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Subscriptions and orders for back issues should be sent to H. Duane Smith, 501 Widtsoe Bldg./Department of Zoology, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602. Requests for assignment of species and editorial matters should be addressed to Troy L. Best, Department of Biology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131.

GUIDELINES FOR USAGE OF COMPUTER-BASED COLLECTION DATA

Committee on Information Retrieval

Suzanne B. McLaren, Chairman

Section of Mammals, The Carnegie Museum of Natural History Annex
5800 Baum Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15206

The advance of technology in the computer field has made it possible for scientific researchers to obtain information about museum specimens much more easily and quickly than in the past. The Committee on Information Retrieval recognizes that we are entering a new and exciting era in collection use. Herein we would like to state some of the policies dealing with collection data that many collections have lived by for years but few have ever written down. Our purpose in putting together these guidelines is to provide both collection personnel and users with a course of action which will ensure the continued accuracy and validity of primary research. Advances in technology have not diminished the importance of these ideas.

1. Collecting data for research is the responsibility of each individual researcher. It is the responsibility of the curator/collection manager to facilitate an investigator's work but not to collect the primary data. Museums with scientific collections have an obligation to make available material and associated information for scientific research to qualified individuals whose use of said data/specimens is compatible with the goals of the collection. Policies which protect holotypes, rare specimens, and data being actively researched in-house are the prerogative of individual collections. Each request should be addressed individually on the basis of such policies.
2. Under no circumstances should collection personnel knowingly install specimens with erroneous data. Questionable data should be marked as such on specimen tags, catalogs, and on computer files. Personnel at each institution will provide accurate information to the best of their ability.
3. Investigators requesting data (and specimens) from a collection should provide collection personnel with as specific a request as possible and should only request information (and specimens) that specifically are needed.
4. It is the responsibility of the institution to maintain basic management data including: institution (acronym); catalog/serial number; genus; species; date collected; continent or country; state or province; county, district or major island group (ocean and sea, if marine mammal collected in open waters); sex; and type of preservation. Additional optional data fields may include: specific locality; collector; preparator; prep number; and availability of supplementary material.
5. It is the responsibility of the researcher to verify specimen identification and associated information before reporting on it in any form. Researchers who utilize specimens should inform collection personnel of name changes or other data that will improve the curation of the collection for future workers.
6. It is the responsibility of the investigator to inform collection personnel of the use that will be made of the data and to act in a responsible manner in publication. Each use of the collection data is to be made only with the express permission of the curator/collection manager. The sale or distribution of collection data beyond the original user is done only with the expressed permission of the curator/collection manager. Second-hand disseminators of data are expected to inform subsequent users of original sources. Original sources should always be acknowledged when data are used.
7. Reprints, or at least complete citations to articles, based upon specimen data obtained from a collection should be forwarded to the curator/collection manager of that collection. Use of the collection or of

data provided by collection personnel should be acknowledged in any publications based on those specimens or data.

8. Automated databases and the software that run them are covered under the Copyright Act of 1976, Title 17, U.S. Code. The Copyright Office of the Library of Congress encourages registration of copyrightable works by making it a prerequisite to suit. Over the past ten years, The Copyright Office has examined and upgraded its policy on registration of ever-changing databases. For information on current rulings and registration procedures, contact The Copyright Office, Information and Reference Division, Library of Congress, LM 455, Washington, D.C. 20540. Telephone 202-479-0700.

When dealing with computer-generated data, we would offer one caveat. Information is not more likely to be correct simply because a computer provided it. In fact, as collections rush to computerize, data banks are likely to be filled with information that is functional but requires proofreading and correction.