

PRESERVATION CHRONICLES

THE NEWSLETTER FOR CULTURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

THE IRAQ NATIONAL MUSEUM: PICKING UP THE PIECES 1

SPATIAL DATA TECHNOLOGY'S SOLUTION FOR THEMATIC CARTOGRAPHY 1

THE MONITOR SHIP-WRECK SANCTUARY RECEIVES A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH 3

THE IRAQ NATIONAL MUSEUM: PICKING UP THE PIECES

After the fall of Baghdad to coalition forces in April of 2003, thieves entered the Iraq National Museum, looting at will for nearly three days, and carrying off approximately 15,000 items from the museum's collection, including: the Lion Hunt Stele from Warka; the Ivory "Mona Lisa" of Nimrud; Neo-Assyrian gold and stone jewelry; Sumerian Votive Plaques; Old Babylonian Cuneiform Tablets; Parthian statues from Hatra – in short, nothing less than the most significant artifacts discovered from the ancient world.

According to a report by Col. Matthew Bogdanus, who was charged with investigating the thefts on behalf of the U.S. military, the initial group of looters seemed to have inside knowledge about where things had been hidden. However, some people took relics from the Museum in order to save them from the looters. "A number of these items were later

returned to the Museum once security had been restored," says Corine Wegener, an Army Reserve Officer deployed to Iraq in May of 2003. "We had a "no questions asked" policy about items that were returned," she says.

Wegener is an art museum curator at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and in 2003 was an Army Reserve Major, who was assigned to Army Civil Affairs. Wegener was tasked with humanitarian assistance and worked at the Coalition Provisional Authority as a cultural liaison with the Iraq National Museum being her primary assignment. Her immediate task was to re-establish security at the Museum, but once that was accomplished she and her team worked on purchasing generators, computers, and a new HVAC system to maintain a stable environment for the collections in the 114° F heat of Baghdad's summer.

Later, while developing an instructional guide to assist civil affairs units in the performance of cultural resource assessments, Wegener considered how non-governmental cultural



The Ivory "Mona Lisa" of Nimrud. Neo-Assyrian in origin, circa 8th c. BC, was one of the irreplaceable treasures stolen by looters in the aftermath of the Baghdad invasion



Museum curator Corine Wegener started the first U.S. branch of the International Committee of the Blue Shield to protect cultural resources, after her nine month tour in Baghdad.

SPATIAL DATA TECHNOLOGY'S SOLUTION FOR THEMATIC CARTOGRAPHY

Faced with the daunting task of documenting historic resources while monitoring the success of preservation strategies through time, cultural resource managers are turning to powerful new relational databases that add a new dimension to thematic cartography by integrating multiple data layers in a spatial conceptual environment such as the latest applica-

tion from CartoPac Field Solutions (Spatial Data Technologies, Fort Collins, CO).

"The CartoPac Enterprise is an easy interface for GPS data collection, which allows the user to integrate GPS information from the field into a GIS platform back at the office," says Jake Opdahl of Spatial Data Technologies, Inc. Opdahl says that in one application of

their product at the Mesa Verde National Park, for every point of positional x,y data, they generated 20 different tables of granular detail assessment.

Allan Loy, GIS Coordinator for the National Park Service, was the project sponsor for the Mesa Verde National Park archaeological field data collection modernization project. "We have used other products,"

SPATIAL DATA—CARTOPAC ENTERPRISE

says Loy. “What led us to CartoPac is its ability to support relational databases in the field on mobile computing devices.”

Mesa Verde has thousands of archaeological sites dating from A.D. 550, and includes the famed Mesa Verde cliff dwellings where the Ancestral Puebloans, formerly referred to as the Anasazi, lived from 1100 until they mysteriously left their cave dwellings in 1300. The Mesa Verde Archaeological Site Conservation Program (ASCP) team has identified and recorded

device is downloaded through ActiveSync to the CartoPac Desktop application and is transferred into a QA/QC database. A series of reports are generated to find errors, and then the data is committed to the permanent Access database.

“The QA/QC features designed into the digital data collection workflow has affected a significant cost savings compared to data capture on paper,” he comments. If you have a well structured relational data-

base model, it’s very conducive to field data collection with CartoPac, he says. There is broad compatibility with CartoPac, which integrates well with relational database management systems such as Access, and the data can be readily exported to Excel or other industry standard programs. “You can move away from proprietary systems,” observes Loy.

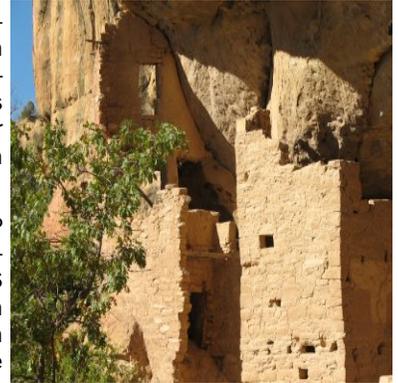
Loy says they will eventually incorporate tablet PCs supported by CartoPac so they have more screen real es-

features that include not only individual building structures, but individual bricks, stones, and plaster. “In collecting data about wall features, for example, you can create additional records specifically related to wood or plaster features and all records are captured in CartoPac,” says Loy.

tate. Going from a mobile computing device such as an iPAQ that weighs several ounces to a tablet PC that weighs a few pounds may create challenges in documenting sites where a long hike over difficult terrain is required, but the advantages in terms of computing power and the ability to concurrently record and annotate ancillary information, such as photographs, will be a benefit.

Prior to the CartoPac system the team had been collecting level III (landscape) and level II (condition) data on focus packaging that included as many as 20 paper forms. Using a mobile computing

device and the CartoPac software a portable view screen presents forms that are segmented into topical sections that can be populated similar to a paper form, but with greater ease and specificity. The ASCP staff uses an HP iPAQ device in a cabled configuration with a Garmin GPS receiver to provide location data. The GPS is contained in a backpack with a real-time differential correction beacon. To interface between the GPS and CartoPac they use the NMEA protocol. The field data collected on the mobile



Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado represents the Anasazi’s Classic Period and was designated a World Heritage Cultural Site by UNESCO in 1978.

“What led us to CartoPac is its ability to support relational databases in the field on mobile computing devices.”

Use of trade names does not constitute an endorsement by the National Park Service or Mesa Verde National Park.

IRAQ NATIONAL MUSEUM

resource organizations (NGOs) might have been deployed to better assist local authorities.

“Typically in wartime, humanitarian and non-profit organizations are welcomed into war zones to help out,” she says. However, there was no cultural resource organization that was prepared to deploy in Iraq, and individuals who offered their assistance were simply

turned away.

Notably, McGuire Gibson, professor of archaeology at the University of Chicago, managed to obtain a press pass from National Geographic to enter the country, while archaeologists from the British Museum similarly obtained BBC credentials.

Upon returning from her mission to Iraq, Wegener established the first U.S. branch of

the International Committee of the Blue Shield, whose purpose is to protect cultural property in wartime.

Blue Shield is specifically mentioned in the Second Protocol of the 1954 Hague Convention, which asserted that cultural assets need to be protected. Although the United States and the United Kingdom are not currently State’s Parties to the Hague Convention, both countries



Still missing from the collection, these vessels and lamps made of silver demonstrate the Assyrian mastery of metalwork.

IRAQ NATIONAL MUSEUM

have national Blue Shield committees that are part of the emerging Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield. Based in the Hague, this group of 17 national committees and more than 20 developing committees hopes to provide an emergency response for cultural heritage at risk in future armed conflicts.

One critique of the Hague Convention is that its prohibition is directed at professional soldiers and is not generally thought to include looting by civilians. Lawrence

Antiquities Board, Rothfield says, "The museum community has been silent about the devastation there." Hundreds of people are showing up at archaeological sites with guns and backhoes and they simply remove the items unchallenged.

"In Iraq you can go to jail for taking antiquities, but the reality of enforcing such a rule is complicated," says Rothfield. He explains that the society is structured on clans. If an officer tries to make an arrest it's very dan-

Rothfield, Associate Professor in English and Faculty Director of the Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago, sees the greatest problem as the ongoing looting of archaeological sites throughout Iraq.

One estimate by Massachusetts College Art Professor, John Russell, puts the number of items looted since the end of the invasion at between 400,000 and 600,000, which is a startling number when compared to the approximate 170,000 pieces in the entire collection

gerous because the family of the person arrested may retaliate against a member of the officer's family.

Rothfield believes that antiquities collectors could help Iraq by asking their congressman to place a tax on the trade of legal antiquities that would assist the Antiquities Board. The sale of The Guenol Lioness, a 5,000 year-old white limestone figurine, brought \$57.16 million dollars at a Sotheby's auction last December. Rothfield says that a 2% tax on all such

at the Iraq National Museum. However, this estimate is extremely rough due to the lack of satellite imagery and on-site documentation.

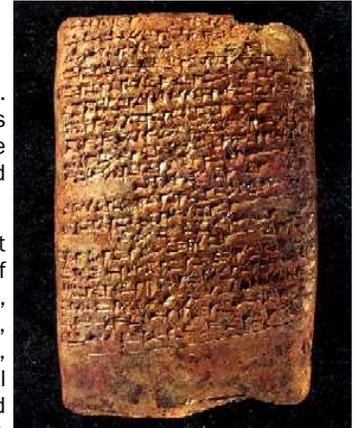
A British expedition to eight archaeology sites north of Basra: Ur, Ubaid, Eridu, Warka, Larsa, Tell el-Quelli, Lagash, and Tell el-Lahm, sponsored by the Cultural Heritage Initiative, discovered less evidence of looting than had been anticipated.

Perhaps critical of the response offered by western collectors in aiding Iraq's

Mesopotamian artifacts would provide enough funds to support the conservation program managed by the Iraq Antiquities Board.

Aside from urging the government to tax exchanges of antiquities, Rothfield encourages people to donate to UNESCO, which set up a fund dedicated to Iraq's antiquities. He also recommends donating to Blue Shield.

To make a donation to the U.S. Committee of the Blue Shield go to www.uscbs.org



This Old Babylonian cuneiform tablet, which was lost from the Museum, represents one of the greatest inventions of the Mesopotamian world—the written word.

"The museum community has been silent about the devastation there."

MONITOR NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY RECEIVES A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH

At half past twelve, on the night of December 31st, 1862, the Civil War ironclad *Monitor* slipped beneath the waves off Cape Hatteras, not to be seen again until 1973 when a group of oceanographers stumbled onto the wreckage during a routine topographic survey.

The mighty ship, which had survived the battle of Hampton Roads, Va. On March 9,

1862 against the Confederate ironclad *Virginia*, was no match for the boiling seas that result from an unusual formation along the North Carolina shelf where the Gulf Stream and the Labrador Current often collide.

In recognition of the ship's historic and archaeological significance, the USS *Monitor* was designated the first national Marine sanctuary in 1975, which includes a col-

umn of water one nautical mile in diameter.

In May of 2008 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released a peer-reviewed report that assessed the condition of the shipwreck. The condition report that was published by the NOAA covers everything within the Marine Sanctuary, including biological data as well as archaeological resources.



Copper plate engraving of the sinking Monitor with its escort the Rhode Island. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Naval Historical Center.

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USS MONITOR

According to Jeff Johnston, Specialist/Historian with the *Monitor* National Marine Sanctuary in Newport News, Va., the most significant threat to the *Monitor* is from nature. "Cape Hatteras is very dynamic, with incredible fluctuations in temperature from the Gulf Stream and the Labrador Current," says Johnston.

The temperature fluctuations and high salinity create a corrosion issue for the iron ship. "That's one of the reasons we opted to recover the propeller and the revolving turret. The portion of wood that was exposed by the salvage operation makes the wreck more susceptible to shipworms or "Teredo", but

it was a calculated risk that we believe was worth the effort."

"The rotating gun turret changed everything about naval warfare," Johnston enthuses. "For the first time in naval warfare, the ship's captain could evade a broadside attack while aiming his cannon at the target." The gun turret, ship's propeller, and cannon are now in conservation at the Mariners' Museum.

In addition, an Ericsson vibrating side lever steam engine was used for propulsion, which is entirely unique, explains Johnston. The steam engine machinery is currently soaking in an electrolytic bath, softening and loosening

the marine concretions and encouraging the corrosive sea salt out of the artifacts. Once the debris is removed they will be able to begin the long process of disassembly to assure complete treatment, and then reassembly for eventual exhibition.

Johnston would like to see further investigation of the area around the *Monitor*, commonly referred to as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic." 2,700 ships are sunk off the coast of North Carolina, including civil war wrecks, four German U-boats, and what is believed to be one of Francis Drake's lost ships. He believes that by working with the public, and the dive community in particular, they



The wreck of the USS Monitor as it exists today, 16 miles southeast of Cape Hatteras in 230 feet of water.

may be able to fund the preservation and conservation of these other historic vessels as well.

For more information go to Monitor@noaa.gov or the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation