Preamble

Storage procedures largely depend on the institution and its location code system, availability of space, and database management system.

Where something is stored is always entered into the database, even if it is a temporary location such as on display.

1.0 Materials

Different materials require different storage needs. However, all materials used should be archive quality.

1) Archival quality cardboard boxes
2) Archival quality tissue
3) Archival quality foam (for support and shelving)
4) Box Labels
5) Archive quality pens

Note: Archive quality items can be bought through archival supply companies; the SFU MAE uses Carr McLean.

2.0 Storage Space

Plan where artifacts will be stored before preparing them. It is best to create a map that can be references for artifact storage locations.
2.1 Location Codes

Some museums and repositories will have location codes, which are shorthand labels on shelves that can be entered into the database. It allows for tracking for research and public access purposes. It is important to set up a system like this so artifact do not get lost; with thousands of artifacts, it can be easy to lose track of them.

It is essential that all changes of an artifact’s storage location are carefully tracked. Because collections are held in trust for the public and are made accessible for the public’s benefit, the public expects museums to maintain the highest professional standards - this includes accounting for our whole collection.

When these location codes change for a collection or items in a collection (for example, going on display in the gallery) make sure to make note of it in the database. When these artifacts go back into their proper storage areas, make sure to change the location code to the correct one again.

For example, in the museum we use a system on the shelves: each shelf unit is given a Roman numeral, and each individual shelf is given a number. For example, A-II-3 is the first bank of shelves, the second unit over and the third shelf from the top.

If you have different storage units such shelves, drawers, and cupboards, be sure to keep location codes consistent and organized; have a procedure explaining the system and be sure it is logical and has room for future expansions if necessary. Sometimes if the location code is different between storage units (i.e.: shelves have different location code system than drawers) it allows for quicker understanding and more adaptability to future expansion. We cannot stress how important it is to keep your storage system organized.

Items on loan must be stored, catalogued, and given a location code in the database. It is therefore important to update these codes when items both enter and leave the museum. This is only pertinent if your institution takes part in loan.

3.0 Storage Fittings

Artifacts that are stored on open shelves or are fragile must be fitted to a type of storage fitting in order to protect it from movement. This mostly applies to organic materials, due to their sensitive nature. For example, stone artifacts such as a fishing weight do not need a foam cradle, but a sensitive cedar bark hat will.

If something is going into open storage, make sure that it is supported properly with archival quality foam. This support should hold the artifact so that there is no tension, that it is fitted
snugly onto or into the foam. For example, a Coast Salish hat should be placed on a foam core fitted to the inside of the hat, so that no part of the artifact is strained while in resting position.

If the artifact does not need a support, make sure that it is in the proper area of the shelving unit, that it is properly numbered and tagged (see artifact numbering procedures), and that the final location is listed in the database.

4.0 Drawer Storage

Drawer storage is most often for textiles, clothing pieces, smaller flat artifacts, and paper artifacts. Artifacts that go in drawers must be laid out on a foam pad (archival quality) and it must fit into the height of the drawer so that it does not scratch the top as the drawer goes in. Textiles are covered with archival quality tissue paper to help preserve them.

Remember to document the location of the artifact in the database.

5.0 Boxed Storage

Boxed storage is a simple concept used to box up collections that have many objects and are not as reliant on an air-monitored environment (such as lithic collections).

1) Artifacts within the box are placed in separate plastic bags (size appropriate)
2) Bag label is filled out (make certain accession number matches that of the artifact) and placed in the bags; the bags are tucked in on themselves.
3) The label in the bag must face up, with the artifact underneath it.
4) A separate box label is filled out on the computer and printed, then placed in a plastic slip and taped to the side of the box.