

# Archaeological Curation (or the Crisis in the Closet): A Practicum in Management and Care of Research Collections (156-467)

Instructor: John Richards

Prerequisites: Jr standing; 156-103 or with consent of instructor  
Offered Spring 2017, Wednesday, 9:30AM-12:10PM in SAB 240



**“Entire collections of artifacts across the country are simply vanishing or being hidden away so deeply that they are forgotten about completely, not to mention being stored in substandard conditions that do not preserve them for posterity.”**

**2007 The Curation Crisis in Archaeology**

The course will provide an introduction to the basics of archaeological curation in non-museum settings such as university and private-sector artifact repositories. Currently, the lack of adequate storage facilities for the constantly expanding volume of archaeological materials generated by academic and CRM-based projects is the single largest problem facing the discipline today. As a result, most museums and state repositories no longer accept collections. Many are reviewing existing inventories with an eye toward de-accessioning or discarding portions of their collections. In addition, some Federal agencies have begun to implement a “no collection” policy to limit the amount of material that must be curated.

This course will give students tools they will need to deal with the present crisis and develop strategies to cope with conflicting demands of research and preservation now and in the future. Students will receive training in database development and use of PastPerfect™ software, a widely-used collections management platform. Course topics will include conservation and preservation, pest management, storage, collection accessibility, accountability, curation policies, federal regulations, and ethical concerns. Through a combination of classroom work and hands-on experience, students will have the opportunity to work with archaeological collections of artifacts and botanical remains as well as associated paper and digital documents including maps, notes, and photographs. In addition, the course will cover issues relating to the care and conservation of human remains.