

PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

Safeguarding the Past and Illuminating the Future of Cultural Information

ELENI MAMMA

Archivist–Librarian, MSc
(emamma.teiath@gmail.com)

Technological Educational Institution of Athens
Library and Information Systems Department - Greece

Our epoch, having so many changes and rapid evolutions in information environment, has to deal with the challenge to protect and bring out unique cultural objects, as photographs are. Photographs consist a source of great significance, as they capture and reflect various dimensions of human life and the activities of mankind. Indicatively, we refer to several events with social, political, educative, historical and cultural interest, which are stamped on photographic materials through time. Libraries, archives and generally information and cultural institutions possess photographic collections, which are well organized and handled with one goal: the preservation of access to a rich information treasure for end users and researchers. In order to achieve this upper goal, recognized photographic metadata standards are exploitable, such as Sepiades, VRA Core, CDWA, and Dublin Core. These are used for the documentation and the digitalization of photographs as well as the creation of eminent photographic digital archives and institutional repositories. The principal goal of the poster is the inspection of the above-mentioned standards and the documentation of a specific photographic collection under the implementation of the worldwide-recognized standard, Sepiades. Especially the documentation constitutes a creative process, because it shows off the endless importance and proof of culture and history through photos. Concluding, the main aim of this poster is to enlighten the greatness of photographic information management, and furthermore to show that standards are a substantial aid in the area of Libraries, Archives and Information Science, concerning knowledge access.

REQUIREMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE MANAGEMENT

Within the framework of organising, digitising, preserving and displaying a Photographic Archive the following basic requirements for the effective implementation of this project must be met in advance

Implementation Criteria

The criteria as well as the requirements of implementing the organization of a photographic Archive are as follows:

- First of all, the structures and designations of all likely description levels of the file must be clearly determined (file – sub-file – series – sub-series – folder – sub-folder – and document), after the file has been thoroughly investigated and recorded on site. In this way, errors affecting its structure and, by extension, configuration will be avoided, aiming at the clearly specified processing of the file (digitisation and documentation).
- Following the on-site investigation, the structure of the file will be reconfigured, if necessary, so as to determine how it will be digitised and documented.
- Based on the SEPIADES model, the photographic material must be digitised in accordance with the configured structure of the file.
- In addition, the name of every file must be clearly specified and represent the respective filename of the item(s) which will go into the particular file. This is considered necessary as it will be possible to document and associate similar items more easily and quickly.
- Finally, it follows that the phase of documentation must necessarily be carried out on the basis of the configured structure of the photographic file, which will have been determined in advance after the investigation.

Implementation Recommendations

As a consequence of the above, it is recommended to:

- Record fully and clearly the content of series, sub-series, folders and sub-folders;
- Name items clearly and at all times in relation to folders and sub-folders;
- Determine the photographic-file structure in accordance with which digitisation and documentation works will be carried out later;
- Train information specialists (documentalists) along the lines of the SEPIADES model;
- Build the cataloguing model based on the SEPIADES model;
- Specify the phase of material digitisation according to strict criteria;
- Give in advance clear instructions as to the phase of material digitisation (fields and metadata).

SEPIADES STANDARD

(Safeguarding European Photographic Images for Access)

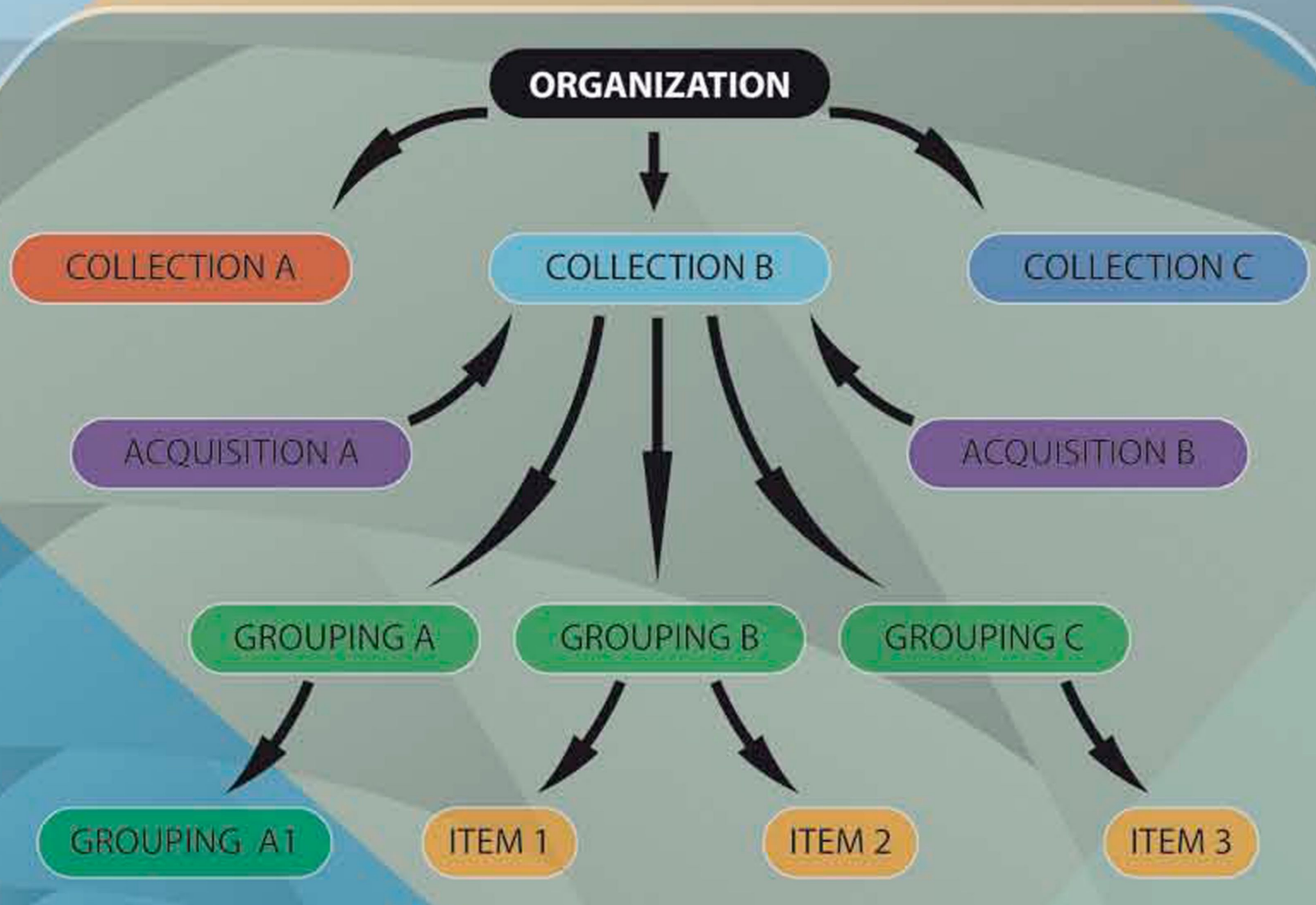


Figure 1
Basic Hierarchical Structure of SEPIADES

DOCUMENTATION OF ARCHIVED PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS

The SEPIADES model

- Is a model used to describe metadata for photographic collections
 - Is used by Greek & international photographic archives kept by organisations
 - Has multiple capabilities for applying issues of digitisation and documentation of photographic material
- Material
- Of complex hierarchical structure
 - Of large quantity
 - Difficult to organise (multiple & different forms)
- Provides the possibility of recording & documenting the material with a multilevel structure (Figure 1)

BASIC PRINCIPLES

WHAT IS METADATA?

Metadata	Data about other data. Information that describes and identifies the features of a document
FEATURES	structure, management, format, content, etc.
DOCUMENTS	books, papers, photographs, newspapers, museum objects, maps, audiovisual material, webpages, etc.
AIM	to classify, document, process, filter, associate with other documents, search & find the documents described

SPECIAL DESCRIPTION WITH SEPIADES

Due to the particular or complex nature of the specific data that must be documented, the SEPIADES model requires a special and additional description as to some of its elements. These elements are the following:

- NAME:** persons, objects (houses, buildings, ships, etc.), persons responsible for creating the photograph
- DATE:**
 - Date of Exposure
 - Date of Processing
 - Date of Publishing

The date a physical item related to the photograph was created in the 'grouping'

The date the photograph was published provenance and content of each form of the item

SEPIADES STRUCTURE

WHAT IS THE INSTITUTE LEVEL?

The 'Institute' level is the first and most general level in the hierarchical structure of the SEPIADES model.

INSTITUTE
the institution that holds a photographic collection because it either owns it or acquired it in other ways (donation, borrowing, purchase, etc.)

INFORMATION REGARDING THE 'INSTITUTE'
basic information such as postal address, country, type of institution, etc.

WHAT IS THE 'COLLECTION' LEVEL?

The 'Collection' level is the second description level of the SEPIADES model.

COLLECTION
a 'group' of objects; in this case, photographic documents (photos, negatives, slides, prints, digital files) held by the Institute

INFORMATION REGARDING THE 'COLLECTION'
detailed information regarding its management, provenance and material

WHAT IS THE 'GROUPING' LEVEL?

The next level in the structure of the SEPIADES model is the 'Grouping' level.

GROUPING
a set of physical images which may be either a sub-category of a collection or a different group

INFORMATION REGARDING THE 'GROUPING'
detailed information regarding its management, provenance and material

WHAT IS THE 'ITEM' LEVEL?

The 'Item' level is the immediately next, final and the most detailed level of description.

ITEM
the visual & physical image of a photographic document. A 'visual & physical image' means any kind of form such as the image of the photograph itself (visual), a print (physical), a negative (physical), a slide (physical), a digital file (e.g. CD, DVD)

INFORMATION REGARDING THE 'ITEM'
information regarding the management, provenance and content of each form of the item

WHAT IS THE 'ACQUISITION' LEVEL?

The 'Acquisition' level concerns one of the most important applications & functions of a catalogue, namely providing information regarding the history of a collection and/or its various parts.

ACQUISITION
how (manner), when (time) and from whom (source of acquisition) a particular collection in its entirety and/or as a group of items was acquired

INFORMATION REGARDING THE 'ACQUISITION'
details about various management issues inside the Institute, as well as issues of provenance and content of the material itself

SPECIAL DESCRIPTION WITH SEPIADES

- GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION:** right from the beginning, the country, city/town, place will be clearly specified with a name
- In order to record geographical locations / place names, the SEPIADES model recommends following and using the Getty Thesaurus of Geographical Names.

SEPIADES core elements

The primary aim of the SEPIADES model is to specify a number of basic / minimum fields that can be used by information specialists of photographic material all over the world for the description of photographic collections.

These elements are the following:

- Main Reference Code
- Name of Institute
- Acquisition Code
- Location (permanent or temporary)
- Title
- Creator
- Subject Headings / Classification
- Names
- Dates
- Geographical Location
- Access Restrictions / Copyright
- Relationships between Related Items
- Physical Status
- Technical Identification
- Dimensions, Quality, Volume
- Type of Photographic Item
- File Format
- References
- Origins of Collection / Groupings
- Contents of the Collections / Grouping / Acquisition

DUBLIN CORE AND SEPIADES

- Mapping
- Crosswalks

The Main aim is:

- Interoperability

IMPORTANT TIPS

- A SET OF CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTING DIGITISATION STEPS AND RULES
- A SET OF CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTING DOCUMENTATION STEPS AND RULES
- A SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROUPS HAVING TO DEAL WITH THE PROCEDURES OF ALL THE RECOMMENDED STEPS OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVES
- A SET OF APPRAISAL RULES IMPLEMENTED BEFORE DEALING WITH THE PROCEDURES OF DIGITISATION AND DOCUMENTATION
- BUILDING ALL THE PROCEDURE STEPS WITH A STRICT AND WELL MANNERED POLITIC
- RESPECTING THE WHOLE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE STRUCTURE AND CLASSIFICATION