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Introduction

One of the things that most archaeologists hate about archaeology is how misunderstood it is; we meet people all the time who have never met an archaeologist, or who did not realize that one can have a career as an archaeologist, or who think that archaeologists spend their time digging up dinosaurs. Almost as bad, we meet people who have heard of archaeology and perhaps even have met real archaeologists, but who have a misconceived notion of the discipline and its practitioners.

The myth of archaeology runs from the adventure of tomb raiding at the one extreme to the tedium of unending work in dusty archives at the other. The reality is, of course, far more complex. Thus, this book is an introduction not to what archaeology *is*, but to what archaeologists *do*, and, therefore, to what the archaeological community is like. To that end, this book is about the profession of archaeology, because modern archaeology is a vocation akin to law or medicine; the various chapters of the book discuss the different jobs open to budding archaeologists.

Although the main users of this book are likely to be prospective archaeologists – archaeology students, in particular – the intention is that this book will be of interest and use to anyone who has ever wondered what archaeologists actually do on a daily basis. Friends and family of current archaeologists might thus find this book of use; so too should anyone in industry, business, government, or the nonprofit sector who has contact with archaeologists, as well as colleagues in related disciplines

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and professions such as geography, geology, and history (who may identify some similarities in outlook and lifestyle). This is a potentially very large audience, which says something about how much archaeology has an impact on people's daily lives, whether they realize it or not.

Why Archaeology Matters – Archaeology in the Real World

In a book about the profession of archaeology, it is as well to address early on the significance of archaeology: why archaeology matters in the real world. At the time of this writing, the world is embroiled in crises, both human and natural – wars, social and economic disaster and disorder (especially the ongoing impacts of the global economic crash of 2007 onward), unexpected environmental disasters, and human-created incidents. It is thus a fair question to ask: Why does archaeology matter? Why should people spend their time studying archaeology, and why should society at large fund and support archaeology through various means? Should not this time and these resources be spent on something else, something potentially more "useful" to society? As the wonderfully named archaeologists Fritz and Plog (1970: 412) once wrote:

> We suspect that unless archaeologists find ways to make their research increasingly relevant to the modern world, the modern world will find itself increasingly capable of getting along without archaeologists.

True in 1970 and equally true now, the following sections highlight the major reasons that archaeology is relevant to society and why archaeology is a justifiable thing on which to spend scarce time and resources (see Sabloff 2008 for a more detailed explanation of this).

Studying, Exploring, Protecting, and Managing the Past for Present and Future Generations Is a Moral Obligation of Any Civilized Society

Taking its lead from the issue of "birthright," there is demonstrable evidence that humans have shown an interest in their past since the very origins of humanity itself – that such an interest is one of the self-defining features of humanity, a characteristic that makes us what we are. As a starting point, it is reasonable to suggest that a society with no respect for its past is no society at all. Imagine, not a world, but just a single country, without any heritage – no books or TV shows; no historic sites to visit; no imagination, thoughts, or cares about the past. This imaginary world is dystopian – close to that depicted by George Orwell in his novel *1984*. An appreciation of the past, of history – of *archaeology* – is integral to civilized society. Archaeology is part of the fabric of society – not a desirable extra, but a quintessential part. It is in the interests of archaeologists in particular, and the public in general, to better acknowledge this.

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Archaeology Tells Us about the Past, and the Past Tells Us about Both Our Present and Possible Future Worlds

If archaeology tells us about our ancestors and ourselves, it follows that it can also be used to help us shape the future in ways that we want, including trying to avoid the worst aspects of the past. As Sabloff (2008: 17) writes:

> Archaeology can play helpful roles in broad, critical issues facing the world today. Archaeological research not only can inform us in general about lessons to be learned from the successes and failures of past cultures and provide policy makers with useful contexts for future decision-making, but it really can make an immediate difference in the world today and directly affect the lives of people at this very moment.

There is, for example, a growing body of work on archaeological lessons of climate change – how human adaptation to past climate change can be used to inform modern decisions about responses to climate change in our and future worlds. This is the type of "critical issue" identified by Sabloff. Archaeology demonstrates, time and again, that humans are resourceful, inventive, and above all adaptive: as a species, we are good at dealing with change. Archaeology helps give both "broad brush" and "little picture" examples of how humans can adapt to climate change, from entire civilizations down to individuals – for example, how we can live in a more sustainable manner in more energy-efficient buildings. The problem is that archaeology is rather bad at highlighting this supremely practical use of its knowledge. The global community of archaeologists needs to work much harder at demonstrating this use to decision makers in government and industry alike.

Archaeology, of all the sociohistorical disciplines, is uniquely good at connecting with people, because it deals with things – with real, tangible objects. Telling a story with images and objects; learning through handling and especially doing things; having a physical connection with a place, culture, and past by exploring an ancient site are demonstrably some of the best ways to engage with both the past and the present. Such types of active learning are also among the best types of learning in terms of engagement and data retention, those types of learning most recommended by educational psychologists. Thus, if archaeology can contribute to planning for critical issues such as climate change, it can do so in ways that really connect with people. Climate change, in particular, is an issue that can seem insurmountable – a problem too big and complex for any community, let alone individual people, to deal with. However, one of the key lessons of archaeology – and one of its unique advantages – is the human scale: archaeology can be used to humanize responses to climate change; to take responses down to a personal, individual level; to show how we as individuals and small groups such as families can make changes in our own lives that matter collectively – things such as energy efficiency, recycling, and so on that were done in the past and need to be done more now and in the future.

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Archaeology Contributes More to Any Economy Than It Takes from Any Economy: Archaeology Is a Net Contributor to Many National Economies

This is the ultimate, market-led reality of archaeology, and in the brutal economic circumstances of the early twenty-first century it sometimes appears to be the only argument that holds much sway. Here is an indicative example of the purely economic value of broader heritage in contemporary society comes from the UK for the financial year 2009–10 (see Davies 2010 citing HLF 2010; Heritage Alliance 2010) (similar data exist for other countries as well – see Chapter 1):

- Tourism is the UK's fifth largest industry and its third largest export earner; specifically, heritage tourist spending (including that on attractions, food, and accommodations) directly generates £4.3 billion of GDP and employment for 113,000 people – making heritage tourism comparable to the film, motor vehicle manufacturing, and advertising industries.
- The wider impacts of heritage tourism on the UK economy (i.e., supply-chain impacts on goods and services) increase this heritage tourism contribution to £11.9 billion of GDP and 270,000 jobs (some estimates put this figure even higher, as much as £20.6 billion of GDP and 466,000 jobs [Heritage Alliance 2010]).
- More than 31 million paying visits a year are made to heritage attractions in England alone; 69 percent of the population of England (29 million people) visited an historic site in 2009–10 (figures for Scotland and Wales are not available).
- Historic sites are a key driver of international tourism in the UK: more inbound tourists plan to visit historic sites than to visit the theater, museums and galleries, or sporting events. Ten million holiday trips are made by overseas visitors to the UK each year – and four in ten of these visitors cite heritage as their primary motivation for visiting the UK.

Archaeology Is Fun – and Fun Is Too Important a Thing Not to Be Taken Seriously

Countless studies have demonstrated that a society that has adequate leisure time is healthier in both mind and body. Moreover, people want to be involved in the study and protection of the past. As an example, more than ten times as many people belong to heritage organizations than belong to political parties in the UK: in the summer of 2009, membership of the National Trust (a key voluntary sector heritage body in the UK) reached an all-time high of 3.8 million people. In total, some 66 percent of the historic environment of the UK is supported, managed, or owned privately or by civic heritage bodies, and there are more than 2,000 community archaeology groups with more than 200,000 members.

Archaeology matters for all these reasons. It is worth doing, and is worth studying. It is worth paying for, and worth protecting. It is worth fighting for when placed under threat.

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What Is This Book About?

This book provides a short guide to the profession of – careers in – archaeology in, primarily, the UK, US, and Australia. The following chapters outline, in as straightforward a fashion as possible, the entire archaeological career process in these nations – the various job options, the training that is required, and how one gets positions in the academic, commercial, and government worlds. Focused on archaeological employment (i.e., work connected directly to the understanding of past societies through the recovery and study of material culture), the book also includes discussion of careers in related heritage professions such as museums and conservation sciences – although it does not go into great detail about these, which are too specialized not to be the subject of an entirely different book. To this end, the book includes interviews with real archaeologists currently at work across the UK, US, and Australia, all young professionals who began their careers within approximately the past ten years.

Although the case studies in this book are focused on the UK, US, and Australia, these are not the only places where archaeologists live and work – these are merely the locations where the author has contacts and experience. As discussed in Chapter 1, there are archaeologists at work in almost every nation of the world – and more now probably at work in nations such as India and China than in most of the rest of the world combined. A second version of this book published in ten years' time will tell a very different story of the experiences of this growing global community of archaeologists, for the situation changes almost daily; so too would a version of this book written, for example, by a Chinese or Indian archaeologist at work today, or a book written by an Indigenous archaeologist living and working in the US or Australia.[1] The amazing work of archaeologists at work across the many different nations of Africa, to name but one continent, for example, is almost entirely unknown outside a small circle of professional archaeologists – and although the results of their fieldwork are well published, the experiences of undertaking this fieldwork are not (although see, for example, the many contributions in Philips' (2005) *Writing African History*, and the work of Walz (2009) for a frank example of fieldwork in Tanzania).

Closer to home, only two hours away by train from the office in London in which this book was written, a French archaeologist writing in a Paris-based office would tell a very different story, for the archaeological community and career structure of France is profoundly different from that of the UK. And even just within Europe, the communities and career structures vary considerably – the aforementioned hypothetical French archaeologist works in a very different cultural environment from that of potential research collaborators elsewhere in Europe, far more so than

[1] See Ucko, Ling, and Hubert (2007) for evidence of the former in various nations around the world, including in China, Nigeria, Korea, Mexico, Southern Africa and Thailand; Smith and Burke (2007, chapter 6) for a discussion of working with Indigenous Australians; Watkins (2000) for an example of the Indigenous archaeology of the US; and Nicholas (2010) and Smith and Wobst (2005) for examples of people being and becoming Indigenous archaeologists around the world.

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the differences in experience and career structure among archaeologists working in different parts of the US, UK, and Australia.

One of the sad facts of present life is that the professional community and general public alike grossly underappreciate the stories and experiences of these archaeologists' different lifestyles. There is shockingly little written about the lives of modern archaeologists anywhere in the world. This book focuses on the UK, US, and Australia partly because that is where the author has experience, but mainly because these are some of the only places where enough published literature exists for a consistent, verifiable story to be told. The author looked long and hard for published examples from other countries, and found virtually nothing – although a new series of books being produced in conjunction with the World Archaeological Congress, the Global Cultural Heritage Manual Series, is beginning to redress this balance (see Smith and Burke's (2007) first volume on Australia, with more to follow on other countries, and Nicholas' (2010) *Being and Becoming Indigenous Archaeologists*). As discussed elsewhere in this book, we do not even know how many archaeologists are currently at work around the world. Therefore, one of the wider aims of this book is to encourage more archaeologists out there to tell their stories – to write their own versions of this book.

A Note on Terminology

To make this book as readable as possible, it is structured into some broad over-arching chapters on the main sectors of archaeological employment (see Figure 1). These chapters' titles use the same terms for the different sectors discussed in the text. But archaeology is a complex international business, and not everyone uses the same terms, which can easily lead to confusion.

To try to keep things clear and simple, a glossary of archaeological terms is provided in Appendix 2, outlining official and unofficial terminology, concepts and meanings, legal terms, organizations, and acronyms. In addition, here is what is meant by the terms used throughout the rest of the book for the different sectors of archaeological employment:

- *Cultural resource management (CRM) archaeology*: archaeological employment undertaken as a consequence of various "polluter pays" laws and policies of different countries, legal requirements for archaeological work to be undertaken in advance of developments such as housing, industry, or transport development.
- *Academic archaeology*: archaeological employment undertaken within the setting of a university, college, or other place of higher education, and generally connected with teaching and research.
- *Local government archaeology*: archaeological employment undertaken within the setting of a state (in federal systems such as the US and Australia), county, borough, district, unitary, or other local authority settings, usually in relation to the provision of information to people and the enforcement of local heritage laws within a defined area.

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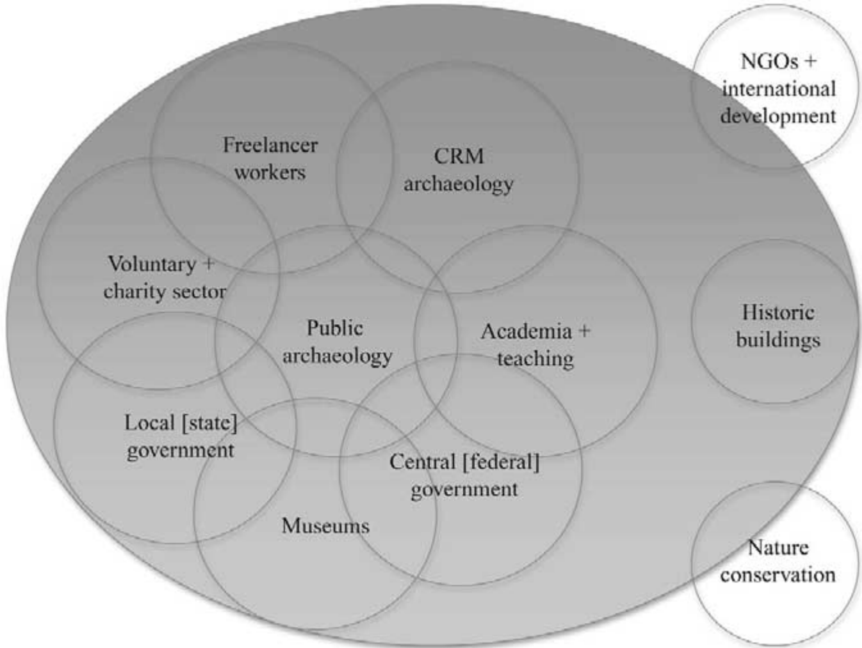

Figure 1. The structure and interrelationships of the archaeological job market and related disciplines.

- *Central government archaeology*: archaeological employment undertaken within the setting of regional or national government (the federal government level in those countries that have such systems), usually in relation to provision of information to people and the enforcement of national heritage laws.
- *Public and community archaeology*: archaeological employment undertaken within the setting of interaction with the general public. In truth, it is not a distinctive sector comparable with the preceding sectors, which all involve (or should involve) public and community archaeology. There are specialist skills relating to these practices, however, which is why these are considered separately in their own chapter of this book.

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Chapter 1

What Is – and Isn't – Archaeology?

What Is Archaeology?

Archaeology is usually defined along the lines of "the study of past cultures through the analysis of surviving material remains"; if a historian is someone who studies surviving *documents* to understand the past, so an archaeologist is someone who studies instead surviving *things* (the formal term is "material culture"). Digging deeper, this means that an archaeologist might study, at the large scale, an entire landscape to look at traces of, say, ancient agriculture, and, at the small scale, the microscopic remains of plant pollen from a particular site in that same landscape to understand the species of plants propagated by the people who once lived there. Along the way, the archaeologist of this imaginary landscape is likely to look at a mass of other evidence, too, down to the broken pots dumped in a disused well by way of the outline of the houses in an abandoned village. It is likely, too, that the imaginary archaeologist will find evidence of trade and exchange – perhaps some worked beads made of a stone that is foreign to the study area and in fact come from only a few specific locations hundreds of miles away, perhaps even from across the sea.

In this brief picture-portrait, a host of different aspects of archaeology as a discipline, and archaeologists as a community, are touched on. Archaeology studies tangible, material things that one can pick up, touch, and feel; it also studies, through these surviving things, far more ephemeral concepts about people and places, cultures and communities: the aforementioned beads were worked by someone who had some artistic scheme for them in mind; the designs the beads carried appeal

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enough for someone else to trade them, perhaps multiple times, over a long distance until they ended up in their final location. The archaeologists who found the beads then did so after a series of other processes that took them to that one site, in that one landscape. They may have planned to visit that specific site after a long period of research and planning – or they may have been led to the site as a consequence of development or industry in the area or even as a result of a chance discovery by a passerby. The archaeologists had to have the training to be able to identify the beads and to excavate them in a controlled fashion so the beads' exact location was recorded in relation to hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other materials found on site; they also had to have equipment and resources to get to the site in the landscape, along with permission from various government and even private authorities to be there in the first place. Having completed their fieldwork, the archaeologists then had to take the beads away and analyze their structure in a laboratory to realize that the beads came from far away; they also had to compare their data with those of other archaeologists to understand the significance of the find. Having realized the significance of the discovery – or equally, having realized that the find is mundane and insignificant, because identical beads have been found on many similar sites both near and far away – the archaeologists will have written up the results of their exploration and discovery and published these results in a book or journal, and probably online as well. They may also have presented their findings in a lecture or at a conference, or even on a TV show. The beads, meanwhile, will have remained in a laboratory to be conserved before being put on display, or stored in a museum or archive.

This picture-portrait gives a sense of the different components of an archaeologist's life: project planning and management in advance of any work; fieldwork, exploring and excavating an archaeological site; lab work, analyzing remains; and desk work, thinking about the meaning of a discovery before writing, lecturing, and other forms of public engagement. A formalized understanding of all these skills can then be gained from the UK's *National Occupational Standards for Archaeology* (TORC 2010), which gives some idea of the diverse array of skills put into play by a modern archaeologist. There can be no doubt that it is this mix of practical and theoretical, physical and intellectual activities that represents one of the strongest appeals of archaeology to its practitioners.

So much for the basic truth of archaeology and archaeologists; what of the myth? Depending on whom you ask, archaeology is either incredibly lucky or utterly damned by being an eternally stereotyped profession – adventurous, perhaps even glamorous, and above all popular, considering the viewing figures for archaeology-themed TV shows and book sales: millions of people around the world are interested in archaeology. The profession has endlessly debated the rights and wrongs of this public perception of archaeology. This subject has even been tackled in a formal way by the über-archaeologist of archaeologists, Cornelius Holtorf (2005, 2007a). Back in 1999, the US-based Society for American Archaeology was so concerned about this issue that it even commissioned a report exploring public perceptions and attitudes about archaeology (see Ramos and Duganne 2000). It is not the purpose of this book to debate the rights and wrongs of the mass representation of archaeology,

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except in passing, by contributing this particular description of the profession in the early twenty-first century. A few "pop" characteristics can usefully be noted, however, that are of significance to the understanding of what archaeology is and, thus, what archaeologists do.

Key within this is simply the fact that people *do* care about archaeology and, by default, about archaeologists – many people are interested in both the process and people. Secondary to this is the fact that this interest is overwhelmingly positive. Archaeology is a field that enjoys a special place of enduring, affectionate popular myth: we are the "good guys," at least in European-influenced society; the populations of many other countries around the world do not always feel the same way, however, when the history of European colonial oppression means that archaeologists are often viewed with suspicion at best, and open hostility at worst. Despite this, not too many other professions have such an unequivocally positive place in popular culture; for every good TV cop or lawyer there is a bad one, for instance. Even in comparable academic settings, archaeology has an enviable position – there are plenty of historians who would kill for the kind of media attention that archaeology seems to be able to command at its whim.

Archaeology, truth be told, is incredibly lucky to be seen as a distinct and even glamorous field – it is rare to meet people who are cynical about archaeology and archaeologists. To use a political analogy, this makes archaeology a tiny country that "punches above its weight" on the global stage and enjoys a special relationship with many other nations. This is not bad for a discipline that is barely more than a century old.

Furthermore, this is an incredibly small community. Globally, there are no total recorded figures for professional archaeologists because the sector is too small for government statisticians to track the industry (although specific albeit partial figures for some nations do exist, as discussed later), but a fair guess would be no more than 40,000 people globally employed in archaeology, with perhaps another 40,000 students of various types (to this should then be added, however, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of active volunteer archaeologists at work around the world, and many millions more passive consumers of archaeology through books, TV shows, and site visits). For example, the World Archaeological Congress (WAC; a nongovernmental, not-for-profit organization and the only representative worldwide body of practicing archaeologists) has a membership in the thousands, representing nearly every nation on earth. WAC's most recent meeting – the Sixth World Archaeological Congress, held in Ireland in 2008 – was attended by more than 1,800 archaeologists (professionals, volunteers, and students) from some seventy-five countries, with WAC supporting the attendance of around 230 participants from Indigenous groups and economically disadvantaged countries. Furthermore, the financial barriers to joining organizations such as WAC mean that there are many more professional archaeologists than there are members of such organizations, to a ratio of at least 2:1 or even 3 or 4:1 – so if WAC has, say, 500 members in any one country, it is a fair guess that there are at least twice as many

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