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Explorations In Collections Care: Martin And Osa Johnson Glass Negatives In The Permanent Collection At The George Eastman House

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Explorations in Collections Care:

Martin and Osa Johnson glass negatives
in the permanent collection at the George Eastman House

by

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A thesis presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the program of

Photographic Preservation and Collections Management

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and Rochester, New York, USA, 2011

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Explorations in Collections Care: Martin and Osa Johnson glass negatives in the permanent collection at George Eastman House

Master of Arts, 2011

Jennifer Ko

Photographic Preservation and Collections Management

Ryerson University/George Eastman House

Abstract

This paper discusses a professional practical project that dealt with the collections care undertaken for one instance of found-in-collections material. Consisting of 336 four-by-five and five-by-seven gelatin glass plate negatives by American travel and wildlife filmmakers Martin and Osa Johnson, the material had been cared for in the vaults of the permanent collection at the George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film for many years without the establishment of official acquisition or public accessibility. The project discussed in this paper involved the trajectory of care required to make the Johnson material available, including provenance research, official acquisition, registration documentation, cataloguing, and housing improvements. The paper discusses this process, analyzing decisions made from issues of arrangement to culturally-sensitive description in associated cataloguing records. Finally, this paper suggests avenues for potential use of the Johnson material, arguing for the possibilities afforded by accessibility.

Acknowledgements

There are many thanks owed in the completion of this project. The majority of the staff at the George Eastman House have come to my aid at one point or another, however, I would particularly like to thank my project consultants at the George Eastman House, Photographic Archivist Joe Struble and Assistant Curator of Photographs Jamie Allen for their endless patience and professional thoughtfulness. I am additionally indebted to Curator of Photographs Alison Nordström for her guiding engagement with my project. Registrar Wataru Okada and Assistant Registrar James Bellucci are also owed many thanks for their invaluable help. I would further like to acknowledge my first and second readers, Kathy Connor, Curator of the George Eastman Legacy Collection, and Stephanie Allen, Registrar at the Royal Ontario Museum. Their enthusiasm and expertise were much appreciated.

A few final and very important thanks are owed to: Alana West, the Howard and Carol Tanenbaum Curatorial Fellow in the Department of Photographs at George Eastman House, for her love of tea, sympathetic ear, and critical editing; Sarah Steele, and all my fellow Photographic Preservation and Collections Management classmates, for their humor, advice and constant commiserating; and Daniel R. Gruetter.

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Introduction

Most modern collecting institutions have stashes of ‘mystery material,’ those boxes that were there before all of the employees, for which no records exist, and no one knows what to do with. In her book discussing collections management problem-solving, Rebecca Buck cites case studies of such conundrums at such wide-ranging institutions as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, and the Brandywine River Museum.¹

The George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film (GEH) is no exception. The project to be described deals with the trajectory of collections care for one instance of such material. Several years ago, GEH archivist Joe Struble encountered three metal drawers of unaccessioned glass plate negatives in the vault of the permanent collection of the Department of Photography at GEH.

The three drawers contain 296 four-by-five glass negatives and 40 five-by-seven glass negatives. All of the negatives were taken by American filmmakers Martin and Osa Johnson between 1917 and 1920 in the Solomon Islands, New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), British North Borneo (now Sabah), and Australia. The negatives were stored with other accessioned Johnson negatives, but had not been formally made accessible as part of the museum’s permanent collection due to questions regarding the provenance of the material.

¹ Rebecca Buck and Jean Allman Gillmore, *Collection Conundrum: Solving Collections Management Mysteries* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2007).

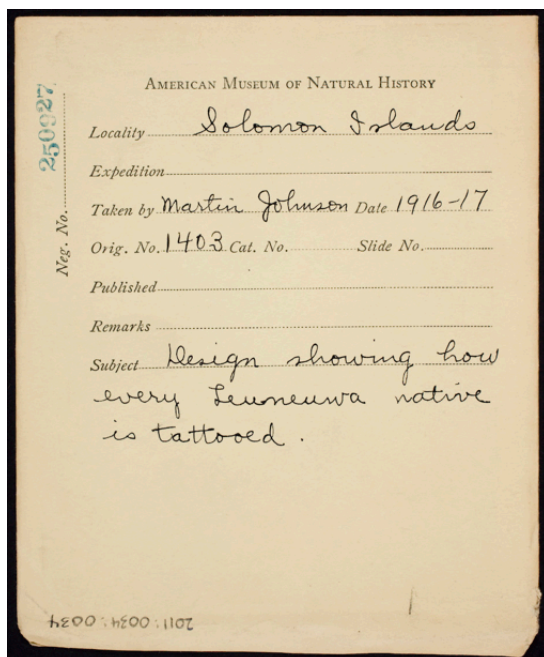


Fig. 1. Johnson, Martin & Osa, 'Design showing how every Leuneuwa native is tattooed,' gelatin glass plate negative, 1916-17. 12.6 x 10.1 cm. 2011.0034.0034; AMNH housing envelope.

Collections are at the heart of all museums and cultural institutions. Museums exist to care for collections and provide the public access to those collections; they hold objects in the public trust.² Given this civic responsibility, there are many steps involved in the incorporation of material into an institutional collection, from initial discussions regarding why material should be made part of the collection to the eventual generating of acquisition and catalogue records.

Of primary importance is the justification for acquisition. Objects must reflect the mission of the museum, and similarly, the museum must consider whether material fits with existing collections material.³ The availability of resources for the care of the objects must also be taken into account when adding material to a permanent collection. While the negatives in question had a physical home in the vault, the validity of their official inclusion in the collection

² 'Code of Ethics for Museums,' American Association of Museums, accessed March 27, 2011, <http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/coe.cfm>.

³ Buck and Gillmore, *Conundrums*, 2-3.

was never previously examined. The justification for this incorporation is discussed in a later section of this paper.

After the authorities involved in the collection reached consensus regarding the appropriateness of the glass negatives for inclusion in the collection, the official acquisition process began. This involved provenance research, registration documentation, record creation, object numbering, and cataloguing using ‘The Museum System’ (TMS), GEH’s collection database system.

The lengthy process was undertaken with the aim of providing both a study of the process of incorporating material into an institutional collection, as well as to establish access to unique historical material, as of yet undiscussed in related literature.

Literature Review

Martin and Osa Johnson are little known figures in present day histories of film and photography; however, during their lifetimes, they published a great variety of material, from regular reports from abroad to over a hundred *New York Times* articles.⁴ Martin Johnson authored eight books and over sixty periodical articles. Meanwhile, Osa Johnson wrote approximately ten books and around forty periodical articles. The Johnsons' books are good sources of first-hand information and description of their travels, however, there are often conflicting accounts of itineraries and incidents between the husband and wife, as well as a considerable amount of idealized exaggeration.⁵ Often hard to find, the multitudes of contemporaneous articles have been little documented, with the exception of two separate modern articles detailing the bibliographies of each Johnson.⁶

A specific account of the Johnsons' story was published in 1992. *They Married Adventure*, which Pascal Imperato co-authored with his wife Eleanor Imperato, describes in thorough and well-researched detail the lives and legacy of Martin and Osa and their films. Likely their biggest present-day fan, Imperato even co-authored a book with Osa.⁷ Despite his obvious bias in favor of the Johnsons, his work remains valuable. Sections of Imperato's book that have been particularly useful for this project include: the reconstruction of the Johnsons' Solomon Islands and Borneo itineraries; the details of the Johnsons' squabbles with the

⁴ Pascal Imperato and Eleanor Imperato, *They Married Adventure: The Wandering Lives of Martin and Osa Johnson* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992) 289.

⁵ Osa Johnson, *I Married Adventure: the Lives and Adventures of Martin and Osa Johnson* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1940).

⁶ Imperato, *Adventure*, 289.

⁷ Osa Johnson and Pascal Imperato, *Last Adventure* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1966).

American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) over the use, storage and possession of their still negatives and films; the general summary of where their materials now exist; and the extensive bibliography.⁸

Additional accounts of the Johnsons' lives have been published by the Safari Museum in Chanute, Kansas.⁹ The institution is the current resting place of much of the known Martin and Osa Johnson material, and is tasked with preserving their legacy. As such, their publications reflect a similarly biased story, but have worth for their reference to primary sources.

Further, more recent references to the Johnsons' work discuss their influence in such wide-ranging topics as wildlife film and the history of conservation efforts, depictions of women, and racism and colonial African history.¹⁰ While many of these inclusions are but brief mentions, there are several that are heavily critical of the Johnsons for their frequently displayed racism, commercial and often hurtful exploitation of both people and animals, and non-scientific methods. While this author does not dispute their claims, these essays and articles can be faulted for solely discussing the commercial films of the Johnsons; not one makes reference to the thousands upon thousands of still negatives in collections at the American Museum of Natural History, George Eastman House, or the Safari Museum.

The absence of the images from these negatives in the literature referencing the Johnsons is significant. The negative has been understood in photographic circles as the primary original that provides 'much more information than a print made from it.'¹¹ Study of the early Martin and

⁸ Imperato, *Adventure*, 194, 118, 134, 154, 206, 228-229, 289-298.

⁹ See: Mih, Stott, *Wait-A-Bit News*, etc.

¹⁰ See: Browder, Caminero-Santangelo, Chris, Doherty, Enright, Gordon, Jones, Stange, etc.

¹¹ John Szarkowski, *Ansel Adams at 100* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2003).

Osa Johnson negatives in the permanent collection at the George Eastman House will not only broaden analysis and criticism, but just may yield a very different understanding of their work.

The Johnson material was found, unaccessioned, in the collection at the George Eastman House by archivist Joe Struble. Many museum collections regularly deal with objects with such mysterious origins. While the reasons for this are many, museum managers generally fault the relatively short history of collections management. Museum documentation systems were not regularized until the early 1900s and their adoption was slow and erratic.¹²

Despite the youth of this subject area, publications abound. This particular project has relied heavily on several primary texts. *Museum Registration Methods* is in its fifth edition and is an indispensable resource for clear and thorough discussion of the many aspects of registration, from provenance research to object numbering.¹³ Given interest in the provenance of the Johnsons' material, the more specific *AAM Guide to Provenance Research*, with its clearly explained principles and thoroughly documented bibliographic resources was extremely useful, although its focus is more specific to Holocaust-era research.¹⁴ As well, the problem-based volume *Collections Conundrums* was additionally helpful for its chapter on case-studies of found-in-collections material.¹⁵

There is a wealth of publications dealing with both the theories and practice of cataloguing as well. For instance, the theoretical discussion of cataloguing using The Museum Systems database in Tasha Lutek's Master's thesis, *The Specimens Box: A case study in*

¹² Buck and Gillmore, *Conundrums*, 5.

¹³ Rebecca Buck and Jean Allman Gillmore, *Museum Registration Methods Fifth Edition* (Washington D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2010).

¹⁴ Nancy Yeide, Konstantin Akinsha and Amy Walsh, *The AAM Guide to Provenance Research* (Washington D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2001).

¹⁵ Buck and Gillmore, *Conundrums*, 17, 37-48.

cataloguing at George Eastman House, was of interest for its discussion of a specific case at GEH and for its interpretation of cataloguing theory. In terms of practical resources, however, neither the standard MARC or AACR2 instructions were applicable to this particular project, however, much use was made of thesauri such as the Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names. Additionally essential was the GEH Department of Photographs TMS Cataloguing Style Manual, generated specifically for and by the museum staff.

For issues of preservation and object care, *Photographs of the Past* served as a brief, process-specific reference. Additionally helpful for specific guidelines was the Library of Congress informational site ‘Care, Handling, and Storage of Photographs.’

Generally, the literature discussing such found and un-accessioned material emphasizes the importance of research into issues of provenance, and subsequent accession for the purposes of care and access.¹⁶ Indeed, the Johnsons material was ripe for that process, consequently providing for a more comprehensive study of their context and work.

¹⁶ See: Buck and Gillmore, Burcaw, Fahy, Lord and Lord, and Simmons, etc.

Biography

Martin Elmer Johnson was born October 9, 1884 in Rockford, Illinois to John Alfred Johnson and Lucinda Constant Johnson.¹⁷ He spent his fairly typical childhood in Lincoln, Kansas, getting into mischief with his friends, and helping his father in his variety store. It was through his father's franchise to sell Eastman-Kodak products that Martin first encountered photography; his immediate enthusiasm was such that his father built a darkroom in the shop for Martin.

While Martin's father hoped to have his son join him in business, Martin suffered from considerable wanderlust. There are many divergent accounts of his early travels; however, the most significant was his adventure with author Jack London aboard his custom-built ship, the *Snark*.¹⁸ After reading about Jack London's intended trip in *Woman's Home Companion*, Martin, a sincere fan of London's, immediately wrote to the author, asking if the boat could use an extra hand. His letter struck a chord with Jack and his wife Charmian, and Martin joined the crew as the cook, though he later took on other roles. While the trip suffered a plethora of set-backs related to both flaws in the boat and difficulties with the crew, Martin and Jack eventually made it across the Pacific to Hawaii, and on to Polynesia, New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), and the Solomon Islands. Both Martin and Jack, however, became seriously ill during their time in the Solomons and were forced to abandon their original itinerary to recover in hospitals in Sydney,

¹⁷ The biographies in this paper synthesize information gathered from the various sources discussed in the literature survey; however, Pascal Imperato's account was the main source used.

¹⁸ Imperato, *Adventure*, 32-50.

Australia. The abrupt end to the trip was a great disappointment to Martin, and its failure was the inspiration for his first trip with Osa Johnson in 1917.

Martin met Osa after his return to Kansas, while he was performing at his custom-built theatre, the *Snark*. Exploiting the Londons' name, and using his lantern slides from the *Snark* voyage, Martin concocted a vaudevillian travelogue lecture that was wildly popular, and included the singing styles of a young Gail Perigo. Gail was the best friend of Osa Leighty (later Johnson).

Born on March 14, 1894 to William Sherman Leighty and Belle Leighty, Osa grew up in the small town of Chanute, Kansas, aspiring to a traditional family and domestic life. This was not to be, however. Martin and Osa eloped on May 15, 1910, one day after Osa substituted for Gail in Martin's lecture. Despite anger from both sets of parents, Martin and Osa officially declared their partnership on the stage of the *Snark* theatre on May 18, 1910. The duo re-formulated Martin's travelogues, traveling, performing and publishing together across the United States, trying to save money to travel abroad.

By 1917, the Johnsons had secured the funds required, and set about making plans to film in the South Pacific. It is from this first trip that the negatives under analysis derive. Shot on either the Johnsons' five-seven or four-by-five Graflex, the Eastman-Kodak dry plate glass negatives reflect their itinerary. They travelled on the steamer, the *Sonoma*, stopping first in Hawaii and American Samoa, and then Sydney. The processing of much of the Johnsons' film from this trip was performed in Sydney by Ernest Higgins.

From Sydney, the Johnsons made their first stop in the Solomon Islands at Tulagi, the administrative capital of the Solomons. Once there, they made the acquaintance of Harold

Markham, a trader depicted in many of the Johnsons' negatives. Markham helped the couple on to their next destination: the government station of Auki, on the island of Malaita, where they naively hoped to get footage of cannibal feasts. William Robert Bell, the colonial official in charge of Malaita, hosted the Johnsons for their month-long stay, and guided their visits to various island villages.



Fig. 2. Johnson, Martin & Osa, 'Markham and his boat's crew,' gelatin glass plate negative, 1916-17. 10.1 x 12.6 cm.
2011.0034.0121

They did not film any of the hoped-for cannibalistic activity, and in August, were taken by Markham to Leuneuwa Island (also known as Luanguia) in the Ontong Java Atoll for a week

to witness the annual coconut harvest.¹⁹ After this brief trip, the Johnsons stopped back at Tulagi, before spending another week on the island of Guadalcanal. This was followed by a series of similarly short jaunts to Makira (San Cristobal), Santa Ana, and the small island Ugi, before returning to Sydney in October of 1917 with over 20,000 feet of motion picture film and several hundred glass negatives.

Their next venture found the couple leaving Sydney for Vila, the capital of New Hebrides, with a stop-over in Noumea, on New Caledonia. This trip included visits to Vao and Malekula via Espiritu Santo. While on Malekula, Martin and Osa attempted to visit the north island tribe of the Big Nambas at their village, Tenmarou. The Big Nambas' chief, Nihapat, refused to let the visitors leave until a British gunboat was sighted.²⁰ Due to this slightly hostile interaction, Martin was prohibited from visiting Tenmarou again, and in December, with an additional 20,000 feet of motion picture film and even more negatives, the couple set sail for San Francisco, via Sydney.

This first trip resulted in the release of the entertainment feature, *Among the Cannibal Isles of the South Pacific*. The film received ardently positive reviews, despite the misinformation represented throughout its hour-long running time. Meanwhile, the couple's many still photographs were put in storage. The success of the film, related short releases and

¹⁹ For a map of the Johnsons' itineraries, see Imperato, *Adventure*, 66, 120. For historical place names, their meanings, and contemporary names, see Adrian Room, *Placenames of the world: origins and meanings of the names for 6,600 countries, cities, territories, natural features and historic sites* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006), and the Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names.

²⁰ Nihapat is the name used by Pascal Imperato. In the inscriptions on the envelope housings of the Johnson negatives at GEH, the name Nagapate is used, as is the alternate spelling Nagatapate. Also, the term 'Devil-Devil' is used for the Big Nambas, who are also described in the Johnsons' writings as the Big Numbers. See Imperato, *Adventure*, 90.

publications provided ample funding for the Johnsons' return trip to Malekula to film the Big Nambas.

In April of 1919, the couple again set sail for Sydney. This trip aimed solely to secure further footage of the Big Nambas on Malekula. After stops in Noumea, New Caledonia and Vao, the Johnsons landed on Malekula, in Tenmarou Bay. Martin and Osa immediately set up a projector and showed the Big Nambas *Among the Cannibal Isles of the South Pacific*. This scene was then recorded and described as 'cannibals at the movies,' although Martin never filmed or described any cannibalistic behavior in Tenmarou. Still looking for such entertaining footage, the Johnsons fruitlessly visited villages all over Malekula, including Port Sandwich, Lambumbu Bay, and the islands of Tomman and Api, before returning to Vao, Vila, New Hebrides and Espiritu Santo.²¹ Upon their return to Sydney, the couple had generated over a thousand still negatives, and over 25,000 feet of motion picture film. The forty 5x7 inch negatives derive from this group. Meanwhile in 1921, the Johnsons made the short film *Head Hunters of the South Seas*, based on Nihapat, the chief of the Big Nambas.

It was during their return to Australia that the directors of the Martin Johnson Film Company suggested the Johnsons redirect their cameras and focus on wildlife pictures. Their first trip emphasizing animals in the wild was to be shot in British North Borneo (now Sabah, East Malaysia). This trip was considered by Martin as highly unsuccessful due to difficult weather and climate issues, however, the footage shot was eventually released as the heavily promoted and highly commercially successful *Jungle Adventures*.

²¹ Martin attributed cannibalism to the Tomman people, though this description of the pictured activities was a decision made after the Johnsons' return to Australia. The photographs included in the Johnson material at GEH depict cured heads, not any cannibalistic activity. See Imperato, *Adventure*, 83.

Due to the fame achieved through the Johnsons' first several pictures, Martin Johnson was invited to become a member of the Explorers Club in 1921. It was through this association that Martin and Osa came to befriend Carl Akeley of the American Museum of Natural History. Because of concerns amongst natural history scientists for the survival of African wildlife, Akeley's goal during this time was the creation of an African Hall at the New York City museum. Coincidentally, Martin and Osa had interests in traveling to Africa for their next film. Through this overlapping interest and their friendship with Akeley, the Johnsons managed to both receive the support of the AMNH for their venture.

Akeley travelled with the Johnsons on their first African filming adventure in East Africa, encouraging 'authentic' and 'scientific' images of wildlife in their natural state. Despite plentiful training and help from everyone from naturalist Arthur Blayney Percival to hunter John Walsh, the Johnsons had great difficulty in securing satisfying footage. Eventually, they overcame their technical issues, exploring and photographing widely for a year and a half. By late 1922, they had shot over 100,000 feet of motion picture film and several hundred still photographs, of which many are accessioned in the permanent collection at George Eastman House.

Upon their return to the States, the couple's first African feature film, *Trailing African Wild Animals* was released to rave reviews and record attendance.²² The Akeley-advocated new 'scientific' approach garnered much respect, as did Osa's on-screen interactions with lions and rhinos. The plentiful praise garnered adequate financial support for further African filming expeditions. The duo left for Africa again in 1924. Their four year stay resulted in the films *Martin's Safari*, *Osa's Four Years in Paradise*, *Simba: King of the Beasts*, and *Congorilla*, as

²² Imperato, *Adventure*, 111-112.

well as a few thousand more still negatives. A visit during this time from George Eastman spawned the Johnsons' first sound film: *Across the World with Mr. and Mrs. Johnson*. These latter films are the better-known of the Johnsons' work, however, as the style and subject matter veered away from the scientific aims of the American Museum of Natural History, the museum's support was withdrawn during this period.

Unburdened by the demands of the academics at AMNH, the Johnsons returned to their entertainment routes, purchasing airplanes for another novel way of viewing Africa. *Baboona*, released in 1935, was generated from this aerial footage. One of their planes, 'The Spirit of Africa and Borneo,' accompanied the couple on their last trip to British North Borneo, which resulted in the film *Borneo*.

This was their last adventure together; Martin died in a plane crash on their way home. Osa lived until 1953, capitalizing on her earlier fame through the publication of children's stories and traveling lectures.

Osa left her entire estate to her mother, Belle Leighty. Belle was instrumental in the creation of the Martin and Osa Johnson Safari Museum in Chanute, Kansas, donating her daughter's films, photographs, manuscripts, articles, personal belongings and books to their collections. The museum was created in 1961 to celebrate the Johnsons and preserve material related to their adventures, and continues to promote the couple's legacy.²³

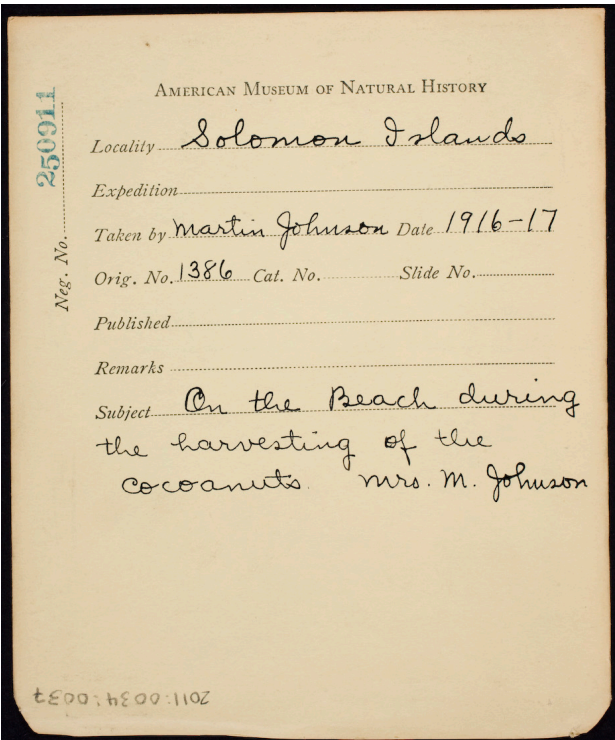
²³ 'The Martin and Osa Safari Museum,' accessed March 27, 2011, <http://www.safarimuseum.com/>.

Process

As briefly mentioned, the project undertaken involved numerous steps, including the inventory, accessioning, numbering and cataloguing of the individual objects, as well as investigation into issues of provenance.

A preliminary inventory was required from the beginning of the process, in order to determine the size and scope of the collection. This initial count and description was documented in an Excel spreadsheet and included fields for medium, date, author, title, description, dimensions and inscriptions. The detailed nature of the spreadsheet aimed to facilitate efficient cataloguing, and was modeled on the inventory template created by Jamie Allen, Assistant Curator, and used by the Department of Photographs.

This inventory was important for all of the ensuing steps, and of particular importance to the investigation of the provenance of the material. In order to accurately describe the ownership history of the negatives in question, it was important to know when and where the glass plates were taken. Fortunately, the majority of the negatives were still housed in American Museum of Natural History sleeves. Given the described relationship between the Johnsons and the AMNH, the envelopes likely dated to



250911
Neg. No.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Locality... *Solomon Islands*

Expedition...

Taken by... *Martin Johnson* Date... *1916-17*

Orig. No. *1386* Cat. No. Slide No.

Published...

Remarks...

Subject... *On the Beach during the harvesting of the coconuts Mrs. M. Johnson*

2011:0034:0037

Fig. 3. AMNH housing for object 2011:0034:0037

after their 1921 agreement. The inscriptions on the envelopes, likely written by the Johnsons, provided a wealth of information regarding authorship, subject matter and dates.²⁴

The AMNH markings on the sleeves, however, were also the impetus for research into the ownership of the negatives. This investigation included the inspection of acquisition records in the Department of Photographs, the Eastman Legacy collection archives, the GEH library, and the Registrar's Office. Information regarding any related constituents, including Eastman-Kodak, George Eastman, Carl Akeley, AMNH, Belle Leighty, the Safari Museum, Clark Getts (Osa's second husband), and of course, Martin and Osa Johnson was reviewed. Acquisition documents associated with previously accessioned Johnson material were also studied. Writings about the Johnsons were analyzed for any additional insights. All of the accumulated information was then synthesized and described in the provenance description and timeline included in the registration files, and summarized in a later section of this paper.

Though the research performed did not provide a clear indication of ownership, the authorities involved in the collection, including the Department of Photographs Curator Alison Nordström, Assistant Curator Jamie Allen, Archivist Joe Struble, and Registrar Wataru Okada, decided the material qualified for accessioning. The decision, as discussed in other sections of this paper, was based on several factors, including the several decades of collections care already furnished on the negatives. Additionally of importance in the accessioning decision was the congruence between the material in question and existing collections material. GEH's collections database lists over 9000 photographic objects related to the Johnsons in its permanent collections. While there are a few early lantern slides, the majority of these are glass plate

²⁴ The envelopes, as pictured in figure 1 and 3, appear to have inscriptions from the Johnsons. See later discussion in note 31 for attribution.

negatives from their later trips to East Africa, the Belgian Congo and the Johnsons' last trip to Borneo. Lastly, the motion picture collection also boasts an early print of the Johnsons' last film, *Borneo*. Given such extensive holdings, the addition of this early material was deemed necessary, logical, and in accordance both with the mission of the museum and precedents set by found-in-collections case studies, and the principles and guidelines suggested by the American Association of Museums, of which GEH is a member.²⁵

After this consensus was reached, the material was assigned accession numbers by this author, and the Registrar, Wataru Okada. GEH uses the common four digit notation recommended by Rebecca Buck in the *AAM Museum Registration Manual*.²⁶ New numbers are assigned in a lot that is generally defined through acquisition at the same time from the same source. In the Registrar's office, the status of each of the created records is tracked in a colour-coded spreadsheet. Each new entry is described with fields noting object status, acquisition method, object type, the number allocation date, classification, object count and description. Once the number is assigned on the spreadsheet, a lot level record is created in 'The Museum System,' the institution's collections management database. The lot level record describes the total number of objects in the acquisition, and includes all of the information recorded in the registration spreadsheet, as well as a provenance credit line.

²⁵ Yeide, Akinsha, and Walsh, *Provenance*, 9-17.

²⁶ Buck and Gillmore, *Registration*, 206-208.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1										
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5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										
15										

Year #	Lot #	Sub #	Dept.	Acq. Source	Acq. Method	Descriptions	Received Date	Count
2011	0001	0001-5	PH	People's Republic of China	Gift	0001-2: [Chopsticks in Red Square] 0003-5: [Panda in Red Square]	11/11/11	5
2011	0002	0001-6	PH	People's Republic of China	Gift	0001-3: [Bamboo in Small Red Square] 0004-6: [Bicycle in Small Red Square]	11/11/11	6
2011	0003	0001-6	PH	People's Republic of China	Gift	0001-3: [Bicycle in Green Circle] 0004-6: [Chopsticks in Green Circle]	11/11/11	6
2011	0004	0001-7	PH	People's Republic of China	Gift	0001-4: [Bicycle in Lime Green Octagon] 0005: [Jade in Lime Green Octagon] 0006-7: [Panda in Lime Green Octagon]	11/11/11	7
2011	0005	0001-9	PH	People's Republic of China	Gift	0001-4: [Bamboo in Yellow Horizontal Bar] 0005-8: [Chopsticks in Yellow Horizontal Bar] 0009: [Dragon in Yellow Horizontal Bar]	11/11/11	9
2011	0006	0001-6	PH	People's Republic of China	Gift	0001-3: [Dragon in Tall Blue Triangle] 0004-6: [Jade in Tall Blue Triangle]	11/11/11	6
2011	0007	0001-8	PH	People's Republic of China	Gift	0001-4: [Bamboo in Chubby Blue Triangle] 0005-8: [Panda in Chubby Blue Triangle]	11/11/11	8
2011	0008	0001					Total	47
2011	0009	0001						
2011	0010	0001						
2011	0011	0001						

Fig. 4. Sample Accession Number Tracking Spreadsheet, courtesy Wataru Okada, Registrar at GEH.

For the Martin and Osa Johnson material, two lot level records were created. Two lots were decided upon due to both the large number of objects in the collection (336), as well as because of the two distinct sizes of the material (4x5 in., and 5x7 in.). The lot level records were connected through the related tab in TMS to secure their correspondence.

Objects

File Edit Display Mode Query Report Conservation Registration Related Tools Maintenance Help

☐ Curator Approved ☐ Public Access ☐ On View ☒ Accountability ☐ Virtual Object 2 / 338

The Museum System **Photography** 2011:0034:0001-0296

Classification
Negative-Glass Plate

Period
Date: 1916-1917

Constituent(s)
Original photographer: Martin & Osa Johnson, American, active 1917 - 1937
Original photographer: Martin Johnson.

Group Information
Item (2011:0034:0001-2011:0034:0296)

Title
First trip: New Hebrides, Solomon Islands

Object Name

Medium
negative, gelatin on glass

Dimensions
Overall: 10.1 x 12.4 cm

Description
Martin and Osa Johnson:

Credit Line
Gift of Eastman Kodak Company

Frame Case Mount

Catalogue Raisonné **Portfolio/Series**

Signed

Current Location
2011:0034:0001-0296: George Eastman House, Photo Collection, NEGATIVE 08:03:2 [Mar-19-2011]

Mark(s) **Inscription(s)**

Front Card **Notes** **Documentation** **Media** **Context** **Related** **Other**

Fig. 5. Example lot level catalogue record in TMS.

The records were then furnished with information common to all of the objects. Three constituents were added to each of the records as Original Photographer: Martin & Osa Johnson (partnership); Martin Johnson (individual); and Osa Johnson (individual). These multiple constituents were all added as specific authorship for individual works remains murky due to the nature of the Johnsons' partnership and working style. Specific amendments to the constituents and roles were made during cataloguing where one of the Johnsons was pictured in the negative; this is further described in the discussion of cataloguing that follows.

Geographical places were also determined to be an important emphasis of the collection, and likely one way in which the material would be searched. New Hebrides, the Solomon Islands, and British North Borneo were consequently added in the database's "Geo place" field. For these entries in the searchable database field, the historical names employed by the Johnsons

in their inscriptions were used. Lastly, a note was made referring to the availability of the confidential provenance research in the registration files in the Registrar's Office.²⁷

The screenshot displays the 'Objects' module interface. At the top, there's a menu bar with options like File, Edit, Display Mode, Query, Report, Conservation, Registration, Related, Tools, Maintenance, and Help. Below the menu, there are checkboxes for 'Curator Approved', 'Public Access', 'On View', 'Accountability' (checked), and 'Virtual Object'. The main header shows 'The Museum System' and 'Photography' with the identifier '2011:0034:0281'. The 'Classification' dropdown is set to 'Negative-Glass Plate'. The 'Date' field is '1916-1917'. Under 'Constituent(s)', the 'Original photographer' is 'Martin & Osa Johnson, American, active 1917 - 1937'. The 'Title' is 'Girls of Tahiti'. The 'Group Information' field contains a lot number and trip details. A large placeholder box on the right says 'Image Not Yet Available'. Below this, there's a 'Geography Xrefs' table with columns for Type, Value, Path, and Remarks. The 'Geography' section lists 'Geo Place' entries: 'New Hebrides', 'Solomon Islands', and 'Tahiti, French Polynesia'. On the right, there are fields for 'Style', 'Dynasty', 'Reign', 'Movement', and 'School'. At the bottom, there are tabs for 'Front Card', 'Notes', 'Documentation', 'Media', 'Context', 'Related', and 'Other'.

Fig. 6. Geo place field in the Objects module of an individual catalogue record in TMS.

After completing the descriptions in the general lot level records, the records were split into individual object records by this student and James Bellucci of the Registrar's office. This enabled the next step: the simultaneous numbering and cataloguing of the individual glass negatives. Numbering proceeded according to the order in which the negatives were stored as the order roughly corresponded to a numbering system inscribed on the negative sleeves. While this was the system selected, some thought was given to attempting to re-order the negatives into

²⁷ The provenance summary was not made available in a public space due to the confidential nature of such material.

a chronological sequence according to the Johnsons' itineraries. This was, however, determined to be impossible given the lack of specific dates in inscriptions on the negatives, and the multiple visits the couple made to each of their destinations. The format for numbering followed the guidelines suggested by Archivist Joe Struble; full accession numbers were recorded in pencil on the lower right hand corner of each envelope.²⁸

The next step in this process was the cataloguing of the material. Cataloguing refers to the description of the individual objects according to standards, and aims to facilitate public access to the material.²⁹

The screenshot displays the TMS (The Museum System) interface for an object record. The top navigation bar includes 'Objects' and various menu options like 'File', 'Edit', 'Display Mode', 'Query', 'Report', 'Conservation', 'Registration', 'Related', 'Tools', 'Maintenance', and 'Help'. Below this, there are checkboxes for 'Curator Approved', 'Public Access', 'On View', 'Accountability', and 'Virtual Object'. The main header shows 'The Museum System' logo, the object type 'Photography', and the accession number '2011:0034:0001'. The record is for a 'Negative-Glass Plate' with a 'Period' of '1916-1917' and a 'Date' of '1916-1917'. The 'Constituent(s)' field lists 'Original photographer: Martin & Osa Johnson, American, active 1917 - 1937' and 'Subject of photograph: Osa Johnson.'. The 'Group Information' field contains 'Lot 2011:0034:0001-0296, Martin & Osa Johnson, First trip: New Hebrides, Solomon Islands, 1916-1917 (2011:0034:0001-2011:0034:0296)'. The 'Title' field is 'Our Party' and the 'Object Name' is empty. The 'Medium' is 'negative, gelatin on glass' and the 'Dimensions' are 'Overall: 10.1 x 12.4 cm'. The 'Description' is 'The expedition party including Martin and Osa Johnson and' and the 'Credit Line' is 'Gift of Eastman Kodak Company'. The 'Frame Case Mount' is empty. The 'Catalogue Raisonné' and 'Portfolio/Series' fields are empty. The 'Signed' field is empty. The 'Current Location' is '2011:0034:0001: George Eastman House, Photo Collection, NEGATIVE 08:03:2 [Mar-30-2011]'. The 'Mark(s)' field is empty and the 'Inscription(s)' field is 'recto (on envelope):'. The bottom of the interface has tabs for 'Front Card', 'Notes', 'Documentation', 'Media', 'Context', 'Related', and 'Other'.

Fig. 7. Example catalogue record in TMS.

²⁸ Buck and Gillmore, *Registration*, 233-248. Also see Fig. 1 and 2 for an example of the numbering on the original housings.

²⁹ For a theoretical discussion of cataloguing specific to GEH, see Tasha Lutek, *The Specimens Box: a case study in cataloguing at George Eastman House*, (M.A. Diss., Ryerson University, 2010).

As previously mentioned, the cataloguing process for the Johnson material was generally guided by the GEH TMS Style Manual. However, even with the specific instructions therein, cataloguing was far from straightforward. According to the AARCII guidelines, ‘the chief source of information for graphic materials is the item itself, including any labels, etc., that are permanently affixed to the item.’³⁰ The Johnson negatives provided descriptive information through both image content and inscriptions on housing materials, however, the two sources frequently contradicted each other. For instance, the inscriptions on many of the housings attributed specific negatives to the subject depicted in the image when the negative was clearly not executed by that individual. Such a confusing situation indicates the weighty responsibility of the cataloguer. The cataloguer is required to provide a detailed, accurate, thorough, and thoughtful description of an item to facilitate the finding of material by collection users. Each conundrum of the sort described required considerable deliberation and consultation with experts for resolution. In the case of the muddled attributions, the individuals involved were Martin and Osa Johnson. When one of the pair was depicted in the negative, their individual constituent was changed from the Original Photographer role to that of Subject, and the partnership constituent of Martin & Osa Johnson remained in the role of Original Photographer to indicate their collaborative working relationship and intertwined authorship.

³⁰ Robert Maxwell, *Maxwell's Handbook for AACR2: explaining and illustrating the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2004), 209.

Constituent Assistant

Girls of Tahiti 2011:0034:0281
Four unidentified women
First trip: New Hebrides, Solomon Islands
 Martin & Osa Johnson, American, active 1917 - 1937
 Martin Johnson, American, 1884 - 1937
 Osa Johnson, American, 1894 - 1953

Martin & Osa Johnson
 American, active 1917 - 1937 Edit Constituent

Pioneer filmmakers and adventurers Martin Johnson (1884-1937)
 and his wife Osa Johnson (1894-1953) traveled to the

Constituents
 Object Related

	Role	Name	Date Range
1	Original phot...	Martin & Osa Johnson, American, active 1917 - 1937	
2	Original phot...	Martin Johnson, American, 1884 - 1937	
2	Original phot...	Osa Johnson, American, 1894 - 1953	

Add Edit Delete Close

Fig. 8. Example of the constituents attached to record 2011:0034:0281.

Constituent Assistant

Mrs. Martin Johnson and girls of Tahiti 2011:0034:0277
Osa Johnson and five unidentified women
First trip: New Hebrides, Solomon Islands
 Martin & Osa Johnson, American, active 1917 - 1937
 Martin Johnson, American, 1884 - 1937
 Osa Johnson, American, 1894 - 1953

Martin & Osa Johnson
 American, active 1917 - 1937 Edit Constituent

Pioneer filmmakers and adventurers Martin Johnson (1884-1937)
 and his wife Osa Johnson (1894-1953) traveled to the

Constituents
 Object Related

	Role	Name	Date Range
1	Original phot...	Martin & Osa Johnson, American, active 1917 - 1937	
2	Original phot...	Martin Johnson, American, 1884 - 1937	
2	Subject of ph...	Osa Johnson, American, 1894 - 1953	

Add Edit Delete Close

Fig. 9. Example of the constituents attached to record 2011:0034:0277.



Fig. 10. Johnson, Martin & Osa, 'Devil Devil men,' gelatin glass plate negative, 1916-17, 10.1 x 12.6 cm. 2011:0034:0053 (upper); Johnson, Martin & Osa, 'Tattooing,' gelatin glass plate negative, 1916-17. 10.1 x 12.6 cm. 2011.0034.0077 (lower).

For example, for record 2011:0034:0053, *Devil-Devil men*, Martin & Osa Johnson and Osa Johnson are listed as the Original Photographers, while Martin Johnson is listed as the Subject of Photograph, as he is pictured filming unidentified men in the negative. Meanwhile, for negatives such as record 2011:0034:0077, *Tattooing*, Martin & Osa Johnson, Martin Johnson, and Osa Johnson are all listed as Original Photographer as neither of the pair is pictured.

Additionally problematic was the issue of titling. The wealth of information provided by the inscriptions on the housings included fields for locality, photographer, date and subject, and are in what appears to be the handwriting of Osa Johnson.³¹ During the initial survey of the Johnson material, it appeared that the subject field most accurately described the image content, and consequently was selected to be represented in TMS as the Title On Object. These phrases, however, were written before 1930 and display prejudices from that era in disrespectful and objectifying captions such as ‘A native and its home.’ Describing holdings of such culturally sensitive material is a complicated endeavor; there are ‘moral and ethical implications attached to materials that may not have been created under circumstances that would be judged ethical by today’s standards.’³² Those caring for such collections have to balance moral obligations to respect the communities represented in such material, as well as the needs of the scholars, museum professionals and other users of the collection.

While overarching museum policies can aid in establishing protocol for the ethical handling of culturally sensitive materials, in the case of the Johnson material, specific consideration was given to employing descriptive titles instead of the photographer’s subject.

³¹ Attribution by this author based on reproduced samples of correspondence; see resources on the Martin and Osa Johnson Safari Museum website (<http://www.safarimuseum.com/>).

³² Kristina Laszlo, ‘Ethnographic Archival Records and Cultural Property,’ *Archivaria* 61, 2006, 300.

This, in light of the scholarship reviewed, was deemed historical misrepresentation.³³ Martin and Osa Johnson were part of a cultural context in which ideas of race were marked by hierarchy and social Darwinism.³⁴ These attitudes are reflected in their subject descriptions, which are consequently an important contextual component of the material and were thus used as titles. This inclusion follows precedents set both at GEH with standard cataloging practice in the Eastman Legacy Collection, as well as by institutions such as the National Museum of the American Indian, whose ‘records include their original catalog cards [which may] include tribal names and terminology considered unacceptable or offensive today but ... have been included to illustrate the information that originally accompanied the objects.’³⁵ With the Johnson material, in order to provide a culturally respectful option as well, an additional descriptive alternate title was included.³⁶

For example, record 2011:0034:0036 has the inscribed title, ‘In the heart of the village showing representative natives,’ in the TMS field for Title on Object. The Descriptive Title ‘Unidentified men and Martin Johnson in a village,’ was added to the record as a more culturally sensitive alternative.

³³ Historical attitudes have been deemed an important contextual element to historical objects, and often are considered opportunities for engagement and learning; see Keith C. Barton and Linda S. Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers, 2004).

³⁴ For a discussion of these ideas, see Peter Dickens, *Social Darwinism: linking evolutionary thought to social theory*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2000), and Howard Winant, ‘Race and Race Theory,’ *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 169-185. For a description of the Johnsons’ relationship to these ideas, see Imperato, *Adventure*, 41, 164, 173.

³⁵ National Museum of the American Indian, accessed April 15, 2011, <http://www.americanindian.si.edu/searchcollections/home.aspx>.

³⁶ Precedents for culturally sensitive language use in cataloguing have not yet been standardized; language conventions used in generating alternate titles for this project derived from standard controlled vocabularies (see bibliography). Future work must be done to improve standards of culturally sensitive description.

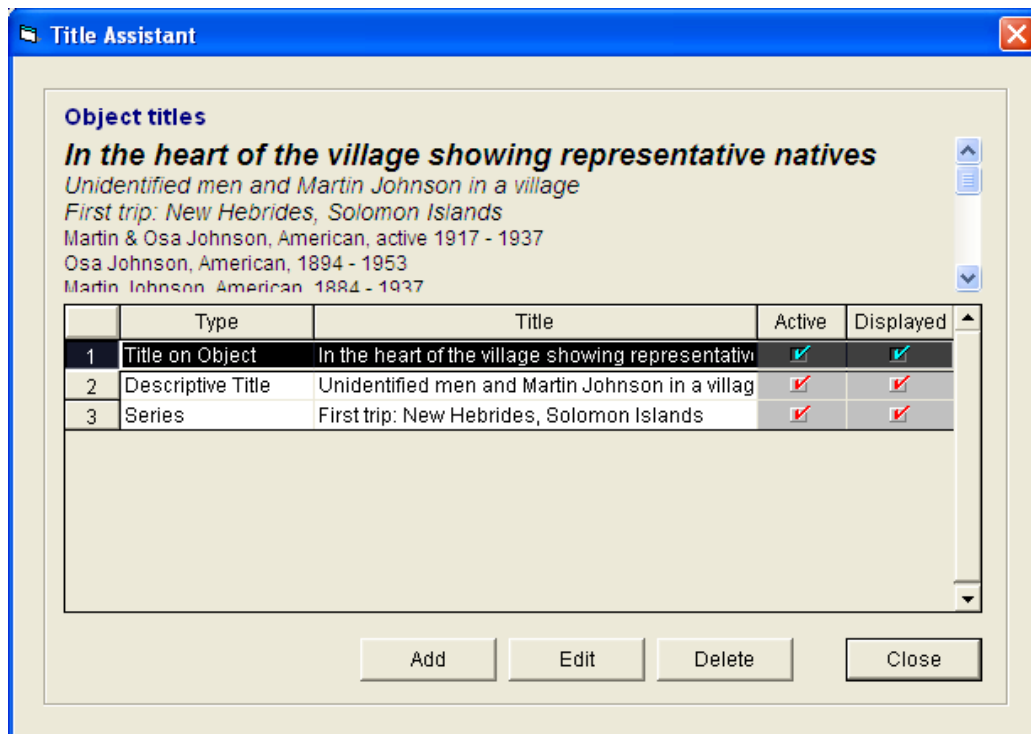


Fig. 11. Example of the titles associated with record 2011:0034:0036.

Final components of the project focused on the preservation of the material. The negatives will continue to be stored in the Department of Photographs' secure permanent collections vault, at a recommended relative humidity between 30 and 40% and at a temperature well below 18° Celcius.³⁷ The negatives are vertically stored in protective envelopes, and broken negatives were reinforced using custom-cut 4-ply board.³⁸ Given additional time and resources, further improvements to the housings for the broken negatives would be preferable.

Lastly, with the help of Staff Photographer Barbara Galasso, digital surrogates were generated to minimize object handling.

³⁷ Bertrand Lavedrine, *Photographs of the Past: process and preservation*, (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 2009), 283.

³⁸ At the suggestion of Archivist Joe Struble and according to Mark Roosa, *Care, Handling and Storage of Photographs*, (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1992).

Provenance Summary:

The Johnson material included in the permanent collections at GEH prior to this project numbered over eight thousand objects, the majority of which are glass plate negatives. These negatives derive from the couple's various African trips, and their last trip to Borneo. The material under analysis had been stored with this accessioned material and cared for in the same manner.

The question of why this material had not been accessioned was raised by Archivist Joe Struble, and remains an interesting one. Investigation, conducted as previously described, found little to answer that query. As generally acknowledged, Martin and Osa Johnson stored their photographic material at Eastman Kodak during their lifetimes for ease of printing. Promised as collateral for the museum's support, the rights to this material was to be transferred to the American Museum of Natural History upon the Johnsons' deaths. The alliance between the museum and the Johnsons dissolved in the 1930s however, and while the specifics of the original agreement are unknown, AMNH did not pursue the collection.

Additionally, despite ample use of the Johnsons' material through publication and exhibition at GEH, the sole claim to the material over the past seventy years was made by the Martin and Osa Johnson Safari Museum of Chanute, Kansas. Their demands were legally unfounded, however, and resolved amicably.

Finally, there are several suggestions in early museum correspondence, as well as in a published *Image* article, that GEH purchased the Johnson material. Given such evidence, the

negatives in question were determined to be part of the Department of Photographs permanent collection, and were consequently accessioned, catalogued, and formally registered.



Fig. 12. Poster for *Cannibals of the South Seas*, from the Safari Museum.

Analysis

The justification for this project is two-fold, relating both to the general role of museums and to the significance of the specific material. According to the AAM *Manual of Museum Registration*, ‘the overall purpose of most museums is to collect, preserve, and exhibit materials of artistic, historical, archaeological, and natural significance for the benefit of the public.’³⁹

As described, the Johnson material has been treated as collection material; it had been stored in a secure, climate-controlled area with the rest of the permanent collections. It had not, however, been made accessible through registration and cataloguing. Given the described obligations and accepted justification for inclusion in the collection, the museum was ethically obliged to follow through with registration and cataloguing to enable public access to the Johnson material.

The project undertaken served as a case study of this process at the George Eastman House. With the aim of experiencing the many steps taken through various departments in the museum, the execution of the project revealed the many checks and balances incorporated into the system of acquisition and collections care.

Multiple departments are involved with varying authority to ensure integrity and provide specific expertise from divergent perspectives with the goal of thoughtful and thorough procedure. The curator, the archivist, the registrar, and board of trustees all communicate to that end. These roles and their definition vary widely from institution to institution, however, generally, the curator is responsible for the intellectual and aesthetic aspects of the collection, while the archivist takes on collections care, the registrar for issues of documentation and

³⁹ Buck and Gillmore, *Museum Registration*, 14.

record-creation, and the board serves as an outside authority.⁴⁰ The ideal result of these distinct responsibilities is clear and accountable practice. Unfortunately, and as is the case in most realities, the actual difficulties of such an interwoven system are many. Communication is often faulty, and the many people and steps involved frequently dictate slow and laborious progress. Despite the practical problems of such a structure, the effort is not in vain; the system of checks and balances is required to fulfill the moral obligations of the museum.⁴¹

The overarching purpose of the entire procedure, however, is the availability of material to the public. The Johnson material required such access; in the survey of related literature, very little mention was made of their still photography. Collections of their work at the American Museum of Natural History and the Safari Museum are uncatalogued and largely unavailable.⁴² Yet, there is plentiful contemporary academic and popular interest in the Johnsons. Their paths have been re-traced by contemporary travelers; they are discussed for the legacy of their representations of culture, geography and travel; they serve as the inspiration for poetry and adventure, and as fodder for arguments about such wide-ranging topics as commercial sponsorship to the evolution of the wildlife film.⁴³ Thus, the potential implications of the negatives involved in this project are many.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the roles of museum professionals, see George Ellis Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1997).

⁴¹ 'Code of Ethics for Museums,' American Association of Museums, accessed March 27, 2011, <http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/ethics/coe.cfm>.

⁴² Gregory August Rami, Special Collections and Reference Librarian, American Museum of Natural History, e-mail message to author, March 21, 2011.

⁴³ For further details on where the Johnsons have been mentioned in contemporary research and literature, please refer to the literature review and bibliography of this paper. Of particular interest are the various academic dissertations that rely on the Johnsons; see Kelly Enright's argument about the importance of the Johnsons' films in establishing popular ideas of the jungle as a 'wild' and 'unspoiled' place (Kelly Enright, 'Maximum of Wilderness,' PhD Diss., Rutgers University, 2009.)

Of particular interest are the implied complications the Johnson negatives will generate in regards to the photographic histories of the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Sabah. The negatives present an instance of culture contact, a situation rife with potential interpretations.⁴⁴ Indeed, though beyond the scope of this thesis project, a comparative analysis of visual representations of these locations, both photographic and otherwise, as well as indigenously-authored and otherwise, would be of tantamount interest.⁴⁵

Such work would have the potential to involve a variety of disciplines, with the hopeful result of engaging the communities depicted. Projects such as that of Project Naming, as well as the finding aid for Alaska Natives on Film Identification, provide templates that challenge past stereotypes and establish agency for those subjects pictured. For the former initiative, Library and Archives Canada and the Inuit are working jointly on Project Naming to improve descriptions of their photographic



Fig. 13. Bernatzik, Hugo, 'A Motu Kundu Drummer preparing to enter the line of dancers,' from *Bernatzik: South Pacific*, 2002, 207.

⁴⁴ Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone,' *Profession* 91 (1991): 33-40.

⁴⁵ Hugo Bernatzik, an Austrian ethnographer, photographed in the Solomon Islands in the 1930's. His work is markedly divergent from that of the Johnsons and has been the focus of recent scholarship; see Hugo Bernatzik, *Bernatzik: South Pacific* (Milan: 5 Continents, 2002).

holdings related to indigenous people through the on-line input of communities throughout the world.⁴⁶

With the help of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Alaska Natives on Film project ‘incorporated elders in comprehensive identification of villages and people represented in more than 1100 still-frame photographs captured from film, and made VHS copies and still print copies available to family members identified during the project.’⁴⁷ Such work strives to acknowledge those on the other side of the lens, an ambition previously not possible with the Johnson material that will hopefully become a necessary responsibility demanded by the access brought about by the project described in this paper.

Again beyond the scope of this project, but of potential pertinence, would be the specific analysis of the Johnson negatives as a cohesive group of objects, as well as in the context of the couple’s films.⁴⁸ Such a study would present a more comprehensive understanding of the trajectory of the duo’s particular working methods, general attitudes and overarching significance.

These described academic investigations are only two possible directions for extrapolations to be made based on the Johnsons’ still photography material. Given the access provided by this project, the possibilities for engagement with the Johnson material are indeed

⁴⁶ David A. Smith, ‘From Nunavut to Micronesia: Feedback and Description, Visual Repatriation and Online Photographs of Indigenous Peoples,’ *Partnership: the Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 3 (2008): 330-349.

⁴⁷ ‘Finding Aid for Alaska Natives on Film Identification,’ University of Alaska, Fairbanks, accessed March 27, 2011, <http://library.uaf.edu/alaska-natives-film-project>.

⁴⁸ Work of this sort would look to visual and material culture studies; for background see: Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999); and Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: an introduction to visual culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and of more specific relevance to this paper, Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: exchange, material culture, and colonialism in the Pacific* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1991).

wide-ranging, at the same time, however, the project has not been without potential improvements.

The project under analysis was, as mentioned, an experiential case study of the process of registration and cataloguing of material in the museum context. Much was learned in the execution of this procedure, and as is often the case, much would be changed in a second attempt.

One such re-consideration derives from the catalogue records generated through this project. The records stand in as a public description of the material, and for the purposes of this project, are complete. However, cataloguing is an interminable process; research, standards and practice are perpetually evolving to add and alter the established records.⁴⁹ Over the course of this project, much research specifically about the Johnsons was accomplished, however, in re-visiting the catalogue records, it was evident that increased information pertaining to the histories of the cultures depicted in the negatives would be helpful.

While there are a number of such improvements that would preferably be made given additional time and resources, this thesis project achieved its goal of establishing formal registration and comprehensive, item-level catalogue records for the over three hundred Martin and Osa Johnson negatives in the permanent collection at GEH. The access that this process enables will surely lead to use and subsequent investigation of and engagement with this unique historical material.

⁴⁹ Lutek, *Specimens*.

Appendix I

Sample Catalogue Records:

2011:0035:0005

Classification: Negative

Original photographer: Martin & Osa Johnson

Original photographer: Martin Johnson

Subject of photograph: Osa Johnson

Donor: Eastman Kodak Company (E130)

Series: Second trip: Solomon Islands, British North Borneo (Sabah), East Africa

Title on Object: At our home in Vao

Dates: 1919-1920 1919 1920

Description: Osa Johnson in a bathing suit on the beach.

Martin and Osa Johnson: (40) 5 x 7 glass negatives from 1919-1920 from their second trip to the Solomon Islands.

Medium: negative, gelatin on glass

Dimensions: Overall: 17.8 x 12.8 cm

Inscription: recto (on envelope printed/in black ink): AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY / Locality_ New Hebrides / Expedition_ / Taken by_ Martin Johnson / Date _ 1919-1920 / Orig. No. _ 102 / Cat. No. _ / Slide No. _ / Published _ / Remarks _ / Subject _ At our home in Vao / Neg. No. _ 108092

(pencil): 113 (on negative in white ink): 102 (on negative in black ink): 108092

Subject:

at beach Authorities\Attributes\Objects\GEH\Subject\people\

woman Authorities\Attributes\Objects\GEH\Subject\portrait\

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2011-03-31

2011:0034:0294

Classification: Negative

Original photographer: Martin Johnson

Original photographer: Martin & Osa Johnson

Subject of photograph: Osa Johnson

Donor: Eastman Kodak Company (E130)

Series: First trip: New Hebrides, Solomon Islands

Title on Object: Aboard the Sonoma with Captain Trask

Dates: 1916-1917 1916 1917

Description: Osa Johnson standing with Captain Trask on the upper deck of the Sonoma, Hawaiian Islands.

Martin and Osa Johnson: (296) 4 x 5 glass negatives from 1916-1917, their first trip to the Solomon Islands.

Medium: negative, gelatin on glass

Dimensions: Overall: 12.6 x 10.1 cm

Inscription: recto (on envelope printed/in black ink/stamped in blue ink): AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY / Locality_ Hawaii Islands / Expedition_ / Taken by_ Martin Johnson / Date _ 1916-17 / Orig. No. _ 1046 / Cat. No. _ / Slide No. _ / Published _ / Remarks _ / Subject _ Aboard the Sonoma with Captain Trask / Neg. No. _ 250571 / not cataloged

(on negative in white ink): 1046 (on negative in black ink): 250571

Subject:

man & woman Authorities\Attributes\Objects\GEH\Subject\portrait\

ship's deck Authorities\Attributes\Objects\GEH\Subject\study\

RU11-Ko

2011-05-04

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