CONDITION ASSESSMENT – DOCUMENTATION

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ABSTRACT

Documentation is not an exercise that stands alone in the overall management and care of cultural heritage; it has no particular value in and of itself. It is, however, an important process for recording specific information that is directly related to one of the many needs of those responsible for the protection of heritage monuments and sites. A documentation program must be a direct response to a specific need and, once the need is identified, an appropriate documentation approach and methodology can be selected and the documentation process can begin. Rather than simply presenting various methods to document a site or a structure, this session will emphasize the definition of a need, an objective, and the selection of the proper documentation approach, method and tools.

The needs for documentation are varied, being as wide as the needs to produce presentation renderings for site interpretation, to understand the cause and effect relationship of decay, to provide a base line to which more detailed information can be added in the future, to specify interventions, and to monitor deterioration, among others. The need to identify important characteristics so that their future protection can be incorporated into the planning process requires that those characteristics be appropriately documented. Each of these needs can be at least partially met through some form of documentation, but not all level and degrees of sophistication are appropriate for each.

It is too often assumed that the most detailed level, the most highly technical level of sophistication, is the most desirable if it can be accomplished. A rendering produced from a photogrammetric plotting may well be appropriate for some purposes, but it is not appropriate, for example, to document the surface decay of mud friezes. In this case a photograph is much less costly, requires much less effort, is possible for most anyone, and provides a much more useful product. Appropriateness is another important concept that will be emphasized during this session.

During this session, students will actively participate in deciding what their needs are and what role documentation can play in meeting those needs. This is the basis of the course materials presented and the methods for presenting it. The questions, “How do I document an earthen archeological site,” or in general, “How do I document,” will not be answered. The response to those questions will be, “Why do you need to document?”. In deciding why they need to document, students will be in the best position to determine for themselves the most appropriate methodologies and the most appropriate documentation tools.

During the field exercise, students will be given a problem that will require some form of documentation in order to solve. It will be their responsibility to choose the appropriate documentation methodology from those presented and from their own experience, to meet the need presented.
OBJECTIVES

As a result of this session, the participant should be able to:
- Understand that documentation decisions are based on why we document a site.
- Understand the relationship between documentation purpose and the documentation methodology.
- Understand the process of defining the information to be recorded and its role in the planning process.
- Identify and be familiar with a wide range of documentation tools and methods

CONTENT

Classroom Lecture:

The classroom lecture will introduce the subject of documentation by first discussing the purposes for documenting a site or structure. Examples of documentation tools will then be presented in a general overview, and then specific documentation objectives and methods will be presented. Active class participation will be continually encouraged.

In support of the objectives of this section, the instructor will discuss:

- Introduction
  1. Establish a relationship between this session with both the previous sessions and particularly with the upcoming sessions
  2. Explain what types of records are produced at different stages of the conservation process and how
  3. Emphasize the impact of proper recording, documentation assessment and information management on the conservation process
  4. Emphasize how threats are factors that decide the documentation methodology of a site at risk

- Documentation Tools and Methodology
  1. Ask the students to give examples of site documentation and identify the tools used for each.
  2. Describe the difference between documentation tools and methods and make a list of the samples given by the students, group the tools in the following categories:
    a. Base recording:
       • Hand survey
       • Sketch diagram
    b. Instrument survey:
       • Total station theodolite
       • Laser scanning
       • Global positioning system (GPS)
    c. Image-based documentation methods:
       • Pictorial imagery
       • Rectified photography
       • Photogrammetry
       • Video
    d. Data Management:
       • Computer-Aided design and drafting (CAD)
       • Computer modeling
3. Discuss each primary documentation method and the tools available for each method in more detail.

- **Databases**
- **Geographic Information System (GIS)**

4. Documentation for specific objectives:
   1. Ask the students to brainstorm about the reasons to document a site and make a list; make sure that the basic reasons are covered (interpretation, decay process, monitoring, and intervention).
   2. Using different case-studies, (preferably provided as essential readings prior to the class) describe different site documentation methods, the rationale behind them, their advantages and disadvantages. Compare and make parallels to the reasons given by the students and, based on the documentation objectives, group them in the following categories:
      a. **Site recording**:
         - Rapid assessments
         - Site deformations
         - Definition of boundaries, limits, etc.
         - Definition of character defining features
         - Site interpretation
      b. **Documentation assessments**:
         - Condition survey of surfaces
         - Building diagnosis
         - City inventories
         - Disaster rapid condition recording
      c. **Information management**:
         - Monitoring
         - Structural modeling
         - Planning decisions based on collected information

3. Using the same categories, ask the students if the tool selected for each case study was suitable for the identified need and the reason why documentation was conducted in the first place. If not, discuss with the students the alternatives.

4. Present an example of a site in drawings and photographs and discuss how it would be documented for the purpose of:
   a. Establishing the minimum information the needs to be recorded and how
   b. Developing a condition assessment report
   c. Monitoring decay
   d. Recording of interventions

- **Summary**
   1. Documentation is an activity within the conservation process that needs clearly defined objectives in order to wisely choose the proper tools and methodology to collect relevant information over time for the preservation of the site.
   2. Within the various purposes discussed, two objectives should always be part of any documentation program:
      a. Monitoring of future changes (to whatever level is possible)
      b. Establishing a base to which more information can be added in the future (if it doesn’t already exist).
   3. Describe field exercise.
Field Exercise:

The field exercise will be to establish, record and describe (verbally and in graphics) relevant information for different documentation purposes. For the purpose of the field exercise, different structures will be selected for at least one objective per category (site recording, documentation assessment or information management).

1. Established teams will each be assigned a specific structure and all teams will identify the relevant information to be collected and the potential tools and methods to be used for either site recording, documentation assessment or information management.
2. The recording exercise will be performed by each group.
3. The teams will present their results to the class.
4. The instructor will discuss with the students if the collected information would be useful for the purpose of site documentation, assessment or information management.

ONLINE REFERENCES:

= Available online


BIBLIOGRAPHY

= Essential reading material


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