



Guidelines for the Field Collection of Archaeological Materials and Standard Operating Procedures for Curating Department of Defense Archaeological Collections

#98-1719

Background

The care of archaeological collections has been an ongoing responsibility for all federal agencies for almost 100 years. Collections are composed of archaeological materials and all documentation associated with the collecting, analysis, or interpretive use of those materials. With the participation of environmental laws in the 1960s and 1970s the quantity of federal archaeological collections has risen dramatically as archaeological identification and evaluation studies have become integrated into agency planning and project implementation work. With archaeological projects occurring by the thousands, a crisis quickly developed in the ability of existing repositories to provide adequate curation for the volume of collections generated by these compliance activities.

Objective

Faced with these issues, the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Environmental Security, created an Integrated Project Team (IPT) composed of cultural resource specialists from the tri-services (Air Force, Army, Navy/Marines) who were charged with reviewing DoD curation issues. The IPT examined a variety of approaches to these problems including combining collections from these services in selected repositories to achieve economies of scale and to formulate new policies and procedures that will standardize the way DoD curates its collections.

Summary of Approach

The goal of the Legacy project was to collect information from as many federal and non-federal archaeologists as possible to determine current operating procedures on curation, provide a DoD standard operating procedure for curating collections on their lands, and recommend ways to implement the DoD field collecting guidelines and curation standard operating procedures.

The first step was to distribute a questionnaire to collect information from a non-random sample of federal and non-federal sources on existing field collecting polices for archaeological materials, policies and procedures used to prepare collections for curation, and policies and practices

for actual long-term curation and use of the collections. Over 600 telephone calls were made during 1998 and a total of 77 written polices were received. The results of these surveys and a discussion of their approach to curation are discussed in length. The report concludes with guidelines for field collections of archaeological materials from DoD administered lands and outlines curation procedures.



Fort Riley curation facility.

Benefit

The guidelines and the standard operation procedures will reduce the future growth, by volume, of archaeological materials, create economies of scale by standardizing the care of collections, result in improved management of archaeological resources by installations and by services, and insure general comparability between the services in how they meet their curation responsibilities.

Accomplishments

The project identified and recommended ways to implement DoD field collecting guidelines and standard curation operating procedures. In addition, the project proposed eight recommendations to facilitate the review process and obtain substantive comments and cooperation.

For More Information Please Visit:

<https://www.denix.osd.mil/denix/Public/ES-Programs/Conservation/RockArt/rockart.html>