

Remote Sensing for Archaeology AARG/EAC/ISAP working party

Report 2017-18 for the 19th EAC annual meeting, 22-24 March 2018, Sofia, Bulgaria

Following the recommendation in the 2016-17 report of the WP, a consultation on future activities of the RS for Archaeology WP has been undertaken amongst AARG, ISAP and ArcLand International (ALI) memberships. The consultation included the EAC Action Plan to communicate EAC objectives, and the suggestions from the EAC Board for future activities of the WP, namely reporting on the uses of RS in developing national inventories, and a foresight report on new directions in RS technologies and their potential impact. The consultation stressed openness to suggestions for other topics and activities that fit with the EAC remit. Finally, there was a request for volunteers to work in the WP.

Consultation outcomes

Responses were received from two individual AARG/ISAP members and the combined committees of AARG, ISAP and ALI, which is attached to this report. The responses can be summarised as follows:

1. There is enthusiasm for exploring the use of Remote Sensing in "developing national inventories", especially when large-scale hidden landscapes are revealed. ALI has indicated that, through its international membership, it can coordinate responses from across Europe and help to define the scope of outputs on this topic.
2. ALI is also enthusiastic about a "Foresight Report" on new technologies, identifying that many of its members are already involved in the prospective use of new tools, such as computer vision, rapid, high spatial resolution geophysical survey, UAV mounted sensors and high altitude pseudo-satellites.

More generally, ALI also expressed interest in Theme 1 (embedding archaeology in society), Theme 2 (different/local approaches) and Theme 3 (crowdsourcing and the use of digital resources). ALI identify that their membership (currently 42 member institutions from 19 European countries) is well-equipped to contribute, for example by compiling a coherent dataset on different approaches to archaeological prospection techniques. In addition ALI members may be able to provide training for heritage agencies on how to integrate remote sensing/geophysical data for archaeological purposes. In all these areas there is a recognition that the development of guidance documents is necessary, as is training, especially for those working in heritage management.

The consultation also asked for volunteers to engage in activities, and apart from ALI indicating its willingness to engage its membership, there was only one direct response to this request.

Next steps

The level of interest in the WP from ALI is encouraging, and while this group has a track record of delivering outputs, it is unclear how their broad enthusiasm will translate into human resource to progress WP activities. However, depending on the view of the Board to the responses compiled above, it seems worthwhile responding positively to ALI, with a view to creating a group to work on national inventories, and perhaps another to progress the foresight report (depending on interest). However, there are two tensions that we wish to mention, as they may have an impact on the productivity and future management of the WP.

Firstly, while the work of EAC WPs depends to a large degree on common purpose to develop shared agendas, there is an underlying difficulty in expecting a WP entirely of voluntary input to carry out tasks on a considerable European scale. It is always difficult to maintain such 'free' work and the EAC Board should consider the degree to which it can financially support the work of WPs, for example in funding meetings, administrative work and commissioned pieces of research.

Secondly, the lack of more general interest in active WP involvement is a concern, and we ask Board members to seek out people who have the energy and time to become involved. This is also a time to consider the future chairing of the WP, and while Dave Cowley and Chris Gaffney are prepared to provide strategic oversight of WP activities for the next year they feel strongly that the future of the

WP has to include a change of personnel in these roles. While suitable candidates to take over may emerge from WP activities over the next year, this is an agenda that requires active consideration.

We look forward to hearing the response of the Board, and will progress the WP activities accordingly.

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