

Jon Kohl

An Interpretive Resume of My Interpretive Communications and Development Experience

“There’s no reason to expect poor interpretation to accomplish anything beyond sheer entertainment, if even that... Unless interpretation accomplishes its basic aim of provocation, it can’t hope to produce any other kind of outcome consistently.” **Sam Ham, *Interpretation: Making a Difference on Purpose***

Interpretation Done Well Can Improve This World

Interpretation branches off the conventional communications tree by provoking people, through emotional and intellectual connections, into a state of deeper thought and appreciation about a person, place, thing, or idea so when that person comes back up, their newfound appreciation drives their participation in the achievement of environmental management objectives.

Interpreters, in fact, cannot resist the compulsion to better this world, especially through heritage conservation, both for the environmental benefits it provides as well as the historical lessons about the universe and humanity it reveals. Interpreters create experience opportunities during which people activate their imagination to enter a story and therein discover significant meanings normally hidden behind the outwardly obvious. When the intimacy of relationship between people and heritage expands, their enthusiasm also expands to celebrate and protect that heritage.

Writing/Storytelling Is Critical to a Professional Interpreter

In fifth grade, I earned the highest town-wide score on a fiction-writing test. Aside from ego inflation, that achievement sent me down a path of creative and then academic writing. Understanding the craft of storytelling is perhaps the best background an interpreter can have. Many literary techniques — suspense, themes, authenticating details, characterization, plotting, conflict development — all translate directly to interpretive performances. Through writing and editing, the jump to interpretation proved less treacherous. See last page for partial list of interpretation publications.

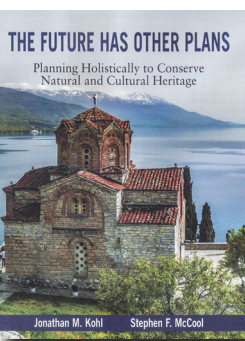
- Worked with the National Museum of Costa Rica to write interpretive signs for Guayabo National Monument
- *Fallout*, a SciFi romance novella, co-written with Kimberly K. Comeau, published by Bookstogonow.com
- International Interpreter column, *Legacy*, magazine of NAI
- Bilingual blog “International Heritage Interpretation,” www.facebook.com/heritageinterpretation, since 2011, 950 followers from over 50 countries
- Some pubs: *Wildlife Conservation*, *Parks*, *Parks & Recreation*, *The Boston Globe*, *E*, *World Heritage*, *Native Peoples*, *Caribbean Travel & Life*, *The Interpreter*, *Legacy*, *Interpnews*, *Boletín de Interpretación*, *Journal of Interpretation Research*, *Interpretation*

Magazine Editors Constantly Churn Out Provocative and Often Interpretive Stories

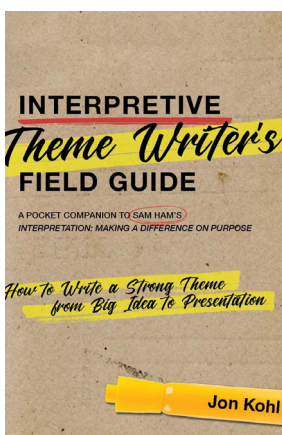
- I worked with *The Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* 3 years (cover story on Dartmouth and the environment); summered for *Oceanus* of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and *Greenpeace Magazine* in Washington, DC
- At Dartmouth College, I founded *Sense of Place* magazine in 1989, the first formatted publication to be transmitted across an e-network in the world. Assisted and covered by mentor Donella Meadows and *The New York Times*.
- Edited high school newspaper and co-founded its literary magazine
- Contributing editor of *Legacy*; cover stories on Komodo Dragons and extra-dimensional beings; honorable mention feature of 2010 on guiding.

Every Interpreter Should Brandish a Camera

At first my photography merely supplemented my writing, but later became a passion unto itself. A picture of a mantis was a finalist in the 2013 *Organic Gardening* magazine photo contest. I completed a professional photoshoot of tourism products at Mistico Park in Costa Rica. [See my best photos on Flickr.](#)



Published December 2016, the book traces deep reasons for plan implementation failure and offers a new way forward. For more information, click [here](#).



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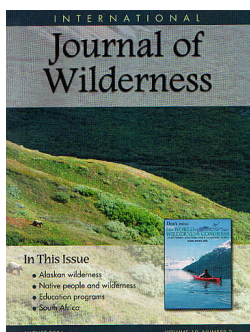
Ask for my general CV that includes almost everything
(English o español)

1 January 2023

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See my talks and keynotes



I won an essay contest at Yale about the relationship between zoos and wilderness; I later published “Zoos Behind the Wild Facade”.



Carlos Rosero and I facilitate the interpretive framework for El Cocuy National Park

Public Speaking Is Another Base Skill of Field Interpreters

When I took Persuasive Speaking at Dartmouth, I discovered a passion for performing in front of people.

- Peace Corps educator and interpreter at the National Zoo of Costa Rica. Attended over 6,000 children.
- Speaker in the US State Department Strategic Speaker Initiative that sent me to talk about interpretation and ecotourism in Ecuador, Bolivia, Cameroon, Liberia, Swaziland, and Malawi
- Keynote speaker for conferences of the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education, Colombian Network for Sustainable Tourism, Mexican Congress on Alternative Tourism (twice), as well as invited speaker at the Universidad Externado and National Training Service in Colombia, many interp conference presentations.
- Book speaking tour. Talk uses interpretive and TED techniques; given over 15 times in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

I Wander in Purgatory between Academia and the Field

Drs. Sam Ham and Susan Jacobson accepted me fully paid to be their doctoral student, but I stayed in the field.

- Exhibition researcher for the Smithsonian Institution Office of Environmental Awareness's traveling exhibit, *Ocean Planet*, curated by [Judy Gradwohl](#)
- Taught environmental interpretation and protected area planning at the University of Costa Rica and the University for International Cooperation (ELAP) in Costa Rica
- Research and publishing: *International Journal of Applied Education and Communication* (comparison of environmental education and interpretation), *The Journal of Interpretation Research* (systems thinking and meaning creation), *International Journal of Wilderness* (wilderness and the modern zoo), *Journal Interpretation* (community interpretation)
- Attend and present at NAI, AIP, InterpEurope, InterpatMX national and international conferences.
- Named associate editor of the *Journal of Interpretation Research*, November 2019
- Named to editorial advisory board, magazine of the International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites. [UNESCO-WHIPIC](#), Korea, August 2022.
- Serve on the ICOMOS Scientific Committee for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage

In hindsight, one foot in theory and the other in practice should be the posture of every professional interpreter.

Interpretive Themes Provoke and Guide Deeper Appreciation

Based on the seminal research of Ham on the centrality of thematic interpretation, I have innovated the craft of fashioning “strong” interpretive themes with universal connections. I have also advanced the interpretive framework, a hierarchical set of themes that links essence, processes, themes, and heritage created through a consensus process to represent a community's view of its own site and its relationship to the larger universe. In fact, I published a book on theme writing (see the cover on first page and listing on publications page.)

At Fermata, Inc. I worked with the concept originator (Shomer Zwelling) to craft the [Lumber Heritage Region Interpretive Plan](#). Later I created 3 more interpretive frameworks (see Poconos example to left) before developing the tool as part of participatory interpretation and community development. See some favorite messages:

- Behind the artistic beauty of the colonial architecture of Antigua, Guatemala, can be found the hidden intention of the Spanish conquerors to dominate the artistic expression and customs of indigenous peoples.
- Governments fight drug trafficking where the cocaine supply grows in Colombia, while invisible and blameless consumers in distant lands drive the demand.
- Ants have innovated farming strategies (aphid herding and fungi cultivation) millennia before people “invented” their own farming systems.
- What distinguishes World Heritage Sites from other protected areas is the facility with which the Sites can tie together the heart of a person with the heart of humanity.
- The collapse of human civilizations is not a history of the slow disappearance of the capacity to provide basic services, but a long ignorance of declining indicators by society's leaders.
- Sex between two people as well as the spiritual motive to improve the world are manifestations of the same creative impulse that has made the world more complex and mysterious since its beginning: The Big Bang.

Experience in Participatory Interpretive Frameworks (frameworks available upon request):

- World Heritage City of Evora, Portugal (see participants at right)
- CATIE university in Costa Rica (through University of Costa Rica project)
- Union Island in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

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Interpretation in Latin America Needs Organization

As director of the PUP Global Heritage Consortium one of our objectives is to promote interpretation in Latin America. We do this through our webinars, publications, and the coorganization of the First Latin American Congress on Heritage Interpretation. As co-organizer I worked with Dr. Antonieta Jimenez (on the PUP board of directors) as well as professor at the El Colegio de Michoacan in Mexico to organize this historic event in October 2018. It was a teleconference with transmission centers at the University of Costa Rica, Tropical Science Center in Costa Rica, El Colegio de Michoacan, National School of Conservation, Restoration and Museography in Mexico, National Learning Service in Colombia, Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, Universidad Científica del Sur in Peru. Together we organized the largest interpretation event in the history of Latin America and PUP played a pivotal role. The second congress is tentatively scheduled for the second half of 2020.



One of the principal products that came out of this conference was the eventual establishment of the Mexican Association of Heritage Interpreters, the first and only interpretation association in Latin America.

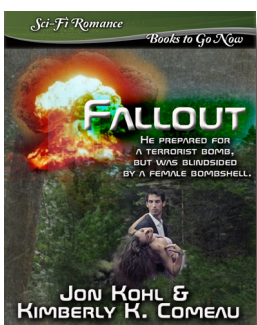


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Some Interp Pubs



Articles in *Legacy* between 2003 and 2004 were part of my regular column called “The International Interpreter”. 23 articles in *Legacy* in total.



Using Adobe Premier, I have a number of self-produced videos in English and Spanish found at PUP's Youtube Channel



“[Heritage Interpretation Emerging in Latin America](#).” (December, 2022). *Interpreting World Heritage*, UNESCO-WHIPIC. p. 25. Also in Spanish.

“Challenges that rangers must face: Four rangers from Mexico, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Colombia tell their stories of diverse realities across Latin America.” (September 2021). *Parks Stewardship Forum*. 2-part German version.

“Gestión holística del patrimonio: ¿Qué nos enseña el lugar donde murió George Floyd sobre el patrimonio y su papel en la sociedad?” (September 2021). *Boletín de Interpretación*.

“Talking climate with those holding different worldviews.” (June 2021). *Yale Climate Connections*. Also in *IE Newsletter*.

Esencia de la interpretación de patrimonio: Una visión holística para experimentar y conservar el patrimonio natural y cultural de América Latina. (May 2021). Second author with Marisol Mayorga. First university textbook for/by Latin America. Central America university publisher, UNED. See [cover](#). [Ebook version](#).

“Heritage Interpretation Enriches the Park Experience.” (December 2020). *Parks & Recreation* magazine.

“Four Levels of Interpretive Development Based on Tilden’s Principle of Wholeness.” (November 2020). *Journal of Interpretation Research*.

“Going Galactic: Expanding Heritage Interpretation to Include the Potential Influence of Extraterrestrial and Extradimensional Beings.” (May/June 2020). *Legacy*. Cover story. Co-written with Dr. Sean Esbjörn-Hargens.

Interpretive Theme Writer’s Field Guide: A Pocket Companion to Sam Ham’s Interpretation: Making a Difference on Purpose: How to Write a Strong Theme from Big Idea to Presentation. (November 2018). National Association for Interpretation.

“Beyond the Interpreter’s Words: Experiences Erupt from the Visitor’s Entire Context.” (Jan/Feb. 2017). *Legacy*. Cover story (picture of my son to left) and based on a webinar given for NAI.

“Elaboración de los productos y programas de uso público en los parques nacionales.”. (2016). Co-author with Ramos, Calvo, Perales, Martínez. Red de Parques Nacionales: Cuadernos 6. Book on interpretive planning.

“Book Review: *Tour Guiding Research: Insights, Issues, and Implications*.” (May 2015). *J of Policy Research, Leisure, & Events*.

“Self-Worth, Self-Identity.” (June 2014) *Interpretation* Journal, Association for Heritage Interpreters, UK.

“A Systems-Based Interpretive Planning Model that Links Culturally Constructed Place Meanings and Conservation.” (November 2008). *Journal of Interpretation Research*. Co-author Ted Eubanks. NAI publication.

“Way Beyond Darwin: Evolution of Human Consciousness and the Future of Interpretation.” (May/Jun 10). *Legacy*.

“Dodging Cuts: Surviving budget cuts for heritage interpretation means becoming relevant.” *Parks & Recreation* (3/07)

“Visitor Centers: If You Build Them, Will They Come?” *E Magazine* (Nov/Dec 2000), *Legacy* (Jul-Aug 2002)

“The Boneyard Classroom.” *The Boston Globe* (13 September 1993 and reprinted in *Sanctuary* January 1993).

“¿Qué es realmente real? Nueva visión de la autenticidad y su papel en la interpretación y el turismo alternativo.” (02/13). *Boletín de Interpretación*. Also in *Legacy* as “What Is Really Real?” (Nov/Dec 2014).

“Heritage Interpretation vs. Environmental Education as an Ecotourism Conservation Strategy.” Chapter in *Ecotourism and Conservation in the Americas*. (2008) Edited by Amanda Stronza & Bill Durham. CABI Pub.

“Putting the Ecotour Guide Back into Context: Training Guides with Systems Thinking.” Chapter in *Quality Assurance and Certification in Ecotourism* (2007). Edited by Rosemary Black & Alice Crabtree. CABI Pub.

“Putting Environmental Interpretation to Work for Conservation in a Park Setting: Conceptualizing Principal Conservation Strategies.” (02/05) *Applied Environmental Education and Communication Journal* 4(1).

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23 Years of Public Use and Interpretive Training Around the World



August 2022

I was involved in all of these interventions

Country	Collaborators	Participants	Summary	Date
Honduras	RARE, Fundación VIDA, REHDES	10-15 guides from REHDES members	70-day Nature Guide Training Program, 8-person staff, three training locations, English only	1997
Honduras	RARE, Fundación VIDA	15 guides from throughout the country	Same program as above, guides from throughout country	1998
Guatemala, Yucatan, Honduras			Wrote the <i>Guides Guide</i> for these programs. Did model tours in Yaxhá and Tuxtla zoo. Marisol Mayorga helped with Mexican Yucatan <i>Guides Guide</i>	1999 2000 2005
Indonesia	TNC, RARE, UNESCO, NP Komodo and Ujung Kulon	Personnel, communities, RARE, The Nature Conservancy	Extensive training, accompaniment, that led to the facilitation and writing by communities of their public use plans	2003
South Texas, USA	World Birding Center, Fermata, Inc.	Staff from 7 different protected areas from local cities, Texas State Parks, NPS, FWS	One week of training 10-13 participants. See testimonial from Jennifer Owen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFWEXTf98v8	2005
Bolivia	US Embassy, Conservation International, local tourism and conservation organizations, materials from Fermata	25 Bolivians from organizations throughout Bolivia	4-day workshop outside Madidi National Park; a proceedings-guide was published as a result inaugurated by a Bolivian minister and used to teach interpretation at a university in Bolivia.	2007
Costa Rica	Rainforest Biodiversity Group and Costa Rican Bird Route	14 guides and staff from Bird Route member sites	Two one-day workshops focused on introducing what it takes to professionalize guides throughout the route. Assisted by Raquel Gómez	2010 May
Colombia	Colombian National Parks, USAID, Patrimonio Natural	14 staff from throughout parks system	10-day workshop in Otún Quimbaya, outside of Pereira, assisted by Carlos Romero (independent) and Clara Osorio (Parques)	Oct. 2010

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Montenegro	UNESCO, City of Ohrid, Durmitur NP, Ministry of Environment in Montenegro	10 participants from 2 WHS and guests	6-day PUP training. Macedonian representative went on to complete the heritage atlas component	2010
Viet Nam	UNESCO, UN Habitat, ILO	30 participants from 3 UNESCO sites: Cham Island Biosphere Reserve, My Son Sanctuary, Hoi An City	Three segments of training of a week each, intermixed by a few months of training work. Three-person training team. All three sites produced PUP and were approved. First time in Viet Nam a heritage site planned from ground-up	2011-2012
Belize	UNESCO, The Nature Conservancy	12 participants from Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve in Mexico and related NGO and Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System (WHS)	One-week PUP training	2011
Costa Rica	INBio, ACROPROT	25 guides	Guides seeking national tour guide certification with INA delegated to ACROPROT/INBio. I did the interpretation component. Over a couple of months.	Oct-Dec 11
Portugal	UNESCO, Network of Portuguese-Speaking World Heritage Sites	20 participants from various WHS where Portuguese spoken	One-week training. Went on to do half PUP process in the city of Evora and one module on ROS zoning in Coa	2012
Kenya	UNESCO, Fort Jesus National Monument	20 participants from site and community	Training and technical assistance for staff to carry out first steps of PUP Process	2012
Colombia	OpEPA, National Parks, USAID, Patrimonio Natural	15 guides from community operators around El Cocuy National Park	1-day interpretive planning workshop for stakeholders of El Cocuy. 5-day workshop in El Cocuy with 15 local guides. Co-led with Carlos Rosero, OpEPA	July 2012
Colombia	OpEPA, USAID, Patrimonio Natural	15 guides, staff of OpEPA and tour operators from Bogotá	2-day introductory workshop on environmental interpretation for staff of OpEPA	July 2012
Costa Rica	University of Costa Rica	6 environmental interpretation students	4 are students of interpretation/biology licentiate degree, 2 are Spanish transfers	Aug-dec 12
Colombia	Fundación Natura USAID	25	Interpretive training for Guides and heritage interpreters – corregimiento de El Valle, Chocó	2012
Colombia	Fundación Natura USAID	20	Interpretive planning workshop for corregimiento de El Valle, Chocó	2012
Colombia	Fundación Natura USAID	20	Workshop for the design of Interpretive products corregimiento de El Valle, Chocó	2012

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Costa Rica	Rios Tropicales rafting company	10 guides/staff	Also created a <i>Guide's Guide</i> for the company. No follow up.	Oct 13
Colombia	OpEPA, Mar Viva, PUP, SENA	12 local guides from fishing village in Jurubirá, Chocó	Phase I: Various days, facilitated by PUP Facilitator Carlos Rosero with PUP materials Phase II: Product design with guides	Nov 14 Nov 15
Spain	National Parks Agency of Spain	15 people from parks throughout Spain	Public use and interpretation training, four days, also gave a series of talks in Spain including the keynote for the 2014 Conference for the Association for Heritage Interpretation	November 2014
Colombia	SENA, National Parks	15 instructors in Cartagena	Training on theme writing and also working with SENA curriculum designers to design a course in heritage interpretation to add to the official curriculum	December 2014
Colombia	OpEPA, District Institute for Tourism	600 students	Descubriendo Siete Tesoros Naturales en Bogotá Program	2015
Colombia	Mar Viva Foundation	25	Interpretation workshop for guides and heritage interpreters - DMRI Golfo de Tribugá	2015
Colombia	Mar Viva Foundation	20	Interpretive planning workshop – DMRI Golfo de Tribugá	2015
Colombia	Mar Viva Foundation	20	Workshop Interpretive product design - DMRI Golfo de Tribugá 2015	2016
Honduras	ProParque/USAID, PUP	15 guides/staff/supporters	10-day workshop, diagnostic, upgraded evaluation framework, some follow up to write tour outlines. PUP Facilitator Ivonne Oviedo assisted.	Oct 15
Honduras	ProParque/USAID, PUP	18 guides/staff/VIPs	6-day “advanced interpretation” workshop focusing on planning, materials production, graphic design, exhibits to move forward on the tour outlines from the previous workshop. Three instructors Jon Kohl, Ivonne Oviedo, and Jonathan Mariño as graphic designer. Most advanced course yet, sophisticated evaluation system.	Feb 16
World	National Association for Interpretation	Students and practitioners	Founded bimonthly webinar program on heritage interpretation-related themes in Spanish.	2017-2021

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Colombia	OpEPA, National Parks, European Union	120 local service providers in 5 workshops	Each workshop lasted 40 hours followed by period in which participants developed and improved products considering interpretation and visitor experience.	Nov-feb 2017–18
Colombia	OpEPA, National Parks, SENA	40 SENA instructors and park employees	2 workshops of five days each in Otún Quimbaya. Part I of a four-part series.	Sept y Oct 2018
Latin America	Multiple universities, SENA, Tropical Science Center in 5 countries	1800 people from Spanish speaking world	First Latin American Congress on Heritage Interpretation. Organized between PUP and the Colegio de Michoacán in Mexico	November 2018
Costa Rica	OpEPA, PUP	20 participants	Two-day workshop on interpretive theme writing	June 2019
Costa Rica	Tirimina Biological Reserve, PUP	12 participants	Two-day workshop on interpretive theme writing	
Colombia	Metropolitan Touring, OpEPA	45 interpretive Guides first annual cohort Second cohort stopped by pandemic	Leadership, Interpretive training in La Macarena National Park	2019-2020
Latin America	PUP	12 participants	4-week online course on interpretive theme writing using ZOOM and Slack	January-February 2020
USA	PUP and NAI	36 participants	Webinar on worldviews and climate interpretation. Extremely well attended.	August 2022