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protected areas



## Planning interpretation - **The Plan**





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## Planning interpretation - **The Plan**

- provides the strategy to ensure that messages **are truly connecting with, and being understood, by audiences** in the most cost-effective and powerful ways possible.
- It helps identify themes effective media and services to deliver your messages, engage and inspire your visitors, and increase visitation and memberships.
- Document. Project. Process. Conversation. Collaboration. Negotiation. Journey. Aspiration. Manifesto...



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## Planning interpretation

- Interpretive planning happens at many different scales – from a whole area/park to a single display.
- Within NP you might need:
  - A Park-wide interpretation strategy
  - Local Interpretive Plans for the main honeypot areas
  - Individual interpretive plans for each visitor centre





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## Planning interpretation / in theory

- Purpose (WHY),
- Audience (WHO),
- Outcomes (WHAT)
- and interpretive delivery mechanisms (HOW).



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# Planning interpretation / in practice

- introduction;
- context – the background to the project;
- vision of the organisation – a reminder for internal readers and context for external readers;
- heritage statement – a description of the heritage asset you are proposing to interpret, perhaps a written statement of significance or conservation statement;
- strategic integration – how this plan fits with other plans and/or heritage sites;
- current offer – a review of existing interpretation;
- interpretive objectives – why you're doing this;
- audiences – current and potential and what you know about them already, including a summary of any segmentation and/or pen portraits and any market testing results;
- front-end and formative testing plans/results;
- visitor outcomes – what you expect visitors experience;
- themes and/or messages – what you would like visitors to take away with them;
- interpretive thinking – the principles of your work and the rationale behind what you are proposing;
- audience/interpretive rationale – a description of how audience insight has had a direct impact on the interpretation you are proposing;
- visitor journey – a description of what visitors will experience, from start to finish, including visitor flow and circulation;
- accessibility – how the interpretation will be accessible to all;
- interpretive methods – the devices you intend to use;
- design – the look and feel of 2D and 3D elements;
- comparators – other heritages sites that have inspired you or set a precedent;
- practical integration – how this plan will fit with rest of the heritage site;
- participation – a description of how audiences will be involved in the creation of content;
- summative evaluation – how you intend to evaluate your work once completed;
- renewal and maintenance – what will need to be done to keep the resulting interpretation in check once it has been installed;
- budget – an indication of what this will all cost;
- schedule – a programme of activity between sign off and opening date;
- management – how the project will be overseen and kept on track;
- personnel – the people who will deliver this interpretation plan.



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## Planning interpretation / key planning issues

1. **Why** do you want to interpret something?
2. **Who** should be *involved* in the interpretive process?
3. **What** are you **interpreting**?
4. **Who** you are interpreting **for**?
5. **What messages** do you want to communicate?
6. **What** are your specific **objectives**?
7. **What media** will you use?
8. **How** will your interpretation be **implemented**?
9. **How** will it be **evaluated**?
10. **How** will it be **maintained**?



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# 1. Why do you want to interpret something?

The first Q: what is the real reason to interpret something?

- education?
- conservation?
- marketing and promotion?
- raising funds?
- visitor management?

**...or simply to give your visitors a more enjoyable experience.**



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## 2. Who should be involved in the interpretive process?

Involve right people!

Involve different people/stakeholders! *...with different views about what messages should be communicated to visitors.*

DMOs, NGOs, local communities, voluntary groups, etc.

At the other end of the scale, only one person may be needed to plan a simple piece of interpretation, but...



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## 2. Who should be involved in the interpretive process?

- curators/historians/scientists/rangers and other subject experts – also known as the institutional knowledge, potentially including external advisers;
- designers – both 2D (graphics/layout) and 3D (spatial);
- professional interpreters;
- learning/education staff;
- audience researchers;
- communications, marketing and public relations;
- front-of-house/operations;
- access specialists;
- collections management staff and conservators;
- architects (if required);
- finance/legal staff;
- project management,
- ...



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### 3. What are you interpreting?

You need to think carefully about what you want to interpret. The key question to ask is:

**What is special about your site, feature or collection?**





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## 4. Who are you interpreting for?

It is essential to understand your visitors so that your interpretation is relevant to them.

- Who are they?
- Why do they come?
- How many of them are there?
- How often do they come?
- Where are they from?
- What interests them?
- How long do they stay?



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## 4. Who are you interpreting for?

Some key points include:

- If you have many **families and school groups** you should do something specific for **children**.
- If you have lots of **foreign visitors** you should **translate** some of your interpretation.
- If you have lots of **repeat visitors** you could **change** part of your interpretation each year, or use arts media that can be equally enjoyed every visit.
- If you have visitors **with particular interests** you should interpret what they are interested in.
- You may also wish to consider potential future visitors as well as your current audience.



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## 5. What stories do you want to tell?

**This is when you start to prepare the actual interpretation.** refine what you wish to communicate into ‘themes’ – the ideas that you want visitors to take away with them.

Themes should be stated as complete sentences that contain one main idea. You might interpret several main themes at a single site.

As a guide, you should be able to complete the following sentence for each theme:

“The thing I want people to learn from this interpretation is...”



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## 6. What are your objectives?

Or **what the interpretation is meant to achieve.**

There are four kinds of interpretive objectives:

- **Learning objectives** – what you want your visitors to know
- **Emotional objectives** – what you want your visitors to feel
- **Behavioural objectives** – what you want your visitors to do
- **Promotional objectives** – how you want to present your organisation

Your objectives should be **specific, measurable and achievable.**

They should justify the resources to be spent on the interpretation, and are a critical reference for your future evaluation.



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## 7. What media will you use?

- at this stage that you should choose your media.
- Let your aims, resources, audience, site characteristics, themes and objectives determine what media you use, not the other way round.



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## 7. What media will you use?

Medium	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Guided walks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very effective form of interpretation</li><li>• Flexible</li><li>• Can present a complex story</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Only reach a small audience</li><li>• Need good marketing and administration</li></ul>



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## 7. What media will you use?

Medium	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Graphic panels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Need no supervision</li><li>• Can reach a large audience</li><li>• Low maintenance</li><li>• Easy for the audience to use</li><li>• Can combine text and pictures</li><li>• Can help orientate visitors</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are becoming ubiquitous and people might be starting to ignore them</li><li>• Can have a negative landscape impact</li><li>• Can be prone to vandalism</li></ul>





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## 7. What media will you use?

Medium	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Publications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can be used on and off site</li><li>• Can contain more detail than a panel</li><li>• Can aid orientation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must be effectively distributed</li><li>• Regular reprints may be needed</li><li>• May be discarded as litter</li></ul>



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## 7. What media will you use?

Medium	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Audio tour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can be multi-lingual</li><li>• Can use narrative to tell a story</li><li>• Potential for creative characterisation</li><li>• May be used indoor and outdoor</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Isolates users from each other</li><li>• Relatively expensive</li><li>• Important operational considerations like the hiring of headsets</li><li>• Hardly can be used outdoors</li></ul>



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## 7. What media will you use?

Medium	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Computer interactive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourages interaction</li><li>• 'Modern' appeal</li><li>• Creative combination of pictures, text and sound</li><li>• Different tools and appliances</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Expensive to program, install and maintain</li><li>• Technology can date quickly</li><li>• Aversion to technology</li><li>• Complicated for some groups</li></ul>



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## 7. What media will you use?

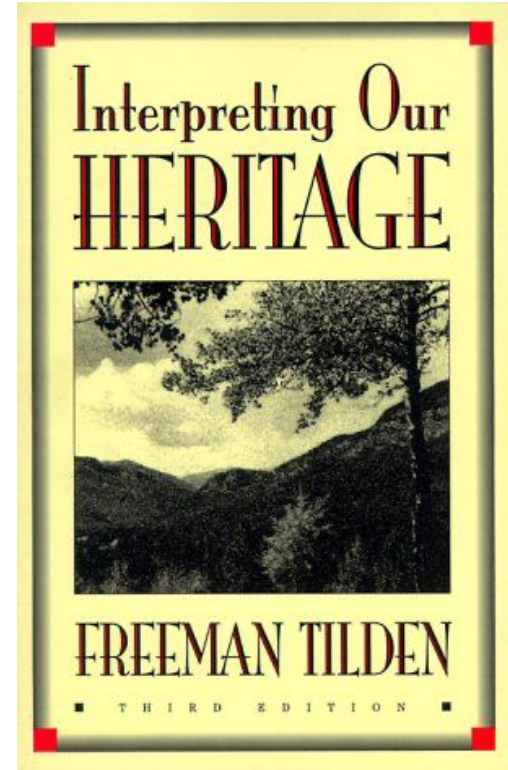
Medium	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Visitor centre</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduces a complex story</li><li>• Can be an major attraction</li><li>• Reaches a large audience</li><li>• Can contain a wide range of media</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very expensive to build and run</li><li>• Needs highly professional management</li></ul>



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## 8. How will your interpretation be implemented?

Just use previous 7 steps  
and “the bible” and follow 6  
principles of interpretation :)





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## 8. How will your interpretation be implemented?

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.

Three types of interpreters:

- the ones you can listen to
- the ones you can't listen to
- the ones you can't help but listen to.

The philosophy of this principle is to become the last one listed :)



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8. How will your interpretation be implemented?

2. Information, as such, is not Interpretation.

**"Americans buy an average of 329,000,000 kg of chips annually. That's over 901,000 kg per day, 625 kg per minute and 10 kg per second!"**

In the time it takes to read this sentence, Americans will have eaten almost 250 kg of potato chips.

If a chip factory can interpret the consumption of chips, think about the possibilities of interpreting the cultural and natural heritage of our planet!







## 8. How will your interpretation be implemented?

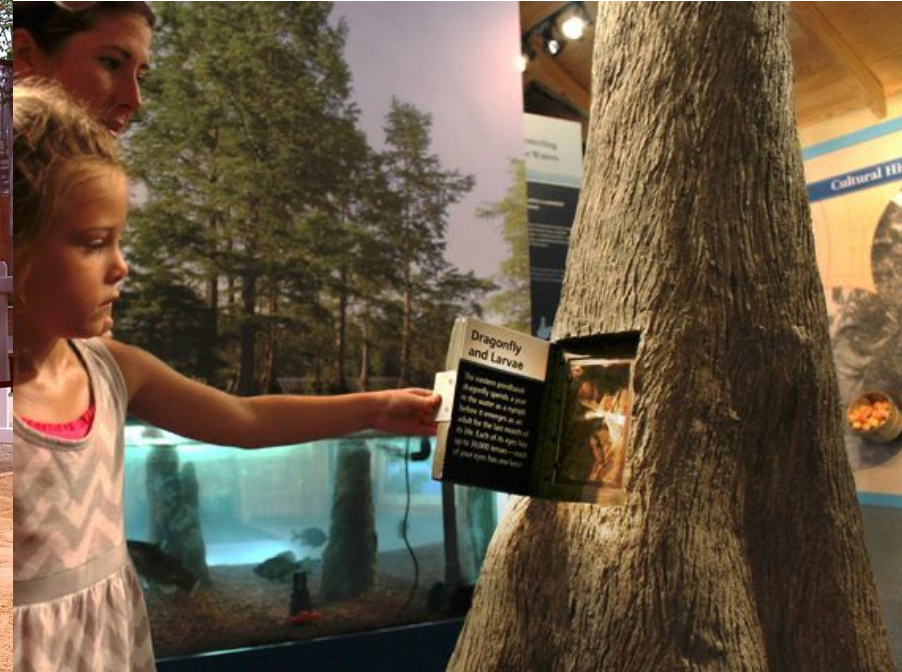
4. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.





8. How will your interpretation be implemented?

4. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.





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8. How will your interpretation be implemented?

5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.

- Create a general unifying theme for the area and then break it down into separate subthemes.
- Connecting individual messages into a bigger picture that visitors can relate to and easily understand.
- People can assimilate information much more easily when given a general context or frame of reference.
- The context is easier to follow - Sequence of events



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## 8. How will your interpretation be implemented?

6. Interpretation addressed to children (say up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.



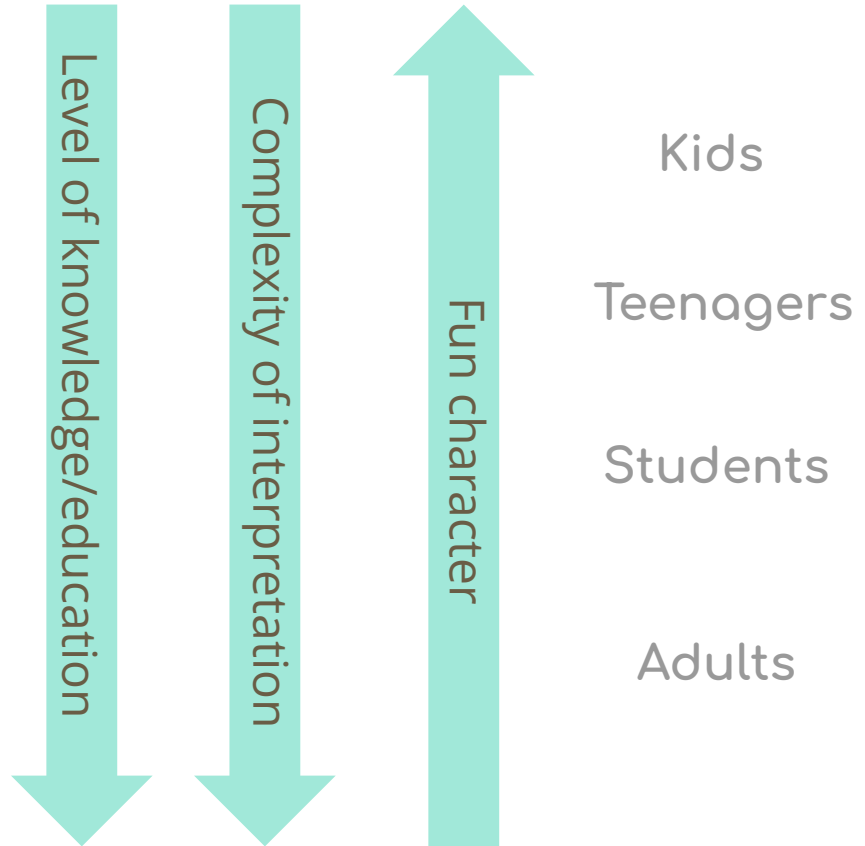


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## 8. How will your interpretation be implemented?

6. An interpretation for children must not be a shortened interpretation for adults!

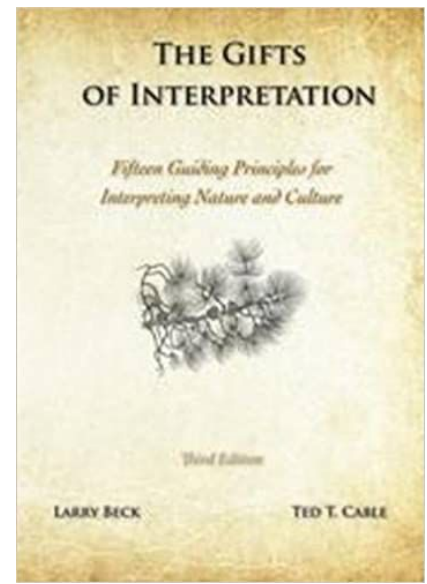
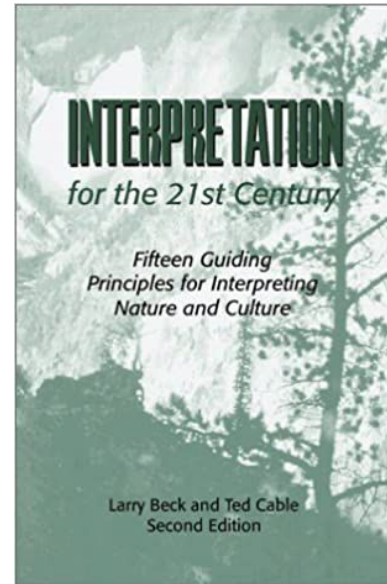
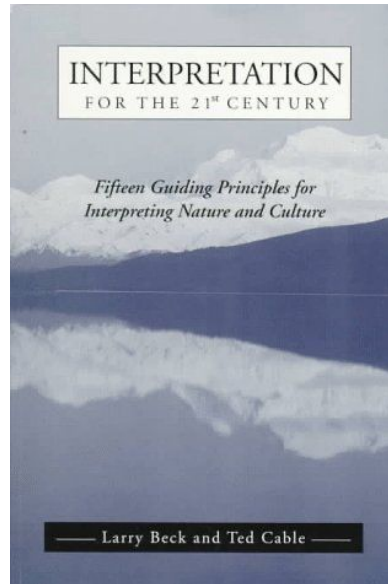




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## 8. How will your interpretation be implemented?

In contemporary practice there are 15 principles :)

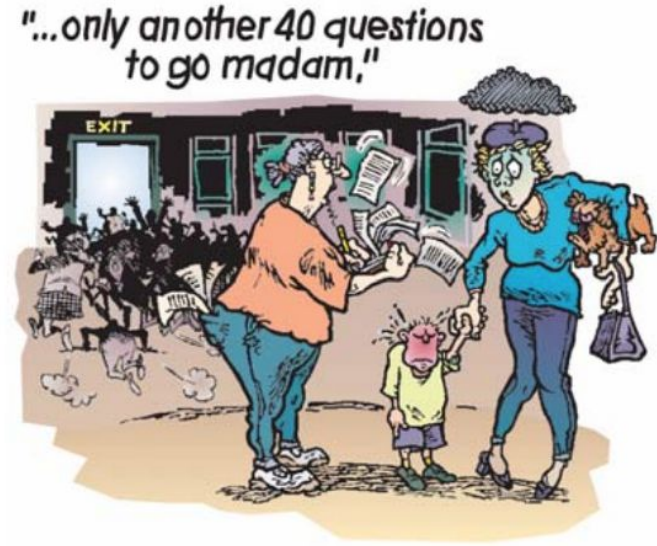




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## 9. How will it be monitored and evaluated?

- This will tell you whether it's working or not.
- Can be carried out in planning and implementation phases
- Different techniques:
  - Observations
  - Tracking/behavioural mapping
  - Questionnaires
  - Focus groups
  - Critical appraisal





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## 10. How will it be maintained?

It is important there are clear responsibilities for maintaining and eventually replacing the interpretation.

- clearing vegetation around a panel,
- making sure all interactives are in working order,
- re-touching paintwork,
- ensuring all lights and fixings are working properly.



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## Planning interpretation / **Final thoughts (only 23 of them)**

### 1. **An interpretation plan is essential.**

Without knowing why, what, who for, when, and how you should interpret, you'll be in a right muddle.

### 2. **Know your visitors and do what's right for them.**

Don't just interpret what you are interested in.

### 3. **Make sure you relate to your audience,** and that they can connect with what you want to say.



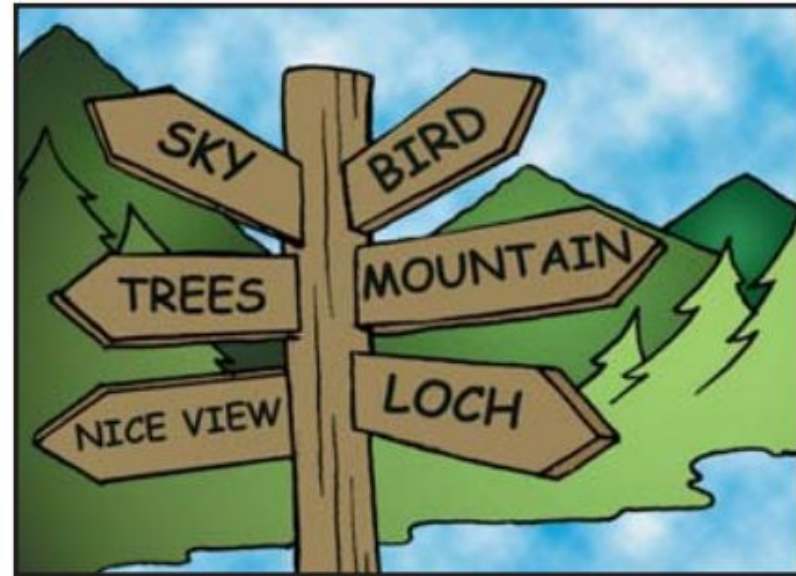
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#### **4. Each piece of interpretation should communicate a single, clear message or idea.**

This is the main ‘theme’ of your interpretation, and can hook your visitors into a more detailed story.

#### **5. Don’t interpret everything.**

Some things are best left for people to discover or wonder at for themselves.





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**6. Get specialist help if you're not sure what you're doing.**

Interpretation looks easy, but is difficult to do well.

**7. Don't assume that your visitors know much about what you are interpreting,**

but don't underestimate their intelligence either.

**8. Dull and boring is bad.**

Fun and provocative is good.

**9. Be prepared to take risks -**

your visitors are not cautious bureaucrats but normal people who will enjoy being excited, amused, challenged and entertained.



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## 10. Stimulate all the senses.

What can your visitors see, hear, feel, smell and taste?

## 11. Be interactive.

Get your visitors doing things and playing games.

## 12. Don't preach.

You may want to change people's attitudes or behaviour, but it pays to be subtle and to let people think for themselves.





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**13. Layer your interpretation so that everyone gets the message,** regardless of how bothered they can be to read / watch / listen to or do the whole thing.

**14. People like stories and puzzles**

**15. Mix your media:** don't rely on ever more panels and leaflets.

**16. A 'book on the wall' is a definite no-no.** Keep any text short and sharp.





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**17. Think about how accessible your interpretation is.**  
Can people get to it, and then can they understand it?

**18. Good design is part of your message,**  
but bad design will obscure it. Don't be seduced into doing  
something that looks good but isn't easy to read.

**19. Don't spend all your money on a nice-looking building only  
to run out of money when it comes to the interpretation inside.**  
Your real 'product' is the interpretation, not the building.

**20. Do encourage your visitors to explore further.**



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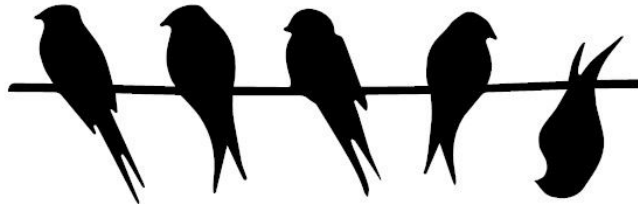
**21. Link your site to a relevant facility such as your local museum.**

**22. Do include responsibilities and budgets for maintaining the interpretation in your annual work programme.**

**23. Do measure how well your interpretation is working.**

And really the last one:

**Be different, always try and dare to be different! :)**





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“Think like a wise man,  
but communicate in the language of the people”

William Butler Yeats