

Book Reviews

Collection, Use, and Care of Historical Photographs. ROBERT A. WEINSTEIN and LARRY BOOTH. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History. c1977. 222 p., photos. ISBN 0 910050 21 X
Members: \$10.50, Non-members: \$16.00.

Weinstein and Booth's long-awaited work, *Collection, Use, and Care of Historical Photographs* is a fine volume, well conceived, accurately and meticulously researched, written with fervour, and revealing deep concern for the survival and use of the historical photograph.

Weinstein and Booth speak with authority. Having laboured in the new field of photographic archives, they have experienced the joys and challenges of collecting, the concerns of care, and the realization of the photograph's potential. They have also witnessed the disasters of deterioration and felt helpless in the face of limited resources, indifference and misplaced priorities.

Weinstein, the academic, writer and photo researcher and Booth, the curator, were charged by the American Association for State and Local History to produce a guide covering both the philosophical and technical aspects of photograph collections. This they have done well, sharing their experiences and what they have meticulously gathered from others. The authors convey these results effectively, sometimes coaching, sometimes cajoling and even mesmerizing, but always instructing.

Layout and printing have been competently executed. The use of a double-column format for text make reading easy. The eighty-three illustrations selected by the authors as a cross-section of nineteenth-century photography provide an appropriate visual complement to the text.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One (Collection, Use and Initial Care) is designed to acquaint the uninitiated with the historical photograph and to give more substance to what experienced archivists should already have learned. There are sections on the academic, educational and commercial uses of historical photographs, the responsible reproduction of photographs, the search for collections, and the criteria for collecting as well as negotiation and acquisition. Issues of rights and donor restrictions and sensibilities are discussed. Then follows a case study in collecting photographs, a step-by-step procedural tour from the moment of acquisition, through the initial examination, identification, sorting, filing, storing, care, and cataloguing. The potential problems are indicated and basic remedies given, with numerous appended examples. Mention of the work of Newfoundland photographer John De Visser, the Klondike Gold Rush, and the Vancouver Centennial Museum's effective use of historical photo murals, even lends some Canadian content.

In Part One, Weinstein and Booth pour out their enthusiasm and experiences through a happy combination of authoritative teaching and passionate pleas for commitment and understanding, all of which is guaranteed to kindle the interest of the neophyte and to set him on the right path. For more experienced archivists, parts of this section may appear too general and only commonsense, but a faithful reading (preferably in small doses) does yield a wealth of information.

Part Two (How to Care for Historical Photographs: Some Techniques and Procedures) is a manual in itself, containing the detailed technical data we gathered previously from countless sources. Various sections discuss the preservation of photographic materials, the nature of the photograph, the causes of deterioration, the factors of temperature, relative humidity and air pollution, and carefully detail steps for the care of negatives and prints. The latest specifications for envelopes, mountings, and, of utmost importance, the perils and problems associated with producing copy negatives and prints are also discussed. A chapter on the restoration of photographic materials is of primary importance, dealing with chemical restoration, restoration of the earlier photographic types, and the care of glass plates, printing papers and film. The last chapter focusses on modern photographic processes, both black-and-white and colour. Appendixes conveniently supply an indispensable table of photographic processes, types, characteristics and chronology. There are also useful listings of major institutions (none Canadian) involved with historical photographs and of the manufacturers and suppliers of the materials mentioned in the text by brand names and product number. The book concludes with a select bibliography, divided into technical and non-technical readings, and an index.

Collection, Use, and Care of Historical Photographs makes no pretensions about being the final word in photographic archival science. As the preface indicates, the book provides "common-sense suggestions, basic information and explanations," helping the reader to make responsible decisions on what should be done, who should do it, and what it will cost in time, money, equipment and facilities. "Most important of all, the reader will learn how photos can be ruined unintentionally by mishandling, experimentation and improper storage. He will learn . . . one cardinal rule: When in Doubt, Check it out. Consult an Expert — Avoid Remorse." The authors also recognize that the search for knowledge in this field continues, that "more will be discovered and published, for more is still needed." Weinstein and Booth anticipate that their book "will be used, amended, questioned, and in time replaced." In spite of their anticipation, this book will remain a standard reference for some time to come. Anyone concerned with our photographic heritage requires a copy.

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Photography Within the Humanities. Edited by EUGENIA PARRY JANIS and WENDY MACNEIL. Danbury, New Hampshire: Addison House Publishers, 1977. 157 p. ill. ISBN 0 89169 013 1 \$22.50.

The past decade has seen an avalanche of books on photography, most of them simply presenting pictures without saying anything useful. The tremendous impact of photography on the world remains almost unexplored. In fact, by concentrating on the aesthetic aspects of photography, most scholars and critics have wrapped a cloak of mystification around the more important aspects of the subject.