

Care and Handling of Photographs

Activities

1. Lay out a selection of photographic media from the institution's collections and have the participants talk about each one. Include among the examples a glass plate negative, a nitrate negative, and a safety film negative; a color transparency and a color print; and a variety of black and white prints. Discuss the issues that need to be considered for each in their long-term life.
2. Using an assemblage of photographic media from the institution's collections, discuss storage options for each. Using an archival supplier's catalog (such as Hollinger Metal Edge or Gaylord), identify the most appropriate storage materials for each medium.
3. Have participants select several photographs from the collection that they feel should be digitized and made available to a wider public through (for example) Flickr. For each image, consider these questions: What is important about the image? What information do you have about the image? Is that sufficient to make the image meaningful to a viewer in another state? Are there any copyright issues or donor issues? What standards should be used, and what information collected, in order to create a permanent digital file? What should be done with the original photograph after it has been scanned?
4. If the institution has original photographs on display, discuss options that can reduce the image's risks and prolong its life. These could include UV shielding, moving the photograph, adjusting the lighting, replacing it with a reproduction, rotating display items, etc.
5. The institution may have particular photographs that are especially important but which present unusual problems of handling or storage. With advance knowledge of them, the Mentor can be prepared to discuss these with participants. Examples might include rolled or framed panoramas (Cirkut camera prints), framed enlarged portraits (crayon portraits), oil tinted photographs, so-called magnetic photo albums, and so on.