



DIVISION OF PALEONTOLOGY GENERAL CATALOGING PROCEDURES

The American Museum of Natural History Division of Vertebrate Paleontology has adopted the following set of general procedures relating to cataloging.

- No new large blocks of numbers (i.e., more than 50) should be issued, either to AMNH staff and students, or to workers in other institutions.
 - In the past, researchers were often assigned blocks of catalog numbers, which could be used, often over considerable periods of time, to catalog specimens that they were studying. Although this has been accepted practice throughout the paleontology profession, and more widely in natural history collections, it has a number of drawbacks. For example, in order to avoid the risk of re-assigning the same number to more than one specimen, unused numbers in the assigned catalog block series need to be “retired” – i.e., made unavailable for future usage; because of the time taken to process collections (2 to 20 years or more), and the size of the blocks of numbers assigned, this is harder in practice than it might seem. Even when numbers are retired, the end result is often large blocks of unused numbers in the catalog series, which can give rise to confusion as to whether or not a number is available.
- Blocks of numbers that have already been assigned can still be used by the assignees. In the event that they are not used by the assignees, the numbers should be “retired.”
- All holders of catalog cards should be asked to return them whether filled in or unused. A mutually agreeable date should be set. In no case should this be more than 3 years into the future.
- Retired numbers should be indicated by striking diagonally through the relevant catalog card in indelible black ink.
- To minimize the possibility of duplication of catalogue numbers, only the relevant collection manager, or a designee working under the supervision of the collection manager (e.g., a student or volunteer), can assign a catalog number to a specimen.
- No un-accessioned specimens can be cataloged. While provisional assignment of a catalog number can be made for tracking purposes, final labeling of the specimen and completion of cards can only be done when an accession number has been assigned.
- With very few exceptions, no numbers should be assigned for specimens that are not physically present in the Museum.