



Inklings

Bulletin of Interpretive Ideas

June 2005 Volume 5, Issue 2

Current Project List

- Interpretive Sign Design, Outdoor Discovery Center, Holland, MI
- Interpretive Brochure Design, The Nature Conservancy, Indiana Chapter
- Interpretive Sign Design, Butler Park, Bloomington Parks and Recreation (IN)
- Interpretive Sign Design, Mounds State Park, Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources
- Interpretive Plan, Wabash and Erie Canal, Delphi, (IN) *with Lifespace Design*
- Interpretive Sign Design, Brown County State Park, Indiana Dept. of Natural Resources
- Interpretive Sign Design, Oxbow Park, Elkhart County (IN) Parks Department
- Interpretive Sign Plan and Design, North Hydro Park, Charter Township of Ypsilanti (MI) *with Landscape Architects & Planners, Inc*
- Interpretive Sign Design, The Nature Conservancy, Indiana Chapter
- Interpretive Sign Design, Chilo Lock and Dam, Clermont County Park District (OH)

Sign Standards

by Lise Schools

With the development of new interpretive signs, an opportunity exists to create a cohesive sign design that will become the template for future sites. A uniform appearance or sign standard creates an agency identity and professional image. It will be something that park users will recognize and identify with. Visitors will find it easier to navigate through the parks. When creating a sign standard, the following sign features need to be determined.

Materials

All signs should be constructed of the same material whether it is an interpretive panel, orientation sign or directional sign. Using different materials in close proximity (wood, metal, fiberglass) creates a cluttered, unplanned appearance.



Standard sign base and frame

Bases

Frames and mounting structures should also be of the same style and color on all signs.

Colors

The background color and font color should be consistent. Avoid white as a background color due to glare. Font color should contrast sharply with the background color for easier reading. Any other features such as side banners should have their color determined.



Indiana DNR template

Layout

The agency logo should appear on all signs in the same location. Banners down the side or mastheads across the top should always appear in the same position.

Artwork/Photos

High resolution photos and professional artwork can attract a visitor's attention and draw them to the sign. Keep image styles consistent within the same topic. For example if identifying tree species, make sure that all of the images are photos, or all of the images are illustrations. Don't mix image types.



Template for Bloomington Parks and Recreation (IN)



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Font

Style

Certain fonts are considered more readable and have the endorsement of the Americans for Disabilities Act. Serif typefaces such as Times Roman, Garamond and Palatino are easily read. Sans serif fonts such as Arial and Trebuchet are other easy-to-read fonts. Italic type should be used only sparingly as in a photo credit or for a *emphasizing* a word.

Font Size

As opposed to reading a book, the audience's eyes are typically a few feet away from sign. For this reason, **24 pt.**

font is the smallest used on an interpretive sign. This size includes paragraph text. The sign title should be up to

72 pt. and paragraph headings should be **36pt.**



Text

Justification

The easiest to read text is left justified, ragged right. Avoid full justification or centered text.

Left justified, ragged right

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Centered

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Full justification

The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog. The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog.

Word Count

Telling big stories in as few words as possible is the biggest challenge for interpretive signs. After 150 words, readership drops dramatically. When a visitor sees a sign covered with large blocks of text, they walk past it without stopping. Use graphics, diagrams and maps to replace text wherever possible. Break the text into captions under graphics. This will help make a sign more user friendly.



Taking the time to plan the sign standard you want will result in successful signs.

The lower sign with its larger graphics and brief text is more inviting than the upper sign.