

ARCHAEOLOGY AND Community Service Learning



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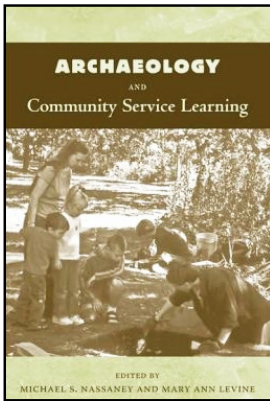
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Archaeology and Community Service Learning

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In “Archaeology and Community Service Learning,” Michael S. Nassaney, Mary Ann Levine and their fellow contributors explore how community service learning (CSL) can assist the discipline of archaeology to overcome its antiquated pedagogy and help provide some of the needed changes in practice and teaching. As Nassaney and many of the authors point out, archaeology has become more applied in nature with a greater concern toward those we study and collaborate with. This book is filled with many of the high minded benefits of CSL: moral and civic engagement, connections with our democratic structure, creating civic minded citizens and citizenship skills. It provides great resources for a new pedagogical direction.

The book is divided into three sections to explore the various connections between archaeology and service learning. The first looks at the pedagogical foundations of archaeology, and defines the changes that are necessary to move the field from purely academic and fieldwork skills to one that explores its teaching methodologies and interactions with people.

Michael S. Nassaney explores the opportunities and obstacles to conducting CSL and how it can help pedagogical reform in his chapter. As he reviews each positive and negative aspect, he provides a great foundation for others to build upon with their own service learning projects. His discussion of the growth of public archaeology shows a clear path from the old academic pedagogy to an open and engaged learning environment, with teaching and learning occurring on many different levels. As he points out, further research is needed to see if students learn better in service learning contexts; however, the multiple, important lessons it can teach (i.e., sensitivity to community needs, real world settings, critical thinking, compassion, and linking theory to practice) will help students, the communities they are in and the future of archaeology.

Sherene Baugher’s chapter follows with a history of service learning, the archaeological benefits and barriers to service learning, and her experiences during field work with the Enfield Falls Project. As Baugher points

out, the archaeological community has developed many barriers for the use of service learning, which include the lack of research, partnerships with non-archaeologists, and that it can only be done in a field-school setting, etc. However, archaeologists need to move away from finding barriers to exploring the diverse approaches of service learning to find what will work. To help, she lays out a good model for archaeology, service learning, and community outreach. By illustrating the model with her experiences at Enfield Falls, one can appreciate the usefulness of service learning and how the barriers can be torn down and put to rest.

Scott A. McLaughlin discusses the importance of service learning to archaeology like many of the other authors, connecting theory to practice, real world problems, benefits to community partners, etc. Although he doesn't provide an in-depth review of service learning pedagogy, he does provide perhaps the best blueprint for designing a service learning experience. McLaughlin's chapter allows the reader to see how an experience should naturally flow from course, partner and student preparation; through action, reflection and assessment to provide the students with the skills and knowledge they need.

The second section of the book explores "Community Partnerships and the Engaged Classroom." The chapters in this section have a wide focus, from working with local school children, to dealing with the politics of place and segregation, and the issues dealing with a wide variety of engaged publics.

Mary Ann Levine and James A. Delle explain how CSL fits with their outreach efforts at the Thaddeus Steven and Lydia Hamilton Smith site in Lancaster. Their chapter really highlights the impact service learning has in an outreach program, both from the perspective of local students and of the college students working on the project. Though reflexivity is important to all the authors, Levine and Delle include many stories from their students that demonstrate the impact upon their world view and how they see themselves in it.

Uzi Baram's experience at Sarasota's Rosemary Cemetery placed her and her students face to face with the history of southern segregation and the politics of place. By getting students into the community, Baram was able to help them understand how history can be silenced although it is still a part of the landscape.

Ruben G. Menodoza has perhaps the best chapter demonstrating several different aspects of CSL programs. His discussion of starting a project at a newly formed campus geared toward the "twenty-first-century student" (p. 122) demonstrates that even campus administrators are still trying to come to terms with CSL projects. Menodoza also explores the concepts of

"community engagement" and "entanglement" (p. 126–127). I believe this discussion really explores the heart of CSL projects, specifically working with diverse and, at times, confrontational community groups.

The third section of the book, "Service Learning, Civic Engagement, and Archaeological Fieldwork," takes a close look at the service learning connections with the local communities. To engage a community, one must be prepared to deal with the social and political outcomes whether they were intended or not. These chapters provide some good examples of what to expect.

Paul T. Thacker explores the combination of service learning within a participatory action research program through his work in the historic African American community of Happy Hill located near the Moravian settlement of Old Salem. Thacker explores how archaeological research needs to be built from the ground up with community needs guiding the research instead of academic needs from the top down. Through his experiences at Happy Hill, he shows how the archaeological project fueled the interaction between a wide diverse set of communities within Salem and the Happy Hill neighborhood. Though the archaeological research did produce the desired results, the outcomes through community participation were greater.

Elizabeth S. Chilton and Siobhan M. Hart examine how a CSL approach in their fieldwork within the "Pioneer Valley" has helped challenge the "historical erasure" of Native Americans from the valley and helped document and protect archaeological sites. Key aspects of their experiences were the development of relationships between the students and various stakeholders (including the general public), student reflections, and evaluation of the programs with partners. Having the students reflect upon their experiences forced them to truly apply what they were learning and to challenge preconceived ideas. The evaluation was key to ensure clear connections and focus with community partners.

Paul Reckner and Philip Duke's chapter regarding service learning at the Colorado Coalfield War Project probably best details the complexity of working with stakeholders and the politics that occur as stakeholders vie over the historical meaning of a site. Student reflections were an important aspect to their program, and the addition of some of their students' reflections truly highlights the learning that takes place during service learning projects.

To complete the volume, Paul Shackle does a wonderful job in the Epilogue summarizing the benefits of service learning projects and highlighting the need for archaeologists to engage the communities they work in. As with several of the authors, he reiterates the notion that service learning projects

are done “with others rather than for others” (p. 217). Archaeologists and the community can work together to complete mutually beneficial goals. Critical reflection is another aspect Shackle focuses on. By working with diverse groups, students are challenged not only to explore social issues but their own feelings. By opening these doors, we can begin to break down barriers and understand the complexity of society better and hopefully create a knowledgeable, engaged student and community.

For those in the discipline charged with preparing the future generations of archaeologists, “Archaeology and CSL” should be a must read. The pedagogical changes Nassaney, Levine, and the others call for will help move archaeology forward and make it more relevant not only to the public, but to archaeologists as well. Even if service learning projects may not be possible within your institution, there are many examples in this book that can be applied in a wide variety of educational scenarios. If we as teachers cannot help our students engage and understand modern society with its diverse communities and issues, then how can we expect them to understand those that have come before?