Caring for Photographs
Webinar 4: Preventive Care of Photographs

Assess Collection Needs & Demonstrate Thoughtful Planning

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

Establish Priority for Preservation

- Level of access
- Type & format

Frederick Langenheim
Frederick Langenheim Looking at Talbotypes
Daguerreotype
Dimensions: 4 3/4 x 3 1/2; Case: 6 x 4 11/16 x 5/8
Gilman Collection, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Emily Brown, Art Conservation Fellow, Winterthur/UD Program in Art Conservation

http://www.connectingtocollections.org/courses/caring-for-photographs/
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Instructor: Debra Hess Norris

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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

5/21/2013
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

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

Effect of Visible and UV Light on Photographs

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

Measuring Color

PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESERVATION: RISK ASSESSMENT & IMPLEMENTATION
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

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

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.
3. Inspection of film-base negative collections

- Specific dates
- Edge stamping
- Deterioration characteristics

Film Base Preservation Strategies

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

Generic Preservation Planning for Photographic Collections

4. Duplication program for deteriorated negatives

Film Base Identification Guidelines

- Cellulose nitrate negatives (during rehousing from the Dr. Rose Collection, Smithsonian Institution Archives)

Generic Preservation Planning for Photographic Collections

5. Rehousing of historic photographic prints

Technical Guidelines for Digitizing Cultural Heritage Materials: Creation of Raster Image Master Files

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

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

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/
  - 1-800-526-6940
- Gaylord: http://www.gaylord.com/
  - 1-800-962-9580
- 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

- Framing:
  - Use spacers to prevent sticking to glazing
  - Using UV-filtering glass or acrylic: http://www.tru-vue.com/

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.

PRESENTATION TO BE CONTINUED IN WEBINAR 5…