

SPOTLIGHT



DigVentures' paperless recording app goes global

Is this the biggest leap forward in archaeological recording since the context sheet? Archaeologists around the world seem to think so: from north-west Spain to upstate New York, communities are using Digital Dig Team – DigVentures' paperless recording app – to manage archaeological data and publish finds online in real time.

Imagine being an archaeologist who could locate a context record with a single tap, record a new feature just by whipping out your phone, add a new interpretation without making a mess, get your pottery expert to add their analysis to the primary record and instantly share that information with the whole team.

Digital Dig Team is the world's first entirely paperless recording system that also allows instant and open access to data online. Developed in collaboration with fellow Registered Organisation LP Archaeology, it is now being adopted by community archaeology projects around the world, including teams working on a late glacial cave in Yorkshire, an Iron Age hillfort in Spain, a Shaker site in the US and an Anglo-Saxon chapel at Lindisfarne.

Each of these projects is crowdfunded, with teams made up of professional and budding archaeologists who support the research either in the field or from home.

Instead of paper files that can only be accessed by one person at a time, archaeologists can instead use smartphones, tablets and laptops to create an online, editable and publicly available record of the

site they're working on. As soon as they start work, everyone on the team can see what's been found, and so can you.

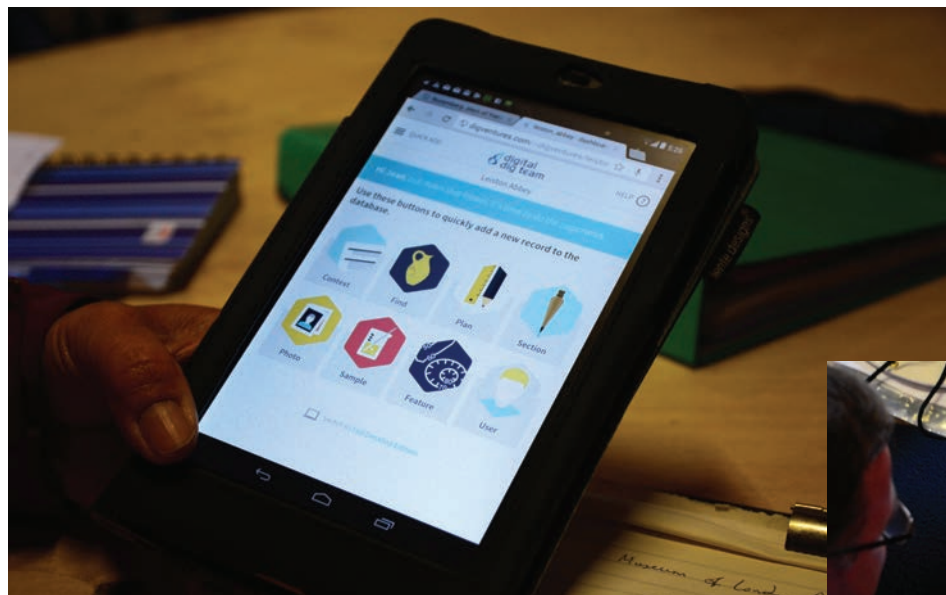
Global communities who stay connected

For these community-led projects, where people from around the world have come together to make a project happen, born-digital archives that update in real time aren't just efficient, they're imperative – not just for feeding information into the system, but for keeping those communities engaged.

People who temporarily join the team in the field can see how that complicated feature they were working on ultimately turned out, or what happened when the pot they found finally got lifted. Likewise, people participating from home can use Digital Dig Team to support and follow the dig remotely.

Archaeology in your hands (or your pocket)

Paperless recording systems preserve the integrity of traditional recording skills, but for these projects it's also allowing better communication between remote members of the team, as well as between the team and their community of public supporters, and they're starting to do it in their own, increasingly visual, ways.



Digital Dig Team is user friendly, has inbuilt help sections and has a responsive design so that it can be used on any smartphone or tablet.

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 digital dig team



Everyone has archaeology in their pockets.

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After piloting Digital Dig Team at Leiston Abbey, it's clear that photogrammetry is becoming a standard part of the recording process, with 3D models being added by contributors to the primary record. The same is happening for the extensive collection of late glacial fauna and Romano-British artefacts from Victoria Cave, which are then collated into a virtual museum, allowing casual browsers to explore them up close and in detail.

For the more technically minded, 'map view' creates an interactive map through which people can explore the entire site, zooming in to see trenches, features or even individual artefacts in greater detail. And we're developing a plug-in that means the identification of features can be crowdsourced – people will be able to tag possible features, or even groups of features, helping experts to identify areas for further analysis.

In short, Digital Dig Team is a born-digital archive that means professional and budding archaeologists can contribute to, enjoy and access all stages of the archaeological process either in the field or remotely, whether it's for fun, independent study or as part of the project write-up.

Next steps

As the functionality of Digital Dig Team expands, we're increasingly asked about versions that work on sites with no internet connection, or that can be used in schools and classrooms. Rest assured, we're working on it.

In the meantime, we're on the lookout for new project partners. If you're interested in trying it out on your own dig, we'd be delighted to hear from you.

To see the pilot project go to www.digventures.com/leiston-abbey or find out more at www.digventures.com.



Digital Venturer Fred came to visit and had followed the dig so closely he was able to give us his own site tour. © DigVentures



Trench supervisor James Early shows Field Venturer Rita Baker how to record a posthole on an iPad. © DigVentures



Field Venturer Anna Roik records a new context using her Blackberry. © DigVentures