10/07/2021

Disability in Archaeology-WIA Episode-For Transcript

00:00:00 **Chelsi**

Hi and welcome to the Women in Archaeology Podcast, a podcast about for and by women in the field. My name is Dr. Chelsi Slotten and I'll be your host for the episode. On today's episode we'll be chatting with Dr. Laura Heath-Stout about her work on archaeology and identity, following the results of our recent listener survey, we'll be focusing particularly on her work with archaeology and disability, which was a fan favorite listener request. Filling out the panel today is Emily Long. Thanks so much for being here everyone

00:00:32 **Emily**

Happy to be here and we're very excited to have you.

00:00:37 **Chelsi**

We are! So Laura, we normally start our episodes, asking our guests to tell the audience just a little bit about themselves and where their project originated. I know that this kind of started as a PhD project for you. Unless I'm misremembering.

00:00:53 **Laura**

That's right. Yeah, so I started working on equity issues in archaeology for my PhD project. I actually came to graduate school intending to do historical archaeology of colonialism in mesoamerica, and I started a dissertaion on that and I had a bunch of roadblocks and I was just having a hard time. I call it my mid PhD crisis, maybe the listeners can relate, and my research just wasn't working and I thought about leaving graduate school and then I sort of thought about why I had gone to grad school in the first place, what, what I loved about archaeology, what I was most interested in and a lot of the work that I have found most interesting, in term papers from undergrad even, was thinking about systemic oppression and archaeology. So I was very lucky to have a very supportive advisor and I said, you know, can I, can I change my project, can I do something completely different. He said yes, and so for my dissertation, I did both a quantitative study of journal authorship and a qualitative study about archaeologists experiences with a focus on racism, sexism and homophobia in the discipline of archaeology.

00:02:30 **Emily**

That's a huge undertaking.

00:02:32 **Laura**

Yeah, and I managed to make it bigger since I graduated three years ago, and I'm now working on the book from that and the book also looks at classism and ableism. So it's, it's a big project. But yeah, I really wanted to be intersectional in my work.

00:02:57   Emily

That's amazing.

00:02:59   Chelsi

Which is just so important.

00:03:00   Emily

Oh my gosh. So just looking at all of those topics I feel like there could be a dissertation on just race, a dissertation on just sexism. And so pulling, all of that together did you find a lot of crossover within those? That's like, well, there's definitely if you're looking at sexism there's going to be issues of race as well. That type of thing.

00:03:26   Laura

Yes. Definitely. And actually looking for those overlaps was part of why I wanted to be so ambitious because there... So since the 1980s feminist archaeologists have been looking at gender issues, quantitatively and looking at, usually it's a particular granting agency or journal for a particular perid of time and you can kind of count up based on first names, making guesses about gender of authors, or grantees to try to get a sense of the gender balance. And that has been really important for establishing the imbalances in the field and it's also got some problems that a lot of the people doing this work readily acknowledge these days. Those of us working on it in recent years really understand that you can't always know someone's gender from their first name and that the idea is to get a sort of baseline rather than to try to identify every single person correctly, but it does exclude trans people in that you might get their, if they have a binary gender identification, you might get that correct, but you wouldn't know that they're trans. For non-binary people, they might not get counted, people with uncommon names might not get counted, people with non-english names. might not get counted, even if their names are very gendered in the language that the name is from if author of the study doesn't know that language, and then people with gender-neutral names in English, and so, it's limited in terms of knowing each individual person correctly, but you can get an overall baseline. And then the other limitation is that it isn't intersectional, because there's just no way to even make an educated guess about someone's racial Identity, or sexual orientation, or disability status, or class background from someones name. And so, you can't do that. And so, I set out to use a survey to actually ask authors of journal articles about some of those identities in order to look intersectionally. So I surveyed all the author's whose e-mail addresses I could find from 21 journals in a ten-year period and

wow

Yeah, there's a lot of Googling people looking for their email addresses.

#ResearchSkills

Yes, because some journals publish the email address of at least the corresponding author, but they don't necessarily publish other email adresses for everyone. Also people's email, addresses change. So, yeah, it was a lot and I found that although the gender numbers do look a lot better than they did in those earlier studies in the 80s and 90s. Back then a lot of the studies showed that grants and journal articles were about 70 percent men, 30 percent women and my number was more like 60/40, a lot of those women are straight white women. And so moving towards gender parity is obviously something to celebrate. That's great,

Baby steps

But that does not mean that we're moving towards diversity in a more holistic way. Like bringing more straight white women into the field is great, but it's not, we can't extrapolate from that that the field is also getting so much better on race issues or sexuality issues or anything else. It ss really just that's a single access gain that is happening yeah. And yeah, there are just endless connections

Sorry. Can I just break in really quickly? Can you tell our listeners kind of roughly the years that you were doing this research because obviously Covid has disrupted a lot of things and I've seen a lot of articles talking about how Covid may have exacerbated trends in males, publishing more than females with unequal burdens of care at home in this Covid year. So I want to make sure that we're very clear to our listeners about when we're talking about

Yes, definitely. So I started working on the project and designing the project in 2016 and the years for the articles that I was serving authors for were 2007 through 2016. I sent out the surveys in early 2017.

00:08:48   Emily

Okay. Thank you. That that helps a lot because that's a good thing to bring up Chelsi. Because yeah, who knows? If a study were done that covers the pandemic. I'm sure we'd see a drop. I'd imagine.

00:09:03   Laura

Yeah, and I believe that Lisa Overholser and Catherine Jalbert are working on a survey of Canadian archaeologists about that exact issue right now. They recently published something in American Antiquity about their research, on gender equity issues in Canadian archaeology and I have heard that their next project is about Covid. So cool future podcast guys.

00:09:30   Emily

Come on the show, but going back to your research. So what did you find then, since it was difficult to make the determination in terms of sexuality and race. What did you find once you started going in that direction?

00:09:50   Laura

Yes, so we as a field, certainly remain very white and very straight. And yeah, and so I was able to find that one of the sort of interesting things was that the more prestigious journals tended to not only be more male dominated, but more white-dominated and more straight dominated. And so I look at journal prestige using a few different metrics: h-index and sjr side journal ranked, as well as impact factor and for all of them there were strong statistically significant correlations between prestige and sort of domination by straight, white, cis men and so that was really notable. But I really also wanted to look at who studies which issues or uses which methods or studies which parts of the world and I hit some roadblocks in the dissertation research with that because the first way I tried to do that was I read all the abstracts of all the articles for which I had an author survey, where the author had chosen to fill in my survey and I tried to tag them based on regions, methods, and a list of sort of theoretical frameworks, but then I tested myself and picked a random sample to tag a second time. And I did not tag them exactly the same way the second time, which shows that I was not able to be super consistent and so this is sort of a problem in my dissertation but it's something that I've been working on since. So I'm now using some very basic text analysis just in Excel actually, just like searching each title and abstract for lists of different keywords that I've written that are associated with different methods or regions. So, for example, I have a list of countries in Africa and I have Excel search all the abstracts for any of those countries. And if one of the names of the countries pops up it flags that abstract as yes Africa, then I've had to deal with the fact that there are

a lot of words that have M-A-L-I, so mali in them so that I could remove all the things that say formalize,. t's not the same as Mali. So that's been a little bit of a [laugh] at least it's internally consistent.So I'm working on an article right now and it looks like gender and race and sexual orientation of authors are all significant predictors of where in the world people work, where people fieldwork, which makes a lot of sense to me. Actually gender is the one that's most surprising to me there. Race doesn't surprise me at all, because it's historically, the colonialist history of archaeology has been full of white archaeologists from North America and Europe, studying other people, but then, I mean, it seems pretty evident that a lot of people from other countries study their own country's history, mostly, and even that a lot of archaeologists of color, within the United States that I know, are studying either the countries that their families immigrated from, or the communities that they're descended from. I mean, obviously, not a hundred percent, but that seems to be the overall trend. And that's something that a lot of my interviewees of color talked about in interviews as well,

00:14:18   **Chelsi**

That also happens. So, I'm very white, you know, but I chose to do my research on Scandinavia, which is where my heritage is from, mind of might point to some more interesting like wanting to understand where you're from and what that that means. And I also will say I'm not super surprised to hear that there's a difference in gender and where people study because there are certainly places I would not want to study just from like almost as a safety perspective, or a concern about local cultures not respecting me and not respecting my authority.

00:14:57   **Laura**

Yeah, I think that's true also for sexual orientation issues. Going to the field can be really fraught for queer people in terms of safety and degree of being out and to whom you come out. And so, I think that, I mean there's some parts of the world where being gay is a crime, so that of course is an issue but it's also it's not that the United States for example, where I'm from is so great on sexual orientation. There are many states in this country where I could legally be fired or evicted for being gay under state law. So it's not like the US is so great. But there's something about going to a different cultural context where I can sort of guess in the US who's gonna maybe not approve of me being queer and who is. And I can like hang out in my little progressive bubble of academics and activists and have no problems, but when I go to another country I just can't necessarily read as well who's going to be okay with things and who isn't. And so yeah, it's definitely a concern for going traveling to different places. And then I think that there's also... communities develop in different subfields where you get to know a mentor who's either queer themself or is like accepting of of you and then you like, go and work where they work. And you're more likely to want to keep working in a particular place if you have a sense that you're accepted in that community. And so I think like

pockets develop in different places that then encourage people to, with particular identities to continue working in those places

00:17:20 **Emily**

that make sense, it definitely makes sense, and I'm sure the surrounding environment on so many levels makes a difference and I know you're saying even in the United States and it's like all the stories started popping up in my head of like, oh, yeah, that's when I was on a crew with all men and man that was not fun and just different things like that where it makes sense that you get these little bubbles and pockets of safe spaces and it's a shame we don't have all pockets, it's not a pocket, it's a full dress, you know.

00:17:56 **Laura**

Yeah, and I think that's what we need to work for is making the pockets bigger and bigger until they take up the whole outfit.

00:18:03 **Emily**

Exactly. Pockets are great but we could make them bigger

00:18:10 **Chelsi**

Pockets are never big enough. Never

00:18:13 **Laura**

Especially those marketed to women.

00:18:15 **Emily**

Exactly. We need a whole handbag, a satchel.

00:18:18 **Laura**

Or like a backpack

00:18:20 **Chelsi**

What we really need is those like, you know, I think it's 1700s. Sorry. I'm not a clothing historian. But when you had the panniers and like, they're just like giant bags on your side.

00:18:34 **Emily**

Yeah, that's all we need. A giant bag that can tie to your waist of inclusive, inclusive tivity,

00:18:40 **Chelsi**

Right? An inclusive dress.

Yep.

00:18:46   Chelsi

Anyway, on that note, we have hit the end of our first twenty minutes of recording. So we will be back after the break.

00:18:56   Emily

Hooray.

00:19:04   Chelsi

Hi everyone, and welcome back to the Women in Archaeology Podcast. On today's episode we're joined by Laura Heath-Stout. In the first segment we talked a lot about her research on differences in sex, sexual orientation, gender, and race when it comes to publishing and articles. For this segment we're going to talk a little bit more of some of the results that she had from that survey and transition a bit more into looking at disability as an aspect of an intersectional identity as well. So, Laura, I know that in addition to doing this qualitative, sorry quantitative study on journals you also did some qualitative interviews. Was there anything there that you found particularly surprising? Or that you weren't expecting to come up that did?

00:20:06   Laura

Yeah, I mean there's a, there's a lot. So for my dissertation, I did 72 interviews. I was aiming for between 50 and 60 but there were a bunch of people who said, "yeah, you could interview me, how about at next SAA", and I said, "yeah, sure." and I expected some of them to flake out and then none of them did. And so I ended up doing like, 14 interviews that one SAA. That one year it was really a lot. So I ended up hitting 72 and then I've been expanding the study for the book project and have done about 30 more interviews. So I've got a lot, there's a lot there.

00:20:51   Emily

Just a poke in real quick. What is the book going to be called? And where will it be available?

00:20:58   Laura

It is called Identity, Oppression and Diversity in Archaeology: Career Arcs and it is under contract with Rutledge. They're doing a new archaeology of gender and sexuality series that's being edited by Pamela Geller. And so it's going to be in that series, but I have another year to write it. So it's going to be awhile.

00:21:25 Emily

No worries. We'll just have to keep it on our radar.

00:21:30 Laura

Yep. So for the future and perhaps someone will be listening to this podcast a couple of years from now and it will be out.

00:21:40 Emily

Excellent. Yeah, sorry for interrupting, but please continue.

00:21:43 Laura

Yes, so my original dissertation interviews really focused on gender, race, and sexual orientation. And one of the really interesting things that I found was, I started every interview with the same question, which is "how and when did you decide to become an archaeologist?" And I sort of thought that that would just be a nice opening question. Pretty much everyone has been asked that question before and so people will have a ready answer and so it'll help establish a rapport with me and the interviewee and make everyone comfortable and get us started and it ended up being such an interesting question to analyze the answers of in a way that I didn't expect.

00:22:36 Emily

It wasn't all Indiana Jones?

00:22:37 All

[laughter]

00:22:37 Laura

There was a fair amount of Indiana Jones in there, but one of the things that I noticed was I think that there are a lot of archaeologists who are like me in that, they have, like a cute story of being a kid and wanting to be an archaeologist. And that's actually a moment interviewees, there was actually a bigger group who decided to become an archaeologist once they entered college and like had no interest or no knowledge, really of archaeology before that. And a lot of those people, even though they were in the majority of my interviewees. When I asked the question, they said, "oh well, I don't have a cute story like everyone else of when I was I the precocious kid who was really into archaeology, but I went to college and I was interested in majoring in something else and then I took this class as a general education requirement and it was really amazing and I got into it" or "my friend or my roommate took this class and said, oh you have to take a class with Professor so-and-so" or there was one person who there was like a straight of mix-up and they were supposed to have

a work-study job in some other like science lab, but then there was an admin mix-up and they ended up having a work-study job in archaeology lab. And so these sort of serendipitous feeling encounters with archaeology in college were more common, but so many people were sort of self-conscious like, oh, well, I didn't, you know, I sort of got into it late, when I was 18, which is kind of funny,

00:24:30   **Emily**

Sooooo old

00:24:36   **Chelsi**

I mean that was me.

00:24:38   **Laura**

There were actually, yeah, it's actually really common and so. But there's some race and class related dynamics there, where a lot of us who have these precocious kids stories, part of that story is either of vacation to some archaeological site or Museum visits with family or some incredible social studies teacher in school and all of those can be related to class. Not that people from lower or working class backgrounds never take vacations, or never go to museums, and not that teachers working in under funded schools aren't incredible, but rich people have more time and money to go on vacation and take their kids to museums and well-funded, public schools, and private schools give their social studies teachers a lot more freedom of what to teach, give their teachers in general, more freedom of what to teach because they're less beholden to standardized tests. And so, on average rich kids are more likely to encounter archaeology before college. And I found this actually kind of counterintuitive because I think of college as such an exclusive space that it seemed to me like, you know, college shouldn't be the great recruiting ground for marginalized archaeologists because who gets to go to college?

00:26:24   **Emily**

Suprise

00:26:30   **Laura**

But it does seem to be that way. And so yeah, and so I found that really interesting and it made me much more aware when I do tell my story of being a precocious little kid, it makes me very aware of how much my class privilege was part of that story in a way that I don't think I was before. I don't think I had really thought about the fact that my parents, you know, had professional salaries and weekends off and that was part of how they were able to, I grew up in New Jersey and they would take me into New York City to go to the Museum of Natural History or the MET. And like, if my

parents had been working three jobs minimum-wage, they would not have been able to do that as often, even if they have inclination

That is areally good point.

00:27:27   **Laura**

Never mind the vacations that we took. I mean, we took a lot of vacations that had a lot of like educational content to them, a lot of historic sites and things like that. And so that's expensive and requires, like my parents are both educators, so they had flexibility in the summer. I don't want to say summers off. They worked a lot during the summer, but they weren't actively teaching, they were preparing to teach for the fall. And so they were able to take a two-week vacation in the summer in a way, that a lot of people just can't.

00:28:02   **Chelsi**

Yeah. So I also thought the point you made earlier about colleges being privileged spaces, which they definitely are, and as more and more archaeology jobs require a undergraduate degree, at the very least and some even a master's degree, that you are really limiting your pool of potential archaeologists and different viewpoints from which one can view the past by putting that requirement in.

00:28:41   **Emily**

Mmmhmm.

00:28:41   **Laura**

Yeah, and I think field schools are also a problem here because, much as college is terribly expensive in the United States and we don't have nearly enough financial aid available. There are systems for financial aid, no matter how flawed they are and there are, you know, community colleges and public universities that are somewhat more affordable. But with field schools, I actually wrote an article, I co-wrote it with my friend Elizabeth Hannigan, who did her undergrad degree at Boston University, when I was there doing my PhD, and we wrote a paper together that's been published in Advances in Archaeological Practice about the cost of field schools. And so it was for summer 2019 I believe, we gathered all of the field schools that were on the Archaeological Institute of America archaeological, ummm, archaeological fieldwork opportunities bulletin, that's what it's called. And also any that we heard about or were sent through chain letters or saw on social media that year being advertised and we found that the, sort of

00:30:04   **Laura**

normalizing for like length of time, the average cost of a four-week field school, including college credit, is over four thousand dollars and that doesn't include airfare and that doesn't include lost wages. And so we were sort of thinking like that's not even the whole cost because if you go on a 4-week field school in July, it's going to be really hard to get a job for June and August, like who wants to hire a college student for the summer, but they're gone for four weeks. And so..

00:30:41 **Chelsi**

I think some of that ties into, a lot of field schools use the tuition to, to fund the program essentially because it's not well funded through, through the university. And, I mean, talking about field schools, it just reminds me of having conversations with some of my own students and seeing conversations that were happening on Twitter, blog posts, Tik-Tok, what have you, about you archaeologists with disabilities, visible or invisible and the difficulties of maybe needing an interpreter but not knowing that you're going to need an interpreter because you sight read really well, or lip read really well, but then you get there and the person who's explaining is looking down at the dirt and you can't see their lips and then not being able to find someone who speaks or signs the same language as you do, particularly if you've gone to a foreign country so, there are all these additional barriers that are put in place if you have either visible or invisible disabilities.

00:31:59 **Laura**

Yeah. So like I said, I've been expanding this study to include ableism and classism more directly and part of that is that even in my first interviews where I didn't have any, you know, prepared questions about disability, there were a handful of interviewees who brought up disability issues in their interviews and accommodations and so I got really interested in that. I'm disabled myself, but in a non-apparent or invisible way. People don't necessarily know that I'm disabled, unless I tell them and my partner is a disability rights organizer. So, you know, I would say coming to an identity or a political disabled identity over the course of this project. Anyway, and then yeah, and so then disability was like, starting to come up and I realized, you know, I really need to think about this more and so I interviewed a bunch more archaeologists specifically about disability and ableism for the book. And I mean one thing that surprised me was just how easy it was to recruit archaeologist with disabilities to

00:33:25 **Emily**

We're out there

00:33:27 **Laura**

and I just thought, I thought it was going to be hard to find people and it was not at all. So, I sort of put the word out. I had posted in a bunch of Facebook groups and on Twitter and I also asked all of my interviewees from the dissertation, from the first round of interviews. I said, if you have a

disability and you want to talk to me more and tell me about that I'd love to hear from you. And if you have colleagues who are disabled would you be willing to forward them an email from me asking them if they'd be interested in being interviewed? And it was just super easy. Like I was just flooded with messages. And so that was really interesting and it just made clear to me how many of us there are. There are so many of us. And there are people with visible or apparent disabilities as well. It's not just invisible disabilities. But so many of us are sort of passing as non-disabled a lot of the time and I think partly that's a sign of how ableist the discipline is that it's very difficult for archaeologists who present as obviously disabled to get into the field at all and part of it

00:34:46   **Emily**

Why do you think that is?

00:34:49   **Laura**

It's partly our emphasis on field work honestly

00:34:53   **Emily**

The physicality

00:34:53   **Laura**

on the physicality of fieldwork. I think archaeologists, we often are really proud of being like, field workers and like we climb the mountain and carry the heavy buckets. In fact, buckets have come up. It's a really interesting. So I had all of these interviewees in the like first round, a whole bunch of women, interviewees brought up carrying buckets, and having buckets and other heavy objects taken out of their hands by men as a common sexist microaggression happening in the field. And there was a lot of, like, "I'm an archaeologist. I can carry my own buckets" which I have felt myself. So when I worked in Mexico, there was a worker on the project, so I was working on a project run by the The Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia which is a government agency in Mexico, and so it was like a mixture of Mexican archeologist, Mexican archaeology students, a whole bunch of local hired laborers and then me and occasionally a couple of other like US grad, students, volunteering and participating. And so I would work with, there was this guy Wicho who's a like a local worker, who we worked together a lot and he was, he just took every bucket out of my hands with a smile, very friendly, but like he could not, I was not to carry heavy buckets and I found it like kind of sexist an annoying at first and so I was like I can carry my own bucket.

00:36:49   **Chelsi**

So on the bucket thing, I will both say that yes, I can carry my own damn bucket, but also as someone who is relatively short, a lot of the buckets I have to physically bend my arm to get them off the ground which means that I do have to actively use my biceps rather than just being able to

like bend my knees, pick it up and just kind of lock your arms out. So maybe we just also need some shorter buckets.

Yeah, and better handles.

Yes. oh better handles.

Yeah, and in Mexico, where I work, we were working during the rainy season because the, it's just the way the academic year shakes out. We, all the academics are available in the summer, which is rainy season in plus kala. And so, usually you get some multi-day rain storms, but mostly it's like every late afternoon, evening it rains. And so, you're digging mud in the morning. And we have these five gallon bucket that we're filling to the brim with like wet dirt. They're really heavy. They're so heavy. And so like I can carry it, but like it's actually easier for Wicho to carry it.

And well then that makes me wonder too, because I've worked with individuals who have the, and I apologize if this is not the correct term, a birth defect where their arm stops at a specific point. And so, how would they be able to pick up a heavy bucket and carry it? And I know there was a stigma against them because they were unable to carry it. But then it's like, why couldn't we then make accommodations to make it possible for them to have the bucket.

Why do we think that carrying buckets is essential? Like the, the center of, all of this feeling about competence and doing archaeological work. I mean, buckets need to be carried, that is like part of field work, buckets need to be carried. Someone needs to carry the buckets. The buckets need to be carried, but it's not actually essential that every person on an excavation carry buckets. And that's not the essential work of archaeology. The essential work of archaeology is interpreting the past through material culture. And in order for that to happen, someone needs to carry buckets, but we do not all need to carry buckets in order to be real archeologist. It's just unnecessary. So I think we need to open our minds about that.

Yeah, that is a really great point to end our second segment on. You know, let's get back to thinking about what are the essential tasks of archaeology, and who actually needs to carry the bucket. And

when we come back in our next segment, we will talk a little bit more about, you know, who needs to carry the bucket and what accommodations can be made.

Hi everyone and welcome back to the Women in Archaeology Podcast. On today's episode we've been joined by Dr. Laura Heath-Stout and at the end of the last segment, we were talking about how not everyone needs to carry the bucket. The bucket needs to be carried, but not by everybody, not by everyone. And so, when we move into this segment, we're going to be talking a little bit more about whose responsibility it is to make sure that the bucket is carried. What accommodations need to be made? What accommodations can be made excetera? So Laura to kick us off, when you were doing your survey with individuals who are disabled. Did they have opinions about, you know, who should be responsible for carrying the proverbial bucket.

00:40:50   Laura

Yes, definitely. And so part of how I approach all of this is that I look at archaeology using the social model of disability. And so the models of disability are different ways that disability studies scholars have come up with, to describe the different sort of common ways of thinking about disability in our society and so we have the medical model, which sees disabled bodies and minds as needing to be fixed but through medicine. We have the charity model, which sees disabled people, as sort of poor piteous victims who we should, we should pity and we should give give money to help them on a sort of individual level, because we as individuals feel bad. And then there's the social model of disability, which says that yes, many bodies and minds have impairments, but that the impairment itself is not a problem. And so, what's the problem is when society and institutions and communities are not built in ways that accommodate people with a variety of bodies and so a key example is glasses. Lots and lots of people in the United States today, wear glasses or contact lenses, because they have a visual impairment and we just don't see, you know, a slightly nearsighted person who's wearing glasses as disabled because it's like in our society, it's not actually a problem to have a mild visual visual impairment. I mean, glasses are expensive and that's a problem. But most people who need them, do actually have access to them. And so people just wear glasses and it's not, it's just not an issue and so they have an impairment, but they are not disabled by society because society has glasses and contact lenses. Now those could be more available of course, but

00:43:21   Emily

It's agreat analogy.

00:43:22   Laura

Yeah, and then another common example is curb cuts which are where a sidewalk will have like a little ramp at the corner that slopes down to the street. And so, those were advocated for by

disabled activists. And the idea is that someone who can't step up onto a curb or down off of the curb and is using a wheelchair perhaps, there's not actually anything wrong with their body. The problem is the sidewalk that has a step to get on or off of it. And so we could just build the sidewalk to have Curb cuts at corners. And then the sidewalks becomes accessible to the person who's using a wheelchair and those are also a good example of Universal Design because that also helps people who have a stroller or a shopping cart or anything else tha they're carrying, or people who are sort of temporarily disabled by an injury, and might be using crutches or a wheelchair for, like, a few weeks. They also benefit.

00:44:38 **Chelsi**

That's a really great point, that kind of accessible and inclusive design, benefits everyone.

00:44:46 **Laura**

Hmm. And so in archaeology, the social model of disability would say that it is the responsibility of field directors, archaeology projects, classroom teachers to make their their projects and classes accessible to people with disabilities. Now, of course, there are a lot of archaeological sites that are in remote places and on terrain where wheelchair accessibility would be very, very difficult. And we, you know, I knowledge that, but I think that there are a lot of disabilities that can be accommodated through a sort of flexibility. And so there are no, there no digs that I've ever experienced, where every single person does every single task. There are always people who are either have specialized skills or particular interests who are doing particular things, or even just seniority that like people who have been there longer are, maybe supervising and teaching a bunch of people who are newer and so we're always specialized. We're always collaborating. It is very, very rare that you have a dig where there's just one person doing it. I did hear of one through my dissertation, somebody who like went and dug some test pits all alone for her dissertation work, but it's like real rare, right? And so not, everyone has to carry the bucket. Not everyone has to do the paperwork. Maybe there's one person who's carrying the buckets and another person who's doing all the writing. And so, we can think more broadly than we usually do about which tasks different people are able to do and we need to be doing that in conversation with the people who are going to be doing them, it can't be based on assumptions. So there's a piece coming out later this year and on archaeological ethics, there's a chapter by Debbie Sneed and Mason Trader who both study disability in the past. They're both classical archaeologists and Mason has cerebal palsy, and he writes about his experiences being just like outright not accepted to field schools on the assumption that he wouldn't be able to participate

00:47:28 **Emily**

That's not legal. Right? I mean, it seems like that with ADA and everything, especially if they're getting, a lot of digs get federal funds too

00:47:40   Laura

It's no, it's definitely not legal. Yeah, in the United States you can't do that, but people do and yeah, and so he writes about also a really positive experience he had on a field school where the director reached out to him before the summer started, before the field season started and they had a whole meeting where they talked about, Okay, what are the different, there are like going to be different crews working on different parts of the site and like you know the kinds of tasks they're going to be doing. And here's the topography of this site and like which crew do you think it would make sense for you to be on? And what accommodations might you need? And because he had had that conversation, and the director continued I believe also to check in with him over the course of the field school about how it was going, he participated. Very successfully. And so he was put on the crew that, where like him just being able to like physically navigate to that area, was going to be easiest and navigate around that area was going to be easiest for him and it worked out. And so I think that there's a, if we approach running fieldwork, or lab work, or even classes in archaeology with that mentality, that it is the job of the leadership of the program to make it as accessible as possible that the problem is not this person has this disability. The problem is that the way we usually run digs is only designed for certain kinds of bodies and minds and with some flexibility and an open mind and asking questions, "well, can you do this? Can you do that?" that really a lot is possible.

00:49:44   Chelsi

So that's just basic human decency. You just like don't don't be an ass, for lack of a better word.

00:49:51   All

Laughter

00:49:55   Emily

It seems ike a lot of folks would not be willing to have that like conversation, like time is money or that kind of attitude. So I seems there needs to be an attitude shift as well.

00:50:07   Laura

Yeah. Yeah, and there are some really amazing examples. So there is a woman Theresa O'Mahony in the UK. She died a couple of years ago, but she founded the Enabled Archaeology Foundation in the UK and she wrote this guide that's free online. I can give the Women in Archaeology Podcast, folks the link to post about a guide to enabled archaeology where she wrote about all these different ways that you can accommodate people. She talked abou like taping trowels or spoons to people's hands if their hands are an unusual shape or they don't have a strong grip. She even has this

example of digging a ramp down into a trench for wheelchair users, which is a particularly ambitious one I think. It's kind of...

00:51:02   Emily

I mean it's a vertical, vertical, did it or what? Is it like a, what do they call the type of dig where you're digging against the hill as opposed to doing step. So why not

00:51:13   Laura

Yeah right. And so, yeah, and there's, there's some organizations that do archaeology with veterans that have been particularly cool about that. So there's a Nightingale Project in the UK and American Veterans Archaeological Recovery in the US, but I know that some of those folks who worked with Theresa, but there's a lot of possibilities there, where some of it is even just thinking about, like making sure that people have opportunities to take breaks and eat snacks and drink water. The American Veterans Archaeological Recovery when they do field projects, they have a mental health counselor on site the whole time with people, because a lot of the veterans who they work with, have depression, anxiety, and/or PTSD.

00:52:07   Emily

That would be such an asset on all projects,

00:52:10   Chelsi

Oh my god yes. Mandated water breaks, great idea.

00:52:13   Emily

Mandated water breaks and mental health checks. I love it. I love it.

00:52:20   Laura

And they also they have, they encourage people to, they provide like an occupational, therapist who will talk to people before the dig about what they're like, how to dig in ways that work for their body. And so the person I talked to who's a leader in this organization was saying, we think about disabled veterans as beling like people missing limbs, but a lot of people actually these days, veterans of recent wars just have like, chronic knee and back pain. Um, and so, a lot of it is about figuring out ways to lift things, or move in ways that don't exacerbate those issues and I thought, you know, a lot of archaeologists have chronic knee and back problems.

00:53:05   Emily

Exactly.

00:53:05 **Laura**

We can all maybe talk to an occupational therapist about like ways to move that don't hurt our bodies.

00:53:15 **Chelsi**

We mentioned, I can't remember whether it was earlier in a segment or in one of the breaks, but just kind of some of the issues with identifying archaeology solely as a fieldwork based discipline because there are sites that are, you know, not accessible. If you have to scale a mountain to get to them or, you know, rappel down the side of a cliff to get to them. I know some of the kind of recoveries from previous wars, planes end up in weird places that are hard to get to. But that's not all archaeology is. Archaeology is collections, archaeology is writing reports, archaeology is... you know so just this, this kind of idea of archaeology as only being fieldwork- shifting that might also help to think of Archaeologist as representing a more diverse population.

00:54:19 **Laura**

Yeah, and I was surprised by how many of my disabled interviewees with all different disabilities talked about the lab as being like a more accessible space to them. So let's see. So one of my interviewees is autistic and she talked about how like, just the way her mind works she does best in sort of like quiet spaces. That she's less likely to get sensorally overwhelmed, and that's more likely to work in the lab. Right? And that also she finds that the kind of like puzzle-like work of lab analysis is like something that she's really good at. So it's not even just that she gets overwhelmed in the field sometimes. It's that like she's especially good at certain kinds of lab work because of her disability. I had an archaeologist who's hard of hearing tell me that she found the lab more accessible also because it's more quiet, that she has trouble like having a conversation when there's a lot of background noise and sort of picking out the person who's speaking and also that she lip reads a lot and people are more likely to be like looking at you and talking in the lab, and so, in the field, she's constantly being like, "can you look at me. So I can read your lips." And yeah, people with mobility impairments. Often labs are either just like easier to physically get into or like, once you're there, you're sitting down. That's a big thing. There are people with, you know, allergies or chemical sensitivities for whom like the lab just because you're not moving around as much, if you I can get the space to work for you in whatever way that it just stays that way, you know, and you're not just like

00:56:24 **Emily**

So you just need to present that option as a more like, this is a huge [part of archaeology]. Pretty much like what is it? Like 20% fieldwork, 80% lab, paperwork, forms analysis.

00:56:36 **Chelsi**

How many abandoned collections are there right?

Emily

MmmHmm.

Laura

Yeah, and we are just so, we're so field focused as a discipline. And I think we really need to let go of that because they're all different kind of collections that need to be studied and, you know, not everybody has to go to the field or go to the field a lot. And even like, I think there's an interesting work of fieldwork being rethought as well. I think about Sara Gonzales work where she does catch and release survey where they look at service collections and then, you know, document them in the field or document them in the lab and then return them to the places that they were from. I just think there's so much creative work going on right now to like rethink what archaeology is and make it more inclusive.

Emily

So in terms of like a general call to action, what can we do to be more supportive as a field? And then what kind of organizations are out there for those who may identify as a disabled archaeologist?

Laura

Yeah, so I think that. So, there are some really cool organizations based in the UK. There's the Enabled Archaeology Foundation. And then I have been involved in founding of the Disabled Archaeologists Network.

Emily

Wonderful

Laura

It is brand new this spring and it's all archaeologist with disabilities, but undergrads through retirees and people with all different kinds of abilities, learning disabilities, mental health disabilities, any kind of disability, chronic illnesses, as well as things that are more sort of obviously norm of disability. And a lot of us are in the US. But we also have folks in Canada, the UK and other parts of Europe who are involved. And so I will share the link to join or request to join our Gogle group and our Facebook group to get publicized by the Women in Archaeology Podcast. And yeah, and so we're doing a mixture of, we're thinking about what we want to do still. We're a brand new organization, but we're thinking about both sort of ways to support each other and ways to educate archaeologists more, broadly about accommodations and access. And also promoting archaeological

interpretations of the past that come from, that are informed by disability studies, especially in terms of sort of interpretations of disabled bodies in the past or bioarchaeology and institutions for disabled people in the past. We try to make sure that not all of that is coming from a medical model but that were, including sort of disabled voices in those interpretations

00:59:50   Emily

Absolutaly fantastic.

00:59:52   Laura

Yeah. So it's really, really exciting. And so I hope that people will get involved in those, in the Disabled Archaeologist Network or in the Enabled Archaeology Foundation.

01:00:07   Laura

And for everyone else I would just encourage you to think about if you're teaching, are you in touch with the disability office or disability, like, administrative folks at youruUniversity about how to be most accommodating to your students. If you are running a field school or a field project that isn't a field school. Are you proactively opening up conversations with everyone on your crew about what they need to succeed in the field. If you're running a lab, are you talking to the people that you're working with about how to make that lab comfortable and accessible to them? And we can I think all just by sort of asking those questions and keeping an open mind and being flexible, we can be more inclusive of archaeologists and there are just so many of us. There's so many of us and many of us are um, passing as non-disabled, people with chronic health conditions, learning disabilities, mental health disabilities. You may not realize how many of us there are all around you all the time, but archaeologists with disabilities are everywhere.

01:01:36   Emily

Exactly,

01:01:37   Laura

And there's probably someone with a disability on your group already, and if you don't know that, that may be a sign that you're not having those open conversations that you could be having. And so I encourage you to just try to widen your ideas about who needs to be doing what in an archaeological research context and see, see what you can accommodate. And keep your eye out for educational resources coming out of the Disabled Archeologist Network.

01:02:16   Chelsi

Yeah, I think those are all really great points to make. We are unfortunately at the end of our third segment, but Laura, thank you so much for coming on today. This has been absolutely fascinating

and we would love to get you back on in the future. Maybe when your book comes out we can do a promo episode

01:02:38 **Laura**

Wouldn't say know that

01:02:41 **Chelsi**

But seriously, this has been a phenomenal conversation and to our listeners, thank you so much for joining us for this conversation. We hope you have taken something away, some practices that you can put into your own life to make the world a better, more accessible place. If you liked what you heard today, please make sure that you subscribe on your favorite podcast platform. You can also follow us on Twitter @WomenArchys and you can email us at womeninarchaeology@gmail.com. Thanks so much until next time.

01:03:18 **All**

Bye.