

COLLECTIONS PREPARATION GUIDELINES

Standards for the Preparation and Transfer of Archaeological Collections
and Associated Records for Long-Term Curation

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The San Diego Archaeological Center (SDAC) is a nonprofit museum and qualified curatorial repository dedicated to preserving and interpreting the archaeological heritage of Southern California. Through stewardship, education, research, and collaboration with Tribal Nations and community partners, the SDAC promotes the responsible preservation and use of archaeological collections and associated records.

The SDAC curates' archaeological collections originating from federal, state, Tribal, local, academic, and private-sector investigations and maintains these collections in accordance with applicable legal, ethical, and professional standards.

Purpose of These Guidelines

These guidelines establish the minimum standards for preparing archaeological collections and associated records for long-term curation at the SDAC.

The guidelines are intended for cultural resource management (CRM) firms, government agencies, academic institutions, consultants, and other organizations responsible for the recovery, analysis, documentation, and transfer of archaeological collections to the SDAC.

Adherence to these standards promotes:

- Long-term preservation of archaeological collections and associated records.
- Consistent collection organization and documentation.
- Accessibility for future research, education, interpretation, and Tribal consultation.
- Compliance with applicable laws, regulations, permit conditions, and professional standards.
- Responsible stewardship of cultural resources on behalf of present and future generations.

These guidelines supplement, but do not replace federal, state, Tribal, and local laws, regulations, permit requirements, or contractual obligations.

Curatorial Philosophy

Archaeological collections are irreplaceable records of human history. Once excavated, a site can never be reconstructed in its original context; therefore, the collections and records generated during archaeological investigations become the primary evidence available for future research, interpretation, and cultural understanding.

The SDAC advocates for the preservation of complete archaeological collections whenever scientifically, culturally, and ethically appropriate. Decisions regarding sampling, deaccessioning, or non-curation should be based on research value, long-term preservation considerations, legal requirements, and consultation with culturally affiliated communities—not solely on the cost of curation.

The SDAC recognizes the importance of Tribal sovereignty, cultural values, and traditional knowledge in the stewardship of archaeological collections. The SDAC is committed to meaningful consultation, respectful care of cultural materials, and compliance with applicable repatriation laws and policies.

Applicable Standards

Collections accepted by the SDAC are prepared, managed, and curated in accordance with applicable federal and state regulations, professional museum standards, and institutional policies, including but not limited to:

Federal Standards

- 36 CFR Part 79 – Curation of Federally Owned and Administered Archaeological Collections
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)
- Applicable federal agency curation requirements and permit conditions

State Standards

- California Guidelines for the Curation of Archaeological Collections (1993)
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)
- California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (CalNAGPRA)

Professional Standards

- National Park Service Museum Handbook, Part I
- Current museum, archival, and collections management best practices
- Guidance developed through consultation with Tribal Nations and culturally affiliated communities

Institutional Policies

- San Diego Archaeological Center Collections Management Policy
- San Diego Archaeological Center NAGPRA Policy
- San Diego Archaeological Center Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan
- San Diego Archaeological Center Code of Institutional Ethics
- Applicable curation contracts, care and trust, and repository agreements

Qualified Curatorial Repository Statement

The San Diego Archaeological Center meets the criteria of a qualified curatorial repository as outlined in:

- 36 CFR Part 79, Curation of Federally Owned and Administered Archaeological Collections; and
- California Guidelines for the Curation of Archaeological Collections (1993).

The SDAC provides professional, systematic, and accountable curatorial services for archaeological collections and associated records on a long-term basis. Collections are managed

in accordance with accepted museum and archival standards and are housed in environmentally controlled facilities designed to support their preservation and accessibility.

How to Use These Guidelines

Organizations preparing collections for transfer to the SDAC should consult these guidelines early in the project planning process. Incorporating curation requirements into project design, laboratory procedures, budgets, and reporting will reduce delays and improve the long-term preservation of archaeological collections.

Questions regarding collection preparation, documentation requirements, ownership, conveyance procedures, or curation services should be directed to:

760-291-0370

collections@sandiegoarchaeology.org

Collection deliveries are accepted by appointment only.

CHAPTER 2

Collections Accepted for Curation

The SDAC accepts archaeological collections and associated records that support its mission of preserving and interpreting the cultural heritage of Southern California. Acceptance of collections is subject to available resources, repository capacity, ownership documentation, legal requirements, and consistency with the SDAC's Collections Management Policy.

Acceptance of a collection does not occur automatically upon delivery. The SDAC reserves the right to evaluate all collections and determine whether they meet applicable curation standards and repository requirements.

Geographic Scope

The SDAC prioritizes archaeological collections originating within San Diego County. Collections from the region are considered central to the SDAC's mission and may be accepted for accession or long-term curation provided they meet the requirements outlined in these guidelines.

Collections Originating Outside of San Diego County

The SDAC may accept collections originating outside San Diego County when:

- Appropriate ownership and conveyance documentation is provided;
- The collection meets all preparation and documentation requirements;
- Culturally affiliated Tribes, agencies, or collection owners approve curation outside the county of origin when required; and
- The collection supports the SDAC's mission and available curatorial capacity.

Collection Types

Collections accepted by the SDAC are managed under one of the following categories.

Accessioned Collections

Accessioned collections are permanently incorporated into the SDAC's collections and become the responsibility of the SDAC under an executed Accession Agreement.

These collections typically result from:

- CRM investigations;
- Academic research projects;
- Archaeological mitigation programs;
- Legacy collections with documented ownership; or
- Other approved archaeological investigations.

Upon accession, title to the collection is transferred to the SDAC.

Contract Collections or Care and Trust/Storage Agreements

Contract collections are curated under a Curation Contract or Storage Agreement in which ownership remains with the contracting agency or organization.

The SDAC provides professional collections care, documentation, storage, and access in accordance with applicable agreements and curatorial standards.

Contract collections commonly include:

- Federal agency collections;
- State agency collections;
- Requests for storage by Tribal Nations;
- Municipal collections; and
- Other collections where title is retained by contract owners for long-term curation.

Teaching Collections

Teaching collections consist of archaeological materials retained primarily for educational and interpretive purposes.

Teaching collections may originate from:

- Approved deaccessioning programs;
- Legacy collections;
- Donations;
- Educational collections; or
- Other sources approved by the SDAC.

Teaching collections are managed separately from accessioned archaeological collections and are used to support educational programming, exhibits, and public outreach.

Loans

SDAC may accept collections or individual objects on temporary or long-term loan.

Ownership of loaned materials remains with the lender. All activities involving loaned materials, including exhibition, research access, conservation treatment, repatriation considerations, or other actions, must comply with the applicable loan agreement and the SDAC's Collections Management Policy.

Ownership and Legal Title

The SDAC may only accept collections when legal ownership can be clearly documented.

Prior to transfer, the collection owner must provide appropriate documentation demonstrating authority to:

- Transfer title;
- Authorize curation services; or
- Execute applicable repository agreements.

The SDAC will not accept collections with unresolved ownership questions or contested title.

Collections Not Accepted

The SDAC generally will not accept collections that:

- Lack of adequate provenience information;
- Have disputed or undocumented ownership;
- Cannot be legally transferred or curated;
- Present unacceptable health or safety risks;
- Have deteriorated beyond reasonable preservation potential; or
- Do not support the SDAC's mission or available curatorial capacity.

The SDAC reserves the right to decline any collection that does not meet repository standards or institutional priorities.

Hazardous Materials

The SDAC will not accept materials determined to present significant health, safety, environmental, or regulatory risk to staff or collections.

Examples may include:

- Unidentified chemicals;
- Explosive or combustible materials;
- Radioactive materials;
- Biohazards;
- Active mold infestations; or
- Other hazardous substances.

Collections containing potentially hazardous materials must be disclosed to SDAC staff prior to delivery.

Sensitive Cultural Materials

The SDAC is committed to respectful stewardship of Native American cultural items and other culturally sensitive materials.

Collections containing known or suspected:

- Human (or ancestral) remains;
- Associated funerary objects (AFO);
- Unassociated funerary objects (UFO);
- Sacred objects (SO);
- Objects of cultural patrimony (OCP); or
- Other culturally sensitive materials

Any collection containing the above must be identified prior to transfer so that appropriate consultation, documentation, and procedures can be implemented.

Acceptance of such materials does not alter applicable legal obligations under NAGPRA, CalNAGPRA, or other relevant laws.

Right of Refusal

The SDAC's Board of Trustees and authorized staff retain the right to accept, conditionally accept, or decline any collection offered for curation, accession, storage, donation, or loan.

Acceptance decisions are based on:

- Mission relevance;
- Legal ownership;
- Physical condition;
- Repository capacity;
- Documentation quality;
- Long-term preservation needs; and
- Compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

Organizations considering the transfer of archaeological collections are encouraged to consult with SDAC staff early in the project planning process to ensure that repository requirements can be met.

CHAPTER 3

Minimum Curation Requirements

The SDAC advocates for the long-term preservation of archaeological collections and associated records generated through CRM, academic research, and other lawful investigations. Collections submitted for curation should be prepared so they may support future research, education, interpretation, and consultation activities.

The following standards establish the SDAC's minimum requirements for collections submitted for accession or long-term curation.

General Principles

Archaeological collections are non-renewable resources. Once a site has been excavated, the recovered materials and associated documentation become the primary record available for future study.

Collection preparation decisions should support:

- Long-term preservation;
- Future research potential;
- Educational and interpretive use;
- Consultation with culturally affiliated Tribes and communities;
- Compliance with legal and regulatory requirements; and
- Professional museum and archival standards.

Whenever possible, archaeological collections should be preserved as complete and well-documented records of an investigation.

Research Design Documentation

Archaeological collections submitted to the SDAC must be supported by appropriate project documentation.

For projects conducted under CEQA, NEPA, permit requirements, mitigation programs, or other formal investigations, the SDAC recommends that a written research design or equivalent planning document be included within the project record whenever available.

- Research designs provide important context regarding:
- Project objectives;
- Research questions;
- Field methods;
- Laboratory procedures;
- Sampling strategies; and
- Interpretive frameworks.

Any mitigation requirements or collection-related conditions imposed by lead agencies should accompany the collections' documentation.

Collections Must Be Curated at a Qualified Repository

The SDAC strongly supports the long-term curation of archaeological collections at qualified repositories capable of providing professional collections management services.

Qualified repositories should:

- Maintain professional collections management practices;
- Provide environmentally appropriate storage conditions;
- Maintain accession and inventory control systems;
- Ensure long-term physical security;
- Support access for authorized research and consultation; and
- Meet applicable federal and state curation standards.

The SDAC meets the requirements of a qualified repository under 36 CFR Part 79 and the California Guidelines for the Curation of Archaeological Collections (1993).

Collection Completeness

SDAC encourages the preservation of complete archaeological collections whenever scientifically, culturally, and ethically appropriate.

Collection preparation decisions should be based on:

- Research value;
- Cultural significance;
- Consultation outcomes;
- Educational potential;
- Long-term preservation needs; and
- Professional judgment.

The cost of curation alone should not be the sole factor used to determine whether archaeological materials are retained or discarded.

Materials Generally Recommended for Curation

The following materials are generally considered appropriate for long-term curation:

- Precontact Archaeological Materials
- Unless otherwise determined through consultation or applicable agreements, the SDAC recommends the curation of all recovered precontact archaeological materials.
- Diagnostic Artifacts
- Artifacts possessing diagnostic characteristics that contribute to site interpretation, chronology, function, technology, or cultural affiliation should be retained.
- Examples include:

- Projectile points;
- Modified shell artifacts;
- Ceramic vessel fragments with diagnostic attributes;
- Ground stone tools;
- Historic artifacts with maker's marks or identifiable manufacturing attributes; and
- Other culturally or scientifically significant objects.
- Materials with Future Research Potential

Materials that may support future analytical methods should generally be retained.

Examples include:

- Residue-bearing artifacts;
- Samples suitable for chronometric analysis;
- Faunal remains;
- Botanical remains;
- Soil samples retained for specialized study; and
- Other materials with potential scientific value.
- Significant Historic Artifacts
- Complete or nearly complete historic-period artifacts, as well as artifacts possessing unique identifiers, should generally be retained when they contribute to the interpretation of a site or collection.

Materials That May Not Require Long-Term Curation

In some circumstances, certain materials may not warrant long-term curation.

Examples may include:

- Modern debris unrelated to site occupation;
- Materials lacking archaeological significance;
- Hazardous materials;
- Materials deteriorated beyond reasonable preservation potential; or
- Materials subject to repatriation, reburial, or other culturally appropriate disposition.

Decisions regarding non-curation should be documented and discussed with SDAC staff prior to collection transfer.

Sampling

The SDAC recognizes that certain bulk materials may be appropriately sampled prior to curation when supported by professional judgment and project objectives.

Examples of material classes that may be suitable for sampling include:

- Shell;
- Highly fragmented faunal remains;

- Historic mortar;
- Common construction materials;
- Flat glass fragments;
- Rusted metal fragments; and
- Other bulk materials with limited interpretive value.

Sampling strategies should:

- Retain representative portions of the assemblage;
- Be clearly documented;
- Be described in project reports; and
- Be reflected in collection catalogs.

The amount retained and the amount removed should be recorded in the permanent collection documentation.

Documentation of Non-Curated Materials

Any material removed from a collection prior to transfer must be fully documented.

Documentation should include:

- Material type;
- Quantity;
- Reason for removal;
- Final disposition; and
- Supporting photographs when appropriate.

All non-curated materials should be clearly identified within the collection catalog (marked with a D for deaccession in the box column) and in the final project documentation.

The SDAC recommends that deaccessioned archaeological materials be transferred to an appropriate institution, returned to a land-managing agency, reburied when appropriate, or otherwise disposed of in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and consultation outcomes.

Associated Records

Associated records are an essential component of every archaeological collection and are required for long-term curation.

Collections submitted to the SDAC should include all records necessary to document the recovery, analysis, interpretation, and management of archaeological materials.

Associated records may include:

- Administrative Records
- Correspondence;

- Permits;
- Agreements;
- Agency communications;
- Newspaper articles; and
- Project administration files.
- Field Records
- Field notes;
- Provenience records;
- Feature forms;
- Unit records;
- Survey records;
- Maps; and
- Field logs.
- Laboratory Records
- Catalogs;
- Analysis records;
- Conservation documentation;
- Laboratory procedures; and
- Supporting databases.
- Reports
- Technical reports;
- Research papers;
- Data recovery reports;
- Monitoring reports; and
- Supporting publications.
- Visual Records
- Digital photographs;
- Negatives;
- Slides;
- Photograph logs;
- Video recordings; and
- Audio recordings.
- Digital Records
- Databases;
- GIS files;
- GPS data;
- Spreadsheets;
- Scanned documents; and
- Other digital project files.
- Consultation and Community Records

When appropriate and legally permissible, records documenting consultation activities, culturally affiliated community participation, and related communications should accompany the collection.

Required Collection Components

At a minimum, collections submitted for curation should include:

- ☐ Archaeological materials approved for curation;
- ☐ Associated records;
- ☐ Project reports;
- ☐ Master catalog;
- ☐ Conveyance documentation;
- ☐ Documentation of non-curated materials; and
- ☐ Information regarding known or suspected NAGPRA-related cultural items.
- ☐ Collections lacking critical documentation may be placed in temporary status or returned until deficiencies are resolved.

Consultation Prior to Transfer

Organizations are encouraged to consult with SDAC staff early in project planning and collection preparation.

Early coordination can help:

- Reduce preparation errors;
- Clarify documentation requirements;
- Address ownership questions;
- Resolve curation concerns; and
- Ensure compliance with repository standards prior to delivery.

CHAPTER 4

Conveyance and Required Documentation

The SDAC requires complete documentation prior to accepting archaeological collections for accession, long-term curation, storage, or educational use. Proper documentation establishes legal authority, ownership, provenience, and collection history, ensuring that collections can be responsibly managed and preserved over time.

Collections submitted without the required documentation may be placed in temporary status or returned to the sender until deficiencies are resolved.

Required Collection Documentation

All collections submitted to the SDAC must include the following documentation, as applicable:

- Required Documents
- Final or draft technical report
- Master Catalog
- Information regarding inadvertent discoveries
- Documentation of non-curated or deaccessioned materials
- Appropriate conveyance documentation
- Associated records and supporting project documentation
- Additional documentation may be required depending on project type, ownership status, contractual obligations, or applicable regulations.
- Collection Review and Deficiencies

Upon delivery, collections and associated records will be reviewed to determine compliance with SDAC requirements.

If required documentation is missing or incomplete, the collection may be placed in temporary pending status for up to 30 days while deficiencies are addressed.

If deficiencies are not resolved within the designated period, the SDAC reserves the right to return the collection to the owner, agency, or submitting organization.

Ownership and Authority

Only individuals or organizations with legal authority over a collection may authorize:

- Transfer of title;
- Long-term curation;
- Storage agreements;
- Donations or loans; or
- Other collection-related actions.

The SDAC may require additional documentation to verify ownership or authorization prior to accepting a collection.

Conveyance Documents

The SDAC utilizes several legal instruments to establish ownership, curation responsibilities, and collection management authority. The appropriate document depends upon the ownership status and intended disposition of the collection.

Digital versions of current conveyance forms are available on the SDAC's website and are updated annually.

Accession Agreement

Purpose

An Accession Agreement is used when ownership of an archaeological collection will be permanently transferred to the SDAC.

Upon execution of the agreement, title to the collection passes to the SDAC and the collection becomes part of the SDAC's permanent holdings.

Typical Uses

- Archaeological mitigation projects
- Academic excavations
- Legacy collections
- Private collections with documented ownership
- Other approved collections intended for permanent accession

Required Signatory

Collection Owner (Title Holder)

The submitting CRM firm is generally not authorized to transfer ownership unless it is the legal owner of the collection.

Fees

Applicable accession fees may be paid by either the collection owner or the submitting organization, as arranged prior to delivery.

Curation Contract or Storage Agreement

Purpose

A Curation Contract, Care and Trust Agreement, or Storage Agreement is used when the collection owner wishes to retain ownership while contracting the SDAC to provide professional curatorial services.

Under these agreements:

- Ownership remains with the collection owner.
- The SDAC provides storage, collections management, documentation, and access services, depending on the collection owner's guidelines.
- Responsibilities are defined by contract.

Typical Uses

- Federal agency collections
- State agency collections
- Tribal collections
- Municipal collections
- Other collections requiring long-term repository services
- Required Signatory
- Authorized Agency or Collection Owner Representative

Fees

Curation fees are established through the contract and are generally paid directly by the collection owner.

Deed of Gift

Purpose

A Deed of Gift transfers ownership of donated materials to the SDAC.

The SDAC may accept archaeological materials, associated records, educational collections, archival materials, photographs, maps, or other approved items through a Deed of Gift.

Typical Uses

- Private donations
- Legacy collections
- Educational collections
- Historical records and archives
- Research materials
- Required Signatory
- Collection Owner (Donor)
- The donor must possess legal authority to transfer ownership.

Transfer Agreement

Purpose

A Transfer Agreement is used when a collection is being delivered to the SDAC under an existing curation contract, storage agreement, or repository arrangement.

The agreement documents:

- Collection ownership;
- Project information;
- Collection contents;
- Delivery information; and
- Compliance with SDAC preparation standards.

Typical Uses

- Federal undertakings
- Agency collections under existing agreements
- Ongoing contract collections
- Supplemental additions to previously curated collections

Required Signatory

Authorized Representative of the Submitting Organization

In most cases, this will be a Cultural Resource Management (CRM) firm representative acting on behalf of the collection owner.

Fees

Curation fees associated with contract collections are typically governed by the underlying curation agreement and are not generally the responsibility of the submitting CRM firm unless otherwise specified.

NAGPRA, CalNAGPRA, and Sensitive Cultural Materials

The SDAC is committed to compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), California Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (CalNAGPRA), and other applicable laws governing culturally sensitive materials.

Prior to transfer, the submitting organization must notify the SDAC of any known or suspected:

- Human (ancestral) remains;
- Associated funerary objects (AFO);
- Unassociated funerary objects (UFO);
- Sacred objects (SO);
- Objects of cultural patrimony (OCP); or
- Other culturally sensitive materials.

Relevant information regarding inadvertent discoveries, burial encounters, and consultation activities should accompany the collection whenever available.

Early notification allows the SDAC to coordinate appropriate review, consultation, and handling procedures.

Collection Transfer Checklist

Prior to delivery, submitting organizations should verify that the collection includes:

Archaeological Materials

- ☐ Archaeological collections prepared in accordance with these guidelines
- ☐ Documentation
- ☐ Final or draft project report (Final preferred)
- ☐ Master Catalog (Digital and hard copy) and box inventories

- ☐ Associated records
- ☐ Documentation of non-curated materials
- ☐ Information regarding inadvertent discoveries
- ☐ Conveyance Documents
- ☐ Accession Agreement, Transfer Agreement, Deed of Gift, Loan Agreement, as applicable
- ☐ Digital Records
- ☐ Digital catalogs
- ☐ GIS or GPS data, when applicable
- ☐ Digital photographs and supporting inventories

Sensitive Materials

- ☐ Documentation regarding known or suspected NAGPRA-related cultural items

Delivery Appointments

- ☐ Collection deliveries are accepted by appointment only.
- ☐ Organizations planning to transfer collections should contact the SDAC in advance to:
 - ☐ Schedule delivery;
 - ☐ Request current forms;
 - ☐ Obtain fee information;
 - ☐ Confirm repository requirements; and
 - ☐ Resolve any outstanding questions regarding ownership, documentation, or collection preparation.
- ☐ Early coordination helps prevent delays and ensures a smooth transfer process.

CHAPTER 5

Artifact Preparation: Cleaning, Conservation, and Stabilization

The long-term preservation of archaeological collections begins during laboratory processing. Improper cleaning, conservation, labeling, or packaging can permanently damage artifacts and destroy information that may be valuable for future research, consultation, or interpretation.

The SDAC encourages a conservative approach to artifact preparation. Treatments should preserve the integrity of the artifact while minimizing alteration of original materials, use-wear, residues, pigments, and other evidence.

General Preparation Principles

When preparing collections for curation:

- Use the least invasive treatment necessary.
- Preserve evidence of manufacture, use, repair, and deposition.
- Avoid treatments that permanently alter an artifact whenever possible.
- Document any treatment that *does* modify an artifact.
- Retain representative untreated samples when destructive or irreversible methods are used.

Consult SDAC staff when unusual materials or conservation concerns are encountered.

Cleaning Standards

The SDAC recommends minimal cleaning of archaeological materials.

Dry brushing is generally preferred over washing because residues, pigments, microscopic use-wear, and other evidence may be lost during cleaning. If washing is necessary:

- Use distilled water whenever possible.
- Avoid chemical cleaners unless scientifically justified.
- Allow materials to dry naturally at room temperature.
- Do not use ovens, heaters, direct sunlight, or forced-air drying.
- Document all cleaning procedures in project records.

Documentation of Cleaning Procedures

When methods other than dry brushing are used, documentation should include:

- Cleaning solutions or products used;
- Manufacturer information;
- Concentration;
- Duration of treatment;
- Drying method; and
- Reason for treatment.

Conservation Standards

Conservation treatments should be limited to those necessary for stabilization and long-term preservation.

All treatments should:

- Be reversible whenever possible;
- Be fully documented;
- Preserve evidence of use and modification;
- Avoid obscuring original surfaces;
- Be detectable upon examination; and
- Follow accepted conservation standards.

If treatment permanently alters an artifact, a representative untreated sample should be retained whenever feasible.

Approved Adhesives

When reconstruction or stabilization is necessary, only reversible archival-quality adhesives should be used.

The SDAC recommends:

- Paraloid B-72

Other products may be acceptable if they meet current conservation standards and are fully documented.

Prohibited Adhesives

The following products are not acceptable:

- White glue
- Rubber cement
- Epoxy
- Glue sticks
- Construction adhesives
- Tape applied directly to artifacts
- Other non-archival adhesives

These materials may discolor, fail over time, or cause permanent damage.

MATERIAL-SPECIFIC PREPARATION STANDARDS

Faunal Bone

Recommended Treatment

- Dry brush only.
- Allow damp specimens to dry slowly at room temperature.

DO NOT

- Wash routinely.
- Apply oils, consolidants, or preservatives.

PACKAGING

- Large specimens may be labeled individually.
- Small specimens should be bagged and cataloged.

Ceramic

Recommended Treatment

- Dry brushing is preferred.
- Preserve residues, pigments, slips, and decoration.

DO NOT

- Routinely wash ceramic artifacts.
- Remove adhering residues unless justified by research objectives.

PACKAGING

- Large artifacts may be labeled individually.
- Fragments should be bagged and cataloged.

Lithics (Ground Stone and Chipped/Flaked Stone)

Recommended Treatment

- Dry brushing only.
- Preserve residues and use-wear evidence.

DO NOT

- Routinely wash artifacts.
- Remove concretions unless necessary and documented.

PACKAGING

- Large artifacts may be labeled individually.
- Smaller artifacts should be bagged and cataloged.

Shell

Recommended Treatment

- Dry brushing only.

DO NOT

- Wash routinely.
- Remove pigments, pitch, lacquer, or surface treatments.

PACKAGING

- Bag and catalog according to provenience and artifact type.

Metal

Recommended Treatment

- Dry brushing only.

DO NOT

- Wash.
- Use acids or chemical cleaners.
- Remove stable corrosion products.

PACKAGING

- Sharp objects should be double-bagged, with the label attached inside the outer bag.
- Different metal types should not be stored together.
- Aluminum foil should not be used.

Vegetal Material

Examples include basketry, cordage, mats, wood, and other plant-based artifacts.

Recommended Treatment

- Dry brushing only.
- Allow damp materials to dry slowly.

DO NOT

- Wash
- Apply oils, preservatives, or consolidants.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Monitor for insect activity.
- Isolate materials if infestation is suspected.
- Leather, Hair, and Other Organic Materials

- Review/keep any documentation on past treatments to include usage of pest management sprays or arsenic.

Soil and Flotation Samples

DO NOT

- Wash
- Apply oils or preservatives

PACKAGING

- Protect from crushing and excessive handling.
- Unprocessed soil samples should only be curated when justified by project goals or future research potential.

REQUIREMENTS

- Thoroughly dry prior to bagging.
- Double bag all samples.
- Label both inner and outer bags.
- Record all samples in the Master Catalog.

RECOMMENDED SAMPLE SIZE

- Approximately 50–200 grams per sample.

Pollen Samples

Processed pollen samples should be stored in sealed glass vials using accepted laboratory preparation methods.

UNPROCESSED POLLEN SAMPLES:

- Should be clearly labeled.
- May be sampled when appropriate.
- Must be documented in project records.
- Chronometric Samples

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Radiocarbon samples
- Dendrochronology samples
- Archaeomagnetic samples
- Thermoluminescence samples

These materials should be handled carefully and prepared according to accepted analytical standards. Special packaging requirements may apply depending on sample type.

Historic and Specialty Materials

Historic artifacts and unusual materials may require specialized preparation.

Examples include:

• Rubber
• Pitch
• Composite materials
• Entomological specimens
• Manufactured artifacts
• Industrial materials

When uncertainty exists regarding preparation methods, consult SDAC staff before delivery.

Human Remains and Sensitive Cultural Materials

Human (ancestral) remains and culturally sensitive materials must be treated with the utmost care and respect.

The SDAC must be notified prior to delivery of collections containing known or suspected:

• Human remains;
• Associated funerary objects (AFO);
• Unassociated funerary objects (UFO);
• Sacred objects (SO);
• Objects of cultural patrimony (OCP); or
• Other culturally sensitive materials.

Documentation regarding inadvertent discoveries, consultation, and field treatment should accompany the collection whenever available.

Questions regarding sensitive cultural materials should be discussed with SDAC staff before transferring.

Preparation Summary

Preferred Practices

✓ Dry brushing instead of washing
✓ Minimal intervention
✓ Reversible conservation treatments
✓ Thorough documentation
✓ Preservation of residues and use-wear
✓ Consultation with staff when unusual materials are encountered

Avoid

X Chemical cleaners
X Non-archival adhesives
X Forced drying
X Removal of stable residues or corrosion
X Unnecessary reconstruction
X Treatments that permanently alter artifacts without documentation

The SDAC's goal is to ensure that archaeological materials retain their maximum scientific, educational, and cultural value for future generations.

CHAPTER 6

Catalog Preparation and Collection Documentation

The Master Catalog serves as the primary inventory and intellectual control document for an archaeological collection. Accurate cataloging ensures that artifacts can be identified, located, managed, and interpreted throughout the life of the collection.

All collections submitted to the SDAC for long-term curation must include a Master Catalog prepared in accordance with the standards outlined below.

Cataloging Principles

Catalogs should:

- Accurately document all curated materials.
- Maintain provenience information.
- Support future research and inventory control.
- Be internally consistent.
- Use clear and standardized terminology.
- Be submitted in Microsoft Excel format (xlsx).
- Catalog information should correspond directly to artifact labels, bags, box inventories, and associated documentation.

Catalog Numbering Standards

Every artifact or lot of similar artifacts must be assigned a unique catalog number.

Catalog numbers should:

- Be unique within the collection.
- Remain stable over time.
- Correspond to physical labels and records.
- Be recorded consistently throughout all documentation.
- Individual Artifacts
- Single artifacts are assigned a unique catalog number.

Example:

CA-SDI-5496-1998-14

Lots and Bulk Materials

Lots of similar materials recovered from the same provenience may be cataloged under a single catalog number.

Examples include:

Bulk shell

Soil samples

Debitage

Fragmentary faunal remains

Catalog Number Suffixes

When multiple items are separated from a single catalog number, numerical suffixes may be used.

Example:

CA-SDI-1234-243.01; CA-SDI-1234-243.02; CA-SDI-1234-243.03

Master Catalog Requirements

The Master Catalog must include all curated artifacts and materials.

In addition, the catalog must account for:

- Missing items
- Deaccessioned items
- Oversized artifacts
- Samples removed for analysis
- Other materials are no longer physically present in the collection

The Master Catalog should serve as a complete historical record of all cataloged materials.

Required Catalog Fields

Required Minimum Fields

Field	Description
Site Number	Official site designation
Catalog Number	Unique catalog number
Recovery Type	Surface, Unit, STP, Feature, etc.
Unit/Location	Excavation unit, feature, coordinate, or location
Level (cm)	Provenience depth
Material Class	Broad artifact category
Object	Artifact type
Material	Raw material, species, or composition
Quantity	Number of artifacts represented
Weight (g)	Weight in grams
Box Number	Storage location
Comments	Additional descriptive information

Additional fields may be included if desired.

Catalog Formatting Standards

Font: Aptos (Body), 11-point

- Alignment: Text fields are left-aligned; Numerical fields are right aligned

- Terminology: Avoid abbreviations when possible.
- Use standardized nomenclature.
- Use consistent spelling and terminology throughout the catalog.

File Format

Microsoft Excel (xlsx)

Header Requirements

Each Master Catalog should include a header with:

- Project Title
- Site Number(s)
- Year(s) of Excavation
- Catalog Creation Date
- Catalog Title

Example Header:

Master Catalog
Excavations at Pine Tree Estates
CA-SDI-6804
Excavated 2006
Created: 05/19/2008

Footer Requirements

Each page should include:

- Print Date
- Page Number
- Total Number of Pages
- "Acid-Free Paper"

Example Footer:

Printed: 05/23/2008
Page 1 of 25
Acid-Free Paper

Field Definitions

- Site Number: Official archaeological site designation.

Examples:

CA-SDI-1234
P-37-000123
W-456

Catalog Number: Unique number assigned to an artifact or lot.

Recovery Type: Method used to recover the material.

Examples:

Surface
Unit
STP
Feature
Trench
Coordinate Collection

Unit or Location: Specific provenience designation.

Examples:

Unit 1
STP 3
Feature 7
Coordinate N100 E50

Level: Depth provenience recorded in centimeters.

Examples:

0-0
0-10
10-20

Material Class: Broad artifact category.

Example Material Class Categories

Chipped Stone
Ground Stone
Ceramic
Historic
Shell, Modified
Shell, Unmodified
Bone, Modified
Bone, Unmodified
Vegetal
Stone, Other

Object: Specific artifact type.

Object Examples

Projectile Point
Bead
Sherd
Bottle
Mano
Pestle
Fragment

Material: Artifact composition, species, or raw material.

Material Examples

Olivella
Chert
Granitic
Glass
Ironstone
Ceramic
Metal
Tizon Brownware
Cow (or species of bone)

Quantity: Number of artifacts represented by the catalog entry.

Weight: Weight recorded in grams. Weights should be recorded to the nearest tenth of a gram when practical.

Quantity and Weight Examples

Qty 10.02 Wt 15000

Box Number: Storage location.

Examples:

Code	Meaning
1	Box 1
2	Box 2
OS	Oversized

M	Missing
D	Deaccessioned
N	NAGPRA

Comments: Additional descriptive information.

Examples:

Aqua bottle base fragment
Residue present
Removed for radiocarbon analysis
Missing during inventory

Missing and Deaccessioned Materials

All catalog numbers assigned during analysis should remain documented even if the material is no longer present.

Items that are:

- Missing
- Discarded
- Deaccessioned
- Destroyed during analysis
- Removed for specialized testing;

must remain documented within the catalog.

Oversized Artifacts

Oversized artifacts are materials that:

- Are too fragile to be boxed in a standard box;
- Do not fit within a standard archival box; or
- Exceed the maximum box weight limit.

Oversized artifacts must:

- Be included in the Master Catalog.
- Be assigned "OS" in the Box field.
- Be labeled in accordance with SDAC standards.

Example:

Site	Cat. No.	Recovery Type	Unit	Level	Object	Material	Qty	Weight	Box
SDI-1234	418	STP	1	0-0	Nether Stone	Granitic	1	3600	OS

Box Inventories

Each collection box must contain a Box Inventory.

Box inventories facilitate:

- Collection retrieval
- Inventory control
- Research access

Box inventories should be generated from Master Catalog and include all artifacts stored within that box.

Required Information:

- Project Title
- Site Number
- Box Number
- Material Class
- Year Excavated

The inventory should list all catalog entries contained within the box.

Catalog Quality Control

Prior to delivery, please verify:

Catalog Review Checklist

- ☐ All artifacts are cataloged
- ☐ Catalog numbers are unique and not reused
- ☐ Provenience information is complete
- ☐ Material classes use standardized terminology
- ☐ Missing items are documented
- ☐ Deaccessioned items are documented
- ☐ Oversized items are documented
- ☐ Box numbers correspond to physical storage of artifacts
- ☐ Catalog entries match artifact labels
- ☐ Catalog entries match box inventories

Careful review prior to submission reduces delays during collection intake and improves long-term collection management.

CHAPTER 7

Labeling Standards

Accurate and durable labeling is essential for maintaining the long-term integrity, accountability, and accessibility of archaeological collections. Labels provide the critical link between artifacts, provenience information, catalogs, and associated records.

All collection labels must be legible, stable, and prepared using archival-quality materials suitable for long-term storage.

General Labeling Requirements

All labels should:

- Be legible and easy to read.
- Be produced using archival-quality materials.
- Correspond exactly with catalog records.
- Include sufficient information to identify the artifact and its provenience.
- Remain physically associated with the artifact or collection container.
- Labels should be prepared in a manner that minimizes handling and allows information to be viewed without opening bags whenever possible.

Artifact Bag Label Format

Recommended Standards

- Aptos (Body) font
- Minimum 10-point type
- Standard alphanumeric characters
- Black text on white acid-free paper

Acceptable Label Types

- Acid-free paper labels
- Archival adhesive labels
- Laser-printed labels
- Labels should be appropriately sized for the bag and easily readable.

Artifact Bags

All artifact bags submitted to the SDAC must meet the following standards:

Requirements:

- Minimum 2-mil, 4-mil polyethylene preferred
- Appropriate size for contents
- Secure closure
- Archival quality

Minimum Size:

- Bags that are smaller than 3 x 3 inches are not accepted.

Double-Bagging Requirements

Certain materials require double bagging to prevent damage or loss.

Examples include:

- Soil samples
- Pollen samples
- Flotation samples
- Rusted metals
- Glass fragments
- Granular materials
- Materials that produce residue
- Sharp artifacts

Double bagging may also be appropriate for fragile or unusually heavy materials.

Exterior Bag Marking

Additional information may be written on the exterior of bags using permanent marker.

However, exterior writing should be considered supplemental information only.

All essential collection information must appear:

- On the internal label; and
- Within the Master Catalog.

Labeling Individual Artifacts

Whenever possible, artifacts should be identified through bag labels rather than direct marking.

Direct labeling may be appropriate when:

- The artifact is oversized;
- The artifact cannot reasonably be bagged; or
- Any direct labeling method must be stable, reversible, and non-damaging to the artifact.

Friable Artifacts

Friable artifacts are materials that may be damaged by direct labeling.

Examples include:

- Basketry
- Cordage
- Mats
- Textiles

- Leather
- Hides
- Delicate vegetal materials

Labeling Method

Friable artifacts should be labeled using:

- Acid-free paper tags
- Cotton string or other archival attachment methods
- Tags should be attached in a manner that minimizes stress on the artifact while remaining visible and secure.
- Multiple tags may be used when appropriate.

Oversized Artifacts

Oversized artifacts must be individually labeled.

Required Information

Oversized artifact labels should include:

- Project Title
- Site Number
- Catalog Number
- Artifact Type
- Number of Oversized Artifacts (if applicable, example 1/1 or 1/3)

Label Materials

Labels should be:

- Printed on acid-free paper
- Attached using archival-quality string or other approved methods
- Oversized labels should remain securely attached during transport and storage.

Prohibited Labeling Materials

The following materials are not acceptable for use directly on artifacts:

- Tape
- Metal-rimmed tags
- Twist ties
- Staples
- Paper clips
- Wire
- White-Out® or correction fluids
- Quill pens
- Clear nail polish

- Non-archival inks
- Non-archival pens or markers

These materials may damage artifacts, fail over time, or complicate future conservation efforts.

Box Labels

Each collection box must be labeled to facilitate storage, retrieval, and inventory control. Box labels should be inserted into a protective label holder or sleeve attached to the exterior of the box.

Required Box Label Information:

- Project Title
- Site Number
- Box Number
- USGS 7.5-Minute Quadrangle
- Site Location (City, County, Jurisdiction, etc.)

Box Numbering

Box numbering should be sequential within a collection.

Example:

CA-SDI-5699 – Box 1 of 5
CA-SDI-5699 – Box 2 of 5
CA-SDI-5699 – Box 3 of 5

When multiple sites are included within a project, site numbers and box numbers should be organized in ascending order whenever possible.

Label Quality Control

Prior to delivery, organizations should verify:

Label Review Checklist

- ☐ All bags contain internal labels
- ☐ Labels match catalog entries
- ☐ Labels are legible
- ☐ Labels are printed on archival-quality materials
- ☐ Double-bagged materials contain labels in both bags
- ☐ Oversized artifacts are labeled
- ☐ Friable artifacts are tagged appropriately
- ☐ Box labels are complete and attached to their corresponding box
- ☐ Box numbers correspond to catalog records
- ☐ No prohibited labeling materials are present

Proper labeling is essential to the long-term preservation, accountability, and accessibility of archaeological collections. Collections with incomplete or inconsistent labeling may be delayed during intake until deficiencies are corrected.

CHAPTER 8

Packaging and Boxing Standards

Proper packaging and boxing are essential to the long-term preservation of archaeological collections. Collections should be organized, packaged, and housed in a manner that protects artifacts from physical damage, minimizes handling, facilitates inventory control, and supports future research and access.

The SDAC requires that all collections be packaged using archival-quality materials and prepared in accordance with the standards outlined below.

General Packaging Principles

Collections should be packaged to:

- Prevent physical damage during transport and storage.
- Maintain provenience and catalog integrity.
- Support efficient retrieval and inventory management.
- Minimize unnecessary handling.
- Provide long-term stability for artifacts and associated records.
- Packaging should be appropriate for the material type, weight, condition, and size of the artifacts being curated.

Collection Organization

Collections should be organized in a logical and consistent manner prior to boxing.

Organization Standards:

- Artifacts should be grouped by site number.
- Materials from different sites should not be mixed within a box unless the entire project fits within a single box and prior approval have been obtained from SDAC staff.
- Similar material classes should be grouped together whenever practical.
- Bulk materials should be separated from diagnostic artifacts.
- Fragile materials should be separated from heavy or abrasive materials.
- Provenience information must always remain associated with artifacts.
- Artifacts should be kept organized by recovery type and unit, when possible.

Boxing Standards

Artifacts should be placed within boxes in a manner that minimizes movement and prevents damage.

Requirements:

- Artifacts should be evenly distributed within the box.
- Boxes should not be overfilled (no more than 30 lbs.)
- Artifacts should not be forced into containers.

- Heavy artifacts should be separated from fragile materials.
- Empty space should be stabilized with approved archival support when necessary.
- Each box must contain a Box Inventory.
- Collections should arrive ready for long-term storage with minimal repackaging required by SDAC staff.

Approved Collection Boxes

Standard Repository Box Requirements:

- 15 in. × 12 in. × 10 in.
- Corrugated polyethylene or corrugated plastic construction
- Removable lid
- Archival quality
- Structurally stable
- Clean and free of damage
- No box may exceed 30 pounds (13.6 kg)
- Overweight boxes may be assessed as additional units or require repackaging prior to acceptance.

Small Collections

Small collections may be housed in appropriately sized archival containers.

Examples:

Polyethylene shoe boxes
Archival document boxes
Small archival storage containers
Containers must remain durable and suitable for long-term storage.

Internal Supports and Dividers

Artifacts should be stabilized within boxes to prevent shifting during transport and storage.

Acceptable stabilization methods include:

- Acid-free corrugated board
- Polyethylene dividers
- Ethafoam supports
- Volara foam supports
- Archival-quality custom mounts
- Partitions should be secured in a manner that does not endanger the collection.

Custom Packaging

Some collections require specialized housing due to their size, fragility, or unusual configuration.

Examples:

• Large ground stone artifacts
• Fragile basketry
• Composite artifacts
• Oversized historic objects
• Archival materials
• Maps and drawings

Custom supports may be constructed using approved archival materials.

Whenever possible, custom containers should be proportionally consistent with standard repository storage systems.

Oversized Artifacts

Oversized artifacts are materials that:

- Exceed standard box dimensions; or
- Cannot be safely housed within a standard repository container.

Examples:

Ground stone tools
Large historic equipment
Architectural elements
Oversized faunal remains

Requirements

Oversized artifacts must:

- Be included in the Master Catalog.
- Be assigned an "OS" designation in the Box field.
- Be individually labeled.
- Be delivered without non-archival wrapping materials.
- When appropriate, oversized artifacts may be covered with approved protective materials to prevent dust accumulation.

Recommended Packaging Materials

The following materials are acceptable for use in collection preparation:

Wrapping and Padding

- Acid-free tissue paper
- Unbuffered archival tissue (when appropriate)
- Tyvek®

- Virgin polyester batting
- Polyester felt
- Ethafoam®
- Volara®
- Microfoam®

Enclosures and Containers

- Polyethylene bags
- Archival document boxes
- Archival map boxes
- Archival photograph enclosures
- Archival media enclosures
- Polyethylene storage containers

Construction Materials

- Acid-free corrugated board
- Archival-quality adhesives
- Hot glue for custom box construction
- Prohibited Packaging Materials

The following materials are not acceptable because they may deteriorate, off gas, attract pests, transfer residues, or damage collections over time:

Prohibited Materials

- Household plastic bags
- Grocery bags
- Polyvinyl chloride (PVC)
- Polyurethane foam
- Saran wrap® or household plastic wrap
- Cellophane
- Non-archival bubble wrap
- Construction paper
- Newsprint
- Colored paper products
- Waxed paper
- Paper towels
- Facial tissue
- Toilet paper
- Cotton balls
- Cotton floss
- Foam peanuts
- Organic packing materials (e.g., popcorn)

- Excelsior (wood wool)
- Laminated enclosures

Associated Records Packaging

Associated records should be packaged separately from artifacts whenever possible.

Examples:

Reports
Maps
Catalogs
Field notes
Photographs
Correspondence

- Records should be housed in archival-quality folders, boxes, sleeves, or other appropriate enclosures.
- Requirements for associated records are discussed further in Chapter 9.

Packaging Quality Control

Prior to delivery, organizations should verify:

Packaging Review Checklist

- ☐ Artifacts are organized by site, recovery type/unit, and/or provenience
- ☐ Similar material classes are grouped appropriately
- ☐ Fragile materials are protected, support used if necessary
- ☐ Heavy artifacts are separated from fragile materials
- ☐ All bags are archival quality
- ☐ Approved boxes are used
- ☐ Boxes do not exceed 30 pounds
- ☐ Oversized artifacts are identified and labeled
- ☐ Only approved packaging materials are present
- ☐ Prohibited materials have been removed
- ☐ Each box contains a Box Inventory

Proper packaging protects collections during transport and contributes significantly to the long-term preservation of archaeological materials.

CHAPTER 9

Associated Records and Digital Deliverables

Associated records are an essential component of every archaeological collection. Without supporting documentation, archaeological materials lose much of their research, educational, legal, and interpretive value.

The SDAC requires the transfer of all associated records necessary to document the recovery, analysis, interpretation, and management of archaeological collections.

Associated records should be organized, clearly labeled, and prepared using archival-quality materials and file formats whenever possible.

General Requirements

Associated records submitted to the SDAC should:

- Correspond to the curated collection.
- Be complete and organized.
- Be clearly labeled.
- Be free of duplicate or unnecessary materials whenever possible.
- Include sufficient documentation to support future research and collection management.
- Be prepared using archival-quality materials and stable digital formats.

Associated records should remain linked to the archaeological materials they document.

Required Associated Records

When applicable, collections should be accompanied by:

Administrative Records

- Permits
- Agreements
- Agency correspondence
- Project administration records
- Relevant newspaper articles
- Supporting project documentation

Field Records

- Field notes
- Unit records
- Feature forms
- Survey forms

- Provenience records
- Field logs
- Sketches
- Maps

Laboratory Records

- Master Catalog
- Analysis records
- Conservation records
- Laboratory procedures
- Artifact inventories
- Supporting databases

Reports

- Technical reports
- Monitoring reports
- Research papers
- Data recovery reports
- Publications derived from the collection

Visual Records

- Photographs
- Photograph logs
- Slides
- Negatives
- Video recordings
- Audio recordings

Digital Records

- Databases
- GIS data
- GPS data
- Spreadsheets
- Scanned records
- Digital reports
- Supporting project files

Records on Paper

Paper records should be prepared using archival-quality materials whenever possible.

Paper Standards

Records should be submitted on:

- White acid-free paper
- Smooth finish paper
- Minimum 20-pound bond stock

Acceptable records include:

- Laser-printed documents
- Photocopies
- Original field records
- Typed documents

Handwritten Records

Handwritten records should be prepared using:

- Black ink; or
- Black pencil

Colored inks, highlighters, and specialty papers should be avoided because they may fade over time.

Bound Volumes

Reports and other bound materials should utilize:

- Plastic comb bindings
- Plastic spine bindings
- Other non-permanent binding methods

Bindings should allow future preservation activities without damaging documents.

Loose Records

Loose records should be organized within:

- Acid-free folders
- Archival sleeves
- Archival document boxes

Records should not be folded when avoidable.

Oversized Documents

Oversized records may include:

- Maps
- Drawings
- Architectural plans
- Large-format field records

Whenever practical:

- Oversized records should be reduced to standard size while remaining legible.
- Original oversized documents should be preserved when reduction would compromise readability.

Oversized records should be housed flat whenever possible.

Document Storage

Associated records should be delivered in archival-quality document boxes or folders.

Recommended enclosures include:

- Metal-edge archival document boxes
- Acid-free folders
- Archival sleeves
- Archival photograph enclosures

Records should fit securely within containers without excessive compression or slumping.

Maps

Maps provide critical provenience and spatial information and should be curated whenever available.

Required Map Information

- Project title
- Site number
- Contractor or organization name
- Scale
- Legend
- North arrow
- Date created
- Datum information
- Reference to source maps when applicable

Map Preparation

Maps may be:

- Hand-drafted
- Digitally produced
- Scanned from original sources

Maps should be prepared using stable media and housed in archival enclosures.

Storage

Maps should be stored flat whenever possible; or rolled within archival-quality tubes when necessary.

Photographic Records

Photographs are an important component of archaeological documentation and should accompany collections whenever available.

EXAMPLES:

- Field photographs
- Excavation photographs
- Survey photographs
- Artifact photographs
- Historic photographs
- Laboratory photographs

Digital Photographs

Preferred image formats include:

- TIFF
- JPG/JPEG
- PNG
- RAW (when available)

Images should be retained at original resolution whenever practical.

Photograph Inventories

A photograph should accompany digital image files and include:

- File name
- Subject description
- Site number
- Provenience information
- Date
- Photographer (when known)

Audio and Video Records

Audio and video recordings documenting archaeological investigations may be submitted when relevant to the collection.

Examples:

- Oral histories
- Consultation recordings
- Field recordings
- Public outreach materials
- Research interviews

Whenever possible, recordings should be submitted in stable, non-proprietary digital formats.

Digital Records

Digital records should be submitted in formats that support long-term accessibility and preservation.

The SDAC reserves the right to update accepted file formats as technology evolves.

Preferred Digital Formats

Record Type	Preferred Format
Reports	PDF
Catalogs	Microsoft Excel (xlsx)
Spreadsheets	.xlsx
Text Documents	PDF or Microsoft Word
Databases	Access
Images	TIFF, JPG, PNG
GIS Data	Shapefiles or approved GIS export formats
GPS Data	Excel, CSV, or GIS-compatible formats

GIS and GPS Data

Spatial data are increasingly important for archaeological research and collections management.

Projects utilizing GIS or GPS technology should provide associated datasets whenever possible.

GIS Deliverables

GIS submissions should include:

- Shapefiles or approved export formats
- Metadata
- Coordinate system information
- Project boundaries
- Site locations
- Relevant supporting files

GPS Deliverables

GPS datasets should include:

- Coordinate information
- Datum
- Collection date
- Project name
- Site number
- Equipment used

Spatial data should be clearly documented and accompanied by metadata whenever possible.

Digital Media

The SDAC prefers delivery of digital records using currently supported digital storage methods.

Organizations planning to transfer large digital datasets should consult SDAC staff prior to delivery to determine preferred transfer methods and accepted formats.

Because digital preservation standards evolve over time, organizations are encouraged to contact the SDAC for current requirements before submission.

Records Quality Control

Prior to delivery, organizations should verify:

Records Review Checklist

- ☐ Project reports included
- ☐ Master Catalog included
- ☐ Associated records organized
- ☐ Maps labeled and documented
- ☐ Digital photographs included
- ☐ Photograph inventory included
- ☐ GIS/GPS data included (when applicable)
- ☐ Digital files use approved formats
- ☐ Records are clearly labeled
- ☐ Associated records correspond to the collection
- ☐ Archival-quality enclosures used

Associated records are an integral component of every archaeological collection. Collections lacking sufficient documentation may be delayed during intake until deficiencies are corrected.

CHAPTER 10

Delivery, Collection Review, and Fee Schedule

The final step in the curation process is the transfer of archaeological collections and associated records to the SDAC. Collections should be fully prepared, documented, and organized prior to delivery to facilitate an efficient intake process and ensure compliance with repository standards.

Organizations are encouraged to contact the SDAC early in the project planning process to discuss collection preparation requirements, scheduling, ownership documentation, and applicable fees.

Delivery Appointments

Collection deliveries are accepted by appointment only.

Prior to delivery, organizations should contact the SDAC to:

- Schedule a delivery appointment;
- Confirm current fee information;
- Confirm required documentation;
- Verify ownership and conveyance requirements;
- Resolve any outstanding collection preparation questions.

Contact Information

Cultural Resources Director or Collections Technician 760-291-0370

collections@sandiegoarchaeology.org

Collection Intake Review

Upon delivery, SDAC staff will conduct an initial review of the collection and associated records.

The intake review is intended to verify that:

- Collection materials are properly organized;
- Required documentation is present;
- Catalogs and inventories are complete;
- Labeling requirements have been met;
- Packaging complies with SDAC standards;
- Ownership documentation is complete; and
- The collection is suitable for long-term curation.

Acceptance of a collection is contingent upon successful completion of the intake review.

Notice of Deficiencies

Collections that do not meet SDAC requirements may be placed in a temporary pending status and issued a Notice of Deficiencies.

Deficiencies may include, but are not limited to:

- Missing documentation;
- Incomplete catalogs;
- Improper labeling;
- Inadequate packaging;
- Missing conveyance documents;
- Unresolved ownership issues;
- Missing digital records; or
- Other deviations from these guidelines.

The Notice of Deficiencies will identify the issues requiring correction and provide instructions for resolving them.

Deficiency Resolution Period

Collections placed in temporary status may be held for up to 30 days while deficiencies are addressed.

If deficiencies are not resolved within the designated period, the SDAC reserves the right to:

- Return the collection to the submitting organization;
- Return the collection to the owner;
- Suspend processing until deficiencies are resolved; or
- Decline acceptance of the collection.
- Additional fees may apply if extensive staff time is required to address deficiencies.

Collection Acceptance

A collection will be considered formally accepted once:

- Intake review has been completed;
- Required documentation has been received;
- Applicable fees have been paid;
- Conveyance documents have been executed; and
- Any identified deficiencies have been resolved.

Formal acceptance does not alter any ownership arrangements established through contracts, storage agreements, or other legal instruments.

Revitalization Services

The SDAC offers revitalization services for collections that do not meet current curation standards.

Revitalization services may include:

- Catalog correction;
- Inventory creation;
- Relabeling;
- Rehousing;

- Documentation organization;
- Digital record management; and
- Other collections management activities that are necessary to bring collections into compliance with SDAC standards.

Organizations seeking revitalization services should contact the SDAC for consultation and project-specific estimates.

Curation Fees

Curation fees support the long-term preservation, management, storage, and accessibility of archaeological collections and associated records.

Funding for curation should be incorporated into project planning, budgets, grant proposals, and mitigation programs whenever possible.

Current fees are listed below. The SDAC reserves the right to revise fees as necessary.

Curation Fee Schedule

Fiscal Year 2026–2027

Collections prepared in accordance with these guidelines:

Accession Agreements

Service	Fee
Standard archival box (15" × 12" × 10")	\$1,500 per box
Quarter-box collection	\$375
Oversized artifact storage	\$500 per cubic foot
Collection processing fee (includes NAGPRA assessment)	\$150 per collection

Note: Standard boxes may not exceed 30 pounds. Overweight boxes may be assessed as additional storage units.

Revitalization Services

Service	Fee
Revitalization of existing collections	\$250 per box
NAGPRA Assessment or advisement	\$150 per box

Revitalization services include bringing collections into compliance with SDAC standards through inventorying, relabeling, rehousing, and related collections management activities.

Contract Collections

Collections curated under renewable curation contracts or storage agreements:

Contact the SDAC for current contract rates.

Contract fees vary depending on:

- Collection size;
- Storage requirements;
- Ownership status;
- Contract duration; and
- Service needs.

Payment

Payment arrangements should be coordinated with SDAC staff prior to delivery.

Depending on the collection type, fees may be the responsibility of:

- Collection owners;
- Government agencies;
- Cultural Resource Management firms;
- Developers; or
- Other authorized parties.

All outstanding fees must be resolved before final processing and accessioning can occur.

Collection Delivery Checklist

Prior to delivery, verify:

Collection Materials

- ☐ Archaeological materials prepared according to these guidelines
- ☐ Oversized artifacts identified and labeled
- ☐ Collection organized by site, recovery/unit and/or provenience

Documentation

- ☐ Final project report
- ☐ Master Catalog
- ☐ Box inventories
- ☐ Associated records (field notes, photographs, etc.)
- ☐ Documentation of non-curated materials
- ☐ Information regarding inadvertent discoveries

Conveyance

- ☐ Appropriate conveyance document completed
- ☐ Ownership documentation verified
- ☐ Required signatures obtained

Digital Records

- ☐ Digital photographs included (if applicable)
- ☐ GIS/GPS data included (if applicable)
- ☐ Digital files prepared in approved formats

Packaging

- ☐ Archival-quality materials used
- ☐ Boxes properly labeled
- ☐ Box weights verified
- ☐ No prohibited materials are present

Delivery

- ☐ Appointment scheduled
- ☐ Fees confirmed
- ☐ Questions resolved with SDAC staff

Commitment to Stewardship

The SDAC is committed to the long-term preservation of archaeological collections and associated records. Careful preparation prior to delivery ensures that collections can be preserved, accessed, and interpreted for future generations while supporting research, education, Tribal consultation, and responsible stewardship of cultural heritage resources.

The SDAC appreciates the efforts of collection owners, agencies, Tribal Nations, researchers, and CRM professionals who contribute to the preservation of our shared archaeological heritage.

When a material or object type is not represented below, catalogers should select the closest applicable term and consult SDAC staff if clarification is needed.



APPENDIX A: STANDARDIZED NOMENCLATURE

APPENDIX A: STANDARDIZED CATALOG NOMENCLATURE San Diego Archaeological Center

Use the approved Material Class, Object, and Material terms below whenever applicable. When a material or object type is not represented, use the closest appropriate term and document any deviations.

BONE				CERAMIC				CHIPPED STONE				GROUND STONE			
BONE, MODIFIED			BONE, UNMODIFIED			Material Class			Material Class			Material Class			Material Class
Material Class	Object	Material	Material Class	Object	Material	Material Class	Object	Material	Material Class	Object	Material	Material Class	Object	Material	Material Class
Bone, Modified	Awl	Cetacean	Bone, Unmodified	Cerial	Bird	Ceramic	Rim Sherd	Brownware	Chipped Stone	Angular Waste	Basalt	Ground Stone	Bead	Basalt	Ground Stone
Bone, Modified	Bone	Olivella	Bone, Unmodified	Long Bone	Fish	Ceramic	Body Sherd	Buttware	Chipped Stone	Blade	Coarse Metavolcanic	Ground Stone	Bowl	Diorite	Ground Stone
Bone, Modified	Fishhook	Fish	Bone, Unmodified	Short Bone	Mammal, Large	Ceramic	Base Sherd	Carrizo Buttware	Chipped Stone	Brace	Cryptocrystalline Silica (CCS)	Ground Stone	Charm Stone	Granite	Ground Stone
Bone, Modified	Gorget	Mammal, Large	Bone, Unmodified	Vertebrae	Mammal, Medium	Ceramic	Drilled Sherd	Colorado Brownware	Chipped Stone	Chopper	Felsite	Ground Stone	Discoidal	Quartzite	Ground Stone
Bone, Modified	Needle	Mammal, Medium	Bone, Unmodified	Pawc	Mammal, Small	Ceramic	Incised Sherd	Colorado Buttware	Chipped Stone	Core	Fine Metavolcanic	Ground Stone	Donut Stone	Rhyolite	Ground Stone
Bone, Modified	Ornament	Mammal, Snail	Bone, Unmodified	Teeth	Amphibian	Ceramic	Jar Sherd	Desert Buttware	Chipped Stone	Crescentic	Granitic	Ground Stone	Maro	Sandstone	Ground Stone
Bone, Modified	Whistle	Amphibian	Bone, Unmodified	Rib	Reptile	Ceramic	Modified Sherd	Palomar Brownware	Chipped Stone	Dablage	Obsidian	Ground Stone	Metate	Steatite	Ground Stone
Bone, Modified	Fragment	Reptile	Bone, Unmodified	Mandible	Unspecified	Ceramic	Vessel	Pine Valley Gray	Chipped Stone	Drill	Piedra de Lumbre (PDL)	Ground Stone	Mortar	Volcanic	Ground Stone
Bone, Modified	Other	Unspecified	Bone, Unmodified	Fragment	Mixed	Ceramic	Painted Sherd	Pine Valley Red	Chipped Stone	Flake	Quartz Crystal	Ground Stone	Peelite	Granitic	Ground Stone
			Bone, Unmodified	Bulk	Unspecified	Ceramic	Pendant	Salton Brownware	Chipped Stone	Hammerstone	Quartzite	Ground Stone	Pipe	Quartz	Ground Stone
						Ceramic	Tube Fragment	Salton Buttware	Chipped Stone	Point	Chert	Ground Stone	Shall Straightener	Quartz Crystal	Ground Stone
						Ceramic	Fragment	Tizon Brownware	Chipped Stone	Projectile Point	Metavolcanic	Ground Stone	Smoothing Stone	Basalt	Ground Stone
						Ceramic	Other	Undifferentiated	Chipped Stone	Scraper / SEUT	Volcanic	Ground Stone	Warming Stone	Volcanic	Ground Stone
									Chipped Stone	Tool Fragment	Other	Ground Stone	Weight	Undifferentiated	
HISTORIC			SHELL			STONE, OTHER			VEGETAL			VEGETAL, UNMODIFIED			VEGETAL, UNMODIFIED
Material Class	Object	Material	Material Class	Object	Material	Material Class	Object	Material	Material Class	Object	Material	Material Class	Object	Material	Material Class
Historic	Bottle	Glass													
Historic	Button	Bone													
Historic	Coin	Metal	Shell, Modified	Bead	Olivella	Stone, Other	Fire-Arched Rock (FAR)	Undifferentiated	Vegetal, Modified	Fragment	Undifferentiated	Vegetal, Unmodified	Fragment	Undifferentiated	Vegetal, Unmodified
Historic	Construction Material	Mixed	Shell, Modified	Bowl	Halotis	Stone, Other	Fragment	Material	Vegetal, Modified	Radiorobon Sample	Charcoal	Vegetal, Unmodified	Sample	Charcoal	Vegetal, Unmodified
Historic	Cup Fragment	Porcelain	Shell, Modified	Fishhook	Halotis	Stone, Other	Sample	Soil	Vegetal, Modified	Sample	Other	Vegetal, Unmodified	Pi	Apricot	Vegetal, Unmodified
Historic	Handle	Metal	Shell, Modified	Ornament	Astraea	Stone, Other	Manuport	Cobble	Vegetal, Modified	Sandal	Juncus	Vegetal, Unmodified	Simple	Charcoal	Vegetal, Unmodified
Historic	Hardware	Mixed Material	Shell, Modified	Pendant	Olivella	Stone, Other			Vegetal, Modified	Twine	Yucca	Vegetal, Unmodified	Simple	Charcoal	Vegetal, Unmodified
Historic	Household Item	Mixed Material	Shell, Modified	Blank	Tivela	Stone, Other			Vegetal, Modified	Weaving	Fiber	Vegetal, Unmodified	Sew	Unspecified	Vegetal, Unmodified
Historic	Jar, Codd Cream	Mix Glass	Shell, Modified	Fragment	Unspecified				Vegetal, Modified	Wood Artifact	Wood				
Historic	Marble	Glass	Shell, Modified	Other											
Historic	Mining Item	Metal													
Historic	Personal Item	Mixed Material													
Historic	Pipe	Ceramic													
Historic	Plate	Earthenware													
Historic	Tableware	Ceramic													
Historic	Tool, Farming	Metal													
Historic	Fragment	Unknown													
COMMON SHELL TAXA															
Astraea • Balanus • Citron • Donax • Halotis • Land Snail • Mytilus • Olivella • Ostrea • Pecten • Polinices • Protothaca • Tegula • Tivela															
NOTES															
• Use the most specific Object and Material terms possible.															
• If species identification is not possible, use "Unspecified".															
• If multiple species are present, use "Mixed" and identify species in the Comments field.															
• Maintain consistent terminology throughout the catalog.															
ADDITIONAL TERMS															
Additional nomenclature may be used when scientifically justified and consistently applied. Any non-standard terminology should be defined within the project report and used consistently throughout the Master Catalog.															
EXAMPLES OF MODIFICATION (NOT EXHAUSTIVE)															
Flaking Grinding Drilling Shaping Engraving Polishing Perforating Carving Manufacturing															

APPENDIX A-1: QUICK REFERENCE TO CATALOGING

APPENDIX A-1: QUICK REFERENCE CATALOGING GUIDE San Diego Archaeological Center

MATERIAL CLASS SELECTION GUIDE	
If the Artifact Is...	Use This Material Class
Modified bone artifact	Bone, Modified
Unmodified faunal bone	Bone, Unmodified
Pottery or fired clay	Ceramic
Flaked stone artifact	Chipped Stone
Ground stone artifact	Ground Stone
Modified shell artifact	Shell, Modified
Unmodified shell	Shell, Unmodified
Historic-period artifact	Historic
Fire-affected rock, cobble, mineral sample	Stone, Other
Modified plant material	Vegetal, Modified
Unmodified plant material	Vegetal, Unmodified

COMMON OBJECT TERMS							
BONE, MODIFIED	BONE, UNMODIFIED	CERAMIC	CHIPPED STONE	GROUND STONE	SHELL, MODIFIED	HISTORIC	VEGETAL, MODIFIED
Awl	Cranial	Rim Sherd	Projectile Point	Mano	Bead	Bottle	Twine
Bead	Long Bone	Body Sherd	Point	Metate	Pendant	Button	Sandal
Fishhook	Vertebrae	Base Sherd	Blade	Mortar	Ornament	Coin	Weaving
Gorget	Pelvic	Drilled Sherd	Core	Pestle	Fishhook	Hardware	Wood Artifact
Needle	Teeth	Incised Sherd	Deblage	Bowl	Bowl	Marble	Fragment
Ornament	Rib	Vessel	Flake	Pipe	Blank	Pipe	Radiocarbon Sample
Whistle	Mandible	Painted Sherd	Blade	Weight	Fragment	Plate	Sample
Fragment	Fragment	Pendant	Scrapers / SEUT	Smoothing Stone	Other	Tableware	Other
Other	Bulk	Tube Fragment	Drill	Shaft Straightener		Construction Material	
		Fragment	Hammerstone	Other		Personal Item	
		Other	Tool Fragment			Other	

COMMON MATERIAL TERMS						
BONE	CERAMIC	CHIPPED STONE	GROUND STONE	SHELL	HISTORIC	VEGETAL
Mammal, Large	Brownware	Obsidian	Granitic	Olivella	Glass	Charcoal
Mammal, Medium	Buffware	Chert	Basalt	Helicis	Metal	Wood
Mammal, Small	Carrizo Buffware	Quartzite	Sandstone	Donax	Porcelain	Yucca
Fish	Tizon Brownware	Basalt	Quartzite	Tivela	Earthenware	Juncus
Bird	Salton Brownware	CCS	Volcanic	Astraea	Milk Glass	Fiber
Unspecified	Undifferentiated	Granitic	Undifferentiated	Unspecified	Mixed Material	Unspecified
		Metavolcanic				

COMMON CATALOGING ERRORS		CATALOG REVIEW CHECKLIST	
AVOID	USE INSTEAD	☐ Material Class is correct ☐ Object term is the most specific available ☐ Material is identified to the greatest practical level ☐ Catalog number matches artifact label ☐ Provenience is complete ☐ Quantity and weight are recorded ☐ Comments explain unusual identifications ☐ Terminology is consistent throughout the catalog	
Arrowhead	Projectile Point		
Pottery	Ceramic		
Rock	Stone, Other		
Shell Artifact	Shell, Modified		
Bone Fragment	Bone, Unmodified		
Grinding Stone	Mano, Metate, Mortar, or Pestle		
Historic Debris	Identify specific artifact type whenever possible		
Unknown	Use only when no reasonable identification can be made		

BEST PRACTICE: When in doubt, use the most descriptive and specific terms available and be consistent throughout the collection.

For complete standards and additional examples, refer to Appendix A – Standardized Catalog Nomenclature.

APPENDIX B: MASTER CATALOG

Purpose

The Master Catalog serves as the primary inventory for a curated archaeological collection. Catalog entries must correspond with artifact labels, box inventories, and the physical contents of the collection.

The following example illustrates the recommended organization and minimum required fields.

Site Number	Catalog Number	Recovery Type	Unit / Location	Level (cm)	Material Class	Object	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Box Number	Comments
CA-SDI-0000	1	Surface	Surface	0-0	Chipped Stone	Projectile Point	Chert	1	4.2	1	Complete
CA-SDI-0000	2	Unit	1	0-10	Chipped Stone	Debitage	Quartzite	14	36.8	1	—
CA-SDI-0000	3	Unit	1	10-20	Ceramic	Body Sherd	Tizon Brownware	3	18.4	1	—
CA-SDI-0000	4	STP	4	20-40	Shell, Unmodified	Fragment	Donax	22	12.6	1	—
CA-SDI-0000	5	Feature	2	30-40	Bone, Unmodified	Fragment	Mammal, Medium	6	21.3	1	Unspeciated
CA-SDI-0000	6	Unit	3	10-20	Ground Stone	Mano	Granitic	1	845.6	2	Fragment
CA-SDI-0000	7	Unit	3	20-30	Vegetal, Unmodified	Sample	Charcoal	1	8.4	2	Retained sample
CA-SDI-0000	8	Feature	4	40-50	Historic	Bottle	Glass	2	74.1	2	Aqua glass fragments

Catalog Requirements

- Use one row per catalog entry.
- Maintain consistent terminology throughout the catalog.
- Record weights in grams.
- Do not delete catalog numbers assigned during processing.
- Missing, deaccessioned, oversized, or analytically consumed materials must remain represented in the Master Catalog.
- Box numbers must correspond with the physical location of the curated material.
- The final Master Catalog must be submitted in Microsoft Excel (.xlsx) format.

APPENDIX C: MISSING AND DEACCESSIONED CATALOG

Purpose

Materials assigned catalog numbers during processing must remain documented even when they are no longer physically present in the curated collection.

Missing and deaccessioned materials must remain in the Master Catalog and should also be documented on separate worksheets for collection management purposes.

Missing Items Example

Use **M** in the Box Number field of the Master Catalog.

Site Number	Catalog Number	Material Class	Object	Material	Quantity	Box Number	Comments
CA-SDI-0000	125	Chipped Stone	Projectile Point	Chert	1	M	Missing during final inventory
CA-SDI-0000	248	Historic	Button	Glass	1	M	Not located during collection preparation
CA-SDI-0000	417	Shell, Modified	Bead	Olivella	1	M	Missing; last documented during analysis

Missing Items Requirements

- Retain the original catalog number.
- Do not renumber the collection to eliminate gaps.
- Enter M in the Box Number field.
- Document known circumstances in the Comments field.

Deaccessioned or Non-Curated Items Example

Use **D** in the Box Number field of the Master Catalog.

Site Number	Catalog Number	Material Class	Object	Material	Quantity	Box Number	Comments / Final Disposition
CA-SDI-0000	302	Stone, Other	Fire-Affected Rock (FAR)	Undifferentiated	18	D	Sampled; remainder not curated
CA-SDI-0000	355	Historic	Construction Material	Mixed	12	D	Non-curated; documented in project report
CA-SDI-0000	511	Vegetal, Unmodified	Sample	Charcoal	1	D	Consumed during radiocarbon analysis

Deaccessioned / Non-Curated Materials Requirements

Documentation must identify, as applicable:

- Catalog number;
- Material type;
- Quantity;
- Reason material is not present;
- Sampling method, if applicable;
- Final disposition; and
- Supporting documentation or photographs when appropriate.

Important: "Deaccessioned" should only be used when appropriate to the legal and collections status of the material. Materials excluded from curation before accession should be documented as non-curated or otherwise described according to their actual disposition.

APPENDIX D: OVERSIZED ARTIFACT CATALOG

Purpose

Artifacts that cannot be safely housed within a standard archival box, or that exceed applicable box weight limitations, must be identified as oversized.

Oversized artifacts remain part of the Master Catalog and must be individually labeled.

Use **OS** in the Box Number field.

Site Number	Catalog Number	Recovery Type	Unit / Location	Level (cm)	Material Class	Object	Material	Quantity	Weight (g)	Box Number	Comments
CA-SDI-0000	418	Surface	Surface Collection	Surface	Ground Stone	Metate	Granitic	1	18,250	OS	Complete; oversized
CA-SDI-0000	419	Unit	Unit 4	0-10	Ground Stone	Mortar	Granitic	1	12,480	OS	Fragment
CA-SDI-0000	420	Surface	Feature 1	Surface	Historic	Construction Material	Mixed	1	9,300	OS	Architectural element

Oversized Artifact Requirements

Each oversized artifact must:

- Appear in the Master Catalog;
- Be assigned OS in the Box Number field;
- Retain complete provenience information;
- Be individually labeled according to SDAC standards; and
- Be prepared for safe transport and long-term storage.

Contact the SDAC before delivery when a collection contains unusually large, heavy, fragile, or difficult-to-house materials.

APPENDIX E: ARTIFACT BAG LABEL EXAMPLES

Required Information

Artifact bag labels must correspond exactly with the Master Catalog and include sufficient information to maintain artifact identity and provenience.

At minimum, include:

- Site Number
- Catalog Number
- Recovery Type / Provenience
- Unit, Feature, STP, or Location
- Level / Depth
- Material Class
- Object / Material
- Quantity
- Weight

Standard Artifact Bag Label

Site	CA-SDI-0000
Catalog No.	125
Provenience	Unit 2
Level	10–20 cm
Material Class	Chipped Stone
Object	Debitage
Material	Chert
Quantity	14
Weight	32.6 g

Sample Label

CA-SDI-0000-2026-426

Feature 3 20–30 cm

Vegetal, Unmodified Sample

Charcoal Qty. 1 18.2 g

Label Placement

- Place the label inside the artifact bag.
- Position the label so it can be read without opening the bag whenever possible.
- For double-bagged materials, place identifying information, so it remains clearly associated with the contents.
- Exterior marker information may supplement, but must not replace, the internal label.
- Labels must be printed on archival-quality material using stable, legible text. Always verify that the catalog number, provenience, quantity, and contents match before sealing the bag.

APPENDIX F: BOX LABELS

Each archival collection box must have a clearly legible exterior label corresponding with the Master Catalog and Box Inventory.

Box Label Requirements

Include:

- Project title;
- Site number(s);
- Box number and total number of boxes;
- USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle;
- General site location or jurisdiction; and
- Collection or accession number, when assigned.

Boxes should be numbered sequentially and correspond directly with the Master Catalog and individual Box Inventories.

Do not permanently write repository-assigned accession or collection numbers on boxes before receiving those numbers from SDAC.

Standard Box Label Example

Sample Archaeological Testing Project
CA-SDI-0000
Box: 1 of 4
USGS Quadrangle: Escondido 7.5-Minute Quadrangle
Location: San Diego County, California
Collection / Accession No.: _____

Box Numbering Example

Box 1 of 4
Box 2 of 4
Box 3 of 4
Box 4 of 4

APPENDIX G: COLLECTION PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Before Scheduling Delivery

Use this checklist to confirm that a collection is ready for transfer to the SDAC.

Do not deliver a collection until all applicable requirements have been reviewed. Questions should be resolved with SDAC staff before the scheduled delivery date.

1. Collection Organization

- ☐ Collection is organized by site and provenience.
- ☐ Catalog numbers correspond with physical materials.
- ☐ Material classes and terminology are used consistently.
- ☐ Missing, non-curated/deaccessioned, and oversized materials are documented.

2. Artifact Preparation

- ☐ Artifacts are clean, dry, and stable.
- ☐ No unnecessary or undocumented conservation treatments have been applied. All treatments have been documented and shared with SDAC staff before delivery.
- ☐ Residues, pigments, use-wear, and culturally significant surface features have been preserved.
- ☐ Fragile or unusual materials are appropriately stabilized.

3. Bagging and Labeling

- ☐ Archival-quality bags are used.
- ☐ Each bag contains a complete internal label.
- ☐ Labels match the Master Catalog.
- ☐ Required materials are double-bagged.
- ☐ Friable and oversized artifacts are appropriately tagged.
- ☐ No prohibited labeling materials are present.

4. Boxing

- ☐ Approved archival-quality boxes are used.
- ☐ Boxes do not exceed the maximum allowable weight.
- ☐ Heavy and fragile materials are appropriately separated.
- ☐ Artifacts are stabilized to prevent movement.
- ☐ Each box has an exterior Box Label and Box Inventory

5. Master Catalog

- ☐ Master Catalog is complete.
- ☐ Catalog numbers are unique and not used more than once.
- ☐ Provenience information is complete.
- ☐ Quantity and weight are recorded.
- ☐ Missing items are coded **M**.
- ☐ Non-curated/deaccessioned items are appropriately documented and coded **D**.
- ☐ Oversized items are coded **OS**.
- ☐ Final catalog is prepared in Microsoft Excel (.xlsx).

6. Associated Records

- ☐ Final and/or draft technical report is included (digital format preferred).
- ☐ Original catalog is included in digital and printed formats.
- ☐ Field and laboratory records are organized.
- ☐ Maps are included and properly identified.
- ☐ Photographic records and inventory are included.
- ☐ GIS/GPS data are included when applicable.

7. Conveyance and Compliance

- ☐ Legal ownership or authority has been verified
- ☐ Appropriate conveyance documentation is complete.
- ☐ Required signatures have been obtained.
- ☐ Non-curated materials and final disposition are documented.
- ☐ Known or suspected NAGPRA-related cultural items have been disclosed to the SDAC.
- ☐ Relevant inadvertent discovery and consultation documentation is included, when applicable.

8. Final Delivery

- ☐ Collection has received a final quality-control review.
- ☐ Delivery appointment has been scheduled.
- ☐ Current fees have been confirmed and invoices have been received.
- ☐ Oversized, hazardous, sensitive, or unusual materials have been discussed with SDAC staff in advance.

APPENDIX H:

COMMON DEFICIENCIES AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

The following issues commonly delay collection intake. Conducting a final quality-control review before delivery can significantly reduce processing delays and requests for correction.

Common Deficiency	How to Avoid It
Missing or incomplete Master Catalog	Complete a final catalog review before delivery and verify all required fields.
Catalog does not match physical collection	Conduct a box-by-box inventory and compare every catalog entry with the physical contents.
Missing original catalogs or records	Verify that all original and final field, laboratory, and catalog records are included before transfer.
Missing catalog numbers	Do not delete catalog entries. Document missing items using M and explain the circumstances in Comments.
Non-curated OR deaccession materials not documented	Record material type, quantity, reason for removal, and final disposition.
Incorrect box numbers	Verify that the Master Catalog, Box Inventories, and physical box label all match.
Incomplete artifact labels	Ensure every label contains required identification and provenience information.
Label and catalog information do not match	Perform a final cross-check between labels and Master Catalog.
Inconsistent nomenclature	Use Appendix A throughout cataloging and perform a terminology review before submission.
Non-archival bags or packaging	Use only approved archival-quality collection materials.
Prohibited packing materials present	Remove household plastics, PVC, paper towels, newsprint, foam peanuts, and other prohibited materials.
Overweight boxes	Weigh boxes before delivery and redistribute materials as necessary. (Box weight limit is 30 lbs.)
Fragile artifacts inadequately supported	Use appropriate archival supports, padding, or custom housing.
Oversized artifacts not identified	Code oversized artifacts OS , label them individually, and notify the SDAC before delivery.
Missing Box Inventories	Place an accurate box inventory in every collection box.
Missing digital files	Complete a digital records inventory and verify all required files are present and accessible.
Poorly organized digital files	Use clear folder structures and descriptive, consistent file names.
Missing photographs or photograph inventory	Submit relevant project photographs with a corresponding inventory.
Missing GIS/GPS information	Include applicable spatial data, datum/coordinate-system information, and metadata.

Incomplete conveyance documentation	Confirm the correct agreement and/or authorized signatory before delivery.
Unclear ownership	Resolve legal title or curation authority before scheduling transfer.
Sensitive cultural materials not disclosed	Notify the SDAC in advance of known or suspected human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, objects of cultural patrimony, or other known culturally sensitive materials.

Final Quality-Control Rule

Before scheduling delivery, someone **other than the individual who originally prepared the collection** should conduct a final review whenever staffing allows.

When in Doubt, Contact the SDAC Before Delivery

Questions identified before delivery are generally easier to resolve than deficiencies discovered during intake. Contact SDAC staff in advance regarding unusual collections, unclear requirements, ownership questions, specialized materials, or circumstances not addressed by these guidelines.