

SALTED PAPER PRINT INITIATIVE AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY: PRELIMINARY REPORT

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Abstract

Harvard University's collections include some of the earliest photographic images in the world and are among the most valuable photographs the university holds. The University has several thousand salted paper prints located in numerous museums, libraries and archives on campus. The photographs are from all over the world and in a variety of formats. Harvard Library's Weissman Preservation Center is working on a multi-year initiative which seeks to enhance our understanding of salted paper prints and to ensure their long-term preservation. Programs to assist Harvard librarians and curators in care and handling of these materials include workshops on the identification of salted paper prints, condition surveys, treatment, rehousing, instrumental analysis, preservation guidelines, exhibition, and digitization of selected collections.

The main component of the project is a detailed condition survey. Since the project provides an extraordinary opportunity to examine a large number of diverse types of salt prints, the survey includes noting curatorial information and physical characterizations, in addition to condition. This paper will describe the components of this multi-faceted project to identify and preserve the salt prints at Harvard. Solutions to various challenges will be presented, along with preliminary observations.

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