Society of California Archaeology Conference

Curation in Crisis: Knowing the Unknown through Potential Solutions

Session Meeting March 8, 2019

Moderator: Wendy Teeter
Session Panelists: Anmarie Medin, Karimah Kennedy-Richardson, Desiree Renee Martinez, Kathy Bancroft, Myra Herrmann, Amy Gusick, Destiny Colocho, Xochitl Aguinaga

Session Agenda

- Presentation of California Curation Survey results by Xochitl Aguinaga
- Thinking Towards Solutions: DPR 523A Primary Record Form
- Panel Discussion
- Question and Answer with audience

Curation Committee Meeting

- Discussion of Archaeological Collections Consortium (ACC) "Best Practices for No Collection Projects & in Field Analysis in the US": Is this an answer to the curation crisis?
- Regional Meetings?
- New topics and Audience Participation

Survey Results by Xochitl Aguinaga

California Curation Survey 2018 & 2019

California Curation Survey I

California Curation Survey II

Presentation Notes

- The Fowler Museum team created a survey in 2018 to collect data about the state of California archaeological collections curation to better understand and create solutions to the curation crisis and thoughts expressed in the 2010 Archaeology Curation White Paper (http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=26522).
- In addition we wanted to know:
    - Current and Available Curation Facilities
    - Document the Extent of Uncurated Archaeological Collections in California
    - General approaches to curation and funding needs.
- The survey wasn't without its flaws: based on the results from 2018 survey, the survey implementation team set out to make improvements.
    - Questions and answer choices were simplified/more refined.
    - Improved ranges for answer-choices.
- Overall the 2019 survey results were **similar** to 2018 results, but provided a more concise picture on the status of California curation.

California Curation Survey 2019

Presentation Notes

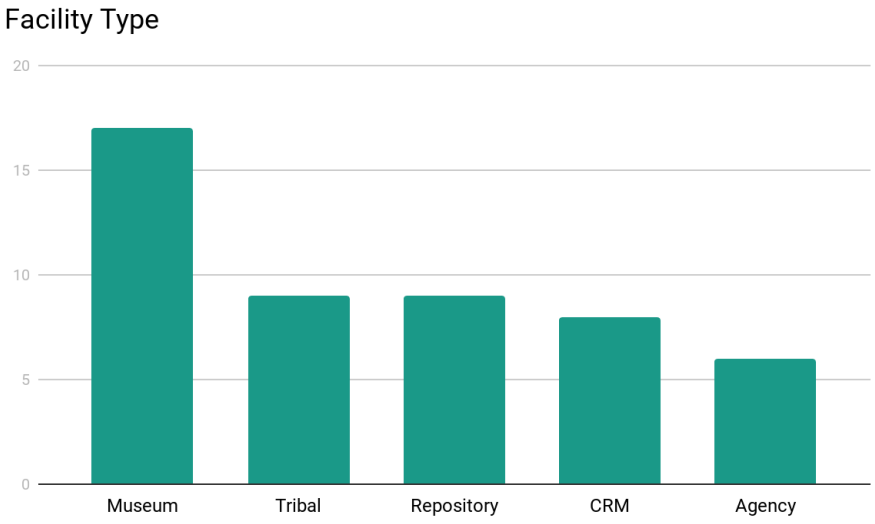
- There were 51 respondents total, while there were 65 in 2018

    - The survey was sent out via email and social media as a Google Form so a response rate could not calculated

- **All** respondents had archaeological collections and artifacts
    - Whereas **10%** of respondents from 2018 **did not** have archaeological collections or artifacts.
- Additionally **all** respondents in 2019 had collections from California
    - Only **80%** of respondents had collections from California in the 2018 survey.
- 2019 survey showed a higher response rate per question compared to 2018 survey.
- For this session the implementation team focused on a few data points that were central to the new solutions we are piloting.

Facility Type

The following graph shows a breakdown of survey-respondent facility types. For the purposes of the survey it was necessary to ask respondents to select a **primary** identifier in order to discern trends on the variety of facilities in California.



Below is a detailed description of Survey facility-type definitions.

Repository: A location in which archaeological collections are stored and managed (e.g. anthro/arch lab, archaeology societies)

Cultural Resource Management (CRM): Business of managing cultural resources in response to some legal or policy mandate; which often processes resultant artifact collections and houses them temporarily.

Tribal: Any tribe that cares for pre-contact/historic cultural items, could be within a repository, cultural center, museum, etc.

Museum: Open to the public, has exhibits; allows research; education programs, whether private, university, or heritage.

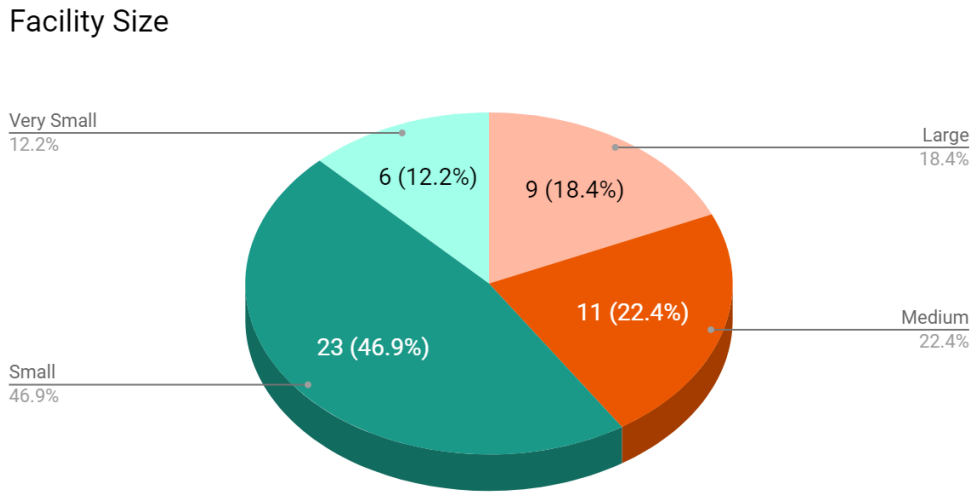
Agency: A federal, state, or county agency/park that directly curates collections (possession and control)

Presentation Notes

- Overall there was representation from all facility-type selections.
    - Museum: **34.7%** Tribal: **18.4%** Repository: **18.4%** CRM: **16.3%** Agency: **12.2%**
        - Data reflecting the overall proportions of these facility types statewide is not currently consolidated for comparison to the survey representation.
- Compared to the 2018 survey there was an increase in participants from tribal facilities and a decrease in participants from CRM facilities. This may be because there was more emphasis on reaching out to tribes with the second survey or that CRM firms felt they didn't meet the criteria. However, this is merely speculation.

Facility Size

Respondents were asked the size of their archaeological collections to gain a broader understanding of collection facilities. To make this question simple to answer, the implementation team devised ranges from large to small facilities based on trends from the 2018 survey.



Large Facility: 6,000-3,000 sq ft and/or 500,000 objects or more. **18.4 %**

Medium Facility: 2,500-800 sq ft and/or 300,000-100,000 objects. **22.4%**

Small Facility: 700 or Less sq ft and/or 90,000 objects or less. **46.9%**

*Very Small Facility: Based on survey responses. **12.2%**

Presentation Notes

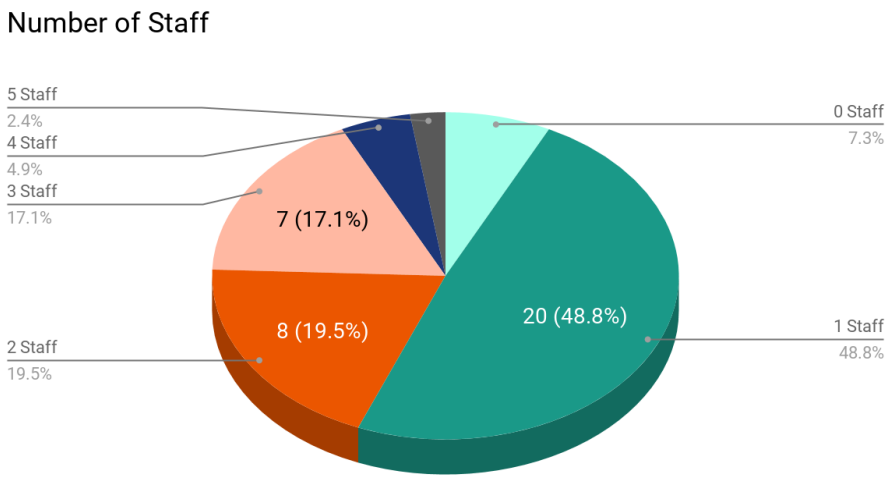
- Respondents had the option to fill in a free-response if none of the ranges matched their collection size. Surprisingly, there was a sizeable amount of respondents who pointed out they had **very small collections** as opposed to a small collection.
    - For example, they might have had one filing cabinet or a small storage closet.
- Overall the majority of facilities were in the small/very small range (**59.1%**).
- There is still a sizeable representation from large and medium sized facilities (**40.9%**).

Staff and Volunteers

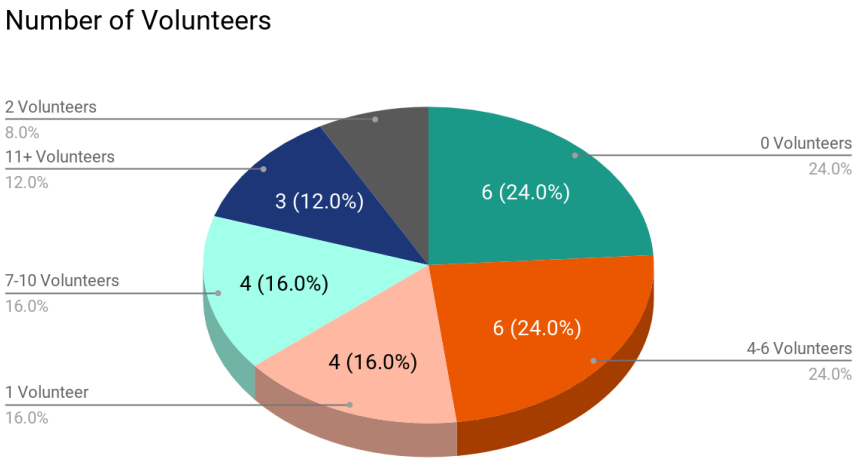
The survey implementation team asked for the number of staff and volunteers that worked **directly** with archaeological collections. The 2018 survey yielded a broad range of responses because we did

not ask for staff and volunteers that worked on archaeological collections (some respondents gave staff numbers for entire company/all departments).

Based on the graph below the majority, **48%,** of facilities had one staff member. **19.5%** of respondents had two staff members. **17.1%** of facilities had three staff members. **7.3 %** of facilities had zero staff members. **4.9%** of respondents had four staff members. **2.4%** of responses had five staff members.



Compared to Staff workers there was a greater range of volunteer numbers. **24%** of respondents had zero volunteers. Another **24%** of respondents had 4-6 volunteers. **16%** of respondents either had one volunteer or seven to ten volunteers. **12%** of respondents had eleven or more volunteers. **8%** of respondents had two volunteers.

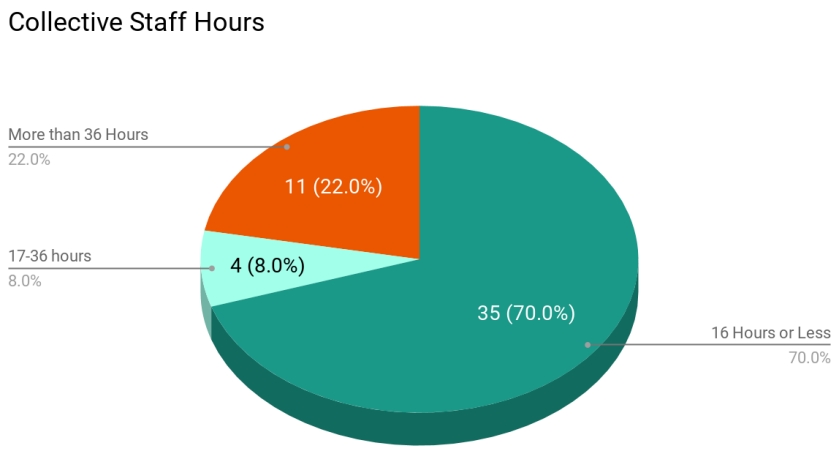


Presentation Notes

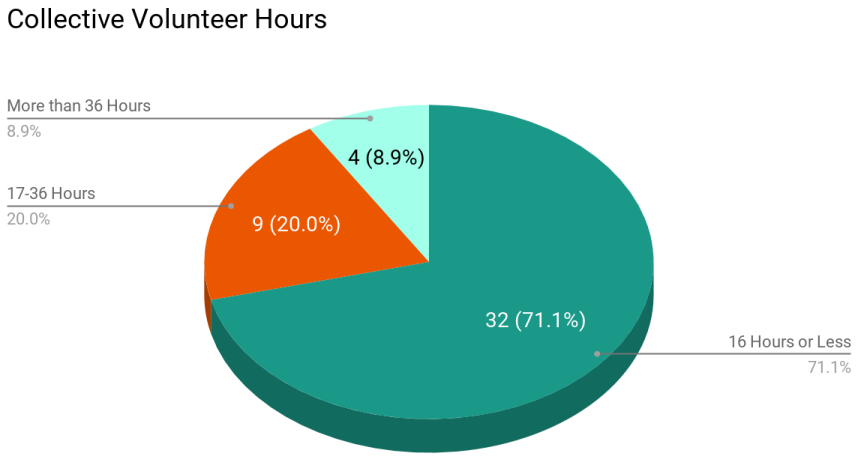
- Considering this was a free response question, the implementation team anticipated more variability.
- Consistently facilities had **one to five** staff members.
    - The majority of facilities had either One part-time or One full-time staff member.
- Most respondents had **four to six** volunteers or **no volunteers** at all.
    - Some facilities utilized many volunteers, with upwards of twenty volunteers.
- There is a sizeable portion of respondents with no dedicated staff members (**7.3%**), these facilities are **entirely volunteer operated.**
    - If another survey were to be conducted it would be interesting to collect information on Volunteer-only operated collections. Specifically, what kind of training and record keeping these facilities utilize.

Working Hours

To build on the information on staff and volunteer numbers, the implementation team asked for collective staff and volunteer hours towards archaeological curation. The graph below shows that the majority **70%** of respondents had 16 hours or less of collective staff hours. **22%** of respondents utilized 36 hours or more of collective staff hours. **8%** of respondents reported a middle range of



17-36 hours. Similarly, the majority **71.1%** of volunteers collectively worked 16 hours or less. A sizeable portion of volunteers collectively worked 17-36 hours, **20%**. **8.9%** of volunteers collectively worked 36 hours or more. Keep in mind that **24%** of facilities had no volunteers.



Presentation Notes

- The majority of collective staff hours and collective volunteer hours were 16 hours or less per week to archaeological collections. This equates to about one part time position.
    - With this in mind the implementation team aimed to devise a solution that maximizes research potential when there are limited working hours and limited staff/volunteers.

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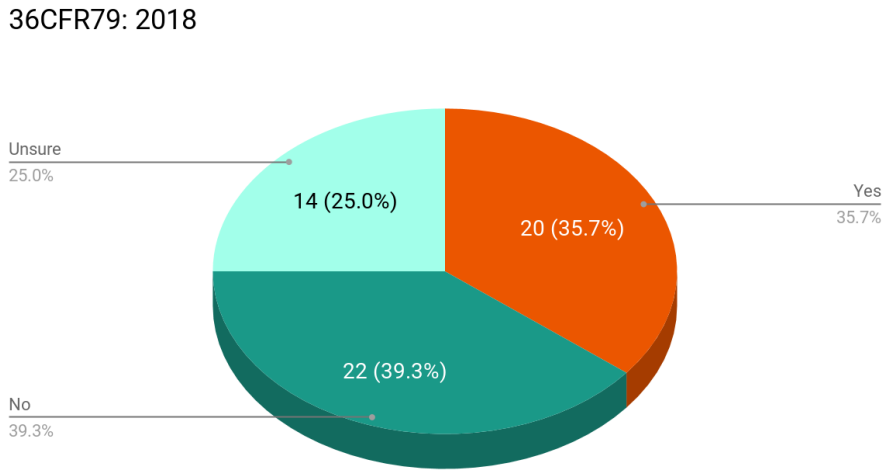
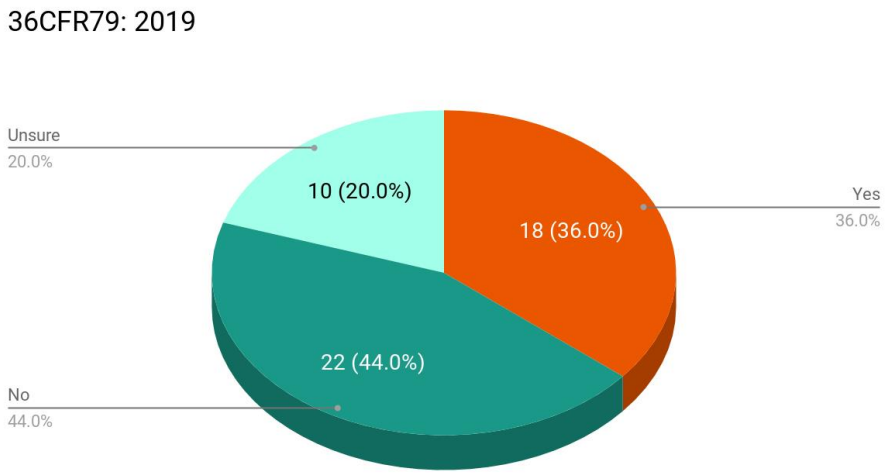
36 CFR 79

The implementation team asked respondents if their collection meets 36CFR79 standards (Guideline for federal agencies preservation practices NPS 36 CFR 79 Description).

Despite having more Archaeological and California collections in 2019 compared to 2018, data was practically identical in both years.



In 2019 data was about split between the people who did meet 36 CFR 79 **36%** and those who did not meet 36 CFR 79 **44%**. **20%** of respondents were unsure of their status.



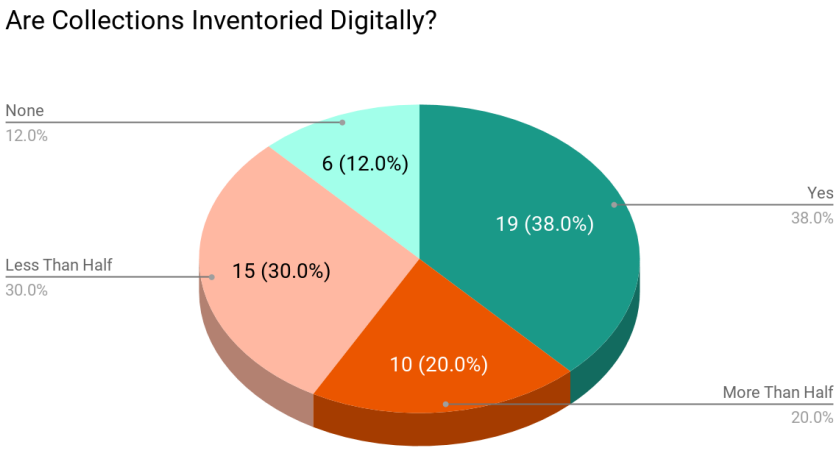
Presentation Notes

- If another survey were to be implemented we would like to expand on this question.
- For those who are unsure: would they like to confirm they meet 36 CFR 79 or learn how to?

- For those that don't use these standards: would they like to incorporate 36 CFR 79?

Online Accessibility

Survey respondents were asked if their facility inventoried their collections digitally. Most of the respondents had all of their collections inventoried digitally **38%** -- but only by a small margin. **30%** of respondents had less than half of their collection inventoried digitally. To a lesser degree **20%** of respondents had more than half of their collection inventoried digitally. Meanwhile, **12**% had none of their collection inventoried digitally.

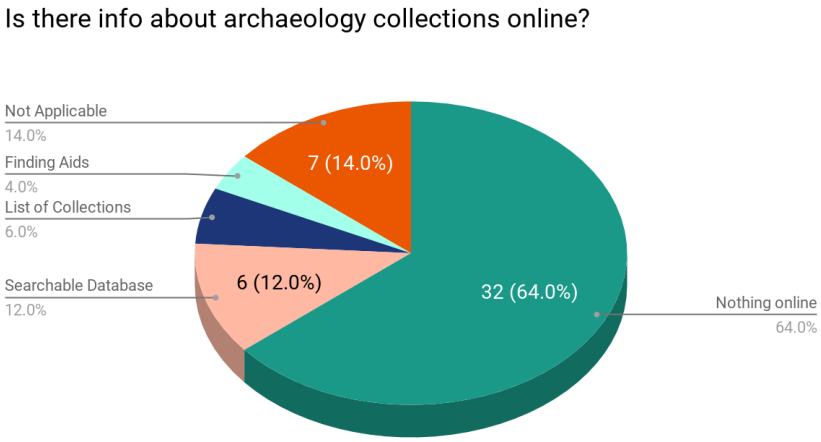


Presentation Notes

Moving forward: how can we transition facilities with no digital inventory or less than half (collectively **42%**) to integrate more online?

Similarly we asked respondents if they provided online access to information on their collections.

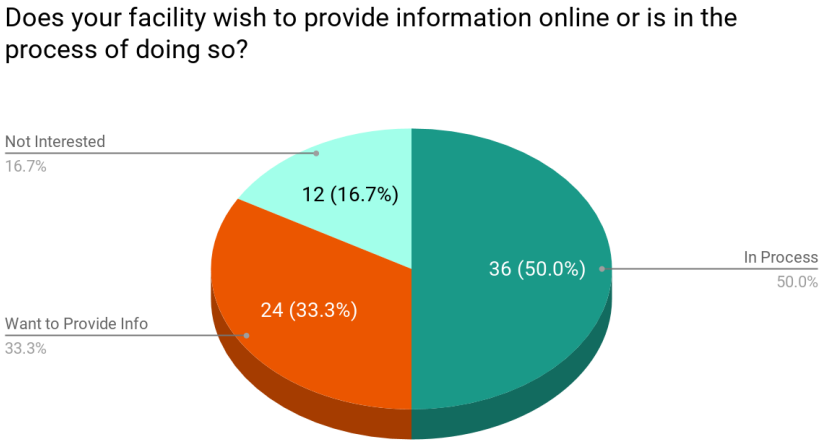
The vast majority **64%** of respondents had no information accessible online. **14%** of respondents said that online-accessible information was not applicable to their facility. **12%** of respondents had a searchable database, **6%** had a list of collections available, and **4%** provided finding aids.



Presentation Notes

- Results from 2019 were consistent with 2018 results for this question (2018: **77**% had no online accessibility).

Based on the results from 2018 the survey implementation team asked participants with no online access why that was the case.



Exactly half of respondents with no online access were already in the process of providing information online. **33.3%** of respondents wanted to provide information online, but had not initiated the process. For **16.7%** of respondents online integration was not a priority.

Comments from Survey Respondents

"State or counties need to work together to provide collections facilities to house collections, which are our collective cultural legacy. In addition, many state and county laws and regulations are the reason why these collections are generated in the first place - there is no follow-through and this creates the environment where collections are orphaned or worse."

"Public outreach. Targeted curation. Use of digital technologies for those materials that don't have specific provenience information."

"Incentives/funding for creating repositories, online collections, care and staff."

*"***Universities with repositories have an obligation to encourage analysis of old collections and bring those old collections up to current curation standards before allowing new excavations. Without proper curation, analysis and publication of old and/or orphaned collections, their status is the equivalent of having been looted from their original provenance."**

Presentation Notes

Most of our respondents suggested:

- Improved curation standards: such as online integration
- Others emphasized outreach with tribes, other facilities, and community members
- Along with increased research from collections

An additional component that is not shown here are financial constraints: many facilities have limited budgets and limited space as well.

Connecting Survey Results to Potential Solutions

- **Keeping in mind…**
  - Number of staff and volunteers.
  - Working hours dedicated towards archaeological curation.
  - The needs of both small collections and large collections.
  - Current curation standards and online databases.

Collection Curators need an efficient solution to address these factors.

Presentation Notes

Through the discussion of data points from the California Curation Survey the implementation team hopes to address the needs for:

- Improving research value of collections
- Making inventories easier, efficient, and accessible

Additionally the California Curation survey illuminates the need to balance the constraints of curation budgets, limited working hours, and training resources.

Thinking Towards Solutions: DPR 523A Primary Record Form

Primary Record Forms: Connecting Field Sites to Curation

- Primary Record Forms used to record all manner of cultural resources can be adapted to capture diverse information about archaeological collections within curation facilities.
- Primary Record Forms can standardize information about collections.
    - The Fowler Museum provided some examples below of how they can be used.

Presentation Notes

- Primary record forms are currently used to record existing cultural resources, but can be adapted for museums, repositories, CRM facilities, and storage facilities to connect existing collections to their former physical locations.
- If a collection is not associated with a Smithsonian trinomial or Primary Number, the Repository can complete the Primary Record From (see web link below to ICDB), then submit that form to the CHRIS, along with a Continuation Sheet that captures the collections details as known. The CHRIS will assign a Primary Number and record the location so as to inform future planning and environmental compliance. See Conclusion section below for how to complete the suggested information fields on the Continuation Sheet.
- Pilot program to begin using these forms across different facility types.
- Pilot Program will require additional training and work-time allocated to filling out forms.

DPR 523- A Primary Record Form Example

State of California ▯ The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
PRIMARY RECORD

Primary #
HRI #
Trinomial 4-LAN-52
NRHP Status Code

Other Review Code | Reviewer | Date | Listings

Page 1 **of** ___ ***Resource Name or #:** (Assigned by recorder) 4-LAN-52
P1. Other Identifier: Arroyo Sequit, Lisigsh, Fowler Museum at UCLA Accession #112

***P2. Location:** √ **Not for Publication** □ **Unrestricted**
***a. County** Los Angeles **and**
***b. USGS 7.5' Quad** _____ **Date** _____ **T** __; **R** ___; __ □ **of** __ □ **of Sec** __; _____**B.M.**
c. Address _____ City _____ Zip _____
d. UTM: Zone __, _____ mE/ _____ mN
e. Other Locational Data:

***P3a. Description:** A collection of prehistoric artifacts from excavations conducted in Spring 1954 by Clem Meighan and his Anthro 195 field class to salvage information from portions of the site that were lost to highway widening. The site is a late and historic village and shell mound with many burials. This collection included 525 entries of chipped and ground stone objects, worked and unworked shell and bone and historic period materials. Documentation includes field notes, correspondence, photographs, maps, site survey records, unpublished reports.

***P3b. Resource Attributes:** AP9. Burials; AP15. Habitation debris

***P4. Resources Present:** □ Building □ Structure √ Object √ Site □ District □ Element of District □ Other
P5b. Description of Photo: 1954 Excavations looking S
***P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source:** □ Historic □ Prehistoric √ Both
***P7. Owner and Address:**
California Department of Parks and Recreation
***P8. Recorded by:** Wendy Teeter, Curator of Archaeology, Fowler Museum at UCLA; Box 951549, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1549
***P9. Date Recorded:** 3/3/2019
***P10. Survey Type:** Field school excavations
***P11. Report Citation:** Meighan, Clement W. 1954 Archaeological Exploration of Carrillo Beach Park (Arroyo Sequit Shellmound) Meighan, Clement 1954 Archaeological Survey of Arroyo Sequit, Los Ageles County, CA.

***Attachments:** √NONE □Location Map □Continuation Sheet □Building, Structure, and Object Record
□Archaeological Record □District Record □Linear Feature Record □Milling Station Record □Rock Art Record
□Artifact Record □Photograph Record □ Other (List): _____

DPR 523A (9/2013) *Required information

Panel and Audience Discussion

- How will using the DPR 523A change interactions with Information Centers?
    - Will technological advancements from Information Centers make filling out such a form necessary?
        - Based on audience comments it was made clear that Information Centers had already developed a Resource Submittal Template for DPR523 Forms. While this tool is not widely used by museum curators, it might address issues of standardizing information (More information can be found here (https://sites.google.com/site/icdbhelp/resource-submittals).
    - What are the benefits and disadvantages to using prompts on the DPR 523A form?
    - Does using the DPR 523A form curation subvert its actual purpose for field work?
    - Can a free-response continuation sheet better serve the needs of a curation facility?
    - Is there a compromise?
- Will curation facilities feel comfortable filling out a DPR 523A form? What does it mean to share information on a document that is associated with the Federal Government?
- Will a DPR 523A form be too much additional work for facilities that have more than one trinomial system or no trinomial system?
- Wendy Teeter and Anmarie Medin will continue to work together to address questions and develop a compromise between the fields needed to understand where individual collections are curated, associated documentation, and summary information about their scope and content. Please provide feedback as you are trying out this Pilot program / idea.

Discussion led by Anmarie Medin of Archaeological Collections Consortium, "Best Practices for No Collection Projects and In-Field Analysis in The United States"

The goal of these guidelines is to ensure that no-collection and in-field identification and analysis methods—when agreed upon, documented, and adopted—are implemented with appropriate care and ethical considerations.

The Archaeological Collections Consortium (ACC) also considers these best practices to provide a framework that can be adjusted to specific archaeological projects and, perhaps, state policies and guidelines. All parties acknowledge the importance of consultation in deciding what materials are curated, how, and where.

For federal and many state projects, the collections must be curated in a repository that meets the standards in 36 CFR Part 79, and the repository must be identified prior to the start of fieldwork. The repository should be identified in the final project report, including accession numbers.

The efficacy of no-collection and/or in-field analysis needs to be considered at a programmatic level and should be addressed in agency/installation/university planning documents.

Many government agencies and some cultural resource management firms have a technical field manual for archaeological investigations. Such manuals should include information about no-collection surveys and/or in-field identification and analysis. To this end, the panelists discussed front-loading vs back-loading curation, specifically using technology such as photogrammetry, LiDaR, and other methods that could digitally capture artifacts and excavated materials in lieu of physical collection. Instead of doing curation and research in the lab on the "backend" of a project, a no collection excavation requires front-loading research technology and expertise and collecting all information in the field for future researchers to use. As the ACC notes in their proposal, considerable research is necessary to help resolve potential problems.

Forum Conclusions

Wendy Teeter, Chair of the SCA Curation Committee, and Fowler Museum Archaeology staff undertook the creation and distribution of a survey designed to assess cultural heritage curation needs within the state of California in 2018 and 2019. The survey collected data to reflect the locations, demographics, and needs of curation facilities statewide. The results of each survey were shared with attendees of the 2018 and 2019 SCA annual meetings along with a group panel discussion led by CRM, tribal, museum, and agency representatives. The ultimate goal of the multi-

year project is to create white papers to address the critical needs of California cultural heritage and their continued care.

From discussion with the group and survey responses, there were clear problems common to everyone involved. Primarily that development projects create new collections that need to be curated in facilities long term, however very few resources are allocated to this continued care. Many facilities have only one or two staff members and a few volunteers to maintain and care for California cultural heritage in perpetuity. Additionally, the vast majority of staff and volunteers dedicate a collective 16 hours or less per week to this care. This is not an adequate amount of time to address the needs of collections in a timely manner, such as digitization of collection inventories, which only 38% of respondents responded that they had completed. There are other issues such as not knowing which facilities curate which sites or collections, requiring detective work to locate them. The solution of making such information publicly available online has not been completed by the majority of respondents. Of the respondents, 64% have nothing available online, 14% said it was not applicable to them, and the remaining 22% have only limited information about their collections online. Meanwhile, 83.3% would like to have this work completed. Finally, many facilities don't meet 36 CFR 79 curation standards-- 64% of the respondents. Panel and discussion participants added at the meeting that budget constraints may account for these issues, as well as an ever increasing lack of space to house new collections. Several counties have no curation facilities that are able to take in new collections!

Discussion at the SCA panels generated proposed solutions. No collection field work will prevent unnecessary collection of archaeological materials, but require large amounts of pre-field preparation and lots of in-field documentation. For the existing collections, it was discussed that states and counties need to dedicate more resources to the care of our collective cultural heritage, particularly as new and ongoing development projects continue unabated. In order to understand where collections are, the Fowler Museum archaeology staff created a DPR 523 Museum page that can be adapted for the existing "Continuation Sheet" DPR 523L for submission to information centers to allow the location of existing collections. It describes what the site is, what is represented in the collection, and what associated archival material and records are curated in the facility (see attached blank form and filled out example).

Postscript:

An immediate result of the 2019 SCA panel discussion was the creation of an Archaeology Curated Collection "Continuation Sheet" for use in California OHP Information Centers, which will help integrate and track existing site collections and what associated documentation is available. This sheet is quick and simple to complete.

The heading is meant for use by information centers, so the facility does not need to complete the grey heading information.

"Resource Name(s)" references the site name(s) and the trinomial. See figure 2, an example created by Fowler archaeology. We curate a site named Brand Park or CA-LAN-169/H, both of which we added to the "Resource Name(s)" section. Fill in what you know.

"Resource Location Identifier" is in reference to any locational information that can be used by the information center. This includes a site address, GPS coordinates in UTM or otherwise, township/range/section, nearby landmarks, and so on. It is important to search through associated documents as best you can to complete this section. For the example below, it was necessary to search for a Brand Park near the San Fernando Mission to find the correct address.

"Collection Repository Location and Address" refers to the full name and address of your institution. We have provided the full address for the Fowler Museum at UCLA.

"Repository Accession Number(s)" is referring to any unique identifiers attached to the collection by your facility for tracking or record keeping purposes. These are unique to the collection per excavation and assigned when a collection is received, so one site may have multiple accessions. One accession may have multiple sites, depending on the circumstance. Brand Park (LAN-169/H) is curated at the Fowler under Accession 957.

"Collection Owner and Address" refers to the owner of the collection. This refers to whoever has control over the collection, who will need to be contacted specifically for research permission or permission for destructive analysis or repatriation. UCLA was deeded control to these materials excavated from Brand Park, so we have listed their address. If the owner is unknown, check the corresponding box. Federal and state agencies will retain ownership over collections from their lands.

"Interested/Affiliated Tribe(s)/Descendant Group(s)" refers to any groups whose ancestors may be the creators of the artifacts in the collection. For example, Brand Park is in the San Fernando Valley and immediately adjacent to the San Fernando Mission, so this collection would be affiliated to the Fernandeno Tataviam. This should be the best possible list of descendant groups, including both federally recognized and non-federally recognized tribes. If it is a historic site it may be a stakeholder organization or even a family named. Be as specific and exhaustive as possible. If this information is completely unknown, check the corresponding box.

"Collection Constituents" is referring to the type of materials in the collection. Are there lithics, shell, textiles, etc? If possible, attach the catalog to the form and check the box "Catalog attached." The example has listed the materials in the collection, and when submitting will attach our digital catalog. A copy of a field catalog would also suffice.

"Estimated Time Period for Assemblage" requires that you provide the site age to the best of your ability. It may be multiple time periods. If known, add the date range, or if this specifically is not available check one of the boxes. Explain what data was used to establish the date range (e.g., projectile point seriation, bead typologies, C14 dating, obsidian hydration, etc.). The materials recovered during this excavation were from the mission-era, so the estimated time range is historic.

"Artifact Collection Methods" refers to the way the collection came to be. Are these surface collected artifacts or was there a systematic excavation? In the Brand Park example, it was a systematic excavation.

To complete the "Date Excavated/Collection" portion, you should write when the project took place, and when the materials were excavated. Accession 957 excavated during a project that lasted from 2005-2007.

Where "Associated Documents" exist, check the boxes for any archival documentation you hold related to the accession.

"Report Title" should be completed if there is a report about the collection. Though there is certainly a report, the Fowler does not have it at this time. The Info Center may help with this.

In "Additional Comments" there should be any extra information about the collection that is not included in the form already. This includes additional documentation, any research that has been completed, if there are existing loans of the collection or if you know that part of the collection is located elsewhere, the state of the collection (is it housed properly or does it need assistance), and so on. The example in Figure 2 adds detail about the excavation.

"Deaccession/Discard/Transfer Date/Reason" need only be filled out if the collection was removed from the repository by deaccessioning, disposal, or transfer. You should describe what was done, when, and for what reason. This section is blank in the example since it is still curated by the Fowler.

The footer should include the name, date, and role at the repository of the person who completed the form. This can be a collections manager, assistant, volunteer, etc., but is important for future questions.

The information collected by this form will promote better record keeping about the location and status of cultural resources from California, which is vitally important to descendent tribes, repositories, the government agencies, university researchers, and the overall protection of California's cultural heritage.

State of California ▯ Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

Primary#
HRI #
Trinomial

CONTINUATION SHEET

Page ___ of ___

Resource Name(s): Brand Park (CA-LAN-169/H)

Resource Location Identifier: 15174 San Fernando Mission Rd, Mission Hills CA 91345

Collection Repository Location and Address: The Fowler Museum at UCLA, 621 Charles E. Young Dr. North, Los Angeles CA 90095

Repository Accession Number(s): Accession 957

Collection Owner and Address: or ☐ Owner Unknown The Fowler Museum at UCLA, 621 Charles E. Young Dr. North, Los Angeles CA 90095

Interested/Affiliated Tribe(s)/Descendant Group(s): or ☐ Unknown Fernandeno Tataviam

Collection Constituents: ☐ Catalog attached
Tejas (roof tiles), floor tile samples, faunal bones, steatite, shell beads, glass trade beads

Estimated Time Period for Assemblage: _____ BCE to _____ BCE
☐ Prehistoric ☐ Protohistoric ☐ 1542-1769 ☐ 1769-1848 ☐ 1848-1880 ☐ 1880-1914 ☐1914-1945 ☐ Post 1945 ✓ Historic ☐ Undetermined

Artifact collection methods: ✓ Systematic Excavation ☐ Surface Collected ☐ Other:

Date Excavated/Collected: Excavated 2005-2007

Associated Documents: ✓ Field Catalog ☐ Field Photos ✓ Field Notes ☐ Burial Records ☐ Artifact Analyses ✓ Publication/Report ☐ Maps

Report Title: or ✓Unknown

Additional Comments: Applied Earthworks Inc. excavated 21 boxes of artifacts and collected 1 box of documentation from Brand Park Archaeological Data Recovery Project in 2006 and 2007, resulting in the recovery of mission-era deposits.

Deaccession/Discard/Transfer Date/Reason: n/a

Form Prepared by: Sedonna Goeman-Shulsky Date: 7/26/2019

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