

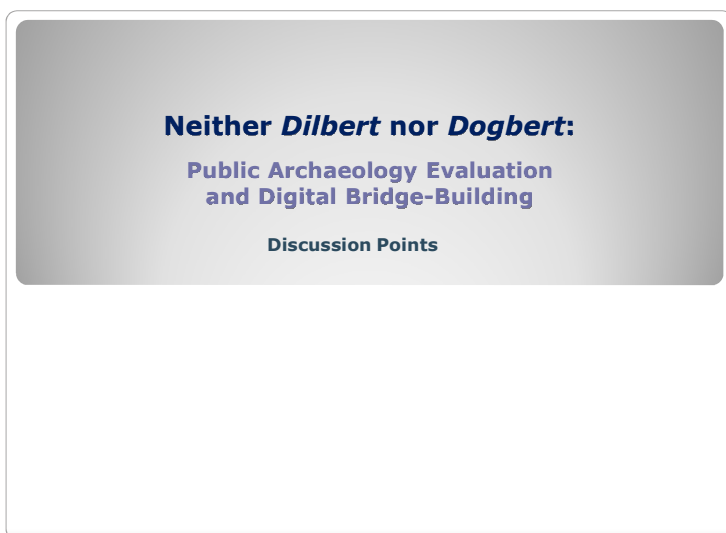
Neither *Dilbert* nor *Dogbert*: Public Archaeology and Digital Bridge-Building

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Prepared for the SHA PEIC¹-sponsored symposium entitled, "Evaluation of Public Archaeology: Principles, not Protocols"², to be presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Historical and Underwater Archaeology, Albuquerque, NM, Jan. 2007.

ABSTRACT: Evaluation in Public Archaeology often depends on old-economy models such as those lampooned in the satirical cartoon Dilbert. Such models are designed by corporate and bureaucratic entities to assess insider political and economic agendas and thus they are ill-suited for other uses – such as determining whether archaeology is meeting the needs of its outside publics. In the rapidly evolving social environment created by the new economy -- e-business, e-commerce, and the web – such traditional strategies for assessment are now being replaced with agile development methodologies that embrace both rapid technological innovation and employ theoretical paradigms of applied social science. The web-based, **Archaeology for the public** project (www.saa.org/public) rejects old style corporate frameworks of assessment in favor of a more context sensitive approach typical of applied anthropology. This strategy involves evolving, ongoing (applied, theoretical) engagement with multiple publics and short-term, technical development sequences that welcome change in place of long-term, projected, outcomes. In evaluating this project, the adaptive development process itself forms the primary measure of progress.

#1—Title slide

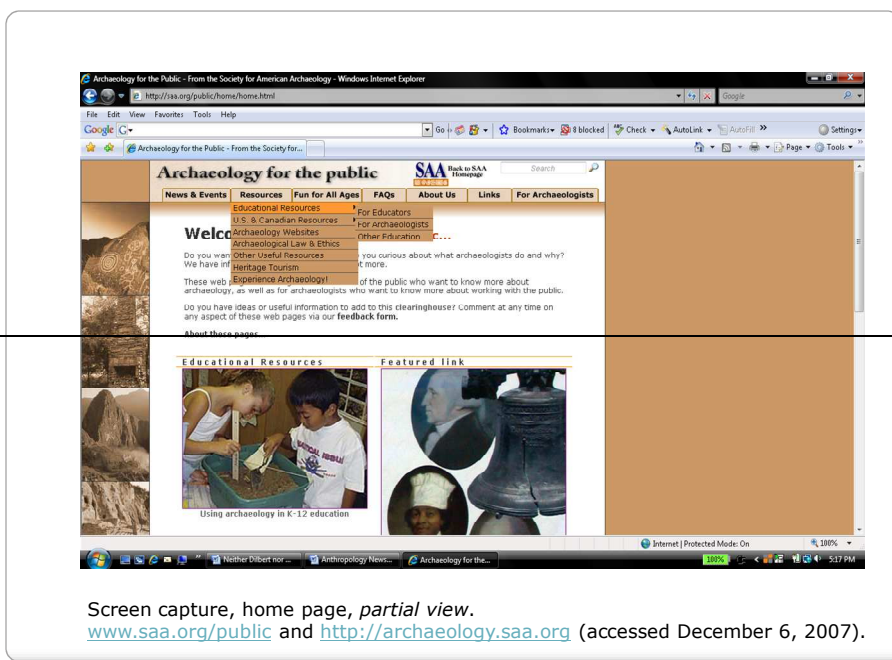


¹ Society for Historical Archaeology Public Education and Interpretation Committee.

² Evaluation of Public Archaeology: Principles, not Protocols is organized by James G. Gibb and Carol McDavid. ABSTRACT: While there has been some disciplinary attention to the need to evaluate public archaeology activities, for the most part these have been aimed at developing rules and "do's and don'ts", rather than examining the principles that underlie the development of public programs. This session aims to do that -- to identify the considerations which come into play when undertaking an "evaluation", and to examine what happens if these considerations come into conflict with either inside or outside interests. As such, this session will foster discussion of the ethics of public archaeology work as well as to provide some frameworks for context-sensitive approaches.

This symposium on *evaluation principles* signals that our discipline is moving beyond laundry lists for evaluation that are borrowed opportunistically but unreflexively from other professions and from commercially driven environments. Our contribution to this discussion is a context sensitive example of evaluation based in the principles of *applied* or 'Public' anthropology. We demonstrate these principles using a relatively new resource, *Archaeology for the public*, which is a vast set of informational web pages designed to serve as a major interface between the field of archaeology and its many publics. Several reports on this project exist elsewhere and a paper explaining today's talking points is posted online. Here we will highlight the applied anthropology principles driving this project and the considerations that come into play when undertaking its "evaluation".

SLIDE -- #2



The aim behind **Archaeology for the public** is not to try to meet the content needs of every potential audience for archaeology, but rather to create a resource that will grow and expand as the area of practice known as "Public Archaeology" does the same. To help make this happen, the project draws upon ethnographic methods and theory that are useful for addressing practical problems beyond the discipline, that take into account larger surrounding social issues, and that encourage broader public conversations about these issues with a goal of fostering social change. Two factors are central to this 'context-sensitive development strategy.

Slide -- #3



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DILBERT MOUSE MAT

Dilbert is published in over 2,000 newspapers in 65 countries.

Created by Scott Adams, this cartoon is distributed by United Features Syndicate.

First is the *genesis of Archaeology for the public* which can not be separated from its social environment which is the new technological economy -- e-business, e-commerce, and the web. This realm is experiencing a major paradigm shift whereby traditional assessment strategies are being replaced with *agile development methodologies*. These are hailed as 'anti-Dilbert' in reference to the satirical cartoon that pillories corporate bureaucratic and economic frameworks that reduce humans to powerless cogs and whose main objective appears to be to resist change and keep secure the positions of those in leadership.

Slide #4

Manifesto for Agile Software Development

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:

- Individuals and interactions** over processes and tools
- Working software** over comprehensive documentation
- Customer collaboration** over contract negotiation
- Responding to change** over following a plan

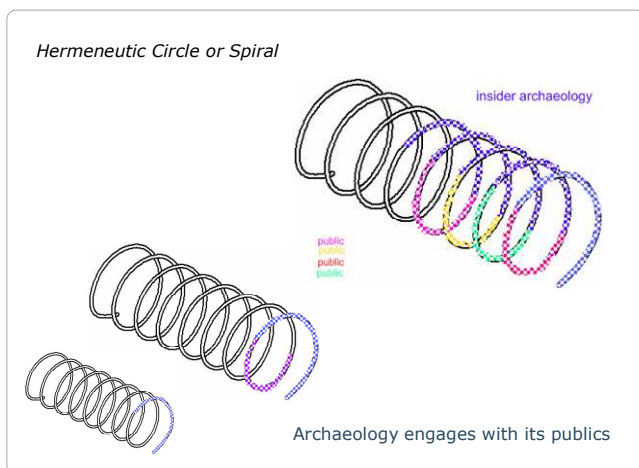
That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more...

agilemanifesto.com

Cutting-edge (or Extreme) computer programmers reject these less democratic evaluative protocols in favor of *agile methodologies* that embrace technology's rapid innovation and social science critical theory in a movement that is transforming the notion of evaluation in business, corporate culture, and computer programming. Under this new paradigm there is continuous

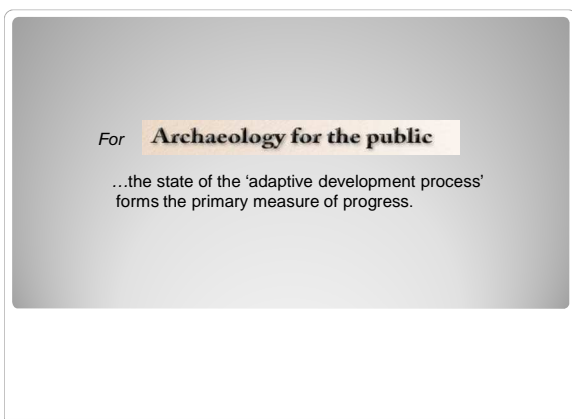
collaboration between web designers and clients in a process that welcomes evolving change in place of long-term, *projected outcomes*. As in *applied anthropology* there are *targeted audiences, clients*, and the programmers are serving as the *Change Agents*.

Slide -- #5



The *second factor* leading to **Archaeology for the public's** context-sensitive development is the *hermeneutic*, or *interpretive circle*, central to the project. This theoretical framework cultivates the ability to approach archaeology from another point of view and to appreciate the cultural and social forces that may have influenced that outlook. This approach might be labeled any number of terms found under the applied anthropology umbrella – for example, *Action Archaeology* or *Community Development and Archaeology* – but, taking place as it does in cyberspace, this applied project is also, defacto, *Agile*, in that it employs Extreme Programming-type methodologies in place of (old-paradigm) long-term projected outcomes: Short-term development sequences and rapidly shifting requirements are operationalized as part of an evolving and intensifying collaboration with our publics. To put it in the disciplinary vernacular, ongoing engagement with our multiple publics is accommodated through evolving web page development.

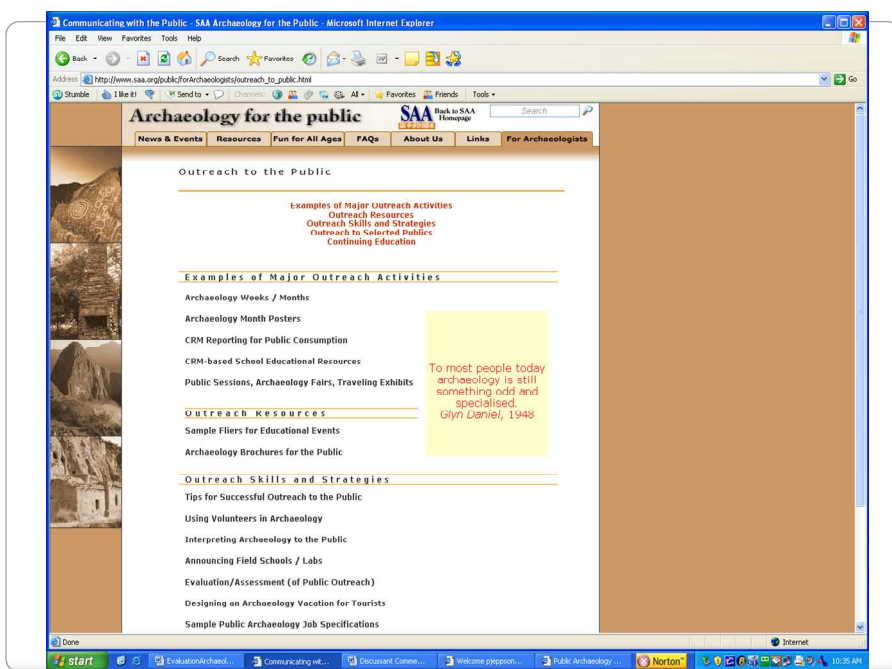
SLIDE #6



This incorporation of Agile (aka *Applied*) methodologies in a *hermeneutically-derived, context sensitive, development strategy* reorders the notion of assessment for this project. In evaluating **Archaeology for the public**, it is the state of the adaptive development process *itself* that forms the primary measure of progress. The development process allows us to understand what our publics do with archaeology, what our colleagues do with their publics, as well as how archaeological practice is being informed and transformed in cyberspace.

So how would this project informed by these principles be evaluated? Well, that depends on what the meaning of the word 'evaluation' is – whether the aim is, like in traditional evaluation, to assess *insider political and economic agendas* -- or whether the goal is to assess *the conveyance of useful information to our publics*.

Slide-- #7



An adaptive development process is operational in this project. To date, 179 archaeologists and members of various publics who use archaeology have contributed to this project in a dynamic and organic, collaborative authoring process where listening and learning from others is valued over structuring development through preordered, categories. Page content is inductively derived from what practioners and publics actually do with archaeology.

Slide--#8

The screenshot shows a Windows Internet Explorer browser window displaying the 'Archaeology Law & Ethics - Archaeology Resources' page. The page features several news articles and a central image of an excavation site. The articles include:

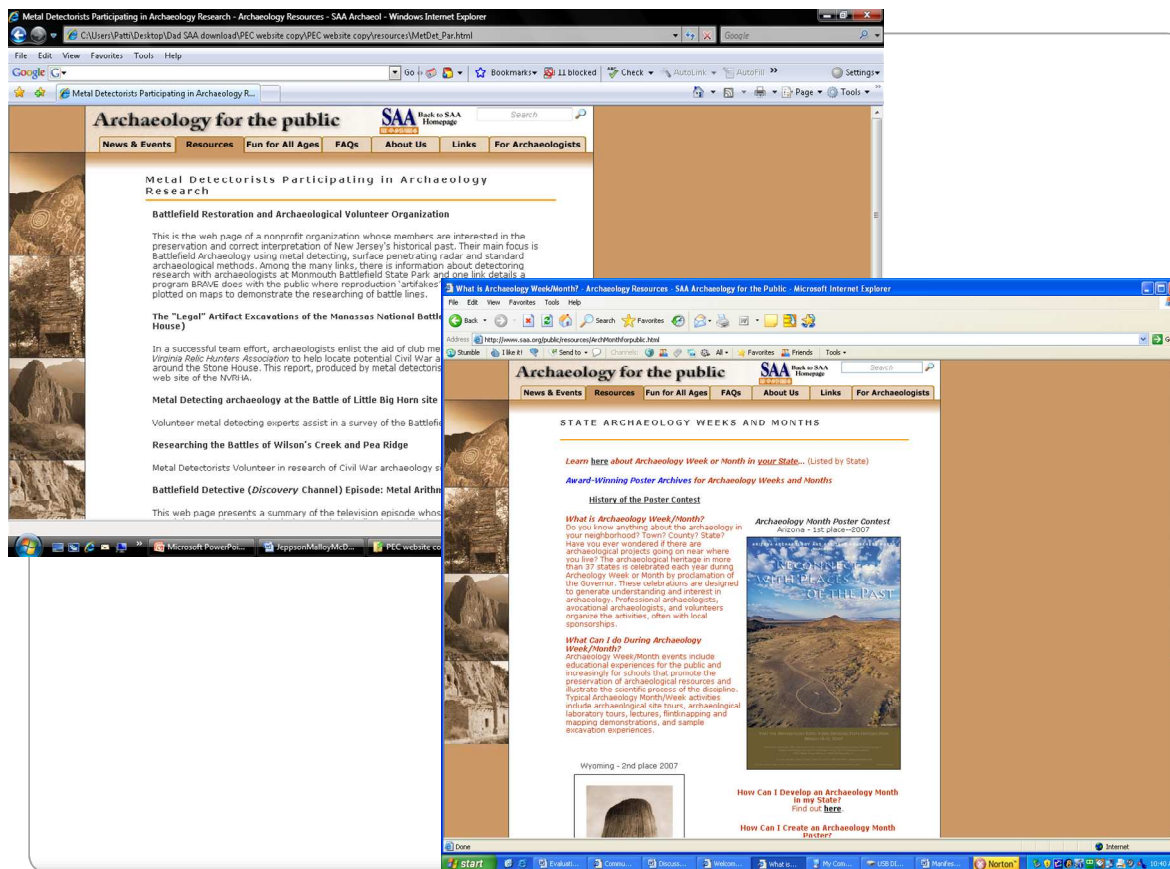
- Archaeologist Aids Army on Sensitivity**: News story by William Kater, Associated Press, Oct. 6, 2006, at CBS News On-line.
- Past archaeologists will train Soldiers to preserve historic sites**: News story by Jason B. Cutshaw, Staff Writer, Fort Drum Blizzard On-line.
- Excavation of Mass Graves in Iraq**: More than 400 mass graves are thought to exist in Iraq. Archaeologist Dr. Michael 'Sonny' Trimble and his forensic team have been excavating at some of these locations at the request of the U.S. Department of Justice's Regime Crimes Liaison Office. The forensic information being gathered is used as evidence in the legal trials judging allegations of genocide by the Baath Party against the Kurds in northern Iraq. Through archaeology, the voices of these victims is being heard. Read about this important undertaking in these three articles in *Forum*, a publication of the St. Louis District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (where Trimble is based).

Below the articles is a photograph of an excavation site with a caption: "We thank Michael 'Sonny' Trimble, Kristine Brown, and the U.S. Army Engineers District, St. Louis -- particularly Public Affairs Specialists Nicole Halyemela and Alan Fowlley -- for providing this page content."

Overlaid on the bottom left is another browser window showing the 'Archaeology for Educators' page from the Society for American Archaeology. The page title is 'Archaeology for Educators' and it includes a table of contents with sections like 'Introduction', 'Understanding the Past', 'What is Archaeology?', 'Methods of Gathering Data', 'Archaeological Collections', 'Archaeology and the Public', 'Protecting the Past', and 'Additional Resources'. The main content area discusses how archaeology can be integrated into classroom teaching and includes a section titled 'Why Teach With Archaeology?'.

This information is gathered through collaborations across and between professional archaeological societies, across professions, and between professionals and multiple publics. This development strategy in turn reveals the state of Public Archaeology by clarifying how archaeological outreach aims and goals differ among practitioners, vary among US professional societies, and even how US outreach differs from that found in other regional practices.

Slide -- 9



While **Archaeology for the public** works toward a goal of engagement with our publics that will foster stronger, more cooperative relationships, this project's *applied* (aka *agile*) methodology is not always understood 'in-house'. Indeed, the practitioners contributing to the project are working, in effect, as *Change Agents* -- not between our discipline and our publics but between *the institutional bureaucracy of our professional societies* and our publics. Archaeological society institutional bureaucracy is, by definition, *not* anthropological. It is guided by the principles of its own culture which are informed by the economic needs and hierarchical structure typical of corporate business. All of us **need to be grateful for that** because, quite frankly, we *wouldn't be* without this structure. But this institutional bureaucracy has *other* important needs that are not the discipline's important needs -- and *that* is what is not always appreciated.

This conflict shows up when the evaluation frameworks common to this corporate-styled, bureaucracy run counter to those of an applied, discipline-based, academic project such as this one. For example: an *open ended* development process as opposed to a 'defined structure at the outset', a *flat management hierarchy* rather than 'top down control', cyberspace editing conceptions alien to those of the print medium, and shared ownership and stewardship of the past *with the public* verses territorial 'branding' and *authoritative* expertise (the latter leaving the outreach effort perceived as 'false humility'). Old-style models of assessment proceed with, and

operate with, built in controls designed to minimize and resist change. An applied (*agile*) strategy not only accepts change and expects change but, in a true engagement with our publics, recognizes that *there will be* other positions, other agendas, and other needs unrelated to those of archaeology.

Slide -- # 10



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*Dilbert's boss stays current on the latest business trends but rarely understands them. All he really cares about is the 'bottom line' and looking good in front of his superiors.

But such conflicts may soon be resolved. Recently, agile methodologies were the topic of a Dilbert cartoon. This indicates that context-sensitive evaluation frameworks have gone *mainstream* in corporate business and economic environments and should soon be found in bureaucracies everywhere (including SAA). Archaeology is usually at the end of the line in the time-lag of new ideas or techniques that trickle down into and through the academy but, in this case, with applied ethnographic methods at the base of the emerging paradigm, anthropological archaeologists are already 'there'.