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## Press Release

SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM

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### **ALASKA STATE MUSEUMS' HANDS-ON LOAN PROGRAM HAS NEW ONLINE SEARCHABLE DATABASE**

The Alaska State Museums' Hands-on Loan Program is a special collection distinct from the museums' permanent collections, consisting of objects, photos, and posters for use in interactive educational settings. The museums are pleased to announce a new online searchable database for checking out educational objects for classroom use.

The program is available to Alaska teachers, students, librarians, home schoolers, and museums. Objects will not be shipped out of state. There is no charge for the service except for return shipping costs. The materials currently available represent Alaska's Native cultures.

Borrowers integrate the objects into their curriculum or program in a variety of ways. The objects are used in classroom exhibits, as models for students to create their own reproductions, or as inspiration for creative writing, drawing, or drama. Students often use the objects as primary research material for written reports and oral presentations.

We encourage teachers to complete the "Feedback & Curriculum Ideas" section located under "object detail" describing how they used the objects they borrowed. If the teacher allows the response to be viewable to others, it provides the opportunity for exchange of ideas statewide. For example, a teacher on the North Slope would be able to provide ideas, suggestions and lesson plans on Inupiaq cultures to a teacher in Southeast Alaska. This is an excellent way for teachers to network and share information.

Objects in the Hands-on Loan Program include baskets, drums, moccasins, mittens and mukluks, bowls, games, clothing, kayak and hunting equipment models, dolls, ulus and animal hides which may be used for classroom activities or displays. There is a photograph of each object and information is still being added to the descriptive narrative to help borrowers decide which materials they want to order.

The online database will allow users to type in key words or to browse the entire database. For example, a user might type in “basket” as a key word and then either select a specific cultural group such as Northwest Coast, or “ALL,” to view what baskets are available for checking out. The following categories are available for borrowers to choose from: Aleut/Alutiiq, Athabascan, Northwest Coast, Yup'ik/Inupiat (Eskimo), and Natural History.

In order to check out objects, a user first creates a user ID and a password, and identifies the institution they are associated with. They will also be asked to provide phone numbers, email addresses and mailing addresses. The next time the site is accessed they will simply have to log in using the password they created. Loan items may be reserved for a full two weeks.

The website is currently available through the link at <http://www.museums.state.ak.us/>.

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