Digital Preservation as Business as Usual

The OASIS Project 1999-2017 and beyond

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The ADS: Who we are and what we do

- Founded 1996
- Department of Archaeology, University of York
- Collections
  - 1,100,000 metadata records
  - 40,000+ unpublished fieldwork reports
  - C.1000 rich data archives
- Guides to Good Practice
- DPC Decennial Award 2012
- Data Seal of Approval
Overview

• What is OASIS?
• Why is it relevant?
• Establishment
• Uptake
• Key Points for Project Outset
• Key Points for ‘Business as Usual’
• Review and improvement
What was OASIS?
What is OASIS now?

- Became: A ‘transit lounge’ for transferring metadata about archaeological investigations, plus the digital preservation and access to archaeological grey literature for research purposes – i.e. it fed the Library of Unpublished Fieldwork Reports (and other systems)

- Will be: A mechanism for transferring metadata about historic environment investigations, plus the digital preservation and access to archaeological grey literature for research purposes – i.e. it feeds the ADS Library.

OASIS is a Web service that provides access to data through OAI-PMH.
Why is oasis relevant to today?

- Access to metadata and data for research purposes and other re-use
- Multi-agency co-operation
  - Owner-operator
    - The ADS
  - Funding and Training
    - National Agencies (Historic England and Historic Environment Scotland)
  - Participants
    - 82 + Local Government Services
    - Over 550 Historic Environment ‘Contracting’ Organisations
    - Over 1000 individual logins

110 Archaeology
A1 Archaeology Ltd
AC archaeology Ltd
AD Archaeology Ltd
ARCA
ARCHAS Cultural Heritage Ltd
Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit
Absolute Archaeology
Acer Consultants
Adrian Lisney Partners
Aeon Archaeology
Air Photo Services
Albion Archaeology
Alex Rosen Associates
Alexander Thomas
Alison Deegan
Allen Archaeology Ltd
Anderson and Glenn
Andrew Townsend Architects
ArchHeritage
Archaeo-Survey
Archaeologica

Archaeological Burials Company
Archaeological Excavation Services
Establishment

• Pilot project – 2003
• Workshops / Training Days / Talks
• Management Board and Working Party with key stakeholders
• Endorsement
  • Association of Cathedral Archaeologists, National Trust, MoD Archaeologists, English Heritage Inspectors of Ancient Monuments, Volunteer Archaeologists / CBA, Universities, ALGAO, ...
• Carrots and Sticks...
Key Points: Outset

• Clear governance and commitment from outset

• Funding: ‘Free’ at the point of use (i.e. no deposit charge)
  • Key because people are donating time already, and time is money

• Free at the point of access
  • Key because the participants are also the users
Archives are a solution, not a problem!

... have your eyes on the prize, with a nose to the grindstone...
Benefits

Staff time saved by no longer needing to:
• check copyright / permission to disseminate on a case-by-case basis
• copy / scan then email / post reports
• help visitors find paper reports
• Report retrieval time via the HER is almost instantaneous for files held by the ADS
• Future maintenance of this system will be minimal as each report has a DOI
Introduction

Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society was founded in 1866. The Society first published its Transactions (TCWAAS) in 1874. Fifteen volumes were published up to 1900 and from then it became an annual publication. Each volume of TCWAAS contains a collection of edited papers on various topics relating to both the history and the archaeology of the area.

From the first, the Society embraced Lancashire-over-Sands, despite the geographical focus of its name; so when, in 1974, that area of Lancashire was officially absorbed into the new administrative area named Cumbria, the change made little difference to CWAAS affairs.

The Society funds historical and archaeological research with grants to volunteer groups, schools, museums and academic/professional researchers. Operates a website, www.cumbriapast.com, with accessible heritage information. Supports local historical societies in studying the historical environment. Holds study days, lectures and visits. As well as publishing Transactions, a respected annual journal, the Society publishes books and tracts.
Key Points: The Mindset

- Know your participants
- Know their work processes
- Exploit peer pressure and word of mouth
- Pitch for the participant, not the project
- Know your system from your users eyes
  - Track & interrogate helpdesk enquiries
  - Track and interrogate use
We’ve almost found ‘another Roman Britain’” – Prof M Fulford
Full Circle

Our oasis ‘transit lounge’ feels about this old...
And we still have some issues...

There’s a problem of flow in and out of the transit lounge

And in some places it still isn’t used enough!
• Major overhaul planning has been going on for the last 3 years.

• System rebuild due to start this summer.

http://existentialcomics.com/comic/29
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