DAACS Cataloging Manual: Objects

LAST UPDATED: AUGUST 2024
VERSION 1.0: 2003

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The DAACS Object Manual documents how objects are produced and linked to records in the DAACS PostgreSQL database. This manual is one of sixteen DAACS Cataloging Manuals. Each manual documents a specific module of the DAACS database, and they provide protocols for using each module. In addition to defining each data field (meta data), the manuals describe how data should be entered into data field, provide guidance on artifact identification, and give examples of how artifacts should be cataloged.

The DAACS database was developed in 2000 by Jillian Galle and Fraser Neiman, in collaboration with members of the DAACS Steering Committee. Jillian Galle, Fraser Neiman, and DAACS Staff, including Leslie Cooper, Lynsey Bates, Lindsay Bloch, Elizabeth Bollwerk, Jesse Sawyer, and Beatrix Arendt, led the development of cataloging protocols. In addition to DAACS staff and steering committee members, Monticello current and former Archaeology Department staff, Jennifer Aultman, Sara Bon-Harper, Derek Wheeler, Donald Gaylord, Karen Smith, and Nick Bon-Harper also contributed to the development of cataloging protocols. Jennifer Aultman and Katherine Grillo produced the initial versions of these DAACS manuals in 2003. They have been continuously revised by DAACS staff in the intervening years.

This manual was substantially revised for the introduction of the Bronze, Silver, and Gold cataloging tiers in 2022, and in preparation for the new website launch in 2024. These revisions were made by Galle and Bollwerk and by DAACS analysts Iris Puryear, Allison Mueller, and Catherine Garcia.

Convoy, a web design and graphic design company based in Charlottesville, Virginia, initially programmed the DAACS database in SQLServer (2001-2013). The University of Virginia's Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities (IATH) built and currently maintains the PostgreSQL version of the DAACS database (2014-present). Convoy also designed the original DAACS website (2004), and has since redesigned the website twice (2014, 2024).

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1. THE DAACS DATABASE

The DAACS database was designed by Galle and Neiman in 2001 with direct input from the DAACS Steering Committee and collaborating institutions. Today DAACS' large relational database is comprised of over 200 tables programmed in open-source PostgreSQL. It is linked to a Ruby-on-Rails web-based interface that allows DAACS Research Consortium members to access the database through a web browser with a login from anywhere with a working internet connection. For a detailed summary of the DAACS database and history of DAACS, please see Galle, Bollwerk, and Neiman 2019.

In 2018, a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities' Digital Humanities Division provided funds to develop a tiered cataloging interface that would allow DRC users to engage with the database on a variety of levels while retaining the data standards and integrity built into the original system. This new interface, with its Bronze, Silver, and Gold tiers, went live in March 2022. This project was a collaboration between DAACS, The University of Virginia's Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, and Convoy.

2. ABOUT THE OBJECT MODULE

The DAACS Object Module is primarily used to record artifacts or objects that serve as study collection examples and to capture mended and/or vesselized artifacts that would otherwise only be cataloged individually (i.e., at the "sherd" level). Objects can therefore be composed of one or many sherds or fragments. Since sherds and fragments are generally catalogued individually in their respective artifact tables, this can potentially create a "one-to-many" relationship in terms of Objects and their respective artifact records. In these cases, the ObjectID ties the records in other artifact tables to the Object record for a particular object.

This manual outlines protocols for cataloging artifacts into the DAACS Object Module. The following section provides detailed descriptions of individual data fields and describes how attribute data are measured and recorded for each field.

3. DAACS Object Field Definitions and Protocols

3.1 Main Object Table

3.1.1 Object ID

Auto Generated Column

The Object ID serves as a unique identifier for artifacts cataloged into the Object table, and functions to tie Objects to their associated artifact and/or image records. No action is required by the cataloger for this data field. A numerical Object ID is generated automatically when the record is saved.

3.1.2 Project Name

Controlled Vocabulary

Select the appropriate Project ID from the pull down list.

3.1.3 Object Description

Open Text

Record a concise description of the object, e.g., “Pearlware platter with Pinwheel transfer print pattern.” Additionally, any applicable references and/or other pertinent information about the object should be recorded in this field. For example, reference information regarding a maker’s mark or any other relevant information obtained from the documentary record or additional research.

3.1.4 Object Type

Controlled Vocabulary

Select the appropriate artifact table for the Object. These include Beads, Buckles, Buttons, Faunal, Ceramic Vessels, General Artifacts, Glass Vessels, Tobacco Pipes, and Utensils. This should correspond to the same artifact table in which the sherds or fragments that compose the object are recorded.

3.1.5 Object Material

Controlled Vocabulary

Choose the appropriate material type from which the Object is made. Note that the choices for this field are also the choices for Material Type in the respective artifact tables and are filtered based on the Object Type selected.

3.1.6 Object Ware

Controlled Vocabulary

For artifacts with an Object Type of “Ceramic,” choose the appropriate ceramic ware type from the drop-down list. For all other Object Types, record this field as “Not Applicable.”

3.1.7 Object Manufacturing Technique

Controlled Vocabulary

Choose the appropriate manufacturing technique for the object and, as with the Material field, the choices are filtered based on the Object Type designation.

3.1.8 Vessel Category

Controlled Vocabulary

For glass and ceramic artifacts, identify the object as either “Flat” or “Hollow.” If mended, this designation is made on the basis of the complete, mended object. For all other Object Types, enter this field as “Not Applicable.”

3.1.9 Object Form

Controlled Vocabulary

Record the appropriate Form for the object being cataloged. This designation should be the same as the Form recorded in the associated artifact record, or the equivalent of the Mended Form if the object is comprised of multiple artifacts.

3.1.10 Object Shape

Controlled Vocabulary

This field describes the shape of the object and applies only to artifacts with an Object Type of “Bead,” “Button,” or “Buckle.”* This designation should be the same as that entered in the “Shape” field for the associated artifact record. The options in the drop down list are filtered based on the selected Object Type. For all other Object Types, enter “Not Applicable.”

*Note: For Buckles, this field describes the shape of the buckle frame (e.g., “Square/Rectangular,” “D-Shaped,” etc.).

3.1.11 Object Completeness

Controlled Vocabulary

In most cases, for buttons, beads, buckles and utensils, this field is recorded as “Complete” or “Incomplete” with the appropriate table designations. In many cases, “All Other Artifacts” (aka General Artifacts) should also be catalogued this way. Follow cataloguing protocols for General Artifact completeness outlined in the General Artifacts Cataloguing Manual (see manual). For example: choose “head and partial shank” or the appropriate completeness for nails. Additional general artifacts with completeness recorded as something other than complete/incomplete include folding knives and straight pins.

Note that this field should refelct the overall completeness for the Object and may differ from the Completeness as recorded elsewhere for individual fragments or sherds that comprise the Object in cases where it is mended (especially true for ceramics).

3.1.12 Object Color

Controlled Vocabulary

When applicable, use this field to record the appropriate color for objects identified as glass vessels, glass buttons and paste jewels, as well as the exterior color of glass beads. Note that these colors are from the Basic Color Section of the DAACS Color System. For all other artifact types, enter "Not Applicable" for this field.

3.1.13 Country of Manufacture

Controlled Vocabulary

This information is recorded for all artifact types when the object's country of manufacture is known. In the case of ceramics, the country of manufacture can be inferred based on countries of origin associated with certain ware types. For most other artifacts, this information will be unidentifiable unless artifacts exhibit maker's marks or the country of manufacture has been obtained through other research. In most cases, this field will be recorded as "Indeterminate."

3.1.14 Institutional Object Number

Open Text

If another institution's number is associated with the object, such as the Monticello Study Collection or other Object Number, that number is recorded here; otherwise leave this field blank.

3.1.15 Curating Institution

Controlled Vocabulary

Choose the appropriate institution from the drop-down list.

Note: For objects from the Monticello collection, choose "Thomas Jefferson Foundation."

3.1.16 Object Location

Open Text

Enter the location where the object is housed within its respective collection or curating institution. More detailed location information, including the history of artifact loans between different institutions, is recorded under the Object Location tab.

Note: For Monticello Study Collection objects, record the appropriate study collection drawer location.

3.1.17 Notes

Open Text

Record any pertinent information regarding the Object that is not recorded elsewhere.

3.1.18 Conserved?

Controlled Vocabulary

Select Yes or No, based on whether the object has received any conservation. If it is not clear whether the object has received conservation treatment, enter “Uni” for this field.

3.1.19 Conservation Notes

Open Text

If Conservation is recorded as “Yes” in the above field, please include details regarding the conservation treatment.

3.2 Measurements

The measurements tab in the Objects Module allows catalogers to record detailed measurements for complete and partial objects that may not be captured in the associated artifact records. For example, in the Object Module, it is possible to enter measurements for physically glued artifacts that reflect the length, width, and height of the complete *mended* object, rather than the dimensions of individual fragments that are recorded in the respective artifact records.

Protocols for recording measurements in the Object Module are complex and may differ from established DAACS guidelines for cataloging and recording measurements for individual artifacts in other modules. This is particularly true for artifacts with multiple associated artifact records and/or mended objects (often these overlap). Please see below for a few important guidelines catalogers should follow when cataloging objects with multiple associated artifact records. If you have questions about recording measurements for a specific object, please reach out to DAACS staff for additional information.

Recording Measurements for Objects with Multiple Associated Artifact Records:

- For objects that consist of multiple, unconnected parts (for example, a ceramic plate comprised of three groups of mended sherds but those three groups don’t mend to each other), taking measurements is more complex. A general rule of thumb is to take measurements from the largest sherd or group of mended sherds that comprise the object. It is common for many objects to be comprised of one large group of mended sherds with one or two small, unconnected sherds whose form and decoration suggest they are also a part of that object. By measuring the largest group of mended sherds, you are capturing the general, albeit incomplete, size of the broken object.

- However, if one of the unconnected fragments is not the largest, but does have a complete, diagnostic measurement, take and enter that measurement into the correct field. For example, the largest group of mended sherds might be a painted central scene from a plate. However, one small unmended sherd belonging to that object goes from base to rim, which allows you to get a complete height measurement. Use the largest mended group for the length and width and then the smaller sherd for the height. When this is done (i.e. measurements split between different groups of artifacts within the same object), please make note of it in the Notes field and indicate what measurements the fields refer to.

3.2.1 Object Length

Numeric

Using calipers or a measuring tape, record the length of the object in millimeters. An Object Length measurement should be taken for every object, regardless of completeness. For most objects, the longest axis corresponds to the "Length" field.

Note: For objects with multiple associated artifact records, please see the above section for more detailed cataloging protocols.

Figure 1: Object Length Measurement

3.2.2 Length Complete Measurement?

Controlled Vocabulary

This field indicates whether the Object Length recorded represents a complete or incomplete measurement (i.e., a complete/finished dimension). Enter “Yes,” or “No,” as appropriate.

3.2.3 Object Width

Numeric

Using calipers or a measuring tape, record the width of the object in millimeters. An Object Width measurement should be taken for every object, regardless of completeness. For most objects, the shortest axis corresponds to the “Width” field.

Note: For objects with multiple associated artifact records, please see the above section for more detailed cataloging protocols.

Figure 2: Object Width Measurement

3.2.4 Width Complete Measurement?

Controlled Vocabulary

This field indicates whether the Object Width recorded represents a complete or incomplete measurement (i.e., a complete/finished dimension). Enter “Yes,” or “No,” as appropriate.

3.2.5 Object Height

Numeric

Using calipers or a measuring tape, record the height of the object in millimeters. For most objects, the “height” is defined as the height of the object from base to rim. While Object

Height can be recorded for objects regardless of completeness, there is no need to enter an incomplete height measurement in the case of extremely fragmentary objects for which there is little analytical utility in documenting this information (e.g., three small body sherds from a vessel). In these cases, Object Height should be entered as "N/A." Always record Object Height measurements when complete.

Note: For objects with multiple associated artifact records, please see the above section for more detailed cataloging protocols.

Figure 3: Object Height Measurement

3.2.6 Height Complete Measurement?

Controlled Vocabulary

This field indicates whether the Object Height recorded represents a complete or incomplete measurement (i.e., a complete/finished dimension). Enter "Yes," or "No," as appropriate.

3.2.7 Object Weight

Numeric

Record the total weight of the object in grams. This measurement represents the weight of the whole object and its constituent sherds or fragments. Include the weight of all associated fragments in the measurement, even if some pieces do not physically mend or are otherwise disconnected.

3.2.8 Object Capacity

Numeric

This field records the capacity or volume of an object as measured in milliliters. This measurement field generally only applies to objects classified as "vessels," which includes both ceramic and glass examples as well as General Artifact vessels made of other materials such as metal, wood, plastic, etc. Object Capacity should also be recorded for tobacco pipe bowls.

When applicable, measure the Object Capacity of the object according to the following protocols:

- *Only* record Object Capacity in the case of complete or near complete* objects for which an accurate capacity measurement can be confidently estimated.

- Object Capacity is measured in milliliters and is calculated using quartz sand as a proxy for the object's original contents. To measure, fill the vessel or pipe bowl with sand, level off the top, and then pour the sand into a graduated cylinder to measure the volume.

*It is sometimes possible to measure the capacity of an incomplete vessel in cases where the object is largely complete *and* when the Base to Rim Height and Rim Diameter can be accurately calculated. If only a small fragment of the vessel rim is missing, for example, it may still be possible to record Object Capacity by temporarily patching this area for the purpose of taking the measurement.

Note: If there is documentary evidence indicating the expected volume of a particular vessel form, but the object itself is too fragmentary to take a physical capacity measurement, do *not* enter information into the Object Capacity field. Record any volume or capacity information gleaned from the documentary record in the Object Description field on the Main tab.

3.2.9 Object Rim Diameter

Numeric

This field applies to all Ceramic vessels and Glass tableware (**excludes glass bottles and containers**), as well as General Artifact vessels such as metal pots with rims. For other Object Types, leave this field blank. If applicable, measure Object Rim Diameter by following the guidelines outlined below:

- Rim diameter is only taken for sherds with rim lengths of *greater than 20mm and in cases when this measurement can be confidently estimated*.

- The radius template on the cataloging mat is used for this measurement –the curvature of the rim is matched to the curves on the mat to the nearest arc shown on

the mat. When dealing with thicker sherds, the general rule is to measure along the exterior of the rim (rather than trying to determine the interior diameter of the vessel). Diameter measurements on the mats are in millimeters.

- In order to measure the rim diameter for a flat, scalloped-edge vessel using the radius template, there must be three scalloped points. If less than three points are present but an interior edge of the marley is present, use the radius template or Plog-o-Meter (whichever is easier) and add twice the marley width to complete the total diameter measure. Use the radius template when you have three or more points.

3.2.10 Object Base Diameter

Numeric

This field applies to all Ceramic and Glass vessels (***including* bottles and containers**), as well as General Artifact vessels such as metal pots with bases. For other Object Types, leave this field blank. When applicable, measure Object Base Diameter by following the protocols outlined below:

- Base diameter is taken when base lengths are *greater than 20mm and in cases where this measurement can be confidently estimated*.

- The base diameter template sheet is used for this measurement –the curvature of the base is matched to the curves on the template to the nearest arc that can confidently be matched. It is often easiest to turn the sherd over and place the clear template on top of the sherd. When dealing with thicker sherds, the general rule is to measure along the exterior of the base. Diameter measurements on the template are in millimeters.

3.2.11 Object Rim to Base Height

Numeric

When you have a complete object for which you can obtain a complete measurement of vertical height from the base to the rim, please record this information in the Rim to Base Height field. This measurement generally only applies to objects identified as “vessels” (this includes ceramic and glass examples as well as General Artifact vessels of metal, plastic, etc.), but also encompasses tobacco pipes. If not applicable, leave this field blank.

3.2.12 Exhibit Length

Numeric

This field, in conjunction with Exhibit Width and Exhibit Height, provides a place to record measurements that indicate the amount of space needed to accommodate an object within an exhibit case. For Exhibit Length, measure and record the length of the artifact or group of artifacts that comprise the object in millimeters. For complete objects that do *not* include multiple unmended or unconnected pieces, this measurement will be identical to that

recorded for Object Length. However, for objects comprised of multiple groups of mended and/or unmended artifacts, catalogers will need to consider the most logical arrangement of the artifacts within the exhibit space. If, for example, you have three groups of mended ceramic sherds that belong to the same plate but which are *not* all mended to each other, you would arrange those three groups of mended sherds so that they relate to each other in the best possible manner; then, measure the length of the arrangement to determine the appropriate Exhibit Length.

Figure 4: Exhibit Length Measurement

3.2.13 Exhibit Width

Numeric

This field, in conjunction with Exhibit Length and Exhibit Height, provides a place to record measurements that indicate the amount of space needed to accommodate an object within an exhibit case. For Exhibit Width, measure and record the width of the artifact or group of artifacts that comprise the object in millimeters. For complete objects that do *not* include multiple unmended or unconnected pieces, this measurement will be identical to that recorded for Object Width. However, for objects comprised of multiple groups of mended and/or unmended artifacts, catalogers will need to consider the most logical arrangement of the artifacts within the exhibit space. If, for example, you have three groups of mended ceramic sherds that belong to the same plate but which are *not* all mended to each other, you would arrange those three groups of mended sherds so that they relate to each other in the best possible manner; then, measure the width of the arrangement to determine the appropriate Exhibit Width.

Figure 5: Exhibit Width Measurement

3.2.14 Exhibit Height

Numeric

This field, in conjunction with Exhibit Length and Exhibit Width, provides a place to record measurements that indicate the amount of space needed to accommodate an object within an exhibit case. For Exhibit Height, measure and record the height of the artifact or group of artifacts that comprise the object in millimeters. For complete objects that do *not* include multiple unmended or unconnected pieces, this measurement will be identical to that recorded for Object Height. However, for objects comprised of multiple groups of mended and/or unmended artifacts, catalogers will need to consider the most logical arrangement of the artifacts within the exhibit space. If, for example, you have three groups of mended ceramic sherds that belong to the same plate but which are *not* all mended to each other, you would arrange those three groups of mended sherds so that they relate to each other in the best possible manner; then, measure the height of the arrangement to determine the appropriate Exhibit Width.

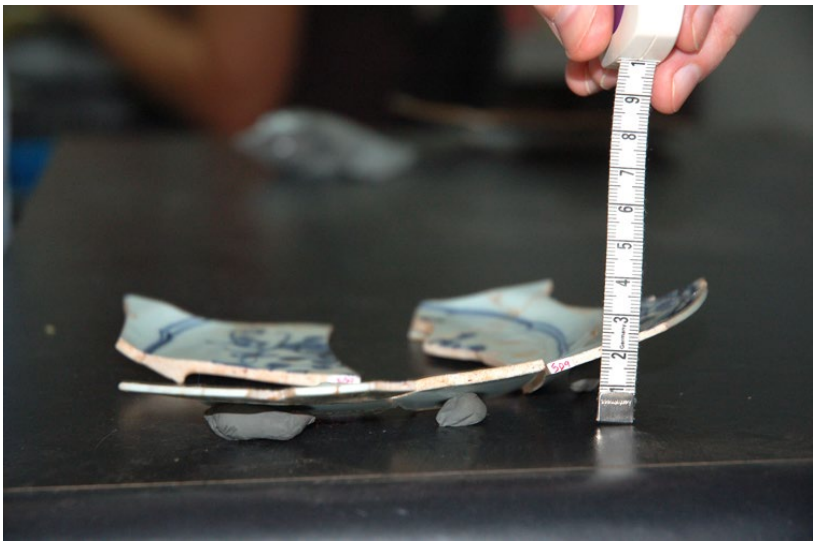

Figure 6: Exhibit Height Measurement

3.3 Decoration

3.3.1 Object Decoration Technique

Controlled Vocabulary

When applicable, decoration is recorded for all object types. Choose the appropriate decoration for the object from the drop-down list. If there are multiple decorative techniques represented on the object, select "Multiple Dec. Techniques."

3.3.2 Object Decoration Color

Controlled Vocabulary

Enter the appropriate color of the decoration on the object. For objects decorated with more than one color, enter "Polychrome." If you have a ceramic vessel, a toy marble, a doll's head or any other artifact with more than one color of decoration on it, use "polychrome" to describe the color. For many objects, such as etched glass and other objects that may be decorated but have no color applied, this is recorded as "Not Applicable."

3.3.3 Object Decoration Notes

Open Text

Use this field to provide any additional information about the object's decoration. For instance, it is often used to describe objects that exhibit multiple decorative techniques or with polychrome decoration. This field can also be used for citing relevant sources about specific decorative patterns and motifs.

3.4 Dating the Object

3.4.1 Object Date

Open Text

If a date can be determined for the object, please enter the date in this field.

3.4.2 Excavator Phase

Open Text

Enter the Excavator Phase for the context or contexts with which the object is associated. Note that Excavator Phases are the temporal phases assigned by the site's principal investigator and these may not be the same as the DAACS Phase (see below).

3.4.3 DAACS Phase

Open Text

When applicable, enter the appropriate DAACS Phase for the context or contexts with which the object is associated. DAACS Phases are assigned by DAACS staff and represent a sort of "ethnostratigraphic group" – that is, a grouping of deposits by virtue of similarity in their ceramic assemblages, where similarity is reckoned on the basis of chronologically sensitive artifact types. Note that Phases assigned by DAACS have a P prefix that precedes the phase number (e.g., P01 equals Phase 1).

3.5 Associated Artifacts

This section displays the individual Artifact ID(s) of the artifact or artifacts that comprise a given object. These IDs are also hyperlinked, allowing users to navigate from the Associated Artifacts tab directly to the artifact record or records associated with the object.

Artifacts can *only* be linked to their associated objects through the artifact record interface. To link associated artifacts with an object, you must first create the object record for the object in question. Then, navigate to the Object tab in the respective artifact record and click "Add Object" to select your object. The list of Object IDs that appear is filtered by associated Project ID. Once these changes are saved, the associated artifact ID links will automatically appear in the Associated Artifacts tab in the Object record.

3.6 Object Location

This tab contains a set of fields that allows the curator to track the location of an object while also providing a history of the loans related to that object. Each set of fields contains data for a single loan. These fields belong to a related table that retains the history of all loans related to that object. If not applicable, leave these fields blank.

3.6.1 Loaned To

Open Text

Enter to whom the object was loaned. This may be an institution or an individual.

3.6.2 Institution Contact

Open Text

Enter the name of the person responsible for accepting the loan at the receiving institution.

3.6.3 Exhibit Name

Open Text

Enter the name of the exhibit in which the artifact will appear, if applicable.

3.6.4 Loan Length

Open Text

Enter the length of loan.

3.6.5 Date Loaned

Open Text

Enter the date the object was loaned.

3.6.6 Date Returned

Open Text

Enter the date the object was returned, if applicable.

3.6.7 Artifact Handler

Open Text

Enter the name of the Monticello employee responsible for arranging the object and loan.

3.6.8 Notes

Open Text

Include any additional notes regarding the loan.

3.7 Images

This tab allows users to link images of the object and its associated artifacts to the object record. Note that a DAACS image record must be created and linked to the appropriate

Project ID in order to associate an image with its respective object. See the **DAACS Image Manual** for detailed protocols for capturing and uploading images of artifacts and objects to the database.