

Affiliate Organisations and the EAA: a strategy for future cooperation?

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As members of the EAA we all accept, approve, appreciate and share the highest standards and principles of the Association outlined in its official documents. We contribute to the EAA's standards and challenges, introducing and progressively improving our personal level of scientific proficiency and discourse with others. On whose behalf do we act – our own obviously (even though many of us have a solid institutional affiliation behind us); but to whom are we addressing our scientific and practical issues – to the community of potential participants of EAA conference sessions (and to the readers of the highly ranked European Journal of Archaeology, if we are authors there)? This is a significant audience. BUT is it sufficient for us? How visible and recognizable is our performance on the EAA scientific scene?

These are only a few of the reasonable and spontaneously arising questions of some part of the EAA membership. I will try to approach the issue via a virtual monologue based on current EAA documents. Let us remind ourselves of some of the prominent and crucial points of the current EAA research policy:

EAA Statutes, Article II: aims (the same text in Handbook, Article II)

The aims of the Association shall be:

1. To promote the development of archaeological research and the exchange of archaeological information in Europe;
2. To promote the management and interpretation of European archaeological heritage;
3. To promote proper ethical and scientific standards for archaeological work;
4. To promote the interests of professional archaeologists in Europe;
5. To promote cooperation with other organisations with similar aims.

Apart from the mobilization and PR aspects of these objectives, a simple question is evoked: HOW can these well-structured aims become reality? How to transform these laudable objectives into a meaningful and stimulating appeal to people – apart from disseminating our work through publication in the EJA, as mentioned above.

MY answer is: via openness and close collaboration with institutions and organisations that are behind the thousands of individual members. The EAA has already offered some places for corporate members, which brings modest financial benefits, but unfortunately there are no perceptible signs of their collective activities.

Three years ago the idea was put forward to create “Affiliate Organisations” (For examples of such organisations, refer to the Statutes of the UISPP (the oldest and most honoured organisation in the archaeological domain), alongside the existing membership categories. Affiliate Organisation status is envisaged as being open to archaeological and academic bodies that share the EAA's professional standards and interests. The EAA Executive Board (ExB) proposed guidelines for “affiliate” status. No direct financial benefits for the EAA or the Affiliate Organisation are envisaged (the EAA non benefit side is challenged here!), but to qualify for “affiliate” status an outside organisation must have at least 5 members at any one time who are also fully paid up members of the EAA. A Memorandum is presumed to be signed by the head of the Affiliate Organisation and the EAA President (the draft of this document is actually being discussed by ExB and Statutes Committee members).

Information about the creation of this new category of “Affiliate Status” should be presented to the EAA membership and a debate should ensue in order to gauge opinion on the proposal, to be voted on at the next ABM in Vilnius (2nd September 2016).

Let me turn to my idea from the beginning – the EAA will be better able to promote new initiatives and fulfil its aims by sharing the practice with a larger spectrum of organisations (including “affiliates”) and creating space for new and challenging research and management ideas and experience emanating from different backgrounds in Europe and beyond. Many individual members will benefit if their host institution is formally affiliated with the EAA; for instance, imagine the EAA enriched by affiliation with the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, with the Bulgarian and Serbian Associations of Archaeologists, or with the National Museums of countries that do not deserve to be neglected merely because their scientific organisations cannot afford to pay the fees required for Corporate membership of the EAA. These potential affiliate organisations would like, in fact, to be in formal association with the EAA and would have much to contribute.

These thoughts are intended to provoke a frank and earnest debate about WHY we are in the EAA: is it to enjoy our corporate logo on the website, to attend the EAA conference for personal interest and prestige, OR is it to share the scene with partners whose potential we tend to underestimate or neglect out of lack of awareness and/or because of profit-focused strategic ambitions?