Announcing Revisions to the SAA Style Guide

In December 2023, the Society for American Archaeology released an updated version of its “Editorial Policy, Information for Authors, and Style Guide for American Antiquity, Latin American Antiquity, and Advances in Archaeological Practice” / “Normas Editoriales, Información para los Autores y Guía Estilística para American Antiquity, Latin American Antiquity y Advances in Archaeological Practice” (hereafter style guide) in both English and Spanish. This document serves as both a policy guide for the Society and its editors and a traditional style guide serving authors and editors in preparing manuscripts for final publication. One style guide serves all SAA publications, and the guidance provided recognizes that archaeological practices vary across North and South America. The style guide strives to be a comprehensive reference for Society editors, to be a standards document for the Society and the profession, to ensure the quality of all SAA publications, and to reflect changes in the workflow and production of publications. The current update took place over two years and is the result of review by the SAA Publications Committee and editors, the SAA Publications Manager, and Cambridge University Press editors. We were assisted in our development of inclusive citation language by knowledgeable colleagues. The three major categories of updates include awareness of inclusive respectful publication practices, improved data presentation, and updates to journal submissions information, including a significant change in reference style. A number of minor updates have been made as well.

The style guide provides updated directions for respectful publication practices in a number of ways. Three new sections have been developed. The section on diversity and inclusivity in languages asks authors to be thoughtful about using language that might have implicit colonial bias and encourages them to be as specific as possible. It directs authors to take particular care in the categorization of people and the naming of temporal phases and the capitalization of names attributed to groups of people. The guide also asks for attentiveness and caution in the reuse of older wording and paraphrasing when older work uses biased language. The section on respectful terminology for the discussion of human remains asks that that respectful language be employed when referring to the remains of people and their belongings. A number of institutions promote cognizance of language in daily practice (Roberts Thompson et al. 2023; Watson et al. 2022). A third new section provides guidance for the citation of Indigenous and Traditional knowledge, allowing oral communications to be included in citations (McLeod 2021). Previously this form of knowledge was noted as personal communication, which meant it was invisible in citation analyses. Updates to existing sections of the style guide ask that authors be conscious of gendered language and use nonbinary language and ask that peer reviewers be thoughtful and deliberative in their evaluations. The style guide update also considered diversity among the example references provided.

The updated style guide provides more detailed instructions on data publication. Archaeological publication of Bayesian models in chronology studies is increasing, and the style guide provides expanded standards for publication. The section on mathematics and statistical copy has updated discussion about reporting probabilities and improves wording about metric measurements. Lastly, the style guide provides information about the proper use of supplemental materials and
encourages use of data archives as a more sustainable practice. All of this is intended to enhance the reproducibility of results.

Finally, the style guide has had a complete review by editors at the SAA and Cambridge University Press to bring updated submittal information to authors, including the proper order and sample text for newly required elements such as Funding Statements and Competing Interests Statements, guidance on AI-generated text, and new information on scope for each of the three journals including updates on word counts and numbers of figures and tables. A major change is in the formatting of references that is designed to save space and better capture metadata, a modification that may affect choices in bibliographic software and down-the-line users of SAA style such as other journals and private sector companies with report series. Attention has also been paid to providing authors with instructions for initial file uploads and final submission criteria.

The updated style guide is effective immediately. Click on the links to the English version and the Spanish version to download.

References Cited

