

## SNOMNH ARCHAEOLOGY: PROCESSING AND CATALOGING INSTRUCTIONS FOR INCOMING COLLECTIONS

These instructions are meant to assist personnel in the processing and cataloging of archaeological collections according to SNOMNH standards. Cleaning, sorting, cataloging, labeling, bagging, and boxing of collections are important to the total process of collection curation. Proper cleaning techniques are necessary for artifact research and collection of analytical data. If any questions arise while reading this manual, please contact the Collection Manager.

### **Whatever you do, don't lose provenience!**

It is mandatory that all provenience information, including field lot/bag number (and catalog number if already assigned), stays with the correct lot of artifacts as they are washed and dried!!! Only **one** provenience at a time is washed. Remember to use extreme care to maintain the correct provenience information with the artifacts.

### **Washing**

Prior to cataloging, most, if not all, artifacts should be cleaned. Exceptions might include friable materials, artifacts found in contexts where residue from use is preserved on the object, or whole or partial vessels that still may contain food residue.

Before washing, you should lay out the dry artifacts on a sieve or tray so they can be examined. Be sure to investigate ALL foil packets and vials. Foil packets with wood, charcoal, or soil samples should be left open so the contents can dry.

Once all of the artifacts from one provenience have been examined and you are ready to proceed, use the following protocol:

- When washing, **use only tap water. DO NOT use soap.**
- DO NOT try to reconstruct any artifact unless and until you have talked to the Collection Manager.
- Avoid getting **shell** wet at all. Carefully remove as much dirt as possible without damaging the shell. You may use a dry sponge or soft toothbrush to remove loose dirt. For large chunks of dirt, lightly spray water onto dry dirt (be careful not to get the shell wet). Once the dirt is moist, carefully remove it with a blunt wooden pick. Be very gentle.
- **Bone** can be gently rinsed to remove excess soil or clay. **DO NOT** let bone soak (especially friable bone fragments). You may use either your fingers or a soft artist's brush to remove soil or clay residue, but be gentle so as not to leave damaging brush marks. If the bone is very friable, do not get it wet. Brush off loose dirt with a dry artist brush.
- **Pottery** should be investigated for cooking residue **PRIOR** to cleaning. Check with the Collection Manager. Pottery may be delicately washed with your fingers, a damp sponge, or a soft artist's brush, being careful not to leave damaging brush marks. A sponge is preferable to a brush. Make sure the pottery is completely clean, including the edges.
- Special care needs to be taken with **pipe bowls** and **pipe stem** fragments. **DO NOT** clean and please save all of the contents *in situ*, if possible.

- **Lithics** are to be washed thoroughly using a soft toothbrush. Make sure each piece is completely clean, including the edges. Exceptions will be artifacts that have been previously identified for use wear and/or residue studies.
- **Groundstone** that has been utilized or has grinding areas should not be washed, as future researchers may wish to perform pollen or other residue analyses. If needed, dry brushing is recommended to clean groundstone (to remove excess dirt). Worn or utilized areas should be avoided when the artifact is cleaned, to preserve any residue left on the surface.
- **DO NOT** clean **C-14 samples or charcoal**. They need to be completely dry before bagging for storage, so open the samples so they can dry. There must be complete provenience information with the samples. **DO NOT** place paper labels directly with samples, as paper can contaminate samples for radiocarbon dating. Once dry, wrap the C-14 sample in aluminum foil. Label the foil with the catalog number, using a permanent pen. Place this in a **4-mil** zip lock bag or glass vial with the catalog tag.
- Historic artifacts may need special treatment. Iron, copper, and other metal artifacts should **NOT** be washed. Instead, dry brush with a stiff artist brush or a soft toothbrush. All glass and ceramics may be washed in tap water with a soft toothbrush. However, check the surface of each prior to washing – do not wash if any residue is present on the surface (for possible future analysis) or if the object is friable. Check with the Collection Manager if you have any questions.
- **Daub and limestone** should NOT be cleaned at all.
- **Hematite, limonite, and kaolin** – check with the Collection Manager prior to cleaning.
- **DO NOT** throw anything away from inside the artifact bag without the explicit permission of the Collection Manager or the Curator (or the agency's Principle Investigator for incoming material). This includes pieces of torn paper with various information written on them, specimen cards, etc. Cut the provenience label from the original artifact field bag (as well as any other sections that may have writing on them) and place it on the drying rack, along with written objects inside the bag, with the properly provenienced artifacts. Consult the Collection Manager or Principle Investigator before throwing anything away.

### **Drying**

When placing artifacts on drying screens, use dividers to separate various proveniences on the screen. Trays may be used to separate various materials from the same provenience. Remember accurate provenience information must be maintained for each artifact or batch of artifacts.

**Never leave artifacts without provenience information.** Accuracy is a **MUST**. Cut the provenience label from the original artifact field bag and place it on the drying rack with the properly provenienced artifacts.

### **Sorting<sup>1</sup>**

When the artifacts are completely dry, sort the artifacts within each provenience by function/material type. Once the artifacts have been sorted, they should be cataloged, labeled, bagged, and boxed.

Basic material categories include:

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<sup>1</sup> See *Artifact Classification* for details on artifact types common to Oklahoma.

- Chipped Stone (including debitage/debris - primary, secondary, and tertiary flakes, and chunks/shatter, modified/utilized flakes, tools, etc). This can be further subdivided if a particular object type is more prevalent than the others (like debitage, scrapers, points, or bifaces)
- Groundstone (which can be further subdivided if needed, such as “grinding basins,” “manos,” etc)
- Pottery
- Pipes, Figurines, etc
- Shell (which can be further subdivided is needed, included decorated/undecorated)
- Bone (which is generally subdivided into worked/unworked, depending on size)
- Plant remains
- Historic artifacts (which can be further subdivided if needed if a lot of historic material is present. Otherwise, place all historic artifacts, which are bagged as specified below, in one large bag).

This list is not complete – other categories may arise based on the character of the site and assemblage. Categories should be tailored to each site and determined based on large groups of similar artifact types. Researchers tend to ask for particular material classes more often than specific proveniences. Sorting the artifacts by material classes will allow for easier access for future research.

### **Cataloging New Acquisitions**

**Before assigning catalog numbers, contact the Collection Manager to see if catalog numbers already exist for your site.**

### **Organize Field Lots by Provenience**

Prior to cataloging, lot/bag numbers from the field need to be organized by provenience so that sequential catalog numbers can be assigned. This is best done on a spreadsheet, so that the field number, provenience, and assigned catalog number can be cross-checked. Please double-check that the provenience written on the field bag matches the field notes and spreadsheet.

Arrange artifact lots in the following order to facilitate the cataloging process:

1. **Provenience.** Arrange first by provenience, including unit and level. Multiple bags from the same provenience may be combined and given the same catalog number, unless they were excavated on different dates or by different people.

2. **Excavation date and excavator.** Next arrange artifacts from one provenience by excavation date and excavator. These bags would be assigned consecutive catalog numbers.

When the lot/field bags have been placed in provenience order, assign catalog numbers.

An example follows for a fictitious site:

Lot/field bag #	Grid Coordinates	Level	Depth	Date excavated
4	N5E4	1	0-10cm	6/14/2000
5	N5E4	2	10-20cm	6/14/2000
6	N5E4	3	20-30cm	6/15/2000
3	N5E5	1	0-10cm	6/13/2000
1	N6E6	1	0-10cm	6/12/2000
2	N6E6	1	0-10cm	6/13/2000

### Identify and Describe Artifacts

The cataloger is primarily doing an inventory of what has been recovered from the archaeological project. Artifacts in each lot should be identified by material category and general descriptive information. Type names need only be included if easily recognized by the cataloger.

For example, decorated pottery should primarily be labeled as “incised,” “slipped,” “punctuate,” etc. Points should primarily be described by general shape (“triangular,” “contracting stem,” “corner-notched expanding stem,” etc, and designated spear/dart vs. arrow). Lithic objects need not be microscopically examined for use-wear. Simply note obviously utilized objects. *Researchers will modify the inventory during future analysis, if needed.* Consult the Collection Manager if you are unsure how to classify an object.

In your spreadsheet, list artifacts first by material category or functional type, then place further descriptive information for particular artifacts within that category/type in parentheses. Separate groups of artifacts with commas.

Lot/field bag #	Total # of artifacts	Catalog description
1	9	1 point (expanding stem), 8 pottery body sherds (1 incised, 2 punctate)
2	5	4 flakes (1 secondary, 3 tertiary), 1 biface
3	3	1 pottery rim sherd, 2 pottery body sherds (1 red slip)

### Assign Catalog Numbers

The SNOMNH archaeology cataloging system consists of (1) the site number/locality designation, (2) the catalog number (corresponds to a single lot), and (3) the specimen number (corresponds to a single artifact within that lot).

**Again, consult with the Collection Manager before assigning catalog numbers, in case some numbers from the site have already been used.**

**Site.** The format of the site designation varies, depending on whether the site is from a known archaeological site in Oklahoma, from another country or state, or from an unrecorded locality.

For materials from specific archaeological sites within Oklahoma, we use the U.S. trinomial site designation in which the first two numbers indicate the state in which the site is located (based on alphabetical order; Oklahoma is number 34). Next, the 2-letter county designation (always written as an upper case followed by a lower case letter) is added. Finally,

the third number is the site number assigned to each particular site by the Oklahoma Archeological Survey. An example is 34Mc104 (Woods Mound Group in McCurtain County, Oklahoma, the 104<sup>th</sup> site to be officially recorded in that county).

Consult with the Collection Manager regarding other site or locality designations. Materials from other countries are represented by a capital three-letter designation, followed by a site number (example, MEX2 for the second site or locality from Mexico for which the SNOMNH holds material). State sites are recorded in a similar fashion, although with a two-letter designation (example, NM200 for the 200<sup>th</sup> site or locality in New Mexico for which the SNOMNH holds material).

***Catalog number and specimen number.*** The catalog number corresponds to specific proveniences and/or dates of survey or excavation at each site. This number is assigned by the Collection Manager of Archaeology at SNOMNH. **These numbers must be approved by the Collection Manager prior to cataloging any artifacts**, in order to eliminate the occurrence of duplicate catalog numbers.

Each unique provenience from a site (the 3-D location of an excavation unit, feature, or object collected from a unit or feature) is assigned its own individual and unique catalog lot number (See the table below for an example). This includes piece-plotted artifacts and/or artifacts from levels that were excavated over different days (and were placed in separate bags) – every lot of artifacts with a different provenience or excavation date is assigned a unique catalog number.

Following the site number and catalog number, the number to the right of the period is a discrete number assigned to each artifact from that particular provenience (although if an object is broken into 2 or more pieces that can be reconstructed, it is bagged together and counted as one object). The specimen number is important to assign because it allows a researcher to distinguish each specific object and cross-reference past and current research. Assign specimen numbers sequentially to like groups of artifacts.

**At this point, you should start keeping two spreadsheets**, one for your basic catalog information, and one with specimen information. Excel format is preferred. This will allow the Collection Manager to easily import both your general catalog information (with basic artifact descriptions and count) and specimen data acquired during analysis directly into the Museum's database. **Both spreadsheets must be transmitted to the Collection Manager when the artifacts are deposited at the SNOMNH.**

***Example of Catalog and Specimen Spreadsheets:***

**Catalog spreadsheet:**

Accession #	Catalog #	Collector/ Excavator	Date of Collection	Provenience			Total #	Description
				Unit	Level	Depth (cm)		
Leave blank, assigned by SNOMNH	34Cz0032/1*	John Smith	2011	N3W1	1	0-10	9	1 point (expanding stem), 8 pottery body sherds
	34Cz0032/2	Ann Doe	2011	N4W2	1	0-10	4	4 flakes (1 secondary, 3 tertiary)
	34Cz0032/3	Ann Doe	2011	N4W2	2	10-20	1	1 pottery rim sherd

*\*Please include four digits in the site designation part of the catalog number.* This permits easier sorting of the database.

Additional catalog fields are highly encouraged (based on excavation records and any research performed for the final report), but are not required. Other categories that may be included in the catalog spreadsheet are comments, northing (piece-plot), easting (piece-plot), UTM coordinates, field or temporary number, grid/area, feature number, feature type, feature portion, or unit section..

## Specimen Spreadsheet

The second spreadsheet lists each specimen individually, along with the associated catalog number and the specific artifact description. *It is important to include the catalog number because this is the linking field through which our catalog and specimen databases are dynamically linked.* This allows any future researcher to easily link specimen data and provenience data for any particular artifact or provenience. Here is an example of the most basic acceptable specimen database:

Catalog Number	Specimen Number	Description	Material Class
34Cz0032/1	34Cz0032/1.1	1 point (expanding stem)	Chipped stone
34Cz0032/1	34Cz0032/1.2	1 pottery body sherd	Pottery
34Cz0032/1	34Cz0032/1.3	1 pottery body sherd	Pottery
34Cz0032/1	34Cz0032/1.4	1 pottery body sherd	Pottery
34Cz0032/1	34Cz0032/1.5	1 pottery body sherd	Pottery
34Cz0032/1	34Cz0032/1.6	1 pottery body sherd	Pottery
34Cz0032/1	34Cz0032/1.7	1 pottery body sherd	Pottery
34Cz0032/1	34Cz0032/1.8	1 pottery body sherd	Pottery
34Cz0032/1	34Cz0032/1.9	1 pottery body sherd	Pottery
34Cz0032/2	34Cz0032/2.1	1 secondary flake	Chipped stone
34Cz0032/2	34Cz0032/2.2	1 tertiary flake	Chipped stone
34Cz0032/2	34Cz0032/2.3	1 tertiary flake	Chipped stone
34Cz0032/2	34Cz0032/2.4	1 tertiary flake	Chipped stone
34Cz0032/3	34Cz0032/3.1	1 pottery rim sherd	Pottery

Acceptable entries for “Material Class” include:

Chipped Stone, Ground Stone, Pecked Stone, Mineral, Fire Cracked Rock, Pigment/Paint, Building Materials, Pottery, Clay, Bone, Fauna, Human Remains, Shell, Wood, Macrobotanical, Pollen, Soil, Dating Sample, Textile, Basketry, Metal, Glass, Ceramic, Plastic, Rubber, Hide, Unclassified, Other.

Additional specimen fields are highly encouraged, particularly if analyses have been conducted for a final report. Contact the Collection Manager if you would like an example of the fields we use in our database. Some basic fields include type name, length (cm), width (cm), thickness (mm), weight (grams), raw material, surface treatment, and temper.

Should new collections be forthcoming from a site with cataloged material already present at the SNOMNH, archaeologists are asked to contact the Collection Manager to determine what catalog number these new collection entries should start with.

## Labeling Artifacts

At the minimum, all **individually unique** or **diagnostic** artifacts should be labeled, in addition to being bagged separately with a separate catalog tag. *Common sense exception: do not label very delicate artifacts such as engraved shell or copper!* The label consists of the complete catalog-specimen number, without the extra zeros required for the database, i.e. 34Cz32/1.5.

Diagnostic artifacts are particularly important to label because of the high probability that they will either be researched or exhibited in the future. If this is the case, the objects will most likely be separated from their corresponding catalog tag, causing a higher risk of disassociating the object from its provenience information. In order to alleviate this problem, the artifacts are labeled so provenience information is not lost.

We encourage you to label as many artifacts as possible, but understand that it is impractical and inefficient for some very small artifacts (i.e., debitage and sherdlets <0.5 inches). The tools that will be needed to label artifacts properly are:

- B-72 (with Acetone and Ethanol, see below) or B-67 clear labeling lacquer (10% solution)
- Application brushes
- Acetone and/or Ethanol (for B-72) or mineral spirits (for B-67) (for cleaning brushes)
- White printing/copy paper (acid-free)
- Laser printer

## Label Template

The Collection Manager will provide the template for printing the labels. First print the entire catalog-specimen number (ex. 34Cz3/1.1) on white paper on a laser printer. Use the font Comic Sans MS, and print the labels in at least 3 different sizes (2, 3, and 4pt). By doing so, you will be able to tailor the size of the label to each individual artifact while labeling. Next, cut the appropriate-sized label(s) (cut more than 1 if you are labeling a group of objects). These will be very small, so be sure to use a contrasting-colored tabletop to place them on.

If cutting out multiple labels, it is easiest if you are right-handed to first cut down the left-hand side of the strip of labels. Then, cut horizontally between each label. After this you can cut as many labels off the strip as you feel comfortable handling at one time.

## B-72/Acetone/Ethanol Solution

At the SNOMNH, a solution of 10% Acryloid B-72 and 90% acetone/ethanol is used. Previously only acetone was used to dilute the plastic. Ethanol is added to help stop the bubbling that sometimes occurs. Acryloid B-72 is preferred over PVA (Polyvinyl Acetate) because B-72 is more durable and resistant to yellowing. B-69 is another substance that was once used (it was more durable than PVA, but still yellowed). Labels that were applied with PVA in the 1940s are now falling off artifacts at SNOMNH.

To make ~100 mL of the B-72/acetone/ethanol solution:

1. Add about 80 mL of acetone and 10 mL of ethanol to the bottle. (This does not have to be exact – anything in the range of an 80-20 or 90-10 ratio of acetone-ethanol will do. Or even closer to 50-50).
2. Add 10 g of B-72 beads to the acetone-ethanol.



3. Let the beads sit for a few days to dissolve, then stir everything up. (You can get them to dissolve faster by stirring for a long time right after you add the bead, but it is easier to anticipate when you will need more of the solution and make it in advance).

We prefer using the narrow-necked bottles for storing the solution that will be used. The narrower lids are easier to remove if some of the glue gets in the threads. Also, less of the solution is wasted if it gets dirty from the artifacts. If the solution gets too thick it can be diluted with more acetone, or if it gets too thin more B-72 beads can be added.

Blot the paintbrush along the inside of the neck, not on the top of the lid, to prevent glue build-up. Make sure to clean the rim with acetone after every use!

### **Placing the Label**

Place the label in an inconspicuous place on the artifact. Labels will go on the inside and away from the rim on pottery rim sherds. On tools, place the label on a broken edge (if present). Labels are NOT placed on the worked edges of artifacts. Your main concern is to place the label in an inconspicuous or the least aesthetic spot - where it will not be seen if an artifact is ever photographed or exhibited.

Paint a small rectangular strip of clear B-72 or B-67 base coat onto the inconspicuous area. B-72 is soluble in acetone or ethanol, whereas B-67 is soluble in mineral spirits, if you ever need to remove the label. While the base coat is still wet, gently pick the correct label up with paint brush and carefully place the label onto the wet strip. This requires lots of coordination and gets easier with practice. Finally, place a clear protective seal of B-72 (or B-67) over the label and base coat. After this has dried for a couple of minutes check to see if the label has properly adhered; gently press it down onto the artifact if there is an air bubble. Allow this to dry thoroughly. If the artifact has a rough texture, several layers of clear base coat may need to be applied to make a smooth surface to apply the label. Use good judgment for placement on the object.

### **Labeling by Hand**

The labeling process described above has been recently adopted by the SNOMNH and is the preferred method. However, labeling by hand with a Rapidograph pen and/or India ink is still acceptable (as long as it is used in conjunction with B-72 ALWAYS as a base and top coat and the white ink or strip for dark objects and acrylic paint).

**NOTE: Labeling an object does not excuse it from also receiving a catalog tag when bagged. All bags should include a catalog tag, whether or not individual objects are labeled.**



*Labeled objects*

### **Storage of Artifacts A: Bagging and Catalog Tags<sup>2</sup>**

Within each catalog number, all like artifacts should be bagged together and given a single catalog tag. Diagnostic artifacts or those liable to be easily damaged are first bagged separately and then bagged together with other like artifacts within that catalog number, in order to protect them.

For example, nine plain pottery body sherds would be placed in a single 4mm bag and given a single catalog tag. Three pottery rim sherds, however, would each first be placed in an individual bag. Then those three bags would be placed in a larger bag and given a single catalog tag.

The tools that will be needed to bag artifacts properly are:

- **Catalog/Label tags of acid free cardstock (65lb or similar) (contact the Collection Manager for templates)**
- **Pencil**
- **Assorted sizes of 4mil-polyethylene zip lock bags**
- Assorted sizes of archival boxes
- Assorted sizes of polyvinyl or glass archival vials (glass is preferred)
- Electronic scale for weighing certain artifacts
- Acid free tissue paper (unbuffered and buffered, depending on specific artifact needs. Most archaeological materials require unbuffered paper)
- Polyethylene foam (1/4-inch thick) for support of fragile objects

For the most part all you will need are the cardstock, pencil, and assorted 4 mil bags. Please only use pencil on the catalog tags.

### **Bulk Bag Like/Similar Non-diagnostic Items**

Lithic debitage, undecorated (plain) pottery body sherds, daub, burned earth, unmodified bone fragments, unmodified limestone, unmodified groundstone fragments, fire cracked rock, charred organics (corn, seeds, etc.), hematite, and limonite, etc. should each be placed in one bag with a catalog tag.

NOTE: During the sorting process, it is not necessary to separate different tempered pottery (shell, sand, grit, grog, etc.). This will be performed during the analytical process. *However, if they have been separated previously, they should remain in separate bags with unique tags. Do not lose any information from previous analysis.*

As bagging proceeds, the following need to be weighed and the weight recorded: sandstone, daub, shell fragments, limestone, burned earth, hematite, limonite, charred organics, unmodified bone.

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<sup>2</sup> See Artifact Classification for details on artifact types common to Oklahoma.



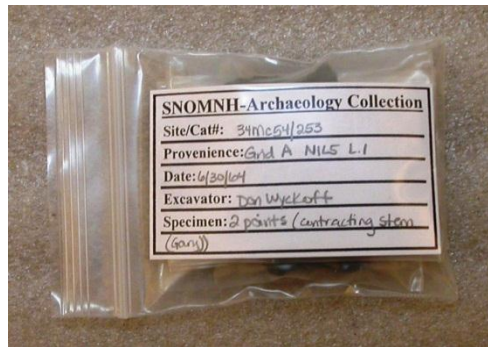
*Bulk-Bagging*

### Individually Bag Unique/Diagnostic Items

Individual bagging is done to reduce or alleviate damage to artifacts in constant contact. Items that may be individually bagged include: diagnostic pottery sherds (rim/neck sherds, body sherds with handles, base sherds, and decorated sherds), lithic tools/tool sections (points, drills, utilized flakes, etc.), modified limestone, sandstone abraders, decorated or diagnostic shell (such as shell hinges), bone tools, utilized hematite or limonite, or any exotic (non-regional) material.

Wrap worked bone and other delicate objects in polyethylene foam inside the zip lock bag to cushion it against other objects, if needed. Fragile objects should be placed in small archival boxes or in polyvinyl or glass archival vials (although be careful that the object will not break apart in the vial if jostled). In general, charcoal and seeds should be placed in a vial or box (depending on size).

If more than one diagnostic object is present from one provenience, the individually bagged objects should be placed inside one larger zip lock bag with a catalog tag. For example, each of two contracting stem points from one provenience will be contained in its own bag. These two bags will then be placed in a larger bag with the catalog tag.



*Items that are Individually Bagged and then Bagged Together*

### Packaging Delicate Items

If an object is particularly **friable** (liable to fall apart easily) or **unstable**, it should be bagged and/or boxed separately. An example of this is unmodified shell, which should be cushioned in a small archival box with acid free tissue paper to prevent it from being crushed against other objects. Another example is a complete pottery vessel, which may require a special

box be tailor-made to support it properly. Tyvek is needed for some rare artifacts, such as textiles.

When cushioning friable objects, make sure each object is supported well and that it will not shift if its box is moved. Do not wrap these objects, as unwrapping a friable object for viewing and/or inventory needs causes unneeded and excessive handling of the object. Place a catalog tag inside each box to maintain the object's provenience information. In addition, write the catalog number and provenience information on the outside of the box with an archival pen.



*Images showing custom boxes inside larger box*

**Whole pots** can either many can be boxed together in a standard sized archival box (although bagged separately with individual catalog tags and properly supported) or one may be boxed individually in a tailor-made archival box with a catalog tag if it will not fit in a standard-sized box. In either case, a thumbnail-sized digital photograph of the pot(s) should be placed inside a polyethylene sleeve on the exterior of the box to mark the presence of whole pottery in that box.



*Images showing custom pottery boxes (oversized pot at top, many smaller pots on bottom)*

### Double Bagging

Collected **charcoal**, **C-14 samples**, and **plant remains** should **NOT** be washed, but should be recorded on the catalog sheet as “charcoal sample,” “C-14 sample(s),” “seeds,” or “plant remains.” Once the opened foil packet/film canister of material has completely dried, it

should be placed in a polyvinyl or glass archival vial, which is placed in a zip lock bag with a catalog tag. Larger samples should be wrapped in aluminum foil with the catalog number labeled on the outside, prior to being bagged. Pottery with cooking residue should be bagged individually in zip lock bags. If the sample is too large to wrap, double-bag the sample (with the catalog tag placed within the outside bag, to reduce the possibility of contamination by the paper label). This double-bag process should also be used for any *processed* flotation samples, to add an extra barrier to these samples (in case a bag should break in the box).

**A GENERAL RULE: Although all objects receive their own specimen number, only diagnostic objects are individually bagged.** For example, a bag of 10 lithic debris may be described as 34Jf14/4.1-10 on the catalog tag, but the flakes are all placed together in one bag. However, this technique can ONLY be used for LIKE objects (if the debitage has been separated into primary, secondary, and tertiary flakes, then the labels and bagging method should reflect this). The same is true for multiple diagnostic artifacts. Three expanding stem points may be bagged individually, but then those bags can be placed together in one larger bag with a tag labeled 34Jf14/4.11-13.

#### **Labeling Specimen Tags (use pencil!)**

1. **Site/Cat#.** First fill in the site, catalog, and specimen number(s). Be sure that the county designation and the catalog number are written correctly. The first letter of the 2-letter designation is always a **capital letter** and the second letter is always **lower case** (34Cz1/1.1). If the artifact had an old/temporary number, put it on the far left side of this row.
2. **Provenience.** Enough provenience information should be included to separate this catalog number from others. At a minimum (unless a surface find), provenience usually includes the unit designation (northing and easting, row and alley, or stake), the level, and the depth (if available). If all other paperwork were somehow lost, future researchers should be able to reconstruct provenience from the catalog tags.
3. **Date.** The date of excavation, month/day/year.
4. **Excavator.** The person(s) who excavated the artifacts, if available. Sometimes only initials will be available. Other times only the principal investigators name will be available. If no other information is present, list the name of the agency responsible for the excavation, i.e. WPA or ORBS (respectively, Works Progress Administration and Oklahoma River Basin Survey).
5. **Specimen.** Basic description of the specimen(s) in the bag. This should include the number and material type. If any basic diagnostic information is available, it goes here too, sometimes in parentheses. Examples include “4 pottery body sherds”, “1 pottery rim sherd (engraved)”, “2 contracting stem points”, and “3 tertiary flakes”.
6. If necessary, it is acceptable to use multiple lines or the back of the card for long provenience or specimen entries.



<b><u>SNOMNH-Archaeology Division</u></b>	
<b><u>Site/Cat#:</u></b>	_____
<b><u>Provenience:</u></b>	_____
<b><u>Date:</u></b>	_____
<b><u>Excavator:</u></b>	_____
<b><u>Specimen:</u></b>	_____

<b><u>SNOMNH-Archaeology Division</u></b>	
<b><u>Site/Cat#:</u></b>	<b>34Lf1/1.1-.6</b>
<b><u>Provenience:</u></b>	<b>N1E2, L.1 (0-10cm)</b>
<b><u>Date:</u></b>	<b>1/1/2006</b>
<b><u>Excavator:</u></b>	<b>John Doe</b>
<b><u>Specimen:</u></b>	<b>6 pottery body sherds (incised)</b>

## Storage of Artifacts B: Grouping Bags and Boxing

### Grouping Bags

After the artifacts have been individually bagged, a tiered system is used to organize the site material. First, choose the categories to be used for boxing the material (example: debitage, tools, pottery, etc.). Then work from specific to general provenience. First, bag all like material (i.e., all pottery) from the same level and make a bag tag (example: 0-0 level 1 – Debitage; see example below). Then, bag all material from the same unit and make a bag tag (example: 0-0 – Debitage; see example below). Continue until bagging objects together no longer makes practical sense (i.e., if the bag to place them in is as large as the box itself).

The purpose of this method is to aid in finding specific artifacts in the future. Instead of searching in a sea of loose bags, the researcher can pinpoint the artifact's location faster by finding the correct provenience.

Use the small bag tags for bags 6"x6" and smaller. For anything larger, use the large bag tags.





*Images showing organization of provenienced objects and use of Bag of Bag tags*

<p><b>SNOMNH</b>  <b>Archaeology Collection</b></p> <p><b>Site #: 34Lf1</b>  <b>Unit 1:1 Level 1</b>  <b>Debitage</b></p> <p><b>Bag 1 of 1</b></p>
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*Small bag tag*

<p><b>SNOMNH</b>  <b>Archaeology Collection</b></p> <p><b>Site #: 34Lf1</b>  <b>Unit 1:1</b>  <b>Debitage</b></p> <p><b>Bag 1 of 1</b></p>
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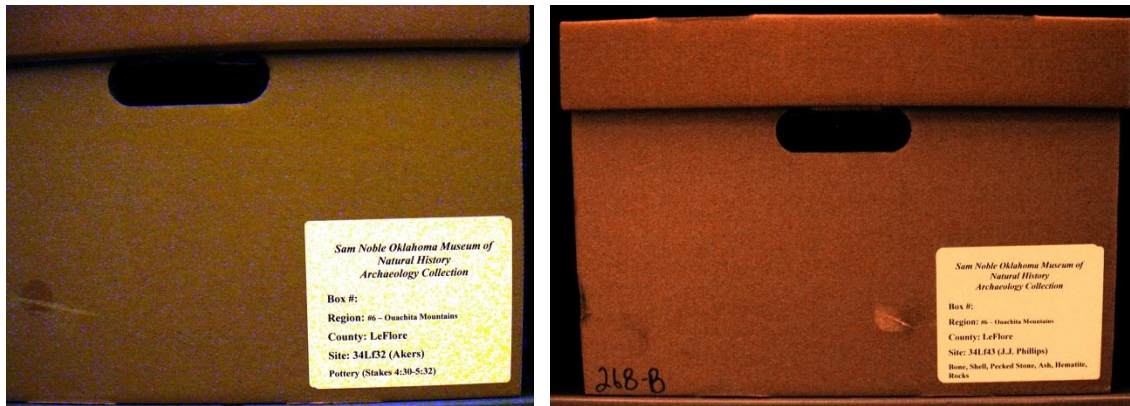
*Large bag tag*

### **Boxes**

All boxes should be lined on the bottom with a layer of polyethylene foam (1/4-inch thick) to cushion the objects inside. Then, boxes are organized according the material, provenience, and quantity of artifacts. Each material category need not be placed in separate

boxes if the quantity is low. For example, if there are only a few plant remains and historic artifacts, they may be placed in the same box. The box should then be labeled “Plant Remains, Historic.”

On the other hand, some sites may have large quantities of particular materials. If, for example, the lithic debris must be placed in two boxes, the boxes should be labeled to reflect this. The label should include both the associated catalog numbers (if the catalog numbers are arranged by provenience) and the box number: “Lithic debris #\_\_ to \_\_ (box 1 of 2)” and “Lithic debris #\_\_ to \_\_ (box 2 of 2).” If the catalog numbers are not organized by provenience, include provenience ranges instead of catalog numbers on the box labels. If you have a question about how to organize your collection into boxes, please ask the Collection Manager for assistance.



*Examples of labels for the box exterior*

Apply a label to the outside lower right corner of the box that states the box contents. All boxes are re-labeled by the Collection Manager during filing after they arrive in the collection, to maintain a more uniform appearance.

### **The Final Check**

- ✓ *Catalog tags.* Make sure each zip lock bag containing artifact(s) has a catalog tag inside the bag. The paper labels from the original artifact bags can be discarded AFTER the cataloger is certain the information has been transferred correctly. If any doubt exists, these labels can be placed in a zip-lock bag and added to the site's archival documentation and will be filed with the other archival material.
- ✓ *Bag tags.* Bags should then be organized by provenience, using the small and large bag tags to group bags by ever-broader provenience categories.
- ✓ *Boxes.* All objects from the site should be organized into the boxes by material type, and then in ascending order according to provenience information, and labeled as such on the exterior of each box.



## Packaging “Cheat Sheet”

Bulk bag these items:

- lithic debitage
- undecorated (plain) pottery body sherds
- daub
- burned earth
- unmodified bone fragments
- unmodified limestone/hematite/limonite
- fire cracked rock
- charred organics (corn, seeds, etc.)
- Non-cultural objects (rocks, etc.)

Bag these items individually:

- diagnostic pottery sherds (rim/neck sherds, body sherds with handles, decorated body sherds, and base sherds)
- pottery sherds with cooking residue
- lithic tools/tool fragments (cores, core knives, drills/gravers, points, bifaces, scrapers, modified/utilized flakes)
- modified or utilized limestone/hematite/limonite
- sandstone abraders
- decorated or diagnostic shell (such as scrapers, hoes, or shell pieces with hinges)
- bone tools
- any exotic items (non-regional)
- any artifacts with research notes attached

Double bag these items:

- ash
- charcoal (in foil)
- soil samples
- light fraction
- heavy fraction

Especially fragile items should be boxed carefully and securely in a separate box (lined with polyethylene foam) or placed in an archival vial (wrapped in polyethylene foam or tissue paper) to avoid unwanted shifting if moved.

All plant remains (seeds/nutshell/ small charcoal samples) and snail shells should be placed in archival vials, and then placed in a zip lock bag with the catalog tag.