



The  
*Michigan Traditional Arts*  
Program



# **MICHIGAN TRADITIONAL ARTS PROGRAM FIELD RESEARCH GUIDELINES**

**Updated: October 2016**

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## **1. ABOUT MTAP**

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

## **2. ABOUT WORK FOR HIRE**

We request that you follow closely the formats described in these guidelines. You should make any personal copies of fieldwork to keep for your records before submitting the final report to MTAP. The work must be completed within the dates stated on your contract or memorandum of agreement.

**\*\*Note:** you must have an IRS form W-9 on file with MSUM prior to beginning work.

The MSU Museum has full rights to all materials collected or developed under its auspices. This does not preclude your use of the materials as long as MSU [and any other supporting agency, as specified when you are hired] is given proper credit for research funding.

Payments are subject to receipt of the materials specified in your contract and submission of an invoice (submitted digitally) to your MTAP staff contact. The invoice must include:

- date
- your name
- contract agreement number (if applicable)
- a brief description of services provided
- dates of work
- amount to be paid
- your signature
- your home mailing address [NOTE: Please do not use a P.O. Box address as MSU will not mail checks to those locations]
- your home, work, and/or cell phone numbers
- your email address

The MTAP mailing address is listed below:

Michigan Traditional Arts Program  
Michigan State University Museum  
409 W. Circle Drive  
East Lansing, MI 48824

Administrative Office: (517) 355-2370  
(Monday-Friday 8:00am-12:00pm; 1:00-5:00pm)

### 3. DOCUMENTATION (Audio, Video, Photographs)

#### Audio Recordings

Wherever possible, we encourage the audio recording of interviews, *especially* for tradition bearers with narrative and musical traditions. Explain the nature of your work to your consultant, review the consent form with your consultant, and sign the consent form with the consultant. At the beginning of the recording, make an announcement with your name, project name, date, event/person(s) being recorded, and recording location (venue, city, state, and country).

If you take the time to record, try to get the best recording possible. Keep in mind that audio recordings may be used in the development of exhibitions and social media (blogs, podcasts, videos). Avoid the use of fillers such as "um," "yes," "so," etc. Be conscious of the recording environment. Try to achieve a balance between contextually appropriate background sound and disruptive noise. Place the microphone an appropriate distance away from the source of sound—not too close so that the sound becomes distorted and not too far so that the source is inaudible. Sound levels should also be checked on the microphone before beginning the interview.

\*See **DIGITAL FORMATS** for notes on accepted and ideal file types

#### Video Recordings

If you are asked to shoot video, the focus should be on documenting processes, events, and activities that cannot be adequately captured by audio recording and still photography, such as dance or theater.

At the beginning of the recording, give your name, location, the date, and subject to be recorded to test the audio and also provide identification.

Shooting in short segments is preferred, as video will rarely be utilized in extended segments. Remember that you will be determining what the viewer sees and how the story unfolds, so try to shoot segments that can be assembled later to form that story. Unless otherwise instructed, submit video unedited.

Remember these basic principles for capturing better video<sup>1</sup>:

- Use a tripod when possible
- Use external [microphones](#) and check your audio levels while recording.
- Strive for good lighting, using natural light whenever possible
- Use the [rule of thirds](#) to frame your subject

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<sup>1</sup> Pennington, S., & Rehberger, D, 2012. Quick tips for better interview video. In D. Boyd, S. Cohen, B. Rakerd, & D. Rehberger (Eds.), *Oral history in the digital age*. Institute of Library and Museum Services. Retrieved from <http://ohda.matrix.msu.edu/2012/08/quick-tips-for-better-interview-video/>.

\*See **DIGITAL FORMATS** for notes on accepted and ideal file types

## **Images/Photographs**

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

- Posed portraits
- Context shots (close-ups, details, overviews, works in progress), which show the subject practicing his or her tradition
- Interactions with others while working/performing

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

When photographing events, be sure to document as many aspects of the event as possible. Use a combination of close-up and overview shots that show setting and place.

Include only the best and most representative images in your submission, but do not edit or crop the selected images. Remember that your photos will need to be grouped into folders organized by informant or group name, event, or location, whatever is most intuitive for your fieldwork.

Photos may be used for identification, research, publicity and promotion, exhibits, online and print publications, and public presentations.

\*See **DIGITAL FORMATS** for notes on accepted and ideal file types

## **4. DIGITAL FORMATS**

MTAP prefers new fieldwork in electronic “born digital” formats, meaning work originally produced in digital formats. However, documents or paraphernalia collected in the field that are not born digital are still accepted. Materials will need to be submitted digitally, in person, or by US mail, FedEx [MSU Museum has a FedEx number that can be obtained from your staff contact], etc. For materials that required special handling, contact your MTAP project coordinator. Remember to make copies for personal use prior to submission.

Acceptable digital formats are listed below:

- Manuscript or Document files: Microsoft Word or PDF
- Photographic images: 10 megapixel or higher camera (the higher the resolution the better) is preferred, unaltered original images preferred. Do not crop or edit photo files.
- Audio: WAV format (at 96 KHz, 24-bit or 44.1 KHz, 16-bit) preferred, however other formats (e.g. Mp3) are acceptable. Avoid “marking” or adding any cueing or ID markers

into the file. Do not edit audio files.

- Video: Shoot in uncompressed High Definition (HD), NOT Standard Definition (NTSC), at the highest possible camera settings. 1080i or 1080p are preferred; 720p and 720i also are acceptable. Use tapeless media (e.g. a secure digital memory card) or external drive to record from the camera if possible. Use external microphones for audio capture.

## **5. RESEARCH FORMS**

Research forms consist of consent forms, logs, record forms and a few others; the purposes of these are to standardize metadata, forms of communication, and ethics. Each form is described below. Forms are available online, and may be filled out online as well. Fieldworkers must fill out corresponding forms for all audio and video recordings and photographic images. In addition, fieldworkers must complete the accession record as described below. *Please note that the following fields, common to many of our forms, are used as search terms once the fieldwork is processed, so these must be filled out with special care:*

- Ethnic/Cultural Group/Tribal Affiliation
- Fieldwork Location (city, state, county)
- Artist/Informant (names of all the key individuals featured in a particular interview, event recording, or folder of photographic images)
- Subject (for searchable terms you may want to consult the MSUM lexicon and/or the Library of Congress's Ethnographic Thesaurus; <http://openfolklore.org/et/>)

### **Professional Ethics in Field Research Form**

The Statement on Professional Ethics is to be read and signed by each researcher before starting fieldwork. You can submit the form either digitally or as a hard copy.

### **Research Consent Form**

The Research Consent Form is to be signed by groups or individuals you record or photograph. This form has been approved by Michigan State University's Committee for Research on Human Subjects. If no releases are obtained, use of collected data may be limited in the future to research purposes only. The same consent form can be used for all documentation (photographs, audio, video, etc.). You can submit the form either electronically or as a hard copy.

### **Reciprocity and Thank You Letters**

The MSUM does not pay interviewees for their contributions. If a situation arises requiring reciprocity, contact your MTAP staff contact. MSUM letterhead will be provided for thank you letters.

### **Artist Data Form**

The Artist Data Form is a permanent archival record and must be filled out as completely and accurately as possible. Not all fields are applicable to every interview, so completeness will vary on a case-by-case basis. This form summarizes basic contact, biographical, and ethnographic data. Fill out one form for each individual interviewed or organization contacted. If you are interviewing a group, fill out one form for each member where possible. For musical groups with managers, please indicate clearly on the artist data form which individual is the manager and whether or not they also perform with the group. Please also indicate the primary contact person for and/or leader of the group.

### **Audio-Video Record Form**

\*See **FILE AND FOLDER ORGANIZATION** for notes on labeling files

Each media file must be accompanied by an Audio-Video record form. The Audio-Video Record includes content information and subject matter of the recorded session. The first section of the form includes summary information. The second section (the index or log) should review the content of the recording in real elapsed time, with time codes included. Discuss the appropriate level of detail for the index with your MTAP staff contact. Possibilities include: chronological list of topics covered or music performed, a detailed summary of topics, a combination of detailed summary and partial transcription, or full transcription.

### **Image Record Form**

After photos are grouped in the appropriate folders, complete an MTAP Image Record form for each grouping. Each image description should include event, location, venue, activity documented.

### **Accession Record**

The accession record should be completed after you have filled out all other forms.

Copy relevant material from all other forms into the appropriate category. Please be careful to use the same terms in the accession record that are used in other fieldwork forms. List the items you are submitting, using the digital folder and file names you have assigned. Include total number of hard copy books, file folders, CDs or DVDs, etc.

## **6. COLLECTING OBJECTS**

The Michigan State University Museum has been able to develop a significant collection of folklife-related objects that is used for research, exhibition, and educational purposes. This collection has been built up primarily through donations from individuals and materials collected by researchers during field research projects, as well as through purchases made by curators. Fieldworkers are asked to assist in the development of this collection by collecting any free or inexpensive items connected with a particular tradition or artist being studied. Such items might include handbills, catalogues, samples of materials or specialized tools used in producing an artifact, etc.

Consult with MTAP staff, and, if appropriate, encourage artists to consider donating an example of their work to the MSU Museum. This, of course, may be more appropriate to ask in some situations than others, and is left to the researcher's discretion. Please note, however, that the curatorial staff at the MSU Museum makes the actual acceptance of a donated item into the collection. If an object is donated, give the artist a completed Temporary Deposit Receipt Form. Inform them that they will be receiving a Certificate of Gift that requires their signature. If they do not place a value on the objects donated, an appraisal amount will not be assigned to them.

If you decide to purchase an artist's work, purchase no more than two items, not to exceed \$50.00 total, that represent the artist's work. To be reimbursed for these purchases, submit receipts with your final report. Such items might include a tied fly, a paper flower, a piñata, etc. Complete an Object Data Form for each item collected. If the artist's work exceeds \$50.00 in cost or if you recommend purchasing additional examples of an artist's work, please discuss this with your MTAP staff contact or write these recommendations in your field notes and provide photographs of the object.

### **Source Information**

Please fill out this form with basic contact information about the maker or donor of an object.

## **7. COLLECTING PUBLICATIONS, COMMERCIAL RECORDINGS, & OTHER RESOURCES**

In the course of your work, you may come across publications, recorded audio, or other reference materials for sale that would help support the documentation of traditional arts and should be placed in the MTAP research collection. We encourage you to purchase two copies of recorded audio materials and, if under \$25.00, one copy of publications. For publications over \$25.00, please check first with your MTAP staff contact. For reimbursement for contracted researchers, submit receipt with invoice; for staff, submit receipt to the MSUM accountant or secretary.

## **8. RESEARCH REPORT: ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT**

There are a number of methods that MTAP uses for documenting traditional culture. Depending on the research project or activity, one or more of the following are required for completion. Be sure to check with your MTAP staff contact for guidance on which are necessary for a particular activity. The report may include the following information:

- Research Overview
  1. Summary List of Contacts
  2. Travel Log
  3. Researcher/Fieldworker Brief Bio
  4. Field Data
  5. Interviewee/Artist Biographical Data
- Public Program Data



- Selected bibliography or discography
- Field Notes (included as an appendix at the end of the report)

### **Research Overview**

(list project title, your name as fieldworker/author, and date prepared)

#### **1. SUMMARY LIST OF CONTACTS**

List the name(s) and contact information (mailing address, email address, home phone, cell phone, work phone, and website) of individuals contacted during fieldwork. Provide interview date and subject for each name listed.

#### **2. TRAVEL LOG**

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

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

#### **3. RESEARCHER/FIELDWORKER BRIEF BIOGRAPHY**

Prepare a one-paragraph biographical statement that will provide concise contextual information about you as collector of these materials, including relevant training, publications, and previous experience, especially as it pertains to the topic you researched.

#### **4. FIELD DATA**

Field data should be organized by interview or event documented and should include the following kinds of information:

- The date, time, location, and interview type (i.e. site visit, phone interview, etc.) of each instance of documentation.
- Purpose of visit (make contact, document tradition, develop MTAP, etc.)
- Description and analysis of circumstances affecting collection of data
- List of any objects, ephemera, printed material, recordings, etc. collected as part of instance of research
- History and contemporary practice, context and content of the tradition being researched, including the following:
  1. Description of the tradition
  2. How and when learned by interviewee
  3. How regularly practiced by interviewee
  4. Role of interviewee in the tradition
  5. Quality of work and information describing how quality is measured
  6. Description of the community in which tradition exists

- a. Explanation of meaning and value of tradition to family and/or community
- b. Audience for work/tradition if different than above
7. Attached interview questions if there was a structured interview format
8. Relevant bibliography or discography
9. Suggestions for future research

## 5. INTERVIEWEE/ARTIST BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARIES

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

- Tradition the individual/group represents
- How the individual/group fits into the tradition
- How and when he/she learned this tradition
- History of the group (if applicable)
- Evidence of community or family support, excellence of contribution or artistry, mastery of art form

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

### **Public Program Participant Suggestions**

Public program participant suggestions generated by fieldworkers and researchers provide MTAP staff with assessments and recommendations of individual tradition bearers for MTAP public programs. These include digital media, publications, exhibits, festivals, and educational packets for schools and community groups. Specific public programs run through the MSU Museum, which receive support from the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts, include the following:

**The Michigan Heritage Awards (MHA)** honor individuals who continue their family and community folk traditions with excellence and authenticity. The program was established in 1985 to call attention to Michigan's exceptional tradition bearers and supporters of traditional culture whose contributions to our state's heritage had not been recognized previously. Awards are annually presented in three categories: material culture, performance, and community leadership.

([http://museum.msu.edu/s-program/mh\\_awards/mha.html](http://museum.msu.edu/s-program/mh_awards/mha.html))

**The Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program (MTAAP)** encourages cultural preservation, pride, and respect through grants of \$2,000.00 made to master artists to teach their skills, techniques, and knowledge to others in their communities. The intent of this program is to recognize those master artists who maintain their traditions with excellence and according to the

needs and aesthetics of their communities and to encourage and facilitate the learning and transmission of valued traditions.

( <http://museum.msu.edu/s-program/mtap/mtaap/mtaap.html>)

The award-winning **Great Lakes Folk Festival** is a celebration of culture, tradition and community. The Michigan State University Museum works year-round to develop this festival program that reflects the immense variety and vitality of art, skill, knowledge, and wisdom of our cultural heritage for the public. GLFF offers a one-of-a-kind mix of music and dance stages, demonstrations of traditional arts and storytelling, authentic ethnic food, an arts marketplace, and many special activities for kids and their companions.

(<http://www.greatlakesfolkfest.net>)

Briefly summarize your recommendations for the above listed programs, along with any issues or special considerations of which MTAP staff should be aware.

For MHA, describe the award category suitable for this potential nominee, and who might be a suitable nominator.

For MTAAP, be sure to include the names and suitability of any potential masters or apprentices.

For GLFF, discuss the appropriateness of each person for public presentation. Include the following:

- Does the individual or group have a personality conducive to public presentation?
- Is the tradition suitable for public presentation (why or why not)? Would the tradition be engaging for a public audience? Is it possible to be presented outside of the artist's home or studio?
- Has the individual had previous experience in presentation of their tradition in a public setting?
- How should the individual or tradition be presented (on music stage, narrative stage, folk arts marketplace, food vendor booth, other)?
  - Note that food vendors must deal with the sales volume over the 3 days, own adequate equipment, and meet demands of fire marshal and health department including gaining proper licenses and fire extinguishers. In addition, vendors incur expenses and commissions when participating. Booth rental costs \$200 with additional fees for more than two 8' tables, and for more than 110V 20 amp electricity usage. Sales commission to GLFF is 15% for 501c3 nonprofits, 20% for profits.

Also include the following kinds of technical and programming information as appropriate:

- Potential for sales of art form/recordings by the artist
- Group size, instrumentation, and number of hotel rooms needed for music groups if travelling long distances
- Any unusual equipment, ingredients, utensils, or supplies required

If your fieldwork outcome involves potential food or material culture demonstrations at GLFF (discuss this with your MTAP staff contact), the following information also is helpful:

- Names and addresses of suppliers of materials needed for presentation
- Names and phone numbers of persons who should be consulted by MTAP technical/design staff for design or construction information
- Recipes for foodways demonstrations, including brand names and specialty items
- Major logistical challenges involving safety, power and water needs, equipment size and transportation, etc.

## 9. FILE AND FOLDER ORGANIZATION

All files should follow the organization outlined in these guidelines. Labeling should be intuitive and concise. Think of it like a style guide (e.g. MLA, Chicago, etc.): the style, or labels, you choose should best reflect the type of work, but what is most important is **consistency**.

Main Folder: Fieldwork (FW) \_topic or artist date (ex: FW\_Coney Islands 2015)

Photos folder:

- image files
- Image Record Form (ex: Image Record\_Coney Islands 2015)

Videos folder:

- video files
- AV Record form for each video (ex: AV Record\_File name)

Audio folder

- audio files
- AV Record form for each file (ex: AV Record\_File name)

Objects folder

- Object Record form for each object (ex: Object Record\_Object)

Documents folder

- Accession Record form (ex: Accession Record\_Coney Islands 2015)
- Artist Data forms (ex: Artist Data\_Smith 2015)
- Consent forms (if in digital form)
- Professional Ethics Form
- Field Notes
- Final Fieldwork Report

Additional subfolders and files, as needed, should be organized by location, event, or interviewee, with all pertinent files included. These subfolders/files should be labeled with either artist surname, event name, or location, and the date. For example Chinese\_New\_Year\_2013-02-12; Bishop\_2013; Lansing\_Foodways\_2013.

## 10. SUBMISSION OF FIELD MATERIALS TO MTAP

Discuss with your MTAP staff contact the mechanism for submitting the completed electronic field materials to MTAP (Dropbox, external hard drive, email, etc.). Mailing address for original signed consent forms, research ethics form, signed invoice, and any ephemera collected is listed below:

Michigan Traditional Arts Program  
Michigan State University Museum  
409 W. Circle Drive  
East Lansing, MI 48824

Administrative Office: (517) 355-2370  
(Monday-Friday, 8:00am-12:00pm; 1:00-5:00pm)  
Fax: (517) 432-2846

## 11. RESEARCH DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST

- Signed "Professional Ethics in Field Research" Form (\*submit original with original signature)
- Signed Consent Forms for all persons interviewed/photographed (\*submit original with original signatures)
- Fieldwork Report
- Completed Artist/Consultant Data Forms
- Completed Accession Record (page 1 only)
- Audio/Video files (with completed Audio/Video Records)
- Commercial Recordings
- Image files and associated Image Record
- Objects (with completed Object Data Forms)
- Related manuscript materials
- Field Notes
- Other Resources

In addition, certain projects use survey or evaluation forms:

- Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Assessment Form
- Michigan Quilt Project Inventory Form
- Rag Rug Project Form
- Michigan Barn & Farmstead Survey Form (<http://michiganbarns.org/>)
- 4-H History Project Form
- Association of Michigan Basketweavers Heritage Basket Collection Project
- Stained Glass Census Form (<http://michiganstainedglass.org/>)

## 12. FURTHER READING/VIEWING ON ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEWING

Annechino, Rachelle. "Interviewing for Introverts," *Ethnography Matters*, 3/22/2012.  
<<http://ethnographymatters.net/blog/2012/03/22/interviewing-for-introverts/>>

Bartis, Peter. *Folklife and Fieldwork: And Introduction to Field Techniques*. Washington DC: Library of Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2002.  
<<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/fieldwork/pdf/fieldwkComplete.pdf>>

Gee, Mary Kay and Charlotte Ullman. "The Ethnographic Interview," Drawn from ERIC article ED423721 - Teacher/Ethnographer in the Workplace: Approaches to Staff Development. <<http://www.ccs.neu.edu/course/is4800sp12/resources/EthInterview.pdf>>

Ives, Edward D. *The Tape-Recorded Interview*. Knoxville: UTP, 1980.

Spradley, James P. *The Ethnographic Interview*. San Francisco: Harcourt, 1979.

*The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2003. <<http://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/pdf/InterviewingGuide.pdf>>

"Quick Tips for Ethnographic Interviewing," 2013.  
<<http://pages.ucsd.edu/~dkjordan/resources/InterviewingTips.html>>

### Videos

"Getting People to Talk: An Ethnography & Interviewing Primer."  
<<https://vimeo.com/1269848>> 30-minute video.

Check out the Traditional Arts Indiana YouTube channel, where there are multiple videos on interviewing techniques:  
<<https://www.youtube.com/user/TradArtsIN>>