Susana Ortega

ARCH1900

8 November 2011

Through growing technologies, archaeologists are able to approach archaeology and cultural heritage digitally. With databases or websites, data information has made itself more accessible to the public and researchers. This allows us to save time and money from projects being repeated. For the John Brown House excavation, we also have to take into consideration of how we are able to use digital technology to gain more information and to help us allow others to view our data.

Addison describes virtual heritage as “the use of digital technologies to record, model, visualize and communicate cultural and natural heritage.” He explains how with the help of technologies we are now able to “research, reconstruct and bring to life…the ancient world” (27). However, with the lack of data portability it leads archaeologist to re-gather data that has already been done (34). This occurs due to the vast quantity of data, there are doubts about the data or the cost of re-collecting is cheaper than the cost of recovering. Mostly, it is from past data that “is not readily available, known of, or clearly free of copyright” (35). An example he gives is when he brought 3D scanners to Angkor and, without knowing about it, two other teams carried out similar surveys. If there was better communication or awareness of neighboring projects, the team could have “reduced costs and covered more ground” to where it is needed (31). So, Addison purposes that digital heritage community should learn about Copyleft, which is “a method for making a work free to all… and pass along credit.” It allows one to add to the data, it would be able to flag mistakes, and diminish the longevity issues (37). It is also interesting when Addison questions “[w]hy record if the data is not to be shared?” I find myself agreeing with him when he responds to this by stating if data is not being shared then archaeologists are forced to repeat the same research. He also argues how we should make our work accessible and provide rights from copyleft so others could add from our data. It is important for data to be accessible because only then will archaeologists save time and money on other work than repeating the same project so they can have the data themselves.

Limp argues how Web 2.0 technologies should be used by archaeologists. He explains how it was first defined as “business revolution in the computer industry cause by a move to the internet as platform” (266). Limp states “if the archaeologist who ‘spent’ time learning Web 2.0 and ‘spent’ time creating new tools also created powerful or faster ways to do new analyses…could we say that Web 2.0 was valuable” (274). The Web 2.0 tools allow interaction between the people in the community in an easier way (269). An additional idea to help physical materials and records to be sustained is to let university library systems to continue their faculty’s digital systems (276). Because site management systems are restricted in the United States, the use of Web 2.0 approaches is unsustainable, while in Britain site location data is public (272). Similar to Addison, Limp argues that if data are accessible online then it will “reduc[e] budgets or increas[e] the speed at which decisions can be made” (275). In doing this, researchers will no longer have to carry out the project again but review over what past researchers had done.

Kansa and Kansa explain how there are many records in archaeological databases, downloading will be too much of an effort for those who are browsing. As a solution, he proposes to have these databases on online website for an easier access to browse (58). With the help of the Web, publication is possible for those materials that could not by print and the information is able to be reached. They developed Open Context, “a free, Web-based data publishing tool providing access to primary data from multiple projects” (59). They also mentioned how their early experiments with Web 2.0 techniques did not go well and needed changes (61). Though Open Context is not an archive, University of California’s California Digital Library provides data archiving and curation services (75). They argue the importance of data portability and how it “helps ensure that context can be discovered and is preserved, and is also a key aspect of making data useful” (77). It is also appealing how they question the influence of documentation and how resource should not save resources if others do not understand it. Data is now viewed as more useful and relevant to larger audiences than the limited audience of project director and specialists. More careful documentation and quality will also now become important for the future (87). I agree with these new advancements in archaeology because in doing this researchers are able to progress rather than go backwards.

Lucas has explained a dual sense of such classification between “the site’s features…from its finds…[and] the separation of different kinds of finds from each other” (64). He argues how the problem is not due to classification but to how the structure is use now. It is also interesting how he mentions there are “no universal classifications…no universal specialisms…if we can accept this level of contextualization, there is no reason not to tolerate even tighter levels” (106). I agree with this point and how the level of contextualization can be in tighter levels.

For the John Brown House excavation, we have already provided a few of digital contexts. We have our own class website, where our weekly blogs and unit summaries can be found. Those interested can compare our data from previous years, and they can read past projects and soon we will provide our current projects. During excavation, we shot photos, recorded ourselves explaining new contexts that was found, and used GPR and the total station.

Upon reading these articles, the issue of accessibility was brought up as an importance. Because our class website is not very known, there needs to be an improvement in the way we allow others to access our information. Perhaps we can place all our data into a database, where it can be more accessible than limiting it to the class. Another idea might be that we set up our own website and place the link in the Rhode Island Historic Society website, so those who are interested in the John Brown House can obtain more information through us.

As technology is advancing, archaeology has been gaining more information and documentation of sites. With more recorded materials we have the responsibility to store and share these to the public or other fellow archaeologists, who can be aware of current projects and add to them rather than repeating the same research. For the John Brown House excavation, we also have that responsibility to provide the public with our information and allow those who are interested to have access to our data. By providing a database or website, we are opening our doors to wider audiences.

Works Cited:

Addison, Alonzo C. 2008 The Vanishing Virtual: Safeguarding heritage's endangered digital record. In Y.

Kalay, T. Kvan, and J. Affleck, New Heritage: New Media and Cultural Heritage, 27-39.

Kansa, Eric C. and S. Kansa. 2011. "Toward a Do-It-Yourself Cyberinfrastructure: Open Data, Incentives,

and Reducing Costs and Complexities of Data Sharing." In E. Kansa, S. Kansa and E. Watrall, eds.

Archaeology 2.0: New Approaches to Communication and Collaboration. Los Angeles. 57-91.

Limp, W. Frederick. 2011. "Web 2.0 and Beyond, or On the Web Nobody Knows You're an

Archaeologist." In E. Kansa, S. Kansa and E. Watrall, eds. Archaelogy 2.0: New Approaches to

Communication and Collaboration. Los Angeles. 265-280.

Lucas, Gavin. 2001 Chapter 3, "Splitting Objects", In Critical Approaches to Fieldwork. Routledge:

London, pgs. 64-106.