

Fundamentals of the Conservation of Photographs



DISTANCE MENTORING / MODULE 1

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SUMMARY

The distance mentoring phases that followed the first and second summer schools were a means to take the learning process beyond the classroom and to integrate all three years of the course into an extended learning experience. This phase of the course allowed the instructors to remain in contact with participants in a mentoring relationship as they applied information obtained in the summer schools to their own work. This process was intended to deepen understanding of concepts through application, and to encourage the formation of professional relationships through sustained communication. Sustained contact with instructors and their course colleagues also helped participants to develop a wider perspective on the collections, institutions and other professionals both in their region and internationally, and to inspire broader engagement with the field of photograph conservation.

The distance mentoring phase for Module 1 of the course "Fundamentals of the Conservation of Photographs" followed the first summer school and ran from September 1, 2008 to May 1, 2009. During the 9 month period, participants were responsible for completing four assignments designed to help them apply the information and knowledge from the summer school to their own collections and professional practice, with the guidance of designated course instructors who served as mentors. The assignments centered on the survey of 20-30 photographs from an institution, family or teaching collection and were designed to lead participants through the process of surveying a small collection and writing a condition report and preservation plan. The work schedule was flexible with assignment due dates spread throughout the year. Participants (and their supervisors) agreed in advance to spend an average of ten hours each month on distance mentoring activities.

At the due date, participants uploaded their assignments onto the course website. The role of the mentors was to review the assignments and provide constructive feedback to participants. Throughout the distance mentoring period mentors also addressed questions and issues that participants encountered at their own institutions, and encouraged others in the group to contribute to solutions and share information through an online discussion forum on the course website.



SESSION OUTLINE CONT'D.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Assignment I: Participants surveyed their small collection of 20-30 items and created a short (3 pages) interim report for their collection that identified the photographic process, format and ownership of each photograph. This was due November 2008.
- Assignment II: Participants created a longer condition report (4 - 5 pages with visual documentation and captions) that described condition, housing (location, materials and environment), organization, and access to the collection; gave recommendations on re-housing, and assigned conservation priority where appropriate. This was due January 2009.
- Assignment III: Participants wrote a conservation plan for the preservation of the collection. The plan proposed appropriate actions to stabilize items in the collection, including (as appropriate): conservation treatment; consultation with a conservation professional; re-housing (including appropriate materials for re-housing) and digitization. The report also addressed issues of accessibility. All proposed actions included resources, funding and a time-line for the sequence of events. This was due March 2009.
- Assignment IV: Dissemination of the knowledge, expertise and personal experience gained by participants through the course was an important objective of the course. Participants were asked to prepare a 10 minute presentation for the Module 2 summer school detailing their dissemination activities (broadly defined) related to the conservation of photographs that they carried out during the year. These activities could include lectures, publications, hands-on teaching or workshops, collaborative activities or dissemination through the internet.

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