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# Live Interpretation in Archaeological Open-Air Museums



With the support of the Culture Program  
of the European Union

Do's and Don'ts of including  
Live Interpretation  
as part of the visitor experience



WorkPackage 3: "The Dialogue with the Visitors"

is produced in the context of the OpenArch project, as part of Work Package 3 – the Dialogue with the Visitors.  
Commissioned by Archeon (NL). The text was produced by experts at Archeon, collated from questionnaires sent to the partners  
and requests to Live Interpretation professionals.

are:

Museum Cymru – National Museum Wales (Wales – UK) further referred to as “St Fagans”

Logisch Ökologisches Zentrum Albersdorf (AÖZA) (DE) further referred to as “AÖZA”

Archeon BV (NL) further referred to as “Archeon”

Viminacium – Archaeological Park of Viminacium (RS) further referred to as “Viminacium”

Parco Montale – Museo Civico Archeologico Etnologico (IT) further referred to as “Parco Montale”

Kierikki – Kierikkikeskus/Kierikki Stone Age Centre (FI) further referred to as “Kierikki”

Foteviken – Organisationen för Kulturell förmedling ekonomisk förening (SE) further referred to as “Foteviken”

Calafell – Ciutadella Ibèrica (CAT) further referred to as “Calafell”

Hunebedcentrum – Prehistorisch hart van Nederland – Hunebedcentrum (NL) further referred to as “Hunebedcentrum”

University of Exeter, College of Humanities – Dept. of Archaeology (EN) further referred to as “University of Exeter”

“Involve me, and I will understand”



## FOR THE VISITORS



Education and Culture DG

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The OpenArch project has made it possible to create this guidebook aimed at the visitor. The consumer market is ever-changing. Visitors under twenty have grown up with a smartphone or tablet in their hands. This is something all museums should be aware of. This guidebook is meant to be used by staff and management of Archaeological Open-Air Museums, in order to increase the visitor experience. Whether the museum already uses Live Interpretation as part of their display or is exploring the possibilities, this guide should prove invaluable to the museum staff and so, to the visitors themselves.

The best teacher is experience. The best way to learn how to include Live Interpretation in a museum's display is to do it. The goal of this guidebook is to give examples and options, as well as concrete tips and tricks for interpretation. But in every case, improving the visitor experience is the goal. We hope this book gives handholds by which to reach this goal.

Archeon (NL) and Viminacium (RS), and the other partners in the OpenArch project.

WP3 coördinators, Archeon and Viminacium



# PREFACE

By Marc van Hasselt

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2011 graduated  
Utrecht University with an  
MA in Medieval History.  
Started work as an  
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in 2001, since 2011  
he has worked there  
as event coordinator and  
project manager.  
Since 2015 he is  
the chair of IMTAL.

Live interpretation is the best tool for museum education. Archaeological Open-Air Museums (AOAM), such as represented in the OpenArch project, have known this since the time of Arthur Hazelius and his 'Skansen'. But in recent years, this realization has also made its way into the more traditional museum world. Live interpretation, whereby the guide takes on the role of interpreter of the past, is well and truly established as a means of educating and entertaining visitors.

Especially in the US and UK, through the efforts of the International Museum Theatre Alliance (IMTAL) and similar organizations, the use of first person interpretation has become a staple of educational programs aimed at both school children and adults. This is also true for many museums and heritage sites throughout Europe. Still, there is a great diversity in the ways in which interpretation is offered and experienced. Through efforts to better understand and thus, improve the visitor experience, museum professionals have been able to take great strides in the application of live interpretation. As one school child put it, after being asked what he had learnt from a performance: "I knew that it had happened, but now I understand what that means."

This understanding, the opportunity to relate to our ancestors, is what Live Interpretation is all about. It is a dialogue between the visitor and history. For this dialogue to happen, the museum staff needs to have a skillset specifically aimed at initiating their own dialogue with the visitor. This guidebook provides some handholds for developing this skillset further. It gives examples of styles of interpretation, the sorts of visitors a staff member might encounter, as well as practical examples of interpretation. Equally important is a confidence with the subject matter; a passion for, but also a well-founded understanding of, the past. Using sources can be daunting, but historical research is a core skill of the modern museum professional.

One of the most important skills, however, is the ability to understand the visitor. Why are they visiting? What is their goal? Why are they interested in history, culture or art? What is their background, their understanding of the subject? To answer these questions is another part of the dialogue with the visitor. Interpreters often answer them without thinking about it, while many institutions wish they knew how to even ask the right questions. The immediacy of human interaction is what makes Live Interpretation so uniquely suited to museum education and entertainment.

OpenArch has given the opportunity to 11 partners to interact and learn from one another. This international dialogue has resulted in a number of insights into the dialogue between museums and traditional skills, scientific institutions, but mostly; the dialogue with the visitor. This guidebook is therefore of value not just to the OpenArch project, but to all museum professionals seeking to improve their craft.

**"Outside of your comfort zone is where the magic happens."**

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# Methods of Interpretation

There are many different ways to present history and archaeology to the public. This chapter will outline some of the choices that Archaeological Open-Air Museums are faced with when deciding what method best fits their site. Much of the chapter will focus on the practical application of techniques, so that employees of AOAM can use it to improve and expand their presentation. For this purpose, experts (OpenArch partners and external) have been consulted.

Archaeological Open-Air Museums (AOAM) offer a unique setting in which Live Interpretation can make history come truly alive. For many, or perhaps all AOAM, history is the product they are presenting to the public. During the five years the OpenArch project has run, the partners have spent many hours discussing the merits of Live Interpretation in the unique setting of an AOAM. It is an effective method – whether done in first or third person – to entertain and educate. But what does the visitor experience when faced with Live Interpretation? How does it affect the transfer of information and what are the specific goals of this method? Are there alternatives?

## 1. Live interpretation

To begin, it is important to set the stage. This means that a precise definition of Live Interpretation is essential to determining its application, possibilities and limits. Put simply, live interpretation is a method for interpreting the past using (live) people. Traditionally, in the context of AOAM, it involves people in historically accurate clothing in a historically accurate setting. These interpreters of the past can perform live interpretation through different means, including but not limited to: demonstrations of historical crafts and arts; guided tours; shows (both small and large scale); storytelling; (historical) theatre.

Of course, it is entirely possible to do Live Interpretation in a different setting, whereby the person interpreting the past cannot use the environment he is in, but is limited to his own person, attire, accessories and other accoutrements. This is the case with an interpreter visiting a school or conference; some living history or re-enactment events; museum theatre; etc. While this limits the possible subjects the interpreter can use, as long as he can use reproductions of historical objects he can offer his audience an experience of the past. This guide focuses on a situation wherein an interpreter can use his surroundings, within an AOAM.

Since the goal of Live Interpretation is to give the audience an experience, it is very important to plan this experience and gauge the impact. The use of Live Interpretation (as opposed to, for instance, theatre or storytelling) is the possibility to change the performance as and when it is needed. The ability to read his audience and improvise, based on the audience's reaction, is therefore the most important skill an interpreter has.



Fig 1. A guide from Calafell welcomes visitors into the citadel. School children are invited to take part both as interpreters and visitors, which creates a unique educational environment.

# DO'S

## Think about your role:

am I acting (first person) or am I a guide (third person)?

## Check your appearance:

are modern items visible? Does my clothing need repairs? Are my shoes polished?

## What is the first impression the guests will have of you?

How are you going to break the ice, in order to start interacting with them?

## Make sure you have an appropriate amount of items to talk about,

which the visitors can personally interact with (handle).

## Think about your position with regards to the visitors:

make sure you are easily approachable.

# DON'Ts

**Be careful of switching between first and third person at random**

– it confuses the visitors.

**Never be careless about your appearance,**  
even if you are portraying someone of lower station.

**Your answer to any interaction from the visitors should never be “No”;**  
even negative comments can be turned into a positive experience.

**Never turn your back on the visitors,**  
they should feel welcomed and invited by your position and stance.



Fig 2. A group of children dressed as Celts attack a group of Roman legionnaires during the yearly International Roman Festival at Archeon. An unforgettable (and fun!) experience.



Fig 3. (Above) Roman soldiers in Archeon, acting the part of the stern Optio (unit commander).

Fig 4. (Bottom) The children, having been drilled as a unit and given a (cardboard) Roman helmet as a reward, show their parents how loud they can shout.



# INPUT FROM

Chris Gidlow:  
"First and Third Person"



Chris Gidlow is the Live Interpretation Manager for Historic Royal Palaces in the UK. He manages the performances of live interpretation at places like the Tower of London and Hampton Court Palace, bringing events such as the Peasants' Revolt or the weddings of Henry VIII to life for thousands of visitors per year. Chris Gidlow is also the head of the board of IMTAL (International Museum Theatre Alliance).

**In first person interpretation, interpreters take on the character of a person from the past.** People never come out of character and no anachronisms are allowed. They speak in terms 'I am...', 'I do...'. They avoid mentioning or discussing things not from their lifetime or experience. Some practitioners allow no knowledge of the present; others use an approach where they acknowledge that the visitor is in the present and the interpreter from another time.

**Immersion in a believable world of the past is easiest to achieve when the interpreters take on first person characters.** In some sense first person is 'easier', since the interpreter can confine themselves to a limited perspective of their character and what they know, rather than an encyclopaedic knowledge of the sources and the place of their character in history. On the other hand, some aspects are difficult. The character must know the price of a litre of milk, the date of their birthday and the number of children they have. Sometimes those simple details are actually unknown or unknowable and evidence-based elements of fiction may have to intrude. Those difficulties are outweighed by the believability and enjoyment of 'stepping back in time', if the whole site is integrated to produce that effect, or 'encountering a person from another time' if the interpretation takes place in a multi-period or neutral environment such as a museum. Visitors tend to find this approach more enjoyable, and closer to what they would expect from other media, such as film, theatre and video games. A first person character can easily hold and express views which are unusual, even offensive in a modern context, which can be used to illustrate changing social norms or to provoke debate. At Historic Royal Palaces, we have found visitors' expectations have changed over the past twenty years, and that they are now far more willing to enter into first person dialogue. **Indeed they have come to expect it from a person in costume.**

However, interpretation fails when it becomes a barrier to communication. We should never let 'first person interpretation' prevent an interpreter telling a visitor where the toilets are or what time the next performance starts, or coping with a medical emergency. Authentic language is sometimes used, but if it interferes with communication, it is 'translated'. Our experience is that in order for the visitor to interact fully, and understand the information given, the best route is to use standard modern language, avoiding obvious anachronisms. **Interpreters would avoid modern greetings such as 'hello' or 'hi' in favour of timeless ones like 'good day'.**

Needless to say, a first person interpreter needs to be authentically dressed. **The quality of the costumes is a key factor as perceived by the visitors.** They are visually appealing and spark the imagination, certainly, but their impact comes from the fact that visitors consider that they are historically accurate, an impression reinforced by the ease and appropriate way the interpreters wear them.

We stress the accuracy of our live interpretation to ensure it adds to rather than detracts from the authenticity of the experience. We ask not only what do the interpreters look like and how do they act, but what are they doing? Their behaviour must also be authentic. Washerwomen in the State apartments interpreting the inner workings of the King's foreign policy are not authentic, no matter what the level of costume and language used. We want authentic social interaction between classes and sexes; we also try to construct rationales for interpreters giving tours and demonstrations which are authentic in context of the time.

## First Person: The issue of shame

An experience elicits an emotion. This emotion can be positive or negative, but in the case of Live Interpretation, should always lead to a moment of realization and education. Negative emotions should not necessarily be avoided, as they tend to leave longer-lasting memories. For instance, when someone has a sudden fright (similar to a horror film or ghost house), which is a negative emotion; it does not mean the experience as a whole is ruined. The interpreter must realize that while he could scare an adolescent or adult to elicit a response - usually a gasp followed by laughter - the same tactic would not work on a toddler - they would just start crying. Again, the most important thing is to tailor the experience to the individual.

One negative emotion that should be avoided is shame. In Dutch, we refer to "plaatsvervangende schaamte" (vicarious shame) when someone experiences a feeling of shame on behalf of someone else. When someone is confronted by a performance they consider shameful, they will generally not take the experience as positive. The vicarious shame takes over when they are confronted with, for instance, medieval beggars or lepers portrayed in an over-the-top manner. Entering an open-air museum's medieval section, the visitor is approached by a dirty-looking beggar holding out a bowl for alms. It is a scene that is repeated in castles, towns, events and other setting across Europe and the world. The visitor, however, does not know what is expected of them in this scenario, leading to indecisiveness and an overall feeling of shame. Some may be able to interact quite easily with such a performance, but this can not be expected of the average visitor.

Going back to the example of the beggar and the feeling of shame: when the aforementioned beggar approaches a visitor out of the blue and starts asking for alms, none of these rules for interaction are employed or engaged. It is unclear what the correct response would be, or what choices the audience is presented with. What are the consequences of giving or not giving alms? What response can be expected of the actor? What is the context of the beggar in question? When the scenario is placed in its proper context, however, it might be a very worthwhile experience after all.

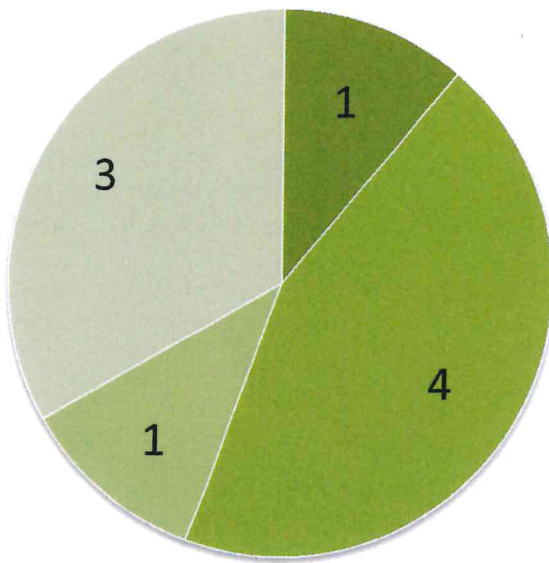
Fig 5. An interpreter at the Hunebedcentrum gathering crops. Interpreters have the option of using sights as well as smells and even taste.

## Third Person interpretation

When an organisation decides to use Live Interpretation, it needs to make a clear decision whether this should be in third person or in first person. In third person the Interpreter dresses and acts in the manner of the past, but does not adopt a historic role. The Interpreter acknowledges the present - i.e. 21st century, and can interpret events/themes not directly related to a specific character scenario. The interpreter uses a 'they were, they did' approach to language. With careful construction, this method can introduce visitors to concepts of historical perspective, archaeological process and cultural change. It is often a conservative choice, either for an organisation which itself favours a traditional approach to interpretation, or where the visitors are not prepared for or happy with a first person approach. This is because, although the interpreter is in costume, they perform many traditional interpretation roles such as guide or demonstrator. The site itself may require the interpreter to perform a variety of functions, such as orientation, greeting and warding, which may fight against a first person approach. If done badly or inconsistently, it risks confusing the visitors. It is less immersive than first person and constantly creates anachronisms.



## WE ASKED Do you use Live Interpretation at your AOAM?



- First Person interpretation (1)
- Third Person interpretation (4)
- Mixed form (1)
- No Live Interpretation / Only at special events (3)

**Graph 1.** From the respondents, only one indicated they do not use Live Interpretation at all. Two others have indicated they really only use Live Interpretation during special events and not as a part of the daily program. Only one respondent indicated they regularly use first person interpretation as their 'default' way of interacting with the visitors. The other 5 (over half) indicated they use third person or a mix of first and third person.

### Skills and crafts

All of the AOAM in the OpenArch project use demonstrations of skills and crafts as part of their interpretation, usually as part of a special event. Three of the partners indicated they have such demonstrations daily during the opening season.

### Shows

Six out of nine partners also use shows (in first person) to further educate and entertain visitors. They use the existing structures and areas to have these shows, which commonly involve most or all of the staff present. Their goals are generally the same: to generate more interest in the historical period being portrayed and to provide both entertainment and education.

### Training

An important part of the dialogue with the visitor is preparing staff for their job as historical interpreters, tour guides or experts. 7 out of 9 partners indicated they reserve time to the training of staff, the other 2 indicate that, partly due to the influence of the OpenArch project, they plan to start in 2014-2015.

## The setting

There is a big difference between 'traditional' museums and AOAM. Central to this difference is the amount of interactivity that is possible for, but also expected of, the visitor. They are not just faced with passive objects surrounded by more-or-less interactive displays. The objects themselves are active – many of them are used by the interpreters to help create the experience. The second part of the definition given above – the historically accurate setting – comes into play. This context in which the performance is placed can help guide both the interpreter and the visitor to come to a better experience.

Continuing with the example of our shame-inducing beggar, it has been established that this performance on its own does not necessarily provide a positive experience. First the interpreter should make it clear what his role is. If interpreting in the third person, this can be easily done. In the first person, it is important to explain what the role of the character is in the wider context of the medieval setting.

A beggar or, for that matter, anyone placed outside of society as a whole, is in a perfect place to criticize society from the outside.

A beggar could, instead of just asking for alms, engage the audience on the evils of society that led to him becoming a beggar. They could even ask the visitor to help them by speaking up for them, simultaneously placing the visitors on the same level as the other interpreters who do have houses, food and money; and asking them to join the beggar in creating a better society. The experience as a whole is then broader than just the experience of meeting a beggar – the visitor is instead meeting the whole underside of medieval society.

This only works in an authentic setting where there are multiple characters which can be interacted with. If we look at the example of the gladiator show, the interaction of the Lanista with the audience ties the experience together – the gladiators on their own do not provide this, nor does the Lanista on his own. The visitors are invited to become part of this world for a little while and see it through the eyes of the characters that inhabit it. But to successfully accomplish this, they need a guide or interpreter. The beggar is not (just) asking for alms, he is asking the visitor to see the unfairness of the world around him. He is asking them to experience what life was like for him for a moment. Again, this can lead to powerful experiences.



Fig 6. (Above) Children pretending to be vikings, enjoying the interaction with the interpreters.

Fig 7. (Bottom) A show involving birds of prey in Archeon. The use of animals, while tricky, can be extremely rewarding. When Calafell asked school children what they remembered most of their visit, one of the most common answers was: "the goat!"

## Shows and performances

Shows and performances, while less personal in their approach to experiences and interaction, still offer the chance to create these powerful experiences. The difference between a show and a personal interaction with an interpreter is the scale: a show will usually involve a larger crowd and be performed at a set time. They are part of the day's activities and fit into a schedule. The interactions between interpreters and visitors are more improvised and do not follow a set script.

### EXAMPLE Archeon, The Netherlands Gladiatorial combat



Fig 8. While the gladiators take central stage, note how the soldier, Lanista and Charon all have a part to play in the show. It wouldn't work without them.

As an example, the Gladiatorial combat in Archeon shows how this can be achieved. The central part of the show is the gladiator fight itself. But, if people were to walk into the arena, see a quick fight and then leave again, they would not have much of an experience. However, due to the way the show as a whole is built up, it can become quite unforgettable. First the rules of gladiator combat are explained by the Lanista (trainer of the gladiators). He uses a volunteer from the audience, creating a bond with them in the process. However, due to the way he presents himself, he usually gets the exact opposite of what he asks for – if he asks the audience to cheer, they boo. When asked to boo, they cheer. After more than half of the show is over, the gladiators themselves are called in. They enter one at a time, with the Lanista making it very clear who his personal favourite is. This creates a sense of unfairness, which elicits a strong response – the audience boos the champion. The second gladiator to come in is then inevitably cheered, despite (actually, because of) the Lanista's protests.

The responses of the audience to stimuli are very much pre-programmed and predictable. At the end of the show, after the champion has lost to the underdog, the audience is then asked to decide the loser's fate. About 99% of the time, they call for his death. The big surprise is then usually that the winning gladiator complies and cuts the losers throat in a welter of blood. This creates a brief moment of shock and disbelief in the audience; "Did they actually..?"

This experience can then become highly educational in both a practical sense (teaching the audience about the harshness of life in Roman times) and in a more psychological and philosophical sense (this is mob rule). As an aside, to prevent the creation of too many childhood traumas, the 'dead' gladiator can be seen standing just outside the arena when the crowd leaves, covered in blood but very much alive. It makes for an unforgettable experience for all, but not a traumatic one.



**“Involve me,  
and I will understand.”**

There are, of course, other ways to create such an experience. If an interpreter wants a visitor to experience life as a Roman Legionnaire, he can just give him a helmet and a suit of armour to try on – that is already part of the experience linking the visitor to the historical character of the legionnaire. Similarly, giving a visitor a sword to hold and use, can give them an idea of the experience of being a medieval soldier or knight. While an interpreter portraying a knight can tell a lot of stories about knighthood and interact with other characters to tell his story, the experience of hefting a sword and striking at someone will leave a lasting impression.

Confucius is quoted as having said (in 450 BCE): **“Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand.”**

The most powerful way to create lasting experiences, next to Teaching Others, is Learning by Doing. This is, of course, why Live Interpretation is such a powerful tool for education – the interpreter can involve his audience in the work he is doing, offering them the experience of doing it for themselves.



During the OpenArch project, questionnaires were used to gauge the visitor's experience. These questionnaires yielded important statistical data on where the visitors came from, how large the groups were, how they appreciated different aspects of their visit, etc. They were also invited to comment on their visit, both in a positive and room-for-improvement sense. A general image of the visitor and his expectations has started to emerge from this part of the project. The average visitor thinks, for instance, that the catering has room for improvement, but the staff is very helpful and informative. And while they sometimes miss informative signs accompanying the displays, they were very happy with the chance to take part in activities. This goes to show, AOAM must manage their visitors expectations very carefully: when the visitors expect the same experience as when they visit a more traditional form of museum, where there are signs everywhere and the restaurant serves haute cuisine, they may be disappointed. Faced with a different experience and Live Interpretation in an authentic setting, they are asked to take on a role which is different from a museum visitor. AOAM ask them to become part of the story that is being told, to take an active role. The visitor, in short, is the actor.



Fig 9. (Top) The audience experience a roman military drill during the visit of Legio Secunda Augusta to Archeon.

Fig 10. (Middle) Children experiencing traditional crafts at Foteviken museum.

Fig 11. (Bottom) A mix of the previous two examples in Viminacium, where a display of Roman military drill includes the opportunity for the audience to take part and learn how to be a Roman legionnaire.

## 2. Experiencing history

So, what is central to the visitor's experience is the interaction between visitor and interpreter. The interpreter, as the word implies, helps the visitor make the transition from passive to active, from observer to actor.

All the AOAM involved in the OpenArch project use Live Interpretation in one way or another. While most of the partners in the project use third person interpretation, there is almost always an element of role-play or theatrics being used. Many of the partners have also indicated, partly due to what they have learned during the project, that they want to introduce theatrical training for their staff.

### EXAMPLE Foteviken, Sweden Selling slaves



Fig 12. The correct setting helps guide the visitor into the experience. At Foteviken, the natural place for the slavers to lurk is at the entrance to the Viking village, where the visitor 'enters their world', so to speak.

Another example of the visitor-as-actor comes from Foteviken museum in Sweden— during their Viking markets there is often a group of Vikings who roam around, looking for suitable candidates to capture and sell. Using a net, they first capture a visitor and then shackle him or (more commonly) her. They place a sign around their neck and then take them to market, with loved ones trailing behind. At the market, they proceed to list all of the desirable qualities of a thrall (slave) and haggle with the audience over a price. Normally, the thrall is then sold back to their loved ones for a reasonable sum.

In this example and many like it, the use of humour is very important. Slavery is a difficult subject, but by dealing with it in this light-hearted manner, it can still become a positive and unforgettable experience for the visitors. History comes alive by becoming part of it for a short moment. The interpreter guides the visitor in and, equally important, back out. They leave with smiles on their faces and a deeper understanding of their own history and identity.



Fig 13. (Above) An student from University of Exeter showing visitors hide softening techniques using a flint tool at the Athra gathering, Sagnlandet Lejre.

Fig 14. (Bottom) At AÖZA, visitors are shown a demonstration of crafts by their guide. The experience of seeing an expert at work often fascinates visitors for hours.



### 3. Body language

As important as your general appearance, as an interpreter you should also be very much aware of your body language. Below are some tips and tricks, as well as exercises, which are inspired by techniques used by actors in theatre and film.



## TIP

### Be conscious of your own body in three easy steps

1. **Stand still.** Be conscious of yourself. How do you stand? Are you standing firmly on the ground? Are your shoulders bent forward or squared? Is your back arched – hollow or bent?
2. **Start walking.** How do you walk? Do you take big steps; is your back straight or bent? Do you roll your foot from heel to toe?

### Now we are going to adjust some things

1. **Place your feet firmly on the ground, feel the weight of your body resting on them.** Stand straight, bend your shoulders a bit back and let your arms hang alongside your body. Chest forward. Straighten out your neck and pull your chin a little bit inwards. Consciously activate your eyes and look around.
2. **Imagine that you have a wire attached to your head that pulls you upwards.**
3. **Now start walking.** Are you getting back to your old position? Then change in an instant. Keep practicing this if needed.

## TIP

### Eye contact

Eye contact is very important to communicate. Talking to your visitors while not making eye contact, will make you lose them. They don't feel important, or they feel rejected. But staring, on the other hand, isn't a good idea either. Make sure you look at the whole group and notice every visitor individually.

## TIP

### The mirror

After practicing the exercise outlined here, stand in front of the mirror and practice what you just learned. This helps you see what kind of posture you have and you can take. It will help you to be more active when you are interacting with the visitors, performing on location or taking part in a show.

## TIP

### Speaking in front of a large group

If you have a large group in front of you, look randomly at all of the people. They will get more attached to you. It is a common mistake that the person who speaks, places his focus on one person. You probably don't do this on purpose, but this makes people feel rejected, and not part of the conversation.

**So;** Next time you are giving a tour or standing in front of a big audience, check what you do and actively look at all your visitors.

## TIP

### How to exaggerate

This is a nice trick to practice with your colleagues. In this exercise, everything you do and say should be exaggerated, larger than life and over-the-top.

Take a firm pose, feet planted wide apart. Take up more space than you would normally and (if seated) sit up straight. Look people straight in the eye, look around and make yourself big. When speaking, make wide arm movements. You will feel like you can take on the whole world. Your voice will be louder and clearer.

Now make yourself small. Keep your head down, your eyes should be downcast and look inwards, keep your arms at your sides or cross them in front of your body. You will feel very submissive. And your voice will be weak and soft.

The first position is good to use if you are addressing large groups. The second position can be used if you want to make people curious and draw people in. It is only effective in smaller settings, so be aware of how you present yourself in either situation.

Fig 15. (Above) At Kierikki, efforts are made to recreate prehistoric music. Getting visitors to clap along, sing with you or dance can be an easy way to break the ice.



Fig 16. (Above) Visitors take part in a workshop at AOZA during a seminar. The placing of the group is difficult in this situation, as not everyone has a place to sit and watch the explanation of the interpreter.

Fig 17. (Bottom) Children helping an interpreter bring in the harvest. While only a few are shown in this picture, this could easily be expanded to a large group with a little organisation. In this photo the interpreter is taking part herself, though it may be better to let the children do the work and keep an overview of the situation.

## Positions in space

### How and why

Here are some pointers for placing visitors when you are on location or taking them with you on a tour.

#### Keep track of the environment

##### → Sunlight Strikes

Make sure your group has the sun in their backs.

**Why?** It's less convenient for you, but when it's the other way around; you might lose your visitors because they can't see you or having trouble with looking at you.

##### → Dark places (small)

Let your visitors adjust to the dark. Place yourself in the opposite direction of the entrance and let the visitors stay out of the doorway.

**Why?** The light of the entrance will shine on you. People will see you more properly. If the doorway is blocked by visitors, your light is gone.

##### → Dark places (large)

Let your visitors adjust to the dark. Light a fire. Sit closely to the fire. Not possible to make a fire? Place them at the entrance of the building.

**Why?** Making a fire brings light. You do have to make sure it's big enough. If you are close to the fire, people will see you completely. If the house is too dark, you will lose your visitors because they can't focus on you. Keep them in sight and keep yourself in the light.

##### → Speak up

Articulate clearly and loud enough.

**Why?** Visitors need to hear what you say. If they can't hear you or have trouble listening to you, you will lose them.

#### Be aware of your own place in the space

##### → Speaking directions

Place yourself in the middle of your visitors, and take enough distance. Look around you to all your visitors.

**Why?** If you are on one side of the public, the others will only see your back. Also, the sound of your voice will disappear. Visitors have trouble hearing you. If you have enough distance, you can speak to the whole public and if you are making sure you're looking at them all, they will definitely hear you.

##### → Turning

If you need to turn around to grab something, bring up the volume of your voice or stop talking until you are looking at your visitors again.

**Why?** Turning around will cut off your voice. They can't hear you properly. If you choose to stop talking, make sure it's at the right time.

##### → High or low (small group)

You can choose to level with your visitors. Sit down, or stand. Or, let them sit down and you remain standing. You can stand closer to them than with a bigger group.

**Why?** If you have a small group, you can connect better with them if you are sitting down when they are seated, or standing when they are standing. Getting closer to them means you can also connect better. And you don't have to talk so loud.

##### → High or low (big group)

Make sure you can see your visitors. That way, they can see you too. With bigger groups it's best to take a bit more distance. You can choose to stand higher than them too.

**Why?** You want your visitors to see and hear you properly. If you are lower than them, a lot of people can't see you and they will lose interest. Taking more distance will let them see you better. You do have to speak louder.

##### → Overall view

Place yourself on a spot so you have the overall view of your location.

**Why?** This way you can see visitors coming and interact with them even before they reach your location.



Fig 18. A panoramic view of the Medieval street in Archeon. As an interpreter, you should have a wide view.

# The story you tell



Fig 19. Antti Palmroos of Kierikki scraping an Elk hide. The story of how reconstructions are made is always impressive.

## Story of the Site

The basis of the Story of the Site is the physical reconstructions presented there. The interpreters form the link between the audience and the material heritage as shown in an AOAM. They present the immaterial heritage (the stories) and for this, they need to know what they tell the public, as well as how.

## 1. Reading your audience

### The meaning of 'audience'

This paragraph will focus on the audience and how to read it. Before diving into how to read your audience as an interpreter, it is important to define the word 'audience'. The dictionary provides several options;

- From Latin *audientia* a hearing, from *audire* to hear.
- The group of spectators at a public event; listeners or viewers collectively.
- A regular public that manifests interest, support, enthusiasm, or the like.
- Opportunity to be heard; chance to speak to or before a person or group; a hearing.
- The act of hearing, or attending to, words or sounds.
- The devotees or followers of a public entertainer, lecturer, etc.; regular public.

As you can clearly see here, the words 'listening' and 'hearing' seem to be very important and basic when describing 'audience'. Of course they are. Normally an audience is there to listen and hear a nice story. Of course the interpreter is well aware of this, and will do its utmost to tell an entertaining and historically correct story, but sometimes it may seem very hard to do so for no specific reason. Of course there is always a reason why it seems a story is not really hitting home. It often has something to do with misreading the audience before you.

This paragraph will provide the interpreter with some tools of how to read an audience, how to make contact and how to keep it, how to be aware of the environment, how to adapt and manipulate a story at how to get and keep an audience involved.

Fig 20. (Next page) Large-scale shows *Spartacus* in *Archeon* tell a different kind of story

# WE ASKED

## The Story of the Site

### Target Audience

5 out of 9 AOAM part of the OpenArch project have not undertaken systematic research into their target audience. Even when the amount of visitors, the different types (school children, family groups, business bookings) and such is known, that does not always give a good impression of the target audience. What is the level of education, income, social inclusiveness, and so on? Sometimes, an analysis, in-house or by an external agency, can be useful. Viminacium and Parco Montale both indicated they have very concrete data about their visitors and the target audiences they welcome on their respective sites.

### Preserving Heritage

All the partners indicate that they record the stories told by their staff in some form, either by writing them down, taking photographs or through the medium of film. There is always new research going on in the AOAM within OpenArch, the partners all indicated that the project has helped them find new stories to tell, or new ways to present old stories. This is done through a combination of in-house discussion and development, but can also come from external influences. New stories come from OpenArch partners, seminars, conferences or other sources.

Almost all partners use a mix of archaeological, historical and anthropological data to tell the story of the site. AOAM like Parco Montale focus on the archaeological aspect, as that is part of their mission statement. To give the visitor confidence in the staff's ability to portray or explain the past, it is important to consider the sources used to craft the presentation.

### Guided Tours and long stays

6 out of 9 OpenArch partners indicate that they provide tours both through booking them and at set times during opening hours. The other 3 only provide tours for groups that are booked in advance. Guided tours are very much a defining feature of the daily work at AOAM, as they are at most museums around the world.

Most tours are still fairly classical in their approach - the tour guide takes the visitor to the different locations on the site and explains about certain details. Of course, the possibilities given by an AOAM in terms of interactive activities, shows and such, means that most tours have a different atmosphere than those that take place in museums.

7 out of 9 AOAM have the possibility and facilities for longer stays, sometimes ranging into weeks (for volunteers in Foteviken, f.i.). Both the two remaining partners are exploring the possibilities of offering this service in future.





Fig 21. A pottery demonstration at Parco Montale helps tell an everyday story about daily necessities. The children are listening and watching, but not a part of the activity.



Fig 22. Food is important to everyone. A story about Roman culinary customs at Archeon, hosted by nationally renowned chef Pierre Wind. The children are invited to join in and involved in the activity. The interpreter offers to use a feather to induce vomiting, making room for the next course of the meal. Even better would be if every child had their own feather, involving the whole audience.

## Reading an audience

### Types of people

The word 'audience' does not always imply a group of people. It can be a single person as well. It does not really matter how big, or how small the audience is, an interpreter must always try to read the person or people in front of him. To do this, an interpreter must be aware of the basic types of people: the thinker, the questioner, the listener, the choice maker, the know-it-all, the doer, and a combination of the before mentioned types.

→ **The thinker** might look like a quiet visitor, not really actively participating. A person like this participates more on the intellectual level. He will listen very carefully to what the interpreter is saying; not to look for mistakes, but out of sheer interest. Some interpreters find people like this a little bit intimidating or even frightening, because of them being so quiet and attentive. They are not, they are interested and they often thank interpreters for the entertaining and interesting story.

→ **The questioner**, both children and adults, is sometimes considered annoying, because of the constant questions asked. Interpreters need to keep in mind that visitors like this, mostly do not intend to be annoying, they are just enthusiastic about it all. Try to see it as a compliment. They apparently like the story you are telling and want to know more. Sometimes it seems impossible to tell a story from start to finish because of all the questions, in that case, the interpreter can ask the visitors to listen first and ask the question later on. This way the story can be finished and the visitor will leave with all the answers he wants.

→ **The listener** is another example of a fairly passive visitor who will drink up everything you tell them. They will rarely respond to questions, preferring to listen quietly or react with a series of 'Hmm. Yes. Interesting.' type of responses. Their lack of interaction can be misinterpreted as disinterest, while they are perfectly happy listening to everything the interpreter has to say.

→ **The choice maker** likes options. Listening to the story told by the interpreter is not enough. The listener will easily lose attention. The best way to keep visitors like this involved and active is by asking questions with several plausible answers to think about.

→ **The know-it-all** visitor is the hardest to work with for most interpreters. People like this tend to interrupt the interpreter because they believe the story is wrong or consider the interpreter as incompetent. Basically, they do not provide the interpreter with the space to tell the story because they are sometimes biased from the start. There is no room for the interpreter and he may wonder why the visitor has come in the first place. Some visitors from this type are not really biased at all; sometimes they just interrupt out of enthusiasm, which comes across as know-it-all. It is up to the interpreter to distinguish what he is dealing with.

→ **The doer** is the very active visitor and often a child. Children do not always want to listen to stories, no matter how entertaining. They want to do and experience things by trying and participating.

→ **The combination** visitor is most common and easy to work with for most interpreters. It is nice to talk to people who listen, ask the interpreter a question every now and then after thinking about what has been told, or participate in answering questions asked by the interpreter. Visitors like this are the easiest to please.



Fig 23. (Above) Children participating in activities in the Medieval section of Archeon. Making sure every visitor has their own place to sit can help relax them and open them up to what you have to tell them.

Fig 24. (Right) A child having his arm 'tattooed' in the prehistoric section of Archeon. The interpreter can explain about the process while applying the ochre, giving the child but also other onlookers something to take home with them.

**TIP** Do keep in mind that all types of visitors exist among adults as well as children.



**To get and keep contact: how to get it**

It does happen, but is very uncommon to have an entire audience (more than one person) made out of just one of the types described. Usually the audience consists of every type, which can make it difficult to read the group at first. This paragraph will give interpreters some tools how to get and keep contact with the audience.

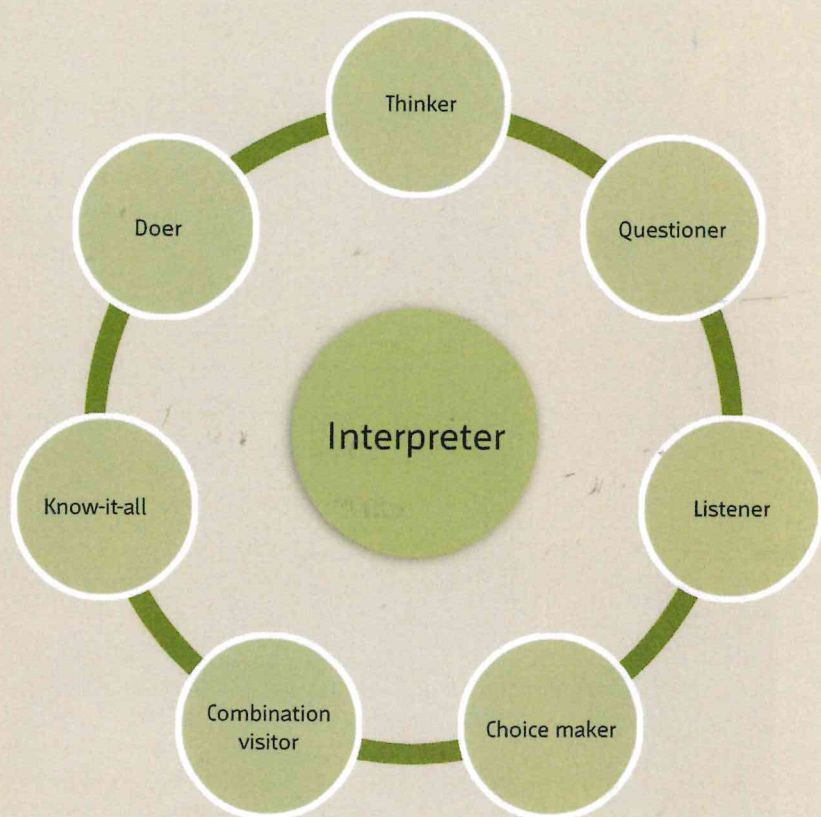
Getting attention of an audience has a lot to do with your body language (chapter 1). Interpreters that have a strong presentation will get the attention sooner than people lacking strong body language. But of course knowing how to work with body language is not the perfect solution. There are other ways of getting the attention. One of the easiest ways to do so is to approach the audience with a smile; it makes them feel welcome and happy. A happy audience will pay attention to you. Another yet very simple way of getting attention, is by literally elevating yourself above the audience; find a big stone or something to stand on. People will automatically look up at the interpreter, the moment he starts to speak.

A third very simple way to get the attention is to start with a one-liner. Every historical period had its funny facts that the general public does not know anything about. Give them one, and usually the attention is there right away; the audience will be surprised: the interpreter knows things they do not know yet! After a one-liner, the interpreter can use the new found attention, to inquire about what the audience is expecting. Of course it should not look like the interpreter is unprepared; ask people what they already know and then tell them there are far better stories to tell. Asking a simple question like this, makes everything easier; both parties know what to expect. The interpreter knows what not to tell, the audience knows it will hear new things instead of a story they have heard many times before. Hearing new information will automatically generate more attention from the visitors.

When starting a tour for example, it is always good to tell the audience what to expect; how long will a tour last, where will you go, are people allowed to step out? An audience, especially one with small children, likes to know what to expect. Knowing that you are free to leave anytime, can keep the audience more attentive because they do not feel the pressure of staying the entire time. The time they do spend with the interpreter will be spent with the full attention, which is what is desirable.

A nice trick to get people's attention is to ask them very basic personal questions first; 'are you having a good time?' 'what have you done so far?', 'where will you go next?' Questions like this indicate that the interpreter has eyes for his audience and is willing to listen to what the audience has to say.

Having eyes for your audience not only means asking them questions, it also means looking around; scan the environment. During a tour, new visitors might wonder if they can still join the group. Notice them and invite them to join. When they do join, it is important to give them a short overview of the things told so far.



**To get and keep contact: how to keep it**

Keeping an audience and the attention often proves more difficult than getting an audience and attention. People leaving in the midst of a story can leave the interpreter on site with an odd and maybe insecure feeling. It is logical for the interpreter to have doubts at times like this. Usually there is nothing wrong with the story itself; the interpreter did not succeed in keeping the attention of the audience, which is a problem that can easily be solved using some tools. These tools do not differ much from the tools you use to get the attention; make one-on-one contact, scan your surroundings, what do people already know, manipulate and adapt your story, get people involved and participating.

Most interpreters will end up working with a mix of visitor types as described earlier. Usually keeping the attention of a mixed group will not be a problem. The diversity of people will make a diverse and easy going tour in most cases. Basically it is a circle;

Diagram 1. Diversity of visitors within a single tour group.



As you can see in the diagram, the interpreter is the centre; he tells interesting stories for people to think about and listen to, answers questions, and asks questions. This way every basic type of visitor will be addressed. The diagram shows a connection between the types of visitors and the interpreter; which is very logical and important as shown in the next diagram, which explains how to deal with questions:

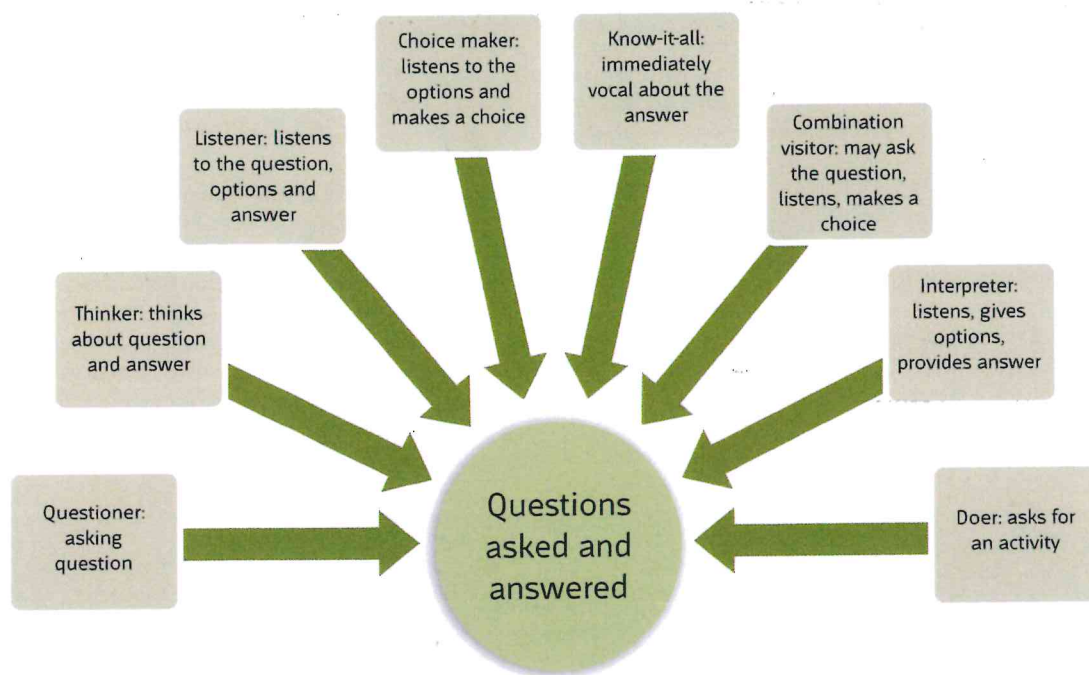


Diagram 2. Connection between interpreter and visitors during a tour.

Of course it can happen that a group is not as diverse or easy going as the interpreter on site would like, this can happen any time. Use the tools already discussed; ask one-on-one questions, or use a simple one-liner to regain the attention, scan your surroundings to see if there is something else you can talk about, do not stay in one place too long. Try not to talk about the things the group already knows, adapt the story and try to get people involved by doing an activity.

**To get and keep contact: adapting**

One of the most difficult ways to regain the attention of visitors is by adapting a story. Every interpreter has a story he feels most comfortable with. This comfortable feeling might not match with the current feeling of the visitor; a very scientific story about the history of the site, does not match with small children; a small children story, does not match with adults, etcetera.

One of the simplest ways of adapting a story to match with the visitors is by changing details as can be seen in diagram 3. The diagram only shows some of the adaptations an interpreter needs to be able to make; more options exist, but are not included. Diagram 3 must always be used in combination with diagram 1 and diagram 2, considering visitor types and adapting stories are closely connected; each interpreter will experience that each visitor type will show itself during one of the six story types presented in diagram 3.

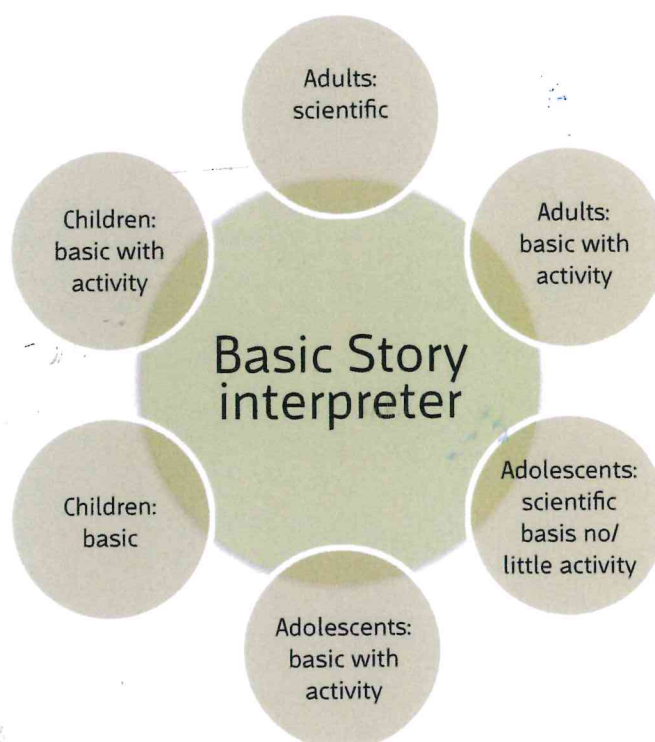


Diagram 3. Six possible adaptations of a basic story presented by an interpreter on site.

**To get and keep contact: manipulating**

Adapting a story should not be confused with manipulating a story. Manipulate means to adapt or change (accounts, figures, etc.) to suit one's purpose or advantage, whereas adapting simply means telling a story that fits the audience. In the case of interpreters, manipulation means that they have to 'bend' the story to their advantage. Manipulation often occurs when groups turn out to be difficult to handle, or difficult to read.

It is possible that the visitor or group of visitors changes attitude during a tour or story. This occurs more often than expected. Visitors can be viewed as blank pages; they do not know what to expect, so they, and the interpreter, can easily be surprised in a positive or negative way. Both ways will be shortly discussed:

The positive surprise may occur when a visitor does not expect something to be interesting, for example a story about religion. Maybe the visitor already knows a few things about that topic. Usually the visitor will not make this known to the interpreter before hand, out of respect. In this case it is up to the interpreter to read the visitor or ask him a question, in order to manipulate the story. After finding out the foreknowledge, the interpreter can start with telling the things the visitor does not know yet. Surprising stories will leave both the visitor and the interpreter with a very satisfying feeling; the visitor will be surprised with the knowledge of the interpreter that has provided him with new information. Visitors will also feel that they have been taken seriously by the interpreter who took the time to read them, and adapt and manipulate the story to meet their, often unspoken, wishes. For the interpreter, it will be very satisfying to know that he has read the audience properly in order to tell them something new in the most entertaining way possible. Seeing an audience leave with a compliment or a smile is a great rewarding feeling.

Fig 25. During a procession at Archeon, visitors are invited to take part, regardless of their religious beliefs. It is a more powerful lesson than just explaining what people believed.



The negative surprise must be prevented at all times, but sometimes it will happen, which is not something to worry about. Sometimes visitors and interpreters just do not match. To explain a negative surprise, the 'positive surprise' example is used; a visitor with foreknowledge. A visitor like this often expects that interpreters know everything about everything. They will often bombard the interpreter with very detailed questions or interrupt the story that is being told, because they believe the interpreter is wrong or incompetent. Very often this is not the case at all; they just do not give the interpreter the possibility to tell the story. In the end this visitor will leave with an unsatisfying feeling, for example; the interpreter proved to be not the expert the visitor expected. The interpreter will feel unsatisfied and often a bit frustrated as well; he was not allowed to space to do his job properly and may have to deal with a complaint about his competence, no matter how untrue this is. Luckily, the solution of how to deal with visitors like this is very simple; read the visitor, listen to what he has to say two times, do not feel obliged to tell the visitor that you would like to tell the story because that is what he is here for, but keep in mind not to offend people. Next to that, it often helps to tell the visitor very small details about things. It will prove that they do not know everything better than the interpreter, which opens them up to listen to the story told. In case this does not work, the interpreter can try to ask them more difficult questions, to get them involved into the story; interpreter and visitor work together this way, which keeps everybody happy and satisfied in the end.

In diagram 4 it is shown that both the positive and negative surprise can be dealt with in the same way leading up to the same result; a happy visitor and satisfied interpreter. It will be no surprise that a negative surprise can change into a positive surprise when following the steps of adapting and manipulating as described.

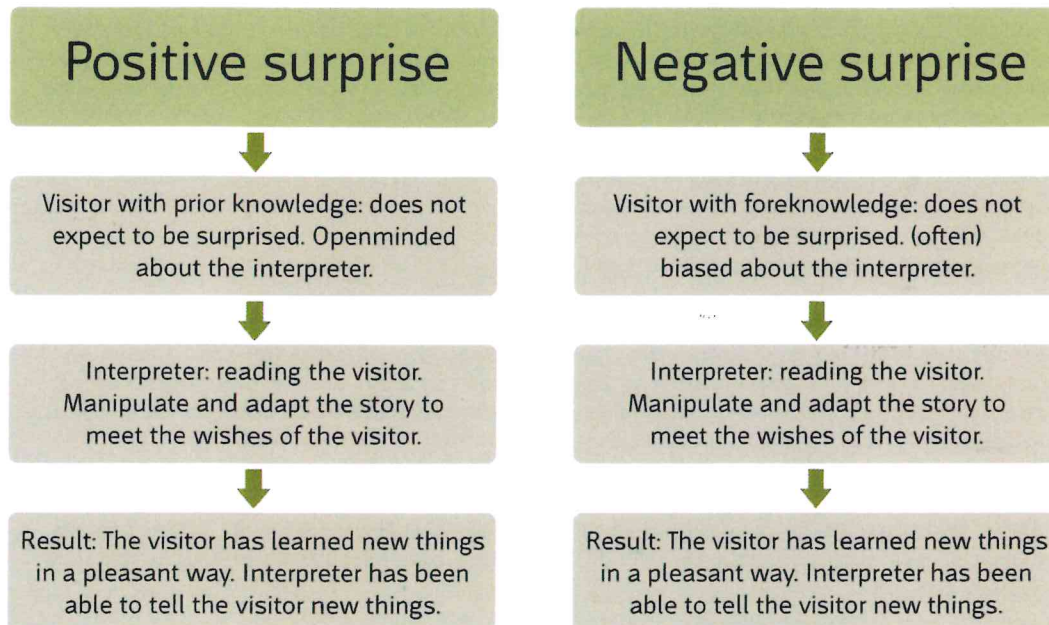


Diagram 4. Manipulating and adapting a story in case of a positive or negative surprise.

### To get and keep contact: active mode

The story told so far, was basically focusing on storytelling itself. This section will explain the so-called 'active mode'. The active mode is needed at all times, considering almost all visitors want more than just a told story; they want to experience by doing. The combination visitor and the doer, as described before and shown in diagrams 1 and 2, are most likely to openly ask for activities, but all types of visitors will be discussed considering the action mode.

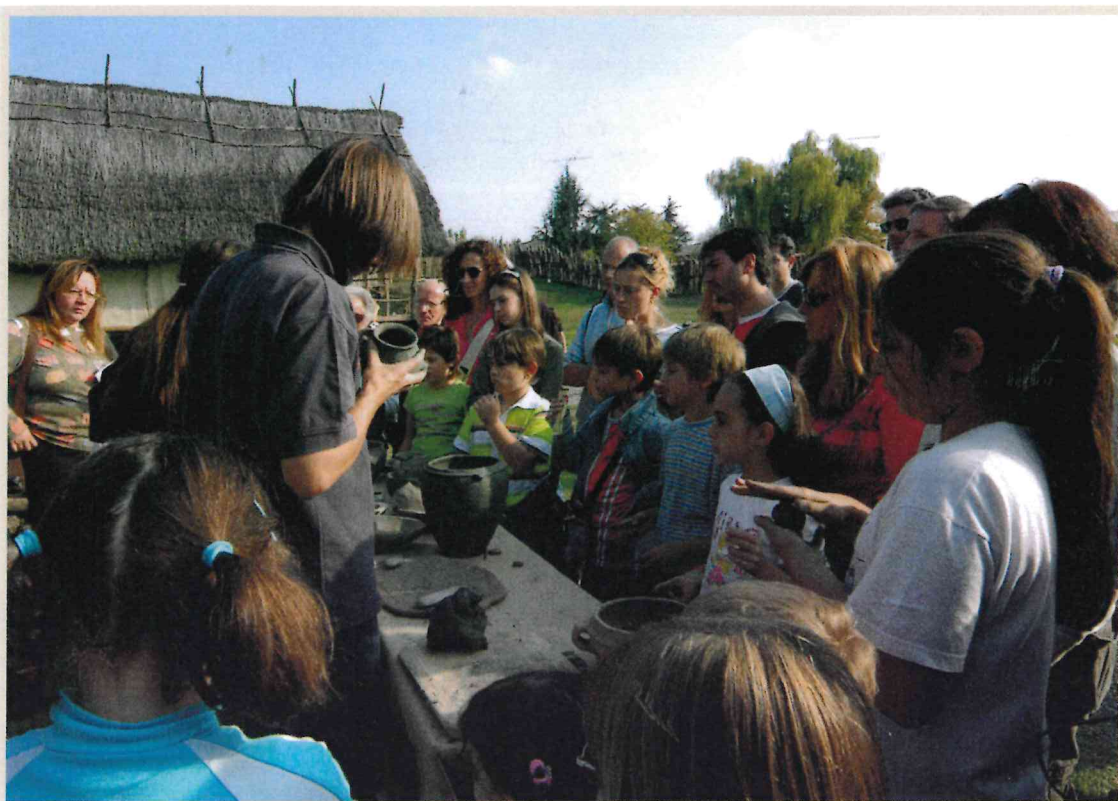


Fig 26. The visitors are invited to join in at Parco Montale for a pottery workshop. The cramped space makes it difficult to see what the interpreter is demonstrating and severely limits the amount of people that can participate. Only the happy few at the front are truly involved. Widening the circle and providing seating areas would make for a more interactive experience.

**To get and keep contact: the interpreter in active mode**

Active mode starts with the interpreter itself. Visitors will most likely, not ask to join an interpreter that does not look active himself. An active attitude towards the visitors and activities provided on site is crucial. Interpreters must keep in mind that most visitors do not know the possibilities the site provides. Maybe they have been given a program or schedule telling them about activities, but often people do not read everything properly. Interpreters need to invite people to join an activity, even when it is something simple as sitting next to a fire together. Interpreters can also start doing an activity themselves. Seeing an activity being done, often proofs enough for visitors to join in.

The active mode to get people to join activities does not stop when the activity has started. Sometimes visitors show up during the activity. Interpreters must be aware of this by keeping an eye on their environment, making eye contact with new visitors, telling them they can join in, or join the next shift. This makes people feel welcome and seen; they often do not mind waiting a few minutes when they know they have been noticed.

Important to realize is that a lot of visitors are not aware of the activities offered. They may just wander around. It is up to the interpreters to read these visitors correctly; sometimes they do not want to join activities, which is fine, but sometimes they are simple unaware of the options and very happy when the interpreter is telling them all about it. In case an interpreter cannot do the activity himself because of other obligations, he can take them to a person who can.

As mentioned before, a lot of visitors do not read an entire program or schedule, missing out on activities offered when they get the starting time of place wrong. People like this will wander around looking a bit lost, while looking on their program or map. The solution is simple: ask them what they are looking for, and show them the right way.

**To get and keep contact: the visitor and interpreter in active mode**

With diagrams 1 to 4 in mind, it is time to focus on the active mode of visitors and interpreters together. Every visitor type can be triggered to participate in activities by the interpreters. Diagram 5 will provide an insight of how to find and use those triggers, combining the information of the first four diagrams and focusing on the specific visitor characteristics. Keep in mind that diagram 5 can be applied to children and adults, solo visitors and groups.

Diagram 5. The visitor and interpreter in action mode.

Thinker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Character: Intellectual participation</li> <li>• Trigger: The story accompanying the activity</li> </ul>
Questioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Character: Participation by asking questions</li> <li>• Trigger: The story accompanying the activity, asking questions</li> </ul>
Listener	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Character: Quiet participation in the background</li> <li>• Trigger: Invitation to listen to the story behind/during an activity</li> </ul>
Choice maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Character: Likes options</li> <li>• Trigger: Choices between activities</li> </ul>
Know-it-all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Character: Interruption, sometimes biased</li> <li>• Trigger: Information or activities they do not know yet</li> </ul>
Doer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Character: Constant asking for activities</li> <li>• Trigger: Telling them everything there is to do</li> </ul>
Combination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Character: All the above depending on the visitor</li> <li>• Trigger: All the above depending on the visitor</li> </ul>

## Knowing your story

## INPUT FROM



Yvonne Kuhfus has produced interactive tours for museum throughout the Netherlands. She has worked with the Rijksmuseum to produce unique, interactive and multimedia tours for many years.

Yvonne Kuhfus:  
“Dull Museums?”

A ‘classic’ museum, showing paintings and sculptures, is dull for kids. At least, if there haven’t been huge investments made in all sort of audio-visual gadgets; film clips, tablet tours and audio tours, to make the whole experience interesting for the generally audio visually spoiled children.

When I wrote my first theatrical tour 15 years ago, these audio visual feats were not very common yet. There was a pencil-written treasure hunt for the children on the loose, and school groups received tours from well-informed museum teachers whose only mode seemed to be ‘send’. The kids got to listen, watch and most of all – never touch! So, dull. Happily, the educational departments of most museums kept growing and gaining in relevance. Investments were made to increase the level of interaction between children and art. Museum teachers would, for instance, bring a bag of paint tubes to smell, or scraps of fabric like those used in 17th century dresses. More questions were asked of the children in order to involve them in the art.

I wanted to go one step further and made a theatre play in which both the children and the artworks played a role; a theatrical tour. An actor and a museum teacher would take the children through the museum, in which the artworks would come to life, literally and figuratively. The wife of painter Kees van Dongen simply steps out of her frame, voices and notes appear from the paintings, Vincent van Gogh winks at the visitors and a hot potato rolls from the Potato Eaters!

These theatrical tours for children are an instant hit. They are completely consumed by the story, are looking for specific paintings, watch and listen to them attentively, talk to them, even return with their parents to introduce them to their new friends. They come up with their own stories associated with the paintings, look at them with different eyes and, almost without noticing, learn a lot about art in the process.

It is a joy and not just for the kids, but equally for the museum teachers and actors. It’s an amazing experience to have a small child cry out: “Hey, Vincent van God isn’t dead! He can see me!” That is exactly what we want: red cheeks, shining eyes, and a museum that isn’t dull and certainly not for kids!

## Finding new stories to tell

The majority of the AOAM work within the boundaries of a set (part) of history, meaning that they made a choice for a specific period in history, for example the prehistoric era. After making a choice for a specific part of history, you have to make sure there is a sufficient amount of (scientific) information and research available to work with, while building the site and shaping the ideas.

Fig 27. Archers practice with historically accurate longbows at Kierikki.



Fig 28. Children taking part in an activity at Archeon. By creating different stations where the children can participate in either the same activity or linked activities, it is possible to reach more of the audience with the experience.

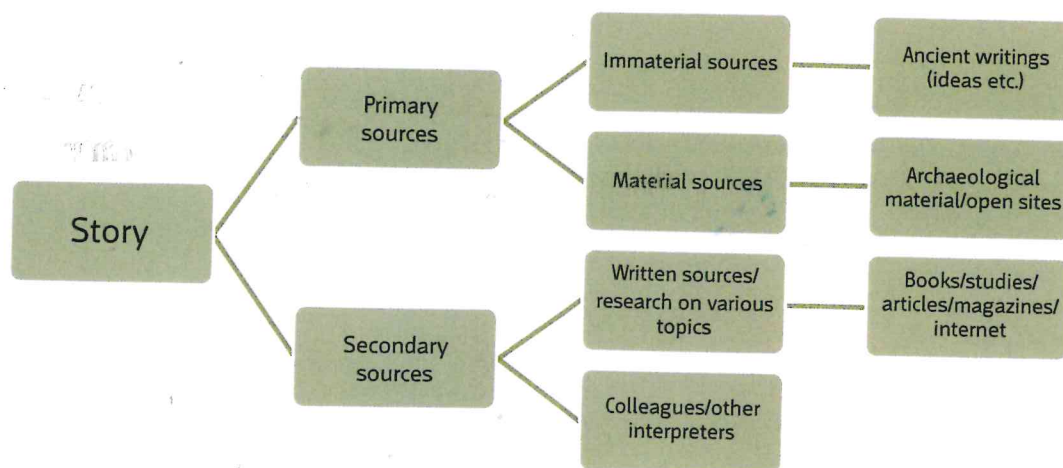


The sources you can use are numerous, both scientific and popular, material and immaterial. Next to all that, there are various written sources to take into account; the ancient and the contemporary sources, the latter often based on and discussing the archaeological material and ancient written sources available. As a contemporary source, the interpreter can also turn to other interpreters, working the site a longer period of time. These people often know very much about various topics related to the site and can be a valuable source for new interpreters. Of course the interpreters, both old and new, need to keep in mind that stories change in time and need to be checked and updated from time to time.

It is important for interpreters to know how their site came to be; what it was based on and where the correct information is to be found. This will strengthen the story of the interpreter on site and will provide him with the confidence required to give the visitors the full experience of the location.

Diagram 6 shows the different types of sources interpreters can use to build their own stories to use on site. Each step will be fully explained in this chapter.

Diagram 6. Sources to build a story.



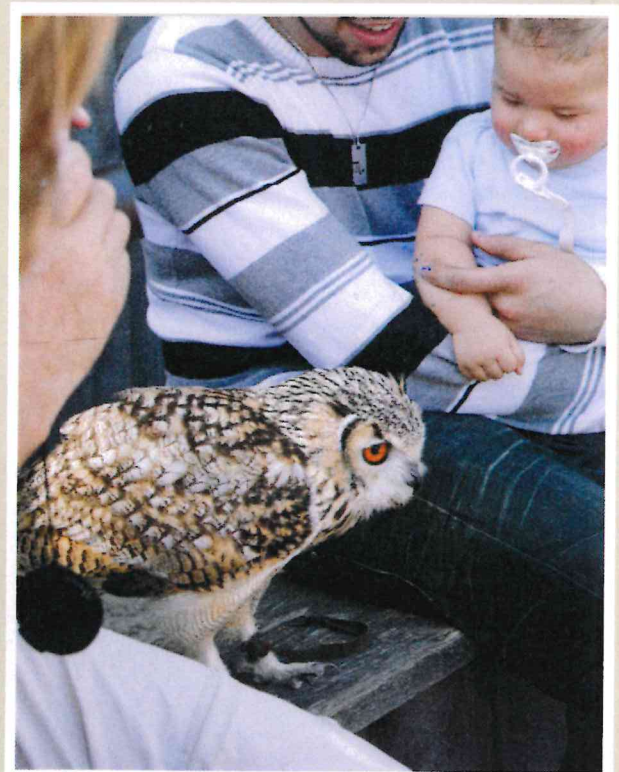


Fig 29. (Above) A family enjoying an outing in Archeon. What story do you want them to take home? What will they tell their friends about their visit? Make sure you have a concrete goal in mind when interacting with your visitors.

Fig 30. (Bottom Left) Vikings enjoying a good raid at the yearly Viking Market in Archeon. While it's important to know the story you tell, it's also important to enjoy the telling of it.

Fig 31. (Bottom Right) An owl taking a breather during a bird of prey show in Archeon. Most visitors will not have had close encounters with animals like these. What story do they tell?

## 2. Sources

### Primary sources

Primary sources are sources from the chosen historical period itself, for example; the excavated structure and small items found on site, written sources from the period or, in case of the Prehistoric periods, paintings on walls and scratches on smaller items like pots. Every historical period has its own primary sources, no matter how small, that can be used while developing a story to tell visitors.

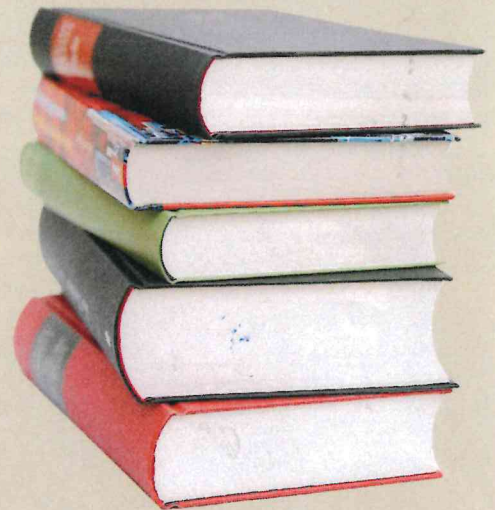
Most sites will turn their attention on the archaeological records first, local or international, depending on the goals of the site for the future. Archaeological data will almost never provide you with a complete story to tell. The data very often, does not tell much about the daily use of the structure in history, or the people occupying it. The main reason for this is often the lack of human remains and small finds. Of course this does not mean that new excavations on the same site can never provide new, very usable and valuable information. But, everybody working with and interpreting archaeological data has to keep several things in mind;

- Results and ideas based on data can vary from site to site, while looking very similar at first glance. No site is the same.
- Data may change after a few years because of new research, new insights etcetera. This means that the stories interpreters tell, may need some changes after a while.



### Secondary sources

After focusing on the archaeological evidence available when building a site or story, the attention can shift to the so-called 'secondary sources'. Secondary sources heavily based on primary sources as described above. Significant for the secondary material, are the choices made by the scientist or author that has studied the primary material to build his own story. A secondary source usually focusses on a specific theme or question to be answered. Hence, it is very important to look at more than one secondary source to build the most plausible and complete story. Studying primary and secondary sources together, provides the interpreter not only with a solid and historically and scientifically true story, but also the possibility to develop his own opinion about the site. Developing an own opinion and plausible interpretation of the site is very valuable and should not be underestimated. The more secure the interpreter is, the better he can tell the story, and visitors are often looking for the personal touch and ideas, not just the story in the scientific publication.



There are several secondary sources to look at. See the explanatory box on page 29 for more detailed information of the five types.

- Scientific publications focusing on demographic information.
- Scientific publications focusing on anthropological information.
- Scientific publications focusing on social/personal information based.
- Popular publications, often written without specific scientific tools.
- Colleagues and training materials.

Fig 32. Archaeological data - Bronze Corinthian-type helmet From the 'Warrior Grave,' Necropolis of ancient Hermione, ca. 525-500 BCE. Archaeological Museum of Nafplion, Greece. Photo by Dan Diffendale (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)





Fig 33. A more traditional display of life in prehistory, in the Hunebedcentrum. While Live Interpretation is a powerful experience, sometimes visitors are happy to see miniatures and mannequins as well.

## EXAMPLE The different types of secondary sources

### → Scientific publications based on an archaeological site, focusing on the structures found. (Demographic story)

Sources focusing on the structures provide mostly demographical information. For example; the size of the population, the importance/ lack of religion, the influence of natural disasters on welfare, etcetera. To basically; what does the structure and size of the site tell about the society.

### → Scientific publications based on an archaeological site, focusing on the finds found. (Anthropologic story)

Sources focusing on the (small) finds provide interpreted information about the more personal life of the people inhabiting the site. Sources may focus on the political, religious or social life of the people based on the available information. Interpreters need to keep in mind that these secondary sources look at the material from a scientific distance.

### → Scientific publications based on written sources from the period itself. (Social/personal story)

Sources focusing on the personal stories that can be found in the written sources from the period itself. Publications like this are often very specific and focus on small details. More personal information written down by the historical people itself, is the most important information available for interpreters. Visitors do not want to hear scientific tape; they want to hear the personal story.

### → Popular publications with very small topics, bits and pieces often published in popular history magazines.

The more popular publications need to be used with care and caution. Very often they do not use any scientific tools like footnotes, so it can be difficult to check the information for errors. The value of these small publications lies in the fact that they often provide funny jokes, details and facts about the period that true scientific publications skip. Interpreters can use these funny facts and details to keep their visitors entertained. Small facts and details make a story more personal and entertaining for both interpreter and visitor.

### → Colleagues and training materials

Colleagues are a valuable secondary source for both new and old interpreters. The people you work with may know more than you about the site or its history. They can be scholars with a degree on the period or subject; they may have studied it out of interest. Of course it is very important to check the stories for errors before sharing them with the public of other interpreters. Most AOAM provide training materials for their interpreters often written by internal specialists. This material should ideally come with footnotes.

## How to work with sources

### Primary sources

Most interpreters rely on the secondary sources, mainly because they lack the specific education needed to use the primary material first hand. Interpreters, qualified in archaeology, art history or history know very well how to use the primary material and often do so. Interpreters like this can find the demographical, anthropological and socio-historical information themselves, mainly because they were not only taught how to do this, but they also have the needed experience to interpret them correctly. In case unqualified interpreters would like to use primary sources themselves, it is advised to do this together with a qualified person so they can learn how it goes. Practice makes perfect.

While using primary sources it is important to keep in mind that they will never contain the perfect answer you are looking for. Even though a primary source may look amazing, it is important to remember that it is 'just' a source; maybe the only one available or ever found about a specific topic. This does not mean that there are no other sources somewhere still to be found. The best thing to do is to consider the source used as a very plausible story, but not a definite one. For example, never say: 'because this source says so, it must be true.' In case a primary source seems a little bit odd, try to find more sources relating to that source, topic wise or time wise. The result may be very surprising. Most primary sources, including a translation, can be found online these days. Just use google to get started. In case google does not provide the satisfying answers you are looking for, you can always turn to the University libraries.

### Secondary sources

The secondary material is most used by interpreters all over the world. History and archaeology are very popular fields, so it is not hard to find the best (scientific) secondary sources. Using secondary sources does defer much from using the primary source material. The most important thing is knowing how to use them properly and where to find them. One of the most important things to do is look for references and footnotes within the book itself. If a source is lacking those, look for another publication. Of course you will come across several secondary sources without references or footnotes that look very good. All you have to do then is crosscheck the information with another source; a primary one, or a secondary one with references or footnotes. Colleagues can also be consulted for their opinion about the source.



Fig 34. Marginal illustrations of daily life in the Romance of Alexander (Bodleian library, Bodley 264).

One of the most common secondary sources we know today is the internet. Use the internet wisely; everybody can upload things on the internet, but this does not mean that the information is automatically correct. Crosscheck it. For the more unexperienced interpreter or researcher finding a way through the internet can be tricky; it is sometimes hard to distinguish incorrect from correct information. Today, one of the best options provided by the internet to start your research is using Wikipedia. The topics are numerous and especially when it comes down to historical topics, you can almost find everything you need. One of the great advantages of Wikipedia is the option of redirection; underlined words will direct you to more information when you click on them, enabling you to widen or narrowing down your search. Scrolling down, you will often find numerous literary sources, both primary and secondary, beneath the article. Another sign that the author has tried his best to write a solid story. These added sources offer you the second step; researching the primary and secondary publications and asking colleagues for advice or help when needed.

## How to build your own story using primary and secondary sources

### Primary sources

This paragraph will focus on how to use the sources while building your story as an interpreter. Ideally both primary and secondary sources are used, but sometimes it will become clear that this is not possible. Some interpreters find it very hard to build a personal story for themselves and it must be clear that a dialogue with the visitor is more than telling a personal story; a more scientific story is just as valuable. It is undesirable to force an interpreter to have a personal story if this does not match with the functionality of personality of the interpreter. Of course, many interpreters will be able to adapt; they can tell both: a personal or more distant story.

The excavation data, presented by a secondary source, can be used as a starting point for the interpreter of the site to build a solid and plausible story for himself. The data can, for example, provide the interpreter with information about architecture, the type of furniture, the artefacts used or the size of a family. See example below for an explanation of this.

Written or artistic primary sources are very valuable as well, when building a story for yourself. For example, the writings of the Roman aristocracy are not the only written sources available. The more 'humble' Roman scratched vulgar texts or images on everything. These small writing are not only more funny to read, but also more realistic about society; those people lived the lives, most interpreters are interpreting. Stories written by the aristocracy are often biased. In case of the Roman history, the artistic remains are a very good primary source. Romans made images of almost everything. Next to that, an enormous amount of artefacts is available for us to see in museums worldwide. In case of the prehistory; the cave drawings are a very valuable source to use, considering there was no real writing yet. Images about hunting or the types of animals those people saw, are very telling about the world they lived in. In combination with the artefacts found, the interpreter will be able to develop a plausible story. Primary sources about the medieval period are basically comparable with the sources available from the Roman period. We have writings, paintings, tapestries, artefacts and whole structures to look at. All these can be used to build a personal story.

### Secondary sources

After building a basic story for and a round of practice with that story, the interpreter will very soon be interested in adding more details to the story. Details can always often be found in the secondary sources, because those are often very specific. You can find whole publications just about the image of Roman Freedman in the Northern parts of the Empire, a very narrow topic, but very useful when you want to focus on your character being a slave for example.

Fig 35. Mosaic depicting two female slaves (ancillae) attending their mistress. "Carthage museum mosaic 1" Photo by Fabien Dany [www.fabiendany.com](http://www.fabiendany.com)



### No matter what

Not matter what historical period or site an interpreter is working with, the things to keep in mind are always the same:

- Crosscheck the information; use the sources wisely
- Combine primary with secondary sources when possible
- Look for references and footnotes while using secondary sources
- Build a story that suits you; enable yourself to tell the best story you can tell
- Keep in mind that stories sometimes need an update
- A lot of information proofs to be plausible, not solid fact
- Ask other interpreters for advice and their opinion; talk to each other

## EXAMPLE Plausible interpretation of archaeological data when building a story and dialogue

The particular excavation has shown that all the found structures are build the same way, each providing space for 10 people to live. Stables are found within the structure, so the inhabitants most likely kept their cattle inside from time to time. In case of a hearth or stove in the structure, they probably sat indoors to eat. All this archaeological information can be used by the interpreter to build a story around him; he can be part of a family of nine, one person died and was buried or cremated. He is a farmer himself; he has two cows that are kept indoors because it is cold outside. He sits by the hearth every day to keep warm, to eat, to talk to his family, to make plans.

### 3. What role do you play?

#### Definition of role, roleplaying and acting

Roles and roleplaying are very valuable tools interpreters can use while working with an audience, but playing a role can be scary. Some interpreters might feel that they are not qualified enough to take on a specific role, because they feel like they lack the required in-depth knowledge to do so. But an interpreter should realize that in the case of re-enactment, there is a difference between roleplaying and acting. The interpreter is not performing in a movie or a theatre, which often requires years in drama school. An interpreter usually performs in a much smaller setting; a site or a specific house within the site. The intimacy of the interpreter's world, making direct contact with the visitors instead of being on a screen, offers the opportunity to perform smaller and more personal, so basically an interpreter stays himself, with the addition of role(playing) elements.

'Role' can be defined in various ways. One of the definitions is 'the part played by a person in a particular social setting, influenced by his expectation of what is appropriate.' Another one; 'a character or part played by a performer.' Of course there are more options, to define 'role', but these two are most suitable when it comes to re-enactment and roleplaying. 'Roleplaying' is defined as 'acting a particular role' without being specific about the place or location this takes place.

Where the definitions of 'role' and 'roleplaying' leave much open for a more personal view on the definition, the definition of 'acting' is more specific; 'the art, profession, or activity of performing in plays, films, etc.', or 'the occupation of an actor'. Both of these definitions indicate some form of specific training, leading up to qualified people.

Some interpreters are actors by the definition of acting, but most of them are not. In reality, actors usually only take on a (historical) part, without paying much attention to the history behind the character, details about clothing, accessories and hairstyles for example. Actors follow the wishes of the director and a script. Interpreters on the other hand, tend to do the exact opposite; they build their own story, as detailed as possible. They do not really have a director by their side, but what they do have is a social group of other interpreters around them to turn to, to make the story and role even better.

#### Why use roles?

Some people like taking up a role, some do not, but most people are just not really sure how to do so, or even a bit scared. Reluctant interpreters may be scared to go beyond the comfort zone. The comfort zone is a nice place to be in, but it often stops people from trying something new, or be open minded about something like roleplaying. To be open minded about roles and roleplaying, interpreters must know why taking up a role is something good. Next to that, the interpreter needs to know how to build one, how to step into and out of one.

#### Why take up a role?

When working with visitors on site, the interpreter must be aware of the expectations of the visitors. Visitors expecting to visit a museum meeting a normal guide to show them around, do not expect the guide to be a complete historical character; they usually want to hear the story of the site from a slight distance. Usually visitors like this are older children and adults. People visiting a museum, expecting to get the full historical experience are the opposite; they want to see as many historically correct and functioning interpreters as possible. Especially children are very open about this; they love to step into the 'fairy-tale' of history. A normal guide often does not do much for the imagination of children, which leads up to them losing their interest. The same is often true for the adult visitor; they know the interpreter is not a historical person with eternal life (like children sometimes believe) but the fact that the interpreter can stay in character, while telling an entertaining story, is often appreciated. Not having a role, or being able to step into one as an interpreter, may result in a lot of disappointed visitors. It will not be a surprise that most visitors will be a combination of the two types described here.

#### How to build a role?

When building a role for oneself, it is important to keep in mind that a role must be fitting and suitable at all times. Being a blacksmith for example, is only useful when there is something like a forgery on site. Being a midwife is not so useful when there are only men around. A medieval knight has nothing to do with a Roman site, no matter how good he might be. These examples are very simple, but they make it very clear that the interpreter must always be aware of his surroundings on site. Next to the location the interpreter is building his role for, he should also figure out the best role for himself; a fourteen year old, cannot be a Roman senator, a forty year old cannot be a sixteen year old, blushing bride. The interpreter should always try to build a role or character that makes him feel more comfortable. A role should make sense at all times. When building a suitable and functioning role, diagram 'sources to build a story' on page 27, can be used.

#### Stepping into and out of character

Having a very solid and satisfying role as an interpreter can make it very hard to step out of the role, or to adapt to match with the wishes of the visitors. Some visitors, both children and adults, do not want the interpreter to act like a real historical person, who is unaware of what a cell phone is. They consider that childish and may feel like they are treated as children. Others may be very disappointed that the magical bubble of interacting with a real historical person bursts the moment the interpreter knows what a cell phone is and starts talking about his own. Keep that in mind at all times: Read the audience and adapt. Sometimes the interpreter starts in character but feels the need to step out of character, and sometimes it will be the other way around.

## Choose your role

There are different types of roles an interpreter can play while interacting with an audience. This section will focus on some of the options, but more types are possible. The following seven types will be discussed: craftsman, tour guide, preacher, storyteller, teacher, activity coordinator and the academic. These seven types often combine with the historical role or character of an interpreter; a Roman soldier can adapt to tour guide, he can tell his story like a preacher etc. No matter what, the key here, once again, is reading the audience and adapting.

### The craftsman



The role of the craftsman is one of the most used roles interpreters use. Interpreters love to show ancient tools and crafts, and experience has shown that crafting is a very easy way of getting a conversation started. Visitors also love to try new things, so having a craft and inviting people to try it gets things going. The craftsman needs to have eyes in the back of his head though. Sometimes visitors are a bit scared to interrupt the person working, they will just stand there, look, and walk always after a while. They feel unseen by the interpreter. Try to look up from time to time, to make sure that visitors are noted, invited in, or invited to join the crafting.

One of the biggest advantages of re-enacting as a craftsman is the fact that visitors do not feel like they have to join right away. They can observe the craftsman and his craft first, they can come closer, think about a question etc. The craftsman can simply continue working, greet them and invite them in. If they do, great, if they want to keep looking, that is fine too. The craftsman is not 'threatening' or forcing the visitors to do anything. He can just start talking about what he is doing. Visitors can easily leave when they want, without feeling obliged to stay because the interpreter has nothing else to do, than talking to them. He has a craft to do, so he will also be able to keep himself busy after the visitor has left. Often a very comfortable feeling.

### The tour guide



The tour guide is another very common type used. The key here is to read the audience properly, like said before. Not all visitors will enjoy a time travelling tour, where the interpreter really pretends to be a historical figure. Others will not enjoy the more indirect tour, where the guide just tells about the locations, nothing more. Young children are very open to the time travelling concept; they often enter a site dressed like a historical character ready to go. Adults and teenagers on the other hand often make jokes about interpreters pretending to be a historical figure; they do not always want to play that game, no matter how entertaining. They are more open to the distant concept. Of course an interpreter will very often meet visitors that enjoy the combination; the family unit with both children and adults. The children may enjoy the time travelling experience where they can talk to a 'real knight', where the adults like to hear the knight's stories from a distance, while watching the children time travelling.

### The preacher

The preacher is one of the trickiest interpreters. Every devoted interpreter tends to preach from time to time, simply because he knows every tiny detail about his craft, outfit or time period and feels the need to share this. This need is often just a form enthusiasm, nothing more. No interpreter purposefully tries to bore the visitor before him. While enthusiastically telling everything there is to tell about something, the visitor might feel obliged to stay out of respect for the interpreter. Even when they really want to move on to the next location. In the end the visitor will leave the location or interpreter feeling numb and tired. Receiving a survey stating that the interpreter could not stop talking and that that was a bit much, and little entertaining because the visitor did not feel invited to be an active part of it all is never good.

Fig 36. (Left) An archaeologist at Parco Montale handles a newly-made 'wolf' or iron. In this situation, he is not playing a role, his job is to demonstrate historical skills.

Fig 37. (Right) Acting as a guide, this interpreter takes the visitors along to his 'home' in the reconstructed stone-age village at Kierikki.

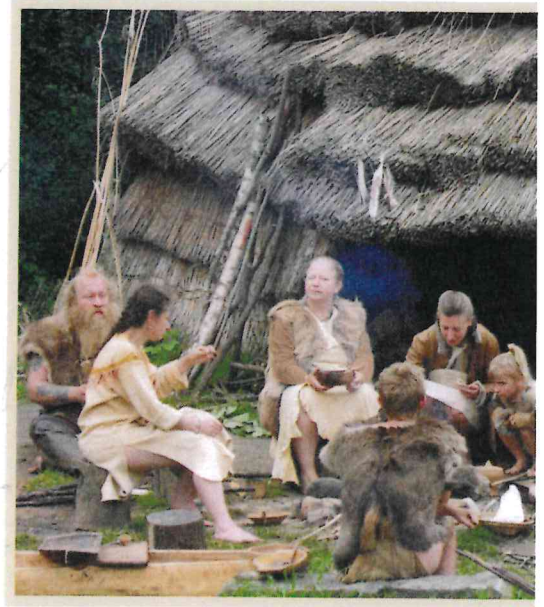
### The storyteller

The storyteller is a beloved type for interpreters. They all love to tell the stories of times gone by. Usually visitors come to listen to stories told by an enthusiastic interpreter. The only thing the interpreter has to keep in mind at all times is that he can easily become a preacher when talking too much. He needs to know when to stop and how to read his audience. The best way for interpreters to keep in mind that they are probably not the only interpreter the visitor will meet that day, is to keep the stories short, but as entertaining as possible. Interpreters can obtain this by writing a story like a letter; a beginning to introduce the topic, the actual story, and a conclusion or obvious end.

Of course it is good to have a much bigger story about a certain topic, but the interpreter needs to be able to adapt and manipulate the story to match the wishes of the audience. So sometimes the story is long, sometimes short. This does not mean that the story is better or worse. The interpreter should keep in mind that there are probably more storytellers available on site that have stories to tell. In the eyes of the visitor it is better to hear more short stories from several storytellers, than one, much too long story told by just one storyteller. Of course it is important to have more than one story as an interpreter, in case you are not the first one to be visited.

### The teacher

Most open air museums have an educational aspect. Sharing history and archaeology with visitors is often one of the cornerstones. In the light of this, it only makes sense that a lot of interpreters come across like teachers from time to time. They often work with groups of schoolchildren who visit the site as part of an educational program. The accompanying teachers often expect the interpreters to be surrogate teachers. It will not be a surprise, that the teacher type shares characteristics with the preacher and the storyteller. Acting like a teacher works very well, when working with schoolchildren paying a visit, but it is often not the best way of approaching other visitors. Because of the educational purpose of a lot of open air museums, most visitors are willing to learn something during their visit. This does not mean that they are back in school. Approaching them like a teacher, asking for the exact right answers etc. should be avoided. Visitors are there to have a pleasant day, not a day at school. Children might even be a bit frightened, because they think they are not allowed to do things when they get an answer right. A teacher can be scary.



### The activity coordinator

Sometimes an interpreter will have to be an activity coordinator. Especially during the peak season, interpreters will have to be able to manage large groups of people participating in activities, which can be challenging. Interpreters have to keep in mind that sometimes it becomes impossible to tell something about the historical background of an activity. It is important to accept this in order not to get frustrated. The interpreter must keep a cheerful face at all times, to make sure the visitors feel welcome, seen and happy.

### The academic

Some interpreters have an academic background. They are historians, archaeologists, art historians etc. To academics it is normal to have a lot of knowledge about certain topics. Sometimes it is hard to realize that most people do not have all that knowledge, which may become a problem when talking to visitors. The interpreter must read the audience to try to figure out what the visitor already knows and what he is interested in. This is especially necessary when talking to children they often do not understand all the scientific terminology of the academic. Interpreters must let go of the academic approach in order to work with children. When working with adults, or older students and children, the academic approach often works, especially when the visitor is testing the knowledge of the interpreter. Visitors sometimes do this believing that the interpreter is not proficient.

Fig 38. (Top) An interactive stone age living project at AÖZA, allowing researchers to experience life in the Mesolithic and visitors to interact with them.

Fig 39. (Left) Teaching mesolithic archery to the visitors at Kierikki.

## Type of tours

It is easy to say that roleplaying or taking up a role by the interpreter is the only thing that happens while working on site. This is not the case. An interpreter will, often subconsciously, give his tour a certain 'role' while working with visitors. Considering the word 'role' is more suitable when talking about people, the term 'type' will be used here to define the different kind of tours. No matter what role the interpreter has created for himself, it will become clear that he must be able to use all the different types of tours, depending on the audience before him. He must read his audience, like explained before.

There are three main types of tours: the passive tour, the active one, and a combination of both. Each type will be explained and illustrated, using the different roles of the interpreter.



Fig 40. Craft skills demonstration at St. Fagans. Inviting the visitors (especially the elderly or young children) to sit down changes the dynamic entirely.



Fig 41 During a demonstration of, for instance, archery, keeping safety and experience in mind is essential for the interpreter (in this case: Tom Snoek, Cardiff University). They are the expert in both areas, for the visitors. Photo by Emma Laurijssens at AFM Oerlinghausen (DE).

### The passive tour

The passive tour is the kind of tour that does not very often match with a big group of people. Basically, the interpreter is telling a story, without getting his audience involved; the story is told like it comes straight from a book. Many visitors consider this type of tour to be boring, because they cannot participate. Interpreters need to keep in mind that the passive approach only proves its worth, when talking about something very specific or complicated for a short period of time, knowing that the audience needs a certain focus to understand what has been told.

In short: the passive approach is only suitable when talking about something specific for a few minutes. No long tour should be done using the passive technique.

### The active tour

Just like the passive tour, the active version does not always match with the audience. Interpreters providing an active tour, make sure that the audience participates all the time. In most cases the historical story is very basic while giving an active tour. The active tour is usually most suitable for children. Kids like to be active and are not always interested in the historical story like adults are. All of this does not automatically mean that adults will not enjoy an active tour. Very often they will. Interpreters just need to keep in mind that adults will not like the same activities children like. Adapt, alter the program, and adults will be just as pleased.





Fig 42. (Above)  
A typical tour at Parco Montale. The guides do not 'dress up', but there are interpreters on-site who demonstrate crafts. These interpreters do not interact with the visitors.

Fig 43. (Right)  
A Medieval dancing lesson at Archeon for a family spending a Medieval holiday there. Clothing is provided by the museum to enhance the experience.



### The combination tour

A combination of the active and the passive approach is most common, which is not surprising. Just like in everyday life, people like a combination of passive and active elements while visiting a site.

The combination of active and passive, also gives visitors the time to adapt and to orientate. Nobody likes to just dive in and be active from the start. It is nice to listen to an interpreter first to get comfortable with the location and the present atmosphere. After that, the visitor knows what to expect, how approachable the interpreters are, and what they have to offer the visitors. All this will make visiting a site a very nice and comfortable experience, without having the feeling of being forced to be active or passive from the start.

While touring with a group of people, the interpreter can start telling interesting things, which is more like the passive approach, before asking a question about it for example, which is the active approach. Interpreters may hand out specific items they are telling about, so people can take a closer look to participate that way. An activity using certain items or playing an historical game can be a very valid option as well. Once again, the key here is reading the audience and adapting or manipulating the story.



## Roles and tour types in a matrix

### Storyteller:

- **Passive:** The interpreter will start telling the story of his liking when visitors approach him. He does not inquire about the wishes of the audience.
- **Active:** The interpreter may ask what he can do for the visitor before him; is there something special he wants to know more about? The interpreter can also show the visitor some items he can tell a story about, or provide the visitor with some options. This helps to get the conversation going.
- **Combination:** The interpreter is telling the story he feels most comfortable about, or adapts his story to match the audience. During his storytelling he can ask some questions about what has been told, to get the visitors involved. It is important that the interpreter has certain mnemonics to help the visitors along, or to guide the visitor to the next interpreter, who knows more about a certain topic. It is very important that the interpreter knows when to stop talking. It is better to have the variety of more interpreters telling a story, than just one talking all the time.

### Preacher/ academic:

- **Passive:** The preacher is basically telling his story; detailed and very long. There is no room for the visitor to ask a question. The visitor may not even know specifically what to ask, because the story of the interpreter contains so many details, their focus is gone completely. The preacher is performing a one-man-show.
- **Active:** A preacher being active can be dangerous; the visitor already needs all his attention to keep up with the detailed story told, so it is not always good to start asking the visitors questions. They may not know the answer, or are afraid to admit that, which will create an uncomfortable situation that leaves the visitor with a bad feeling.
- **Combination:** The interpreter is reading his audience first and adapts his story. Every group of people can handle a certain amount of details, and the interpreter should feel free to tell those, without the risk of boring the visitor or making things more complicated than necessary. A preacher working with the techniques of the combination tour, will almost all the time, evolve into the storyteller.

### Craftsman:

- **Passive:** The interpreter is mainly crafting and telling about it. There is no clear focus on the wishes of the audience, or getting the audience to participate. The audience will be left with a lot of information about the craft itself, but it will be forgotten soon, because there was no participation.
- **Active:** The interpreter is working on his craft, but will ask the visitors to try the craft as well. While working the craft with the audience, the focus will be on what they are doing, mainly because of safety reasons. The interpreter will focus on telling some information about the craft, but not about the details, because visitors will not be focused on that, they are focused on the task at hand. The craftsman will be in need of a lot of materials in order to get everybody participating and not just waiting and looking.
- **Combination:** The interpreter will do some work himself, he will invite the visitors to join him and he will tell some more in-depth information, because not everybody will be participating. Visitors who just want to look will still participate because they can listen to the story told, while other visitors are illustrating the story.

### Tour guide:

- **Passive:** The tour guide is not an historical figure like the craftsman, and he will just guide the visitors through the site, telling the proper information. The visitor will just listen.
- **Active:** The tour guide makes sure that he is aware of the wishes of the visitor by listening to their questions and asking them questions himself.
- **Combination:** The guide is not only telling the proper information about the locations on site. He can also tell more detailed information about the locations, to keep people entertained. Another option is telling the basics before getting the people in contact with an expert, the craftsman for example. This way the tour guide shows the visitors where to go for a more detailed story or an activity.

### Teacher:

- **Passive:** The interpreter will treat the visitors like a school group. The story is told and the interpreter is expecting the visitors to remember everything. It will not be a surprise that the teacher will often compare with the preacher. There is little to no involvement of the visitors.
- **Active:** The interpreter can ask the visitors questions about certain things and should be aware of visitors asking him questions.
- **Combination:** A teacher can use the same combination techniques of the storyteller and the preacher.

### Activity coordinator:

- **Passive:** A passive approach might sound strange in when talking about an activity coordinator, but it is not. Very often an interpreter is waiting for a group of visitor to show and ask for an activity. When the activity has begun, the interpreter will focus on the people participating. New visitors will be left with the feeling that they were not seen and cannot participate at all.
- **Active:** A good activity coordinator is able to spot new participants while focusing on the people already participating. He should make people feel welcome and ask them to join in, even when the activity has already started. This approach means that the interpreter needs eyes in the back of his head as well, to see everybody; especially small children are left unseen sometimes when a location is crowded.
- **Combination:** Sometimes people are afraid to ask for an activity. They may think something is very hard or complicated, even when it is not. This is often the case with small children or parents underestimating their children. What helps is performing the activity yourself, so people can see what is expected of them. People often feel comfortable watching someone do something. While doing the activity, the interpreter can invite the visitor to join in, stating that it is not as hard as it looks and that it is ok, to maybe need more than one attempt.

# WE ASKED

## Knowing the visitor

All the AOAM in the OpenArch project agree that it is difficult to teach staff how to 'read' an audience. A number of them agree that the best way to learn is to learn by doing. At first, by copying more experienced members of staff, after that by creating their own ways of interacting with the visitors. Each group of visitors requires a new and unique approach. The skill to very quickly assess the needs of a group of visitors is essential to a good interpreter, but hard to teach. It is easier to give them the stability of knowledge about the subject matter and allow them to work with more experienced staff in order to 'learn the ropes'.

All the AOAM also have tours, guides and/or signage available in multiple languages. The programs and activities are geared towards both younger and more mature audiences, with activities catering to different age brackets. The challenge with Live Interpretation is, that it is nearly impossible to do in multiple languages. Shows and tours are usually given in the local language or English. Other languages might be possible but are very much dependant on the competencies of the staff.

Partly due to the effort within the OpenArch project, all the partners are very much aware of the subject of accessibility in museum and specifically AOAM. While wheelchair accessibility is usually a given on site, the same cannot always be said to hearing impaired or visually impaired visitors.



Fig 44. The Mammoth Park at Viminacium. Photo by Technical documentation of the project Viminacium, Archaeological Institute, Belgrade

Each partner has also undertaken new initiatives during, or as part of, the OpenArch project. Their responses have provided us with some interesting examples.

**Viminacium:** After the discovery of a prehistoric mammoth, the site initiated the Mammoth Park, which integrates a children's playground into educational facilities. Placing the local dolmen in a more international context has also increased the visitor experience.

**Hunebedcentrum:** The centre is developing Live Interpretation as a semi-permanent part of their displays. The Oertijdpark incorporates reconstructions and volunteers as interpreters. The OpenArch project has provided them with much inspiration in order to take this further, as well as practical experiences such as Staff Exchanges.

**AÖZA:** The stone age park in Albersdorf has developed skill-based displays, where visitors can try out prehistoric skills for themselves. There is also a permanent mesolithic settlement which has been added to the experience. Both these initiatives has been co-funded and developed with help from the OpenArch project.

**Foteviken:** The Viking experience has been further expanded with new programs for children and adults. With help from the OpenArch project, a new hands-on experience is available for volunteers, similar to the initiatives from AÖZA.

**Calafell:** In Catalonia, there have been a number of developments. In 2014 a marketing plan was drawn up in order to better cater to the visitors' expectations, resulting in an 'essential information visit' and an 'extended information visit', supported by signs and brochures. Due to the influence of OpenArch, the new and existing brochures were translated into several more languages and experimental actions were added to the site.

**Parco Montale:** The addition of a workshop where children and families can try out ancient crafts for themselves proved a great new visitor experience. Inspired by the contributions and feedback from OpenArch partners, there is more emphasis on family groups with young children, resulting in new storytelling opportunities.

**Archeon:** In Archeon, the OpenArch project inspired some new ways to communicate with the visitors. Signs in Dutch and English were added to the site, along with new interpretation programs. After the inspiring conference in Foteviken, more theatrical training for staff was introduced, as well as new storytelling opportunities. The visitor surveys provided unique insights into the target audiences, giving new impulse to initiatives such as interactive shows and demonstrations.

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# OPENARCH

A five year Culture project with 11 partners, based on EXARC's key strengths - its supportive community and international perspective. OpenArch built a permanent partnership of archaeological open-air museums, raising standards among participants and improving the visitor experience across Europe.

