

**QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES IN ESTABLISHING AND
MAINTAINING A LOCAL STUDIES CENTER: THE CASE OF THE
CAVITE STUDIES CENTER OF DE LA SALLE
UNIVERSITY-DASMARINAS**

by

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INTRODUCTION

Local collection building has become one of the major thrusts in university-based Philippine libraries because of the need to showcase local identity. Initially, this collection usually starts as part of the Filipiniana collection but as the number of materials increase and its organization becomes more complex, the apparent need arises to separate these materials from the Filipiniana section and to showcase the collection as one section of the library. In the early 1990's, some universities started to appreciate the value of local studies because Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) and State Colleges and Universities (SUC's) in the Philippines were mandated to respond to the need of the immediate community especially in developing research programs and community extension projects. With this as a mandate, some universities responded by accumulating materials designed to orient the researches on the facts, issues, and problems confronted by the immediate community. Other universities also took action by strengthening their local culture materials in their respective libraries. However, such initiatives emanating from the library do not signify an adequate action to speed-up the local collection development. There has to be one academic unit in the

university or school setting that should focus and specialize in this activity. Because of this need, the establishment of a local studies center has become an indispensable effort in developing local collection.

This paper is an attempt to explain the role of the local studies centers in the Philippines especially its distinct capacity to collect local materials. The discussion focuses on the questions and challenges in establishing and maintaining a local studies center. As a case in point, the paper shall zero in on the Cavite Studies Center of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas in Cavite, Philippines.

RATIONALE

The Cavite Studies Center was created to contribute and make an impact on national and local historical scholarship as well as to keep track of the exciting future developments in the province of Cavite. The primary objective of the center is to translate into action the university's vision-mission of "undertaking research focusing on Cavite history and culture." The main activities of the CSC include conducting an in-depth research, writing and publishing Cavite town histories as well as documenting the traditions intertwined with the historical development of the province. The building of an extensive library collection form a significant part of the center as a resource for faculty, researchers, and scholars. In addition, galleries of historical artifacts and visual arts focused on Cavite are part of the long-range plan of the center. It was envisioned by the former President of De La Salle University-System, the late Br. Andrew Gonzalez, that the Cavite Studies Center of De La Salle University – Dasmariñas will become one of the major studies centers in the Philippines.

Researches and scholars will visit the center to obtain credible data that will be needed in achieving scholarly and in-depth studies on local and national history and culture.

HISTORY

The idea of gathering materials about the history and culture of Cavite was informally conceptualized during the time of Emilio Aguinaldo College (EAC) president, the late Dr. Paulo Campos. With a meager budget, the Social Sciences Department chair Prof. Dominador del Rosario, was tasked to do research in the province. When DLSU purchased EAC in 1987, Bro. Andrew Gonzalez, then the incumbent president of DLSU-System, sent Mr. Del Rosario to Cebuano Studies Center at San Carlos University in Cebu to study and make recommendations about setting up a studies center in DLSU - Cavite. As a result of his trip, the center was formally institutionalized by naming it as the Cavite Studies Center.

The Cavite Studies Center was initially housed in the second floor of the unrenovated administration building (formerly records section). A museum (Museo Caviteño) was organized to house Cavite artifacts donated by students. Museo Caviteño started with only one *escaparate*. Major changes took place when Emilio Aguinaldo College was bought by De La Salle University-System. It was during this time that the center was transferred from the administration building to the first floor (left wing) of the main building of Emilio Aguinaldo Library. A coordinator was also appointed exclusively for the center. Because of these changes, the CSC, with the Museo Caviteño was formally detached to the Social Sciences Department and created as a separate unit of the university.

Mr. Bernard Esternon, the first coordinator of the Cavite Studies Center was succeeded by Mr. Teresita P. Unabia. At that time, little budget was still allotted for the

center. A few books can be found in the CSC office but these were loans from the library. The pictorial collections of Cavite during the revolution which were acquired during del Rosario's (through the help of Dr. Paulo Campos) time were displayed. There were only few bound local history students projects and papers on local history in the vertical file.

The initial publications of the Cavite Studies Center came out in 1989 and 1990 respectively. These included a baseline survey on Cavite researched by Celso R. Gutierrez and a monograph on the socio-economic impact of De La Salle University-Emilio Aguinaldo College and the De La Salle University-Emilio Aguinaldo College of Medicine. During the coordinatorship of Ms. Teresita Unabia, biographical sketches of Cavite revolutionists and prominent Caviteños (1996) and Cavite Historical Calendar (1997) were published.

In the early summer (February) of 1997, Mr. Emmanuel Calairo was appointed as consultant of the Cavite Studies Center. Mr. Calairo then was connected as a faculty of DLSU-Manila Department of History. After a year (June 1998), Mr. Calairo was appointed to head the Cavite Studies Center. It was during his term that the title of coordinator was modified into director. Likewise, Museo Caviteño was absorbed by the newly created Museo De La Salle.

Since 1998, CSC actively formulated projects and programs which until now are being implemented. Among the major activities include sponsoring of annual historical awareness campaign which comprises a tribute to Cavite historian, book launchings and annual seminars on Cavite. Since 1996, the Cavite Studies Center has been continuously launching publications about the history and culture of Cavite. Almost all the sponsored activities of the Center are in coordination with the Cavite Historical Society, the National

Historical Institute, the Provincial Government of Cavite and selected municipalities of Cavite.

One of the most important reasons for the CSC existence is its vast collection of historical materials about Cavite, the Caviteños and its participation to the Philippine Revolution which range from archival sources in print and in microfilm/microfiche format. To maximize the collection building and linkages, a consultant was hired in 2002. Subsequently, a resident writer was incorporated in the center to insure the stability of research and writing about Cavite. Added to the manpower of the center were selected faculty from the Social Sciences Department who were deloaded to help CSC in its various projects. Because of pressures in its various programs, an inhouse editor (publications coordinator) and a research personnel were appointed to take care of the center's publications and the organization of its collection. Subsequently, an events coordinator was appointed to look after the programmed activities for the year and to function as a think tank for the center's upcoming endeavors.

PROGRAM

The Cavite Studies Center program can be divided into three. These are programs that are continuously undertaken by the Center through the years such as conducting research and studying the cultural history of Cavite, the development of its library collection, and the promotion of Caviteño history and culture.

Research

Research is the major role played by a local studies center in a university. As an academic based unit, it is mandated to conduct research so that there would be a continuous discovery of local knowledge. In Cavite, there are still a lot of information that need to be discovered and brought into the attention of the general public. Some local information are already made part of the topics discussed in local newspapers, parish souvenir programs and school publications. An indepth study has to be made by the academic sector in order to fully document local information. The purpose is not only to capture the vanishing local materials but also to recommend possible actions for its preservation and development.

In the DLSU-D experience, CSC directly belongs under the management of the Vice Chancellor for Academics and Research (VPAR). There are only two institutional research units under the VCAR: the University Faculty Research Office (UFRO) which is designed to initiate and monitor faculty researches and the Cavite Studies Center which is specifically created to conduct research on Cavite province. As an academic unit, the CSC was allotted its own research budget for the development of its library collection and also for its other operations and programs. UFRO provides budget for faculty researchers conducting studies on Cavite which is supervised by the Cavite Studies Center. Incentives include teaching deloading and financial support in the research implementation. Both budgets (UFRO/CSC) support the collection development building of the Center.

The CSC initially conducts documentations on local history and culture specifically by :

- gathering data from parish, municipal and/or provincial archives;

- collecting available memoirs and other writings about local revolutionaries, heroes and outstanding citizens;
- photoduplicating documents found in the Philippine National Library, the Philippine National Archives (PNA), the UST Central Library and Archives, and in other institutions where rare collections are available;
- videotaping local folklore, customs and traditions;
- tape-recording of interviews recounted by elderly citizens or those who have intimate knowledge and experiences about certain historical events, local traditions and celebrations and cuisines;
- identifying and videotaping local historical spots;
- acquiring through donations, exchange, or purchase important historical documents, manuscripts, journals, books, etc.

Developing the Library Collection

The main component of the Cavite Studies Center is the library collection. It is envisioned that the library will cater researchers and scholars not only those inside the campus but also those coming from Manila and other regions in the country. The library collection features rare collection of books, data in microfilm and microfiche format, original and photocopied archival documents and other printed materials coming from personal collections of the Caviteños. Dubbed as *The Cavite Studies Center Library*, the following can be found in this section:

Caviteniana Collection – printed materials focusing on Cavite publications

General Reference - includes Filipiniana section, books related on research in general and other materials pertinent in conducting historical and cultural studies

Periodicals – highlights local periodicals such as newspapers and magazines coming from Cavite and Southern Luzon areas.

Microfilm/Microfiche collection - rare publications in macrofilm and microfiche reels. To date, the center has two sets of microfilm/microfiche reading equipment. It has rare periodicals in microfilm focusing on the Philippines in general dating from the Spanish period up to the American times. The CSC also has more than 500 titles of rare books printed in the Philippine and abroad in microfiche format. The first 150 microfilm reels of the Philippine Revolutionary Records are part of the CSC collection at present. It is expected that within the next five years, the collection will be doubled making it the first and only local studies center in the archipelago with such kind of information.

Archival/Documents – collections of photocopied documents during the Spanish and American era in the Philippines. To date, the center already has a vast collection of photocopied documents from the Records Management and Archives Office (formerly the Philippine National Archives). This includes the making of towns, local elections, registered businesses, education, etc. The center has already photocopied rare documents from selected local government agencies which include municipal council minutes during the American period, resolutions, and others. These collections are continuously growing depending on the availability of funds coming from internal and external sources.

Special Collections – materials donated or on-loan to the center. At present, the collections contain materials given by Cesar E.A. Virata and the family of Alfredo Saulo. Photo collections also form part of the special collections. These include rare photographs classified according to sources such as the Ricafrente Collection, the Pangilinan Collection and the Diwa Collection among others. Musical compositions of Josefino Cenizal, famous Caviteño composer can also be found in this section.

The CSC has a reading area where students and researchers can do their research works.

Awareness Campaign

To continue the discourse on Cavite history and culture inside and outside the university is the major reason why CSC instituted its annual historical awareness campaign. The campaign is designed to gather research updates, materials not yet known and recognize

persons who promoted the Cavite history and culture. As a result, three activities were initially launched in 1999 but after five years, the campaign grew from three months into a year long campaign.

Tribute to local historian

In order to fully appreciate the works of those who documented the history and culture of Cavite, an annual recognition of Caviteños who contributed to the development of local studies was formulated. This activity was developed not only to recognize individuals who made local studies popular but also as a way to enrich the CSC collection. Usually, recognized persons have their own library collections which they use during their research. In the CSC experience, their collection was a rich source of researched materials which are not usually available in public libraries and bookstores. They are the products of long time research conducted either in the community (grassroot level) or specific repositories of materials such as archives and other special collections. It was through this activity that CSC managed to convince some recognized individuals or their relatives to donate either a part or the entire collection. If they could not donate or loan the materials due to sentimental reasons, an opportunity to at least photocopy some of those which are rarely seen in public and private libraries is encouraged.

Publications

The center etched a mark in Philippine libraries and bookstores because of its continuing thrust in information dissemination. There are two types of publications under the CSC. One aspect is the dissemination of information to update the public regarding its

activities through its bi-annual newsletter and the publication of its researches and output from its sponsored seminars/conferences. The other component, that is the publication which is a product of CSC research and which is not usually seen in a library setting, shall be discussed in details.

Because of the importance of academic research in the community, the Center looked for agencies or societies that could help them disseminate its research output. Since the focus is on history and cultural studies, the center was lucky to come across the Cavite Historical Society, Inc. (CHS) as partner association in publishing the CSC research outputs. The interests of CHS in CSC researches are particularly due to the following reasons:

1. CHS's main thrust is to promote research but since members are mostly not academicians, they don't have the needed academic training to do the task. CHS members are usually politicians, businessmen and retired individuals who are vanguards of historical consciousness in the province. Research and documentation are usually done through the help of people coming from the academe.
2. Funded CSC research outputs published by CHS give the historical society prestige and honor because these were already recognized in the academic circle. Two of its publications were nominated in the national books awards, one of which won the 2006 national book awards.
3. CHS saw CSC as a partner institution that will realize their goal which is to foster the identity of the Caviteños. CSC is equipped with young researchers who are idealistic and who can continue to realize the vision of the organization.

4. It's not a one sided activity rather than an equal opportunity for both. The CSC was funded by the university to come up with credible research output. After its completion, the CHS will fund the publication and printing of the university output. One complements the other, both CSC and CHS work together to realize their respective goals.
5. Because of their collaboration, CHS and CSC became a potent force in promoting local history not only in the province but also in the national level.

Annual seminar on local history and culture

Conceptualized in 1998, this activity is a way to update the center and the public about the researches conducted by faculty, researchers, and other scholars coming from various academic institutions and associations. Since the beginning, it became an instrument to gather materials which are products of painstaking research either through personal initiatives or part of the graduate studies. As a result, the center compiled a compendium of studies on Cavite which is not funded by the University and which is not usually found in various libraries because majority of which is not yet published. In addition, the seminar became a yearly forum to discuss issues on Cavite history and culture. Each year, the center usually comes up with a specific theme. This has been the usual scenario since 1998. Cavite historiography, provincial modernization, local migration, religious institutions in Cavite, folk arts, Cavite myths and legends, and folk medicines were some of the themes in the previous seminars. Papers presented in some of the seminars observed were published by the Cavite Historical Society and the National Historical Institute. The annual seminar which is initially hosted by DLSU-Dasmariñas now rotates in various institutions. Among them were

the Cavite State University, Imus Institute, Philippine Christian University and the Aguinaldo Shrine. The seminar is currently in its ninth year.

Regional/National Conference

Part of CSC's awareness campaign is the interface with other local studies centers and historical associations to further foster the value of local history and culture in the Philippines. The purpose of this activity is both for enrichment and for establishing camaraderie with other local agencies in the Philippines. Through this activity, CSC better understands and discovers the uniqueness and dynamism of various local studies centers. Also, the activity became a venue in sharing research outputs through a forum jointly sponsored by other studies centers. In the case of CSC, it has already conducted interfaces with the following local studies centers:

Central Luzon Studies Center, Central Luzon State University (Muñoz, Nueva Ecija)

JDN Center for Kapampangan Studies, Holy Angel University (Angeles, Pampanga)

Center for Batangas Studies, Lyceum of Batangas (Batangas City)

Center for Mindoro Studies, Divine Word College Calapan (Oriental Mindoro)

In the national level, the center became a local convenor (partner) in the 25th National Conference on Local History and Culture with the theme *Focus on Cavite Studies and Beyond*. It was sponsored by the Philippine National Historical Society in collaboration with the Cavite Historical Society, the Provincial Government of Cavite and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

LINKAGES

CSC's success caught the attention of several universities. As a result, representatives from some institutions visited the center or invited and requested the CSC director to assist them in establishing their own local studies centers. The following were centers that was established through the backings of the CSC.

Centers	Academic Institution
Batangas Heritage Center	University of Batangas
Center for Batangas Studies	Lyceum of Batangas
Center for Mindoro Studies	Divine Word College Calapan Mindoro

POINTERS IN ESTABLISHING/MAINTAINING A LOCAL STUDIES CENTER

After a decade of active promotion of local heritage and meeting with various local studies centers, academic institutions, NGO's, and national, provincial and municipal governments, the Cavite Studies Center already outlined the following factors that will ensure the success of a local studies center. This is just an attempt to suggest or recommend some ideas which are believed to be important specifically in addressing concerns in the establishment and maintaining a local studies centers.

1. Goals/Objectives

The development and drafting of the objectives and goals of the center must be in line with the regional development thrust and the provincial development agenda. They should be specific. If the center is part of a university, the center's objective should be directly or

indirectly articulated in the vision-mission of the institution. It is also important that when formulating the objectives, the university development plan should be consulted. Such would become a basis for the existence of the center and its relevance in attaining the regional and provincial programs. Usually, regional development goals are translations of the national development plan. Thus, the Center became a partner of the national government towards the attainment of its goals. The Philippines is culturally diversified and it promotes various ethnic identities. It becomes the responsibility of the government to acquaint the people with the various cultural identity in order to fully understand and appreciate the national identity of the Filipinos. In this regard, local studies centers became an effective instrument in attaining such objectives. Understanding the identity historically and culturally is an effective tool in appreciating every ethnic communities in the archipelago.

Academic based

It is important that a local studies center should be based in the academe. One major reason for this is that the Center may not be affected by a change of administration. In the government sector, it is usually the case with that of the executive, either the governor or the mayor that when their term expires, so is with their programs. When the newly elected or appointed ones come in, old projects were usually shelved and new ones are formulated. The continuity of the programs or projects solely depends upon the incumbent officer's desire whether he will push through with the programs left by the past administration. In the academic setup, the center is usually created as one unit of the university. Thus, even if the university administrator's term expires, the center still exists and its program will be carried on by the new appointee. Since it is a unit in the university, it shall have the privilege to

have its own facility or office space, have a separate annual budget for its operation, and be given priority in the use of other school facilities whenever there is an upcoming program. In addition, since it is a component of the academe, it is usually connected in the area of academics especially in research undertaking. Majority of the centers that the CSC has established linkage were managed by faculty who were deloaded from their teaching task. Some of them didn't receive honorarium to compensate their work but they were given lesser teaching loads to man the center. Personnels were also faculty coming from the Social Sciences Department and they were utilized as researchers. Another advantage of being academically based is that it earned an image of a very reputable agency which is the guardian of local identity. Reputable in this context means it follows a sense of scholarship which makes its output a result of a systematic study using methodologies and theories coming from various disciplines. Thus, the research result, after having evaluated and revised, becomes unquestionable and could be used as basis in developing policies in the local level.

In a cultural studies center, it is a strong conviction that the academe should be the agency that will carry out the task of research rather than the task coming from the local government units or NGO's. What is being stressed here is to capture the local identity of a people which is very significant in the local level. When speaking about establishing the truth, researchers usually refer to studies that make use of methodologies in obtaining data. Making them more systematic would mean using the needed analytical tools to make the conclusions more valid. Usually those in the academe are equipped with the trainings obtained from their graduate and post graduate works. In conducting local research, it is then

suggested that the community and the researcher concerned should collaborate in order to come up credible results.

Sustained linkage

Since the objective of the center is to respond to the research needs of the province in particular and the region in general, it is a must for the center to establish linkages with the provincial government and non-governmental organizations whose objective is in line with the thrust of the local studies center. In the case of Cavite, the CSC is usually invited to attend provincial affairs which concern the promotion and preservation of cultural heritage. Among the activities included the drafting of the tourism plan, unveiling of historical markers, re-enacting historical events, preserving historical sites, and also in recognizing people who contributed in the development of the province and the nation. CSC in this activities became direct participant in planning an event or consultant in developing programs. Because of active participations in provincial activities, the Center is considered as a partner in cultural development. As a result, the provincial government co-sponsors projects of the center. The center, since 1998, has been collaborating with the Cavite Historical Society (CHS). The CHS is composed of members of town historical societies and also of other interested scholars who are keen in the preservation and conservation of the cultural heritage of Cavite. CHS, for almost a decade has already been a partner of the Cavite Studies Center. The former being the agency that is funding the research projects and events of the center while the latter is responsible in conceptualizing activities that will realize CHS objectives. Also, at the national level, the Center is a constant partner of the National Historical Institute (NHI) and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) in

promoting local and national heritage. In addition, CSC also active in collaborating with national historical organizations such as the Philippine National Historical Society (PNHS), Asosasyon ng mga Dalubhasa at may Hilig sa Kasaysayan (ADHIKA) and the Philippine Historical Association (PHA) in promoting local history in the local level.

This active linkage of the Cavite Studies Center becomes a potent force in safeguarding local heritage. The Center serves as an interlinking agency which carries out the objectives of the community, the academe, the local government, NGO's and other stakeholders. This could be substantiated in this paradigm - *There is a strong collaboration where people unite in order to preserve their local identity.*

Administration

It is important that the Center should be under the office of the President or the Vice president for academics. The reason is purely to have a direct link with the decision makers. It is interesting to note that in the local level or even in the university level, it is the cultural preservation that is usually left behind. The Center should be placed near the decision makers so that programs and projects could be easily understood and appreciated and which could eventually become part of the priorities of the university. Ideally, the center should have the following personnel: head or director, librarian, publications coordinator and curator/events coordinator. The idea for having different coordinators is to speed up the operations of the center.

Financial concerns

Local studies center should have its own operational expenses. This is very basic because it will allow the center to initially or continuously operate even without an activity or a seasonal project. Included here are office supplies, transportation budget for linkage, representation allowance, and communications budget. Other items that have to be included are budget for the development of library collections which include research expenses (photocopying and transportation expenses). In the case of the Cavite Studies Center, printing or publication expenses are usually shouldered by the external agencies such as the CHS.

SUMMING UP: BEYOND THE REGIONS: EFFORTS TO FOSTER NATIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH LOCAL STUDIES

It is already accepted in the academe that local studies centers play a major role towards the documentation of our national identity. Local studies centers are partner agencies of the national government in reaching the grassroot levels. With this function as a reality, local studies center's agenda should be given priority in the institutional plans of every academic institutions. The educational institutions through its local studies centers could participate meaningfully in the overall process of educating the public regarding the details of our national identity. Local studies center serves as link to the academic sector, the business sector, the government sector and the community in order to fully realize the national goal which is to document the comprehensive history of the Philippines. This reality could be attested by the experiences of various studies centers in the country such as the

Cavite Studies Center, the JDN Center for Kapampangan Studies and the Center for Bulacan Studies.

Although the role played by the studies centers nowadays is already acknowledged both in the national and local levels, it is believed that the centers' significant role in shaping the young minds must be disseminated to the various academic institutions. Appreciation of the administration of academic institutions could be measured through funds allotted to the center, the number of personnel given and the number of sponsored activities. Setting a separate building for a local studies center or the establishment of a separate building or facility solely for the local studies center is a clear manifestation that the institution where the center belongs is seriously committed in the attainment of the center's goal. Another investment for this matter is the institutional financial assistance in conducting research and printing of the center's publications. With the above support coming from the institution where the center belongs, a local studies center will last as long as the institution exists.

To maintain the dignity of the center, it should produce publications that are at par with the publications of major universities in Metro Manila. Research outputs should be evaluated by respected scholars so that it would ensure the credibility and reliability of the studies conducted. With such credibility, local studies centers shall be looked upon as the vanguard of cultural heritage conservation in the regions.

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