Sample Lesson 1: Museum Resources for Research

Overview:
Researchers intending to use museums as sites for data collection need to understand what they contain, how material is organized, and proper practices to access materials. Visitors who have limited familiarity with museum research often allow insufficient time and do not use their time efficiently. In this lesson, students will receive orientation to the collections resources of the Smithsonian Department of Anthropology, as well as guidance on how to make effective use of the resources.

Goals:
- to gain familiarity with the range of materials in museums
- to gain familiarity with how collections are organized and stored
- to understand what museum staff expect of research users and what researchers may expect of staff
- to learn basic procedures for accessing collections
- to begin to understand procedures and strategies to access data

Session outline:
General presentation
- the Smithsonian Museum Support Center
- organization of Department of Anthropology collections
Tour of Artifact Collections, led by Collections Manager
Tour of National Anthropological Archives, led by NAA Director
Tour of Human Studies Film Archives, led by HSFA Manager

Presentation by Collections Manager and discussion with collections staff on
- how objects and information are organized
- how to arrange access to collections
- how to make effective use of collections research time
- general expectations of researchers

Summary discussion
- how various types of material (objects, film) might be used for research
- strategies to efficiently access and collect data