An analysis of formal publication within academic and commercial archaeology

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2. Consider the requirements of formal publication, including standards for writing, editing and style, for a range of archaeological project outputs (47%, 3500 words or equivalent)

Introduction

"In our hearts, all of us know how we would pursue truth if we did not have to pursue status as well. The only question is: are we brave enough to do it?" This quote from the research of Ahmed and others (2019, p.1026) concludes their work on the future of academic publishing. Formal publication of research is discussed frequently now in literature, often in a pessimistic sense of its current model and future with that current model. Archaeology has not escaped this pessimism, especially as the rise of commercial archaeology continues, the role of the public becomes more important, and the datasets and budgets spiral either high or low.

Formal publication also must contend with 'informal' forms of publication, although these could be classed as dissemination methodologies. Online blogs, social media channels, digital forums like KnowledgeHub alongside magazines and newspapers all present avenues in which an archaeological project outputs could be accessed. In this analysis, two overviews of academic and commercial archaeology practises towards publication will be discussed. An analysis of four separate strands of formal publication will then be explored. The standards of writing, editing and style of these outputs will be examined, with both the positives and negatives of these highlighted. Given the broad topic, examples of the Colchester Archaeological Trust (a commercial unit) and the Lithic Studies Society (an academic society with an academic journal) will be included.

Overview of publication within commercial archaeology

The developer-led archaeology sector, also known as the commercial archaeology sector, has been discussed frequently since the implementation of PPG16 regarding publication. The formal publication of data is seen as one of the last barricades of a perceivably 'accessible' model of archaeology. Commercial archaeology relies predominantly on grey literature reports, reports created internally within units or consultancies with an internal peer-review system before submission to the relevant local planning authorities and clients. However, as highlighted by Evans (2015) the term grey literature does not accurately describe the reports produced within the commercial sector, with grey "synonymous with a liminal status and inferior quality".

In a talk presented at the Theoretical Archaeology Group Conference Hewerdine (2019) noted the fact that grey literature reports continue to be unassigned by ISSN numbers. Furthermore, the report is a consequence of the planning process itself as a minimum fulfilment of a planning condition (Hewerdine, 2019). The concept of grey literature also suggests that it is not in line with academic discourse and that a lack of cohesion exists. The majority of reports are found to be well researched and written, often presenting new research or data which has not been accessible via the overwhelmed Historic Environment Record (Hewerdine, 2019). A misconception has grown that the lack of academic practice (such as rigorous peer-review, access to large assemblages or university or privately funded scientific equipment) within commercial archaeology has made it obsolete (Jones et.al, 2003).

However, it can be argued the very intrusive nature of commercial work is at the cutting edge of archaeology (Darvill et.al, 2019). Publication advances within commercial archaeology have been gaining traction, namely the Archaeology Data Service. The Archaeology Data Service (ADS) was founded in 1996 to ensure the "long-term digital preservation of the data" produced via UK-based archaeological fieldwork and research (ADS, 2025). A digital resource, the ADS was founded using an excavation index which is accessed via a webpage called Heritage Gateway (Evans, 2015). The ADS has grown and evolved since its formation and is now seen as a world leader in data preservation as aided by its open access journal *internet archaeology*. In theory, the ADS is extremely accessible however as researched by Hewerdine (2019) questions remain over how accessible it is for those who are not involved in archaeology and would typically describe themselves as lay-men. Nonetheless, the ADS must be recognized for its publication of grey literature within archaeology.

Overview of publication within academic archaeology

There has been a push to unite the spheres of academic and commercial archaeology under one banner, that we should ethically all be working or researching in the same way. Although I agree with this principle of unity, it is important to highlight fundamental differences and stereotypes persist and can only be compared as two entities. Orange and Perring noted that it is the aim of any commercial unit to get academic publication of their recent fieldwork (2017). This desire is then hampered by budgets, time scales and pushback from clients or consultants.

Academic publication remains a lichen covered monolith in the landscape of the archaeological sector. A number of well-established publishers still exist (namely BAR, Archaeopress and Bloomsbury Publishing) although newer open-access models do exist

like Ubiquity Press (Pollard and Yorke-Edwards, 2014). Research conducted by Beck and other (2021) highlighted several important factors with publication within academic archaeology. One of these was that the publication of a peer-reviewed article was still viewed as the pinnacle of success (see figure one). This 'academic capital' as described by the researchers was found in their surveys which revealed a number of journals seen more favourably pinpointing just how competitive the current model is.

Publication within academic archaeology with the use of journals has received a backlash for the use of paywalls and the 'gatekeeping' knowledge (McDowell, 2018). In 2023, 70% of scientific journals articles were found to exist behind a paywall (Ahmed et.al, 2023). But there is also an understanding that the production costs of a publication have increased, and therefore the funding has to be sought from somewhere (Beck et.al, 2021). Academic publication models in South America have been suggested as a solution, using community driven platforms and publicly funded infrastructure (Ahmed et.al, 2023).

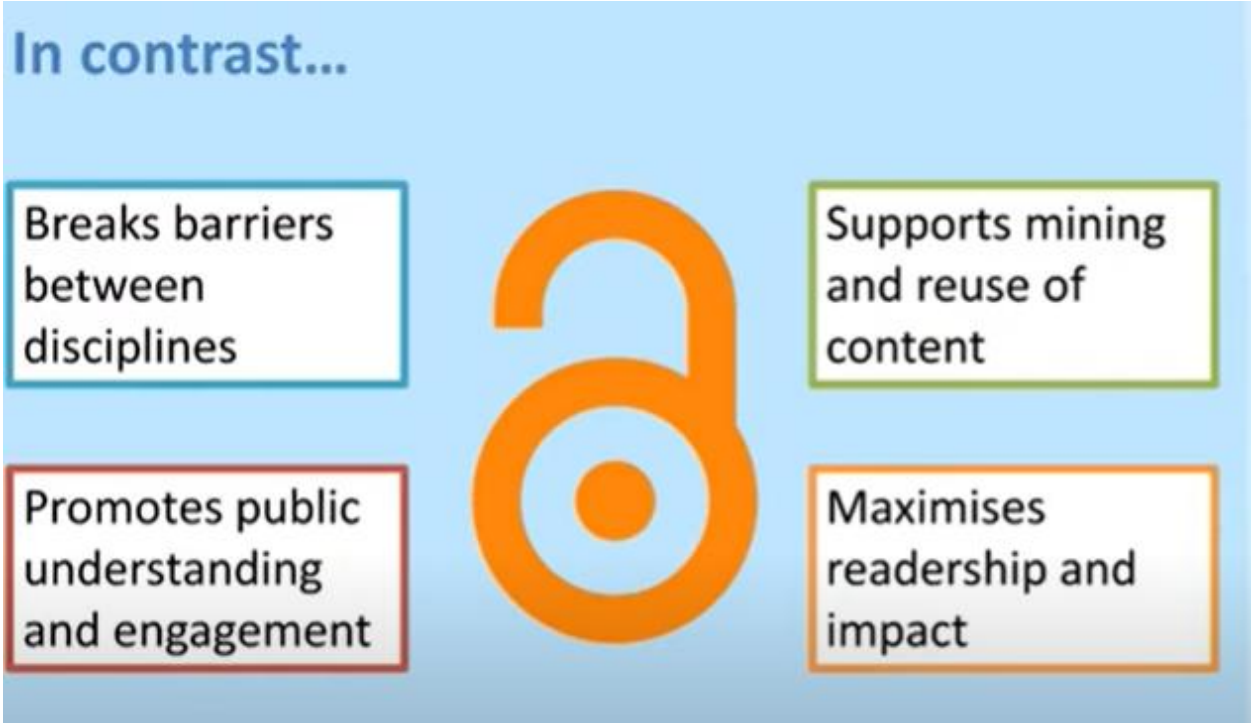

Figure one: a screenshot of a conference talk by T Pollard promoting reasons for open access via Ubiquity Press (2012).

It seems that within academic archaeology, publication is centred widely on prestige and this affected which journals received which articles (Beck et.al, 2021). I believe this differs from commercial archaeology where the publication of grey literature has created an even playfield so to speak, with the ADS accepting reports for public consumption. But this does not defer from the fact formal publication within commercial archaeology is not nearly at

the level it aspires to be at. Commercial activities do get submitted to academic journals, such as the journal *Lithics* of the Lithic Studies Society which published the recovery of a Neolithic polissoir found by commercial unit Oxford Archaeology East (Billington et.al, 2023). But these avenues will often be less popular than informal publication routes, such as blogs, which may receive more attention and public engagement.

Grey literature report

A grey literature report is a technical summary produced by a commercial unit in the aftermath of fieldwork or research (Orange and Perring, 2017). This report is not seen as a formal publication within the traditional academic setting. However, as highlighted by recent discourse I choose to view it as such and will analyse in the following.

The bulk of the available guidance for a grey literature report is available from the Chartered Institute for Archaeologist (CIfA). The *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (2014, revised 2020) covers the post-excavation assessment and project design, analysis as well as the publication and dissemination of that report. It is also suggested that the following documents are followed: Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) (Historic England 2015), Professional standards of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, including its Code of Conduct (CIfA 2020a-b). Specifically for CAT we also adhere to the East of England standards and frameworks published by East Anglian Archaeology (Brown & Glazebrook, 2000; Gurney, 2003; Medlycott, 2011) and the recent 2021 review updates online.

The standards of writing can vary between units, but the majority will follow a house style and approach the work with an academic tone and terminology. The standards of a report may vary depending on the experience of the report writer and whether the project is something they have firsthand knowledge of. At CAT, we are fortunate to have several experienced report writers, with all our reports produced internally (including the majority of our finds reports).

The editing of these reports is done by three separate strands: the report writer, the post-excavation manager Laura Pooley and the senior associate Howard Brooks. In the past, each of CAT's reports were edited and signed off via our director however this procedure has changed as working styles have altered. Once edited for spelling, grammar and whether the interpretation of the archaeology is agreed upon, the report is submitted via PDF to the historic environment consultant assigned to the project (see figure two).

Another example of this is Cotswolds Archaeology who include a document control grid on their reports of revisions.

Colchester Archaeological Trust

CAT Report 2094
issued October 2024

Archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on land to the west of Ten Tree Road, Great Waldingfield, Suffolk, CO10 0SD: October 2024

CAT project ref.: 24/09d
SCC parish code: WFG 070

Archaeological evaluation by trial-trenching on land to the west of Ten Tree Road, Great Waldingfield, Suffolk, CO10 0SD: October 2024

NGR: TL 90070 43750 (centre)

Planning district: Babergh
Planning ref.: DC/21/00917/FUL

CAT project ref.:24/09d
CAT Report 2094
OASIS id: colchest3-527964

SCC parish code: WFG 070
SCCAS monitor: Vincent Monaihan

report prepared by Megan Beale

fieldwork by Nigel Rayner and Megan Beale

commissioned by Heather Gower of Arcady Architects on behalf of Lily Group Holdings

Prepared by:	Megan Beale	Senior Site Assistant
Reviewed by:	Laura Pooley	Post Excavation Manager
Reviewed and approved by:	Howard Brooks	Senior Associate
Issued:	17/10/2024	

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Figure two: an example cover of a grey literature report produced by CAT (2024).

The style of CAT reports has grown clearer and more precise as the company has evolved. Past styles included very dramatic interpretations and an over reliance on the audience knowing the archaeological context prior to reading. However, reports now tend to be more direct and makes strict demands of the report writers. An example of this is the finds specialists not being too interpretative in their concluding remarks and allowing the lead report writer to make these decisions. This is something I have found difficult in my training as a lithics specialist.

The dissemination of the report is also paramount to its role within the wider archaeological sector. It is growing more common for individual units to publish their grey literature in their own online report libraries, not connected to the ADS. Examples include CAT, Cotswolds Archaeology, Oxford Archaeology Knowledge Hub, Archaeology Southeast publication library and many others. At CAT reports are uploaded to ADS on final completion and invoice to ensure the information required for planning sign off is not gained for free.

An extra consideration of grey literature publication is the associated costs. As it is a minimum and part of the original invoice the report is covered, however budgets may be stretched if further work or analysis is required via LPA decision.

Journals

Publication within an academic journal is governed by the editorial team of the journal in question. Organizations like CIfA have very little say on the proceedings of a journal and how it chooses to operate within academic or commercial archaeology. There is a myriad of different journals, some very institutionalised and respected, others solely based online with a younger history of publication. The overlap for some of these journals is obvious (such as *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, the *Theoretical Roman archaeology Journal*, *Britannia* and the *Journal of Roman Studies*). Each journal will have its own form of guidelines, which some may be identical to others in terms of requirements.

Using the case study of the Lithic Studies Society, the journal has its own set of guidelines available online. It provides clear word lengths, as well as templates for sample paper and a style sheet. All of these are downloadable documents. Like many journals, *Lithics* requires contact with the editor prior to submitting an article. These standards have been recently updated, and although the webpage to access them is fairly static a large amount of information is provided (see figure three).

Submissions

Search ...

Author Guidelines

Lithics invites contributions from anyone engaged in the study of past societies through stone tools. We publish research articles (2000–4000 words in length) which have been reviewed by two independent researchers experienced in the period in question. We employ a rigorous blind review process whereby your work will be read without knowledge of the writer's name, personal information, qualifications or past submissions. We also publish shorter communications (up to 1000 words). These can be short reports on particular artefacts, reviews (books, site visits, conferences, exhibitions), obituaries and other related lithic activities. Where applicable, these may be peer reviewed.

If you wish to submit an article to Lithics, please contact the Editor to discuss your proposed submission and any particular requirements you may have. All submissions must be made electronically via e–mail.

Rolling submissions: As of 2016, authors may submit their work throughout the year without regard to deadlines. Articles will be sent for review as soon as they are received and works will be published online with accompanying doi as soon as the final proof is accepted. Articles will subsequently appear in the hard copy version of Lithics.

All contributions must be submitted following the Lithics housestyle, which is detailed in the style sheet (available here). Please include a completed electronic copy of our Cover Sheet (Form LS1) along with your submission. This form will enable you and us to track the progress of your submission, provide feedback of reviewers' comments, and generally maintain contact during the editorial process. You can also download a correctly formatted sample paper (available here) and a Microsoft Word (.dot) template (available here).

All potential authors should note that any submissions which do not follow the style sheet guidelines will be returned for re-formatting.

The review and publication process works as follows.

- Initial e-mail submission of manuscript to the Editor, accompanied by Form LS1.
- Manuscript reviewed by two anonymous referees and decision (accept/reject) returned to the author/lead author (for multi-author papers). If manuscript is accepted, author/lead author informed of the Editorial Board member who will be involved with the remainder of the editing and submission process.
- Re-submission of modified manuscript (unless rejected, or accepted without need for editing).
- Second review of manuscript and comments returned to author/lead author from member of Editorial Board.

SUBMISSIONS

Lithics invites contributions from anyone engaged in the study of past societies through stone tools. Guidelines

PAST ISSUES

2024

2022-23

2019

Figure three: a screenshot of the *Lithics* journal webpage with notes for contributors. Further information is found down the page.

The editing of articles is conducted by the LSS editorial team of four to six individuals. Each individual is assigned a paper to read and comment on, before suggesting revisions. Revisions are key for our editorial team to ensure the information is up to date but also that it matches the subject matter of the journal itself. The style of the journal is influenced by the Society's history, and what articles have previously been published to suggest future material. The journal accepts smaller contributions of book reviews, event reviews or letters of note. It encourages strongly the work of early careers people and is accepting

more commercial led research for publication. Given the new environment the Lithic Studies Society finds itself in with more commercial work and lithic artefacts being uncovered, the style of purely academic research is changing.

The dissemination of journal articles has been poorly explored in the past. The achievement of publishing was seen as dissemination alone and added to this monoculture spoken about by Mastroianni (Ahmed et.al, 2023). Digital channels such as social media, KnowledgeHub, and LinkedIn have created environments for self-promotion, whether that is as a contributing author or a lead author. These channels have reframed our perception of knowledge and the promotion of research (Richardson, 2019). One requirement to help this dissemination could be the promotion of the article in a targeted approach, like LinkedIn updates on the week of publication.

The budgets and associated costs of publication raise several interesting challenges, especially when copyright transactions and article processing costs (APCs) are considered (Ahmed et.al, 2023). Funding or grants may be sourced from external sources, whilst some authors may find it easier to not be a lead researcher for an article but contribute a smaller amount. Some may have to seek journals which require no submission fee, like the Lithic Studies Society. These issues were highlighted by Pollard and Yorke-Edwards (2014) through their creation of the Ubiquity Press and *Journal of Archaeological Data* and their implementation of the JISC-funded REWARD project at UCL from 2011-12. The Researchers using Existing Workflows to Archive Research Data project was a pilot-project and used the Digital Curation Centre and Ubiquity Press, receiving positive results and reviews (Sakellariadi and Hole, 2014).

Monographs

Monographs have been a popular publication within archaeology since the early 1900s. They allow for an enormous amount of depth and detail into a specialised topic, which can vary from a specific time period to a material type (Ashikuzzaman, 2013). It is also worth noting they can vary significantly in size but normally constitute large documents which aim to contribute to a particular area or field within a larger sector. In the past, the main target audiences of these publication were academic libraries (Dodds, 2017). However, with the changes to university expenditures, department sizes and course alterations. This is coupled with rising publication costs encountered by journals (Dodds, 2017). The effect of open access has been substantial on the monograph publication and impacting the sustainability of its current model.

The monograph's style will depend on the topic being focused on. Joshi (2023) highlights that despite the syntax being the same, the style can differ greatly between sciences and humanities with the scientific style offering a more concrete definite tone. Different styles of monographs can be found across academic organisations or groups such the Society for Medieval Archaeology. Monographs are also published by English Heritage, as well as archaeology schools or departments like the University of Oxford. However, many commercial companies have also published monographs, albeit in the past. This includes ASE, Cotswolds Archaeology, and CAT. Many of these more recent publications focus on large scale excavations, often from infrastructure work.

The standards of writing a monograph are akin to those of creating a book. They require an enormous amount of prior research into your chosen topic, as you are presenting an up-to-date overview of your subject (Pooley, 2024). The standards are also affected by whether your intended audience is an academic or a more general audience, who may include archaeology enthusiasts (Charlesworth Author Services, 2022a). The standards will anticipate that books are less cited than journal articles, therefore will approach the subject with professionalism and not a sensational perspective (Charlesworth Author Services, 2022a).

Dissemination of monographs can rely on social media and other channels. It is important to have a strategic oversight for this to prevent sensationalist reporting or inaccurate coverage (Milligan, 2015). In 2003 Jones and others found that fieldwork monographs were still used weekly or fortnightly in comparison to other types of publication (Jones et.al, 2003). In a commercial setting, they are important as overviews of specific areas like Roman Colchester. The ability for a monograph to be digital allows for easier and more international access, although there are still challenges associated with it (Armstrong and Lonsdale, 2000). Many of the commercial archaeology monographs will often have a specific webpage to advertise their existence and where hard copies may be purchased (see figure four).

When considering publishing a monograph, it is important that the company or individual has a structured plan of the budget and timescale to create and subsequently publish. Monographs require a lot of time and effort to produce, often to an extremely high standard of additional photographs, illustrations and research of a local area (Pooley, 2024). With commercial sites, it needs to be considered if additional costs will be incurred for the client and whether these would be acceptable. These costs could be alleviated by funding sought from organizations like the National Heritage Lottery Fund, academic societies, or English Heritage. But this would require further research or networking within archaeology.

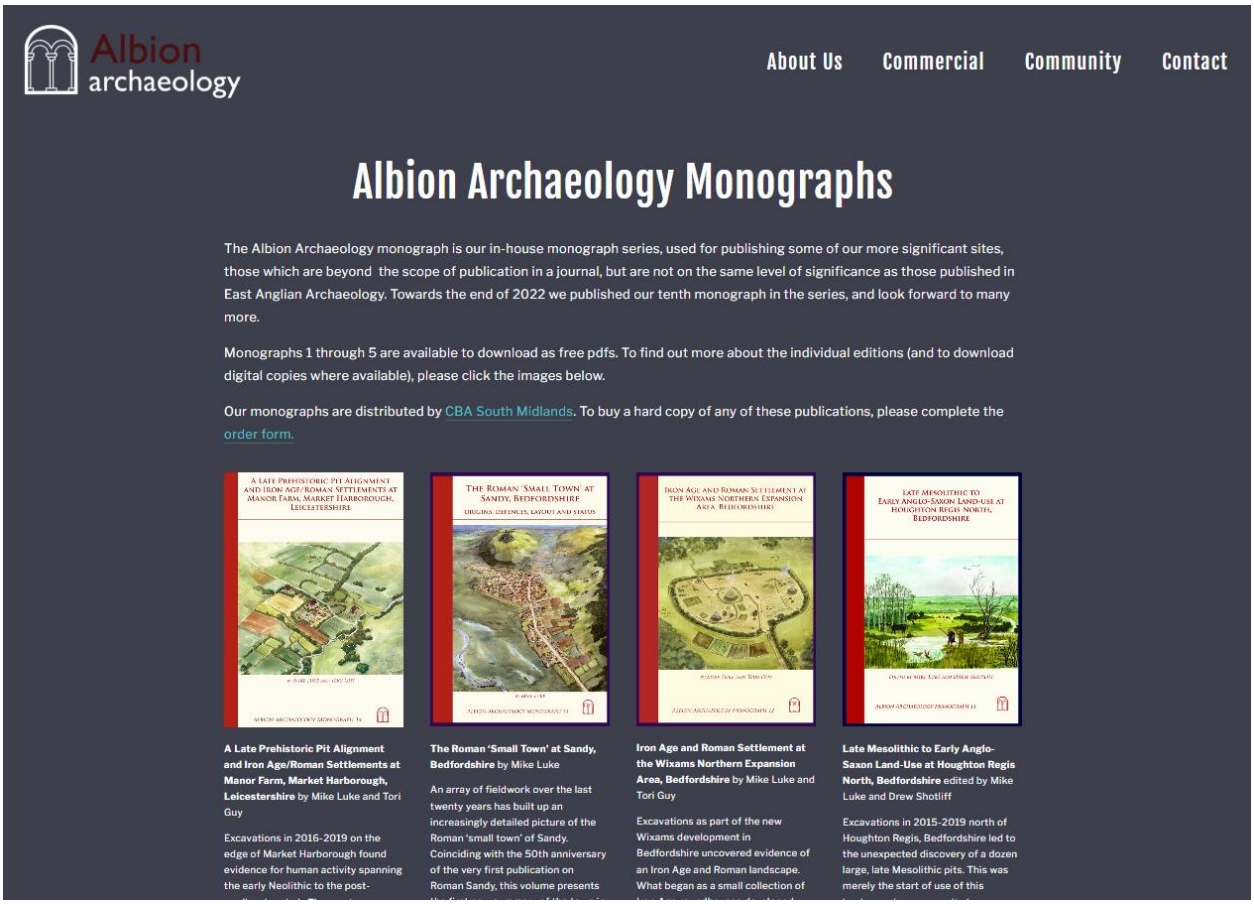

Figure four: a webpage screenshot of the commercial company Albion Archaeology highlighting their available monographs and where to purchase them (Albion Archaeology).

Conference proceedings

The conference proceedings are one of the most ubiquitous publications within the archaeology sector. These proceedings number in their hundreds, across nearly all academic societies or groups within archaeology. These include the Roman Society, the British Archaeological Association, the Archaeological Institute for America and the Mogollan Archaeology Conference of the Western New Mexico University Museum. These proceedings can also cover one-off events such as the Preserving Archaeological Remains in situ (PARIS) conference held in September 2001 and collated by author Taryn Nixon for publication in 2004.

The proceedings are a collection of documents or papers that are presented at a conference and are therefore recent or new research within that conference's chosen topic (IEEE, 2003). Some science sectors require rigorous peer-review for their conference proceedings while others require less examination (Rosenbaum, 2017). This due to the fact

many papers within proceedings are considered working papers, therefore have been accepted for a conference however may not have received additional review other than that (University of Missouri Library, 2024). The standards of the proceedings would follow academic protocol however there can be different approaches. Some proceedings will include full papers, while others may simply have the abstracts of papers presented (University of Missouri Library, 2024). Some will include the conference timetable itself, whilst others will have those details removed (University of Missouri Library, 2024). The name of the proceedings can also vary and may instead be titled as a convention, a congress, or a symposium (University of Missouri Library, 2024).

The style of a proceedings is affected by the conference or event it is covering. Typically, conference proceedings have the intended audience of those who were present at the event itself, or members of the organization or group who hosted the event (University of Missouri Library, 2024). Some may never be for public consumption or even published at all beyond the organization's remit (University of Missouri Library, 2024). The proceeding's style can also vary if what the event covers is of national or international interest. The aim of the initial event, perhaps a thematic conference or a conference in memoriam of someone, can also affect this (Charlesworth Author Services, 2022b).

Editing these conference proceedings may occur internally within the organization which hosts the event. However, as mentioned many of these papers are still seen as working papers therefore are not subject to peer-review in the same manner they would be if applying for a journal (Charlesworth Author Services, 2022b). The editing process is dependent on whether the proceedings are published before or after the event itself (Birukou, 2020). Some proceedings will be published afterwards to allow for further amendments to be made due to new recently presented ideas (Birukou, 2020). In my experience of the Lithic Studies Society, that has been the suggestion of publication after the event.

Discussion is divided over whether proceedings count as books or as journals. Proceedings can typically be published within journals or within a group's Transactions, however some are released as books (Birukou, 2020). This seems very dependent on the publisher of the resource. It has been highlighted though as proceedings contain primary research results, they are often subject to the same copyright policies as a journal would be (Birukou, 2020). With this in mind, the budgets or associated costs of a proceedings may be incorporated into the event itself which might aim to make a profit to allow for a proceedings publication.

Conclusion

In conclusion, formal publication within archaeology has a lot to catch up with. The colonial practises of the sector alongside the predominant demographic of middle to upper class, Caucasian individuals is changing. An awareness of marginalised groups, marginalised research and inaccessible data means that archaeology as a sector cannot hide what has now been realised. The worlds of academic and commercial archaeology do still have differences in their approaches and misconceptions. These misconceptions need to be either proven and fixed, or forgotten completely. More interaction and collaboration in research and publication will aid this.

I would like to briefly summarise the four formal publication strands I have explored today:

- Grey literature is not actually grey and has been misconstrued and therefore undermined as a formal and respected publication pathway.
- Academic journals require an overhaul of their current model and approach towards authors to guarantee their role in the future.
- Monographs offer a level of detail and synthesis not found in other publications but require a planned and funded approach.
- Conference proceedings are well intended and aimed at a specific audience with the latest research of that topic.

If the current standards of writing, editing and style guidelines cannot support the next generation of researchers in the archaeological sector, the role of formal publication in the future is in jeopardy.

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