Sustaining Open Data: Lessons from Open Context

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(Interview conducted by Andrew W. Kandel)

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In this interview, Sarah Whitcher Kansa, Executive Editor of Open Context, discusses the development of Open Context and aspects of its approach to data publishing. Open Context's granular approach to data means that each item resolves to its own unique URL and is linkable to related data from across the Web. This "one URL per pot sherd" facilitates research by allowing people to cite specific items in a database and recognizes the individual contributions of authors who described or analyzed specific items. Recognizing there is not a one-size-fits-all solution to data archiving and dissemination in archaeology, Open Context has taken a bottom-up approach, developing new functionality to meet the demands of data authors over time. Open Context's team works with data authors to clean and decode their data and add descriptive information about the intellectual context of the data creation. This additional work, along with annotating datasets to facilitate linked open data, ensures that data are more intelligible and useful to future users. Kansa also discusses the importance of supporting innovation and exploration in the growing ecosystem of data sharing and archiving, highlighting how the success of related programs benefit Open Context. She concludes by discussing the benefits of broadening the community of people who engage with datasets through improved data literacy and storytelling.

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