

Fundamentals of the Conservation of Photographs



DISTANCE MENTORING / MODULE 2

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SUMMARY

The distance mentoring phases that followed the first and second summer schools were a means to take the learning process beyond the classroom and to integrate all three years of the course into an extended learning experience. This phase of the course allowed the instructors to remain in contact with participants in a mentoring relationship as they applied information obtained in the summer schools to their own work. This process was intended to deepen understanding of concepts through application, and to encourage the formation of professional relationships through sustained communication. Sustained contact with instructors and their course colleagues also helped participants to develop a wider perspective on the collections, institutions and other professionals both in their region and internationally, and to inspire broader engagement with the field of photograph conservation.

The distance mentoring phase for Module 2 of the course "Fundamentals of the Conservation of Photographs" followed the second summer school and ran from September 1, 2009 to June 1, 2010. During the 10 month period, participants worked at their own institutions to complete five assignments designed to help them apply the information and knowledge from the first two summer schools to their own collections and professional practice. The Module 2 distance mentoring assignments focused on the themes of survey, terminology, work and storage environments and dissemination. As in the first distance mentoring period, participants worked under the guidance of two designated course instructors who served as mentors. The work schedule was flexible, with assignment due dates spread throughout the year. Participants (and their supervisors) agreed in advance to spend an average of ten hours each month on distance mentoring activities.

At the due date, participants uploaded their assignments onto the course website. The role of the mentors was to review the assignments and provide constructive feedback to participants. Throughout the distance mentoring period mentors also addressed questions and issues that participants encountered at their own institutions, and encouraged others in the group to contribute to solutions and share information through an online discussion forum on the course website.



ASSIGNMENTS

- Assignment I: During the Module 2 summer school, the participants conducted a brief collection survey for the Slovak National Library (SNL) with the supervision of instructors. Each participant surveyed a number of items from the collection as well as storage and exhibition spaces at the library. For the first distance mentoring assignment, the participants analyzed the data they had collected to create a report for the SNL.

The report was 5 pages and briefly described or summarized the findings for the following categories: institutional goals, preservation plans, collection and exhibition policy and practice, staffing, condition of the building and facilities, description of storage areas and their condition, environment parameters climate control strategies, general condition of collections and emergency preparedness. The report also included a conclusion with a summary of findings and recommendations and an introductory executive summary with key points. This assignment was due September 2009.

- Assignment II: The participants were asked to prepare a report, 5 pages long and including images with captions, describing their work with photograph collections and their working area within their institution. The participants also discussed plans they have for future improvements and changes to the workspace. This assignment was due November 2009.
- Assignment III: Terminology is very important in the field of conservation and preservation, and in photograph conservation the vocabulary it is still evolving rapidly. Module 2 summer school instructors helped to create a list of 186 photograph conservation terms in English and French. Participants were then asked to translate these terms into their own language. This assignment was due January 2010. The resulting compilation represents a comparative vocabulary of 186 terms in 10 languages, which will be reviewed and completed with definitions to form a glossary.
- Assignment IV: The participants conducted a survey of their own institution's photograph collection(s). The report was not more than 10 pages long. It summarized findings and gave recommendations for all categories included in assignment I (the shorter report for SNL) and provided an executive summary with key points. This assignment was due March 2010.
- Assignment V: Dissemination of the knowledge, expertise and personal experience gained by participants through the course was an important objective of the course. Participants were asked to prepare a 10 minute presentation for the Module 3 summer school detailing their dissemination activities (broadly defined) related to the conservation of photographs that they carried out during the year. These activities could include lectures, publications, hands-on teaching or workshops, collaborative activities or dissemination through the internet.

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