

World Archaeological Congress Publications Task Force Report, 1 December 2003

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Claire Smith charged the Publications Task Force to make recommendations for her to provide to the WAC Executive so that a WAC publications policy can be developed. The task force has had about two months to deliberate on the matter, which proved to be problematic at best. E-mail is not conducive to on-going discussion, and most members feel it deserves more. Hence, we feel that the Executive must find a way to ensure that discussion about WAC publications is on-going. WAC members generally agreed that due to the complexity of issues and differing opinions, the Executive should see all the significant e-mail from out discussions. Thus, as an appendix, all the e-mail is included, with only personal references and irrelevant material deleted.

After basic discussion, Zimmerman provided a draft report, which prompted further discussion. From that, six major points were extracted. These are presented as a report, with major matters of remaining discussion or disagreement added in parentheses and italics. The latter are summarized from e-mails, so Executive members are urged to look at the e-mails to get a more complete understanding of the issues.

Major issues that should guide WAC publications

1. WAC's publications must be of the highest possible quality. The mechanisms to achieve this can be variable and multiple, from peer review (not necessarily anonymous) to selection of strong editorial teams and individuals. *[One member feels that this statement is obvious or trivial, that no one would wish to produce poor publications {Holtorf}; another {Zimmerman} feels that it reaffirms WAC's commitment to quality and also suggests that WAC should explore mechanisms to achieve this given that peer review has been perceived as a way to keep*

authors from some countries or regions, or with controversial viewpoints from getting published.]

2. Publications should include media beyond print, perhaps to include Web, CD-ROM, video, and other forms. *[Holtorf generally agrees but does is concerned about some media, especially video, and whether WAC should be involved in its production and distribution.]*

3. Selected publishers need not necessarily be large and profit-oriented. Rather, they should be selected on the basis of 1) quality, 2) how well they match WAC perspectives on archaeology (i.e. inclusiveness, accessibility of information, organizational goals, etc.), and 3) opportunities they offer to WAC that help WAC accomplish its goals. *[There is general agreement about this point, but some minor disagreement from several task force members on what it may mean.]*

4. WAC publications must be made as accessible as possible, including distribution of free copies, keeping prices low, and use of non-print media. This is more important than any funds WAC might realize from sales. *[There seems to be strong agreement that electronic publication, especially the web, may help with issues of distribution. Mechanisms can be complex and can cause problems for publishers of hard copy materials by harming their sales.]*

5. Language is a key issue. WAC and its publishers must do everything possible to offer translations of its publications. This will be difficult and costly, but must be attempted . *[Several members including Marciniak, Matsumoto, and Holtorf have pointed out that there are questions about which languages get selected and how this may cause ill will. Marciniak and Matsumoto suggest that all non-English materials be translated into English so that authors from these countries will have their work distributed to, and recognized by, scholars from other countries.]*

6. WAC's constituencies/stakeholders include more than archaeologists. WAC should consider creating publications for its many publics. *[There has been agreement that WAC needs to address the interest and concerns of non-archaeologists, from members of descendant communities to interested members of the general public. There is also agreement that the task is not easy, but should be attempted. See discussion for more detail.]*

7. The Executive must continually evaluate WAC publishing for its effectiveness in helping WAC to meet its goals. *[Task Force members feel very strongly that evaluation of WAC publication policies must be ongoing. Several have offered to serve, if the Executive wishes to create a*

publications standing committee.]

Final Comments

WAC publications will continue to grow in complexity, and because of that, there is potential for substantial disagreement between WAC members. The major mechanism by which this can be controlled and minimized is to continually evaluate whether WACs publications are serving the organization well, or at least, as intended. We urge the Executive to develop a standing publications committee and to make both the committee's and Executive's deliberations about publications as transparent as reasonable and possible.

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