

Seeing archaeology from a different angle: An editor's perspective on understanding audiences

Although archaeologists know, that they don't have just one audience, but many different ones, many of them still don't behave so: They lump the native together with an interested visitor, or the journalist with the politician. Statements like "that's (not) interesting for the people" or "for tourists archaeology means adventure" are still common amongst archaeologists and the result of an implicit, simplifying understanding of a more or less homogenous public. In fact, many scientists still tend to understate a differentiated view on their public or see it as a marginal detail.

If archaeologists communicate the same to all people, or expect the same from everybody, they don't reach most of their audiences, but actually lose many of them. They miss chances to share their knowledge, to exchange ideas and opinions, and to call attention to a fascinating discipline. Getting to know more about highly differentiated publics is an essential need of public archaeology.

Mass media work with precisely defined audiences, when they communicate archaeology in TV, radio, or in the press. Editors have an idea of what their public is interested in, what they already know, and what they expect from a certain topic. The author of this paper examines how far journalism's methods and strategies to understand its audiences could be transferable to the scientific discipline and might contribute to communicating archaeology.

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