INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

As a state certified facility and the repository of record for many federal agencies, the TARL staff are required to follow the Texas Historical Commission’s Certification Program specifications as well as the Curation of Federally Associated Collections (36CFR Part 79). The most important of these standards is proper collection management including inventory and location control. Moreover, the organization of storage locations should facilitate any researcher in locating a specific item as referenced in the report. TARL collections staff is committed to keeping these records as current as possible. In order to achieve this goal, the collections that are submitted for curation must be organized in the most efficient and clearly identifiable means possible. All requirements herein are directed toward that purpose.

The process of accessioning a collection (herein collection means records and objects), TARL staff will reconcile the inventory with the artifacts submitted for accuracy; depending on the size of a project this process may take several weeks. It is the responsibility of the submitting archeologist to provide TARL staff with enough lead time to conduct the review. An occasional special request for a fast invoice turnaround time may be accommodated; however, please allow at least two weeks for any project involving objects, and one month for collections with thousands of items.

All collections, including records and materials, must be complete when submitted for curation. A Collections Worksheet (Excel® file and hard copy) must be included at the time of delivery. There shall be a separate worksheet for each site and for each phase of investigation at each site (e.g., survey, testing, or excavation collection). This is crucial for collections consisting of a testing and mitigation phase that were accomplished under two different permits. The Curatorial Facility Certification Program regulations specify that each held-in-trust object or document be identifiable by permit.

Each storage area for collections is handled differently as described in the section on Separation of Collections. Particular attention should be given to unmodified faunal remains identified by taxon. TARL will accept collections with faunal remains only if taxonomic separations are maintained. Contractors should make certain that subcontractors comply with these requirements. Objects considered to be “isolated finds” or from “localities” will only be accept for curation at TARL if they are part of survey or monitoring projects. Unusual individual cases should be discussed with TARL’s Head of Collections in advance.

Since one of our primary missions is to maintain in perpetuity records and collections for research and education, TARL attempts to curate collections in a manner providing efficient access for users. As described in the section “Separation of Collections for Housing at TARL,” there are four principal collection housing areas (General Collections, Human Osteology, Vessel Collection, Bulk Collections), and the remains curated in each are prepared in somewhat different ways. More specifically, since almost all users want to examine specific objects, specific kinds of objects, or specific kinds of samples from one or more sites, collections submitted to TARL must be separated according to the four-fold division described in the section on Separation of Collections. In addition, items must be submitted in the analytical categories into which the materials were sorted for reporting purposes; these groups of items must be clearly identified by analytical category through the use of a tag prominently displayed inside the bag. The labeling of the ziplocking bag does not fulfill this requirement. Ceramics and lithic tools typically reported by categories can be grouped into inclusive bags. Pottery, for example, is normally reported by ceramic type or other group (e.g., Holly Fine Engraved, Borger Cordmarked, etc.).
Similarly, chipped stone tools are typically reported by categories such as end scrapers, beveled knives, utilized flakes, dart points, arrow points, etc. (see also #15 below).\(^1\) Collections submitted without meeting these standards will be rejected.

Finally, the \textit{receipt} of a collection by TARL does not constitute acceptance. We are aware that some CRM firms have contractual obligations specifying dates to have their project submitted to a repository. However, when TARL agrees to take delivery of a collection in these circumstances, the CRM firm should not assume that the collection has been \textit{accepted}. Moreover, in order to make it as clear as possible, TARL will provide to each contractor upon submittal a form signed by the TARL staff member receiving the collection indicating the receipt but not acceptance of curation readiness. The submitter will be asked to countersign the form. For those collections sent through a shipping service, mail, or third party courier, this form will be sent via email and also by US mail for the counter signature of a company representative.

Submission of collections according to these criteria is considered to be the professional and ethical responsibility of the Submitting Archeologist since it permits efficient evaluation of analytical results by others and allows for reproducibility of results. Collections submitted without meeting these stipulations in their entirety will be rejected.

\section*{CLEANING}

Clean and preserve all materials using TARL-approved, nondestructive, and reversible techniques. Exceptions, of course, are expected when cleaning has the potential for destroying archeological data. Please consult with the Head of Collections prior to submission of the materials and, document all techniques and materials used in processing a collection on the TARL Collection Processing Record. Separate and document specimens in need of ongoing stabilization, preservation, and/or monitoring. Please involve TARL staff in discussion about curating artifacts that have not been cleaned or in any other non-standard state (e.g., large plaster casts). Do not assume that TARL will accept a collection if TARL has not alerted to this condition when the request for housing form is submitted or during the setup of the curation delivery date.

\section*{LABELING}

Other than the exceptions noted below, all specimens must be individually labeled with a site designation and intrasite provenience designation (a lot number system is acceptable).\(^2\) These designations should be written on the specimens with permanent ink and coated with Acryloid B-72 for protection. A base coat of Acryloid B-72 is required for labels on porous materials such as unglazed ceramics. The properties of Acryloid B-72 make it a superior product for our environmental conditions. No other acrylic products may be used. Care should be taken to avoid labeling specimens in areas necessary for attribute analysis and labeling near the edges is generally discouraged. Dark specimens are to be labeled with permanent white ink and coated as above. You may use a titanium white additive in B-72 as a base coat. Any other materials are not acceptable. \textbf{The ability to write small is negated by the inability to read the label.}

Contractors may request to label artifacts with laser printed identifiers on acid-free paper. The paper must be Perma-life or of a similar type and archival standard (acid-free and lignin-free). In order to be approved to use this method, the contractor shall allow TARL collections staff to view a small sample of the artifacts labeled this way. Please plan in advance for a time lag between a request and an

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\(^1\) The only exception to this is that all artifacts associated with human burials are kept together (but separate from the skeletal remains) to be curated as a unit in General Collections.

\(^2\) If specific classes of artifacts are analyzed as individual objects, they must be individually bagged and tagged with the identification of analysis grouping or specimen numbers be assigned. Bagging separately or the use of specimen numbers identify the item’s analysis data.
approval. An article by Thomas Braun in the *Journal of American Institute for Conservation*, Volume 46, no. 2, pp. 91-104 is a very useful reference. Unstable mass manufactured materials such as rubber, plastic, etc., should not be labeled with any solvent-based lacquer.

At least 50% of chipped stone debitage larger than a US quarter dollar must be individually labeled but need not be separated from other, smaller debitage from that provenience. Window glass fragments need not be labeled and should be treated as bulk samples. Rusted metal objects and objects such as nails and wire fragments that have not been conserved should be double bagged with an appropriate label; string tags are useful for many metal objects that should not be labeled. Miscellaneous metal specimens should be separated by type of object. Collections not separated will be rejected. Unworked shell or bone, including and especially human remains should not be labeled. The labeling of any other perishable or fragile specimens should be discussed with the Head of Collections as the need arises.

Labeling Guidelines

- All labeling should be done in non-diagnostic areas, toward the center of the object, avoiding edges to the extent possible.
- Lithic debitage should be labeled in the middle of the *ventral* surface and tools, points and cores should have their labels confined to the smallest possible area, such as a flake scar. However, *legibility* is more important than the size of the label.
- Bulk categories such as unmodified, undecorated ceramics and debitage should be labeled at the rate of 50% of everything over a quarter in size. Any individual analysis on these materials should also be indicated by separate bags, tags or specimen numbers.
- Labeling on decorated ceramics, whether prehistoric or historic needs to be unobtrusive to the identification of the decoration type or style. All labels on prehistoric and unglazed ceramics should have bottom coats to act as barriers against the absorption of the label into the porous surface.
- Unmodified bone and shell are not to be labeled. They should, however, be tagged and bagged by the level of analysis and identification (e.g., species, species and element, etc.). Modified bone and shell should be labeled with a bottom coat.
- The labeling of glass should take into account the stability of the matrix. If patination is already occurring, do not attempt to label the items as the patina and the label will likely peel off. Use the separation of bags and tags for levels of analysis.
- For the same reason as glass, metal should not be labeled unless it is stable or has been conserved.
- Small items, such as beads or other jewelry may have acid-free tags attached to them.

**BAGS**

Paper artifact bags will not be accepted for curation at TARL. Use 4-mil reclosable (zip-lock) polyethylene bags for all artifacts. Consider 6 or 8 mil bags for sizes larger than 8x10. Do not write on the polyethylene bag as it will fade over time and smear with hand oils.

All unique items should be individually bagged and those that are too small to be labeled should be placed in small ziplocking bags for safety and cushioning. Ideally, any small object should be double bagged for safety. Interior bags for these small items may be 2-mil in thickness. To ensure against loss of provenience and analysis grouping, the label should specify that specimens are not individually labeled.

Place a tag, no smaller than 6 x 6 inches in size, in each grouping of artifacts (e.g., Scallop arrow points grouped together). This tag should list all the project information, as well as the class and lots.
contained within. There is no need to number the group bags, but list them by category on your box inventory. See the Stipulations for Submitting Collections for more specific information.

TAGS

Artifact tags must have a site designation, project name, phase and number, date of recovery, provenience data, lot/catalogue/specimen number (in other words its unique identifier), analytical group or type of sample, number of specimens, and the name of submitting agency/ institution/ company. It is also appropriate to put the owning/controlling federal or state agency on the tag.

All artifact tags/labels are to be on acid-free and lignin-free paper (a random sample will be tested for compliance). Submitters are strongly urged to use cardstock for tags for durability over time. Handwritten labels must be in pencil. No organic material should ever be in direct contact with a tag. In general any materials such as low-fired ceramics, bricks, and metal that may continue to deteriorate must be double-bagged. Any heavy bulk samples must be double-bagged. Do not place the tag in a bag, but place the tag between the two plastic bags. The cost of adding a missing bag will be done at the submitter’s expense.

Labels must be readily visible and legible. The tags should contain any analytical grouping or named types as used in the report and as such the use of field tags for curation is discouraged. The use of specific identifications such as “Holly Fine Engraved” or “Scallorn Arrow Point” is preferable to only stating “decorated sherd” or “arrow point”. Please specify typed or untyped dart or arrow point, and likewise typed or untyped ceramic sherd (and any other relevant qualifier such as “engraved”, etc.).

The tags/labels must include the following:

- Project Name and #, if assigned
- Date of Investigation
- Investigative Company/Agency
- Federal/State Agency
- Site #
- Intrasite Provenience
- Lot/Cat or Tracking #
- Class or Type of Artifact
- Count and Weight (all samples must have a weight)

Any changes made to tags during analysis and reporting should match listing in submitted inventory. Labor expended to make these changes will be added to the invoice. Artifacts submitted without this basic information will be rejected.

BOXING

The listing of materials considered bulk collections has changed—please review the listing below. Separate and package materials according to the instructions in the section "Separation of Collections for Housing at TARL." Submit the artifact bags in the analytical categories used in the report and, if appropriate, from meaningful proveniences within a site (such as areas and/or units).

TARL provides boxes for housing of bulk specimens, osteological remains, and other special materials. The cost of the boxes is covered by the basic curation charge. Boxes for Bulk Collections and Human Osteology should be requested in advance. TARL will be phasing out the cardboard box in the near future; please contact the Head of Collections regarding the supply and phase out date. In the interim, cardboard box bottoms must be generously hot-melt glued, not taped or interfolded. All adhesive tapes fail with time, and folded box bottoms are not strong enough to hold.
these bulk materials.

Materials should be packaged so that a minimum of time is expended to find and reconcile the submitted inventory with the artifacts. The submission of human remains must be arranged in advance. TARL will not accept any human remains without clear documentation as to its NAGPRA status.

Each box of collections or records should be clearly labeled with contents and an inventory of materials placed inside the box. If the materials are to be shipped, TARL recommends that the materials be sent by a carrier insuring and tracking each box. Please contact the curatorial staff to make sure we know your materials are in transit and to make sure that they have arrived.

**INVENTORY/CATALOGUE**

Organic samples and some of the more fragile non-organics are more accurately accounted for in inventory as weights. Materials such as bone, mussel shell, snail, flotation or macrobotanical remains must be recorded on inventories as weights. Any collection with materials submitted without this data will be returned for further processing. Subcontractors who do specialized analysis should be told to include weights in their submitted data. The “to count or to weigh” table is provided below. Shaded lines do not need a weight. Materials that are considered samples (snail, bone, etc.) are counted as one item and a weight is required. Any blank cells require either a count or a weight. Burned rock should have both a count and weight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Not needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snail</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charcoal and Macrobots</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mussel Shell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burned Rock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debitage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithic tools and cores</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American Ceramics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Items</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A hard copy and “live” electronic specimen inventory (no PDF versions) at least to the class level should be included with the materials. This may be a report from a database. However, any original individual specimen catalogues should also be submitted. Both of these inventories should include full provenience information and the lot and catalogue numbers assigned to each individual item or class of items. Any specific cataloguing schemes should be spelled out in the records. Each state and federal held-in-trust collection inventory will be verified before acceptance for final curation. The specimen inventory or catalogue should be designed to facilitate this verification. This inventory must also include any items that were discarded as a record of held-in-trust collections. Please indicate “discarded” or “not curated” on the inventory. The copy of the letter from the THC or other entity authorizing this discard should accompany the records for the project.

**INVENTORY WORKSHEET**
All collections, including records and materials, must be complete when submitted for curation. TARL Collections Inventory Worksheet(s) must be included with the objects at time of delivery. Phase designations need to be a column/header on the inventories and catalogues. Records should be on archivally stable media, as noted in Council of Texas Archeologists Guidelines for Curation Standards and Procedures 3.2.1. An Excel® file with this same information is also to be submitted. This will facilitate TARL staff adding the inventory to our database and making it accessible to other researchers. TARL staff have created a template.

The so-called packing inventory is to contain only the necessary data for checking the artifacts against the bags once submitted. Please produce hard copies that can be read easily and annotated. Do not use your database file for use as your packing inventory, but select the fields necessary for comparison, such as site, provenience information including unit/level, feature, field identifier, lot and catalogue number, class of artifacts, a meaningful type/description, and number of items and weight where appropriate (see table below). This document should also list whether items were not curated. The use of small fonts is discouraged. An electronic version of this inventory should also be provided.

Provide an explanation or index for the cataloging system used and a specimen inventory that accurately reflects the quantity of materials being submitted for curation and their analysis and packaging order. Be specific when listing the box contents on the inventory placed inside the box and submit an electronic version of this file for any projects consisting of more than 4 boxes. Please use clear attributions (e.g., “41TV290 - undecorated white earthenware”, “41TV534 - porcelain” rather than lumping them together as “41TV290 and 41TV534 white earthenware and porcelain”).

Be certain that analytical groups as well as individual artifact designations on the inventories correspond to those used in the final report and on packaging. A line of data that only specifies that there were 100 sherds from a lot is not sufficient if some of those sherds were removed and have been reconstructed into a vessel. There should be same number of lines as individual bags of artifacts.

Analysis spreadsheets and tables must accompany the records to match specific artifacts to the classification by the analyst. This will greatly facilitate use by future researchers and is considered good collections management. Materials that have been grouped into vessels (glass or ceramic) and referenced as such in the report must be cross-referenced in the inventory with these designations. Refits of such when bagged together must also be referenced as “bagged with lot X”. Each specimen that refits should have this reference to all other refitted sherds from that vessel. For example, three of 13 sherds were refitted to two different vessels from Lot 15. Lot 15 would appear in the database as shown below. There should also be an electronic file and paper copy listing the ceramic vessels, their number or attribution, the count of sherds from each lot, and a total count.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lot</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Refit Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Earthenware</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>leave blank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Earthenware</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>bagged with CV-01, Lot 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Earthenware</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>bagged with CV-04, Lot 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DESTRUCTIVE ANALYSIS

Destructive analyses of materials must be documented in the collections inventory. The database line for destroyed specimens should not be removed from the database but carry an annotation that the artifact was not curated, a lab sample number, and a brief description of analysis (e.g., INAA, TL, etc.) and a reference to the results. When a lot is sampled for analysis, there should be two lines in the database: 1) the total number of specimens and weights where appropriate for the lot minus the removed items, and 2) the specific reference to the sample number for the specimen destroyed with the lab and results reference. There should also be an electronic file and a paper copy listing the lot
numbers, weights and counts of items, and the results. These data are considered the replacement for the specimen that was destroyed and are required for all held-in-trust collections; moreover good stewardship obliges us to curate all items or the data for those that are discarded/destroyed.

**SPECIAL SAMPLES**

Radiocarbon samples should be submitted in glass containers\(^3\) (if the sample is from acidic sediments) or in aluminum foil packets placed inside a reclosable polyethylene bag. Since the foil packets tend to leak over time, please double bag. There must be labels between the bags or inside the glass jar (the label should be in a zip-lock bag). Labels should indicate if a portion of the sample has been submitted for dating; the records and the project database should indicate total weight of specimen before analysis, weight of sample analyzed, and remaining sample weight.

Bulk samples (e.g., matrix, soil, burned rocks, lithic debitage) must be double-bagged and an easily read acid-free, lignin-free paper tag must be placed between the two bags. Do not overpack, and keep the top of bags up, with heavy materials on the bottom of the container. Staples are not acceptable. In the case of soil, matrix, pollen, macrobotanical, fine-screen, and/or flotation samples, tags should be placed between the two bags. Labels should indicate if a portion of the sample has been removed for analysis and this should coincide with the records and the project database (see #8 above). It is important that all samples (as well as artifacts) be completely dry before being enclosed in their containers. Materials that are susceptible to continued degradation (e.g., prehistoric sherds, bone, shell, etc.) should all be double-bagged.

**SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: LARGE OR UNUSUAL ITEMS**

If the need to curate anything unusual or large is anticipated, or if clarification of these procedures is needed, please contact TARL Collections at 512-475-6853. A list of some sources for curation and archival products is included with this curation packet. All state and federal held-in-trust collections will be verified for inventory purposes.

Please consult in advance with the TARL registrar to schedule delivery of a collection, providing ample time for TARL staff to review and reconcile the artifact inventory. For large submittals anticipate a minimum of one month for invoices.

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\(^3\) For safety, please clearly label any box or other container that contains glass vials.