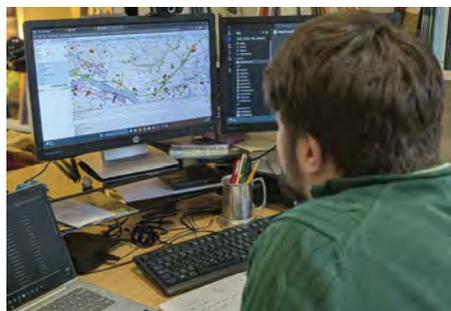


EDITORIAL

Information management unplugged: *why the ordinary matters in heritage*

Laura O'Connor MCIfA (10992), IMSIG Chair, Historic Environment Scotland



p6



p12



p18



p28

Information management (IM) in heritage is not often recognised as something extraordinary, yet it underpins multiple specialisms across our sector. When robust, it is the unsung hero of large infrastructure projects, data repositories and public information data services. But when it's not, it can undermine even the best-intentioned initiatives. IM and its advocates often sit quietly in the background – databases updated meticulously, naming conventions applied (or not!), standards implemented and real-time decision-making enabled. As this demonstrates, IM is anything but ordinary. It is truly fundamental to how we understand the past, work in the present, and strategise for the future.

TA127, developed in collaboration with the CfA Information Management Special Interest Group (IMSIG), explores these dynamics further, where information management encompasses activities from the practical and routine to the incredibly technical and strategic. Collectively, the articles pose a critical question: what does information management within heritage really look like in practice today?

To answer this question, we have a range of exciting papers from leading experts in the field. In 'Advanced digital workflows for archaeology', Émilie Pagé-Perron (ADS) and Julian Richards (ADS/HSDS) explore working with European partners to develop best practice for field recording, archiving, and managing multiple data types.

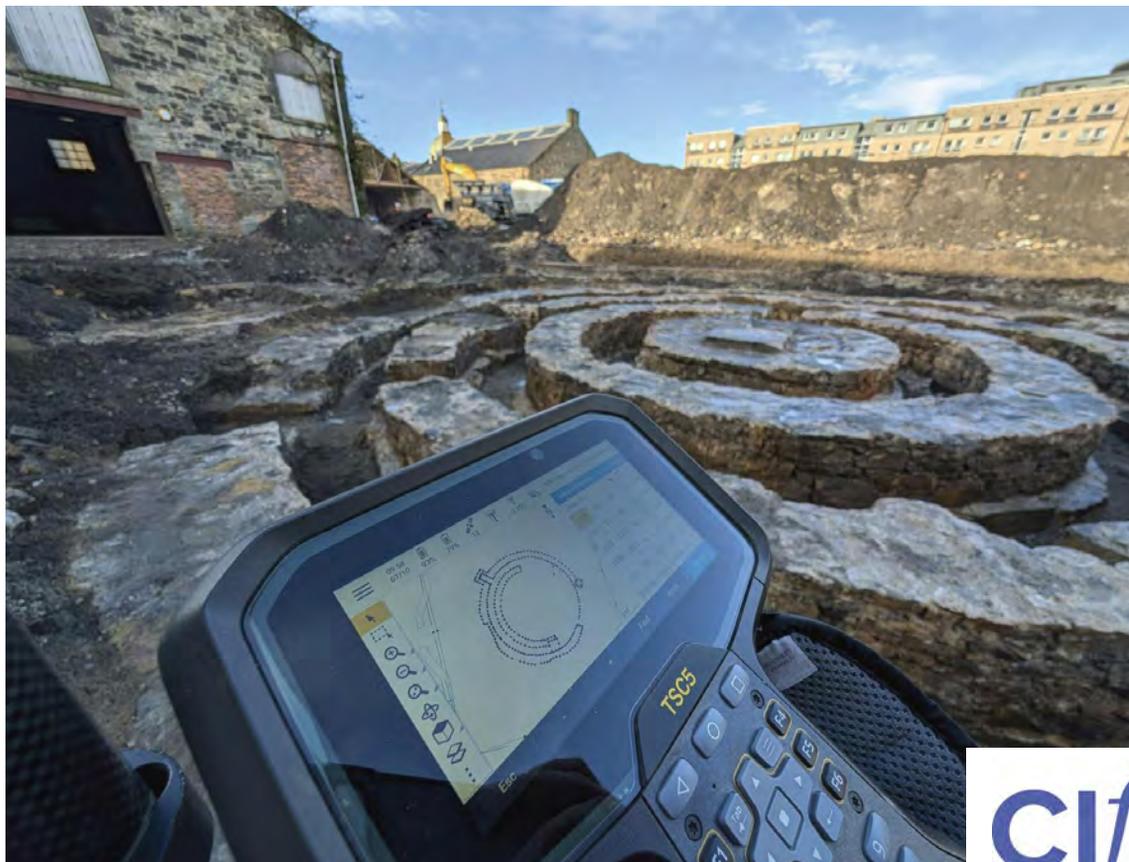
Ben Wallace (Warwickshire County Council) and Keith Elliott (Scottish Borders Council), in their contribution 'Historic Environment Records: signposts to the past', review the UK's network of HERs and how they serve multiple users, maintain rigorous standards and play a critical role in decision-making for planning. Complementing this, IMSIG committee member and Historic Environment ICT & GIS Consultant Gary Duckers reflects in 'A career in context: from trenches to tables' on his versatile career path from field archaeology to consultancy, perfectly illustrating how passion for information management develops alongside professional experience.

Julian Richards (ADS/HSDS) and Jo Tozer (HSDS) introduce the Heritage Science Data Service, cataloguing heritage science datasets and facilities from partners including Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland, Amgueddfa Cymru and the British Museum.

In his article 'Navigating conflicting regulatory requirements for historic environment information', Martin Newman (Historic England) examines how copyright, open licensing and GDPR interact with heritage datasets, demonstrating that compliance and accessibility can coexist.

Our IMSIG committee archives experts – Katie Green (ADS), Jessica Irwin (Wessex Archaeology) and Theodora Anastasiadou (specialist) – explore the challenges and opportunities of information management in archaeological archives, highlighting the balance between safeguarding collections and enabling access.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly being adopted as a tool across the sector. Following on from the October CfA



Survey of Gas Holder F, Baltic Street, Leith (Winner of the 2025 IMSIG photo competition submitted by Steven Watt). Credit: AOC Archaeology Group



Innovation Festival seminar ‘AI in cultural heritage’ (reviewed in this issue), we are also pleased to include an article on the subject. Alphaeus Lien-Talks (Historic Royal Palaces) explores the potential of the technology when applied to data within grey literature, showing how harnessing AI can help ensure these data remain findable, understandable and reusable – strengthening the foundations of information management.

Finally, to understand where we are going, it always helps to remember where we came from. Original IMSIG committee member Edmund Lee reflects on the Group’s early objectives, highlighting the importance of collaboration, trust and shared expertise in achieving FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) data. Promoting these conversations remains central to IMSIG’s objectives, reinforcing that good information management is a cornerstone of sustainable, responsible heritage practice.

These contributions very much illustrate that information management is not only about technology or tools. Platforms, standards and automation are only ever effective when embedded within pragmatic strategies. Governance, documentation,

skills development and shared objectives are equally imperative. While implementation approaches can vary, it is apparent that incremental improvements, cross-team/organisation collaboration, and thoughtful decision-making can lead to long-term success. Future-proofing data remains one of the sector’s greatest challenges, requiring foresight, resources and sustained commitment to ensure it remains meaningful and usable across projects, technologies and ultimately into perpetuity.

The diversity of expertise in this issue reflects the reality of the sector – complex, evolving, and interconnected. The work of IMSIG aligns well here – by encouraging discussion, sharing experience and creating opportunities for collaboration, the Group supports practitioners navigating these challenges and in doing so, can help advance best practice across the sector.

With that in mind, I would like to take the opportunity to thank both former and current committee members of IMSIG:

Information Management Special Interest Group – past and present

Current committee members

- Laura O’Connor
- Jessica Irwin
- Theodora Anastasiadou
- Eileen Kerhouant
- Thomas Cromwell
- Tanya Malone
- Katie Green
- Simon Parsons
- Gary Duckers

Former committee members

- Edmund Lee
- Martin Newman
- Isobel Holroyd
- Mike Heyworth
- Jeremy Oetgen
- Mike D’Aprix
- Claire Tsang
- Doug Rocks-Macqueen
- Colin Forrestal
- Ben Wallace
- Sarah Orr