



Article: Get your field work for nothin' and your sherds for free: Compensation for archaeological field conservators

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GET YOUR FIELD WORK FOR NOTHIN' AND YOUR SHERDS FOR FREE: COMPENSATION FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD CONSERVATORS

SUZANNE DAVIS AND CLAUDIA CHEMELLO

ABSTRACT

A wealth of information exists on the practice of archaeological field conservation, and many objects conservators will provide field conservation for an archaeological project at some point in their careers. However, very little has been published about the business aspects of this work. For example, what services do archaeological conservators typically provide? Is there a standard? How are they paid for their work and by whom? How many conservators volunteer their time for archaeological projects and why?

To answer some of these questions, the authors developed an anonymous online survey to gather data about the work practices of archaeological conservators. The primarily multiple choice survey was designed to collect information about archaeological field conservators, including their level of experience and education, where they work, the services they provide, and their rates and methods of financial compensation over the past ten years.

In addition to a discussion of the survey's findings, this paper will describe the methodology and design of the survey as well as give demographic data on the respondents. The authors will also examine prevailing attitudes about compensation for archaeological field work. Finally, they will provide suggestions as to how our professional body might use the data generated by this survey.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the course of their careers, the authors have encountered a variety of different attitudes and beliefs about compensation for field conservators. Casual questioning of fellow conservators and archaeologist colleagues revealed no standard for how conservators are compensated, and many colleagues expressed feelings of confusion, unease, and awkwardness with the idea of determining and negotiating for appropriate financial compensation.

In an effort to shed light on compensation for field conservators, the authors conducted an online, primarily multiple choice survey. The survey collected information about archaeological field conservators, including their level of experience and education, where they work, the services they provide, and their rates and methods of compensation over the past ten years. For the purposes of the survey, and this paper, the word "compensation" is defined as financial compensation or payment for services provided. Previous surveys have examined the education and experience of archaeological conservators (Peachey 2010), as well as compensation for conservators in general (AIC/FAIC 2009). However, to the authors' knowledge there has been no examination of compensation specifically for conservators who provide conservation in the field, on-site at archaeological projects.

An additional, equally important goal of the survey was to gather information about conservators who are providing conservation for archaeological projects as well as about their on-site practice. Where do these conservators work? How much time do they spend on-site during an average field season? What services do they provide? The demographic and professional practice information collected by this survey provides a picture of what is currently happening in this field.

The primary purpose of this paper is to provide a summary of the data collected. This paper will also describe the methodology and design of the survey. It will examine and discuss

compensation of respondents and also their work practices in the field. Finally, it will provide suggestions as to how our professional body might use the data generated by this survey.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research began by examining past studies of compensation for conservators to assess whether this topic had been previously addressed. The authors determined that it had not. Existing, comprehensive publications about how to care for and treat archaeological material do not address compensation questions. Ethical business practice for archaeological conservators is discussed only briefly in these publications (Cronyn 1990; Pye 2001; Sease 1987; Watkinson and Neal 1998). The authors felt that an examination of compensation and business practice would be useful for archaeological conservators, and designed a survey to specifically target conservators who work on-site at archaeological excavations. Conservators who had worked for archaeological excavations within the past ten years were asked to participate. The time period of ten years was chosen to provide relatively current data. Because field work is often sporadic, the authors felt that a shorter time period might adversely limit the sample size.

The authors first created a draft survey in FileMaker Pro to test content, question flow, and ease of data acquisition and analysis. Various online survey tools were considered, and the authors chose to use Qualtrics,¹ a versatile online survey tool which is used by multiple academic units within the University of Michigan. Qualtrics is relatively simple to use, has sophisticated analytical capabilities, and allows survey responses to be exported to multiple file formats including Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

The authors' goal was to create a survey which was clear, easy to take, and had a completion time of ten minutes or less. The survey had a total of 26 questions, but employed skip and display logic so that the number of questions answered by individual respondents varied. For example, a conservator who is the proprietor of a private practice was not asked whether s/he takes paid vacation time to do field work. The questions were primarily multiple-choice, with a few write-in boxes and areas for longer text responses. Answering most questions was mandatory in order for respondents to continue taking the survey (forced validation), but a few questions which the authors thought might be sensitive, such as the actual rate of compensation, were optional. Respondents had the option of providing their names and contact information, and the responses of individuals who did so were kept confidential. Otherwise, respondent anonymity was maintained; each response was coded with a unique number generated randomly by Qualtrics.

A group of conservators selected by the authors was asked to test the survey, and changes were made based on their comments. A final draft of the survey was tested again prior to launch. The survey was distributed in October of 2010 and was active for 3 weeks. A link to the online survey was emailed to the following specialty groups within the American Institute for Conservation (AIC): Architecture, Conservators in Private Practice, Objects, Paintings, Research and Technical Studies, Textiles, and the Wooden Artifacts Group. These groups were selected by the authors as those most likely to have members working on-site at excavations. A link to the survey was also posted on the Conservation Distribution List (Conservation DistList Instance 24:23, distributed: Friday, October 29, 2010).

Each survey response was examined by the authors to determine completeness and to check for duplications. There were 161 responses, 45 of which were discarded because they were incomplete. Removal of the incomplete responses resulted in 116 responses which could be used

for analysis. No duplications were found. Only one survey was found with an obvious error, which was re-coded.

All monetary data provided in currencies other than U.S. dollars were converted to U.S. dollars. Conversion was carried out on March 23, 2011, using the exchange rates on that day.

3. RESULTS

Readers are asked to consider two important factors when interpreting the results. One, the sample size is small, with only 116 respondents. Outlying data points, such as very high and very low salaries, skew the results more for smaller samples. Two, the authors cannot compare the sample size to the total number of conservators doing archaeological field work, since the latter number is unknown. AIC does not capture archaeological field work in its member profiles.

3.1 RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND PROFILE

This section provides a summary of respondent demographics. Demographic and profile questions in the survey included gender, primary employer, level of conservation training, and level of experience as an archaeological field conservator. With the exception of geographic location, the following sections summarize quantifiable respondent demographics.

Geographic location: Of the respondents who chose to identify where they were based, the majority were conservators based in the United States, but there were also responses from conservators in Mexico, Australia, Croatia, Greece, the United Kingdom, and Cyprus.

Gender: Of the 116 respondents, 85% (99 individuals) were female, while 15% (17 individuals) were male.

Primary employer: As seen in table 1, the largest number of respondents, 39%, indicated that they worked for a museum or other cultural institution. The next largest groups were conservators who are the proprietors of private practices, at 17%, and federal or state government employees, also at 17%. Examples of responses to the “other” category, where respondents could write their own answer, included “historic preservation consulting firm” and “currently unemployed.”

Level of conservation training: Respondents were asked to choose the option which best described their level of conservation training (table 2). At 78%, the most commonly chosen option was “graduate degree in conservation.” The second largest group, 9%, were respondents who hold an undergraduate degree in conservation. Unlike the FAIC survey on compensation (AIC/FAIC 2009), this survey collected data solely on conservation training, not on all degrees held.

Level of experience as an archaeological field conservator: Respondents were asked to choose which range of experience, in terms of years, best described their experience as archaeological field conservators (table 3). Ranges varied from 0-5 years to 11 or more years. The authors considered this question to mean the number of field seasons worked to date in the conservator’s career, but did not specify this when asking the question. This question may have been understood differently by different respondents. For example, a conservator who has worked on-site 3 times in the past 12 years may have answered that s/he has 11 or more years of experience. Another conservator with the same experience may have answered that s/he has 0-5 years of experience as a field conservator. In determining respondents’ level of experience as archaeological field conservators, data from this question may be less useful than data from a later question (table 5), which asks respondents to identify how many times they have worked

on-site in the past 10 years. For comparison, table 4 provides a cross-tabulation of responses to both questions.

The largest group of respondents, about half (44%), had the least experience. This group indicated that their level of experience was 0-5 years as a field conservator. But the next largest group, 35%, was conservators with 11 or more years of experience. Less than a quarter of respondents fell in the middle group.

3. 2 PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

This section examines the professional practice of respondents, including whether or not they take leave from their primary job for field work, the frequency of their field work, and the location, number, and types of sites for which they work. The survey also asked about the length of time respondents typically spend on-site and about the services they regularly provide for archaeological projects.

Leave from primary employer: Two questions asked respondents about vacation and unpaid leave taken for conservation field work. Individuals who indicated that they were the proprietor of a private practice business were not asked these questions. 96 respondents answered these questions. 43% indicated that they had taken paid vacation time for field-work within the past ten years, while unpaid leave was taken by 46% of respondents.

Frequency of conservation field work: Survey participants were asked about the frequency of their field work during the past ten years (table 5). The choices ranged from “1-2 times in the past 10 years”, to “I work year-round for an archaeological project.” The greatest number of respondents chose the option with the lowest frequency.

Location of sites and number of projects: Respondents were asked if they work for archaeological sites located in the United States or in a country or countries outside the United States and were asked to choose both if applicable. 22% indicated that they worked on sites located in the United States, while 91% indicated that they worked on sites located outside the U.S. In a separate question, respondents were asked if they had worked for more than one project during the past 10 years. 66%, or about two-thirds, answered that they had.

Types of Sites: When asked about the types of sites for which they worked, terrestrial or underwater, 100% of respondents indicated that they worked on terrestrial sites. 13% also indicated that they worked at underwater sites. No respondent indicated that s/he worked solely for underwater sites.

Length of time spent on-site: Most respondents, 68%, spent 3-4 or 5-8 weeks on-site, with an even split between each choice (table 6). The next largest group of respondents indicated that they spent only 1-2 weeks on-site. Fewer numbers of respondents were on-site for 9 weeks or longer. Respondents who had previously indicated that they worked year round for an archaeological project (table 5) were not asked this question.

Services provided: Respondents were shown a menu of services commonly provided for archaeological excavations and asked to choose the ones they regularly provide (table 7). They could choose all applicable options. The highest percentage of respondents, 96%, indicated that they provided artifact processing for projects; however, only 78% provided projects with a written report describing the conservation activities performed.

Table 1. Primary employer

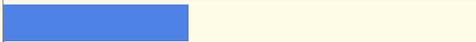
Which best describes your primary employer? Please choose only one.		Response	%
museum or other cultural institution		45	39%
private conservation practice – proprietor		20	17%
private conservation practice – employee		2	2%
regional conservation lab		1	1%
academic department - faculty or staff		12	10%
academic department - student		6	5%
federal or state government		20	17%
cultural resource management firm		3	3%
Other		7	6%
Total		116	100%

Table 2. Level of conservation training

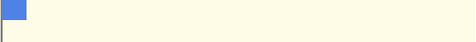
Which best describes your level of conservation training?		Response	%
no formal training in conservation (self-taught)		0	0%
1 or more short-courses or academic classes in conservation		2	2%
undergraduate degree in conservation		11	9%
traditional apprenticeship training in conservation		6	5%
student enrolled in graduate-degree program in conservation		6	5%
graduate degree in conservation		91	78%
Total		116	100%

Table 3. Level of experience as an archaeological field conservator

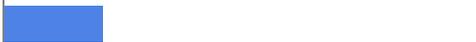
Which best describes your level of experience as an archaeological field conservator?		Response	%
0-5 years		51	44%
6-10 years		24	21%
11 or more years		41	35%
Total		116	100%

Table 4. Cross Tabulation: frequency of fieldwork (rows; data shown separately in table 5) with level of field experience (columns; data shown separately in table 3)

Note that these results are given as numbers of individual respondents, not as percentages.		Which best describes your level of experience as an archaeological field conservator?			Total
		0-5 years	6-10 years	11 or more years	
			one to two times in the past ten years	28	
In the past ten years, how often have you worked as a field conservator for archaeological projects?	three or more times in the past ten years	16	11	10	37
	at least once per year	3	8	13	24
	more than once per year	2	2	5	9
	I work year-round for an archaeological project(s)	2	0	4	6
	Total	51	24	41	116

Table 5. Frequency of conservation field work

In the past ten years, how often have you worked as a field conservator for archaeological projects?		Response	%
one to two times in the past ten years		40	34%
three or more times in the past ten years		37	32%
at least once per year		24	21%
more than once per year		9	8%
I work year-round for an archaeological project(s)		6	5%
Total		116	100%

Table 6. Length of time spent on-site

On average, how much time do you spent on-site at an archaeological project?		Response	%
1-2 weeks		22	20%
3-4 weeks		37	34%
5-8 weeks		37	34%
9-12 weeks		7	6%
13 or more weeks		7	6%
Total		110	100%

Table 7. Services provided

Which professional services do you regularly provide for archaeological projects? Please choose all that apply.		Response	%
artifact processing such as stabilization, cleaning, and reconstruction		111	96%
conservation of architectural structures and/or elements		54	47%
conservation planning and consultation		67	58%
site management		23	20%
teaching and training		73	63%
outreach about conservation at the site (e.g., lectures, web content, or other public education efforts)		49	42%
a written report describing the conservation activities performed		91	78%

3.3 COMPENSATION

This section first examines salaries or stipends paid to conservators for their archaeological field work. It then looks at compensation for expenses, such as travel and room and board. Finally, it examines volunteerism by conservators on archaeological projects.

Percentage of respondents paid a salary or stipend for conservation field work:

Respondents were asked a yes/no question about whether they had received financial compensation for their field work during the past 10 years. Conservators who were paid their regular salary by their primary employer while they were on-site were instructed to choose “yes.” Students had been previously instructed to consider their school to be their primary employer, and the group of respondents who were paid should be assumed to include some students who were drawing stipends from their schools.

82% of respondents, or 95 individuals, were paid for their field work, while 18%, 21 individuals, were not.

Compensation (salary or stipend): Respondents were asked, if they were willing, to provide their financial compensation. This question was optional because salary information tends to be highly sensitive. Many respondents do not wish provide sensitive information in surveys, even when the information is kept confidential, and the drop-out rate tends to be higher where such responses are required.

Of the 116 respondents, 50 individuals or 43% chose to tell us what they are usually paid. To encourage a higher response rate, the question was left open; the authors did not ask respondents to specify whether the pay given was gross or net, although they did ask respondents to indicate a time period basis for pay—i.e., weekly, per season, or fee for service.

Individuals answered with different bases for the rate—e.g.: hourly, daily, weekly, monthly or annual salary. The authors multiplied/divided amounts to get compensation per week in order to be able to report one unit. They also felt that the weekly rate of pay would be most helpful for conservators negotiating on-site salaries in future.

The minimum rate of pay was \$58 per week, while the maximum was \$8,000 per week. The average was \$946 per week, and the median was \$563 per week. The mode, or most frequently occurring rate of pay, was \$1000 per week.

Provider of compensation: For this question, respondents who had been paid for their field work within the past 10 years were asked to indicate who had compensated them: the archaeological project, their primary employer with professional development funds, or their primary employer with regular salary (table 8). Keep in mind that individual respondents may have had more than one compensation source within the past 10 years.

Respondents who indicated that they were paid by an archaeological project were asked an additional question about how they determined their fee for the project (table 9). Note that highest percentage of respondents, 68%, indicated that their compensation was determined by the project’s budget.

Expenses: All respondents were asked who paid the travel and living expenses for their fieldwork (table 10). Keep in mind that some respondents worked for more than project and that their expenses may have been covered in a variety of ways. The largest group, 80%, of respondents indicated that their expenses were covered by the archaeological project. 22% paid their own expenses. This latter group was asked an additional question about the primary reason their expenses were not covered (table 11). For this group, the largest number of respondents, 56%, indicated that the archaeological project could not or did not wish to pay their expenses.

Volunteering: This survey captured information on two groups of conservators who volunteer their services. The first group did not receive any financial compensation, defined as a salary or stipend, for their field work within the past 10 years. The second group consisted of conservators who were paid for their fieldwork at least once within the past 10 years, but who also, during that 10 year period, volunteered their services or worked at a substantially reduced rate.

The first group, who were not paid for their field work within the past 10 years, represents 18% of the total number of respondents, or 21 individuals. These individuals were asked to choose the primary reason they were not paid (table 12). For this group, the largest number of respondents, 33%, indicated that the primary reason they were not paid was because the archaeological project could not afford to pay a conservator, although it did pay other professional staff. Closely following this 33%, at 29% and 24% respectively, were respondents who were volunteering in order to gain experience and respondents who worked for projects that did not pay any professional staff. The smallest number of respondents, only 2 individuals, indicated that they were willing to volunteer their time and services regardless of the project's ability to pay them. These 2 individuals were asked an additional question about their reasons for volunteering and both indicated that they enjoy the work.

Conservators who were paid within the past 10 years were asked if they had also volunteered or worked at a substantially reduced rate within that time. Of the 95 respondents who were paid during the past 10 years, 69%, or 66 individuals also volunteered or worked at a reduced rate. This group was asked a follow-up question about their reasons for volunteering or working at a reduced rate (table 13). The largest two groups, at 71% each, were working to gain experience and found the work enjoyable. The smallest group, 8% or 5 individuals, chose the "other" response. Write in responses included the opportunity to travel and lack of other work.

Satisfaction with compensation: All 116 respondents, regardless of whether or not they were paid, were asked if they felt adequately compensated for their field work. 41% of respondents, or 47 individuals, indicated that they felt adequately compensated, while 59%, or 68 individuals, said that they did not. This was a yes/no question, but respondents also had the opportunity to write a descriptive comment about their answer. 68 respondents chose to write comments.

Of the 47 individuals who said that they felt adequately compensated, 20 wrote a comment. Common reasons given for feeling satisfied were that they were working to gain experience, and thus felt compensated by the learning experience; that they were being paid their regular salary by their primary employer; and that they love the work. Many individuals also qualified their answers. For example, several respondents wrote statements such as: Yes, I am satisfied, but the hours are quite long.

Of the 68 individuals who said they did not feel adequately compensated, 48 chose to write a comment about their answer. Common reasons cited for dissatisfaction included: the compensation received was not enough to cover bills at home; the compensation was not adequate for the long hours and effort required; and, that conservators were underpaid compared to other professionals on archaeological projects.

Table 8. Provider of compensation

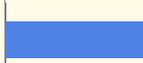
You indicated that you have received financial compensation for your field work within the past ten years. Who compensated you? Please choose all that apply. If you are a student, please consider your school to be your primary employer.		Response	%
I was financially compensated by the archaeological project		68	72%
I was financially compensated with professional development funds provided by my primary employer		16	17%
I was financially compensated by my primary employer with my regular salary		46	48%

Table 9. Determination of fee

You indicated that you have been financially compensated by an archaeological project within the last ten years. Which best describes the primary method used to determine your fee?		Response	%
my financial compensation was determined by the project's budget		46	68%
I charged based on the amount of time spent on the project (e.g. by days, weeks, months)		12	18%
I charged based on the services provided		1	1%
I charged based on both the time spent and the services provided		9	13%
Total		68	100%

Table 10. Expenses

In the past ten years, who has paid the travel and living expenses for your conservation work on-site? Please choose all that apply. If you are a student, please consider your school to be your primary employer		Response	%
I paid for these expenses myself		25	22%
the archaeological project paid these expenses		92	79%
my primary employer paid these expenses		31	27%
not applicable - I lived near the site(s)		11	9%

Table 11. Reason expenses were not covered

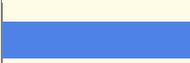
You indicated that you paid for some or all of your travel and living expenses while doing conservation work on-site. Which best describes the primary reason for this?		Response	%
I was willing to pay my own expenses regardless of the project's financial resources		7	28%
I built the cost of my expenses into the fee I charge projects		4	16%
the project could not or did not wish to pay my expenses		14	56%
Total		25	100%

Table 12. Primary reason for not receiving financial compensation

You indicated that within the past ten years, you did not receive financial compensation for your conservation field work. Which best describes the primary reason for this? Please choose only one.		Response	%
the project(s) I worked for was not financially able to pay any professional staff		5	24%
the project(s) I worked for was not financially able to pay a conservator, but did pay some other professional staff members (e.g. surveyor, illustrator)		7	33%
I would have liked financial compensation, but did not feel comfortable asking for payment		1	5%
I was working in order to gain experience		6	29%
I was willing to volunteer, regardless of the project's ability to pay a conservator		2	10%
Total		21	100%

Table 13. Reasons for volunteering or working at a reduced rate

You indicated that you have provided site conservation services as a volunteer or at a reduced rate within the past ten years. Please indicate the reasons why. Choose all that apply.		Response	%
to gain or broaden my experience as an archaeological field conservator		47	71%
to assist a colleague		24	36%
to assist a project with few financial resources		42	64%
because I find the work enjoyable		47	71%
Other		5	8%

4. DISCUSSION

Although the authors hoped to find predictors for whether conservators are paid for field work, and for the rate of pay, the sample size was too small to identify statistically significant predictors. In this section, the authors will discuss survey findings which were of particular interest to them. Additionally, the authors will present thoughts on how to improve future surveys on this topic and identify areas for further work.

4.1 SURVEY FINDINGS

4.1.1 Gender

85%, or more than three-quarters, of respondents were female. This is interesting when compared to the FAIC survey (AIC/FAIC 2009), for which 75% of respondents were female. Keep in mind, however, that this observed difference may not be statistically significant when compared the FAIC survey due to the large difference in sample size. This survey had 116 responses which could be used for analysis, whereas the FAIC survey had a useable sample of 643 responses.

Is one gender compensated more frequently than another? 17 men took the survey, and 76% or 13 of these men, indicated that they had been paid for their fieldwork within the past 10 years. 99 women took the survey, and 83% or 82 of these women, were paid within the past 10 years. Although a difference in the percentage of individuals paid is observed in relation to gender, 76% of men paid versus 83% of women, the number of men is too small to consider this difference statistically significant.

Is gender linked to compensation? Only 50 respondents provided salary information, and only 6 of these respondents were men. There are not enough data to determine if the rate of pay is correlated with gender. However, of respondents who provided salary information, the two highest earners are a man and a woman.

4.1.2 Practice

From the questions examining individuals' field practice, there are a few findings worthy of special consideration. The first is the number of respondents documenting their conservation field work in an end of season report (table 7). 78% of respondents indicated that they provided such a report, which means that 22%, or almost one quarter, of respondents did not. Whether or not individual artifact or architectural feature treatment records are generated for archaeological projects, an end of season report provides a professional summary of the conservator's work during the season and is an important means of documenting and communicating such work. The full range of conservation activities on archaeological projects may not be visible to the project's director unless these activities are communicated in writing. The authors would like to encourage conservators who are not currently submitting end of season reports to start doing so.

One question in the compensation section crosses over into practice; conservators who were paid by archaeological projects within the past ten years were asked how they had determined their fee (table 9). 68% of respondents who answered this question indicated that their compensation had been determined by the project's budget, which suggests that most conservators were not able to set their own rates of pay.

4.1.3 Compensation by Provider

Table 8, found in Section 3.3 Compensation, reports the numbers and percentages of respondents compensated for field work in 3 ways: by the archaeological project, by their primary employer with professional development funds, and by their primary employer with regular salary. Respondents could, and did, choose more than one option, and it is clear that most conservators piece compensation together from multiple sources. 72% of respondents were compensated by an archaeological project with a salary or stipend, and in terms of expenses (table 10), 79% of respondents had their expenses paid by the project.

48% of respondents were being supported by their primary employer with their regular salary. Of this 48% (46 individuals), 46% worked for a museum or cultural institution, 24% worked for federal or state government, and 13% worked as faculty or staff for an academic department. 100% of the private practice proprietors were compensated by archaeological projects.

68 respondents, or 72%, were paid at least once in the past 10 years by the archaeological project for which they worked. Of these 68 people, some were also compensated by their primary employers for archaeological field work. During the past 10 years, only 28% of respondents received no financial compensation from the projects for which they worked.

4.1.4 Practice and Compensation by Primary Employer

The authors looked in more detail at the top three groups of respondents by primary employer. These were employees of museums or cultural institutions (39%), individuals who are the proprietors of private conservation practices (17%), and the employees of federal or state governments (17%).

Of the first group, employees of museums or other cultural institutions, 82% were paid for their field work within the past ten years. Of this 82%, 73% indicated that they also volunteered or worked at significantly reduced rates. Most respondents in this group, 44%, indicated that they spent three to four weeks on-site at archaeological projects. 47% of this group took paid vacation for fieldwork, and 44% took unpaid leave. This group indicated that they were financially supported for fieldwork in a variety of ways. For provider of compensation, respondents could choose more than one option. 57% were paid their regular salary for field work, 22% were compensated with professional development funds, and 70% were paid by the archaeological project. Keep in mind that individual respondents may have had more than one compensation source within the past ten years (i.e., paid salary one year, compensated by the archaeological project in a different year). Similarly, 87% had travel and living expenses paid for by the archaeological project, 33% had these expenses paid for by their primary employer, and 18% paid these expenses themselves. There is little data on what this group is paid because not enough respondents in this group answered the salary question. Only 14 respondents chose to provide this information.

For the second group, conservators who own private practice businesses, 75% were paid for their field work within the past ten years. Of this 75%, 87% also volunteered or worked at a reduced rate. 100% of those paid were paid by archaeological projects. Most conservators in this group spent 3-4 weeks on-site. Every paid conservator in this group provided salary data. The minimum salary was \$375/week, and the maximum was \$8000/week. The mean was \$2,069/week, the median \$1,000/week, and the mode \$1,000/week.

The third and last group is employees of federal or state governments. 85% of this group was paid for their field work within the past ten years. Of this 85%, 47% also volunteered or

worked at significantly reduced rates. In terms of time spent on-site, 35% of respondents in this group, the highest percentage for this question, indicated that they spent five to eight weeks on-site at archaeological projects, while 15% of respondents worked year round for a site. 25% of this group took paid vacation for fieldwork, and 40% took unpaid leave. This group indicated that they were financially supported for fieldwork in a variety of ways. For provider of compensation, respondents could choose more than one option. 65% were paid their regular salary for field work, 18% were compensated with professional development funds, and 65% were paid by the archaeological project. Keep in mind that individual respondents may have had more than one compensation source within the past ten years (i.e., paid salary one year, compensated by the archaeological project in a different year). Similarly, 75% had travel and living expenses paid for by the archaeological project, 35% had these expenses paid for by their primary employer, and 10% paid these expenses themselves. 50% of respondents in this group provided salary data. The minimum salary per week was \$188, while the maximum was \$1375. The mean was \$522/week, and the median \$354/week. There was no mode for this data set, since every salary response in this group was unique.

4.2 PREVAILING ATTITUDES ABOUT COMPENSATION FOR FIELD WORK

Conservators may be asked why they should be paid for their services, since many other professionals on academic archaeological projects appear to donate their time and expertise. In fact, most academic archaeologists and scholars continue to draw a salary from their home institution while working on excavations, while conservators who are not compensated by their primary employers will simply not be paid if asked to volunteer their time. Additionally, on academic excavations, many professionals associated with the project may be working for non-financial types of compensation. For example, scholars may have publication rights associated with specific artifact types. This is not a way in which conservators have traditionally been compensated.

Conservators who were not paid for their field work within the past ten years were asked to indicate the primary reason they were not paid (table 12). 33% of this group indicated that the archaeological project had paid other professional staff, but not the conservator. This statistic suggests that projects do budget for professional staff, if not specifically for conservation. This survey also shows that many conservators, 82%, were paid for field work during the past ten years. The authors hope that conservators will advocate for appropriate salaries for field work and be unafraid to examine the attitude that they should be willing to volunteer their services.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SURVEYS

In future, it would be beneficial to collect data on whether a respondent is a member of AIC. Since the authors intended the data from this survey to benefit fellow professional conservators in North America, and intended the presentation and publication venue to be within AIC, it might have been better to specifically target AIC members (or least have been able to filter the responses accordingly). Additionally, it would be beneficial to collect data on where respondents are based. The low salaries of respondents based in developing countries may skew salary data for conservators based in North America, while the comparatively high salaries paid to conservators in the European Union may have the same effect. Knowing where the respondent is based would have allowed the data to be examined and filtered with this in mind. Limiting the survey to AIC members would undoubtedly have resulted in an even smaller sample size; however, the data might have been more useful for this group.

The survey data would have been more useful if a larger number of respondents had provided salary information. The authors have carefully considered ways to encourage respondents to provide this type of information in the future. One way might be to give ranges of pay to choose from—e.g., \$0-\$500/week. Asking respondents to choose a pay range might be a less intrusive way to ask about salary and encourage more individuals to provide this information. Asking the question this way would also improve data analysis, because the time basis for the rate of pay would be stipulated within the question. The authors did not specify the pay period or rate basis (weekly, monthly, per season, etc.) because they hoped to make the survey as easy as possible to take. Asking respondents to calculate a weekly rate of pay seemed like an extra step which might discourage responses to the question. However, this added significant time to the data analysis, since weekly rates had to be calculated by the authors. This survey did not collect data about funding for conservation equipment and supplies on archaeological projects. Future surveys might wish to examine this question.

4.4 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The authors hope that the data provided by this survey, which is the first ever to examine compensation and practice for archaeological field conservators, will be useful to our professional body. The data gathered can be used in salary discussions with dig directors and/or employers. The authors would like to encourage conservators to get involved in grant writing and funding development for archaeological projects so that realistic conservation budgets are included in funding proposals. Additionally, the authors hope that this survey will encourage field conservators to educate excavation directors about the number and types of services they are providing for archaeological projects.

To gain a better picture of archaeologists' engagement with and access to professional conservators, the authors will be conducting a survey of excavation directors. As part of this survey, respondents will be asked about their total project budget and the percent allocated for conservation.

Increased advocacy with federal agencies which fund archaeological field work, such as the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, is recommended to encourage such groups to include conservation in grant narratives and budgets. More formalized and systematic outreach from AIC to professional archaeological groups is also recommended.

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NOTE

1. The data and data analysis for this paper were generated using Qualtrics Labs, Inc. software, Version 2009 of the Qualtrics Research Suite. Copyright © 2010 Qualtrics Labs, Inc. Qualtrics and all other Qualtrics Labs, Inc. product or service names are registered trademarks or trademarks of Qualtrics Labs, Inc., Provo, UT, USA. www.Qualtrics.com

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