



YoungArchers

Module 4

The YoungArchers
Building Recording Form



How to document the true story of a building: Guidelines for educators



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Module Description

This module aims at providing guidance to two main target users, namely primary school teachers and their students, about “How to document the true story of a building”. Section 1, introduces the architectural heritage documentation procedure. Section 2, provides detailed information about how to complete the Young ArchHers Building Recording Form. Section 3, provides basic guidelines for photographing a heritage building, considering also the needs of learners with disabilities. Finally, Section 4, provides a glossary for educators that can be used to solve any possible questions related to the styles foreseen in the YoungArchHers project.



Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this module, learners will be able to:

- Describe the architectural heritage documentation procedure.
- Explain the structure and the content of a Building Recording Form.
- Use Building Recording Forms in class.



Section 1: Introducing the architectural heritage documentation procedure

The documentation of buildings of historic and architectural value constitutes a substantial step towards their protection. Via the documentation procedure, the number of heritage buildings of a city and their state of conservation can be recorded, helping both the authorities and local communities manage, protect and promote urban architectural heritage.

The YoungArchers project invites primary school teachers to mediate the concepts of built heritage protection and preservation through an experiential learning process involving in-situ observation, building photography and the completion of a Building Recording Form, a key tool for the documentation of heritage buildings by elementary school students.

Completing this form is a procedure of vital importance in the framework of the suggested activities, as it will guide students through unveiling and consequently narrating the hidden stories of emblematic heritage buildings in their urban contexts. It is further expected to help them consider even abandoned buildings not just as "empty shells", rather as landmarks inextricably linked with the stories of people who used them and/or lived in their premises.

This process could be upgraded by further including primary and secondary research techniques, such as archives consultation, bibliographic research and the collection of oral evidence: conducting interviews with current and former residents could help validate and enrich the information collected via the Building Recording Form for heritage buildings.



Section 2: Completing the YoungArchers Building Recording Form

In the framework of educational walks through important heritage buildings of their city (cf. Module 5, Lesson Plans), students are encouraged to directly fill in the sections they can easily obtain information about. If a particular question is difficult to be answered on the spot, students are encouraged to add it to Section VII at the end of the form for future processing.



Accessibility and special needs of students

In order to help you, as an educator, take into account the possible accessibility needs of your students, we are adding a dedicated recommendations section entitled "Accessibility and Special Needs of Students", to support you in including all of your students within each activity.

1. Location of the building

- Students are invited to collect information with respect to the exact location of the building. Educators can advise them to look for the street's name and the building's number, and/or ask neighbours the name of the neighbourhood.

Example:

- **Country:** Greece



- **City:** Athens
- **Neighbourhood:** City centre
- **Address:** 11 Ermou Street



Accessibility and special needs of students

Some of your students may be visually impaired or even completely blind and may not be able to observe the monument visually. Others may have difficulty in expressing themselves.

In this case, it is important to create groups of students to carry out the activity and to give a specific role to students with disabilities.

For example, you can give them the role of the “validator”. It will be up to these students to validate the chosen description. This will ensure that the description is sufficiently precise and explained in a way that is understandable.

Another possibility is to prepare the collection of information in advance by doing an online research. This role, the “fact-checker”, can be specifically dedicated to students who will have less opportunity to participate in the project.

2. Use(s) of the building

- Students are invited to find out and note down the past and present uses of the building. There could be cases where these uses are unknown, or different uses are connected with different levels of the



building (like a shop or a museum on the ground floor, apartments on the rest of the floors).

Example:

- **In the old days:** House
- **Nowadays:** Hotel



Accessibility and special needs of students

This activity may involve interacting with people occupying the building. In the case of deaf students, it will be important to allow them to participate fully by anticipating the exchanges and allowing a mediation interface, such as a sign language interpreter.

In addition, it is important to anticipate these exchanges to ensure that students in wheelchairs can eventually access the building to make contact with the people to be interviewed.

3. How would you describe the building's exterior?

- Students are asked to observe and provide information regarding the exterior of the heritage building. They are invited to consider each constituent part and the elements on the building's "shell" that link it to a specific architectural style: its walls, windows, doors and building materials.



- The “Construction” section refers to the elements that help the different parts of the building hold together: construction materials may vary from stone and bricks, for older buildings, to concrete and steel, for the more recent ones. Construction details may include merely decorative morphological elements like a mural, or special architectural features, like an ornate entrance, a staircase, a balcony and so on.

External features

- **Number of floors:** Ground floor plus number of levels
- **Windows/Doors:** Number of windows and doors, frames made of wood/metal
- **Walls:** Covered with plaster / made of bricks / engraved lines
- **Roof:** Tiled roof / flat roof / domes
- **Form:** Symmetrical, simply decorated, elaborate
- **Colour(s):** White/off-white / other (specify)

Construction

- **Materials:** Stone/brick/concrete/steel/metal/wood/natural materials
- **Details:** Elaborate decoration, engravings, sculptural details, arches, domes, elaborate staircases/entrances/doorsteps (made of...)
- **Surroundings:** A garden, a yard (if any)
- **Architectural style(s):** neoclassical / eclectic / modern or any local variations



- **Other:**



Accessibility and special needs of students

Educators could encourage the students to describe the surface of a building by touching it, if possible. Furthermore, students could be encouraged to work in groups, each one focusing on one aspect of the building's features, depending on their abilities.

4. What is your impression of the building?

Students are invited to

- write a short comment or a longer description
- insert a photo or draw a picture

in order to depict how they personally perceive the building.



Accessibility and special needs of students

Multiple options are given to students, so they can express their impressions depending on their preferences and abilities. It is important for teachers to encourage their students to express themselves freely and think outside of the box, so that all students can feel included.

5. Let's discover the story of the building!

- Back to the classroom, students are encouraged to research the year of construction and the overall history of the building. Any inscriptions on the building could reveal more about its past or present uses.
- In case educators opt for a more extended investigation, they might also encourage students to ask present or past tenants about possible connections of the building with major historical events, important persons that might have lived/worked on its premises or even designed it (e.g. a renowned artist, politician, writer or architect). In the last question of the section, students are invited to write down a story that a person related to the building (a neighbour / a family member / other) has told them about it, or even a story they can imagine about the different “lives” of the building.



Accessibility and special needs of students

As mentioned previously, when an activity involves interacting with the people in the building, it is important to prepare it beforehand and provide the means for all the students to participate in the activity.

In the case of deaf students, a sign language interpreter could be needed.

Students in wheelchairs will need proper access to the building as well.

6. Is the building well preserved? Is it at risk?

- In this section, students are encouraged to observe the conservation status of the heritage building, as well as collect information about its accessibility and visiting capacity. Additionally, they are asked to look for any dangers the building faces, and note down their emotional reaction at the sight of it. Possible dangers would include pollution, abandonment, lack of protection (or lack of funding to protect it), but also the excessive economic growth of the area. Finally, students are invited to come up with a “nickname” for the heritage building.



Accessibility and special needs of students

As mentioned previously, students could be encouraged to work in groups, each one focusing on one aspect of the building's features, depending on their abilities.

There are different roles to distribute, such as the “validator” of the information and the “fact checker”.

7. Is the building accessible?

This section is important as it raises the awareness of students with regards to the accessibility of their surroundings. It is important to explain to the students that any accessibility barriers can affect a person’s experience, and prevent them from exploring the building.

FFZ principles: free passage, flat surface, zero barriers

a. Free passage

The passageways should have sufficient width and height, and be free of obstacles.

For example, if people want to go from point A to point B, they need enough space to be able to pass each other easily.

It is recommended that paths outside the building should be at least 120 to 180 cm wide. Narrow paths should always have a minimum width of 90 cm. Signage, flags or other overhanging stuff should allow for a free height of 210 to 230 cm.



b. Flat surface

A surface needs to be flat or slightly sloping. It should be continuously paved and safe, also in wet or frozen conditions.

Therefore, it is essential to use some slip-resistant material for the pavement. A lot of accidents are caused by tiny level differences.

c. Zero barriers

Zero barriers means avoiding all obstacles on a path. Even the smallest gap can cause problems: a white cane can get stuck, just like high-heeled shoes.



Accessibility and special needs of students

Disabled students can be appointed the “experts” when it comes to this activity. Their role can be to advise other students on different barriers. The teacher can ask the “experts” about different accommodations they would suggest for improving the accessibility of the building or its surroundings.

8. Things you might still wish to know about this building

- This section is dedicated to questions that students might have found especially challenging and/or to additional queries they might have.



Section 3: Guidelines for photographing a heritage building

Before setting out on architectural walks, students should be informed about the importance of photographing the visited heritage buildings in order to record their existence, details and overall position within their respective urban contexts.

In case school regulations allow it, students should be encouraged to photograph using their cell phones, or simple digital cameras; otherwise, one or two students from each participating group could be designated as “Photographers” of the activity of building recording. Students should be further advised to avoid including people or cars in their frames.

It would also be advisable to photograph every aspect of the building, if possible, and also create some angle photos. Moreover, students could take pictures of the street where the building is located, its surroundings and any details on its surface that they find interesting or attractive (such as windows, arches, ornaments, inscriptions, etc.).



Accessibility and special needs of students

With proper guidance, visually impaired students can take pictures!

This can be organised as a group activity, where some students are the “photographers” and others are “advisers” who work together to guide each other to take the best pictures possible while respecting the privacy of people around the building.



Section 4: Architectural styles: A glossary for educators

As already explained in previous Modules, the YoungArchHers activities focus on heritage buildings across partner cities (Athens, Barcelona, Nicosia and Paris) constructed between 1850 and 1960. Below you can find a basic grouping of architectural styles popular at that time across Europe.



- **Neoclassical architecture:** buildings like ancient temples with symmetry; columns, pediments.

Neoclassical architecture is an architectural style that emerged during the 18th and 19th Centuries in Europe, as a revival of Classical architecture. It is characterised by symmetry of composition, use of columns, pediments and other ancient Greek or Roman details. In most parts of Europe, it also refers to grandeur of scale.

Examples of neoclassical buildings:



Figure 1. Phaneromeni Girls School, Nicosia, 1925. (Source: YoungArchHers)



Figure 2. Museo Martorell, Barcelona, 1882. (Source: [Ajuntament de Girona, Public Domain](#))



Figure 3. National Archaeological Museum of Athens, Athens, 1891. (Source: Monumenta)



- **Eclectic architecture:** a style combining many older styles, a lot of decoration, sculptures, arches, etc.

Eclecticism in European architecture emerged in the second half of the 19th Century, as an attempt to renew the architectural vocabulary via a combination of elements of various previous historical styles. Such a combination of styles could include a selection of decorative motifs, ornaments, sculptural elements from other times and countries (roman architecture, renaissance and baroque). The main centre of European eclecticism lies in Paris and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. In Greece, it appeared after the 1900s.

Examples of eclectic buildings:



Figure 4. Palais Garnier - Opéra Nationale de Paris, 1861-1874. Source: Opera National de Paris)



Figure 5. Sagrada Família, Barcelona, 1882–present.(Source: Basílica de la Sagrada Família)



Figure 6. Megaro Metohikou Tameiou Stratou (Army Share Fund Building), Athens, 1939. (Source: Monumenta)



- **Modern architecture:** buildings like boxes, simple geometric forms

Modernism in architecture gradually emerged during the first decades of the 20th Century, in an attempt to create simple, functional buildings, making use of the newly developed technical advances and materials of the era, especially reinforced concrete. The forms of the modern architecture are simple, abstract and geometric, with almost no decorative details, depending on the exact period and place of creation, and are inspired by industrial achievements (buildings like airplanes, like ships, like “machines”) according to the “form-follows-function” approach. The Bauhaus art and design movement founded in 1919 in Weimar, made Germany an extremely important source for modernism-related ideas in architectural design.

Examples of modern buildings:



Figure 7. Maison La Roche, Paris, 1923–1925. (Source: Fondation le Corbusier)



Figure 8. Apartment building and Astoria Cinema, Barcelona, 1933–1934. (Source: Cinema Treasures)



Figure 9. Diamantopoulos house, Loukianou and Charitos Str., Athens, 1928–1929. (Source: Monumenta, Photographer: Jeff Vanderpool)



Resources

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Online resources

- [International Committee for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement.](#)
- [For the Protection of Natural and Architectural Heritage in Greece and Cyprus.](#)
- [Discover inspiring cultural heritage from European museums, galleries, libraries and archives.](#)
- [OBIAA Accessible Buildings Checklist: Comprehensive.](#)
- [FFZ requirements - Transmedia Catalonia.](#)