

# EDITOR'S CORNER

## Concluding Thoughts on Change and Independence

Over the past several years the Society for American Archaeology, *American Antiquity*, and reader perceptions of the journal have changed. These changes and their possible outcomes deserve brief review for the journal to continue to be the leader in archaeological scholarship.

The most significant change for the Society for American Archaeology was to complete the transition to independence. An Executive Director oversees a staff and budget in a historic office building beside Washington's Union Station. Organizational independence may be taken to signal American archaeology's intellectual maturity. Contrary to comments on its adolescence, archaeology is not the "lesser part of anthropology" or "fact-grubbing antiquarianism." One of the early commentators, Clyde Kluckhohn, worried 50 years ago "that unless archaeologists treat their work quite firmly as part of a general attempt to understand human behavior they will, before many generations, find themselves classed with Aldous Huxley's figure who devoted his life to writing a history of the three-pronged fork" (*The Maya and Their Neighbors* 1940:43).

Archaeology has also survived the ridicule of Robert Maynard Hutchins, president of the University of Chicago and renowned educator, that it was "a 'tool course' that belonged in the curricula of vocational schools and not in those of a university" (Paul Martin, *American Antiquity* 36:1). Today it is not uncommon to hear archaeologists speak of a uniquely archaeological theory and method, one focusing on the understudied critical relationship between people and their technology, especially in contemporary settings where behavior and culture are inextricably bound to the actions and values of material things. Scholarly goals are pursued confidently in full knowledge of the growing significance of the past to contemporary circumstances and the irreversible pervasiveness of people's dependence on tools.

Prehistory and historical archaeology continue as the central research strategies within a broadly conceived archaeology that includes ethnoarchaeology, experimental archaeology, modern-material-culture studies, and much more. On the surface it appears as though archaeologists are going in every direction from research on the chemical character of stones, bones, and sherds to dressing whole prehistories in contemporary ideological fashions. But archaeologists as investigators of material things will always test the latest in research technology and as anthropologists will rightly seek to try on contemporary social thought. The diversity conveyed by the many research directions of modern archaeology signifies intellectual vitality in a healthy, mature discipline.

An ongoing challenge to American archaeology is in integrating Native scholarship and politics into academic, government, and private sectors of archaeological activity.

American archaeology has come of age. Along with organizational independence and a conspicuous position in contemporary America, archaeology has become an integral part of anthropology and the social sciences.

A less dramatic change, but one that portends a decrease of independence, has occurred at *American Antiquity*. The editor is no longer an elected, voting member of the Executive Board. The by-laws change approved in April 1989 stipulates:

- a. The Editor of each publication of the Society shall be appointed by the Executive Board, on recommendation by the Publications Committee, for a term to be determined by the Executive Board, and shall be subject to such editorial policy as may be adopted by the Executive Board.

b. The Editor of each publication shall have such responsibility and authority as delegated by the Executive Board (ARTICLE X, Section 2, By-Laws of the Society for American Archaeology).

One result of this change is that subsequent editors are selected by the Executive Board from those submitting a proposal, which at one level is not much different from the previous selection system. However, requirements that the editor be a nonvoting member of the Executive Board and reduction of Executive Board meeting attendance by the editor reduces the editor's role as an officer of the Society and places the journal more under the control of the Executive Board and administrative staff. Incorporation of the Managing Editor position into the Washington office, as is now planned, could further lessen the independence of the editorial office.

These changes come at a time when journals are under close scrutiny for subscription elimination by libraries, and universities are becoming increasingly reticent to continue their heavy subsidy of scholarly publications. The selection of the new editor, Michael W. Graves, should cause us to rethink traditional expectations of university subsidies for journals. At the request of the Executive Board our office drafted a request for proposal for the Editor of *American Antiquity*, which was edited, approved, and made available by the Washington office. When no one responded, it became apparent that willing scholars could not put together the requisite local subsidy of release time, space, assistants' wages, operation funds, and a dedicated computer. Don Fowler, as chair of the nominations committee, was able to match an outstanding, energetic scholar with a solvent university, or, at least, a friendly dean. It is difficult to imagine that university budgets will improve sufficiently before the next search to permit a return to a time when universities clamored for the privilege of housing the editorial office of *American Antiquity*.

I see no immediate threat to editorial independence, yet the historical safeguards are now absent, and economic conditions are unsettling. The readership must be vigilant to any encroachment on the editorial integrity and quality of the journals.

In this era of introspection, retrospection, and deconstruction the readership should reexamine their own preconceptions and expectations of the journals. Quite a few comments and letters over the years reflect a deeply held notion that the editorial office is a well-ordered, mechanized operation on the verge of converting to robotics. Our office is no more well organized than your desk or your field notes. That journal production moved into the electronic age during the past three years—manuscripts received on disk are translated and coded then shipped to the printer—cannot disguise the continued use of manila file folders and 3-x-5 cards. *American Antiquity* production has been and will continue to be a labor-intensive, time-consuming cottage industry heavily dependent on university subsidies of goods and intellectual services and a heck of a lot of volunteer effort.

Perhaps it is the speed with which we can communicate messages and transmit facsimiles that has led many to expect faster thinking. If anything, thinking may have slowed under the weight of high-speed information processing. Manuscript referees do not review any faster, and some seem more churlish and less inclined to review because of overwork, presumably brought on by electronic, labor-saving devices. Being hard wired to the local area network meant that when that system collapsed during the winter and spring of 1993 the *American Antiquity* computer also was affected. The point here is not to bemoan the irreversible move into the electronic age, but to request the readership's patience.

Another misperception afloat among the readers is that a large portion of their annual dues goes to support *American Antiquity*. Thus, when someone is disgruntled with the journal, they drop their membership. Although precise figures have been difficult to obtain, the truth of the matter is that *American Antiquity* is funded by institutional subscribers and approximately 10 percent of each member's annual dues. The total might be even less under the new, independent office. Express your opinions about the journal to the editor and support the other programs of the Society through your continued membership.

Changes in editorial personnel and duties provide an opportunity to extend sincere appreciation to the people behind the masthead. First I wish to thank W. Raymond Wood, my predecessor as editor, and his Associate Editor, Michael J. O'Brien, for encouraging Teresita Majewski to follow the journal to Tucson and for assisting me in creating a full-time professional position as Managing

Editor. Without Terry's prior experience I do not think we could have converted to electronic production as quickly as we did. We also would not have been able to continue electronic production without the University of Arizona providing the half-time assistance of Barbara Klie Montgomery. As a measure of their experience, both Majewski and Montgomery have Ph.D.s in anthropological archaeology. Also with doctorates are Maria Nieves Zedeño and Axel E. Nielsen, both Latin Americans, who have given generously of their time to write and edit Spanish-language abstracts.

Associate editors are to be congratulated for initiating new directions in their province. Diane E. Gelburd, Associate Editor for Reviews and Book Notes, used her position in the federal government, her wide network of colleagues, and the able assistance of Richard J. Dent to increase participation of government- and private-sector archaeologists. Furthermore, the reviews editors have maintained their independence in selecting books and reviewers, an essential ingredient of a balanced presentation in a discipline of multiple interests groups.

Douglas R. Givens, Associate Editor for Obituaries and History of Archaeology, channeled his concern for the preservation of archaeology's history into expanded sketches of important people and discussions of major ideas.

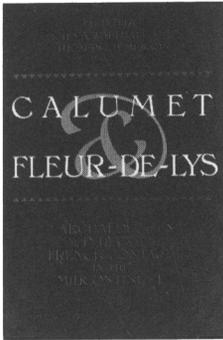
Three Consulting Editors for Mathematics and Statistics—Donald A. Graybill, Harold J. Hietala, and Kenneth L. Kvamme—underscore the rapid change in the role of quantitative methods in archaeology and the variety of techniques being used. We look back on  $\chi^2$ , Student's  $t$ , and the slide rule with nostalgia.

Special commendation is extended to all the assistant editors for Current Research and to Teresita Majewski, who coordinated this controversial section during a period of no change. Current Research will continue to be a topic of discussion.

Nowhere do we list the hundreds of referees whose manuscript evaluations are so essential. I extend my sincere thanks to all of them—the acknowledged and unacknowledged alike—and hope they are comforted by knowing that there could be no scholarly journal without their volunteer commitment.

Change is inevitable, independence is not. As we contemplate and debate the direction of future changes in *American Antiquity* and in the Society for American Archaeology we must give our full support to Michael Graves and his staff as they work to maintain independence and intellectual diversity.

J. Jefferson Reid  
Last Elected Editor



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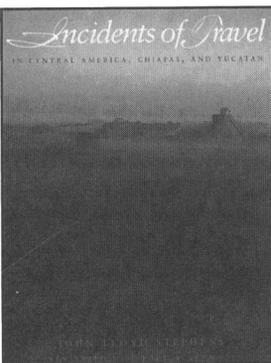
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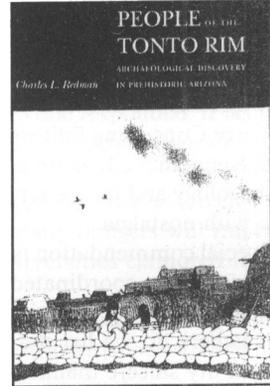
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