

# Summary of May 2019 Presentation by Nicole Lohman on “Rock Art Documentation Methods”

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Nicole Lohman, an archeologist who works for the BLM, was our May speaker. Nicole began her archaeological career with the Forest Service in northern Minnesota at the age of 14, participating in volunteer excavations through the Passport in Time program. She attended the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse for her undergraduate studies, graduating with a B.S. in Archaeological Studies in 2007. After graduating, she worked for a series of private archaeological firms and four National parks prior to attending graduate school. Her graduate research involved studying the efficacy of rock art documentation methods completed at Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona. Prior to joining the BLM Utah State Office, Nicole worked in the Price and Vernal Field Office and the National Historic Oregon Trail Interpretive Center in Oregon.

Presentation:

Comparison of the Efficacy of Four Rock Art Documentation Methods

In 2015 research was undertaken to examine the measurable differences among four methods currently used for documenting rock art images. A comparison of the variables of time to complete, accuracy, and perceived ease for each method revealed the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. This presentation discusses the findings of the research and provides an adaptable approach to documenting rock art based on an individual's time, available materials, and purpose of the documentation.

Why is it important to sketch rock art? First, it is an immovable resource. Secondly, because rock art is so susceptible to weather, global warming, acid rain, environmental impacts, and vandals; it needs a permanent way of preservation. Next, we need to preserve the history of rock art documentation by creating a data collection.

Garrick Mallery was the first to begin this type of work in 1892. His and other archeologists work was marginalized, and not much was done until the 1960's. They focused on direct contact methods which we avoid doing now. Some of these old methods included making molds of the rock art which, unfortunately, changes the rock chemistry. Chalking the image is problematic as it bakes into the rock. Using aluminum powder changes the chemistry. Putting water on the rock results in damage. Rubbings slowly wear the rock away.

Nicole used four methods to see which method was best, the most accurate and cost effective.

The Two Ruler method was difficult to do with one person. She managed to conduct ten tests, but she decided that it isn't a very accurate method and rated it a 4, with 1 being the best and 5 being the worst.

The String Grid method involves using a paper with squares (a grid). She would tape the grid up, but it would often fall, so it was very difficult to do. After conducting ten tests, she decided that this method didn't rate very high either.

Next, she did the Acetate Trace method. Here she took a photo, went home and enhanced it; then she returned to the site again where she traced the photo. Because she was at the site, she was able to make sure that she had all the detail. After ten tests using this method, she rated it a 2. It was easy

because she was tracing, but it did require two steps.

The last method was the iPad method where she did digital tracing using a stylus. It wasn't as accurate as the Acetate, but that was five-years-ago, and software is better now. Technology can be difficult when it's hot. Glare is a problem, and the iPad can overheat. This was the fastest method.

Her conclusion was that the best method was the Acetate Trace method as it was the most accurate. Nicole gave archeologists four different methods to use. Future researchers now have a standardized form. She says that more tests are needed because archeologists need this information and over the years minute changes will occur.