



Heritage Interpretation for Senior Audiences

A Handbook for Heritage Interpreters and Interpretation Managers





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Peter Seccombe and Patrick Lehnés (editors)

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About this handbook

This handbook is for heritage interpreters and interpretation managers at heritage sites to help them improve the experiences and enjoyment of their senior visitors.

Throughout Europe the proportion of people that are over 55 years old is increasing. A great many of them are active citizens with interests in heritage and the environment, and with the time and resources to satisfy these interests and enthusiasms. They are an important market for heritage sites and one that is expected to grow in the coming decades.

The handbook is a toolkit of guidelines and ideas on how sites can be improved for senior visitors. It provides background information about the role of interpretation in explaining natural and cultural heritage, presents a comprehensive list of essential recommendations for the management of sites for senior visitors and offers ideas on how to market sites to them. It is one of the main outputs of a project supported by the European Union Grundtvig Lifelong Learning Programme, Heritage Interpretation for Senior Audiences (HISA), which ran from 2013 to 2015 and involved partners from Germany, Italy, Malta, Poland and the United Kingdom.

Chapter 1 provides an **overview** of the project and the partners involved.

Chapter 2 reviews the **changes in age structure** in Europe and the significance this has for heritage sites.

Chapter 3 has background information on the **role and importance of interpretation** in explaining heritage sites.

Chapter 4 contains our **key recommendations** on managing sites for senior visitors.

Chapter 5 has a review on the **value of volunteering** at heritage sites and how this can enhance the experience of seniors, both as volunteers and as visitors.

Chapter 6 assesses how seniors can be involved in **developing and delivering interpretation** at heritage sites.

An extra appendix includes a summary of the key findings of the research that took place to prepare this handbook.



You never truly know someone until you've walked a mile in his shoes.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction and overview

All over the world, societies are rapidly changing, shaped by declining birth rates and the lengthening of life expectancy, which foster the rise of the “silver economy”. Senior citizens (55 years old and over) represent around 25% of the European population. Predictions are that, by 2060, about 30% of the EU population will be aged 65+.

The European Union designated 2012 as the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, and launched the Senior Tourism Initiative in May 2012 as a pilot initiative to define the framework conditions for encouraging senior citizens to travel in Europe.

In the tourism sector, demographic changes affect the characteristics and relative importance of travel market segments, tourism products, services and activities. Along with challenges, demographic change also brings new opportunities for the tourism sector. Seniors have more spare time and money to spend on tourism and are more flexible in travel patterns. Off-peak seasons offer advantages that appeal to senior travellers, such as less congested facilities and lower prices. Moreover, seniors can be more conscious and demanding of safe, responsible and sustainable services and infrastructures.

However, there are also seniors with less purchasing power and seniors with health problems. The heterogeneity of the senior market, which brings different needs and motivations, requires the design of measures for all segments of senior tourists. Senior visitors want to be entertained and to enjoy themselves, and they also want to have a learning – a broadly educational – experience.

The main objective of this project, Heritage Interpretation for Senior Audiences (HISA), is to enhance the learning experience of seniors visiting heritage sites, museums and protected areas. The project, funded by the EU Grundtvig Lifelong Learning Programme, is to identify the requirements and needs of this audience and design an interpretive framework which could be accessed by heritage interpreters as well as the institutions and organisations which host these audiences. The HISA Project contributes to fostering the appreciation of European cohesion and mutual understanding, encouraging seniors to broaden their horizon of interests and to reflect on European core values.

The other objectives are:

- The production of an overview of physical obstacles that hinder older people's learning from heritage and to share solutions already available within the partners' regional networks
- The development of common guidelines for tailoring heritage interpretation to the needs of senior visitors, domestic and international, and to identify special skills and competences needed by adult education / interpretation staff dealing with seniors.
- The preparation of a manual – this document – for developers, educators and curators who create guided tours, interpretive programs, exhibitions and self-guided trails for senior audiences.
- The dissemination of new findings and the manual in the partner organizations, their regional networks and Europe wide
- The identification of next steps, e.g. possible follow-up projects for further non-formal education addressing seniors visiting heritage sites.

In order to achieve these objectives, the organisations forming the HISA partnership from Germany, Italy, Malta, Poland and United Kingdom brought their expertise and knowledge in the fields of interpretation, learning and heritage site management related to senior audiences. This kind of partnership, based on transnational knowledge, skills and experience, can facilitate the analysis of the situation in many European countries. This will then trigger a synergetic exercise which, through best practice, a pooling of initiatives and a coordinated exercise, may result in a stronger, Europe-wide movement towards the development of common strategies to satisfy the needs of the senior audience.

The Project advocates the importance of addressing interpretation for older people at a professional level.

CHAPTER 2

The increasing significance of senior audiences

The HISA project focuses on the interpretation needs of the over 55s. This section examines the changing nature of Europe's population age structure and assesses the impact this has on heritage sites.

2.1 A changing age structure

Statistics from the European Union¹ show that the share of the population aged 65 years and over is increasing in every member state, candidate state and EFTA Member state. The increase over the last decade ranges from less than 0.5% in Luxembourg, Spain and Belgium to 3.6% in Lithuania and Germany and 3.8% in Malta. The overall increase in the last decade has been 1.9%. During the same period the share of the population aged less than 15 years has decreased by 1.2%.

There are two main reasons for growth in the older population – people are living longer and the birth rate is going down. Life expectancy has been increasing for several decades. A hundred years ago people could expect to live for a year after retirement. Now they can expect to live for 25 years. This is 'ageing at the top' of the population pyramid. Meanwhile, low levels of child-bearing throughout the EU in recent years is decreasing the number of younger people. This is 'ageing at the bottom' of the pyramid.

The projections for Europe's population for the period 2013 to 2080 show that the total population of the EU (EU-28) will peak at 525.5 million around 2050 and thereafter decline to 520 million by 2080. The comparison of age pyramids shows that the population will continue to age. By 2080 the pyramid will be more like a rectangle, narrowing slightly in the middle and considerably at the base. The proportion of those aged over 65 will be 28.7% compared with 18.3% in 2013.

Another aspect of population ageing is the ageing of the older population itself. The relative importance of the very old is growing at a faster rate than any other age group. The share of the over-80s is projected to more than double between 2013 and 2080, while the share of working age people is expected to decline steadily. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimates that only 39% of Europeans between the ages of 55 and 65 work. The result is that Europe's economic output could radically decrease over the next four decades.

Alongside the increase in the proportion of older people in the population there has been an increase in the number of older people enjoying arts and culture. Figures from the UK² show that adults aged 65-74 have demonstrated a significant increase in engagement in arts and culture activities since 2005/6 from 71% to 77%. In the year to 2014:

- 55.2% of people aged 65 to 74 years had visited a museum or gallery during the previous year;
- 77% of 65-74 year olds and 60.6% of over 75 year olds had engaged in an arts activity;
- 79.9% of 65-74 year olds and 57.8% of over 75 year olds had visited a heritage site.

1 Eurostat figures http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Population_structure_and_ageing

2 *Taking Part 2014/15 Quarter 2 Statistical Release, December 2014, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, UK*

2.2 The significance of a changing age structure

The figures show very clearly that people are living longer and that older people are an increasing proportion of the population. A larger proportion of the population, therefore, has more time available for activities outside work. Evidence from the UK also shows that a larger number of older people are involved in arts and cultural activities.

With more people living longer in retirement, there is an increasing need for them to adjust more to a 'career of leisure', asserting their status and purpose outside the jobs market. Activities pursued during leisure time can provide people with a sense of usefulness and self-definition.

As the numbers of older people engaged in arts and cultural activities increases, the older demographic sector is becoming, and will increasingly become, an important market for heritage sites and therefore for heritage interpretation. This trend is expected to continue in the foreseeable future.

2.3 Characteristics of senior visitors

In discussing provision, in terms of interpretation and support services, for older visitors, it is important to identify those characteristics that distinguish them from younger visitors and that need special consideration. The characteristics are not uniform and, apart from age itself, they may not manifest themselves. Some of the key factors – several of which are contradictory – that arose from the research carried out for this project and need to be considered are:

Physical

- decreasing mobility and energy
- increasing aural and visual impairment
- greater requirement for rest, sustenance and toilet facilities

Intellectual

- greater knowledge and experience, therefore, increased ability to 'make connections'
- greater capacity for detailed information
- increased interest in researching information
- decreasing short-term memory and increasing senility
- less open-mindedness and even prejudice about some topics

Emotional

- strong personal ties to places
- pride in their own heritage
- increasing reflection on personal experiences

Social

- increased desire for congenial places to be with friends and family, particularly grandchildren
- desire for personal engagement with staff / volunteers at heritage sites

Cultural

- increased desire for interpretation at sites to be placed in context, in geographical terms and in world events
- enhanced sense of nostalgia while visiting heritage sites

These topics are addressed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

Heritage interpretation

The HISA project explores the needs of senior audiences for heritage interpretation. It also looks at other needs that contribute to a satisfying and rewarding experience at a heritage site. This section provides background information on the meaning of heritage interpretation and the significance of these other factors that help to make a visit to a heritage site a 'good day out'.

3.1 What is heritage interpretation?

Heritage interpretation is about explaining the characteristics and significance of a place, its features and its history. This explanation is for local residents and visitors – anyone who has an interest in the natural and cultural heritage, the people and the visual and emotional experiences of a heritage site. The explanation should inform, inspire and fascinate and it should also celebrate the place and its people.

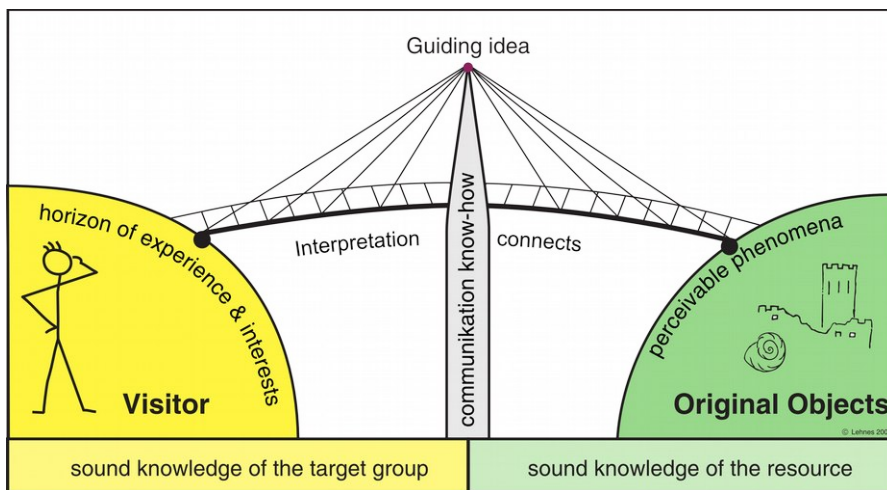
The first definition of interpretation was published in the USA in 1957 when Freeman Tilden³, produced a book, *Interpreting our Heritage*, to guide the United States National Park Service. He then defined heritage interpretation as

an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.

Tilden's work established interpretation as an important part of heritage and visitor management. His approach has guided the way heritage and conservation organisations have worked ever since.

Tilden said that interpretation should provoke, relate and reveal. It should provoke thought, interest, curiosity and even discussion. It should relate to people's everyday lives and to their experience, and it should reveal new insights.

Interpretation is an important part of visitors' experience of a place. A purely aesthetic experience is not enough. For a full experience visitors need to gain an understanding of the special features of a site or object and why it is significant.



Interpretation facilitates such connections between what visitors can perceive with their senses and the contemporary visitors' horizon of experience and interest. It carefully selects objects and features that are presented as well as background information and contexts. It composes such story elements to narrations which reveal new insights and bigger ideas.⁴

3 'He wasn't a scientist, a naturalist, a historian, nor a technician of any kind. Rather he was a playwright and philosopher. He was not well grounded in the biological or physical sciences – frequent subjects of interpretive programmes – but he was an unusually sensitive person with a profound intuitive understanding of how humans communicate.' In *Environmental Interpretation* by Sam Ham, Fulcrum Publishing 1992.

4 c.f. Lehnes 2008, 125ff

Heritage interpretation is a non-formal educational approach at heritage sites and museums which is used for many age groups. It can also be part of a conservation strategy, informing and inspiring visitors about caring for our heritage. Interpretation also supports economic development by helping to create a powerful, meaningful and appealing impression of a place and its features.

Last but not least, Heritage interpretation is a key part of sustainable tourism. Providing learning experiences at natural and cultural heritage sites can lead to more satisfying leisure time or holidays and can help to reduce the impact— through more responsible visits – on a site's principal features. Through greater knowledge and understanding, visitors can become more respectful of the site, can stay longer and contribute more to the local economy, and can interact better with host communities.

3.2 Delivering interpretation

Heritage interpretation can be delivered in many ways. Personal interpretation involves people such as tour guides, rangers and museum guides explaining to individuals or groups the significance of their site. Tilden felt that personal interpretation was the most valuable for understanding a place, object or event.

“There will never be a device of telecommunication as satisfactory as the direct contact not merely with the voice, but also with the hand, the eye, the casual and meaningful ad lib, and with that something that flows out of the very constitution of the individual in his or her physical self.”⁵

The essential element of this type of interpretation is the opportunity for it to be ‘two-way’. It allows the interpreter and the audience to ask questions of each other and to engage in **conversations** about the site, to share knowledge and experiences and to be fully immersed in its features. Personal interpretation, though, always involves staff or volunteers and is therefore ‘resource intensive’ in revenue budgets. Most guided activities need the visitors to join a visitor group and often they need to plan their visit in advance in order to arrive at a certain meeting point on time.

Non-personal interpretation includes leaflets, guidebooks, exhibitions, interpretation panels, digital presentations, websites, recorded audio guides, models and other types of media with text and / or images. This type of interpretation tends to be ‘one-way’ with explanations about the site delivered to the visitor. Non-personal interpretation can be delivered more widely without staff or volunteers being involved in the delivery process. It is usually capital intensive with limited revenue costs. Media-based interpretation is often preferred by visitors who want to experience a place individually without being part of a group at their own pace.

3.3 Understanding audiences

A crucial part of designing and developing interpretation is to understand its audiences. The type of interpretation, and the level at which it is pitched, will vary according to the type and age of the audience. Some target groups may welcome more detailed explanations, while for diverse audiences, with different ages and cultural backgrounds, the interpretation generally needs to be much simpler.

Whatever the audience, the stories need to be accessible. People on leisure visits are ‘pleasure seekers’ and many will not want educational experiences. This will usually mean highlighting a few themes and storylines and providing a simple narrative. The challenge is to reveal the spirit of a place to identified audiences, including the responsive visitor and the casual passer-by, in ways that engage them and make them want to find out more.

The HISA project, and this handbook, is concerned with senior audiences. The findings of the research on the needs of senior audiences are summarised in Chapter 4, while the recommendations for delivery of interpretation are presented in Chapter 5.

5 Freeman Tilden 1957

3.4 Other important factors for senior audiences visiting heritage sites

Enjoying a heritage site, whether it is the natural or the cultural environment, a historic site, a heritage building or a museum, involves many stages from arriving, through visiting, to departing. Making sites accessible to the whole community – of local people and tourists – should be a priority for site managers. They should wish to include everyone as visitors to the site. An inclusive site, or environment, is one that can be visited by everyone, regardless of age, gender, ability, gender or background.

This handbook focuses on good practice for **heritage interpretation** but it also considers some of the physical requirements for sites that can make them accessible for everyone and provide for an enjoyable visitor experience. It considers physical accessibility to, and around, the site, providing safe and easily-used facilities and services, providing clear signage and orientation and providing interpretation in forms that are usable by people with aural, visual and intellectual impairments.

CHAPTER 4

Guidelines

This section contains the guidance that can help heritage site managers enhance the experience of senior visitors. It includes key recommendations for interpretation for senior audiences, overall guidance on good practice, and advice for involving volunteers at heritage sites.

Please see Appendix 1 for a summary of the research findings that helped in the preparation of these guidelines.

4.1 Key recommendations for heritage interpretation for senior audiences

This study has identified many points of good practice that can help to provide a satisfying interpretive experience for senior visitors at heritage sites. The recommendations are grouped under five headings:

Physical requirements for effective interpretation

Intellectual access to interpretation

Emotional engagement in interpretation

Social factors influencing the success of interpretation

Cultural factors influencing the success of interpretation

These recommendations will not necessarily apply to every site and every organisation or to every senior visitor. They should be used where they are **appropriate** to the site or the organisation.

4.2 Physical requirements for effective interpretation

Staff, volunteers and partners

- Appoint or designate a dedicated Access Officer with responsibility for maintaining and improving physical and intellectual access for senior and disabled visitors. This could be a member of staff or a volunteer.
- Work with organisations that support people with disabilities to ensure that disabled visitors can enjoy your site with dignity. In particular, toilets should be clearly signposted and easy to reach and use. See the text box below.
- A helpful personal approach is really appreciated. Disability confidence training can aid staff and volunteers, making them aware of the best ways to help people.

Online

- Provide clear and accurate information on your website, and in written material such as leaflets, about the accessibility of the site. This should include information about the accessibility of the interpretation as well

as the site itself and its facilities. A contact telephone number or email address is helpful for people with additional access questions.

- Provide information on your website about the availability of wheelchairs and any booking requirements, to avoid people arriving and finding that all wheelchairs are already being used.
- Be aware of psychological barriers such as fear of heights, claustrophobia and dislike of crowds. Encourage planning visits by group leaders to ensure their group gets the maximum benefit from their visit.

Arrival

- Provide accessible car parking close to the main visitor areas for people with limited physical mobility.
- Ensure there is easy and well-signed access to the site from public transport stations and stops.

Orientation

- Provide good, clear signage to and around the site. Make sure that this signage is designed with good colour contrast, commonly recognised symbols, and clear fonts so that it is easily visible for people with visual impairments. Avoid the use of upper case letters other than for initial capitals. Give an indication of average walking times / distances at larger sizes and types of terrain.
- Provide short and clear audio announcements about closing times, special tours and other activities at the site, but keep their use to a minimum so that they are not intrusive. Clear and large print information about opening and closing times for site, café and shop, as well as tours, should be available at the reception area. Staff can give this information orally and individually if they see it may be required. A print-out is useful for people with short-term memory problems.
- The location of any lift should be made obvious by clear signage. Floor numbers should be indicated on each floor beside lifts and on staircases. Lifts should have clear internal signage and easily-accessible controls as well as audible announcements.

Mobility

- Ensure your site is suitable for use by senior people. Provide level access where possible, handrails by steps, ramps and changes in level, easily operated doors, textured surfaces, and easy to use taps and toilets⁶.
- Ensure there is plenty of opportunity to sit down with a companion and that the location and availability of visitor seating is made clear to visitors. Provide some easily accessible seating with armrests and with the seat at dining chair height.
- Provide wheelchairs for visitors with mobility impairments and ensure these are regularly maintained. Consider the provision of motorised scooters for larger sites.
- Provide walking aids that also function as temporary seating. Ensure that visitors are given clear instructions on how to use them and the opportunity to try them first.

⁶ Visit England has a free toolkit to help you create an Access Statement for your site.
<http://www.access.tourismtools.co.uk>

Renovation and modernization of the Gallery of 19th Century

Polish Art in the Sukiennice, Krakow – Project of the National Museum in Krakow



The Cloth Hall (or Sukiennice in Polish) is located in the Main Square, the historical centre of Krakow and the largest market place of Medieval Europe. Historically, the Cloth Hall was also the first seat of the National Museum in Krakow, which was founded in 1879 as the first Polish national collection.

One of Krakow's landmarks today, the Cloth Hall houses the Gallery of 19th Century Polish Art, a branch of the National Museum in Krakow. It is Poland's largest and most valuable permanent exhibition of 19th century painting and

sculpture. The collections form part of the Polish national treasure and are a major artistic attraction of the city and the region, visited by more than 50,000 viewers every year. The Gallery at the Cloth Hall also has the function of a city salon, where concerts, celebrations and promotional events are held.



The history and beauty of the Cloth Hall were not matched, however, by the quality of the building's services. Recent renovations have included extensive conservation of the architectural decor and the installation of a lift in the historic staircase providing a better access both to the people with disabilities and to senior visitors. The renovation also provided:

- *New exhibition and storage space*
- *A new reception hall, cafe and a relaxation room combined with a museum shop*
- *Rooms for lecture and multimedia presentation needs*
- *Renovated terraces (never open before) for access by visitors*
- *A new exhibition scenario along with an educational program.*

Ta' Bistra catacombs: an experience for the less mobile

On the outskirts of Mosta, a town in the north of Malta, there is an extensive IVth century AD catacomb complex, a section of which has just been restored. As part of the upgrading in the visitors' centre, improvements were made to allow better access for people with mobility issues, such as senior citizens, who are not normally able to enjoy this cultural heritage experience.



Through the installation of a lift, which connects the parking area to the lower floor, visitors with mobility impairments can descend to the level where the catacombs are situated and thus come as close as possible to the underground site. In this way Ta' Bistra catacombs are the first such type of heritage site in Malta that can be enjoyed by seniors with mobility issues. They are now able to touch the site, get to within centimetres of the tombs, smell the environment and look inside the ancient graves.



4.3 Aural and visual access

- Good and even levels of lighting are particularly important on steps or stairs, in toilets and illuminating signs and written information.
- If you provide aural and visual material for people with sight and hearing impairments make sure it is properly trialled and tested by people with visual and hearing impairments. Ask their advice on the most effective ways to promote these materials to visitors.

Important features for toilets:

- Clear signs with symbols
- Good tonal contrast between key surfaces and between the fittings and the walls
- Locks that are substantial and easy to use
- Grab rails beside the toilet
- Toilet pans that aren't too low
- Flush levers that are easy to use
- Good lighting
- Coat hooks
- Pictograms for instructions / names of anything that is not obvious. For example, if the taps are of contemporary design, people might not recognise them or know how to use them. An explanation of the waste disposal systems used may be needed for people visiting from abroad.

4.4 Intellectual access to interpretation

Knowledge

- Interpretation should be planned and delivered as a comprehensive programme to explain the site and its heritage to visitors with a range of interests, experiences and educational levels.
- Treat people of all ages as equals – don't assume lack of knowledge, but also don't assume a high level of knowledge.
- Provide layered interpretation, at a variety of levels, from a simple overview to a more 'in-depth' presentation. Give people an option to find out more detail, both on-site and through publications and websites. Many senior visitors like to explore topics in detail and appreciate being provided with appropriate information.
- Be aware of multiple interests among visitors, and their varied experiences and educational levels.

Media

- Provide a range of interpretive media, such as personal interpretation, printed materials, animation, film, music and easily-used digital facilities. Consider providing reading lists for more in-depth study, to cater for different learning styles and to appeal to a wide audience.
- Use as many different senses as possible in your interpretation, appropriate to the meaning in the interpretation. Include smells, sounds, fun activities and imaginative devices, but be aware that people can be startled or repulsed by some smells.
- Provide good quality printed interpretation that people can read at the site and take away for further reading.

Developing Intellectual access in a new display

Clifton Suspension Bridge

In December 2012, The Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust began to create a new display about the history of the bridge.



Research

We began by asking our visitors what they wanted and found out that they preferred short paragraphs of text, 'behind the scenes' photographs and historical images. Overseas visitors told us that it was vital to contextualise our history, providing background information on people involved and relating events taking place in England to events in other parts of the world.

Visitors wanted to leave feeling informed, and valued the opportunity to speak to someone knowledgeable.

Development

We began by identifying key themes and made a list of the most popular questions asked by visitors. We decided to layer the information we provided, starting with panels of 100 words each which could be read individually or in sequence. We also designed interactives which could help explain complicated engineering concepts.

Road Testing

Throughout 2014 we asked visitors to comment on the new text and interactives. This helped us to identify unclear text, areas where we needed to provide more information and where additional images were needed.

Publication

A company specialising in exhibition design brought our text and interactives to life. The style chosen was visual, with lots of large images supported by technical drawings and three dimensional models. In-depth information was housed on pull-out boards on which just the title was visible when slotted into place.

4.5 Emotional engagement in interpretation

Participation

- Offer opportunities for senior visitors to record their reminiscences and memories about the site – or aspects related to it. Provide visitor books, feedback forms or a chalkboard / flipchart for written comments. Make Post-it note pads available for recording spontaneous thoughts.

- Ask staff and volunteers, whenever possible, to mix with visitors and invite discussion about the site. Encourage staff and volunteers to record comments and reminiscences from visitors. Use these comments to develop your interpretation and to demonstrate visitor engagement.
- Offer opportunities for intergenerational activities, for grandparents and grandchildren to do things together, sharing their knowledge and skills.
- Spark memories and imagination in your visitors by including historical images, text and other items in interpretation where appropriate.

Age awareness

- Provide interesting – and easily-used – interactive models and activities suitable for adult use, such as models and touchscreens.
- Provide space for rest and contemplation. This could be a quiet room or space, or a quiet area of a café. Opportunities for contemplation are rare at heritage sites but are valuable places for visitors to reflect upon, and discuss, their experiences.

Back to childhood



Entering the “attic of childhood” in the Vogtsbauernhof open air museum in the Black Forest you are welcomed by a real attic atmosphere: little light and a lot of old stuff that has seen much better times.

Just sit on one of the old school desks and listen... “oh, this looks exactly like my doll Paula...”, “when I was a child I played with a train just like this...”, “We had the same book at home and I enjoyed listening to my father’s good night stories...”. “Did you play the same games too?”, “Do you know what happened when we were naughty at school?”

Hundreds of questions and conversations come up when visiting this thoroughly prepared room with corners, cupboards and boxes full of past life. Seniors enjoy the unexpected meeting with their childhood. And for their children and grandchildren this is a place where a window can be opened into their family’s history.



It doesn’t need much to provoke people’s memory but the objects need to be chosen very carefully and brought into to the right context. I wish everybody would have the chance to visit such a place where memory and feelings wake up again and the past is as present as possible. It’s not just fun for seniors but for all the family.

4.6 Social factors influencing the success of interpretive media

Additional facilities

- Provide refreshments, ideally a café, or at least a vending machine. Visiting a café is an important part of a trip to a heritage site and is greatly appreciated as an opportunity for social activity and contemplation as well as rest.

Volunteering

- Provide opportunities for people to volunteer at the site. Volunteering is a valuable activity for seniors and helps with the management of the site. See Chapter 5 Volunteering at Heritage Sites.

Planning ahead

- Indicate the average time it takes to visit the site, take a walk or visit an exhibition. (For example, the ss Great Britain guidebook has suggestions for what to see and do in 30 minutes, 1, 2 and 3 hours.)

Partnership and loyalty schemes

- Consider discounts and events for seniors, carers, grandparents with grandchildren and extended family.
- Consider providing tickets that are valid for a year to allow for repeat visits. This would be a special bonus for senior visitors, especially those bringing grandchildren. You could also provide a loyalty card for free sites that offer a bonus after a number of visits.
- Consider offering joint price tickets that link to other sites to allow reciprocal visits, or offer a reduced entry fee at other linked sites.
- Provide information on discounted tickets for public transport to the venue.

Age awareness

- Offer child-free time slots for senior visitors. Some senior visitors do not enjoy being with groups of children. Many senior visitors appreciate some quiet times to enjoy and understand a site.
- Arrange themed events to attract seniors such as coffee mornings, musical activities, reminiscence events, tea dances or other activities.
- Offer events and activities for adults only, including activities in evenings. Offer activities specifically for people with dementia and other disabilities and offer joint tickets for carers and family members.

It's all about music

200 years of building organs – that's the main focus of the permanent exhibition of the Elztalmuseum in Waldkirch, a small town in the Black Forest. From hurdy-gurdies and fairground organs to orchestrions many different types of organs are brought to life. In our guided tours we talk about the history and techniques that drive these instruments but more important for many visitors is the opportunity to listen and enjoy the melodies.

Finding the right tune

Seniors enjoy the memory of their youth and more active times. And music has the power to revive past times and feelings. That's why I always choose very carefully tunes related to the the age of the visitor.

How wonderful to see your audience starting to move and sing! And what can be more rewarding than observing people suffering from dementia or who arrive tired or apathetic are “waking up” by the music?

We were also told by carers that people who didn't communicate for days or weeks suddenly start to sing or talk.

These are really great moments for me.



Brigitte Schäfer, Elztalmuseum Waldkirch

4.7 Cultural factors influencing the success of interpretation

Language

- Multi-lingual interpretation will attract a wider range of visitors. Research the key languages used in your area and provide some translated material. Even a simple A4 summary sheet can help visitors to understand your site.
- Guides, whether staff or volunteers, should have language flags or badges to show their competence in other languages.

Orientation

- Provide information on nearby heritage and tourist attraction sites. Provide information on places for refreshments if these are not available at your site.

Cultural awareness

- Offer food in cafés that all cultures, and those with special dietary needs, can eat, including vegetarian food.
- Be aware of inter-cultural differences and provide training in politeness for different cultures and in cross-cultural and cross-needs communication.
- Be sensitive about culture, and about multiple perspectives on history and politics.

“Ottomania. The Ottoman Orient in the Art of Renaissance”

Dürer, Memling, Bellini, Tintoretto, Veronese. Works of these great artists, who enjoyed great popularity with the audience, were on display in Brussels (from 27 February to 31 May 2015) and in Krakow (from 26 June to 27 September 2015) thanks to a unique exhibition prepared by the National Museum in Krakow in collaboration with Palais des Beaux-Arts (BOZAR) in Brussels. The exhibition was a part of a large international project titled “Ottomans & Europeans: Reflecting on five centuries of cultural relations”.

The exhibition focused on the power of attraction which the Ottoman Empire exercises on Western artists who were inspired by the Ottoman culture and the pomp and circumstance of the courtly life of the sultans. The mutual fascination brought about a never before seen cultural exchange between East and West.

The exhibition shows ambivalent image that the Ottoman Empire left in Renaissance art. The exhibition has seven sections that enable the viewer to recognise both the exotic and the combative culture of the Ottomans. Starting with images that show the Ottomans as the enemies of Christianity and European civilization it develops into a story of travellers, artists and diplomats who brought a different perspective that soon turned into a fascination of foreign culture, leaving an indelible mark in the art of the Renaissance masters.

This exhibition is a good example of how museums can contribute to raising awareness of stereotypes and an advocacy for a differentiated inter-cultural understanding.



4.8 Overall guidance on interpretation

Interpretation at heritage sites can be provided in many forms: personal interpretation at the site by a guide, static and graphic media or interactive models and projections on site, site descriptions or explanations provided off-site in websites or brochures. This section provides guidelines for personal interpretation, guided tours and non-personal interpretation.

The research undertaken for this project revealed differences in levels of appreciation for personal interpretation. Senior visitors in some countries, such as the UK, appreciate and enjoy personal interpretation for the opportunities to discuss site features and to learn about and enjoy the site at first hand. In other countries, for example Germany, senior visitors enjoy more the opportunities to read interpretation in exhibitions, leaflets or websites.

Personal interpretation

Personal interpretation from a tour guide or interpreter can provide some of the best interpretation experiences for visitors. The following guidelines for personal interpretation can help to provide a good experience for senior visitors.

- Communicate as if you are having a two-way '**conversation**', not just explaining the site in a one-way monologue.
- Most people like to be communicated with, rather than talked at. Senior visitors seem to be especially keen on, and appreciate, good communication and a chance for a conversation.
- Take time to talk with people, but be aware of when to stop speaking and avoid visitors feeling 'captured' by the guide.
- Treat everyone equally and don't be patronising. Everyone likes **personal attention** and to be regarded as equals.
- Be patient and give people time to understand. Let them tell their own stories so their experience is personalised, and use those stories where relevant as part of your interpretation of the site.

Good practice for guided tours

A guided tour, led by a staff member or a volunteer, involves many stages including meeting and greeting a group, establishing a relationship with them, explaining the features of a site and listening to their feedback. Here are some guidelines for leading a guided tour for seniors.

Meeting and greeting

- Introduce yourself and put people at their ease by being friendly and communicative.
- Give a clear indication at the beginning of what the tour will comprise, how long it will take, whether it involves steps or steep terrain, and what opportunities there are for taking a rest or for going to the toilet.
- Make the group feel welcome, invite questions and interact with them in a friendly way.
- Ask them what they want from the visit, find out their interests and experiences, and adapt the way you give information.
- Ask if they have any personal memories of the site, or stories to tell about people associated with the site.

Presentation

- Avoid standing with your back to a window or lights as this may make it difficult for the group to see you clearly.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Ensure that you are looking at the group when speaking to them and that you can easily be seen by all members of the group. Avoid rushing and speak audibly. Provide suitable and effective assistive hearing equipment and ensure all staff are trained in its use.
- At busy sites with frequent tours, make sure that tours are not within hearing distance of each other.
- Avoid using technical language. If you have to, make sure you explain it.
- Be positive and polite. Say 'do' rather than 'do not', and 'take care' rather than warning about 'extreme danger'.
- Give people time and space, and be welcoming with a smile.
- Ask questions, such as 'Are you enjoying the visit?', 'Would you like some information about...?'
- Make conversation if visitors want to talk but try to avoid being drawn into long conversations.

- Be aware of visitors' body language.
- Learn from what older people tell you about their experiences and use this in your tours.

Michael Karris – or the power of contagious enthusiasm in heritage and people



Michael Karris grew up in the United States (a Chicagoan by birth), where his decision to take the “useless” subject of Latin in high school led him to a life-long interest in all things Italian. He has been residing in Italy for over 35 years now—in Bologna, Sardinia, Perugia, Naples and Rome. He is currently teaching English for Artistic Communication at the Rome University of Fine Arts and also conducts courses on Art and Monuments of Rome for Tour Guides at the Università Popolare di Roma.

Among his current academic interests are values, ethics and innovation in intercultural interpretation and

educational tourism. As an official tour guide of Rome and its province, he has founded a cultural association Rome 101, for which he organizes a series of cultural and thematic tours.

Michael loves accompanying tourists who crave to learn more about the history and heritage of Rome through the ages. Michael particularly enjoys working with senior citizens from all over the world, seeking to stimulate their curiosity and involving them actively in life-long intercultural learning by drawing upon their widespread geographical origins, their varied professional and educational backgrounds and their rich life experience.

Accessibility

- When speaking to wheelchair users, position yourself in a way that the person and you are at a similar head level to avoid talking down to them. This may involve simply standing back while talking to them to maintain good eye contact.
- Do not assume senior visitors need help but be aware if help may be needed.
- Make sure that there are helpful people around the site that visitors can turn to if necessary.
- Be aware of setting an appropriate pace for the group – not too slow or too fast.

Saying ‘thank you’

- At the end of a tour, invite feedback about the tour, thank guests for participating and for their input into conversations, and wish them well and ask them to return.

Extending the Interpretation Experience – Robert and Marie Avellino, Experience Malta

One of the major problems for on-site guides is the time restriction at sites due to a tight tour programme. Guides are expected to deliver a professional presentation in a specific time slot, whilst visitors are 'allowed' only a short period to 'discover' a site on their own. To address this problem, Robert and Marie Avellino from Malta offer off-site interpretation programmes for tour operators.

The main programme comprises a series of talks, such as the 'Maltese during the war years', the Maltese Festa and 'Treasure Island'. They then give animated presentations, before or after the site visit to enhance the visitors' experience at the site. They are told stories about the places they will visit, and have the time to ask questions or have a vibrant discussion supported by the facilitators.



Special themed programmes which are not linked to specific heritage sites are also provided and these include listening to excerpts from diaries, presentations of vegetables, fruit or flowers that are endemic to the Maltese Islands, and hands-on activities such as preparing food. These allow visitors who have accessibility issues to enjoy their holiday experience, allowing them to interact with locals and with local products and artefacts.

If the programme takes place before a visit it enables them to

have a more fulfilling and enriching experience at the site, and after a visit it allows them to extend their memory and learning experience. In all cases, the programme takes place at the hotel where the visitors are staying and forms part of their evening entertainment.

This relaxed and informal environment is very popular with older adults who may find that evenings spent at a noisy bar or 'karaokeing' is not their ideal way of spending an evening in the Mediterranean.

4.9 Non-personal interpretation

This interpretation includes printed materials, such as leaflets and panels, guidebooks and downloadable materials, and digital media such as film, animation, audio-visual presentations, touchscreens and websites. General points of good practice include:

Presentation

- Use sans-serif and non-italic fonts that are clear and easy to read.
- Avoid the use of italic fonts, words all in upper-case letters or underlining.
- Choose colours that provide a good contrast for text; do not print text over photographs.

- Provide text in short paragraphs with adequate white space around.
- Write clear and uncomplicated text aimed at an intelligent 12 year-old.
- Avoid using jargon. If you have to, make sure you explain it.
- Consider provision of clear and simple maps for complex sites and diagrams for complex processes.
- Choose clear and eye-catching images.
- Use a similar design style for interpretation throughout the site.
- Maintain and update interpretation and make sure it is coherent throughout the site.

Depth of Information

- Layer the interpretation so people can get the main points from the headlines.
- Provided more detailed interpretation for those who want to find out more. Make it easy for people to find more information, such as hyperlinks in websites.

Considerations

- Present political, cultural and historical issues in a way that shows sensitivity to different cultures, nationalities and beliefs.

Accessibility

- Provide large print versions of leaflets as text-only documents with very simple layout.
- Provide printed versions of audio tours that can be downloaded from your website.
- Provide specialist audio description for people who are blind or partially sighted and use tactile exhibits where possible.
- Films should have subtitles and audio description.



Seniors enjoying a well structured and easy to interpretation display at a nature trail on the Belchen summit (Black Forest). Note that there is also a bench allowing to rest.

This trail is only one km long, accessible by cableway and easy to walk.

CHAPTER 5

Volunteering at heritage sites

Volunteering at heritage sites is well developed in some countries, but less so in others. Some heritage sites rely on volunteers to manage the site and to interact with visitors, while at others they are valuable as ‘friends groups’ to raise funds for the site or to engage in educational activities.

A large proportion of volunteers are seniors and play a very important role in heritage interpretation, either as ‘deliverers’ of interpretation or as ‘learners’. This section summarises research in the UK on the experiences and roles of volunteers, and provides guidelines for their participation at heritage sites.

5.1 The nature of volunteering

Many heritage sites in the United Kingdom rely on volunteers to help with visitors and with the management of the site. In other countries volunteering is not as integral, with volunteers tending to be involved in ‘friends’ associations as social clubs and fund-raising organisations, rather than as part of the management of a site or a museum.

At some heritage sites the ‘staff’ are entirely volunteers, giving their time freely to pursue their own enthusiasm, in managing, promoting and interpreting the site. At other sites, volunteers participate in certain activities, supplementing paid staff and helping to keep the site open for visitors and to manage its features.

In the UK many volunteers are retired and are therefore within the demographic of this study. They participate in volunteering as a social activity, and as an active and meaningful use of their retirement time.

5.2 The value of volunteering

Volunteering has many benefits, both to the heritage site manager and to the individual. Site managers receive willing and enthusiastic assistance in many aspects of site management, while volunteers can pursue their interests in working with people, or helping to care for a site.

Volunteers are generally enthusiastic about their site, have great knowledge about its features and can therefore be its most valuable ambassadors. They can be exceptional tour guides and personal interpreters, and can contribute their own knowledge and experience to interpreting its features. For the individual, volunteering can provide a high level of personal satisfaction and a strong sense of purpose, particularly in retirement.

Volunteers are often from the local community and can relate well with visitors from those communities. Senior volunteers can also relate very well with senior visitors. They can spare time to talk with visitors and can share common experiences and reminiscences. Encouraging volunteers at heritage sites can therefore greatly enhance the senior visitor experience.

Volunteers and over 55s as assets at Clifton Suspension Bridge

The Clifton Suspension Bridge Visitor Centre depends on volunteers to keep open. A team of thirty cover two shifts a day 362 days a year, supported during the week by the Visitor Services Manager and at the weekends by a part time worker. Some have been volunteering for almost twenty years.



Volunteers provide information to the public, record visitor numbers, collect donations, sell souvenirs and keep the centre clean. They engage in a variety of ways, some enjoy helping young children with activities; others are comfortable discussing engineering details with civil engineers. Volunteers have created new resources, have been trained to give bridge tours, assist with the annual stocktake and contribute suggestions for new shop products.

In November 2013, 25 volunteers at Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust were asked to complete an anonymous survey about their experiences. Volunteers were asked “what is the best thing about volunteering?”

48% agreed that meeting and talking to visitors was the most enjoyable part of their role, 16% enjoyed sharing information about the attraction and 12% said that they enjoyed feeling part of a team.

5.3 The experience of volunteers

As part of the research for this project a workshop was held for volunteers from the ss Great Britain and the Clifton Suspension Bridge in the UK, to find out more about the motivations and experiences of heritage site volunteers. These are the key points arising from that workshop.

Why volunteer?

- Volunteering helps to start a new chapter in one’s life.
- Volunteers like meeting and talking to members of the public.
- They like to tell people about the museum and the subject.
- Volunteering provides opportunities to meet people, learn new things and keep learning.
- Volunteering can provide physical exercise and intellectual stimulation.
- Volunteering can help those who are less fortunate than ourselves.
- Volunteering provides friendship and camaraderie.
- It is good to feel valued and part of the staff.

- Volunteering makes a meaningful contribution to the organisation.

How does the organisation benefit?

- Volunteers provide a high level of physical presence and customer service at the site.
- Volunteer-led talks add value to a visit to the museum.
- As volunteers come from the community there is a closer relationship between the museum and the community.
- Volunteers bring expertise, including research, life experiences, subject specialism, customer service and practical skills.
- Volunteers can promote the organisation to friends and relatives.
- Volunteers can be closer to visitors, especially for visitor research.
- Volunteers can bring new ideas.

How should volunteers work with senior visitors?

- Find out visitors' interests and adapt the way you give information.
- Give information about rest stops, toilets and safety / access.
- Reassure and welcome them.
- Tailor your interpretation to individual needs and experiences.
- Take time to find out different motivations.
- Give visitors a chance to tell their stories – it is an opportunity to collect memories and objects.
- Senior visitors often take more time with their visit – take time to chat with them.
- Older visitors are more interested in history – particularly in their lifetimes. Explore their memories.
- Senior visitors may also have more specialist interests.
- Seniors are more likely to know what they want from their visit and want more in-depth interpretation.
- Seniors will have many different motivations – older couples may be different from grandparents with grandchildren.
- Don't assume that senior visitors need help, but be there if they need it.

What media and activities work well for senior visitors?

- Use different media – for example, piano playing and making music and song can get people really interested. It's an opportunity to sit down if nothing else.
- Make sure there is good interaction between older and younger volunteers, and between volunteers and staff.
- Senior volunteers can be very good at interacting with senior people – they have similar experiences.
- Use different sense with interpretation – smells, fun activities, imaginative devices.
- Use a range of different media – touch, smell, sound.
- 'Fun' appeals to all ages.
- Senior people often don't like dressing up in costumes.
- Explore using things that spark memories and imagination.

5.4 Key points about volunteering relevant to the HISA project

Volunteering is extremely beneficial for people of all ages, and especially for seniors who have retired. Volunteers can also greatly help senior visitors at a heritage site, empathising with their experiences and enhancing their understanding of the place. The key points arising from the research are:

- Senior people often relate better with other seniors.
- Volunteers at heritage sites are often seniors themselves as they are pursuing their interests in retirement.
- Volunteers are often from the local community and can relate well with visitors from the community.
- Encouraging volunteers at heritage sites can therefore greatly enhance the senior visitor experience.

5.5 Guidance on involving volunteers

Providing opportunities for volunteers to help at a heritage site needs to be planned carefully. Here are a few simple guidelines that can help to make volunteering a valuable and pleasurable experience for site managers and volunteers.

Management

- Identify or appoint a dedicated staff member, or other volunteer, to have responsibility for the volunteers and who has a good relationship with them.
- Be aware of the legal framework for volunteering and any requirements for insurance.
- Make sure volunteers are not being given work that should be done by paid staff. They should not be considered to be free alternatives to an accountable paid staff member.
- Identify clear procedures for volunteers, including:
 - Claiming expenses
 - Asking for absence
 - Defining roles
 - Identifying the organisational structure
 - Providing support mechanisms
 - Training
 - Safety issues
 - Offering options to try different roles

Recruitment

- Clear volunteer roles need to be defined that relate to the goals and vision of the organisation.
- Advertise locally for volunteers, to attract local people.
- Recruit organically, have a range of ages, train them well and trust them to engage with visitors.

Training and Development

- Provide structured supervision and modular training and learning opportunities for those volunteers who are ready and want to take on more responsibility.
- Encourage volunteers to engage with seniors at heritage sites and support them properly through regular training and development.

Feedback

- Volunteers need to feel appreciated and to know that they are contributing to the success of a site.
- Make sure senior visitors can feed back their experiences of the site and include this feedback in development and training.
- Make sure the site is a place volunteers **want** to stay.

CHAPTER 6

Involving seniors in developing and delivering interpretation

The benefits of involving seniors in developing and delivering interpretation are numerous and are highlighted throughout the handbook. In this chapter you will find some practical ideas about involving seniors in developing and delivering interpretation, including real case studies.

Involving seniors in the early development of interpretation materials has great benefits. Using their knowledge and life experiences can introduce varied perspectives about a place and its features. It can help introduce themes that are of greater interest for older people and can also encourage a wide sense of 'ownership' of the interpretation among people who respect, and care for, the site.

- Consult with existing senior audiences or stakeholders to identify themes and / or content they feel would enhance a visit for people of their own age. This is especially useful when thinking about adding to the enjoyment and meaning of exhibitions for senior audiences.
- Take time to identify senior's skills, interests and background (using application process, informal meetings and reviews). They may well have knowledge and skills that would be well suited to a specific element of your interpretation project. Do not underestimate the value of life experience!



A group of seniors engaged in planning the permanent exhibition of the small Feierabendziegel-Museum (end of work roof tile museum) at Bad Herrenalb, Germany.

One of the seniors had offered his large collection of old so called 'Feierabendziegel', hand-made tiles with drawings and writings made by the craftsmen.

The group developed an interpretive narrative and exhibit labels and benefited from mentoring by a professional heritage interpreter.

- Be aware that retired people may have more time to conduct in-depth research than those in work or in a programme of study – but they can also be incredibly busy! Utilise senior's availability by giving clear aims, objectives, timescales and any specific information on format and style in the project brief.
- Ensure your whole team are aware of interpretation strategies and other relevant strategies/overarching mission statements so they know how their work will contribute – adding value and sense of achievement.

- Test and review all content with current senior stakeholders. Ask senior visitors to complete feedback on proposed exhibition content in short segments. This can be as simple as conducting some face to face evaluation at your visitor attraction, going out to meet local seniors or leaving feedback forms with questions to gather demographic data – particularly age category.



An information stand at a meeting of a local Historical Society where those attending were invited to read through material for a new exhibition and give their opinion on the content and writing style. Consultations like this can be achieved with low-cost print outs and images.

- Ensure thorough consultation is conducted before publishing or installing material. Arrange focus groups with senior visitors to further test and revise content for senior audiences.



The image shows a focus group conducted by the Clifton Suspension Bridge and ss Great Britain to review the advice presented in this manual. Participants were contacted via local interest groups including the University of the Third Age, Clifton Historical Society and the English-Speaking Union.

- Key advice on how to deliver a successful focus group can be found via many visitor-focused organisations. One good example is on the South West Federation of Museums and Galleries (UK) website: <http://swfed.org.uk/resources/usersvisitors/audience-development/consultation-techniques>

Interpretation for the new Visitor Centre at Clifton Suspension Bridge.

Context

The Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust maintains and preserves the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol, UK. In 2014, the 150th anniversary of the opening of the bridge was celebrated by the construction of a new visitor centre, which included an exhibition, shop and visitor facilities.

What we did

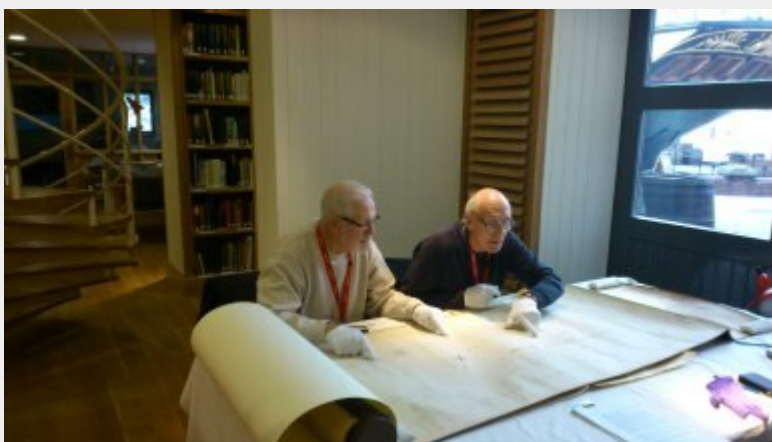
It was very important to the Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust that our new visitor centre exhibitions were co-created and to an extent, co-curated. Not only did we consult with stakeholders of all ages on what they wanted to see in the new centre, we offered members of our existing team of volunteers the opportunity to get involved with exhibition research.

A number of senior volunteers put themselves forward and Our Community Learning and Volunteer Officer discussed interests and themes with each research volunteer before designating tasks. This way the team split the work amongst their own specific interests, examining and transcribing historic documents in several collections.

The information gathered directly informed the displays now exhibited in the new visitor centre.

Outcomes

- The experience enabled our research volunteers to develop new skills (including learning about the conservation needs of historic items, how they are stored, how to handle them appropriately and how archives work).
- The research role empowered the team. Many of the senior volunteers who had been helping front of house for some time had the chance to be directly involved in the development of the new exhibition rather than watching it being created by others. The team had a say in the themes that were to be interpreted, giving feedback throughout the process.
- Volunteers gained a sense of ownership and pride in the end result - the research completed by senior volunteers was incorporated into the final exhibition and is now on show to the public.
- The volunteers gained confidence both in their own capabilities and in their value to the management team.



Costumed Interpretation role – ss Great Britain

Context

The ss Great Britain is a historic iron-hulled ship preserved in a dry dock in Bristol, UK. It has been restored to its original appearance in the 1800s and visitors can explore cabins, engines and storage bays on deck and inside the ship.

Situation

In 2014, staff at the ss Great Britain conducted audience research, which highlighted that our visitors enjoyed talking to knowledgeable people in historic costume. After looking at resources it was decided to introduce a costumed interpretation volunteer role; this type of role was new to the organisation. The aim was to introduce 15 new costumed interpretation volunteers and create a sustainable recruitment and training programme for the future.

What we did

We started by reviewing the skills and experience we had internally. We also reviewed the networks and people we knew who might be able to support us and lend us their expertise to the project.

In our existing volunteer base we had volunteers with many different backgrounds, including ones relevant to this role, including performance, re-enactment, experience as crewmembers and expertise in sewing.

We arranged consultation meetings with interested volunteers to gather ideas and interest, and to gain the support of our existing volunteers in other roles. In these sessions we discussed ideas for the role, how they thought that would fit in with existing roles and what ideas they had for the role.

We also reached out to different groups relevant to the project, including the West Country Knotters. This group has a high percentage of senior members. They were able to support the project-offering knot tying expertise to the training; some members were also interested in performing the role themselves.

Following this we:

- Developed a role description.
- Advertised (for our target audience we focused on interest areas such as performance, museums, and maritime and nautical interests).
- Interviewed and recruited volunteers. The interview was based on the requirements of the role description. This ensured that we were able to assess people's suitability to the role fairly.
- Developed and delivered an induction and training session.
- We gave the volunteers an introduction period of 6 sessions, at the end of this time we caught up with volunteers individually to find out if the role was fulfilling their expectations. This was also an opportunity to ask if there was anything we could do to make the experience better if possible.
- Planned group feedback sessions, which allowed us to make adjustments to the role and for the team to mix as a group, these sessions also allowed us to thank volunteers for their contribution.
- Maintained ongoing informal consultation.
- All feedback has fed in to evaluation and further development of the role.

The benefits of involving seniors

The benefits to ss Great Britain of involving seniors in developing and delivering this interpretation project included:

- One volunteer involved in the role had had a long career in the Navy and was able to use his life skills to talk to other volunteers about maritime equipment and life at sea. His working knowledge and stories fed in to training sessions. It also created a great intergenerational exchange between him and our younger volunteers. This was beneficial to both parties and brilliant for the organisation.
- We had an experienced volunteer who was an actor, re-enactor and interpreter he was able to feed in to the training directly and help deliver the aspect of the training relevant to his experience, this meant that volunteers were also able to ask him about this aspect of the role which took some of the work away from staff. He was also able to offer practical advice when developing the costume and activities.
- A retired volunteer who had a lack of direction found that being able to contribute to the new role gave him a new sense of purpose.

Further reading on best practice when involving volunteers: <http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/downloads/96a5e2a2-b1c7-11e2-b572-001999b209eb.pdf>

Glossary

Interpretation

Interpretation is “an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationship through the use of original objects, by first-hand experience and by illustrative media rather than simply to communicate factual information” (Original definition by Freeman Tilden, ³1977:8)

Interpreter

As Graham Black (2005) argues, the origins of this profession lie in the environmental movement in second half of the 19th century in the USA. More specifically, the United States National Park Service (NPS) employed rangers and interpreters from its creation in 1916. The first person who started to use the word ‘interpret’ was John Muir, an early supporter of the NPS Movement. Browning (quoted in Brochu and Merriman 2002:12) affirmed that Muir wrote “I will interpret the rocks, learn the language of the flood, storm and avalanche. I’ll acquaint myself with the glaciers and wild gardens; and get as near the heart of the world as I can”. Enos Millis is considered as the first modern writer to identify the role of a guide as an interpreter, “someone who translates what is seen and experienced to others with less experience”. However, the better known to the modern audience is Freeman Tilden, as the first writer on interpretation who set down specific principles of interpretation. His book *Interpreting Our Heritage*, published in 1957, it is a text foundation for the interpreters.

Tilden’s six principles of interpretation

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or being described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
2. Information, as such, is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art which combines many arts whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

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