

OHIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
COLLECTIONS/CURATORIAL DIVISION
RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The Society recognizes the potential for its collections of historic and prehistoric artifacts and natural specimens to provide new insights into Ohio's cultural and natural heritage through systematic research. Consequently, the Society will make collections available to bona fide researchers within the limits of available space and staff. The following procedures are designed to provide access to the collections, to coordinate research with other collections activities, to provide for an outcome for the research, and to safeguard the collections.

I. Initial Contacts:

Researchers are encouraged to contact relevant OHS curators and collections staff to discuss their potential project prior to submitting a formal research request. These discussions should include the focus of the study, the OHS collections and staff to be involved, and the timing of the research.

II. Formal Proposal:

A formal written proposal is required for every research project whether undertaken by OHS staff or outside researchers. The proposal will include the following:

1. Purpose of the research including background information on the topic. Honors or graduate students may submit a copy of their thesis prospectus that has been approved by their faculty advisor.
2. A list of OHS collections, including collection documentation files, relevant to the research topic
3. The types of analysis to be used. Techniques regarded as destructive testing must be fully justified and the procedures dealing with destructive testing (see section VII) must be followed
4. An estimate of the amount of space and equipment required, and a time schedule for the work
5. Provision for disseminating the results
6. Researcher's curriculum vitae or resume
7. Student researchers must submit a letter of endorsement from their faculty advisor
8. Researchers may request the loan of specific collections for study if it is not practical for them to examine the materials at the OHS Collections Facility. In that case, in addition to the requirements of Section I and II, the researcher must follow the Society's current loan policies and procedures.
9. The proposal will be submitted to the relevant curator who, in consultation with other staff as needed, will approve or disapprove the proposal. If the proposal is approved, the curator will inform the researcher and work out a mutually-satisfactory time schedule for the work. If the proposal is disapproved, the curator will so inform the researcher, indicating why the request has been rejected.

III. Scheduling

The Collections Facilities are generally open to researchers Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., contingent on staff schedules and holiday observances. Any deviation will require prior approval of the relevant curator and/or collections staff.

IV. Procedures for Handling Collections

1. Researchers will have limited access to objects. The number of objects available at one time is dependent upon the nature of the collection, the research project, and the discretion of the curatorial/collections staff
2. Collections staff will retrieve specified items from storage each day for the researcher, and then return them to the collections at the end of the day; researchers are not allowed in collections storage unless accompanied by staff
3. Researchers will follow the directions of collections staff regarding handling specific objects, including wearing cotton or latex gloves, keeping objects in protective boxes or trays, and moving items on carts rather than hand carrying them.
4. Food or beverages are not allowed in storage areas or on tables where collections objects are laid out

V. Access to Documentation Files

1. Researchers will have access to OHS accession, field note, and photo files that are relevant to their particular research project

2. Collections staff will retrieve specified files for the researcher and will refile the materials
3. Copies of collection files and all other unpublished documents are provided to the researcher for their personal research only. They are not to be recopied or distributed in any form to any third party
4. Researchers are expected to file copies of all research notes and other project documentation (electronic and paper records) with the Society at the conclusion of their research. These materials will become part of the permanent record of the collection(s) being examined.
5. Researchers will provide the Society with a copy of their final report, thesis, or dissertation on their project. Copies of any subsequent publications, both print and electronic, that describe the research will also be submitted to the Society for the permanent files.

VI. Photography

1. Researchers will follow the photography procedures developed by the Society's Archives/Library Division (copy attached)

VII. Requests for Destructive Testing

The Society recognises its obligation to preserve its collections for future generations. At the same time, it also recognises the significant information that can be derived from various analyses that involve chemical and/or physical alteration or destruction of part or all of an object. In considering requests for destructive testing, the following criteria will be considered:

1. The appropriateness of the proposed test as the least intrusive and most likely to yield the intended results
2. The rarity and scientific importance of the object(s) to be tested
3. The quantity of material required for the test
4. The researcher's competence to remove and analyze the sample successfully
5. If DNA sampling is involved, whether the DNA extraction will be returned to the Society for reference to decrease the need for other extractions by future researchers

Requests for destructive testing must be approved not only by the relevant curator but also the Collections Management Team and the Society's Board of Trustees. The only exception is a request for radiocarbon dating charcoal samples since those materials are generally collected specifically for that purpose. Researchers will be encouraged to use accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) dating or other similar techniques that require very small amounts of material for a successful date so that a portion of a dated sample can be retained.

VIII Equipment Availability

Researchers are expected to provide their own analytical tools--measuring devices, calculators, computers, magnifiers, etc.--and supplies. Researchers may have access to Society copying and fax machines, however, they will be billed for photocopies and faxes. Long-distance phone calls made on Society telephones will either have the charges reversed or billed to the researcher's phone credit card.

I have read this document and agree to abide by these procedures.

Researcher's Name

Date

April 2004