



Art Conservation *and international outreach*

In places where there are many photographs but few, if any, photograph conservators, preservation can be especially challenging. This is the situation in much of the developing world, and as a result many valuable photograph collections and the visual heritage they contain, are at risk. To help address this concern in the Middle East, the Art Conservation Department at the University of Delaware has joined with other institutions, including the Arab Image Foundation in Beirut, Lebanon, in a three-year collaboration called the Middle East Photograph Preservation Initiative.

The goal is to promote preservation and awareness of photograph collections in the broad Middle East, from North Africa and the Arab Peninsula through Western Asia, by offering a series of intensive preservation workshops, distance mentoring, and follow-up meetings. Representatives from libraries, museums, press agencies, universities, and private collections in Iraq, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Morocco, and Egypt have already participated. Other countries will follow. Middle East Photograph Initiative (MEPPI) courses are taught by professional conservators; however, Winterthur University of Delaware Program in Art Conservation (WUDPAC) Fellow and photograph conservation major Heather Brown assisted by writing a technical leaflet for the program. Her goal was to produce something that could be easily translated and shared with collecting repositories across the Middle East. Over the summer, Heather created a leaflet that includes basic photograph preservation guidelines on environment, storage, housing, duplication/digitization, and emergency response and recovery. She submitted her work to the other MEPPI partners, and 14 rounds of editing followed. The process helped underscore the many preservation challenges from the threat of armed conflict to high temperature conditions.

Budgets are tight; therefore purchasing a heating and air conditioning system, for example, is probably unrealistic. At the same time, the region is dry and dusty, so lowering temperatures with fans and open windows may not be effective. The leaflet text emphasizes that institutions will need to be both flexible and creative in trying to meet photograph preservation guidelines. Heather also developed a bibliography about photograph preservation; ideally such information should be available in Arabic, French, and English.

The University of Delaware's partners in MEPPI, which is largely supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, are The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Arab Image Foundation. The leaflet, supported by a grant from Tru Vue Inc., will be available in time for the next course, scheduled to take place from November 11-19 in Abu Dhabi. For more information, visit <http://www.meppi.org/>.

ARTC Spotlight—October 2012

The University of Delaware's Art Conservation Department educates and trains professional conservators in the treatment, analysis, documentation, and preventive conservation of individual artifacts and entire collections. Our students are powerful public spokespersons for cultural heritage and its preservation. For more news about our students and other department activities, visit our web site at <http://www.artcons.udel.edu>

Top: WUDPAC Fellow Heather Brown examining a deteriorating negative. Above: Heather demonstrating proper handling techniques. Right: The Heritage Preservation Emergency Response and Salvage Wheel, translated into Arabic. Photos by Courtney Von Stein.

