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Photography in Academia

Photography has been used in academia as a recording device, analytical instrument, historical source material, note-taking method and mere illustration for research, teaching and publication since its beginnings in the midst of the 19th century. As early as 1844, Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877), one of the inventors of photography, predicted many of the later scientific uses of the medium in his path breaking conceptual work "The Pencil of Nature" (Talbot 1844). Widely known are, for example, the notorious programs of anthropometry and racial typology which followed the realistic and objectivist paradigm in humanities and sciences of the time. The visual products of these endeavors now serve as historical evidence of a specific mentality of the photographers rather than being interpreted as adequate representation of the photographed. Cultural "traits", "customs" and "beliefs", popular topics in anthropology since the 19th century, also became objects of the camera, no matter if they were taken in their context of origin or staged off context (for example Krech 1984, Theye 1989, Wiener 1990, Edwards 1992, Hanke 2007). All sorts of travel photography, with or without academic impetus, became possible (Neumayer 1875). In the (natural) sciences, photography served as a research tool from 19th century onwards. For example, around 1860 the physicist and philosopher Ernst Mach (1838–1916) verified his the-

ory of the phenomenon of shock waves, which became crucial for the development of aeronautics, with experimental photographs of bullets (Hoffmann/Berz 2001).[1]

These few and arbitrary examples can only sketch the tip of the iceberg of academic usages of photography in the early days of the medium. The list of examples could be greatly extended and the visual product of these activities is huge. Archives and photographic collections around the world hold visual evidence of these experiments. Glass-plates and other negatives, prints of photographs, slides in diverse material forms and published versions of the images like picture postcards are stored, described, reproduced, digitized and made available to the users of the archives or the world wide web. The value of these early photographs as historical source material is, now, rarely questioned.[2] But this has not always been the case and the fact that photography has long been neglected as an adequate historical source has led to a very fragmentary documentation structure compared to other archival objects (Jäger/Knauer 2009).

Whereas the archival value of the experimental and academic photographs of 19th and early 20th century seems to be beyond question today, the abundance of photographs that arose due to technical developments like the 35-mm camera and later digital photography poses new challenges. Strictly speaking, the production of images was no longer bound to skilled or professional photographers with the invention of the dry-plate negative process early in the 1870's and the first "box-camera" with flexible film in 1888 by Kodak[3]. But the spread of amateur photography reached a new dimension with the introduction of the 35-mm camera at the onset of the twentieth century. The new technical equipment and the photographic processes became

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1   The glass-plate negatives and slides from the personal papers of Mach were digitized and are available online at the Archive of Deutsches Museum: http://www.deutsches-museum.de/archiv/archiv-online/ernst-mach/

2   The genealogy of the ambivalent relationship between history and photography Jäger in this volume.

3   Their slogan "You press the button, we do the rest!" became programme for photography.

easy to handle and the costs were low, facts that led to a vast accumulation of photographs, as it did in the broad field of research related photography.[4]

This essay begins at the question of what happens to research related photographs after their intended purpose had been served? To what extent could they be made accessible for future re-use? This is a subject that became even more relevant with the demand for open access availability of publicly funded research data.[5] Questions of how to take care of this visual legacy and how and where to store and process these images are highly debated. Online image databases or local storing of the originals are only two extremes that span a wide range of alternatives. A further possibility is offered by the archives of universities and other research facilities. The following thoughts represent an archivist's perspective and discuss suggestions for the formation of academic photographic archives.

THE VISUAL LEGACY IN THE HUMANITIES

Within the vast field of photography, I will concentrate on the branch of humanities and will take into focus one special format and materiality of photography, namely the 35-mm slide. The period of active use of the 35-mm slide, whose golden age started in the 1930's, seems to be essentially over and we are now confronted with a huge visual legacy of 35-mm slides.[6] Many institutions store cupboards full of slides in their basements or attics and are struggling with how to deal with them.[7] The stocks of images are sometimes

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4   It has to be questioned if the flood of images is even rising with the invention of digital photography or if, on the contrary, the decision of deleting images that were regarded as not adequate is made easier.

5   Cf. Berlin declaration on Open Access: http://oa.mpg.de/lang/de/berlin-prozess/ berliner-erklarung/

6   This should not deny that photographers still are working with the 35-mm slide for diverse reasons. But the low quantity and relevance to the topic in question here allows to leave them out of the discussion.

7   The empirical basis for this description is the situation at some Universities in Germany. A comparison of my own experiences in Goettingen, Munich, Bayreuth

in a good state of preservation and systematic order, sometimes they come with formal and content description and metadata, but sometimes they exist without nearly any context information and are, even worse, showing severe chemical and mechanical damages. This is a typical situation in academic institutions and many of the above mentioned questions about the handling of scientific photographs in general[8] are greatly applicable to the 35-mm slide.

Decisions have to be made about the future of the images as material objects and as information carriers. Questions about preservation and restoration, selection, description, digitization, accessibility and rights management have to be addressed. The principle tasks of archiving should merge into a practice that meets the academic requirements of the humanities.

Fig. 1: Slide collection

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and Bamberg with information by colleagues and literature offered in many aspects comparable situations. Nevertheless, this description is based on singular cases and does not claim to be a general valid statement.

8   This topic was also subject at the conference "*Über den Wert der Fotografie. Wissenschaftliche Kriterien für die Bewahrung von Fotosammlungen*" (March 2012, Aarau, Switzerland).

THE ERA OF THE 35-MM SLIDE FORMAT

The 35-mm slide has some special characteristics as a medium, object and part of social interaction which also influence its value as historical source material. Flexible 35-mm film has been used in both negative and positive film format. It was invented at the end of the 19th century and served first as recording material for cinematographic films. At the beginning of the 20th century, Oskar Barnack experimented with the basis of the filming process and in 1913 invented the Leica camera. It was mass-produced by Leitz beginning in 1924 and became the first successful and widespread 35-mm camera (Kisselbach 2008). The small and handy cameras allowed "fast" photography, because the emulsion was very light-sensitive and rich in contrast and thus facilitated taking photographs by hand instead of using a tripod. Moreover, it became possible to take a series of images at frequent intervals and to take photographs in new situations, like indoors. Starting in the 1920's, these effects also influenced the development of photo journalism as well as popular and travel photography.

One of the most important reasons for the acceptance and spread of the format was the possibility, beginning around 1936, to produce color photos with brilliant quality and sustainability at low costs. For decades, the 35-mm slide format was regarded as the best for color photography at a reasonable price.[9] The richness in contrast could not be reached by other processes and the brilliance of projected slides could hardly be reached by other media. Slides served also as a basis for the printing of colored images. Other slide formats, such as the medium 6x6 cm (or larger) formats, of course increased the effects of the small scale slide, but they were used mainly in the professional or the skilled amateur sector and did not reach the same distribution as the 35-mm slide. Costs for medium format photography were much higher, which led to a different usage of the format in select cases, after thorough preparation. The 35-mm color format responded to a need that existed since the beginnings of photography. The lack of color in photographs was often viewed as a shortfall, leading to experiments with diverse methods to

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9   Alternative film types like Kodachrome will not be discussed here.

add color, especially to the "death-like" black & white portraits. There existed, for example, diverse forms of painting positives and producing color images by combination of different filters (Henisch/Henisch 1996).[10 .]

The purposes of slide production and usage can be categorized into three main areas, which need to be distinguished in the archiving process. The most common usage is, of course, to create an original image with the positive effects of the 35-mm slide. In many cases, 35-mm slides are unique, in contrast to the negative-positive process, which often leads to the development of diverse prints out of one negative. The question of uniqueness is relevant for decisions about archiving, because the aim is to compose singular fonds and not mere duplications of collections.

Second, slides were often duplicated for distribution. This was common in the commercial sector, where distributors and publishing houses offered slide collections of specific regions, subjects or other focuses. Commercial series of images are often related to tourism and are easy to recognize, as they usually have the publishers name on the frame. Moreover, private persons duplicated slides and distributed them among academic colleagues, friends and family. In many of the latter cases it is difficult to determine whether one has the original or the duplicate in hand.

Finally, slides (originals and reproductions) are frequently used for presentations. Especially in teaching, it was common to reproduce a great number of images from other sources, like books, maps, drawings or artwork, and project them in the classroom and lecture hall. While the numerous reproductions of other sources are not of interest to the archive, the complete sets of slide shows, instead, may offer different historical approaches, as they can shed light on the famous medium of public slide lectures that have existed since the 19th century (Barber 1993). If there is accompanying documentation with the slides shows, they become an especially important historical source for the life-cycle of the images and forms of social interaction by the medium.

To sum up, as we near the end of the era of the 35-mm slide production, we have an abundance of slide collections, many steming from field research, travel photography and photo journalism. Slides are often regarded as bulky because they cannot be viewed adequately without technical devices like a

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10 Diverse methods of adding colour to early photographic formats since the daguerreotype gives evidence of this demand for colour in photography.

light box, a projector or other means of enlargement. Therefore, they are often neglected and denied acceptance in collections, in contrast to printed photographs. The characteristics of the slides and their special forms of usage reveal the need for clear strategies of evaluation, selection and recording of this important visual legacy in the humanities.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS
AND ARCHIVAL ATTENDANCE

If images were academic original data, if they played a significant part in theory formation or if they helped to visualize academic results, there is a need to preserve them and make them accessible, at least within academia. Even apart from the demands since the Open Access initiative, many images are regarded as valuable sources within their own field of origin, as well as for historical inquiry for a variety of approaches and contexts, now and in future.

Archives, in the strict sense of the word,[11] come into service when documents are no longer needed in their original context. This context may be an administrative or academic one. Many administrative documents have to be archived due to statutory provisions, whereas this obligation does not exist for a lot of academic documents. Nevertheless, their preservation may be highly desired for historical reasons. When documents enter the realm of the archive, they should have passed a certain period of safekeeping and evaluation since only some of them can be kept. As total (long-term) archiving simply cannot be accomplished and would not make sense, one has to be selective in order to build a significant historical tradition.[12]

The tasks of university archives, concretely, are twofold: in the first instance they have to assure the long-term preservation and accessibility of relevant documents of the academic self-administration, in the second instance they are building samples and documentation about the academic life

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11 This means archives as institution, with a clear policy and statuary and not the commonly used term of the archive as any form of storage.

12 On the main tasks of archiving cf. Reimann 2008, Menne-Haritz 2006; with special respect to university archives cf. Becker 2009, Brübach and Karl Murk 2003, Moritz 2006.

and research activities (Becker 2009, Universität des Saarlandes 2007). The formation of photographic archives is mostly related to the second field of action. As university archives function as service oriented institutions, the formation of their stock takes into account the specific requirements, the history and the visions of their university. With respect to the building of photographic archives, collaboration with the academic branches of the university is highly recommended. What special needs exist on the academic side? What services do they expect from the archive? And what kind of services can the archive deliver?

PRINCIPLE OF PROVENANCE

One of the most important methods and organization principles in archiving is the principle of provenance, which supports academic research as well as practical archiving issues. The principle means, generally speaking, that documents should be kept in their original context as long as possible. This "original context" may be the context of the production of the image, for example the works of a photographer, or it may be the context of a collection on a specific topic, by a specific person or institution. Thus the term is relative and not bound to a fixed category.

To keep the provenance of an object not only helps to identify missing metadata, like time, place or photographer, but it is also significant for the interpretation of an image and the broader context of the photographs, as well as the history of the collection and the archive. It opens up new perspectives on the construction and the intention of the image that the photographer may have had in mind. Critical historical research profits greatly if collections are organized by their provenance and not mixed up according to the photographed objects or places.

The principle of provenance, moreover, helps to present archival documents in their place- and time-dependent context, for example in highly politicized or contested fields. Original, rude colonialist's descriptions may be documented with an image and thus offer an entrance point for historical research, which could be hidden by a later added, politically correct nomination in the archive. It is, of course, necessary to declare the sources of any description of the documents. In reality, due to the long neglect of photographs as an adequate historical source material, there are items or whole

collections within archives without any contextual information about their origin. But with the help of further documentation, from within or outside the archive, provenances can be reconstructed by critical research.

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND SELECTION

The flood of all kinds of data like written documents, images or other media needs clear strategies of evaluation in order to preserve cultural heritage. Thus, evaluation is one of the most important tasks of the archivist, who has to select and build historically significant samples (Tiemann 2008). Evaluation criteria are developed in collaboration (four-eye-principle at least) to minimize personal prejudice. Photographs enter the archive from diverse sources, sometimes as part of personal papers, sometimes as complete collections or personal remains, sometimes without context. Therefore, the criteria for evaluation of photographs differ in some aspects from the general criteria for evaluation of other documents. In any case it is necessary to install specific criteria for evaluation and to document and communicate them in order to make the history of the archive transparent.

Evaluation criteria

First of all, the singularity and uniqueness of the images is an important aspect, as one tries to avoid redundancy and duplication of archival stocks while creating unique collections. For example, it does not make much sense to archive photographic prints of a renowned photographer if the complete photographic legacy, including negatives and prints, are stored in another public archive. A parallel archiving of photographs incurs high costs without having, probably, the right to publish and make accessible the image in question. Singularity, with respect to the informational value as well as the aesthetic value, and the quality of the photograph are leading principles for evaluation. Within academic archives, the aesthetic value may be interpreted differently than in the realm of fine arts and different aspects of singularity may be competing. As a result, evaluation is a process of deliberation and cannot strictly follow general rules, rather it depends on the focus of the special institutions.

The aspect of the prominence of the photographer or the photographed subject is related to the uniqueness of the images. Within academic collections, this aspect is closely connected to the specific main academic focuses of the respective university, but the decision of integration of photographs is not necessarily bound to the main academic fields.

A third criterion is the state of preservation of the images. Storage conditions might have led to chemical or material damages, which may be irreversible. Faded colors can be processed, but this may also cause severe damage. Special care is needed if fungus or mold have attacked the images because, apart from destroying the infected image, they can spread to other fonds. Therefore infected images should be handled with care if they are to be integrated into a collection.

Cost and available resources are not only an important consideration for questions of restoration, but also for preservation, digitization, description and storage in general, as these tasks are labor-intensive. The expense of high quality digital storage should not be underestimated, nor the costs for the adequate physical storage of original photographs, negatives or slides. The ideal conditions for storage of color images and slides are, for example, different from the conditions for paper documents, thus it could be necessary to organize different archiving rooms. Moreover, resources for ongoing tasks like data management, control and migration need to be secured (Glauert/Walberg 2011).

Items that could easily be removed in the evaluation process are reproductions of other sources, like books, maps, other photographs etc. Especially in academia, these kinds of reproductions are very widespread as they were needed for presentations or lectures. This material may also be subject to copyright restrictions and often the quality of the reproduction is poor or the images exist in good quality at other institutions.

RE-CONTEXTUALIZATION AND DESCRIPTION

Scholarly work with photographic sources relies, to a certain degree, on the contextualization and description of images. Likewise, it also adds new layers of knowledge and interpretation to the pictorial sources and helps, at least, to identify new metadata of the images. Photographic archives therefore welcome scholarly research that uses their photographic stock. If images are available for research there is a good chance to gather some data from the academic community, for example by social media or crowdsourcing projects.

As is true for other source material, photographs should also be archived including metadata about their time and place of production, about the photographer and the purpose of the image and other information. Forms of archival classification and description follow national or international standards as the integration into gateways is made easier and the user has easier access to archival descriptions that follow comparable standards and customary layout. Archives offer diverse starting points for systematic approaches to their stock and information retrieval systems normally allow full text searching (Nimz 2008).

However, one has to take into account that the content and structure of an archive influences the perception and interpretation of the pictures and with this the "images" of history, no matter how "objective" the classification and description of the sources is intended to be. The corpora of images may be built by strategy, by mere chance, or by both, but the history of the fonds itself is never irrelevant to interpretation and should be reflected in archiving strategies (Sekula 1989, McQuire 1998, Edwards/Hart 2004). It is the task of the archive to find forms of description which are not misleading but offer the sources as openly as possible. A wrong or undeclared uncertain status of a description can cause more damage than a missing one.

Contextual information may be detached from accompanying archival or published documents if it is not delivered with the images themselves. As images are sometimes archived without related personal papers or other documentation, their contextualization is made difficult. But if the depositories of images, as well as of related documents, are known, a combined research of the respective archival groups of the archives in which parts of the collection are held promises meaningful results and may lead to a virtual reunification of disconnected fonds.

Photographic Archive of Otto Friedrich Raum

The archiving process of the photographic collection of Otto Friedrich Raum (1903–2002) may serve as a striking example. Friedrich Raum was an internationally renowned German anthropologist and educator who was born in East Africa and later lived and worked in Eastern and Southern Africa. After his death, his personal papers were donated to the *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* (Bavarian State Library), which also took over some albums containing photographs. The collection of 35-mm slides, however, was donated to the University of Bayreuth and stored at the digital archive of African Studies (DEVA).[13]

The slides stem from the period of 1938 to 1968 and were taken mainly in Eastern and Southern Africa. They contained only few metadata and content information, the only texts accompanying them were a few handwritten entries on the frames of the slides themselves. The state of conservation was sometimes poor, colors were fading, and there were images of objects that apparently belong to an (unknown) museum. Apparently, the images were not arranged in a chronological, spatial or obviously systematic order, but following a hitherto undeciphered order which did not make it easy to access the collection. From an expert opinion we[14] knew that the field research photographs were of extraordinary value and rareness for the time and region of their production. They showed, for example, diverse rituals and festivities, but also everyday life activities of the Zulu and other people in Southern Africa. Hence, it was reasonable to take some efforts toward the recontextualization of the images.

One possibility to gather context information was the consultation of the personal papers of Otto Friedrich Raum. Potentially, they contain some kind of "shooting-lists", entries in diaries or letters or other information about the slides. But as the papers were not yet recorded, it was difficult to estimate if there would be any information on the images at all. To get access to the

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13 http://www.deva.uni-bayreuth.de

14 This report is based on a description project which I conducted in 2011 at DEVA together with Prof. Achim von Oppen, then director of the Institute of African Studies, University of Bayreuth, and Tabea Köster, student assistant of the project, who did the consultation of the papers and the alignment with the slides. The project was funded by a grant of the Oberfrankenstiftung.

papers, we started a collaboration project with Johannes W. Raum[15] (the son of O.F. Raum) and the *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* with the aim of (virtually) putting together the photographic archive and the personal papers.

Fig. 2: Füße auf Holz

Nachlass O.F. Raum.

One visual example may reveal how helpful and important the consultation of the papers was for the description of the photographic archive. The image shows human feet on an unidentified ground and any meaningful description was hard to discern from the image itself. But in the personal papers we found a manuscript of a lecture by O.F. Raum with the title „*Dias Vortrag Ostafrika*" (Slides for lecture East Africa") from 1983 (*Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*, *Nachlass O.F. Raum*). It contains the following description for this image "*Der Motor: Muskelkraft der Füße (Salzpflanzen!)*" ("The motor. Ferry powered by muscular strength" – my translation). And a local hint to the Kilombero river in southern Tanzania. Thus one could conclude that this is an image of the famous ferry over the river Kilombero in Southern Tanzania, which is powered by people.

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15 Prof. Dr. Johannes W. Raum was an important partner in the project and shared a
    lot of information with us. We mourn his passing in 2014.

Apart from this example, it became possible to identify many portraits with the help of the personal papers. Also, the correct order of a series of images showing rituals has been made possible by the consultation of the papers. These few examples may illustrate that the project was very efficient for the description and (re-)contextualization of the photographic archive. And it is a vivid example of the significance of the principle of provenance, even if the provenance was split to two institutions. Only by bringing together the photos with the papers did it become possible to identify the images and reveal important parts of their meaning.

The example of the ferry illustrates that accompanying documentation for slide shows may reveal important hints for historical research. Apparently, many slides of the collection of Raum had been sorted according to lectures and for publication in books. Moreover, slides often served as part of social interaction for lectures, public events and presentations in public and private realms. Thus the search for contextual material and information on the life-cycle of the image, for example the history of its presentation and publication, can offer significant results.

DIGITIZATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

The most common access to archival documents is still performed in the reading room of the archive, where interested persons work with the original documents. Working with original documents offers a different range of access points and research methods than working with secondary and/or digital forms. For example, relevant questions of historical source criticism, especially with regard to the external aspects of the items, can be better examined by looking at original documents rather than their digitized form. Also, the materiality of diverse archival objects simply cannot be presented through digitization.

But digitization and preparatory tasks for (open) access to archival material are core activities of archivists in a technical and organizational respect. Both ways, working with original or with digital objects are complementary and not exclusive. The availability of digital formats allows easy access to the archival documents for a broad and large audience which would in many cases not be able to visit the archive personally. Academic research profits

from the digitization of archival documents and from offering (open or restricted) access to digital data and metadata. Moreover, the possibilities for interactive and collaborative work are enhanced widely by the offering of digitized material.[16]

Archives, libraries and other research institutions are called by leading national institutions to enhance their digital research infrastructures and the possibilities for funding are growing (*Wissenschaftsrat 2012*). Nevertheless, it is still a problem of capacity for many archives to respond appropriately to the requirements of the digital era in great parts of academic, public and private life. Actually, it is one of the main tasks of the archives to enhance the needed capacity in the realms of personnel, finances and technical supplies for the modernization in the direction of digital archiving. This modernization, which is taking place, is the presupposition if the archives want to stay an adequate partner for academic research in the future.

A project of the *Bundesarchiv* (National Archives, Germany) shall be summarized briefly as an example for making available open access photographic collections. The *Bundesarchiv* started a collaborative project with Wikimedia and made accessible parts of its photographic collections. The responses were immense, especially students came into contact for the first time with the stock of the *Bundesarchiv* via this collaboration and were impressed about the wealth of images and the open access policy of the *Bundesarchiv*.[17] Unfortunately, the *Bundesarchiv* stopped the collaboration with the argument that they were not able to respond to the flood of requests that arose out of the accessibility of their photographs.

A second example illustrates a social media project by the Library of the University of Zürich (ETH Zürich). They conducted a project for the description of the photographic archive of SwissAir which was donated to them. A selected group of former employees of the SwissAir, thus a limited group,

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16 The digital availability of archival documents seems to be, especially for students and younger researchers (digital natives in the widest sense), rather the normal and expected way than the work with original documents and explanation is often needed that there is much more valuable material in the archive than can be found (at the moment) via google & co.

17 Cf. for example the works of the photographer Walther Dobbertin of East Africa, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Photographs_by_Walther_Dobbertin?uselang=de.

described the photographs in detail. Subsequent workflows in alignment of data and corrections according to international standards in description had to be undertaken by the library, but the positive effect was that they gathered an immense wealth of information and metadata in a very short time and were thus able to present the photographic archive within a short period of time.[18]

THE BLANK POSITION IN THE ARCHIVE

To a certain extent, the holdings of an archive are contingent on what has been offered and what could be acquired. But besides these outer limitations, the archivists are also actively contributing to the composition of their stock, as was explained with respect to the necessity of evaluation and selection. Historical approaches to the archival material can also include research about the institution of the archive itself, whose results may be linked back to the history of the documents.[19] Ideally, the archive itself offers relevant documents about its own origin, its development, its structure and its policy of collecting.

A different starting point for research on the archive, its stock and its collections would be to ask for the "blank positions"[20] in the archive. More concretely, this approach can pose the following questions to the archive: Which images do not exist in an images collection? Are there significant motives that do not occur though they were highly expected? Is it possible to detect more general lines in the blank positions? And can substantial conclusions be drawn and proved about the reasons for the blank positions? What insights does the archive offer into its history while reading and interpreting the blank positions? Are they significant, maybe for specific time- or space-bound reasons or do they stem from the active evaluation process by the archivist or maybe, earlier, the photographer?

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18 Cf. the presentation by Michael Gasser, Library of ETH Zürich, 82. Deutschen Archivtag 2012, 27.09.2012.

19 Philosophical and theoretical critiques about the archive are offered for example by Foucault (1994) and Ernst (2002).

20 To adopt a term by Wolfgang Iser (1976), who discusses the "Leerstelle" in literature.

This approach proved to be very fruitful for a study on the photography of slavery in Brazil, where it became obvious that certain public and visible aspects of the system of slavery obviously did not exist on photographs though they were very present on other forms of visual arts like engravings or drawings. These blank positions centered mainly on images of cruelty and punishment against slaves. One interpretation of this significant blank position was the so-called realistic effect of photography which seemed to have banned objects from the camera which did not seem to fit with hegemonic interests (Prussat 2008). On the contrary, the photographs have underlined the myth of harmonious slavery in Brazil which was revealed by Gilberto Freyre (Freyre 1933).

CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES. FROM HIDDEN SECRETS TO OPEN ACCESS?

The connections between academia and the archive are manifold. The archive offers historical source material for research, initiates research about its holdings, conducts research itself and becomes the subject of critical historical research itself. Also with respect to photographs, the archive evaluates, takes over, classifies, describes and makes available the images for further research, which will extend the initial purpose of the images within their research context. Thus the images enter a new context which is no longer bound to their former usage. And in many cases, only now do they become accessible to a broader audience. If no legal restrictions, such as personal rights or copyrights, stand against it, this access is intended to be as open as possible, whereas access rights management is of high priority. Though the development of criteria of evaluation is the duty and responsibility of the archivist, it is very helpful, especially in academic fields, to collaborate with the institutions and branches that produced and will utilize the images. Also with respect to classification and description, the aid of factual know-how is recommended and makes archiving as well as the use of the archive more efficient. Another aspect of the archive as service provider can be the allocation of pre-structured photographic archiving database for researchers, so that they can use international standardized archiving forms without having to create and administer them by themselves.

In the humanities, there are huge, highly significant and unique collections of 35-mm slides which afford clear strategies in storage, digitization and description. They are part of a valuable cultural heritage that has long been neglected, because of the "moderate" aesthetic and technical value that has been ascribed to this mass-media format.

Nevertheless, mere digitization of all holdings and storage of millions of digital images without a clear evaluation strategy would not lead to a useable archive because the capacity needed for the classification, description and administration of the photographs and the data can hardly be afforded. Social media applications or crowdsourcing models are helpful methods to integrate the academic (and non-academic) community into the process of describing the images. Thereby the principle of provenance proves to be crucial for the composition of photographic archives as well as for archives in general. It facilitates the reconstruction of contexts of origin of the images and artifacts and thus the (re-)contextualization of images.

Now and in future, new branches and new methods of research are posing challenges also to the archiving of photographs and other documents and media. New types of images will arise and new requirements for research are expected which afford permanent development of the services of the archive. A promising path into the digital future of the university archive is to closely network with the academic branches, with the relevant producers, consumers and interpreters of archival data.

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