

The Case for Archiving Legacy Archaeological Collections into tDAR: Digitizing Approaches for Preservation, Dissemination, and Access

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Abstract: Paper documents are a time proven technology for the preservation and dissemination of information. The advent of computers and the Internet have enhanced some basic concepts for which paper documents have traditionally been used, such as the management of information on an external platform. Some benefits of using computers are the speed and ease of aggregating and disseminating information. This research will review preservation methods on how to ingest a legacy archaeological collection into an international online digital archive repository called the Digital Archaeological Record (tDAR). This online repository is housed by the Center for Digital Antiquity and is a secured databank that has relational capabilities to combine various datasets from different archaeological investigations. This online archival repository was established to improve and assist in the preservation, dissemination, and access of archaeological data, which is a nonrenewable resource. The archaeological legacy collection used here is the Anasazi Origins Project (AOP). The AOP is particularly significant for its contribution to defining the Archaic northern Southwest. The benefit of ingesting this collection into tDAR is to establish the foundation to centralize various components such as paper documents, artifacts, and photographs, of the AOP collection located across the United States through virtual unification. This research contributes to the ongoing discussion of whether there is a need to establish a professional niche that effectively integrates archaeology, museum studies, archiving, and information technologies. Moreover, this research will explore the possibility of “big data” in archaeology.

About the author:

David M. Plaza is the principal investigator for the Anasazi Origins Project Digital Archives Initiative. Previously, David was a librarian assistant in Special Collections of the Golden Library and has served on the Golden Library committee at Eastern New Mexico University for improving user-friendly interfaces and access. He has also worked as an archaeological technician in the Southwest United States for several years for federal agencies, universities, and cultural resource management firms.

David’s current research focuses on digital archiving of legacy archaeological collections and datasets, ethics in archiving and preservation, creating models for archiving,

preserving and reinterpreting legacy datasets, implementing living documents approach to archiving, and using GIS as an electronic form of archiving and preservation. His current research implements a living documents approach and recursive research design to archiving and preserving paper documents into electronic databases, such as a geodatabase.

David received a BA in Anthropology from the University of New Mexico and a MA in Anthropology from Eastern New Mexico University.