

Visualisation in Archaeology  
EH Project No: 5172MAIN



# First Progress Report

---

10 July 2008



ENGLISH HERITAGE

**Visualisation in Archaeology**

funded by

English Heritage  
under the HEEP scheme.

[www.viarch.org.uk](http://www.viarch.org.uk)

This is the First Progress Report of the HEEP-funded Visualisation in Archaeology project (HEEP Project No. 5172MAIN). The project's start date was 3 December 2007 and has funding allocated for a period of three years as set out in the project design (13/11/2007; 5172PD).

The report will review the project's first six months of operation across its main focus of core activities, as well as outline the underlying efforts to build cross-sector support and endorsement of the project's aims and objectives.

## Overview

Visualisation in Archaeology (VIA) is an umbrella organisation encompassing a number of interrelated core activities; it is a sum of its parts. Over the initial six months of VIA operation, the two project managers have directly contributed to the establishment of those research areas that have so far been initiated. Working in collaboration with the VIA Project Team in the form of Working Groups and Co-ordinators, the project managers have jointly planned the development of VIA research activities, implemented complimentary initiatives to realise their planned development, and measured and reported on their progress.

To date, two Working Groups have been formed to provide scope and direction for their own area of activity through regular, scheduled meetings. Steering Committee members are represented on each Working Group to ensure alignment with the VIA's stated aims and objectives. In addition, teams of co-ordinators have developed strategies in conjunction with the project managers to gather, organise and present data associated with other key elements of the project.

Following the forthcoming Steering Committee meeting, this provisional report will be expanded to include a 'Next Step' section to reflect the Committee's collective response to the VIA's first phase of activity, to indicate future development, and to outline project expansion. In its final form, this First Progress Report will be posted on the project's website.

Due to a number of external and internal considerations which have directly impacted on the project start-up, specific project activities have been re-prioritised in the first year of operation. It is anticipated that the tasks identified in the project design and the order in which they are undertaken will be back on track in the second and third years. Conference planning will get underway following the 2008 Workshop.

IFA support and endorsement of the VIA project has been sought and received at an operational level, although it has been stated that more substantial involvement is possible but would be subject to a specific request. A similar arrangement is currently under negotiation with the CBA. Involvement with the AAI&S has been arranged to take place through the IFA/AAI&S Illustration & Survey Special Interest Group. A recent Council meeting of the AAI&S voted to formally provide support to the VIA.

## VIA Core Activities

### 1 Project Website

As the ubiquitous internet-based method of raising an organisation's profile, the VIA website will principally present project-generated deliverables and a research-based database through a combination of dynamic content, and search and display information. The Steering Committee, in consultation with the funding body, will explore a policy of 'open access' publication based on the Wellcome Trust model in order to maximise distribution.

Website co-ordinators: Garry Gibbons and Steve Cheshire, with contributions from the project team.

#### 1.1

##### *Action*

Content, design and construction

##### *Timeline*

Weeks 2-3

##### *Benefit*

Systematically present results of the project's research. Support an academic resource database. Showcase Best Practice case studies. Announce project news and events.

##### *% Complete*

100%

##### *Comments*

Areas of development and expansion will be continually assessed by the Steering Committee.

##### *Next step*

Develop database for Academic Resource.

#### 1.2

##### *Action*

FlashPaper-based dissemination.

##### *Timeline*

Week 15

##### *Benefit*

Transforms any printable document into compact, web-friendly, fast-loading files that can be linked to or embedded in any web page and include multi-media content.

##### *% Complete*

100% adopted; ongoing development.

##### *Comments*

FlashPaper is cross-browser, cross-platform and cross-device compatible. Requires Flash player (included on most computers or available as free download).

*Next step*

Explore full potential for displaying FlashPaper-based content.

## **2 2008 Workshop**

The VIA project centres on a series of annual workshops. This 2008 Workshop represents the first in a series of three that are collectively designed to foster cross-disciplinary research, debate and analysis. Each workshop will centre on a main theme, and each theme will build upon the problems and innovations explored across VIA's period of tenure. Researchers or practitioners are invited to submit papers on original work from within archaeology, although contributions are particularly encouraged from other disciplines. The workshops will be hosted by Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton.

Working Group: Garry Gibbons, Professor Stephanie Moser and Sara Perry, in collaboration with Dr Simon James, Professor Sam Smiles and Professor Steve Woolgar,

### **2.1**

*Action*

Choice of 2008 Workshop theme and sessions -- the overarching workshop theme will be Visualisation and Knowledge Formation, in the context of which the following sub-themes will be explored over four sessions: Where is visualisation in archaeology today? How does visualisation communicate? How did visualisation in archaeology develop? Seeing a way forward? Papers will provide the structure for four consecutive sessions of presentation and dialogue to be held over two days.

*Timeline*

Week 20

*Benefit*

This first workshop will lay the groundwork for VIA's future meetings and related productions, including an international conference at the University of Southampton in 2010. Outcomes of the dialogue will feed into the VIA's online academic resource, and a series of working reports and best practice models will be produced over the next three years.

*% Complete*

100%

*Comments*

Session sub-themes will remain constant over the proposed Workshops to ensure a stable framework for research development.

*Next step*

Relate proposed paper abstracts to sessions.

### **2.2**

*Action*

Mailing list of invited, specialist participants.

*Timeline*

Week 20

*Benefit*

The mailing list reflects the cross-discipline ambitions of the VIA project, drawing on specialists from archaeology, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, science and technology studies, etc.

*% Complete*

100% for initial Call for Papers mailing; mailing list under constant review.

*Comments*

The mailing list will be interrogated and refined after the first workshop in light of those specialists/subject areas that have responded and/or participated.

*Next step*

Continue to expand the mailing list.

2.3

*Action*

2008 Workshop Call for Papers – undertaken by e-mailing, announcement on the VIA project website, and through English Heritage.

*Timeline*

Week 20

*Benefit*

Papers are invited that will offer new findings arising from current research and/or will speak to innovative ways of making research accessible to various audiences (with special emphasis on management, outcomes and lessons learned).

*% Complete*

100%

*Comments*

Abstract and paper submission will be made entirely online through the project website. Abstracts deadline: 25 July 2008.

*Next step*

Collate abstracts and post online.

### **3 Strategic Report**

The Strategic Report will capture research results generated by VIA in order to provide an historic overview of visualising practice in archaeology, a statement of current visualising practice with particular attention to its role in the publication process, and to anticipate future trends of visualising techniques allied with innovative models of dissemination in light of developing 'new' technologies. In its first phase, a working copy of the Report will be disseminated to various constituencies within the heritage sector, allowing a period of 12 months in which feedback and comment will be actively sought, collated and assessed prior to the production of a final Report in the VIA's publication phase post-2010. In addition to the incorporation of direct feedback from the sector, the Report will acknowledge the published results of previous research to inform issues of

professional development, standards and values. Finally, a series of key recommendations and a short-term action plan will be proposed.

Working Group: Garry Gibbons, Professor Stephanie Moser, Dr Simon James, Trevor Pearson and Rob Read.

### 3.1

#### *Action*

Sector endorsement and co-operation – initial contact has been made with the sector's principal organisations to request explicit endorsement of the aims and objectives of the Report. In addition, representatives of these organisations have been invited to join the Working Group in order to contribute to the Report's scope, content and production.

#### *Timeline*

Weeks 26-32

#### *Benefit*

The Report will limit its focus to visualisations commissioned and produced specifically by and for archaeological practitioners. In part, the rationale for turning our gaze inward on the profession is to allow the results of this research to draw upon and compliment previously published surveys. Engagement in the Report by the IFA, CBA, AAI&S and English Heritage will provide a sector-wide perspective and a broad representation of expertise.

#### *% Complete*

50%

#### *Comments*

Following initial meetings between project staff and the sector's principal organisations, the CBA and the IFA are undertaking internal consultations regarding their potential involvement with the Strategic Report. English Heritage are also considering their involvement on a departmental basis. The joint IFA/AAI&S Illustration & Survey Special Interest Group has committed to co-operating, and will be represented on the Working Group by their Chair, Rob Read. The AAI&S will similarly feed into the Report by way of the Illustration & Survey SIG.

#### *Next step*

Finalise potential IFA and CBA involvement.

### 3.2

#### *Action*

Scope and content – the Report's scope and content was drafted by Garry Gibbons with contributions by members of the Working Group.

#### *Timeline*

Weeks 20-35

#### *Benefit*

The draft document has been circulated to those organisations who, it is anticipated, will nominate additional members to the current Strategic Report Working Group. The draft document also provides an indication of the Report's aims and scope, thereby providing a point of discussion.

#### *% Complete*

40%

*Comments*

Work on refining the draft scope and content document will proceed late July 2008.

*Next step*

See 3.1. Finalise Strategic Report structure and content in advance of initiating research.

3.3

*Action*

Survey – a sector-wide survey will be undertaken to inform aspects of the Strategic Report. In light of shifting technological, financial and social realities, this work will survey, analyse and report on the methods of knowledge dissemination resulting from archaeological investigations. It will also examine the skills and training requirements arising from the adoption of innovative models of publication and dissemination. The survey methodology and questionnaire has been drafted by Garry Gibbons, with contributions by members of the Strategic Report Working Group.

Survey co-ordinators: Garry Gibbons and Rob Read.

*Timeline*

Weeks 18-35

*Benefit*

The draft document has been circulated to key organisations (see 3.2 above).

*% Complete*

60%

*Comments*

English Heritage has kindly offered to pilot the survey among its staff. Work on finalising the methodology and questionnaire will proceed late July 2008. Announcements in advance of the survey's release will be co-ordinated through various media outlets of the IFA and CBA.

*Next step*

See 3.1. Finalise Survey methodology and questionnaire. Initiate pilot study.

## **4 Best Practice Case Studies**

This element of the VIA programme is designed to identify the key themes of best practice and innovation in the planning, management and delivery of effective knowledge dissemination models as a result of, but not exclusively from, archaeological investigations. By turning our attention away from traditional models of dissemination (paper-based publication), VIA acknowledges the many opportunities and challenges offered by 'new' technologies in the dissemination of archaeological knowledge and understanding. The proposed research-based archive of case studies will pull together strands from a number of knowledge communities to provide a compendium of inter-related best practice resources from a 'total project' perspective based directly on experience. Case studies will be showcased on the project website.

Best Practice co-ordinators: Garry Gibbons and Rob Read.

4.1

*Action*

Case Study scope and content – an outline document has been drafted by Garry Gibbons, with contributions by Rob Read.

*Timeline*

Weeks 18-37

*Benefit*

This resource is designed to critically showcase current non-traditional dissemination practices and should not be construed as a series of ‘must’ or ‘should’ be followed guidelines. Each case study will be relevant to the sector, provide concise and useable guidance, be directly linked to related professional issues, and kept up-to-date by inviting feedback from practising professionals and professional organisations.

*% Complete*

30%

*Comments*

The Best Practice case studies, whilst providing a stand-alone online resource, will substantially impact on the Strategic Report. Indeed, as the Strategic Report content has been developing over the past weeks, it is now acknowledged that it would be advantageous if the scope and content of the Best Practice case studies were developed in parallel with the same aspects of the Strategic Report.

*Next step*

See 3.1. Finalise scope and content. Draw up list of organisations to visit.

4.2

*Action*

Survey – the Strategic Report survey (see 3.3) will also substantially inform the Best Practice case studies.

*Timeline*

Weeks 12-37

*Benefit*

See 3.2.

*% Complete*

30%

*Comments*

See 3.3. Whilst this element of the project has been delayed, it is recognised that, as indicated above, the deliverables will be more meaningful if co-ordinated with the Strategic Report.

*Next step*

See 3.1. Finalise survey.

**5 Academic Resource: Bibliography**



The bibliographic component of the Academic Resource aims to provide users with access to a representative sample of citations of published works pertaining to the visualisation of data. The bibliography proposes to span the literature: from writings on the visual representation of archaeology, to visualisation in the wider fields of the sciences, social sciences and arts in order to offer archaeological practitioners (and the wider public) the opportunity to learn from and build upon a cross-disciplinary body of findings and experience. The VIA website will feature both a search and view component to interrogate the bibliography and a reference submission component, allowing users to submit publications for inclusion.

Co-ordinators: Sara Perry and Steve Cheshire.

## 5.1

### *Action*

Gathering and formatting content -- references will be assembled via a series of literature searches conducted through the databases Web of Knowledge, Google Scholar, International Bibliography of the Social Sciences, Anthropology Plus, JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, Periodical Index Online, Social Sciences Index, Humanities Index, ScienceDirect, and the British Humanities Index. The annotated bibliography will then be supplemented by a written call for additional contributions circulated on the project website. The system will be developed and refined over the bibliography's initial phase of deployment.

### *Timeline*

Weeks 13-27

### *Benefit*

Bibliographic references will adhere to the logic of the Harvard citation style. The bibliography is envisioned as a community-building tool whose components work together to foster conceptual reflection within archaeology, as well as to create a network of dialogue and information-sharing across disciplines.

### *% Complete*

90%

### *Comments*

On-going review of information formatting and search categories will be essential as the bibliography expands.

### *Next step*

Finalise the formatting of information prior to posting on-line.

## 5.2

### *Action*

Formatting and presenting online content -- the online bibliographic listing will include a search facility which enables users to seek out specific content by the following five categories: *Create List, Discipline, Genre of Representation, Author, and Date*. An underlying database will be constructed pulling in the data via EndNote software.

### *Timeline*

Weeks 22-27

### *Benefit*

As a critical element of VIA's contribution toward the construction of an intellectual framework for the visualisation of archaeological data, the bibliography proposes to function as a one-stop, web-based resource for the promotion of cross-discipline research.

*% Complete*

80%

*Comments*

Search categories will be reviewed as the resource develops.

*Next step*

Complete development of the website database. Post first instalment of the Bibliography on-line.

## **6 Academic Resource: Research Summaries**

The research summaries component of the Academic Resource aims to offer users access to descriptions of a sample of innovative, contemporary research projects focused on the visualisation of data. The summaries will extend across disciplinary boundaries to consider current and proposed visual projects in archaeology and the wider fields of the arts and humanities (cultural studies, visual studies, museum studies, art history), social sciences (geography, geology, sociology, anthropology), and science and technology studies. Like the bibliography, these summaries aim to link practitioners across disciplines, highlight innovative visual projects, and offer a platform for future planning and discussion of best practices around archaeological visual method and theory.

Co-ordinators: Sara Perry and Steve Cheshire.

### 6.1

*Action*

Gathering and formatting content – research summaries will be compiled by communicating with researchers through project organised activities, by contacts established through the Project Team, through attendance at conferences and via social networks. research summary e-form with a standardised series of fields to be completed—in whole or in part—at the discretion of researchers themselves. All research summary pages will follow a similar layout, identifying the project's name, researcher name(s), researcher contact information (if supplied), researcher affiliation, project keywords, a short summary of the research (in paragraph form or point-form notes), representative project imagery (with the choice to include contextualising captions, as well as the option to identify one image as the 'cover illustration'), and citation details for directly-related publications (for inclusion in the VIA bibliographic listing).

*Timeline*

Weeks 13-27

*Benefit*

Like the bibliography, these summaries aim to link practitioners across disciplines, highlight innovative visual projects, and offer a platform for future planning and discussion of best practices around archaeological visual method and theory.

*% Complete*

40%

*Comments*

Action on the Research Summaries will continue following the posting of the Bibliography. It is also expected that the gathering of summaries will initially develop at a slower rate than the Bibliography.

*Next step*

Create data collection sheets. Finalise the formatting of summaries prior to posting on-line.

6.2

*Action*

Formatting and presenting online content – upon choosing whether to view all entries, or alternatively to search the research summary database for particular entries, users will be confronted with a list ranging from all to zero records displayed in alphabetical order (by author surname) alongside an associated image, project title and keywords. Users may then click on an image or project title to view more detailed research summary information.

*Timeline*

Weeks 22-27

*Benefit*

Research summaries will be presented online in alphabetical order by author surname(s), alongside a representative image (if available), project title, and associated keywords. Users of the Academic Resource will be able to click on either the project title or image to access the actual summary page which will feature specific contact details, researcher affiliations, additional images, a research description (summary statement), and relevant bibliographical material (hyperlinked to the bibliographic listing).

*% Complete*

30%

*Comments*

Search fields to be agreed by co-ordinators.

*Next step*

Complete development of the website database. Post first instalment of the Research Summaries on-line.