Abstract #: 2399

BEST PRACTICE IN FIELDWALKING DOCUMENTATION: FORMATION OF AN EAA COMMUNITY

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For at least the past 25 years archaeologists working around the Mediterranean have stressed, to little avail, the enormous importance - for heritage management and scientific purposes - of being able to merge the hundreds, if not thousands, of fieldwalking datasets generated since the 1950s (Barker & Mattingly eds., 1999-2000). But attempts to analyze multiple fieldwalking datasets (e.g., Alcock & Cherry eds., 2004; Launaro 2011) have so far failed to go beyond an uninformative 'least common denominator' approach. More-over, the data of most fieldwalking surveys, and the metadata for nearly all of them, remain unpublished or inaccessible.
However, in recent years we have seen progress on four fronts: survey archaeologists themselves, in bi-annual meetings, are working towards agreement on good field and documentation practice; the FASTI Online Survey project is now actively promoting the submission of legacy survey datasets for online archiving and publication; a Dutch-UK-Italian research team is test-driving a merged survey database for the area around Rome (see paper by Attema in this session); and proposals have been prepared for a field survey extension to the CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model, an international standard for information exchange (De Haas and Van Leusen, forthcoming).
Following a review of the status quo, it will be argued that standardisation of survey documentation practices should now be our first goal, along with a definition and justification of best practice in modern, systematic fieldwalking survey. Having the political and organisational weight of the EAA, as the largest gathering of professional archaeologists in Europe, behind this initiative is crucial; the formation of an EAA community for this purpose will be announced.

Keywords
Fieldwalking survey, Data integration, Best practice guidance

Note/comment
Links to the paper proposed by Attema for this session.