

DERLEME / REVIEW

The Judicious Cultural Resources Management During Covid-19

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Abstract

People are experiencing unprecedented crisis worldwide that has affected livelihoods, lives, and the society's cultural and social fabric due to Covid-19. Covid-19 is significantly affecting cultural resources management (CRM) due to its effects on intangible, immobile, and mobile cultural heritage. further states that cultural resources encompass vital places, sites, and objects protected through various legislations which were not formulated to handle the unexpected and fast-moving variables resulting from the pandemic. Despite the extraordinary circumstances, cultural resources remain integral coping tools that provide livelihood opportunities and communities rely on them for psychosocial support.

Consequently, CRM stakeholders had to rally their response efforts immediately the pandemic started ravaging the entire globe to reduce its negative impacts on cultural heritage. As the sector started shifting focus and stabilizing to cope with Covid-19 regulations and restrictions, the need for assessing CRM sector's response efforts arose followed by identification of areas that needed instant corrections. The crisis process provided insights to help cultural resources managers to embrace event-driven shift by strategizing and capitalizing on the identified opportunities.

Keywords: Covid-19, CRM, Heritage Monuments, Traditional Architecture, Cultural Ecosystems.

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INTRODUCTION

CRM depends significantly on the food systems, public health, and economic and social wellbeing among other aspects which have negatively been impacted by the pandemic. Hence, according to Rahman (2020) the pandemic has undermined activities like protection and preservation of archeological resources, museum collections, cultural landscapes, prehistoric and historic structures, and ethnographic resources. However, like all other sectors, assessing how CRM has changed during the Covid-19 crisis proves fundamental in informing and tailoring partners and governments' responses to the impacts and changes resulting from the pandemic.

The current study aims to investigate CRM during covid-19. The study first addresses what CRM entails. It then focuses on CRM activities before the Covid-19 crisis. Third, it provides an overview of the Covid-19 outbreak and disruptions in CRM activities. Finally, the study discusses changes adopted in CRM approaches during Covid-19 pandemic to curb the spread of covid-19 and save lives.

What is CRM?

CRM entails preservation and protection of culturally valuable items including paintings, archeological sites, museum objects and historic buildings. CRM also captures the preservation of culturally significant, but intangible items like oral histories, language and folklore among other nonphysical cultural assets (Baldrice et al., 2020). Thus, the stewards of numerous integral cultural resources are guided by federal, local, state, and international laws that aim to preserve such resources. The preservation calls for research to find, assess, file, catalogue, and establish key information regarding cultural resources and the people who were traditionally associated with them (Baldrice et al., 2020). Accordingly, CRM programs also involve planning for seamless management processes that facilitate the setting of priorities and decision-making processes to integrate cultural resources information and foster association and consultation with other institutions. Hence, CRM encourages stewardship to protect and preserve cultural resources, maintain and treat them appropriately so that they can be in desirable conditions for the public to access, enjoy and understand.

Archeological sites are some of the major areas where CRM occurs. Archeological sites encompass many types of places where human activities took place in the past thereby leaving physical remains including prehistoric

archeological sites which lacks written records (Huete-Alcocer et al., 2020). Some of the common archeological sites are old farmsteads and homesteads, refuse heaps, burials, cemeteries, camps and villages, ceramic, stone and metal workshops, artifact caches and family plots. The Valley of the Temples is the world's largest archeological site in Sicily which is an astonishing Greek architecture and art outside Agrigento that United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) listed as a World Heritage Site in 1997 (Cozzolino et al., 2020). Pyramids of Giza, Tomb of Qin Shi Huangdi and Teotihuacán among others are also some of the world's most outstanding archeological sites. Such resources are important in providing solid evidence of cultural stories spanning several centuries. Theopetra Cave is the world's oldest archeological site. Kyparissi-Apostolika & Manolis (2021) revealed in 2012 that people lived in Theopetra Cave in the past 135,000 years after many decades of excavations and research, an aspect that makes it the oldest world's archeological site. Thus, CRM focuses on archeological sites because they are vaults containing cultural and historical artifacts that provide valuable information.

CRM also aims at protecting and preserving historic buildings. Historic buildings are antique structures with historic value that enable people to currently connect to them in some way through past events (Coppola et al., 2020). Vittala Temple Complex, Hampi, Karnataka is an example of a historical building which is recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site that attract tourists to visit India. The site is located within the ruined city of victory known as Vijayanagara that used to be the historic capital of the Vijayanagara Empire between 1336 and 1646 C.E (Reddy, 2020). CRM preserves such ancient buildings because they are witnesses to a city's cultural and aesthetic history that help individuals to connect to the past besides giving them a sense of place. The buildings frequently represent important or famous things to people living in a city alongside those visiting (Coppola et al., 2020). Thus, preserving historical buildings equally preserves history of places where they are located since such significant historic resources reveal the unique character of the surrounding communities. Therefore, CRM fosters historic preservation to connect communities and their people to their roots while adding to their quality of life.

Intangible resources form the final category of cultural heritage that United Nations' cultural wing, UNESCO strives to preserve through CRM. According to UNESCO, intangible cultural resources entail living expressions or

traditions that people inherit from ancestors like skills and knowledge for producing traditional artifacts, practices and knowledge concerning the universe and nature, oral traditions, festive events, performing arts, rituals, and social practices before passing on to their descendants (Bucuvalas, 2020). Intangible heritage are fragile resources which help communities to maintain their diversity despite the growing globalization by encouraging mutual respect for every individual's way of life and helping with intercultural dialogue. Intangible cultural resources are living, traditional and contemporary as they also present contemporary urban and rural practices that various cultural groups participate in besides representing past traditions. Hence, CRM entails intangible heritage protection which fosters the transmission of wealth of skills and knowledge from generation to generation because of the relevance of economic and social value of transmission of such skills to major social groups and minority groups within various states.

CRM Activities before Covid-19 crisis

Before Covid-19 pandemic, various institutions and organizations used to engage in numerous CRM activities without any limitations since doing so could not endanger people's lives. The far-reaching effects of Covid-19 and its containment measures have considerably taken toll on the initial CRM operations (Vrasida, 2021). Initially, several organizations hired staff who worked within the institutions regardless of their positions. Managers, restoration and maintenance personnel, and staff who dealt with the public directly used to work at the heritage sites and could always take paid holidays from the numerous projects in various monuments and museums (Vrasida, 2021). Temporary workers and freelancers also signed multiple contracts with several museums that remained their main source of livelihood for many years. Both temporary and permanent employees were certain about their jobs because of numerous activities that used to take place at various cultural sites.

Globally, securing contents of heritage sites and visitors was easier. Lockdowns were inexistent and staff and visitors could easily access the heritage sites (Vasilev, 2020). Staff did not need to work remotely, an aspect that did not raise concerns regarding the security of the sites and cultural resources in them. Open spaces, parks and gardens were frequently maintained and attended to through maintenance works that prevented decay. Post disaster reconstruction of cultural sites also used to be conducted immediately after devastating calamities

like earthquake because of restrictions like lockdowns and travel bans were inexistent. Heritage sites did not need to extend their working hours because they could receive many visitors at ago without having to spread them, distribute them by reservation, equip them with protective tools, or volunteers to help in managing them (Vasilev, 2020). Heritage institutions and sites did not need to take such considerations into account before covid-19. Besides, hygiene and security used not to be a key concern for tourists and heritage operators because people did not need to keep social distance while in public areas.

The heritage sector operated with fewer socioeconomic challenges before covid-19. Social and human capital was available since several stakeholders like volunteers who played a significant role in the field used to carry on with their activities (Agostino et al., 2020). Outreach programs which took place in rural areas bolstered cultural participation through physical attendance which strengthened social links. People directly related with the territory because there was no quarantine which has since isolated distant locations with information exchange and communication challenges. Networking and exchange of knowledge were also faster around the globe thereby promoting educational and cultural inclusion and equality because there were no travel bans.

The absence of covid-19 containment measures before the outbreak promoted a robust heritage and cultural ecosystems. Before the pandemic, heritage sector operators did not prioritize on digital transformation and all the large and small museums received visitors because online sharing of materials and collections was not their main source of revenue (Dragoni et al., 2019). Heritage organizations did not have to worry about digitalization gap which limits heritage and cultural diversity between bigger and smaller heritage institutions. Several heritage organizations in rural areas were not worried about their lack of digital skills as they remained active due to the absence of movement restrictions. Museums were also allowed to borrow and lend artworks at their convenience enabling European and international exhibitions to thrive because international borders were accessible (Dragoni et al., 2019). Intangible heritage also thrived since people were allowed to attend spring-related ceremonies and festivals among other events with guaranteed cultural value. Communities were allowed to gather in religious and other celebrations and rites that traditionally promoted exchange between foreign and local communities and intergenerational exchange that allowed people to share and transmit values and knowledge.

Finally, heritage operators were able to keep networks and ensure proper communication before the pandemic. Heritage operators made future plans without waiting for the frequently changing government updates and regulations (Xue et al., 2019). Public activities and events went according to plan without having to suspend revenues for gift shops, hotels and restaurants. Sponsors also invested funds and there were no project alterations and cash delays. Heritage institutions easily communicated their future arrangements to staff, audiences and volunteers because of the clear situation in which they operated in. Several sites and organizations did not have to work remotely and could fully access files without having to invest in staff training to facilitate home-office operations.

Covid-19 outbreak and disruptions in CRM activities

Covid-19's outbreak significantly impacted social and economic activities across various sectors thereby garnering policymakers' and citizens' attention in equal measure. A lesser-known impact of covid-19 is its resultant heavy strain on cultural heritage protection and preservation efforts (Hodor et al., 2021). As governments strived to curb the spread of the pandemic and save lives, they issued strict restrictions and guidelines that led to the shutdown of cultural heritage institutions, museums, restaurants, theatres, malls, libraries, schools and airports. As governments had no vaccine nor cure for the disease during its onset, they had to struggle with the mitigation of the damages that lockdowns caused to cultural heritage organizations and sites.

Covid-19 has had incredible effects on CRM activities over a short time. Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions led to immediate stoppage of critical cultural rehabilitation and restoration activities. For instance, the restoration of Topdara Stupa in Afghanistan shown in (Figure 1). below that dates from early AD had to stop due to covid-19 restrictions (Farrokh, 2018). The recent restoration and repair of the heritage site that led to successful tending to its base and drum was launched in 2016. However, one cannot tell whether the CRM activity will be completed for the stupa to stand complete because the entire structure should be rehabilitated appropriately.



Figure 1. Topdara Stupa in Afghanistan whose restoration stopped due to Covid-19 (Farrokh, 2018)

Similarly, the recently launched rehabilitation project in Mali's Tomb of Askia in Gao is also an example of a CRM activity that had to stop because of Covid-19 (Al-Said, 2020). The tomb is a unique pyramid structure shown in (Figure 2). below that consists of a cemetery and two mosques that represents West African Sahel's monumental mud-building culture. The rehabilitation of Sagrada Família, which is Spain's famous monument that was initially constructed in 1882 also stopped because of the imposed lockdown although the rehabilitation of the temple was to end in 2026.

Covid-19 has massively impacted CRM because of its effects on tourism and travel sector which cultural sector significantly relies on. Southeast Asian world heritage sites are perfect examples of regions whose CRM were negatively impacted by the pandemic as early as April, 2020 because of the 99 percent reduction in the number of visitors. Such sites epitomize important sources of employment to artisans, cultural organizations, associations, archeologists, and the local population. Thus, such significant impacts of the crisis have led several nations to



(Figure 1). Mali's Tomb of Askia in Gao whose restoration stopped due to Covid-19

embark on funds mobilization to provide financial support to people who relied on cultural heritage sector as their source of livelihood and prevent permanent closure of the sites. However, heritage sites need urgent funding to support pending activities and take care of other costs like providing healthcare to workers.

The pandemic also disrupted the Holy Week celebrations in Spain which took place during lockdown. The Passion of Jesus Christ that Catholics celebrate a week before easter annually by performing penance processions along every Spanish City's streets and town (McNamer, 2018). The social and cultural celebration draws huge numbers of local and international tourists who visit most popular destinations holding pronouncements and titles of global interests for Spain's tourists. In 2020, Easter time coincided with Covid-19 restrictions like social distancing requirements and the ongoing lockdown in Spain and across several countries in Europe (Santos Rutschman, 2020). People were unable to perform various religious and social activities particularly praying and their sacred sculpture (Pasos) procession as shown in (Figure 3). below further demoralized Spanish communities leading to their psychological and physical suffering (Moreno, 2020). With the objective of infusing hope and spreading resurgence messages among communities, numerous confraternities tried in Spain tried providing reach out by broadcasting Easter rituals live. Social media played an important role as some were able to send prayers or arranged live masses through Facebook, YouTube among other platforms. Children were also engaged by sending patterns of the capirotas (hoods) among families through email to enable them to conduct procession events at home.



(Figure 3). People performing religious and social activities as part of Easter rituals (Acevedo, 2020).

Finally, Covid-19 also interrupted Olympics which is a humanity's heritage event. The Olympic Games celebrations used to take place in the current Greece which was initially known as Olympia since ancient times like 9th or 10th centuries BC with the year 776 BC being its historical first reference (Stambulova et al., 2020). The event takes place after every four years. The competition initially consisted of a race only although other sports were progressively added during successive occasions within the subsequent twelve centuries. Athletes from all the parts of the Greek world which include the far western Spain (Iberia) and the eastern Turkey (Black Sea) traveled to attend the event. A lapsus occurred for 1502 years before the return of Olympics which took place in Athens Greece's capital in 1896. The International Olympic Committee in Paris was then established in 1894 before it was transferred to Switzerland's Lausanne during World War I. 28 games have since then been celebrate in various continents despite its cancellation thrice in 1916, 1940, and 1944 because of the World Wars (Stambulova et al., 2020). Thus, the cancellation of Olympic event in 2020 denied people the opportunity of looking back and celebrating the history of ancient Greece that led to the spread of people's love for games across borders that takes place after every four years. However, amidst the threat, people decided to preserve the intangible heritage by evolving and adopting to hopefully minimize the delayed cancellation period to just one year.

CRM approaches during Covid-19

Amidst various disruptions in CRM activities, people had to adhere to medical recommendations and laws. CRM personnel pay attention to safety and health guidelines to keep themselves healthy by taking measures that limited their risks of exposure to covid-19 (Little, 2020). As a result, covid-19 presented an opportunity for people to use traditional patterns in making masks to encourage others to wear the protective gear as part as outlined in health and safety rules issued by various governments. (Figure 4). below shows a picture of masks made using traditional patterns. The cultural habit of wearing face masks while in public places is recommended in many nations and many grabbed the opportunity to avail the important commodity that was not readily available.



(Figure 4).below shows a picture of masks made using traditional patterns (Little, 2020).

Tuning out distraction from the mediascape which was polluted with (dis)information, pandemonium and panic is another strategy that enabled CRM stakeholders to survive during covid-19 pandemic. An hour on social media was enough to send people to scramble rolls of toilet papers and face mask in towns (Gottlieb & Dyer, 2020). Thus, people had to grasp on facts to tune out exaggerated information whenever they spent too much time on news websites and social media. Many people focused on credible news sites like the World Health organization and CDC to get focused updates on the pandemic.

Personnel's safety has also been a priority during covid-19. Heritage institutions ensure that their personnel are safe by identifying those with higher risks of being infected like ones who dispose wastes or manage visitors and equipping them with the necessary protective gears (Moon, 2020). Heritage sites with social distancing measures in place have also been consulting with emergency management bodies on whether the need for closing or staying partially open and encouraging remote operations by non-essential employees in either case. Essential services employees like facility maintenance workers and security guards in heritage sites have also been getting necessary equipment and safety briefings besides following government health regulations like hygiene and sanitation. Staff have also been requested to monitor their health and stay in isolation in case of mild symptoms and whenever they get in contact with Covid-positive people. The heritage sites also had to install hand sanitizers and hand washing equipment to reinforce safety and health of staff, immediate communities and visitors of the institution (Moon, 2020). Cleaning of all surfaces has also proven helpful during Covid-19 besides isolating infected spaces at heritage sites to prevent the use of chemicals like bleach which can destroy historic objects and surfaces. Guidelines also had to be established for the

workers to ensure that they enter their offices, work and leave while safe by following disinfection, cleaning and washing protocols.

Finally, strategy for supporting intangible heritage came in handy during Covid-19 outbreak by adopting support systems for craft persons, artists and cultural bearers. CRM practitioners developed means of ensuring that their essential sustenance and survival needs relevant and dignified shelter, nutritious food, safe drinking water, access to markets, healthcare and education and clothing are met (Silberman, 2021). Psychosocial and mental health effects of the pandemic on communities, families and individuals also had to be considered. Short-term recovery mechanisms were also developed during covid-19 through restoration of access to equipment, cultural spaces, cash, supplies, tools, partnerships and connections with various appropriate schemes. Resilience building also had to be planned in the long run to reduce the risk of stresses and shock to livelihoods, physical health or wellbeing in future through creation of improved living environment (Silberman, 2021). Cultural bearers' voice also had to be amplified during covid-19 by connecting them with aid agencies to assist them and participating in humanitarian coordination programs to get information about the covid-19's effects on them. Cultural bearers also had to be connected with relevant institutions, groups, platforms and networks while ensuring regular communication and participation during the pandemic.

CONCLUSION

Covid-19 is significantly affecting cultural resources management (CRM) due to its effects on intangible, immobile, and mobile cultural heritage. As the sector started shifting focus and stabilizing to cope with Covid-19 regulations and restrictions that led to retrenchment of several workers who facilitated the management of cultural heritage, the need for assessing CRM sector's response efforts arose and areas that needed instant corrections were identified. The pandemic has undermined activities like protection and preservation of archeological resources, museum collections, cultural landscapes, prehistoric and historic structures, and ethnographic resources.

CRM involves cultural resources preservation and protection of culturally valuable items including paintings, archeological sites, museum objects and historic buildings. CRM encourages stewardship to protect and preserve cultural resources, maintain and treat them appropriately

so that they can be in desirable conditions for the public to access, enjoy and understand. The importance of focusing on archeological sites is because they are vaults containing cultural and historical artifacts that provide valuable information. Preserving historical buildings equally preserves history of places where they are located since such significant historic resources reveal the unique character of the surrounding communities. The protection of intangible heritage also fosters the transmission of wealth of skills and knowledge from generation to generation because of the relevance of economic and social value of transmission of such skills to major social groups and minority groups within various states.

Before Covid-19 pandemic, various institutions and organizations used to engage in numerous CRM activities without any limitations since doing so could not endanger people's lives. Both temporary and permanent employees were certain about their jobs because of numerous activities that used to take place at various cultural sites. Hygiene and security used not to be a key concern for tourists and heritage operators because people did not need to keep social distance while in public areas. Also, heritage sector operators did not prioritize on digital transformation and all the large and small museums received visitors because online sharing of materials and collections was not their main source of revenue. Museums were also allowed to borrow and lend artworks at their convenience enabling European and international exhibitions to thrive because international borders were accessible and heritage operators made future plans without waiting for the frequently changing government updates and regulations.

Covid-19's outbreak heavily strained cultural heritage protection and preservation efforts. Lockdowns and restrictions led to immediate stoppage of critical cultural rehabilitation and restoration activities like the restoration of Topdara Stupa in Afghanistan that dates from early AD. Rehabilitation projects in Mali's Tomb of Askia in Gao, rehabilitation of Sagrada Família, which is Spain's famous monument that was initially constructed in 1882 is also an example of a CRM activity that had to stop because of Covid-19. Such significant impacts of the crisis have led several nations to embark on funds mobilization to provide financial support to people who relied on cultural heritage sector as their source of livelihood and prevent permanent closure of the sites. In 2020, Easter time and Olympic event coincided with Covid-19 restrictions like social distancing requirements and the ongoing lockdown in Spain and across several countries in Europe. Thus, People were unable to perform various religious and

social activities and the opportunity of looking back and celebrating important historic events.

Finally, during the pandemic, CRM personnel have been paying attention to safety and health guidelines to keep themselves healthy by taking measures that limited their risks of exposure to covid-19. Many people focused on credible news sites like the World Health organization and CDC to get focused updates on the pandemic. Personnel's safety has also been a priority during covid-19. Guidelines also had to be established for the workers to ensure that they enter their offices, work and leave while safe by following disinfection, cleaning and washing protocols. CRM practitioners developed means of ensuring that their essential sustenance and survival needs relevant and dignified shelter, nutritious food, safe drinking water, access to markets, healthcare and education and clothing are met.

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