

“Institutional Pressures on Theory and Practice in #pubarch”

2017 Public Archaeology Twitter Conference
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Abstract:

Institutional stakeholders are at the forefront of our awareness as practitioners day-to-day. Representatives of institutions, from grant reviewers and program officers, to publication editors, to tenure committees, all impact the direction of individual projects and the trajectory of entire bodies of literature. In previous papers I have stressed the importance of seeking feedback from stakeholders and pointed out how rare it is for funding institutions to require evaluation of public outreach; here I will discuss ways institutions shape public archaeology practice which are not as explicit as grant requirements. I will use a survey of public archaeologists I conducted in 2016 to outline the impact of institutionally-mediated forms of scholarly communication and knowledge-building. Through these examples, I will show that institutions are intertwined with the theoretical, ethical, and political dimensions of current public archaeology practice.

Tweets:

1/12 #PATC #pubarch | In US #archaeology especially, there is little published evidence of direct institutional reqs of #pubarch outcomes

And yet it stands to reason that employment, funding, publishing, & comm structures/institutions shape what is done in #pubarch | 2/12 #PATC

Responses to my 2016 survey of #pubarch practitioners revealed cautious optimism of public outreach skills being taken seriously 3/12 #PATC

However, 70% of respondents said formal evals in various sectors/formats ignored or critiqued effort/\$\$ being put into #pubarch | 4/12 #PATC

Despite apparent division, animosity between vocational groups, feedback on #pubarch seems consistent: vaguely +, noncommittal | 5/12 #PATC

Formal & informal feedback received by respondents indicates a widespread assumption that #pubarch is ethically desirable | 6/12 #PATC

In some cases involving the public (even in sharing results) is deemed unnecessary or even antithetical to scientific practice | 7/12 #PATC

Most critiques of academics focus on perceived theoretical impotency of #pubarch and its inadmissibility in most tenure reviews | 8/12 #PATC

In contract work, respondents said most often cited legal and political reasons for being allowed or not to pursue #pubarch | 9/12 #PATC

Universally the biggest struggle cited was justifying the time/cost, regardless of political, ethical motivation of the funder | 10/12 #PATC

This formal & informal feedback indicates that continuing to incorporate #pubarch into publishing, contracts, programs is key | 11/12 #PATC

If we believe #pubarch can help the discipline and the public, we should keep tacking between inward and outward facing work | 12/12 #PATC