



Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Early Careers SIG: Writing a Conference Abstract



Don't be afraid to ask – There is no standard for abstracts and what is expected can change depending on the conference, journal, or department. Don't be afraid to ask for help or ask questions!


Why do I need an abstract? – Conference abstracts serve two purposes: to help organisers determine if your work is in the scope of the conference and it is the first introduction to your work in the conference program.

Your abstract should be simple and easy to read because it is what conference attendees will use to decide whether to come to your session or view your poster!

Basic Components – There are some basic components for writing an abstract: a good title and subtitle, your name and affiliation (where you study or work), your actual abstract which can be anywhere from 250 – 500 words long, and keywords. We'll include an example of what we are looking for in our conference on the next page.

Your Title and Subtitle – The title is the first thing people will read and is your first chance to grab the attention of the reader. Your title should be clear and concise, and your subtitle should give just a little bit more detail on our topic. It is important to know your audience; fun titles with puns and jokes can make your work sound more exciting but could also detract from your topic. Make sure your potential audience will understand the title and what your topic is about.

Name and Affiliation – The next basic part of your abstract is the author's name and affiliation. The format for this can change and sometimes conferences or journals will have forms for you to



fill in these areas. You should always include the main authors or presenters and their affiliations. Your affiliation is the place where you study or work and this should be done for each of the authors separately. Sometimes conferences and journals have specific ways of writing these which may include footnotes.

Abstract Body – The abstract body is the most important part of your abstract. This is where you explain your work, why it is important, and what it is about. Keep in mind your audience and the themes or sessions that you are submitting to and write a summary of your work that both the conference organizers and your audience will understand.

Stay within the word limit! Word limits are usually 250, 300, or 500 words for your abstract so you have to be clear and concise. Talk about the **main problem or focus**, the **importance of the problem**, and **your results or findings**. Not all work has to have a typical scientific result or conclusion. There are many theory and philosophy focused research topics you can present at conferences, but you should always include your **general aims, purpose** and your **conclusion or final argument**.

You do not need to cite sources in your abstract but like any academic or professional work, if you reference something you should cite it at the end.

Keywords – The last part of your abstract is to include keywords. This helps people quickly see what your work is about and also helps your work be found. Try to use words that are specific to your research but easy enough to search for, think of the types of words you would use in a Google search to find you and what you do.



ClfA Early Careers Conference Example (300 words)

Whither Archaeology:

How to Assess a Diverse and Varied Discipline

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Archaeology is a diverse and varied discipline that draws method, theory, and philosophy from a range of social scientific and natural scientific fields. Some believe archaeology is parasitical in its adoption of ideas while others view archaeology to be pragmatically omnivorous. Regardless of these views, the way the discipline has developed has resulted in countless, varied forms of archaeology. Each tradition of archaeology has developed to address unique goals, specific issues, or to overcome various hurdles, whether those be methodological, theoretical, philosophical, or external to archaeology: political, cultural, societal, and so on.

The question 'whither archaeology' cannot be answered nor can the state of such a varied discipline be assumed without first understanding how diverse archaeology is and its context. We regularly make discipline-wide assumptions like that of a science revolution or that archaeology is 'no longer the handmaiden of history or anthropology', yet there is no grounding for such arguments in a discipline where the basic definition of archaeology can differ from nation to nation, region to region, institution to institution, site to site, and from archaeologist to archaeologist.

This paper argues the need to better understand the context of archaeology, what do archaeologists do, not through philosophical or theoretical questioning but through actual surveys, systematic reviews, and, most importantly, international conventionality.

We cannot begin to question how science and humanities operate together without first asking how they are used by archaeologists. Are scientific tools like carbon dating, pollen, or isotope analysis, or even GIS used systematically across the discipline or are they used sporadically, and if so, how does that impact our understanding of archaeology as a science?

We must take time to better understand what it is that archaeologists do and how they do it before addressing and generalizing the state of a varied and diverse discipline.

(300 words). **Keywords:** Archaeological Theory; Whither Archaeology; Contextualization; Scientific Revolution; Multivocality in Archaeology.

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