

TURNING STATS & STUFF INTO


# STORIES

## Designing Signs that get NOTICED

(and maybe even READ)

June 20, 2013

## Introductions



- Name
- Organization
- One sentence about your project
- Expectations

## A National Heritage Area

- Tells Nationally Significant Story
- Preserves Cultural Heritage
- Partners with National Park Service
- Managed by a Regional Organization
- Eligible for Matching Federal Funding




*Alliance of National Heritage Areas*

## Alliance of National Heritage Areas




**A Heritage Area may...**

- **Recognize** a critical moment in history.
- **Conserve** a cultural resource such as a historic canal or roadway.
- **Celebrate** and share a large-scale natural resource.
- **Explore** a common theme or an industry.

## National Park Service

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior





## Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area

- To preserve and tell the story of American agriculture and its global significance through partnerships and activities that celebrate the land, people and communities of the area.
- 37-county region in NE Iowa
- 112 Designated Partner Sites



Tell me a fact and I'll learn.  
 Tell me a truth and I'll believe.  
 But tell me a story  
 and it will live in my heart  
 forever.

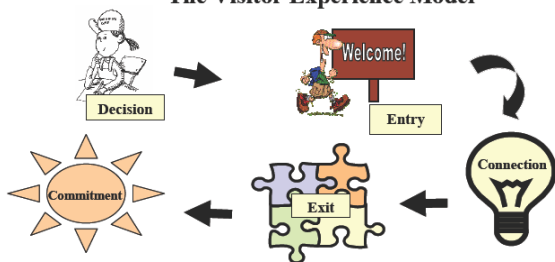
--Indian proverb

## Topics to be covered

- Visitor Experience
- Interpretation
- Central Theme
- Copywriting
- Graphic Design & Layout



## The Visitor Experience Model



## Three Types of Visitors

- The Studier
- The Stroller
- The Streaker



## The Studier

- Very knowledgeable, interested, supportive and ready to contribute to the theme
- Loves to learn new things, explore new ideas and places, filled with questions, loves to read



## The Streaker

- Requires constant efforts being made to maintain their attention
- Ever-changing stimuli



## The Stroller



- Spontaneous, curious, easily interested in new things and willing to switch goals if the new one is compelling
- Knows enough to be willing to learn more if the learning requires little to no extra effort.

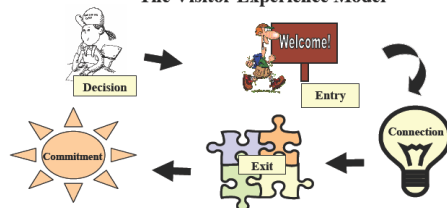
## Keep Asking

- Why would a visitor want to know that?
- How do you want the visitor to use the information that you are giving them?



## Interpretation is Connection

### The Visitor Experience Model



## What is Interpretation?

A mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and meanings inherent in the resource.

*National Association for Interpretation*

## Information vs. Interpretation

- What do you really want your visitors to walk away with?
- Is remembering facts really what you want?
- Provoke, don't instruct
- Visitors want to make their own meaning



## Types of Interpretation

Personal/sequential



Non-personal/non-sequential



## Sequential Products

- YOU control the order in which the audience receives information
- Talks, guided tours, novels, short stories



## Non-Sequential Products



- The AUDIENCE (not you) controls the order in which the information is received
- Exhibits, signs, displays, bulletin boards, multi-media, most brochures, pamphlets, posters



## Connection Stage Activity



To what extent do your offerings focus on helping visitors develop personal connections and meaningful relationships with your site?

## A Central Theme...

- Is a complete sentence, less than 18 words.
- Has both tangibles and intangibles.  
*Tangible*: is a physical attribute of the topic or idea  
*Intangible*: is a sentiment of feeling
- Has a point of view (opinion)

## What Makes a Good Theme?

A theme should:

1. Explain something significant about your resource;
2. Be written as a complete sentence focusing on a single message you'd like visitors to remember;
3. Go beyond a mere description of facts;
4. Be presented at a level of detail that's appropriate for the audience – something that's interesting, but not too specialized;
5. Think tangible things to intangible ideas (explain how different aspects of your resource reflect ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values);
6. Allow visitors to decide for themselves what the resource means;
7. Give visitors an opportunity to discover a few things on their own, and
8. Have room for many related stories within it.

## Topics vs. Themes

TOPIC TITLES	THEME TITLES: TITLE THAT MAKES REFERENCE TO THEME IN EXHIBIT
Agriculture	Agriculture touches everyone... even you! Our lives depend on agriculture.
The Changing Forest	This Forest is Changing
Soil Erosion	We are Losing Our Soil
Preventing Soil Erosion	You Can Save Your Soil



## Theme Activity

Tangible

Intangible

## Theme Title

Apples – The Perfect Choice



## Theme Statement

Always tasty, apples make an easy, juicy snack for all people on the go.

## Themes are Important

- People forget random facts, they remember strong messages.
- Helps you and your audience remember the importance of what you are saying.
- Should answer the “so what?” or “who cares?”

## Copywriting

Less is more.

- **Best:** 50 words per panel
- **Good:** 100 words per panel and 70 words per single text block
- **Acceptable:** 200 words per panel and 70 words per single text block

## Reading Level

- Write at 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade
- Simple & Straight forward
- Eliminate technical jargon

Do: Surfaces that don't absorb water  
Don't: Impermeable surfaces

## Copywriting

- Short sentences
- Short paragraphs
- Bullet points
- Photo captions and image call-outs
- Personal words – you, me, I, we, yours
- Quotes
- Poetry



## Copywriting

"I am an Old Time County Lane. Now I have been officially vacated and closed. (I never liked automobiles anyway.) I invite you to walk — as folks have walked for generations - and be friendly with my trees, my flowers and my wild creatures."

- Forest Preserve in Illinois cited by Tilden

"9 out of 10 raccoons prefer our sweet corn."

-found along an Iowa highway



## LIFE AS A HANSEN DAIRY COW

**1 Birth**  
As a cow, you are born in a barn. You are born with a mother and a father. You are born with a name. You are born with a purpose. You are born to be a cow.

**2 Calves**  
You are born as a calf. You are born with a mother and a father. You are born with a name. You are born with a purpose. You are born to be a cow.

**3 Heifers**  
You are born as a heifer. You are born with a mother and a father. You are born with a name. You are born with a purpose. You are born to be a cow.

**4 Milking Cows**  
You are born as a milking cow. You are born with a mother and a father. You are born with a name. You are born with a purpose. You are born to be a cow.

**5 Dry Cows**  
You are born as a dry cow. You are born with a mother and a father. You are born with a name. You are born with a purpose. You are born to be a cow.

## Graphic Design



- Layout
- Type Size & Style
- Color & Contrast
- Graphics Images
- Quotes

## The Right Graphic

- "Eye Candy"
- A picture is worth a thousand words
- Black & White photos
- Color photos
- Simplifying ideas
- Selection – "then" not "now"



# Copywriting & Design Activity



**New Life for the Old Bridge**

James County saved the Hill Bridge in 1997, and the bridge was listed in the town diary and put on the map. Members of the James County Historical Preservation Commission, however, learned of the historical bridge's true story to save the historic structure. They obtained the support of the Iowa Department of Cultural Resources and the Iowa Historic Preservation Office and the Iowa Department of Transportation.

In the winter of 2005, each of the individual bridge spans was removed intact and transported separately to better serve the public. In the summer, the bridge spans were reassembled and repaired at the original site. In March of 2009, the Iowa National Guard and two Chinese soldiers from Company D, 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, Company D, 25th Infantry Division, were stationed in Wagonwheel State Park. One USARV "Blackhawk" helicopter from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 10th Aviation, 48th Airborne, provided additional support.

The National Guard crews placed the two end spans on their piers, while the third middle span was set down in the river to be moved into place by heavy construction cranes later. The spectacular move was witnessed by hundreds of onlookers as the two end spans were gracefully placed onto the stone piers.

Today, the Hill Bridge stands in its new location as a reminder of times gone by and serves as a prominent form of transportation in Iowa. Now the great bridge serves as a gateway for pedestrians and bicyclists to enter and enjoy the beautiful Wagonwheel State Park while connecting both sides of the Wagonwheel River. The preservation of this bridge is part of those generations an exciting reminder of our rich cultural heritage.

Met: 11:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. - 12:20 p.m. - 12:40 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. - 1:20 p.m. - 1:40 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. - 2:20 p.m. - 2:40 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - 3:20 p.m. - 3:40 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. - 4:20 p.m. - 4:40 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. - 5:20 p.m. - 5:40 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. - 6:20 p.m. - 6:40 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. - 7:20 p.m. - 7:40 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. - 8:20 p.m. - 8:40 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. - 9:20 p.m. - 9:40 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. - 10:20 p.m. - 10:40 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. - 11:20 p.m. - 11:40 p.m. - 12:00 p.m.

**New Life for the Old Bridge**

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**A MOVING EXPERIENCE**

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**THE IRON HEART OF THE COUNTRYSIDE**

Wagonwheel State Park is a beautiful area with a rich history. The park is home to many historic structures, including the Hill Bridge. The bridge was built in 1897 and is a testament to the craftsmanship of the past. Today, the bridge is a popular destination for visitors looking for a scenic view of the river and surrounding landscape.

The Iron Heart of the Countryside is a beautiful area with a rich history. The park is home to many historic structures, including the Hill Bridge. The bridge was built in 1897 and is a testament to the craftsmanship of the past. Today, the bridge is a popular destination for visitors looking for a scenic view of the river and surrounding landscape.










## 2013 SSNHA General Grants

- Applications available after July 1
- Project must be complete by September 2014
- \$50,000 available
- \$1,000 – \$10,000 grants
- 1:1 match



## Silos & Smokestacks Sign Design Guidelines

- Create a standardized recognizable graphic identity
- Raise viewer awareness of the heritage area
- Assist visitors in navigating the heritage area
- Provide additional outdoor presentations of the region's stories and site information



## Design Guidelines include

- Standard elements
  - Symbols
  - Font
  - Logo use
- Sign types – panel layout and base design
  - Interpretive
  - Wayfinding
- Fabrication information
- References and contacts
- Maintenance information



## Sign Types

### Interpretive

- Low Profile Exhibit
  - Tells the story of the site
- Upright Exhibit
  - Tell the story of the site
  - Set context for visit
  - Orient and inform visitor



## Old McDonald Activity

## Takeaways

“Storytelling reveals  
meaning without  
committing the error of  
defining it.”

-Hannah Arendt  
Bartlett's Book of Quotations

**We want to hear from you!**

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