

Digitizing Family Albums in The Family Camera Network (FamCam),

Archive at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM):

A Case Study of the Evans Family Collection

By

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ABSTRACT

Digitizing Family Albums at The Family Camera Network at the Royal Ontario Museum:

The Evans Family Collection

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My thesis explores the family album as an indivisible object within a museum's collection. Family albums hold both private and public importance for their ability to share collective memories and are valuable resources for scholars and the general public. To realize the inherent value of albums, I argue that we need to treat them as singular objects. Most institutions – such as museums, libraries or archives – treat family albums merely as a group of individual images. In this thesis, I propose an alternative approach: viewing and digitizing the albums as whole objects that are inseparable, lest we distort the narrative shaped in the album. The digitization process advances three services: first, digitization increases access to the album; second, digitization often enables the public to see and understand the album as a whole, maintaining the vision that the album's maker sought to construct; third, digitization helps preserve the albums. My thesis investigates best practices for family album digitization so that the public can see albums as whole objects. A case study will focus on the Evans family collection from the FamCam at the ROM (accession numbers: 2018.24.1-21), a family collection which comes from a Canadian family that lived in China from 1888, for nearly a 100 years. Twenty-one family albums comprise the collection. The collection portrays the lives of a Western family in China, and provides insight into a century of photography and history. My thesis discusses the methodology, tools, and specific techniques for digitization, while highlighting the complexity of family albums. Though this digitization process may differ from

the typical protocols for artifacts, the uniqueness of family albums necessitates genre-specific procedures. My thesis contributes to the emerging literature on family photography in public institutions, and develops an original method for preserving and archiving them digitally.

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1. THEORIES AND ANALYSIS

1.1. INTRODUCTION

“The Album as a private collection, whether social, anthropological, historical, museological, or biographical, domesticates a vast and unpredictable universe, setting its pleasures and terrors into a pattern of knowledge and experience inextricably linked with the self. The compiler-spectator is absorbed by and into the visible world through tangible possession of its photographic emblems and the walking dream work of the imagination”.¹

Family albums have long been a cherished cultural object. In earlier times, the family album could often be found next to the Bible in family homes, a testament to their cultural importance. Amateur and professional photographers have compiled family albums since the advent of photography in the late 19th century. With the invention of the Kodak No. 1, in 1889, photography became more accessible to the public. Individuals started showing interest in photography and in documenting their lives and their travels, incorporating self-made and professionally-made photography into their personal albums. These albums often depicted specific events or family members. Occasionally, people photographed simply to explore the camera, this new invention.² Family albums became a valuable part of family lives, a part of its social activity.³

Though many people have documented their lives through photography, until recently scholars of photography have neglected to focus on family photography as a distinct genre. For

¹ Martha Langford, *Suspended Conversations* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2001), 63.

² Daphne Yuen, “The Digitization of Photographic Albums at the Victoria and Albert Museum and other London-Based Cultural Institution,” Master thesis, Ryerson University, 2017, 13.

³ Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 24-25.

example, in Beaumont Newhall's *The History of Photography* (1982), the preeminent academic book on photography for decades, there is no section devoted to family photography.⁴ A lack of scholarship points to a lack of awareness surrounding the rich histories contained within family albums. Scholars such as Martha Langford and Tina Campt, who did study the genre, emphasized family photography's historic and anthropological values.⁵ Only in recent years has the fascination with family photography grown, after institutions and scholars began to discover the value of these records for the public. Even writers, artist, and filmmakers started looking to family photography to learn about family relations and their complexities.⁶ Concomitantly, academics realized that family photography is intertwined with memory and history. Mariane Hirsch recommended viewing family photography as a source of study about cultural memory, a collection of stories from different perspective that sometimes contradict each other. Quoting Jo Spence and Patricia Holland,⁷ Hirsch said that family photogaphy creates a bridge between personal memory and social history.

The academic interest in family albums became contagious. Amongst cultural institutions there was an epiphany that the albums' psychological and social aspects extend far beyond the specific family portrayed.⁸ Thus, museums and other institutions invested in family photography

⁴ Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography: from 1839 to the present* (NY: Museum of Modern Art, 1964).

⁵ Langford, *Suspended Conversations*; Tina Campt, *Image Matters, Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

⁶ Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸ Gillian Rose, *Doing Family Photography: The Domestic, The Public and The Politics of Sentiment* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company), 19.

collections and exhibits. For example, in May 2017, the ROM partnered with the Art Gallery of Mississauga (AGM) to present “The Family Camera” exhibition.⁹ In June 2017, the archive of Ontario showed its “Family Focus” exhibit, which consisted of early family portraits.¹⁰

Photography scholars started to take notice of this genre, especially since the albums make a commentary on the history of photography. Notably, in Geoffrey Batchen’s book, *Each Wild Idea* (1999), he emphasizes the importance of “ordinary photographs,” such as family photography. Batchen says that the history of photography cannot be understood without acknowledging the importance of these quotidian images.¹¹

In Mette Sandbye’s article, “Looking at the Family Photo Album: A Resumed Theoretical Discussion of Why and How” (2014), she argues that the emotional and psychological aspects of family photography are relevant to society, and therefore merit further study.¹² The act of photographing and compiling family albums is a social practice, and as such, helps shape identity.¹³ This significance goes beyond the history of one family; the album often contributes to the history of a location, era, or ideology. A public narrative arises out of the album’s pages beyond simply a personal point of view. Citing Daniel Miller’s *Stuff* (2010)¹⁴,

⁹ “The Family Camera,” *Royal Ontario Museum*, 2017, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/exhibitions-galleries/exhibitions/the-family-camera>.

¹⁰ Jay Young & Alison Little, “A Focus on Family: Creating an Exhibit about 19th-Century Archival Photographs,” *ActiveHistory.ca*, <http://activehistory.ca/2017/06/a-focus-on-family-creating-an-exhibit-about-19th-century-archival-photographs/>.

¹¹ Batchen Geoffrey, *Each Wild Idea* (Cambridge: MIT Press), 57.

¹² Mette Sandbye (2014) “Looking at the family photo album: a resumed theoretical discussion of why and how,” *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 6, no. 1 (2014): 4.

¹³ Rose, *Doing Family Photography*, 18.

¹⁴ Miller, Daniel. “Stuff” Polity press. 2010 quoted in Sandbye “looking at the family photo album: a resumed theoretical discussion of why and how” *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 6, no.1 (2004).

Sandbye argues that the family album creates a bridge between the local and the global, the general and the particular, the macro and the micro, ideology and emotion.¹⁵

Sandbye's appeal to recognize family photography as a distinct academic discipline receives support from the emergent study of social history, a sub-discipline within the field of history, which concentrates on the study of social behavior and social development. By making family photography collections publicly accessible, museums offer tools for researchers to learn about the past through the lived experience of individuals. Recently, the growing trend of family photography within public museums – a topic that I will explore shortly – illustrates its growing popularity for cultural institutions. The photographs' inclusion into museum collections indicates a growing recognition of these objects' significance. The new attention signifies a change in the way we see family albums and family photography. Marianne Hirsch compares the newfound appreciation of family photography to the transformation from "gazing" to "looking." The focus of power changed from the traditional hierarchy to more self-reflection.¹⁶ Now, society is less reliant on iconic images from reknown photographers, since we can also turn to the unknown vernacular photographers¹⁷ who share the untold stories which frame our life.

Despite the growing popularity of family photography, museums have not optimized their curatorial practices for this genre. Most museums fail to treat these albums as unitary objects, leaving their full potential unrealized. Rather, institutions digitize and exhibit these objects as individual images online, rather than as inseparable parts of a family album. Consequently,

¹⁵ Sandbye, "Looking at the family photo album," 12.

¹⁶ Hirsch, Marianne, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Post-memory* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2012), 15.

¹⁷ "Collecting Family Photographs," PIX, <http://www.enterpix.in/pix-post/collecting-family-photographs/> (accessed August 1, 2018).

viewers see just a part of the story, not enough to understand its full narrative. Isolating photographs from their albums in this way is similar to tearing a page from a book and expecting the reader to understand the book's full narrative from the one page. This practice diminishes the amount of information and leads to misinterpretations. The family album serves as a family book, where its introduction, content, illustrations and cover, are all integral parts of a rich history folded in the albums.

My thesis examines the unique nature of family albums within the ROM, which hosts The Family Camera Network (FCN) collection. The FCN focuses on the relationship between photography and the idea of family through the study of family photography. The FCN's records are distinct from typical museum records – the FCN's family albums are usually amateur works made for private needs rather than public display. However, through this unique photography, the FCN seeks to understand the family, community, and nation. The FCN aims to create a public archive of family photography, accompanied by oral histories, which will provide a valuable source for scholars. The archive can be of interest to a broad range of researchers, from those looking for new perspectives on the history of Canada to those who want to learn about the family photography genre or the *practice* of family photography.¹⁸

For my research, I find the FCN to be an inspiring project, which can enrich my research into family photography. I will examine family albums' defining factors: their physical conditions, content, physical organization, and photographic processes of the images. With these features in mind, I identified the best digitization method for the albums. Specifically, I developed a case study of 21 donated family albums, which document a single Canadian family in China and Canada, from 1888 to 1979. After studying the albums, I established step-by-step

¹⁸ Ibid.

guidelines for the digitization of those albums, as a resource for the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in its implementation of The Family Camera Network (FCN) collection. The Evans family collection exemplifies the importance and value of family photography to the public, since the collection portrays 100 consecutive years of one family's experiences as a Western family in 19th and 20th century China. Without these albums, scholars and the public would be deprived of their invaluable documentation and perspectives of this country and time period.

1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Family albums are unique since they hold collective memories and personal interpretations of events and history.¹⁹ Albums become a part of family ceremonies, tradition, and many aspects of everyday life, making them an important part of a family's possessions. Cherished throughout life, albums often pass on to the next generation. They are a physical and vivid testimony of the family's stories and history.

Why are family photographs so important to us? Why do we so often hear that in a house fire, people will first choose to save their family pictures? These photographs hold our memories from the past and are testaments not only to our own lives but also to those of our loved ones. These photographs serve as a bridge between life and death, connecting us to relatives no longer with us. Elizabeth Edwards (2004) emphasizes that family albums stimulate our memories, transforming them from the past into the present.²⁰ Critics from diverse fields (scholars such as

¹⁹ Camp, *Image Matters, Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe*, 17.

²⁰ Edwards, Elizabeth. ed., *Photographs Objects Histories* (London: Routledge, 2004), 28.

Dubois, Metz, Jay, Sontag) have noted the connection between photography and death.²¹ These scholars have observed that photographs, like death, are incomprehensible and inspire self-reflection. Indeed, the nexus between death and photography can be traced to the very inception of photography.

Not only teaching us about death, family photography informs us both about life as well. There are four notable edifying functions of family photography: its ability to portray the habits and stories of a private family; its use as a vehicle of social and cultural formation;²² its tendency to project the feelings and emotions of the album compiler; and its propensity to influence future viewers.²³

We should consider not just how these emotions affect our perspective on our history, but also how such emotions shaped our perspectives. Photographs evince emotions that reveal a profound story. Recognizing these emotions will enable us to experience the story more fully and to derive greater benefit from the images.²⁴

Family albums do not just spark our emotions – they also stimulate our senses.²⁵ Specifically, albums stimulate our optical, tactile and sonic senses.²⁶ Quoting the critic Laura Marks, Tina Campt invokes the concept of haptic visuality, in which touch connects between

²¹ Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 27.

²² Campt, *Image Matters, Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe*, 5.

²³ Elspeth H. Brown and Thy Phu, eds., *Feeling Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

²⁴ Rose, *Doing Family Photography*, 16.

²⁵ Campt, *Image Matters, Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe*, 13.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 18.

what we see and what we view – and how we feel.²⁷ Haptic visuality is significant due to its affect. In the context of Camp’s work, to “see” refers to our reception of an image’s content; and to “view” refers to recognition of the image’s material presence. In her book *Touching Photographs* (2012), Margaret Olin emphasizes this point through her discussion of the connection between photography, materiality and affect.²⁸

The digitization process directly implicates many of these senses. Though digitization may diminish our senses, insofar as our tactile access to material objects may be reduced, we can mitigate the loss by creating a digital reproduction that represents the entire album, rather than merely scanning individual components of an album. Thus, the viewer is able to engage more closely with the album in a manner that elicits a tactile experience.²⁹ With access to a digital reproduction of the whole album, the viewer can better connect to the story contained in the album pages, to the family chronology, to the significant moments in the family life that were chosen to represent the family narrative, and to the unique style of the album. Sometimes albums produce a sort of language, a family narrative that embraces a certain culture of time and place. The viewer can only appreciate such a language if he or she observes the albums in their entirety, rather than disparate images.

An effective online exhibit will allow the viewer to browse album pages and choose which period, place, or event to focus on. He or she can read the captions attached to the pictures with their personal and private aura, enabling the viewer to become more familiar with the family history captured in the album pages.

²⁷ Camp, *Image Matters, Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe*, 33.

²⁸ Margaret Olin, *Touching photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012),

²⁹ Camp, *Image Matters, Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe*, 8.

Public institutions often add layers to the family artifact. When a family album changes ownership, to a museum for example, another perspective grows on the object's story. The institution's archival practices supplement the family's initial perception of the album. The object does not lose its history; rather with the public's increased access, the albums become open to new viewpoints. For example, one Evans family album shows J.J. Evans'³⁰ photographs from the time that the family spent in a Shanghai concentration camp during the war with Japan. Once these albums enter the public realm, the images will become open to academic analyses, which will likely garner more input about the lives of Westerners in China during the war. When the object changes hands, new owners can offer different insights into the albums. Scholars of photography, such as Catherine Zuromskis, Gregory Stanczak, Luc Pauwels Martha Langford and Daphne Yuen, emphasize this aspect of shifting interpretations in response to changing owners.³¹

The album compiler is akin to an artist or an author who designs a unique work. Compilers organize their albums by various criteria, such as topic, chronological order, or specific figures and events. Sometimes, albums have no particular order or artistic intent, but randomly hold the pictures as if it were a shoebox. From the album contents, we can learn about the subjects' social interactions or social behavior. For example, how family members group together in the photographs may connote the types of relationships that existed. The social activities that are photographed inform the viewer about the family's daily lives.

³⁰ J.J. Evans was the photographer and compiler of most of the albums in the collection.

³¹ Catherine Zuromskis, *Snapshot Photography: The Lives of Images*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013); Gregory C. Stanczak, *Visual Research Methods: Image, Society, and Representation* (NY: SAGE Publications, 2007); Luc Pauwels, "A Private Visual Practice Going Public? Social Functions and Sociological Research Opportunities of Web-Based Family Photography," *Visual Studies* 23, no.1 (2008); Langford, *Suspended Conversations*; Yuen, "The Digitization of Photographic Albums."

The design and order of the album can also be particularly informative. In her book, *Image Matters, Archive, photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (2012), Tina Campt suggests that the album's design – even more than its contents – reflects on the compiler.³² Campt claims that the album at its core is a personal and social statement about one's sense of identity, which is particularly meaningful for marginalized groups, such as the African diaspora, whose identities have been fractured in the wake of slavery.³³

In addition to the album's content, order, and structure, the annotations distinguish an album. Some albums are annotated with dates and names. In others, owners share their impressions and experiences next to the images. The albums communicate a plethora of information to future generations and viewers. Concomitantly, they document sociological aspects that we have less access from other historical sources.³⁴ Annotations explicate the pages. Album annotation – though extrinsic to the image – adds meaning to the photographs and shape our memories.

Also extrinsic to the image – though likewise important – is the material composition of the photographs and albums. Scholarly studies on individual photographs expound on the importance of material composition for our analysis of photography. In the case of individual photographs, Edwards recommends, in *Photographs Objects Histories* (2004), that we consider the photograph's material composition for additional context.³⁵ Edward's suggestion is also

³² Campt, *Image Matters, Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe*, 69.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁴ Sandbye, "Looking at the Family Photo Album: A Resumed Theoretical Discussion of Why and How," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 6, no. 1 (2014): 5.

³⁵ Edwards, Elizabeth, ed, *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004).

salient when it comes to albums. Referring to Edwards, Campt points to material composition as a relevant attribute for evaluating photography. Material composition holds no less import when dealing with entire albums, since material composition adds meaning to the album as an object.³⁶ Sandbye also recommends looking at albums through the lens of material culture studies and to refer to family albums as “a thing.” According to Sandbye, we should consider the albums’ active role in our material lives and their meaning within this physical context.

In *Doing Family Photography* (2016), Gillian Rose discusses the album as an object, writing that the real importance of an image comes from its context, which includes the album structure and the album’s path into the public arena.³⁷ Similarly, in Richard Chalfen’s *Snapshot Version of Life* (2008),³⁸ family photography serves as both a form of communication and a “symbolic activity.” The family album is an object, a social device used to communicate through time. Album order, annotations, culture, materiality, and the interplay of these factors thus inform my analysis, which argues that we should view albums holistically. Only by looking at albums as indivisible objects can we better appreciate all these factors and the albums’ significance.³⁹

When considering albums in this holistic approach, Sandbye writes that they are social and dynamic objects with cultural importance.⁴⁰ These albums are tools that symbolically define

³⁶ Campt, *Image Matters, Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe*, 31.

³⁷ Rose, *Doing Family Photography*, 20.

³⁸ Chalfen, Richard, *Snapshot Version of Life* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), quoted in Sandbye, “Looking at the family photo album,” 4.

³⁹ Rose, *Doing Family Photography*, 12.

⁴⁰ Sandbye, “Looking at the family photo album,” 12.

our world. The album can recreate the life story of the family, highlighting proud moments and ignoring the parts the compiler wishes to elide. In turn, the album influences the family's memory of events. Photographs share vivid moments from the past, depicting real people and events, which makes them valuable objects.⁴¹ Family photography carries unique significance. The transition of family albums from private hands to museums increases the albums' historical value, since now they are open to inspection, insight, research and analyze. When public institutions, such as the ROM, invest their resources into a new field, such as family photography, it has the potential to enrich this emerging field and enhance the cultural community.⁴²

While family albums serve a general purpose across time and region, culture often shapes society's perception of the family album. Sandbye discusses the differences in family albums across cultures, each with its own aesthetics and unique conventions.⁴³ That said, one must not assume that all dissimilarities in albums result from cultural differences. Sandbye advises that when analyzing heterogeneity between albums, we should also evaluate temporal and geographic differences to determine if they play a significant role in the album.⁴⁴

My case study of the Evans family collection demonstrates the importance of viewing the album *qua* album, lest we lose significant portions of the family narrative. Taken separately, the album's individual images portray Westerners in China in the 19th and 20th century. Notably, the albums elide major Chinese historical events, such as the Boxer Rebellion and the founding

⁴¹ Campt, *Image Matters, Archive, Photography and the African Diaspora in Europe*, 6.

⁴² Sandbye, "Looking at the family photo album," 5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Sandbye, "Looking at the family photo album," 11.

of the People's Republic of China by Mao Zedong. Instead, the albums highlight the family's life of affluence. The missing elements – references to China's development between the 19th and 20th century – are as informative as the images the family chose to preserve. That is, by consideration of the album's gaps, the viewer learns about the compiler's values and priorities. In the case of the Evans family collection, the compiler created an idealized narrative of a successful Canadian family and its journey in China. Images that did not fit this storyline were disregarded. Much of this meta-information would be lost if not presented within the context of the album.

The Evans family album compiler is not unusual in choosing to minimize the less flattering parts of life. This is typical of family albums, where compilers select their narrative to advance a desired theme or message for future generations,⁴⁵ even though the depicted story is not completely factual.⁴⁶ Unadulterated facts are not the mandate of the family albums; when a family is taking pictures for its own needs, they have no social responsibility to present objective facts, as opposed to a photographic journalist or historian. Due to the inherent subjectivity of family albums, they are exceptional for the study of culture and history. They illuminate a personal and unmediated perspective on historical events, which can add different representations of time and era.

Because family albums convey meanings through their presentation as albums, they need to be collected and digitized as albums. For the album to accurately convey its comprehensive history, story, and imagery to the public, museums need to treat the album as one holistic object with interwoven visual, physical, and historical elements. What, then, is the best way to present

⁴⁵ Langford, *Suspended Conversations*, 34.

⁴⁶ Rose, *Doing Family Photography*, 11.

an album to best capture its entirety? What are the essential album features that we need to highlight? Citing Edwards, Gillian Rose provides some suggestions. She outlines an album's three defining features, which are essential to preserve within the museum exhibition: its visual form (seen in the image); its material form (the physicality and feel of the album and its images); and its presentation (the album's organization).⁴⁷ With these features in mind, this thesis drafts protocols for the effective digitization of albums.

1.3. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

As discussed earlier in this thesis, institutions have predominantly examined family albums as a collection of individual images that are bound together in an album, without any consideration of the macro-context and organization. To formulate my proposal for how to digitize family albums, I first surveyed the practices in various museums and art institutions, which apprised me of the different approaches that have already been tried. I draw my conclusions from this survey here.

1.3.1. SURVEY REPORT

Many family photography collections come to the museum from donations, albeit of various types: some families donate single images, while other families offer dozens of albums. Museums, however, have not yet developed uniform protocols for the accessioning of family albums. In comparison to individual images, albums are a challenge for museums, which need to consider how to present the multitude of images in a way that faithfully represents the history

⁴⁷ Rose, *Doing Family Photography*, 17.

and story within albums, the wishes of the compiler and the family of the donor and their relatives wishes. In this survey, I examined private family albums in four public museums and art institutions, which informed me of the different approaches and methods that each one uses when dealing with family albums.

Family collections that come to museums do not solely consist of photographs. Families send a variety of memorabilia, including home movies, oral testimonies, family documentation and maps. Each type of artifact requires different treatment and sets of procedures. Family albums illustrate a family's own experiences and impressions. Unlike the individual image, an album contains historical and artistic value greater than the sum of its individual pictures. The album's annotations often add information that would be missed if the image is viewed separately, providing the viewer a better understanding of the imagery portrayed.

The value of family photography comes from the collective meaning of its details. When professionals view domestic photographs through the lens of conventional artistic or photographic norms, they often dismiss the photography as amateur products – parents snapping photos of their children or tourists indulging in leisure activities – with little aesthetic merit. But aesthetics are just one measure of merit. The true value of such photography often stems from a macro-perspective, which we can obtain when considering the photographs as a part of a larger album.

For my thesis, I chose four art institutions as case studies for understanding how family photographs are handled in public collections: The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto, Canada, which is a partner to the FCN research project (the FCN acceded the Evans family collection); the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) in Toronto, Canada, which illustrates an artistic approach to family albums; the McCord Museum of Canadian History in Montreal, Canada,

which holds the William Notman & Son Photographic Studio Collection; and the Victoria Museum in Australia in Carlton, Australia, which uses an innovative online platform to display its family collections. For the most part, these museums have preserved, digitized, and made the albums accessible as individual images.

My research aims to provide best practices for accessioning private family albums as whole albums. The goal will be for art institutions to facilitate the public's access to the albums as holistic objects. The presentation of the albums should enable the public to realize the albums' values as primary sources of history. Throughout this research, I will be guided by the following questions: What is the albums' purpose in the museum or gallery? How can we best preserve these artifacts in the digital era? How can we best share the albums with the public?

For my investigation, I evaluated each museum's website, where I searched for key terms: "family," "family albums," and "family photography." I checked for controlled vocabulary with the Art & Architecture Thesaurus and The Getty and the Library of Congress, neither of which returned alternative wording for family photography. However, a search for the word "albums" returned: "albums," "photograph albums," "wedding albums," and "baby albums," all of which could include family photography. A search for the word "family" returned: "family archives" and "family records," which could also include relevant materials. Additionally, the controlled vocabulary search led to criteria for specific photographic styles, such as black and white photography, color photography, digital photography, documentary photography or close-up photography. Of the various criteria, "snapshot photography" was the closest fit for family photography. Given the increasing interest in family photography, in the future we might find an independent category called "Family Photography," where one can find snapshot images and professional photographs within the same search.

In my search of the four institutions' websites, I used only general search terms. Nonetheless, the searches returned only minimal information – a fact that attests to the family albums' lack of accessibility within the context of family memorabilia. Though museums maintained these collections of family albums, apparently it would be quite difficult to find one of them under a search for “family photography.”

The lack of accessibility for the family genre stems from historical factors – in the past, museums did not collect family photography *qua* family photography. The interest in those materials was due to some other factors, such as the photograph's artistic quality, as was the case with the family collections at the AGO, or historical importance, as was the case with the family collections at the ROM. Therefore, museums catalogued family photographs in connection to some other genre, making it more difficult to locate as family photography. Recently, some institutions have adopted different perspectives, seeing the value of family photographs *qua* family photographs with their social and cultural values. Therefore, museums and galleries around the world have started collecting family photographs and related materials. Moreover, academics and researchers have started treating family photography as a separate genre containing primary historical sources.

My survey will evaluate how those institutions are changing their focus to accord with these nascent perspectives on family photography as an independent genre with its own artistic and historical merits. Thus, I will examine how those four institutions manage family photography donations by evaluating their practices under four criteria: accessibility, ownership, privacy, and cross-references. Museums are redefining their protocols for accessioning family photography – and family albums in particular – which are newly recognized as dual purpose objects that hold both personal significance (for the family and individuals within the albums)

and historical or artistic significance (for the public). My research will delve into the nexus of these areas, considering family albums at both the private and public levels.

To better explain my analysis of a museum's treatment of family photography, I will delineate my four points of evaluation:

- i. Accessibility** refers to the ability of the public to access materials. Within this category, I will examine accessibility for the public-at-large, academics, and the family that donated the materials to the museum or gallery.
- ii. Ownership** refers to the legal rights over the albums or individual photos. Is the museum or gallery the owner or a borrower? If the museum or gallery gains ownership, what rights might donor families retain?
- iii. Privacy** refers to the museum's or gallery's consideration of sensitive materials that can be found within albums intended for personal or family use. How does the museum or gallery deal with these items?
- iv. Cross-references** refer to the museum's or gallery's ability to portray the family history accurately through links to all related items in an album. The institution may receive various materials in a donation: individual photographs, full albums, oral testimonies, documents, maps and filmed materials. The cross-reference segment will evaluate how the institution connects between materials of the same collection. If presented piecemeal, the individual items may not describe the entire story. Online viewers will only gain a partial understanding of the item, which will differ from the experience of a museum visitor who may be able to physically peruse an album. How should those institutions cross-reference items online to best convey the history behind these items?

As my survey shows, currently museums are uploading albums not as albums but instead as individual images. This practice, however, is changing at ROM, particularly within the FCN

collection. My thesis is contributing to this urgent work by helping to establish these practices when it comes to FCN materials.

My survey will evaluate four museums – the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM), the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), the McCord Museum, and the Victoria Museum in Australia – through the prism of my four key criteria.

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Museums and Gallery | | | | |
| Royal Ontario Museum, ROM | Art Gallery of Ontario, AGO | McCord Museum Montreal | Victoria Museums, Australia | |
| Aspects checked | | | | |
| Ownership | Privacy | Accessibility | Cross-Referencing | |
| Terms checked | | | | |
| Family | Family album | Family photography | Albums | Photographic albums |

Controlled Vocabulary: AT – Art & Architecture, Thesaurus, The Getty, Library of Congress.

1.3.1.1. ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM (ROM)

The ROM officially opened its doors in 1912, as a history and natural science museum. Since then, the museum has become a cultural attraction and Canada’s largest museum. Its collections are diverse, extending across various cultures and eras. The ROM holds more than 12 million objects and has 40 galleries.

Among all the different collections, the museum also hosts the FCN and partners with the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA). The FCN collects items related to the social, political, and technological influences that affect families and their representation in photography and film. The CLGA has worked to acquire, preserve and provide public access to LGBTQ materials since 1973. The ROM and CLGA have partnered in the project to portray the history of Canada and its different waves of immigration through donated family photos and albums along with their oral histories. More generally, the project explores how we present and view families.⁴⁸ Within the framework of this project, the FCN has created a photographic archive.⁴⁹ Though the partnering institutions share the fundamental ideas and guidelines for the archive, they each bring their own materials and methodologies for preservation and accessibility. Additional differences derive from ROM's status as a public museum and the CLGA's status as a community archive.

Even prior to the advent of this project, the ROM held many family albums in its repository, including the Evans family collection, which is the primary subject of my thesis.

i. **Accessibility.** I performed multiple internet searches on the museum website, and its new online platform, the eMuseum. On the eMuseum platform, a search for "family" produced 339 diverse results, from a 19th-century bowl to a collection of termites, though nothing relevant to family photography. A search for "family photography" and "family albums" produced 349 and 409 records, respectively, though none related to my topic. The FCN project is not yet on the eMuseum, as the collection is currently in the process of being accessioned, digitized, and catalogued.

⁴⁸ The Family Camera Network, <http://familycameranetwork.org/> (accessed August 1, 2018).

⁴⁹ Phu, Thy, Elspeth H. Brown, and Deepali Dewan, "The Family Camera Network," *Photography and Culture* 10, no. 2 (2017).

A search for “family” on the museum website returned different articles, including a link to a closed FCN exhibition, *The Family Camera* (2017).⁵⁰ “Family albums” led to the FCN blog⁵¹ which gave more links and information about the FCN project. “Family photography” provided more results than the former two. In addition to the results from the last search, I received a link to the article “The Living Room – Photography in the Public and Private”,⁵² which further discusses the collaborative project that was a part of the FCN exhibition. When searching for “album” in the eMuseum, I received various records, from a Japanese handheld fan to a set of drawings that had nothing to do with photography albums. Among the different records yielded was an 1889 drawing of a cowboy on a horse (See figures 1-3) and another female figure, also on horseback. These both actually belong to the same album page but each item was cataloged as an individual piece, without reference to an overarching album, let alone page. Much of the connecting background story was lost. These two records illustrate the problems that arise from treating bound materials as individual ones. Unfortunately, the museum offers no historical text to explain the items and their relation.

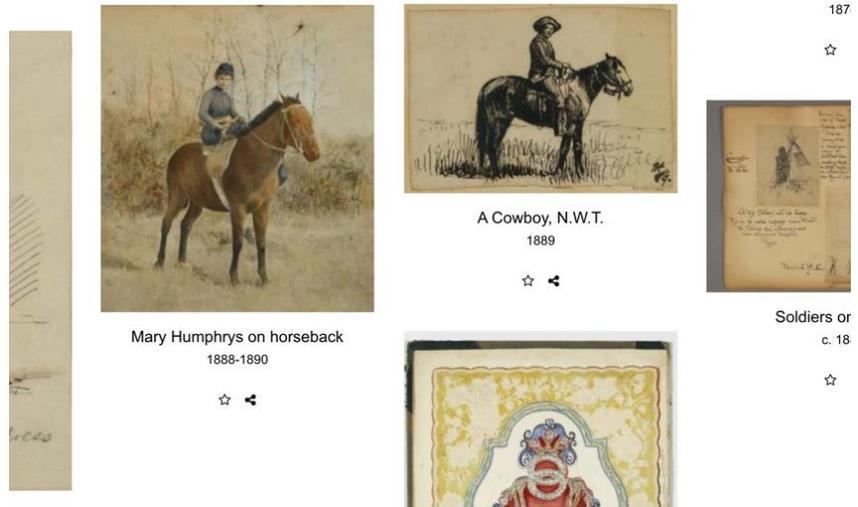
⁵⁰ “The Family Camera Network,” Royal Ontario Museum, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/exhibitions-galleries/exhibitions/the-family-camera> (accessed Aug. 1, 2018).

⁵¹ “Visual Stories Blog,” The Family Camera Network, <http://familycameranetwork.org/visual-stories/> (accessed Aug. 1, 2018).

⁵² “The Living Room: Photography in the Public and Private,” Royal Ontario Museum, May 2, 2017, <https://www.rom.on.ca/en/blog/the-living-room-photography-in-the-public-and-private>.

The ROM website enables viewers to filter their search by different categories – exhibition, video, events – which are not found on the eMuseum platform. The difference in results – between the website search and the eMuseum search – suggests that the two platforms are serving different needs without much overlap. Whereas the eMuseum focuses on the museum

Figure 1:
The Mary Humphrys on Horseback,
 1888-1890, accession: 979.135.2.2.
 Watercolor over photographic print on
 paper; *A Cowboy, N.W.T.* 1889. Pen
 and ink on wove paper,
<http://collections.rom.on.ca/search/album/objects/images?page=5>.



A Cowboy, N.W.T.

Date: 1889
 Maker: Mary Humphrys (1871-1961)
 Medium: Pen and ink on wove paper
 Dimensions: 5.7 x 8.2 cm
 Object number: 979.135.2.1

Not on view



In Collection(s)

Art & Music

Figure 2:

A Cowboy, N.W.T., 1889; *Mary Humphrys*, 1871-1961,
<http://collections.rom.on.ca/objects/169040/a-cowboy-nwt?ct>. Pen and ink on woven paper.

Images (2)





Figure 3: *Mary Humphrys on Horseback*. 1871-1961, 5 drawings, Pen and ink on wove paper and watercolor over photographic prints on paper, full page.

objects collection, the website will share past and present activities from exhibitions or conferences and will share articles that were published about the collection in the past.⁵³

Donor families who wish to view their materials will need to arrange an appointment. The FCN collection at the ROM is not currently open to the public and materials are not yet digitized. This is a temporary situation since the some of collection will be accessible online soon. If scholars wish to inspect the collections, they too will need to coordinate with museum staff to access the materials. They may also need the donor family's approval for scholarly research on the materials.

⁵³ On the CLGA website, the FCN project does not show up at all. Indirectly, one can find a reference to the FCN project through an article by Elspeth Brown, titled "Trans Oral Histories: The Transgender History Project of the Upper Midwest," which appears on their website and provides links to the project. The CLGA website's functions are limited at that point.

ii. **Ownership.** Each family that donates a collection needs to sign a Copyright Assignment Agreement between the donor and the ROM and then a gift form,⁵⁴ which allow donors to list exclusions such as access to images and to specify the type of donation, from a full conveyance to a limited-time loan.

Though the museum has release forms for donated materials, it still reaches out to families to obtain permission from the families for each particular case. Those authorized to give permission may change over time, as a new generation in the family becomes involved. For example, with the Evans family collection, the original donor has passed away. The ROM negotiated with a generation that did not participate in the decision to donate the albums. They may not have a connection to the members of the family portrayed, which makes it a challenge for them to obtain permission for public display. Furthermore, the new owner does not necessarily hold the same views for managing the family's materials. Nonetheless, as of April 2018, grandchildren of the donors signed the release forms.

iii. **Privacy.** The ROM invests many resources to protect the privacy and dignity of donations, recognizing that these are personal records. The museum understands that donations contain many personal stories, not just of the individual donor but of other family members as well. This may partly account for why family collections are not accessible to a wider audience at the moment. Given the multitude of people found in any one album, it can be a complicated task for the museum to ensure that all individuals' privacy rights are respected. Though one may own an album or photograph, he or she does not have absolute rights. The owner of a photograph does not have free rein to disregard the privacy rights of persons captured in the photograph. For example, in the Evans collection, J. J. Evans is usually the photographer and the compiler of the

⁵⁴ "Frequently Asked Questions," The Family Camera Network, <http://familycameranetwork.org/faq/> (accessed Aug. 1, 2018).

albums, which mainly contain his own family members. Nonetheless, all individuals in the photographs have their own privacy rights.

The FCN website shares a few images to promote and introduce its project, though these images are not available through a direct search. In the future, some objects from the project will be accessible through the eMuseum, which has become the museum's keystone project, though it is unclear when this will be available to the public.

For my thesis, I am following the museum's efforts to integrate the FCN project into the eMuseum (within the limits of my residency timeframe, which ends in the summer of 2018). Privacy questions concerning living and deceased individuals appearing in the photos will be one of the subjects to consider. When one chooses to donate family records to a museum, one also shares the lives of individuals uninvolved in the donation decision. The ROM differentiates between living and deceased people in the photographs and relies on the donor to acquire authorization to publish from all living people who are depicted in the donation. This task is not always possible, due to relatives often falling out of touch over the years.

It is interesting to note the ROM's and CLGA's different approaches to privacy. The CLGA has chosen to share oral histories with the public, but not accompanying imagery. The ROM does not publish oral histories, but will release the photographs. Although the two institutions are part of the same family photography project, they have different agendas. The ROM is a museum, whereas the CLGA is an archive. Therefore they have different approaches to sharing with the public.

iv. **Cross-references.** Since materials are not presently available to the public on the eMuseum, I cannot comment on the cross-referencing of individual items within this software. The efficiency of future searches will depend on the museum's ability to successfully incorporate

objects and related information into the Museum System (TMS) software. The eMuseum will draw its content from the TMS.

Researchers and museums have invested substantial resources to maximize accessibility for various items belonging to the same family donation, while also seeking to preserve privacy rights. The success of such efforts will ensure the possibility of future viewers to gain valuable access to the museum records. For example with the Evans family, viewers will learn much more if they can cross reference between the albums, family documents, the family tree, history, and the oral testimonies. The different sources support each other and strengthen the content of the collection as a whole. The explanatory documents, combined with the family member's oral testimony, turn an individual image from a family album into a testimony on an event that goes beyond the family itself.

1.3.1.2. ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO (AGO)

Founded in 1900, the AGO has a collection of more than 90,000 works of art. Its gallery includes a range of diverse works, from signature Canadian pieces to African art. It also holds various family albums, such as the Van Horne family collection. The Gallery has not set out to create a public archive, but instead collects family collections based on their artistic value.

i. Accessibility. On the AGO website, I performed a search of terms including: “family,” “family album,” and “family photography.” My search returned links to different collections and articles but not to actual family photography records within the AGO collection. However, when I searched under AGO collections for the word “album,” with the filter “album,” I received eight photographic displays from 19th-century albums. The eight objects were by professional photographers and all eight included family

images. The museum exhibited albums' entire individual pages and identified all pages of the same album as related objects.

The gallery website presents the album as an object and the individual pages as related objects.

The pages arise as individual gallery records. The website also allows the viewer to zoom in to obtain a detailed view of the image. Since the AGO is an art museum, the online database

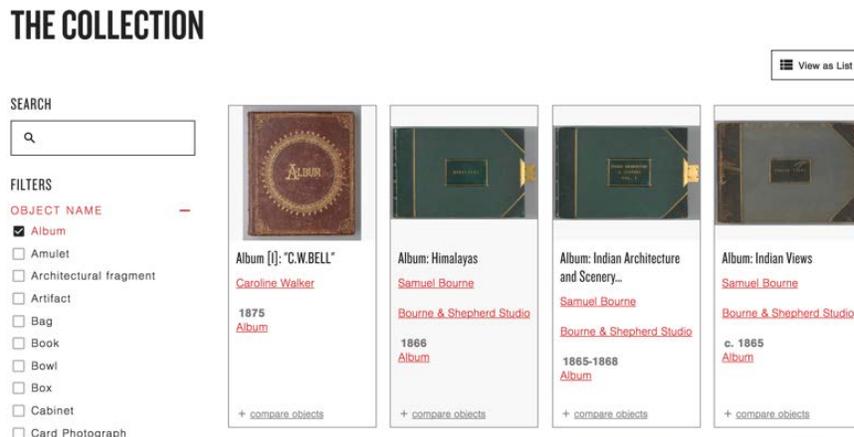


Figure 4: The results from a photography album search of the AGO's online collection, [https://ago.ca/collection/browse?field_object_name_reference_target_id\[2809\]=2809&field_object_name_reference_target_id\[2537\]=2537](https://ago.ca/collection/browse?field_object_name_reference_target_id[2809]=2809&field_object_name_reference_target_id[2537]=2537).



Figure 5: *Tramp Art Photo Display*, Canadian, 1885, accession no. 2011/34. Cartes the visite: albumen prints (11), tintypes (5), wood, glass, and paper crown of thorn design with paint applied to a rotating base and carved leaf and vine details.



Figure 6: *Album (1):C.W. Bell, Caroline Walker, 1875*, accession no. 2003/1.6. 7 gelatin silver prints, watercolour on paper.

RELATED WORKS



Figure 7: Bourne & Shepherd Studio, *Screenshot of "Indian Views" album*, 1865, accession no. 2007/1938.1-.63. Album: green cloth and morocco leather, embossed title in gilt; 130 pager, 63 albumen prints mounted on board. Related works.

emphasizes the individual value of each page and its artistic qualities. However, this database does not afford the capacity to view albums as albums. On the AGO website, a visitor cannot get the experience of flipping through the album as one family object. Since the AGO's focus is on the artistic value of such records, the story folded between the album's pages is of lower priority.

The AGO's records show that it held photography albums for the last 15 years, but has never defined them as "family" records – the gallery has not recognized such a genre. Focusing primarily on artistic content, the AGO does not present family records as a historical archive for public use. As a result, it does not offer family collections through its website. For example, an online search shows that the AGO holds the Van Horne family photography collection; however, it does not offer access to the collection's images. These materials are available only by special appointment. Even if one searches specifically for the family name, he or she will find various materials about the family donation, including the related finding aid, but still not receive the actual images.

ii.-iii. Ownership & Privacy. As for the information available online, it seems that the AGO sets distinct privacy and ownership rules for each donation. For example, with the Max Dean

project, which contains roughly 100 years of photography compiled in family albums, the records are not available to the public due to privacy concerns. Unfortunately, the terms of ownership and privacy agreements for the different family photography collections are restricted. However, the gallery website explains that:

All images reproduced on this site are provided free of charge for research and/or private study purposes only. Any other use, distribution or reproduction thereof without the express permission of the copyright holder, is subject to limitations imposed by law. Any commercial exploitation of the images is strictly prohibited.⁵⁵

The albums in the collection, shown in figure 5, abide by the gallery's general ownership and privacy rules. According to information available online, there are no rules specific to family photographs.

iv. Cross-references. The AGO's family albums are not open to the public. The gallery has only released individual records for specific projects, which makes it difficult to determine the gallery's cross-referencing options. A search for "album" on the gallery website led to professional photographs from photograph albums, which were likely chosen due to their artistic value or contribution to the history of photography. The website shows these photographs in the context of the entire album page, indicating to the viewer that the photographs are part of a larger object, the album. Though the gallery presents each page as an individual record, the website shows related pages from the album on the screen. No other information is presented, which would make it difficult to cross-reference to anything outside the parent album.

The AGO provides access to some of its physical collection for those who request via a formal procedure. Additionally, the gallery provides a few sources for specific collections, such as the Fairlie family collection finding aid, which is organized into the following categories:

⁵⁵ Art Gallery of Ontario, <https://ago.ca/about/about-the-ago> (accessed June. 1, 2018).

Family Correspondence, Professional Correspondence, Financial and Legal Documents, Newspapers and Clippings, Photographic Materials, Amateur Film Ephemera, Memorabilia and Personal Effects. Anyone interested in gaining access to records from the Fairlie collection can easily find it within one of these categories, which are based on the collection's original categories and order. However, these tools are exclusive to a physical search, which lies outside the scope of this thesis.

1.3.1.3. MUSEUMS VICTORIA (AUSTRALIA)

Established in 1854 and located in Melbourne, Australia, Museums Victoria is a history and natural science museum that features collections of zoology, geology, history, indigenous cultures, and technology. In 1986, the museum initiated and presently houses “The Biggest Family Album” (BFA), a 9000-item collection of family photographs that documents life in Victoria from the 1890s to the 1940s.

i. Accessibility: Information is easily accessible via the museum online platforms. The site provides access to the BFA online. The museum itself only holds high-quality digital copies of the photographs, not the originals. The BFA is accessible on the museum site under the “Technology & Society” section of “Collections.” The site encourages other families to contribute their photographs to the BFA project, providing support for families looking to donate.

Since the museum only maintains copies, the museum dedicates resources mainly to the digital preservation of the BFA project avoiding significant expenditure on physical preservation. Accordingly, the museum does not depend on large numbers of skilled employees. Moreover, the

museum has defined a unified protocol for all family donations, which reduces the need for prolonged negotiation with each family.

While the museum is focused on digitization, accessibility is still an issue for online viewers. An internet search does not reveal the extent of available materials. The museum may possess relevant photographic materials, perhaps for professional scholars. However, there is no indication on the website. Online accessibility appears to be the same for the general public, scholars, and families.

Under a search for “family,” I found 17,303 results; under “family albums” 23,615 results, which include the results from the previous search; “albums” returned 6,427 results; “photograph albums” returned 20,212 results; “family photography” returned 24,000 results. Under “family, albums”, there were 115 results. None of the searches returned entire albums, only single images. This fact reduces the viewer’s access to a full collection if it exists. If the museum had scanned images within their original album setting, I did not find an indication . The selected words function as “tags” within the search engine. Based on my observations, the museum created its search engine to be user-friendly and intuitive, in accord with regular internet searches.

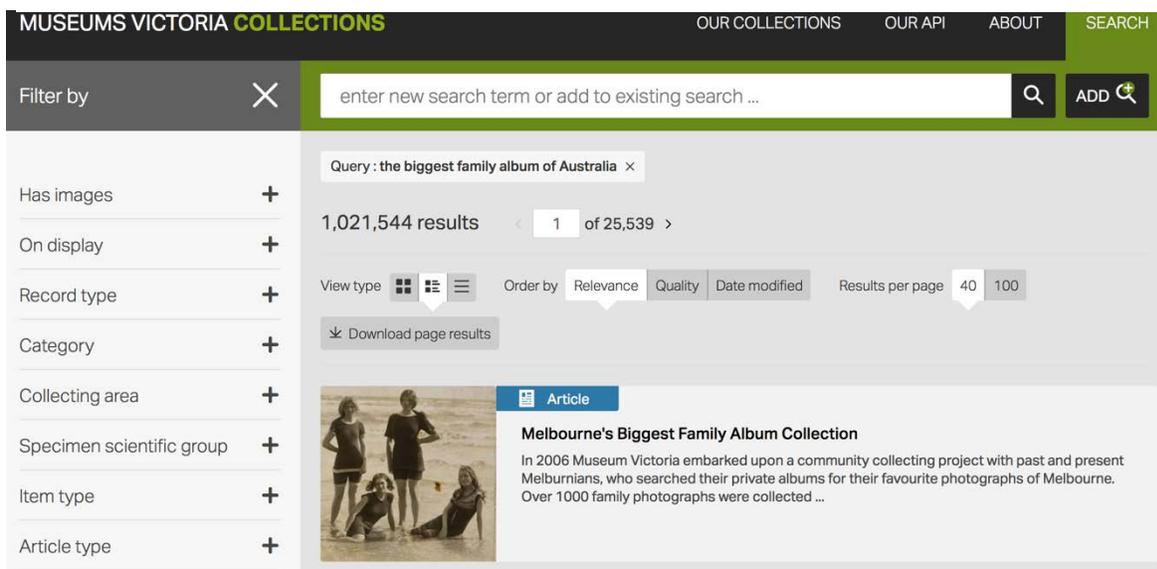
Since the Museums Victoria recognizes family photography as an independent category, I did not need to perform a general “album” search, as I did in the first two institutions that I surveyed. My research focuses specifically on family albums, which made a general search for albums less relevant in this museum’s case.

ii. Ownership. Since the museum only holds digital copies of images, issues of ownership and copyright are more concerned with the digital copies and not physical objects. The museum protects the material on its website with a copyright and, where applicable, moral and cultural

rights. The museum notes that some images fall under third-party copyrights, which could require additional permissions. The museum licenses images, sounds, and audio-visual material apart from the texts.⁵⁶ Ownership of these records can vary. The museum shares its rules of usage clearly, emphasizing that the responsibility to use the images legally falls on the user.



Figures 8-9: Screenshots of *The Biggest Family Album of Australia*, Museums Victoria, <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/search?query=the+biggest+family+album+of+australia>



⁵⁶ “Legals,” Museums Victoria, <https://museumsvictoria.com.au/legals/> (accessed June. 1, 2018).



Item

MM 110979

Digital Photograph - Boiler Attendant with Coal-Fired Boiler, Alfred Lawrence & Co, Kensington, Victoria, circa 1950

Working Life & Trades

Black and white photograph featuring a view of John Delaney attending a boiler at Alfred Lawrence and Co. factory in Bruce Street Kensington, circa 1950. The Alfred Lawrence and Co. factory made food essences ...



Item

MM 111052

Digital Photograph - One Boy and Five Girls in Circular Wading Pool, Backyard, Ringwood East, 1965

Leisure

Black and white photograph featuring the Ellerbock family children and a family friend in a wading pool in the Ellerbock family backyard, Ringwood East, 1965. This was the family's first pool. The Ellerbock family ...



Item

MM 110018

Digital Photograph - Owners of K & A Pappas Australian & Continental Milk Bar, Preston West, 1978

Home & Community, Working Life & Trades

Colour photograph featuring Athanasia (Anna or Sia) and Konstantinos (Kon) Papadimitropoulos in their Papadimitropoulos Milk Bar, also known as the 'K & A Pappas Australian & Continental Milk ...

Figure 10: Screenshots of *The Biggest Family Album of Australia*, Museums Victoria, <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/search?query=the+biggest+family+album+of+australia>
 On the BFA website, search results bring up different types of records, such as the articles seen in figure 9 and the images seen here.



Digital Photograph - One Boy, Four Girls in Circular Wading Pool, Backyard, Ringwood, East, 1965
 Source: Museums Victoria
 In Copyright / All Rights Reserved (Licensed as All Rights Reserved)



Item MM 111052

Digital Photograph - One Boy and Five Girls in Circular Wading Pool, Backyard, Ringwood East, 1965



Summary

Black and white photograph featuring the Ellerbock family children and a family friend in a wading pool in the Ellerbock family backyard, Ringwood East, 1965. This was the family's first pool.

The Ellerbock family immigrated from Upper Austria to Australia in 1955. They were sponsored, and their sponsors arranged for them to have temporary accommodation in Ringwood East from July 1955 to May 1956. They then settled in the area, and Mr Ellerbock was naturalised in 1961.

Photograph collected as part of Melbourne's Biggest Family Album in 2006.

Description of Content

One boy and five girls in a circular wading pool in the backyard. The girl front centre is kneeling in the water and wearing a striped shirt. A shed is in the background and behind that is a house.

Not on display

Currently in storage

Got a Question?

Send us an enquiry

Share



Cite this page

Museums Victoria Collections
<https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/1689701>
 Accessed 30 June 2018

Physical Description

Digital image file. A digital photograph was taken of the original black and white print.

More Information

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Collection Names | Melbourne's Biggest Family Album |
| Collecting Areas | Leisure |
| Acquisition Information | Copied from Mrs Ingrid Cuttiford, 09/12/2006 |
| Place & Date Depicted | Bedford Park Road, Ringwood East, Greater Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, 1965 |
| Photographer | Unknown |
| Individuals Identified | Ellerbock, Ron; Ellerbock, Anna jnr; Ellerbock, Hanne; Ellerbock, Ingrid; Ellerbock, Liz; unknown family friend; Smith, Marie |
| Format | Digital Still Image, Tiff, Black & White |
| Classification | Recreation & tourism, Play, Pools |
| Category | History & Technology |
| Discipline | History |
| Type of Item | Image |
| Keywords | Backyards , Children's Play , Leisure , Sheds , Swimming , Swimming Pools , Water |

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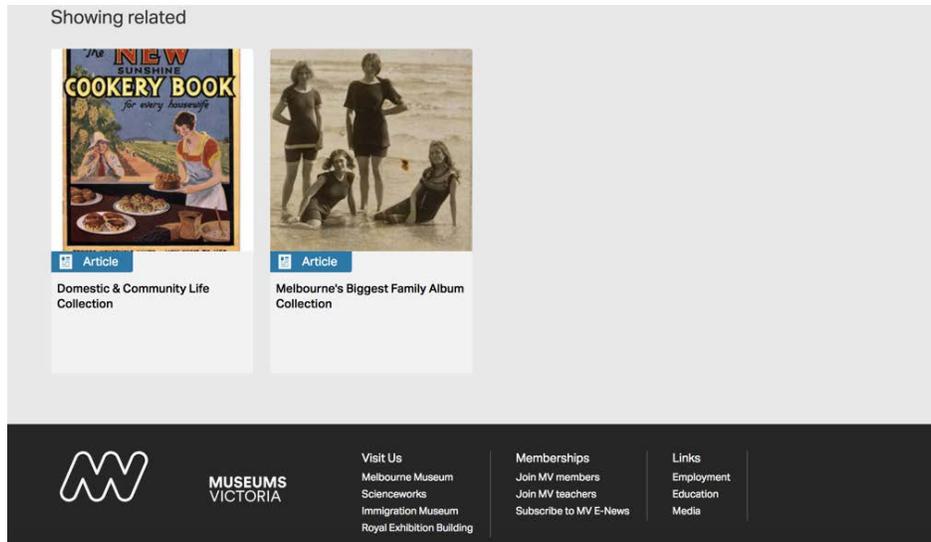


Figure 11-14: *One Boy and Five Girls in Circular Wading Pool, Backyard*, Melbourne's Biggest Family Album, 1965, <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/1689701>. The four figures typify the result of one family record from the Museum Victoria website.

The Museum Victoria public domain allows access to images, though anyone wishing to download needs to request the image from the museum. The website also offers “streamed sound and film recordings for reuse where possible.”⁵⁷ However, I could not find such recordings. Some unpublished materials may require permission for reuse. Orphan works, where the copyright owner is unknown, also require permission for reuse. Additional legal and cultural complexities arise in the case of indigenous works. For example, one may be required to seek permission from indigenous peoples or organizations before reproduction of their materials. The elements of each record that are defined as data carry a Creative Commons Zero (CCO) license. The Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC-BY) license controls the release of texts and information written by curators, collections managers or others.

⁵⁷ “The Biggest Family Album in Australia Collection,” Museum Victoria Collections, <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/2975> (accessed June. 5, 2018).

iii. Privacy. When someone chooses to donate his or her family album, he or she is placing other people – the various figures included in the photographs – into the public sphere.

Museums Victoria shares these photographs under its public domain or with a Creative Commons license. When names are known, the museum publishes them as well. Since the museum's family database is highly accessible to the public, privacy issues are particularly consequential.

iv. Cross-references. If a specific family name is known, a search leads to all the relevant information: objects, documents, images, video and audio. Each item falls under an individual index, which cross-references to the family name and themes such as migration, cultural diversity, community, or public life.

By simply clicking on an image, the viewer can discover the family collection that originally held the photograph. With this knowledge, it is easy to search the rest of the family material as well. Often the website presents other items from the collection automatically on the screen. If video or audio material exists, the website provides a link.

If a creator is known, all of their works could be traced under a search of their name. It is more difficult to perform searches according to the donor's family name (see figures 15-16). As shown in the images below, the website treats each image as an individual item. The explanatory texts leads to additional searches, such as the relevant dates or locations. However, a search by date or location will lead to a plethora of material, mostly unrelated to the desired album or family. The museum search engine may prove useful for a broader search, but not for narrowing down a list of items from a specific album or family. For those interested in specific albums, the museum's search engine is inadequate.

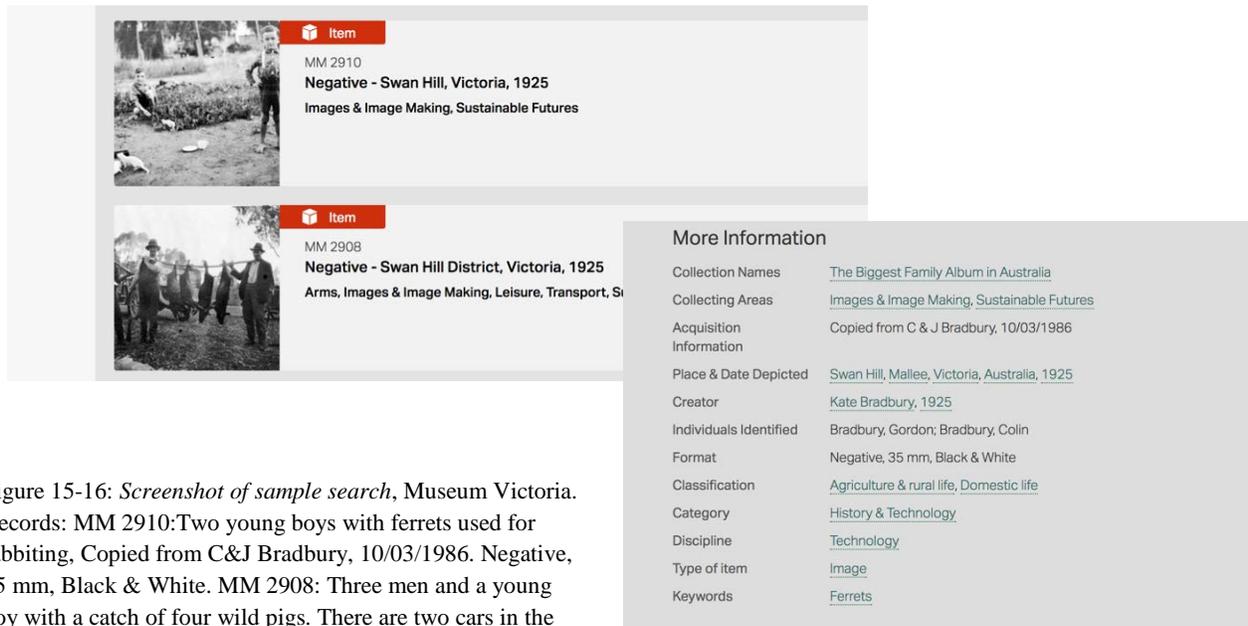


Figure 15-16: *Screenshot of sample search*, Museum Victoria. Records: MM 2910: Two young boys with ferrets used for rabbiting, Copied from C&J Bradbury, 10/03/1986. Negative, 35 mm, Black & White. MM 2908: Three men and a young boy with a catch of four wild pigs. There are two cars in the background. Copied from C& J Bradbury, 10/03/1986, Negative, 35 mm, Black & White.

1.3.1.4. MCCORD MUSEUM

The McCord Museum was established in 1921 as a home for the collection of David Ross McCord, a passionate collector. Located at McGill University, this cultural and natural history museum tells the story of the people of Montreal and Canada. McCord envisioned his museum to be an exemplar of accessibility. Furthermore, he sought to highlight the importance of shared cultural records. In 2013, the McCord Museum merged with the Stewart Museum, a history museum that promotes and preserves Quebec heritage.⁵⁸ The two museums have initiated a

⁵⁸ The Stewart Museum, <http://www.stewart-museum.org/en/about-51.html> (accessed June. 5, 2018).

family records project called “Our Amazing Families – Three Centuries of Quebec Documents and History,” which portrays Quebec history through the documents of individual families.⁵⁹

The McCord Museum’s photographic collection holds 1,317,610 photographs that present the social history of Montreal and Canada. The Notman collection alone is comprised of 450,000 photographs, with professional and amateur photography and includes family photography.⁶⁰

i. Accessibility. In Martha Langford’s book *Suspended Conversations*,⁶¹ she claims that the McCord Museum holds family albums within its collection based on the albums’ subject-matter, as opposed to aesthetic value. She emphasizes the importance of the album compiler and the album as an object.⁶² I argue that a holistic perspective, which sees the albums as one entity, adds to the value of each individual record.

Within the collections, I searched for “family albums,” though nothing came up. A search for “family photography” returned 1439 records; a search for “family” provided 1786 records. Like the previous museums, each record is catalogued as an individual item. Many records come from the collection of William Notman, a well-known Scottish-Canadian photographer, who was based in Montreal and worked there from 1876 until 1935. In 1957, McGill University purchased this collection.

⁵⁹ “Our Amazing Families – Three Centuries of Quebec Documents and History,” McCord Museum, <http://www.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collections/textual-archives/our-amazing-families/> (accessed Aug. 1, 2018).

⁶⁰ “Photography,” McCord Museum, http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/scripts/explore.php?Lang=1&tableid=4&tablename=department&elementid=00016__true (accessed Aug. 1, 2018).

⁶¹ Langford, *Suspended Conversations*.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 203.

When clicking on an image, a viewer sees a window indicating to which collection the image belongs. The viewer can reach the rest of the collection through this window. The information on the website is accessible to everyone. Scholars who perform physical searches may gain additional access. The website's index uses keywords that link to subjects, which adds to the accessibility of the materials.

The Notman family records are easily traceable as one archive within the museum holdings. Other than that, when trying to locate an album as one record, a search for "photographic albums" brings up empty albums, including those of Notman. From the website, it was difficult to ascertain if those albums arrived to the museum empty or if the images were removed from the original album (see figures 10-12). After reaching out to the museum, I learned that the images were detached from the albums in the museum. From a search of the online repository, the ordinary researcher would be unlikely to recognize that this empty album once held individual images.⁶³

⁶³ Heather McNabb, (Reference Archivist, McCord Museum), in discussion with the author, April 13th. 2018.

If one wishes to purchase a record, one can do so online. Though the online database contains images from different institutions across Canada, one can only order reproductions of images located in the McCord.⁶⁴

Keyword : Photographic album; Museum(s) :

13 Result(s)
| 1 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 |  | <p>Photographic album <i>Frothingham family album, red cover with monogram "LDF," 1862-1885</i> 1862-1885, 19th century N-1986.5.2.1-57 © McCord Museum</p> <p>Description</p> <p> Select Image (Your image selection is empty)</p> <p> View Info  Add to Cart</p> | |
| 2 |  | <p>Photographic album <i>Hugh A. Peck album</i> Hugh A. Peck 1909-1931, 20th century M2000.113.6.1-295 © McCord Museum</p> <p> Se (Your  Vi</p> | <p>The most recent version of the Flash plugin must be installed </p> <p>Photographic album <i>Frothingham family album, red cover with monogram "LDF," 1862-1885</i> 1862-1885, 19th century 21.6 x 17.8 x 7 cm Gift of Miss E. Dorothy Benson N-1986.5.2.1-57 © McCord Museum</p> <p>Description Keywords: Photographic album (13)</p> <p> Select Image (Your image selection is empty)</p> <p> Add to Cart</p> <p>VISITORS' COMMENTS <input type="text" value="Add a comment"/></p> |



 Full Screen [192 kB]

[Download this image](#)

Views



Available images : 6

ii. **Ownership.** The museum holds the records under Creative Commons rules, similar to Museums Victoria in Australia. Hence, one can freely share the information, though not for commercial uses. In most cases, the records indicate the original owner, such as the Notman

⁶⁴ “How to Order Photographic Reproductions,” McCord Museum, <http://collections.museum-mccord.qc.ca/scripts/order.php?Lang=1> (accessed June. 5, 2018).

collection or Harry Sutcliffe.⁶⁵ Ownership seems to stay with the original owner of the records. Nonetheless, there could be third-party ownership rights, which is why the museum emphasizes the need to verify ownership with the original owner.

iii. Privacy. The website shares information related to the exhibited records, including names and places captured in the photographs. Like the other institutions included in this set of case studies, the McCord Museum will avoid publishing disrespectful materials. The website follows guidelines presented under the “Keys to History – My McCord,” which discusses the privacy rights for online users, though not specifically about museum donations.⁶⁶ Within this context, the Museum respects the privacy and the integrity of contributors to their website. Moreover, the Museum complies with Canada’s privacy laws, which largely align with the website guidelines.

iv. Cross-references. The McCord museum does not treat albums and the albums’ content as a unified record. Therefore, the viewer will struggle to know if a specific image relates to a particular album. Likewise, it will be difficult for a researcher to cross-reference between different types of records. For a more comprehensive search, a researcher will need to approach the museum staff directly rather than relying on the online search tools.

⁶⁵ “Search Criteria for Artist: Sutcliffe, Harry,” McCord Museum, http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/scripts/search_results.php?Lang=1&artist=00208 (accessed June. 5, 2018).

⁶⁶ “Privacy Policy,” McCord Museum, <http://www.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/privacy-policy/> (accessed June. 5, 2018).

1.3.1.5. CONCLUSION

My research looked at the online databases of four museums to examine their different approaches to exhibiting family albums online. Each museum had a distinct style, though all had accessibility issues. Even Museums Victoria, which offered the most sophisticated online database, did not present whole albums, but rather piecemeal items. These shortcomings demonstrate the need to develop the most reliable replica of the original family album in an effective way on the online museum platform. The goal of finding best practices for presenting unified albums directs my thesis.

Overall, I aim to promote the presentation of photography at the macro-level, as part of an overarching album, rather than as individual images. Each family album is a unique, irreducible object. One cannot fully understand a family album's story from individual photographs, any more than one can understand a book looking solely at individual paragraphs. There are innumerable ways to compile images and develop meaning in a text. Given the characteristics of family albums, museums should have a specific policy for dealing with this unique genre, while maintaining flexibility for the specific needs of each album.

Cross-referencing between the different materials helps to develop this macro-picture and elucidates a family's history and time-period. Taken together, a family photograph collection generates a rich picture of a period in history, enhancing the meanings afforded by unaffiliated images. This history is often as important as the images themselves.

As this survey of institutional collecting and digitizing practices shows, museums have not yet established best practices for handling family albums. However, the ROM is starting to

do so, particularly as part of the FCN collection. My thesis is contributing to this urgent work by helping to establish best practices when it comes to FCN material at the ROM.

| #01 | ROM | AGO | McCord | Victoria |
|---------------|---|---|--|--|
| Accessibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Family Camera Network is not yet on the eMuseum (in progress) Search for "album" provides various results, though nothing related to family photography The albums are not cataloged | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no family collections to view online Information about collections usually relates to search aids Does not serve as public archive There is no "family album" category Family albums are classified by content or artistic value A search for "album" returns all professional photography, including family images Individual pages are linked to album Treats each page as a whole | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holds 1,317,610 photographs in their collection The Notman collection alone holds 450,000, including Notman family images Preserves family related albums by subject matter Search for "family photography" returns 1439 records, treated as individual items Every record indicates to which collection it belongs Online material is open to all Catalogs albums as objects, though does not include content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biggest Family Album of Australia (BFA) is completely accessible online BFA is located under "Technology & Society" section There is a full category of family photography Different searches returned different numbers of records: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Albums - 6427 Family Photography - 24,000 Photograph Albums - 20,212 "family, albums" - 115 Search doesn't return entire album, only individual images The museum holds high quality copies of images The originals remain with the donor families Tags make searches easy Search method is as user friendly as any website search engine |
| Ownership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusive contract with each family Terms vary by individual needs or requests Families sign release forms Donor is not always the signer Before moving online, museum will verify ownership rights are preserved | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No uniform policy Varies for each donation or loan Records are free for academic purposes Other purposes require permission from copyright holder Albums fall under the same rules as any other record in the museum for ownership matters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holds images under Creative Commons rules, One policy for all Free to use and share records for private/educational needs Not free for commercial purposes Indicates record's original owners Third-party ownership rights are occasionally involved Verifies ownership rights with the original owner | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holds only copies, which reduces the issues related to ownership and copyrights Images are in public domain Extraordinary usage requires additional procedures All images are Creative Commons Zero (CC0) license Downloading requires authorization from museum Specific records (orphan or indigenous works) require permission for reuse |

F: a table assembling the main ideas of the survey.

| #02 | ROM | AGO | McCord | Victoria |
|-----------------|--|---|---|--|
| Privacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High priority Museum seeks to ensure all who appear in the photos are willing to have their images online Issues arise when dealing with deceased figures Before going online, museum will verify ownership rights are preserved | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not refer to family album objects Privacy rules fall under museum's general rules Focus on albums' artistic values, not historical or personal merits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Museum presents records in a manner considerate of all figures included and affected Follows a general moral standard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicizes information about figures in images, if shared by the donor Since images are public domain, there are less privacy issues |
| Cross-reference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not relevant, the FamCam is not online yet. Need to perform a directed search Related images do not come from a simple search The website doesn't reveal related records to search Catalogs each record separately eMuseum and the general search use different filters, without overlap No guidance from the partnering institutions to each other (CLGA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding aid is accessible for some family collections More access requires one to contact the museum staff and make a formal appointment Full page presentation for available online albums in their collection Cross reference available between the album pages, but not to other records related if they exist (as from different types – video, sound, documents and so on) Further information requires a visit to the museum Online database is not meant for research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear if there is a connection between individual images and the museum's empty albums (which may have held the images) No cross references between different types of records | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catalogs images as individual images, without reference to holder album Search by name leads to all available materials under that name – objects, documents, images, video, and audio Filters by themes – such as community, public life, cultural diversity – will bring up the available information After selecting image, one learns the original family owners of images This information facilitates access to the rest of the family donation if available online Entering into one image gives viewer option to search under place and date, creator, and different hierarchical orders of the cataloging system |
| Conclusion | <p>Efficiency of future searches depends on data implementation into the TMS museum system, which will go online into the eMuseum. Similarly, efficiency of FamCam online depends on TMS. The museum introduced the TMS recently, which is still a work in progress.</p> | <p>The AGO acknowledge the importance of full page scans and the creation of cross-references between album pages. The museum focuses on the artistic value, rather than the family angle. Nonetheless, the museum highlights importance of album context.</p> | <p>Museum has empty albums, though it's unknown if museum received them in this manner. Museum treats family related records the same as any other records in their collection (by subject matter or professional photographer – not by category for family pictures.</p> | <p>There is no available "album" search. Even though the museum has a family photography section, it only contains individual images. My research shows that there is more than one image per family, though each one functions as a stand-alone piece, without reference to a related album.</p> |

⁶⁷ When referring to someone else signing the release forms, I refer to the heirs of the donors.

1.4. THE HISTORY OF PHOTOGRAPHY AS REFLECTED THROUGH THE EVANS FAMILY COLLECTION

The narrative contained within the album pages holds value that can allow future scholars to take their research in many directions. By keeping the album as one piece, we maximize the potential of such future research. In this thesis, I emphasized the importance of those records for understanding cultural history as well as the history of photography. The Evans family albums, a collection that spans 100 years, reveal within its pages not only the development and life of the family portrayed, but also changes and developments in the field of photography.

J.J. Evans, the compiler and photographer of most of the Evans collection, employed a range of photographic techniques, which largely mirrored the development of photographic technology. The earlier albums in the collection, from late 19th century, contain mostly studio shots taken by professionals. These photographs generally depicted the important events and moments in the family's life. In the early 20th century, the invention of the Kodak No.1 and transparent celluloid film enabled regular people to document mundane aspects of family life. The Evans family took advantage of this new technology. Hence, J.J. Evans' later albums show more personal images and quotidian scenes that were photographed by family members.

Examining these albums and the photographic processes involved is fruitful for the study of the history of photography. Notably, in the early albums, we can see albumen prints next to silver gelatin prints. Albumens were commonly used between 1860-1895. Gelatin POP came later, mostly used between 1885-1910. Silver Gelatin DOP was prominent between 1890 until early 2000.⁶⁸ The processes presented in the albums correlate with the technological

⁶⁸ Image Permanence Institute, "Graphics Atlas," *Rochester Institute of Technology*, <http://www.graphicsatlas.org/> (accessed July. 7, 2018).

developments in the field. In turn, we see a general shift in composition and theme. Earlier photographs were almost entirely formal representations of the family, with studio shots for every baby and important event, which feature well-dressed and often stiffly posed individuals. Later photographs depict more casual and spontaneous moments, wherein the family enjoys leisure time together in nature, home, or work. By keeping the Evans family albums together – not just one album, but as a whole collection of albums – we are better able to reveal the richness of the surrounding histories.

2. THE PRACTICE OF DIGITIZING AND ARCHIVING FAMILY ALBUMS

2.1. THE EVANS FAMILY COLLECTION

The Evans family collection (accession # 2018.24.1-21) consists of 21 family albums, which span the years 1888 to 1979. Four albums document the Evans' lives in North America and 17 albums focus on their lives in China. They are handmade albums with leatherette covers. Most are compiled in a scrapbook style. The photographs depict diverse topics: family moments, sporting events, fire brigade activities, and nature views. The albums contain varied photographic processes and techniques in different stages of deterioration. Most albums include notes of names, dates, places, and events. Additionally, these albums illustrate unique handwriting and presentation styles. Despite their differences, the albums share the story of one



Figure 19: *Portrait of J.J. Evans at his desk*, c.1960. Album 17 of Evans Family Collection (view 5), The Family Camera Network, ROM, accession: 2018.24.17.

family's journey. J.J. Evans, the photographer and compiler of most of the albums, documented his family's life with great photographic skill.

The family story starts with Edward Evans, who moved to Canada from Liverpool at the age of 24. At the age of 47, Edward moved with his family to China to work as a missionary. He later started an office supply and publishing company in China, under the name "Edward Evans & Sons, Ltd." Edward and his wife, Emma Jewell, raised their children in accordance with Western customs and values, minimizing their contact with locals. Their family albums illustrate



Figure 20: *Portrait of Edward Evans and his son Joseph Jewell Evans*, Album 1 of Evans Family Collection (view 37), The Family Camera Network, ROM, accession: 1905. 2018.24.1.

the prosperity and wellness of a Canadian family in China, with scant reference to China's contemporary affairs.



Figure 21: *Edward Evans & Sons Book Publishers Headquarters in Shanghai, China*, Album 2 of Evans Family Collection (view 28), 1910, The Family Camera Network, ROM, accession 201 8.24.2.

In 1945, Edward and Emma's son, Joseph Jewell Evans, and his family returned to Canada, after serving three years in the Yangzhou Japanese prison during World War II. Amelia "Milly" Gertrud Way née Evans, J.J.Evans' daughter, donated the albums to the ROM in 2004. Ten years later, the ROM collaborated as a parent organization with the FCN, which subsequently incorporated the Evans family albums into the project's collection. In 2018, curator

Dr. Deepali Dewan interviewed Milly's son, Dr. Edson Way, who explained the special status that the albums held in his family's lives. He stated that the albums were "the family treasure," ubiquitous in his family's discussions and activities. With the Evans family, discussion of the albums was an everyday practice. While the J.J. Evans and his wife Alice Morton Evans were alive, they often shared stories with their descendants in Canada about their ancestors time in China. The albums represented vivid memories of another era and place, which the grandparents keenly wished to preserve and pass on.⁶⁹



Figure 22: *Evans family gathered together, listening to the family stories*, Album 14 of Evans Family Collection (view 91), accession: 2018.24.14.

⁶⁹ This thesis deals with the practical aspects of the Evans family albums in the possession of the ROM. A more in-depth study of the family history should be the focus of a separate study.

2.2. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY FOR DIGITIZATION OF FAMILY ALBUMS

In most instances, because visitors are unable to access the archive in person, the digitized copy of the album will become the only version they will see. Therefore, it must be an acceptable representation of the physical record.

As emphasized by Zurmoskis, Rose, and Langford,⁷⁰ digitization allows for better access and new perspectives. However, it will always differ from the physical experience. Thus, digitization raises questions, such as how to best transfer the “feeling” and content of the record from the physical to the digital. Physical albums have physical attributes such as color, texture, size, frame, and signs of aging. The materiality of an object, in its physicality and haptic sense, are difficult to translate into the digital form. How much is lost in the transition to digital? Can the physical experience be translated into a digital form? Is it important to emphasize the “handmade” aspect of the albums? When trying to simulate the physical experience, curators need to weigh their options: should they try to make the page-flipping experience or opt for presenting full digital pages next to one another. These are just some of the questions that need to be addressed.

The answers to such questions will affect the sense of intimacy that is revealed between the pages. The end-product can either strengthen or weaken the album compiler’s message and the artistic importance of his or her creation. The decisions made during the digitization process will influence the public’s understanding of these records and determine their historic or artistic value.

⁷⁰ Zurmoskis, *Snapshot Photography*; Rose, *Doing Family Photography*; Langford, *Suspended Conversations*.

Effective digitization promotes the museums' calling, which is to educate and expand the horizons of its viewers. Increasingly, museums understand that if they want to stay relevant, it is important for them to adopt digital platforms. Museums, whether focused on art or history, need to adapt to changing times and new technologies, while staying tuned with their mission statements. Their adaptability determines budgets, timelines, human resources, and often the future of the museum. When considering the move to digital platforms, the methodology and catalog system are crucial for future public accessibility of the materials.

Online platforms such as eMuseum, not only supplement the physical collections but also provide a stand-alone platform with various levels of access to information. An online "tags" search could lead quickly to pertinent information with greater ease than searching through a museum exhibition. Ideally, these online systems will facilitate access to various types of records: movies, audio files, images, documents. If different records relate to a common search, they should appear on a single screen, without the use of extra screens or audio tools.

Technology enables us to access records from around the world without the need to physically travel to a specific museum or collection. Optimizing the use of technology calls for effective cross-referencing abilities to better connect and share public treasures with a wide audience.

The application of technology to family albums is novel territory since family albums are a relatively new type of record within museum holdings. Therefore, there is a need to define appropriate technology protocols for treating them. Similar to how sculptures or world maps carry niche-specific procedures, family photography should require a separate set of protocols. A new set of rules is needed that takes into consideration all aspects of family photography, including its physical aspects and content, the private and public aspects of albums, and the need to present them as unitary objects.

Even if an album is located in the ethereal digital world, it should still convey its special characteristics, and the album's overall narrative. From the annotations that decorate the album pages to the album's overall organization, digitization should preserve and amplify these micro and macro details. It is important that digitization shows an album's myriad physicalities: its paper composition, the different paper styles and sizes, the album cover consisting of a wide range of materials – paper, wood, leather, metal. Moreover, museum technology should not neglect to express the different photographic processes encapsulated in the albums, such as albumens, silver gelatin, or cyanotypes.

Digitization needs to be expressive, portraying the details and the album's overarching story. To best preserve the micro and macro stories, I suggest digitizing the albums' full pages, and not the individual images, while keeping the album's original order.

More specific guidelines would not be effective. Though family albums share many qualities, each album differs from one another, telling a unique story. Given the multitude of stories and styles that emerge from these albums, rigid guidelines are less relevant; rather, my aim is to highlight important steps and issues to consider when dealing with family albums. I want to leave the curators and collection technicians the latitude to handle each album according to their specific needs.

Since the FCN is an affiliate of UWO,⁷¹ which partnered with the ROM for the FCN's research. My guidelines need to comply not just with the ROM's overall protocols but also with the needs and singularity of the FCN. Recently, the ROM has undertaken an ambitious digitization project, which seeks to digitize all the museum's 12 million records for display on

⁷¹ UWO – University of Western Ontario

eMuseum. My recommendations to the FCN digitization project will adhere to the guidelines of the general digitization project at the museum so that consistency will be preserved.

Currently, the ROM has no division dedicated specifically to photography, even though each museum department holds photographic materials. As a result, each department may handle its photographic materials in a different manner. Without a photography department or photography preservation specialists, the museum's departments are likely neglecting preservation norms for photographic materials. For example, it is customary to store original photographed images – such as albumens – inside books with proper environmental control. If the departments are unfamiliar with such a standard, some may put photographs in improper storage, to the detriment of the record.

The ROM also deviates from best practices for categorizing photography objects. Specifically, the museum's online platform categorizes photographic images within the 2-D paper-works section, alongside paintings, maps and paper-based records. Categorizing photographic items by their component materials reduces the chances of actually finding the item. To facilitate access, museums need to categorize the images by its genre, in this case, "family photography." The ROM's decision to categorize by component material exemplifies inefficiencies that can arise when institutions inexperienced with photography deal with family photography.

2.3. THE PHYSICAL CONDITION OF THE EVANS FAMILY ALBUMS:

Most of the albums in the Evans collection are over 100-years-old. The album compilers used a black paper background to support the photographs. The albums' conditions vary. Some of them are in excellent condition with the album cover and pages still intact. In these cases, the images and captions are often clear and vivid. Other albums have deteriorated over the years,

with their bindings crumbling. The albums in poor condition have pages that are torn, with the images, captions, and annotations fading. Some of the albums cannot lie flat, while others struggle to remain at an angle. Due to the disparate conditions, I digitized the albums using different techniques, depending on each album's needs. To this end, I consulted with the ROM's paper conservator on the various album types and their specific conditions. The condition of the album is a critical factor when deciding on the digitization method. Some albums were in such poor condition they they required me to take the album apart to scan them. Overall, I found that an overhead camera with a copy stand was the most effective way to digitize albums. This camera is quite flexible, adjusting to each album and its special requirements.

Effective digitization will boost the public's access to family albums through the eMuseum. In this way, the museum will increase accessibility, minimize the use of the original albums, facilitate cross-references with other materials in the collection, and become a more efficient pedagogical and research tool.

In all, I digitized 21 of the Evans family albums which consist of 2030 scans, according to the guidelines presented in this thesis. For each of these 21 albums, I created a digital version for the families. The digital albums could also serve as another resource for visitors, thereby minimizing the public's contact with the originals.

Through this practical experience, I learned about the various challenges that come with digitizing family albums. In the appendix, I provide a link to the album's digital version, which offers a genuine page-flipping experience.

2.4. WORKING PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE DIGITIZATION OF FAMILY ALBUMS

Throughout this thesis, I argue that museums should digitize family albums in a way that best portrays the album's full experience. This requires digitization of each page as a whole and treating each page as an object related to the parent record (the album itself). In Figures 23-25, I created a prototype simulation page for how collections should look on the ROM website. In this

Figure 23: Author's prototype page imitating the ROM's future photography collections page.

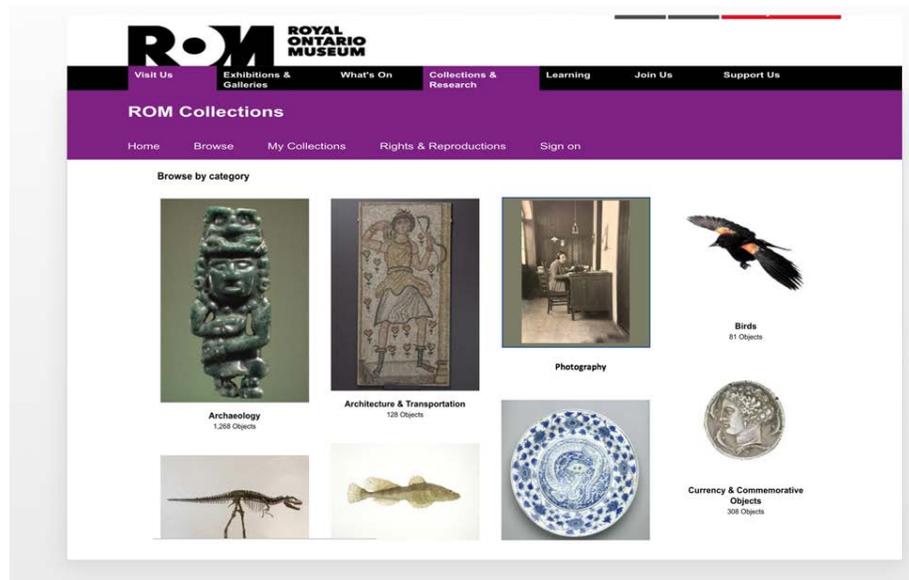


Figure 24: Author's replica of an exemplary digitized online album, starting with one chosen image from the album, followed by the album's pages arranged sequentially. The page layout allows the viewer to connect to other records that are part of FamCam.

simulation, photograph albums are adjacent to the museum's other collections.

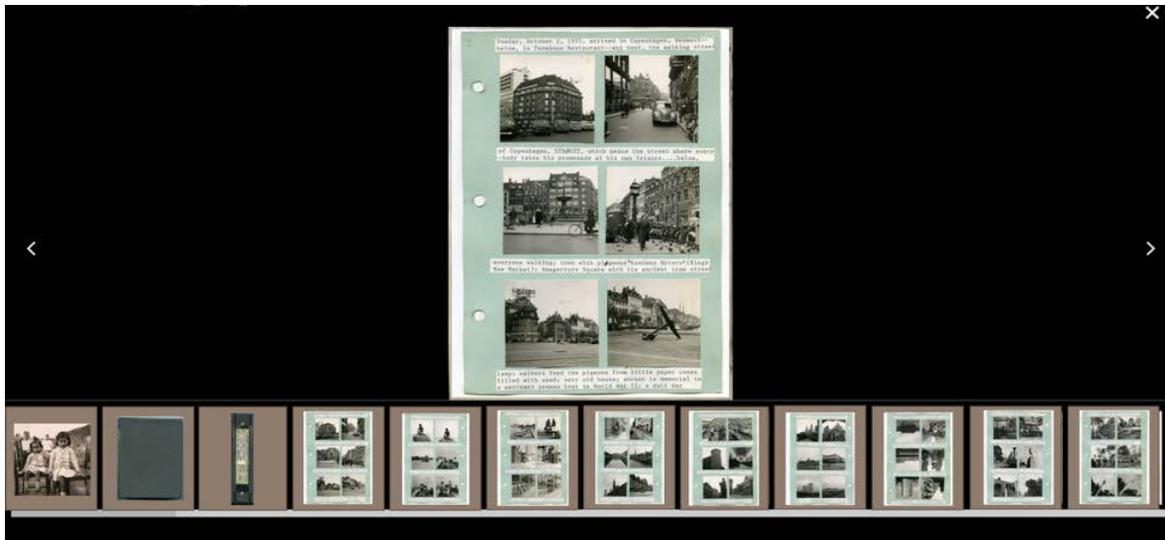


Figure 25: Autor's replica of an Album with pages in original order from Martin collection, The Family Camera Network, ROM.

As a part of my research, I checked different types of scanners to determine the ideal one for my project. I will not elaborate on the multitude of scanners available on the market. Instead, I will focus on the scanners that I considered and the relevant information that led to my preferred choice. My survey will consider flatbed scanners, overhead scanners, book scanners, and the general camera with a copy stand:

i. **Flatbed scanner.** This scanner is recommended for flat materials, documents or images, and particularly in cases when no damage can be caused to the object. If there are any corners that may be torn or cracked by the weight of the scanner's cover, one should not use the flatbed scanner. Similarly, if images may fall from the page, as is often the case with albums, one should not place the document flat. In such instances, a flatbed scanner can damage the fragility of the binding and cause images to fall from their pages. The flatbed scanner is more suitable for albums where the pages or images can be naturally separated from the albums without causing harm. For my project, I used the flatbed scanner for the loose images in the collection.

ii. Overhead scanner. There are many types of overhead scanners, from the high-end to the basic. This scanner was not my preferred choice because it does not allow for great flexibility.

When digitizing family albums, adaptability is key for dealing with the different types of albums one may encounter. Family albums contain different types of photographs, such as albumen prints or silver gelatin. One needs a scanner that can adapt to the various type of photographs – an overhead scanner fails to meet this requirement. Ideally, the scanner will be able to adjust its lighting angle and positioning with ease. For example, with the Evans family collection, I often needed to adjust the camera’s lighting and position to meet the requirements of each album page (sometimes the binder cut off parts of the page or lose pages required repositioning of the camera). An overhead camera, due to its lack of flexibility, was not ideal for the task.

iii. Book scanner. Though a book scanner is a suitable option, high-quality book scanners can be quite expensive in comparison to the other scanners. For quality and consistency, book scanners may be most appropriate for a large digitization process, which also spreads out the cost. For smaller digitization jobs, this scanner’s cost can be prohibitive. For family albums, book scanners will likely not be an option. At the ROM, the book scanners were not meant for high-quality photography but rather for scanning textbooks, which is why I opted not to use the book scanner for my work with the Evans family collection.

iv. A camera with a copy stand. I decided on this option, which was already available at the ROM. A camera with a copy stand can provide high-quality digitized images at a reasonable price while enabling fair handling flexibility. One can choose from a wide range of cameras to scan. I used the ROM’s Nikon D5500.

This camera balanced the considerations of space, budget, time, and flexibility, while offering for quality and consistency. To experiment and describe the digitization process, I relied mostly on the Evans family collection. However, I also used other families' albums, which I obtained from FCN, to gain experience with different types of albums and to avoid relying on one collection for my conclusions.



Figure 26: Author's recommended set-up for digitization of the family albums, using a book easel to support the album and a grey background to reduce the noise behind the album.

After consulting with glass suppliers, curators, technicians and the paper conservator at the ROM, and Having chosen my digitization device, I started to digitize the Evans family collection. Since old family albums typically cannot lie flat, I used a book easel supported with foam, seen in figure 26, to create a V-shape, which ensures that only one side is horizontal when scanning. For maximum efficiency and preservation, I digitized the right side of the album first, followed by the left side. One side of the album was horizontal at all times. This method proved

to be economical and efficient, eliminating the need for two cameras. The method facilitated the editing of the images since they were already ordered in my camera according to the album's original order.

A challenge I faced was selecting the right platen material to flatten the images. The platen also minimizes reflections and damage to the album. I performed various tests with different kinds of glass and diverse types of acrylic. The art glass was particularly successful because it generated a detailed and clear image, with the glass barely visible, as seen in figure 29.



Figure 27: *Third album (images 201-204) of Goss collection, The Family Camera Network, ROM, examining the use of a platen material.*



Figure 28: *Third Album (images 201-204) of Goss collection, The Family Camera Network, ROM. The image emphasizes the quality and detail captured in the image.*

Figure 29: *Third Album (images 201-204) of Goss collection, The Family Camera Network, ROM. The image shows the use of 'art glass' as the platen material.*





Figure 30: *Sample album page*, Album 12 of Evans Collection (view 73), accession: 2018.24.12. There is platen material on the right-hand side. For comparison, the left-hand image is without platen material.

However, the use of glass is not a sustainable solution for a high-volume workflow, such as a project to digitize full albums. Glass is too fragile. Potentially, it could damage the album or the person performing the digitization. As a result, I looked for other materials that can flatten images, reduce reflections, create high-quality images with consistency, and enable high-volume workflow without endangering either the album or staff.

I concluded that the best results come not with glass, but instead with the museum acrylic, Optium TruViu. The result was as clear and sharp as glass, but with less risk for damage. In the image on the right, above, the glass is barely perceptible, though there is a thin silver line on the left-hand image from the edge tape on the glass. In the right-hand image, the photographs are flat. On the left-hand side, the photographs are floating, projecting shadows. Floating photographs may lead to a distortion of the perceived images or loss of details due to the angle of the photographs. With the help of Optium TruViu and an angled book-easel, along with the use of a level to ensure the surface is parallel to the camera, I reduced distortion and made the scans more consistent in quality.

Another benefit to Optium TruViu is that it prevents a common problem that arises with glass: Newton rings. An impediment to a clear image, Newton rings appear on glass surfaces as a concentric pattern of rings. Anti-Newton-ring glass or a high-quality plexiglass, such as the TruVue Optium, thwarts Newton rings.

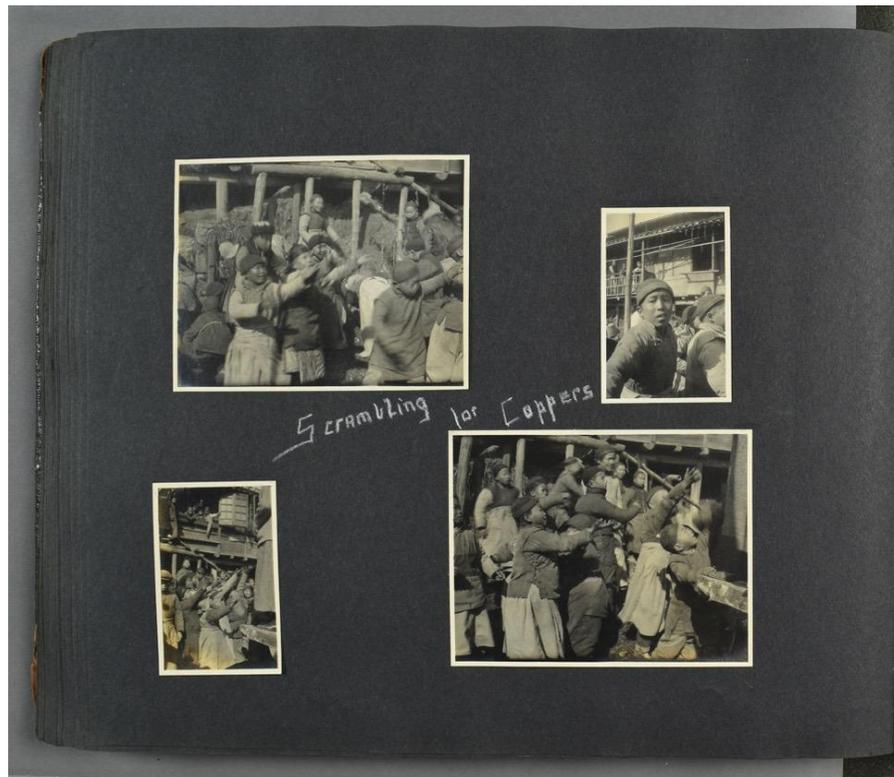


Figure 31: *Sample album page*, Album 10 of Evans Family Collection (view 80), accession: 2018.24.10. The image was taken with Optium TruVu acrylic.

I tested different types of platen materials, such as Museum glass or Artglass, which are typically used for professional framing. I tried different types of Plexiglas, however, the texture caused a reflection, which was difficult to avoid. Eventually, I came to the Optium TruVue which gave me the best results: the material was more durable, lighter, and returned a high-clarity image.

2.5. DIGITIZATION GUIDE FOR HANDLING FAMILY ALBUMS IN THE MUSEUM

In section 2.5, I will detail the workflow related to the digitization of the Evans family albums within the FCN collection. The digitization process for other types of records in the collection, however, is beyond the scope of this document. I will address the following aspects of the digitization process: digitization methods for different album types; project planning and management; tools, equipment and set-up instructions; quality control measures; and post-digitization work.

When choosing to digitize an album, one should select the desired method according to the specific characteristics of the album, the time available, budget, human resources, conservation concerns, institutional needs, and project goals. Three goals guided my decisions for my digitization project:

- i. The FCN digitization project should preserve the materials for the long term, to make them a useful tool for future research, and available for future exhibitions,
- ii. The project should keep the donor family's interests in focus;
- iii. Concomitantly, the chosen method should be compatible with the ROM online eMuseum, where the FCN will share some of its objects with the public.

When dealing with family albums, museums face different types of albums and records. In most cases, the album contains either a family or individual story. The organization and details of the album reveal a lot about the album narrative and compiler. To preserve the object accurately for future generations and gain the most from its details as a historical record, there is a need to stay faithful to the original object when creating a digital copy.

Often, full-page digitization will best transmit the album's story. This is especially true in the following instances:

- When the album contains inscriptions with personal details
- When the pages include drawings or other illustrations next to the photographs
- When the album includes any objects attached to the pages
- When multiple photographs are glued to the pages

If the album does not offer added value as an object, it may be better to scan the album as individual images – this is typically a curatorial decision.

Digitization practices vary depending on the albums type. For example:

Slip-in pocket albums. Best practice often calls for first digitizing the whole album in low resolution for reference. Then one should carefully remove the photos and scan them individually in high resolution, while keeping the original order of the album. The scanner should number the photos according to the album's original order to keep track and to preserve the narrative created by the compiler.



Figure 32: Sample album page – slip in pocket album, Lu-Thai Family Album, The Family Camera Network, ROM.



Figure 33: Sample album page, Album 1 of Evans Family Collection, accession 2018.24.1. The image shows different photography processes on the same page (8 Gelatin Silver prints, 4 Albumens and 2 Cyanotypes).

Scrapbook albums. Even in the case of multiple albums from one donor, scrapbook albums will not necessarily be digitized in the same manner. Digitization methods depend on each specific album, its characteristics, and condition. Many times when the album is handmade, the design of each page holds a specific structure and thought, which is unique to the creator and the narrative he wants to tell. In that case, it is best to digitize the pages, in their entirety, to include not just the images but also the structure of the page, any inscriptions or drawings, or any objects that might be attached to the pages.

Magnetic pages. For preservation reasons, in most cases, it is better to remove photographs from the album, since the adhesive material will accelerate degradation of photos. One should always

document the album before making any change and keep the original album order. The curator needs to work closely with the conservator to consult on the removal of images from the album. In cases where there is only one photograph per page, with no additional details, it is better to take out the images and scan them individually, while keeping the original order. In many cases the photographs will be glued to the pages. In such cases, it is better to consult with the conservator. If possible, one should extract the photographs from the album with the appropriate tools.

2.6. WORKFLOW - THE DIGITIZATION SET UP:



Figure 34: Author's digitization set-up at the ROM.

In section 2.6, I will list the tools and equipment needed to digitize the albums, following the guidelines for the digitization process. Some images accompanying the text will facilitate the

explanations. The guidelines will not cover digitization techniques for all the possible types of albums. Rather, this section aims to provide general guidelines that can be modified for the necessities of specific albums.

2.6.1. TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

Recommended tools will likely change depending on the needs of a specific album or the digitization resources. Through pictures, I explain some of the tools accessible at the ROM.

Figure 35: A camera and an adaptor to download the photos to your computer



Figure 36: A copy stand



Figure 37: Photography studio lighting



Figure 38: A book easel to support the albums



Figure 39: A platen material
– Plexiglas, Optium Tru
Vue.



Figure 40: A grey surface that goes
under the album, matching the
background of all the objects in the
eMuseum

Figure 41: Foams to
support the albums



Figure 42: A selection of foam in
different sizes and thickness
to adjust the surface of the album
while digitizing and flipping pages

Figure 43: Grey card for
white balance



Figure 44: A level to
ensure the camera and the
album are even

Figure 45: Microfiber cloth to clean the platen material



Figure 46: Nitrile gloves



Figure 47: Cleaning material to ensure the area is ammonia free (Premium Clean by Tru Vue)

2.6.2. DIGITIZATION WORKFLOW



Figure 48: Prepare the book easel



Figure 49: Position the book easel on the copy stand

Section 2.6.2 delineates the digitization workflow steps that I took after consulting with the paper conservator at the ROM. Similarly, in future digitization projects, should first consult with the paper conservator to receive advice relating to the characteristics and needs of the specific album.

- i. **Prepare the book easel (Fig. 49):** Remove the upper part of the book easel, which goes on the copy stand.
- ii. **Position the book easel on the copy stand (Fig. 50):** Adjust the easel's angle to the needs of the album being digitized. Each album will require a different angle for its V shape. Nonetheless, the angle cannot be too narrow or it will block the light from one side.



Figure 51: Foams on the book easel, which create a balanced and soft support for the album



Figure 52: The grey boards on top of the albums

- iii. **Place foams on the top of the book easel to create a balanced and soft support (Fig. 51).**
- iv. **Place the grey board on top (Fig. 52).**⁷² The structure of the foams should vary according to the needs of a specific album. Museum staff needs to consider two issues when placing the foams:
 - a. ensuring that the foams structure do not damage the albums, meaning its supporting while stable;
 - b. leveling the albums with the camera.

When digitizing albums, staff should consider both the correct photographic lighting and the need to protect the albums. Each album has its own limitations, often related to the

⁷² The grey board is needed to generate the same background that is being used for the ROM's general digitization project.

album angle, the different photographic processes involved in creating the imagery, or the page surfaces which may produce reflections.



Figure 53: Light preparation

- v. After placing the foams and the grey board, staff can attend to the following camera settings: Raw format, 100-150 ISO, F stop 8-10, Speed 10-13s, RGB color set, white balance – Incandescent.

The camera's height on the copy stand depends on the size of the album. For most of the Evans albums, I used 45 cm, as seen in Fig. 55.



Figure 54: A simple level that can be used on every surface



Figure 55: The camera's height on copy stand

- vi. **Place the camera** so as to see a full page of the album with a little bit of grey background, which will be partially cropped later to achieve a consistent look.
- vii. **Level the camera (Fig. 54).**
- viii. **Gloves** - There is a debate about whether gloves are advised for paper materials. Each institution or professional approaches this issue differently. The needs of the object and your comfort should direct the decision on whether to work with gloves. If gloves prevent users from feeling the paper properly, then it is better to handle the materials with clean hands. That said, gloves protect the user. Therefore it is important to know what kind of materials are involved and if there is a need for gloves. If one decides to use gloves, Nitrile gloves are recommended, since they closely fit the hand.

- ix. **Prepare the Plexiglass.** It is recommended to clean the surface each time, using a piece of fiber cloth with ammonia-free premium cleaning material. Ensure that there are no fingerprints or dirt left on the surface. Spray a small amount of cleaning material on the cloth and gently clean the surface. It is best not to spray directly on the Plexiglas. This task is easier with gloves, since bare hands can create new fingerprints.
- x. **Place and balance the album on top of the grey background that you prepared on the setup (Fig. 56).** Check that everything is in place, minimizing any risk to the object.

Figure 56: Use of level after placing the object on the grey board

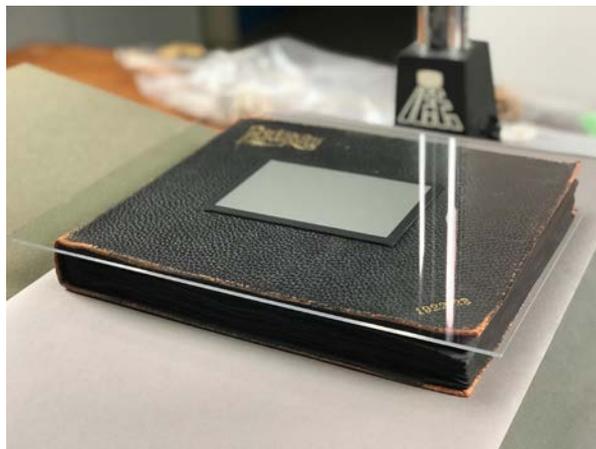


Figure 57: Grey card under the platen material

- xi. **Level the album (Fig. 56).** The staff will need to check every few shoots (after 3-5 pages) that the surface is leveled, since turning the pages may offset the balance. When leveling the album, it is important to level both sides throughout its length and breadth (Fig 57-58).

- xii. **Shoot the grey card (Fig. 57).** Place the grey card under the platen material, which also affects the colors and white balance. This step is needed to apply white balance properly after scanning the pages. Whenever there is a pause in scanning, the conditions may change necessitating a re-shoot of the grey card.
- xiii. **Scan the recto side first from top to bottom and then the verso side from top to bottom.** Focus on the edges of the image. If there is a face or text, focus on

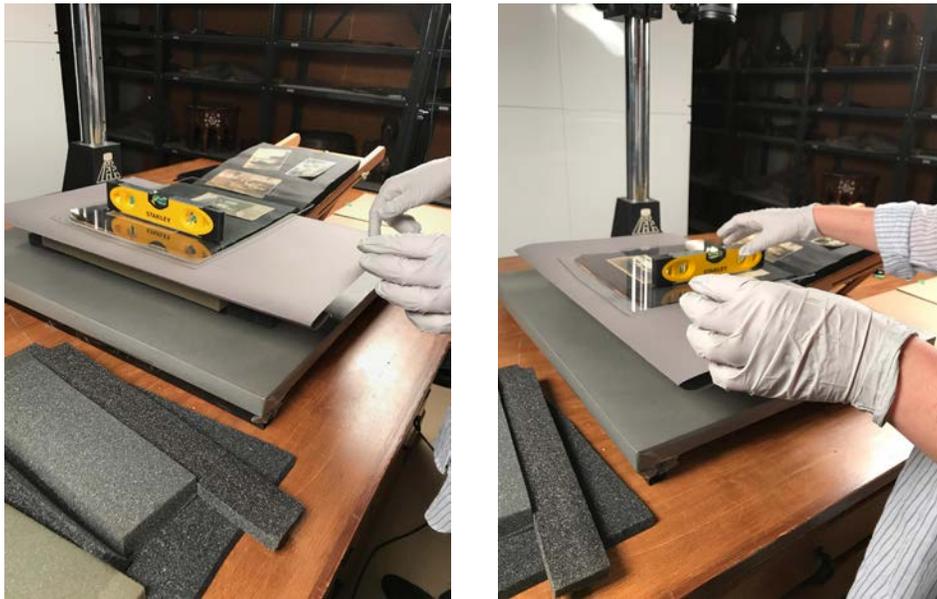


Figure 58-59: Use of the level for both length and breadth

those as well, which ensures the images is sharp.

- xiv. After the first shoot, check the camera screen to see if the desired result was received (Fig. 60).

- xv. Once shooting the recto side of the album, it is advised to **download** your images to a computer (using a laptop next to the setup, if possible). If a laptop is unavailable, then download your images to a desktop computer in order to ensure

Figure 60: Checking the sharpness of first image



the photos are suitable before proceeding. If there are any loose images in the albums, the curator should decide how to treat them in advance.⁷³

2.6.3. EDITING THE FILES

Create three folders, one for each set of image files: i. Master files, ii. Production files, and iii. Access files.

- i. Master Files (RAW format):** This format holds the originals. No editing is done on the master files. Any change made to an image will go to a copy. As with any photography album, it is better to create two sub files – Recto and Verso.

⁷³ With the Evans family collection, we discussed to treat the loose images as one group of images. In every album a few images were loose. We decided to bind them all together and digitize them on a flat bed scanner while accessioning each photo as an individual record within the batch of the Evans collection, accessions # **2018.24.22-34**.

ii. **Production Files (TIFF format):** These produce high-quality copies of the original.

Production files hold changes, such as cropping or adjusting, from the original. These files offer a high-quality copy to share or distribute with others.

iii. **Access Files (JPEG format):** These low-resolution JPEG files are designed for easy and fast network-sharing, including on the eMuseum platform. The ROM museum guidelines will define the resolution, size, color, and balance of these files.

After creating the three folders, select all the images from the recto file within the master file and open them in Photoshop. A camera RAW window will open with the selected images. This step is recommended to work on a batch of images. For example, one may want to rotate all the images or to adjust white balance and exposure across the whole batch. Depending on the scanning method, the recto or verso will be upside down. To fix this, choose all (command A) and use the rotate signs on top. All the images will rotate.

Next, I will outline the steps to edit the digitized images.

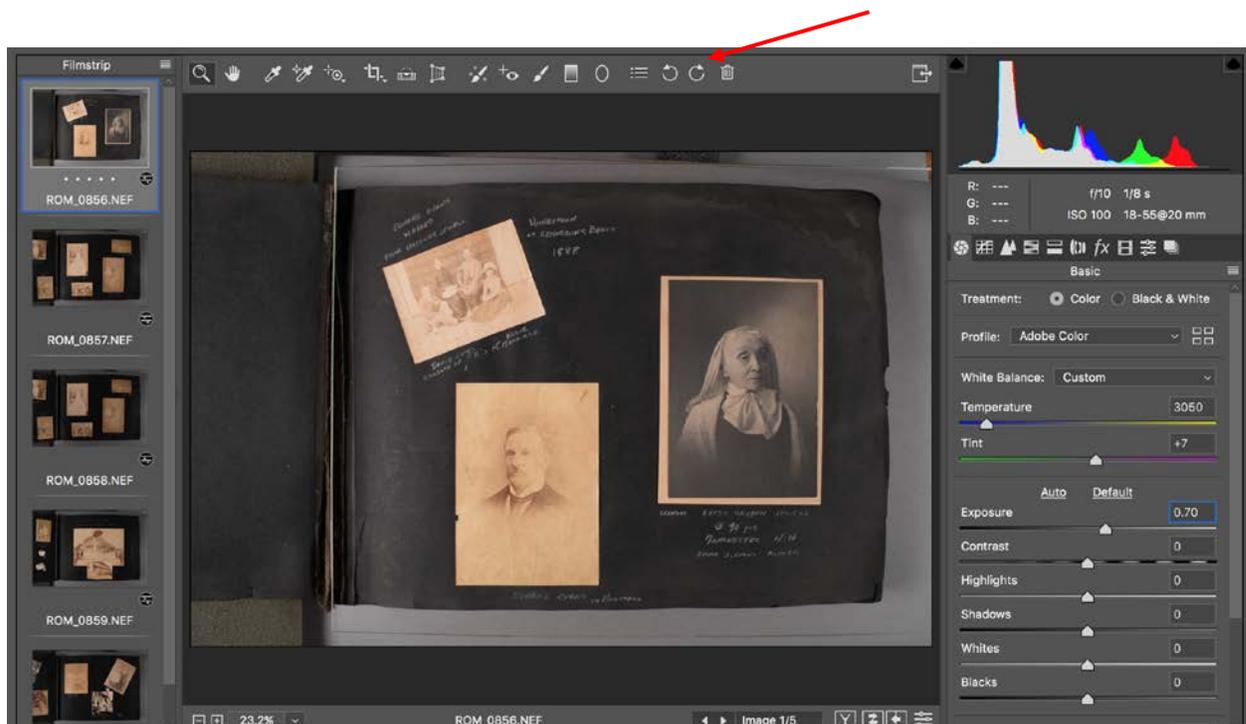


Figure 61: The rotation tools in the camera's RAW window

i. **White Balance.** To ensure that white balance is correct on all album, first, scan the grey card (or color card). If scanning conditions change, such as when using different lighting or after breaks in the work, one will need to scan the grey card again. If using platen material, the grey card should be placed under the platen material. In this case, platen material should be used throughout the whole album, even on pages that the platen is not needed, to avoid differences in color and balance. For the grey card, select the eyedropper, located on the top banner of tools. When the cursor points over that button, “white balance” will appear. Set the white balance on the right side to “custom.” When the eyedropper tool touches the grey area the temperature and tint values will change. Afterwards, select all images (command A) and apply the white balance tool again. All the selected images should change their white balance according to the values created with the grey card. After completing this process, randomly check the values of the temperature and tint on a few images. They should be the same for all images.

This process will ensure the white balance is consistent across all groups of images from the same album, especially if they were taken on different days or under different physical conditions.

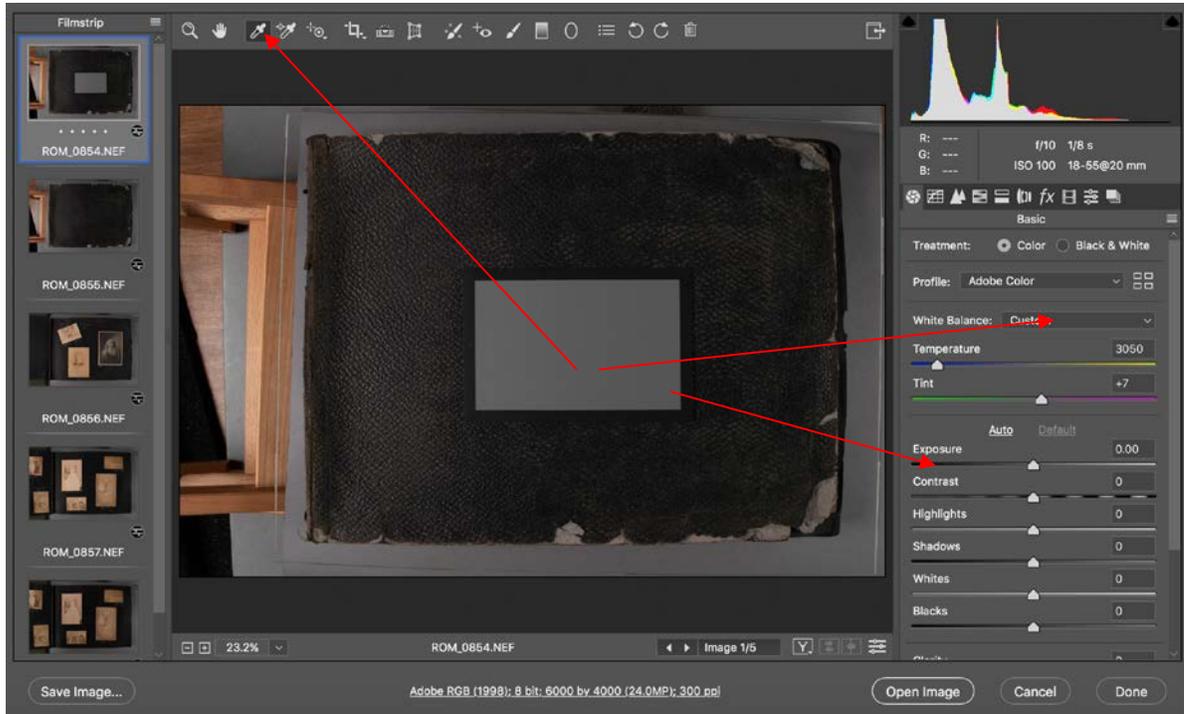


Figure 62: White balance tool

ii. Levels and Exposure. Photoshop offers valuable tools for editing images. For museum purposes, we want to avoid manipulating the images. However, the exposure and level tools are acceptable forms of image editing. With the RAW format, it is easy to adjust the exposure and the brightness of the images, while making sure all the files share the same values. Photoshop tools help to brighten dark areas of an image if needed, avoiding the need to change the overall contrast (see figure 54). After completing leveling and exposure alterations, select the “open images” option. All selected images will open in Photoshop automatically.

iii. Cropping. It is recommended to crop one by one. When working with family albums, which are often handmade and akin to a scrapbook style, each page will tend to differ from the next. Thus, one cannot effectively crop a batch of the images together. Individual cropping is a

time-consuming task, though it allows for better control of the image, with more precise cropping. As a result, one avoids losing valuable information from the image. It is also recommended to crop the images sequentially, according to the order that they appear. After cropping, number the images accordingly. In my case study, I used a printed copy of the album (from an existing pdf file) to help me follow the correct order. When multiple images are open in Photoshop, the ones not seen on the upper bar are concealed under the two arrows (seen in figure 63, below). The arrows will open a drop-down list with all the available images. Choose the smallest numbered picture, which corresponds to the first image scanned.

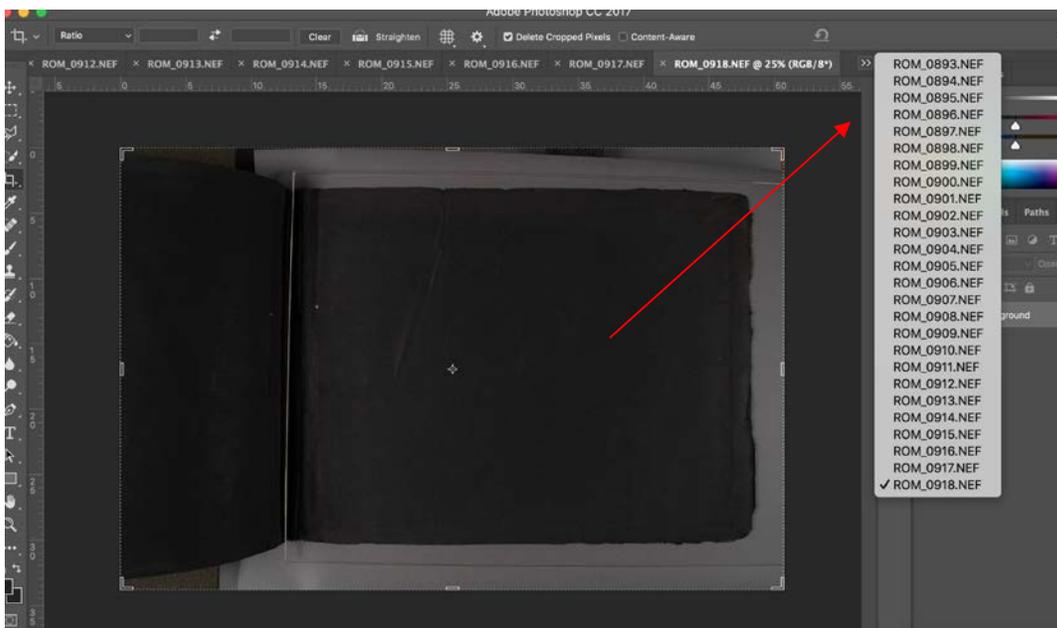


Figure 63: The two arrows on the top right will reveal a list of all the images that are open in Photoshop but not shown – choose the smallest one.

The cropping tool can also adjust the position of an image. When pointing the mouse cursor on one of the corners of the selected area, an arched arrow will appear. By moving the arch, the selected image will rotate (Figure 64).

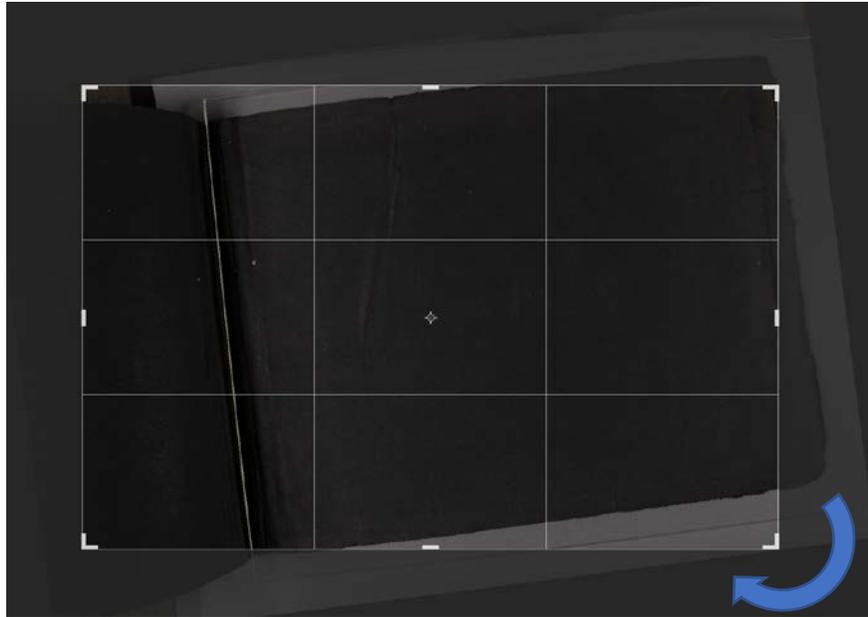


Figure 64: An example to a position adjustment

iv. After cropping is complete, the next step is to **name the file** by the agreed upon numbering system. In the case of the Evans albums, we named the pages by views. Therefore, each image received a number corresponding to its album order. When using a hard copy it is easier to number all the pages in the physical draft and to follow that numbering with the actual files. After numbering, save the new cropped file as a TIFF document in the production file, which was prepared in advance.

After scanning the recto and verso side, the TIFF documents will be located in one file (the production file) organized according to the original object. At this point, it is best to check that nothing was missed and that the files are a reliable representation of the album.

The last editing step is to create the JPEG files. My preferred method is to open Photoshop and then follow these clicks: File → script → image processor.

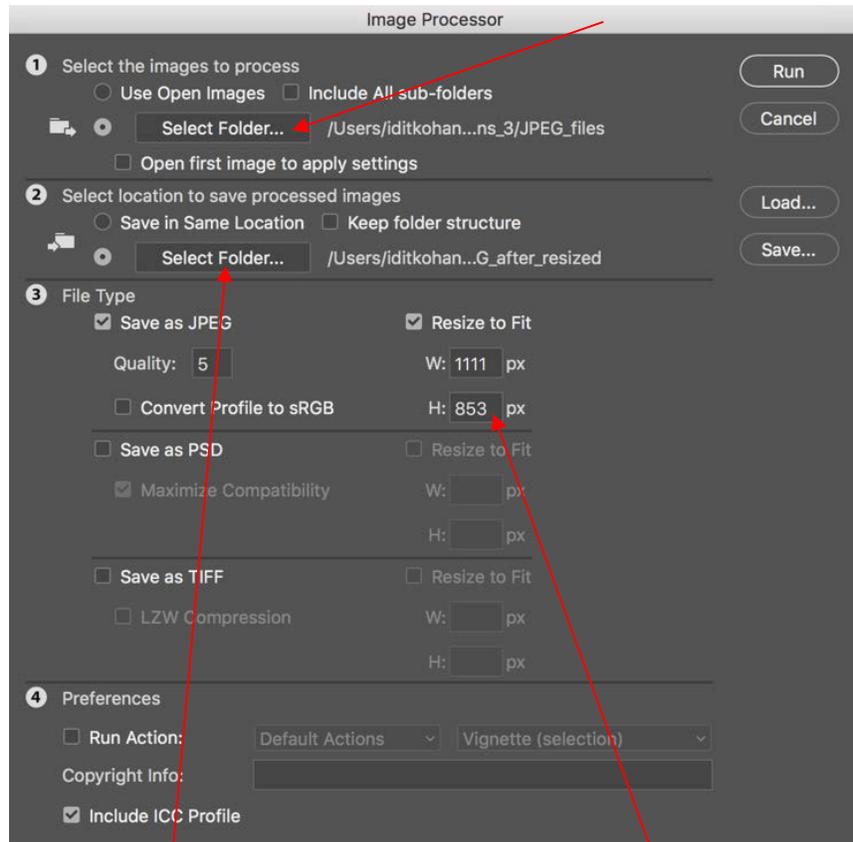


Figure 65: Window for resizing a batch of images

Then, choose the relevant production file (the whole file together). Save the files to the access file prepared in advance. Choose ‘resize to fit’ and type the desired dimensions for resizing. Click RUN. All files will resize automatically to the same size without distorting the images. The process will preserve the aspect ratio.

2.6.4. CATALOGUING

The cataloging of family albums is outside the scope of this thesis. Given the multitude of issues involved, one should consult an archival specialist. For purposes of digitization, one should examine how the cataloging method will affect the presentation of the records on the online platform. Archival standards will affect the information that goes online and how this information will be accessed.

Museum cataloging systems need to adapt to technology changes while staying synchronized to archival standards and to their methods and system being used. The cataloging method should increase accessibility for both the digital and physical records, for the random viewers and to the museum staff.

The Evans collection is a part of a wider collection of family records within the FCN. Therefore, the FCN cataloging system will direct decision-making relating to the Evans collection. The FCN continues to develop its cataloging system, with each collection presenting its own challenges.

3. CONCLUSION

In Daphne Yuen's thesis "The Digitization of Photographic Albums at the Victoria and Albert Museum and other London-Based Cultural Institutions,"⁷⁴ she refers to museums' former system, which catalogued each image as an individual record. She argues that, in so doing, museums treated albums as vessels for multiple objects rather than viewing each album as one indivisible record. Yuen's stance aligns with my recommendations for treating family albums as a singular unit.

In accord with my suggestions, the FCN decided to digitize its albums by full pages, acknowledging the importance of keeping the album together as a holistic object. This perspective, which sees albums as unitary objects, will inform the FCN's cataloging methods, including for the Evans collection. Each Evans's album will receive one accession number, a policy that will keep all the album pages together in its original order. Additionally, the FCN numbered album pages by views to facilitate access in the future. The FCN will catalog the album after my time frame at the ROM.

By managing family albums as whole objects and as a part of a comprehensive collection, the museum offers maximum accessibility to the general public and scholars in particular. Thus, society can better learn and benefit from family narratives and this genre's unique nature. Future generations will not only be able to enjoy a collection of rare and extraordinary photographs but also to learn about the history of photography and general history through private individuals.

⁷⁴ Yuen, "The Digitization of Photographic Albums," 35.

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APPENDICES

In the next few pages, I will present a few pages from Album 2 (accession no. 2018.24.2) of the Evans collection, which present the results of my digitization project. After finalizing the digitization process, I simulated a flip book, which will be shared with the donor family, using Flip Builder software.

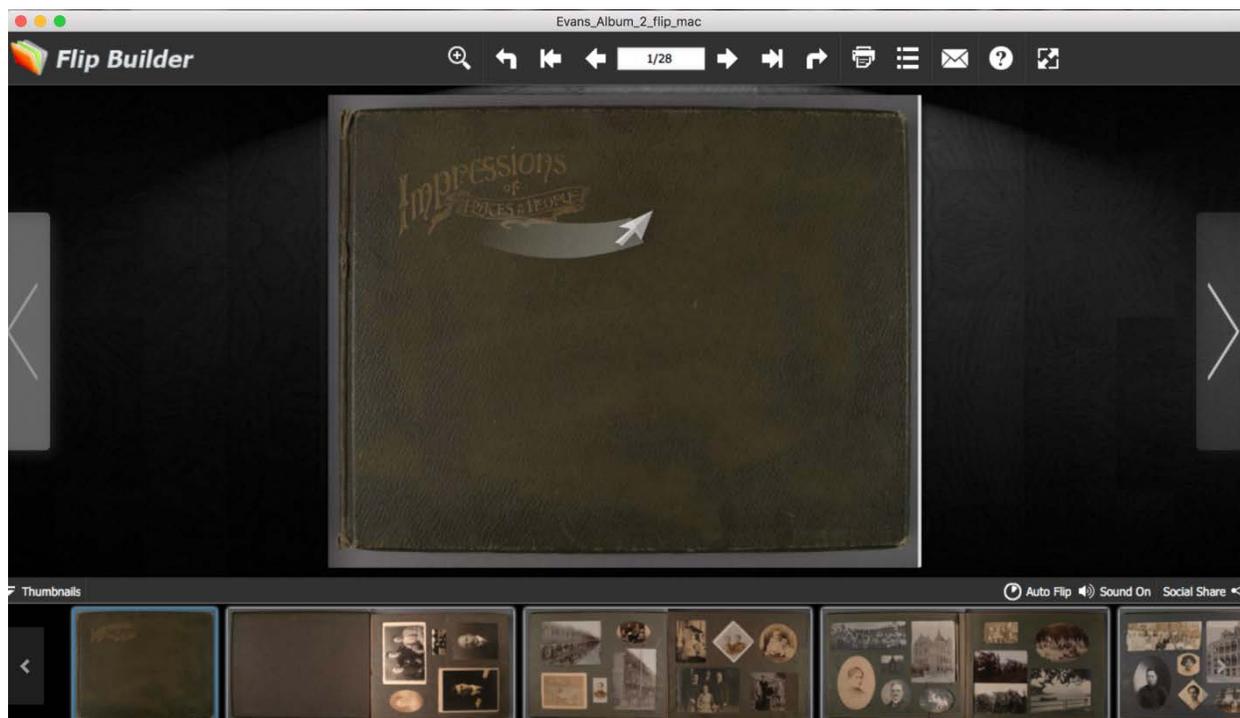


Figure 66-73: *Sample album pages*, Album 2 of Evans Family Collection, The Family Camera Network, ROM, accession: 2018.24.2. These images show the results of the author's digitization project.

