

Collaborative Collection Goals:

Goals for the collaborative collection are drawn from the grant proposal and project team meetings and can be summarized by the following collection statement:

To broadly document the history and culture of Pittsburgh and the surrounding region visually, through the selection of approximately 7,000 photographs from collections maintained by ASC (Archives Service Center), CMA (Carnegie Museum of Art), and HSWP (Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania). The final collaboratively developed online collection will provide a comprehensive view of the Pittsburgh region, illustrating a variety of subject matter and photographic contexts as well as Pittsburgh’s diverse ethnic and social groups and their contributions to the culture, government, and history of this area in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Purpose of Selection Criteria Guidelines:

- 1.) To facilitate collaboration among ASC, CMA, and HSWP.
- 2.) To encourage the project team to think conceptually about the final online collection *as a whole*, its potential users, and how each institution’s individual selections will come together to visually define Pittsburgh.
- 3.) To assist each institution to select according to its own institutional mission, to serve its identified audiences, and to represent the strengths of its individual collections.
- 4.) To ensure that the selected images will be technically and economically feasible to digitize, and that time and legal constraints of the project will be recognized during the selection process.

Documentation of Selection Process:

For purposes of project evaluation, final reports, and potential articles and papers, it is strongly recommended that each institution individually document decisions made about selection.

IMLS has traditionally funded projects to encourage cross-institutional collaboration and outreach to diverse audiences. In documenting selection decisions, special emphasis should be given to the steps made to select for traditional and new audiences alike, special inquiries made to determine the needs of the collection’s potential users, and/or tools used to anticipate uses of the online collection. Emphasis should also be given to the role of cross-institutional collaboration and communication in influencing final image selection.

Selection Criteria:

Format and Size:

The majority of an institution’s selected images should consist of monochrome prints no larger than 8” x 10” and transparencies measuring up to 8” x 10”. Each institution may choose to permit exceptions (e.g. larger format prints, glass plate negatives, daguerreotypes, etc), but should carefully consider the implications, such as:

- Will scanning equipment accommodate the format?
- Will the format require special preparatory steps that will require extensive time or money?
- Will final presentation of the special format compromise accuracy of the image?

Condition:

Preservation concerns will influence selection criteria.

- Images should be able to withstand the stress and handling of the digitization process.
- Consider whether informational content has not been compromised by deterioration.
- Consider the future health of the original image. Will digitization and online access prevent excessive handling and thereby help preserve the original? If digitization and online access spurs public attention and demand for reprints, can this demand be accommodated with the digital surrogate?

Legal Restrictions:

Each institution must ensure its legal right to publicly disseminate digital reproductions of the selected images. To that end, any copyright issues, donor restrictions, and privacy concerns should be identified and remedied prior to selection. Specifically, ensure that each image:

- Is in the public domain or covered by copyright protections negotiated by the institutions.
- Is free from donor restrictions that would prevent an image from being digitized and publicly accessed.
- Has been considered with regard to privacy issues. In images where individuals are displayed, would content or context of the image pose ethical or privacy concerns for the people pictured or their families?

Metadata:

Well-captioned images and existing documentation about the collections will contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of metadata collection.

- Will extensive research time be required to record even the minimal metadata requirements?
- Is enough information readily available about the image to provide a useful context to potential audiences?
- If outside assistance from donors or advisory groups is required to describe the image, can this be done in a timely and cost-efficient manner?

Thematic Representation:

It may benefit the team to collectively ask, “What kind of Pittsburgh will we have represented when the project is finished?” Is there a danger of over-representing the city as merely an industrial powerhouse? Is there a chance that we may under-represent the diversity of our ethnic communities?

Institutions should consider the thematic content of a selected image and whether it will contribute to the comprehensiveness of the final product. A list of broad themes has been compiled from major topic areas represented in the combined collections. The following is a list of major subject areas and examples of representative images:

- Business [store fronts, promotions, billboards...]
- Industry [images of corporate culture, work conditions, machinery, worker culture in steel, glass, mining, etc. industries]
- Leisure/Entertainment/Holiday/Ritual [sporting events, parades, performances, parks...]
- Daily Life/Material Culture [scenes of families, homes, farms, fashion...]
- Religion [churches, temples, religious ceremony and display...]
- Education/Science/Art [schools, universities, medical facilities, public statues...]
- Infrastructure [roads, tunnels, river transportation, railways, bridges, public transportation...]
- Landscape
- Personalities [media personalities, political figures, community leaders...]
- Architecture [landmarks, notable buildings, styles of architecture, work of notable architects...]
- Ethnicity/Immigration/Race [scenes of ethnic neighborhoods, scenes of segregation, integration, ethnic celebrations...]
- Military/War
- Civic [police, fire department, public safety, charitable organizations...]

Value:

Priority should be given to images with high informational or intrinsic value.

- Does the image contain significant visual information that will meet the needs of the audience?
- Does the image depict one or more of the collection themes?
- Does the image depict subjects or groups that have been traditionally under-documented.
- Is it the earliest or only available image of its kind?
- Does the image have significant aesthetic value?
- Was the creator a notable photographer?

Audience:

Each institution should select images for its traditional patron base while simultaneously considering the new audiences and uses that will result from the collaboratively developed online collection.

- Will selecting a popular image or subject area bring an institution’s traditional audiences to the collaborative collection?
- Will an image that has been underutilized by traditional patrons of one institution be useful to the informational needs of audiences that the other partner institutions will bring to the collaborative collection (e.g. K-12 students, teachers, art historians, etc)?
- Each institution may maintain databases, statistics, or other quantitative tools that keep track of collection usage. Can these easily be shared with the partner institutions as an indicator of the variety of user interest for visual Pittsburgh history?

Additional Considerations:

Advisory Groups:

Institutions may already have external or internal advisory groups that assist in collection policy, educational programming, and exhibits. These advisory groups provide an expertise about collection use, presentation, or needs of a specific audience that will influence selection for this project. Can this expertise be easily shared with the partner institutions and contribute to their well-informed selection for audiences with whom they may not have extensive experience?

Adding Collections:

To contribute to the comprehensiveness and balance of the overall collection, institutions may consider adding images from collections not initially noted in the project proposal.

Duplication:

Avoid image duplication and extensive thematic duplication from within the same collection and from the selections of other institutions.

ASC and HSWP will be selecting from some collections that can easily overlap contextually and thematically. It will benefit overall selection if these two institutions can begin an immediate dialogue about proposed selection from the following collections:

- Oliver M. Kaufmann Collection (ASC) and the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House Collection (HSWP)
- William J. Gaughan Collection (ASC) and the Jones and Laughlin Steel Corporation (HSWP)
- Later years of Pittsburgh City Photographers Collection (ASC) and Allegheny Conference on Community Development Collection (HSWP)