

Session Proposal

European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) 12th Annual Meeting
Krakow, Poland
19th to 24th September 2006

Organizer: Kenneth Aitchison , Mark Spanjer

Theme:

Managing the Archaeological Record and the Cultural Heritage

Session Title:

Opening doors for Archaeologists: Making Malta Work

Abstract:

The European Association of Archaeologists and the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage have many things in common. This session seeks to see how the aims of the EAA and of the Malta Convention can work together for the good of archaeology.

While the round table on heritage legislation is for the lawmakers and their advisers, this session is for those that translate that legislation from the academic to the practical level and act on it.

We need to think about how we can do good, professional work – not with our primary objective being to make money, but for the benefit of archaeology. This is not a reaction to globalisation or the commercialisation of archaeology, but it is to make archaeologists aware of threats and opportunities and how we can make the most of them.

In the 15 years or so since the convention was written and the Association founded, the practice of archaeology has changed across Europe. Some may have resisted this change; some may have blocked their ears and pretended it wasn't happening. But it has changed, it is changing and it will continue to change. Academic research doesn't stand alone and the divide that comes with commercial archaeology is as unstoppable as the tide - EAA is the body that should help with smoothing the process and building bridges across the gap, making it work for the benefit of archaeology.

Archaeologists need to think about what these changes mean in terms of practicalities, of working outside traditional borders (geographical, physical and mental), of knowledge transfer, of how to fight battles differently, of long-term perspectives, and above all of what is the EAA for? What is Malta for?

We need to make those good things work. Such powerful tools such as the Malta convention should be as familiar to us as our shovels and trowels. And we need to be trained to work with these new tools. Archaeology will not be able to go forward by being a collective of individualists – we need to be efficient and get other people to fight our battles – such as the lawmakers and the civil servants.

To do this, archaeologists need to tap in to the value the public attaches to archaeology. The public imagine they are paying for excavations, whether directly or indirectly. They are not paying for excavations – they are paying for the story. They are paying archaeologists to transform the raw data into stories.

To make the public aware of our shared European heritage we need to be telling the story and to do that we need to learn about selling a story and getting it out there.

The EAA needs to be loud about this – we are more than a vehicle for propagating university research. We are the body that enables further dissemination, and we can show that all archaeologists are passionate about archaeological research whether they are out in the field or not and who are making it work

This session will explore different ways that archaeologists have been making Malta work, with case studies from across Europe and across the different sectors of archaeology that come together to form the EAA.

Contact details:

Kenneth Aitchison

Institute of Field Archaeologists, UK

E-mail: kenneth.aitchison@archaeologists.net

Mark Spanjer

Bureau of Monuments and Archaeology, City of Dordrecht, NL

E-mail: m.spanjer@dordrecht.nl