

Standards for the Collection, Management and Culling of
Archaeological Collections
in the Field, Lab and Curation Facility

New York Archaeological Council

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I: Introduction

In October of 2015 the New York Archaeological Council (NYAC) began developing a set of standards to guide the efforts of archaeologists and curators in collecting, culling and curating artifacts recovered from archaeological sites. The need for standardized practices in these areas is increasingly evident due to such crises as the lack of storage space, inadequate conservation and maintenance funds and the meteoric growth in collections as a result of Cultural Resource Management (CRM) archaeology. NYAC hosted a series of meetings where archaeologists presented and discussed the issues confronting institutions and the myriad forces driving policies and practices associated with culling, curation, accessioning and de-accessioning. Standards developed by other organizations were used to inform our process. Roundtable discussions identified specific concerns surrounding particular issues and several solutions were proposed. The Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) participated in the process and potentially may have an interest in adopting the proposed practices as a set of policies.

The standards presented here are the outcome of these efforts and are grouped into four parts discussed in greater detail in **Section II**:

Part 1 addresses the physical sampling, collecting and culling of archaeological materials. It focuses on the fact that collections are managed differently at different stages of a project and that sampling strategies are dynamic. These strategies may shift based on factors, that range from current research needs to project or budget constraints. Ultimately, the need to minimize artifact handling and curating, as well as reduce storage **space requires reflect the future trend at this time.** Archaeological collections are first generated by sampling in the field, and are then often reduced in size or culled in the laboratory, and again at the repository or final storage facility. At every step, decisions are made about the kinds of information to be retained and what to discard. By the end of a project, the materials cataloged and curated often represent sub-sets of much larger samples. These sub-sets can focus on particular types of material that reflect site specific contexts and research questions or they may merely be based on raw numbers of redundant types of artifacts. This may be a biased sample when compared with the full spectrum of materials recovered during investigations. Of primary concern is the composition of the final collection in comparison to what was available. The collection should be comprehensive enough to represent the site/context of origin AND meet the data and storage space needs of the present and future. Often these are competing goals in terms of time, space and funding.

In addition to material remains such as artifacts, standards are also needed for transferring and maintaining the records associated with excavations and artifact collections. Archaeological projects generate diverse datasets such as field records, maps and historic documents, lab records, photographs, correspondences, exhibit materials, pamphlets, and other unique materials specific to the project. These constitute part of an archaeological collection vital for future researchers working with archived collections.

Part 2 deals with the range of analytical methods currently available to archaeologists and conservators that can determine what and how to curate artifact assemblages. It

Commented [Linda Sto3]: Even if materials are culled in the lab, are they not cataloged too? Perhaps reword or remove "cataloged.":

makes a case for retaining important though cumbersome types of data such as soil samples. Here an attempt is made to promote the analytical value and potential of archaeological collections beyond gross, typological or morphological analyses of simple artifact classes. It also identifies individuals and groups in the community with a genuine interest and/or stake in having access to these collections for scientific research or other legitimate goals. The summary is not meant to serve as an absolute list of potential types of researchers and data. Instead it is intended as a baseline reminder of the evolution of various analytical methods and specialized studies that could offer insights into human history not imaginable even a few years ago.

Part 3 addresses the current state of affairs with facilities that accept archaeological collections in New York State. It evaluates the current options for storing archaeological collections and the limitations of those facilities. It also assesses the need for a different kind of system and discusses the potential for community archaeological centers to fulfill this need.

Part 4 considers the range of interested parties and stakeholders, in addition to the archaeological community, that may have an interest in, and want access to, material cultural and the archaeological collections generated by the CRM process. Part 4 focuses on identifying the broad spectrum of individuals and groups who might have an interest in the collections generated by archaeologists. It is not enough to think about the archaeological potential of collections. Other groups have connections to some of the remains, sometimes a single artifact, that may have nothing to do with archaeological research potential. Their interest or connection might be familial, historical, religious, emotional, occupational, or simple curiosity. Whether they claim this right as a member of a descendant community or as a tax-payer, people are interested in what Archaeologists do and the results and collections that investigations produce, and their voices should be considered before materials are lost or discarded.

Caveat: No single set of standards can satisfy every situation. Issues of sampling and culling addressed here and any protocols developed must be flexible and responsive to myriad research questions, archaeological contexts and the potential uniqueness of each site. They must also allow for changes to our professional practices over time. Standards are presented with the understanding that archaeology is first and foremost a scientific method that relies on sampling procedures. Sites are never fully excavated even when they undergo extensive mitigation. There is not enough time, money or storage capacity to collect all of the cultural materials and information that could be generated by total site excavation. By necessity the science of archaeology is done by the systematic sampling of sites and deposits as well as artifact assemblages and other culturally generated materials.

Section III presents alternatives to field excavation and addresses the need for archaeological centers that essentially are a new type of repository that encompasses educational programs and exhibits of CRM derived collections.

Commented [Linda Sto4]: Editorial comment: Check for consistent sentence spacing. Most up to this point is single space. The following paragraph is 2 spaces between sentences. Didn't check any further. I'm old school on this issue and prefer the 2 spaces, but up to final editors.

II: Collections Management Guidelines

Part 1: Key Stages in Archaeological Sampling, Collecting and Culling In the Field

Different levels of fieldwork are done regularly. Phases 1, 2, or 3, are intended to address different kinds of research questions about a site, to evaluate its potential and to recover data. A Phase 1 is intended to address whether or not cultural materials are present, what temporal range they cover and the cultural groups with which they are affiliated. Because testing is often a small footprint exposure, the size of materials and artifact assemblages recovered tend to be small. Phase 2 projects open larger units of excavation to determine a site's extent and significance. They address questions of overall significance and, through sampling, determine the extent of significant deposits. The volume of artifacts is greater than in Phase 1 and may include large quantities of potentially redundant materials, such as window glass, heat by-products or lithic debitage. Phase 3, also known as mitigation projects, are the largest and most extensive field efforts. The size of the collections recovered from this phase is significantly greater, as is the corresponding range of materials collected including soil and flotation samples. Because the site will be destroyed, the need to recover cultural material is greater. In particular, Phase 3 projects have the potential to generate massive collections which become the focus of major culling issues. In these cases, it has been argued by National Park Service personnel (Jed Levin; personal communication) that a clear research driven collection and sampling policy should be in place prior to starting the fieldwork and should be vigorously enforced during the excavation as well as during post-excavation processing in the lab.

These fairly straightforward principles should be familiar to anyone with a degree in archaeology. However, it is clear that there are mitigating circumstances, since every project is unique. So the standards for what to keep and what to discard have to be evaluated in terms of a number of factors including 1) state of preservation and ability to conserve or stabilize fragile materials, 2) potential research value, 3) importance to all stakeholders, 4) and volume of material.

Finally, it is worth noting that alternatives to digging may be considered in certain cases. This is especially important when dealing with contaminated sites. It is obviously the case when a site has been destroyed. In these cases, rather than artifact collection, there is only data recovery, a report, and/or publication.

General issues regarding collection and culling in the field:

- Field records should include the recordation of all materials sampled and discarded, and provide a description and/or a count and weight; any photographic documentation should be noted.
- Assess the crew's experience. If the crew is inexperienced, keep everything including brick, mortar, coal, charcoal, wood chips, window glass and lithic remains even if they appear unmodified, as well as botanicals, shell and faunal remains.
- Collect or carefully record all artifacts including plastic, rubber and apparent synthetics.
- Collect or carefully record all paper.
- Collect all bone. Unless one is a trained zooarchaeologist or human osteologist they are not qualified to identify 'non-diagnostic' bone. Size does not indicate diagnostic potential.

Commented [Linda Sto5]: Perhaps add definitions of sampling vs. collecting vs. culling before section A.

Commented [Linda Sto6]: Would sound more professional to have a published reference.

Commented [Linda Sto7]: I don't understand this sentence in this context. Therefore, not obviously.

- Anything that will clearly disintegrate should be photographed in the field but not collected. This information should be recorded on the field record.
- Heavy objects such as pulleys should be photographed, weighed and discarded in the field, unless they have some unusual quality or marking or research potential.
- Crews should be given a check list for each site that indicates what should be collected, sampled, culled and photographed.

These are guidelines for the collection, sampling and discarding of specific materials for all phases of fieldwork except where specified. The following cultural materials potentially may be sampled and culled in the field but must be identified and listed on the field record, counted and/or weighed, and a representative sample should be kept:

1. Soil and Flotation Samples. Collect soil and flotation samples from feature deposits on Phase 3 projects. The size of the samples is dependent on the research goals and the ability of the archaeologist to have them processed.

2. Bulk Remains. Large bulk materials on historic sites should be sampled by category including brick, mortar, coal, charcoal, wood chips.

3. Window Glass. Window glass must be evaluated in terms of what is represented, e.g., edges, trimmings, scored specimens, crimped specimens, bull's eyes and disk rims. If the collector cannot distinguish between these fragments all should be retained.

4. Construction Materials. Mortar, cement, and plaster are similar yet different and each should be sampled, record weight/count and discard.

5. Heating Materials. Heating by-products, such as clinkers, ash and slag, are also similar yet different. Again, each type should be sampled, recorded, weighed/counted and discarded.

6. Ferrous Metal. Ferrous metal is the most abundant type (of metal? Of artifact?)????? found on historic sites. **It is the only one (one of what? Metal? Artifacts?) that potentially can be sampled (Culled?) in the field.** This is because if untreated, this class of artifact will disintegrate. If you cannot tell a nail from a spike then collect everything. But if you can distinguish ferrous objects, they should be listed by type, sampled, counted/weighed and discarded.

7. Wood. Different tool marks may be present and finished pieces versus undefined pieces may be distinguishable. If you cannot conserve them they will fall apart.

8. Shell. Large quantities of shell clearly consisting of a single species should be identified, sampled counted/weighed and discarded. If you do not know what species you are looking at then collect everything as important information may be lost if incorrectly identified,

9. Special Cases. Some examples of exceptions to these guidelines are listed below. In situations such as these, the archaeologist must evaluate the collection of these materials in terms of research value. Contact the repository to determine the volume they will accept.

Culling and sampling must be negotiated/determined.

- Shell used as driveway paving material
- Ceramic dumps from industrial kilns
- Bottle glass dumps from glass factories
- Leather scraps from a factory
- Anything that has a commercial origin (I am unclear as to what is meant by this?)

• **In the Lab (Pre-accessioning)**

Commented [Linda Sto8]: Is this intended to be an exhaustive list? That's how it sounds. So either something should be added to indicate it is not or other artifact categories/classes should be added.

Commented [Linda Sto9]: What about sampling an abundance of metal alloy screws? Or other metals/alloys of other abundant categories, glass leads for example.

Commented [Linda Sto10]: Crossed out because included under bulk remains.

Protocols for culling in the lab should be developed based on the specific research design of each project. For most projects, this will determine the categories of information with the highest potential to address research questions. When no such research design exists (such as for most Phase 1 CRM projects), all materials should be brought back to the lab where expert personnel are better able to make informed decisions about what should be culled or sampled. There may be situations where feedback from expert lab staff during the initial days of a project could determine if field culling is appropriate for the remainder of the project. For projects that have a specific research design, the methods and protocols outlined in the research design should guide culling. The protocol should identify which specific artifact categories or classes should be saved as well what percentage of the overall recovery of those classes should be retained..

General issues:

- Culling decisions are determined by the age of the assemblage (e.g., most prehistoric material would not be culled; 17th- and 18th- century historic assemblages would not be culled/sampled; 19th century onwards would be subject to differential culling/sampling standards.)
- There should be a record and rationale for culling/sampling. Sampling and subsequent culling should not be based on random or cookie-cutter guidelines. The rationale and approach to sampling should fit the type of site and characteristics of the assemblage, keeping in mind the research potential of the assemblage.
- Objects to be culled should be photographed (by lot).
- Records of culling decisions and rationale should be kept in the artifact boxes as well in the site records.

Specific Materials:

These discussions apply to general situations where culling may be necessary, acknowledging that a research design takes precedence in decisions on culling, recording, etc, as does research that takes a particular direction not previously considered. [HOW IS THIS DETERMINED???

1. **Window Glass.** Architectural historians say that the thickness of window glass is dependent on the factory that produces it and that measuring the thickness is useless. **Recommendation:** Hand blown window glass should not be culled. For post-1830s machine-made glass, a representative sample of all material not deemed essential to the research design (determined by experienced lab personnel) should be retained with a focus on larger pieces that can be used for future testing (e.g., XRF). Count and weigh the remainder prior to discard. Keep a record of the rationale for sampling and discarding, the deaccession date, and personnel responsible for the decision and implementation of the rationale.

Commented [Linda Sto11]: FCR? Shell?

Commented [Linda Sto12]: Shell? Ferrous metal? Window glass?

Commented [Linda Sto13]: When is it culling vs. sampling. Or do we mean to imply they are one in the same?

Commented [Linda Sto14]: Is it really necessary to keep records of such things as a rock/pebble coming into the lab with the field tech thinking it was a stoneware ceramic sherd or stone tool? These are very different scenarios and perhaps should be considered, with other too.

Commented [Linda Sto15]: This section seems to include too many field recommendations for "In the Lab" and may be better moved to "In the Field."

Commented [Linda Sto16]: Count, weigh, document, etc. is the recommended for most things in this section so perhaps consider to use the same language in each or put a blanket statement at the top of the section. Also, I think "photograph" should be added to the list for all. I can't think of a single instance when it would be inappropriate.

Commented [Linda Sto17]: It should be considered that it may be adequate to describe the sampling and culling methods in the report, rather than in individual boxes.

2. **Bottle Glass.** A variable category.

Recommendations: Culling of machine-made post 1906 bottles (except those that are whole or any diagnostic parts of broken bottles: the neck, lip, base, and embossed letters). 19th-century mold-made bottles have diagnostic features on the neck, lips, and bases that can date them to specific times in the 19th century, so these parts should be kept. Avoid permanent reconstructions since this takes up valuable curation space. If the pieces are not temporally or functionally diagnostic or are not essential to the research design, then cull after counting and weighing. One might cull selectively and keep a sample (judgment of the archaeologist). As noted above, record and file decisions.

Commented [Linda Sto18]: In some cases there is superscript and others not. Should be made consistent.

3. **Nails and Metal Hardware.** This category is difficult since metal deteriorates. While x-rays can help determine if concretions of rusted metal are important to save, not many labs have access to this equipment.

Recommendation: for early wrought nails and metal from early sites (e.g., late 18th/early 19th century) save all nails and metal. Otherwise, sample based on the wholeness of the piece, the level of oxidation and the project research design. As noted above, record and file decisions.

4. **Tin Cans.** These fall into the general category of corroded metal.

Recommendations: If corrosion has erased all diagnostic elements (e.g., corroded sides, no visible labels) cull after weighing. Record and file decisions.

5. **Coal and Slag.** It is useful to know the difference between bituminous (layered) and anthracite (solid and shiny) coal since the types used are related to quality, cost, and burning rates. Coal can provide data on class, consumer behavior, and disposable income when recovered from residential sites. **Recommendations:** There are two potential options for this category; 1) train staff to identify in the field and toss after recording, or 2) bring material back to the lab for identification, weighing, and selective sampling. Distinguishing between these two types of coal is hard, even for highly trained individuals especially when it is dirty. The type of coal recovered is a critical piece of information when studying specific site types, such as industrial, vs. residential.

Commented [Linda Sto19]: Nice having slag grouped with coal here, but there is nothing in the section about slag.

Commented [Linda Sto20]: Perhaps recommend counting, weighing, photographing and selective sampling dependent on site type and research design.

6. **Concrete, Mortar and Plaster.**

Recommendations: If important to the site's research potential, then identification, counting, weighing, and selective sampling are recommended.

7. **Brick.** Same concerns as above.

Recommendations: If there are diagnostic marks, whole faces, different colors, evidence that it was hand-made, then identification, counting, weighing, and selective sampling in the lab are recommended.

8. **Tiles and Piping.** Considerations include time period, materials, and function.
Recommendations: Keep if from the early colonial period. For roofing tiles, save a sample of colors and cull the remainder after counting, weighing and documenting. Keep writing slates.
9. **Ceramics.** There are many issues to consider.
Recommendations: Cull ceramics only if you are excavating a ceramics factory site. In such a situation, cull according to the research design or with site-specific protocols designed by experts.
10. **Bone.** This category may include human bone as well as faunal and therefore has legal ramifications for both prehistoric and historic analysis.
Recommendations: Do not cull unless an expert has distinguished between human and faunal.
11. **Shell.** Although this is a very unstable material, the potential for analysis and research is high.
Recommendations: Do not cull unless there are context specific redundancies addressed in the research design.
12. **Plastics.** This category can include materials with high research and diagnostic potential.
Recommendations: At the archaeologists' discretion.
13. **Lamp Glass.** Hand-blown versus machine produced are considerations. Earlier lamp chimney glass would have been hand-blown, but it is hard to tell the difference with most fragments recovered archaeologically.
Recommendations: If identified as hand-blown, do not cull. With machine produced lamp glass, keep the rim/borders because those details can relate to the cost of lamps especially with the fancy edged work. For the remainder, count, weigh, and document (photograph?) before culling. Record and file decisions.
16. **Prehistoric/Protohistoric/Native American Historic.**
Recommendations: Identify and save all tools, count weigh and keep a sample of remaining pieces (e.g., debitage, then document prior to culling. =

Commented [Linda Sto21]: I don't necessarily agree. More thought should go into these recommendations since there wasn't enough time to discuss originally.

• At the Repository

It is required that an institution that has agreed to accept the collection is identified prior to the start of every project. The standards of that institution need to be understood and be in effect before the project begins. From the repository perspective there are standards that collections must meet in order to be considered for accessioning. A summary list of the kinds of materials the facility will not accept needs to be used in the field. The archaeologists in charge can decide whether or not to collect those materials but will bear the burden of how to store or dispose of them prior to delivering the materials to the institution.

There is a growing trend in museums and historical societies towards redefining their roles and responsibilities to the public. In the past, these institutions considered that one of their primary responsibilities was to preserve the past. Today, institutions are moving away from that role and refocusing their efforts on education and public outreach programs. Some institutions no longer feel they have a responsibility to store large collections and are in the process of de-accessioning materials. A few years ago Parks Canada started de-accessioning duplicate materials in their holdings. In the process they reanalyzed the collections before disposing of the artifacts (Evaluating Archaeological Collections Workshop, CNEHA 2001). Some institutions changed their mission statements to reflect that they no longer considered themselves 'repositories' or 'warehouses for large collections that are never brought into public focus and have little potential for ever being on display.

The situation is further complicated by several changes in Cultural Resource Management (CRM). First, the volume of CRM projects, and the corresponding volume of artifacts, has grown enormously over the past two decades. Second, the bulk of the materials recovered from CRM projects have little or no relevance to the mission statements of many institutions. Thus, there is little incentive on the part of museums and historical societies to accept the collections.

- In 2002 Heather Henderson of Historic Horizon Inc., conducted a survey of museums in the Toronto, Canada area which focused on the problems these institutions have when dealing with archaeological collections (Her entire report can be read in the NYAC survey of repositories available on the NYAC website, referred to as Appendix F [Evaluating Archaeological Collections Workshop, CNEHA 2001]). Below is a summary of a few of the problems she highlighted.:

Most institutions do not have archaeologists on staff trained to manage archaeological collections nor do they understand site reports, archaeological databases, provenience information, etc. They also have difficulty locating exhibit quality artifacts and don't understand the significance of most of the artifacts, or often of the site and don't know how to incorporate artifacts into existing educational programs

- Henderson identified some of the information needs of museums: b) Simple site descriptions, and easy to understand explanations of the site's significance b) Exhibit quality artifacts, with labels and captions c) Suggestions for using the collections in educational programs

The final decisions made about what to do with archaeological collections ultimately rests with the repository. Once a collection has been handed over, it is no longer under the control of the archaeological community. Repositories have policies concerning accessioning, maintenance, culling, etc. And it is here that the unkindest cuts will be made without consultation with our community regarding the needs of future archaeological research and other stakeholders. Currently Native Americans and African Americans are considered prior to making decisions about collections.

There is a responsibility on the part of the archaeologist to deliver collections that meet the repository's standards of acceptance. But there is also a responsibility on the part of the institution to limit culling once the collection is accepted. This is because museum staff are generally not qualified or trained to evaluate the research potential of archaeological materials,

Commented [Linda Sto22]: Add url.

e.g., when soil samples are thrown away because they are big, heavy and ugly, yet they carry all of the three dimensional data required to reconstruct the environment in which people lived.

The culling practices of repositories can be grouped into specific types of actions guided by a set of standards (see Appendix A for the culling practices of the NYC repository, Camille's document/ Name?).

- Whether or not to cull duplicates within collection, e.g., particular artifact class.
- Re-examination of old collections.
- Discuss/collaborate before collections are culled with diverse parties, especially material specialists like ceramicists, lithics analysts, etc.
- X-ray corroded metal objects, document all before culling.
- Concerns of repository affect what will be kept- significance issue.
- Quality of documentation is a factor in keeping collections, e.g. field notes, photos, maps.
- Collections should have some research potential.
- Rehousing and culling older collections.
- Keep a list of everything discarded and photograph them as well.
- Deaccessioning policies need to exist before materials are discarded
- Find partners/communities who might want collections.
- Sampling is necessary.
- Use experts in material culture- have a list of experts available to review collections to be culled
- 19th and 20th century material- how useful are particular artifact classes.
- Why save a modern battery.
- Why save fragment so small no measurements are possible.
- Why save faunal remains chewed by rats in the museum .
- Why save mixed crushed glass.
- Policy program 36CFR69- deaccessioning regulations.
- 36CFR79.12- deaccession object of insufficient archaeological interest with appropriate sampling limited to portions of federal collections.
- The best deaccession policy is a good accession policy.
- Keep it all/new technology/ethics vs. sustainability, cost, space, ethics.
- Needs to be case by case.
- Create a panel or consortium of experts to weigh in on the disposition of a collection would be something to consider or incorporate with efficient feedback and communication.

Commented [Linda Sto23]: Yes, let's add the proper reference.

Commented [Linda Sto24]: Previously mentioned and mentioned again in last bullet. Keep just one.

Commented [Linda Sto25]: Previously mentioned, one of the bullets could be deleted.

Part 2: Understanding the Potential Research Value of Archaeological Collections

Archaeological collections are of great importance to many people. First and foremost, to the archaeologists who generate them, they hold information about the past. The ability to read the artifacts gives archaeologists insights into the lives of people who no longer have a voice. But there are others for whom the collections are also important. For some, the collections are a link to their ancestors, while for others there may be a spiritual significance to some of the remains. There are emotional ties as well, some sites may be linked to important events in the past and therefore be of importance to our nation's history.

Artifacts are the first things that come to mind when discussing archaeological collections. No doubt they are the bread and butter of all analyses. Ceramics and stone tools are the most durable of all artifacts made by humans for thousands of years. Typical analyses examine artifacts by gross morphological traits. Since the late 20th century, analysts have reconsidered the embedded social meaning in artifacts and, in doing so, enhanced our ability to understand more subtle social histories such as gender, ethnicity, socioeconomics and other aspects of social identity.

However, in recent years major advances have been made in extracting information at the molecular and micro levels. Consequently there is a greater understanding of potential for materials that have often been tossed in the first round of culling negotiations such as soil and flotation samples. It is recommended that samples of soil and flotation samples be kept even if they are smaller than they traditionally were. It is also recommended that samples of shell be kept.

a. Standard Gross Morphological Analyses

- Prehistoric
- Historic
- Botanical remains
- Faunal remains
- Human remains

b. Specialized Analyses

- Soils
- Organic deposits
- Residue analysis
- Wear patterns
- Molecular samples
- Genetic samples
- Dating samples

Part 3: State of current repositories in New York State.

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a. Survey Results

In the fall of 2004, the NYAC Collections Committee conducted a survey of all the New York State museums, historical societies, schools and universities identified as archaeological repositories in the Guide to Anthropological Collections from New York State published by NYAC in 1988. The term “repository” referred to institutions that were thought to serve as curatorial facilities for archaeological collections in New York State. The survey was conducted because of the growing awareness that most of these institutions did not in fact accept archaeological collections, especially if they came from CRM projects, but additionally if they did not meet the guidelines for acceptance that were in effect at each place.

Forty-one percent (n=114) of the 277 institutions that received the survey form responded. The entire report may be downloaded from the NYAC website. When asked if their policy limited the acceptance of archaeological collections to a specific geographic area, time period, artifact or material type, 92 institutions said yes. In general, if an institution was a county institution, acceptance was limited to that county. If an institution was located in a town, acceptance was limited to that town. If an institution was a specialized type of facility, such as a fort or canal, acceptance was limited to collections having to do with the focus of the facility. A few institutions did not set specific limitations other than with New York State, and at least one institution said they would accept archaeological collections from anywhere, regardless of point of origin. A few institutions mentioned not accepting collections that would place them in conflict with NAGPRA legislation. Finally, several institutions mentioned that only small collections with appropriate documentation would be considered.

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A copy of the information about each institution’s archaeological holdings was attached to each institution’s survey form. Most of these listings came from the State Ed survey in the 1988 NYAC publication. A small number of institutions said they had since de-accessioned their holdings, while some institutions said that they knew nothing of the materials listed in the State Ed survey. Others mentioned having ‘arrowheads’ but no ‘archaeological materials/’

Commented [Linda Sto28]: Is there a better reference/format for this survey?

The study concluded, based on the survey results, there are at least 73 repositories that accept small archaeological collections, generally if they relate to the local area, and particularly if they are documented. Very few repositories will accept large collections, as they have limited space and are unable to care for them. Of those that accept collections, most do not charge a curation fee, though there is a growing trend towards doing so. Almost 50 percent of the repositories surveyed indicated that they would be willing to take part in a more in-depth survey. Finally, the survey discovered the existence of a number of ‘orphaned’ archaeological collections throughout New York State. These are collections that fall outside mission statements of their institutions, and which the institutions have no interest in maintaining.

b. Museum Collections Stewardship: What to Accept, Stabilize, Assess, and Interpret

- Stewardship of collections is critical.
- Creative Mitigation Measures- rehab old collections instead of generation of new collections.
- Re-examination of old collections.
- Discuss/collaborate before collections are culled with diverse parties, especially material specialists like ceramicists, lithics analysts, etc.
- Have specific evaluation methods/criteria used in deciding which collections to accept.
- Concerns of repository affect what will be accepted- significance issue.
- Quality of documentation is a factor in accepting collections, e.g. field notes, photos, maps.
- Collections should have some research potential.
- Rehousing and culling older collections.
- Keep a list of everything discarded and photograph them as well.
- Deaccessioning policies need to exist before materials are discarded.
- Find partners/communities who might want collections.
- Consider audience/who/why material is collected: research, exhibit, cultural patrimony issues, special interest groups, environmentalists, biological sciences .
- Have a list of experts available to review collections to be culled.
- Key criteria: fit with existing collections, significant material based on research potential- long term research goals.
- Save/curation of all primary documentation.
- Should culling be driven by concerns about space, the quality of collections or both?
- Appropriate access, accompanied by competent curation with scientific value makes collections worth keeping.
- Collections should be accessible and useful.
- Collections should have research value/replicability.
- SHPO requests deed of gift copy for Phase 3 (usually).
- Digital primary data/documentation- digitize original records, and upload to the SHPO office?
- Important to interpret the site vs. important to keep all the information.
- Objects not as important as need to explain why these contexts are important.
- Need to promote the collections AND context important.

Commented [Linda Sto29]: Duplication point.

Commented [Linda Sto30]: Duplicate point.

Notes:

Can there be a mechanism for looted antiquities/objects subject to NAGPRA that would allow them to have an “in transit” status?

- This would allow them to be documented, photographed, researched, etc. without any question of illegality or impropriety
- Similar to safe haven protocol
- Objects that would go back to a war zone could fall into this category, in which they can be safely held by an institution until conditions in source community stabilize
- Case Study: Issue of cuneiform tablet collections at Cornell
 - Lack of specific provenance information is problematic; considered “looted” even though 3-year FBI investigation did not result in any specific evidence/charges

Commented [Linda Sto31]: Edit as appropriate for NAGPRA.

Commented [Linda Sto32]: Since we are attempting standards for NYS, perhaps we can come up with a local example.

- Purchased and accessioned at auction 20 years ago
- Dean is requiring that they return material to Iraq because it's "bad press", but Iraqis say that are not in a position to accept the material and want the project to be finished
- Do museums have a duty to accept orphaned artifacts?

Suggestions:

- Can a safe haven protocol be adopted into the regulations?
- Incorporate statewide links/electronic resources that allow for:
 - List on a centralized website that includes different repositories and what they collect
 - better information sharing between institutions across the state to understand collecting priorities of each institution; need better sense of what would be of importance to other institutions if yours can't accept it
 - Artifact documentation card/outreach based on Tompkins County house history card model to encourage public education and make collectors more savvy about museum collections quality information
 - Encourage people to adopt this model during Archaeology Identification days
- Make a distinction between hand-made things (each one is unique) and mass-produced/machined things in terms of creating research vs. representative collection
- Do not get rid of originals once they are digitized (cautionary tale of microfiched newspapers in library collections that are totally illegible)
- Culling: look more critically at things collected from sites that have no archaeological significance (e.g. unworked cobblestones in Lamoka Lake collection)
- Culling: Need to identify which repositories would accept materials from academic or CRM projects. The problem finding a facility to accept collections has resulted in archaeological materials ending up with or under the care of archaeologists.

Commented [Linda Sto33]: Not sure who/what is MHH.

WHERE ARE THE SECTIONS FROM TOC ON POLICIES AND PUBLIC OUTREACH?

Part 4: Identifying the Key Players in the Creation, Analysis and Maintenance of Archaeological Collections

Archaeological collections are created through fieldwork, are handled in the lab, and eventually transferred to a repository, after which they are processed by the standards of the facility. At every stage, the entities that deal with them make decisions about what to keep, how to store it, and its value. Therefore it is worth taking the time to identify the key players and to highlight some of their main concerns and the steps they may take to reduce the size of a collection or split different parts of the collection according to material or data type, and how those materials are stored. The examples discussed are taken from the NYAC panel discussion which took place in October 2015. They serve to highlight some of the dangers to collection and data types and why a solid understanding of what constitutes ‘value’ has to be established and used to guide how data are collected, sampled, analyzed, stored and curated.

- Cultural Resource Consultants
- Companies
- The New York State Museum
- Other Museums with Conservation Facilities
- Historical Societies
- NYSAA Chapters
- The Susquehanna River Archaeological Center
- The New York City Repository
- Descendant Populations (both historic and prehistoric?)
- Archaeological Centers
- Public Education and Outreach Programs
- **State University of New York Centers**

Commented [Linda Sto34]: I like the idea of including “companies”, but not sure what type of companies the group suggested, aside from CRM firms.

Commented [Linda Sto35]: Perhaps I am uninformed, but what is a SUNY Center vs. SUNY?

Section III: Recommendations

a. Digging Less and Alternative Mitigation Strategies

There are alternatives to field excavation depending on certain key factors including site type, level of information available, stakeholders and the value they derive, and gatekeepers, in other words, the decision makers. What types of sites can be considered for alternative mitigation, and under what conditions (level of information)?

There are 4 site types considered suitable for alternative mitigation strategies:

1. Standard site (no prior disturbance)
 2. Damaged or destroyed site
 3. Toxic/hazardous site
 4. Sacred site
1. **Standard Site.** Standard sites should not be considered for alternative mitigation until they have been determined NR eligible (Phase II recommendation for eligibility). Generally the sites considered for a NR eligibility at the level of a Phase 2 are historic sites. These sites have no “special” mitigating factors. Historic sites lend themselves more readily to alternative mitigation. Examples of historic sites where alternative mitigation may be appropriate include those where there is a lot of repetition of information (e.g., historic farmsteads), and very large industrial sites (factories, mills)

Because pre-contact sites are far less common they are typically not considered “standard.” In general, prehistoric sites should not be eligible for alternative mitigation. However, examples of Prehistoric sites where alternative strategies might be considered include a) very large sites with repetitive information, such as a quarry, b) very large sites with non-diagnostic material/structure(s), c) sites with no features, all in plow zone, and non-diagnostic materials.

Commented [Linda Sto36]: Be consistent in capitalization.

2. **Damaged or destroyed site.** Such sites must be evaluated in terms of what level of information is/may still be available. Furthermore, it is important to determine if stakeholders place any value on the site, or on the remaining information. An evaluation should be completed to determine who caused the damage/destruction. The mitigation cost/effort should be relative to the damage and the level of guilt (or responsibility) of the responsible party.
3. **Toxic/contaminated site.** These sites must be evaluated in terms of degree of contamination and what level of information is/may still be available. Based on the level of information available, how much value do stakeholders place in the site, or the remaining information. An assessment should be done on a case by case basis. Some may be too “toxic” (e.g., Radioactive) while others could be cleaned or contained.
4. **Sacred site.** These are sites that have value to stakeholders that is significant enough that they and/or Federal and State agencies will not permit excavation of the site.

Important issues to be considered:

- **Stakeholders.** As noted in some of these site types, the term stakeholder is used to refer to groups who have a connection and vested right or interest in a site. However, there should be prior determination of which stakeholders to consider and whose “value” or values should alternative mitigation strategies reflect. Determining who has the right to the site, or information can be difficult, not to mention complicated by the fact that sites have different value to different communities: the local community, SHPO, THPO, other agency(s) involved, the descendent community, the ethnic community. There is a need to consider and balance different stakeholder values but that should be the role of gatekeepers (SHPO, THPO, other agency reviewers).
 - **Types of Mitigation Strategies.** Sites considered for alternative mitigation should be evaluated in terms of strategy and constraints. A formal design needs to be implemented and constraints delimited. The focus of alternative mitigation will be decided by the reviewing agency (SHPO, THPO as appropriate) and they should consult with stakeholders as part of the process. There should be no blanket policy; each case should be decided individually. Sites should not have alternative mitigation without some baseline level of information collected. This should apply to all site types. Alternative mitigation should be rare—sites should not be “bought” with alternative mitigation money as a cheaper way to move projects forward.
 - Some general principles can be proposed:
 - a. An alternative mitigation plan should have spatial proximity to the site (same region for example),
 - b. It should have research related to the site (similar site type, similar time period, similar artifact types),
 - c. It should be used for archaeology, not unrelated projects (for example, building a sports field).
 - d. Examples of possible alternative mitigation strategies include:
 - Regional analysis of site types, locations, features etc. for the region in which the site is located
 - Deed or other document research on the site and/or related sites
 - Fund local museum or historic society to work on related collections
 - Purchase and preserve a different site
 - Completely excavate one of several similar sites (e.g., lithic scatter)
 - Fund regional archaeological centers for CRM collections, research and public education
- b. Archaeological Centers as Alternatives to Traditional Museums for Storing and Maintaining Collections**

There is a great need to create a new type of facility devoted to housing archaeological collections. This is the fastest growing type of heritage material generated today. Instead of

burdening museums that have their own mandates and missions, regional archaeological centers need to be established that accept entire collections. These centers would be places for research, public education, and rotating exhibits. The range of materials accepted would extend beyond artifacts and documents to include soil and flotation samples since they are important for molecular and other specialized studies. Furthermore, by opening regional archaeological centers, jobs and research opportunities would be created for archaeologists.

Museums, historical societies and other institutions have guidelines for accessioning collections of which archaeological materials are just one group. The guidelines follow their mission statement which limits what they will accept. For this reason they are not the best place to house archaeological collections that typically come with large volumes of dirt, bones, and documentation which may not meet the basic criteria for acceptance. Even when collections are accepted in their entirety, they remain in danger of being culled. The material considered 'valuable,' which is biased by known possibilities of the time or simple aesthetics, often comprises objects considered solely for exhibition.

Today we are faced with storage issues that force us to reduce collections. In the future, perhaps 50 or 100 hundred years from now, archaeological sites dating from prehistory to Contact Period, and the formative years of our nation, will be gone. The rate of construction and landscape modification guarantees that only a few sites will be left, saved by the efforts of the Historic Preservation Act and a small number of proactive groups such as the Archaeological Conservancy. For this reason, archaeological collections will become increasingly valuable to researchers and stakeholders. The sense of urgency felt by the present community is short-sighted as there eventually will come a point in time when the culling of our national heritage will no doubt be seen as a most unfortunate chapter in our history.

The need for archaeological research centers is great but the challenge to create them is greater. A model for the creation of archaeological centers is needed to fund and staff them. We envision these facilities as places that would curate all archaeological materials related to a given project. In addition, these places would serve the needs of diverse groups and individuals such as stakeholders, researchers, school children and others who have a vested interest in learning from these materials or for whom they have historical or emotional value.

This document attempts to lay out the problems facing archaeological collections from their recovery in the field, to their analysis in the lab and acceptance by repositories, and their future curation and preservation. It is enough to state that 1) these are meant to be guidelines, 2) there is no consensus on the value of all material types, and 3) archaeological collections are precious, rare and irreplaceable.

c. Public Education and Outreach/Access to Collections and Discarded Material.

The relationship with major museums is important in coordinating and managing existing archaeological collections. The New York State Museum leads the way in research and public outreach programs in the state of New York. The museum works directly with teachers offering them opportunities to learn about archaeological fieldwork and lab procedures. The influence of the New York State Museum is important in guiding the efforts of all archaeologists.

- **Public Education**

Archaeology should be included into the Common Core as well as in the New York State coverage of Native history in 4th and 7th grade. Currently archaeology is not part of the curriculum and yet by including a segment on archaeology and our collective past students would gain appreciation of the importance of cultural resources and how the past influences the social interactions of living peoples.

How can best practices articulate with these curricula? The 1 week Public Archaeology Program that the Binghamton PAF provides a good model for a summer field experience. The Schenectady Community College Program in public archaeology is another success story that could be emulated by others.

- **Outreach**

Department of Transportation contracts require that a certain amount be spent on public education. What about other agencies?

NYAC and NYSAA chapters can play a role:

- Chapter meetings, chapter digs, and knowledgeable members volunteering as speakers.
- Open houses – digs, field schools, CRM projects
- Working with Historical Society Collections can provide “hands on” experience working with material and can help to revitalize such organizations.

- **Access to Collections**

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Web sites and tDAR make images available to interested student or professional. This could be followed up with hands-on content for those initially attracted via web based content. Scanning and 3-D printing now allows easier access to reproductions.

- **Discarded Material**

This can be valuable for teaching purposes via loan kits and sandbox archaeology exercises.

OTHER:

What is the relationship between NRE criteria, site integrity and information potential at OPRHPI?