

# The Future of Car Barn 315

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## *Annual Learning Space Review Form*

**Prepared by:** A Practitioner

**Date:** June 20 [REDACTED]

**Location:** The Car Barn, Room 315, 3600 M Street NW, Washington, DC.

**Present use:** Learning space.

**Future use:** To be determined.

[...]

*Thank you for completing the Annual Learning Space Review Checklist for this learning space. Would you like to leave any questions, comments, or observations about the space for the committee?*

Yes

No

*Since you have selected yes, please leave any comments or questions in the addendum form below. Note that all of the following text boxes will require content in order to be submitted. Please trust that the committee will consider this in its ongoing dialogue about the futures of this learning space.*

### **Brief statement of significance:**

*In this section, please summarize any relevant observations, anomalies, or issues about the learning space that you noted as a practitioner.*

**H**ONESTLY? TO BE DETERMINED. But TBD in the way that might fundamentally alter how we do things. I can't comment on the general significance, but I have to say I think there might be some learning significance here if that's what we want.

So, I'll go through the protocols, submit this addendum, and follow our formal procedures (as we are still a university, after all). And even though everything I'll add here will just represent



- *Any learning space can become a different space in the future.* A very possible result from interrogating our learning spaces and the work they are doing. Universities are always wondering what their built environments are doing, if their spaces are welcoming or exclusive by design, making people sick or well, or working for the praxitioners already in the community. Getting this information about our spaces allows us to make choices about what to do with them. Some former learning spaces became other things; on our campus, old learning spaces without windows or moveable furniture have since become nap pods or communal storage. Other learning spaces were built or renovated to become optimal places of learning, and, as of this writing, all of our learning spaces meet these baseline criteria. Just in case, praxitioners review our learning spaces to see if they’re doing what we want them to do. We praxitioners usually rely on a form to help them with this assessment, streamline the responses by ticking boxes, and do our best to minimize extraneous long reads unless there might be a problem.

Potential Problems and/or Consequences from Our Not Problems

- *The potential learning moment data isn’t perfect and, like all data, has its limitations.* The data are always limited in a few ways.
  1. First, CHALK software captures potential learning moments because they (might, possibly) have the potential to signify learning. Our learning spaces now sense all kinds of senses, though they were originally tracking signs of discomfort as based on the software’s application of learning zone theory. Theory aside, the potential learning moments were not proof of learning. Sure, a learner might wince because they have a stomach ache because the ground is crumbling beneath them in the best way possible because they’ve just heard something that will entirely change how they view the world. And sometimes, a stomach ache is just from too much cheese. Regardless, potential learning moments only move beyond their potential when a learner decides to create a learning record out of it. As a result, the data is limited because it is somewhere between conditional and aspirational.

PLM #3520
<b>Praxitioner:</b> [REDACTED]
<b>Role:</b> Carpenter
<b>Year:</b> 1921
<b>Location:</b> Car Barn
<b>Moment:</b> Carpenter is informed that this space that has stored the city’s cable cars will become office space.
<b>Evidence of potential learning:</b> Awe.

2. Also, there are a lot of potential learning moments. Like, a lot. They happen all of the time. When there is a nearly illegible amount of potential learning moments, then we have a nearly illegible data source, which can make it a little less than useful.
3. The data are limited because the scope was always limiting. In other words, it’s by design. In its original iteration, CHALK collected data that the learners themselves never saw. When the technology was first developed, spun out of facial recognition software, early 21<sup>st</sup> century wearables, hearable technology, and assessment surveillance, it was intended to track discomfort in learners. Back in those days, the university still had some

praxitioners designated as professors, and as the professors worked with learners, the space would capture data about how the learners responded to the professor. Then, the professor could log into the early versions of CHALK and see if, for example, they only talked to learners sitting in the front row or made comments about a reading that resulted in a learner becoming disengaged. This technology was supposed to help professors help learners, yet it took a while for the CHALK data to simply be available to the learners to help them track their own learning.

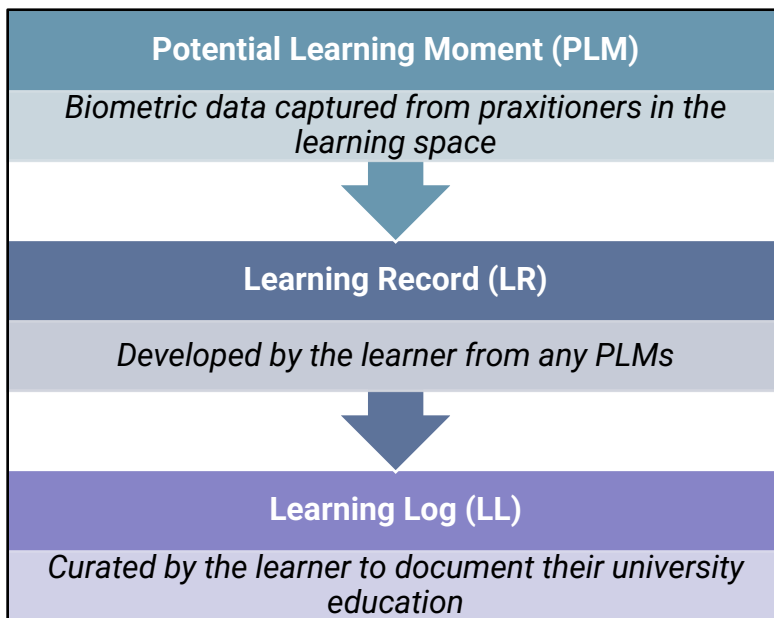


Figure 1. How a potential learning moment becomes a learning record and how learning records feed into learning logs.

Despite these changes and adaptations, we also know that the original design intentions behind our educational materials and products have lingering, downstream effects. From the 2000s to the 2030s, more and more universities recognized that being built by stolen labor on stolen land for only certain populations centuries before precluded contemporaneous learning. (See various university working groups on slavery and their reports or the proliferating spate of anti-racist mission statements in the early 2020s.) The ripples from historic exclusion, whether theoretical or practiced, impacted all praxitioners and their learning. It's said that the [Portland Community College archival report](#) applying critical race theory to the built environment inspired the CHALK software in the first place with its focus on how biases shaped spaces and the learning therein. In some ways, this is why the potential learning moment data only goes back as far as the built environment (as structures are built to separate and contain)—or even why we look at the potential learning moment data in the first place.

All data are limited and limiting. But, having different types of data that are limited in different ways helps stretch our understandings a bit more. For the room review process, this means we then look at data from learners' learning records. This also means that we might be getting to another potential problem.

- *We look at potential learning moment data alongside learning record data to see what they say, but we only look in certain ways.*
  1. We first focus on location. All potential learning moments and learning records are tagged by location.
  2. We then look at the ratio of potential learning moments to learning records. Most potential learning moments do not get converted into a learning record. This happens all of the time, partly because potential learning moments happen all of the time. A learner can observe and react to functionally infinite things, but a potential learning moment will only become a learning record if they reflect on it (i.e., more or less the process of logging into CHALK, clicking on a potential learning moment, adding in their reflections, filling out the form, and then clicking the *create learning record* button).
  3. From here, we look at the content of the learning records to see what learners say about the space. When several learning records happen in the same place, we can learn more things, especially if there's a record of site-specific learning. For example, let's say a group of praxitioners decided they were going to meet every week in the same place to learn how to knit and logged this information in learning records. Their records might be tagged to the learning space they were in, but the content of the learning records (what they wrote in their reflections) might reveal how a learning space's hypothetical repository of knitting needles, teas, and memories of other needlework learners was helpful in their learning journey, or that the space itself didn't really matter. In other words, we generally conclude that if learners don't name the site itself in their learning records, that whatever they learned could be learned anywhere, then maybe the learning space itself didn't help facilitate learning. Perhaps we no longer need that learning space.

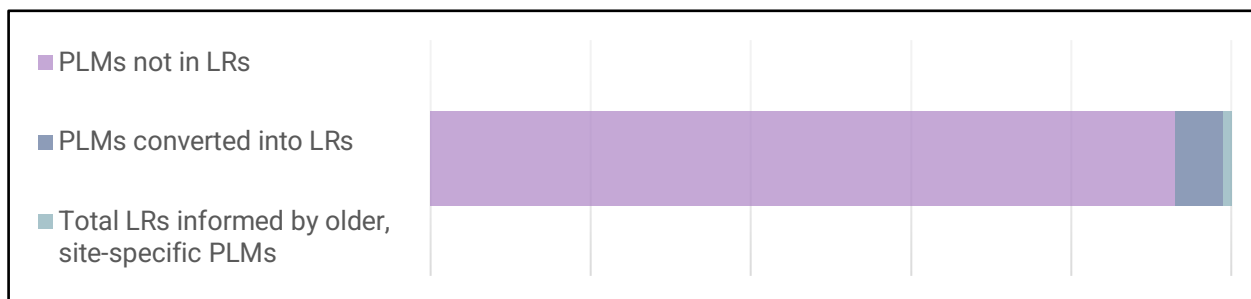


Figure 2. Potential Learning Moment (PLM) and Learning Record (LR) Distribution Data for Car Barn 315 since 1898.

- *Because we only look in certain ways, we only look in certain ways.* Some of these ways of looking are very clear Not Problems, and they have helped turn Actual Problems into Not Problems. We often look back to the praxitioners in the early 2020s who, when there were rampant concerns that generative AI technology would impede learners' ability to demonstrate learning because the technology could write papers and take exams, wanted to see how else learners could demonstrate their learning. At the time, the idea of a learning record was labeled "alternative assessment," and instead, learning was declared to have happened (or not) by a frequently arbitrary rating system based on tasks that a learner completed which may or may not have been correlated with learning without any input



Still, the foundations for that information, and the software we rely on, have their own biases.

This is not to say that the CHALK data did not help more practitioners reflect more critically on the work and challenges of learning at a university. Developing CHALK and relying on it helped reveal even more about how our learning spaces impacted learning. For a long time, practitioners knew that the exclusionary practices built into learning spaces rippled down to learners hundreds of years later, and CHALK offered some tools to help respond to that reality in its own way. Some sites of learning are hard; museums and memorials have told us that for ages. And we do need these places. At our university, we knew that our history mattered and that our history at this campus site mattered. Like other universities where their place matters, practitioners looked at the potential learning moment data for site-specific learning and aimed to make informed choices about those sites for future learning. On our campus, some of our more difficult sites became more like museum spaces, where we developed materials to help support the discomfort from both the learning and difficult topics in our history. Some statues got moved, and concrete was poured for new ones to become key sites for learning. As we know, some spaces were updated to be better learning spaces while others spaces were no longer designated for learning. But, our focus on memorializing, reshaping, or reconstituting spaces had its consequences. Site-specific learning, functionally synonymous with site-specific discomfort, became centralized, hyper-localized, and contained.

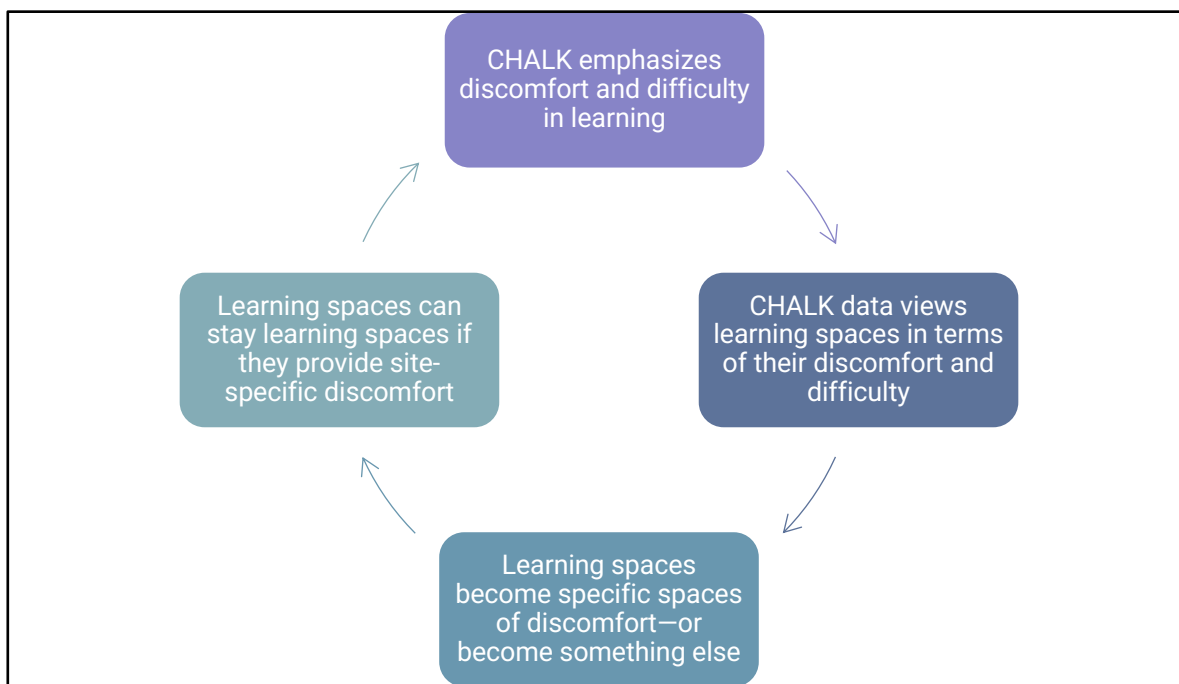


Figure 3. A diagram sketched by A Practitioner.

On the one hand, learners can be prepared in advance if they are about to enter into a space with the purpose of engaging with its difficult memories to support their learning from it. The downstream effects of this software and these approaches are that we are only looking at histories of difficulty and pain as relevant for learning. It is almost as though we

measure for a space's ability to resonate with learners by measuring the difficulty and heaviness of its memories. The real throughline is difficulty.

- *There are other throughlines for learning—and they help us learn, too.*

Earlier, we talked about hypothetical praxitioners knitting, where an application of a learning space might include praxitioners gathering to learn something together and accessing site-specific memories about that craft to help with their learning. But, our reality doesn't unfold like this when we've limited site-specific learning to be difficult and hard. Our learning data, a learner's curations, and our software have their benefits—and at the same time, they prevent us from looking at or for other throughlines in our learning memories.

PLM #1926054

**Praxitioner:** [REDACTED]

**Role:** Visiting praxitioner

**Year:** 1959

**Location:** Car Barn

**Moment:** Praxitioner wipes their mouth with a napkin while waiting to talk to the musician. Praxitioner shakes hands with the musician. Praxitioner and musician discuss the tune they hear under the conversation at the party.

**Evidence of potential learning:** Nervousness. Curiosity. Listening. Smiles.

The potential learning moments and the learning record conversion ratios from Car Barn 315 underscore something central about the learning space: Car Barn 315 has actually been a site for a lot of things. And by being a lot of things, in the light of our learning space review process, Car Barn 315 weirdly seems ineffectual as a learning space because its memories are eclectic, meandering, and not readily relevant. As we know from our ethos of learner-developed records and learning logs, relevance is subjective—yet it remains essential to the learner who curates it.

So, yes: learning is uncomfortable, and learning certain things ought to be uncomfortable. But, are those the only feelings relevant to how we should measure learning? What about joy as relevant for a learner's praxis? Or playfulness? What about fun, wonder, and awe? Can these be throughlines or lineages of a space, its memories, and our learning?

We have the data to answer this question; it's all there recorded and written in CHALK. Any of us praxitioners can read it as long as we look at it in a certain way that's different from our usual praxis. Just as each potential learning moment is tagged for its location, they are all also tagged with the specific senses and reactions that the software identifies as evidence of potential learning. The different types of potential learning evidence—hesitation, dissonance, confusion, and questions, but also playfulness, awe, and joy—are hyperlinked in the system. Click one, and you can see all the other potential learning moments with that tag.

PLM #49198790
<b>Praxitioner:</b> [REDACTED]
<b>Role:</b> Learner
<b>Year:</b> 2023
<b>Location:</b> Car Barn
<b>Moment:</b> Praxitioners have gathered for a karaoke night. Learner is asked if they are ready for their turn. Learner assents, then requests to perform a song called "Lip Gloss."
<b>Evidence of potential learning:</b> Dancing. Laughter.

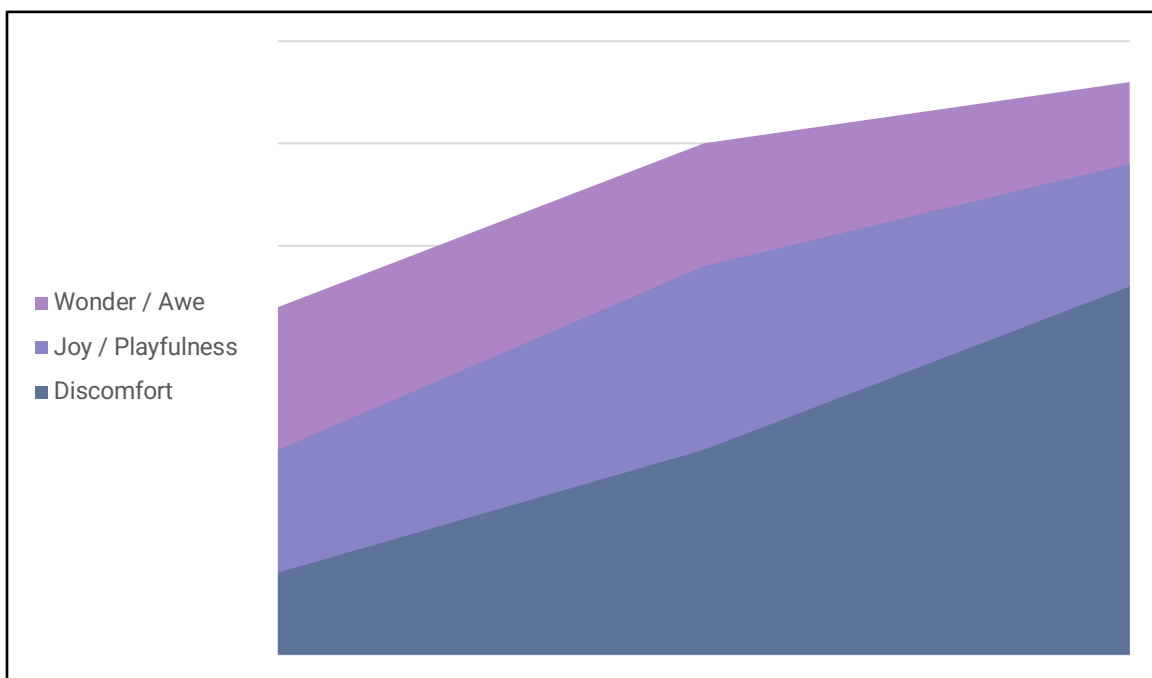


Figure 4. Categories of potential learning moment tags for Car Barn 315 from 1899-present.

The varied history of the Car Barn has amassed an eclectic mix of potential learning moments with a wide range of evidence. Again, discomfort is relevant for learning, so we can trace that tag back to the beginning of the space's time. But, we can also see joy connecting a commuter in 1899 to a young passenger in 1922 chuckling at jokes from the "Behind the Row" pamphlet tucked in their lap to praxitioners gathered together and ribbing each other while playing racing games on a 20<sup>th</sup> century Nintendo console in 2019. The feelings of wonder and awe from the praxitioners who envisioned the building are connected to the feelings that visitors in 1987 felt when peeking out the windows to view the Potomac River while touring rentable office space, and, in turn, they are tied to the praxitioners who marveled at each other's growth as they presented their learning portfolios to one another in 2024.

The difficult moments in the history of our learning spaces matter, and so do the moments of joy. They all sit next to each other in the software, in the tags, in the system, in the learning space itself. Our learners and all practitioners can look for them and learn from them now and in the future.

### **Recommendations for future use:**

*Given the possibility that this learning space may be reconfigured into a space with different uses in the future, please outline any elements of the space which may suit it well for other futures (if any) for the committee.*

Committee, you, too, are capable practitioners. Who can login to CHALK. And click on some hyperlinks. Go check ‘em out.

But what if we looked at the room review process differently? Instead of an exhaustive (and exhausting) checklist of a learning space’s traits and specific learning record data in the system, what if we considered a broader range of memories? What if we asked a learning space’s memories to model different ways of learning for our learners and reviewed its ability to be a site for myriad things? What could learning records and learning logs look like with more attention toward playfulness, wonder, and joy? How might that help our practitioners keep learning after they move beyond our campus?

There is so much data in the system. We can see it. And we can see how a shift is very much in the realm of possibility because that is in the data, too. We can look back at our records and see how we’ve changed the way we’ve done things before. Yet, we need only to look at the Car Barn itself to see just how much and how many times we’ve changed the way we have done things before. This is how we learn from the space and keep learning from it in the future.

PLM #8360192
<p><b>Praxitioner:</b> O. E. Penney  <b>Role:</b> Valuation Engineer  <b>Year:</b> 1961  <b>Site:</b> Car Barn  <b>Moment:</b> “Today the building which was conceived 66 years ago as a grandiose structure of the traction era, which was then in its ascendancy, has been remolded into a highly functional modern structure... What does the future hold in store for this fine old Georgetown landmark?”  <b>Evidence of potential learning:</b> TBD.</p>

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