



Describing Visual Materials in the Digital Age

Is a Picture Worth a Thousand Words if
You Can't Find It in a Keyword
Search?

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- What constitutes visual materials
- Decision-making process
 - What do you have?
 - How shall you describe it?
- Information sources for help
 - Identification
 - Description
 - Cataloging



What constitutes visual materials

- Works of art
 - Drawings
 - Paintings
- Photographs (on paper and digital)
- Printed graphics (posters, postcards, engravings removed from books)
- Architectural drawings
- Digitized images of any of the above



Decision-making process

- What do you have?
 - Photograph, mechanical photographic print
 - Poster, broadside
 - Is it more graphic or more textual?
 - Analog or digital?
 - Digitized vs. born digital?
- How shall you describe it?
 - Contents and/or subject?
- What provides the best access?
 - Collection or item level?



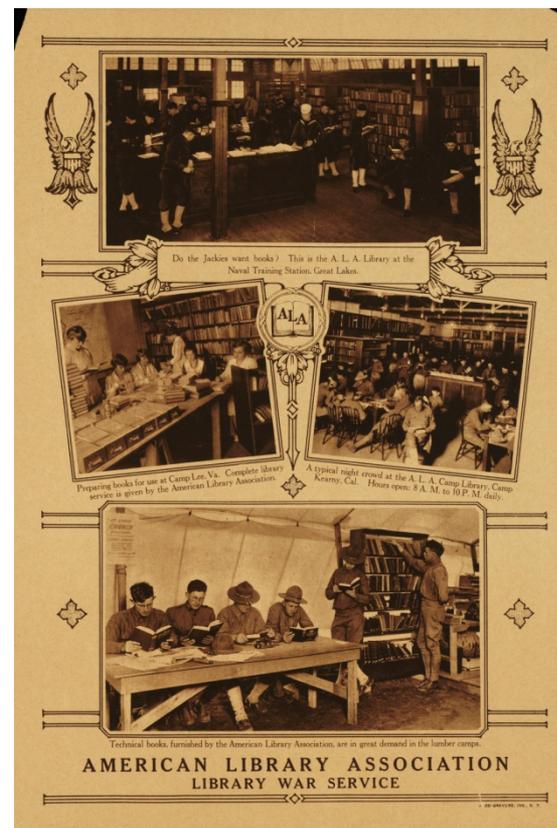
Photograph, mechanical photographic print

Photograph



Use a 10x loupe to see if there is evidence of mechanical printing

Mechanical print

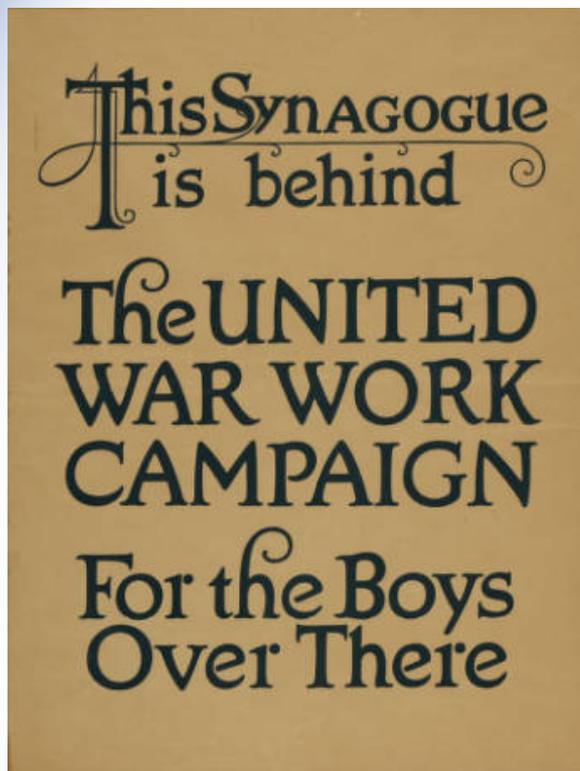




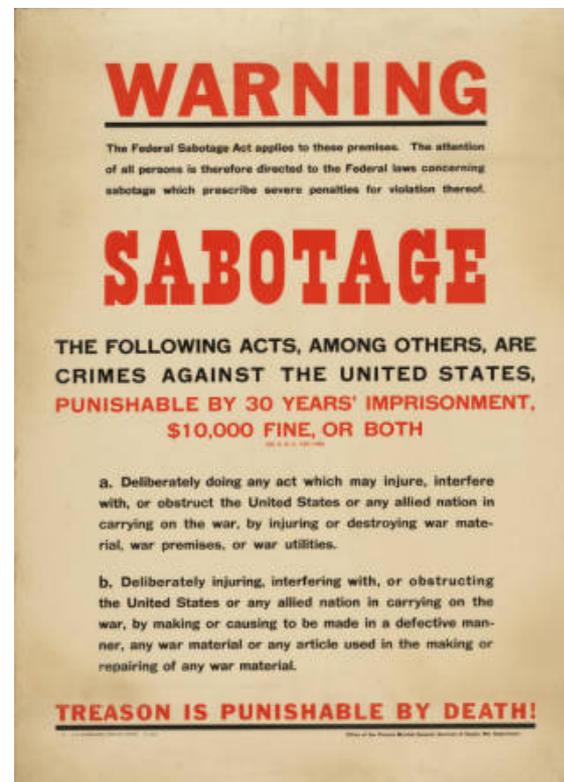
Poster

Is it more graphic or textual?

Graphic lettering



Printed text





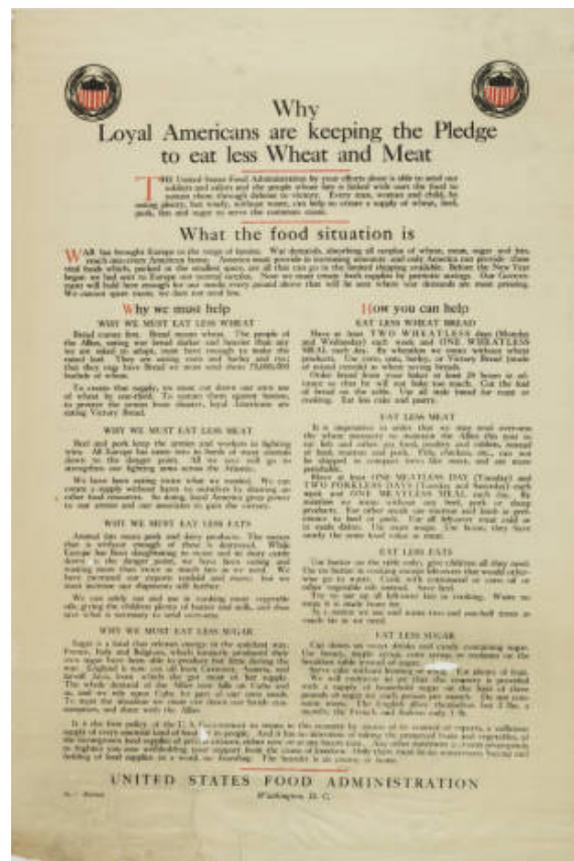
Poster or Broadside:

Consider size, paper weight, purpose, audience

Graphic



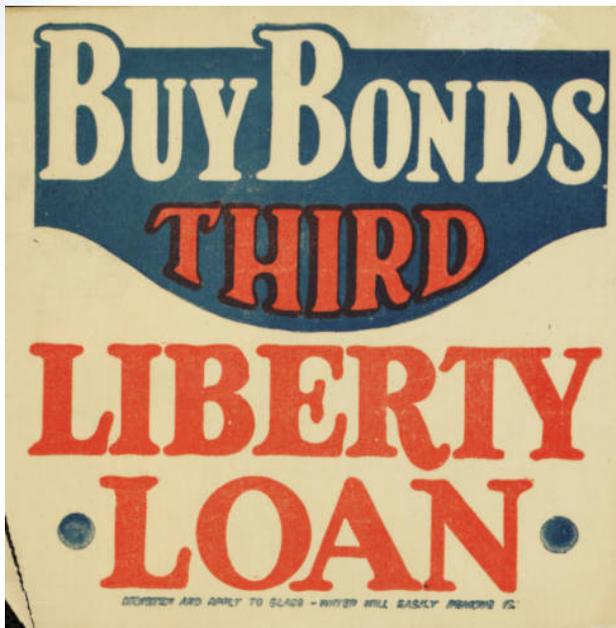
Textual



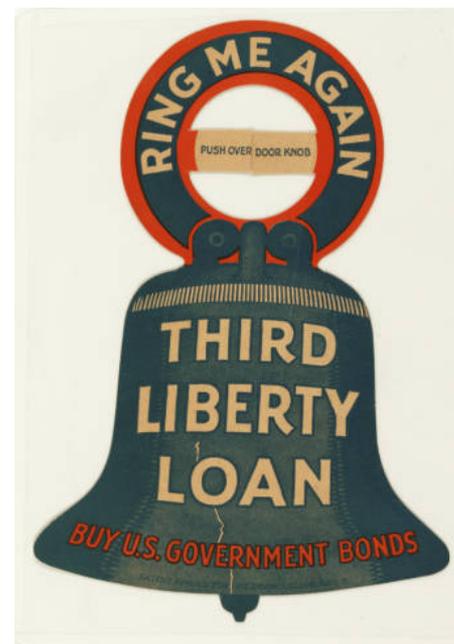


Ephemera

Decal



Doorknob hanger





Analog or digital? Digitized vs. born digital?

Digitized



Centre Furnace Mansion, Centre County
Historical Society, State College, PA

Born digital



Pere Antoine Restaurant, French Quarter, New
Orleans, LA



How shall you describe it? Contents and/or subject?

- How to “read” an image
 - Is-ness: What is the image
 - Physical format (daguerreotype, engraving, postcard, electronic document)
 - Of-ness: What is it of
 - What is depicted in the image (people, buildings, objects, landscapes)
 - Aboutness: What is the image about
 - Does it represent an idea or concept (poverty, slavery, patriotism, women’s voting rights)



Poster: who, what, where, when Flags and handshake—what does it mean?





Source of information

- **Who:** Searched images at Library of Congress, NARA, Imperial War Museum Web sites
 - Same poster or similar image design
 - Contacted by F.H.K. Henrion's daughter to verify this might be one of his posters
- **What:** Identify the twelve countries' flags
- **Where:** U.S. or U.K.?
- **When:** World War II



- 050 4 D743.25
 049 UPMM
 100 1 [Henrion, F. H. K.](#), [✎e artist.](#) [\[LCNAF\]](#)
 245 00 [\[Handshake amid twelve countries' flags\]](#) [✎h \[graphic\]](#)
 260 [\[S.l. : s.n. , ✎c 1941?\]](#)
 300 1 print (poster) : [✎b color](#) ; [✎c 71 x 55 cm](#)
 500 "U.S.P.-A.I."
 500 [Title supplied by cataloger.](#)
 500 Imperial War Museums has an 845 x 610 mm version of the poster marked "U.S.P.-D.10.E."
 545 [Frederick Henri Kay Henrion](#) (born Heinrich Fritz Kohn, Nuremberg, Germany), 1914-1990, was a German graphic designer. During [World War II](#) he was interned as an alien but subsequently [worked for the British Ministry of Information designing posters](#) for campaigns like Dig for Victory, Aid the Wounded, and Grow More Food. He [also designed posters for the U.S. Office of War Information.](#)
 520 8 This untitled poster, [attributed to F.H.K. Henrion by the Imperial War Museums as created in 1941](#), depicts two male arms with their hands clasped in a handshake surrounded by [twelve countries' flags](#) (above the arms: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Canada, United Kingdom, United States, Norway; below the arms: Belgium, Yugoslavia, France, U.S.S.R., Netherlands, and Greece). [It is stylistically similar to Henrion's D-Day poster of four hands tearing apart a swastika.](#)
 650 0 World War, 1939-1945 [✎v Posters.](#) [\[LCSH\]](#)
 650 0 Friendship in art.
 650 0 Flags in art.
 650 0 Hand [✎x In art.](#)
 655 7 War posters. [✎2 gmGPC](#) [\[Graphic Materials form/genre\]](#)



What provides the best access? Collection or item level?

■ Item level

- Single image
- Works of art
- Titled (unless part of a set)
- Anticipated user needs

■ Collection level

- Multiple images (family photographs, university photographer's job lots, events)
- Albums
- Unidentified images in quantity
- Architectural drawings



Item level: single image

Personal Author: Mamburg, L. L. L.,

Title: <Esnvarg vet gevinen di velt-milkhome! [graphic] : ir gekumen do zukhn frayhayt : veyts iz dorf far dem aleyz : vist gornisht>. עסנווארג [graphic] געווינען די מלחמה! : געקומען דא זוכן פֿרייהייט : ווייץ איר איז דארף פֿאר דעם אלייז: וויסט גארנישט

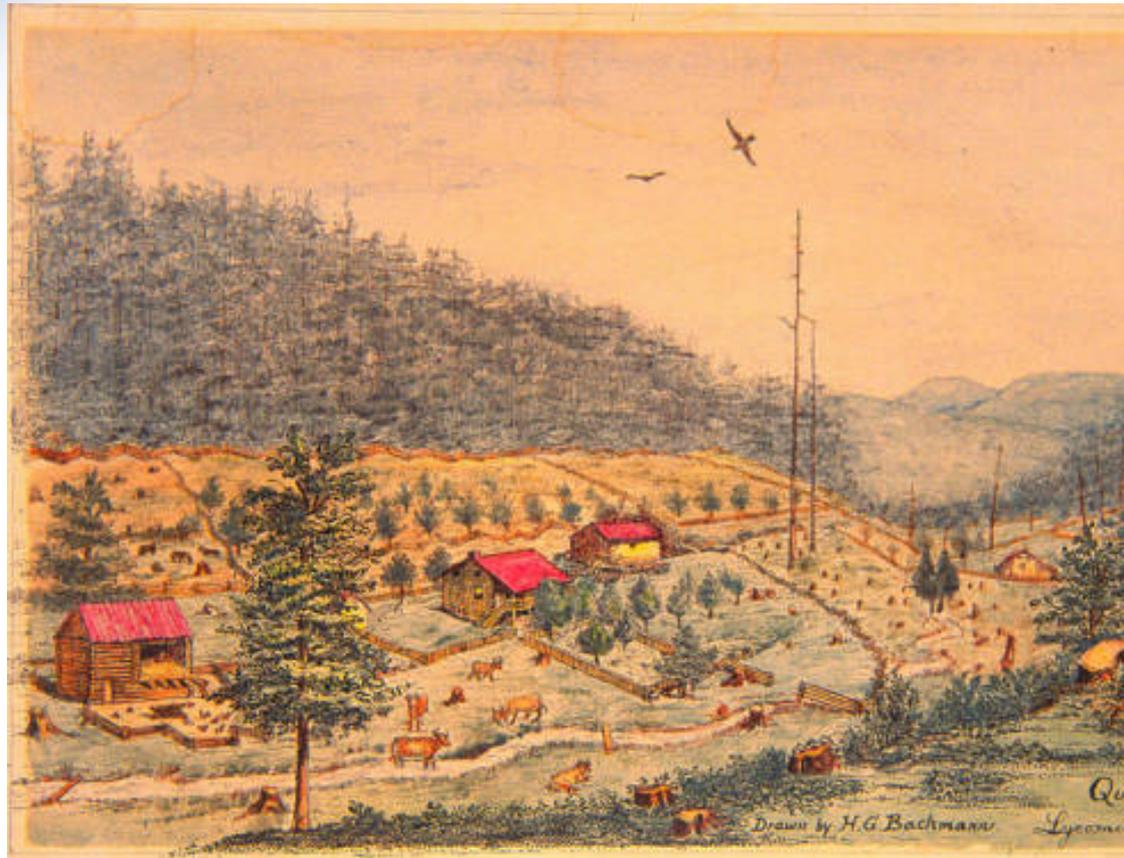
Variant title: Title in English: Food will win the war, you came here seeking freedom, now you must help to preserve it, wheat is needed for the allies, waste nothing.

Physical Description: 1 print (poster)
: lithograph, color ; 76 x 51 cm.





Item level: works of art



Quenshageny, Lycoming County, Pennsylvania.
Watercolor with pen and ink
O'Connor-Yeager Collection, Palmer Museum of Art, Penn State
University



Item level: titled, user needs



Mira Lloyd Dock Forestry Lantern Slides Collection



Collection level: multiple images

Corporate Author: Pennsylvania State University. Archives.

Title: Photographic vertical files, Students, 1855-2013.

Physical Description: 95 cubic feet.

Organization/arrangement: Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Abstract: The collection contains black-and-white and color photographs of African American students, cheerleaders, customs and scraps, dance team, events (AIDS quilt, battle of the bands, concerts, dances, demonstrations, lawn displays, May Day, orientation week, parades, parents' weekend, queens, spring week), foreign students (by country), fraternities (men's, women's, and joint activities), honoraries and hat societies, honors, living accommodations, organizations (professional interest, special interest clubs), publications, religion, scholarship awards, student government, student life, and women.

Index notes: Selected digital images are available at <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/digital/psuphoto.html>



Collection level: multiple images



Digital image collection title: Penn State Libraries Photo Archive—Students

Catalog record title: Photographic vertical files, Students

Collection level: albums

Title: Album of Pennsylvania R.R. scenery.

Publication info: New York :
Wittemann Bros., c1880.

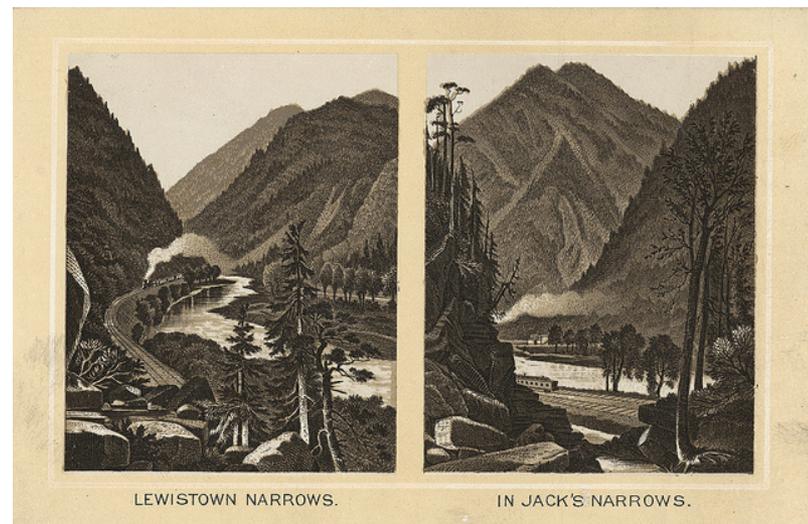
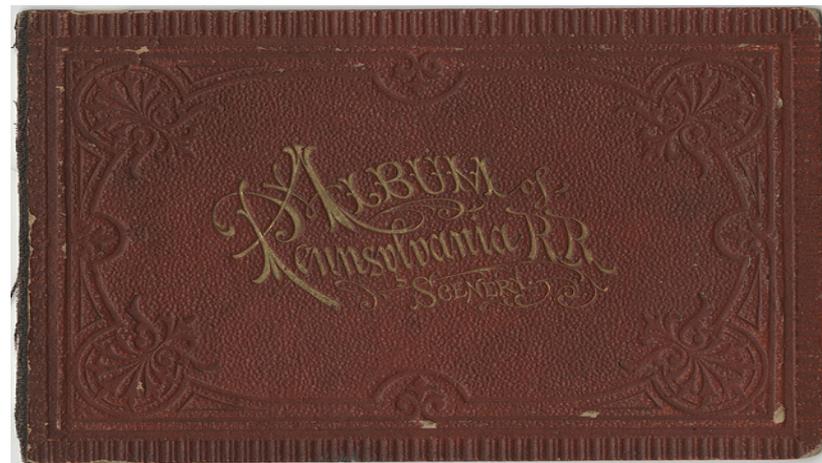
Physical Description: [12] leaves of
plates : ill. ; 9 x 13 cm.

General Note: Plates on continuous
strip 8 x 140 cm. folded to form 12
leaves.

Abstract: Also includes seven leaves
of duplicate images from a different
printing of the album published and
copyrighted 1880 by Wittemann
Bros., sole agents for North
America for Louis Glaser's souvenir
albums.

Subject: [Pennsylvania--Pictorial works.](#)

Genre index term: [Viewbooks.](#)





Collection level: unidentified images in quantity

Title: Historical photograph collection, 1868-1992.

Physical Description: 2,394 items.

Abstract: The collection consists of 3 posters, 30 glass slides; 176 photographic negatives; 1291 glass plate negatives; 691 photographic prints; and 2 albumen, 200 glass, and 2 print stereoviews illustrating labor, family, industry, railroad, and rural and urban Pennsylvania history. Included are a large number of negatives, 176 safety film and over 1200 glass slide negatives; prints are primarily in black and white; stereoviews formats include print, glass, and albumen. Subjects represented include primarily labor and railroad scenes in Pennsylvania, but also features over 1000 glass negatives of scenic views from other states. In this collection, photographs are grouped in folders according to their source, the format, and subjects; few photographs are described individually.



Collection level: architectural records

Personal Author: Izenour, George C.

Title: George C. Izenour drawings of the theater.

Publication info: 1938-1988.

Physical Description: 1363 architectural drawings : India ink on mylar ; 36 x 48 in. and smaller.

Physical Description: 238 negatives : ; 24 x 36 in. and smaller.

Physical Description: 1 model : plastic and metal ; 86 x 64 x 48 cm. in case.

Access restriction: Unrestricted access.

Abstract: The collection contains architectural drawings for three of Izenour's books, Roofed theaters of classical antiquity, Theater design, and Theater technology, and exhibition drawings and negatives for the Izenour Drawings of the Theater exhibit in Spain of fifty of the most significant theater buildings in western cultural history. Also contains a working model for a mechanically-controlled three-configuration convertible theater.

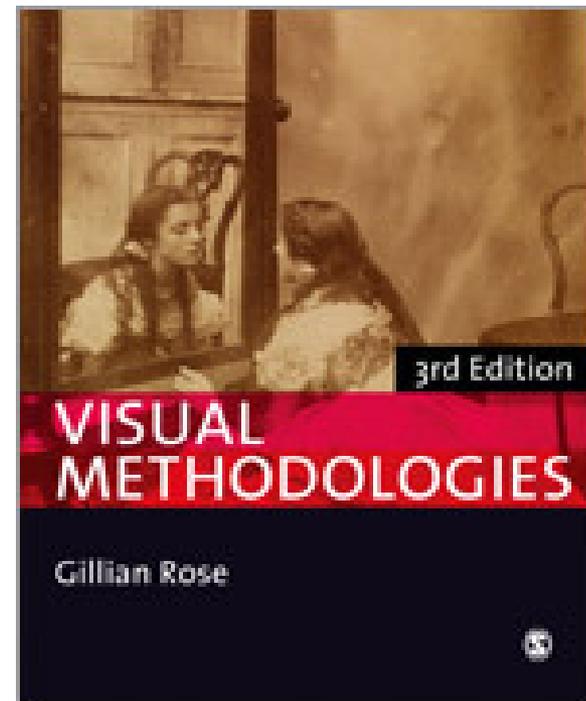


Information sources for help: Identification

Rose, Gillian. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. 3rd ed. London: Sage Publications, 2011.

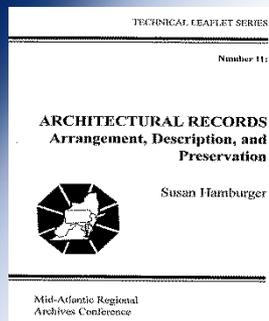
Companion Web site for 3rd
ed.:

[http://www.sagepub.com/rose/
home.htm](http://www.sagepub.com/rose/home.htm)

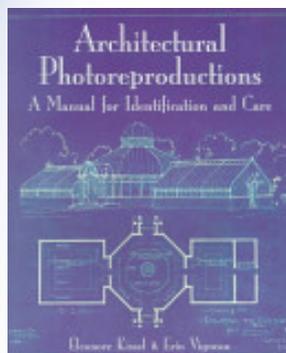




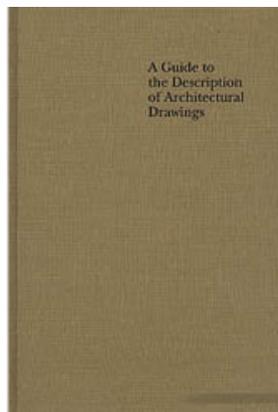
Architectural drawings



Hamburger, Susan. *Architectural Records: Arrangement, Description, and Preservation*. Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, 2004. 48p. Also available online at http://www.marac.info/assets/documents/marac_technical_leaflet_11.pdf



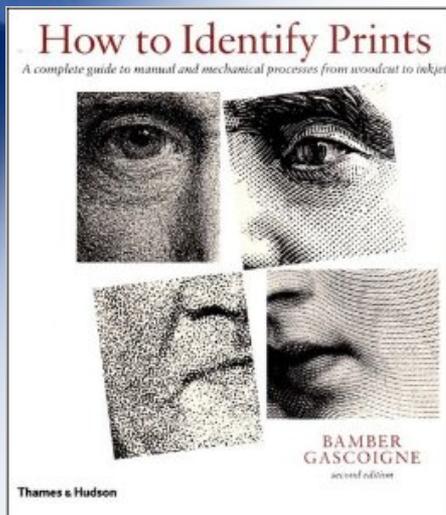
Kissel, Eléonore & Erin Vigneau. *Architectural Photoreproductions: A Manual for Identification and Care*. Newcastle, DE: Oak Knoll Press and The New York Botanical Garden, 1999. 121 pp.



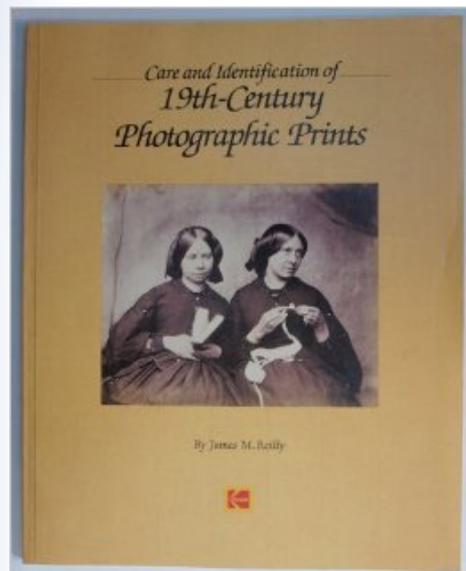
Porter, Vicki, and Thornes, Robin. *A Guide to the Description of Architectural Drawings*. Updated by Patricia Harpring, 2000. Available online at http://www.getty.edu/research/publications/electronic_publications/fda/index.html



Photographs



Gascoigne, Bamber. *How to Identify Prints: A Complete Guide to Manual and Mechanical Processes from Woodcut to Inkjet*. 2nd ed. London: Thames & Hudson, 2004. 216 p.



Reilly, James M. *Care and Identification of 19th-Century Photographic Prints*. Rochester, NY: Eastman Kodak, 1986. 116 p.



- Philadelphia Print Shop. *Reference Library*. 2002.
<http://www.philaprintshop.com/library.html> (Under General Printmaking, includes dictionary of printmaking terms, glossary of abbreviations used by printmakers, and discussion of print processes.)
- Washington Printmakers Gallery
<http://washingtonprintmakers.com/> (Includes dropdown menu of printmaking techniques to help identify prints.)
- Spencer Museum of Art
<http://www.spencerart.ku.edu/collection/print/index.shtml> (Under Works of Art on Paper, includes glossaries of photographic terms and printmaking terms, what makes a photograph a photograph, image maps of printmaking techniques.)
- Rare Book School, Charlottesville, Virginia
<http://www.rarebookschool.org/courses/illustration/i35/> (The Identification of Photographic Print Processes, taught by James M. Reilly.)



Information sources for help: Description

- Layne, Sara Shatford. "Analyzing the Subject of a Picture: A Theoretical Approach," *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 6:3 (1986): 39-62.
 - Suggests a theoretical basis for identifying and classifying the kinds of subjects a picture may have using previously developed principles of cataloging and classification, and concepts taken from the philosophy of art, from meaning in language, and from visual perception.

- Shatford, Sara. "Describing a Picture: A Thousand Words are Seldom Cost Effective," *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 4:4 (1984): 13-30.
 - Attempts to develop some concepts and objectives to use as a theoretical basis for the descriptive cataloguing of pictures. The purpose of developing a theoretical basis for picture cataloguing is to provide the reader with the means of evaluating, adapting, and applying presently existing codes and formats, or for devising new codes and formats.



Information sources for help: Cataloging

- **Visual Materials: Processing & Cataloging Bibliography**

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/resource/vmbib.html>

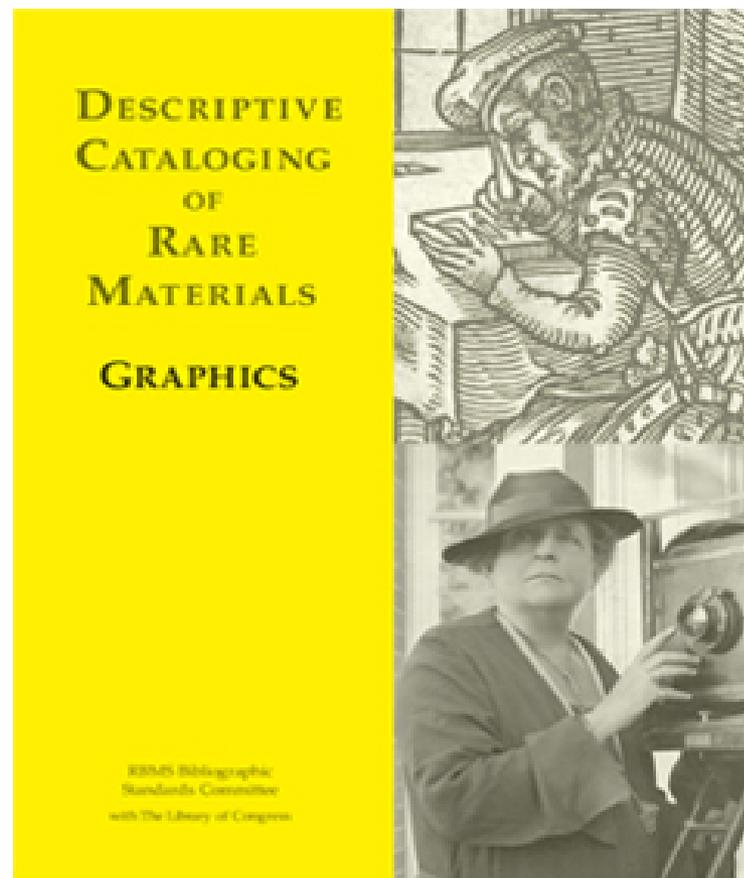
- **Online Reference Sources for Cataloging Visual Materials**

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/resource/vmrefcat.html>



Information sources for help: Cataloging

- Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (Graphics)
<http://rbms.info/dcrm/dcrm/g/>
 - direct successor to Elisabeth Betz Parker's *Graphic Materials: Rules for Describing Original Items and Historical Collections*
 - free PDF
 - in issue 4, 2013 release of Cataloger's Desktop
 - "dcrm/g" in the 040\$e (RBMS, Library of Congress, and MARC Standards Office okay to use coming soon)





Authorities tools

- Library of Congress. Prints and Photographs Division. *Thesaurus for Graphic Materials I: Subject Terms.*(TGM I) 3rd ed., 2008. Online at: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/tgm1/> (More than 7,000 terms for indexing pictures according to the depicted activities, objects, occupations, and events as well as concepts conveyed.)
- -----. *Thesaurus for Graphic Materials II: Genre/Format Terms.* (TGM II or GMPGC) 3rd ed., 2008. Online at: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/tgm2/> (About 650 terms to index media, formats, and work types.)
- Getty Research Institute. *Art & Architecture Thesaurus Online.* http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/vocabularies/aat/index.html ("More than 133,000 terms ... and other information relating to fine art, architecture, decorative arts, archival materials, and material culture.")



Contact information

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Available in DRUM: <http://hdl.handle.net/1903/12510>

and

ScholarSphere: <https://scholarsphere.psu.edu/files/7d278z27t>