Penn-Brock statement of principles and best practices for underwater archaeology and the stewardship of underwater cultural heritage in the Mediterranean

A two-part workshop series titled, *Who owns underwater cultural heritage? Perspectives on archaeological law and ethics in the Mediterranean*, was convened at Brock University in St Catharines, Ontario (22-25 October 2009) and at the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (26-28 March 2010). Over the course of the two sessions, this document emerged through consensus of the participants to reflect principles and best practices for underwater archaeology and the stewardship of underwater cultural heritage.

Acknowledging the imperative for the protection of cultural heritage in general, and underwater cultural heritage in particular;

Committed to three primary aims of underwater cultural heritage protection in territorial and non-territorial areas, and in shallow and deep water: 1) preservation and evaluation, 2) the development of knowledge, and 3) public access to cultural and intellectual resources;

Considering that the UNESCO 2001 Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage is worthy of support because it furthers these aims;

Recognizing that the nation-state serves as the primary framework for the preservation of cultural heritage and cooperation through governance of activities by persons and vessels subject to its jurisdiction;

Convinced that archaeologists should take advantage of the developing technology for the exploration of the marine environment;

Believing, from an archaeological and legal perspective, in the identification and following of best practices for the conduct of archaeology that will ensure effective protection and preservation, the advancement of knowledge, and public access to material, cultural, and intellectual resources;

Conscious that underwater cultural heritage encompasses knowledge of the broader maritime landscape;

Recognizing the link between underwater cultural heritage preservation and the preservation of its surrounding natural and social landscape; and

Focusing particularly on archaeology in the Mediterranean;

We recognize **principles for activities** directed at underwater cultural heritage, which include but are not limited to the following:

1. Timely attention should be directed toward underwater cultural heritage at risk;

2. Underwater cultural heritage shall not be commercially exploited, as defined by the Convention;

3. Cooperation is critical to promote common understanding among states whose heritage is defined by maritime connectivity from antiquity to the present day;

4. Regional and local authorities should be fully engaged in the responsibility of protecting underwater cultural heritage in their respective areas;

5. Local communities, when appropriate, should be actively involved in the stewardship of cultural heritage;

6. The archaeological community has an ethical obligation to raise awareness about the importance of cultural heritage and its preservation through education, outreach, and publication of research;

7. The practices established by the Rules stated in the Annex of the 2001 Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage provide a clear framework to direct all archaeological research;

8. Archaeological research plans should set preservation and the advancement of knowledge as their primary objective;

9. Archaeologists should work collaboratively with other scientists in the development of research plans and new technologies, remaining mindful of the research aims and ethics of archaeological practice; and

10. Access to adequate financial resources on a regional, national, and international level ensures the long-term viability of archaeological resources, aimed toward the equal treatment of underwater cultural heritage in all countries.

With these principles in mind, we suggest the following **positive actions and best practices** for the effective protection and exploration of underwater cultural heritage:

1. The archaeological community has an obligation to **respect** the underwater environment. Respect extends from underwater cultural heritage to natural environment and the broader maritime landscape. It includes the understanding of underwater archaeology as the pursuit of research questions and the protection of underwater cultural heritage.

    A. The archaeological community has a responsibility to be aware of and follow the laws that govern and the ethical practices that guide underwater archaeology;

    B. The archaeological community has a responsibility to promote the stewardship of specific archaeological sites and their contexts; and

C. The archaeological community should cooperate with national administrators in the stewardship of underwater cultural heritage.

2. The archaeological community should **educate** students through field and classroom training and informational programs in schools, universities, and any other academic and scientific institutions.

   A. Members of the archaeological community have a responsibility to educate themselves and their students in current skills, technologies, and best practices associated with research directed at underwater cultural heritage;

   B. Training in underwater cultural heritage law and ethics should comprise part of qualifications in the discipline; and

   C. All disciplines that might include the investigation of underwater cultural heritage should be mindful of best practices that apply to archaeology.

3. The archaeological community should engage in **outreach** toward the academic community and the general public, including representatives of trades, professions, and industries that work underwater.

   A. The archaeological community should undertake the timely publication and dissemination of research in scholarly venues and, when appropriate, the popular media and trade literature;

   B. The archaeological community should work toward the development of effective public relations strategies that emphasize the dissemination of information through traditional and innovative sources;

   C. The archaeological community should report the looting and damage of underwater sites to all relevant authorities and advocate for their protection; and

   D. The archaeological community should draw positive public attention to underwater cultural heritage.

4. The archaeological community has an obligation to secure **financial resources** adequate to provide for all stages of project design, including research development, excavation, conservation, dissemination, and the long-term impact of the project on local, regional, and national levels.

   A. Budgetary considerations included in research projects should contain plans for education and training of students;

   B. The archaeological community should be mindful of ethical concerns in obtaining funding for projects; and

C. The archaeological community should support and encourage research collaborations between countries, public institutions, universities, other educational and scientific institutions, and NGOs in order to maximize limited financial resources.

5. Mindful of the principles established above, there should be open, transparent **cooperation**, **collaboration, and involvement** between archaeologists, local, regional, and national communities; public institutions; other interested parties; and the international community of archaeologists.

   A. The archaeological community has a responsibility to cooperate with and involve interested local communities as appropriate in all stages of research. Local communities, defined by their proximity to the research site, include, but are not limited to, users of local resources (students, diving clubs, fishermen, coastal inhabitants, etc.);

   B. The archaeological community should, where appropriate, include the consideration of other interested parties in their research. Interested parties may be individuals or groups who, in addition to the nation-states and local communities, claim an aesthetic, intellectual, economic (e.g. sustainable tourism and other sustainable development), or other association with a particular site;

   C. The archaeological community should consult with legal specialists for information about the development and implementation of relevant laws;

   D. The archaeological community should recognize the importance of collaboration among archaeologists and across other disciplines, including scientific, and technical specialists;

   E. The archaeological community should strive toward open access to data, as appropriate, for all involved parties; and

   F. The archaeological community should contribute to the establishment of bilateral or multilateral agreements at the national and international level aimed at the implementation of research, protection, and enhancement of underwater cultural heritage.

In the spirit of this statement, we will strive to institute these positive actions and best practices in our efforts toward underwater cultural heritage protection and research. We see these principles and best practices as critical for the future of the discipline of underwater archaeology. We believe that these principles should be reviewed in two years' time, in conjunction with the 2012 International Year of Maritime Heritage.

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