



Peer Community In Archaeology

A nice project looking at under-represented demographic

Alexis Pantos  based on peer reviews by **Catriona Cooper** and **Steinar Kristensen**

Alphaeus Lien-Talks (2024) The Ashwell Project: Creating an Online Geospatial Community. Zenodo, ver. 4, peer-reviewed and recommended by Peer Community in Archaeology.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8307882>

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The paper by A. Lien-Talks [1] presents a small project looking at the use of crowd sourced data collection and participatory GIS. In particular it looks at the potential of these tools in response to socially disruptive and isolating events such as the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the potential role of digitally mediated heritage initiatives in tackling some of the challenges of changing demographics and life styles.

The types of technologies employed are relatively mature, the project identifies potential for such approaches to be used within the local-history/local community settings, though is also a reminder that despite the much broader adoption of technology within all areas of society than even a few years ago many barriers still remain. While the the sample size and data collected in the project is relatively modest, the focus on empathy toward the intended audiences from the design process, as well as some of the qualitative feedback reported serve as a reminder that participatory, or crowd-sourced data collection initiatives in heritage can, and perhaps should place potential social benefit before data-acquisition of objectives.

The project also presents a demographic that is not often represented within the literature and the publication and as such the publication of the article represents a meaningful contribution to ongoing discussions of the role heritage and digitally mediated community archaeology can play a role in developing our societies.

References:

- [1] Lien-Talks, A. (2024). The Ashwell Project: Creating an Online Geospatial Community. Zenodo, 8307882, ver. 4 peer-reviewed and recommended by Peer Community in Archaeology.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8307882>

Reviews

Evaluation round #2

DOI or URL of the preprint: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10726635>

Version of the preprint: 2

Authors' reply, 14 March 2024

Dear Alexis,

I hope this message finds you well. I wanted to express my gratitude for the insightful feedback you provided on my project. Your suggestions have been invaluable in refining the work to ensure its clarity, coherence, and overall effectiveness.

I have carefully reviewed your comments and have made several adjustments to address the areas you highlighted. Firstly, I have incorporated your suggestion to move some of the descriptions of the challenges faced by the target user groups from the later discussions section to the background section. This adjustment enhances the clarity of the objectives and provides a more cohesive narrative structure.

Furthermore, I have taken your feedback regarding the use of subheadings into consideration and have worked to ensure consistency throughout the document. I understand the importance of a clear and cohesive structure, and I have made revisions accordingly.

Additionally, I have reviewed the repetition of descriptions and elements within sections and have streamlined the flow of the article to eliminate redundancy and improve readability.

Regarding your concern about presenting the project as a success prematurely, I have revisited the phrasing and structure to strike the right balance between highlighting achievements and acknowledging areas for further development. This ensures that the observations from the study are effectively communicated without overstating the success of the project.

I have also carefully reviewed the specific comments and suggestions included in the attached file and have addressed any additional issues or concerns raised.

I am confident that these changes have significantly improved the project, and I am grateful for your guidance and support throughout this process. Your feedback has been instrumental in shaping the final publication, and I truly appreciate your time and expertise.

Thank you once again for your thoughtful review, and please let me know if there are any further adjustments or revisions you would recommend. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on the updated version of the project.

Warm regards,
Alfie Lien-Talks

Decision by [Alexis Pantos](#) , posted 08 March 2024, validated 08 March 2024

Additional restructuring and clarification

This remains an interesting project with many valuable points. The emphasis on the benefits of empathy in user experience design is especially welcome.

The current version could still benefit from some adjustments before final publication but they are not considered insurmountable.

In particular I suggest moving some of the descriptions of the challenges faced by the target user groups that appear in the later discussions section to the background section to make the objectives clearer earlier on.

Some of the comments of review 1 remain regarding the use of subheadings. Particularly noticeable is the difference in the use of subtitles in different sections. At the same time there are some descriptions and elements that are described multiple times, especially at the beginning of sections. This could be refined/removed to improve flow of the article.

Reviewer 1 also emphasised that the original piece appeared to present the work as the success of a project. Some of this remains especially with regard to the direct reference to aims and objectives in later sections. Reconsidering this phrasing/structure may help flow and help to bring the interesting observations of the study to the foreground.

More specific comments and suggestions are included in the attached file.

Good luck with the next edit! [Download recommender's annotations](#)

Evaluation round #1

DOI or URL of the preprint: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8307883>

Version of the preprint: 1

Authors' reply, 29 February 2024

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to the reviews received for the preprint submission titled "The Ashwell Project: creating an online geospatial community" I appreciate the thorough feedback provided by the reviewers and would like to assure you that all comments have been carefully considered and addressed in the revised version of the manuscript.

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to the reviewers for recognising the merits of our project, particularly in highlighting the significance of community archaeology endeavours such as ours and the value they bring to both local communities and the broader understanding of heritage. I am pleased to inform you that I have made substantial revisions to address the concerns raised by both reviewers and improve the overall quality of the paper.

To address Reviewer 1's feedback, I have revisited the structure and presentation of the manuscript. I have refined the aim of the paper to ensure it aligns more closely with the objectives outlined initially. Specifically, I have reworked sections 2 and 4, reducing the overuse of subheadings and providing a clearer focus on the project's aims and outcomes. Additionally, I have amended the language surrounding the creation of the resource for educating the public about local narratives to accurately reflect the collaborative nature of the endeavour and the importance of community input. Furthermore, I have updated the Introduction to Ashwell to ensure its relevance and accuracy.

Regarding Reviewer 2's comments, I have clarified the scope of the collected material, including the types of information gathered and the methods used. I have reorganised the narrative sections under Chapter 3 as suggested and ensured that all chapters and sections are clearly numbered and labelled. The missing text in Chapter 4h has been included, and the purpose of "4A Use case" has been clarified to provide a better understanding of its content. I have also distinguished between premises for investigation and testing and the presentation of results and experiences in paragraphs 4A, 4B, and 4C.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our preprint. I believe that the revisions made address the concerns raised by the reviewers and significantly enhance the clarity and coherence of the manuscript. I am confident that the revised version of the paper will contribute meaningfully to the scholarly discourse on public engagement in archaeology and heritage studies.

Thank you for your consideration of my revised manuscript. I look forward to hearing from you regarding the next steps in the publication process.

Yours sincerely,
Alfie

Decision by [Alexis Pantos](#) , posted 31 October 2023, validated 01 November 2023

Changes recommended

Both reviewers stress the merits of the project described in this paper and highlight the value of publishing such projects. However they also highlight several shortcomings in the structure and presentation of the work in the paper.

As such I believe this preprint merits revision. Based on the reviews received this might require some substantial editing, but I would encourage the author to do so and follow the recommendations in the reviews and resubmit this interesting project.

Reviewed by [Catriona Cooper](#), 09 October 2023

This is a really interesting paper that captures a community archaeology project using participatory GIS to capture local meaningful heritage. In general not enough of these projects are published, despite the clear value of the projects to the communities they engage and wider understanding of the importance of heritage to wellbeing, place and community. There is a lot to commend this paper, but at the moment but I feel it needs some work to really be of value.

- It feels very much like a masters dissertation, rather than a publication. I would suggest stepping back and thinking about what the aim of the paper is, it feels much more like this paper is reporting the success of the TAP, and how the methodology was successful, rather than the three aims and objectives laid out. I think some of the problem perhaps lies with the overuse of subheadings, something I largely consider helpful, but here is taken a bit far. Particularly true in section 2 and 4, both of which I think need reworking.
- There are areas of this paper which feel a bit too AHD, for example the creation of the resource for “educating the public about local narratives”. On reading the paper it feels more like “the public” are creating the resource to highlight what they value about their heritage. An important distinction, and something the author might want to draw out a bit more. I would also like to see a bit more discussion about place, intangible heritage and the importance of community participation, this may emerge with the reworking of section 2.
- The Introduction to Ashwell feels dated, or perhaps an incorrectly referenced quote?
- I would be careful aligning less technologically competent with older populations, unless this was your direct experience. The concepts of “young” and “old” are subjective and less easy to define, particularly given the issues with data literacy among school leavers.

Reviewed by [Steinar Kristensen](#), 26 October 2023

The article focuses on an exciting and, above all, a promising field within historic research. Public engagement in research can enhance, deepen, and nuance humanities studies. The article discusses a project in Ashwell, North Hertfordshire, UK where the aim is to gather information and stories related to local communities using digital tools and geographic information systems.

It is somewhat unclear what is encompassed by the collected material; for example, it takes a long time in the text before it becomes clear that participants do not provide oral information in the application. What about pictures, whether personal or from others? This should be further clarified.

I believe that "Narratives collected" with its underlying paragraphs (Narratives collected, Natural Beauty and Nostalgia, Community Spaces as Pillars of Identity, Preserving History and Cultural Significance, Familial Narratives and Personal Journeys, Cultural Events and Identity Formation) should be placed under Chapter 3.

Chapter 4h appears to be missing the text.

It is also difficult to understand what "4A Use case" entails.

Paragraphs 4A Family..., 4B older..., 4C museums..., 4A... accessibility. Are these premises for the investigation and testing of the application, or are they results and experiences? It is unclear where these belong.

The numbering and chapter divisions need to be clarified and adjusted earlier.

Overall, this is a good article that discusses themes within public research that many academic communities will benefit from. The engagement of the audience should not be underestimated.