

# Book Reviews

Willems, Willem J.H. and Monique H. van den Dries 2007.  
*Quality Management in Archaeology*.

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Reviewed by Richard Fullagar,  
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This book should be read by all Australian archaeologists with any serious interest in cultural heritage management. It has its roots in early meetings of the *Europae Archaeologiae Consilium* (<http://www.e-a-c.org/>) and the European Association of Archaeologists ([www.e-a-a.org/](http://www.e-a-a.org/)) and in a particular session titled 'Quality Assurance in Archaeology', in the 2005 meeting (Cork, Ireland). Chapters in the book trace the recent history and current status of archaeological resource management in Germany (Andrikopoulos-Strack), Ireland (two papers, one by Gowen and one by O'Rourke), Netherlands (van den Dries and Willems), Romania (Angelescu), Ontario, Canada (Ferris), Great Britain i.e. England, Scotland, Wales (Hinton and Jennings), United States of America (Peacock and Rafferty), France (Demoule) and Sweden (Lekberg). The editors invited a chapter on Australia which was not completed, but might have corrected an oddity on page 5, a reference to the now defunct Australian Institute of Professional Archaeologists (AIPA) and no mention of the longstanding peak body, the Australian Association of Consulting Archaeologists Inc. (AACAI). Hopefully this publication will inspire a comparable article in this journal.

Willems and van den Dries provide a concise statement on the various ways countries have approached archaeological heritage; and the various national experiences are as diverse as their political organisations. The USA can boast over 100 years of compliance-driven archaeology. The European Convention on the protection of the Archaeological Heritage by the Council of Europe (COE) is more recent (1992) and has been ratified by most of the 46 member countries, and European Union (EU) legislation on environmental impact assessment (Council Directive 97/11/EC) is binding on all 25 member states of the EU. Key differences in how countries manage archaeological heritage are indicated first by the nature of governmental control over the quality of archaeological work and second by how archaeological services are provided (i.e. by private consultant services or government controlled agencies). It is difficult to generalise in countries with federal systems where control resides mostly in states or provinces, such as in USA, Canada, Germany (and Australia). However, the roles of both professional associations and government agencies are not static and there is much to learn from the

experience of others. In particular, it is of considerable interest to see how different governmental regimes cope with the same core COE and EU legislation designed to protect European cultural heritage.

In France (population 63 million) there were about 3000 archaeologists but only about 20 'private' archaeologists when the book was published. Archaeological services are provided by an institute of public research under the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Research. The French government controls both the service provided and the quality assurance. Other European governments issue a license or permit to regulate the quality of practitioners (also in Northern Ireland, it being an exception in the UK, which elsewhere does not have a licensing system). Netherlands, for example, had a very restrictive licensing system, eligible only to universities, state and municipal authorities; and a system that has recently been revised so that the State Archaeological Service can now grant permission to archaeological contractors.

The Dutch system has provided an extraordinarily comprehensive quality control system with its Dutch Archaeology Quality Standard (<http://www.sikb.nl/upload/documents/archo/knauk.pdf>); a professional register provided by the Dutch Association of Archaeologists to the Ministry of Culture, and maintained by peer review and with obligations for continuing professional development; and a national research agenda (also available on <http://www.noaa.nl/content/nieuwe-content/hst1/H1.eng1.xml.asp>). The form of certification, auditing or quality control of archaeological companies has not been finalised in the Netherlands but the preferred approach in other areas appears to be government recognition of private certification (as happens, for example, in audits of Australian companies' integrated management systems which must comply with national standards). An enormous benefit of the Dutch system is that information on sites and projects is fed into a central archaeological information system. The State Inspectorate commissioned audits of how the system was working in 2005, with mixed results – 19% reports were judged to be rather badly written. A more recent review in 2008 indicated that 36.5% of sampled (n=85) excavation reports were bad (Monique van den Dries, personal communication; for results see: [http://www.erfgoedinspectie.nl/\\_media/publications/werk\\_inuitvoering\(2\).pdf](http://www.erfgoedinspectie.nl/_media/publications/werk_inuitvoering(2).pdf)). However, the key point is that reports are indeed being monitored and evaluated. Such audits, like those of the Institute of Field Archaeology in the UK (see below) are vital to quality assurance.

To varying degrees, governments have maintained the will to control the quality of archaeological work in Germany, Ireland, Netherlands and Romania and Sweden. Ontario also has a licensing system with detailed standards and guidelines. Private archaeological companies provide services in various ways and under various degrees of regulation designed to implement government responsibility and control over quality.

They do things differently in the USA and Great Britain (and Australia). Professional associations exist in these countries but no government legislation demands membership of such associations; and disbarred archaeologists or unqualified practitioners are not restricted from practising. Attempts to legally require membership of professional associations (which demand levels of qualification and accreditation) in order to practise archaeology has failed in the USA despite the obvious advantages in improving quality control via professional regulation rather than government legislation. The Institute of Field Archaeologists in the UK has different membership requirements for individual archaeologists and registered archaeological organisations (RAO). Hinton and Jennings argue that particular reforms are needed for individual accreditation, to bring them in line with RAO membership requirements.

The editors and contributors of *Quality Management in Archaeology* are congratulated! This tightly packed and excellently produced book succeeds in highlighting the difficulties, successes and failures of different forms of quality control in archaeological heritage management. Australian readers will find much to which they can relate their own experiences within six state and three territorial parliaments down under. Although more likely to follow the British and American models, Australians should carefully consider (as have some large public companies) the strengths in the Dutch system, which is the emerging global benchmark of best practise for quality management in archaeology. Unfortunately, the Dutch system is unlikely to develop in legislative form within Australia, but in the absence of strong leadership on quality control from most Australian governments, Australian archaeologists should do more to support their professional associations (like AACAI) and lobby for State and Federal regulations that recognise and encourage professional association membership. These issues are of considerable importance to practitioners, since the Federal *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* is currently undergoing review. While current proposals <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AILR/1997/38.html> appears to strengthen the Aboriginal role in management, there is little explicit interest in international best practise for archaeology or heritage management.

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Sabloff Jeremy A. 2008  
*Archaeology matters: Action Archaeology in the Modern World*  
Left Coast Press 2008 144pp

ISBN 978-1-59874-089-9 paperback  
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Reviewed by Susan McIntyre-Tamwoy

This book is written primarily for first year archaeology students and the general public. It attempts to address the perennial question of 'what use is a study of archaeology to society today?' The books chapters take

the reader through various versions of this question such as:

- The Importance of the Past for the Present;
- Lessons from the Past;
- How can the prospects for a Sustainable World be Improved?
- Is Warfare Inevitable?

The key to demonstrating and exploring the answers to such questions, Sabloff believes, lies in 'Action Archaeology' which he defines as 'involvement or engagement with the problems facing the modern world through archaeology'. Furthermore action archaeologists are 'engaged archaeologists who can effectively communicate with their varied publics (p17). The author acknowledges that an 'engaged archaeology is far from a new thing' but he maintains that an 'archaeology engaged with the broad public on key public issues, such as sustainability, especially through action research projects, is still in its relative infancy.' (p110).

Of course assuming that the reader is convinced by the arguments marshalled the author moves on to the questions of 'What can be done to preserve the Worlds Historical Heritage?' and a consideration of 'Future Directions'

Sabloff (p106) bemoans the fact that writing in media targeting the general public is not valued in the discipline – a process he refers to as 'academic devaluation of popular writing and communication'. He urges that archaeologists fight this process. This resonates with similar thoughts expressed by in list discussions by archaeologists in recent years in Australia regarding the need for an increased focus on populist archaeology to build political support for the discipline. He falls short however of providing a clear outline for such a campaign.

This book is well pitched to the target audience of introductory archaeology students. That said it relies heavily on American case studies and examples and pays scant acknowledgment to relevant initiatives abroad and not at all to related work in Australia. While agreeing with the author that more can always be done, there are many examples from Australia of engaged archaeology in the areas of community-based archaeology, particularly in relation to Indigenous archaeology (for example see Greer 1999; Greer et al 2002; Clarke 2000, Ross 2002) but also in other areas relevant to non-indigenous community interests (e.g Ireland 1996). In Australia archaeologists have engaged their discipline to explore many contemporary questions such as, amongst others, Native Title (e.g Harrison 2000); understanding environmental change (e.g Smith 2006); understanding climate change (e.g Smith 2005; Rowland 1996, 2009) and the development of mitigation strategies and site management relating to climate change impacts (McIntyre-Tamwoy ed. 2008).

The book is arguably less well suited to the other stated audience – the general public. Its reflective nature deals as much (or more) with the perceived shortcomings of the discipline and the work of archaeologists than with the outcomes and benefits of archaeological research. Without doubt engaged

archaeologists and action archaeology are important in developing the profile at least locally of archaeology. However past experience has indicated that the sort of self-critical discussion contained in this book while undeniably healthy within the discipline, often serves to reduce its credibility in the eyes of the public.

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