

How Do Expert Users Judge Archival Qualities in Digitized Photographs?

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Abstract: This poster outlines the methodology utilized to identify, interview, and evaluate the transcripts of seven visually expert users who have utilized the Library of Congress's extensive collections of digitized photographs to produce distinctive visually-based products. The case studies represent the spectrum of factors motivating the sophisticated, project-based use of digitized photographs, ranging from scholars to serious avocational users to people whose livelihood depends on finding and using high quality representations of historical photographs. The poster includes information on the characteristics of expertise and on the specific projects undertaken by the expert users. Discussion of the poster contents will highlight a form of qualitative research that uses "grounded theory" to extract meaning from extensive interview transcripts. The research is supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation.

About the author:

Paul Conway is associate professor in the School of Information. His research interests include the challenges of representing and interpreting visual and textual resources in digital form and modeling the use of archives in interdisciplinary scholarship in the humanities. Conway has extensive teaching and administrative experience in the archives and preservation professions. Before joining the Michigan faculty in 2006, he held administrative positions at Duke University, Yale University, the National Archives and Records Administration, and the Society of American Archivists. Conway has made major contributions over the past 30 years to the literature on archival users and use, preservation management, and digital imaging technologies. In 2005, he received the American Library Association's Paul Banks and Carolyn Harris Preservation Award for his contributions to the preservation field. He currently serves on the Editorial Board of *American Archivist* and is a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists.