Past, Present, and Future Directions of Heritage Education

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Abstract—Past, Present, and Future Directions of Heritage Education

In the United States and Canada, heritage education is a young profession, emerging in the 1990s as archaeologists and federal and state agencies realized that reaching out to the public was important for protecting the vast prehistoric and historic resources of the Americas. The major professional archaeological organizations enthusiastically supported their fledgling public education committees and task forces and the SAA in particular provided a large venue for persons interested in practicing heritage education. Archaeologists worldwide explored the concepts of heritage and heritage values. Meanwhile, the expansion of the Internet provided a broad platform for public education as more people had the technological means to access it. After the millennium, the SAA Board began to question the size, independence, and purpose of its Public Education Committee. In 2008, it tasked the PEC with maintaining the SAA Archaeology for the Public web page, and it began reducing the size of all committees, requiring long-standing members to rotate off. The unintentional result was that the primary venue for heritage education practitioners disappeared. This paper will explore the past and present state of heritage education, compare it with the development of environmental education, and suggest possible future directions for the profession.

Part 1 – Past and Present State of Heritage Education

North American Beginnings – late 1980s
Prior to the 1990s, heritage education efforts were undertaken largely by individuals (Sabloff in Judge 1990:3) and several entities such as the Center for American Archeology (CAA), which began in 1953 with field schools and evolved to become a center of “investigation, educational outreach and cultural stewardship” (CAA 2014). According to its web page, the Crow Canyon Archaeological Center (Crow Canyon) began in 1983 (Crow Canyon 2014), although it had existed as an experiential educational program at various southwestern Colorado locations since 1968. (Berger 1993: 80)

There was a growing awareness of the need to combat vandalism. Congress found in The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended through 2006, that “historic
properties significant to the Nation’s heritage are being lost or substantially altered... [and] the preservation of this irreplaceable heritage is in the public interest...” (16 U.S.C. 470 Section 1 (b) (3 – 4). A few years later the Archaeological Resources Act of 1979, as amended, recognized that archaeological “resources are increasingly endangered because of their commercial attractiveness” (16 U.S.C. 470aa. Findings and Purpose). Importantly for heritage education, Section 10 (c), provided the “Each Federal land manager shall establish a program to increase public awareness of the significance of the archaeological resources located on public lands and Indian lands and the need to protect such resources (16 U.S. C. 470ii(c). Together, these two acts set the stage for greater federal involvement in heritage education.

Save the Past for the Future - Taos
“In May 1989, the SAA and other project sponsors held a working conference [in Taos] on looting and vandalism of archaeological sites.... The conference brought together over 70 national experts... and citizens concerned with problem of archaeological looting and vandalism.” The Taos conference had far reaching outcomes as organizations and agencies stepped up to meet the challenges of the action items.

A summary of the Taos findings listed seven action items; the first two of which were informing the public and education. (Judge 1990: 9)

- Information must reach the public.
- Education and training must be improved.
- Laws must be strengthened.
- Protection efforts must be increased.
- Agencies must improve coordination.
- More research is needed.
- Alternatives must be provided.

Early Federal Efforts
At about the same time an Interagency Task Force on Cultural Resources formed in Utah to combat rampant vandalism and looting in San Juan County. The BLM, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the State of Utah decided that educating the children of local citizens would be the most effective tool to combat the looting. The result was the publication of Intrigue of the Past: Investigating Archaeology: A Teacher’s
Activity Guide for Fourth through Seventh Grades in 1992 (Smith 1992, 1997) and the creation of a workshop program to reach out to teachers and other educators.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) established a heritage education program in 1992. With five persons focusing on the effort, it adapted the Utah program and called it Project Archaeology. The U.S. Forest Service began the Passports in Time program. The Park Service provided a yearly update, LEAP or the Listing of Education in Archeological Programs Clearinghouse on heritage education efforts until the advent of the internet. In 1991 it published Archaeology and Education: The Classroom and Beyond, a compilation of papers presented at a 1990 symposium of the Society for Historical Archaeology, in which Francis McManamon and KC Smith called for greater coordination among entities. (McManamon 1991: vii)

The Society for American Archaeology and the Public Education Committee
In the foreword of the Taos report, SAA President Jeremy Sabloff writes, “The Executive Board of the Society for American Archaeology has pledged to make the campaign to preserve the past one of its top priorities.” (Judge 1990: 3) This initiative continued into the early 2000s. However, in 2007 and 2008, the Board instructed its Public Education Committee (PEC) to enforce “the long-standing policy of term limits for committee service“(SAA Board Minutes 118-40c). The following year the board voted to limit the size of the PEC and changed its charge (SAA Board Minutes: 119-40D). These decisions effectively ended its commitment to providing a venue for heritage education initiatives and collaboration. I will examine why this happened and what implications it might have for the creation of another venue for communication and collaboration.

The 1990s – The PEC’s many accomplishments
The SAA began its work by establishing a Task Force on Public Education in April 1990, a result of the efforts of an ad hoc group that had its roots at the Taos Conference. (SAA 1992: 1) One of its three goals was to establish “a Public Education Committee to lead the SAA in an aggressive public education program. Efforts will include encouraging cooperation among the SAA and other professional organizations on public education issues, as well as creating a network of archaeologists and educators who teach archaeology in a public setting” (SAA PEC 1990: 2 - 19).
The scope of this paper does not allow for more than a brief account of the many accomplishments of the PEC. The PEC was accepted as an official committee of the SAA and had developed a Strategic Plan (SAA PEC November 1992) to be presented to the SAA board at its November 1992 executive committee meeting. (SAA PEC August 1, 1992:3) This included a committee structure composed of at least nine subcommittees.

The Public Education Committee had no size limits imposed by the SAA, although a perusal of board minutes of those years indicates some consternation about the size. (SAA Board Minute 90-105) The PEC met annually for an evening on Tuesday and a full day on Wednesdays before the opening evening sessions of the SAA annual meetings, requiring extra funds from the SAA for room rental.

The committee was able to fund raise for some of its activities, particularly from various federal entities, such as the BLM – funds to assess archaeological games and outreach expenses for teacher conferences, the Bureau of Reclamation – PEC chair in-kind donations and funding for outreach to other groups, and the National Park Service (SAA PEC Report to Board, October 1995). Federal support was possible partly because of commitments made at Taos and but more directly because of an intersection of their interests with the activities of the PEC during the 1990s and into the first years of the millennium.

The many early efforts of the Public Education Committee took place in a pre-digital world without web pages, easy internet searches, and e-mail. Early accomplishments included publication of a printed newsletter, *Archaeology and Public Education*; the establishment of a network of archaeological contacts in each state; development of an exhibit for outreach to teachers; a regular column in the SAA Bulletin; publication of the *Teaching Archaeology: A Sampler for Grades 3 – 12* (Few, et al: 1994); and development of an archaeology merit badge for the Boy Scouts of America (Skinner 1997).

**Save the Past for the Future II – Breckenridge**

In September 1994, a second and much larger conference, Save the Past for the Future II (Breckenridge), was held. It featured three streams – Education, Integrated Resource Management, and Law Enforcement – attended by approximately 160 people (SAA 1995). The Education contingent produced a 60 page book of recommendations in four main areas, which coincided with the thrusts of the Public Education Committee. These were the Network, Resource Forum and Resource Centers, Formal Education, and
Professional Involvement. Each group came up with a list of action items that included a budget, with a great deal of hoped-for funding to come from the SAA, though some recommended government agency funding and grant opportunities. A new staff member was often also envisioned (SAA PEC 1995).

Following the conference the PEC enthusiastically forged ahead and the SAA Board had to ponder all of the recommendations to spend money. In 1998, the SAA Board decided to dissolve the Foundation for American Archaeology and use “$2,000 [of the fund] to fund development of the publication on working with K-12 teachers; and the remainder in the Public Education Initiatives Fund. The Board will consider the possibility of moving the remainder funds into a Public Education endowment fund no later than the fall Board meeting” (SAA Board 98/91.2). In 1999, the report of executive director Tobi Brimsek to the board discusses public education funding: “There is a new Public Education Endowment Fund, in addition to the Public Education Initiatives Fund. Currently, contributions designated on the dues renewal go to the initiative fund. That will be changed to the endowment fund (SAA Board 199 103/8). Later during that meeting, the Board voted to establish a half-time education position no “no sooner than January 1, 2000” (SAA Board 103/54.3 [D]).

Meanwhile, the PEC embarked on its long list of tasks and over the next few years accomplished many of them. The SAA began to give a public education award, the Native American Education Subcommittee obtained support or in-kind funding from the US Bureau of Reclamations and the Bureau of Land Management to conduct three workshops (SAA PEC Chiarulli 2003; SAA PEC Czaplicki 2002: 5). The Bureau of Reclamation also funded the Education Resource Forum to reach out to teachers, interpreters, and museum staff at their professional conferences; and public sessions and workshops were given at SAA meetings. The Electronic Communications Subcommittee established a PEC LISTSERV, marking the PEC’s first official foray into the electronic age.

The Professional Involvement Subcommittee created a survey, eventually became a separate SAA task force, and, after holding a sponsored workshop, focused on collegiate curricular reform. The members produced *Teaching Archaeology in the 21st Century.* (Bender and Smith 2000) The Formal Education Subcommittee produced *Archaeology in the Classroom: Guidelines for the Evaluation of Archaeology Education*
Materials, now available for download from the SAA web site. The Archaeology Education Handbook: Sharing the Past with Kids, a collection of essays about the teaching of archeology was published in 2000. (Smardz and Smith 2000)

During this time, the PEC report to the board contained each subcommittee’s separate report and recommendations to the board, many of them based on charges arising out of the Breckenridge report. These accomplishments were possible in part because the PEC membership numbered 63 in 1997. (SAA PEC Friedman E-mail 1997) By 1997, the SAA had begun to employ a part-time, education manager. Ed Friedman resigned as PEC Chair at the end of the 1998 meeting, thus ending the considerable in-kind support for his time from the Bureau of Reclamation. In 1999, the Public Archaeology Interest Group began at the Chicago meeting. Its activity level has varied, but it continues as a viable, less formal opportunity for SAA members to participate in heritage education.

The 2000s – Federal Efforts, the Rise of Heritage Studies, the PEC and the Internet

Changes in Federal Involvement in Heritage Education Efforts
The 2000s saw a constriction of the federal budget. As with everything else, federal involvement in heritage education efforts changed. As budgets tightened, agencies found partners to help administer—and fundraise for—heritage education initiatives. The US Forest Service began a partnership with the SRI Foundation to administer the Passport-in-Time program, which is now open to other agencies. (Passport in Time 2014)

The Bureau of Land management’s (BLM) Project Archaeology is now administered by Montana State University, but the BLM still provides in-kind support through one full-time staff member. In 2008, the BLM formed a new Division of Education, Interpretation, and Partnerships. Project Archaeology is one of two signature educational signature programs in its Education, Interpretation and Youth Engagement National Strategy (BLM 2013).

The National Park Service (NPS) continued its heritage education efforts in numerous ways. For example, the Southeast Archaeological Center (SEAC) staff developed workshops for joint teams of archaeologists and interpreters, which eventually resulted in a competency, “Module 440: Effective Interpretation of Archaeological Resources,”
now available on-line. (NPS Interpretive Development Program 2014) SEAC offered sponsorship or in-kind support of a number of targeted retreats that resulted in publications, some of which were in partnership with the SAA, such as *Teaching Archaeology in the 21st Century* (Bender and Smith 2000). The meetings that resulted in *Heritage Values in Contemporary Society* (Smith, *et al* 2010) helped lead to the creation of the UMass Amherst Center for Heritage and Society, which is dedicated to the development of the study of heritage, including heritage education. (UMass Amherst Center for Heritage and Society 2014)

Additionally, fewer federal workers attended the PEC meetings. At least once during this period, NPS Washington Office staff was forbidden from attending the SAA Annual meetings. Generally, federal funding for cultural resource professionals to attend professional meetings shrank and fewer agencies held annual meetings prior to the commencement of the SAA annual meetings. [Recently, the Department of the Interior (DOI) issued a financial management memorandum requiring approval at the highest levels for any meeting attended by 30 or more DOI employees, which would encompass many agencies and have a dampening effect on SAA attendance (DOI 2013-024 (Vol. VI.B.))]

**The Public Education Committee**

The SAA Board had embarked on an initiative called *Task Force on Renewing our National Archaeology Program*. In 2000, the board directed the PEC to “consult the recommendations in Section II [of the task force report]...and make recommendations to the Board concerning the evaluation of public participation in archaeology. The Committee should consider how to determine the effect upon the public and on archaeology of public education projects (such as volunteer, pay-for-dig; field schools, etc.). Additionally the Board directed the PEC to “pay particular attention to the results of the Harris Poll on the Public Understanding of Archaeology” (SAA Board 105/40F), released by the SAA in March of 2000 (SAA Board 104/54.2). With this in mind, the PEC obtained funding to hold a retreat in Louisiana prior to the 2001 annual meeting in New Orleans. The results of the retreat would have a far reaching effect on the future of the PEC in unanticipated ways.

In its 2002 report, the PEC reported on its Retreat in Louisiana, funded by a grant from the Bureau of Reclamation and support from the Louisiana Department of Culture and tourism.
“The Committee...identified three major audiences for our outreach efforts. The audiences include: educators, archaeologists especially SAA members, and other publics, including descendent groups, the interested public, and the uninterested or hostile public. As described in the budget request, a number of new projects are planned....” The report also mentioned the formation of a website task group. The committee proposed a new link, within the SAA website, to be called, “Archaeology for the Public.” A third task group was also funded by the Bureau of Reclamation. “Called the Native American Workshop Task Group,” it planned to write a Prospectus for Native American Educations Initiatives that would include work with smaller indigenous communities, rather than nation-wide efforts. “This prospectus will be used as a start to find funding for a revised model of the Archaeology for Native American Educator workshops....

The retreat members also discussed the possibility of creating a future Heritage Education Conference no associated with the SAA annual meetings to share issues, research, and ideas in a more sustained and focused venue” (SAA PEC 2002: 1-3).

In hindsight, this retreat at the end of ten years of active growth of the PEC forms a line of demarcation between early heritage education efforts and those of the early 21st century. Other forces – such as lessoning federal involvement and the growth of the Internet – outside the SAA, as well as internal changes, affected not only its goals and work, but also the ability of the PEC to function as a national leader in heritage education as the decade wore on.

**The SAA ends it role as Heritage Education leader**

The size of the PEC seems to have been a source of consternation for the Board, which is reflected in the Executive Board meeting minutes through the years. (See SAA Board meeting minutes 95, 96, 97, 99, 101, 102, and 125.) The Boards of the 90s were concerned about the committee’s increasing size but the exact reasons for the concern are not clear. The committee was larger than any other SAA committee and very active. It garnered outside funding for some, but not all of its activities. The minutes of Board Meeting 107 in Atlanta late in 2001 indicate the Board’s continued commitment to funding public education efforts, which by that time included an SAA staff person. Besides instructing
the executive director to create an investment policy for a fund, “The Board instructs the president and executive director to pursue submitting the proposal to obtain 3-year funding for the Public Education Program and to report to the Board on the proposal’s status at the fall 2001 Board meeting. (SAA Board 107/22.1 – 22.2) In its 2002 report, the PEC provided comments about how an educational endowment might assist PEC initiatives. (SAA PEC 2002)

By far the biggest issue was how to incorporate the PEC’s ideas for outreach to the public through a robust web page for the public. In 1999, the Board directed the PEC to redesign the PEC area on the web... [by using] “an invisible link to another server and the SAA webmaster will link to it” (SAA Board 102/40). Following the Louisiana retreat the web task group worked even more vigorously on their new site to address public outreach. At this point, the SAA lacked the web infrastructure and staff to handle a web page as complex as was envisioned by the PEC. Board minutes from that period reflect the difficulties of moving into the digital age for a professional organization. (See SAA Board minutes for meetings 102, 104, 106, 108, 110, 112, 113, 119, 120, 121, and 122) And, the public website was ambitious. The website would be a one-stop shop for anything about archaeology that any of the various publics could want. (SAA PEC Chiarulli 2002: 10 – 16) Board minutes indicate a plan for the site to “go live in September 2004” (SAA Board 112/40A).

Beginning in late 2005, there were no longer any persons who had been PEC members or at Taos on the board. Federal funding for collaboration disappeared. The Society now had a public programs manager who could handle public inquiries and outreach to educators. Meanwhile, the issues surrounding the launch of a society web page for the public on another server were complex and the site had been created by the PEC.

This prodigious effort by a group of extremely dedicated PEC members became increasingly problematic for everyone involved. Because of the effort involved in creating the site and projected maintenance, it created a large amount of future work for someone. There were issues of ownership since the site was developed outside the SAA Internet Technology structure. (See SAA Board minutes 102,113, 122 128) The Board’s actions during the next three meeting indicate an effort to rein in the PEC. There is no indication of a discussion about the implications these actions in terms of continuing the
SAA’s commitments to providing leadership in heritage education. There was no request to the PEC to provide information to justify continuing its previous course.

During the same November 2007 meeting in which it praised the work of the Web Pages Task Group, (SAA Board 119/40/C and 119/40/D), the Board reduced the size of the PEC to 15 members. At its next meeting the Board reaffirmed “the role of the Public Education Committee with respect to the development and maintenance of the public archaeology web pages and requests that Public Education Committee create an interim subcommittee to work with the Web Manager for this purpose. (Passed 26 March 2008) (SAA Board 120-40D) In November of 2008, the Board added “the following sentence to the charge of the Public Education Committee: The PEC shall maintain and review the archaeological content of the Archaeology for the Public pages on the Society’s web site” (SAA Board 121-40D).

Finally, in 2010, in an effort to encourage greater participation in the society, the Board completely restructured its committee membership process, reducing the terms to two years. And, it deleted the preamble to the PEC’s charge. The result is that half the members of all committees must rotate off every year, unless they can be reappointed, which can happen only once. This severely limits the abilities of committees to undertake the types of efforts that produced things like the Archaeology for the Twenty-first Century Curriculum or the Native American workshops.

The PEC is now a fully functioning regular committee of the SAA and continues to add to its history of accomplishments, albeit on a much smaller scale. Among these have been a series of career articles and collaboration with other organizations to do outreach to teachers as well as supporting the Archaeological Institute of America in establishing International Archaeology Day.

**Implications for the Future of Heritage Education**

The many accomplishments of the PEC were possible for several reasons. One was that there was a broad consensus among archaeologists that there was a need for more public outreach in order to combat vandalism of archaeological sites. Federal agencies committed both staff and funding to the efforts. Professional organizations supported
public education efforts and the SAA, as the largest group, agreed to provide a home for a new group that would help lead the way. As the years progressed, archaeologists who had participated in the Taos conference or who had been PEC members became members of the SAA Board and could offer not only support but also ideas about how the SAA might benefit from the efforts of its unusual Public Education Committee. During these years the Board expressed concern at the size of the committee, but it continued to support it and, following its own committee policies, allowed members to remain on the committee for long periods of time.

Finally, the size of the committee enabled it to take on and sustain long term heritage education efforts. While some on the committee were never able to do much more than participate in the annual meetings, others donated many, many hours to the cause. The wide variety of collaborative efforts allowed many of them to justify spending work time, since their employers could see positive results from these collaborations.

Currently, heritage education, interpretation, and outreach professionals have no single venue for the exchange of ideas, collaboration on initiatives, development of a profession through research, and training of heritage educators. Although several professional organizations have committees or interest groups that focus on heritage (Figure 1), none is as active as was the PEC. Is there a need for such an organization? I believe there is, but only a collective group of professionals can make it happen. What might such an organization accomplish?

**Part 2 – Development and Accomplishments of Related Professional Organizations**

For comparative purposes, I researched three professional organizations that provide opportunities and benefits to professionals in fields similar to heritage education.

**North American Association for Environmental Education**

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) was founded in 1971 as National Association for Environmental Education (NAEE), by college professors interested in promoting environmental education and the development, marketing, and dissemination of instructional materials dealing with the environment, for use at the community college level. NAEE expanded its focus and merged with the
Conservation Education Association in 1990. It includes annual meetings and publications; and awards. It has aggressively pushed professionalization of the practice of education. (Disinger et al. 2001)

A key achievement is promoting best practices, something it has been very successful at. A wide array of resources is available through the NAAEE web site. Some are downloadable PDFs and others are publications that can be ordered. They cover a broad range of topics from environmental justice to how to teach workshops. Members receive an on-line newsletter and discounts on several publications. (NAAEE in Brief 2014) The annual conference includes a two-day research symposium before the other sessions, which are aimed at teachers, environmental educators and interpreters. (NAAEE Frequently Asked Questions 2014)

**The National Association for Interpretation**

“The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) professional association for those involved in the interpretation of natural and cultural heritage resources in settings such as parks, zoos, museums, nature centers, aquaria, botanical gardens, and historical sites. For more than 50 years, NAI and its parent organizations have encouraged networking, training, and collaboration among members and partners in support of our mission: inspiring leadership and excellence to advance heritage interpretation as a profession” (NAI 2014). “NAI was founded in 1988 from two existing organizations, the Association of Interpretive Naturalists (founded in 1954) and the Western Interpreters Association (founded in 1965).” It has three heritage-related sections.

By 2008, NAI had 5,000 members in over 30 countries with three international affiliate organizations…. NAI offers an annual national workshop that attracts over 1,000 people, an international conference, regional and special-interest section workshops, two full-color magazines, certification and training, an association store, a publishing imprint (InterpPress), digital newsletters, and web-based services.” (NAI 2014) Many federal agency interpreters use NAI training for certification and enjoy the annual workshop structure.

**American Alliance of Museums**

and service.' The American Alliance of Museums (formerly the American Association of Museums) is the one organization that supports all museums. Through advocacy and excellence, the Alliance strengthens the museum community. We support 21,000 museums, individuals and companies by: developing standards and best practices, providing resources and career development, [and] advocating for museums to thrive” (AAM 2014).

The AAM has developed museum specific, education and interpretation best standards, “National Standards and Best Practices for U.S. Museums.” Its twenty-two professional networks, organized around job responsibilities and areas of common interest, are available to members at no cost. The educational committee, “EdCom,” has its own executive board. Members receive subscriptions to Museum Magazine (AAM 2014). The Annual Meeting and Museum Expo occurs in May and takes place in venues similar to the SAA’s annual meetings, but with a very pricey registration (AAM Registration FAQs 2014).
## Table: Organizations Providing Professional Heritage and Educational Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Affiliates</th>
<th>Conf. Fee</th>
<th>Conference fee Inclusions</th>
<th>Conference Dates &amp; Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AAM - American Alliance for Museums (AAM: 2014)</strong></td>
<td>22 Professional Networks* EdCom (Educational committee) has a board</td>
<td>$90 professional $50 student $50 retiree Institutional memberships</td>
<td>$650</td>
<td>All program sessions, general sessions, &amp; Museum Expo. No meals provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NAAEE – North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE: 2014)</strong></td>
<td>Affiliates: state, territorial, provincial, or regional EE organizations</td>
<td>$80 professional $35 student $35 student Plus lower Mexican rates</td>
<td>$249 - $300.</td>
<td>Two lunches &amp; reception &amp; a research symposium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SAA – Society for American Archaeology (SAA: 2014)</strong></td>
<td>Council of Affiliated Societies, each with non-profit status. Usually state arch. groups. PEC 15 members PAIG</td>
<td>$145 regular $70 students $92 Retired Discounted rates for some countries. Affiliated +$30</td>
<td>$179</td>
<td>All program sessions and the Exhibit Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SHA – Society for Historical Archaeology (SAH: 2014)</strong></td>
<td>MOA with the Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology No provision for affiliates. Public Education &amp; Interpretation committee 20 members.</td>
<td>$135 Regular $80 Student $80 Retired Institutional Memberships.</td>
<td>$205</td>
<td>Admission to the Opening Reception, Friday's Pre-Awards Banquet Cocktail Hour, Awards Ceremony and Dance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*Figure 1: Organizations Providing Professional Heritage and Educational Opportunities.*
Part 3 – Future Directions

If we were to form something like a “Society for Heritage and Education,” to provide services similar to those provided by other professional societies who would be interested in joining and what might the meetings look like?

An interesting development in archaeology is the rise of the study of heritage. The recently established UMass Amherst Center for the Study of Heritage and Society defines heritage as “the full range of our inherited traditions, monuments, objects, and culture. Most important, it is the range of contemporary activities, meanings, and behaviors that we draw from them” (UMass Amherst 2014). Clearly the study of heritage includes archaeology, but it is broader. A professional society that brought together not only those who study heritage, archaeology, anthropology and related fields, but also the educators, interpreters, and museum professionals who play a key role in presenting heritage to the public, would attract enough persons to support a separate organization.

The meeting model provided by the NAAEE is an interesting one. The annual meeting is preceded by a two day research symposium. The sessions that follow are geared to the practitioners of environmental education. A meeting of this type not only addresses the needs of practitioners, but it also allows for the continued growth of the discipline provides a dedicated research venue. Such a group would not necessarily have to organize its own meetings initially; it begin by meeting before one or more other professional meetings.

I believe that we are at a crossroads in heritage education. I offer the idea of forming a separate professional organization in hopes of generating discussion about what we can do to move forward. The SAA PEC’s accomplishments demonstrate that collaborative efforts can lead to great things.
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North American Association for Environmental Education


National Association for Interpretation


National Park Service, Interpretive Development Program.

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