

Digitizing the Religious News Service Photographs: A Planning Project White Paper

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Executive Summary

With support from a 2018 Humanities Collections and Reference Resources planning grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS) developed a rating system for prioritizing images for digitization from the Religious News Service (RNS) photograph collection at PHS. The RNS collection, which documents religious history from a multi-denominational perspective, includes approximately 60,000 image files dating from 1945 to 1982.

The three-tier, five-point rating system set the digitization priority for select boxes of RNS images—including photo-print and photo-negative formats—across four decades. The overall rating combined sub-ratings for physical condition, documentation quality, and historical significance. An advisory panel of technical and scholarly experts guided the system’s development process, and PHS staff members tested it during the pilot phase of the project.

As a result of “Digitizing the Religious News Service Photographs: A Planning Project,” PHS added 478 RNS images to its digital archive, Pearl, making the images and related documentation available to researchers through the internet. The project helped PHS gain technical and interpretive insights about the Religious News Service photographs; it also positioned the society to make more images from this significant collection accessible to the public in the near future.



*Resurrection City during the Poor People's Campaign, Washington, D.C., 1968.
Gilbert Photo Service, Inc.*

Introduction

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, denominational outlets distributed most religious news. The Religious News Service (RNS) was one of the first intentional efforts to disseminate depictions of religious life to a broad-based national and global audience. Louis Minsky, a British-born journalist of Russian Jewish ancestry, established RNS in New York City in 1934 with the aim of providing “reliable and bias-free” religious news to newspapers and radio stations across the United States. RNS was owned by the National Council of Christians and Jews (NCCJ), an interfaith group led by prominent activists and statesmen including Jane Addams, Henry Morgenthau, and Theodore Roosevelt. President Franklin D. Roosevelt praised the NCCJ for its work in the 1930s. Decades later, in 1961, President John F. Kennedy commended the NCCJ for doing more than perhaps any other organization “in our national life to provide for harmonious living among our different religious groups.”

For half a century, NCCJ and RNS worked in conjunction to educate and inform Americans about Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Eastern Orthodox, and other religious experiences and practices in the United States and around the world. When the NCCJ transferred ownership of the Religious News Service to the United Methodist Reporter in 1984, the organization gifted full ownership of the RNS collection to the Presbyterian Historical Society (PHS), the national archives of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and one of the largest denominational archives in the United States. The total RNS collection, consisting of 621 cubic feet of records, includes news releases, photographic prints, photographic negatives, press clippings, and other materials produced or disseminated by RNS.

Of particular interest is the approximately 60,000 image files held in 227 cubic-foot boxes that date from 1945, the inaugural year of the RNS Photo Service, to 1982. The RNS Photographs (organized as [RNS Record Group I: Photographs, 1945-1982](#)) are closely related to the three other RNS collections, all owned by PHS and held at the Society: [RNS RG 2, News Releases, 1936-1981](#); [RNS RG 3, Subject Files, 1930s-1983](#); and [RNS RG 4, Administrative Files, 1940s-1960s](#). PHS also holds the research notes Elliott Wright used to prepare his 1993 history of RNS, *RNS Reporting: 60 Years of Religious News Service*.



*Anti-war demonstrators arrested, Washington, D.C., 1971.
Wide World Photos, Inc.*

The RNS photographs—a mix of candid snapshots, photojournalistic images, and arranged portraits and group shots—capture a diverse array of faith groups and community experiences, including efforts to rebuild post-war Europe and Japan; the growth of interfaith youth organizations in the 1950s and 1960s;

religious conferences and conventions in the United States and around the world; the work of ecumenical leaders and organizations such as the National Council of Churches, the NCCJ, and the World Council of Churches; foreign and domestic work of clergy and missionaries; religious observances; and the activities of religious and political leaders such as Pope John XXIII, the Reverend Billy Graham, anti-war leader Father Daniel Berrigan, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The photographs also document the interplay of religion, domestic politics, and foreign affairs, including coverage of U.S. presidents and presidential elections; the Watergate scandal; the emergence of the



Syngman Rhee speaks at his inauguration as the first president of the Republic of Korea, 1948.

Religious Right; the Civil Rights Movement and race relations; anti-war demonstrations; abortion; nuclear proliferation; the energy crisis; the Iran hostage crisis; the conflict in Northern Ireland; the persecution of Jews in the Soviet Union; and a number of twentieth-century wars including World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. The photographs show leaders from a multitude of civic, religious, and political groups, as well as the followers and adherents who changed history through collective action.

For the first three decades after its acquisition by the Presbyterian Historical Society, the RNS photograph collection's size, physical condition, and lack of description severely limited its use. Two grant awards in the last ten years have helped open the collection to wider use. The first, a "Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives" grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and administered through the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), funded minimal processing and description. The resulting [finding aid](#), completed in April 2011, described the photographs at the collection level with a rough box list.

Despite the descriptive improvements made through the CLIR project, researchers continued to find the photographs difficult to use. A second grant award, a 2018 Humanities Collections and Reference Resources [planning grant](#) from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), enabled PHS to develop a system for prioritizing images from the RNS collection to digitize. This grant included funding for a small pilot project to test the prioritization system. This white paper describes the planning, implementation, and results of that work.

Project Overview

Prior to 2018, the Presbyterian Historical Society had digitized a small number of Religious News Service images for use in PHS communications and to fill requests from researchers. Although PHS accommodated this "digitization on demand" approach, the staff recognized that such a workflow did

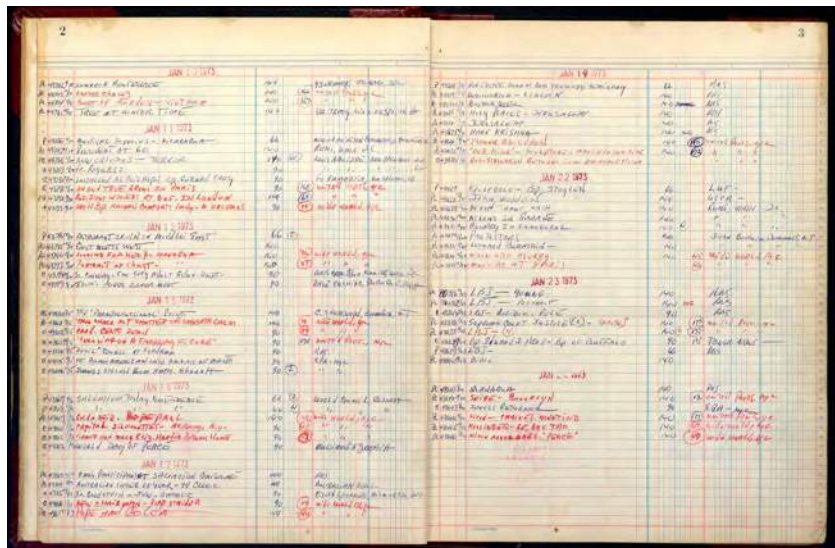
not do justice to the significance of the RNS collection. Thanks to project funding from the NEH, PHS was able to develop a sustainable approach for current and future digitizing of RNS images by (1) working with an advisory panel of experts to develop a three-tier, five-point rating system for setting digitization priorities based on each photograph's historical significance, physical condition, and available description, and (2) testing the rating system through a pilot project, which resulted in the digitization of 478 RNS images. PHS staff added all of the RNS images digitized during this project, along with scans of accompanying material and standardized metadata, to the [Religious News Service photograph collection](#) in Pearl, PHS's digital archives.

Previous Preservation and Use of RNS Images

When the Presbyterian Historical Society received the RNS photographs in 1984, staff boxed the collection in acid-free, cubic-foot boxes but retained the original image enclosures. RNS had assigned a unique number to each image; an envelope for that image number could contain prints, negatives, accompanying press releases, other print material, or drafts and copies of the caption. In many but not all cases, a piece of paper containing the caption was also adhered to the front of the envelope. PHS staff packed these original, acidic envelopes in cubic-foot boxes, sometimes up to 300 enclosures per box. Since RNS had assigned numbers sequentially and PHS staff maintained the envelopes in number order, the images stayed in relatively good chronological order when boxed.

Along with the images, RNS donated ten handwritten log books to PHS, which provided brief titles and photographer credits for most of the images. Listings in the log books are strictly chronological; there is no separate index or topic list. Researchers and PHS staff who wanted to search for images prior to the NEH-funded project needed to either look through boxes for the particular year or years of interest or read through the log books in the hope of finding a brief notation that matched the subject of their search—and then look through the boxes for the corresponding year.

Paging through the envelopes in a box was often tedious work. Even with careful handling, there was the risk of damaging materials inside each envelope. If boxes were tightly packed, users had to pull out stacks of envelopes to look through them. If the outside of an envelope did not have a caption on it, users pulled out the contents of the envelope. This process could



Religious News Service log book, 1973.

happen hundreds of times, with the friction of pulling-things-out and putting-them-back-in wearing on the photographic materials.

To complicate matters more, a majority of the negatives in the RNS photograph collection are cellulose acetate and have begun to deteriorate. With off-gassing due to vinegar syndrome, using boxes that contained acetate negatives was unpleasant at best and threatened to severely damage or destroy the images at worst. Once negatives show evidence of vinegar syndrome, deterioration becomes autocatalytic and accelerates significantly, limiting the amount of time researchers can safely handle the collection and placing the accompanying prints at risk of deterioration.



Left: Unprocessed RNS photographs in old housing. Right: RNS photographs rehoused during pilot project.

While most of the negatives remain in good condition, PHS staff had found some acetate negatives that were embrittled and channeled (bubbling), obscuring the image layer. Limited resources prevent PHS from housing the negatives in cold storage, which is the professional recommendation for slowing deterioration. Since its donation to PHS in the 1980s, the RNS collection has been archived in storage ideal for preserving paper, its likely home for the foreseeable future.

In June 2017, prior to receiving the NEH grant award, PHS Director of Programs and Services Nancy J. Taylor and Digital Collections Archivist Natalie Shilstut conducted an initial consultation with Barbara Lemmen, Senior Photograph Conservator at the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA). Ms. Lemmen reviewed a selected subset of RNS photo files with preservation concerns, including those containing deteriorating cellulose acetate negatives, prints and negatives stuck together, and mixed boxes of acetate and polyester negatives. Lemmen confirmed that PHS staff members had a good understanding of the preservation issues in the collection, making a formal collection survey unnecessary prior to any RNS digitization project. She also confirmed the PHS assessment that the black-and-white photographic prints were generally of good quality despite being housed with deteriorating negatives.

Archival Rating Systems for Setting Digitization Priorities

As part of the NEH application process, PHS staff studied past projects at other institutions that developed rating systems to aid in setting work priorities. The [rating system](#) employed by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for the Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR) project from 2011 to 2016 was one model. HCI-PSAR rated collections based on several factors, including research interest/historical significance, documentation quality, and physical condition. As with most surveying and appraisal techniques currently employed at libraries and archives, the HCI-PSAR model assigned ratings at the collection or box-level rather than at the item-level.

An exception is the model developed by the Moravian Archives for their “Eastern West Indies Records Planning Project,” funded by the NEH and described in a 2016 [white paper](#). This system rated different types of archival material at the item-level, and the final prioritization rating for digitization encompassed six different factors related to historical significance as well as physical condition—with some factors weighted more heavily than others. This model proved especially helpful when PHS began developing its own rating system during this project.

Developing a Rating System for RNS Photographs

During the initial phase of the NEH-funded grant project (June through October 2018), PHS used its knowledge of the RNS photograph collection and feedback from project consultants and advisory panelists to devise an overall rating system for digitizing RNS photographs. This system graded the physical condition, documentation quality, and historical significance of RNS images. PHS staff then tested the system during a small pilot project, which began at the end of 2018 and continued into the summer of 2019.

Physical Condition

Once PHS secured NEH funding in the spring of 2018, CCAHA Senior Photograph Conservator Barbara Lemmen joined the grant project as an official consultant and advisory panel member. PHS staff members Nancy Taylor and Natalie Shilstut met with Lemmen in June 2018 to examine representative boxes of RNS images and to discuss the physical condition of negatives and prints. Lemmen then spent the summer compiling a report for the advisory panel and developing a rating system for the images based on physical condition. Her thirteen-page report provided guidelines for digitizing the RNS images, including prioritizing photos based on format and condition ([see Appendix A: CCAHA Condition Report](#)). The following informed her guidelines and five-point physical condition rating system:

- The primary document is the negative, so it should always be scanned before a print.
- The base type of each negative should be identified as polyester, cellulose acetate, or cellulose nitrate.
- Polyester negatives and prints are relatively stable in the current environmental conditions, so these should be digitized last (assigned a 1 rating).
- Cellulose acetate negatives which are slightly distorted should be digitized first (assigned a 5 rating) before they deteriorate further and can no longer be safely digitized on a PHS flatbed scanner.
- Cellulose acetate negatives which have not started to deteriorate and are flat should be digitized as soon as possible (assigned a 4 rating).
- If an acetate negative is so distorted that a clear image cannot be obtained, it should be set aside for stripping of the acetate support layer from the gelatin image layer; this conservation technique must be performed by an outside vendor and is costly, but it does recover the image for scanning (assigned

a 3 rating; the rating for these negatives could also be lowered to a 2 or 1—their continued deterioration will change neither usability or treatment cost).

- Prints which require treatment prior to digitization should receive a slightly higher priority (usually a 2 rating) to accommodate the time lag in the project generated by conservation treatment; these ratings could also be lowered to a 1.
- All cellulose nitrate negatives should be set aside during the pilot project (and assigned a 1 rating). Their total number and condition cannot be determined in time for their inclusion in the project workflow. Decisions such as whether images will be scanned in-house or not will be made prior to digitization of the entire collection.

Lemmen’s report included a format-to-scan decision tree and a chart with the five-point rating scale (see page 10, Appendix A) that would be applied to project images depending on their format (i.e. acetate negative, polyester negative, or print).

Documentation Quality

Documentation quality describes how much is known about a particular image. For the great majority of the 60,000 RNS images at PHS, most of this information is contained within the original enclosure. A majority of the images have extensive captions, which are adhered to the outside of the envelope or found within on pieces of loose paper. Some prints have additional information about photographer, distributor, or even additional descriptive details stamped or written on the back. Some envelopes also contain press releases, newspaper clippings, brochures, programs, or other types of printed material that provide context for the image itself. In addition to the envelopes, the log books are the other main source of information about the images. Log books sometimes contain the name of a photographer or distributor, which may or may not be found on the back of the print. Good documentation enables robust metadata and enhances key-word searching capabilities if text is run through optical character recognition (OCR) software. Good documentation quality increases the potential use of an image, making it easier to determine the copyright holder.



A young woman preaches on a street corner, New York, NY, 1980.

Questions about copyright issues had loomed over this project from the beginning. As PHS staff worked on the application to NEH, Nancy Taylor and Natalie Shilstut consulted with attorney Laura Genovese, an expert in intellectual property law, to make sure a large digitization project was allowable. PHS had received the RNS photographs as an “outright gift” in 1984 from the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the owner of the Religious News Service before ownership transferred to the United Methodist Reporter. Because NCCJ did not hold copyright to most of the images, it could only gift the physical

photographs to PHS; most of the images had been purchased by RNS over the years on the basis of one-time reproduction rights, and either the photographer, a wire service, or another organization retained copyright. Genovese confirmed that PHS could digitize the RNS photographs and make them available to end-users without violating copyright. She cited the *Authors Guild vs. Google, Inc.* Supreme Court case, which ruled in support of Google Books' mass digitization efforts on October 16, 2015.

During the summer of 2018, Nancy Taylor and Natalie Shilstut drafted a five-point documentation quality rating scale (see [Appendix B: Documentation Quality](#)). Images with detailed captions and accompanying printed material received the highest rating of 5; images with little or no information received a 1. Laura Genovese, now an advisory panel member, reviewed the Documentation Quality scale to make sure it correctly incorporated copyright considerations. In her report to the panel, she also addressed other copyright-related issues including the display of RNS images in Pearl and PHS's Takedown Policy (see [Appendix C: Genovese Copyright Report](#)).



Historical Significance

Physical condition and documentation quality are relatively objective measures and lend themselves to quantification on a 1-to-5 rating scale. Historical significance, however, is much more subjective. To meet the need to quantify a subjective measure, PHS Executive Director Beth Hessel recruited five historians and journalism scholars to serve on the seven-person advisory panel. Given the breadth of historical coverage in the collection, an array of informed scholarly perspectives was crucial for adequately determining research interest.

Hessel and PHS Director of Programs and Services Nancy Taylor provided the panel with subject expertise in Presbyterian religious history and ecumenism. Hessel recruited three historians to share

their expertise in the specific histories of other religious denominations or faiths represented in the RNS photograph collection, as well as two journalism scholars to help panelists understand the Religious News Service photographs from a communications perspective. Those five persons were:

- [Dr. Hasia R. Diner](#), the Paul and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History at New York University
- [Dr. Jill Gill](#), Professor of American and Religious History at Boise State University
- [Dr. Raymond J. Haberski, Jr.](#), Professor of History and Director of American Studies at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)
- [Dr. Debra L. Mason](#), Professor Emerita at the University of Missouri School of Journalism and former publisher of Religion News Service
- [Dr. Diane Winston](#), Associate Professor and Knight Center Chair in Media & Religion at the University of Southern California

Prior to the October 28-30, 2018, meeting of the advisory panel at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, PHS staff members Nancy Taylor and Natalie Shilstut shared information with the panelists via Dropbox, including the reports prepared by Barbara Lemmen and Laura Genovese; the HCI-PSAR rating assessment criteria and Moravian Archives white paper; and images of sample RNS boxes, photo files, and log book pages.

PHS staff crafted the agenda for the advisory panel meeting to allow adequate time for hands-on examination of the RNS images as well as discussion of how to determine the historical significance of photographs ([see appendix D: Agenda for Advisory Panel Meeting](#)). Panelists also heard reports on the physical condition and documentation quality rating scales and had the opportunity to ask questions. One of the panelists' final tasks was to decide whether the three scales should have equal weight in determining the final rating and, if not, how they should be combined.

The panelists settled in quickly and enjoyed their time together examining images and engaging in discussions about the historical significance of particular images and image types. PHS staff members Beth Hessel, Nancy Taylor, and Natalie Shilstut sat in on all of the advisory panel meetings and discussions. The panelists used extra time at the end of the meeting to examine additional images and, during that process, test the historical-significance criteria together. This extra time proved helpful solidifying the criteria for both the panelists and for Taylor and Shilstut, who would apply the criteria during the later pilot project.

Panelists identified several factors they believed increased the historical significance or research interest inherent in an image: action, a compelling story, and depiction of an under-represented religious group. They also called out high aesthetic or compositional quality as a factor that increased an image's rating. Photographs that portrayed no action (for example, an image of a church building), showed the inner workings of a denomination, or were not grounded in religion rated lower in historical significance. Many of the lower-rated images were portraits or posed group shots.

5	<p>Images with two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than one quality story • Portrayal of an under-represented group • Action <p>AND:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High aesthetic or compositional quality
4	<p>Images with two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than one quality story • Portrayal of an under-represented group • Action
3	<p>Images with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One compelling story • Portrayal of an under-represented group OR action-oriented
2	<p>Images:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounded in religion • A story but not necessarily compelling
1	<p>Any one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not grounded in religion • Shows the inner workings of a denomination • Portrays the presenting of awards • Publicity/stock photos • Formal headshots/portraits • Static images depicting buildings

Historical Significance Rating Criteria (5=highest priority)

Note: High aesthetic/compositional quality can raise an image one rating point

Whether or not to weight any of the ratings was the final point of discussion for the advisory panel. The historians and journalism scholars were concerned that historically significant images (rated a 4 or 5) would not be scanned if the physical condition rating was low. To ensure that historical significance was a top factor in prioritizing images for digitization, the panel decided that the historical significance rating would be doubled for any images rated a 4 or 5. All other ratings would go equally into the equation that determined the final digitization priority:

$$\frac{\text{hist. significance (x 2 if "4" or "5")} + \text{phys. condition} + \text{doc. quality}}{3} = \text{final photograph rating}$$

Overall rating scale formula (5=highest priority)

For example, an image that rated 3 for historical significance, 5 for physical condition, and 4 for documentation quality would have a final rating of 4. But, an image that rated 4 for historical significance, 5 for physical condition, and 4 for documentation quality would have a final rating of 5.67 because the historical significance rating would be doubled.

Applying the Overall Rating System

PHS staff came out of the advisory panel meeting confident in the three rating scales and eager to apply the overall rating system to RNS images during the pilot project. The three objectives for the pilot project were: (1) test the rating system; (2) establish and test the workflows for scanning, metadata creation, and ingestion into Pearl, PHS's digital archive; and (3) gather statistics about the time spent on the various aspects of the work in order to inform planning and resourcing of future digitization projects.

As proposed in the NEH application, PHS staff designed the pilot project to focus on five boxes of images from the collection with about 500 images to be scanned and added to Pearl. As suggested by advisory panel member Debra Mason, Nancy Taylor used a random number generator to choose the five boxes, one from each decade of the collection. The selected boxes contained photographs from 1948, 1955, 1965, 1971, and 1980. PHS staff had estimated approximately 300 enclosures/images per box, for a total of 1,500 images; the five boxes actually contained 1,315 images.

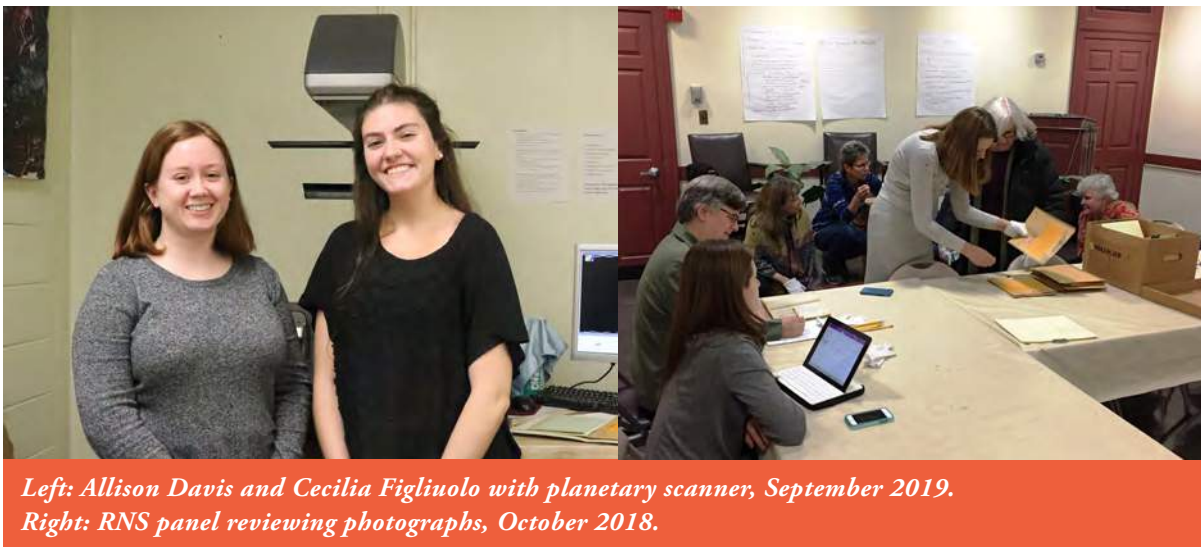
Nancy Taylor and Natalie Shilstut reviewed the five boxes, ranking each RNS image using the three-tier, five-point rating system finalized by the advisory panel. With the intention of applying the ratings in a consistent fashion across the five boxes, they worked together on the first part of the 1948 box and then split the remaining images and boxes so that no single person would rate an entire box by themselves. Final ratings were added to a Google sheet ([see Appendix E: RNS Sorted by Image Number](#)).

The most significant change PHS staff implemented to the rating process came early in the pilot project. As Taylor and Shilstut worked with the images more closely, they began to see evidence that the negatives were actually made from the prints rather than the other way around; tiny pin holes punched through the corners of the prints can be seen in the negatives. To make sure, PHS staff scanned some of the negatives, zoomed in, and compared the print and negative pin holes, which proved to be identical. Taylor and Shilstut shared this evidence with photo conservator Barbara Lemmen, who supported the conclusion that the negatives were copy negatives made from the prints, making the prints the preferred image format to scan. Accordingly, Taylor and Shilstut revised the rating spreadsheet and workflow: as part of the examination of each envelope and its contents, they would note the format to scan (print or negative) and then apply the condition rating to that format. They also went back and redid the evaluations for the enclosures already examined ([see Appendix F: Revised Priority Table Physical Condition](#)).

Since most of the prints were in good condition, the discovery of the primacy of the prints eliminated most but not all of the issues posed by the deteriorating acetate negatives. (Some envelopes contained only a negative, and there were some cases where the negative was stuck to the front of the print.) This discovery may also have negated the need to give added weight to historically significant images by doubling the 4 and 5 ratings. However, Taylor and Shilstut decided to maintain this weighting in the final ranking, as recommended by the panelists.

Digitizing Pilot Project Images

Nancy Taylor determined that PHS would scan and share the top 478 rated images during the pilot project, approximating the application's proposed goal of 500 images. Natalie Shilstut created the workflow for scanning, describing, and ingesting the images and accompanying materials into Pearl based on existing PHS scanning, quality control, post-production, metadata, and digital content management workflows. Archives Technicians Allison Davis and Cecilia Figliuolo utilized on-site equipment for the pilot digitization project including two Epson flatbed scanners and one CopiBook HD planetary scanner. Image resolution, bit depth, color space, and master file formats followed the Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative's [Technical Guidelines for Digitizing Cultural Heritage Materials](#). Staff utilized Adobe software (Photoshop, Lightroom, Acrobat) to streamline quality control and post-production processes.



Metadata creation for the RNS project followed current Presbyterian Historical Society practice. PHS uses the MODS metadata schema for the society's digital collections, modeled on [Princeton University Library's implementation](#). PHS's implementation of MODS utilizes Library of Congress name and subject headings and Getty Art and Architecture Thesaurus for genre, form, and geographic terminology. PHS staff integrated the standardized copyright statements provided by the [RightsStatements.org](#) project into the metadata schema for the pilot project, which in turn facilitated sharing metadata with digital collections aggregators including the [Digital Public Library of America](#). Staff also used the existing workflow to generate MODSXML files from spreadsheets to automate ingest of descriptive metadata into Pearl.

Project Obstacles and Alterations

The pilot project yielded a great deal of useful information and brought new insights that will have a major impact on future RNS collection digitization efforts. All major project objectives were accomplished during the year-and-a-half planning project span, although staff turnover slowed parts of the image ingest phase of the pilot project.

The departure of Natalie Shilstut at the end of February 2019 delayed the goal of having all pilot project images scanned, described, and ingested into Pearl by the end of May. Shilstut was the point person for back-end design work in [Islandora](#), the digital asset management system software supporting Pearl, and was the only staff member who knew all the ins-and-outs of batch ingests. Although Shilstut was able to work with PHS Manager of Technical Services Margo Szabunia to train other staff members before her departure, technical problems with batch ingests cropped up almost immediately; Szabunia and PHS Cataloging and Metadata Librarian Gabriela Zoller eventually worked through those problems, and yet the ingest process continued to run less smoothly than expected. Display issues in Islandora also proved to be a recurring problem. Lacking the funds and expertise to fully customize Islandora displays, PHS staff worked primarily with the built-in manuscript module to display the different pieces of the RNS records in Pearl. This created an awkward viewing experience for users and did not support a thumbnail-only display for images under copyright. Acquiring funds to support further customization of Islandora will be an important part of any large future digitization projects.



Scanning and metadata creation also took longer than anticipated, in part because project staff decided to maximize aspects of the images that rated highly on the documentation quality scale. If the image enclosures included material such as a press release, the image rated a 5 in documentation quality; images with detailed captions but without additional accompanying material rated a 4. Nancy Taylor and Natalie Shilstut made the decision to scan both accompanying material and typed captions and to make these pieces key-word searchable through OCR. A complication arose when the captions required additional lengthy quality control after OCR, primarily because the yellow caption paper or adhesive used to attach the caption to the outside of the envelope prevented good digital character recognition. Metadata creators Allison Davis and Cecilia Figliuolo found that typing the caption into the image record for Pearl was faster than running OCR and then cleaning up the text.

In putting together the advisory panel, PHS staff had sought out subject experts in Catholic, Jewish, and other aspects of religious history not represented in the PHS collections. However, in setting the timeline for the pilot project, it did not occur to Nancy Taylor and Natalie Shilstut that they needed to

build in extra time for PHS staff members to develop new subject competencies in areas not in their daily wheelhouse. Davis, Figliuolo, and Gabriela Zoller found they had to conduct extra research before assigning subject headings to RNS images, and the sheer diversity of topics made metadata creation slower. In the workflow, there was also a divide between the initial raters (Nancy Taylor and Natalie Shilstut, who attended all of the advisory panel discussions) and the staff members who scanned and described the selected images (who did not attend the advisory panel discussions). If the same individuals both rated and then described the images, they would have more opportunities to build knowledge of the collection and the subject expertise to enable faster metadata creation.

In the end, the complex process of scanning and metadata creation generated records for individual images in Pearl with multiple parts: the image file, pdfs of accompanying material such as press releases or programs, a verbatim caption, and the MODS metadata. PHS staff created all of these parts separately, and Islandora combined them upon ingestion to make the record as displayed in Pearl. The final product demonstrates why these particular images were chosen for digitization, but creating this rich product took more time than anticipated. For future digitization projects, PHS staff will need to weigh in advance available time and resources versus the desired final product.



Additional Findings about the RNS Collection

Although the pilot project focused on only 5 of the 227 boxes in the RNS photograph collection, it did allow PHS staff to gain more concrete knowledge about the nature of the collection itself. In the five sample boxes the most represented faith group was the Catholic church (the 1980 box included more Jewish content than the other four boxes as well as more non-denominational news). There are more international images in the RNS collection than PHS staff previously realized; not only is there good coverage of Americans aiding international relief efforts and causes, but there are

more images than expected of events and people not directly related to the United States. In terms of physical condition, staff learned that the 1948 prints and acetate negatives were in good condition (and that the 1948 box contained no nitrate negatives). The boxes from 1955 and 1965 had the most problems with deteriorating acetate negatives, causing prints and negatives to stick together; the tightly packed 1965 box is in the worst condition. By 1971, RNS was including many extra copies of the paper captions in each enclosure, resulting in fewer actual images per box.

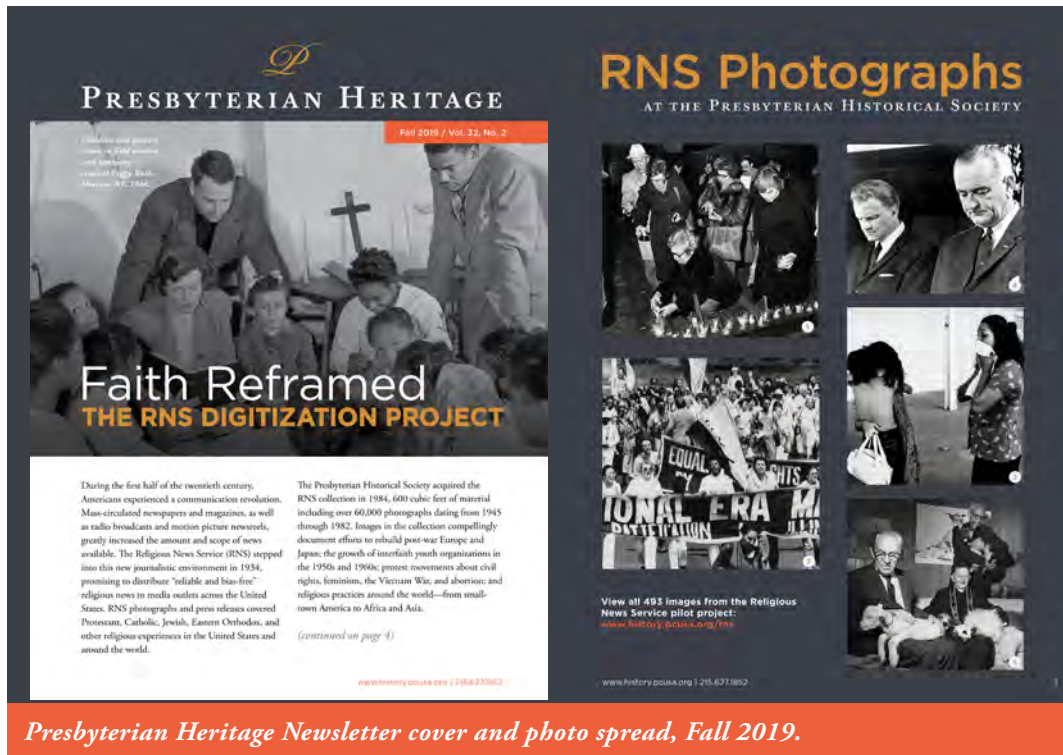
PHS staff also discovered through the pilot project that, based on the historical significance criteria established by the advisory panel, very few of the images rated a 5 for historical significance (about

one percent) or a 4 (about ten percent). For future digitization projects, PHS may retain the same general criteria for historical significance but revise the criteria for what constitutes each rating. For example, aesthetic or compositional quality might remain a factor that could boost a rating but not be a requirement for a 5 rating if all of the other criteria are met. A 4 rating could be one quality story, portrayal of an under-represented group, and an action shot; while a 3 rating would then remain one quality story and either portrayal of an under-represented group or an action shot.

Sensitive Material Policy

Finally, the pilot project prompted PHS to evaluate policies governing our digital archive, Pearl. PHS had already formulated a [Takedown Policy](#), posted on Pearl with a takedown request form. Allison Davis, Cecilia Figliuolo, and Gabriela Zoller also crafted a Digital Collections Sensitive Material Policy.

During the digitization phase of the pilot project, Davis and Figliuolo encountered some image titles and captions that contained language considered offensive by 2019 standards, including terms that are outdated, insensitive, or offensive. Because Pearl records contain original captions alongside images, researchers would see the descriptions provided by the creators or former owners of the material. The new PHS policy calls for staff to clearly indicate, through the use of notes, quotation marks, or other explanations, when titles or descriptions come from the original source and are legacy language. In addition, PHS staff will supply descriptions for digitized items with sensitive or offensive content in order to more responsibly describe the resource.



Also included in the RNS collection are photographs that depict disturbing events such as the aftermath of bombings and riots. PHS staff want researchers to be able to discover and utilize this historical content, but also to receive advance warning about its graphic subject matter. Gabriela Zoller created

a temporary solution that involves embargoing the full-size image and its thumbnail from public view, while leaving the image’s description and related textual materials visible. This prevents general public viewing of graphic content, while allowing researchers to access the image by contacting the PHS reference staff.

This method was applied to four different Religious News Service photographs in the pilot project. Each includes a statement found in the image’s metadata: “Image not displayed due to sensitive content. Please contact PHS Reference Desk at refdesk@history.pcusa.org or 215-627-1852.” The long-term goal is to implement Islandora’s Managed Access module, which provides users with a written warning about potentially troubling imagery and asks them to “click through” to the full image after the warning screen has displayed.

Sharing Project Results

As PHS staff members completed the pilot project, they increased efforts to share findings and other results. Already RNS images had transformed PHS’s physical space. In the fall of 2018, staff began planning displays in two areas of the building: a new exhibit in the lobby that focused on four new PHS initiatives, including the NEH-funded RNS project; and a longer-term change to the images displayed in the building’s largest meeting room. For years, that meeting room’s walls had featured oil portraits in ornate gold frames depicting Presbyterian ministers and missionaries—most white, male, and from the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. PHS Executive Director Beth Hessel led the staff initiative to take down and store those paintings and replace them with eight enlarged images (about five feet by three feet) from the RNS collection. This change made an immediate impact, completely transforming the feel of the space and signaling to everyone—visitors and staff alike—a more inclusive PHS. Staff proudly showed off the images and discussed the NEH-funded RNS digitization project. Groups meeting in the renovated space—from the PHS Board of Directors to classes from the Community College of Philadelphia—engaged the enlarged twentieth-century photographs in exciting new ways.

Beth Hessel left the Presbyterian Historical Society in June 2019 and later that summer, Nancy Taylor officially took over as the project leader. This final staff transition went relatively smoothly since PHS staff members who played significant roles in the pilot project also wrote about the project for public audiences beyond the building. Allison Davis and Cecilia Figliuolo created blog posts reflecting on their work on the project and highlighting some of their favorite images and image-related stories. PHS featured these posts in its October and November 2019 e-newsletters, *PHS Matters*. Nancy Taylor wrote the lead story for the Fall 2019 print newsletter,



Presbyterian Heritage, also about the RNS project. In October 2019, PHS increased its frequency of sharing RNS collections news via social media, highlighting digitized RNS photos each week on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram using the hashtag #RNSatPHS. Staff also selected an RNS image from 1948 that Development and Communications Associate Kristen Gaydos featured in the widely distributed PHS Christmas Card.

Gabriela Zoller publicized the RNS project prominently as part of a Pearl Digital Archives 2019 review in December, which was shared via PHS’s website, pcusa.org (the website of the largest Presbyterian denomination in the country), and pres-outlook.com (the publisher of the largest independent Presbyterian magazine in the country). Kristen Gaydos created a two-minute video describing the project and featuring an interview with Nancy Taylor, footage of Allison Davis working with the RNS collection, and photographs scanned during the project. The [video](#) is available on YouTube and the hyperlink appears in a number of PHS communications pieces.

In early 2020, PHS staff including Director of Communications and Marketing Fred Tangeman renewed conversations with the successor group of RNS, now called the Religion News Service, an active media operation with a large digital audience (religionnews.com). PHS and the Religion News Service are planning to jointly share news about the RNS digitization project and the RNS photos at PHS via news and feature articles and monthly e-newsletter mailings. Images related to historic and current-day responses to immigration, national politics, and the environment are top priorities to share.



Finally, Nancy Taylor, Natalie Shilstut, and Barbara Lemmen presented on the results of the project as part of the panel, “Moving from Positive to Negative: Working Across Disciplines on Large Photograph Digitization Projects” at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference meeting in Cambridge, Maryland, on November 9, 2019. The [slides from the MARAC presentation](#) are available through the Digital Archives Repository of the University of Maryland. PHS staff relied on previous ratings systems to develop the three-tier system used in this pilot project, and the hope is that sharing information about the project and its findings with the archives community will inform the future use of such systems to assist in planning and implementing work on large archival collections.

Conclusion

Making a determination about what is important and valuable is deeply embedded in archival practice, shaping what is collected, preserved, and shared. When faced with voluminous collections of images and

limited resources, deciding what is important to digitize, preserve, and make available to the public can be a daunting challenge.

PHS has learned a great deal from the RNS digitization planning project that speaks to important aspects of archival practice and thus to the historical record. In bringing together experts from diverse fields and drawing on that expertise to develop and test a comprehensive rating system for prioritizing digitization, this project has contributed to archival theory and practice by offering a systematic way to combine concepts of “value” (in particular, historical significance) with physical condition and documentation quality. More immediately, “Digitizing the Religious News Service Photographs: A Planning Project” has allowed the Presbyterian Historical Society to scan some of the most historically rich and physically vulnerable photographs from the entire Religious News Service collection and to share them with researchers and history enthusiasts around the world.

Appendix A:
CCAHA Condition Report

Barbara Lemmen, Senior Photograph Conservator
Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts
October 17, 2018



Introduction

Religious News Service (RNS RG 1: Photographs, 1945-1982) contains approximately 68,000 gelatin silver developed-out paper photographs (8x10"), film base negatives (8x10"), and typed captions on paper supports. The print, negative, and caption(s) for each image are currently housed within original, poor quality paper envelopes in a total of 227 paperboard boxes. The envelopes also have identifying information.

The photographic materials vary in size and condition. Representative examples were examined on two occasions by Ms. Lemmen with Nancy J. Taylor, Director of Programs and Services, and Natalie Shilstut, Digital Collections Archivist.

The black-and-white prints are on paper and resin-coated paper supports and in good condition, in general. The film base supports of the negatives are cellulose nitrate, cellulose acetate, and polyester (starting in the 1970's). Cellulose nitrate negatives were recently discovered in a box from the 1940's; the total number in the collection and their condition have not been determined at this time. Polyester is a very stable plastic and these negatives are, consequently, in very good condition. The condition of the cellulose acetate varies from very good to poor; their deterioration is detailed later in the report.

This report provides guidelines for digitizing these materials including prioritizing them based on format and condition.

Guidelines

Prior to Digitization

Place each negative with sticky tapes within an enclosure of clean, inert polyester film; although this may increase the rate of deterioration, it is needed to protect the scanner and, later, adjacent materials in the collection from contamination with the adhesive.

In general, minimize handling. Severely deteriorated film is brittle. In addition, when a negative is removed from its enclosure, deterioration will speed up as trapped volatiles disperse.

Establish Format and Condition Priority for digitization for each image using the "Priority Decision Tree" in "Appendices;" additional details and rationale can be found in the "Prioritization" section. During this process, set aside the negatives and prints requiring conservation treatment (priorities 3 and 2).

Digitization

1. Clean a print on the image side and film on both sides with a wide, soft brush and/or air blower. Wash the brush regularly and allow it to dry thoroughly before resuming work. Ideally, use several brushes, so you won't have to wait for them to dry before resuming cleaning.
2. Determine which is the emulsion side of the film. Some ways to tell are that the emulsion or image side may be darker and/or exhibit silver mirroring; the non-image side may be shinier.
3. Capture the digital image of the negative or print using a flatbed scanner. Place a piece of clean Plexiglas on top of negatives or prints which are only slightly distorted to keep them in plane. Those with severe distortion cannot be pressed in a scanner, but can be imaged with a camera.

Rehousing Recommendations for the Prints and Negatives

- Label the enclosures prior to insertion of the object.
- Place each print and caption into a separate paper enclosure, or place them into one enclosure with a sheet of alkaline interleaving paper. Use enclosures like those used for the negatives or an alkaline paper folder.
- Place each negative into a paper four-flap or envelope. Negatives with sticky pressure-sensitive tapes should be placed within enclosures of clean, inert polyester film; although this may increase the rate of deterioration, it is needed to protect the scanner and, later, adjacent materials in the collection from contamination with the adhesive.
- If possible, place prints and negatives vertically into separate, lidded storage boxes. Insert several sheets of paperboard, cut to the interior size of the box, to act as dividers; fill empty space at the back with more pieces of paperboard, if necessary.
- All housing materials should meet ISO 18902:2013 *Imaging materials--Processed imaging materials--Albums, framing and storage materials* including passing the Photographic Activity Test.

Preservation of the Negatives

Cellulose acetate film base is inherently unstable. Only storage at freezing temperatures and low relative humidity will ensure its long term survival. Research, charts and interactive tools from the Image Permanence Institute at the Rochester Institute of Technology show the benefit of these conditions compared to the rapid rate of this autocatalytic chemical process in the current storage conditions.

eClimateNotebook data for the past three years from the storage area for the RNS collection was fed into the IPI Storage Calculator for Acetate.

	Temperature	Relative Humidity	Time before degraded acetate reaches poor condition
Max	72	60	3 years
Mean	70	51	5 years
Min	61	36	22 years

At the average conditions in the PHS storage area, the cellulose acetate negatives in this collection will degrade significantly in approximately five years. Film which is currently at stage 1 or 2 and can be digitized on the flatbed scanner. Negatives with severe distortion must be treated (stripped) to obtain a clear image.

Stripping cellulose acetate film is a conservation treatment which effects the separation of the gelatin emulsion from the deteriorated plastic support. The distortion in the image that was generated by the channeling is removed when the emulsion is expanded back to its original size. The emulsion is digitized before it is returned to the owner; the current cost is approximately \$200 per 8x10" sheet film negative including digitization.

The rapid rate of deterioration of the acetate film argues for a compressed timeline for the project and/or cold storage of the collection while the project is planned.

Cellulose nitrate film is also inherently unstable and is classified as a hazardous material (DOT Class 4.1 Flammable Solid) and fire hazard for which handling, storage, transportation, and disposal are governed by law and federal, state and local regulations. All of those negatives identified or suspected of being cellulose nitrate should be set aside during the pilot project. Their total number and condition cannot be determined in time for their inclusion into this workflow. Decisions regarding digitization and their long-term care will be made once more information is available.

Prioritization – Format and Condition

This table defines the priority (1 to 5, with 5 being the highest) for digitization of the negatives and prints based on a combination of the format (print or negative; film-base type) and current condition.

Priority	Format		Condition	Treatment	Digitization
	Negative exists	Print exists			
5	Cellulose Acetate	NA	Slight distortion = stage 2 or 3	---	Flatbed
4	Cellulose Acetate	NA	None = stage 1	---	Flatbed
3	Cellulose Acetate	None	Poor/distorted = stage 4 or higher	Stripping	Flatbed or by outside contractor
3	Cellulose Acetate	Poor quality	Poor/distorted = stage 4 or higher	Stripping	Flatbed or by outside contractor
2	None	Yes	Unstable	Maybe	Camera (If treated, flatbed scanner could be used)
1	None	Yes	Good	---	Flatbed
1	Polyester	NA	---	---	Flatbed
1	Cellulose Nitrate	NA	---	---	Flatbed (in-house or by outside contractor)

* For details of the stages refer to "Deterioration stages for cellulose acetate film" in the "Appendices."

The main concepts on which the priorities are based are as follows:

- The primary document is the negative, so it should always be scanned before a print.
- The base type of each negative should be identified as polyester, cellulose acetate, or cellulose nitrate.
- Polyester negatives and prints are relatively stable in the current environmental conditions, so these should be digitized last (1).
- Cellulose acetate negatives which are slightly distorted should be digitized first (5) before they deteriorate further and can no longer be safely digitized on the flatbed scanner.
- Cellulose acetate negatives which have not started to deteriorate and are flat should be digitized as soon as possible (4).

- If an acetate negative is so distorted that a clear image cannot be obtained, it should be set aside for stripping (3). The priority for these could also be lowered to 2 or 1 because these negatives could continue to deteriorate and the outcome and cost of treatment would not change.
- Prints which require treatment prior to digitization are given a slightly higher priority (2) to accommodate the time lag in the project generated by conservation treatment; however, these could also be 1.
- All of the cellulose nitrate negatives (1) should be set aside during the pilot project. Their total number and condition cannot be determined in time for their inclusion into this workflow. Decisions, such as whether they will be scanned in-house, will be made prior to digitization of the entire collection.

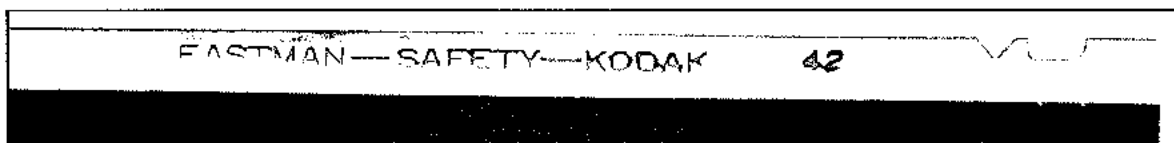
Due to the instability of the cellulose acetate film, when the "Format and Condition" priority ratings are combined with "historical significance," the former should be weighted more heavily so that priorities 1 and 2 retain these relative positions overall. According to Rob Waller, "Format and Condition" would become the "dominant criterion" or 'dominant factor' when the film is in a condition when it can still be digitized. Another way to address this is to make all 3, 4, and 5 level items into the same priority level.

Appendices

1) Identifying the three types of film base




There are four non-destructive methods, given here in order of convenience, available to identify the three types of plastic film supports in this collection. It may not be necessary to undertake all four to get an answer. It is often possible to perform the first two without removing the negative completely from its enclosure. The fourth is a chemical test that must be conducted in a laboratory by a photograph conservator.

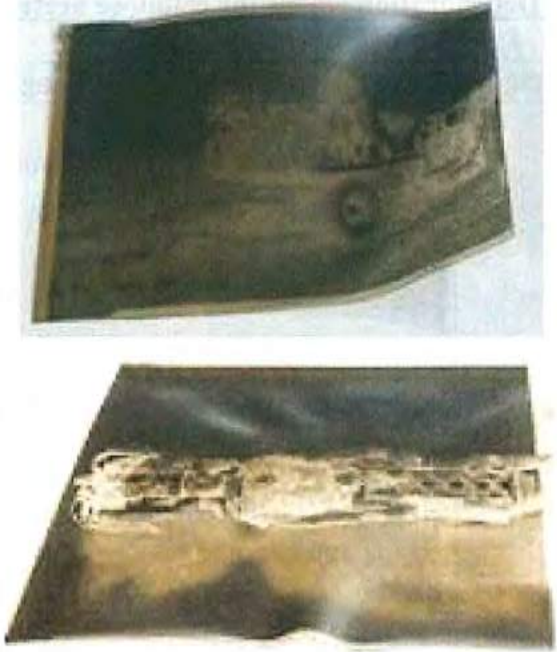
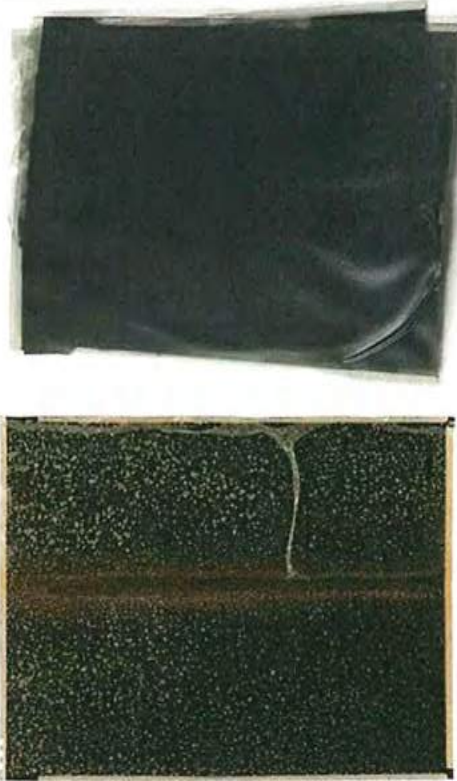
- 1) Look for advanced deterioration which are characteristic of cellulose acetate such as delamination and brittleness (refer to Appendix 2, the chart "Deterioration stages for cellulose acetate film," for details and images).
- 2) Look for edge marking on the film; there may not be any. Cellulose acetate will often be labeled as such or as 'safety.' It is less common for polyester or nitrate to be marked with the film base type. Polyester may also be stamped with the brand name for the base, most commonly "Cronar" (Du Pont) or "Estar" (Kodak).




- 3) If necessary, conduct the polarization test to separate out polyester film from the other two types. (refer to "Completing the Polarization Test: How to Make and Use a Film Viewer," National Park Service)
<https://www.nps.gov/museum/coldstorage/pdf/2.3.1b.pdf> (last accessed 9/18)
- 4) Determine which of the remaining film is cellulose nitrate versus cellulose acetate using the diphenylamine spot test. If the testing stops before step 4, all of the remaining negatives should be classified as nitrate.

2) Deterioration stages for cellulose acetate film

Stage	Description	Image Legibility	Examples in normal and transmitted light
1	No deterioration	Legible image	
2	Negative starting to shrink and become brittle Possible yellowing May give off a vinegar odor	Legible image	
3	Vinegar smell Negative begins to curl May show blue or pink staining Yellowing	Legible image	

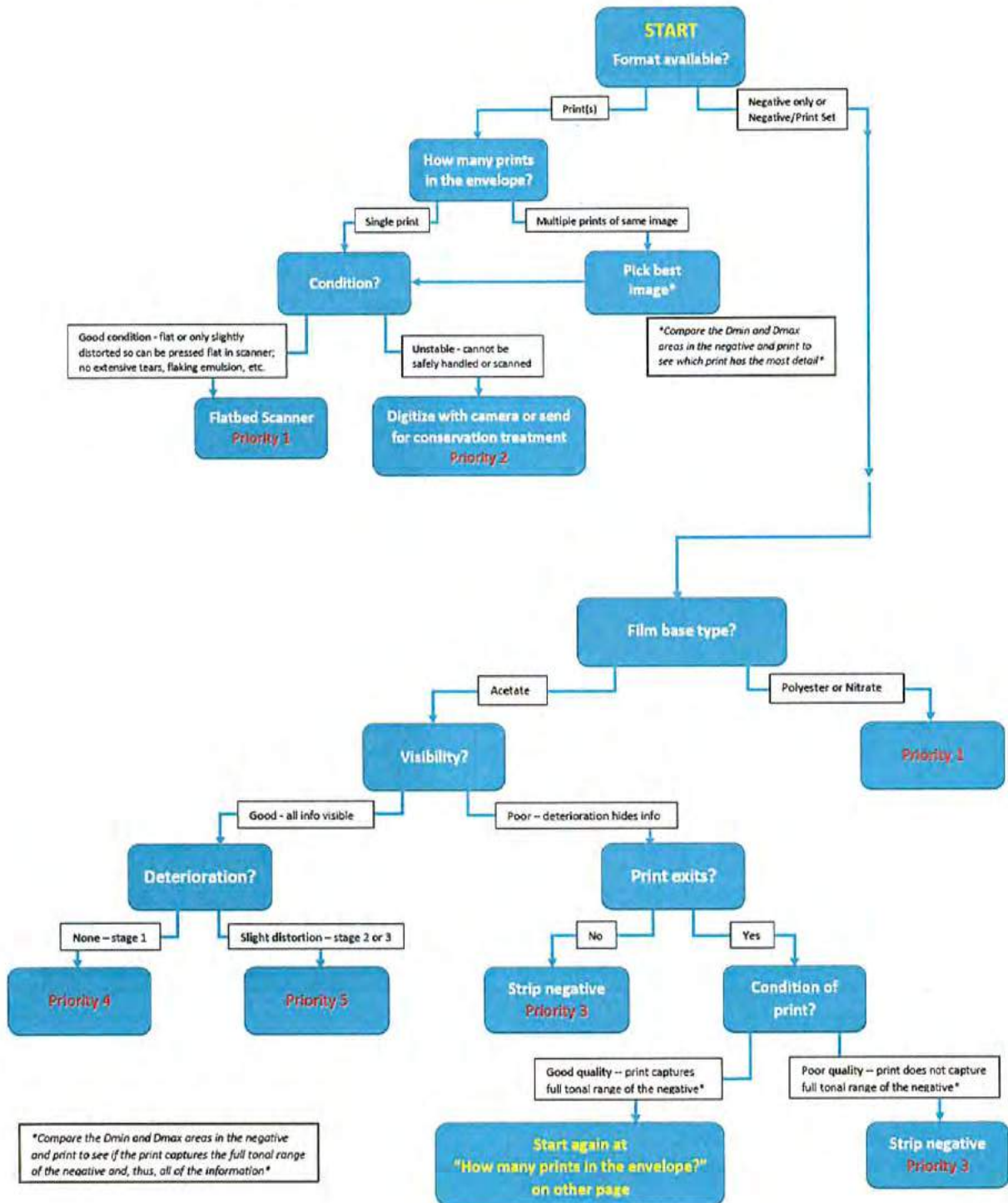
4	Overall shrinkage of film base begins	Legible image	
5	Bubbles and crystalline deposits form between layers of the negative	Depending on the extent, the image may not be legible	

6	<p>Channels form on both sides of the negative</p> <p>Highly distorted</p>	<p>Depending on the extent, the image may not be legible</p>	
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Images courtesy of:

- Barbara Lemmen
- *Photographic Negatives: Nature and Evolution of Processes* by Maria Fernanda Valverde, published by the Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Preservation/George Eastman House/Image Permanence Institute, Rochester, NY, 2003.
- Preservation Self-Assessment Program, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- NEDCC.org
- gawainweaver.com
- National Park Service "Cold Storage"

3) Priority Decision Tree



4) "Photographic Film Base Negatives and Gelatin Silver Developed-out Paper Prints: References"

Film Base Negatives

"The Acetate Negative Survey: Final Report," by David Horvath, in *Topics in Photographic Preservation, Volume Two*, compiled by Maria S. Holden, published by AIC Photographic Materials Group, Washington, D.C., 1998, 25-39.

http://gawainweaver.com/images/uploads/Horvath_AcetateNegativeSurvey.pdf
(last accessed 9/18)

Australian Network for Information on Cellulose Acetate (ANICA)/National & International Preservation Activities (NIPA), Preservation Services, National Library of Australia.

Topics include:

"Assessment Guidelines,"

"Occupational Health and Safety"

"Storage of Cellulose Acetate Collections: A Preliminary Survey of Issues and Options"

"Identification of Cellulose Acetate in Collections"

<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/125596/20110324-1024/www.nla.gov.au/anica/storagecontents.html> (last accessed 9/18)

Cold Storage, National Park Service website includes these sections on film identification:

"History of Film Types Timeline"

https://www.nps.gov/museum/coldstorage/html/filmid2_1.html

<https://www.nps.gov/museum/coldstorage/pdf/2.3.1a.pdf>

"Film Characteristics"

https://www.nps.gov/museum/coldstorage/html/filmid2_2.html

"Film Identification"

https://www.nps.gov/museum/coldstorage/html/filmid2_3.html

"Decision Tree for Sheet Film"

<https://www.nps.gov/museum/coldstorage/pdf/2.3.1c2.pdf>

"Completing the Polarization Test: How to Make and Use a Film Viewer"

<https://www.nps.gov/museum/coldstorage/pdf/2.3.1b.pdf>

(last accessed 9/18)

Filmcare.org, the Image Permanence Institute, Rochester, New York, 2018.

<https://www.filmcare.org/> (last accessed 9/18)

"History, Science and Storage of Cellulose Acetate Film Base," by Tim Vitale, 2009.

[http://videopreservation.conserva-](http://videopreservation.conserva-us.org/library/history_science_storage_of_acetate_base_film_16b.pdf)

[us.org/library/history_science_storage_of_acetate_base_film_16b.pdf](http://videopreservation.conserva-us.org/library/history_science_storage_of_acetate_base_film_16b.pdf)

(last accessed 9/18)

“Imaging Materials – Processed safety photographic films – Storage practices” (ISO 18911:2010). International Organization for Standardization.

IPI Storage Guide for Acetate Film, by James Reilly, published by the Image Permanence Institute, Rochester, New York, 1993.

http://www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org/shtml_sub/acetguid.pdf (last accessed 9/18)

“Management of Cellulose Nitrate and Cellulose Ester Film,” (Appendix M) in *Museum Handbook: Part 1*, published by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 1999.

<https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/MHI/AppendM.pdf>

(last accessed 9/18)

“The preservation of acetate film materials: a cost benefit analysis for duplication and cool/cold storage,” Steven Puglia, *Topics in Photographic Preservation*, volume six, 1995, pp50-79.

http://resources.conservation-us.org/pmgtopics/1995-volume-six/06_04_Puglia.pdf

(last accessed 9/18)

“A Short Guide to Film Base Photographic Materials: Identification, Care and Duplication” (Preservation Leaflet 5.1), by Monique Fischer, published by the Northeast Document Conservation Center, Andover, MA.

<http://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/5.-photographs/5.1-a-short-guide-to-film-base-photographic-materials-identification,-care,-and-duplication> (last accessed 9/18)

Photographic Negatives: Nature and Evolution of Processes by Maria Fernanda Valverde, published by the Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Preservation/George Eastman House/Image Permanence Institute, Rochester, NY, 2003. (poster for sale, booklet only available as pdf)

https://www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org/webfm_send/302 (last accessed 9/18)

Cellulose Nitrate Film

“Caring for Cellulose Nitrate Film,” (Conserve O Gram 14/8) published by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 2004.

<https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conserveogram/14-08.pdf> (last accessed 9/18)

“Management of Cellulose Nitrate and Cellulose Ester Film,” (Appendix M) in *Museum Handbook: Part 1*, published by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 1999.

<https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/MHI/AppendM.pdf>

(last accessed 9/18)

“Standard for the Storage and Handling of Cellulose Nitrate Film” (NFPA 40). National Fire Protection Association, 2010.
<https://catalog.nfpa.org/NFPA-40-Standard-for-the-Storage-and-Handling-of-Cellulose-Nitrate-Film-P1176.aspx> (last accessed 9/18)

Gelatin Silver Prints

“Curatorial Care of Photographic Collections,” (Appendix R) in *Museum Handbook: Part 1*, published by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 1996.

<https://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/MHI/Appendix%20R.pdf>
(last accessed 9/18)

“A guide to fiber-base gelatin silver print condition and deterioration,” Gawain Weaver, Gawain Weaver and the Advanced Residency Program in Photograph Conservation/George Eastman House/Image Permanence Institute, Rochester, NY, 2008.

http://gawainweaver.com/images/uploads/Weaver_Guide_to_Gelatin_Silver.pdf
(last accessed 9/18)

“Imaging Materials – Reflection Prints – Storage practices” (ISO 18920:20101. International Organization for Standardization.

Appendix B:

Documentation Quality

Documentation Quality

Caption scenarios:

- Single version of caption
- Multiple versions of caption (i.e. draft versions of caption found in photo file)
- Photo file also includes accompanying materials, such as the full newspaper article the image was published with and/or related articles
- Brief title and no descriptive caption
- No information (other than date and photo file number)

Copyright information scenarios:

- Personal/corporate photographer and/or wire agency name written/stamped on envelope or back of photo
- Credit appears in ledger and matches info found in photo file
- Credit appears in ledger and does not match info found in photo file
- Credit only appears in ledger
- No credit in photo file or in ledger

Rating Criteria (5=highest priority):

5: Detailed caption provides good context for the image (names, subjects, location, etc.). Photographer credit is clear and there is no contradiction between credit in photo file and in ledger.

4: Detailed caption provides good context for the image (names, subjects, location, etc.). Photographer credit is unclear, absent, or contradicts credit found in ledger.

3: Brief title or caption is present but lacks detail that would provide good context for the image. Photographer credit is clear and there is no contradiction between credit in photo file and in ledger.

2: No title or caption. Photographer credit is clear and there is no contradiction between credit in photo file and in ledger.

1: No title or caption. Photographer credit is unclear, absent, or contradicts credit found in ledger.

Appendix C:
Genovese Copyright Report



602 South Bethlehem Pike
Building B, Second Floor
Ambler, PA 19002

T (267) 468-7140
F (267) 468-7140
E info@kassgen.com
W kassgen.com

October 15, 2018

Nancy J. Taylor
Director of Programs and Services
Presbyterian Historical Society
425 Lombard St.
Philadelphia, PA 19147

Dear Nancy:

You have asked us to advise you concerning copyright issues related to the Presbyterian Historical Society's display of photographs from the Religious News Service ("RNS") via PHS's Pearl Digital Collections site, available at <https://digital.history.pcusa.org> ("Pearl"). Specifically, this letter provides advice concerning the display of images in Pearl. All advice and recommendations contained in this letter are based on U.S. law, and do not address issues of non-U.S. works or works created by non-U.S. nationals.

Display of Images

Currently Pearl allows users to view high-quality reproductions of the photographs in the collection, and users of the site can right-click an image to copy and download it to the user's computer. As discussed more fully below, my recommendation is that PHS display thumbnails of those photographs that remain protected by copyright, instead of displaying enlargeable, high resolution images that a user can easily download.

Copyright Protection

Under current law, photographs are protected by copyright as soon as they are created, and copyright subsists for 70 years following the death of the photographer. The owner has the exclusive rights to authorize the reproduction, distribution, or preparation of derivatives of the owner's photograph. For photographs created prior to January 1, 1978, the rules for determining

the copyright status of a work are varied and dependent on many factors. In general, however, a published photo taken before 1923 is in the public domain.¹

“Fair Use”

“Fair use” is a very limited exception to the general rule that use of a copyrighted work without permission is an infringement of that work. There is no bright-line test for fair use, and it must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Ultimately, the determination of whether a use is “fair” is made by a court of law in the context of an infringement lawsuit.

Under the copyright statute, determining whether a use is “fair” depends on an evaluation and analysis of four factors:

1. the purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes;
2. the nature of the copyrighted work;
3. the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and
4. the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

17 U.S.C. § 107.

In recent copyright jurisprudence, uses of copyrighted works that are deemed “transformative” are usually found to be fair. As stated by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit (an influential circuit with respect to copyright law), “transformative uses tend to favor a fair use finding because a transformative use is one that communicates something new and different from the original or expands its utility, thus serving copyright’s overall objective of contributing to public knowledge.” *Authors Guild v. Google, Inc.*, 804 F.3d 202, 2015 (2d Cir. 2015) (finding that Google’s digitization of copyrighted works and creation of search functionality across those works was a fair use).

Courts have held that the use of thumbnails (small, low-resolution images) of copyrighted photographs to facilitate searching is a transformative and fair use. *Perfect 10, Inc. v. Amazon.com, Inc.*, 508 F.3d 1146, 1168 (9th Cir. 2007) (the search value of thumbnails in Google Image search outweighs potential infringement by users downloading the thumbnails); *Kelly v. Arriba Soft Corp.*, 336 F.3d 811 (9th Cir. 2003) (because thumbnails are not a substitute for full-

¹ On January 1, 2019, published photos taken before 1924 will be in the public domain.



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October 15, 2018
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sized images, they do not harm the photographer's ability to sell or license her or his full-sized images).

In our opinion, in order for PHS to prevail in a fair use analysis, we recommend downgrading the quality of the images available on Pearl to thumbnails. This modification should be sufficient to meet the research and educational needs of individuals using the site, while not providing a substitute for purchasing or licensing the original work (or a copy of the original work) from the copyright owner.

**Copyright and Permission Section of Pearl
(<https://digital.history.pcusa.org/copyrightpolicy>)**

I have reviewed these sections and find them accurate with respect to the information conveyed concerning copyright issues. PHS makes clear that it does not own the copyright in the images, and that it is providing them as a research and educational tool for the public. To the extent a user wishes to make use of an image, PHS clearly states that the onus rests on the user to ascertain the copyright status and obtain the necessary permission(s) for the desired use.

The resources available on the "Evaluating Copyright" page (<https://digital.history.pcusa.org/copyright>) are appropriate and helpful. You should consider adding a sentence recommending that the user obtain legal advice concerning the status of a work and the proposed use of the work. For example, consider these revisions to the third paragraph on the "Evaluating Copyright" page:

*The society makes an effort, where possible, to assess copyright restrictions. Works that are labeled as having **no known copyright restrictions** in the society's digital repository, Pearl, are likely to be in the public domain. This status has been determined to the best of our ability based on available information and is not a guarantee of public domain status, nor is it a guarantee that there aren't other intellectual property restrictions attached to the work. Users should conduct their own investigation and/or seek legal advice prior to use of an image.*

The Takedown Policy is sound.



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Designating a Copyright Agent Pursuant to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. (DMCA)

In addition to the Takedown Policy that you have already implemented, we recommend that PHS designate a copyright agent for claims of copyright infringement, as provided in the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA). Section 512 of the DMCA (17 U.S.C. § 512) provides a “safe harbor” for online services for user-posted content. I recognize that since PHS itself is selecting and posting the images available on Pearl, protection under the DMCA may be quite limited at best. However, given the low cost (under \$10) and the simplicity of registering an agent, I believe it is still worth doing. You can sign up at <https://www.copyright.gov/dmca-directory/>. You should designate a special email address for DMCA inquiries and review the messages regularly. One of the requirements for the safe harbor is quick action to remove allegedly infringing images. We can advise you more fully on the handling of DMCA notices upon request.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this report.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Laura A. Genovese'.

Laura A. Genovese

Appendix D:

Agenda for Panel Meeting

Agenda for NEH-RNS Advisory Panel Meeting

Sunday, Oct. 28

- 10:00-10:45: introductions: from PHS—Beth Hessel, Nancy Taylor, and Natalie Shilstut; scholars—Hasia Diner, Jill Gill, Ray Haberski, Debra Mason, and Diane Winston; overview of grant, roles, expectations
- 10:45-11:30: initial discussion of “historical significance”—What makes something historically significant? For images, are there additional factors to consider? How do such things as potential uses of an image and aesthetic values factor into historical significance?
- 11:30-1:00: brunch at Beau Monde (624 S 6th St, Philadelphia, PA 19147)
- 1:00-4:00: review of collection materials, both individually and in groups

Monday, Oct. 29

- 8:30: brief tour of archives annex and digitization studio plus PHS Director of Communications Fred Tangeman will introduce himself to panel
- 9:00-10:00: sharing of impressions from Sunday afternoon’s collection review and how that may have reinforced or shifted some of the initial conclusions about historical significance
- 10:00-lunch: presentations by Barbara Lemmen and Laura Genovese and question and answer session on physical condition and documentation quality ratings
- Lunch break
- 1:00-4:30: draft historical significance rating scale (5 highest significance to 1 lowest significance with concrete examples for each number 5-4-3-2-1)
- 5:30: dinner at a local restaurant

Tuesday, Oct. 30

- 9:00-11:00: finalize historical significance rating scale and determine how the three ratings will be weighted to determine the final priority for digitization
- 11:00-Noon: review post meeting plans and timeline; brainstorm about ways to publicize and disseminate the results of the grant (digitized RNS images in Pearl, white paper findings, etc.); share ideas about grant opportunities for a larger implementation grant for the RNS photos

Appendix E:
RNS Images Sorted by Image Number

Appraisal Date	Appraisal start time	Appraisal end time	Appraised by	RT number	Box number	Photofile prefix	Photofile number	Date (year)	Condition rating	Documentation Quality rating	Historical Significance	HS weight (4/5 x 2)	Weighted Historical Significance	Totaled rating	Rating/3	Available formats	Format to scan	Candidate for stripping?	Additional materials in folder	Notes
11/7/2018	10:20 AM		NS, NT	1040	18	C	7741	1948	1	5	2	1	2	8	2.67	Acetate, Print	Print		newspaper clipping	
			NS, NT	1040	18	P	7742	1948	1	5	2	1	2	8	2.67	Acetate, Print	Print		draft press releases	
			NS, NT	1040	18	AED	7743	1948	1	5	3	1	3	9	3.00	Acetate, Print	Print		draft press releases	
			NS, NT	1040	18	SA	7744	1948	1	5	1	1	1	7	2.33	Acetate, Print	Print		draft press releases	
			NS, NT	1040	18	C	7745	1948	1	4	2	1	2	7	2.33	Acetate, Print (2); 1 Print	Print		draft press releases	
			NS, NT	1040	18	C	7746	1948	1	4	2	1	2	7	2.33	Acetate, Print	Print		draft press releases	
			NS, NT	1040	18	P	7747	1948	1	5	1	1	1	7	2.33	Acetate, Print (2)	Print		draft press releases	
			NS, NT	1040	18	P	7748	1948	5	5	1	1	1	11	3.67	Acetate	Acetate negative		draft press releases	Eugene Kellersberger in photo
			NS, NT	1040	18	P	7749	1948	1	4	1	1	1	6	2.00	Acetate, Print	Print		draft press releases	
			NS, NT	1040	18	DC	7750	1948	1	4	1	1	1	6	2.00	Acetate, Print	Print		draft press releases	
			NS, NT	1040	18	C	7751	1948	5	5	3	1	3	13	4.33	Acetate, Print	Acetate negative		draft press releases	no print
			NS, NT	1040	18	C	7752	1948	1	5	3	1	3	9	3.00	Acetate, Print	Print		newspaper clipping	
			NS, NT	1040	18	C	7753	1948	1	4	1	1	1	6	2.00	Acetate, Print	Print		draft press releases	
			NS, NT	1040	18		7754	1948	1	3	2	1	2	6	2.00	Print	Print			
			NS, NT	1040	18		7755	1948	5	2	4	2	8	15	5.00	Acetate	Acetate negative			no print
			NS, NT	1040	18		7756	1948	5	2	4	2	8	15	5.00	Acetate	Acetate negative			Syngman Rhee; no print
			NS, NT	1040	18		7757	1948	5	2	4	2	8	15	5.00	Acetate	Acetate negative			no print
			NS, NT	1040	18	C	7758	1948	5	5	3	1	3	13	4.33	Acetate, Print	Acetate negative		newspaper clipping	
			NS, NT	1040	18	PI	7759	1948	1	2	1	1	1	4	1.33	Acetate, 2 Prints	Print			
11/7/2018		11:38 AM	NS, NT	1040	18	PI	7760	1948	1	2	1	1	1	4	1.33	Acetate, 3 Prints	Print			
11/9/2018		9:30 AM	NS	1040	18	PI	7761	1948	4	2	1	1	1	7	2.33	Acetate, Print	Acetate negative		2 acetate negs: 2x2 and 8x10	
			NS	1040	18	PI	7762	1948	1	2	2	1	2	5	1.67	Acetate, Print	Print			

Appendix F: Revised Priority Table Physical Condition

Revised Priority Table, Physical Condition Rating

Priority	Primary format			Type and Condition	Treatment	Digitization
	Negative	Print	Copy Negative			
5		Yes				
5			Yes	Cellulose Acetate with slight distortion or no distortion (stage 2 or 3)		
5	Yes			Cellulose Acetate with slight distortion or no distortion (stage 2 or 3)	---	Flatbed
4			Yes	Cellulose Acetate with no distortion (stage 1)	---	Flatbed
4	Yes			Cellulose Acetate with no distortion (stage 1)	---	Flatbed
3			Yes	Cellulose acetate distorted (stage 4 or higher)	Maybe	Flatbed or by outside contractor
3	Yes			Cellulose acetate distorted (stage 4 or higher)	Maybe	Flatbed or by outside contractor
2		Yes		Unstable	Maybe	Camera (If treated, flatbed scanner could be used)
1	Yes			Polyester	---	Flatbed
1	Yes			Cellulose Nitrate	---	Flatbed (in-house or by outside contractor)



Presbyterian Historical Society
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Organized in 1852, the Presbyterian Historical Society is the oldest denominational archives in the United States and serves as the national archives for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessor denominations. PHS exists to collect, preserve, and share the story of the American Presbyterian and Reformed experience with Presbyterians, the scholarly community, and the general public.