Interpreting Archaeology by Natalie Vinton

5.0 Results

5.1 Educational Benefits

Providing people with a multitude of opportunities to learn about archaeological remains and to participate in the practice of archaeological research is the most effective way to educate people on the significant contribution that archaeology can make to understanding our past.

In order to dispel the myth that archaeology equates to treasure hunting expeditions carried out by elite scientists, we must provide local communities and their visitors with abundant opportunities to experience archaeology for themselves. After all, our archaeological resources are a community asset.

My visits to numerous sites and organisations in America have revealed a great variety of ways of employing educative and interpretative techniques in relation to archaeological resources. They range from the imaginative, low budget ‘hands-on’ programs, run by a handful of dedicated professionals, through to high-end sophisticated tours that offer breath-taking archaeological and environmental tours of America delivered by well-known and highly respected archaeologists.

Archaeologists working in the laboratory at New York Unearthed, an archaeological interpretation centre for the public in the heart of New York City

The organisations I consulted demonstrated that by presenting archaeological results through a variety of medians - including visual and audio displays, self-guided tours, film and television,
publications, and public participation in archaeological excavations - the benefits for heritage management, as a whole, are far-reaching.

An archaeologist talks to the general public about the various artefacts recovered from a convict site in Parramatta, Sydney 2002.

The positive outcomes for heritage agencies, site managers, practitioners and the public, include:

- an increased awareness and appreciation of, the rarity and significance of ever-depleting archaeological resources within local community areas;

- increased activism by individuals and local community groups for the protection and preservation of archaeological resources, including voluntary and fee-paying participation in archaeological projects and events, sponsorship for conservation projects, membership in archaeological societies, purchase of archaeology-related publications and donations to archaeological centres;

- reduction in looting, treasure-hunting and vandalism at archaeological sites because of an increased respect for archaeological resources, and the increased willingness of people to participate in a volunteer capacity to help monitor and protect sites (Dagget 1989; Ryan 1992; Pilles 1993; Jameson 1997; United States Department of Agriculture 1999; Sherbin 1999;2000 et al);
• improved town planning initiatives, statutory planning controls and legal protection for significant archaeological sites by Federal, State and Local Government Agencies (USDA Forest Service 1999; National Park Service Advisory Board 2001; Drayton Hall 2002);

• increased understanding and respect for other people’s cultural values, perspectives, spiritual beliefs and histories (Aronson 1996; Lipe 1974; pers. com. Berggren 2002; pers. com. Pilles 2002); and

• increased awareness and appreciation for the range of environmental and cultural factors that influence the formation of archaeological sites - natural environments, geological historic landscapes and built heritage (architecture).

Archaeology, in itself, is a powerful and exciting educative tool because it provides people with an interactive learning environment and requires the use of many different disciplines, from physical activity in the field through to analytical skills in the laboratory to derive meaning from the thousands of artefacts recovered from sites. For these reasons, archaeology is being used widely in America to teach specific subjects, such as history, prehistory, social studies, science, maths, and art, in addition to the teaching of particular types of skills, such as analytical thinking, inquiry-based problem solving, reading, oral presentation, and even creative writing for all ages from young children through to adults (Selig 1991; Monticello Education Department 1996; Davis and Connolly 2000; Kingerly Mays 2000; Drayton Hall 2002; et al).

Archaeological sites and collections are part of our heritage both globally and locally. The study of archaeology has the potential to teach about the contingency of all human endeavour. As we expand our view of the past to include the struggles, successes, and failures of all peoples from all times and situations, our wisdom - and compassion - ought also to expand.

Barbara Little, Archaeologist National Park Service (2002:16)

5.2 Tourism
Half of all international tourists and the majority of domestic tourists visit National Parks. During their stay in Australia 60% of international tourists visit a cultural attraction.

Australian Heritage Commission and CRC for Sustainable Tourism 2001:4

The common thread that binds all site visits undertaken during my research in America is the concept of ‘cultural heritage tourism’ and the benefits it brings to communities. Each site offered public access to various layers of archaeological information, whether it was a glimpse into the past at a self-guided interpretative centre right in the heart of a bustling city, such as Franklin Court (Philadelphia) and New York Unearthed (New York), or at a country centre designed specifically for archaeological research and education, such as Crow Canyon. The key common ingredient at each site was the imaginative, innovative interpretation of archaeology for the general public.

Across the United States the interpretation of archaeological remains, either as a stand-alone tourism venture, or a part of a cultural or natural heritage ‘package’ is on the increase. Cultural heritage managers, site owners, government agencies and heritage tourism promoters have recognised that archaeology, when appropriately marketed and managed, attracts the interest of amateur archaeologists and enthusiasts, history buffs, tourists and the local community,
which in turn draws in private and public funding for further archaeological research and activities.

Increased tourism and visitation to archaeological sites provides job opportunities, encourages expenditure within local communities by visitors to the region, the organisations themselves, and secures community support for the protection of heritage items.

Part of the trick is to get management to look at archaeology not as a hindrance to development but as an opportunity that can be promoted for tourism benefits.

Peter Pilles, Archaeologist Coconino National Forest (pers. com 2002)

Several strategies implemented by heritage agencies in the United States have contributed to the increasing popularity of archaeology and its emergence as a key player in the American heritage tourism industry. They include the following:

1. **Use of Traditional Marketing Techniques** - Archaeologists, private organisations and government agencies employ traditional marketing techniques to secure community support for archaeological projects and public interpretation programs. Newspaper and news stories, films, documentaries and the archaeological remains themselves attract major public attention because of the exciting and rare insights that archaeology can offer into past lives.

Private companies and government agencies are increasingly using archaeology to gain a high profile within communities, to secure wide spread positive media exposure and to improve public relations for their organisations, ventures and programs. Where archaeological investigations are conducted with an emphasis on public outcomes, reams of positive media coverage can be generated and in turn, companies traditionally viewed as having a negative impact on heritage resources have begun to build community trust and gain acceptance.
2. **The Internet** - In recent years the internet has emerged as the most important and comprehensive marketing tool for the majority of archaeological sites open to the public in the United States. The internet has allowed organisations to promote their programs, activities and achievements to an international audience, at little to no cost. The advent of the internet has virtually eliminated the need to produce expensive publications in order to spread the word about activities and to attract visitors to a site. Visitors to most websites can find out as little or as much about a site as they are interested in, and can interact with the staff who run archaeological programs and activities.

   *The key to a lot of it is simply advertising...it’s a sell job. Go to your marketing and tourism people because all we’re talking about here is “How do you sell a product?” and the good thing for us is that we have a product that is easy to sell.*

   *Peter Pilles, Archaeologist Coconino National Forest (pers. com. 2002)*

3. **Access to Archaeology** - Efforts by relevant stakeholders to host public open days, provide general access to sites and activities, and integrate archaeology into school education programs has created a higher demand for access to archaeological information and sites.

4. **Interactive Activities** - Innovations by heritage managers, site managers, government agencies and archaeologists alike have seen the development of exciting interpretation programs that allow people of all ages and abilities to interact with archaeologists, participate in hands-on archaeological activities and become involved in worthwhile conservation projects. Interactive, inquiry-based activities are unique, in that they offer a ‘behind-the-scenes’ type experience at a site that can not be duplicated through reading publications or visitation at many traditional historic and museum sites. As a result, in the United States there is now a great demand for public participation in interactive archaeological projects.
5. **Authenticity** - Over the last 20-30 years there has been a major increase in the demand for sophisticated and realistic interpretation programs at heritage sites. Modern tourists want to know how a landscape was reconstructed, and what type of evidence exists to support the reconstruction of a building or interior. Archaeology adds an essential layer to understanding the fabric, evolution and occupation of a site and provides evidence for the ‘faithful’ reconstruction of sites. As stated by Professor Stanley South, Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of South Carolina:

> Some people have the kind of mentality that, “It doesn't matter what the past was really like, we don't need [reconstructions] based on archaeology and clear, careful analysis of the documents. What matters is, we want to bring tourists in here, to bring money into the community and we can put up any kind of fibreglass little thing to attract them”, but the fallacy in that is that tourists today are far more sophisticated than they used to be. They’re asking questions now...People want to see interpretations based on the best evidence available at the time.

(pers. com 2002)

6. **Co-operative Partnerships** - Co-operative ventures between site owners, government agencies and private companies have seen the emergence of eco-friendly professional tour companies that use a variety of adventure activities, such as hiking, cycling, off-road vehicles and white-water rafting to visit remote and interesting archaeological sites. In many instances where the tours are being carried out on public land, the government receives a percentage of the revenue earned by the private touring companies. Through these co-operative ventures, the revenue being collected by the government is being directed straight back into the maintenance and preservation of the sites being visited. This also benefits private tourist operators who understand that is the preservation and maintenance of the environment and archaeological resource tourists flock to see is fundamental to the success of their operations.

In America, the public support for accurate, high-quality interpretation is demonstrated by the success of the many archaeological institutions and sites to draw in thousands of new and repeat participants for their many programs and activities every year.
5.3 Economy

For economically depressed areas in general, archaeology can be a needed shot in the arm by drawing in tourism dollars. Archaeologists, anthropologists and historians offer local areas a unique opportunity to both capture and share their pasts. With careful planning this can be to the benefit of residents, scientists and tourists alike.

Barbara Heath, Director of Archaeology, Poplar Forest (1997:68)

Whilst undoubtedly the emphasis at the majority of sites visited is the constant challenge of securing funding, grants and private donations to undertake the proposed annual and future works programs, research and activities, the prevailing commonality for all sites - whether commercial or non-profit - is the ability of each place to set and then achieve major goals. Through a combination of dedicated staff, media savvy, the commitment of volunteers, public support and innovative programs and activities, the economic spin-offs for sites and the broader community continue to expand.

America has demonstrated that archaeology, when done ‘right’, can contribute on many levels to the economic success of townships, ranging from its ability to promote expenditure on local commodities through to the creation of permanent jobs at institutions involved in archaeological research, education and heritage tourism.
Involving the general public in a variety ways can lead to major economic spins-offs for government agencies and privately-run organisations. Some of the most successful volunteer and fee-paying programs implemented to date include:

• **Site Steward Program** - where members of the public are trained to patrol specific archaeological sites looking for signs of vandalism. The program is co-ordinated through the State Historic Preservation Office and has gained phenomenal community support. For example, Arizona now has one funded ‘State Co-ordinator’ position after statistics demonstrated that for an investment of one salary (US$20 000) to co-ordinate the volunteer training and administration, approximately US$550 000 worth of volunteer hours was being spent annually on patrolling, updating records and apprehending vandals at Arizona’s significant archaeological sites (Pilles pers. com 2002).

• **Passport in Time Projects (PIT)** – generally one to three week project opportunities provided by the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service for the participation of the general public. People are selected through an application process and pay their own expenses to get involved in projects ranging from archaeological records management, historic photographic cataloguing, oral history reviews and conservation works. Statistics show that by 1999 more than 13 000 PIT volunteers had already contributed over 400 000 volunteer hours to Forest Service heritage projects (USDA Forest Service Department of Agriculture 1999). Each year, it continues to gain greater community support.

• **Fee Demonstration Projects** - visitors to public-owned lands are charged a fee to visit the site, and in return a percentage of the money collected from fees is directed straight back into projects for that particular site, rather than into the Federal Treasury for general redistribution. The Fee Demonstration program allows financially-strapped land managers to improve maintenance standards, interpretation facilities and customer service at its significant archaeological sites, despite continued reductions in annual funding allocations from National and State budgets for heritage resource management.
charging fees at the end of June 1997...Funds provide interpretative and visitor services, enhancement of resource conditions, sign improvements, repair and maintenance and law enforcement protection of the site.

November 1998 saw the Palatki Fee Demonstration area selected as the year’s National “Windows on the Past” award.

(George 1999:6)

- **Certification Programs** – non-archaeologists pay a fee to undertake training and gain various levels of certification so that they can participate in archaeological projects, ranging from field excavation through to laboratory analysis. In Arizona the Department of Certification is run by the Arizona Archaeological Society, with a set curriculum, so that there is consistency in training across the State. In many cases, this training has led to participants gaining recognition as archaeology experts in their own right.

One of the most revealing aspects of the site visits, with respect to cost, was the way in which individuals and organisations find innovative and dynamic ways to fund archaeological research, educational programs and to provide facilities for the public to visit. The majority of museum sites and archaeological centres were established without any major corporate financial backing. Today’s multi-faceted, highly respected organisations, who employ numerous full-time staff and enjoy thousands of visitors each year are a direct result of the passion, hard work and the innovative minds of a dedicated few, who have worked to stretch what little resources were available in the beginning such a long way.

In addition, the establishment of various types of tax systems across the States means that taxes collected from particular types of revenue, such as gaming and alcohol sales are redistributed to fund grants that will benefit cultural heritage preservation and tourism in local regions. These types of ‘bed, booze and board’ grants have provided a much-needed funding source for non-profit organisations.

America’s cultural places and archaeological centres have flourished and gained community support because archaeological research and activities are carried out imaginatively, with a
strong public component. They continue to attract thousands of local and international visitors each year, generating millions of dollars per annum for their respective communities.

5.4 Archaeology and Town Planning

At the sites that were reviewed as part of this study tour, it quickly became apparent that where the interpretation of buildings has been expanded to include an investigation of archaeological remains, there has been a greater understanding and appreciation of the need to save surrounding landscapes and original curtilages associated with these significant historic buildings.

Through their investigations archaeologists have demonstrated to heritage managers, site owners and key stakeholders that archaeological remains are a rare source of primary evidence not available through any other means which can be analysed to reveal new information about the use, development, evolution and occupation of sites.

Archaeological sites and historic and natural landscapes provide the context for historic buildings. This realisation by site managers has led to the reconsideration of sub-divisions, the placement of covenants over sites and an increase in land acquisition by agencies and organisations concerned with the loss of significant archaeological resources. Known archaeological remains have been mapped and potential archaeological sites have been tested for their integrity prior to the development of key planning documents for historic sites in order to determine the most appropriate placement of new buildings, pathways and facilities.
As communities in the United States continue to demand the appropriate management and conservation of local archaeological assets, Federal, State and Local government agencies respond accordingly with improved planning controls and public works programs.

With the increase in community pride for archaeological resources, the establishment of ‘voluntary’ law enforcement task forces and the contribution of volunteer time generally, State and Local Government Agencies have been able to record a drop in the illegal looting and destruction of public sites and a reduction in the need to mount expensive prosecution cases.

This land, which once formed part of the Drayton Hall Plantation was recently bought by the State of South Carolina to protect and enhance the existing curtilage of Drayton Hall, South Carolina.
5.5 Community Benefits

As demonstrated in the previous sub-sections of this report, archaeology not only provides a unique avenue for interpreting the past, but also generates a number of major flow-on benefits for communities. The implementation of public programs by government and private agencies leads to improved planning and urban design outcomes for historic sites and areas and the development of positive relationships between developers, land owners, the government and communities.

Archaeological excavations provide opportunities for people of all ages, physical and mental abilities and cultures to become actively involved in unearthing history, either as individual or within a group. Amateur archaeologists are able to develop their interest in heritage management and archaeological research under the supervision of professionals.

Communities can develop marketable programs, activities and tourism opportunities associated with significant archaeological sites and centres, which in turn promotes community pride for local cultural and heritage resources. With education, community pride and understanding comes a decrease in the destruction and vandalism of significant archaeological sites.
6.0 CONCLUSIONS

Since the introduction of the NSW Heritage Act twenty-five years ago, the relics provisions of the Act have been adapted and amended to provide comprehensive legal protection to New South Wales's significant archaeological remains. Now that we have adequate legal controls firmly in place, it is time for the government to move forward and embrace the public in its management of New South Wales's archaeological remains.

The results of my study tour clearly demonstrate that proactive public education and interpretation of archaeological resources is the quintessential key for people to gain an understanding of, and respect for, the rich cultural information that lies in our archaeological record.

The main principles being applied to the ‘best practice’ interpretation of USA’s archaeological sites, which include the provision of volunteer programs, archaeological activities and educational programs for schools should be further researched, adapted and applied to the interpretation of all types of heritage resources in New South Wales, including historic archaeological sites, natural and historic landscapes, movable and built heritage items, Aboriginal cultural sites, and maritime resources.

We can learn from the world leaders in the art of interpreting and managing archaeological resources to implement our own exciting and dynamic archaeological programs for everybody to appreciate.

By giving people access to the past we foster appreciation of respect for and increased activism on behalf of our irreplaceable heritage. Public participation is a valuable component in protecting, promoting and interpreting cultural resources.

Teresa Hoffman Archaeologist (1997:73)
Unless the Government can begin to adequately justify the cost and worth of archaeology to the public, New South Wales will continue to experience:

- an increase in the **destruction of significant archaeological sites** through accidental or intentional means;

- **unsympathetic development** proposals that result in salvage excavations with little or no public outcomes;

- the **continued loss** of, or lack of public dissemination, of important archaeological information retrieved from salvage archaeological excavations;

- increasingly **belligerent behaviour** from site owners responsible for the safe-keeping and investigation of archaeological remains because of the ‘perceived’ lack of public benefit to be gained from archaeological research;

- increased **resistance by developers** and site owners to fund post-exavcation analysis and interpretation of significant archaeological remains;

- **likely increased breaches** of the Heritage Act, which will require an increase in government expenditure on law enforcement and prosecution;

- **dissatisfaction** from those members of the community who have a genuine interest in amateur archaeology and gaining new perspectives about Australia’s history; and

- The **major loss** of rare heritage assets that belong collectively to all Australians, not individual site owners and heritage managers alike;

The development of a strategic system that ensures public education and community outcomes can change the current emphasis of the management of archaeological remains from a statutory mandate to a publicly supported management system that embraces public interaction, stewardship and the distilling of archaeological results to the broader community.
The management of archaeological relics by the NSW Government, through an innovative framework - a strategic ‘Public Archaeology System’ that facilitates education and public interpretation of archaeological remains will lead to:

1. Provision of **effective interpretation strategies** that make archaeological research, historic sites and exhibitions meaningful, enjoyable and educational for the people of NSW;

2. Provision of adequate **justification for** the requirements for **archaeological research** to be undertaken, in accordance with the statutory provisions of the Heritage Act (1977);

3. Development of **unique opportunities in local areas and small communities** to capture, understand and share their pasts through the study and interpretation of archaeological resources;

4. Provision of an **economic boost through tourism dollars to local** communities generated from archaeological and historic sites: and

5. Ultimately, the **gaining of support of people** thus ensuring the survival of our finite, and heavily diminished archaeological resource for future generations

It is envisaged that, once adopted, the “Public Archaeology System” can serve as a model for other Australian states to adapt and develop further to suit their own needs.

*Clay pipes and other 18th artefacts recovered from a site in Parramatta, Sydney 2002*
Increased public access to archaeological sites, processes and results has led to the development of a strong sense of community ownership of archaeological sites and resources in America. Broad community interest in archaeological research has led to a better appreciation within the development community of the positive aspects associated with the interpretation of archaeological resources. Most importantly, public archaeological programs allow people to appreciate and discover undocumented prehistoric and historic lifeways.

Responsible interpretation and development of archaeological sites can capitalize on people’s interest in cultural heritage and in so doing not only boost tourism but at the same time preserve resource integrity and promote an ethic of stewardship. It can also help to secure the future of unprotected resources. Teresa Hoffman, Archaeologist (1997)
7.0 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR THE HERITAGE COUNCIL OF NSW

The results of this study tour form a strong case for the NSW Heritage Council to review the management of archaeological relics under the current provisions of the Heritage Act 1977, and to fund further research into the development of a strategic “Public Archaeology System” that can be used to finance, manage and guide the future investigation, interpretation and preservation of historical archaeological remains in NSW.

Several types of programs and initiatives undertaken by government agencies, heritage practitioners and private organisations in America should be subject to further review and feasibility studies. They include, but are not limited to the:

- establishment of a state-based *National Archaeological Society* closely aligned to, or, administered by each of the state heritage agencies to cater for professionals, amateurs, tourism operators, teachers and other relevant stakeholders alike. The society would co-ordinate archaeological certification, public education and participation in volunteer archaeology programs;

- introduction of trial government-run community archaeological programs, such as volunteer site monitoring programs, site interpretation and fee-paying conservation projects aimed at reducing the mass destruction of archaeological sites, whilst providing increased heritage education and tourism opportunities for regions (i.e. similar to Elden Pueblo, Site Steward Programs).

- establishment of stronger partnerships and co-sponsored programs with tourism agencies, schools, developers and other relevant stakeholders to promote the benefits of archaeological research and heritage conservation (i.e. travelling archaeology education kits, sponsorship for school archaeology programs, interpretation centres, poplar publications);

- review of current funding requirements for archaeological research (i.e. investigate the use of taxes to fund heritage grants; fee-paying participation in projects, bond systems); and

- publication of innovative, practical interpretation guidelines in consultation with key stakeholders; and
• review of the Heritage Act to incorporate public education and outcomes within the provisions of the Act.

The NSW Government must actively encourage innovative interpretation of the State’s historical archaeological remains and active community participation in the protection of our state’s significant cultural resources. Public archaeology programs that are embraced by local communities provide greater protection against the destruction of significant heritage assets and provide dynamic economic, educational, tourism and development opportunities.
8.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Summary of Heritage Office Strategic Plan - Criteria relevant to study tour

| NSW Government leadership in heritage management | The community will recognise NSW Government agencies as leaders in heritage management. NSW Government agencies will model best practice in the management of heritage places. |
| Local heritage management | Local councils will integrate heritage conservation into their overall environmental management. |
| Value of heritage to the community | The community will celebrate and conserve the State’s environmental heritage. |
| Conservation practice standards | The Heritage Council will set best practice standards for heritage conservation. |
| Role & functions of Heritage Council | The Heritage Council role and functions will be clearly understood at community and government levels |
| Support to the Minister and the Heritage Council | The Office will provide quality advice to the Minister and the Heritage Council and support the Heritage Council so that it can conduct efficient meetings and make good decisions. |
| Development of Heritage Office and its staff | The Heritage Office will have a diverse staff with the skills and resources needed to carry out its functions. |
### Appendix B: Table 1.0

**Summary of Organisations and Institutions visited with strong ‘Public Archaeology Interpretative’ Objectives and Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANISATION NAME</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>CONTACT PERSON</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getty Conservation Institute</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>David Myers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOS ANGELES</td>
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<td>Cultural Heritage Protection &amp; Strategy</td>
<td>Private Consultancy</td>
<td>Margaret McLean</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOS ANGELES</td>
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<td>Telluride Historical Museum</td>
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<td>Self-Guided Site Visit</td>
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<td>COLORADO</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York Unearthed</td>
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<td>Self-Guided Site Visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEW YORK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crow Canyon Archaeological Centre</td>
<td>Non-profit Education and Research Organisation</td>
<td>Elaine Davis</td>
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<tr>
<td>COLORADO</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mark Varian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bureau of Land Management</td>
<td>Federal government</td>
<td>Peter Pilles</td>
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<td>ARIZONA</td>
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<td>State Historic Parks</td>
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<td>University of South Carolina</td>
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<td>Anasazi Cultural Centre</td>
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## APPENDIX C: TABLE 1.1 SUMMARY OF SITE-SPECIFIC CASE STUDIES

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<th>SITE NAME</th>
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<tr>
<td>Drayton Hall</td>
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<td>Tracy Hayes – Acting Director</td>
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<td>Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site</td>
<td>Historical Site</td>
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<td>Poplar Forest</td>
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<td>Elden Pueblo</td>
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