



HFC *on* MEDIA

November | 2004

Issue I



The brochure that park ranger Jennifer Kays and visitors to the new World War II Memorial are reading is the first park folder to be evaluated using a program developed by Randi Korn & Associates of Alexandria, Virginia. The program tests the effectiveness of the brochure in communicating with visitors. A report is due later this year, and we will present findings in a future issue.

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From the Manager

Welcome to the inaugural issue of **HFC onMEDIA**, Harpers Ferry Center's new newsletter! This is another part of HFC's ongoing effort to provide information about media projects and products to our NPS colleagues. The Center's staff has more than 3,000 years of collective experience in media work, and it's all at your service, whether you want us to do a project for you, or you just want advice on how to do it yourself. In either case, we will help you avoid some of the pitfalls that we've learned to spot over these many years. We provide answers to your questions, including those oft-asked ones, "Why does it cost so much?" and "Why does it take so long?"

We want this newsletter to provide answers about and insight into HFC and the world of media production. Our aim is to provide you with information that will make working with HFC easier, more enjoyable, and more productive. We believe this will help us all to better preserve, protect, and interpret the special places that we work in and serve. □

Gary Cummins, Manager

Waysides In A Minute

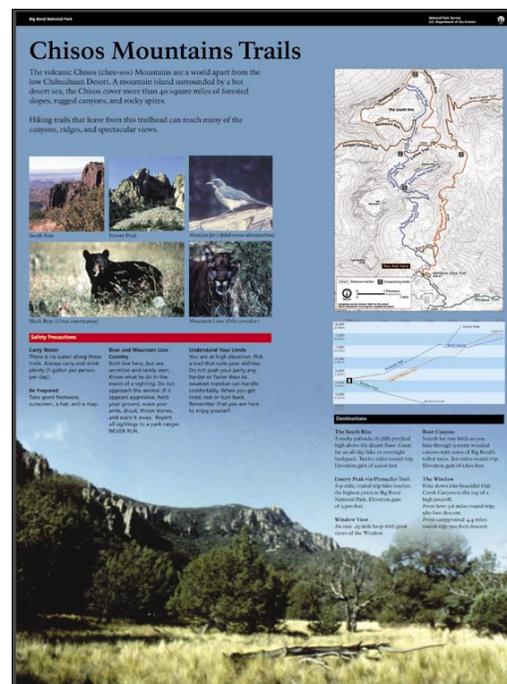
Actually One Year

Need just a few wayside exhibits? Have the money to pay for fabrication and hardware, but the funding is good only for the current fiscal year? Do you have some planning knowledge, draft text, graphics, but no design experience?

If you can say yes to all these questions, the Waysides Technical Assistance Program is just what you need. And now is the time of year to get in line for this work, for the program has just opened its doors to applicants October 1, 2004, on a first-come, first-served basis. Harpers Ferry Center will continue to take requests for waysides development under this program through February 1, 2005.

A key part of this program is that HFC plans and designs your exhibits and obligates their fabrication within the fiscal year you place your request. There are a few other important points to keep in mind, too. Your request should consist of six or fewer wayside exhibit panels. You should have draft text and graphics that are specific to the site. Remember that waysides “caption the landscape,” they tell the story of what you are looking at when you lift your eyes from the wayside panel and look straight ahead. No HFC planner or designer will travel to the park; you are the planner. So you must ensure that the wayside panels are correctly sited to tell the story that you want your reader to comprehend. The advantage here is that no travel costs are involved. If you need an orientation panel, then you must assemble map reference materials so that a cartographer can create the map. Original

artwork, necessary to explain a geological process or illustrate historic events, will also require reference materials.



Artwork and maps take time to create, and you will need to allow for a two-year cycle for your exhibits. If wondering which direction to take, photography can be produced much more quickly.

You will pay \$750 per panel for HFC design services. Costs for panel fabrication varies, ranging from around \$800 to

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Send questions and comments to Gary Candelaria either by email at gary_candelaria@nps.gov or call 304 535 6058. To contact the editorial staff email Bob Grogg at bob_grogg@nps.gov or call 304 535 6415.

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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

“Now is the time of year to get in line for this work, for the program has just opened its doors to applicants October 1, 2004, on a first-come, first-served basis.”

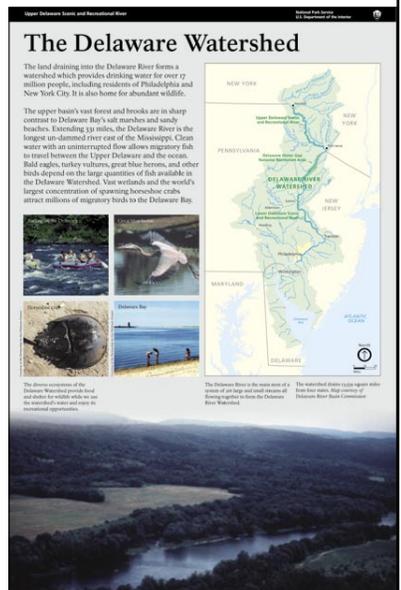
more than \$4,000, depending on complexity, type of material used, and base construction.

The program provides many advantages besides making use of your funds within one fiscal year. The work meets all NPS graphic identity standards. HFC vendors have been carefully selected and trained to provide the high quality products demanded by the National Park Service. Contracting and writing the scopes of work and technical specifications are done by HFC. All wayside panels meet the life expectancy standards of the manufacturer. All production materials are maintained in the HFC archives, so replacement panels can easily be fabricated if the original weathers, needs updating, or is vandalized or damaged.

Learn more about the Technical Assistance Program on the Harpers Ferry Center website at www.nps.gov/hfc. Choose the "Products and Services" tab and then select "Wayside Technical Assistance Program" to read all about creating wayside exhibits in general and about the Technical Assistance program in particu-

lar. Review the information about digital photography carefully. Using a digital camera is very beneficial, but it must be done right for digital images to be usable in a wayside exhibit.

All program application forms are available online as PDF files, so you can easily complete and send them to HFC along with a resource package (text and graphics.) If you have questions, call Winnie Frost, the Technical Assistance Program Manager, 304-535-6043. Harpers Ferry Center is ready to help you produce your wayside exhibits whether just one exhibit or half a dozen. □



These two wayside exhibit panels and the one on the preceding page were all developed through HFC's Technical Assistance program: park staffs did the planning and HFC did design, editing, and fabrication.

Devlis Tower National Monument National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior

How Did the Tower Form?

The process began about 50 million years ago. Magma (molten rock) was injected into layers of sedimentary rock, forming the Tower, one and one-half miles below the earth's surface. It has since taken millions of years to erode away the surrounding sedimentary rock to expose the Tower we see today.

Geologists agree the Tower is an igneous (hardened magma) intrusion, but have three different interpretations of the Tower's original size and shape. Because of erosion, we may never know which interpretation is correct.

Three Possible Interpretations

Igneous Stock:
The Tower is an irregularly shaped, igneous intrusion called a stock. It was formed when magma cooled and crystallized before reaching the earth's surface.

Laccolith:
The Tower is the remnant of a mushroom-shaped, igneous intrusion. As with the igneous stock, the magma solidified before reaching the earth's surface.

Volcanic Plug:
The Tower is a cylinder-shaped igneous intrusion, part of the plumbing system that fed a volcano. The pipe feeding the volcano, became plugged when the magma solidified underground.

MIDS

The Media Inventory Database System

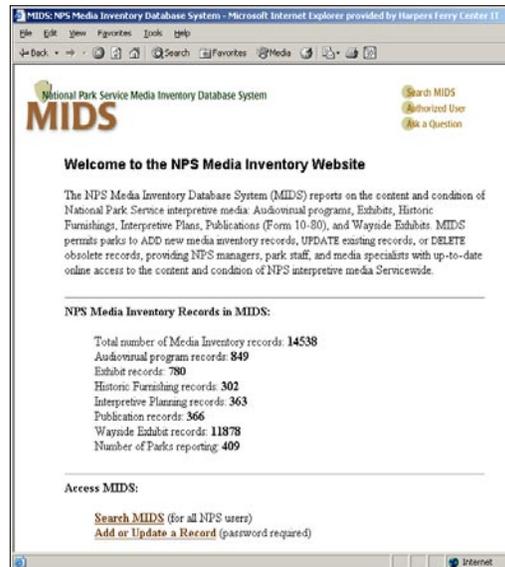
The name is deceiving because this is not just an inventory. It is a panoramic view of National Park Service interpretive media.

There is currently information on more than 14,500 items in this system. How did we get all this information? And what uses can be made of it in the future?

In the late 1990s we began to wonder how many exhibits, publications, AV programs, historic furnishing exhibits, interpretive plans, and waysides existed in the parks. No one knew the answer, and no one knew the condition of these different media. The perceived wisdom was that many were out-of-date, unacceptable, and not reflective of current thinking about interpretation. But again, no one knew the true state of the media. What everyone did know was that if we did not get a handle on what was out there, and on what needed to be done, certainly no one could ever hope to make a case for fixing what was truly unacceptable.

In February 1999 we called upon all chiefs of interpretation to review and report on all the media in their parks. The reports began flooding in. With funds provided through the 20 percent Fee Demonstration Program, one Harpers Ferry Center employee and two other NPS people began entering the data. The information quickly became encyclopedic, providing NPS interpreters and managers with a first look at the range of interpretive media products in the parks. Some parks quickly realized how

valuable the system could be. Katherine Brock used two volunteers at Natchez Trace Parkway to survey every single sign and wayside along the parkway. In all, 590 entries were added to MIDS through



The MIDS system is easy to use, but it is only as good, accurate, and current as the information entered into it.

this effort. Many have JPEG images of the signs/waysides attached to the entry, so the actual condition can be instantly seen. Of the 590 entries, 123 were found to be unacceptable—21 percent of the total. With this information in hand, the staff and Brock prepared a PMIS request to replace the unacceptable media. Because the request had documenta-

Retirees

Martin Burke

"We never knew what to expect when he came back from vacation," says one employee. "The only thing we knew for certain was that he would have come up with lots of ideas for us to try out." Martin Burke, Associate Manager for Media Assets at Harpers Ferry Center, retired October 3. "Energetic," "fresh," "the wheels always seem to be turning" are the words and phrases his staff members use. Harpers Ferry Center manager, Gary Cummins tells how "I was always trained to think of the position, not the person. Martin Burke made that impossible. He has been an invaluable employee and colleague."

Martin Burke has worked at Harpers Ferry Center since November 1991. Before coming to the National Park Service, he worked in the Division of Conservation at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

Ben Miller

Ben Miller, exhibit planner at Harpers Ferry Center, completed a 32-year career with the National Park Service on September 30, 2004. Miller first experienced the National Park Service as a seasonal historian at Castillo de San Marcos National Monument in Florida during the summer of 1968.

On October 1, 1972, Ben Miller came to work at Harpers Ferry after two years in the Peace Corps in Kenya. According to colleague Neil Mackay, Miller quickly broke new ground by involving subject matter experts from a variety of specialty fields in the very early stages of National Park Service exhibit planning.

Miller takes pride in the respect every HFC media professional has for one another, and the commitment each one has to the work they do. "None of this has changed during my 32 years at Harpers Ferry Center."

"MIDS showed it could provide the documentary credence needed to justify the allocation of funds."

tion that could be readily verified, “the statement rose to the top in the Southeast Region,” Brock reports.

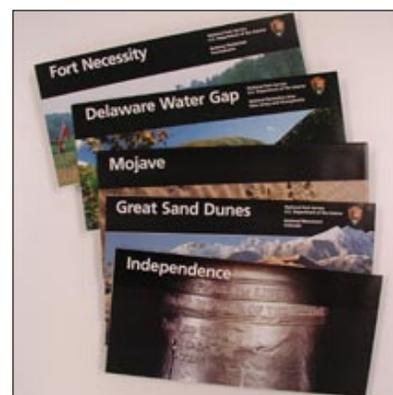
Likewise at Morristown National Historical Park, Anne DeGraaf found that when writing a justification for new waysides, she could refer the reviewer to the MIDS entries for quick verification of the “actual condition of the existing wayside exhibits.” At both Natchez Trace and Morristown, MIDS showed it could provide the documentary credence needed to justify the allocation of funds. DeGraaf also makes use of the system to track her park folder inventory so that she and her staff always know how many publications they have on hand, what their use patterns have been, and when they will need a reprint.

In the last nine months new changes have taken place to the system that will provide even greater flexibility.

This spring the entire database was moved from Harpers Ferry to a server in Washington where the Facility Management Software System (FMSS) resides. The plan is to establish data links between the two systems so that they can talk to one another and share data. Common fields will exist for the two systems so that when maintenance people assess the physical condition of waysides, AV equipment, and exhibits, both systems will pick up the information. Interpretive

staff will continue to evaluate the interpretive content of the media. Knowing the physical condition will enable managers to make decisions about repair and/or replacement.

The move to Washington has added a further feature. Acrobat PDF documents attached to the media records are now searchable. This is a powerful new tool and provides interpreters and managers with unparalleled access to up-to-date content and information. For example, as the NPS prepares for the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, 2011-2015, interpreters can now see all interpretive media that relate to the Civil War, the condition, and the interpretive quality. The same goes if you want to know about sea turtles, volcanism, barrier island ecology—you name it. But as with all good programs, MIDS is only as good as the information it contains. Right now 122 parks do not have passwords and that means information for those parks is not being updated, is incomplete, and lacks documentary evidence necessary to help those parks choose where to put their limited resources. Getting a password is easy. Give us a call at the number below, and help make MIDS “sing.” □



Brianna MacDonald (top) was one of two NPS employees entering data that created the MIDS database.

One component of the system allows parks to monitor the inventory of the HPC-produced official park brochure (bottom) ensuring that reprints are on the way when needed.

The Seven Steps to MIDS

1. Familiarize yourself with MIDS; go to www.hfc.nps.gov/mids.
2. Get a password. Call 304-535-6102 or email David T Gilbert.
3. Review the entries for your park.
4. Ask yourself, is the condition of each entry accurate?
5. Add any media that are not included.
6. Add JPEG and PDF files as appropriate.
7. Review all entries for your park every 12 months.

The Truth is in the Fibers

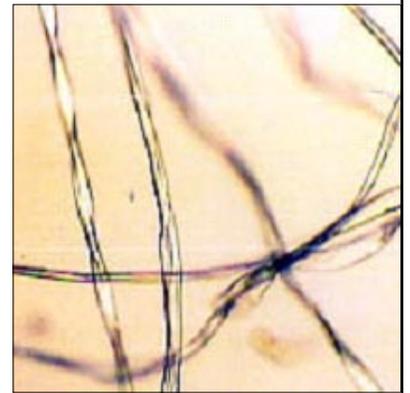
On April 3-6, 2003, professionals from the National Park Service, the Smithsonian Institution, museums and universities in North America, Europe, and Australia, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and the New York Police Department met in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, to talk about a common concern.

What brought these people together, you might ask? “Fibers” is the answer. These curators, conservators, forensic and conservation scientists, archeologists, and law enforcement officials all find the lowly deteriorated fiber very interesting. Actually to call a fiber “lowly” is a disservice since it contains vast amounts of information that present-day technology is helping us unravel. Whatever their actual interest in fibers, professionals from all these disciplines are creating and amassing a growing body of information that is useful whether it be for determining a course of treatment for a Civil War private’s jacket or linking a suspect to a crime scene.

They find fibers so interesting because their physical features change as they deteriorate. The identifying characteristics get worn away or alter shape. By examining fibers under a microscope, specialists can describe the fiber type and what kind of stresses may have caused the deterioration. Fibers, which are found in textiles—the most common documents made by humans—are storehouses of information about human activity and movement. For example, a fiber found at a burial site, whether ancient or a recent

murder, can provide answers to many questions, perhaps even identify the person buried. With so many—preservationists to law enforcement officers—collecting vast quantities of information, this growing body of knowledge can become a powerful research tool. A database to organize the information so that all can share it seems an obvious solution.

The idea to convene a meeting of specialists who would discuss the creation of a reference library of deteriorated fibers arose more than a decade ago. Initially the reference library was conceived as a resource for conservators who routinely need to identify deteriorated fiber samples. In the intervening years technologies have developed that could create a reference library as a powerful, searchable database containing digital images of fiber samples linked to the parent object and its treatment, storage and exhibition history. NPS textile conservator Jane Merritt and NPS conservation scientist Judy Bischoff invited the participants to this conference, which they also planned and organized. The National Park Service and the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training provided the funding.



Conference participants (top) spend time in a laboratory discussing practical aspects of creating the digital database.

Cotton fibers (bottom) at great magnification show the distinctive “soda straw” structure of the fibers.

“In the future, no professional working with fibers need make a decision for treatment or analysis without first locating a similarly degraded object to compare.”

Since Harpers Ferry Center works with such a wide range of materials in creating interpretive media, it followed that the growing body of information gathered as collections are treated here could be the catalyst for creating a system to make this knowledge available to everyone. The tools to make this infant reference library accessible were acquired gradually. Computers and the Internet became an integral part of life in the 1990s. The textile lab purchased a high quality polarized light microscope. Harpers Ferry Center hired both a web manager and an advanced conservation fellow who created an architecture for the reference library. A conservation scientist brought a vision of image analysis to the project.

What the conference revealed is that whatever the need of the individual professional, having the samples acces-

sible over the web will be a powerful tool. Getting to that point will take a great deal of work. But the report, *Development of a Web-Accessible Reference Library of Deteriorated Fibers Using Digital Imaging and Image Analysis* (available at www.nps.gov/hfc/products/cons/con-fiber.htm), recently published by Harpers Ferry Center, is an important first step and will be used to raise funds to establish the program. Currently the project remains under the direction of the National Park Service while funding is sought and a non-profit organization is created to establish, manage, and operate the database. Harpers Ferry Center has played a vital role in bringing people, who might not have known of one another's work, together from around the world.

Look for further updates as the project progresses. □

Identity News

□ Issue One of *NPS Identity* has been distributed throughout the NPS; 375 copies with a binder to hold future issues were sent to parks and regional offices. An additional 175 requests have come to Harpers Ferry for printed copies. The latest statistics from the web show that 2,380 downloads of the PDF version of the newsletter have been made. Issue Two will be out in January. To learn more, visit the NPS Graphic Identity website at www.graphic.nps.gov.

□ The Office of NPS Identity is in early discussions with vehicle fleet managers and is doing research in anticipation of creating standards for marking all park vehicles.

□ The official name change at Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts provides an opportunity for the park and Harpers Ferry Center to apply the standards for two entrance signs and develop new standards for an electronic marquee that will advertise current and coming attractions. Harpers Ferry Center and the park are working with a fabrication firm in Manassas, Virginia, to produce and install the signs.



Even after a long week's schedule of papers and discussion, the satisfaction on everyone's face is evident, knowing that they were involved in creating something that would help them all.

Digging into the Past

The Hidden Treasures of a Historic Furnishings Report

The Library of Congress, probate records, collections of papers at large, research universities, local government records, living descendants of famous people. What do they all have in common?

These are some of the resources researchers mine to create just one Historic Furnishings Report. Why would someone go to this kind of trouble just to furnish a historic structure? Isn't the story of the people who lived here really the reason we travel to historic homes? We visit to learn about the individuals, not what kind of furnishings they had, one might think.

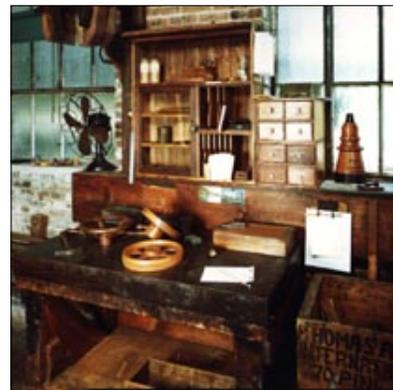
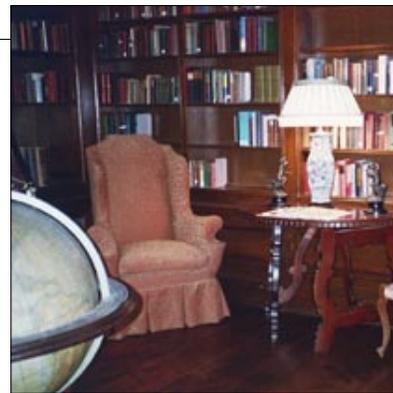
The simple answer is we do go to learn about the important people and the important places. But we also end up learning about the typical people—the unnamed slaves in the big house, the lighthouse keeper, all those persons of our shared past. We do go to see the houses they lived in, too, where the things they owned give us clues about who they were as human beings. The Truman family left their home as if they had just walked out the door. We see the books President Truman was reading. We know what issues engaged his mind. We see their kitchen, and we learn how they lived their lives. This house, obviously, does not need a Furnishings Report, but it does represent the ideal. We see this family as human beings, as people to whom we can relate.

A Furnishings Report is not just an inventory, although it does tell you how many chairs to place in a room. Its most

important function is to re-create an environment, to establish a link to those times when people lived in this building. It is an interpretive tool that provides a compendium of research around which to build an interpretive program. It is a springboard for creating those connections to other collections and to other researchers.

What can Harpers Ferry Center bring to such an assignment? HFC has a staff of well-trained researchers who have experience working with architects, antique dealers, and reproduction fabricators. Center researchers can turn a Furnishings Report into reality. Experience has taught them which interpretive techniques work with historic furnishings and which do not. They can recreate scenes that give us insights into the past.

Is there a historic building in your park calling out for a Furnishings study? If so, call HFC at 304-535-5050, and let's talk. □



The Forest Service came to Harpers Ferry Center to get the expertise necessary to restore Grey Towers (top), the home of Gifford Pinchot, to its 1930s appearance.

The Wright Brothers print shop (middle) is the result of some fortuitous discoveries—an inventory found at the Library of Congress, wallpaper still in the building, ink stains on original flooring for placing machinery, and surviving Wright Brothers equipment found elsewhere.

The Edison pattern shop (bottom) was an embarrassment of riches. Deciding what to remove from the accumulation of many years' work was the critical decision.

"We do go to see the houses they lived in, too, where the things they owned give us clues about who they were as human beings."