

Journal of Interpretation Research (JIR)

It's Never Been Easier



Photo: Will Husby

By Sue Ellen Fast

Here's a journal published by Interpretation Canada's cousin to the south, the National Association for Interpretation (NAI).

In 2003, I was contacted by the new editor of the *Journal of Interpretation Research* (JIR). Carolyn Ward of Humboldt University asked me to serve on the journal's advisory board. She was looking for input as she took this traditional research journal into a new phase, increasing the breadth of content to include short pieces such as in-house research and current state-of-knowledge articles

along with the longer original peer-reviewed research papers.

Now I'm pleased to say that JIR is much more accessible. Field interpreters and managers keen to apply the latest research and scholarly thinking to on-the-ground work with visitors and communities have never had it easier.

Why do we need research? Here's Carolyn from volume 9 issue 1:

"I believe that research is the key to the survival and development of interpretation. Research provides the glue that links our services, the interpreters, the audiences, and the managers together within the science of the practice of interpretation. The key to defending and ensuring the survival of the field is to critically examine what interpretation does, how it is done, and what results from it."

Until now it has been difficult to access this journal in Canada or in other parts of the world. For people like Betty Weiler, who sees JIR as the premier interpretation research journal and wants all interpreters to be able to access it, this has been "frustrating to say the least". (Betty is a professor at Monash University in Australia, and was a keynote speaker at the 2004 Interpretation Canada national conference in Lethbridge, Alberta.)

But Carolyn has since made the journal more widely and easily available. Now interpreters, managers and researchers everywhere can browse the abstracts at the JIR website and absorb that condensed information, as well as decide about whether to subscribe or locate library copies. Back issues are becoming more accessible too. Both of the 2002 issues are

Journal of Interpretation Research (JIR)

Who: Published by National Association of Interpretation

What: A peer-reviewed research journal with short pieces and state-of-knowledge essays

When: Bi-annually (two issues/year)

Why: to communicate original empirical research and to provide a forum for scholarly discourse about issues facing the profession.

Cost: \$45 (US) Individual

Subscribe

Online: www.interpnet.com/JIR

A Sample Abstract

An abstract is a thumbnail sketch of a research paper. Here's a sample from the *Journal of Interpretation Research* that may interest those with bear awareness and safety messages to deliver.

Assessment of Communication Focused on Human-Black Bear Conflict at Yosemite National Park

Brenda K. Lackey, Ph.D.
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Cleveland, Ohio

Sam H. Ham, Ph.D.
Department of Resource Recreation and Tourism
University of Idaho

Abstract

This study assessed how Yosemite National Park (YNP) targets the continuing problem of human-black bear conflicts via interpretive communication.

The research examines how YNP delivers information to visitors about human-black bear conflicts, and how visitors receive that information. Key variables include message recall by visitors, the effectiveness of message content and media in reaching visitors in various overnight lodging locations, the spatial relationship between message delivery and bear incidents, and the role of park employees in delivering bear information to visitors.

Results indicate that park visitors receive messages about bears. Inconsistencies between messages delivered via personal interpretive services and YNP bear management policy were revealed. Implications for future research and improving YNP's human-bear communication program are offered.

What's in the Latest JIR?

Research

- ***Elements of Successful Interpretation: A Multiple Case Study of Five National Parks***

Doug Knapp and Gregory M. Benton,
Indiana University

- ***The Effects of a National Wildlife Refuge's EE Programs on Elementary School Classes' Knowledge and Attitudes***

Jason P. O'Brien and James L. Pease,
Iowa State University

In Short

- ***Book Review: Interpreting the Land Down Under: Australian Heritage and Tour Guiding***

Edited by Rosemary Black and Betty
Weiler

Reviewed by Joseph Roggenbuck,
Virginia Tech

In My Opinion

- **The Future of Interpretation**

Diane M. Chalfant, Chief of
Interpretation, Yellowstone National
Park

- **It's a Matter of Balance**

Sam Vaughn, Chief of Interpretive
Planning, National Park Service

- **Twelve Trends in the Interpretive Profession**

Tim Merriman and Lisa Brochu, National
Association of Interpretation

- **Legacy Denied**

Myra Dec, Chief of Interpretation and
Education, Apostle Islands National
Lakeshore

now available free in pdf format on the JIR website, and earlier issues will be posted eventually as well.

I encourage all IC members to visit the JIR website and browse through the abstracts to see what's there that you can use. And I encourage anyone involved in interpretive research in Canada, whether in an academic setting or a smaller in-house project, to consider JIR for publication so that we can all have access to the knowledge you gain.

You can reach the JIR website through www.interpcan.ca under Get Info.

Sue Ellen Fast is a consultant with EcoLeaders Interpretation and Environmental Education. She is also the contracted administrator for Interpretation Canada and the editor of *InterpScan*. Reach her (me) at editor@interpcan.ca.

