

# Archaeology as Service

## Introduction

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### ABSTRACT

This article provides an introduction to the theme issue “Archaeology as Service.” We explore how performing service in archaeology articulates with the concepts and practices of community-based archaeology, collaborative archaeology, and the Archaeologies of the Heart projects and their larger purposes of approaching work through a lens of social and environmental justice. We introduce seven articles that describe working in communities around the world, including the Bininj of the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation in the Northwest Territory of Australia; the Bunun of the Lakulaku River Basin in Taiwan; the Passamaquoddy Nation in Maine (USA); people from 21 First Nations in the province of Ontario, Canada; the diverse communities of Oklahoma (USA); the African American community in Bolivar, Texas (USA); and the people of San Cristóbal Island in the Galápagos Islands, Ecuador. The articles are tied together by the common theme of collaborative work that is built through relationships of trust and is conducted in ways that strive to change the institutional and educational structures in which archaeology is practiced.

**Keywords:** collaborative archaeology, community-based archaeology, social justice, environmental justice, service

Este artículo presenta una introducción al tema Arqueología del servicio. Exploramos cómo el servicio en arqueología se articula con los conceptos y prácticas de la arqueología basada en la comunidad, la arqueología colaborativa y los proyectos de Arqueologías del Corazón y sus propósitos más amplios de enfocar el trabajo a través de un prisma de justicia social y medioambiental. Se presentan siete artículos que describen el trabajo en comunidades con: los Bininj de la Corporación Aborigen Gundjeihmi en el Territorio del Noroeste de Australia; los Bunun de la cuenca del río Lakulaku en Taiwán; la Nación Passamaquoddy en Maine, Estados Unidos; los habitantes de 21 Primeras Naciones de la provincia de Ontario, Canadá; las diversas comunidades de Oklahoma, Estados Unidos; la comunidad afroamericana de Bolívar, Texas, Estados Unidos; y los habitantes de la Isla San Cristóbal en las Islas Galápagos de Ecuador. Los artículos están vinculados por el tema común del trabajo colaborativo que se construye a través de relaciones de confianza y se lleva a cabo de manera que se esfuerza por cambiar las estructuras institucionales y educativas en las que se practica la arqueología.

**Palabras clave:** arqueología colaborativa, arqueología comunitaria, justicia social, justicia ambiental, servicio

Service is an active, and humbling, form of care when done by choice. As a journal of practice, it is the mission of *Advances in Archaeological Practice* to examine archaeology and the social and political context of our work. In this issue, we propose that archaeology conducted in ways that serve is both pragmatic and filled with possibility. It can create meaningful connections between people—past and present—can improve well-being in the discipline, and, we hope, can facilitate healing, restoration, and reconstruction for communities in need (d’Alpoim Guedes et al. 2021; Schaepe et al. 2017). This issue of *Advances in Archaeological Practice* is one exploration of how archaeologists disassemble the idea that our efforts should focus solely on the study of the past. The articles that follow offer examples of how methods, practices, and disciplinary training can serve present and

future needs. By situating this work within an understanding of funding, institutions and alliances, and policymaking, the authors provide a sense of the durability of their transformative endeavors. The project put forward here was created through the experience and guidance of our editors and editorial board. This issue provided the opportunity to work with many authors who are new to this journal and who are working with communities not previously recognized in its pages. We are grateful for their insights and their participation.

In our call for articles, we tried to be open to a variety of definitions of “service” because we were curious how archaeologists sought to fulfill such needs, and how archaeologists defined whom, what, and why we can serve. Those who responded feel

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the call to work in communities of people who have been impacted by colonial power structures. They recognize that archaeology conducted in the academy or in heritage/cultural resource management works within structures that are far from benign. Archaeologists work on the lands of people who have been marginalized by the inequities of economic expansions, extractive industries, and political subjugation. As we come to understand our positionality and power, we are trying to work more responsibly. Through critical examination of our work, we seek to understand and halt those exploitations and to examine the “human consequences of our technology, our methods, and the pasts that they create” (Caraher 2019). Student and professional archaeologists are also asking how our methods, theory, and results can contribute to the well-being of people and our environment.

The articles presented in this issue pay respect to the essential work on collaborative (Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2008) and community-based archaeology (Atalay 2020). We also draw inspiration from the editors and authors of the *Archaeologies of the Heart* project (Supernant et al. 2020) in their exploration of data practices, and we envision a practice built around rigor, care, and relationality in our work (Lyons and Supernant 2020). Essential works include those cited in this introduction and throughout this issue, and those who approach work through a lens of social and environmental justice (Belcher et al. 2021; Camp et al. 2023; d’Alpoim Guedes et al. 2021; Douglass et al. 2019; Flewellen et al. 2021; Laluk and Burnette 2021; Lane 2015; Little and Shackel 2007; Sanger and Barnett 2021; Schaepe et al. 2017; Two Bears 2023). Broader sources of inspiration include the work of D’Ignazio and Klein (2020:173–201), who draw attention to the emotional and affective work that women and minoritized groups do, and they ask how we make visible the work of caregivers and “maintainers.” Their definitions could include the work of culture keepers, and their comments have relevance for thinking about the way Western institutions value the past.

Archaeologists want to believe that their work improves the world through understanding the foundations of our institutions and the revival of ancient knowledge (Agbe-Davies 2010:1). We see that our students and colleagues are searching for different ways to study and engage with the past (Quave et al. 2021), and we want to do work that matters (Douglass et al. 2023; Mikel and Olson 2021). Finding relevance—which might include concepts of service—through archaeological methods and practice is one way to ensure that archaeology is not an esoteric science conducted by people with the privilege and security to choose a vocation that is often undercompensated. Furthermore, the sense of purpose offered by a service approach to the discipline has the potential to draw in or help retain a more diverse range of people interested in archaeology and history. As we were preparing this issue, editorial board member Kristina Douglass commented, “My sense is that many minoritized scholars, in particular, feel that they became archaeologists to serve their communities and practice archaeology in ways that are restorative. Archaeology as service is really the complete antithesis to archaeology as antiquarianism that members of the broader public may be more familiar with” (personal communication 2022).

Archaeologists who seek to respond to the contemporary challenges of the communities they work with should be listening to, learning from, and working beside people from the communities

most affected by injustice. Archaeology can provide technologies and methodologies that serve community initiatives. For example, William Wadsworth, Kisha Supernant, Ave Dersch, and the Chipewyan Prairie First Nation (CPFN; 2021) use ground-penetrating radar for the purpose of locating ancestors in the CPFN burial ground. Archaeological investigations may also transform understanding of the past through using scientific methods and carefully contextualized interpretations to question the status quo and then to consider how the past has been represented in modern narratives (Acabado et al. 2017; Kusimba and Reich 2023) and by whom. The articles in this issue show how archaeologists can provide field and analytic methods, theoretical frameworks, and the results of their research to serve the communities with which they work.

## ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

In this issue, we publish seven articles offered as a response to our call for papers. We note that many of the articles are not just *about* collaboration; they model working together through their authorship, demonstrating the ways that the authors and the people they worked with shared knowledge and authority, and a continuing engagement and investment in the presented projects (Douglass et al. 2019).

After providing a brief history of the land rights and extractive industries in the Northern Territory of Australia, and the development of legislation protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage, Lynley Wallis and her Bininj and archaeology coauthors (2023) delve into the role of the Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation (GAC). The GAC was formed as an entity to take payments from the mining company, but it has broadened its authority and taken responsibility for identification, management, and protection decisions related to cultural heritage, including maintaining a digital database repository and asserting Indigenous intellectual property rights. The GAC structure allows for more collaborative work between the community and archaeologists, but the authors show some of the challenges for Bininj participation in heritage management and in investigator-initiated archaeological practice created by the expectations and priorities of existing research structures. The GAC has hired an archaeologist—Dr. Wallis—to represent their interests and to both work with and train community members. They provide a case study related to an incipient ochre research project, but they note that the publication process is one more area of work where existing structures challenge community participation, and they make points that ask us as editors for increased attention to decolonizing publishing.

Chieh-fu Jeff Cheng (2023) applies North American approaches to collaborative archaeology as he works toward decolonizing Taiwanese archaeology. His work incorporates descendants’ knowledge into what is known from the remnant settlements of Taiwan’s indigenous Bunun people, left when relocated by the Japanese in the 1930s. Multigenerational root-seeking expeditions—multiday expeditions sponsored by townships, families, or communities—are a popular way for Bunun to revisit their former settlements. Cheng joins these tours. He uses remote sensing to help focus identification of past places in less accessible parts of the mountainous regions. With the support of the Ministry of Culture, the Historic Site Regeneration Project blended cultural heritage preservation, the collection of oral histories, and training

Bunun in site documentation. Since their displacement, the place-based knowledge has eroded, so the root-seeking expeditions and the archaeological work provide a chance to resurrect wilderness skill sets and landscape knowledge. The Istasipal house has been restored as a meeting place, and with identification of the place as an archaeological site comes some funding support.

Bonnie Newsom and her coauthors (2023) consider the role of archaeology in offering resilience to communities in the face of the realities of climate change and linguistic genocide. Indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable to climate-change loss, and this article describes how the impacts to the Maine coastline affect ancestral Passamaquoddy shell heap sites, thereby removing their built heritages. Funded by a University of Maine grant, a multiyear field school at the Holmes Point West site is a collaboration between the Maine Coast Heritage Trust land conservation organization, the Passamaquoddy Nation and its Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO), and the University of Maine's Department of Anthropology. The project goals are developed jointly, and students work and share time with Wabanaki representatives and students. The agenda is to document coastal shell-bearing sites, engage with issues of language preservation, and conduct community archaeology. These avenues address some concerns of the modern community while training students. They take the approach that heritage loss can be mitigated through learning about ancestors' experience and knowledge, passing along the resilience of the people as more enduring than the materials.

Sarah Hazell and Alicia Hawkins (2023) seek to address the exclusion of descendant communities in heritage policies and practices. Their goal was to use training to connect communities with archaeology, introducing members to current practices and providing entrance into existing archaeological regulatory and knowledge systems and so as to empower them. Many descendant groups have no awareness of the projects that encounter their cultural belongings, so the authors focused on providing training for archaeological monitors and artifact cataloging to create opportunities for future access and care. Their initial focus was on youth, hoping to make visible a future career path, but First Nation government workers and elders also participated. Collaborations between organizations—including the Ontario Archaeological Society, Anishinawbek Nation, and the Ojibwe Cultural Foundation—helped to create and open opportunities to participants whose range of ages and investment were more substantial than anticipated.

The current tagline for the Oklahoma Public Archaeology Network (OKPAN) is "Archaeology in Service of Heritage." Together with coauthors and cofounders of OKPAN, Bonnie Pitblado (2023) describes the creation of a new organization within the land-grant institution University of Oklahoma. Their article shows the continuing process of critically examining ways that archaeologists engage with the myriad communities of the state, leading to a process of breaking from other existing organizations and reforming relationships inside and outside of archaeology. OKPAN started by introducing models that were familiar from the authors' prior work and models from other public archaeology programs, but through continual evaluation of their work, they have identified the activities through which their energies and budgets could be most effective, and the organization continues to change. The authors highlight the Voice of Oklahoma summer intern initiative and their digital magazine, the *Community*

*Archaeologist*. OKPAN's work is funded, in part, through Pitblado's Robert E. and Virginia Bell Endowed Chair of Anthropological Archaeology, and while recognizing the University of Oklahoma as a place whose power structure can create inequities, it is also a structure filled with the possibilities. By situating this service work in the university and inviting the participation of precollege, undergraduate, and graduate students as both learners and leaders, there are tangible ways to create points of entry to archaeology and careers for those who have historically been excluded.

Work conducted in advance of the expansion of a rural highway identified, among the other historic resources, the blacksmith shop owned by Tom Cook at a small crossroads in Bolivar, Texas. After his emancipation, Cook—an African American blacksmith—also became a Methodist minister, a Prince Hall Freemason, and an esteemed town citizen. Alexander Menaker and his coauthors (2023) illustrate how they collaborated to coproduce and share the story of this man, who lived, raised a family, and shoed horses more than 150 years ago in a mostly white frontier town. The project team and coauthors include the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)—the project proponent—private sector archaeologists from Stantec, a university professor with significant experience working with descendant communities, and the descendants of Tom Cook. Public outreach was a goal of the mitigation project from the outset, so the community members and archaeologists worked side by side before, during, and after the field project to seek and share Cook's role in Texas history. The article highlights the Bolivar Archaeological Project as an example of how a cultural resource management project can serve marginalized communities and reveal undertold historical narratives through developing and funding collaborative projects.

Fernando Astudillo and his coauthors (2023) describe the Historical Ecology of the Galápagos Islands (HEGI) project, a collaboration between three universities in Ecuador and Canada and two research and educational centers to provide student training and examine the role of humans in the production of landscapes, particularly the novel ecosystem of the Galápagos, and to develop considerations for management and policy. Their research site on San Cristóbal Island is a place of relatively modern and transient human habitation after the mid-nineteenth-century colonization of the island for industrial agriculture. The modern people of San Cristóbal live on a landscape with multiple layers of governance and with interest from nongovernmental organizations and government agencies that are concerned with nature conservation, tourism, economy, and funding. Residents are Ecuadorian and international, and current residents have few connections to the people who initially constructed and worked on the plantation. Cultural heritage has been a low priority in this protected ecological sanctuary. Those who live near remains of the nineteenth-century industrial plantation, at Hacienda El Progreso, wanted to enforce and expand national heritage policies in ways that reflect a commitment to preserving both the human and ecological history of the place and that could provide steady funding for education and tourism. The archaeological work situates the local history within larger stories of human roles in the transformations of ecosystems and uses the processes of community-engaged archaeology to work through long-held stereotypes about local residents. The protections for the site, formed through the HEGI project and implemented by the local community, will endure after the archaeologists depart.

## THEMES

In “The Future Is Now: Archaeology and the Eradication of Anti-Blackness,” Maria Franklin and coauthors (2020) consider the transformations needed to build an antiracist archaeology. The social justice mission they put forward requires structural change in the discipline, and they illustrate the work for change through both education and many collaborative projects. The momentum was increased through visibility of the Society of Black Archaeologists and allied groups and Black Lives Matter–related programming, which resulted in changing organizations, building new ones, and increasing capacity for cooperation. In this issue of *Advances in Archaeological Practice*, authors show how collaboration, personal and institutional resources, and momentum help to address inequities and transform archaeological practice through ideas of service.

### Collaborative Work

Collaborative work is at the center of all the articles in this issue. When collaborating with communities, which comprise one form of stakeholder, archaeologists work with people whose understanding of the past comes from knowledge gained in ways beyond academic, on-the job, and other professional training. Some collaborative projects are created intentionally, whereas others may have evolved to collaboration through iterative and changing practices (e.g., Douglass et al. 2019). When working in a fully collaborative way, the authority to direct research is shared and expanded. Authors in this issue reference approaches such as Two-Eyed Seeing (Newsom et al. 2023), Indigenous leadership (Colwell 2016; Wallis et al. 2023), and Atalay’s (2012) metaphor of braided knowledge. Collaborative work considers shared interests in research goals, community appropriate methods (also Douglass et al. 2019; Glencross et al. 2017; Sanger and Barnett 2021; Wadsworth et al. 2021), interpretation of findings, and the handling of data now and in the future. The results incorporate insights gained through coauthorship and quotation in the articles themselves.

When collaborating, research questions, project goals, and interpretations change. For example, in Maine, the West Holmes Point field school is conducted in the context of the loss of sites to climate change (Newsom et al. 2023). It is not unusual for archaeologists to address the idea of a material loss as a predecessor for arguing for management improvements (Anderson et al. 2017; Lane 2015). Here, the understandings that come from the archaeological work with the Passamaquoddy tribe are those of cultural strength through resilience and persistence. Similarly, the story of the nineteenth-century Texan Tom Cook is not focused on his enslavement but on his role as an essential part of the success of a small Texas frontier town (Menaker et al. 2023). San Cristóbal Island and other Galápagos islands were colonized, in part, by using forced labor for agriculture and industry. Consequently, they are places with a once volatile and sometimes violent human history. The collaborative archaeological approach elicited the role of humans in transforming ecosystems (Astudillo et al. 2023).

Two articles illustrate how archaeology mediates between loss and resilience in critical tangible and intangible heritage. The need to address language loss by tying words to archaeological contexts

and concepts is highlighted by Newsom and colleagues (2023) as they describe the introduction of Passamaquoddy language preservation into the field school. Hazell and Hawkins (2023) describe how the language revitalization programs of the Anishinaabe expanded their workshop learning sessions, teaching words about artifacts to archaeologists. They say that “connecting language to the project was also underscored as a way of asserting and, in some cases, reclaiming identity” (Hazell and Hawkins 2023:359–360).

Increasingly, archaeologists—whatever of their areas of practice—are recognizing the interests of a variety stakeholders, including the communities in which and with which we work. If we are thoughtful in our assignment of the concept of stakeholders, we should recognize that these people have risk, investment, and claim in the work that is being conducted (Agbe-Davies 2010:2) and, in response, consider whether and how our work can be of value to them. Cultural/heritage resource management is well positioned through its consideration of stakeholders to work with communities, but relationships can become streamlined and taken for granted in the process and pace of daily work. In that context, projects like that of Menaker and colleagues (2023), as well as others (e.g., Dongoske 2020; Tull 2020) that also create opportunities for creativity, stand out.

### Structural Change

What may distinguish the collaborative work of the authors who conduct archaeology in service from others who work collaboratively is their focus on changing the structure and institutions of archaeology. Because there are international, national, and regional rules that require documentation, evaluation, preservation, and attention to the treatment of heritage places, there are multiple pathways for archaeologists to enact changes (Welch 2020). Each author works with or within a governance or educational structure that engages with heritage. The authors note the power disparities related to access to knowledge, places, funding, or other resources. In their search to address inequities and erasures, they look for places where their grant, their time, and their existing relationships, affiliations, and access can enact changes that permeate structures. What they start is one more step toward the resolution of inequities perpetuated by the more conventional practice of archaeology.

The archaeologists who have authored these articles are affiliated with governmental organizations of nation states and Indigenous nations, universities, research units, and nonprofits (and some may wear many hats), and their coauthors are leaders in their communities. Many of the projects described in this issue come from the partnership of multiple organizations, including nonprofits, land trusts, and archaeological societies with regional professional and avocational membership. Through the organizational commitments made to the success of the projects described, people set the stage for future work. Some of the work done in service and described in following articles is decades in the making. The role the GAC in the Alligator Rivers region of Australia takes in managing Mirrar heritage follows decades of work in creating and expanding governance frameworks. The Bolivar Project is, notably, not the first community-oriented project sponsored by TxDOT; it follows the Ranson Williams farmstead project (Franklin and Lee 2020). It illustrates the innovative and enduring commitments of

this agency and the Texas archaeological community to understanding the diverse histories of the state. The GAD El Progreso fought for an ordinance to protect the material and immaterial human history of the Galápagos, which should offer protection and heritage tourism opportunities in the future. Other work, such as the formation of the Oklahoma Public Archaeology Network, is in its first years. The job training and educational opportunities offered by Hazell and Hawkins were made possible by grant funding, and they consider how to build on what they created and what their next steps are.

The authors here who conceive of archaeology in service are not stopped by the scale of the challenge. They illustrate how they identify problems with current practice, see possibilities in the resources they can bring to a project, work with intention, and show us how they affect change in institutional practices, person by person. By investing in enduring structural change through their collaborations, they have expanded the potential of archaeology beyond its traditional values.

### Relationship Building and Trust

Newsom and her coauthors (2023) comment that collaborative relationships require trust, reciprocity, communication, and respect, as well as accountability. In their article, they describe both the long-term institutional relationships between the university, the land conservation trust, the Passamaquoddy tribe and the THPO office, and personal relationships. As a Penobscot tribal historic preservation officer, Newsom had previously worked with the Passamaquoddy THPO. This theme is present in other articles too. We see the essential role of El Progreso community member and author Edy Becerra preserving the historic hacienda. Cheng talks about how the project presented in his article built on a relationship with Bunun established by doing trail maintenance in the Lakulaku River Basin as part of his doctoral work. The grant-funded work in Ontario came together through the existing relationship between a student and a professor, Sarah Hazell's membership in the Nipissing First Nation, and their collective decades of work with other Ontario First Nations. The authors show us that the cultivation of respect through working together, often over many years, creates possibilities. In the United States, the relationships that develop between institutional archaeologists and descendant communities when working earnestly to meet Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) responsibilities can be the foundation of future projects (or, when done poorly, a barrier; Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2007; Goff et al. 2019; Grant and Gaunteaume 2021; Thompson et al. 2023). When archaeologists and the communities we work with trust each other, we can create safe places where we can share successes, make mistakes, critique as we collaborate, and broaden our approach to archaeology.

### Momentum: Just Do It

Is there a place for archaeological methods, theories, and practice to benefit others? During the planning work for this issue, we asked whether the idea of "service" was naïve. There is so much need, and the ways that archaeology has been practiced across the globe leaves the profession with much to overcome. But if we believe that archaeology can provide some kind of value to the people among whom we work, we should start now. Given the time it takes to create the relationships that allow us to work

together with communities, maybe we should not let the quest for a perfect solution get in the way of approaching archaeology through ideas of service, heart, well-being, humility, and community (Kimmel et al. 2023). Archaeologists continually critique the discipline's field methods and are curious adapters of new technologies. For those with the vision to change practice through our relationships to individuals and economic and political structures, we archaeologists may be able to use our power (Welch 2020) to make sustainable changes. And we might challenge ourselves to view each project through this lens: if we cannot do a lot, can we at least do a little more?

If we add up the people who engaged with archaeology and represented in the pages of these articles, it would include the students and educators who have worked with the University of Oklahoma and the University of Maine, the more than 100 people in 21 different First Nations who took the classes offered by Hazell and Hawkins in Ontario, the authors William Howard Clark and Halee Wright and their relations in Texas, members of the Istasipal family in Taiwan, the Bininj ranger team, and the archaeological crew from the hacienda of El Progreso. When archaeologists co-create and co-labor with communities, it is a good starting point for expanding the impact and potential of our work.

We want this issue of *Advances in Archaeological Practice* to inspire our readers. This diverse set of articles comes together by sharing a sense of purpose in archaeology as service. For those who have similar goals and ideals, we hope they find the experiences communicated in these articles relatable. Working in service is incremental, reflexive, and iterative, but it expands the possibilities of our discipline and brings new value to the practice of archaeology.

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