

EDITOR'S NOTE

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I have been involved with archaeological societies for nearly 60 years as a member, meeting attendee and planner, program chair, presenter, board member, president, treasurer, secretary, journal editor, and business manager at various times for many organizations. I have always viewed them anthropologically as holistic entities. A change in one part affects the structure of the entire society and all of the members. These groups cannot increase their membership by sexual reproduction. They must proselytize to attract new members to support their goals. In this way they are a lot like the Shakers, but without the nice furniture.

The basic concept is getting avocational, volunteers, and students to join, to attend meetings, to make presentations, publish in the journal, and eventually become committee members and officers in the organization. Throughout this entire process, they are improving their skill set, making connections, and developing a network that will aid the entire profession. The professional network is not just for expertise in excavation, analysis, interpretation, presentation, and publication, but also in local, state, and national government practices, laws and decisions. People on the local level know of threats to archaeological sites, but do not always know what can be done. It is usually more productive to ask someone you have met face-to-face rather than a random voice on the telephone or a generic email address.

Major anthropology departments used to be one-stop shopping with classes, field schools, laboratories, and cultural resource management-focussed multi-disciplinary activities, training, and internships. More than likely, there was one pivotal person who ramrodded this entire production in each locale. When the pivotal person retired or died, the system broke down. Funding was cut. CRM went out of the university and into private firms or corporate engineering firms. One of the strengths of the avocational (amateur) societies is the very diverse backgrounds of attendees and members. Students are a distinct category that can be target to be encouraged to attend. A few societies once had very active university faculty members who brought students, who once they saw the advantages, would come on their own. This must be encouraged.

I edited my first book in 1977. Since then, I have edited nine different journal series. Of these, there are six that I am doing currently. I have also edited, written, or ghost-written books in archaeology and law enforcement. I have produced more than 600 issues with an on-time delivery rate of 99%. The late delivery is current and due to the dearth of submitted manuscripts (mss).

Despite hundreds of emails to presenters and session organizers at annual meetings of Middle Atlantic Archaeological Conference (MAAC), Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA), Society for American Archaeology (SAA), and small state and regional conferences, I have had difficulty filling issues in the past few years. During the pre-COVID years, I attended annual meetings of at least three and sometimes five state and regional meetings to solicit mss. What good is a spoken presentation with no written record? I knew many people wanted their research and ideas disseminated to a wider audience. I also knew that life intrudes upon professional activities and most promises would not materialize quickly or at all. But I always had enough for the next issue of each publication.

During COVID, I had hopes that people working from home would have time to catch up on long delayed writing projects. Mss began to appear, but without the final graphics. Authors complained that graphic artists and photographers were not able to access digital archives and artifacts in storage. Authors did not have remote access to their office files from home during the lockdowns. Others lacked home computer systems comparable to the ones in the office including printers. One person had to email a pdf of a copyright release to Kinko's to be printed.

Immediately post-COVID was the catch-up period with the delayed fieldwork and contract reports. Students and employed professionals were getting back on schedule and adapting to a new normal. People decided that they liked weekends with friends and family. Retirement was far more appealing than it had been pre-COVID. Archaeological conferences moved from Zoom to in-person, so I expected things would return to the normal that I knew. Wrong again.

Retirees who were regular attendees at meetings were not coming. Faculty that used to bring groups of students stopped. A new generation of undergraduate and graduate students came of age with no history of attending meetings. Students making presentations were not willing to develop these into mss for publication. The social media lifestyle includes web sites like Academia and Researchgate providing outlets for professional mss. Uploads to these sites seem to be replacing submissions to traditional print journals. While the information might technically be available, the only way to access it is by guessing the correct search criteria and then filtering through scores (hundreds?) of hits looking for the most appropriate ones for your research goals.

Three of the journals I do are for SAGE, a major commercial publisher of journals in the social sciences and other disciplines. One title accepts mss from outside authors, but the ms flow is like molasses in a very cold January. Mss for those journals are sent to a production company that handles all of the layouts, graphics, pdfs, printing, and distribution. I am constantly being asked to fill the current issue.

For three journals, including this one, I do all of the production work. This used to mean actual mechanicals (paste-ups of texts with spaces left for the photographs). I knew the very basics, but my skills improved while working at a printshop part time for 27 years. I did everything except run the presses in the beginning. When some of jobs could be done more efficiently on a digital press, I learned Photoshop and digital layouts to run those jobs. However, we could not do journals like this one cost effectively.

I had been using a printer in Ohio for the past 39 years for these three journals and some of the previous ones. As printing technology changed, the production manager would tell me how to change the copy that I was submitting. When they went digital for the types of books I was doing, I made a major investment in software, computer hardware, an internet upgrade, and training. This worked very well until they no longer did my type of books at the end of 2023. They recommended the printer who is doing this issue. The account executive explained how they do things differently, and I made the necessary adjustments in a few days. You are reading the result.

I think of myself as a dinosaur seeing the first mammals scurrying around my habitat. Do I adapt to life with the new creatures? Do I try to convince the newcomers to follow the current world order? Or do I just wait for the giant asteroid to signal "Game Over" and let the replacement population reinvent the wheel? Wait and see.