

Off the Back Roads and onto the Superhighway

Reclamation Reports

Archeology is a philosophical endeavor. It is also a discipline rooted in history that reports on history. It is also a science that experiments and reports on the human experience; it tests hypotheses, analyzes data, builds cases of discovery, and creates an understanding (both theoretical and real) of human adaptation, interaction, and relationships. Archeologists do many things to perfect their discoveries; they collect, analyze, test, create, simulate, re-create, experiment, and report on their thoughts and findings. Archeology is an exercise of intense concentration that demands organization of thought and product.

Over the past 25 years, reporting archeological research has become an area of critical concern. You may have heard reference to “gray literature”: how it is inconsequential, how it is substandard, how it is poor science, and how it is not shared. Yes, there are problems with “gray literature,” but they are not unique to Cultural Resource Management (CRM). All reporting outlets suffer from a lack of timeliness, quality of data recovery, quality of analysis, quality of thought, and incompetent writing.

In the early years of American archeology, monographs and major site histories were published by the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE), the Smithsonian Institution, the Peabody Museum, and other major museums associated with universities and departments of anthropology. These efforts, from the late-19th century to the mid-20th century, form the backbone of every American archeology library. For the Southwest United States, Adolph Bandelier’s (1892) report on his investigations in the Southwest, Jesse Walter Fewkes’ (1912) report on Casa Grande, Emil Haury’s (1945) report on Los Muertos, and Frank H. H. Roberts’ (1929) report on Shabik’eshchee Village are but a few of the major archeological works in professional

libraries. Reports were sent to libraries, and individuals could purchase copies directly from the BAE. Until 1969, these numbers adequately accommodated the needs of the discipline. For the generation of archeologists that grew up with CRM in the 1970s, however, these works are not available.

Many BAE publications were the result of the River Basin Surveys program, the precursor of modern CRM (Jennings 1985). Primarily written by academic archeologists, River Basin Surveys reports are not generally labeled “gray literature,” yet they are the results of “salvage archeology,” another moniker of “second tier” status. The “second rate” label vanished, however, once the reports appeared and were received by a critical audience. Despite good effort, the River Basin Surveys publication record was disturbing. Donald Lehmer (1965) was critical of the record produced for the Missouri River Basin, estimating that only 25% of the data recovered was reported by 1964, almost 20 years into the program. While the published reports were excellent, the loss of data and lack of published results was significant.

Problems with publishing and disseminating archeological research are not new concerns. The “Crisis In Communication” discussed in 1974 at the Airlie House seminars (McGimsey and Davis 1977:78-89) is probably not as critical as it once was, but without constant vigilance and reminders, the “crisis” could become a major issue.

In 1974, the Airlie House seminar participants concluded, “. . . the current mechanisms for communication among active participants in archeology are something less than adequate” (McGimsey and Davis 1977:81). To solve this problem, seminar recommendations included centralization of both internal and external communication, a national newsletter, and greater distribution of data through the use of microfiche

(McGimsey and Davis 1977:83). Publication and distribution of data were identified as areas of critical concern. The increasing cost of publication and the eventual acquisition of reports were seen as real problems. They remain today as even greater problems, as the pace of archeology reporting continues to increase dramatically. Some effective solutions to the first two issues have been implemented, such as the SAA's *Bulletin* and *Archaeology and Public Education* and the National Park Service's *CRM* and *Common Ground*. The sponsors of these public outreach series provide a central focus for the discipline, and offer information to the profession and public.

Publication and dissemination of professional reports and data are another matter, however. Microfiche was the idea in 1974. It has been inconsistently applied, and is no longer current technology. Application of current technology is desirable, but one must recognize the dangers of inconsistent application of the technology, the fact that communication technology developed in the past 25 years has an incredibly restricted shelf life, an organization's inability to change as new, even better, technology is developed, and the inability to transfer data to current technology are all common maladies. As Alan Ferg (1997), archivist at the Arizona State Museum so succinctly pointed out to me recently, "Technology is well and good, but [in] reality there is no better way to preserve data than a hard paper copy." Centralization is another problem as evidenced by the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) and its poor quality of reports, poor advertising, poor participation, and poor record of use.

The Phoenix Area Office (PXAO) began funding large archeological investigations during the mid-1970s, and adopted a philosophy of Cultural Research Management (Rogge 1983:23). Part of that philosophy included demand for high quality research consistent with approaches sanctioned by SAA, larger than usual print runs, and public education components for all major projects. A priority was to get reports to agencies, libraries, CRM companies, and academics to the greatest extent possible especially at the regional level. Report print runs ranged between 125 and 200 copies, a number far greater than usual for CRM reports. Our contractors have routinely printed comparable quantities for their own distribution. As a result, the

many volumes produced for the Central Arizona Project (CAP) are in use by academia and CRM alike, and transcend the label "gray literature." Some of these reports are standard reference volumes in Hohokam archeology.

All of the CAP projects included significant public education requirements, as much as 4% of budgets that could be several millions of dollars. Results included brochures, audio-slide productions, narrated videos, teaching plans, traveling and permanent exhibits, open houses, and site tours. The permanent exhibit at the Arizona Historical Society (AHS), Central Arizona Museum, is a case in point. In partnership with AHS, PXAO provided funds and technical assistance in development of the museums' major permanent exhibit on Theodore Roosevelt Dam. This award winning exhibit chronicles the development of Theodore Roosevelt Dam in the early-20th century, the history of hydro-technology, the changing western landscape, and the politics of watering the desert. In 1996, the exhibit won the Dibner Award from the Society for the History of Technology. It was the first civil engineering exhibit to be awarded by that organization.

In 1986, as a direct result of recommendations made during a program review conducted under the auspices of the Departmental Consulting Archeologist, PXAO implemented two new requirements for contractors to further the dissemination of federal CRM activities: to submit articles to major refereed journals, and to propose symposia for consideration by professional societies at their annual meetings. Over the past 14 years the PXAO cultural resource program and its contractors have successfully organized 12 symposia, presented 115 papers, published 34 articles, published 11 books, completed 7 dissertations and 3 masters theses, and received over 10,000 visitors at sites during open houses. The successful *Exploring the Hohokam* (Gumerman 1991) published in 1991 by the Amerind Foundation and University of New Mexico Press (UNM Press) set a new standard for CRM sponsored publications. It will be followed by a similar synthesis of Salado archeology (Dean 2000) from recently sponsored CRM investigations in Arizona's Tonto Basin. Each of these books had or will have print runs of 2,500 books. In addition, the University of Arizona Press has published four Anthropological Papers on behalf of the Arizona State Museum from CAP projects.

Chances are a number of these activities would have occurred anyway, but the pace certainly quickened once they became a contract requirement. Two important points to remember are that the technical reports and monographs were accomplished with federal financial assistance, these days an increasingly scarce commodity, and they are not “gray literature.” They represent the highest quality of archeological production and reporting.

University of Arizona Press also published *Raising Arizona’s Dams* (Rogge *et al.* 1995). This work of historic archeology has been favorably reviewed in professional journals. Nonetheless, the most recent review by Mary L. Maniery (1997) still is critical of the information content. Says Maniery (1997:130),

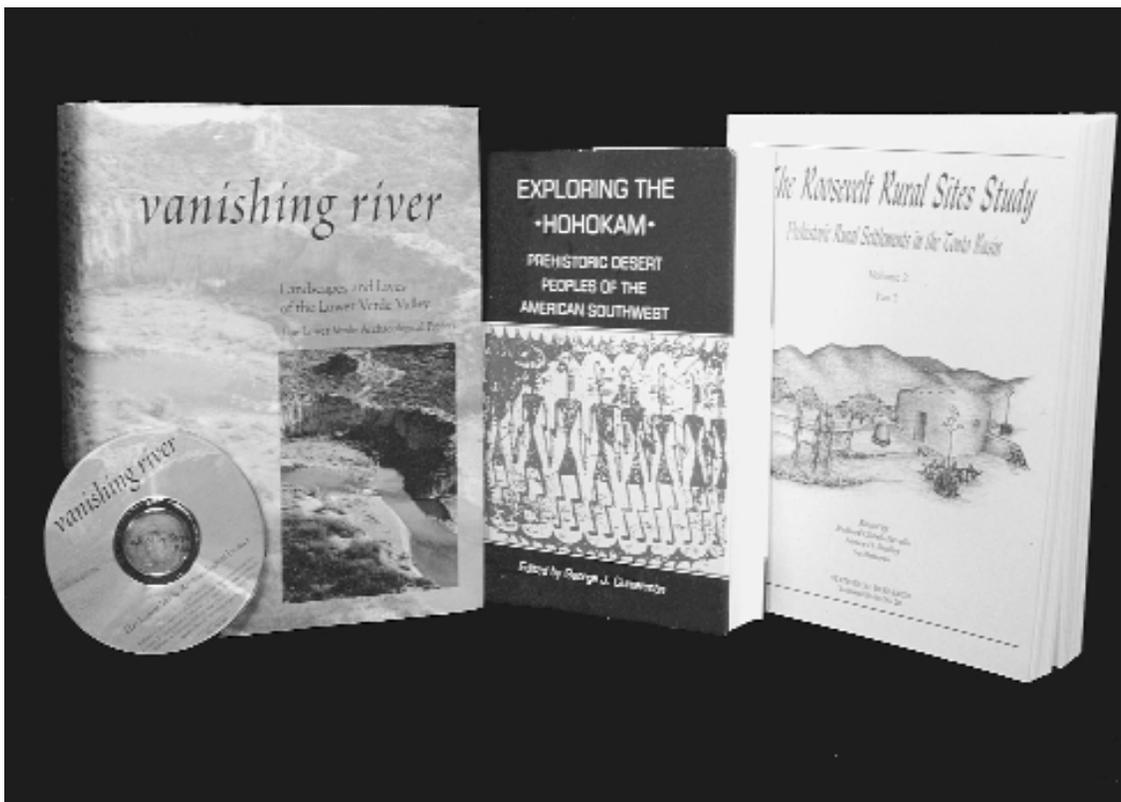
The text is witty, lively, and compelling, yet details I longed for as an archeologist are lacking. The nuts and bolts research and analysis that formed the basis of [construction] camp life interpretation are not elaborated on

This criticism might have been avoided had Maniery taken the time to acquire the other five volumes containing the “nuts and bolts” of this archeology project. In addition to the standard CRM reports, Reclamation, at great expense, produces a popular publication that is acclaimed by both professional and public audiences, and it

still gets criticized because the reviewer wants it all in one volume. How can one do more to deliver the goods?

In 1998, PXAO printed the final report for the Verde River Safety of Dams projects. *Vanishing River* (Whittlesey, Ciolek-Torrello, and Altschul 1998) brings complete archeology reporting into the realm of possibilities. The hard cover 800+ page synthesis is not unique by CRM or academic reporting standards. What is unique about *Vanishing River* is the compact disc that contains the entire suite of archeological data and imagery that one would normally find in data volumes and unpublished project documents. With *Vanishing River*, PXAO and its contractor, Statistical Research, Inc., provide it all. The CD is user friendly, linking text, tables, figures, images, appendixes, and references. The CD text reads like a book, is searchable, and may be printed as individual pages or in total. The CD also comes with a digitally-created video of the Verde River project area. The CD was not created with data manipulation as an option; however, data tables can be downloaded and processed using other data manipulation software. *Vanishing River* is stimulating, provocative, and of extremely high quality. It is very fresh. I would not hesitate to stack Whittlesey, Reid, and

Recent publications by Reclamation contractors. Photo courtesy Douglas Slowiak, Bureau of Reclamation.



Altschul against anyone Cambridge University Press is currently publishing.

Twenty years ago Fred Wendorf (1979:642) lamented,

I can foresee a time when archeology may come to be regarded, even by archeologists, as nothing more than a service industry, when archeologists regard themselves as the peers of beauticians and plumbers, who have no obligation whatsoever beyond the simple repair jobs they are called in to do. They may fulfill a contract in the very strictest sense, but will go on from there to the next contract rather than to the assimilation and synthesis of the data....

I happily note that Dr. Wendorf's fears have not become an industry nightmare. The major works of CRM are no grayer than that of academia or the National Science Foundation. In fact, because of CRM's funding possibilities, its reports may shine into the 21st century as world wide publishing on the Internet is implemented along with virtual museums and archives.

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