



# HFC *on* MEDIA

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*Yellowstone National Park's "Roving Ranger" videocasts enable visitors to download interpretive content from the Web to their own digital device, and then play back the content during their park visit. New technology like this gives our audiences greater control over when, where, and how they receive interpretive information. Learn more about new media products like this starting on page 5. (NPS Photo)*

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## From HFC's Director

New media—digital and often web-based—offer the interpretation and education professional many opportunities to deliver information to our many audiences. More than ever before, these tools allow us to target our messages to very specific demographics and create a whole new palette of experiences for visitors.

Each of the “new media” technologies has its own content requirements, operational regimes, and investment and life cycle costs. As a result, some are more successful in park environments than others. In this issue, we take a look at a few of the new technologies that have been used in our parks and hear from experienced park professionals about the challenges, successes, and lessons learned as they have implemented new media products in their park.

Even though many of these exciting new media solutions are by design “user generated” at the park site, Harpers Ferry Center looks forward to helping parks prepare their content and create standards that benefit the NPS system-wide.

—Don Kodak

# Interpretation in the Digital Age

## Interpretive Techniques in New Media

**We're in the opening innings of a whole new ballgame: affordable, do-it-yourself, mass communication. Launch a podcast, post an e-hike, or create a wiki, and you can interpret your park's resource for a wider potential audience than ever before.**

But using the latest technology doesn't ensure that you'll reach people successfully. After you've learned about digital recording, editing, and uploading, you still want to use the medium so that people come to care about your park. Luckily, NPS guidelines for creating effective (traditional) interpretive media are just as relevant in the new ballgame.

The Interpretive Development Program (IDP) lays out the Service's approach to interpretation. Whether or not you use it for training and certification, you'll find that it's full of great strategies for creating publications, exhibits, waysides, and other media. Let's see how the IDP guidelines—especially in modules 101 and 311—can help you create a captivating digital or online product.

### Audience

First, have a look at the "Knowledge of the Audience" component of the Interpretive Equation (*see below*). Perhaps you've already met some of the audience who would subscribe to a podcast or rent a GPS-triggered device—they're already visiting your

park. But there are members of your online audience whom you might never see.

How do these statistics match your assumptions about the potential audience for new media online?

- 72% of Americans aged 50-64 use the Internet.<sup>1</sup>
- 93% of college graduates use the Internet, compared to 67% of people with only a high-school degree, and 38% of people who didn't complete high school.<sup>1</sup>
- Only 18% of Americans have listened to at least one podcast.<sup>2</sup>
- Among those who have listened to a podcast, 20% come from each of these age ranges: 25-34, 35-44, 45-54; only 13% are 18-24 years old.<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly half (48%) have visited a video-sharing site, such as YouTube.<sup>3</sup>
- Around half (51%) of Internet users have taken virtual tours of another location online.<sup>4</sup>

Before you invest a lot in posting content on your website, see what you can find out

### The Interpretive Equation

$$\left( \begin{array}{c} \text{Knowledge of} \\ \text{the Resource} \end{array} + \begin{array}{c} \text{Knowledge of} \\ \text{the Audience} \end{array} \right) \times \begin{array}{c} \text{Appropriate} \\ \text{Techniques} \end{array} = \begin{array}{c} \text{Interpretive} \\ \text{Opportunities} \end{array}$$

1. Survey of Americans 18 and older, February 2008, Pew Internet and American Life Project, [www.pewinternet.org/trends/User\\_Demo\\_2.15.08.htm](http://www.pewinternet.org/trends/User_Demo_2.15.08.htm)

2. Survey of Americans 12 and older, March 2008, Edison Media Research, [www.edison-research.com/home/archives/2008/04/the\\_podcast\\_con\\_1.php](http://www.edison-research.com/home/archives/2008/04/the_podcast_con_1.php)

3. Survey of Americans 18 and older, January 2008, Pew Internet and American Life Project, [www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/232/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/232/report_display.asp)

4. Survey of Americans 18 and older, November 2006, Pew Internet and American Life Project, [www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Virtual\\_Tours\\_2006.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Virtual_Tours_2006.pdf)

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**HFC Website**  
[www.nps.gov/hfc](http://www.nps.gov/hfc)

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about the people who visit the site. Does the content and cognitive level of your programs match the audiences most likely to see it? Think about the range of interest level among your visitors—there will be similar ranges among your “virtual” audience. Are you providing for both the casual and the committed?

Of course, your virtual audience isn’t necessarily sitting at a computer keyboard. One of the most important factors in reaching your audience is knowing the context in which they experience your interpretation. The power of a wayside exhibit is that the resource, the audience, and the interpretation are all in the same place, at the same time. This will certainly be true of a GPS-triggered device, but it’s not necessarily true of a cell-phone program or a podcast. Many podcast listeners appreciate having content available while they’re commuting to work or working out at the gym. Also, whether your audience can look at images or listen to narrative—or both—should make a big difference to the content of your interpretive media.

### Appropriate Techniques

When using something called “new media” or “emerging technology,” we’re usually delivering our interpretive product—made of images, words, and sounds—through a digital device. The technology gives our audiences greater control over when, where, and how they attend to the interpretation. Although the means of delivery may be different, we’re still using those familiar elements: images, words, and sounds. So we can rely on some proven interpretive techniques for using those elements.

Here’s an example from a parkcast at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. The “Chasm View Geology” episode is part of a series, a ‘tour’ of canyon overlooks. You can watch it on your computer or carry it right out to the Chasm View overlook on an iPod, Blackberry, or other similar gadget.



The narrator immediately gives you an activity and asks a question: Compare the apparent distance to the opposite rim and to the river below. Is the rim further away? Even if you’re at home, the question gives you a tool for imagining yourself at the overlook, and the video furnishes a (diminished) view.

The video shows a diagram, a cross-section of canyon labeled with distances, as the narrator explains how the canyon’s depth and width differ in places. The view and the diagram introduce tangible qualities of the canyon. Video and audio then move in clearly linked steps toward an explanation of the canyon’s intangible significances. Depth and width vary because some rocks—especially granite—are harder than others and more resistant to erosion by water. Near Chasm View, “the river had to really focus its energy to narrowly cutting down through granite.” These evocative words accompany the rushing sound of water and a close-up on river pounding against rock.

Several “old” interpretive techniques—activity, question, illustration, word choice—appear in this “new” medium. Other techniques that work well in a video are: visual before and after comparisons; chronological events; rhythm (created as you cut from

*Visitor listens to an audio tour on his iPod while following a map at Richmond National Battlefield Park, Virginia. (NPS Photo)*

*Dozens of techniques and examples are described in **Handles: A Survey of Interpretive Techniques**, at [www.nps.gov/idp/interp/handlesupdate.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/handlesupdate.pdf)*



one scene to the next); and quotations (either re-enacted or from interviews).

### Characteristics of good interpretive (new) media

To make a good downloadable video tour, you should choose techniques that exploit the strengths of the video medium. This is a characteristic of any good interpretive product: that it functions well within the medium's strengths and weaknesses.

Imagine trying to describe how shoelaces are tied. Spoken narrative is not the best way to describe an intricate sequence of motions or events. A written, numbered list might do the job, but a series of images would work even better. (Then consider how your choice of medium could change, depending on the audience for shoelace tying.)

You'll find summaries of traditional media's strengths and weaknesses on both the HFC and IDP websites. Some of these qualities apply to new media, especially those related to audio and video production. However, sometimes new media might "break the rules" we're used to.

For instance, a limitation of traditional park films shown in a theater or on TV monitors is that people have high expectations for their quality. Low-budget productions can leave a bad impression of NPS professionalism. As more people see "home-made" videos on YouTube and download video onto hand-held devices, our audiences may apply different standards to some digital products. The intimacy of hearing an expert's voice over a cell-phone may outweigh the poor sound quality (although a bad original recording might make it impossible to understand the expert!). A ranger's enthusiastic demonstration of maritime knot-tying might be more engaging than a well-rehearsed actor's voiceover on an online virtual tour.

The IDP has a rubric for evaluating good interpretive media. We've reviewed the first measure—exploiting the strengths of the medium—and seen that it applies just as much to the new technology as to the old. As you read this summary of the rubric, note which criteria would not apply to new media:

- works within the medium's strengths and weaknesses
- links tangibles and intangibles and introduces universal concepts to convey resource meanings
- communicates appropriate depth and amount of relevant information
- provides factual balance, acknowledges multiple viewpoints
- creates context, supports content, and enhances connections with photos, illustrations, objects
- uses the physical space to enhance interpretation
- applies basic principles of design to develop relationships between the "things" or information (tangibles) and the ideas or meanings (intangibles) they represent

The only irrelevant criterion concerns "physical space." Perhaps even that might be translated to apply to a computer screen just as well as to a publication page. Of these seven measures, notice that three of them have nothing to do with media—they apply only to the quality of your

*Find descriptions of media strengths and weaknesses at [www.nps.gov/hfc/products/ip-media-select.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/ip-media-select.htm) or [www.nps.gov/idp/interp/311/choosemedia.htm](http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/311/choosemedia.htm)*

*The GPS Ranger, developed by Bar Z Adventures of Austin, Texas, is an interactive handheld GPS (Global Positioning System) mobile guiding device that can deliver audiovisual messages to visitors as they explore your site. The unit below is in use at Death Valley National Park, California.*



interpretation, not to how well you use the medium to convey your interpretation. Even a great web designer, videographer, or editor must be a good interpreter to create good interpretive media.

The last criterion on the list concerns basic design principles. In the past, most park staff who created their own interpretive media relied largely on graphic design skills, whether contributing to publications, waysides, or exhibits. A well designed graphic layout makes effective use of proximity, alignment, repetition, contrast, balance, and negative space. Similar principles apply to

new media. However, much new media interpretation will rely on skillful audio and video production. AV producers must account for the fourth dimension—time—among their design principles.

In any medium, technical skill alone is not enough to forge a connection with your audience. Along with mastering the hardware and software, you also need good design and interpretive skills to create good interpretive media.

*Caitlin McQuade, an exhibit planner at Harpers Ferry Center, authored this article.*

*Find basic design guidelines at [www.nps.gov/hfc/products/pubs/pubs-sb-01.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/pubs/pubs-sb-01.htm), [www.nps.gov/hfc/products/waysides/contents.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/waysides/contents.htm), or [www.nps.gov/idp/interp/311/desprin.htm](http://www.nps.gov/idp/interp/311/desprin.htm)*

## What New Media Products are Parks Using Today?

### Cell Phone Tours

In 2005, staff at Valley Forge National Historical Park, Pennsylvania, found that approximately three-quarters of their park visitors were regional users—local people who used the site to walk, jog, or just enjoy the outdoors. The park subsequently conducted a formal Visitor Use Study which confirmed this visitor profile. The study also revealed that these local visitors, who came to the park monthly, weekly, or even daily, typically bypassed the park visitor center.

Assistant superintendent Barbara Pollarine recognized a need to somehow communicate with these local park visitors. Says Pollarine, “We needed to find a way to reach this audience and connect them to our park’s significant stories.” Wayside exhibits were certainly one way to tell their stories, but Pollarine was looking for a more interactive approach.

“One thing almost all these local users had in common,” according to Pollarine, “was a cell phone.” Everyone who came to the park, which is just a few miles west of Philadelphia, seemed to have one. This fact was a

major influence in her research, and led her first to “Talking Street,” a company which specializes in cell phone tours in urban areas. One of her museum contacts also recommended another company called “Guide by Cell.”

The park subsequently invited three companies who provide cell phone tours to come to Valley Forge and make presentations. Pollarine ultimately chose Guide by Cell, and the park couldn’t be happier with their choice. She cites four compelling advantages to the Guide by Cell service:

- The park can record messages directly from their own telephone handset
- The park can constantly update their cell phone messages
- Cell phone tours can be easily converted to podcasts
- The park can access the Guide by Cell website at any time to see what the call volume is on a stop by stop basis

The park launched their cell phone tours in the summer of 2006 with 11 recorded messages for stops along the Encampment



Cell Phone

*Cell phone icon developed for Valley Forge National Historical Park by the NPS Sign Program.*

Auto Tour. Today, the number of messages and stops has grown to about 60. Each message is typically narrated by subject matter experts from either the park or the local community. The park distributes a brochure with a map of the stops, and uses a cell phone icon developed by the National Park Service Sign Program to identify stops at sites throughout the park.

Pollarine credits three 2006 summer interns with really helping the park develop, launch, and fine-tune their cell phone tours. One intern was recruited from Unilever's "Healthy Parks-Healthy Living" summer internship program. Another intern was provided through the park's partnership with the Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau. A third intern was solicited through CraigsList.

"These interns really helped us understand the cell phone medium," says Pollarine.

"They took our primary interpretive messages and distilled them down to about 1 to 1½ minutes in length. They really emphasized just how short most people's attention span for audio is."

Today, call volume ranges from about 200 calls per month during the off-season to 3,000 to 4,000 calls per month during the summer season. Cost per month, which is based on call volume, ranges from \$200-\$800—or about \$5,000 per year.

Valley Forge's cell phone tours continue to evolve. Guide by Cell recently translated all the park's messages into Spanish for \$1,700, allowing the park to reach an important new audience. The park has also added a text messaging feature offered by Guide by Cell, which prompts users at specific stops if they would be interested in receiving a text message about an upcoming park event related to that site. If a user selects "yes," they will receive a text message prior to the date of the event as a reminder. The park is also adding trail-specific messages to assist visitors with wayfinding.

In addition to Valley Forge, four other national park sites are presently offering Guide by Cell audio tours:

- Edison National Historic Site
- Grand Teton National Park
- Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial
- Lincoln Memorial and National Mall

To learn more about Guide by Cell and to listen to sample recorded messages, logon to [www.guidebycell.com](http://www.guidebycell.com).

## GPS Ranger

In early 2006, Eastern National approached Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site about developing a prototype "GPS Ranger" tour. Chief of interpretation Melissa English-Rias and her park staff met with Lee Little of Bar Z Adventures, and work on the GPS Ranger began.

The GPS Ranger, developed by Bar Z Adventures of Austin, Texas, is an interactive handheld GPS (Global Positioning System) mobile guiding device that can deliver audiovisual messages to visitors as they explore your site. The device can be programmed with unlimited content. It allows for daily updates such as your park's events or activities. The GPS Ranger automatically delivers audio, video, text, or still photos when a visitor approaches the pre-programmed GPS coordinates that correspond to every point of interest (buildings, landmarks) throughout the tour. The user can also manually navigate to any of the auto-triggered content. The device is about six inches wide and fits into the palm of a visitor's hand. It is lightweight, rugged, and water-resistant with a sunlight viewable touch-screen.

English-Rias, who is now an interpretive specialist in the Southeast Regional Office, was really intrigued by the new device. She recalls her impression when she first learned about the GPS Ranger: "I always want all our visitors to have an interpretive experience with a ranger while they explore

## New Employees at HFC

### Linda Blaser

Linda Blaser has joined Harpers Ferry Center as Associate Manager for Media Assets. Linda began her career at the Library of Congress in 1973, where she entered a training program for conservators run by Donald Etherington, Christopher Clarkson, and Peter Waters. Linda taught bookbinding and conservation classes at the Smithsonian Institution, and worked privately for private individuals, libraries, and museums throughout the Baltimore/Washington area from 1978 until 2003.



Linda Blaser. (Photo by Darryl Herring)

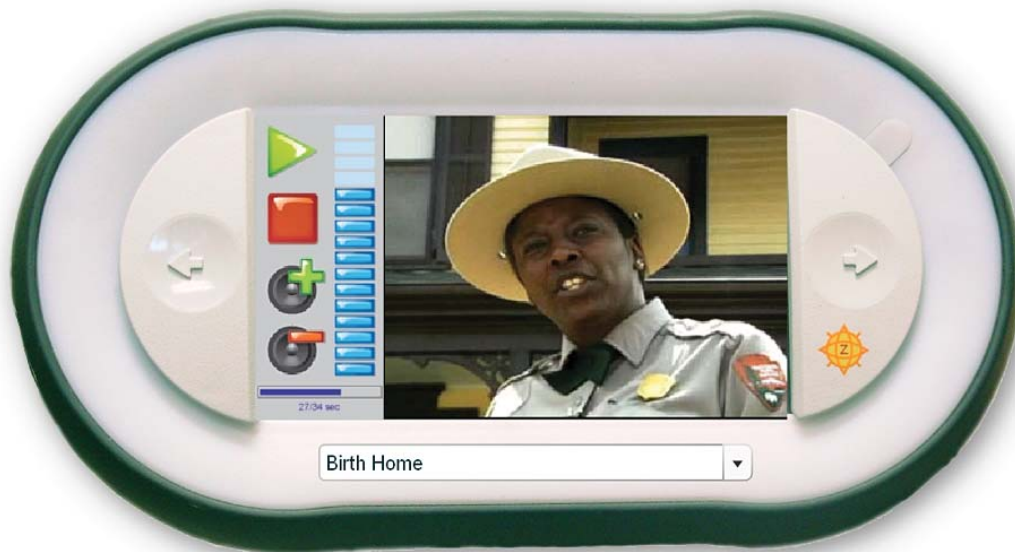
In 1993, Linda became the Senior Book Conservator at the Folger Shakespeare Library, working with their rare book collection and exhibition program. Most recently, Linda was the National Preservation Officer for Regional Records at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) from February 2003 through March 2008. In that position she oversaw building projects, managed preservation environmental concerns, established preservation policies, and assessed conservation issues in NARA's regional facilities and affiliated archives.

### Toni Dufficy

Toni Dufficy recently joined HFC as an Interpretive Planner. Employed with the NPS for more than 23 years, Toni was most recently working at Mather

*continued on next page*





*Melissa English-Rias appears on the GPS Ranger at Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site.*

the historic Sweet Auburn Area of Atlanta. When I heard about the GPS Ranger, I knew I had to get it for my visitors.”

Using visitors’ most frequently asked questions from the park’s training manual, Bar Z Adventures began developing content for the device. They had a professional video photographer follow English-Rias on a tour of the park, recording her interpretive talk at about a dozen points of interest. Working closely with the vendor, park staff helped develop text for each tour stop and reviewed rough cuts of the vendor’s video.

Finally, in October 2006, the first prototype of the GPS Ranger was delivered to the park. The park was delighted with the content of the device. Using the GPS Ranger, visitors could hear Dr. King’s message of social justice and equality, view images of the civil rights movement, and experience the aftermath of his untimely death, all in the palm of their hands.

But there were also problems with the first prototype. Battery life proved to be inadequate for the entire walking tour, and the device’s LCD screen was impossible to see under sunlight. A subsequent GPS Ranger device has worked much better, providing a larger, easier to view screen and longer battery life.

A more persistent problem is unique to Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site. The GPS Ranger can be rented for \$9.95 exclusively at the Eastern National Bookstore inside of Fire Station #6, located on the corner of Auburn Avenue and Boulevard. Unfortunately, Fire Station #6 is more than a block away from the park visitor center where most people first arrive. By the time visitors get to the bookstore, they’ve already seen most of the park, and don’t see much need to rent the device. English-Rias estimates that visitors rent the GPS Ranger just a few times each month.

Vicksburg National Military Park, which launched their own GPS Ranger tour in June 2007, reports much higher visitor use of their device. Available for rent at the Eastern National bookstore inside the park visitor center for \$14.95, the GPS Ranger is their 4<sup>th</sup> best-selling product.

Other parks using the GPS Ranger presently include:

- Cedar Breaks National Monument (available from the Zion Natural History Association bookshop at the park visitor center for \$9.95)
- Death Valley National Park (available from the Death Valley Natural History Association bookstore in the Furnace Creek

Training Center here in Harpers Ferry, where she was the Lead Training Instructor for the NPS Fundamentals V program.

Her first NPS job was as a volunteer/student intern in Washington, D.C. at Union Station when it was the National Visitor Center. After graduating from the University of Maryland, she became a seasonal—and ultimately permanent—park ranger/interpreter at Jean Lafitte NHP in New Orleans, Louisiana.



*Toni Dufficy. (Photo by David T. Gilbert)*

Her park experiences have included Women’s Rights NHP, Theodore Roosevelt National Park (North Unit), Everglades National Park, Biscayne National Park, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Fort Raleigh NHS, and Wright Brothers National Memorial. Toni also was the first space ranger assigned to work with NASA at the Goddard Space Flight Center.

**James Stayton**

Jim Stayton has joined the Digital Imaging Project in Media Assets as a digital image processor. Jim brings a vast amount of technical experience to this position. He is relocating to our area from Denver, Colorado, where he operated high end scanning equipment for a major commercial photo lab. This position involved critical color management and retouching skills. He has been working with digital capture and computer graphics since the early 1990s, and has

*continued on next page*

Visitor Center for \$19.95 for a full day or \$14.95 for a half day)

- Shenandoah National Park (available for rent from the Shenandoah National Park Association bookstore in the Byrd Visitor Center at Big Meadows for \$9.95)

The Shenandoah National Park GPS Ranger was just launched on Memorial Day weekend in May 2008. The Shenandoah device offers four different hikes: Dark Hollow Falls, Hawksbill Mountain, Big Meadows, and the Appalachian Trail.

Interpretive specialist Claire Comer, who worked closely with Bar Z Adventures on content development, wanted to offer much more than just videos of interpretive rangers talking in front of a camera. “We’ve incorporated historic photographs, taped interviews with resource specialists, Flash animation, and other rich interpretive content into our GPS Ranger,” says Comer. She’s particularly pleased with a graphic demo of plate tectonics geology at Hawksbill Mountain, and historic film footage of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

One problem Comer is concerned about is battery life. Some GPS Ranger models, like the ones used at Death Valley National Park, include car chargers to prolong battery life. But the model used at Shenandoah doesn’t include this feature. There is no on-off switch, and their GPS Ranger can only operate from 3½ to 4 hours before recharging is necessary. That’s not enough time to use the device on more than one or two of Shenandoah’s four GPS Ranger hikes. This may cause some users to feel rushed, and to miss opportunities to enjoy the resource.

On the plus side, Comer sees great value in being able to change their GPS Ranger content whenever necessary. “Through our online account, I can actually upload new digital pictures or WAV audio files directly to the Bar Z Adventures website.” The vendor can then incorporate the new content into the GPS Ranger program, and

transmit the updated content back to the park overnight. Because each GPS Ranger device is stored on a recharging grid that is connected to an Internet-enabled computer, the updated content is available for the next day’s rentals. “That’s pretty cool,” says Comer.

For more information on the GPS Ranger and to see online demos of park video content, logon to [www.barzadventures.com](http://www.barzadventures.com).

## **Pocket Ranger**

This year Cheatham Lane, a premier provider of professional interactive 360° panoramic virtual tour photography, has partnered with Lightspeed Media to prototype a new product called the Pocket Ranger. Lightspeed Media specializes in creating highly immersive, interactive user experiences. Development of the Pocket Ranger is being underwritten by the National Park Foundation and National Park Service.

The goal of the new Pocket Ranger is to empower visitors to national parks—and potential visitors—to access the interpretive elements of a specific park from home, and to take the park “on the road” using iPod and/or iPhone devices.

Once the content—VR and still photography, HD video, text, audio, etc.—is downloaded, the user can view and interact with the content from their desktop via Pocket Ranger’s custom interface/application. The Pocket Ranger will also allow the user to configure their own “tour,” so that if someone wants to they can take their iPod or iPhone on the trails and have access to information which augments their experience. Obviously, nothing beats a real live park ranger, but since there can’t be a ranger assigned personally to each park visitor, there’s Pocket Ranger.

The vendors have already begun documenting Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. During 2008, the team will gather content at one or two more

worked hard to reduce or eliminate any dependence on film and chemical processing.

Off duty, James enjoys producing multi-media shows using one of his passions—photography. He was introduced to photography during his early years as a military dependent while attending high school in the Philippine Islands. It was an instant fit, and upon his return to the U.S. he enlisted in the Air Force, where he trained and became a photo journalist.



*James Stayton. (Photo by Darryl Herring)*

Highlights of his photography career include covering the U.S. Space Command, chief NORAD photographer, and Chief of Photography for the USAF “Thunderbirds.” His photographic work has been published around the world and he has received widespread recognition. This is Jim’s first time living on the east coast, so he looks forward to traveling and exploring this part of the country.



national parks and establish their processes and workflows. They plan to then spiral out and ultimately document each location within the National Park System.

## Hand-Held Audio Tours

In February 2008, the “Mount Rushmore Audio Tour: Living Memorial” received the Director’s Award for Excellence in Interpretive Media at the Association of Partners for Public Lands (APPL) awards banquet in Denver, Colorado. This is the third national award for the audio tour, which was developed by the Mount Rushmore History Association. The audio tour also won a 2007 APPL Award in the audio/visual division and a 2007 National Association for Interpretation (NAI) Media Award in the audio tour division.

“Mount Rushmore Audio Tour: Living Memorial” incorporates a lightweight, handheld wand which features narration, music, interviews, sound effects, and historic recordings of sculptor Gutzon Borglum and his children, Lincoln Borglum and Mary Ellis Borglum Vhay. Interviews with workers who helped carve the mountain and members of local American Indian tribes highlight different perspectives on the carving. Visitors can listen to this self-guided tour while sitting beneath Mount Rushmore or by walking around the memorial on a suggested route. The audio tour and accompanying brochure and map are translated into German, Lakota, and Spanish.

The project was funded by the Mount Rushmore History Association (MRHA), a non-profit organization and Mount Rushmore partner. Working with Q Media Productions of Florida, a committee consisting of the National Park Service, MRHA staff and committee members, and Mount Rushmore National Memorial Society board members developed the direction, content, and flow of the tour. The wands themselves were

developed by Tour-Mate, internationally known for developing quality audio tour technology for parks and museums.



Tour-Mate

The tour is available at Mount Rushmore National Memorial for \$5 in the Audio Tour building during the summer months and in the MRHA bookstore located in the Information Center during the winter months.

For more information on Q Media Productions, logon to [www.qmediaproductions.com](http://www.qmediaproductions.com). For more information on Tour-Mate, logon to [www.tourmate.com](http://www.tourmate.com).

## Flash Virtual Tours

On November 30, 2007, the first virtual tour of Acadia National Park was launched on the park’s website. Called the Acadia *eCruise*, this interactive online tour takes participants on a virtual exploration of the park’s coastal islands and the surrounding waters of the Gulf of Maine. Participants can tailor their experience by choosing from a variety of media—audio, video, text, panoramic images, maps, and photographs. The *eCruise* includes the sounds of calling seabirds and crashing waves; the sights of lighthouse beacons and coastal scenery; close-up views of museum content and tidepool animals; and more.

Acadia National Park staff, led by graphics and technology specialist Todd Edgar, developed the *eCruise* through a partnership with David Restivo of Glacier National Park. Restivo, the 2007 recipient of the National Freeman Tilden Award for excellence in interpretation, had previously created a series of *eHikes* for Glacier using Adobe Flash software. Support from Tom Davies of the Northeast Region’s Interpretation and Education Office was also instrumental in making the project possible. The Northeast Region paid for Restivo’s time and travel, which totaled one week at Acadia National Park.

## HFC Staff News

### HFC Staff Present Byways Program Tele-Workshop

David Guiney and Betsy Ehrlich were the featured presenters during an April 16, 2008 Tele-Workshop sponsored by the America’s Byways Resource Center— part of the National Scenic Byways Program. Guiney and Ehrlich spoke to approximately 30 Tele-Workshop participants during the 90-minute conference call about “Interpretive Wayside Development and Design Standards.” Topics included use of images that connect wayside exhibits to the landscape, guidelines for developing a wayside exhibit team, the importance of properly positioning and installing wayside exhibits, and much more. Guiney and Ehrlich also took questions from the participants.

### Amber Perkins Graduates from Entry-Level Employee Development Program

HFC Audiovisual Production Assistant Amber Perkins graduated with the Entry-Level Employee Development Program class of 2008, on April 11 in Washington, D.C. This year’s graduating class consisted of 37 employees from various career fields throughout the National Park Service.

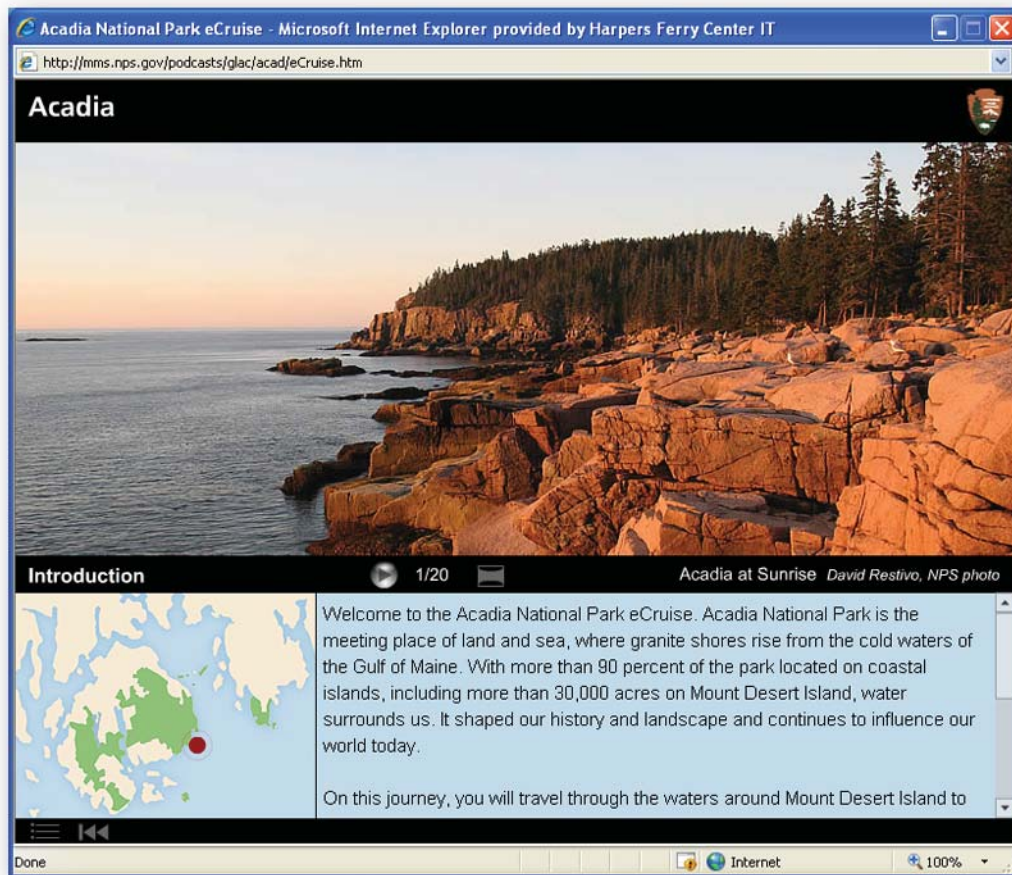


Amber Perkins. (NPS Photo)

These employees, GS-5 through GS-8 levels and equivalent wage grades, represent all regions and the Washington Office.

The two-year, competency-based training program, managed by

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*Acadia National Park's eCruise, a Flash-based online virtual tour.*

Edgar, who had seen Glacier National Park's *eHikes*, recognized that this interactive online format was well suited to Acadia's own interpretive goals. Although the ocean and offshore islands play an integral part in the story of Acadia National Park, only a very small percentage of the park's two million annual visitors actually get out on the water or visit the islands—which are accessible only by boat. “A virtual tour,” according to Edgar, “would be a perfect way to provide an engaging interpretive experience about the ocean and offshore islands around the park.”

Both Edgar and Restivo are well-versed in Flash. Adobe Flash software is the most advanced authoring environment for creating rich, interactive content for digital, web, and mobile platforms. By developing and delivering applications with Flash, authors can deliver content over the Web via the ubiquitous Adobe Flash Player software to ensure their content reaches the widest possible audience.

One key to successful development of the *eCruise*, according to Edgar, was the creation of a good interdisciplinary team of interpretive specialists, subject matter experts, and technical experts. Once park staff agreed upon the interpretive focus for the virtual tour, they then put together a comprehensive storyboard, developed a script, and compiled a list of text, photographs, maps, and video footage for the virtual tour.

Edgar emphasizes that building a Flash application like the *eCruise* requires considerable technical expertise. “Developing a virtual tour like this,” he cautions, “requires expertise with digital photography, video editing, and graphics software.” Among the software the Acadia team used to prepare files for the virtual tour was Adobe Photoshop for photo editing, Adobe Premier Pro for video editing, and Audacity for audio editing. Restivo provided Adobe Flash programming expertise, including knowledge of ActionScript, which is critical to the

the WASO Learning and Development Division's Capital Training Center, is designed to enhance the knowledge and leadership skills of each participant. The first year of the program culminates with the presentation of an individual project designed to help meet one of their park/program GPRA goals. During the second year of the program, the participants build a firm foundation in park and program operations, including team projects that address the integration of civic engagement with National Park Service operations.

#### **Robin Butler Completes the DOI University's Foundations in Leadership Program**

HFC Program Assistant Robin Butler completed the Foundation in Leadership Program on May 9 at Main Interior in Washington, D.C. The class consisted of 25 employees from various bureaus throughout the Department of the Interior: Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Minerals Management, and National Park Service.

This two week program, managed by the Department of Interior University, is designed to provide introductory leadership skills to mid-level administrative and support staff. The program provides each participant with an opportunity to explore and expand their leadership potential and technical competences. This program emphasizes leadership skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, influencing, negotiating, and conflict resolution, as well as oral and written communication skills, interpersonal skills, and the federal budget process.



development of a robust interactive online application.

Clearly, development of the *eCruise* was a team effort, combining the subject matter expertise of park staff with the digital media and software skills of Edgar and Restivo. By combining this expertise into their team, Acadia was able to develop an effective online interpretive experience. Edgar estimates that a total of about 280 staff hours were spent on the Acadia *eCruise*.

To take the Acadia National Park *eCruise*, logon to [www.nps.gov/acad/photosmultimedia/virtualltour.htm](http://www.nps.gov/acad/photosmultimedia/virtualltour.htm). To take one of Glacier National Park's *eHikes*, logon to [www.nps.gov/glac/photosmultimedia/ehikes.htm](http://www.nps.gov/glac/photosmultimedia/ehikes.htm).

To see another example of a Flash virtual tour, logon to *The Clara Barton Interactive Experience* at [www.nps.gov/features/clba/feat0001/flash.html](http://www.nps.gov/features/clba/feat0001/flash.html) (see "The Clara Barton Interactive Experience," May/June 2007 *HFC onMedia*, page 2).

## Audiocasts, Videocasts, & Podcasts

Several national park websites offer audiocasts, videocasts, or both. These media files can be played directly from a park's website, and in some cases you can also download the files to your local computer for playback at a later time. Many of these audiocasts and videocasts are also available as "podcasts."

A podcast is a series of digital-media files, such as audiocasts or videocasts, which are distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and computers. The term podcast, like broadcast, can refer either to the series of content itself or to the method by which it is syndicated; the latter is also called podcasting.

Though a podcast may be directly downloaded or streamed from the podcasters'

own website, a podcast is distinguished from other digital media formats by its ability to be syndicated, subscribed to, and downloaded automatically when new content is added, using an aggregator or feed reader capable of reading feed formats such as RSS (Really Simple Syndication). Apple's iTunes website is a popular place where users can subscribe to a podcast and receive automatic downloads when new content is added.

### Audio PastCasts

In May 2006, staff from Jefferson National Expansion Memorial attended a meeting on podcasting sponsored by the St. Louis Attractions Association. These staff members included chief of museum services and interpretation Mardi Arce, education director Elisa Kunz, education specialist Peter Hovey, and archivist Jennifer Clark.

Clark was already familiar with the emergence of podcasting as a popular communications medium. She often downloads podcasts from Apple's iTunes website and listens to them during her spare time. Energized by what she learned at the St. Louis Attractions Association presentation, she downloaded several audio podcasts from Colonial Williamsburg and burned a CD to share with her colleagues.

The following summer the park saw an opportunity to begin producing their own audio podcasts. Superintendent Peggy O'Dell suggested that the 2007 "Live on the Levee" event, which is held every summer adjacent to the park, would be the perfect venue to launch these podcasts.

The park produced six audio tours, called PastCasts, which visitors could download to their iPods or MP3 players at home and then take to the park. These audio tours were developed to complement live interpretive presentations given by park rangers and volunteers at five stations around the park during "Live on the Levee." To iden-



This icon identifies an RSS feed on a Web site.

## HFC Products Receive Awards

The American Association of Museums and National Association of Government Communicators recently recognized several Harpers Ferry Center media products.

### American Association of Museums

Two HFC media products were selected for 2008 MUSE Awards by the American Association of Museums (AAM) Media and Technology Committee. The awards were presented on April 27 at the 2008 AAM Annual Meeting & Museum Expo in Denver, Colorado.

- Silver Award, Video category: *Ribbon of Sand* (John Grabowska, Producer and Steve Ruth, Photographer).

**What the judges said:** The incredible cinematography of this video captures the audience immediately, but it is the complicated story of Cape Lookout National Seashore and the strands of personal reflection from the writings of environmental pioneer Rachel Carson that bring understanding and awe to this doomed landscape.

- Silver Award, Teaching and Outreach category: *Never Lose Sight of Freedom*, Educational Resource Kit (Lakita Edwards, Project Lead with collaboration from the entire SEMO team).

**What the judges said:** Designed to increase student knowledge and understanding of the Modern Civil Rights Movement and encourage social change, *Never Lose Sight of Freedom* documents a critical episode in U.S. history through engaging interactives and powerful stories. Judges cite that the medium was stellar in its use of graphics, sound, and video—all easy to navigate—and that the program addressed multiple modes of learning with oral histories that showed narrators, as well as their words transcribed. The "EduKit and Resources" section features a thorough concept-

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tify which PastCast tour stop the listener was at, the park placed numbered markers around the park.

Content and scripts for each PastCast were developed by park education specialist Elisa Kunz and exhibits specialist Myron Freedman. Freedman, who's had extensive acting experience, helped develop script details, served as voice talent on some of the audiocasts, and recruited voice talent. Park historian Bob Moore also furnished his subject matter expertise.

To produce the PastCasts, the park purchased a RODE Podcaster USB microphone, hooked it up to a laptop computer, and made the recordings in the park's theatre. Exhibit specialist Sue Ford made the recordings using Audacity on a Windows-PC laptop, then ported recordings to a MacOS computer where she edited the recordings using Apple GarageBand. The entire process included recording, mixing sound, and eventually adding music as Ford became more familiar and competent with the software.

"Obtaining royalty-free music was a challenge," cautions Clark. "We eventually worked out an agreement with a musical group that has performed here many times, and they let us use their music for free as long as we gave them credit."

Each PastCast is between 17-25 minutes long. To hear the park's PastCasts, logon to [www.nps.gov/jeff/photosmultimedia/pastcast.htm](http://www.nps.gov/jeff/photosmultimedia/pastcast.htm).

### Video Parkcasts, Ranger Minutes, and Roving Ranger Videos

Parkcasts, Ranger Minutes, and Roving Ranger Videos are short online videocasts in which a park ranger shares interesting stories and information about their park. Among the parks who are using these

audiovisual formats are Acadia National Park (Ranger Minute), Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park (Parkcast), Grand Canyon National Park (Ranger Minute), and Yellowstone National Park (Roving Ranger Videos).



iPod Nano

At Acadia National Park, the Ranger Minute videocasts have evolved over time, starting out as video recordings of rangers documenting their competencies for training. Todd Edgar, the park's graphics and technology specialist, has fine-tuned the format and now focuses on presenting short, concise topics. He asks seasonal rangers to think

of interesting subjects they can address in the format of a 1-2 minute video presentation. This approach forces each ranger to think about a specific topic, focus on the topic content, and create a script for the presentation. Edgar helps them think about what they'll say, how they'll say it, what setting is best suited to the content of the presentation as well as for video and audio recording, and what supplementary visuals to include in the presentation.

According to Edgar, the Ranger Minute format gives viewers a personal experience with a park ranger. "The short presentations provide a one-to-one interface for visitors to the park website to listen to and learn from a park ranger," he says. "It really gives park staff a way to connect with visitors in a new and effective way, and to reach new audiences."

Edgar started out using free Windows Movie Maker software, but is now using Adobe Premiere Pro video editing software. New Adobe Premiere Elements, which only costs \$99, offers most features parks might need to create simple online videos like the Acadia Ranger Minute.

Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park has developed a total of 96 parkcasts

based curriculum that offers thoughtful and flexible ideas for teachers to adapt the website content to their own needs.

### National Association of Government Communicators

Four HFC media products also received 2008 Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards from the National Association of Government Communicators.

- Blue Pencil First Place Award, Individual Map category: National Park System Map (Tom Patterson and Nancy Haack)
- Gold Screen First Place Award, Documentary category, *Ribbon of Sand* park film (John Grabowska and Steve Ruth)
- Gold Screen Award of Excellence, E-Newsletter category, *HFC onMedia* (Dave Gilbert and Bob Clark).
- Gold Screen First Place Award, Instructional Training category: *Measure Twice, Dig Once: How to Install a Wayside Exhibit* video (Bob Clark, Eric Epstein, Winnie Frost, Michele Hartley, Amber Perkins, and Mark Southern).

The awards were presented at the Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards Reception and Banquet on April 29 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

### Worldfest Houston

**International Film Festival**  
Several National Park Service films received awards on April 28 at the 41st annual Worldfest Houston International Film Festival, one of the oldest and largest film and video competitions in the world.

- "The St. Croix: A Northwoods Journey," a film produced for HFC and the Saint Croix National Scenic Riverway by IDIQ contractor Great Divide Pictures, won a Platinum Remi Award. Michele Hartley was the COR on the project, and Winnie Frost was the Project Manager.
- "On Great White Wings," a film produced for HFC and Dayton Aviation Heritage NHP

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that tell 48 distinct stories. According to Phil Zichterman, the park's former chief of interpretation, the park began the process of identifying and building content three years ago. Zichterman's goal was to provide unique, non-linear presentations for each of the park's 12 major viewpoints along the canyon's edge.

"Visitors typically drive to just two or three viewpoints during their visit here," he says. "But when they come to our website, they have access to parkcasts on all 12 viewpoints." To provide consistency to their presentations at each viewpoint, the park identified four common themes that tied the 12 sites together: geology, history, life science, and recreation. Each parkcast provides ranger narration with site-specific video, serving as a personal tour guide.

As he surveyed the many technologies and devices available to host and present the park's content, Zichterman focused on devices users already owned. With the growing prevalence of iPods and other portable MP3 media players, he thought it best to develop media for these devices rather than have the park get into a rental program or purchase hardware technology which could quickly become outdated.

"Cost to the visitor was a big concern," recalls Zichterman. "The park had just doubled its entrance fee, so adding a fee for a rental program was not a good option."

Zichterman echoes the advice given by Acadia's Todd Edgar: "Keep your presentations short. Users have short attention spans. Don't try to put too much content into a single videocast." Black Canyon's parkcasts are just 2-3 minutes long.

Zichterman also agrees that having technically-savvy staff is indispensable for developing and delivering new media. To fill this need at Black Canyon, Zichterman hired Alison Koch, a SCEP (Student Career Experience) employee who was working on



*Park visitor watches a "Roving Ranger" videocast at Yellowstone National Park. (NPS Photo)*

a Masters degree in natural history filmmaking at Montana State University. Koch provided much-needed technical expertise for the development and production of the parkcasts.

Other hurdles Zichterman warns that parks need to address are intellectual property rights and Section 508 accessibility compliance. "Make sure you have use rights for any video footage, photographs, or music you use in your podcasts, and make sure your videocasts are accessible to people who are deaf or have hearing loss."

For more information on accessibility requirements for government videocasts, see "Accessibility Best Practices for Video Podcasts" on the Harpers Ferry Center website at [www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility/access-podcasts.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hfc/accessibility/access-podcasts.htm). To watch a park videocast with open captions, logon to the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park website at [www.nps.gov/havo/photosmultimedia/multimedia.htm](http://www.nps.gov/havo/photosmultimedia/multimedia.htm).

To watch one of Acadia's Ranger Minutes, logon to [www.nps.gov/acad/photosmultimedia/rangerminute.htm](http://www.nps.gov/acad/photosmultimedia/rangerminute.htm). To watch one of Black Canyon's parkcasts, logon to [www.nps.gov/blca/photosmultimedia/parkcast\\_srtour.htm](http://www.nps.gov/blca/photosmultimedia/parkcast_srtour.htm). To watch one of Grand Canyon's Ranger Minutes, logon to [www.nps.gov/grca/photosmultimedia/rangerminute.htm](http://www.nps.gov/grca/photosmultimedia/rangerminute.htm). To watch one of Yellowstone's Roving Ranger Videos, logon to [www.nps.gov/archive/yell/insidyellowstone/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/archive/yell/insidyellowstone/index.htm).

by IDIQ contractor Aperture Films, won a Special Jury Award. John Grabowska was the COR, and Michael Paskowsky was the Project Manager.

- "Jamestown: America's Birthplace," a nine-screen "immersive" AV program produced by IDIQ contractor Hillmann & Carr, Inc. for the new visitor center at Jamestown NHS, won a Platinum Remi Award. Mark Southern was technical advisor on the project.

- "San Juan National Historic Site: Where History Comes to Life," a marketing video produced for HFC by IDIQ contractor Henninger Media Services, won a Bronze Remi Award. Anne Tubiolo was the COR, and Michael Paskowsky was the Project Manager.

Learn more about Worldfest at [www.worldfest.org/PAGES/winners.htm](http://www.worldfest.org/PAGES/winners.htm).

# Land of Dreams—Homesteading America

*New Film Premieres at Homestead National Monument of America*

On April 5 and 6, 2008, Homestead National Monument of America and the National Park Service premiered *Land of Dreams—Homesteading America*, a new interpretive film directed by HFC's Chuck Dunkerly. The new film uses personal interviews of homesteaders and their descendents to weave together memories of hope, frustration, defeat, and success. Through these compelling personal accounts, and through breathtaking cinematography, homesteading becomes a tangible piece of history, engaging new generations with the stories of the people who built much of our country with their dreams and fortitude.

The world premiere was held on Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, at the Hevelone Center for the Performing Arts in Beatrice, Nebraska. To celebrate the premiere, performances and presentations were made by John E. Carter, curator of photographs for the Nebraska State Historical Society; Matt Jones, Native American story teller; Atz Kilcher, story teller and musical performer; and Jan Meza, composer and concert pianist.

After the premiere event, *Land of Dreams—Homesteading America* took up permanent residence at the Homestead Heritage Center, where visitors can view the film during their park visit. The addition of the new film is the culminating piece of the new visitor experience at the Heritage Center, opened in May 2007 (see "HFC Completes New Exhibits," *September/October 2007 HFC onMedia*, page 10).

*Land of Dreams* was produced by the National Park Service in cooperation with the Nebraska Public Power District, First National Beatrice, and Pinnacle Bank. Chuck Dunkerly, the film's producer/director, has been working on award winning films for



the past 10 years. He has been involved in films for the Jefferson Memorial, Olympic National Park, and Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. His awards include a Cine Golden Eagle Award, National Association of Interpretation Media Award, and Winner of the International Wildlife Film Festival, best in non-broadcast category.

The film premiere event was made possible with the support of the Hevelone Foundation and the Nebraska Arts Council.



**Above:** *Harpers Ferry Center Producer/Director Chuck Dunkerly with Cinematographer Rich Confalone shooting footage for "Land of Dreams" on the Nebraska plains. (NPS Photo)*

**Below:** *The new Homestead Heritage Center in Beatrice, Nebraska. (NPS Photo by Paul Koehler)*



# New Graphic Identity Website Launched

*Retrieve Arrowhead files, business cards, typefaces, and publication templates*

**It's been almost seven years since the National Park Service Graphic Identity Program website was first launched. Since that time, park and program staff across the Service have downloaded thousands of arrowhead artwork files, NPS-approved typefaces, and pre-formatted publication templates—all with the aim of designing and producing media that brings a consistent look to our NPS communication materials.**

This entire effort started in 1999. Among the barriers to a greater public understanding of the breadth and depth of the National Park Service, according to research conducted by the NPS Message Project, was a lack of consistency in the content and appearance of visual materials presented to the public. By their appearance, National Park Service materials often and actively communicated that the parks and programs were NOT connected to one another or to the NPS as a whole. This research resulted in a Message Project recommendation that “exact standards should be established for the appearance and use of the Arrowhead” and that “a systemwide style guide should be established and strictly enforced.”

Thus was born the NPS Graphic Identity Program and, in June 2001, the website that promulgates its guidelines and materials. The new version of this website, launched on April 2, 2008, provides much of the same material previously available: arrowhead artwork files, information and instructions for obtaining business cards, NPS-approved typefaces, pre-formatted publication templates, and guidelines for the adoption and use of these materials.

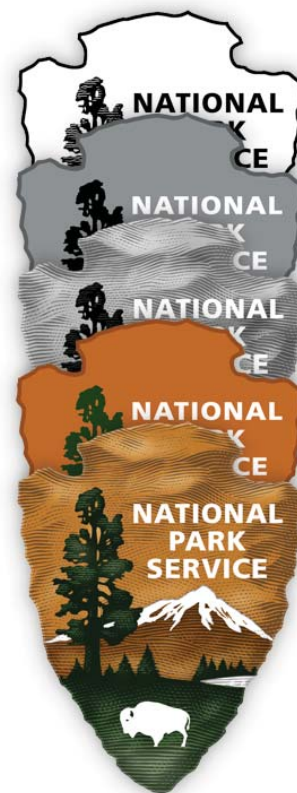
Among the most significant changes to the materials available on the website is the disappearance of platform-specific file formats. In the past, separate file formats for arrowhead artwork, typefaces, and publication

templates were required for Windows-PC and MacOS computers. With the evolution of Windows-PC and MacOS operating systems, and the maturation of the Adobe Creative Suite (CS) line of applications, that's no longer the case. Now each arrowhead artwork file, typeface file, and publication template can be downloaded and used on either computer platform.

Another significant change is the availability of completely revised publication templates. All the templates have been updated with the new NPS-approved OpenType fonts, and migrated from Quark Xpress and Adobe PageMaker to Adobe InDesign CS2 and CS3. The handful of Microsoft Word templates provided on the website have also been revised and updated. In addition, a new NPS PowerPoint template is now available.

For those NPS staff who are not familiar with the evolution of visual identity in the National Park Service, with NPS Message Project, or with how the NPS Graphic Identity Program came into being, the website now provides comprehensive information on these subjects as well.

To access the new NPS Graphic Identity Program website, visit [www.graphics.nps.gov](http://www.graphics.nps.gov). Please note that this website is only available to computers connected to the National Park Service network.



[www.graphics.nps.gov](http://www.graphics.nps.gov)