

SP23.016: Digital Data Recording and Management of Archaeological Collections

Overview

The job of archaeologists often begins in the field, documenting and collecting material culture remains. Most of one's time as a working professional, however, will be spent in the laboratory. There, archaeologists begin work by creating object inventories, familiarizing themselves with the collected samples, and recording details about artifact context and/or cultural significance through systematic background research and work with affiliated groups or archives. While archaeologists have diverse aims, they all must develop effective strategies for records keeping and data management, which in turn aids the ability to protect the past and expand our understanding of it. Working together in the Bilby ceramics lab, we will create an inventory of objects destined for repatriation and begin recording details on objects from the Anthropology Department's archaeological and ethnographic collections. Throughout the process, you will gain much-needed hands-on experience working to design relational database inventory and catalog systems for objects of different sorts and of different regional, cultural and temporal classification. In addition to the first tasks described above, as part of the mentor's longer-term research goals, you will apply your new skills in the development and populating of a new database management system in anticipation of defining a new artifact typology of pre-Hispanic pottery from northern coastal Peru dating to ca. 8th century CE.

What the student will DO and LEARN

The student will learn how to design a relational database and artifact cataloging systems for archaeological materials, photograph artifacts, keep detailed records on archaeological heritage, research and education collections, process artifacts for educational purposes, prepare reports and summary artifact descriptions, and maintain searchable artifact catalogs. The student will also learn to be an organized and meticulous records keeper and begin cultivating job-ready skills including: decision making, database design, data management, working collaboratively, critical thinking, cultural history expertise, exposure to basic qualitative and quantitative research methods, artifact analysis, lab specimen processing, resource management, professional communication, legal and ethical practices concerning heritage collections.

Additional benefits

The lab skills gained in this internship will be immediately transferable into heritage management, museum, education, and other types of archaeological research settings. The collections come from several sources: donations to NAU, donations to the Hopi Tribe (which NAU is storing on behalf of a future tribal museum), NAU's past contract archaeology projects, and international archaeological investigations led by Dr. Kayeleigh Sharp, lending exceptional depth to the experience. The understanding of current legal and ethical standards in various parts of the world gained with this internship will be extremely valuable to anyone pursuing a career in archaeology or museum work. The intern will see research project[s] through and present their work at the Undergraduate Research Symposium.

Additional qualifications

- On the job training will be provided to accommodate various levels of expertise. Archaeology/anthropology majors are encouraged to apply.

Time commitment

5-10 hrs/week for 15 weeks