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SUMMARY Community Archaeology Resource Review

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Executive Summary

This document is a summary of a report prepared in response to a brief issued by The New Forest National Park Authority to identify, review and assess guidance resources that are readily accessible to volunteers and community groups undertaking their own archaeological investigations.

The full report and supplementary documents can be downloaded from Oxford Archaeology's online library: <https://library.thehumanjourney.net/4636/>

Over three hundred and fifty archaeological guidance resources have been identified and listed in a form that aids comparison of the content and format of different resources and guidance. However, it appears that there has been limited evaluation of the use and impact of these resources prior to this research.

Focus groups and an online survey were undertaken in order to find out how community volunteer archaeologists access and use these existing guides and what they would like to see from future community resources. The focus groups provided more detailed local insights and informed the questions asked in the online survey.

The results demonstrate that there is a demand for simple 'how-to' guides with signposting to more detailed information produced by well-recognised and easily identifiable sources, particularly at national and regional (county) level. The extent of knowledge exchange and local adaption of guidance resources has probably been underestimated, and indicates that the professional archaeological sector needs to do more to understand and aid the transfer of accurate, reliable and user-friendly information amongst community volunteer archaeologists.

There is already a large amount of material readily available on a wide range of topics but there is an evident problem of knowing what has already been produced and searching for it. There are also some notable gaps in guidance materials, particularly on running projects and reporting and disseminating the results. Online, there is a tendency not to refer to specific sources of guidance but to use Internet search engines to find information but it should not be presumed that use of social media platforms and other online services is universal. Many community volunteer archaeologists still like to have written notes to accompany electronic media such as videos, and want to refer to hard copies of information when collecting data or taking a break from using screens. This report includes a number of recommendations for future community resource creation and maintenance, and a toolkit for consulting community volunteer archaeologists about guidance materials and support.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 As part of the Our Past, Our Future Landscape Partnership Scheme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (now the National Lottery Heritage Fund), the New Forest National Park Authority commissioned Oxford Archaeology to review the guidance that people refer to when undertaking supervised or self-guided community archaeology projects. The NFNPA Community Archaeologist is working with communities to identify training and development opportunities and is considering how effective 'how-to' guides are in disseminating good practice and sustaining learning after fixed-term projects. Standalone guidance resources are not a substitute for the training and expertise offered by professional archaeologists in person, but they can serve as a useful reference to groups and volunteers doing independent research and to professional archaeologists with finite time and resources to support them. The conclusions of this research will be used to inform the NFNPA about whether there is a need or demand for more guidance resources.

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The guidance materials under consideration in this study were those which instruct and advise unpaid community volunteer archaeologists about how to undertake self-guided archaeological research in the UK. These 'how-to' guides might be about identifying, researching and recording archaeological sites and finds and may be in the form of textbooks, digital or printed media.
- 1.2.2 In particular, the focus was on guidance material which is readily accessible to an interested member of the public. Some guides are produced for people enrolled on field schools, university courses or employed by archaeological contractors, or require subscriptions or one-off payments to access material. These guides are not easily available and so were not included in this review.
- 1.2.3 The review was not about ranking or critiquing existing guidance but gaining an understanding of what exists, what is accessible and what volunteers and community groups engage with. The review was not intended to be comprehensive. It is a snapshot of the guidance materials which could be readily identified at one point in time. However, it is hoped that this study will give a representative overview of the range and type of guidance that exists and bring them to the attention of relevant stakeholders.

1.3 Outputs and Outcomes

- 1.3.1 The outputs for this resource review are as follows:
- i. A list of existing archaeological resources and guidance readily accessible to volunteers and community groups.
 - ii. A toolkit for consulting community volunteer archaeologists about guidance materials and support.

- iii. Suggestions for future community resource creation and maintenance.

1.3.2 The outcomes for this resource review are as follows:

- i. An understanding of how guidance is accessed and used by volunteers and community groups.
- ii. An understanding of what volunteers and community groups find useful and would like to see from future community resources.
- iii. An informed and rational strategy for NFNPA and other interested parties regarding future community resource creation and maintenance.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Publicity and Consultation

- 2.1.1 A range of national, regional and local organisations working with community groups were contacted at the start of this resource review and again to circulate a survey aimed at community volunteer archaeologists. These included the Council for British Archaeology (including individual regional groups), Historic England, Archaeology Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, The Northern Ireland Archaeological Forum, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the CfA Voluntary and Community Archaeology Special Interest Group, the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers and National Park authorities amongst others.

2.2 Identification of Existing Resources

- 2.2.1 A relational database was created to collate and query information about existing guidance resources. Community archaeology initiatives were contacted for information about the guidance issued to their volunteers and affiliated community groups and search engines were used to source guidance material available online. Resources were also suggested by community volunteer archaeologists consulted in focus groups and an online survey as part of the study.
- 2.2.2 The database contains the following information: the title of the guidance material; who produced and authored the guidance; the year when the guidance was first published and last updated/revised (if applicable); the format of the guidance (i.e. PDF, video, webpage, online course); the length of the guidance (i.e. page number or audio/video duration); the type of guidance (i.e. step-by-step instructions, proformas, identification reference); the subjects covered by the guidance (i.e. desk-based research, field techniques, recording and reporting) and the geographic coverage (if applicable).
- 2.2.3 The community resources have been categorised into a lot of narrowly defined subjects in order to more accurately reflect the variety of different topics covered and to aid anyone using the database to find material relevant to their interests. The allocation of subject categories is subjective and ambiguous, with some guidance covering multiple subjects or not being clearly defined. Similarly, the type of guidance is not categorical but gives an indication of the depth of advice and how the resource might be used. Inclusion of a guide in the database is not an endorsement of the advice and techniques outlined. The database is intended to reflect the range of material that anyone might find when searching for community archaeology ‘how-to’ guidance, and illustrate the range of formats for accessing and presenting information

2.3 Assessment of Existing Resources

- 2.3.1 The researchers discussed with the NFNPA Community Archaeologist about devising subjective measures to assess the usefulness and perceived strengths and weaknesses of the guidance resources identified. However, the focus group responses indicated that there is a lot of regional and individual variation in the demands and needs of

community volunteer archaeologists. It was decided that the database would be more useful as a resource in its own right for people to search and compare guidance materials with their own aims and preferences in mind. The focus in creating and populating the database has been on categorising existing resources so that other users can easily identify and compare relevant guides for their own purposes.

- 2.3.2 Organisations who had run community archaeology projects were approached asking for any feedback or evaluation of the guidance resources they had generated.

2.4 Focus Groups

- 2.4.1 Two focus group meetings were held to present two local case studies giving a more nuanced perspective on guidance use by individuals undertaking their own archaeological investigations. The aims were to explore where they currently seek guidance; discuss what they find useful and not useful about existing guidance resources and identify potential areas for improvement.
- 2.4.2 The first focus group meeting took place at the New Forest Heritage Centre in Lyndhurst, Hampshire with participants invited by the NFNPA's Community Archaeologist. The second group meeting was held at Oxford Archaeology East's office in Bar Hill, Cambridgeshire with representatives from the Jigsaw network of local history and archaeology groups in the county. Participants in the Cambridgeshire focus group are primarily supported by local archaeological contractors, which contrasts with the Hampshire focus group participants who are primarily supported by a National Park authority.
- 2.4.3 A topic guide of themes to discuss and specific open-ended questions were prepared in advance of the focus groups. However, the direction of the focus group discussions also responded to the comments given by the focus group participants in order to question and understand their views. Each focus group also included a practical exercise to search for existing material online with the intention of observing the search terms used, how the participants filtered the results and how they decided what to use. Answers to a pre-meeting questionnaire, audio recordings, film footage, notes made by the facilitators and transcription were analysed to identify reoccurring themes in the responses representing the collective view; and unique, unusual or remarkable responses representing individual opinions and potential qualifiers. The focus group discussions helped to determine the emphasis for key questions in the online survey, and how to expand and probe the initial responses with follow-on responsive questions.
- 2.4.4 The resources produced to organise and run the focus groups have been compiled as an information pack for other organisations interested to find out about the guidance materials used by their volunteers and community group contacts. CBA North-West conducted a focus group meeting using the information pack and their anonymized findings were taken into account in the findings of this study.

2.5 Online Survey

- 2.5.1 An online questionnaire was devised and circulated to community volunteer archaeologists nationally. A dynamic responsive questionnaire was created with the sequence of questions asked in some sections dependent on the answers given to previous questions.
- 2.5.2 The survey asked for contextual information to determine respondents' demographic profile; prior skills, knowledge and experience of archaeology; and their learning and accessibility preferences. It included three examples guidance resources (a video, a diagram and a paragraph of text) to find out how they responded to these and if that reflected their stated preferences. Survey respondents were also asked to subjectively assess measures such as titles, domain and organisation names which might guide their selection of guidance materials to use. The aim of this was to test their recognition and perceptions of particular sources of information.
- 2.5.3 The survey was open for one calendar month (7th September – 7th October 2018) and there were 139 usable survey responses – of these, 92 were complete (i.e. respondents clicked through all of the pages and submitted the survey, even if they chose not to respond to all of the questions asked).
- 2.5.4 Respondents were asked if they were currently or had ever been paid professional archaeologists. Those who do not participate in community archaeology in a voluntary capacity were asked not to proceed with the survey, although those who do so in their own time were encouraged to proceed. Analysis of the findings was mindful of this and their responses were considered separately in some of the analyses.

3 FINDINGS

3.1 Identification of Existing Resources

- 3.1.1 The total number of 'how-to' guidance resources identified during this resource review was 356. Many of the guides (163 out of 356) provided information and wider context about particular subject areas and their application (i.e. handbooks). However, fewer provided specific step-by-step instructions or template documents to use. The vast majority of the guidance materials (72%) were in PDF format.
- 3.1.2 The main sources of guidance resources were: national organisations, regionally-based community initiatives, local societies and subject specialists. Several national organisations (Council for British Archaeology, Maritime Archaeology Trust and the Portable Antiquities Scheme) have produced a large number of guides and a notable proportion of their most recent guides were produced as part of HLF projects. There have been several bottom-up initiatives to produce guidance resources by community groups which, as local or regional projects, may not necessarily appear or be selected in Internet searches and yet could have the potential to be used more widely. Much of the standards and guidance produced by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and historic environment services in the UK, such as Historic England, have been written solely with professionals in the heritage and planning sector in mind and, as such, may not be accessible or relevant to those undertaking community archaeology projects. There is evidently a gulf between the self-regulating professional sector setting and reviewing its own standards for archaeology, and the needs and demands of the community archaeology sector who also require direction to and training in standards appropriate to the scale and nature of their archaeological investigations.
- 3.1.3 Half of the resources identified (179 or 50%) had the date it was first published and/or last revised, and of these, only half were published or revised in the past five years.
- 3.1.4 The largest subject area was identification guides for pottery and Ceramic Building Material (CBM), reflecting the large variety of different regional types of pottery. There are also multiple guides on identifying other types of find (e.g. coins, lithics and faunal remains). There are notably fewer guides on the post-excavation and reporting process or specifically covering aspects of planning and delivering community archaeology projects, such as Health and Safety (although this is touched upon with regard to particular themes and techniques in other guides), insurance, and equality and diversity.

3.2 Assessment of Existing Resources

- 3.2.1 Very little evidence of formal evaluation of guidance materials was found during the resource review. Several evaluation reports produced for Heritage Lottery Funded projects were identified which listed that the guides were produced as an output of training sessions run. Feedback was collected from participants following the training sessions but there was no user feedback about the use and effectiveness of the guides produced afterwards.

3.3 Focus Groups

- 3.3.1 The New Forest focus group discovered during the online search activity that search results often produced links to documents to view or download, which resulted in missing contextual information and supplementary documents on the source website, such as a description of who had produced the guidance. Several people within the focus group mentioned that they rely on search engines to find and re-find information rather than bookmarking or navigating the websites of specific known sources. Several participants were adamant that they would not use social media, and it was felt that it could be exclusionary to use social media as the primary means for engaging with volunteers and hosting guidance materials.
- 3.3.2 Several of the Cambridgeshire focus group participants mentioned during the discussion that they encounter difficulties using screens but none of them had described themselves as having a visual impairment or requiring adaptations to read information in print or on screen. All of the five community groups represented in the focus group had used proformas produced by professional organisations but relied on personal recommendations of other community volunteer archaeologists and circulated adapted versions between one another, rather than using the originals verbatim. In the search task, there was a clear preference for guides produced by familiar or local organisations.
- 3.3.3 Both focus groups had locally specific means of sourcing support with contacts in professional and voluntary archaeology to consult but both groups felt there was a lack of national centralisation and standardisation. Known and local sources of information were preferred above others, and the participants liked personal recommendations from other community volunteer archaeologists.
- 3.3.4 The overwhelming preference of the two focus groups was for simple reference 'how-to' guides with clear signposting to best practice and sources of additional more detailed information. The participants were also keen to emphasise that they also wanted access to specialist training and consultation.
- 3.3.5 Many of the comments on formats reflected personal preferences, rather than indicating significant trends. The wide-ranging views expressed during the focus groups indicate that it is very difficult to find one model to fit all preferences, and the importance of consulting the target user group to find out what they would like to use, particularly given they may not be aware of new and different methods or have very specific or surmountable prejudices.
- 3.3.6 The CBA North-West focus group participants felt that there was a general lack of standardisation amongst organisations and were overwhelmed by the quantity of information online. They suggested that a central point of reference with a depository of guidance materials, information on training and best practice, and an online forum would be helpful. The participants thought that future guidance materials should be created with specialist support from people experienced in training and teaching, and that they require more support with other aspects of running community archaeology projects such as health and safety, data protection, insurance and liability and codes of conduct.

3.4 Online Survey

- 3.4.1 The majority of respondents (60%) indicated that they are retired, and 26% indicated that they are employed. The majority of respondents were aged over 65 (53%) and a large proportion were in the 50-64 age bracket (32%). Only 14% of respondents were aged 49 or under. The vast majority of respondents with recognisable postcodes were based in England (90%). There was a concentration of responses from the postcodes in close proximity to the New Forest National Park. The majority of respondents were educated to degree level (71%). A far smaller number of respondents had either not completed any education (2%) or secondary education (6%). Laptop computers are the most common device used to access the Internet (78%), but a majority of respondents also use desktop computers (62%) and smart phones (53%).
- 3.4.2 The majority of respondents have been actively involved in archaeology for ten or more years (55%), and only 7% of respondents had been involved for under two years. The majority of respondents are in regular contact with other volunteer archaeological and heritage societies (88%), and just over half are in regular contact with local authority archaeologists (53%). When asked why they were involved in community archaeology, three-quarters of respondents (76%) said that it was because they had a general interest. A majority of respondents also indicated that they are involved because they find it fun (65%), sociable (53%) and they want to acquire more archaeological knowledge (60%).
- 3.4.3 The most common archaeological activity that respondents had been involved in during the past two years was excavation (77%), with the next most popular activities being geophysical survey (57%) and finds identification (57%). Overall, most respondents indicated that they were relatively confident in carrying out the archaeological activities they have undertaken in the past two years. The activity that respondents felt most confident in carrying out was field walking. The only activity that nobody indicated that they felt very confident in was finds identification. It seems that more people are undertaking archaeological activities than have received any formal training in them, and particularly in post-excavation activities such as report writing and project archiving.
- 3.4.4 The majority of respondents (65%) had undertaken other aspects of running an archaeological project in the past two years (e.g. project/volunteer/budget management). More people had been involved in general project management, volunteer management, outreach and health and safety. Fewer respondents had undertaken publicity, budget management or funding applications. The majority of respondents indicated that they were either confident or very confident about carrying out these other aspects of running an archaeological project but it is likely that the people self-selecting to undertake these tasks are people who have prior experience and expertise. Again, far fewer people undertaking these aspects of an archaeological project have actually received formal training in doing them.
- 3.4.5 The majority of respondents self-identified as primarily verbal (54%) or visual learners (35%), with a far smaller number identifying as kinaesthetic (16%) or aural learners (2%). This may reflect the main learning and teaching methods that people have been exposed to rather than their innate preferences. Although most respondents initially identified as verbal learners, when asked to think about how they might learn a

practical skill such as using a new piece of survey equipment, most people wanted to observe a demonstration and practice using it themselves (54%). Far fewer people felt confident that they would learn best how to use a new piece of survey equipment by looking at pictures of someone using the equipment or reading about it from a manual.

- 3.4.6 Survey participants were asked to look at a video, a diagram and a section of text about the use of a resistivity meter to conduct a geophysical survey. There was no clear preference for the format of information, and the ratings for presentation, relevance, detail, simplicity and clarity were broadly similar and positive. Many of the positive comments described the guides as concise, simple and easy to understand with clear explanations. The main way that respondents felt the video could be improved was a better view of the buttons on the control panel being referred to. Criticisms of the diagram primarily related to the style of arrows used and the contrast between the text and the background of the buttons on the control panel. Both the video and the diagram lacked context for their instructions but, conversely, some thought the text was too long and wordy for a quick reference guide and would have benefited from illustrations or breaking down into clearer points.
- 3.4.7 Survey respondents were asked if they required any accommodations and modifications to watch or listen to presentations. Only 37% of respondents did not require any of the stipulated accommodations and modifications, and a large proportion (43%) said that they require accompanying written notes.
- 3.4.8 Survey respondents were asked whether they require any accommodations and modifications to read print or text on screen. 12% indicated that they required one of large print, visual cues or coloured backgrounds or overlays.
- 3.4.9 When they were last learning a new technique, 72 respondents (73%) indicated that they would seek information from a person (either an archaeologist working in the profession or another community volunteer archaeologist) rather than seeking information for themselves from books or online material (27%). People were more likely to consult their resources because they had previously consulted them or felt confident that it would have the answer (64%). A similar proportion of respondents indicated that they would prefer to seek information from a person rather than guidance material when they last encountered a problem and needed to troubleshoot solutions.
- 3.4.10 General Internet searches for information and reference to personal collections of books were amongst the most popular types of guidance material regularly consulted by survey respondents. It suggests that people are casting a wide net to try to find relevant and useful guidance resources. It likely also reflects that these are the most readily accessible and immediate ways of sourcing information from home. The organisation most commonly cited when looking for guidance material was Historic England although, interestingly, many of the respondents still referred to it by its former name (English Heritage). Other national organisations referred to by a number of survey respondents include CIfA, BAJR and PAS. Also commonly cited were organisation or project specific handbooks or manuals, including those produced by commercial contractors and research projects involving volunteers. Notably there were also mention of community volunteer groups producing their own guides. Many of the books listed by survey respondents were reference resources for finds

identification or introductory 'primer' textbooks rather than 'how-to' guides. Respondents also mentioned that they consulted local archaeologists, experts and other volunteers indicating that, for many, their first port of call would be a person rather than guidance materials.

- 3.4.11 Survey participants were asked why they usually consult these resources. A large number of the responses relate to the perceived accuracy or reliability of the information given by these resources or that they come from authoritative sources. Others also said that they referred to their preferred guidance resources because they had used them previously or that they were familiar.
- 3.4.12 Survey participants were asked if they had consulted social media platforms, video sharing platforms, digital applications or 'apps' or online courses. Many of the respondents said that they had not consulted any of the listed digital sources for guidance materials (46%). Many respondents were open to new online sources of information with interest in online courses in particular. Some of the responses indicated that the sources would need to be free, trustworthy and brought to their attention as a useful source. 17% said they would not consider using these digital sources of information because they do not use social media or understand how it could be useful, that they have very specific guidance requirements or that they look to other people to source guidance materials rather than seek it out themselves.
- 3.4.13 When asked which types of organisation they would be most likely to consult when searching for guidance materials, the survey participants indicated that were more likely to consult local and national authorities. This may be because they are aware of complying with legal policy and their responsibility to report archaeological findings. It may be due to the trust they place in or the accessibility of the professional archaeologists at these organisations. The Council for British Archaeology also rated highly, presumably as a national organisation with a network of regional branches with a remit for supporting local societies. Despite many university departments, archaeological contractors and museums running community archaeology outreach projects, the respondents indicated that they were more likely to consult other local volunteer archaeological/heritage societies before approaching these sources
- 3.4.14 The survey respondents indicated an obvious preference for referring to webpages and downloading documents such as PDFs when looking for guidance materials on the Internet. They were far less likely to refer to videos or downloadable applications. When undertaking field based work, the survey respondents indicated that they would prefer to take printed materials with them or digital files pre-downloaded onto a device rather than rely on Internet connections to refer to a webpage.
- 3.4.15 In the further comments, several respondents explained why they don't refer to guidance resources. The reasons given relate to difficulties of knowing where to find information, remote Internet connections and already being familiar with archaeological techniques. Many of these reiterated that they preferred to be given a demonstration of what to do and then practice how to do it, and that guidance resources serve as useful reminders after training and if someone hasn't used a technique recently. A couple of the further comments addressed who they thought should be creating 'how-to' guidance resources. One respondent mentioned a lack of direct archaeological support outside time limited projects and another respondent

thought that community volunteer groups could be adapting resources to address their own needs.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

- 4.1.1 Community archaeology guidance resources have been produced by numerous national and local organisations and there is already a large amount of material readily available on a wide range of topics. Nevertheless, there has been little concerted coordination on the production of guides for community volunteer archaeologists, and some of the information available is considered conflicting or confusing. There has been some replication on topics and there are gaps in the range of subjects available, notably on aspects of organising projects and reporting and disseminating the results. Rather than duplicating effort, there is scope to reuse and refine existing information and ensure that more community volunteer archaeologists are aware of what already exists. This does, however, require organisations to have the funding and the capacity to update and distribute their existing guidance resources or grant copyright licensing which allows others to copy, distribute and modify them. National organisations including the Council for British Archaeology and funders such as the Heritage Lottery Fund have a responsibility to guide, coordinate and evaluate future resource creation.
- 4.1.2 Many of the guides specifically aimed at community volunteer archaeologists in recent years have been created as outputs of fixed-term grant funded projects, notably those funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. There appears to have been little formal evaluation or revision of their use, particularly beyond the lifetime or original scope of a project. There are also reference guides produced for a professional, academic or general interest audiences which are used by volunteer archaeologists and community archaeologists undertaking their own research. These usually provide useful background context but do not necessarily provide step-by-step instructions suited to the scale and scope of community archaeology projects. This review shows that there is a demand for simple ‘how-to’ guides with signposting to more detailed information. This is in addition to rather than instead of initial training and ongoing support by other archaeologists in person. Community volunteer archaeologists are more likely to consult a person rather than a guide in order to learn a new subject or troubleshoot problems.
- 4.1.3 The study has also shown the laudable extent to which community volunteer archaeologists want to ensure that they are following best practice. They trust guides produced by well-recognised and easily identifiable sources, particularly at national and regional (county) level. Previous cross-sector efforts to bring together guidance, such as ISGAP, are now out-of-date and are not widely known. As this review has shown, community groups and volunteer archaeologists frequently seek recommendations and advice from other community volunteer archaeologists, often adapting existing guidance resources to suit their specific circumstances. The extent of knowledge exchange and local adaption of guidance resources has probably been underestimated, and indicates that the professional archaeological sector needs to do more to understand and aid the transfer of accurate, reliable and user-friendly information amongst community volunteer archaeologists. The profile of community volunteer archaeologists who engaged with this study suggests that there are a relatively small number of (paid and unpaid) individuals leading community

archaeology projects, therefore dissemination of guidance and recommendations is reliant on them knowing what is available.

- 4.1.4 An understanding of who is accessing these guides and how they are using them is crucial to ensure that community archaeology guides are actually used and that they help to create robust and disseminated research as well as skilled and confident practitioners. This research indicates that there are highly individual learning preferences and that 'one size' is unlikely to fit all. Therefore, different and flexible approaches tailored to the intended audience are required. An important step in achieving this is to consult users before developing new guidance resources and ask them to test and provide feedback on materials, rather than making assumptions about what they will and can use.
- 4.1.5 Most of the 'how-to' guides readily accessible to community volunteer archaeologists are printed publications or digital resources online. This study has shown that there is not an outright preference for the format of guidance resources, but many community volunteer archaeologists still like to have written notes to accompany electronic media such as videos, and want to refer to hard copies of information when collecting data or taking a break from using screens. There is some, but not universal, reception to digital formats such as video and software applications. Thus far, there has been limited and specific development of guidance resources in these formats. It is possible that digital formats would be better received for 'desktop' rather than field-based activities such as GIS. Users need to be reassured about the content quality and still have access to written and printable formats. It is possible that, as these new digital formats and use of mobile devices becomes more prevalent, that there will be greater trust and use of them.
- 4.1.6 Many of the guides identified in this research were not mentioned by and, in some instances, not recognised by the community volunteer archaeologists surveyed. It is therefore unclear how many of the existing guides are regularly used. For community volunteer archaeologists, there is an evident problem of knowing what has already been produced and easily finding it. There is widespread use of non-digital formats, and especially personal reference libraries of books that are familiar and readily to hand. Online, there is a tendency not to refer to specific sources of guidance but to use Internet search engines to find information. The generation of search results rely on the keyword query and the metadata associated with the content of webpages, and may not produce the most useful and relevant guidance. Search engine results can distance the material from important contextual information about the author, the intended use of the guide and other accompanying files. Webpages located a long way from the home or root page are less likely to come up in search engine results, and the content of electronic document files such as PDFs and spreadsheets are not searched. Producers of digital guidance materials need to ensure that they use techniques for search engine optimisation to improve rankings in Internet search results. A central online 'hub' to list guidance materials and share advice and skills would be very beneficial to the archaeological sector, and this was also a recommendation recently made by Frearson (2018) in the CBA's survey of community archaeology groups and volunteer archaeologists.
- 4.1.7 There was a wariness and, in several cases, hostility amongst some community volunteer archaeologists about using social media and other digital subscription

services to access guidance materials and connect with sources of support. It should not be presumed that use of social media platforms and other online services is universal, and there should be alternative means to access the same information without requiring (or even the perception of requiring) a specific website account. A popular opinion expressed by community volunteer archaeologists was that guidance resources should be free of charge, which prompts the question of who should be funding them.

4.2 Recommendations

- 4.2.1 The creation of simple clear guidance resources which include signposting to more detailed information.
- 4.2.2 The creation of coversheets and checklists to accompany existing guides which can be readily edited and adapted by community volunteer archaeologists to suit their circumstances.
- 4.2.3 The creation of a central online 'hub' to search for, access and provide feedback and comments such as user reviews on guidance resources. The database generated in this review could be used as the basis for a new hub for community archaeology knowledge exchange.
- 4.2.4 The continued adaptation and improvement of existing guidance resources, rather than creating new bespoke material.
- 4.2.5 The production and wide dissemination of more guidance on administration and management of archaeological projects, such as volunteer management, risk assessment and data protection, and on reporting and disseminating the results of research.
- 4.2.6 Greater clarification and signposting of standards and best practice from the professional archaeological sector and funders.
- 4.2.7 Improved signposting by community archaeologists and initiatives to other organisations and contacts to raise awareness of new and existing guidance resources.
- 4.2.8 Earlier and wider consultation of potential user groups, including the generation of more nuanced qualitative feedback through focus group and user testing.
- 4.2.9 The facilitation of peer support for advice and troubleshooting amongst community volunteer archaeologists, such as networking events and forums in person and online for neighbouring groups to meet and exchange information.
- 4.2.10 Promotion of an open access culture to freely share resources and facilitate reuse and modification through share-alike copyright licensing.
- 4.2.11 Employment of search engine optimisation for online guidance and, in particular, site navigation structures and webpage meta data to ensure high ranking placement for webpage and file content in Internet search results.
- 4.2.12 Ongoing evaluation of guidance resources produced as part of community archaeology projects, with lessons learned and recommendations shared for the benefit of other organisations.

- 4.2.13 The creation of a guide about how to produce resources for community volunteer archaeologists, outlining considerations such as accessibility, consultation methods and the pros and cons of different formats.
- 4.2.14 More funding and resourcing to review and update guidance resources, particularly during and after fixed-term grant-funded projects.

4.3 Future Research

- 4.3.1 There was insufficient data to draw out significant differences about how audiences of different ages use and engage with guidance materials. Younger people were also underrepresented in the CBA's survey on community archaeology (Frearson 2018).
- 4.3.2 The majority of participants in this study were already relatively experienced. Further research is required to understand the training, support and resources required for people completely new to community archaeology.
- 4.3.3 Future research should focus on the geographical differences in the use of and access to guidance resources. The aim of this study was to provide some wider context to focus group and survey responses from community volunteer archaeologists working in the NFNPA, but there were significantly fewer participants from areas such as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- 4.3.4 There is potential to explore new and innovative formats for producing guidance, to find out how people engage with different methods of presenting information and learning new skills.
- 4.3.5 The search tasks undertaken as part of the focus group meetings demonstrated that more user testing could be undertaken to understand online behaviour.
- 4.3.6 This study has found that there is considerable skills exchange between members of community archaeology groups and between those of different groups. It would be interesting to understand more about how information and skills are disseminated within and between community groups.
- 4.3.7 It is not clear how much time and external consultation goes into producing new guidance resources and maintaining existing ones. It would benefit organisations to know how much time and money might be required to ensure that there is sufficient resourcing.
- 4.3.8 There appears to be far fewer people involved in planning and managing self-led community archaeology projects than the number of people who take part in the activities they organise. It would be useful to know the scale of this and what impact it has on the capacity and sustainability of community groups.

The full report and supplementary documents can be downloaded from Oxford Archaeology's online library: <https://library.thehumanjourney.net/4636/>

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