Heritage Management: A Teaching Approach to Study the Conservation of Sport and Recreation Venues

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Over the past few decades, a debate between building new sport and recreation facilities or renovating existing venues has engrossed sport managers, administrators, owners and political figures in and around host communities (Barghchi, Omar, & Aman, 2009; Galvan, 2006; Grant-Long, 2005; Rosentraub & Ijla, 2008; Seifried, 2010). Interestingly, the individuals entrusted with making investment decisions on sport and recreation facilities often lack knowledge of the processes of renovation which involves heritage building activities such as restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction and preservation. Many sport management programs of study often include courses related to facility management; however, they rarely include curriculum items or class activities/projects on the renovation of culturally valuable sport and recreation buildings also identified in this work as heritage management (Slaton, 2005). Take for instance some of the most commonly utilized contemporary sport facility management textbooks (e.g., Ammon, Southall, & Blair, 2004; Fried, 2010; Westerbeek, Smith, Turner, & Emery, 2005); it appears that these sources of facility management do not address heritage management/education as it applies to facility management and only sparsely support the collection and analysis of historical data prior (i.e., facility audits) to renovation or new construction efforts. Interestingly, this trend is also prevalent in other areas of academia such as architecture (Lobovikov-Katz, 2008).

Although the process of facility audits is an important activity to help demonstrate the differences between historical buildings, researchers and teaching professionals should understand there is a more sophisticated method to teach and prepare students for future careers in sport and recreational facility management through the completion of coursework centered on heritage management. The contemporary academic approach, especially concerning sport management curricula, basically shows very little understanding of the real needs of study regarding sport and recreation facilities as monuments and significant venues for the preservation of heritage. Specifically, from a teaching perspective, it seems as if sport management scholars have been reluctant to depart from their set management teaching practices regarding sport and recreation facility management. This should not be surprising as Amis & Silk (2005) stated “what currently holds the center of sport management research is a somewhat narrow definition of the field” and in many ways, this restricted perspective positions sport management scholars to inadequately provide for a “critical examination of the operations...of sport-related industries and institutions” (p. 356). Overall, these fixed and rigid boundaries appear to overlook the importance of heritage management and its future impact on sport and recreation venues. This is certainly interesting when we consider that the newest wave of professional baseball and football facility construction (i.e., 1992-present) has produced over $23 billion in spending (Seifried, 2010) and recreation building (e.g., renovation and new construction) costs average roughly $20 million and generated $4.9 billion between 2004-2009 (Goldman, 2007).

The aim and main purpose of this presentation is to propose heritage management as an important component to sport and recreational facility management and to showcase an example of this innovation incorporated into a facility management class. We propose heritage management can be intertwined into the curriculum of a facility management class alongside other pertinent aspects of facility management in order to create a more well-balanced curriculum which desires to produce a well-rounded education of sport and recreation facilities in order to help prepare students for future debates similar to that regularly generated today regarding opportunities to build new or renovate. The example teaching method is geared toward both upper-level undergraduate and graduate students with a preliminarily understanding of facility management issues related to social/cultural influences, technology, financing, and communication.

Heritage management through sport venues is a unit that was presented to the class as part of larger focus on feasibility studies which specifically identified historic structure reports, economic impact reports, landscaping assessments, and environmental evaluations as useful activities to complete prior to renovation or new construction efforts. In this instance, the culminating project was to produce a Historic Structure Report (HSR) and a professional
presentation which counted as the graded elements for the course. A class on historical data collection and analysis was added to help specifically deal with sport and recreation facilities as unique monuments within communities. To achieve the goals of this HSR project, the instructors began the educational unit by researching information on a specific sport or recreational facility to acquire a comprehensive understanding of that place as a source of heritage. After this background was in place, a series of lectures provided the students with the appropriate information regarding renovation, restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction and preservation (i.e., heritage management). Following this, students were then randomly split up into research teams comprised of seven to eight undergraduates and one graduate student team leader. The next step of the process was the acquisition and validation of both primary and secondary historical sources in order to create a clear picture of the building's history through data. The final investigatory process for the teams was an on-site field examination. Prior to the field experience, the teams were provided with a check-list of items to inventory and comment on regarding the quality of venue for their report and encouraged to split the examination responsibilities. Finally, the teams were instructed to share the collected information from their investigations and their ideas on whether or not to renovate the building and how they would do that or to build new and why they support that initiative.

We feel the documentation and survey of historic sport and recreation facilities is an important aspect of sport management education and likely missing in most course curriculums. In addition, it is a facet of the sport management education that should, and easily can, be taught and implemented into both undergraduate and graduate programs of study through creating a report like a HSR. Through the HSR activity, the various facets of historical data collection along with a firsthand observatory account were used to provide students with an exercise and experience they can use in their future sport management career. Specifically, this example and presentation on heritage management allows students to understand how to create valuable contributions to their field toward the decision to build new or renovate through various building activities. Finally, this presentation will provide a valuable contribution to curriculum theory and program development, which as noted by Zeigler (2007), is an important category of research and instruction in the field. This presentation supports this because it discusses the tenets and importance of HSRs, then presents an outline of the methodological approach necessary to encourage a thoughtful review of sport and recreation venues and the opportunity to build new or renovate. The methodological breakdown, an application of the method, and discussion about various renovation decisions also build appreciation for history and its impact on community issues and facility construction efforts.