

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

Formal publication can come in many forms, and each has its benefits and constraints depending on the type of project and output material. This document will assess different forms of publication available for those working in the archaeology sector, including grey literature reports, journal articles, monographs and books as well as some of the publication options available to those working within Historic England including contributions to the Historic England Research Magazine and Historic England Research Reports. All different forms of publication have different requirements which affect how the research content is prepared, written and formatted. Each form of publication also has a specific target audience which is another consideration when deciding on the type of language to use and what details to include, discount or focus more on.

Grey literature reports

Most research projects within the archaeological community are usually completed through a type of grey literature report, whether this is an excavation report for a commercial unit excavation, a fieldwork report or a topographical landscape survey undertaken by a community interest group or perhaps a desk-based assessment written by a commercial unit for a planning application. Essentially the purpose of a grey literature report is to communicate the results to both provide the basis for administrative decisions in the commercial sector and more generally, to contribute towards wider archaeological understanding (Börjesson, 2015, p.4).

It is important to consider the format and layout when writing up a project report as there is often a particular template to follow, particularly within the commercial sector, as this ensures the report appears professional and credible. For anyone completing a research project and archaeological fieldwork, it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that the appropriate standards set out by CIFA are followed, this ensures the project report and the information it contains becomes a reliable and trustworthy source of information for other people. CIFA cover a range of guidelines for best practices for a range of specialisms, including finds specialists who commonly produce their own reports which are often separate from the site report. Some of the guidelines available on CIFA are written and published by specialist groups. One example, '*A Standard for Pottery Studies in Archaeology*' published by the Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group, Study for Roman Pottery and Medieval Pottery Research Group sets out the procedures for creating specific pottery finds reports, listing the type of content to include, the scope and the type of sources to reference in the report

(Barclay et al, 2016, p.15-17). The detailed guidelines help promote consistency within the specialism.

Often grey literature reports in the commercial sector are written for a very specific purpose with a set of stakeholders including those working in archaeological consultancies, contractors or local government (Jones et al, 2004, Section 6). When there are stakeholders involved there is a requirement for the evidence presented within the report to be backed up by credible sources and these should be referenced properly, this ensures that the report again becomes a trustworthy source itself but also provides a useful suite of references if others use the report in the future (Jones et al, 2004, Section 6). Grey Literature reports should also have quality assurance checks from another member of staff, to ensure that the report is completed to a satisfactory standard (Jones et al, 2004, Section 6).

There is a discussion of just how useful grey literature reports are for future use in research outside of the commercial sector. Grey Literature reports of any kind are often data-heavy which can be difficult to unpick when looking for a specific piece of information, depending on how they are structured. The nature of grey literature, as an unpublished document, means that intellectual accessibility is often overlooked as they are not considered public documents made for anyone other than the stakeholders involved. The documents themselves are also complicated to access, as most are not published and those that are, can take a long time to become accessible on the Archaeological Data Service Library or the relevant HER database. The main drawback of grey literature reports is the accessibility both intellectually but also in the availability and ease of access for the wider public, for those who produce the reports they are however relatively quick documents to produce and successfully serve a very specific purpose, to provide information for a set of stakeholders.

Journal articles

Journals are vastly different from grey literature outputs both in format and discoverability. Journal articles are published research works that can be featured in a variety of journal types including regional, national, and international, which can be further split into specific thematic groups. Although many journals are only accessible through paid mediums, some are available via open access, making them more accessible than grey literature reports, resulting in information which is easier to obtain and more widely available. Having a set structure, which most journal articles follow, enables those using them to locate the information they need quite easily. Their structure usually includes a clear introduction which provides an overview of the research/subject and the main findings, research data, the methodology used, and a discussion of the results that places them into the wider research context. Following the structure gives readers a familiarity with what to expect, and makes

finding specific information easier, compared to fieldwork reports which can vary in structure between the different companies who produce them. However, for those writing a journal article, the rigorous format requirements, can be a lot of work and come with both word restrictions and strict style guidelines (Taylor and Francis, 2024).

When choosing to produce an article for a journal both the content and its presentation must be considered carefully, this includes how the data is presented, especially if the data is quantitative, such as graphs or charts, illustrative such as drawings or photographs or spatial such as maps. Journal articles tend to have strict word or page limits which can make choosing any extra figures difficult. Authors need to select illustrative items carefully, only using them if they add meaning to what is written in the text, simply adding graphs and photographs that don't add meaning can be a waste of space. Figures should be chosen when it would help reduce the number of words needed to explain something, for example it may be much simpler to include a photograph of a site location within the landscape context with a short description rather than describing in lengthy detail the topographic context. This is not necessarily a negative thing when choosing a journal article as a publishing method, but it can limit freedom with the type and amount of content that can be included.

Journal articles tend to cater to a particular audience, the academic sector and those conducting research in a particular specialism. The academic nature of the expected journal audience may influence the type of language used, and often technical and scientific language is opted for, however, by doing this the author could be gatekeeping the intellectual accessibility of their research and this could inhibit the user-friendliness of the article, alienating potential new audiences. The choice to make a journal 'open-access' is also another consideration to make as doing so can increase discoverability to more audiences and make a bigger impact on the chosen area of research. It is worth noting however, some journals such as *The Archaeological Journal*, issue an article publishing charge if the article is chosen for 'open access' (Taylor and Francis, 2024).

When deciding to publish a piece of research in a journal it is also important to choose the correct journal, as there are a lot of different journals, each with individual themes, scopes and aims which the research may or may not fit into. Once a journal has been chosen the submission process can begin. When submitting an article to the journal, it must first undergo an initial appraisal to ensure the research is in line with the journal's scope and that the research is of good quality (Taylor and Francis, 2024). Journal articles must also undergo a rigorous peer review, often by multiple experts who will each provide feedback for the article, this process can be time-consuming and could result in big changes to the original article. It may result in an article far from its early foundations, possibly discouraging some

researchers from publishing their work this way. The peer review stage is, however, a good way to ensure the article is of a high standard in both its structure and content, as publishing work puts the author's reputation in the public eye.

Overall, journal articles are a good way to publish research and can help reach a large audience. Journal articles tend to attract mostly an academic audience, so it may also be sensible to consider alternative methods of broadcasting your research through other mediums, such as social media, to gain the attention of alternative audiences. Generally, journal articles are a useful way to ensure research is not only published but that it is published to a high standard and contributes towards the particular specialism or thematic area of archaeological research studies.

Monographs

As well as thematic-based journals that focus on a particular period, specialism or archaeological practice, monographs similarly focus on very specific archaeological interest areas. Monographs can be a good publishing method to reach very specific audiences such as the Aerial Archaeology Research Group (AARG) Occasional Publications which often focus on a specific theme within the specialist area of aerial archaeology. The AARG occasional publications are not published periodically and are usually available in print and digital downloads, formatted in the style of a published book. Unlike a journal article, there is usually more freedom with word count/page numbers, which is shown in the variations for the AARG publications ranging from 58 pages up to 544 pages (AARG Online, 2025). For the type of research within the specialism of aerial archaeology, it may be more suited to a monograph output as with more freedom for content size, there may be more opportunity to include imagery, something which goes hand in hand with aerial survey research outputs. The Latotcha (2015) paper from the *Recovering Lost Landscapes* AARG monograph is a prime example which shows how the freedom for more space enables the author to include lots of illustrations including maps, photographs and lidar imagery. This demonstrates the importance of understanding the type of research and its data outputs and thinking carefully about how best to explain and present the information when choosing a publication method.

Differently from a journal article, monographs tend to have less stringent peer review stages. This can make the whole process quicker and give the author more control of what gets published, however, it does mean that the authors themselves must often find a relevant person to peer review the work, which can result in extra charges for using someone's time. This isn't necessarily a negative thing, as although there is some work in finding the appropriate person to peer review the work, if the person chosen is known to the author, rather than an anonymous person chosen by an editorial board (as in the case of a journal

publication) there is more control with how quickly feedback is received, further speeding up the overall process.

The decision to publish research as a monograph or journal article, whether available online or printed, may not always be the obvious choice for publication method if speed is the top priority. Most research projects result in grey literature reports which are made available through ADS (Archaeological Data Service); Often making the data outputs available is also something which is done but not necessarily used as much as a resource for further research. One of the main issues with data reuse is that the data itself is difficult to find and when it is, it simply lacks the context to be interpreted properly (Sobotkova, 2018, p.118).

The publication of a monograph or journal article ensures that the research context is attributed to the data which can make the data more useful. Providing a written context and description of how the research data fits into wider studies can be just as important as the data itself and something which makes both journals and monographs still viable as useful publication methods. Another issue of simply making a dataset available is that often it won't be easily discoverable to those for whom it may be relevant; monograph and journal articles can be a useful way of signposting the research to the attributing datasets, which otherwise may fly under the radar as an underused resource.

Books

Throughout the history of archaeology as a discipline, books have always been at the forefront of dissemination as a key method of publication, especially as 'popular' archaeology books were seen as a way of ensuring more diverse audiences were reached (Thornton, 2018, p.108). Printed books may well be becoming more redundant as publication methods but online books are very much still practical options for archaeological research publication. The availability of books online actually gives the authors more freedom than printed versions, through lower costs as a result of no printing fees, especially when choosing to include coloured illustrations. Differently from journals, books and monographs formatted in the style of popular books can be a good way of reaching different audiences, away from the traditional academic peers who frequent archaeological journals. To further cement the attention of alternative audiences it is critical to consider the language used in the publication as well as carefully choose the title of the publication to engage a wider group of people, rather than simply using the same title as the original research report. When writing a book in a 'popular' style, to try and engage with a broader audience, using a clear structure and purpose with less technical language can foster a more inclusive reading experience. For some research projects, a narrative style of writing to tell a story of the methods and context behind them and presenting the findings in this way could be a method

of promoting greater understanding of the archaeological discipline through improved writing styles to boost engagement (Pruitt, 2022, p. 85).

Historic England publication opportunities – Research reports

For employees working within the Historic England organisation or those that have conducted archaeological work funded by Historic England, there are a few publication opportunities available, which differ from those previously mentioned. The most commonly used publication method for those working within the archaeological discipline is the Historic Environment Research Report. Historic England has a section on the website where all of the research reports written for a variety of archaeological research projects are available and accessible for free. The style of the reports are formatted similarly to what would be expected of a grey literature report, presenting the context of the research, aims and objectives, methodology, data and findings, a discussion of the results and conclusions along with any recommendations for further research. The difference between grey literature reports and the Historic England Research Reports is the mode of accessibility to the material. The Historic England website has both a search function to find specific reports but also an interactive GIS map to see all of the available research reports which can be helpful if the researcher needs to find reports for a specific location. The GIS map also allows for different search queries to be input to allow specific types of research to be shown such as archaeological excavations, topographical or building surveys as well as allowing inputs for date ranges and authors. This is one way of making the 'grey literature' genre of publication much more accessible and reusable amongst researchers and within the archaeological commercial sector.

When completing a research project for Historic England it is part of the project design to publish a research report much like the commercial sector. All research reports are written using the same structure, which over the years has varied in contents and style slightly, for the most part, however, the structure, layout and format of the reports are uniform across the different archaeological departments, with a set template provided to ensure the reports display a consistent level of professionalism and high standards. The reports all undergo a stage of peer review which is conducted by another colleague working within the same department. The process is fairly swift and ensures that reports are completed promptly. As the reports are made available online in-house the whole process is straightforward.

Historic England Research Magazine

Alongside the Research Report series, Historic England also publishes a Research Magazine every six months. The Research Magazine focuses on recent research from different archaeological departments both within Historic England and also for external

partners who have completed work funded by Historic England. The purpose of the Research Magazine is to highlight new research to both those working within Historic England but also to the wider public. Having recently experienced the process of writing an article for the Historic England Research Magazine, the following procedures were observed.

Working as an aerial survey investigator on the reconnaissance side of the team means that I am often involved with many small projects through the request for area coverage, but more generally, I am constantly working to achieve Historic England's organisational strategic agenda. Often my work does not result in a formal report as you would expect for other archaeological projects, which means I do not get the opportunity to publish my work very often. The Historic England Research Magazine editor had approached another colleague working in the Aerial Investigations Team and they then presented me with the opportunity to write an article for the Research Magazine. After an initial conversation with the editor of the magazine, I was given the broad theme of the next issue which was targeted at different archaeological approaches to research and how they connect us to people in the past. I sent a summary of what I intended to write an article on over to the editor, explaining how aerial surveys impact our understanding of the past but also how this can benefit present-day societies and how my work contributes towards Historic England's strategic agenda (Andrews, 2024, pp. 34-41).

The editor sent over a checklist for me to format my article and this came with a word count of 1200 words which is quite a tight restriction. The checklist also provided a summary of the expected audience, stating the article should be aimed at an intelligent audience but not niche specialists and those who have knowledge of the heritage sector, which meant I would need to explain any technical processes or jargon. I kept this in mind when discussing cropmarks, detailing briefly how they are formed (Andrews, 2024, p. 39). The language prompt also stated to use active language which helps to create a more engaging piece of text. As my article came together, it felt natural to write in the first person as I was describing my personal experiences and observations, this was accepted by the editor, and I believe it made the article feel more personable to the reader. The checklist allowed the inclusion of up to ten images which suited my type of article and the material I wanted to present completely. I chose photographs that clearly evidenced the work I was describing and showed the different motives for my reconnaissance work. For the article I was also asked to provide a bibliography for any relevant sources, which gave me the opportunity to signpost useful web pages related to aerial survey at Historic England as well as the Yorkshire Wolds Research Strategy, as this was relevant to the new discovery section of the article (Andrews, 2024, p. 39).

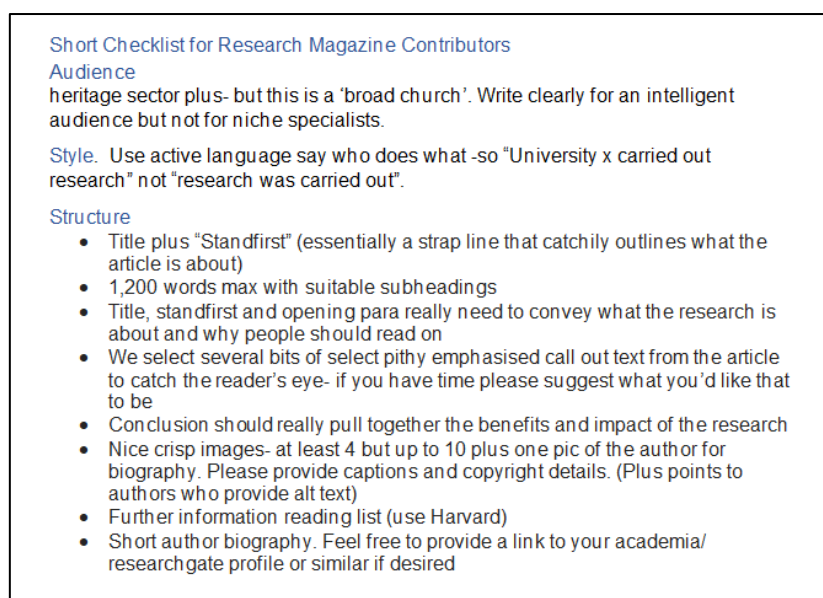


Figure 1: Checklist received from the editor of the Historic England Research Magazine (Page, 2024)

Once I had completed the first draft of my article, I sent a copy to the manager of the Reconnaissance team and the aerial survey team principal (head of the whole aerial team). Both colleagues provided useful comments on the content but also slightly contradicting ways to focus the content, with my line manager preferring more detail on the nuts and bolts of the reconnaissance programme and the team principal preferring more of a focus on how our work contributes to the wider organisation. The differing advice from both colleagues highlighted the motivations of their roles within the organisation and left me a challenge to balance both views, which after some editing, I think I achieved successfully. I sent the edited version back to them and they were both then happy for my article to be sent over to the editor. Once the editor had looked over the article, I was then given more feedback which mostly concentrated on the language used rather than the content. After editing my article I sent it back to my colleagues to make sure that the edits I had been requested to make by the editor did not impact the overall understanding of the aerial survey team's work. Once both colleagues were content, I sent this back to the editor who was happy with the final piece. The overall process felt multifaceted, and it was difficult to balance the feedback received from each person. After a few weeks, I was told by the editor that another section about my apprenticeship had been added to the introduction by the early careers team with which I had no input at all. Although the extra section was not discussed with me, it did help to introduce my role within Historic England and set the scene for the rest of my article (Andrews, 2024, p.34).

Having published my work as a magazine article, the process felt quite controlled by external conditions and the formatting process took longer than expected. Although the checklist was only short, it exposed just how much work goes into publishing research work for different mediums. Comparing the checklist for the Historic England Research Magazine (figure 1) with the long list of format and style guidelines required when publishing in a journal (Taylor and Francis, 2024), reveals just how much work goes into publishing and explains why not all research is taken further than the stages of grey literature. The publication medium of a research magazine did provide an alternative way to publish my work, which although had a lot of input from other colleagues, I felt the input was complimentary to my article and the end product still very much felt like my own work.

Summary

Through exploring the different mediums of publication available to those working and researching within the archaeological discipline, it is clear that researchers should fully consider the aims of their research and which audiences they want to target. The types of data outputs can also impact which publication method is most appropriate. Research should always aim to be published to adhere to the FAIR principles (Wilkinson et al, 2016) but choosing the correct medium can have a big impact on how successfully the research is shared and received by others.

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