



Fieldwork Guidelines

The Michigan Traditional Arts Program (MTAP) of the Michigan State University Museum, a partnership program with Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, coordinates a variety of programs and projects focused on traditional culture. The MTAP maintains a collection of artifacts, fieldwork, photographs, audiotapes, and resources related to state, regional, national, and international folklife. The collections have been developed through donations as well as staff, student, and contracted research. The majority of these collections are indexed and computerized. The collections are housed in the Michigan State University Museum's Cultural Collections Resource Center on the campus of MSU. Access to the collections for research and educational use is by appointment.

There are a number of methods that MTAP uses for documenting traditional culture. Depending on the research project or activity, one or more of the following are required for completion. [NOTE: Be sure to check with documentation coordinator or contractor for guidance on which are necessary for a particular activity]

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN FIELD RESEARCH FORM¹

The Statement on Professional Ethics is to be read and signed by each researcher.

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

The Research Consent Form is to be signed by groups or individuals you record *or* photograph. This form has been approved by Michigan State University's Committee for Research on Human Subjects. If no releases are obtained, use of collected data may be limited in the future to research purposes only.

ARTIST/INFORMANT DATA SHEETS

The Artist/Informant Data Sheet is a permanent archival record and must be filled out as completely and accurately as possible. Fill out one sheet for each individual interviewed or organization contacted, including both informants and resource persons. If you are interviewing a group, fill out one for each member. For musical groups with managers, please indicate clearly on the artist sheet that the individual is a manager and whether or not he or she also performs with the group. In some cases a group leader may be different than a manager; we need to know who is the primary contact and what his/her role is.

ACCESSION RECORD

One Accession Record must be filled out. It contains information on: key subject words, key Informant(s), the number and type of rolls of film, number of audio tapes, number of video tapes, number of data disks, and the number and description of objects.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARIES

Attach a 150-200 word written biographical summary of the recommended artist(s) or group(s). The biographical information should include name (including any preferred stage, nickname, or tribal names), date of birth, and current hometown. In the case of a group, include biographical data on the leader or key members as appropriate, and at least list group members by name, age, hometown, etc. The following questions must be answered within this biographical summary:

- What is the tradition the individual/group represents?
- How does the person/group fit into the tradition?
- [for individuals] How and when did he/she learn this tradition?
- [for groups] What is the history of the group?

The biographical summaries should be sufficiently detailed so that they can provide the basis for a press release or program, should the individual or group be selected for the public program.

¹ Samples of all forms are attached

AUDIO RECORDINGS

Wherever possible, we encourage the audio recording of interviews with people, especially those with narrative and musical traditions. Explain the nature of your work to the informant/artist and obtain consent to record; obtain a signed release form from your informant. The same one can be used if photographs are also being taken. At the beginning of the tape, record an announcement with your name, the date, and the person(s) being recorded.

Keep in mind that audio taped recordings may be used in the development of exhibition, radio, Internet, and other media programs. Avoid inserting “um, yes,” etc. Be aware of the recording environment. Try to achieve a balance between contextually appropriate background sound and disruptive noise.

Tape should be recorded on one side only. Record one informant per tape. Continue a tape-recorded interview onto additional tapes as needed. Label each tape with names of interviewer and informant, date, and number consecutive tapes as belonging to a set (Tape 1 of 2, etc.).

Complete an Audiotape Record of each tape recorded as well as notes on the context of the recording. Return all tapes unedited. Original copies will be digitized for archival storage. Transcriptions of narrative recordings may also be made from a copy of the tape upon receipt of original fieldwork into archives.

AUDIO TAPE RECORD

Fill out a Tape Record for each tape that is recorded on during a session. The record includes technical as well as identifying information about the recording conditions and contents of the tape-recorded session and is a location guide for tape contents. Please indicate with an asterisk particularly significant sections of tape for possible use on radio or other educational programs.

Mark the tape cassette(s) itself with the following information:

- a. Date
- b. Location of interview (town, state or province, country)
- c. Informant(s)
- d. Fieldworker
- e. Topic (brief)

PHOTOGRAPHS/VIDEOS

[NOTE: The following refers to non-digital cameras. Please modify as appropriate if using digital cameras]

All interviewees should be photographed if possible. When photographing individual artists, please make sure you have both:

- Posed portraits **and**
- Context shots (close-ups, details, overviews), which show the subject practicing his or her tradition

Members of groups may be best photographed together rather than individually.

When photographing events, be sure to document as many aspects of the event as possible. Use a combination of close-up and overview shots that show setting and place. Be sure to capture details that define the activity or event. *Photo detail should be crisp.*

Photos may be used for identification, research, publicity and promotion, exhibit or festival signs, festival program books and other publications, and presentations. Please use only 35mm black and white films unless color slides (Kodachrome 64 or 200) are requested by MTAP staff. Make sure that release forms are signed by those individuals you photograph; *if no releases are obtained, use may be limited in the future to research purposes only.*

Ask to have contact sheets made instead of prints. Send the negatives as well as the contact sheet in with your report.

FILM RECORDS

Complete a MTAP Film Record for every roll of film used. Identify the following information for each exposure, using the appropriate sheets:

- a. Date
- b. Location (place, city or town, state, country)
- c. Photographer
- d. Subject(s) (names of people in the shot)
- e. Activity (brief description of activity in the shot)
- f. Kind of film
- g. ISO number, film speed/file format (if digital)
- h. Fieldworker
- i. Project manager/staff contact

FIELD NOTES (or “Research Notes”)

These are your personal notes recording data and observations culled from an instance of fieldwork research done on site or by telephone or Internet. Length of field notes will depend on the scope of a contracted assignment, time available, purpose of research, and your familiarity with the tradition. Field notes should include:

1. Your name and the date, time, location, and circumstances (i.e. site visit, phone interview, etc.) and, if appropriate, purpose (MTAAP review, festival contact, etc.) of each instance of documentation.
2. Description and analysis of circumstances affecting collection of data.
3. Discussion of the history and contemporary practice, context and content of the tradition being researched, including the following:
 - How and when learned
 - How regularly practiced
 - How it is expressive of community values and beliefs
 - Description of the community in which tradition exists
 - Type of objects, foodway, verbal art, music, or other expressive tradition produced
 - Other contextual information as appropriate.

[NOTE: Information on suitability for public program participation generally should not be included here, but rather reserved for the “Public Program Data” section of your documentation.]

4. Description of the individual participant in the tradition [can be used with artist data sheet]
 - How and when they learned
 - Their role in the tradition
 - For what particular audience does this artist work
 - Quality of their work and information on by whose or what standards this quality is measured
5. Name(s) and contact information (mail address, email address, home phone, cell phone, work phone, fax, and website) of informant(s) and all others contacted during fieldwork (leads, etc.)
6. Other information as appropriate, including references to other related sources of data
7. Names of the people contacted while working for this specific project
8. List of questions asked [if there was a structured interview format]
9. List of any objects, ephemera, printed material, recordings, etc. collected as part of instance of research

Please do not collect local newspapers or anything printed on newsprint. Remove all post-it notes, staples, paperclips, and any other metal or glue-like substances from reports and collected materials.

TRAVEL LOGS

The Travel Log is very helpful in accessioning your research materials and can be important to fieldworkers for income tax purposes. Include:

- a. Dates and time of travel
- b. Locations (starting point, route taken, destinations, etc.)

PUBLIC PROGRAM DATA

This information is crucial to the planning and production of MTAP's public programming. Suggest and describe individuals who would be suitable for public programs (such as festival, exhibit, folk arts in schools, etc.) and what kinds of presentations the individual could do.

Discuss the appropriateness of each person for public presentation. Include the following:

- Is the tradition suitable for public presentation (why or why not)?
- Does he or she have a personality conducive to public presentation?
- How should the individual or tradition be presented?
- Has the individual had previous experience in education, presentations, or demonstrations of their tradition in a public setting?

Also include the following kinds of technical and programming information:

- a. The potential for sales of artwork or recordings by the artist.
- b. Names and addresses of suppliers of materials needed for presentation.
- c. Names and phone numbers of persons who should be consulted for design or construction information by MTAP technical/design staff.
- d. Information to help design public program, as appropriate. What unusual equipment, ingredients, utensils, or supplies are required? Are there any major

logistical challenges involving safety, power and water needs, equipment size and transportability, etc.?

- e. Recipes for foodways demonstrations, including brand names and specialty items.
- f. Group size, miking needs and instrumentation for music groups.

At the close of your report, summarize your programming recommendations (pros/cons, first, second, third choice, etc.).

FIELDWORK REPORT

For some projects, a summary report is preferable or required and should contain, in addition to the Field Notes and Travel Log Summary, the following information:

- Research Overview
 - Provide a brief description of any previous work on this topic.
- Discussion of History and Contemporary Practice of Topic
- Suggestions for Future Research
 - Describe follow-up research ideas, referring to leads/contacts as appropriate.
- Selected bibliography or discography

COLLECTING OBJECTS

The Michigan State University Museum has been able to develop a significant collection of folklife-related objects that is used for research, exhibition, and educational purposes. This collection has been built up primarily through donations from individuals and materials collected by researchers during field-research projects, and, occasionally, through purchases funded by special projects. Fieldworkers are asked to assist in the development of this collection by doing the following:

- a. Collect any free or very inexpensive items connected with a particular tradition or artist being studied. Such items might include handbills, catalogues, samples of materials or specialized tools used in producing an artifact, food containers, menu (new and old) from a restaurant, T-shirt with text or images relating to a tradition, etc.
- b. Encourage artists to consider donating an example of their work to the MSU Museum. This, of course, may be more appropriate to ask in some situations than others, and is left to the researcher's discretion. [Please note, however, that the curatorial staff at the MSU Museum makes the actual acceptance of a donated item into the collection.]
- c. If an object is donated, give them a completed TEMPORARY DEPOSIT RECEIPT FORM. Inform them that they will be receiving a Certificate of Gift that requires their signature. If they do not place a value on the objects donated, an appraisal amount will **not** be assigned to them.
- c. Purchase no more than two items, not to exceed \$50.00 total, that represent the artist's work. To be reimbursed for these purchases, submit receipts with your final report. Such items might include a tied fly, a paper flower, a *piñata*, etc. Complete an Object Data Sheet for each item collected.
- d. If the artist's work exceeds \$50.00 in cost or if you recommend purchasing additional examples of a particular artist's work, please contact the research coordinator or write these recommendations in your field notes and provide photographs of the object.

PUBLICATIONS, COMMERCIAL RECORDINGS, & OTHER RESOURCES

In the course of your work you may come across publications, commercial cassettes, CDs, records, or other reference materials for sale that would help support the documentation of traditional arts and should be placed in the MTAP research collection. We encourage you to purchase two copies of cassettes, CDs, and records and, if under \$25.00, one copy of publications. If you have a choice, please purchase a CD, as well as a cassette or LP. For publications over \$25.00, please check first with the documentation coordinator. [NOTE: For reimbursement for contracted researchers, submit receipt with invoice; for staff, submit receipt to accountant or secretary]

COMPUTER DISK COPY

If your report is written on a computer, please submit a disk copy with a hard-copy printout of file and your other materials or send an attachment file indicating the document format on the accession record. Please list the program and format used on the Accession Record. This will assist MTAP staff in the fieldwork accessioning process.

TO STAFF

Documentation should be turned over to Documentation Coordinator or Program/Project Coordinator (if for specific project) or to MTAP Collections Manager/Archivist (if for general or unspecified purpose) at agreed-upon deadline and no more ninety days after fieldwork is completed unless other arrangements have been made. Copies of documentation should also be circulated to appropriate MTAP staff when done for team projects or when it is otherwise useful to share information.

TO CONTRACTED RESEARCHERS:

Your formal contract from Michigan State University states the scope of your research, the starting and ending dates, and any payment terms. We request that you follow closely the formats described above. [NOTE: sample reports are available on request]. All report materials must be typed. You should make any personal copies of fieldwork before submitting the final report to MTAP. The work must be completed within the starting and ending dates stated on your contract.

MTAP will provide all photographic and audiotape supplies as needed. We also have a limited number of cameras and tape recorders available for your use. Please contact the MTAP office should you require this equipment, additional supplies, or equipment instruction.

Please make special note of the Rights-In-Data clause attached to your contract. This document specifies that the MSU Museum has full rights to all materials collected or developed under its auspices. This clause does not, however, preclude your use of the materials as long as MSU is given proper credit for research funding.

Photo developing costs are not included in your contract fee. Please have your film developed as a contact sheet, and send us the receipts for reimbursement. Black and white film will be provided by MTAP; contact your research coordinator for supplies. All unexposed film should be returned upon completion of your contract.

All unused audiotapes should be returned to our office.

Advance payments and final payments for any portion of the contract are subject to the receipt of the materials specified. When the contract has been completed, you must submit an invoice requesting payment. An invoice form is available from your documentation coordinator.

The invoice must include:

- a. the date
- b. your name, typed or legibly printed
- c. the contract agreement number
- d. a brief description of services provided
- e. dates of work
- f. the amount to be paid
- g. your signature
- h. your social security number
- i. your home mailing address [NOTE: Please do not use P. O. Box addresses as MSU will not send checks to those]
- j. your home phone number
- k. your work number (if available)

- l. your cell phone number (if available)
- m. your fax number
- n. your email address

Please send your invoices directly to the following address so we can expedite payment:

Michigan Traditional Arts Program
Michigan State University Museum
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824-1045
Staff Contact: [your documentation coordinator]

PLEASE USE THIS SHEET AS A CHECKLIST

- Signed “Professional Ethics in Field Research” Form**
- Signed Consent Forms for all persons interviewed/photographed**
- Completed Artist/Informant Data Sheets**
- Completed Accession Record**
- Audio/Video Recordings (with completed Tape Records)**
- Commercial Recordings**
- Film, Contact Sheets (with completed Film Records)**
- Objects (with completed Object Data Sheets)**

- List of involved Staff, Fieldworkers, Informants**
- Field Notes**
- Travel Logs**
- Fieldwork Report (summary/narrative)**
- Public Program Data**
- Biographical Summaries**
- Printed/published materials**
- Other Resources**
- Electronic File/Computer disk copy**

In addition, certain projects use survey or evaluation forms:

- Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Assessment Form**
- Michigan Quilt Project Inventory Form**
- Rag Rug Project Form**
- Michigan Barn & Farmstead Survey Form**
- 4-H History Project Form**
- Association of Michigan Basketweavers Heritage Basket Collection Project**

