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Issue 81 | July 2018

## B-72 OR B-67...WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

By Jessica Jenkins, curator, Minnetrista

Maybe you are new to museums. Maybe you have never been the person in charge of numbering objects. Or maybe you have been doing it for years, but just need to ask, "B-72 or B-67 ... what's the difference?"

We have all been there. A new object comes into the collection, an accession number has been assigned, and now it is time to physically attach the number to the object. But what materials do we use? Some rubber and plastic objects require an acid free paper tag and textiles are better off having a numbered piece of cotton tape sewn into a discreet location. Then there are the times you need to apply a barrier layer and then write the number on the object with an acid-free micron pen. As you reach for the bottle of clear liquid, which one do you grab? The one labeled B-72? Or the one marked B-67?

Each of these clear liquids are distinct. While they are often used in similar ways, there are some definite differences between the two. Knowing when to use which one can be a bit of a mystery, and perhaps even a bit intimidating; but rest assured that doesn't need to be the case.



### ONLINE RESOURCES

[Collections Management Resources](#)  
(American Association for State and Local History)

[Use of Acryloid B-72 Lacquer For Labeling Museum Objects](#)  
(National Park Service, Conserve O Gram)

[CIDOC Fact Sheet No. 2: Labelling and Marking Objects](#)  
(International Council of Museums)

[Resources for Webinar "Marking and Labeling Collections" by Nora Lockshin](#)  
(Connecting to Collections Care)

[Labelling and Marking Museum Objects Booklet](#)  
(Collections Trust)

### UPCOMING TRAINING AND PROGRAMS

[AASLH Annual Meeting](#)  
Sept. 26-29 -  
American Association for State and Local History.



[Canning jar made by Ball Brothers Glass Manufacturing Company, 1910-1912.](#) (Courtesy of The Minnetrista Heritage Collection, Muncie, Indiana)

## Things to Know about B-72

- B-72 is a resin commonly used by museums for numbering collection objects.
- B-72 is often suggested as a base coat when applying accession numbers to hard, non-porous collection objects. This creates a barrier between artifacts and accession numbers and prevents inked numbers from bleeding into the object itself. While B-72 is often suggested as a base coat, it can also be used as a more stable top coat with careful application.
- B-72 can bubble if not applied carefully, making it hard to write on.
- If you buy B-72 premixed it will arrive to you in a small bottle. It has already been dissolved in acetone, and is ready to use as is.
- Pre-mixed B-72 will become gummy and stringy in its storage bottle over time.
- B-72 is extremely stable. While it is reversible, its toughness means it will stay put for a very long time. This does make it harder to remove later on if need be.
- Because B-72 is so stable, it will not yellow or become discolored over the years.
- The acetone in pre-mixed B-72 can permanently damage a wide variety of plastics and paints by dissolving them. Because it can be difficult to determine which plastics and paints are safe to label and which are not, it is best to avoid any that are questionable.
- B-72 is great as a base coat on items like:
  - The quills of feathers
  - High-fired pottery
  - Shells

- Unfinished wood (BEWARE - IT WILL STAIN!)
- Glass



[Doughnut cutter, around 1920.](#) (Courtesy of The Minnetrista Heritage Collection, Muncie, Indiana)

## Things to Know about B-67

- B-67 is also a resin commonly used by museums for numbering collection objects.
- B-67 is often suggested as a top coat when applying accession numbers to collection objects. In its pre-mixed form it should brush over top without disturbing the number applied to the base coat.
- If you buy B-67 premixed it will arrive to you in a small bottle as well. It has already been dissolved in naptha or mineral spirits, and is ready to use.
- B-67 is reversible, but not quite as stable as B-72. That means it will be easier to remove if need be, but will also not hold up to time and wear as well.
- B-67 will yellow over time.
- B-67 is less likely than B-72 to damage painted surfaces.
- The naptha or mineral spirits in pre-mixed B-67 will dissolve oils and waxes present in some surface finishes. If these dissolve, the object will be permanently damaged. If you cannot determine that the surface or finish is oil and wax free, do not apply B-67.
- B-67 can be used as a base coat on items like:
  - Oily wood (if a number MUST be applied directly rather than tagging)
  - Painted wood
  - Hard plastics (It is BEST to use no barrier coat if possible. If it is a must, use B-67)
  - Metal

## General Tips and Tricks

- Even though the pre-mixed packaging of B-72 and B-67 looks like clear nail polish, remember they are not! That said, do not use clear nail polish in their place. It might be tempting because it is cheap and easy to get, but it will damage your collection.
- B-72 and B-67 both put off fumes, even in small doses. ALWAYS use in well-ventilated areas and wear gloves when using in liquid form.
- If you need to remove a number for any reason, use the same solvent to remove the top coat as what the resin was dissolved in. For example, if you used B-72 dissolved in acetone, use acetone to gently remove the resin. The resin dries and hardens as the solvent evaporates. So, if you introduce the same solvent to the resin again it will begin to soften, becoming lathery, then gummy, and will finally come off.
- Sometimes, inked numbers smear when the top coat is applied. This can be caused by ink that is not completely dry. Other times it is caused by the type of pen used, or the thickness of the base coat or top coat. Remember, it takes practice to get it right. Practice on non-archival items to get the hang of how heavy handed to be, how long to let things dry (it can take 24 hours or more), and to find the best combination of resins and inks for different material types.

- When you practice numbering do it in the area where you will be marking your collection objects. It may not seem like it, but the tiniest difference in temperature and humidity can affect how resins and inks dry and harden.

In a nutshell, B-72 and B-67 are very similar in use, but there are some things to consider when deciding which to use. B-72 is more stable than B-67. It will hold up better over time and will not yellow in the same way, but if you need to remove the number it is going to take a lot more work. B-67 on the other hand tends to be less fussy and is easier to remove, but it will turn yellow and will not hold up to handling and aging nearly as well. Rather than always assume you should use the same combination on every artifact, it is best to consider every object individually.

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