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CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE TENURE AND PROMOTION OF CLASSICAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS EMPLOYED IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

The Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) is an international organization of archaeologists and archaeology enthusiasts. The AIA serves as the national professional organization for classical archaeologists (i.e., those concerned with ancient Greek, Roman, and related cultures) in the United States of America and Canada. In this capacity the AIA offers the following considerations regarding the evaluation of classical archaeologists for tenure and/or promotion at colleges and universities in North America.

Because there are few departments of archaeology in North American institutions of higher education, most classical archaeologists are employed in academic departments dedicated to other fields of study. Most often these are departments of classics, history, and art history. Archaeological field research differs in some significant ways from research undertaken by classicists, historians and art historians, and so it is quite common for classical archaeologists to be evaluated by colleagues largely unfamiliar with the nature, the quantity, and the pace of archaeological research. For example:

1. Research in classical archaeology usually involves the collection of data at venues (e.g., archaeological sites, museums, archives) located in Europe, North Africa, or the Near East. Classical archaeologists employed in North America are thus able to carry out the collection of data only irregularly, at considerable cost in terms of both time and money, and during those blocks of time (the summer, sabbatical leaves) that many other academics employ for activities such as grant writing, data analysis, library research, writing, and course preparation.
2. In order to conduct archaeological field research (excavation, regional site survey, restudy of excavated and/or standing remains) or analyze artifacts in museum collections in a foreign country it is generally necessary to apply for and receive authorization from representatives of that country. This is often a complex process that is difficult for the applicant to control, and this requirement may result in very considerable delays in the initiation or continuation of a research project or lead to its premature termination.
3. Archaeological field research is an expensive undertaking. For example, a six-week field season in the Mediterranean can easily involve a budget in the six-figure range in 2008 US/Canadian dollars. Additionally, major sources of federal research funding in North America provide limited support for classical archaeology. In the USA, for example, the NSF only rarely funds research in classical archaeology, while the NEH provides only partial support for a small number of projects. The directors of research projects in classical archaeology thus spend a substantial amount of energy applying for numerous small, short-term grants and pursuing the identification and cultivation of philanthropic donors.

4. Much archaeological research is collaborative and involves the participation of a wide array of specialist scholars and technicians. This not only renders the conduct of archaeological research more complex, time-consuming, and expensive than research conducted in other fields, but also results in a higher incidence of multi-authored publications. This is true not only for book-length publications such as final project reports and museum catalogues, but also for many article-length publications. While there is no discipline-wide standard for book and author credit lines, it is usually the case that the names of the primary authors (those individuals who undertook the most prominent role in the published research) are given first.

5. Archaeological research projects usually take several years to complete. They can last decades, with years of gradual data collection required before synthesis and interpretation are possible. For this reason, a candidate for tenure and/or promotion who has conducted an active and productive research program for a period of several years may have completed few publications related to that project.

6. The results of archaeological research projects are traditionally published in the form of large monographs that contain a substantial amount of low-level data and a large number of photographs. It is increasingly the case that this model for publication is not economically viable. As a result, much archaeological research is now disseminated to the scholarly community and the broader public in an economical and timely fashion via the World Wide Web.

7. Research and publication in classical archaeology often requires the review of scholarship in multiple languages that often appear in publications not widely available in North America. In many cases it is also necessary to obtain specific permission to publish photographs and drawings obtained from these and other sources, which often adds significantly to the time and expense of formal publication.

8. Classical archaeologists employed in North America regularly publish with international journals and presses and often in languages other than English in order to reach more effectively their target audiences. The fact that many international journals and presses do not employ the same peer review system widely utilized in North America should not be taken as an indication that these venues are less selective or prestigious than similar North American publications.

9. The citation indices for the arts and humanities and social sciences canvas only a small portion of the journals in which classical archaeologists publish their research. Accordingly, they do not offer a useful indication of the academic impact of a classical archaeologist's work.

The AIA hopes that this information will be useful to faculty and administrators unfamiliar with research in classical archaeology when evaluating classical archaeologists for tenure and/or promotion. Clarification on any of these points and/or additional information regarding research in classical archaeology is available from the AIA Committee for Archaeology in Higher Education.