



VALUING ARCHAEOLOGY BEYOND ARCHAEOLOGY

AN AMERIND FOUNDATION SEMINAR

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What would a future without archaeology look like? How do we work to ensure that archaeology remains vibrant and relevant, especially considering today's changing political and economic landscape?

Archaeology in the United States is robust but is highly dependent on governmental funding and regulations, all of which can change. Budget cuts are likely, and we may be competing with other needs for limited research funds. There are political threats to the Antiquities Act of 1906, the first legislation that established federal government interest in archaeology in the United States, as well as other regulations. Therefore, we need strong voices, arguments, and examples from individuals and organizations about the value of understanding the past to help ensure archaeology's and the planet's future.

Archaeological information has always been relevant to issues facing human societies and communities. We are encouraged that archaeology has a growing body of research with explicit value for contemporary problems under the rubric of public archaeology, public interest archaeology, contemporary archaeology, and other such labels. A list of these archaeological publications and organizational initiatives number in the hundreds. While more research is needed, archaeologists also need to better present the value of our work beyond our own profession.

To help meet these challenges, the Amerind Foundation hosted a two-day workshop in May 2017 to draft an action plan. Most

participants were leaders of core archaeological associations and related organizations, and we hope to increase collaboration among these groups.

We discussed two major topics—the values/relevancies of archaeology, and constituencies/audiences/stakeholders—and identified some possible actions. What we offer here is a general framework with the purpose of stimulating further thinking, discussion, and action among archaeologists. We recognize that the specific contexts and settings influence how or whether people value archaeology; as a result, salient points need to be tailored to the specific circumstances. Furthermore, we focused on archaeology in the United States, but the issues raised are hardly limited to one country.

Values and Relevancies of Archaeology

Archaeologists need to work to increase the relevance of our field and to make clear to our many audiences and constituencies that archaeology is indeed applicable to a wide range of interests in today's world and to a host of issues facing people wherever they live. Messaging about why archaeology matters could highlight some of the following points.

Archaeologists believe that archaeology is clearly relevant to descendant communities, and we should continue to collaborate with those communities to ensure that archaeology is of value to them. Archaeology can **help communities better under-**

stand their shared heritages; it also can bring indigenous peoples' stories to light, show how closely they are connected to local landscapes, and make clear their links to specific sites or artifacts. Numerous studies of Ancestral Pueblo archaeological sites throughout the US Southwest—some by Native American archaeologists—constitute just one of many examples. Furthermore, archaeology can be intentionally used to chip away at unconscious bias by encouraging an appreciation of cultural diversity and challenging assumptions about a variety of cultural behaviors.

Archaeological findings also can be relevant to political entities (states, cities, etc.) and feed **local or nationalistic pride**, as is the case in Mexico. Nevertheless, as history has shown, intentionally misconstrued use of archaeological results can also have very dangerous results—Nazi Germany being just one awful example—making professional archaeological voices in the public sphere of even greater importance.

Archaeology can **provide corrections, reveal complexities, and yield material evidence unavailable in the written historical record**, as well as fill key gaps in that record. Many examples exist of these contributions, such as the research on the slave quarters at Monticello, the African burial ground in lower Manhattan, and sites associated with Colorado's coalfield wars.

Archaeology has developed and applied many **methods, techniques, and approaches that are being utilized in a wide variety of non-archaeological endeavors** (forensics [as can be seen in *CSI*, for example] and evidence gathering for war crimes investigations, modern garbage and landfill studies, homeless encampment studies, and transient immigrant camp studies, among many examples).

Archaeology offers an important tool for lifelong learning. It **engages K–12 students** through a sense of wonder that helps stimulate student interest in science learning. For older students and adult learners, it offers a **multidisciplinary, problem-based approach at the intersection of science and the humanities**; it also can stimulate interest in field and laboratory sciences. The Society for American Archaeology, among many other groups, has an active outreach effort aimed at pre-college students.

Archaeological sites play a significant role in **heritage tourism** around the globe and thus are a **strong worldwide economic driver** for towns, cities, regions, and countries. One can name hundreds of examples in this regard, such as Chichen Itza in Mexico, Lascaux Cave in France, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Mesa Verde in Colorado, and Jamestown in Virginia. For example, in the United States, the value of heritage tourism is worth billions of dollars.

Additionally, archaeological findings can give decision-makers, planners, and the public a **significant deep-time perspective on key issues**, such as the success or failure of varying adaptations to changing environments and to economic and demographic trends. Archaeology thus offers historical perspectives on a variety of current problems, particularly the sustainability of the growing urban populations across the globe with changing climate regimes. Surely, the thousands of ancient cultures that have lived on the earth over many millennia developed solutions that could well be useful in the future.

Constituencies/Audiences/Stakeholders

While there are many groups with interest and stake in archaeology, we grouped these into the following major categories.

Policy Makers and Implementers

These groups are those that directly affect the legal, administrative, and bureaucratic context of our work. Given recent political changes, archaeological organizations have intensified coordinated advocacy. Outreach and advocacy must happen at all levels: municipal, county, state, regional, and federal. We prioritized five actions:

1. **Strive for greater coordination among archaeological organizations.** Core archaeological organizations have increased cooperation. This should be formalized through institutionalized and ongoing communication. The Coalition for American Heritage represents such an effort, and we encourage organizations to remain engaged in collaborative projects.
2. **Reach out to non-archaeological organizations.** Archaeology has much to offer other disciplines and vice versa. Archaeologists could organize sessions at their meetings and invite other disciplines for sessions on cross-disciplinary topics that would be of value to all the participants.
3. **Intensify contacts with historic preservation.** State Historic Preservation Offices, Tribal Historic Preservation Offices, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other organizations are essential connectors between archaeology and historic preservation efforts, as well as between archaeology and important decision-makers. Archaeologists could work with such partners to ensure that archaeological sites are included in lists of threatened resources or to develop new annual lists of the most threatened archaeological resources to publicize at-risk heritage locations.
4. **Emphasize and publicize efficient and effective practices.** National and international archaeological organizations should provide more ways of distributing information about best practices for advocacy and outreach.

5. Offer greater recognition for implementers. The archaeological community needs to forge long-term relationships with those implementing policy. This needs to occur at a variety of levels.

Business

Businesses are critical to archaeology, but not just as the primary clients for cultural resource management. Equally important, they are often core organizations in political processes and recognize the importance of cultural heritage for strengthening civic engagement and pride. We suggest five priorities:

- 1. Emphasize efficient practices.** Businesses want results, predictability, and efficient processes. Too often archaeology is viewed as an impediment to development rather than as an opportunity. Archaeologists working throughout North America, however, have proven that efficient and effective collaboration with businesses is possible. Organizations, such as the American Cultural Resource Association and others, should further disseminate the best practices and examples of successful collaboration.
- 2. Highlight the value of corporate citizenship.** Most businesses recognize that it is in their interest to be good citizens through support of communities. We think archaeologists could take better advantage of corporate citizenship. Archaeologists should seek out business opportunities and recognize those businesses that support cultural heritage efforts.
- 3. Communicate more with trade associations.** Contacts with trade associations are efficient ways to communicate with whole segments of businesses. Archaeological organizations should consider appointing liaisons with these groups.
- 4. Highlight benefits of local preservation ordinances.** Vibrant communities are good for businesses. A sense of appreciation of cultural heritage helps build strong communities, and archaeology's role in this needs to be highlighted. Making presentations at various meetings, such as at local chambers of commerce, and offering tours of successful preservation efforts for select groups may help build support for archaeology.
- 5. Emphasize best practices for heritage tourism.** For many places, heritage tourism is an important economic driver. There are specific communities that recognize this, such as St. Augustine, Florida, and Santa Fe, New Mexico. Heritage tourism is valuable far more widely, however; in fact, it is hard to think of a community without interesting archaeology.

Educators/Students

Archaeologists and archaeological organizations have long recognized the importance of educating the next generation from

K–12 through university. We can do more by highlighting the relevancy of archaeology in curricula and developing project-based archaeological curricula that fully integrate discussions of the ethics of practice and research; encouraging and promoting support for more involvement by archaeologists in schools; providing more training on writing for nonacademic audiences; focusing especially on middle school students as target audiences, as this age group appears to be uniquely open to science and thus to archaeology; and encouraging the formation of school clubs.

Practitioners

This group includes a diverse range of professionals who have at least peripheral relationships to archaeology. Archaeologists have emphasized outreach to students and various communities. We have been less successful at reaching out to practitioners, such as scientists in other disciplines. We discussed the following possible relationships:

- 1. Link natural and human systems through a landscape perspective in order to facilitate outreach to and interaction with other disciplines.** As we have long recognized, humans have been an integral part of the web of life. Other disciplines, such as conservation biology, have come to appreciate that an understanding of ecology requires an understanding of human history in its full complexity. The same can be said for economics, sociology, and engineering, among many others. We can, for example, invite scholars from other disciplines to special sessions at our meetings and work to have archaeological sessions at meetings of interested disciplines.
- 2. Reach out to the legal profession about the value of heritage preservation and education.** Archaeologists should work to cultivate relationships with individual lawyers and with legal associations. Offering field trips showcasing archaeology is one such approach.
- 3. Publish in cross-disciplinary journals.** The majority of archaeological research is published in discipline-specific journals that are read primarily by archaeologists. Cross-disciplinary journals, such as *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *Science*, and *Nature*, are read by scholars from many disciplines and receive wide public exposure, as well.

Communities

Archaeology can be of great value to communities. Most recent discussions about community collaboration have focused on Native American nations, given the special nature of peoples who as sovereign nations have long relationships with their landscapes. It is hard, however, to think of a community that would not be enriched by archaeological research, including

ethnic groups, as well as economic classes, regional and local populations, and industrial communities. We discussed the following initiatives:

1. **Sensitize archaeologists to local contexts, sensibilities, biases, and concerns.** To be effective in communicating and collaborating with communities requires sensitivity to the concerns of these communities. Anti-bias/anti-racism training at professional meetings is one step toward reducing problems. Also critical to effective collaboration are the identification of appropriate community contacts and efforts to ensure that collaboration is not just one-way communication. Again, archaeologists need to continue to disseminate best practices in community engagement and provide awards for those doing exemplary work in this area.
2. **Collaborate with all generations, especially youth.** Some of the most effective community outreach programs involve youth, and we encourage more such efforts; however, we should not forget older generations and should offer help with lifelong learning programs.
3. **Encourage collectors to work in positive ways.** There are thousands of artifact collectors and metal detector enthusiasts. Many, if not most, have deep interests in archaeology. Archaeologists need to continue to cultivate relationships with these types of collectors. Such efforts have the potential to benefit the archaeological record through gathering new distributional information and potentially reducing sales of artifacts. To do this, archaeologists need to increase support of avocational groups.
4. **Support strengthening of import/export controls for illegal antiquities.** Human heritage is worldwide, and the United States is a major market for illegal antiquities. While there has been progress in this direction, governments around the globe should be encouraged to implement stronger controls on the export and importation of illegal antiquities.
5. **Increase outreach to recent immigrants.** The United States is and will continue to be a land of immigrants. Archaeological outreach to recent immigrant communities can help them to gain a sense of place and history for their new homes. Conversely, we can see our work through the fresh perspective of these immigrants.

Funders

Archaeological research and related activities cost money. Although federal funding supports a good deal of archaeology in the United States through agency compliance with federal historic preservation laws, direct federal funding through the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) only supports a small fraction of archaeological research. Archaeologists should proactively

seek new funding sources. Archaeologists are largely unaware of the thousands of local foundations throughout the United States. While their grants tend to be small, they may be useful for small archaeological projects. Archaeologists also might increase their collaboration with relevant industries and organizations, as the latter can help underwrite archaeological research.

Military

The military is important for several reasons. First, the military controls a vast amount of land throughout the United States, and many of these locations have significant prehistoric and historical cultural resources. Second, archaeological remains in overseas conflict zones face immediate threats as, unfortunately, we have seen recently in Iraq and Syria. Third, the US military are often the first responders on the ground in cases of environmental and natural disasters in many parts of the world. Archaeological organizations can help raise the profile of heritage protection in both conflict zones and disaster relief situations. We can publicize programs like the Veterans Curation Program, forensic programs, and work by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency whose archaeologists recover and identify POW/MIA remains.

Media

Getting the word out about archaeology and its roles in a wide variety of contexts requires strategic media exposure. We offer the following suggestions to continue to amplify the work that archaeologists are already doing:

1. **Treat media professionals as an audience.** They are not just an information conduit; they are themselves an audience. Therefore, we need to understand the various types of media, and speak to different media professionals in a way that works. It would be helpful to offer workshops on writing for and speaking to media at professional meetings or other settings.
2. **Foster stronger contacts and develop relationships with journalists.** As anthropologists, we know how important social relationships are, so we need to cultivate relationships with journalists in the same ways we build relationships with other groups and individuals.
3. **Improve social media strategies.** Archaeology could do much more in using the power of social media to its advantage.
4. **Identify archaeologists with expertise in various areas of archaeology and the ability to convey that knowledge in media-appropriate ways.**

Summary

While we have offered a framework for more effective outreach and advocacy, we recognize that there are so many more actions we can take to ensure that archaeology has a viable and important future. In the broadest sense, we see five overarching and priority approaches:

1. **Help archaeologists understand that outreach and advocacy are essential** not only for archaeology's future but also for helping to meet many of the problems of the modern world.
2. **Disseminate "best practices" more widely and consistently.** The Society for American Archaeology, as an example, already has three outlets for doing so: *The SAA Archaeological Record*, *Advances in Archaeological Practice*, and its webpage. The Society for Historical Archaeology, as another example, hosts a community-based best practices page in its Abandoned Burial Grounds website: <https://sha.org/resources/abandoned-burial-grounds/>.
3. **Greatly increase the social media presence for archaeology.**
4. **Coordinate ongoing outreach and advocacy collaborations within and among archaeological organizations and associations more effectively.** This will require identifying and recruiting formal liaisons within these organizations.
5. **Give greater recognition—via awards, for example—for outstanding advocacy and outreach efforts.**

If archaeology were not to rise to the current challenge of explaining its value and if it were to lose much of its support and funding, what might our world look like in the future? We could lose an important economic generator, as heritage tourism declined. In addition, the contributions to history that many groups of people worldwide have made would remain underappreciated or ignored. We also might see irreversible destruction of our global heritage and the consequent loss of information that could have immense value for the modern world. Such destruction of information about how thousands of generations of our ancestors coped with the challenges of their times, including climate change, would be a painful blow to efforts to find a sustainable way of life for the increasing population of the earth.



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