

*The Scholar as Designer: the Creation of a Sophisticated Audience*

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The audience for historical archaeological and architectural sites is in general tourists, non-professionals with an interest in the past. Historical archaeological and architectural sites have traditionally presented themselves with little intervention, that is, traditionally sites have been cleared of vegetation and sometimes stabilized and protected from further destruction by the weather and the public—sometimes through direct conservation of the remains, sometimes by the creation of prescribed pathways through the site—and, occasionally, didactics in the form of site plans and brief historical summaries have been placed at strategic positions on the site. Aside from that, the bulk of the presentation is left to guide books for those hearty tourists who are willing to pay for them and who have the time and patience and experience to leaf their way through them successfully as they explore the site. Like the didactics, the guidebooks focus almost exclusively on the description of the remains and of their historical context. And like the didactics, pathways are often prescribed and guidebooks are usually written based upon the writings of the scholars who excavated or studied the remains on the site. That means that usually the presentation of the site to the general public is a digested version of the presentation created by scholars for scholars, not a presentation designed around the needs and experience of the interested non-expert. This watered-down form of scholarship, in which conclusions are presented without the analysis on which they are based, is of little interest to the professional world for which the scholarship was originally produced, for it is more the process, the analysis than the conclusions that engage and excite and enlighten scholars. Nor do the historical summaries and reconstructed plans that characterize most guidebooks and site didactics often engage the imagination of the general public. Debased scholarship seems a poor principle around which to design the presentation of a site or a museum exhibition intended for either professionals or the general public. A more fruitful design process would seem to begin with the scholars' paring down to their essence those problems that have most engaged them with the site, and then with the formulation of simple, concise visual and interactive experiences expressly designed to engage the public not only with the problems but also to engage them in the process of their analysis.