

**FIELD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
ANTHROPOLOGY COLLECTIONS**

**POLICY REGARDING ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS
AND COLLECTIONS DOCUMENTATION**

The Field Museum of Natural History (the “Museum”) encourages the use of its collections and collections documentation for research, publication, exhibition, educational, and community heritage purposes. Every effort will be made to provide approved users with as timely and complete access to the collections and collections documentation as possible. This access will be limited only by space, time, and the established care and security needs of the collections and collections records. This policy pertains only to non-commercial use of the collections and collections documentation. Any commercial use of the Museum’s collections and collections documentation requires separate written permission from the Museum.

Collections are defined as all archaeological and ethnographic objects and human osteological remains that have been accessioned into the Anthropology collections.

Collections documentation is defined as all written, photographic, or recorded materials that contain primary information about the Anthropology collections, including Accession Ledgers, Accession Files, Catalog Ledgers, Catalog Cards, Exhibition Files, Photographic Albums, Computer Database Files, and the Archives (field records, exhibition information, administrative files, photographs, sound recordings, microfilm, and videotape).

Special Note: Many of the objects in our North American ethnographic collection are ceremonial items that are sacred or sensitive to the tribes from which they came. Some of these are believed to be potentially powerful and may have a possible negative effect on certain individuals who handle or view them, especially if those individuals are uninitiated, are of the wrong gender or age set, or if the proper cleansing ceremonies have not been performed. In working with tribal representatives and elders, Anthropology staff has been working to identify which objects should be restricted from view, even while in storage. Muslin or canvas covers have been installed on shelving units in collections storage that contain sacred objects. Others have simply been placed in blue board boxes and identified and labeled as “sacred”, “sensitive”, or “ceremonial”. Though each issue surrounding the preservation and management of sacred objects must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, the staff tries to come to reasonable solutions acceptable to all parties involved; this is an ongoing process and conditions on access may change from time to time. Please do not examine any objects that have been set off by curtains or marked boxes to limit access. If it is necessary to open the curtains or a marked box for any reason, please contact Collection Manager, Jamie Kelly 312-665-7469 or jkelly@fieldmuseum.org.

Hazardous Materials Statement for Visitors, Staff, Volunteers, and Interns:

Please be aware that there are potential hazards associated with handling objects in our collections.

Chemicals such as arsenic, DDT, chlordane, and carbon tetrachloride may in the past have been applied to select objects for pest control or preservation purposes. Objects consisting, in whole or in part, of organic materials such as fur, hair, skin, feathers, and plant materials are more likely to have been treated with these chemicals. It is less likely that objects made from inorganic materials such as metal, stone, or ceramics were treated.

However, inorganic objects may have been stored in rooms in which dangerous chemicals were once applied, they may have been contaminated, and they should therefore be handled as if residues are present. **Researchers assume all risks and potential hazards associated with handling collections objects.**

These basic safety measures should be followed when working with collections:

1. Bring no food or drink into collections areas.
2. Cover all surfaces with a 1/8" ethafoam (polyethylene foam) and then cover with plastic sheet. Wash work surfaces daily with damp paper towels and replace the plastic often to reduce the accumulation of harmful particulate debris.
3. Wear a clean lab smock to prevent hazardous dusts from settling on clothes.
4. Wear nitrile gloves AT ALL TIMES, to prevent absorption of potentially hazardous material through the skin. If gloves compromise your safety or the safety of the object being handled, you may consider removing the gloves, but you must wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after the task is complete. In special circumstances, wearing a dust mask may be necessary as well.
5. Wash your hands every time you remove your gloves, especially before breaks and eating. Shower facilities are located in the northwest corner of the 4th floor, on lower level one (LL1) of the CRC, and in the administration area of the ground floor, should you need them.

Arsenic Contaminated Objects

The Field Museum has an active, ongoing arsenic-testing program. This program is designed to determine the extent of arsenic contamination in suspect collections. In addition, all items being considered for outgoing loans or repatriation requests are routinely tested. Results of these tests are recorded in the collections database and Conservation files. The test results can be provided to the visitor upon request. Even if an object has not tested positive for arsenic, the above handling guidelines should be followed, as other hazardous substances may be present.

Objects that have tested positive for the presence of arsenic have been bagged and tagged to prevent the future spread of arsenic to other surfaces. These objects should only be removed from their bags if absolutely necessary, with supervision from a Museum conservator or collections staff member and following the *Arsenic Contaminated Object Handling Guidelines*.

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OBJECT HANDLING AND TRANSPORT PROCEDURES

All Anthropology collections require careful handling at all times. Even seemingly robust objects can be extremely fragile. All objects, no matter what they are made of, have undergone some degree of deterioration and must be treated accordingly to prevent further damage or breakage.

In order to ensure the proper care of collections, the procedures outlined below should be observed at all times when handling and transporting objects. All visitors, regardless of prior experience, will receive artifact handling instructions from collections staff at the beginning of the visit.

Should any object sustain damage during handling or transport, you must notify a member of the collections management staff immediately. Keep any broken pieces, no matter how small, and supply information on how the accident occurred.

OBJECT HANDLING PROCEDURES

1. No eating or drinking is allowed in collections areas or records rooms.
2. Use pencils or personal computers for note taking. Leave all backpacks, briefcases, coats, computer cases, and other parcels outside of storage rooms, workrooms, and labs. Lockers may be available to store these items.
3. Lab coats and latex gloves should be worn whenever handling collections. This is for the protection of *both* the object and the handler. With repeated handling, oils, grease, and dirt from the hand can soil and stain objects and cause metals to corrode. As noted in the Hazardous Materials Statement above, many of our collections composed of organic materials have been treated with potentially hazardous pesticides to help control insect infestations.
4. Remove or cover all rings, watches, belt buckles, jewelry, ID cards, and pens or pencils that might bump or scratch an object.
5. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling objects, and especially before eating. It is good practice to wash your hands every time you remove your latex gloves.
6. Do not handle an object unless it is absolutely necessary. Keep objects in trays, boxes, drawers, and bags if at all possible. If an object must be handled, examine it carefully to determine the best place for gripping it. Whenever possible, avoid areas where there is applied decoration that might be damaged. Secure loose or mobile parts of the object before handling. Ask for assistance if you are unsure about proceeding.
7. Always pick up an object gently but firmly, with both hands. Too tight a grip can snap objects; too loose a grip can allow them to slip from your hands. Use both hands to pick up large and heavy objects, being careful not to apply too much pressure to potentially vulnerable areas. Two or more people should pick up extremely large or heavy objects. When this is necessary, a third person should be in charge of the operation and give instructions to the first two in order to avoid confusion.

As a general rule, pick up objects at the thickest, strongest part in such a way as to distribute the weight of the object evenly. Whenever possible, pick up an object from the underside. Do not pick up objects from their rims, handles, or protruding sections that might easily snap off; lift at the body of the object. Long thin objects should be picked up from the center, not from the ends.

8. Avoid bending flexible materials such as textiles, fibers, and metals. Repeated flexing can cause breakage. Provide rigid support for objects that may bend. Avoid touching objects with friable, powdery surfaces or delicate parts.
9. Place especially delicate objects in a padded box or other suitable container.
10. Handle only one object at a time, no matter how small.
11. If pieces are broken off an object during handling, inform the collections management staff, place the loose pieces in bags or boxes and label them clearly with the catalog number of the object. Do NOT try to repair the object on your own.
12. When placing an object on a pedestal, in a case, or on a table, make sure it is securely positioned before (and while) removing your hands.
13. Do not place an object on the edge of the table or shelf or on a surface where there are tools.

OBJECT TRANSPORT PROCEDURES

1. Never carry an object for any distance. Use a tray or cart for transporting it.
2. Before using a tray or cart, make sure the bottom and sides are padded with foam or tissue paper. Be sure to replace the cushion material when it becomes dirty.
3. Place the object securely on the tray or cart. Whenever possible, make sure that the object does not hang over the sides or end of the cart.
4. After placing the object in the tray or on the cart, use tissue, sandbags, or foam to support vulnerable portions of the object. Make sure the entire object is well supported.
5. Objects with applied decorations, such as feathers, should be supported in such a way that the support will not damage or crush the applied decorations.
6. If more than one object is placed in the tray or cart, be sure to place padding between objects to keep them from touching each other.
7. Do not overload trays or carts. Never place one object on top of another.
8. Do not wrap objects in foam, bubble wrap, or tissue in such a way that the object must be rolled in order to remove the wrapping.
9. When pushing a cart containing objects go slowly and avoid bumps or shocks to the cart. Vibration and shock can be responsible for severe damage to fragile objects.
10. Two staff members are required for transporting objects through public areas of the Museum.

STATEMENT REGARDING USE OF ANTHROPOLOGY PHOTO ALBUMS

The Anthropology Photograph Albums hold a wide range of images, including photographs of objects, fieldwork, exhibitions, people, and places. Not all of the objects curated by Anthropology have been photographed, and the degree of photographic coverage varies from collection to collection.

Anthropology does not hold the copyright to all of the photographs in our collection, thus some cannot be reproduced for publication, though they may be photocopied or scanned for research use. In some cases, the copyright holder is known; in others it is not.

Anthropology encourages the use of these albums in conjunction with research on our collections, but they are fragile, archival materials. The following rules pertain to their use.

1. Handle each album with extreme care. They are extremely fragile and irreplaceable. **Nitrile gloves must be worn while viewing with the albums.** Remove each album, one at a time, holding the bottom of the album so that no extra stress is put on the cover, pages, or binding. Lay the album flat on a table to view the pages, and flip the pages slowly and carefully.
2. Pages are loose and extra sheets of paper may have been inserted in the albums. Take care to ensure that all materials are returned to where they were found.
3. Although photos may not be specifically marked as such, some depict objects or scenes that are considered sensitive for political or religious reasons. Such photos are restricted to view-only and may not be photocopied, scanned, or reproduced without the permission of the Registrar.
4. The albums are now digitized. Photocopying of non-sensitive photographs is permitted on occasion if the digital image is not available. Please see a Registration staff member to request digital images or photocopies. No photograph may be re-photographed, scanned, videotaped or otherwise recorded without permission of the Registrar.