

## **Conserving the Archaeological Soul of Places: Drafting guidelines for the ICAHM Charter**

Brian Egloff  
President, ICAHM, Adjunct Associate Professor of Cultural Heritage Studies,  
University of Canberra  
86 Hilltop Road  
Burra Creek, NSW 2620  
Australia  
Brian.Egloff@canberra.edu.au

Douglas C. Comer,  
Vice President (North America), ICAHM Principal, Cultural Site Research  
and Management, Inc.  
2113 St. Paul St.  
Baltimore, MD 21218  
United States of America  
dcomer@culturalsite.com

**Abstract:** Gustaf Trotzig, a founder of ICAHM, states that ‘Representation of sites to the public takes many forms and have varying impacts on the archaeological remains and the ‘soul or spirit of the site’. Archaeological resources are a key component of global travel and local economies. How places are presented to the public varies wildly from entirely unkempt hidden treasures to highly manicured multimedia extravaganzas. An exhaustive survey of the heritage literature indicates that there have been fundamental shifts in the emphasis of archaeological heritage management from where academic values stressed knowledge and publication with the involvement of local peoples to the approach of today that caters for visitors and managers with little tangible outcomes by way of improving our understanding of the resource. Guidelines have been drafted for the ICAHM Charter that draws strongly upon the published experiences of archaeologists that explores the kinds of approaches that characterize best heritage practice.

### **Introduction**

Archaeology is the study of the material remains of past cultures and is practiced in part in order to add to our understanding of the present condition of human societies. Archaeology is not as straightforward of an activity as it may seem, as it is a distinctive and at times perplexing amalgam of the arts and the sciences. W. N. F. Flinders Petrie (1904: viii) wrote that ‘A complete archaeological training would require a full knowledge of history and art, a fair use of languages, and a working familiarity with many sciences.’ Of growing importance is the mandate to sustain the archaeological resource for the use and reinterpretation by future generations. This in turn has caused the field of archaeological endeavor to become even more complex than it previously was. Regardless of whether they are of the scientific or the arts/humanities persuasion, it must be admitted that for the most part that archaeologists seem to be more concerned with the discovery of the past than with the sustainability of the resource. For instance, there is no session at WAC 6 dealing with archaeological conservation while at WAC 5 it was entirely the effort of the Getty Conservation Institute that realized the inclusion of conservation in the program and

provided for the publication of the more than 50 papers presented at the sessions (Agnew and Bridgeland 2007). The same apparent lack of interest in archaeological heritage management at the international level is seen in regional conferences such as the Indo Pacific Prehistory Association with 600 to 800 members. At its 2006 meeting at Manila in the Philippines more than 280 papers were listed in the program (Indo Pacific Prehistory Association 2006). A review of the abstracts indicates that only eight or so of the offerings dealt with the conservation of the archaeological resource while an equal number of papers reported on the excavation of human remains and cemeteries in third world countries; a highly controversial approach to research in some first world countries.

A survey of the membership of the International Committee for Archaeological Heritage Management (ICAHM) indicates that there is a need for an up-to-date international instrument. With this mandate in mind successive presidents of ICAHM have sought to review the ICAHM charter and draft a set of comprehensive guidelines. It was not until the retirement of the current president from his academic position and the funding of a visiting scholar position at the Getty Conservation Institute in 2006 and 2007 that matters were progressed. This paper is a report of the current status of the ICAHM charter guidelines project. Archaeologists often work within a heritage-hostile environment and the maintenance of professional standards may require international support from an instrument that is: current and timely; future orientated; aimed at an international, rather than a local, professional or national specific audience; has some degree of external authority that predates the particular issues at hand; and, does not conflict with the common basis of national heritage legislation but which serves to buttress weak points in policy and implementation.

It has been pointed out that the internationalization of archaeology occurred well before there were any national associations. The first international congress "*pour les études préhistoriques*" met at Neuchâtel in 1866. In 1931, the Eighteenth International Conference of Orientalists met at Leiden (Daniel 1975: 202, 313-314) and a new congress, the International Congress of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences, met for the first time in London in 1932. Following a formal recommendation in 1932, in 1937 the League of Nations drafted the *Cairo Act* during an International Conference convened by the Egyptian Government at the request of the International Museums Office (International Museums Office 1940). At that time, it was believed by some, and most definitely not by all, that 'an appeal' for direct co-operation would be more effective than would be 'regulations binding on governments' (UNESCO 1955/CUA/68/: 5; refer also to Manual on the Technique of Archaeological Excavations, International Museums Office, 1940). After the Second World War, the *Cairo Act* 1937 was followed by its direct successor the *Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations* (UNESCO 1956). It is the UNESCO document that details the consideration of the *Cairo Act* 1937 with respect to the forthcoming drafting of a New Delhi Recommendation that is particularly apropos to understanding the state of international academic archaeology in the 1950s (UNESCO 1955/CUA/68/). Perhaps one of the most telling contributions is that of Australia through the eminent classical archaeologists, and Master of the University House of The Australian National University in the late 1960s when this author was in residence, Professor A.D. Trendale. He expressed particular concern for those countries without an archaeological past such as Australia and urged that those regions rich in

archaeological collections, particularly the Mediterranean countries, assist museums in the New World to acquire collections. Trendale writes:

I think is most important that Australia should stress particularly the principle that excavators should receive a fair share of the material found. In this country, where we lack any archaeological sites in the strict sense of the word, it is absolutely impossible to build up an archaeological collection from material locally available' (UNESCO 1955/CUA/68 Addendum 1: 2).

An exceptionally narrow and relic driven approach seems to bedevil international charters as each national representation for the most part evidences a narrow perspective based upon current issues, at time seemingly highly personal, rather than a broad approach that focuses upon sustaining the resource and enhancing the study of the archaeological past. It is apparent that this narrow reaction of archaeologists to a post colonial world where they no longer had free and unfettered access to archaeological resources is strongly expressed in the New Delhi Recommendation of 1956. The ICOMOS *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (ICOMOS 1966), dating to 1964 following the IInd International Congress of Architects and Specialists in Historic Buildings that met in Venice touches only briefly on archaeology and set a disturbing trend. Being drafted for the most part by architectural restoration specialists it took the emphasis away from societies as the caretakers of their heritage and diminished the stress on research and publication found in the *Cairo Act 1937*.

It was not until the 1990s with the drafting of the ICAHM charter and the revised European convention that a more holistic perspective was offered to the international community. The Council of Europe (1969) prepared the *European Convention on the Protection of Archaeological Heritage* that was redrafted in 1992 as the *European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe* (Council of Europe 1992). Emerging in 1990 just prior to the revised European convention was the ICOMOS *International Charter for Archaeological Heritage Management* (ICOMOS 1990). The charter was inspired by some of the same European heritage specialists that were involved in drafting the revised European convention with an injection of Australian heritage management expertise.

There are no journal articles discussing the application or the impact of the *Cairo Act 1937* as it seems to have been lost in the wholesale destruction of World War II. Only a few papers discuss the importance of the New Delhi Recommendation and the ICAHM Charter (Cleerre 1993; Elia 1993; O'Keefe and Prott 1986/1994; Stanley Price 1995). But there is a growing body of literature reviewing the implementation of the *European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised)* (Council of Europe 1992) (Council for British Archaeology n.d.; Lund 1989; van Marrewijk and Brandt 1997; O'Keefe 1993; Trotzig 1993, 2001; Willems 1997, 1999, 2007, n.d.; Young 2001; and various articles in Willems and van den Dries 2007). A review of the commentary on the application of the European Convention provides a fascinating account of the shift in archaeology from an international-nationalistic pursuit of academics to a popular and more broadly based activity of international concern with the management and conservation of the resource.

## **Towards international guidelines**

The review of the international literature dealing with archaeological heritage management has proven to be both time consuming and exhausting. The rate of publication of new material is indeed prodigious, perhaps marking the interest that archaeological heritage management is gaining outside of academic circles. 'Archaeological Heritage Management: Towards International Guidelines' now numbers more than 230 pages, fifty of those pages comprise a bibliography of roughly 400 references. There are perhaps as many as 50 more journal articles and edited chapters to be considered for incorporation into the narrative.

Archaeological heritage management has many faces particularly as it is strongly determined by at least two kinds of legislation – archaeological and antiquities – if not three or four if one includes environmental conservation and planning instruments as well as being loosely tied to national and international instruments such as the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (UNESCO 1972). Some national and state/provincial jurisdictions divide archaeological legislation into that dealing with the material culture of indigenous peoples as distinct from that of the settler societies. Who owns archaeological resources varies greatly. Archaeological resources may be owned by the nation or state/province while in other countries the prehistoric materials belong to the property owner. This duality is manifested in the European Council where archaeological heritage managers are to adhere to the *European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage of Europe (Revised)*, Valetta 1992 with archaeological resources in the United Kingdom belonging to the landholders, with some exceptions such as treasure trove, while in the Netherlands the resources belong to the nation.

At the World Archaeology Congress in Dublin, 29 June to 4 July 2008, one of the most contentious issues to engulf the membership was the fate of archaeological resources whose significances are allegedly threatened by the construction of a highway system near the 'Hill of Tara', the ancient seat of the kings of Ireland. The role of consultants and academics was questioned within the context of allegations of unseen profits being garnered by private developers. In a highly emotive article titled 'The State We're in on the Eve of World Archaeology Congress (WAC 6): Archaeology in Ireland vs Corporate Takeover', Maggie Ronayne (2008: 115) expresses the view that the professionalisation of archaeology 'has happened in tandem with increasing corporate control of universities and bureaucratic pressure on academics to orient teaching to meet the needs of industry'. This could be true but on the other hand it has to be acknowledged that the National Roads Authority of the Government of Ireland has developed a code of practice that on the surface appears to be second-to-none in the world (National Roads Authority n.d.).

### **Mainstreams of archaeological inquiry**

Each of the four geographical regions discussed in the guidelines review, Australia, Europe (in particular the Netherlands, Ireland and the United Kingdom) and the United States of America evidence different trajectories with lag-times of perhaps one to two decades for the timing of when key issues emerge. For example consultant archaeologists were employed in the United States in the 1970s but not in the Netherlands until the 1990s. Settler societies in North America and Oceania are concerned with indigenous issues while countries that have experienced prolonged and bitter endemic warfare are concerned with the seemingly out of all proportion to the reasonable conduct of war impact of conflicts on their heritages. Each region and nation state evidences different priorities with commonalities in terms of ethical

standards, interpretation of archaeological places and the challenges of World Heritage conservation.

A review of the salient indicators of the future directions of archaeological heritage management was undertaken through the identification of zones of discomfort as evidenced in *Heritage At Risk* (ICOMOS 2001/2, etc.). The analysis of *Heritage at Risk* is supplemented with a review of the sessions at the 2008 World Archaeology Congress. A brief summary of some of the salient interrelated challenges follows.

*Generating and using knowledge is a broad category of activity that is based upon objectivity and an ethical approach.*

The power of heritage discourse has been known for many years with its most publicized application being that of the national socialist government of Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s. The power of archaeological discourse continues today with places being destroyed to remove traces of the past of peoples and heritage being selectively conserved to meet with local and national agendas. Regrettably no where is this more evident than at World Heritage places where the diverse communities in a nation state strive for recognition and ownership of the present through glorification of their past at the expenses of other people's pasts. Heritage as a force in political agendas at times is overwhelming and archaeologists need to seek a balance in how communities and nations relate their heritage to that of others. At the immediate operational level archaeologists need to effectively interface with stakeholder groups and insure that positive benefits return to the individuals that have vested interests in archaeological heritage.

*Education, training and qualifications are of major importance to archaeological heritage managers throughout the world.*

Standards and guidelines for fieldwork have been codified by many agencies and consultation guidelines have been developed in various countries including Australia with some agencies like road and transport authorities developing their own standards. As research undertaken by consultants now constitutes perhaps as much as 90% of the archaeology in some jurisdictions, it is important that it is undertaken to the highest possible standard. This has brought about a review by European nations of quality control in archaeological projects that are mandated by the state/nation usually in circumstances where the client does not care what the quality of the work is as long as it meets the government's requirements. In many instances the work is of high quality but the only independent audit to be undertaken, in the Netherlands, suggests that the majority of projects do not meet established standards (van den Dries and Willems 2007: 61). The Government of France under pressure from the European Union has been able to argue effectively that it should preserve its system of a strict state monopoly of archaeological projects as in their opinion it is effective in delivering quality outputs (Demoule 2007).

There is cause to question how effective is the work of consulting firms, or academic consortiums, when it is linked to developmental and governmental projects - 'compliance-driven archaeology' - that may require commercial or institutional confidentiality. As publication has long been held to be the standard requirement of archaeologists and a formal international requirement since the *Cairo Act* 1937, how should the profession relate to participants in cultural heritage management projects where the products are not available to academia or the public. Here the concern lies not necessarily only with consultants but also with academics that might undertake

such projects, and are seen by other archaeologists to be specialists in ‘developmental clearances’. These enterprises might be termed ‘agencies of last resort’ as they frequently ‘re-work’ existing conservation plans such that the client can do whatever they wish regardless of the impacts on the conservation of the archaeological resource. Standards for archaeologists working abroad who choose to undertake certain kinds of research projects not readily condoned in their homeland should be reviewed. A wide variation in legislation and policies governing archaeological processes means that it is highly likely that what one can do in overseas countries is substantially different from that which an archaeologist can do in their own country. This is particularly true with respect to the excavation of human remains. Should the archaeological community continue to undertake the wholesale excavation of burials in foreign countries knowing that this practice is banned or considered to be highly suspect in their home country, and has led in the past to highly acrimonious disputes between archaeologists and local communities?

Continuing professional development needs to be a required component for participation in professional archaeological employment. Educational standards vary substantially between countries. For instance an undergraduate degree is required in Australia while postgraduate qualifications are required to undertake Federal government consultancies in the United States of America. Should the archaeological profession press for a common set of standards or a minimum level of educational attainment followed by a sustained period of professional experience evaluated through a workplace competency process for professional archaeologists?

*Sustainability of resources has never been more important as the world's economies reach such a state of development that they have the wherewithal to impact on even the remotest heritage place in the world.*

Governance of archaeological heritage resources is a matter that has seldom been addressed in the literature but one that should be of particular interest with respect to collecting institutions. The term governance refers to the organizational level at which policies are formulated that set the agenda for the managers and administrators of an institution (Cueervo-Cazurra and Aguilera 2003). Heritage resources are controlled by institutions with specific objectives and in many instances the dominant agenda is not necessarily the conservation of the resource or the reaching of an understanding of its importance to archaeological studies, but the physical possession of it. This focus on the possession of items from the archaeological past often leads to a downplaying of the knowledge base of the artifact as a collecting institution either consciously or through purposeful inactivity hides any telltale signs of a tainted past (Egloff 2008). With this in mind, archaeologists need to press for more open governance policies by national and state collecting institutions as well as by councils that determine the fate of heritage listed places including archaeological sites.

The nexus of archaeology and indigenous people has been on the agenda of the international heritage management arena since at least the 1970s. The position of indigenous communities in the archaeological process has changed from one of minor involvement to a position where they are the employers of archaeologists and the community sets the agenda. Nevertheless there are very real differences in capacity between indigenous communities and mainstream societies with respect to the wherewithal to manage their respective cultural heritages. This imbalance needs to be addressed at the coal-face with respect to real capacity building through archaeological projects as well as enhancing educational opportunities for the members of indigenous and minority groups. It seems as if only a very few academic

archaeologists have made a real difference in the education of indigenous and third world archaeologists while many archaeologists have done very little to further the archaeological careers of the peoples that they work with.

*Economics of the archaeological heritage are nothing short of remarkable with the returns from heritage tourism sustaining a considerable proportion of the world's population.*

Rebuilding of archaeological sites has been held by some practitioners to be an uncomfortable exercise and the examples of over-rebuilding of heritage places are legend. The most recent matter of international concern being the UNESCO report on the World Heritage listed Skellig Michael, the 8<sup>th</sup> century island monastery off of the southwest coast of Ireland where over-reconstruction of some of the ruined stone structures is raised (*Irish Times* 2008). Pressures from management and the tourist industry to provide neat and clean facilities (including ruins), and consumable and readily understandable heritage packages through the radical transformation of rather disorderly archaeological sites is growing such that all manner of hypothetical alterations are being undertaken. One cannot help but be uncomfortable when visiting a heritage place and noting that its current appearance could not in any way resemble its form during its 'real life' when it was populated by 'real people'. Authenticity of fabric and the limits of acceptable change need to be brought into the fore when interpreting places to the public. No excuses should be given for not detailing in the site interpretation the changes that have taken place during the hypothetical reconstruction.

*Development and economics, as discussed above, are almost impossible to disentangle and very much drive the heritage agenda.*

Archaeology as a tool of development is known to be both a positive and a negative force, as is discussed above with respect to the 'Hill of Tara'. Although the value of archaeology in local capacity building is assumed, one of the few articles dealing specifically with archaeology and development is by G. Trotzig, 'The cultural dimension of development - an archaeological approach', in *Archaeological Heritage Management in the Modern World* edited by H. F. Cleere (1989). There are publications presenting vague anecdotal accounts of what archaeology can add to the quality of life in third world countries but nothing that provides hard-core economic data. Oddly enough one of the more detailed economic considerations of the value of cultural heritage is in a collection of papers prepared by the IUCN titled *The Protected Landscape Approach: linking nature, culture and community* (Mitchell and Beresford 2005). 'The Protected Landscape Approach in the Czech Republic' (Kundrata and Husková 2005: 137-141) documents in micro-detail an interesting case study of rural sustainability at the small village of Hostetín in eastern Moravia. Reed bed sewerage treatment, energy production by forest waste wood, use of traditional fruit varieties for commercial juice production and sale have contributed to sustainability within which landscape heritage features prominently. It is the detail of the analysis by Kundrata and Husková that offers an alternative to the impressionistic assertions that litter the literature on archaeology, heritage and sustainability. Archaeology needs to construct well-documented and persuasive arguments for the inclusion of archaeology as a component of development and capacity building.

*Threats to the archaeological heritage seem to be endless when one takes into account both natural and cultural forces.*

In the last two World Archaeology Congresses the impact of the American invasion of Iraqi on cultural heritage resources, in particular archaeological sites and museum collections, has been discussed and deplored. The considerable damage inflicted on archaeological resources has been well documented but the appropriate position of academic and professional archaeologists in terms of cooperating with military powers leading up to and during the invasion of a country is less well defined. Here reference is to the 'Archaeology in the Context of War' session at WAC 6 where the wisdom and ethics of archaeologists participating in invasion pre-planning was debated (WAC-6 Ireland 2008). There seems to be scope for a broader and thoughtful discussion of the ethics of archaeologists, be they situation specific or not, when as individuals become embedded in military operations.

Transfer of tainted or illicit artifacts continues to be of concern to archaeologists with the looting of heritage places continuing unabated in spite of considerable effort by heritage managers. The Society for American Archaeology (1996) has within its code of ethics a statement that 'Wherever possible, they should discourage, and should themselves avoid, activities that enhance the commercial value of archaeological objects, especially objects that are not curated in public institutions, or readily available for scientific study, public interpretation, and display'. Why include the clause 'not curated in public institutions', as upon extensive first-hand research (refer to Egloff 2008 for references and a more detailed discussion), public institutions and quasi-public galleries broadcast a highly visible elitist statement that they will do what they believe to be the best for both their institution and the wider cultural world and in doing so add to their collections whatsoever they wish to.

Natural forces in particular changing climatic regimes and the measures that human societies have taken to adapt to change have been the topic of archaeological inquiry. More recently the impact of climate change on the conservation of the archaeological resources has begun to take centre stage. The most concentrated effort being taken by the University College London with the establishment of the Centre for Sustainable Heritage that specifically considers impacts of the changing climate on the historic environment (Cassar 2005).

*Dissemination of archaeological information has grown apace with the 20th century publication explosion and the creation of new media such as web sties that protest the destruction of archaeological places*

Advocacy of archaeological conservation issues is of considerable concern to the international community of conservation heritage managers. ICOMOS has made an enormous effort in its publication of *Heritage at Risk* to bring to the attention of the wider public key place and theme related heritage issues. Of considerable concern is the lack of a public profile for ICOMOS, its limited and often government dependent financial resources and its sparse following in non-developed nations. The activities of the World Archaeology Congress may have an impact but would seem to have even less international leverage than does ICOMOS. The Archaeological Institute of America as North America's oldest and largest organization devoted to the world of archaeology with nearly 250,000 members and subscribers does speak out on major issues and has had an impact as has Heritage Watch since its foundation in 2003 and the World Monument Watch list of the 100 most endangered heritage places prepared by the World Monuments Fund. There is an obvious need for a peak heritage advocacy body that has a popular appeal and is more broadly funded such as is found in the natural heritage regime with the World Wildlife Foundation or the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).



## **Summary**

Distinct issues merge when discussing topics of particular interest. For instance when it comes to ascertaining the quality of values-orientated commercially driven archaeology there is considerable discussion of competence, qualifications and ethics. Is the work competent, is it done by qualified people, is it honest - doing what it says it does - and does the research at all add to our understanding of the archaeological resource. It is the mandate of archaeologists that their work should add to our understanding of the past and/or that it should be pointed towards conserving the remains of past societies so that they can be explored and reinterpreted by future generations of archaeologists. Academic archaeology was never perfect and until the 1960s it was a very small world in which the tens of archaeologists dealing with a particular realm of the past were able to meet and discuss their interests, agreements and disagreements.

The World Archaeology Congress at Dublin, 29 June to 4 July 2008, with more than 1,500 attendees and up to 18 concurrent sessions at any one time questions the wherewithal of any single organization to respectably represent archaeological thought and actions. Some 33 themes were discussed in the sessions including the following: theory and its application; materials (ceramics, lithic, etc) analysis techniques; war, conflict and working with the military; museums, interpretation and archaeology; digital media; archaeology and development; intellectual property rights; kinds of archaeology such as geoarchaeology, wetland, rainforest, innovation and migration; ethical archaeology had considerable coverage including a youth forum; useful archaeologies, communicating archaeology, heritage tourism; archaeology and sexuality; landscapes and archaeology; maritime archaeology, politics and identity; and, human responses to change. Some of the themes were of interest to narrow groups of archaeologists, for example archaeology and sexuality, while other subjects such as ethics and conflict, were of considerable importance to the wider body of archaeologists. Perhaps WAC 6 evidenced a shift away from archaeology as being based upon a reasoned body of empirical data to a field more emotionally driven and less able to support its arguments with anything less than impressionistic observations. What constitutes archaeology has never been easy to define and certainly that task has not been made any easier by the growing mandate to actively conserve the resource

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