

INFUSING IDENTITIES: CREATING A UNIQUELY RELATIONAL DATABASE FOR
THE FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY'S SEMINOLE AND MICCOSUKEE
ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

By

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To Mom and Dad

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Summary of Project in Lieu of Thesis
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THE FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY'S SEMINOLE AND MICCOSUKEE
ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION

By

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The Florida Ethnographic Collection (FEC) at the Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH) holds tremendous cultural and historical significance. Comprised primarily of Seminole and Miccosukee ethnographic materials, its size and scope rivals those of the nation's elite museums. However, unlike the majority of its peers, the collection lacks both an effective computer management system and a publicly accessible database, thereby limiting its potential as a research hub for Florida's Native people. Informed equally by the perspectives of Native Americans, museum professionals, and anthropologists, this project aims to create a relational database that not only incorporates the diverse values of these groups, but bolsters the FEC's status as an indispensable research tool for *anyone* interested in the remarkable history of the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes of Florida. Through collaboration, consultation and a genealogical approach to material culture, this project serves as a model not only for other anthropological collections at the FLMNH, but also for any museum striving to create an effective and engaging database for its ethnographic collections.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In the Information Age, museums are scrambling to digitize their collections. During a time in which information consumption is immediately and gratuitously accessible, museums have been quick to adopt an ideology that counteracts historical notions of insularity and overprotectiveness. Excitement over advances in computer technology (Bearman 2010, 48), coupled with public and academic demand for increased accessibility and engagement with museum collections (Weil 1999), has afforded museums a unique opportunity to share the roughly 95% (Edwards 2010, 413; Swain and Buck 2010, 293) of “hidden assets” not normally seen by outsiders. However, before museums are completely swept away in the “digitization frenzy,” they must first consider what it really means to “digitize” a collection. Is it simply a matter of reallocating old information into new formats for internal use? Is it photographing objects and publishing them in online galleries? Is it parsing out a collection’s metadata line by line and creating an intricate relational database? Is it making that database publicly searchable online, or even turning an entire collection into a virtual exhibit? In some cases, it may be one of those things; in others, it may be all of them (or more). A collections database should be tailored to meet the needs of a specific department or collection, yet still serve the best interests of the museum as a whole (Chenhall and Vance 2010, 42; Malaro 1994, 136). Museums must be careful to avoid the “technology trap” (Parry 2010, 454), digitizing collections not just for “digitization’s sake.” They must also approach the subject with explicit objectives in mind that result in a beneficial and ultimately sustainable product.

The Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH) in Gainesville, Florida has been grappling with these issues for years. With more than 34 million specimens of staggering diversity (Florida Museum of Natural History 2012), the formation of an institution-wide database that equally addresses the needs of all divisions and collections has proven elusive. Despite significant progress in many divisions,¹ the task is ongoing for the Anthropology Division, where cultural materials are less easily characterized in systematic terms than specimens of the biological world. In fact, many instances call for anthropological objects to be treated more as works of art than scientific specimens. The difficulty in bridging this divide has prompted some programs of the Anthropology Division to seek external solutions, at least for the time being, to address the immediate needs of bringing their renowned and important collections to their full potential.

The Florida Ethnographic Collection (FEC) is one of these renowned collections, comprised primarily of ethnographic materials from the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes of Florida. The unique dilemmas inherent in attempting to “digitize” a living people, coupled with a manageable sample size of 644 object records, make it an ideal “guinea pig” for database trials both in-house and through commercial vendors. Inspired not only by the opportunity to assist FLMNH’s Anthropology Division, but also to create a collections database that might engage Native communities, researchers, and the general public alike, I received permission to pursue this objective as my project in lieu of thesis.

¹ Access any of the current FLMNH online collection databases at the following web address: <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/collections/databases/>

The results of this project form a multifaceted product of nearly two years of collaboration, research, and collections work. In developing a relational database for material culture of the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes of Florida, I have attempted to manifest the insights and best interests of Native Americans, the general public, museum anthropologists, and FLMNH faculty and staff in a single comprehensive database. The narrative for this process, perhaps unsurprisingly, is not entirely linear. It is informed by experiences both formal and informal, and perspectives both Native and non-Native. From conferences and Museum Studies seminars to candid conversations with friends and colleagues, the sequence of events that influenced the outcome of this project is not necessarily chronological. The FEC database is truly an amalgamation of inferences and perspectives, but its construction is explained most clearly by first distinguishing the differences between the *sources* of those perspectives. In this paper, after an overview of the history and significance of the FEC, I examine the three perspectives that, in no particular order, most influenced the FEC database project: (1) the collections manager's perspective; (2) the Native American's perspective; and (3) the museum anthropologist's perspective. It is only after exploring these viewpoints that the actual details of constructing the database make sense. This project is a synthesis of teamwork, theory, ethics, and practicality, all with the primary objective of making the FEC database an indispensable research tool for anyone interested in studying Seminole or Miccosukee culture.

CHAPTER 2
THE FLORIDA ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION: AN OVERVIEW

Florida's Enduring Legacy

The Seminole and Miccosukee tribes are synonymous with Florida history and their enduring legacy is a testament to both their rich cultural heritage and status as two of the United States' best-recognized and influential Native groups. Their story, however, actually originates far from the State of Florida, both in time and space. Though problematic to postulate the "beginning" of a culture, the story of the Seminoles most commonly starts with the Creeks of Alabama and Georgia in the 18th Century (Milanich and Root 2011, 3). By 1760, after European colonization had essentially eradicated all of Florida's original inhabitants (Milanich 1998a), the open Spanish territory beckoned to Native groups fleeing oppression from the north (Milanich and Root 2011, 3). Within twenty years, the Creeks who had migrated into the Florida territory became known as the Seminoles and were joined by members of other tribes, including the Choctaw, Hitchiti, Mikasuki, Oconee, Yuchi and Yamasee (Milanich and Root 2011, 4). Escaped African slaves, with whom an intimate and cohesive relationship gradually developed, joined them on the frontier in the late 1800's (Downs 1997, 34). In fact, their close relationship probably introduced African influences into Seminole artwork such as "applique, bead embroidery, and coiled basket making" (Downs 1997, 34).

Of course, what was desirable land to the Seminoles soon became equally desirable to settlers of the newly formed United States of America. Florida was relinquished from Spain in 1822 and after a series of skirmishes with the Seminoles, newly elected president Andrew Jackson and the federal government made it a priority

to relocate all southeastern Native Americans to Oklahoma with the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (Milanich 1998b). Many Seminoles refused to leave and their resistance is what ultimately culminated in the Second (1835-1842) and Third (1855-1858) Seminole Wars (Milanich 1998b). Their lifestyles forever changed, the roughly 200 (Downs 1997, 64) Seminoles who evaded capture or death were gradually pushed further south into the untamed Florida Everglades (Milanich 1998b). Despite this tremendous persecution, they never surrendered or signed a peace treaty with the government, giving them the distinction of being the only “unconquered” Native American tribe in the United States (Seminole Tribe of Florida 2012a). As the Seminoles grew accustomed to life in the Everglades, they made the most of their surrounding environment. They established reciprocal relationships with traders, who supplied them with essential goods and craft supplies in exchange for alligator hides and other raw materials (Downs 1997, 72). Hunters from the Northeast would often hire them as guides through the treacherous Everglades (Schreuder 1989), indicative of the respect held for their ecological prowess.

The Seminoles lived in relative isolation until about 1880, when the American government refocused its efforts on assimilating Native groups through educational and religious acculturation. Consequently, the Florida Seminoles were observed by individuals such as Reverend Clay MacCauley, who in 1880 and 1881 reported to the Smithsonian Institution on, among other things, the number of Seminole camps and individuals located in South Florida (Downs 1997, 67). MacCauley also took copious notes on Seminole dress and material culture (Downs 1997, 68), essentially making him one of the first “anthropologists” to study Seminole culture.² Naturally, as anthropology

² For more information on Rev. Clay MacCauley’s work with the Seminoles, see his 1887 book titled “The Seminole Indians of Florida,” Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the

began to flourish as a discipline around this time, the institution of programs such as the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE) in 1879 made the Seminoles ideal subjects of ethnographic studies. In an effort to document and “salvage” what was thought to be the last of a vanishing race (Glass 2002), prominent BAE anthropologists such as Frances Densmore³ and William C. Sturtevant⁴ researched the Seminoles extensively in the early and mid 20th Century.

The emergence of museums and cultural anthropology in the early 20th Century overlapped with the so-called “Indian craze” that saw public interest in Native American material culture skyrocket (Downs 1997). Considering that the Seminoles had been living in “abject poverty” for decades by this point (Milanich and Root 2011; Seminole Tribe of Florida 2012b), it is no surprise that the Florida land and tourism booms of the 1920’s were the tipping points for large scale production and consumption of Seminole material culture. The Seminoles adeptly took advantage of their economic opportunities, many choosing to live in South Florida tourist villages such as Coppinger’s Tropical Gardens (est. 1914) or Musa Isle (est. 1917), where *they* were the exhibits (Downs 1997, 85; West 1998, 14). Though their cultural lifestyle in tourist villages actually did not differ greatly from those of the Everglades settlements (West 1998, 32), a greater emphasis was placed on the production of clothing and crafts. “Traditions” such as alligator wrestling and totem pole carving were also invented to placate public

Smithsonian Institution, 1883-84, Government Printing Office, Washington, pages 469-532.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/19155>

³ For more information on Frances Densmore’s work with the Seminoles, see her 1956 bulletin titled “Seminole Music,” Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 161, Government Printing Office, Washington. <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/FS00000025/00001>

⁴ For more information on William C. Sturtevant, see Jason Baird Jackson’s 2007 remembrance on the *Museum Anthropology* blog. <http://museumanthropology.blogspot.com/2007/03/william-c-sturtevant-1926-2007.html>

preconceptions and generate income (West 1998, 56). This new entrepreneurial focus on tourism resulted in not only greater economic prosperity for the Seminoles, but the widespread distribution of what are now considered “museum-quality” ethnographic artifacts such as dolls, textiles, and wooden carvings (Downs 1997). Most of these early tourist trade items wound up in the hands of private collectors, but a great many went to anthropologists such as Sturtevant, Alanson B. Skinner of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), or William F. Stiles of the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation (MAI).

The “Florida Seminoles,” as they were known generically until the mid 20th Century, spoke two primary languages: Mikasuki and Muscogee (West 1998, 2). These terms were associated with the original bands of *Mikasuki*-speaking Seminoles and *Muscogee*-speaking Creeks who settled in Florida in the 18th and 19th centuries (Downs 1997, 5). In 1957, the Seminole Tribe of Florida became a federally recognized tribal government, and after the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida was formally recognized in 1962, linguists decided to change the language’s spelling to “Miccosukee” to reduce confusion (Downs 1997, 5).⁵ Members of both tribes still speak the Miccosukee language, though English is now taught in tribal school alongside it (Downs 1997, 5). The Muskogee or Creek language, spoken less prevalently, is taught and practiced at the Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation near Lake Okeechobee, Florida (Downs 1997, 5). The Independent Traditional Seminole Nation of Florida, who did not

⁵ The Florida Ethnographic Collection contains ethnographic materials relevant to the histories of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Independent Traditional Seminole Nation of Florida. Throughout this paper, the generic term “Seminole” is often used as an adjective, referring simultaneously to all three of these related groups. However, the independence of these three groups is important to recognize. Research conducted for this project-in-lieu-of-thesis focused primarily on individuals predating the formation of federally recognized tribal governments, however, any collaborative work was conducted in concordance with an affiliate of the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

agree to certain principles of federal tribal recognition and withheld from joining either tribe, also speak the Miccosukee language.

Today, the Seminole Tribe of Florida is one of the most recognized Native American groups in the United States. Their commercial ventures, such as the establishment of the first tribal casino in the United States and purchase of the Hard Rock Café restaurant and casino chain (McCoy 2006), have been extraordinarily lucrative. However, beyond their claim to being the only “unconquered” tribe in America, much of their fascinating cultural history remains relatively unknown to the general public. This is something the Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Seminole Indian Museum (hereafter Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki) near Clewiston, Florida is trying to change. In another historic milestone in 2009, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum became the first tribally owned museum to be accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), a feat accomplished by only 776 (AAM 2012a) of the estimated 17,500+ museums in the United States (AAM 2012b). The advent of the tribal museum has given Seminoles and other Native American groups unprecedented authority over the stewardship and interpretation of their cultural heritage. Still, as Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki emerges as a world-class institution, an untold number of Seminole artifacts remain housed in various museums throughout the world. Some, like the FLMNH, have gone to great lengths to ensure collaborative roles in exhibit design (Marquardt 1996). However, with the rapid evolution of computer technology, there is opportunity for more intimate participation. Access to wikis like the one created by Shawna Pies (Pies 2009) offers Seminole tribal members a connection with FLMNH collections on the individual object level. However, as a standalone entity not maintained by FLMNH, it is superficial in the sense that any

contributions made by tribal members are not necessarily detected and added to collection records. This is certainly no fault of the user(s) or the creator, but rather is indicative of the need for a comprehensive collections database on par with that of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI)⁶.

Collecting Seminole

The proliferation of Florida Seminole and Miccosukee material culture in museums across the world is remarkable. The museums that collect Seminole artifacts vary in scope as much as the types of artifacts they collect. A brief inspection of online collection databases confirms this fact. For example, the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, England possesses two Seminole artifacts,⁷ while their more famous neighbors at the British Museum in London hold no less than seventeen.⁸ The Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, British Columbia possesses three Seminole objects,⁹ though their database incorrectly identifies a long-shirt as a “dress.” An understandable deduction given the shirt’s form, this error is partially attributable to the geographic distance between the object and its original home. It seems, however, that a majority of Seminole and Miccosukee ethnographic materials are housed in United States museums.

⁶ The collections database for the National Museum of the American Indian can be found at the following link: <http://www.americanindian.si.edu/searchcollections/home.aspx>

⁷ The collections database for the Pitt Rivers Museum can be found at the following link: <http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/collections.html>. The two artifacts are 1949.3.20, a wooden spoon and 1967.42.7, a Seminole doll.

⁸ The collections database for the British Museum can be found at the following link: <http://www.britishmuseum.org/collection>

⁹ The collections database for the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, British Columbia can be found at the following link: <http://collection-online.moa.ubc.ca/>. D3.212 is a long-shirt, 379/26 is a skirt, and D3.185 is a silver spoon.

The whereabouts of Seminole artifacts have consistently occupied the minds of those who study them. In August 1959, John M. Goggin, a prominent anthropologist at the University of Florida, compiled a list of thirteen “major museum collections” in the United States. Among the eight collections designated as having “major significance” are the Chicago Museum of Natural History (now the Field Museum), AMNH, the Florida State Museum (now FLMNH), the Milwaukee Public Museum, MAI (now the National Museum of the American Indian), the National Museum (now the National Museum of Natural History), the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University and the Yale Peabody Museum. Goggin, who by then had collected a majority of the Seminole ethnographic materials at the Florida State Museum, described the collection at MAI as “the finest and largest Seminole collection in existence (Goggin 1959).” Sturtevant, then an Ethnologist for the Bureau of American Ethnology and a good friend of Goggin’s (Sturtevant 1964), also took interest in this research. During his tenure at the Yale Peabody Museum, Sturtevant collected what Goggin described as “the broadest collection of *recent* (emphasis added) Seminole materials,” though ultimately his contributions to the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) were even more substantial. Sturtevant’s handwritten notes regarding the 1959 report, now housed in the National Anthropological Archives (NAA) in Washington D.C.,¹⁰ further elucidate his knowledge of Seminole material culture, listing several additional museums not mentioned by Goggin. Most are unexpected, such as the Brooklyn

¹⁰ Sturtevant’s notes are on file in the National Anthropological Archives and were referenced in June and July 2012 as part of a research project conducted under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution’s Summer Institute in Museum Anthropology. At the time, Sturtevant’s notes on Goggin’s inventory were filed in a folder titled “JMG: Sem bibliog '59” in Box 1 of the William C. Sturtevant Seminole documents, which had yet to be completely archived. This particular folder was accessed on July 6, 2012.

Museum,¹¹ the Montclair Art Museum,¹² and the Moravian Historical Society.¹³ Clearly, the popularity of Seminole ethnographic materials transcends both geographic and disciplinary boundaries.

Of course, there are more museums today in the United States than there were in 1959 and with 53 additional years to collect and grow, those that existed in Goggin's era have expanded their Seminole holdings. In order to account for the proliferation of small and private museums since 1959, a statewide survey of Florida museums was conducted by the author via e-mail in November 2011, revealing fourteen additional museums with known Seminole and Miccosukee artifacts (Bell 2011, 12). Though not all of the nearly 200 solicited museums elected to respond, the results of the survey projected as many as 39 additional Seminole or Miccosukee collections in Florida museums alone (Bell 2011, 15). The primary obstacle to conducting a more accurate survey is a lack of access to collections online. The absence of a searchable online database is certainly understandable for small museums with limited staff and tight budgets, but to be a collection of "major significance" in 2012, an online database is a virtual necessity. Today, five of Goggin's original eight "significant" museums have a publicly searchable collections database: AMNH, NMAI, NMNH, Peabody Harvard, and Yale Peabody. According to independent research conducted by the author, these five museums also remain among the ten largest Seminole collections in the United States

¹¹ The homepage for the Brooklyn Museum can be found at the following link: <http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/collections/>

¹² The homepage for the Montclair Art Museum can be found at the following link: <http://www.montclair-art.com/collections-native-american.php>

¹³ The homepage for the Moravian Historical Society can be found at the following link: <http://www.moravianhistoricalsociety.org/>

in terms of sheer number of ethnographic objects (Table 1-1). In fact, only two museums rank in the top ten that were *not* on Goggin’s original 1959 list: Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki, owned and operated by the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and an anonymous Florida museum. While the “significant” collections of 2012 are clearly similar to those of 1959, there is a clear distinction between those with online collections access and those without. The largest Seminole ethnographic collection (excluding images as objects) in the United States without a publicly searchable database is FLMNH, which ranks only behind Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki and the Smithsonian Institution’s NMAI and NMNH in size.

Table 1-1. The Ten Largest Collections of Seminole/Miccosukee Ethnographic Objects

Museum	Number of Objects	Online Database
Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum	1800	Y
National Museum of the American Indian*	673	Y
National Museum of Natural History*	471	Y
Florida Museum of Natural History*	388	N
American Museum of Natural History*	288	Y
Field Museum*	150	N
Anonymous Museum	148	N
Milwaukee Public Museum*	123	N
Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History*	118	Y
Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology - Harvard University*	91	Y

*Described by Goggin in 1959 as having a Seminole collection of “major significance.”

This table shows an approximation of the ten largest collections of Seminole/Miccosukee ethnographic materials in the world as of November 2012. Estimates were ascertained through searches of online databases (for those museums that have them) and personal communication. All eight of Goggin’s “significant” 1959 collections rank among the ten largest Seminole collections of 2012.

The Florida Museum of Natural History

Despite the lack of a publicly accessible database for their Seminole collection, FLMNH is among the nation’s elite natural history museums. Founded in 1891, the museum moved to the University of Florida in 1906 after spending 15 years in Lake

City, Florida. In 1917, the Florida State Museum was designated the official natural history museum of the State of Florida,¹⁴ a responsibility it continues to uphold nearly 100 years later. In 1988, the Florida State Museum officially changed its title to the Florida Museum of Natural History in an effort to more accurately reflect its mission, which is “understanding, preserving and interpreting biological diversity and cultural heritage to ensure their survival for future generations.”¹⁵ With more than 34 million specimens, most of the museum’s collections rank in the top ten nationally and internationally (FLMNH 2011, 5). FLMNH recently received its largest grant ever, \$10 million from the National Science Foundation to establish a national center for biological collections digitization. In fact, many of the museum’s collections are already digitized and publicly accessible online, with ten different divisions offering at least partial access.¹⁶ The museum has also been pursuing an institution-wide collections management system for several years, potentially providing even greater accessibility. However, with such diverse collections, equally addressing the various digitization needs of all divisions is an enormous challenge. For the Anthropology Division, the difficulty lies in organizing and classifying cultural collections within a structure primarily suited for the scientific nomenclature of biological specimens. The unique properties of archaeological and ethnographic collections have thus far prevented their successful integration into a museum-wide database.

¹⁴ A brief history of the Florida Museum of Natural History can be found on their webpage at the following link: <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/about-us/overview/brief-history/>

¹⁵ Read the entirety of the Florida Museum of Natural History’s mission statement on their webpage at the following link: <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/about-us/overview/mission-and-impact/>

¹⁶ <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/collections/databases/>

The Florida Ethnographic Collection

The Florida Ethnographic Collection at FLMNH is one of largest and most comprehensive collections of Florida Seminole and Miccosukee materials in the world. The faculty and staff of the Anthropology Division's South Florida Archaeology and Ethnography Program, established in 1983,¹⁷ actively maintain the collection with assistance from graduate students, undergraduate students, volunteers, and interns. As of November 1, 2012, there are 644 individual catalog records in the FEC, accounting for 825 total objects.¹⁸ Of these 825 objects, 307 (37%) are images in the form of photographic prints, photographic slides, postcards, posters, glass plate negatives, and an oil painting. While some museums do not catalog photographs and other archival documents as part of their ethnographic collections, FLMNH has practiced this since its inception. As a contrast, a majority of the thousands of Seminole photographs at the National Museum of Natural History are now part of the National Anthropological Archives, another branch of the Smithsonian Institution. Nevertheless, when compared to other museums nationally, FLMNH ranks fourth in the number of individual Seminole or Miccosukee object records with 388 (Table 1-1), consisting of 518 total objects. Among the objects present are bandolier bags, baskets, beadwork, dolls, moccasins, rattles, silverwork, tools, woodcrafts and patchwork clothing (Table 1-2). However, what makes the collection truly valuable is not its size, but its scope (Figure A-2).

¹⁷ More information on the Anthropology Division's South Florida Archaeology and Ethnography Program can be found on their webpage at the following link: <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/sflarch/>

¹⁸ It is important to note that prior to this project, previous object tallies of the Florida Ethnographic Collection did not include photographs as part of the estimate. For example, Pies in 2009 estimated the collection to hold "over 300" objects. This estimate is accurate yet conservative, with 388 known "object" catalog records as of November 1, 2012. However, including photographs, postcards and other forms of imagery, the collection contains 644 individual object records and 825 total objects.

The first two objects that would later become a part of the FEC were donated to the museum in February 1920. By 1930, the Florida State Museum had already accumulated 67 Seminole objects thanks largely to L. Winternitz, whose photographs and postcards can also be found in the Smithsonian’s collections. However, the true foundation of the FEC occurred in 1955, when John Goggin purchased more than 150 objects that had been collected over a number of years by a variety of people, including William Sturtevant. Not only does this accession still comprise more than twenty percent of the entire collection, but the quality of the objects and their accompanying documentation make it the “backbone” of the FEC. Goggin was conscientious enough to document not only the physical characteristics of the objects, but important biographical information such as names of artists or previous owners as well.

Table 1-2. The Ten Most Common Object Types in the Florida Ethnographic Collection

Object Type	Number of Objects
Silver Bangles	80
Dolls	71
Baskets	27
Shirts	14
Rattles	13
Skirts	12
Spoons	12
Stickball Sticks (Pairs)	8
Bandolier Bags	6
Canoe Carvings	6

Of the 388 non-photographic objects in the FEC, these ten types are the most prevalent.

Since Goggin’s contribution in 1955, the museum has not gone more than five years (1962-1967) without making an addition to the FEC. Several curators and collections managers have overseen the collection during this time, but the accumulation of objects has been relatively consistent throughout, save for a lull in the 1960’s. Techniques and approaches to collecting have changed, with less emphasis on

field expeditions and more on donations from private individuals, but the collection continues to grow after nearly a century (Figure A-1). Perhaps more impressive is the span of history covered by the collection. For example, seventeen objects are known to have been collected after a battle of the Third Seminole War on December 3, 1857. Thirteen objects are estimated as early or mid 19th Century, while seven others are circa 1830-1840, placing them before Florida's statehood or the Second Seminole War. Much of the Seminole silverwork likely dates to the 19th Century as well, though only collection (not manufacture) dates are known precisely.

The FEC has a long and storied history that is exhibited in its contents. Its importance to the museum, the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes of Florida, the State of Florida and the general public is undeniable. More than 100 objects from the collection are currently on exhibit in at least seven museums across the state. The FEC's continued growth and potential as a primary resource on Seminole and Miccosukee culture make it an indispensable research tool. However, some of the FEC's significance is undermined by the lack of an online database or appropriate in-house data management system.

The absence of a collections management system or online database for the FEC is not from a lack of effort. Prior to the initiation of this project, the FEC already had a relatively substantial digital "footprint." The FLMNH database homepage currently provides a link to a dedicated web gallery for FEC, which delivers images and brief captions for 44 Seminole objects.¹⁹ While visually appealing and important for public awareness and recognition, the gallery represents only seven percent of the entire

¹⁹ http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/sflarch/ethnographic_collections.htm

collection and fails as a true research tool, with no search options for visitors. A more comprehensive representation of the FEC was created in 2009, when Shawna Pies created a 350-page wiki²⁰ to encourage feedback and participation from Seminole and Miccosukee tribal members (Pies 2009, 10). The undertaking was highly successful, garnering significant information to be incorporated into FEC collection records. However, while still operational with feedback as recent as June 2012, the wiki was created on a stand-alone network not associated with FLMNH. Its maintenance is dependent on individuals no longer affiliated with the museum and it is not referenced or linked to the official FLMNH website. It also displays less than half of the current collection, again with no search options for visitors, only browsing and comment capabilities. It is stuck perpetually in its 2009 state, as none of the dozens of objects omitted or added to the collection since then are available for comment. While its existence has provided a significant ethical and informational boost by raising awareness and encouraging interaction with the FEC, the wiki remains a separate entity. The collection is even featured on the museum's Pinterest page,²¹ though this is more of a novelty than an effective educational resource. While the FEC has made an impact with its online presence, the fact remains that no publicly searchable collection database yet exists, thereby limiting its true potential as a research tool.

While the current public digital “footprint” of the FEC remains important if not entirely effective, the lack of an online database can partially be attributed to the status of its *private* digital “footprint.” Prior to the completion of this project, the most advanced

²⁰ <http://floridamuseumproject.pbworks.com/w/page/12946091/FrontPage>

²¹ <http://pinterest.com/floridamuseum/florida-museum-collections/>

inventory of the FEC existed in a 40-column spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel, a cumbersome table with limited options created in 2011 by the author. Previous Anthropology Division inventories existed in Paradox and were later migrated into Microsoft Access, Excel or Word when Paradox became outdated (Elise LeCompte, personal communication). However, the incompatibility of Paradox and Microsoft made data conversion a time-consuming process, especially when considering that the FEC is only a fraction of the overall Anthropology collection. Much of the original FEC data remains either unconverted or un-entered. While Microsoft Office inventories are sufficient as basic reference tools for staff members, most substantial contextual information is still gathered from the physical catalog and accession records. These primary sources often yield more comprehensive object information because programs like Microsoft Excel either don't have room for, or cannot effectively manage, such large datasets. However, these resources are not available to the public and with more than a half-million database queries in 2010-2011 alone (FLMNH 2011, 2), interest in FLMNH collections continues to grow. Should the museum provide Internet access to the FEC in its current digital state, online visitors would unknowingly face a dearth of contextual information vital to its relevancy. As home to one of the largest and most important collections of Seminole and Miccosukee ethnographic materials in the world, the FLMNH has an obligation to disseminate any associated knowledge to its constituents in a more effective manner. The installation of a relational collections management system would not only facilitate accessibility and the distribution of knowledge, but it would also allow the FEC to relinquish its title as the largest Seminole collection in the world without a publicly searchable online database.

CHAPTER 3 THE COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

Perspective Introduction

For younger generations of museum professionals, imagining a career in museums without the Internet or personal computers is either unmanageable or simply unpleasant. While it is true that these days it is “virtually impossible” to maintain museum collections without them (Chenhall and Vance 2010, 39), a quick tour through most any museum’s storage facility delivers a sobering reality. At some of the most established and venerated institutions, there are decades upon decades of hand and typewritten records, all produced without computers, many of which are still the sole sources of documentation for associated objects. While tremendous strides in museum collections management have been made since the incorporation of computers, simply not enough time has elapsed to catch museum databases up to decades of pre-computer collecting. Suffice it to say that some seasoned museum professionals have, in the span of their careers, witnessed the dawn of the computer age, debated its applicability, accepted its inevitability, and ultimately become reliant on the vast array of opportunities it affords. The rapid evolution of computer technology during that time has led to countless upgrades and improvements, often rendering certain programs, hardware, and software packages obsolete after only a few years. For many museums, which are tasked with preserving the treasures of humanity *in perpetuity* on a limited budget, this can be an exasperating and relentless cycle that leaves staff members feeling frustrated and out of touch.

Nevertheless, the explosion in computer technology has benefited museums greatly over the past three decades. From the wondrous exhibits never before imagined

to the unprecedented accessibility offered by “virtual museums,” computers have been a catalyst for the transformation of museums from insular and “stuffy” to cutting-edge and exciting. Perhaps not coincidentally, the introduction of computer technology into the museum field coincides with a general shift in museum ideology that has seen the primary role of the museum change over the past twenty years (Weil 1999) from that of “collector” to “educator.” Many museums have revised their mission statements and hired specialized staff members to accommodate these new roles, with job titles such as “Director of Education” or “Social Media Coordinator.” In an ever-shrinking world, these positions are an absolute necessity for keeping museums relevant and facilitating connections between museums and their audiences. However, as focus has shifted away from collections, some museums are funneling more technology into exhibits and public programming than the actual databases required for successfully maintaining the fidelity of their collections. Increasing financial reliance on public support makes an attractive and sophisticated public “product” a virtual necessity. However, as iPads and interactive videos fill exhibit halls in an effort to proactively engage modern audiences, museum collections managers often operate on archaic computers and software that are only replaced when they fail. No matter how well an art or natural history museum educates its audience, that education is impossible without the objects in its collections. Objects are the very foundation upon which these types of museums are built and the importance of successfully managing and preserving them cannot be overstated. Their very existence as museum property dictates the content and focus of exhibits and public programming. Now, as time has allowed for some of the earliest museum collection databases to be improved, a plethora of options exist for museums of all types. As

stewards of cultural heritage and institutions held in the public trust, most museums have a responsibility to develop a collections database that not only addresses the growing demands for education, engagement, and accessibility, but also effectively manages objects in a manner that will keep them available for future generations.

The Five Characteristics of the Ideal Database

Intuitiveness

A variety of factors determine the effectiveness of a collections database, but perhaps none is more fundamentally important than being user-friendly. No matter how powerful a database may be, its existence alone does not manage a collection (Chenhall and Vance 2010, 39). Without a competent human operator, the database is useless (Malaro 1994, 137). This is an obvious yet important consideration when measuring the lifespans of objects against the relatively frequent turnover of database users. A database should be intuitive not only to its primary users, but any non-primary or future users as well. After a reasonable introductory period, independent users should feel competent managing the complexities of a relational database in order to achieve their desired results. A relational database is, by definition, structured to recognize similarities between information stored in different tables and provide links between them. However, without a basic understanding of its structure, a user may underutilize the capabilities of a relational database. Users should also have access to a system manual (Quigley and Sully 2010, 181) or live technical support continuously throughout their period of use. Disconnects, however, sometimes occur between database programmers and primary users, especially when programmers do not have collections management experience (Quigley and Sulley 2010, 164). If a museum chooses to construct an in-house system rather than purchase one from a commercial

vendor, the process must be a collaborative effort between programmers and potential users. Otherwise, a great deal of time and money can be wasted on an unintuitive system that could have otherwise been invested into an intuitive commercial collections management system.²²

Flexibility

A second characteristic of an effective collections database is flexibility (Quigley and Sully 2010, 162). The ability to easily and efficiently import and export existing records from the program in a variety of formats is a necessity. This is especially vital to the long-term fidelity of collections records because at the rate computer technology is developing, the likelihood of museums using the same database system for more than a decade or two are remote. Investing in a highly stable company's commercial collections management system can assuage this to an extent, as future updates and upgrades will undoubtedly be available. However, regardless of the brand name attached, *no* museum database should be thought of as permanent. History has shown that something bigger and better will come along, especially when there is a profit to be made. Therefore, it is imperative that any metadata entered into a collections database system be easily extractable in multiple formats. Flexibility also entails an opportunity for customization, as museums must be able to manipulate directories and user fields to meet their specific needs. The option for user-customization offered by some commercial vendors is enticing, as in-house customization may result in a "trial and error" process rather than a proven and user-friendly method. After all, a museum should not invest in a database for the sole purpose of filling it with existing data.

²² This ultimately became one of the primary reasons for investing in Re:Discovery Proficio, as discussed in Chapter 6, "The Project: Creating the Florida Ethnographic Collection Database."

Instead, a database should be maintained with expectations for its future use, including the types of information that will be gathered or attributed in the future. Flexible structural options allow data managers to anticipate the interests of future users and leave “research clues” in the database; much the way many anthropologists do in scientific publications, affording the opportunity to build upon prior research.

Power

A user-friendly and flexible database will only take a museum professional as far as its technological limits. Though many commercial products have advanced tremendously in recent years, some are more powerful than others in terms of their management capabilities. This factor should weigh heavily into investment decisions. At a large institution like FLMNH, part of that management power derives from a database with network capabilities. A network of computers linked to the same database yields greater communication and standardization between users (Quigley and Sully 2010, 167), resulting in a more organized and holistic museum. Increased productivity is also a natural derivative, as the possibility for concurrent users means data can be input simultaneously from multiple sources and locations. In a division as large as Anthropology, there is a potential demand for double-digit concurrent users. The database must not only be powerful enough to handle a network of users, but the museum must also have the technological capabilities to host such a network. Museum information technologists must be consulted throughout the decision making process, because they possess the knowledge necessary to determine how powerful a database can ultimately be. Of course, with an increased network of users comes an increased security threat, another important factor in determining the effectiveness of a collections database.

Security

Due to the historic significance of the information housed in many collections databases, as well as the often-sensitive nature of it, security must be a priority for an invested museum (Quigley and Sully 2010, 179). A database that allows administrators to edit specific authoring rights of subordinate users protects the fidelity of museum collections and helps preserve them for posterity. Unauthorized changes or deletions are crippling to the process of digitization and can either force primary users to start over or, far worse, go unnoticed and result in the permanent loss of metadata. Confidential information, such as donor records, storage locations, or collection sites must also be safeguarded for legal and ethical reasons (Quigley and Sully 2010, 179). Exceptional regard for the security of Native American collections is also imperative, especially those materials of a sensitive nature.²³ In the case of the FEC, sensitivity to privacy concerns raised by Seminole or Miccosukee tribal members must be respected to prevent unauthorized access to sacred or tribal-only knowledge. Thus, if a hierarchical networked system with concurrent users is the product of choice, its security features must not only be sophisticated and powerful, but exercised whenever possible.

Contextualization

Finally, perhaps the most contemporary necessity of a collections database is the ability to effectively contextualize a collection (Cameron 2010, 82). For museums in a digital era, this means breaking away from previously linear narrative formats in documentation and harnessing the power of the technology at their disposal (Cameron

²³ See Chapter 4 of this paper: "The Native American Perspective."

2010, 82). Not only does digital technology allow for the incorporation of images, audio recordings, three dimensional objects and a variety of other media into collections databases, but also the relational capabilities of some management systems enable objects to be “contextualized with people, places, events, periods, classification, and multimedia content (Cameron 2010, 82).” Naturally, the context surrounding an object’s origin (Keene 1998, 16) or “pre-museum life” is vitally important, but so too is life at the museum that follows, whether it be on a storage shelf or in an exhibit. In this respect, “context” should not be thought of as merely a chronological list of proper nouns, but a continuing narrative of the “*relationships* (emphasis added) between the objects and...proper nouns (Bearman 2010, 55).” Dates, names, and places should be elaborated upon and related via text whenever possible, even (and especially if) they are obvious to a user. Sometimes subconscious associations in the minds of users are actually important contextual clues that can be lost if they are not recorded. After all, with the specialized knowledge that accompanies managing museum collections, there may be only a handful of people that possess the knowledge to effectively piece together an object’s history without substantial research. This influx of context has led some in the museum field (MacDonald and Alsford 2010, 74-75) to contend that museums ought to treat *information* as their primary resource rather than the objects themselves. After all, “the manner in which an object is acquired and documented will, to a large extent, determine how current and future generations understand it (Cameron 2010, 81).” This perspective in no way diminishes the importance of objects, as they remain the primary *sources* of information, whether it is “intellectual, aesthetic, sensory, spiritual, or emotional in character (MacDonald and Alsford 2010, 75).” However, it does

promote the transformation of databases from authoritative documentation tools into “knowledge environments (Cameron 2010, 81),” a perspective that acknowledges the struggle to incorporate post-structuralism and post-modern epistemology into collection documentation practices (Cameron 2010, 91). By thinking of databases as living, interrelating, and evolving bodies of knowledge (Cameron 2010, 87), museums can incorporate the interpretations and perspectives of constituents into their collections, thereby de-constructing the contextually specific descriptions of objects that have long served as authoritative statements of meaning and significance.

This perspective increases the necessity for accessibility, transparency, collaboration, and research, making the collections database an indispensable tool not only to the museum, but the invested communities that it serves. Suzanne Keene accurately foretold the importance of research to databases in 1998, stating that “the museum’s paper files and solid walls need no longer be a barrier for contributions (Keene 1998, 27).” Collections research, however, ought to come not only from external sources, but also those who manage the objects. Due to the longevity and scope of many collections, research is essential for staff members to understand object biographies well enough to construct a relational database around them (Keene 1998, 26). No individuals have greater access to museum collections than those tasked with handling them, and their roles in building a database should not be as passive receptors of contextual information. The voice of the museum professional presents a valuable perspective and contributes significantly to the contextual narrative that should be documented evenly and continuously. In fact, the actions and opinions of all independent interpreters should be integrated into a cultural object’s documentation over the course

its lifetime (Bearman 2010, 58-59). This logic dictates that a collections database ought never to be understood as “complete,” but as an ever-expanding reservoir of heritage, knowledge, and understanding.

Choosing the Right Database

Investing in a collections management system is analogous to buying a new home. Typically, a buyer looks for an affordable house in a safe neighborhood with a limited number of defects or potential hazards. There is a tremendous amount of research and scouting involved and ultimately, the buyers get what they pay for. Imagine, however, the process of buying a home with half a dozen coworkers of varying backgrounds and lifestyles, all of whom will live together in this building for the foreseeable future. Diversity in the needs, sentiments and available funds of even the friendliest staff members can drag the process along and potentially lead to conflict. While strictly hypothetical, this situation is a reality for medium- to large-sized museums trying to decide on a collections management system. The only difference is, instead of filling a house with museum staff members, they are filling a collections management system with a variety of collections, each represented by a different staff member. Each voice carries equal weight, whether it is that of the collections manager, the curator, or the registrar. Though the aforementioned “five characteristics of the ideal database” are universal, the decision-making process can be delayed or stalled completely without proper communication and teamwork. By using these characteristics as a framework for discussing database options, the various insights and experiences of devoted staff members can be reflected on each issue and in the overall consensus.

Perspective Summary

The collections management perspective plays a primary role in the construction of the FEC database. As part of a larger database initiative for the Anthropology Division, this perspective is not only informed by literary citations, but daily interaction with the faculty and staff of FLMNH, including collections managers, curators and registrars. While my prescribed “five desirable characteristics” – user-friendliness, flexibility, networking capacity, security, contextualization – are not exhaustive, they correlate with many of the comments and concerns made by curators, collections managers and registrars since my involvement. The “collections management perspective” it is not reflected in the interests of myself or a single registrar, curator, or collections manager, but in the collective outlook of an entire team of people working together to fulfill the museum’s mission. In its ongoing efforts to fulfill that mission, the anthropological collections at FLMNH deserve a system that is user-friendly, flexible, powerful, secure and “contextually capable.” However, in creating a database specific to the needs of the FEC, I must consider perspectives from two additional and sometimes-conflicting interest groups: Native Americans and museum anthropologists.

CHAPTER 4 THE NATIVE AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Perspective Introduction

Before the opening ceremony of the 2012 International Conference of Indigenous Archives, Libraries, and Museums in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a powerful video looped on the large screen at the front of the room. In simple black and white lettering, it summarized the 2007 adoption of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*, a promising and long-overdue standard for the treatment of indigenous people around the world. The United States of America was one of only four countries to vote against it in 2007 and after the other three countries changed their minds, the U.S. became the lone holdout. In 2010, however, President Barack Obama agreed to sign the declaration, concluding: “the aspirations it affirms, including respect for the institutions and rich cultures of Native peoples, are ones we must always seek to fulfill (Richardson 2010).” The enthusiastic response to the presentation from the predominately Native crowd was both heartening and thought provoking. After all, this was a conference about archives, libraries, and museums. What sort of applications did a declaration on human rights have to museum collections? As various amendments scrolled across the screen, the gravity of managing a collection of Native American ethnographic materials at a non-Native institution began to sink in. Amendment 11 struck a particular chord with the audience:

Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such

as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.²⁴

The opening ceremony, while perhaps intended more as a celebration than an inspiration for a project-in-lieu-of thesis, had a profound influence on my understanding of what building a database for the FEC meant. No longer was it just about effective data management, contextualization, or civic engagement, it was about creating something that helped provide a fundamental human right to Seminole and Miccosukee people: access to the “manifestations of their cultures.” As a potential resource for the practice and revitalization of cultural traditions, the FEC database requires transparency and accessibility in a fashion that is engaging to its Native communities. Building a database of this significance would require thoughtfulness, sensitivity, and a proactive approach to understanding indigenous perspectives.

A New World Order

The ownership of indigenous material culture has often been a source of contention between Native American communities and museums. However, in the postmodern world, themes of repatriation, restitution, and de-colonization have begun to author a change in the perception of museums by Native Americans, as well as the academic community and general public (Krech 1999). The inclusion of Native perspectives is now standard practice for many museums, including FLMNH, as they address their own histories of colonialist collecting practices (Jonaitis 2002). Concern for Native American rights has many museums ceding hegemonic authority in favor of collaborative exhibits and interpretations. In fact, many museums now author guidelines

²⁴ The 2007 United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Rights can be found at the following link: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

as part of a larger “code of ethics” or “strategic plan” to address these issues, though some are more explicit than others.²⁵²⁶²⁷ Only recently, however, have *Native Americans* established a formalized set of criteria for the responsible care of their material culture, with the 2006 *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*.

Protocols for Native American Archival Materials

The *Protocols* were designed specifically for non-tribal institutions such as FLMNH. A joint venture by a diverse group of professionals that included representatives from fifteen Native American, First Nation, and Aboriginal communities, the *Protocols* established “best professional practices for culturally responsive care and use of American Indian archival material held by non-tribal organizations.”²⁸ Many of the human rights themes that later resulted in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* arose during formative discussions, providing an ethical foundation for the *Protocols*. Accessibility, awareness, collaboration, consultation,

²⁵ The Florida Museum of Natural History’s (FLMNH) Code of Ethics includes several general guidelines that are applicable to Native American collections such as the FEC. One example is found in Section II, Article E: “When scientific matters approach subject areas such as ethnic and social history, the museum professional must be especially sensitive and demonstrate an analytical and critical concern.” However, no explicit references to Native Americans or Native American material culture are made in the document. The entire FLMNH Code of Ethics can be found at the following link: <http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/about-us/overview/code-of-ethics/>

²⁶ The American Alliance of Museum’s (AAM) Code of Ethics is the standard from which many museums, including FLMNH, model their codes of ethics. Again, the AAM Code of Ethics speaks in broad terms, but it too makes several statements applicable to Native American materials. For example, the Collections segment reads, “the unique and special nature of human remains and funerary and sacred objects is recognized as the basis of all decisions concerning such collections.” The AAM Code of Ethics can be found at the following link: <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices/code-of-ethics-for-museums>

²⁷ The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum does not have a formal “code of ethics,” but their “2009-2014 Long Range Strategic Plan” functions as one in many ways, making explicit references to the ethical concerns and objectives of Seminole people. The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Long Range Strategic Plan can be found at the following link: <http://www.ahtathiki.com/Long-Range-Strategic-Plan-09-to-14.html>

²⁸ The 2006 *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* can be found at the following link: <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html>

context, education, ownership, and sensitivity are emphasized consistently throughout the document, fostering hope for mutual respect and exchange. I first learned of the *Protocols* during educational sessions at the 2012 International Conference of Indigenous Archives, Libraries, and Museums (Devine and Littletree 2012; Jones 2012), in which they were referenced repeatedly. This enthusiasm towards their implementation is indicative of the esteem in which they are held by both Native and non-Native professionals. Limited only by the unfamiliarity that coincides with their relative youth, the *Protocols* will play a significant role in the management of ethnographic collections for the foreseeable future.

Many of the themes and recommendations outlined in the *Protocols* can be applied directly to the FEC. In order to establish a relationship of mutual respect, I had a moral and professional obligation to reach out to representatives of indigenous communities and inform them of my project. FLMNH has a strong track record of working with Native groups in the past, especially in exhibit design and matters of cultural sensitivity, so being a museum affiliate might enhance my status. Still, I needed to initiate a dialogue on my own, an intimidating task for a student with an uncertain future and unknown levels of involvement beyond graduate school. If I were to avoid becoming a “helicopter researcher (Devine and Littletree 2012),” I would have to ensure that my project is a mutually beneficial objective with long-term implications beyond my student tenure. After all, the completion of this project is not urgent for everyone. By applying an honest, straightforward, and genuine perspective to any dialogue, I could voice these concerns as well as my intentions to give back to the community, even if someone other than myself delivers the final product. To ignore the temporariness of my

standing as a graduate student would be a disservice to everyone involved. However, with its potential for online accessibility, the completion of the FEC database hopefully will give back to the community for many years after I graduate. With this in mind, the project could be used as a primary talking point to help initiate dialogue on both ends. The geographic distance between Gainesville and South Florida is a natural deterrent to sustained collaboration, but the possibilities are exponentially improved by the presence an online collections database.

In determining whom to contact regarding this project, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki²⁹ and the Tribal Historic Preservation Office³⁰ most immediately came to mind, but lesser known divisions of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, such as the Tribal Library System³¹ or the Department of Genealogy,³² held promise as well. The Education Division also merits future consideration as a source of outreach programs to Seminole youth. Of course, the Seminole Tribe is not the only indigenous group represented by the FEC. The Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida and the Independent Traditional Seminole Nation of Florida also have ties to the collection, though the resources and prominence of the Seminole Tribe often overshadow them. With a longer time frame to complete a project of this nature, I would contact leaders from both tribes in a good faith effort to share knowledge and ensure respectful care and use of the collection.

One important notion not to be overlooked is that the creation of an online database does not mean the *entire* FEC should be made publicly accessible. Creating

²⁹ <http://www.ahtahthiki.com/>

³⁰ <http://www.stofthpo.com/>

³¹ <http://www.semtribe.com/Services/TribalLibrary.aspx>

³² <http://www.semtribe.com/History/Genealogy.aspx>

an online database with unlimited access to tribal members is most easily accomplished in an open-access public format. However, allowing access to specialized or sacred knowledge can cause harm to Native American communities. Some materials in the collection are sensitive in nature and their status should be discussed with tribal leaders before any access is granted. The contextual information that accompanies many objects can be considered private to tribal members as well, calling for consultation on an even deeper level. Tribal requests to restrict access must be considered and procedures for obtaining access should be established in consultation with community representatives. Non-native researchers seeking access to sensitive materials should first have approval of the indigenous community. Of course, the fidelity of sensitive materials should still be actively maintained and unrestricted access provided to qualified tribal members. As the *Protocols* state, for sovereign tribal governments, certain kinds of information are a matter of “national security.” Preserving this information, even if it is never shared, is of the utmost importance.

While some information may be private, the FEC’s value as a resource is enhanced with the provision of context. The use of Eurocentric language in reference to Native Americans has evolved over the past century, but much of it remains offensive or inaccurate. Perspectives of Seminole and Miccosukee community members should supplement this language in museum collections, offering an alternative context and an explanation of offensive terminology. The relationships between collectors and communities of origin should be explored and incorporated into collections metadata. Derogatory terms should be removed and substituted with more culturally appropriate terminology in brackets, which indicate that a change has been made. Contrived

photographs, those obviously staged by the photographer, should be described as such (Jones 2012). Those objects of a sensitive nature should include statements that inform researchers of community concerns and the protocols necessary to access the collection. Any context that can be extracted from or attributed to collections records increases the understanding and value of the FEC.

According to the *Protocols*, one of the most important roles of the FEC is as a facilitator of “knowledge repatriation.” The 1990 passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) was a landmark moment for indigenous rights, requiring all museums receiving federal funds “to reexamine, catalog and inform Native Americans about the objects they held in their collections (Haakanson 2004).” Museums are consequently obligated to return certain objects to their affiliated federally recognized tribes, including: human remains, associated and unassociated funerary items, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony (Trope 1996). While the implementation of NAGPRA marked “fundamental changes in basic social attitudes towards Native peoples by the museum and scientific communities and the public at large (Trope and Echo-Hawk 2000),” a majority of Native American objects are not eligible for repatriation and remain housed in non-tribal museums (Haakanson 2004). However, important everyday objects like textiles, clothing, and tools can embody Native American beliefs and instill feelings of cultural identity and pride (Haakanson 2004). By securely preserving these objects for posterity, some museums may unintentionally be denying the fundamental rights of indigenous communities to possess the traditional knowledge of their culture. Many Native Americans, however, do not request physical possession of their material culture, only an “ongoing connection and

control (Clifford 1997, 212; Kramer 2006, 96).” The presence of an online collections database facilitates that connection by providing an opportunity for the *digital* repatriation of museum collections to their communities of origin. As demonstrated by Sven Haakanson in his 2012 educational session *Museum in the Middle: An International Case Study for Repatriating Knowledge and Awakening Culture*, access to a collection can produce inspiration, knowledge, and pride for its community (Haakanson 2012). Opportunities for the practice or reinvigoration of traditional customs and the perpetuation of knowledge pertaining to the origins, histories, and functions of material culture are two of the many benefits inherent in repatriating knowledge (Haakanson 2004) through a digital collections database.

Consulting Native Collections Management Systems

The *Protocols* are essential to managing Native American museum collections, but their ascribed consultations are not exercised on the level of individual objects. For more specific inferences, tribal museums and other cultural heritage institutions should be contacted in order to implement similar and consistent management practices. For example, I visited Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki in June 2012 for research purposes, but by exploring their collections as a non-Native researcher and talking with their staff, I was able to gain an understanding of their approach to culturally sensitive Seminole material. The museum also hosted a “collections care” workshop sponsored by the Florida Association of Museums (FAM) in 2010,³³ where I was first exposed to some of the difficulties inherent in managing Seminole collections specifically. As a tribally owned museum, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki’s collections management practices invariably align with the

³³ Florida Association of Museums (FAM) “Improving Collections Care and Storage” Workshop at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, June 23, 2010.

wishes of Seminole community members. By integrating some of those characteristics into the FEC database, the format not only remains consistent, but also in line with tribal requests.

Perspective Summary

The Native American perspective will play an ongoing role in the continual evolution of the FEC database. Implementing ideals derived from the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*, as well as practical guidance from existing databases, the FEC database can be a model for non-tribal institutions with indigenous collections. By emphasizing the preservation and perpetuation of *heritage* rather than objects, collections can be a source for the revitalization of cultural practices and the perpetuation of knowledge, much as they are in many tribal museums (Child 2009). The creation of a relational database for the FEC is an opportunity to create a reference *for* Native Americans rather than *about* them (Hoerig 2010). This project required the establishment of reciprocal relationships with tribal members and affiliates in concordance with its objectives.

CHAPTER 5 THE MUSEUM ANTHROPOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

Perspective Introduction

An effective synthesis of practical concerns from a collections management perspective with ethical concerns from a Native American perspective is vital to the FEC's longevity. The FEC database must function both as an efficient organizational tool and an access point for Seminole and Miccosukee people to their heritage. However, in considering the viewpoints of these two major user groups, the interests of a third party must also be considered: those of the museum anthropologist.

The Evolution of Material Culture Studies

Anthropologists are the primary sources of many ethnographic collections in museums today and still play a major role in their research and interpretation. At longstanding natural history museums like FLMNH, anthropologists such as Goggin and Sturtevant collected ethnographic materials for decades. In fact, the systematic collecting of material culture in the mid 19th Century played an "important role in the intellectual development of anthropology (Thompson and Parezo 1989, 37)." In these early days of anthropology, ethnographic collections were seen as primary sources of data, as well as the principal outcome of field expeditions (Collier and Tschopik 1954, 771). However, unlike botany, paleontology, or other natural history fields, anthropology has not consistently utilized museum collections as a focus of research (Sturtevant 1973, 41). Early in the 20th Century, the research emphasis in anthropology began to shift from questions of materiality to those of sociology and a more holistic and interdisciplinary approach (Thomas 2010, 6), examining different aspects of cultures beyond the interrelations of material manifestations. It was not necessarily that material

culture studies were happening less frequently, but rather the emergence of other types of studies was becoming more prevalent (Thompson and Parezo, 51).

Museum Collections as Field Sites

The advantage of material culture study is that because museum collections are preserved in perpetuity and never obsolete, they offer the possibility for new questions and inferences. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, material culture studies have re-emerged at the forefront of museum anthropology (Thomas 2010, 6). The museum's role as an "anthropological databank (Sturtevant 1973)" is being realized by more and more anthropologists, lending credence to the idea of museum collections as "field sites (Candace Greene, personal communication)." By viewing ethnographic collections as "sites for the production of knowledge (Greene 2012)," anthropologists can not only take advantage of the intensive fieldwork conducted by previous generations, but also do it in a manner that is engaging to the indigenous communities being researched (Greene 2012). This perspective was prevalent throughout the 2012 Summer Institute in Museum Anthropology (SIMA) at the Smithsonian Institution's NMNH in Washington D.C.

Summer Institute in Museum Anthropology

A national program funded by National Science Foundation (NSF), SIMA's primary objective is to "promote more effective use of museums as sites for the production of knowledge (Greene 2012)." Participation in this program enhanced my understanding of the museum anthropologist's perspective and granted an opportunity to explore ethnographic collections from the role of the researcher rather than the research facilitator. As a graduate assistant at FLMNH, I had assisted several visiting researchers to the museum, but visits were seldom and often the information sought

was only complementary to research done in the field or outside the museum. However, by crafting my own research proposal and learning to use the NMNH collections as a “field site,” I was able not only to develop a unique approach to the study of Seminole and Miccosukee material culture, but also to apply that approach to the construction of the FEC database in a manner that may benefit researchers interested in pursuing a similar methodology.

A Genealogy of Objects

The inspiration for my SIMA research proposal was drawn from a May 2012 article in *The Seminole Tribune*, the official newspaper of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. In the article, Jonathan McMahon (formerly of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki) asked for feedback from the Seminole community on how best to engage them with the thousands of objects, documents and photographs held in collections storage (McMahon 2012). Among the museum’s suggestions were tours of collections, fulfillment of image requests, and unlimited use of the research library and language dictionaries. However, there is no explicit enticement to utilize these services beyond simply being a member of the Seminole Tribe. Considering the number of anthropological studies and census records conducted amongst the Seminoles in the early 20th Century, I contemplated whether a more personal connection might be established through genealogical ties to collections. Though McMahon does not overtly discuss it, lineage is a direct and obvious connection between today’s Seminole people and those associated with objects in the museum. This notion may be inherent to a member of the Seminole Tribe thinking about visiting Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki, but without directly advertising it, the museum fails to capitalize on the most personal of potential connections: the familial connection. The Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Department of Genealogy and anthropologists such as Sturtevant have

studied Seminole ancestry extensively, affording the possibility of personalized genealogical connections between today's Seminole people and the material culture of their ancestors. However, because Seminole artifacts are scattered throughout museum collections around the world, the problem becomes not only creating personal connections to objects at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki, but also connections to other *objects* worldwide. Thus, for my SIMA project, I proposed the initiation of research to uncover a global network of Seminole objects, documents and photographs, all connected through the Seminole or Miccosukee individuals who were at one time affiliated with them.

Fittingly coined a “genealogy of objects,” this project would commence with the collections at FLMNH and NMNH, but eventually expand to other museums with artifacts of known provenance, such as Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki. Any genealogical connections between objects would effectually aid in the decolonization of museum collections by breaking down the “barriers” between museums, bypassing traditional approaches for relating objects based on cultural area or object type. Instead, this new methodology approaches objects on the level of the individual, seeking to re-humanize and re-contextualize many of the objects held in ethnographic collections.

The Benefits of a Genealogically Oriented Research Methodology

Of course, to fulfill these objectives effectively, collections research must yield more than a simple list of Seminole names and corresponding objects. Taking a genealogical approach to the analysis of museum collections can also generate a variety of research questions. For example, studying how patterns in Seminole patchwork diffuse through generations of a particular family line could tell us a great deal about Seminole family life. Changes in the kinds of objects made also reflect demand for or the marketability of certain items, because some objects were made for

the tourist trade or commissioned by specific collectors. General comparisons between the diffusion of objects and the history of collecting practices or changing policies on Native Americans might reveal new questions for museum anthropologists.

The exploration of Seminole individuals as *artists* rather than simple “makers” of anthropological specimens allows for a study of changes and progressions in a person’s cumulative work over time, as well as of the social, political, and economic milieu in which they created their works. Previous studies of “primitive art” by art historians proved ineffectual to anthropologists when context was ignored in favor of aesthetics and form (Thompson and Parezo 1989, 49). By “personalizing” objects with contextual information about their artists and original circumstances, art studies become anthropological again. This approach creates new associations between objects that merit consideration by both anthropologists and art historians as a focus of research.

Contextual attributions, such as names, dates, and locations, can also be made to individual objects through genealogical research. For example, many historic photograph captions give no reference to the names of Seminole women or children present, instead identifying them in terms relative to an associated adult male. By referencing genealogical charts and census records, reasonable identifications can sometimes be inferred based on these partial identifications, the physical orientation of individuals in the photograph, and clues from associated museum records. Also, as a way to incentivize community engagement with collections, research databases can be constructed for individual Seminole clans, displaying the distribution of objects around the world from a particular lineage. Entire exhibits on Seminole individuals might even

emerge from this approach, as individualism is often a casualty of homogenized cultural exhibits.

Clearly, a variety of questions arise from this approach to material culture. Unfortunately, the completion of my SIMA proposal is not feasible within the parameters of this project in lieu of thesis, as it constitutes years if not decades of work. However, as a model for future approaches to ethnographic collections, it can be incorporated into the preliminary stages of the FEC database. Genealogical data collected at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki, NAA, NMAI, NMNH, and FLMNH have already resulted in attributions to several objects at FLMNH. With this information now readily available to FEC users, the database can continue to garner contextual attributions as it grows and develops around this prescribed genealogical methodology. Hopefully amongst those users will be members of the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes, whom this approach is intended to engage. However, as previously discussed in the *Protocols*, most genealogical and ancestral knowledge is intended for tribal use only. Should the collections database ever be published online, all genealogical information should be kept private. However, as a majority of the genealogical information recovered for this project was found in publicly accessible museum collections, it also requires maintenance and frequent entry by non-tribal museum staff members in order to facilitate the use of collections by visiting tribal members.

Perspective Summary

Not surprisingly, many non-Native museums struggle to engage the indigenous communities represented in their collections. Changes in government policy and museum practice, as well as the proliferation of community-owned museums and accessible online collections have aided considerably in this respect, but invoking a

personal connection to material culture often long-removed from its original context is challenging. However, by exploring the social lives of Seminole objects from a genealogical perspective, artifacts, photographs and documents are connected across museum boundaries through the relationships between people associated with them. This approach should not only give rise to an entirely new set of questions for both Native and non-Native researchers, but serve as a relational model for making museum collections more immediately accessible to indigenous communities. By incorporating this methodology into the FEC database, its value as a research tool and source of community engagement is significantly enhanced.

CHAPTER 6
THE PROJECT: CREATING THE FLORIDA ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION
DATABASE

The Planning Stages

As with many collaborative museum initiatives, the FEC Database emerged from a series of meetings and e-mail exchanges dating back nearly two years. On February 7, 2011, an informal meeting was held between the various faculty, staff, interns, and volunteers who were, at that time, affiliated with the FEC (Karen Walker, e-mail message to author, January 18, 2011). The meeting served as the first major push towards establishing the FEC as a premier research hub for the study of Seminole and Miccosukee culture. Several short-term goals were established for the collection, including the acquisition of new storage space and cabinetry, the consolidation of the FEC into a central location, the completion of unfinished accession or catalog records and the creation of a comprehensive collection inventory, including photographs, archival documents, and the continually expanding library.

Over the course of the Spring 2011 semester, all involved made significant progress towards bringing the established goals to fruition. In late March 2011, however, I was asked to submit an inventory of FLMNH Seminole and Miccosukee holdings to the Seminole Tribe of Florida's Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in Big Cypress, Florida (Karen Walker, e-mail message to author, March 21, 2011). After scrambling to piece together as "comprehensive" a Microsoft Excel inventory as possible under limited time constraints, I began to wonder about the practicality and reliability of such a method. Many of Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki's object records, for example, are readily accessible in

an online database.³⁴ I could not help but be surprised that at the State of Florida's official natural history museum, there was not an easier way for a member of a cooperating institution to attain detailed information about the FEC. The accuracy of such a hastily constructed inventory could not be guaranteed, nor could its depth. Of course, as the first tribal museum accredited by the AAM, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki is a model institution and ahead of the curve in many respects. It has a substantial budget for its size and is able to hire positions that are not even on staff at FLMNH. It also has the advantage of a more limited collections scope, dealing with about thirty-five thousand total "things" (Tara Backhouse, e-mail message to author, December 13, 2011), as opposed to the Florida Museum of Natural History's nearly thirty-four *million* objects and specimens (FLMNH 2011). Still, creating the inventory was an unexpectedly difficult task for such a relatively small collection and left something to be desired for the recipient, who was left to imagine the objects based on the limited descriptions I provided. This is what spurred me, on May 19, 2011, to propose to my thesis committee the creation of a relational, searchable, and eventually publicly accessible online database for the FEC as my project-in-lieu-of-thesis.

Dreams vs. Reality

My proposal was greeted with enthusiastic support from my committee, though I quickly realized that while I developed the idea independently, I was certainly not the first to do so. In fact, this project is simply a small portion of what most of the FLMNH faculty and staff have been striving towards for years: a comprehensive institution-wide database. As a graduate student relatively low in the museum's hierarchy, it was

³⁴ Portions of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum's collections are available online through a partnership with Pasttime Software. <http://semtribe.pastperfect-online.com/34687cgi/mweb.exe?request=ks>

important to understand that my specific interests in creating a database for the FEC were justifiably superseded by the interests of the museum as a whole. To make this project truly beneficial, it would have to at least have the *potential* to interrelate with other FLMNH collection databases in the future. In addition, it would have to fit more than just the needs of the FEC and its managing staff, but also those of the entire Anthropology Division. The time, labor, and expense required for such an endeavor demanded the consensus and collaboration of multiple programs within the Anthropology Division. Otherwise, I would only be creating another standalone inventory, not dissimilar to the Excel spreadsheet I created for Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki.

Fortunately, the decision to pursue the development of a relational database for the FEC came at a time when the museum was on the brink of implementing its own in-house museum-wide database, one that had been in development for several years. Beginning in late August 2011, a series of meetings were held between several members of the Anthropology Division and the people in charge of constructing the in-house database, with the intention of using metadata from the FEC as a trial subset for the entire FLMNH Ethnographic Collection. In preparation for these meetings, it was my responsibility to parse out and organize the existing FEC metadata in a manner that both adhered to the standards produced years earlier by Registrar Elise LeCompte and conformed to the direction of the proposed database. In partial fulfillment of a Fall 2011 Museum Practicum under South Florida Archaeology and Ethnography Curator William Marquardt, I produced multiple Excel spreadsheets that were then migrated into the new in-house program. We were granted access to a “live” version of the database, allowing us to test it for functionality and practicality and provide constant feedback to its

managers. As with any computer technology still “under construction,” there were numerous bugs and interface errors and though it seemed to be on the right track, it also seemed far from complete. The most significant issue was that it simply was not user-friendly, navigable, or intuitive enough to be an efficient tool for museum staff. For this reason, much of its power was simply lost on its users. As previously discussed, the divide between programmer and user was apparent. Considering the diversity of potential users, both in skill level and specific collections needs, it was months (if not years) away from being fully operational, even after years of previous development. Creating a custom museum-wide database that fit the needs of an incredible diversity of collections like those of FLMNH is certainly an ambitious and laudable goal, but considering the existing state of the majority of the Anthropology Division’s collections, the time had come to explore other options.

Discovering Re:Discovery

The Anthropology Division’s faculty and staff spent months shopping for the ideal collections management system. Several programs were considered, including KE EMu (used by NMNH), PastPerfect (used by Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki), and Re:Discovery Proficio (used by the Southeastern Archeological Center [SEAC] in Tallahassee, Florida). Among the factors considered were the “five characteristics of the ideal database.” To make an investment of this magnitude, the database had to be user-friendly, flexible, powerful, secure, and capable of managing the complex contextual information inherent in anthropological collections. The database also needed to be affordable, since at this point it was only viewed as a semi-permanent transition to the future institution-wide database. The general consensus pointed to Re:Discovery Proficio, which met most of the Anthropology Division’s needs. Some staff members had prior experience with the

system, vouching for its relational capabilities and intuitiveness. The ability to easily import and export data meant that should the museum decide to terminate its license with Re:Discovery in the future, data conversion would not set the museum back in time and money. Powerful security options and an offline “public search” were also major factors, because they allowed guest users to explore designated fields in a simple and intuitive manner. Security and networking strategies were discussed with the Office of Museum Technology in order to ensure their feasibility and compatibility with FLMNH and University of Florida protocols.

Re:Discovery Proficio currently offers four different modules: the Collections, Archives, Archaeology, and Web Interface Modules.³⁵ After conferring with Re:Discovery spokespeople via e-mail, phone, and in-person meetings over the course of several months, the Collections and Archive Modules were deemed the most appropriate for the current needs of the Anthropology Division. The Archaeology Module was ruled out because the flexible Collections Module can be customized to incorporate a greater diversity of collections, including the archaeological ones. The Web Interface Module, while excluded from FLMNH’s initial investment, holds great promise for the future of the collections. Eventually, when the collections are in an acceptable state for public viewing, the Web Interface Module provides a medium through which to provide straightforward Internet access to the collections database. For the FEC, this means that while I am not able to immediately make the database publicly accessible, I can have it prepared for online publication, a relatively simple final step if the Web Interface Module is installed.

³⁵ <http://www.rediscov.com/productsoverview.aspx>

The Dirty Work

I began entering FEC data into a full-service trial version of Re:Discovery Proficio in February 2012. While the decision to pursue Re:Discovery as a collections management system had been made, a full test of its capabilities with FLMNH data had not been attempted. Using the same dataset submitted for the in-house museum database trials, Re:Discovery was able to import the Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and link them fairly effectively. However, due to the limitations of Microsoft Excel, the submitted collections data were largely incomplete. Detailed object descriptions on old catalog cards had been substituted with simple object names in order to accommodate the sorting limitations of Excel, which meant that much of the provenance that made the FEC significant was absent. Minor importation errors were also abundant, as many imported data fields were placed into improper Re:Discovery fields. However, these incompatibilities were more reflective of the limitations of managing a database in Microsoft Excel than the inadequacies of Re:Discovery. Much of the absent data was a product of my own negligence, as instead of creating a comprehensive dataset from the outset, I had produced only the information required at the time. A significant amount of data entry and correction would be required in order to verify Re:Discovery Proficio's capacity as a comprehensive relational database for the rest of the Anthropology Division. A majority of this project, from February to October 2012, was spent completing and correcting all 644 individual object records. The numerous supplementary, accession, loan, and donor records, most of which were not submitted to Re:Discovery at all, also required a significant time investment because they had to be found, researched, and entered into the database. However, as previously stated, digitizing the FEC for "digitization's sake" would not suffice. Building the database's

relational framework was an enormous and critical first step. However, in order to “flesh it out” and truly maximize its potential as a research tool, the incorporation of the collections management, Native American, and museum anthropology perspectives was required.

Applying the Collections Management Perspective

The integration of the “collections management perspective” into the FEC database was relatively straightforward. The “five characteristics of the ideal database” were fundamentally engrained in the program because museum collections managers and registrars are Re:Discovery’s primary users. Incorporating this perspective meant little modification of the database itself, but plenty of data entry, photography, and attention to detail. To fully maximize the database’s relational capabilities, each object record would have to be edited individually, with special attention paid to relationships with other datasets. Consistency in data entry is essential, because a simple typo can detach an object record from its supplemental records, leaving it in a classification by itself. In order to maintain consistency with previous FLMNH collections records, LeCompte’s data dictionary and standards were consulted during data entry (Elise LeCompte, e-mail to author, August 15, 2012). Catalog numbers, accession numbers, object names, and material types were modified to meet these standards whenever possible. For example, due the variation in FLMNH catalog number formats over the past century, “place-marker zeroes” are required to maintain a chronological sequence, even in Re:Discovery. Also, object names and materials specific to the FEC were added to the Re:Discovery lexicon if they were not already a part of the built-in dictionaries.

Each of the 644 object records required the manipulation of at least thirteen pre-existing data fields in Re:Discovery Proficio. Catalog number, accession number, object

name, description, material, storage location, object status, record status, count, dimensions, source, acquisition method, and cultural association were all known to a certain degree for each object (Figure B-1). Additional fields such as title, artist/maker, date made, place made, condition, condition description, recent conservation, eminent figure, provenance narrative, and notes were completed when the information was available (Figure B-2). Information for each object was obtained from original catalog cards and related documentation. Metadata were entered uniformly and consistently throughout to ensure maximum functionality. However, most accession records had to be created independently and then retroactively linked to object records because the initial importation of these data was either partial or incomplete. All known accession or loan information was entered into one of two linked tables (Figure B-4), whose intricate hierarchies also infused biographical records for donors and loan institutions respectively. Addresses and contact information for these entities, found on the original accession, catalog, and loan cards in the Special Collections Room, were parsed out and entered into their respective data fields. Any relevant information found in accession files was incorporated as well. Overall, five main data tables were constructed for this project: catalog records, accessions, loans out, artist/maker/eminent figure, and names and addresses. Each entry in the four latter tables is related to at least one record in the object catalog, thereby making the FEC a fully relational database. Many smaller data tables were constructed or updated as well, such as cultural association, material type, and record status. Though less integral to the relational integrity of the database, the creation of these tables promotes consistency by providing drop-down menus and customized options for future users to choose from.

Because Re:Discovery allows for the storage of photographic images and multimedia in object records, the existing digital images associated with the FEC were first organized on the FLMNH network shared drive and then imported into the database. Many of the existing digital images are a direct result of the work of Shawna Pies and Eric Zamora, who in 2009 photographed the FEC objects in storage for Pies's wiki project (Pies 2009). Pies also scanned a majority of the photographic slides that were taken in October 2000 of objects on loan to FLMNH's "South Florida People and their Environments" exhibit, where they will remain in-house until at least 2015. In fact, more than ten percent of the FEC's 644 objects are currently on loan to this single exhibit. In spite of this, many objects in the FEC have not been photographed. This is especially true for the 29 objects on loan to five other museums, as well as the 47 acquisitions since 2009. Therefore, museum quality photographs were taken of all recent procurements, as well as the few objects in storage that were previously overlooked. Objects on loan to other institutions, however, will require either image requests via e-mail or in-person visits. One such visit was made on October 25, 2012, when I visited the Jupiter Lighthouse Museum (JLM) in Jupiter, Florida to photograph several FEC artifacts on loan from the FLMNH. This visit coincided with a research trip to the Seminole Tribal Headquarters in Hollywood, Florida. With advance notice of my arrival, the JLM staff graciously accommodated my requests and I completed my objectives in less than an hour. Similar "photography detours" are recommended for any FEC affiliated faculty or staff making future research trips across Florida.

While capturing images of objects became a priority due to the organizational, interpretive and practical advantages they provide, 256 of the 644 (40%) total FEC

object records are images themselves. With so many photographic prints, postcards, and slides, a considerable amount of scanning was required to complete the digitization process. FLMNH volunteers had already scanned a majority of the early FEC photographs, but the most recent image donations remained incomplete, as well as several dozen previously overlooked images. The addition of a professional-grade scanner to the FEC research area on October 11, 2012 expedited this objective. Also scanned in the process were many of the original FLMNH catalog cards that had not been previously scanned by Pies in 2009. The motivation to scan all catalog cards stemmed from my SIMA interactions with NMNH's online database, where original catalog cards for each record are available in an image file, along with a picture of the object (if available). Having catalog cards accessible online is extremely advantageous to collections research, because they often provide clearer contextual information than the sometimes-limited user fields of a database. In constructing the FEC database, catalog cards were imported into object records "behind" only the primary object photograph(s) (Figure B-3), making them readily apparent to any user.

The "collections management perspective" was employed heavily throughout this project. Not only is it innate in the Re:Discovery software, but it is also implemented on a daily basis at FLMNH. Numerous meetings between collections managers, curators, and registrars resulted in a consensus on the appropriate software to fulfill the needs of participating programs within the Anthropology Division. The "five characteristics of the ideal database" are evident during use. Formerly onerous tasks such as queries, reports, and label making are now simple and expedient. Having the FEC metadata in one place has supplied a constant stream of surprises, from finding long forgotten

paintings to following up on decades-old loans. Not only is it functioning optimally as an organizational tool, it has faculty and staff members actively thinking about and developing the FEC again. The most important thing to realize about the “collections management perspective” is that it is not just the perspective of a single registrar, curator, or collections manager, it is the collective outlook of an entire team of people working together to fulfill the museum’s mission. As a facilitator of communication and teamwork, Re:Discovery Proficio was functioning long before the first object record was entered.

Applying the Native American Perspective

The “Native American perspective” has been incorporated into the FEC database primarily through an adherence to the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*. By proactively engaging with Ah-Tah-Tah-Ki and the Seminole Department of Genealogy as suggested by the *Protocols*, I have established a personal basis for what is hopefully a long-lasting and reciprocal friendship. This is not imply that FLMNH has not engaged with indigenous communities in the past, as the faculty and staff have gone to far greater lengths than I in consulting and collaborating with the Seminole and Miccosukee people. However, specific to the creation of the FEC database, several measures have been taken to ensure that the “Native voice” is heard.

While relatively uncommon in the FEC, some of the oldest photographs have derogatory titles or captions. As recommended under the “Providing Context” section of the *Protocols*, all derogatory language in the FEC metadata has been substituted with appropriate language in brackets to indicate a change has been made. For example, the word “squaw” has been replaced with [wife] in several instances. This alerts the

reader that a modification has been made and provides more insight into the context surrounding the photographs.

On the “extended information” tab for each object record in Re:Discovery, there is a set of customizable user fields. In order to comply with the “Striving for Balance and Content in Perspectives” section of the *Protocols*, I have allotted several fields to “tribal attributions,” where the identifications, opinions or thoughts on any individual object by a tribal representative can be incorporated as a permanent part of the collections record (Figure B-5). For example, during a visit to the museum in 1997, Seminole elders made numerous comments about specific artifacts, adding valuable and previously unknown context to the FEC. This information was recorded by museum staff members and now can be incorporated into the database. However, because some information is of a sensitive nature, there are two “tribal attribution” fields, one for public knowledge and one for tribal knowledge only. This not only lends a voice to Seminole and Miccosukee people in the interpretation of the FEC, but also offers a level of authority over what information is shared. Information from Pies’s wiki has been incorporated into the “Tribal Attributions Public” field, because these comments were originally made in a public forum. Thus, the field serves as a solution to the problem of the standalone wiki. The idea for a “tribal only” attribution field grew from conducting research at Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki in June 2012, where a large quantity of information is off-limits to outsiders, including myself. While FLMNH is not a tribal museum, it should continue to consider these practices in order to maintain strong relationships.

Perhaps the most important infusion of Native American perspective into the FEC database has also been the most enjoyable. In an effort to “build a relationship of

mutual respect (as per the *Protocols*),” I have collaborated via e-mail and in person with the Seminole Tribe of Florida’s Department of Genealogy at Tribal Headquarters on the Hollywood Reservation since June 2012. Through this partnership, dozens of previously unknown Seminole individuals in FLMNH photographs have been identified and an astonishing amount of context restored to the FEC. Two face-to-face meetings have yielded identifications for dozens of individuals in photographs that have been nameless for more than 50 years. Even more rewarding, however, was the experience of establishing a mutual partnership and witnessing the FEC become a source of excitement for someone in its community of origin. During this visit, I also received important feedback into what types of fields should be made public or private. Much of the shared information will be kept in-house, but it will be available to those with the credentials to view it.

Applying the Museum Anthropology Perspective

The application of the “museum anthropology perspective” to the FEC Database is part of a concerted effort to turn the entire collection into a “site for the production of knowledge.” Through the implementation of a genealogical approach to Seminole and Miccosukee material culture, I believe that the FEC will yield a more personal connection to its researchers, thereby increasing its visibility and use. However, though a derivative of lessons in museum anthropology, the “field site” is not necessarily always intended for anthropologists, but also for Seminole and Miccosukee people interested in exploring their family lineage.

While combing the archives and collections at NAA and NMNH respectively in 2012, I gathered vast amounts of genealogical information from Sturtevant’s field notes and photographed more than 200 objects affiliated with at least one known Seminole

individual, whether through artistry, previous ownership or anecdotal references. I also photographed more than 200 photographs, newspaper clippings and postcards at NAA, all featuring at least one identified individual. Combined with additional collections information from NMAI and Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki, I returned to FLMNH with these resources to test their potential applications to the FEC. What I found was that not only did certain individuals appear in multiple museum collections, but also because of the amount of data I had accumulated, I could actually make some contextual attributions of my own.

For example, FLMNH photograph 94106 (Figure C-1) shows eight Seminole individuals situated outside of a chickee. Each person has a number over his or her head, presumably assigned by the photographer, which links to an identification written on the back of the card. However, beyond the names of the individuals, the context of this photograph is unclear. Four fairly young children are standing in the foreground, one teenage boy is standing in the background, and three middle-aged to elderly adults are sitting in the foreground. This leads one to believe that this is possibly a family, but without any additional information, there is no way to know for sure. However, when the eight names are searched for in Sturtevant's 1959 genealogical charts, some exciting connections are made. It turns out that this *is* a family group, but with a twist. The young girl is not the boys' sister; she is a cousin. In fact, the elderly woman on the left is actually the grandmother of all five children and the mother of the man seated in the middle. The young girl's mother is actually the sister of the woman seated on the right, making the woman her aunt. They are all members of the same clan. Interestingly, the couple had three additional children not present in this picture, though their absence remains unexplained.

Clearly, this approach reveals more about the photograph than previously known. However, taken a step further, an approximate date can precisely be attributed to the photograph. Applying the 1914 Reconstructed Census by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the genealogical connections are confirmed and birth and death dates for a majority of the individuals pictured are provided. Based on the birth date of the youngest individual present and the death date of the eldest, this picture was taken between roughly 1904 and 1915. Based on the approximate age of the youngest child in the photograph, a date of circa 1910 can confidently be assigned to this photo. Prior to this attribution, the only dates that existed for this photograph were 1922, an approximation given to the entire accession, and 1958, the year it was found in collections and accessioned.

In addition to establishing attributions on a micro-level, a wider lens reveals cross-institutional connections between collections based on this single image. In my limited research thus far, I have found eighteen other photographs or artifacts at four different institutions associated with someone in this picture. Previously unrelated artifacts, such as a wooden sofkee spoon made by one brother and a small totem pole made by another, now carry new meanings and with those, new questions. This demonstrates the power of the genealogical methodology with only a cursory study. The future of ethnographic collections at museums, in my opinion, lies in finding the commonalities that link objects not only to other objects across institutional boundaries³⁶, but also across time and space to people in communities of origin today.

³⁶ Portals have emerged as a popular method for aggregating and sharing ethnographic collections. Examples include “E-humanity,” operated primarily by the Digital Science Center at Indiana University and funded by a grant from the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), and The Southeastern Native American Collections Project (SNACP), an initiative directed by Jason Baird Jackson of Indiana University. While SNACP is still in development, the FEC should be considered for inclusion into both portals. As of December 10, 2012, there are already nearly 400 search results for the keyword “Seminole” in E-humanity. E-humanity can be accessed at the following link: <http://e-humanity.org/>.

In terms of building the FEC database, this approach yields new information and offers a multitude of possibilities, but it also lays the groundwork for a genealogical databank of sorts. Each object record can be attributed to either an artist/maker or an eminent figure. For any object in the FEC associated with an identified individual, a related biographical page is created for that person. With space for an abundance of personal details, these biographical pages bring the people behind the FEC to life. However, in order to tie in the genealogical relationships between the individuals, I customized several blank user fields (Figure B-6) so that one person's biographical page can be linked to those of an unlimited number of relatives across the relational database using traditional familial categories such "grandparents" or "children." As of November 2012, there are more than 150 individuals in this database (Figure B-7), though the connections have only just begun. Hopefully, with these resources available and a framework established to pursue a "genealogy of objects" further, the FEC will become a research destination for Seminole and Miccosukee people seeking a tangible connection to family history.

Conclusion

As one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Seminole and Miccosukee materials in the world, the Florida Ethnographic Collection is on the verge of realizing its full potential as a site for community engagement and the production of knowledge. It is my hope that by creating a relational database for this collection, not only will it become a research hub for Native and non-Native people alike, but also its unique accessibility will connect to its users on a personal level. By infusing three equally significant viewpoints into the construction of the FEC database - the collections managements perspective, the Native American perspective, and the museum

anthropology perspective – I hope that I have created a relational database that not only satisfies these groups, but sustains the FEC for years to come. Through collaboration, consultation, and a genealogical approach to material culture, this project serves as a model not only for other anthropological collections at the FLMNH, but also for any museum striving to create an effective and engaging database for its ethnographic collections.

APPENDIX A
DATA

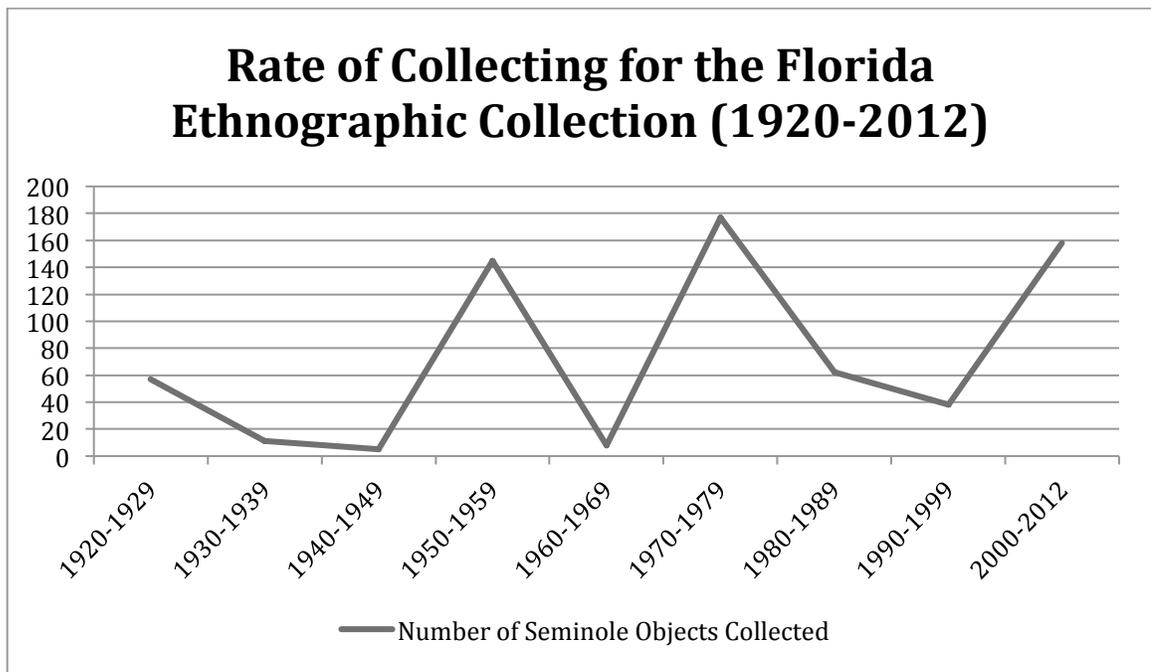


FIGURE A-1

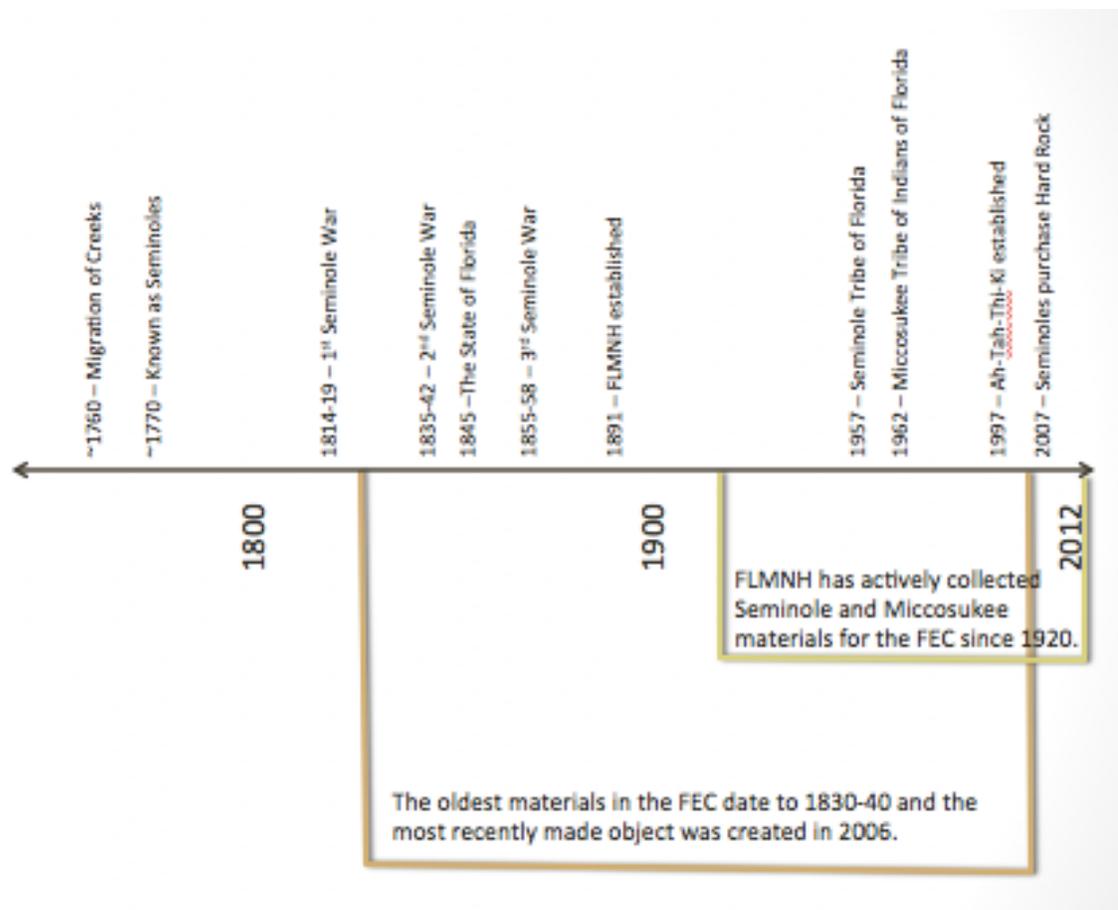


FIGURE A-2 Timeline of the Florida Ethnographic Collection.

This timeline illustrates the scope of the FEC. Significant events in Florida history are shown above the timeline. The green bracket indicates the amount of time the FLMNH has been collecting Seminole material relative to Seminole history. The brown bracket indicates the amount of time represented by the objects in the FEC relative to Seminole history.

APPENDIX B

DATABASE SCREENSHOTS

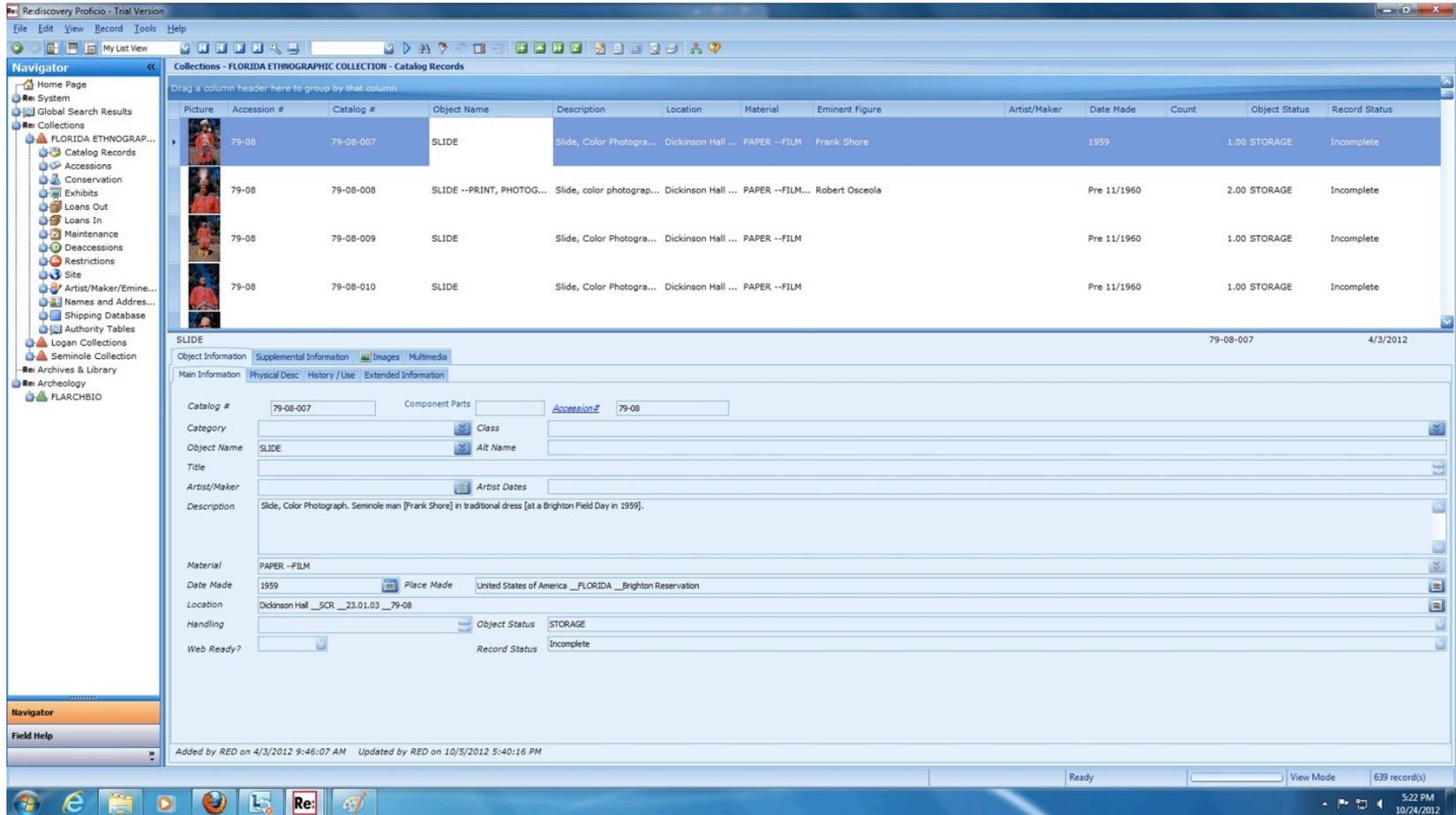


FIGURE B-1 Main Information Tab.
Typical view upon startup.

The screenshot displays the Rediscovery Proficio software interface. The main window shows a list of catalog records for the 'FLORIDA ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION - Catalog Records'. The records are sorted by 'Eminent Figure'. The selected record is a 'BOWL' with accession number 3933 and catalog number 92787, made of wood, with a date made of 'Pre 1949' and located at 'Dickinson Hall __SCR__23.02.02'. The main information tab for this record is expanded, showing details such as the artist/maker 'Micohatchee __Manufacturer', the description 'Wooden bowl, cypress. Flat bottom; incised, divided diamond on 1 side; round; flanged lip; cracked.', and the material 'WOOD'.

Picture	Accession #	Catalog #	Object Name	Description	Location	Material	Eminent Figure	Artist/Maker	Date M...	Count	Object...	Record Status
	2001-96	2001-96-001	CAPE	A Seminole woman's pa...		COTTON CLOTH --R...		Martha Jones __Manufacturer	2001	1.00	LOAN OUT	Incomplete
	2001-96	2001-96-002	SKIRT	Seminole woman's patc...		COTTON CLOTH --R...		Martha Jones __Manufacturer	2001	1.00	LOAN OUT	Incomplete
	3933	92925	BASKET	Seminole basket made ...	Dickinson Hall __SC...	PALMETTO	Mary Tommie	Mary Tommie __Manufacturer	9/17/1942	1.00	LOAN OUT	Complete
	3933	92787	BOWL	Wooden bowl, cypress. ...	Dickinson Hall __SC...	WOOD	Micohatchee --Harriett M. Bedell	Micohatchee __Manufacturer	Pre 1949	1.00	STORAGE	Complete
	3933	92788	BOWL	Wooden bowl, cypress. ...	Dickinson Hall __SC...	WOOD	Micohatchee --Harriett M. Bedell	Micohatchee __Manufacturer	Pre 1949	1.00	STORAGE	Complete
	3933	92789	BOWL	Wooden bowl, cypress. ...	Dickinson Hall __SC...	WOOD	Micohatchee --Harriett M. Bedell	Micohatchee __Manufacturer	Pre 1949	1.00	STORAGE	Complete
	3933	92790	PLATE	Wooden plate, cypress. ...	Dickinson Hall __SC...	WOOD	Micohatchee --Harriett M. Bedell	Micohatchee __Manufacturer	Pre 1949	1.00	STORAGE	Complete
	95-01	95-01-001	BRACELET	Beaded Seminole bracel...	Dickinson Hall __SC...	GLASS --COTTON F...	Missie Tiger	Missie Tiger __Manufacturer	1923-1924	1.00	STORAGE	Complete

Main Information Tab:

Object Information | Supplemental Information | Images | Multimedia

Main Information | Physical Desc | History / Use | Extended Information

Title

Artist/Maker: Micohatchee __Manufacturer | Artist Dates

Description: Wooden bowl, cypress. Flat bottom; incised, divided diamond on 1 side; round; flanged lip; cracked.

Material: WOOD

Date Made: Pre 1949 | Place Made: United States of America __FLORIDA __Everglades City

Location: Dickinson Hall __SCR__23.02.02

Handling | Object Status: STORAGE

Added by RED on 4/3/2012 9:45:53 AM | Updated by RED on 10/4/2012 5:11:05 PM

FIGURE B-2 Main Information Tab.
List sorted by eminent figure.

Rediscovery Proficio - Trial Version

File Edit View Record Tools Help

My List View

Navigator

- Home Page
- System
- Global Search Results
- Collections
 - FLORIDA ETHNOGRAP...
 - Catalog Records
 - Accessions
 - Conservation
 - Exhibits
 - Loans Out
 - Loans In
 - Maintenance
 - Disaccessions
 - Restrictions
 - Site
 - Artist/Maker/Emine...
 - Names and Addr...
 - Shipping Database
 - Authority Tables
 - Logan Collections
 - Seminole Collection
- Archives & Library
- Archeology
- FLARCHBIO

Field Help

Collections - FLORIDA ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION - Loans Out

Drag a column header here to group by that column

Loan Id	Borrower	Loan Desc
X-2000-5	Florida Museum of Natural History	"South Florida Peoples and Environment" Exhibit
X-2008-1	Florida Museum of Natural History	"Dugout Canoes: Paddling Through the Americas" Exhibit
X-74-25		
X-76-13	Florida Museum of Natural History	Florida State Museum Department of Interpretation
Y-93-2	Lignumvitae Key State Botanical Site	Lignumvitae Key State Botanical Site
Z-2002-5	Orange County Regional History Center	Orange County Regional History Center
Z-2008-2	Silver River Museum and Environmental Education Ce	Silver River Museum Exhibit
Z-2009-2	Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and Museum	Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse and Museum
Z-2009-4	South Florida Museum and Bishop Planetarium	South Florida Museum & Bishop Planetarium
Z-79-11		Historic St. Augustine Preservation Board
Z-88-11	Collier County Museum	Collier County Museum

Z-2008-2

Loan Out Information Items on Loan Images

Print Refresh View Add Edit Delete

Directory	Table	Catalog #	Loan Status	Object	Start Date	End Date	Value
FEC	Catalog Records	92890A	ACTIVE	MORTAR	7/14/2008	6/30/2009	\$0.00
FEC	Catalog Records	80847	ACTIVE	SPOON	7/14/2008	6/30/2009	\$0.00
FEC	Catalog Records	92-46-001B	ACTIVE	PESTLE	7/14/2008	6/30/2009	\$0.00
FEC	Catalog Records	92864	ACTIVE	BANGLE, SILVER	7/14/2008	6/30/2009	\$0.00
FEC	Catalog Records	92915	ACTIVE	BASKET	7/14/2008	6/30/2009	\$0.00
FEC	Catalog Records	E1017	ACTIVE	NECKLACE	7/14/2008	6/30/2009	\$0.00
FEC	Catalog Records	92785	ACTIVE	BASKET	7/14/2008	6/30/2009	\$0.00

7

Ready View Mode 11 record(s)

4:27 PM 11/14/2012

FIGURE B-4 Loans Out Table.
Active and expired loans with linked objects.

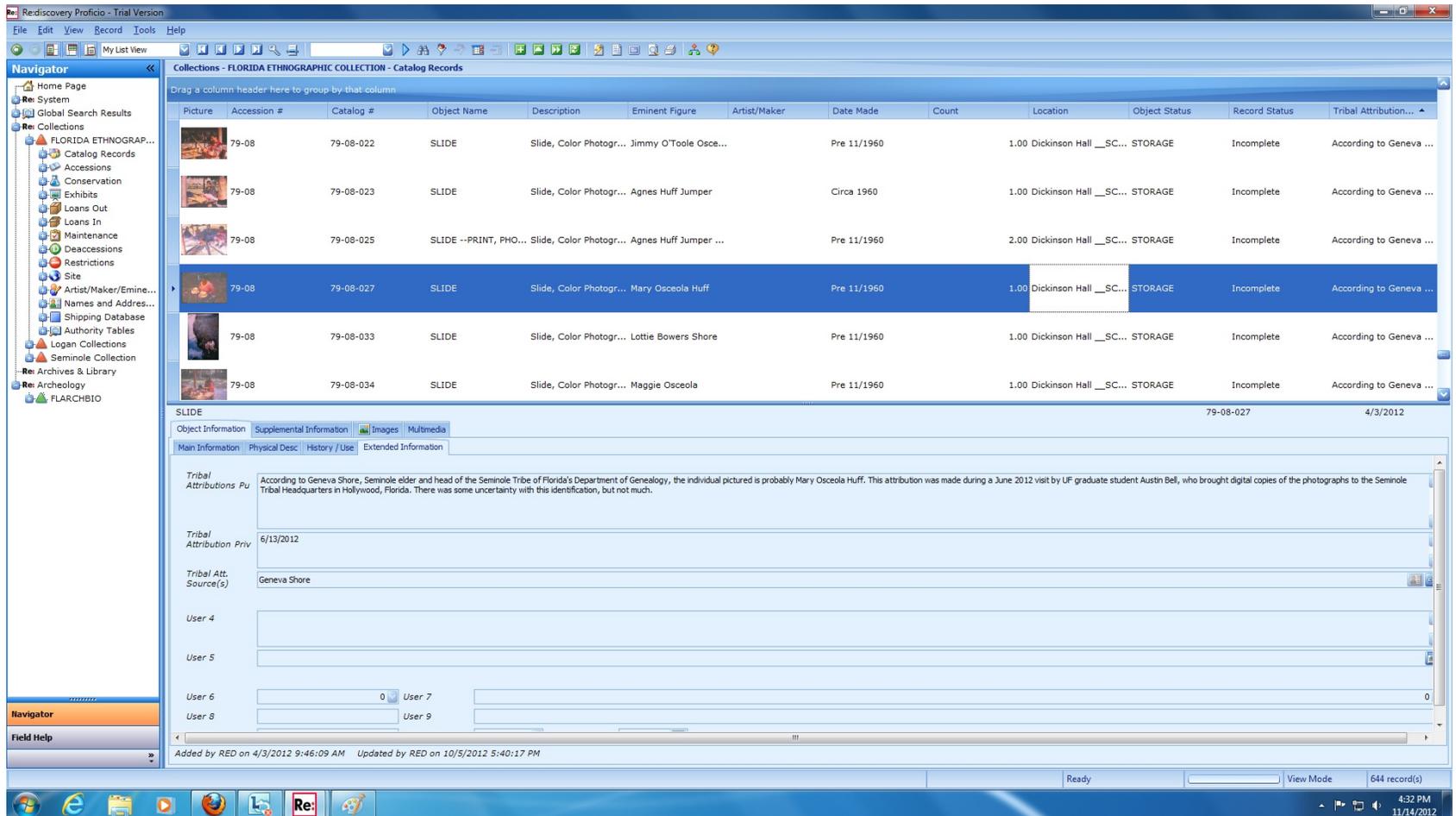


FIGURE B-5 Extended Information Tab.
Customized tribal attribution fields.

Collections - FLORIDA ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION - Artist/Maker/Eminent Figure

Drag a column header here to group by that column

Name	Dates	Nation	Organization	Grandparents	Parents	Spouse	Children	Grandchildren
Alice Huff		Seminole						
Annie Billie	1896-	Seminole			Little Billie			
Annie Mae Tommie		Seminole						
Annie Tommie	1856-1946	Seminole				Doctor Tommie	Ben Tommie --Brownie Tom...	
Beets Tiger		Seminole						
Ben Tommie	1883-1971	Seminole		Grandma Jumper --Old Doct...	Doctor Tommie --Annie Tom...			
Ben Wells		Seminole						
Betty Mae Jumper	-	Seminole		Mary Tiger	Ada Tiger	Moses Jumper		
Betty Osceola	-	Seminole						
Billy Bowlegs		Seminole						
Billy Bowlegs III		Seminole						
Billy Osceola	-	Seminole						
Bobby Tiger		Seminole						
Brownie Tommie	1899-	Seminole		Grandma Jumper --Old Doct...	Doctor Tommie --Annie Tom...			
Buffalo Jim		Seminole						
Charlie Billie		Seminole						

Artist Information Images

Main Information Extended Information

Grandparents: Grandma Jumper --Old Doctor Tommie

Parents: Doctor Tommie --Annie Tommie

Spouse:

Children:

Grandchildren:

Added by RED on 9/14/2012 5:56:15 PM Updated by RED on 10/5/2012 10:38:38 AM

FIGURE B-6 Artist/Maker/Eminent Figure Table.
Relational genealogy fields on individual biographical records.

The screenshot displays the Rediscovery Proficio software interface. The main window shows a table titled "Collections - FLORIDA ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION - Artist/Maker/Eminent Figure". The table has columns for Name, Dates, Nation, Organization, Grandparents, Parents, Spouse, Children, and Grandchildren. Below the table, there is a detailed record for Betty Mae Jumper, including her name, title, organization, birth year (1923), death year, dates, notes, and accomplishments.

Name	Dates	Nation	Organization	Grandparents	Parents	Spouse	Children	Grandchildren
Corey Osceola		Seminole						
Damian Jay McGirt	-	Seminole						
Doctor John	-	Seminole						
Doctor Tiger		Seminole						
Doctor Tommie	1860-1915	Seminole			Grandma Jumper --Old Doct...	Annie Tommie	Ben Tommie --Brownie Tom...	
Donna Frank		Seminole						
Dorothy Buster		Seminole						
Each-ches-hah-chee Jimmie		Seminole						
Elizabeth		Seminole						
Emma Nicco	-	Seminole				Charlie Nicco		
Eula Matlow	-	Seminole						
Eula Tus-kee-na-kee	1904-1941	Seminole		Grandma Jumper				
Everett Osceola		Seminole						
Flagler Motlow	-	Seminole						
Florence Stiles Randle		Seminole						
Foke-Luste-Hajo		Seminole						
Frank Charlie		Seminole						
Frank Huff	1911-	Seminole			Sam Huff --Rosalie Huff			
Frank Jimmie	-	Seminole						
Frank Osceola	-	Seminole						
Frank Osceola, Mrs.	-	Seminole						

Artist Information: Betty Mae Jumper

Main Information:

- Name: Betty Mae Jumper
- Title:
- Organization:
- Birth Year: 1923
- Death Year: Productive Years
- Dates: Nation: Seminole

Notes:

- "Ada Tiger was Missie Tiger's half-sister. Ada was Betty Mae Jumper's mother. Betty Mae Tiger is now Betty Mae Jumper." -Doris P. Clarke (Donor, Acc. 95-1)
- "Betty Mae Tiger was born April 27, 1923." -Legends of the Seminoles (Article, Acc. 95-1)

Accomplish:

- Attended Choctaw Indian Boarding School as a 4th grader in North Carolina.
- Graduated high school at 22, the first Seminole Indian to do so.
- Elected Seminole Tribal Chairman in 1966.
- Founded 3 tribal newspapers, including the Seminole Tribune in 1979, of which she is the Editor-in-Chief.

Added by RED on 9/24/2012 11:08:06 AM Updated by RED on 9/28/2012 5:21:41 PM

FIGURE B-7 Artist/Maker/Eminent Figure Table.
Standard view of table.

APPENDIX C
PHOTOGRAPHS



FIGURE C-1 FLMNH Cat. No. 94106.
Tinted color postcard, mounted on fiber-board.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Austin Bell was born and raised in West Palm Beach, Florida. After moving to Sioux Falls, South Dakota during high school, Austin returned to Florida for college, where he attended the University of Florida, earning a double B.A. in anthropology and classical studies (2007). Austin has worked at the Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH) continuously since 2008, both in the South Florida Archaeology and Ethnography Program and the Environmental Archaeology Program. In 2010, Austin returned to school at the University of Florida to pursue an M.A. in Museum Studies. During his student tenure, Austin has interned at three different museums in addition to maintaining his position as a curatorial assistant at FLMNH. In Summer 2011, he participated in a ten-week collections management internship at the History of Diving Museum in the Florida Keys. In Spring 2012, he was enlisted as a photographer for the Public Relations and Marketing Department at the Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art and later that year, participated in the Summer Institute in Museum Anthropology (SIMA) at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History in Washington D.C. Austin has presented student projects at both regional and national museum conferences and co-curated an online exhibit at the University of Florida Smathers Library. Upon graduation, Austin hopes to pursue a museum career in collections management or collections research, particularly with Native American ethnographic materials. He also has the two best sisters in the world, so he hopes to live closer to them, the rest of his family, and his beloved cat Smudge.