Eight Days a Week: Preservation Planning and Advocacy

Mike Mitchell, Feb. 11, 1964 at Washington Coliseum, Silver Gelatin Photograph

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

Eight Days a Week: Preservation Planning and Advocacy

Images courtesy of the Kamran Najafzadeh Collection, Iran

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

Eight Days a Week: Preservation Planning and Advocacy

HBCU Photograph Preservation Institute, Image from Evan Krape, University of Delaware

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

Photographic Conservation Resources

A Guide to the Preventive Conservation of Photograph Collections

By María Fernanda Valverde

https://www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org/webfm_send/302

By María Fernanda Valverde
Assess Collection Needs & Demonstrate Thoughtful Planning

- Identify urgent needs
- Prioritize
- Focus on strength
- Involve experts

ESTABLISH PRIORITY for PRESERVATION

- Level of access

Emily Booth, Art Conservation Intern, Winterthur/UD Program in Art Conservation

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION
ESTABLISH PRIORITY for PRESERVATION

- Level of access
- Type & format

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

- Glass Plate Negative Private Collection, Iran
- Albumen Photographs, Carte-de-visites, Private Collection

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

- Helen Medici (Nana) and Debra Prima Norris 1957, Kodachrome

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

- Lantern Slide: Schooner, Elizabeth City NC
- Lantern Slide: Tree Fruits, Carmen Peach, Moore Co. NC

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

- Private J. M. Strasburg, Company A, 95th Regiment, Ohio Volunteers
- Fr Barnabas Portrait

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

- Shaft Guards at Thurber Coal Camp, under Capt. Wm. Lightfoot, July, 1894
- Dick Smith Library

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION
Caring for Photographs
Webinar 4: Preventive Care of Photographs

Instructor: Debra Hess Norris

5/21/2013
Generic Preservation Planning for Photographic Collections

1. Environmental assessment and incremental control
   - 30% - 50% RH
   - 68°F (40°F or below for color)
   - Low temperature and low humidity for nitrate & acetate film

IPI Media Storage Guide

- Information in short and accessible format
- Information on materials and preservation issues
- Addresses needs for mixed media

https://www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org/store/media-preservation/media-storage-quick-reference

Generic Preservation Planning for Photographic Collections

2. Preparation of handling and housekeeping guidelines and an emergency plan

Exhibition Guidelines

- Evaluate process
- Evaluate exhibition conditions
  - Light type and levels
  - Duration of exhibition
  - Environmental conditions
  - Method of presentation

Richard Avedon: Portraits
September 26, 2002–January 5, 2003
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Exhibition Guidelines

- Kinds of lights available:
  - Fiber optic
  - LED
  - Fluorescent
  - Incandescent

Exhibition Guidelines

- Lighting Tips:
  - Duration: 3-6 months is normal, 9 months is considered long
  - Intensity: 5 foot-candles (50 LUX) max for sensitive materials
  - Sensitivity: assume all photographs are light-sensitive
  - Wavelength: UV (i.e. daylight) is more destructive than other kinds of light

Photography: Component Parts

Support
(paper, glass, iron, silver plated copper, plastic, textile, leather, wood and more)

Binder
(albumen, collodion, gelatin)

Support
(paper, glass, iron, silver plated copper, plastic, textile, leather, wood and more)
Photography: Component Parts

**Final Image Material**
(silver organic dyes, pigments, platinum, gold, iron salts)

**Binder**
(albumen, collodion, gelatin)

**Support**
(paper, glass, iron, silver plated copper, plastic, textile, leather, wood and more)

Effect of Visible and UV Light on Photographs

Portrait of J. D. Dana, Smithsonian Institution Archives;
Portrait of J. D. Dana, Smithsonian Institution Archives

Effect of Visible and UV Light on Photographs

Courtesy of Nora Kennedy

Measuring Color

Photograph: Nora Kennedy study by Katie Sanderson, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Findings from The Heritage Health Index

2.6 billion items of historic, cultural, and scientific significance are not protected by an emergency plan and are at risk should a disaster strike their institutions.

Emergency Planning, Response & Recovery

Recovery of water-damaged photographic materials

- Collections can be safely frozen, if space and time requires
- Freeze drying may be possible with some collection materials
- Document carefully
- Wet surfaces will be fragile and may be tacky

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Field Guide To Emergency Response

- Spiral-bound notebook outlines initial steps, essential functions, 10 most common problems.
- Customized information tabs
- DVD demonstrates basic salvage techniques.

https://www.heritagepreservation.org/catalog/product.asp?IntProdID=33
**Generic Preservation Planning for Photographic Collections**

3. Inspection of film-base negative collections

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**Film Base Identification Guidelines**

- Specific dates
- Edge stamping
- Deterioration characteristics

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**Film Base Preservation Strategies**

**Long-term Goals**
- Establish cold storage environment (not necessary to separate nitrate from acetate)
- Duplicate heavily used collections

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**Generic Preservation Planning for Photographic Collections**

4. Duplication program for deteriorated negatives

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**Generic Preservation Planning for Photographic Collections**

5. Rehousing of historic photographic prints
Photographic Storage: General Recommendations

- Separate print and negative collections
- Utilize standard-sized enclosures
- Consider plastic versus paper
- Review relevant ISO standards
- Purchase acid-free boxes for extra protection

Photographic Storage: General Recommendations

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Photographic Storage: General Recommendations

- Paper and board:
  - “acid free” means acidic at the time of manufacture, may become acidic with time
  - Try to find “lignin free,” “rag board,” or “museum board”
  - Should pass Photographic Activity Test

Photographic Storage: General Recommendations

- Plastic:
  - Polyester
  - Polyethylene
  - Polypropylene
  - AVOID vinyl (PVC)
  - AVOID acetate

Photographic Storage: General Recommendations

- Paper vs. Plastic

  - Opaque
  - Porous
  - Weaker (may tear easily)
  - No static

  - Transparent
  - Non-porous (not recommended for cellulose negatives)
  - Stronger
  - May have sharp edges
  - Static
Photographic Storage: General Recommendations

- Smooth-surfaced paper of best quality available
- pH of paper cold extract
- Lead acetate for the detection of reducible sulfur compounds that will tarnish silver
- The Beilstein Test for the presence of chlorines (in plastics)

Some Recommended Suppliers

- Archival Products: http://www.archival.com/
  - 1-800-526-6640
- Gaylord: http://www.gaylord.com/
  - 1-800-962-6680
- University Products: http://www.universityproducts.com/
  - 1-800-628-1912
- Talas: http://www.talasonline.com/
  - 212-219-0770
- Hollinger Metal Edge: http://www.hollingermetaledge.com/
  - 1-800-862-2228
- Archivart: http://s390435715.onlinehome.us/
  - 1-888-846-6847

Photographic Storage: Basic Properties

- Separate print and negative collections
- Utilize standard-sized enclosures
- Consider plastic versus paper
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Generic Preservation Planning for Photographic Collections

6. Identification of photographic prints requiring conservation treatment
Conservation Priorities for Photographic Prints

- Active mold
- Flaking binder layers
- Pressure-sensitive tapes
- Rubber cement adhesives
- Severely degraded primary or secondary supports

Silver Gelatin Photograph from the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia, PA

Before Treatment

After Treatment

Private Owner, c. 1920s

Basic Preservation Advice

- Seek advice from experts. Local museums or The American Institute for Conservation.