



SLIDE AND TRANSITIONAL MEDIA TASK FORCE CASE STUDY TEMPLATE

The following is a list of suggested categories to provide some uniformity to the case study, but they are optional depending on the context. These descriptions of events do not have to be lengthy, but utilitarian. If more in-depth narratives emerge, it is recommended that the author(s) consider submitting an article on the topic to the VRA Bulletin (see: <http://online.vraweb.org/vrab/submguid.html>).

TITLE

Weeding a small art college library's slide collection

CONTACT

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INSTITUTION

Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA), Portland, Oregon

TYPE OF COLLECTION/DESCRIPTION

35mm slides for teaching of art historical images from books, vendors, and snapshots, local artists' work, student thesis work, housed in the PNCA library.

STAFF SIZE

Visual resources staff: 1.0 FTE, Entire library staff including VR: 4.5 FTE, Student employees: 3.0 FTE

CHALLENGE

Upgrades to digital academic technologies rendered slide collections and projectors obsolete, and access to digital images for teaching increased. Some faculty prefer the richness of color and detail in 35mm slides, but access to working projectors became difficult. The library ceased operations of slide creation or digital production of

teaching images because we were understaffed and quality control was difficult with student employees. Our slide collection was approximately 60,000 – 75,000 slides, roughly arranged by artist last name, geographical area for architecture, or by the class the slides were created for. Many slides were deteriorating – colors fading/changing, labels coming off, poor quality.

METHODS

Criteria for discards:

Phase 1

- Faded/color shifting – loss of color, changing to red/orange
- Poor quality – blurry, skewed, black and white images of color works
- Not 35mm
- In glass and metal frames (often these slides were also those that had discolored to red hues)

Phase 2

- Available in ARTstor
- Digitized by library staff for faculty

All slides pertaining to Portland and Pacific Northwest artists, PNCA community (staff, faculty, students) to be kept. These were moved to a separate section of the slide library and labeled for archives.

Disposal: many slides given to students for use in art. The rest were thrown in the dumpster.

OTHER INFORMATION

To date, this project has not greatly impacted teaching at PNCA. This is likely due to the gradual weaning of the use of slides and the slow decay of our analog projection technology. Many faculty have private slide collections or digital collections that they continue to draw from for lectures. Some faculty lament the loss of high-quality, vivid-color images that slides provided, but the deterioration of these slides makes this moot.

However, I am very concerned that without a local digital collection of images for teaching and learning, we may someday be put in the position to lose the contracted online collections if they become prohibitively expensive or inaccessible. Luckily, there are many public domain art history images, but often art school faculty use specific views or images in context and these might not work for their needs. This case study has illuminated the need to survey instructors about their use of digital images for teaching.