

# **Job Losses in Archaeology – April 2009**

## **Report for the Institute for Archaeologists and the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers**

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### **Executive Summary**

The economic downturn continues to have a direct and negative effect upon archaeology. Over a very short period, archaeology has been transformed from a briskly expanding profession to one that is losing trained staff rapidly.

Following the loss of 345 archaeological jobs in the three months from 1 October 2008 to 1 January 2009, a further 195 jobs are estimated to have been lost from the profession in the period from 1 January 2009 to 1 April 2009. Since the summer of 2007, approximately 670 jobs have been lost. This figure represents 1 in 6 (16.5%) of all commercial archaeological posts, which equates to nearly 10% of all the jobs in professional archaeology that existed in 2007.

At least one archaeological practice has ceased trading.

Smaller organisations (employing less than 20 people) have been most heavily affected in the first three months of 2009; in the final quarter of 2008, it was larger organisations (employing more than 50 people) that were hardest hit.

Further job losses are anticipated in the quarter to the end of June 2009. The employers of 25% of the staff at all respondent organisations do not expect to be able to maintain current staffing levels. This remains very significantly high, although it is a marked reduction from the January 2009 figure, when the organisations employing 66% of the total number of archaeologists working for respondents expected to lose staff.

Business confidence remains poor (although not at as such low levels as were reported in January 2009), with most employers expecting the situation to deteriorate further in the coming twelve months and for more commercial archaeological businesses to cease trading.

These job losses mean that the profession is losing skilled workers. Fieldwork skills are being lost, with the skills of junior fieldworkers (contributors to excavation, historic building and other surveys) being particularly badly affected.

## Introduction

In January 2009, the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), together with FAME (the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers) responded to learning that the economic downturn was having serious effects on commercial archaeological practice by conducting a rapid survey of archaeological employers in order to gather statistical data on job losses and business confidence which could be used to support businesses and individual archaeologists.

This survey is a repetition of that January 2009 exercise (the report on that survey is available on the IfA website at <http://www.archaeologists.net/modules/news/article.php?storyid=354>), and it seeks to continue to track where jobs are being lost, with an additional question relating to the impact of these job losses upon particular skills areas.

The organisations that were approached represent the majority of employers working in commercial, client-funded archaeology.

## Methodology

Archaeological employers that are either Registered Organisations with the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) or members of the Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers (FAME) were sent a short questionnaire by email on 15 April 2009, asking for responses by 24 April 2009. The questionnaire replicated and updated the previous, January 2009, questionnaire. It asked about past and present staffing levels, business confidence in the future and which skills were being most heavily lost. The full questionnaire is presented at the end of this report.

The majority of respondents had answered the earlier, January 2009, questionnaire, but the overlap was not precise. This has meant that while data provided in April could be cross-checked against that received in January, and vice-versa, it has presented some slight (but manageable) inconsistencies. All figures presented here are consistent with those presented in the January 2009 report.

## Sample

Questionnaires were sent to 64 IfA Registered Organisations and to the 59 members of FAME. As there is a degree of overlap (with some organisations being both IfA Registered and FAME members), 98 questionnaires were sent in total. As two of these organisations do not employ archaeologists in the UK (and did not reply to the consultation), and two questionnaires went to subsidiary offices of larger organisations, in total 94 organisations were contacted.

## Responses

61 completed questionnaires were returned, along with one notification of non-response from an organisation that declined to provide data.

Two of the returned questionnaires came from organisations that identified themselves as not undertaking commercial archaeological practice, and so their returns are excluded from

the analysis of job losses below, but their responses regarding business confidence are included.

## **Results: Job Losses**

The respondent organisations employed the equivalent of 2,068.4 people at the time of the *Archaeology Labour Market Intelligence Profiling the Profession 2007-08* (LMI) survey in August 2007.

On 1 October 2008, they employed 1,961.4 FTE staff, a decline of 5.2% since the LMI survey.

On 1 January 2009, these organisations employed 1,788.8 FTE staff, a reduction of 8.8% over the previous quarter and 11.7% fewer than in August 2007.

On 1 April 2009, these organisations employed 1,691.4 FTE staff, a reduction of 5.4% over the previous quarter, 13.8% over the previous six months and 18.2% since August 2007.

### **Change from August 2007 to 1 October 2008 (reported in January 2009 report)**

The census date for the LMI survey was 13 August 2007; this was the most recent reliable benchmark of archaeological employment available. Respondents were asked how many people they employed at that date, and how many people they employed on 1 October 2008, the start of the third quarter of financial year 2008-09.

Overall, there had been a modest decline in the number of people working for the respondent organisations (3.2%) over that period of slightly more than a year.

There is a level of seasonal variation in the numbers of people employed in commercial archaeology. As the 2007 figure relates to a summer census date, the level of decline until the start of October 2008 can be partly explained by this but is unlikely to have been entirely within the normal range of fluctuation.

### **Change from 1 October 2008 to 1 January 2009 (reported in January 2009 report)**

In total, there were 191.2 less jobs at the respondent organisations on 1 January 2009 than there had been on 1 October 2008, a decline of 8.6% over the quarter, and a cumulative loss of 263.1 jobs (11.8%) since August 2007.

This represents a substantial loss of staff over a very short period of time.

Extrapolating from the survey sample, it is estimated that a total of 345 archaeological jobs will have been lost in the period from 1 October 2008 to 1 January 2009.

On a case-by-case basis, 28 of the 63 responding organisations reported a reduction in staff numbers over the previous quarter, but although this was a minority of organisations they represent the overwhelming majority of employers with more than 20 staff.

### **Change from 1 January 2009 to 1 April 2009**

While most organisations either maintained the same levels of staffing or expanded over the quarter, 40% of organisations did lose staff. This meant that in total there were 97.4 less

FTE staff working for the respondent organisations on 1 April 2009 than had been working for them three months previously.

Employer size in August 2007 (number of employees)	Change 1 January 2009 – 1 April 2009 (number of organisations)			Change 1 October 2008 – 1 January 2009 (number of organisations)		
	Contraction (less employees)	No change (same number of employees)	Expansion (more employees)	Contraction (less employees)	No change (same number of employees)	Expansion (more employees)
100+	2	1	0	3	0	1
50 – 100	4	2	3	7	1	0
20 – 50	6	5	2	12	4	1
- 20	12	17	5	6	25	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>5</b>

Extrapolating from this sample, it is estimated that 195 archaeological jobs were lost in this quarter, 5.4% of the workforce in commercial archaeology.

This then represents an aggregate loss of 540 jobs over the six months from 1 October 2008, and a total reduction in workforce of 670 people from the August 2007 high. This figure equates to a total loss (since August 2007) of 16.5% of all commercial archaeological posts, equivalent to 9.7% of all posts in professional archaeology.

Although job losses have been reported across all sizes of organisations, different rates of change can be identified by comparing the effects on organisations of different sizes.

Employer size in August 2007 (number of employees)	Total number employed			Change 01/01/09 – 01/04/09	Change 13/08/07 – 01/01/09	Sample size
	1 April 2009	1 January 2009	13 August 2007			
100+	631	666	738	-5.3%	-9.8%	3
50 – 100	471	491	668	-4.1%	-26.5%	9
20 – 50	344	357.2	391.4	-3.7%	-8.7%	13
- 20	251.4	273.6	277	-8.1%	-1.2%	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>1697.4</b>	<b>1787.8</b>	<b>2074.4</b>	<b>-5.1%</b>	<b>-13.8%</b>	<b>59</b>

In the quarter to 1 January 2009, organisations that employed between 50 and 100 people were most seriously affected by job losses as 26.5% of jobs at organisations of that size were lost in that period. In the first quarter of 2009, organisations of all sizes lost staff, with very small organisations (those with less than 20 employees) being particularly heavily affected, as 8.1% of jobs at these organisations were lost. Organisations of this size had been less affected in the previous three months.

### Anticipation of Further Losses

The questionnaire asked respondents whether they feel they will be able to maintain their present numbers of staff over the three months to the end of June 2009.

While the majority of respondents (44 of 57) felt that they would be able to maintain their present staffing levels, 9 anticipated further losses. Those that anticipate further losses are the employers (as of 1 April 2009) where 21% of the workers at the respondent organisations are employed. Three of those organisations had lost staff in the previous quarter, five had maintained a constant number of employees.

By comparison with the January 2009 responses, in terms of the numbers of organisations expecting to maintain staff levels and those that expected losses, there has been some positive movement of expectations. Larger organisations are generally showing more confidence that they will be able to maintain their staffing levels. In January 2009, the organisations employing 66% of the people working for respondents expected to lose staff; in April 2009, that figure had reduced to 25%.

*Do you anticipate being able to maintain your present staffing levels over the next three month period (to 31 March 2009)?*

	Responses	Number employed on 01/04/2009	Lost staff in previous quarter	No change in previous quarter	Expanded in previous quarter
Yes (will maintain present levels)	44	1,193.9	22	13	9
No (will not maintain present levels)	9	412.5	3	5	1
Don't know	4	88	1	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>1,694.4</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>

## Results: Business Confidence

The responses to the January 2009 survey indicated that respondents overwhelmingly expected market conditions to deteriorate during 2009, with the organisations that employed 93% of staff at respondents expecting the situation to worsen.

Respondents to the April 2009 survey still generally believe that the market will continue to deteriorate, but the sentiment is not as universally held as it was in January 2009. In April 2009, the organisations that employed 53% of staff at all respondents considered that the market conditions will continue to worsen in the next 12 months.

*Do you believe that the market conditions will deteriorate further in the next twelve months (from April 2009)?*

	Response s	Number of staff employed on 01/01/2009
Yes (market conditions will deteriorate in the next 12 months)	31	903.5
No (market conditions will not deteriorate)	15	521.4
Don't know or no answer	11	271.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>1,696.4</b>

Respondents were also asked whether they expect any archaeological businesses to fail in the next twelve months. The responses to the January 2009 survey indicated that the overwhelming majority (the employers of 85% of the archaeologists working at respondent organisations) expected at least one archaeological practice to cease to trade during the course of 2009.

During the January – March 2009 quarter, one organisation that was Registered with the IfA has informed the Institute that they are no longer trading.

The level of expectation that businesses will close remains consistent. Respondents to the April 2009 questionnaire continue to expect archaeological businesses to cease trading during the next twelve months, with 43 of 57 respondents (representing the employers of 84% of the archaeologists working at those respondent organisations) considering this to be the case.

*Do you expect any archaeological practices to cease trading in the next 12 months?*

	Response s	Number of staff employed on 01/04/2009
Yes (expect practices to cease trading in 12 months from April 2009)	43	1,427.4
No (do not expect any practices to cease trading in 12 months from April 2009)	3	52
Don't know or no answer	11	217
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>1,696.4</b>

## **Results: Skills Losses**

Respondents were also asked to help identify which specific skills areas are being particularly affected. The questionnaire asked them to indicate up to three areas from the shortlist of skill areas used in Aitchison & Edwards 2008<sup>1</sup> where they felt that their

<sup>1</sup> Aitchison, K. & Edwards, R. 2008. Archaeology Labour Market Intelligence: Profiling the Profession 2007.08. Reading: Institute for Archaeologists.

[http://www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/inPages/docs/lmi%200708/Archaeology\\_LMI\\_report\\_colour.pdf](http://www.archaeologists.net/modules/icontent/inPages/docs/lmi%200708/Archaeology_LMI_report_colour.pdf)

organisation had lost skills during the present crisis. They were asked to mark these 1, 2 and 3 in order of severity (1 being the area where skills have been most severely affected).

The table below grades the responses according firstly to the total number of times a skill area was identified as being lost, and secondarily by the significance that respondents attached to that loss.

	Total	1 (most severely affected)	2 (severely affected)	3 (affected)
Contributing to intrusive investigations (evaluation, excavation) as team members or diggers	23	12	8	3
Conducting (leading or directing) intrusive investigations (evaluation, excavation)	12	2	8	2
Desk-based historic environment research including desk-based assessment	7	1	6	0
Contributing to survey and interpretation of historic buildings as team members	7	0	5	2
Conducting (leading or directing) survey and interpretation of historic buildings	6	2	3	1
Contributing to other non-intrusive investigations as team members	6	0	3	3
Artefact research	4	0	2	2
Conducting (leading or directing) non-intrusive investigations (geophysical survey)	3	1	1	1
Conducting (leading or directing) other non-intrusive investigations	3	1	1	1
Contributing to non-intrusive investigations (geophysical survey) as team members	3	0	2	1
Ecofact research	1	0	1	0
Other archaeological skills ( <i>please specify</i> ) – geomatics and survey	1	0	1	0
Other archaeological skills ( <i>please specify</i> ) – enviro / geoarchaeology	1	0	1	0
Providing information and advice on the conservation and management of the historic environment	1	0	0	1
Other archaeological skills ( <i>please specify</i> ) – post-ex (generally)	1	0	0	1
Creating, managing and maintaining Historic Environment Records	0	0	0	0
Historic environment characterisation	0	0	0	0
Conservation of artefacts or ecofacts	0	0	0	0

The areas that respondents felt were being most heavily impacted upon were in intrusive fieldwork – excavation skills – and primarily in terms of the skills needed to contribute to excavation projects, with the second most commonly identified area of skills loss being in conducting, or directing excavation projects. Desk-based research, contributing to and then conducting historic building survey and contributing to other non-invasive fieldwork (survey) were the other areas that significant numbers of respondents recognised as having lost skilled workers.

This reflects the pattern one might have expected, as desk-based assessments and fieldwork were the first areas to be hit by the downturn with post-excavation work, which has



a longer timeline and fewer specialists, yet to be really seriously impacted. Subsequent surveys will show whether these skills will, in time, also be lost or whether, as some post-excavation skills are so sparse, employers will put greater effort into the retention of those skills.

In general, it is fieldwork skills that are being lost, and in particular the skillsets held by more junior fieldworkers (contributors to excavation, building and other surveys).

When compared with the results of Aitchison & Edwards' (2008, 103-105) study of which areas archaeological employers were prioritising training in, or where skills were being bought in, it is significant to note that at that time, no overall skills gaps or shortages in conducting or contributing to intrusive investigations were identified, nor were any skills gaps or shortages in conducting or contributing to other non-intrusive investigation.

However, that study did identify a potential general skills shortage (meaning that it was difficult to buy in that skill) in conducting and contributing to the survey and interpretation of historic buildings, and it also identified a skills gap in desk-based research and assessment amongst new entrants which (at that time) appeared to be being well-managed by the provision of training. There were some indications that in some organisations this might be a skills shortage (where it had to be bought in), but no difficulties with procurement were identified. These skills may be now in critical demand, as they were in short supply pre-crisis and are now being noticeably lost.

## **Future Surveys**

IfA will continue to repeat this survey on a quarterly basis, reporting the results on its website and tracking changes in the situation, until further notice.

## Questionnaire

### Job Losses in Archaeology

Dear Colleague,

I wrote to you three months ago regarding the current economic downturn and the serious and adverse effect it has had on archaeological work, asking you to complete a short questionnaire. Your questionnaire returns allowed IfA, together with FAME, to gather valuable information on the effects of the downturn in terms of job losses and the report on that survey is published on the IfA website [here](#).

As promised, IfA has staged a seminar on the recession ([report here](#)) and published a series of measures and recommendations to help the profession, and we are continuing to track the impact and work to alleviate the effects of the recession on archaeology by repeating this short survey on a quarterly basis until further notice.

Please now assist us again by completing the questions below, which now ask for details as of 1 April 2009.

This email has been sent to all IfA Registered Organisations and FAME member organisations.

How many members of staff (FTE) did your organisation have on 1 April 2009?

How many members of staff (FTE) did your organisation have on 1 January 2009?

How many members of archaeological staff (FTE) did your organisation have on 13 August 2007 (the census date for *Profiling the Profession: Archaeology Labour Market Intelligence 2007-08*)?

Do you anticipate being able to maintain your present staffing levels over the next three month period (to 30 June 2009)?

Do you believe that the market conditions will deteriorate further over the next 12 months?

Do you expect any archaeological practices to cease trading over the next 12 months?

As well as tracking the key data regarding job losses, in order to help us track which specific skills areas are being particularly affected, and so to help plan for the recovery, please now also indicate up to three areas from the following list where you feel your organisation has lost skills during the present crisis. Please mark these 1, 2 and 3 in order of severity (1 being the area where skills have been most severely affected).

Conducting (leading or directing) intrusive investigations (evaluation, excavation)

Contributing to intrusive investigations (evaluation, excavation) as team members or diggers

Conducting (leading or directing) survey and interpretation of historic buildings

Contributing to survey and interpretation of historic buildings as team members

Conducting (leading or directing) non-intrusive investigations (geophysical survey)

Contributing to non-intrusive investigations (geophysical survey) as team members

Conducting (leading or directing) other non-intrusive investigations

Contributing to other non-intrusive investigations as team members

Desk-based historic environment research including desk-based assessment

Creating, managing and maintaining Historic Environment Records

Historic environment characterisation

Providing information and advice on the conservation and management of the historic environment

Conservation of artefacts or ecofacts

Artefact research

Ecofact research

Other archaeological skills (please specify)

Please send your responses to me, [Kenneth Aitchison](#), by Friday 24 April 2009.

Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidentiality; while aggregated and extrapolated figures will be provided to FAME and published on the IfA website and elsewhere, I personally will be the only individual who ever sees the organisational responses.

The information gathered will continue to be used to see how IfA members, Registered Organisations and the profession as a whole can be supported through this period. We expect to continue to repeat this questionnaire on a quarterly basis until further notice.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads "K. Aitchison" with a period at the end. The letters are cursive and somewhat slanted.

Kenneth Aitchison: IfA Head of Projects and Professional Development