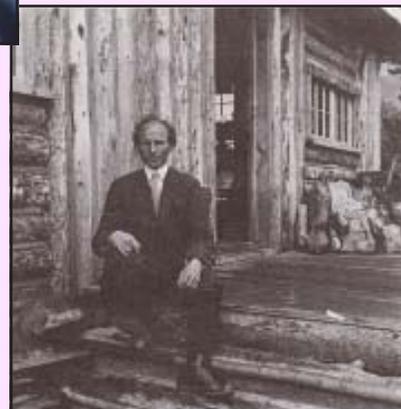


# Professionalism



*Ere long may  
nature guiding  
be an  
occupation of  
honor and distinction. May  
the tribe increase!*

Enos Mills



Courtesy Enos Mills Cabin Museum

© 2003 California State Parks



# Professionalism



What is it? high quality standards for training, conducting, and evaluating interpreters

Why do we do it? to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of interpretation

How do we do it? by providing high quality programs and service

*When love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece.*

John Ruskin



Even the most informal interactions should be conducted with professionalism.

## Introduction

What does it mean to be a “professional?” Is interpretation a profession? Now that we have uncovered the history, purposes, theories, and skills of practicing interpretation, we turn to a more philosophical discussion about the profession of interpretation. What does it mean to be an interpreter? We know what it means to practice the art and science of interpretation, but what does this mean to an interpreter? What are the responsibilities of an interpreter to the agency, the public, the resource, and to you?

Professionalism must exist throughout our programs, staff, volunteers, and nonprofit associations, and in our daily interactions with all those encountered. We have an ethical responsibility to the agency, the resource, the public, ourselves, and to the discipline itself when we practice the art and science of interpretation. These responsibilities and standards of practice combine to form the backbone of much of the profession of interpretation. This module will introduce and propose issues and ideas for contemplation. Keep them in mind as you develop and grow as an interpreter and steward of California’s precious resources.



## Characteristics

Before we begin a discussion of whether interpretation is or should be a profession, we must understand what profession means.

Profession: *n.* a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often long academic preparation (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1994)

Professional: *n.* one that engages in an activity professionally (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1994)

Professionalism: *n.* the standing, practice, or methods of a professional, as distinguished from those of an amateur (Random House Webster's Dictionary, 2000).

There are numerous definitions of profession, professional, and professionalism. It is important to remember that when we try to define something, we typically do so in order to distinguish it from something else. In this case, the effort is to distinguish the professional from the amateur or the untrained. For example, all of the definitions of a professional seem to converge on the ideas of formal training, education, and standardized practices.

In the field of interpretation, discussions of professionalism abound. From the early calls of Enos Mills (1920) to develop the profession, to the current directions by the National Association for Interpretation (NAI, 2002) to pursue and improve the profession, most assert the desire for interpretation to be considered a “true profession.” So what is a profession? Let us begin by examining some basic characteristics and see how interpretation measures up.

## Philosophy

There are some basic characteristics of a profession on which most people agree (Baseman, 1998; Beck and Cable, 2002; Brochu and Merriman, 2002; Knudson, Cable, and Beck, 1999; Sontag and Haraden, 1988). First, a profession must have a knowledge base and a collection of information, theories, and ideas that form the philosophy, framework, and backbone of the field. Tilden and Mills outlined much of the original philosophy of interpretation. Authors such as Sam Ham, Doug Knudson, Ted Cable, Larry Beck, John Veverka, Grant Sharpe, and others expanded upon the early work. Later publications did not serve to replace the articulated philosophy of Mills and Tilden, but they contributed to a living and evolving philosophy. In terms of this first characteristic, interpretation does indeed seem to be a profession.

## Standards

A second characteristic of a profession is accepted standards of practice. In order for interpretation to be considered a true profession, it must assert and maintain a standard code of ethics and practice. In order for this to occur, there must typically be one organization that speaks for the body of practitioners. In other words, in a profession there should not be different rules, standards, and practices for different individuals, parks, or agencies. For example, the American Medical Association speaks for the medical profession. In interpretation, we do have a central organization, the National Association for



## Characteristics

Interpretation (NAI). However, practitioners of interpretation do not have to belong or ascribe to the standards asserted by the organization in order to practice interpretation. In addition, there are different standards of practice depending upon the agency, park, or supervisor for whom you work. These standards of a profession, although constantly changing and evolving, are not strongly or consistently demonstrated in interpretation.

### Certification

Third and closely linked with the idea of standards of practice is the issue of accreditation and licensing. Peer recognition, standards of practice, codes of ethics, and many of the other qualities of a “profession” are often driven and controlled by a licensing organization to which members give the



Cadets at Mott Training Center discover the art and science of interpretation.

authority to provide oversight and control for the profession. The American Bar Association is an example of such an organization. Until recently, there has not been a single organization that licensed or certified interpreters. This lack of professional certification was an indication of the members’ inability to determine what standards should be prescribed. After all, many still consider interpretation to be an art that is above any ability or need to quantify or measure. This lack of certification changed in 1998 when NAI began offering certification in four categories. This was done in order to support the organization’s mission of advancing interpretation as a profession.

### Evaluation

The fourth characteristic of a profession is evaluation, which includes quality control, oversight, and measurement of the application of standards. Research, evaluation, and monitoring are critical to a profession. Methods must exist to increase the knowledge base, develop understanding, and examine the successes and failures of the standards of practice. These are important components of developing the profession of interpretation. Over the years, standardized practices of research and evaluation have been increasing and furthering the development of the discipline (see Module 12-Evaluation). In addition, conferences and other networking opportunities are available to develop and disseminate knowledge. In fact, our effectiveness “depends upon a regular nourishment by well-directed and discriminating research” (Tilden, 1977, p. 5). Although research and critical examination are increasing, there is always room for improvement in this area.

# Characteristics



*It is probable that nature guiding will become a nation-wide and distinct profession, and, though different, ranks with the occupations of authors and lecturers.*

Enos Mills

## Training

The fifth characteristic or quality of a profession is that it provides opportunities for training, education, and development. Enos Mills recognized early the need for training and development of interpreters when he said, “While I have trained a few nature guides there appears to be a need for a



Training is part of an interpreter’s journey to becoming a professional.

State University or a Foundation to regularly develop nature guides” (p. 139). Today there are numerous training, educational, and development opportunities provided by local, state, and national resource management agencies, universities, and NAI. Mott Training Center is one example of an entity that provides a thorough training program for interpretation. This training serves to further the development and growth of the individual, and promotes the overall success of the profession. There are “many avenues (that) contribute to our professional growth. As we

continue to work at a particular site, we grow in our knowledge of the place, we grow in our experience there, and we grow to love the place” (Beck and Cable, 2002, p. 115). This practical site experience, combined with special training and education, helps further the development of the profession.

Interpretation is beginning to demonstrate the necessary basic qualities and characteristics of a profession. It is in its infancy, and the initial stages of growing from a practice to a profession are not without turmoil. Now let us turn to a discussion of the difference between the *practice* and the *profession* of interpretation.



## From practice to profession

### From practice to profession

As a discipline, interpretation is evolving from individuals practicing a craft to cohesive group building and participating in a profession. Interpretation as a practice is as old as the ancient art of storytelling. Interpretation in this sense of the word was used to convey meaning, history, and tradition and was practiced by many. Interpretation as a profession with the associated characteristics previously discussed is a much younger phenomenon. Let us explore the distinctions between the practice of interpretation and the profession of interpretation.

Interpretation is a growing discipline. Although there are many qualities and characteristics of a profession throughout the practice of interpretation, the consistency of their application is lacking. In addition, there are thousands of volunteers or “happy amateurs,” as Tilden called them, and novice practitioners of interpretation throughout the country. In fact, Tim Merriman, Executive Director of the National Association of Interpretation, estimates there are over 250,000 individuals volunteering in the field of interpretation. Many of these individuals have little to no interpretive training yet practice interpretation daily. These individuals are critical to the overall accomplishment of the mission of our parks. We will revisit their role in our profession later in this module. However, they are not professionals practicing the discipline of interpretation. Because so many untrained individuals practice interpretation, many feel interpretation will never be a true profession. For example, would the public ever accept a novice practicing medicine or would they demand that she be a trained, licensed professional? Since it is commonly accepted that volunteers in parks (VIP), with little to no training, work as interpreters, then how could interpretation ever be elevated to a true profession, and should it be?

These issues prompt us to make a distinction between the *practice* of interpreting and the *profession* of interpretation. This distinction is not meant to assert judgment about the rightness or the quality of the service, merely to allow for a critical discussion of interpretation as a profession.

***Perhaps the real challenge is to come up with a code of ethics that all interpreters can subscribe to and leave it at that.***

Wil LaPage

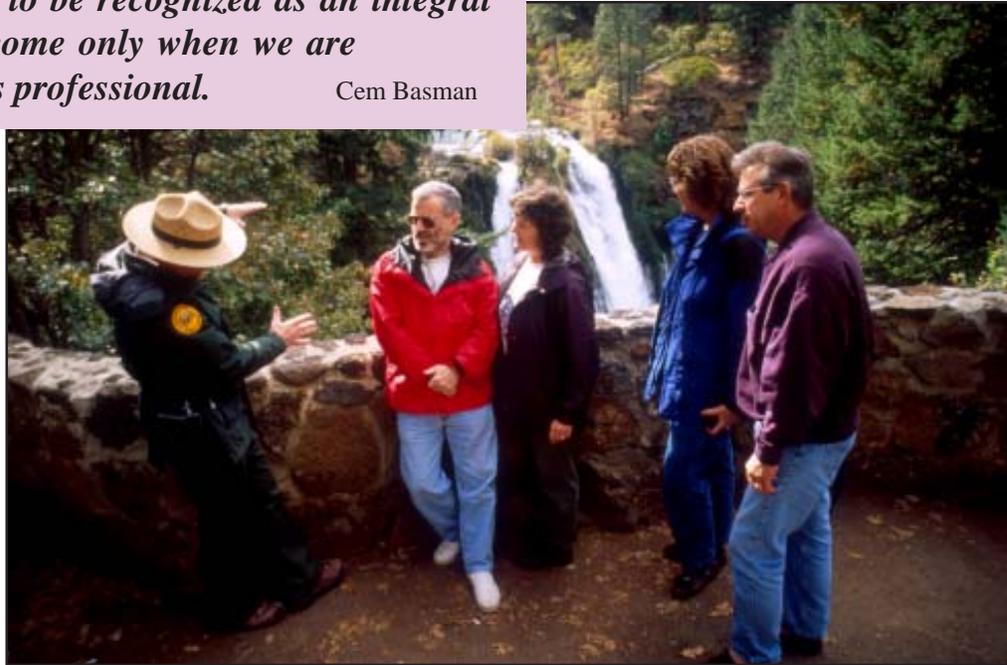
Many in the field become very uncomfortable with discussion of professionalism. They feel they were “called” to be interpreters, and to be categorized a professional only minimizes the spiritual aspects of what they do. Some wonder if the path to professionalism will result in a “path of standardized and sanitized mediocrity” (Basman, 1998, p. 6). The profession is a noble one that is not easily captured by titles, categories, or certifications. In addition, the art of practicing interpretation is not easily conveyed in training or in technical classes. The passion, enthusiasm, and love for the art of interpretation cannot be taught. Further, the attempt to teach the techniques to those without the love results in meaningless and emotionless education-driven programs. These sentiments are not without merit. The dry, information-laden programs performed by the uninspired interpreter are certainly not models of *good* interpretation.

## From practice to profession



*Our struggle to be recognized as an integral service will come only when we are recognized as professional.*

Cem Basman



Every interaction with the public builds on an interpreter's image as a professional.

The other side of this debate recognizes the value of training and education in the development of a profession. Although training cannot replace or teach innate passion, the hope is that practitioners come with the passion and learn the techniques to better carry out the mission. Even ministers and priests that were “called” to the church undergo education, training, and certification processes. This is not to degrade or minimize the spiritual nature of their calling, but instead to elevate the seriousness of their mission by adopting, scrutinizing, and promoting set standards and practices. This is similar to the debate introduced in Module 12-Evaluation between the art and science of interpretation. There are no absolute answers to any of these issues, only the need to have the discussion and continue the evolutionary development of interpretation.

*No one can question the importance of professionally certifying teachers to ensure a standardized level of competence. We must be sure of the credentials of those who influence our children. Conversely, no one can logically question the impossibility of institutionalizing the creativity of artists (although some have tried). Our challenge is to embrace both of these components of our trade and incorporate them into how we define excellence in our diverse (and sometimes eclectic) profession.*

Cem Basman



## Responsibilities

### Responsibilities

Now that we have an understanding of what constitutes a profession and the tenuous journey of interpretation to become a profession, let us turn to a discussion of the responsibilities of an interpreter. As a professional interpreter, you have a responsibility to the science of interpretation that you practice, the agency for whom you work, the audience you serve, and the resources with which you work. In addition, one of the most critical responsibilities is to yourself. Each of these areas interacts with the others to weave the tapestry of what it means to be an interpreter. Although we will discuss each separately, they are all interrelated. These responsibilities help us to begin to distinguish the mere *practice* of interpretation from the *profession*.



We have a professional responsibility to tell the interpretive stories accurately.

***Every interpreter has a personal responsibility to research carefully the messages being conveyed, to represent their organizations faithfully, and to handle the facts, artifacts, and stories of culture and science ethically.***

Lisa Brochu and Tim Merriman



## Interpretation

Every interpreter has a responsibility to know, understand, and apply the best practices of interpretation. It is the collective group that makes up the profession. “Interpreters, as individuals, must protect the dignity and value of the profession in the careful handling of every activity” (Brochu and Merriman, 2002, p. 4). Staying current in the field is the responsibility of every interpreter. Every time an interpreter interacts with the public, he or she represents the field as a whole. The collective reputation of the profession, especially in its infancy, is only as strong as its weakest link. Administrators, managers, and visitors form opinions about the field of interpretation based on personal experiences with individual practitioners. This is where the role that volunteers and “happy amateurs” play in the development of the profession becomes especially clear. We will discuss their role in greater detail later in this module. The key responsibility to the discipline of interpretation is to know how to conduct quality interpretation. It is the individual’s responsibility to stay current in the literature, to learn new skills and strategies, to contribute to the discipline through articles, research, etc., and to participate in training and conferences. Networking is a critical component of improving and expanding the profession of interpretation. The profession is only as strong as the members creating and adhering to it.

## CSP

As an interpreter, you have responsibility to represent your agency in an appropriate and ethical manner. In the field of interpretation, you work for the public you serve, the resources you represent, and the Department. You have a responsibility to positively represent the Department, promote its mission, increase public support, and conduct ethical action in the Department’s best interest. Personal agendas should be secondary to the accomplishment of the mission of the organization for which you work. Life is short. Be sure you are doing something you love. In the field of interpretation especially, the love and passion for what you do plays a tremendous role in your job performance. Visitors can see the innate interest, passion, and care you have for your park and your programs. This cannot be taught through training, books, or manuals. It is *you* who must bring the belief and support in your Department’s mission to the public.



Promote the agency mission in all endeavors.

## Audience

The audience you serve depends on you to convey accurate, fair, and meaningful information. It is your responsibility to serve your clients in the most appropriate and ethical manner possible. Therefore, you have an ethical responsibility to ensure the information and messages you share with the public are conveyed with the utmost quality, discretion, and honesty. Balancing the needs and mission of the



## Responsibilities

agency with the demand to accurately represent the resource is your responsibility. The audience deserves the “truth” of the science, the place, the people, etc., and it is your job as a professional to provide this as ethically as possible.



An audience eagerly absorbs the interpreter's story.

***The audience and even the organization may not know when the interpreter fails to act ethically. Interpreters, as individuals, must protect the dignity and value of the profession in the careful handling of every action.***

Lisa Brochu and Tim Merriman

## Resource

You must represent the resource to the public in such a manner as to ensure its protection, promote visitors' respect and support, and encourage the development of future resource stewards. For many visitors, interpreters serve as the link between the resource and the meanings ascribed to it. Additionally, in many parks the interpreters are the ones most familiar with the resource and the effects of visitor use. You have a responsibility to promote resource knowledge, understanding, and protection through your carefully planned programs. We “speak for the trees,” and in this role we must be able to know what they would say (Seuss, 1971). Research, research, and research are the keys to fulfilling our responsibility to the resource. *Know the resource*: walk the trails, uncover the past, discover the seasons, learn the flora and fauna. *Feel the resource*: slow down and listen, lie on the ground with your eyes closed, step into the past. *Understand the resource*: read, learn the stories, dog-ear the field guides, ask questions. There is no substitute for field experience, for walking trails, for being in the resource, and for knowing the place. As a professional, it is your responsibility to the resource to know it so well that you may accurately and appropriately “speak for the trees.”



## Interpreter

The final responsibility you have is to yourself. In order to be an effective interpreter, you have to feel it, to believe in it, and to sincerely care about what you are doing. You must fuel your enthusiasm, your innate interest, and your passion. Any fire, even one of the spirit, must be tended or it will soon smolder and die. During the first weeks on the job, excitement permeates everything you do. As the interpretive season wears on, you become more comfortable with your programs, the public, and your resource. After the fiftieth time you give that same program... well, it is easy to become complacent. The other responsibilities of a professional interpreter that we have discussed will all be affected if you become bored, tired, or too comfortable. Keep your programs fresh; add new information, modify, read, learn, and always try to remember, *it is the first time visitors will hear it*. Most importantly, keep yourself fresh and renewed. The number one way to do this is to get out in the resource. Walk the trails and the historic sites, and remember why you entered this field in the first place.



Discover the trail, remember your bliss...fuel the fire.

*Do not burn yourselves out. Be as I am - a reluctant enthusiast...a part-time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves and your lives for pleasure and adventure. It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it.*

Edward Abbey



## Putting it all together

### Putting it all together

These responsibilities, coupled with the basic qualities and characteristics of a profession, paint one possible picture of the development and growth of interpretation as a “profession.” The directional development of the discipline should not and will not proceed without division, controversy, and debate. This developmental process should bring about lively discussions regarding quality, quantity, management, standards, oversight, evaluation, and certification, among other topics of interpretation. It is only through intellectual discussions and debates that the profession will evolve and grow. The participation of the practicing members of the profession is necessary for the critical questions to be asked and answered. Where is the profession heading? In what direction should it be going? What is the role of individual members?

#### Interpreter’s creed



**As an interpreter for California State Parks, I shall endeavor to:**

- **Know, understand, and apply the best practices of interpretation.**
- **Conduct evaluation of myself and my programs.**
- **Continually strive to meet agency goals and objectives.**
- **Stay current in the literature, techniques, and skills of interpretation.**
- **Conduct meaningful thematic interpretation.**
- **Keep in touch with visitors’ needs, goals, and desires.**
- **Make all of my presentations, programs, and displays relevant and enjoyable to visitors.**
- **Create and conduct interpretation to protect and represent the inherent meanings in the resource.**
- **Be a role model for environmental responsibility.**
- **Strive to make interpretation universally accessible to all visitors.**
- **Be approachable, kind, and respectful to visitors and colleagues.**
- **Be a resource, mentor, and professional colleague for others.**
- **Create and strive to meet personal yearly goals.**
- **Rediscover the trails or the halls of my resource at least monthly.**



### Supporting the profession

There are two groups that work closely with California State Parks in the design, delivery, and support of interpretation: cooperating associations and the Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) program. These groups are closely aligned with what Tilden termed “happy amateurs” dedicated to the parks. These are people who love the parks and are passionate about helping achieve the mission of California State Parks, but are not necessarily professional interpreters. They may have special expertise, training, or interest in parks and the resources within them. In fact, many are uniquely qualified to act as interpreters of the resource. Because of the important role these groups play in conducting interpretation in California State Parks, we will discuss each one below. Their work in the parks affects the overall perceived professionalism of interpretation in the parks, and they should be closely nurtured, advised, monitored, and trained.

#### **VIP (Volunteers-In-Parks)**

California State Parks (CSP) volunteers are older than the official park system itself. Starting in the 1860s with the caring volunteers who rallied to help establish Yosemite as the first state park, to over 15,000 individuals today, volunteers play a key role in our parks. Volunteers perform numerous services, including working as docents, park hosts, and visitor center staff. These specialized volunteer programs are the ones most closely associated with interpretation.

Volunteers interact with the public daily. They conduct roving interpretation and formal programs, promote resource protection, and provide information and orientation services. These are some of the same critical duties performed by interpreters in the park. These individuals are not “professional,” as we have discussed; they support the paid interpretive staff. However, this does not mean they can not and should not exude professionalism in their actions.

Tilden described the “happy amateur” as the individual filled with enthusiasm and a desire to share that passion with others. “One does not need the background of a formal education to become an amateur of either art or science,” said Tilden (1977, p. 101). Others (Knudson, Cable, and Beck, 1995) have indicated there is no reason volunteers cannot interact with the public in a professional manner. It is up to the rest of the supporting staff and you—the professional interpreter—to ensure that professional standards are adhered to. The Volunteer Programs Manager serves as the statewide coordinator of the Department’s VIP programs. The purpose of the VIP program is to carry out California State Parks’ mission by establishing the highest standards and developing the best quality volunteer programs. Work closely with volunteers in your park to provide training and oversight that will ensure the highest quality interactions with the public. This contributes to the overall professionalism of interpretive services.



Volunteers play a key role in California State Parks.



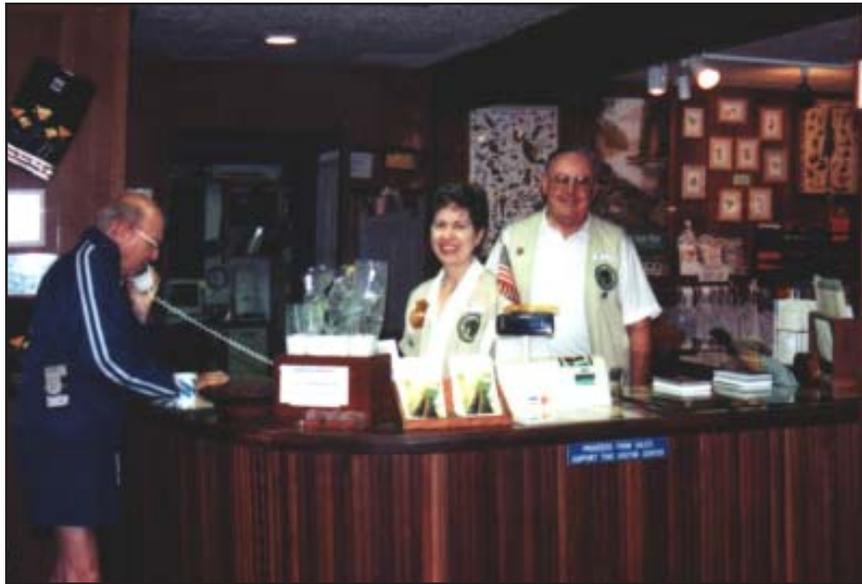
## Supporting the profession

### Nonprofit cooperating associations

Cooperating associations are another critical group of “happy amateurs” helping to fulfill the interpretive mission of CSP. Cooperating associations are nonprofit charitable organizations committed to funding, supporting, and assisting California State Parks in its educational and interpretive mission. Today, there are over 80 cooperating associations raising more than \$12 million dollars to fulfill the interpretive mission of CSP. These organizations provide program support, raise capital needed for interpretive projects, conduct

community outreach, participate in annual training and workshops, and provide educational and interpretive materials for sale through numerous outlets. Wherever a visitor center or bookstore is found, chances are a cooperating association runs the show. As with VIP programs, working closely with your cooperating association to provide professional interactions with the public should be a priority. The presence of cooperating associations extends the reach of park

personnel already stretched between numerous duties. Work with your cooperating association to increase the overall effectiveness of interpretive services provided in the park.



Bookstores are one of the most common interpretive services provided by cooperating associations.

## Professional Organizations

### National Association for Interpretation (NAI)

In an effort to link numerous individuals across the country who participate in and practice the art and science of interpretation, the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) was formed in 1988. NAI was formed when the Association of Interpretive Naturalists (AIN) joined with the Western Interpreters Association (WIA). This, for the first time in the history of interpretation, created one national voice to speak for the discipline. Although the organization is still young and evolving, it does help meet one of the qualities of a profession by uniting practicing individuals into one group. Joining NAI is easy and provides many useful benefits. For more information, visit [www.interpnet.com/home](http://www.interpnet.com/home).



### **California Association of Museums (CAM)**

CAM, founded in 1979, is a nonprofit organization that represents the interests of California museums and their employees and volunteers. CAM's members include educational and research institutions, as well as individuals associated with such institutions. Their function is to interpret and preserve art and cultural and scientific artifacts for public benefit. CAM provides a variety of programs that address issues important to museums and advocates for museum interests at the local, state, and federal levels. CAM's programs include workshops, an annual conference, an informational website, and a legislative advocacy network. CAM encourages the implementation of professional practices and standards in museums, and works to increase the public's understanding of and support for museums. CAM offers both institutional and individual memberships at reasonable prices. For more information on this organization, visit [www.calmuseums.org](http://www.calmuseums.org).

### **American Association of Museums (AAM)**

AAM is a national organization representing museums and their paid and volunteer staff. Founded in 1906, AAM currently has more than 16,000 members, with over 11,000 individual members who span the range of occupations in museums, including curators, educators, designers, directors, public relations staff, security officers, trustees, and volunteers. Individual membership rates are based on income and range from \$50 to \$140. AAM is an advocate for museum issues, provides professional educational opportunities, and offers accreditation and guidance on professional standards. For more information on AAM, visit [www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org).

### **American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)**

AASLH was officially founded in 1940, although its history dates back to an outgrowth of the American Historical Association in 1904. This professional organization for individuals and institutions associated with state and local history currently has close to 6,000 members nationwide. AASLH serves history organizations in the United States through a variety of programs and publications. Although the organization tends to have a museum focus, its members span the gamut of history interests. AASLH offers technical resources such as board orientation kits, a free video lending library, and technical leaflets. It holds an annual meeting and periodic professional development workshops and seminars and produces a variety of publications including a newsletter, monthly magazine, and books. It has also created software and programming materials geared toward the needs of smaller institutions that may not have the funds to produce such items on their own. AASLH offers individual and institutional membership. For more information, visit [www.aaslh.org](http://www.aaslh.org).



## Supporting the profession

### **California Council for the Promotion of History (CCPH)**

CCPH is a statewide organization committed to serving the interests of professionals across all the history disciplines. As such, CCPH's membership includes individuals and institutions associated with museums, historical societies, archives, historic preservation and archaeology, education, and government service. Founded in 1977, CCPH's program offerings include an annual conference, a quarterly newsletter, and a mini-grant program. CCPH also offers certification through its Register of Professional Historians and puts forward Standards of Professional Conduct for historians. Through a variety of committees, CCPH advocates for history-related interests at the local, state, and national levels. Membership is offered to both individuals and institutions. For more information, visit [www.csus.edu/org/ccph](http://www.csus.edu/org/ccph).

### **Local Agencies**

Many communities, cities, special districts, and counties have museums, parks, cultural sites, recreational facilities, and zoos. They are managed by local government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Each varies greatly in their approach to interpretation. Some, like the East Bay Regional Park District and the Oakland Museum of California, are well established and have developed extensive facilities and programs that reach thousands of visitors each year. These organizations have the ability to adapt and transform themselves, expanding their outreach to the perceived needs of their respective communities. They have adopted a regional or statewide approach to interpretation and offer comprehensive training for their staff and volunteers, as well as for individuals from other agencies. Other organizations, because of their location and budgetary considerations, have taken more modest approaches to interpretation. Within most counties there is at least one organization that has focused on the preservation and interpretation of the area's natural or cultural history.

### **Association for Living History, Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM)**

ALHFAM is a museum organization involved with living historical farms, agricultural museums, outdoor museums of history and folklife, and those museums—large and small—that use “living history” programming. The organization is committed to supporting museum interpreters, educators, researchers, administrators, curators, and volunteers in the fields of historical agriculture, trades and manufacturing, clothing, foodways, living history programming, historic site administration, care of collections, and program delivery. The organization is an affiliate of the American Association of Museums. For more information, visit [www.alhfam.org/](http://www.alhfam.org/).



## Historical Societies

Throughout the state a number of historical societies support the preservation of history and its interpretation. Many have scholarly journals, oral histories, documentary materials, and other useful collections. They may be organizations with a statewide interest, like the California Historical Society, or regional groups, such as the Historical Society of Southern California. They can also be smaller local organizations, like the Sacramento County Historical Society. Many have a considerable history themselves, going back fifty to one hundred years. Some groups take a specific focus of interest, such as the Chinese Historical Society of America or the National Japanese American Historical Society. Even the remotest locations in the state have historical organizations with resources that may be of value to interpreters developing programs. Use the American Association for State and Local History's *Directory of Historical Organizations in the United States and Canada* or the California Historical Society's *California Cultural Directory* (available online at [www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/programs/ced.html](http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org/programs/ced.html)) as a source for locating information about nearby historical societies and other agencies.

**Be knowledgeable, be skillful, be ethical, be passionate...**  
***Be an interpreter!***

## The future

The future of the profession depends on you, the practicing interpreter. The role you play in the development of the discipline is significant. We all determine what interpretation is, how it will be managed, and what the accepted standards will be. You are already well on your way to becoming a professional by completing training such as is offered at the Mott Training Center. There are many paths to an end, and which road you choose to follow is up to you. The profession of interpretation is a noble and distinguished one, deserving the dedication and participation of its members. **THAT IS YOU!** Ask questions, contribute, grow, change, challenge, and discover. The profession begins to die when the members become complacent and stop learning.

Our mission is one of distinction and importance. "It is a worthwhile life work and one that will add immeasurably to the general welfare of the nation" (Mills, 1920, p. 140). Especially in this day and age of dissolution, environmental degradation, terrorism, fear, and general unease, the parks and our connections to them are critical. Not only is connecting the public to natural and cultural resources important to the overall health of the



The future of interpretation is up to each of you.

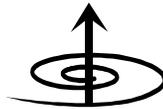


## The future

nation, but interpretation of the critical issues facing the country and our people is important. Who better than an interpreter to help make sense of the issues we face? Is that not our job, to translate the science, link people to the places, and speak for the issues? We cannot and should not restrict ourselves to just the simple topics. Instead, we should tackle those that are difficult, complex, and unclear. These critical managerial, political, and emotional issues are the worlds we should help illuminate for the public and for ourselves.

This training manual is one tool that contributes to your growth as an interpreter. The public, the resource, and management will also further your growth. *Listen...learn...love.*

### What's ahead?



You now have the theories, tools, skills, and techniques of an interpreter and are ready to begin practicing the art and science of interpretation. There will be many new opportunities and experiences that will teach you more about the essence of interpretation than could ever be imparted in a training session. Learn, grow, and teach others. As an interpreter, you wield enormous strength, influence, and responsibility. Use it well.

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# Professionalism









## Workbook learning activities



To help you review and apply the material covered in Module 13-Professionalism, a selection of review questions and/or activities is provided. Again, no answers are included. Use the material from the module, outside sources, and your colleagues to help you complete the activities and answer the questions. There may be more than one right answer. Use the questions and activities to generate discussion about the material. Be prepared to discuss, perform, or demonstrate your answers in class.

1) Do you think interpretation is a profession? Why or why not?

2) What does it mean to you to be a “professional” interpreter?



## Workbook learning activities



- 3) What ethics are involved in what we do? Explain your answer. Should these be our personal ethics? The department's? The discipline's?

- 4) What can you do to develop and improve your skills as a professional?



## Take it to your park



Answer each question with the information specific to your park. You will have to conduct some research in order to answer each question. Use the answers as a guide for beginning your career in California State Parks.

### Professionalism

Park name \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) What steps can you take to help develop the profession of interpretation in your park?



## Take it to your park



- 2) Brainstorm some ideas about how you, as a new employee, can work with the volunteers or cooperating associations in your park to increase the overall professional image of the agency.