

# *Cataloguing Historical Photographs With ISBD (NBM)*

by DAVID MATTISON AND SAUNDRA SHERMAN

Large collections of archival photographs are among the most difficult records to organize and describe, and to analyze for subject content. Until now there has been no *standard of description* applicable to both photograph collections and individual photographs. Archives, along with other institutions that collect photographs, have developed local methods for the organization and description of such pictorial records. These methods have always been determined by the archives' budget and staff time. This article concerns the description of historical photograph collections according to a recently developed standard of description, the International Standard Bibliographic Description for Non-Book Materials (ISBD[NBM]), and the associated problem of providing subject access to such collections.

The International Standard Bibliographic Description is a form of information control being developed for all media by the International Federation of Library Associations as part of a concept known as Universal Bibliographic Control. The ISBD for monographs has been in use for several years, but that for non-book materials was published only in the fall of 1977. Each ISBD, regardless of the medium for which it was designed, has the same infrastructure: eight areas of description and a variable number of elements of description within each area. The order of these areas and of the elements within each area remains the same.

Schellenberg pointed out more than a decade ago that the description of pictorial records within archives had still to be defined and standardized.<sup>1</sup> This is still true. Archivists may argue the merits of standardization of description yet agree upon what information should be recorded to describe a photograph, not realizing that defining and standardizing are two aspects of the same issue. Once archivists determine which elements of description are necessary for the identification of an individual photograph or an entire collection, then a standard of description can be established. The ISBD for non-book materials is one such standard, and its chief advantage is that it is one of a series of ISBDs, each with identical format.

The forthcoming second edition of the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules*

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1 T.R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (New York, 1965), p. 322.

sets forth new rules of description which follow the ISBD descriptive structure and can be applied to both published and unpublished materials.<sup>2</sup> The eight areas of description are presented in the following order:

1. Title and statement of responsibility [authorship]
2. Edition and issue
3. Material (or type of publication) specific
4. Publication, distribution, manufacture
5. Physical description
6. Series
7. Note(s)
8. Standard number (or alternative) and terms of availability

Within each area various punctuation marks are used to separate the descriptive elements. Organizational and retrieval factors such as subject headings, filing devices, tracing information and so forth do not form a part of any ISBD.<sup>3</sup>

During the summer of 1977 the authors were hired by the Special Collections Division, University of British Columbia (UBC) Library, to develop a cataloguing system for a collection of approximately two thousand historical photographs, the majority of which are unique prints without accompanying negatives. The authors worked under the supervision of the University Archivist, Laurenda Daniells, and consulted the management of the UBC Library Catalogue Divisions regarding an appropriate descriptive format. After studying the ISBD(NBM), the authors agreed that it would work provided one adjustment were made.

#### HEADINGS

Three identifying-filing devices were selected. The first is the *accession or control number*. The accession numbers for the collection we catalogued are preceded by the letters "BC" (for British Columbia) to distinguish this collection from the University Archives Photograph Collection. Two identifying-filing devices have been called the *place of image creation* and *date of image creation*. Figure 1 shows their location on the catalogue card immediately beneath the accession number.

#### TITLE AND STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY AREA

Many photographs by professional photographers have titles (figures 2, 3 and 8). There are no inflexible rules regarding what constitutes the title of a photograph, so it is a purely pragmatic decision: if something looks like a title, it is used. It may be found either on the back or the front of a photograph. If there

2 The Public Archives of Canada has been studying the importance of standardization of description for all archival records. A Task Force on Information Control has recommended acceptance and adaptation of the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules*. See Public Archives of Canada, Task Force on Information Control, "Project I Report," (Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, March 1977), p. 5.

3 International Federation of Library Associations, *ISBD(NBM): International Standard Bibliographic Description for Non-Book Materials* (London: IFLA International Office for UBC, 1977), p. 2.

is no title, one is supplied describing as objectively as possible the image content (figures 1 and 9). If a photograph has a title which does not accurately describe the image content, an element of description called "other title information" is used to record this information (figures 2 and 8). The title is always separated from the statement of responsibility by a space-slash-space (figure 1).

The statement of responsibility is usually an individual photographer's name. Studio names or corporate agencies such as the Canadian Pacific Railway are also used if it can be determined from internal or external evidence that such corporate bodies were responsible for the image content only. The phrase "photographer unknown" is used if the person or corporate body responsible for the image content cannot be identified (figures 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, and 11).

#### FIGURE 1

BC487  
VANCOUVER, B.C. 1910s?  
[Oxen pulling logs over a skid road] / Archibald  
Murchie.

1 photograph : b&w (sepia) ; 15 x 20.5 cm. --  
Mounted on cardboard, 25 x 31 cm. --  
Donated by H.R. Macmillan who obtained it from  
L.D. Hitchner, Richmond, B.C.

#### FIGURE 2

BC288/11  
VANCOUVER, B.C. 1886 April.  
Real Estate Office in Big Tree : [7 men posed in  
front] / [H.T.] Devine.

2 photographs : b&w (sepia) : 20 x 25 cm. --  
[S.J. Thompson, 19--?].

1 photograph : b&w (sepia) : 18 x 23 cm. -- [S.J.  
Thompson, 19--?]. -- (#6853).

1 photograph : b&w (sepia) ; 18 x 22 cm. --  
Mounted on cardboard, 27 x 28 cm.

#### EDITION AND ISSUE AREA AND MATERIAL (OR TYPE OF PUBLICATION) SPECIFIC AREA

Since photographs are unique items, the edition and issue area is not used. The material (or type of publication) specific area is currently used only in ISBDs designed for serials and cartographic materials.

#### PUBLICATION, DISTRIBUTION, MANUFACTURE AREA

Any or all of the elements and subelements in this area may be used. Manufacture was considered to be the most useful of the three in describing an

historical photograph. If any of the subelements of manufacture (place of manufacture, name of manufacturer, and date of manufacture) differ from the place and date of image creation and the statement of responsibility, these subelements are transcribed (figures 2 and 8).

#### PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION AREA

This area provides for the specific description of either individual photographs or groups of photographs (figures 8 and 9).

#### SERIES AREA

We used this area for the transcription of the number the photographer had given to the negative. Any information in this area is enclosed in parentheses (figure 3).

#### NOTES AREA

The notes area is used to present information which cannot be incorporated into the other seven areas of description. Two useful notes are the type and size of mount and donor information (figures 1 and 3).

#### STANDARD NUMBER AND TERMS OF AVAILABILITY AREA

The photographer's number can be placed in this area. In the case of a photograph collection, "terms of availability" can be used to convey information about restrictions on the use of a collection.

### FIGURE 3

BC225

NELSON, B.C. 1898 July 1.

Nelson, B.C., Horse Race, July 1st, 1898 / Wadds  
Bros.

1 photograph : b&w ; 18.5 x 24 cm. -- (#197). --  
Mounted on cardboard, 27 x 32 cm. -- Donated by  
S.S. Fowler? -- From the R.L. Reid collection.

### FIGURE 4

CLAUDET, FRANCIS G (1837-1906)

New Westminster, B.C.

1860s

Worked in Assay Office. See Reid, R.L., *The Assay  
Office and the Proposed Mint at New Westminster.*

### FIGURE 5

CLAUDET, FRANCIS G

BC70?

BC550

BC784

BC787

BC789

BC795

**FIGURE 6**

VANDERPANT, JOHN  
 New Westminster, B.C.  
 1924-1927  
 Columbia Studio  
 New Westminster, B.C.  
 1928  
 Vanderpant Galleries  
 Vancouver, B.C.  
 1926-1939?

**FIGURE 7**

COLUMBIA STUDIO  
 J. Vanderpant, prop.  
 New Westminster, B.C.  
 1928  
 C.H. Reeves, prop.  
 New Westminster, B.C.  
 1929-1930s?

**FIGURE 8**

BC218  
 WILLIAMS CREEK, B.C. 1860s?  
 The Rankin Compy Mine : [3 men standing by the mine]  
 / [F. Dally?].

1 photograph : b&w ; 12 x 17 cm. -- Donated by F.W.  
 Howay.

1 copy negative : b&w ; 10 x 12.5 cm. -- [Vancouver,  
 B.C. : UBC, Instructional Resources Centre, 1977  
 September].

The catalogue card format we devised represents an experiment in cataloguing historical photographs with ISBD(NBM). Because it is best for the user to see at a glance both the collection's image content and image form, an adjustment to the ISBD(NBM) format was made, namely, reversing the publication, distribution, manufacture area and the physical description area. In addition, the notes area and the standard number area were treated as integral parts of the physical description and manufacture areas. Because of this adjustment, it was possible to list the different physical forms of the same image (figures 2 and 8).

There are other ways of dealing with the listing and description of these physical forms within the ISBD format. They can be listed in the notes area or recorded in a "holdings" record separate from the catalogue record. If the collection is small, it makes sense economically to collocate the various forms of the same image on one card. The course we chose represents one of two means of achieving such a collocation, the other being to use the notes area.

**FIGURE 9**

BC188/1-28  
 KOOTENAE HOUSE, WINDERMERE LAKE, B.C. 1922 August 30.  
 [Kootenae House museum opening] / photographers  
 vary.

28 photographs : b&w and sepia ; 14 x 8 cm to 20 x  
 24 cm.

**FIGURE 10**

F5009 Notman, William  
 T24  
 1865 Taylor, Fennings, 1817-1882.  
 v. 1-3 Portraits of British North Americans /  
 by William Notman ; with biographical  
 sketches by Fennings Taylor. -- Montreal :  
 Wm. Notman, 1865-68.

3 v. : 84 port. ; 23 cm.  
 The portraits are sepia carte-de-visite  
 photographs.

**FIGURE 11**

BC941/1-40  
 ALBUM  
 BULLION, B.C. ca 1900.  
 [Views of the Consolidated Cariboo Hydraulic Mine]  
 / photographer unknown.

40 photographs : b&w & col. ; sizes vary.  
 Album.

**FIGURE 12**

BC600/1-600  
 B.C. 1920s  
 [Howay Collections : views of cairns and monuments  
 in B.C.] / photographers vary.

600 photographs : b&w ; sizes vary.

**SUBJECT ANALYSIS**

The analysis of photographs for subject content and the subsequent indexing are important aspects of the handling of such records. Analyzing photographs for subject content is difficult given that there exists at present no theoretical base for the analysis of photographs to reveal subject content. Subject indexing presents problems as well, since there is neither a national list of subject headings for historical photograph collections, nor a current list of subject headings applicable to Canadian history and culture, and no code for the con-

struction of subject headings exists.<sup>4</sup> Current cataloguing theory about subject analysis of non-book materials seems to favour extending rather than limiting the subject headings for items such as photographs, which contain many subjects of interest to a variety of users.<sup>5</sup> Lacking any guidelines on the depth of subject analysis and indexing necessary to achieve an appropriate level of recall and relevance, each archives must decide from an economic standpoint how much time can be devoted to it.<sup>6</sup>

Subject indexing of photographs may be reflected in a subject file on cards with the photographs themselves arranged either by accession number or by their original order. Photographs or electrostatic copies of the photographs may be placed in a file for the user to consult. The subject file itself may contain either a full or partial description of each photograph or collection of photographs preserved by the archives, depending on time and budget constraints. In any case, at some point in his search the user should encounter a complete description of a photograph or a collection of photographs.

Access to the photographs we catalogued is gained through four different card files. The accession file, arranged numerically by accession number, must be consulted in conjunction with the photographer file, where the accession numbers of photographs taken by a photographer are listed on a card (figure 5). The user then refers to the accession file to obtain a description of the photograph. The user may prefer to go directly from the photographer file to the visual record which in this case consists of electrostatic copies of prints.

The photographer file is an alphabetical listing of the photographers and studios represented in the collection. The file also includes a nearly complete listing of photographers who lived and worked in Vancouver between 1886 and 1916, though the collection does not yet contain works by many of those photographers. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the two types of cards that are found in this file. The first card (figure 4) bears the name and dates of business of the photographer, while the second gives the photographer's name and the accession numbers of the photographs he or she took (figure 5). Cross references to studios and photographers are included on each card (figures 6 and 7). The file also contains *see* reference cards which lead the user to the established name form of a photographer.

The subject authority and information file gives users both information about the subject headings used and in brief what is known about a photographed person, place, or event. Because the collection is still being catalogued, *see* and *see also* reference cards are contained in both this file and the subject file. To save drawer space, however, it may be necessary in the future

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4 Lois Mai Chan, "Alphabetical Arrangement and Subject Collocation in Library of Congress Subject Headings," *Library Resources & Technical Services* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 168.

5 Suzanne Massonneau, "Developments in the Organization of Audiovisual Materials," *Library Trends* 25, no. 3 (January 1977): 679.

6 Subject terms were based on the *Library of Congress List of Subject Headings* (8th ed.), the *List of Canadian Subject Headings* (Canadian Library Association, 1968), and indexes of histories of British Columbia and Canada. No limit was set on the maximum number of subject headings to be applied to any one photograph or collection of photographs. The average number of subject headings per photograph is seven.

to remove the *see* and *see also* cards from the subject file. The subject file is organized word by word rather than letter by letter. Place, rather than time, has been used as the first filing element after the subject heading itself. To aid users, the filing order is sometimes stated on the subject guide card, as shown below:

BUILDINGS—B.C.

Filed by place, date, number

BC291

ASHCROFT, B.C. 1875.

BC452

ASHCROFT, B.C. 1875.

BC129

NELSON, B.C. 18—?

BC225

NELSON, B.C. 1898 July 1.

The exceptions to this order are proper names and occupations which are always filed by date of image creation. Depending upon user reaction, some cards in the subject file may have to be rearranged to provide access only by subject name and time. All decisions about which filing order to use under which subject name were made on an ad interim basis.

In designing this cataloguing system, we recognized the need for a descriptive format combined with organizational aids that could manage not only single photographs or negatives, but also original photographs in limited-edition books, photographs in family or corporate albums, and photographs in manuscript collections. There was no need to design either separate catalogues or separate card formats for photographs in books, albums, or manuscript collections (figures 10, 11 and 12).

The cataloguing system we designed stands as an on-going experiment, an attempt to fuse both archival and library principles for the handling of photographs. It should not be viewed as the best solution nor as the solution for all archives, but rather as a step towards the best solution for all archives collecting historical photographs.





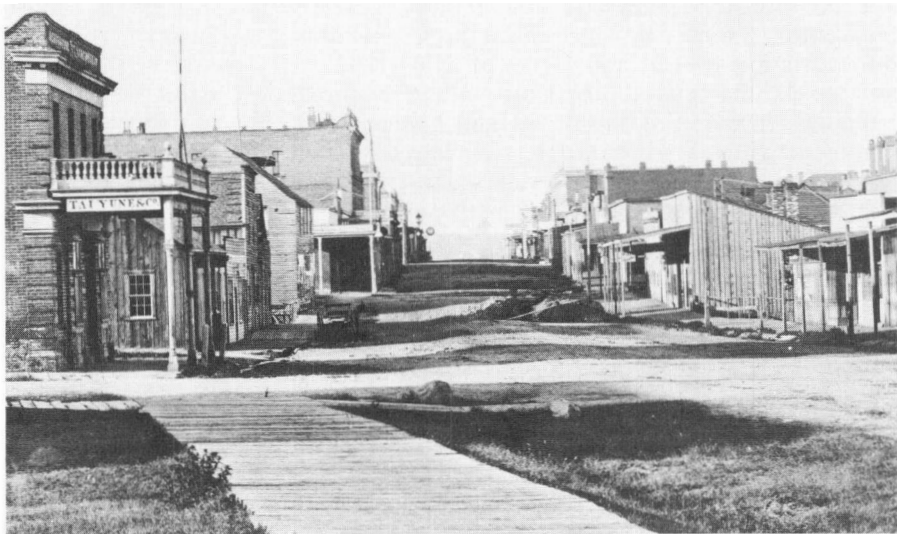
Oxen pulling logs on a skid road, Vancouver, B.C., ca 1910s? Archibald Murchie, photographer. (Special Collections Division, UBC Library BC487)

Dominion Day horse race in Nelson, B.C., 1898. Wadds Brothers, photographer. (Special Collections Division, UBC Library BC225)



“Real Estate Office in Big Tree,” by Harry T. Devine, Vancouver’s first professional photographer. (Special Collections Division, UBC Library BC288/11)

Part of the opening ceremonies of the Kootenae House museum on Windermere Lake, B.C., 1922 August 30. (Special Collections Division, UBC Library BC188/21)



One of numerous Cariboo mining companies, ca 1860s? Frederick Dally may have taken this photograph. (Special Collections Division, UBC Library BC218)

Victoria, B.C., Government Street looking south, early 1880s. S.A. Spencer, photographer. (Special Collections Division, UBC Library, uncatalogued)