

University of Northern Colorado

Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC

Mesa Verde National Park

Colorado National Parks

July 2024

Memo - Museum training course 4-3-1958

National Park Service of the United States

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digscholarship.unco.edu/meve>

Mesa Verde National Park
Colorado

April 3, 1958

Memorandum

To: Director
Attention: Chief, Museum Branch

From: Superintendent, Mesa Verde

Subject: Training Course In Museum Methods - 1958

Reference is made to memorandum dated February 28, to Regional Director, Region Three from Mr. Buffmire, Acting Chief, Museum Branch, copy of which was forwarded to this office.

In accordance with the request in Mr. Buffmire's memo Mrs. Pinkley has assembled her comments and suggestions, which are attached in duplicate.

(Signed)

Superintendent

Attachment

Copy to Regional Director, Region Three w/attachment ✓

I view pertinent and useful comments.
WJ 4/11

RECEIVED	
NPS REGION THREE OFFICE	
APR 7 1958	
	SEARCHED DATE
REG. DIR.	
ASST. R.D.	
ADMIN.	
OPERATIONS	
INTEL	<i>Smith 4/7</i>
RECREATION	
FORESTRY	
SOLICITOR	
FILE	

Keep EXR
Done 4/11 Jones
Stewart
Sheridan

MUSEUM METHODS TRAINING COURSE, 1958: COMMENTS and SUGGESTIONS

Jean M. Pinkley, Archeologist, Mesa Verde National Park, Colo.

The outline followed is that given in the syllabus for the 1958 course.

INTRODUCTION.

1. Park Museum Functions. Basic; no comment or suggestion.
2. Literature of Museum Work. Basic; no comment or suggestion.
3. Introduction to Washington Office. It promoted a better understanding of the various divisions and functions of the Washington Office to be given the opportunity to attend the staff meetings held by the Director and the Chief of Interpretation. This opportunity should be afforded all future trainees.

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS.

4. Accession Policies. 5. Museum Records System. As the Museum Records Handbook had just been issued to the field, it was advisable at this session to spend considerable time on accession policies and record systems. Now that the field is furnished with the handbook and each Region has a curator, I think a short lecture on methods and problems should suffice for future sessions.

6. Study Collections and Their Use. Informative and helpful; no suggestions.

7. Study Collection Storage. No comment or suggestion.

8. Preservation of Museum Specimens. Excellent and informative. It would be helpful if even more time was devoted to this important aspect. The service has valuable specimens in so many different categories, and as others will continue to be received, I think it mandatory that personnel in charge of the museum collections be well-trained in handling a variety of materials. It would be worth while to schedule even more detailed lectures by specialists in the Museum Laboratory and by specialists working for other museums in the Washington area. Many of the latest methods and techniques are not covered by manuals or text books, and excellent though these publications may be, they often fail to list important "do's" and "do not's" which preservation specialists have learned only through long experience. While preservation was handled very well in the 1958 session, I, personally, would have welcomed even more assistance in this field.

9. Problems of Identification. Excellent and informative. The scientists who assisted us are to be commended for their clear, concise presentations and it is to be hoped they can be prevailed upon to devote even more time to future training sessions.

MUSEUM PLANNING.

10. The Museum Prospectus. 11. Building Requirements for Visitor Centers. 12. The Exhibit Plan. The training, information and assistance received under these three interrelated headings was outstanding in every respect and constituted the most valuable instruction of the course. I feel this section should continue to receive priority over all other categories.

I feel it would be of immeasurable assistance to future trainees if a file could be drawn up on each completed visitor center. This would include the prospectus, the building plan, the exhibit plan, the alterations or changes and a critical evaluation of the center in use, its merits and its defects or drawbacks. Wherever or whenever possible, slides of all possible steps should be provided for use in conjunction with the file. By being able to follow several centers through from the prospectus to the building in use, the trainees could profit in a short time from the years of experience involved.

13. Evaluating Exhibits. This also was of immeasurable assistance. The only suggestion I would make is that it might be profitable to devote more class time to each category under this heading prior to field trips to the various museums.

MUSEUM OPERATION.

14. Maintenance of Exhibits. Very good. No comment or suggestion.

15. The Museum in Use. No comment or suggestion.

16. Aids to Self-Guidance. No comment or suggestion.

17. Guided Tours and Gallery Talks. I do not feel that this category deserves more than passing mention during the course. Considering the size of park service museums and the fact they are devoted to telling the story of a particular and limited area, there seems to me to be little call or place for guided museum tours or gallery talks. In most cases, these would impinge upon guided trail trips. Furthermore, in any park service museum with which I am acquainted, such activities would be distracting and create unnecessary bottle-necks in the flow of traffic. If one of our museums, in view of their size, demands guided tours or gallery talks to make it comprehensible to the average visitor, then it

needs an immediate overhaul for it certainly is not serving its purpose.

18. Facilities and Activities for Children. I felt that too much time was devoted to the study of special activities and facilities for children. While I agree it is advisable to include such instruction in the course, I think too much emphasis was placed on this aspect. Our areas, with the possible exception of a few urban spots, are not equipped to handle anything such as we were shown. Most children visit the parks with their parents and the activities offered are geared as much to children's enjoyment as to their parents' enjoyment. Most parents wish to supervise their children's activities and participate with them in those activities. School groups which come are given special treatment at all times and all activities scheduled for them are in line with their educational program.

It seemed to me personally that much of the time devoted to instruction in and observance of the handling of children's activities in the museums visited by the trainees could better have been spent in being instructed in policies of interpretation, preservation and museum planning by the members of the staff of the institutions visited. In this connection, I would like to state that the session on interpretive policies and methods conducted by Dr. Alexander and his staff at Williamsburg, was one of the finest and best organized I have ever attended. Would it be possible in the future for similar sessions to be conducted by the staff members of our own areas, such as Colonial, Independence and National Capital Parks? I think trainees would profit from such seminars.

19. Special Exhibitions. Very good; no suggestion.

20. Audio-Visual Techniques. Excellent. It would be helpful to demonstrate the various types of equipment and instruct the group in their use.

21. Roadside Interpretation. Excellent and informative. I think it would be helpful if actual texts and plans of many roadside exhibits could be made available for study by the trainees.

The following suggestions are offered for consideration:

1. I suggest trainees be selected and notified three months in advance of the course. When notified, each trainee should be furnished a syllabus of the course and a bibliography of required and suggested reading material. As much of the literature is not available to field personnel, the Museum Branch should have sufficient copies of pertinent publications for circulation among groups of trainees. Funds for the purchase of books and periodicals could be obtained by soliciting the aid of

cooperating associations throughout the service. The benefits of such a system to the service and the individuals concerned are obvious.

2. I urge that the lectures and discussions be held in some room other than the laboratory workshop. The noise, confusion, crowding, poor ventilation, lighting and uncomfortable seating arrangements were not conducive to concentration. At times it was impossible to hear a speaker. I know I often misinterpreted such snatches of a lecture as I could hear and undoubtedly missed out on key statements or salient points, a circumstance I regret as I will not have the opportunity to repeat this course. In view of the importance of this training to interpretive personnel, the service should provide a well-equipped lecture room with standard desks, blackboards and film projection facilities.

3. As activities are scheduled through the weekends, I recommend that one-half day each week, preferably a week-day afternoon, be allowed trainees for personal matters such as securing haircuts, shampoos, arranging for laundry and dry cleaning and purchasing of supplies. I feel dissatisfaction with personal appearance and the annoyance it engenders can and should be avoided.

4. I think it would be desirable and beneficial if all trainees could be persuaded to secure accommodations at one place. One gains much from personal contacts with a group such as this. Such contacts come in the evening and their value lies in discussing points brought up during the day, analyzing other trainees' reactions and opinions and in learning about the problems of other areas and how the people involved have reacted to them or solved them. In other words, the so-called "bull session" is a vital supplement to any training session.

In this regard, I recommend that future trainees be urged to consider accommodations other than the Potomac Motor Court. The per diem is sufficient to cover meals, public transportation and much more adequate quarters than the outmoded, antiquated, dirty and uncomfortable housing procurable at the court. I feel strongly that a desk at which to study, good shaded lights, a closet in which to hang one's clothes, comfortable chairs and a good bed would make all the difference in the morale of the group. Perhaps this is a purely personal matter, but I feel that neatness, cleanliness and comfort promote a feeling of well-being that is reflected in a person's attitude toward his work. Believe me, none of these can be achieved at the Potomac Motor Court!

(Mrs.) Jean H. Pinkley
Archeologist