

Editorial

This issue goes to press as conditions for international archaeological research continue to be difficult due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with ongoing restrictions on international travel. Over the past year we have all had to become expert in online communication. One advantage is the possibility of holding Editorial Meetings with members of the committee in different continents, even if time differences mean early mornings and late nights for some. The original papers in the Special Section presented in this issue were given in May 2019, for an English language session at the last in-person Annual Meeting of the Japanese Archaeological Association, and preparations are underway to hold the 2021 conference online as well. One of the themes of the special section is sustainability, and we build towards the ‘new normal,’ it will be incumbent on all of us to reconsider the sustainability of our practices and their impact on our landscapes and planet. Further papers from the 2019 session will be published in the next issue.

In many countries (including my own, the UK), where survey and excavation are part of the development process, archaeological field staff count as ‘key workers,’ permitted to continue going to work while the majority of the population are ‘locked-down’ in attempts to slow the rate of infection. This makes sense in many ways, including because we know that the transmission rate of Covid-19 is very low outdoors. Around the world, museums and other parts of the heritage economy have fared less well. Despite the invaluable educational and well-being roles that they fulfil, museums are among the last facilities allowed to open as restrictions are lifted. It remains to be seen what the longer-term impact on the sector will be.

The original research paper by John Ertl published in this issue focuses on one of the most distinctive aspects of Japanese archaeology: open air historical parks with ‘reconstructed’ buildings based on understanding of ancient construction techniques. As Ertl deftly demonstrates, there are more such buildings in Japan than any other country. For some, this enthusiasm for building such structures raises issues of authenticity, a term that has received very considerable attention not least from the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. For others it is evidence of the importance of tangible, experiential pointers to the past for the production and reproduction of local identities. This issue goes to press just as 12th iteration of the largest conference on experimental archaeology takes place <https://exarc.net/meetings/eac12> —with over 120 experiments being presented (online) from all around the world. In the UK, the Ancient Technology Centre usually offers excellent interactive and immersive educational experiences <https://ancienttechnologycentre.com>. There is a widespread hunger to experience everyday life in the past, and the chance to wonder at technological ingenuity in action.

We hope you enjoy this issue and find the reports from the Japanese Archaeological

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Association of interest, and look forward to being able to resume the full range of in-person activities as soon as circumstances permit. In the meantime, stay safe and well.

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