

# *Avocationalists, Colleagues, and Clients— 'Lend us your ears!' (and direct your cursors!)*

Society for American Archaeology (PEC) Web Pages Working Group:  
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## ABSTRACT:

Incarcerated Readers, Heritage Tourists, and Site Descendants....Metal Detectorists, Land Owners, and school Educators....Archaeologists contacting media representatives or legislators: These are some of the 27 audiences identified by publicly-directed archaeologists for outreach and or civic engagement. To help meet the needs of these publics, the Society for American Archaeology, serving as a clearing-house for outreach and education resources, has developed an extensive set of public-friendly, peer-reviewed, web pages that will form an important point of contact between the discipline and its friends and foes. So far, 450 pages of content have been written and or coordinated by SAA Public Education Committee members (two of whom are working in tandem as part of the SHA Public Education and Interpretation Committee [PEIC]). This poster presentation will introduce this new resource. Issues related to reflexivity as well as the hermeneutic guiding this public archaeology undertaking will be discussed. (Key Words: Public Archaeology, Web Page, Education Resource)



***Heritage tourists,***  
***Site descendants,***  
***Smart Growth advocates ...***

***Legislators,***  
***Metal detectorists,***  
***School educators ...***

***Land owners,***  
***Journalists,***  
***Archaeology avocationalists ...***

These are just some of the 27 audiences tapped for educational outreach and civic engagement via this new Public Archaeology resource. Included as an audience are professional archaeologists and archaeology educators who deal with our various publics on a regular basis and are looking for advice and resources to assist their efforts.

In using the cost effective reach of the Internet, and by employing a navigational strategy designed to meet the needs of non-professional audiences, **Archaeology for the public** will share a vast amount of archaeological information while communicating the commitment of the archaeology discipline to its publics.

## **Content Area Design and Implementation**

In planning these public web pages, the aim was not to try to meet the content needs of all of every potential audience, but rather to create a design that will be flexible enough to address multiple audience needs in the future. These web pages will grow and expand as Public Archaeology grows and expands.

*Phase I* of this project -- completed and live on the Internet -- involved development and implementation of a navigation design plan and the posting of a minimum amount of page content. *Phase II*, now underway, involves posting an additional 300 pages of recently created and gathered formal educational resources.

Presently, the **Archaeology for the public** web pages contain 51 directories, 797 files, and 33,788, 039 bytes, for a total of 450 HTML pages of content. Technical assistance for posting content has been provided in part through a grant from the US Department of Interior Bureau of Reclamation.

Initial design decisions for this project began with the efforts of more than 20 Society for American Archaeology (SAA) Public Education Committee (PEC) members who drew on topics of concern that the PEC regularly considers and responds to. The design plan implementation (the fleshing out and tweaking of the link hierarchy) was and continues to be shaped by the content contributed (to date) by more than 130 publicly-directed archaeologists and archaeologically-interested members of the public. This content is coordinated by the PEC *Web Pages Working Group* (two members of which are working in tandem as part of the SHA Public Education and Interpretation Committee [PEIC]) and the SAA Manager of Public Education.

All page content is field-tested to assess for public-friendliness, and is also subject to a rigorous peer review process. An important part of this content-gathering and review stage involves input from K-12th grade educators on the content elements designed for them and their students.

**Archaeology for the public** is designed to serve as a clearing-house, or major portal, for individuals in search of information (including archaeologists). One important aim is to use relevant existing content (already available on other web sites) rather than ‘reinventing the wheel’. Visitors to these web pages are encouraged to comment and submit queries and or content. We welcome ideas and ask everyone and anyone to forward their suggestions and contributions for making this a more successful public resource.

### **Learning From Archaeology for the public**

Much is being learned about the current state of Public Archaeology through this project. *For example:*

- Outreach aims and goals are found to vary among regional archaeology traditions. U.S. outreach practice often reflects the processual archaeology tradition. Archaeological methods and methodology form the focus of a significant portion of outreach which is promoted in terms of a science orientation.
- As part of federal agency mandates, many materials and programs have been geared toward meeting archaeology’s stewardship needs (namely, preservation of sites). At the same time, much recent Public Archaeology attempts to address the public’s needs – for example, archaeology for the needs of K-

12th grade education and or for specific descendant communities.

- Historical archaeology (which deals with the recent past, broader American History issues, and descendant communities) produces (proportionately) the majority of U.S. archaeology outreach resources.
- Many public outreach efforts are created as one-off's (non-enduring) efforts. A significant amount of public outreach is undertaken by avocationalists or non-archaeologists who contribute substantively but do not excavate their own sites and thus don't have data readily accessible to transform into a public resource.
- Public Archaeology now forms a sub-specialty of theoretical academic practice with Ph.D. dissertations and MA theses, several book series, an international peer reviewed journal, professional conference themes and symposia, special journal issues, and college/university courses and programs.
- There is an increase in hybrid professionals and an increase in collaborative practice as Public Archaeology matures.  
The application possibilities of new technologies are being actively explored and embraced.
- More and more often, public outreach is required or offered as a creative mitigation option in legislated environmental compliance.
- Assessment and evaluation are becoming more commonplace. At the same time, *agile methodologies* flourish in this realm of applied practice: Shifting requirements are welcomed as part of an evolving

and intensifying collaboration, whereby the adaptive development process itself forms the primary measure of progress.

**Archaeology for the public**

**<http://archaeology.saa.org>**