

# **Anthropology Research Collections at Texas A&M University: Collections Management Policy**

## **Mission**

The Anthropology Research Collections (ARC) at Texas A&M University (TAMU) supports and complements the Department of Anthropology's goals of education and research focused on understanding the human experience across space and time. ARC serves this mission primarily through maintaining, and making available to researchers, anthropological materials collected during research projects led by TAMU Anthropology faculty and students. The driving force of our mission is the recognition that cultural materials -- as manifestations of the practical and symbolic lives of human groups -- represent tangible and irreplaceable sources of information for the study of human behavior.

## **History**

Historically, ARC curated prehistoric, historic and ethnographic collections acquired as a result of anthropological research, archaeological survey and excavation conducted by a succession of research centers including the Anthropology Research Laboratory, Center for Archaeological Research, Center for Environmental Archaeology, and the Center for Ecological Archaeology and also by other members of the Department of Anthropology, donations, and scholarly exchange. In 2008, the Department of Anthropology decided that -- due to limited funds and space -- ARC would become a closed repository. ARC will consider curating materials collected by TAMU Anthropology faculty and students, when no more appropriate facility can be found to house the collection and the below collections policy criteria are met. Faculty and students are strongly encouraged to consider the below criteria and curation fees prior to taking on a project, as ARC will no longer guarantee curation of all collections generated by members of the Department of Anthropology. The collections are organized, cataloged, conserved and stored on TAMU premises; collections are made available for research, teaching and exhibition.

## **Collections Management Policy**

This policy establishes guidelines for the acquisition, deaccession, loan, care and use of the Anthropology Research Collections at Texas A&M University. These policies shall not replace any Texas A&M University, State, or Federal law, statute or regulation under which ARC is legally or ethically bound to operate. Specifically, the State Held-in-Trust Collections and any objects under NAGPRA may be subject to specific State and Federal laws not enumerated here. Prior to any action taken on such collections, the most current laws pertaining to these objects will be consulted by the Curator.

The ARC Curator manages the collections and is responsible for all aspects of curation and maintenance of collections. The Curator's duties include any acquisition, deaccessioning, conservation, approvals for exhibition, loans, access, research, or publication of information pertaining to ARC. Although the Curator reports directly to the Department of Anthropology Head, a report of the Curator's activities will be made available to all faculty at the end of each academic semester. ARC has the responsibility to work with faculty and researchers to contribute to TAMU's research, teaching, and public service. As a closed repository, ARC

strives to maintain the collections that we are historically responsible for; however, we only accept care of new collections under specific case-by-case circumstances.

### ***Definitions used in this Policy***

*Collections* refer to anthropological objects and related supporting documentation acquired by ARC and conserved for their cultural significance and scientific value.

*Object* refers to, but is not restricted to, all material culture, geoarchaeological samples, and skeletal remains, including specimens, artifacts, and works of art.

*Supporting documentation* refers to, but is not restricted to, all primary data such as field records, notebooks, maps, and photographs. ARC recognizes that the records documenting an object's origin and history are indispensable to a proper understanding and interpretation.

*Accessioning* is defined as the process of creating a permanent record of an object, assembly, or lot received from one source at one time for which ARC has custody, right, or title, and assigning a unique control number to said object, assembly, or lot.

*Deaccessioning* is the action of removing an accessioned object by due process from the permanent collection. The process is documented and made part of the permanent record.

### ***Care and Control of Collections and Associated Data***

Care of ARC is the responsibility of the Curator. This care includes responsibility for both the physical condition and storage of all objects and supporting documentation. The Curator's responsibilities include: 1) preserving all objects through the use of professionally accepted methods and techniques; 2) ensuring that all supporting documentation is maintained in a secure fashion and meet or exceed documentation standards; 3) maintaining current accession files, deaccession files, and catalogues of objects in the collections by following current TAMU data standards.

A collection becomes the responsibility of ARC at the time when an owner or Principal Investigator relinquishes control of the collection to the Curator. As such, active research collections, comparative collections, teaching collections, and material borrowed from other institutions by faculty or students are not the responsibility of the Curator. Objects left in the temporary custody of ARC – whether by a visitor, student, or faculty member -- must be documented as such and will be considered an incoming loan, subject to the guidelines listed below.

The Curator will authorize key issue and key check-out. Research Associates, visiting scientists, graduate students and student assistants may be allowed to have keys upon the recommendation of the Curator but are restricted to the collections in which they are working. It is the Curator's responsibility to insure that visitors are restricted to the collection in which they are working. Volunteers shall not have keys assigned to them.

### ***Access to Collections***

Collections are accessible for scholarly and educational purposes. Access to collections is not an inherent right of the general public. The Curator will attempt to comply with all serious requests for access, but the collections are not open to random browsing. The Curator establishes all

procedures for access to collections under his/her care.

Collections, data, and images may be used by for-profit organizations or by agencies only when a written agreement is made between them and ARC specifying use, user fees, and acknowledgment of ARC's ownership of the resources used.

During established office hours, the collections will be accessible for legitimate scholarly research and study by responsible investigators, subject to procedures necessary to safeguard the objects and to restrictions imposed by exhibition requirements, availability of study space and facilities, availability of curatorial staff, and approval of the Curator.

After-hours access to the collections must be arranged with the Curator. The Curator is responsible for the security of all collections at the time such access occurs. The Curator is to recognize the special relationship between a collection and the PI who originally researched that collection. Effort will be made to insure that these individuals have the access they request regardless of timing.

### **Loans**

Loans are transfers of objects from ARC to a TAMU faculty member or to another institution in which there is no transfer of ownership. ARC sends or receives loans for the purpose of research, education, or exhibition. ARC will exercise the same care of objects received on loan as it does in safekeeping its own objects.

All Incoming Loans will be subject to the following guidelines:

- All objects borrowed by ARC are the responsibility of ARC. All loans to faculty, visiting researchers, and students in the Department of Anthropology at TAMU, which are to be housed in ARC facilities must be arranged directly with the Curator. The Curator is not responsible for collections borrowed by faculty or students without permission of the Curator.
- Care should be taken to house borrowed objects properly and to have all documentation in a clearly marked file.
- No permanent loans will be accepted. In the case of extremely important objects, an exception can be authorized by the Curator, in consultation with the Department of Anthropology head and an *ad hoc* committee of three Anthropology faculty.
- ARC will not knowingly accept incoming loans of objects acquired or collected illegally or not in compliance with all applicable international, national, state, and local laws and regulations.
- The Curator will not transfer possession or alter in any way objects ARC has received on loan without the express written approval of the lending institution.
- ARC does not carry insurance for incoming loans for exhibit and research purposes. Coverage can be obtained for loans through written contractual agreements.
- The Curator is responsible for packing, unpacking, pest control, shipping, insurance

agreements, and providing condition reports for all incoming loans to ARC.

All Outgoing Loans will be subject to the following guidelines:

- ARC lends objects to TAMU faculty and to qualified institutions for teaching purposes, scholarly research and exhibition, subject to policies and practices within each collection. Permission to borrow material for non-destructive analyses, teaching purposes, and exhibition is granted by the Curator.
- The borrower or borrowing institution will not transfer possession, repair, clean, alter, or restore objects it has received on loan without express written approval of the Curator.
- Loans promoting an awareness of cultural heritage or the Department of Anthropology in public buildings (airport, Governor's office, TAMU administrators) are permitted, providing the objects in such loans are displayed under approved environmental and security conditions. Facilities reports should be completed for these outgoing loans.
- ARC does not grant loans of its collections to private or corporate establishments, except for educational, non-profit purposes.
- Objects requested for loan by TAMU students requires Anthropology Department faculty endorsement and the approval of the Curator. Loans will be made to sponsoring faculty member and not to the student.
- Outgoing loans will be for a one-year period unless otherwise specified. The loan may be renewed with the written approval of the Curator prior to the return date.
- The borrower or borrowing institution will assume full responsibility for any loss of or damage to the objects.
- ARC requires that the borrower or borrowing institution insure objects loaned for exhibition.
- ARC does not require that the borrower or borrowing institution insure loans for research purposes unless the Curator specifically requests such coverage.
- Objects on loan from ARC will not be reproduced/replicated in any manner without the written permission of the Curator.

### ***Destructive Analyses of Objects in ARC***

Destructive analysis of objects in ARC requires endorsement by an *ad hoc* committee of three Anthropology faculty members and written approval from the Curator. ARC will consider proposals for the scientific testing of objects that demonstrate a clear knowledge of methodologies and that will result in the enhancement of knowledge about the material tested. While ARC recognizes the significant results that can be obtained by the use of scientific tests, it seeks to balance the loss to the collections caused by sampling with the potential of the proposed research.

Once the Curator has determined that it is legal, ethical, and advisable for the specified

collections to be the subject of scientific testing, an *ad hoc* committee of three Anthropology faculty (selected based upon their knowledge concerning the collection and methods under consideration) will evaluate the proposal. The committee may accept the proposal as is, suggest a modification of the research design, require additional steps on the part of the researcher, or reject the proposal. Prior to receiving permission to carry out scientific testing, the investigator must agree to provide ARC with a copy of his/her results as well as to return any unprocessed samples. As scientific testing can result in a loss, the investigator may be asked to carry out additional tests at the same time to minimize the loss.

ARC staff cannot undertake the work of selecting items to be sampled for researchers, and will not agree to blanket requests. As a result, requests for destructive analysis will generally require a preliminary research visit so that the investigator can list specific specimens for sampling. Further, some sampling may require supervision by ARC staff or an appointed faculty member.

### ***Acquisition of Objects for ARC***

ARC is a closed repository. As such, we strive to maintain the collections that we are historically responsible for; however, we only accept care of new collections of material culture under specific case-by-case circumstances. Approval to accept and accession an object or collection can only be granted by the Curator. Collections generated by Anthropology projects directed by Department of Anthropology faculty or students are given priority consideration if no more appropriate facility can be found to house the collection. Other collections will be considered for curation under extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Curator. Collections or objects may be accepted and accessioned into ARC's collections when the following conditions are met:

- The object or collection is determined to meet the mission of ARC as stated above. An object or collection for which the Curator anticipates no foreseeable use for exhibition, research, education or exchange, will not be accepted.
- Since ARC has space and financial limitations, the Curator subscribes to a policy of selective acquisitions. The object or collection must represent a unique, irreplaceable source of data for the study of human behavior.
- The object or collection was acquired in a manner that respects the public trust and does not damage cultural resources.
- ARC can provide proper care, conservation, and storage under conditions insuring their preservation and availability, in keeping with professional standards.
- Title to the object or collection acquired should be obtained free and clear, without restrictions as to use, exhibition, loan, or future disposition. If, under special circumstances, an object is accepted with restrictions or limitations, such conditions must be approved by the Curator, an *ad hoc* committee of three Anthropology faculty members, and the Department Head and it must be stated clearly in the instrument of conveyance.
- Curation fees and storage requirements are met to the satisfaction of the Curator.

It is the professional responsibility of the student, researcher, or faculty member to ensure that archaeological collections in their possession are properly packaged, labeled, and maintained in accordance with modern curation standards. It is also the responsibility of the researcher to clearly define origin, ownership, and disposition plan for archaeological collections in their possession. ARC should not be considered a default curation facility for any collections made or used by students, researchers, or faculty members during their studies, career, or tenure at Texas A&M University. Depending on the origin and ownership of the collection, it is probable that a more suitable long-term repository, curation facility, or government agency exists.

If no more appropriate facility can be identified for the long-term curation of a collection, TAMU-affiliated students, researchers, and faculty may submit a formal ARC accession request as a part of their disposition plan. Pending acceptance, the collection and all associated documentation must be submitted following the guidelines established above.

In the event that a student, researcher, or faculty member responsible for a collection separates (voluntarily or otherwise) from the Department of Anthropology at Texas A&M University, an effective disposition plan will ensure transfer of the collection to the appropriate long-term repository, curation facility, or government agency. ARC will facilitate and advise this process, but will not assume responsibility, ownership, or costs associated with the appropriate disposition of the collection.

If no disposition plan exists, ARC will help the department develop an appropriate disposition plan based on the origin and ownership of the collection, if known. If no more suitable facility can be identified or the appropriate facility is unable to accept the collection, then ARC will consider accepting the collection pending formal accession request by the Department Head. Pending acceptance, the collection and all associated documentation must be submitted following the guidelines established above.

### ***Deaccession and Disposal of Objects for ARC Collections***

Accessioned objects are held in trust for the public in perpetuity as long as: 1) they retain their physical integrity, their identity, and their authenticity, 2) they continue to be relevant and useful to ARC's purposes and programs, and 3) they can be properly stored, preserved, and used.

Only the Curator has the authority to select objects to be deaccessioned. The Curator must fill out an ARC Deaccession Form, which in turn must be approved by the Department of Anthropology Head. Once approved, an entry must be made in the permanent records stating that the objects have been deaccessioned. A copy of the deaccession form and any other documentation must be put into the permanent file.

Objects will be considered for deaccessioning under one or more of the following circumstances:

- The object is no longer relevant to the mission of ARC as stated above.
- Inadequate documentation or absence of documentation critically reduces the cultural or scientific value or significance of the object.

- The object cannot be preserved, or has deteriorated and is no longer of any cultural or scientific value.
- The object is considered scientifically redundant.
- The object represents an unacceptable hazard to personnel, or to other collections.

Any object that has been selected and approved by the Curator for deaccessioning should be transferred or disposed of as follows:

- Museums or educational institutions should be contacted regarding the availability of the items for exchange or donation depending upon the nature of the items.
- Consideration should be given to placing the object in ARC's teaching collection, or teaching collections in other departments of the University, or other educational institutions.
- If the object cannot be disposed of in any of the above manners, it will be destroyed by the Curator. Destruction is defined as the obliteration of an object or specimen by physical or mechanical means. The disposal method must be both documented and witnessed. All identifying numbers or labels must be removed prior to disposal.

Deaccessioned objects will not be given, exchanged, or sold privately to employees of ARC or the University, members of the governing authorities or to their representatives, or volunteers.

ARC will not remove from public trust by any means of disposal, any item of prime historical, cultural, or scientific value as determined by the Curator.

ARC is required by the Internal Revenue Service to hold donations for a minimum of two years, especially for donors making a declaration for tax purposes.

***Native American Human Remains, Funerary Objects, Sacred Objects and Objects of Cultural Patrimony***

It is ARC's intent and policy to comply with Public Law 101-601, the "Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act." Curation staff will not intentionally collect Native American human remains or objects specified under the Act unless written permission has been granted by the appropriate authorities. ARC may temporarily accept Native American human remains and objects specified under the Act for purposes of identification, attribution or legal custody. ARC may accept Native American human remains and objects specified under the Act as per Trust Agreements made with Native Americans. Native American human remains and objects specified under the Act that are included in a gift, donation, bequest, or acquired as federally confiscated property, or in any other legal manner, will be held in trust by ARC and, when possible, the appropriate Native American tribe will be notified. Further, ARC will comply with the request of the appropriate Native American tribe as to the disposition of the material, providing the request is in accordance to Public Law 101-601.

## **Appraisals**

Neither the Curator nor ARC personnel shall participate in the appraisal or estimation of the value of an item as a part of ARC services to the public. No member of ARC personnel will give appraisals for the purpose of establishing the fair market value of gifts offered ARC. Donors desiring to take an income tax deduction must have an independent appraisal made on the value of their gift. ARC personnel may assist donors in locating qualified appraisers.

Neither the Curator nor ARC personnel will not knowingly appraise, identify, or otherwise authenticate for persons any specimens or cultural artifacts under circumstances that could encourage or benefit illegal, unethical, or irresponsible traffic in such materials. Identification and authentication may be given for professional or educational purposes, or in compliance with the legitimate requests of professional or governmental bodies or their agents. As a service to the public, ARC personnel may attempt to identify or authenticate items brought to ARC by the general public.

## **Curation Fees**

A one-time fee will be charged for the curation of a collection into ARC. These fees are used to help cover the costs supplies and personnel needed to bring a collection up to archival storage standards as well as upkeep of storage facilities. Charges will be based on a minimum of 0.5 cubic foot for artifacts and other non-burial remains, 0.5 cubic foot for documents including photos, and 1.0 cubic foot for human remains and funerary goods.

- Hollinger No. 10760 box or equivalent (or 1 cubic foot) \$ 400.00
- Hollinger No. 10755 half box or equivalent (or 0.5 cubic foot) \$ 200.00
- Oversized artifacts (such as metates), each \$ 400.00
- Human Remains, at least partial skeleton \$ 400.00
- Oversized records, each sheet \$ 100.00

An “oversized artifact” is any artifact that cannot fit in a Hollinger 10760 or equivalent box. If a site yields scattered elements of human remains, not from identifiable burials, these scattered elements may be submitted in the same box, at the rate of \$400.00 per cubic foot, minimum charge 1 cubic foot. An “oversized record” is any sheet larger than 11 x 17 inches.

All fees are based on collections being prepared and submitted in accordance with the current version of “Preparing Archaeological Collections for the Anthropology Research Collections at Texas A&M University.” Additional fees may be assessed as needed to bring collections up to those standards. Fees can be reduced or eliminated on a case- by-case basis if objects are already stored to archival standards or under extraordinary circumstances as determined by the Curator in consultation with the Department Head a an *ad hoc* committee of 3 faculty members.