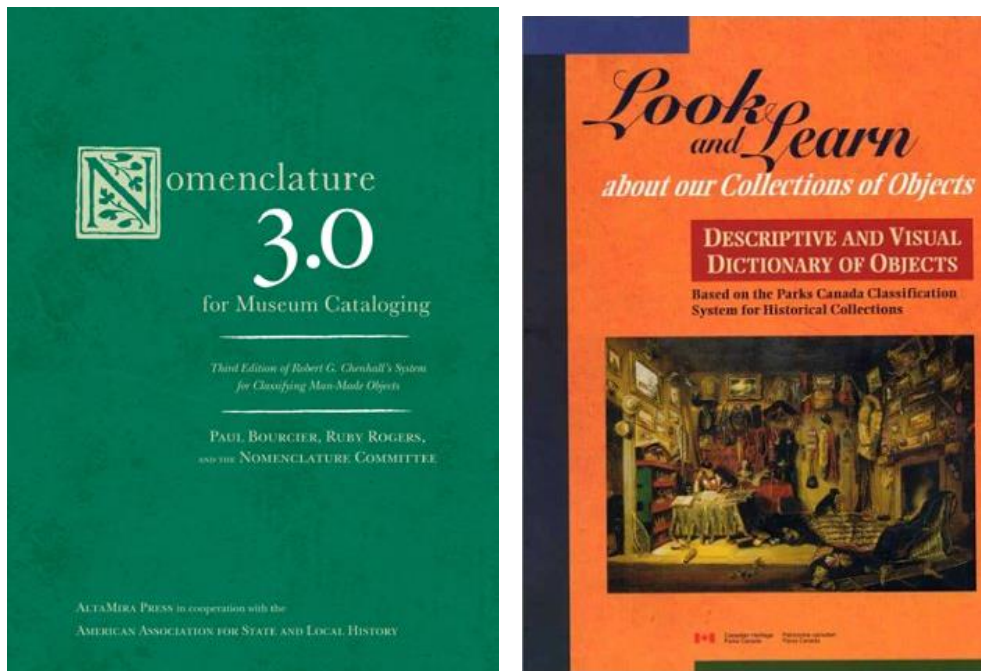


Adopting a Classification System for Collections of Human-Made Objects: A Comparison of *Nomenclature 3.0* and the *Parks Canada Classification System*

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Introduction

Museums in Canada that are documenting their historical collections in English generally use one of two well-known classification systems:

- *Nomenclature 3.0*¹ (or the older *Revised Nomenclature*²), or
- *Classification System for Historical Collections*³ and its updated online version, the [Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects](#) (referred to throughout this document as the *Parks Canada Classification System*).

¹ Bourcier, P., Rogers, R., Chenhall, R. G., & Nomenclature Committee. *Nomenclature 3.0 for Museum Cataloging*. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2010.

² Blackaby, J. R., Greeno, P., Chenhall, R. G., & Nomenclature Committee. *The Revised Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging: A Revised and Expanded Version of Robert G. Chenhall's System for Classifying Man-made Objects*. Nashville, TN: AASLH Press, 1988.

³ Canadian Parks Service. *Classification System for Historical Collections*. Ottawa, ON: National Historic Sites, Parks Service, Environment Canada; 1992.

Both are standards used by museums to classify their collections, and to identify precise and consistent names for objects. But how can a museum choose between these systems? Can museums use both? What are their relative strengths? What are their main differences and similarities? This paper will provide an overview and comparison of these two North American standards, and guide museums in their choice.

What Are Object Classification Systems?

An object classification system is a scheme for arranging or classifying objects, grouping similar objects together. Classification systems can sometimes also be used to name objects precisely and consistently. There are many different ways to classify objects – for example, by material, by cultural context, or by form – but both the *Parks Canada Classification System* and *Nomenclature 3.0* use the **functional context of the object** as the basis for classification. For example, both systems include functional groupings for lighting devices (objects which function to provide illumination) and footwear (objects which function to protect or cover for the feet). The functional context of the object is important, because if terms were organized by function alone, then (for example) all cutting tools would be grouped together, regardless of whether they are used to fell trees, prepare food, or make a surgical incision. Instead, these different types of cutting tools are separated by functional context, into categories for “Forestry Tools & Equipment”, “Food Preparation Equipment”, and “Medical & Psychological Tools & Equipment”.

Why Do Museums Need Object Classification Systems?

Classification systems are a valuable tool for indexing, searching and organizing collections, for management and documentation of museum collections, for curatorial study (research, evaluation, assessment of collections), for exhibition development, and for media and visitor engagement.

Use of a classification system can benefit museums in several ways:

- A hierarchical arrangement of records (i.e. by the functional context of the object) makes it easier to work with record groups.
- Search results include objects of the same type or kind and are related to each other.
- Classification systems provide a general overview of the whole collection and facilitate access by allowing the user to easily find out what objects the museum has of a given type.
- Museum collections records are more easily used and exchanged among museums or departments if objects are identified unambiguously and named consistently.

What Museum Disciplines and Data Fields Use These Standards?

Parks Canada Classification System and *Nomenclature 3.0* are used by museums with historical collections (human history, ethnology, anthropology). They are also sometimes used to a limited extent for archaeology collections. These standards are not used for collections that are comprised primarily of art objects or natural specimens, for which

categorization by functional context is either not sufficient, or not appropriate. However, some museums having mixed collections (consisting primarily of historical artifacts but including a small number of art objects and/or natural specimens) can be accommodated by both the *Parks Canada Classification System* and *Nomenclature 3.0*.

These systems are used to standardize:

- top-level classification fields (e.g. Category, Class, Sub-Class)
- object naming fields (e.g. Object Name, Object Type, Object Term)

Parks Canada Classification System and *Nomenclature 3.0* are not preoccupied with standardization of other data fields, such as:

- Materials (e.g. plastic; wood)
- Techniques (e.g. carved; embroidered)
- School/Style (Victorian; Art Nouveau)
- Geographical Location (Ukraine; Canada)

These other fields have other standards that can be used to control vocabulary. For more information on other standards, see the [CHIN Guide to Museum Standards](#) on the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN) Professional Exchange.

Parks Canada Classification System and Nomenclature 3.0 – Background and Similarities

Both *Nomenclature 3.0* and the *Parks Canada Classification System* are:

- intended for indexing and cataloguing historical collections of human-made objects
- developed from common usage in museums of regional, North American history
- flexible frameworks which can be expanded by museums to reflect their needs
- structured and controlled lists of object terms organized in a classification system
- similar in structure, and have many identical categories and classes

[Nomenclature 3.0](#) is a publication of the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH).

- *Nomenclature* was first published in 1978, *Revised Nomenclature* in 1988
- *Nomenclature 3.0* was published in 2010. This new version had substantial input from Canadian museums (including a large submission of terms from Parks Canada)
- *Revised Nomenclature* and *Nomenclature 3.0* are widely used in Canada; a few still use the 1978 *Nomenclature*

The *Parks Canada Classification System for Historical Collections* and the *Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects*

- are based on the 1988 *Revised Nomenclature*
- were developed initially for exclusive internal use within Parks Canada, to provide bilingual access to collections

- were first published in 1992, after requests by many Canadian museums that had collections similar to Parks Canada’s collection or museums that required bilingual or French terminology
- are widely used in Canada, not just within Parks Canada
- was launched online in 2005 as the [*Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects*](#), in the CHIN Professional Exchange, through a collaboration between Parks Canada and CHIN

The *Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects* includes terms from all Categories (1-10), but Categories 4-10 are still being validated, and work continues to progress. There is a possibility of harmonization between the *Parks Canada Classification System* and *Nomenclature 3.0* in the future. Parks Canada would like to update the Parks system to follow *Nomenclature 3.0* more closely. The Nomenclature committee will continue to work closely with Parks Canada as they develop future versions of Nomenclature.

Parks Canada Classification System and Nomenclature 3.0 – Comparative Analysis

Table: Comparison at a Glance

	Nomenclature 3.0	<i>Parks Canada Classification System</i>
Number of Terms	15,500	6,491
Focus	Objects from collections across North America	Objects from Parks Canada collections
Language	English only	English and French
Includes Illustrations, Definitions of Classes and Terms, and Bibliography?	No	Yes
Structure	6 Levels	3 Levels
Conventions	Recommends use of multiple terms and cross-indexing where doing so would make the object more accessible	Recommends using only one term representing the primary function, except where necessary due to multi-functional object
Availability	Print version only; licensed e-file available for software vendors; published 2010; comes pre-loaded into some commercial collections systems	Online, free, searchable database; free e-file for CHIN members and Canadian museology programs; published 2012 (continual updates)

Number of Terms and Focus

Nomenclature 3.0 includes many more terms than the *Parks Canada Classification System*. *Nomenclature 3.0* contains more than 15,500 terms for objects found in collections all across North America, whereas the most recent (online) version of the *Parks Canada Classification System* only includes those 6,491 terms that represent objects that are found in the Parks Canada collections.

Because the *Parks Canada Classification System* was designed around the Parks Canada collection, assembled to “protect and present nationally significant examples”⁴ of cultural heritage, it includes more specific terminology in areas such as military history, fur trade, costumes, immigration, industry, farming, science and product packaging for various cultures (Canadian, French, British, Loyalist, First Peoples, Métis, Viking, etc).

However, since the 1988 *Revised Nomenclature* was the original source of terms within the *Parks Canada Classification System*, and since many terms from the *Parks Canada Classification System* were submitted to the Nomenclature Committee for inclusion in *Nomenclature 3.0*, there is substantial overlap between the two systems.

Language

Nomenclature 3.0 is available only in American English, whereas the *Parks Canada Classification System* is available in American English and international French. Each category, class, and term within the *Parks Canada Classification System* has a code so that classification can be applied bilingually and so that data manipulation can be done more seamlessly.

Illustrations, Definitions, and Bibliography

Some of the most important features found in the *Parks Canada Classification System*, but absent in *Nomenclature 3.0*, are the illustrations, the term definitions, and the hierarchical bibliography.

The *Parks Canada Classification System* and *Nomenclature 3.0* both include definitions for the main categories and classes. But many of the terms within the *Parks Canada Classification System* additionally include a line drawing or photograph illustrating the typical object, as well as a term definition to help cataloguers differentiate between terms, and precisely identify objects. For example, the *Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects* entry for “dalmatic” includes an illustration and a definition, to help cataloguers differentiate it from other similar garments such as “alb”, “chasuble”, “surplice”, etc.

Illustration: Record for “dalmatic” from the *Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects*

⁴ Parks Canada's Mandate. (2011, August 3). *Parks Canada*. Retrieved May 30, 2013, from www.pc.gc.ca/eng/agen/index.aspx



Category: [PERSONAL OBJECTS](#)
Class: [C100 : CLOTHING, OUTERWEAR](#)
English Term: DALMATIC
Other designations: tunicle.
French Term: DALMATIQUE
French Grammatical Gender: f
Nomenclature Code: 03-00182

Definition:

An ecclesiastical robe consisting of a loose-fitting tunic that is usually made from two identically-shaped pieces of cloth sewn together, leaving a partial slit up either side. The sleeves are loose and rectangular, and it resembles a cross when fully open.

Originally worn by deacons during religious ceremonies, it is now also worn by prelates.

Do not confuse with: ALB (C100:03-00164).

Status: validated

The *Parks Canada Classification System* also has a very useful bibliography (available in the print version only) that is not available in Nomenclature 3.0. The bibliography, containing authoritative bibliographic references by material culture specialists and terminologists, provides iconographical references, scientific definitions and other documentary reference material to provide literary warrant for term choice, form and

usage. References are grouped by the Categories and Classes of the objects they describe, to make it easy for cataloguers or researchers to pinpoint resources relevant to their area of material culture research.

Structure

Nomenclature 3.0 has six hierarchical levels:

- Category
- Classification
- Sub-Classification
- Primary Object Term
- Secondary Object Term
- Tertiary Object Term

The *Parks Canada Classification System* has three levels (following the 1988 *Revised Nomenclature* on which it was based):

- Category
- Class
- Object Term

Table - Comparison of Structure

<i>Nomenclature 3.0</i>	<i>Parks Canada Classification System</i>
Category	Category
Classification	Class
Sub-Classification	
Primary Object Term	Object Term
Secondary Object Term	
Tertiary Object Term	

The three additional hierarchical levels (Sub-Classification, Secondary Object Term, and Tertiary Object Term) found in *Nomenclature 3.0* make it easier for cataloguers to quickly pinpoint the term they need when browsing the hierarchy. These additional groupings serve to gather like objects together, so that cataloguers can find them more easily than browsing through a long list sorted alphabetically.

For example, within the *Parks Canada Classification System*, all of the different ecclesiastical garments (dalmatics, surplices, albs, etc. are mixed in among the other terms within the Class of “Clothing, Outerwear – so the cataloguer has to look alphabetically through 109 terms in that Class (including aprons, blouses, breeches, capes, etc.) to find them. A cataloguer using *Nomenclature 3.0*, however, could browse down the hierarchy to find the specific grouping of “Vestments” in order to find all the terms for the ecclesiastical garments (“Alb”, “Dalmatic”, “Surplice”, etc.) categorized together.

Conventions

There are some differences in cataloguing conventions or best practices for the handling of multi-component and multi-functional objects as recommended by *Nomenclature 3.0* and the *Parks Canada Classification System*. The museum can choose which method to follow, however, regardless of which classification system they are using.

As cataloguers know, some museum objects straddle the divisions between functional categories – either because they consist of many different functional parts (e.g. a radio/phonograph entertainment unit), because they have multiple functions (e.g. a pen with an advertisement printed on it), or because the function of the object has changed over time (e.g. a blacksmith tool that was later used for mechanical maintenance). *Parks Canada Classification System* (following the 1988 *Revised Nomenclature*) suggests that in these cases, cataloguers select up to three different terms in various classes and categories, but only as necessary to classify the object by “original function”. The recommended best practice in *Nomenclature 3.0* is to use more than one term to name the object, if doing so will improve cross-referencing and make the object more accessible. To this end, *Nomenclature 3.0* includes many notes (see “May also use...” in the illustration below) to aid the cataloguer in selecting appropriate additional terms for the object.

Illustration: Page from *Nomenclature 3.0*, showing “May also use” entries for several items in the “Wedding Object” Sub-Classification

Sub-Classification:		Definition: Artifacts intended for use in weddings, independent of formal religious worship or general partying and gift-giving.	
WEDDING OBJECTS			
Primary Object Term	Secondary Term	Tertiary Term	Notes
Bouquet, Wedding			
Bowl, Marriage			
Cup, Bride’s			
Dress, Bridesmaid			<i>Note:</i> May also use “Dress” from Main Garments
Dress, Wedding			<i>Note:</i> May also use “Dress” from Main Garments
Glass, Toasting			<i>Note:</i> May also use “Glass, Wine” from Drinking Vessels
Huppah			
Pillow, Ring			
Ring, Wedding			<i>Note:</i> May also use “Ring” from Body Adornments
Veil, Wedding			<i>Note:</i> May also use “Veil” from Headwear
Wreath, Wedding			<i>Note:</i> May also use “Wreath, Head” from Headwear

Availability

The [Parks Canada Descriptive and Visual Dictionary of Objects](#) is freely available as a database on the Professional Exchange website of the Canadian Heritage Information Network (CHIN). Users can type in a search for terms, or browse the Categories and Classes. It is also made freely available as a downloadable file, to CHIN members and museum studies programs in Canada, to assist museums with data entry and cataloguing.

Nomenclature 3.0 is available primarily as a paper publication, but has also been made available by licencing arrangement with the publisher (AltaMira Press) as an electronic file for collections software vendors. It has already been implemented in several collections systems that are widely used in Canada and the USA.

Parks Canada Classification System and Nomenclature 3.0 – Comparison of Top-Level Categories and Classes

Both systems originated from the 1988 *Revised Nomenclature*, and their common origin is apparent in the following table, which shows the approximate mapping between the top levels of *Nomenclature 3.0* and the *Parks Canada Classification System*. Please note:

- The following table only includes the top two levels of each system. Further mapping may be possible when sub-classifications are considered. For example, the third level of *Nomenclature* includes sub-classifications such as “Headwear”, “Outerwear”, etc. that would map to the second level Parks Classes, “Clothing, Headwear”, “Clothing, Outerwear”, etc.
- The mapping shown in the table below is not exact, as there are sometimes differences in the way the categories and classes are defined; users should consult the definitions for each category and class in order to determine the scope of each grouping.

Table: Comparison of Top-Level Categories and Classes

<i>Nomenclature 3.0</i>		Parks Canada Classification System	
Category	Classification	Category	Class
Built Environment Artifacts		Structures	
	Building Components		Building Component
	Site Features		Site Features
	Structures		Building
			Other Structure
Furnishings		Furnishings	
	Bedding		Bedding
	Floor Coverings		Floor Covering
	Furniture		Furniture
	Household Accessories		Household Accessory
	Lighting Equipment		Lighting Device
	**note: Plumbing Fixtures are included within <i>Nomenclature 3.0</i> as part of “Building Components”		Plumbing Fixture
	Temperature Control Equipment		Temperature Control Device
	Window & Door Coverings		Window or Door Covering

Personal Artifacts		Personal Artifacts	
	Adornment		Adornment
	Clothing		
	**note: Clothing sub-classifications such as Headwear, Footwear, etc. are included in Nomenclature 3.0 but not shown here as they appear at the third level of the hierarchy.		Clothing, Footwear
			Clothing, Headwear
			Clothing, Outerwear
			Clothing, Underwear
			Clothing Accessory
	Personal Gear		Personal Gear
	Toilet Articles		Toilet Article
Tools & Equipment for Materials		Tools & Equipment for Materials	
	Agricultural T&E		Agricultural T&E
	Animal Husbandry T&E		Animal Husbandry T&E
	Fiberworking T&E		
	Fishing & Trapping T&E		Fishing and Trapping T&E
	Food Processing & Preparation T&E		Food Processing T&E
	Food Service T&E		Food Service T&E
	Forestry T&E		Forestry T&E
	Glass, Plastics, and Clayworking T&E		Glass-, Plastics-, Clayworking T&E
	Leather, Horn, and Shellworking T&E		Leather-, Horn-, Shellworking T&E
	Masonry & Stoneworking T&E		Masonry and Stoneworking T&E
	Metalworking T&E		Metalworking T&E
	Mining & Mineral Harvesting T&E		Mining and Mineral Harvesting T&E
	Multiple Use T&E for Materials		
	Painting T&E		Painting T&E
	Papermaking T&E		Papermaking T&E
	Textileworking T&E		Textileworking T&E
	Woodworking T&E		Woodworking T&E
	Other T&E for Materials		
			Basket-, Broom-, Brushmaking T&E
			Cigarmaking T&E
			Lapidary T&E
			Soapmaking T&E
			Wigmaking T&E
Tools & Equipment for Science & Technology		Tools & Equipment for Science and Technology	
	Acoustical T&E		Acoustical T&E
	Armaments		

	**note: Armaments sub-classifications such as Edged Weapons, Firearms, etc. are included in Nomenclature 3.0 but not shown here as they appear at the third level of the hierarchy.		Armament, Edged
			Armament,Bludgeon
			Armament, Artillery
			Armament,Ammunition
			Armament, Body Armor
			Armament Accessory
	Astronomical T&E		Astronomical T&E
	Biological T&E		Biological T&E
	Chemical T&E		Chemical T&E
	Construction T&E		Construction T&E
	Electrical & Magnetic T&E		Electrical and Magnetic T&E
	Energy Production T&E		Energy Production T&E
	Geological T&E		Geological T&E
	Maintenance T&E		Maintenance T&E
	Mechanical T&E		Mechanical T&E
	Medical & Psychological T&E		Medical & Psychological T&E
	Merchandising T&E		Merchandising T&E
	Meteorological T&E		Meteorological T&E
	Nuclear Physics T&E		Nuclear Physics T&E
	Optical T&E		Optical T&E
	Regulative & Protective T&E		Regulative and Protective T&E
	Surveying & Navigational T&E		Surveying and Navigational T&E
	Thermal T&E		Thermal T&E
	Timekeeping T&E		Timekeeping T&E
	Weights & Measures T&E		Weights and Measures T&E
			Other T&E for Science and Technology
Tools & Equipment for Communication		Tools & Equipment for Communication	
	Data Processing T&E		Data Processing T&E
	Drafting T&E		Drafting T&E
	Musical T&E		Musical T&E
	Photographic T&E		Photographic T&E
	Printing T&E		Printing T&E
	Sound Communication T&E		Sound Communication T&E
	Telecommunication T&E		Telecommunication T&E
	Visual Communication T&E		Visual Communication T&E
	Written Communication T&E		Written Communication T&E
			Other T&E for Communication
Distribution & Transportation Artifacts		Distribution & Transportation Artifacts	
	Aerospace Transportation T&E		Aerospace Transportation Equipment
			Aerospace Transportation Accessory

	Containers		Container
	Land Transportation T&E		
	**note: Land, Rail, and Water Transportation sub-classifications such as Animal-Powered Vehicles, etc. are included in Nomenclature 3.0 but not shown here as they appear at the third level of the hierarchy.		Land Transportation, Animal Powered
			Land Transportation, Human Powered
			Land Transportation, Motorized
			Land Transportation Accessory
	Rail Transportation Equipment		Rail Transportation Equipment
			Rail Transportation Accessory
	Water Transportation Equipment		Water Transportation Equipment
			Water Transportation Accessory
Communication Artifacts		Communication Artifacts	
	Advertising Media		Advertising Medium
	Art		Art
	Ceremonial Artifacts		Ceremonial Object
	Documentary Artifacts		Documentary Object
	Exchange Media		Exchange Medium
	Personal Symbols		Personal Symbol
Recreational Artifacts		Recreational Artifacts	
	Game Equipment		Game
	Public Entertainment Devices		Public Entertainment Device
	Recreational Devices		Recreational Device
	Sports Equipment		Sports Equipment
	Toys		Toy
Unclassifiable Artifacts		Unclassifiable Artifacts	
			Object Remnant
			Function Unknown
			Multiple Use Objects

The table shows that for the top two levels of classification, *Nomenclature 3.0* and the *Parks Canada Classification System* have more similarities than differences. At the level of basic structure, the systems are compatible. This demonstrates the feasibility of bringing the two systems together, and it is hoped that this will someday be possible. In the meantime, museums must choose which system better suits their needs.

How Can My Museum Choose Between These Systems? Can We Use Both?

Museums should not try to use both systems simultaneously. They should choose one of these two standards as the authoritative classification structure that they will use.

Although it is very important to select a classification system that meets the needs of an individual museum, it is equally important that the chosen classification system have its own internal logic, and that it be consistently applied to the museum's collection. *Nomenclature 3.0* and the *Parks Canada Classification System* have a slightly different organization and structure. Each of the classification systems has been carefully designed with its own internal organizational logic; the top levels of each system are fixed (they do not change), mutually exclusive (a given term belongs in one, and only one position in the hierarchy), and precisely defined. Trying to use both systems simultaneously (using parts of each) would compromise the logic by which the systems are organized, leading to confusion for cataloguers trying to determine how to classify an object. The same term can appear in a completely different Category or Class, because of differences in the organization of the two systems. For example:

- “Tent” is found in *Nomenclature 3.0* as “Built Environment Artifacts > Structures > Other Structures”, but it is found in *Parks Canada Classification System* as “Structures > Building”.
- “Ornament, Christmas Tree” is found in *Nomenclature 3.0* as “Communication Objects > Ceremonial Artifacts > Holiday Objects > Decoration, Holiday”, but it is found in *Parks Canada Classification System* as “Communication Objects > Art”.

There are many such examples. Cataloguers trying to use parts of both systems are likely to find it very difficult to determine the proper classification for an object, and apply that classification consistently. Users of the system may also find it difficult to determine how a given object would be categorized or named.

Museums that attempt to adopt pieces of each system are certain to face challenges in maintaining internal consistency in re-assigning classifications and terms when either of the official standards is updated. They may find it difficult to exchange meaningful object classification and naming data outside of the museum. And they may have a harder time to move their data in or out of a collections system that is designed to handle one of the official standards.

Even though museums must choose one system or the other, remember that it is possible to:

- add terms from the other standard. For example, a museum that is using the *Parks Canada Classification System* can add certain terms from *Nomenclature 3.0* that are needed to cover the scope of their collection. To do this, carefully follow the rules described in the “Adding Object Terms” section of the Introduction to *Nomenclature 3.0*. Keep track of which *Nomenclature 3.0* terms have been added, in order to facilitate a future update. Decide where the *Nomenclature 3.0* term fits within the *Parks Canada Classification System*, and do not try to conflate the two different hierarchical models.
- use the other standard as reference. For example, a museum that is using *Nomenclature 3.0* as its classification system may need to consult the *Parks Canada Classification System* for illustrations and definitions, French terminology, or bibliographic references.

- use other standards to provide supplemental classification or terminology for more specific object naming within the structure of the system the museum has chosen as its primary classification system. For example, a museum with a large quantity of coins in their collection may find that the term “Coin” as found in *Nomenclature 3.0* and *Parks Canada Classification System* does not provide enough granularity for their purposes. In this case, they may choose to supplement their terminology (sub-divide the term “Coin”) by adopting or developing their own coin-specific terminology. A history museum with a growing collection of science specimens may choose to sub-categorize the existing *Nomenclature 3.0* terms, “Specimen, Animal”, “Specimen, Plant”, and “Geospecimen” by using a scientific classification authority.
- use the classification and terminology of one standard, and the “conventions” of another. For example, a museum using the *Parks Canada Classification System* could adopt the *Nomenclature 3.0* convention of cross-indexing (using multiple terms to name the object).

To choose between *Nomenclature 3.0* and the *Parks Canada Classification System*, a museum should:

- Assess the scope of the museum’s historical collection and see which system more adequately covers it. If the collection is similar in scope to Parks Canada collections, the museum may not need all the additional terms found in *Nomenclature*
- Assess the museum’s needs for bilingual classification and terminology – if French is required, *Parks Canada Classification System* is probably the best choice
- Assess the museum’s requirements for use of the information – does the museum require an electronic file that can be adapted for local use, or loaded into the collections system? Or will a print publication suffice? The *Parks Canada Classification System* is freely available online, and is provided on request as an electronic file to CHIN members and museum studies programs in Canada – but *Nomenclature 3.0* comes pre-loaded into several major collections software products.
- Remember that Parks Canada intends to bring its classification system (which was based on the older *Revised Nomenclature*) closer to the *Nomenclature 3.0* system in the future; this means that *Parks Canada Classification System*’s object groupings will likely be more similar (or possibly identical) to those found in *Nomenclature 3.0*. It is unknown when this will happen, however.
- Check if the museum’s collections software
 - already comes with a classification system (e.g. *Nomenclature 3.0*)
 - can handle the hierarchical structure required to implement the museum’s chosen classification system (3 hierarchical levels for *Parks Canada Classification System*, 6 for *Nomenclature 3.0*)

How Can My Museum Change from One Classification System to Another?

Museums that are using an older version of *Nomenclature* (such as *Revised Nomenclature*), or that are using the *Parks Canada Classification System* and want to switch to *Nomenclature 3.0*, may be in for a substantial amount of work, depending on the number of items they have catalogued. Museums will need to assess the work required and make sure it is feasible before deciding to upgrade. It is better to be consistently using an older classification system, than to be stuck part of the way through a conversion, and struggling with inconsistencies.

For users of *Revised Nomenclature* that use commercial software packages that offer support for “automatic” data conversion from *Revised Nomenclature* to *Nomenclature 3.0*:

- After an automatic conversion, museums will need to clean pre-existing data.
- Review local terms that have been added, to see if they are now included in *Nomenclature 3.0*, and if not, decide where to organize them in the new structure.
- Review terms in the museum records - a better or more specific term from *Nomenclature 3.0* may now apply.

For users of *Revised Nomenclature* or *Parks Canada Classification System*, that wish to change to *Nomenclature 3.0* without commercial software support:

- Museums will need to look up every term they have used in their old system, to find out how it is handled in *Nomenclature 3.0*, and update the term and its hierarchical position accordingly. Some terms may have changed spelling or may have been removed, and many will have been moved within the hierarchy.
- Museums will also need to review all the local terms that they have added to their lexicon, to determine if they are covered in *Nomenclature 3.0*. If they are covered, the museum’s data must be changed to *Nomenclature 3.0* terminology. If they are not covered, the museum must determine how best to organize them within the new hierarchical structure of *Nomenclature 3.0*.

Conclusion

Both *Nomenclature 3.0* and the *Parks Canada Classification System* are excellent standards which are heavily used in Canadian museums to classify their collections, and to identify precise and consistent names for objects. Because of their common origins, they have many similarities, but they also have significant differences in the following areas: number of terms; focus; language; inclusion of illustrations, definitions, and bibliography; structure; conventions; availability. Although they should not try to use both systems simultaneously, museums can select the standard that best meets their needs as their primary system, and consult the other for the addition of terms or for reference.