**Care & Use of Collections (BIOL/MUSE 240)[[1]](#footnote-1), 3 credits**  
M, W, F 10:00-10:50 a.m.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Instructor:** | Heather Lerner, Joseph Moore Museum Director, Assistant Professor of Biology and Museum Studies |
|  | Office: Dennis 033 |
|  | Email: hlerner@gmail.com |
|  | Office Phone: x1402 |
| **Office hours** | By appointment, or stop in if my office door is open |
| **Pre-requisites:** | Students enrolled in this course should have a basic background in |
|  | Biology, be comfortable reading scientific literature and be of sophomore or above standing.  To enroll, you **must** have taken MUSE 150, MUSE 224, BIOL 111 or BIOL 226. |
| **Required Texts:** | There are no required texts for this class. We will principally read primary and secondary literature made available to you on Moodle, as hyperlinks, or handed out as needed. If you prefer paper copies, you will be responsible for printing any articles from Moodle and the associated costs. You should supply your own binder and organizational system to be filled throughout the course. |

**Course Description:**

Natural history, or biological, collections have provided the foundation for the field of biology and the discovery of the processes that underlie the diversity of life on earth. The importance of such collections over time cannot be overstated. Yet formal training in caring for, expanding, and using biological collections is surprisingly lacking. This course aims to introduce you to the wealth of possibilities that exist in biological collections and the practical responsibilities to preserve them.

You will gain hands-on practice accessioning specimens into the collection, organizing specimens within the collection and databasing specimens using the collections software Specify. As part of a team, you will undertake a semester-long collection-improvement or research project using the Joseph Moore Museum collections.

We will also videoconference with curators at major collections/museums around the country to gain a broader understanding of the issues facing such collections. We will all benefit from a small class size, engaging team-work and active participation in the Joseph Moore Museum collections.

**Learning Goals**

This course will give you the opportunity to add a variety of tools to your toolbox. These are skills that will help you become (a) a successful scientist, including a curator at a museum or a top-notch collection manager, (b) an outstanding coworker and (c) an attractive job applicant:

Scientific skills you will perform

* Practical application of taxonomy (Unit I)
* Critically Read Primary Scientific Literature (Units 3-6)
  + Identify the main question in a publication
  + Place research into a broader context (i.e. why is the research important? Why are researchers interested in answering these questions?)
  + Determine if the evidence really does support the conclusion(s)
  + Know when and which modern techniques to use for studying organisms with voucher-specimens (e.g. DNA analysis, stable isotopes, etc.)
* Present scientific content to a general audience (Video project)
* Writing a convincing, well-supported grant application (Final Project)

Generic vocational or life skills you will practice

* Using Modern Technology, including software and hardware:
  + Creating a video presentation, use production and video editing software (Unit III)
  + Using modern database software (Unit I, projects)
* Working in a team (all Units)
* Being organized and observant, paying close attention to detail
* Writing a convincing, well-supported grant application (Final Project)

**Course Structure**

This course is structured as a series of units within two major sections. The first section of the course will focus on care of collections, while the second section will address uses of collections.

## Team-Based Learning

The structure of this course is an adaptation of “Team-Based Learning.” You will be assigned to one team of 4-5 students, and you will work with that team for the duration of the semester. Much of the course work will be done in your team. A large portion of your grade will depend on your team’s work (more on grades below).

Additionally, this course will be largely “flipped.” Unlike traditional lecture courses, most of class time will be devoted to working in teams on application problems, case studies, and other activities that reinforce key concepts. Therefore, a significant portion of content learning will occur outside of class. This will frequently involve reading and watching online videos. **Because your first exposure to the material will occur outside of class, it is critical that you do your homework before class.** Each content-learning assignment will include a detailed guide to help you focus on the key concepts.

This course format has several advantages. First, it facilitates learning if you have ADD/ADHD (or if you simply have a short attention span), because it eliminates the need to concentrate on a lecture for 50 minutes. You can approach learning the content outside of class in whatever way works best for you: one long session or several short reading periods; in a group study session or on your own; in the middle of the night or over lunch. You are encouraged to discover what method works best for you and stick with it.

Additionally, this course format facilitates deep learning. You will *use* the facts you learn to design hypotheses, make experimental predictions, and analyze data. In this way you will practice critical thinking and scientific reasoning skills, which are fundamental to any scientific discipline. Furthermore, you will have a deeper understanding of signal transduction principles using this approach than if you simply memorized facts.

The course is divided into 6 units. The beginning of each unit will include two “Readiness Assurance Tests” (RATs): an individual test (iRAT) followed by a team test (tRAT). You will take the iRAT first. After you and all of your teammates have turned in their answers, your team will take the tRAT, which is the *exact same test*. Your grade will be based on both your individual and your team’s score.

The rest of the unit will consist of application exercises that your team will complete together, individual writing assignments, and peer writing critiques.

**Attendance and Late Policy**

Attendance is critical to your and your teammates’ success. This course requires hands-on learning during class time; if you miss a class, you can’t “catch up” by getting lecture notes from a peer. Additionally, your team members rely on your contributions, so when you miss class, you impact your teammates’ learning.

Because attendance is so critical to your success, there is a 3-absence grace period. **If you miss more than 3 class periods, you will lose 5% of your total course grade for each additional missed class.** There are no “excused” absences. In the case of extreme circumstances (such as a substantial medical emergency), please talk to me about how you can make up the work you missed and earn back the points that were deducted. **This conversation must happen in person or over the phone**; a conversation over email is not sufficient to earn back points from an absence incurred because of an emergency.

Additionally, it is important that you arrive to class on time. If you arrive to class more than 3 minutes late, you will be marked as “Late.” Two “lates” equal one absence.

## Communication

## Communication outside of class will occur largely by email. If you would like to discuss something with me, stop by my office or send me an email. I will respond to emails within 24 hours. I will occasionally send communications about the class via email, so please check your email daily.

## Late Homework Policy

Late homework assignments lose 10% of the entire assignment grade for every day the assignment is late. The day the assignment is due is considered the first late day. In other words, if an assignment is due at the beginning of class and you turn it in after class on the day it was due, the assignment will lose 10%. If you turn in the assignment the day after it was due, you will lose 20% of the possible points for that assignment.

## Peer Evaluation Score

At the end of the semester, you will evaluate the contributions made by each of your teammates. You will distribute 100 points among your teammates. Team members who contributed more should receive more points than team members who contributed less. For example, in a team of 4 (Mary, Susan, Allen, Peter), Mary may receive the following scores: 30 from Susan, 34 from Allen, and 31 from Peter. Thus, Mary’s Peer Evaluation Score is 30 + 34 + 31 = 95. The Peer Evaluation Score is used to adjust the Team Performance Score. In the example above, Mary will receive 95% of her Team Performance Score.

The entire class will determine the minimum (min) and maximum (max) limits for the Peer Evaluation Score, to ensure that no one receives substantially more or less than their Team’s Performance Score.

## Exams

Exams are strictly individual; there are no team exams. Exams will cover material from pre-class content (including readings from the textbook and articles, and videos), in-class activities, and homework assignments. **Exams may be rescheduled only by my PRIOR approval, at least 2 days before the exam.** In the case of an emergency, contact me immediately. Emergencies will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

## Team Collections-based Video Assignment

Businesses, including the institutions that employ scientists, increasingly have the need to share information in a digital format, including videos, to reach a broader audience. Indeed, some of the major museums are publishing short, fun, informative videos (e.g. the weekly [Brain Scoop](https://www.youtube.com/user/thebrainscoop) at the Field Museum of Natural History). To help you become familiar with this presentation format, in your teams, you will create a **3-5 minute video** that describes your focal museum collection and its scientific importance.

**Audience:** This video is a candidate for posting on our museum’s blog and for presenting at the fall scientific research conference at Earlham College. Therefore, your audience will include diverse members from experts in your taxonomic group to laypersons. You will need to tell an engaging story using accessible language so that a family can mostly understand it, with enough detail to make it worth an expert listening in.

Be sure to **address the following questions**:

* What are the major strengths of the collection, including its size, major collectors, most active time period, and most common localities of specimens. (You should use graphs where appropriate.)
* How are specimens preserved, collected and organized for this type of collection?
* Choose at least one interesting or unique specimen and describe it.
* Describe at least one publication that has used specimens from this collection.

**Learning Goals for the Collections-based Video Assignment** synergize with the course learning goals and are as follows:

* Present scientific information in an engaging way using modern technology to reach a diverse audience—without over-simplifying
* Gather data from the physical museum collections and database software

## Research Grant Proposal

For the Research Grant Proposal, you will write a proposal to use museum specimens to answer a research question. To start, you will choose one current paper (published in 2011 or later) on any topic that uses museum specimens to answer a research question—this can’t be one of the papers assigned in class and must be **approved by Heather**.

**Document 1--Introduction:** Based on this current paper, you will write an introduction for your proposal detailing how the current paper fits within the previous literature. You will identify the current paper’s main question and conclusions, using key evidence from the paper to support the claims, and you will critically identify any weaknesses. 2 pages max

**Document 2--Project Description:** You will identify an unanswered question that is raised by the current paper (from your introduction) and you will develop a project proposal to answer the question using museum specimens. This can be a small project you could accomplish, or a larger project beyond your current capacity. Your project description should address [paragraph #2](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_2.jsp#IIC2d) of the NSF Grant Proposal Guide’s content section in the requirements for project descriptions:

The Project Description should outline the general plan of work, including the broad design of activities to be undertaken, and, where appropriate, provide a clear description of experimental methods and procedures. Proposers should address what they want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue if the project is successful. The project activities may be based on previously established and/or innovative methods and approaches, but in either case must be well justified. These issues apply to both the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions.

2 pages max

**Document 3—Budget:** Prepare a budget itemizing anticipated expenses incurred only by the grant, including supplies and travel; but not salary that are associated with your proposed project. 1 page max

**For documents 1-3, you should follow the Proposal Margin and Spacing Requirements and Page Formatting in the** [NSF Proposal Guide](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappguide/nsf13001/gpg_index.jsp)

**Document 4—Application Cover Page** (1 page)

Your name

Title of project

Proposed Start Date and End Date (maximum 12 months)

List of specimens you require and the museums that hold them

**Learning Goals for the Research Grant Proposal** synergize with the course learning goals and are as follows:

* Connect current research to prior research.
* Demonstrate the ability to read a primary research article and distill the important points.
* Practice asking “What Next” questions and propose experiments to test a hypothesis (demonstrate familiarity with techniques and experimental design).

**Grades**

Your final grade will depend on three factors: Individual Performance, Team Performance, and Peer Evaluation. In the first week, the whole class will determine, by consensus, how much the final grade will be affected by Individual and Team Performance scores. Additionally, the class will determine the weight of each type of assignment. Finally, your Team Performance score will be modified by a Peer Evaluation Score, which is determined by an end-of-course peer evaluation.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Grade Component | Percentage | Grading Scale:  A+/A: 93-100  A-: 90-92  B+: 87-89  B: 83-86  B-: 80-82  C+: 77-79  C: 73-76  C-: 70-72  D+: 67-69  D: 63-66  D-: 60-62  F: <60 |
| **Individual Performance**  iRATs  Homework Assignments  Exams (3 total)  Research Grant Proposal | **50-75%**  10-25%  10-25%  15-25%  10-25% |
| **Team Performance**  tRATs  In-Class Exercises  Collections Video | **25-30%**  5-20%  5-20%  5-20% |
| **TOTAL** | **100%** |
| **Peer Evaluation Score** | Peer Evaluation Score  min = \_\_90\_\_\_\_\_  max = \_\_100\_\_\_\_\_ |

## The Earlham Writing Center

The Earlham Writing Center is dedicated to providing Earlham students with advice and resources about writing. Students will meet one-on-one with trained consultants who will contribute feedback to writers at any stage of the writing process: brainstorming, drafting, researching, revising, and polishing. Consultants will begin with the writers’ needs and concerns. Please come prepared with questions and specific concerns associated with your writing – have an idea of what you would like to focus on with the specific piece of writing that you bring in. We will use our knowledge and expertise to teach you how to recognize strengths and weakness so you may effectively improve your own work.

You can enjoy free, walk-in service in the basement of Lilly Library from 8-11PM Sunday through Thursday with additional hours on Sunday from 2-5PM. In addition to dropping by, you may also schedule an appointment up to 10 days in advance using the online scheduler found on our website: www.earlham.edu/writing-center/ . On the Writing Center website you can also find dozens of resources, videos, and presentations to help you with your writing.

## Disability accommodations

Students with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, visual, hearing, etc.) must request an accommodation statement from the Academic Enrichment Center and provide a copy to me before learning accommodations can be made. If you need a learning accommodation for this course, you must visit the Academic Enrichment Center within the first two weeks of the semester to begin the process.

## Earlham College Policy on Academic Integrity

 “The College trusts students who enroll at Earlham to be honest seekers of truth and knowledge. This trust is extended to all students by other students and by teachers, and is manifested in a variety of forms. . . Students must be mindful that, although Earlham encourages cooperative and collaborative, rather than competitive, modes of learning, one's work must still be one's own, unless explicitly assigned to a group. Giving or receiving aid inappropriately on assignments and tests, or plagiarizing by using another person's words or ideas without credit, constitutes a serious breach of our trust in one another and in the integrity of the search for truth.”

Learning to think for yourself, assess information judiciously, and speak and write effectively in your own voice is at the heart of a liberal arts education and global citizenship. Treasure and cultivate these skills. Papers and other work, including digital creations, downloaded or copied from other sources, or in which words or ideas belonging to others have been deliberately misrepresented as your own, will receive an automatic F, as they thwart your learning process and damage the integrity of knowledge-discovery. If you have questions about how to find, integrate, and properly cite sources, never hesitate to ask for help.

An excellent place to find help in knowing when and how to cite others' work appropriately can be found on the Libraries page: http://library.earlham.edu/friendly.php?s=academic\_integrity. The site also includes Earlham's full statement on academic integrity and procedures for addressing academic violations of the Student Code of Conduct.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Week** | **Monday** | **Wednesday** | **Friday** |
| **Care of Collections Section** | | | | |
| **Intro** | **1** |  | **Aug 27**  Intro,  Team formation, Grade Weights | **Aug 29**  Practice RATs  Handwriting  Collections tour |
| **Unit I**  **Organization of Collections** | **2**  **Sep 1** | Labels (Field to Drawer), software, phylogeny, georeferencing |  |  |
| **3**  **Sep 8** |  |  |  |
| **Unit II**  **Agents of**  **Deterioration** | **4**  **Sep 15** | Physical, chemical, biological |  |  |
| **5**  **Sep 22** |  |  |  |
| **Unit III**  **Policies and Permits** | **6**  **Sep 29** | Accession, Loan, Permitting | Videography Workshop |  |
| **7**  **Oct 6** | Video Outline Due (end of class) | Video Script Due (end of class) | Video Worksession |
| **8**  **Oct 13** | **Video DUE**  **Reflection?** | **EXAM 1**  (Units 1-3) | No Class: Early Semester Break |
| **Use of Collections Section** | | | | |
| **Unit IV**  **DNA Analysis** | **9**  **Oct 20** |  |  | **Collections Tours, Sat Oct 25th** —Homecoming Weekend |
| **10**  **Oct 27** |  |  |  |
| **Unit V**  **Chemical Analysis** | **11**  **Nov 3** | **Paper selection due** |  | Last day to drop a course |
| **12**  **Nov 10** | **Background DUE for peer review** |  |  |
| **Unit VI**  **Physical Analysis and Miscellaneous** | **13**  **Nov 17** | **Background DUE to Heather** |  |  |
| **14**  **Nov 24** | **Fall Break** | | |
| **15**  **Dec 1** |  |  | **Project Description DUE for peer review** |
| **16**  **Dec 8** | **Budget Due for peer review** |  | **4-document proposal DUE to Heather (max 6 pages)**  Last day of class |
|  | **Dec 15** | **8:00 am**  **Final Exam** |  |  |

**EXAM II –WHEN IS THIS SCHEDULED?**

(Units 4-6)

**Introduction goals**:

* Motivate to be in the class
  + Importance of museums
    - Talk by Helgen—**brain scoop is better (but save the where did we get all the dead animals part for later)**
    - Video of what its like to be a curator? Probably better to select a few Brain Scoops
      * Corrie Moreau on ants: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWWw3SHCIAw>
      * Squirrel McNastyface

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iko2eExc08>

* + What is a curator (both the titles used in different museums and a sample list of duties Buck reading in The New Museum Registration Methods)
    - **ASSIGNMENT:** Read article, find a job ad for a collections manager in a natural history collection and AS A TEAM?? highlight the duties in that job ad that are also on the reading’s generic list of duties, note any duties in the ad that are *not* in the generic list…but is this significant? Not really…so maybe do it as individuals and report as a team on new duties and consistent duties🡪use class time to get into the collections rooms
    - Could also use the table in Developing Staff Resources for Managing Collections
  + Get them into the collections rooms!
* Practice a RAT (half done)

Topics to cover:

**Care of Collections**

**Unit I**: **Theory and Organization of Collections**

Accession, Loan, Permitting

Theory of Collections Paper

Biological Voucher

Field Collection—could go in the second half of the semester too, but it has a lot to do with labeling, so could go here

Labels (Field to Drawer), software, phylogeny, georeferencing

Controversy around collecting—use recent science article🡪and the brain scoop response: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nS8suhK-c5I

**Unit II:** **Agents of Deterioration**

IPM

Physical, chemical, biological

**Unit III:** Policies and Permits? Maybe collecting? Also serving the Public: Use Nina Simon TedEx talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aIcwIH1vZ9w

**Use of Collections:** (probably put DNA or Chemical last because it’s probably harder to understand than physical/morphological work)

DNA analysis—phylogenetics, population genetics, genomics

Chemical analysis: include isotopes, pesticides, heavy metals)

Physical analysis: Morphology—CT scans, baby mammoth?? (Climate Change)

pXRF, DNA and isotope analysis.  We are experimenting with 3D printing,

Video about using biodiversity collections to understand evolution: Palaeobiologist Dr Anjali Goswami (UCL Genetics, Evolution and Environment and UCL Earth Sciences) explains what we can learn about biodiversity from the unique collection housed at UCL's Grant Museum of Zoology.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SNXMPUYvdfw&list=PLXXq6t7B9L\_7itwvL8hG9fGKxdcIyRi0Z&index=15

**Grading**

Exams (20% each)---------------------------------------------------------------------40%

Final Project ----------------------------------------------------------------------------20%

**Total**: 60%

Individual Assignments and Tests -----------------------------------------------15-25

Team Assignments and Tests ----------------------------------------------------15-25

**Total**: 40%

Need to include some way to reflect—do a learning goals activity on day one, then have them review it mid-course and end-of-course

**Readings or Videos:**

**Theoretical Basis of Collections Management**

**Article by Simmons—**very math heavy, but an activity would be to classify the different types of deterioration as reversible or not and to have them decide where on the diagram their collection is now and what steps should be taken to move it out of that space, to prioritize the steps and so on.

I actually really like this diagram now that I think of it. It separates out growth, order and deterioration from each other so you could decide how to prioritize them and figure out where you collection is on each scale…

**Changing significance and definition of the biological voucher—article**

**Type specimen video**

**Collecting Protocols**

# [Volume 8 -](http://www.abctaxa.be/volumes/volume-8-manual-atbi) Manual on Field Recording Techniques and Protocols for All Taxa Biodiversity Inventories (2010) Jutta Eymann, et al.

Chapter 4 - Individual records and the associated data: information standards and protocols

**GLOSSARY**

In purple paperback Developing Staff Resources for Managing Collections

**Scientific Papers (Use)**

Lecture by Kris Helgen: Museums, Biodiversity and the Anthropocene

Studies characterizing biological variation and diversity, which are enormously valuable to science and society, have for centuries been the mainstay biological usage for natural history museum collections. Even with rapidly changing technology, especially involving genomic techniques, these traditional uses (systematics, biogeography) remain the principal collections-based disciplinary emphases for biological research programs in natural history museums. Studies relevant to modern environmental change, and health and disease, among others, also represent important uses for museum collections, but these receive less focal attention within natural history institutions, collections, or curator-led research programs. Very large economic (and other) impacts of rapidly changing environments, climates, and disease landscapes in the Anthropocene highlight a need for organized efforts to expand natural history research programs to incorporate additional uses of collections as “core business” that can complement studies of systematic biology. Indeed, critical documentation of Anthropocene impacts, and the future of natural history museums, including public impressions of their relevance, may depend on it.

http://www.si.edu/consortia/castlelectureseriesmarch192014/

Link to: Gardner et al. (2009) Shifting latitudinal clines in avian body size correlate with global warming in Australian passerines. Proc R Soc. B. 276(1674: )3845-3852

[http://rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/276/1674/3845.full](http://rspb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/276/1674/3845.full" \t "_blank)

Brain Scoop on Olinguito <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=074AGwZF8ho>

Also recommended Van Buskirk et al 2010) Declining body sizes in North American birds associated with climate change. Oikos 119(6)1047-1055

[http://www.researchgate.net/publication/227668742\_Declining\_body\_sizes\_in\_North\_American\_birds\_associated\_with\_climate\_change/file/3deec51991002edc72.pdf](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/227668742_Declining_body_sizes_in_North_American_birds_associated_with_climate_change/file/3deec51991002edc72.pdf" \t "_blank)

**Other Resources:**

* [http://www.spnhc.org/19/publications](http://www.spnhc.org/19/publications" \t "_blank)

Conserve O Grams: <http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/publications/conserveogram/cons_toc.html>

As for references for collection management:

* 1. Storage of Natural History Collections: Ideas and Practical Solutions, edited by C.L. Rose and A.R. de Torres; available from the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections
* 2. Manual of Curatorship: A Guide to Museum Practice, edited by J.M.A. Thompson, published by Butterworth Heinemann but I believe it's available from the American Association of Museums
* 3. Managing the Moder Herbarium: An Interdisciplinary Approach, edited by D.A. Metsger and S.C. Byers; also available for the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections

• Bucks and Gilmore. 2010. Museum Registration Methods 5th

• Merritt and Gardner. 2004. AAM Guide to Collections Planning.

• National Parks Service Storage Guide:

Ed.

ß http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/publications/mhi/CHAP7.pdf

• PastPerfect Database Tutorial Manual

ß http://museumsoftware.com/download/pp4-5.pdf

• Small Museums Cataloguing Manual, 4th

. Ed.:

ß <http://www.mavic.asn.au/assets/Small_Museums_Cataloguing_Manual_4th.pdf>

**Guiding questions for responses in readings and creative assignments:**

Part 1 (Weeks 1 & 2): Institutions with Collections

Public Trust

Mission and collection plans

Collections Policies

Reading 1:

AAM Guide: Building the Intellectual Framework, the Planning Process

Article: Developing a Collections Management Policy

B & G: Section 2 (Collections Policies and Ad Hoc Policies), Section 4 (p.193-4), Section 7

(393-426, 448-471)

Reading Response 1 questions:

1. How does public trust impact the creation and maintenance of a collection?

2. Explain the significance of defined staff roles in the creation of a collections policy.

Part 2 (Week 3 & 4): Shaping Collections

Accessioning

De-accessioning

Reading 2:

AAM Guide: Writing the collections plan, Museum Politics

Article: National Parks Service Deed of Gift, NASA Satellite article

B & G: Section 3 (p.44-58, 100-119, 194-5, 234-276)

Small Museum Catalog Manual (43-64)

Reading response 2 questions:

1. How can artifact provenance influence accession and collection use?

2. Examine the connection between proper accessioning and de-accessioning practices.

Part 3 (Week 5 & 6): Collections Information

Cataloguing

Records systems

Collections databases

Reading 3 (Week 7):

Article: How Do We Select a Collections Management System

B & G: Section 4 (p. 149-189)

Past Perfect PDF (Museumsoftware.com link) (1-18)

Reading Response 3 questions:

1. How does the nature of the collection influence an institution’s records system?

2. Explain the significance of consistency in museum collections data entry.

Part 4 (Weeks 8 & 9): Collections Management

Numbering systems

Storage

Insurance

Loans

Inventory control

Reading 4:

Article: Checklist for Planning the Shipment of Museum Objects, Packing Museum Object for

Shipment, Crating Museum Objects for Shipment, Use of Acryloid B-72 Lacquer for Labeling

Museum Objects

B & G: Section 1 (p. 19), Section 3 (p. 120-133), Section 4 (p.196-200) Section 5 (p. 205-208,

234-276, 293, 315-346)

Small Museum Catalog Manual (29-42)

National Parks Service Storage Guide (1-48)

Reading Response 4 questions:

1. How can multiple numbering systems impact a collections inventory project?

2. Explain the relationship between storage, access, and safety in museum collections.

Part 5: Collections Access and Use

Accessibility

Exhibits and research

Electronic access

Reading 5:

Article: Access Policy and Rules, Collections Issues in Exhibitions

B & G: Section 4 (p. 184-190, 200-202, 278-284

Reading Response 5 questions:

1. How can digital access impact interpretation of collections?

2. Explain the role of provenance in the digital age.

MUSE 704

Written Assignment 1

Be the Trustee: Establishing a Collection

Imagine you are a private collector or are founding a museum. Compile a real or virtual

collection of at least 10 objects of your choosing. By mid-term, when you will present your

collection to the class, it should be expanded to include 20-30 items.

What is the scope of your collection? What kinds of things are being collected, for what

purpose? How does the collection support the mission of the institution that owns it?

Write a short (less than one page) description of your institution/its mission (if applicable) and

the collection and draft scope of collections that details its purpose and can guide its future

growth.

MUSE 704

Written Assignment 2

Be the Registrar: Assuring the Usefulness of a Collection

A collection is only as good as what is known about it. Without accurate, associated

information, collections items are only objects and the collection is just a bunch of “stuff.”

What kinds of information must be known about your collection in order to verify its legality,

preserve its integrity, and guarantee its usefulness so it can fulfill its purpose?

Create a basic catalogue sheet or database record for your collection. Complete entries for at

least three items in your collection.

MUSE 704

Written Assignment 3

Be the Curator: Refining a Collection

For a variety of reasons, a collection must change over time in order to remain viable and/or to

ensure it supports a museum’s mission.

Imagine you are a curator. How does your collection need to change? What needs to be added,

what needs to be removed? How do these changes improve the collection?

Identify 2-4 collection items to de-accession (your “hit list”). Write a proposal making the

case for their removal to convince your museum director and board of trustees. Refer to your

collections plan. Include the means by which you will dispose of the de-accessioned materials.

Identify 2-4 key objects you feel should be added to the collection (your “wish list”). Describe

how they would enhance the collection and make it better serve its purpose/support the mission.

MUSE 704

Written Assignment 4

Be the Collections Manager: Activating a Collection

Bringing a collection and the public (or some other constituency) together is often necessary for

realizing the collection’s usefulness/fulfilling its purpose.

Please develop one of the following for your collection:

• Access Policy: Who has access to collection material and information, for what purposes,

under whose authorization?

• Loan Policy: Who may borrow from the collection, for what purpose, by whose authority,

with what restrictions?

• Exhibit Plan: What is the exhibit about, who is it for, what objects are included, what

information is shared?

1. ## Some text, specifically regarding team-based learning, is borrowed from Jayme Dyer’s syllabus for Signal Transduction in Cell Biology (BIOL 382) Spring 2014.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-1)