

Recommended Documentation Procedures for Cold Storage Implementation

Introduction

Storage in a cold environment, lower than “normal” archival storage conditions (68-72°F), is essential to slow the deterioration process and extend the life of this vulnerable media. After film-based materials are identified and cold storage needs have been established, the materials must be separated from the remainder of the archival holdings and prepared for packaging.

To maintain physical and intellectual control of these collections, it is necessary to prepare sufficient documentation to account for separation and/or relocation of materials prior to moving them into cold storage. This documentation will ensure the relationship to the collection is properly recorded. This will also facilitate easier access to materials when retrieval is requested. Although “frequent” retrieval (more than 2 or 3 times a year per item) of collections materials is discouraged, materials may be accessed while in cold storage.

Many film-based materials in museum collections already exhibit signs of deterioration, thus it is imperative that these collections be moved into cold storage as soon as possible. The urgent need for cold storage cannot be underestimated, and the development of efficient and thorough documentation procedures is essential to ensure the long-term preservation of vulnerable film-based materials.

Working Methods

The following checklist will help guide you through the process of preparing film-based materials for cold storage in terms of archival documentation. NOTE: Physical preparation of film-based materials collections must also be completed, but is not addressed in this document.

- **Refer to the survey/assessment you completed when identifying the film-based materials in your collections.**
- **Review the storage spaces listed in the survey/assessment and identify any new areas that may contain film-based materials.**

___ Have you obtained new film-based materials since your survey/assessment was completed?

___ Did you account for ALL film-based materials including slides, negatives, motion picture film, aerial film, microfilm/fiche and x-rays?

Make all necessary changes, as the survey/assessment will be your primary resource to refer to in order to ensure all film-based materials are identified and cold storage needs are addressed.

- **Identify the status of your film-based materials**

___ Are any of your film-based materials NOT accessioned? If yes, then you should accession them before moving them into cold storage.

___ Are ALL your film-based materials accessioned? If yes, then you should proceed with documenting the materials in preparation for cold storage.

Although materials need not be cataloged prior to moving them into cold storage, you MUST ensure proper documentation is completed to ensure access and accountability. Minimal documentation should include a box inventory and list of contents (refer to instructions below). This documentation will enable staff to retrieve materials for future cataloging and/or duplication/digitization projects.

- **Housing considerations**

___ Are your prints and negatives stored in the same enclosure? If yes, you will need to separate your negatives from your prints so that the negatives can be placed in cold storage. The negatives can remain in the original enclosures and the prints should be placed in new archival enclosures maintaining the original order.

___ If you separated your prints from your negatives, have you transferred all indentifying information so that the negative and print both retain all pertinent information? Any information such as notations on the back of the prints and/or on original enclosure must be maintained by both objects. Extensive notes on original enclosures that are not duplicated in any other catalog system should be photocopied onto archival bond paper that can be placed behind the print inside its new enclosure (or make a small folder from the photocopy paper and place the print inside). If there is identifying information written on only the back of the print and not on the original envelope photocopy the back of the print onto archival bond paper and insert the paper into the envelope behind the negative.

___ Have you created separation sheets to track any negatives and prints that were separated? If a large number of prints and negatives (i.e., more than 100) are filed in a group (by subject or project, etc.) track the items that are separated on the inventory form, and prepare a separation sheet for each box of prints (specifying that the corresponding negatives have been removed and where they are located) and for the negative boxes (specifying that the corresponding prints have been removed and where they are located). If small quantities of individual prints are separated from their negatives (i.e., less than 50), prepare a separation sheet for each envelope. Place one sheet in the original location, one sheet in the new location and one in a master file.

___ Are the film-based materials in a container or box that is structurally stable and labeled on the outside? If not (i.e., if negatives are in filing cabinets) then these materials (and their respective enclosures) will need to be placed in labeled boxes of appropriate size prior to being moved into cold storage.

NOTE: It is NOT necessary to re-house collections in new archival enclosures before they are placed in cold storage providing the enclosures are intact and sturdy (replace

only those that are moldy, torn, falling apart, etc.). Older or acidic envelopes and outer enclosures are acceptable for cold storage as long as they are structurally sound. A cold storage environment will slow down deterioration process for all materials including acidic envelopes and outer boxes/containers.

- **Review status and housing of film-based materials**

___ All film-based materials are accessioned

___ All film-based materials are separated from other materials (i.e. prints) and/or associated records

___ All separation sheets have been completed and filed accordingly

___ All film-based materials are in appropriate enclosures, outer boxes and/or containers and are grouped/organized accordingly to facilitate access and retrieval from cold storage

NOTE: If you confirm the above tasks have been completed, then you are ready to proceed with documentation procedures.

- **Documentation - creating an inventory**

___ Compile a list describing images or groups of images and relate them to an easily identifiable number, number range and/or brief description (i.e., topic or project) on the outer box/container. This list will be your inventory list for that particular box and will enable you to easily access your film-based materials in cold storage. The level of description you use will vary according to your needs. Recording information by topic or project should be a minimum requirement.

The inventory list may contain detailed descriptive information if it is available and/or necessary (i.e., if images will be accessed frequently). However, sometimes such detailed information is not available and only broad project information can be noted (i.e., “Archeological Survey from 2000” or “Wolf Monitoring Project 1999-2004”).

Your inventory list may be hand-written or created in an electronic format. If you are keeping your film-based materials on site, then a handwritten version may suffice. However, if your film-based materials are moving to another storage location offsite, then an electronic version is highly recommended, as it will be much more helpful to staff at the receiving site.

NOTE: Packaging film-based materials for cold storage should only begin after proper documentation is completed. Specific procedures for packaging and handling are available in separate documents.

- **Changing Storage Locations**

You will need to enter new storage locations in the respective records (i.e., catalog) for the film-based materials moving to cold storage. After the boxes/containers of film-based materials are organized inside the freezer unit/s, you should also specify on which shelf and in which freezer unit (if using multiple freezer units) the image is stored.

- **Mapping the Cold Storage Freezer (when using onsite freezer storage)**

___ You will need to use your inventory list to help you “map” the location of each box in your freezer. This will enable you to locate and access materials in an efficient, organized manner in the future.

___ Number the freezer shelves using labels. As you store each box, record its shelving location in the freezer. Use this information to create a map and to update the storage locations in ANCS+. Create the map as if you are looking down from above each shelf and indicate if boxes are stored two deep or more (refer to example below). Place a copy of this map in a stable polyester enclosure on the exterior front panel of the freezer door. Magnets can be used to secure this map and enclosure to the freezer door.

Example:

