

Monstrous images of the past: photorealism and non-photorealism in archaeological information work

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Abstract. We argue that archaeological visualisations of the past form together with their makers and spectators a cyborg. The aim of this article is to show how these cyborgs reside in a human-technology continuum and how the nexus of agency is shifting and can be (attempted to be) shifted from humans to technologies and back by appropriating technologies in specific ways in a social context. The findings show that a life-like photorealistic visualisation, as an example of an information technology, can be seen as monstrous if it is considered as imposed difficult to control technology that expropriates agency of human actors. In contrast, a non-photorealistic, less life-like visualisations can be seen as less monstrous because of their reminiscence of traditional illustrations and lower level of detail. Implications of the monstrosity of technologies for information work in archaeology, and for other social and technical information technologies including information systems, information services and information literacy are discussed.

Keywords: 3D, visualisation, archaeology, photorealism, non-photorealism, cyborg, hybrid agency, information work