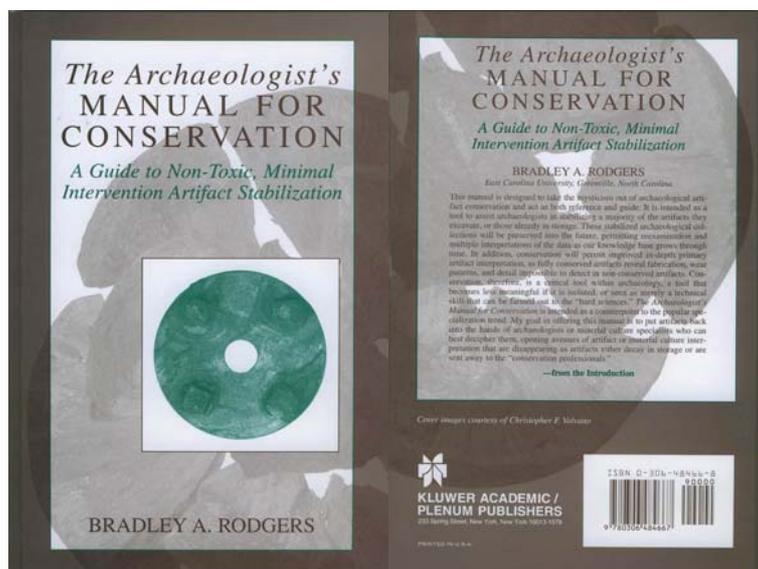


Rodgers, B. 2004. The Archaeologist's manual for conservation. A guide to non-toxic, minimal intervention artifact stabilization. – New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers

Book review by J. Trosper



Bradley Rodgers' new book 'The archaeologist's manual for conservation' is a valuable addition to conservation literature. Rodgers is a 'New world' archaeologist who has studied conservation, presumably through anthropology courses developed for archaeologists although he does not specify. He is also an archaeologist who has a strong bias against the conservation profession as an independent entity.

Rodgers has subtitled his book 'A guide to non-toxic, minimal intervention artifact stabilization'. Safety and simplicity are important goals in any aspect of conservation but become even more critical during field work where resources are often limited. The book is divided into chapters by material, following an initial chapter on setting up a minimal intervention laboratory. The book is written primarily for archaeologists working on marine sites although very general information is also provided for dry recovered artefacts. Many of the treatments assume the archaeologist has the resources to establish or to access a fairly elaborate laboratory, equipped with large soaking tanks for bulking of waterlogged wood and tanks, extensive reagents, and specialised apparatus for electrical manipulation of metals and their corrosion products. The information is sound, the bibliographies following each chapter extensive, yet I would question the minimal intervention paradigm in some of the treatments described. Rodgers (p. ix) disparages conservators "whose literature [is] dominated by theory with anecdotes from spectacularly difficult ostentatious projects," while at the same time describing complicated treatments with likely unfamiliar equipment and chemicals that only the most intrepid archaeologist would attempt without prior experience. His intent is a good one, to bridge the gap between theory and application, but the elimination of the specialist, *i.e.* the conservator, is both limiting and potentially risky to human and artefact.

Without question, much of field conservation can be safely conducted by trained archaeologists. However, those same archaeologists should possess the skill to recognise situations where a professional archaeological conservator also has a role. The preservation of the world's collective material culture does not benefit from the continuation of the archaeologist vs. conservator stereotype. Collaboration, sharing our various strengths, should be our direction.

Regardless of philosophical perspective, 'The archaeologist's manual for conservation' is a tremendous resource, providing current theoretical and methodological information, broken down by condition and treatment goals, for a wide range of artefact forms and materials.

Rodgers, B. 2004. The archaeologist's manual for conservation. A guide to non-toxic, minimal intervention artifact stabilization. – New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publisher. 214 pp. ISBN 0306484668. Price €85.00/\$94.00/£59.00 (hardback).