Blogging the Field School: Teaching Digital Public Archaeology

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Summary

Over the past few decades, digital and public archaeology have grown in importance in archaeology. With the advent of social media, the importance of using digital tools for public engagement has increased. However, the basic training received by archaeology students has not provided adequate instruction in the use of these tools. The archaeological field school, the traditional means of training archaeology students, provides a perfect opportunity to begin to instruct students in this area. At Michigan State University, the Campus Archaeology Program developed a public blog written by field school students, and used this platform as a successful tool for teaching students about archaeological methods, public archaeology, and the use of digital tools for public engagement.The project also became an excellent way of assessing how well students understood and incorporated basic archaeological concepts.

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Features

- Key words: field school; digital; student; public; audience; engagement

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1. Introduction

The emergence of social media as a new way of sharing and gathering information has revolutionised the way that people, companies, and organisations communicate. Blogs are one of the earliest forms of this revolution, giving individuals with an Internet connection a platform to share their thoughts and experiences with others. For archaeologists, these media offer new opportunities to share information and communicate with stakeholders about our research, engage communities in the process of archaeological discovery, and disseminate our findings with colleagues. This leads to a more transparent, collaborative, and reflexive archaeological practice that can bring the public and archaeological communities closer together. In this way, the objectives of online engagement are no different from 'traditional', non-digital, forms of public archaeology. These digital tools, therefore, provide new, additional ways of engaging new communities with archaeological practice (McDavid and Brock 2015).

Before archaeologists can begin to take advantage of these new technologies, however, they must learn how to use the tools that are available to them. While almost anyone can set up a blog or Facebook account, learning how to use these tools as effective and strategic means of engaging the public is vital to ensure we reach our desired audiences and foster effective dialogue. This raises an important question: are we training future archaeologists in digital public archaeology?

For decades, archaeologists have used the model of the archaeological field school as to train students in archaeological data collection by working on an active research site. Through this model, academic archaeologists rely on students spending multiple weeks of their summer to gather their field data, while providing them with an often memorable and instructional experience learning archaeological field methods. In most cases, the pedagogical approach to these multi-week courses has remained the same: students participate in an actual research project, learning the basic skills of excavation, artefact identification, record keeping, and artefact processing. Assessment comes through professor observation on criteria such as teamwork, participation, and quizzes or exams on artefact identification, stratigraphy, and the understanding of basic field methods. Often absent are instruction in public archaeology or digital methods, two increasingly important and related components of archaeological practice in the 21st century. Recently, the Michigan State University (MSU) Campus Archaeology Program (CAP) used a publicly available blog as a teaching and assessment tool in a five-week, on-campus field school to instruct students in the use of digital tools for public engagement. Students also regularly served as on-site 'tour guides' for the public, ensuring that they learned and understood that multiple approaches are needed to engage the largest possible public.

2. The Campus Archaeology Program

The Campus Archaeology Program was officially developed in 2008 by Lynne Goldstein in response to the growing awareness of and need for archaeological mitigation across MSU's 5,000-acre campus. The program emerged from a 2005 MSU field school that was conducted as the Department of Anthropology's contribution to MSU's Sesquicentennial celebration. Goldstein, with the support of MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon, proposed excavating the first college dormitory as an on-campus field school. The dormitory housed students from 1855 to 1876, and there was a certain symmetry in having students today learn about students 150 years previously by excavating the first dormitory. The field school revealed foundations just below the ground surface and demonstrated the value of archaeology on MSU's campus to the public and

administration (Mustonen 2008; Lewis 2010; O'Gorman 2010). CAP focuses on research, education, and public engagement, and, with the lead of the faculty director (Goldstein), is operated by graduate and undergraduate students, with one graduate student named as Campus Archaeologist (Brock served in this role from 2008 to 2010). That individual has the primary responsibility of directing survey and excavations in areas destined for construction or modification. In 2010, CAP conducted its first archaeological field school at the historic centre of campus. For on-campus field schools supported by CAP, the focus is on specific questions or areas that will provide information and background on major campus developments. Field schools allow CAP to integrate the more intensive and extensive data resulting from the field schools with various and scattered mitigation and survey data. Overall, a more complete history of campus development is the result.

In creating CAP, one major idea was that the program would carry on the U.S. Land Grant tradition of learning by doing, using the entire campus as a laboratory. Land Grant Colleges were the result of the 1862 Morrill Land Grant Act, which established funding for higher education in agricultural sciences. Each state developed one Land Grant school, which offered more practical, skills-based curricula, and focused on using real-life, hands-on educational activities. This idea was a significant cornerstone of the original college, but had been lost to an extent due to some administrators and planners who worried that place-based learning activities (such as archaeology) would disturb the beautiful landscape and plantings, yielding relatively little in return. The 2005 field school and some archaeological work conducted in 2006 and 2007 demonstrated that across the campus there was a lot that could be learned from archaeology, and the landscape did not suffer (although we did negotiate a series of procedures that ensured that no harm would come to the trees).

With Goldstein as Faculty Director, and Terry Brock as the first Campus Archaeologist, CAP developed as a unique archaeological program. The University came to CAP when any land was about to be disturbed, from construction of a new building, remodelling an old building, excavating trenches for new fibre optic lines, replacing sidewalks, or putting in new trees or bushes. A number of other campuses in the United States have campus archaeology programs, but they tend to be focused on work associated with Federal or

State legal compliance or excavations at a particular historic location. Because of the nature of CAP and the Land Grant tradition, we had great freedom in designing and developing the program, since the University had no set requirements other than acting as good stewards of its past. The funding was assured, and the MSU Graduate School has regularly provided additional funds in the form of fellowship monies to allow graduate students to try new projects. CAP has worked to maintain the spirit of experimentation to allow students to question what they are doing and to develop new ways of teaching and communicating with our diverse stakeholders. CAP is also open to new field techniques and other opportunities that can potentially enhance what we do and what we can learn. Failure becomes a learning experience and is seen as positively as possible.

Using digital media as a tool for public engagement is one example of this experimentation. In 2009, Brock began using social media as a primary means of engaging the public on his CAP excavation projects, and Campus Archaeology became an early adopter in the use of Twitter, Facebook, and blogging for public archaeology (Brock 2009). Social media was integral to this process because it allowed CAP to act as a large entity despite its small size, and it also ensured that the results from a vast majority of the mitigation projects, which were located on construction sites or only lasted a few days, were available publicly. Social media provided two-way interaction with a widespread public, and also meant that CAP could engage with their primary stakeholders, such as MSU alumni, who lived around the world (Brock and Goldstein 2010; Nohe and Brock 2011). Since 2009, CAP has regularly used Twitter, Facebook, and a blog to communicate with the public, and has recently partnered with MSU's Cultural Heritage Informatics Initiative to develop a mobile app called MSU.seum.

Teaching students how to participate in digital public engagement, therefore, became an additional experiment carried out during the 2010 summer field school. Co-directed by Brock and Goldstein, the blogging project was designed as a means to engage the online public that already followed CAP, while also teaching students about how to use a blog to communicate with the public. The aim was to address the lack of training students receive in digital technologies and prepare future archaeologists to have a better

understanding of digital public archaeology through its real-world application.

3. The Field School, Experiential Education and Learner-Centred Teaching

The blogging project was influenced by a number of practices in teaching, including experiential learning, learner-centred teaching, and the use of technology in the classroom. In many cases, these trends fit within the framework of MSU's heritage as a Land Grant institution. Since its founding, MSU has used parts of the campus to conduct agricultural research, and has incorporated students into that process. This tradition is now discussed as 'experiential' or 'active' learning, where students learn through doing, not simply by listening to lectures and memorising content (Weimer 2002). As noted above, CAP follows in this long Land Grant tradition of using the campus as a laboratory.

CAP has applied this experiential framework through its entire program: aside from the director of the program, all the other positions, ranging from the Campus Archaeologist to researchers to field technicians, are filled by graduate or undergraduate students. Excavations, public programs, and publications are designed, researched, excavated, analysed and written by students. The Faculty Director oversees all projects, conducts weekly meetings, and has editing and veto authority, but students are given broad freedom in conducting their work. Additionally, this research takes place entirely on the campus, meaning that students are using the campus as a laboratory for conducting archaeological research. The program also regularly collaborates and integrates with other sections of the University that do research on campus, such as the Beal Botanical Gardens, University Archives, Library, and the MSU Museum.

The archaeological field school is another example of experiential learning. An archaeological tradition for decades, the field school is a multi-week opportunity for students to participate on an archaeological excavation typically directed by a faculty member or a director at a research institution. In most cases, these students have no fieldwork experience. The field school serves as their introduction to archaeological methods, while they participate in actual archaeological research. Conducting an

archaeological field school through CAP, therefore, fits within the pedagogical approach of the program, University, and the discipline.

Making the blogging project experiential was critical to the project's success and the program's mission. Because the field school serves as the training ground for archaeological methods, and because public and digital archaeology are increasingly relevant components of archaeological practice, it was important that the public and digital archaeology skills the students learn follow the same pedagogical framework. This was achieved by making the blog publicly available, so that the posts written by students would be read by actual stakeholders. This placed students in the real-world context of discussing archaeology with an actual digital public, not simply with their professors and classmates.

The design of the project was also influenced by constructivist approaches toward pedagogy. This line of thinking emphasises a student-centred approach, where learners are 'actively constructing their own knowledge rather than passively receiving information transmitted to them from teachers and textbooks' (Stage *et al*. 1998, 35). While field school students do not select the archaeological site they excavate, the blogging project was designed to give them an opportunity to participate in interpretation, and to reflect on their own field school experience. By giving students the choice over their blog topics, they were able to apply archaeological methods and the results of their excavations to their own understanding of their experience. Such an approach should result in a fuller understanding of why archaeological methods are conducted in specific ways, resulting in 'deep' learning. Instead of limiting the understanding of archaeological methods to 'surface' learning, where they leave field school with only the knowledge about how to excavate, the blogging project gave an opportunity for students to develop a deeper understanding of why those methods were important and how they helped to interpret the archaeological record.

The emergence of technological pedagogical approaches also influenced the design of this project. Teaching students about the use of digital technology is an increasingly important component of teaching digital citizens. While students come to college having

used technology, few understand how to gather information critically on the web or how to disseminate that information in a critical and meaningful way. This project sought to provide a specific example of how digital social technology can be used to disseminate information about archaeological methods, while also teaching students about the use of new digital tools that can be applied to other fields and careers.

Technology also provided an opportunity to address our learning objectives in a new and interesting way. As will be discussed further, using a blog provided a new and different medium to instruct students about public archaeology, and emphasised and broadened their understanding of the archaeological methods they were learning in the field. Throughout the season, the use of the blog not only heightened our program's ability to teach about public and digital archaeology, but it also provided an effective and valuable tool for assessing the student's comprehension of archaeological techniques being taught on the ground. Using a blog was the only way to emphasise these two issues in a creative, experiential way.

4. Identifying Objectives and Learning Outcomes

A valid criticism of any social media use, whether for marketing or for engaging with the public, is its adoption without specific objectives in mind. The same mindset should apply to teaching with technology: the technology selected should respond to a specific objective, as opposed to the tool being used for the sake of using the tool. We chose a blog because it was a tool we already successfully used at CAP for digital public archaeology, we had an established audience, and knew that blogging would allow us to meet a number of learning objectives for our students. We believed blogging would assist students in their overall comprehension of archaeological methods and their applications, improve their confidence in writing for public consumption, provide instruction in public archaeology, and improve their digital literacy and understanding of social media as a tool for public engagement. An overall goal was to teach students about how to communicate online about archaeological methods, and to become digital heritage advocates.

It is worth noting that the blog in this project was designed as a pedagogical tool first, and a public outreach tool second. The blog was open and we encouraged members of the public to visit, but we also maintained our regular CAP blog separately throughout the field school. In many ways, the field school blog served as an 'open classroom' where members of the public were invited to participate in the co-education of students in public archaeology.

4.1 Improving comprehension and assessment

It is our belief that the act of writing about a skill or concept aids a student in retaining and understanding that skill. This is redoubled when a student is encouraged to explain or teach that skill or concept to another person. Additionally, writing blog posts also allows students to take the methods learned in the field and develop interpretations of what they are discovering, a process that reinforces the value of field methods by demonstrating their utility through interpretation. Therefore, we expected that students writing about archaeology for the public would increase their own understanding of the archaeological methods and concepts they were learning during the field school.

The blog also provides opportunities for instructors to reinforce the concepts being learned in the field through the process of the blog post being written. From conception through publishing, the instructor works with the student to ensure that the content generated reflects what is being taught. This collaborative approach provides an important opportunity for instructors to assess the student's comprehension of the concepts covered in the class, and to address any misunderstandings by the student. This one-on-one collaboration further improves comprehension.

4.2 Public archaeology

Adopting the blog as part of the field school places an immediate primacy on the importance of public archaeology. Students are encouraged daily to think about possible blog posts, and they are coached in how to turn that topic into something consumable by the public. This was done through informal discussions about the topic in the field, and then in more formal conversations with students after they had completed a first

draft. The writing process, which includes as many drafts as necessary until the product is ready to post, is another opportunity for the student to refine their writing for a public audience and to learn how to communicate and explain the concepts they are learning.

4.3 Digital literacy

At a minimum, this project encourages students to engage with a blog in a critical and intimate way. Students leave the project with a basic understanding of how to use one blogging platform, a transitional skill that can be applied to many careers and fields. Additionally, students should be able to recognise the potential uses of a blog for public engagement with scientific knowledge

4.4 Building digital heritage advocates

This approach to blogging and learning not only educates students for a potential future in public archaeology, but teaches them how to be better and more effective stewards of cultural heritage in a digital age. A primary objective of most field schools and archaeology courses is to give students the knowledge and the tools to make more informed decisions as citizens about the value of the past. By improving their digital literacy, this project also readies them for the new frontier of archaeological mis-information: the Internet. Separating the signal from the noise on the Internet is daunting, but by educating more individuals about the tools available to them, and providing them with the proper education about the value of cultural heritage and our shared past, this project helps contribute to a better, more valuable online discourse. It was our hope that the project would instil this understanding in our students.

5. Course Structure

The field school took place over five weeks, beginning with shovel test survey during the first week, and moving towards block excavation for the final four weeks. The project was co-directed by the authors, and was additionally supervised by three graduate student teaching assistants, each designated to work with a group of four to six

students.

The blog was built using a Wordpress.org installation on the MSU Campus Archaeology website. The site served as a course website, with the class syllabus and course readings also available for the students. Aside from the reading selections being locked behind a password, the website was entirely visible and shared widely with the public through CAP's already established social media accounts. With this in mind, a section of the website specifically addressed the public, noting that this portion of the website should be understood to be a 'digital classroom' for our students in which the public was invited to participate, but readers needed to be mindful that this was a space for learning. While no problems were encountered during the field school with spam or inappropriate comments, this did set some ground rules for those who chose to participate and communicate with the students. This emphasizes the point discussed previously, that the field school blog was an 'open classroom' in which the public was invited to participate in the education of students. Members of the public, therefore, participated more as co-instructors, serving as a collaborator in the education of students, than as members of the public learning about archaeology (although we hoped they would learn from the posts, as well). This approach was further emphasized by an email sent by the course instructors to a segment of our regular followers and colleagues, asking them to read and comment on the posts regularly.

Each student was required to write three blog posts over the course of the five weeks. The first was done as an instructional exercise during the first day lectures. This exercise included a brief lecture on the use of social media for public engagement, and then students went through a guided process to publish an introductory blog post. At a campus computer laboratory, students logged in to their blog accounts and drafted an introductory blog post highlighting who they were, why they took the field school, and what they hoped to learn. A photo of each student was taken at the beginning of the class, so they could learn how to import photos into the post. This exercise not only provided instruction in the use of the blog, but it also gave students a chance to reflect on their upcoming experience, and allowed the field school instructors, TAs, and the public an opportunity to get to know the students.

It is worth noting that the materials used to teach the students about blog writing were largely this single lecture, and one-on-one interaction with the course instructors. In 2010, when this class was designed, few archaeologists had been using social media as a tool for digital engagement—CAP was an early adopter in the use of Twitter and Facebook for live updating, for example. The instructions provided, therefore, were based primarily on the social media experience of Brock, and the public archaeology experience of Goldstein. In 2011, a similar approach and strategy was used, although we incorporated some of the lessons learned in 2010.

Each additional week, half of the class was assigned to draft and publish a blog post. This resulted in each student writing two additional posts. Staggering the due dates for posts over the course of the field school ensured that blog content was distributed over the five-week experience, making them easier to grade and also easier to consume by the public. It also ensured that blog posts were written about the entire process of the field school, not just about the final weeks. Students were expected to use their personal time to complete their posts, although the occasional rain day could also be used to write.

Students chose the blog post topic. This provided students with agency in the process, and also resulted in a wide variety of topics, ranging from posts about methodology, types of artefacts, possible interpretations, and more abstract posts about teamwork or working with the public. Despite being given the opportunity to choose their own topics, the decision about what to write was often difficult for students. Each day, students were encouraged by the staff not only to consider the work they did and objects they discovered in the context of the site, but also as something they could possibly share with the public. When students were excited about a discovery, the staff channelled that excitement towards a possible blog topic, giving the student an opportunity to delve deeper into their discovery.

Students also took part in the daily, in-person public archaeology that happened at the site. Each day, tour guides were selected from the students to show visitors around the site. These guides started the day by giving the site directors a tour of the excavations,

and were coached in their approach, asked questions, and learned about the site. Engaging with on-site visitors was an opportunity for students to learn about more 'traditional' public archaeology, but also to help them understand the types of questions that members of the public typically ask, and to practice explaining concepts to them. Coaching students in the field on interacting with the public helped inform their efforts online.

While students were given the freedom to choose topics and write the posts, their topics and posts still had to be approved by an instructor before they were made public. This ensured that the content presented to the public included accurate information. It also gave the instructors a chance to assess the student's understanding of the concepts and teach the student about writing for a public audience. In some cases, this process delayed the publication of the post beyond the arbitrarily established due date, but ensured that the student produced a quality product.

6. Blog Posts in Context

The major component of this project was the use of a blog as a tool for teaching students about archaeology and public engagement, while also educating the public about archaeology and the site being excavated. Some of the posts written by students highlight the ways in which this innovative combination allowed the students to examine and reflect on their experience in ways that would not have traditionally been a part of the class.

In his post 'The Problem with the Past', one student attempted to identify a unique artefact that was found during excavations. Typically, this type of analysis would have waited until after the excavations, but he decided to use the artefact as one of his blog post entries. The post itself describes the amount of work he put into finding out what the artefact was, only to come up empty handed: 'After downloading a program from a government website (harder than it sounds) and going through 438 different patents (twice), I return empty-handed. Two and a half weeks ago, I set out to discover the true heritage of the knob which reads June 11, 1889 and am no closer than when I started'

(Vaughn 2010). While he is visibly frustrated, he takes it as an opportunity to teach the public about the 'fickleness of the past', and discovered that, for himself, this exercise 'reignites his interest in the field' (Vaughn 2010). This post demonstrates the ability of this project to take the instruction of a field school into multiple levels of understanding and learning: this student goes beyond the field to do extra research about an object he found. He also demonstrates his understanding of public archaeology by recognising the difficulty of this research as something important for the public to understand. Lastly, he gives the public a 'behind the scenes' look at the research process, not just at the results of that research.

In their post 'No Artifacts? No Problem', a group of students discussed their distress with a unit in which they found very few artefacts. However, using archaeological concepts, they explained how their excavation unit still contributed to understanding the past, by exploring the archaeological concepts of stratigraphy and context. These are important concepts that hit a number of our objectives: first, it demonstrates the students' understanding of archaeology as more than just 'things', second, it identifies the students' knowledge of archaeological concepts, and third, they effectively explain these concepts to the public (Wancour and Levine 2010).

Some posts dealt with the issue of how we draw conclusions in archaeology. One student examined how conclusions are drawn through creating hypotheses, gathering evidence, and connecting the dots: an advanced understanding of the social sciences that is even more difficult to explain to the public. Nonetheless, the student was able to articulate these difficult concepts, demonstrating their understanding of archaeological research design, a topic rarely examined by students during archaeological field school (Raether 2010).

Another post highlights 'imagination' as a critical tool: 'we have to place ourselves in the past, see how the land was, see the people's thoughts, and see the material they used. This is why imagination is just as important in an archaeologist's toolkit as a trowel. Our imagination helps us draw conclusions, helps decide our next steps, and help bridge the path between past and present' (Holt 2010). The understanding that archaeologists

must use their imagination to place themselves in the past is a critical part of archaeological investigation, one that archaeologists often employ to understand and evaluate the past in a critical manner. Although we typically do not use the word 'imagination', the student used it as a way to make a complex concept accessible to himself and to the public.

One particular post covers an integral part of being on a field school. Entitled 'Team Work', this student stressed a component of the archaeological field school that is not explicitly discussed as an archaeological concept or method, but is nonetheless integral to a successful project. This student used the blog as a means of identifying a transferrable skill that he will be able to use in any field or career (Jones 2010). While this was not a specific objective of the project, providing a blog as a medium for students to reflect on their experience allowed this student to think abstractly about his time in the field, and to share his observations. While this may not have been what a member of the public would have expected when reading an archaeology blog, it provides them with a fuller, well-rounded view of the archaeological process as one that requires a large team to accomplish. Without a reflective venue such as the blog, students would not have the opportunity to draw these connections, and the public would not have a chance to understand them.

7. Post-Field School Assessment

The blog posts themselves demonstrate the effectiveness of the blog project in students' ability to advance their understanding of archaeological concepts and communicate with the public. A survey distributed to students after the course was completed provided additional information about the effectiveness of the project in meeting our learning goals. The questions on the survey addressed the four objectives of this portion of the course: 1) the ability of the blog to improve their understanding of archaeological concepts, 2) learn about public archaeology, 3) build digital literacy, and 4) connect digital tools with cultural heritage. The survey used Survey Monkey, and nine students from the 2010 field school responded to the questionnaire.

All of our respondents indicated that the blog enhanced their understanding of archaeological field methods. Five students said the blog helped them 'somewhat', one 'a lot', and three 'significantly'. Those who identified it as a positive experience articulated the value of the blog as a means of advancing their understanding of not only what they were doing, but why they did it and how it aided in interpretation:

> 'I think [blogging] was extremely important to making us get a full understanding of what we were doing. We took very detailed [field]notes about what we saw, but not necessarily about what it meant. The blogs made us put on our thinking caps and come up with possible theories of what everything meant and how the puzzle could be put together.'

Another student notes that, while he saw the importance of the blog to public archaeology, it 'gave us a chance to critically think about the research and what it affected'. The blog therefore helped students elevate their level of comprehension. Not only did it improve their understanding of the skills they learned in the field, but it helped them consider how those skills are applied to research. In fact, as the latter student implies, the blog gave students 'a chance' they otherwise may not have had to think critically about their excavations. This suggests that while most field schools teach the physical excavation skills, educators are missing important opportunities for students to critically engage with the results of their excavations. Blogging aids in this process, by encouraging students to think critically about what they are learning, instead of going through the motions of excavation. While students also do laboratory work, they rarely get a chance to follow the research to report writing. The blog provides a way to write about what they are doing, thinking, learning, and interpreting as the field school progresses.

The project also received high marks regarding its ability to teach students about public archaeology. Five out of nine said blogging increased their understanding of public archaeology 'significantly', while the remaining four said, 'a lot'. Seven out of nine students stated that they felt 'confident' communicating with the public about archaeology, and six out of nine said they were 'confident' writing about archaeology. Their comments indicate that blogging played a role in their understanding of public archaeology, writing, and communication. As one student notes, she gained 'more

confidence when communicating to the public by sharing my personal thoughts'. Another student noted that after writing the first blog, 'I learned how to address the public in a way that they can understand what we were doing without belittling them by dumbing down the material'.

Teaching digital literacy received mixed results from students. Regarding improved skills and confidence with how to use tools such as Wordpress, all students responded as somewhat confident or confident. When asked if blogging increased their understanding of 'writing in a digital world', two said 'somewhat', two said, 'a lot', and five said, 'significantly'. It seems that students did not grasp the application of blogging beyond its use as a tool for conducting public archaeology, however:

> 'This has definitely taught me the benefits of blogging in the field of archaeology. I can't say for sure if I'll be in a situation like a field school or dig again but if I am I will definitely use blogging as a means to increase public interest for dig sites.'

This student clearly recognises the potential for blogging and public archaeology, but does not grasp blogging's utility for other areas. Others felt the same way, noting that 'if I continue in archaeology like I plan to, I would strongly support using more blogging to keep the public in touch … [otherwise] blogging would probably just result in one more time consuming computer habit that takes time that I could spend on career advancement'. This student, instead of seeing these new skills as transferable, and as a positive application to a career outside of archaeology, and even as a tool for career advancement, actually views it as a hindrance to her career aspirations. Some students did recognise the value of the medium, however, with one student noting that he would 'incorporate the online world into marketing myself and telling people about my interests and passions', while another noted that 'any improvement in your communication abilities' can help you 'further any life goal'.

Identifying future digital advocates for cultural and archaeological heritage is a more difficult goal to examine. The survey questions did not explicitly ask about this concept, and our interpretation instead relies on the broader picture of students' ability to build knowledge, understand public archaeology, and their improved digital literacy. Clearly,

students grasped the understanding that blogging could be used as an important tool for understanding, explaining, and teaching about archaeology. While not all students grasped the transferable nature of digital skills, their emphasis on blogging as a means of disseminating information about archaeology to the public is encouraging. This, in addition to their increased knowledge about archaeology as a discipline, and their increased confidence in using digital tools, suggest that blogging during a field school may have the potential to create online advocates for cultural heritage.

This post-project assessment did not include questions for the public about their level of interaction with the blog or its effectiveness in teaching about archaeology. This is an oversight that, in future efforts, should be included in the project. However, this does not take away from the effectiveness of the project as a tool for teaching students about archaeological methods, digital archaeology, or public archaeology. In many ways, knowing or thinking that the public is out there still requires one to ensure that the product is accessible and conveys useful content. And, while educating the public is a fundamental objective of CAP's program, this project's primary goal was to educate students about digital and public archaeology. In many ways, the public played a role as a community partner in this educational task, and the public's education for this portion of the CAP blog became more - a secondary educational goal.

8. Conclusion

The CAP blogging project set out to achieve a number of goals. First, it addressed the need for students of archaeology to learn about public archaeology, particularly its application through digital tools, through experiential education. Second, it sought to improve students' learning about archaeological methods by encouraging them to teach the content to others, and to actively participate in choosing their own topics and interpreting the data they excavated. Third, by using an online blog, it addressed the need for students to gain digital literacy in an increasingly digital world. And fourth, it addressed a broader goal of building citizens who could advocate for and discuss cultural heritage and archaeology online.

Determining success can be measured in a number of ways. Based on survey results, it is clear that students responded positively to the first and second goals. They clearly understood the importance of public archaeology, and understood fully the value of using digital tools as one way to engage the public. Additionally, students responded well to the freedom afforded by the learner-centred approach: as one student noted, the blog provided 'a chance' to participate in interpretation and discuss their own experiences, an opportunity that is not often available in a class or field for students. While students did note that their understanding of how to use digital tools increased, as did their confidence in communicating online about archaeology, they did not see beyond the discipline as a means of applying their new digital skillset. This leaves room for improvement in teaching digital literacy and making these skills transferable for students who do not continue in archaeology. The most lofty goal, of creating digital advocates for archaeology, appears to be an attainable one. Students noted their confidence in being able to speak to the public about archaeology, and to do so online. Future field schools that use the blogging project should build on this potential, being more explicit during the week about the application of this process, and the importance of the digital sphere as a way not only to inform the public about cultural heritage, but to use that platform as a way of creating meaningful change.

Post-project assessment should also be more direct in measuring the effectiveness of teaching digital advocacy. The potential for longitudinal study of this group of students also exists, to determine if this project has had any effect on their careers or interests. Assessment should also include addressing the outcomes of this project for the public, inquiring about the effectiveness of the blogging project on their learning and comprehension about archaeology at Michigan State.

The future of the blogging project at CAP continues to grow. The project continued during the 2011 field school, and in 2012 Goldstein and Brock were recognised for the success and innovation of this 'combination blogging and field school project' in the AT&T Faculty-Staff Award Competition in Instructional Technology where they were awarded second place in the Blended Course category. Due to this success, and the positive response from students, this project will continue in the upcoming 2015 field school.

While a simple project conceptually, the blogging project provides a unique opportunity for archaeologists to build on and adapt the archaeological field school to address new and needed skillsets in archaeology. The reality is that we are only in the infancy of the digital age: for archaeology to continue to exist as a relevant, meaningful, and influential discipline that works with and for the public, it must learn to take advantage of the digital world. This can only be done by teaching archaeologists how to use digital tools for public engagement, and to equip the vast majority of students who do not become archaeologists to become digital advocates for our discipline. Without these voices taking part in the online conversation about archaeology and the importance of cultural heritage, it will be increasingly difficult for us to cut through the digital noise and create meaningful change in a digital world. While this blogging project is a small step, it provides an initial foray toward building this foundation.

PEER COMMENT

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