

Archaeology Data Service Online

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Editor

Alicia Wise, Data Coordinator
King's Manor, Department of
Archaeology
University of York, York YO1 2EP
+44 (0)1904 433 954 phone
+44 (0)1904 433 939 fax
[email](#)

Director's Welcome

This is the first edition of **ADS Online**: the web version of the Archaeology Data Service newsletter. We hope to develop **ADS NEWS** and **ADS Online** as regular bulletins, distributed twice a year, and covering all aspects of archiving, preservation, standards, and re-use of digital archaeological data.

The ADS is in its infancy: still less than six months old, but we've been encouraged by the welcome we've received travelling around the country meeting archaeologists, whether they be contractors, curators, or archive professionals. Everyone seems to agree that digital data in archaeology is getting out of hand and that the birth of the ADS is a timely opportunity for the profession to address this problem.

Archaeology is in a special position in that much of the creation of its data results from the destruction of primary evidence. Increasingly the digital record may be the only record of precious research materials. With the ever-increasing pace of change in computer hardware and software, in a few years' time that data may be lost for ever. Our aim is to collect, describe, catalogue, preserve, and provide user support for all digital resources that are created as a product of archaeological research.

The ADS is already working with the national and local archaeological agencies, and those research councils involved in the funding of archaeological research, to negotiate deposition of project data. This will include data derived from fieldwork as well as desk-based studies. The types of data involved include: text reports, databases (related to excavated contexts or artefacts, for example), images (including aerial photographs, remote sensing imagery, photographs of sites, features and artefacts), digitised maps and plans, numerical datasets related to topographical and sub-surface surveys and other locational data, as well as reconstruction drawings.

Thanks to the Internet, that data does not need to be collected together in a single physical location. Indeed, given that much of it is constantly changing and being updated, there are considerable advantages in keeping data distributed. At the ADS, we will be working with

others to develop an integrated catalogue enabling a "one-stop shop" for the archaeological researcher.

It's an exciting task, but also a daunting one. Fortunately we don't have to do it all by ourselves. For one thing, we're part of the newly established [Arts & Humanities Data Service](#) (AHDS) and we'll be combining our efforts with those of our four sister services in [history](#), [texts](#), [performing](#) and [visual arts](#). For another, there are also many others in Archaeology with experience and interests in this area. In many cases all we need to do is provide a catalyst. If you want to find out more, or contribute to our aims, then do keep in touch.

Julian D Richards, Director

Accessing Scotland's Past

In February we learnt that a joint ADS / [RCAHMS](#) proposal had been selected for funding by [SCRAN](#) (the Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network - a Millennium Project). RCAHMS is responsible for compiling and maintaining the National Monument Record of Scotland (NMRS). This consists of textual information on archaeological sites and historic buildings throughout Scotland, together with the varied collections of associated material: photographs, maps, books, manuscripts, plans and so forth. Since 1990 the archaeological section of the NMRS has been held in computerised form in an Oracle database, which currently contains material on around 96,000 sites. In early 1996 the architectural section of the application was completed and data entry began in February 1996. By completion the database will contain around 250,000 entries for sites and monuments, with an accompanying index to the collections - in particular to the archive of around 500,000 pictures of sites and buildings. Through a suite of GIS applications the core NMRS data is also linked to field notes, measured survey plans, aerial survey records, and to collections of vertical air photographs of Scotland which cover the entire country and comprise over 1 million images. SCRAN have agreed to fund a pilot project to make the NMRS records for the West of Scotland and Shetland available via the Internet. For the ADS this will provide a pilot for the development of its integrated metadata catalogue using well-developed and tested archaeological information resources. It is envisaged that the tools developed will be transferable to other aspects of its catalogue.

Upcoming Features

This first issue of [ADS Online](#) is primarily an introduction to the ADS. We hope that future issues will cover more general digital archiving issues in archaeology, and will include guest columns. Look for articles about the U.S. Archaeological Data Archive Project and the ALGAO/RCHME SMR Data Standard.

Resource Discovery Workshop

On March 24th and 25th, the ADS will be hosting a Resource Discovery Workshop (the title is encoded jargon meaning 'Metadata Workshop'). Metadata means information about information and refers to summary descriptions of digital files which allow them to be related to similar digital resources. Participants in this session have been invited from a cross-section of archaeological sub-disciplines including aerial photography, archaeological bibliographies,

computing, contracting units, cultural heritage management, documentation and standards, environmental archaeology, finds research, geophysics, local government, museums, national government, NMRs, public archaeology, SMRs, trusts, and underwater archaeology. The goal of this workshop is to discuss the description of digital archaeological data, and produce a report (to be widely circulated) proposing a draft metadata framework for archaeological research. To order a copy, please email [email](#).

ADS Organisation

Staff

[Julian Richards](#), Director

As part-time Director, Julian takes overall responsibility for the day-to-day running of the ADS, and for project finances. He also takes a lead role in liaison with external organisations.

Paul Miller, Collections Manager

In April Paul will be joining the ADS as its Collections Manager. In his new post, Paul will be overseeing the development of the integrated metadata catalogue with pointers to digital information held by other archaeological organisations, and will provide technical expertise for accessioning, mounting, and cataloguing ADS collections.

Alicia Wise, Data Coordinator

In post since October 1996, Alicia is responsible for approaching grant holders, negotiating with depositors and acquiring access to collections. She manages user services for the ADS, and is the first point of contact for information about data deposition, joint cataloguing, or data access and re-use.

Maureen Poulton, Administrator

Maureen has worked at the University of York since 1990, with the Department of Archaeology since 1992 and with the ADS since 1996. She is responsible for essential administrative and financial management.

Management Committee

The Archaeology Data Service is managed by a consortium of UK institutions, led by the [University of York](#), and including the Universities of [Birmingham](#), [Bradford](#), [Glasgow](#), [Kent at Canterbury](#), [Leicester](#), [Oxford](#), and [Newcastle](#), with the [Council for British Archaeology](#), the [Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England](#) (on behalf of the Royal Commissions of [Scotland](#) and Wales), [the British Academy](#), and the [Arts and Humanities Data Service](#). The ADS Management Committee is composed of representatives from these institutions.

Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee facilitates communication between the ADS and the wider archaeological community. The committee is chaired by [Professor Rosemary Cramp](#), and representatives are drawn from 40 organisations in the UK. Please [click here](#) for more information about the advisory committee.

Mailing List Details

Please send the ADS an email to let us know if you, or someone you know, would like to receive a personal copy of the next **ADS NEWS** issue, or if you would like an e-mailed announcement that the next version of **ADS Online** is available. Please also indicate whether or not you would like to receive a copy of the Resource Discovery Workshop report. All you have to do is email the ADS at [email](#)

If you have regular e-mail access, you might consider joining our mailbase discussion list ADS-ALL. [Please click here for information about joining ADS-ALL.](#)