Collections Research News

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 IV

In the last few years registrars and conservators have been conferring on the best materials and methods for associating permanent numbers with museums objects. Unfortunately there is no definitive answer available which will work for every type of object. In Part I of this series four methods of marking objects were outlined. Part II discussed proper numbering materials and the first of the four marking methods: the use of tags for marking museum objects. Part III discussed appropriate materials to use as a barrier layer on which the number can be written. In this installment we will discuss the third and fourth methods of marking objects: direct marking and a combination of methods one through three. We will also touch on a couple of new, high-tech marking methods: barcoding and radio frequency transponders.

Writing the number directly on the object is the preferred technique for marking paper and photographs and could be considered as an option for plastics. Bear in mind, however, that any number applied directly to plastic objects should be considered permanent since solvents and even water can be damaging.

WHAT'S NEW AT CRM

Collections Research for Museums has been busy of late focusing on the computerization of museum collection records. We have recently begun a project at the Buffalo Bill Memorial Museum in Golden, CO to place their collection catalog on computer.

We have also assisted the Silver City Museum in Silver City, NM in the computerization of their collection by providing them with CRM-designed FileMaker Pro® cataloging templets (see related story on this page).

FILEMAKER® PRO CATALOGING TEMPLATES NOW AVAILABLE FROM CRM

Collections Research for Museums has created a collection database using the commercial software FileMaker® Pro. Cataloging templets are available for object collections, photographic collections and archival collections. We will also customize a cataloging screen for those of you who have specialized collections. We can also connect your database to an imaging system to allow photographs of the collection to be incorporated into the database. Contact us for details and pricing.

For paper, use a #2 or softer pencil and press lightly. If possible, mark the mat (if present) rather than the work itself. Always place the number on the reverse side of the work.

For marking photographs a #2 or softer pencil is recommended. The Schwan Stabilo Marking Pencil works well on resin-coated photographic paper. Again, press very lightly so as not to damage the emulsion or make an imprint. Number only on the back near an edge and away from the image portion of the photograph.

A wax pencil (Berol China Marker) may be used to mark plastics. It also can be used for resin-coated photographic papers if the Stabilo pencil does not work, but it can smear so care should be taken to interleave photographs with acid-free paper or place them in individual mylar sleeves to prevent transfer.

Do not use inks or paints on paper or photographs. If necessary, acrylic paint or watercolor can be used on plastic, but the number should be applied in an inconspicuous location away from any maker's marks.

The forth and final method for marking museum objects is a combination of methods one through three. The most common combination is one of the two direct marking techniques combined with a tied on tag. This can be useful in storage to prevent unnecessary handling of objects during inventories and exhibit preparation. The tags can be removed for exhibit and replaced when the objects are returned to storage.

This combination has been employed in museums currently using barcoding for tracking their objects. A barcoded tag is placed with, or tied to, the object in such a way as to be visible for scanning. Then staff can quickly scan a drawer or shelf without handling the objects unnecessarily. Barcoded labels are also used for cabinet, drawer and shelf tags and seem to make periodic inventorying of collections go more smoothly.

Another new method of marking museum objects is being explored--radio frequency transponders. This technology has been used with live collections in Zoos for a number of years and is now being explored for possible application with museum objects. The exact method of attachment to a museum object is still being worked out.

If you have the opportunity to attend a numbering workshop or meeting session, we advise you to take advantage of it. Other available resources are: *The New Registration Methods* recently published by AAM and *Marking Collection Objects: Beyond Fingernail Polish II* (the workbook for the AAM Pre-conference Marking Workshop in Atlanta) now available through the Registrar's Committee of AAM.