

Friend or Foe? ... Or Something Different? About the Role of the Mass Media

Archaeologists and heritage managers are having quite diverse ideas about how the mass media could serve them. Some are hoping journalists would help them to increase public attention to cultural heritage and to their archaeological research. Others want to educate and teach the general public via radio, TV, and the press. There are some scientists who are skilled to masterly use the opportunities mass media are offering and who regard them as platform for their personal public appearance. Finally, there are – not that few – archaeologists who refuse to cooperate with editors and journalists as they regard them as mere distributors of superficiality.

No matter which view a scientist takes: The most what people know about archaeology came to them via the mass media. Ignoring the media or not knowing how to cooperate with them means to renounce a major gateway to wider audiences.

But could the journalist be an ally for us and serve as multiplier of our messages? Is the journalist necessarily the opponent who works in a separate world that is incompatible with ours? Are there fruitful ways of cooperation for both sides?

This paper examines the real tasks of journalism in contemporary society. It also gives a view from inside the media and thereby tries to sketch a realistic and constructive way of collaboration for the future.

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Abstract for the annual Ename colloquium "The Future of Heritage – Changing Visions, Attitudes, and Contexts in the 21st Century"
Session "Education and the Communication of Heritage"
Ghent, 21-24 March 2007

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