



Newsletter #2 Fall 2008
www.naisections.org/INTL
Editor: Duane Fast dfast@artcrft.com

IN THIS ISSUE:

Cover- INTERNATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

Page 1- INTERNATIONAL PROJECT FEATURE
Museo del Acero, Monterrey, Mexico

Page 2- INTERNATIONAL ISSUES SECTION
Symbols in Culture

Page 3- INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH PROJECT
Environmental Volunteerism In Taiwan

Page 4- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Advancing Cultural Competence Within the
National Park Service

Page 5- SPECIAL FREE EVENT INFO



In each issue, we hope to profile one of our members who is an international interpreter:

Profile: Dongying Wei

-Prof. JH Wilson (wilsonjh@msx.umsl.edu)

They told me that I would like this young woman from China. And from the start, I did. Animated, fit, attractive, intelligent—Dongying embodies the promise of our time. Walking through the tallgrass prairie of the Midwest at our first meeting, she talked with sincerity and passion about the changes in her country and the promise that interpretation offers to conservation and sustainability.

Dongying Wei was born and raised in a small city, Xinzhou City, in northern China. A special middle school teacher turned her on to geography. “When I was young, I couldn’t travel much,” she says. “Geography helped me learn about the culture, heritage, and ecology of the world. I have always liked it”. Now, she thinks, she has experiences in 11 different countries.

Dongying received her bachelor’s degree in law, but then found a way to pursue her graduate education in geography and interpretation with Dr. Wang Min at the prestigious Beijing Normal University. At BNU, she became assistant director of the Environment and Heritage Interpretive Center. Earlier this year, she received her Ph.D. from BNU with her dissertation entitled Evaluation of Interpretation Systems in Geoparks: A Case Study of Yuntaishan Geopark.

Not content with a single doctorate, Dongying is currently working with Dr. Carole Murphy, University of Missouri St. Louis, on a second doctorate where she examines leadership through leadership policies. Dr. Murphy has great things to say about Dongying Wei, citing her recent receipt of a College of Education scholarship, her work with the Missouri Principals Leadership Academy, her work with the Chinese Student Organization, her internship with the National Park Service, her work with the Reading First program for literacy, and her collaboration with several college and university presidents. Murphy credits Dongying’s enthusiasm and perseverance with the establishment of a sister park agreement between Grand Canyon National Park and Yuntaishan World Geopark.

Dongying helped to organize and conduct a landmark international conference on interpretation in Geoparks in 2007. She is currently the chair of the International Geographical Union Commission on Geoparks.

Dongying Wei, whose name relates to the “oriental hero” is one of those international interpreters whom you should know. She and Professor Wang Min will present at the upcoming conference in Portland.

Museo del Acero Monterrey, Mexico

Dominating the Monterrey skyline, Blast Furnace No. 3 is one of the most recognizable icons of the Mexican metropolis, symbolizing the importance industry plays in Monterrey's past, present and future. But the future of the crumbling structure was seriously threatened until the Patronato Museo del Acero envisioned it as a place to provide a fun and educational environment for families and children to discover steelmaking history and technology in Mexico.

To make this vision a reality an international team, in collaboration with museum staff, developed a unique and engaging experience that introduces visitors to the importance of steelmaking in Mexico and the science behind this important material. The design team, led by Aldrich Pears Associates, worked closely with architects, local advisors and consultants to find solutions to the challenges presented in the restoration of the blast furnace.

The interpretive objectives of the Museo del Acero are to tell the century-old story of steelmaking in Mexico, explain the process of making steel step by step, and provide visitors with a way of experiencing the excitement of standing next to Blast Furnace No. 3 when molten steel pours out in a river of fire and smoke. The challenge was to figure out how best to tell these complex stories - stories that had never been told before in a museum and science center - in a way that visitors would find fascinating and easy to understand.

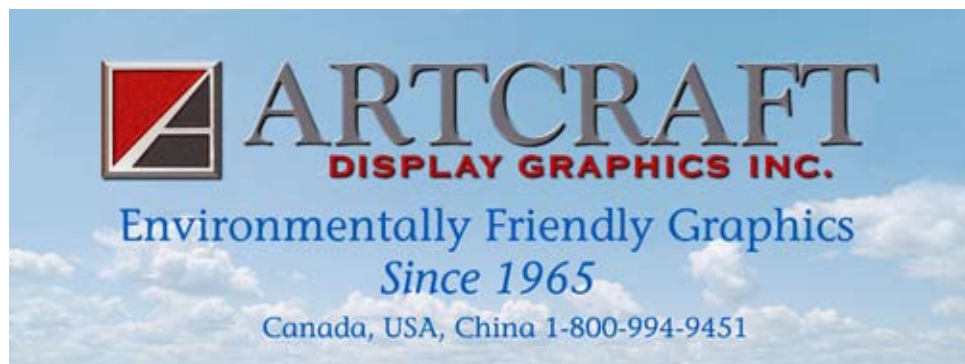
The team included British architectural firm Grimshaw Architects, the Mexican firm of Oficina de Arquitectura and the engineers were Werner Sobek New York. Exhibit design was handled by Aldrich Pears Associates from Vancouver, Canada. Fabrication and graphics were done by the Canadian firms of The Taylor Group and Artcraft Display Graphics Inc. Many Mexican companies also supplied construction expertise.



This was a classic example of international co-operation being used to successfully undertake and complete a major project with very unique requirements. The end result has won rave reviews and has appeared in international publications praising its spectacular results.



Photos Roberto Ortiz

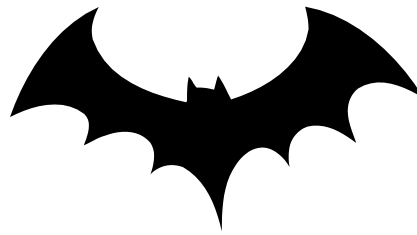


Symbols, Culture, and Interpretation

-Sylvia Lin (hsylvia.lin@gmail.com)

Although symbols are common in daily life, they are often taken for granted. A symbol can be a person, place, or thing – virtually anything that represents an idea or a concept. Oftentimes, our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors are influenced by symbols that surround us – even in an unconscious way.

Symbols often convey different meanings to people, especially in a cross-cultural context. Bats are one example. In the U.S., many people associate bats with fear. This is one reason for their “popularity” near Halloween. Other people might think about Bacardi rum in relation to bats. However, a lot of people associate bats with Batman. Batman, created by Hollywood, is a well-known movie character who symbolizes heroism. For Chinese people, bats symbolize luck and good fortune. This is because the pronunciation of bats in Chinese is the same as luck. So if a bat flies into a Chinese home, the family would be very happy because they believe it would bring them luck – not fear. In fact, bats are commonly found on many examples of Chinese art and architecture. Although different meanings may be created through the same symbol, these meanings usually represent big ideas which are easily understood by most people. For example, love, heroism, and luck are universally understood - just in different ways by people.



(photo M. Vinluan)

How can symbols be related to interpretation? Freeman Tilden (1957), a pioneer philosopher in interpretation, declared that interpretation “aims to reveal meanings” (p. 8). The NPS and NAI also define interpretation as a communication process that provides an opportunity for visitors to form their own intellectual and emotional connections to on-site resources (Larsen, 2003; NAI, 2000). Instead of “meaning takers,” interpretation invokes visitors to be “meaning makers,” actively constructing their own meanings of natural and cultural resources. One of the applications of this idea is relevancy - the more relevant, the more effective. Meanings are contextual in nature. Making interpretation relevant to visitors’ previous knowledge, social contexts, and cultural backgrounds can empower their meaning-making ability on a personal level. Thus, symbols can be powerful for interpreters to increase relevancy and empower visitors to develop big ideas within a program or activity.

However, the fundamental premise of using symbols within interpretive programs and services is to know your audience. Because symbols may not be interpreted the same way in different cultural contexts, interpreters should be careful before using them. In addition, visitors may reach the same conclusion through the use of different symbols. After knowing something about their audiences and what kind of big ideas they hope to produce, interpreters can become more confident in using symbols.

In sum, interpretation aims to reveal meanings and relationships. The use of symbols can be a powerful tool to help visitors reach higher level of meanings in many different ways. However, symbols may convey different meanings and the same meanings may be reached by using different symbols. Understanding something about your audiences, especially those with different cultural backgrounds is a good starting point for interpreters to apply symbols in their programs.

References:

- Larsen, D. L. (Ed.). (2003). *Meaningful interpretation: How to connect hearts and minds to places, objects, and other resources*. Fort Washington, PA: Eastern National.
- Tilden, F. (1957). *Interpreting our heritage*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- National Association for Interpretation (2000). *NAI books of Motions*. Fort Collin, CO: National Association for Interpretation.

ENVIRONMENTAL VOLUNTEERISM IN TAIWAN

-Prof. Mark Morgan (markmorgan@missouri.edu)

Volunteerism is a multi-faceted issue that requires a unique combination of human capital, place settings, resource knowledge, and activity involvement. Interpretive agencies in the U.S. and abroad face similar challenges in managing non-paid staff. The Society of Wilderness (SOW) is a non-governmental organization in Taiwan that relies on volunteers to protect nature through environmental education. Since volunteers play such an important role in natural resource preservation, more information is needed to understand their participation in SOW. The purpose of this study was to develop an interpretation specialization continuum of environmental volunteerism in Taiwan. A mail-back survey was administered to interpreters volunteering at Er-ge Mountain during the winter of 2005. Forty-five of 48 questionnaires were returned, yielding a 93.8% response rate. The resource knowledge and place attachment scores of volunteer interpreters were combined into a 2 x 2 matrix, thus providing one explanation for their level of activity involvement in SOW. Although volunteer interpreters were distributed throughout the continuum, results showed that highly specialized interpreters had greater activity involvement scores than those who were less specialized. Length of membership in SOW had no effect on their activity involvement scores. This specialization continuum addressed key managerial issues, such as recruitment and retention of volunteer interpreters. For more information see:

Morgan, M., Lin, H., Chou, J. & Wu, H. (2006). An interpretation specialization continuum of environmental volunteerism in Taiwan. *Journal of Interpretation Research*, 11(2), 7-20.



A "Buffalo Soldier" Leads the Charge: Advancing Cultural Competence within the National Park Service

- Theresa Coble (tcoble@sfasu.edu)



Four years ago Bill Gwaltney, Assistant Regional Director for Workforce Enhancement for the Intermountain Region of the National Park Service (NPS), presented an online lecture to students in the Master of Science in Resource Interpretation program at Stephen F. Austin State University.



Bill spoke about the challenges and the imperative of interpreting the African American experience at heritage sites in the U.S. Using an oft-repeated admonition he attributed to his grandmother, he entitled his talk: "Tell the Truth and Shame the Devil."

In the 1980s, Bill led Fort Davis National Historic Site in west Texas to prominence as a national center for the promotion of frontier black history. Instrumental in the living history interpretation of the "Buffalo Soldiers," Bill paid tribute to men like Henry O. Flipper, the first African American graduate of West Point and a serving Cavalry Second Lieutenant in the Frontier Army, when he said "These black soldiers, many of them combat veterans, showed time and again, courage, patriotism and sacrifice in the execution of their duties." The administrative history of Fort Davis commends Bill Gwaltney for helping the National Park Service become a full-fledged participant in the national dialogue about race and ethnicity.

At Yellowstone National Park this summer, I noticed that Bill's smiling face was among those featured on the cover of a book entitled "Black and Brown Faces in America's Wild Places." Not surprisingly, when an email from Bill entitled "Draft Cultural Competencies in the IMR" appeared in my inbox, I instantly paid attention...

In his draft dated July 7, 2008, Bill outlines the essential elements of Cultural Competencies for the National Park Service, including a list of standards, definitions, the competencies themselves, and how these competencies might manifest themselves through day-to-day job performance.

Bill's approach is in keeping with federal directives stipulating that all hiring, evaluation and promotion decisions, and all employee training efforts, should be focused on the employee's demonstration of essential knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors associated with core competencies. During the past decade, NPS interpreters have emerged as leaders within the NPS through their identification of ten benchmark competencies and their advancement of the Interpretive Development Program (IDP) to support employee professional development in these competency areas.

In some initial back and forth correspondence, Bill highlighted that his efforts to date represent "a rough draft" and that "working with folks such as your self is how I expect to polish them." In that spirit, and with Bill's blessing, I share a few excerpts from Bill's draft Cultural Competencies for the National Park Service.

In his draft, Bill outlines 12 standards for cultural competence relating to: ethics, values and assumptions, self-awareness, cross-cultural knowledge, cross-cultural skills, connecting with diverse communities, workforce diversity, interpretation, protection, maintenance, training, language, and outreach.

Using pioneering work done by others, Bill also provides three definitions:

Culture

Culture relates to ways in which tradition is passed on from generation to generation. Culture are those socially transmitted behaviors, customs, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought that result in patterns, attitudes, and traits considered as the expression of a particular period, class, community, or population and that characterize the functioning of a group.

Competence

Competence is defined as the "the quality of being competent; adequacy; possession of required skill, knowledge, or qualification."

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is the integration and practical use of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate settings to work effectively in cross-cultural situations, and make services and experiences relevant to all, thereby producing better outcomes.

Bill indicates that cultural competence is comprised of four primary components:

- 1) Awareness of one's own cultural worldview;
- 2) Awareness of one's own attitude toward cultural differences;
- 3) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews; and
- 4) Cross-cultural skills.

He believes that cultural competence is different from cultural knowledge, cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity (though they undoubtedly function as precursors): "Cultural competence emphasizes the idea of effectively operating in different cultural contexts through the development of specific skills."

Finally, and most importantly, Bill outlines seven essential cultural competencies for NPS employees and lists 28 ways that NPS managers could strive to develop their own cultural competency and that of their staff. I'm not going to attempt to summarize the competencies here; in all fairness to Bill, you need to read them in their entirety in his draft document...

Hopefully this discussion has whetted your appetite to review Bill's draft and provide helpful comments related to the key concepts, the specific provisions, and the write-up itself. I can't think of a better way to channel our collective desire to learn and grow personally and professionally than to kick off this discussion within the International Interpretation section of NAI.

The complete text of Bill's draft is available on our section webpage (www.naisections.org/INTL).

**The International Section is having its first section meeting in Portland!
It will be at 3:45 pm on Thursday, Nov. 13th.
Please come and be a part of this exciting new group.**



BONUS SPECIAL INTERNATIONAL EVENT EVERYONE WELCOME

**Hear world renowned interpretive expert Ted Cable speak on
"International Interpretation: How and Why to Get Involved."**

**Missed hearing Aaron Maluwa at the International Conference?
Here's another chance to hear this inspirational speaker from Malawi!**

Get this Africa double-feature along with munchies absolutely FREE!

Thursday Nov. 13th from 5 to 7 pm.