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International Committee for Documentation of the International Council of Museums

International Guidelines for Museum Object Information: The CIDOC Information Categories

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This page is the introductory page of the International Guidelines for Museum Object Information: The CIDOC Information Categories, produced by the International Committee for Documentation (CIDOC) of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). This is a description of the Information Categories that can be used when developing records about the objects in museum collections.

Production

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The electronic version of the Guidelines can also be accessed over the Internet at:

http://cidoc.mediahost.org/guidelines1995.pdf

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Contents

Foreword

The International Committee for Documentation of the International Council of Museums (CIDOC) is the international focus for the documentation interests of museums and similar organizations. CIDOC has over 650 members from 60 countries, including documentation specialists, registrars, computer managers, system designers, advisors and trainers.

CIDOC has been committed to the development of museum documentation standards for over 25 years. It has provided a forum for the discussion of standards issues and a focus for practical initiatives by a series of Working Groups. Its members include most of the national museum documentation standards organizations and the leading specialists in this field.

During the 1978 CIDOC meeting in Julita, Sweden, a set of minimum Information Categories for museum objects was discussed. Robert G. Chenhall and Peter Homulos presented a proposal setting out 16 general categories designed to identify an object, record the history of its ownership and use, and provide information for use in internal museum inventories (Chenhall and Homulos, 1978). A version of these proposals was recommended to national documentation committees as the basis for national standards.

From 1980 to 1992, these recommendations were developed by CIDOC in two parallel initiatives:

- a Data Standard Working Group developed Information Categories for art and archaeology collections (International Council of Museums. International Committee for Documentation, 1992 and 1993);
- a Data Model Working Group designed a data model of museum information (International Council of Museums. International Committee for Documentation, (1995a).

At the 1992 ICOM Triennial Conference in Quebec City, the CIDOC Board reviewed progress with these initiatives and identified the need to consolidate the previous work into an accessible and widely available statement of best practice. During 1993-95, the experience of the Committee and its members has been applied to the development of these International Guidelines for Museum Object Information. These Guidelines supersede the 1978 recommendations concerning the Information Categories that should be recorded by museums.

This first edition of the Guidelines will be presented to the 1995 ICOM Triennial Conference in Stavanger. Copies of the publication will be widely distributed to CIDOC members, ICOM National Committees, other ICOM International Committees, related organizations and international standards bodies. CIDOC will actively encourage the use and development of the Guidelines, with the aim of reaching a wide consensus on their content by the 1998 ICOM Triennial Conference. A great deal of work remains to be done before the Guidelines are complete and we will welcome your contribution to this process.

It has been a privilege to be Chair of CIDOC during this period, when the activity of the Committee has resulted in this publication and a number of other products. We owe a great debt to the project team responsible for these Guidelines, and particularly to the commitment and expertise of Alice Grant, Joséphine Nieuwenhuis, and Toni Petersen.

Andrew Roberts, CIDOC Chair, 1989-1995
Cambridge, June 1995

Preface

At the 1993 CIDOC Board meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the CIDOC Data and Terminology Working Group was charged with developing a set of Information Categories for museum objects. This product was intended to be used by the international museum community, especially small museums with no access to existing standards and those in developing countries.

Members of the Data and Terminology Working Group had previously developed Information Categories for art and archaeological collections (International Council of Museums. International Committee for Documentation, 1992 and 1993). In addition, the Data Model Working Group had carried out theoretical work on Information Categories, leading to the development of a data model (International Council of Museums. International Committee for Documentation, 1995a and b). It was therefore decided that the project would be a collaboration between the two groups.

A project team was set up from the membership of the Working Groups, chaired by Toni Petersen of the Data and Terminology Working Group and Alice Grant of the Data Model Working Group. Liaisons were also formed with four other initiatives which are concerned with identifying Information Categories for specific purposes:

- CIDOC's Archaeological Sites Working Group, which is developing recording guidelines for archaeological sites and monuments (International Council of Museums. International Committee for Documentation, 1995c);
- CIDOC's Ethno Working Group, which is developing recording guidelines for ethnographic collections;
- ICOM's AFRICOM project, which is developing recording guidelines for museums throughout Africa (International Council of Museums, 1995);
- International Project on Documentation Standards for the Protection of Cultural Objects, a collaborative project of the Getty Art History Information Program (AHIP) and the Getty Conservation Institute, sponsored by ICOM and other international organizations (Thornes, 1995).

The first priority was to review existing national and international information standards. In October 1993, CIDOC members in 19 countries were invited to contribute to the project. This request yielded 19 data standards (see Contributions to the Development Process). A later request for standards from natural history museums added another four. The project coordinator reviewed these standards and took into account the original list of categories promulgated by CIDOC in 1978, the Information Categories for art and archaeology, the data model, and the lists under development by the liaison groups. An analysis was drawn up, identifying the categories that were in common in these sources.

The main Information Categories in these Guidelines emerged from this analysis. At a meeting in London in April 1994, sponsored by AHIP, members of the project team reviewed the analysis and agreed on the content of a first draft report, provisionally titled Minimum Information Categories for Museum Objects. This draft was the subject of two sessions at the 1994 CIDOC Conference in Washington, D.C. As a result of suggestions from the project team and conference participants, the Guidelines underwent extensive revision.

The project team is aware that these Guidelines have not acquired the status of an official standard. At this point they should be read as a proposal toward a consensus throughout the international museum community. We will be satisfied if we have achieved that much.

Alice Grant, Joséphine Nieuwenhuis, and Toni Petersen
Williamstown and London, June 1995

Acknowledgements

The successful completion of this project was only possible through the joint efforts of a team of CIDOC members drawn from the Data and Terminology and Data Model Working Groups:

Project Chairs:

Toni Petersen (USA), Data and Terminology Working Group
Alice Grant (UK), Data Model Working Group

Project Coordinator:

Joséphine Nieuwenhuis (USA), Data and Terminology Working Group

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Liaisons:

Roger Leech (UK), CIDOC Archaeological Sites Working Group
Andrew Roberts (UK), ICOM AFRICOM project and CIDOC Chair
Alenka Simikic (Slovenia), CIDOC Ethno Working Group
Robin Thornes, International Project on Documentation Standards for the Protection of Cultural Objects

A number of interested colleagues reviewed a prior draft of these Guidelines and contributed valuable comments which were incorporated here. They include Joan Bachrach, Anne Claudel, Claire Constans, Christer Larsson, Dominique Piot-Morin, Gillian Quine, Eva Stengard, and Leonard Will.

Toni Petersen, Chair of the Data and Terminology Working Group, is Director of the Art and Architecture Thesaurus (AAT), a program of the Getty Art History Information Program (AHIP). In the early stages of the project, Alice Grant was Standards Development Manager at the Museum Documentation Association (MDA), with responsibility for developing SPECTRUM: The UK Documentation Standard. She is currently Systems Development Manager at the National Museum of Science & Industry, London. AHIP enabled Joséphine Nieuwenhuis, on the staff of AAT, to coordinate the project, and supported a number of additional project costs. We are very grateful to these organizations for their commitment to the project.

Introduction

The Guidelines

The International Guidelines for Museum Object Information: The CIDOC Information Categories is a description of the Information Categories that can be used when developing records about the objects in museum collections. The Guidelines can be adopted by an individual museum, national documentation organization, or system developer, as the basis for a working museum documentation system.

The Guidelines incorporate the following elements:

- a definition of the Information Categories that should be used when recording details about objects;
- an outline of the format rules and conventions governing how information is entered in these categories;
- comments on the terminology that can be used in these categories.

The Guidelines are based on the experience of the members of the project team and an analysis of the best practice in a number of other documentation projects. They are compatible with the major national and international descriptions of museum information, including related research in the United States, Canada, the UK, and France, by other CIDOC Working Groups and international initiatives. More details about these initiatives are given in a brochure on Developments in International Museum and Cultural Heritage Information Standards (Getty Art History Information Program and the International Council of Museums. International Committee for Documentation, 1993).

The categories of information developed by most of these documentation projects have been described as a data standard or an information standard. A "standard" is a mutually agreed designation that helps to ensure a consistent result (Getty Art History Information Program and the International Council of Museums. International Committee for Documentation, 1993). In the current state of this project, we have avoided the use of the term "standard," considering that it should only be applied to a product once it has achieved widespread acceptance. We hope this will be the case with a future edition of the Guidelines.

Objectives of museum documentation

The Guidelines support the following key objectives of museum documentation:

- ensure accountability for objects: they can be used to define the objects that are owned by a museum, identify the objects, and record their location;
- aid the security of objects: they can be used to maintain information about the status of objects and provide descriptions and evidence of ownership in the event of theft;
- provide an historic archive about objects: they can be used to maintain information about the production, collection, ownership, and use of objects and as a means of protecting the long term value of data;
- support physical and intellectual access to objects: they can be used to support access to objects themselves and information about the objects.

The need to protect cultural property against damage, loss, theft, and crimes against humanity has acted as an incentive to the development of standardized documentation practices. The 1970 UNESCO Convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export, and transfer of ownership of cultural property recommends that national inventories be established to identify cultural property. Inventorying objects in a standardized way can help prevent loss and aid the recovery of lost items.

The availability of good documentation also ensures that knowledge about objects extends beyond the objects themselves. It provides a foundation for the use of a collection by curators, researchers, and the public.

Role of the Guidelines

The Guidelines have a number of main roles (Getty Art History Information Program and the International Council of Museums. International Committee for Documentation, 1993):

- as the basis for an international museum information standard: it is intended to develop these Guidelines and reach a wide consensus on their content. This work will be undertaken in close collaboration with other initiatives and CIDOC members. The result will be proposed as an international standard;
- as the basis for new national guidelines and standards: if there is no current standard project in a country, the Guidelines and the related standards can be used as a starting point for this development;
- as the basis for comparing other national and international standards: following the principles established during the development process, the Guidelines can be used as an intermediary when comparing one standard with another;
- as a model for a practical documentation system. These Guidelines and the related standards can be used as a model by individual museums, national organizations, and system developers when designing systems. These systems can be paper based or computer based, with the Information Categories being comparable to the spaces on recording forms or the fields in a computer system;
- as a basis for sharing information within a museum and among museums. The consistent use of these Guidelines and the related standards will make it easier to share information. Opportunities for sharing information are being actively examined by the Consortium for the Computer Interchange of Museum Information (CIMI) and its Cultural Heritage Information Online (CHIO) project (Perkins, 1995). Project CHIO is working closely with the developers of the CIDOC Data Model and other data standards (Anon., 1995);
- as a means of protecting the long term value of data: the widespread adoption of these Guidelines and the related standards will support the development of high quality records;
- as a focus for improving staff expertise: the development and use of these Guidelines and the related standards is resulting in a higher level of professional practice and staff opportunity.

The Guidelines can be used as the basis of an inventory of the collections or a full catalog:

- an inventory consists of the basic collections management information about each object in a collection, including the details that are essential for accountability and security;
- a catalog is a fuller record with additional details about the historic significance of the objects.

The Guidelines are designed to support the needs of all disciplines represented in museums, including archaeology, cultural history, art, science and technology, and natural science. For convenience, the text uses the term "object," but this should be taken to cover both objects and specimens.

The Guidelines can be used to support the documentation of individual objects and overall acquisitions. It is important to develop information about each individual object in the collection, except in specialist circumstances such as groups of natural science specimens or bulk finds from archaeological excavations. If staff resources are limited, the priority should be placed on the development of inventory level information.

Note that the Guidelines are not:

- a mandatory standard for use in all museums;
- a rigid standard with a single mode of implementation;
- a data structure for use in a collections documentation system, although they can act as the basis for such a structure.

Information Groups and Categories in the Guidelines

The Guidelines include definitions and illustrations of a number of Information Groups and Information Categories.

Each Information Group describes a particular aspect of the information about an object, such as:

- Acquisition: information about the acquisition of an object or group of objects by the museum;
- Location: details of the storage location of an object;
- Production: information about the production of an object.

Each Information Group contains one or more Information Categories, describing related pieces of information. For example, the Acquisition group includes:

- Acquisition method: information about how an object or group of objects was acquired by the museum;
- Acquisition date: the date the object was acquired by the museum;
- Acquisition source: the source from whom an object was acquired.

As noted above, one of the most important roles of the Guidelines is as a reference model which can be used when designing a museum documentation system. It is anticipated that the Guidelines will be used as the basis for new and revised systems, in association with other standards.

An individual system needs to incorporate each Information Group and Category that is appropriate to the needs of the intended user. The precise set of Information Groups and Categories will vary from museum to museum:

- the museum may not require all the Information Groups: for example, the Production Group will not be relevant to a natural science museum. Where an Information Group is only applicable to a particular discipline, this is pointed out in the text;
- the museum may not require all the Information Categories in a group: for example, the Institution sub-body name may not be necessary for a particular museum.

Conversely, museums with specialist requirements will need additional Information Categories not listed in the Guidelines. This set of categories is not intended to be comprehensive or restrictive, but provides a nucleus on which to build. Additional categories may be included in future editions.

Content and terminology control

The use of standardized format rules and terminology controls assists the production of consistent documentation. These principles are emphasized in the description of the Information Categories.

Content format rules define the structure of an entry in an Information Category. For example, in the case of a personal name, the most important component of the name may be recorded first, with other elements following in a consistent sequence. This assists a recorder in the development of uniform entries and a user in the efficient retrieval of information. Many museums have adopted well established library standards, such as the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (1988) to control this aspect of their documentation.

Terminology control can be used to establish the appropriate words to use in an Information Category. It also assists a recorder to develop consistent information and helps a user search for information. The process of developing a controlled terminology includes:

- identifying and defining the terms that may be used in a category;
- deciding whether a term is to be used by a recorder (a preferred term) or avoided (a non preferred term);

- establishing the relationship between terms, such as one term being broader than a number of other terms.

A museum may decide to develop one or more controlled terminologies that are unique to its particular needs, such as the coding used in condition reports. However, in complex cases such as object and personal names, materials, and techniques, it is usually preferable to adopt existing published terminologies such as standardized thesauri. The widespread use of established thesauri will facilitate searching for information across collections.

Two international standards governing the development of thesauri are published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (1985 and 1986). These provide rules for determining the scope and purpose of the thesaurus, the identification of terms, the choice of term form and relationships among terms, and formatting possibilities.

In 1988, the MDA organized a conference on Terminology for museums which reviewed the experience of many museums and described progress with the development of terminologies. The proceedings of the conference include an extensive source list and bibliography (Terminology for museums, 1990). A number of cooperative projects have made considerable progress since then, including two initiatives of AHIP:

- the Art & Architecture Thesaurus (AAT) (1994): a comprehensive terminology of art and architecture terms, including object names, materials, techniques, and other terms necessary for the description of objects;
- the Union List of Artist Names (ULAN) (1994): a database of artists' and architects' names with biographic and bibliographic data.

Other guides to museum terminology include:

- the CIDOC Directory of Thesauri for Object Names (International Council of Museums. International Committee for Documentation, 1994), which lists a number of controlled terminologies that have been produced to specify the names of objects;
- the Canadian Heritage Information Network document Data Content Standards: A Directory (Harvey and Young, 1994), which lists a number of terminologies for different categories of information, such as personal names, geographic names, and materials.

Glossary

AAT	The Art and Architecture Thesaurus. Part of the Art History Information Program of the J. Paul Getty Trust, AAT addresses the need for a standardized vocabulary of art and architecture terms for use in bibliographic and visual databases and in the documentation of object collections.
Accession	The formal act of entering an object into the collections of a museum. Once an object has been accessioned it has a status beyond that of merely being the property of the organization and can only be disposed of by referring to the governing body of the organization, e.g., the Trustees or Director.
Accountability	To establish accountability, a museum must demonstrate to auditors, trustees, governing bodies, and insurers that proper, responsible management of objects in custody of the museum is taking place. One important component of accountability is the maintenance of a reliable and up to date physical inventory of the objects in the institution's custody.
Acquisition	The transfer of ownership (title) of an object to the organization.
AHIP	The Getty Art History Information Program, one of seven operating programs of the J. Paul Getty Trust.
AITF	A collaborative project of AHIP and the College Art Association, the Art Information Task Force seeks to develop and promote standards for documenting works of art.
Audit	An audit is the procedure whereby the physical presence of all objects in the museum is compared with the documented presence of those objects in the museum records to enable a museum to be accountable for every object, at any point in time.
Authority list	A list of approved terms enabling information to be recorded in a controlled manner for ease of entry and retrieval. Types of authority lists include name authority lists, subject authority lists, and thesauri. They may include notes on local usage.
Cataloging	The compilation and maintenance of primary information by systematically describing objects in the collection, and the arranging of this information into an object catalog record.
CIDOC	The International Documentation Committee of the International Council of Museums.
CHIN	The Canadian Heritage Information Network.
Collections management	Ensuring the effective documentation, preservation, and access to objects in a museum collection.
Data standard	A statement of what data should be recorded, how data should be recorded, and how data should be supported by a system in order to retain its full meaning. A data standard should enable consistency and predictability in the organization and recording of data, whatever the type of system or data structure used.
Data structure	The way in which sets of data are organized in a particular system.

Documentation	The records which document the creation, history, acquisition by the museum and subsequent history of all objects in a museum collection. Such records include provenance and provenience documents, acquisition documents, conservation reports, cataloguing records, images, and research papers, both created by the holding institution and by previous owners or independent researchers, etc. Also used for the process of gathering this information.
Field	A named subdivision of a record containing a specifically-defined piece of information within a system, for example "Artist's name," "Simple name," "Denomination."
Free text	Data which is entered into a field without any formal or pre-defined strucure other than the normal use of grammar and punctuation.
Inventory control	The process of establishing the physical presence of all objects in a museum for which that museum has custody and is legally responsible (including objects in the collection, objects on loan to the museum, and objects in custody of the museum).
ICOM	The International Council of Museums
MDA	The Museum Documentation Association
Object	An item which forms part of an institution's collections either permanently (in which case it would be recorded in the accessions register) or temporarily (e.g., a deposit or loan). For natural science collections the term "Specimen" is used and in this document the two terms should be regarded as being interchangeable.
Record	A group of fields relating to a particular object or transaction.
Specimen	See Object
System	The operational means by which data is recorded. A system can be paper-based or computerised.
Terminology control	The facility to restrict or monitor the terms or words which may be used in a specific field.
Transfer of title	A legal term to describe the formal process of a change of ownership of an object from one person or institution to another.

Format of the Information Groups and Information Categories

Information Group

Purpose:

Describes why the Information Group has been included and which of the following criteria for inclusion it satisfies:
Security of collections
Accountability for collections
Access to collections
Historic archive for collections

Information Categories:

A list of the Information Categories contained within the Information Group.

Examples:

Examples of how the Information Categories included in the Information Group are used together.

Notes:

Notes are provided which address issues including the following:

- Whether the Information Group may be used more than once within a single record.
- Recommendations and suggestions on implementing the recording of the Information Group within a system, where appropriate.

Information Category

Alternate name:

Other names that might be used for the Information Category. This list is not exhaustive.

Definition:

A short definition of the category.

Examples:

Examples of information belonging in this Information Category, from a range of collection disciplines.

Notes:

Addresses issues including the following:

- Whether or not an Information Category can be used more than once within an Information Group
- Whether contents of an Information Category should be recorded in natural language or according to a defined syntax or format. For example, dates should always be recorded with the full day, month, and year in the same order and with all four digits used for the year. In these Guidelines, the ISO Standard, Specification for Representation of Dates and Times in Information Interchange (ISO 8601-1988) has been used.
- Whether a controlled vocabulary is recommended for the Information Category. See the section on " Content and terminology control" in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminologies.

The Information Groups and Categories

Below is an alphabetical list of the 22 Information Groups, each containing one or more Information Category.

Acquisition Information

Acquisition method
Acquisition date
Acquisition source

Condition Information

Condition
Condition summary
Condition date

Deaccession and Disposal Information

Deaccession date
Disposal date
Disposal method
Disposal recipient

Description Information

Physical description
Specimen status

Image Information

Image type
Image reference number

Institution Information

Institution name
Institution sub body name
Institution address
Institution country

Location Information

Current location
Current location date
Current location type
Normal location

Mark and Inscription Information

Mark/inscription text
Mark/inscription type
Mark/inscription description
Mark/inscription technique

Mark/inscription position
Mark/inscription language
Mark/inscription translation

Material and Technique Information

Material
Technique
Part or component description

Measurement Information

Dimension
Measurement
Measurement unit
Measured part

Object Association Information

Associated place
Associated date
Associated group/person name
Association type
Original function

Object Collection Information

Collection place
Collection date
Collector
Collection method

Object Entry Information

Current owner
Depositor
Entry date
Entry number
Entry reason

Object Name Information

Object name
Object name type
Object name authority

Object Number Information

Object number
Object number type
Object number date

Object Production Information

Production place
Production date
Production group/person name
Production role

Object Title Information

Title
Title type
Title translation

Part and Component Information

Number of parts or components
Description of parts and components

Recorder Information

Recorder
Record date
Authority

Reference Information

Reference
Reference type

Reproduction Rights Information

Reproduction rights note
Reproduction rights owner

Subject Depicted Information

Subject depicted
Subject depicted description

Acquisition Information Group

Acquisition Information Group

Purpose:

Acquisition information supports Security and Accountability. It is needed to provide evidence of the legal status of the object as part of the museum's collections.

Information categories:

Acquisition method
Acquisition date
Acquisition source

Examples:

Acquisition method: gift
Acquisition date: 1985-01-01
Acquisition source: The Smith Corporation, New York

Notes:

- Only record Acquisition information for those objects for which title has been transferred to an institution, i.e., for those objects owned by the institution.
- Acquisition information should not be repeated within an object record as an object or specimen is normally only acquired once.

Acquisition method

Alternate names:

Acquisition type

Definition:

The method by which an object entered the collection.

Examples:

gift
purchase
exchange
bequest
unknown
field collection

Notes:

- This Information Category is repeatable if an object was obtained through more than one method or formal legal means.
- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Acquisition date

Definition:

The date the object entered the collection and title was transferred.

Examples:

1994-03-01

Notes:

- Always use the same format when recording dates.
- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.

Acquisition source

Definition:

The name of the person or organization from whom the object was acquired.

Examples:

Hapgood, Jane S.

Notes:

- The acquisition source is the person or organization from whom formal title was transferred, rather than an agent.
- It is recommended that an authority file is used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.
- In the case of archaeological or natural science field collections, ownership may lie with the owner of the land. Confirm ownership according to the appropriate national legislation before transferring title to the institution.
- Where an object or specimen was acquired from more than one source (e.g., when it was previously jointly owned) this Information Category should be repeated.

Condition Information Group

Condition Information Group

Purpose:

Condition information supports Accountability. It helps ensure the physical protection of the object and also supports the identification of objects. Condition information also helps provide physical protection for collections.

Information categories:

Condition
Condition summary
Condition date

Examples:

Condition: fair
Condition summary: hairline cracks in bowl, repairs to base
Condition date: 1993-12-12

Notes:

- This Information Group can be recorded as many times as required for an object.
- When reassessing the condition of the object, retain the previously recorded Condition information in order to compile a history of the condition of the object.

Condition

Alternate names:

Examination history
Physical condition

Definition:

A single term or code describing the overall condition of an object.

Examples:

good
fair
1
C

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Condition summary

Alternate names:

Condition note
Condition narrative

Definition:

A short description of the overall condition of the object, including observations on the stability, blemishes, repairs, and completeness.

Examples:

Crack on spout, handle missing, stained interior.

Condition date

Definition:

The date the condition of the object was checked.

Examples:

1992-03-23

Notes:

- Always use the same format when recording dates.
- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.

Deaccession and Disposal Information Group

Deaccession and Disposal Information Group

Purpose:

Deaccession and disposal information supports Security, Accountability, and Access. Without this information it is not possible to tell whether an object is missing or whether it has been actively deaccessioned.

Information categories:

Deaccession date
Disposal date
Disposal method
Disposal recipient

Examples:

Deaccession date: 1992-01-12
Disposal date: 1992-01-13
Disposal method : transfer
Disposal recipient: The Henley Rowing Museum

Notes:

- Dates of both deaccession and disposal are required to ensure that the object was formally deaccessioned and also to show that disposal actually took place.
- This information is not repeated in a record as an object is only deaccessioned and disposed of once.

Deaccession date

Definition:

The date the object was formally struck from the accessions register.

Examples:

1994-03-01

Notes:

- Always use the same format when recording dates.
- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.

Disposal date

Definition:

The date a deaccessioned object was actually disposed of. This date may be later than the deaccession date.

Examples:

1994-03-01

Notes:

- Always use the same format when recording dates.
- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.

Disposal method

Alternate names:

Disposal type

Definition:

The method by which a deaccessioned object was disposed of.

Examples:

destruction
transfer
loss
sale

Notes:

- This Information Category is not repeatable.
- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Disposal recipient

Definition:

The person, group, or organization to whom a disposed object has been transferred.

Examples:

Giles Teaching Collection

Notes:

- It is recommended that a controlled list of terms is used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Description Information Group

Description Information Group

Purpose:

This information supports Security, Accountability, Access, and an Historic archive. In the absence of an image it provides a detailed description of an object and a retrieval facility which would not be available using an image alone. Description information can be used for a variety of purposes, including research, handlists, exhibitions, and publications.

Information categories:

Physical description
Specimen status

Examples:

Physical description: 1.25 cm in length; pale blue with small darker blue markings evenly spread.
Specimen status : type

Notes:

- Specimen status information is recorded only for natural science specimens.

Physical description

Definition:

A description of the general visual appearance of the object.

Examples:

A cabinet, marquetry of satinwood, rosewood and other woods and of marble intarsia panels with mounts of gilt brass. In front between four engaged pilasters of wood composition, with beading and Doric capitals of brass, a set of eleven panels of marble intarsia.

Notes:

- Include information about frames, mounts and presentation where appropriate.
- More than one Physical description may be recorded.

Specimen status

Definition:

The type status of a natural science specimen.

Examples:

paratype
holotype

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Image Information Group

Image Information Group

Purpose:

Image information supports Security, Accountability, Access and an Historic archive. Particularly valuable in the recovery of missing or stolen property, without an image it may be impossible to prove ownership or certain identification or an object. Image information also supports visually the textual information about the object recorded elsewhere.

Information categories:

Image type
Image reference number

Examples:

Image type: digital
Image reference number: 765123.23

Notes:

- This Information Group may be recorded as many times as required. An object can have multiple images.

Image type

Definition:

The format of an image of or relating to the object.

Examples:

color print
digital

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Image reference number

Definition:

A reference linking the record to an image of the object either stored outside the documentation system or digitally within the system.

Examples:

1992-32

Notes:

- Record the Image reference number according to the standard agreed within an institution or required by a system.

Institution Information Group

Institution Information Group

Purpose:

This information primarily supports Accountability, and Access. It is essential when exchanging object information with other institutions as it provides a location for the documentation of an object, and in many cases for the object itself.

Information categories:

Institution name
Institution sub body
Institution address
Institution country

Examples:

Institution name: Smithsonian Institution
Institution sub body: National Museum of American History
Institution sub-body: Department of Social and Cultural History
Institution sub-body: Division of Domestic Life
Institution address: 12th Street at Constitution Avenue, Washington DC 20560
Institution country: United States of America

Notes:

- This Information Group is not normally repeatable within a record since only one institution at a time can normally be the legal custodian of an object.
- The Institution information recorded for an object should be for the body which is formally responsible for the object.
- The information recorded in this group should be specific enough to identify uniquely the holding unit of the object and its documentation.
- Always record the Institution name on a card or record, even if the record is for internal use only. Paper records can be pre-printed with the Institution name and Department name.

Institution name

Alternate names:

Organization name
Body name
Custodian name

Definition:

The identifying name of the institution legally responsible for the object and its documentation.

Examples:

Smithsonian Institution

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Institution sub body

Alternate names:

Organization sub body name
Department name
Sub body name
Custodian sub body name

Definition:

The identifying name of the sub body of an institution legally responsible for the object and its documentation.

Examples:

National Museum of American History

Notes:

- The names of departments and divisions in an institution should be those that are agreed on throughout the institution.
- Repeat the Institution sub-body as often as required to describe the part of the institution responsible for an object as precisely as necessary.
- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Institution address

Alternate names:

Organization address

Definition:

The address of the institution legally responsible for an object and its documentation.

Examples:

South Kensington, London SW7 2RL, United Kingdom

Institution country

Definition:

The country of the institution legally responsible responsible for an object and its documentation.

Examples:

Brazil Norway
Norway

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Location Information Group

Location Information Group

Purpose:

Location information supports Security, Accountability, and Access. Without Location information it is not possible to fulfil the basic responsibilities of a museum, in that the custodian should always know where objects are and be able to provide physical access when necessary.

Information categories:

Current location
Current location type
Current location date
Normal location

Examples:

Current location: North gallery, west wall
Current location type: exhibit
Current location date: 1980-01-04
Normal location: room 3/bay1/rack5

Notes:

- Except for objects able to be made accessible under controlled conditions (e.g., on exhibition, in a study collection), Location information should not be made publicly available in order to protect objects against theft.
- Record Location information for all objects in the custody of the museum, including those on loan or temporary deposit.
- This Information Group can be recorded more than once. Details of past Current locations and dates form an audit trail of the object's movement.

Current location

Definition:

A term or code identifying the place where an object is known to be physically located at the present time.

Examples:

Gallery 56/Case 2/Shelf A

Notes:

- The Current location information should be precise, including, where appropriate, details of the building, room, cupboard, shelf and box where an object is known to be.
- The Current location may comprise a hierarchy of different locating units, from the general to the specific, each unit separated by an agreed character, e.g., a forward slash "/."
- The Current location should be checked regularly to ensure that it is correct. This should form part of an audit process.
- For objects on loan to other institutions, the location should indicate that the object is on loan.
- It is recommended that terms are used for this Information Category which are agreed within an institution.

Current location type

Alternate names:

Location status
Location description

Definition:

The nature of the Current location assigned to an object.

Examples:

display
storage
conservation studio

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Current location date

Definition:

The date an object was moved to the Current location.

Examples:

1994-03-15

Notes:

- Always use the same format when recording dates.
- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.

Normal location

Alternate names:

Permanent location

Definition:

A term or code identifying the place where an object is normally to be located and to where the object will be returned from the Current location where this is different.

Examples:

Room 15/Cupboard 3/Shelf 2/Box 14

Notes:

- he Normal location information should be precise, including where appropriate, details of the building, room, cupboard, shelf, and box where an object is normally located.

- The Normal location may comprise a hierarchy of different locating units, from the general to the specific, each unit separated by an agreed character, e.g., a forward slash "/."
- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Mark and Inscription Information Group

Mark and Inscription Information Group

Purpose:

Mark and inscription information supports Security, Accountability, Access, and an Historic archive. It enables the retrieval of lost property and the unique identification of otherwise similar objects and can be of particular research significance.

Information categories:

Mark/inscription text
Mark/inscription type
Mark/inscription description
Mark/inscription technique
Mark/inscription position
Mark/inscription language
Mark/inscription translation

Examples:

Mark/inscription text: SI DEVS NOBISCVM QVIS CONTRA NOS
Mark/inscription type: inscription
Mark/inscription technique: engraved
Mark/inscription position: bowl, under rim
Mark/inscription language: Latin
Mark/inscription translation: If God be with us, who shall be against us

Notes:

- This Information Group should be repeated for each inscription.

Mark/inscription text

Definition:

The text inscribed on an object, recorded in the original language.

Examples:

Made in Hong Kong

Notes:

- Record the mark or inscription exactly as it appears on the object, using the same capitalization and punctuation. Use a slash (/) or other character to indicate line breaks.
- If the alphabet of an inscription is different to that normally used by an institution then the inscription should be transliterated according to the standard scheme normally used by the institution.

Mark/inscription type

Definition:

The form or function of the inscription.

Examples:

hallmark
stamp
signature

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Mark/inscription description

Definition:

A description of any non textual marks inscribed on an object.

Examples:

Capital A in a circle with a line underneath

Notes:

- An image can be useful in recording this information.

Mark/inscription technique

Alternate names:

Mark/inscription method

Definition:

The method used to inscribe a mark or text on an object.

Examples:

engraved
painted

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Mark/inscription position

Definition:

A term describing the position of an inscription on an object.

Examples:

inside rim

Mark/inscription language

Definition:

The original language used in a textual inscription on an object.

Examples:

French
Japanese
English

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Mark/inscription translation

Definition:

A translation into the institution's first language of a textual inscription on an object.

Examples:

Cast in Italy
Fabrique en Angleterre

Material and Technique Information Group

Material and Technique Information Group

Purpose:

Material and technique information supports Security, Access, and an Historic archive. It can be of primary importance in identifying high value, and therefore high risk, objects. It is also a key information area for the research of man made objects.

Information categories:

Material
Technique
Part or component description

Examples:

Material: cotton
Technique: embroidered
Object part/component: whole

Material: charcoal
Object part/component: medium

Material: paper
Object part/component: support

Notes:

- This Information Group is repeatable. Always specify object parts comprising multiple materials and techniques, recording them in descending order of importance where appropriate.
- It may also be necessary to record a contextual description using the Description Information Group to clarify the relationship of the materials.
- Do not use this Information Category to record information about materials used in conservation processes.
- The recording system used should ensure that the relationships between the components of repeating groups is maintained. In the examples above this would mean that "charcoal" is associated with "medium" and "paper" with "support."

Material

Definition:

The Materials used in the creation, decoration, and any subsequent adaptations of the object.

Examples:

gold
chalk
oil
tempera

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.
- This Information Category is repeatable; as many Materials as required can be recorded for each Part/component described.

Technique

Alternate names:

Manufacturing methods
Creation processes
Decorative techniques

Definition:

All processes, methods, and techniques used in the creation of the object.

Examples:

carved
thrown
printed

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.
- This Information Category is repeatable; as many Techniques as required can be recorded for each part/component described.

Part or component description

Definition:

The Part or component of the object for which the Material or Technique is being described.

Examples:

whole
neck
base
arm
support
medium

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Measurement Information Group

Measurement Information Group

Purpose:

Object Measurement information supports Security, Accountability, and Access in that it may be the only way of establishing whether or not an object is really that which is described in the documentation. It can be of particular research importance for natural science collections. Measurements can also indicate how easy it is to access and move an object.

Information categories:

Dimension
Measurement
Measurement unit
Measured part

Examples:

Dimension: height
Measurement: 23
Measurement unit: cm
Measured part: figure excluding mount

Notes:

- This Information Group can be repeated to record as many measurements as necessary.
- Measurements can include linear measurements as well as trade sizes, weight and volume, e.g., the weight of a specimen may be given as 103.6g.
- Measurements may change after conservation treatment, or as a result of use, in which case the up to date measurements should be recorded.
- It is advisable to always measure similar objects in the collections in the same way so as to ensure consistency of measurement.

Dimension

Definition:

The aspect of an object being measured.

Examples:

height
width
depth
weight
volume
circumference

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Measurement

Alternate names:

Numeric value
Dimension value

Definition:

The numeric value of the Measurement of a dimension.

Examples:

23
14.5

Measurement unit

Definition:

The unit of measurement used when measuring a dimension.

Examples:

cm
metres
inches
g

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology

Measured part

Alternate names:

Dimension qualification
Measurement remarks

Definition:

The part of the object being measured.

Examples:

Plate area
Excluding frame
Wing fully extended

Object Association Information Group

Object Association Information Group

Purpose:

Object association information supports Access and an Historic archive. It can be recorded for all types of collection disciplines.

Information categories:

Associated place
Associated date
Associated group/person name
Association type
Original function

Examples:

Associated place: Nebraska
Associated group/person name: Giles. JK
Association type: owner
Original function: carving tool

Associated place: South Africa
Associated date: c.1900
Associated group/person name: Zulu
Association type: user
Original function: ceremonial

Notes:

- This Information Group can be repeated to describe multiple events in the history of an object, including usage, historical ownership, etc.

Associated place

Definition:

The name of a place associated with the history of the object or specimen.

Examples:

Karystos/Evia/Greece/Europe
Spurn Point/North Humberside/England/Europe

Notes:

- To record information about specific places, separate each component of a place using the same character, such as a slash.
- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.
- Use the Association type Information Category to specify the way in which the Associated place is linked to the object.

Associated date

Definition:

The date or date range associated with the history of the object or specimen.

Examples:

c.1883
1956-01-21
1200-1400
600BC
10BCE

Notes:

- Always use the same format when recording dates.
- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.
- Be as precise as possible when recording dates. It may be necessary to record ranges of dates or to otherwise qualify the date recorded in some way. If so, always use the same method of indicating any qualification.
- Use the Association type Information Category to specify the way in which the Associated date is linked to the object.

Associated group/person name

Alternate names:

People name
Folk name
Organization name
Nation name

Definition:

The person, group, or organization associated with the history of the object or specimen.

Examples:

Iroquois
Heals Ltd
Jones, I

Notes:

- It is recommended that a controlled list of authorized names is used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.
- Use the Association type Information Category to specify the way in which the Associated group/person name is linked to the object.

Association type

Definition:

The way in which the person/group, date, or place is associated with the history of the object or specimen.

Examples:

excavation
collection
creation
use

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Original function

Alternate names:

Use

Definition:

The way in which the object was known to have been used.

Examples:

Ceremonial bowl, used during marriage celebrations.

Object Collection Information Group

Object Collection Information Group

Purpose:

Origin information supports Security, Accountability, Access, and an Historic archive. It can be applied to collections management areas as well as object history and description areas. It supports the documentation of the collection or the discovery of natural science specimens and archaeological and ethnographical objects and can be recorded for all types of collection disciplines.

Information categories:

Collection place
Collection date
Collector
Collection method

Examples:

Collection place: Nebraska
Collection date: 1992-03-01
Collector: Smith, C.S.
Collection method: excavation

Notes:

- Additional detail may be required by natural science and archaeological collections in order to describe more precisely the details of collection or excavation.

Collection place

Alternate names:

Excavation place

Definition:

The name of a place associated with the excavation or collection of the object or specimen.

Examples:

Karystos/Evia/Greece/Europe
Spurn Point/North Humberside/England/Europe

Notes:

- To record information about specific places, separate each component of a place using the same character, such as a slash.
- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Collection date

Definition:

The date or date range associated with the excavation or collection of the objector specimen.

Examples:

c.1883
1956-01-21

Notes:

- Always use the same format when recording dates.
- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.
- Be as precise as possible when recording dates. It may be necessary to record ranges of dates or to otherwise qualify the date recorded in some way. If so, always use the same method of indicating any qualification.

Collector

Alternate names:

Excavator

Definition:

The person, group, or organization associated with the excavation or collection of an object or specimen.

Examples:

Iroquois
Heals Ltd
Jones, I

Notes:

- It is recommended that a controlled list of authorized names is used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Collection method

Definition:

The means by which an object or specimen was collected.

Examples:

excavated
found
trapped

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Object Entry Information Group

Object Entry Information Group

Purpose:

Object entry information supports Security, Accountability, Access, and an Historic archive. Enabling the recording of information about objects in a museum's custody but which it does not necessarily own, Object entry information should be recorded for objects deposited temporarily or on loan to the museum.

Information categories:

Current owner
Depositor
Entry date
Entry number
Entry reason

Examples:

Current owner: Wright, DG
Depositor: Allen, A
Entry date: 1994-03-21
Entry number: E1324.1994
Entry reason: loan

Notes:

- For large numbers of similar objects (e.g., lots of natural science specimens) Object entry information may need to be recorded once only and linked to the entire collection provided it is clearly labelled.
- All deposited or loaned objects should be clearly labelled with Object entry information unless on display.

Current owner

Definition:

The person, organization, or group of people who owns the object or specimen deposited at the museum.

Examples:

Jones, John G.

Notes:

- It is recommended that a controlled list of authorized names is used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.
- In the case of archaeological or natural science field collections, ownership may lie with the owner of the land. Confirm ownership with the appropriate national legislation before accepting responsibility for deposited objects.

Depositor

Definition:

The name of the person, organization or people responsible for depositing an object with the museum.

Examples:

James, Patrick

Notes:

- It is recommended that a controlled list of authorized names is used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Entry date

Definition:

The date the museum accepted custody of an object or specimen.

Examples:

1994-03-01

Notes:

- Always use the same format when recording dates.
- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.

Entry number

Definition:

The number assigned to an object or collection of objects or specimens at the time of deposit in the museum.

Examples:

E123.1994

Notes:

- The museum should agree on a standard format for the Entry number. This might comprise a running number and the year of entry, separated by a single character.
- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.

Entry reason

Alternate names:

Entry method

Definition:

The reason why custody of an object or collection of objects or specimens was accepted by the museum.

Examples:

loan
study

possible acquisition
enquiry

Notes:

- This Information Category is repeatable if an object was accepted for more than one reason.
- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Object Name Information Group

Object Name Information Group

Purpose:

This information primarily supports Accountability, Access, and an Historic archive. At a collection level the Object name is of primary importance in establishing the range of object or specimen type available.

Information categories:

Object name
Object name type
Object name authority

Examples:

Object name: altarpiece
Object name authority: Lyons, E

Object name: Rattus rattus
Object name type: taxonomic
Object name authority: Jones, RJ

Object name: skull
Object name type: common name

Notes:

- It may be desirable to record more than one Object name term in order to access a collection from different viewpoints, e.g., "mug" and "souvenir" can each be used to describe the same object, as can "rattus rattus" and "skull." The Object name information recorded depends on the nature of the collection, on the depth of cataloging that is required, and on the use that is made of the collection.
- It may be necessary to record an Object name at varying levels of specificity according to the nature of the collection. For example, in a furniture museum it may be necessary to record specific types of chair, such as "Windsor chair," while in a more general collection the Object name "chair" would be sufficient for useful identification.
- Natural science classification systems in particular may need to repeat this Information Group several times in order to identify a specimen, for example, to record the genus and species to which it belongs; they may also require other Information Categories for additional classificatory details.

Object name

Alternate names:

Specimen name
Common name
Local name
Classification
Object category
Object group
Object type
Simple name

Definition:

A term used to identify the form or function or type of object or specimen.

Examples:

Object name: grandfather clock
Object name: Larus ridibundus

Notes:

- It is important to use the same Object name for all similar objects in a collection.
- When assigning an Object name to natural science specimens the term may be repeated to record both the varying levels of classification required (genus, species, etc.) as well as a common or simple name describing the specimen (skull, bone, etc.).
- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.
- At least one Object name should normally be recorded.
- This Information Category is repeatable. It is possible to record multiple Object names for an object, for example "mug" and "souvenir," to indicate different characteristics of the same object.
- Assign Object names according to the level of specificity appropriate to the collection, e.g., for a collection containing three clocks among other types of objects, the term "clock" is a useful Object name. However, for a specialist collection of clocks, more specific Object names are required to distinguish between different types of clocks.
- Very general Object names can be assigned in order to group types of objects together, although if a structured thesaurus is being used then this will be done automatically, e.g., the term "furniture" would automatically include the term "chair" as a narrower term. If a thesaurus was not being used, both terms could be recorded separately.

Object name type

Definition:

The nature of the Object name recorded.

Examples:

taxonomic
common name
classification

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Object name authority

Alternate names:

Object name information source

Definition:

The name of the person responsible for identifying the Object name.

Examples:

Smith, W.J.

Notes:

- It is recommended that a controlled list of authorized names is used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Object Number Information Group

Object Number Information Group

Purpose:

This information supports Security, Accountability, and Access. Without an Object number it is not possible either to uniquely identify an object or to link an object with its documentation. The Object number should be marked on, or otherwise physically associated with the object.

Information categories:

Object number
Object number type
Object number date

Examples:

An object with several numbers:
Object number: A1234
Object number type: accession number
Object number date: 1970
Object number: 57.357
Object number type: previous loan number
Object number date: 1943

An object that is part of a group:
Object number: 1992.3001a
Object number type: inventory number
Object number date: 1992

A group of specimens in a life sciences collection:
Object number: 79.222
Object number type: collection number
Object number date: 1979

Notes:

- This Information Group is repeatable, as an object can have multiple Object numbers over time.
- It is essential to provide at least the current Object number. Older numbers should also be recorded, with an explanatory description in the Object number type Information Category.
- When an object comprises separable or separate parts, the Object number may be qualified using a different suffix for each part.
- In natural science or archaeological collections, or other collections where large numbers of similar objects or specimens are grouped together, the Object number can be assigned to a contained group or lot of objects, without differentiation for individual objects.

Object number

Alternate names:

Accession number
Inventory number
Catalog number
Registration number

Definition:

A unique number, assigned by the institution, that connects an object to its documentation and provides a unique identification.

Examples:

1994.1

Notes:

- The Object number can consist of numbers, letters, or a combination of numbers and letters.
- The Object number should be written legibly or printed on all documents concerning the object, and attached semi permanently on the object itself or, for very small objects and objects otherwise unsuited to semi permanent marking, on the container holding the object.
- Multiple numbers may be assigned to the object, e.g., an object may have a current accession number and an old loan number.

Object number type

Alternate names:

Identity number type

Definition:

The type or function of the Object number recorded.

Examples:

accession number
previous accession number
previous loan number

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Object number date

Alternate names:

Accession number date
Identity number date
Inventory number date
Catalog number date
Registration number date

Definition:

The date that the Object number was assigned to the object.

Examples:

1933-01-21

Notes:

- Always use the same format when recording dates.
- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.

Object Production Information Group

Object Production Information Group

Purpose:

Object production information supports Security, Accountability, Access, and an Historic archive. It can be applied to collections management areas as well as object history and description areas. It supports the documentation of the production of man made objects. As such it is required for all types of collection disciplines.

Information categories:

Production place
Production date
Production group/person name
Production role

Examples:

Production place: Leeds
Production date: 1932-03-01
Production group/person name: Grindley
Production group/person role: designer, manufacturer

Notes:

- This Information Group can be repeated to describe multiple production events in the history of an object, including design, manufacture, decoration, etc.

Production place

Alternate names:

Creation place
Place of manufacture

Definition:

The name of a place associated with the production of the object.

Examples:

Karystos/Evia/Greece/Europe
Spurn Point/North Humberside/England/Europe

Notes:

- To record information about specific places, separate each component of a place using the same character, such as a slash.
- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.
- Use the Production role Information Category to specify the way in which the Production place is associated with the object.

Production date

Definition:

The date or date range associated with the production of the object.

Examples:

c.1883
1956-01-21
1200-1400
600BC
10BCE

Notes:

- Always use the same format when recording dates.
- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.
- Be as precise as possible when recording dates. It may be necessary to record ranges of dates or to otherwise qualify the date recorded in some way. If so, always use the same method of indicating any qualification.
- Use the Production role Information Category to specify the way in which the Production date is associated with the object.

Production group/person name

Alternate names:

Artist
Designer
Maker
Manufacturer

Definition:

The person, group, or organization associated with the production of the object.

Examples:

Iroquois
Heals Ltd
Jones, I

Notes:

- It is recommended that a controlled list of authorized names is used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.
- Use the Production role Information Category to specify the way in which the Production group/ person name is associated with the object.

Production role

Definition:

The way in which the person/group, date, or place is associated with the origins of the object, including the creation, manufacture, use, excavation, or collection of an object or specimen.

Examples:

designer
manufacturer
painter

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.
- It may be necessary to record more than one Production role for the same person/group, date or place, e.g., where an object was designed and manufactured by the same company.

Object Title Information Group

Object Title Information Group

Purpose:

Object title information supports Security, Access, and an Historic archive. Often the primary identification of fine art and other high value objects, the Object title is essential for describing such collections. It is also a primary point of access to object information for all types of users.

Information categories:

Title
Title type
Title translation

Examples:

Title: Las Meninas
Title type: artist's title
Title translation: The Maids in Waiting

Title: The Maids of Honor
Title type: popular title

Title: Madonna and child
Title type: iconographic title

Notes:

- This Information Group can be repeated for as many titles as required. An object can have more than one title, and a title can be shared by several objects.

Title

Definition:

The name assigned to an object or group of objects by the artist/creator or collector at the time of origin or subsequent titles either specifically assigned or generally understood to refer to the object.

Examples:

Madonna and Child
Untitled

Notes:

- Use "Untitled" only if this has been assigned as a Title.
- Record Titles using the same punctuation and capitalization as the source used.
- When describing a group of objects with a collection name, record this name as one of the Titles.

Title type

Definition:

The nature of the Title recorded.

Examples:

collection
artist's
popular
series
trade

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Title translation

Definition:

A translation of the Title recorded.

Examples:

Le Grand Lit de Ware

Part and Component Information Group

Part and Component Information Group

Purpose:

Part and component information supports Security, Accountability, and Access. Without this information it is not possible to maintain proper control of the collections by ensuring that parts of objects are not mislaid or lost, nor is it possible to provide more detailed descriptions of objects for research purposes.

Information categories:

Number of parts or components
Description of parts and components

Examples:

Number of parts or components: 32
Description of parts and components: 8 panels, 16 feet, 8 hangings

Notes:

- Where records of an object are held at different levels (e.g., sets, archives, etc., the Part and component information describes the items at the next record level down.
- For each collection it must be decided whether to describe each part of an object or set as separate records, or as a single set or object, listing the separate components by name and numbering them.

Number of parts or components

Alternate names:

Amount
Number of items
Quantity

Definition:

The number of physically separated or separable parts of an object or a set of objects described by separate records at the next record level.

Examples:

3

Description of parts and components

Definition:

A brief description of the physically separated or separable parts of an object or set of objects.

Examples:

For an altarpiece:
2 center panels and 1 left wing

For a tea service:
1 teapot (with lid), 1 sugar bowl, 1 milk jug, 6 cups, and 6 saucers

For a jar of specimens in a life sciences collection:

50 specimens (approximately), 4 species

Notes:

- When describing a lot, i.e., an aggregate of specimens in a life sciences or earth sciences collection, provide the approximate number of specimens in the lot. Also include the number of species if appropriate.

Recorder Information Group

Recorder Information Group

Purpose:

Recorder information supports Security, Accountability, Access, and an Historic archive. Without this information it is not possible to establish when object information was created or establish the accuracy of the information, both of which are essential for maintaining inventory control and supporting research activities. It can help prevent unauthorized alteration of documentation.

Information categories:

Recorder
Record date
Authority

Examples:

Recorder: Legrand, M
Record date: 1992-04-23
Authority: Delahaye, F

Notes:

- Recorder information can be assigned to the documentation as a whole, or repeated for specific parts of the documentation. Normally the Recorder Information should be repeated in association with each Information Group.

Recorder

Definition:

The name of the person recording an Information Group or Category.

Examples:

Smith, R.G.

Notes:

- It is recommended that a controlled list of authorized names is used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Record date

Definition:

The date of creation/modification of an Information Group or Category.

Examples:

1989-01-23

Notes:

- Always use the same format when recording dates.

- Always record all four digits for the year of a date, e.g., 1994, not '94.

Authority

Alternate names:

Information source

Definition:

The person or reference providing the information recorded in the Information Group or Category.

Examples:

Smith, W.G.

Notes:

- It may be necessary to use controlled terms for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Reference Information Group

Reference Information Group

Purpose:

This information supports Accountability, Access, and an Historic archive. It may also be significant in proving ownership of the object, for example where reference is made to documents supporting legal title.

Information categories:

Reference
Reference type

Examples:

For a reference to a file held elsewhere:
Reference: 1991.234
Reference type: conservation file

For a reference to another object:
Reference: 1981.234
Reference type: object

For a reference to a publication:
Reference: Smith, K., Studies in Palaeontology, 1978
Reference type: publication

Notes:

- This Information Group may be repeated as many times as required to record multiple references.
- References may also be made to other objects in the collection as well as additional documentation.

Reference

Definition:

A number or code for linking the object documentation to any additional documentation about the object or another object in the collection.

Examples:

1983.34

Notes:

- Use a standard format for describing References according to the institution's agreed practice.

Reference type

Definition:

A description of the type of Reference recorded.

Examples:

object

acquisition file
bibliographic

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Reproduction Rights Information Group

Reproduction Rights Information Group

Purpose:

Reproduction rights information supports Accountability and Access. The recording of this information ensures that a museum is in a position to ensure that intellectual, reproduction, and usage rights relating to the object are protected.

Information categories:

Reproduction rights note
Reproduction rights owner

Examples:

Reproduction rights note: Restrictions apply to UK use only
Reproduction rights owner: Wellcome Trust

Notes:

- This Information Group may be recorded more than once to cover multiple owners of reproduction rights as well as different types of restrictions of use.

Reproduction rights note

Definition:

A description of the nature of the Reproduction rights which are owned and the restrictions of use of the object which apply.

Examples:

Not-for-profit reproduction permitted but only after confirmation with owner.

Notes:

- This Information Category may be recorded as many times as necessary for different restrictions relating to a single Reproduction rights owner.

Reproduction rights owner

Alternate names:

Copyright holder

Definition:

The person, organization, or group of people who own the reproduction or other rights of use to the object.

Examples:

National Gallery of Art, London

Notes:

- It may be necessary to use controlled terms for this Information Category. Refer to the " Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.

Subject Depicted Information Group

Subject Depicted Information Group

Purpose:

Subject depicted information primarily supports Access. Without this information it is not possible to provide even rudimentary access to pictorial collections beyond that required for accountability purposes. Subject information also supports the identification of objects.

Information categories:

Subject depicted
Subject depicted description

Examples:

Subject depicted: seascape
Subject depicted: sailing boats
Subject depicted description: beach and sea near a town with sailing boats on a rough sea

Notes:

- When documenting recorded works including film or music, use this Information Group to record a transcription or thematic description of the music or music performances.
- When describing books or other written works, use this Information Group to record a description and interpretation of texts where applicable.
- This Information Group may include information about people, places, events, or objects depicted.
- This Information Group can be repeated as many times as required.
- Subject information is not recorded for natural science collections.

Subject depicted

Alternate names:

Iconograph
Depiction
Content

Definition:

A term describing the abstract or figural composition of an object or of the decoration on an object, or the interpretation of the composition.

Examples:

flowers
Queen Elizabeth I
war

Notes:

- It is recommended that controlled terms are used for this Information Category. Refer to the "Content and terminology control" section in the Introduction for further guidance on sources of controlled terminology.
- This Information Group may include information about people, places, events or objects depicted.

Subject depicted description

Alternate names:

Iconography
Subject
Content

Definition:

A textual description of the abstract or figural composition of an object or of the decoration on an object, and the interpretation of the composition.

Examples:

A woman picking potatoes in a large field with a background of a small village.

Contributions to the Development Process

The following data standards were reviewed during the development of the Guidelines and have been taken into account in the current publication.

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