
This study describes a questionnaire survey of the Carolina Hurricanes fan base. The survey was conducted to establish fan interest in oral histories of the Carolina Hurricanes team and staff. 167 responses were received and analyzed. Participants answered three multiple-choice questions and two free-response questions offering opinions about the current state of the identity and team memory of the Carolina Hurricanes. It was determined that fans want more than what is being currently documented and presented as the history of the team. Desired types of information include greater fan recognition and inclusion, team history, and celebration of existence in a non-traditional market, all of which can be effectively captured by oral histories.

Headings:

Oral history

Sports -- History

Hockey -- History

Hockey fans
PRESERVING HISTORY IN MOTION: USING ORAL HISTORY TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE MEMORY OF A NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE TEAM AND OF THE INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS

by
Hillary Hollinger

A Master’s paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

November, 2014

Approved by:

_________________________
Advisor
Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction .......................................................................................... 2
(I) Title ......................................................................................................................... 2
(II) Introduction ............................................................................................................ 2
   Research Context ....................................................................................................... 2
   Research Aims .......................................................................................................... 4
(III) Literature Review .................................................................................................. 5
(IV) This study’s substantial and original contribution to knowledge .................. 12
(V) Research Questions .............................................................................................. 13

Chapter Two: Research Plan ....................................................................................... 14
(I) Research Methods ................................................................................................... 14
   Methodology ............................................................................................................. 14
   Analysis Procedures ................................................................................................. 18
   Limitations of Methodology ..................................................................................... 18
(II) Confidentiality ....................................................................................................... 19

Chapter Three: Results and Discussion ..................................................................... 20
(I) Results ..................................................................................................................... 20
(II) Discussion and Conclusion .................................................................................... 26

Works Cited .................................................................................................................. 28
Chapter One: Introduction

(I) Title

Preserving history in motion: using oral history to preserve and enhance the memory of a National Hockey League team and of the individual players

(II) Introduction

Research Context

Oral histories have largely been regarded as mechanisms with which to explore and study the life of an individual or group, or to remember specific events from the viewpoints of those who experienced them first-hand. This type of record creation is a way to preserve history based upon personal narrative and memory recollection. While there is some debate as to whether oral histories are the most reliable method of preservation because they are human-centric and susceptible to error and biases, they are uniquely capable of capturing not only cultural and collective memory,¹ but also why the sporting community remembers the things they do.² Given this potential held by oral history use, I find the absence of it within the context of sports history both surprising

and unfortunate. The sports history community has given a small amount of
acknowledgement about utilizing oral histories as a method of preserving intangible
aspects of sports memory, and what has been said has been resoundingly positive.³
Baseball oral histories, although still limited in number, have made the most of oral
history creation. Here, interviews with former players and those closely associated with
the sport have uncovered important insights and highlighted areas of perceived
significance.⁴ Cultural elements, such as humor and the passing of expertise from one
generation to the next, cannot be captured as effectively without the integration of
nuanced delivery. When these elements are present, a richer experience is delivered to the
audience.

Although the National Hockey League (NHL) has not made significant use of oral
history, the practice appears to be a growing interest within the community. However,
these histories are only being created to memorialize specific events or experiences of
certain players, and still hold potential for further usefulness. Certain NHL franchises
make more use of video interviews of players and staff more than others, but on the
whole, professional-level ice hockey teams are not using oral histories to preserve their
team culture and history, or the player experience. Fans of NHL teams consume that
which represents their interest in teams and players, whether through merchandise or
information. Given this demand and the unique benefit in oral history of being an
expressive way to supply information, my belief is that fans will be enthusiastically

receptive to it. This study intends to determine the level of interest fans have in oral histories of players.

**Research Aims**

Despite what is being said about the positive role of oral history in sports, very little is being done in the way of recording oral histories within the NHL, and what is being done is almost exclusively aimed at the bigger and best-known names of the game. The most significant documentation of these players is comprised of written articles, photographs, and various pieces of memorabilia; even the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto has not fully utilized this technology as a way to further engage visitors with the museum and bring the experiences of featured players to life. Furthermore, very little, if anything, is being done to preserve and validate the experiences and contribution of the average player, coach, or staff member. While hundreds, if not thousands, of interviews and other interactive items exist about team captains and superstars, it is a difficult venture finding anything of lesser known players, like career fourth-liners, players with shorter careers, and of key coaches and staff members that have had integral parts in the development of the organization and team. It is also unlikely that any information produced at current standards regarding their careers and experiences will be of a similar quality in terms of depth and availability. However, these individuals contribute just as much to the team and its culture as any superstar, and should be remembered on an equal level in order to create a true picture of the team experience and franchise culture. This is not to say that other team sports that often rely on the talents or personality of one or two key players, namely basketball and football, might not benefit from the type of memory that is focused upon those singular members. The experience and “feel” of these sporting
communities is of its own character, but the sports that require full team participation, coach and staff involvement, and confidence to succeed present a much different experience. In this respect, ice hockey is notorious for its “We” attitude and team atmosphere, but this is not necessarily what is presented for team posterity.

An assortment of questions arise when exploring the methods of memory preservation of an NHL level hockey team and its specific culture. Will implementing an oral history program in conjunction with a hockey team’s current and future preservation methods have distinct and reformative benefits? My ultimate goal is to create a qualitative base of information exhibiting not only an interest in utilizing oral history as a means of preservation among players, staff, and fans, but also to demonstrate the gap between what is currently being provided and the potential for providing a complete picture.

(III) Literature Review

There has been a pervasive attitude about sports and how they fit into the scheme of historical record, and the attempts of sport historians to legitimize the practice of remembering sports have been met with lukewarm reception. More often than not, these historians end up documenting the history of sports within another socio-cultural or geographical context, while leaving the actual sporting history as a secondary feature of their research. Being that sports are largely overlooked already in the field of history, the use and creation of oral histories within sports history is an even rarer occurrence.

---

Oral history initiatives have been successful throughout Australia (most recently in Australian sports), and there has been much enthusiasm about expanding that use, not only from an academic standpoint, but also from one born of public interest. In 2010, the National Library of Australia (NLA) announced that they would be joining forces with the Australian Paralympic Committee (APC) to record oral histories with the intent to promote disability in sports while simultaneously preserving any and all information relevant to the APC. The most significant and memorable figures within the sport were approached, as well as those who had the greatest influence in growth and promotion of Paralympic sport in Australia. On the academic end, it was discovered that the richest information sources were those individuals who had served both as athletes and within an administrative position. These perspectives encompassed so many fragments of the APC that they formed a much fuller picture than might have been gleaned from someone who had participated in only one aspect of the Paralympic organization. Furthermore, this partnership generated a considerable amount of information that would have otherwise gone undocumented. However, even with just the highlights provided, the Australian public responded to this new array of information in ticket sales. The Paralympic events have seen a pointed increase in spectator attendance and corporate sponsorship since the release of the APC oral histories, and there is still untapped information waiting to be heard. Interest in the Australian Paralympics has the potential to grow even greater with more information provided.

In a similar venture, the University of Huddersfield in England launched their

---


7 Coombes, "Talking Art and Drawing Words: Paper and Oral History Collections in the National Gallery of Australia's Research Library." 300
“Up and Under” Rugby League Oral History Project. This project was intended to elicit perspectives on an individual basis regarding prominent themes and experiences that have characterized the league’s past. The players’ personal contributions added insight to the historical information already offered, primarily as it related to the working class and the hard labor that most rugby players endured to make ends meet. While this has definite value in several subject areas, the project focused upon rugby as it affected the players’ lives, which is a significant component of what I would like to capture with the use of oral history in hockey. These interviews carry the identity of the rugby experience as it was and how it evolved into the present day, making the past something more approachable and understandable.

The Baseball Hall of Fame in America boasts the largest amount of oral histories, although they are still sparse in number. The oral histories offered by the Baseball Hall of Fame feature recollections of the lives of individuals, and much like the “Up and Under” project, feature investigation into the broader contexts associated with the era in which the athlete played. These histories are all aimed at a general audience so as to widen the net of their usability, only capturing the personal accounts of players and select staff, and most often as accounts that pertain to other significant moments in history (i.e. the integration of African-Americans in professional baseball). This leaves much to be built upon. The possibilities were highlighted in Peter Golenbock’s book, Bums, in which he compiled accounts of players, fans, and management in order to best recreate the Dodgers’ seasons from the 1930s to 1957. This book represents a successful

undertaking in the creation of oral histories with the primary context of preserving the history of a sports team. It is a prime example of what oral history in sports can do.

Several factors play into the loss of information and personal recall of each NHL player, with the most obvious being the well-documented effect of memory loss and cognitive change that concussions, and particularly multiple concussions, are known to cause.\textsuperscript{11} However, career-ending injuries and trades create a similar, though different, kind of loss. While we can combat this by capturing the individual within the context of the team, we need to determine the ways in which history can be preserved as it is happening, rather than collect what is available after the fact and accept the losses that accompany that choice of timing.

Oral histories could offer a level of complexity in preserving the history of the team as it is created, and this is how it will complement the current documentation. The issue at hand is not how the complexity of hockey culture and player/staff experience can be captured with oral histories, but rather, in what ways will we preserve hockey culture and player and staff experience as it develops? How do we document the ebb and flow of team changes? This all depends on what the players, staff, and fans find to be most important about their experiences, and what is possible within a given timeframe. An AHL affiliate team member that is called up for an NHL stint that only lasts a few days may not have the necessary time or mindset for an oral history interview, but a cumulative, end of the year interview is within the realm of possibility.

This also brings up a crucial point that has been largely overlooked: recording oral histories is an efficient way to preserve the experience of the players specifically. It

holds each account, whether it is that of the captain or the AHL call-up, on an equal level, created with equal depth and thoroughness. With that being said, in what ways can we preserve the stories, contributions, and perspectives of all players on an equal level? A few things must be determined to draw definite conclusions on this matter. First, I need to determine what their perspective is now on legacy, and what are they currently doing to preserve it in detail. Rather than repeat what is already being done, we need to build upon what is there and fill in the gaps as needed. Second, we need to address how the perspectives of players, staff, and fans differ in regard to the history of a hockey organization and how that history is created, and more specifically, how stakeholders’ perceptions of the team’s history now affects their future legacy.

Third, and most importantly, it needs to be determined how and in what ways the top-down (the history chosen to be preserved from the perspective of the staff and organization officials) and bottom-up (the history chosen to be preserved by the players and fans) views of the organization meet, and how this affects their legacy. Bottom-up and top-down perspectives are necessary as a tandem to create the fullest picture possible, and it is not known if they currently meet at a middle ground. Whereas the staff and organization officials might be most concerned with keeping track of stats and quantifiable contributions, the players might desire their own legacies and reputations to be held in more qualitative terms. For instance, the +/- rating is held in incredibly different lights between forwards and defensemen. That statistic means something much more negative to a defenseman than it would to a forward, and in truth, it does not necessarily indicate much about a particular player’s career. It certainly does not reflect

---

their overall work ethic, which is more likely along the lines of what an individual player
would want remembered, rather than numbers alone.

Additionally, participating in an oral history initiative could give players the
opportunity to solidify or attempt to alter their reputations on the ice and within the
hockey community. Hockey, and the NHL in particular, have a gamut of unspoken rules
and expectations that apply throughout the league. An image of “appropriate masculinity”
and knowing one’s role within the league are expected, and players are heavily critiqued
when these dimensions of their personality are not exhibited in a manner believed to be
of a proper character.\textsuperscript{13} Two prime examples of this violation of the assumed range of
expectation exist: the constructed image of Sidney Crosby, and the Todd Bertuzzi-Steve
Moore incident. Due to his extremely high level of ability and talent, Sidney Crosby is in
the uncommon position of being “the face” of hockey. Higher expectations and greater
pressures are placed upon him more so than any other player, which extends to both his
personal and professional life. Because of this, Crosby is also under a greater amount of
scrutiny on a regular basis than any other player. Although his development and growth
into a veteran player included the same mistakes and habits typical of most rookie
players, his masculinity and image were challenged on a level more intense than would
be expected of anyone else. In accordance with this, there are now two images of Sidney
Crosby - the Canadian Hero, and the Whiner. The Bertuzzi-Moore incident\textsuperscript{14} follows a
similar structure to Crosby’s situation in that a single event has defined the careers of
these two players despite other contributions they have made to the NHL and to their

\textsuperscript{13} Allain, K. A. “Kid Crosby or Golden Boy: Sidney Crosby, Canadian National Identity, and the Policing of Hockey

\textsuperscript{14} On March 8, 2004, Vancouver Canucks forward Todd Bertuzzi approached Colorado Avalanche forward Steve Moore
from behind and attacked him, which resulted in a career-ending injury to Moore.
respective teams. Todd Bertuzzi’s conduct during this incident was in direct violation of the unwritten code of player ethics and of sanctioned violence in hockey\(^\text{15}\), and this is, in the minds of many hockey fans, the only incident attached to these two names. While there is no guarantee that career-defining moments, like the Bertuzzi-Moore incident, and early mistakes and habits within a player’s career will not ultimately be the largest focal point of a player’s reputation, portraying all major events and long-term contributions of a player to a team equally through oral history offers an opportunity to that player to define his career on his own terms.

Oral histories also have the potential to expand the team or NHL franchise from both an internal point of view, and a marketing perspective. Defining how creating and making accessible oral histories of players and staff will change the NHL and respective teams is not such a difficult endeavor. An element that seems to have gone under-represented in oral history use in sports is the audience. What has been made available in other sports’ history is aimed at a general audience, not a specific one.\(^\text{16}\) From a marketing standpoint, making oral histories accessible to fans can provide more interaction with this audience, particularly if the histories are aimed directly at fans as the core audience. Oral histories will generate more interest from fans who are already heavily or even moderately engaged with the franchise, and potentially draw in more interest from those who are not fully committed to their interest in the team. By introducing this personal element to what is available to fans, the franchise builds another


layer (or becomes more complex)\textsuperscript{17} and may be able to discover new angles in which fans seek interaction with the team.

Internally, the team may feel an increase in positive receptivity with each other, as well as with fans. Though the team aims to create a collective sense of efficacy in order to achieve the level of success they expect of themselves, the personal worth of individual players can be largely dependent upon comparison of their own skills and that of their teammates.\textsuperscript{18} Instituting a platform in which everyone is on the same level despite differences in ability and notoriety could relieve some, if any, tensions felt in the locker room. In the context of fans, there is a psychological response to intimacy, and oral histories are a method of creating a safe, yet existent, intimacy between the players and their followers. Sports fans look to create connections with their favorite teams, and, often, specific players. Fostering a positive relationship between fan and idol holds the potentiality that the inevitable losing streak or bad play will meet fewer negative or extreme reactions, thus contributing to a positive fan-franchise interaction.

\textbf{(IV) This study's substantial and original contribution to knowledge}

The proposed research aims to address an area of documentation in professional ice hockey that is currently going unfulfilled. Oral histories have been utilized to some degree in other professional sports, but this is something that has exceptional potential benefit within the realm of ice hockey in particular. That being said, research on this

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{17} Coombes, "Talking Art and Drawing Words: Paper and Oral History Collections in the National Gallery of Australia's Research Library," 308
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
topic with the specificity of ice hockey has not been done before. Research is not being duplicated, but it will be complementing what has been studied in relation to other sports and to the collective sports history.

(V) Research Questions

1. What do the fans of a hockey organization feel is under-represented or over-represented in the history of the organization? In what ways do they feel these areas could be addressed?

2. How will oral histories validate player and staff experiences and document the organization’s history while also being accessible to fans to enhance their experience?

3. In what ways will the organization be interested in using oral histories as a bottom-up method to preserve the collective identity of the team?
Chapter Two: Research Plan

(I) Research Methods

Methodology

I am choosing to investigate my questions within the context of a single NHL team, the Carolina Hurricanes. The fans and team are local to my current area, and they are a newer team still in the process of establishing their presence within the NHL, and in the South. I feel that the “new-ness” of the team presents a unique opportunity in that their identity as a team is still being formed. Oral histories could be particularly useful for this team, not only for the sake of richer documentation, but also for the sake of posterity as the team establishes its reputation, and further establishes its identity.

In order to make a determination about possible interest in oral histories of players and staff from fans, I plan to collect data and draw conclusions from survey results. The survey will be administered using the Qualtrics service, and is intended to address how fans currently view the identity of the team, what they find to be the defining aspects of the team history, and what other information in which they might be interested.

The survey will consist of five questions (three mandatory questions with multiple choice responses, and two optional, open-ended questions), and it will be open to any
fans of the Carolina Hurricanes hockey club. My analysis plan of the survey responses will be conducted according to the schedule that I have set, starting with making the survey available in late June before or just after the 2014 NHL Draft takes place. I will collect responses and have an initial analysis completed by August 25th, 2014. A final analysis of all responses collected will be completed by September 8th, 2014.

While my target demographic is Hurricane fans, I realize that the survey will be open to anyone that sees it and wants to take time to complete it. Therefore, I am not discrediting any responses unless it is obvious that a survey response was completed only as a means of promoting offensive views that do not contribute to the completeness of the data. I estimate that I will receive 40-50 individual responses in total. In the event that I receive a number of individual responses in excess of 100 before the cut-off date for collection of survey responses, I will end the survey earlier than the specified date such that I will be able to fully analyze the acquired findings without compromise.

A link to the survey and a short explanation of the goal of the survey will be made available on a handful of platforms. The first dissemination of the survey will be through the Canes Country Blog as a fanpost, and it will be open for comment responses in case responders have a question or concern. This is a community blog website that thrives on fan participation. Posting the Qualtrics link to the survey is not a violation of their community policies, and is likely to garner a particularly honest collection of responses as the community is geared toward both negative and positive discussion of the team. My fanpost will include the following content along with the survey link:

“Hello. I’m a Library and Information Science student at UNC working on my master’s paper, and I have chosen to focus on the ways information science might
be able to enhance the Carolina Hurricanes experience. If you would take 5-10 minutes to answer my survey regarding your opinions and thoughts about the team, I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you. [link]"

Canes Country also manages a Twitter account, and I plan to post the link on this platform as well with this tweet:

“(CanesCountry My master’s paper is about @NHLCanes and integration of information science. Help me and RT my survey? [link]”

With cooperation from the organization’s public relations staff, I may be able to contact the season ticket holders, or send out the survey link via email to anyone subscribed to the Carolina Hurricanes email service. The email would contain the same content and link as shown in the blog entry. I also plan to make the survey available on social media platforms, namely Twitter and Facebook. The Facebook post will be identical to the blog fanpost and potential email, but posted in two places: on my personal account as a status update and on the Carolina Hurricanes fan page as a public wall post.

Making the survey available on Twitter is more complicated as a single tweet is only allowed a maximum of 140 characters, and the survey link will consume 22 characters. Also, due to the informal and conversational nature of Twitter, I chose to compose a tweet that meets this community expectation, but still appears professional enough to be trustworthy. I propose to tweet this statement to the Carolina Hurricanes from my personal account:

“My master’s paper is about the @NHLCanes and integration of information science for #Caniacs! Please take my survey? [link]”
The Carolina Hurricanes follow me on Twitter, so it is my hope that they will be willing to retweet this message to their base of followers of approximately 126,000. I also plan to request that my friends on Twitter retweet the message so that their followers might complete the survey.

The content of the survey in its entirety is shown here:

“Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. It should only take about 5-10 minutes of your time, and your answers will be completely anonymous. You may leave the survey at any time, but your answers will not be recorded until after you have hit the Submit button. Questions marked with an asterisk require an answer in order for the survey to be submitted. Questions not marked with an asterisk are optional.

1. What do you think makes up the identity of the Carolina Hurricanes? (Check all that apply)*
   - Inclusive and collective of all players
   - Focused upon one or a handful of key players
   - A team of skilled players
   - A team of fast skaters
   - A team of gritty/aggressive players
   - Tough competitors
   - Hard-working
   - Offense first
   - Defense first
   - Other: _________________________________

2. Which aspects of the team would you want remembered? (Check all that apply)*
   - Only major events (conference titles, playoff participation, etc.)
   - The players’ perspective on the team’s history and culture
   - The coaches’ and administrative staff’s perspective on the team’s history and culture
   - Contributions of all players (statistics, perspectives, community, etc.)
Only contributions of fan-favorite players (statistics, perspectives, community, etc.)
Other: _________________________________

3. What would you want remembered specifically about the players’ contributions to the team? (Check all that apply)*
- Goals
- Assists
- Hits
- Saves/Blocks
- Captaincy (including Alternate Captaincy)
- Experiences specific to each player
- Experiences shared by the team
- Experiences specific to fan-favorite players
Other: _________________________________

4. What would you like to see remembered in the history of the team that is not currently being addressed?

5. What about the coaches/administrative staff experience do you feel is important, but not being captured or remembered?"

Analysis Procedures

The questions presented here have been designed to elicit information from fans of a particular team in regard to the creation and retention of team culture and history. Due to the open-answer nature of some questions, survey responses will be grouped based on themes and likeness to each other and then analyzed from this perspective.

Limitations of Methodology
This study will be limited by the number of participants in this study. Survey responses are provided on a volunteer basis, and are determined by who chooses to answer the survey. While I expect that the majority of answers provided will be of a serious nature, I will have to weed out those which are intentionally detrimental to the study. Responses that fall into this category will be recognizable if they fall under one or more aspects from this set of criteria:

1. The response is intentionally off-topic.
2. The response is intentionally derogatory towards individuals within the organization or to the team as a whole.

(II) Confidentiality

All data, from the survey is confidential, and used only for the purpose of this study. No identifiable information will be utilized except where permitted.
Chapter Three: Results and Discussion

(I) Results

The survey was opened and announced on July 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2014 with a spotlight article on the Canes Country Blog, as well as through the Canes Country Twitter feed and Facebook page, and through my own personal Facebook and Twitter accounts. It was open for three weeks, and ended on August 15\textsuperscript{th}, 2014. It accumulated 167 completed responses for a 96.5\% overall completion rate. The multiple choice response questions elicited a greater response percentage than the questions that were strictly free response. However, the participants did offer a large amount of information within the free response questions and in the “Other” choice options from the multiple choice questions.

What do you think makes up the identity of the Carolina Hurricanes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defense first</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A team of gritty/aggressive players</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offense first</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A team of fast players</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tough competitors</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard-working</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A team of skilled players</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusive and collective of all players</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused upon one or a handful of key players</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Team Identity
Oddly enough, of the answer choices offered for this question (shown in Figure 1), the two choices with the largest percentage of participant agreement were completely contradictory. 48% believed that the identity of the team was focused upon one or a handful of key players, but 41% thought the opposite, with the identity being inclusive and collective of all players. This is evidence to suggest a disparity between what is being promoted by the organization and what fans are experiencing. Of the 29% of participants that answered “Other,” each provided a response that sheds light on why this discrepancy may be occurring. These responses generally indicated that the style of play (how the team performs on the ice) and social perception (how the team is viewed by their fans and peers) of the team are the defining factors in regard to the identity of a team. Participants gave commentary as it applied to one or both of these factors and it was split between opposing negative and positive views – one person mentions areas in which the team is perceived to be lacking, another points out areas of skill and character. This continues to ring true when regarding where the remaining response percentages lie. There is not a clear inclination as to which of the team descriptors is most applicable. “A team of skilled players” and “hard-working” top the list of descriptors, but the data do not confidently indicate where the skill and hard work lies. This leads into another common theme among responses: a lack of team identity entirely. Many fans reported feeling that the team was in transition, or did not always present a consistent identity through either style of play or social perception.

*What aspects of the team would you want remembered?*
An overwhelming 74% of respondents desired the team memory to be established through contributions of all players on the team, as opposed to 7% desiring just the contributions of fan-favorite players (shown in Figure 2). This sentiment is echoed by 50% of respondents indicating that they desired the players’ perspective on the team’s history and culture. Coupled with the 50% who want only major events to be part of the team memory, a reasonable conclusion is to suggest that major events could be highlighted by oral history accounts given by each player involved. Although not as great as player participation, there is still notable interest in the perspectives of the coaches and administrative staff (37%).

What would you want remembered specifically about the players’ contributions to the team?
When asked about players’ contributions specifically, 71% of respondents prefer team-shared experiences to individual, fan-favorite player experiences (15%). It is important to note that 59% of respondents prefer experiences specific to each player, again, ranking higher than fan-favorite player experiences alone. Goals, assists, saves/blocks, and hits all received about the same amount of interest, and captaincy did not fall far behind.

**What would you like to see remembered in the history of the team that is currently not being addressed?**

The responses to this question presented several common desires. The most dominant request was for the organization to document its roots, meaning that it should offer more information about its history in Greensboro, and surprisingly, the history of the Hartford Whalers. Before moving to Greensboro, North Carolina (and subsequently, after the construction of the permanent arena, to Raleigh, North Carolina) and becoming the Carolina Hurricanes, the team was based in Hartford, Connecticut, and known as the Hartford Whalers. When the team was sold and brought to North Carolina, its identity
within the NHL changed. Though many of the same players from the last Whalers roster stayed with the organization, it was considered a brand new team and a brand new start. The motivations of respondents for wanting this information and history seems to be largely based out of nostalgia and the desire to make sure that what came before is not forgotten. As one participant responded, “I think it brings an added history of what came before Raleigh. While many may disagree…I feel people enjoy history and how things came to be.” Another participant recounted that “the first hockey games I went to were Hartford Whalers games. I would like to see more inclusion of the Whalers history and players. Maybe have the team wear a throwback jersey or even just sell some Whaler merchandise.” Although the Carolina Hurricanes organization is still young in the eyes of the League, it is old enough to have established its own identity apart from the Whalers.

Other respondents commented upon the lack of equal and accessible documentation of all players, including those from the AHL affiliate team, the Charlotte Checkers. Several comments were made in regard to fans feeling that “the AHL participation by the team is all but ignored,” and they “would like to know more about the experiences and feelings of the players that get called up from the AHL but are then returned after just a few games.” Along the same lines, respondents also felt that the team’s most accomplished members and achievements were not being made visible enough. One noted that the team’s Hall of Fame is located inside the locker room, and suggested that, because the arena in Raleigh is shared with other sports teams and concerts, it should be located in a commons area where it could generate more interest from those attending other functions. Another point (of contention) is that the only accomplishment the organization refers to regularly is the 2006 Stanley Cup victory.
While no one denied that this was the high point of the Hurricanes’ current legacy, many asked why other accomplishments, both on-ice and off, were not being promoted or featured as significant pieces of their identity. In fact, the greatest complaint respondents had after lack of information about the Whalers and Greensboro history was that community involvement and fan participation are under-represented.

The Hurricanes’ fan-base is neither shy, nor unaware of the non-traditional market they are supporting. The South is not an easy market for an ice sport to break into, but the Hurricanes have managed to integrate ice hockey into the immediate and surrounding communities, particularly through youth programs. This is due in no small part to the positive outreach the Hurricanes have built a reputation around. For this organization, outreach and fan participation go hand in hand. Because of this, fan investment in outreach activities is heightened, thus generating the desire for more acknowledgment and inclusion in team platforms.

What about the coaches/administrative staff experiences do you feel is important, but not being captured or remembered?

Of the survey respondents who expressed an opinion about the experiences and perspectives of the coaches and administrative staff, the majority wanted to know biographical and professional information about the coaches, staff and administration, as well as the impact they had on player and organizational development. Overall, fans do not feel that they have been given enough information about these people, so much so that they do not feel that they can accurately describe who the coaches and behind the scenes staff are and what they do. One respondent phrases it best:
“There is very little, if any, recording, discussion, or analysis concerning each coaches role with the team (assistant coaches) or their style of play (head coaches) such as offense first, offense philosophy, defense first, defensive philosophy, power play philosophy or method, penalty kill methodology, player interaction philosophy, etc. What we know about each head coach generally is that he's in charge with little discussion of how he goes about his duties and responsibilities. The same is true about the assistant coaches except we may know a specific duty they perform (coach the power play, coach the penalty kill, etc.).”

Fans would like to know the paths each person traveled before joining the organization, and anything that would enable a connection to be made rather than just a short, impersonal biography and resume.

(II) Discussion and Conclusion

Common themes of under-representation within the Carolina Hurricanes organization include the desire for greater fan recognition and inclusion, team history as an unexplored organizational facet, and lack of adequate celebration of existence in a non-traditional market.

Given the number of responses pointing to community and fan recognition as a concern, the personal connection between the team and the fans must be developed further, and with such strong ties to the Hartford Whalers still lingering, it must be questioned what other efforts can be made to differentiate the two organizations. Strengthening the personal connection alone may be enough to spark and encourage differentiation. Utilizing team history as one of the primary tools in this process would not only serve to address this perceived weakness, but also that weakness found in current team history practices. That being said, the team’s history must first be given a platform, with accessible, engaging media, and a structure that can be maintained and updated with consistency. This new system needs to include a certain number of steadfast
elements (present throughout the duration of the system) to establish congruity in
documentation, but it also needs to be responsive enough for adaptation and change over
time. Because of the opportunities to customize both the creation and presentation of
information, recording oral histories is the most lasting and efficient option available to
achieve improvement in both of the aforementioned areas.

The non-traditional market aspect could easily be addressed within this system as
well. While not a solution specific to this issue, it is a quality that can be acknowledged
and supported through the same means. Whether it is a topic prompted during oral history
recordings or incorporated in some other way, the opportunity to integrate it is present.

Capturing oral histories of the organization’s history is the act of validating the
experiences players and staff, because those experiences are the essence of the
organization. One cannot exist without the other. However, this does not mean that the
information collected needs to expose the sensitive inner workings of the organization, or
be of a revealing, personal nature. There is a considerable amount of information that
falls into a range that is comfortable to relay, contributes to the historical goal, and also
appeals to the consuming fan base. This sweet spot is where bottom-up and top-down
mentalities meet to enable preservation of the team identity.

Although it felt as though there were nearly as many unique suggestions as there
were responses, it is important to note that there was not a single survey response that
expressed a desire for personal information about players and staff, or for complete
transparency from the organization. This leads me to believe that, in general, any
expectations that fans may have from oral histories will be reasonable.
Works Cited


