New Tools for the Preservation of Modern Digitally Printed Materials

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Abstract: In a 2009 survey of archives, libraries, and museums, the Image Permanence Institute (IPI) discovered that most cultural heritage institutions currently have digitally printed documents, graphic objects, and/or photographs within their collections, expect that these portions of their collections will accelerate in growth, and that some of the items in their care have already begun to decay. Through funding by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Institute for Museum and Library Services, IPI has created a new website devoted to providing the information and tools needed to care for digitally printed materials. During the past three years IPI has performed new research to understand how these materials will respond to the common forces of decay – heat, extremes of humidity, light, atmospheric pollutants, handling, and disasters such as flood. The results have led to new recommendations on how to properly care for these objects in institutional collections. These recommendations along with many additional resources, such as descriptions of the technologies, a glossary of digital printing terms, and additional suggested reading are now available on the DP3 Project website. In addition, there is a simple to use interactive tool to aid archivists in developing the skills they need to confidently identify the most common types of digital prints. These new resources provide a solid foundation for archivists to ensure continued access to these materials well into the future.

About the author:

Daniel M. Burge is a Senior Research Scientist at the Image Permanence Institute (IPI) of the Rochester Institute of Technology. He has been a full-time member of the IPI staff for the last 19 years. He received his B.S. degree in Imaging and Photographic Technology from the Rochester Institute of Technology in 1991. He managed IPI's enclosure testing services from 1991 to 2004. In 2004, he took over responsibility for all of IPI's corporate-sponsored research projects. Currently he is investigating digital image stability and storage issues.