

Texas Beyond History

A Service of the Texas
Archeological Research
Laboratory at The
University of Texas at Austin

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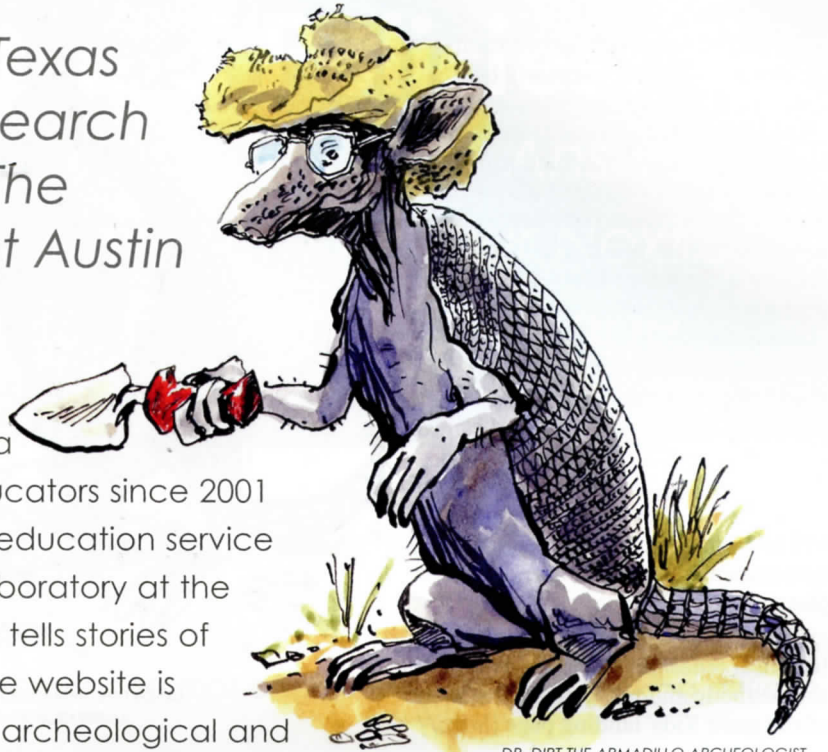
Texas Beyond History (TBH) has been a digital resource for social studies educators since 2001 (texasbeyonhistory.net). A free public education service of the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at the University of Texas at Austin, the website tells stories of Texas' 15,000+ year cultural heritage. The website is unmatched in its breadth of accessible archeological and historical information in the state and country. TBH has grown, page by page, kids' activity by activity, year by year, decade by decade, thanks to the great support of the Texas archeological community. Professional Texan archeologists continue to see TBH as *the* place to make their archeological and historical research accessible to the public—including school-age children and their teachers. In fact, four of the top five most-visited TBH pages are in our Kids' section! In 2023, TBH staff are revamping the websites' Teachers' and Kids' pages.

Since TBH first went live online in October 2001 the website has undergone several redesigns to keep up with changing technologies. The most substantial of these occurred in 2018, when a massive recoding project was undertaken to make the website mobile-device friendly and to cope with the demise of Adobe Flash, which was the backbone of TBH's more complex graphics and interactive activities. Five years later, the website again needs to be refreshed to continue to attract and grow website use by teachers and youth.

The work TBH staff are undertaking will bring K-12 content up to date with

changing digital technologies, user needs, and Texas education standards. To that end, TBH seeks your input! We have developed a short seven-question online survey to help guide the revamp—the overarching question is, “How can TBH better serve your needs as an educator and better engage your students?” If you are familiar with TBH, please take our survey here: shorturl.at/hwGL6

TBH's K-12 content is organized into seven main Kids' sections and includes 26 interactive activities and games (see <http://www.texasbeyonhistory.net/kids/>), and a Teachers' section with 53 unique



DR. DIRT THE ARMADILLO ARCHEOLOGIST.
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lesson plans and four multi-day unit plans (see <http://www.texasbeyonhistory.net/teach>). TBH lesson plans are based on archeological and historical scholarship and designed and written by professional educators to meet the objectives of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Social Studies, Art, Language Arts, and Math and Science classes. The majority of the lesson plans (43 to be exact) are in the subject of Social Studies. Including the multi-disciplinary plans that overlap several subjects, TBH has also developed 17 Math/Science lesson plans, eight Language Arts lesson plans, and seven Art lesson plans.

The upcoming Kids' and Teachers' revamp has two facets: (1) updating and expanding Kids' content, curricula, and Teachers' resources and (2) improving the technical functionality of the K-12 content. Extant lesson plans will be evaluated and revised under the direction of experienced Texas educators. Lesson plans may be altered to better conform to the most recent TEKS standards. Revisions to TBH lesson plans will incorporate more inquiry and critical thinking in place of superficial

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learning, which will better align them with the processing skills of social studies and the work of archeologists and historians.

In addition to revisions of extant content, new K-12 content will be developed. This will include a new Kids' interactive activity, "How Many Ways Can You Use Agave?," which will be analogous to the popular Kids' bison activity (<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/buffalo.html>). The bison activity is the most-visited TBH webpage, homepage aside, with over 21,000 views in the last year! Agave, like bison, was used in many different ways from food to fiber to ritual. Another planned addition is a Kids' activity or lesson plan to accompany the recently published Special Exhibit, "Radiocarbon Dating Understood." New Kids' illustrations will be created by artists to ensure the new content is stimulating and visually pleasing.

The second facet of the revamp, the technical redesign, will focus on updating the aesthetic and navigational function of the main Kids' landing page ([A cartoon illustration of a purple armadillo character named Dr. Dirt. He is wearing a yellow sombrero with a feather and glasses. He is holding a large green leaf in his right hand and a small white object in his left hand. He is standing on a patch of brown ground with some green grass.](http://</p></div><div data-bbox=)

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www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/) and the Kids' header (found at the top of each Kids' section page). The individual Kids' activities pages will also be improved with systematized navigation. Kids' and Teachers' pages will also be updated with new responsive web design coding templates to modernize the display and functionality of each page.

The Kids' and Teachers' website revamp is being funded in part by a grant from the Texas Preservation Trust Fund, through the Texas Historical Commission. Matching funds are from individual donors in the archeological community and TBH's sustaining partner organizations, including consulting firms and regional archeological societies (see texasbeyondhistory.net/abouttbh/partners.html).

What would you like to see on the new TBH Kids' and Teachers' pages? Let us know in the survey (shorturl.at/hwGL6) or email us your comments directly at emccuistion@utexas.edu.

Emily McCuistion is a professional archeologist and assistant editor at TexasBeyondHistory.net. Begun in 2001, Texas Beyond History's enduring mission is to share the results of archeological and historical research on the cultural heritage of Texas. 🇺🇸

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