

Collections Accessioning Procedures

When a prospective donor offers an object to the Museum, the Museum gives the donor a temporary receipt. It is then the Museum Accessions Committee’s duty to research the object, and prepare a recommendation to the Board of Directors, based upon the Museum’s Statement of Purpose and Scope of Collections, including a Collections Category (primary, secondary, or expendable).

Following a negative decision by the Board, the object is then returned to the donor. If the donor states so in writing, the Museum may offer object to another institution, or send it to a charitable organization. The Museum staff should take care not to consume inordinate amounts of time trying to find a suitable “home” for the donation. Under no circumstances should the Museum discard the object.

If the Board decides to accept the object, the Accessions Committee will prepare a form, transferring ownership to the Museum. The form will identify the object using professional-standard nomenclature, describing physical attributes and condition, noting provenance, and indicating its Collections Category. When the form has been signed and returned by the donor, the Museum staff may process the object.

The donor receives a copy of the accession form for his records. While donors are entitled to applicable state and federal tax deductions for their contributions, no employee of the Museum is to provide an appraisal, since the Museum is an “interested party.” The Museum staff may provide a list of possible appraisers, but not until the donation is complete (that is, until unrestricted ownership has been transferred to the Museum). The list is not to be viewed as a recommendation of particular appraisers’ services.

The object will receive a unique number, affixed in a permanent, reversible manner. Generally the following methods will be used, although the staff may decide on a case-by-case basis that other methods are preferable.

Types of Objects/Materials

Books and paper items	#2 pencil
Textiles	bias tape and thread
Wood, finished	white paint, inked number, clear coat
Wood, unfinished	bias tape and thread
Glass	white paint, inked number, clear coat
Pottery, glazed	white paint, inked number, clear coat

Pottery, unglazed	bias tape and thread
Skins	bias tape and thread
Metal	bias tape and thread or white paint, inked number, clear coat
Plastics	bias tape and thread

Numbering Schemata for Primary and Secondary Objects

- First number: year of acquisition
- Second number: the order of the year's acquired collections {the first and second number together are often called the "accession number."}
- Third number: the order of the items in the collection
- Fourth and subsequent numbers or letters: the parts of the item

For example,

2001.12.6 is a frying pan. It is the sixth item in the 12th collection, acquired in 2001. If the frying pan were to have a lid, the pan would be number 2001.12.6a, and the lid 2001.12.6b. The main piece is always designated (a), while the secondary piece is (b.)

If the pan and its lid were the only object in the acquisition, the numbers would be 2001.12a and 2001.12b.

In the same collection, we have a pair of shoes. The shoes will be numbered 2001.12.7.1 (right shoe), and 2001.12.7.2 (left shoe). If shoelaces are with the shoes, then the right shoe becomes 2001.12.7.1a, its lace is 2001.12.7.1b; the left shoe is 2001.12.7.2a, and the left lace is 2001.12.7.2b. If the collection also includes the original shoebox, its number would be 2001.12.7.3a (box) and 2001.12.7.3b (lid).

The object's number will be in a location easily seen, but not likely to cause damage to the object. Clothing for the upper part of the body (jackets, blouses, vests, chemises) are to be numbered at the front, on the inside hem of the waist, on the right side. Clothing for the lower part of the body (pants, pantaloons, skirts) will bear their numbers on the inside front of the waist, on the right. Clothing which covers the entire body (one-piece dresses) will be numbered on the right side, at the inside of the front hem. Pieces of furniture will bear their numbers on the front, right side. Numbers affixed to pottery and glassware can be found on the bottom, in the center.

It bears repeating that numbers are "permanent," in that they are positioned so that they cannot easily be detached from the object, and "reversible," in that removing them would not cause damage to the object. Locations and methods can and should be changed if the usual numbering locations or methods pose a problem. It is advised that number locations, usual or alternate, be recorded in the object's files.

In addition to written records, staff will photograph each object with its accession number prominently displayed next to the object.

The object will then be stored in a location that contains only primary or secondary objects, and the location will be noted in the object's records.

All records resulting from the accessions process, as well as prior ownership, provenance, location, and condition will be under the jurisdiction of Museum staff. It is advised that copies of all information be made and kept in a location separate from the Museum.

Numbering Schemata for Expendable Objects

The number location and sequence for expendable objects will be the same as if the object were in the primary or secondary collections categories, but expendable objects will bear the designation "EX" before the rest of the accession number. In this way, the object remains connected with its original accession, but staff members know that it is acceptable to use the object for hands-on activities.

For objects that move from primary or secondary categories to the expendable category, the staff will add "EX" to the number on the object, as well as add clear information of the change in the object's files.

Special Cases

For objects already in the Museum's collections that do not bear numbers, and cannot easily be connected to an acquisition, numbers will be assigned as though the object were acquired that day. The records will be designated with the donor, "Museum Collections," and the accession number {first and second number} will not be used for any other object. Information that might connect the object to others in the collections or to a particular person or event will be recorded in the object's file, with the intent that the object will eventually have definitive provenance.

This procedure statement was adopted by the Aztec Museum Association Board of Directors, 6/10/2010.