

1-1-2012

# Finding Wolff: Intellectually Arranging the Werner Wolff Fonds at the Ryerson Image Centre

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FINDING WOLFF:  
INTELLECTUALLY ARRANGING  
THE WERNER WOLFF FONDS  
AT THE RYERSON IMAGE CENTRE

by  
Sara L. Manco, BA, Kansas State University, 2010

An applied thesis project  
presented to Ryerson University and George Eastman House

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, 2012  
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Sara Manco

Finding Wolff:  
Intellectually arranging the Werner Wolff *fonds*  
at the Ryerson Image Centre

Master of Arts, 2012  
Sara L. Manco  
Photographic Preservation and Collections Management  
Ryerson University/George Eastman House

## **Abstract**

This thesis presents the results of an applied project in Collections Management, comprising the intellectual arrangement of the Werner Wolff *fonds* at the Ryerson Image Centre (RIC), and the creation of a finding aid to promote public research in the collection. Wolff was a photojournalist from the late 1930s to the 1980s who amassed a collection of over 1,300 files of photographs and related materials, which his son donated to the RIC in 2009. The project revolved around the organization of the collection inventory, a necessary step before it was possible to proceed with the intellectual arrangement of the *fonds* into series and sub-series with descriptions of each as set by the Canadian standard Rules for Archival Description. This thesis describes the arrangement of the *fonds* and the decisions made along the way. It also includes a copy of the finding aid written to promote public access to the *fonds*. The conclusion outlines the future needs of the collection to finalize the processing of the *fonds*.

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis would not have been completed without the help of many people.

I would like to thank:

Steven Wolff for donating such a rich collection to the Ryerson Image Centre, and for his constant support while I pestered him with many questions.

Ben Chapnick and Franklynn Peterson, for being so willing to talk to me about Werner Wolff and the history of the Black Star Agency.

The staff at the Ryerson Image Centre, particularly Alison Skyrme and Chantal Wilson, for their gracious assistance in helping me carry out the project.

Robert Burly, my thesis adviser, for his time spent helping me perfect this project as well as his positive outlook and support.

My second reader, Mary Panzer, for taking the time to read and critique this document.

My parents, Dave and Linda, for being the best parents in the world.

My mentors, Jim Richardson and Lawrence Jackson, for their wisdom.

And last but not least, the PPCM class of 2012 for being awesome.

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## **1. Introduction**

The golden age of photojournalism in the twentieth century, generally considered to span the 1930s through the 1970s, is associated with big picture magazines such as *VU* and *Paris Match* in France and *Life* and *Look* in the United States (US). These magazines, and many others, gave generations of photographers the opportunity to make a living. Photographers found steady work by associating with photographic agencies that supplied photographic content for these magazines, as well as for advertising agencies and corporate reports. With a career spanning over fifty years, much of it at the renowned Black Star Agency, the German born photographer Werner Wolff stands out as a prolific and well respected image maker within this field.

However, Wolff's work has remained largely unknown outside the profession until the donation of his archive to the Ryerson Image Centre (RIC) by his son Steven in 2009. Ryerson acquired the Black Star Collection in 2005, taking on the responsibility for this historic collection of photojournalism and making it accessible to researchers and scholars. Wolff's collection compliments the Black Star collection, not only with the breadth of his career, but also with the ephemera that came as part of the donation. Wolff's notebooks, letters, press passes, and passports give a glimpse into the life of a working photojournalist, showing all aspects of a career spanning from World War II to the late 1980s. After retirement, Wolff worked on personal projects until his death in 2002. The photographs were left to his family, who has since entrusted the RIC with caring for the collection.

The Werner Wolff collection is one of three archives created by individual artists held in the RIC photographs collection, along with the Wendy Snyder MacNeil and Jo Spence. As RIC Director Doina Popescu stated in a recent interview about the Black Star Collection states that the centre encourages scholars and researchers to engage with the photographic objects to promote new insights into photojournalism.<sup>1</sup> This statement was directed towards the Black Star Collection, but applies to Werner Wolff's photographs as well. The depth of the Wolff *fonds*, (the technical term for a collection, such as Wolff's, within a large collection such as the RIC) with its information about the career of a single photographer) has the potential to give new insights into the Black Star Collection as a whole. In addition to photographing for Black Star, Wolff served in the U.S. Army Signal Corps, adding another layer of unique objects to the *fonds*. Photographic prints, negatives, and copies of the US Army weekly magazine *YANK*, held within the collection, give the potential for further study of photography during World War II. Wolff photographed mostly in black and white, resulting in a large number of negatives, contact sheets and prints. He was also an early

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Pitnick, "The Black Star Archive: Preserving History," B&W Magazine, no. 91, (June 2012): 38.





Illustration 1: Portrait of Werner Wolff from his service for the US Army Signal Corps during World War II. Gelatin silver print 10.16 x 12.7 cm, ca. 1944. The Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.

convert to colour, using colour transparencies from about the 1960s onwards. The Wolff *fonds* also includes many magazines and tear sheets of articles featuring his work, illustrating how Wolff's photographs were used by various publications. Coupled with his notebooks detailing his payments and expenses, the Wolff *fonds* encompasses a unique collection with the potential to aid research on and understanding of many facets of the profession of photojournalism during the years in which Wolff worked.

The project began with the goal of making the Werner Wolff *fonds* available to the public, by organizing the collection and creating a finding aid. The finding aid is a written document which explains the contents of the *fonds* and how it was organized. It also contains information on the photographer, his career, and how the objects are housed.

The Wolff collection itself was in a state of disarray at the time this thesis began. Organizing a *fonds* with over 1,300 files was an extensive project, and a necessary one, before it was possible to create a finding aid. Each file contains material related to a particular assignment carried out for a certain client. In a process called "intellectual organization," the archivist arranged files into categories. The following paper details this work as well as outlining my decisions made along the way. A literature survey reviews texts written about photographic archives as well as texts written about photojournalism in the United States. A copy of the finding aid is included as the first appendix, and example catalogue records make up another appendix. With these catalog records, RIC staff will be able to create digital records of each file and provide wider access to the *fonds* in the future. Several illustrations have also been included, showing the breadth of material in the *fonds*. In organizing this collection, I have not only begun to create access to objects that have been previously restricted, but also brought to light the career of a photographer who has remained almost unknown in the canon of photojournalism.

## **2. Literature Survey**

In organizing a collection and creating a finding aid, the examination of literature on archival management and photojournalism in the twentieth century is an essential step in the research process. The following literature survey is divided into two parts: the first examines books and articles written about intellectual organization and archival arrangement, and the second discusses texts used in conducting contextual research about Wolff's career.

### **2.1 Archival Arrangement**

To fully understand intellectual arrangement and the elements in a finding aid, one must consult guides to archival management, theoretical writings on the subject, and other finding aids on similar subjects. Since the RIC is a Canadian institution, the use of the Canadian standard Rules for Archival Description (RAD) was also important to the process.

In understanding the organization of collections within archives, *Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-to-do-it Manual* by Gregory S. Hunter is very helpful in explaining the physical arrangement of archival objects. Hunter's book addresses each step to be taken from acquisition through to digitization and breaks down intellectual arrangement into a series of easy steps applicable to archives with various types of objects. Additionally, *Photographs: Archival Care and Management* by Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler and Diane Vogt-O'Connor focuses on the special needs of photographs in archival collections. The book is an invaluable resource for a archives containing a large bodies of photographic work. However, both texts used the American standard of Encoded Archival Description (EAD) in their provided examples. As a Canadian institution, the RIC maintains the use of RAD. *Basic RAD: An Introduction to the preparation of fonds- and series- level descriptions using the Rules for Archival Description* by Jeff O'Brien is a useful resource for newcomers to Canadian archives. O'Brien's document breaks down the mammoth RAD manual into the basic elements necessary when describing and creating a finding aid for a *fonds*. This document, in addition to the complete RAD manual, were essential tools for the completion of both the arrangement and the finding aid.

Several articles written about archival management have proven useful to this project. "Minimum Standards Processing and Photographic Collections" by Anne Foster stresses the importance of establishing the minimum level of processing of a collection<sup>2</sup> as well as the importance of understanding the needs of potential researchers when creating finding aids.<sup>3</sup> The book *What Are Archives? Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: A Reader*, a compilation of keynote

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<sup>2</sup> Anne L Foster, "Minimum Standards Processing and Photograph Collections," *Archival Issues* 30, no2, (2006): 111, [http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/results/getResults.jhtml?\\_DARGS=/hww/results/results\\_common.jhtml](http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/results/getResults.jhtml?_DARGS=/hww/results/results_common.jhtml).35.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 113.

speeches delivered at a recent archives symposium in the United Kingdom, addresses the current role of archives in society. These essays bring to light contemporary issues archivists face, including the need to create finding aids that are informative and available online to make information easily accessible to the public.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, two finding aids completed by previous Photographic Preservation and Collections Management students proved to be useful models for this project. *Providing Access to the Everette Dixie Reese Prints and Negatives at George Eastman House* by Amanda Smith was a good starting point when I first began my project. Lisa Hennessey's thesis *The Mark A. Freeman Collection of World War II Photographs at the George Eastman House* has also been useful in that the contents of the Mark A. Freeman collection are similar to the Wolff *fonds*.

After conducting this research, it is evident that both intellectual arrangement and finding aids vary from institution to institution. Although structural standards, such as RAD, have been established, the intellectual arrangement and finding aid are created based on the unique needs of the collection itself as well as the needs of the institution and its researchers.

## 2.2 Contextual Research

Though Wolff was a distinguished photographer with a long career, he is not widely discussed in the published histories of the medium. Research into the history of photojournalism provides insight into the environment in which Wolff worked. *Eyes of Time: Photojournalism in America*, edited by Marianne Fulton, contains several essays on the evolution of the genre in the US. This book contains valuable information about role of photo agencies,<sup>5</sup> the impact of European photographic magazines on the US industry,<sup>6</sup> and the role of World War II correspondents.<sup>7</sup> Michael Carlebach's book *American Photojournalism Comes of Age* is the second book in a two volume series chronicling photojournalism in the US. Carlebach also dedicates chapters to war reporting<sup>8</sup> and the influence of the European illustrated press on the US publishing industry.<sup>9</sup> But, as texts focused on the general history of American photojournalism, only well known photographers are used as supporting examples. Tim N. Gidal's book *Modern Photojournalism: Origins and Evolution 1910-1933* discusses several photographers and editors responsible for the rise in photojournalism in

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<sup>4</sup> Louise Craven, ed., *What Are Archives? Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: A Reader*, (Burlington: Ashgate), 2008, 92-98.

<sup>5</sup> Marianne Fulton, ed., *Eyes Of Time: Photojournalism in America*, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 1988), 136-138.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 76-103.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Carlebach, *American Photojournalism Comes of Age*, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 99.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 190.

Germany. The author highlights the influence of Alfred Eisenstaedt and Erich Salomon, among others, on a subsequent generation of photographers who lived in America.<sup>10</sup> Wolff is part of this subsequent generation, as he worked as a lab technician developing prints from Eisenstaedt's negatives in New York City. Claude Cookman's book *American Photojournalism: Motivations and Meanings* is theoretical in tone and stresses the role of the photojournalist as a witness to history.<sup>11</sup> The introduction to Christian Caujolle and Mary Panzer's book *Things As They Are: Photojournalism since 1955* not only offers an international history of the genre but also emphasizes the need to view photographs in their original material context. Panzer reminds the reader that by studying how photographs were published, one can understand the use of images in the communication of news.<sup>12</sup> This is particularly applicable to the Wolff *fonds* as so many tear sheets and contextual information are part of the archive. All of these sources provide information on the evolution of photojournalism in mid-twentieth century America, and are relevant to scholars seeking to learn more about the time in which Wolff lived and worked.

John G. Morris' book *Get The Picture: A Personal History of Photojournalism* is not a traditional secondary historical text, but a reflection on the genre from a former picture editor of *Life* and other illustrated magazines and one-time manager of Magnum. Morris gives a glimpse of the inner workings of a large format picture magazine, giving a unique point of view on photojournalism, which is very different from the historical sources previously mentioned. Morris' book describes many of the personalities of both Wolff's colleagues and the editors for whom he photographed.

In addition to the history of American photojournalism, texts describing the role of photographers during World War II are also important. As a member of the U.S. Army Signal Corps and a photographer for *YANK* magazine, Wolff's images served a different purpose than those taken by reporters. The book *The Forgotten Front in Northern Italy: A World War II Combat Photographer's Illustrated Memoir of the Gothic Line Campaign* by Robert H. Schmidt describes the types of assignments given as well as the working conditions of Signal Corps reporters. Additionally, two books written about *YANK* magazine give an engaging look into the publication. The magazine was a weekly, created by Signal Corps officers and only distributed to men serving in the armed forces. *YANK: The Army Weekly: World War II from the Guys Who Brought you Victory* by Steve Kluger

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<sup>10</sup> Tim N. Gidal, *Modern Photojournalism: Origin and Evolution, 1910-1933*, (New York City: MacMillan Publishing Inc., 1973), 25.

<sup>11</sup> Claude Cookman, *American Photojournalism: Motivations and Meanings*, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 3.

<sup>12</sup> Caujolle, Christian and Mary Panzer, *Things As They Are: Photojournalism in Context Since 1955*, (New York: Aperture Foundation and World Press Photo, 2005), 10.



Illustration 2: An issue of YANK magazine from June 29, 1945 featuring Wolff's photographs of Mannheim, his childhood home, after the town was bombed during World War II. This issue of YANK is housed in the fonds. Photographs by Werner Wolff, the Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.

reproduces several articles highlighting key moments of the war. Though Kluger did not reproduce any of Wolff's photographs, his book provides an overall explanation of the purpose of the magazine. Art Weithas's book *Close to Glory: The Untold Stories of WWII By the GIs Who Saw and Reported the War - YANK MAGAZINE Correspondents* reprints personal letters from those on staff. This book shows the mentalities and personal feelings of those who were employed by the publication, shedding light onto the attitudes of many correspondents in similar positions as Wolff.<sup>13</sup>

In conducting this contextual research about Werner Wolff, I discovered that publications highlighting the Black Star Agency praise Wolff as a great contributor to the field of photojournalism, but he is not widely discussed outside of this circle. *Truth Needs No Ally: Inside Photojournalism* by former Black Star president Howard Chapnick provides valuable information about the agency and photojournalism as a profession. Chapnick, who reigned over Black Star for several decades, acknowledged Wolff as one of the great photographers of the agency.<sup>14</sup> This book gives insight into the inner workings of the agency for which Wolff spent most of his career, encompassing what Chapnick believes to be important traits of successful photographers. Dorothy

<sup>13</sup> For more information about YANK magazine see Appendix I on page 34 of this thesis.

<sup>14</sup> Howard Chapnick *Truth Needs No Ally: Inside Photojournalism*, (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press) 1994, 160-161.

S. Gelatt's article "Inside Black Star: Photo Agency to the World" explains the inner structure of the agency during the 1960s, a time in which Wolff was an active photographer. Gelatt states that Wolff was involved with running the lab that printed many of the agency's photographs, in addition to being a photographer.<sup>15</sup>

Hendrik Neubauer's *Black Star: 60 Years of Photojournalism* chronicles the establishment and rise of the agency, focusing more on the history and dissemination of images from the Black Star collection. Neubauer devotes several pages are devoted to Wolff's photographs of Italy during World War II,<sup>16</sup> a United Nations conference,<sup>17</sup> and a portrait of philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre.<sup>18</sup> The book *Life: The Second Decade 1946-1955* was published in conjunction with an exhibition featuring photographs that appeared on the magazines pages, and features one photograph taken by Wolff.<sup>19</sup> One of the three introductory essays states that this book and exhibition were "...a selection of the most remarkable, compelling or delightful images of that time, regardless of subject matter."<sup>20</sup> This statement places Wolff within the ranks of *Life* magazine's greats. Wolff's status is also highlighted in the conference paper *The History of Black Star Picture Agency: "Life's" European Connection* by C. Zoe Smith, which explores the origins of the Black Star agency and its relationship with *Life* magazine. The author mentions Wolff as an example, further illustrating his importance within the agency.

From these texts, it is apparent that Wolff was a very active photographer who was well respected within his circle. The contextual sources shed light on the environment in which he worked, adding deeper context to the material in the Wolff *fonds*.



Illustration 3: A double page spread of photographs by Werner Wolff in the Hendrik Neubauer's book *Black Star: 60 Years of Photojournalism*, pages 56-57. © Könemann Verlagsgesellschaft mbH and the Black Star Publishing Co. Inc,

<sup>15</sup> Dorothy S. Gelatt. "Inside Black Star: Photo Agency to the World," *Popular Photography*, March 1968, 24.

<sup>16</sup> Hendrik Neubauer, *Black Star: 60 Years of Photojournalism*, (Köln: Könemann, 1997), 46-57.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>19</sup> Cornell Capa, Ralph Graves and Doris O'Neil, *Life: The Second Decade, 1946-1955*, (Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 1984), 169.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.



### 3. Methodology

The initial task of organizing and arranging the Werner Wolff *fonds* at the RIC took hundreds of hours to complete between September 2011 and April 2012. After consulting with former RIC Gallery Registrar Alison Skyrme, I learned that the collection was donated by Werner Wolff's son, Steven, in 2009. A second small donation arrived in 2011. Since then, under the direction of staff at the RIC, several undergraduate students from the School of Image Arts have rehoused and inventoried the collection by entering data onto an Excel spreadsheet.

The material was divided into files, about ninety percent of which were inventoried at the start of 2012. Essentially, each file is an archival folder containing photographic objects related to a particular assignment. The amount of material in each folder varies, from a file containing only one roll of 35mm gelatin silver negatives to a file containing contact sheets, gelatin silver prints, gelatin silver negatives, handwritten notes, typed notes, and tear sheets of the published images (see illustration 4). In addition to the photographs, the donation included many ephemeral objects with important contextual information, such as financial ledgers.

My original goal for this thesis was to create a finding aid for the collection. Armed with the file level inventory data, the first step I took was to complete the time consuming task of examining the entire contents of the collection. With over 1,300 files a large portion of this project was spent with the objects themselves. I quickly discovered that the files were loosely organized, had lost much of the original order, and the staff at the RIC was overwhelmed by the size and complexity of the collection. I also found many inconsistencies in the inventory information, which was a result of so many students compiling the data.



Illustration 4: A file containing negatives, contact sheets, captions, and handwritten notes for an assignment photographing the farming

After further discussions with Skyrme, and RIC Collections Curator Peter Higdon, I learned that any original order of the collection had been lost long ago. Though Steven donated the collection, he had not spent extensive time with the photographs themselves. He is not aware of an organizational system once used by his father,<sup>21</sup> and Wolff discarded many of his own photographs after retirement.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Wolff's notebooks and ledgers did not give clues as to what kind of structure was used. Most commercial photographers, such as the Egène Atget, employed a numbering system of some kind to categorize the contents. As a photojournalist, the subject is the most important part of the image. Wolff used a subject description for his files that often included written notes and texts. While this provides rich material for researchers, it created difficulty when organizing the collection.

The focus of this project expanded to include the intellectual arrangement of the objects in addition to the creation of a finding aid. Ninety percent of the inventory was left as is, other than fixing some descriptive format inconsistencies, such as the way the creation date was entered into the spreadsheet. If necessary, I entered additional notations into the notes field after I examined each file. For example, a notation was made if a file contained colour photographs that showed signs of colour fading or deterioration. I also created two new columns in the spreadsheet, one that noted relationships between files within the *fonds*, and another that linked individual files with other material at the RIC. For instance, a file containing photographs of a US president was linked to a different file in the *fonds* containing the press pass from that same assignment by making a notation in the column titled "Related material." For a roll of film containing a negative for a print in the Black Star Collection, a notation was made in the column labeled "Associated material."

### **3.1 Research**

While examining the files, research into how to intellectually arrange a collection of photographs and how to create a finding aid was carried out. The finding aids created by past Photographic Preservation and Collections Management students were very helpful in understanding the limitations of this type of project for the time frame available to me. While these examples were excellent starting points, many were created for the George Eastman House and used standardization rules set by archivists in the US. Thus, I sought out finding aids created for Canadian institutions. By looking at so many different types of aids for a variety of collections, I gained a greater understanding of the necessary elements to this type of document. These finding

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<sup>21</sup> Steven Wolff (son of Werner Wolff) in discussion with the author, April 23, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Ben Chapnick (president of Black Star) in discussion with the author, May 29, 2012.



aids also gave insight into how institutions organize their collections. I quickly realized that, despite the various manuals available, many institutions have their own standards and many finding aids vary in format.

As this is the first finding aid for the RIC, the work I completed has added importance, setting a precedent for finding aids that will follow. As a new archivist, I consulted the *Canadian Archival Standard: Rules For Archival Description* (RAD) which proved essential for this project. In using the standards laid out in the RAD manual, I have ensured that the intellectual arrangement of the Werner Wolff *fonds* and its finding aid comply with Canadian standards of describing and providing accessibility to the collection.<sup>23</sup> Dissecting this manual and surveying example aids were fundamental in enabling me to better understand the task in front of me. The most useful sources have been analyzed in the literature survey of this thesis.

But understanding the Canadian archival descriptive standards was only one part of the research. I also looked into the ways in which a collection of photographs can be intellectually arranged. In an ideal world, a collection of photographs would arrive at an archive in the original order set by the photographer. The original order is kept whenever possible, which preserves important contextual information to the collection or *fonds*.<sup>24</sup> However, many collections arrive at archives without original order, as is the case with Werner Wolff's photographs. If at all possible, it behooves the archivist to recreate the original order. With the notes Wolff left behind, I had hoped to discover the system he used to organize his collection. But, as I previously discussed, the photographs arrived with no discernible order to be recreated. In this case, as the archivist, I had to assign a conceptual arrangement, also known as the intellectual arrangement.<sup>25</sup> According to RAD, the intellectual arrangement is a hierarchal system of several levels, that create a foundation for which to base a finding aid and allow researchers to utilize the *fonds*. It is up to the archivist to create an intellectual arrangement that best reflects the *fonds*.<sup>26</sup>

Because he was a journalist, Wolff documented many facets of the twentieth century, including famous people and the activities of major American corporations. While Wolff used many different photographic formats during his career, a breakdown by photographic process was not suited to the collection. Additionally, arrangement based on conservation needs was not

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<sup>23</sup> *Canadian Archival Standard Rules for Archival Description*, (Ottawa: Bureau of Canadian Archivists, 2008), xxii.

<sup>24</sup> Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler and Diane Vogt-O'Connor, *Photographs*, 146.

<sup>25</sup> Gregory S. Hunter, *Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-to-do-it Manual*, 2nd ed., (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 2003), 115.

<sup>26</sup> *Canadian Archival Standard Rules for Archival Description*, xxiv.

necessary as the majority of the collection has been well preserved and only a small amount of material is in a fragile state.<sup>27</sup> While completing the intellectual organization, I kept the material in the physical order in which they arrived to prevent any object from being misplaced or lost.

In addition to researching intellectual arrangement, I gathered contextual information around photojournalism in the US during the twentieth century. I looked at several books written on the history of photojournalism, the Black Star Agency, and *YANK* magazine to understand the social history behind the collection.<sup>28</sup> Conversations with Steven Wolff and current Black Star president Ben Chapnick provided valuable information about Wolff's working method. Both were able to tell me about Wolff's personality and his relationships with his colleagues. From what I learned from these two men, I was able to understand the timeline of Wolff's life and career, which aided in the creation of Wolff's biography. Researching the social context of this *fonds* not only helped tremendously in the establishment of each series within the intellectual arrangement, but also helped me understand the man who created these photographs. By piecing together bits of information from books discussing Wolff, stories from Steven Wolff and Ben Chapnick, and the documents in the archive, I was also able to create a more detailed and comprehensive biography of Wolff than has been available before now. This biography is an important element of the finding aid and will help researchers understand Werner Wolff the person in addition to Werner Wolff the photographer.

Another factor to keep in mind while completing the arrangement was who the potential researchers may be. Because of the nature of the photographs, this collection is useful to both photography historians and social historians. For historians of photography, the contextual information provides unique clues to the working methods of a practicing photographer during the twentieth century, information rarely found in collections of photography and photojournalism. The ability to compare the ways in which photographs were printed in different publications will open new insights to historians interested in the illustrated press. The numerous processes represented in good condition show the benefits of proper preservation. The subject matter of the photographs widens the research circle to social historians as Wolff documented major events, people, and the every day life of American citizens.

To better understand the needs of researchers, I discussed the collection with artist Vera Frenkel, who is completing a project based on photographs by Wolff. From Frenkel, I learned how a researcher approaches an archive and how one relates to the objects. At the time this thesis was

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<sup>27</sup> For proposed future conservation see the conclusion on page 22 of this thesis.

<sup>28</sup> For more information on the contextual research see the literature survey on page 4 of this thesis.

written, the artist was creating work based on photographs by Wolff. Frenkel sought out information to explain more about the photographer and the contents of the *fonds*. To Frenkel, a finding aid of any kind would prove helpful, illustrating the need to be aware of the different types of investigations researchers pursue.<sup>29</sup> Without the contextual frame or understanding researchers needs, I would not have been able to arrange the collection in a useful way.

### 3.2 Intellectual Arrangement

According to RAD, a standard hierarchy should be organized from the most general to the most specific.<sup>30</sup> RAD “... recognizes the following levels of arrangement: collection, fonds, series, file and item. Each level of arrangement has a corresponding level of description.”<sup>31</sup> As shown in figure 1 (page 13), each individual level plays an important role in organizing the collection.<sup>32</sup> The majority of the material in the Werner Wolff *fonds* arrived at the RIC in one large gift from Steven, becoming one of three artist archive collections at the RIC.<sup>33</sup>

A major part of any intellectual arrangement was the breakdown of the *fonds* into several series. As the *fonds* has already been established, the focus of my thesis was the creation of the four series described below. Rather than risk damage or loss to the objects by physically moving them, I created an Excel workbook document with four sheets, one sheet for each series. I also did not want to lose any information on the original inventory spreadsheets. So I copied and pasted the original information into the new document, pasting the file in the sheet that best reflects the use of the photographs. Determining the different series for a collection this big was another challenge of this project. The series divisions were not reliant on the subject of the photographs or my own thoughts. As mentioned in the previous section, the contextual research played a large part in understanding how Wolff worked as a photographer, which was crucial to the creation of the series breakdown. As part of RAD, each level of the hierarchy has a description known as the scope and content.<sup>34</sup> The contextual research also gave me the necessary information to write the scope and content descriptions for the *fonds* as well as the scope and content descriptions for each series and

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> *Canadian Archival Standard Rules for Archival Description*, xxv.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., xxiv.

<sup>32</sup> Jeff O'Brien, *Basic RAD: An Introduction to the preparation of fonds- and series-level descriptions using the Rules for Archival Description*, (Regina: The Saskatchewan Council of Archives, 1997), 5-6.

<sup>33</sup> Wendy Snyder MacNeil and Jo Spence are the other artist archives at the RIC. MacNeil and Spence are Canadian art photographers and are not linked to the Black Star Agency in any way. All three archives are separate from each other.

<sup>34</sup> *Canadian Archival Standard Rules for Archival Description*, 0-8.

**Collection:** a grouping of objects from any creator, intentionally assembled on the basis of some common characteristic - in this case, the Ryerson Image Centre Photographs Collection.

**fonds:** all records created by one unit, individual or entity - in this case Werner Wolff

**Series:** a group of records within the fonds created or accumulated from the same function, activity or subject

**Subseries:** readily identifiable as a subordinate or dependent entity to the series

**File:** documents kept together which reflect particular activities, subjects, etc. - in this case one assignment = one file

**Item:** lowest level and smallest entity within the fonds - in this case one contact sheet = one item

subseries.<sup>35</sup> The *fonds* has been divided into four major series: 1) Early Work and WWII, 2) Black Star, 3) Personal, and 4) Ephemera. Each series contains a unique body of work reflecting different parts of Wolff's photographic career.

The first series features the early part of Wolff's career with photographs taken before and during World War II (from 1939 - 1945). The series contains just over 3,000 photographs in 84 files. Wolff was a United States Army Signal Corps correspondent for the 10th Mountain division, stationed in Italy. While there, Wolff photographed assignments for *YANK* magazine. The photographs taken during this part of Wolff's career are distinct from the photographs taken after the war in both his visual approach and in subject matter, meriting its own series. Several issues of *YANK* magazine came with the donation, which have been separated into a subseries. These magazines are unique items in of themselves, distinct from the negatives and prints and worthy of their own separation.

The second series, and largest, is the Black Star series, containing photographs from 1945 to the end of Wolff's career in the late 1980s. Wolff was a contract photographer,<sup>36</sup> and the agency committed to paying Wolff with a weekly draw. This draw, which was \$100 in 1952, was applied against the earnings of his image sales. For the majority of his career, Wolff was commissioned by a diverse group of clients, ranging from magazines and the press to advertising

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<sup>35</sup> An explanation of the scope and content is provided in section 3.4 page 19 of this thesis, "Writing the Finding Aid."

<sup>36</sup> Two contracts are housed in the fonds, one of which states that the terms outlined were valid for three years and yearly thereafter.

agencies and corporations.<sup>37</sup> When Wolff began his career at Black Star, the agency already had deep connections with a number of corporations, which gave Wolff the opportunity to produce work for *Cosmopolitan*, *Ebony*, *This Week*, the *Toronto Star*, Young and Rubicam, the United Nations, and AT&T.

With so many different types of clients, and over 1,300 files in the series breaking the files into smaller, more manageable groups was necessary, making the Black Star series one of the most difficult to arrange. Several different ideas of how to organize the series were considered, before finally settling on what is presented in this thesis. Wolff's photographs of corporations consist of board meetings, corporate portraiture and factory

facilities. The way in which these photographs were shot are very different from the photographs taken for magazine and press assignments. Therefore, corporate assignments are grouped into their own sub-series and work commissioned for the press is grouped into a different sub-series. But not all work was able to be divided into these two categories. The remaining files have been kept in the main Black Star series.

The third series was titled "Personal," because these photographs depict Wolff's life outside of his professional work. This series is considerably smaller than the first and second series, with only nineteen files. But the depiction of his family is worthy of being separated into its own category. Additionally, these photographs were not sold or used for commercial purposes. Though Wolff continued to take photographs after retirement, his personal projects did not arrive with the original donation. In the future, if the RIC were to acquire photographs taken after he retired, the material can be arranged into this series.

The last series is the ephemera, containing non-photographic objects acquired as part of the donation. This includes twelve files with many different types of objects, such as contracts with the Black Star Agency, Wolff's passports, and press passes for certain events. Also in this series are two notebooks in which Wolff detailed the amount he was paid for each assignment completed during

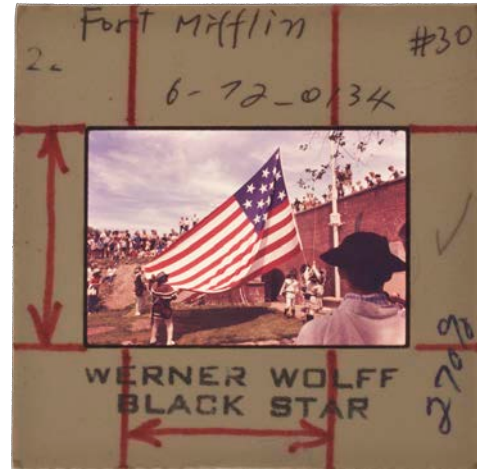


Illustration 5: An image of a Revolutionary war era reenactment, with editing and cropping marks. Kodachrome slide, 35 mm, 1972. Photograph by Werner Wolff, the Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.

<sup>37</sup> C. Zoe Smith, "The History of Black Star Picture Agency: "Life's" European Connection," (presented to the Visual Communication Division at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Gainesville, FL, August 7, 1984).



Illustration 6: A few of the press passes Wolff wore as a reporter on an official US Presidential tour with Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1960. The Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre. Documented by Sara Manco.

the 1940s and 1950s. The ephemera complements the photographs in the collection, showing how a working photographer made a living. This series is a unique part of the *fonds*, as it gives insight into the inner workings of the Black Star Agency as well as the life of a successful photographer working in of the golden age of photojournalism in the twentieth century.

### 3.3 Relationship with the Black Star Agency

As previously mentioned, Wolff had a long and distinguished career with the Black Star Agency, spanning over fifty years. During that time, Wolff produced over 2,000 prints that became part of the Black Star collection, to which the negatives are in the Wolff *fonds*. In 2005, Ryerson University (the RIC was established in 2008) acquired the entire Black Star Collection of prints as a generous gift from an anonymous donor.<sup>38</sup> The collection itself is made up of prints taken by the various photographers who passed through the agencies' offices, creating a visual history of significant twentieth century people, places, and events with an emphasis on the US.

The Black Star Agency was established by German emigres Kurt Kornfeld, Ernest Mayer and Kurt Safranski, who modelled the agency after the Berlin based Mauritius Photo Agency which

<sup>38</sup> "Ryerson Image Centre Collections," *Ryerson University*, accessed June 11, 2012, <http://www.ryerson.ca/ric/research/collections.html>.

handled the printing pricing and billing of the photographs.<sup>39</sup> The agency began in 1935 and is still active with corporate clients today. In the early years, magazines like *Life* supported their own staff of photographers, but they continued to use Black Star if their photographers missed or could not cover a story. But later in the century, as photographic magazines faded away with the rise of broadcast news, the agency shifted focus from photo reportage to a commercial work.<sup>40</sup> In addition to owning a complete run of *Life* magazine, the RIC hopes that the Black Star Collection will be utilized in the future for research as well as exhibition.<sup>41</sup>

With the contextual material contained in the ephemera series, the Wolff *fonds* adds another layer in understanding how the agency functioned. According to former *Life* magazine Picture Editor John Morris, the agency negotiated assignments with the client on behalf of the photographer.<sup>42</sup> His contracts with the agency explain an agreement between Wolff and the agency to to a weekly draw for all commissioned work. This draw worked against the sales of his photographs, which kept cash flowing through the agency.<sup>43</sup> According to current Black Star president Ben Chapnick, all work done by Wolff was completed for a specific assignment. Often, groups or individual photographs were chosen to be kept in the agency's stock collection with the hope of future use.<sup>44</sup> Time Life Inc. functioned in a similar manner, which archived certain photographs with the hope of selling in the future. In 1989, several photographs that had been kept in the Time Life Inc. archive were returned to Wolff, which arrived with the original donation. Similar to Time Life Inc., Ben Chapnick returned many photographs in the Black Star collection that were not selling back to the photographers in the early 2000s. A large group of prints from several different assignments were returned to Wolff.<sup>45</sup>

A contributing factor to his large body of work is the fact that Wolff was always around and willing to take on assignments. He was a constant presence at the offices, usually available to talk

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<sup>39</sup> Ben Chapnick.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Pitnick, 36.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>42</sup> John Morris, presentation to the Photographic Preservation and Collections Management program, Paris, France, May 8, 2012.

<sup>43</sup> Smith, "The History of Black Star Picture Agency: "Life's" European Connection," 19. For more information about the Black Star agency see Appendix I on page 38 of this thesis.

<sup>44</sup> Ben Chapnick.

<sup>45</sup> Ben Chapnick.

shop with other photographers.<sup>46</sup> He was very close to then agency president Howard Chapnick, with whom Wolff and his wife Alice took many vacations. Retired Black Star photographer Franklynn Peterson remembers Wolff as one who “...never stood out in a crowd, never called attention to himself. He was just always there, always willing and able to take on any job that fell his way.”<sup>47</sup> Peterson also recalls G&W Photo Lab operated by Wolff and master printer Joe Giacomelli. Known as a perfectionist who was unhappy with previous printers used by the agency, Wolff established the lab so that he could monitor the quality of the processing of prints and negatives.<sup>48</sup> Over time, G&W became the main lab used by the agency to process black and white work, which Peterson states ran with “magnificent efficiency.”<sup>49</sup> Additionally, it appears as though G&W was careful and methodical in terms of their production methods. Gelatin silver prints in the Wolff *fonds* show little or no signs of deterioration which can be attributed to careful processing.

In addition to being meticulous about the processing of his prints, Wolff was also very particular about the way in which his images were cropped. The prints held within the Black Star Collection have only a few cropping and editing marks on the rectos and versos, showing that the way Wolff made his prints was how he wanted them to be reproduced. Further research can be undertaken into the relationship between prints in the Black Star Collection and the corresponding files in the *fonds*.

Over 2,000 Wolff prints are in the Black Star Collection, showing the wide range of assignments he took on, which the agency organized by subject, not by photographer. For example, in the “Personalities” section of the collection, all photographs of Mickey Mantle are in the same box, even though several photographers took images of the baseball star for the agency. Photographs are stored alphabetically by subject so that images of Tommy Manville and Ambassador Mike Mansfield are kept in the same box. Over six thousand photographers are represented in the collection, mixed together in this way. By organizing the collection by subject, Wolff becomes part of a spiderweb of photographers earning a living through the Black Star Agency. As a mainstay, Wolff had his hands in many aspects of the agency, “but Werner was first and foremost a photographer.”<sup>50</sup> The ability to see a photographers’ archive along side the archive

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<sup>46</sup> Franklynn Peterson, in discussion with the author, June 29, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ben Chapnick.

<sup>49</sup> Franklynn Peterson.

<sup>50</sup> Franklynn Peterson.



G&W - Printing Room  
 L to R Joseph "Joe" Giacomelli  
 NASSER ALIABADI  
 AL ROA ★  
 Credit:  
 WERNER WOLFF  
 from BLACK ST



Illustration 7 (above): Printers in G&W Photo Lab, run by Werner Wolff with his partner Joe Giacomelli. Gelatin silver print, 20.32 x 25.4, ca. 1950s.

★  
 BLACK STAR  
 PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.  
 410 LEXINGTON AVENUE - NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

AGREEMENT made this FIRST day of AUGUST, 1952, by and between Mr. Werner Wolff, hereinafter known as Mr. Wolff, residing at last address, 297 Bleecker Street, New York City, New York, and the Black Star Publishing Company, Inc., a domestic corporation, having its principal place of business at 410 Lexington Avenue, New York City, and hereinafter known as B. S.

WITNESSETH

In consideration of one dollar and the mutual covenants hereinafter set forth, the parties hereto agree as follows:

1. Mr. Wolff hereby appoints B. S. as his sole and exclusive agent and personal representative to sell, rent and otherwise deal in photographs made by him, and B. S. accepts said agency. This agency shall be for the disposal of the photographs anywhere in the world.
2. Mr. Wolff agrees to and by these presents does appoint B. S. as his true and lawful attorney to enter into contracts for the sale of other in his name or in the name during the term of this agreement, and Mr. Wolff agrees to fulfill said contracts entered into on the behalf of B. S.
3. Mr. Wolff agrees to apply his skill and best efforts in promoting photographs and fulfilling all assignments to be procured for him by B. S. during the term of this contract.
4. B. S. agrees to use the best efforts to promote the sale and other disposition of Mr. Wolff's pictures, to obtain the highest possible prices therefor and to do everything possible to enhance Mr. Wolff's reputation.

Mr. Wolff covenants to pay to B. S. the sum of \$100.00 per month.

From the proceeds of the sale of Mr. Wolff's pictures, B. S. shall pay to Mr. Wolff the sum of \$100.00 per month.

In witness whereof

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AGREEMENT between Werner Wolff and B. S. Page 2

Illustration 8 (below): A portrait of Howard Chapnick, former Black Star president and close friend of Wolff's. Kodachrome slide, 35mm, 1978.

All photographs by Werner Wolff, the Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.

Illustration 9 (left and below): Wolff's contract dated 1952, signed with the Black Star Agency, explaining copyright and payment. Documented by Sara Manco.

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 PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.  
 410 LEXINGTON AVENUE - NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

AGREEMENT between Werner Wolff and B. S. Page 3

5. The necessary expenses consisting of cost of negatives, materials, developing, printing, finishing, travel and personal maintenance expenses incurred in carrying out such business as set forth in the contract, will be borne by B. S. with 50% (FIFTY PERCENT) thereof.
6. All monies received for photographs made by Mr. Wolff shall be paid by B. S. to Mr. Wolff within thirty days after receipt of such monies. In the event any monies are received by Mr. Wolff for work performed, said monies are to be deposited with B. S. within 10 days after receipt.
7. At the discretion of Mr. Wolff, B. S. shall pay the advanced necessary expenses and shall be reimbursed from the monies received from the sale or disposal of Mr. Wolff's photographs.
8. B. S. guarantees to procure for Mr. Wolff enough assignments, sales and other disposition of his photographs to net him a minimum of \$100 (one hundred dollars) per week after deduction of all necessary expenses and commission as stipulated in the contract for services rendered by Mr. Wolff. (One hundred dollars) each week on and against his account. However, in case Mr. Wolff is unable to take pictures or fulfill conditions under B. S. on his behalf because of illness, accident, or other cause, said monies shall continue for a period of more than four weeks, then the guaranteed weekly payments shall be made for each week that Mr. Wolff is unable to perform his work.
9. In the event Mr. Wolff does not earn the minimum guarantee as set forth in Paragraph 8, then the minimum guarantee shall be deemed against B. S. in the amount of the minimum guarantee less any monies paid on account or loaned to Mr. Wolff during the course of the year.
10. Should Mr. Wolff's earnings not reach the minimum guarantee he set forth in Paragraph 8, and should B. S. have paid the minimum guarantee to Mr. Wolff, then B. S. shall be entitled to retain the negative of prints made by Mr. Wolff and dispose of the said negatives and prints until Mr. Wolff's earnings shall have reached the minimum guarantee, at which time the prints and negatives of Mr. Wolff in the possession of B. S. will be returned to Mr. Wolff.
11. It is agreed that all bills and statements for the disposal of Mr. Wolff's pictures shall be sent and received in the name of B. S.
12. B. S. shall bear all expenses in connection with the sale and other disposition of Mr. Wolff's photographs.

TELEPHONE LEXINGTON 4-0000 / CAROL MONTAGNON  
 410 LEXINGTON AVENUE, BLACK STAR LTD., LEXINGTON, NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

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 BLACK STAR  
 PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.  
 410 LEXINGTON AVENUE - NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

AGREEMENT between Werner Wolff and B. S. Page 3

photographs to be sold or otherwise disposed of or by

Werner Wolff does hereby state that

at the request of Mr. Wolff, to make the weekly payment of this contract. The sum amount should be paid to Mr. Wolff, according to this contract, before the sales will take place.

It is understood that this agreement shall be in no way interpreted and no other-employee relationship shall be deemed

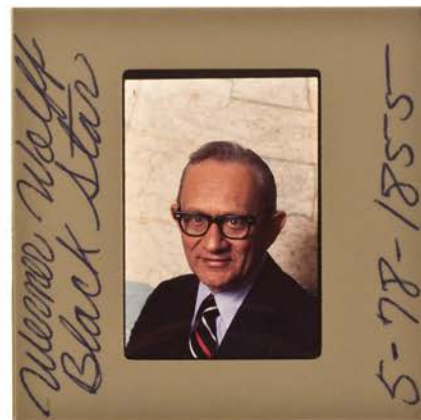
all be valid until December 31, 1953, and shall be void, unless terminated by either party in the two months before the expiration of this agreement.

parties have executed and their hands and seals on

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Werner Wolff  
 Black Star Publishing Company, Inc.

Werner Wolff



of the agency for which he primarily worked is unique to Ryerson University and does not occur in other agency collections.

### 3.4 Writing the Finding Aid

After the collection was arranged into series, the next step was to write the finding aid. RAD defines finding aids as “descriptive tools containing information that establishes control over records and facilitates their retrieval.”<sup>51</sup> For the RIC, a simple Microsoft Word document was created with the necessary elements. In the future, all information will be available to researchers in the RIC database. However, creating full digital access was out of the time frame of this thesis project. A finding aid begins with the most general information and ends with the most specific. The *fonds* level description is read first, after which the user finds the series and subseries descriptions.

Several elements are necessary when describing a *fonds*, which include the following: title, dates, extent, administrative history and biographical sketch, custodial history, scope and content, source of supplied title, physical description note, arrangement, restrictions, accruals note, and linking elements.<sup>52</sup> Many of these elements are also necessary in the series and subseries descriptions. The Wolff finding aid starts with a one sentence introduction to the *fonds*. What follows are the necessary elements as mentioned in the previous paragraph, beginning with the title of the *fonds*, the dates the photographs were created, and the extent. The title here is the “Werner Wolff fonds,” and the dates range from the youngest to the oldest photographs.<sup>53</sup> The extent describes the physical details of the collection, stating the number of items in the *fonds* and the medium. In photographic collections, this would be the number of individual photographs and photographic processes used. At the series level, the extent describes the number of photographs in that particular series. Because of the large scale of the Werner Wolff *fonds*, the extent in this finding aid is approximate.

Next is the administrative history, or biographical sketch, which explains the creator of the *fonds* and gives context to the collection.<sup>54</sup> This section features a biography on Werner Wolff, and a chronology of his life. To write this section, I began my research with a brief autobiography that came as part of the donation. I then pieced together information I gathered from several books that discuss Wolff, as well as my conversations with Steven Wolff and Ben Chapnick. The

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<sup>51</sup> *Canadian Archival Standard Rules for Archival Description*, D-5.

<sup>52</sup> Jeff O'Brien, *Basic RAD*, 15.

<sup>53</sup> *Canadian Archival Standard Rules for Archival Description*, 1-33.

<sup>54</sup> Jeff O'Brien, *Basic RAD*, 11.



Illustration 10: Most of the fonds is currently housed in letter size archival boxes. Ephemera and oversize objects have received their own unique housing.  
By Sara Manco.

chronology came together after the biography was written, and acts as a quick reference for Wolff's life and career. The custodial history follows the biography, which details the care of the photographs after leaving custody of the creator.<sup>55</sup> This section explains how the collection arrived at the RIC and the care that has been taken since its arrival. The scope and content description follows, which briefly explains the contents of the *fonds*. The physical description is next, which is a space to explain extra information for conservation needs. A brief note on the arrangement of the collection follows, which explains how the collection is arranged both intellectually and physically. Access restrictions, copyright, and accruals are next. These areas tell the researcher how to contact the RIC, how to gain permission for reproductions, and whether or not future acquisitions to the *fonds* are anticipated. The last two elements are the associated materials and the related materials. Under associated materials I have included any documents (books, theses, etc.) at the RIC library featuring text on or images taken by Wolff. The related materials section is reserved for other material at the RIC directly related to the contents but not part of the *fonds*. In this case, the prints in the Black Star Collection are directly related to the *fonds*, but are not part of the *fonds*. This section is particularly important as 2,276 prints by Wolff are housed in the Black Star Collection.

At the *fonds* level, this information is written in the most general way possible. The series, and file levels were described using many of the same elements I just explained. So, each series received a title, administrative history, etc., as does each subseries.<sup>56</sup> For example, the Black Star series contains the dates for which Wolff worked for the agency, a description of the photographs in

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>56</sup> Jeff O'Brien, *Basic RAD*, 18.

that series, and a brief administrative history of Black Star and Wolff's working relationship with the agency. At the series level, as well as the subseries, it was important that the scope and content remained brief and related only to that body of work.

### 3.5 Mimsy XG Database Records

As a future project for the RIC, digitization of the collection will provide even more access to researchers and scholars. Digitization includes the creation of database catalog records and documenting objects from the collection. Catalog records are particularly helpful as they serve as a digital record of each file in the *fonds*. Due to the enormous amount of material, I could not possibly catalog the entire collection for this thesis project. However, creating sample records set the standard for how future catalogers can enter information into the database in the correct format. The RIC has already established standards for cataloging individual items, such as a vintage photographic prints, in the software program Mimsy XG. However, creating a digital record of the *fonds*, series, and subseries descriptions is an entirely different matter. The Werner Wolff *fonds*, the Wendy Snyder MacNeil *fonds* and Jo Spence *fonds*, are considered archival groups separate from the rest of the photographic collection which makes the database much more complex for these three groups. The descriptions I created for the *fonds*, series, and subseries will become their own records in the database, in addition to records for each file. As an appendix to this thesis, screenshots of Mimsy show the *fonds*, one series, and one file level record as examples for future catalogers. One of the most crucial elements in these records is showing the links between the material from a specific file to other files both in the Werner Wolff *fonds* and elsewhere in the RIC collections.<sup>57</sup> From these examples and the information gathered while completing this project, the RIC should be able to create digital records of the Werner Wolff *fonds* in the near future.

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<sup>57</sup> For more information on cataloging records with similar material, consult Matthew Rushworth's thesis "Issues in Object-Level Description in Collections of Press Photography: Towards a Metadata Standard for Photojournalism" completed for the Photographic Preservation and Collections Management program in 2012.

#### 4. Conclusion

Despite the long hours I have put into this project, the intellectual arrangement of the Werner Wolff *fonds* will continue to be a work in progress for some time to come. Processing a collection of photographs this large takes a significant amount of time, especially in such a state of disorganization. The purpose of arranging a collection is to make the information accessible, provide a basis for description and make the contents comprehensible.<sup>58</sup> The goal of this thesis project was just that - to arrange the Werner Wolff *fonds* in a way that makes the collection more accessible and easy to understand. I hope that future readers of my thesis can gain a better understanding of how to go about organizing large collections of photographs. In addition to the arrangement, the finding aid will give the staff at the Ryerson Image Centre the tools necessary to begin to provide access to researchers as the collection has many potential research strengths for historians of several disciplines. Those interested in photojournalism will find use in researching his career as well as how a photographer worked within the parameters of the Black Star Agency. For social historians, much of the everyday life of twentieth century America can be found in the *fonds*. Those interested in World War II will find the issues of *YANK* magazine a unique way of examining the second world war. Wolff was not only an accomplished photographer but a one who understood how to convey information and feelings in pictures. He understood the balance between text and photographs, and how to tell a story using both together successfully. I also hope that future curators will turn to the Wolff *fonds* as a potential source for photojournalistic work for exhibitions. As scholars and researchers engage with the *fonds*, the historical and cultural value of the collection will only continue to grow.

This thesis concludes with the intellectual arrangement, but a few steps remain to complete the processing of the collection. About 162 files of black and white photographs remain to be inventoried, in addition to around 225 files of colour slides, and thirty nine loose prints. All items need to be inventoried and placed into the intellectual organization.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, all files need to be physically rearranged to reflect the intellectual arrangement. After these steps have been completed, the collection will be ready for cataloging and digitization. The *fonds*, series, and subseries level descriptions I have created will need to be imported to the database to create a digital record showing the existence of the collection and its arrangement. As part of the digitization of the collection, scanning the individual pages of the slides will be an excellent way to properly document the order in which the slides arrived.

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<sup>58</sup> Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler and Diane Vogt-O'Connor, *Photographs*, 145.

<sup>59</sup> I have examined all files and know that each will fit within the intellectual arrangement created here.

Several objects in the collection are in a fragile state and are in need of conservation attention. About 198 rolls of film has been rolled up very tightly and stored in this manner. The film rolls have been accessioned, but a conservator will need to be consulted to flatten these rolls to make them accessible. Seventeen files show signs of mould damage and nine rolls of negatives have fallen victim to vinegar syndrome. The best solution for vinegar syndrome is the way in which the negatives are currently housed. The placement of the film into paper sleeves, rather than the polyethylene,<sup>60</sup> and in a separate Hollinger box away from other files will ensure proper preservation of the negatives.<sup>61</sup>

With these last few steps in mind, it is important to emphasize that my work is not the definitive arrangement of and finding aid for the collection. Rather, I have hoped to create a system that best reflects the information at hand and which can be built upon later. As I mentioned before, the more scholars engage with the *fonds*, the more information will be gathered and the more we will know about Werner Wolff. It is my hope that, after all of this is completed, that Wolff's photographs will eventually be brought out of the archive and given the attention I, as well as his contemporaries,<sup>62</sup> believe he deserves.



Illustration 11: One of four boxes of rolled negatives in need of conservation attention. Each box is considered a file and has been given an accession number. Negatives by Werner Wolff, date unknown, the Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre. Documented by Sara Manco.

<sup>60</sup> Polyethylene Printfile™ sleeves have been used in rehousing the majority of the *fonds*.

<sup>61</sup> Bertrand Lavédrine, *A Guide to the Preventive Conservation of Photograph Collections*, (Los Angeles: The Getty Institute, 2003), 54-56.

<sup>62</sup> Contextual information and the respect Wolff earned from his colleagues, such as Howard Chapnick, is discussed in the literature survey of this thesis on pages 4-7.

## Appendix I: Finding Aid for the Werner Wolff Fonds

The following document is the archival description and finding aid for the Werner Wolff fonds at the Ryerson Image Centre (RIC) consisting of photographs from World War II to the 1980s.

**Title:** Werner Wolff fonds [graphic material, textual records, objects]

**Dates:** [ca.1939]-1989

### **Extent/Physical Description:**

ca. 1,1358 files of photographs, textual materials : multiple processes ; dimensions vary

*Note:* Processes include gelatin silver negatives, gelatin silver prints, colour transparencies, Polaroid. -

ca. 22 files of objects ; dimensions vary

*Note:* 198 rolls of film need to be humidified and unrolled, 15 files exhibit mould damage, 9 rolls of film show signs of vinegar syndrome.

### **Biographical Sketch:**

*This biography is based on interviews, textual resources, and a short autobiography written by Werner Wolff, housed in the Ryerson Image Centre study centre.*

Werner Wolff was born in Mannheim, Germany on June 11, 1911. At only twelve years old, he persuaded his parents to install a sink in his room, transforming his bedroom into a dark room. Wolff was enrolled in photography classes in Mannheim until he emigrated to New York City in 1936. He was twenty-five years old when he left Germany. In December of that year, Wolff was hired by Pix, Inc. as a darkroom technician, giving him the unique opportunity to develop photographs taken by Alfred Eisenstadt. But Wolff was not satisfied to merely develop other photographers' images. After only a year at Pix Inc., Wolff partnered with colleagues to create their own agency called Camera Features. This small agency, established in 1939, was only moderately successful but enabled Wolff to make valuable contacts within the industry.

Around this time, Wolff met his future wife, Alice, through a mutual friend. She was American born and living in New York.<sup>63</sup> The pair married in 1941 as the United States was on the brink of entering World War II. Because he held a German passport when the US entered the war, Wolff was declared an enemy alien and his camera was confiscated.<sup>64</sup> In 1941, a colleague of Wolff's appealed this enemy status to then first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, whom Wolff met when he had photographed her for the newspaper the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*.<sup>65</sup> By 1944, Wolff was drafted to the United States Army and assigned to duty in North Africa. Though Wolff did not enter the war as a photographer, he soon became a correspondent for the U.S. Army Signal Corps. *YANK*, the

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<sup>63</sup> Steven Wolff, in discussion with the author, June 7, 2012.

<sup>64</sup> Hendrik Neubauer, *Black Star: 60 Years of Photojournalism* (Köln: Könemann, 1997), 50.

<sup>65</sup> A copy of the letter of appeal is housed within the Werner Wolff fonds.





Illustration 12: A photograph of visitors overlooking a terrace at an unknown location. Gelatin silver print, 14.6 x 12 cm. Photograph by Werner Wolff, the Werner Wolff Fonds.  
© The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.

Army weekly magazine employed Wolff as a photographer and photography editor from 1944 to 1945. While stationed with *YANK* in Italy, Wolff documented battles on the Po River, Germany, and photographed his hometown of Mannheim. Wolff was also among the first soldiers to enter Hitler's hideout in Berchtesgaden. In a letter dated May 27, 1945, Wolff described the destruction of European cities he witnessed, and the shock of seeing prisoners from the Nazi concentration camp Dachau. Wolff also described the eerie sight of his hometown left in ruins, and the inability of photography to convey his feelings of grief.<sup>66</sup> He ends a letter by saying "I could go on rattling about Germany-but it wouldn't be anything you haven't already seen in the papers. It looks like a beaten country."<sup>67</sup> Wolff returned to New York City after the war ended in 1945. By this time he had been naturalized as a US citizen and his elder son, Steven had been born. Wolff bought a four story house on Bleecker Street that would become his family home in which he lived out his life with Alice. On December 2, 1947, his second son, Mark, was born.<sup>68</sup>

Upon his return from Europe, Wolff began his long stint at the Black Star Agency, which lasted for the rest of his photographic career.<sup>69</sup> He was known to be a quiet man as well as a perfectionist, who often returned from assignments with a pessimistic attitude about the results of his film.<sup>70</sup> Howard Chapnick, president of Black Star from 1963 to 1990, held Wolff in high regard, believing him to be an excellent technical photographer. In his book *Truth Needs No Ally: Inside Photojournalism*, Chapnick explains that Wolff came from a generation of photographers that learned

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<sup>66</sup> Werner Wolff, 27 May 1945, Personal files of Steven Wolff, Colorado.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Steven Wolff.

<sup>69</sup> Ben Chapnick (president of Black Star) in discussion with the author, May 29, 2012.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.



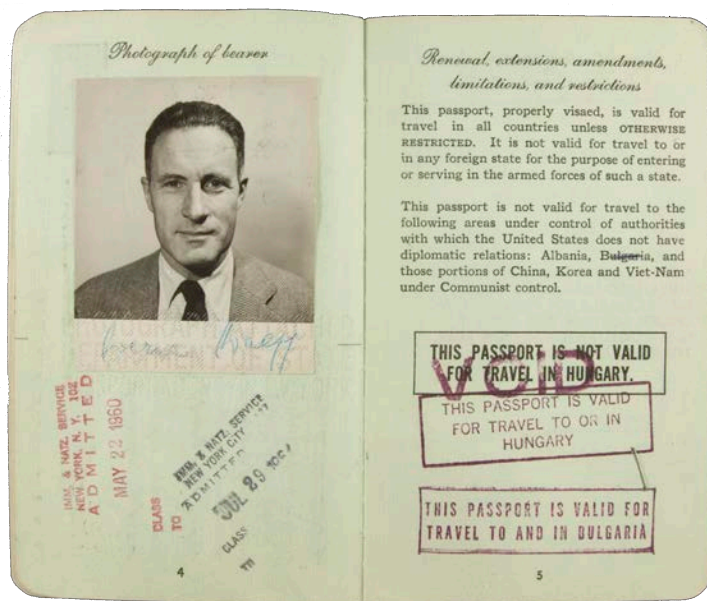


Illustration 13: One of two passports in the fonds. Wolff traveled all over the world for various assignments as well as for personal trips with his wife. Photograph by an unidentified photographer, ca. 1960, the Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.

to shoot well under any circumstances, and Wolff “consistently came back with technically and compositionally sound photographs.”<sup>71</sup> These qualities would undoubtedly aid in Wolff’s ability to shoot extremely diverse assignments for the agency. Chapnick emphasized that Wolff used the “...camera as a communicative tool that spoke directly to the viewer without nuance or ambiguity.”<sup>72</sup> Ben Chapnick, Howard Chapnick’s nephew and current president of the Black Star Agency, stated that Wolff was a favourite photographer of *Life* magazine in the early years in addition to photographic for other clients of the agency. His photographs appeared on the pages of various newspapers and magazines such as *Time*, *Ebony*, *Home and Garden*, and the *Toronto Star*. His subjects varied from baseball star Mickey Mantle to the the farming industry in Guatemala and the Italian Rivera. Wolff also took on many corporate clients of the agency, photographing local hospitals and companies such as the Dictaphone Corporation. Ben Chapnick explained that Wolff had the skills to successfully complete many different types of jobs, from photojournalistic reportage to corporate portraiture, regarding Wolff as one of the best technical photographers he had encountered. In an anecdote about an outing with Wolff, Ben Chapnick explained that Wolff was able to hear that a camera shutter was in need of repair, despite the fact that the shutter was operating at a very high speed.<sup>73</sup> Wolff’s deep technical knowledge and ability to handle any photographic situation contributed to this high level of respect from his colleagues.

Early in his Black Star career, Wolff grew impatient with the quality of commercial printers used by Black Star. Initially, Wolff established C&W Photo Lab with colleague Joe Covello. Soon after, Covello left the lab and Joe Giacomelli teamed up with Wolff to establish G&W Photo Lab. G&W processed and printed all the black and white work for the agency, which resulted high quality

<sup>71</sup> Howard Chapnick, *Truth Needs No Ally: Inside Photojournalism*, (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1994), 161.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ben Chapnick.

prints and contact sheets. Colour work done on assignment was processed elsewhere. Wolff's main role was to be the link between the agency and Giacomelli, as Wolff never processed a print or a single roll of film himself after the lab was up and running.<sup>74</sup> The lab was operational until the 1990s, when the agency ceased to use black and white analog technology.

In 1959, Wolff took on the large assignment of traveling with Dwight D. Eisenhower on an official U.S. presidential tour overseas. A few of the locations visited were Athens, Rome, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Casablanca. The 1960s took Wolff to Europe with John F. Kennedy<sup>75</sup> and Guam with Lyndon B. Johnson. Wolff continued to photograph U.S. presidents throughout his career at Black Star, but only traveled with the above three.

Wolff steadily produced work for the agency over the next few decades. During the early 1970s, his house was divided into two apartments, the bottom half the residence of Werner and Alice, and the top the residence of Steven and his wife. Wolff retired from the agency in the late 1980s, nearing eighty years of life and fifty years with Black Star. He spent his remaining time traveling the U.S. with his wife, celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary in Los Angeles in 1991.<sup>76</sup> Though he was retired, Wolff never stopped taking photographs, and the freedom of retirement gave him the ability to pursue a personal project of documenting gravestones and graveyards.<sup>77</sup> In the early 2000s, prints and negatives held in Black Star's collection were returned to many of the agency's photographers, including Wolff. These photographs were no longer being purchased and the agency did not have a use for them.<sup>78</sup> After retiring, Wolff also combed through his archive and disposed of much of his corporate work.<sup>79</sup> This was done at a time when most photographers kept their photojournalistic work, but saw little worth in the corporate photographs. Chapnick believes that Wolff did not regard these photos as worthwhile and therefore discarded them. Werner Wolff died of colon cancer in 2002, leaving his photographs in the care of his family. For many years, the photographs remained untouched in the basement of their house. But Steven's donation of the collection to the Ryerson Image Centre has given these photographs new life. Only now can the career of this prolific photographer be examined in full, bringing to light a photographer who has largely been forgotten in the history of photojournalism.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> One image taken on this trip is reproduced in Howard Chapnick's book *Truth Needs No Ally: Inside Photojournalism*.

<sup>76</sup> Steven Wolff.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ben Chapnick.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

## Appendix I: Finding Aid for the Werner Wolff Fonds

### Werner Wolff Life Chronology

1911:

- Born in Mannheim, Germany

1922:

- Enrolled in photography school in Germany, transformed his bedroom into a darkroom

1936:

- Emigrated to the United States of America, began work as a lab technician at Pix, Inc.

1939:

- Co-founded the short lived photography agency Camera Features
- Around this time met Alice, his future wife
- Traveled to and photographed Palestine and Jerusalem
- Hitler invaded Poland marking the beginning of World War II

1941:

- Married his wife, Alice H. Eckstein
- Wolff declared an enemy alien, his camera was confiscated, Wolff appealed to the government for a pardon which was granted with the assistance of Eleanor Roosevelt.

1942:

- US entered World War II
- Wolff received U.S. Army draft notice
- Became a correspondent for the U.S. Army Signal Corps - Photographed Rome, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Verona, Sienna, Venice, Algeria, Mannheim, Berchtesgaden.

1943:

- Wolff naturalized as a citizen
- Eldest son, Steven Wolff, born April 15

1945:

- Returned to the U.S. from military service
- Signed first contract with Black Star Agency - worked for Black Star for the rest of his career

1946:

- Bought house on Bleeker Street, New York City in which he lived for the remainder of his life
- Co-founded G & W Photo Lab with Joe Giacobelli

1947:

- Younger son, Mark H. Wolff, born December 2

1959:

- December - Accompanied U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower on official tour overseas

1961:

- Photographed John F. Kennedy in Europe

## Appendix I: Finding Aid for the Werner Wolff Fonds

1967:

- Photographed Lyndon B. Johnson's visit to Guam

1968:

- Werner and G&W Photo Lab mentioned in article "Inside Black Star: Photo Agency to the World" published in *Popular Photography* magazine.

1971:

- Werner divided house on Bleecker street into two apartments, Steven moved into upstairs apartment with his wife and family, Werner's grandchildren

1984:

- Werner's portrait of an inventor of the board game Scrabble published in the book *Life: The Second Decade 1964-1955*

Late 1980s:

- Werner retired from the Black Star Agency, traveled the United States with Alice, continued to take photographs for pleasure

1991:

- Werner and Alice celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary

1994:

- Howard Chapnick published his book *Truth Needs No Ally: Inside Photojournalism* highlighting Werner as one of the great photographers of the Black Star Agency

1997:

- The book *Black Star: 60 Years of Photojournalism* published featuring several photographs from throughout Wolff's career

Early 2000s:

- Prints returned to Werner from the Black Star Agency

2002:

- Werner Wolff dies from colon cancer at the age of 91

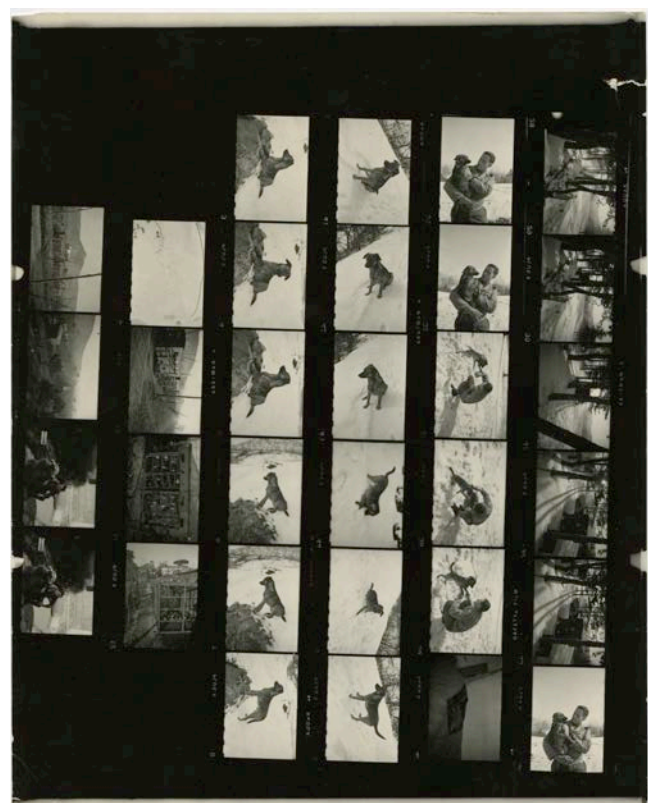
2009:

- Photographs donated to the RIC

2010:

- May - Steven moves to Colorado
- September - Alice dies at the age of 96

Illustration 14: Contact sheet showing Wolff playing in the snow with a dog. Gelatin silver print, 20.32 x 25.4 cm., ca. 1960. The Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.



### **Custodial History:**

The Werner Wolff material was under the care of Wolff's heirs prior to its arrival to Ryerson University. In the early 2000s, several files that had been held at the Black Star agency were returned to Wolff. These files were placed with the rest of Wolff's work in the cellar of the house, where the collection remained largely unsorted.<sup>80</sup> After the death of Wolff's wife, their son, Steven, gave the collection to Ryerson University in 2009. The collection became one of three artist archives at the Ryerson Image Centre (RIC). After learning of the acquisition of the Black Star collection, Steven contacted the RIC and inquired about the donation of Werner Wolff's photographs. After email correspondence, RIC Curatorial Manager Peter Higdon, enthusiastically accepted the collection and moved the photographs from New York City to Toronto, Ontario. The contextual material contained within the fonds appealed to Higdon, as the RIC is a research institution and the material enhanced the research value of the Black Star collection in addition to being a unique collection itself. The contents of the collection arrived at the RIC in one move, after which time the objects were accessioned, placed in archival housing, and inventory was completed. In 2011, a small second donation was made by Steven in the form of a bankers box containing mostly 35mm colour slides. In 2012, inventory was completed on all objects, and the objects were intellectually and physically arranged, and this finding aid was created.

### **Scope and Content**

The Werner Wolff fonds at the Ryerson Image Centre contains objects created during the career of photographer Werner Wolff from the 1930s-1980s. Fonds includes photographic prints, contacts sheets, and negatives of various formats. In addition to photographic material, other personal material related to Wolff's career are contained within the fonds. Wolff documented U.S. Army troops during World War II before becoming a contract photographer for the Black Star Agency. Wolff remained on contract with Black Star for the rest of his career. The objects document U.S. Army troops during World War II, major European cities, various aspects of American life during the twentieth century. The majority of the collection consists of 35mm black and white negatives, 6 x 6 cm (120 roll film) negatives, contact sheets, handwritten notes, typed captions and tear sheets. Other photographic processes include 35 mm colour transparencies as well as 10.16 x 12.7 cm (4 x 5 inches) colour transparencies. Each file contains the negatives, contact sheets, tear sheets and caption information written by Wolff. Additionally, Wolff's passports, financial ledgers, Black Star contracts and press passes from various assignments are included. The fonds is arranged into the following series and subseries:

Series 1. Early Work and WWII

Subseries 1.1: YANK Magazine

Series 2. Black Star

Subseries 2.1 : Commissioned for Corporations

Subseries 2.2 : Commissioned for the Press

Series 3. Personal

Seres 4. Ephemera

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<sup>80</sup> Steven Wolff.

## Appendix I: Finding Aid for the Werner Wolff Fonds

Series and subseries descriptions are detailed below. File level descriptions are noted in Excel spreadsheets at the Ryerson Image Centre. Because of the size and nature of the fonds, item level descriptions are not necessary.

**Source of supplied title:** Fonds title based on name of the creator of the photographs.

**Physical description note:** With only a few exceptions, the majority of the objects are in good condition, which include a variety of photographic processes, textual documents on onionskin paper and textual documents on wood pulp paper. Several colour transparencies have shifted to magenta and several rolls of 35mm black and white negatives have shown signs of vinegar syndrome. 60 rolls of film have not been inventoried because they are tightly rolled, and unrolling would risk damage to the emulsion. Fifteen files exhibit mould damage. Consultation with a conservator is needed to flatten the rolled negatives and tend to the mould. Nine rolls suffer from vinegar syndrome and should be kept in their own Holliger box, ideally in cold storage. Several of the YANK Magazine issues are very brittle and must be handled carefully. A variety of materials have been used to create the objects in the ephemera series, including pulp paper, cotton, and felt. All ephemera material is in good condition.

**Arrangement:** No original order was kept or discovered. The intellectual arrangement of the series and subseries are based on the content of the fonds, contextual research, and correspondence with heirs of Werner Wolff. The physical arrangement is based on the intellectual arrangement, the photographic processes, and conservation needs.

### **Restrictions:**

The collection is available for viewing in person by appointment. As of 2012 the collection has not been digitized nor is it available online. Fonds, series and subseries descriptions are available at the RIC on the database Mimsy XG. Certain restrictions may apply for certain objects in need of conservation attention. To view the collection please contact the Ryerson Image Centre at:

Ryerson Image Centre  
33 Gould Street  
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 1X8

416-979-5000, ext. 7032  
gallery@ryerson.ca

### **Copyright:**

Express permission for reproduction must be given by the family of Werner Wolff (currently Steven Wolff). Contact the Ryerson Image Centre for more information on receiving copyright permission. If given permission, the following statement must accompany all photographs: "*All photographs by Werner Wolff, © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.*"

**Finding Aid:** Box list and file level inventory available at the Ryerson Image Centre.

**Accruals:**

In 2011, a box of 35mm and 10.16 x 12.7 cm (4 x 5 inches) colour transparencies were donated to the Ryerson Image Centre by Steven Wolff. As more material continues to be uncovered, additional acquisitions may be later accessioned into the fonds.

**Associated material:**

Theses

Rushworth, Matthew. "Issues in Object-Level Description in Collections of Press Photography: Towards a Metadata Standard for Photojournalism." Master's thesis. Ryerson University and The George Eastman House International Museum of Photography and Film, 2012.

*Matthew Rushworth used the Werner Wolff fonds as a case study for his Master thesis written for the Photographic Preservation and Collections Management program in tandem with Sara Manco's thesis. Both are available at the Ryerson Library and the RIC.*

Smith, C. Zoe. "The History of Black Star Picture Agency: "Life's" European Connection." Presented to the Visual Communication Division at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Gainesville, FL, August 7, 1984.

Exhibitions

Canadian artist Vera Frankel completed a piece based on a photograph taken by Wolff exhibited in *Archival Dialogues: Reading the Black Star Collection* shown September 29-December 22, 2012. Contact the RIC for more information about the exhibition.

Books

*The following is a list of books featuring photographs by Werner Wolff:*

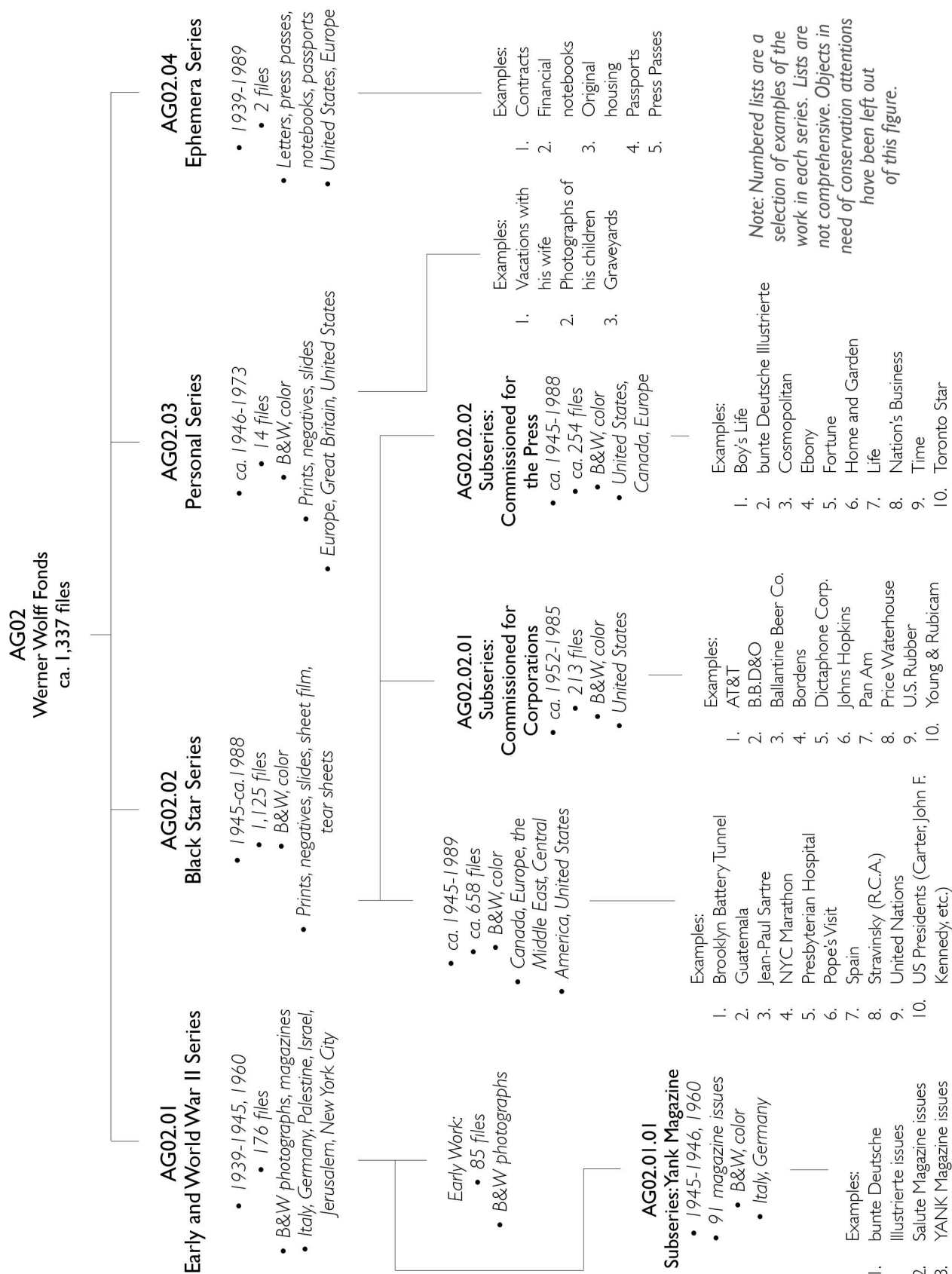
Chapnick, Howard. *Truth Needs No Ally: Inside Photojournalism*. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1994. (Available at the RIC)

Neubauer, Hendrik. *Black Star: 60 Years of Photojournalism*. Köln: Könemann, 1997.  
(Available at the RIC and Ryerson University Library)

Capa, Cornell, Ralph Graves and Doris O'Neil. *Life: The Second Decade, 1964-1955*. Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1984. (Ryerson University Library, call number: TR820. L53 1984.)

**Related records:**

Approximately 2,276 prints from negatives taken by Werner Wolff are held in the Black Star Collection at the Ryerson Image Centre. Corresponding negatives and assignment information are in the Werner Wolff fonds. The individual prints in the Black Star Collection have been linked to Werner Wolff in the Ryerson Image Centre database Mimsy XG.





**Series descriptions:** *Note: Due to time restraints, extent was completed on all series except Series 2: Black Star. In the Mimsy XG database, the Administrative History was entered into the Scope and Content field.*

## **1. Early Work and WWII**

**Dates:** [1939]-1945 ; 1960

**Extent:** 176 files

ca. 3,022 photographs : multiple processes

ca. 47 p. textual records

*Note:* Processes include gelatin silver negatives, gelatin silver prints, gelatin silver contact prints ; dimensions vary

### **Administrative History:**

The earliest photographs taken by Werner Wolff are in this series. Not much is known about his work before World War II. During the 1930s, Wolff documented his travels to Palestine and Jerusalem. During World War II, Wolff served as a member of the U.S. Army Signal Corps based in Italy. Many of the photographs found here were taken on assignment for the Army weekly *YANK* magazine.

### **Scope and Content:**

Files contain negatives, prints and contact sheets taken in Palestine and Jerusalem prior to World War II and in Europe during World War II. Files also contain handwritten notes, typed notes, and correspondence.

**Source of supplied title:** Based on contents of the series.

### **1.1. Sub-series: YANK Magazine**

**Dates:** 1945-1946 ; 1960

**Extent:** 91 magazines : b&w and col.

#### **Administrative History:**

Written "By the men, for the men,"<sup>81</sup> *YANK* Magazine was a picture magazine published entirely by enlisted soldiers during World War II, and only disseminated to those who served. Neither officers nor news agencies interfered with the content, which provided a unique way for the men on the front lines to express themselves.<sup>82</sup> Similar to *LIFE* Magazine, *YANK* was an illustrated weekly that published photo essays, and feature stories, in addition to comic strips, and pin up girls. While working for the U.S. Army Signal Corps in Italy, Wolff was a photographer and photo editor for the Mediterranean edition. Several editions were printed for twenty-three different geographical regions, including a South

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<sup>81</sup> Steve Kluger, *Yank, the Army Weekly: World War II from the guys who brought you victory*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), xi.

<sup>82</sup> Art Weithas, *Close to Glory: The Untold Stories of WWII By the GIs Who Saw and Reported the War - YANK MAGAZINE Correspondents* (Austin, Texas: Eakin Press, 1991), xiv.

Japan edition and Middle East edition.<sup>83</sup> According to the website “Wartime Press,” the European edition changed its name to the Mediterranean edition on April 13, 1945. The final issue was printed on November 2, 1945, after which it merged with the Continental edition for the final two months of printing. The magazine ceased production after the war ended.<sup>84</sup> After the war, *Salute* magazine was published in the U.S. by former editors of *YANK*. This monthly publication took on a similar style as *Life* as a large format picture magazine.

Two copies of the German photo magazine *bunte Deutsche Illustrierte* are also included in the subseries, featuring an article on former U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s trip to Germany in 1960.

**Scope and Content:**

Subseries Contains issues of the publications *YANK*, *Salute*, and *bunte Deutsche Illustrierte*. Individual magazines were not assigned unique accession numbers.

**Source of supplied title:** Based on contents of the subseries.

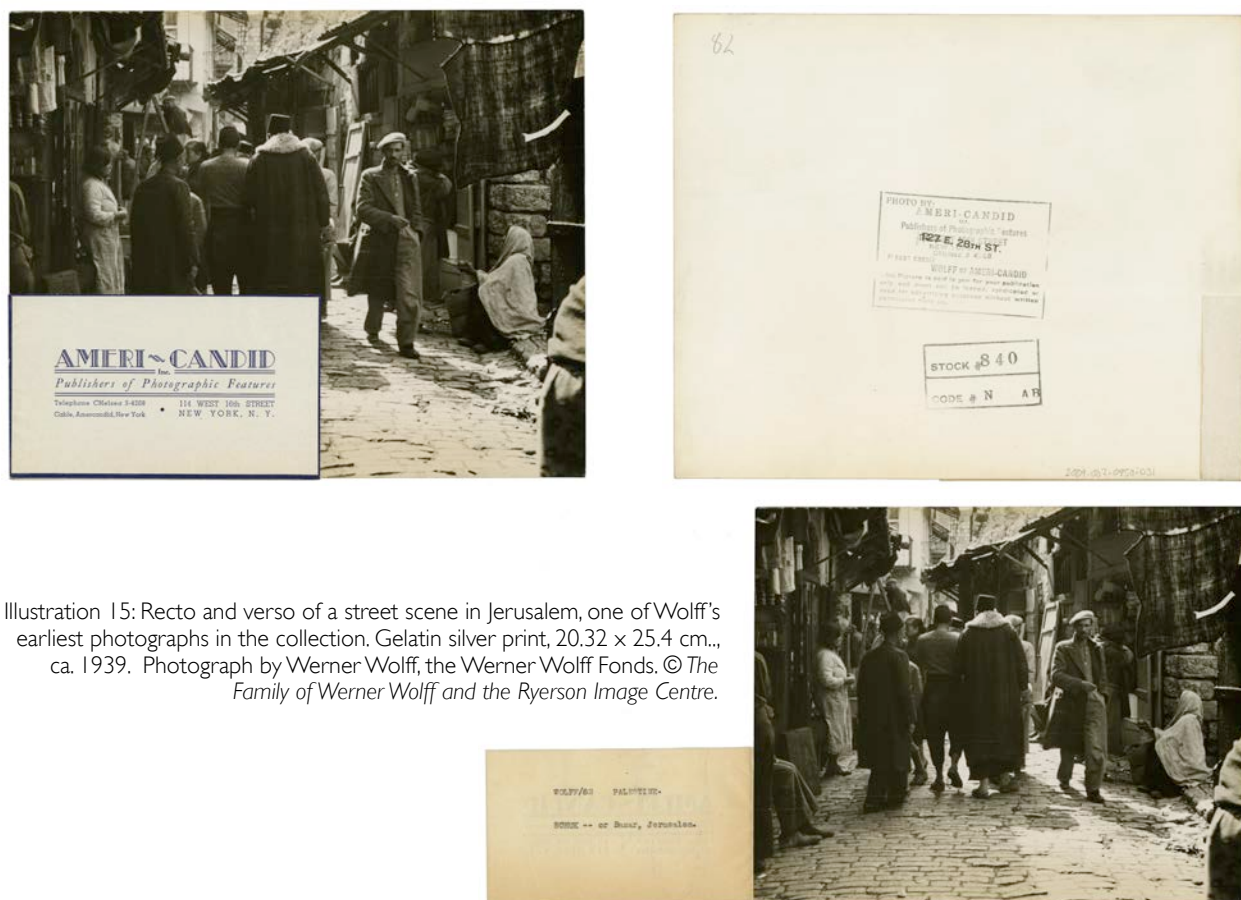


Illustration 15: Recto and verso of a street scene in Jerusalem, one of Wolff's earliest photographs in the collection. Gelatin silver print, 20.32 x 25.4 cm., ca. 1939. Photograph by Werner Wolff, the Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.

<sup>83</sup> “Army Yank Magazine-All Editions,” *Wartime Press*, accessed January 5, 2012, <http://www.wartimepress.com/archives.asp?TID=Yank%20Magazine%20-%20All%20Editions&MID=Army&q=41&FID=36>.

<sup>84</sup> According to “Wartime Press,” the final issue of the Continental edition of *YANK* was printed on December 30, 1945.



Illustration 16 (above): Recto (left) and verso (right) of a photograph depicting a town in Algeria being bombed. Gelatin silver fiber print, 9.9 x 12.4 cm., ca. 1942. All photographs by Werner Wolff, the Werner Wolff Fonds.  
© The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.



Illustration 17 (above): An Italian street scene. Gelatin silver fiber print, 6 x 6 cm, ca. 1943-1945.



Illustration 18 (above): Portrait of a wounded member of the 10th Mountain Division. Gelatin silver fiber print, 6 x 6 cm., ca. 1943-1945.

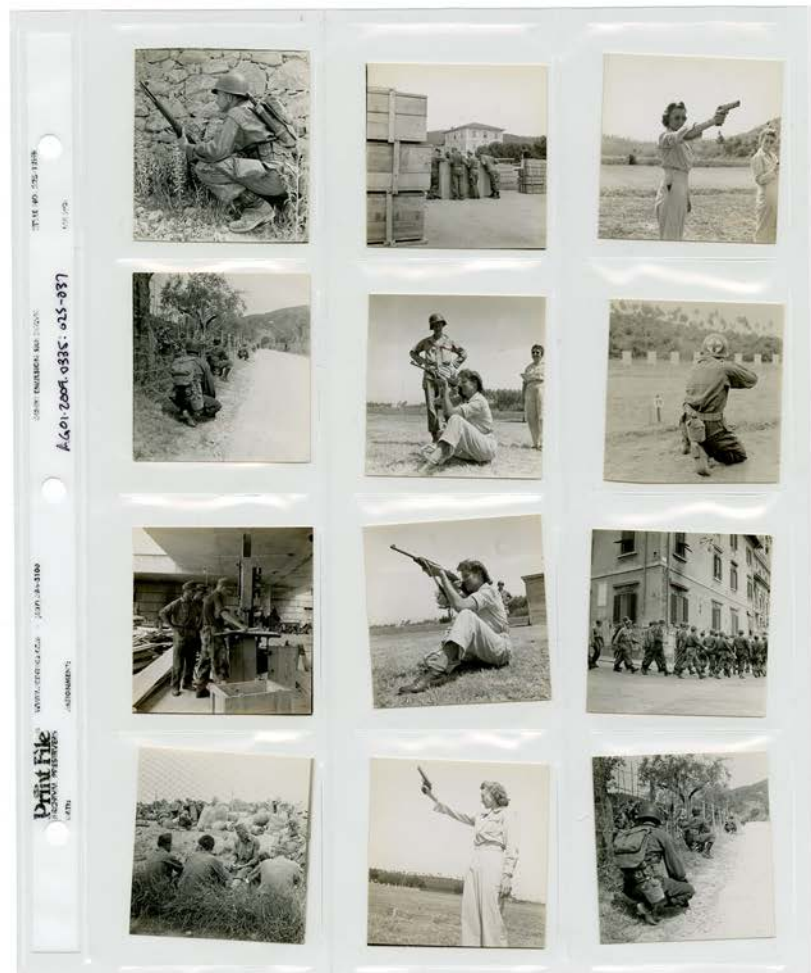


Illustration 19 (above): Contact prints of a redeployment camp with US Army soldiers and nurses, in archival housing. Gelatin silver fiber prints, 6 x 6 cm, ca. 1943-1945.

## **2. Black Star**

**Dates:** 1945-[ca.1989]

**Extent:** ca. 1,125 files. - photographs : multiple processes. - textual records ; dimensions vary.

*Note:* Processes include gelatin silver negatives, gelatin silver prints, colour transparencies, Polaroid

### **Administrative History:**

Werner Wolff was a contract photographer for the esteemed Black Star Agency for the majority of his photographic career. He was a highly skilled technical photographer, photographing a wide range of subjects. Wolff spent long periods of time photographing his subjects, ensuring he returned to the Black Star offices with a variety of rich visual material. He also understood the nature of illustrated magazines, making him popular among publications such as *Life* Magazine. Established in 1936 by emigres fleeing Europe, the agency's goals were to create an organization representing working photojournalists in the United States<sup>85</sup> and make their work commercially available. By the time Wolff returned from World War II in 1945, the agency had established tight connections with various publications including, but not limited to, Time, Inc. and *Life* magazine. Other clients included organizations such as the Dictaphone Corporation and Johns Hopkins University. Over the years, the agency would represent a number of well known photographers.

Black Star was based on a European model of agency management, handling the printing, pricing and billing of the photographs,<sup>86</sup> as well as operating as a stock agency.<sup>87</sup> As a freelance photographer, Wolff was given the opportunity to take assignments for a wide range of clients, including corporations and advertising firms as well as magazines and the press. His contracts with the agency show that Wolff agreed to a weekly draw that worked against the sales of his photographs.<sup>88</sup> According to current Black Star president Ben Chapnick, all work done by Wolff was completed for a specific assignment, with many photographs integrated into the Black Star stock collection.<sup>89</sup> In addition to commissioned work, sales were generated for the agency by selling photographs held in the stock collection. In the early 2000s, Ben Chapnick returned many prints in the collection that he believed had outlived their usefulness back to the photographers. These photographs were no longer sought after,<sup>90</sup> and many that were returned to Wolff and have been organized into this series. Black Star classified the photographs in the collection by subject, with a numbering system to identify individual assignments, such as "12-67-3818." The first number refers to the month the assignment was taken, the second number the year and the last is a Black Star

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<sup>85</sup> Hendrik Neubauer, *Black Star: 60 Years of Photojournalism*, (Köln: Könemann, 1997), 8.

<sup>86</sup> C. Zoe Smith, "The History of Black Star Picture Agency: "Life's" European Connection," (presented to the Visual Communication Division at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Gainesville, FL, August 7, 1984), 18.

<sup>87</sup> Dorothy S. Gelatt, "Inside Black Star: Photo Agency to the World," *Popular Photography*, March 1968, 125.

<sup>88</sup> Ben Chapnick (president of Black Star) in discussion with the author, July 25, 2012.

<sup>89</sup> Ben Chapnick (president of Black Star) in discussion with the author, May 29, 2012.

<sup>90</sup> Ben Chapnick.

identifier. Many of these numbers were found on the original housing and transcribed to the inventory data.

**Scope and Content:**

Files contain negatives of various processes, prints, contact sheets, typed captions, handwritten notes, and tear sheets of published images. His contracts and financial ledgers are in the ephemera series. Many, but not all, files in the series have been separated into the two subseries listed below. Within each subseries, files are arranged alphabetically by title of assignment, which corresponds with the titles on the container list.

2.1. Commissioned for Corporations

2.2. Commissioned for the Press

**Source of supplied title:** Based on contents of the series.

**2.1. Subseries: Commissioned for corporations**

**Dates:** 1945-[ca.1987]

**Extent:** ca. 213 files. - Photographs : multiple processes. - textual records ; dimensions vary

*Note:* Processes include gelatin silver negatives, gelatin silver prints, colour transparencies

**Administrative History**

Wolff was commissioned to photograph many corporations including Young & Rubicam, Ballantine Beer Co., and AT&T among others. These photographs were intended for internal use, such as for annual reports, and not initially intended to be printed in press (i.e. magazines and newspapers).

**Scope and Content:**

Subseries includes negatives, contacts sheets and photographs commissioned by corporations in the United States. The majority of the files contain negatives of various processes, prints, and contact sheets. Some files include typed captions, handwritten notes, and tear sheets of the images.

**Source of supplied title:** Based on contents of the subseries.

**2.2 Subseries: Comissioned for the press**

**Dates:** 1945-[ca. 1989]

**Extent:** ca. 254 files - photographs : multiple processes. - textual records ; dimensions vary

*Note:* Processes include gelatin silver negatives, gelatin silver prints, colour transparencies

**Administrative History:**

Wolff documented much of New York City, including demonstrations, politicians and street scenes. He also traveled the world and photographed for international publications. Many of the photographs in this subseries were printed in newspapers and magazines across the United States, Canada and Europe. Examples of how Wolff photographs were used in the press can be found in appendix II of this thesis.

**Scope and Content:**

Files contain negatives, contact sheets and photographs intended to be printed in widely distributed publication. The majority of the files contain negatives of various



processes, prints, contact sheets. May include typed captions, handwritten notes, and tear sheets of the images.

**Source of supplied title:** Based on contents of the subseries.



Illustration 20 (above): A street scene in Portugal. Kodachrome slide, 35mm, 1975.

Illustration 21 (right): A contact sheet showing toys stopped in motion, shot on assignment for Johns Hopkins. Gelatin silver print, 21.59 x 27.94 cm, ca. 1950s.

Photographs by Werner Wolff, the Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.



Illustration 22 (above): Firefighters on the job.  
Color transparency, 12.5 x 10 cm, ca. 1950-1960v.



Illustration 23 (top left): Former U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson greets U.S. soldiers in Guam.  
Poloroid, 8.5 x 10.8 cm, ca. 1967.

Illustration 24 (left): Photographs of a demonstration on Wall Street in New York City.  
Kodachrome slide, 35mm, 1975.

Illustration 25 (below left): A contact sheet for a story about baseball stars Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris, shot for the Toronto Star.  
Gelatin silver print, 21.59 x 27.94 cm, ca. 1960s.

Illustration 26 (below): A portrait of Dr. Spitzer in his office, shot for Johns Hopkins Magazine.  
Gelatin silver print, 20.32 x 25.4 cm, 1952.

All photographs by Werner Wolff, the Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.



### 3. Personal

**Dates:** [ca. 1939]-1985

**Extent:** 14 files

ca. 719 photographs : multiple processes ; dimensions vary

3 p. textual records

*Note:* Processes include gelatin silver negatives, gelatin silver prints, colour transparencies

#### **Administrative History:**

Though most of the contents of the Werner Wolff fonds are the result of paid assignment work through the Black Star Agency, several files contain photographs of Wolff's personal life. The photographs here are a very small part of the collection, depicting personal trips with Alice as well as photographs of Wolff's children on vacation.

#### **Scope and Content:**

Files contain gelatin silver negatives, prints, and 35mm colour transparencies of Werner Wolff, his wife, and their children.

**Source of supplied title:** Based on contents of the series.



Illustration 27 (above): A portrait of Werner's wife, Alice, while on vacation in the English countryside. Kodachrome slide, 35 mm, ca. 1972.

Illustration 28 (left): A photo of Werner's son, Steven, brushing his teeth. Gelatin silver print, 24.3 x 19.5 cm, ca. 1948.

Photographs by Werner Wolff, the Werner Wolff Fonds. © *The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.*



#### 4. Ephemera

**Dates:** 1939-1989

**Extent:** 22 files

56 objects : textual records, graphic material ; dimensions vary

##### **Administrative History:**

Werner Wolff kept many handwritten and typed notes relating to each assignment, most of which have been housed in the same file as the negatives. Wolff saved many other objects associated with certain assignments that were donated with the collection, as well as personal objects.

##### **Scope and Content:**

Series includes contracts with the Black Star Agency, letters, passports, press passes, examples of original housing, and notebooks detailing his finances.

**Source of supplied title:** Based on contents of the series.

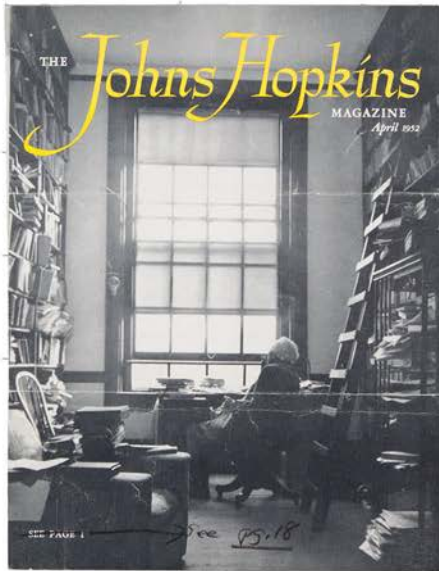


Illustration 29 (above): A financial notebook kept by Wolff, detailing his expenses.

Illustration 30 (above left): A medal from Wolff's time overseas during World War II.

Illustration 31 (left): An example of an original envelope used by the US Army Signal Corps to correspond with official YANK reporters.

Photographs by Werner Wolff, the Werner Wolff Fonds. © The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.



The following are examples of Wolff's images printed in various publications. More examples can be found in the fonds. The Werner Wolff Fonds, ©The Family of Werner Wolff and the Ryerson Image Centre.

Illustrations 32 (left and above): The same photograph of Dr. Spitzer used two different ways for Johns Hopkins University publications in 1952.

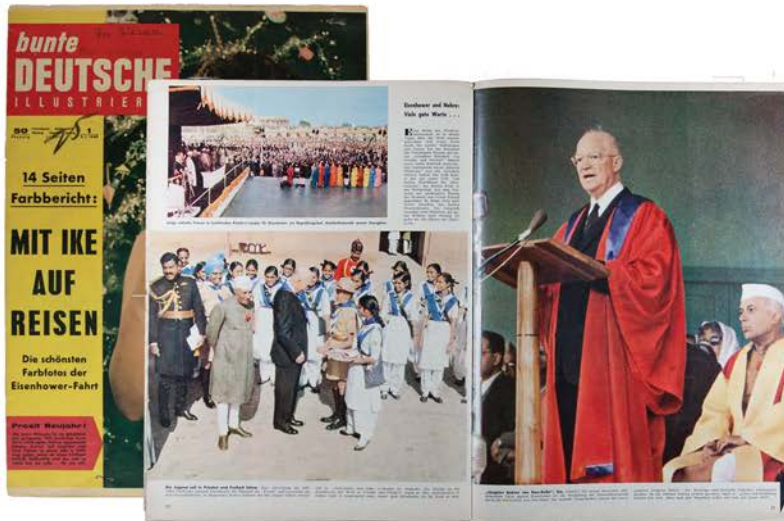


Illustration 33 (above): Photographs of Dwight D. Eisenhower on an official presidential tour to India, the Middle East and Asia, Published in the German illustrated magazine bunte Deutsche Illustrierte, 1960.



Illustration 34 (above): Photographs of the Empire State Building, printed in an unknown publication.



Illustration 35 (right): A copy of Life magazine from September 23, 1945 featuring Wolff's images of a tennis match.

Mimsy XG: Production database (xg)

File Edit Field Record Group Search Tools Reports Activities Authorities Window Help

Information  
AC02  
Werner Wolff fonds  
Currently 2,276 prints in the Black Star  
Collection are credited to Werner Wolff.

Media

Links  
+ Authorities (1)  
+ People (1)  
+ Other (1)  
+ Group (1)  
+ SMANCO: Wolf Series level rec

Access Restrictions  
Category Archives  
\* Title Proper: Werner Wolff fonds  
\* Creator Statement: WOLFF, Werner

Publish? ☐ N

OBJECTS

Name	Relationship	Bio	Legacy Affiliation	Prior Attribution?	Sort	Begin Date	End Date	Note	Portion
WOLFF, Werner	photographer	German, 1911-2002		<input type="checkbox"/>					

Edition  
[ca. 1939]-1989  
Currently 2,276 prints in the Black Star Collection are credited to Werner Wolff.

Associated Materials  
Related Works  
Collector  
Place of publication  
Place Collected

Extent: ca. 1,338 files: graphic material, textual records, objects  
photographs, negatives, slides, and other textual material

Physical Description  
Date Collected  
Item Count  
Site  
Condition  
Object Type  
Culture  
Medium  
Dimensions  
Biographical Sketch

For more information on Werner Wolff, see the Werner Wolff person record in the Mimsy database. A detailed biography is available upon request at the Ryerson Image Centre.

Accompanying Material  
Other Measurements  
Custodial History

Scope and Content  
The Werner Wolff material was under the care of Wolff's heirs before arriving at Ryerson University. In 2000, several files that had been held at the Black Star agency were returned to Wolff. These files were placed with the rest of Wolff's work in the cellar of his house, where the collection remained largely unsorted. After the death of Wolff's wife, Alice, their son, Steven, gave the collection to Ryerson University to become one of three artist archives at the Ryerson Image Centre (RIC) in 2009. After learning of the Black Star collection, the Ryerson Image Centre accepted the collection and transferred it to the Ryerson Image Centre. Most of the contents of the collection are housed in the Ryerson Image Centre's Black Star Collection, which is a small section of the collection. The Black Star Collection is a collection of photographic prints, contact sheets, and negatives of various formats. In addition to photographic material, other personal material related to Wolff's career are contained within the fonds. Wolff documented U.S. Army troops during World War II before becoming a contract photographer for the Black Star Agency. Wolff remained in contact with the Black Star Agency for the rest of his career. The objects document U.S. Army troops during World War II, various aspects of American life, and major European cities during the twentieth century. The majority of the collection consists of 35mm black and white negatives, 6x6 cm (120 roll film) negatives, contact sheets, handwritten notes, typed captions and bear sheets. Other photographic processes include 35 mm colour transparencies as well as 10.16x12.7 cm (4x5 inches) colour transparencies. Each file contains the negatives.

Condition Date  
Immediate Source  
Arrangement  
The fonds is arranged into the following series and subseries: Series 1: Early Work and WWII, subseries 1.1: YANK Magazine; Series 2: Black Star, subseries 2.1: Commissioned for the Press; Series 3: Personal; Series 4: Ephemera. Series and subseries descriptions are recorded in the database. File level descriptions are noted in Excel spreadsheets at the Ryerson Image Centre. Because of the size and nature of the fonds, item level descriptions are not necessary. Fonds physically arranged by series, subseries, and in accession number order.

Mat. Language  
Most material in English, some ephemera in German.

Location of Originals  
Other Formats Available  
Terms Governing Use  
Arrangement (TEXT, MAX Length = 1000)

Figure 3.1 : Fonds level database record

Note: The following figures are computer screenshots of fonds, one series, and one file record as entered in 2012. For updated information, consult the RIC database.  
One issue of YANK magazine has also been catalogued for future reference.



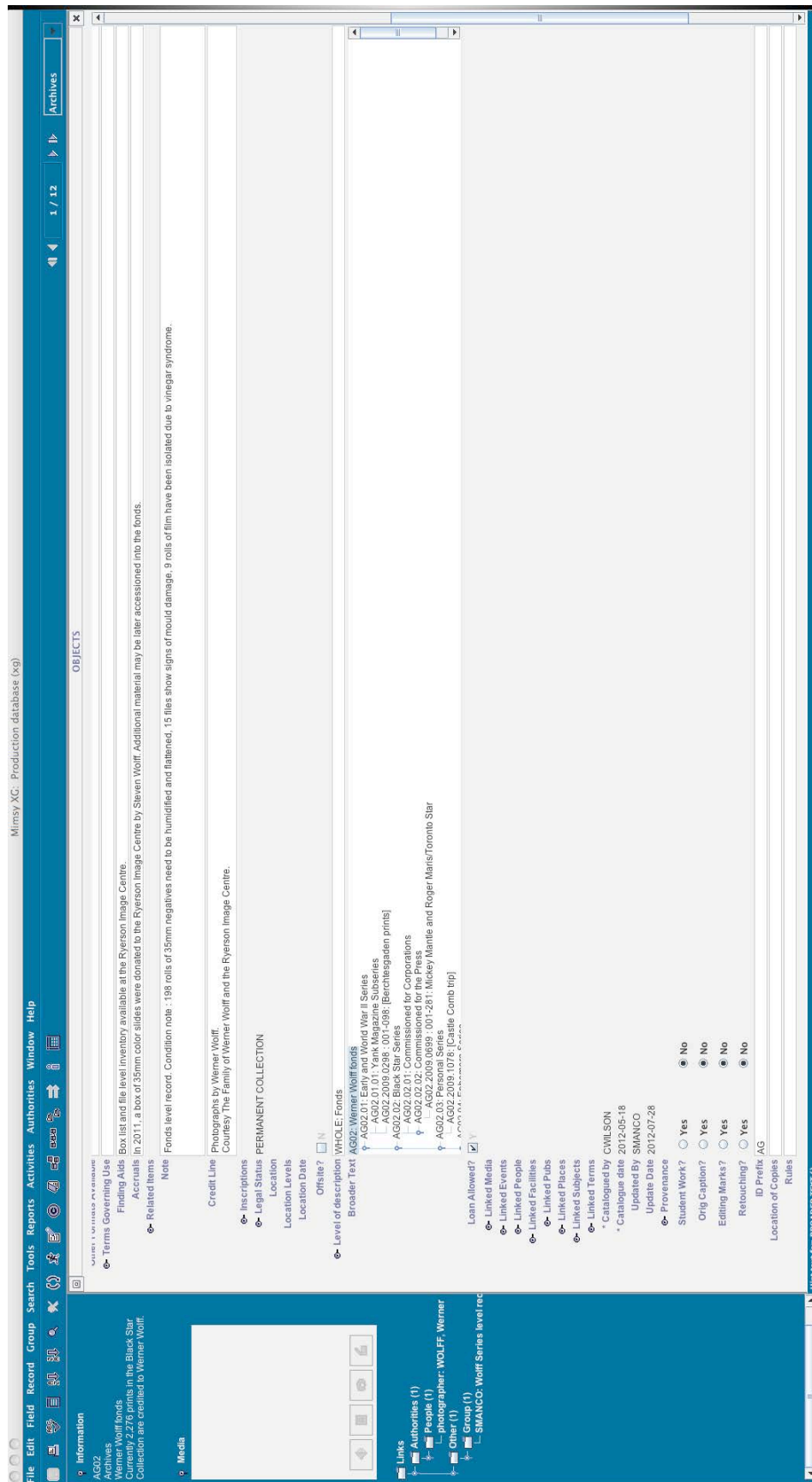


Figure 3.2 : Fonds level database record

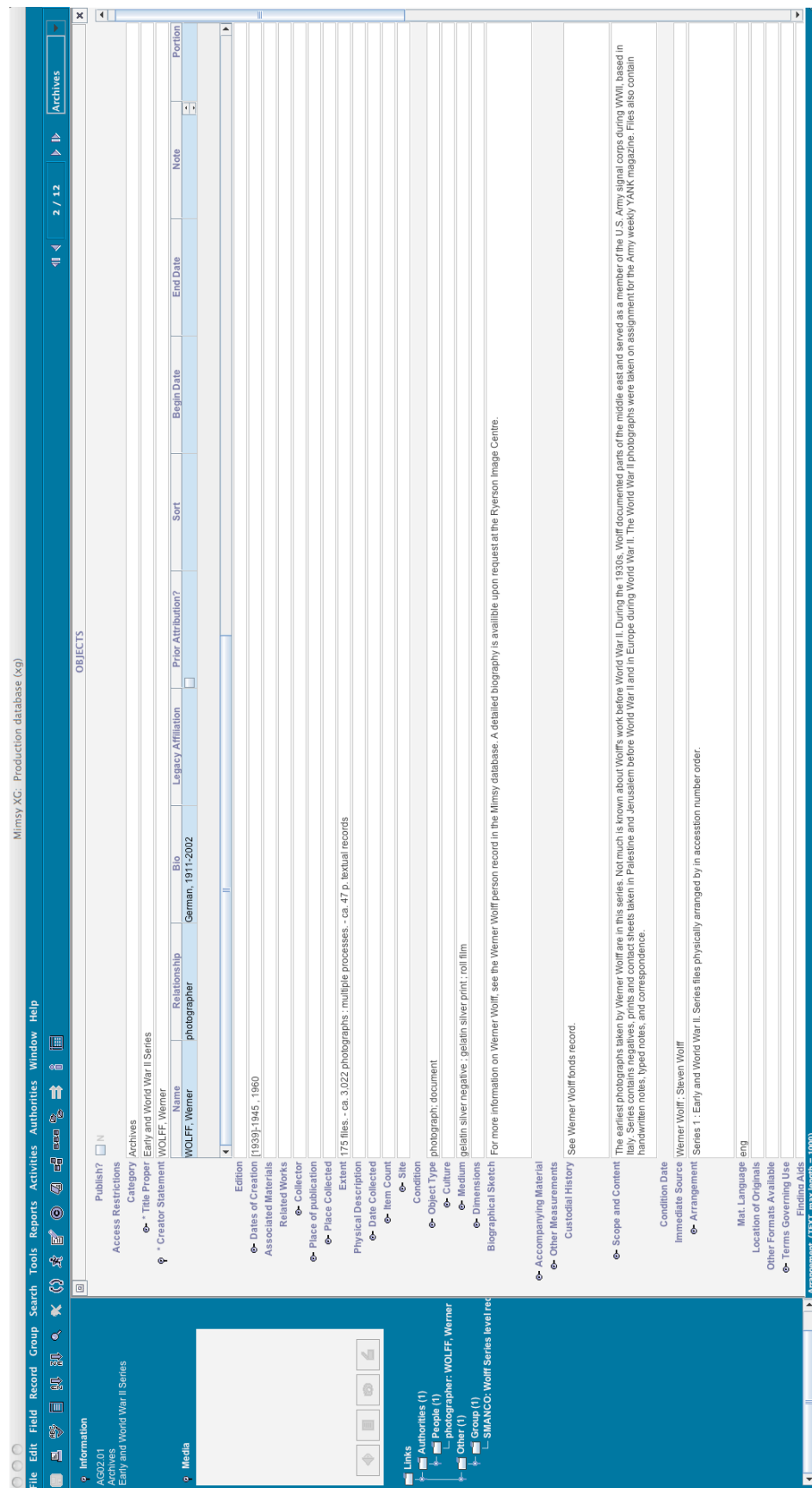


Figure 4.1 : Series level database record



Figure 4.2 : Series level database record

Minsky XG - Production database (xg)

**Information**

AG02.2009.0298 : 001-098  
Archives  
(Berthsgaden prints)

**Media**

**Links**

- Authorities (2)
  - Peoples (1)
    - Photographer: WOLFF, Werner
    - Yank-June 1, 1845
  - Other (1)
    - Group (1)
      - SMANCO-Wolff Series level rec

**OBJECTS**

Name	Relationship	Bio	Legacy Affiliation	Prior Attribution?	Sort	Begin Date	Note	Portion
WOLFF, Werner	photographer	German, 1911-2002		<input type="checkbox"/>				

Edition

- Dates of Creation 1945
- Associated Materials
- Related Works
- Collector
- Place of publication Europe
- Place Collected

Extent 99 photographs : gelatin silver contact prints ; 6x6 cm.

Physical Description

- Date Collected
- Item Count
- Site
- Condition
- Object Type photograph
- Culture
- Medium gelatin silver print
- Dimensions
- Biographical Sketch

Accompanying Material

- Other Measurements
- Custodial History See Werner Wolff fonds record.

Scope and Content

Images of aftermath of bombings - mostly small towns and countryside.

Condition Date

Immediate Source Werner Wolff : Slaven Wolff

- Arrangement Series 1 : Early and World War II; File : AG02.2009.0298 : 001-098

Mat. Language eng

Location of Originals

Other Formats Available

Summary of the object (TEXT max length = 4000)

Figure 5.1 : File level database record

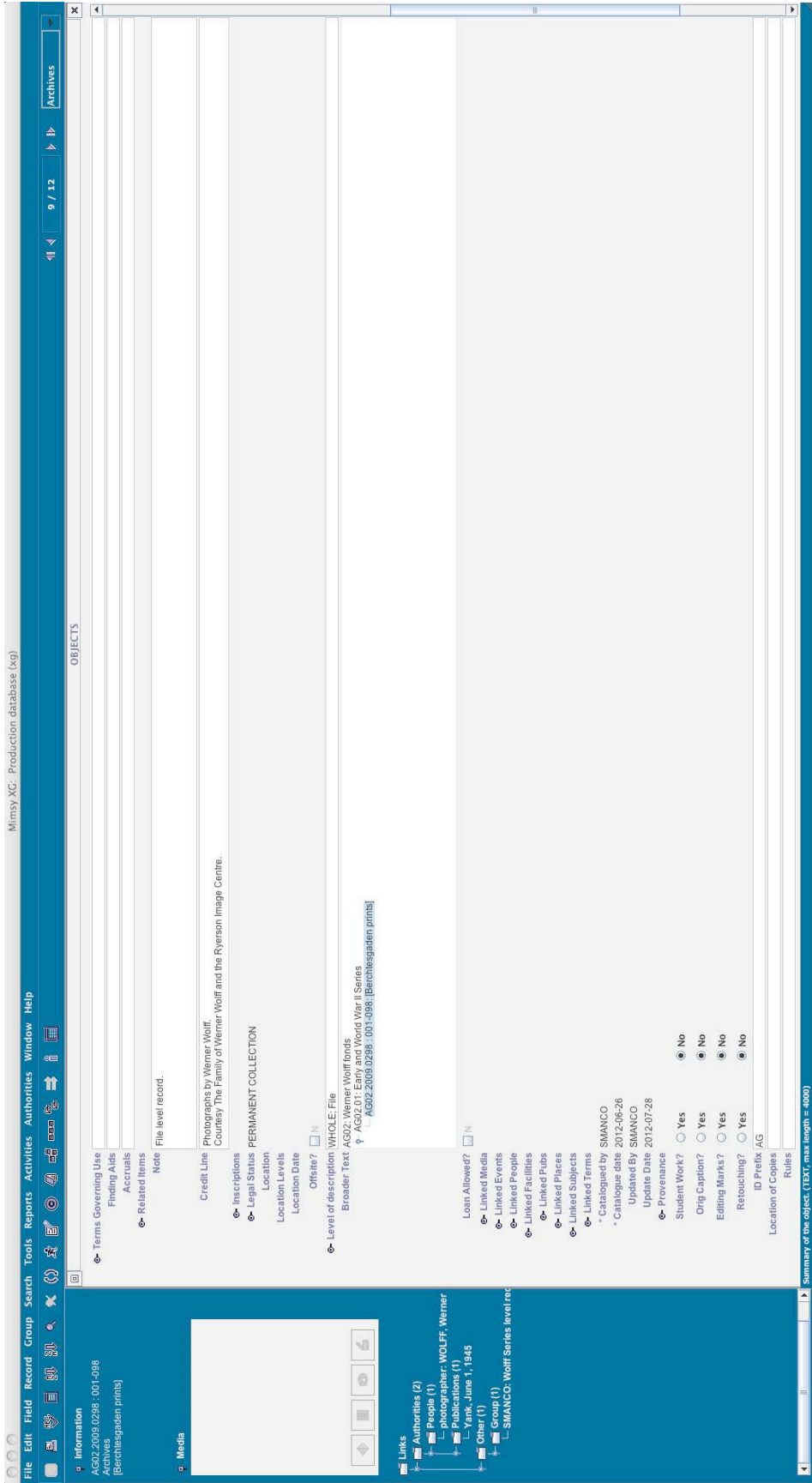


Figure 3.2 : File level database record



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