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Beyond Conflict

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Post-Occupancy Evaluation & Programming

Amending Discord to Create Harmonious Design: A case study

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Thematic Abstracts
Post-Occupancy Evaluation & Programming

Post-occupancy evaluations (POE) are a process of assessment meant to assist in making more informed design decisions to improve an existing building or to provide direction for future facilities. POEs focus on building occupants and their needs, and thus provide insights into the consequences of past design decisions and the resulting building performance. Through this systematic process, those aspects of design that are effective or that create the greatest problems can be identified, assessed and finally amended to provide for better design solutions in the future. But is this assessment process limited to only buildings and can it be expanded to holistically evaluate the building within the context of a site?

This session will discuss a post-occupancy evaluation pilot study that was carried out at two interpretive centers; buildings that were built to reflect the dynamic stories of a particular site and communicate the connection between the building and the site to its visitors. Interpretive centers throughout the country play a vital role in connecting people and place and therefore have very specific and unique design requirements. They are public buildings that reflect a particular region, specific site or community (natural or cultural) and serve as a link to these places and their unique stories. They provide visitors with a sense of meaning for a place; therefore they are inherently linked to the site and the significance of the site. The post-occupancy evaluation process must then assess not only the building performance in terms of its design but also how the integration of building, site, context and story work together to provide significant learning experiences for visitors. For example, if one of the main goals of an interpretive building is to serve as an introduction to the site, how does the design of the building accommodate for the integration of interior and exterior spaces and how does the building communicate this connection to the visitor? The results and methodology applied in this pilot study will demonstrate how the post-occupancy evaluation process can be revised to assess a building’s performance in these terms. Several research methodologies were utilized in this study including case study analysis of similar facilities; site visits; photographing the building and visitor interactions; document evaluation (building plans); interviews that identified the goals and needs of facility users (employees) and how building performance met these needs; and survey of visitors to evaluate the effectiveness of the building and visitor interaction (how it communicated the stories of the site to visitors as well as accommodated the various activities that take place in the facility). This paper will discuss the results of the pilot study and demonstrate how the post-occupancy evaluation process is an important tool in assessing the success of building design as well as the building’s relationship to the site and stories it was built to reflect.

Keywords: post-occupancy evaluation, case study, aesthetics/meaning/assessment, communication, interpretive center

Bridging the Gap between Programming and Design: Recent Experiences Teaching Health Care Studios in Architecture Schools

Organizers: Despres, Carole (Universite Laval, Quebec); Anthony, Kathryn (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign); Verderber, Stephen (Tulane University, LA) [Symposium]

This workshop session discusses recent experiences teaching programming and environment-behavior
A Critical Review of the McNamara Center: A Signature Facility in Conflict with Building Users

Corry, Shauna (University of Idaho) [Poster]

Signature buildings are considered to be the star facilities of many corporate, government, and university campuses. However, after the project has been completed the building owner and facilities team are left with solving a variety of problems. From inappropriate material selections and ineffective space plans, to health, safety, and welfare considerations, managing signature buildings has proven to be a challenge. This paper presents a critical review of a signature facility, the McNamara Alumni Center, designed by Antoine Predock. Critical review of signature facilities is necessary and needed in today’s climate of corporate branding and the resulting meaning ascribed to the built environment. The messages premiere architects are communicating to building users are, at times, in conflict with the prevailing objectives of the discipline of design. Research methodology for this critical review included on-site observations, personal focused interviews with facility team members, and a photographic analysis of facility use. These qualitative methods provide a richly textured portrait of the designs’ successes and failures. A content analysis was completed for both the facility photographs and the personal interviews/narratives and the data was analyzed and categorized according to the contextual framework outlined by Dickson and Carll White (1997). Emerging patterns suggest the following issues: 1) the relationship between the design program and the design solution’s concept; 2) the users’ perception and evaluation of and response to the design solution; 3) the facility’s contribution to supporting the values of the users; and 4) the facility’s contribution to promoting the quality of life of the users, are key in identifying design problems and the resulting conflicts users have with the building. Analysis of the findings suggest that although the center is an elegant design representing a beacon of knowledge, and serves...