Discussion 6 in the 21ˢᵗ Century Challenges for Archaeology Series: 'Challenges for Archaeological Publication in the Digital Age' 29-30 November 2017

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Simon Gilmour (Director of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland)

Stuart Bryant (Self Employed Archaeologist)

Contributions by email/ Facebook

Martin Counihan, Archaeologist plus one other anon. Facebook contribution

Introduction and Setting out the Questions

Main online discussion

(Robin Page)

Welcome to this 6th online discussion in the '21st Century Challenges for Archaeology' series! It is on the subject of 'Challenges for archaeological publication in a digital age: who are we writing this stuff for, anyway?' Discussion over the next two days will focus on how we can secure and enhance the public and academic benefits of archaeological publication at a time when most archaeological fieldwork is carried out by the commercial sector and when digital technologies are challenging traditional models of dissemination.
A background briefing paper is available through the CIfA website: https://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/Workshop%206%20online%20%20%28003%29.pdf
Please see the following posts for the specific questions we'll be addressing

1. How much do we know about our profession's usage of publications? Do the findings and recommendations of the 2001 'From the Ground Up' report still apply? Have they been implemented?

2. Do we need a new and more prescriptive professional standard and guidance for grey literature reports and for our academic publication channels?

3. Is our profession clear when and why we publish reports as grey literature; on-line; as journal articles or as monographs? Who decides and on what basis?

4. Are we clear on the boundary between 'publication' and 'archive' and does this

need to change? And do we know how to create a usable digital documentary archive and have we adequate professional standards and guidance in place?

5. If we can access most information on line, what should the 'main' report on an archaeological intervention comprise? Evidence, synthesis or a popular account? Should any of it be in hard copy?

Robin Page (...and Questions 6-8 of 8...)
6. Does professional or popular hard copy publication derived from excavation reporting still have a role to play? If so, what, why and how?
7. How can we improve public engagement with what we are writing without neglecting our professional and academic responsibilities to publish?
8. If we were to start again what would be our ideal form(s) of archaeological publication?

Steve Trow From Steve Trow
Good morning everybody. Here are a few thoughts on 'grey literature' to get us warmed up. I hope we can also look at more formal channels of publication, such as journals and monographs, as well.

The dramatic increase in the number of archaeological interventions since PPG 16 was issued has been accompanied by a massive growth in the volume of 'grey literature' reporting. This has posed two challenges: ease of retrieval and variation in standards.

Steve Trow Between 1990 and 2000 Historic England funded the Archaeological Investigations Project by Bournemouth University, which painstakingly 'swept -up' and indexed as much grey literature as possible to ensure its retrievability. Initially through the British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography and now the Archaeology Data Service Library.

In an era of public spending reductions, we can't afford to do this nowadays. Nor, frankly, do we think it's our job to chase around after the commercial sector trying to retrieve their reports! Nowadays it should be the responsibility of all archaeologists to ensure the reports on their interventions are uploaded to the Archaeology Data Service and indexed via OASIS. We are working to ensure this happens, with others in the profession, through our Heritage Information Access programme
see: https://historicengland.org.uk/research/support-and-collaboration/heritage-information-access-strategy/

Steve Trow CIfA will need to play an important role in all of this by ensuring that on-line access to information is threaded through its Standards and Guidance and training.

Is this something we can easily sort out? It doesn't feel as if it should be an insuperable challenge….

Jan Wills Good morning from me too. Starting with grey literature links us into the discussions we had on the previous topic of synthesis: there was a lot of criticism of grey literature standards, and of the grey literature/formal publication relationship, and many researchers lamented the lack of clarity of the relationship between the two. The standards question falls into at least two parts: do we have the right standards, and is everyone complying with them? The answer to the latter question seems to be no.

Steve Trow If the improving the retrievability of grey literature looks like a challenge that should be within our grasp, do we have a more intractable problem with its quality?

The issue of standards has recently been given greater prominence as a result of a methodological review, funded by Historic England, as part of the important Roman Rural Settlement project undertaken by Reading University working with Cotswold Archaeology. This has shone a rather uncomfortable light on the considerable variation in standards of reporting and a resultant reduction in the public value of the products derived from development-led archaeology.

Do we think the quality of grey literature is an historical problem that is now solved? Or do we need a close look at the standards and guidance we apply to it? Views from people who use it would be really useful.

Steve Trow If people are unfamiliar with the work by Reading University and Cotswold Archaeology a series of thought provoking short papers can be seen at: http://cotswoldarchaeology.co.uk/community/discover-the-past/developer-funded-roman-archaeology-in-britain/methodology-study/

Edmund Lee Paper 9 in the methodology papers on the Cotswold website by Stewart Bryant is particularly relevant to this discussion

Jan Wills I think that Ed Lee and Stewart Bryant are going to be running a session at the CIfA conference in April 2018 on grey literature reports, very hands on, with a view to sorting out the problems on the spot. Maybe they can contribute some thoughts on this here during the next couple of days??

SteveTrow Thanks Ed. If I can take the liberty of quoting from Stewart's paper, he says: 'Any analysis and conclusions regarding methodologies is therefore reliant upon the presence of the relevant data within the published or grey literature report and for this to be recorded reasonably consistently. Whilst some important data such as excavation and evaluation plans are invariably present, most data including reporting of non-invasive surveys and the reporting and illustration of artefacts and environmental data is inconsistent to varying degrees'.

Nicholas Boldrini Taking the questions in turn.
1) How much do we know about our profession's usage of publications? Do the

findings and recommendations of the 2001 'From the Ground Up' report still apply? Have they been implemented? - I am not sure we know very much about usage of Grey Literature. In our HER, the number of people coming in to use the HER reports has dropped off to virtually nil, but as many reports are now available digitally perhaps they are being accessed in different ways? (eg ADS)? I would think (though its been ages since I read it) that a lot of From The Ground up has been dealt with, but it might be worth a formal review.

Nicholas Boldrini 2) Do we need a new and more prescriptive professional standard and guidance for grey literature reports and for our academic publication channels? - I would say that given recent work then the answer to this is almost certainly going to be yes for GL. The only way you can ensure standards are being met is having one defined. At present I would suggest there isn't a clear standard.

Nicholas Boldrini 3. Is our profession clear when and why we publish reports as grey literature; on-line; as journal articles or as monographs? Who decides and on what basis? - I would say no to this, from the planning context. As Planning Advisors, LPA Archaeologists often have to make this call for sites found during the development process, and I would say that call is based on gut feeling, as to what should be formally published. But theres a subtle point here. I assume that a published site will have had more analysis than a non-published one. In the modern publishing media set up, a GL report with enough suitable analysis may be enough for a site, without it being formally published. So the important question in this are the first part. Why do we publish. In the past that was clear - wider circulation, but with online GL reports, why do we

Steve Trow Replying to Nicholas on Question 1. With the help of Mike Heyworth, we will be reviewing progress on the 'From the Ground Up' at the workshop on the 7th. Some but not all the recommendations have been followed up.

Nicholas Boldrini 4. Are we clear on the boundary between 'publication' and 'archive' and does this need to change? And do we know how to create a usable digital documentary archive and have we adequate professional standards and guidance in place?
I would say the boundary is clear, at least to me, but it might be getting more blurred with EG articles linked to digital archives. The published form is the interpretation of the archive, showing the key parts - the archive, is the raw data. Internet archaeology are helping to blur this line/remove the distinction in a positive way by making it possible to have articles which link to archives more closely, but I think the distinction is pretty clear. You'll have to figure out yourself what an archive means, a publication explains it to you.

Steve Trow One of the interesting things about 'From the Ground Up' was it assumed that we were on the brink of a big switch to digital publishing for major archaeological reports. And that was a decade and a half ago!

Nicholas Boldrini 5. If we can access most information on line, what should the 'main' report on an archaeological intervention comprise? Evidence, synthesis or a popular account? Should any of it be in hard copy? Given that there is a reasonably

widespread view that for many reports (of any kind - not just archaeological), it is the executive summary that gets read most, then this is a reasonable question. I think the distinction is between levels of detail. A popular summary (not the same as an executive summary) might be useful to have available, but the detail in a report is often useful to others more interested in a site. So I think a good report should be all of these things - a presentation of the evidence, an interpretation of it , a syntheses of it into its wider context, and a popular (ie plain english, aimed at the interested layman) account, as well as an executive summary. You can then pick what level to engage with the information at.

Nicholas Boldrini 5. Continued that said I think there is an assumption that people understand these distinctions, but I am not sure they do. I regularly point users at our online HER hoping that they will answer their query and I won't have to do a full HER search. But I am sometimes concerned that maybe they think they have gleaned everything from our online HER, when they haven't. Different levels of publication may raise similar concerns.

Steve Trow Replying to Nicholas on question 4. Your question is a good one. A bit of context (insofar as we understand it) may be useful?

Notwithstanding the growth in grey literature, a ?? significant amount of state-funded, academically-instigated or commercially-led archaeological investigation is still published through long-standing traditional channels as monographs or articles in learned journals. This has been estimated by the Historic England funded Archaeological Investigations Project to be 'less than 10% of the total' of archaeological reporting and the Southport Report estimated that monographs made up 5% of total reporting.

Arguably it is these formal publication channels that tend to be chosen for dissemination of the results of the most significant investigations.

This, of course, doesn't answer the question 'why?'. Show less

Nicholas Boldrini As for hard copy, there is a can of worms. We still ask for Hard Copy GL reports for the HER. But as space is an issue then increasingly I know some HERs don't. And a good PDF version should be easily print out able if a hard copies needed. But then the cost is being borne by eg the HER rather than the developer for the hard copy. But print on demand is a way round that. And some people prefer reading hardcopy (though I think that is a generational thing, and will change over time). So the option should be there, at least for a while longerShow less

Steve Trow At the risk of being provocative. Are we making a good job of these formal (journal and monograph channels) and creating real public value?

In 2003, the CBA's survey of user needs highlighted 'widespread dissatisfaction with the structure of reports, and diversity of opinion about the purposes of writing them'. It also concluded that, in terms of research and public benefit, 'the present pattern of publication is arguably falling short on both counts'.

Steve Trow And the report of the Southport Group in 2011 was rather more blunt, concluding that, "....there appears to be an over-reliance on publication in what were described to us as 'large dusty academic journals', with a lot of technical detail but very limited public readership. These generate high use value for scholars but very little for the public at large."

It also noted that "Because of their specialist nature these monographs have very limited print runs. For the most interesting or important excavations an edition of 250–500 might be printed....These beautifully printed volumes have a very small audience". ....Show less

Nicholas Boldrini 6. Does professional or popular hard copy publication derived from excavation reporting still have a role to play? If so, what, why and how? See above, but also, is there evidence to suggest it doesn't? This seems framed to get hard Copy to prove its worth, whereas it might be worth reframing it with some evidence about how much hard copy gets used, and who by?

Nicholas Boldrini 7. How can we improve public engagement with what we are writing without neglecting our professional and academic responsibilities to publish? I would suggest this is about producing different texts for different audiences. We could change GL to be more publically engaging, but would it then still serve its aims? A certain amount of technical jargon is ok in a report aimed at specialist professionals. A Plain English Version would be better suited to the public, and doesn't need to be the full document. Again it could be a detailed summary. Andits also worth noting that academic benefit, or specialist archaeologist benefit IS a public benefit, its just a small subset of the public. If we want to broaden the benefit, I think we need different targeted narratives, but allow anyone to access all those different narratives, should they wish.

Jan Wills At the core of much discussion of the lovely hard copy monograph, or whatever, is the academic and possibly older generational need to 'publish' in the traditional/old fashioned sense cf Southport above. Is this still true? And can we - do we need to - drag ourselves away from this?

Nicholas Boldrini I have just refreshed and see Steves interjections to what could appear to be a bit of a rant. The point about Dusty Academic Journals, is fair, but I think is more to do with the accessibility of those publications to people outside academia, rather than neccessarily their use/relevance.

Steve Trow Replying to Nicholas on question 6. I'm not too embarrassed by asking 'hard copy to prove its worth', especially where public money is concerned, as its a fairly expensive medium to produce.

Historic England has recently taken the decision not to publish long-form/monograph excavation reports through its own publishing team. They loose money and we simply can't justify the cost. And we will now be looking for digital publication of any investigation project that we fund.

The real challenge is to make digital publications something more useful than a digital version of a hard copy format. Not sure we have cracked that one yet, either as an organisation or a profession. Show less

Nicholas Boldrini The other point about publication, is to do with career progression, or showing status (personally or as a research institution) which is harder to do with more fluid digital publication. That is a wider (ie not just archaeological) career/academic issue

Steve Trow I agree with the point about the importance of the 'big book' in terms of career advancement, especially in academia. But not a massively persuasive argument in terms of public value!

We are certainly not the only profession debating this at the moment and the next Research Excellence Framework in 2021 might profitably consider that point?

There has been a very interesting project in the States by JSTOR and Columbia University called 'Reimagining the Digital Monograph Design Thinking to Build New Tools for Researchers' which might point the way?

https://labs.jstor.org/download/JSTORLabsMonographJune2017.pdf

Jan Wills I think this is a real issue for us. Unless/until digital publication is seen an an animal in its own right and as real publication there will be a resistance for the reasons that Nick and I commented above. Is it being addressed in other disciplines??

Dave Radford Re popular publications there has been a long gap since public facing books have been produced which is something we are hoping to address soon and a few are in the pipeline.

One contracting unit PCA were recently successful (unusually) in getting their monograph for a small site into Blackwell's and the Ashmolean shop by framing it in a more expansive manner (i.e. calling it Medieval Craft working in Oxford): http://www.pre-construct.com/Publications/Clarendon.htm

Another point to make is that the Oxford Urban Archaeological Assessment was made available online and not as a monograph (which would have involved a lot more work).

Caroline Howarth I think the production of hard copy is still seen by many as the more academically prestigious form of publication, though it seems we are moving towards a mixture of both mediums at the moment- a small print run coupled with a downloadable e-book or pdf.

Stewart Bryant In response to Steve's question about the quality of Grey Lit: as of 2014 (the cut off date for the Roman RSP), there appeared to be problems - in one

form or another - with a significant minority of GL reports. Most of these should be relatively easy to address via a combination of the scheduled improvements in ADS/OASIS, some changes to CIfA Standards and Guidance, and perhaps also getting HERs and academic community to monitor progress? There is a workshop at the CIfA 2018 conference which will look at one potential collaborative way of making progress, hopefully quite quickly.

In addition, as part of this process I think there is a case for eventually raising the status of evaluation reports to formal, peer-reviewed publication, in recognition of their importance in the planning process. and because many contain important archaeological information not available elsewhere. Show less

Dave Radford In Oxford the publication record is generally good, with the bulk of sites either published in the county journal Oxoniensia or as short print run monographs. The Oxoniensia format is particularly attractive because the reports are made available via the well-structured OAHS web site after a short delay. However there are ongoing issues with publication backlog and the use of journal space for specialist reports. The short run monographs are more problematical because of the sometimes adhoc/voluntary nature of peer review and because they are often not made available digitally (beyond a draft pdf being held on the council internal server).

Dave Radford I have recently been under pressure to agree internet only publication of an excavation report and have been reluctant to cross this boundary. Both because of my own preference for printed reports (backed up with digital copies) and because there is some national research which also supports the utility of monographs, for example the 2015 Hefce report (which is only partially relevant to this discussion but provides some general context).

"Monographs are a vitally important and distinctive vehicle for research communication, and must be sustained in any moves to open access. The availability of printed books alongside the open-access versions will be essential."

http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2015/monographs/

Edmund Lee Thanks for the plug Jan :-) Yes, Stewart Bryant and I will be running an innovative workshop at CIFA 2018 in Brighton where we will attempt to write a template or standard for the headings that should always appear in an evaluation or watching brief report so as to improve the subsequent research value of these publications. That's part of the answer to Q2. Draft programme is at https://www.archaeologists.net/conference/2018 . (I'd welcome expressions of interest in taking part in that session - off list probably best Edmund.lee@HistoricEngland.org.uk

Pippa Bradley From a 'commercial' unit perspective we work within a brief/WSI agreed with the curator/local planning team which will generally set out broad publication routes of generally a monograph or journal article as appropriate. Popular dissemination will sometimes be a requirement. The crucial point is how do we make

one publication cover all audiences - the answer is that it can't and we need to layer information as appropriate (web-based technical material with specialist-written summary for publication?, web pages and social media), ebooks and POD all have a role. In terms of audiences and poplar dissemination we should be supporting publication in local/regional journals, many of whom have very active and loyal members. We shouldn't lose sight of the fact that we are preserving by record... and we know that use of primary archives by researchers is fairly limited at least the physical archive.

Steve Trow Replying to David and his good point about Hefce. I certainly recognise the (in my case age-related) hankering for the attractive monograph.

But a possibly more penetrating discussion of the worth of the long form publication comes from two recent AHRC funded reports to the British Library and AHRC.

https://academicbookfuture.org/

This does make a case for the need for a long form of publication in the humanities but not necessarily in hard copy.

Caroline Howarth I agree with Dave Radford that a mixture of both hard and online publication works well. In fact, free online downloads of books has been shown to increase hard copy book sales. I think there will always be an audience for paper copy, but in some cases it isn't always appropriate.

Steve Trow I'd also like to hear more views on the progress the profession is making on digital archives and whether we are clear what should be in them? A quick look at the ADS web site tells me it has 1155 'project archives' with a healthy submission rate in 2017. Is this now the norm?

Nicholas Boldrini Responding to Stewart Bryant - hooray! Another task for HERs to do, because we have plenty of spare time to do it...;)
Seriously, the issue of GL standards in Development Management is going to run into the wall of capacity VERY quickly. I think the assumption may be that HERs/DM archaeologists are policing this quality issue already, my experience suggests that not all are (useful data to be gathered there - how many do, why don't you if you don't, and other related questions)? A standard of headings (Ed's Point) would be useful to check against a report, but the longer that is, the more time it takes. And not being a specialist, how does the relevant archaeological Officer know that whatevers under that heading (text images etc) is not just guff?

James Dinn In Worcester there has been a bit of a move towards digital monograph publication, but so far always linked to a summary highlights report in the county journal. I am fairly comfortable with this approach in principle, but there needs to be some feedback on the use of the digital monographs - I know I have downloaded them, but how many others have? How much awareness is there of them?

The peer review point is well made and we should be making this explicit in briefs.

We have sometimes (luckily very rarely) had issues with contractors issuing monograph publications without approval, and that can be hard to enforce on; peer review would help here. Peer-reviewed evaluation reports would often be useful, but not within the timescale of a planning application.

Caroline Howarth The good thing about online publishing is that the original document can be updated and this is especially useful with things like Research Frameworks, such as the Derwent Mills Research Framework: Knight, David, 2016, The Derwent Valley, The Valley that changed the World: Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Research Framework, Derwent Valley Mills Partnership http://www.derwentvalleymills.org/derwent-valley-mills-history/derwent-valley-mills-research-framework/ and http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/researchframeworks/eastmidlands/wiki/Main

Caroline Howarth Slightly off point, but to go back to the discussion about different outputs- a good example of where both online and traditional publishing have been mixed is a project and publication Historic England funded on Heybridge, Elms Farm. One volume was online and the other as a hard copy:

Atkinson, M. and Preston S., 2015, Heybridge: A late Iron Age and Roman settlement. Excavations at Elms Farm 1993-5. Volume I, EAA 154

Atkinson, M. and Preston S., 2015, Heybridge: A late Iron Age and Roman settlement. Excavations at Elms Farm 1993-5. Volume II, Internet Archaeology 40. http://dx.doi.org/10.11141/ia.40.1

Stewart Bryant Nick, yes I would agree that it should not add to the HER workload. I was thinking more of HERs feeding back from time-to-time on some of the basic issues which have been identified and which could be picked-up during the process of entering reports on the HER, such as location in the wrong place or obvious missing information about surveys. If there were a process for gathering this information from HERs (and if necessary feeding back to the authors) it may help to improve quality and - in time - reduce workload?

Simon Gilmour The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland is actively looking to publish online Open Access as opposed to print publication, especially for what are in essence archaeological reports. Our books average about a 300 print run, and SAIR (Scottish Archaeological Internet Reports) has about the same visits per month, and just less in downloads each month - the comparison is striking. We have also had a policy of putting all out-of-print books online Open Access too - and these average about 70 downloads a month!

We also had an interesting discussion yesterday about data archiving and project dissemination (what books/monographs/articles etc are) and the potential for much greater public value from digital productions. There are clearly practical problems (copyright for book style productions for e.g.) but the potential to consume

archaeological information in a much more useful manner means we will certainly be looking to develop digital dissemination more in future.

Robin Page Picking up on a comment about how other disciplines/ professions deal with publication, Martin Counihan, a member of the Britarch forum responded to initial publicity about this discussion via email, signposting how digital publication for some of the sciences is in part handled via centralised websites https://arxiv.org/ and https://www.biorxiv.org/

Robin Page Other contributions via email and Facebook have expressed perceived complextity/ "dauntingness" felt in getting articles into journals formal journals.

In a separate Facebook post Archaeologist Andrew Hoaen in effect pointed back to our first discussion about archiving, reinforcing the point that good publication rests on being able to draw on a good standard of recording and archiving.

Jan Wills Reference has been made by various people to the important vehicle of publication in local society journals. The ones I am most familiar with are still mainly publishing conventional archaeological reports, with a struggle each time about how much of the specialist reporting gets into the volume. One makes a copy of each volume available on its website after a few years. How much is this changing across the country as a whole?? Its interesting to contrast the discussions on archaeological reports with those on local history, where very detailed records are still being transcribed and made available in hard copy.

Pippa Bradley In terms of popular dissemination we have made a number of popular booklets available via our web pages http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/kent/east-kent-access-road and http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/projects/longforth

In both cases these were in addition to 'traditional' monograph publication. For Longforth we printed copies of the booklet which have been given to the local museum, show home and at a number of lectures given on the results of the excavations - so fully embedded into a programme of engagement with the public which began onsite with open days.

A similar programme of outreach was undertaken for East Kent but the booklet is only available digitally.

Pippa Bradley In response to Jan, the Kent Archaeological Society's archaeology reports online http://www.kentarchaeology.org.uk/10/00.htm is perhaps a good one to follow?

Alistair Barclay Online publication also presents the opportunity of releasing data and interpretation as a project progresses rather than at the end or in the case of monographs several years down the line (the traditional linear model). And following on from Caroline's point - updates, ideas, errors or critical shortcomings could more easily be addressed and incorporated as part of a running dialogue and more fluid publication process. Show less

Jan Wills Thanks, Pippa. I'd be interested if anyone else has good examples on local society approaches to publication.

Elizabeth Popescu Just picking up on Alistair's point, I have some serious concerns about the suggested fluid approach to publication. At Oxford Archaeology we have trialled 'pre-publishing' specialist reports digitally, but readers often take this as the final word (using them as references in their own work), when actually the traditionally published version has seen more refinement/correction and updates. We're currently in the process of reviewing our publication procedures and policy (building on our current layered approach with a range of outputs), so the current discussion is really interesting ...

Jan Wills Hi Elizabeth - OA has an impressive record of monograph publication, including over the last 12 mths. Are you thinking of any radical departure from this or are you too early in the review?

Julian Richards Responding to Jan, a number of local (and national) societies have been digitising their back-runs and are hosting them with ADS (e.g. Berks, Sussex, Surrey, Derbys, Cumberland and Westmorland, Severn Estuary, MSRG, etc) - and some have a rolling wall as new issues are released. This has the advantage (a) that they are easy to find (b) are archived (c) have DOIs (d) are indexed in the ADS Library, and (e) articles can easily be linked to supplementary data sets

Julian Richards And Steve Trow asked about "progress the profession is making on digital archives and whether we are clear what should be in them?" From an ADS perspective the answers would be "Slow" and "No"!! The 1155 archives he quotes in ADS is, I'm sure, just the tip of the iceberg. We're in desperate need for the profession to define what it means by an adequate digital archive for a site investigation. I'm sure it's not just a GL report and some photos.

Steve Trow I'm delighted that Professor Barry Cunliffe - who not only has a track record of exemplary publication but has also grappled with the strategic challenges of publication several times over the years - will facilitate the workshop next week. Barry offered me some wise insight recently, when we discussed the future of the archaeological monograph. He observed that the really critical thing is the extended episode of intensive deep-thought and cross-disciplinary working required to produce the content of a monograph: not the form of dissemination itself. That process is critical whatever the end result.

This, I should say, does not preclude the interactive staged release of findings and ideas referred to Alistair Barclay above. I wholeheartedly agree with him about this and it may be a way of securing public engagement, in what otherwise would look like a period of inactivity.

Steve Trow I'm sure many of us enjoyed the fantastic Must Farm web pages and Facebook blog during the excavation. It would be great to think that we could stimulate further public excitement about the post-excavation analysis which is due to commence shortly.

Edmund Lee One point going back to the hard-copy versus online discussion. I suggest the distinction is not so much the medium but the process of production. The distinction is between content which is peer-reviewed, and that which is not. The 'daunt...Show more

Elizabeth Popescu Hi Jan, many thanks. It's too early in the process to give any details as yet, but we are planning to stay with monographs as part of our range of outputs for the foreseeable future. That said, we're looking at all options ... Has anyone yet mentioned the ADS/CIfA PUBLICAN survey in today's threads? Will be interested to see the results ....

Martin Locock I don't think that GL standards need necessarily be seen as a policing issue; it could be like the digital/GIS standards where it's a series of prompts for the creator to follow if they want to make their work as fully reusable as possible. Despite the Roman report's comments on lack of quantification, it's better that every site is recorded somehow rather than some being in perpetual 'in prep' because the standards are seen as too onerous

Steve Trow Julian Richard's point is, I think, critical. The digital archive shouldn't be seen as a passive record but as an interactive tool. I'd guess that more than 90% of the 'average' archaeological excavation report, in traditional monograph format, is made up of the excavation narrative and various specialist reports of interest to a comparatively small number of readers. Surely these could be in a far more interactive and deployable format in the digital archive, rather than on a printed page? It is the synthesis and contextual material that surely needs or gets the wider readership, particularly if the digital archive is just a click away?

Edmund Lee Very interesting points from Alistair and Elizabeth. The production and review processes need both some formality (to establish credibility and authoritative status) and some open-ness (to engage and inform the deep thinking). I'm slightly on Alistairs side (sorry Elizabeth!). I'm particularly interested in sites such as Open Context https://opencontext.org/which make research data available. Publication before Archive. Is that the way we should go?

Martin Locock In Wales many of the county history and archaeology journals have been digitised by the National Library of Wales (although unfortunately many of the photos are blanked for copyright reasons). https://journals.library.wales/

Julie Franklin Online content can still be peer reviewed - cf the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland SAIR publications. From a writer's perspective I always prefer to see a hard copy book at the end of the process - it seems a more concrete record of one's achievement. But conversely, when I'm researching, I am always delighted to find what I need online as it saves a time-consuming trip to the library. As long as there is a credible way of referencing it in the bibliography that is.

Alistair Barclay In reply to Elizabeth it would have to be stage managed with the usual QC/QA. But if you think it through how much current research is done from online/accessible preliminary and provisional 'grey lit' reports? {instead of final publications}. The idea comes from my time at OA and I am sure others have trialled similar approaches. How final are any of these publications anyway? I do prefer the layered approach as this can avoid the possibility of a 'dogs breakfast' - just thinking of the experimental approaches to public/academic integrated reports of the 90s and beyond (including my own projects).

Steve Trow I enjoyed and sympathise with Julie's Franklin's writer v's reader dilemma. This neatly sets us the question about whether current approaches to publication are more designed to suit the producer - rather than the consumer - of research....

Elizabeth Popescu Just to clarify in relation to Edmund's comment, I was referring to specialist reports that form a supplement to publication, rather than the digital archive itself (databases, archive level data etc). Am fully in favour of providing access to this type of information as long as it's done in a thoughtful way that complements other strands of dissemination (not simply a 'data dump'). We're currently setting up systems at OA to monitor the reuse value of such data more effectively and it's already clear that we're seeing some interesting patterns of reuse (eg for human skeletal data, linked to university terms).

Steve Trow Elizabeth's point about monitoring reuse value is a good one. We do comparatively little of this although Julian Richards may have further insight from the ADS?

Pippa Bradley Picking up on Steve's point we need to see archiving as a process that happens throughout the project not just at the end and to make it become an active part of the dissemination process alongside a more synthetic publications

Elizabeth Popescu I completely agree with Alistair that the layered approach needs to be carefully thought through, ideally at the outset of a project, in terms of data destined for traditional publication, digital publication (by which I mean peer reviewed outlets) or digital archive. It sounds simple, but can be a really complex process (not a 'quick/cheap fix'). One of the problems we're grappling with at the moment is the effective fragmentation of projects and their different outputs ...

Steve Trow Thanks Pippa - agreed. So perhaps the answer to Ed Lee's question above 'Publication before Archive. Is that the way we should go?' is that the publication and documentary archive creation are parallel and interlinked processes which start and finish together?

Judith Winters As editor of Internet Archaeology, I'd say that the publication and the archive really should be developed together. I also echo Pippa's point that publication needs to become more integrated in the process from the start. I can work ...Show more

Steve Trow Earlier today I referred to a project by JSTOR and Columbia University called 'Reimagining the Digital Monograph Design Thinking
to Build New Tools for Researchers'
see: https://labs.jstor.org/download/JSTORLabsMonographJune2017.pdf

This work aimed at understanding the way people use the long form publication (in this case for the study of history) in order to design new digital publication formats that favoured the needs of the user rather than the producer. I'd be interested to know whether anyone knows of similar projects and, indeed, whether we feel archaeological publication would benefit from such an analysis?

Judith Winters p.s. I am very keen to see the journal used more as a publication option by the commercial archaeology sector, for outputs where there are broader dissemination aims or needs. By way of an exemplar, we recently published an excavation report from Avon Archaeology which included a range of specialist reports and links to related digital archive holdings in ADS.
Corcos, N. et al. 2017 Excavations in 2014 at Wade Street, Bristol - a documentary and archaeological analysis, Internet Archaeology
45. https://doi.org/10.11141/ia.45.3

This site was not a Must Farm or an Elms Farm but it still garnered attention from locals/non-archaeologists e.g. http://chopsybaby.com/magazine/its-never-boring-in-st-judes-bristol-wade-street-archaeological-excavation/
Just a small eg but something that we can already achieve/broaden our audience as well as cater for us as archaeologists - maybe authors just need a clearer vision of what is possible. I know there there some who have not heard of IA (PUBLICAN)

Pippa Bradley Hi Judith, I've been trying to push for IA for some of our projects but am meeting with some resistance from PMs unsure of curators (and clients)... I will keep going with it!

Judith Winters Here are some of the PUBLICAN key findings

Open access
There is some work required to clarify in the profession the responsibility of the cost of open access publication, particularly at what point open access should be mandated/recommended. The main finding from the interviews is that commercial units and freelance specialists are willing to incorporate resources for open access into planned work, but that for this to occur, a substantial change in recommendations and support is required from local government archaeologists and curators.

This study found that the ADS and IA are having a positive impact on practice but that there are still issues surrounding a lack of awareness of the resources/costs required to support these.

Printed pubs still seen by some as more stable, and that it was easier to use established routes for publishing (particularly for commercial units) rather than trying

something different.

Judith Winters cont'd

Specifically for IA - generally seen to have had a positive contribution to the profession esp. through profile building for specialists but challenges include a still lack of awareness of the journal, it being open access, and a concern of the complexity of publication process (i.e. variation in publication skills amongst non-academic stakeholders).

Other issues:

Digital publication is seen more typically outside "usual work" (i.e. lack of organisational-level support)

A lack of prioritisation of publishing (particularly amongst local government)

Publication is perceived to be for 'academics' rather than practitioners

Variation in publication advice i.e. archive and publish but not taking into account digital options.

And certainly freelance and smaller units, not currently including digital dissemination preparation costs in tenders

Paul Backhouse Referring to what Judith has said "Printed pubs still seen by some as more stable, and that it was easier to use established routes for publishing (particularly for commercial units) rather than trying something different."

In terms of stability I think I have been responsible for the pulping of 5000 books, which wouldn't sell, couldn't even give them away.

I think its been difficult for commercial units to change what they do, a top down love of paper, with a small appetite for risk means in the 2 decades I have been in the sector we have all been aware of the problems but not much has changed.

The complete lack of focus on the audience is the real issue for me.
What will the next generation want - what we help them understand the archaeology that has been excavated in the last years of archaeological boom.

Pippa Bradley In response to Paul - commercial units are somewhat tied by the briefs set by curators and other stakeholders, whilst we can lobby for change, others need to join in to make this happen.

I would also take issue with comment on lack of focus on audience, the problem is

that we are being asked to produce one publication for all audiences and clearly it is hard to make that work in the traditional format.

Paul Backhouse I do also think that there are some great tools, and opportunities in the digital realm to take advantage of - but as yet I am not aware of a "publishers toolkit" which would (please correct me). DOI's and Crossref (https://www.crossref.org) allow a much better idea of what material has been referenced and cited.
My worry is that when we start to look at the actual impact of the publications we create - then its a very small circle mostly made of contributors to the volumes and their immediate contacts.
My experience of crossing from OA to Historic England was that there existed some amazing published guidance but it never really got beyond a few select places. Knowing where stuff was and how to get it remains a real issue, both as a publication and as a digital asset.

Elizabeth Popescu Hi Paul, I agree that print runs historically for some volumes have been much too large. However, we've cut down (generally) at OA and now release digitally when they sell out (or before in some cases) or after a time lag. I agree about the need to focus on the audience, but the problem is (of course) that we have so many audiences, each with different expectations and requirements. We also mustn't forget that some areas of the UK still lack reliable digital access and therefore still favour traditional publication and/or CDs for specialist data. Going back to an earlier comment, having adopted a layered approach to try and address the audience issues, we've ended up with new challenges in terms of holding projects together (ensuring navigation etc). There's also the issue of linkage to new technologies (photogrammetry/geophysics etc) and, as you say, future expectations ...

Elizabeth Popescu I also agree with Pippa's comments about DCs etc and the challenges of meeting the expectations of each audience in a commercial environment

Jan Wills Liz and Pippa: could you expand on the curator issue? Is it that curators are specifying traditional forms of publication, unwilling or no time to engage in discussion about other approaches?

Jacqueline Nowakowski pretty late to this conversation but have enjoyed reading the comments. yes I think Pippa and Liz have made good points here about unwillingness of curators to consider other formats of dissemination and as Pippa has said we have a wide audience to satisfy particularly if we want wider public engagement and not just academic with the results of archaeological endeavours

Pippa Bradley Hi Jan, yes traditional forms of publication are almost always listed in WSIs often in the local archaeological journals/societies - I am strongly in favour of supporting these societies - but we need to find a balance particularly as some journals are being swamped with reports leading to the inevitable delays in getting the information out Show less

Jan Wills This may be standardisation borne out of lack of time to engage in project-specific solutions?? What would help free up the discussion??

Paul Backhouse Hi Pippa, are these journals offering open access?
The publication delay has always been an issue, but I get the sense its getting much worse?

Steve Trow Just a quick thought on print-on-demand. It is still part of our current thinking, of course. But if we radically rethink what digital excavation report publication might look like, it may not suit Direct POD. Developing a separate parallel format for POD would be hard to justify.

Pippa Bradley Hi Paul, no open access isn't always an option, problems with publication 'backlogs' with journals is varied across the regions, we seem to be digging much more - although is this actually true - I would be interested to see the stats - so perhaps the delay to publication feels worse now than previously?

Jan Wills My one knowledge of submitting material to local journals is pretty restricted to my own local ones, but since they remain important publishers is there a forum in which they collectively engage with these issues of publication?

Edmund Lee A particular subtlety to the Open Access debate for local or specialist journals that I'm aware of, and might be relevant, is the reliance on sales of the journal to fund the activities of the society. Going OA digital might not be an option for them without revising their business model.

Edmund Lee For those interested in the OA debate can I recommend the blog from the Society for Scholarly Publication - the Scholarly Kitchen - Well worth dipping in to https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/

Robin Page I have to sign out now till tommorrow, thanks to everyone for this very productive session so far, keep the comments coming!

Jan Wills Thanks, everyone, for the wide ranging comments today. I have to sign out now but will be back tomorrow. A question for this evening and tomorrow (and tonight if you can't sleep):
What is/are the ideal form(s) of archaeological publication for the future? Can you set out your vision, please?

Steve Trow Thanks from me too. Some really valuable ideas and views from you all today.

Neil Rathbone Although I'm a self-confessed armchair archaeologist, having recently discovered Publish on Demand for a book on interpretation, I'm a convert. It is easy and no cost to publish, and I think the public will pay a modest amount for informative and well-presented information. Don't forget other forms of public

dissemination - Our former County Archaeologist, Peter Liddle, having taken early retirement due to budget cuts, has carried on doing seminars and walks/talks but now just charges a modest fee (£3-£6) and regularly gets 20-30 people for a whole range of subjects.

Robin Page Welcome back to the second day of this discussion, Jan Wills has asked us today to explore- "what is/are the ideal form(s) of archaeological publication for the future? Can you set out your vision, please?"

1d

Neil Rathbone I think a lot more can be done for dissemination to the general public via on-site open days that have the 'live' element that is now the fashion on TV. The recent public open days at the Roman excavations at the ex-Stibbe building in Leicester were completely overwhelmed (3 hr queue on Saturday) and had to be extended by a week to cope. I went early the second Thursday (only a half-hour queue), and although the guides were good, being archaeology students working in three teams with 10 visitors each, the information and interpretation provided was poor and amateurish, consisting of looking over the shoulders of others at photocopied photographs. As I have a commercial interest in interpretation, I am working on the idea of pop-up museums and open days giving people information on their smartphones using our 'Info-Point' Wi-Fi units on battery power. I'm currently looking for a pilot site in order to evaluate this approach.

Pippa Bradley I would like to see more synthesis with specialist data available so that researchers can make their own interpretations although this may not be an easy shift. A balance between providing enough detail for interpretation but an interesting narrative of the site.

But we do need to accept that some sites are not that remarkable and we are really just providing a record/interpretation for the future (although I accept that the unremarkable may become more significant with further discoveries/different interpretation).

Elizabeth Popescu For articles, we've moved towards synthesis supported by digital release of grey lit and supporting data, which seems to work well (but it depends on the county and expectations of DC/consultants etc as to how willing they are to accept this - some still want single site reports). Grouping smaller sites thematically helps to offset the issues with limited space/queues for archaeological reports in county journals. For monographs, I think a considered version of the layered approach can work really well (including web-based outreach). However, I think there's still a strong place for monographs which effectively still provide a stand-alone output. Building on Neil's point, we've also being discussing creating a virtual museum, but this is very much at discussion stage.

Jan Wills Morning everyone. During the course of the day it would be good to hear more about where people would like us as a sector to get to in publishing/dissemination in the medium term - hence the future gazing comment

above - and particularly about who needs to do what (prof institutes, curators, HE, universities, companies etc) to get us there.

Julian Richards There seems to be a general consensus in the profession that we should be making better use of digital media - particularly to provide access to data from more synthetic publication (which might itself be online and more creative). However, (and particularly given that today is International Digital Preservation Day) we must not forget the fragility of digital data and digital editions. We have libraries to look after books; we need to make sure that digital data is looked after in accredited repositories. And today the UK's lead archaeological digital repositories are launching the Bedern Declaration. http://www.dpconline.org/our-work/working-groups-and-task-forces/bedern-group. Tub-thumping over!

Stewart Bryant Something to pitch into the discussion is the question of who actually reads full published excavations these days? As I suspect that not many archaeologists outside of universities and those producing the specialist reports are doing so? (although happy to be proved wrong on this). Maybe a rapid survey on this would be useful?

Archaeology after all is a reading subject, publications are becoming more accessible (and less costly and even free in many cases) and there is a lot out there that needs to read and used/critiqued. Perhaps keeping up with developments in relevant areas and subjects should be formally part of all CPD? A larger readership amongst the profession would also be healthy to provide more feedback and develop innovation.

Elizabeth Popescu Hi Jan, Although not directly related to your comment, one key allied issue is to improve related training (both at universities and in companies), particularly in terms of academic writing. In the commercial sector, we often expect our staff to be polymaths, but not everyone finds the transition from field to px an easy process. We do quite a lot of training already, but there are some skills it's difficult to teach in a commercial environment - if people lack the basic skills of data presentation, interrogation and logical argument, it can cause huge problems later in the process and adds extra layers of complexity to the editorial process. Another issue (that we've already touched on) is that expectations vary so much about what it's appropriate to publish and/or release. In particular, there's still a lot of confusion about the difference between publication and archive (as per question 4).

Pippa Bradley Hi Elizabeth we have all these issues as well but I'd also like to say the transition between writing GL reports and publications is also not easy for some people - ie what detail they can leave out. More practical training in university would be an obvious route, as well as better mentoring/training within the commercial sector

Steve Trow Picking up on Jan's challenge to re-imagine the future and thinking about public benefit; existing digital capability; maximising the ease of discovery of reports; and the greatest utility of results for researchers, and maximum efficiency, here is my 'ideal world' starter for ten.

First, for all interventions an ADS OASIS record is created from the outset, and kept updated through various project stages, to maximise discoverability.

Second, where we think there will be a reasonable public interest in the results of an individual excavation we should produce a digital or hard copy publication aimed at the interested professional, plus the time-starved professional. Dave Radford's example yesterday about 'Medieval Craft Working in Oxford' and Judith Winters' example of Wade Street illustrate the potential to get a greater range of discoveries to the public's attention: not just the 'super sites'.

Jan Wills It underpins the whole set of issues though, and came up in workshop 2 on S & G i.e. there is a need to train people in that range of skills that you list. Others on the same occasion asked why these skills weren't being developed in universities...

Steve Trow Third, summary reports can be produced for national/local journals (James Dinn's point yesterday) or on-line channels such as Internet Archaeology (see Judith Winters, yesterday) which provide a synthesis and highlight and contextualise key findings. Ideally these reports are all on-line to increase discoverability and readership (see Simon Gilmour's point about SAIR yesterday).

Fourth, the digital archive includes the excavation narrative, structural and contextual data, and specialist reports all in downloadable form to increase the ease with which researchers can export, manipulate and cross-correlate the data. These can also be written at the correct length to provide maximum utility: not constrained by the cost of publication.

Steve Trow Fifth, Hefce re-evaluates its definition of research excellence to ensure an e-publication is not given less weight than a weighty tome and also adds more points for archaeological publishing that has excited and engaged the public.

Sixth, we all get some extra space on our bookshelves for some nice novels...

Jan Wills Does this futurescape have any takers??

Caroline Howarth Adding to imagining the future- greater investment and increase in editorial posts and in training staff to produce good quality reports and publications.

Bob Sydes 1 of 4 It seems to me that there are already a lot of initiatives examining various aspects of this discussion topic, and thank you Steve Trow and others for signposting to many of them. Too much to digest in such a short time however. The forthcoming review of "From the Ground Up", will obviously clarify question one and my hope is that ALL the recommendations in that report will be actioned at last. It seems that CIfA have already decided that new standards and guidance are necessary as they have set out their ambition for the 2018 Conference, and I fully support this. It is long overdue. Show less

Bob Sydes 2 of 4 I would add, in response to many posts yesterday, that local authority development management heritage teams are best placed to ensure the

quality and accessibility of archaeological mitigation/research so that the public benefit can be best achieved. They can only act appropriately with the active support of CIfA and Historic England. I would suggest that new CIfA Standards documentation should include clear and unambiguous instruction on access to, reporting on, and dissemination of results in a form that local authority planning archaeologist can attach to a brief.Show less

Bob Sydes 3 of 4 In response to Jan Wills question for today I suggest that we need to completely rethink what we understand by publication, particularly in the context of development related mitigation. Personally, I really dislike the term "popular account" and its derivatives as it reinforces an unhealthy mystique about archaeology in our society. Unless I am undertaking some really detailed research I really do not want to know that context 1 overlies context 2. What I want is the story and surely that is what everyone wants and everyone expects.

Bob Sydes 4 of 4 So here is a thought.

For the planning process:

A technical advice note, no more than 2 sides of A4 and a well designed and constructed graphic.

For dissemination:

An illustrated, inclusive and accessible narrative that integrates specialist contributions and allows archaeologists and others (citizens) to satisfy their curiosity about their place and their inheritance. This, in a form that can be seamlessly integrated into the HER without fuss and bother.

Julian Richards I'm already signed up! And in terms of Steve's 5th point, actually HEFCE already mandates that all journal articles in the next REF must be available online and Open Access (at least as pre-prints) so there is no policy reason why e-publication should be given less weight. Many Internet Archaeology articles already featured in REF submissions last time, and also scored well in terms of Impact

Bob Sydes I would also suggest that CIfA could usefully identify examples of quality reports, evaluations, watching briefs, statements of significance etc. and signpost to them through new guidance. This will obviously create some challenges but it really needs to be done. Also, thought needs to be given to accessibility criteria but again that is probably down to local authority planning archaeologists to insist on.

Jan Wills Hi Bob, Much to agree with in objectives there but what about all of the other bits and pieces - where shall we put the context descriptions and the supporting data??

Nicholas Boldrini in reply to Bobs 4 of 4 - really disagree with that Planning idea, though I am not clear whether you mean that as a publication or the GL report. I think prescribing a format based on the route that lead to the investigation of a site is daft, bluntly. If there is any prescription, it should be based on the significance of the

site, not the route to investigation. On that basis a nationally important site investigated in planning would get short shrift, but a locally important one via research would have more publication - if I have understood right

Nicholas Boldrini Also, I think we need to define publication. Dissemination might be a better term. But increasingl, with various data online Publication as a term is getting redundant.

Nicholas Boldrini Some things to consider (and these are just off the top of my head) would be description of work on site and summary (ie GL report); peer-reviewed summary of a site (ie article); detailed site description (ie monograph); summary (popular narrative text). Those aren't well thought through, but I think publication needs to be re-thought as aiming to reach different audiences, possibly with different formats, but being less hung up by how that is done (ie distinctions between GL, Journal publication, monograph, online version etc are less useful nowadays than thinking of the audience you are aiming for)Show less

Stewart Bryant In response to Bob 4: the technical advice note sounds like a good idea but would this be the only report or in addition to the GL? Because, (if the former) in the case of pre-determination evaluation, the report would still be expected to provide evidence that may affect the outcome of the planning application? And for the illustrated narrative: also yes, if the relevant supporting data (again the evidence) is accessible and signposted in the report.

Dave Radford Re Jan's question of where the sector should go with publication/dissemination I'm looking forward to reading what other people's views are. At present my thoughts would be:
-Maintain journal/monograph output with academic/specialist focus, backed up with digital access where possible and sometimes with specialist reports available only in digital format.
-Grey literature made available online.
-Occasional requirements for popular pamphlets for major sites in addition to published reports.
-Regular requirements for popular leaflets (online pdf and short print run) for interesting/high profile sites.
-Increasing use of simply annotated 3d models of excavations (i.e. sketchfab) that in future may be accessed through wayfinding signs, as these can get straight to the point visually on someone's phone with minimum text (i.e. big medieval wall under car park)https://sketchfab.com/tags/westgate
-Look for opportunities to encourage synthesis of urban data as this is an issue.

Judith Winters I would argue that for many sites, quite a few of these things (summary/interpretations, detailed description) can be done via the same digital publication. It's what IA and ADS have been trying to do - connecting and linking the detail in the archive (be that simply a GL report or a richer archive) with publication of the narrative/synthesis etc in the journal article (plus additional thinds like 3D

models, video) 'overlying' it (if it's long enough then might it be called a monograph) - so that it's all there together for whoever wants it at the level they want it at.

Bob Sydes In response to Nick, Jan and Stewart. Obviously there will be circumstances where more not less information will be required but the substantive point relates to the inclusion, in reports of unnessessary and irrelevant information. Does a planning archaeologist really need a narrative and tabular regurgitation of records held in the local HER? I think not. Statements of significance are fine but can be brief if the graphics are fit for purpose. I have had the privelage of reading some very fine SofS that are narrative light and a joy to read. It's not difficult.

Bob Sydes Data is for the archive I suggest!

Bob Sydes Part of the problem may be that commercial arcaheologists feel that they have to write reams and reams to justify the costs to the client. Just saying.

Stewart Bryant And expanding a point made yesterday: I think that for the following reasons that pre-determination evaluation reports are under-rated and should in be regarded as full publication:
- they are arguably the most important archaeological reports produced for the planning process as they can affect the outcome and the design of development
- they are the archaeological reports most likely to be read by planners, developers, and local people who might be affected by developments
- they are the most important determinant of the mitigation strategy, should the development be approved and will impact on significant archaeology

For this to happen, there would of course be a need for better definition of the content and the reporting of evidence.

Steve Trow Replying to Julian. Thanks for the update regarding HEFCE. It's certainly a positive development, given some of the concerns expressed yesterday about the need to publish in hard copy in order to get professional recognition. I'd even more impressed if HEFCE's approach to research evaluation gives public benefit and outreach some real heft too. Show less

Judith Winters I'd like to see more digital publications that link into and connect to that data in the digital archive with as many 'touch points' as possible from the narrative/discussion i.e. not just a link from the Table of Contents.

Robin Page A personal opinion from me, strongly agree with the references people have made to using other media, like 3D imagery, film etc and also "layering" the linked information in the way Judith Winters described. Training has been mentioned and I think this should include a wider appreciation of what constitutes good impactful images. Communication is becoming increasingly image-led and a great piece of writing can still be boosted by eye-catching images...or indeed let down by it if they are dowdy.

Nicholas Boldrini In reply to bob again - so actually rather than a prescriptive i side what your saying is leave out the guff? Agreed! Wholeheartedly - but that is more

about defining what is needed in that sort of report, than prescribing a length. My pet bugbear is geology. Most reports mention it. But virtually none discuss what relevance it has to the site. On a different training routine, i was told that when preparing the document I was being trained for, at each point, don't just right what information you have under that heading, but ask "so What?" Ie what does that mean for you. I would argue the same is true when writing a GL report - geology is mentioned - but so what? The HER data is mentioned as a Heading- but what does that mean in relation to this site? Some good reports do this. Too many don't , and thats what need tackling

23h

Nicholas Boldrini So in relation to guidance and standards for reporting - its not enough just to have headings to cover, but an indication of what should be included. Just mentioning the data is pointless - again Geology so its on limestone. Thanks - I can get that from the GIS. But, SO WHAT? What value does that data add to interpreting this site?
And whilst data is mainly for the archive, there needs to be enough in there for me to read it and agree with your interpretation. I do occasionally disagree with reports about the significance of a things found, and suggest more/less work is needed. There needs to be enough data in the GL report for me to be able to do that without having to go to the archive.

Julian Richards In response to Steve, to be fair to HEFCE they already give a massive weighting to public benefit. in the last REF Impact (non-academic and beyond universities) counted for 20% of University funding. In REF2021 it will be 25%. It's been estimated that for each Archaeology Dept one 4* Impact case study (i.e. case study of public benefit of our research) is worth at least five 4* academic publications. Sorry, slightly off topic, but might still be of interest more widely, as hopefully it will also influence professional attitudes to publication.

Bob Sydes Forgive this anecdote but following Nicks point, my all time report bugbear is variations on the theme of "no archaeological features were present". Understanding of such basic information inherent in site formation processes seems commonly lacking. I was trained to view all 'soil' as archaeologically significant and the process of field archaeology an attempt at understanding the processes at work on a given site. I am not convinced that the majority of practitioners see it this way. Show less

Steve Trow Thanks Julian. I don't think discussing measurement of public benefit can be off topic here! I'm aware of the 'impact' weighting, of course. I suppose I'm slightly sceptical about the effectiveness of the way it is evaluated in practice. One for the next REF, I guess? But a key issue for academic, commercial and public sectors.

Juan Fuldain Is there any web site with an index that links to all the reports that are available online?

Dan Miles Just picking up on two things - 1 from yesterday picking up on Pippa's post regarding the need to see archiving as a process that happens throughout the project not just at the end and to make it become an active part of the dissemination process alongside a more synthetic publications - I think this is essential and the development of data management plans is a way of ensuring this is built into the project management system - it would not only facilitate digital archiving but identify early on (and can be updated) dissemination and publication opportunities.

Dan Miles 2ndly - picking up on the earlier synthesis discussion and on David's example of more popular publications is the opportunity of publishing from various different excavations sites into a combined publication. An eg I can think of in Wiltshire is the recent excavation of a number of Anglo Saxon cemetery sites at Collingbourne Ducis, Larkhill, Tidworth and even Barrow Clump - all of which if combined in a publication could be incredibly interesting (for the public and academics) in terms of our changing understanding of this period - probably more popular & useful than 4 separate publications - more public value and impact, more intellectual value. The issue obviously is the funding model as all are funded separately (though the recent Larkhill and Tidworth come under the same scheme) - though all involve the same contractor. This also reduces Paul's book waste and of course publication costs. Individual detailed reports and specialist data cld be digitally published separately.

Jan Wills Dan - its good to see this issue being picked up and it links back to workshop 1 discussion on archives, and the recommendation to do exactly that i.e. consider the archive from the project design stage onwards as an active process, not something that happens at the end. Something we can start to fix through updated HE and CIfA advice and guidance? There's a parallel strand which is about ensuring that the archive is a part of the project that is specified and monitored from the curatorial side - there may be some forthcoming work on disseminating/specifying best practice on this too.

Steve Trow Juan, try https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library/

Elizabeth Popescu Hi Juan, all the Oxford Archaeology ones are in our digital library here: https://library.thehumanjourney.net/, with extra archives etc on the ADS website. We are planning to update it and link it to traditional and digital publications, as well as the research archive.

David Bowsher Hi Juan for MOLA reports see https://www.mola.org.uk/research-community/resource-library.
Here is a publication example with some numbers - for one of our large excavations in the City of London at No 1 Poultry (ONE94), London we produced 3 London Archaeologists journal articles at the end of the excavation and after the analysis phase 3 monographs, each with a 500 print run of which we have sold c 1,000 and a popular book with over 5,000 sold. The digital archive was deposited with the ADS in 2013http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/no1poultry_molas_2007/index.cfm … and since 2013 this digital archive has had 2,861 page views, 572 downloads and 1,219 visits.

Jan Wills A late in the day request: What can/should HE and CIfA do to take forward issues raised in the discussion, and who else do we need to engage with??

Steve Trow I'm afraid that I've got to engage elsewhere now, although Jan and Robin are still on duty. I'd like to thank everyone for their excellent, inventive and thought-provoking contributions. There is a lot for us to think about in the combined responses and to take forward to the workshop. I hope people (including additional people) will stay engaged for the remainder of the day - and I hope to see some further creative thinking about alternative approaches. Thanks again. Steve.

Judith Winters I think looking at the guidance given in briefs when publication is specified (and exploring the levels of publication that might best serve the evidence, would be useful, so drawing in ALGAO?

Juan Fuldain That is a great tool Steve. Elisabeth, Oxford Archaeology is an example to follow, if all the companies will have their reports as OA it will be very easy to find any report, at the moment is more or less easy to find publications, but the reports get lost in the immensity of the web.

Robin Page Juan, Historic England Research Reports (including on the built historic environment) can be found via this page on our website https://historicengland.org.uk/research/research-results/research-reports/ and the searchable database for them is here http://research.historicengland.org.uk/ . Reports that fit the scope can also be found at the ADS library.

Jan Wills Judith: so ideally there should be a dialogue, curator/contractor, about the appropriate level of publication, based on significance. Is the block to this the level of curatorial capacity to engage?

Judith Winters I think that's start. At least we all need to be on the same page as to what is even possible/suitable. Sorry I have to drop out now but I am coming next week!

Juan Fuldain each company has its own system, but I think a search engine or able to locate all possible reports will be a fantastic tool. The Archaeology data service is a good approach in that direction but in a quick try I have only been able to find 1 article of 4 I know are available online so it is a bit limited at the moment as a working tool

Robin Page Just to go back to the idea of multiple layers of dissemination, the image I chose to accompany the opening post is the cover of a hard copy work of synthesis about Winchester's archaeology by Patrick Ottaway- supported by Historic England. This builds on a town historic environment record that you can access online via Heritage Gateway and we also have a digital magazine and web article giving a taster of Winchester's rich heritage referencing the book: https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/research/understanding-winchesters-past/

Jan Wills That"s a great one to reference, Robin.
I have to sign out for the day now,
so thanks very much to everyone who has participated over the last two days. Lots of useful thoughts.
And since this is the last in the series of six online discussions in the 21st-century Challenges for Archaeology series I'd also like to thank all that have joined in over the 9 months since we started.
You can find all of the discussions and workshop papers online on the CIfA website, under News and Events where the project page is located. (The website may be unavailable today and tomorrow since staff are moving office).
There will be a session at the CIfA conference on the project themes, and more information here on how we hope to take the recommendations from the discussions forward over the next few months.

Robin Page I too have to sign off and echo Steve and Jan's thanks. I'll keep the discussion open for tomorrow morning for any final thoughts.

Andrew Hoaen SOrry I came late to the party. I think I would echo Julians thoughts about the fragility of digital archives. There has been lots of thought about what outputs should be but not much thought about who the readers/ viewers/ listeners for these various forms of media should be. As an archaeologist I am drawn towards the idea of layers of publication as David Bowsher says. But at some point there has to be some sort of conclusive paper copy of the findings of archaeological interventions held somewhere. Personally, I would like to see a series of conventions around what a interim should contain etc. It would make my job teaching first year undergraduates field archaeology a lot easier. On a final note I was looking at an archive today as it happens lovely popular publication by dedicated volunteers, supported by their local authority, strong set of archives on paper, and a completely redundant set of CD's and tape recordings that were inaccessible as there was no machine to play them on.

Bob Sydes The Winchester book is £40! Sorry but that is just not accessible for many even though I am sure it is very good :-)

Robin Page Thanks Andrew and Bob. Bob makes a fair point already touched on that high quality hard copy monographs are expensive to produce and thus can also be more of an investment for an individual as opposed to institutional purchaser, depending on their resources. Although- a personal observation here at the risk of indulging in 'whataboutism'- I have just recently seen some history monographs elsewhere retailing at five times that amount, which were less substantial pieces of work.

Robin Page I'll be closing the discussion shortly. I'd like to repeat Steve and Jan's thanks to everyone who has participated in this series of discussions for giving their time and for sharing their insights and passion for archaeology. Please do continue to watch the CIfA http://www.archaeologists.net/21st-century-challenges-archaeology and Historic England websites https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/research/21st-century-challenges-archaeology/
for further developments.