

# Three cool things about archaeologist Larry Zimmerman - Archaeology Review

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## 1) Archaeology of Homelessness

(<http://info.iupui.edu/news/page/normal/3736.html>): Zimmerman, along with student Jessica Welch, recently presented the findings of a study they completed which examined the material culture of the homeless. The presentation was at the World Archaeological Congress in Dublin, Ireland. The study was conducted near downtown Indianapolis.

What they found was that they can derive new information about the problem of homelessness, a contemporary issue in most cities in the world by applying archaeological methods to sites where the homeless congregated. From this information, Zimmerman posits that “[a]rchaeology can be a tool for making decisions, not just for understanding the past.”

“We found a large number of food cans. Most had been opened, often not very successfully, with knives or by banging them against rocks or even by heating them until the contents exploded. We rarely found cans that had been opened by a can opener. That made us realize that they didn’t have can openers, which must have been very frustrating to them,” said Zimmerman.

## 2) 2008 Peter Ucko Memorial Award

(<http://www.indiancountrytoday.com/global/34891559.html>). Zimmerman wasn't just in Dublin to present his findings on the archaeology of homelessness. While there, he received this award for his contributions to modern archaeology due largely, perhaps, to his work in Native American archaeology and the sensitivity and understanding with which he has approached archaeology.

The award is named after Peter Ucko, the founder of the World Archaeological Congress and "a British archaeologist who broke with tradition during the 1980s by instituting the participation of indigenous communities as part of the proper scope of archaeology." Zimmerman was nominated by four Native archaeologists, including Dorothy Lippert, a Choctaw and archaeologist with the Smithsonian Repatriation Office at the National Museum of Natural History.

“The award was very humbling, and it was gratifying to be recognized, but I have to admit that I can make no claim to planning much of what happened,” Zimmerman said modestly. “One of the best things to come from my work and that of other non-Indian archaeologists is that we helped younger Indian students understand that there were archaeologists who cared about more than science, that you could be an archaeologist and still be respectful of traditions. It’s nice to know I had a role in that.”

## 3) *Presenting the Past (The Archaeologist's Toolkit, V. 7)*

([http://www.amazon.com/Presenting-Past-Archaeologists-Toolkit-V/dp/075910025X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1227587028&sr=8-](http://www.amazon.com/Presenting-Past-Archaeologists-Toolkit-V/dp/075910025X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1227587028&sr=8-1)

[1](http://www.amazon.com/Presenting-Past-Archaeologists-Toolkit-V/dp/075910025X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1227587028&sr=8-1)). I read this book a couple of years ago and it really inspired me. One of the things I feel passionate about is presenting science, particularly archaeology and anthropology, to the public.

In this book, Zimmerman outlines the need to present archaeology to the public as well as how it can be done. Chapters include: Recognizing our Audiences, Choosing the Right Medium, Computers and Presenting the Past, Visual Archaeology, and From Presented to Printed among others. If you're an archaeologist and interested in presenting archaeology (or any science) to the public, then there will be something in *Presenting the Past* for you.

[W]e ... need to learn that archaeology can be a very cruel discipline. Like history, archaeology can literally undercut a people's belief system. Little wonder that many tradition-oriented American Indians despise an archaeology that sometimes seeks to debunk their origin stories. The problem, of course, is how to deal with archaeological interpretations about the past and our kind of "truth" versus a concern for people's feelings. That is no small matter!

We shouldn't have to dumb down everything we do so that it "sells" or makes people "feel good" about themselves. Rather, we had better figure out that just doing archaeological reports doesn't cut it if we want our publics to learn about, let alone buy into, our disciplinary views about the past. Worse, it may even alienate them if done without sensitivity to their concerns or needs.

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