

**Archaeological Archives Forum
Summary Progress Report
2002–2007**

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Introduction

The [Archaeological Archives Forum](#) was established in 2002 to:

- link together in partnership all major parties with an interest in archaeological archives in order that common policies and practice can be developed and applied
- identify the courses of action necessary to further best practice in the field of archaeological archives and to effect the means to achieve this action

During its first four year's of existence the Forum pursued an agenda derived from the EH report 'Archaeological Archives; Documentation, Access and Deposition; A way Forward, 2002' which presented the results of a rapid survey undertaken across the archaeological resource management sector, identifying the issues involved and recommending an action plan for a way forward.

The 2002–6 agenda and outcomes and the proposed 2007–10 agenda (to be discussed and expanded) are as follows;

AAF Agenda 2002–6

1. Standards guidance on archive roles, procedures and responsibilities.

‘Standards guidance should be developed, under a multi logo umbrella, which sets out archive procedures, roles and responsibilities for the wider profession. This should draw on current documentation and form a set of model procedures that can be adapted at a local level. The production of draft procedures must be followed by a wide professional debate in order to assure agreement and sign up. A steering group should be charged with this role, headed up by representatives of key involved groups, such as [IFA](#), [ALGAO](#), [SMA](#), [SCAUM](#), [EH](#) and [Resource](#).’

In May 2004, 'A Review Of Standards In England For The Creation, Preparation And Deposition Of Archaeological Archives' was received by the Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF). This report highlighted major inconsistencies in the ways various types of archaeological practitioner perceive their role within the archaeological archiving process. Planning archaeologists, contracting units, specialists and museum curators were all consulted, together with as much documentation as possible. The AAF asked the [Institute of Field Archaeologists \(IFA\)](#) to manage the preparation of a best practice guidance document that brings together procedures in all stages of the archive process, that has the support of all areas of the archaeological profession, and is available to all practitioners. The final version of the document, written by Duncan H Brown of Southampton Museums, is now available to [download](#) (PDF). It is a comprehensive, practical and exhaustive guide to the whole process of archaeological archiving for both material and documentary archives, from project planning through to final deposition and the archive's subsequent curation. An IFA Standard and guidance for the creation, preparation, transfer and curation of archaeological archives will be completed this year.

2. Local Area Forums

‘Local area forums should be established which bring together the wider discipline. The Resource initiative, which intends to set up regional hubs for archives, libraries and museums, should be capitalised on as a stepping stone for wider forums. It is recommended that EH and Resource work together to examine the potential for expanding this initiative.’

English Heritage pre-empted work on this issue as all the EH regional offices have successfully established regional Historic Environment Forums. The wider discipline has also been engaged in co-operative work through a series of regional research framework projects.

3. Training programmes

‘Training programmes in archaeological archive processes for the wider archaeological discipline should be devised, aimed at differing audiences and

cross sector teaching. The MDA are an ideal body to take the lead in this initiative.'

Several attempts have been made to tackle this issue, but it remains on the agenda to be pursued more rigorously. It is recommended that a small AAF working party devote some time to this matter.

4. EH box grant and museum charging policies

'EH and Resource should review both the EH box grant, and museum charging policies. Options such as a developer tax, general investment funds, and alternative sources of sustainable funding should be explored. The need for investment in digital curation should not be overlooked'.

A review of the EH box grant system has been undertaken and in consultation with Resource new procedures have been agreed. This will ensure a fairer simpler procedure for the museum service and also smooth the transfer procedure from archaeological practice to museum.

A project was undertaken on behalf of Resource (now MLA) and the Forum which resulted in the report 'Access to archaeological archives', by Val Bott (2003), [DOC](#) | [PDF](#). This study sought to define costs associated with the storage of, and provision of access to, archaeological archives in museums.

5. Standards guidance for temporary storage of archives

'Standards guidance for temporary storage of archaeological collections should be developed for both museums and contractors. Current standards should be utilised to produce baseline guidance. This initiative should be linked to the review of the current museum registration standards proposed by Resource. The new standards should be developed under a multi logo umbrella, including the SMA, IFA, ALGAO, Resource, and EH.'

This agenda item was subsumed into agenda item number 1. See above.

6. PPG 15/16 revision

'EH and Resource should seek to influence DCMS and DTLR on the need to revise PPG16 to include the duty of care to medium and long term storage of archaeological materials, and the costs involved in storage and curation.'

An AAF working party was formed to address this issue. Basic principles and a form of words were agreed and provided for the EH representative on the ODPM working party. This had a successful outcome as the suggestions were fully incorporated in the latest revision of the text. However the ODPM initiative to revise the PPGs stalled with the onset of the Heritage Protection Reform work which will lead to a draft bill in April. Work on keeping the DCMS briefed to ensure we are involved in any future revision to the PPGs continues.

7. SMA museum collecting areas and policies project

The SMA initiative which will map museum collecting areas should be broadened to include collecting policies. The results should be used to inform the wider discipline on combining collecting policies with national, regional and local research agendas where relevant, and also where resources should be targeted to counteract gaps in provision.

This project was successful and concluded with a report and on-line interactive map:

[Archaeological Collections Areas Database and Map](#) (Society of Museum Archaeologists, 2003), a survey commissioned in September 2002 by the Society of Museum Archaeologists, with funding provided by English Heritage. The research was carried out by Val Bott, a museum consultant.

8. Framework for archaeological selection strategies

English Heritage should collate the views of all sectors of the profession on a proposed national framework for the selection, retention, and discard of archaeological archives. The results from this study will be analysed along with the results of the SMA mapping project (10.2.4), in order to draw up an overall position statement, which will be brought before the Archaeological Archives Forum (10.4) for endorsement.

A project, funded by Resource, undertook a first stage in a process which would eventually provide a full decision making framework for archaeological selection strategies. This stage aimed to map the archaeological process across the whole spectrum of archaeological work, identifying decision making points and the relevant consultation resources necessary to the selection process. A draft report was prepared which unfortunately could not quite fulfil the original brief. It is essential that this work is revisited.

9. Disaster management planning guidelines

Disaster management planning guidelines for archaeological contractors should be drafted. These should be produced under the auspices of the IFA.

This project was completed successfully:

[Disaster management planning for archaeological archives](#), by Kenneth Aitchison (2004), published as the Institute of Field Archaeologists Technical Paper 8. This paper sets out in the required detail the considerations that need to be addressed in preparing and implementing a disaster management plan for archaeological archives. [PDF]

10. Archaeology and the law

The IFA should produce a guidance note on archaeology and the law, which should include model clauses for archaeological contracts.

The IFA began to work on this project but unfortunately, due to the complicated issues involved, work has stalled and it is now dormant. It was mooted that the SMA would provide a discussion paper, and this idea should be revisited.

11. Grant procedures and model briefs

IFA, ALGAO and EH should carry out a scoping project to review current grant procedures and model briefs in order to determine how new standards, which should incorporate a wider view of dissemination up to and including deposition in a public repository, can be implemented and monitored.

English Heritage have revised their grant procedures to incorporate the wider view of dissemination and deposition, the final performance indicator of any agreement is now tied to archive deposition. ALGAO have yet to review their model grants and procedures but EH are in dialogue with ALGAO UK executive about this issue now that the new UK organisation has bedded in.

12. Conferences

The Forum have held three large scale successful day conferences to publicise this agenda and to gain approval for it's initiatives. The third conference in 2007 launched the new AAF standards and guidance and also introduced a new 3 year forward agenda which is summed up in the 2007–10 forward agenda document.