

Southeast Museum of Photography Preservation Assessment Project

A. What activity or activities would the grant support?

Support will fund three primary activities for the Southeast Museum of Photography Preservation Assessment Project:

- A formal assessment of the photographs and photographic objects from the museum's 4,500 piece collection, by a professional conservator of photographs.
- In consultation with a professional conservator of photographs, the creation of a long-term preservation strategy for existing materials and future accessions.
- In consultation with a professional conservator of photographs, the creation of a list of appropriate archival collections materials to reinforce existing collection materials and to support the care of future acquisitions.

Through these activities, the Southeast Museum of Photography (SMP) aims to become better stewards of its cultural artifacts, ensuring the photographs and photographic materials in the museum's care can be preserved and maintained in accordance with the highest of collections standards for future generations of researchers, educators, and museum visitors.

B. What are the content and size of the humanities collections that are the focus of the project?

The Museum houses 4,500 photographs dating from the mid-19th century to the present, 1,500 objects representing photographic processes such as photo transfer screen prints, photogravure prints, glass lantern slides, and 372 vintage or antique cameras. The photographic collection of SMP includes representatives from every major photographic process and the developments within those processes, including: tintypes, daguerreotypes, albumen prints, cyanotypes, gelatin silver prints, and C-prints.

Highlights of the collection include:

- Vintage and authorized edition prints from modern photography masters including:
 - Edward Weston: one of the foremost champions of highly detailed photographic images and the first American to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship.
 - Tina Modotti: an Italian photographer, model, actress, and revolutionary political activist.
 - Paul Strand: an American Modernist photographer who helped establish photography as an art form in the 20th century.
- A robust catalog of approximately 250 images taken by contemporary leaders in photojournalism and editorial photography including:
 - Steve McCurry: National Geographic photographer widely recognized for his evocative color photography and documentary style.
 - Kate Brooks: award winning, photo-journalist specializing in news and the impact of conflict on civilian populations, whose images galvanized global interest and raised funds to start a non-profit benefiting orphaned children in Russia.
 - Louie Palu: a Canadian, award winning documentary photographer and filmmaker known for covering social-political issues, war and human rights.
- Thousands of images of Florida dating back to the 1890s including significant holdings from the Richard H. LeSesne Studio located in Daytona Beach, FL which houses negatives and photographs showing the early automobile attempts at speed records, historic NASCAR beach racing and aviation images.
- In excess of 200 RPC (real-photo postcard) panoramic views of Central Florida from the early 1900s.
- More than 30 commercial daguerreotype portraits from the 1880's. - (Daguerreotype was the first commercially successful photographic process and named after the inventor, Louis Jacques

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Mandé Daguerre. Each unique image is on a silvered copper plate and will appear either positive or negative; depending on the angle it is viewed.)

- One of the largest and most comprehensive collections of photographs from post-revolution Cuba consisting of 350 still images dated from 1955 to 1970.
- Over 50 confirmed images taken by Farm Security Administration (FSA) artists from 1935 to 1944 which illustrate segregation and reinforce historical and statistical analysis of the Jim Crow South.
- Forty photographs by world-renowned photographer, Gordon Parks, which include 15 photographs of the historic black college, Bethune-Cookman University and a portrait of its founder and civil rights activist, Mary McLeod Bethune.

In addition to its vast array of photographic objects and content, this unique collection provides primary documentation of racial segregation and the resulting social and political landscape of Southeastern United States and southern culture. With photographs dating back to the early 20th century and numerous FSA originated photographs, the collection illustrates racial segregation of the Jim Crow South. Jim Crow laws were enacted in the late 19th-early 20th centuries and mandated racial segregation in all public facilities until 1965. In 1941, during this tumultuous time, Gordon Parks received his Farm Security Administration fellowship and took 15 historically relevant photographs of Bethune-Cookman University, the historic black college. These images, among others, cast a light on the “separate but equal” legislative doctrine enabling racial segregation and southern culture. SMP is within walking distance of this historic university.

C. How are these humanities collections used?

As a public museum housed within an academic institution, Southeast Museum of Photography utilizes collections objects as teaching materials through engagements in the galleries and in the collections viewing room. The Museum staff strive to facilitate teaching objectives of academic departments at Daytona State College (DSC), as well as, University of Central Florida programs housed on the DSC campus, including the Southeast Center for Photographic Studies.

As an example, students enrolled in DSC’s Museum Studies Course visit SMP several times during a semester to critically engage museum objects, museum policy, and the physical collections spaces. These engagements are completed as a group, as well as, individually. Objects of the collection including glass lantern slides, daguerreotypes, and tintypes are regularly handled by Museum Study students and instructors to master proper care and maintenance within museum environments and protocols. Students reference the museum for subject matter content and are required to complete 20 of hours of internship.

Outside of museum or photography-based course offerings, the SMP collection is often utilized by DSC instructors in departments of English for Speakers of Other Languages, African American Studies, Veterans Affairs, and the Writing Center. In the 2017- 2018 academic year, the museum hosted 26 academic activities designed to encourage students to view, contemplate, research and then deliver a writing assignment on the historic, cultural, or social importance of the objects.

As a community service provided by DSC, SMP utilizes photographs and objects from the collection in exhibitions and public engagements to further the educational mission of both the college and the museum. In its 25 year history, SMP has authored, published, and distributed dozens of exhibition catalogs that featured material on significant humanities holdings from the permanent collection.

SMP actively collaborates and loans artwork to other regional and national museums so that they may engage their audiences with new and unique humanities collections.

Two recent examples include:

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- Establishing a biennial photo exchange partnership with the Wright Museum of Art at Beloit College located in Beloit, WI. In 2017, the inaugural collection lent by SMP consisted of 46 recently accessioned photographs and text addressing urban gardening and the environmental agenda of urban centers by photographer Brad Temkin. The exhibition titled *Rooftop: Second Nature* was on display August 28-November 19, 2017. The highlighted topics demonstrated the importance of a new movement of rooftop gardens to counter the heat island effect caused by city life and reflects upon the conflict of human existence.
- In 2018, SMP lent 22 significant examples of Florida photography to the Boca Raton Museum of Art, located in Boca Raton, FL for an exhibition titled *Imagining Florida: History and Myth in the Sunshine State* and is currently on display from November 13, 2018 through March 24, 2019. It is the most comprehensive Florida themed show presenting a singular collection of 200+ works of art that celebrate how the Sunshine State has inspired artists across three centuries.

D. What is the nature and mission of your institution?

Nature: Southeast Museum of Photography is one of only 13 facilities in the U.S. dedicated exclusively to photography and few such institutions share a similar scope, depth of collection, and activities in this particular field. As one of very few museums devoted exclusively to photography, SMP serves national and international photography communities, as well as, its campus, local and regional audiences.

Mission: Southeast Museum of Photography exhibits, collects, preserves, and interprets photography to facilitate teaching and learning at Daytona State College and enhances the community's understanding and appreciation of culture, history, art, and photography.

SMP has a full-time staff of three employees: a director, a registrar and collections manager, and a manager of public programs and education engagements. Sixteen work-study students supplement these permanent positions as gallery attendants, front desk agents, and occasionally collections assistants. The director trains a minimum of two unpaid interns per semester most commonly from, DSC, University of Central Florida, Bethune-Cookman University and/or Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. The museum currently has two local volunteers who each donate up to ten hours per week toward community outreach and docent programming.

The Museum is open from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM, five days a week, year-round, with the exception of holidays and semester breaks. There is no entrance fee, and any collected donations are allocated to offset material cost of three workshops/activities designed for children and teenagers. In the 2017-2018, SMP welcomed more than 3,000 visitors for its exhibitions, while more than 1,800 individuals participated in its free programs and events catered to individuals of all ages.

E. Has your institution ever had a preservation or conservation assessment or consultation?

No.

F. What is the importance of this project to your institution?

The Director of the Southeast Museum of Photography has designated this preservation assessment as a major priority.

1. Based on the findings of the conservator of photographs assessment, Museum staff will develop a list of immediate conservation priorities, a long-range conservation plan, and reexamine current collections policies and protocols ensuring the implementation of the highest collections standards for preservation to be examined by future generations of researchers, educators, and museum visitors. Additionally, the museum's geographic location—Central Florida—has seen a sharp increase in the number and severity of hurricanes, tropical storms, and other weather phenomena. Though

the collections of the museum are stored on the second floor of the museum building, the museum will benefit from an assessment of the physical space and weather related protocols identified in the collection policies, ensuring the preservation of the museum's holdings during intense weather.

2. The timing of the project is also critically important, as the museum collection is currently undergoing a digital migration from the *EmbARK Collections Management Software* into the *PastPerfect Museum Software*, with just one third of the process completed. As the migration process continues, all objects must be physically inspected for instance of damage or other potentially damaging condition issues, inventoried and mapped against documents of provenance, then photographed and uploaded into the new collection database. The SMP Director seeks to enlist the help of a professional conservator for a total assessment of condition issues and to provide guidance regarding the permanent storage and preservation of these items. The preservation and digital migration will:
 - Ensure proper preservation of the unique collection and photographic objects.
 - Create a more effective, user-friendly searchable collection database enabling broad access to the collection by the public, as well as, partner institutions and collaborators regionally, nationally, and internationally.
 - Maintain and enhance the value of the collection as a teaching and learning resource.
3. Lastly, the results of this assessment will also help determine the direction and scope of future grant writing and other fundraising activities in the collections arena.

G. What are the names and qualifications of the consultant(s) and staff involved in the project?

SMP will enlist the expertise of Kim Du Boise, President and Senior Conservator at PhotoArts Imaging Professionals, LLC. Kim Du Boise has more than four decades' experience with photographic materials as a photographer, instructor, printmaker and conservator. Since 2001, Ms. Du Boise and her conservation staff have served clients in more than 35 states and Canada. Projects include individual photographic items and collections surveys; recommendations for conservation treatments and preservation; traditional and digital archiving; and remediation of fire, smoke, water and storm-damaged materials, including environmental and fungal damages. Ms. Du Boise and her staff worked with National Parks Survey (NPS) and Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documentation projects from 2006-2012. PhotoArts Imaging is a vetted vendor for Digitizing & Reformatting Photographic and A-V media and Conservation Services; Preservation Surveys; and Staff Training for the Library of Congress FEDLINK services.

Primary coordination for the project will be managed by James Pearson, Director of the Southeast Museum of Photography. Mr. Pearson's prior experience includes Curator and Collections Manager of the Wright Museum of Art at Beloit College, located in Beloit, WI. While at the Wright Museum, Mr. Pearson coordinated a grant-funded Collections Assessment Program, where he wrote and received an NEH Preservation Assistance Grant for the care of paper objects in addition to other grant and non-grant funded collections projects. Mr. Pearson helped to establish the Long Range Conservation Policy at the Wright Museum, created and maintained a working list of conservation priorities, and while there taught Art History and Collections Management in the Museum Studies Department.

Stephanie Shaw, Registrar and Collections Manager of the Southeast Museum of Photography received an M.A. in Art History from Florida State University, has been employed with the museum for a year and recently attended a *Preservation Training for Museums and Cultural Institutions* workshop. Ms. Shaw will provide key information on the collections protocols and object histories where appropriate

and desired. Ms. Shaw, will be the primary contact for collections usage and movements once the preservation assessment is completed. She will also draft the Long Range Conservation Plan under the guidance of Mr. Pearson, Director.

H. What is the plan of work for the project?

The plan of work for the project is highlighted in a letter of commitment; Ms. Du Boise has detailed the types and amount of work to be completed on a daily basis:

Day 1: Morning: meet with Registrar and Collections Manager and other museum staff to review standing policies and/or procedures. Tour museum facility and storage area to view collection and space. Check amount of lighting available for examination and landing place(s) for items/boxes, documentation and writing areas. Take photographs of storage area.

Day 1: Afternoon: Prepare for survey, educate staff on workflow, complete standard conservation forms, set-up for photo documentation, examine logistics, assess the physical space in light of weather related protocols, locate required items, inspect photographs and check against collections list (documents of provenance).

Day 2: Morning: Continue examination: determine types/amounts of supports and processes; sort for most expedient workflow. Check SMP staff work for accuracy and clarity. Check for issues known to occur in certain types/brands of RC photograph papers.

Day 2: Afternoon: Continue examination, documentation and survey of photographs. Meeting with SMP staff to discuss findings, the conservation priority list and the current policies of the Museum as relates to the new Collection Preservation Policy.

Day 3: Morning: Review Day 2 to ensure standard conservation forms are completed accurately, confirm photo documentation is complete, and consult with museum staff. Continue assessing materials and conditions, estimate of amounts of each type.

Day 3: Afternoon: Continue the survey of photographs; monitor for issues and document current stages as found. Complete collection analysis, review issues for conservation priority list and documentation work. Final wrap-up meeting with Director and Museum Registrar and Collection Manager to discuss finding results, storage optimization and materials, and answer questions as needed.

Return to PhotoArts Imaging facility: Designated two full days for compiling and drafting the final report with discussions via email and telephone. The final report will be sent in electronic form and one printed copy will be provided. The survey containing an executive summary and recommendations will include the information gained from museum policy information and the survey activities onsite. Additional hours are included to guide SMP staff as they draft the museum Preventative Conservation Policy and Procedures.

Once the final assessment has been received, the Director, and Museum Registrar and Collection Manager of SMP will utilize the documentation, along with telephone and email assistance from Ms. Du Boise, to complete an updated, all inclusive, Preventative Conservation Policy and Procedure guide incorporating suggested policy changes. The conclusion of the project will be purchasing necessary materials and ensuring that photographs and objects are safely stored in accordance to the new guidelines and completed under the guidance of the Director.