



2018

# Covering the Costs of Curation: A Comparative Analysis in the Southeastern United States

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## Recommended Citation

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*Covering the Costs of Curation:*

*A Comparative Analysis in the Southeastern United States*

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the  
Department of Anthropology and Sociology

By

Amanda Sexton

Under the mentorship of Dr. Matthew Compton

Abstract

In 2017, a survey was used to assess the curation crisis and see how curators have adapted their repositories to combat the issue. The results have been analyzed compared to other surveys sent out in the past twenty years to monitor changes and trends in repositories. This is an effort to explore and understand the challenges archaeological repositories face, how they manage the obstacles that accompany archaeological curation, and how this has changed over the years. Hopefully, the study of the ongoing curation crisis and those who have to oversee it will encourage conversation and collaboration between those who wish to find solutions for this dilemma.

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April 2018

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University Honors Program

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## **Acknowledgements**

The Honors Department gave me the opportunity to do this project, and they provided funding which helped me attend the 2018 Society for Historical Archaeology conference, where I was able to meet with other collaborators on this project. The Georgia Southern Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the Student Government Association also provided funding that allowed me to attend the conference. The Curation and Collections Committee of the Society for Historical Archaeology is graciously allowing me to work with them on this project. My mentor Dr. Compton's advice and guidance have been a valuable resource for completing this project. I am especially grateful to the repositories listed in Appendix A that were willing to participate in this project.

## **Introduction**

The curation crisis is a topic that many archaeology researchers have sought to understand because it is a burden that nearly every archaeological repository has had to contend with. The curation crisis is the struggle that archaeologists face in caring for and preserving archaeological collections. Since 1975, some archaeological repositories have tried to alleviate the pressures of the curation crisis by charging a fee for accepting new collections into their repositories (Childs and Kagan 2008). However, this process requires that many things be taken into consideration, which means that archaeologists do not always get it right. Many archaeologists still struggle with finding the right balance between the needs of their repository and the resources they have. Archaeologists have to consider environmental conditions and controls, security, curation personnel, space, and the amount of resources available to them. Since 1997, authors like Terry Childs have

tried to bring some clarity to the curation crisis in archaeology by sending out surveys to repositories all over the United States and asking them about the fee structures they use in their repositories. This would allow the researchers to investigate the curation crisis using the changes in fee structures. Sending out several studies allows researchers to track changes and trends in the curation crisis by examining the differences over time. This is the most recent survey done since the article published in 2008 (Childs and Kagan 2008). This study was conducted by the Curation and Collections sub-committee of the Society for Historical Archaeology. Although the project encompasses the entire United States, the data and information presented in this report represent only the southeastern region of the United States.

Archaeologists study the past by examining artifacts, documents, and photos associated with culturally relevant sites. Because of this, the curation crisis poses a serious threat to the field. Archaeologists excavate sites to retrieve materials left behind by past cultures. These materials can tell us things about how past peoples used to live. There are many steps that go into archaeology, with curation technically falling at the end of the project after all other steps of the project are completed; but really, curation should be involved from the very beginning of the project (Sullivan and Childs 2003). Field archaeologists are in charge of finding and excavating sites while archaeological curators are tasked with maintaining archaeological collections in perpetuity. Field archaeologists and archaeological curators work very closely together to ensure that archaeological collections receive the best possible care. Before archaeologists begin excavations, they have to know where the artifacts they retrieve will be curated (Sullivan and Childs 2003). That means that they need to find a repository that will be willing and able to hold the

collections that are produced when the project is finished. Archaeologists also keep curation in mind throughout the entire process so that they can ensure that the archaeological collections are processed and packaged according to the repository's curation requirements. This helps curators with fulfilling their responsibilities when the collections pass into their care. Curators are responsible for the storage and care of artifacts for the long-term. For archaeological collections, long-term means for as long as possible. The collections that a repository holds should remain in the repository for as long as the repository can keep the collections in a stable condition.

We curate collections because they are a finite resource that provide us the ability to examine how past peoples lived. When we excavate a site, it is destroyed. Archaeology is described as a destructive science, which means that the process of excavating archaeological materials causes some data to be lost. Many important details about a site can never be recreated for further research, so field archaeologists have to keep careful records during excavation, and these documents must stay with the artifacts that they relate to. Because the site is destroyed during excavation, archaeologists have an ethical responsibility to preserve what they have recovered (Sullivan and Childs 2003). In 1996, the Society for American Archaeology adopted the Principles of Archaeological Ethics (Society for American Archaeology 1996). At the top of the list of the Principles of Archaeological Ethics is a principle stating that because archaeological sites and materials are irreplaceable, archaeologists have a responsibility to work for the long-term preservation of archaeological collections. However, ethical responsibility is not the only reason for curating archaeological collections; research potential is another important reason (Marquardt et al. 1982). Archaeology may develop new technologies and new

perspectives that will make going back and looking at the collections again worthwhile. All of us are affected by the cultures that we live in and when we examine an archaeological collection, we see it based on what we have been taught to see. Theories that we learn, research that we have read, and current archaeological concepts all affect how archaeologists interpret what they find at a site. Another archaeologist may have some information that causes them to interpret the site differently. It is like a lens that we look through to examine the materials left behind by the past. New technologies and new perspectives may give us the ability to learn something new from a collection that has already been examined by someone else. That is why it is so important for an appropriate repository to be identified before the archaeologist produces a collection so that the archaeological collections can be cared for long-term.

The curation crisis is the state in which repositories are unable to provide adequate care to archaeological collections. The concern is that the inadequate care of collections will cause deterioration that will make collections inaccessible for research purposes (Sullivan and Childs 2003). The curation crisis really began to affect repositories in the late 1970s due to a combination of new developments in archaeology. One of these developments was the historic preservation movement (Sullivan and Childs 2003). As archaeology was professionalized, there was a growing push for preservation of historic resources, especially sites. Unfortunately, the connection between preserving sites and the conservation of collections and documents was not made. So, sites were excavated with little thought of how the collections produced by excavation would be preserved. Another factor was the ethic of conservation that stated that archaeological sites were irreplaceable remnants of the past (Sullivan and Childs 2003). This new

principle encouraged archaeologists to gather everything that they possibly could from sites during excavations. It resulted in larger collections being generated, as well as putting more emphasis on the careful management and preservation of the collections produced. A third factor that brought attention to the curation crisis was the concerns raised about archaeology involving Native Americans (Sullivan and Childs 2003). The relationship between Native Americans and archaeologists is somewhat strained because the excavation of Native American artifacts can at times conflict with their religious beliefs. The Native American Graves Repatriation Act required that archaeologists return any Native American artifacts they had to the tribes that they belonged to; this was a difficult task given that the cataloguing systems utilized by repositories was somewhat lacking. It forced repositories to go through their collections and some repositories realized that their policies were not meeting the needs of the collections. These factors together accelerated what had come to be known as the curation crisis.

The curation crisis makes many repositories unable or unsuitable to house collections. Archaeologists became concerned about the visible deterioration of collections, inaccessibility of collections due to inadequate inventory, and improper or nonexistent security protocols in repositories (Sullivan and Childs 2003). To monitor the condition of this crisis, authors Childs and Kinsey sent out surveys to repositories in the United States to ask firsthand whether repositories were still being affected (Childs and Kinsey 2003). A similar project was conducted in 2008 by Childs and Kagan (Childs and Kagan 2008). They used the data they collected along with the data from 1997/98 and 2002 to compare the fee structures of repositories in order to examine the curation crisis. This project is an update of these studies to see whether the policies they had were

enough to provide for the repositories, or if they've had to update them more. The curation crisis is a phenomenon that has been documented by many authors (Childs and Kinsey 2003; Majewski 2010; Sullivan and Childs 2003; Marquardt et al. 1982). Teresita Majewski says that it all comes down to money and time (Majewski 2010). However, it may be more accurate to say that it comes down to money. Time is a resource that, like boxes and labels, is acquired by money. Money is needed to procure the materials necessary for storage of the artifacts. It is needed to pay the people who will be taking the time to curate the artifacts. It is needed to provide a proper storage facility and to provide it with the right environmental conditions (humidity, temperature, etc). Money goes into every aspect of curation and many repositories are battling a shortage of funds. Because curation is the last thing that happens in a project, it frequently receives the least amount of funding. Repositories oftentimes have to make hard decisions about the allocation of the money they have. They do the best they can with the resources they are given, but it can sometimes result in inadequate care for the collections they house. Every aspect of curation is affected by the lack of money. Perhaps most importantly, space and curation personnel are limited to what the repository can afford to sustain (Sullivan and Childs 2003). It has reached a point where field archaeologists have to think carefully about what materials they collect in the field, because the repository may not have enough space for everything (Bawaya 2007). This problem is one that increases in intensity with each collection that is produced and it still receives little attention. The situation of the curation crisis has improved over time, but the problem still persists (Childs and Kinsey 2003; Childs and Kagan 2008). It is important that archaeologists keep participating in the ongoing discussion of this problem. Although some archaeological collections are not

cared for properly, it is not due to a lack of desire to care for them. Archaeologists want to care for the collections, they just don't always have the ability to.

### **Background**

The lack of funding is caused by several factors. One is that curation receives very little attention when compared to field archaeology. Excavation is the flashy part of archaeology that people want to hear about (Bawaya 2007). Few people care to hear about curation, because it does not seem as exciting as excavating a site. Many people do not think about the fact that all of the analysis that leads to new discoveries happens when the artifacts are taken back to a lab and examined. Media outlets only show the archaeologists out in the field, digging up artifacts. They do not show what happens to the artifacts afterwards, because curation is not easy to show on camera. Similarly, many graduate programs are focused primarily on field research, not collections (Sullivan and Childs 2003; Childs 2006). They push students to complete an excavation so that they can gain the skills needed in the field. Few graduate programs place emphasis on collections care.

In addition, there was an increase in federally and state-mandated archaeology projects and no real increase in the amount of money provided for curation. New laws like the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 led to huge numbers of collections being produced, with still no materials or trained professionals to care for them. Between the years of 1975 and 1990, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers spent \$165 million on archaeological field work (Childs and Sullivan 2004). When the amount of money that goes into archaeological projects increases with no increase in the amount spent on curation, repositories end up with more in their collections than they can afford to curate.

There is also the general problem that author Teresita Majewski refers to as the “black-box situation” (Majewski 2010). The Black Box Situation is one where archaeologists are asked before a project begins to estimate how much time and money will be needed for the project to be successfully completed. At this point in the project, it is impossible to accurately determine how much archaeological material will be produced and agency archaeologists are forced to give what is essentially their best guess. They must attempt to give a number that seems reasonable to all parties, including the ones who will be funding the archaeology project (Majewski 2010). The fixed budget that results may not cover the actual costs of the project. Some aspects will end up taking more money than the archaeologists were prepared for, while few aspects ever actually take less. Curation is the last step of the archaeological project. That means that curation only gets what is left when the project is completed. Since it is usually a fixed budget, there is nothing that curators can do except try to allocate what is left in the best way that they can.

The goal of the survey sent out in 1997 was to understand the use of curation fees better. In 2002, another goal was added to the first one. That was to gather data that could indicate trends occurring in the repositories that used fee structures (Childs and Kinsey 2003). The authors hoped to accomplish this second goal by contacting the same repositories that responded to the first survey. They used several sources to identify which repositories they should contact and then they called or emailed those repositories to gather their responses (Childs and Kinsey 2003). They noted that many repositories charged both a one-time fee and a processing fee for collections. The fees varied from \$1500 to \$68 per box with most repositories charging per standard box sized one cubic

foot (Childs and Kinsey 2003). Repositories also varied greatly in how they handled associated records and documentation. Some included them in the artifacts fee, while others charged a separate fee for documentation (Childs and Kinsey 2003). Based upon the variation between the repositories reported in both data sets, the authors concluded that there was a need for more guidance for archaeologists on budgeting for curation (Childs and Kinsey 2003).

The survey sent out in 2008 had similar goals in mind. They hoped that by gathering more data and comparing the data sets, they could answer several questions regarding the now common use of curation fees. The authors wanted to know how these fees are calculated, which repositories charge a fee for curation, and how the fees were being used (Childs and Kagan 2008). They used the list of repositories reported in the earlier project along with word of mouth to identify who should be included in the study. They found that repositories in the United States varied considerably in the unit of assessment used to determine the size of the collection, the type of services that should be provided for by the fee and the amount of the fee itself (Childs and Kagan 2008). Almost all repositories still used a one-time fee for collections. They also noted that in the southeast, the price range for the curation fee was \$125-300; the southeast tended to have a lower fee for curation than elsewhere in the United States (Childs and Kagan 2008). Overall, prices for curation were rising. The tendency towards including associated documentation in the artifacts fee has steadily decreased over time. In general, the authors note that archaeologists are trying harder to anticipate the real costs of curating collections when they develop their fee structures (Childs and Kagan 2008).

In 2008, an article was published that provides discussion on the various surveys that have been sent to repositories since 1997. Here, the authors specify that the purpose of the three surveys that had been sent out was to investigate the impact of the fees implemented in repositories on the curation crisis (Childs, Kinsey, and Kagan 2010). Later surveys were also used to identify trends in the fee structures across the country (Childs, Kinsey, and Kagan, 2010). The authors outline the activities involved in the curation of an archaeological collection. These include cleaning, packaging, accessioning, cataloging, storage, inspections, inventory, conservation, exhibition, etc. (Childs, Kinsey, and Kagan 2010). With all of these factors contributing to curation, it is reasonable that archaeological repositories charge a fee for curation. The authors also specify that to fully understand collections care and fee structures, it is important to remember that collections consist of two parts. One is the artifacts and ecofacts, and the other is the associated documentation, including pictures, field notes, and site maps (Childs, Kinsey and Kagan 2010). Several repositories include documentation in the artifacts fee, while others had a separate fee for documents. However, in 2008, a new kind of fee was introduced. This was the digital media fee (Childs, Kinsey, and Kagan 2010). The authors identified two important trends in the three surveys that were sent out. The first was that fees for curating outside collections will continue to rise to provide for the needs of archaeological collections (Childs, Kinsey, and Kagan 2010). Over time, the number of repositories that charge a fee for curation has increased, as has the price charged for curation. In addition, the studies show that repositories are working to find other ways of being sustainable without increasing the curation fee (Childs, Kinsey, and Kagan 2010). Interest-bearing accounts, stricter accessioning policies, and identifying

services that can be charged as a separate fee are all methods that archaeologists have used to avoid raising the curation fee.

Back in 1997 when the authors of “Costs of Curating Archaeological Collections” started collecting data for the project, many institutions did not charge anything to accept a collection into their repository. In 2002 when they contacted the repositories again to see the change, many of those repositories had started charging a fee to accept new archaeological collections. In addition, many of those that had already been charging a fee had increased their fee since the last time that they had been contacted. This general trend seemed to indicate that while repositories had started trying to develop policies to support future curation needs, most did not feel that what they had done so far was enough. This parallels the general attitude towards the curation crisis. While archaeologists are generally optimistic about the steps that have been taken for curation, they feel that it is necessary to do more. That being said, it is getting better, but there is still room for improvement (Bawaya 2007).

### **Methods**

At the onset of this project, there were several anticipated outcomes for the conclusion of the project, primarily based on the book *Curating Archaeological Collections: An Archaeologist's Toolkit* (Sullivan and Childs 2003). The most fundamental expectation was that the repositories would tend to have increased their fees since the last time they were contacted regarding their fee structure. Since that was the general trend in the 2003 article and the 2008 article, it was determined that it was likely that most of the repositories would have had to increase their prices more as time went on and more expenses were added. Another potential expectation was that repositories

within the same state would have similar fee structures. This was based on my expectation that repositories would model their own fee structures off of nearby repositories; also repositories within the same state would have a lot of the same factors (such as environmental conditions, state laws, quantity of sites, number of repositories, and market forces) contributing to their fee structures, which would result in a similar outcome.

**Survey Method:**

For this study, it was decided that a survey sent by email was the most appropriate way to collect data, because this was probably the easiest way for the repositories to receive and answer the survey. It also allowed the survey responders more freedom to explain their choices if they felt it was necessary. The survey included questions about the fee structure of the repository and their collections management policies (See Appendix B). The survey was designed to assess how much repositories have had to change in the years since the initial survey was reported (Childs and Kinsey 2003; Childs and Kagan 2008). The changes that repositories have had to make reflects how much repositories have had to adapt to the “curation crisis.” Most of the questions specifically regarded the fees in the institution, as this was the most direct way to determine how repositories deal with the “curation crisis.” However, there were also questions regarding the amount of people working in the institution and the size of the repository, as these factors influence the amount of funding a repository needs to be able to function. Lastly, the repositories were asked if they planned to increase their fees in the future. This was asked to determine whether the repositories felt that they had reached a place where the

funds that they were receiving would be enough to cover the expenses of running the repository in the future.

**Institutions Contacted:**

The repositories to be contacted were identified using the list of repositories contacted in the studies published in 2003 and 2008 (Childs and Kinsey 2003; Childs and Kagan 2008). The survey also included a question asking whether there were any other repositories in their state so that the list of repositories could be updated to include any that did not exist at the time of the publication of the 2003 study, or to remove any that were no longer in operation. This survey was sent to the person who was identified as the one who would oversee the managerial aspects of the repository. This was done by visiting the website of the repository and looking through their directory to find the most suitable person, preferably the person listed as the curator or collections manager. The goal was to find the person who was directly responsible for designing the repository's fee structure. This method was problematic, given that some websites may not have been up-to-date, and therefore would not necessarily have the information needed, but it was determined to be the best method available. To get around this problem, calls were often made to the administrative office of the repository in question to find out whether the information provided on the website was accurate. The surveys were sent out in September of 2017 (See Appendix A). Few repositories responded initially, so additional emails and phone calls were made. In some cases, other members of the Curation and Collections sub-committee of the Society for Historical Archaeology reached out to those repositories who still did not respond at that point. The goal was to have at least two repositories in every state respond. This was not always possible. There were two

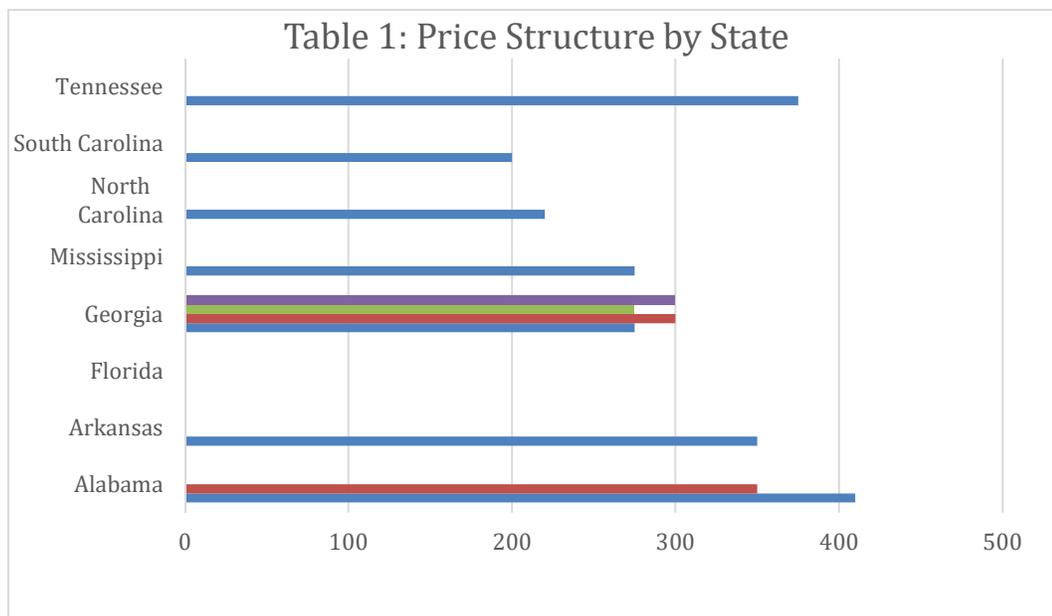
spreadsheets in use to record data; one for research data relating specifically to the southeast maintained by the author, and one for all of the data collected by the sub-committee as a whole. The latter was accessible by everyone in the sub-committee.

While the 2003 article was based on surveys sent to repositories in the entire United States, it was decided that for this project, the area should be limited to the southeastern United States due to time and labor constraints. This area includes: Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi. Initially, there was only one researcher involved in this project, so the project was intended to only cover this area. However, during the planning phase of the project, it was discovered that another project was being conducted which covered many of the same questions, but would include the entire United States. We decided to collaborate on the project to avoid redundancy. The data collected in this project will be used in the broader study including the all of the United States.

## **Results**

### **Repository fees:**

Of the nineteen repositories that were contacted, fifteen responded. Alabama and Georgia both have multiple institutions that are willing to accept outside collections. All other states had one response, but not all of the states had an active repository. Louisiana did not have a repository report that they had an active repository accepting outside collections. Twelve repositories reported that they did accept outside collections. Only one repository that accepted outside collections reported having no fee involved with accepting collections; that was the Bureau of Archaeological Research in the Division of



Historical Resources in Florida. On average, repositories charged \$302 for accessioning collections. In most cases, this fee includes digital media; eight repositories did include this in the fee and four did not. The highest price recorded was a \$410 one-time fee at the University of Alabama; \$60 more than the other repository in Alabama. The lowest price asked was \$200 at the South Carolina Institute of Anthropology and Archaeology, the only available repository in the state of South Carolina. Of the four repositories in Georgia, two of them charged \$275 and two of them charged \$300. Only one repository out of the twelve reported that they had a Memorandum of Understanding with another agency. This was the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

### **Types of fees:**

Most repositories reported that their fee was a one-time fee. All eleven of the repositories that charged a fee for curation offered a one-time fee. However, two of the repositories had other options. The R. M. Bogan Archaeological Repository at Georgia

Southern University offers a one-time fee as well as a fee for short-term curation. The Antonio J. Waring, Jr. Archaeological Laboratory at the University of West Georgia charges both a one-time fee and a processing fee. Seven of the repositories reported having a half-box fee. However, over-sized box fees had more mixed results. The two most common responses were “case-by-case basis” and “calculated by cubic feet.” Six repositories gave these answers in response to being asked about their over-sized box fees. Four repositories reported that they had no over-sized box fee. Nine of the repositories reported that they did not have a fee for digital media.

#### **Plans for the future:**

There was a tendency towards saying that the repositories did not plan to increase their prices in the future. Of the twelve respondents, eight reported that they had no plans of raising their fee. Of the four that did plan to increase their fees, two had an exact number in mind for the increase. One was raising its fee by \$100 and has already put the new fee into effect; the other was only raising it by \$25 and did not have a date in mind for when the fee would increase. The other two repositories who had plans to increase their fees had no new fee in mind. Nine repositories reported that they did have formal curation standards that their repository used for accepting collections. Two reported that they did not, and one did not respond to the question.

It is worth noting that there were some repositories that said that while they had once accepted collections for long-term preservation, they no longer had the necessary resources to support the accessioning of new collections. Some moved their collections to a new facility and closed up completely, while others simply stopped accepting new collections so that they could focus their resources on the collections that they already

had. It is possible that they may reopen in the future, once they have reached a more stable condition; this was the case that was reported in repositories outside of the southeast, so it is an option for those repositories that have found themselves unable to continue with collections care (Lyons and Vokes 2010).

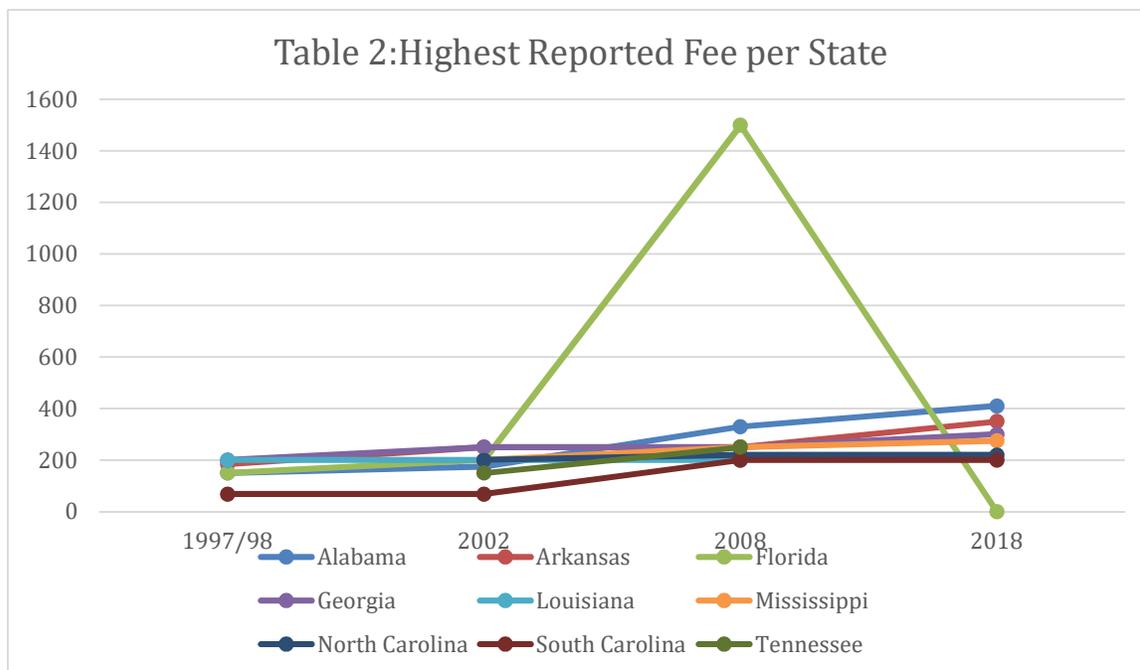
### **Discard Policies:**

It was also noted that the attitudes regarding discarding materials were nearly evenly split. Six reported that they did discard certain materials, and five said they did not. One did not respond to the question. Based on their reactions to the question regarding discard policies, some repositories seemed to be completely against discarding materials, while others seemed to have no problem with it, provided that it was done in a cautious and reasoned manner. The responses towards discarding materials were the most varied responses out of any of the questions that were asked.

## **Discussion**

### **Repository fees:**

There has been a general tendency for prices to increase over time, as illustrated by Table 1. The only case in which the price charged within the state fell drastically was in Florida after 2008. In 2008, the highest fee structure in Florida was \$1500 (Childs and Kagan 2008). In 2018, the only repository that responded to the survey reported that they had no charge associated with accepting new collections. Other than this one case, the reported fee by state has increased steadily with each new survey conducted. In 1997, the price range recorded for the southeastern United States was \$68-200 (Childs and Kinsey 2003). In 2018, it was \$200-400. Both the highest and the lowest price structures have



increased, but the gap between the lowest and highest curation fee has not changed very much; if anything, it has increase, but only slightly.

It is also interesting to note that while Alabama is currently the state with the highest fee for curation, this has not always been the case. In 1997, Alabama's repository reportedly charged \$150 for curation while several other states charged \$200. In 2008, Florida charged \$1500 for curation, while Alabama only charged \$330. The state with the highest fee structure changes with every new survey. The state with the lowest fee structure has remained the same. South Carolina has always reported having only one repository, and its price has continued to rise like in nearly every other state; however, it has also consistently been the state with the lowest price charged for curation.

**Discarding Materials:**

Discarding materials is a topic that has a high degree of controversy because of the way that we think about preserving archaeological materials. On one hand, we are exposing highly fragile and valuable materials, the quantity of which is finite and dwindling over time, to elements which begin to degrade them as soon as they are removed from their context. Obviously, we have an ethical responsibility to preserve what we can, because it is our study of them that puts artifacts in danger. On the other hand, it is difficult to justify keeping several boxes of materials with little research value when space within the repository is limited. This situation may explain why reactions towards the question regarding discarding materials were so highly varied. Discarding materials is a reaction to the curation crisis, just like implementing fee structures; however, it is still something that makes archaeologists uncomfortable and many archaeologists will not accept discarding policies into their fee structures unless they can see no other way to keep their facilities going. In the future, it is likely that more repositories will have some policy regarding discarding materials as space in repositories continues to fill up.

**Future Plans:**

There was a tendency towards saying that the repositories did not plan to increase their prices in the future. This is surprising given that the tendency has been to increase prices over time. One would expect that the price would not only continue to go up, but that the curators in charge of their repositories would expect it to continue to rise as well. There is a general trend to increase prices over time, as was expected based on earlier studies of this topic. It is not necessarily surprising that as time goes on, more money is

required to sustain the growing number of collections that a facility holds. What is surprising is the number of repositories that reported that they had no plans to increase their fees. Of the twelve repositories that responded to the survey, eight reported that they had no plans of changing their fee structure. This could potentially indicate that repositories are approaching the amount that they feel is needed to care for their collections. However, it could also mean that the curators simply had not considered the possibility; they could just be more focused on other aspects of managing their repositories and have little time for making alterations to the fee structure.

The reports of repositories closing or moving their collections to new facilities are especially disconcerting. While it is true that businesses have a tendency to close and reopen, the collections that are housed in these facilities need a more stable condition than that to ensure that they can remain in use for as long as possible. Any time that collections have to be relocated, they become subject to damage. They are exposed to unstable environmental conditions, friction and shifting caused by movement, and general human error. The collections could get damaged or misplaced. It is far better for them if they are given a permanent home where they can live in perpetuity so that they can maintain a stable condition. The general conclusion that can be come to when looking at this data is that the condition of the curation crisis is improving, but there is still definite room for further development.

### **Future**

This report is the first presentation of the study that is being conducted with the Society for Historical Archaeology. There is still some data collection to do to reach the goal of the Collections and Curation Committee of the Society for Historical

Archaeology. In addition to assessing the progress of curators in dealing with the curation crisis, it is the hope of the Committee that this data will be of use to archaeologists and curators who wish to know about the location and status of other repositories. A significant roadblock to overcome with this study was that it was unknown whether there were other existing repositories that were not being contacted because the researchers had no knowledge of them; similarly, it was not known whether the repositories reported in the 2003 article published still remained operational. Since this article was the one that the original contact list was based on, this was problematic. Several emails and phone calls went unanswered and it is impossible to tell whether that was because the person being contacted was just busy, or because they were no longer there. It seems unlikely that this is the only time that this issue has surfaced. For repositories to collaborate with other facilities, or for researchers to make use of the collections stored there, or for archaeologists to store new collections there, the existence of the repository must be known. Hopefully, when the project is finished, it can be used to help inform archaeologists and curators of the repositories that are currently in operation and what their conditions currently are.

To accomplish this goal, the Committee will continue to seek out repositories that have not yet been contacted until either we have reached a point where we are satisfied that most repositories have been accounted for, or we feel that it is unlikely that we will get any further responses. It was my hope that we would be able to gather at least two responses for every state, which has not been accomplished yet. However, after seven months of attempting to make contact with other repositories, it seems unlikely that any others will respond. There is some speculation within the Committee on whether this data

should be used to create a Geographic Information Systems map that would be posted on the Society for Historical Archaeology's webpage. The GIS map would include which repositories are accepting new collections as well as their fee structure and a link to the website of the repository. This project would undoubtedly be incredibly beneficial for the archaeological community. It would allow archaeologists to find the most suitable storage facility for their collections and it would give curators the ability to stay up-to-date with what projects or research other repositories in their region are conducting. However, this project would be a substantial undertaking and the Committee is unsure whether they will be able to keep it updated. For this GIS map to work, there would need to be several members of the committee dedicated to keeping in contact with all the repositories in their area, as well as keeping up with any new repositories or any that close down. Currently, the Committee has doubts as to whether they have the resources to undertake such an expansive long-term project. The issue will likely be readdressed when the Committee meets again in the future.

### **Conclusion**

Curation is an aspect of archaeology that does not receive very much attention. However, despite the fact that it is often overlooked, curation is a crucial part of the archaeological process. We have an ethical responsibility to preserve the artifacts that we excavate because they give us an extraordinary opportunity to study and learn about the past. It is important that archaeologists can go to a repository and reexamine artifacts to keep curated artifacts involved with current archaeology. Our interpretations of the archaeological artifacts that we study are affected by the perceptions that we have. These perceptions are built by the culture that we grow up in and the experiences that we have.

Other archaeologists may look at the same archaeological materials and come to an entirely different conclusion on what these artifacts tell us. It is like a lens that we look through that affects what we see and other people have lenses that show them something different. All these interpretations are useful and it is important to know what other interpretations there could be. Our goal is to study the past in as scientific a manner as possible and for that to happen, others must be able to review the entire process and see how the conclusion was made. There is also the possibility of technological advances or new discoveries which may be important in the study. For years, archaeologists did not keep charcoal when it was excavated at a site. Now, it is one of the most reliable methods we have for dating a site. The artifacts are also important for making a connection between sites or people. We should never forget that people interact with each other and affect each other in many different ways. People learn things from each other, trade with each other, make war, and make alliances. Understanding how people interacted is an important part of understanding people. If artifacts are not preserved and protected, none of these research opportunities are possible.

Artifacts are a central part of studying humans of the past, so the protection and preservation of these artifacts is of paramount importance. Over time, the field of curation has fallen into crisis due to a lack of communication and a lack of resources. The field does not receive the attention and the support that it needs to maintain the heavy burden of sustaining archaeological collections. In addition, collections themselves are not utilized properly to enhance their value. Collections are generated and then left in repositories for years with no further research done with them. They sit on the shelf for so long that they are forgotten. This is a waste of archaeological research potential. Based on

other studies of the curation crisis, many archaeologists believe that the condition of our repositories has improved. Curators are doing all that they can to obtain the necessary resources to give archaeological collections the care that they deserve. In the meantime, they are doing the best that they can to maximize the effectiveness of the resources that they do have, while at the same time trying to plan ahead for all of the needs of the collections. Curators and archaeologists are also trying to bring curation into the limelight by utilizing collections in research and presenting reports of what new curation steps they are taking at conferences. Things are certainly looking bright for the future, so long as we continue to work at solving this problem and keep moving forward.

**Recommendations:**

The most obvious solution to the curation crisis is for repositories to receive more funding. Curation is expensive and it is necessary for repositories that house archaeological materials to have enough money to adequately provide for all the collections that they house to ensure that the collections do not deteriorate over time. For this reason, most repositories now charge a fee for accessioning new collections. It is difficult to come to a price that will be sufficient to cover the collections' need, but will not exceed what others are willing to pay to have their collections accepted. Over time, repositories tend to find it necessary to increase their prices as the costs that they accumulate continue to rise. However, other strategies may be employed to help alleviate the costs. One such strategy is to use an interest-bearing trust account to make sure that the money that the repository does have can start compounding over time (Childs and Kinsey 2003). This can help in the event that a repository faces a large expense that must

be paid all at once, such as installing new shelving units to expand the repository's storage space.

Other solutions involve educating others on the necessity of curation and all that it involves. Public outreach can be challenging, but the benefits of having more people aware of a solution are incalculable. Collections-based research is one method of getting people more familiar with collections and curation. Graduate study programs tend to have a heavy bias towards getting students into excavation-based research, which produces even more collections that must be stored and managed somewhere. Students should be encouraged to consider utilizing already existing collections for their research. This would limit the number of new collections that are produced, educate them on curation, and also fulfill one of the reasons that collections are kept in the first place, which is to utilize their research potential. Too often, researchers decide to excavate a new site when there is already a collection that could probably serve the same function. Presenting collections research at conferences is also a good way to promote curation. Both presenting research that utilized a preexisting collection, and also presenting on the any new techniques or policies that are being employed in a repository can help facilitate discussion on collections. Then repositories can stay informed of the projects that other facilities are working on, and more opportunities for discussion and collaboration arise.

Repositories can also utilize volunteer workers to do some of the work with maintaining collections. The volunteers could do things that don't require too much knowledge of collections, like packaging and labeling. There would need to be some prerequisites for volunteering so that they have a general idea of what is going on, and they would need to be supervised by somebody who was trained in curation. However,

this would cut down on the cost of labor required for collections care and also give prospective archaeologists some background in curation that could help them to make informed decisions on the curation of their collections later in life.

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## Appendix A: List of Repositories

<b>State</b>	<b>Repositories</b>
<b>Alabama</b>	University of Alabama Office of Archaeological Research
	Center for Archaeological Research, University of South Alabama
<b>Arkansas</b>	Arkansas Archaeological Survey
<b>Florida</b>	The Bureau of Archaeological Research in the Division of Historical Resources in the Department of State of Florida (BAR)
<b>Georgia</b>	R M Bogan Archaeological Repository, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Georgia Southern University
	Antonio J. Waring, Jr. Archaeological Laboratory
	Georgia Museum of Natural History, University of Georgia
	Columbus State University Department of Earth and Space Sciences
<b>Mississippi</b>	University of Mississippi Center for Archaeological Research
<b>North Carolina</b>	NC Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources
	Fort Bragg artifact Curation Facility
	Wake Forest University
<b>South Carolina</b>	South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA)
<b>Tennessee</b>	Frank H McClung Museum

## Appendix B: Survey Questions

1. Are you accepting outside collections?
2. Are there other repositories in your state? If yes, please list.
3. Do you have a Memorandum of Understanding with any agencies that exempt a firm from paying a fee?
4. What is your standard box fee? Is it a one time fee?
5. Do you have a half box fee? If so how much is it?
6. What is your oversized box fee?
7. Do you have a fee for digital media?
8. Are you planning on raising your fee in the near future and if so what will it be?
9. Do you have formal curation standards? If so, please provide a link or pdf of the document.
10. Do you allow discarding of certain materials?

## Appendix C: Survey Data

State	Repository	Reference Number
<b>Alabama</b>	University of Alabama Office of Archaeological Research	1
	Center for Archaeological Research, University of South Alabama	2
<b>Arkansas</b>	Arkansas Archaeological Survey	3
<b>Florida</b>	The Bureau of Archaeological Research in the Division of Historical Resources in the Department of State of Florida (BAR)	4
<b>Georgia</b>	R M Bogan Archaeological Repository, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Georgia Southern University	5
	Antonio J. Waring, Jr. Archaeological Laboratory	6
	Georgia Museum of Natural History, University of Georgia	7
	Columbus State University Department of Earth and Space Sciences	8
<b>Mississippi</b>	University of Mississippi Center for Archaeological Research	9
<b>North Carolina</b>	NC Dept. of Natural and Cultural Resources	10
	Fort Bragg artifact Curation Facility	11
	Wake Forest University	12
<b>South Carolina</b>	South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA)	13
<b>Tennessee</b>	Frank H McClung Museum	14

Reference Number	Are you Accepting Collections?	Do you have an MOU with any agencies that exempt a firm from paying a fee?	What is your standard box fee? Is it a one-time fee?
1	Yes	No	\$410/Yes
2	Yes	No	\$350/Yes
3	Yes	No	\$350 per 0.7 cubic foot/Yes
4	Yes	No	No Fee
5	Yes	No	\$275 one time, \$150.00/box for short-term curation, and \$10/box per annum
6	Yes	No	\$300 one time, \$20/box annual fee, and processing available
7	Yes	No	\$275/Yes
8	Yes (limited space)	No	\$300/Yes
9	Yes	No	\$275/Yes
10	Yes	Yes/NCDOT	\$220/Yes
11	No	N/A	N/A
12	No	No	N/A
13	Yes	No	\$200/Yes
14	Yes	No	\$375/Yes

Reference Number	Do you have a partial box fee? If so, how much is it?	What is your oversized box fee?	Do you have a fee for digital media?
1	Yes, \$102.50/Quarter	Calculated by cubic feet	55 cents each
2	Yes, \$87.50/Quarter	87.50/Quarter	50 cents each
3	Yes, \$175/Half	Calculated by cubic feet	No
4	No Fee	No Fee	No
5	Yes, \$150/Half	Case by case basis	No
6	No	Calculated by cubic feet	Not yet
7	No	No Fee	No
8	No	\$350	Not yet
9	No	N/A	No
10	Yes, \$110/Half	Case by case basis	No
11	N/A	N/A	N/A
12	N/A	N/A	N/A
13	Yes, \$50/Quarter	Calculated by cubic feet	No
14	Yes, \$93.75/Quarter	No Fee	Yes

Reference Number	Are you planning to raise your fee in the near future? If so what will it be?	Do you have formal curation standards?	Do you allow discarding of certain materials?
1	No	Yes	No
2	No	No Response	Yes
3	Raised from \$250 to \$350 on 1/1/2018	Yes	No
4	No	Yes	Yes
5	Possibly	Yes	No Response
6	No	Yes	No
7	Yes, to \$300	Yes	No
8	No	No	No
9	No	No	Yes
10	N/A	Yes	Yes
11	N/A	No Response	In consideration
12	N/A	Yes	Yes
13	Yes, not sure	Yes	No
14	No	Yes	Yes