

Using Public and Experimental Archaeology to Engage Communities



Archaeological Research Institute

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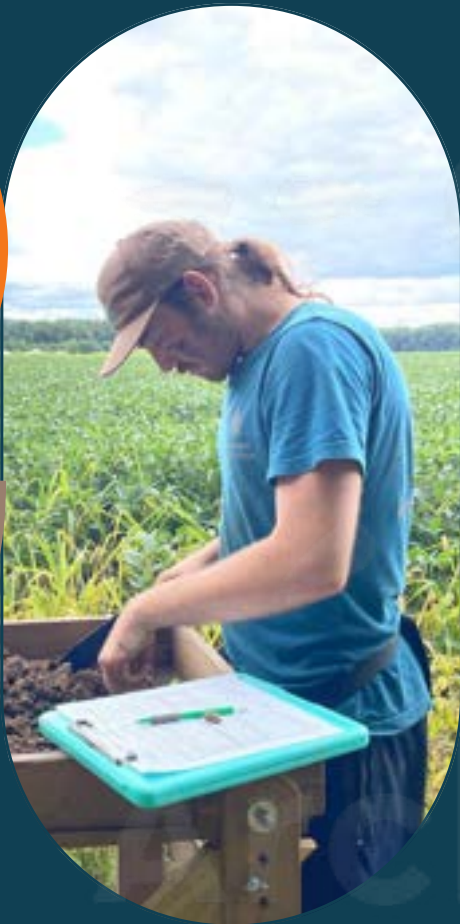
Archaeology Coordinator/Director of VALOR



October 2, 2025

Preserving Historic Places, | Ft. Wayne

About ARI



The Archaeological Research Institute is a 503(c) located in Lawrenceburg, Indiana. Our mission is to educate current and future generations about past cultures through the investigation, identification and preservation of native and non-native sites.

We accomplish our mission by offering carefully curated & learning-outcome-focused educational programming; hands-on archaeological experiences, tours of local & regional archaeological sites, day camps, lectures & workshops.

Archaeological
Research Institute

**what is the role of
public archaeology?**

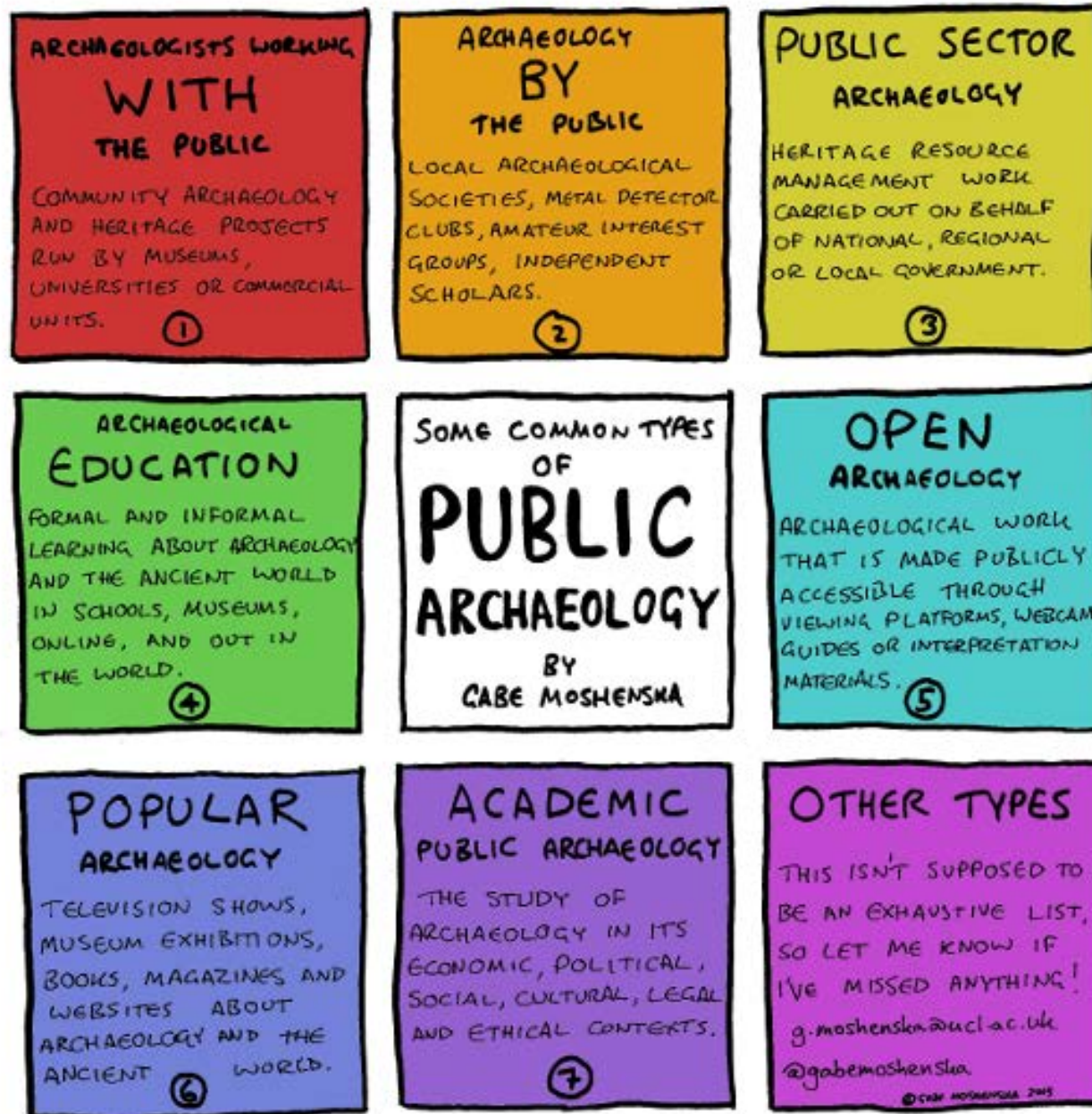


Figure 1: Some common types of public archaeology. Gabriel Moshenska
2015

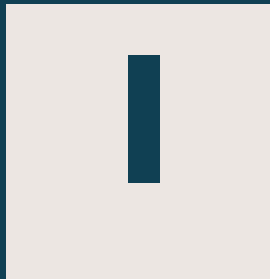


Public Archaeology



Discover

- Experiential learning
- Importance of cultural resources
- Hand-on opportunities



Involve

- Local collaborations
- Community buy-in
- Sense of belonging/ownership



Grow/Guide

- Connections between archaeologists and communities
- Increased understanding
- Shared learning



Share/Support

- Community voices
 - Preservation
 - Respect for heritage
 - Cultural knowledge
-

Our Brand of Public Archaeology

Programming

Bringing people to us to learning about regional archaeology through workshops, experiences, and other offerings.



Outreach

Going out into the community to engage people at events, in the classroom, or otherwise on their terms.



Research

Conducting independent research related to our fieldwork and lab analysis, and presenting that research at regional and national conferences.



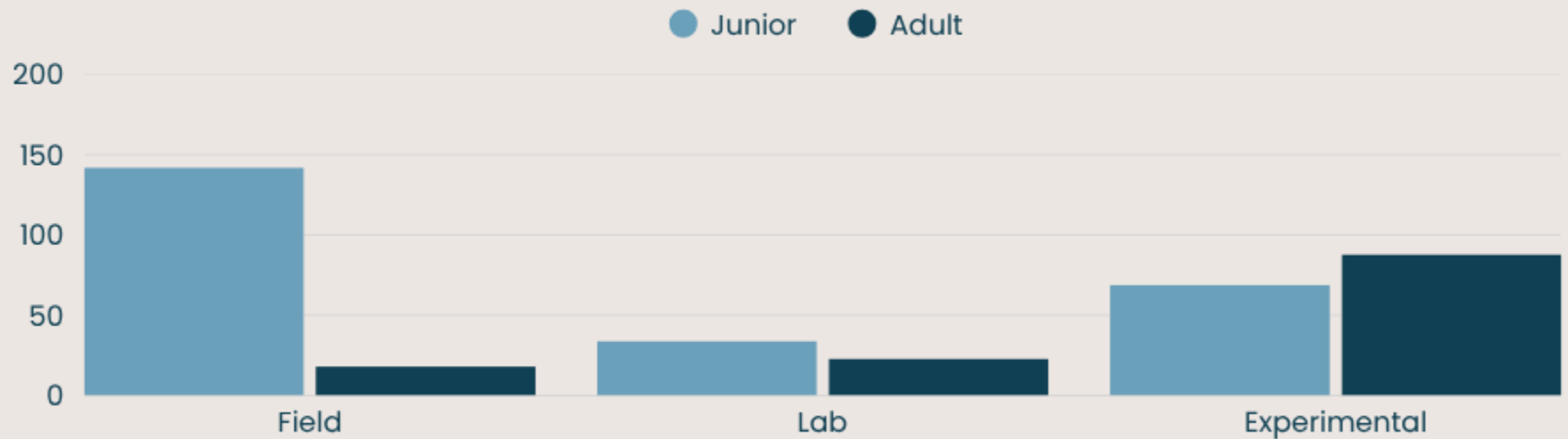


Impact

- Recent research in public archaeology (i.e. Reetz et al. 2019) stresses the **need for alternative forms of engagement** that provide active participation in order to increase the public's understanding of the **importance of heritage resources**.
- Pre-and post- surveys for experiences at ARI show an **increase in understanding of the importance of archaeology** after the experience.



Experience Counts - 2024



28%

of all booked
Experimental Kids
activities

68%

of all booked
Experimental Adult
activities

42%

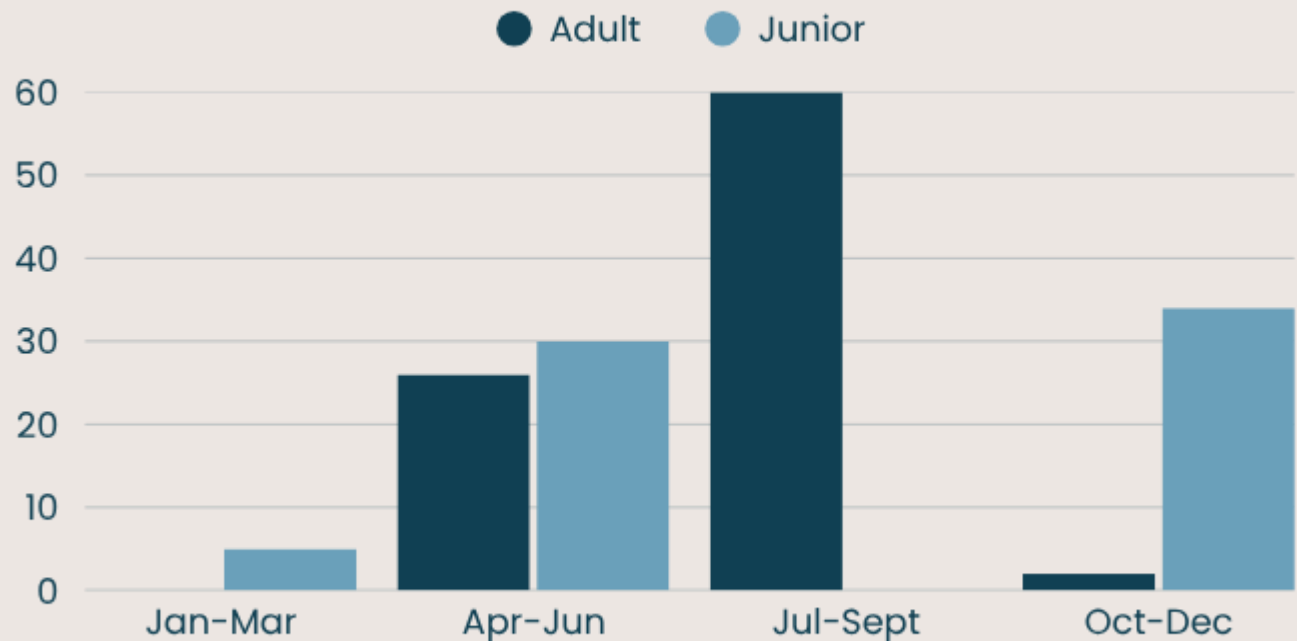
All experiences
booked as
Experimental



Experimental Experiences

Kids Experimental
Bookings in off
season
78%

Adults booking in
off season
1%



**“what good is
another
flintknapping
demonstration?”**

-Conference on Public Archaeology, 2023



VIRTUAL REALITY

Step into the past and explore a village from 1,000 years ago—no time machine required! With our immersive virtual reality experience, you can wander ancient streets, admire the architecture, and even test your aim with a bow and arrow in a simulated hunt. History isn't just something you learn—it's something you *live*.

ORACLE

Using the headset and software, you can virtually explore a Fort Ancient village.

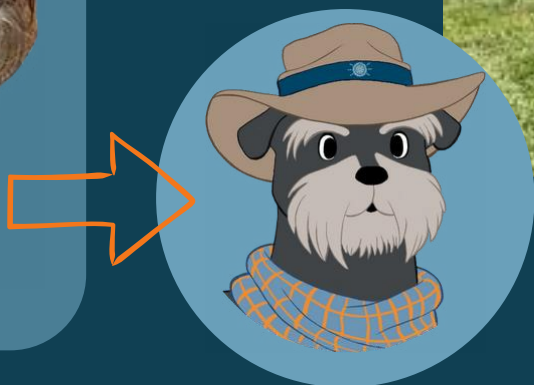
GREEN SCREEN

The green screen experience offers an artifact simulator and hunting simulator.



AUGMENTED REALITY

Walk through our field and experience the Guard Site as it could have looked 1,000 years ago. Using augmented reality, visitors can engage with the past in a novel way.



“Join us at ARI and let Rex guide you through a captivating Augmented Reality tour that will transport you back in time, allowing you to explore and connect with the fascinating stories of the people who once called this region home. Get ready to em”bark” on an unforgettable adventure of discovery!”



Experimental Archaeology

CERAMICS

- Salt pans
- Clay processing
- Clay procurement
- Firing techniques
- Temper
- Decorative motifs
- Building techniques
- Surface treatments

ATLATL

- Spear throwing
- Different geographical styles
- Composite darts

HIDE PROCESSING

- Tool manufacture and use
- Material knowledge
- Tanning techniques

FLINT KNAPPING

- Knapping techniques
- Understanding and use of different knapping tools
- Understanding and preparing different knapping materials
- Reproduction of tools
- Tool use
- Hafting

FIRE MAKING

- Resource procurement
- Techniques and tools
- Fire pit types and uses

FISHING KITS

- fishing methods
- hook types and manufacturing
- resource procurement

CORDAGE

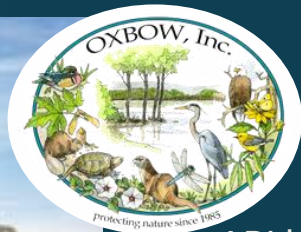
- Materials and procurement
- Times and methods of harvest
- Types of cordage
- Preparation of materials
- Manufacture
- Uses
- Gateway to fiber arts

PROGRAMS

- Hands on History mini workshops
- Workshop series
- Pumpkin STEM
- Demonstrations

RESEARCH

- Salt procurement
 - Procurement of local materials for ceramic manufacturing and pit firing
 - Currently working to understand better the structures that were at the Guard site.
-



Oxbow, Inc.

ARI has partnered with Oxbow, Inc., a nature conservancy also located in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, since our inception in 2019. ARI and Oxbow co-steward the Guard Site (12D29), a Ft. Ancient village. The partnership is based in a dedication to serve the community and protect both the natural and cultural resources of the region.

Atlatl
Range

Resource
procurement

Experimental
Gardens

Fieldwork

Adventure
Trek



Carriage House Farm

Carriage House Farm is a single-family owned Ohio Sesquicentennial Farm located in historic North Bend, Ohio. They are passionate about local history and regional food culture. ARI has partnered with Carriage House Farm since 2024 on a number of traditional craftsmanship processes.



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Queen City Clay

Our partnership with Queen City Clay (QCC) began in the winter of 2024 as we dove into research on salt procurement in the Ohio River Valley (Schmitt et al. 2025). QCC is a pottery studio in Cincinnati, Ohio, with a keen interest in professional development through creative outlets. This partnership showed us the value of inviting local expert artisans into research, as their lifetimes of experience and passion for their craft can offer a whole new perspective and level of analysis that archaeologists do not typically possess.



Salt
pan
research

Clay
Process
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Tempe
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Types
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manuf
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(Coil/Sl
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Applying the Partnerships

Exp
Arch

Hands-on History Mini Workshops

July	Knapping + Ceramics
August	Fletching Darts
September	Cordage
October	Fishing Kits
November	Ceramics
December	Fire Starting



Making a Difference with YES Home

- group home for at-risk youth
- started a multi-day pottery workshop
- continuing with other monthly workshops
- giving the students agency and confidence



Our Public Archaeology provides....

- A means to connect with the community in new, engaging, ways
- Unique experiences every time guests walk through the door
- Attention-getting activities like trebuchets, atlatls, and native plant use alongside dig boxes, flint knapping, and pinch pots
- An understanding of how things were done in the past
- An appreciation for this type of research
- **Memorable experiences**
- **An understanding of the importance of local heritage resources**



STAY IN TOUCH



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@Explore_ARI



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