

# **Center for Archaeological Studies**

## **Guidelines for the Submission of Archaeological Collections and Records**

It is important to think about curatorial issues and practices from the very beginning of a project, and we want you to have all the information you may need to plan and prepare your collections for final curation at CAS. It is never too early to call us with any questions that you may have about your project. At CAS, we welcome our submitters to come tour the future home of their record and artifact collections.

Archaeological materials and records curated at CAS should meet the curatorial standards established by the Texas Historical Commission, the Council for Texas Archeologists and the Center for Archaeological Studies at Texas State University-San Marcos. Curation standards specific to CAS's curation program are tailored to make collections and records compatible with our collections management software and are outlined below. Please contact CAS's curatorial staff at (512) 245-2724 if you have any question concerning the following procedures, or if you would like to begin coordinating your curation preparation with CAS.

### **Field Curation Guidelines**

CAS is available to help establish or provide guidance on field protocols. This includes best management practices in the field for the collection, handling and storage of materials recovered during a given project. Please call for project specific guidance on collecting strategies, conservation in the field or any other curation-oriented field procedures.

In general, field curation and recordation practices and procedures should be:

1. Consistent with the guidelines and standards established by the Council for Texas Archaeologists.
2. Stated in the research design and approved by the lead agency responsible for the enforcement of environmental laws and regulations.
3. Include provisions that a representative sample of all classes of cultural materials should be retained unless there is an overarching concern (e.g., health risk, repatriation of human burial remains to culturally affiliated groups, or impracticality of stabilization).
4. Coordinated with and approved by CAS.

### **Post-Field Curation Guidelines**

Please fill out, sign and submit a copy of our **Request for Housing** form. This form can be emailed and should be submitted and approved prior to the submission of the collection. CAS's collections manager will check either "curation approved" or "curation denied" on the form and return a signed copy to the submitting archaeologist (SA). If approved, the signed and returned **Request for Housing** form will also act as the **Provisional Housing Agreement**. This document

is the agreement that CAS will provide curation for the collection, assuming that all curation requirements are met.

1. Before you begin the cataloging and data entry phases of curation preparation, contact CAS for an **Accession Number** for the collection. You will need this number in order to assign **Object ID Numbers** to each item or bag of like items (See # 3 in How to Prepare Archaeological Collections for Curation at CAS).
2. Acquire **Transfer/Ownership** and/or **Deed of Gift** documents from client and/or landowners.
3. Process records and recovered material according to the standards established by the THC, CTA and CAS.
4. **Reminder:** THC approval is required for discarding materials collected under a Texas Antiquities Permit. CAS will need documentation of this approval included with the collection's associated records if artifacts have been discarded.
5. Acquire curation boxes from CAS. Boxes may be picked up from CAS or we can deliver boxes to the SA if feasible. The latter option would allow us to assess the status of the collection at your facility before it comes to CAS; make suggestions about how to streamline the cataloging process with our curation requirements and address any questions you may have. This step is designed to prevent confusion about how collections are organized, saving valuable time and resources in the long run. Contact CAS to schedule this appointment.
6. Complete the appropriate curation forms:
  - No collections will be approved for final curation (aka accessioned) without the submission of the required forms. Two forms are required to transfer the ownership or specific custodianship of the collections from the contracting firm and the sponsor/owner of the project (**Transfer from Sponsor** and **Transfer of Held-in-Trust**). In cases when the sponsor is also the property owner, the Held-in-Trust transfer form serves the purpose of both forms. A **Deed of Gift** form must accompany all collections from private lands. For Held-in-Trust collections, CAS will complete an **Artifact Curation Form** and an **Agreement for State of Texas Held-in-Trust Objects/Collections Form** on behalf of the associated Texas Antiquities Permit holder. Additional forms include a **CAS Curation Submittal Checklist** and **Collections Processing Record**.
7. Set up a delivery date and time with CAS's curatorial staff prior to the submission of the collection for permanent curation.
  - Upon delivery, the collection (materials and records) will be checked by CAS's curatorial staff for compliance. If problems are found and the collection is not ready for final curation, CAS will inform the submitter and will either return the collection for corrections or arrange to make the corrections in-house. Once the collection is ready for final curation and has been accessioned, CAS will send an invoice for curation charges including labor charges if corrections were made in-house.

- If the collection consists of records only (no artifacts), it may be sent to CAS via US Postal Service or FedEx rather than being hand delivered, so long as the delivery is insured and has a tracking/confirmation number.
8. Once the SA has met all applicable curation obligations, the collection is accessioned, and the curation bill is paid, CAS will send a letter stating acceptance of the collection and that the collection is now the responsibility of CAS. For permitted/Held-in-Trust projects, CAS will send the **Artifact Curation Form** to the THC, as well as a copy to the contractor.

### **How to Prepare Archaeological Collections for Curation at CAS**

1. All collections, including records and materials, must be complete before submission for curation. A **CAS Curation Submittal Checklist** must be submitted with all collections at the time of delivery.
2. All materials will be cleaned and preserved using CAS/THC approved, nondestructive, and reversible techniques. Cleaning and preservation techniques and materials used will be documented on the **Collections Processing Record** that will be submitted with the collection to be curated.
3. A complete and accurate **Artifact Catalog/Specimen Inventory** must be submitted with all collections. Since CAS has the capacity to curate artifacts *and* data, the **Artifact Catalog** is essentially the **Master Database**; there is no need to submit two different databases or spreadsheets. Please submit three hard copies and one electronic version. Two hard copies should be included with the associated records and the third should be printed out for use as a packing inventory (sort the excel sheet by box number before printing). This inventory will be verified prior to acceptance for final curation. Please contact CAS if you have any questions about the artifact catalog.

The artifact catalog must:

- a. Be formatted in an Excel database.
- b. Include separate columns for:
  - i. Material- The material(s) from which an artifact is manufactured.
  - ii. Object Name- The name/analytical category of the item or group of items. These analytical categories must correspond to those used for analysis, final reporting and packaging labels.
  - iii. Description- A description of the item(s). CAS welcomes you to be as detailed and/or lengthy with descriptions as you wish.
- c. Accurately reflect the analytical categories and quantities of each category established during analyses. **A good rule of thumb is that every bag, whether it contains one artifact or many, needs a tag, which should correspond to an entry (one line item) in the Master Database.**
- d. Include all available provenience information (in separate columns).

- e. Include a column for artifact Counts. If items have been weighed, please also include a column for Weight.
  - f. Include a column for Lot Numbers. Assign one lot number to each specific provenience from which artifacts were collected. When curating with CAS, you will always be able to start with Lot # 1. The reason for this is that the accession number is what we use to separate any given collection from other collections in our facility, even those originating from the same site.
  - g. Include a column for Object ID Numbers. Every line item in the artifact catalog will need an Object ID number in order to make the collection compatible with our collections management software. An Object ID number is a *unique number* assigned, by the SA, to an object or bag of similar objects from the same lot. It consists of the Accession Number, the Lot Number and the specimen number. For each lot number, start with the items that have already been assigned a specimen number (if any) and then complete the sequence.  
It will look something like this: **CAS.2014.20.083.01**.  
**CAS.2014.20** is the accession number assigned by CAS (the 20<sup>th</sup> collection acquired by CAS in 2014)  
**.083** is the lot number  
**.01** is the specimen number  
If your lot numbers within a collection or specimen numbers within a lot go over 99, you will need to use the 0 as a place holder(s).  
(Ask CAS for an example of an acceptable database if needed)
  - h. Reminder: Every bag needs a tag and every tag needs a database entry. For example, if you have one bag of debitage from a lot, that bag can be assigned one Object ID number. *However*, if your analyses split the debitage into categories (by size, broken, complete, raw material etc.) then each category (for each lot analyzed) needs to be catalogued, bagged separately, and given a unique Object ID number.
  - i. Include a column for Box numbers. Assign numbers to each box planned for curation at CAS. Enter the box numbers into the database for each corresponding line item.
4. In addition to the **Artifact Inventory/Master Database**, a **Baseline Inventory** should be submitted. The will include the project name, date, permit #, a total count and weight of all artifacts by material class (e.g. ceramics – count: 54, weight: 34g) and the amount of records to be curated in linear inches.
  5. Please include a document explaining the cataloging system used for the submitted collection. This document should explain how the collection was cataloged and organized and is especially useful for defining all of the different fields of data collected during analyses and used in the Artifact Inventory/Master Database.

### Artifact Packing and Labeling Guidelines

- a. If boxes were not acquired from CAS before submittal, materials will be transferred into 15" x 11" x 12" boxes by CAS. The cost of these boxes is included in the curation costs. Materials should be packaged so as to minimize labor expenditure involved with moving the materials into their new containers; box numbers should not need to be corrected or reassigned.
- b. Do not over-pack boxes or pack fragile material with heavier items.
- c. Materials are to be submitted in the analytical categories used for analysis and reporting. Groups of items must be clearly and *consistently* identified by analytical category through the use of a tag prominently displayed inside the bag. Please do not apply labels directly onto the zip locking bag with a marker. This practice does not fulfill the labeling requirement and will only create more work as marked bags will have to be replaced with clean, archivally stable ones.
- d. Individually labeled artifacts should include site designation and intra-site provenience designations (lot/provenience system). Labels should be created by writing the information with permanent, archival stable ink, or affixing a small strip of acid free paper with the information printed with a laser printer, on a base coat of Acryloid B-72 and then top coated with Acryloid B-72. Dark specimens should be labeled with white Acryloid B-72 or archival stable white ink. **The use of whiteout or clear nail polish will not be accepted.** A PVA resin is acceptable if acetone or ethanol has been used as the solvent. Contact CAS curation staff for time saving tips and details on the paper labeling method. The standard artifact labeling format is the full site trinomial, with the lot number directly underneath. Whenever possible, include the specimen number in the label.

Example:     41HY163  
                  306-3

- e. Zip locking polyethylene bags, 4-millimeter thick, are to be used for all artifacts. Paper bags will not be acceptable for curation at CAS. All bags must have a clearly visible tag inside the bag. **Writing on the bag is not an acceptable substitute for a tag.** Organic materials should never be in direct contact with the tag. Double bagging may be necessary for heavy and bulk samples.
- f. All artifact tags/labels must be on acid-free paper. Information must be written in pencil or archival ink. Labels must be visible within the bag, legible and accurate at time of submission. *Any changes made to tags during analysis and reporting must correspond with the submitted inventory. Labor expended to make these changes will be added to the curation invoice.*
- g. All tags/labels **must** include the following information:
  - Project Name
  - Accession #
  - Date of Investigation

Investigating Company/Agency  
Site #  
Intrasite Provenience  
Lot #  
Specimen #  
Object Name (analytical category)  
Description  
Count  
Weight (optional—report only if recorded during analysis).

6. The submission of human remains must be arranged in advance. Human remains will not be accepted without clear documentation of their NAGPRA status.
7. Provide a simple **Project History** that clearly states the official project name and number, counties involved, dates of work, and who the work was completed for. List names of the principle investigator, the project archaeologist, and names of crewmembers (use complete names; no abbreviations). State nature of work conducted (survey, testing, etc).
8. **Paper records** should be submitted in archival folders and labeled with **project name, number (if applicable), year, site number, permit # (if applicable) intrasite provenience (if applicable), folder contents, and submitting contractor/agency**. Submit a master inventory or table of contents that lists in detail the contents of each folder. Include number of pages. Records should be separated into unit/level records, feature forms, daily journals, etc. A photographic log should be submitted with **both** records and with the photographs (if already printed). Original records are preferred, but if they are not attainable then clear copies on acid-free paper are acceptable with CAS approval. Records that are soiled or marked with pen/ink/sharpie will be placed in archival quality page protectors. A copy of the **Texas Antiquities Permit** shall accompany all Held-In-Trust Collections.
9. **As of March 1, 2018**, all original paper records (field and lab) must be digitized and duplicated. If project records (field and lab) have not been digitized or duplicated, CAS can provide this service for a fee (see calculating costs).
10. **The duplicate set of records will need to be organized separately but should meet the same standards and mirror the organization of the original set (see number 8).**
11. Scanning should be set to full color with a resolution of 300 dpi or higher. Please save these scans as Portable Document Format (PDF) files and submit them on a Gold archival CD. **File names** for each digital document must be unique to that project and file, either through the use of the project number or the accession number provided by CAS. Generic file names such as “catalog” or “map” are not acceptable.
12. **Digital Photographs** will be submitted on a separate archival stable CD or DVD in a standard format. A contact sheet clearly displaying each image with its accompanying image/file number is not required, but may also accompany each CD. If included, the

contact sheet must be printed on acid-free paper using a color laser printer. **Ink-jet images will not be accepted.** Each image should be cataloged and recorded on a photographic log with corresponding image/file numbers. Please submit both an electronic and hard copy of the photo log for each CD.

13. **Film Photography:** If project photographs were taken using photographic film, please submit both the prints and negatives for curation. Submit prints and negatives in the appropriate archival poly sleeves (page protectors). The images should be cataloged and entered into an electronic photo log with corresponding frame numbers.
14. Collections and Records must be delivered in person (**see records-only exception**) to CAS at:

601 University Drive  
Trinity 120  
San Marcos, TX 78666

### **Standards for Preparing Archaeological Records**

All written records pertaining to the excavation, handling, and conservation of the artifact materials should be submitted for curation with the materials. These include the original catalogs — field and laboratory, and the final specimen inventory. Please contact CAS's head of records at (512) 245-2724 for any questions regarding Records Curation.

### **Common Records for Curation include but are not limited to:**

#### **CURATION FORMS:**

Artifact Curation Form (only for HIT collections)

Agreement for State of Texas Held-in-Trust Objects/Collections (only for HIT collections) \*

Letter of Transfer/Ownership – for an individual\*

OR Deed of Gift – for an institution or agency\*

OR Governmental Agency Curation Agreement – for a governmental agency\*

Transfer Inventory/Accession Record (and add accession to Accession Record) \*

(\* these documents are collected from organizations outside of CAS when curating their materials at CAS)

#### **FIELD RECORDS:**

Shovel Test Forms or Unit-Level Summary Forms

Feature Forms

Daily Journals

Site Maps

Photo Log from field

**LABORATORY RECORDS:**

Artifact catalog  
Master artifact inventory  
Collections Processing Record  
Lot Summary Form  
Explanation of Cataloging System Used

**PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS:**

Contact sheet of digital prints  
CD of digital images  
Photo log (lab generated)

**GENERAL PROJECT RECORDS:**

Copy of final report  
Background research  
Project History  
Baseline Inventory

Documents and forms are to be placed in archivally stable file folders that are labeled lightly in pencil with the Project Name/Year, Permit #, and File Contents. Use protective sleeves for documents that are dirty (soil and/or food stains, etc.).

Include a simple project history with the records that clearly states the official project name, permit number, counties involved, and the dates of work. List the names of the principal investigator, the project archaeologist and the names of the crewmembers. Use complete names. Also, state the nature of the work conducted (e.g. pedestrian survey, testing, etc.) and who the work was completed for (i.e. City of San Marcos, Texas State University-San Marcos).

A baseline inventory should also be generated and printed out to accompany the curated documents. A baseline inventory will include: project name/date, permit #, a total count/weight of all artifacts by material class (i.e. Ceramics, Count: 54, Weight: 34g), a total count and weight of all artifacts, the number of boxes to be curated, and the amount of records (linear inches) to be curated. A baseline inventory of all Held-In-Trust collections is required by the Texas Historical Commission and will be submitted to them at the end of every year.