

A DAY (OR 2) IN THE LIFE OF THE MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAM

July 29, 2011 michigan Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Science Anthropology, archaeologist, Archaeology, Campus Archaeology, CAP, Chris Stawski, Community Archaeology, director, Excavation, Facebook, Grace Krause, Grandparents University, historic archaeologist, http, Katy Meyers, Kristin Sewell, Lynne Goldstein, Michigan State University, online platforms, paint brushes, precision measuring device, researcher, Richard MacNeish, Seuss, Social Media, Twitter

The following is a combined Day of Archaeology post from the Michigan State University Campus Archaeology Program (<http://campusarch.msu.edu>).

Since we have completed our major piece of fieldwork for the summer at the beginning of July, I asked our graduate fellows to talk about what they are doing now. I wrap up the discussion at the end of this piece. The first picture is from our summer field school excavations, the second from a series of tours we regularly do (this one was Grandparents University).

Lynne Goldstein, Director of CAP



Chris Stawski

As MSU's previous Campus Archaeologist, a day for an archaeologist like me is concentrated on the educational aspects of our program and of archaeology. Ranging from working with undergraduate interns on their semester projects in archaeology, to writing technical reports on fieldwork and site mitigation, to the basic social outreach done through Twitter, Facebook and the CAP blog, each aspect centers around education. It's these day-to-day operations that educate the public, the community, and our students about the methods, theories and platforms that we as archaeologists use to preserve, protect and share MSU's historic past.

Katy Meyers

As the new Campus Archaeologist for MSU, most of my time is currently spent trying to transition into the position and get ready for the upcoming year. While archaeology does involve a lot of excavation and work with material culture, it also requires planning and working with the public. Currently I'm working on developing a social media plan with one of the previous Campus Archaeologists. Creating a relationship with the campus community requires work with a number of online platforms to make the work accessible, open and relevant. All the archaeological work that is done on campus is tweeted, facebooked, photographed, and published online. This requires not only careful documentation of everything that we're doing, but also a method for disseminating the information in a cohesive, standardized and — most importantly — quick manner. By making the campus aware of our activities, we spread information about archaeology, and we also create connections with various facilities on campus that may be doing potentially destructive work.



Grace Krause

While I love dirt and the glamorous excitement of new archaeological finds, my life in the lab is far more satisfying to me. After spending several years in museums, detailed work with collections has become the most enjoyable aspect of archaeology for me. Lately for Campus Archaeology, I have been analyzing our faunal collections. My day in the lab requires bone manuals for identification, a microscope and magnifying glass to look for small modifications, and calipers (a precision measuring device) to take measurements that help determine species and age. Some broken bones I am able to reconstruct to help with identification. After identifying a bone, I enter it into a database with site information, bag number, species, any modifications, and other potentially important information; the bone is then drawn on a separate form if there is evidence of human modification. Of course, it is always better to record more information than you think you might use. Finally, specimens are tagged and returned to their cabinets for

safekeeping. Organizing collections such as this is a key aspect of archaeological research. Without such work, we could not make informed interpretations about the frequently confusing remains we see at sites.

Kristin Sewell

Imagining a typical archaeologist, many people envision a khaki-clad figure huddled over a hole with paint brushes and trowel, rear-end stuck in the air like a stink beetle. For most archaeologists, realizing this popular image is a high-point of the year: the much anticipated field season. But, what do archaeologists do during the rest of the year? For me (a historic archaeologist), the bulk of my archaeological research is done in preparation for the field season and happens in the library and archive. Libraries contain secondary sources like biographies, histories, and maps that help me recreate the past and identify previous research and interpretations of cultures and people. In the archives, I scour journals, letters, ledgers and other primary sources that describe the experiences of specific individuals. I try to find that small voice that reaches out from the past to direct my research in the present—I once heard an archival researcher compare this research as the moment when Dr. Seuss' beloved Horton finally hears the Whos on that speck of dust "We are here! We are here! We are here!"—With research from primary and secondary sources in hand, archaeologists like me can better identify where to dig, how the land there was used, why it was used, and what we might recover during the archaeological field season. This is the life of a typical archaeologist, a life spent as much in the dust as it is in the dirt.

Lynne Goldstein

The Michigan State University Campus Archaeology Program is unique – we not only step in to collect site information before it is destroyed by development, we do work on any and ALL ground disturbances on campus – from new buildings to new sidewalks, trees and shrubs. Another important aspect of our program is education, as both Chris and Katy have noted above. Both Grace and Kristin have talked about lab and archival work that is critical for establishing context and helping in interpretation. We actively try to include the entire MSU community – from staff, faculty, administrators, students, and visitors to alumni and the general community – in everything we do. There is no question that this program is the most transparent and collaborative program I have ever directed or participated in. We want people to know who we are, what we are doing, why we are doing it, what we are finding, and what we have produced. On this day of archaeology, we hope that we provided a glimpse into our program, and we welcome you to visit us on a regular basis, via our website (see above), Twitter (@capmsu), Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/capmsu>), Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/capmsu>), or in person! Hope everyone learns a lot today and gets excited about archaeology around the world!