

## Harold Lewis Dibble

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In 1984, Apple Corporation played the now-classic commercial “1984” that introduced Macintosh computers. The commercial used as an analogy the destruction of an Orwellian-like dystopic world with the arrival of a form of personal computing that would from this point on increasingly become part of everyday life (Stein 2002). Themes promoted in the commercial were freedom and revolution. The timing of this commercial, and the revolution that it foregrounded, closely matches the date when Harold Dibble was hired at the University of Pennsylvania as an assistant professor (he was first hired there as a lecturer in 1982, then assistant professor, and was promoted to associate professor in 1991 and professor in 1996, becoming the Francis E. Johnson Term Professor in 2017). Harold’s approach to Paleolithic archaeology matched in many ways the revolution that the Apple Macintosh commercial sought to expound (although being Harold, and rarely conforming, he didn’t use Apple products at all, but was a supporter of IBM PCs).

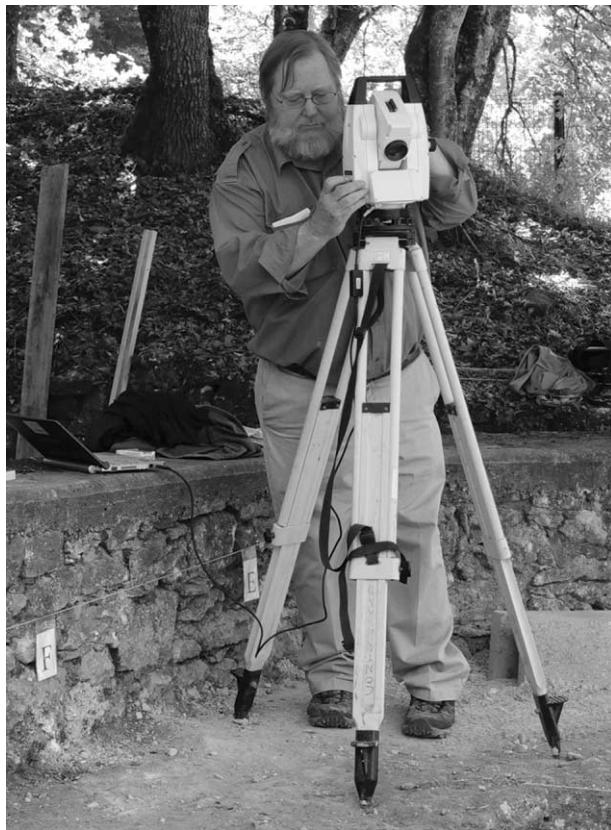
During the 1980s, he developed a counterculture to Paleolithic archaeology, which at the time was typologically driven, a world populated by what James Sackett (1982) referred to as the “journeyman” archaeologist—scholars who learned their trade by following the traditions of archaeology as taught by those who had the knowledge to correctly identify numbered artifact typological forms. Harold’s approach was strikingly different. His undergraduate studies at the University of Arizona (BA 1971) had progressed from liberal arts through humanities to mathematics before he discovered anthropology. He therefore came to archaeology with a set of skills in mathematics, statistics, and computer programming combined with an appreciation of the humanities that was rare in the 1970s. His skill set might today be labelled as Digital Humanities, and it allowed him to see things differently from his contemporaries. His graduate work and PhD dissertation were supervised by Arthur Jelinek, who had recently completed excavations at the very famous Tabun Cave in Israel. Harold’s 1981 dissertation was a quantitative study of flake form from Tabun, involving experimental flaking, a subject that he would return to beginning in the 1990s.

Shortly before his appointment as assistant professor at Penn, Harold published his first paper on scraper reduction (Dibble 1984). It was followed by a 1987 paper in *American Antiquity* extending the analysis. These studies split the Bordes versus Binford, style

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Harold Dibble operating an electronic total station at the La Ferrassie excavation in 2011 (photo by Shannon McPherron, reproduced with permission)

versus function debate apart, effectively making arguments on either side irrelevant. Moreover, in a way akin to the Apple Macintosh commercial's destruction of a dystopic world, Harold's scraper reduction papers took apart the previous domination of typology as the organizing methodology for the Paleolithic world. Also in 1987, Harold organized a conference at the University of Pennsylvania that brought together many of the leading European and North American practitioners in Paleolithic archaeology. I remember Bob Dyson, then the director of the University Museum at Penn, asking Shannon McPherron and I, both beginning graduate students with Harold, what we thought about the conference. We both enthused about the excitement of knowing that the ideas Harold was describing were on the cutting edge, pushing colleagues well out of their comfort zones, truly a revolutionary approach. Looking through the Google Scholar citations of those early scraper reduction papers, I am struck today by the continuing influence of Harold's studies. The seemingly simple observation (building on earlier observations by George Frison and Jelinek) that single-sided scrapers, double-sided

scrapers, and convergent forms might be representative of different stages in a process of resharpening has had a long-standing importance that belies the simplicity of the observation, an importance moreover that has extended into lithic studies from Paleolithic Europe through North America to Australia. Even now, when the longevity of academic papers is the subject of various metrics, the quantification of Harold's contributions stands out.

Harold taught his graduate students to measure artifacts, lots of artifacts. He taught us to analyze the data sets we acquired statistically, using inferential statistics to test hypotheses. An earlier generation of archaeologists had understood the utility of statistical analysis, but Harold linked this to the acquisition of large, structured datasets. In his computers-in-archaeology class in the 1980s we learned to construct databases (dBase III) and coding (in QuickBasic), writing elements akin to what he and Shannon McPherron were developing as NewPlot, software with many of the elements of a GIS that could be used to develop spatial databases during excavation of Paleolithic sites. Harold used total stations to plot the location of objects in three dimensions. This technology is nearly ubiquitous today in archaeology, but during the 1980s in Harold's excavations at Combe-Capelle Bas and La Quina (Dordogne and Charente, France) it was another form of computerized revolution. If Harold was not the first to use this technology in archaeology, he was among the very first. I remember watching senior Paleolithic scholars "checking" Harold's total station measurements with their handheld measuring tapes just to make sure that laser measurements were accurate. Harold recorded all artifacts and faunal material. NewPlot even allowed the recording of un-worked "rocks." His intent was to develop large, integrated databases that captured the totality of archaeological finds, but that could be analyzed rapidly and—with the publication of the Combe-Capelle Bas CD ROM containing the location, attributes, and measurements of the artifacts recovered—that could be analyzed by anyone. It is worth remembering that Harold published his data decades before the current drive to publish source data for analyses. And he did so in an academic culture in which excavation directors most often controlled access to excavation collections in ways that limited access and therefore the possibility of additional, innovative studies.

Harold also published monographic site reports. He was obviously not the only Paleolithic scholar to do so, but he was one of only a handful to publish the sites he excavated so rapidly and comprehensively. This matched his commitment to making data available to all. He could access thousands of records in the databases he created and therefore could (and did) share data with colleagues who wanted to understand the bases for his analyses. As with his total stations, in the modern context this may not seem so unusual, but 25 years ago using relational databases inspired his graduate students (including me) to take Harold's ideas and apply them in many parts of the world. We knew how to create large data sets and how to manipulate and analyze them thanks to Harold's vision.

Harold supervised (as chair) the work of 13 PhD students to completion, with two further students under his supervision at the time he passed away. He was a committee

member for a further seven students at Penn and an external committee member for 14 more. Many of us were foreigners who came to Penn to study. Harold was our academic mentor but also at times our life coach. Study at Penn meant adjusting to a new culture, an Ivy League university in a big East Coast city, so very different to many of our previous experiences. Harold was always generous with his time, listening to the difficulties we encountered and suggesting solutions. He socialized his students both academically and domestically. He organized sessions at the SAA meetings in which we were involved and he was a mainstay of the newly formed Paleoanthropology Society. He made sure that we were invited to the after-seminar dinners. He regularly had colleagues visit for seminars. At these occasions he entertained the visitors and students at his home. He co-published with many of us, beginning when we were graduate students. These experiences left lifelong impressions. For those of us who went on to have academic careers, Harold influenced the way we interact with our graduate students.

Harold's academic CV lists 11 books and monographs, five textbooks, a CD-ROM, and 182 journal articles, book chapters, and other forms of published scientific output. I imagine that these numbers will be augmented with forthcoming publications that will now appear posthumously. Nearly 80 of the articles and chapters appeared in the past 10 years along with four of his books and two of his textbooks. This reflects the multiple projects in which Harold was involved and the large, multidisciplinary teams that he helped organize. He was involved in many projects, some of them thematic, such as his interest in the use of fire; others reflecting his lifelong interest in stone artifacts, seen particularly in his experimental studies of flake formation; and others reporting on aspects of the sites that he excavated. He returned to his PhD studies involving experimentation, ultimately setting up the Laboratory for the Study of Ancient Technology at Penn, where he undertook fundamental studies on flake fracture. His monographs on individual sites covered his excavations at Combe-Capelle Bas, Fontéchevade, Pech de l'Azé IV (all classic sites in southwestern France), and Grotte des Contrebandiers (a.k.a. Smugglers' Cave, in northwestern Morocco). Harold is first author on some of these publications, but most often it is his colleagues (especially young ones) who lead the articles and chapters. This reflected his lifelong commitment to supporting the careers of his colleagues.

Harold undertook fieldwork in Morocco and Egypt, but he had a passionate commitment to the Middle Paleolithic archaeology of France, beginning with his participation at Pech de l'Azé IV under the direction of François Bordes. He directed his own projects in France beginning in the 1980s and had been scheduled to continue field-work there in the summer of 2018. His approach to Mousterian archaeology involved him in vigorous debates on the cultural capabilities of Neandertals, the significance of Levallois, Neandertal burials, and the use of fire, among other topics. In these debates, Harold often held the minority, antiestablishment view (another example of the analogy with the Macintosh commercial). He was a vigorous debater, as I remember recently from the workshops that led to the recent publication of "Major Fallacies Surrounding Stone Artifacts and Assemblages" (Dibble et al. 2017). I remember Harold as having a commitment to act as a critic and conscience in academic discourse, where he strove to

encourage creativity, to develop what at times seemed to be radical ideas, and where he criticized the status quo. And where his actions were intended to provide the freedom of information needed to express criticism. His far-too-early passing will be sorely felt by those who knew and worked with him. He is survived by his wife Lee and sons, Flint and Chip. (If anything, Harold Dibble was indeed overwhelmingly devoted to the subject of lithic technology!)

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