**The Future of Archaeological Archives conference: presentation abstracts**

**1. Katie Green, Archaeology Data Service**

*The Importance of Being Explicit: Metadata for Data Reuse and Preservation*

As a sector we have become much more familiar with the term metadata over the past decade and metadata creation is becoming standard in many organisations. But is the metadata we are creating helping us to achieve FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) digital data?  This short paper will discuss the importance of being explicit when creating metadata for data reuse and preservation, demonstrating how to create high quality metadata that will enable a digital archive to achieve its greatest public value in the future.

This paper will then present how the ADS has made steps towards keeping our data FAIR but simple, by streamlining what metadata is essential to foster better discovery and reuse within an archive, and from there, how metadata can be passed to external data catalogues such as ARIADNEplus and The National Archives in the UK.

**2. Claire Tsang, Historic England**

*Anything but Black and White: the Data Management of Digital X-radiography*

X-radiography is an important technique for the understanding of archaeological objects and materials. Despite it being a process applied to archaeological material, x-radiographs themselves should be treated as primary data due to the instability of archaeological metalwork and radiography’s ability to provide evidence of the internal nature of the objects. Increasingly computed radiography is being used by the archaeological sector, with the Archaeology Data Service now accepting DICOM files or derived Raster images.

Historic England uses industrial radiography, which produces a very similar file format – DICONDE. To support our overarching data management guidelines, we have started to develop technique-based data management plans, and investigation into digital radiography quickly identified that this wasn’t going to be a simple task, with a need to; create metadata standards, resolve issues relating to producing accessible surrogates, and develop a selection strategy.

The data management of computed radiography is an informative case study in the challenges of dealing with digital data, demonstrating how the complexity of moving to digital and the rapid evolving roles and processes of the data creator and the archaeological archivist. This paper will discuss the work of Historic England to develop a technique-based data management plan for digital x-radiographs that can feed into all project-based data management plans, covering metadata documentation, complex selection decisions, managing loss of functionality, and creating flowlines to ensure data quality and integrity.

**3. Lorraine Mepham, Wessex Archaeology**

*Dealing with Digital Data – a Contractor’s View*

Development-led archaeology generates vast quantities of digital data, and has done so now for several decades, but we have not yet really come to grips with how to deal with it. In recent years, with the support of ADS, contractors have made some progress in the deposition of digital archives. However, this is still patchy, so what are the existing barriers to digital deposition, what progress have we made recently, and what do we still need to do? This overview comes from the viewpoint of a large contractor, where we have made some progress in engaging staff in the process (including managers who control budgets) and in exercising more control over the collection and processing of digital data. Our future plans include the streamlining of metadata production, controlling data flow, storage and retention, and a move towards open-source formats. There are still challenges (not least funding) but we are now better placed to help shape the future of digital archiving in archaeology.

**4. Nicky Scott, Oxford Archaeology**

*Bish, Bash, File; Job Done?*

In 2008 I gave a talk to ALGAO members called 'Bish Bash Box; job done?', which examined the process of archiving from a contractor’s perspective and the practical challenges it presented. In this talk, I will look back over how the process has evolved with the march of digital records and what solutions have been found.  Whilst in the intervening fourteen years much focus has been on space and rationalisation of the material archive, I will argue that the real challenge going forward is one of communication and accessibility to data.

**5. Duncan Brown, Historic England**

*The Future for Archaeological Archives Programme*

This paper offers an update on various initiatives that Historic England and the Arts Council are pursuing in response to the developing issue of archaeological archive storage. The Future for Archaeological Archives Programme Board comprises representatives of the main heritage organisations, with certain infrastructure bodies, who are resolved to complete an ambitious action plan; the main points of which are: addressing issues of ownership and transfer of title; archive storage; archive deposition costs; standards for good practice and gathering evidence of archive use. Much of this is being brought to the preparation of a business case to DCMS for funding towards a storage project. There is a lot going on and it is hoped that this will be of interest to the AAG.

**6. Helen Parslow, Albion Archaeology**

*Ethical Considerations in Archaeological Archives*

In line with the professional ethics required for membership of CIFA, this talk will look at ethics and archiving:

* Transfer of title, including GDPR issues
* The selection and discard of finds and where we dispose of any unwanted material
* What should happen with archives that have no home
* How human remains are cared for
* What standards should be followed

This is intended to be a discussion session, with input from the floor and other speakers.

**7. Victoria Sands, Colchester Archaeological Trust**

*Public Engagement with our Collections: What Works Best?*

Raising awareness and interest in archaeological projects is a fundamental part of our role in archives, and with CIfA currently working on a Toolkit on how to better incorporate public engagement into archaeological processes, this is a perfect opportunity to discuss what is currently working well.

I will start by outlining the approaches currently employed by Colchester Archaeological Trust, and the initiatives I have tried to introduce to better engage both our volunteer population and the wider public with our archives. I will then share some excellent examples of public engagement, especially over the COVID lockdown period. My presentation aims to encourage the audience to discuss their own methods, what they think the most effective tools for public engagement area, and any barriers that might affect their use of these.

**8. Sam Paul**

*Selection Toolkit update and discussion*

Is the toolkit being used, and is it working? After a short update, this will primarily be a discussion opportunity for people to share their experiences of using the toolkit (or not) so far.