

Campus as Laboratory:

AN ORAL HISTORY OF MSU'S CAMPUS ARCHAEOLOGY PROGRAM

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Archaeology and Oral History

We argue that oral history is a genre of documentation that should augment traditional publications in recording the historiography of archaeological projects, teams, and sites.



Photos, from left: Fragmented doll head found on campus in privy during 2015 field season. Center: The CAP field school and crew excavating midden near the administration building in 2015. Right: LEADR's recording studio and equipment were used to conduct interviews for this project.

- Field notes, white papers, and informal data recordings are all important aspects of archaeological research that don't necessarily carry the same "weight" as monographs for academics; yet, they offer insight into the social and historical contexts of the archaeologists themselves.
- Blogs are similarly public-facing work that incorporate of-the-moment and personal perspectives of archaeologists into the disseminated record of a dig or project.
- Oral histories offer another kind of opportunity for public outreach and documentation.

Broader Implications

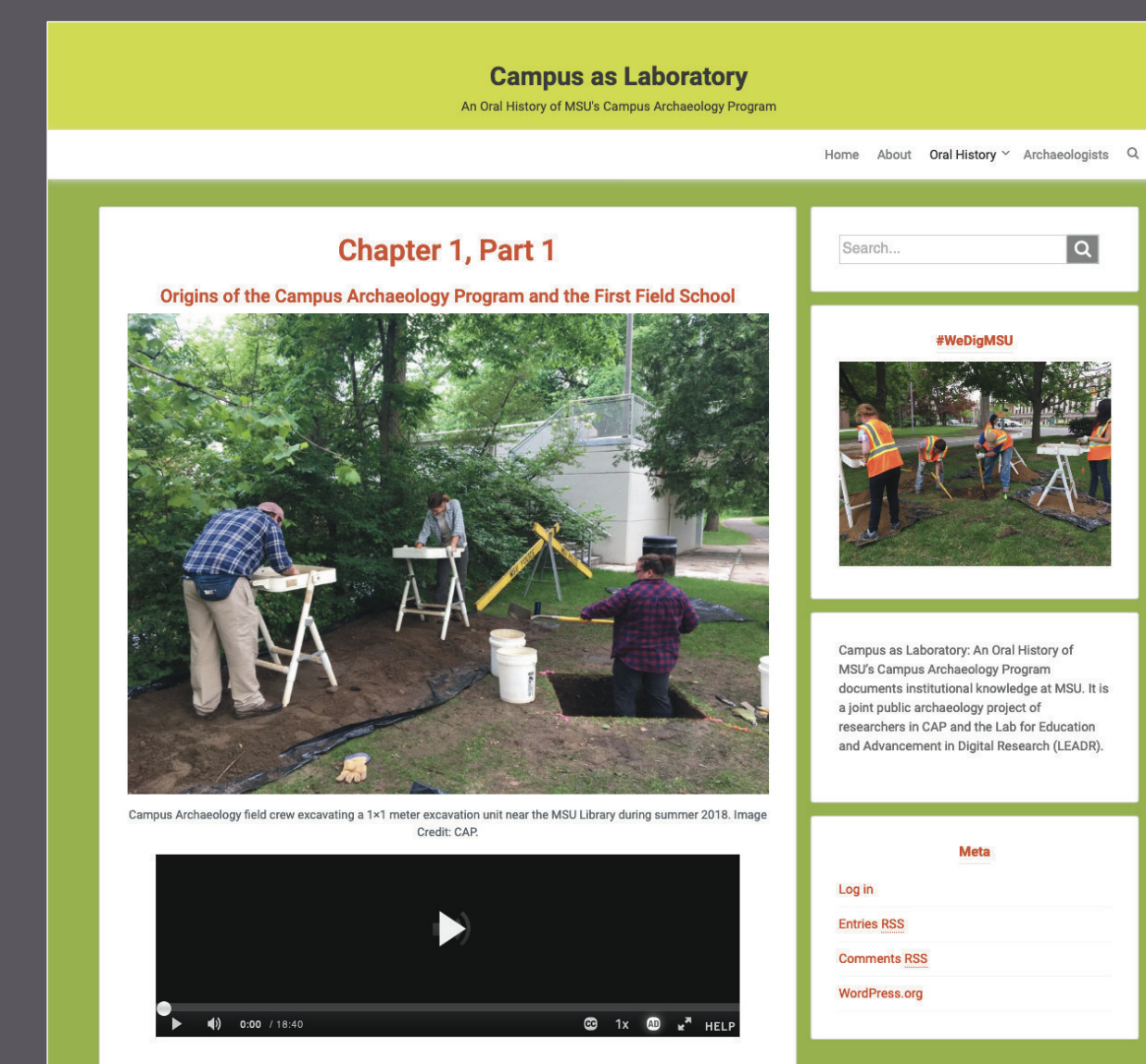
This oral history records important information about the Campus Archaeology Program that has not been extensively documented until now. It also shows the larger impact of CAP on the University.

This project serves as a case study for similar programs wherein oral history may serve as both valuable "grey literature" in recording unpublished archaeological data, as well as outreach to wider publics.

This research is a collaboration between researchers in the Lab for Education and Advancement in Digital Research (LEADR) and the Campus Archaeology Program (CAP) at Michigan State University. The public-facing website is part of the CAP online presence, hosted by Matrix.

Web Presence

oralhistory.campusarch.msu.edu



By the time Dr. Lynne Goldstein retired from Michigan State University's Department of Anthropology in 2018, she had gathered 22 years' worth of stories and experience.

Among these are the origins and development of the Campus Archaeology Program (CAP), which continues to offer students both field and lab experience.

We scheduled several conversations, rather than trying to capture all of Lynne's stories at once. We started with a list of broad categories that seemed pertinent to historical research, and left the interview questions open-ended enough that Lynne could help shape the narrative.

We used Audacity software on a laptop with a Zoom Handy Mic to record and edit the data in LEADR.

Some example research questions:

- "Start with a little bit about the origins or the beginnings of Campus Archaeology here at MSU."
- "What makes MSU ideal for this particular type of program?"
- "Have there been any favorite projects or projects that stand out to you?"
- "Can you give us an overview of the kinds of archaeological jobs that people have gotten after participating in CAP?"

Accessibility

This project received a DH@MSU Seed Grant to produce text transcriptions for better accessibility

Web images have alt-text, which is a brief description that screen readers can convey.

We created a link to a text-only version of the timeline so that people who cannot see the media can receive the content in chronological order.

Hyperlinks are on descriptive phrases (rather than generic "click here") ensure that each is unique.

FURTHER READING

Baylor University has a thorough style guide (based largely on Chicago Manual of Style) with criteria for copy editing transcriptions, and suggestions such as M-dash for incomplete sentences (rather than ellipses).
<https://www.baylor.edu/oralhistory/index.php?id=931752>

The Oral History Association's Web Guides to Doing Oral History is a useful roundup of guidelines for best practice (among them, the "Oral History in the Digital Age," resource developed by MATRIX here at MSU).
<https://www.oralhistory.org/web-guides-to-doing-oral-history/>

Timeline



Founding of CAP
2007



Terry Brock
Campus Archaeologist
2007 - 2010



Chris Stawski
Campus Archaeologist
2010 - 2011



Kate Meyers Emery
Campus Archaeologist
2011 - 2013



Kate Frederick
Campus Archaeologist
2013 - 2015



Lisa Bright
Campus Archaeologist
2015 - 2018



Dr. Lynne Goldstein
CAP Director Retires
May 2018



Dr. Stacey Camp
New CAP Director
May 2018



Autumn Painter
Campus Archaeologist
2018-2020