GreyNet Newsletter

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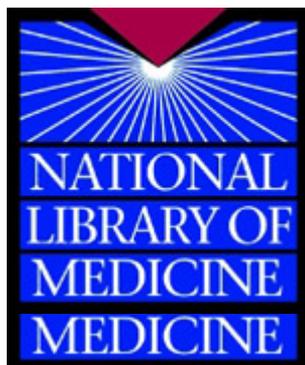- Recommended Hotels
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Twenty-six, full-text papers from the Fourth International Conference on Grey Literature are now available in the OpenSIGLE Repository. GreyNet purchased permission earlier this year from Emerald to make openly accessible the papers published in the GL Conference Proceedings, 1994-2000. Since its relaunch in 2003, GreyNet has sought to recover this earlier research in the field of grey literature and make it available to librarians, researchers, educators, students, and net-users alike. These earlier collections will be included in the OpenSIGLE Repository and will rely on the efforts of INIST as service provider and GreyNet as data provider. In 2008, GreyNet's conference based collections 2003-2007, were included in the OpenSIGLE Repository. By the close of this year, it is anticipated that all of the papers in the International Conference Series on Grey Literature will be fully accessible via the OpenSIGLE Repository. http://opensigle.inist.fr/handle/10068/697891

'Archaeology and Grey Literature'
TGJ Summer Issue 2009, Volume 5

Introduction by Deni J. Seymour, Guest Editor

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL GREY LITERATURE

Grey literature in archaeology is subject to special considerations and problems not shared by other professions in which the so-called grey literature is produced. Perhaps most distinguishing is the fact that archaeological investigations, such as excavations, tend to alter if not destroy the subjects of study. As Aitchison points out in this issue the resulting records of past human life are all that remain of the limited and non-renewable cultural resources and so their storage, preservation, indexing, and continued accessibility are paramount considerations as these records serve thereafter in lieu of the resource itself. These records take many forms, but the authors in this issue discuss mainly reports, field records, and databases.

In this issue effort has been made to bring together different perspectives from throughout the world to reflect some of the diversity of experience that at the same time illustrates a similar range of problems. Contributors include archaeologists from the United Kingdom (Aitchison, Hardman), France (Stock), Australia (McGowan), and the United States (Harlan, Seymour) allowing us to explore different problems faced and solutions attempted in these varied social contexts. This global perspective is reflected by the fact that some of these papers were presented as part of a 2008 World Archaeological Congress symposium in Dublin, Ireland on "Getting the Message Across - Communicating Archaeology: Black and White Issues about the Scientific and Technical the Grey Literature;" other papers from that symposium are under review at Archaeologies.

Throughout the world archaeological grey documents are produced by university-based researchers, state and federal land management agencies, and development-based investigators or private consultants. This latter group produces by far the most grey literature in many areas of the world including the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. While many issues surround the production, use, and preservation of grey literature, we have had to limit the selection to just a few. Each contributor was asked to focus on a topic of their choice that they felt needed to be addressed. We expect to learn important lessons from one another because countries are in different stages of development with regard to the sectors of archaeology that produce grey documents and the problem of curating and providing access to ever-growing volumes of grey materials. We do not all agree on what constitutes grey literature in archaeology. Some include unpublished dissertations and unpublished meeting presentations as white literature or 'less grey' forms of literature, while others see no difference between these unpublished documents and those more generally recognized as grey.

The relative youngness of the archaeological profession is reflected in the topics in this issue. Contributors focus on professional standards of practice (Aitchison, Harlan, Seymour), how to standardize databases when documents are produced by individuals with diverse training and objectives (Aitchison, Stock), how to maintain and preserve grey literature (McGowan), how to make grey documents more accessible by focusing on solutions to access and indexing problems (Hardman, Stock), and on exposing the culture within archaeology that tends to devalue the grey literature product (Harlan, Seymour). Questions that were once commonsensical are made more complex by the great volumes of material now being produced, the availability of the Internet, and the rapid rate at which technology and software change.

Another problem relates to the divide between academic and contract archaeologies and the way archaeology in each of these substrata is conducted and conceived. These differences often lead to what are viewed as breaches in scholarship that exacerbate the divide and sometimes marginalize grey literature and grey scholars. This happens in many areas of the world, including the United States, France, and the United Kingdom. In the United States, grey literature and those who produce these documents dominate the profession, representing well over 80 percent of practitioners and in excess of 90 percent of in-print material. The percentage is even higher in the United Kingdom; in Tasmania, the smallest state in Australia, the vast majority of archaeological product is grey and there are very few formal or white publications each year. In France such documents are at least as important in numbers as commercial articles and books. Yet, despite this disproportion, certain types of grey literature are generally ignored by the academy, citing any number of apparent issues, including accessibility and lack of peer review, as both Harlan and Seymour point out. In other parts of the world and in many other professions grey literature and the scholars who produce it are treated more respectfully than in the archaeological profession in the United States, and their product is sought and cited.

Also at the core of the problem in some countries is the fact that grey reports and data contain confidential information that cannot be made indiscriminately available. Not subject to the Freedom of Information Act in the United States, site location data and reports containing this type of information are kept sequestered in state and federal repositories, as they are in many counties, such as Australia and France. In other countries, such as the United Kingdom very few sites are protected in their own right through legal designation (exceptions principally include Scheduled Ancient Monuments, but also Protected Wrecks and designated military wrecks or aircraft crash sites), according to Aitchison (personal communication to the author, 2009) and these make up far less than 1 percent of their recorded sites. In comparison to the United States, fewer people own bulldozers and pots have a lower market value in the United Kingdom, Aitchison notes; instead looters are interested in precious metals, and in England, with landowner permission there is no legal reason for them to be stopped. The amount of privately owned land accounts for some of this difference in policy between countries, especially because public lands make up one-third of the United States land mass, with even higher percentages in the western United States and cultural resources are legally protected but vulnerable. Site ownership follows land ownership and protection measures depend upon ownership.

Dissemination and preservation are paramount for archaeologists but these objectives can be at odds when combined with the intentions of other sectors that give precedence to the aesthetic qualities and therefore economic value of ancient artifacts. For archaeologists preservation for the future is always the primary consideration. Because confidentiality must be maintained access to site location information for unexcavated sites is restricted to those authorized by training and licensing (permitted practitioners) so that information does not fall into the wrong hands resulting in cultural properties being looted. The conflict is that it is desirable to make the reports widely available while site location data is made available to a limited distribution list, and its long-term confidentiality, accuracy, and reliability must be maintained.

This issue of storing records in a useable state in perpetuity presents another difficulty. First, in perpetuity is continually and pragmatically reinterpreted as museums fill up, funding wanes, or as obsolete data bases and software become too expensive to update. In many areas of the world support for archaeological investigations and maintenance

of the records are, supported, in part, and often largely through public funding. As McGowan comments (personal communication to the author, 2009) with respect to Australia, "Although commercial interests fund much archaeological investigations, long-term maintenance of the records is rarely funded by developers – this is left to governmental agencies." Yet there and elsewhere the public does not necessarily see the benefits or product of the work undertaken in a direct way. Moreover, public attitudes about the relevancy of archaeological investigations and the preservation of cultural materials vary with economic and social circumstances, placing many records at risk over the long-term. Records lost are the ethical and practical equivalent of bulldozing a cultural property without investigation.

Funding issues tend to focus on field, analysis, and report production. While provisions are made for curation or the long-term preservation and use of records and reports, solutions acceptable in the past are no longer adequate. Previously, documents were so few that when placed in a museum or other repository a handful of people could manage their access and care. Now a burgeoning of records and reports requires creative forms of indexing and complex databases that require full-time and sizable staffs for input and maintenance. This is especially important now because of an increasing need for ready access, and a new demand by the grey community (mostly contract archaeologists but also including government archaeologists) to have their material recognized as scholarly, to be credited for their work, to have their efforts cited.

These complicating factors serve as a backdrop for several professional topics that are included in this journal issue relating to the archaeological grey literature. The subjects covered in this issue are by no means comprehensive or representative of the problems of the archaeological grey literature as a whole, but they provide the reader with a feel for the special problems encountered and solutions sought by the archaeological profession. ■

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This serial publication endeavors to keep information professionals abreast of developments in the field of grey literature. The bimonthly newsletter gives exposure to GreyNet's information resources and frontline activities with special emphasis on the International Conference Series on Grey Literature. The GreyNet Newsletter replaces the monthly GL Conference Memoranda (2003-2008) and is made possible through the support of GreyNet's Associate Members and Corporate Authors: The British Library (United Kingdom), INIST-CNRS (France), New York Academy of Medicine (United States), and University of Ljubljana (Slovenia).

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