

Records in Archaeological Research: A Historical Case Study Examining the Mandates of Change in Archaeological Recordkeeping in the United States

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Abstract: My study is an historical examination of the influences that have played a role in shaping archaeological recordkeeping over the past 100 years. Utilizing data gathered from archival sources and interviews, my goal is to provide analysis of two of the primary influences that have shaped the recordkeeping practices in the U.S. over an extended period of time: technology and policy. There is evidence that both of these forces have been significant in shaping archaeological recordkeeping at various points in time over the last 100 years. It is through a better understanding of these phenomena that my research intends to address theoretical and pragmatic issues for archaeologists and records professionals in the cultural heritage domain. This discussion outlines my background research and provides an overview of the finding from my first phase of research. I explore how technology and policy have impacted the form of archeological records and provide an analysis of such change over time. Archaeological records provide the context for all material remains collected from archaeological sites. Along with artifacts, archaeological recordkeeping systems represent the sum of what can be known about many past events and extinct cultures. Therefore, my study: 1) Will provide a narrative chronology of archaeological recordkeeping; 2) Will describe in detail the external mandates that lead to evolutionary changes in practices for recording archaeological research; 3) Will help to provide a context for archaeologists and records professionals that are dealing with the current changes occurring in archaeological record keeping and records use.

About the author:

Brian Cumer is a PhD student in the LIS Program at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Information Sciences. His dissertation research examines how technology and policy have influenced archaeological recordkeeping in the U.S. Prior attending Pitt, Cumer worked as an archivist throughout the Pittsburgh helping non-profit organizations. He also has a professional background in archeology, and participated in field research in Pennsylvania, New York, Indiana, and Israel. Cumer received an M.A. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (Archaeology Concentration), where he first became interested in archives while working at the James L. Kelso Bible Lands Museum. His primary motivation for pursuing a PhD in Library and Information Science is closely tied to a personal passion for teaching. As a Teaching Fellow at Pitt, Cumer taught courses on archival preservation and archival appraisal, including a course he designed entitled *Archives and Cultural Heritage*, which he offered for the second time this summer. He is interested in combining his professional experiences in archaeology and museum studies with his current work in archival studies. Cumer considers it part of his mission as an educator to help equip future archivists to better deal with culture and the digital record.