

Consider the requirements of formal publication, including standards for writing, editing and style, for a range of archaeological project outputs

Archaeologists have been experimenting with varying styles of publication since the work of antiquarians (Perry 2015). Ranging and oftentimes conflicting theoretical paradigms and epistemological views have moulded the way we publish research (Hodder 1989; Sinclair 1989; Tilley 1989; Huvila 2016; Huvila *et al* 2021). The ease of interrogation and the reusability of published information are significant factors that have affected the developing standards and requirements of publication. The PUNS Survey, in addition to shedding light on the way in which publications are utilised, found that most respondents view the principal purpose of formal publication to be the “provision of information to facilitate research, and the dissemination of knowledge for public benefit” (Jones *et al* 2003). In consideration of the perceived shortcomings of the resultant outputs, the formal and informal standards and requirements for a range of publication types are examined in this report.

Structure and Content

The style of excavation reports and monographs employed today have developed from those first used by 19th century archaeologists (Richards and Hardman 2008; Maarleveld 2011). As noted by Bradley (2006) excavation reports and monographs typically follow the same structure, comprising three principal components. They are usually formed by a descriptive account of the excavated features, contributions from environmental and artefactual specialists, and an interpretive discussion. Although conspicuously omitted as essential components by Bradley (2006), there are also the project backgrounds, archival information, and methodological accounts so vital to reusability and reinterrogation. This omission, unfortunately, is somewhat reflective of many publications; it is surprisingly common that project aims and accounts of what was done are omitted, or implied as information to obvious to impart (Collis 2013).

This traditional configuration is specified for in the guidelines of numerous monograph series, including *East Anglian Archaeology* (EEA 2022), and is apparent in many recent monographs published by units such as NAA (e.g., Ross and Ross 2021) and Albion Archaeology (e.g., Luke and Barker 2021). This structure is not ubiquitous however, and many guidelines are not prescriptive (BAR 2014; BIAA 2022; MA 2022); nevertheless, the traditional structure is still widely employed in these publications (e.g., Butler and Gerrard 2021; Ladle 2022). Grey literature reports, although varying slightly in their structure, typically follow the same layout. Structurally, for example, the reports of Cotswold Archaeology and Wardell Armstrong are almost indistinguishable, excepting the inclusion of specialist reports within the appendix of the former and within the core text of the latter (*cf.* Wheelan and Howard 2019; Lloyd-Smith 2021). While structural requirements are sometimes prescribed, archaeological publication also appears to be conditioned and moulded by informal and formal rules, principles, and expectations (Huvila 2016; Börjesson 2017).

The segregation of description and interpretation evident in grey literature reports and monographs has been argued to create a barrier for reinterpretation and reuse (Hodder 1989), with many highlighting the need for greater integration and synthesis (Jones *et al* 2001;

Jones *et al* 2003). The grand print monograph and archival report are perhaps not conducive of the scholarly endeavour of establishing arguments with data, with many investigations relying on inextricably interwoven forms of data attained from ranging forms of analysis (Morgan 2018). The dearth of integration, and the placement of crucial data within appendices or even separate volumes, disjoints the integral links between conclusions and their evidential foundations. Nevertheless, this highly categorised structure must be understood, regardless of the valid critiques, in the context of these publications being the only *effective* archival record up until the late 20th century; historically, the full published report and the archive were often considered to be the same thing (Jones *et al* 2003; Richards and Hardman 2008).

Today, the journal article represents the most common vehicle for ‘synthetic’ publication. The structure imposed upon authors nevertheless varies across archaeological journals. *Norfolk Archaeology*, for example, still broadly adheres to the traditional excavation report format outlined above (e.g., Newton *et al* 2020). Although not ubiquitous, this appears to be the norm for regional archaeological journals. Indeed, while not stipulated within their guidelines, excavations published in the *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society* follow this traditional structure (PCAS 2022). Again, this speaks to the plethora of unwritten expectations that restrict authors (Börjesson 2017).

The *Medieval Archaeology* journal, in contrast, is less prescriptive in its guidance (MA 2022). This has resulted in articles that are more synthetic, with descriptive evidence integrated more thoroughly with interpretive narratives. In relation to the saltern site at Wainfleet, for example, feature descriptions were sequentially interwoven with historical accounts of each stage of the salt production processes – though specialist artefactual reporting was not integrated (McAvoy *et al* 1994). Nevertheless, the journal publishes very few excavation reports and reserves this for material that is of at least national ‘significance and international interest’ (MA 2022). Arguably, the journals that are more amenable to experimental structures and ways of ‘storytelling’ are those that are concerned with material of greater significance; those that are more likely to accept synthetic research, as opposed to regional journals that accept the results of the single-site excavations typical of commercial archaeology. Moreover, experimental structures and ways of writing generally appear to flourish beyond the confines print peer-reviewed publication, and take place on social media and increasingly in blogs and e-publications (Opitz 2018).

Although e-publications do not necessarily require innovative forms, they give opportunities for new structures to emerge. Indeed, *Internet Archaeology*, in its guidance, implores authors to “try to think beyond a linear text...” (IA 2022a). Digital publications have the potential to reframe the linear, rigid, and formulaic structures traditionally employed. Digitally-enabled publications do not have to be ‘passive diagrammatic summaries’ but can be interactive mediums that allow for active access to organically connected data and interpretation (Dallas 2015: 317-318). Perhaps more simply put, the reader can navigate data and arguments through hyperlinks that connect, for instance, each stratigraphic unit discussed in the interpretation with the artefactual information that is key to its understanding. *Internet Archaeology* requires authors to square-bracket words in manuscripts that need hyperlinks

so that they can be appropriately linked during in collaboration with the editor (IA 2022a). The virtues of 'linked' publication have been widely propagated (Franze *et al* 2014; Schreibman 2014; Clarke 2016; Early-Spadoni 2017), with the work of Opitz *et al* (2016) on *A Mid-Republican House from Gabii* being a particularly good example of the utility of this structure (Fig.1).

Phase B-3

New walls and the division of space

In Phase B-3, the construction of walls SUs [1058](#), [1135](#), and [1163](#) reflects a change in the focus of the activity within the structure, with activity oriented toward the western road and activities to the north. North-south polygonal tufo wall SU [1058](#) was constructed slightly west of SU [1245](#); it continues north, as SU [363](#), on top of the fill of a possible quarry in Area A, for most of its length and only slightly past east-west wall SU

[1187](#), which had divided the courtyard. This wall (SU [1058](#)) was faced nicely on its western side facing the road but was not faced on the eastern side, leaving the rubble packing exposed. This reflects a focus on the activity associated with the road and not the structure itself. The construction of SU [1058](#) (and its continuation SU [5146](#) to the south) clearly cut the structure's western wall SU [1245](#). Construction cuts SUs [1175](#) and [1407](#) also cut the re-pavement of Road 4 (SU [1400](#)) of the previous phase, indicating a general raising of both the road and the courtyard. Construction fills included SUs [1406](#) and [1174](#). SU [1162](#) and a single block, SU [1263](#), are associated with further patching of SU [5018](#) and further obliteration of SU [1245](#).

Fig.1: A hyperlinked excerpt from *A Mid-Republican House* (Opitz *et al* 2016).

Data Presentation

Tables and Catalogues

Environmental and artefactual data is typically published via a series of catalogues or table-heavy appendices within monographs and grey literature reports. This data is almost ubiquitously required in grey literature reports and monograph series, as it is an interrogatable published representation of the archive. The publication of this data in physical print form, or in an often challenging to utilise PDF file, is however extremely challenging and time-consuming to reuse (Evans and Moore 2014; Evans 2015; Opitz 2018; Lodwick 2019a; Moody *et al* 2021). While earlier publications did not have this capability, today many publication guidelines give authors the choice to include links to electronic supplementary databases (Lodwick 2019a; Lodwick 2019b). This is likewise true for the more synthetic peer-reviewed journal, which often do not contain the extensive in-text data tables, and the inclusion of links to electronic supplementary material has been advocated by the *Journal of Archaeological Science* (Torrence *et al* 2015). While the utilisation of such links is preferable to impractical print catalogues, these databases are often not the subject of quality-control and may suffer from link decay (Whitlock 2011; Costello *et al* 2013; Warinner and d'Alpoim-Guedes 2014; Moore and Richards 2015).

E-publications provide an alternative route to publishing datasets (Kansa and Kansa 2013; Moore and Richards 2015; Lodwick 2019b). *The Journal of Open Archaeology Data*, for example, publishes data papers that have their own DOI (e.g., Johnson 2014; College 2016). I have personally been involved in such an endeavour, whereby a dataset related to a particularly noteworthy pottery assemblage from Ely is to be published in *Internet Archaeology* (Thompson and Podbury *forthcoming*). Guidance from *Internet Archaeology* prescribes that data papers are to be data dense and textually brief, with the 'interpretation'

principally being an account for avenues of future analysis and reuse potential (IA 2022b). Publication of entire datasets in this way ensures that the data is peer-reviewed and increases the availability and survivability of the dataset (Kansa and Kansa 2013; Costello *et al* 2013). The publication of these datasets nevertheless does not resolve the significant problems related to standardised formats and terminology that plague reusability (Kansa and Kansa 2013; Lodwick 2019b).

Visual Communication

The visual communication of interpretations and findings have been essential to the archaeological discipline since its inception (Moser 2012; Morgan and Wright 2018). Photographs, drawings, and reconstructions typically adorn the range of formal publications, in order to present or evidence arguments and animate the past. Archaeological illustrators adhere to a myriad of established conventions; combinations of views (Fig.2), the thickness of lines, the types of shading and hatching, and the stylistic representations of materials and forms all facilitate interpretation of images and enable comparisons to be made (Banning 2020: 349-351).

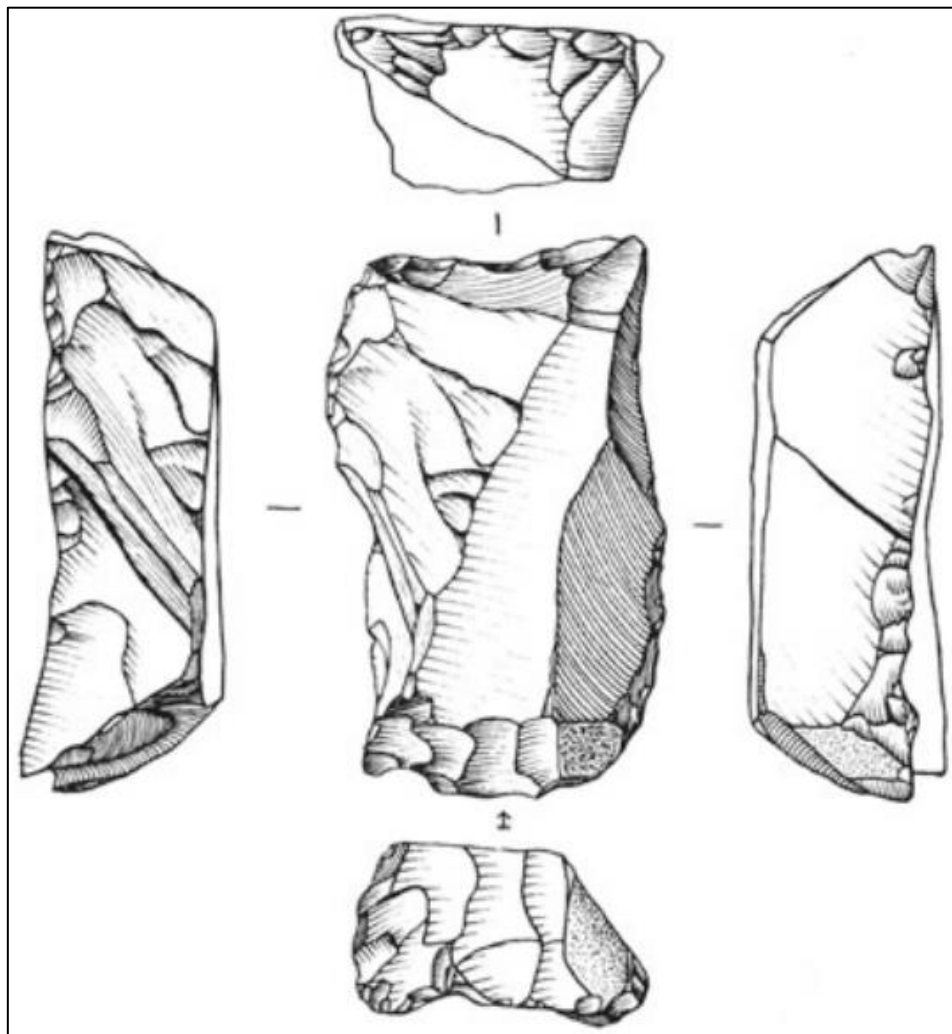
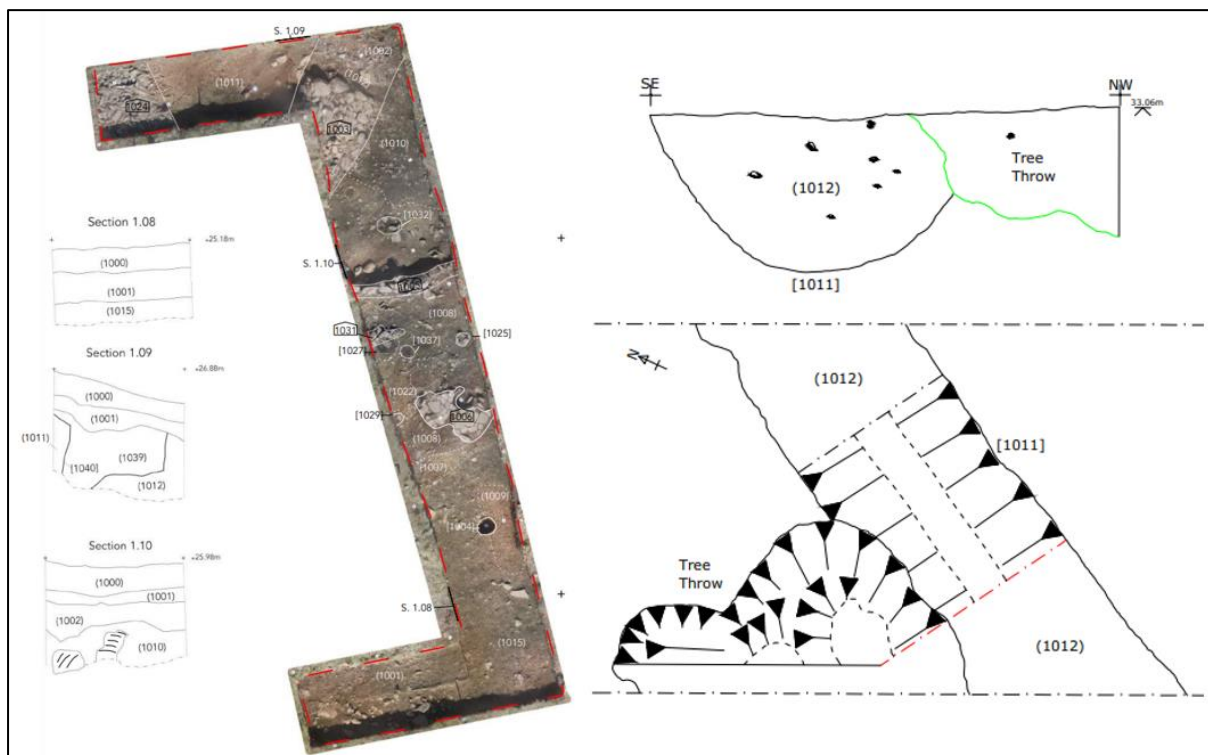


Fig.2: The conventional orthographic views typical of artefactual illustrations (Banning 2020: 353).

Most archaeological units have ‘style sheets’ that outline these conventions or refer to other widely-used handbooks (e.g., Hawker 2001; Steiner 2005; Small 2013; Collett 2017) – specifying for inclusions like scale bars and north arrows – which dictate the styles of drawings and images produced for grey literature reports. The illustrations produced in grey literature reports vary widely across archaeological units. Some plans and illustrations, for example, are initially hand-drawn and then digitally transcribed, while many are ‘born digital’ (Hopkinson and Winters 2003). The difference between the born digital illustrations of DigVentures, which incorporate imagery from a drone survey, and the more traditional digitally transcribed plans of Britannia Archaeology is clear (Fig.3). Although differing, both the plans clearly convey the excavator’s *interpretation* of the archaeology encountered.



integrated within the publication; pushing readers to engage with the digitised data along with the textual narrative (Fig.4). Indeed, the multi-layered e-publication (or ‘digital ecosystem’) of the LEAP II Project which included databases, digital audio, virtual-reality, and video – in addition to facilitating interrogation of interpretations and data – disseminated research to a broad audience (Limp *et al* 2011). While the inclusion of such multi-media is not a requirement of the e-publication, the flexible and experimental nature of these platforms give rise to the publication of a variety of visual communications. The requirements of *Internet Archaeology* with regards to multi-media files, notably, are not freely available and the editor must be directly contacted for specifics; this probably speaks to the range of issues, such as digital content preservation and format compatibility, in addition to cost, which restrict this type of visual communication (IA 2022a).

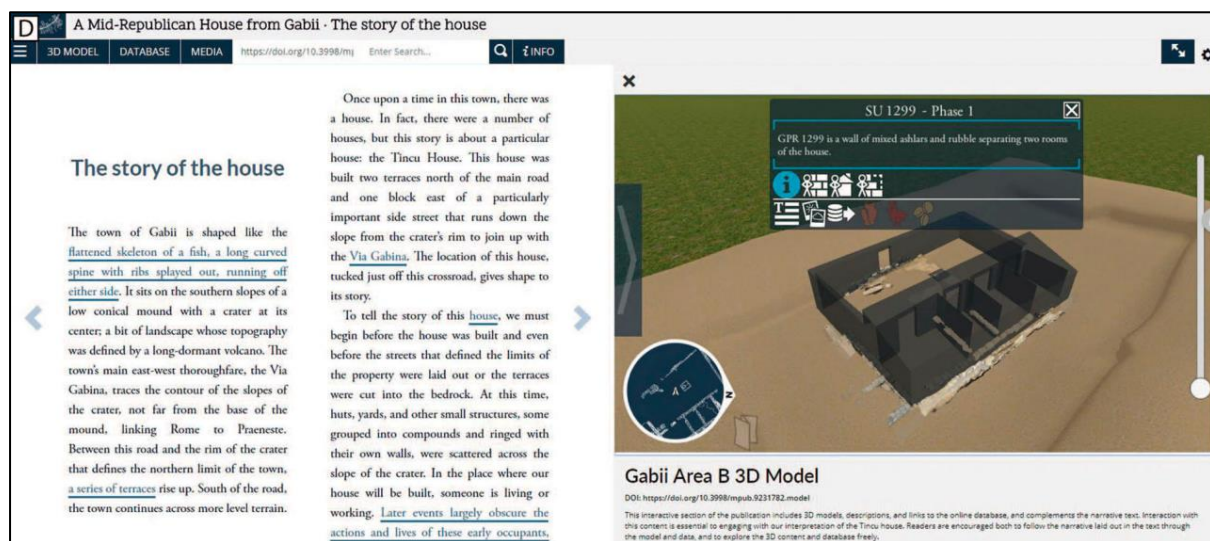


Fig.4: The textual narrative alongside the 3D-model (Opitz *et al* 2016).

Writing Style

In addition to specifying the format of bibliographies and citations, with many journals and e-publications necessitating DOI hyperlinks (e.g., IA 2022a; JAS 2023), most publishers have terminological guidelines. The guidelines of publishers typically list the expected conventions for communicating dates and periods, radiocarbon dates, abbreviations, measurements, directions, and geographical references (e.g., JFA n.d.; BAR 2014; PCAS 2022; MA 2022; IA 2022a; EAA 2022). These requirements ensure consistency and, to a certain extent, comparability and reusability. Many publications also observe policies that specify against the use of exclusionary language in relation to race, ethnicity, and gender. In the case of *East Anglian Archaeology*, for example, the terms ‘Neolithic man’ and ‘mankind’ are judged to be inappropriate, and would be replaced with preferable terms such as ‘Neolithic communities’ and ‘the human race’ (EAA 2022).

While the terminological requirements of publications are noteworthy, it is the unwritten expectations with regards to writing style that are perhaps more consequential. The writing styles employed in formal publication have been the subject of considerable discourse (Hodder 1989; Jones *et al* 2003; Bradley 2006; Joyce 2008; Fagan 2016). Archaeological

publications usually employ formal academic language (Lucas 2019) written in the passive anonymous voice (Huvila 2017). This writing style is arguably the result of increasing professionalisation in the humanities (Opitz 2018). While not all publications include uninteresting and disproportionately lengthy description, grey literature reports and print monographs often contain protracted technical descriptions. Hodder (1989) notes that "...at best the reports are dull, excessively long, detailed and expensive and read by no one except the delirious specialist". Even more concisely, Boivin (1997) laments many archaeological publications as "boring, boring, boring...". An excerpt from my own work is illustrative of this tedious, and potentially self-evident, descriptive style:

"Sub-circular pit [1023] may represent the earliest feature observed within the trench; however, its stratigraphic relationship with ditch [1025] was not clear. The pit had steep sides with a concave base (1.40m+ x 1.10m x 0.65m). It was filled by deposit (1024), a friable mid grey/red brown silty sand with frequent small sub-angular flints. (Podbury 2022).

Despite the valid critiques of the uninteresting style of these accounts, these descriptions are viewed as key to their later interrogation and are likely related to efforts for such reports to *represent* the 'full' archive. The aim of the modern journal article, on the other hand, is not to represent the full archive; instead, they are synthesised works that point the reader to the wider archive. Within many articles from regional journals, such as those from *Norfolk Archaeology*, there are no longer lengthy accounts of grouped artefactual or environmental assemblages – they have been replaced with short, summarised sections on the findings. This too has been the subject of significant disapproval. Many of those interviewed from the PUNS Survey were concerned about the disparity between the amount of information published about features in comparison to the artefactual and environmental findings (Jones *et al* 2003).

It has also been argued the impersonal style is caused by the perceived necessity to be seen as serious and impartial in all forms of academic writing (Hyland 2001: 208; Culler and Lamb 2003); an observation that is certainly applicable to my own writings. Understandably, however, this unnecessarily dense and impersonal style is not particularly appealing to the wide spectrum of contemporary audiences that archaeologist hope to reach. While these mediums are certainly not immune to this style of writing, several journal articles and e-publications have sought to remedy this perceived shortcoming. For example, the work of Hudson (2010) within the *American Journal of Archaeology* uses personal pronouns throughout. This article, like many that use the first-person, does not conceal that knowledge is being actively created by the researcher, and is perhaps more likely to include information on how or why particular conclusions were reached (Webb 1992: 748-749). A short excerpt from the article by Hudson (2010: 675) demonstrates the utility of this style of writing:

"With the ceramic assemblages, I make use of existing ceramic typologies to classify vessels but do not rely on these typologies to determine vessel function. This is because typologies are constructed to illustrate chronological evolutions of forms and types within a production tradition".

Again, however, despite the guidelines for many peer-reviewed journals and monographs not being prescriptive on the 'grammatical person' (e.g., JFA n.d.; MA 2022; IA 2022a; IA 2022b; EAA 2022). The impersonal academic tone almost always employed appears to represent a learned behaviour that is reflected in numerous manuals for academic writing (Hyland 2001; Börjesson 2017).

The impersonal and academic tone brings into question the ability to convey information to a broad public audience; one of the principal purposes for publication highlighted in the PUNS Report (Jones *et al* 2003). Although certainly not a typical output of commercial investigations themselves 'popular' archaeological books, like those by Alice Roberts (2021; 2022), are often far more engaging, personable, and readable. Inevitably, the notion of serving a broad audience gives rise to tensions about the potential incompatibility of producing interesting, widely accessible and readable prose, and the necessity for exhaustive scientific rigour (Connah 2010).

While many authors of monographs and journal articles express complex concepts in simple language (Hodder 1989) – with some journals requesting 'everyday language' (MA 2022) – it is through these publications that interpretations are most often obfuscated with jargon. The experimental nature of e-publications provides opportunities for authors to diverge from the traditional ways of storytelling. Within *A Mid-Republican House from Gabii*, in addition to typically detailed and complex narratives, each chapter includes a section that tells the story of the excavation in highly simplified language accessible to those of 13 and older (Opitz *et al* 2016). This report, more in line with the other publication types and certainly reflective of my own instruction in academic writing, has a Flesch Reading Ease score of 15; thus, being characterised as very difficult to read and best understood by a university graduate.

Quality Control and Editing

Monographs, journal articles, and academic books go through a process of peer-review. Peer-review is a social process of negotiation between editors, reviewers, and authors (Bedeian 2004). Discussing the peer-review processes of *American Antiquity* and *Latin American Antiquity*, Lanata *et al* (2007) states that following submission to the journal reviewers are tasked with appraising theoretical and historical context, the methodological process, and the consistency and accuracy of the conclusions presented. Papers often go through numerous reviews before being accepted for publication, with many requests for significant changes (Lanata *et al* 2007). Following review, the author can either accept the comments and duly revise or they can dispute the comments and suggestions. Through this process of negotiation, the intended purpose of the peer-review is achieved; the assurance and homologation of the quality of knowledge published (Bedeian 2004; Lanata *et al* 2007; Salazar *et al* 2019).

Despite the clear significance of this practice, in contrast to other disciplines, critiques of the peer-review process in archaeology are limited (Salazar *et al* 2019). Among a plethora of critiques, are the recurring discussions about the biases purportedly inherent to peer-review processes (Benos *et al* 2007; Lee *et al* 2013; Jukola 2017); specifically, interpersonal biases and biases that relate to content of the submission. Perhaps even more significantly, it has

been argued that peer-review mechanisms have the potential to stifle innovation and restrain the development of new ideas (Armstrong 1997; Bedeian 2004; Bensos *et al* 2007; Jukola 2017). Regardless of the considerable limitations outlined in the discourse, the method is still the best way to determine the academic quality of formal publications (Young 2003; Bedeian 2004; Lanata *et al* 2007).

That is not to say that the practice cannot be improved upon, and the experimental e-publication provides an opportunity to adapt the process. Most e-publications go through the traditional peer-review process; however, *Internet Archaeology* has experimented with 'open peer review' in their recent blogging volume (Morgan and Winters 2018). The transparent peer-review process reportedly made interactions more civil, and produced a more meaningful and insightful discourse between the reviewer and the author – this observation is evident upon reading the published peer comments, which largely represent considered essays themselves (e.g., Beale 2015). Open peer-review, however, is not a panacea. Issues related to the stifling of innovative research remain and as relayed by the reviewers of the articles in volume, some were uncomfortable and tentative when publicly publishing a critical review (Morgan and Winters 2018). Nevertheless, the open process would be particularly appropriate when the manuscript is focused on a highly niche topic where a double-blind peer review would be impossible. Indeed, Judith Winters, the editor of *Internet Archaeology*, views the open peer-review as an option to be selectively employed rather than a wholesale replacement (Morgan and Winters 2018).

Although not subject to peer-review, grey literature reports usually go through an internal process of quality-control. At Wardell Armstrong, for example, each report undergoes two internal reviews to correct any errors and to ensure completeness. The report is then submitted to a curatorial archaeologist, who again reviews the document and recommends revisions. Nevertheless, these quality-control procedures are subject to the same personal idiosyncrasies and limitations that afflict the traditional peer-review (Harlan 2009). The shortcomings of these quality-control mechanisms are perhaps one reason many academics have negative opinions about grey literature reports (Roth 2010: 339). An internal review may particularly focus on an aspect of the report that would not be of great concern to the academic reviewer – the minutiae, for example, of the planning background. In contrast, the peer-reviewer may focus on how theoretically informed the manuscript is, and this is arguably not the focus of many internal reviews (Green and Doershuk 1998). Indeed, Roth (2010) notes that ideas that are not 'well supported' are sometimes published in grey literature reports, deriding that these ideas are not published in a forum where they can be challenged or vetted for accuracy. Suggestions on how the perceived shortcomings of the standard quality-control procedures, however, were not proffered.

Conclusion

There are a wide range of requirements and standards, some of which are explicitly prescribed by publishers and some that are unwritten conventions, that mould formal archaeological publications. Authors abide by an assortment of guidelines with regards to structure, data representation, visual communication, terminology and writing style and undergo the rigours of quality control procedures. Arguably, these written and unwritten

conventions that shape publications have given rise to a variety of critiques that reflect the way in which readers hope, or expect, to use published resources. In particular, there have been considerable critiques of the style and legacy of monographs, grey literature reports, and to a lesser extent traditional journal articles, accompanied by condemnation on the lack of progress in recent years over the rethinking of these mediums (Opitz 2018). The nascent digital-monograph and e-publications, as dynamic and developing platforms, may remedy these perceived shortcoming as they permit authors to experiment with new ways of communicating their research. Regardless, the e-publications, like the more traditional forms of publication, are required to adhere to the guidelines of the publisher so that certain basic scholarly standards are upheld.

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