

MSc Interpretation: Management and Practice

Assessment feedback sheet

Module title	Implementation of Interpretation
Module status	Core
Module leader	Genevieve Adkins
Academic year	2008-09
Semester	2
Student ID	09004853
Assessment information	Assessment 1 – evaluation report – 1500
% of overall module mark	20%
Assessment due date	13:00 Monday, week 7
Learning outcome(s) assessed	
LO4	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals and elements of good interpretive design.
LO5	Demonstrate an ability to critically examine and evaluate interpretive media selection.
Specific comments on attainment under each of the learning outcomes	
LO4	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals and elements of good interpretive design.
LO5	Demonstrate an ability to critically examine and evaluate interpretive media selection.
Overall comments	
Mark given by 1st marker	
Mark given by 2nd marker	
Agreed provisional mark	

Please note that this mark is provisional until ratified by the relevant exam board

Wordcount: 1595

MEDIA EVALUATION REPORT

1. Background

Northern Moravian karst is among the prime tourist attractions in the Czech Republic. Promotion of the site is focused on 4 showcaves open to public in the form of guided tours. Guided tours are limited to cave interiors namely dripstone formations. Other interesting features of the karst are presented on information tables along two trails.

High concentration of visitors to few starting points and estimated number of 0,5 million visitors per year create potential for building a visitor centre interpreting Moravian karst as complex natural phenomenon and implications of this phenomenon to the history of humankind.

Design of the visitor centre was commissioned by Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection of the Czech Republic (AOPK) to be completed within 60 days period to qualify the visitor centre for EU funding in Summer 2009. The haste resulted into skipping the interpretation planning stage for the visitor centre. The exhibition was drafted by a graphic without getting any specification on themes or goals from the investor. As the tender for the exhibition supplier approaches the AOPK revises the draft of the exhibition.

This work evaluates one theme of the proposed exhibition – importance of the Moravian karst to the history of humankind. Methodology of the evaluation can be applied to other parts of the exhibition throughout the process of revision.

2. The current media

Appendix 1 briefs the prehistoric settlement of the Northern Moravian karst. An information table (Figure 1) in front of the Kůlna cave is dedicated to the topic.

Longer trail of the Sloupsko-Šošůvské caves guided tour finishes at Kůlna cave. The hole with marked strata reminds a visitor of archaeological research (Figure 3, Figure 4) and information tables give overview on the research.

Appendix 2 shows design of the proposed visitor centre exhibition dedicated to the topic of the prehistoric settlement. It consists of a life-size diorama and an interactive multimedia display. The diorama is equipped with mirrors enabling a visitor to become part of the scene and be snapped by another visitor.

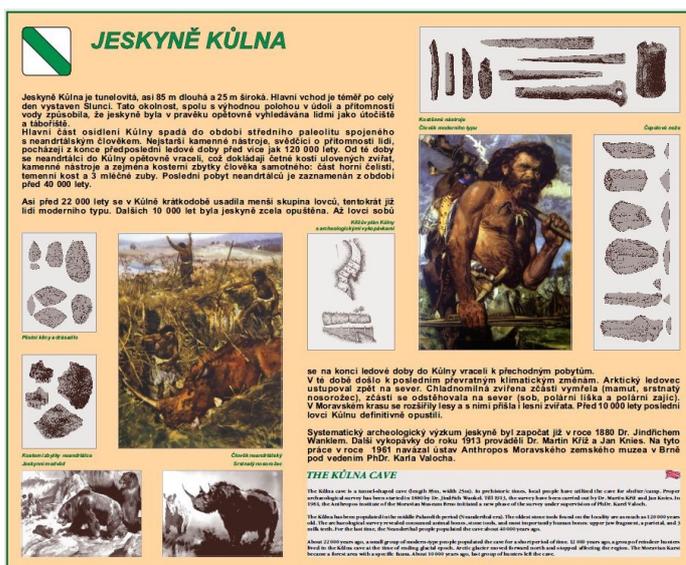


Figure 1: Information table in front of the Kůlna cave entrance.

3. Interpretive objective

The interpretive objective of each element should follow the central theme, the subtheme and storylines and be consistent with the interpretation goals (Brochu, 2003: 127). Appendix 3 shows the proposed messages and goals extracted from the Northern Moravian karst Interpretation Plan (author 2010). The plan at this current draft stage intentionally does not specify media for it has been in the process of introducing it to the stakeholders.

The following learning objective is relevant to the prehistoric settlement: *A visitor shall discover and understand the importance of the Moravian karst in the history of humankind and our understanding of it through archaeological research.*

The interpretation subtheme and proposed storylines shall be used to create

interpretive objectives that are used to assess the ability of different media to deliver them.

Subtheme: *Moravian karst was the place where the first people in Central Europe settled – our distant ancestors lived here hard lives, skilfully used local resources and walked the same ground.*

Storylines:

- *for thousands of years hunters and gatherers made caves their home, nature looked different at that times and many extinct large mammals lived nearby (S1);*
- *uncovering the artefacts of the cave people we are getting clues of the history of humankind (S2);*
- *our ancestors were able to survive extreme conditions and endure many hardships, because they combined their sharpened skills with masterful use of available natural resources (S3);*

Taking into account the current media, namely illustration of the archaeological research in Kůlna cave, the part of the exhibition dealing with prehistoric settlement should meet the following interpretive objectives (Brochu, 2003:127):

Learning objectives – most visitors will

- discern at least 3 paleolithic cultures;
- understand environmental aspects that influenced the prehistoric settlement;
- can compare everyday life of prehistoric people with ours;

Emotional objectives – most visitors will

- appreciate skills and toughness of the prehistoric people;
- feel connected with our ancestors and obliged to our descendants;

Behavioural objectives – some visitors will

- search more information about the prehistoric people;
- visit an important archaeological site;

Since the main scope of the visitor centre exhibition is not archaeology, the detailed depiction of different cultures or anthropological differences between the Neanderthals and the modern people need not be presented. The research storyline was left to the display in Kůlna cave.

The audience

Detailed statistic on showcave attendance reveals that the four showcaves are visited by 300 000 people per year, 25% of them are foreign visitors, 8% of visitors are under 6 years of age. More 40% of foreign visitors come from Poland who together with Russians, Slovaks and Taiwanese constitute 75% of foreign visitors.

The visitor centre attendance is estimated between 70 000 and 150 000 people annually.

Qualitative surveys by Mortier (2004) and Tihelková (2009) give some insight into attitudes of visitors but do not allow any further market segmentation. This means that Market/Message/Media Matrix (Brochu, 2003:130) cannot be used for the media evaluation.

Methods of media evaluation

Designed diorama (Appendix 2) with multimedia information panel were compared with another medium: props.

The above mentioned media were evaluated to meet interpretive objectives and operational parameters. Table 1 shows results of the evaluation using balanced scorecard.

The media were scored on the scale 1-4 with 1 as very low meeting a criterion or very expensive option and 4 as fully meeting a criterion or low cost option. 0 means falling to meet a criterion.		Diorama			Multimedia information panel		Props	
		Weight	Score	Weighted score	Score	Weighted score	Score	Weighted score
Criteria								
Learning objectives	discern at least 3 paleolithic cultures;	7	1	7	3	21	2	14
	understand environmental aspects that influenced the prehistoric settlement;	7	1	7	4	28	1	7
	can compare everyday life of prehistoric people with ours;	7	3	21	3	21	2	14
Emotional objectives	appreciate skills and toughness of the prehistoric people;	9	2	18	1	9	3	27
	feel connected with our ancestors and obliged to our descendants;	9	1	9	2	18	3	27
Behavioural objectives	search more information about the prehistoric people;	5	1	5	3	15	1	5
	visit an important archaeological site;	5	1	5	3	15	1	5
Operational parameters	simultaneous impact on wider audience	6	3	18	1	6	1	6
	attractivity	9	3	27	1	9	4	36
	engagement (discovery learning)	7	1	7	1	7	4	28
	appeal to children	9	3	27	1	9	4	36
	production costs	4	1	4	1	4	3	12
	maintenance costs (service, updating)	5	3	15	1	5	2	10
	durability	5	3	15	2	10	1	5
	everyday operation costs (electricity, cleaning, staffing)	6	3	18	3	18	1	6
		100		203		195		238

Table 1: Balanced scorecard of different media options.

Comments on the specific media

Diorama

Diorama can speak for many texts and immerse a visitor into its atmosphere – the form has high “attracting power”(Falk, Dierking 1997:68). This requires good positioning within the exhibition and subtle play of light or even sounds. However the separation of a visitor with glass may create impersonal impression (Looker 2006:8). In the exhibition design the diorama is used as a place of taking unique photos – a valued souvenirs (Weaver 2007:130). This feature makes it an attractive exhibition element, however challenges delivery of other interpretive objectives due to its intrusiveness.

The diorama did not score high in meeting the interpretive objectives though this form of interpretation has got the potential if the explanation exceeds proposed multimedia panel and links directly to what a visitor can see.

Another aspect of the Neanderthal diorama is its accuracy. It will need involvement of top scholars to make the diorama adequate to up-to-date knowledge about Neanderthal life. Making a model of a Neanderthal man or a women requires specialists backed with anthropologists and archaeologists (Hall 2008, Looker 2006) which might be very costful since the diorama is not the main element of the exhibition.

Multimedia information panel

The proposed information panel should give a visitor in-depth information about the prehistoric settlement of the Northern Moravian karst. Its advantage is layered information and potential to be foreigners-friendly.

The panel scored high in fulfilling the learning objectives and giving concrete clues to meet behavioural objectives as well. However, this potential impact is build on the presumption that a visitor goes actively through the information and soaks them up. Many studies showed that this presumption is wrong (Falk, Dierking 1997:67).

The multimedia information panel lacks the interaction with the real objects and focuses attention on the small screen only. It can hardly meet the emotional interpretive objectives with the most of visitors. Though the panel content can be accessible through internet or other means of digital communication, its cost-effectiveness profile remains low because of small amount of visitors it can serve simultaneously.

Props

Props offer visitors multiple senses experience. They have got potential to quickly immerse an individual into a topic. The experience is authentic. That is why it scored high in meeting the emotional objectives and interactivity. Props offer experience that goes across age groups and uses discovery learning (Black, 2005:138).

Though the props scored highest in Table 1 they need additional information that frame the experience. Their impact depends on the activities visitors are instructed to do with specimens. In this particular case visitors can try to cut with flint knives from different cultures or scrape wax from a piece of leather to imitate stone-age leather treatment. Though the props itself are costless comparing to other media, they need to be constantly replaced and secured against theft. The above mentioned examples of activities require constant staff care.

Conclusion

Delivery of the interpretation subtheme of prehistoric settlement in the Northern Moravian karst shall be located on different places. Delivery at Kůlna cave giving information on archaeological research and part of the exhibition in the designed visitor centre focusing on life in paleolithic.

None of the tested media can achieve the interpretive objectives alone. Even the combination of them would not meet the objectives for both props and diorama need further explanation. Multimedia panel is not the proper media for the explanation because it can interact with 1-2 visitors in a moment and lacks visual connection with the display. Text panels should be designed and tested to deliver the explanation. The idea of making diorama a souvenir-photography spot must be questioned for its intrusiveness might seriously limit meeting interpretive objectives.

Props showed to be convenient media to deliver emotional interpretive objectives.

The evaluation proved need to refurbish the whole part of the exhibition devoted to the prehistoric settlement. There are definitely cheaper alternatives to diorama and multimedia panels that would meet the interpretive objectives better e.g. stereoscopic

slides showing different aspects of life, illustrated first-person lifestory or statues of hunters and gatherers. The delivery should not be focused on the material culture only but shall touch experience of every visitor with concepts like hunger, living on a minimum resources or fight for survival with the past animals (Tilden, 2007:36). Advantages and disadvantages of different media need to be further tested to develop their successful combination.

The list of references

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ZO ČSOP Pozemkový Spolek Hády, Správa CHKO Moravský kras (2006) *Moravský kras*. [DVD-ROM] Brno: Štefl Software

APPENDIX 1 – THE RESOURCE

Despite its isolation from the main migration routes and relatively high altitude the Northern Moravian karst was repeatedly chosen for settlement by different prehistoric cultures. Out of more than thousand registered caves only two offered formidable conditions for the settlement: space for the tribe, south exposure of the cave entrance, location near the valley bottom, enough space in front of a cave and close water resource. Karst plateaus continually passing into Drahaný highlands plateaus provided easily surveyable hunting ground.



Figure 2: Formidable location of the Kůlna cave (ZO ČSOP Pozemkový Spolek Hády, Správa CHKO Moravský kras, 2006).

Kůlna cave

Kůlna cave is one of the top sites for middle paleolithic period in Central Europe providing both neanderthal artefacts and evidence of the fauna (Podborský, 1993:23). The cave was inhabited by neanderthal man from the beginning of the last interglacial period (120 000 years ago) to its extinction (40 000 years ago). The place was settled several times in the upper paleolithic period as well but the relative importance of the findings to archaeology is lower.

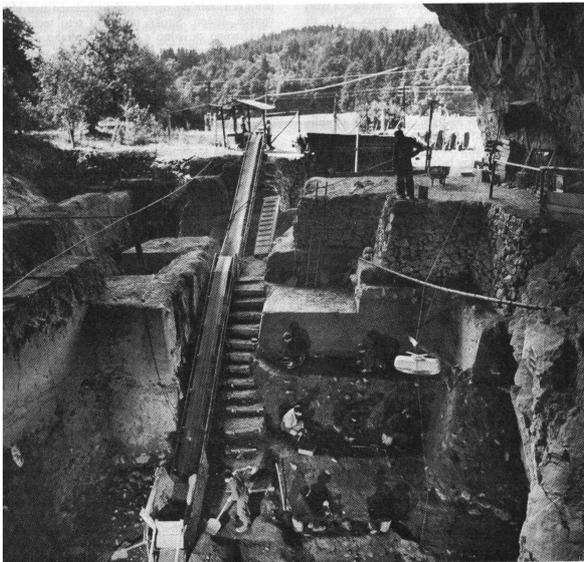


Figure 3: Archaeological research in 1960s (Podborský 1993:22)



Figure 4: Archaeological research hole is part of Kůlna cave guided tour (ZO ČSOP Pozemkový Spolek Hády, Správa CHKO Moravský kras, 2006).

Balcarka cave

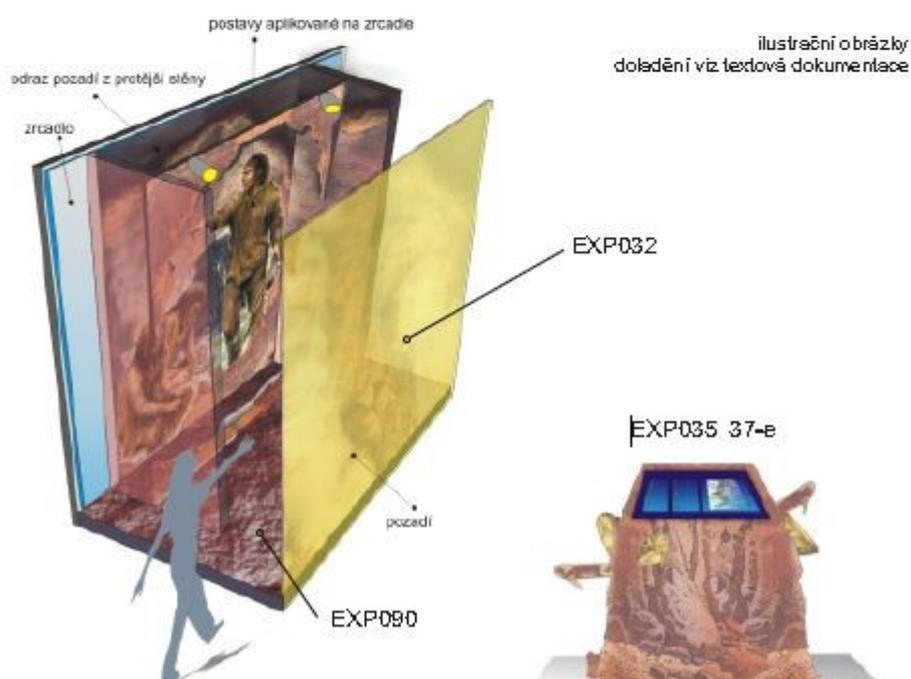
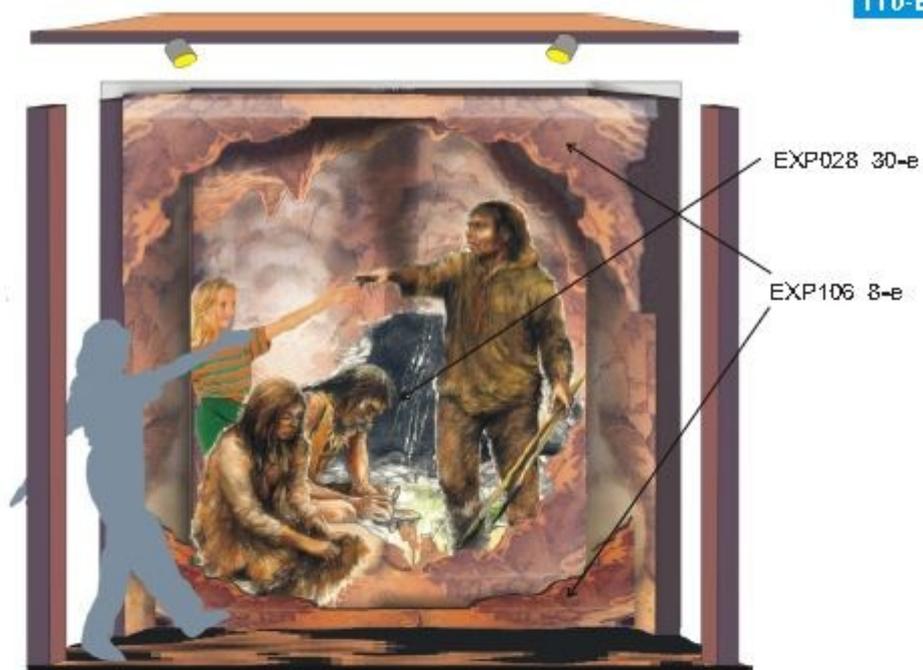
Magdalenien settlement near the cave entrance is well dated and proved as the oldest site in the chronology of Moravian magdalenien hunters and gatherers culture (Valoch, Neruda 2005: 461)

Koňská jáma cave

Large set of neolithic artefact was found in the cave. The reason why neolithic people entered caves and what they used them for is not yet clear. The findings are not important evidence of the material culture of the period but may give clues about the spiritual life of the peoples.

APPENDIX 2

110-E



divák, který vstoupí do prostoru diorámatu, vstoupí mezi odraz pozadí a obraz postav v popředí = vstoupí do obrazu a stane se účastníkem děje.

APPENDIX 3 – INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

Content of Appendix 3 is based on the proposed interpretation plan of the Northern Moravian karst (author 2010)

Aim of interpretation

To encourage visitors from wherever they are to enjoy the amazing karst scenery, understand relationships among its elements, value its uniqueness and play role in securing its sustainability.

Goals of interpretation

To achieve the aim set of interpretive goals was proposed in three areas based on Veverka (1998: 45): learning goals (know), emotional goals (feel) and behavioural goals (do).

Learning goals

- understand how the karst landscape and the karst phenomena came into being and have been developing;
- appreciate the unique habitats and their inhabitants tied to the karst landscape;
- discover and understand the importance of the Moravian karst in the history of humankind and our understanding of it through archaeological research;
- see the karst landscape dynamics, fragility and vulnerability to human influence;

Emotional goals

- wish to stay longer in the area and contribute to local community and economy;
- desire to explore other parts and aspects of the karst;
- feel a need to come back to renew the positive experience and acquire new ones;
- give positive reference about the nature and hospitality in the area.

Behavioural goals

- actively explore the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- respect the outstanding value of the heritage and take active part in its conservation;
- avoid vandalism in caves, on rocks and man-made facilities;
- respect the limits to sporting activities.

The above mentioned goals shall be further elaborated into quantifiable interpretation objectives (Brochu, 2003: 72) compatible with karst management objectives and local economy interests.

Theme, subthemes and storylines

To structure the messages to visitors, classification introduced by Brochu (2003: 97) was used. Based on resources available, visitors and interpretation aim and goals the interpretation plan suggest 6 main **subthemes**:

1. Moravian karst represents all the awesome features of a karst – the ever changing landscape where underground world with its beautiful decorations is tightly connected to what is happening on the surface.

2. Extraordinary morphology of the karst terrain created variety of habitats with unique flora and fauna that can be admired even nowadays.
3. Moravian karst was the place where first people in Central Europe settled – our distant ancestors lived here hard lives, skilfully used local resources and walked the same ground.
4. Living in the karst local people needed to overcome many hardships, and even until these days the karst determines their livelihood.
5. Generations of cavers have been exploring the hidden underground world, their bravery and discoveries claimed many lives, notwithstanding that they still continue to bring new facts to light.
6. Karst is a fragile environment, understanding its interconnectivity we are committed to keep it for enjoyment of the future generations.

Central theme:

- Limestone shaped unique landscape of the Moravian karst that hosts unique biota and has had an impact on livelihood of its people from the prehistoric times.

These subthemes shall be elaborated into storylines to structure visitor's experience (Brochu, 2003: 105). The following storylines are suggested:

1. Moravian karst represents all the awesome features of a karst – the ever changing landscape where underground world with its beautiful decorations is tightly connected to what is happening on the surface.

- what is karst and how it came into being;
- how caves and their decorations came into being;
- what are other karst phenomenons and where they can be seen;
- geological processes in the karst are much faster than in other landscapes, this makes it vulnerable to human influence;

2. Extraordinary morphology of the karst terrain created variety of habitats with unique flora and fauna that can be admired even nowadays.

- due to temperature inversion unique vegetation and fauna developed in the karst valleys preserving glacial relicts;
- poor and dry soils on the limestones bring thermophytic vegetation (e.g. Mediterranean plants) into the altitudes and latitudes it would never thrive;
- certain invertebrates colonised the lightless habitat of cave interiors;

3. Moravian karst was the place where first people in Central Europe settled – our distant ancestors lived here hard lives, skilfully used local resources and walked the same ground.

- for thousands of years hunters and gatherers made caves their home, nature looked different at that times and many extinct large mammals lived nearby;
- uncovering the artefacts of the cave people we are getting clues of the history of humankind;
- our ancestors were able to survive extreme conditions and endure many hardships, because they combined their sharp skills with masterful use of available natural resources;

4. Living in the karst local people needed to overcome many hardships, and even until these days

the karst determines their livelihood.

- caves and other karst features are interwoven into many local stories and legends;
- past landscapes were much more influenced by grazing than nowadays, it has got impact on distribution of many plants;
- Moravian karst provided its inhabitants with abundance of some natural resources (limestone, iron ore, caves) but scarcity of others (water, fertile soil)

5. Generations of cavers have been exploring the hidden underground world, their bravery and discoveries claimed many lives, notwithstanding that they still continue to bring new facts to light.

- cavers volunteered millions of hours to explore the cave systems, many discoveries were made after years of hard work;
- caving is dangerous and requires many skills;
- most caves lack dripstones and other decorations;

6. Karst is a fragile environment, understanding its interconnectivity we are committed to keep it for enjoyment of the future generations.

- underground world is closely connected to the management on the surface;
- precious parts of karst biota could not survive without human management these days;
- human activities including tourism may have exterminating effect on Moravian karst natural heritage, effort of each individual is important in the pursue to save it;