

The Use of Place in Sustaining Ursuline Identity



Ursuline Motherhouse Chapel. Photo courtesy: Sacred Heart Schools

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Abstract

At one time, Ursuline sisters represented a notable share of faculty and administrative positions within the educational ministries they founded, Sacred Heart Schools (Louisville, KY). Over the last fifty years, the number of sisters has declined significantly, and active Ursuline participation within the schools is now minimal. When living examples of an organization's purpose are no longer present, how can a connection to place and interpretive experiences serve to convey the culture, legacy and values of such individuals? The purpose of the following paper is to discuss the importance of place in the cultural interpretation of the Ursuline sisters and to recommend mechanisms for keeping their legacy meaningful and relevant to community members. This will be accomplished through (1) a brief history of the Ursulines and Sacred Heart Schools, (2) current interpretive challenges (3) a discussion of the importance of place in Ursuline identity, (4) examples of campus places with interpretive value and (5) recommendations for better interpretive use of such places.



Ursuline Campus, winter 2015. Photo courtesy: Sacred Heart Schools

Introduction

When the truest examples of an organization's purpose begin to fade, when physical presence of the givers wane, how is the gift sustained within the community? What can organizations do to ensure preservation of the value systems, stories and history of their cultural forebears, particularly when said forebears are no longer active participants? The Ursuline Sisters of Louisville and their founded ministry, Sacred Heart Schools, are currently challenged with these questions. As the sun sets on the order's presence and participation within school operations, campus leadership must grapple with how to maintain its identity of association with the women who are responsible for the institution's very existence. The following paper will discuss the role of place in keeping the Ursuline legacy

meaningful and relevant to community members, namely the school communities and campus visitors. Ideas will be presented within the context of my own personal experience on campus as a community stakeholder and within a broader historical narrative.

I will first provide a brief account of the Ursulines from their inception to today. We will then address the potential interpretive challenges left in the absence of active Ursuline participation and the significant role of place in cultural and value systems identity. Multiple campus spaces will be reviewed, each with a series of proposed recommendations for better utilizing the space for preservation of identity and interpretive learning. Spaces identified will include: (1) the Marian Hall statue and the Immaculate Heart Chapel, (2) the campus exterior/green space, (3) the Ursuline Motherhouse and (4) the Ursuline Archives. Recommendations, while directed at these highlighted spaces, may be applied within other contexts throughout campus. Some recommendations may be transferable in their use to other organizations and communities altogether.

While it is my hope that this work may be of value and use to other entities, the intended audience is the leadership of Sacred Heart Schools and Ursuline Sisters of Louisville. If just one of the recommendations is worthy of consideration, or merely the spirit of the project contributes to the larger dialogue of planning, I will be content and grateful. It should be made clear that the sum of my experience, research and recommendations in no way implies that SHS or the Ursulines have not given considerable time and effort to address the overarching themes outlined throughout. On the contrary, current strategic planning and mission effectiveness efforts on the part of the schools are indicative of a powerful sense of responsibility campus leaders share for preserving "*Ursulineness*." This community is very aware of the challenges ahead.

In late April 2016, the Board of Trustees for the schools approved the new strategic plan that will serve to drive major initiatives for the next five years. Of the

aspirations, the first¹ reads as follows: “Aspiration Statement 1: To strengthen a vibrant, student-centered community of Catholic schools recognized for their model character-building environment and their emphasis on the development of compassionate and just leaders.” Under this aspiration, one of the goals is to “enhance the visible symbols on our campus that showcase our Catholic tradition.” The plan goes on to highlight several objectives for the purposes of educating students on the history and legacy of the Ursuline Sisters. I make note of these plans as evidence that school leadership has prioritized the maintenance of the campus’s cultural identity. My reflections, research and recommendations were devised outside of the strategic planning process, although I cannot think of a more appropriate time for their submission.

For one to understand my perspective in all of this, I should first provide some context of my own place within the community. To borrow a phrase from immigrant justice author and advocate Deepa Iyer,² I will explain my “point of entry” as it pertains to Sacred Heart Schools and the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville. For the record, I am not Catholic. While raised in a devout Christian home (Baptist, to be exact), my only direct exposure within Catholic schools, prior to working for SHS, was my kindergarten and first grade experience at Christ the King School in Madisonville, Kentucky. Nevertheless, the district’s decision makers saw fit, as they have with many non-Catholic employees, to welcome me as Director of Enrollment and Marketing. Having served SHS for approximately three years at the time, it became increasingly clear that the topic of interpretive place would satisfy needs of the schools as well as the requirement for completion of my graduate studies. Aside from its value as degree credit, or application in my daily work, the motivation to pursue this project was largely fed by my own desire to help preserve and protect something to which I have grown attached. The sense of belonging and connection I have experienced, despite not being an alum, a Catholic or an Ursuline for that

¹ Sacred Heart Schools Strategic Planning Committee. “Sacred Heart Schools Strategic Plan 2016-2021.” Louisville, KY. Sacred Heart Schools, 2016.

² Iyer, Deepa. *We Too Sing America: South Asian, Arab, Muslim, and Sikh Immigrants Shape Our Multiracial Future*. New York: New Press, 2015, ix.

matter, is a testament to the love and hospitality of this community.

The people on campus, the values they exude and the physical environment in which they operated encouraged me daily to think on my own faith experience. Shortly into my tenure, I began to be more reflective and I saw my work in marketing as a more direct contribution to mission advancement. As my comfort level grew, my participation in faith formation activities increased, as did the noticeable impact of said activities on my daily experience. Currently, I have developed a routine of visiting one of the campus chapels in the early morning, alone, for meditation. I often couple this with a daily devotional book that is distributed to all employees. While prayer and devotionals are nothing new, I believe place has played a significant role in the mindfulness I have for these practices as well as a heightened sense of purpose as an employee.

Admittedly, I approached this project with some apprehension. In the most basic sense, I would, at times, be trying to tell *Catholics* – sisters even – how to better convey their *Catholicity* via their *Catholic* spaces. I was encouraged by colleagues, however, that my positioning lent itself to an objectivity that would be of value in crafting interpretive programming. There is also something to be said about how an outsider (like me) aspires to achieve understanding¹. Psychologist Arian Furham believes that outsiders' approach to learning can be more comprehensive. "Those who learn by imitation are different from those who learn by instruction. To learn the rules is often to understand their function, and their history. This can give a much better insight into why things are done the way they are. It can make the outsider more adaptable and flexible." This piece will later address such instructional value as it pertains to interpretive experience and wayfinding. Being adaptable and flexible will be paramount as the campus community works to preserve and celebrate Ursuline heritage.

¹ Furnham, Adrian. "The Advantages of Being an Outsider." *Psychology Today*. April 26, 2015. Accessed April 26, 2016.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/sideways-view/201504/the-advantages-being-outsider>.

Background - St. Angela and the Ursuline Sisters

Since coming to Sacred Heart Schools, a faux pas I committed several times before being corrected was the improper use of the term nun. Having always assumed the term nun and the term sister were interchangeable, I later learned that to refer to someone as a nun implies that they are living lives of private prayer, often partitioned from the outside world. To be a Catholic sister implies a life of ministry in the world. Knowing what I know now about the ministries of the Ursulines, they certainly are the latter. I explain this not as a vocabulary lesson, but an important preface to the fact that these dedicated women have tirelessly inserted themselves into the communities they serve with intentions of affecting social change. We will explore these powerful ministries shortly.

It is relatively well known that women answering the vocational call are required to take vows in their initiation as sisters, most notably those of chastity, poverty and obedience. The Ursulines also take a fourth vow to provide Christian Education¹. There are other orders that observe similar ministerial vows as well (the Sisters of Mercy, for instance). In the case of the Ursulines, this commitment to education is the result of a lived charism. The word itself, *charism*, was not a term I was familiar with before coming to Sacred Heart Schools. I remember hearing Sr. Janet Marie Peterworth, President of the Ursuline Leadership Team, explaining it to be a divine gift; in this particular case a gift from foundress St. Angela Merici to the Ursuline Sisters (and to the Church and by extension its people at large). Sister Marietta Wethington, OSU of the Ursulines of Mount St. Joseph² rounds up the following definitions: “the gratuitous gift of the Holy Spirit”, “the divine influence on the receiver’s heart”, “a freely given gift of God”, “power given to a community by the Holy Spirit” and “the spirit of a community based on the founder’s experience of God”. I have read the defined charism many places throughout campus, even on

¹ Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland. "About Us / Mission." Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland. 2016. Accessed February 23, 2016. <http://www.ursulinesisters.org/mission-and-ministries>.

² Wethington, Sr. Marietta, OSU. "Charism." Mt. Saint Joseph Ursuline Association Update 24 (November 2009): 2.

refrigerator magnets in break rooms. It is defined as “a contemplative love of God and resulting openness and eagerness to serve the needs of others.”

To better understand the significance of the Ursuline Sisters, their charism and the associated values on the campus, one must first reflect on the life of foundress St. Angela Merici. Angela founded the Company of St. Ursula in Brescia, Italy¹. This group of women committed themselves to the ministry of providing Christian education, particularly focused on the education of women. This ministry later became a monastic group, the Ursuline, continuing to grow and thrive for centuries. Three Ursuline sisters from Straubing, Germany, traveled to Louisville, Kentucky, in 1858 for the purpose of teaching German immigrants at an area Catholic school. The following year, Ursuline Academy opened in downtown Louisville to meet an increasing student demand. The Academy of the Sacred Heart opened in 1877, and by 1880 there were twenty area schools operated by the Ursulines². This was a reflection of both the need for educational opportunities in the community and the exponential increase in the number of women entering the monastic life of the Ursuline Sisters.

The Academy of the Sacred Heart, an all-girls high school, would eventually become the cornerstone of what is now Sacred Heart Schools (SHS). Comprised of four schools, including Sacred Heart Preschool, Sacred Heart Model School, Sacred Heart Academy and Sacred Heart School for the Arts, the independent Catholic district maintains healthy enrollment today and a reputation of rigorous, holistic education. All four, located directly on the Ursuline Campus, share a mission: “SHS is a community of Catholic schools, sponsored by the Ursuline Sisters and dedicated to educating the whole person in academics, arts, athletics, and spirituality.” They also share the Ursuline core values: Leadership, Community, Reverence and Service.

¹ “Ursuline Sisters of Louisville – Historical Timeline.” Presentation at Sacred Heart Schools, Louisville, KY, February 2016.

² “Ursuline Sisters of Louisville - Our History.” Ursuline Sisters of Louisville - Our History. Accessed June 20, 2015.
http://www.ursulinesisterslouisville.org/our_history.php.

Ursuline Involvement within the Schools

During a century and a half of educational ministries throughout Louisville, many Ursuline programs have come and gone while others have simply evolved into something different. The transitive and sometimes temporary nature of these programs could, in part, be connected to declining numbers within particular parishes and the competition brought on by other independent and secular offerings in the community. This was also the result of the sisters' determination of critical community needs. "The changing role of the sisters over the years was based on the needs that could be met in the community," explained Sr. Martha Jacob, the current archivist for the Ursuline Sisters of the Immaculate Conception¹. The needs had been many. Throughout its history, the Ursulines supported dozens of ministries throughout Louisville and much of the Bluegrass State. They founded and operated many of the larger ministries² themselves, including, but not limited to, the following.'

Ursuline Academy, Louisville (1859-1972)

Sacred Heart Academy, Louisville (1877-present)

Sacred Heart Model School, Louisville, (1924 – present)

Sacred Heart Junior College/Ursuline College, Louisville (1921-1968)

Ursuline Speech Clinic, Louisville (1956 – 1996)

Angela Merici High School, Louisville (1959 - 1984)

Ursuline Tutoring Program, Louisville (1960 -)

Ursuline Special Education Learning Center, Louisville (1964-1981)

Ursuline Montessori Preschool, Louisville (1967 – present)

Ursuline Reading Clinic, Louisville (1969 – 1971)

Ursuline School of Music, Louisville, (1970 – present)

¹ Jacob, Sr. Martha, OSU, interview by author, February 24, 2015.

² Schweri, Helen Margaret. *Under His Mighty Power: A History of the Ursuline Sisters of the Immaculate Conception*, Louisville, Kentucky. Louisville, KY: Ursuline Sisters, 1983, 173-176.

Ursuline Achievement School, Louisville (1977-1979)

Ursuline Achievement High School, Louisville (1979 – 1981)

Sacred Heart Schools remains today as the most significant existing sponsored ministry of the Ursuline Sisters in the Louisville area. At one time, sisters represented a notable share of faculty and administrative positions. Ursulines served as the executive decision makers. Over the last fifty years, the number of sisters has declined significantly, and active participation within the schools is now minimal. Of the sisters remaining on campus within the confines of the motherhouse (and just over 70 in the Louisville area), the average age is now well into the 80's. Simply put, the Ursuline Sisters are no longer in the classroom amongst students and faculty as they once were. Governance of the schools was transferred to an independent president/board model over 25 years ago, although a small handful of sisters still sit on the board and maintain reserved powers.

While they have not been finalized, long term strategic planning on the parts of both SHS and the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville suggest that the role and presence of the sisters will continue to dwindle, requiring the schools to bear more and more of the responsibility in maintaining the identity. Among many things, this will include the future of the physical spaces on campus; their preservation and maintenance, but also their interpretive usage.

The decline in Catholic school students, parish participation and women religious nationwide are not new phenomena. The lasting downward trend, and more forecasts of the same, would indicate that there does not yet appear to be an effective nationally prescribed solution to reverse this course.

Louisville, with its large and active Catholic population, has experienced its own decline in both school and overall parish participation. According to the Archdiocese of Louisville's 2012 Catholic Elementary School Report, the number of parish schools dropped significantly from 55 in 2000 to 35 in 2013. This figure represents closing and consolidations of schools. Enrollment dropped nearly 25%

between 2002 and 2011¹. Some of this can be attributed to affordability compared to public schools. Another reason could be the dense, competitive market of private, Christian and independent schools in the Louisville metropolitan area. Tuition continues to increase despite a national plateau in household income. The decline, however, in baptisms, first communions and confirmations suggests an overall decline in faith participation amongst Catholics. There is good news; forecasts for Louisville's school-aged child population in the years to come appears promising. Our focus, however, is not to solve the issue of declining Church involvement nor even how to maintain strong enrollment. Our charge, in this moment, is to think on the ways in which the schools may carry on and honor the legacy of the Ursuline sisters.

Jennifer Mertens, a religion teacher and alum of Saint Ursula Academy in Cincinnati, thinks upon her time as a student and the invaluable physical presence of the Ursuline Sisters. Seeing for herself the slow-but-noticeable disappearance of Ursulines as teachers, administrators or even resident storytellers is a difficult reality to accept. Upon hearing of a particular sister's retirement from school life, Mertens reflected², "I knew this day was coming. When it did, however, an unexpected weight surfaced with my sadness. 'How am I going to teach without her to share our history? To keep it alive?' Daily, these questions continue to challenge me, our religion department and, indeed, our whole school community."

Sister Paula Klein-Kracht, an Ursuline Sister of Louisville and a member of the leadership team, acknowledged³ what she referred to as the "people piece." She explained, "The heritage is imbibed because of the people. If you don't have leadership that has this in their bones..." She did not complete her sentence, but

¹ Archdiocese of Louisville. 2012 Catholic Elementary Schools Report. Report. 2012. Accessed December 21, 2015. <https://www.archlou.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/2012-Catholic-School-Report.pdf>.

² Mertens, Jennifer. "Women Religious Offer Their Charism to Future Generations." National Catholic Reporter (Kansas City), October 29, 2015, 7. <http://ncronline.org/blogs/young-voices/women-religious-offer-their-charism-future-generations>.

³ Klein-Kracht, Sr. Paula, OSU, interview by author, January 29, 2016.

gestured with her hands out in front of her as if to imply *'you do the math'*. Sitting across from her during this conversation was the new Director of Mission Effectiveness for Sacred Heart schools; Amy Olson, a devout Catholic and experienced professional, most recently as a faculty member at Sacred Heart Preschool. Olson represents the first lay person to hold this position, charged with keeping the Ursuline core values and the spirit of St. Angela alive, relevant and central to school operations.

In addition to this “people piece”, the remaining Ursulines, like Sr. Paula think about the future of sacred physical space and its use for and by the community. Take, for instance, the Motherhouse Chapel, a central point of campus and arguably the most recognizable icon of the Ursulines in Louisville. Sr. Paula wonders about its future role in “experiencing” by students, faculty and staff. Seemingly, it is not the ultimate fate of the space itself that concerns her, but rather how it will be utilized for spiritual formation and maintaining the Ursuline identity. For 100 years, the Ursuline Motherhouse has served as an important symbol on campus (and of course as a sacred place of worship), but its role as a source of heritage grows even more critical in its growing state of (human) vacancy.

Community Sense of Belonging

Here is the church. Here is the steeple. Open the doors to see all the people. If you are not familiar with this rhyme, it is accompanied by a series of hand gestures. Both the saying and the gestures are commonly taught to very young children in Sunday school. There are probably several lessons to be learned from them. I suppose my own interpretation was that the church was more about the people in it than the building. I certainly felt a connection to the church I attended, the physical elements included, but my sense of belonging stemmed from my relationship with my church family and the experience we shared within the space. What happens to our ability to connect and experience, however, when some of the people inside the church are no longer present?

Peter Read¹, in “Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership”, states that “belonging is a relatively simple concept to understand in relation to an individual’s connection to a group and/or value system. Pride and celebration of place, belonging and connectedness in relation to the physical environment is a little more complex.” While Read’s context speaks specifically to the relationship of indigenous peoples to their physical environment, our point is not lost. Albeit complex, one’s connection to a group and/or value system stands to be strengthened by the ever-so-important component of place. The associative and sensorial connections provided to us by place are powerful, sustainable and even subconscious. This is a critical concept in a scenario where the participation of/with a group is vulnerable, leaving us with the physical environment from which to draw a meaningful connection.

Read goes on to explain that “belonging means sharing and that sharing demands equal partnership.” *Equal partnership*, in our case between the Ursuline sisters and the schools, requires a healthy degree of active participation on the part of all stakeholders. Simply put, with fewer than 75 Ursuline members remaining, most of whom do not live on site, and an average age in the mid 80’s, *equal partnership* may be problematic. In 1950, such an active partnership would be plausible because many sisters were teachers and administrators. They were seen and heard from. They governed and they served. In some cases, sisters even lived in convent space that directly connected to the school buildings.

Sr. Martha Jacob, a member of the Louisville Ursulines and the acting archivist, made the connection between the people and the values. She reflected on her time as a high school student at Sacred Heart Academy in the 1950’s. Compared to her era, she felt that there is much greater effort today to promote ideas like the Ursuline core values. Sr. Martha explained that there was not as much time dedicated to discussing the foundress, St. Angela, or the Ursulines themselves. “We

¹ Read, Peter. *Belonging; Australians, Place and Aboriginal Ownership*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2000, 223.

were getting it from osmosis,” she concluded. She and her classmates were, in fact, seeing the Ursuline charism lived out every day at school.

The schools now find themselves on the other side of a half-century pendulum swing that saw active Ursuline participation within the schools significantly shrink. Currently, there are no Ursuline sisters serving as full-time faculty or staff. Before the decline in Ursuline participation in the schools, due to numbers and the age of the active members, there very well may have been a more unified sense of community between the sisters and school stakeholders; a greater sense of belonging and connection. Dynamics have shifted in such a way that one might identify the campus as now having two community subsets; the schools and the Ursulines. The extent to which this is happening runs the risk creating an unintended gap where the school community members begin to self-identify as outsiders to the sisters, and vice versa. Neither group may feel the same level of connection and belonging, while school stakeholders may be more limited in their exposure to Ursuline culture and history.

Whether or not the school communities of yesteryear were any more exposed to Ursuline space – such as the Motherhouse - was of lesser significance at that time. The fact that students and employees alike were engaged daily with the sisters themselves allowed for a greater understanding of the Ursuline identity. Today, without that level of personal engagement, it is more difficult for stakeholders to empathize with these women, their charism and the foundress, St. Angela. What remains, and what will remain post-Ursulines, is place.

Place is a common denominator.

Place is an equalizer.

Place is a monument.

Place is an incubator in which belonging and connection can be nurtured.

Yi-FU Tuan defines *Topophilia*¹ as “the affective bond between people and place or setting.” In the growing absence of a people-to-people connection, in this case between the Ursuline sisters and the school communities, the alternative

¹ Tuan, Yi. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Morningside ed. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1990, 64.

connection to be made is primarily that of people-to-place. This is a much more difficult proposition for visitors, as Tuan points out: “The visitor’s evaluation of environment is essentially aesthetic. It is an outsider’s view. The outsider judges by appearance, by some formal canon of beauty. A special effort is required to empathize with the lives and values of the inhabitants.” I will assume that the effort Tuan refers to is compounded in cases where the inhabitants (Ursulines) are few and far between. We can define visitors, in this capacity, as anyone who is not an Ursuline sister. Students and teachers within the schools are visitors, but are most receptive to interpretive learning of the Ursuline history and value systems.

Belonging, for the schools and its community members therein, has traditionally been defined by being on the receiving end of the Ursuline charism, or the “resulting openness to serve the needs of others” as a result of a “contemplative love of God”. Sr. Martha Buser, equates this to *hospitality*¹. Ursuline sisters were hospitable in starting the schools for the community’s young people and serving as educators. It is this same hospitality that now allows the schools to operate, quite independently, on the Ursuline Campus; to continue to receive sponsorship; to thrive. Can that hospitality also effectively nurture a bond between people and place? For long after the Ursuline Sisters themselves vanish from the campus, a presence can be sustained through commemoration, interpretive celebration, experience of tradition and a personal connection to place.

There is more at stake here than the fading of an Ursuline culture. Also hanging in the balance are the potential inclusion and participation of members of the campus community who neither identify as Catholic nor have a pre-existing connection to the Ursulines. I can speak personally to this. Without a clear interpretation of the value and culture systems, some stakeholders could struggle with a sense of belonging and connection to campus. The delivery system for the understanding and practice of the Ursuline values has shifted dramatically over the last 50 years. The brokerage of this culture, once squarely on the shoulders of the

¹ Buser, Martha. *Also in Your Midst: Reflections on the Spirituality of St. Angela Merici*. De Pere, Wisconsin: Paisa Publishing, 1990, 8-9.

sisters, must now, more than ever, rely on lay people. The physical representations of this culture – place and interpretive experience - are the most effective tools for connected people to the values, second only to the interpreters themselves.

This decline in engagement we are seeing, regarding the Ursulines' physical role within the schools, may be accelerated by a lack of opportunities for students and faculty to enter into and understand the Ursuline space. That is not to say that opening widely the doors to the Motherhouse is necessarily appropriate responses. Without Ursulines in the schools and without members of the schools in the Ursuline space, the engagement once thought of as critical is but a small remnant of what it once was.

In my discussions with Sr. Paula Kleine-Kracht, she reflected on the limitations of the admittance of guests into the Ursuline space – namely the Motherhouse¹. First and foremost, she explained that, “this is someone’s home”. Here, the sisters sleep, eat, pray, study, socialize and live out their lives. Many are very limited, physically, and require a particular level of care. Sr. Paula agreed that the Motherhouse itself is a great “source of heritage” and that she is mindful of its future role in the experience of our community members.

Like local community groups reacting to the potential implications of tourism, the sisters may share their own skepticism about allowing community members more access to their home. Such concerns are not intended as a rejection of the importance of connecting with the schools. Let us, if only briefly, equate tourism with student/faculty participation within the confines of the Motherhouse and other designated Ursuline spaces. After all, virtually any school group to enter the space would do so under supervision of a guide, and under the pretense of an interpretive experience. The beauty and wonder of the Motherhouse chapel very well could be described as a tourist attraction! Inhabitants of the space might object to this notion, but it could be viewed as a compliment; so much to learn, or to “imbibe” as Sr. Paula stated. Those who might assert the interpretive value of the Motherhouse to outside guests would do so because they respect the potential for

¹ Klein-Kracht, interview, 2016.

impact and connection. The extents to which interpretive experiences are plausible within the confines of spaces like the motherhouse are dependent upon the comfort levels of the Ursulines. Additional opportunities for groups to enter the space would require acceptance and adjustments on the part of the sisters. In Hasan Zafer Dogan's "Forms of Adjustment", he summarizes the degrees of cultural responses to tourism¹ as the following:

- *Resistance* to and discouragement of tourism, for concern that such interference would likely violate local norms.
- *Retreat* from tourism, defined as a tolerance of visitors but an avoidance of personal engagement.
- *Boundary maintenance*, in which tourism is encouraged but a balance is found to preserve the local cultural construct.
- *Revitalization*, where tourism encourages a renewal of traditions, rituals and place.
- *Adoption*, in which new customs take the place of certain elements of the traditional experience.

There are some more traditional occasions where community members are invited into the space in a context that respects the needs of the sisters; boundary maintenance. Largely by way of the Director of Mission Effectiveness and Campus Minister for Sacred Heart Schools and the respective religion faculty, most of the schools do have some exposure to the Motherhouse chapel and certain parts of the adjoining space. Liturgies, for example, take place there throughout the school year for Sacred Heart Model School students. The space is also utilized for SHMS students observing first communion. Sacred Heart Preschool students visit the library and the school system's board uses the same space for its annual day-long retreat. At the beginning of each year, all faculty and staff begin with a prayer service there, and new employees are given the opportunity for a brief tour.

¹ Chambers, Erve. *Native Tours: The Anthropology of Travel and Tourism*. Second ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010, 56.

It is in Dogan's adoption phase where there is perhaps substantial opportunity for growth in interpretive experience. It would serve the community well to look outside the precepts of the space's liturgical use, supplementing community exposure in a way that grants less Catholic constituents the ability to connect and realize a greater sense of belonging. The key word here is *supplementing*, not to be confused with *taking the place of*. In no way do I advocate the lessening of the faith formation component.

Only recently, I have learned of new programming from the Director of Mission Effectiveness at SHS that has provided many students with the opportunity to explore Ursuline spaces and, even better, interact with Ursulines directly. One such program has allowed each preschool classroom to "adopt" a sister. These particular sisters live at Sacred Heart Village, an assisted living and nursing care facility that is a common destination for many of the Ursuline sisters when they require a particular level of care. Preschool students and these sisters exchange photos of one another, pray for each other and make art for one another. Just recently, transportation was arranged so that the sisters could visit campus and enter the classrooms of their adopted students. At this time, the students performed songs and participated in activities. Over the course of the year, the students have grown very aware of these sisters as a result of age-appropriate programming designed to tell the Ursuline story.

In another example, elementary and middle school students from Sacred Heart Model School, during a supervised visit, went through areas of the motherhouse chapel to identify Catholic symbols and icons for the purposes of interpreting their meaning and purpose. This is a perfect example of an interpretive activity that used the physical space to convey value systems and cultural identity. Through recommendations presented later in this piece, we will consider actions of a similar nature.

Not having been raised Catholic, and not having attended any of the four schools on the Ursuline Campus, I sometimes struggle to identify the numerous statues placed throughout the sprawling 48 acres. The number of sculpted saints and biblical figures appear to outnumber the remaining Ursuline sisters themselves.

Having been raised Baptist, my own experience within designated sacred space – places of worship – lacked the ornate sacramentals and symbology commonly found within the Catholic Church. In that way, my interpretation of the Ursuline campus is perhaps that of relative novelty and awe compared to my Catholic counterparts. In my heightened state of curiosity and intrigue, however, I am primed to receive interpretive knowledge. I am positioned for a more complete experience, that is, if the opportunities to learn and connect are there. Often, they simply are not.

It is easy to admire a statue as simply an impressive piece, an appreciated work of art. If one is fortunate enough to know who the piece portrays, along with the story of that individual, one can also draw inspiration from his or her historical and religious significance. Even more, understanding symbols and how physical space ties into faith traditions can enrich the experience itself. An additional element to the appreciation that is perhaps overlooked is answering how and why a structure came to be in its current space. Take the following questions about its origin, materials, maker and travels:

Where did the stone come from?

From what stone is it crafted?

Where was it sculpted?

Who is/was the sculptor?

When was it sculpted?

From where has it traveled?

What other places – perhaps sacred spaces – has it stood?

Skim the course catalog of a liberal arts college and one is likely to find an entry-level art appreciation course. The syllabus of such a course would include more than *looking* at paintings and other works of art. It would, in fact, require students to learn about the history of various art movements and the revolutionaries of form, to understand the basic concepts of how such works are created. By doing so, one's *appreciation* is greater. It is suggested, that the impact of

aesthetics alone is fleeting and momentary. Context prolongs and enriches the experience to be had.

Yi-Fu Tuan invokes the philosophy of art historian Sir Kenneth Clark¹:
To attend to a great work of art for longer than that, knowledge of historical criticism has value for it keeps one's attention fixed on the work while the senses have time to get a second wind. Clark believes that as he remembers the facts of the painter's life and tries to fit the picture in front of him into its place in the development of the artist, his powers of receptivity are gradually renewing themselves; suddenly they make him see a beautiful passage of drawing or color which he would have overlooked had not an intellectual pretext kept his eye unconsciously engaged.

We can think of the human experience as an energy that fits into a grander system. An individual's connection with place is critical to her/his desire to sustain said place. It is why we donate money to an organization that has impacted us; it is why we volunteer our time or why we are passionate about a cause. Freeman Tilden notes an important idea buried within the National Park Service (NPS) administration manual: "Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection." Before we press forward in our discussion of a place's impact on human consciousness, we must take a moment to acknowledge that preservation of place is simply not possible without the elective buy-in of community members; their understanding, their belonging, their sense of collective ownership. Preservation is just one part that feeds and is fed within this cycle that Tilden references.

Tilden goes on to explain that the purpose of the NPS is "not merely to preserve the piece of hallowed ground, but to make it full of meaning to the visitor. This is interpretation. In the very place, surrounded by the very memorials, you enjoy by understanding. From that fuller understanding follows a sense of personal custody. 'This is my legacy. I must protect it.' Thus interpretation becomes also an instrument of the safekeeping of our parks."² The primary interpretive and most

¹ Tuan, Yi. *Topophilia*, 93.

² Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. Fourth ed. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007, 190.

qualified custodians of these “hallowed grounds” have been the sisters. Now that the Ursulines on this campus are fewer and are less actively involved, the system must adapt. Protectors and interpreters must arise from the schools and associate communities to carry on important functions.

The stories behind physical spaces adds to their interpretive value. The impact of the story will undoubtedly vary among each member of the community but, as O’Gorman and Faulkner¹ explain, “Sacramentals raise the awareness of Catholics to the fact that God is everywhere by putting that idea into concrete form.” Is there a better way to contemplate God’s presence than to think on His involvement in what brought this physical representation to where it currently stands? God’s creation that produced this stone? God’s inspiration that guided the hands of the artist? A challenge not unique to chapels and churches, is providing explanation of context; the offering of stories as contribution to the value of the place. Buildings, manmade and natural space, wooden trim, decorative detail, images hanging on the walls, the furniture, etc., all have a story that stands to raise one’s appreciation and connection to the place and the things that occupy it. The very design of a sacred place, perhaps more than most realize, is conceived with the visitor’s faith experience in mind. The interpretive design must follow the same reasoning, meeting all of them where they are. This serves as a perfect segue way into our review of several spaces on the Ursuline campus.

Immaculate Heart Chapel and Marian Hall Statue

The transformation of the Immaculate Heart Chapel at Sacred Heart Academy was the result of the time, effort, study and prayer of several invested members of the community. Prior to its 2014-2015 renovations, the chapel did serve campus ministry purposes, but lacked elements necessary for many liturgical and sacramental functions. The room was plain, dimly lit, and was missing the ornate beauty that could be found elsewhere on campus. In the hallway, the entrances to the space were hardly noticeable, with both of its doors blending into those of

¹ Gorman, Robert T., and Mary Faulkner. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Catholicism*. New York: Alpha Books, 2000, 182.

classrooms. There was little signage other than a small placard above one of the entrances, the same ones that label things like “Chemistry Lab” or “Faculty Lounge.” The size and versatility of the space made for utility well outside of campus ministry; parent and club meetings, space for student group work, etc. Over time, the more casual use of the chapel and the dated carpet and furniture conveyed the likes of a multipurpose room more so than a sacred space.



Immaculate Heart Chapel, pre-renovations (2014). Photo courtesy: Sacred Heart Schools

In its previous state, perhaps the only notable feature was a large, colorful mural painted by a former student. At that time, the mural hung on the interior wall of the chapel, but has since been moved to the outside hallway wall, between the two chapel entrances. One of the entrances has been indented and accented with wood trim, paintings of Jesus and Mary, and plaques denoting sponsoring parties. Yet another sign presents a sculpted depiction of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Within the first year of the chapel being re-opened, students and faculty alike have begun a new tradition of touching this heart before tests, games and other important campus events. They will then recite a prayer that is used to begin each day at the school; “Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in you.”

The true transformation took place on the inside of the chapel. Carpet was pulled away to reveal terrazzo flooring. Chairs were mostly replaced with pews. Old wooden tables and accent pieces were replaced with marble and stone altar work. Cinderblocks and drop ceiling gave way to seamless, high quality materials. Intricately carved wooden stations of the cross lined the long sides of the room. A marble bas-relief depicting our Lady of Grace took the place of an unused door.

Virtually every piece brought into the space as part of the renovation came from a source off campus; in several instances came from thousands of miles away. The beauty of these elements is undeniable, as is their impact on the space. A multipurpose room has been reborn as the most sacred of spaces, particularly for the majority of families at the Academy who identify as Catholic. These elements add significantly to the capacity for spiritual formation of the campus community.



Immaculate Heart Chapel, post-renovation (2015). Photo courtesy: Sacred Heart Schools.

Is there, however, even more to gain from knowing the stories behind what made this space possible? If these elements, whether the stations of the cross, the paintings or the votive stand, were to be found in a museum, they would almost certainly be accompanied by some sort of interpretive text defining the history and circumstances behind them. With the story comes a greater appreciation and respect for the divine purpose they serve. In her shared notes, Jeanmarie Passafium, the parent of an SHA alumna and head of the committee to renovate the chapel, was

careful to include not only an explanation of what is now there, but also an explanation of what was there¹:

Prior to the renovation, there was a door at the back of the chapel that connected to the adjacent convent that years ago was frequented daily by the Ursuline sisters for prayer and liturgy. That door was removed and a niche was created for a white statuary marble bas-relief of our Lady of Grace with a marble ledge beneath. This devotional is on a direct axis and the center aisle that leads to the tabernacle. It architecturally connects Mary's Immaculate Heart inside of Jesus' Sacred Heart in the tabernacle.



Marble bas-relief, Immaculate Heart Chapel. Photo courtesy: Sacred Heart Schools.

¹ Passafium, Jeanmarie. "Immaculate Heart Chapel." E-mail message to author. April 10, 2015.

Current students and many alumni will remember the door that connected the convent to the chapel. Future students and campus guests, without this information, may never understand that in place of this beautiful marble structure there at one time was a door through which the Ursulines passed to enter this sacred space. The hall itself still connects to the space once used as the convent. That convent space, however, is now used for central administrative offices, faculty offices and meeting rooms. Many alumnae who return to campus will learn of the transformation of the convent to office space and wish to visit it. As students, they were forbidden from entering the convent, so it is a new experience for them as well, and they delight in ascending to a place they had never been allowed as teenagers.

As one of the final stages in renovations to the Immaculate Heart Chapel, a statue of Mary was carefully placed in the chapel garden in August 2015. Having sat in storage for nearly three years, the statue had recently been repaired by a local artist. Its original place was atop Marian Hall, a building demolished shortly after my arrival on campus, in fall 2012. The building had served several purposes over the years, both for the Ursulines as well as school functions. On the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville's Facebook page, old photos can be found of the statue originally being placed at Marian Hall, sometime in the 1950's. Prior to placement at Marian, the piece had traveled from Italy. The statue is a heavy, marble metaphor for the salvaging and central placement of Ursuline identity within the landscape of modern day Sacred Heart Schools.

My learning of the statue's journey was largely happenstance, through casual discussions with the Director of Facilities and surfing on social media, but suddenly I knew more than many people on campus. My own experience and my connection to the space were greatly enhanced by the knowledge of the statue's story. In terms of the Ursuline Core Values, the *reverence* I felt for the statue – and by extension the Ursulines – was complemented with the story. For that, the story is a gift to members of the community.



Left: Statue installation at Marian Hall (1956). Right: Same statue being installed outside of Immaculate Heart Chapel (2015). Photos courtesy: Sacred Heart Schools.

Igor Kopytoff¹, in his essay “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process”, goes so far to say that we should personify *things* as having “biographies”, and in doing so, we “can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure. For example, in situations of culture contact, they can show what anthropologists have so often stressed: that what is significant about the adoption of alien objects – as of alien ideas – is not the fact that they are adopted, but the way they are culturally redefined and put to use.”

¹ Kopytoff, Igor. “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process.” In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Edited by Arjun Appadurai, 65-91. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

How appropriate Kopytoff's thoughts are when applied in this sense, given the salvaging and repurposing of so many sacramental elements in the Immaculate Heart Chapel! The idea of "alien objects" presents multiple layers of understanding. To someone like me, a non-Catholic, these objects can certainly seem foreign. To the most devout of Catholic students and faculty at Sacred Heart Schools, these objects, perhaps to a lesser extent, are foreign as they come from elsewhere. The repurposing of these objects, however, unites all who experience them, along with the countless others from earlier in the objects' biographies. By acknowledging story/biography, these physical, tangible, finite things suddenly carry with them a transcendently powerful impact. We have seemingly increased the sacramental significance of the sacramental object.

I imagine Willie Nelson would agree with Kopytoff's assessment, that the biographical significance of an object "can make salient what might otherwise remains obscure."

*There's a family Bible on the table
 Its pages worn and hard to read
 But the family Bible on the table
 Will ever be my key to memories
 At the end of day when work was over
 And when the evening meal was done
 Dad would read to us from the family Bible
 And we'd count our many blessings one by one¹*

The Marian Hall statue and the Immaculate Heart Chapel represent a single example of a sacred space on a campus that is filled with sacred spaces. Given the newness of this space and the school's larger stake in its use (compared to a space such as the Ursuline Motherhouse), it merits the consideration of strong

¹ ""Family Bible" Lyrics." WILLIE NELSON LYRICS. Accessed March 12, 2016. <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/willienelson/familybible.html>.

interpretive programming. While the following recommendations are made with the Immaculate Heart Chapel in mind, they could very feasibly be applied to other designated sacred spaces.

Recommendations

Professionals in virtually any field can fall prey to limitations of excessive jargon. This can be brought on by a lack of mindfulness towards those outside of what one might call a *proximity of knowledge*. Advertising experts, for instance, might be inclined to throw around terminology not commonly used outside of the industry. Teachers may rely on “education speak”, putting anyone without certification at a disadvantage. Commonly, doctors must simplify their diagnoses for patients who do not possess the knowledge one might receive in medical school. Applying the same logic to the interpretation of Sacred Heart Schools’ mission, history, and faith components – and especially traditions and sacred spaces - is paramount to sustaining Ursuline culture. In other words, all interpretive planning must keep in mind audiences who know little about the Ursuline Sisters, Catholic faith formation and the long history of the campus. With that in mind, let us consider a list of possible tactics for the purposes of attaching interpretation (biography) to place and associated objects.

Placards

As a means of communicating religious and historical significance, Sacred Heart Schools would benefit from mounted placards that provide brief explanations of statues, sacramental objects, artwork and structures. Visit the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., or the Pantheon in Rome and the experiences within these grand, sacred spaces are enhanced by information provided to visitors via modest, tasteful, interpretive signage. The schools invite educational use of the space outside of liturgies and prayer services and continue to connect community members who may not otherwise gain a fuller understanding of the purpose of place.

Terminology Diagrams

In place of or in addition to placards, a prominent diagram near the entrance of particular spaces can provide a more visual description of terms, facts and themes the host wishes to emphasize. Not unlike maps, diagrams can use photos/renderings of a particular space and a key to highlight features. For a space such as the Immaculate Heart Chapel at Sacred Heart Academy, a diagram could effectively summarize many details in a single, centralized piece. Given the history of the salvaged and repurposed elements and their liturgical purposes, a display could offer guests a wealth of knowledge prior to entering and using the space. As an alternative, smaller versions of a diagram could be made available for guests to pick up as they go to and from the space. Similar material could also be available as a printable download on the Sacred Heart Schools website.

Digital Tools

Given that we have spent a great deal of time already talking about experience within place, it almost seems ironic to bring up the use of online content and electronic devices. It is very often because of these distractions that we take for granted or altogether miss the full experience of place. How many of us, while enjoying a powerful sensory or spiritual moment in a park or a church or around a family dinner table, have been abruptly lured away from it due to the buzzing of an iPhone. In this way, the devices work against our desire to achieve a heightened state of presence within a place, a mindfulness that can require undivided focus or the mindlessness that comes with being fully lost in an experience. What if, however, our devices could be used to enhance the interpretive experience.

Virtual Tour Integration

Sacred Heart Schools currently uses mobile app technology, including a virtual tour function that allows users to navigate a campus map. For some areas of campus, the tour detail includes a floor-by-floor experience where “tourists” can learn about various programs through the lens of physical spaces; labs, library, gym, art wing, etc. Using existing technology, SHA could develop an additional level of

detail that would allow users to learn about the chapel and the history behind its various components.

Website Integration

Having undergone a website redesign in summer 2014, Sacred Heart Schools now uses a content-managed, reactive platform. This translates to an easy user experience, while backend content managers benefit from a variety of storytelling tools. One such tool is a photo slideshow module. Through this module, series of photos and captioned information can be posted in a sleek, flip-book style format perfectly showcasing facilities – and in this case, sacred spaces.

Social Media Integration

Sacred Heart Schools utilizes Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to communicate with current and prospective families, alumni, employees and other interested groups. Having only recently expanded many of these platforms to the three smaller schools, Communications and Marketing staff members are working towards a more strategic approach to manage a greater demand for content. Showcasing visuals of campus is nothing new, but periodically offering them within a more interpretive context as it relates to the Ursuline identity and sacred space – answering the who, what, when, where, why – enriches the message. For successful social media management, industry standards point to a content ratio that relies less on self-promotion and/or selling something. More often organizations use the social presence for sharing meaningful, inspirational content, stories and learning opportunities. Understandably, non-profits, especially those with a faith affiliation, hesitate to self-identify as a business operation. To achieve relevance and to maintain it on social platforms, schools, churches and human service agencies alike are taking their cues from the for-profit world.

“Monday Message”

Each Monday, the Director of Mission Effectiveness sends an email to all campus employees, featuring inspirational quotes, scripture passages or poems. It is

not uncommon that these might feature work from an Ursuline or the writings of St. Angela herself. These messages could easily integrate imagery of various sacred spaces throughout campus or sacramental elements found within them, associating values with familiar places. As an alternative, in addition to the inspirational text, a “Catholic Word of the Week” could be introduced along with its definition and photo. For non-Catholic employees especially, this would help to eliminate barriers that limit cultural participation.

The writing and creation of signage can be part of the learning experience itself. Students, particularly at the high school level, could be charged with authoring the information to be displayed along with specific features of the campus. Whether through an existing religion class, a club or the office of Campus Ministry, the opportunity to help create the interpretive experience invokes all four of the Ursuline core values.

- Community – The interpretation of physical components to the faith formation on campus speaks to the spirit of inclusion that is so very important in an educational setting.
- Leadership – Challenging students to play a key role in the interpretation of such structures and objects provides them with leadership opportunities.
- Reverence – What better way to respect the Catholic and Ursuline identities of Sacred Heart Schools than to interpret them in a manner that is accessible and unambiguous to all community members.
- Service - The charism of the Ursulines of Louisville speaks to an openness and eagerness to serve the needs of others as a result of one’s loving relationship with God. Serving the campus community (and beyond) as an interpreter of the Ursuline culture is a practical and important application of one’s faith.

Along with, or in place of, student participation in this endeavor, the Ursuline Sisters could play an active role as interpreters of the physical space. After all, many Ursulines have seen the campus spaces evolve over decades; buildings coming and going, spaces repurposed, emphases changing. Like the covered convent door to the

Immaculate Heart Chapel, there are Ursuline connections that might go unnoticed if not for the interpretive planning.

For such a process to take place, a committee should be convened of interested stakeholders: faculty and staff representing mission and faith, Ursuline Sisters, art faculty (preferably one with curatorial or art history experience), Campus Ministry and Mission Effective representation, a representative from the grounds/facilities department and someone to consult from a communications and branding standpoint. It would be the primary objectives of this body to: (1) identify spaces in most critical need of interpretive signage and (2) devise strategies to involve members of the community in the research, writing and installation of such signage. Next, the committee must prepare a formal proposal to president and school administrators for approval of the project. It would be appropriate at this stage to project cost and solicit funds from budget most aligned with this kind of project. If existing funds are not readily available for such a project, the committee may have to be resourceful in procuring inexpensive/existing materials in the initial phases (cardstock, foam board, even laminated paper).

Wayfinding on the Ursuline Campus

When Angela said to be like a piazza, she left us a legacy of how to live. She told us to be open and gracious and hospitable, filled with joy. Being like a piazza is the secret of Angela's spirituality and gives us a clue about why she seems so contemporary. In Angela's hospitality there is no dichotomy, there is rather unity and integrity¹.

-Martha Buser, OSU, from "Also in Your Midst; Reflections of the Spirituality of St. Angela Merici"

There is no shortage of activities that bring people to campus, opening the door for guests to benefit from potential interpretive experiences. With a park like ascetic, neighbors are encouraged to walk the campus with children and dogs in

¹ Buser, *Also in Your Midst*, 9.

tow. Dance and theatre productions attract guests from outside of the immediate school community. Several spaces on campus are available to rent. Alumni, young and old, are invited back for numerous reunions. An impressive high school athletics program draws thousands each year. The foot traffic is substantial. As a professional focused on the marketing, communication and enrollment strategies, I am challenged by the thought that so many visit our campus only to leave with no more information than when they arrived, interpretive or otherwise. While the experience of our guests may be brief and for a singular purpose, are we missing opportunities to share our story? The Ursulines and their school tenants have at their disposal 48 acres of sprawling green space in a centrally-located and historic area of Louisville. Among the four schools, Ursuline facilities, auxiliary spaces and athletic fields, an unknowing bystander might assume he or she is on the grounds of a small Catholic college. This is not far from the truth, given that the campus did operate a small college from roughly 1930 until 1968.

From the most casual of dog walkers to the most formal of event guests, there is a great capacity for community engagement and meaningful, contemplative experiences. This capacity, however, is contingent on the hospitality of the hosts, not to mention the self-awareness required to be a good host. Each year, hundreds, even thousands of people step on campus who are not directly associated with the Ursulines or the schools. That is, they do not attend school on campus, and they are not employed there. What brings them might be a performance, a third party event making use of rental space, an athletic competition or just the need for some green space on which to stretch their legs. Perhaps what draws them is something deeper, such as a desire for peace and contemplation.

Whatever the draw to the space, these guests can be exposed to the influence of the history, the stories and the spirit therein. Some of the more intentional visitors may come in search of such influence; peace, inspiration, reflection, etc. It is less likely, however, that visitors, without a direct knowledge of the Ursuline identity, will happen upon such a contemplative experience. Therefore, conditions for a more interpretive experience must be accommodating to a broad audience. Just like a “sales funnel” where success begins with a widely accessible entry point

for potential customers, perhaps we can think of an interpretive funnel as the idea where an organization's story is more accessible to more people. For an outsider, who for our purposes could be anyone who is not an Ursuline sister, much of the interpretive value of the physical environment is hidden in plain sight and, at times, inaccessible.

Let us think about the ways in which we can widen the top of the interpretive funnel. How do we make more accessible the Ursuline identity, in particular by way of physical space. When someone steps foot on campus, for whatever reason, what are the potential barriers (in both a physical and figurative sense) that prevent a guest from having a richer, more conscious experience?

- (1) Navigation – Do I know where I am? Do I know my way around? Am I where I am supposed to be?
- (2) Understanding – What is this place? Why is it here? What do I do? How do I access more information?
- (3) Acceptance – Am I allowed to be here? Am I welcome? Will I fit in? How do I keep from standing out? What if I am doing something wrong?

Navigation is wayfinding in the most literal, directional sense, and should never be far from the front of our minds as hosts. Understanding, a bit more abstract, can be a challenge for those already deep within the folds of the community and culture. We leave out details that we view as insignificant. We use jargon that is unique to us alone. We forget what it is like to not be *from within*. We must not, however, define for ourselves, but for someone that may have limited understanding. *Acceptance* requires success in *navigation* and *understanding*, a level of hospitality that comes with anticipating the needs of everyone.

These concerns must be addressed before visitors can truly open themselves to place and the experience. Very often we are, understandably, short-sighted in

determining when our role as interpreters begins. Brochu's Visitor Experience Model¹ compels us to think about the how accessible we make our entry points.

"The entry phase involves more than just the front door. It includes everything that occurs on the way to that front door. On arrival, visitors are looking for clear signals that indicate where to park, how to enter the facility, if tickets are required, what they can do with their pets, and how to address other concerns. During the entry phase, the basic human needs defined by Abraham Maslow in 1954 must be handled. Maslow suggested that people could not attend to personal growth or accept new knowledge until their basic physical needs such as food, water, safety, and security were met. The entry phase provides the opportunity to make people so comfortable with the experience that's about to unfold that their concerns about basic needs virtually disappear. It's also a chance to reinforce the central theme through visual and verbal cues."

In these examples – parking, entrances, tickets, etc. – the concerns are very real, but are surface-level. Maslow's concepts of safety and security could also be thought of as one's level of comfort in participation. I think of the first time I attended a service in a Jewish temple as one of my friends was called to the Torah for his Bar Mitzvah. Having not set foot in a temple before, I remember being quite self-conscious, knowing little of what was happening and reluctant to participate for fear of embarrassing myself or offending others. After going on to attend half a dozen other such ceremonies for my friends in seventh grade, I became much more accustomed to the protocol and was able to relax and focus on the celebration at hand. The services became more meaningful, and I found a much greater admiration for this beautiful rite of passage. The event meant something to me, as did the sacred space in which it occurred. I felt honored and no longer doubted my place and participation.

As guests become more comfortable, they feel more welcome. This welcome feeling gives way to an early sense of belonging. The establishment and maintenance of an environment that is welcome to all can be a challenge for those already inside of the proverbial tent. Their familiarity may prevent them from

¹ Brochu, Lisa. *Interpretive Planning: The 5-M Model for Successful Planning Projects*. Fort Collins, Colo.: InterpPress, 2003, 110.

recognizing the basic needs of guests and more peripheral members of the community. This starts, first and foremost, with a mindful hospitality that anticipates the needs of visitors at all times throughout their campus experience.

The missed potential starts with the individual experience. Consider this example: many step foot on campus each year for third party productions making rented use of the Ursuline Arts Center (UAC). A recently renovated creative space, the UAC is modern, state-of-the-art and beautiful. It plays host to 40 productions each year, from Madrigal concerts to senior adult theatre companies to storybook ballets. My concern is that, when attending a performance or any number of events on campus, guests view the locale as the space in which their event is scheduled to happen; simply assigning the venue an address. Our preference, as interpreters of all things Ursuline, is that guests associate the entirety of their experience with place. Ideally, that experience is to be made whole by elements prefacing and following their intended purpose of being on campus, thereby increasing the potential for impact and connection to the Ursulines.

From the time a patron first pulls on to campus until he or she returns to their vehicle and departs, what is this person learning about the Ursuline Sisters and the school community? Is the person learning the Core Values of the Ursuline Sisters and the schools? How welcome does the individual feel? How easily does one find his/her destination on the sprawling campus? What is the central point? What perception does the individual leave with? Does the guest learn anything, and does he/she feel any more connected to the campus upon departure?

For those of us who are regularly aware of campus happenings – student, faculty, alumna, etc. – it is easy to take for granted the sheer size of the campus, the number of buildings and the potential for confusion on the part of our guests. With nearly half a dozen major entrances to campus, accommodating variable traffic to four different schools (with different addresses) and the Ursuline facilities themselves, the challenge grows exponentially.

While directional wayfinding is a large part of the equation, it is the interpretive wayfinding that provides an opportunity for positive growth. Just as maps, signage and guides are often necessary for navigating unknown spaces, so are their

counterparts on an interpretive level. Imagine walking into a museum where beautiful and interesting exhibits featured no explanations, no credits to the artists, no discussion of historical context. How are we, particularly those of us who did not major in Art History, to gain a healthy appreciation for the work without the story and the intended meaning? That is not to say there is no impact of such art in the absence of interpretive context, but surely the experience is enhanced by absorbing more of the story.

I am reminded of a song I learned at a very young age in Sunday school.

*This little light of mine,
I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine,
I'm gonna let it shine.
This little light of mine,
I'm gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine¹.*

The simple tune conveys the importance of living one's faith out loud for others to experience. By extension, people of faith, and the communities of which they are a part, must assume responsibility for portraying a welcoming and open environment in which one's value system can shine. This includes an inviting and hospitable place.

Recommendations

Exterior Wayfinding Signage

Roughly two dozen telephone-pole mounted banners pepper the roadways and parking lots throughout campus. Half of the banners promote the Ursuline

¹ Loes, Harry Dixon. This Little Light of Mine. Lyrics by Avis Burgeson Christiansen. 1920.

Sisters of Louisville while the other half are for the schools' use. After five years of unforgiving Kentucky winters and summers, the vinyl has faded, frayed and in a couple of instances fallen off the frames. In addition to their age, the featured logos and photography are outdated. They are long-overdue to be replaced. The schools, for their part, could choose to simply renew the current design; a smiling student with one of the school logos. Brand recognition is certainly needed throughout campus and few would argue with a cute kid.

A need that prefaces that of brand reinforcement is the self-awareness of the guest. Visitors, in the vast majority of cases, come to campus with a specific purpose; admissions inquiry, event attendance, perhaps just plain curiosity. The guest has already opted in to being present, having come to campus, and it is in the best interest of the campus stakeholder to ensure – first and foremost - they reach their intended destination without too much of a challenge. First impressions are everything!

Banners of this nature should serve as wayfinding tools. The average Catholic parish/school operation in Louisville could be described as fairly self-contained. That is, there are fewer buildings and less square acreage for visitors to contend with. It is far more likely that a guest would become lost and confused on his/her maiden voyage across the Ursuline Campus. Keep in mind that the telephone pole banners in this case are simply one example of the wayfinding signage that is possible. Ground level directional signage such as temporary yard signs or even sandwich boards could essentially accomplish the same thing. The function, however, is critical. People need to know where they are going.

Rethink the Visitor and/or Interpreter Center Model

Lisa Brochu, in her 5-M Model of interpretive planning¹, lays out beautifully the intended benefits of centralized, dedicated spaces for the purposes of welcoming guests and introducing ideas. Brochu explains that such facilities “contain a variety

¹ Brochu, Lisa, *Interpretive Planning*, 24.

of interpretive media, often including exhibits, audiovisual programs, resource libraries, observation areas, and trailheads. Venues for staging interpretive programs are often incorporated into the interpretive center.”

Providing “a central location for communicating a specific theme and introducing important stories” is ideal perhaps in a singularly purposed, remote setting, but such a place presents a number of challenges for an organization with several relatively independent operational points. Even if a single space on the Ursuline Campus were to serve this visitor gateway function, it does so at the disadvantage of one or more of the schools. If the center is in close proximity to the Academy, for instance, the distance to some of the other schools might discourage guests from participating. Inclement weather may discourage pedestrians from stopping at the center altogether, particularly if guests are then expected to walk and/or drive to another location on campus. Until a time when the campus can locate and repurpose appropriate centralized visitor/interpreter space, it must take alternative approaches for sharing the campus story.

For all of the disadvantages of having a sprawling property of several schools with heightened security at each, there are certainly strengths to the green, wide-open spaces found throughout the Ursuline Campus. The park-like setting is ideal for outdoor activities, walking, touring and exploring. Much of the front side of the property is shaded under a canopy of large trees, and sidewalks weave through most of the campus, seamlessly connecting one area to the next. It is in this context where I find there to be ample opportunity for more casual interpretive experience through the use of both traditional and emerging mechanisms. The physical beauty and potential for impact is there: statues, gardens, architecture, common space. The added benefit of both story and wayfinding are still largely missing from the experience.

Traditional wayfinding enhancements in a physical sense are, fortunately, not a novelty. Entire industries are dedicated to products and services that add value to visitor experience; instructional, safety and promotional signage. The challenge of an organization, such as the Ursuline Sisters or Sacred Heart Schools, to find such materials is far less than one might expect given that all of these things can

now be found in one-stop-shops. However, the marketing of such products and services is directed to grounds and facilities managers and may never make it into the hands of those responsible for an organization's mission and values integration.

Integrate emerging technology

With more and more campuses, from colleges to museums to parks, going completely wireless, and with accessibility to mobile devices now more or less standard, the integration of mobile technology into the interpretive experience presents seemingly limitless possibilities. Device-guided experience can also serve a preservationist purpose. Signage and exhibitor space, for instance, while well-intentioned to provide important information for guests, can disrupt and even damage natural and historical landscapes. Confining information to electronic devices prevents unnecessary disturbances to place. We have already explored the counterargument, however, that increasing reliance on one's device might do more to remove a person from an experience than enhance it.

Pushing interpretive resources directly to guests by way of their mobile devices may also serve to minimize costs. Expenses associated with signage, placards, electronic displays, brochures, viewbooks and even tour guides might cost more than what an organization can comfortably invest.

All of the elements I have previously mentioned, from the wayfinding signage to interpretive centers and mobile device and applications, as helpful and informative as they might be, are only as effective as the stories to which they contribute. Freeman Tilden¹ tells us, in regards to interpretation, "the activity is not instruction so much as what we may call provocation." To that end, wayfinding on the Ursuline campus should move beyond an informative purpose and also strive to connect visitors to the values systems and legacy. Organizations must not focus on user-friendliness disproportionately to user-impact.

¹ Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. Fourth ed. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007, 59.

Archives

In the basement of the Motherhouse, within a long narrow room wrapping around the front wall of the library, directly underneath the chamber surrounding the Chapel, exists the Ursuline archives. A tight squeeze for even the most petite of sisters, let alone an average male, the space is a series of narrow conjoined work rooms, crammed with tables and filing cabinets. The furniture, flooring and lighting convey the pale yellow of age and simplicity. The exterior wall is stone, with the interior counterpart constructed of brick and cinderblock. Adjacent to one particular work area is the archive room itself, a temperature and humidity controlled space organized neatly with shelves, most packed with file boxes. Walking into the room, an unsuspecting guest is struck by the cool dryness. A smaller series of bookcases contains copies of all published works by the Ursuline sisters, annals from Sacred Heart Academy and other schools past and present. Stacked high in the corner are hundreds of VHS tapes containing footage of Ursuline- related footage, among other moments in their modern history worth capturing on camera. On the far end of the room, where one can find the only wall not lined with documents, is a cluttered patchwork of framed prints, photos and posters from various Ursuline programs. Many of these come with labels in the bottom corners, some simply hand-written notes held on with tape.

There is nothing particularly impressive about the collection, at least at first glance. The contents, however, reflect nearly 140 years of history; surviving remnants of the stories on which the campus and its schools were built. Without some strategic prompting, many of these stories may never be unearthed for interpretive use by the campus schools. The archives at the Ursuline Motherhouse are certainly not the only place one can find the stories. Much of the space, even the darkest and emptiest of corners, provides the means of incredible experience.

Sr. Martha Jacobs currently serves as the appointed Ursuline archivist. Upon hearing of my studies, and of my desire to better understand the significance of Ursuline place, she eagerly welcomed me to discuss her experience and the organization's efforts to collect and maintain documents. Sr. Martha categorized the Ursuline archives into three parts. The first part consisted of documents related to

the Ursuline ministries, of which there have been many throughout Louisville and beyond. A second purpose of the archives is to preserve administrative and organizational documents; incorporation materials, governance, financials and documents of a more technical nature. The third, and perhaps most addressed part of the archives relates to biographical information of the sisters. The majority of the requests to the archives, Sr. Martha explained, were for questions and updates on members of the order. For instance, the archives receive many calls from community members doing genealogical research. Someone working on family history might contact the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville to track down information on a great aunt that was member of the order. The Ursuline archives do not include many artifacts. Despite beautiful and historic facilities throughout campus, one would be hard pressed to find archived items other than documentation. This perhaps speaks to both the nature of the lives the sisters chose to live and the fact that physical items, outside of sacred places and sacramentals on campus, have not been a point of emphasis.

Walk up a flight of stairs to the main floor in the Motherhouse, and the scenery improves considerably. In the grand social rooms and sitting areas and in the chambers surrounding the chapel itself, one can find framed artwork, Ursuline composite photos of years passed, and antique furniture. Framed on a wall just inside the main entrance to the social rooms there is a beautifully preserved passport, stamped and dated, from when the original sisters arrived in the United States. Fascinating pieces such as this rarely feel the gaze of eyes outside of the Ursuline residents themselves.

Ascend yet another floor, and another, and another, and one can find prayer rooms, living space and many vacant areas that all speak to an integral part of the Ursuline sisters' history. To picture the facility filled near capacity with these women is almost hard to fathom given the noticeable emptiness and accompanying silence. On the top floor, in what is essentially an attic, one can find rickety flooring, peeling paint and wallpaper, the apparent absence of heat or air conditioning, and dust. At one time this modest space was suitable for inhabitation, but one could assume that building code would prohibit it as living space now.

Visualize, for a moment, the ending to the movie “Raiders of the Lost Ark”, a personal favorite of mine. Indiana Jones, our hero in the film, foils a Nazi plot to use the Ark of the Covenant for global domination. In the final moments of the film, the Ark – now safe - is crated and hauled into a gigantic, dimly-lit warehouse filled with countless other crates that presumably contain other rare and important artifacts. Even as a child watching the film, I remember thinking that Ark would get lost or that people would never see it again. I felt melancholy as the end credits began to roll, the unscratchable itch of *what’s next*. Perhaps a silly parallel, but as I toured the Motherhouse, I was overcome with the familiar feeling.

In far less dramatic fashion than George Lucas films, I have begun to wonder if pieces of the Ursuline history will share a similar fate; ‘artifacts’, a term I will use here as the cumulative sum of the documents and other items the Ursulines have collected and built, simply boxed up and stored. Those who have not taken the Ursuline vows themselves rarely experience the art and history on display throughout the building – not to mention the space itself. Leadership of the schools and the Ursulines should discuss how elements of the physical space will be used as interpretive tools, as vehicles of human consciousness for members of the campus community and beyond. At the very least, the situation begs the question of whether or not the campus can be equipped to ensure that these things are adequately preserved. Further still, can we ensure, ideally, that what is preserved is shared, contemplated and celebrated?

Physical remnants of the Ursuline history, as they have accumulated, are obviously important and sacred; photographs, meeting minutes, long-retired sacramental objects, furniture. These items, however, are lacking some of their potential value without the narratives to which they are connected. Without things like stories of origin, the feelings and memories they invoke, and their context, they are just items collecting space and dust – eventually to become someone else’s problem.

Would an old, stained recipe card mean much to a young man if he did not understand that the recipe was what his late grandmother used to make him delicious blackberry jelly as a child? The card itself may not evoke memory, emotion

and experience in the absence of its story. With the simple explanation as to its place in the young man's memory, the card takes on new meaning. He begins to taste the jelly. He begins to think on the family breakfasts during which it was served. He thinks about the conversations and experiences that paired so perfectly with the meal.

In the same way, would the framed passport in the Motherhouse mean nearly as much if no one understood its role in the Ursuline arrival in the United States? Does the passport play any interpretive role in establishing place if virtually no one knows it exists? The framed passport itself is a lovely and possibly valuable antique. To the Ursulines, however, this is a priceless representation of *the beginning*. How valuable that concept must be for the remaining sisters in the twilight of their human existence. After the last of the sisters have passed on, will the campus community share in a portion of that perceived value in the history of this place; this story.

We learn from Joseph A. Amato in his *Local History: A Way to Place and Home*¹, that narrative is akin to the "rhythm and beat" of music that connects people to place. "Narrative alone affords an understanding through stories and tales of what a place was, where it stood in the process of becoming, and how it exists in the folds of memory and the unfolding layers of interpretation." Without the interpretive element – without the story - place falls well short of its potential impact on human consciousness. The connection to place, in the case of the Ursuline identity, transcends the Ursulines themselves, but to what extent this occurs is largely contingent on the interpretive efforts of the schools and the Ursuline organization.

A potentially unsettling fact is that the members of the sisters' community, particularly those who can address the rhythm and beat of the Ursuline identity are few. For so long, the sisters served as the interpreters, the administrators, and the truest examples of the Ursuline core values. Now, these roles are increasingly entrusted to lay people.

¹ McClay, Wilfred M. *Why Place Matters: Geography, Identity, and Civic Life in Modern America*. New York, New York: Encounter Books, 2014, 217.

Recommendations

Ursuline Arts Fair Poster Print Placement

For years, the Louisville area community was invited to the Ursuline Campus for an annual art fair. The sisters orchestrated an outdoor showcase of local and regional artists. At its peak, the Ursuline Art Fair was one of the largest and best known art fairs in the Louisville area, drawing hundreds of attendees, many of whom had no direct affiliation to the campus.

Commemorative poster prints were made for the annual event, some of which can be found hanging on walls throughout campus, mostly in the designated Ursuline buildings and in the archives. Collecting these prints and presenting them in common areas of campus, perhaps in the Ursuline Arts Center, would serve to revisit an important event in the Ursulines' history as well as serve as a reminder of the emphasis the Ursulines have always placed on the arts as a part of a strong Catholic education. Better still, such prints could be reissued in limited quantities as gifts and sale. A single print could showcase small versions of every print on record.

Brescia Hall Exhibitor Space

Currently, the administrative offices of the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville reside in Brescia Hall, one of the more modern facilities on campus utilized by the sisters and their small staff. Like other spaces on campus, its use has evolved over the years to accommodate the changing needs of campus stakeholders. A unique feature of this three-story building is rentable space available to any group that might wish to use it; small and mid-sized meeting rooms, a prayer room and a kitchenette. SHS utilizes these spaces on several occasions throughout the year, as do outside groups for retreats, educational opportunities, luncheons, etc. On the first floor, just beyond the lobby, are hallways lined with built-in glass cases. Equipped with shelving and recessed lighting, these are museum quality. In my three and a half years on campus, I have visited Brescia Hall well over a dozen times. To the best

of my memory, only a small fraction of these cases were in use. Even if they had been, for whatever purpose, students seldom – if ever - use the building

Naturally, this space provides incredible opportunity for interpretive learning. Photographs, artifacts, sacramentals, timelines, artwork, memorabilia and sister honoraria could safely and intentionally be displayed for a wide audience. The story of St. Angela, the establishment of the Ursulines in Louisville and the modern history of the schools could be conveyed in exhibit form, supplementing what is currently taught using modest print materials and powerpoint. The potential for learning does not stop with simply observing the displays. Campus stakeholders, like senior religion students for instance, could participate in the creation of such exhibits. New employees who tour campus would also benefit from displays of this nature. Those visiting Brescia also stand to benefit from face-to-face interaction with members of the Ursuline Leadership Team located on the second floor.

Ursuline Motherhouse

This sacred domed space represents not only an incredible history, but a consistency of divine purpose. While many structural and organizational manifestations of the Ursuline charism have changed over time, whether Ursuline College, Angela Merici High School or Sacred Heart Preschool, the purpose remains intact – not unlike the Motherhouse Chapel or the spirit of its inhabitants. It is for the sake of community members years, decades, even centuries from now, when the physical presence of the Motherhouse Chapel is less certain, that this foundation – this purpose - be maintained and nurtured.



Ursuline Motherhouse Chapel. Photo courtesy: Sacred Heart Schools

During a Sacred Heart Schools Board of Trustees retreat in August 2015, a group facilitator asked each person in the room to contemplate over a meaningful moment they have experienced related to Sacred Heart Schools. One member shared his experience as it related to the Motherhouse Chapel. Years ago he and his

wife had married in the space, and the family had just recently witnessed his daughter's first reconciliation, also in the chapel. Both moments were transformational in the board member's life. The association with that place, for him, came full circle. What he saw, heard, felt and even tasted and smelled are now all unmistakable pieces of those transformational moments. Future experiences in and around the chapel for this board member and his family will draw from those previous moments, adding to their value. This family's experience represents an exception more than a rule, particularly since weddings have not been permitted in the Motherhouse Chapel for some time.

Outside of an annual Ursuline open house, opportunities for the public to enter the space are few and far between. Students and their families, faculty and staff are provided with ample opportunities via liturgies and ceremonies like eighth grade graduation. Events like weddings, however, have long since been prohibited. The schools' uses of the motherhouse chapel, ones that might serve to expand the campus community's mindfulness of the Ursuline presence, vary among the schools. Sacred Heart Model School, for instance, uses the chapel for regularly scheduled liturgies throughout the year, typically on a monthly basis, whether in smaller groups of classes or as a complete student body. The 850 students at Sacred Heart Academy exceed the chapel's maximum capacity of 500, so liturgical uses for them are more rare and take the form of individual class services that might involve parents or grandparents. The preschool and School for the Arts rarely use the space.

The chapel, formally named the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, along with the motherhouse living space for Ursuline sisters, is visible from busy Lexington Road and is one of the most recognizable spaces in historic St. Matthews. She has aged beautifully while other buildings in her shadow have come and gone, the necessary victims of modernity and progress and modern safety standards.

In January 2017, a year-long celebration will commence, honoring the centennial of the space. Ursulines, their advancement staff and representatives from the schools are currently planning a year of events to commemorate the occasion. Tentatively, the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville will offer nearly half a dozen performances and services intended for a more public audience. At least one will

take place in the outside amphitheater adjacent to the Ursuline Motherhouse. This series of celebrations will be paired with fundraising and marketing campaigns. A centennial presents a clear and powerful opportunity to make the space accessible to a much broader audience, including those who may have some deeper connection to it rooted in a past experience (not unlike the previously mentioned board member). In the non-profit advancement world, centennials are not taken lightly. Entire studies and conference sessions are dedicated to using these once-in-a-lifetime milestones as fulcrums for: (1) raising money, (2) generating buzz and (3) casting a wider net for constituent engagement.

A Council for the Advancement and Support of Education/National Association of Independent Schools (CASE-NAIS) conference in January 2016 offered a session entitled “Have Your Cake and Honor It Too”. While speakers addressed major anniversary initiatives from a school’s perspective, the information provided could be extended to any non-profit, particularly heritage sites and religious organizations. All of the instruction provided during the session supported the central idea that significant time, money and manpower must be dedicated to observing centennials. This would appear to be common sense, but organizations – particularly smaller ones – may not realize the importance of such strategies¹:

- Build a budget five years in advance.
- Start early – 2 or 3 years in advance of your anniversary.
- Dedicate a full-time person to oversee this initiative.
- Reach out to other schools who have had a similar celebration.
- From the beginning, know what you want as your outcomes.

The 100-year anniversary of the campus's most sacred space provides opportunity for the planning of celebration and reflection, but perhaps, it also proves useful as a forum for discussion of the long-term preservation of the items representative of the Ursuline story. For instance, are there local or regional groups

¹ McGrath, Lisa, and Marion Couzens. "Have Your Cake and Eat It Too." Proceedings of 2016 CASE-NAIS Independent Schools Conference, New York.

with whom to partner to ensure that the transition of documents and artifacts is handled properly? In the eventual absence of the Ursuline sisters, the facilities and their contents become even more critical pieces to sustaining an appreciation and understanding of these women's role in the education and the culture that surrounds it. More than a history lesson, this is a question of organizational existentialism.

Recommendations

Monthly/Quarterly Tours

Between the Director of Missions Effectiveness, Campus Minister, Religion faculty, service and stewardship appointees, Ursuline Sisters of Louisville, Ursuline Associates and student members of faith initiatives on campus, the campus has at its disposal a fair number of (potential) sacred space interpretive guides. With minimal planning and training, these individuals could be equipped to offer periodic tours and programs with the intention of informing opt-in guests of: (1) the history of a particular space, (2) sacramental purposes and (3) correlation with the Ursuline identity. While the entire campus community could receive regular invitations within existing constituent communications, such programming offers a unique opportunity to families who do not identify as Catholic or who are new to campus and wish to have a better understanding. Currently, many students at Sacred Heart Academy are required to participate in sessions that explain the Ursuline identity, from the life of St. Angela through the modern application of the Ursuline charism and core values. Essentially, we are talking about expanding upon this type of learning to reflect physical space on campus as a vehicle of faith formation and values.

Cultural Partnership with Frazier Historical Museum

Louisville is fortunate to have a booming museum district. Between the Speed Art Museum, Louisville Science Center, Louisville Slugger Museum, Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft and the Frazier History Museum, there is a lot to be

learned. The Frazier, in particular, has experienced an interesting evolution in the years since its grand opening. What started as a historical arms museum, featuring extensive collections of weaponry and firearms dating back hundreds of years, has become a broader historical showcase of global, national and regional proportions. Recently, the Frazier exhibited dresses and other personal effects of Princess Diana. Another collection included original props, costumes and promotions from the holiday classic film "White Christmas". As for local flavor, the museum featured exhibits on prohibition in Kentucky and "100 Years of Doe Anderson"; a look at a century's worth of creative content from a Louisville-based advertising firm. The diversity of stories told, in both topics and scope, has made the museum a must-see for visitors and locals alike.

With such an affinity for local history, an organization like the Frazier Museum would serve as a perfect collaborator in bringing the Ursuline story to life in an exhibit. More so, a museum such as the Frazier comes equipped with the professional know-how and tools to ensure preservation and interpretive planning are done safely and effectively.

Cultural Partnership with Preservation Louisville

Old Louisville is one the largest and best preserved Victorian neighborhoods in the United States. It is not through pure happenstance that this is the case. Like so many historic neighborhoods around the country, much of this space could have fallen into disrepair, been chopped up for cheap college housing or been demolished altogether in the name of urban development. One local key player that is instrumental in proper preservation and related policies is Preservation Louisville, Inc. (PLI). The expertise of this organization, its passion and the muscle it has effectively applied to local government is quite impressive. Outside of Old Louisville, many other neighborhoods and structures find themselves under the watchful eye of PLI's membership. In recent years, advocacy and education have become larger parts of the organization's mission, making it an accessible and useful resource for community members facing challenges to endangered physical spaces.

Groups like PLI may be the keys in offering the education and support

needed to ensure that the Motherhouse and its contents move into a future with dignity, despite the unfortunate absence of its one-time inhabitants. LPI is certainly not unaware of the challenges posed to sacred spaces such as the Ursuline Motherhouse. In the organization's list of "Louisville's 2015 Top 10 Endangered Historic Places List", LPI lists "historic sacred spaces" as number seven¹. Coincidentally, "Historic Educational Buildings" ranks second, so one could argue that the Ursuline Campus represents two items on the top ten list.

In Closing

Throughout the course of my conversations and observations as it relates to the future of the Ursulines, there seems to be a quiet peace regarding the inevitable end to the human Ursuline presence on campus. This acceptance is perhaps cloaked in the hope that the charism lived by so many women over the course of decades upon decades will survive through the commitment of lay torch bearers. Let us remember that Angela Merici was not of an order herself, nor were the members of her community that joined her in serving the needs of the people. St. Angela was a layperson with humble beginnings who contributed to significant social change that once attracted the attention of the Pope himself. What St. Angela started grew into a formal order of Ursulines, the likes of which still exist today. Her story should provide encouragement to the committed members of the Sacred Heart Schools community as rightful sustainers of the Ursuline legacy. Just as they were there in the beginning, lay people – like students, teachers, alumni and associates – will continue the work of St. Angela and the Ursuline sisters. The spaces throughout the Ursuline campus are effective tools in preservation of identity. They are monuments to the lived charism of these transformative women and the years of ministries that have helped to shape the Louisville community and the hearts of thousands of students.

The recommendations presented throughout this paper are designed to

¹ "Preservation Louisville Announces 2015 Top 10 Most Endangered Historic Places and Top 10 Preservation Successes." Preservation Louisville, Inc. 2015. Accessed October 2015. <http://preservationlouisville.org/top10/>.

connect individuals to the traditions and values of the Ursuline sisters. More important than the recommendations themselves are the emphases of why a people-place connection is so very important to a sustainable future. Only through connection, interpretation and belonging will community members feel compelled to cherish and protect these unique cultural constructs. Revisiting Freeman Tilden's thoughts on the importance of interpretation, we learn that "From that fuller understanding follows a sense of personal custody¹." As interpretive custody of the Ursuline identity continues to transfer to Sacred Heart Schools, in the growing absence of the sisters, place will serve as a critical resource in helping others achieve greater understanding. Sacred Heart Schools, and organizations like it, must realize the interpretive use of place as means of both mission advancement and cultural sustainability.

¹ Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 190.

Methodology

Research for this project fell primarily into one of three categories. The first involved the study of Ursuline and school publications, campus documents and conversations with stakeholders. This included books and presentations published by Ursuline sisters, strategic planning documents and historic timelines. I also took the opportunity to speak with multiple Ursuline Sisters and school administrators. Knowledge uncovered during this phase of my research provided me with a better understanding of (1) the Ursuline story and (2) the opinions and perceptions of stakeholders as it relates to the campus and spaces within it. This research also proved particularly helpful in expanding my views on the Ursuline charism.

The second category involved research on the topics of place and interpretive experience. To convey the importance of place's role in cultural sustainability and storytelling, I sought out experts in relative anthropological fields. Resources on interpretive planning, heritage and tourism were very fruitful, providing me with much of the context needed for my recommendations.

Lastly, as this piece was to be largely reflective on my own experience, I thoughtfully approached my own participation within the Ursuline space. By learning about and engaging in ritual, tradition and use of place, I gained a greater appreciation and understanding of the potential for a people-place connection. My experience as a non-Catholic community member gave me a uniquely objective prospective; a prospective that presented its own challenges and advantages. As part of my participation, I attended nearly half a dozen liturgies and several prayer services. I also routinely visited sacred spaces on campus for morning meditation and devotional time. My own sense of connection to the campus and the community grew as a direct result of this experience.

Literature Review

Buser, Martha. *Also in Your Midst: Reflections on the Spirituality of St. Angela Merici*. De Pere, Wisconsin: Paisa Publishing, 1990.

Sr. Martha Buser, OSU, discusses her own interpretations of the life and ministries of St. Angela Merici. Buser also examines the Ursuline charism; a contemplative love of God with the resulting openness and eagerness to serve the needs of others. The author draws inspiration from events throughout the life of St. Angela and those of her company; themes like hospitality, graciousness and discernment.

Schweri, Helen Margaret. *Under His Mighty Power: A History of the Ursuline Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Louisville, Kentucky*. Louisville, KY: Ursuline Sisters, 1983.

Sr. Helen Margaret Schweri provides a thorough history of the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville and their ministries dating back to the arrival of the first Ursulines in 1858. The publication was part of the 125th anniversary commemoration. Schweri writes about the future of Ursuline service and the modern applications of the Ursuline charism.

Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. Fourth ed. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Tilden uses primarily the contexts of national parks to convey the importance of interpretive learning as a means of protecting place and culture. Among the topics presented, the author presents basic principles of interpretation, concepts in storytelling and recommendations for an impactful visitor experience. Tilden stresses the idea of provocation, not simply informing, as the most important goal of interpretation.

Tuan, Yi. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. Morningside ed. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1990.

Tuan defines Topophilia as the affective bond between people and place. He explores the human experience as it relates to the physical environment, noting the variable perceptions within and between different cultures. Tuan emphasizes one's experience with the physical world as a primary shaper of value.

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Ursuline Campus Guide. Photo courtesy: Sacred Heart Schools