COLLECTIONS
Advisor

Martin Collection, Indiana Historical Society, cropped from original

Issue 2, November 2011

Basic Cataloguing Tips

By Diane Barts, Registrar
Minnetrista, www.minnetrista.net

Cataloguing is the method museums use to give each object its own special identity. Each object at Minnetrista has its own museum catalogue number; for example, 88.31.616. This catalogue number has been assigned to a teddy bear. The 88 is the year the bear came to Minnetrista; the year could also be recorded as 1988. The 31 indicates that the items the donors gave were recorded as the 31st donation that year. The 616 means that this bear was the 616 th object in the donation to get a new number. Once the bear was assigned a number, it was carefully stitched onto the toy. The label should be placed in a spot that is accessible for museum staff, but not easily seen by visitors. In this case, the label is on the bottom of the bear's paw.

The doll pictured in this article has received its new number, 2009.42.23, and now the collections specialist is recording everything about it. Its eyes, hair, hands, legs and clothing are carefully described – nothing is left out. Descriptions should be as complete as possible so that this doll can be differentiated from other dolls in the collection. Measurements are next, especially the doll's height and width.

After writing a description which gives as much information as possible about the doll, the collections specialist documents any problems: tears in its dress, scratches, chips, fading and any other notes about its condition. This record will also allow museum staff to ascertain whether the doll's condition has changed over time. This is important so that the object can undergo conservation, if

Accession number

Measuring

necessary. Changes in the doll can also indicate problems that may be developing in the collections storage area.

Then, the doll's picture is taken; the ruler is placed next to the doll to show size and scale. Finally, the doll is placed in storage. The collections specialist uses acid-free paper and an acid-free box to house the doll. A label is placed on the outside of the box for easy identification of its contents.

Preparing for storage

For more information about cataloguing and condition reporting, contact Diane Barts at dbarts@minnetrista.net .

Resources:

- *Basic Condition Reporting* by Priscilla O'Reilly and Allyn Lord and *Museum Registration Methods* by Dorothy Dudley and *Registration Methods for the Small Museum* by Daniel Reibel, both available from the Indiana Historical Society Lending Resource Center, www. indianahistory.org/our-services/local-history-services/ lending-resources
- Connecting to Collections Online community www. connectingtocollections.org

On-site collections care training opportunity:
During a free one-day visit, participating sites receive in-depth, specialized training on collections care and fundraising for collections. The training is designed to fit the specific needs of each site based on a pre-visit survey. Only 100 site visit appointments are available and will be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. To receive information about on-site collections care training, email themmerlein@indianahistory.org.

Reprinted courtesy of Minnetrista

*This publication from the Indiana Historical Society
is a service of the Hoosier Heritage Alliance*

*This project is made possible by a grant from the
U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services*