

Evaluation Brief EB10

May 7, 2007

== DRAFT ==

Off-Site Testing of the Prototype Temporary Signage

The initial installation of the *Trail of Time* will include relatively little on-the-ground interpretation. Although a range of interpretive signage will eventually be available along the completed *Trail*, for the initial installation in 2007 the only interpretative text will be (a) the 10-meter markers; (b) temporary signage at the major entrances; and (c) a *Walking Guide*, a freely distributed pamphlet designed for *all* visitors to use as they walk along the initial *Trail*. Following is a brief overview of off-site testing of three prototype versions of the *temporary sign*.

Methods:

This test was conducted off-site in the Chicago area. Two methods were used: (a) critical review and (b) user testing with purposively selected respondents.

The *critical review* consisted of two evaluators independently reviewing the materials for the incorporation of principles of instructional design and informal learning. The *user-testing* included showing respondents 8½ by 11 inch printouts of three versions of the prototype signage: Version 4/18, Version 4/20-C, and Version 4/20-E (see thumbnail graphics, below). To conduct the user-testing we asked respondents a series of open-ended questions and followed up with detailed probes based on their responses. A total of one hour of direct contact hours were spent with three respondents in 3 interviews from April 29 to May 2, 2007. Respondents varied in (a) age (4th grade through mature adult); (b) previous experience with the Grand Canyon (no experience to one previous visit); and (c) knowledge of geology (complete novice to amateur paleontologist).

Key Findings:

In keeping with the criteria for these Evaluation Briefs (i.e. short, and quick) we are including only key findings below. Because these are the results of testing done off-site and out of context, these findings are not definitive or finally conclusive. They do however summarize important information that will help guide the next iteration of the prototype temporary signs that will be tested at the rim.

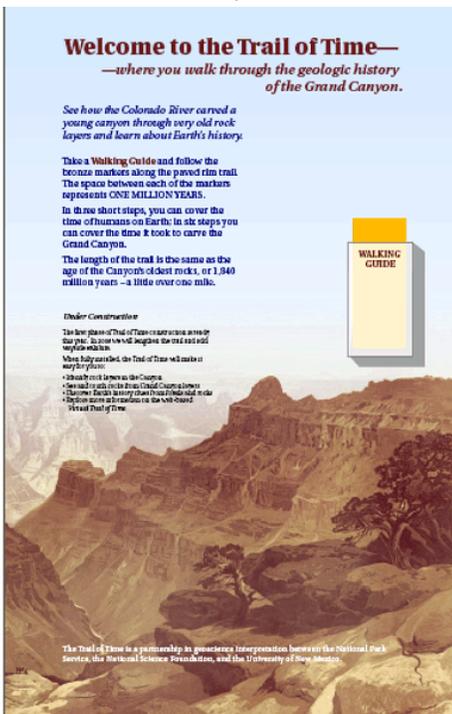
1. **Amount of text:** Overall, the data indicates that the version(s) with less text (versions 4/20-C and 4/20-E) will likely be read more thoroughly by visitors to the rim.
2. **Getting visitors to pick up a *Walking Guide*:** One of the important functions for the temporary sign is to get visitors to pick up a walking guide. There were some indications that the term *walking guide* might be ambiguous to some visitors. Some respondents thought it might be referring to a series of signs along the trail. Others (who saw Version 4/20-C and 4/20-E) weren't sure where they would find a walking guide.
3. **The "...three short steps..." paragraph** (a) underestimates the size of a step—it's really a BIG step for most visitors; and (b) is written as if visitors will enter at time zero. There were indications that visitors may find this text useful, and it seems worth retaining for the entrance at Grandeur Point. But this paragraph will likely prove confusing to visitors who enter at the Shrine of the Ages or Verkamps entrances to the *Trail*.
4. **Under Construction:** There were indications that visitors will need and appreciate knowing that the *Trail* is not yet complete. Respondents we talked with explained that it was important to them to know that the *Trail* was under construction. Although Version 4/18's "Under Construction" text gave them too many details, the shorter paragraph in Version 4/20-C seemed to provide a more appropriate level of detail. However, the language in this paragraph was a bit misleading—for example, the *Walking Guide* already helps visitors identify rock layers by name.
5. **You are here:** Although all three versions of the temporary sign effectively communicated the physical length of the *Trail*, several respondents were left wondering where they were along the *Trail*. Some specifically asked for "You are here" information on a map.
6. **Look and Feel:** Respondents really liked the graphic of the Grand Canyon.

Recommendations:

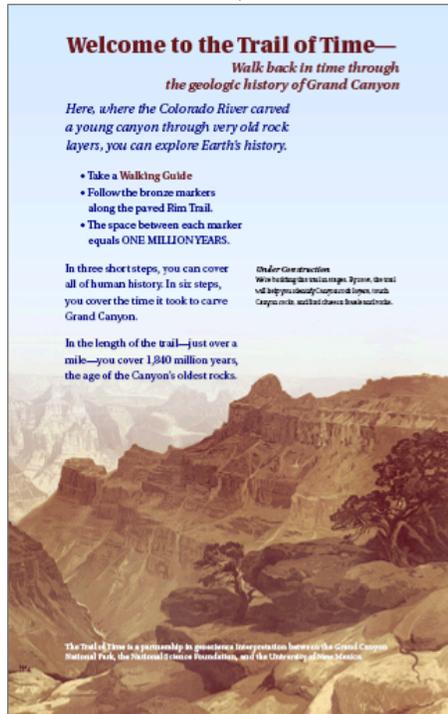
1. Use version 4/20-E as the basis for the signage tested in May, making revisions as described below.
2. Retain the 4/20-E main header, and most of the text. Replace the subheading with simplified text: *Walk through Grand Canyon's geologic history.*
3. Test whether visitors to the rim can easily locate and pick up a *Walking Guide* with the existing *Take a Walking Guide* direction, or if more descriptive information needs to be added.
4. Develop two versions of the sign, one for the Grandeur Point entrance, and the other for the Shrine of the Ages and Verkamps entrances. Retain Version 4/20-E's current "Three steps..." paragraph for the Grandeur Point entrance (at time zero), editing it to read "Three BIG steps..." However, remove this paragraph for the signs at the other entrances.
5. Replace "The space between each marker represents ONE MILLION YEARS" with "one BIG step = one million years." Test with visitors to the rim to see if they can then move to the trail and quickly figure out that the one-meter markers are one million years apart.
6. Add a short "Under Construction" paragraph to say something like: "The Trail of Time is currently under construction. Enjoy it today, and then come back when it's finished in summer 2009." Alternatively, add a circle graphic that looks like it's been applied with a rubber stamp off to the right that says something like: *UNDER CONSTRUCTION. Enjoy the trail today, and be sure to come back when it's done.*
7. Add a small map that shows "You are here." This map should be even simpler than the map in the short version of the *Walking Guide*. Obviously the *You are here* location would be different at each of the three entrances.
8. Make sure all three pieces—i.e. the ten-meter markers, the prototype walking guide, and the temporary signs—have a similar look and feel so visitors to the rim recognize them as belonging together.

Prototype Versions of the Temporary Signage

Version 4/18



Version 4/20-C



Version 4/20-E

