

Museum Accessioning and Registration of Collections Online Course

OKMuseums.org



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Module 26: Numbering Systems

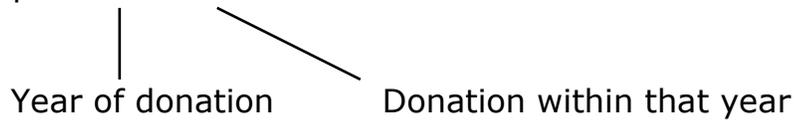
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Numbering Systems

- While each museum will find that it has its own method of numbering objects, it is profoundly important that each object in the collection have a unique number as a means of identification.
- If you already have a consistent numbering system in place, it is best to continue using the same system
- If you have not yet begun numbering objects in your collection, a three-number system is the optimal solution.

For example: 1998.065.003 — The object number within that specific donation



So, this is essentially a donation from 1998, the 65th donation that year, and the third object in that donation. If that donation had 25 objects, the number range would read 1998.065.001-.025 denoting 25 objects in that donation.

A few rules to bear in mind when the three-number system is to be used:
A lower case letter suffix is added to an accession number in only two situations:

- When you have a pair (such as a pair of gloves) or
- When you have an artifact that has pieces that *physically* fit together (such as a teapot and lid).

For example, the teapot and lid would be assigned the accession numbers 2004.003.001a (for the teapot) and 2004.003.001b (for the lid).

If the teapot had a matching sugar bowl, the sugar bowl would receive the accession number 2004.003.002 (different last number because the sugar bowl does not physically attach to the teapot) because it is the next item in that specific donation.

Should you have an artifact that has many *physically* attaching parts (more than 26) and you therefore go through the entire alphabet, you would then use aa, bb, cc, etc. or you would use an additional .1, .2, etc. use whichever method you want, but be consistent.

Should you receive an artifact that is a set containing pieces (such as a set of flatware) you would number each piece separately such as 2004.003.003, 2004.003.004, 2004.003.005, etc.

If you receive a artifact that has *many* pieces but they *do not* physically fit together (e.g. a large glass jar containing 200 marbles), you would need to decide whether you will assign one number for the glass jar and marbles or whether you want to spend the time giving the jar a number and then each and every marble a number. The important thing to remember is if there are plans to ever open the jar and exhibit marbles separately, then you would need to number them individually. If the jar will never be opened, then perhaps consider just one number.

1998.065.003

1998.065.003

Year of donation Donation number that year Specific object in that donation