Twenty Five Years of Computer Applications in Archaeology

Susan Laflin.

To celebrate twenty-five years of the conference on "Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology", the conference held at Birmingham in the spring of 1997 included a section on this topic. Irwin Scollar was invited to give the keynote address, which is included here: Irwin Scollar "25 Years of Computer Applications in Archaeology". This was followed by a short statement by the founder of the conference: Susan Laflin "Twenty-five Years of CAA: a Personal View" .

The first morning session consisted of four invited speakers on the main application areas featured in the conference throughout the 25 years.

Archaeological prospection has been an important area for over twenty-five years. The School of Archaeological Sciences at the University of Bradford has been active throughout this period and so were invited to give the survey of this area. A. Aspinall and J.G.B. Haigh "Twenty-five years of archaeological prospection" .

Databases and "databanks" have always been recognised as an application where computers could make a valuable contribution, first in America and then elsewhere. They have been used for excavation recording, sites and monuments records in counties and nationally, museum collections and any other application which generates a large collection of data. This aspect is covered in the paper by Jennifer Sewart: Jennifer Stewart "Has 25 Years of Computing Provided Greater Physical and Intellectual Access to Archaeology?"

Coming on to the more mathematical applications, simulation is an important area which has been somewhat neglected by archaeologists. Professor J. Doran from the University of Essex gave an excellent survey at the conference but sadly did not have time to supply a written version for the proceedings. Other statistical techniques have been more widely used and, in the final paper of the morning session Clive Orton from London University gave his paper: Clive Robert Orton "Plus ça Change? - 25 Years of Statistics in Archaeology" .

The afternoon sessions contained a number of other papers. Two speakers also submitted written versions and these are included here. John Wilcock presented his account of statistics over the past 25 years: John Wilcock "Getting the Best Fit? 25 Years of Statistical Techniques in Archaeology" and Morgan Tamplin described the progress in Canada over the same period: Morgan J. Tamplin "Archaeological Computing in Canada: The First (and Last) 25 Years". Three other speakers also attempted to predict future trends in various areas, but none of these wished to have their thoughts recorded in print (and possibly quoted against them in future years).

Contact details

Susan Laflin
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Bimingham B152TT
UK
email: S.Laflin@bham.ac.uk