Write Here! Write now! information for participants (please read this first)

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April 23, 2018

Thursday 26th April 2018 at the CIFA conference, Brighton, 09:30 to 13:00

See the CIFA 2018 conference site for registration details

What we are trying to do - write two standards in three hours. . . .

In this innovative collaboration session participants will pull together a new standard for what should be included in the 'grey literature' reports produced by Field Evaluations and Watching Briefs, two types of investigation covered by CIFA standards and guidance. This will set out, as clearly as we can, what information (for example what sections of text, what associated data files) should appear in these reports. Some of these headings we will identify as **Mandatory** (they should always appear, even if there is nothing to report) and some will be **Optional** (they may be included if appropriate). The Mandatory headings will then form both a template for those who want to write a report (What should I include?), and an objective test for those who receive them (Is this report complete?).

We are not going to be able to tackle all the issues of quality of the content, accuracy of the data, or understanding of the authors that might be a problem for future researchers. But by doing one small thing to improve consistency, we hope that these quality issues can become the main focus.

Why do we need to amend the sections of the current CIfA S&Gs for Evaluation and Watching Briefs that deal with reports?

These sections were drafted several decades ago

There is accumulating evidence from retrospective studies of reports for national research that that there are problems which need to be addressed

Some of these are basic issues that can probably be addressed by drafting changes and additions to the S & Gs

Archaeological assessment and evaluation has been one of the major success stories for archaeology since 1990. The ability to detect and assess the significance of archaeology has reduced risk for developers and has been a major reason for the relative lack of disasters where archaeology is destroyed without record.

Evaluation reports are under-valued. They are arguably the most important reports produced for the planning process.

They:

- address important planning questions and objectives as well as archaeological objectives and questions;
- are an important influence on planning decisions and the archaeological outcomes of development projects;
- are read by a uniquely diverse audience including planners, developers and the interested public

Evaluation reports need to be fit for purpose as the planning system and technology develop. The importance of evaluation and the need for high-quality reports will increase as development, especially high volume housing, increases. The ability to use the results of evaluation reports to model past landscapes is likely to become a vital aspect of archaeology – to support research and planning decisions.

Watching brief reports are also important and under-valued: Many watching brief reports provide the only evidence for sites and settlements. Very few are formally published. The quality of the information in reports is therefore an important issue and it can be crucial to understanding archaeology.

Why are we doing this?

Synthesis projects, such as the Roman Rural Settlement project, make clear the need for greater consistency in these reports. Without consistency it is very difficult to combine the findings from different investigations together so as to synthesise a better informed, more complete and up to date knowledge of the past societies that we study. Our aim is to make it easier to synthesise reports and to advance the knowledge of the past.

What will we do?

Our session will use the 'booksprint' collaboration approach, to write and test the standard *during the session.*

1.   Brief introduction (with Q and A) to the issues and the opportunities including highlights of pre-circulated resources and background papers (20-25min)

-   Why is it important

-   What do we hope to achieve

-   Why we have chosen this method

2.   Ground rules for a booksprint, and what we will produce (file formats, Creative Commons licence) (15mins)

3.   Divide into table groups – one writer plus commenters on each table

Each group works on a section for a period, then it's shared with the other groups (ideally put into one online document) (1 hour)

4.   Coffee break

5.   Repeat 3 until all the basic sections are in rough draft (30 mins)

6.   Review of Next steps

How will the results of this session be used?

License - important please read this

We are asking you as participants in this session, as a requirement for taking part to make all your contributions freely available under a Creative Commons license. This will make the text you write available for others in the profession to apply in their work, as long as they credit the authors, and make any derivative works available under a similar license. The license we are planning to use is the CC-SA-BY 4.0

Authority

The draft standards we create at the Write Here! Write Now! booksprint will be put out for consultation with the sector, with a view to submitting a motion for them to be approved at the 2018 CIFA AGM as an appendix to CIFA Standards and Guidance for these investigations. This will make their use a significant part of professional practice.