

Archaeology: From Map to Museum

LD 6: American Cities of the 31st Century

Description: This Lab Deliverable consists of a series of group exercises intended to put you in the position of the archaeologist and his or her team attempting to interpret the archaeology and culture history of an alien civilization. In this instance, you are to work as teams to develop a strategy for excavating an American city or cities of the 31st Century...or, at the very least, a city abandoned and forgotten for one thousand years. You should assume that you know nothing of the civilization in question and each artifact recovered must be interpreted in terms of its absolutely alien origins.

Considerations: The following considerations about the nature of the sites that you have chosen should be taken into account. Use the attached [Materials Conservation Table](#) to record your data.

1. Any one or more of the following cities may serve as your point of departure for the archaeological investigation in question: Los Angeles, San Francisco, Salinas, Las Vegas, Denver, Detroit, St. Louis, Chicago or New York. Why did you choose the city that you chose?
2. You must assume that at the very minimum at least 1,000 years of decay, deterioration, weathering, vandalism, looting, and natural depositional processes have obscured or obliterated much of the city or cities under review. What would you anticipate finding in such a ruin?
3. Using the Internet or other resources you will be required to determine the rates of decomposition and preservation of varying types of materials that might constitute the contents of your chosen city. You may use an educated guess, or your knowledge of sites dating to at least 1,000 years, as your basis for the conservation projections in question. Of course, the climate and overall environment of your settlement will need to be described in order to more fully predict the survivability of those artifacts and materials under study. What is most likely, and least likely, to survive this scenario?
4. Your team will first need to take that time necessary to develop a strategy and research plan for sampling such a large archaeological zone. Because your time and resources are limited, your research design will need to be both cost effective and decisive in terms of the potential results and the significance or your interpretations. How will you know if you have succeeded?
5. The survey, excavation, or other sampling strategy undertaken by your group will need to be justified by your team and your methods and strategies for interpreting artifact types and the overall culture history of the settlement in question will need to be based on prevailing archaeological methods. What methods do you anticipate using in order to maximize information recovery?
6. In lieu of written records, how would you go about interpreting materials that would appear to constitute written records of your alien civilizations cultural history?
7. What assumptions and strategies would be required of you in order to interpret the function, social contexts, provenience, cultural relationships, ideology, status, and age of those artifacts and buildings recovered in your investigation?