

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DISTRACTIBLE DESK AND DATA JOCKEY

July 30, 2016 Jolene Smith Day of Archaeology 2016, Digital Archaeology, Explore Posts, Historical Archaeology, Public Archaeology

I'm Jolene Smith. I manage archaeology site data for Virginia at the Department of Historic Resources. We've got around 44,000 recorded archaeological sites in our inventory, with more coming every day. Archaeology in Virginia is driven by research and by compliance with environmental review regulations (which are, in turn, triggered by doing things like building a road, a housing development, a solar energy farm, you get the picture).

While we've got a lot of paper records, most of the work I do day-to-day is in databases (Here's last year's [post](#) as an example). I won't post a picture of my desk and computer this time, I promise.

This year, I've set my sights on taking all of this incredible information and making big plans to link it together and make it useful for professional archaeologists and the general public.

My big project lately is to lay the groundwork for a digital repository for archaeology reports, photos, maps, etc. I'll be continuing this project through the summer as part of the [Institute on Digital Archaeology Method and Practice](#).

We are fortunate to have the [ASV](#), a spectacular avocational archaeology organization, here. As part of the ASV's Certification Program, DHR is hosting a week-long lab school at our curation facility and I'll be showing folks how to record sites in Virginia through VCRIS, our (registration-based) online system. But I've been thinking a lot lately about getting information from the general public, as well. Archaeologists get tons of calls and emails from people with found artifacts looking for more information and small family cemeteries to record. What's the best way for them to get us information?

I spent my afternoon concocting big plans to develop free, easy to use tools to document this kind of information and then send it along to us (or any other organization) using mobile apps and easy-to-use web mapping.

While I was pulling tools together, I also returned to an idea I've been slowly working on for the past year: a matrix of variously free, cheap, and easy to use digital tools for heritage institutions and organizations.

🔑 Tool Name	🔗 URL	☑ Ease of Use	📄 Data Control/Security	☑ Open Source or Prop...	📝 Comments	🏷 tags
Airtable	https://airtable.com/	easy/non-technical	Cloud-hosted/Less Secure	Proprietary		collaboration database

On a completely different note, I also started planning for a redesign of the *History Surrounds Us* interactive compass exhibit for an event at the Virginia Capitol Square in September. Expect a big revamp from [this](#).

See- told you I was distractable. Eventually, this will be all nice and openly accessible on GitHub as part of [Local Preservation School](#).

I also asked my colleagues for updates for today's Day of Archaeology post. Dee DeRoche, our curator says:

I've been responding to emails this morning, including brainstorming for ways to present archaeology at a late September Fair at Richmond's Capitol Square and planning a spring workshop for collections professionals with other Council of Virginia Archaeologists. The afternoon will be devoted to preparation for next week's Lab Workshop for Archaeological Technician Certification students, laying out supplies and equipment for processing artifacts, sorting flotation samples, and rehousing a forty year old collection into archivally sound containers.

Joanna Wilson Green, Easement Archaeologist (and the person you call if you find human burials) reports:

I spent yesterday in Arlington discussing the best method for identifying unmarked graves in a heavily urban context, complicated by the presence of multiple underground utilities and high public visibility.

We've got regional archaeologists out in the field, a State Archaeologist working on synthesis of last year's excavations, and compliance archaeologists making sure all the Ps and Qs are minded.

So much to do! But there's plenty of time. We're archaeologists; we think in very long time-frames.

Until next year...