Campus Connections to White Supremacy: 

The Role of Archivists in Reconciliation through Community Engagement and Historical Research

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About Me, the OMA and OSQA

http://guides.library.oregonstate.edu/oma

http://guides.library.oregonstate.edu/osqa
Building and Place Names Matter

- They play an important role in how community members interact with, remember, and revere their histories
- They are symbolic of the long historical threads of racism, institutionalized discrimination, and the use of public spaces to perpetuate dominant narratives

Conversations at Universities and Colleges Across the Country

- Brown University
- George Mason University
- Princeton University
- University of Oregon
- U. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Westfield State University
- Yale University
What about your institution or communities?
The Evaluation of Building and Place Names ~ at OSU

About OSU

- Located in Corvallis, Oregon; est. 1868. Is a PWI, in a predominantly white college town
- History of students of color protesting injustices since the late 1960s
- 2015 “Students of Color Speak Out” and subsequent establishment of the Office of Institutional Diversity
- Building renaming is common on campus; new buildings are named after individuals for a variety of reasons
- Reconciliation efforts and actions by the university to address past injustices are part of an ongoing process
As an institution, we asked ourselves:

“What does it mean for OSU to value equity and inclusion if individuals after whom its buildings are named did not?”
The Evaluation Process

- Formation of a Building and Place Names (BPN) committee
- Development of the Evaluation Criteria
- Responding to a Student Protest
- Creating a Communications Plan
- Providing a Team of Scholars Historical Research Assistance
- Designing and Implementing a Community Engagement Plan
- Decision Making Process
- Announcing the Decision
- Engaging in a Renaming Process
- Planning for Permanent Education Accessible to Community Members
Session Agenda

Lessons Learned
- Formation of a Building and Place Names (BPN) committee
- Development of the Evaluation Criteria
- Responding to a Student Protest
- Creating a Communications Plan
- Decision Making Process

Descriptions of the Processes and Lessons Learned
- Providing a Team of Scholars Historical Research Assistance
- Designing and Implementing a Community Engagement Plan
Formation of a Building and Place Names (BPN) Committee

Lessons Learned

• Request to be a part of the process, from start to finish
• Set boundaries regarding your time and commitment to the process
• Educate committee members about archives and the work of archivists
• Build trust among committee members
• Ensure your department and colleagues are clear on your role and theirs
• Voice your opinion and push back on the administration as needed
• Be transparent with the public as to the who’s who of the process

Committees and Groups: http://leadership.oregonstate.edu/building-and-place-names/about/committees-and-groups
Development of the Evaluation Criteria

Lessons Learned

• Review other institutions’ evaluation criteria and determine if you will adapt it or create your own

• If applicable, create criteria broad enough to address future evaluations not just building namesakes currently under review

• Include information regarding planned permanent education

• Directly connect the criteria to requests for community input and community engagement activities

Criteria: http://leadership.oregonstate.edu/building-and-place-names/evaluation-process/renaming-criteria
Responding to a Student Protest

Lessons Learned

• It’s not just about the building names
• There is an urgency to the process, but a need to “get it right”
• The process needs to include facilitated, small group discussions
• Need for historical research to address misinformation
• Need to address community FAQs
• Always remember that it’s about the students who feel excluded and harmed by the institution’s racist past – and present
What I hear when I’m being yelled at is people caring really loudly at me.
Creating a Communications Plan

Lessons Learned

• Communications Committee
  ~ determine roles
  ~ follow protocol but also assess when to deviate

• Community Stakeholders
  ~ identify / set meetings with student groups, alumni representatives, non-university specific community members, etc.

• Website
  ~ provide photos and (minimal) historical information and context
  ~ online form for feedback collection *based on the evaluation criteria*
  ~ ensure transparency and provide as much content as possible

• Press
  ~ develop talking points, as well as a clear narrative
  ~ place the institution front and center
Decision Making Process

Lessons Learned

• Be clear about the process and timeline
• Place the ultimate decision on the administration
  ~ Community input
  ~ BPN committee and workgroup discussion
  ~ meeting with the President
  ~ Architectural Naming Committee meeting with
    the President
• Document the process and make a version of that
  documentation available to the public
• Be prepared for push back on the decision

OSU President Ed Ray, 2003-present
Providing a Team of Scholars
Historical Research Assistance

The Process

Historic Reports on OSU Building Names

LibGuide https://guides.library.oregonstate.edu/osu-buildings-history
Providing a Team of Scholars
Historical Research Assistance

Lessons Learned

• Begin the research process early, anticipate needs and do not wait to be asked

• Plan for the appropriate amount of staff and student assistance

• Build in extra time to assist scholars and develop research plans

• Review and discuss content researched with the scholars, if desired

• Provide constructive criticism to report drafts, if requested

• Share the information uncovered with other committee members as needed
Designing and Implementing a Community Engagement Plan

The Process ~ Goals

- Provide information, enable dialogue and build community consensus on the importance of acting on OSU’s mission and values through evaluating building names and places;
- Review the history of these buildings and their namesakes in the context of OSU’s history;
- Transparently engage the community in this process by reviewing and discussing findings;
- Enable OSU community members and stakeholders to openly, constructively and safely share their views on this subject;
- Reconcile the building namesakes’ views or actions with the contemporary values of the OSU community and the university’s mission;
- Gather community and stakeholder input on whether to change the names of the buildings;
- Share and explain the history of these buildings and places and their namesakes, regardless of any decision.

Designing and Implementing a Community Engagement Plan

The Process ~ Calendar

Community Engagement Sessions
- Session One, September 28, 5:30pm-7:30pm
- Session Two, October 2, 12pm-2pm

Building Name Evaluation Sessions
- Arnold Dining Center Discussion - Wednesday, October 11, 5:30pm-7:30pm
- Avery Lodge Discussion - Monday, October 16, 5:30pm-7:30pm
- Benton Hall and Annex Discussion - Tuesday, October 17, 5:30pm-7:30pm
- Gill Coliseum Discussion - Thursday, October 19, 5:30pm-7:30pm

Community Input Analysis
- A qualitative summary and assessment of the data gathered during the community engagement process is available online

All community engagement sessions were recorded and are available online.
Designing and Implementing a Community Engagement Plan

The Process ~ Part 1

• Began with intentions and expectations
• How did we get here?
  The national conversation and OSU context; the reasons why it is important to reflect on our past
• What happens next?
  The process timeline, what happens after the evaluation process is compete i.e. a remaining process and the permanent education component
• Workshop Plan
  Review “Intentions of RESPECT”
  Watch 9 min video of New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu speech, May 2017
  Engage in facilitated discussion with trained facilitators and note-takers
Facilitated Conversation Questions

1) What do you think the difference is between remembering history and revering history?
2) What does “reconciliation” mean to you? What does reconciling the past with the present mean to you?
3) Consider this quote from President Bush at the 2016 opening of the African American Museum in Washington D.C.: “A great nation does not hide its history. It faces its flaws and corrects them.” What are your reactions to this statement? How do you think this statement connects to evaluating the names of buildings at OSU?
4) What does or could it feel like to walk into a place named after a person who stands for something at odds with your values, or the values of the university?
5) At this point in history, what story do you want OSU to tell through the names of its buildings? Through its language, symbols, and actions?
Designing and Implementing a Community Engagement Plan

The Process ~ Part 2

• Repeat of Part 1 Content
• BPN committee co-chair presentation on the significance of building names and an explanation of the evaluation criteria
• BPN co-chair presentation on the historical research findings based on the reports produced by the scholars
  ~ historical review team, purpose, and process ~ building history
  ~ namesake history and controversies ~ summary points
• Workshop Plan
  Review “Intentions of RESPECT”
  All tables had copies of the criteria, the historical reports, & presentation slides
  Engage in facilitated discussion with trained facilitators and note-takers
Designing and Implementing a Community Engagement Plan

The Process ~ Part 2

Facilitated Conversations, based on the evaluation criteria

Should a building be renamed because the “context” of an individual’s life and legacy is inconsistent with OSU’s contemporary mission and values?

“Context” is evaluated by the following criteria:

- Actions taken by an individual vs. viewpoints held by an individual
- The individual's public vs. private persona
- The progression of an individual’s viewpoints and life as a whole
- Whether and how an individual’s actions and viewpoints aligned with OSU’s mission and OSU’s and society’s values at the time
- How the current OSU community engages with the “context” of an individual’s life
Lessons Learned

• Develop sessions that feature both information sharing and ample time for engaged dialogue (have contingency plans i.e. talk with public safety).

• Know your audience (students, F/S, alumni, non-OSU); assign tables randomly.

• Be transparent about the process and repeat key pieces of information.

• Recruit and train facilitators and note-takers.

• Connect the evaluation criteria to the facilitated conversation prompts.

• Outline participant expectations, review “Intentions of RESPECT”.

• Administrators were present but did not participate (Pres. Ray was not).

• Do NOT have an opportunity for comments to the room by participants.
http://leadership.oregonstate.edu/building-and-place-names
Q & A

General Q and A

Please feel free to email me natalia.fernandez@oregonstate.edu if you would like a copy of this presentation or if you would like more details about the process.