

Visualisation in Archaeology  
EH Project No: 5172MAIN



# Fifth Progress Report

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ENGLISH HERITAGE

**Visualisation in Archaeology**

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

This is the Fifth 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). This progress report will summarise the project's activities covering the first half of its final year.

#### Overview

Visualisation in Archaeology (VIA) is now nearing its (revised) completion date of May 2011 following on from its final major event, the VIA International Conference. Over the past 6 months a number of project activities have neared their completion or have entered their final phases and are summarised as follows.

A series of wide-ranging surveys exploring the techniques and processes involved in the production of visual images were concluded during the summer of 2010 with analysis of the data and writing up of the results currently underway. In order to identify which organisations within the archaeology sector featured in-house graphics offices, a telephone survey was undertaken of IfA member organisations whose core activities included archaeological research and fieldwork. The resulting list of in-house teams included details of future respondent's who had agreed to undertake the VIA Snapshot Survey. Programmed to be completed on the 15 April 2010, the VIA Snapshot Survey collected detailed information relating to each in-house graphics teams' activities as carried out on the survey date. The survey data provided a baseline audit of imaging professionals and the work they carried out. In parallel with the VIA Snapshot Survey, graphics managers representing larger in-house graphics offices were approached to undertake a structured interview survey. Finally, the VIA has, with the kind assistance of the Association of Archaeological Illustrators & Surveyors (AAI&S), updated AAI&S members' contact details in order to identify freelance archaeological illustrators – whose contact details have been particularly difficult to obtain – who might undertake the VIA Snapshot Survey.

Work focusing on inter-disciplinary network building between visibility-related research and practice remains ongoing and is featured on the project website in the form of the VIA Academic Resource comprising an inter-disciplinary research showcase of innovative visual projects and an inter-disciplinary listing of publications relating to the visual sphere.

The VIA's third and final annual workshop was hosted by the University of Southampton in the autumn of 2010. Spanning two days, the workshop was structured to explore in greater detail issues that had emerged during the previous seminars through a series of sessions specifically directed toward focused discussions on the workshop's main themes.

Finally, preparations are well underway for the VIA International Conference to be hosted by the Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton, 18-20 April 2011.

During the final months of the VIA project, a strategic report is planned to detail the project's scope, methods, principal results and recommendations.

## VIA Core Activities: Summary of current status and outline of intended action over the next six months

### **1 2010 VIA Workshop**

Workshops were planned for each of the project's three years, each Workshop progressively informing the content and scope of the next. The third and final VIA Workshop – *Creation, Communication, Circulation, Consumption* -- was held at the University of Southampton on 21-22 October 2010. The Workshop attracted 22 researchers and practitioners from across Europe, North America and Africa, each contributing to a series of structured discussions following position statements relating to the workshop's main themes. Following feedback from the 2008 Workshop, participation in the third Workshop was by invitation by each of the session's chairs.

Organising Committee: Garry Gibbons, Professor Stephanie Moser and Sara Perry, in collaboration with Dr Simon James, Professor Sam Smiles and Dr Graeme Earl.

#### 1.1

##### *Action*

Two day workshop comprising four half day sessions, each session exploring one of the workshop's main themes.

##### *Timeline*

Week 133

##### *Benefit*

Content of the 2010 workshop was informed directly by issues arising from the 2008 and 2009 workshops, thereby providing coherence, continuity and a degree of 'closure' to the series of VIA workshops. The 2010 Workshop themes reflected fundamental points of debate still to be explored within the archaeology sector relating to all phases of an image's 'working' life.

##### *% Complete*

100%

##### *Comments*

The 2010 Workshop was live streamed via the project's website.

##### *Next step*

Results of the 2010 VIA Workshop will now inform further investigation through the 2011 VIA International Conference.

### **2 2010 VIA Workshop Report**

The report seeks to summarise the thematic threads of the VIA 2010 Workshop, draw attention to undercurrents of contention which may be impacting on the productivity and influence of the VIA project, and ultimately, sketch out an organisational strategy to help guide VIA international conference in 2011.

Co-ordinators: Sara Perry and Garry Gibbons

## 2.1

### *Action*

Based on the review of mid-conference feedback statements, post-workshop assessments, and audio recordings from the event, this report seeks to lay out the technical and epistemological implications of VIA's third workshop

### *Timeline*

Week 142

### *Benefit*

Feedback from previous workshops have garnered virtually universal praise for their organisation, direction, community-building, and constructive interchange.

### *% Complete*

70%

### *Comments*

The 2010 VIA Workshop Report will be circulated through the project's website.

### *Next step*

A proposed journal paper (Social Archaeology) will pull together all three workshop reports.

## **3 VIA Surveys**

As central elements of the VIA project, this series of practitioner-focused surveys are designed to provide a wide-ranging insight into the circumstances and processes which contribute to the production of images within archaeology.

Co-ordinator: Garry Gibbons

### 3.1

#### *Action*

*Telephone Survey* – a contact list was constructed from an initial comprehensive list of archaeological and heritage organisations, numbering in excess of 500, compiled principally from the IfA 2009 Members Handbook. This initial list was further refined to some 280 organisations through the exclusion of those organisations not directly associated with archaeology (research and fieldwork) and through the setting aside of local authority planning archaeologists and, with a few exceptions, museums.

#### *Timeline*

Week 123

#### *Benefit*

The telephone survey provides a coarse-grained understanding of those organisations within the archaeology/heritage sector who do (and do not) produce images, the technologies employed, and basic staff profiles of those producing images. Where in-house graphics teams are identified, respondent information is sought for the VIA Snapshot Survey (see 3.2) and, as appropriate, the structured interview survey (see 3.3).

*% Complete*

100%

*Comments*

124 organisations contacted and data collected.

*Next step*

Now the telephone survey has identified respondents for the VIA Snapshot Survey, the questionnaires will be reviewed in order to explore imaging practices in those organisations which do not employ dedicated imaging staff but who, nevertheless, produce images.

3.2

*Action*

*VIA Snapshot Survey* – following a period when the questionnaire was piloted within English Heritage and a number of commercial units, the survey was finalised and mailed on 15 April 2010. The telephone survey (see 3.1 above) collected general information from 124 organisations, with an emphasis on who created graphics within each organisation, the type of graphics produced and their means of production. As a result, thirty-eight organisations were identified as having in-house graphics capabilities comprising one or more full-/part-time employees dedicated to the production of graphic images. However, this final number was soon reduced to thirty-seven as a result of the current economic environment. All questionnaires were anonymised

*Timeline*

Week 120

*Benefit*

The snapshot survey was structured to capture information from each in-house graphics team by collecting data in four core areas, namely, the parent organisation, the illustrators, the products and professional standards.

*% Complete*

100%

*Comments*

The survey achieved an 80% return.

*Next step*

Analysis of survey data and publication of results.

3.3

*Action*

*Structured Interview Survey* – this interview-style questionnaire was specifically aimed at Senior Illustrators/Graphics Department Managers, and has been designed as a predominantly attitudinal survey. The questionnaire was piloted with the cooperation of a small number of commercial units.

*Timeline*

*Week 123*

*Benefit*

The questionnaire seeks to tease out managerial attitudes to the professional status of illustrators, to assess the value and purpose of skills development, and identify the nature, if any, of a professional culture within archaeological graphics. Further, the survey attempts to chart past and future trends within the graphics environment.

*% Complete*

100%

*Comments*

Nineteen graphics managers undertook the interview survey.

*Next Step*

Analysis of survey data and publish results.

#### **4 VIA International Conference**

A wide-ranging international conference held at the Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton, 18-20 April 2011. The steering committee will work towards defining and structuring the aims of the conference. Contributors will be invited to present publication standard papers.

Organising committee: Garry Gibbons, Professor Stephanie Moser and Sara Perry.

4.1

*Action*

Post 'Call for Sessions/Papers' on the VIA website and distribute on various mailing lists.

Timeline

Week 154

*Benefit*

Designed to bring together all aspects of inter-related research concerned with the visual representation of data.

*% Complete*

40%

*Comment*

As the 2010 VIA Workshop and the International Conference would have been within weeks of each other, the Conference has been re-scheduled to beyond the initial project end date into Spring 2011.

*Next Step*

Finalise sessions.