

# CURATION GUIDELINES

## I. PURPOSE

The University of Alaska Museum (UAM) curates archaeological collections from state, federal, private and Alaska Native lands in Alaska for future research, exhibit, and instruction. When a collection is deposited at the Museum, UAM assumes a commitment to ensure the safe storage and availability for study and exhibition of that collection in perpetuity or to the extent allowed by an established agreement. In order to meet this commitment and comply with the requirements of 36CFR79 Curation of Federally-Owned and Administered Archeological Collections, UAM has formulated the following procedures and requirements.

## II. PROVISIONAL CURATION REQUEST

Professional and legal responsibilities require that the Principal Investigator (PI) must plan for curation of artifacts and associated documentation before excavation. Written permission from the proposed repository is required for permits issued under the Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA) and the Alaska Historic Preservation Act. The Provisional Curation Request form serves as the written permission from UAM to serve as the repository for collections contingent upon compliance with the UAM Curation Guidelines. Prior to designating UAM as the repository for an archaeological collection, the Principal Investigator must complete a Provisional Curation Request form. The Provisional Curation Request form should be completed during the planning phase of the project. Only one form needs to be completed per project. UAM will review the request and may approve or deny provisional curation. Reasons for denial of provisional curation typically include determination that the collection falls outside UAM's mission or UAM does not have the space or other resources to curate the collection. The Provisional Curation Request form notifies UAM of a potential collection, notifies the PI that they must comply with these Guidelines, and notifies the Permit Agency that UAM has agreed to serve as the repository for the collections. Unless otherwise specified by a Memorandum of Agreement, the PI is responsible for complying with these Guidelines, including the payment of Curation Fees.

### **III. AGREEMENT**

Any collection deposited at UAM must be covered by an agreement (Memorandum of Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding, or Trust Agreement) between UAM and the land management agency or landowner. This agreement establishes a curatorial partnership between UAM and the agency/landowner and details the responsibilities of UAM and the agency/landowner regarding any collections deposited at UAM. If an agreement does not already exist, one will be completed as soon as possible. The agreement must be signed by authorized representatives of the agency/landowner and UAM. In the case of collections from private land, a Deed of Gift must be completed and submitted with the Provisional Curation Request.

### **IV. CONSERVATION**

The conservation needs of a collection should be considered during the planning phase of the project. The PI should evaluate the potential needs of a collection and budget accordingly. Conservation may require a significant investment of time and money. Archaeologists in the field and in the lab can employ some preventive conservation measures, however, a professional conservator should carry out any conservation treatment. A collection must be in a stable condition and any necessary conservation treatments must be completed before a collection is deposited at UAM. Curation of the collection in perpetuity in a qualified archaeological repository is only the final step in a long-term conservation plan.

Artifacts must be cleaned before being deposited at UAM. The method and degree of cleaning should be appropriate for the type and condition of the artifact. In general, artifacts should be dry brushed only. Special consideration should be given to preservation of residues that might be useful for future analysis.

UAM does not have a conservator on staff but can provide limited conservation advice and direct archaeologists to conservators and references on archaeological conservation such as:

Scott, Rosalie and Tara Grant (editors)

2007 *Conservation Manual for Northern Archaeologists*. Revised 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

Available at: [www.pwnhc.ca/download/conservation-manual-for-northern-archaeologists/](http://www.pwnhc.ca/download/conservation-manual-for-northern-archaeologists/)

Sease, Catherine

1994 *A Conservation Manual for the Field Archaeologist*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Archaeological Research Tools 4. Institute of Archaeology, University of California, Los Angeles. Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Press, Los Angeles, CA.

Available at: [www.ioa.ucla.edu/content/conservation-manual-field-archaeologist](http://www.ioa.ucla.edu/content/conservation-manual-field-archaeologist)

## V. ACCESSIONING

Accession numbers are assigned by the Archaeology Collections Manager when notified by the PI that a collection exists and is ready to be cataloged. An accession number will be assigned to a collection recovered from one site during one field season. If a site is investigated during more than one field season, a new accession number will be assigned by UAM for each year's collection. If more than one site is investigated during one field season, a different accession number will be assigned by UAM for each site's collection. The PI should contact the Archaeology Collections Manager to receive an accession number. At the time an accession number is assigned, UAM will request the following information and register the accession in the Archaeology Collections Database and the Archaeology Accession Ledger:

- Site Name
- Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRIS) site number
- Principal Investigator
- Year of Investigation
- Project Name
- Sponsoring Organization
- Permit Agency
- Land Management Agency or Landowner
- Agency Unit
- a count or estimated count of the number of specimens in the collection
- an estimate of the cubic footage of properly packaged artifacts and documentation
- a summary of the collection

Accession numbers assigned to archaeological collections by UAM consist of three parts (e.g., UA2000-051). The letters "UA" (for "University of Alaska Museum") designate the curating institution. The first four digits are the calendar year of assignment. The second three digit

number indicates the position of the particular accession in the series of accession numbers assigned by the archaeology department for that year. The series of numbers from 001 to 050 is reserved for the use of the ethnology and history department in order to avoid duplication of accession numbers for similar collections; archaeology department accessions begin with series number 051. In order to facilitate location of the collection by future researchers, the PI should reference the accession number in site reports and documentation.

## VI. CATALOGING

Each specimen, sample, or lot of specimens must be assigned its own unique catalog number. The catalog number is a unique number that links the artifact to all associated information. The catalog number consists of the accession number followed by a four digit sequential number that identifies the artifact within that accession (e.g., UA2000-051-0001). The catalog number should be written on the white block portion of an **archival 4 mil zip-lock polyethylene bag**. It is not necessary to apply catalog numbers directly to an artifact. A group of similar objects of identical provenience can be cataloged together to simplify the process (e.g., "100 basalt flakes, Test Pit 1, 0-5cmbs"). All artifacts in a lot must be of identical artifact type, material, and provenience. Such a grouping is referred to as a "lot".

The purpose of cataloging is to produce an item-by-item record of the contents of an accession. The catalog will assist research by providing a convenient means of cross-referencing between documentary materials and specimens in the accession. Successful curation of the collection depends on the availability of a reliable catalog.

The catalog consists of a sequential list of entries in columnar format. Each catalog entry includes several fields of information; including the catalog number itself, which consists of the accession number followed by a unique number corresponding to the item's position in the catalog sequence. To illustrate, the first entry in the catalog for accession UA2000-051 would be catalog number UA2000-051-0001, the second UA2000-051-0002, and so on. Leading zeros in the catalog number are necessary to facilitate sorting in the computer database.

Other information recorded for each catalog entry is artifact description, provenience, and collection data. Artifact description fields will vary by project, but typically include formal or functional categorization (object name) and material type (e.g., stone, bone, ivory, etc.). If the item is cataloged as a lot, a count and weight must be included. In the event of number damage or of separation of unnumbered items from their labeled containers, the item description may be useful in the identification of specimens for which provenience might otherwise be lost. Measurements and photographs are also useful, but not mandatory.

The provenience-related content of each catalog entry is determined by the investigator's method of excavation and field recording procedures. Controlled excavation produces the most detailed provenience information, and generally includes grid square designation, position within grid square, elevation relative to a vertical datum, stratigraphic unit, and cultural feature.

Collection data such as excavator, date of collection, and field numbers should appear in the catalog and are useful for cross-referencing to field notes. A comments column is helpful for calling attention to distinctive features or unusual circumstances. Specimens used in destructive analysis should be cataloged and included in the collection catalog, even when completely destroyed in analysis. Should charcoal or other samples be submitted for destructive analysis, a note to that effect should be entered in the catalog. As a general rule, care should be taken to ensure that provenience recorded in the catalog is as clear, concise, complete and reliable as possible.

An Excel version of the catalog must be submitted to UAM electronically prior to deposition of the collection. An Excel version of the catalog on a CD or flash drive must be deposited at UAM in addition to the hard copy of the catalog list. This allows UAM to directly import the catalog data in to our Archaeology Collections Database. In order to make it easier for the catalog to be directly imported into the database, UAM has created a catalog template. UAM requests that this catalog template be used whenever possible.

**The following fields are mandatory for the collection catalog:**

Accession Number

Catalog Number

Object Name

Material Type

Provenience

Field Number (when applicable)

Excavator

Date of Excavation

Lot Count (when applicable)

Lot Weight (when applicable)

## **VII. NUMBERING**

The complete catalog number, including accession number, must be applied directly on the white block portion of the artifact bag. It is no longer necessary to directly apply catalog numbers to individual artifacts. It is recommended to use artifact bags with white block, but in cases where it is not possible an acid-free paper label should be included inside the bag with the artifact. Never glue tags or labels directly to an artifact or specimen. Information on each artifact label should include catalog number, artifact name, AHRIS number, site name, provenience data, and lot count (if applicable). Paper labels should be on acid-free archival paper and written with **archival black ink** or printed on a **laser printer**. If the artifact is likely to damage the label, then the label should first be placed in its own polyethylene bag before being placed in the bag with the artifact. In all cases, the outside of the artifact bag or box should also be labeled with the artifact catalog number. Never apply nail polish and/or white-out to an artifact or specimen. These materials are not archival and will degrade quickly over time. They will split and peel off the artifact taking the catalog number with them.

## **VIII. PACKAGING AND LABELING**

Most archaeological specimens can be stored individually in an archival 4mil zip-lock polyethylene bag with white block. This is the standard, default storage for archaeological specimens. Store each artifact in an individual **archival 4 mil zip-lock polyethylene bag** and

write the artifact number on the white block of the bag with a **black Sharpie marker**. Artifact numbers and other information not written on the white block of the plastic bag will rub off. Individual flakes in a flake lot should not be individually bagged. Soil samples, faunal remains and other bulk samples should be double bagged with an acid-free paper label facing outward between the two bags. **Bulk samples must be completely dried**. If more than one bag is needed for a single cataloged lot of specimens, then the bags should be labeled “1 of n, 2 of n, etc.” Radiocarbon samples should be stored in an aluminum foil packet and then placed in an individual archival 4-mil zip-lock polyethylene bag.

Some specimens can not be stored in zip-lock bags. Fragile objects requiring more protection can be placed in an archival box with a layer of archival foam on the bottom. These can be purchased or custom made. Artifacts may need to be padded with archival foam or tissue paper. Artifacts that are too large or odd-sized to fit in a bag should be containerized in an archival box. Some artifacts may be too large to be containerized in an archival box. UAM should be contacted to arrange for curation of exceptionally large artifacts.

Artifacts must be packaged first by project, then by site, then by artifact class and/or material type (e.g., stone, bone, metal, wood, ceramic, soil samples, faunal material), and then numerically by catalog number. With larger collections it may also be necessary to sort artifacts by intra-site provenience after sorting by site. Artifacts of the same artifact class and/or material type require similar physical and environmental storage conditions. Therefore, storing artifacts in numerical order by artifact class and/or material type allows UAM to efficiently use storage space, easily retrieve artifacts for future analysis, and provide optimal preservation conditions based on the requirements of the material type.

Pack artifacts in **12.5”W x 15”L x 10”H** or **6”W x 15”L x 10”H Hollinger acid-free Records Storage Boxes with separate lid (item 10760 or 10755)**. Use half boxes for heavy specimens such as soil samples or large cobbles. Pack heavy materials on the bottom, under lighter fragile materials. Box weight must not exceed 50 lbs. Each box must contain an inventory printed on acid-free paper, keyed to the master catalog list by catalog number. Label each box with accession number, AHRs number, site name, artifact class/material type, and box number.

Number boxes continuously for the entire collection. Do not start over for a new material type or artifact class. Hollinger Metal Edge brand inner packing boxes or trays with dividers can be used to separate and protect artifacts within the boxes. Inner packing boxes can be used alone to package smaller collections that do not require a standard or half size Hollinger box.

Artifacts requiring conservation treatment may need to be housed according to special conditions determined by a conservator.

### **Label Examples**

#### *Label for Paper Tags*

Catalog Number	Example UA2000-051-0001
Object Name	Flake Lot
AHRS Number	FAI-00001
Site Name	Campus Site
Provenience Data	N13/W10 Level 1
Lot Count (if applicable)	n=5

#### *Label for Accession Boxes*

Accession Number	Example UA2000-051
AHRS Number	FAI-00001
Site Name	Campus Site
Material Type	Lithics
Box Number	Box 1 of 5

#### *Label for Records Boxes*

Accession Number	Example UA2000-051
AHRS Number	FAI-00001
Site Name	Campus Site
Document Type	Field Notebooks, Excavation Forms
Box Number	Box 1 of 2

## **IX. DOCUMENTATION**

Collection documentation is equally as important as the artifacts themselves. The documentation holds all of the significant information about the artifacts. Documentation provides the ability for future researchers to reconstruct the original context of artifacts. This information is not only contained in the individual documents but also in the relationships between documents. It is important to preserve collection documentation and maintain the link between the artifacts and

the documents. All documentation must accompany the material collection when it is deposited at UAM. Documentation may include, but is not limited to, field notes and notebooks, maps, photographs, analysis notes, radiocarbon reports, collection catalog, and final report.

Documents should be stored in archival letter or legal size 1” full tab reinforced file folders and organized in records groups according to the basic principles of provenance and original order. Records from a single project should be stored together. If the documents relate to more than one collection of artifacts, all documents should be stored together. Documents relating to a single collection should be grouped together when possible. Records from separate projects should be stored separately. Records from the same source should be stored together. In all cases, records should be stored according to the original order in which they were created and used. When possible, records should be stored together by type (field notebooks, maps, photographs, etc.).

All documents must be printed on **archival bond paper** whenever possible (e.g. collection catalogs, final reports). Copies of important documents must be made on archival bond paper and included in addition to the originals (e.g. field notebooks, radiocarbon reports). Records should not be stapled together. It is preferable to simply place documents in an archival folder and separate with interleaved sheets of archival bond paper. If necessary, it is preferable to secure documents together with stainless steel or archival plastic paper clips that will not rust or damage the paper. A 1” x 3” strip of archival bond paper must be placed under the paper clip to protect the documents.

Folders should be labeled in pencil along the tab with a folder title describing the contents. If the documentation consists of more than one folder, documents must be placed in one of the following document storage containers before being deposited at UAM.

Hollinger Document Case with Hinged Lid and Pull String

Item 10390AB Letter Size 2.5” width

Item 10370AB Letter Size 5” width

Item 10380AB Legal Size 2.5” width

Item 10360AB Legal Size 5” width

If any documents are larger than legal size, they are considered oversize documents. UAM should be contacted to arrange for the curation of a large number of oversize documents.

Oversize documents should be placed in an archival map folder or archival box and stored flat whenever possible. UAM has limited map case storage space for housing oversize documents with dimensions up to 31" x 43". In the case of a large number of oversize documents, they should be rolled and placed in one of the following map boxes before being deposited at UAM.

Hollinger Metal Edge Roll Storage Container

Item 5530                    4"x4"x30"

Item 4445                    4"x4"x25-45"

**The following documents must accompany each collection:**

- An inventory of all records included with the collection.
- A catalog of all recovered artifacts in both hard copy and excel format on CD.
- A copy of the project's final report.
- A copy of all permits associated with the project
- A statement describing any laboratory and field procedures used on artifacts in the collection, and a description of lab coding formats or any other type of analytical records used in the analysis of the collection if applicable. This includes, for example, details on field procedures and materials used in cataloging the collections.
- A report of any analysis conducted on the artifacts (e.g. reports from radiocarbon dating)
- If any artifacts required conservation treatment, the records must include a list of conserved artifacts with a description of conservation treatments and the name of the conservator.
- If any specimens were used in destructive analysis, the records must include a list of those specimens used in destructive analysis and such specimens should be cataloged and included in the collection catalog, even when completely destroyed in analysis.
- If the records include photographs, the collection must contain a photograph catalog. Photographic materials should be organized by media type (e.g. black and white, color, roll film, sheet film, slides, video, computer disk). All photographic materials should be produced and stored as archivally as possible. All photographic materials must be stored in polyester film sleeves and then placed in archival folders or binders as appropriate. Black and white negatives should be printed on **archival, rag-base paper** and processed archivally. Undeveloped film should not be included.

## **X. DELIVERY**

Collections should be deposited at UAM within one year from the date an accession number(s) is assigned. One-year extensions may be granted for a total period of up to three years unless other arrangements have been made with UAM. After this time period, the collection may be subject to revised Curation Guidelines and fees. The PI must contact UAM to schedule a time for delivery of the collections. A copy of the final report and collections catalog must be submitted electronically prior to deposition of the collection. UAM requires at least two weeks notice if the collection is hand delivered and thirty days if the collection is sent through the mail. **Collections should be hand delivered whenever possible.** If the collection is sent through the mail, take steps in anticipation of loss. **Register and insure the parcel(s) to facilitate tracking.** For insurance purposes, UAM determines the value of most collections to be equivalent to the cost of field collection and analysis and/or the estimated cost of recollection and analysis. UAM, however, does not accept responsibility for collections that have not yet been physically deposited in the Museum. Originators of shipments may wish to consult the insurance office of their institutions.

Shipment is typically the time when collections are most vulnerable to damage or loss. Packing must guard against damage from sudden movements, impacts and crushing. However, some fragile objects may suffer more from the effects of over-zealous packing than from shipping itself.

## **XI. LETTER OF REVIEW**

After delivery, UAM will review the collection for compliance with the Curation Guidelines and submit a Letter of Review or email to the PI, generally within one month of receipt. The Letter of Review will certify that the collection was received and is in compliance or will detail any problems with the collection. If the collection does not conform to the requirements, UAM will bring the collection into compliance at the expense of the PI or UAM will return the collection to the PI (at the expense of the PI) and the PI can bring the collection into compliance. Once the collection has been reviewed and is in compliance, UAM will send an Invoice to the PI for processing and curation fees.

## **XII. FEES**

Storage facilities, materials, and personnel support will be required to house and curate collections in perpetuity following deposition at UAM. UAM charges the following fees to enable the collection to be curated in perpetuity according to the latest professional standards for future research, exhibit, and instruction. **Fees are subject to change and will be reviewed annually.**

### CURATION FEE (one time fee)

**1 cubic foot of storage space** **\$575/ft<sup>3</sup>**  
(artifacts and documentation)

The per unit fee for long term maintenance of the collection(s) includes annual percentage of material replacement and upgrade costs, and annual personnel support.

### TEMPORARY CURATION FEE (monthly fee)

**1 cubic foot of storage space** **\$10/ft<sup>3</sup>/month**

### PROCESSING FEE (one time fee)

**One hour processing time (labor only)** **\$25/hr. plus material costs**  
Minimum charge: \$20

The per hour fee charge for bringing the collection(s) and/or documentation which do not meet the requirements into conformance with those requirements.

**If you have any questions regarding these Guidelines, please contact UAM prior to preparing collections:**

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