

Managing Your Historical Photographs Workbook

New York State Archives

2011

Managing Your Historical Photos Workshop Agenda

Introductions, review of workshop goals

How do you get your photographs?

How do archivists do it?

Provenance, Original Order and Context

What do we need to know about photographs?

Break

Preservation

- Understanding risks
- Handling and environment
- Enclosures

Sharing your treasures

- Reference
- Exhibits

Thoughts about digitization

Managing Your Historical Photographs

"Behold thy portrait! -- day by day,
I've seen its features die;
First the moustachios go away,
Then off the whiskers fly.
That nose I loved to gaze upon,
That bold and manly brow,
Are vanish'd, fled, completely gone-
Alas! Where are they now? . . ."

Punch, 1847

- Who am I?
- Who are you?
- Why are we here?

How do you get your
photographs?

From NY
State
Archives –
Interior
view of
post office
with
pneumatic
mail tube
apparatus
- Brooklyn.



As part of a collection of records



As a collection of records in and of
themselves



Dutchess Light, Heat, & Power Company Album, page 21 from the collection of the
Rhinebeck Town Historian



New York State Archives. New York State War Council. Photographs of War Council agency activities, ca. 1942-1945. - Image taken in Utica

Randomly....



Selected historical photographs from the Town of Hague in Warren County.

Or you already have them



How do Archivists do it?

Archivists handle photographs using the principles of **provenance** and **original order** to protect their **context** and to achieve **physical or intellectual control** over the records.

Provenance

The **origin** or **source** of something. Information about the **origins**, **custody**, and **ownership** of an item or collection.

Original Order

The **organization** and **sequence** of records established by the creator of the records.

Context

The organizational, functional, and operational circumstances surrounding records' creation, receipt, storage, or use, and its relationship to other records.

But....



Abandoned Farm House on Reforestation Area No. 2, Manorkill, N.Y. . NY State Archives, New York (State). Conservation Dept. Photographic prints and negatives



New York State Capitol, Assembly Document Room with Attendants, Albany, March 1914.

NYS Archives, Division of Visual Instruction Lantern Slides

Artificial Collections

- For items where
 - Provenance and original order are completely unknown
 - When you have just a few photographs given to you
- Utilize a logical subject filing system for handling these items
 - subject, geographical location, operational function, or chronologically

What do we need to know about our photographs?

- Creator/owner
- Content
- Date
- How was the photograph made



[download image](#)

Title: Steamboat, Jefferson County
Brief Description: Boat touring the Thousand Islands
Date Original: 1914
Identifier: NYSA_A3045-78_Dn_ThZ
Source: New York State Archives. Education Dept. Division of Visual Instruction. Instructional lantern slides, 1911-1925, A3045-78, DnThZ
Publisher: New York State Archives
Contributor:
Creator: New York (State). Education Dept. Division of Visual Instruction
Language:
Description: View of a steamboat going down the Saint Lawrence River from Thousand Island Park to Alexandria Bay in Alexandria, Jefferson County.
Relation: ¹FormatOf: Digital representation of 3.25in x4in. Lantern slide in New York State Archives. Education Dept. Division of Visual Instruction. Instructional lantern slides, 1911-1925, A3045-78, DnThZ
Rights: This image is provided for education and research purposes. Rights may be reserved. Responsibility for securing permissions to distribute, publish, reproduce or other use rest with the user. For additional information see our Copyright and Use Statement here.
Location: Thousand Islands (N.Y. and Ont.)
Jefferson County (N.Y.)
New York (State)
Time Period:
Collections: Rivers

[back](#)



Title: Men's underwear factory: carding room
Brief Description: Men working among machinery and cotton.
Date Original: 1912
Identifier: NYSA_A3029-78_B4_F8.tif
Source: New York State Archives. Factory Investigating Commission. Glass plate negatives and photographic prints of factory and housing conditions. 1911-1912, A3029-78, Box 4, Folder 0
Publisher: New York State Archives
Contributor:
Creator: New York (State). Factory Investigating Commission
Language: eng
Description: Three male workers feed cotton into machines in the carding room of the Washington St. plant of Union Mills, a men's underwear manufacturer located in Hudson, New York. One of the men holds a broom for sweeping the excess off the floor. The investigator noted that "owing to the absence of ducts and hoods the whole room is so filled with floss that it is difficult to see." The cotton in the air and on the floor was noted as a dangerous fire hazard.
Relation: ¹PartOf: FIC
Rights: This image is provided for education and research purposes. Rights may be reserved. Responsibility for securing permissions to distribute, publish, reproduce or other use rest with the user. For additional information see our Copyright and Use Statement here.
Location: New York (State)
Columbia County (N.Y.)
Time Period: 1910s
Collections: Factory Investigating Commission

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What information can you tell about this picture by looking at it?

What information would you like to know about it?

DO NOT GO AHEAD UNTIL AFTER THE GROUP DISCUSSES THIS IMAGE. THANKS.

Metadata concerning the image on the previous page.

Title: Men's underwear factory: carding room
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Identifier: NYSA_A3029-78_B4_F8_tif
Source: New York State Archives. Factory Investigating Commission. Glass plate negatives and photographic prints of factory and housing conditions. 1911-1912. A3029-78, Box 4, Folder 8
Publisher: New York State Archives
Contributor:
Creator: New York (State). Factory Investigating Commission
Language: eng
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Relation: IsPartOf: FIC
Rights: This image is provided for education and research purposes. Rights may be reserved. Responsibility for securing permissions to distribute, publish, reproduce or other use rest with the user. For additional information see our Copyright and Use Statement [here](#).
Location: New York (State)
Columbia County (N.Y.)
Time Period: 1910s
Collections: **Factory Investigating Commission**

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Building a Photographic Database

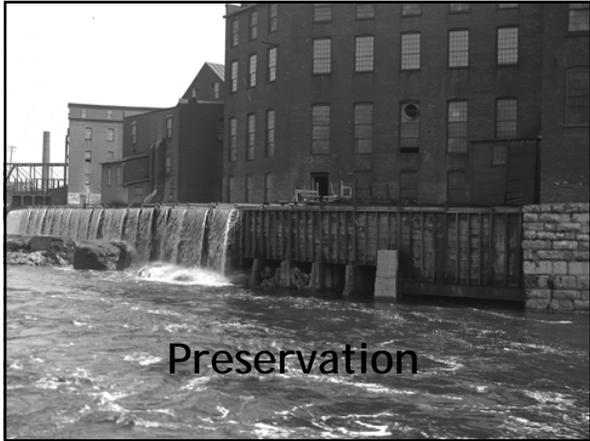
- Requires significant time and effort to implement
- Allows better control over single or related photos
- Provides several points of access
- Basis of imaging system

What information should you record now?

- Brief description of photograph
- Date (or at least year, if known)
- From whom was it received
- What size, type, condition
- Subject or key words

What about your 'mystery' photos

- Publish in local newspaper
- Place on a website
- Set up a display "Who Are We?"
- Meet with groups of long-time residents to get their input
- Hold special event to display your 'unknowns'



Understanding risks

- Built-in problems
- Environment
- Mishandling

Photographs are produced as

- Prints
- Glass plate negatives and lantern slides
- Film negatives
 - Nitrate
 - Acetate
 - Polyester
 - Color
- Slides

Prints



Prints: Cased photographs



Prints: In Albums



New York State Library, E.
Lounsbury DuBois papers,
SC22587, box 2, small album

Men gathered in front of hunting camp named "Forest Home" near Copper Lake in the Adirondack Mountains. Accompanying text reads, "Here - a man is a man. One knows only you." Photograph is part of an album maintained by DuBois, recording his numerous hunting trips.



Prints: Storage

- Separate from acidic backings
- Separate prints from their negatives
- Metal, not wood shelving
- Archival quality enclosures

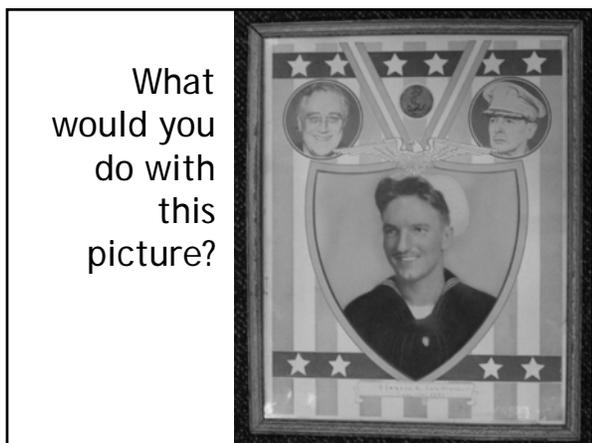
Prints: Storage

- Smaller prints: store upright
- Larger prints: store flat
- Same size? Store together
- Support if brittle mount

Prints: Storage

- Cased photos and albums
 - tissue and box
 - store flat
 - sandwich loose plates
 - use a paper folder for tin types
- Scrapbooks
 - don't dismantle
 - box/store flat
 - Digitize
- Framed images
 - keep intact if contextual







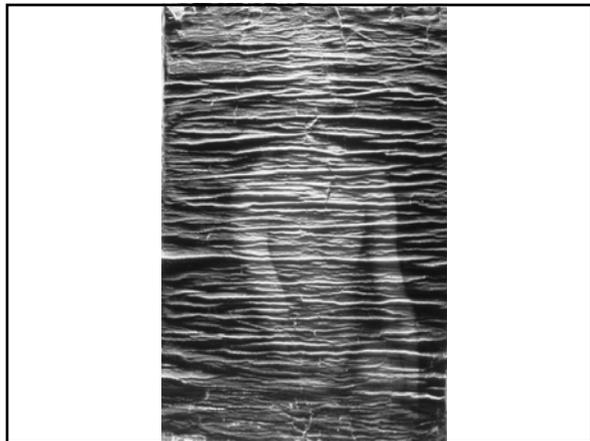
Prints: Additional Advice

Avoid using

- Adhesives
- Pressure-sensitive tapes
- Damaging fasteners

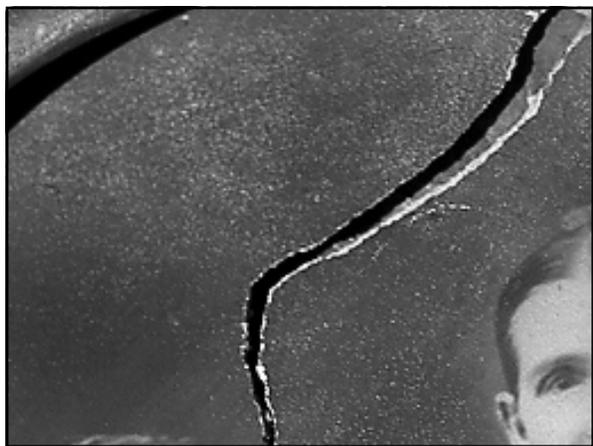
Prints: Environment

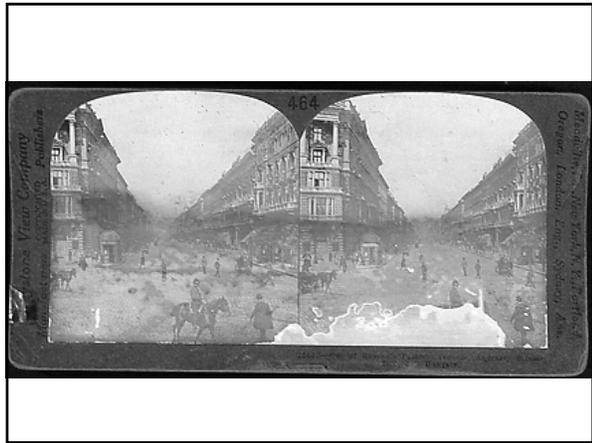
- Temperature: 65-70°F
- Relative humidity (RH): 30%-50%
- Filter or purify air
- Limit light exposure





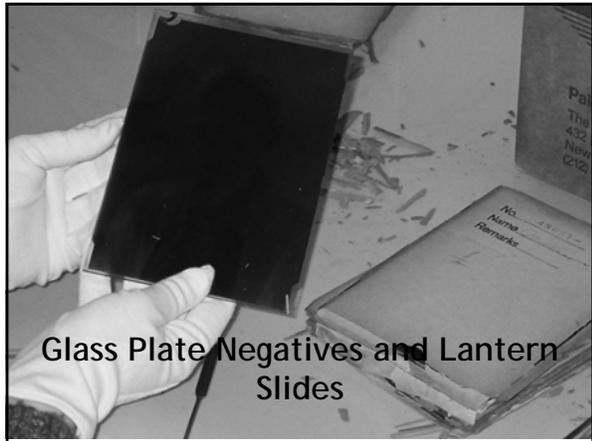




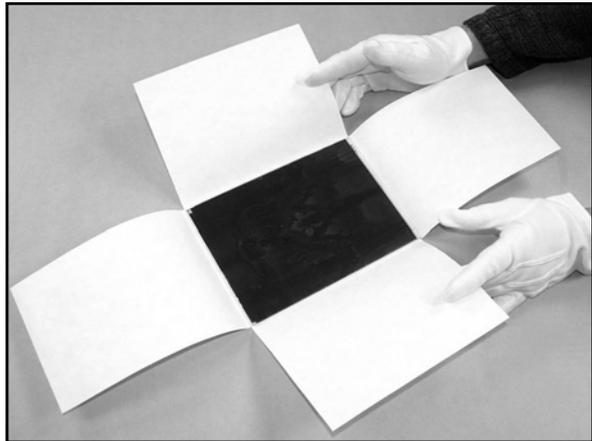


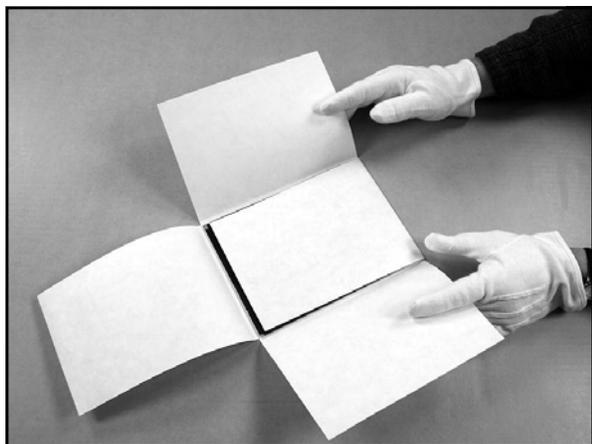


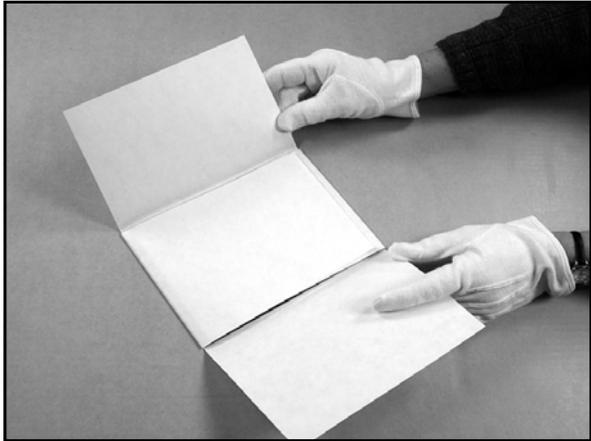


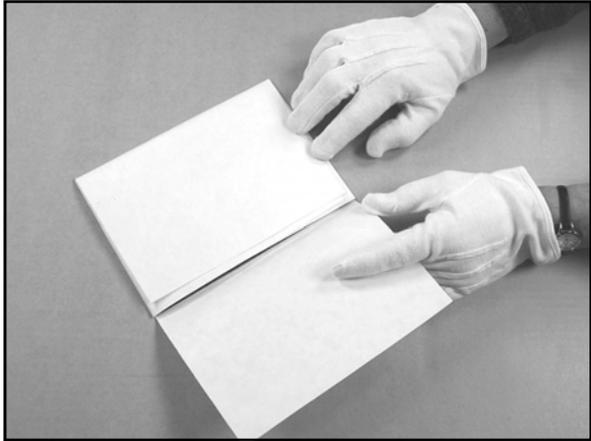


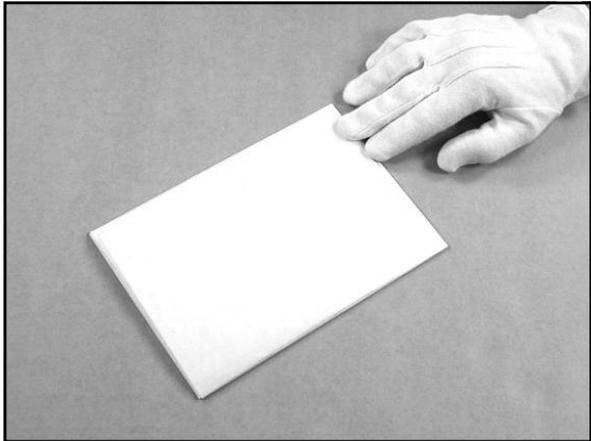
Glass Plate Negatives and Lantern Slides



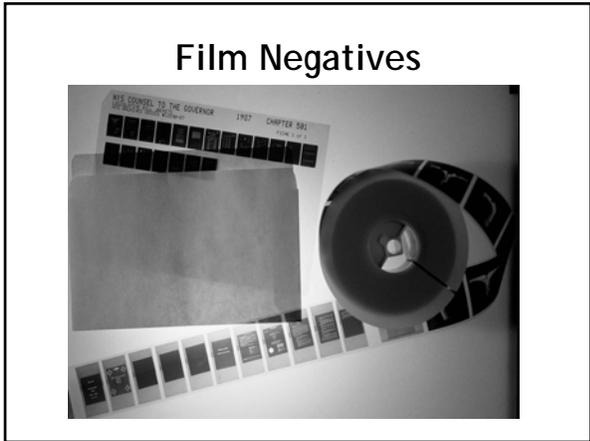












Film Negatives

Support	Dates of use	Gauge
Nitrate	1893-early 1950s	35mm
Acetate	1909-present	35 mm, 28mm, 16mm, 9.5mm, regular 8mm, Super 8mm
Polyester	Mid 1950s-present	35mm, 16mm, some Super 8mm

Nitrate Film Negatives

From
Library of
Congress



LC-G389-958-E32



LC-G389-1163



LC-G389-3945-6



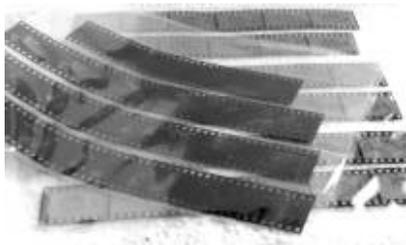
LC-G3897-636

Acetate Film Negatives



Dallas Historical Society

Polyester Film Negatives

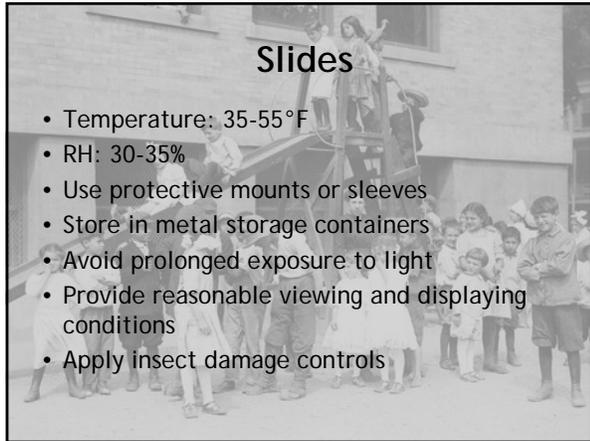


Color Film Negatives



Slides

- Temperature: 35-55°F
- RH: 30-35%
- Use protective mounts or sleeves
- Store in metal storage containers
- Avoid prolonged exposure to light
- Provide reasonable viewing and displaying conditions
- Apply insect damage controls



Enclosures

Paper or Plastic?



Paper Enclosures

- Opaque, porous, protective
- Available in buffered and non-buffered stock
- May contain activated charcoal and zeolites
- No kraft or glassine paper

Plastic Enclosures

- Transparent
- Yes: uncoated polyester, polypropylene, or polyethylene.
- No: PVC



General Advice

- Protection x 3
- Pass the PAT, please
- Windows, radiators, registers
- Keep them cool

Photographic Activity Test (PAT)

Information below comes from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) at their website: <http://www.iso.org/> The important thing to look for in any archival catalog is the

ISO 18902:2007 specifies the principal physical and chemical requirements for filing enclosures, containers, albums and frames, particularly designed for storing wet or dry processed films, plates and papers. It covers requirements for paper and board, plastic, metal, adhesives (except spray adhesives), writing, labelling and printing materials. It is applicable to photographs made with hardcopy materials. Included are photographs made with traditional chromogenic (“silver-halide”) and silver dye bleach photographic materials, dye- and pigment-based inkjet, dye diffusion thermal transfer (“dye sublimation”), liquid- and dry-toner electrophotography, and other analogue and digital print processes.

ISO 18902:2007 applies to storage copies and does not include work copies. It applies to visual records for extended-term preservation and to visual records for preservation for moderate periods of time. The requirements are limited to the characteristics that may affect the enclosed item chemically or physically when it is stored under recommended conditions.

ISO 18916:2007 specifies the procedure for the photographic activity and dye coupler reactivity tests.

ISO 18916:2007 is applicable to general photographic enclosure materials such as paper, tissue, cardboard, mat board and plastics. It is also applicable to components of photographic enclosure materials such as adhesives, inks, paints, labels, and tape.

ISO 18916:2007 evaluates possible chemical interactions between enclosures with processed silver-gelatin, colour (dye-gelatin), inkjet prints made with dye-based and pigment-based inks, thermal dye diffusion transfer (“dye sub”) prints, digitally printed dye-diffusion-transfer prints, liquid- and dry-toner xerographic prints, liquid-toner electrostatic prints, and diazo images after long-term storage. It does not pertain to harmful physical interactions such as blocking (sticking together), dye bleed, adhesive migration, or plasticizer exudation. It does not pertain to important criteria of enclosures such as their inherent chemical stability, physical integrity, and workmanship. Passing the photographic activity test (PAT) does not indicate that a material is archival. This term has no clear definition and is not used in this standard. Photo-safe, storage enclosures and their components are covered in ISO 18902, which includes passing the criteria of the photographic activity test.

If a particular brand of commercially made enclosure materials is found to be safe for long-term storage purposes, there is no assurance that subsequent batches will contain the same ingredients of the same purity, chemical inertness, concentrations, or sound and sturdy construction. For this reason, materials are tested annually or upon each formulation or supplier change. For materials which are manufactured in a variety of colours, such as papers and inks, each colour is evaluated and reported separately.

Want more information?

- New York State Archives:
http://www.archives.nysed.gov/a/nysaservices/ns_pubs.shtml
- Image Permanence Institute:
<http://www.imagepermaneinstitute.org/>
- Northeast Document Conservation Center:
<http://www.nedcc.org/leaflets/leaf.htm>
- Storage and Care of KODAK Photographic Materials Before and After Processing:
<http://www.kodak.com/global/en/consumer/products/techInfo/e30/e30.pdf>



Reaching Out

- Reference
- Exhibitions
- Outreach

Reference: In Person

- Access
- Registration process
- Photocopying rules

Exhibition Dos

- Do nothing to the original that leaves a mark
- Consider exhibit duplicates instead
- If using originals,
 - Exhibit for only short periods
 - Provide light protection
 - Provide good security

Exhibition Don'ts

- Attaching labels directly to records
- Staples and tacks through documents
- Unsupported records
- Display too long (> three months)
- No security

Credit line

Source: New York State Archives, New York (State). Photographic prints and negatives, [ca.1904-1949], 14297-96A, Box 26, SARA No. 205



Thoughts about digitization

Digitization is

- A useful access tool
- Great for exhibits
- Great for outreach

But

- It needs to be done carefully
- It needs to follow standards
- You need to be prepared
- It is not a preservation medium



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Cornell University Library offers an online tutorial and the J. Paul Getty Trust has an online publication related to digitization:

- Cornell University Library/ Research Department. “Moving Theory into Practice: Digital Imaging Tutorial.”
<http://www.library.cornell.edu/preservation/tutorial/contents.html>
- Besser, Howard. Edited by Sally Hubbard and Deborah Lenert. “Introduction to Imaging” Revised Edition.
http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/standards/introimages/index.html

Conclusion

- Today is just the beginning
- There's so much more
 - <http://www.library.cornell.edu/preservation/tutorial/contents.html>
 - http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/standards/introimages/index.html
- Go forth and do good work!

Contact

www.archives.nysed.gov

