



Article: Development and Use of the Photograph Information Record

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Development and Use of the Photograph Information Record

Erin Murphy, Nora W. Kennedy, and Amy Brost

Presented at the PMG session of the 2012 AIC Meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico

Abstract

This article traces the origins, development and publication of the internationally endorsed Photograph Information Record or PIR, a questionnaire form used to collect details pertinent to the cataloging and care of photographs within collections. The importance of the PIR for gathering essential information for the preservation of photographs has risen with the recognition of the artist interview as a crucial tool in the conservation of modern and contemporary art. The PIR also provides a mechanism for systematically organizing and recording information about older works. First launched and made available online in 2009, the PIR has matured in use to the point where an evaluation of its content and implementation are in order. Possible modifications to the form and its future applications complete this presentation of its conception and development.

Introduction

The theme of the 2012 AIC Annual Meeting, “Connecting to Conservation: Outreach and Advocacy” served as a reminder that conservation efforts are most effective within partnerships among allied professionals. The Photograph Information Record (PIR) is the result of a multi-disciplinary, international partnership among conservators, curators, and collection managers with the goal of creating a document that can capture information essential to the cataloging and preservation of photographs. The importance of such documentation becomes more vital as photographers and artists working in photographic media move from traditional analog to digital formats, embracing a variety of new technologies, materials, methods of presentation, and even diverse attitudes toward long-term preservation.

This form was developed and executed by an international committee and has been adopted as a standard by institutions around the world. The PIR is free and publically available on the American Institute for Conservation website in writable PDF format allowing it to be communicated electronically or printed-out to hard copy. The full two-page form is appended at the conclusion of this article. Artists and galleries are encouraged to utilize the PIR to record basic cataloging information as well as materials, processes, and philosophies essential to the preservation and appropriate presentation of the artwork in order to convey this on to future owners in a concise and approachable format.

The creation, use and content of the Photograph Information Record are summarized here. Also touched upon is the collaborative process in developing the PIR, current use of the PIR in leading institutions, user-supplied suggestions for modifications, as well as possible future content and format updates. The third anniversary of the launch of the PIR represented an opportunity to re-evaluate the efficacy of the form and solicit user feedback.

Origins and Development

Record keeping varies widely according to the resources and needs of an institution or collection, but questions regarding artists' materials are universal. Capturing such information at the earliest possible moment - ideally at the time of creation, but currently more generally at the time of acquisition - and from a source knowledgeable regarding the artwork allows curators, conservators and collection managers to make crucial preservation and exhibition decisions now and well into the future. Many conservators and curators in modern and contemporary art have come to champion some form of artist interview as an indispensable conservation tool. Information gathering ranges from informal telephone conversations to written questionnaires to filmed and transcribed interviews, according to institutional needs and resources. In all cases, prior to 2006, the photograph conservation profession lacked consensus on precisely what information should be considered essential for the preservation of photographs. It seemed reasonable that a single questionnaire could be developed that would meet this need. The resulting questionnaire would provide a standard that institutions could freely adopt or use in conjunction with their existing information-gathering processes. A few notable institutions around the world have had artist's questionnaires in use for decades, collecting relevant information about acquired works of art more or less regularly, while other institutions seeking to develop questionnaires were doing so internally, without a systematic way to learn from one another.

The growing need for a universally accepted document to capture essential information about photographers' materials was voiced at a November 2006 meeting of the Photographic Materials Research Group (PMRG) in Paris, a meeting conceived and supported by Manfred Heiting, a connoisseur and collector of photography. The PMRG included conservators, scientists and curators brought together to confer about research needs in the field. Anne Cartier-Bresson, Director of the *Atelier de Restauration et de Conservation des Photographies de la ville de Paris (ARCP)*, spoke of her frustrated attempts to collect information about acquired works of art from the galleries selling them. The ARCP had an artist's questionnaire form of their own design in use at the time, as was the practice with many collecting institutions. Cartier-Bresson made a compelling case for the notion that a more universal form with international backing would carry more weight and therefore elicit a higher response rate from art vendors internationally. The topic was again discussed at a May 2007 meeting of the PMRG hosted by The Metropolitan Museum of Art where Nora Kennedy volunteered to spearhead the effort, thinking it would be a relatively simple and straightforward project. She presented this idea at the joint meeting of the ICOM-CC and AIC photographic materials groups in Rochester in 2007 proposing the establishment of a committee of volunteers to assemble existing questionnaires and edit them into a new international standard. Endorsement by major institutions and professional conservation organizations was viewed as essential to the success of the initiative. Ultimately a group of fourteen conservators volunteered to form the core group. These individuals were joined by four additional members from curatorial and collections management in the final stages to ensure that the form would be of significance to all aspects of institutional involvement. It was in Rochester in 2007 that Erin Murphy of the New York Public Library expressed her willingness to co-chair the committee. The full committee listing of colleagues and their affiliated institutions at the time is appended at the conclusion of this article.

The form was originally conceived as an artist's questionnaire and was intended to summarize and condense existing curatorial and conservation questionnaires into one short, easy-to-complete document. The PIR was born largely from the daily questions and concerns of conservators and curators collecting contemporary fine art, but the hope was that the form would extend itself to 19th and 20th century acquisitions as well, where questions regarding prior exhibition and prior conservation treatment are equally valid.

The seller of a nineteenth-century photograph (such as the one pictured in Figure 1) will not have access to precise technical details about the photograph in question, but can certainly provide information about the provenance and history of ownership, and any prior conservation treatment

if known. The owner also may have researched and be knowledgeable about other known prints, publication or reproduction history, and exhibition history.



Fig. 1. Félix Bonfils (French, 1831-1885), [*Veiled Turkish Woman*], 1870s, Albumen silver print from glass negative. Image: 22.2 x 16.4 cm (8 ³/₄ x 6 ⁷/₁₆ in.). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Funds from various donors, 2010 (2010.317).

Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The PIR is well-suited to collecting information about a single work of art and not designed for large groups of diverse materials. Contemporary artists have available to them an increasing and ever evolving gamut of inks and papers for digital printing in addition to the remaining analog offerings. Finishing techniques such as mounting and surface treatments continue to introduce new plastics and adhesives. The detailed documentation of all components making up a work of art is avidly sought by those responsible for the long-term preservation of these important icons in the history of art. The PIR is used to its best advantage, therefore, when a living artist or an agent familiar with the technical aspects of their work is available to complete the form. Yet this form and the information contained within can be and have been used for large collections, series, portfolios or groups of “like” materials – particularly where the artist or agent is still living.

Collaborative Development Process

The committee commenced the development process by submitting any questionnaires currently in use at their institutions to Committee Chairs Nora Kennedy and Erin Murphy in the summer of 2007. These questionnaires were compiled into one document, repetitions deleted and then redistributed to the committee members for review. Committee members paid particular attention

to language, terminology, emphasis, and clarity keeping in mind that the document would be used by a wide audience and under many different circumstances. The goal was to condense these longer, multiple page documents into a shorter one- to two-page document that could be used as a reference for both curatorial and conservation staff. To that end, committee members had multiple conversations regarding terminology and essential information. The majority of these discussions took place through e-mail exchanges, although some in-person meetings with a small number of committee representatives also took place at national conservation conferences as possible.



Fig. 2. Lois Conner (American, born New York 1951), *Xi Hu, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China*, 1998, printed 2011, Inkjet print, Image: 35.6 x 81.9 cm (14 x 32 ¼ in.) Sheet: 43 x 90.2 cm (16 15/16 x 35 ½ in.).

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the artist, 2012 (2012.130.2).

Photo courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art © Lois Conner.

3.4 If the support/paper is commercially produced, please identify the manufacturer and product name. If produced by hand, please describe the materials and techniques used.

Hahnemuhle 305, photorag

3.5 If this is an inkjet print, please provide ink set information (for example: Epson UltraChrome K3 ink). If the inks are altered or mixed by the artist or printer, please describe.

Printed with an Epson 9880 printer, using Epson UltraChrome K3 inks, and Quad black driver

Fig. 3. Excerpt from the PIR for *Xi Hu, Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China* by Lois Conner. In the Museum's cataloging system, this print (Fig. 2) is generically labeled as "inkjet", but having the artist provide the precise information about the paper and ink types is invaluable for its proper care and exhibition.

Considerable time was spent discussing the list of processes at the top of page two. There was eventual agreement that the major processes being acquired at the time could be summarized in four main categories: gelatin silver print, chromogenic print, silver dye bleach print, and inkjet print. Other options were to be captured in the all encompassing “other” with room for the name to be written or typed in. Standard generic process terminology was favored over specific brand names, but examples were provided to guide the less technically-oriented user. Thus “(c-print, Ektacolor)” follows “chromogenic print” and “(Iris, Giclée, Epson, etc.)” follows “inkjet print”.

As part of the draft review process, committee members were asked to gather feedback from their peers including colleagues in photography galleries, collection managers, registrars, curators, and the artists themselves. A nearly final draft was shared with curators and collection managers in the spring of 2009 for final vetting at a face-to-face meeting with some committee members at The New York Public Library. This smaller group reviewed the document content, terminology, approach, as well as design details and format. A few areas generated considerable discussion including the title of the form and the use of the word “Photograph”, as well as the simplification of philosophical questions included.

Previous artist’s questionnaire had asked questions such as the following:

- “Do long-term stability issues influence your choice of materials or technique? Please elaborate.”
- “How much conservation intervention do you feel is appropriate?”
- “How do you feel about the display of an ‘aged’ or damaged (visually altered) work that cannot be improved through conservation?”
- “Is there any point at which a visually altered work should no longer be displayed?”

These questions were eliminated as being too open-ended or specific or simply because they were too complex and profound to respond to in this format. The question “Are there aspects of the work that are particularly vulnerable and in need of special care?” replaced the above and has proven to elicit more useful information than the prior variants. In section 5.3 the artist is asked to provide any further detail about the creation or preservation of the work of art, allowing ample opportunity for those eager to share their opinions and feelings to do so, adding additional documents or illustrations as desired.

Over the course of development, the draft forms had been entitled “Artist’s Questionnaire”, and then “Materials & Techniques Information Sheet” - the latter a cumbersome title providing no clue to the object in question. Finally “Photograph Information Record” was agreed upon, reflecting a growing emphasis on technological process and presentation aspects of the artwork rather than the artist’s philosophy. The meaning of the word “photograph” itself is a much debated topic as many contemporary artworks described as photographs do not have a light-sensitive component as part of the final work of art. Yet many photographers work with inkjet and alternative media and their works are purchased by collectors, dealers and cultural institutions whose focus has been traditional, chemically processed photographs. The term Photograph Information Record, therefore, provides a generic terminology that can encompass a number of processes that are “photographic in nature” such as chemically produced photographs, inkjet prints, transparencies and multi-media artworks. In that sense, the term “photograph” can be used to broadly represent a family of artwork while the questions on the form logically move

from broad to specific. An additional factor was the fact that in most collecting institutions it is the “Department of Photographs” (in addition to Contemporary Art Departments) that acquires both analog and digital contemporary artworks.

The debate over the term “photography” has and will continue to be discussed. We encountered interesting exchanges within translation committees working to convert the form into other languages. Examples of these are included below. There is no doubt we are not at the end of this discussion, but did not want this to be a barrier to having a form available for use. A great strength of online publication is the unending possibility for evaluations and revisions.

After this final review, the PIR was submitted for endorsement to the American Institute for Conservation and its Photographic Materials Group and sent to major institutions with a request to review the form and give permission to be listed at the bottom of the PIR as a “user”. For an institution to be listed, it was essential that both curatorial and conservation staff approved, so in all cases Malcolm Daniel, then Curator in Charge of the Department of Photographs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art contacted his curatorial colleagues in sister institutions encouraging their support, while the conservation colleagues were contacted by PIR Committee members. In some institutions it was essential that the registrar or collection managers be on board as well. The institutional and professional organization endorsements have been key to focusing attention on the PIR as a universally accepted document to collect cataloging, historical and technical information to inform the long-term preservation of an artwork. The Board of Directors of the American Institute for Conservation readily offered their support and the PIR Committee will continue to seek endorsement by international conservation organizations.

Original Goals

Several fundamental goals of the PIR are summarized below.

- *To create a concise standardized form seeking generally agreed upon essential information.*

While no document can address all aspects of an artwork, the main goal of the PIR was to create a universal document with generally agreed upon *essential information*. Each institution or collecting agency may need to gather information specific to its organization but the goal of the PIR committee was to eliminate institution-specific questions and to pose questions universally applicable to the cataloging and preservation of photographs. The collaborative review process resulted in a very concise, two page, object specific, check off and short answer document in a writable PDF format. The questions are targeted to elicit very specific answers regarding process and materials and to provide contact information for printers, mounters, framers, studio assistants, even conservators who may be familiar with the artist’s work and materials. These were topics all members agreed were crucial to record.



Fig. 4. John Yang (American, born China, Suchow 1933-2009 New York), *[Imisfree Garden, Millbrook, NY]*, 1985, printed 1998, Platinum print, Image: 19.5 × 24.5 cm (7 ¹¹/₁₆ × 9 ⁵/₈ in.) Sheet: 26 × 34 cm (10 ¹/₄ × 13 ³/₈ in.).

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of the John Yang Archive, 2012 (2012.482.4).

Photo courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art © The John Yang Archive.

Of interest in the PIR for this work of art by John Yang is the fact that the platinum print was created by the artist for an exhibition some years after the gelatin silver prints of 1985.

- *To create a form that could be used ready-made or as a model for similar forms.*

As stated above, each institution may have particular needs above and beyond what is addressed by the PIR. Therefore, a secondary but equally important goal was to create a form that could be used ready-made or could be adapted to meet the needs of individual collections. To that end the form is not copyrighted and contains a final portion to allow for additional comments. The small print at the end states: *This form is not copyrighted. It may be reproduced, translated, and used freely by artists, galleries, and collecting institutions without requesting further permission. A writable pdf version of this document may be found at: www.conservation-us.org/PIR.* Since the 2009 launch of the PIR a few users report that they have adapted the PIR or extracted particular questions from the PIR in order to provide greater detail to existing documentation. Others do not work in close collaboration with registrars or curators, so have found only the technical aspects to be useful to them while the information on the front page is gathered by institutional colleagues independently. These are both acceptable applications of the PIR, the spirit of which is to prompt information collection and documentation regarding the creation, maintenance and exhibition of an artwork in a flexible manner.

- *The form should be available in many different languages.*

A form that is universally accepted should be available in several languages. Translations of the English PIR were developed almost as soon as the document was launched, and today the questionnaire is available on the web in Spanish, French, Japanese, Greek, German, Dutch, Catalan, and Portuguese, with translations in Chinese, Italian and Finnish underway.

A direct translation from English to other languages is sometimes difficult due to differences in terminology between languages and to regional dialects. The collaborative process, therefore, has

been essential when creating translations. In general a volunteer steps forward to chair the initiative, and suggests native speakers from conservation, curatorial and collections management. Often one or two members provide the first translation, after which the committee members review and refine the document until a consensus regarding terminology is reached. For languages spoken over broad regions of the world, committees expand to represent regional differences in vocabularies. For example, the Spanish committee was led by Mirasol Estrada from Mexico, but included colleagues from Mexico, Spain, and Chile. A list of the translation committees is appended at the conclusion of this article. Although the PIR is not copyrighted and can be modified for use, the translations hosted on the AIC website adhere as closely as possible to the content and format of the English PIR.

Some committees cited difficulty with particular terms such as “photograph”, “image” and “print”. Martin Jürgens worked with the Dutch translation group and stated:

...we discussed at length the translation of the term **image**, as distinguished in the form from **print**. In English I understand the use of the term image well, and for me it has a broader sense to it: an image can be, in terms of content, anything. A good translation for image doesn't exist in Dutch (as is also the case for German, by the way) so Herman and Michiel suggested using the Dutch term **opname** (equivalent in German is **Aufnahme**), which, however, indicates a photographic original, essentially a **shot**. Their argument was that the form is called the **Photograph** Information Record, and not the **Image** Information Record. My suggestion of using **beeld** (German: **Bild**) wasn't accepted for the same reason. So there does seem to be a sort of contradiction within the title of the form and its content: namely that the title suggests this form is for photographs only whereas the content indicates that this form could also [be] used for other types of images that have been printed. ... Oh-oh, so what is a photograph then?? ...

These discussions provide long-term benefits to the profession in the search for consensus and standards, and sometimes open pathways of communication between allied professionals.

- *The form should be endorsed and adopted by professional organizations and major institutions.*

Having the form endorsed by professional conservation organizations and adopted by major institutions was essential to ensure the document's effectiveness. The support of AIC and PMG as well as a listing of all the institutions currently using the PIR gave the project greater momentum and provided a context for the document within a larger community. Additionally, it has helped to stress that the document is supported by a group of allied professionals rather than being the creation of an individual or an institution. Since 2009 a number of additional institutions have asked to be included among those endorsing the form when the next edition is published.

- *That the form be readily available to anyone on the web and that the form be hosted by major professional conservation organizations such as ICOM-CC and AIC.*

The PIR is free and publically available at the American Institute for Conservation website www.conservation-us.org/PIR. AIC has been hosting the form since its launch in 2009,

managing uploads of new translations as well as providing analytics regarding page hits and session duration. The page on the AIC website where the PIR is hosted has had about 1,800 unique visitors in the 16 months leading up to September 2013. Having the form hosted by a professional organization ensures that the form will be maintained and supported over time. The form can be used by anyone including artists, gallerists, dealers, curators, collection managers and conservators and anyone can add a link to the form on their own webpage. It is hoped that as the PIR becomes more common its web presence will become more abundant. A handful of galleries, educators, photography enthusiasts, conservators, and others currently link to the PIR. This proliferation is something we encourage as it is ideal that the form be widely accessible.

Survey, Feedback and Re-Evaluation

As the PIR headed into its fourth year of activity, the committee sought feedback from users in order to evaluate the real-life application of the document. At the end of 2012, a survey regarding PIR use was designed by Amy Brost, then an intern in Photograph Conservation at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The survey consisted of 30 questions divided into three sections: Usage, Content Improvement, and Best Practices. The Usage section attempted to gauge precisely how the PIR was being used: who sent it out, how often, and by what method, how it was returned, how much information it contained, the usefulness of that information, and how the information was subsequently stored. Most questions were multiple choice with space for optional additional comments. The Content Improvement questions were open-ended and designed to give users a chance to comment on each section of the PIR form itself. The Best Practices section contained several open-ended questions to probe users' experiences with implementation and dissemination of the PIR to find out what worked, what didn't, and what creative solutions they may have developed. The survey was launched on October 22, 2012 and closed on January 15, 2013. AIC set it up using SurveyMonkey, the free online survey tool (surveymonkey.com). AIC sent email invitations on three occasions during the survey period to its Photographic Materials Group member list. There were a total of 53 responses, primarily from conservators, but also from a fine art printer, an educator, curatorial colleagues, and collections care professionals.

For the most part the survey resulted in positive feedback with minor suggestions on content and terminology. Terminology questions are raised in the survey and have been brought up in independent correspondence and can be discussed *ad infinitum*. Because the original committee labored over the terminology currently used on the form as discussed above, the current usage is unlikely to change for the next iteration. This topic will continue to be a burning one and changes will doubtless be necessitated in the future.

The most pertinent findings of the survey results are cited below, maintaining the three subject groupings.

Usage

The majority of the responses to the survey came from conservation professionals, perhaps reflecting the primary origins of the form as well as the means for promulgating the survey via a

conservation distribution list. Eleven respondents indicated that their institutions had been sending out the PIR sometimes or nearly always over the last 1-3 years since its publication. Those stating that they do not actively use the PIR cited infrequency of acquisitions, fear of increased administrative burden on artists, galleries, dealers, or internal staff, as well as lack of awareness of the PIR form as key reasons. Some respondents acknowledged the advantages of the PIR over their current practices, and were hopeful about modifying their current institutional practices. The difficulty of instituting new practices was cited as well by extremely large institutions and those where collecting photographs has expanded beyond the traditional curatorial divisions. Several users cited the difficulty of locating the responsibility for the form within the curatorial department when the technical information on the second page was perceived to be of most value to conservation. Regrettably this reflects one of the challenges in the field internationally that curatorial and conservation colleagues sometimes overlook the mutual benefit derived from working together collaboratively.

Of those routinely using the PIR, most send the English version out electronically, receive it back electronically, and then save the file and/or attach it to a collections management database. Most also file a hard copy. A smaller number take additional steps to enter the information into a database by retyping or cutting and pasting text. These text entries are often electronically searchable, whereas the PDF form fields are not. In most cases, staff uses the hard copy for reference. The survey also posed the question of accessibility of the information within institutions. We have found that the majority limits content access to conservation and curatorial staff although the information is theoretically available to researchers upon request. After English, the translations used most frequently appear to be Spanish, French, and the English with Japanese pop-ups.

The present writable PDF format of the PIR is a flaw that diminishes its usefulness. Rapid changes in technology have made it a challenge to create a simple, universally accessible format for the PIR. Many users have commented that the writable PDF format is not universally compatible with all PDF reader software on all platforms, so some users have experienced technical issues when completing the form. Likewise, many users have indicated that the PDF format is not always compatible with the local database system— meaning that the file cannot be uploaded and attached to the catalog system or that the information cannot be searched or tallied along with other information. While the content from the PDF form fields can be exported to Excel and then ingested into a local database, this multi-step process is cumbersome, as is manual data entry. Others have had difficulties with the character limits on the text fields, or scrollbars that appear and force text in the hard copy printout to be truncated. The original design was for a concise form that could be contained by a single sheet of paper, front and back. Attaching additional pages was encouraged as needed. In reality, the survey showed that most users are choosing to work with the form electronically, so it is possible to rethink the design in those terms rather than privileging the two-sided printed page. In addition, as was mentioned above, some users have workarounds for bringing the information into their databases so it will be searchable and accessible, but it is evident that other file formats need to be explored to make the PIR more user-friendly. In order to facilitate the usage of the information contained in the PIR, users must be able to integrate the responses efficiently into their electronic records.



Fig. 5. Adrien Tournachon (French, 1825-1903) and Guillaume-Benjamin-Armand Duchenne de Boulogne (French, 1806-1875) *Electro-Physiologie*, Figure 64, 1854-56, printed 1862, Albumen silver print from glass negative, Image: 29.8 x 22.3 cm (11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.) Mount: 40.1 x 28.5 cm (15 $\frac{13}{16}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ in.).

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, The Buddy Taub Foundation Gift, Dennis A. Roach and Jill Roach, Directors, 2012 (2012.140).

Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

1.7 Is the work part of a series or portfolio? If so, please describe.

YES "MECANISME DE LA PHYSIONOMIE HUMAINE" 1862

2.1 History of ownership, including dates:

(ARTIST)
CHARLES LENOX WRIGHT II UNTIL 1990 APPROX. THEN TO A N.Y.C. ANTIQUES
DEALER AND THEN IN 2011 TO A PRIVATE COLLECTOR

Fig. 6. Excerpt from the PIR for *Electro-Physiologie*, Figure 64 by Adrien Tournachon and Guillaume-Benjamin-Armand Duchenne de Boulogne. The PIR can be printed out, filled in by hand and mailed to the institution as in this example.

Content Improvement

On the whole, specific suggestions for content improvement were minor, and with rare exceptions, survey responders did not have issues with the wording of the questions in the PIR. Some concerns were related to ongoing debates about terminology in the translated forms. Other suggestions included adding fields for the accession number and object dimensions, and whether or not the print is duplicate, archival or exhibition print as many institutions now acquire

multiples of one print. Other users indicated that artist birth and death location information would be useful.

While the survey responders had few specific suggestions for adjustments to the questions on the PIR, a number of responders expressed concern about the overall length and detail of the form. They suggested that the form is too long, that people do not have enough time and/or do not know the information. Of course the limited time factor is universal, and many arts institutions are understaffed making information-gathering challenging. However, even a partially completed PIR will yield information and is to be encouraged. The more the PIR is used, the more it will be evident to galleries and the artists themselves that this type of information is of value and should be collected ideally as early as when the artwork is created or at very least when it enters the gallery. In some distant future one can hope that a completed PIR will be offered without solicitation when an artwork is acquired. In some cases, partially completed forms are appended to databases or added to the artist's file and only completed fully when the occasion arises to make direct contact by phone to collect the needed information in person. In order to further encourage full participation, the responsibility for completion may need to be shifted from one individual to another. For example, if a gallery has incomplete or even incorrect information, the artist's studio must be contacted directly. Contact information of printers and assistants is requested on the PIR in order to enable these direct conversations as needed. Finally, and most dramatically, some institutions use payment for the artwork as an incentive to complete the PIR—without the final version, the check is simply not cut.

A few users suggested changing or eliminating Section 2 (history of ownership, publication and conservation) as the information is too difficult to obtain or dealers do not want to provide it. While it often is difficult to gather reliable information on these topics, the form should retain the flexibility to add this information as it becomes available. For the most part, the artists themselves are generous in providing information regarding publication and exhibition history even if it is not detailed. Other users have preferred to eliminate edition and portfolio information as superfluous or repetitive. However this appears to be the case primarily in situations where conservation and curatorial staff work relatively independently of one another. Since one of the original goals was to create a document seeking generally agreed upon essential information, it is crucial to gather and retain information important to both curatorial and conservation departments whenever possible. The PIR cannot substitute for a condition report but it can be used to condense or expand other questionnaires and should be jointly used by curators, collection managers, conservators, and other relevant staff.

Best Practices

The final section of the survey allowed participants to offer short answer comments regarding successful use of the PIR. As mentioned before, some institutions simply extract and ask questions most useful to their collection or institution. Some users add the questions to the body of an email message to the artist/dealer, and occasionally a phone interview is used to walk the person through the form. Others have added information to the form based on conversations with the artist or gallery. This can be done verbally using the form as a guide and tailoring additional questions as needed. The PIR can also be sent out with other acquisitions-related documents. This way it borrows the momentum of the acquisitions process and does not appear

to be an extra step. One user suggested adding a note that it was not mandatory to answer all the questions, so recipients know that any information they can provide is appreciated. Additionally, some departments fill out the basic bibliographic information, if known, before sending out the document. This reduces the amount of blank spaces and makes the form less intimidating. Lastly, experienced PIR users indicate that communicating about the purpose of and need for the document is the best way to ensure good participation. Let the respondent know that they are not being tested or scored and that they do not need to fill out information that they do not know. A partially filled out form is better than nothing at all. Also, explain that the form can be used for multiples or series where the prints are virtually the same. This has helped to relieve the stress level where dozens or hundreds of photographs in a series are acquired.

Some users have developed innovative applications for the PIR. Outside of gallery or institutional applications, some fine arts graduate programs are now encouraging students to use the PIR to record information about their work from the outset and some high-end printers are assisting photographers with filling out the form at the time of production. The PIR has been sent out retroactively, for example sending the form to artists whose work was acquired some years ago and in some instances the PIR has been sent to living relatives or agents of a deceased artist.

Conclusion

There are many benefits of incorporating the PIR into the standard documentation for collections. Simply the act of filling out the form will increase understanding of the work, the artist and any special needs of the artwork for both gallery and institutional staff. This is especially useful in all phases of the life of an artwork including during handling, shipping, storage, conservation treatment, and exhibition. For conservators, the PIR now provides crucial details regarding artists' materials including type of paper used (and why), whether or not the print was toned (and how), and the extent and nature of previous exhibitions – if any. These matters are particularly important with the shift from analog to digital print processes. Information about black-and-white paper types is now of greater interest than it ever was before, due in part to the rarity of these papers and the difficulty of accessing information about them. It is critical to collect what information there is before the generation creating and using these papers is no longer available to consult. Contemporary inkjet and other digitally produced images have undergone a rapid evolution where ink set and paper combinations significantly affect longevity. In addition, the PIR lets artists know that the institution is invested in the long-term care of their work. The questions on the form have prompted many to think about and record information that they may not have considered important in the past.

The results of the survey are now being analyzed with a view to upgrading the current version of the PIR. As format and technology issues continue to be a challenge, other document platforms are being considered instead of the writable PDF format. One of the challenges for the success of the PIR is to spread the word broadly about its great benefits and use, reaching beyond conservation, curatorial and collections management departments to galleries, dealers and the artists themselves. The PIR Committee will work closely with AIC and current PIR users to make the form more accessible to a wider audience. The Committee plans to replicate the great acceptance and success the PIR has had within the preservation community to a wider group of artists, dealers and curators. A series of press releases is planned as well as continued

presentations to visiting groups, international conferences and colleges and universities. The announcement and reminders of the form within allied organizations such as the American Alliance of Museums, Association of International Photography Art Dealers, Registrar groups etc. is a goal for the coming years. This parallels efforts in other areas of the field to reach and influence a broader audience.

The creation of the PIR has truly been a collaborative effort involving the time, energy and resources of dozens of people. We would like to thank the original committee members and their institutions, the translation committees for all their hard work and dedication to the project as well as those actively using the PIR and those advocating its use.

Photograph Information Record Committee Members (2007-2009):

Theresa Andrews, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Àngels Arribas, Lumen Photographic Conservation; Barbara Brown, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center; Anne Cartier-Bresson, Atelier de Restauration et Conservation de Photographies; Lee Ann Daffner, Sarah Meister, Whitney Gaylord, Museum of Modern Art; Malcolm Daniel, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Rachel Danzing, Brooklyn Museum; Mirasol Estrada, Advanced Residency Program, George Eastman House & Image Permanence Institute; Eva Grieten, Art Institute of Chicago; Dana Hemmenway, Library of Congress; Kelley Loftus, Whitney Museum of American Art; Annette Manick, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Sylvie Pénichon, Amon Carter Museum; Stephen Pinson, The New York Public Library; Janice Schoepfer, Los Angeles County Museum; Andrea Wise, National Gallery of Australia.

PIR Translation Committees (* indicates the Translation Committee Chair):

Catalan Translation: Pau Maynés,* L.Luís Roqué, Xavier Rossell, Anna Vila-Espuna

Chinese Translation: Hoyu Chang, Hsuan-Yu Chen, Jiuan Jiuan Chen,* Wan-Ping Chen, Yi-Liu (Mei-Chun) Chen, Hsiu Mei Huang, Hsu-Chiao Huang, Jen Jung Ku, Hung-Wen Luo, Fei Wen Tsai

Dutch Translation: Martin Jürgens, Hadassa Koning,* Michiel Kort, Herman Maes, Bill Wei and the fotowerkgroep

Finnish Translation: Elina Heikka, Riitta Koskivirta,* Anna-Kaisa Rastenberger, Laura Sallas

French Translation: Anne Cartier-Bresson, Cécile Bosquier, Marie-Aimée Dubois-Krzynowek, Bertrand Lavédrine, Sylvie Pénichon

German Translation: Martin Jürgens, Klaus Pollmeier,* Marjen Schmidt

Greek Translation: Adia Adamopoulou,* Vassiliki Hatzigeorgiou, Hercules Papaioannou, Aliki Tsirgialou

Italian Translation: Daniele Aliffi, Silvia Berselli, Simona Casarano, Tatiana Cole,* Laura Gasparini, Roberta Piantavigna, Stefania Ruello

Japanese Translation: Toshiaki Koseki, Hanako Murata,* Yoko Shiraiwa

Portuguese Translation: Sandra Baruki, Luisa Casella,* Sabrina Esmeraldo, Miguel Laiginha Loureno, Catarina Mateus, Luis Pavão, Élia Roldão, Ana Saramago

Spanish Translation: Mirasol Estrada,* Claudio Hernández, Rosina Herrera, Vianka Hortuvia Atenas, Alejandra Mendoza, Fernando Osorio Alarcón, Samuel Salgado Tello

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Papers presented in *Topics in Photographic Preservation, Volume Fifteen* have not undergone a formal process of peer review.

Photograph Information Record

This questionnaire is used internationally to obtain essential information detailing the materials and techniques used in the creation of photographic works and their history. This allows institutions and individuals to better catalogue, interpret, and care for their photographs. Please provide as many details as you can. Extra space is provided at the end for responses that exceed the space allotted.

Contact information for the person completing this form:

Name _____ Date _____
 Address _____
 Email _____ Telephone _____

Please complete or verify the following information.

Artist name _____
 Nationality _____ Birth date or life dates _____

1.1 Title of work

1.2 Image date

1.3 Print date

1.4 Is the work editioned? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, this print is number _____ from an edition of _____ plus _____ artist's proofs.

1.5 Is this work editioned in any other size or format? If so, provide details.

1.6 If not editioned, are there other known prints of this image?

1.7 Is the work part of a series or portfolio? If so, please describe.

2.1 History of ownership, including dates:

2.2 Exhibition history **for this print** (indicate length of time and light levels if possible):

2.3 Publication or reproduction history **for this image** (including other prints):

2.4 Conservation history **for this print**. Has the work been examined or received treatment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is documentation or information available? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Attached

3.1 This image derives from ☐ film ☐ digital capture ☐ scanned film ☐ other (e.g., paper negative, glass negative)

Provide film type and size, camera type, digital file specifications, or other information as applicable.

3.2 Describe any image manipulation prior to printing.

continued on other side

3.3 This print is a ☐ gelatin silver print ☐ chromogenic print (C-print, Ektacolor, etc.) ☐ inkjet print (Iris, Giclée, Epson, etc.)
☐ silver dye bleach print (Cibachrome, Ilfochrome) ☐ other

3.4 If the support/paper is commercially produced, please identify the manufacturer and product name. If produced by hand, please describe the materials and techniques used.

3.5 If this is an inkjet print, please provide ink set information (for example: Epson UltraChrome K3 ink). If the inks are altered or mixed by the artist or printer, please describe.

3.6 This work was printed by ☐ the artist ☐ the artist's studio ☐ a commercial printer ☐ other
 Provide printer's name and contact information if applicable.

3.7 Please provide any available information regarding printing equipment such as model, chemistry type, etc. (e.g. Light Jet, Lambda, RA4, Epson, Fuji, etc.).

4.1 Once printed, this work has been ☐ toned ☐ spotted ☐ retouched ☐ coated ☐ treated with other applied media
☐ framed ☐ laminated (with plastic film) ☐ face-mounted (to glazing material)
☐ back-mounted (adhered to solid support) ☐ lined (adhered to flexible paper or textile support)
☐ other

For each procedure checked above, please specify materials, application techniques, mounter's name and contact information as appropriate.

4.2 Are there aspects of presentation (framing, installation details) that are considered integral to the work?

5.1 Are there aspects of the work that are particularly vulnerable and in need of special care?

5.2 If appropriate, please provide contact information for a conservator, assistant, or other individual who is familiar with the work and can be consulted on preservation matters.

5.3 Any other comments or information that you would like to offer regarding the creation and preservation of this work of art would be greatly appreciated.

Additional space for answers to questions above

This form is endorsed by The American Institute for Conservation and its Photographic Materials Group. It is used by The Art Institute of Chicago; Atelier de Restauration et de Conservation des Photographies de la Ville de Paris; George Eastman House, Rochester, New York; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Milwaukee Art Museum; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; The New York Public Library; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; (list in formation).

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