Unlike formal education in which mandatory attendance laws guarantees an audience, interpreters and other nonformal educators must do lots of publicizing their programs. No one has to come to a public program. People use incidental information to judge whether going to a program is a reasonable risk of their often limited leisure time. One of the first impressions that people have of a program is the title listed in a program calendar or other advertisement. The title of each program subtlety communicates a remarkable amount of program information. A title can imply formality or informality, for adults vs. families, interesting or boring, etc.

In analyzing existing program titles of interpretive programs, interpreters tend to either just state the topic of the program, or use a clever, often alliterative title. Yet, there are other possibilities for title construction. This training packet includes three activities:

**Title rating sheet:** This sheet may be used in its entirety or only a page or two. Participants in a CIG are asked to look at titles and rate each title based on four semantic pairs: Boring-interesting, for child-for adult, formal-informal, interesting-boring. They then indicate whether they would like to attend the program. For several titles, they are asked to write down what they think the program is about. The “Mysterious Monarchs” title consistently yields a 70/30 split of monarch butterflies vs. queens and kings. Participants quickly understand that titles implicitly communicate the character of the program. Tabulated results from hundreds of these ratings sheet show that topic only titles are perceived as being for adults, are less interesting and formal. The opposite is true for most titles constructed some other way.

**Title Writing Worksheet:** This worksheet lists different ways to write titles, borrowing heavily from Alan Leftridge’s *Interpretive Writing* book. After reviewing the different types of titles on the front side of the handout—and there are certainly others—hand out the worksheet. Everyone in the CIG class will write a program title for everyone else’s program:

- Ask each CIG workshop participant to write out a description of their program at the top of the sheet.
- Describe the direction the sheets are to be passed around the room.
- Have each person pass their sheet to the person sitting next to them.
- Announce the first title structure on the worksheet and then ask each CIG participant to read the other person’s program description and then write a title using the first title structure.
- Give the group time to complete their first title. When everyone is done, pass the sheets to the next person. Repeat this routine until everyone in the group has written each type of title, one title each for everyone else’s program.
• Return the sheets to their owners and have the owners share titles that they particularly like.

**Bookmark reference:** Before the exercise, edit as you see fit the bookmark reference layout and print them out on ivory cardstock on a color laser printer. Cut the bookmarks up on a paper cutter. Handout the book mark reference (change name, photo, and examples if you want). Tell participants to put this in their desk drawer at work as a reference guide. (*Bookmarks are also a nice easy and inexpensive way of producing takeaways for any type of program. Be sure to point this out. For instance, an interpretive talk on bread making might include a bookmark with recipes, a talk on skunks might include a formula for a solution to wash off skunk spray.*)

Other issues:

• Topic-only titles should probably only be used for adult programs that are information heavy—the professorial lecture. There is a limited market for this type of program, and this type of title will tend to scare off families with younger children.
• Clever or playful titles indicate informality—which is what most people want. But they can be confusing if the topic is not clear. Using a combination of clever + topic may help with titles like “Mysterious Monarchs” that can be misconstrued.
• Just like pun-style jokes, repeatedly using the same title structure gets old. (You may want to show the class the all too common interpretive program calendars where every program title is an alliteration). Twenty alliterations in a row gets stale!

This set of exercises may be used by government and not-for-profit (501c3) organizations without obtaining explicit permission from the author. Please acknowledge the author and the contributions of Alan Leftridge’s *Interpretive Writing* book where possible.