

**Growing Interpretation  
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Curated, Engaging, Mobile Visitor Experiences

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**Abstract**

Presents a brief overview of how mobile technology can be harnessed to engage a new generation of visitors to natural and cultural heritage resources and to address the interests and needs of an increasingly diverse public. Extracts the lessons the Canogle team has learned to date in developing the content for curated, engaging, informative, entertaining outdoor experiences that connect people to their environment.

**Keywords**

Mobile technology, interpretation, cultural diversity, content curation, publishing platform, location – aware content

**Introduction**

Organizations founded to protect natural and cultural heritage resources are facing a host of concerns from budget cuts to increased costs. Perhaps most worrying, they recognize the very citizenry they serve is increasingly unaware of their mission. The solution seems clear – find ways to increase engagement with the public, so it will fully enjoy the extraordinary treasures of its heritage and as a result support the mission to protect them. To the extent that the ‘public’ has dramatically changed over the course of a few decades, becoming far more culturally diverse, this solution is more challenging than ever and yet, at the same time, these same demographics suggest new opportunities for engagement.

**Using Mobile technology to engage a diverse public**

Traditional interpretative techniques have limitations. Ultimately, whether through

signage or docents, it is feasible to tell only a small set of stories from selective points of view. Conversely, mobile technology allows for a multiplicity of stories targeted to a culturally diverse public, while also engaging a critically important segment of the population, the youth, who will in future be called on to support the continued protection of these resources.

Canogle is presented as an example of this application of mobile technology. Canogle has developed a platform that offers organizations a new way to engage and expand audiences by developing convenient and informative experiences that entertain and connect visitors to their environment. The platform publishes curated, location-aware content on smart phones, giving visitors access to engaging stories that target their interests, providing a personalized museum-like experience, outdoors. The technology allows organizations to collect useful data about their visitors and about their experience. It supports tapping into visitors' social networks and cultural contexts—all with the goal of continuing to engage them more deeply and improve their experience.

When visitors arrive on the site, they download the app on their smart phones. They browse, select and take the tours that have been specifically designed for the environment they are in and for their specific interests. As visitors walk along their selected tour, the GPS signal triggers their phone to present the relevant content for that specific location in their preferred language. Each stop along a tour is a story in itself, that together with all the stops creates a larger story about the ecology, human history, natural history, restoration work, etc. of the site.

The Canogle team has identified several critical steps in developing place-based content. First, they identify the characteristics of the site that best fulfill the clients' goals and address the target audience. They then identify the content experts, internally or externally, that can convey engaging and accurate stories about the site. The content is crowd sourced from content a client may already have as well as from new partners in communities they are keen to reach.

Next they identify themes, routes, and major points of interest for each of the themes. They then walk the site interviewing the content experts and recording their responses and their stories. They transcribe the interviews, extracting and shaping the stories into stops along the tour.

Their team of content experts, clients, and community representatives review for accuracy, tone and fit and continue to revise until the stated goals are achieved.

## **Conclusion**

Mobile technology offers a new opportunity to deliver stories that engage a diverse public so that they too can enjoy and help protect and steward parks, open space, trails and other protected lands and historic resources. Canogle has designed a platform and process that applies this technology and has tested it successfully with a number of partners.