where are they right now? From the Elders we heard stories of how some of the artifacts could have been used by Inuit. We hired a local artist to illustrate some of the stories so that they could be added to the interactive. From the community of Gjoa Haven we heard a first-hand account of how the Terror wreck was first seen by an Elder. From everyone we learned how appreciative they were to hear about the latest work related to the shipwrecks and how eager they are to keep following the evolving story.

We learned much more from our experience than we expected. As hoped, we acquired new information and content that will improve the digital interactive for all audiences. In addition, we gained insight into how to improve future northern engagement, and we also learned how to improve other products for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences in the South and North.

Top lessons include: (1) Bring clear meaningful visuals. The map was especially appreciated, and was used by locals to share stories of their own personal histories, journeys and finds. (2) Allot enough time and resist the temptation to hold back-to-back meetings. (3) Tell stories. When we asked a teacher what we could do to improve our presentation, she said to turn our lessons into stories. Her students grew up with stories and love to learn that way. (4) Keep promises, follow up and show how their input is being used. (5) Rely on local knowledge to plan and promote the meetings. (6) Have clear objectives but be open to learning more. While our main task was to gather content for
the digital interactive, we took the opportunity to ask for advice about the best ways to reach remote Northern audiences and obtained plenty of practical advice.

Above all, engage with Indigenous partners early, face-to-face, and often. Engagement is not a one-time event; it is a process and it is valuable in more ways than you ever could imagine.
During this presentation, ethnographic research is presented which took place on Isle Royale National Park in the United States with a group of 14 year-old campers and their wilderness trip leaders. The group was traversing the wilderness island on foot, backpacking for over a week with goals of interpreting the natural history of the island, direct experiential education, and for campers to become comfortable living and traveling in wilderness areas. Central to this inquiry are the ways that group dynamics evolve in wilderness settings and what forms of learning take place during the experience. By way of introducing the research a short description of Isle Royale National Park will be provided as well as a brief summary of the wilderness education program. Additionally, ethnography as a research methodology is introduced as an important way of understanding meaning construction.

Doing ethnographic research in the wilderness can be complicated due to travel difficulties, interpersonal conflict, weather, and gear limitations. To better account for these complexities and to gain an insider perspective of this group, several different data collection techniques were employed. These include; participant observation, interviews, participant still photos and video, reflective journals, and video journaling by participants. These techniques will be explained and short examples of these diverse forms of data provided. By taking part in the experience first hand, the researcher gained privileged access to what the group were talking about, their learning process of living in the wilderness, and what the experience meant to them. This meaning construction is of great importance in understanding educational pedagogies, goals, and outcomes for participants far from cities or towns. To unpack some of this meaning construction, data concerning the interpretive lessons conducted on trail and the knowledge acquisition of the campers is presented.

The presentation concludes with a short analysis of the data, lessons learned from the research in and goals for future study. Reflections of the research process and data collection in a wilderness setting will be offered as a way of integrating these different facets of the study.
Kids Care: Engaging Youth in Coastal Conservation by Promoting Action

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As the future stewards of our planet, youth are critical in the protection and conservation of our coasts and ocean. Building connections early can result in lifetime engagement of conservation-minded leaders advocating for wild places. Youth can also inspire the adults around them to make some much needed changes to protect our planet. The Ocean Day program is a model for engaging students in conservation by empowering them to act. During the Ocean Day event, students dedicate their time to cleaning up the beach, and participate in a giant aerial art design that sends a message of conservation to their community. In 2017, Friends of the Dunes will partner with the Bureau of Land Management and the California Coastal Commission to organize our 13th Annual Ocean Day event in Humboldt County, California. This program continues to grow ocean advocates through collaboration between small non-profit organizations, local businesses, and federal, state, and county agencies. Not Just Any Day at the Beach - Ocean Day is a statewide education program funded by the California Coastal Commission Whale Tail Grant Program, and coordinated locally by Friends of the Dunes (FOD) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). All participating classes receive an interactive classroom presentation focusing on marine debris, and solutions to this worldwide problem. Taking a Stand Since 1994 - Ocean Day started in Los Angeles in 1994 by Malibu Foundation for Environmental Education and the California Coastal Commission, to educate elementary school students about marine debris, and engage them in solutions. A Whale of an Idea - With funding from the Whale Tail License Plate Fund, this program has since expanded to six locations in California: San Diego, Orange County, Los Angeles, Monterey, San Francisco and Humboldt County.

Kids naturally love nature and in showing them something they care about, how it’s being threatened, and then supporting them into action is what Ocean Day is about. Our educational goal is to empower not overwhelm. We are a part of nature, not apart from it and our choices and actions affect the natural world around us. We can have a positive impact by making smart choices that respect and protect our planet. On Ocean Day - we are part of the solution. How to use these powerful images and messaging as interpretive tools to inspire more action. Press releases, public service announcements, video, newspaper coverage all aimed at sharing a conservation message from the ocean. Partners Make it Happen - Friends of the Dunes has been coordinating Humboldt County’s Ocean Day Education Program since 2005. With assistance from the Bureau of Land Management, US Coast Guard, California Highway Patrol, Loleta Volunteer Fire Department, California Conservation Corps, Mark Harris, Patrick Cudahy, Chad Johnson and hundreds of dedicated volunteers, the event usually makes the front page news. Not Just Marine Debris - Participating schools from all over Humboldt County spend the day at the beach picking up trash and restoring the dunes by removing invasive European beachgrass. Birds Eye Art - Artists with a knack for seeing the big picture design aerial art with a message. At the end of the day everyone participates in the design and aircraft flies over to capture the image.

An event with 1000 people at the beach requires extensive planning and safety precautions. We use something called the Incident Command System (ICS) which explains how to plan and execute operations during the event. This system is used in all kinds of incidents and has been applied to ensure safety in all operations. The plan defines the specific roles and responsibilities of the various participants, and establishes standards for event planning implementation. It is well suited for this event and other events like it. After action reviews are also used at the end of each event to make sure all voices are heard and we can mitigate any hazards that may have arisen during the event implementation. When working with aircraft and hundreds of children, a flight plan along with an emergency medical plan is developed as part of this event. Participants will be given access to a sharepoint site that will have useful event planning documentation, press releases, example plans, maps, aerial art instructions and all materials used for planning and implementation.

References

Interpretive Service Learning Projects for University International Study Programs

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University Study Abroad programs focusing on ecotourism and environmental issues can be transformed from passive academic study into memorable and meaningful place-based experiences via service learning projects. In this presentation I will offer examples of international service learning integrated with university courses by telling the stories of three service learning projects from study abroad programs in Greece, England and Spain.

Why should we integrate service learning into study abroad courses? The projects provide a practical application for the theory learned in the more academic portion of the classes. The students experience real-world results and how projects need to be adapted to the geographic, ecological, economic and cultural context of the host country. They are often humbled and empowered by the challenges and accomplishments. How does service learning benefit the students? They leave with a much deeper and more mature understanding of the benefits and challenges posed by ecotourism. They also learn practical skills that enhance their resume and future job searches. They can forge deep working relationships with professionals in the host country that often continue after they return to their home country. They return to campus classes with a much more global perspective on their studies and future lives.

How do service learning projects benefit the host country? The professionals who work with the students have commented that they have enjoyed the energy, enthusiasm and skills that the students bring to their department or municipality and the chance for their staff to learn from and teach the international students. They also appreciate that the students create an interpretive product that wouldn’t have occurred otherwise, either due to short staffing, lack of funds or lack of expertise. What is involved in creating ecotourism courses and in setting up successful international service learning projects? Here are three examples of how projects have unfolded.

Example 1: Kefalonia, Greece: A major earthquake destroyed many of the villages on the island of Kefalonia in the 1950s. The small mountainous village of Farsa was abandoned after the earthquake and survivors moved their homes downhill and closer to the Ionian Sea. The abandoned village was left standing, frozen in time as it was on the day of the earthquake. The students worked the local villagers to help develop a plan for ecotourism related to sustainable living at the site of the old village. They created an interpretive plan about how people lived sustainably in Old Farsa and each created an example interpretive exhibit. They interviewed elders about their experiences on the day of the earthquake and created ceiling to floor interpretive banners for the local community center telling these stories for residents and tourists.

Example 2: London, England: Students worked with Camden Borough Parks Department. They coordinated with the head park ranger and his staff to develop interpretive materials for local parks. The park staff asked the students to create a brochure and website for a walking tour of the hidden and “lost” small cemeteries that dot northern London. These cemetery parks mostly date from the time of the black plague and are jumbles of ancient tombstones leaning, knocked over and sometimes piled into heaps.

Students each worked on an individual park, researching the fascinating historical stories associated with the park and then visited the archives of the public library to locate historical images to illustrate their park entry in the brochure. They then worked together and with park staff to mesh the individual park stories into a quirky and fun walking tour brochure and web page available to visitors of the park and north London. Example 3: Oviedo, Spain: Students worked with Oviedo City Parks to develop park interpretation for English speaking visitors. San Francisco Park is the flagship park for the city and has some Spanish language interpretive signs and website materials but no information in English. The students worked with the Spanish speaking park staff and director to determine what would be most helpful for educating English speaking visitors and then developed a park brochure and website page about the arboretum trees and plants, the historical statues and buildings and the history of park management in Oviedo. The more fluent students translated their work into Spanish for the park staff review and then translated it back into English incorporating the suggested changes. Students also donated a day to work with park staff on landscape maintenance and learned some of what goes into managing a forested municipal park.

Students who have returned from the three programs showcased in this presentation have written very positive evaluations of their experiences. Some of their comments include: “This was the best educational experience of my four years at university.” “Working with the parks department was the most meaningful part of my study abroad experience.” “I felt like I was leaving something positive behind when I left and that I had a chance to give back to the country that gave me so much.” The host country partners have also commented positively and contacted me since and requested that we return with similar student groups and courses. They have proposed other complex and meaningful projects related to ecotourism such as participating in a research project on river otters in a national park in Spain. These programs and projects have also enriched my teaching career and personal life. I encourage others to integrate service learning into their study abroad courses related to ecotourism.

Class syllabi including course reading materials and student products are available by contacting Wendy.Walker@wwu.edu
Pokemon GO Figure: Using Viral Media in Interpretive Spaces

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Pokemon Go took over the world during the summer of 2016. Millions of people played the augmented reality game - which, unlike most smartphone games, required venturing out into the real world. At the Birmingham Zoo in Alabama, I took advantage of this popularity and created Pokemon-themed bird signs to engage the hundreds of players who were visiting the zoo. The signs went viral after being posted online and ended up reaching people all over the world through sixty articles across nearly a dozen countries. These signs are an example of how we can use entertainment and trends to engage our guests and reach our interpretive goals.

My position at the Birmingham Zoo is equal parts zookeeper and interpreter. I get to be innovative and take chances as I create programs and graphics centering on the zoo’s collection of birds in my care. I started playing Pokemon Go on July 7th - I was immediately in love, but also knew there had to be ways to use this game in my interpretation. For those who haven’t played the game, here’s a rundown of the basics: Pokemon Go is a game wherein the all of the major elements, including the actual Pokemon, are tied to real-life GPS locations. The game even uses the phone’s camera to project the animated Pokemon into its surroundings. There are also Pokestops (areas where players can get items or lure Pokemon to that spot) and Pokemon Gyms (areas where players can battle other players’ Pokemon) that many zoos, parks, and museums now find on their grounds. Finally, there are displays for each individual Pokemon that describe their power, attack moves, health, and location where they were found. This display was what I ended up using for my signs. As I was playing the game and looking at the individual Pokemon displays, I thought about how they resembled zoo signage that gave guests information about our animals. I wanted to pique the interest of the hundreds of guests who were coming to the zoo just to play Pokemon and show them that they and their gameplay were welcome at the zoo. Creating and installing the signs was actually done in about a day. I wanted to jump on the trend quickly, and it proved to be successful. If I had waited even another two weeks, I believe the signs would not have gained the popularity that did. The attention the game had peaked in the first few weeks and dropped off afterwards.

Don’t be afraid to jump on trends in your interpretive programming! Trends, memes, and online challenges can often grow incredibly popular within days and disappear in the same amount of time - timeliness is key. As for the process, I pulled up a screenshot of the Pokemon information page and built a template of it from scratch in Photoshop. Graphic design is one of my interpretive strengths and I use it as often as I can. I tried to match the in-game display as closely as possible. Then I incorporated the elements from the real animals. Each bird was given special “attacks” that related to information about them – such as “Ultra Kick” for the Double-Wattled Cassowary. Each animal had a type related to the Pokemon types in the game, including “Fairy” which I applied to flamingos. Maps at the bottom of the page displayed the bird’s geographic range. Overall, I took all of the information we usually put into a zoo graphic and translated that into the game display. Within 20 minutes of mounting the signs, I saw multiple guests playing Pokemon Go stop in their tracks to look at them. Guests were taking pictures of the signs and reading them aloud. I had officially created a connection between this cultural phenomenon and the birds of the zoo.

I posted pictures of my signs online... and suddenly they began to be shared all over the world through Reddit, Facebook, and various news sources. Zookeepers from around the country told me they wanted signs like ours and interpreters asked me for templates. Outside of the zoo or interpretive circles, people online who may have never seen the birds on the signs were engaging and learning about them. My interpretive goal was to engage people with the bird collection of the Birmingham Zoo through their already-formed connection with Pokemon Go - and it had now been achieved globally.

Entertainment - especially in the form of media and technology - is often seen within the interpretive field as shallow, inaccurate, and without educational value. But in fact, connecting to entertainment can achieve engagement, education, and something we have an increasing need for - relevancy. It is a way for places like zoos and museums, often seen as antiquated, to remain relevant and make new connections in the modern era. Specifically in the case of Pokemon Go, entertainment is also an emotional experience. The positive emotions evoked by entertainment are an excellent starting point for interpretation. This is also why creating an immersive experience is important. I was able to create accurate signs because I was immersed in the game. Even though we may feel reluctant as professionals to immerse ourselves in viral media and entertainment, doing so will make our interpretation more accurate and effective. Those who are already connecting with the form of entertainment you choose will then connect on a near-instinctual level with your resource. Pokemon Go can be a model and inspiration for other forms of viral media in interpretation. Even if this game doesn’t fit into your interpretive goals, entertainment and media such as Snapchat, Minecraft, or iNaturalist could all help you achieve your interpretive goals. Don’t be afraid to embrace the entertainment and have fun!

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Training non tourists for tourism: The importance of capacity building in Indigenous tourism projects

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Each year thousands of international tourists board dugout canoes and travel through the Panamanian rainforest, up the Chagres River, to this small Indigenous community. There, they partake in a cultural tourism experience, phenomena mirrored in Indigenous communities all over the world. The experience at Embera Drua includes a series of interpretive activities designed by the village to share a representation of Embera culture. While they dance, eat, get impermanent tattoos from the juice of the Jagua, and explore the village, tourists are given a glimpse of both the modern-day life and the traditions of one of the seven Indigenous tribes of Panama. Culture, traditions and lifestyles of Indigenous peoples are of interest to cultural tourists and, as more people travel, tourism to Indigenous communities has flourished and expanded, representing this growing desire by millions of travelers to experience, if only briefly, a way of life different from their own. Indigenous peoples have more often been the object of tourism without having any control over how that tourism is implemented, this however is changing. Some communities use tourism as a means of reinforcing their uniqueness to both themselves and to the tourist. Scholars argue that community participation in planning and decision-making is a critical part of successful tourism development. involvement of a community in the tourism development process is vital if any region wishes to deliver tourism experiences that ensure both visitor satisfaction and ongoing benefits for the residents of destination areas.

Community capacity refers to “the levels of competence, ability and skills necessary to set and achieve relevant goals” (Balint as cited in Moscardo, 2008, p. 9) and the “assets and attributes that a community is able to draw upon in order to improve their lives. It is the ability to define, evaluate, analyze and act on . . . concerns of importance” (Lavarack as cited in Moscardo, p. 9). One of the challenges to effective community involvement is that tourism is often a foreign concept in remote Indigenous communities. Butler and Hinch (2007) note that tourism is often an “alien or at least non-experienced concept,” (p. 324) and if Indigenous communities are going to be successful dealing with the complexities and whims of the international tourism market, they must be well-informed before making decisions. The lack of tourism knowledge is a critical barrier that not only directly limits the ability of locals to participate in tourism development, but also contributes to the next two barriers: a lack of local tourism leadership and domination of external agents (Long & Nuckolls, 1994). Many of the residents of Embera Drua, particularly those in leadership positions, cited the need for increased community understanding of tourism as a business, mirroring themes found in the literature (Bourke & Luloff, 1996; Reid, Mair, & George, 2004).

Hollinshead (2007) notes that most tourism and training programs include little information specific to Indigenous groups in regard to their beliefs, culture and ways of perception. Berno (2007) agrees, writing that most tourism training programs are imported from the West and oriented toward Western-style management facilities and approaches, and notes the need for Indigenous voices in the process of developing such programs. Most tourism training programs are imported from the West and oriented toward Western-style management facilities and approaches and are segmented into content specific areas, i.e. interpretation, birding, etc., while the overall concepts of why people travel and visitor experience is given less focus. In addition, the lack of business, marketing and entrepreneurial skills, lack of access to credit, and the inability to mobilize the resources needed for success, leave communities dependent on outside experts, to abandon projects or to offer a diminished and/or a narrow range of tourism products. When working with rural, third world or indigenous populations to develop interpretive projects for tourism, consultants must understand that lack of capacity is often a barrier to success because tourism is often a foreign concept in remote communities. To successfully deal with the complexities and whims of the tourism market, communities must be well-informed before making decisions. So too consultants, be they interpretive planners or trainers, need to understand this lack of capacity and offer their services in the context of the communities ability, skills and knowledge OR include such abilities skills and knowledge in their own training packages.

References


Exploring the Stories – Collaboration in the heart of Sydney’s Commercial District

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In Australia, like many other places in the world, many significant cultural heritage sites exist in locations that are prominent, yet privately owned. The opportunity to create meaningful interpretative products at such sites are usually limited because of the private verses public nature of the site, and the lack of opportunity, time, resources, willingness and budget required in order to adequate research and interpret this known or potential significance. As a result, there is often a disconnect between the interpretation of significant cultural heritage sites that are publicly owned, or managed as cultural heritage destinations, and those that sit within private ownership. Therefore, when a major commercial site in the heart of Sydney’s first convict settlement, came up for redevelopment in 2012, it presented a rare opportunity for the developer, archaeologists, architects and artists to work together to pay homage to our difficult, yet highly significant history.

The site was known as a point of first contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; where the displacement of Aboriginal people occurred as a result of the establishment of the colony in 1788; and where the original Sydney Harbour shoreline was reclaimed and built upon, time and time again in order to establish and expand upon the commercial heart of the city. With this significant history in mind, the vision and commitment of the team working on the project needed to be cohesive from the beginning. Without the passion of the developer, the architects, archaeological team, interpreters, artists or the government consent authorities for the site, it would have been too easy for this site to have yet another historic plaque tacked to the exterior wall identifying the site as a location that ‘was once important’. Instead, from the beginning, the vision for the project was to create a new commercial tower that differed vastly from its neighbouring towers, a tower that would stand out for its ‘humanness’, its use of organic materials, such as timber and sandstone (which was quarried from the actual site itself), free-flowing design and connection to the site’s tangible and intangible heritage values. It was this vision, the brainchild of architects Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp (FJMT) and developer, Mirvac, that enabled the cultural heritage values of the site to elevate and become such a strong element within the final built product.

Initially, the known and potential cultural heritage values of the site posed a major risk to the development. In order to gain clearance to undertake deep excavation, necessary for the basement parking and building foundations, it was a statutory requirement to gain approval to remove any potential historical or Aboriginal archaeology. The potential archaeology was likely to be representative of all phases of Sydney’s occupation from its earliest Aboriginal occupation (possibly dating back to 10,000 years old or more), rare convict-related evidence of the colonisation of Australia, through to the later evolution of the site, and was considered to be of potential National significance. In an initial meeting with the State Government, it was strongly stated that they expected glass display cases in the
foyer and a range of other features in order for the development to proceed should significant archaeology be found. The suggestion to possibly combine public art in the main lobby area with cultural heritage interpretative elements was met by the consent authorities with great scepticism, as there were no good examples in Sydney with which to compare.

Upon leaving the meeting, there was a genuine concern that the building end-user needs would clash, terribly, with the ‘museum-style’ restrictions that might be placed on the final design and interior fitout of the building. Following twelve weeks of excavation and the discovery of more than 23,000 artefacts; early natural landscape features; the original shoreline; remnant wharf structures; and an illegal opium smoking den, the archaeologists, the developers and even the architects knew that this site now had the tangible evidence to support the intangible cultural values of the site and that, at a minimum the ‘glass cases’ would be expected. This was when the passion, enthusiasm and creativity of all parties involved came together to take the project to the next level. The architects developed the idea of using sandstone quarried from the site for the main artwork in the lobby, in order to emphasise the connection to the site’s history, and to celebrate the opportunity of being able to use the site’s own natural material to create an outstanding central artwork.

To support this vision, Mirvac commissioned renowned Aboriginal artist Judy Watson to prepare the final 300-square-metre carved sandstone artwork, which wraps around the entire lobby. It contains carvings of historic plans of the site, replicas of artefacts, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal references throughout, and anchors the new building to its cultural heritage values in a way that no other interpretative device could. In addition to this, the exquisitely designed external public staircase, which leads to a pocket park, was specifically designed to house a collection of some of the most interesting and outstanding artefacts found on site. Backlit at night, each case appears to be an artwork in the stairway, with QR codes discretely placed at the bottom of each case to allow people to gain more information about the artefacts, as and when they wish, using their smart phones (for example, http://digitalguide.200george.com.au/art-id/1/). Other elements include heritage panels to the rear of the building and the inlay of metal strips in the floors, both internal and external, to mark the original Sydney Harbour shoreline.

The site’s history, archaeology and intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage values have been treated with the same level of meticulous design consideration as every other element at 200 George Street, Sydney. The architects maintained control over the style, design and fabric of the interpretation throughout the site, so that it fits seamlessly within the overall aesthetic of the building. By forming an integral part of the fabric of the building itself, the interpretation now has an inherent longevity that is rarely seen in interpretative displays, and particularly, within privately owned sites.
Working in International Settings: Best Practices

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Traveling to another country is an exciting adventure, being exposed to new foods, cultures, and lifestyles. Working in an international location with local people is that and much more. It can be rewarding, but also can be stressful and challenging. How do you prepare for these kinds of experiences in situations where you might not know the language or cultural practices and yet are expected to lead trainings, facilitate meetings, accomplish projects and be the “expert in the room”? How do you make sure that your travels involve a true exchange of information, where you are open to learn from others as much as you teach or train your audience?

Our three panelists have worked in a broad variety of international settings: one of us has done extensive field research on the impacts of tourism in Amerindian villages in Panama and has also led interpretive trainings in Mexico, Panama, and the Dominican Republic; one of us has worked extensively with Russian nationals on study tours in the United States and with Americans in Russia, Mongolia, China and west Africa and our third panelist has worked in Uganda, Guyana, Morocco and Russia on various interpretive projects. We will discuss our own experiences – what we learned about ourselves from our work setting and what advice we might give to those who aspire to work internationally.

Preparation
The preparation for foreign work assignments can be approached in a variety of ways, based on your personal experience with international travel, your level of comfort in new locales, your personality and family background, and the type of training or work that needs to be completed. With access to technology such as the internet and Skype, detailed research can be done on a specific site and project history before departure.

But what about ourselves? How do we prepare ourselves for international work? The following questions are something to be considered in preparing yourself personally and professionally.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- Flexibility – How flexible am I with project plans that may change quickly due to weather, disagreements among participants, or last-minute changing priorities? How quickly can I think on my feet and make (or adjust to) alternative plans?
- Communication and Cultural Differences – Is everyone like me? Do I know the characteristics of my home culture well enough to understand whether they might be complementary or conflict with those in my host culture? How do I recognize those differences and bridge them?
- Self-Awareness – Do I know my strengths and weaknesses in working as part of a team in an international setting? Am I willing to challenge myself to do things differently? Can I laugh at myself and use humor appropriately?
- Curiosity – Am I curious about people, about what makes them tick, about people and cultures that are different than mine? Can I ask thoughtful questions about cultural differences and point out how my culture would react? Can I change my ways during my assignment to adapt to the local customs and practices?

Lessons Learned – Advice from a Presenter
Each of our panelists has worked in many locations and cultures around the world. Below they share one lesson each:

- Know Your Audience – We teach this in our interpretive training sessions about audiences at our programs and sites, but it is equally important to know who we will be working with before we start a training. Do the students work for a private firm, a government agency, an NGO or are they freelance guides? Have they travelled themselves? What is their job description and who is their typical audience? Knowing this allows you to tailor activities and examples to the location and the participants, ensuring our efforts are relevant to those we are working with. If you can’t get this information before you arrive, then building in some activities at the beginning might help you tease it out.
- Building Connections – Taking time to get acquainted with the local project hosts is critical to launching a project. Knowing my American background and cultural nuances of being focused on project goals can lead me into forgetting that other cultures are not like mine. Relaxing over a meal and having a “get acquainted conversation” first does wonders for having a successful project in the end.
- Working through Translators — Unless you are multi-lingual yourself, many times you will communicate with your audience through a language interpreter. You may also have materials that you will want to share with your audience that
will need to be translated beforehand. Before you depart you should communicate with your local hosts and set aside time to discuss all the planned presentations and other inter-communications with the folks who will be translating for you. These translators may be able to catch potential cultural misunderstandings beforehand or explain to you why a certain concept or activity may not be applicable or acceptable to your host culture.

Being flexible and able to adapt (sometimes on short notice) is critical to successful international work. All of the work in the world preparing yourself with pre-trip research may come to naught if you don’t have the ability to “go with the flow.” The plans that you thought were guaranteed can always change or be rearranged. Success of a project in many cases is determined by the personal connection you have made to the people involved and the opportunity to have made a difference in even the smallest of ways.

References

Learn About Your Destination – US State Department of State
https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html
A useful site to gain rudimentary background on countries of the world. Keep in mind other references should be compared to determine accuracy.

The World Factbook – Central Intelligence Agency – US
An excellent on-line source for information and maps. Ensure you cross reference this site with others since this is a US-centric view of the world.

35 Etiquette Tips for Doing Business Around the World
A visual info-graphic for tips from working in major countries in the world. Somewhat simple but a good start in researching expectations.
Build Stronger Local Relationships with a Multi-Session Program

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Interpretive programming for youth in natural areas benefits families, the landscape, and your interpretive site. The Junior Master Naturalist program will help you build relationships with your local community by offering a multi-session program engaging participants with your site.

Children are a prime audience for interpreters; their curiosity is easily awakened. Children who find a personal connection to nature at an early age are more likely to be leaders in conservation and environmental stewardship as adults. Facilitating nature discovery opportunities for youth in their local parks and interpretive sites can produce far-reaching benefits for families, ecosystems, land managers, and our society as a whole. Youth development organizations and site interpreters should work to build collaborative partnerships to develop programs that will achieve these goals. One such collaborative effort is Junior Master Naturalist (JrMN). The Oregon Master Naturalist and 4-H Youth Development programs, both housed within Oregon State University, came together in 2016 to develop JrMN. This program reached over 40 4th-6th grade youth in one county during its pilot season, each spending at least 35 hours in local parks, public lands, and interpretive sites learning about natural resources and local geography. Creating family-friendly nature programming, such as Junior Master Naturalist, will not only help children find their connection to nature, but it will increase the comfort level of the entire family with spending time in the outdoors. When programs are centered around the safety of local parks and interpretive sites, families will be more likely to return to these areas on their own and build family traditions and memories around those place-based experiences. Multi-session programs for local families will also support the development of deeper relationships with the communities around your interpretive site. The connection they develop to your site over time will install a sense of partnership and responsibility leading to cooperative visitor behaviors, advocacy, stewardship, and volunteerism. The Junior Master Naturalist curriculum can be found on the Oregon 4-H website at: http://oregon.4h.oregonstate.edu/projects/natural-science/junior-master-naturalist. JrMN features fun, hands-on activities covering a variety of ecological principals and nearly all of the resources needed for these activities are found on the website.

Junior Master Naturalist provides a creative way for interpreters to connect with their local communities and promote repeat visitation. Building collaborative partnerships with local organizations strengthens their ties to the community and allows local families to develop personal relationships with these sites. The concept of multi-session programming engages the public more deeply with sites opening their eyes to aspects and features they may not have otherwise experienced. Junior Master Naturalist is an example of a program that encourages interpreters to think outside the box when trying to achieve goals in visitation and community relations.
“Something There Is That Doesn’t Love a Wall”: Interpreting Borders and Boundaries

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“Something there is that doesn’t love a wall” is a line from Robert Frost’s poem, Mending Wall. What can we take away from this somewhat cryptic line? In many ways, this expression is a commentary on space and place, and the divisions there of (borders and boundaries). But Frost follows later in the poem with the line, “before I built a wall I’d ask to know / what I was wailing in or walling out”. Our perspectives on borders depend on which side we find ourselves. There is safety in borders, comfort. There is fear in borders. There is uncertainty inherent to borders. With myriad interpretations and perceptions of borders and the prevalence of them in our cultures, it would be helpful to have a guide to navigate this terrain. Let’s use Frost’s poem as a guide to understand borders. These divisions, dividing lines, and points of contrast exist in our worldview, our local communities, and in nature. They can be arbitrary lines on maps representing social and political partitions. They can evoke divisive narratives that blare from our radios and televisions. On the one hand they might make us feel safe, in union with those who share the same side. On the other hand they can prompt us to notice differences rather than similarities. Their presence can invoke fear and uncertainty. They can be physical barriers that might seem permanent, but one thing is certain with borders – things change. Borders are as much the conflict between two or more factions as it is a wall or a fence. In the past three years, interpreters at Coronado National Memorial have been trying to address the questions of how to interpret borders and why it is more important than ever to reveal their physical and emotional impacts. Through a variety of interpretive methods and with help from a diverse cast of partners we have begun to explore the narrative power of borders. In this presentation I intend to share the successes and challenges of doing so.

Coronado National Memorial shares its southern border with Sonora, Mexico. The US-Mexico Border in 1941 – the year the park was established – was subtle, designed with stray cattle in mind rather than the migration of humans and the smuggling of goods. Today, the border is a highly visible, 17-foot high concrete reinforced steel fence. Yet, it is much more than metal and concrete. It is a symbol, serving rhetorical agendas and evoking strong emotions and opinions. A monument to fear. When the controversial fence was constructed in 2008 it became a talking point with the visitors to the park. This conversation consisted of interpreters trying to remain politically neutral while discussing something politically charged. This interaction has evolved in recent years and we are now actively interpreting borders and boundaries. Until recently, we had been discovering new ways of discussing borders, and the opinions and emotions surrounding them, while trying to adhere to organization principles. Through this process we have found that interpreting the US-Mexico Border fence allows us to delve into the borders and boundaries that surround our neighborhoods, our cultures and society, and our personal lives. I will share three attempts at interpreting borders and reaching out to communities directly affected by borders – Using internship programs to help reach underserved communities: some programs focusing on diversity provide internship possibilities. We have hosted an intern who came to help conduct outreach to Latino communities in Southeast Arizona, bringing community members to the park that would not normally come. It was an important step to start “dismantling the wall”, bridging a cultural barrier we acknowledge in the park. It is not enough to only recruit interns, one must empower interns through positive leadership.

Special events that bring together regional communities from across borders: the very nature of this activity begins the obsolescence process on borders and barriers in communities. Bringing people together from across political and cultural barriers eroded the “mending” material of fear of the Other. This act also presents the park as a safe space, a place to gather. This can have a lasting effect on the perception and reputation of the organization and the space. Structured programs using dialogue and traditional interpretation methods that directly interpret borders, migration, and the movement of people and cultures: the most difficult task of all – interpreting borders through programs. We have celebrated successes in this area through US/Mexico Border programs and through new exhibits focuses directly on the ecological effects the border wall has had on wildlife and landscape. In our park a tangible resource is in fact the border wall, and subsequently we have begun to treat it as such. Recent attention on the US/Mexico Border and talk of new walls and new fears threatens to begin a “mending” process of the borders at the park. Additionally, heightened political focus on the National Park Service threatens to obstruct the our work.

When it comes to interpreting borders there are bound to be successes and failures. And, in my organization, there are bound to be topics surrounding borders that offend. Let us return to Frost and this passage: “Before I built a wall I’d ask to know what I was walling in or walling out, and to whom I was like to give offense. Something there is that doesn’t love a wall, that wants it down.” By identifying and exploring those interminable intangibles that transcend these borders we can get down to the foundational themes that help us navigate the topic. Although many of the examples I have given are place specific and involve the challenges of working on the US-Mexico Border and the surrounding communities, I hope it will prove to be of value to all interpreters. The material is relevant in interpreting quotidian borders and boundaries found universally throughout our collective sites, as well as tapping into universal themes surrounding migration and movement, neighbors, cultural contact, and much more.
References

You’ve Got a Friend in Me: Developing a Volunteer Corps to Support the Work of Your Organization

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Volunteer program development is important for Interpretive organizations that face many challenges ranging from budget and finance to boots on the ground getting the work done. Forming, developing and nurturing a corps of volunteers can support your organization and provide needed resources (human and fiscal capital) that sustains your mission. This session will use a case study to explore the formation, development and cultivation of a friends group that is instrumental to the sustainability of Schmeeckle Reserve. Examples will be drawn from small, medium and large-scale volunteer programs. During this interactive session, participants will discuss needs at their own organizations and will walk away with an outline to explore the possibilities and develop a plan for implementing a volunteer corps.

Natural and cultural resource site managers ideally develop and nurture relationships in their community, building social capital and garnering support for the mission and vision of the organization. If a manager has been successful in this area, when a discussion arises around the need for community involvement and volunteer participation, the task can be smoother because of the established support and a vested interest by community members. Relationship building is a key component of developing a successful volunteer corps.

Schmeeckle Reserve is a 280-acre natural area on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The mission and priorities of the organization are refuge, research & education, and recreation. Schmeeckle Reserve plays a central role both at the university and within the community, in part by providing natural and cultural resource education programming. This site found itself needing to formally develop a volunteer program, potentially a friends group that could support the organization when resources got tight, such as budget cuts to the state university.

Steps in the process of developing a volunteer program include determining a purpose, fund raising, community education and outreach, help with land management activities, etc. With a purpose in mind, the development of a volunteer program involves establishing mutually beneficial guidelines with a clear chain of authority and open lines of communication for the agency and volunteers. Potential volunteers need to know their purpose. Matching volunteer abilities with needed projects will help ensure a long-lasting volunteer program or friends group. All levels of an organization (including higher level administration) should be included during the developmental process. This investment by all parties can avoid conflicts in the future.

Once the volunteer program is developed, the task of managing could be as formal as following other Human Resources practices, including writing volunteer job descriptions to providing volunteers a handbook that includes policies and procedures, and rights and responsibilities, and establishing a risk management plan that protects the organization and volunteers. An especially important recommendation is to appoint a manager of the volunteer program. Ideally the coordinator has experience with program planning and organization, staffing and directing, agency and community relations, and budgeting and fundraising. It is helpful to understand what motivates volunteers to get involved with an organization. Studies that examine environmental related volunteers have examined some common factors, to include: Helping the environment Learning about nature Socialization Getting outside Projection organization In researching friends group Jones (2002) discovered five additional factors needed before people feel they can become a friends group champion: Passion for the park Relevant characteristics such as persistence Self-efficacy Available time Belief they have skills to offer Perception of an equal level commitment from park officials The Friends Group of Schmeeckle Reserve has grown to 220+ member households since inception in 2014. Schmeeckle did hire an outreach manager who coordinates and directs the volunteer program. The outreach manager’s efforts include fundraising, education and outreach, and advocacy.

Volunteerism is a broad area of study. Even if your site does not currently have a volunteer program, there are guidelines and steps that can be followed to get the process started. There are several models of success to follow eliminating the need to reinvent the wheel. Organizations and agencies do not need to feel like they are the only ones to benefit from volunteers at their site. If designed and managed properly, both the agency and the volunteer will feel they have benefited. A successful volunteer program or friends group should be a WIN/WIN for all involved.

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Community Building Through Interpretive Planning

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Interpretive planning methods to gather multi-dimensional stories include engaging diverse stakeholders with alternative viewpoints, which may enhance the final product in two ways. First, engaging individuals who are different makes the project team prepare better by anticipating multiple viewpoints and, thereby, becoming more innovative, according to Scientific American. Second, an inclusive interpretive process breaks down stereotypes by guiding communities to reflect on and confront the ways that long-standing narratives have perpetuated injustices. Therefore, engaging diverse communities, exploring differences, and confronting oppressive legacies through interpretive planning can strengthen the community and offer some measure of reconciliation. Within this framework, we present Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest and Diamond Point Park interpretive planning processes as case studies for effective community building.

Interpretive planning is a decision-making process that aims to determine an effective way to communicate stories, information, and experiences to a target audience using interpretation. This goal-driven process recommends strategies to help places achieve their mission, protect their resources, and provide the best service to visitors. As with interpretive planning, community building takes a ground-up approach that involves members of a community to work together to solve issues affecting them. Developing a strong community identity and conveying a sense of commitment to the place requires extensive community engagement, beyond political and civic leaders, and research into the topics that matter most to the community.

Case Study 1: Poplar Forest was a plantation and personal retreat for the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. The historic landscape hosts archaeological remains which reveal the stories of those who lived here: Jefferson, his grandchildren, and the community of enslaved men, women and children who lived and labored at Poplar Forest. New leadership at Thomas Jefferson’s Poplar Forest, formed in 1983, noted the downward trend in visitation and public support for historic houses, Poplar Forest needed to build relevance and sustainability, and they chose to do so collaboratively with their community of Lynchburg, Virginia. Poplar Forest selected the 106 Group to develop a Master Interpretive Plan, a process that included facilitating outreach within the local African American community, in particular through Lynchburg’s Legacy Museum of African American History. Forging this institutional partnership began with collaboration on a workshop. The workshop needed to be a safe environment where participants could discuss Poplar Forest’s past role in racial division born out of slavery, as well as its potential as a venue for reconciliation. The Legacy Museum, as a key partner, built a network of African American stakeholders and spread the word about the event. In turn, community leaders were front and center during the workshop. Discussions focused on stories and experiences, so participants were able to give practical suggestions for integrating interpretation, while also offering deep reflections on the African American community’s historical and contemporary struggles. Together in dialogue, we confronted issues about the complex legacy of Thomas Jefferson—a visionary for freedom, yet a slave owner. Subsequent outreach activities continue to transfer ownership and authority to community members, and facilitate safe forums for open expression on difficult topics.

Lessons Learned: When working with historically disenfranchised people, always be conscious of the history of relationships based on unequal power and control – the legacy of slavery continues to mar black/white relationships. The timing of change is critical. There has to be sufficient support from key players and decision makers to support the effort beyond a single event. Provide a safe environment where participants can be part of conversations that emphasize listening and encourage participants to not be afraid of being offended or uncomfortable.

Case Study 2: The city of Bemidji in northern Minnesota, with a population of 13,000, is a central hub located between three Ojibwe reservations: Red Lake, White Earth, and Leech Lake. The City sought to redevelop Diamond Point Park on the shore of Lake Bemidji. In addition to highlighting the beautiful lakeside views, the City wanted to bring to light the park’s layers of cultural history, including a 3,000-year-old archaeology site and burial mounds. The potential for conflict between the Native and Euro-American community during park redevelopment was great because of the sensitive nature of the park’s location on an archaeological site that includes burial mounds, in addition to tensions due to disenfranchisement and racism.

The 106 Group approached the project on two parallel tracks—conducting archaeological investigations that would inform park design and minimize physical disturbance to key resources and features, and creating and working with a newly formed American Indian Advisory Group to develop effective ways to interpret Native history in the park and tell the hidden stories of this place. The 106 Group, in collaboration with the American Indian Advisory Group, recommended that interpretation at Diamond Point Park focus on the overlap, and, to some extent, the blending of three cultural periods:
when Native American life flourished in the area; the contact period between European fur trappers, traders and indigenous people; and the European period, when early settlers first came to the area to make new homes and exiled Native people from their ancestral lands to reservations. By developing the concept of “The Lure of the Water’s Edge,” we settled on a primary interpretive theme that had the capacity to articulate
connections both past and present. Results include a newfound understanding of shared interests and desires through collaborative interpretation, and some new bridges built between the Native and Euro-American community that could be used for future planning efforts.

Lessons Learned - Timing was just right. As the city desired to find ways to rebuild relationships with the indigenous community and in turn the indigenous community had for long advocated for respectful and accurate interpretation of their heritage on Lake Bemidji’s waterfront. Work with an advisory group of stakeholders, in this case indigenous people, to find stories and themes that transcend one culture. Have clear and intentional plans to address the Native community’s fears of damage to the burial mounds and further disrespect and broken promises by Euro-American leaders.

Reference
There is an international vision to reconnect kids and communities to the outdoor natural world. From Nature Play areas in the United States to Switzerland’s Forest Kindergartens to Finland’s expanded school recess to Australia’s Nature Passport Apps, countries around the world are striving to revive childhood’s outdoor natural heritage. Explore how Ohio is motivating schools to get kids outside putting the Ohio Outdoor Children’s Bill of Rights to work. Become introduced to Finland’s philosophy of Friluftsliv. It’s a natural connection philosophy that plays a vital role in Finland’s educational system, which consistently ranks as one of the world’s top three countries in academic performance. U.S. schools place well below Finland — 20th in the world, according to the United Nations. Outdoor play can also remedy behavioral problems. In a new film about a Swiss forest kindergarten—School’s Out,—a pediatrician notes that he sees lots of children with attention deficit disorder in conventional indoor preschools but none in forest kindergartens. Erin Kenny, founder of Cedarsong Nature School on Vashon Island, Wash., writes, in her book on forest kindergartens, “Children cannot bounce off the walls if we take away the walls.” The benefits these outdoor connections bring to personal well-being as well as academic success, result in kids and communities that are healthier, happier and smarter in their knowledge and motivation to protect natural areas and heritage. Inspiring environmentally smart stewards of our natural world and cultural heritage is an important goal for interpreters. This interactive session provides powerful inspiration and proven models of innovative ideas to make outdoor nature connections attainable, successful, widespread and in partnership with multiple community organizations.

Imagine schools assigning homework to read inspiring storybooks encouraging outdoor curiosity followed with instructions to go explore outside to get academic credit! Discover how this homework transforms families into bonding together outdoors! Imagine schools where every grade level has outdoor learning incorporating outdoor exploration, literature, music, and art. Musical messages continually inspiring children to go outside and experience the natural world are part of the science curriculum. Imagine parks and libraries supporting this challenge providing outdoor natural area play spaces and storybook trails. Imagine parks with signs saying “Please go off the trail here and play!” Imagine your organization leading the way for your community to be recognized as “The Best Community for Connecting Kids to Nature!” By creating partnerships with parks, schools, libraries, health care facilities and other community organizations these important nature connections can happen. The simple childhood joys of squishing mud through your toes and building stick forts are becoming rarer. Childhood has moved indoors during the last two decades, taking a mental and physical toll on today’s kids. Children spend an average of over 7 hours each day in front of the computer and TV but less than 4 minutes a day in unstructured outdoor play. The negative impact of decreased time outdoors is resulting in a doubling of the childhood obesity rate and a lowering of their immune systems accompanied by an incremental hundred billion dollar cost to health care systems. In one generation, the percentage of people who reported that the outdoors was the most influential environment of their childhood dropped almost in half. In addition to healthy bodies, healthy attitudes and academic success can depend on outdoor experience. Outdoor nature play can help remedy behavioral problems and help prevent violence tendencies as children enter teenage and adulthood.

Studies have shown that students in outdoor science programs improved their science testing scores by 27 %. The Miami Valley Leave No Child Inside Coalition with significant partnership involvement by Miami County Park District, Five Rivers MetroParks, Centerville Washington Park District, Dayton Childrens Hospital, and Dayton Metro and Miami County Libraries in Ohio have formed strong partnerships particularly with the schools, as well as other community organizations to form CONNECT TO NATURE COMMUNITIES. These efforts have been highlighted by Richard Louv, Chairman Emeritus, Children & Nature Network and author of the book Last Child In The Woods in an international blog on the Children and Nature Network. This workshop will be instrumental in giving participants the tools to launch the challenge that Richard Louv has issued to “Make Your Community the Best for Connecting Kids to Nature”. Rich recently wrote a blog on the Children & Nature Network website about our Ohio challenge to Schools for the BEST SCHOOL IN OHIO FOR CONNECTING KIDS TO NATURE (http://www.childrenandnature.org/2016/08/09/challenge-make-your-local-school-the-best-in-your-state-or-nation/). Since Louv published that blog, I have received inquiries from all over the country as well as internationally asking for details to help others initiate this challenge in their own community.

This session will engage the participants in WHY interpreters need to focus on reconnecting kids and communities with the outdoors and inspire them on HOW their organization can make a difference in their communities by being a driving force in this important vision while empowering them with successful, innovative ideas to take home and put into action. Depending on outdoor access at the conference site, session participants will possibly have the opportunity to go outside and experience, first hand, infusing learning with outdoor natural play! Lead your community to be “The Best Community for Connecting Kids to Nature” where people are healthier, happier, environmentally smarter! Nature Play Places and Learning Spaces -this session offers powerful inspiration, innovative ideas and partnership success stories. Take the challenge!
Interpreting Conservation Science and Stories

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In 2012, the Phoenix Zoo offered the first annual free family event focused on engaging families with conservation science and the Zoo’s conservation efforts. The two-hour event, titled Conservation Science Night, is offered during a two-month-long statewide STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics) focused Arizona SciTech Festival. Interested guests come to the Zoo after regular business hours to participate in the event. The event space is away from animal enclosures and no live animals are present as part of the activities or experience. Each year, the planning and facilitation of the Phoenix Zoo's Conservation Science Night is a collaborative effort between employees from the Education department and Conservation and Science department along with interested volunteers. Discussion and planning of new activity ideas, changes to previous activities, as well as event facilitation considerations occurs through multiple planning team meetings. Using interpretation strategies, the planning team designs this event to encourage participation in conservation science skills and connections to conservation issues.

Known successful interpretation strategies include the foundations of interpretation offered by Freeman Tilden and the concepts described in the acronym POETRY (purposeful, organized, engaging, thematic, relevant, and “you” – the interpreter). Additionally, understanding the audience and using appropriate techniques in which to engage the audience increases the likelihood of effectiveness. Combining Ajzen’s theory of planned behavior and Petty and Cacioppo’s elaboration likelihood model combines the focus of the content of the interpretation with the communication strategy for increased influence on behavior (Ham et al., 2007). This is important to keep in mind when designing interpretation on conservation issues. It is possible that the Conservation Science Night guests are already interested in conservation, since participation occurs separately from a “normal” visit to the Phoenix Zoo. This likely works as an advantage of a reinforcer for the goals to engage the attendees in conservation science and connect with conservation issues. Offering additional resources for conservation actions and exposure to conservation science and the Phoenix Zoo’s successes may encourage a stronger conservation ethic (Beaumont, 2001; Jacobs & Harms, 2014). For those who attend with no prior connection to conservation or the Phoenix Zoo, participating in the activities offered at the event may stimulate the beginnings of a conservation ethic (Beaumont, 2001). The desire to encourage or reinforce a conservation ethic aligns with the Phoenix Zoo’s mission to advance the stewardship and conservation of animals and their habitats while providing experiences that inspire people and motivate them to care for the natural world. Event attendees interact with passionate volunteers and employees focused on providing a high-quality educational experience. These activity facilitators come prepared to share that passion for learning and conservation with the attendees along with offering a positive guest experience (customer service) (Wijeratne, Van Dijk, Kirk-Brown, & Frost, 2014). The combination of conservation concepts and skills with positive feelings from the guest experience may influence conservation-based ethics and actions (Zeppel & Muloin, 2008).

Grounded in understanding interpretation strategies, education, and conservation science, the planning team intentionally designs this event to engage guests with conservation science and the conservation efforts of the Phoenix Zoo.

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Public Archaeology: Inviting Visitors to Engage with Sites

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My topic will explore how interpretive practices and spaces in both archaeological and museum settings supplement each other to create a meaningful visitor experience. Specifically, I’ll look at public parks (federal and state) in the U.S. which incorporate both archaeological and museum practices and settings to share each park’s natural and cultural history with visitors. Using visual models in a poster presentation, I hope to facilitate discussion with colleagues about how interpretative practices and spaces in related disciplines can work together to create interpretive strategies that give visitors more agency in the interpretive process, specifically within archaeology.

In addition to presenting my observations and findings from case study sites as well as interviews with professionals in museums, archaeology, and park interpretation, I will facilitate discussions with participants about the future of public archaeology and the potential roles of interpreters in museums, public parks, and other interpretive spaces in connecting the stories and meanings of archaeological material with present audiences. I will also provide visual models to facilitate talking and thinking points to discuss interpretive practices and roles. As my research will still be ongoing at the time of the International Conference on Interpretation, I hope to gather feedback from my colleagues to take into consideration as I finalize my research and conclusions.

After participating, participants will be better able to consider interpretation from an archaeological perspective, specifically the growing sub-discipline of public archaeology. As this branch of archaeology continues to develop, interpreters of various backgrounds have greater opportunities to play a role in connecting visitors with cultural heritage through archaeological processes and objects, while also providing them with the conceptual tools to take part in the interpretive process themselves. Additionally, participants will also consider the important role of the interpreter and who that may be. We will discuss the roles of the people involved in interpretation and how personal contact plays a major role in the interpretive process of translating archaeological content to visitors.
The Future Has Other Plans: How to avoid barriers to interpretive plan implementation

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Transformed Assumptions, Not Techniques, Can Rescue Plans

The trend in interpretive planning — all planning — concentrates on producing a high quality technical document: strong themes, well-defined audiences, relevant goals, strategic interpretive media. But even the best laid plans often stumble at the near edge of a gap. On the gap’s distant side awaits implementation. On this side, well intentioned, invested, and quality technical plans quickly grow outdated and perish. Many planners and managers blame their inability to cross the gap on resources lacks. To blame lacks, however, is to blame outsiders which relieves those same planners from ever examining their own assumptions. An honest examination of these, nonetheless, reveals that successful plan implementation depends on our deep conception of planning and what kind of world we think plans need to succeed. To transcend implementation barriers that arise from these assumptions requires a new worldview, one that integrates technical planning, social process, and community participation, that blends different knowledges, and looks at challenges through a holistic lens. This, we will see, becomes critical in a rapidly changing world.

Successful Plans Mobilize People to Implement Them

Globally heritage plans end unimplemented. While planners point to diverse causes, a familiar story haunts many. That is, in a world of accelerating change and uncertainty, where governments possess fewer resources, face more societal demands, ever-increasing stakeholders in more open forums, increasing complexity and globalization, governments can no longer implement most plans by themselves. They need resources, ideas, and political support from others. They need their stakeholder community. But plans are commonly written by technical experts, employing technical language, tools, and frameworks. They rarely share power with non-technical stakeholders, fearing how their influence would devastate document quality. Their contracts do not require strengthening stakeholder communities or even focusing on implementation. Those stakeholders, in turn, do not participate in defining planning terms of reference, do not co-create process, do not own products, and usually do not even read plans. Little surprise that they do not support their implementation. Similarly, heritage managers talk highly of adaptive management, participation, resilience, systems thinking, living documents, yet plans languish as final drafts, impossible to update due to their format, conceptualization, and funding allocated only to produce a document. So, on one hand, few people care to implement plans and, on the other, even when they do, the technology of planning documents makes it nearly impossible. Both contribute to plans that quickly fall out-of-date.

A Holistic Response Can Transcend Barriers Planners Build around Themselves

This crisis is nourished by a techno-rational mindset that perceives planning and challenges it seeks to overcome as merely technical. Politics, culture, stakeholder biases all interfere with achieving the best technical “solution.” Based on this Modernist worldview, plans and their creation very much occur like scientific studies. And to create such a plan, planners must assume that a PLUS World exists, that is, Predictable, Linear, Understandable, and Stable, needed to produce technical interpretive plans. In this mode, science dominates rather than accompanies decision-making whether to conserve elephants or choose interpretive media. But we do not live in a PLUS World. Rather our world is DICE that is Dynamic, Impossible to completely understand, Complex, and Ever-changing/Evolving. To survive in this world requires a planning process that learns, adapts, changes, and updates continuously. In this world, we view planning as an opportunity not only to think constructively about the future but to build community social capital for the heritage area. Just consider how sadly infrequent such time and money are invested in bringing people together as during a management planning process. But instead of building the single most important resource necessary for implementation — “community capital” — governments and donors focus on producing a document. And thus they find themselves glaring outward from the gap’s near edge.

An alternative approach, described in the book, The Future Has Other Plans: Planning Holistically to Conserve Natural and Cultural Heritage (Kohl & McCool 2016) sees planning as a facilitated, continuous dialogue among community members that both sets a future course and empowers that community to work together toward implementing it. Such a planning process, rather than waiting until a plan becomes “final” to consider implementation, negotiates conditions favorable for plan implementation before any planning begins, such as,

* Involve the community as early as possible in deciding how the planning process will occur * Avoid creating rigid delivery timetables before it is even clear what should be done and by whom
* Align the community; that is, most actors should agree with the planning and its outcomes even if agendas vary * Build legitimacy into the planning process, for example, through joint fact-finding and problem definition
* Construct minimal trust and transparency in order to work together
* Train in interpretation, dialogue, and decision-making. If the community is not ready to enter a planning process, its actors will not commit resources, energy, or time to implement.
* Forge a new relationship between government, stakeholders, and consultants. The conventional approach charges
outsiders with most research, facilitation, decision-making, and writing. This not only robs the community of opportunities to strengthen its ability to work together, but also ensures that no one but consultants feel ownership for the plan.

To help heritage communities realize their future together, Holistic Planning:

* Recognizes emerging phenomena and interprets them through interior and exterior perspectives

* Redistributes political power by integrating different forms of knowledge and implementing democratic reforms
  Transforms constituency visions into reality through authentic conversation that defines many facets of vision and

* Cultivates constituent communities and strengthens their social capital, cohesion, and trust to learn from and implement management decisions, with sufficient adaptability to protect heritage values and share them with the wider public cover the long term.

So while traditional interpretive consultants create interpretive plans via a set of technical questions (Objectives? Themes? Audiences? Media?), their success depends more on investing in the community that can fill a plan with excitement and ownership that takes interpretive themes and media off the page and into the community landscape.
The Papalote Children's Museum opened its doors to the public in 1993. Located in Mexico City, in the second section of the Chapultepec Forest, it’s been for a little over 23 years a free learning space in which the children, families and teachers can touch, play and learn. In order to do this, they are supported by a team of “friends”, the activities facilitators that the area of experience designs decides, after an evaluation process, to integrate the museums offer. The “friends” are the last ones responsible for communicating to the visitors the messages and along with that the objectives of each activity, to encourage curiosity as much as imagination to participate and coexist with those integrated in each group; the worth of the dialog and the game as principle tools. And then there’s the importance of counting on a solid training program.

After completing 20 years, Papalote Children’s Museum resurrected their training program for friends integrating the principles of personal interpretation. The majority of the “friends” are students that are studying in their last semesters of obtaining their degree and to be able to receive their title they must do 480 hours of social service within a time period of six months. Four times a year they open the application period for whoever wants to apply to participate in the Friends Program, they are interviewed and attend a group session in which they are evaluated for their communication ability and ability to collaborate in a group. Once they are selected, they undergo 60 hours of training in three weeks. During the first week they comprehend the educational philosophy of the Museum, the competencies that they develop as “friends” include personal interpretation principles, they identify how to be satisfied with the Museum’s audience, the tangibles and intangibles of the resources and the appropriate techniques that they utilize. The following two weeks they divide in teams to specialize in the contents, objectives and messages from some of the 6 thematic zones of the Museum: the initial trip, my body, living Mexico, my home and my family, my city and a laboratory of ideas. The practice and constant feedback from the trainers, certified interpretive guides is fundamental for the formation of the “Friends”.

To apply the principles of personal interpretation in the Training Program for Friends we were permitted to transmit in a clearer form to the “Friends” what is expected of them as facilitators of the experiences of the Museum and how they can do it. The museums, as an educational informal space, they should invest in the formation of their guides so that they develop personal interpretation competencies that permits them to generate emotional and intellectual connections from then on of the interests and expectations of their audiences and manage to have significant learning experiences and appropriation of knowledge that generates changes in attitude and behavior with an impact on society.

Personal interpretation as a hub for training the facilitators of Papalote’s Childrens Museum
Interpretive curating, a teaching strategy for the popularization of our heritage

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Since a methodological proposal designed for the planning and development of guides for exhibitions, with fundamental theories of interpretation themes, they have carried out a teaching strategy called “Interpretive curating or revelation,” directed towards students in museographic teaching and the specialty of museography of the national school of conservation, restoration, and museography, “Manuel del Castillo Negrete.”

The strategy consists not only in the teaching of the concepts and the analysis of the curatorial practice (considering the different types of museums), but also the theoretical framework of thematic interpretation as a foundation for the application of the conceptualization and development of contents, meaning, and curation with a focus on dissemination.

Interpretive curating or revelation
In the field of Mexican museums, we have the specialization and/or academic formation of museologos and museografos, ENCRyM, from the National Institute of Anthropology and History INAH, but it’s for post graduate studies. In both programs, they deal with the theme of communication as a central element along with practically all the materials of the curricular map. However, they don’t necessarily offer clear strategies or methodologies for disclosure, the exception being that what was presented here is exactly the curating lesson.

Interpretive curating or popularization
To begin with, I’d like to clarify what do we understand about curating. One of the first goals I confronted as a museologist and as a permanent professor of the subject was to understand exactly what it is. What is the range of competency? And what is the profile of the curator? And although I don’t have any concrete answers yet for this, I’ve observed that today still there is much confusion about the use in the scope of the museums, and even more in the context not specialized. However, I propose the following definition:

Curating is the discipline that is in charge of the study of collections, of knowledge and/or the artistic creation brought together in the museum, through identification, classification, documentation, cataloging, research, selection, and arranging, for the conceptualization and development of contents for the expositions, with a feeling of disclosure communication directed towards the public by means of interpretation from their values and meaning. (Mosco, 2012:43)

Also I believe that the curator is, in essence, a specialist in some discipline: either humanities, science or art, depending in the nature of the museum or exposition. But then when or how does the scientific research or the academic linked with the museums become converted to curation and is this at the same time a job of popularization? This assignment regularly ends as a subsequent job or alternative to curating.

It’s my conviction that the research that expects to produce a museum should contain not only all the academic and/or scientific rigor but also an emphasis only on curating. So I believe that since the research-curating, they should apply strategies of curating and for that I’m convinced that thematic interpretation is an excellent alternative.

Thematic interpretation as an alternative
As we know, thematic interpretation developed as a result of themes (Ham, 2013), messages, milling around ideas, or inventing ideas not found that summarize the general intent of what they want to communicate. The definitions of the unfound inventions for exhibition are defined regularly by the expert, meaning the researcher, whose role of curator would have to be focused on translating that knowledge to the public museums, meaning the application of thematic interpretation that is pertinent from the point of view of curating (conceptualization, research, selection of works, 5 cedulario), and from there you would be certain to continue along with all the development of the exhibition including the design, production, assembly, evaluation, and possible adjustments.

Interpretive curating: a strategy for teaching the spreading of the heritage—the first results

The formation of curators-divulgators in the ENCRyM
Since 2013 I was formally assigned Curator of the Museology Museum of ENCRyM. They integrate in a formal manner the academic program of obligatory materials, the teaching of thematic interpretation as part of the formation in this subject.

The objective is that students, besides understanding the field of activities of curating, also learn how to conceptualize expository projects with a clear interpretive focus, besides a methodological proposal for the development of guides applying the thematic interpretation. Such methodology I can summarize in a scheme of six guides, of which the first four correspond clearly to the field of curating: thematic guide (general conceptualization), interpretive strategies guide, scientific or academic guide and curatorial guide.

As part of the course, they introduce and discuss the contributions of diverse authors and the fundamental theories of thematic interpretation, in order to apply them later on a curatorial project. They do it in such a way that from conceptualization and research they develop an interpretive perspective.

Of all the interpretive strategies that they apply I’ll only point out five here:

1. To choose the use of themes (Ham, 2013), thesis, ideas, sentences or clear messages, short and relevant that summarize the purpose of the exhibit and its contents.
2 Put in relief the approach of objectives in three meanings: knowledge, emotions and action. (Veverka, 2011)

3 Application of the 6 principles of Tilden (1957)

4 Use of the feelings and styles of learning (National Association for Interpretation, NAI, 2005)

5 Approaching a project considering Maslow’s Hierarchy or the needs pyramid adapted for heritage interpretation. (NAI, 2005).

Museology teachers first results
Throughout these years, the students have developed different curatorial projects following this method, first to know and discuss the fundamental theories and practices of thematic interpretation; then they analyze the curatorial designs of the current exhibits and different types of museums and finally they develop their own curatorial design working in teams anywhere from three to five students, applying the thematic interpretation from conceptualization to research. As such, they have dealt with such diverse themes as art history, recent or memorial history, intangible cultural heritage, opera and literature, modern art, mobility in Mexico City, etc. Besides some of them opting for continuing to work in the curating field and applying the criteria of the thematic interpretation in their professional practices, in their masters thesis and in their work field.

Museography Specialty
Since 2011 I was also put in charge of imparting the curator class for the students in this museography specialty. My main objective is that the students comprehend the curator work and it’s relation to museography in the development of an exhibit project with an interpretive perspective or to disclose.

For this profile, the course isn’t asking for curatorial proposals, but rather that students comprehend how you work on an exhibition project applying thematic interpretation from a curator perspective. In order to do so, we follow the same method: knowledge of the fundamental theories and practices of thematic interpretation, analysis of curatorial proposals, and from then on understand how to translate the curatorial speeches in museographic design. The analysis that they carry out also is to reflect upon if the speeches can be understood by the different groups of people.

Finally, during the second semester of this specialty, the students develop a museographic proposal for a curatorial outline. I am in charge of providing museographic help and interpretive solutions that students propose for the final project.

Final Reflections
In Mexico, teaching and learning strategies for spreading information on heritage is considered like optional homework; is doesn’t exist within the formal education specialists of teaching strategies for disclosure; there are very few course alternatives and “optional” talleres, and the majority are at post-graduate level; being as such, it reduces a great deal the number of researchers with this knowledge. This being the case, generally they don’t recognize revelation as an integral part of the heritage conservation labor, not as a serious and academic work. For my part, it is indispensible that curators think about revelation from conceptualization and research for projects in museums, interpretive curating, as I’ve called it, it’s only an alternative, but if they form more people that adopt this practice, I am sure that there would also be an enormous rich source of proposals. this is only the beginning.

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Full Circle Messaging: Aligning Agency Mission, Site-specific Interpretive Themes and Training at Metroparks of the Toledo Area

Kimberly High
Metroparks of the Toledo Area, USA

In a recent U.S. News and World Report, Real Estate article, Toledo, Ohio was rated #2 of the “10 Most Fun Places to Live if You Love the Outdoors” (Miriam Weiner, July 28, 2016). The article emphasized the easy access to biking, fishing and camping in the growing Metroparks of the Toledo Area (MTA). As MTA rises in reputation and expands its variety of outdoor pursuits, maintaining a close connection between mission and park initiatives becomes paramount.

Most interpretive professionals agree that an agency’s mission, as its quintessential message, should manifest itself in some way in every part of that agency and operate as the driving force that influences audience experience and perception. Where agencies sometimes fall short is in their site or park-specific interpretive alignment with their mission, and in the translation of that site-specific interpretive alignment to their staff and volunteers. When the connection between the agency mission and each individual site or park is not developed and aligned via interpretive themes and stories, the result is mixed messages. The unfortunate trickle-down effect can be sub-par staff and volunteer training with failed illumination of the relationship of each individual site to the agency’s whole and subsequent irrelevant interpretive programs and exhibit copy.

MTA has developed a model that helps to change such shortcomings. The strategy uses the agency’s mission for the creation and implementation of district-wide, standardized training documents that highlight interpretive themes and natural and cultural features of each of our individual sites. The result is the ability of all staff and volunteers to embrace and share a seamless, holistic message while they simultaneously relay the unique character and story of each location within the agency. This step-by-step method cultivates leadership of staff and volunteers through a process that spotlights agency mission as the crux of site-specific interpretive themes, thereby connecting the messages of satellite locations to the paramount message of the agency as a whole.

MTA is committed to a process of close scrutiny of its park-specific interpretive themes and stories as they relate to the agency’s mission. Our mission, as approved by the MTA Board of Directors in June of 2014, is “to conserve the region’s natural resources by creating, developing, improving, protecting, and promoting clean, safe, and natural parks and open spaces for the benefit, enjoyment, education, and general welfare of the public.” With that as the driving force, a five-member, cross-departmental interpretive planning team that includes the agency’s lead interpretive trainer works regularly and weekly to see that site-specific interpretive themes and sub-themes for each of our parks help drive the practical application of messages through exhibits and programming.

Specifically, in an effort to drive staff and volunteer training, the team has created theme-based, Park Highlights documents that use a standard template yet briefly detail each park’s special features. These Park Highlights PDF documents are succinct—one page front and back—and contain the following sections: The name of the individual park, its personalized themes and subthemes relevant to MTA’s mission, a sentence about the story behind the name of the park, a short narrative of its natural and cultural history, listings and color photos of plant and wildlife of special interest there, and a sentence on pests and how to protect from them. Offering excellent springboards for field trainings of staff and volunteers, these theme-based documents also serve as effective introductions for the development of exhibits, programs and provoking narratives. They help to crystalize understanding of the connections between the details of each park in its relationship to the district as a whole.

Should other agencies decide to embark upon a similar process in an effort to create full-circle messaging, MTA has a few tips. First, embrace and own the mission by more than just memorizing it. This involves taking an in depth look at mission history and evolution, and revisiting how the mission is applied to all agency interpretation as the agency grows and changes. Secondly, ensure internal alignment by forming a cross departmental team who together own the shared leadership of the messages being driven. The agency’s professional interpreter plays an essential role on this team, as one who connects audiences both emotionally and intellectually to resources, as defined by the National Association of Interpretation. Because others on the team (and agency staff and volunteers at large), are internal customers, they are some of the most important members of this interpreter’s audience, and it is his/her job to be sure that they are well connected and passionately invested in the agency’s messages. Thirdly, allow for the necessary time and effort to create quality training documents. Since they will be used to drive all staff and volunteer trainings and future exhibits, they need to be well thought consensuses of the cross departmental interpretive planning team and even revisited every few years or when major changes occur. Finally, make every effort to train all staff and volunteers consistently and continuously, so that messages are clear, unified, and complimentary, reflecting the alignment of the agency’s core values with every aspect of its fabric.

Source sited: http://realestate.usnews.com/realestate/articles/10-most-fun-places-to-live-if-you-love-the-outdoors/?src=usn_fb
Evolution of Interpretation in Latin America and the Role of the PUP Global Heritage Consortium

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Challenges of Interpretation in Latin America
Mayorga and Garcia (2017) amply discuss the challenges for interpretation in Mesoamerica in this volume, but in summary interpretation has been assumed to be largely a vocational skill for tour guides and thus has not been regarded either as a profession by governments or an academic subject area by academia. Without institutional support, interpreters have felt isolated and disconnected. As a result, there is no network or publication or conferences by and for Latin Americans about interpretation. At least, not yet.

History of PUP’s Interpretive Training in Latin America
For the remainder of this article I will speak in first person as my personal involvement has been central to the efforts of the PUP Global Heritage Consortium today to counteract to some degree this trend. I first entered the interpretation field in 1997 when I took the post of Nature Guide Training Program manager in Honduras for RARE Center for Tropical Conservation. That model that existed upon my arrival was already considered — in the words of the program’s originator at RARE — the “Cadillac of guide training programs.” It involved working with between 15 and 20 largely local folks from around Honduran protected areas in a 70-day intensive training that focused on English-language learning, conservation, tourism, natural and cultural history, and interpretation. The staff consisted of the manager (me), a biologist, education director, and from 4-6 WorldTeach volunteer teachers who participated on six-month assignments.

The course rotated among three sites, designed its own bilingual nature guide manual specifically for the students of the region wherever they came from, and cost upwards of $200,000 to run. The course itself had a five-volume manual on how to run it. Over several years, we offered the course numerous times in Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. After I left RARE when it abandoned ecotourism as a program area, I refined the guide training model, separating out the interpretation component since the other skillsets could be more inexpensively met with local experts and language opportunities, but interpretation was the rarest and most valuable part of guide training. Almost no one understood or could teach it effectively. Over the following years, I experimented with a variety of formats from one-day quickshops (Costa Rica) to four-day workshops with ecotourism specialists from all over Bolivia, weeklong overnights (Texas) of the World Birding Center, formal certification training with the National Training Institute of Costa Rica, intensive 10-day workshop in Colombia, one-week workshop for river guides in Costa Rica, and university interpretation courses at the University of Costa Rica.

As the PUP Consortium, colleagues and I collaborated in offering for local tourism service providers and national park employees an intensive one-week workshop and several months of accompaniment in Colombia to produce products, a two-workshop program for functionally illiterate local fishing guides on the Pacific Coast of Colombia, and then our most sophisticated intervention to date in Honduras an eight-month program with an intensive 10-day basic interpretation workshop and a six-day advanced interpretation program with intervening time to develop actual products for guides and park professionals with a highly advanced evaluation and support program, without a doubt once again (but in a very different format), the Cadillac of interpretation training in Latin America if not beyond (funded by USAID/ProParque).

What is more PUP developed a series of Holistic Training Principles to accompany its Holistic Planning Principles (one of which pertains to interpretation) in order to ensure good practices in training such as working with the trainee’s entire context, application of adult learning principles, a holistic evaluation approach, and numerous others. PUP has also developed much of its Interpretive Framework in Latin America which is a community-driven participatory process to develop a framework of hierarchically organized interpretive themes, universal processes, heritage elements, and a site essence. These have been developed in CATIE, Costa Rica; La Libertad Park, Costa Rica; Union Island, St. Vincent and the Grenadines; El Cocuy National Park, Colombia; three national parks in Honduras; Chagres National Park, Panama; Nunqui, Colombia; Tayrona National Park, Colombia (May 2017), and perhaps for other parks in Colombia.

PUP’s Plans for Interpretation in Latin America
The PUP Consortium, aside from its historical work in sites, has three focus areas that interact where it works. These are heritage interpretation development, public use planning, and conflict management and community facilitation. Its heritage interpretation component is dedicated to the development of heritage interpretation specifically in Latin America. As it has a region-wide view, experience in Mesoamerica and South America, and a goal to improve management and planning of heritage everywhere, the Consortium is developing or participating in several ventures to improve interpretation in the region.

1. It is opening country offices from where interpretation can be better offered. As of this writing we have offices in Mexico and Colombia with others in discussion and under consideration.

2. This year PUP in association with NAI and CATIE are launching an interpretation webinar series in Spanish using NAI’s current webinar platform but with Latin American and Spanish speakers directed at the Spanish speaking market.

3. We are launching a Spanish monograph series which will include interpretation among its topics.
4. We are working on a Spanish language university interpretive textbook which will be tested in 2017 and published regionally in 2018.

5. In 2016, PUP members Jon Kohl and Steve McCool published a book called The Future Has Other Plans: Planning Holistically to Conserve Natural and Cultural Heritage which talks about heritage planning in general and a little on interpretive planning in particular. It was published within Sam Ham’s series on Applied Communication at Fulcrum Publishing. PUP is seeking a potential publisher in Latin America to translate and make it available to the Spanish-speaking audience.

6. We are participating to find interested parties in creating a formal network or even an interpretation association in the region. With these and other initiatives the PUP Consortium hopes to promote interpretation as a heritage management tool in Latin America.
I propose a way to recognize human -universal and cultural- values from archaeological record to provoke a shock on our public’s mind when we immerse them into a different values system. Values connects us as humans, and contradictions and similarities from culture to culture have the ability to surprise. If well presented, cultural values management with such contradictions and similarities integrated on stories can awake emotions and strong feelings to ancient people and the things they left behind.

From an anthropological perspective, archaeological heritage interpretation of cultural values allows an intellectual powerful encounter with ancient people. The possibility to compare our public’s perspective of life with the perspective lived by “the others” (the ancient people) can arise feelings, emotions and rational thoughts about them.

But, how can we recognize values from archaeological data? Before going to death people’s values, we need to find out where does values come from, no matter whether we talk about living or non-living societies. On the next lines, I propose five sources of values depending on the relationship between humans and their natural / cultural contexts. As a complement, I propose a list of values which emanates from the situations associated with cultural values sources. The purpose of this classification is to have a tool to help us in the process of recognition and management of values to be used on our heritage interpretation planning process. The description of cultural/human values and the way they are manifested in quotidian and ordinary activities can be a window to help our public to understand why other societies thought life in very different ways.

The sources of values goes as follow: 1) The way society conceptualizes and uses human body; 2) The rules by which people relate to each other; 3) The way society conceptualizes and uses nature; 4) The way society defines the so called sub-humans; 5) Education and coercive strategies. An example of Teotihuacan archaeological site is presented.
Making live animal collections work for you!

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Nature centers are an accessible resource for introducing wildlife and conservation to the general public. Specifically, they emphasize the value of native flora and fauna to people who may not otherwise have access. This 90 minute mini-workshop will help interpreters to expand or improve upon their live animal collection. Even small animal collections serve as ambassadors for their species and can influence perceptions. Developing a quality animal collection is a process that requires forethought and commitment.

Safety can be an afterthought in small facilities or Nature Centers. There is, however, a link between quality programming and consistently following safety protocols. While this point is clear when referring to megafauna, it is less obvious when applied to small animals such as toads and turtles. Yet, zoonotic disease transmission is just one of the possible outcomes of a minimized role, or lack of, safety protocols. We will use a contagion type activity to begin a conversation about safety and the need for protocols whenever live animals are handled.

If volunteers are part of your facility they also need to be aware of your expectations and given the proper tools to succeed. They can be invaluable when everyone’s needs are being met. We will continue with an activity that gets participants thinking about personal volunteer experiences and how these moments can help address some common issues. Topics will include how to put out a call for volunteers, the interview and training process of these volunteers, and creating a multi-tiered system so that excellent volunteers can take on more responsibilities.

Another concern is the time and money that it takes to maintain a living collection. Limited resources doesn’t necessarily mean that care and quality have to be compromised. To achieve quality care and optimize resources it’s critical to recognize opportunities in your own community. This portion of the program is designed to be a dialogue to create an ‘idea board’ that participants can take back with them.

Overall, we want to communicate that it is important to be realistic; to understand limitations but not be confined by them. The participants in this program will be encouraged to get to know each other and make connections they otherwise would not have made. We believe that by creating a network of interpreters who work with live animals, we can help smaller programs to grow and thrive.