Interpretive Master Plan Development at Public Gardens

Three Case Studies from Finland, Australia and the United States.

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Who are we?

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Photo: Mikko Paartola
What are we going to explore today?

- What is Interpretation and Interpretation Master Planning
- Three case studies:
  - Kaisaniemi Botanic Garden, Finland
  - The Australian Garden, Australia
  - Washington Park Arboretum, USA
- Work Session: World Wide Experience Sharing
- Introducing Interpretation Toolkit & Summarizing Outcomes

Photo: Mikko Paartola
What is Interpretation?

“The job of interpretation is to open the minds of people so they can receive the interesting signals that the world is constantly sending. And the messages sent, when added up, tell what the world is all about”.

Knudson, Cable & Beck (1999)

What is Interpretation Planning?

“A decision making process that blends management needs and resource consideration with visitors desire and ability to play to determine the most effective way to communicate the message to targeted markets”.

National Association for Interpretation (NAI)
Interpretation is POETRY

Purposeful
Organized
Enjoyable/Engaging
Thematic
Relevant
You

Photo: Mikko Paartola
Case Studies

1. Kaisaniemi Botanic Garden, Helsinki, Finland.
2. Australian Garden, Melbourne, Australia.
3. Washington Park Arboretum, USA.
Getting started...

Lessons learned in Kaisaniemi Botanic Garden

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LUOMUS
FINNISH MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

= 1 NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
+ 2 BOTANIC GARDENS
(KUMPULA & KAISSANIEMI)
Once upon a time...

Kaisaniemi Botanic Garden looked like this.
Change is in the air...

“Interpretation is about knowing your audience and exploring how to reach out to them. It is about responding to their needs, answering their questions and providing interpretation when and where it is needed.”
How to investigate your audience?
Helsinki example & useful points

Spying is revealing!
1. Who are our existing visitors?

Photo: Emilia Kurila
2. Why do they visit?

“What do you expect from your visit today?”
Personal Meaning Mapping -method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most important motive</th>
<th>First time visitor</th>
<th>Repeat visitor</th>
<th>All visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recharger</td>
<td>30 %</td>
<td>51 %</td>
<td>44 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience seeker</td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Hobbyist</td>
<td>25 %</td>
<td>26 %</td>
<td>25 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explorer</td>
<td>35 %</td>
<td>7 %</td>
<td>16 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>7 %</td>
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<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=20</td>
<td>n=43</td>
<td>n=63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Delightfully lost

“Visitors do not necessarily come hoping to find out more – but they do learn more than they expect – and they love the sense of unguided exploration, discoveries and pleasant surprises that they encounter in the gardens.”

Waterson & Saunders (2012)
3. How do they use our garden at the moment?

Observing visitor behaviour

Social patterns in observation areas, %
Observed activities in different sectors, %

- **Arboretum**
  - Passing: 45%
  - Other hobbies: 2%
  - Outdoor recreation: 14%
  - Reading: 5%
  - Sitting: 6%
  - Socializing: 2%
  - Picnicking: 25%
  - Interest in plants: 34%

- **Systematic garden**
  - Passing: 9%
  - Other hobbies: 18%
  - Outdoor recreation: 20%
  - Reading: 4%
  - Sitting: 14%
  - Socializing: 6%
  - Picnicking: 28%
  - Interest in plants: 34%

- **Service area**
  - Passing: 19%
  - Other hobbies: 8%
  - Outdoor recreation: 10%
  - Reading: 2%
  - Sitting: 8%
  - Socializing: 7%
  - Picnicking: 34
Guidelines for our interpretation masterplan

1) Better quality visitor experience for our current visitors
   • Visitor surveys revealed that most of our visitors are repeat visitors instead of first time visitors.

2) Broadening audiences and targeting to new groups
   • by supporting sense of exploration and by including interactive elements in the gardens.
   • to appeal to first time visitors, men and families/ groups with mixed ages

3) Creating different types of visitor experiences by zoning
How does our masterplan look like at this point?

Photo: Pinja Näkki
Western zone – “pedagogical garden”:
Insights and basics for those eager to learn
(esp. groups & families)

Eastern zone – Arboretum of discovery
Zone for contemplation and recharging emotional batteries

Middle zone - Science & systematics:
Inspiration for plant hobbyists and garden enthusiasts

- Interactions between plants and animals:
  Protective structures, chemical warfare & warning systems
- Sustainable gardening solutions (changing installation)
- Traditional domestic garden species
- Climate change & protecting threatened plants (seed banking, assisted migration)
- Biodiversity area
- What do plants do?
- Sensory Garden
- Tree of evolution: Systematic garden
- Life of a Tree (arboretum trail)
- Moss & lichen garden
- Stone garden & geology trail: “The landscapes of the lost world in ancient Finland”
STEP 1 in action

Systematic garden in Kaisaniemi, June 2014.

Photo: Ari Taponen
Idea starts to take form, September 2014.
Tree of evolution, structure ready December 2014.
April 2015: First focus groups have shared their visions with us... Planning continues!

There is a need for a thorough discussion about the diverse issues of interpretation. And it calls for frank and open dialogue.
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