



Mapping Institutional Memory: A Content Analysis of Building Dedication Markers in an Archdiocesan Catholic University

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ABSTRACT

This study examined building dedication markers as material records of institutional memory in an Archdiocesan Catholic university in the Philippines, and considered their implications for library-based archival and heritage documentation practice. Using a descriptive-exploratory qualitative content analysis of archival photographs, verified through an on-site inspection of the campus by the authors, the study coded all fifteen major buildings for marker presence, location, and visible content; documented the physical and material characteristics of existing markers; and identified gaps in marker presence and in the archival photographic record. Findings showed that 9 of the 15 buildings (60.0%) had dedication markers, most located on ground floors or at entrances and commemorating religious leaders, religious congregations, and university administrators, while 6 buildings (40.0%) had no marker and displayed only building-name signage. The on-site inspection also located one marker that the archival photographs had not captured and established the placement of two others, showing that a photograph-only inventory would have understated marker presence. Existing markers exhibited marked uniformity in material (polished metal) and form (rectangular, bolted mounting), consistent with an informal design convention, although whether a written marker policy exists was not examined. The study argues that dedication markers constitute an under examined category of institutional record—one that academic library archives and special collections units, as custodians of campus heritage documentation, are well positioned to inventory, standardize, and preserve. A coding framework for future marker inventories and metadata development is proposed. Limitations, including a single-institution, non-probability sample; a single, recent data-collection window; visual rather than instrument-based description of materials; and no numeric reliability coefficient, are discussed alongside directions for future research.

Keywords: institutional memory; archival photographs; building dedication markers; academic library archives; content analysis; cultural heritage documentation

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries are increasingly recognized not only as repositories of published knowledge but as stewards of institutional memory, a role most visible where library-based archives and special collections units manage the records, artifacts, and images that document an institution's history (Millar, 2010). Within this broader mandate, the built campus environment itself functions as a form of institutional record. Building dedication markers—plaques, inscriptions, and engraved stones that commemorate a structure's benefactors, namesakes, and date of inauguration—are a largely unexamined category of this material record, even though they sit squarely within the archival and heritage-documentation responsibilities that academic libraries already carry out for textual and photographic collections (Yeo, 2007).

In many academic institutions, the presence and documentation of such markers can be inconsistent. Some buildings prominently display dedication plaques; others carry only name signage or no commemorative marker at all, and archival photographic collections do not always capture markers even where they exist. This



unevenness creates gaps in the material and visual record of campus development, particularly for library archivists and heritage staff who rely on photographic and physical evidence to reconstruct institutional narratives for exhibits, finding aids, and digital heritage collections (Greene, 2004; Schwartz, 1995). For library archives specifically, systematic documentation of markers is a practical extension of existing metadata and preservation work, not a separate undertaking.

This study maps the presence of building dedication markers in an Archdiocesan Catholic university through content analysis of archival photographs held in the university's library archives and special collections, verified through an on-site inspection of the campus. As a descriptive and exploratory inquiry, it identifies which buildings have visible markers, describes their location and content, documents their physical and material characteristics, and records buildings without markers, as confirmed through on-site inspection. In doing so, the study contributes a replicable coding framework that library archivists elsewhere can adapt for their own campus heritage inventories, and it argues for treating dedication markers as a formal object class within academic library metadata and digitization programs.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is anchored in the view that university buildings and their dedication markers function as tangible expressions of institutional memory and heritage, and that this material record falls within the custodial scope of academic library archives alongside textual and photographic holdings (Millar, 2010; Yeo, 2007). In heritage studies, physical markers are recognized as elements of tangible cultural heritage that contribute to institutional identity, continuity, and public memory (Harrison, 2013), although heritage is also understood as a cultural process through which meanings are negotiated and some narratives are privileged over others, rather than as a property of objects alone (Smith, 2006). Commemorative markers in particular have been theorized as “memorial landscapes” that reflect whose interests and contributions are publicly honored and whose are not (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008).

For clarity, this study operationalizes institutional memory as the retained, accessible record of an institution's formative people, events, and decisions—whatever form that record takes, whether textual, photographic, or material (Yeo, 2007; Foote, 1990). Foote (1990) argues that archives function as more than a metaphor for memory: they, along with other durable communicative resources, extend the temporal range of an institution's self-knowledge beyond individual recollection. A building dedication marker operationalizes this definition in a specifically material and locational way: unlike a textual record held in a library's holdings, it is fixed in place, encountered incidentally by the university community rather than sought out, and persists, or fails to persist, as a physical object rather than as a catalogued item. This distinguishes the study's focus from institutional memory or heritage in the broader sense—curricula, traditions, oral histories—which this study does not examine; the object of analysis here is specifically the university's built and inscribed commemorative record.

This framework identifies three dimensions for analysis, each corresponding to a research question and a results table in this study:

Presence, location, and content of markers. This dimension examines buildings that contain dedication markers, focusing on where markers are located and what they visibly commemorate—names, dates, and dedications (Yeo, 2007).

Physical and material characteristics of markers. This dimension examines the material, mounting style, size, and notable design features of existing markers, treating consistency or variation in these features as an indicator of (informal or formal) institutional standardization.

Absence of markers and documentation gaps. This dimension addresses buildings that lack dedication markers, as shown by the archival photographs and confirmed on site, and markers that are missing from, or whose placement is not captured in, the available archival photographs, underscoring areas where institutional memory is underrepresented in the built environment, in the archival record, or in both (Greene, 2004).



Archival photographs serve as the primary data source for all three dimensions, with the on-site inspection used to verify and supplement them, positioning the study within a broader body of archival theory that treats photographs as evidentiary records of material culture and spatial arrangement rather than as purely illustrative content (Schwartz, 1995). The presence or absence of markers, as evidenced through this photographic record and verified on site, provides a descriptive indication of how consistently institutional memory is visibly represented across campus—and, correspondingly, how complete the library's own archival documentation of that memory currently is.

Read together, the three dimensions form a simple analytical model of how institutional memory is materially instantiated on campus. Presence, location, and content indicate representational significance—whom and what the institution has chosen to commemorate, and how prominently. Material, mounting, and form indicate the institution's, formal or informal, practice around commemorative design, a question of materiality and design uniformity in its own right, independent of what a given marker says. Absence and undocumented placement indicate omissions, both in physical commemoration and in the archival record, that mark where institutional memory is materially or archivally incomplete. This study examines these dimensions synchronically, as a description of the current state of each building; it does not examine the historical context of individual markers, such as when or why a marker was commissioned, which would require administrative or historical-records research beyond archival photographs and on-site observation (see *Trustworthiness and Limitations*).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic libraries and their archives are widely recognized as custodians of institutional memory, where organizational history is preserved through records that extend beyond textual documents to physical and visual materials documenting institutional identity and development (Millar, 2010; Yeo, 2007). Yeo (2007) characterizes records as persistent representations of activities created by participants, observers, or their authorized proxies—a definition broad enough to encompass a dedication plaque as readily as a memorandum, since both persist as evidence of an institutional act. Buildings and their associated markers may therefore be considered artifactual records that embody institutional narratives and commemorate significant events, individuals, and benefactors, contributing to the continuity of institutional memory by embedding historical information within everyday campus spaces.

From a heritage-studies perspective, building markers form part of what is described as tangible cultural heritage: physical objects and structures carrying cultural, historical, and symbolic meaning (Harrison, 2013). Critical heritage scholars caution, however, that heritage is not simply a property of objects but a cultural process in which meanings are negotiated and some narratives are authorized over others (Smith, 2006). Even so, building markers serve commemorative, educational, and identity-forming functions, enabling members of a university community to encounter institutional history in situ. Geographers working on commemorative landscapes have argued that the placement, material, and content of memorial markers are never neutral: they reflect deliberate (if sometimes informal) choices about which figures and events an institution considers worth publicly honoring, and their analysis can reveal patterns of inclusion and omission in institutional memory (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008). This literature is directly relevant to the present study's interest in both the content of existing markers and the pattern of buildings that lack them.

Archival documentation plays a central role in preserving and providing access to these material representations of memory, and photographs are a particularly important resource in this respect. Archival theorists have argued that photographs should be treated as primary evidentiary records in their own right—documents of material culture and spatial context—rather than as secondary illustrations of textual records (Schwartz, 1995). Applied to campus heritage, this means that a library's photographic archive is not merely a supplementary resource for documenting dedication markers; it is itself a primary evidentiary base from which the presence, condition, and content of those markers can be established, and against which on-site observation can be checked.



Despite the recognized importance of markers and archival photographic documentation, gaps can exist in both the physical presence of markers and their representation in archival collections. Greene (2004) argues that archives are bound up with social memory, a “messy” and selective process, so that what an archive holds, and what it lacks, can significantly affect how an organization's past is reconstructed and interpreted. Absences of this kind are not simply administrative oversights; they actively shape which parts of an institution's history remain visible to its community. Identifying such gaps is therefore an important step toward improving both commemorative practice on campus and archival documentation practice within the library.

The literature specifically on dedication markers as a class of institutional record, however, remains thin. Material-culture scholarship has long argued that everyday objects, not only texts, encode a culture's values and can be read as evidence in their own right (Prown, 1982), a premise this study extends to campus markers. Within library and archives scholarship, attention to campus heritage has concentrated on collecting textual, photographic, and born-digital materials, such as institutional repositories, yearbooks, and administrative records, rather than on the built environment itself (Miner & Davis-Kahl, 2012). Memorial-landscape scholarship (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008) has examined markers and monuments primarily in public and civic settings rather than on university campuses, and archival-science treatments of institutional memory (Foote, 1990; Greene, 2004; Yeo, 2007) discuss records and photographs in general terms without extending to building markers specifically. It is this combination, material-culture attention to objects, library-archives attention to campus heritage, and memorial-landscape attention to commemorative markers, that the present study draws together, and it is the absence of a dedicated treatment of building dedication markers at their intersection that this study identifies as the gap it addresses.

In light of these perspectives, the present study contributes a descriptive, photograph-based mapping of building dedication markers to the literature at the intersection of archival science, heritage studies, and academic library practice. By examining both the presence and the absence of markers through a systematic coding framework, the study extends existing scholarship on institutional memory and campus heritage into a specific, underexamined object class that academic libraries are positioned to document and preserve.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the presence, location, and visible content of building dedication markers in the Archdiocesan Catholic university, as evidenced by archival photographic records and verified through on-site inspection?
2. What physical and material characteristics do existing building dedication markers exhibit, and to what extent do these characteristics suggest an informal design convention in institutional commemorative practice?
3. What gaps exist in the presence of building dedication markers across university buildings, and in how existing markers are documented in the archival photographic record?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–exploratory qualitative research design using content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019) to examine the presence, characteristics, and documentation of building dedication markers within the university campus. The approach relied primarily on archival photographic evidence, complemented by an on-site inspection of the campus conducted by the authors to verify the photograph-based coding; no interviews, surveys, or other primary data collection from participants were conducted. This design reflects the study's purpose—to assess what the library's photographic archive reveals about campus commemorative markers and to check that record against the physical campus—rather than to produce a definitive architectural or historical inventory of the markers themselves.



Sources of Data

The primary data consisted of archived photographs of all fifteen major buildings on the university campus, including façades, entrances, and interior spaces where dedication markers are typically located. These images were drawn from the university library's archival photographic collection and were selected for relevance and clarity in depicting building features (taken between January 12 and February 6, 2026). To verify the photograph-based coding, both authors conducted an on-site inspection of the same fifteen buildings on March 23–27, 2026, examining façades, entrances, and accessible interior spaces to confirm whether a dedication marker was present, where it was located, and what it recorded. The sample comprises the full set of major named buildings on the campus (major buildings were defined as those in which classes are held), all of which are represented in the library's archival photographic holdings, rather than a probability sample; findings are therefore descriptive of this single institution and are not intended to generalize statistically to other universities.

Coding Instrument and Data Analysis

Each photograph was reviewed using a structured coding matrix derived from the three dimensions of the conceptual framework: (a) marker presence, location, and visible content; (b) material, mounting style, size and orientation, and notable design features; and (c) documentation status for buildings without a visible marker. Categories within this matrix were developed through a hybrid approach: the three top-level dimensions were derived deductively from the conceptual framework, while specific subcategories, such as reflective versus matte surface finish and the presence of inauguration details, were added inductively as they emerged during an initial coding pass over the photographs. Both authors independently coded the full set of building photographs and reconciled discrepancies through discussion. Photographs in which a marker's presence or content could not be clearly determined, owing to distance, lighting, or camera angle, were flagged during this initial pass and resolved by consulting any additional available photograph of the same building or, where the ambiguity could not be resolved from the photographic record alone, by treating the on-site inspection as determinative. Because the sample was small and exploratory, no numeric interrater-reliability coefficient was calculated; credibility was instead pursued through independent double coding, reconciliation by discussion, and triangulation of the photographic evidence with direct on-site observation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Elo et al., 2014). Where the photographic coding and the on-site observation differed, the on-site observation was taken as the final coding and the difference was recorded. For buildings with markers, additional details such as type, placement, and summarized content were recorded; for buildings without visible markers, observations were limited to confirming their absence in the available images and on site and noting whether alternative signage (e.g., a building name plate) was present. Coded results were organized into four tabular matrices (Tables 1–4) to provide a systematic overview of the current state of building dedication markers across the campus.

Trustworthiness and Limitations

Trustworthiness was addressed using the criteria commonly applied to qualitative content analysis: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Elo et al., 2014). Credibility was strengthened by triangulating two sources of evidence, archival photographs and direct on-site observation of the same buildings, and by independent coding by both authors with discrepancies resolved through discussion (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Dependability was supported by a structured coding matrix, derived from the conceptual framework and applied uniformly to every building. Confirmability was supported by tying each coded entry to specific photographic and on-site evidence that can be re-examined. Transferability is limited to comparable institutions; the description of the setting, data, and coding procedure is intended to allow other library archivists to replicate the inventory. Because the authors are familiar with the campus, their interpretation may have been shaped by that familiarity; independent coding against visible evidence was used to limit this influence.

Several limitations bear on the interpretation of these findings. First, the sample is limited to a single institution and fifteen buildings and is non-probabilistic, which constrains generalizability beyond this campus.



Second, the archival photographs were taken between January 12 and February 6, 2026, and the on-site inspection took place on March 23–27, 2026; the short interval makes change between the two unlikely, but the study captures a single, recent window and cannot show how markers have changed over time. The photographs were also selected for relevance and clarity, which may under-represent markers that appear less clearly in some images. Third, coding relied on visual inspection rather than a standardized measurement protocol or materials testing, so the reported dimensions and material descriptions (Table 2) should be read as descriptive approximations rather than architectural specifications, and marker content is summarized rather than fully transcribed. Fourth, agreement between the two coders was reached through discussion, and no numeric reliability coefficient was calculated. Fifth, the study did not examine administrative records, policy documents, or installation histories, so the inference of an informal design convention rests on observed physical similarity alone, and whether a written marker policy exists was not established. Sixth, for reasons of archival permission, this manuscript does not reproduce photographs of the markers themselves; findings are reported in textual and tabular form only. These limitations are consistent with the study's exploratory, descriptive purpose and are addressed further in the Discussion and Recommendations sections.

RESULTS

This section presents a descriptive mapping of building dedication markers within the university campus based on the archival photographic evidence as verified through the on-site inspection, organized according to the three dimensions of the conceptual framework and corresponding research questions. The on-site inspection corroborated the photograph-based coding for fourteen of the fifteen buildings. One discrepancy was found: the Ryan Annex, coded from the photographs as having no visible marker, has a marker on its ground floor.

Presence, Location, and Visible Content of Markers (RQ1)

Table 1

Status of Building Dedication Markers in the Archdiocesan Catholic University

No.	Building Name	Marker Presence	Location	Visible Content (Summary)
1	Ryan Building	Present	Ground floor	Honors <i>Sr. Mary Philip Ryan, O.P.</i> , first superior of the Dominican Sisters at the university
2	Benedictine Building	Present	Ground floor	Honors the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing and named sisters
3	Serrano Building	Absent	Not applicable	No dedication marker observed; only building-name signage present
4	Guerrero Building (University Chapel)	Present	Ground floor	Honors <i>Most Rev. Cesar MA. D. Guerrero</i> , first Bishop of San Fernando (1949–1957)
5	Puno Building	Absent	Not applicable	No dedication marker observed; only building-name signage present
6	Galang Building	Present	Ground floor	Honors <i>Bishop Jesus Castro Galang</i> ; leadership roles indicated
7	Aniceto Building	Present	Ground floor	Honors <i>Archbishop Paciano B. Aniceto</i> , Chairman of the Board of Trustees
8	Cruz Building	Absent	Not applicable	No dedication marker observed; only building-name signage present
9	Cinense Gymnasium	Absent	Not applicable	No dedication marker observed; only building-name signage present



10	Franco Building	Absent	Not applicable	No dedication marker observed; only building-name signage present
11	Ramos Building	Present	Ground floor	Honors <i>Rev. Fr. Octavio M. Ramos</i> , former rector and university president
12	Main Façade	Present	Front entrance (near Gate 3)	Institutional dedication and inauguration message
13	Puno Annex	Absent	Not applicable	No dedication marker observed; only building-name signage present
14	Ryan Annex	Present	Ground floor	Honors <i>Sr. Mary Philip Ryan, O.P.</i>
15	Domus Mariae International Center	Present	Interior, near General Studies/Pre-School library	Honors the <i>Blessed Virgin Mary</i> ; inauguration details included

Note. N = 15 buildings. Marker presence reflects the archival photographs as verified during the on-site inspection. The marker on the Guerrero Building (University Chapel), whose presence status was initially unclear in the photographic coding, was confirmed on site. The placement of the Guerrero and Aniceto markers was not visible in the photographs and was established on site; the Ryan Annex marker was not captured in the photographs and was recorded on site.

Table 1 presents the overall status of building dedication markers across the university campus. Of the fifteen buildings surveyed, nine (60.0%) were found to have dedication markers—eight identified in the photographic record and confirmed on site, and one (the Ryan Annex) found only during the on-site inspection—while six (40.0%) had none. Buildings with markers—the Ryan Building, Benedictine Building, Galang Building, Aniceto Building, Ramos Building, Ryan Annex, Main Façade, Domus Mariae International Center, and Guerrero Building (University Chapel)—carry markers located in accessible areas: seven on ground floors, one at the front entrance, and one in an interior space near key facilities.

In terms of visible content, the markers primarily serve commemorative functions. Seven of the nine name religious leaders, religious congregations, or university administrators who contributed to the institution's development; one (Domus Mariae International Center) carries a Marian dedication, and one (Main Façade) carries an institutional dedication message. Two markers, those of the Main Façade and the Domus Mariae International Center, also record inauguration details. In contrast, the six buildings without markers—the Serrano Building, Puno Building, Cruz Building, Cinense Gymnasium, Franco Building, and Puno Annex—show no dedication inscription in the photographs or on site, each displaying only building-name signage. These findings indicate that while several structures actively contribute to the visibility of institutional memory on campus, a substantial minority carry no dedication marker at all.

Physical and Material Characteristics of Existing Markers (RQ2)

Table 2

Physical Characteristics of Existing Dedication Markers

Building Name	Material	Mounting Style	Size / Orientation	Notable Features
Ryan Building	Polished metal	Bolted (4 screws)	Rectangular (approx. 12–18" × 10–14")	Standard plaque format
Benedictine Building	Polished metal	Bolted	Rectangular	Design consistent with other plaques
Galang Building	Polished metal	Bolted	Rectangular	Consistent with other plaques
Aniceto Building	Polished metal	Bolted	Rectangular	Standard institutional format



Ramos Building	Polished metal	Bolted	Rectangular	Horizontal grain finish; reflective surface
Main Façade	Polished metal	Bolted	Larger rectangular	Prominent placement; institutional message
Domus Mariae International Center	Polished metal	Bolted	Rectangular	Reflective surface
Guerrero Building (University Chapel)	Polished metal	Bolted	Rectangular	Standard plaque format
Ryan Annex	Polished metal	Bolted	Rectangular	Design consistent with other plaques

Note. $n = 9$ buildings with a dedication marker. Dimensions and material descriptions are visual approximations recorded from archival photographs and direct observation; no instrument-based measurements were taken (see Trustworthiness and Limitations).

Table 2 addresses the second research question by examining the physical characteristics of the nine existing dedication markers. All nine markers were recorded as polished metal—visually consistent with stainless steel or brushed aluminum, although the metal was not tested—and are mounted with visible bolts or screws in a rectangular format. Dimensions were recorded only approximately (Table 2): the Ryan Building marker was estimated at roughly 12–18 by 10–14 inches and the Main Façade marker was noted as larger, while the remaining markers were described only as rectangular, so the degree of dimensional consistency cannot be quantified. The uniformity of material, form, and mounting suggests an informal design convention rather than a codified institutional standard, although this study did not examine whether a written marker policy exists. Based on visual similarity alone, however, this study cannot rule out alternative explanations—for example, that the markers were sourced from a single supplier or installed within a similar period by coincidence rather than by any shared institutional design decision—so the “informal design convention” reading should be treated as one plausible interpretation rather than an established fact. Commemorative-landscape scholarship, which reads memorials as products of institutional choices rather than neutral features of a place (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008), provides a lens for interpreting such uniformity as a shared, if unwritten, understanding of how an institution honors its people.

Some variation is nonetheless observed. The markers on the Ramos Building and Domus Mariae International Center exhibit reflective surfaces or horizontal grain finishes, and the Main Façade marker is comparatively larger and more prominently positioned than the others. These differences may reflect variation in installation period or intended visibility, and they indicate that the observed uniformity, while notable, is not absolute.

Gaps in Marker Presence and Documentation (RQ3)

Table 3

Buildings Without Dedication Markers (Marker Gaps)

No.	Building Name	Marker Presence	Site Visit Verification	Remarks
1	Serrano Building	Absent	Confirmed absent	Only name signage present; entrance documented in photographs
2	Puno Building	Absent	Confirmed absent	Only name signage present
3	Cruz Building	Absent	Confirmed absent	Only name signage present
4	Cinense Gymnasium	Absent	Confirmed absent	Only name signage present
5	Franco	Absent	Confirmed	Only name signage present



	Building		absent	
6	Puno Annex	Absent	Confirmed absent	Only name signage present

Note. n = 6 buildings without a dedication marker, as shown in the archival photographs and confirmed on site.

Table 3 addresses the third research question by detailing the six buildings for which no dedication marker was found, either in the available archival photographs or during the on-site inspection. These include both academic and auxiliary structures, such as the Cinense Gymnasium and the Puno Annex. In each case, the absence of a marker was determined through the lack of a visible plaque or inscription in the photographic documentation and was confirmed by direct observation on site; only building-name signage was observed, which does not fulfill the commemorative function of a dedication marker.

That the same pattern holds across a range of building types indicates that dedication markers were not installed as a matter of course across the campus; because the photographic coding was checked on site, this reflects a gap in physical commemoration and not merely a gap in photographic coverage. The archival record is nonetheless incomplete in another respect, and the site visit exposed it: the photographs did not capture the marker on the Ryan Annex at all, and did not show where the markers on the Guerrero and Aniceto Buildings are placed (Table 1). Coding from the photographs alone would therefore have understated marker presence by one building. Consistent with Greene's (2004) view that what an archive holds shapes how a community's past is remembered, both kinds of gap, markers that were never installed and markers that the archive does not record or locate, limit the record from which the campus's dedicatory history can be reconstructed.

Summary of Marker Distribution

Table 4

Summary of Marker Distribution across Surveyed Buildings

Category	Number of Buildings	Percentage (%)
With dedication markers	9	60
Without dedication markers	6	40
Total	15	100

Note. N = 15 buildings.

Table 4 summarizes the distribution reported in Tables 1 and 3. Of the fifteen buildings included in the study, nine (60.0%) have a dedication marker, while six (40.0%) do not. This distribution indicates that a majority of the surveyed campus buildings have a dedication marker, while the remaining 40.0% lack one—a pattern that, together with the three markers the photographs did not fully capture, provides the empirical basis for the recommendations that follow.

DISCUSSION

The finding that a majority of the surveyed buildings (60.0%) carry a dedication marker, while 40.0% do not, indicates that the material commemoration of institutional history on this campus is present but incomplete. Consistent with archival thinking that treats records as persistent representations that can take many material forms (Millar, 2010; Yeo, 2007), the markers identified on buildings such as the Ryan, Benedictine, Galang, and Guerrero buildings function as durable, in-place records of the religious leaders, congregations, and administrators who shaped the university's development. Because these markers persist physically in accessible areas of the campus, they extend the reach of institutional memory beyond what is accessible through the library's catalogued archives alone, making them relevant to a library's broader heritage-documentation mission rather than a peripheral curiosity.



The near-uniform material and design of the existing markers—polished metal, bolted mounting, rectangular orientation—suggests an informal design convention. Commemorative-landscape scholarship, which reads memorials as the products of institutional choices rather than neutral features of a place (Dwyer & Alderman, 2008), invites the interpretation that campus stakeholders have arrived at a shared, if unstated, understanding of what an appropriate dedication marker should look like. This study did not examine installation dates, suppliers, or administrative policy, however, so the uniformity may equally reflect a convention that was formally prescribed, one that developed historically without ever being written down, or simply installation within a single period or by a single fabricator, and the present data cannot distinguish among these. From a library and archives standpoint, the observed convention offers a practical starting point: a formal marker policy would not need to invent a new design language so much as codify the one already in informal use, once the absence of an existing written policy has been confirmed.

The absence of markers in 40.0% of surveyed buildings is a more complex finding. Because the photographic coding was checked against direct observation on site, the absence can be read as a genuine gap in physical commemoration rather than an artifact of incomplete photographic coverage. It should not, however, be interpreted as evidence that these buildings lack a dedicatory history: a building may have been named, blessed, or inaugurated without a plaque being installed, or a plaque may have been removed, and this study did not consult administrative or historical records that could resolve the question. The gap has an archival dimension as well, and the site visit made it visible: the photographs missed the Ryan Annex marker entirely and did not show the placement of the Guerrero and Aniceto markers, so a photograph-only inventory would have counted eight markers rather than nine. As Greene (2004) argues, what an archive holds shapes how a community's past is remembered. For library archives, the practical implication is that the campus's dedicatory history is only partly visible in either the built environment or the archival record, and that a systematic marker inventory, combined with a review of institutional records for the unmarked buildings, would help close both gaps.

These findings carry direct implications for academic library and archives practice. First, dedication markers represent a discrete, inventoriable object class that could be incorporated into a library's existing metadata schema for campus heritage collections, alongside photographs, yearbooks, and institutional publications. Second, the gaps identified in Tables 1 and 3 point to a concrete, achievable project for a university archives unit: a systematic photographic and textual inventory of the nine existing markers, capturing placement, full text, and condition, together with a review of institutional records to establish whether the six unmarked buildings have dedicatory histories that warrant commemoration. Third, the informal design consistency observed in Table 2 suggests that any future marker-standardization policy could be developed collaboratively between university administration and library archivists, who are positioned to advise on durable materials, legible typography, and long-term archival documentation of each marker as it is installed.

These conclusions should be read in light of the study's limitations. The single-institution, non-probability sample; the single, recent data-collection window; the visual, non-instrumental description of materials and dimensions; the absence of a numeric reliability coefficient; and the descriptive (rather than inferential) nature of the analysis mean that the findings describe marker presence and design at one campus, as recorded in the library's photographic archive and observed during the site visit, rather than patterns that can be assumed elsewhere. Future research that pairs archival and on-site methods with document review or interviews on marker policy and installation histories, and that extends the coding framework to additional Catholic and non-Catholic academic institutions, would help establish whether the patterns observed here—particularly the informal convergence in marker design—generalize beyond this single campus.

CONCLUSION

This study provided a descriptive, photograph-based mapping of building dedication markers within an Archdiocesan Catholic university, using the university library's archival photographic holdings as the primary evidentiary base and an on-site inspection to verify the coding. The findings indicate that institutional memory is materially represented on this campus, but unevenly so: a majority of the fifteen surveyed buildings (60.0%) carry a dedication marker, most honoring religious leaders, religious congregations, and administrators who



shaped the institution, alongside a Marian dedication and an institutional inauguration message, while 40.0% have no marker in either the archival record or on site. Existing markers display a consistent, if informal, design convention in material and form, suggesting a shared institutional understanding of commemorative practice; whether that understanding has been codified into policy was not examined.

Because the study combined archival photographs with on-site inspection, it distinguishes two kinds of gap: buildings that carry no dedication marker (six of fifteen) and existing markers that the archival photographs did not capture or locate (three of nine)—a distinction with direct consequences for how a university archives unit prioritizes its documentation work. Building dedication markers are more than architectural ornament: they are artifactual records that fall within the existing custodial mandate of academic library archives and special collections. Addressing the gaps identified in this study offers a concrete, bounded project through which library archivists can extend systematic documentation practice from the library's shelves to the campus itself.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for the university library's archives and special collections unit, in coordination with university administration:

First, the library archives should conduct a systematic inventory of the nine existing markers, photographing each marker and its setting and recording its placement, transcribed text, condition, and, where known, installation date, so that the archival record captures what the campus displays; this would directly address the gaps identified for the Ryan Annex, Guerrero, and Aniceto markers. In parallel, archivists should review institutional records (for example, blessing and inauguration documents and board minutes) for the six buildings without markers to determine whether they have dedicatory histories that warrant commemoration. This work should be treated as the immediate next step arising from this study.

Second, the university should first confirm whether a written policy already exists and, if none does, consider developing a written marker-design and content policy, informed by the informal convention already observed in Table 2 (polished metal, rectangular orientation, bolted mounting). Formalizing this existing convention, rather than introducing an unrelated design standard, would preserve visual continuity with markers already installed while providing clear specifications for future installations.

Third, dedication markers should be incorporated as a formal object class within the library's metadata schema for campus heritage collections, with each marker (existing or newly installed) catalogued alongside a current photograph, transcription of its text, and installation date. This would allow markers to be searchable and cross-referenced with related archival holdings, such as institutional histories and biographical files on the individuals honored.

Fourth, the university archives could develop biographical finding aids or digital exhibits for the individuals commemorated by existing markers, integrating this material into library instruction, new-student and new-employee orientation, and institutional publications. This would extend the reach of the markers' commemorative content beyond passersby at each building to the wider university community, consistent with academic libraries' broader role in heritage education.

Fifth, where archival and privacy permissions allow, future reporting of this inventory, whether in an institutional repository, exhibit, or subsequent publication, should include representative photographs of each marker type, captioned with the building name, marker location, transcribed content, and archival or field source, so that the visual record accompanies the descriptive one.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

This study adhered to ethical standards relevant to research involving archival and photographic materials. The research relied on existing archival records and photographs held by the university library and on direct observation of the physical campus during an on-site inspection; no data were collected from human participants, so issues of informed consent or participant confidentiality did not apply. All archival sources



were used with acknowledgment of the university's archival collections, and findings are reported in aggregate, descriptive form without disclosing sensitive institutional information. The use of images and records complied with the university library's institutional guidelines on the handling of archival materials.

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APPENDIX

Proposed Standardized Building Dedication Marker Template

This appendix is a supplementary design proposal, not an empirical finding of the study, and is presented separately from the Results and Discussion for that reason. It outlines technical specifications and a content structure that the university could adopt for future markers, informed by the physical-characteristics analysis reported in Table 2.

Technical Specifications

Feature	Specification
Material	High-grade brushed stainless steel or polished brass (weather-resistant)
Mounting	Four (4) visible corner bolts (stainless steel finish)
Orientation	Rectangular (horizontal / landscape)
Standard size	18" (width) × 14" (height)
Marker thickness	3–5 mm with beveled edges



Standardized Content Structure

A consistent hierarchical order is proposed so that the most critical information is immediately visible to viewers:

1. The university seal, centered at the top.
2. The building name, as officially registered in university records.
3. A concise dedication statement (2–3 sentences) describing the building's purpose, the significance of the individual it honors, and the date of the building's original blessing or inauguration.
4. Signatories and institutional leadership at the time of dedication (e.g., the Archbishop as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and the University President).
5. The date of installation of the marker itself (month and year).