



## Glossary

### **Accession/Accessioning:**

The formal and legal documentation of an incoming repository transaction, including a gift, purchase, exchange, transfer, or field collection. Also includes establishment of legal title and/or custody.

### **Accession file:**

File that contains the documentation for each incoming repository transaction, including all legal records. Often includes the documentation of a deaccession.

### **Accession number:**

A unique number assigned to a collection (or, in some cases, an object) for purposes of identification not description (Buck and Gilmore 1998; Griset and Kodack 1999).

### **Accession register:**

System, either in manual/paper form and/or electronic form, used by repositories to keep track of all accessions.

### **Acetone:**

A colorless, highly flammable liquid that is soluble in water. Commonly used as a solvent for adhesives.

### **Acid-free:**

"A material that has a pH of 7.0 or higher (an alkaline), since acids can weaken cellulose in paper, cloth, and board and lead to embrittlement" (Griset and Kodack 1999:155).

### **Acquisition/Acquisitioning:**

A process to obtain custody of an object, document, or collection that involves physical transfer.

### **Acryloid B72 (also Paraloid B72):**

Acrylic resin used as a consolidant, as a barrier material or base coat to label objects, and as an adhesive.

### **Archival quality:**

"Materials that have been manufactured of inert materials specifically designed to extend the life of artifacts and records by protecting them from agents of deterioration" (Griset and Kodack 1999:156).

### **Associated records:**



## MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

"Original records (or copies thereof) that are prepared, assembled and document efforts to locate, evaluate, record, study, preserve or recover a prehistoric or historic resource" (36 CFR 79.4(a)(2)).

### **Catalog:**

A listing of objects or groups of associated records with descriptive details, including provenience information that is arranged systematically.

### **Collecting plan:**

Term used by repositories, it is a document, usually part of a repository's acquisition policy that specifically details what the repository is going to collect in order to fulfill its mission, goals, and scope of collections.

### **Collecting strategy:**

A plan that details what is going to be collected during archeological fieldwork. Can include details on artifact class/type, number, location, and sampling.

### **Collections management:**

The management and care of collections with concern for their long term physical well-being and safety. Includes issues of conservation, access and use, and inventory, as well as management of the overall composition of the collection(s) in relation to the repository's mission and goals.

### **Collections manager:**

A trained professional who is responsible for any and all aspects of collections care. Specific responsibilities vary by institution, but can include day-to-day care of and access to collections, cataloging, and information management.

### **Condition report:**

An accurate, descriptive report of an object's or document's state of preservation at a moment in time. Assists in planning for conservation treatment.

### **Conservation:**

Measures taken to prolong the life of an object or document and its physical, historic, and scientific integrity as long as possible in its original form. May involve chemical stabilization or physical strengthening. Treatments should be fully tested, reviewed, and recorded by professional conservators.

### **Conservator:**

A person trained in the theoretical and practical aspects of preventive conservation and in performing treatments to prolong the lives of objects and documents. Often specializes in a particular class of objects or materials.



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Consolidant:**

A chemical used to strengthen the structural material of an object.

**Corrosion:**

An electrochemical process involving gradual destruction of an object, usually metals, through change in the object's material(s).

**Cultural resources:**

Materials or remains, including historic and archaeological objects that compose a culture's non-renewable heritage. Also includes ethnographic objects, historic and prehistoric buildings, structures, sites, and landscapes.

**Culling:**

The process of selecting and removing objects from a group. Usually entails the rejection of items with no scientific or historical value to the group.

**Curation:**

The process of "managing and preserving a collection according to professional museum and archival practices" (36 CFR 79.4(b)).

**Curation agreement:**

Document/contract between two parties (one usually a repository) detailing the curation of a collection(s). It includes details on the state of the collection when given to the repository, work to be done at the repository, responsibilities to the collection for both parties, costs, ownership, and issues/details on access and use of the collection.

**Curator:**

A trained professional who is usually responsible for the care, exhibition, research, and enhancement of repository collections. Specific duties vary between repositories.

**Deaccession:**

The legal, permanent removal of an object, document, specimen, or collection from a repository. Requires full documentation of the process.

**Deed of Gift:**

A contract that transfers ownership from one person or institution to another. Should include any conditions placed on the gift, although the receiving repository generally discourages these.

**Destructive analysis:**

General term for any type of scientific analysis that destroys or alters the sample during the process. In archeology, destructive analysis techniques include thin-section analysis, DNA analysis, C14 dating, thermoluminescence dating, and metallography.



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Ecofacts:**

Non-artifactual remains and organics that have cultural relevance. Includes faunal or floral remains and soil samples. (See also non-cultural artifacts or materials.)

**Historic preservation:**

The management and preservation of buildings, sites, structures, objects, and landscapes that have historical or cultural significance.

**Loan:**

Delivery of personal or institutional property by one person or institution to another in trust for a specific purpose. This is done with the understanding that when that purpose is accomplished the property is returned to the owner.

**Lot:**

A group of artifacts identified by provenience, material, and/or object name. Provenience should be as specific as is recorded by the archeologist. Material may not be mixed, such as glass and ceramics. Object name may be used to separate out different types of objects of the same material from the same provenience (e.g., flakes, projectile points).

**Material remains:**

"Artifacts, objects, specimens and other physical evidence that are excavated or removed in connection with efforts to locate, evaluate, document, study, preserve or recover a prehistoric or historic resource" (36 CFR 79.4(a)(1)).

**Memorandum of Agreement (MOA):**

Document prepared under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. A MOA details an agreement between parties (such as the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and a federal agency) on what may be done to resolve any adverse effects of an action on the cultural environment.

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):**

An agreement between a federal agency and a curation facility for curation of federally owned collections.

**Metadata:**

"Refers to documentation about data, such as descriptions of electronic files that effectively tell you the format, structure, contents, and authority of the materials. Metadata standards, such as the Dublin Core and the Encoded Archival Description Standards, are developed and being adopted or adapted." (Vogt O'Connor 1999:49).

**Non-cultural artifacts or materials:**



## MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

General term applied to items collected at archeological sites that are natural (not man-made), but still have cultural or archeological significance. Includes soil samples, shell, and floral remains. (See also Ecofacts)

### **pH level /pH scale:**

A logarithmic measure of the acidity or alkalinity of material. The pH scale goes from 0 to 14 with each number indicating a ten-fold increase or decrease from the next number. Neutral is pH 7. Numbers below neutral indicate acidity. Numbers above neutral indicate alkalinity.

### **Phase I, II, III:**

Terms primarily used in contract archeology or cultural resources management to note the type of archeological fieldwork being carried out. Phase I typically refers to site reconnaissance survey and mapping to find and inventory sites. Phase II refers to intensive survey, collection, and site testing. Phase III refers to full excavation or "mitigation" for data recovery. Collections are made in each phase, although Phase III usually yields the largest and most complete collections based on the collecting strategy.

### **Polyethylene (PE):**

A chemically stable, flexible, transparent or translucent plastic. May be found in the form of film, sheets, foam, and rods. It is widely used for making archival quality plastic bags and sleeves.

### **Polypropylene:**

Similar to polyethylene only stiffer and more heat resistant. Commonly used to make sleeves for slides or film or small containers.

### **Polyurethane:**

An unstable polymer that should not be used for storage or in repositories. Tends to off-gas, which can create chemical reactions on or in objects.

### **Polyvinyl Acetate (PVA) emulsion:**

A colorless, transparent polymer of vinyl acetate upon drying that is used in adhesives.

### **Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC):**

A plastic polymer. Not as chemically stable as other plastics because it may emit hydrochloric acid as it deteriorates. Its use for preservation is limited for that reason.

### **Provenance:**

The background and history of ownership for an object or records. Generally used for works of art, historical objects, and archival records.

### **Provenience:**



## MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In archeology, it is the specific geographic or spatial location (either in two-dimensional or three-dimensional space) where an object was found.

### **Registrar:**

An individual responsible for the development and implementation of procedures and policies affecting the acquisition, management, and disposition of collections. A registrar also usually maintains all collection documentation, including inventory and loans. Specific duties vary between institutions.

### **Repository:**

"A facility such as a museum, archeological center, laboratory or storage facility that is managed by a university, college, museum, or other educational or scientific institution, a federal, state, or local government agency, or Indian tribe that can provide professional, systematic, and accountable curatorial services on a long-term basis." (36 CFR 79, Section 79.4(j)).

### **Research design:**

A systematic plan for a research project. Usually includes formulating a strategy to resolve a research question(s). It also details the methods for collecting, recording, processing, and analyzing the recovered data in the field and laboratory.

### **Sampling:**

A process of selecting a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population. The selection process may be based on a mathematical probability theory, a regularized pattern, or existing knowledge of data patterning.

### **Silica gel:**

A granular substance that has high moisture absorbing and emitting properties. It is often used as a moisture stabilizer in packing, storing, and exhibiting items that are sensitive to humidity.

### **Soil samples:**

A quantity of dirt, site matrix, or sediments collected for physical or chemical analysis.

### **State Archaeologist:**

The archaeologist, responsible for managing the archaeological resources for the state.

### **State Archaeological Site (also State Site):**

A land or water area owned or leased by or subject to the paramount right of the state, county, township, or municipality where there are objects or other evidence of archaeological interest. This term includes all aboriginal mounds and earthworks, ancient burial grounds, prehistoric ruins, historical remains, and other archaeological features on state land or on land subject to the paramount rights of the state.



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO):**

"The state official, designated by the governor, to carry out the functions ascribed to the SHPO under the National Historic Preservation Act. SHPOs receive and administer matching grants from NPS to support their work and pass through to others. They identify historic properties and nominate them to the National Register. They maintain inventories, do plans, and consult with others about historic preservation." (King 1998:267).

**Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO):**

"The official of a federally recognized Indian tribe that oversees the tribe's historic preservation program, particularly where the tribe has been approved by NPS to carry out all or some of the functions of the SHPO within the external boundaries of its reservation." (King 1998:267).

References

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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Links:

University of California at Santa Barbara anthropology glossary

Southern Methodist University Anthropology glossary

(Adapted from <http://www.cr.nps.gov/archeology/collections/glossary.htm> )