

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
HORACE M. ALBRIGHT TRAINING CENTER
Grand Canyon, Arizona

PI-36

AN INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETATION

I. Service Policy

The Service shall further, through interpretive programs, visitor understanding of the scenic, scientific, and historic features, such understanding being recognized as essential to full enjoyment and appreciation of areas of the National Park System.

II. What It Means

- A. To help visitors see, understand, and enjoy the values of a National Park.
- B. It is the provocation of interest.

III. Effective Interpretation, According to Freeman Tilden

- A. It should relate to something within the personality or experience of the visitor.
- B. It is revelation based on information.
- C. It is a teachable art.
- D. Its chief aim is not instruction, but provocation.
- E. It should aim to present a whole.
- F. A different approach should be used for children.

IV. Purpose and Objectives of Interpretation and Interpretive Programs

- A. The purpose of the interpretive program is to help Service in fulfilling its obligation in carrying out the mandate of Congress in the National Park Act of August 25, 1916, "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the benefit of future generations."
- B. Immediate objectives
 - 1. Enhance visitor enjoyment and make each visit a memorable experience.
 - 2. Provide hospitality and service to park visitor. Courtesy.

3. Stimulate visitors to get out into area and enjoy the park.
4. Arouse visitor curiosity and desire to explore new ideas.
5. Encourage visitor to use powers of observation.

C. Long range objectives

1. Visitor Information:
To give highest priority to strengthening visitor information services as a necessary element of better interpretation.
2. Quality Interpretation:
To achieve the highest quality of interpretation based on standards of professional interpretation maintained through critical and systematic appraisal of the park program.
3. Professional Interpretation:
To insure high standards of interpretive services through conduct of programs by professional interpreters qualified in their subject fields and with full-time responsibility for planning and executing interpretive programs.
4. Personal Interpretation:
To maintain as fully as possible in the face of increasing park use, informal personal interpretation, including the strengthening of speaking skills.
5. Special Programs:
To reach a wider representation of park visitors through special interpretive programs and facilities for families, young people, and for visitors from other nations.
6. Interpretive Media:
To improve the design and quality of museum, wayside, and audio presentations, graphic and visual arts, and other creative media of interpretation and information, developing new methods and tools based on current advances in technology.
7. Americana:
To expand interpretive and preservation programs in the fields of American music, art, handicrafts, folklore, and other aspects of the Nation's culture, and encourage participation by artists and craftsmen of the region.
8. The Public Beyond the Parks:
To communicate to the public at large the significance of the Nation's heritage as represented in its parks, through talks, publications, graphic arts, and other extension services, with increased emphasis on the use of television and motion pictures.

9. Conservation Education:
To work closely with schools, colleges, educational associations, publishers, and other institutions engaged in educational processes to teach the relationships between man and his heritage as represented in the National Park System.
10. Local Community Relations:
To strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation between the park staff and neighboring communities.
11. Communication of Policy:
To communicate park policies and philosophy to the public through informational and interpretive media at all levels of operation.

V. General Principles Underlying Interpretive Program

- A. Should be related primarily to principal features of the Park.
- B. Must maintain presentation on a high plane.
- C. Should maintain unity throughout National Park System.
- D. Should present nature as a whole with interlocking parts in proper perspective and relationship (Ecology vs. identification).
- E. Keep in mind to develop fuller understanding of National Park System and its place in conserving natural and historic resources.
- F. Interpretation can do much to inspire public confidence in Parkscape and the Long Range Requirements program.
- G. Use of the "real thing" rather than books.

VI. Qualities of the Interpretive Program

- A. Presentations should be informal but dignified.
- B. Use accepted and proven devices.
 1. Campfire and other talks.
 2. Conducted trips (nature walks, historic and archeologic tours).
 3. Self-guiding trails and tours.
 4. Visitor center exhibits.
 5. Wayside exhibits - outdoors.
 6. Audiovisual programs.
 7. Libraries.
 8. Publications (free and for sale).
 9. Study collections and fact files.
 10. Living demonstrations.
- C. Interpreters should encourage voluntary visitor participation but NEVER pressure visitors to participate in interpretive programs.

- D. Presentations should be popular in appeal---not academic.
- E. Programs must be based on findings of sound research.
- F. Material must be accurate.
- G. Presentations should be made by trained, experienced personnel.
- H. Be alert to new approaches and devices that might be utilized effectively.
- I. Characteristics of a capable interpreter:
 - 1. Likes people.
 - 2. Has tact, diplomacy and good judgment.
 - 3. Is a convincing speaker and an able writer.
 - 4. Is willing to work many extra hours.
 - 5. Knows how to operate photographic, projection, and tape recording equipment.
 - 6. Knows basic scientific or historic principles and techniques.
 - 7. Is an effective planner.
 - 8. Has administrative and supervisory potential.
 - 9. Has a real, living interest in natural history, history or archeology.

VII. Protection Through Interpretation

- A. Interpretation develops understanding, understanding generates interest and appreciation, appreciation stimulates a desire to protect and preserve.
- B. Interpretation points out situations and features in which protection is most needed.
- C. Interpretation can be used to give visitors an understanding of the Service's protection and management problems - elk in Yellowstone.
- D. Interpretation points out ways in which visitors may cooperate in forwarding Nation's conservation projects.

VIII. Guidelines for Effective Interpretation

- "NPS Administrative Manual," Volume IV
- "National Park Service Field Manual for Museums," by Ned J. Burns
- "Interpreting Our Heritage," by Freeman Tilden
- NPS Handbook Series:
 - "Museum Records Handbook"
 - "It's to be Published"
 - "Visitor Center Planning"
 - "Sign and Wayside Exhibit Handbook"
 - "Historic and Prehistoric Structures"
 - "Ruins Stabilization"
 - "Natural History Research Handbook"
 - "Interpretive Planning Handbook" (draft, 1965)