

## APPENDIX E: LOT CATALOGING

### A. GENERAL

Lot cataloging is a method of accounting for like objects and/or specimens in groups, or lots, rather than cataloging them individually. Lot cataloging accounts for large numbers of artifacts with similar and non-distinguishing characteristics. Lot cataloged objects and/or specimens should be stored by lots.

#### 1. Establishing a Lot

A lot is established according to appropriate discipline-specific rules (refer to Section B).

#### 2. Assigning a Catalog Number

The lot is assigned a single catalog number.

#### 3. Quantifying the Lot

If feasible, the total number of objects and/or specimens in the lot is counted. If counting is not feasible, an alternative form of quantifying (e.g., weight, cubic or linear footage occupied in storage, or number of storage containers) is given. Alternative forms of quantification should give the unit being measured [e.g., 7 cu. ft., 108 jars (for natural history wet specimens), or 450 grams]. Extremely large lots should be avoided or broken out at the time of cataloging into units of measure that are readily verifiable for inventory purposes.

#### 4. Cataloging a Representative Object or Specimen

A representative object or specimen from the lot is cataloged. In some instances, as with archeological collections, representative samples may be stored together and away from the lots in order to facilitate research.

#### 5. Numbering

If feasible, each object or specimen in a lot is marked

with the catalog number. If not feasible, the representative object or specimen is numbered and the containers for the other objects or specimens are numbered.

6. Removing an Object or Specimen from a Lot

If tracking an individual object or specimen in a lot becomes important (e.g., if the object or specimen is loaned or illustrated in a publication), the object or specimen may be withdrawn from the lot and cataloged individually and assigned the next available catalog number. The individually cataloged object or specimen is related to the original "lot" by cross-referencing notations on both the original catalog record and the new individual catalog record. The "quantification" entry on the original catalog record should be adjusted, as necessary, to reflect the removal of the object or specimen.

Lots should not be used for rare or high value items, type specimens, or objects and/or specimens that need to be individually tracked (e.g., those on exhibit or loan).

**B. DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC RULES FOR ESTABLISHING LOTS**

1. Archeology

Lots are identified by using provenience, material, and object name. Lots should be cataloged by the smallest provenience recorded by the archeologist. Material generally is a rigid category, in that different materials should not be mixed in the same lot. For example, a lot of ceramic, or stone, or wood is acceptable, but a lot of ceramic and stone may not be acceptable. For example, a lot of chipped stone can contain quartz, chert, quartzite, obsidian, and basalt. If possible it is best to identify the kinds of stone within the lot. A lot of ceramics may contain 70 or 80 sherds. The sherds may not be of the same type or time period. For example one lot may have 40 black or white sherds, 40 redware sherds, 10 polychrome sherds, and 5 yellow ware sherds. Object name allows flexibility and

is used to separate lots containing different kinds of objects made with the same material and from the same provenience. Object names may be general (e.g., chipped stone) or specific (e.g., stone tools). The following examples show the application of lot cataloging:

Accession: Sherds from Site 204, Kiva 1, fill and Kiva 1, floor

1 Lot Catalog Record: Sherds, (Site 204, Kiva 1, fill)  
1 Lot Catalog Record: Sherds, (Site 204, Kiva 1, floor)

Accession: Miscellaneous glass and metal fragments, Jones House Site, Room 5, floor

1 Lot Catalog Record: Glass fragments  
1 Lot Catalog Record: Metal fragments

## 2. Native American (Ethnographic)

Lot cataloging may be employed on a limited basis and applied to groups of identical or similar artifacts coming from one accession and having the same provenience, culture and object name. The following examples show the application of lot cataloging.

Accession: Beads, Hopi and Navajo

1 Lot Catalog Record: Beads (Hopi)  
1 Lot Catalog Record: Beads (Navajo)

## 3. History and Art

Lot cataloging may be applied to groups of identical or similar objects coming from one accession and having the same provenience, cultural identity, date/period, artist/maker (if known), and eminent figure association (if any), and object name. The cataloger's judgment is needed to decide when objects should be lot cataloged. The following examples show the application of lot cataloging:

Accession: Box of cigars

1 Individual Catalog Record: Box

1 Lot Catalog Record: Cigars

Accession: General Service Enlisted Man's Uniform  
Buttons, 1855-1884 pattern.

1 Lot Catalog Record: Buttons, uniform

4. Historical and/or Scientific Document Collections

Refer to the explanation of the use of lots in Appendix  
C, Section F.

5. Natural History

To be considered for lot cataloging, natural history  
specimens should be identical in specimen name. They  
should also be from the same accession, collection site,  
collection date, collector, and locale (i.e., the same  
collecting episode).

Lot cataloging in natural history collections relates  
directly to the research objectives of the collecting  
project. Some studies require collecting and studying  
samples that include many individual specimens.  
Specimens that are collected as a unit, to be studied as  
an assemblage and stored as a unit, may be lot cataloged.  
The definition of collection unit is, to some extent, an  
arbitrary decision of the collector. The same is true  
for such collection data as date and time (for example, a  
light trap sample may represent hours of sampling time);  
locale (whether specimens collected within centimeters or  
meters of each other are deemed to be from the same  
locale varies with the collector and the group of  
organisms in question); and collector (individual  
specimens of one expedition may have been collected by  
different technicians). Nonetheless, lot cataloging  
should only be used in the rare case of same collection  
effort, same locale, same data, however these are defined  
in a particular study.

The following examples illustrate lots. An entomologist  
may collect ten monarch butterflies in an hour from a  
single patch of milkweeds, or may collect 150 mixed

insects and arachnids in a 5-minute sweep net sample, or thousands of insects from a single light trap which was run overnight, and call each of these a unit. As long as these specimens are stored together in the collection and are given a single specimen name (e.g., butterflies pinned in a single unit tray, sweep net sample in a single vial of alcohol, and light trap sample in a single vial or jar), they may be cataloged as a lot.

a. Lot Cataloging Variations from Taxon to Taxon

Because of different collecting procedures, the prevalence of lot cataloging varies from taxon to taxon. Mammals, birds, and reptiles are generally collected as individuals and are not lot cataloged. Smaller reptiles and amphibians occasionally may be lot cataloged if they are collected on the same date from small sampling plots. Fish, particularly smaller, more common species, frequently may be cataloged as a lot if numerous specimens are collected from a single seine haul or during electro-fishing or rotenone sampling. Invertebrates are more amenable to lot cataloging than vertebrates in general, because of the well-developed sampling techniques commonly applied to these groups (e.g., malaise traps, light traps, pitfall traps for terrestrial arthropods; various grab, core, sled, and dredge samples for benthic and epibenthic organisms; and the variety of net samplers for planktonic organisms).

Most plant specimens, like vertebrates, are collected as single individuals. Generally, each herbarium sheet is considered one item, even if the sheet contains more than one plant. However, as with amphibians, if numerous individuals of the same species are collected on the same date from a single sampling area, they may be lot cataloged. Instructions for future recataloging of individual specimens from a lot-cataloged sample are given below.

Paleontological specimens that make up one individual are given one catalog number. A matrix that contains a mix of fossils from several individuals from the same species may also be lot cataloged.

b. Maximum Allowable Taxonomic Diversity Within a Lot

The highest acceptable level of diversity (dissimilarity among specimens) within a lot is, in general, the lowest taxonomic level to which specimens are identified at the time they are accessioned. This varies from group to group according to the difficulty of identification within the group, and the level of expertise of the collector, donor, or curator. In general, vertebrates, vascular plants, and large fungi are always identified to species. On the other hand, insects or mollusks (which occasionally may be undescribed as species and which often can be recognized to genus and sometimes family only by a few specialists) may be lot cataloged at one of these higher levels. Other invertebrates or microscopic organisms such as nematodes or protozoans may be grouped at a major group level, such as Phylum.

c. Procedure for Natural History Specimens

The specific steps and guidelines used for lot cataloging are essentially the same as those used to catalog specimens individually. The only difference is that an entire lot (rather than the individual components of the lot) is treated as a single "specimen."

The description portion of the catalog record should then describe in general terms the contents of the lot (e.g., "15 adult carabid beetles from an unbaited pitfall trap," or "approximately 50 Daphnia pulex in various stages of development from a ten-meter plankton tow using a 100 micron mesh plankton net"), as well as specifics about the collection procedure, date, time of day, and associated climatological or other important environmental information. The number of specimens should be indicated.

Once the catalog number has been determined for a lot, a label with the catalog number and other pertinent information is placed in the storage container with the contents of the lot in order to identify the lot. In cases where components of the lot bear their own labels (e.g., pinned insects) each item should also be identified with the lot catalog number. It is not necessary to affix catalog numbers to individual items in a lot if they do not normally bear individual labels when stored.

d. Removal of Natural History Specimens from a Lot

Full records are kept of any specimens that are removed from a lot even if only borrowed temporarily for study. This includes a full description and count of the items removed, the name of the person responsible for them, where they are to be kept, the date on which they were removed, and, if applicable, the date on which they were returned. This information should be recorded on a loan form and filed in the loan folder, and a copy placed in the Accession Folder.

A note, or temporary removal slip recording the same information in permanent black ink on 100% rag paper, may be placed with the remainder of the lot in storage. When the borrowed items are returned, the note can be removed from the storage container and the return noted on the loan form.

e. Recataloging of Natural History Specimens in a Lot

It is likely that specimens from lots can be re-identified as they are studied in the course of future investigations. At such time, assigning individual catalog numbers to single specimens or smaller lots of specimens may become practical and advisable. For instance, in the process of using environmental monitoring samples to document changes in species diversity over a period of twenty years, a specialist may identify all or some of the specimens in the original lot. As this happens, identified specimens should be stored with other fully identified specimens with which they have taxonomic

affinities. Since the original lot would no longer be stored as a unit, it would be necessary to catalog specimens individually or (if many specimens of a single species are obtained from the original lot) to lot catalog specimens at the species level.

Specimens that are permanently removed from the lot (e.g., by accidental loss, or recataloging and storage in another portion of the collection), are recorded on the catalog record and specimens removed for individual cataloging are cross-referenced to the lot catalog record. Likewise the lot catalog record should note this removal and the new catalog number assigned.



Museum Property Handbook  
(411 DM Volume II)  
Appendix E

Release Date:  
New

E:9