

Valuing Archaeology Task Force Final Report

Executive Summary

We were tasked with identifying current SAA activities, and those of allied organizations, that clearly communicate the value of archaeology to non-archaeologists. We find that there are indeed many such activities, detailed below, but that no single group has identification and communication of these values as its main charge. We recommend that the Board form a standing Committee on the Public Benefits of Archaeology to focus the SAA's efforts and those of our sister organizations, which will also establish measures of success and track the impact of these efforts.

Item for Board Consideration

The Task Force on Valuing Archaeology requests that the Board approve the creation of a standing Committee on the Public Benefits of Archaeology with the charge, in collaboration with other committees, to examine ways to spread the word about the importance of archaeology in the contemporary world, and to make recommendations to the Board to enhance the Society's effectiveness in engaging a wide variety of non-archaeological constituencies. General background and more extensive rationale for this request can be found in an *SAA Archaeological Record* article from November 2017 entitled Valuing Archaeology Beyond Archaeology: An Amerind Foundation Seminar, by Paul E. Minnis et al. ([http://onlinedigeditions.com/publication/?i=455593#{"issue_id":455593,"page":30}](http://onlinedigeditions.com/publication/?i=455593#{)).

Activities of the Proposed Committee

1. Assemble information about and examples of the value of archaeology and develop new materials focused on specific constituencies. The results should be available in formats such as webpages or social media;
2. Serve as a resource for other SAA committees to help them, at their request, sharpen their activities and messages;
3. Assist the Board in establishing relationships with other organizations such as AIA, ACRA, SHA (and others) to develop and disseminate the value of archaeology;
4. Sponsor an annual seminar/symposium at the annual meeting related to the value of archaeology. Symposia could explore how archaeology interfaces with other disciplines, or how

archaeology addresses critical issues of importance beyond archaeology such as the human dimension of climate change, conservation ecology, and business and heritage preservation; and

5. Establish measures of success and track the impact of the efforts.

The TF sees no immediate fiscal impact of approving this request on the Society. It is possible that the Committee itself, once formed, might make requests to support one or more of its activities.

Full report

Charge

The Task Force on Valuing Archaeology was formed in Spring 2018 by Board Motion 140-54.1. The charge of this Task Force is:

1. Identify what existing SAA committees and interest groups are doing or would like to do to communicate the value of archaeology;
2. Identify and prioritize needed actions within SAA;
3. Suggest new initiatives;
4. Identify what other archaeological organizations are doing.

The Task Force will submit a final report in the Fall of 2018 (later amended to Spring of 2019). The Task Force will be comprised of a Chair and five members representing a broad spectrum of our membership. Luis Jaime Castillo is liaison for Latin American interests and Steve Tomka is liaison for US interests. The members are Tim Kohler (chair), Paul Minnis, Jeanne Moe, Teresa Moyer, Jeremy Sabloff, and Christopher Thornton.

What are existing SAA committees and interest groups doing or would like to do to communicate the value of archaeology (Charge 1), and what are other archaeological organizations doing (Charge 4)

We requested and were provided with copies of committee and TF reports from Spring 2018. We also contacted several chairs individually, including during the joint committee meeting time set up by the Society in Washington, D.C. The TF found that a number of committees and interest groups are already involved in aspects of communicating the value of archaeology. The most relevant efforts we identified include the following:

Internal SAA Resources

On the new SAA webpages, the Directory of Committees and Task Forces is at http://ecommerce.saa.org/SAA/SAAMember/Members_Only/Admin_Directory.aspx.

Council of Allied Societies (CoAS) (Chair: Pat Gilman)

(From https://ecommerce.saa.org/SAA/SAAMember/About_SAA/CoAS.aspx) CoAS was formed in 1989 for the mutual benefit of all, for the advancement of archaeology, and in order to further the objectives of the Society for American Archaeology; composed of representatives of some 10 state and local societies; provides a forum for the exchange of information and to develop discussion and communication, both among the allied units and also between the allied units, the Council, and the SAA. Appears to be quite active and publishes a newsletter (recently, twice a year) with the most recent (November, 2018) available at http://ecommerce.saa.org/SAA/SAAdocs/CoAS/CoAS_Newsletter_Nov_2018.pdf. Sponsors the Annual Archaeology Month Poster Contest at the SAA meetings.

Committee on Museums, Collections, Curation (Chair: Danielle Benden)

(https://ecommerce.saa.org/saa/SAAMember/Members_Only/CommTaskForce.aspx?Code=CURA) While most of the Committee's efforts are focused on professionals, it occasionally sponsors meeting sessions that concern the general public.

Media Relations Committee (Chair: Kristina Killgrove)

(From https://ecommerce.saa.org/saa/SAAMember/Members_Only/CommTaskForce.aspx?Code=MEDR) The Media Relations Committee seeks to encourage improved and more widespread coverage of archaeology in the media and to foster broader understanding by archaeologists of how archaeology can be promoted in a positive framework. Among its projects is the oversight of the Press Office at the annual meeting.

Public Education Committee (Chair: Elizabeth Reetz)

(https://ecommerce.saa.org/saa/SAAMember/Members_Only/CommTaskForce.aspx?Code=PEED) The PEC advises the Board on the interests and concerns of various audiences about archaeology and advises the Board about roles that SAA can play in their education. The PEC advises the Board on the needs of SAA members with regard to public education; carries out specific tasks as requested by the Board in conjunction with SAA staff; and advises the Board about potential collaboration between SAA and other organizations that promote archaeological education. Composed of a chair and 15 members, including at least two students. SAA's Manager of Education and Outreach serves as staff liaison.

Until 2004 this committee published a newsletter called Archaeology and Public Education. It was discontinued due to many factors including changing technology and the workload involved in preparing and mailing the hard copies on a regular basis.

One important activity of this committee is to provide input to the public outreach portions of the SAA website, recently relocated to <https://www.saa.org/education-outreach>, the first place to which the public landing on the main SAA website is directed. A Task Force on the public web pages made both short and long term recommendations concerning changes in the old webpages (see next entry).

Public Archaeology Web Pages TF (Chair: Carol E. Colaninno-Meeks)

Per Berth Pruitt, SAA, this group successfully completed their task with the launch of the redesign. They catalogued, prioritized, and edited the content on the "For the Public" section of the old website. Beth Bollwerk was originally chair, then it was headed by Carol Colaninno-Meeks.

Public Archaeology Interest Group (Organizer: Meredith Langlitz)

(From <https://www.saa.org/quick-nav/about-saa/interest-groups>): The goal of this interest group is to serve all those interested in public archaeology, archaeology outreach and education, public interpretation and the public understanding of archaeology - those who work at the intersection of the practice of archaeology and the sharing of archaeological information with the public. This interest group will host informal gatherings at the annual meetings and create electronic networks through which members may share their interests, exchange information, and discuss common issues. This informal group will not compete with the SAA's Public Education Committee, rather this is seen as a complementary group; members of the SAA-PEC may also wish to join this group to share ideas with others, and members of the interest group may wish at some time to join the PEC. This group's organizers do not foresee the undertaking of formal projects, publications, or research activities, such as are undertaken by the PEC.

Committee on Curriculum (Chair: Larkin Napua Hood)

(http://ecommerce.saa.org/saa/SAAMember/Members_Only/CommTaskForce.aspx?Code=CURC). Committee is charged with implementing the principles outlined in Teaching Archaeology in the Twenty-First Century (see <https://www.saa.org/education-outreach/teaching-archaeology/post-secondary-resources>).

Teaching Archaeology Interest Group (Co-chairs, Larkin Napua Hood and Elizabeth Scharf)

Appears to be active and has issued two newsletters, most recently in Feb. 2018. Serves three main objectives (<https://www.saa.org/quick-nav/about-saa/interest-groups>). First, the group will allow members to share resources, advice, and ideas related to teaching archaeology in higher education. Second, TAIG members will foster discussions focused on pedagogical theory, method, praxis, and ethics as well as the ways in which pedagogy intersects with mentoring, research and engaged scholarship. Finally, TAIG seeks to promote inclusion of the Principles of Archaeological Ethics in archaeology courses and will encourage members to share strategies to fulfill this goal. The Teaching Archaeology Interest Group will not compete with the SAA's Curriculum Committee or Public Education Committee. Rather, this is conceived of as a

complimentary group focused specifically on the unique opportunities and challenges of teaching archaeology in higher education settings, including colleges, universities, and community colleges

External Resources

AAA Archaeology Division (President, Lisa Lucero)

They annually sponsor a forum or electronic symposium at the SAAs, and the symposia the AD sponsors at the AAA (<http://ad.americananthro.org/meetings/>) which are “intended to reflect the state-of-the-art and the thematic concerns in archaeology. These sessions appear on the program as ‘invited.’”

American Cultural Resources Association (ACRA) (<https://acra-crm.org>)

From their webpage: ACRA is the national trade association supporting and promoting the common interests of cultural resource management (CRM) firms of all sizes, types and specialties. Member firms undertake much of the legally mandated CRM work in the United States.

Coalition for American Heritage (<https://heritagecoalition.org>)

From their webpage: The Coalition for American Heritage is made up of heritage professionals, scholars, small businesses, non-profit groups, and history-lovers from across the country who work together to support and promote our nation’s commitment to historic preservation. The SAA is one of their Leadership Council organizations, along with ACRA, SHA, and the AAA. Advocates for laws and regulations that will ensure the protection of our country’s heritage.

Making Archaeology Public Project (MAPP; <http://preservation50.org/mapp/>)

The Preservation50 Initiative, most active between 2013 and 2016 but with a few ongoing activities, had five goals: Build the coalition required to power a more effective preservation movement; learn from the first 50 years of the NHPA to plan preservation’s stronger future; tell the story of heritage preservation’s value to a broad range of Americans; educate policymakers about improving heritage policy and funding; and prepare the heritage preservation movement’s future leaders. Hosts high-quality videos from 18 states celebrating their historic preservation successes under the National Historic Preservation Act since its passage in 1966.

National Geographic and other media organizations

The National Geographic Society and its media wing, National Geographic Partners, are already strong advocates for archaeology by providing exciting and informative content to the worldwide public. Other companies (including Discovery, History Channel, etc.) can similarly be helpful in explaining the value of archaeology, although too often they distort the purpose and practice of archaeology for sensational purposes. Working more closely with well-informed media outlets, including *Archaeology* magazine, *Smithsonian* magazine and channel, *National Geographic*,

and others, to provide exciting, original content by real archaeologists with SAA approval would build strong allies in the public media sphere.

NPS (<https://www.nps.gov/archeology/npsGuide/index.htm>)

Input we had expected here could not be obtained in time for this report due to the governmental shutdown. However please see <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/aman.12812> for useful comments on the scope of the US National Park Service Archaeology program, co-authored by Teresa Moyer of this TF. Their activities include maintaining programs in over 400 parks, the National Register of Historic Places, and the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Society for Historic Archaeology (SHA; <https://sha.org>)

Maintains an attractive website full of information, and hosts several committees of which two (Academic and Professional Training (chaired by Jenna Wallace Coplin) and the Public Education and Information Committee (co-chaired by Nicolas R. Laracuente and Adrienne Sams) seem most relevant here.

National Humanities Alliance (<https://www.nhalliance.org>)

We mention the National Humanities Alliance (a coalition of organizations dedicated to advancing humanities education, research, preservation, and public programs) here primarily because they recently hired an economist who specializes in explaining the "value" of the humanities to various constituents in economic terms. This has apparently been hugely influential in their thinking, as advocates for the humanities, and we might suggest doing the same for archaeology.

Discussion

Although we have identified a number of communities and efforts within the SAA whose efforts are relevant to identifying and communicating the value of archaeology, there is at present no single group that takes these as its main charge. As this TF was nearing the end of its designated lifespan, the SAA's webpages underwent a radical redesign, making one of our initial criticisms (that there is no one place to go for information on the value of archaeology) somewhat less relevant. From the Home page, it is now easy to navigate to Education and Outreach, and then to either Teaching Archaeology (<https://www.saa.org/education-outreach/teaching-archaeology/teaching-guidelines>) or Public Outreach (<https://www.saa.org/education-outreach/public-outreach/what-is-public-archaeology>).

Nevertheless, while these pages offer some useful content on how the value of archaeology may be communicated, they deal only indirectly with what those values are. As Minnis et al. have argued in the *SAA Archaeological Record* (Vol. 17, No. 5): "Archaeological information has always been relevant to issues facing human societies and communities. We are encouraged that archaeology has a growing body of research with explicit value for contemporary problems under the rubric of public archaeology, public interest archaeology, contemporary archaeology, and other such labels. A list of these archaeological publications

and organizational initiatives numbers in the hundreds.... Archaeologists also need to better present the value of our work beyond our own profession.” This is where the SAA can do an even stronger job than it already is doing in its outreach to such audiences as policy makers and implementers, businesses, educators and students, practitioners, communities, funders, the military, media, and the general public at large as Minnis et al. discuss. An SAA committee dedicated to articulating the value of archaeology and providing guidance for communicating this value would certainly help in this critical effort.

Identify and prioritize needed actions within SAA (Charge 2)

Social Media and Messaging

A cursory examination of the media presence of the SAAs suggests that more could be done to bring the SAAs to the forefront of public discussions about archaeology. As one of the largest groups of professional archaeologists in the world, the SAAs should play a key role in defining the messages used to convince the public that archaeology provides “value,” whether defined as social/cultural value, political value, or economic value. These “talking points” about the value of archaeology should be readily apparent to every member of the SAAs and every consumer of archaeological news and information. The best way to create these “talking points” would be to partner with other professional organizations (e.g., AIA, SHA, SHPO, etc.) and media/communications organizations (e.g., National Geographic, Smithsonian, Washington Post) to come up with understandable and engaging “sound bites” that become the “boiler-plate” messages on every public communication from the SAAs and other organizations to particular audiences.

In terms of actual media output, the SAAs should work to build its own avenues and audiences for public communication. The easiest to build are social media accounts, although these do require a staffing investment and the involvement of SAA members. A quick look at the social media presence of SAAs suggests that we are trailing behind our peers in almost every medium. For example, on Twitter (@SAAorg) we have around 5300 followers, while the SHA has over 27,000 and the AIA over 35,000. On Instagram (@SAAorg) we have 88 followers, which is surprising since SAA has never actually posted anything (compare with the 6500 followers of the AIA). Social media is the primary way that people under the age of 40 receive their news -- if SAAs is not present in those public sphere, then we do not exist to Generation Y, Millennials, and Generation Z. The SAAs needs to commit to hiring a full-time social media manager and devising a strategy for utilizing the members for content and understanding what audiences we are trying to reach and why.

Suggest new initiatives (Charge 3)

As discussed above, various SAA committees have important programs related to the disseminating public benefits of archaeology, yet we suggest that the proposed Committee of Public Benefits of Archaeology can greatly increase the reach of these efforts. We see three

problem with the current situation. The first, a weak social media presence, has already been mentioned. Second, other committees are not directly charged with highlighting the benefits of archaeology to the public and to other professionals. Consequently, it can be difficult for someone, especially those not members of the SAA, to know about the work of other committees, and some resources are out-of-date.

Therefore, the new committee we propose should develop the web site/hub now housed at Education and Outreach with new material it generates and compiles, including links to relevant work of other SAA committees. Additionally, this web site would provide links with other archaeological organizations. Finally, we suggest that the new committee consider the strategy of the National Humanities Alliance, discussed above, of highlighting the economic values of archaeology in outreach efforts. This would require consulting with or otherwise partnering with economists.