

Appendix J: Marking

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APPENDIX J: MARKING

A. Marking Guidelines

1. *Why do I mark museum objects with a catalog number?*

The catalog number on the object links the object with the catalog record, the accession records, and other documentation. The catalog number identifies the object. You need it for accountability and access. Mark all objects in the park's permanent museum collection with a catalog number that includes the:

- park acronym
- collection designator (if applicable)
- unique number

Example: INDE 3487

2. *When should I mark the number on the object?*

Mark objects as part of the cataloging process. Mark the object at the same time that you complete the catalog record. Don't mark numbers on objects until you are ready to catalog them. It's a lot easier to change a catalog number in ANCS+ than to remove a number from an object. You also run the risk of assigning duplicate catalog numbers if you mark numbers on the objects before you catalog them.

3. *What are the general rules for marking objects?*

There are different techniques for marking different types of materials, but every catalog number should be:

- legible and easily found (don't place the catalog number on the underside of a heavy object)
- durable but not damaging
- in a location that doesn't detract from the scientific, historic, aesthetic or intrinsic value of the object (doesn't cover any diagnostic or potentially informative features)
- unobtrusive (not directly visible when the object is on display)
- in a location where it won't receive excessive wear
- secure enough that it cannot be removed accidentally
- reversible

It's much easier to find catalog numbers if you place them in the same position on similar objects. For example, number framed images on the reverse lower right corner.

4. *Can I tag objects in addition to marking them with a catalog number?*

Yes. In addition to the permanent catalog number, you may want to tag objects in storage. Tags make it easier to identify and find objects and reduce handling. Use an acid-free, cotton tag with cotton string, and place it in a visible location. Don't use metal-rimmed tags. Don't attach tags with tape or glue. Don't place the tag on weak parts of the object.

5. *How do I mark objects that*

Never mark a number on objects that are on loan to the park. Attach an acid-free tag to the object using cotton string.

are on loan to my park?

If a tag is too obtrusive for a loan that is on exhibit, keep a detailed list of the catalog numbers for the loaned objects in the exhibit. Note the location of each loaned object in the exhibit and take photos to identify each object.

You don't have to catalog objects on loan to your park for less than a year. Use the lender's catalog number, if available, for tracking purposes.

Note: NPS centers and non-NPS repositories receive incoming loans from parks for the purposes of curation and storage. The center or repository marks the park catalog number on the objects as part of the cataloging process.

6. *Are there marking techniques that I can't use?*

Yes. Don't use any technique that permanently alters the object, such as etching, scribing, imprinting, stamping, engraving, or scratching. These methods are irreversible and permanently alter the object.

You can stamp, etch, or otherwise mark "Reproduction" on objects that are reproductions. For contemporary reproductions, you can add the craftperson's name and the date. Refer to Section IV in Chapter 4 of this handbook and the *MH-III*, Chapter 5: Three-Dimensional Reproductions, for information on reproductions.

Don't use the following materials:

- epoxy and cement
- nail-on tags
- nail polish and nail polish remover
- pressure sensitive tapes and labels (cellophane, masking, plastic, and adhesive)
- rubber cement
- spray varnishes
- typewriter correction fluid
- tags attached with wire
- staples or paper clips
- paint or ink on paper documents

7. *What if I have objects in my collection that have been marked or tagged with incorrect materials?* Consult with a conservator about removing old numbers and tags. Some old numbers and tags may be historically important and shouldn't be removed. Place any tags you remove in the catalog or accession folder. If a tag will be destroyed during removal, copy the information, and place it in the catalog or accession folder.
8. *What should I do about previous catalog numbers from former owners?* Previous catalog numbers are part of the documentation for the object. Don't remove these numbers unless:
- confusion with park numbers is likely
 - the number is causing damage to the object
 - the number occupies space needed for the park number

Never remove field specimen numbers.

Note: If you must remove a previous owner's numbers, consult a conservator. You will have to test for the correct solvent before removing the number.

Place tags you remove in the catalog or accession folder.

If a tag will be destroyed during removal, copy the information and place it in the catalog or accession folder.

9. *Can I use bar codes to mark objects?* No. Some NPS centers are using bar codes successfully to help track the movement of objects. Bar codes require the use of a software package to produce them, a printer to print them, and a scanner to read them. At present, bar codes are not a substitute for marking the catalog number on an object. The bar code tags can become separated from the objects. There are still no satisfactory methods of adhering the tags to most objects.
10. *Should I remove numbers from objects that I deaccession?* No. Let the recipient decide whether to remove the numbers.

B. Applying and Removing Numbers

1. *What is the most common technique for marking numbers on objects?* You will usually use lacquer and ink when numbering museum objects. Use this method for all objects except:
- incoming loans
 - paper
 - textiles
 - objects with unstable surfaces
 - plastics, vinyl, resins, and rubber
 - some natural history specimens

Refer to Sections C-J in this appendix for information on marking specific

materials.

2. *What tools and materials do I need for marking objects with lacquer and ink?*

You'll need these tools and materials to mark objects with lacquer and ink:

- clear lacquer (Acryloid B-72® acrylic resin/acetone)
- white lacquer (Acryloid B-72® acrylic resin/acetone with titanium dioxide white pigment)
- permanent waterproof ink (Higgins® Black Magic® or Pelikan 17)
- technical pen (Rapidograph®), or crowquill pen
- acetone and cotton swabs for cleaning surfaces and removal of lacquer to correct errors, if needed
- artist brushes

3. *How do I apply the number?*

To apply the number:

- Make sure the area is clean and free of dust.
- Apply a small rectangle of clear or white lacquer on the object using a small artist's brush or cap brush. Use clear lacquer on light objects and white lacquer on dark objects. Usually a spot 1/8" wide by 3/8" long is sufficient.
- Allow the lacquer to dry thoroughly.
- Write the catalog number on the spot, using permanent black ink and a crowquill or Rapidograph® pen. Keep a small jar of ammonia and water handy for cleaning pen tips.
- Allow the ink to dry. Drying times will vary depending on the material and climate.
- Cover the number with a coat of clear lacquer to protect it. The clear lacquer topcoat should extend just beyond the lacquer primer rectangle.

*Refer to **Conserve 0 Gram 1/4, Use of Acryloid B-72 Lacquer for Labeling Museum Objects**, for detailed instructions on applying catalog numbers.*

Apply numbers in a well-ventilated area, and use latex or cotton gloves when marking metal objects.

Note: You can get Material Data Sheets on Acryloid B-72 and acetone from the Supply and Equipment Program of the Museum Management Program.

4. *When do I remove a catalog number from an object?*

Remove a catalog number only when necessary. You will need to remove numbers when the:

- number is incorrect
- ink smears
- object is removed from a lot and individually cataloged

When in doubt, consult your regional/support office (SO) curator or a conservator before removing numbers.

Refer to Section A.8 for information about catalog numbers from previous owners.

5. *How do I remove a catalog number from an object?*

Before you remove a catalog number, you need to know what marking materials were used on the object. Check with a conservator if you're not sure. Be aware that removing numbers can alter the object. For example, you may lose a small amount of the finish on finished wooden objects.

Before 1987 the NPS used shellac for marking objects. Remove shellac with denatured alcohol.

In early 1987, the NPS issued a cellulose nitrate lacquer (clear and white) from GSA. In April 1987, the NPS switched to the acrylic lacquer (clear and white) currently in use. You can remove all these lacquers with acetone, but check to make sure there is no shellac overcoat. Sometimes lacquer was used with a shellac overcoat.

To remove the number:

- Make sure you work in a well-ventilated area.
- Apply a small amount of solvent with a cotton swab. The material is carried into the swab rather than diluted and absorbed into the object.

C. Marking Human Remains

1. *Are there special procedures for marking human remains?*

Yes. Consult with affiliated groups about marking human remains. It may be inappropriate to place catalog numbers on these items. An alternative is to mark or tag the container.

2. *How do I mark human remains?*

To mark cremations:

- Completely enclose the burial vessel with unbleached muslin and fasten it with cotton twill tape.
- Attach the catalog number and any other labels to the twill tape. Use acid-free paper or Tyvek® for the labels.

To mark inhumations:

- Group small bones by type and place them in a polyethylene bag.

Place an acid-free label in each bag.

- Place the catalog numbers on the storage container.

To mark skeletal remains with soft tissue:

- Place the catalog number on an acid-free tag, and tie the tag to the remains or the storage container.

D. Marking Paper Items

1. *How do I mark paper items?*

Never use ink or indelible pencils to mark paper items. Use #2H, HB or softer pencils only. You want to use a pencil that won't indent but yet is hard enough not to smear. Write lightly, so you don't leave an impression. Place the object on a clean hard surface before numbering it. You can use a sheet of heavy Mylar.

2. *What tools and supplies do I need for marking paper items?*

Use the following tools and supplies when marking paper items:

#2H, HB, or softer pencils
acid-free paper photographic enclosures
Mylar sleeves
archival film pen

3. *Where do I mark paper items?*

There are various locations for marking paper items.

Individually cataloged paper items

Place the catalog number directly and inconspicuously on the reverse side in the lower right corner. If the item has embrittled edges, place the number away from the edge. If the object is in special housing, number the housing as well as the object.

Archival and manuscript collections

Place the catalog number on the folder.

Books

Place the number inside the front cover at the lower edge of the right hand corner, and on the back of the title page at the lower edge of the right hand corner.

Framed objects

Place the catalog number on the frame and object, on the reverse, lower right edge.

Photographs

Place the catalog number on the reverse, lower right edge. If the number wears off you will have to reapply it. If necessary, set up a monitoring cycle to check the catalog numbers for wear.

For photographs in acid-free paper or Mylar enclosures, mark the enclosure. Use an archival film pen on Mylar sleeves. Mark the sleeve before placing the photograph inside.

When working with photographs, remember that inks (ballpoint pen, felt-tip, manuscript, and rubber stamp) may be acidic and can cause fading of silver images.

Never list additional information on the backs of photographs. Use a cross-reference sheet to list information about names of individuals in group shots.

Photographic negatives

Don't mark the negatives directly. Place the number on the acid-free

(including glass plates)

enclosures that hold the negatives. Mark the number on an archival print of the negative to make sure that you don't lose the number.

4. *How do I remove an incorrect catalog number from paper items?*

If you need to remove an incorrect number, use a white vinyl eraser. Avoid abrading the paper by keeping the pressure as light as possible.

E. Plastics, Vinyl, Resins, and Rubber

1. *How do I mark plastics, vinyl, resins, and rubber?*

There's no single method for applying catalog numbers to these materials. Identification of different types of plastics, vinyl, resins, and rubber is difficult. Their chemical compositions vary and can interact negatively with standard labeling materials.

2. *Why can't I use standard labeling practices with these materials?*

Solvents such as acetone and toluene may:

- dissolve the surfaces of some plastics
- cause stress cracking or crazing
- destroy some glossy finishes

Some water-based materials initiate stress cracking over time. In addition, these materials are not reversible in water when dry.

Regular oil paints and their solvents soften or otherwise damage some plastics over time.

Inks often contain metallic elements that can degrade rubber.

3. *What tools and supplies can I use to mark plastic, vinyl, resin, and rubber objects?*

Use the following tools and supplies when marking plastics, vinyl, resins, and rubber:

Teflon® tape (plumbers tape) with archival film pen
Mylar with archival film pen and nylon or Teflon® monofilament
cotton twill tape and pigma pen
acid-free paper tags with pigma pen

4. *What are some methods for marking plastics, vinyl, resins, and rubber?*

If possible, apply the catalog number to a component of the object not made of these materials using standard techniques with lacquer and ink or pencil. If you can't do this, consider doing one of the following:

- Use Teflon® tape (plumbers tape) and an archival film pen.
- Use Mylar, and an archival film pen. (This may be the most unobtrusive way to label objects on exhibit.)
- Label the container or object mount.
- Use an acid-free paper tag and pigma pen.
- Use cotton twill tape and a pigma pen.

Write the catalog number on the labeling material before attaching it to the object. See E.6 for information on how to attach the labeling material to the object.

If you need to apply a number directly to an object consult with a conservator.

5. *Where do I place the catalog number for different plastic, vinyl, resin, and rubber objects?*

Placement of the catalog number for objects made of these materials will vary. It depends on the type of object, whether the object is on exhibit, and the labeling technique you use. Place numbers in a consistent location for the same types of objects. Keep in mind standard concerns. The number should be legible, durable, reversible, non-damaging, non-obtrusive, and easily found.

6. *How do I attach the catalog number to different plastics, vinyl, resins, and rubber?*

Make sure you apply the catalog number to the labeling material and allow it to dry before attaching the number to the object. Attach the number in a secure and unobtrusive but easily found location.

<i>If you use...</i>	<i>Then...</i>
Teflon® tape or twill tape,	use the tape itself to secure the catalog number to the object.
Mylar,	round the edges of the tag so they can't damage the object, and use chemically inert Teflon® monofilament to secure the tag to the object.
acid-free paper tags,	use cotton string to secure the catalog number to the object.
the mount or container,	use either lacquer and ink or pencil directly on the mount or container. For objects in storage you may place a tag inside the container.

F. Marking Textiles

1. *What tools and supplies do I use to mark textiles?*

Use the following tools and supplies when marking textiles:

cotton twill tape
pigma pen
colorfast cotton thread (Mettler, Guttermann, and cotton quilters thread)
small, sharp needles, various sizes
small, sharp sewing scissors
tweezers

2. *How do I mark textiles?*

Use permanent black ink (pigma pen), cotton twill tape, and colorfast cotton thread to mark textiles. Choose a size and weight of twill appropriate for the object. Use white thread, except for objects on exhibit. Write the catalog number on the cotton twill tape. After the ink has dried thoroughly, baste the tape to the textile.

Baste the linen tape directly onto the textile with colorfast cotton thread. For fragile or open weave items, such as lace, attach the tape with a small loop of thread.

3. *Where do I place the catalog number on textiles?*

Garments

Place the catalog number in the neckband or waistband of the garment. For garments on exhibit, place the number in an unobtrusive location. For example, place the number on the right or left side of the neckband rather than the center. This location will be less visible when the object is on display. If the threads go through the back of the garment where they could be visible, use colorfast cotton thread matching the fabric of the garment.

Flat textiles

For flat textiles, such as rugs, linens, draperies, and flags, place the number on the underside of the garment. Use colored colorfast thread that matches the color of the fabric for items on exhibit.

Rolled textiles

For rolled textiles, place the number so that it is readable without having to unroll the item.

4. *How do I attach the catalog number to textiles?*

Use a basting stitch to attach the twill tape to the textile. Baste all four sides of the twill tape using large stitches. If you only baste the ends of the tape, something could catch between the object and the tape. With a one inch strip of twill tape, you would use one stitch on each end and two on each side.

Keep a loose tension on the thread. Too much tension can stress the textile. Too little tension will leave loose threads that can catch on things and cause damage.

There are two methods for starting and ending your stitches. One method is to use the same holes and go through your first and last stitch twice. This leaves a tail at each end so someone can tell where you started and ended your stitches.

To use the second method, leave a tail with your thread when you start to stitch. After you are done, bring the tail through the second stitch and bring the ending tail back through the third stitch. You'll need tweezers for this technique.

Note: Don't use a knot to start and end your basting. You can pull knots through the fabric causing damage.

For loose weave textiles like lace, loop the string that holds the twill tape label through the weave.

5. *How do I remove an incorrect catalog number from textiles?*

Choose the finest needle that will work for the task. For silk, use numbers 10, 11, 12, or a quilting needle. Rugs may need a number 6 needle. Carefully lift the end of the thread, and pull it gently through the label.

G. Large and Small Objects and Unstable Surfaces

1. *Are there special techniques for marking large objects?*

Yes. Large objects such as wagons, cannons, anchors, and objects kept outdoors need especially durable numbers. Paint the number on the object following the instructions in Section F.3 below. Locate the number in the same place in a protected but accessible area for each type of object.

In addition to the painted number, you may choose to add a supplemental tag. Make sure the tag is attached with something non-abrasive.

You may attach a supplementary stamped or engraved aluminum tag to large outdoor items. Attach these tags with Teflon® tape. This tape is soft, chemically inert, and water, oil, chemical, and insect resistant.

For objects in storage, you can print information on 8 ½ x 11" paper or card stock that you put in a polypropylene bag. Attach the bag to the object with polyester or polypropylene cord in a prominent place.

For objects on exhibit, you may also use a Mylar tag. Round the corners so the sharp corners can't cause damage. This material is resistant to oil, water, and insects. Attach the tag with Teflon® monofilament, or for equipment you can use Teflon® tape.

2. *What are the tools and supplies I'll need to mark large objects?*

Use the following tools and supplies to mark large objects:

aluminum tags
Dymo® labeler (for use with aluminum tags)
engraving or stamping tools (use only on aluminum tags)
pencil or knitting needle
string ties or Teflon® monofilament
Teflon® tape to secure tags
red cadmium or black carbon pigment oil paint
mineral spirits
Tyvek® for labels
Mylar tags

3. *How do I paint numbers on large objects?*

Use mineral spirits to clean and degrease the area where you will apply the catalog number. When it dries, apply the number directly on the object. Use an appropriate size sable brush and cadmium red or black carbon pigment oil paint.

You may need to trim the brush and thin the paint with turpentine. Choose the color of paint based on the color of the object.

4. *Where do I place the catalog number for large objects?*

Apply the number to the right rear of vehicles or boats. Use an out-of-the-way but consistent spot. Because large objects are hard to move, be sure to place the number in an area that is easy to access.

5. *How do I remove an incorrect catalog number?*

While still wet you may remove the paint with VMP Naptha or turpentine.

Once dry, removing the paint will require a strong solvent like methylene chloride. A conservator or qualified member of the staff should perform this task. It's easier to paint over the number with artist's oil paint and reapply the correct number.

6. *Are there special techniques for marking small objects?*

If an object is too small for marking, place the object in a small container, and mark the container. Containers include vials, polyethylene bags, or acid-free envelopes. Place an additional tag inside the container. Tag containers of lot cataloged objects in the same way.

7. *How do I mark objects that have unstable surfaces?*

Some objects may have an uneven, friable, or powdery surface, such as corroded metals or leather objects. Don't use lacquer and ink on these objects. Place the catalog number on an acid-free paper or Tyvek® tag, and attach it with cotton string or polypropylene cord.

H. Leather and Baskets

1. *How do I mark soft leather and hide?*

Don't use lacquer and ink to mark soft leather or hides. You may use lacquer and ink on hard finished leather. Use either an acid-free tag or a textile label to mark soft leather and hide. Use existing holes in the piece to loop the tag through the label, or secure the label to an appendage. When using existing holes, take care not to stress the material.

In some cases, you can mark a component of the object. For example, mark one of the metal pieces of a bridle rather than the leather.

2. *How do I mark baskets, mats, bark cloth, and other fibrous materials?*

On some baskets and fibrous materials it may be difficult to use lacquer and ink because of the narrowness or texture of the fibers. You can apply lacquer and ink to these items, if the surface is firm. When in doubt, use acid-free tags or cotton twill tape. For flat items, place the number on the reverse right corner.

I. Numbering Component Parts, Pairs, and Sets

1. *How do I number objects with component parts?*

Number objects with component parts with the catalog number and the component part designator. Mark each component individually. Each part has a unique lower case suffix.

Example:

<u>Object</u>	<u>Components</u>	<u>Catalog Number on Object</u>
Teapot	Teapot	PARK 5a
	Lid	PARK 5b

See Section I of Appendix C in this handbook for a discussion of component parts. If you need more than 26 letters, double the letters. For example, use 10aa, 10ab, 10ac, and so forth.

Note: Don't use component part designators with biological specimens, such as animal skeletons. Count the bones, and enter this number in the

Item Count field in ANCS+. Mark each bone with the same catalog number. Place bones too small to be individually numbered in a vial with a specimen label showing the catalog number.

2. *How do I number pairs?*

Number pairs, such as a pair of shoes, with the catalog number and a component part designator. Mark each item individually.

Example:

<u>Object</u>	<u>Components</u>	<u>Catalog Number on Object</u>
Spur	Spur	PARK 4511a
	Spur	PARK 4511b

See Section I of Appendix C in this handbook for a discussion of pairs.

3. *How do I number sets and kits?*

Number sets and kits as you would number an object with component parts. Number each piece of the set individually with the catalog number and a component part designator. Each piece has a unique lower case suffix.

Example:

<u>Object</u>	<u>Components</u>	<u>Catalog Number on Object</u>
Kit, Needlework	Thread	PARK 78a
	Thimble	PARK 79b
	Needles	PARK 80c

See Section I of Appendix C in this handbook for a discussion of sets and kits. If you need more than 26 letters, double the letters. For example, use 10aa, 10ab, 10ac, and so forth.

J. Number Location for Specific Types of Objects

As a rule, place the catalog number in the same location on all objects of the same type. The list in this section includes standard locations and techniques for marking various types of objects.

<u>Object</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Marking Material</u>
Armor	Inside each element.	lacquer and ink
Baskets	On base. Don't place catalog numbers on a portion of the basket that may conceal diagnostic information. Tag baskets that are fragile.	lacquer and ink or tag
Beads	Place on the edge or on an attached tag. Put the object in a clear vial container or polyethylene bag with a paper label inside.	tag or place in a marked container

<u>Object</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Marking Material</u>
Books	On endpaper (blank leaf inside front cover), lower edge near spine, and on lower edge, right hand corner on back of the title page. Loose pages must receive the same catalog number, individually on reverse, lower right.	soft pencil (#2H, HB or softer)
Buttons	On reverse side or same procedure as beads.	tag or place in a marked container
Ceramic, glass, pewter	On the underside, but avoid parts that would be abraded when the object is moved. Label whole ceramic vessels on the exterior base, near the center. Number sherds on the undecorated surface. Use multiple applications of lacquer on porous surfaces to build up a base that will prevent absorption of ink.	lacquer and ink
Clothing	Place the number on cotton twill tape, and sew it on the costume to the neckband or waistband. Sew the number on in a location that is easily seen during inventory but not so obvious during exhibition.	sew-on label
Coins	On the edge/rim. <i>Don't</i> number mint condition coins. Place the number on the container holding the coin.	lacquer and ink
Documents, photos, prints, letters, postcards, and envelopes	Reverse, lower right corner.	soft pencil (#2H, HB or softer)
Dolls wooden or china head	Back of neck or bottom of foot.	lacquer and ink
Firearms	Inside trigger-guard, or on the breech of the barrel opposite the lock, or on the lower right butt.	lacquer and ink
Flags/pennants/banners	Reverse side at top of hoisting edge.	sew-on label
Framed image	Reverse, lower right corner of frame.	lacquer and ink
Furniture	Near the inside top of the right rear leg; or for pieces without legs, on the right side near rear corner. Number heavy objects on the right side/leg at the base. Place number so it can be seen easily during inventory, but not obvious when on exhibit.	
beds	Top of back, right headpost or foot rail.	lacquer and ink
trunk/chest	Top right corner of back.	lacquer and ink
chairs, sofas	Top right of back leg, or seat frame.	lacquer and ink

<u>Object</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Marking Material</u>
mirrors	Lower right corner of back of frame.	lacquer and ink
stoves	Top right corner of back.	lacquer and ink
tables	Apron or top right corner of a leg at one end of table.	lacquer and ink
Jewelry	Smooth surface on the right lower corner on reverse side. Number cotton twill tape and sew around necklaces, bracelets, and rings.	lacquer and ink or cotton twill tape
Model vehicles, boats	Right side of back end or stern.	lacquer and ink
Paintings	Reverse, lower right corner. Number both stretcher and frame, in case they are separated. <i>Don't</i> place numbers or labels on the front or back of the canvas. For heavy frames that are difficult to remove from the wall, use the lower right corner on the side of the frame. Number scroll paintings on the scroll knob.	lacquer and ink
Rugs, tapestries, and drapes	Reverse side, lower right corner.	sew-on label
Scabbard	On reverse of the throat, at top, or (absent a throat) on the body near an opening.	lacquer and ink
Scrapbooks, albums	Lower corner near spine inside front cover.	soft pencil (#2H, HB or softer)
Sculpture in the round	At the rear of the base near the bottom; also at the lower edge of the back of pedestal.	lacquer and ink
Sculpture in relief	Lower right of back or edge in an inconspicuous place.	lacquer and ink
Stamps	Write the number on the back of the stamp with a soft pencil. You can also place stamps in acid-free containers, and label the container.	soft pencil (#2H, HB or softer) or place in a marked container
Stone	On base center. Don't put a number on flaking areas.	lacquer and ink
Swords, daggers, and knives	On reverse of the blade, on ricasso just below the counter guard, if it will not likely be scraped off by the scabbard.	lacquer and ink
Tools	Working part of tool (on head rather than on handle.)	lacquer and ink

For further information on placement of numbers see *The New Museum Registration Methods*, Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 1998.

K. Natural History Specimens

1. *What are natural history specimen labels?*

The NPS uses standardized natural history specimen labels to identify all natural history museum collections. These labels are mandatory for all natural history specimens. See Appendix H in this handbook for a description and illustrations of the labels and their uses. Appendix H is in a separate notebook.

2. *Who completes the natural history specimen label?*

The collector or specialist usually completes the label. The accession and catalog numbers are added to the label after the specimen is cataloged. This may be done by park staff, the collector, or the repository that manages the specimens. Refer to Section VI in Chapter 4 of this handbook for information on following regulations for cataloging natural history specimens.

3. *What if the labels on my specimens are incomplete?*

Complete them using data provided by the collector. Follow the instructions in Appendix H of this handbook.

4. *When do I create new NPS labels?*

Only remove old labels if they are damaging the specimen. If you must remove the old label, place it in the accession or catalog folder. Never discard old labels!

Don't remove clearly legible, well-attached collector labels that have much of the information required on NPS specimen labels. Add any additional or new information, such as accession and catalog numbers, to the NPS label, and keep both labels with the specimen.

5. *Where can I get natural history labels?*

ANCS+ can produce all the required natural history labels. The program also completes most of the information on the label from data you enter on the catalog record. Use acid-free paper to produce labels.

6. *What kind of supplies do I need to mark and label natural history specimens?*

Use the following supplies to mark and label natural history specimens:

acid-free NPS natural history labels
glue for labels (white glue such as Elmers glue)
permanent, waterproof black ink
clear lacquer for rocks and minerals (Acryloid B-72® acrylic resin/acetone)
white lacquer for rocks and minerals (Acryloid B-72® acrylic resin/acetone with titanium dioxide white pigment)
acetone
polyvinyl acetate adhesive 5% in ethanol
crowquill or Rapidograph® pen.

7. *How do I mark a number on a natural history specimen?*

You don't mark the catalog number directly on all natural history specimens. For some specimens, mark the number only on the label.

When applying the catalog number to a specimen, use ink and lacquer. Follow the procedures in Section B of this appendix. Make sure you don't cover important features with the number. Place the catalog number and label in a location that minimizes handling the specimen.

Place very small specimens in vials, and attach a label to the vial. If appropriate, place the catalog number inside the vial. Place insect labels on

an insect pin.

When attaching labels directly to a specimen, use cotton thread. For oily and wet specimens you may want to use a polypropylene cord.

For lot cataloged specimens, place a label on the storage container. Place an additional tag inside the container. Refer to Appendix I in this handbook for information on cataloging specimens in lots.

8. *How do I mark plant specimens?*

Herbarium specimens

Don't mark the number directly on the specimen. Glue the Herbarium Collection Label, Form 10-512, on the lower right corner of the herbarium sheet. Mark the catalog and accession numbers on the label.

Don't use starchy pastes. They can attract insects and mold. Don't use glues with a toluene or acetone base (model airplane glues). White glue, such as Elmers glue or polyvinyl acetate emulsion works well.

Nuts, large seeds, and wood specimens

Place the number on the specimen. Use clear lacquer for a primer coat with permanent black ink and a protective overcoat of clear lacquer.

Wet plant specimens

Don't mark the number directly on the specimen. Write the accession and catalog numbers on a Wet Plant Specimen Label, Form 10-506, and place it in the jar or container. Currently you should get labels for wet specimens from the Supply and Equipment Program of the Museum Management Program.

9. *How do I mark vertebrate specimens?*

Bones

Place the number directly on vertebrate bones. Use clear lacquer for a primer coat with permanent black ink and a protective overcoat of clear lacquer. Locate catalog numbers:

- in the center of the largest part of the bone
- near the proximal end of long bones
- at the lower back center of the skull
- on the right ramus of the jaw

Put small bones in a vial or box and write the accession and catalog numbers on the Skull Vial or Box Label, Form 10-502. Place the label in or on the container.

Wet vertebrate specimens

Don't place numbers directly on wet vertebrate specimens. Write the accession and catalog numbers on the Vertebrate Wet Specimen Label, Form 10-500. Place this label in the jar or container. You can also write the numbers on a Vertebrate Specimen Label, Form 10-501. Tie it to:

- the right hind leg above the ankle
- for fish, through a nose or gill
- for some amphibians and reptiles, around the body near the head.

Currently you should get labels for wet specimens from the Supply and Equipment Program of the Museum Management Program.

Animal skins

Place the number on flat skins. Use clear lacquer for a primer coat with permanent black ink and a protective overcoat of clear lacquer. Locate the number on the reverse, on the inside of the neck, or on the right hind leg. You can also number flat skins by writing the catalog number on a Vertebrate Specimen Label, Form 10-501. Attach the label to a right hind leg. For large skins, attach it through a natural opening like an eye or the nose.

Eggs

Place the number directly on the eggs. Use clear lacquer for a primer coat with permanent black ink and a protective overcoat of clear lacquer. Also write the catalog number on an Egg Box Label, Form 10-508. Attach the label to the outside of the box with polyvinyl acetate adhesive 5% in ethanol (PVA).

10. *How do I mark invertebrate specimens?*

Insects

Don't place numbers directly on the insect. Write the accession and catalog numbers on an Insect Label, Form 10-509. Pin the insect with a rust-proof insect pin. Then pin the label at standard height, below the specimen, parallel to the insect's longitudinal axis. The label must be readable from the left side. A collector's label indicating locality, collector's name, and date may exist on a separate label placed in a similar orientation below the insect label.

Other Invertebrates

Place the number directly on other invertebrates, such as shells. Use clear lacquer for a primer coat with permanent black ink and a protective overcoat of clear lacquer. Locate the number on the interior, bottom, or reverse of the specimen. Write the accession and catalog numbers on the Invertebrate Label, Form 10-507, or the Invertebrate Specimen Label, Form 10-503. Place the label in the container with the specimen.

Wet invertebrate specimens

Write the accession and catalog numbers on the Invertebrate Label, Form 10-507, or the Invertebrate Specimen Label, Form 10-503. Place the label in the jar or container with the specimen.

Currently you should get labels for wet specimens from the Supply and Equipment Program of the Museum Management Program.

11. *How do I mark paleontology specimens?*

Place the number on the specimen. Use clear or white lacquer for a primer coat with permanent black ink and a protective overcoat of clear lacquer. Locate the catalog number in a flat inconspicuous surface, where it will not wear off or obscure any important features. Write the accession and catalog numbers on the Paleontology Label, Form 10-505. Place the label with the specimen.

Fossil resins may dissolve in solvents. Don't apply lacquer to a specimen of this type without consulting a conservator. Write the catalog number on an acid-free tag, and attach or place it with the specimen. You can also write the number on Teflon® tape with archival film pens, and tie the tape to the specimen.

12. *How do I mark geology*

You can usually mark the number directly on the specimen using lacquer

specimens?

and ink. Don't use lacquer with extremely fibrous and powdery or flaky specimens. Write the catalog number on an acid-free paper tag or cotton twill tape, and attach or place it with the specimen. Make sure the pressure of securing it won't damage the specimen.

If the specimen is a resin it may dissolve in solvents. Don't apply lacquer to a specimen of this type without consulting a conservator. Write the catalog number on an acid-free tag, and attach or place it with the specimen. Alternatively, write the number on Teflon® tape with archival film pens, and tie the tape to the specimen.

Rocks

Use clear or white lacquer for a primer coat with permanent black ink and a protective overcoat of clear lacquer. Locate the catalog number in a flat inconspicuous surface, where it will not wear off or obscure any important features. Keep the number small. Also print the accession and catalog numbers on the Geology Label, Form 10-504. Place the label with the specimen.

Minerals

Use clear or white lacquer for a primer coat with permanent black ink and a protective overcoat of clear lacquer. Locate the catalog number in a flat inconspicuous surface, where it will not wear off or obscure any important features. Keep the number small. Print the accession and catalog numbers on the Mineral Label, Form 10-511. Place the label with the specimen.

13. *How do I mark microscopic specimens?*

For glass slides use clear lacquer for a primer coat with permanent black ink and a protective overcoat of clear lacquer. For cardboard slides, use pencil to write the number. Write the number on the end of the slide. Avoid touching the cover slip.

Write the accession and catalog numbers and any additional information, if provided, on a small acid-free paper label. For geology specimens, additional information might include age and formation. Store the labels by catalog number, near the specimen microscopic slides. These labels are not standardized.

14. *When do I use an annotation label?*

Use an Annotation Label, Form 10-510, when a specialist reviews a specimen to verify or correct the scientific name. Attach the annotation label to the specimen, or store it with the specimen. Include the name confirmation or change of name, the name of the identifier, and the date of review on the label.