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Article: The Alfred Stieglitz Collection: Photographs: Conservation and Art Historical Data Go Digital at the Art Institute of Chicago (Abstract)

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The Alfred Stieglitz Collection: Photographs: Conservation and Art Historical Data Go Digital at the Art Institute of Chicago

Ariel Pate, Kaslyne O'Connor, and Sylvie Pénichon

Presented at the 2017 PMG Winter Meeting in Kansas City, Missouri.

The 244 photographs that make up a portion of the Alfred Stieglitz Collection at the Art Institute of Chicago are among the treasures of the museum's collection. Yet, unlike the equivalent collections at the National Gallery of Art or the Metropolitan Museum of Art, this collection of photographs had never been systematically researched or presented as a whole. This changed in 2016, with the launch of *The Alfred Stieglitz Collection: Photographs* website (<http://media.artic.edu/stieglitz>), an innovative approach to presenting a sub-section of the museum's holdings.

Collaboration between digital, conservation and curatorial departments resulted in a user-friendly website that presents information at levels meant to appeal to multiple audiences. For the casual browser, quick but scholarly definitions of relevant artists, processes, journals, and galleries related to the photographs provide basic context. For researchers, and those interested in learning more, links to exhibition catalogues, similar prints, and even prints from the same negatives in other institution's collections offer art historical resources. Detailed material and elemental analysis of 44 prints presented in specially designed PDFs (including results of XRF spectrometry, IR photography, FTIR spectrometry and UV radiation induced visible fluorescence) offers an invaluable resource for conservators and conservation scientists interested in Pictorialist photography. All of this was built using a modified Wordpress template, utilizing that platform's intuitive content management system to allow for easy uploading and updating of the data and images.

This presentation will address the unique intersection of art history, conservation and digital experience that this project demonstrates, and hopefully inspire others to think closely about how to make technical and art historical research about institutional collections public in a user-friendly way.

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