



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Alaska Transportation Hub Project
Alaska

Experience Alaska's National Parks Media Project funded by the Alaska Regional Office Interpretive Plan



Experience Alaska's National Parks Media Project

Interpretive Plan

Prepared by the National Park Service
Harpers Ferry Center
Department of Interpretive Planning
and
the Alaska Regional Office

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FOUNDATIONS FOR PLANNING

Background

In the early 1980s, a series of indoor exhibits, some of which had audio-visual components, were planned, designed, fabricated, and installed in 10 airports throughout the state of Alaska. Over the following two decades, most of these exhibits fell into disrepair and almost all had been removed by 2000. Only one of the original 1980s exhibits remains under the stairway at Juneau airport (however, its audiovisual component does not function), and there is an exhibit at Sitka airport from the 1980s that was developed in cooperation with park partners. All of the other original airport exhibits from the early 1980s have been removed. Some have been replaced by exhibits done in partnerships with other agencies; many of Alaska's airports have no exhibits.

In 2000, the Alaska Regional Office of Interpretation and Education submitted three separate Project Management Information System (PMIS) requests – one each for a planning phase, design phase, and production phase – to replace the 1980s airport exhibits with funds from the National Park Service's Fee Demonstration Program. In March 2006, all three PMIS requests were approved for the requested amounts – \$50,050 for planning, \$90,500 for design, and \$266,570 for production – for a total of \$407,120.

Approach/Strategy

The initial intent of this media project was to plan, design, produce and install exhibits (and perhaps audio-visual components or other media elements) that would replace the old 1980s exhibits in airport and ferry terminals at Anchorage, Fairbanks, Gustavus, Juneau, King Salmon, Kotzebue, Nome, Sitka, Skagway, and Yakutat. At planning meetings held in October 2006 with the Alaska Region's interpretive leaders, it was decided that some exhibit locations may change from the original ten listed above. The PMIS request stated that the "comprehensive statewide plan needs to be re-evaluated to determine the most appropriate media for meeting current accessibility needs." Since six years had passed between the project request and receipt of funding, all parties felt a re-assessment was in order. Also, the interpretive leaders suggested that the original "airport and ferry terminals" proposal should also include other "transportation hubs" throughout Alaska such as railroad depots and cruise ship docks. In fact, in keeping with the NPS's recently approved "Interpretation and Education Renaissance," the use of the word "hubs" in this project has been expanded to include not only traditional "transportation hubs" like airports and ferry terminals, cruise ship docks, and railroad depots, but also to include visitor centers, gateway communities, convention centers, and even "virtual hubs" such as websites. Essentially, products need to be installed where visitors are most likely to use them. (See "Appendix A: Potential List of Sites" .)

The interpretive leaders who met in October 2006 also agreed that when this project produces exhibits – they should be modular units so they can remain flexible and sustainable. This project proposal will also take into consideration components within the digital realm – such as podcasts, cell phone tours, and audiovisual downloads – as well as components within the personal services arena such as “talking points” for airline pilots and railroad tour guides.

In short, this straightforward “exhibit replacement” project has changed with the times into an exciting opportunity to “market Alaska’s national parks” to specific audiences using the most effective approaches at the most opportune locations. Accomplishing this large task will take a different strategy than most interpretive media projects. Harpers Ferry Center (HFC) plans to reach out beyond its in-house and contracted talent for planning, designing, and producing interpretive media and employ a firm with experience in marketing research and techniques that can plan and produce a range of tools to reach Alaska’s visitors and evaluate their effectiveness.

This is an exciting project that could provide new venues and tools for reaching park visitors, expand HFC’s existing range of products, and serve as a pilot evaluation project and model for future media projects throughout the National Park System.

Purpose

The purpose statements below were compiled during an Interpretive Planning workshop held in Seward, Alaska, in November 2006. These three purpose statements provide the foundation and focal point for all of this project’s media products:

The purpose of all of the products within the “Experience Alaska National Parks” project is to:

- **grab** the attention of residents and visitors to Alaska.
- **inspire** the public with the exciting, experiential opportunities represented by Alaska’s national parks and preserves.
- **connect** people to websites, visitor centers, and other resources where they can get information to enhance their current and future experiences with the stories, meanings, and recreational opportunities associated with national parks in Alaska.

As with any interpretive product or software, the eventual outcome is enlisting the public as stewards of their parks and their heritage. Thus, the overall outcome of this project is to engage people to create enduring connections to Alaska’s national parks.

Significance

Statements of significance describe the distinctive values of Alaska’s national parks and why these values are important to the state’s residents and visitors.

Alaska’s national parks are significant because they:

- contain largely intact temperate, sub-arctic, and arctic ecosystems.
- contain resources that sustain traditional and historic lifeways.
- offer a wide spectrum of superlative recreational and wilderness opportunities.
- preserve a home for wildlife.

Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are the key concepts that help visitors understand the significance of a park or parks. The theme below for the Experience Alaska National Parks project was developed by the Alaska Regional Office with input from the Alaska parks’ Chief Interpreters.

Alaska’s national parks protect wild lands interwoven with rich human histories, providing opportunities to experience unparalleled inspiration and adventure.

Brainstormed “tag lines” that could serve as starting points for exhibit titles or as marketing slogans are as follows:

“Unrivaled Wild. Deep Traditions. The Greatest Adventure of Your Life!”

“Alaska’s National Parks: Look again, and again...”

Experience Your Alaskan National Parks: Look, Link, Go.”

Connect to your Alaskan National Parks: See, Feel, Learn.”

Explore Your National Parks: Surf www.nps.gov/alaska

Project Goal

To create an awareness of, and compelling interest in, Alaska national park areas for the target audiences through inspirational, informational, and interpretive orientation.

Visitor Experience Goals

Visitor Experience Goals identify the important experiences that should be available to all visitors. During the planning process that led to this document, participants agreed that all visitors to the Experience Alaska's National Parks exhibits and other media components should be:

- drawn to an exhibit that is graphically exciting, easy to find, clearly identified, safe, and fully accessible.
- inspired by the grandeur, vastness, complexity, and diversity of national park stories, meanings, and recreational opportunities.
- connected to a secondary source that provides basic information on national parks in Alaska such as phone numbers, how to get to the parks, and activities that parks offer.

When this project has accomplished these goals, visitors will become acquainted with national parks in Alaska, and discover opportunities for unparalleled adventure in this northern landscape with its superlative wilderness, incomparable scenic beauty, and deep culture.

Media Product Evaluation Goals

The desired outcomes for this project's media products should be used as the basis to evaluate their effectiveness. The following questions should be asked to assess the effectiveness of each product during the formative and summative stages of this project:

- 1) Are the visitors drawn to the media product?
- 2) How long do visitors look/touch the media product?
- 3) What do visitors say to other members of their party?
- 4) Do they write down or capture in any way the website, toll-free phone number, or other information?
- 5) Once visitors go to a secondary source, do they get information they need?
- 6) Once information is received, how do visitors react?
- 7) Do visitors return to website/s for virtual learning/inspiration?
- 8) Do visitors plan a trip to Alaska?
- 9) Once their trip has taken place, is their experience memorable and meaningful?
- 10) Do they recommend their Alaska experience to others?
- 11) Do they blog/share pictures?

Visitation Data

state parks (90%), see native vil-
lages, totems, etc. (84%)

The following visitation data was distributed by Kathy Dunn of the Alaska Travel Industry Association at a Regional Education Workshop in Seward, Alaska, on October 26, 2006:

- The vast majority of visitors to Alaska visit in June, July, and August
- Approximately 1.6 million summer visitors travel to Alaska each year
- Approximately 1.0 million of those summer visitors travel via Cruise Ships
- Approximately 0.6 million are non-Cruise (most on airlines; others via cars and ferry system)
- A large number (at least 50%) of Alaska's summer visitors are repeat visitors
- Most visitors to Alaska are older: approximately 70% are age 50 and older (74% don't have children living in their home; they are either childless or empty-nesters)
- Most visitors to Alaska have medium to high incomes, with a good level of discretionary funds
- Average cost of a vacation to Alaska is estimated at \$2,400 per person (in 2006)
- On average, visitors spend about 10 days in Alaska (Cruise visitors: 7 days; non-cruise: 17 days)
- Top-ranking interests while visiting Alaska: glaciers (94%), wildlife (92%), mountains (91%), open spaces (90%), visit national and

Visitor Profiles

During the Interpretive Planning Workshop held in Seward Alaska on November 1-2, 2006, participants agreed that this project's interpretive media should address these audiences:

- Cruise-dependent (CD): those traveling on cruise ships and affiliated buses and trains.
- Independent (IN): those who planned their own trips via airplanes, cars, and ferries.
- Hybrid (HY): those who take a cruise, then rent a car to explore and experience Alaska independently.
- Alaskan travelers (AT): state residents who travel to other parts of the state for vacation/s (State constituents, especially underserved urban and rural residents unaware of the NPS)
- Virtual visitors (VV): those who "visit" Alaska via websites, films, and digital technology (Including students in their schools and homes throughout America and the world)

In January 2007, the Alaska Regional Office considered narrowing **the primary audiences** for this project to be the **Hybrid visitors (HY)** and **Alaskan travelers (AT)** for the following reasons:

Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) statistics from 2006 indicate that more than one third of visitors to Alaska return for a repeat visit, with nearly 40% saying that they would be "very likely" to return

in the next five years. When most visitors first come to Alaska (about 60% come via cruise ships and affiliated trains and buses), research has shown that their trip is completely planned well in advance; they have no additional leisure time to make side trips. However, the large percentage of repeat visitors is more likely to travel independently on their second visit to Alaska. Since many of the "packaged tourists" are currently visiting at-capacity parks such as Denali and Kenai Fjords, the Alaska Regional Office and park superintendents recently worked with ATIA on a marketing campaign to encourage visitors to explore the other 14 national parks in Alaska that are under capacity, such as Wrangell St. Elias National Park.

Targeting Alaska residents who typically do not visit national parks in their state also has a strong connection to the Alaska Leadership Council's regional focus. One of their 2004 Strategic Planning goals is to focus on improving community relations by ensuring that Alaskans "value the NPS as a neighbor and use unit resources in ways that sustain both natural and cultural resources in an unimpaired state." The Alaska Visitor and Statistic Program (AVSP) found that 48% of people responding to a questionnaire about their travel source used friends and family living in Alaska. Also, in 2006 the NPS National Education Council produced a Interpretation and Education Renaissance Action Plan (which was then endorsed and adopted by the NPS National Leadership Council and approved by NPS Director Mary Bomar) which calls for "connecting all Americans to the recreational, education, and inspirational power of national

parks... the very existence of parks depends upon an American public who values their collective natural and cultural heritage and wants to preserve it.”

As the National Park Service approaches its centennial in 2016, this Action Plan challenges us to “Engage People to Make Enduring Connections to America’s Special Places.” According to that plan, “this must include ethnic, socioeconomic and disabled groups that have, for a variety of reasons, not been well connected to the national parks in the past.” In other words, for this project to be successful, it must do more than make it easier for travelers to visit Alaska’s national parks, it needs also to create awareness and provide access to the parks and their stories to citizens who are presently disconnected from them.

As the front-end evaluation process proceeds, this list of target audiences will be confirmed and priority given to those with greatest potential for success.

Existing Conditions

Airports

Anchorage Airport: The National Park Service (NPS) removed its 1980s-era exhibit from the Anchorage Airport in the mid-1990s. In 2005, the Bureau of Land Management installed an exhibit in the new Ted Stevens International Airport’s security area located in the “C” Concourse. In 2007, the Fish and Wildlife Service, in collaboration with several southcentral parks installed regional displays for the ERA and PennAir commuter gates focusing on Southcentral AK destinations.

Fairbanks Airport: The National Park Service (NPS) removed its 1980s-era exhibit from the Fairbanks Airport in the late 1990s. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) developed and installed an exhibit in 2004 on northern Alaska, and included the NPS areas in that region of the state. Duplicates of this exhibit are on the airport’s East ramp for small airlines.

Homer Airport: There is a small exhibit produced and installed in 1996 by Alaska State Parks. The exhibit contains photographs which have faded over the past decade. The exhibit includes an audiovisual component narrated by Tom Boddett. This video worked on and off for a few years, but has not worked since 1998. This exhibit is currently ineffective and non-functional.

Juneau Airport: The 1980s-era exhibit is still at this airport under the main stairway, but the audiovisual component does not work. The airport manager wants the NPS exhibit

to remain under the stairway for now because they don't want a hole in the wall under the stairway.

Sitka Airport: The Sitka Airport exhibit was a joint project in 1987 or 1988 between the NPS and other agencies. The NPS took the lead on the exhibit's design and installation, with help from the U.S. Forest Service, the Sitka Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and from the Alaska State Museum. Because it is located behind the baggage return, the exhibit is holding up extremely well for its age; however, its photographs have faded, giving it an old photo quality and feel.

Gustavus Airport: The National Park Service (NPS) removed its 1980s-era exhibit from the Gustavus Airport in 2001. There is no central location at this airport where all visitors gather, so each air carrier/taxi building would need a separate exhibit/panel to reach all airport visitors.

Yakutat Airport: This airport probably never had one of the 1980s NPS exhibits. This airport does have a deteriorated 3-sided outdoor kiosk wayside exhibit that was planned and installed in the mid-1990s. Since it is in poor condition, it is rarely used by visitors, even though this kiosk is the only information on Wrangell-St. Elias NP that visitors can find at this airport.

Kenai Airport and Kenai Visitor and Cultural Center: The NPS removed its 1980s-era exhibit from the Kenai Visitor and Cultural Center in the late 1990s. In 2005, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed and installed an exhibit at the Kenai Airport concentrating on south-cen-

tral Alaska that includes some NPS areas.

King Salmon Airport: There are no exhibits in this airport's two terminals. An exhibit project has been proposed, but funding for this project may be years away.

Illiamna Airport: There is a three-sided photo-exhibit panel produced by Historian John Branson about Lake Clark National Park at this airport.

Kotzebue Airport: This airport never had one of the 1980s-era NPS exhibits, but currently has a 5' x 3' exhibit panel located by the airport's baggage claim area. However, this panel's location is not very accessible.

Nome Airport: There was a photo panel at this airport's baggage claim area that features NPS and other federal areas in northwest Alaska. This exhibit has been removed and has not been replaced. This airport was being remodeled in 2007.

Ferry Terminals

Skagway Ferry Terminal: In 1995, the NPS installed panel exhibits on the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park as part of the NPS's Challenge Cost Share Program. The exhibits are on the north and east interior walls of the ferry terminal, which was built in 1983.

None of the other ferry terminals for the Alaska Marine Highway System have NPS exhibits.



Juneau Airport - NPS Exhibit



Issues and Influences

The major influence on this Experience Alaska's National Parks media project is that the National Park Service (NPS) recently approved an "Interpretation and Education Renaissance" to renew the tools and resources the NPS needs to fulfill its responsibilities as the agency approaches its centennial year of 2016. Central to this initiative is a draft Action Plan devised in 2006 that recommends renewed emphasis in the following five areas of Interpretation and Education:

- **Engage People to Make Enduring Connections to America's Special Places.** All of the components of this media project aim to accomplish this goal. As visitors are traveling to or from Alaska's national parks, it is the intent of this media to connect visitors to sources of information and interpretation about these special places. Furthermore, it is equally critical to connect Alaska's populace to their national parks because many urban and rural residents still are largely unaware of the stories, meanings, and range of recreational opportunities represented by Alaska's 16 national park units, two affiliated areas, and its system of four inter-agency visitor centers (the Alaska Public Lands Information Centers in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Tok, and Ketchikan).
- **Use new technologies.** The media project was initially funded to simply replace the old exhibits that were placed in Alaska's airports in the early 1980s. However, early on in this planning process, the participants realized we must use the new technologies available today. Besides some exhibits in airports,

this project will consider and use a range of media options.

- **Embrace Interpretation and Education Partners.** Because the media components of this project will be at many locations not owned by the NPS, this effort will require coordination with a large number of private sector partners and public organizations to assure its effectiveness. There are also significant opportunities to share messages and collaborate on media projects that encourage an interest in the "Alaska" experience shared by parks and partners alike.
- **Develop and Implement Professional Standards.** Beyond the usual standards that all NPS media projects must meet, this Experience Alaska National Parks media project will also require a graphic identity be developed that gives all of its media products an "Alaska family look;" a look that must also fit within the NPS Identity standards outlined in Director's Order 52A.
- **Create a Culture of Evaluation.** An appropriate percentage of the funding for this media project is being budgeted for front-end, formative, and summative evaluation. This is critical since achieving the first bulleted item above of "engaging people to make enduring connections" is based on knowing the needs and expectations of those who live in Alaska, those who visit Alaska, and those who plan to visit Alaska in the future. Application of evaluation results will also ensure that media products are designed and developed that effectively reach and meet the needs of target audiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

On October 26, 2006, an Interpretive Planning Workshop was held in Seward, Alaska, with the interpretive leadership from Alaska's national parks. At that workshop, updates on the exhibits in Alaska's airports were gathered along with general observations of visitors' use of exhibits and other media in airport and ferry terminals. Participants also discussed the potential of exhibits and other interpretive media at other transportation hubs in Alaska such as railroad depots, cruise ship docks, federal agency visitor centers, and gateway communities.

On November 1-2, 2006, a second workshop was held in Seward; this time with a smaller group that included media specialists from Harpers Ferry Center, representatives from the Alaska Regional Office of Interpretation and Education, and interpreters from two Alaska NPS areas. At this workshop, the goals and foundations outlined in the first section of this Interpretive Plan were drafted, and a consensus direction for the interpretive media to accomplish these goals was established. The following pages briefly outline the media products that were agreed upon.

Exhibits Recommendations

As described in the foundations section of this Interpretive Plan, the primary goals of the exhibits to be produced within this project will be to grab visitors' attention, inspire them with the exhibit's content, and encourage visitors to connect with other media opportunities such as regional visitor centers, websites, digital media, and emerging interactive technologies.

Exhibits are envisioned to have some role in this project's media to be put in Alaska's airport and ferry terminals because that was the original intent of this project and the justification for its approved funding. However, these exhibits (and/or the graphics, banners, posters, or other products within a suite of exhibit-like materials) could also be placed in railroad depots, cruise ship docks, federal agency visitor centers, or in any number of gateway community locations.

The workshop participants agreed that the following criteria are important to the success of any exhibits that may be produced within the scope of this project.

- **Modular components** will be used to keep costs within the allotted funds to plan, design, fabricate, and ship the exhibit units. Modular units can also be easily and inexpensively rehabilitated when the exhibits are damaged, thereby extending their lifespan.

- **Inexpensive panel production** methods will be used to allow formative and summative evaluation of the exhibits' effectiveness. Also, inexpensive panel production methods will allow the exhibits' content to be updated more frequently as content information changes.
- **Portable, self-contained** units of hardware, interpretive panels, and other media options will keep the exhibits from being tied into the architecture of the terminal or facility. This mobility will also be important during evaluation to assure the exhibit is in the best location.
- **Local "ownership"** by the NPS staff closest to each exhibit location will be critical to the effectiveness and longevity of these exhibits. The NPS staff along with terminal manager/s must be responsible for the exhibits' maintenance, repairs, and updates of "their" exhibit.
- **Maintenance plan for all exhibits** installed at hub locations, as the estimated lifespan for the exhibits is five to seven years. The exhibits will require occasional preventive maintenance, perhaps through professional cleaning and preventative maintenance work to be conducted at the start of each summer tourist season.
- **Sturdy and durable materials** should assure that the exhibits' lifespan be about 5 to 7 years.
- **Universal design of the exhibits** will allow full accessibility by all members of the visiting public, including those with physical, mental, visual, and hearing impairments. The principles of universal design will also make these exhibits accessible to children.
- **Consistent graphic design** will establish a visual identity for all the exhibits and associated media. The modular system mentioned above should support a consistent visual identity. The exhibits' design needs to work within the NPS Identity system, while supporting some customized content based on each exhibit's specific location and interpretive content.
- **Employ evaluation** at the front-end, formative, and summative stages of this media project.

Audiovisual Recommendations

The audiovisual components of this media project should be in three formats for different audiences and venues. The project's goals of "grab, inspire, and connect" will be included in each audiovisual format. Much of the content will be re-purposed footage from existing audiovisual products done for National Park Service areas in Alaska over the past decade.

The three audiovisual formats should be:

- **5-7-minute** product could be used in airplanes, airports, cruise ships, buses, hotel rooms, visitor centers, and/or ferries (to be shown via video playback systems), conventions and trade shows (in portable units on display tables or with portable exhibits), hotels (on their cable channels that broadcast statewide and regional tourist information), and as a giveaway item to visitors (on a CD or other inexpensive way to mass produce them).
- **90-second** product (which will be a shortened version of the 7-minute product) could be used as a "trailer" to be shown before audiovisual programs presented in Alaska's National Park Service areas. This trailer might also be used in movie theaters throughout Alaska.
- **30-second** product (which will be a shortened version of the 90-second product) could be used on websites affiliated with Alaska's National Park Service areas, as well as commercial websites such as iTunes, YouTube, Google, and Yahoo.

There may be 6 to 8 "regional versions" of this product to make the content more regional in its scope, or topic-specific (e.g., natural history, cultural history, or recreation).

All of the above products will be captioned and audio-described.

In addition, the audio portion/s of the programs listed above could be "re-purposed" as a:

- **30-second narrated audio version** with sound effects (e.g., calving glaciers, seabirds, wind, raven calls, glacial rivers, Eskimo dancing, drumming, train whistle, sled dog mushing) that could be given free to radio stations with a tag line for a website and toll free number.

Digital-Interactive Recommendations

Because many 21st-century visitors are increasingly familiar with the ever-growing family of digital technology tools, it is recommended that a portion of this project's funding be spent on digital and interactive media. The following are a few areas that could help connect Alaska's interpretive messages to technologically savvy audiences:

- **Guide by Cell** is a product and service available through a company in San Francisco, CA, (www.guideby-cell.com) that allows an organization to create self-guided audio tours that are accessible through cellular telephones.
- **Podcasts** (short for "Personal on Demand broadcasts") are media files distributed by subscription over the Internet using software capable of reading feed formats for playback on mobile devices and personal computers. The audio-visual products described on the previous page can also be formatted and posted as podcasts on NPS websites as well as commercial sites such as iTunes, YouTube, Google and Yahoo.
- **Website connections**, one of the key goals of this project, aims to "connect" visitors to the websites and other places where they can get information about Alaska's public lands. The decision needs to be made as to which website visitors should be directed toward. There are currently at least two NPS websites that feature Alaska parks: <http://www.nps.gov/alaska> (the "official" NPS website for Alaska

parks) and <http://www.nps.gov/anch/> (the website for the Alaska Public Lands Information Center). If a new "Alaska family" graphic identity system and/or tagline is developed as part of this project, then one or both of these websites should be redesigned around the new standards. Additionally, the planners for this media project may decide to research the possibility of creating a catchier website domain name that would appear on all the products of this media effort.

Planning Team

Harpers Ferry Center

Jack Spinnler, Interpretive Planner
David Guiney, Director of Interpretive Media Institute
Chris Dearing, Exhibits Designer
Neil Mackay, Senior Exhibits Planner
Mark Southern, Chief of Audiovisual Arts

Alaska Regional Office

Brad Bennett, Chief of Interpretation and Education
John Morris, Interpretive Specialist
Carol Harding, Interpretive Planner (detail from Denali National Park)

Alaska Region Parks

Jim Ireland, Chief of Interpretation, Kenai Fjords National Park

Outside Participant

Curt Pianalto, Byways Resource Specialist, America's Scenic Byways



Members of this project's planning team-listed above and some pictured above-(left to right, Carol Harding, Mark Southern, Curt Pianalto, and Jim Ireland) considered a wide range of media approaches in developing this Interpretive Plan for Alaska's Transportation Hubs.

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

After the Interpretive Planning workshops held in Alaska concluded on November 2, 2006, the HFC media specialists who participated in the workshops went back to Harpers Ferry to meet with HFC Creative Options Manager Cindy Darr in December 2006. This group recommended that this project not be planned or designed with in-house employees because of the project's unique marketing aspects. Instead, they recommended that an HFC project manager and a small group of consultants oversee an HFC Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract to implement the various stages and media products that will accomplish this project.

After HFC received approval from the Alaska Regional Office of Interpretation and Education to proceed with this strategy, the employees listed below were assigned to this media project:

Implementation Team

Harpers Ferry Center

Michael Paskowsky, Project Manager
Dave Gilbert, Web Manager
Bob Cody, Contract Specialist
Deb Haarman, Project Specialist

The following HFC employees will be used as consultants:

Neil Mackay, Senior Exhibits Planner
Chris Dearing, Exhibits Designer
Mark Southern, Chief of Audiovisual Arts
Jack Spinnler, Interpretive Planner
David Guiney, Director of HFC's Interpretive Media Institute

Alaska Regional Office

Brad Bennett, Chief of Interpretation and Education
John Morris, Contract Officer's Representative (COR)
Carol Harding, Interpretive Planner (detail from Denali National Park, January-March 2007)

Implementation Timetable

HFC Web Manager Dave Gilbert drafted the following project timetable in February 2007 as the initial strategy for implementing the Experience Alaska National Parks media project:

Budget: \$407,000 for planning, design, and production

Date: February and March 2007

Owner(s): Alaska Regional Office, National Park Service

Task(s): Gather market research, audience research, and second-hand information on the project's primary target audiences.

Produce an executive summary of findings which includes available tourism statistics, market research, audience research, visitor evaluations, and summaries of discussions with "front-line" visitor services staff. The executive summary should identify target audiences to be reached and best methods of reaching these target audiences with specific messages about visiting Alaska national park areas. The executive summary should also include supporting material that includes copies of print material (12 copies where feasible) and/or electronic files of large reports.

Date: April 2007

Owner(s): AK Regional Office staff

Task(s): Decision made to postpone award of IDIQ design of AV media; project participants want to proceed with in-depth front-end evaluation to define and prioritize target audiences and their specific needs; will work through CESU to develop a cooperative agreement with researcher to accomplish study over FY08.

Date: August - September 2007

Owner(s): AK Regional Office and Harpers Ferry Project manager

Task(s): AKRO will establish cooperative agreement with CESU researcher to accomplish front-end study during FY08. HFC to develop project agreement and obligate funding for design and fabrication through IDIQ contractor at conclusion of study; and determination of priority products to be developed (from results of 08 study).

Date: October 2007 - July 2008

Owner(s): AK Regional Office and SFA University Researchers

Task(s): Conduct literature review, develop methodologies and instruments, secure necessary approvals, and conduct social science studies to identify audience needs and preferences, and prioritize potential products that effectively meet those needs.

Owner(s): Harpers Ferry Center, Alaska Regional Office, National Park Service

Task(s): Draft a scope of work for a two-phased project for bid by HFC-NPS Exhibit Planning & Design IDIQ contractors.

Phase I is a task order request that solicits proposals that identify each firm's capability, experience, and key personnel and solicits a broad range of work samples that may include—but need not be limited to—video, Web, podcasts, cell phones, PDA's, outdoor signage, print, indoor and outdoor exhibits. HFC and AKRO will select three IDIQ firms from all of HFC's IDIQ offerors. The three firms selected will travel to Alaska, review the Alaska Region's market research summary, meet with NPS staff, and observe site-specific resources and media. (Alternatively, HFC and AKRO may select outright three IDIQ firms who offer the best key personnel and broad range of media expertise based on their furnished IDIQ resumes.)

Date: July - September 2008

Owner(s): Harpers Ferry Center and Alaska Regional Office, National Park Service

Task(s): Selected IDIQ Exhibit Planning & Design firms; Each firm will produce a planning, research, design, and production proposal that will offer their firm's best creative approach to designing, developing, and producing interpretive media products that effectively reach selected audiences with specific messages about visiting Alaska national park areas. Media products may include—but need not be limited to—video, Web, podcasts, cell phones, PDA's, outdoor signage, print, indoor and outdoor exhibits. Proposals will be rated according to proposed media solutions, formative and summative evaluation methodologies, key personnel, and best value to the government.

Date: September 2008

Owner(s): Harpers Ferry Center and Alaska Regional Office, National Park Service

Task(s): Award contract to one IDIQ Exhibit Planning & Design firm for Phase 2 of planning, research, and design of interpretive media Products.

Date: December 2008

Owner(s): IDIQ Exhibit Planning & Design Contractor

Task(s): Complete and test interpretive media "mock-ups" through formative evaluation. OMB approval may be required for formative evaluation depending upon evaluation methods employed.

Date: **March 2009**

Owner(s): IDIQ Exhibit Planning & Design Contractor

Task(s): Complete planning and design of interpretive media products.

Date: **March 2009**

Owner(s): Harpers Ferry Center and Alaska Regional Office, National Park Service

Task(s): Develop scope of work for media production.

Date: **May 2009**

Owner(s): Harpers Ferry Center and Alaska Regional Office, National Park Service

Task(s): Award contract for media production. Planning & Design Contractor remains involved with the production and summative evaluation phase of the project.

Date: **January 2010**

Owner(s): Harpers Ferry Center and Alaska Regional Office, National Park Service

Task(s): NPS may exercise \$37,000 option to conduct summative and remedial evaluation on interpretive media products.

Date: **January 2010**

Owner(s): Media Production IDIQ Contractor

Task(s): Complete media production

Date: **June 2010**

Owner(s): IDIQ Contractor

Task(s): Conduct summative and remedial evaluation on interpretive media products and deliver final report. OMB approval may be required for summative and remedial evaluation depending upon evaluation methods employed.

Evaluation of Media

The following objectives and schedule guided Interpretive Planner Carol Harding (on detail from Denali National Park to the Alaska Regional Office from January 8 through March 30, 2007) as she initiated the evaluation component of the project:

Evaluation Objectives

- Match characteristics of intended audiences with best practices in media outreach.
- Inform prioritization and cost-effectiveness decisions about media type and location.

Visitor and Media Market Research

- February 2007– Conduct evaluation and collect findings.
- March 2007 – Produce an executive summary of findings. This executive summary should include available tourism statistics, market research, audience research, visitor evaluations, and summaries of discussions with “front-line” visitor services staff. The executive summary should also include supporting material including copies of print material (12 copies where feasible) and/or electronic files of large reports.

Front-End Evaluation Questions

- What is the current landscape of media types and locations for Alaska visitors receiving information about Alaska national park areas? (i.e. inventory of current practices)
- What are the current gaps in media types and locations for sharing information about Alaska national park areas? (i.e. inventory of unmet opportunities).

- What is known about current best practices, trends, and predictions about media/information consumption relevant to the audiences we care about? This is essentially a literature review. It probably relies heavily on publications and people in current media technology trades, as well as, perhaps, more academic work in media studies and “information structure.” It probably means a combination of seeking out written sources and networking to get informational interviews with knowledgeable technology experts. Types of media to consider: film, DVD, podcasts, web, cell phones, text messages, hand-held devices, and other emerging technologies. Contextual conditions to consider: amount of ambient distraction, proximity to intended destination, transition zones, competing information, etc.
- How does the data gathered from questions 1-3 interact to suggest a set of potential media projects that can be prioritized and optimized in terms of expected “bang for buck?” The goal is to make this decision based on systematically collected data.

Potential Sources - Existing Data:

- Alaska Regional Office Public Affairs (John Quinley)
- Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA - Kathy Dunn)
- Alaska Natural History Association (ANHA - Charley Money)
- Alaska Public Lands Interpretive Centers Managers (APLIC - Alex Carter in the Anchorage APLIC, and Don Pendergrast in the Fairbanks APLIC)
- Alaska Chief Interpreters (especially Kris Nemeth and Ingrid Nixon)

- Front-line interpreters and visitor service staff at a number of NPS areas in Alaska
- Front-line ANHA staff at NPS areas
- Front-line visitor services staff at the two NPS-run APLICs

APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Potential Sites

Airports

Ketchikan
Sitka
Juneau
Gustavus
Skagway
Haines
Yukutat
Cordova
Anchorage
Seward
Homer
King Salmon
Kodiak
Unalaska
Denali/McKinley Park
Fairbanks
Circle
Eagle
Barrow
Bettles
Kotzebue
Nome

Ferry Terminals

Ketchikan
Wrangell
Petersburg
Sitka
Juneau
Gustavus
Skagway
Haines
Yukutat
Cordova
Valdez
Whittier
Seward

Railroad Depots

Seward
Whittier?
Anchorage
Denali/McKinley Park
Fairbanks
Cruise Ship Terminals
Ketchikan
Juneau
Skagway
Whittier
Seward
Bellingham
Prince Rupert

Visitor Centers

Ketchikan – APLIC (USFS)
Anchorage – APLIC (NPS)
Fairbanks – APLIC (NPS)
Tok – APLIC (Alaska State)
Islands & Ocean Visitor Center (FWS)
Coldfoot Visitor Center (BLM)

Gateway Communities

Ketchikan
Juneau
Anchorage
Seward
Fairbanks
Tok

Gateway Airports

Seattle
Minneapolis
Vancouver

Appendix B: Special Populations' Programmatic Accessibility

Guidelines for Interpretive Media (Note: this is being updated in 2007)

Harpers Ferry Center National Park Service

Statement of Purpose

This document is a guide for promoting full access to interpretive media to ensure that people with physical and mental disabilities have access to the same information necessary for safe and meaningful visits to National Parks. Just as the needs and abilities of individuals cannot be reduced to simple statements, it is impossible to construct guidelines for interpretive media that can apply to every situation in every National Park Service (NPS) area.

These guidelines do, however, define a high level of programmatic access which can be met in most NPS situations. They articulate key areas of concern and note generally accepted solutions. Because of the diversity of park resources and the variety of interpretive situations, flexibility and versatility are important.

Each interpretive medium contributes to the total park program. All media have inherent strengths and weaknesses, and it is our intent to capitalize on their strengths and provide alternatives where they are deficient. It should also be understood that any interpretive medium

is just one component of the overall park experience. In some instances, especially with regard to learning disabilities, personal services may be the most appropriate and versatile interpretive approach.

In the final analysis, interpretive design is subjective, and dependent on aesthetic considerations as well as the particular characteristics and resources available for a specific program. Success or failure should be evaluated by examining all interpretive offerings of a park. Because of the unique characteristics of each situation, parks should be evaluated on a case by case basis. The goal is to fully comply with NPS policy:

"...To provide the highest level of accessibility possible and feasible for persons with visual, hearing, mobility, and mental impairments, consistent with the obligation to conserve park resources and preserve the quality of the park experience for everyone."

NPS Special Directive 83-3, Accessibility for Disabled Persons

Audiovisual Programs

Audiovisual programs include video, audio, and interactive programs. As a matter of policy, all audiovisual programs produced by the Harpers Ferry Center will include some method of captioning. The approach used will vary according to the conditions of the installation area and the media format used, and will be selected in consultation with park and regional office staffs. The captioning method will be identified as early as possible in the planning process and will be presented in an integrated setting where possible. To the extent possible, visitors will be offered a choice in viewing captioned or uncaptioned versions, but in situations where a choice is not possible or feasible, a captioned version of all programs will be made available. Park management will decide on the most appropriate operational approach for each particular site.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. Theater, auditorium, or viewing area should be free of architectural barriers, or alternative accommodations will be provided. UFAS 4.1.
2. Wheelchair locations will be provided according to ratios outlined in UFAS 4.1.2(18a).
3. Viewing heights and angles will be favorable for those in designated wheelchair locations.
4. In designing video or interactive components, control mechanisms will be placed in accessible location, usually between 9” and 48” from the ground and no more

than 24” deep.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Simultaneous audio description will be considered for installations where the equipment can be properly installed and maintained.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. All audiovisual programs will be produced with appropriate captions.
2. Copies of scripts will be provided to the parks as standard procedure.
3. Audio amplification and listening systems will be provided in accordance with UFAS 4.1.2(18b).

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. Unnecessarily complex and confusing concepts will be avoided.
2. Graphic elements will be chosen to communicate without reliance on the verbal component.
3. Narration will be concise and free of unnecessary jargon and technical information.

Exhibits

Numerous factors affect the design of exhibits, reflecting the unique circumstances of the specific space and the nature of the materials to be interpreted. It is clear that thoughtful, sensitive design can go a long way in producing exhibits that can be enjoyed by a broad range of people. Yet, because of the diversity of situations encountered, it is impossible to articulate guidelines that can be applied universally.

In some situations, the exhibit designer has little or no control over the space. Often exhibits are placed in areas ill suited for that purpose, they may include large artifacts, they may incorporate sensitive artifacts which require special environmental controls, or they may be within certain room decor or architectural features that dictate certain solutions. All in all, exhibit design is an art which defies simple description. However, one central concern is to communicate the message to the largest audience possible. Every reasonable effort will be made to eliminate any factors limiting communication through physical modification or by providing an alternate means of communication.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

The Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) is the standard followed by the National Park Service and is therefore the basis for the accessibility standards for exhibits, where applicable.

- I. Height/position of labels: Body copy on vertical exhibit walls should be placed at between 36"

and 60" from the floor.

2. Artifact Cases:
 - a. Maximum height of floor of artifact case display area shall be no higher than 30" from the floor of the room. This includes vitrines that are recessed into an exhibit wall.
 - b. Artifact labels should be placed so as to be visible to a person within a 43" to 51" eye level. This includes mounting labels within the case at an angle to maximize its visibility to all viewers.
3. Touchable Exhibits: Touchable exhibits positioned horizontally should be placed no higher than 30" from the floor. Also, if the exhibit is approachable only on one side, it should be no deeper than 31".
4. Railings/barriers: Railings around any horizontal model or exhibit element shall have a maximum height of 36" from the floor.
5. Information desks: Information desks and sales counters shall include a section made to accommodate both a visitor in a wheelchair and an employee in a wheelchair working on the other side. A section of the desk/counter shall have the following dimensions:
 - a. Height from the floor to the top: 28 to 34 inches. (ADAAG 4.32.4)
 - b. Minimum knee clearance space: 27" high, 30" wide, and 19" deep of clearance underneath is the minimum space required under ADAAG 4.32.3, but a space 30" high, 36" wide and 24" deep is recommended.
 - c. Width of top surface of section: at least 36 inches. Additional

- space must be provided for any equipment such as a cash register.
- d. Area underneath desk: Since both sides of the desk may have to accommodate a wheelchair, this area should be open all the way through to the other side. In addition, there should be no sharp or abrasive surfaces underneath the desk. The floor space behind the counter shall be free of obstructions.
6. Circulation Space:
 - a. Passageways through exhibits shall be at least 36" wide.
 - b. If an exhibit passageway reaches a dead-end, an area 60" by 78" should be provided at the end for turning around.
 - c. Objects projecting from walls with their leading edges between 27" and 80" above the floor shall protrude no more than 4" in passageways or aisles. Objects projecting from walls with their leading edges at or below 27" above the floor can protrude any amount.
 - d. Freestanding objects mounted on posts or pylons may overhang a maximum of 12" from 27" to 80" above the floor. (ADAAG 4.4.1)
 - e. Protruding objects shall not reduce the clear width of an accessible route to less than the minimum required amount. (ADAAG 4.4.1)
 - f. Passageways or other circulation spaces shall have a minimum clear head room of 80". For example, signage hanging from the ceiling must have at least 80" from the floor to the sign's bottom edge. (ADAAG 4.4.2)
 7. Floors:
 - a. Floors and ramps shall be stable, level, firm and slip-resistant.
 - b. Changes in level between 1/4" and 1/2" shall be beveled with a slope no greater than 1:2. Changes in level greater than 1/2" shall be accomplished by means of a ramp that complies with ADAAG 4.7 or 4.8. (ADAAG 4.5.2)
 - c. Carpet in exhibit areas shall comply with ADAAG 4.5.3 for pile height, texture, pad thickness, and trim.
 8. Seating - Interactive Stations/ Work Areas: The minimum knee space underneath a work desk is 27" high, 30" wide and 19" deep, with a clear floor space of at least 30" by 30" in front. The desk top or work surface shall be between 28" and 34" from the floor. (ADAAG 4.32 Fig.45)

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Tactile models and other touchable exhibit items should be used whenever possible. Examples of touchable exhibit elements include relief maps, scale models, raised images of simple graphics, reproduction objects, and replaceable objects (such as natural history or geological specimens, cultural history items, etc.).
2. Typography - Readability of exhibit labels by visitors with various degrees of visual impairment shall be maximized by using the following guidelines:
 - a. Type size - No type in the exhibit shall be smaller than 24 point.
 - b. Typeface - The most readable

- typefaces should be used whenever possible, particularly for body copy. They are: Times Roman, Palatino, Century, Helvetica and Universe.
- c. Styles, Spacing - Text set in both caps and lower case is easier to read than all caps. Choose letter spacing and word spacing for maximum readability. Avoid too much italic type.
 - d. Line Length - Limit line length for body copy to no more than 45 to 50 characters per line.
 - e. Amount of Text - Each unit of body copy should have a maximum of 45-60 words.
 - f. Margins - Flush left, ragged right margins are easiest to read.
3. Color:
- a. Type/Background Contrast - Percentage of contrast between the type and the background should be a minimum of 70% .
 - b. Red/Green - Do not use red on green or green on red as the type/background color combination.
 - c. Do not place text on top of graphic images that impair readability.
4. Samples: During the design process, it is recommended that samples be made for review of all size, typeface and color combinations for labels in that exhibit.
5. Exhibit Lighting:
- a. All labels shall receive sufficient, even light for good readability. Exhibit text in areas where light levels have been reduced for conservation purposes should have a minimum of 10 foot candles of illumination.
 - b. Harsh reflections and glare should be avoided.
 - c. The lighting system shall be flexible enough to allow adjustments.
 - d. Transitions between the floor and walls, columns, or other structures should be made clearly visible. Finishes for vertical surfaces should contrast clearly with the floor finish. Floor circulation routes should have a minimum of 10 foot candles of illumination.
6. Signage: When permanent building signage is required as a part of an exhibit project, the ADAAG guidelines shall be consulted. Signs, which designate permanent rooms and spaces, shall comply with ADAAG 4.30.1, 4.30.4, 4.30.5, and 4.30.6. Other signs, which provide direction to or information about functional spaces of the building, shall comply with ADAAG 4.30.1, 4.30.2, 4.30.3, and 4.30.5. Note: When the International Symbol of Accessibility (wheelchair symbol) is used, the word "Handicapped" shall not be used beneath the symbol. Instead, use the word "Accessible".

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. Information presented via audio formats will be duplicated in a visual medium, such as in the exhibit label copy or by captioning. All video programs incorporated into the exhibit, which contain audio, shall be open captioned.
2. Amplification systems and volume controls should be incorporated with audio equipment used individually by the visitor, such as handsets.

3. Information desks shall allow for Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDD) equipment.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. The exhibits will present the main interpretive themes on a variety of levels of complexity, so people with varying abilities and interests can understand them.
2. The exhibits should avoid unnecessarily complex and confusing topics, technical terms, and unfamiliar expressions. Pronunciation aids should be provided where appropriate.
3. Graphic elements shall be used to communicate non-verbally.
4. The exhibits shall be a multi-sensory experience. Techniques to maximize the number of senses used in the exhibits should be encouraged.
5. Exhibit design shall use color and other creative approaches to facilitate comprehension of maps by visitors with directional impairments.

Historic Furnishings

Historically refurbished rooms offer the public a unique interpretive experience by placing visitors within historic spaces. Surrounded by historic artifacts visitors can feel the spaces “come alive” and relate more directly to the historic events or personalities commemorated by the park.

Accessibility is problematical in many NPS furnished sites because of the very nature of historic architecture. Buildings were erected with a functional point of view that is many times at odds with our modern views of accessibility.

The approach used to convey the experience of historically furnished spaces will vary from site to site. The goals, however, will remain the same: to give the public as rich an interpretive experience as possible given the nature of the structure.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. The exhibit space should be free of architectural barriers or some alternate accommodation should be provided, such as slide programs, videotaped tours, visual aids, and dioramas.
2. All pathways, aisles, and clearances shall (when possible) meet standards set forth in UFAS 4.3 to provide adequate clearance for wheelchair routes.
3. Ramps shall be gradual and not exceed a 1” rise in 12” run, and conform to UFAS 4.8.
4. Railings and room barriers will

be constructed in such a way as to provide unobstructed viewing by persons in wheelchairs.

5. In the planning and design process, furnishing inaccessible areas, such as upper floors of historic buildings, will be discouraged unless essential for interpretation.
6. Lighting will be designed to reduce glare or reflections when viewed from a wheelchair.
7. Alternative methods of interpretation, such as audiovisual programs, audio description, photo albums, and personal services will be used in areas which present difficulty for visitors with physical impairments.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Exhibit typefaces will be selected for readability and legibility, and conform to good industry practice.
2. Audio description will be used to describe furnished rooms, where appropriate.
3. Windows will be treated with film to provide balanced light levels and minimize glare.
4. Where appropriate, visitor-controlled rheostat-type lighting will be provided to augment general room lighting.
5. Where appropriate and when proper clearance has been approved, surplus artifacts or reproductions will be utilized as “hands-on” tactile interpretive

devices.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. Information about room interiors will be presented in a visual medium such as exhibit copy, text, pamphlets, etc.
2. Captions will be provided for all audiovisual programs relating to historic furnishings.

Guidelines Affecting the Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. Where appropriate, hands-on participatory elements geared to the level of visitor capabilities will be used.
2. Living history activities and demonstrations, which utilize the physical space as a method of providing multi-sensory experiences, will be encouraged.

Publications

A variety of publications are offered to visitors, ranging from park folders, which provide an overview and orientation to a park, to more comprehensive handbooks. Each park folder should give a brief description of services available to visitors with disabilities, list significant barriers, and note the existence of TDD phone numbers, if available.

In addition, informal site bulletins are often produced to provide more specialized information about a specific site or topic. It is recommended that each park produce an easily updatable "Accessibility Site Bulletin" which could include detailed information about the specific programs, services, and opportunities available for visitors with disabilities and to describe barriers which are present in the park. A template for this site bulletin will be on the HFC Department of Publications website for parks to create with ease, a consistent look throughout the NPS. These site bulletins should be in large type, 16 points minimum, and follow the large-print criteria on the next page.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. Park folders, site bulletins, and sales literature will be distributed from accessible locations and heights.
2. Park folders and Accessibility Site Bulletins should endeavor to carry information on the accessibility of buildings, trails, and programs by visitors with disabilities.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Publications for the general public:

a. Text

- (1) Size: the largest type size appropriate for the format. (preferred main body of text should be 10 point)
- (2) Leading should be at least 20% greater than the font size used.
- (3) Proportional letter spacing
- (4) Main body of text set in caps and lower case.
- (5) Margins are flush left and ragged right
- (6) Little or no hyphenation is used at ends of lines.
- (7) Ink coverage is dense
- (8) Underlining does not connect with the letters being underlined.
- (9) Contrast of typeface and illustrations to background is high (70% contrast is recommended)
- (10) Photographs have a wide range of gray scale variation.
- (11) Line drawings or floor plans are clear and bold, with limited detail and minimum 8 point type.
- (12) No extreme extended or compressed typefaces for main text.
- (13) Reversal type should be a minimum of 11 point medium or bold sans serif type.

b. The paper:

- (1) Surface preferred is a matte finish; dull-coated stock is acceptable.
- (2) Has sufficient weight to avoid "show-through" on pages printed on both sides.

2. Large-print version publications:

a. Text

- (1) Size: minimum 16 point type.
- (2) Leading is 16 on 20 point type.
- (3) Proportional letter spacing
- (4) Main body of text set in caps

and lower case.

(5) Margins are flush left and ragged right.

(6) Little or no hyphenation is used at ends of lines.

(7) Ink coverage is dense.

(8) Underlining does not connect with the letters being underlined.

(9) Contrast of typeface and illustrations to background is high (70% contrast is recommended)

(10) Photographs have a wide range of gray scale variation.

(11) Line drawings or floor plans are clear and bold, with limited detail and minimum 14 point type.

(12) No extreme extended or compressed typefaces for main text.

(13) Sans-serif or simple-serif typeface

(14) No oblique or italic typefaces

(15) Maximum of 50 characters (average) per line.

(16) No type is printed over other designs.

(17) Document has a flexible binding, preferably one that allows the publication to lie flat.

(18) Gutter margins are a minimum of 22mm; outside margin smaller but not less than 13mm.

b. Paper:

(1) Surface is off-white or natural with matte finish.

(2) Has sufficient weight to avoid "show-through" on pages printed on both sides.

3. Maps:

a. The less cluttered the map, the more the visitors that can use it.

b. The ultimate is one map that is large-print and tactile.

c. Raised line/tactile maps are something that could be developed in future, using our present digital files and a thermaform machine. Lines are distinguished

by linewidth, color and height.

Areas are distinguished by color, height, and texture.

d. The digital maps are on an accessible web site.

e. Same paper guides as above.

f. Contrast of typeface background is high. (at least 70% contrast is recommended)

g. Proportional letter spacing

h. Labels set in caps and lower case

i. Map notes are flush left and ragged right.

j. Little or no hyphenation is used at ends of lines.

k. No extreme extended or compressed typefaces used for main text.

l. Sans-serif or simple-serif typeface.

4. The text contained in the park folder should also be available on audiocassette, CD, and accessible web site. Handbooks, accessibility guides, and other publications should be recorded where possible.

5. The official park publication is available in a word processing format. This could be translated into Braille as needed.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

Park site bulletins will note the availability of such special services as sign language interpretation and captioned programs.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

i. The park site bulletin should list any special services available to these visitors.

2. Publications:
 - a. Use language that appropriately describes persons with disabilities.
 - b. Topics will be specific and of general interest. Unnecessary complexity will be avoided.
 - c. Whenever possible, easy to understand graphics will be used to convey ideas, rather than text alone.
 - d. Unfamiliar expressions, technical terms, and jargon will be avoided. Pronunciation aids and definitions will be provided where needed.
 - e. Text will be concise and free of long paragraphs and wordy language.

Wayside Exhibits

Wayside exhibits, which include outdoor interpretive exhibits and signs, orientation shelter exhibits, trailhead exhibits, and bulletin boards, offer special advantages to visitors with disabilities. The liberal use of photographs, artwork, diagrams, and maps, combined with highly readable type, make wayside exhibits an excellent medium for visitors with hearing and learning impairments. For visitors with sight impairments, waysides offer large type and high legibility. Although a limited number of NPS wayside exhibits will be inaccessible to visitors with mobility impairments, most are placed at accessible pullouts, viewpoints, parking areas, and trailheads.

The NPS accessibility guidelines for wayside exhibits help insure a standard of quality that will be appreciated by all visitors. Nearly everyone benefits from high quality graphics, readable type, comfortable base designs, accessible locations, hard-surfaced exhibit pads, and well-landscaped exhibit sites.

While waysides are valuable on-site “interpreters,” it should be remembered that the park resources themselves are the primary things visitors come to experience. Good waysides focus attention on the features they interpret, and not on themselves. A wayside exhibit is only one of the many interpretive tools which visitors can use to enhance their appreciation of a park.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Mobility Impairments

1. Wayside exhibits will be installed at accessible locations whenever possible.
2. Wayside exhibits will be installed at heights and angles favorable for viewing by most visitors including those in wheelchairs. For standard NPS low-profile units the recommended height is 30 inches from the bottom edge of the exhibit panel to the finished grade; for vertical exhibits the height of 6-28 inches.
3. Trailhead exhibits will include information on trail conditions which affect accessibility.
4. Wayside exhibit sites will have level, hard surfaced exhibit pads.
5. Exhibit sites will offer clear, unrestricted views of park features described in exhibits.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Visual Impairments

1. Exhibit type will be as legible and readable as possible.
2. Panel colors will be selected to reduce eyestrain and glare, and to provide excellent readability under field conditions. White should not be used as a background color.
3. Selected wayside exhibits may incorporate audio stations or tactile elements such as models, texture blocks, and relief maps.
4. For all major features interpreted by wayside exhibits, the park

should offer non-visual interpretation covering the same subject matter. Examples include cassette tape tours, radio messages, and ranger talks.

5. Appropriate tactile cues should be provided to help visually impaired visitors locate exhibits.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Hearing Impairments

1. Wayside exhibits will communicate visually, and will rely heavily on graphics to interpret park resources.
2. Essential information included in audio station messages will be duplicated in written form, either as part of the exhibit text or with printed material.

Guidelines Affecting Visitors with Learning Impairments

1. Topics for wayside exhibits will be specific and of general interest. Unnecessary complexity will be avoided.
2. Whenever possible, easy-to-understand graphics will be used to convey ideas, rather than text alone.
3. Unfamiliar expressions, technical terms, and jargon will be avoided. Pronunciation aids and definitions will be provided where needed.
4. Text will be concise and free of long paragraphs and wordy language.

EXPERIENCE ALASKA
Alaska Transportation Hubs Project

Executive Summary
Front-End Research

Prepared by:
Carol Harding
Interpretive Specialist

Prepared for:
National Park Service
Alaska Region

March, 2007

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Project Background

In the early 1980s, a series of indoor exhibits were planned, designed, fabricated, and installed in 10 airports throughout the state of Alaska. Over the following two decades, most of these exhibits fell into disrepair and almost all had been removed. In 2000, the Alaska Regional Office of Interpretation and Education submitted three separate Project Management Information System requests - one each for a planning phase, design phase, and production phase - to replace the 1980s airport exhibits with funds from the National Park Service's Fee Demonstration Program. In March 2006, all three requests for "Alaska Transportation Hubs Project" were approved for the requested amounts.

In the following months, this straightforward exhibit replacement project evolved into an exciting opportunity to market Alaska's national parks to specific audiences using the most effective approaches at the most opportune locations. In keeping with the NPS's recently approved "Interpretation and Education Renaissance," the use of the word "hubs" in this project was expanded to consider the inclusion of not only traditional "transportation hubs" like airports and ferry terminals, cruise ship docks, and railroad depots, but also visitor centers, gateway communities, convention centers, and even "virtual hubs" such as websites. The project will also take into consideration components within the digital realm - such as podcasts, cell phone tours, and audiovisual downloads.

Project Goal

The goal of this media project is to create an awareness of, and compelling interest in, Alaska national park areas for the target audience through inspirational information and interpretive orientation.

Target Audience

The primary audience for the *Alaska Transportation Hubs Project* is repeat visitors to Alaska who originally visit the state as part of an organized tour or cruise ship and who return to Alaska as independent travelers. The secondary audience is Alaskan residents who typically do not visit national parks in their state.

The project selected these two target audiences for the following reasons:

- Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) statistics from 2006 indicate that over one third of visitors to Alaska return for a repeat visit. In addition, nearly 40% of visitors to Alaska before said that they would be “very likely” to return in the next five years. When visitors first come to Alaska, research has shown that their trip is completely planned well in advance; they have no additional leisure time to make side trips. However, the repeat visitor is more likely to travel independently on their second visit to Alaska. Since many of the “packaged tourists” are currently visiting at-capacity parks such as Denali and Kenai Fjords, the Alaska Regional Office and park superintendents recently worked with ATIA on a marketing campaign to encourage visitors to explore the other 14 national parks in Alaska that are under capacity, such as Wrangell St. Elias National Park, a 5-hour drive from Anchorage.
- Choosing Alaska residents who typically do not visit national parks in their state as a secondary audience has roots in the Alaska Leadership Council 2004 Strategic Planning goal to focus on improving community relations, by ensuring that they “value the NPS as a neighbor and use unit resources in ways that sustain both natural and cultural resources in an unimpaired state.” Likewise, William Cronon, PhD, historian from University of Wisconsin, Madison, in his presentation to Northeast Region Superintendents’ Conference in April of 2006, advised the park service audience to “connect the parks to the land they inhabit so locals and visitors understand more about the land they’re traveling in when they leave the park’s gateway.” The Alaska Visitor and Statistic Program (AVSP) found that 48% of people responding to a questionnaire about their travel source used friends and family living in Alaska to find out information about Alaska. Furthermore, the 2006 *Interpretation and Education Renaissance Action Plan*, produced by the NPS National Education Council, calls for “connecting *all* Americans to the recreational, education, and inspirational power of national parks,” including “ethnic, socioeconomic, and disabled groups that have, for a variety of reasons, not been well connected to national parks in the past.” The *Renaissance Action Plan* states that the “very existence of parks depends upon an American public who values their collective natural and cultural heritage and wants to preserve it.” Therefore, “as we approach the centennial milestone of the National Park Service” in 2016, the plan challenges us to “Engage People to Make Enduring Connections to America’s Special Places.” In the case of this particular project planning outcome, that would translate as: **Engage Visitors and Residents to Make Enduring Connections to Alaska’s National Parks.**

Project Foundation

An interpretive specialist was hired from January, February and March of 2007 to carry out a “front-end research” study in order to lay the groundwork for developing and designing effective media for the *Alaska Transportation Hubs Project*. This foundation summarizes a collection of information and surveys, oral discussions based on four questions, and makes recommendations based on the information collected. These four questions were designed by evaluator Michael Duffin of PEER Associates, a consultant for NPS’s Education and Evaluation Coordination Team (EECT). In addition to a summary of the above information, there are five attached documents that support the summary report: 1) a summary of marketing data, audience surveys, and trends, 2) an inventory of signature film footage and images of visitors recreating in Alaska park landscapes, 3) a list of top wilderness recreation activities in the parks and park specific icons for potential use in graphics, 4) a list of resources including project, travel industry, evaluation, and travel industry contacts, as well as web sites and reference documents, 5) a spreadsheet of the pros and cons of current technology, and 6) a list of professional Alaskan photographers.

Research Method

This report is based on reports collected and reviewed about technology and audience surveys on Alaska visitors, information collected from state tourism and other conferences, and informal discussions conducted with a sampling of Alaska businesses, park service staff, marketing and evaluation professionals, and technology experts.

The following questions, designed by evaluator Michael Duffin of PEER Associates, were asked through email, telephone calls, or informal discussions:

1. What is the current landscape of media types and locations for Alaska visitors receiving information about Alaska national park areas?
2. What are the current gaps in media types and locations for sharing information about Alaska national park areas?
3. What is known about current best practices, trends, and predictions about media/information consumption relevant to the audiences we care about?
4. How does the data gathered from the three questions above interact to suggest a set of potential media projects that can be prioritized and optimized in terms of expected “bang for buck?”

Responses to Questions

1. What is the current landscape of media types and locations for Alaska visitors receiving information about Alaska national park areas? (i.e. inventory of current practices).

Alaska Chief Interpreters

- All parks listed web sites as the most useful and current media type
- Other media listed: face-to-face contact, word-of-mouth, films, brochures, slide presentations, wayside exhibits, bulletin boards, local publications, magazine articles, web cams, blog sites, video podcasts
- Main media locations are park and APLIC visitor center's and web sites

John Quinley (NPS Regional Office)

- Print (newspapers), local and national TV, radio, word-of-mouth to form initial travel idea, then go on-line to web sites for planning (60-70%); but few people buy on the web
- Guidebooks such as Lonely Planet, Fodors, Milepost
- Magazines such as Outdoor Magazine, National Park Foundation

Travel Industry (ATIA/AWRTA)

"Technology levels the playing field. Everyone can produce first rate materials, and it's cheaper than traditional media" (Kathy Dunn/ATIA)

- Public speaking
- Email newsletters
- Media road shows, International media trips and trade shows
- Columns for papers, direct mail
- Sending bulk PR supplies of Alaska materials to targeted groups (chamber, libraries, travel agents, AAA)
- B4UDIE campaign

Business (private non-profit)

- Websites are the most effective approach to connect with audiences
- Branding effort for national parks
- Pins, mugs, T-shirts, totes, all products that have ANHA branding
- Ads, posters and brochures
- Films and books

Visitor Studies and Surveys

I. Denali National Park and Preserve Visitor Study (Summer 2006)

Information sources before visiting Denali?

- 64% travel guides/tour books
- 49% friends/relatives/word-of-mouth
- 40% package tours
- 31% NPS park websites
- 6% other (9% tour, 6% NPS sources, 6% word-of-mouth, 5% Milepost)

The most used visitor service

- 73% park brochure/map
- 54% assistance form information desk

II. Wrangell St. Elias Visitor Survey (summer 2005)

Information sources for nonresidents

- 90% received information before they arrived in Alaska
- 47% other (word-of-mouth, travel books, park brochure)
- 29% web site (NPS and other)
- 10% tour company
- 7% travel agency

Sources of information within Alaska

- 21% Anchorage
- 14% WRST visitor center
- 10% friends, verbal
- 11% other Alaska towns

Cluster Analysis: Information Sources

- Outdoor Enthusiast Visitor: 38% received information from web site, word-of-mouth and Milepost also important
- Park Experience Visitor: 33% received information off internet, 66% visited NPS web site, word of mouth and travel books, 10% from visitor center, 67% got information prior to Alaska
- History Buff Visitor: primary source of information was word of mouth, travel books, NOT internet
- Generalist Visitor: 80% got information prior to trip to Alaska (guide books, Milepost, Lonely Planet). Once in Alaska, obtained information in Anchorage or Fairbanks
- Tourist Visitor: 80% got information prior to trip to Alaska (guide books, Milepost, Lonely Planet) Once in Alaska, obtained information in Anchorage or Fairbanks

Technology

Computers and the Internet play an important role in making vacation plans. (*Images of Alaska 2006*)

A high percentage of 2006 visitors (74%) and high potentials (62%) have used the internet to plan or arrange a vacation, compared to only 52% of high potentials in 2000. As age increases, the

percentage of high potentials that use the internet to plan a vacation decreases. Some (39%) high potentials have used the Internet to choose a vacation, but primarily, the majority of high potentials use the internet as a planning tool to get information about vacation destinations (80%), make travel-related purchases (79%) and to get specific information from businesses at a vacation destination (63%). Two in five (41%) visitors and one in four (25%) high potentials with internet access receive electronic travel newsletters or travel-related updates or specials.

2. What are the current gaps in media types and locations for sharing information about Alaska national park areas? (i.e. inventory of unmet opportunities).

Alaska Chief Interpreters

- Foreign language versions of media, consolidated park newsletter, radio station broadcasts, getting park info to local businesses, comprehensive image library, inadequate info on Alaska Channel, inadequate trail signage, reaching visitors on cruise ships, planes, vessels, at ferry or cruise ship terminals via DVD or pod casts.
- Only one park is using a blog site, associated with grizzly bear cams
- Park web sites tend to be static and boring. Most parks do not have web designers, but often rely on staff not trained in graphic design or layout
- Lack of professional photography and film footage for digital products
- Lack of infrastructure to initiate and maintain digital products (ex: from Roy Wood at Katmai who is experimenting with pod casts: park service doesn't allow subscriptions for pod casts, demands have exceeded bandwidth)
- Parks don't have the budget or personnel to maintain AV media products or interactive exhibits at airports

John Quinley (NPS Regional Office)

- "There is good coverage in Alaska of news events, but not as many opportunities for sharing information about Alaska National Parks. Local TV does that sometimes. Anchorage Daily News has an Outdoor and Travel Section, but mostly geared toward travel outside Alaska. Parks are not where the newspapers are. Newspapers are spending less and are therefore reluctant to produce local stories. The Fairbanks and Juneau papers very parochial."
- Interpretation and communication not connected to the web

Business (Private Non-Profit)

- Cracking the industrial tourism trade (cruise ship packages) (C. Money)

3. What is known about current best practices, trends, and predictions about media/information consumption relevant to the audiences we care about?

Alaska Chief Interpreters

- There are more independent travelers; smaller group sizes; stays are longer; cruise ship age is younger; travelers tend to take whole families (from Chris Smith from APLIC)
- Large LCD monitor in King Salmon airport with changeable panels are planned (Roy Wood, Katmai)
- Katmai is experimenting with video podcasts
- New visitor centers planned for Kenai Fjords, Denali (Eielson), Western Arctic (Kotzebue)
- New films are under production or will be soon for Kenai Fjords, Fairbanks APLIC, Denali (Climbing Mt. McKinley), Klondike Gold Rush
- Klondike Gold Rush is working with cruise ships and bus lines to get park message on monitors
- Lake Clark has partnered with a local community museum to develop educational programs using a bear cam at McNeil River Bear Sanctuary
- Katmai and Yellowstone experimenting with podcast programs (see: <http://www.nps.gov/yell/insideyellowstone/index.htm>)
- Yellowstone is developing "The Online Roving Ranger program" (ORR) that will result in the creation of videos of short ranger talks that are similar to the informal contacts made by interpretive park rangers roving our NPS units. In doing so, it will present the NPS interpretive and educational messages to many millions of online visitors over the internet. The videos created will be available as streaming online presentations as well as podcasts that can be downloaded to iPods (and other A/V devices) to be used as portable video wayside exhibits in NPS units. It will allow every unit to develop their own ORR web videos and podcasts. The project will cover the cost of training as well as travel to the training location, lodging and per diem.

John Quinley (NPS Regional Office)

- There are opportunities in the state in print and broadcast
- Banners are a great conversation starter. They are also easy and cheap to make (\$200 to print), and can be used for different events
- Recommends on-board ferries as hubs because they have a captive audience and lots of wall space available
- Recommends a direct product to resident Alaskans, who can pick up a media message and act upon it

Travel Industry

- Alaska Railroad is investigating placing digEplayers on their rail line to and from Anchorage/Denali/Fairbanks

- Alaska Railroad is receptive to playing a 5 minute DVD about parks at their Anchorage depot (Ruth Rosewarner/Alaska Railroad)
- Alaska Airlines, as of April 15, is playing four park films on all flights over 3 ½ hours long (*Heartbeats of Denali; Glacier Bay, Beneath the Reflections; Where Rivers Meet* (Yukon Charlie NP&P); *Crown of the Continent* (Wrangell St. Elias NP&P))
- ATIA is running a promotional campaign called "My Alaska..." on coffee cups (ex: "In the early morning I hike up Mt. Alyeska with my dog, the breakfast at the Bake Shop")

Market Surveys

Continuing the trend, the internet plays a stronger role in arranging vacation travel than it did in 2000 and 1996. (*Images of Alaska 2006*)

- Three in five (62%) visitors used the internet to assist in planning their vacation, compared to 44% in 2000 and 5% in 1996. Although most (68%) visitors using the internet relied on search engines to locate websites, about half (47%) knew the website address and typed it in.

Business (Private Non-Profit)

- Creating coffee table books on Alaska national parks (Charley Money)

Technology Experts

Top 5 internet trends (from Kristen Lindsey @ Apokrisis)

- Blogging (on-line community; great at promoting a product)
- Word-Of-Mouth Marketing (forwarding messages)
- On-line video (YouTube; more and more common...77% visitors preferred using audio iPod rather than traditional labels or audio in a museum setting)
- User generated content (UGC; TripAdvisor, Wikipedia, YouTube)
- Mobile Marketing (blackberry, cell phones)

Video iPod Pilot Study (IMPACT Communications, for Cleveland Museum of Natural History (summer 2006)

- 88% would like to see inclusion of video iPod tour in museum setting
- Over 52% American adult users have taken virtual tours in 2006, up from 45% in 2004. On a typical day, 5 million people are taking virtual tours, up from 2 million in 2004
- 8% preferred signage
- 4% preferred audio enhancement
- 71% preferred story telling video
- 22% preferred 3rd person interpretation
- 7% preferred audio and labeling
- Overall 77% preferred video iPod

Knowledgeable Experts

Top Travel Trends (Peter Yesawich, 2007)

- Family travel (adults with children) will continue to grow at a faster rate than all other forms of leisure travel
- The role of the internet will continue to dominate the travel-planning and booking headlines
- The cruise industry will continue to enjoy remarkable growth, precipitated by the arrival of exciting new ships, an aging population, and general marketing prowess
- The new .travel Internet domain will continue to grow in popularity as suppliers seek to market their products and services in a more refined online environment, and consumers seek refuge from contamination and frustration that accompanies searches in the .com domain

4. How does the data gathered from the three questions above interact to suggest a set of potential media projects that can be prioritized and optimized in terms of expected “bang for buck?”

Media - Print

- Those interviewed were overwhelmingly in favor of banners. They are portable, easily changeable, colorful and attract attention, can dress up events, be placed anywhere, are relatively inexpensive (\$200 to produce), and require little or no maintenance
- “Addition of signs and exhibits explaining the historical significance of the Mill town was highly acceptable to all groups” (*Visitor Preferences for Interpretation in the Kennecott Mill Town, WRS, November 2005*)

Media - Audio

- Produce a radio series that takes listeners on an audio journey through national parks with high-quality recordings from the places, plants, animals and natural places that make parks so special. This is already being done in Utah by the Nature conservancy (*NPS Naturally Speaking Newsletter, Feb 2007*)
- “All five visitor groups to WRST felt that audio tours of Mill Town would do the LEAST to improve their experience” (*Visitor Preferences for Interpretation in the Kennecott Mill Town, WRST, November 2005*)
- When asked which of the three interpretive experiences are preferred: brochure, guided tour, audio tour? (*San Juan National Historic Site Front End Evaluation January 2007*)
 - 50% preferred guided tour (allows visitors to ask questions; engage in dialogue; provide more personal experience)
 - 30% preferred brochures (enjoyed pictures; souvenir; having greater control over their visit)
 - 20% preferred audio tours (technical failure, not allowing questions or dialogue; not being child-friendly)

Media - DVDs

- Those interviewed were overwhelmingly in favor of producing three media DVDs (30 sec, 90 sec, 7 min) for Alaska Airlines digEplayers, monitors on cruise ships, RR depots, hotel rooms, bus lines, web sites, etc. Tourists entered Alaska's national parks in record numbers via cruise ship traffic to three southeast national parks (Glacier Bay, Sitka, Klondike Gold Rush) in 2006 (up 5%). (*Cruise Ships given credit for increase in park visits*, Anchorage Daily News 3/8/07) Therefore, working with cruise ships to get a park product on their monitors would reach a very large audience.

Media - Technology

- Downloading podcast programs at airports found a very favorable response. "<http://www.ParkCast.com> is about supporting the growth of podcasts focused on some of our national parks, and provides the first source of news, information interviews, and commentary about the growth of the parkcast phenomenon." (from NAI newsletter)
"Visitors were quick to embrace the value of anytime, anywhere interpretive content." (*Video iPod Pilot Study* by IMPACT Communications 2006)
- "NPS website was the most frequent source of pre-trip information for nonresident's sampled, verbal communication and travel books were used almost as often." (*Visitor Preferences for Interpretation in the Kennecott Mill Town, WRST, November 2005*) Web marketing could also play a key role in attracting visitors to national parks
- Blog sites are very effective at building support within a "community" of bloggers. Lake Clark is experimenting with a blog site in conjunction with its grizzly cam. "The forum/blog was highly valued as a source of factual information about the bears, their environment, and conservation issues but also as a way to interact with people of like interests. The ability to have questions answered by knowledgeable project staff and volunteers was consistently named as an exceptionally valuable part of the experience." (*McNeil River Remote Video Project Interim Evaluation Report*, December 2006)

Technology Challenges in the Park Service

- Firewalls. (I cannot access programs like YouTube, even though they may relate to my job)
- Lack of developed government protocols for sites such as blog sites
- Subscriptions (needed for video iPods) are not allowed on park websites. Demands have exceeded bandwidth at Katmai
- Yellowstone's video iPods call for "streaming" online presentations
To my knowledge, streaming is not allowed on the park's computers

Media – Three Dimensional Exhibits in Airports

There are conflicting feelings about exhibits in airports. Many feel that they are transition zones, not a destination.

Some like them:

- “Because people are getting to the airport earlier and are looking for something to do to get their mind off airlines being late” (Scott Haberstadd/Alaska Airlines, Charley Money/ANHA)

Some like the idea, but are hesitant because the park cannot maintain the exhibits once installed:

- “If we do 3-D exhibits, please no moving parts because the park does not have the resources for maintenance” (Park Interpreters)
- Airports are transition zones. In order to be effective, the media product in an airport must be: different and unique from other competitors, can't be found anywhere else, tie into statewide, national trend, have high visibility (ATIA)

Some do not like them:

- “We should not do exhibits at airports because half the people are leaving, half are not receptive, and by the time they arrive, they know what they are going to do.” (John Quinley)

Hub Locations

Site Location

- Anchorage was cited most often as the town within Alaska where visitors obtained information about Kennecott Valley, but significantly more nonresidents obtained information about Alaska prior to visit. (*Visitor Preferences for Interpretation in the Kennecott Mill Town, WRST, November 2005, pg 66*)
- Mt. McKinley (36%), Anchorage (30%), Fairbanks (25%) and Juneau (22%) are the top places 2006 visitors would like to visit if they were to return to Alaska (*Images of Alaska 2006*)

Mode of Travel

- Mode of travel to Alaska: air (57%), driving (35%), cruise ship (33%)
- Visitor volume by exit mode: air (48%), highway (4%), cruise (47%), Ferry (1%) (*Images of Alaska 2006*)
- High potentials are more likely than visitors to enter Alaska by air (58% vs. 39%) or private car/truck (6% vs. 1%), and less likely to enter by cruise ship (25% vs. 53%) (*Images of Alaska 2006*)
- While in Alaska, visitors used a variety of modes of transportation including these top mentions: a tour/charter bus (54%), train (36%), cruise ship (35%), private vehicle (29%). (*Images of Alaska 2006*)
- While in Alaska, high potentials believe their primary form of transportation will be a private vehicle (47%) or cruise ship (17%) (*Images of Alaska 2006*)

- **Cruise Ships Given Credit for Increase in Park Visits** (*Anchorage Daily News 3/8/07*)
 - 2005-Park Service counted 2.36 million visits
 - 2006-Park Service counted 2.46 million visits (up 5%) even while the trend nation wide was flat
 - Most of increase was driven by cruise-ship traffic to three southeastern parks: Glacier Bay, Sitka, Klondike Gold Rush
 - 14 additional cruise ships will be allowed in Glacier Bay during the summer

Websites

- NPS website was the most frequent source of pre-trip information for non residents sampled, verbal communication and travel books were used almost as often. (*Visitor Preferences for Interpretation in the Kennecott Mill Town, WRST, November 2005, pg 66*)

Themes for Graphics

Top-ranking interests Before Visiting Alaska:

- Historical (69%), day hikes (61%), wilderness recreation (53%), remote areas (39%), backpacking (30%) (*Images of Alaska 2006*)

Top-ranking interests while visiting Alaska:

- Glaciers (94%), wildlife (92%), mountains (91%), open spaces (90%), visit national and state parks (90%), see native villages, totems, etc. (84%) (*Images of Alaska 2006*)

Top 10 activities in Alaska:

- Shopping (71%), wildlife viewing (59%), cultural activities (56%), sightseeing (48%), train (42%), hiking/nature walk (36%), day cruises (35%), fishing (21%), flight seeing (18%), visiting friends/relatives (17%) (*Images of Alaska 2006*)

Denali National Park Visitor Study Summer 2006

- The most important reasons for visiting Denali: 93% wildlife, 93% enjoying scenic beauty, 89% visiting Alaska, 82% viewing Mt. McKinley
- The most common activity in the park: 94% viewing wildlife, 93% viewing scenery, 63% experiencing wilderness, 53% photography/painting/drawing, the least important was climbing 2%
- The most important activity in the park: 97% viewing scenery, 94% viewing wildlife, 92% experiencing wilderness, 91% photography/painting/drawing, least important was shopping 13%

Wrangell St. Elias Visitor Survey (summer 2005)

Primary activities for residents and nonresidents (similar for both)

- 29% - 34% hiking (most frequent activity among nonresidents), 10% - 15% exploring the Mill Town (most common among Alaska residents), 35% - 23% nature walks, 13% sightseeing, 6% other (Alaska residents are more likely to go backpacking and biking than nonresidents)

Images of Alaska 2006 Survey

- Perceptions of Alaska as an excellent destination for its natural beauty and wildlife are high and should be emphasized in marketing efforts. Visitors also give excellent ratings for Alaska as a unique/one-of-a-kind destination, the quality of the overall experience, the opportunities for adventure.
- High potentials are most interested in experiencing the things that are the most unique to Alaska. 90% or more are interested in experiencing the midnight sun (95%), seeing the glaciers of Alaska (94%), seeing the northern lights (93%), seeing wildlife in their natural habitat (92%), seeing Alaska's mountains (91%), and visiting Denali and Glacier Bay National Parks (91%)

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on examining and distilling the above information. Using technology is “like going to a party....organizations need to find a way to stand out by being funnier, more interesting or better dressed....” (*Virtual Sites Give a Taste for the Real Thing* ADN 3/12/07). The same can be said for exhibits in airports. If we do exhibits, banners or other media, we must insure that we stand out to be noticed. Media must have the “wow” power amidst all the other competition!

Historically, the National Park Service has been behind the technology curve. However, the recently adopted 2006 NPS *Renaissance Action Plan* encourages parks to “adopt innovation in interpretation and education technology.” To further reinforce the use of technology in parks, President Bush, while visiting Shenandoah National Park on Feb 7, 2007, made the following statement: *We want to spend time making sure that we enhance educational opportunities in our park system through new technologies. The iPod is hip amongst some of the younger citizens here in the country, people we want to encourage to come to the parks, so we need to make sure to apply that technology with educational opportunities, as somebody goes walking through our parks.*

Project Direction

- Project must emphasize the lesser known parks that are easily accessible by road (ex: Wrangell-Saint Elias)
- Project must be different and unique, that can't be found anywhere else, that stands out in a crowd.

Produce a “Suite” of Products

- The “suite” of products could include an interactive exhibit component, audio visual product(s), and print materials such as posters and banners. There should be a “blend the physical with the virtual environment” (*Museums in Transition: Emerging Technologies as Tools for Free-Choice Learning*)
- Any digital elements designed for the project should be “grounded” (located) in a physical exhibit at a specific hub site(s) in Alaska. Interactive exhibits could include an iPod docking station (Overall 77% preferred video iPod to signage *Museums in Transition: Emerging Technologies as Tools for Free-Choice Learning*), web access, and three dimensional objects. These interactive exhibits should be prototypes, tested during all phases of the project development.

- Other AV products (DVDs of varying length) could be designed for monitors on airplanes, buses, cruise ships, ferries, hotels, and iPod programs. Print products (such as banners and posters) that are flexible and easily updated and replaced could be used in smaller, rural hubs.
- These “suite” of products should be tailor made for each park but have an Alaska theme that holds together through bold, graphic elements which stand out from competitors.

Park Graphics

- Graphics should feature spectacular images of people recreating in park scenery. “Viewing outstanding scenery” is the highest rated activity that both visitors and prospects like to do while on vacation. Wildlife/animals and sights/attractions are distant seconds. (*Images of Alaska 2006*)
- Graphics must reflect the varying interests of visitors in specific parks (i.e.: Visitors at Wrangell St. Elias are more interested in history, while visitors at Denali are more interested in scenery and wildlife)

Technology

(Museums in Transition: Emerging Technologies as Tools for Free-Choice Learning)

Technology downsides

- Caution against an over-reliance on technology to accomplish goals. Figure out the visitor experience first. Don’t lead with technology.
- Significant differences in access to and understanding of technologies between people of different races, genders, and socioeconomic groups.
- Technology easily gets out of date (needs to be relevant to today)
- People are saturated with their information space

Recommendations

- Blend the Physical and Virtual Environment
- Technology is a Means, Not an End: Technology must add value to the visitor experience, and must be apparent to the visitor
- Choose Wisely: Choose the specific technology that best supports the program and visitor experience
- Know Your Audience: Understand ways in which audience uses technology in their daily lives and the specific technologies they use.
- Educate Your Users: Provide visitors with technology that is self-explanatory and designed to enhance learning
- Design for Experience, Not for Hardware: Focus first on the visitor experience

- Provide Sufficient Resources: Staff and funding; create a research and development budget
- First is Not Always Best: Use standard, proven, off-the-shelf hardware and software (best practices, cost-effective, well supported, and familiar to users)

Hub Locations

- “Don’t compete where you have a competitive disadvantage.” (ATIA Conference)
- Hub sites should include Anchorage, Fairbanks, Tok and cruise ships. Highway visitors are more likely to visit Fairbanks and Tok, air visitors are more likely to visit Anchorage (*A Profile of Visitors to Rural Alaska March 2006*) (*Cruise Ships Given Credit for Increase in Park Visits, Anchorage Daily News 3/8/07*) “Anchorage is by far the most visited destination for sightseeing and Independent travelers, and compared to prepaid visitors, they are more likely to have visited Mt. McKinley/ Denali, Fairbanks, the Kenai Peninsula, Prince William Sound, Alaska Highway, Valdez, Mat-Su Valley, Copper Valley, Arctic, and Cordova.” (*Images of Alaska 2006*)
- Hub sites should consider airports in Seattle and Portland, as air markets tend to draw more from the Western states (*A Profile of Visitors to Rural Alaska March 2006*)
- A Hub site should also include the internet with blog capabilities. The Internet (62%), travel books (55%) and friends/relatives (42%) are top mentioned resources visitors use to assist in planning or arranging their Alaska vacation.” (*Images of Alaska 2006*) Blog sites are very powerful tools to build a community of supporters. Lake Clark’s grizzly cam has attracted some very passionate bloggers that have “developed a sense of personal connection with and proprietary interest in Alaska’s biological resources. Many McNeil blog/forum participants became downright possessive about McNeil Sanctuary and the bears, forming their own *Bears Anonymous Group* (BAG). Some participants felt empowered and take personal action to influence sustainable public resource policies. As of December 8, 2006, online participants helped gather 2,870 signatures on a Friends of McNeil River opposing new bear hunting openings near McNeil Sanctuary.”
<http://forums.ngm.com/forums/15/ShowForum.aspx>
(*McNeil River Remote Video Project Interim Eval Report, Dec 2006*)

Evaluation

The 2006 *Interpretation and Education Renaissance Action Plan* calls for an increased use of technology to “remain relevant to today’s visitor” and also emphasized a wider application of standards including “creating a culture of Evaluation.” The National Park’s Service-wide Interpretation and Education Program has been directed to incorporate an evaluation process at all stages of project development, and to use the data to modify and improve products and services. The *Transportation Hubs Project*, in keeping with the *Interpretation and Education Renaissance Action Plan*, is committed to incorporating Front-End, Formative, and Summative evaluation throughout the project.

Objectives:

- The primary objective of the evaluation component for this project is to *acquire a better understanding* of the best locations and method(s) for connecting the public to information about the recreational, educational, and inspirational opportunities embodied by national parks in Alaska - and to *use that data to improve the effectiveness* of the media product(s) created by this project.
- The secondary objective of the evaluation component is to systematically document the evaluation process itself for use as a case study for other national parks in Alaska and throughout the national park system, to help NPS become a “learning organization” and become more cost-effective by not “re-inventing the wheel.”
- A third goal, if it proves to be the best way to gather evaluation data, is to work with partner universities by employing students in all stages of the evaluation process. From the very onset of this project, evaluation expert Michael Duffin of PEER Associates, and a cooperating partner with the National Park Service’s Educational Evaluation Coordination Team (EECT), and Neil MacKay of Harpers Ferry Center, have acted as technical advisors to ensure that a cost-effective methodology is utilized that helps us gather relevant and useful feedback. Working off their “Evaluation Planning Form,” we have structured the sequence of building an evaluation plan that will lead to useful and crucial results.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ATTACHMENTS

- Visitor Survey Summary Notes (Carol Harding, March 2007)
- Media Landscape and Iconic Representation, in spreadsheet format (Carol Harding, March 2007)
- An inventory of film footage in spreadsheet format (Carol Harding, March 2007)
- Technology: Pros and Cons in spread sheet format(Carol Harding, March 2007)
- Project Contacts and Resources List (Carol Harding, March 2007)
- List of Professional Alaskan Photographers (Carol Harding, March 2007)
- Evaluation Planning Form, in spread sheet format (Carol Harding, March 2006)

REFERENCE MATERIALS

NPS Visitor Surveys

- *Visitor Preferences for Interpretation in the Kennecott Mill Town, Wrangell St. Elias NP&P* (Peter Fix, UAAF, November 2005)
- *McNeil River Remote Video Project, Interim Evaluation Report* (Mike O'Meara, December 2006, Lake Clark NP)
- *Denali National Park and Preserve Visitor Study* (University of Idaho, summer 2006)
- *Strategic Marketing Plan, Alaska Public Lands Information Centers, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, Tok* (Bernholz and Graham, April 2004)
- *Draft Exhibition Evaluation, A front-end Evaluation of the San Juan National Historic Site* (Randi Korn & Associates January 2007)
- *Interpretation and Education Renaissance Action Plan* (National Park Service Education Council, fall 2006)

Newspaper Articles

- *Cruise Ships Given Credit for Increase in Park Visits* (Anchorage Daily News 3/8/07)

Evaluation

- <http://www.nps.gov/hfc/pdf/evaluation>
- www.stasu.edu/msn (Evaluation info)
- www.nps.gov/interp/idp (Evaluation info)

- <http://www.nps.gov/hfc/products/evaluate.htm> (HFC Eval link)
- <http://www.uvm.edu/envnr.parkstudies>
- www.psu.uidaho.edu (reports on visitor center studies in Alaska)
- <http://www.psu.uidaho.edu/vsp.htm> (NPS Visitor Studies Project, University of Idaho)

Market Research

- www.alaskatia.org/research/research.asp (ATIA Research)
- www.dced.state.ak.us/oed/toubus/research.htm (State of Alaska Research)
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- Kristen@apokrisis.com; Apokrisis.com Kristen Lindsey, Internet Marketing Strategist, 258-2133,
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- www.womma.org (word-of-mouth marketing)
- [49th reel.com](http://49threel.com) (case study for consumer generated video)
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