

THE LEXICON

It is important that museums of all sizes adopt a convention for naming objects. This has become especially significant 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 James R. Blackaby, Patricia Greeno, 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 subcategories by its initially intended use. The Lexicon consists of 11 main categories, over 100 subcategories, 8500 preferred object terms, and 1500 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

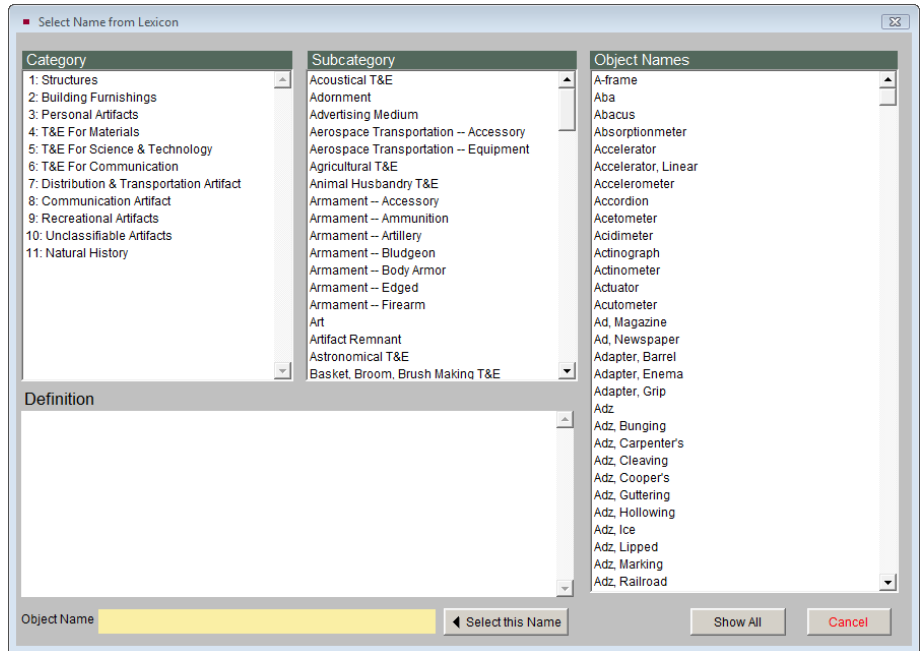
When you enter new records into PastPerfect, the Lexicon is available to help you choose an appropriate object name. Clicking the **Add** button in the Navigation Bar from any catalog opens the screen shown in Figure 10-1.

Figure 10-1 Add New Catalog Record screen

Clicking the Lexicon button on the Add New Catalog Record screen will open the Lexicon screen, seen in Figure 10-2. When you search for the object name in the Lexicon, you can narrow your search by clicking on the category and/or subcategory 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 subcategory. Thus, “pump” appears in three subcategories: Clothing-Footwear, Mining and Mineral Harvesting Tools & Equipment, and Plumbing Fixture.

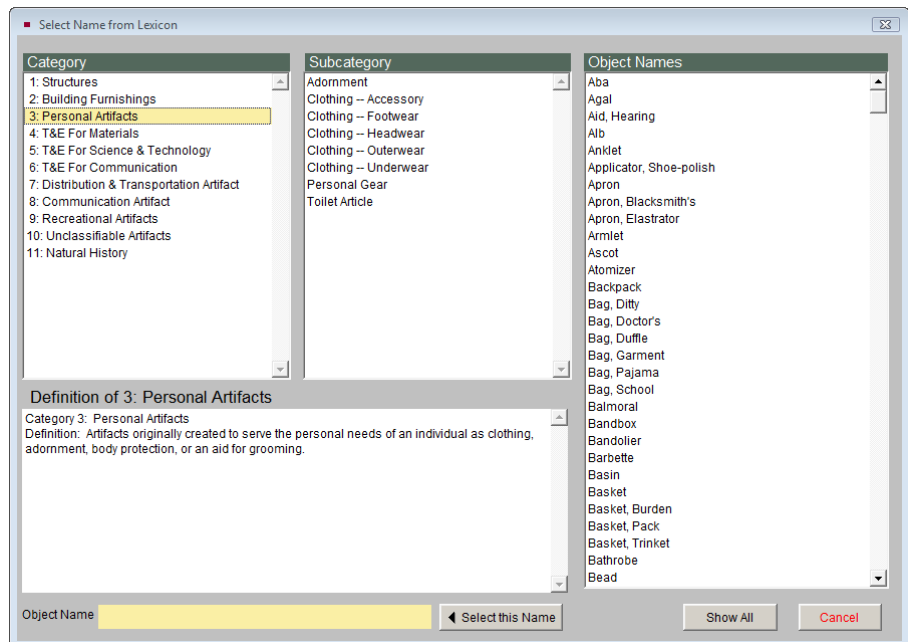
For example, you may be cataloging a piece of clothing such as a hat. You can start your search for the object term by selecting the category according to the item’s use. Click on “3: Personal Artifacts” from the **Category** list. The Lexicon will show the highlighted category Personal Artifacts and its associated subcategories.

Figure 10-2
Lexicon
screen



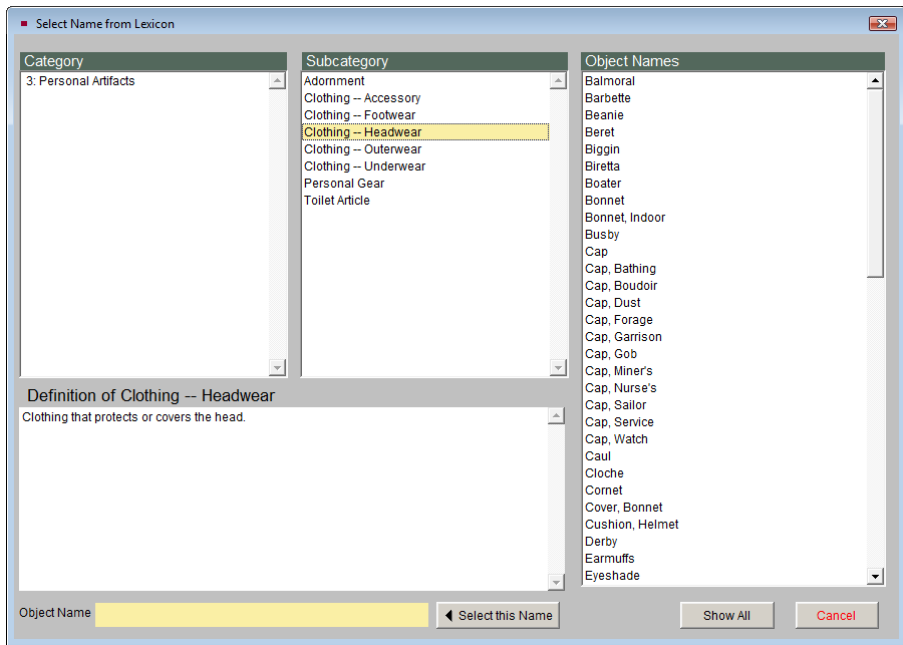
The **Object Names** list at the right will now contain all Personal Artifacts, as seen in Figure 10-3.

Figure 10-3
Personal
Artifacts
Category



To further narrow your search for the correct name, click on Clothing—Headwear from the **Subcategory** list. Now the object names on the right will contain only headwear, as seen in Figure 10-4.

Figure 10-4
Clothing -
Headwear
Subcategory

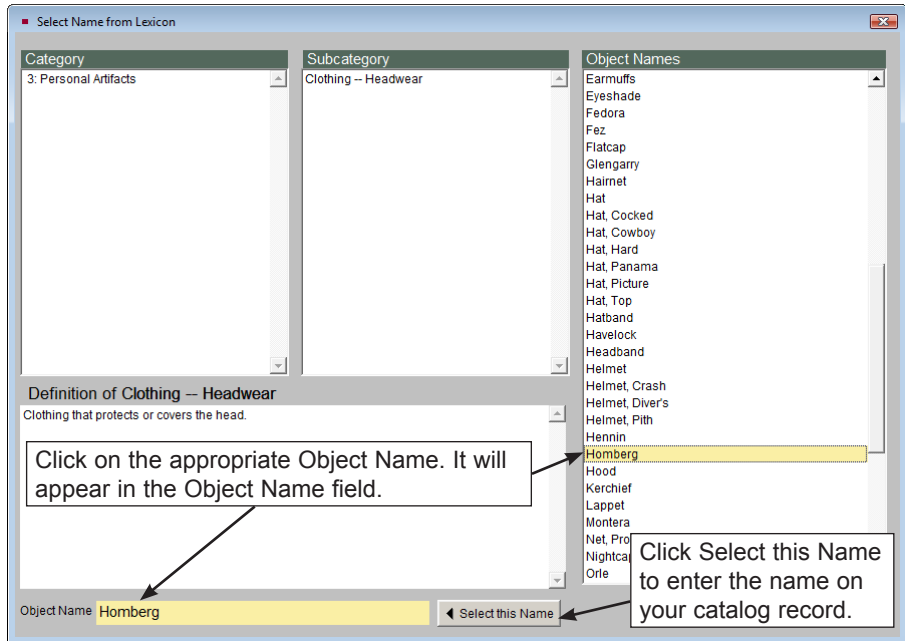


You can now browse the list of headwear until you find the object name that best matches the item you are cataloging, seen in Figure 10-5.

Should you find you have chosen the wrong category and subcategory, click the **Show All** button at the bottom to start again.

Another approach to finding an object name is to start with the **Object Names** list. You can use the scroll bar on the right or the Keyboard Search shortcut (described later in this chapter) to find the term within the list of all Object Names. If more than one term is listed, such as in the case of “pump,” click on the term to see the category and subcategory. This way you can distinguish between a plumbing fixture pump, footwear and a mining and mineral harvesting tool. When you have found the term that describes your item, click once on it so it is highlighted, then click the **Select this Name** button. The chosen object name will appear in the Enter Object Name field on the Add New Catalog Record screen.

Figure 10-5
Headwear
Object Names



NOTE Object terms follow the format of a noun followed by an adjective descriptor. Sometimes one word is adequate to describe the item, but in many cases the adjective is needed to distinguish similar items. Rather than using the object name “Top Hat,” the term is listed as “Hat, Top.” In this way a top hat is distinguished from a cowboy hat, and all hats are listed together alphabetically. When searching the Objects Name list, you can see all hats at once and find the one that best matches the hat in your collection.

WORKING WITH THE SETUP LEXICON SCREEN

To access this screen, please click on **Setup** from the **Main Menu** and choose **Lexicon** from the list. The **Setup Lexicon** screen provides the ability to add new Lexicon terms. You may also change items from one category or subcategory to another. An illegal terms section and a method for changing items’ names in the catalogs are also available.

The Lexicon is divided into three sections: Category, Subcategory, and Object Names. When the screen is first opened, all entries are displayed. At the bottom of the screen you will see Lexicon navigation buttons and two check boxes, seen in Figure 10-6. The first check box controls 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.

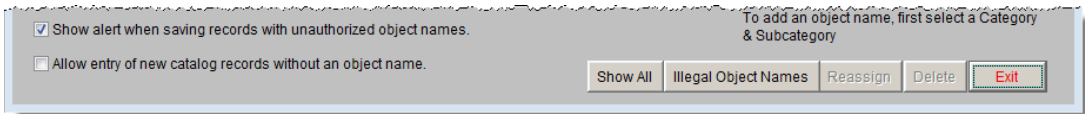


Figure 10-6 Lexicon Navigation Buttons

If you select a category on the Setup Lexicon screen, the Subcategory and Object Names lists will be narrowed to include only those entries that are associated with that category. If you select a subcategory, only the associated category and object names assigned to that subcategory will be displayed. If you select an object name, only the associated category and subcategory will be displayed.

Keyboard Search - Since the Object Names list is long, using the scroll bar or keyboard Page Up and Page Down keys may not be as efficient as you would like. Instead, you can 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 for which you are searching. 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 too slowly, when you type each letter it will take you to the first word beginning with that letter.

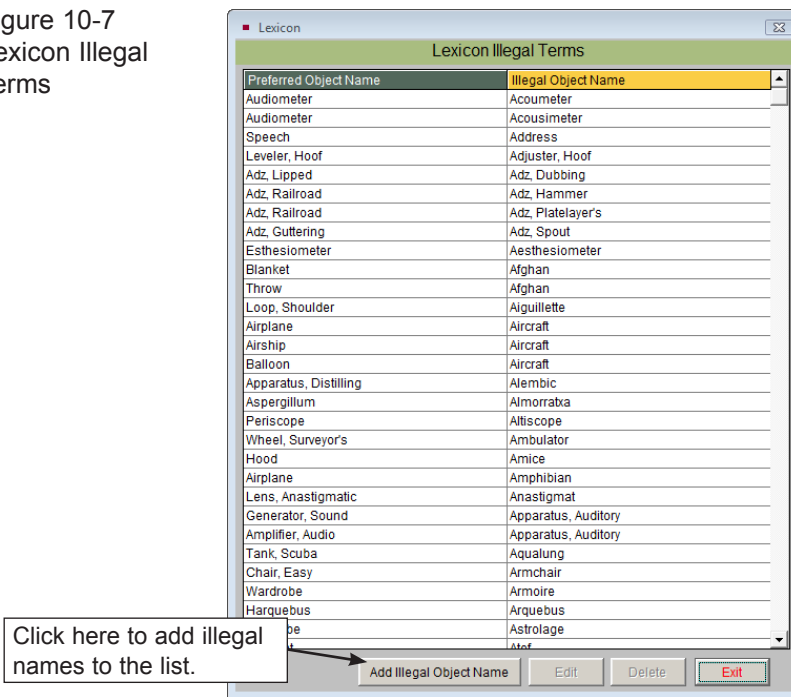
To start a new search, click the **Show All** button to refresh the screen and display all categories, subcategories, and object names.

ILLEGAL OBJECT NAMES

PastPerfect comes pre-loaded with 1500 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 terms. 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 Names** button. This will open the screen seen in Figure 10-7.

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

Figure 10-7
Lexicon Illegal
Terms



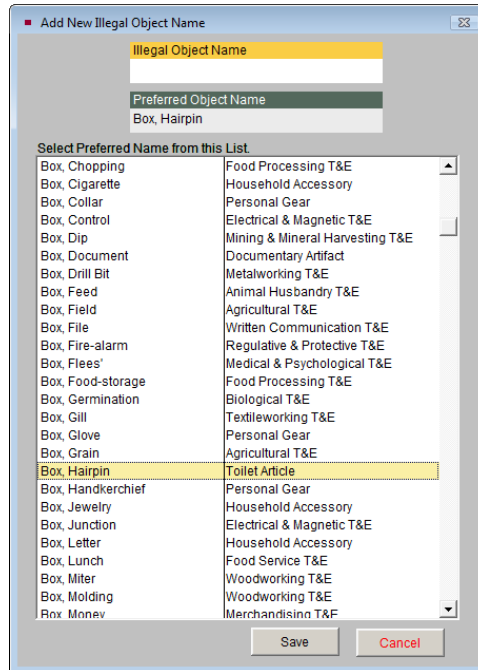
When you click on the **Add Illegal Object Name** button, the screen shown in Figure 10-8 appears. Type the illegal object name in the field at the top of the screen and choose a preferred object name from the list. The list shows the object name on the left and corresponding subcategory on the right. Click the **Save** button to add the new term.

You may also edit or delete terms from the Illegal Object Names list by clicking the **Edit** or **Delete** buttons at the bottom of the screen.

NOTE

If you are adding object names to the Object Name authority file, you should choose terms that are listed in the Lexicon. The Object Name authority files are not automatically populated with terms from the Lexicon. If you add terms to the Object Name authority file exactly as they are listed in the Lexicon, PastPerfect will fill the appropriate category and subcategory for you when you create your catalog record. Otherwise object names will belong to Unclassifiable Artifacts.

Figure 10-8
Add New Illegal
Object Name
screen



CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

The Lexicon screen displays a definition for the selected category or subcategory. Definitions are provided by *The Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging* and are located below the **Category** and **Subcategory** lists.

The **Edit Definition** button allows you to edit the existing definition of a category or subcategory, or enter a definition for a new category. Simply click on the **Category** or **Subcategory** you wish to edit, and the definition appears in the **Definition** field. Click on the button at the upper right corner of the **Definition** field to edit the definition. This button looks like a hand with a pencil writing on a paper.

DELETING AN OBJECT NAME

The **Delete** button is used to delete categories, subcategories or object names. Before deleting categories or subcategories, you must first delete or reassign all of 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

This Object Name is Not in the Lexicon
Photograph

Preferred Object Names
Print, Photographic

To Select a Preferred Name, Click to Highlight and Press Here.

Select a Different Object Name from the Lexicon

Add this Object Name to the Lexicon

Cancel

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

TIP

PastPerfect has added a subcategory that does not appear in *The Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging* - “Need to Classify.” This subcategory is listed under the Category Unclassifiable Artifacts. A list of object names that need to be classified can be displayed on the Lexicon screen or printed by going to the Main Menu | Reports | Lexicon | Need to Classify.

The collection manager may wish to delete the term “Photograph” from the Lexicon (by clicking **Delete** on the Setup Lexicon screen), but because there are catalog records associated with this term, the object name may not be immediately deleted.

Before deleting an object name, PastPerfect checks the catalogs to see if the name has been used. If records are located that are using the object name, PastPerfect will display the **Rename Objects** screen, seen in Figure 10-10, where you can select a new name.

To select an object name from the Lexicon for the **New Object Name** field, browse the list at right and click on your selection. All object names in this list are associated with a subcategory. You will want to be sure to choose not only the correct object name, but also the most appropriate subcategory. PastPerfect will then change all the items in your collection with the old name to the new name, and delete the old name from the Lexicon.

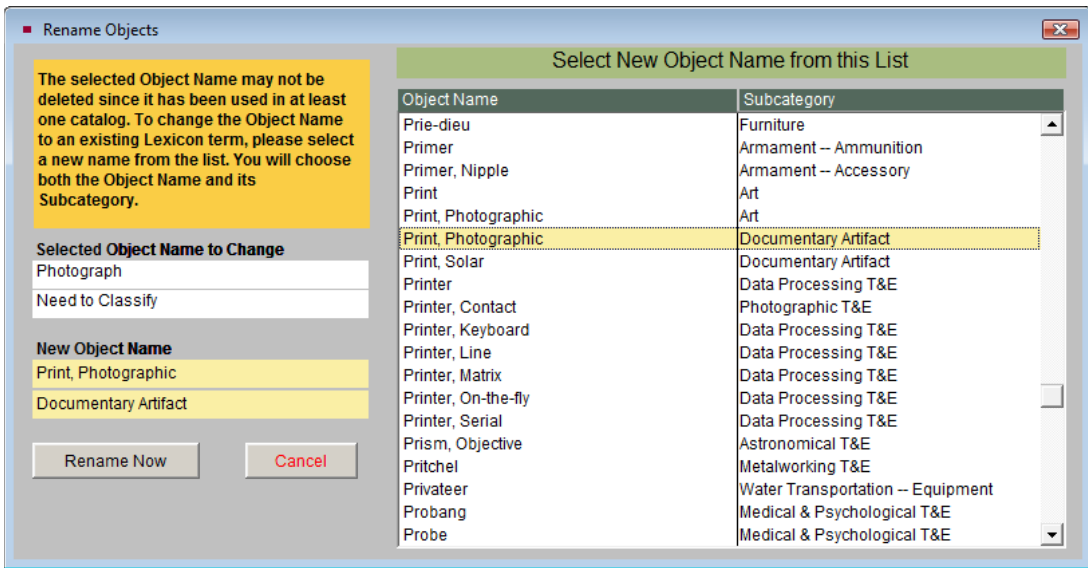


Figure 10-10 Rename Objects screen

If the object name you have selected to delete does not appear on any catalog records, you will be able to delete the name immediately after clicking the **Delete** button.

REASSIGNING SUBCATEGORIES AND OBJECT NAMES

The **Reassign** button can be used to reassign a subcategory to a new main category or to assign an object name to a new category and subcategory.

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

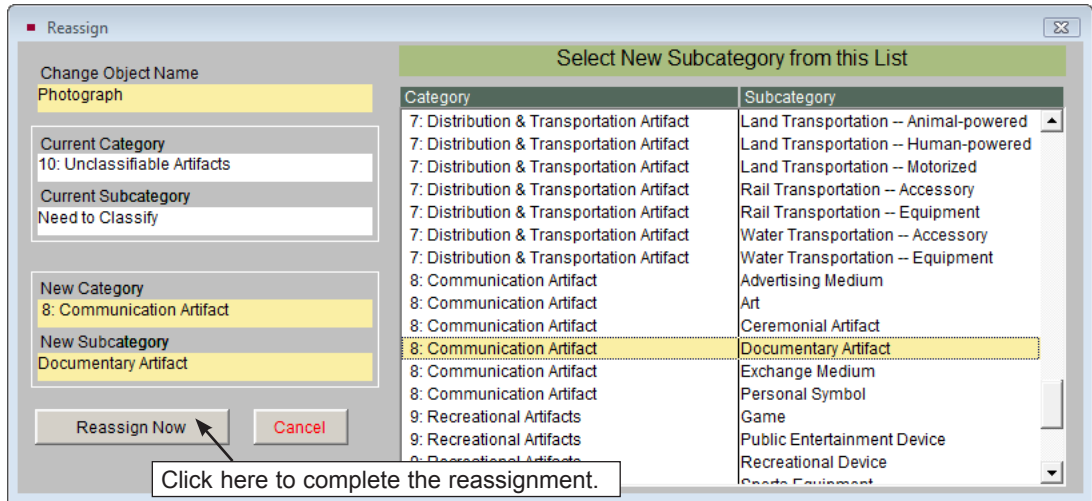


Figure 10-11 Reassign Object Name

Browse through the categories and associated subcategories until you find the appropriate category/subcategory pair. Click on your selection, and the category and subcategory will appear in the **New Category** and **New Subcategory** fields. Then click **Reassign Now**. It will automatically update the category and subcategory 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 category called Natural History. Natural History has four associated subcategories: Biology, Botany, Geology, and Paleontology. Clicking the Natural History category will display these subcategories and object names, seen in Figure 10-12.

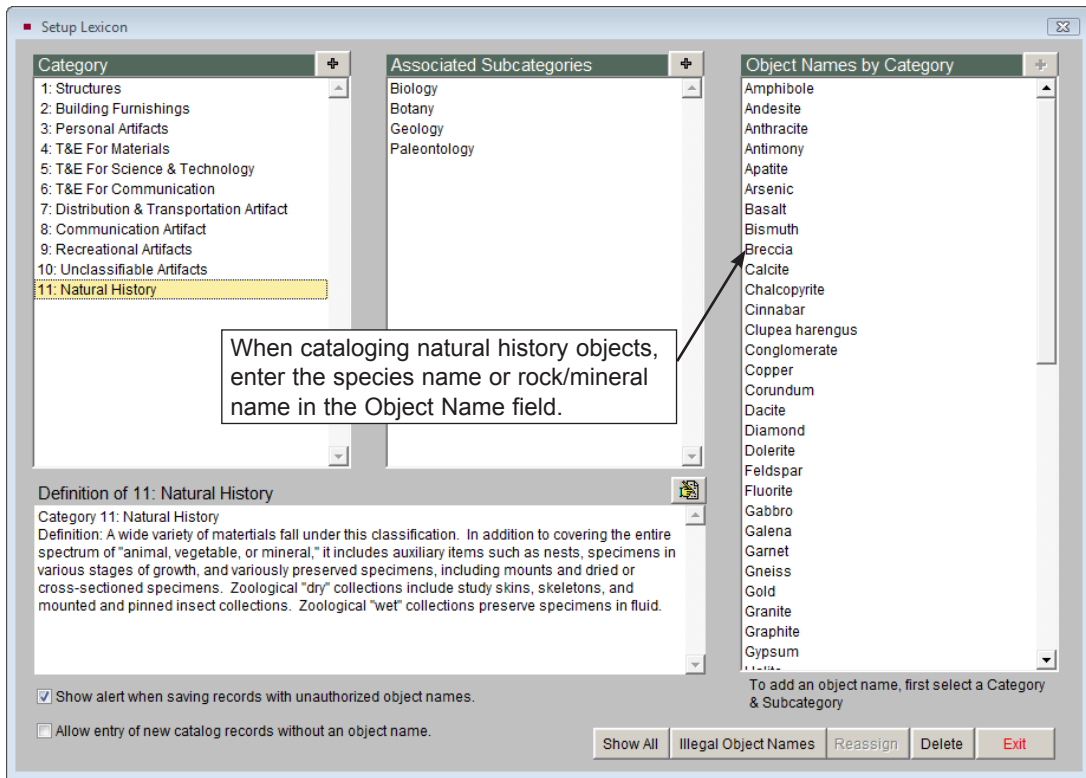


Figure 10-12 Natural History Category

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 plant specimens. In that case, you may want to add the species names for just the plants in your collection as object names under the category Natural History, subcategory Botany.

If you would like your collection's species list imported into this portion of the Lexicon, please contact our conversions department toll free at 1-800-562-6080 or by email using conversions@museumsoftware.com.