

Dear Fellow RPA's

I am honored to be serving as your President for 2010-2011. I want to take this opportunity to share with you some of my thoughts and aspirations for the Register, and bring you up to date on some of the initiatives that your board and committees are pursuing.

After only a month into the job, I have already been asked one question several times. In its various forms the question boils down to this: "What's in it for me as a Registered Professional Archaeologist?" So I want to begin by addressing that head-on.

It has always seemed to me that being a Registered Professional Archaeologist is more in the nature of a long-term commitment than an immediate benefit, and this is a pretty counter-cultural concept in the early 21st century! We don't get a journal, we don't get a conference, and we don't get a newsletter. We don't get a discount on life insurance, 10% off at Barnes and Noble, or even a coupon for a free hamburger.

Primarily, what we do get is a **well-developed disciplinary system for holding us to the ethical and professional standards that we as professionals have agreed to abide by and which make the RPA what it is.** This system is exceptional in its powers and effectiveness, and only the Archaeological Institute of America, one of our sponsoring organizations, has anything remotely like it. In many ways it is at the heart of what RPA is.

All the time, our well-established grievance procedures are being followed, complaints are being investigated, and actions taken to address violations of our code. By their very nature, these investigations are confidential. I as President know very little about them. This confidentiality is essential to protect all those involved in the process. The downside, of course, is that unless the Grievance process results in a verifiable violation, it appears that no action is occurring, and therefore as RPA's we can get only a limited sense of what the Register is doing day-to-day behind the scenes. Being an RPA requires a degree of trust that we may not otherwise be accustomed to.

We need to be aware that not all inquiries to the Grievance Coordinator are negative in nature. Members may query the Board and its officers any time on questions of procedure and policies. The Board has great depth of experience in museums, consulting, and academia. Sometimes a member just needs to discuss possible courses of action with others

It's important also to understand that a substantial part of our dues as RPA's goes into maintaining a substantial financial reserve. This reserve is absolutely necessary so that we can mount an effective defense if our decisions are challenged in the courts. If we are afraid of the costs of lawsuits we may be timid in our disciplinary decision-making, which will weaken our effectiveness.

But beyond this core function of RPA, there is much that we have done and can do. Here are some of the ongoing programs and initiatives that are currently being pursued:

Registration of new RPA's

Our Registrar and the Registrar Advisory Committee continue to review applications using both the long and short forms. We are reviewing possible changes to the long form to help in assessing data analysis and writing skills.

One issue that we will have to address in the near future is how to evaluate on-line degrees. These are becoming increasingly popular, but there are concerns about the quality of academic oversight in some cases.

Qualifications and Standards

On the recommendation of the Standards and Qualifications Committee, the Board has made three decisions:

1. RPA will continue to rely on adherence to the code of ethics as the way to ensure that RPA's do not work outside their areas of expertise. The alternative would have been to introduce categories of membership into the application system.
2. We will work towards a completely **voluntary self-certification** system whereby RPA's can identify interests and specialisms that they want others to be aware of.
3. We will also work towards developing a **Student Level Membership** for individuals in institutions of higher education who are engaged in courses of study that will lead to qualification for the Register. The purposes of this category of membership are:
 - To encourage the development of high ethical and professional standards in archaeology as early as practicable in an individual's career.
 - To enable undergraduates and graduates to participate in, and contribute meaningfully to, RPA.
 - To ensure the long-term development of RPA and strengthen its membership base.

RPA Field School Certification and Scholarships Program

Working with our four sponsoring organizations, RPA has now had a successful Field School Certification program in place since 2001. RPA certified field schools meet specific criteria. Since 2008 each RPA-sponsoring institution has selected one field school to receive a scholarship; the director of this field school then selects a deserving student who will receive the award.

Continuing Professional Education Initiative

Our code of conduct states that it is an archaeologist's responsibility to "stay informed and knowledgeable about developments in her/his field or fields of specialization" (2.1.b) and that an archaeologist shall not "undertake any research that affects the archaeological resource base for which she/he is not qualified" (1.2.d). As a service to RPAs and the discipline, the Register's very active CPE committee has developed a policy for certifying CPE programs such as training courses, workshops, and other learning

activities that meet the Register's mission of improving archaeological standards and conduct. This policy was adopted by the Board last October.

In the near future RPA therefore plans to invite CPE providers to apply for RPA certification of their programs. These will be vetted by RPA to ensure that they meet a number of defined criteria including appropriate *Educational Focus*, the provision of *Expert Instructors*, and adequate *Evaluation*. RPA's will be able to obtain CPE credits by attending courses recognized by the Register. Details of the implementation of this important voluntary initiative will be worked out in the coming months.

Regional Organizations Initiative

Regional organizations play an important role in the national archaeological scene, but until recently RPA has not had much engagement with them or presence at their meetings. Last year then-President Bill Andrefsky met with the Board of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference to explore the possibility of SEAC becoming a sponsoring organization for RPA. These discussions are at an early stage and no commitments have been made at this point. The RPA board feels that there may be many potential RPA's who are active in regional organizations but not in national ones

The Member Directory

Like many organizations we are wrestling with the degree to which we go fully digital or retain hard copy printing of things like the directory. A poll of RPA's last year showed a strong majority in favor of moving to an electronic version, but we will continue to consider low-cost hard-copy options as well. Certainly the current printing format has become a considerable expense for RPA and it makes sense to reduce this cost if we can in order to put the savings to better use elsewhere.

The Website

We keep the website under review, and want to make it as useful and user-friendly as possible. One immediate initiative is to have an External Links page, which will provide links to similar organizations in other countries, and to other relevant sites of interest to RPA's.

Higher Visibility for RPA's

When I ran for President one of my stated objectives was to achieve greater recognition of the letters "RPA" as a standard of quality in archaeology. In whatever field of archaeological endeavor you find yourself: academia, non-profit, consulting, governmental agency, or wherever, the fact that you are an RPA should be seen as a tangible benefit both to you and to your employer. I want to see us move towards a time in which the absence of those letters behind a professional archaeologist's name raises questions, a time in which "RPA" is seen as on a par with "PE" for Engineers and "AIA" for architects: a seal of approval, if you like, and an assurance of professionalism. An assurance that is backed by careful review of applicants, and the effective sanctioning of those who fail to meet the standards they have agreed to uphold.

You are RPA

Much of the success of RPA in achieving these and other goals depends on grass roots advocacy. We need to be telling people that we are RPA's, and why. We need to use those letters at every opportunity. We need to mention that we are RPA's in communication with the students, colleagues, employers, clients and agencies that we deal with on a day-to-day basis. We need to get more of our colleagues to feel that they are missing out by not registering. We need to be the voice of professional archaeology.

I hope to see many of you at the upcoming Society for American Archaeology meeting in St. Louis on April 14th-18th 2009. The RPA board will be meeting on April 14th. On April 15th there are two RPA-related events that I hope you will support. Between 1 and 3 pm is the popular, RPA sponsored, Ethics Bowl. RPA presents a prize to the winning team This is a spirited contest between college teams on ethical dilemmas in archaeology. Between 5 and 6:30 we will hold our annual RPA Awards reception during which we will be honoring those who have furthered the goals of the Register and the profession.

I and your board welcome any and all input and suggestions from you, and I hope you will feel free to contact me.

Ian Burrow, Ph.D., RPA
Hunter Research Inc.
120 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08608
609-695-0122 xtn 102
ianrpa@comcast.net