



Article: NPS Service-Wide Initiative for the Preservation OF Film-Based Media

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NPS SERVICE-WIDE INITIATIVE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF FILM-BASED MEDIA

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Presented at the PMG session of the 2008 AIC Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado

Abstract

The National Park Service has an estimated 15 million film-based photographic images in the museum collection, many of which are cellulose nitrate, cellulose acetate and color materials. It is well known that these materials are highly susceptible to deterioration when not stored in optimum conditions. However, this deterioration can be slowed by an introduction into cold storage. This talk presented a summary of an ongoing service-side film preservation effort focused on establishing cold storage facilities for all vulnerable NPS film-based collections. This project was developed to utilize the best preservation practices while accommodating the uniqueness of the NPS, where collections are managed at 388 individual sites in accordance with a service-wide standard.

The NPS and the Image Permanence Institute worked together to create a web-based survey that all park units were asked to complete on a voluntary basis. This survey information was compiled into usable data that will be used to guide the rest of the project. This talk examined the survey process and the combined effort of many to obtain the best results.

To date, each stage of the project has been met with new and interesting challenges that could not have been addressed without the sharing of knowledge. Beta Testing of cold storage packaging design was performed in conjunction with testing at the Smithsonian Archives. Various packaging systems using the most currently available barrier films were tested for viability and durability. The data was shared and compared between the two institutions to determine the most effective and efficient packaging systems for NPS collections.

Ultimately, the NPS hopes to monitor all their cold storage units throughout the country through one database. This will allow NPS conservators to quickly retrieve data from individual sites to provide technical assistance and promote proper stewardship of film-based photographic collections.

For more information, see the NPS Conserve-o-grams on cold storage that were developed over the course of this project.

http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/publications/conservoogram/cons_toc.html#collectionpreservation

Additional online training is available at:

<http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/coldstorage/NPSColdStorage.swf>

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