

Comments made by Carol McDavid (Wed, 23 Mar 2005) about an SAA PEC prepared Careers in Archaeology handout created for a CRM Expo held during the annual conference.

I wish I had seen this flyer earlier, in time to request some changes in time for it to be passed out at SAA. I am guessing that it's too late to make any changes now. However, if this document does go on the web site, I will also want to include another page to offer a different view of this particular career area.

First, though, let me compliment Susan's hard work on this flyer. It does describe, quite well, a number of public archaeology activities, and it is a great idea to pass something like this out at SAA. My problem with it is that it equates/conflates the terms "public archaeology" and "archaeology education". While I appreciate (very much!) the professional courtesy of being cited, what I was actually talking about in that part of the dissertation (which I realize you would have not read!) was exactly this point.

There are serious problems with the conflation of these two terms, which I've danced around in various postings to the PEC listserv, and have addressed more completely in various publications since the dissertation. Before I go into this please know that I say all this with great respect -- you worked hard on this and I value that work. I am also fully aware of the historical reasons why "public archaeology" is conceived of, by a great many people in this country, as "archaeology education" -- as I am familiar with the history of the PEC and its long struggle for full acceptance within SAA. I also know that my view is probably not mainstream in the PEC committee. But I am convinced that it IS mainstream in the larger world-wide public archaeology and heritage discourse. You may read this as my particular "rant"...but I promise you, it isn't.

I am an historical archaeologist with two specialties: African Diaspora Archaeology and Public Archaeology. I "do" both. I do NOT see what I do as being "archaeology education". My work does sometimes educate, and sometimes I work with educators to make sure that it does so effectively. And, yes, "archaeology educators" should include their work in the field of "public archaeology". But to say that ALL "public archaeologists" are in the career field of "archaeology education" is just wrong. Over the last decade the term "public archaeology" has expanded in meaning, and has now (I think) evolved into a more general term referring to:

- a.. any endeavor in which archaeologists interact with the public, and
- b.. any research (practical or theoretical) that examines or analyses the public dimensions of doing archaeology.

In my opinion, this larger definition allows us here in the US to connect more with the more European and worldwide way of defining "public archaeology" and "heritage" work. In addition, there are serious ethical and philosophical problems associated with conceiving of public archaeology as "just" "archaeology education".

First, public archaeology as "education" is all too frequently "top-down" and hierarchical. As in "let us - the experts - tell you about your past". And it's probably obvious that when dealing with any group, but especially with indigenous or minority groups, this is not a particularly useful way to approach it. For one thing, it tends to shut down real communication before it ever gets started. For another, it tends to offend people that we feel the need to "educate" them about who they are.

Second, limiting public archaeology to just "education" doesn't help us to understand or deal with how archaeology is sometimes used and abused, or to understand how archaeology can be used to create a better world (in the sense of public archaeology as social action). There have been several sessions on this at a number of conferences in recent years, and more are in the works for future conferences as well.

Third, the main idea of most archaeology education is to convince people that archaeological priorities - conservation, preservation, respect for the past, etc. - should be everyone's priorities. In fact, one could more accurately call it "indoctrination", not "education" (and I am not the only one who has made this point, in writing).

Related to this, ironically, most "archaeology education" is not aimed at meeting educators' goals at all. Patti Jeppson has been one of the leaders in promoting the idea that meeting EDUCATOR needs is essential if we are to ever hope of using our work to advance archaeology's stewardship goals. Her research and her sophisticated analyses of the cultural processes at work in this area is not "archaeology education" per se, but it is certainly good public archaeology. Sorry if this embarrasses you, Patti!

Finally, defining "public archaeology" as ONLY "archaeology education" is far too limiting and will continue to marginalize those of us who choose this career. If you question this, look no farther than at how our society marginalizes K-12 teachers, in terms of pay, status, you name it.

Here's a list of public archaeology interests lifted from the masthead of the journal *Public Archaeology* -- some of which are referred to in the flyer as being "archaeology education" when in fact they are more than that:

- a.. archaeological policies and legislation
- b.. Museums
- c.. Sociopolitics of archaeology - how to deal with contemporary groups - ethnic groups, class differences
- d.. the antiquities market, looting
- e.. the law, economics - writing legislation, for example.
- f.. cultural tourism
- g.. ethics
- h.. journalism
- i.. philosophy
- j.. new technologies (for example, one of my main public archaeology projects has been an Internet project)
- k.. and education...of course
- l.. And CRM...also of course

Public archaeologists are concerned with:

- a.. public perceptions of archaeology
 - b.. avocational archaeology and it's connection to both academic and commercial archaeology - there are many more groups like this in Britain, where avocational archaeology is a much more vital part of the discipline than it is here
 - c.. how pasts are created and used
 - d.. the technical and ethical problems of conserving archaeological remains
 - e.. archaeology and the media
 - f.. community involvement in archaeology
 - g.. treasure hunting and looting
- and
- h. the conflict between academic and popular views of the past -- such as the great stuff you and Jay produced for the web site on movies, Susan.

We deal actively with the:

- a.. political, social, and economic contexts in which archaeology is undertaken
- b.. the attitudes of disempowered and indigenous peoples towards archaeology
- c.. and the educational and public role of the discipline.

We also:

- a.. conduct qualitative and quantitative research - surveys, studies, histories, and even ethnographies
- b.. develop marketing and communication activities with diverse groups
- c.. develop outreach, management and communication strategies for international organizations like UNESCO and World Heritage, for anthropological archaeological groups such as the SAA, and for individual archaeology projects like the ones I'm involved with.

In short, public archaeology is an arena in which past and present merge, as information about the past is used by contemporary people for contemporary agendas and needs. It's much more than "archaeology education".

I plan to develop the above comments into a more formal "editorial" for the web site, if the flyer as it is now exists is to be included as well. Or, perhaps we can work together to create a new document. Either way, I hope you agree that presenting this alternate view is an acceptable thing to do...the Internet is especially well suited for this type of multivocality, after all. In the meantime I welcome your comments, and thank you for your patience in reading through this long message.

Regards,

Carol M