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**Abstract:** In current practice, planning for Heritage Site Management is a fragmented effort. All too often, completed conservation management plans outdate quickly and then sit on the shelf unrevised. This paper sets out a model architecture for an integrated Heritage Site Management Plan that addresses all aspects involved in managing a heritage site. Through its modular approach the plan architecture allows plans to be addressing a site’s unique needs while maintaining currency through stratified review cycles.
An Integrated Architecture for Effective Heritage Site Management Planning

by Dirk H.R. Spennemann

Heritage managers typically identify potential heritage sites and establish the public value of those places using predetermined cultural significance criteria. Current historic preservation theory maintains that this process ensures that important aspects of the past are identified, protected, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations.¹ The aim of heritage site management is to maintain these identified places intact and unchanged from their determined period (or periods) of significance to the extent feasible.

The integrity of such places, however, is impacted by a number of factors, from environmental decay to sudden impairment by natural or anthropogenic disasters, gradual or sudden impact by visitors and owners, and intentional damage through acts of vandalism, terrorism, or war. These threats to the integrity and survival of heritage sites can be restricted in their magnitude—and on occasion completely removed—through appropriate intervention.

Currently, each of the states in Australia uses its own planning processes and documents, all of which are based on the principles of
the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter but go by different names. In the state of New South Wales they are called conservation policies and conservation management plans; in Victoria, conservation plans and maintenance plans; in Queensland, conservation management plans and asset management plans; in South Australia, conservation management plans and heritage asset management plans; and in Western Australia, conservation plans. In the United States, they are customarily called preservation plans.

Most common are conservation management plans that contain a description of the extant fabric, a brief history, a statement of significance, and an array of conservation options usually recommended by the consultant completing the plan. Such documents seldom make any provisions for an expansion of management activities. Nor do they allow in their structure for easy review and revision. As a result, many conservation management plans, once completed, languish on the shelves. Because of the effort and resources involved in writing these plans the first time around, few incentives exist to revise them regularly in response to changing conditions.

Although generally viewed as site management plans, most conservation management plans fall short, addressing only part of the remit of management. Among the most common lacunae are visitor and disaster management plans. Places that are open to the public may have interpretation plans, but their visitor management
corollary is often lacking even though visitor use can result in 
damage through unintentional and intentional impact.ix Disaster 
management is likewise largely absent. A review of conservation 
management plans in New South Wales and Victoria, for instance, 
showed that very few actually address issues of disaster managementx 
even though heritage sites are prone to disaster impact.xi This 
situation is due in part to attitudinal barriers among heritage 
professionals that discourage their formulation.xii That review also 
uncovered extensive uncritical copying of text sections from other, 
previously completed plansxiii and called attention to the complex 
language used in writing them.xiv

If heritage managers wish to manage these places effectively, they 
must acknowledge that the context in which a heritage site exists is 
subject to change. Political and economic conditions, public funding 
options, curricula, social expectations, and environmental 
conditions are among the variables that heritage managers must take 
into account. None of these variables changes at the same rate, 
however, and some parts of an original plan might require immediate 
or frequent updates whereas others might not. All too often, 
heritage managers keep plans well past their “use-by” or expiration 
dates. Without a strict regime of plan review, chances are good that 
conditions will develop that can adversely affect the integrity of a 
place.

An Integrated Architecture
This paper proposes a model integrated architecture for a heritage site management plan that will provide site managers and subordinate staff with clear guidance on overarching aims and on-the-ground management action, along with objectively verifiable indicators of management success. The model architecture shown in Figure 1 recognizes a direct correlation between a plan’s effectiveness and its currency (that is to say, its up-to-dateness). It is based on the idea that heritage site management is a process that involves a number of steps and routines, namely identification, documentation, evaluation, formulation, implementation, and review. The flow chart in Figure 2 shows these steps in relation to public consultation.

**Site Management Plan**

The heritage site management plan is both hierarchical and modular and made up of an array of elements that are subject to periodic review depending on their place in the hierarchy. At the top of the hierarchy is the heritage site management master plan.

The master plan contains a brief physical description of the place, a concise contextual history, and a statement of significance. It includes a management policy that sets out the future use of the place, management objectives, and priorities in case of value conflict (for example, conservation versus access). It establishes
conservation standards and priorities, and it provides for the development and periodic revision of components subject to the policy.

The master plan relies on in-depth documentation of the history and physical fabric of a place for direction. This documentation may take the form of a single document or a set of subdocuments on the structures, landscapes, and archeology that define the place. The master plan abstracts pertinent information from these documents, to which it refers readers for information in depth. In the model architecture scenario, each of these documents has a subordinate research needs assessment that spells out the shortcomings in the knowledge base and identifies corrective measures. The history and physical fabric documents are subject to the same 10-year review cycle as the site management master plan, although they might be revised in the interim if new discoveries add substantially to the knowledge required for making management decisions.

The management objectives articulated in the site management policy will determine the nature and number of component plans. At the least, each place should have a physical conservation plan and a disaster management plan. If the site management policy encourages or requires visitation, then site interpretation and visitor management plans are in order. If the place involves moveable objects, then a collections management plan is imperative. That plan should contain acquisitions and curatorial policies spelling out how
and whether objects are to be obtained, exhibited, stored, conserved, and made available for study. At the very least, such places should have a security plan even if the place is not accessible to the public.

The component plans are based on assumptions that will change over time because of evolving social and environmental conditions. The triennial review and revision cycle for a component plan proposed in the model architecture strikes a reasonable balance between the urge to stay current and the need to keep planning in check. Figure 3 shows a development, implementation, and review sequence for a hypothetical site management plan based on the model.

The component plans in this model include brief implementation plan documents. The physical conservation plan features a maintenance plan that spells out, for example, how often the gutters should be cleaned, or how often the place should be checked for mud wasp infestation. A separate repair plan sets out the nature and specifications of work related to major repair needs that are identified in the physical conservation plan. The disaster plan includes a response plan that a heritage site manager and staff will consult and implement when necessary. As another example, the visitor management plan has a subordinate visitor monitoring plan for assessing whether visitor behavior and impacts turn out as initially forecast.
In the scenario, these implementation plan documents are subject to an annual review. The component plans should have a mechanism in place for an unscheduled review in the event that the execution of the implementation plans results in some unexpected and potentially counterproductive impacts. Figure 4 shows how the review of implementation plan and other documents can affect the overall site management plan.

**Basic Outline a Site Management Master Plan**

Figure 5 shows the outline of a site management master plan organized according to the model.

Section 1 of the model consists of summary information. Sections 2 and 3 include extracts from history studies and physical fabric documents, along with references. Section 4 sets out the statement of significance. Section 5 spells out the policy, which is a concise statement that refers back to the statement of significance and establishes the framework in which a place will be managed and used. This site management policy governs all future actions with regard to the place. It involves specific management objectives and priorities. In case of value or management priority conflicts, it provides guidance on how to solve them.
Section 6 sets out the constraints on the management of the place, which might involve staffing, training, access, or use issues. Current and future uses are described next. Together with the policy, they provide the practical framework in which the place is to be managed. The next sections consist of general comments and critical information on physical conservation and disaster preparedness extracted from the related component plans. Interpretation, visitor management, and security plans are essential if the site is to be made accessible to visitors.\textsuperscript{xvi} If the site contains valuable moveable objects, then a security plan is in order even if the site is not open to the public.

**Strategic Plan**

The strategic plan represented in Figure 6 collates all the actions identified in the component plans and prioritizes them based on economic and political realities. The strategic plan looks at all aspects of management, including capacity building. Each action included in the strategic plan should have a specific launch and completion date, along with objective and verifiable performance indicators. Heritage site managers should review the strategic plan half way through the plan cycle to ensure that their planning assumptions (funding levels, for example) and performance goals are still valid. Typically, a strategic plan has a life cycle of three to four years, depending on public funding and political cycles.\textsuperscript{xvii}
**Outlook**

Using this model integrated architecture, heritage site managers can ensure that the cultural significance of a place can be maintained and that all impacts are controlled or minimized. Its modular approach acknowledges that only parts of the plan may require revision at any point in time, which will help ensure that the plan remains current and can be implemented. There is nothing magical about making sure that heritage sites survive for people to enjoy: It is just a matter of adequate and diligent planning.

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Figure 1. This model integrated architecture for a heritage site management plan can provide clear guidance on overarching aims and on-the-ground management action.

Figure 2. This flow chart shows the steps in the heritage site management process in relation to public consultation.

Figure 1. The heritage site management planning process begins with a master plan, followed by physical conservation and other component and implementation plans.

Figure 4. The heritage site management master plan and component and implementation plans are subject to periodic review.
Figure 5. This outline for a master plan is based on the model integrated architecture for a heritage site management plan.

Figure 6. The heritage site management strategy takes economic and other factors into account.


v *Heritage Guidelines* (Brisbane, Australia: Queensland Department of Public Works, 2003)

vi “Guidelines to Approaches for Conserving Heritage Places,” *Heritage Information Leaflet* 1 no. 2; “Planning for Conservation Management,” *Heritage Information Leaflet* 1 no. 3; and *Model Brief for the Preparation of Conservation Plans* (Adelaide: South Australia Department for Environment and Heritage, 2006)


NO LISTING IN REFERENCES FOR SPENNEMANN 2005


This plan was first formulated in 2004. Dirk H.R. Spennemann, Heritage Site Management: Distance Education Study Package (Wagga Wagga, Australia: Charles Sturt University, 2004).
xvi A site management plans should include all headings as placeholders even if not applicable.

xvii Australia follows a 3-year political cycle, whereas the United States follows a 4-year cycle.