



Freelancers' guide

**Guidelines for all who are considering
launching a freelance business in
heritage interpretation**

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Written by: Madison Leeson (Turkey, Canada)
Michael Hamish Glen (UK)
Chuck Lennox (USA)
Edo Mešić (BIH)

With support from: Yael Bamberger (Israel)
Simana Markovska (Bulgaria)
Sarah De Nardi (Italy)
Ageliki Politis (Australia)
Marie Banks (UK)
Helena Vičič (Slovenia)

Copy editing and proofreading: Michael Hamish Glen (UK)

Design: Daniela Ruçi (Albania)

We seek to represent, encourage, and support freelancers in the IE network in their best interests and those of the heritage interpretation profession as a whole.

The information in this guide has been compiled as guidance only and Interpret Europe cannot be responsible for the consequences of any resultant actions taken by members.

Cover images: Tourist guide at Kapllan Pasha Cultural Monument in Tirana, Albania. Image: D. Ruçi (1); Med Dvemi Vodami Visitor Centre in Križovec, Croatia. Image: T. Kalkan (2); Children appreciating heritage. Image: I. Čaleta Pleša (3)

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Welcome to this guide

The Interpret Europe Freelancers' Team 2020-2021 benefitted from the experience of members in Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Israel, Italy, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. This multicultural, multi-continental team empowered us to represent freelancers across the IE network, share helpful resources and spark discussions on the issues that concern us around the world. The Freelancers' Team, of course, also supports the mission, vision and goals of Interpret Europe.

Our goal for this document is to develop a set of guidelines for freelancing in heritage interpretation. We hope there is something in here to appeal to everyone: whether you're thinking about freelancing but are not sure what it entails, you have been freelancing for a year but don't know how to register as a business or you've been freelancing for decades and are looking for new resources and perspectives on contract work during the time of Covid-19. This document is intended as more than just a set of guidelines; ideally, it will help connect us as a network of freelancers and provide support to those who need it.

If you would like to contribute your freelancing experiences and get into exchange with other freelancers at IE, please feel free to reach out to us. You can also email us for more information on anything covered in this document or, if you're passionate about the topic, you might want to join the team. For all these things, you can email mail@interpret-europe.net.

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Meet the authors

Madison Leeson is based in Istanbul, Turkey, where she is pursuing her PhD in Cultural Heritage Management. She is interested in cultural diplomacy and the ability of cultural heritage to foster dialogue and empower community identity. She has presented research at conferences in Montreal, New York, Athens, and Vietnam, and has worked in museums in Canada, Greece, and Turkey. Her freelance work is diverse, but she currently focuses on consultancy for small museums, NGOs, and think tanks in the Mediterranean and Middle East.

Michael Hamish Glen lives in Perth, Scotland, and has been involved with heritage interpretation for more than 50 years, principally as a consultant, running Touchstone Heritage – a small business with a successful record of interpretive planning, undertaking research and copywriting. Latterly, he has worked on his own, increasingly concentrating on his role as a wordsmith, preparing creative text in prose and poetry for people at places. He helped found the UK's Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI) in 1975, Interpret Europe in 2010 and, with Chuck Lennox, the Global Alliance for Heritage Interpretation. He has held various voluntary posts with AHI and worked as its Administrator for some years. He was the inaugural chair of IE's Supervisory Committee.

Chuck Lennox is based in Seattle, Washington, USA, and is a visitor experience consultant having owned his business since 2003. He focuses on planning (interpretive master plans, exhibit plans and interpretive assessments), interpretive training (Master Trainer with the US National Association for Interpretation (NAI)) and programme evaluation. He has a passion for international work and interpretation with past projects in Guyana (South America), Uganda, Morocco, Russia and Mongolia.

Edo Mešić worked as an external associate at the Zemaljski Muzej Bosne i Hercegovine (the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina), the oldest and most prestigious museum institution in Bosnia. During his time in the ZM, he worked on the presentation and interpretation of cultural heritage (archaeology) by adopting modern technology. As an archaeologist, Edo participated in numerous archaeological excavations on sites in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Slovenia. His career interests include digital archaeology, landscape archaeology, Roman provincial archaeology, digital heritage (eHeritage), museology and museum education, as well as heritology and heritage interpretation.

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Who are freelancers and what do they do?

This is how we define the term freelancer:

An individual who is self-employed or earns their income through various employers and is not or not only committed to one employer for a long-term contract. For the purposes of the Freelancers' Team, freelancer may also describe an individual who occasionally performs contract or short-term work in addition to full-time employment. Freelancer in this context is understood to be synonymous with consultant and independent contractor.

Freelancers, whether working full-time, part-time or occasionally, get involved in many facets of interpretation, whether acting as consultants or as contractors, i.e. giving advice or carrying out specific tasks. This means that as a freelancer, you could be, for example:

- Advising a client on how to imbed interpretation in a scheme to develop a museum or a single display, a visitor centre at a historic or natural history site, a complete site, the work of onsite staff including guides and rangers and in many other situations
- Preparing a complete interpretive plan for a site, collection or other situation
- Undertaking research to support the interpretation of a site etc
- Preparing the text for interpretive displays, audio and audio-visual presentations both analogue and digital (including websites) or other such as leaflets and site guides
- Undertaking graphic design, illustrative and other creative work for a variety of interpretive needs from print to displays to websites to branding
- Providing specialist advice on interpreting a particular topic

- Working a part of a team with other consultants / freelancers such as graphic and/or exhibition designers, architects, landscape architects etc
- Guiding visitors or tourists at a site or in a region

You will probably know of other situations where freelancers can play an important role within the broad field of heritage interpretation.

GEM, the Group for Education in Museums in the UK, has just set up a freelancers' group which, if one joins, is another source of information and support.



Larger projects depend on good cooperation of several experts. Image: Muze_Muses



Designing interpretive services is team work. Image: Muze_Muses

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Introduction to freelancing

Whether you're starting work as a freelancer or just want to understand better how you can manage your many responsibilities, a good place to start is by knowing the differences between types of freelancers. The text below has been adapted from thesimpledollar.com.

Independent consultants – a term not used by thesimpledollar.com but is widely used in many countries. It embraces some of the categories below.

Independent contractors – much of the freelance workforce falls into this category. They do supplemental and contract work on a per-project basis. This is what many think of when the word 'freelance' is mentioned.

Diversified workers – part traditional employee and part freelancer. A diversified worker, for

instance, might work 20 hours per week as a tour guide and another dozen or so on consulting jobs.

Temporary workers – temps have either a single, traditional job, or a contract position, for a predetermined period of time.

Freelance business owners – 'a freelancer's freelancer', such as a successful freelance tour guide who is attracting so many clients that they need to hire additional freelance tour guides to meet the demand.

Moonlighters – they have a full-time job and also a 'side hustle' — like museum staff who take on consulting assignments in their own time, or a teacher who conducts heritage tours after school. However, many people would not wish to be labelled in this way and some employers forbid extraneous earning in their contracts of employment.

My experience – Madison

When I started freelancing, I didn't use formal contracts because I didn't realise how hard it would be to secure payment and manage projects. Now I use them not just to maintain communication with clients but also to keep track of my own work.

My experience – Michael

I had some part-time experience, some advice and some good fortune but the biggest challenge I found was coping with a never-ending pile of costs for everything from paperclips to public liability insurance. Sub-contracting (e.g. to a designer) always meant paying out (or having that liability) even when the client wasn't paying in quickly. However, the freedom to work in my own way and establish a track record was very rewarding.

My experience – Chuck

One element I find common today about freelancing was true for me 18 years ago when I launched my business. We are passionate about the focus of our business (otherwise why would we do it?). But there are other elements of working for oneself that we might not be so passionate about, such as bookkeeping and accounting, understanding taxes and paying them on time, writing contracts and negotiating with clients. I found it challenging (and still do) to find support for technology issues. When the computer is not working and you've already spent two hours trying to get it to work, what do you do? The best piece of advice is, "Do what you do best and hire the rest." I now spend money hiring someone else to solve some of my business problems!

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Pros and cons of freelancing

We have set out some of these below – you will see that for every pro there is a parallel con. It's essential to do your homework about all regulatory matters and get advice on the practicalities. Your greatest asset from the start will be quiet confidence in your own abilities and being able to communicate that to potential clients. You don't just want to 'sell' yourself; you want to be 'bought'.

Pros

1. You can choose how you establish and fund your business.
2. You can arrange the legal form of business that best suits your circumstances.
3. You are your own line manager, 'working for yourself'.
4. You can define and design your own ethos, marketing and working methods.
5. You can choose from whom you accept commissions.
6. You can choose where and when you work (other than on clients' sites).
7. You can set your hourly or daily rates and how you recoup expenses.
8. You can set your own expectations of income
9. You can choose to work with others on an agreed basis.
10. You can accept other employment opportunities alongside your freelancing.
11. You can decide whether to buy or rent equipment, including a motor car.
12. You can change your business model as experience develops your skills and interests.
13. You can choose when to take holidays, go to conferences, etc..
14. You can combine work with family or other commitments with a greater flexibility.
15. You can make your own pension and business protection insurance.

Cons

1. You will have to find your set-up and running costs from savings or loans.
2. You need to be fully aware of all legal, tax, insurance and similar liabilities.
3. You are, in reality, working for others, your clients.
4. You have to set aside time for promoting yourself and administration.
5. You may have to accept less-appealing commissions to remain viable.
6. You may have to fit in with clients' time frames, however inconvenient.
7. You have to discipline your working arrangements and control of costs.
8. You must be prepared to wait for long periods before being paid .
9. Your freedoms may be compromised if you work alongside others.
10. You need to balance your time allocations if accepting other employment.
11. You may find it hard to establish yourself in a competitive marketplace.
12. You may find your business model has to change in order to remain viable.
13. You will have no paid holidays and will have to fund conference attendance.
14. You will not be covered by an employer's pension and insurance arrangements.

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Logistics of freelancing

As you launch your freelancing practice, you should consider registering yourself as a business. However, this process (and that of acquiring various types of insurance) varies greatly from country to country. Rather than providing guidance on this process (which might not be relevant for your specific context), we recommend looking into your country's specific procedures for small businesses. This should include considering professional indemnity insurance, which aims to protect you from claims against you by clients for what they perceive as unsatisfactory work or its consequences. Some clients demand that you're covered, often to levels not always appropriate to interpretive freelance work.

Setting up an office

'Office' may seem a grand word for your workspace but if you aim to provide a professional service, you need to equip yourself with the basic equipment for running any business. Most freelancers work from home but a few share or rent space elsewhere. Some equipment you probably already have, some (in shared space) you may be able to share, such as internet access, printers/ copiers/ scanners – and a coffee machine!

A list of all you might need to start off with is too long to include here but you should ensure that you have reliable wi-fi, a computer with adequate capacity for large files, a good mobile phone, at least a basic printer and, of course, access to transport. Make sure you have enough stationery to avoid running out and an office supplies store nearby or online. Even in this digital age you will still need paper and paper files, and related stationery, for some purposes. Experience will be the best guide and don't over-provide at the beginning!

Contracts and contracting

When you start freelancing, it's essential to ask a client to agree and sign a contract. Contracts can help to protect you by spelling out the requirements for the work you have been 'hired' to do such as:

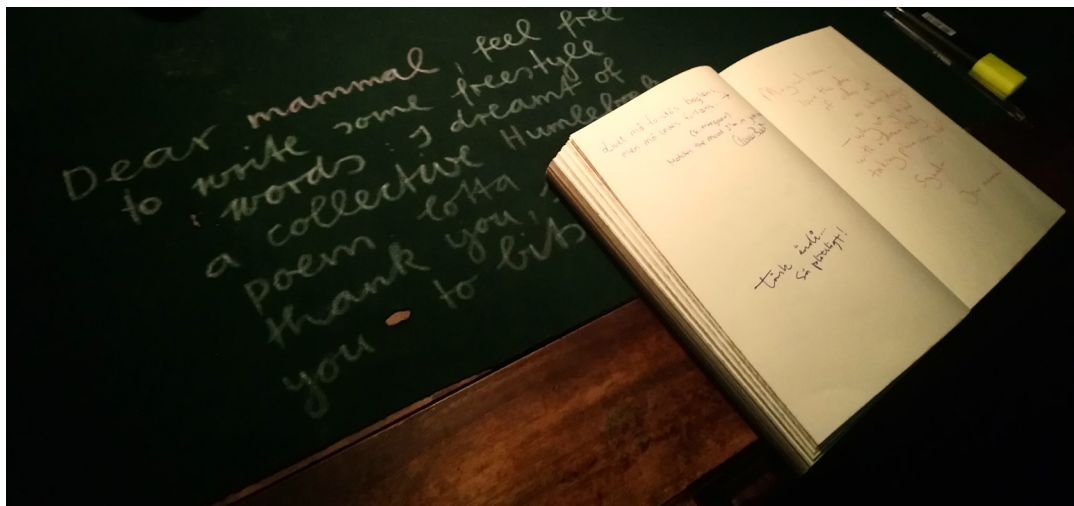
- What is the process? What is the client responsible for? What are you responsible for?
- When are the milestones, deadlines and due dates?



Try your new office for size. The National Leprechaun Museum of Ireland, Dublin. Image: M. Banks

- When and how will you be paid – what if the client is late in paying?
- Who 'owns' the rights of the work you produce?
- What is the process if there is a dispute between you and your client?
- What is your legal status as a freelancer or consultant?

Developing, negotiating, and signing contracts can be stressful and confusing. Having a contract, though, will clarify the expectations your client has for you and what you're expecting from your client.



As a heritage lover, you might prefer freestyle writing to administrative chores. Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen. Image: H. Vičič

As you gain more experience and confidence, contracts will become a standard process. Here is some contract advice to get you started.

Client contracts – These are provided by the client for the work they are hiring you to do. These contracts are generally formal, legalistic and used by government agencies and ministries or large companies. They are written in standard language with 'fill-in-the-blank' spaces for your details. Read through these contracts carefully (it can be a challenge!) to determine what the client is expecting. When you're a new freelancer, consider hiring a lawyer who is familiar with the kind of work or service you're providing to read through the contract and 'translate' the expectations for you. Over time, this process will become familiar.

Be wary of clients who ask you to sign contracts designed for big companies and other corporate bodies; the requirements for liability insurance and other protections may be out of kilter with the value of your work. Most clients will be reasonable.

Template contracts – Sometimes for smaller projects, the client will ask you to provide a contract (or you feel you should have a contract). Locate a sample contract from others that do similar work (details can be blacked out) that might be a template for you to use. Revise the

contract to include the details of your client. If this is your first time offering a contract, consider having a lawyer review this sample or template contract. For future contracts, you can revise the details and use it as a starting point to use with your client.

Subcontractor contracts – A subcontractor is someone you hire to help you with a project. If you have a contract with the client directly and you need additional help, generally you hire or contract a subcontractor directly for the work. For instance, you might have a contract to develop a webpage, but the project still needs photographs. Consequently, you hire a photographer and they are a subcontractor to you. Having some form of written agreement (informal) or contract (formal) with them will spell out your expectations from them and what they need from you. Laws in some areas require you to state that the subcontractor is not an employee and thus has to pay their own taxes. Check local legal requirements (again, ask a legal advisor) to ensure these kinds of contracts are complete and cover you from any liability. In other situations, you might be a subcontractor on a project, and you may need to sign a contract for this work. Generally, your contractor will have a standard contract for you to sign. Read the contract carefully – do you understand the legal

language? Do you have questions? Ask! Do you need it reviewed by that legal advisor again?

Legal and related issues – When starting a business, it's important for you to feel confident that you're doing the right thing. Often an accountant, who is familiar with the rights, obligations and challenges of creative freelancing, can help you understand the whole process of running a business, including contracting, and what role you play. You will eventually become more comfortable with these legal issues and may not continue to need their services.

Protecting your finances

It's important to ensure that you have a solid grasp of your financial goals, net worth and cash flow – which are all important for the sustainability of

your freelancing practice. An accountant can be helpful here too and can often provide templates for your financial records, etc. It's also important to differentiate between personal incomes/ expenses and business incomes/ expenses; confusing these categories can lead to problems later if you're selected for a tax audit. However, taxes are another issue which can vary country to country. Look into the specific guidelines for where you are to ensure your taxes are submitted correctly. Many places have relatively inexpensive services that will submit your taxes for you, at least until you can get a handle on what is expected. This section will offer some guidance on basic concepts of financial management.

First, ensure that you **pay yourself** adequately. Every week you have to manage your networking, banking and paperwork; however, you don't get paid for this and you're not available for 'paid' work. How many paid hours do you need to compensate for this time?

Secondly, keep an accurate record of **all the hours** you spend on each and every commission. You will have to decide whether or not travel time is fully, partly or not included in the time you record – that will depend on how you costed the work in the first place.

The final piece of advice is **keep all your receipts** for expenditure directly incurred in any commission and, as with all paperwork, nurture your obsessive-compulsive side in the way you keep them in order. This is extremely important when it comes to preparing your end-of-year accounts, your tax returns and for staying on top of your financial planning.



Personal interpretation can be one of the most fulfilling jobs. In UK, this is often done by volunteers. Live interpreter at Cutty Sark, London. Image: H. Vičič

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Financial planning

Interpreters don't earn the big fees that business and financial consultants and others command but need to charge an economic rate. At the end of each year, you want to have made a surplus, after all liabilities, because there is always on-going expenditure on office equipment and supplies, conferences, any car you may own or lease, etc. Remember, too, that you may have to take unforeseen time off work to cope with illness, family business or other unavoidable matters. It's essential to start off with, and maintain, a good reserve of funds – we suggest three months' income as a minimum.

A rule of thumb is to start off by deciding how much you can live on in a year after everything else is paid. Let's assume that sum is €16,000. Add on a proportion as a surplus (or 'mark-up') to allow you to re-invest in depreciating assets (like replacement or new equipment, a car, etc.), contributing to a pension fund and, importantly, accommodating unforeseen future costs.

Let's say you add 25% mark-up, making your net earnings target (after taxes, etc.) around €20,000. That will allow you to work out how much income tax, etc. you will have paid to get down to that figure. Let's say it's €4,000 – about 16% of your earnings after allowable expenses. Your total income (excluding expenses refunded by clients, see below) after all costs are met needs, therefore, to be €24,000.

Then estimate all your likely expenses: rent/mortgage, insurance, other costs, etc. – and that income tax figure – for the year ahead. Let's say they add up to another €16,500. There are going to be expenses that will be incurred directly in carrying out some contracts (e.g., travel, lodging, etc.), but these should be in your contract as

reimbursable by your client, so let's leave them out.

Therefore, you want to end up with **€20,000** at the end of the first year, having paid **€16,500** in costs and put aside **€4,000** for income tax, which means your gross earnings need to be **€40,500**. If, of course, you take in less, your tax will be less – estimating cash flow is full of variables. We've set out an example on the next page but you will need to adjust the sums to fit your circumstances. We've used the term 'drawings' to describe the money you take out of your business account each quarter and includes your mark-up.

Once you done all that, you need to decide how many days in the year you can reasonably work. Freelancers need days off and holidays, even if limited in the early years. A good estimate is around 45 x 5-day weeks (allowing for public holidays and normal annual leave allowances in your country plus one-week allowance for being unwell). That could end, for example, in a total of 225 days but will vary according to your national and domestic circumstances.

Many self-employed people work on a rule of 1:3:1 – one day per week for marketing (with all its connotations, including going to conferences, etc.), three days actually earning and one day doing administration (again with all its connotations, such as consulting advisers, keeping your records, preparing tax returns, etc.). Others say you will have to earn your target income in only half the days you can work. So, if you don't want to work on weekends or late into the night, that means the days you're earning number between 135 and about 112. If you divide your target €41,500 by 135, it suggests your daily fee needs to be €300. If you divide it by 112,

your daily fee needs to be about €370. We've used sums in euros here but you can convert the figures to your own currency and comparable sums for earnings.

However, you also need to be 'market aware' and find out what your competitors charge.

Cash flow

A cash flow statement tracks the movement of money in and out of your account or business. This can help you determine the sustainability of your practice by showing how much profit or loss you get each period.

You might consider keeping a quarterly cash-flow statement, which would look something like the table below – it uses the amounts in the financial planning section above. We have used € values but you can adapt it to your own currency as the principles are universal.

The table is optimistic for a first year's trading but still shows a loss. You must expect that, which means you must have an injection of 'capital funding' at the start – working capital to keep you solvent in your first year or two.

Cash flow projection		Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct-Dec	Year
Opening capital balance each quarter		€10,000	€5,000	€2,500	€3,100	
Income	Client A	€1,500	€2,500	€2,500	€3,500	€10,000
	Client B	€2,500	€3,500	€3,000	€2,000	€11,000
	Client C	€1,000	€1,500	€3,500	€3,000	€9,000
	Grants / awards	€500	€0	€1,500	€0	€2,000
	Total income	€5,500	€7,500	€10,500	€8,500	€32,000
Costs and expenses	Rent, local taxes	€2,500	€2,500	€2,500	€2,500	€10,000
	Software, other subs	€400	€200	€100	€200	€900
	Equipment, car	€600	€500	€400	€500	€2,000
	Operating costs	€500	€400	€500	€500	€1,900
	Insurances, fees	€500	€400	€400	€400	€1,700
	Income tax etc*	€1,000	€1,000	€1,000	€1,000	€4,000
	Total costs	€5,500	€5,000	€4,900	€5,100	€20,500
Net operating result		€0	€2,500	€5,600	€3,400	€11,500
Drawings including mark-up**		€5,000	€5,000	€5,000	€5,000	€20,000
Closing quarterly capital balance ***		€5,000	€2,500	€3,100	€1,500	

*This will be paid in the following year but you should set aside this sum; you may not need it all if you earn less than you hope.

**This is the sum you hope to achieve to live on and make a surplus for re-investment.

*** This is the sum left after all drawings are taken and the mark-up set aside. However, if the surplus is not set aside, your closing capital balance after a year will be increased by €4,000 to €5,500. Similarly, if your earnings don't make your target, your income tax will be reduced in the following year.

You will see from the table that it may take you a couple of years or more to restore your opening capital balance. Be really cautious when setting out your expected cash flow; it's very tempting to make it look better, particularly if you're borrowing start-up finance.

Retirement

Unlike traditional employment in many countries, where your employer sets aside a certain amount of your income to a retirement fund (and often health insurance), freelancers are more on their own. Many freelancers wish to add to any government-sponsored pension scheme which can provide only a modest income.

It's best to consult a financial planner with expertise for those who are freelancers in order to consider your options. There are many personal pension/ retirement income schemes and many providers from major international funds to smaller, often profession-specific schemes.

When you start up in business for yourself, it may seem an added (and avoidable) expense but the longer you postpone starting a personal scheme the more it will cost to ensure the sum you will need when you retire.



Age is no barrier to heritage lovers. Bakar, Croatia. Image: I. Mažar

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A code of ethics

Interpretation often aims to encourage a positive attitude towards conservation, or to offer its audience interesting ways to think about heritage. In doing so, it may sometimes challenge established ideas or introduce new perspectives. But it must do these things with integrity.

Recent debates in some countries about aspects of history, such as the slave trade and its legacy, have led to so-called 'culture wars', in which heritage and its presentation are used to promote political views. As a cultural activity, interpretation will always be influenced by contemporary concerns, but it must avoid being a vehicle to promote the agendas of promoters, clients, or political masters

A code of ethics can help interpreters navigate these challenges. The UK's Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI) has developed a code that defines best practice in the way interpreters should approach their work, whether they are employed by an organisation or working freelance. AHI has kindly allowed us to include its principal provisions here as advisory only – see the excerpt included below.

AHI's code of ethics (excerpt)

Interpretation practitioners help enrich people's lives through deepening and challenging understandings of tangible and intangible heritage, engaging their emotions and enhancing their experiences. Interpreters are given an important position of trust in relation to their visitor and local communities, to their employer and commissioning organisations, and to their funders. We must make sound ethical judgements in all areas of work in order to maintain this trust. This Code of Ethics encourages the recognition

of values shared by practitioners. It embraces the key principles of individual integrity and inclusive engagement. Interpretive practice in all its forms should demonstrate these core values:

Integrity – uphold the highest level of integrity and personal conduct at all times, treating everyone equally, with honesty and respect.

Honesty – act in the public interest in all areas of work, generating accurate and balanced information for, and with, individuals, organisations and communities.

Respect – build respectful, transparent and collaborative relationships with organisations, colleagues, individuals and volunteers to ensure public trust in the planning and delivery of interpretive activity.

Veracity – ensure that interpretive content is balanced, and is based on rigorous research, which recognises and addresses implicit bias, avoiding the use of discriminatory language.

Diversity – support freedom of speech; respect the right to express different views; welcome the currency of distinctive perspectives.

Inclusion – understand and engage with existing, potential and under-served audiences, including intellectual and physical accessibility, address barriers to inclusion and seek equity, equality and social justice.

Reflection – learn from reflection on the effectiveness of interpretive activities and use that understanding for personal and professional development, and to inform best practice.

Stewardship – promote the conservation of, and access to, tangible and intangible heritage resources for sustainable public benefit – for learning, inspiration and enjoyment.

Probity – avoid pursuit of any personal interest that may conflict with or influence, or be perceived to conflict with or influence, the public interest.



You need to choose your brand's color palette. Image: I. Samkov

9

Marketing and promotion

Building a brand

A **brand** describes how you're perceived in the world, both personally and professionally. When you're new to the field, it's important to begin building your brand so you can earn a reputation and become better known for your work. Brand management is important for maintaining your professional status and continuing to attract clients. Brand management constitutes a large part of marketing and self-promotion, even for established freelancers.

To begin building your brand, think about the values that are important to you and your work. This will differ from field to field; for instance, a tour guide may **value** approachability and knowledge, while a graphic designer might identify more with creativity and style/ fashion. It's important that your values reflect you as a professional, and the work you do.

Once you know your values, you can begin building your **brand identity**. All the tangible expressions of your brand (logo, colour scheme, slogan, photographs and videos, etc.) together constitute your brand identity. You could hire a professional – another freelancer – to design all these things for you, or you can choose to do them yourself. Your brand identity will evolve and may change as you develop your strengths through different projects. There's no rush to design a logo, colour scheme, or the other tools listed above, but you should work towards these elements, as a way of saying, "Here I am and this is what I do". A word of caution, if you're designing your brand yourself, ask friends and colleagues for feedback before you finalise it. It may be your creative dream but it could be a nightmare when you come to use it and other eyes often spot what you may not!

Promotion

The next step is marketing or promoting yourself. Take "Here I am and this is what I do" and add "This is why you should hire me". As with the last section, you can choose to do your own promotion, or you could hire another freelancer to do it for you. There are several online resources that make it easy to send mass newsletters (e.g. Survey Monkey), market on social media (e.g. Facebook Ads), and promote yourself to a specific demographic (e.g. Google Ads). One of the best ways of self-promotion is to build a website that showcases your past projects and clearly communicates your brand and interests. Many freelancers are active on social media platforms in order to promote themselves. LinkedIn is a good 'professional' social media platform to promote your work and ideas, join in relevant discussions and provide links to your website or other online presence all in one space.

Website

As a way to promote themselves and their work, it's strongly recommended that freelancers design, or get help to design, their own personal website. Online presence can be used for promoting your expertise, knowledge, and skills. It can also show others that you're an expert in a certain field. Besides promoting yourself to the world, a strong virtual identity offers the possibility of getting regular jobs and for being invited to tender for contracts and other opportunities.

A well-designed website can give a freelancer credibility and the ability to receive feedback from others. Here are two links in which freelancers promote their work:

<https://newpalmyra.org/>

<https://www.spomenikdatabase.org/more-resources>



Stationary guides are mostly hired as freelancers. Cultural Monument of Kapllan Pasha, Tirana, Albania. Image: O. Lafi

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Finding freelancing work

How do you find work and contracts? One of the biggest questions when you start to do freelance work is: Where do I find it? What skills do you have that others need? And who needs them? How can I find out 'what's out there'?

Existing skills and experience – Map out what kind of tasks you can, and enjoy, doing and that you have evidence of in your portfolio or resumé. Starting out freelancing without any kind of work history or experience in any field is very challenging. What experience do you have that can be 'packaged' and applied to another field or industry?

Heritage interpretation is a specific approach to connecting people with heritage but it uses skills and methods that may apply to different situations. When starting out freelancing, sometimes you need to apply your skills to tasks that might not be your favourite, but that can begin to build a body of work to rely on. You might even learn something new about yourself and gain experience that can be applied later.

Networking – Networking to expand your contacts and networking to sell your practice are different, although both can take advantage of meetings and gatherings. Most freelancers see networking as a way of helping them to build contacts and knowledge about people and businesses, and to share experiences. It's something you build up during your entire freelance career – a network of people you can ask advice of, clients and colleagues you know have specific experience/ knowledge, etc.

Networking is also a key factor in launching your freelance practice but the circumstances are changing rapidly as a result of the Covid-19



Conferences and training courses are a good opportunity to upskill yourself, as well as to expand your network of clients. Image: V. Baranović

pandemic and the partly-related rise in digital communication. Face-to-face meetings, with all their value, are being supplanted by use of online communities and professional gatherings. Where you carried a business card – ideally with brief details of your skills, services and experience on the back – you now have to ensure that those you meet digitally can follow you up. However, when you do get an opportunity to meet in person, make sure you can give your contact information to those whom you meet.

Networking can also be used to 'pitch your services'. Some people love 'the thrill of the chase' and some people hate just 'making chit-chat'! But face-to-face meeting can be valuable if you feel comfortable 'selling' yourself to others through telling your story. Remember to keep short what you say about yourself and be able to tell a stranger what kind of work you do in just a few moments. Carry contact information and a summary of your services to leave with them and ask them briefly to forward any kinds of leads or contacts to you. Also ask them questions about



As an interpretive consultant, would you advise to hire a guide or to mount a panel? Roman amphitheatre in Apollonia, Albania: Image: D. Ruçi

the work they do – show equal interest. Link back later to let them know the results of any lead they may have given you. And the points made above about online gatherings apply also when you are pitching for work and seeking leads.

Nevertheless, networking with other freelancers can more often result in mutual support and collaboration, in stable partnerships and friendships. Such network can to some extent even 'replace' the social aspect that you may have previously gained from a more formal working environment.

Digital services – In today's virtual world, there are online tools that can ensure your name is out there (such as LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com)). There are websites that will let you post your CV or resumé and sometimes websites where companies or agencies/ ministries will post announcements about projects they are trying to get practices (you!) to bid on. Some websites will let you post a profile of yourself and/ or your business. Keep the profile short and informative and include a website for further information.

Past clients and customers – If you have had contracts in the past with a satisfied client, encourage them to think of you when they hear about work that matches your interests and talents. Never burn bridges even when a client might make you furious. Always leave them with a good impression of yourself. New work that comes from past clients and their referrals is some of the most valuable since you will not have had to spend any time or money finding it! Ask satisfied clients to provide supportive statements praising your work, particularly relating where you have solved problems, found new directions and achieved benefits. It could be used on your website or, in edited form, on your business card.

Government contracts – Many local, regional, national or federal government agencies or ministries have procedures where you can register on their contracting websites and select your interest in different kinds of projects that they may be advertising. The term 'heritage interpretation' is rarely used but you can select other terms close to the concept (i.e. communication, outreach, marketing, tourism, etc.). You may receive a lot of emails but you have to sift through them to see if any apply to your business focus.

Google alerts – Google offers a free service called Google Alert where you plug in a key word or phrase. Google will then send you anything new online with that word or phrase based on your delivery preferences of daily or weekly digest. Think about the best word or phrase to use that will help you to track your interest in a site or area. Delete or add keyword alerts as you need. Sadly, 'interpretation' – as we said above – is not always other people's keyword.

Working as a freelancer, one is always thinking about work – what contract you have now – what contract will be next – what contract you just won – what contract you lost – what kind of contract you really want to get – and how many contracts can you work at the same time, and still have time to run the business or spend time with family! Take a deep breath, if you build a good network, maintain a customer-focused reputation, keep your name 'out there' and do good work, you will make a living and be proud of the work you do.

Tendering – One of the most time-consuming tasks for freelancers is tendering for contracts. It's rare that contracts, particularly with public

and non-profit clients, are awarded without inviting and assessing tenders. You can spend hours putting a tender together only to find it awarded to a competitor. You may or may not learn (but always ask) why they were more acceptable. Price is not always the criterion; tender documents may score experience, completion time etc. highly as well as cost.

Choose carefully which invitations to tender you respond to and try and find out how many practices you are up against. If you're one of six or seven, clearly your chances are less than when part of a smaller field. You may decide to join with one or more other complementary practices (often a help in early days) but beware of finding yourself in a team of other contractors whose work you don't know and/ or whose values and/ or working style don't fit with yours.

Time spent tendering will always be greater in your early years of freelancing when you're establishing your profile.



Interpretive guiding is a common side business for many freelancers in the heritage field. Image: H. Vičič

Conferences and contracts – Finding work – Chuck

Working freelance, I strive to stay in the loop and be current about trends and what others are talking about. Attending conferences and presenting sessions is a method that keeps me in the know. One conference I attended was especially valuable for me several years later. I was sent an unsolicited government notice to bid on a project. I was thrilled and excited to win the contract a few weeks later. In talking with the client later on-site, they had heard me talk about a past project and were impressed. The time (and money) I spent in attending the conference and preparing a presentation was well spent! I always hope I will get work from making the extra effort but it's hard to make a direct connection back to a client. Caution though – spending time submitting session proposals and attending conferences takes time and money – and you don't get paid for it by a client.

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Resources

These are some websites in Europe, USA and globally that offer advice and support for freelancers. Interpret Europe has not monitored any of these sites and so this list does not imply any comment or recommendation; it is for information only.

<https://www.euro-freelancers.eu>: Euro Freelancers is a collaborative network of independent EU affairs consultants and investors. The launch of the EU Affairs Freelancers Association followed an invitation from the European Commission to discuss the importance of tackling the important growth of the Freelance Economy in Europe.

<https://www.flexjobs.com/>: a US-based website for the general freelancer. Good advice for getting started doing any kind of freelance work (not necessarily in heritage interpretation).

<https://freelancersunion.org>: a US-focused website for thinking about the nature of freelance work and the challenges to consider.

<https://www.impnprograms@gmail.com>: The Independent Museum Professionals in the USA has published a set of principles of professional practice covering some of the ground in AHI's Code of Ethics.

<https://www.ipse.co.uk/>: The UK's only not-for-profit, membership-run association that assists the self-employed with developing, supporting, and sustaining their careers.

<https://www.mbopartners.com/state-of-independence>: A new study of independents in the US with a lot of visuals and data crunching.

<https://www.museumfreelance.org>: Museum freelance represents an organisation that supports freelancers and consultants working with museums, galleries, heritage sites, archives, and libraries in the UK.

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-blog/2014/jan/15/career-tips-freelance-museum-heritage>: Slightly-dated career tips for going freelance in the museums and heritage world.

<https://unjobs.org/themes/cultural-heritage>: The UN offers opportunities to work in promotion, interpreting, and guarding the cultural heritage around the world.

<https://up2europe.com/>: Launched in 2016, Up2europe represents the network that promotes cooperation to the next generation.

Interpret Europe

Interpret Europe, the European Association for Heritage Interpretation, is a network organisation which was established in 2010 to serve all who use first-hand experiences to give natural and cultural heritage a deeper meaning.

Interpret Europe has more than 1000 members from 48 countries. It brings together associations, charitable trusts, public sector bodies, university departments, parks, museums, zoos, botanical gardens, etc. as well as consultants, suppliers and practitioners from exhibit designers to on-site guides.

For its members, Interpret Europe provides networking opportunities and information, on the latest news and developments, through frequent newsmails and comprehensive quarterly newsletters. Members can register for training courses and pay reduced fees at conferences and can join monthly webinars for free. To allow interested individuals from all over Europe to join, Interpret Europe offers membership at a comparatively low annual fee.

Interpret Europe's key events are open to everyone. The IE Conference 2016 in Mechelen, 'Heritage interpretation – for the future of Europe' marked an important step for IE in dealing with European concerns. Interpret Europe conferences welcome around 150 attendees and include up to 100 presentations, workshops and study visits. In 2017, Interpret Europe's initiative 'Engaging citizens with Europe's cultural heritage' has been awarded the Altiero Spinelli Prize by the European Union.

Interpret Europe provides its own training and certification programme for members of its network. Relying on shared quality criteria, IE-certified trainers run courses in several languages. So far, Interpret Europe has 40-hour certification courses for interpretive guides (CIG), writers (CIG), planners (CIP), trainers (CIT) and shorter modules for live interpreters (CLI) and hosts (CIH). Interpret Europe training material is available in 16 languages, and courses take place about 40 times per year.

Interpret Europe is involved with several European initiatives. It is a member of the European Heritage Alliance and member of the European Commission's Expert Group for Cultural Heritage (Cultural Heritage Forum), was involved in three Structured Dialogues 'Voices of Culture', and over the last five years it has been a partner in several European projects focusing on quality criteria for interpretation, vocational training, working with specific audiences and competence-based learning approaches.

To find out more about Interpret Europe, visit www.interpret-europe.net or Interpret Europe's LinkedIn and Facebook sites.

You can contact Interpret Europe at any time at office@interpret-europe.net.

Summary

We hope there is something in here to appeal to everyone: whether you're thinking about freelancing but are not sure what it entails, you have been freelancing for a year but don't know how to register as a business or you've been freelancing for decades and are looking for new resources and perspectives on contract work.

This document is intended as more than just a set of guidelines; ideally, it will help connect us as a network of freelancers and provide support to those who need it.

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