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ArchSites in Final Testing

By Jonathan Leader

ArchSites is the new name for the digital site file project funded by a grant from the S.C. Department of Transportation (SCDOT). The name was derived from the recognition that the database contains not only archaeological sites, but also built sites of the National Register for Historic Places. ArchSites combines both facets of archaeology and architecture into a single easily remembered acronym.

A great deal has been accomplished since the project was undertaken. We have gone through two teams of programmers at ESRI Charlotte, new software and code has

hired. All in all it has been a very focused, frenetic, and rewarding time. But all good things come to an end, and this project is no different. In this instance, it ended in the spring of 2007.

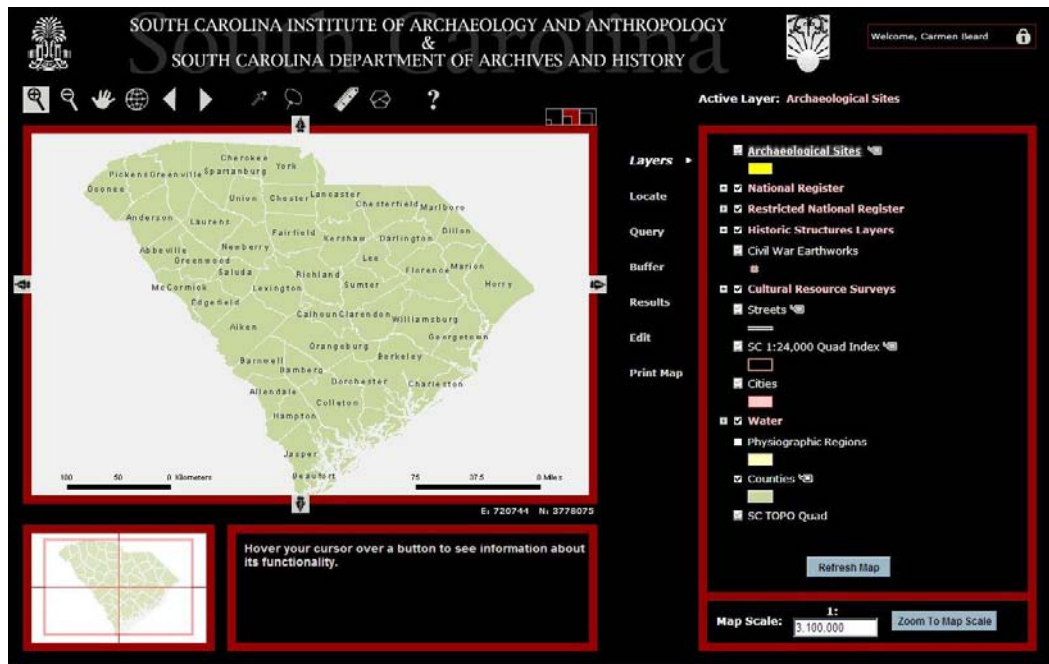
The project team comprised of Wayne Roberts and Chad Long of SCDOT, Chuck Cantley and Elizabeth Johnson of S.C. Department of Archives and History (SCDAH), and Carmen Beard from SCIAA, and I put in a great many hours working out the bugs and solving the contradictions that always crop up in a project such as this. The level of cooperation

the dogged determination of the team that we have reached this point.

The unique software program developed in conjunction with Paul Gallimore and Melanie Baker of ESRI of Charlotte, North Carolina has been placed on the University of South Carolina servers and is undergoing final debugging. The capabilities of the program, which have resulted in the production of the most interactive site file in the United States to date, were demonstrated live at the Council of South Carolina Professional Archaeologists (COSCAPA) meeting held December 8, 2006. In attendance were

archaeologists, city planners, engineers, federal agency representatives, the military, and others who will be benefited by our advance.

Three levels of user are supported by ArchSites. The first is the general public. Many people are curious about what type of archaeological or historical sites are to be found in and around the locations where they live. This level of data is



South Carolina map screenshot from ArchSites database. This is the starting point for level 2 and 3 researchers. (SCIAA photo)

been written specifically to deal with the advances called for by the project's unique specifications, equipment has been purchased and installed, partnership and user agreements forged, and new staff

between our three agencies on a project of such far-reaching importance that cross cut so many different lines of authority is unprecedented. It was only through

made available at the county level without compromising site locations. Nonetheless, the questions that can be asked even at this level are a cut above the ordinary. There is no cost for access to the general public.

The next level provides data and support to the professional consumer. These clients are identified as state and local professionals who need access for planning and stewardship activities. They will go through a more rigorous vetting procedure to ensure that their request for access of actual site location data is appropriate. These resources are both vulnerable and non-renewable. It is envisioned that county and city planners among others will fall within this category. The users of this level do not upload sites and documents. They are consuming the data generated and uploaded by others. Again, the level of query afforded this level is very advanced. It permits the user to ask very sophisticated questions and will help ensure that the best possible information is provided.

The last level comprises those professionals who are actively engaged in research and are producing the site forms, reports, and other materials that are all linked to the database. They will have the most rigorous vetting of all, as they will be uploading the data upon which everyone else will rely. As they upload the data the researcher will be providing electronic signatures attesting to the accuracy of what they provide. Any questions can and will be referred back to the professional who submitted it. A very important feature of this level is that the researcher can fill out the site form on line, draw the map boundaries on an appropriate topographic map, upload additional supporting documentation, and submit the site for it's site number. All of this can be done without specialized software or equipment beyond the normal PC or laptop already in use by most of us. The project's software is designed to

check the submitted site documentation and location against the entire database and determine whether or not this is a unique submittal or potentially a revisit. The software is designed to be able to deal with urban situations, the most difficult environment for this form of determination. If the researcher verifies that it is a new submittal, then they will receive their unique site identifying state trinomial number immediately. There should never be cause to use temporary field numbers again. The finished submittal becomes available immediately to the next researcher. Our normally very fine-grained QA/QC comes into play as the finished form is batched to the attention of the Site File Manager. Needless to say, contact will be made if the data is not accurate or lacks the required level of professional documentation.

In both of the professional levels it is possible to query the database, read the site form data, independently query the site form data, verify the data against the final report or other gray literature, see a complete history of revisits or corrections to the maps and data, and eventually to see the digital photographs of the diagnostic artifacts recovered from each site. We feel that the user is being provided the best access to the research database possible. Undoubtedly on a project of this complexity, as it is used intensively, we will encounter areas that need revamping. It is our intent to revisit the ArchSites on a routine schedule to ensure that the best possible program is in place.

Jim Scurry and Holly Gillam, SC Department of Natural Resources, Lynn Shirley and Kevin Remington, USC Geography Department, and Chris Gillam, SCIAA/SRARP, have

all assisted the project as primary testers. We appreciate their time and effort. Michael Stoner and Kathleen Quinn continue to assist in the population of the attribute databases. This will be a long-term effort that is well underway. Anyone wishing to sponsor a graduate student to assist in this necessary work is encouraged to contact the State Archaeologist.

Welcome Susan Lowe

SCIAA has a new Business Manager! She is Susan Lowe who was hired in March 2007. Susan and her husband arrived in Columbia in January following a move from Leesburg, Virginia, where she worked for the public school system. She has 18 years of office experience, and she is excited about taking on the new challenges of working at SCIAA. Susan's Bachelors Degrees in both Sociology and Spanish were received at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. She has a strong interest in Mayan Civilization; she quilts and makes jewelry in her spare time. Stop by and welcome Susan to her new job.



New SCIAA Business Manager, Susan Lowe.
(SCIAA photo by Lisa Hudgins)