

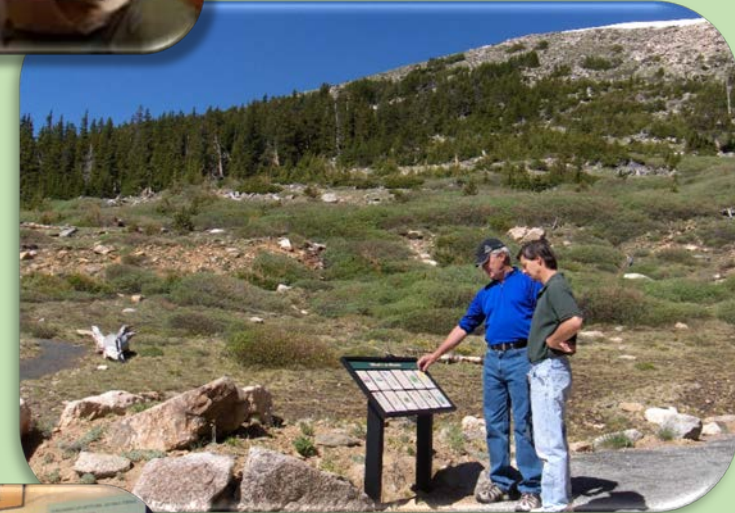
# The Care and Feeding of Exhibit Geeks





# What Is Interpretation?

- Traditional definition (Freeman Tilden):
  - An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.
- National Association for Interpretation:
  - Interpretation is a communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the inherent meanings in the resource.
- Interpretation Australia Association:
  - Heritage interpretation is a means of communicating ideas and feelings which help people understand more about themselves and their environment.
- American Association of Museums:
  - Interpretation is a planned effort to create for the visitor an understanding of the history and significance of events, people and objects with which the site is associated.







# Facts:

- The invasion of Normandy was the largest amphibious invasion in history.
- Allied forces used more than 13,000 ships and 5,000 aircraft.
- More than 10,000 American, British and Canadian troops were killed.
- Allied troops took more than 200,000 German prisoners.
- More than a half-million gallons of gasoline were needed in the first five days after the assault.





# Feelings



# The TORE Model of Interpretation

Dr. Sam Ham, University of Idaho

Effective interpretation is:

- Thematic
- Organized
- Relevant
- Enjoyable





- An interpretive theme is a single-sentence summary of a story.



# The Difference Between Themes & Topics

## Topics

- Birds
- Geology
- Wildlife
- Sinagua culture
- Mining
- Resource protection
- Biotic communities

## Themes

- Birds fascinate people because of their special adaptations for flight.
- Native birds in many regions are engaged in a fight for their lives.
- Eagles and falcons help people.
- Vultures fill the role of “garbage collector,” a significant but underappreciated ecological role.
- Because they are rarely seen, nocturnal birds are often misunderstood and there are many misconceptions about them.



# Interpretive Themes

- Attaching meanings to places and things is a fundamental human trait. We ascribe special significance to places, events, people, and things that rejuvenate our spirits, challenge and strengthen our beliefs, and provoke contemplation and discussion of our past, present, and future.
- Story is the communications tool most effective for facilitating an exploration of resource meanings. Societies depend on the power of story to explore, clarify, and share ideas, meanings, beliefs, and values that collectively constitute culture. *Story* is at the heart of human interaction and, consequently, at the heart of heritage interpretation.
- The set of overarching stories that communicate the essential qualities of a resource are called *primary interpretive themes*. Each is written as a story abstract — an encapsulation of the actual, complex, specific stories of the place.





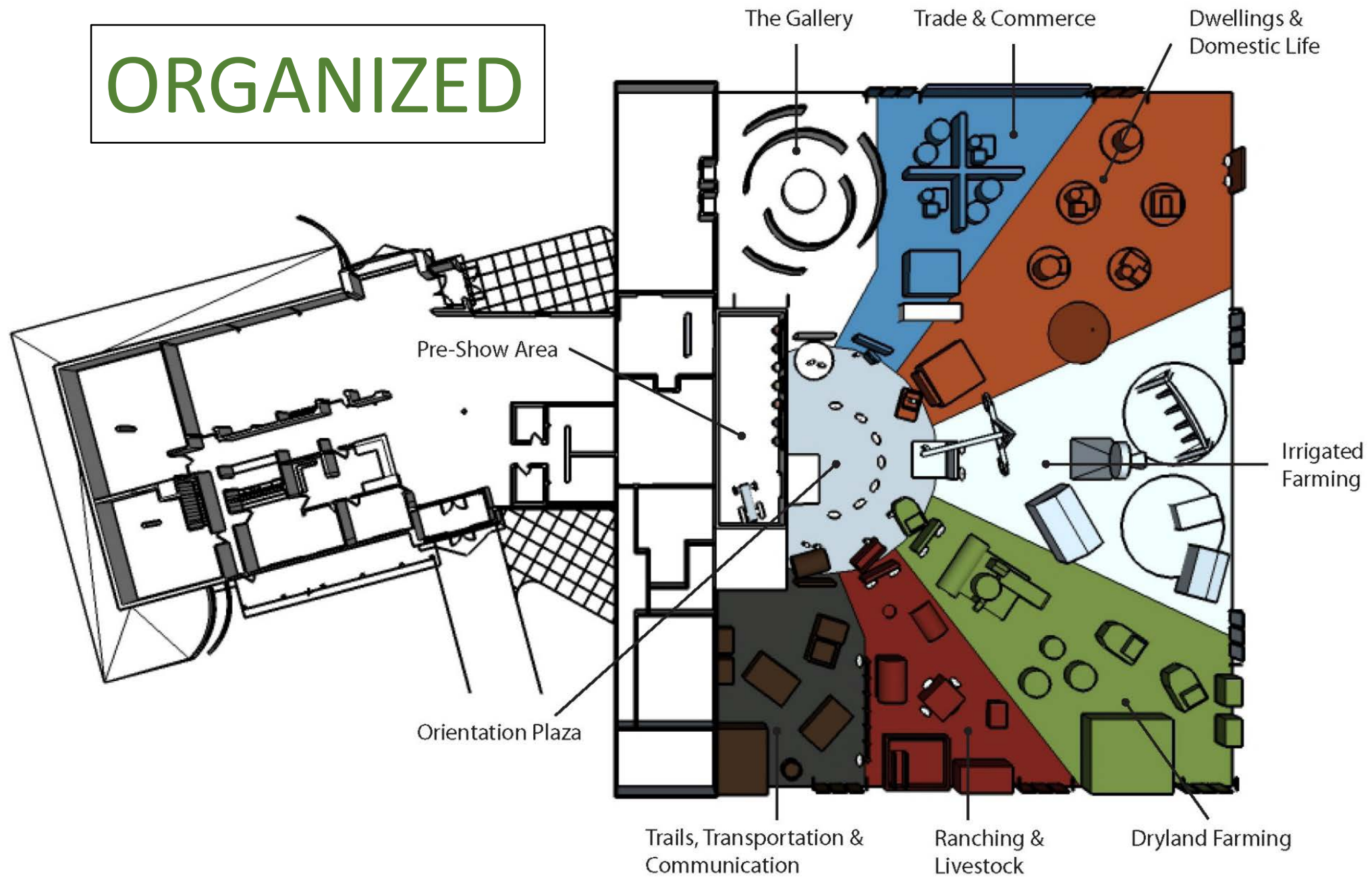
# Voices on the Prairie Wind

- If the prairie wind could speak, it would tell a tale of migration and settlement, innovation and survival, in a land that only grudgingly yields its bounty.*





# ORGANIZED





RELEVANT





ENJOYABLE





SO WHAT?

# Statements of Significance

Statements of significance are *factual* statements that describe what is unique, special or important about a resource. Statements of significance identify resources that merit interpretation.



*Saylorville Lake is designated as a Globally Important Bird Area by the American Bird Conservancy, and it is considered globally significant by Partners in Flight because it provides habitat for more than 300 species.*



# Statement of Significance:

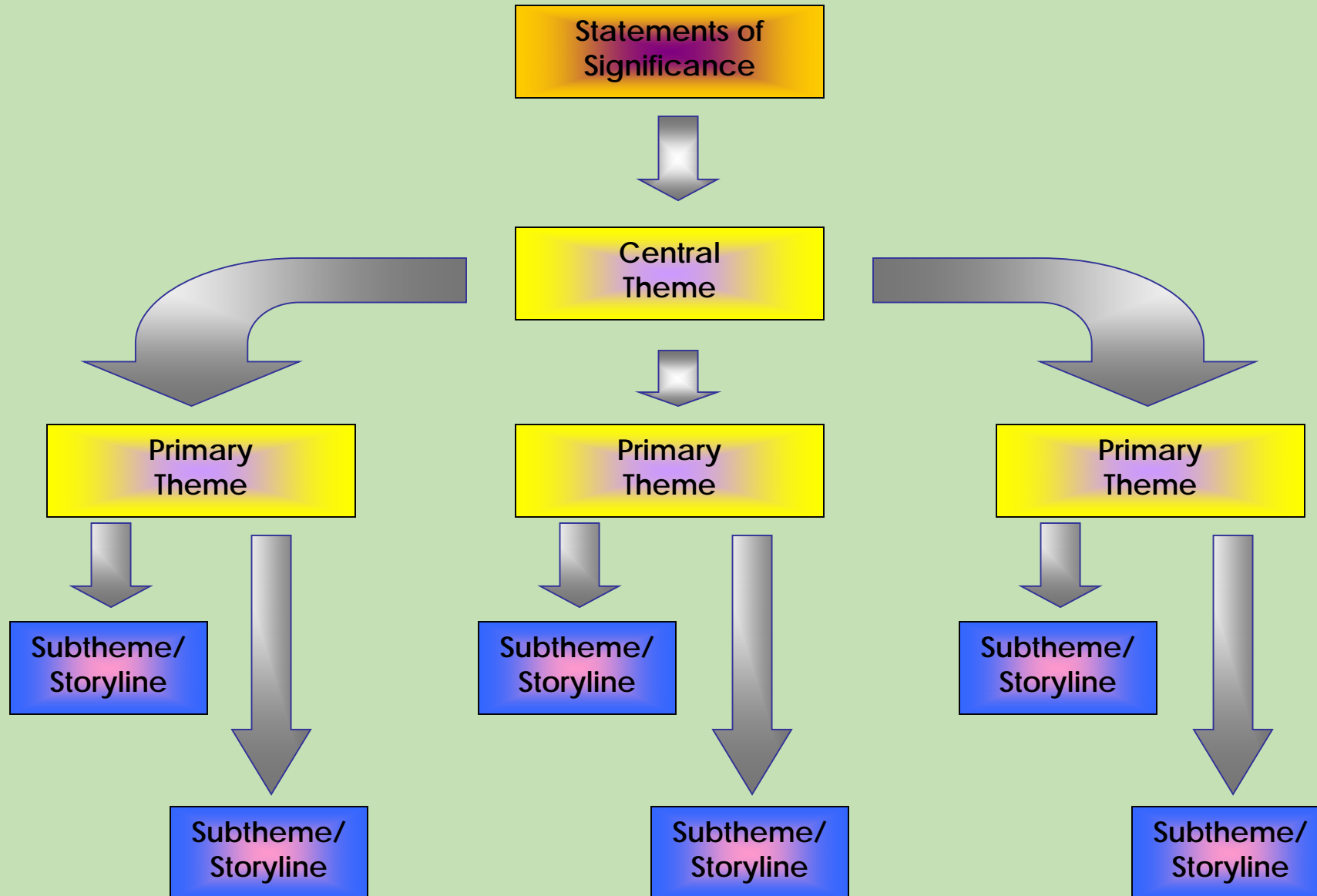
At the time of its construction, Hoover Dam was the largest dam ever built and one of the most challenging modern civil engineering projects ever undertaken, requiring a number of new techniques to be developed.

## Interpretive Theme

The story of Hoover Dam is not as much about concrete and steel as it is about the courage and dedication of the people who built it during the Great Depression, when many Americans were desperate and hope was in short supply.



# Flowchart of Interpretive Planning Process





# Flowchart of Exhibit Concept Development



# Understanding the Audience

- Sources include:
  - Primary surveys
    - expensive and time-consuming
  - Secondary quantitative data
    - U.S. Census
    - SCORP
    - Organizational data
    - Chambers of Commerce & tourism promotion agencies
    - existing visitor surveys & logs
  - Anecdotal/qualitative information
    - interviews w/ staff, concessionaires & others
    - visitor observation





# Audience Segmentation

Any audience, anywhere, can be divided into four basic segments:

<b>Local, Special-Interest Customers</b>	<b>Non-local, Special-Interest Customers</b>
<b>Local, General-Interest Customers</b>	<b>Non-local, General-Interest Customers</b>

# Sample Audience Segmentation

(for Saylorville Lake Project, Johnston, IA)

## Local, Special-Interest Customers

birders  
cyclists  
campers  
disc golfers  
powerboaters/waterskiers  
anglers  
sailors  
windsurfers  
hunters  
snowmobilers  
cross-country skiers

## Non-Local, Special-Interest Customers

birders  
cyclists  
campers  
disc golfers  
powerboaters/waterskiers  
windsurfers  
hunters  
snowmobilers

## Local, General-Interest Customers

elementary schoolchildren (esp. from Johnston & Waukee)  
trail users (esp. non-cycling exercisers)  
motorists (esp. DM residents touring w/ out-of-town guests)  
group shelter users (esp. Latino, Asian)  
wildlife watchers  
swimmers

## Non-Local, General-Interest Customers

trail users/exercisers  
motorists  
group shelter users (esp. special events)  
wildlife watchers  
swimmers



# If You Want to Know How to Design a Kitchen, Ask the Cook





# Stakeholder Input & Public Involvement





# Goals/Objectives of Interpretation



- Two levels: overarching goals of an interpretive project, and the specific objectives of an exhibit or program (interpretive objectives)
- Interpretive objectives can be called “learning outcomes” or “teaching points,” which describe what the communicator wants the visitor to *know*, *feel* and *do* as a result of the experience
- Know=intellectual/cognitive outcome
- Feel=affective/emotional outcome
- Do=behavioral outcome

# Exhibit Cost Estimating

## **\$175-225/sq. ft.**

Basic exhibit installation with simple interactive experiences and a level of detail, fit, and finish typically seen in a small-town museum or state park with limited interpretive funding.

Deliverables typically include:

- graphics of high visual quality that convey a modest number of stories at a moderate level of detail; limited original artwork, mostly photographic imagery
- exhibition design: 18% of total
- acrylic cases, display bases of standard materials, simple models
- small and simple audiovisual interactives and hands-on experiences, limited computer interactives
- track lighting fixtures, including installation (aim and focus), track and power distribution provided by others.



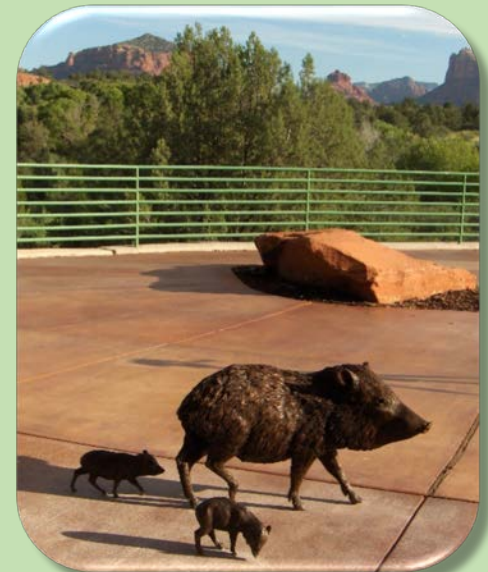


# Exhibit Cost Estimating

## \$250-350/sq. ft.

Mid-range installation with more detailed three-dimensional exhibits, interactives, and graphics typically seen in a mid-size regional museum or well-funded visitor center in a major national park. Deliverables can be placed in the same categories, to include:

- graphics with more stories in greater detail, more photos and illustrations, may include murals or other large-scale imagery and mostly original artwork, rear-lit imagery in select locations
- exhibition design: 22% of total
- higher quality models, taxidermy mounts, artifacts displayed on museum-quality mounts, full-sized themed settings and dioramas, raised relief maps, might include limited live animal displays
- more elaborate interactive audiovisual experiences, some human-scale interactives (i.e. pump a mock cistern, roll a log with a pike, etc.), several computer interactives
- some special lighting effects added to enhance the visitor experience.



# Exhibit Cost Estimating

## **\$400-500/sq. ft.**

High-end, museum-grade installation of the quality found in the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Smithsonian Institution or major science center such as the Corning Museum of Glass. Deliverables include:

- graphics with custom original artwork, large-scale imagery, layered imagery, special lighting effects
- exhibition design: 25% of total
- life-like sculpted models, animated and/or internally lit models, custom metal, glass, and plastic forms; exotic materials, high-end furniture detailing for cases, might include extensive live animal displays
- complex audiovisual interactives, numerous computer interactives with animated imagery and multi-level activities, themed interactives to (i.e.) re-create historic events, high-tech science interactives, etc.
- theatrical-grade lighting with framed light patterns, color areas, special visual effects, in-case lighting.





# Sample Exhibit Development Budget

Fabrication & Installation	50%
Design	25%
Travel, Office Services	10%
Research/Writing/Editing	5%
Image Acquisition, Use Rights	2%
Profit & Overhead	8%



