

THE LEXICON

It is important that museums of all sizes adopt a convention for naming objects. This has become especially important in the age of computerized collection management. A computer cannot understand synonymous terms in the same way that a human brain does. In a search for a “sofa,” the computer does not necessarily know that another name for the same object is “couch.” It cannot tell from context that when you refer to a “pump,” you are talking about a shoe rather than a plumbing fixture. In order for computers to understand what we humans mean, we must use a controlled vocabulary that is understood by both.

The Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging, by Greeno, Blackaby, and the Nomenclature Committee, provides a controlled list of terms organized in a hierarchical classification system. This nomenclature is built into PastPerfect and may be accessed every time you enter a new catalog record. In this way, each new object name is checked against the approved list to ensure consistent data entry.

The nomenclature organizes each object term into categories and sub-categories. The Lexicon consists of 11 main categories, over 100 sub-categories, 8,500 preferred object names, and 1,500 illegal object names. PastPerfect is, however, completely flexible in allowing you to revise and add to the Lexicon to fit your particular needs.

USING THE LEXICON

When you are entering new records into PastPerfect, the Lexicon is available to help you choose an appropriate object name. Clicking the **Add** command button from any catalog opens the screen shown in Figure 10-1.

Figure 10-1
Add screen

The 'Add New Object' dialog box contains the following elements:

- Input fields for 'Enter Accession#' (2004.2) and 'Enter Incoming Loan#'.
- 'Search file' buttons for both accession and loan numbers.
- 'Source' field containing 'Spencer, Harrison'.
- 'Enter Object ID' field (2004.2.1) and 'Search Authority file' button.
- 'Last entry' field (2004.1.45) and 'Search Lexicon' button (highlighted by a callout).
- 'Enter Objname' field and 'Search AAT online' button.
- 'Lexicon Categories' field.
- 'Add' and 'Cancel' buttons.
- Radio buttons for data filling: 'Fill with Blank data', 'Fill with Current data', and 'Fill with Default data' (selected).
- 'Change Default Data' button.
- Checkboxes for 'Prefill Objectid with Accession#' (checked) and 'Prefill Objectid with Incoming Loan#'.

The Lexicon screen lets you narrow your search by clicking on the category and/or sub-category you need. Some terms, such as “pump” and “lens,” appear more than once in the Lexicon. This is by design. These and other object names are listed more than once because they appear in more than one sub-category. Thus, “pump” appears in three sub-categories: Clothing-Footwear, Mining and Mineral Harvesting Tools & Equipment, and Plumbing Fixture.

Figure 10-2
Lexicon
screen

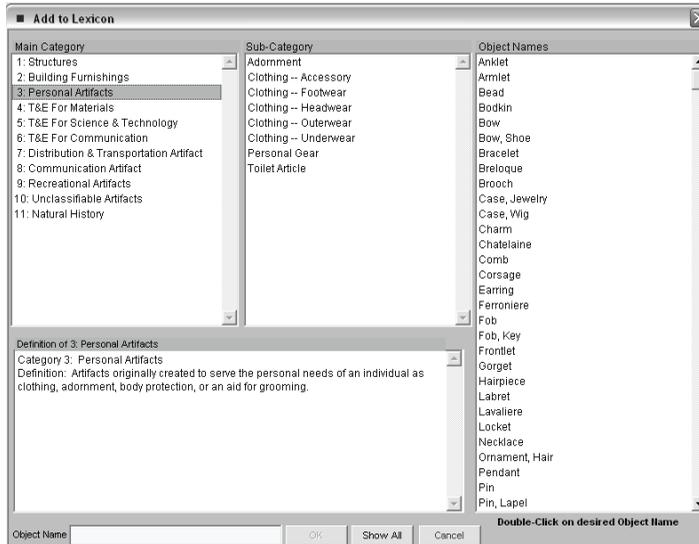
The 'Add to Lexicon' dialog box displays the following structure:

Main Category	Sub-Category	Object Names
1: Structures	Acoustical T&E	A-frame
2: Building Furnishings	Adornment	Aba
3: Personal Artifacts	Advertising Medium	Abacus
4: T&E For Materials	Aerospace Transportation -- Accessory	Absorptionmeter
5: T&E For Science & Technology	Aerospace Transportation -- Equipment	Accelerator
6: T&E For Communication	Agricultural T&E	Accelerator, Linear
7: Distribution & Transportation Artifact	Animal Husbandry T&E	Accelerormeter
8: Communication Artifact	Armament -- Accessory	Accordion
9: Recreational Artifacts	Armament -- Ammunition	Acetometer
10: Unclassifiable Artifacts	Armament -- Artillery	Acidimeter
11: Natural History	Armament -- Bludgeon	Actinograph
	Armament -- Body Armor	Actinometer
	Armament -- Edged	Actuator
	Armament -- Firearm	Acutometer
	Art	Ad, Magazine
	Artifact Remnant	Ad, Newspaper
	Astronomical T&E	Adapter, Barrel
	Basket, Broom, Brush Making T&E	Adapter, Enema
		Adapter, Grip
		Adz
		Adz, Bunging
		Adz, Carpenter's
		Adz, Cleaving
		Adz, Cooper's
		Adz, Outtering
		Adz, Hollowing
		Adz, Ice
		Adz, Lipped
		Adz, Marking
		Adz, Railroad

At the bottom, there is a 'Definition' field and buttons for 'OK', 'Show All', and 'Cancel'. A note at the bottom right says 'Double-Click on desired Object Name'.

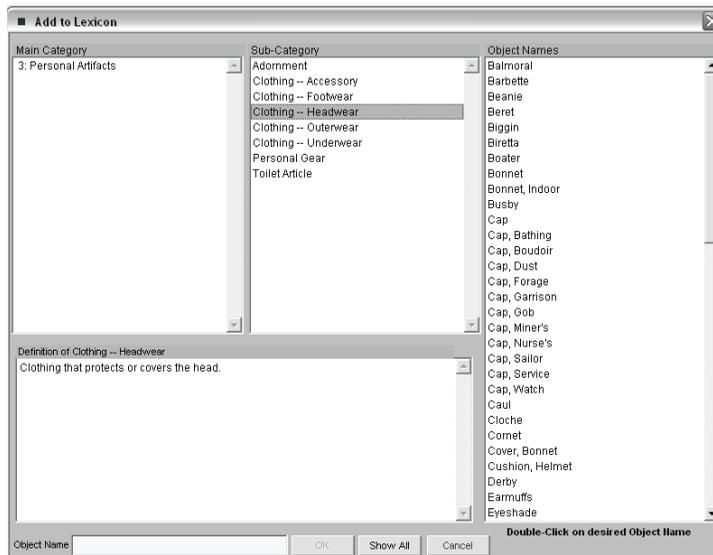
For example, you may be cataloging a piece of clothing such as a hat. Click on the main category Personal Artifacts. The Lexicon will show the highlighted category Personal Artifacts and its associated sub-categories. The Object Names list at the right will now contain a list of all Personal Artifacts.

Figure 10-3
Personal
Artifacts
Category



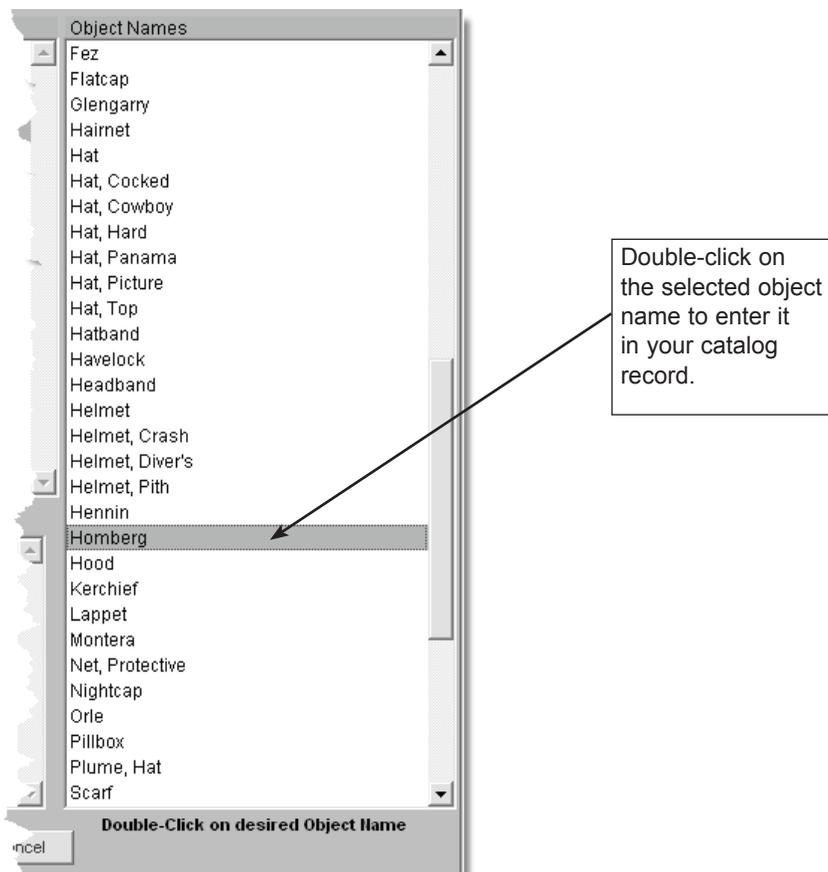
To further narrow your search for the correct name, click on the sub-category Clothing—Headwear. Now the object names on the right will contain only headwear.

Figure 10-4
Sub-Category
Headwear



Now you can browse the list of headwear until you find the object name that best matches the item you are cataloging.

Figure 10-5
Headwear
Object Names

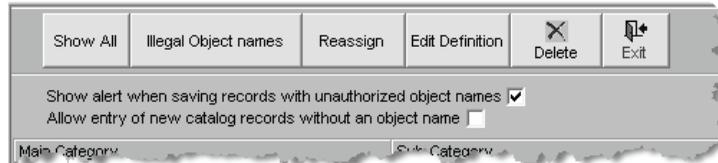


WORKING WITH THE LEXICON SCREEN

The Lexicon screen provides the ability to add new Lexicon terms. You may also change items from one category or sub-category to another. An illegal terms section, and a method for changing the names of items in the catalogs are also available. These features are accessed from the main menu by clicking on **Setup** and then **Lexicon** on the Setup fly-up menu.

The Lexicon is divided into three sections: Main Category, Sub-Category, and Object Names. When the screen is first opened, all entries are displayed with the following command buttons:

Figure 10-6
Lexicon
Command
Buttons



Below the commands are two check boxes, one that will turn off the Lexicon Alert which appears when you add or edit a catalog record and try to use an object name that is not in the Lexicon. The other allows you to enter catalog records without an object name.

If you select a main category on the Lexicon screen, the sub-category and object names list will be narrowed to include only those entries that are associated with that main category. If you select a sub-category, only its associated main category and object names assigned to that sub-category will be displayed. If you select an object name, only the associated main and sub-categories will be displayed.

Keyboard Search - Since the list of object names is long, using the scroll bars or Page Up and Page Down keys may not be as efficient as you would like. You can also use the keyboard to move through the list. First, click on an object name in the Object Name list and then start typing the name you are searching for. You will be advanced to the name that most closely matches the letters. For example, typing T H I M will take you to Thimble. You will need to type the letters relatively quickly to do this. If you type slowly, when you type each letter it will take you to the first word beginning with that letter.

To start a new search, click the **Show All** command button to refresh the screen and display all main categories, sub-categories, and object names.

ILLEGAL OBJECT NAMES

PastPerfect comes pre loaded with 1,500 illegal object names. These are the names listed as non-preferred by *The Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging*. When a user enters a name that is illegal, PastPerfect will list the preferred names. You can add to the Illegal Object Names list with commonly misused terms of your own. To add a new illegal name to the list, click the **Illegal Object Name** command button.

Notice the Illegal Object Name list is in alphabetical order, with the corresponding Preferred Object Name in the left-hand column.

Figure 10-7
Illegal Terms

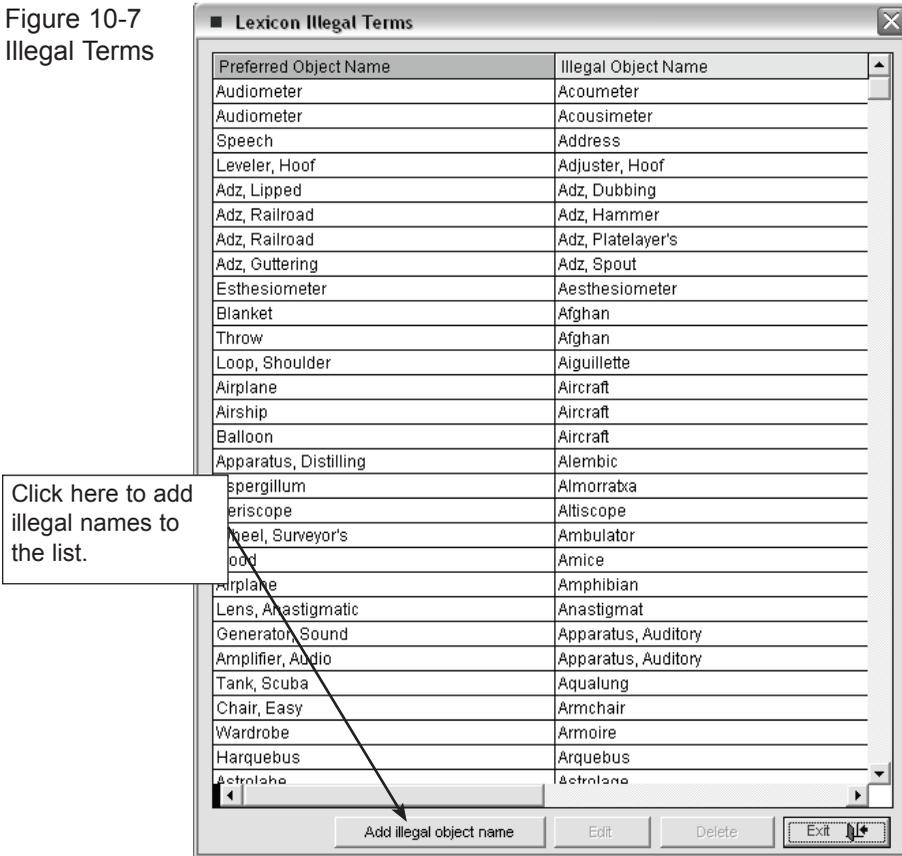
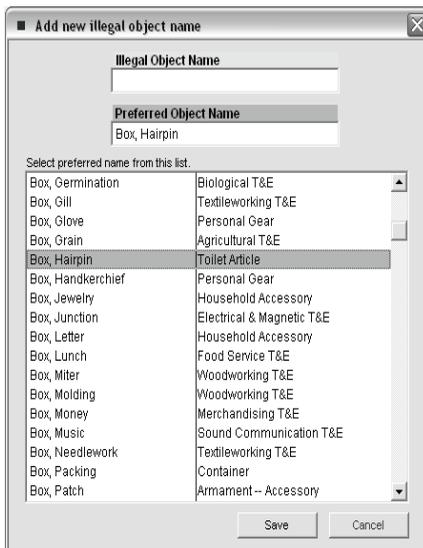


Figure 10-8
Add Illegal
Term



When you click on the **Add Illegal Object Name** command button, the screen shown in Figure 10-8 appears. Type the illegal object name in the box and choose a preferred object name from the list. The list shows the object name on the left and the corresponding sub-category on the right.

CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

The Lexicon screen displays definitions for each main and sub-category in the lower left of the screen.

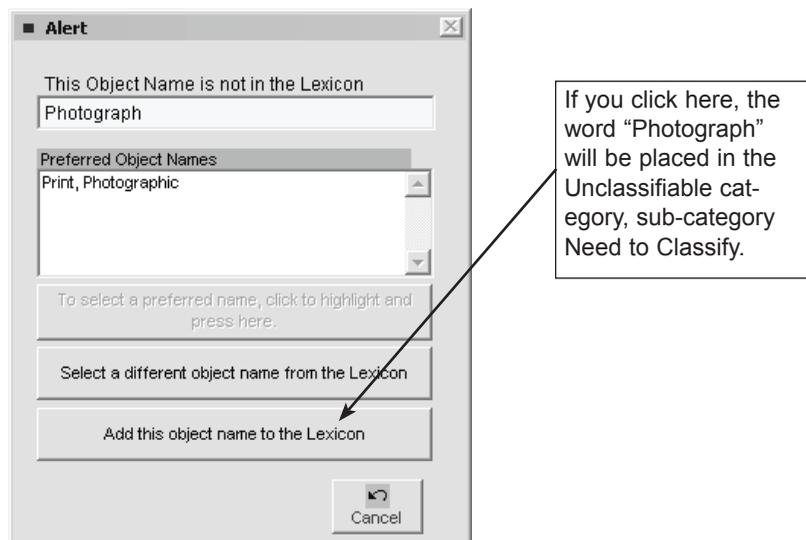
The **Edit Definition** command button allows you to edit the existing definition of a category or sub-category, or enter a definition for a new category. Simply click on the category or sub-category you wish to edit, and the definition appears in the Definition field. Click on **Edit Definition** to change or edit the definition.

DELETING AN OBJECT NAME

The **Delete** command is used to delete categories or object names. Before deleting categories or sub-categories, you must first delete their associated object names.

The deletion of an object name is most often required when a cataloger has added an illegal object name in the course of cataloging. For example: A cataloger has used the name "Photograph." Because "Photograph" is not a preferred object name, when it is used, PastPerfect will give the following alert:

Figure 10-9
Illegal Term
Alert



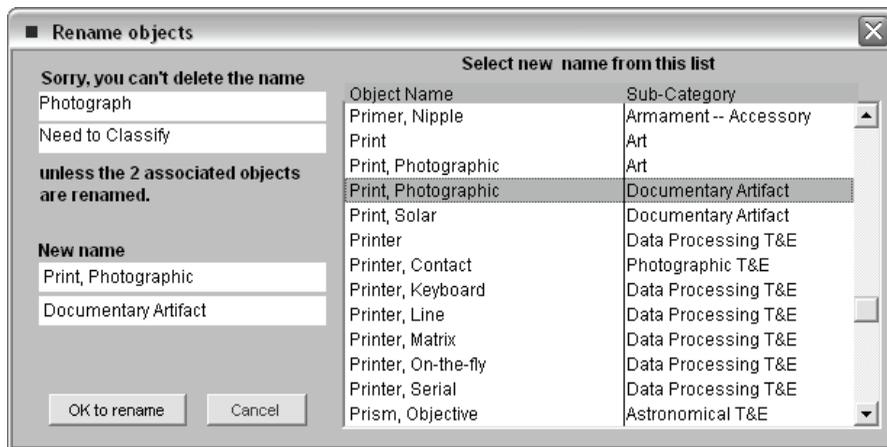
If the cataloger selects **Add This Object Name to the Lexicon**, it will be placed in the Unclassifiable category, sub-category Need to Classify.

TIP

PastPerfect has added a sub-category that does not appear in the Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging - "Need to Classify". This sub-category is listed under the main category Unclassifiable Artifacts. A list of object names that need to be classified can be displayed on the Lexicon screen or printed from the PastPerfect Reports menu.

The collection manager may wish to delete the term Photograph, but because there are catalog records associated with this term, PastPerfect Lexicon will not delete the object name until the associated catalog records are renamed.

Figure 10-10
Rename
Objects



Before deleting an object name, PastPerfect checks the catalogs to see if the name has been used. If records are located using the object name, PastPerfect will display the **Rename Objects** screen, where you can select a new name.

Enter an appropriate object name in the **New Name** box by browsing **Select New Name from This List** and clicking on your selection. PastPerfect will then change

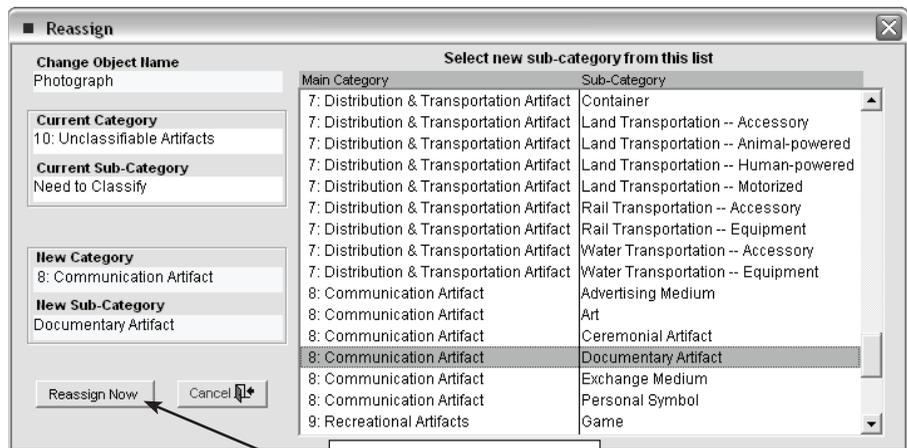
all the objects in your collection with the old name to the new name, and delete the old name from the Lexicon.

REASSIGNING SUB-CATEGORIES AND OBJECT NAMES

The **Reassign** command button can be used to reassign a sub-category to a new main category or to assign an object name to a new sub-category.

For example, if you wish to keep the word “Photograph” in the Lexicon, you should reassign it to the proper category and sub-category. Go into the category Unclassifiable, click the sub-category Need to Classify and click on the word “Photograph.” Click the **Reassign** command button at the top of the Lexicon screen. The following screen appears:

Figure 10-11
Reassign
Object Name

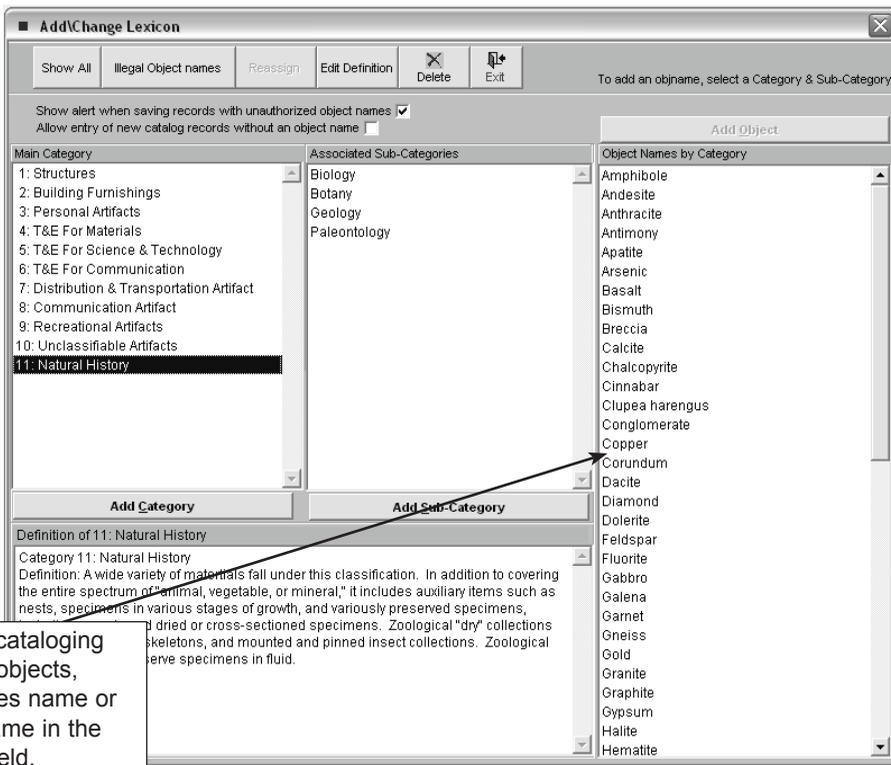


Browse through the categories and sub-categories until you find the appropriate category/sub-category pair. Click on your selection, and the category and sub-category will appear in the **New Category** box. Then click **Reassign Now**. It will automatically update the main and sub-category on the catalog records with that object name, as well as in the Lexicon.

NATURAL HISTORY

Because PastPerfect has a component for cataloging natural history objects, we have added a new main category called Natural History. Natural History has four associated sub-categories: Biology, Botany, Geology, and Paleontology.

Figure 10-12
Natural
History



PastPerfect does not provide every possible species name in the Natural History Lexicon. because it is expected that most natural history collections are of a limited nature. For example, you may have a collection of birds. In that case, you would add the species names only for the birds in your collection as object names under the main category Natural History, sub-category Biology.