



Introduction to the Tour Guide Program (TGP) & Historical Interpretation

6 Dec 2017

How NOT to Interpret History



Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxPVyieptwA>

Agenda



- Welcome & Staff Introductions
- Why the TGP?
- Docents vs. General Volunteers
- Program Overview & Goals
- Summary & Questions
- Demonstration
- Practical Application
- The Visitor Experience (Rail Yard Tour)



Welcome



- Staff introductions
- The VMT Mission Statement:

“To advance all modes of transportation across the Commonwealth, **to celebrate and preserve** the hard work and ingenuity of generations past, and to **inspire current and future generations** to value this industry which is essential to Virginia’s history, culture, and economic growth.”

Why the TGP?



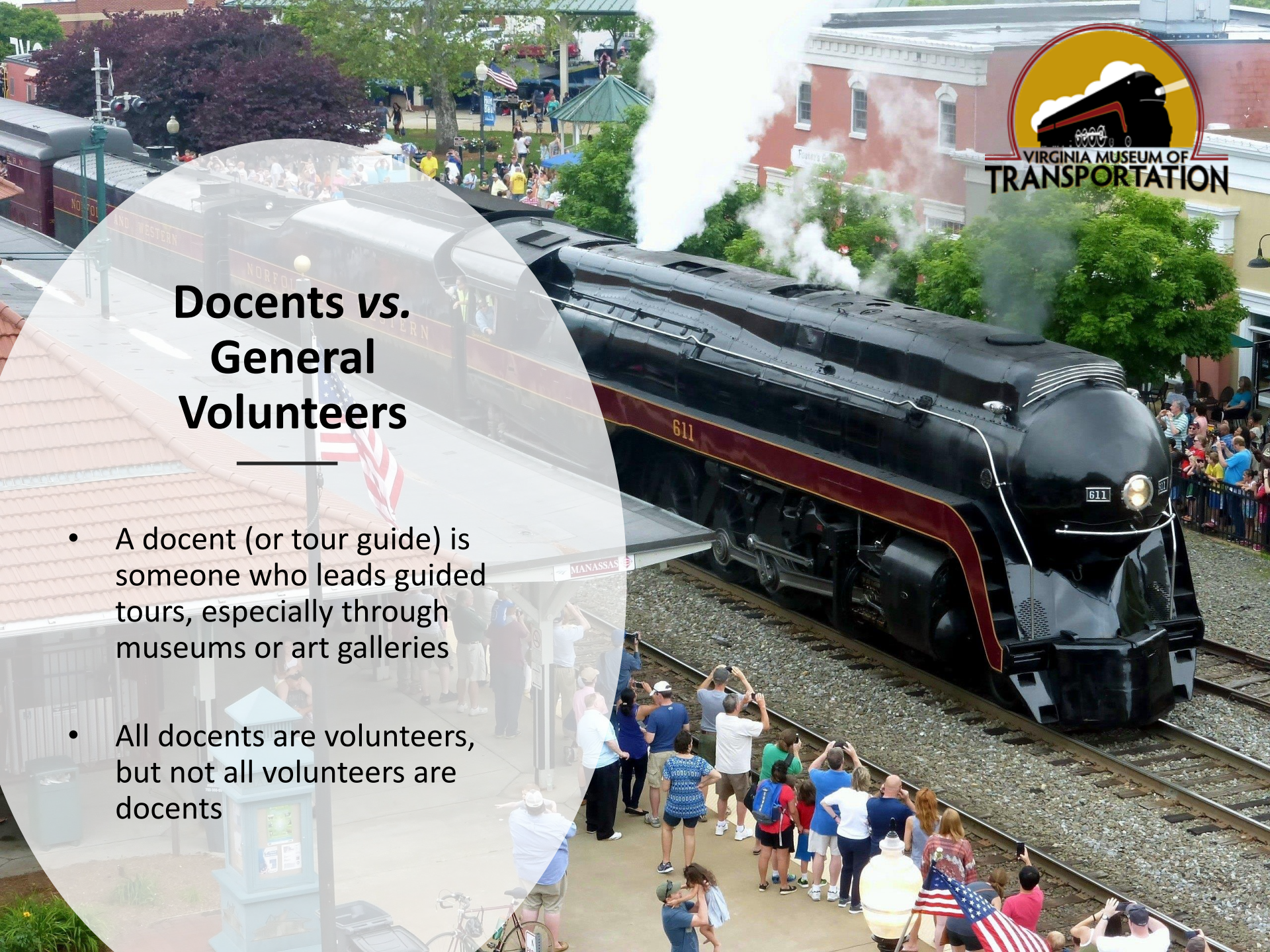
- Implementation & standardization
- Eventually establish a series of professionally-guided tours
- Celebrate, preserve & inspire



James Watt (1736-1819). Pro-tech.co.uk

Docents vs. General Volunteers

- A docent (or tour guide) is someone who leads guided tours, especially through museums or art galleries
- All docents are volunteers, but not all volunteers are docents





The Nuts & Bolts of the TGP

- Delivery & content
- Nineteen courses
- Initial & follow-on training
- Awards & Recognition

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CONSERVATION

COMMISSION

Curriculum

- Four phases of training:
 - Introduction
 - Indoctrination
 - Certification
 - Follow-On



*Wright Model "A" Military Flyer. Fort Myer, VA (1908).
Wikipedia.com.*

Sample Courses



Delivery ("A"-Series) Courses:

A.3 Learning Styles

A.6 Connecting with
Your Audience

A.8 Tour Practicum



Content ("B"-Series) Courses:

B.2 Virginia Rail History

B.7 The Life and Legacy
of John T. Hanna

B.11 VMT Architectural
History

Training Documents



- TGP Training Syllabus
- Follow-On Training Log
- Training Roster
- Standardized Lectures

TRAINING OUTLINE						
TASK / TOPIC	LECTURE NO.	HOURS	DATE	INSTRUCTOR	TRAINEE INT.	INSTRUCTOR INT.
Introduction to the TGP and Historical Interpretation	A.1	1.5				
The Visitor Experience	A.2	2.0				
Learning Styles	A.3	1.5				
Public Speaking	A.4	1.0				
Leadership Essentials	A.5	0.5				
Connecting with Your Audience	A.6	1.0				
Museum Facilities, Staff, and Special Situations	A.7	0.5				
An Overview of Transportation in Virginia	B.1	1.0				
The History of Roanoke	B.10	0.5				
Tour Practicum	A.8	1.0				



Core Values ("P3")

- Patrons
- Personality
- Professionalism

Historical Interpretation



- Tour guides/interpreters are *not* walking textbooks!
- Six Principles:
 - Context
 - Revelation
 - Art
 - Provocation
 - Inclusiveness
 - Applicability



*Tilden, F. (1977). Interpreting Our Heritage (3rd ed.).
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.*



Goals

- Skill development
- Public engagement
- Knowledge
- Emergency response
- Feedback
- Consistency & accuracy

Standards of Interpretation



Know Your Subject:

“Knowledge is the key to credibility and critical to a visitor’s comprehension of the experience. A dedicated interpreter constantly seeks out sources for a greater breadth and depth of information. The learning process never stops.”

Standards of Interpretation (Cont.)



Know Your Audience:

“Knowledge alone is insufficient to interpret effectively. Get to know people.”

“Examine your audience.”

“Empathize with the people your encounter.”



Standards of Interpretation (Cont.)



Know How to Make Connections:

“Think of this as your toolbox. What are some of the possible tools you can use?”

- Quotations
- Questions
- Setting the scene
- Humor



Standards of Interpretation (Cont.)



Know Your Parameters:

“Know the time parameters.”

“Know the conceptual parameters.”

“Stick to them.”



Standards of Interpretation: Summary



“Know Your Subject”

“Know Your
Audience”

“Know How to Make
Connections”

“Know Your Parameters”



Discussing Objects in Context



- Discuss objects in time and place they were used
- Differences between the past and present
- Relate objects to historical vignettes or anecdotes (verifiably TRUE accounts!)

Presentation Techniques

- Eye contact
- Non-verbal cues (body language)
- General appearance & posture
- Language
- Quality of voice
- Clarity of message
- Confidence



IT'S WHAT YOU **DON'T SAY** THAT COUNTS!



LEARN TO **READ** AND **INFLUENCE** PEOPLE THROUGH
NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION.

Tour Guide's Role During the Tour



- Not a disciplinarian
- You're an educator, not crowd control!
- Be adaptive and change the pace
- Look at the students, not the adults, they're the ones you want answering the questions

Summary



- Contribute to the VMT mission
- Core values
- Consistency & accuracy
- Tilden's Six Principles Handout



Questions ?



**HISTORICAL
INTERPRETATION
DEMO**





Practical Exercise

- Groups of two or three
- Select prop to interpret
- Five-minute prep time
- Five-to-ten minute presentation
- Peer-review process
- Remember Tilden & Monticello guidelines

A close-up, low-angle shot of a red steam locomotive on a gravel track. The locomotive's large black wheels and complex mechanical parts are visible. The red paint of the locomotive's body is prominent. The background is a dark, solid color.

The Visitor Experience

- Observe the presentation
- Critique
 - Content/Flow
 - Presentation
- Distribute TGP Books
 - Take home material

End of Session