How Archaeologists and Artifact Collectors Can—and Should—Collaborate to Comply with Legal and Ethical Antiquities Codes

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The July 2014 issue of American Antiquity includes a forum essay I titled “An Argument for Ethical, Proactive, Archaeologist-Artifact Collector Collaboration” (Pitblado 2014). The essay makes two main points. First, developing working relationships with members of the artifact-collecting public can significantly benefit archaeologists, collectors, and privately held cultural resources. Second, archaeologists can develop such relationships while adhering to the

ABSTRACT

In a recent American Antiquity forum (Pitblado 2014), I argued that not only is it possible for archaeologists to engage in ethical collaborations with members of the artifact-collecting public, but that the Society for American Archaeology’s “Principles of Archaeological Ethics” stipulates that we should do so. This is not a message, however, that has fully permeated the archaeological community, which has led to a schism between populations who are often natural allies. This paper starts with that premise: that archaeologists should actively pursue collaborations with the artifact-collecting community with the goal of advancing research agendas, public education, and long-term care of collections in private hands. The paper offers guidelines for establishing and nurturing professional-collector relationships in a way that furthers the directives of legal and ethical archaeological codes. I begin with an overview of the changing nature of professional-collector relationships during the twentieth century, exploring reasons for the divisiveness that has characterized recent decades. I next suggest five steps for establishing appropriate relationships with artifact collectors—and avoiding inappropriate ones. Finally, I describe how I followed those steps to establish a network of collector-collaborators to build the foundation for a Paleoamerican research program in southeastern Idaho and northern Utah.

En un reciente foro de American Antiquity (Pitblado 2014), argumenté que no sólo es posible que los arqueólogos se dediquen a colaboraciones éticas con miembros de la colección pública de artefactos sino que “los principios de ética arqueológica” de la Sociedad Americana de Arqueología estipula que lo hagamos. Sin embargo, este no es un mensaje que ha impregnado totalmente a la comunidad arqueológica, ya que ha dado lugar a una división entre la población que a menudo es su aliada natural. Este ensayo comienza con esta premisa: que los arqueólogos deben buscar activamente colaboraciones con la comunidad recolectora de artefactos con la meta de avanzar en los programas de investigación, educación pública y cuidado a largo plazo de las colecciones privadas. El documento ofrece pautas para el establecimiento y apoyo profesional en las relaciones con el coleccionista de una forma que promueva las normas éticas y legales de los códigos arqueológicos. Inicio con una visión general acerca de la naturaleza variable de las relaciones de los profesionales y los coleccionistas durante el siglo veinte al explorar las razones de divergencia que las ha caracterizado en las últimas décadas. Posteriormente, sugiero cinco pasos para establecer relaciones adecuadas y evitar las inapropiadas con los coleccionistas de artefactos. Finalmente, describo cómo seguí esos pasos para establecer una red de coleccionistas-colaboradores y construir las bases de un programa Paleoamericano de investigación en el sureste de Idaho y el norte de Utah.

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Society for American Archaeology’s (SAA) eight “Principles of Archaeological Ethics” (SAA 1996). The peer review process for the forum and its publication elicited spirited commentary indicating that colleagues share the view that a schism exists between professionals and collectors but do not agree on its magnitude or whether and how to mend it. One reviewer’s request for a separate paper describing best practices and concrete guidelines for ethical collaboration served as the immediate catalyst for this manuscript, which I intend as a practical “how-to” follow-up to the more philosophical American Antiquity piece.

In the following pages, I briefly summarize archaeologist-collector interaction in historical context, first globally and in terms of North American archaeology and then through the lens of Paleoamerican archaeology, the niche I know best and that frames this paper. I note that in recent years, and even within the Paleoamerican archaeological arena in which archaeologist-collector partnerships remain fairly common and fertile (e.g., Anderson et al. 2010), the cooperative approach has acquired a stigma that colors the perceptions and actions of professionals and collectors alike (LaBelle 2003). I cannot definitively pinpoint when or why the relationship degenerated, but I offer a few suggestions that may help to explain the phenomenon. In a related vein, I review the policies and laws that guide the conduct of commercial interaction in North American archaeology. “Peopling of the New World” provides a particularly colorful vehicle for studying “the emotional antecedents of the motivational forces to collect [artifacts]” (Muensterberger 1994:ix).

Countless archaeologists have likewise weighed on the subject of collecting material culture, ultimately and most fundamentally either advocating for or criticizing the notion that contemporary archaeology—in stark contrast to its formative years—should be decoupled from private artifact collecting. Focal sub-themes within that overarching debate diverge largely, although not invariably, along classical vs. prehistoric archaeological lines. Classical archaeologists have tended to address issues related to commercial-scale looting and illicit international artifact trafficking (e.g., Chippindale and Gill 2000; Coggins 1969; Griffin 1986; Howell 1996; Rose and Aar 1996); whether and how archaeologists should interface with high-end collectors and dealers (e.g., Chase et al. 1996; Harris 1999; Renfrew and Elia 1993); and the consequences of incorporating privately procured materials—including and especially those in museum collections—into scholarly research (e.g., Chippindale 1995; Elia 1996; Levine and Martinez de Luna 2013; Robson et al. 2006).

Prehistoric archaeologists, particularly those working in North America and therefore most relevant to this paper, have more often framed their discussions of the archaeology-collector relationship as a matter of archaeological ethics (for wide-ranging examples, see compilations by Green 1984; Lynott and Wylie, ed. 1995; Messenger 1999; Vitelli 1996; and Zimmerman et al. 2003). Inextricably related sub-themes for prehistoric archaeologists include stewardship of the past (e.g., Fagan 1996; Groarke and Warrick 2006; Lynott and Wylie 1995); commercialization of the archaeological record (e.g., Murphy et al. 1995; Neary 1996); the role of descendant populations in archaeological dialogue (e.g., Harrington 1996a; Lackey 2006; Watkins 2003; Watkins et al. 1995); and whether and how to involve the general public—including artifact collectors—in archaeology (e.g., Early 1999; Frison 1984; Harrington 1996b; Herscher and McManamon 1995; Krech and Hail 1999; Poetsch et al. 2012; Shott 2008).

The domain of the earliest human occupation of the New World some 8,000-plus years ago offers a particularly colorful vehicle for plumbing the ever-shifting dynamics of archaeologist-collector interaction in North American archaeology. “Peopling of the New World” narratives related in scholarly writing, textbooks, and museum exhibits typically begin in 1908 in northeastern New Mexico (e.g., Kelly and Thomas 2012; Meltzer 2006; Wildermuth 2012). That year, cowboy, ranch foreman, and “self-taught naturalist” George M. Junkin (Figure 1a) discovered exceptionally large bison bones eroding out of a fresh-cut arroyo, a find he shared with “kindred amateur naturalist and fossil hunter” Carl Schwachheim (Meltzer 2005:437; Figure 1b). Schwachheim in turn contacted the director of the Colorado Museum of Natural History (now the Denver Museum of Nature and Science),

ARCHEOLOGISTS AND PRIVATE COLLECTORS IN HISTORIC CONTEXT

Professional archaeology grew quite directly out of the millennia-long, panhuman desire to acquire material expressions of the past (Brodie and Gill 2003; Trigger 2006). Not surprisingly, given the general principles and specific details that spurred archaeology’s genesis in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the subject of collecting material culture has been explored at length and from many vantage points. In 1995, for example, University of Leicester Museum Studies professor (now emeritus) Susan Pearce published a wide-ranging volume exploring virtually every facet of “collecting.” Noting in her first sentence that “one in every three people in North America collects something” (Pearce 1995:vii). Around the same time, psychologist Werner Muensterberger brought a “psychoanalytical” approach to study “the emotional antecedents of the motivational forces to collect [artifacts]” (Muensterberger 1994:ix).
Jesse D. Figgins (Figure 1c), who conducted paradigm-shifting archaeological research at the locality starting in 1926. The next year, Frank H.H. Roberts, Jr., Alfred V. Kidder, and other archaeological cognoscenti heeded Figgins’s telegraphed invitation to bear witness to what came to be known as “Folsom” projectile points in situ among the ribs of extinct Ice Age bison. Their professional buy-in settled the ongoing debate over whether First Americans had or had not occupied the continent during the terminal Pleistocene.

In addition to launching Paleoindian archaeology as a popular field of study, 1920s Folsom-site archaeology established a precedent of collaboration among people we would today label avocationalists (i.e., McJunkin), private collectors (i.e., Schwachheim), and professional scientists (i.e., Figgins, Roberts, etc.). For decades to follow, the particular players changed, but laypeople with a passion for archaeology (including collectors) and archaeologists worked together to find, excavate, and report the majority of sites comprising the Paleoamerican record as we know it (for dozens of examples see Hall et al. 2002; LaBelle 2003; Pitblado 2014; and Seebach 2006). For most of the twentieth century, the relationship among these parties remained cordial. In fact, lines blurred as some North American archaeologists launched their careers because collecting artifacts spurred their desire to learn more (e.g., Zimmerman 1995).

Generally, too, when publishing research, archaeologists openly and sincerely thanked the private people who had alerted them to the sites. They also openly reported when some component of a site’s material culture remained in the possession of the finder, often the landowner (see a list of Clovis-era examples in Pitblado 2014:Table 1).

As I have discussed, however (Pitblado 2014), and as Colorado State University archaeologist Jason LaBelle (2003:116) bluntly put it, “the two communities [Paleoamerican archaeologists and artifact collectors]… have become increasingly alienated from one another over the past thirty years.” LaBelle attributes the alienation to a lack of communication between the groups and to archaeologists’ failure to direct public education efforts to the artifact-collecting community. I agree with LaBelle and have contemplated why communication and public education ebbed as they did. The most obvious answer, at least in terms of the North American pre columbian archaeology at issue in this paper, is that the passage of federal legislation designed primarily to enhance the protection of cultural resources—notably the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA; 16 U.S.C. 470-1) in 1966 and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA; 16 U.S.C. 470aa) in 1979—set the schism in motion.¹

However, if NHPA and ARPA precipitated the breach between members of the artifact-collecting public and archaeologists, the outcome is ironic, given the acts’ fully articulated directives. The NHPA dictates that the federal government “shall administer federally owned, administered, or controlled prehistoric and historic resources in a spirit of stewardship for the inspiration and benefit of present and future generations” (Section 2.3; italics mine) and “contribute to the preservation of nonfederally owned prehistoric and historic resources and give maximum encouragement to organizations and individuals undertaking preservation by private means” (Section 2.4; italics mine). For its part, ARPA’s stated goal is not only to best manage and forcefully protect cultural resources on public and tribal lands, but...
also “to foster increased cooperation and exchange of information between government authorities, the professional archaeological community, and private individuals having collections of archaeological resources and data which were obtained before October 3, 1979” (Section 2b; italics mine).

From my vantage point as a North American archaeologist in 2014, NHPA and ARPA have succeeded in furthering some crucial goals but have failed to foster cooperation with private citizens. This failure has been exacerbated, again ironically, by professional archaeological groups’ adoption of ethical codes (e.g., the Archaeological Institute of America in 1990, revised in 1997, and SAA in 1996) (LaBelle 2003). The codes, which in effect reframe NHPA, ARPA and other legal mandates as concrete tenets to guide archaeological practice, similarly communicate an ethic of inclusiveness of all stakeholders in stewardship and public education efforts (Pitblado 2014). Yet some archaeologists invoke “ethics” to justify refusing to reach out to some or all artifact collectors or even to reach back when collectors initiate contact (e.g., Sassaman 2014; also see elaborations of this point in LaBelle 2003 and Pitblado 2014). Sometimes that approach is appropriate, because not all artifact collectors are “good guys” with motivations paralleling those of professional archaeologists. What archaeologists sometimes forget, however, is that both opposites are also true: not all artifact collectors are “bad guys” and not all archaeologists are “good guys.”

Of the words I have written so far, the most important is “motivations.” People collect physical remnants of prehistory for many different reasons and under a variety of circumstances (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2004, Hollowell-Zimmer 2003, LaBelle 2003; Muensterberger 1994; Pearce 1995). Reasons range from the appalling (making a financial killing or looting for “fun”) to the understandable (a passing interest in an out-of-place object on the landscape or a deep-seated passion for unraveling mysteries of the past). Circumstances range from the blatantly illegal, unethical, and immoral (e.g., the notorious Slack Farm case [Fagan 2003]) to the perfectly legal and sometimes painstakingly documented collection of artifacts encountered on one’s private property. I conclude that some archaeologists believe that drawing lines in the sand separating themselves from all non-professional artifact collectors automatically positions them on the “proper” side of the law and ethical codes. However, I further conclude that drawing such lines uncritically, without considering the broader intention and clearly written tenets of relevant laws and codes, has eroded the relationship between like-minded citizens and the archaeological profession. And alienating stakeholders violates the spirit and letter of the very laws and codes invoked to justify drawing those lines in the first place.

**BUILDING SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

So, the bad news is that professional archaeologists, at least those focused on Paleoamerican and at least some other niches of North American pre-columbian archaeology bear some of the responsibility for the currently strained relationship between artifact collectors and those with professional training. The good news, however, is two-fold. First, the laws and ethical codes that inadvertently spawned this tension also point the way to relieving it. Second, American archaeologists, who train as anthropologists, already have the skill set necessary to learn about the artifact-collecting populace and to use that knowledge to negotiate positive and productive relationships rooted in shared values. For those not already fulfilling their legal and ethical obligation to promote stewardship of all cultural resources, regardless of where those resources are held, and to advance public understanding of archaeology and preservation, I offer the following guidelines for engaging in principled collaboration that can lead to those ends.

**Understanding Motivations: Our Own and Those of Prospective Citizen Partners**

It takes a conscious and open-minded effort to establish citizen-scientist partnerships (sensu Smith 2014) that will advance a research program, intellectually reward all partners, fulfill the professional’s commitment to archaeological ethics and both parties’ legal obligations, and contribute to long-term protection for artifacts and sites at issue. As with any project an archaeologist undertakes, the first step entails articulating a research problem. The problem will establish parameters for the project’s research design, including its methodology. It is in this particular research phase that archaeological interests most often and directly converge with those of private citizens, including artifact collectors.

In some cases, an archaeologist may simply require permission to access privately owned sites for excavation or land for survey. In others, the archaeologist may need data for which traditional tools—previous academic research, site state records, or “gray” literature—offer no leads. In these instances, the only way forward may be to consult with landowners in the area of interest who have expertise or artifacts they are willing to share. Requesting permission to work on private property—even if the owner is a known artifact collector—is all in a day’s work for most field archaeologists. Cultivating research relationships with landowners, including collectors, can incur accusations of “ethical foul” as discussed above. I suggest that it would be helpful for archaeologists to recognize the consistency inherent in a position that shifts a one-way relationship (asking for and receiving permission to work on a citizen’s land) to a two-way street that actively involves citizens—landowning or otherwise—in the research process.

Starting with the professional side of the equation, we must acknowledge that working with the public in any capacity requires diplomacy, patience, and a genuine desire to engage in public education. To the many archaeologists who routinely interact with collectors, that will sound like a truism. However, I learned the hard way that even an aphorism as basic as “treat others as you would wish to be treated” is better articulated than left unsaid. As elaborated in the case study presented later in this paper, I recently followed in the footsteps of a long-ago professional archaeologist who interacted extensively, but principally negatively, with citizens across a large geographic area. This created a sense of alienation on the part of citizens directly impacted, who grew to distrust archaeologists and passed that sentiment along to neighbors and subsequent generations. This made the task of proactively collaborating with those individuals much more challenging than would have been the case had a more positive tone been set.
As important as it is that an archaeologist has the ability and will to effectively serve as a public ambassador, we must also be savvy ethnographers (for a terrific example, see Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2004). This is where our four-field anthropological training can pave the way to successful partnerships. Frankly, training in psychology would probably help as well; certainly some ability to read and understand individuals is essential. I already noted, as have others, that private citizens collect artifacts for many different reasons, some of which naturally align with professional archaeological goals, others of which represent countervailing interests and the occasional felony. Therefore, before reaching out to prospective target community members, an archaeologist must ascertain community values, standards, and dynamics; identify political minefields that can take a variety of forms; and gather other information to establish whether reaching out is appropriate and, if so, what methods will facilitate doing so.

If a community embraces a culture of looting for profit or “fun”—and some do (Proulx 2013:122)—the average archaeologist should refrain from interacting at all. Deliberate violations of the law and wanton disregard for the archaeological record are not easily (if ever) reconciled with professional archaeology. On the other hand, particularly if a community’s economy is rooted in ranching or farming, there is a strong chance that, for generations, people have encountered cultural resources in their fields and pastures. There is an equally strong chance that these folks—people who know the land like no archaeologist coming into a situation cold ever will—have responded to their finds with curiosity and respect for the people who preceded them (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2004, Pearce 1995). Some already view themselves as stewards not just of their property, but of the material culture that links them to the people who used the land before them. That shared experience of a landscape can create a stronger bond between past and present citizens than the one linking dispassionate archaeologists to the material culture they study (Hinsley 2000; papers in Krech and Hall 1999). Background research, including and especially participant observation, will reveal the pulse of a community, which will allow the archaeologist to gauge the potential rewards and pitfalls of collaborating.

Cultivating Partnerships

Once an archaeologist concludes that significant benefits are likely to accrue from working with community members who may (or must, depending on the research question) possess artifact collections, he or she can begin to cultivate appropriate partnerships. There are many ways to do this, three of which I find particularly effective and will discuss here. None of the three is new or revolutionary to colleagues who routinely invoke them, but not all archaeologists do so. All three require conscious reflection as relationships evolve to ensure that collaborations remain legally and ethically defensible. This is no different from the process of developing any other human relationships, except that the archaeologist will be monitoring a collector’s impetus for engaging in the relationship. The reverse is also true: a collector will quickly recognize if an archaeologist’s motivation for reaching out is governed only by the desire to collect data, as opposed to an interest in nurturing real and lasting relationships.

The most direct roads to kindred spirits in the collecting community run through state anthropological or archaeological societies and their local chapters in the archaeologist’s focal area. I have collaborated closely with members of the Oklahoma Anthropological Society, the Utah Statewide Archaeological Survey, and the Colorado and Idaho Archaeological Societies, and innumerable colleagues do likewise throughout the United States. As a rule of thumb, archaeologists find themselves on solid ground with people who collect artifacts but also care enough about the past for its own sake to actively participate in society meetings and abide by society ethical codes as a condition of membership. To establish relationships, an archaeologist need only offer to give a talk on his work at a meeting and then, during the talk, express a desire to chat with anyone in the audience—or anyone audience members know—to learn more. Personally, I make a point of communicating to listeners my belief that the best and most rewarding research involves as many stakeholders as possible. When I ask in good faith for help, I receive help offered in good faith; that is as close to a fail-safe approach as I can recommend.

A second powerful strategy for recruiting collector-partners requires a bit more effort, but, with enough background research and an initial tier of contacts within the local avocational society, not much more. Every community has particularly well-known and trusted members: people who have lived in the area for generations, volunteer for causes, donate time and money during local crises, lead scout, civic, or church groups, serve on city councils, and so on. In rural communities, in particular, some of these people also collect artifacts. In fact, their engaged personality—the fact that they care about other humans—probably predisposes them to do it. These people make wonderful collaborators for two reasons: they want to do right, as evidenced by the way they live their lives, and their neighbors trust them. When I have found these “nodal partners” (as I think of them), their approval of my motivations opens doors to local knowledge that might otherwise remain closed.

The third strategy I have used to introduce myself to prospective collaborators requires the most effort, but returns are high and the practice is tried and true. I began hosting “Prehistoric Road Shows” as director of the Utah State University (USU) Museum of Anthropology in the late 2000s. I modeled the events after those held by many other museums and archaeological outreach-oriented organizations (e.g., Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2005). We hosted our first road show at the USU museum in 2008 (Figure 2) and, after the event exceeded our expectations, sponsored others in communities throughout the surrounding region. We staffed the events with faculty and student archaeologists, barbecued burgers and hot dogs, and supervised archaeological activities for kids. People brought artifacts they had found and left pleased when we could say something about their styles, raw materials, and ages. We learned who knew what about local prehistory and who kept records of artifact provenience. We also gathered contact information from those willing to collaborate further. The people who attended our road shows did so because they wanted to learn about their artifacts and the past; knowledge was their currency. The commercially minded and those who knowingly violate antiquities laws stayed away because we offered a currency useless to them (knowledge), as
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do not make ideal primary research team members because

tional archaeologists collect artifacts; some do not. Those who

know of prehistory for the joy of learning. Some avoca-

tionally bridge gaps between their archaeology professors and people they

have known all their lives. They can reaffirm to prospective part-

ners an archaeologist’s motivation for wanting to consult with

them, while also reassuring the archaeologist that a prospective

collector-contact privileges knowledge and not the commercial

value of their collections. In addition, a carefully constructed

student team will maximize diversity in age, gender, and other
demographics that may matter to members of a community,
increasing the chances of connecting positively with a given

collector-collaborator. Ethnographers long ago ascertained that

they elicit more meaningful data if their research team reflects at

least some of the diversity in the groups with whom they work.
The same principle operates when archaeologists interact with

members of the public.

The final group I involve when planning collector collaborations

consists of agency archaeologists for public lands in the area of

interest. U.S. antiquities laws are multifaceted and ambiguous.

Expecting the average citizen to know and follow the letter of

those laws is akin to expecting the average archaeologist to

show mastery of corporate tax law. It is important, therefore, to

proactively establish a plan to deal with situations involving the

collection of artifacts from public lands. Of the many agency

archaeologists I have approached over the years, all but one

have accepted my offers to formally record sites on “their” lands

that come to my attention because a citizen once collected a

 projectile point there. Most land managers understand, too, that

artifacts from such sites often return to the public domain once

their collector has joined a formal research effort.

Assembling a Research Team

Even if an archaeologist is new to a community, any or all of the

above methods will quickly establish links to citizens, including,

but not exclusively, artifact collectors willing to help explore

archaeological research problems. It remains, then, to assemble

a group that will work productively with community mem-

bers poised to help. My most successful research teams have

included constituents from three populations: the local avoca-
tional archaeological community; students (graduate and under-
graduate); and agency archaeologists who oversee public lands

in the region. Avocational archaeologists, by definition, pursue

knowledge of prehistory for the joy of learning. Some avoca-
tional archaeologists collect artifacts; some do not. Those who

do not make ideal primary research team members because

they already mediate among professional archaeologists, fel-

low society members with artifact collections, and community

acquaintances with collections and passion yet to be harnessed.

Students are also critical members of research teams. When

students attend a college or university in the region in which

they grew up, they bring with them familial ties to communities

that may interest the archaeologist. Students organically bridge

The approach an archaeologist takes to involving artifact collec-
tors in data collection will vary with the research question, the

nature of the work required to address the question, and the
desire and ability of the collector to participate in the research
process. I have been humbled to learn how eager most people

are to accept every collaborative opportunity I offer. Through
the years, I have documented dozens of well-provenienced

artifact collections in living rooms, involved collectors in surveys

and excavations, and partnered them with students to conduct

specialized analyses of their artifacts. These interactions—those
involving the collaborative collection of data in real time—yield

incredibly powerful public education opportunities. Working

with a collector to reconstruct a seemingly lost artifact prove-
nience starkly reveals the reasoning behind antiquities laws,
something that abstractly preaching the law cannot do. People
change their collecting behavior and sometimes entire mentality
when they themselves draw the conclusion, based on empirical
evidence, that doing so creates value.

This is the step in my suggested approach to collaborating with

artifact collectors that will yield pushback from some archaeolo-
gists. Some professionals intuit that placing trust in an artifact

collector endangers cultural resources (see discussion of this

Collecting Archaeological Data

FIGURE 2. The first “Prehistoric Road Show” at the USU
Museum of Anthropology, November 2008. Photo shows
museum director Bonnie Pitblado (center) examining and
talking about a private artifact collection with a road show
visitor and student museum assistant. Note the field notes
and map flanking the collection, which the owner had used
to document his finds.

well as a high risk of exposure, given the number of newspaper
reporters who covered the events.
issue in Pitblado 2014). Those with this mindset presume that a collector will use knowledge gained from an archaeologist to ramp up their collecting proclivities and increase their artifact holdings (e.g., Murphy et al. 1995). This outcome could come to pass, and versions of it unquestionably have. However, the holistic approach to cultivating collaborative relationships advocated and described here has never, to the best of my knowledge, produced anything like that result. To the contrary, my collaborations with collectors have led to a perceptible shift from a sense of ownership to one of stewardship (sensu Lynott and Wylie 1995) vis-à-vis collections and sites; improved care for collections in private hands and sites on private land; improved collection procedures that often involve contacting a team member upon encountering something new in the field; decisions to forego collecting on public land (common in cases where people were unaware of or misinformed about antiquities laws); and, far more often than one might think, donations of artifacts from both public and private lands to public repositories.

**Meaningful Reciprocity**

Substantive relationships are always a two-way street, and an archaeologist who wants to collaborate with private citizens to further her research must be prepared (and should want) to return the favor. I have discussed how to identify, recruit, and work with collector-partners who share the archaeologist’s thirst for knowledge. Maintaining those relationships, as with any human relationship, requires some effort but also returns the dividends outlined above. Many archaeologists routinely share their research results in public lectures at libraries, schools, and meetings of local archaeological societies. Anyone who has done so knows that the audience loves to hear what archaeologists are willing to share and that we ourselves leave such engagements feeling uplifted that people in our communities care about what we do.

Certainly, disseminating the results of research conducted with community partners in those communities is critical. In terms of education, having student team members gain experience sharing their work in public offers double bang for the buck. Archaeologists can go a significant step further, however, by writing up their results for their community partners, emphasizing how individual data points contribute to broader conclusions about prehistory. This is the other step of the collaborative process, in which community partners see first-hand the importance of their data within a complete research framework and are able to envision how conclusions might have differed had provenience not been secure or had they chosen not to share their knowledge.

**FIGURE 3.** Map showing the convergence of physiographic zones in the SINUPP project area. Note the proximity of the Wyoming Basin (environmentally an extension of the Great Plains) to the other three major regions that constitute the SINUPP region. Photos illustrate (from top to bottom) the Rocky Mountains, Columbia Plateau, and Great Basin and highlight characteristic ecological differences among them. Figure drafted by Holly Andrew.
It is difficult for any professional to write outside the scope of what his employer wants to see, whether the desired product is a technical report for a compliance project or a peer-reviewed publication. But accessibly written research reports, dedicated newsletters, and museum exhibits demonstrate an archaeologist's commitment to her community partners and increase the likelihood that the relationship will continue to bear fruit.

**BUILDING A PALEOAMERICAN RESEARCH PROGRAM IN SOUTHEASTERN IDAHO AND NORTHERN UTAH**

Up to this point in the paper, I have outlined a general strategy for cultivating partnerships that any archaeologist could tailor to a particular research problem and community of prospective partners. In the remaining pages, I provide an overview of how I followed these steps to build a large network of community partners, including, but not exclusively, artifact collectors, to address a vexing archaeological research problem pertaining to the peopling of the New World.

In 2002, I assumed a professorship and anthropology museum director’s position at USU in northern Utah’s Cache Valley. I soon realized that the area encompassing southeastern Idaho (south and east of the Snake River Plain) and my new home constitutes an important and expansive North American ecotone. The Central Rockies, Columbia Plateau, and Great Basin converge there (Figure 3), with the High Plains located immediately to the east in the form of the Wyoming Basin (Fenneman and Johnson 1946). This creates a landscape with the uniquely diverse resource suite of any ecotone and ready access to four fundamentally different regions and their respective resource suites (Andrew et al. 2013; Pitblado et al. 2011). The region boasts more water in more forms (e.g., streams, lakes, hot and cold springs) than most of the arid west (Bowman and Cannon 2011); ubiquitous sources of high quality obsidian, chert, and quartzite (e.g., Thompson 2004); and even myriad ice caves with year-round refrigeration potential (e.g., Gauthier and Dalpra 2011, Hildreth and Pitblado 2010) (Figures 4a, b).

Until my move to Utah, my archaeological research had focused on trying to understand the earliest human occupation of the Southern Rockies of nearby Colorado. I realized early on that the Southern Rockies’ fundamental appeal to Paleoamericans was rooted in their geographically compressed environments, myriad ecotones, and concomitant resource diversity and abundance (e.g., Pitblado 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003; Stamm et al. 2004).

In this new region to the northwest, I saw parallel characteristics and multiple ecotones, and concomitant resource diversity and abundance (e.g., Pitblado 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003; Stamm et al. 2004). In this new region to the northwest, I saw parallel characteristics and multiple ecotones, and concomitant resource diversity and abundance (e.g., Pitblado 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003; Stamm et al. 2004).

In 2002, I assumed a professorship and anthropology museum director’s position at USU in northern Utah’s Cache Valley. I soon realized that the area encompassing southeastern Idaho (south and east of the Snake River Plain) and my new home constitutes an important and expansive North American ecotone. The Central Rockies, Columbia Plateau, and Great Basin converge there (Figure 3), with the High Plains located immediately to the east in the form of the Wyoming Basin (Fenneman and Johnson 1946). This creates a landscape with the uniquely diverse resource suite of any ecotone and ready access to four fundamentally different regions and their respective resource suites (Andrew et al. 2013; Pitblado et al. 2011). The region boasts more water in more forms (e.g., streams, lakes, hot and cold springs) than most of the arid west (Bowman and Cannon 2011); ubiquitous sources of high quality obsidian, chert, and quartzite (e.g., Thompson 2004); and even myriad ice caves with year-round refrigeration potential (e.g., Gauthier and Dalpra 2011, Hildreth and Pitblado 2010) (Figures 4a, b).

Fortune smiled in the form of a southeastern Idaho farm kid who grew up in the 1940s collecting artifacts and nurturing a passion for the region’s prehistory. He attended USU and took every archaeology course offered in the 1960s, flirted with but rejected doing master’s-level archaeological work at the University of Utah, and ultimately pursued and retired from a successful career in business. We encountered each other at USU the year I joined the faculty, while he served on a university board. The gentleman defies pigeonholing, but in the terminology of this paper, he is an avid avocational archaeologist; a former private collector who still acquires the occasional impenetrable artifact when an owner threatens to sell it on eBay (provided it originated on private land and the collector documents its provenance); a generous financial donor to archaeological causes who ensured that my students and I always had the resources we needed to build our “Southeastern Idaho & Northern Utah Paleoindian Research Program” (SINUPP); and a “nodal collector” who linked me to like-minded citizens.

With this crucial partner’s help, I assembled research teams and spent several summers cultivating and working with collector-collaborators using the strategies outlined above. Focusing first on other avocational and nodal collectors, my teams spent hours and sometimes days documenting and photographing Paleoamerican artifacts in private hands. Collectors worked alongside us, answering constant questions about where they had found a given artifact and their level of confidence in their memory. We sought the certainty guaranteed either by the written records some kept or the burned-in-one’s-mind thrill of finding a rare artifact. We next asked collectors to accompany us to the field to help formally document the sites they had found, which nearly everyone ambulatory agreed to do. They flagged the location of their find(s) and sometimes helped to establish site boundaries, mark spots with a GPS, and fill out site forms. Occasionally a collaborator could not relocate where they had found an artifact, which conveyed the importance of context more poignantly than a warning or threat ever could. None of our partners wanted to fail the team, because “our” team had become “their” team too.
Collaboration to Comply with Legal and Ethical Antiquities Codes (cont.)

FIGURE 4. Southeastern Idaho ice cave documented in a 2010 study of ice caves in the SINUPP region. (a) USU archaeology student and SINUPP research team member Benjamin Fowler at the cave entrance; (b) mid-way back in the cave with Alex Hildreth, team member and graduate of USU’s 2009 archaeological field school. This cave extends more than 100 m laterally and includes several distinct chambers with ice up to 2 m thick in places.
FIGURE 5. Map depicting the area targeted for SINUPP research and the Paleoamerican sites documented to date in the project area. The project area, outlined in black, encompasses Cache and Rich Counties, Utah; and Bear Lake, Franklin, Bannock, Caribou, and parts of Teton, Bonneville, and Bingham Counties, Idaho. Blue dots indicate sites in Idaho and Utah SHPO records at the time of the initial site records search. Red dots depict sites reported by collectors to SINUPP team members, who then recorded them on state site forms. Figure drafted by Holly Andrew.
As the number of citizen-collaborators grew, I maintained contact with agency archaeologists managing the checkerboard of federal (e.g., United States Forest Service [USFS], Bureau of Land Management [BLM], United States Fish and Wildlife [USFW]), tribal, state, and local public lands interspersed with the predominantly privately held property of the SINUPP region. As expected, our collector-collaborators led us principally to sites on their private property or on that of neighbors who had granted access to their holdings. Occasionally, however, we traced finds to what is now public land (a moving target, because the checkerboard ownership pattern promotes frequent sales and swaps to consolidate parcels). Because we already had the buy-in of agency archaeologists and land managers, we recorded such sites and submitted forms and reports to appropriate offices for incorporation into master databases. We collaborated particularly closely with the BLM-Pocatello Field Office, which provided cost-share funding for formal survey once we started to ascertain patterning in the occurrence of Paleoamerican sites and learned to predict their locations on the landscape (Pitblado et al. 2011).

Between 2008 and 2012, our research teams worked to build a robust Paleoamerican site database in the SINUPP region that could serve as a springboard for a diverse range of research questions. In that five-year period, our citizen partners helped us to identify and document about 200 Paleoamerican artifacts from nearly 100 Paleoamerican sites (Figure 5), resulting in a many-fold increase from what traditional sources of archaeological data had revealed during the initial literature search. As of this writing, we have reported these findings in 15 regional and national conference presentations, four peer-reviewed publications, four technical reports to our BLM-Pocatello partner reporting on surveys of BLM land (which led us to find, on our own, a dozen or so of the sites now in the database), a master’s thesis (Fowler 2014), and an undergraduate senior honors thesis (Harris 2009).

Equally importantly, we have delivered more than a dozen public talks across the study region, composed nearly that same number of non-technical reports for limited distribution to private donors and landowners, and launched an annual SINUPP newsletter expressly for citizen-partners and community members interested in our progress (Figure 6). In the SINUPP newsletter case, we printed 1,000 full-color copies of each of the three annual issues we have published, with printing costs generously covered by my initial and still closest community partner. We distributed hard copies of the newsletters by mail to anyone who had contributed time, knowledge, or access to collections (a mailing list that now contains 320 names), and we placed stacks of remaining newsletters in 19 libraries and museums across our 10-county study area for patrons to take home. We also made the newsletter available online, and each issue can still be downloaded (Pitblado 2009, 2010, 2011).

This process established a feedback loop of community members and archaeologists reporting finds and results to one another and, within a year or two, reversed the negative dynamic that had long characterized the relationship between archaeologists and citizens in the study area. Now, it is not uncommon for a collector with an obsidian artifact to participate in X-ray fluorescence analysis at a local university laboratory for the sheer pleasure of watching knowledge emerge on the spot.

In fall 2012, I assumed a new professorship at the University of Oklahoma, which, while prompting me to temporarily scale-back SINUPP field work as I adjust to my new home base, has also allowed me to add Ph.D.-level students to the already rich mix of SINUPP research team members.

In addition to the scholarly rewards of our archaeologist-collector partnerships, SINUPP in general and our newsletter in particular have yielded other benefits as well. Our team has been offered the use of resources ranging from a large backhoe and the time of an operator to a bunkhouse on public land as housing for a future group of field school students or crew members and a commercial-grade water pump to facilitate testing a spring site with buried Pleistocene fauna and artifacts. Importantly, too, several of our citizen partners, realizing the significance of the artifacts they had long treasured, have donated or initiated the process of donating the materials to public repositories in or near their communities. Even those who have not (or perhaps simply have not yet) offered to donate their artifacts have improved their collection, site documentation, and curation procedures so that they mirror the methodologies of archaeologists and curators.

While building SINUPP has been rewarding in ways both expected and unexpected, it has also posed challenges. Two
have been particularly vexing and are worth mentioning lest I convey the impression that incorporating collector-collaboration into a research design is easy or pain-free—it is not. As mentioned, I worked closely with federal and state agencies throughout southeastern Idaho and northern Utah to gather and disseminate information, and I appreciate the nearly across-the-board support they provided for my team’s efforts to reunite data with sites we determined are now on public lands. However, one federal archaeologist of the roughly dozen with whom I partnered had his supervisor send the following in response to my proposal, complete with a research design, to provide their unit with data originating on their lands (and SINUPP newsletters to their constituents):

Dear Dr. Pitblado: This letter is in response to your application for a special use permit to locate and record sites in X and Y Counties. [We] have determined that issuing the permit provides no public benefit, and your approach may encourage violations of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, therefore we are denying your request for a permit [June 28, 2010].

I have also found it challenging to navigate the bureaucracy associated with collaborating with heritage-resource specialists for the Shoshone and Bannock Tribes, which own lands in the southeastern Idaho portion of the SINUPP study area. I do partner with individual members of the tribes, including a USPS archaeologist in Idaho and several collectors, and I have tried and will continue to try to develop a closer working relationship with members of the Shoshone-Bannock tribal government in Fort Hall. SINUPP is a work in progress, and until all entities that wish to actively partner with the project are doing so, we will continue to try to build bridges. I accept that I cannot please all people all the time. However, after more than half a decade of effort and experimentation, I continue to believe that proactively approaching and treating all prospective partners with respect and an open mind is the best way to advance SINUPP research.

CONCLUSIONS

As important as the NHPA, ARPA, and other antiquities laws have been for improving our nation’s efforts to protect the past, these laws have failed to achieve clearly articulated goals of improving stewardship of all cultural resources, regardless of who legally owns them. In fact, the laws and interpretations thereof that pervade professional archaeological codes of ethics have had the opposite effect, because too many archaeologists conclude that, to remain ethically “pure,” they must hold all private artifact collectors at arm’s length or beyond. This approach has driven a wedge between the professional and collecting communities that did not exist prior to 1970 or so in the Paleoindian niche and no doubt in others within the domain of North American archaeology. That wedge is actively detrimental to best stewardship practices as articulated in the same laws and codes invoked to justify a position of divisiveness vis-à-vis all collectors, whether or not the act of collecting violates antiquities laws.

In my recent American Antiquity forum contribution (Pitblado 2014), I made the above case and supported it using the language of SAA’s ethical code. In this follow-up paper, I have articulated a strategy—certainly not the only possible strategy, but one that works—for more completely embracing the ethical principles we have all pledged will guide our practice of archaeology. Yes, some people collect artifacts because they want to sell them for personal profit; and yes, some people vandalize sites because doing so brings them some perverse reward. Professional archaeologists do not understand those mentalities and neither do most private collectors, who are as passionate about and protective of the past and its material manifestations as any archaeologist. The sub-population of looters and illicit artifact traffickers is as unreachable as hardened criminals or vandals in any domain. The larger population of conscientious collectors, however, includes many natural allies who can be invaluable sources of hard- or impossible-to-obtain data. Responsibly bridging the chasm between these groups is the right thing to do legally, ethically, and morally. It is also the quickest and surest way to improve stewardship for irreplaceable cultural resources, wherever they currently reside.

Acknowledgments

I thank the many artifact collectors who have shared their time, expertise, and artifact collections with me since the onset of my career. Without you, I would not have a career at all, nor would I have had the opportunities to engage in the public archaeology that I value so highly. I am very grateful to the four anonymous reviewers who made many excellent and concrete suggestions to improve this manuscript; it is much better thanks to their input. Carlos Torres and Marc Levine kindly translated the abstract into Spanish, which my Spanish-speaking colleagues and I greatly appreciate. Holly Andrew drafted Figures 3 and 5, and I gratefully acknowledge her skill in producing aesthetically pleasing illustrations. Finally, I thank my early mentors Vance Haynes and George Frison for demonstrating how to appropriately partner with community members, including artifact collectors, and for always approaching science and humanity from a perspective of gratitude and with remarkable grace.

Data Availability Statement

Databases related to the Southeastern Idaho & Northern Utah Paleoindian Research Program (SINUPP) and project-generated photos and artwork (Figures 2-6) are archived at the University of Oklahoma and are available upon request from SINUPP principal investigator Bonnie Pitblado (bonnie.pitblado@ou.edu). Historic photographs 1a and 1c are archived at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (catalogue numbers IV.0085-719.P and 00-5644, respectively). Contact DMNS Image Archivist René Paine at rene.paine@dmns.org for information on obtaining high-resolution image scans. Photograph 1b is archived at the American Museum of Natural History as image number 112596. For information on accessing it, contact Mai Reitmeyer, Senior Research Services Librarian (mreitmeyer@amnh.org).

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NOTE

1. If this paper had an international focus and encompassed classical archaeological permutations of the archaeologist-collector relationship, I would introduce the 1945 creation of UNESCO and other factors to this discussion. However, in the context of the Paleoamerican archaeology-collector relationships at issue here, I believe that changes in U.S. antiquities laws rather singularly and quite directly led to shifts in those dynamics.

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