

Collections Research News

Fall 1997

NEW ZIP CODE AT CRM

Due to increased growth in the area around the CRM offices in Denver, the Postal Service has found it necessary to build a new Postal Facility in our area. As a result, we now have a new zip code! Effective July 1, 1997 our zip code at Collections Research for Museums has changed to **80246**. Please make a note of it in your

WHAT'S NEW AT CRM: CATALOGING AT THE LUNATIC ASYLUM AT CALTECH

As this newsletter goes to press CRM is in the middle of cataloging the collection of meteorites housed at the Lunatic Asylum (yes folks, that's the official name!), under the Division of Geological and Planetary Sciences at the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California. We began by establishing a numbering sequence to accession the collection and then created a database using FileMaker Pro software.

This is a working research laboratory, so the meteorites have been and are being used for research analysis. Therefore, we not only encounter the specimens themselves but also various materials that have been extracted from the rocks and thin sections and other microscope mounts made from these materials. This makes for an interesting and challenging task.

COLLECTIONS KORNER

(Collections Korner is a regular feature of *Collections Research News*. If there is any topic you would like to see covered in the future, give us a call or drop us a line.)

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN MARKING MUSEUM OBJECTS PART II

In the last few years registrars and conservators have been conferring on the best materials and methods for associating permanent numbers with museum objects. Unfortunately there is no definitive answer available which will work for every type of object. Last time we talked about what materials were no longer recommended for use in marking museum objects. In this installment, we will give you some information on what current thinking is on the proper materials and methods of marking your objects.

In general, use acrylic paints with mineral pigments rather than dyes; mineral pigmented inks and disposable pens; pencils; wax pencils; & watercolors. Do not use: oil paints; inks with dye colorants; paints that contain ammonia; or appliance paints. A word of caution regarding disposable marking pens: the formula could change without notice so test the pens for light

fastness and make sure they are non-acidic. Recommended brands include Pigma Pens and Marsgraphic Pigment Liner.

White & black inks are recommended. Purple has been suggested for reproductions and red is no longer recommended because it cannot be seen by colorblind individuals. Use a fine paint brush (000 or 0000) or a refillable TRIA pen for number application. Neither will scratch the object. Be careful when using a quill pen and nib or drawing pen. These can easily scratch your object.

Of the four methods mentioned in Part I for associating a permanent number with an artifact, the least damaging method is to place the number on a separate material and attach it to the object. This technique involves the use of tied-on tags or sewn-in labels and should be considered for many types of objects.

This is the best method available for marking plastics since these materials can be subject to damage from inks, solvents and even water. Write the number on an acid-free paper tag and loosely tie it to the object with teflon tape or place it with the object in its storage container.

Acid free paper tags can be tied to many types of objects using cotton thread, cotton twill tape, teflon tape, or Glide™ unwaxed dental floss. Polyester thread may be used on

stronger pieces, but care must be taken since this thread can cut into or damage fragile objects. Tags with metal edges should not be used because of the potential for rust stains from the metal.

Use wire ties only for large machinery or similar pieces and then use only galvanized stainless steel, aluminum or vinyl coated wire which will not corrode or rust. Polyethylene or polypropylene ties may also be used on larger, non-fragile objects.

Sewn-in labels are used for textiles, clothing, bags and some baskets and soft leather items. These labels should be made from cotton or linen twill tape (un-sized and un-coated). Choose your marking ink with care and wash the tags prior to attaching them to remove any acid from the ink and assure its fastness. Use permanent pigment-based pens or inks to write the numbers. A permanent Laundry Marker works well.

Sew the tags to the object with appropriate weight thread. The thread should not be stronger than the object itself. Generally, a single strand of cotton thread will serve. Polyester can be too tough and silk can deteriorate. Use a fine, blunt needle and go between the yarns of the material rather than through them.

Under no circumstances should adhesive labels or "sticky notes" be used on museum collections!

In Part III we will discuss accepted techniques and materials for marking directly on objects.

SERVICES

Just a reminder, Collections Research for Museums is offering **classes for small museums in Cataloging and Collections Management**. If you would like more information on topics covered and costs, give us a call at (303) 757-7962 or drop us a line.

We are also still offering a variety of **other services** to museums, large and small. These **range from simple inventories to complete and thorough cataloging of collections**. Feel free to contact us for more information. We still provide a **free initial consultation**.

Also, if you need help preparing your NAGPRA summaries or inventories, we can help. Give us a call.

(Collections Research News is a service of Collections Research for Museums, Inc, 4830 E Kansas Dr, Denver, CO 80246 (303)757-7962). Questions, comments or story suggestions are always welcome.)