Combining Forces: Using multiple out of the box programs when programmers are out of the question!

Abstract

We will outline the interaction between two third-party software applications for streamlined collection management and user access to Special Collections materials. Combining the accession, donor and patron management, description, and online user interface capabilities of PastPerfect with the more sophisticated digital asset management system of CONTENTdm, we have centralized access to our diverse collections. Special Collections, Reference, Collection Management, and Administration Departments have collaborated to make PastPerfect our single access point for over twenty separately maintained Library created databases that are not included in the University System consortium's catalog. Standardized metadata creation for accession and descriptive records in both PastPerfect and CONTENTdm facilitates interoperability between the two systems. If digital objects are available, we can extract the metadata from PastPerfect using a Dublin Core crosswalk; conversely, our digitization workflow allows for item level metadata from CONTENTdm to be imported into PastPerfect. This ensures that PastPerfect is a one-stop shop for discovery of Special Collections' analog and digital materials. Researchers now search one interface and retrieve results from our varied collections – including finding aids, photographs, fanzines, and university publications - with a link to the digital object in CONTENTdm if one exists. Due to our lack of programming staff it was essential to select out of the box software that offered customization and a high level of support, as opposed to building a program in-house or utilizing open source software. We feel that this is a unique and valuable workflow that has not been implemented by other institutions in similar circumstances.

Contextualization of our prior situation

Conversion to PastPerfect and CONTENTdm began in 2007. The Albin O. Kuhn Library had previously purchased CONTENTdm to manage digital assets. PastPerfect was selected by the Special Collections department to consolidate and streamline donor, accessioning, and description documentation and workflows. At present, four Library departments regularly use PastPerfect. Over 20 databases were previously in use; externally, Special Collections photographs, comics, fanzines, radical literature, literary manuscripts, and theses and dissertations each had their own separate search on the public website. The databases were configured using mySQL with a scripted PHP front end—while this is a simple arrangement, the technical knowledge to manipulate the arrangement was held by only one person on staff who had many other duties (and he has since left the Library) and was not supported by the campus IT department. *This is not sustainable.*

A benefit of the previous web search was that it allowed searching of the full photography collection, including non-digitized and digitized. We didn't want to lose this feature and create yet another silo search after investing time to reduce the number of search points. Using PastPerfect as our collective search provides results for all items in one location. A feature that we did want to change was the display of the digital images; the descriptive metadata was displayed on a page separate from the image itself, requiring users to page back and forth in order to view both. This is not the case in CONTENTdm.

Inquiries made to CONTENTdm, PastPerfect, Archives & Archivists list, and the CONTENTdm list in January and March of 2010 revealed that only two other known institutions use both PastPerfect and CONTENTdm: Kentucky Historical Society and the University of Iowa. It is not clear if these programs are linked internally, though they are not connected on their websites. Neither program is required to make this workflow successful and we do not endorse either above other options.
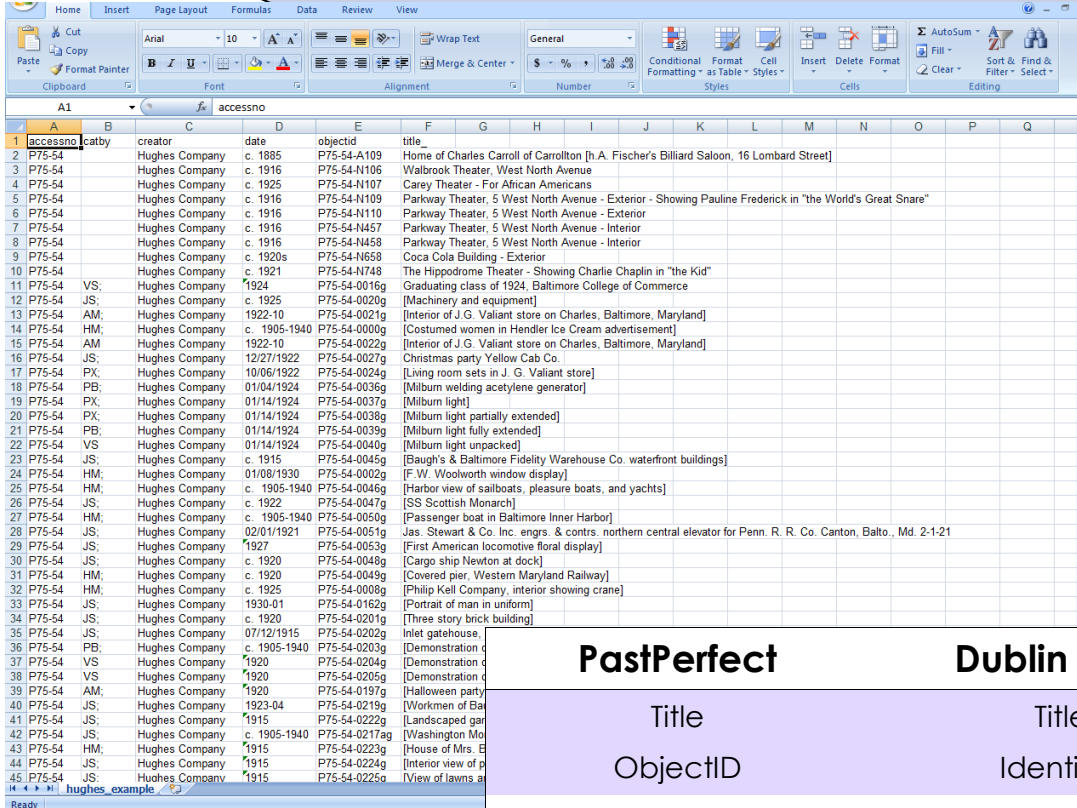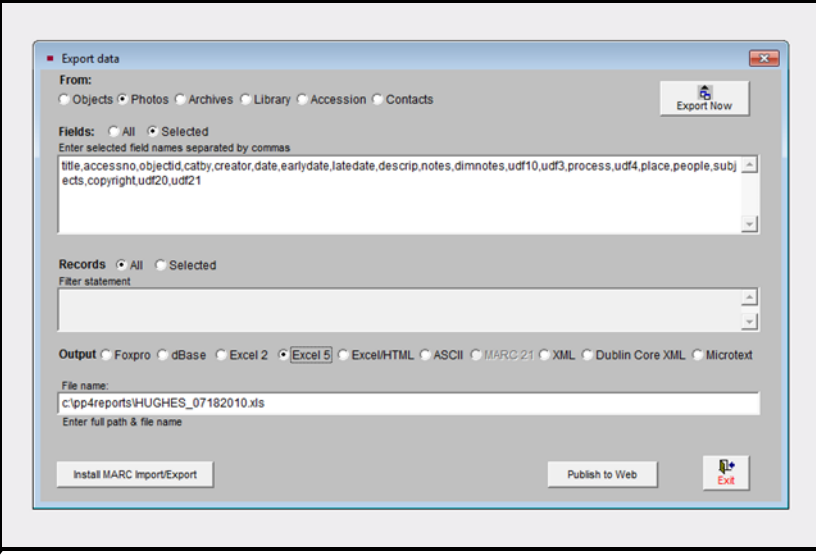
About the Hughes Company Glass Negatives Collection

The Hughes Company was a commercial photography studio in Baltimore, MD founded by James F. Hughes. The bulk of the images depict Baltimore and environs, street scenes, promotional and advertising photographs, businesses, churches, schools, monuments, factories, portraits and signs. The photographs were created c.1905-1940. Nearly 3,000 images have been scanned and we are in the process of describing them so that they can be accessed online.

PastPerfect main screen

All non-digital item and collection level records are created in PastPerfect. If an item is digitized and item level description already exists, this metadata can be exported and repurposed for CONTENTdm. Using PastPerfect's export feature, Library staff extracts the required metadata into an Excel spread-
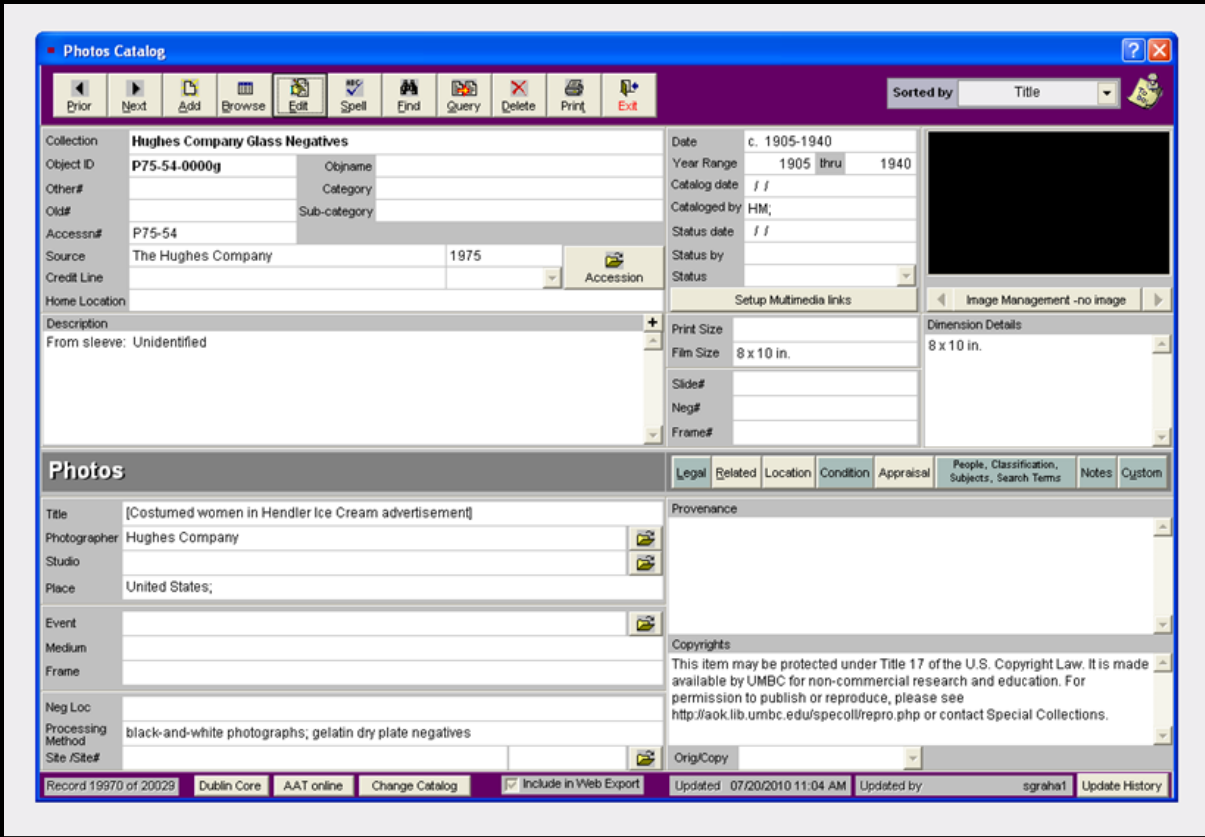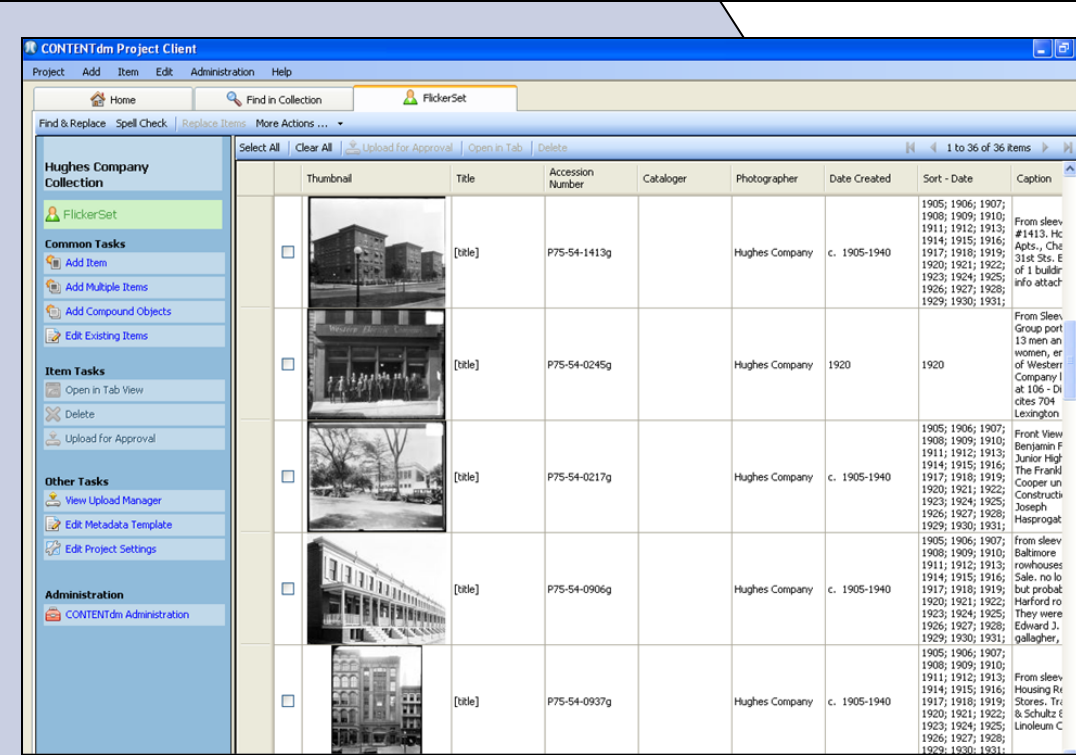
L-R: PastPerfect Photos catalog screen; PastPerfect export screen; example of exported metadata in Excel; data map of field titles; CONTENTdm Project Client edit screen.

Since both programs use Excel as an import/export platform, it is technically simple for people of various skill levels to perform this task and does not require a customized program or assistance from the IT department.

With the technical aspects no longer a barrier, we have been able to spend more time implementing standards of description through the use of Dublin Core and controlled vocabularies, including LCSH, TGM, and AAT. Although the majority of field names in PastPerfect are fixed, we have complete control over the field titles and attributes in CONTENTdm. All CONTENTdm field titles and structures follow professional standards and are mapped to Qualified Dublin Core. PastPerfect fields also map to Dublin Core and we have made use of customizable fields within PastPerfect when necessary. Greater control over the digital item metadata ensures that the content is flexible and may be repurposed through other projects in the future.
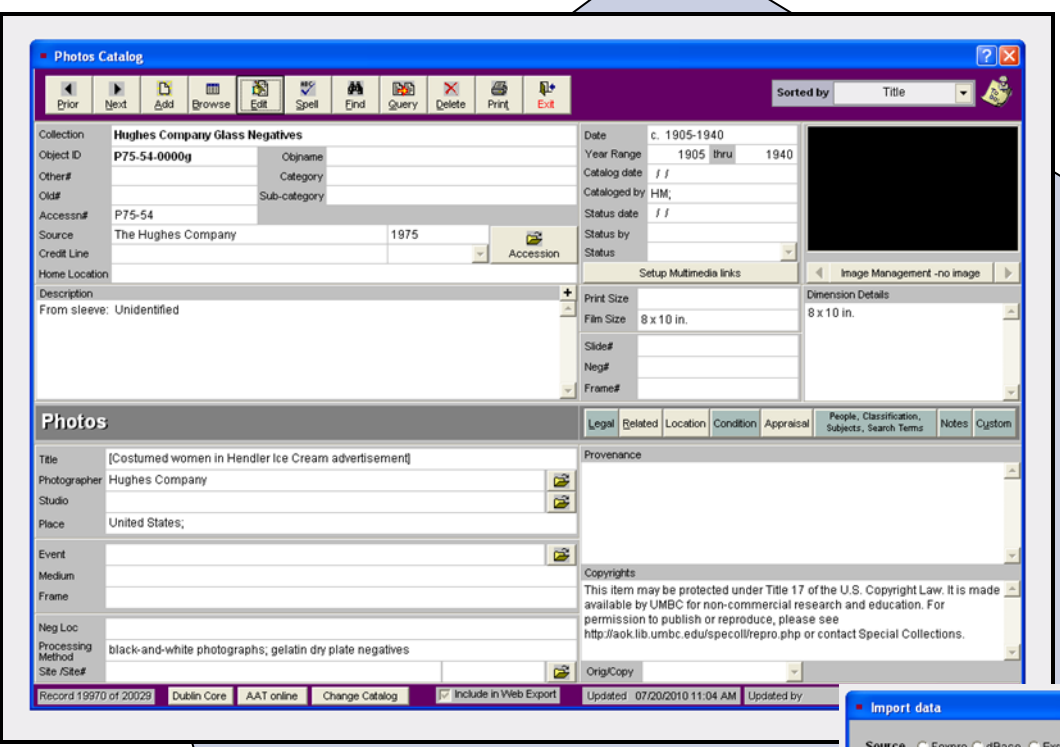
PastPerfect	Dublin Core	CONTENTdm
Title	Title	Title
ObjectID	Identifier	Accession Number
Photographer	Creator	Photographer
Date	Date-Created	Date Created
Film Size	Format-Extent	Measurements
Processing Method	Type	Process
Place	Coverage	Location
Collection	Relation-Is Part Of	Collection
Legal	Rights	Credit Line

Special Collections staff can review, add, and finalize the item level metadata within CONTENTdm's Project Client before uploading the item for public display.

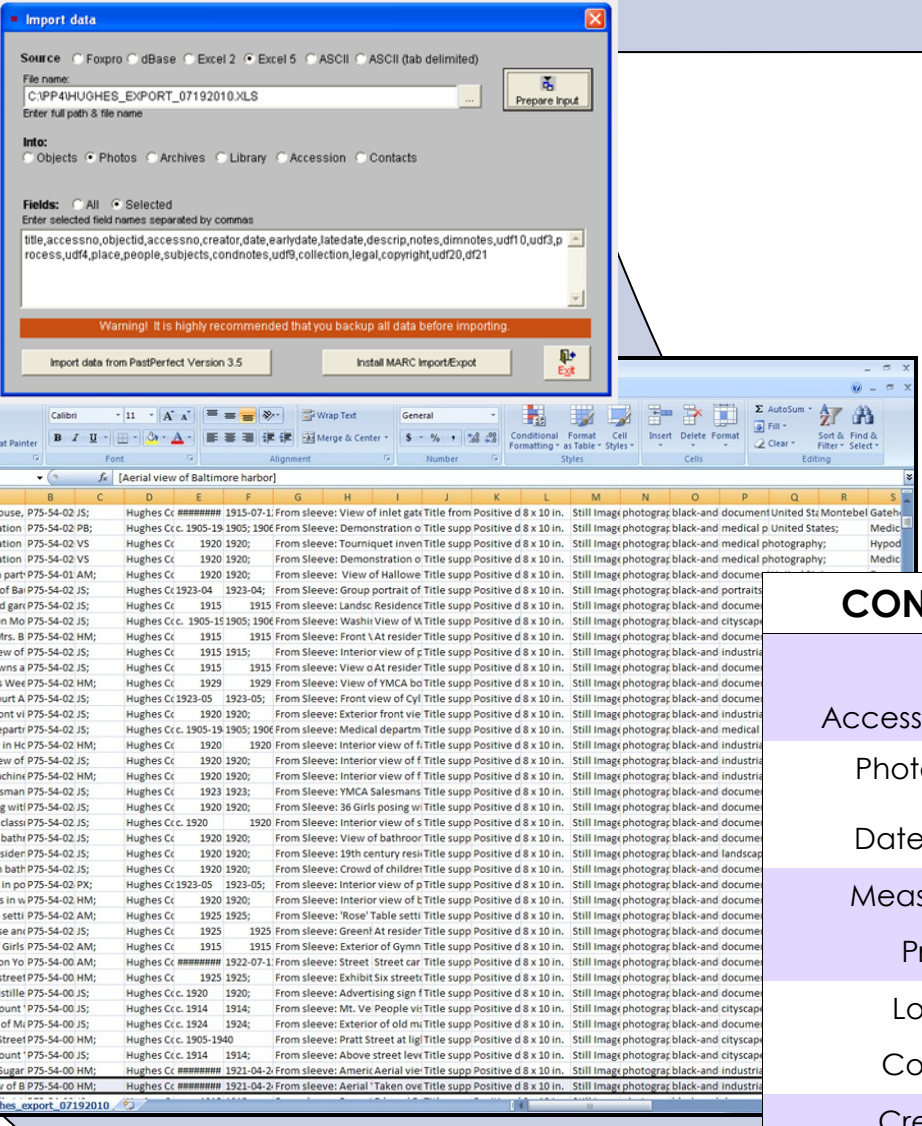## PastPerfect
http://umbc.pastperfect-online.com

UMBC's Digital Collections homepage

PastPerfect records for items with digital versions have a link to the digital file, which takes researchers to the image in CONTENTdm.

CONTENTdm
http://contentdm.ad.umbc.edu

Object description can begin in CONTENTdm as well. All items are then imported into PastPerfect so that PastPerfect remains the one-stop search for all materials.

First, a collection is created and metadata fields are assigned and mapped to Qualified Dublin Core elements.

The item level descriptions from CONTENTdm are then imported into PastPerfect, ensuring that all materials, whether there are digital versions or not, are searchable in one location.
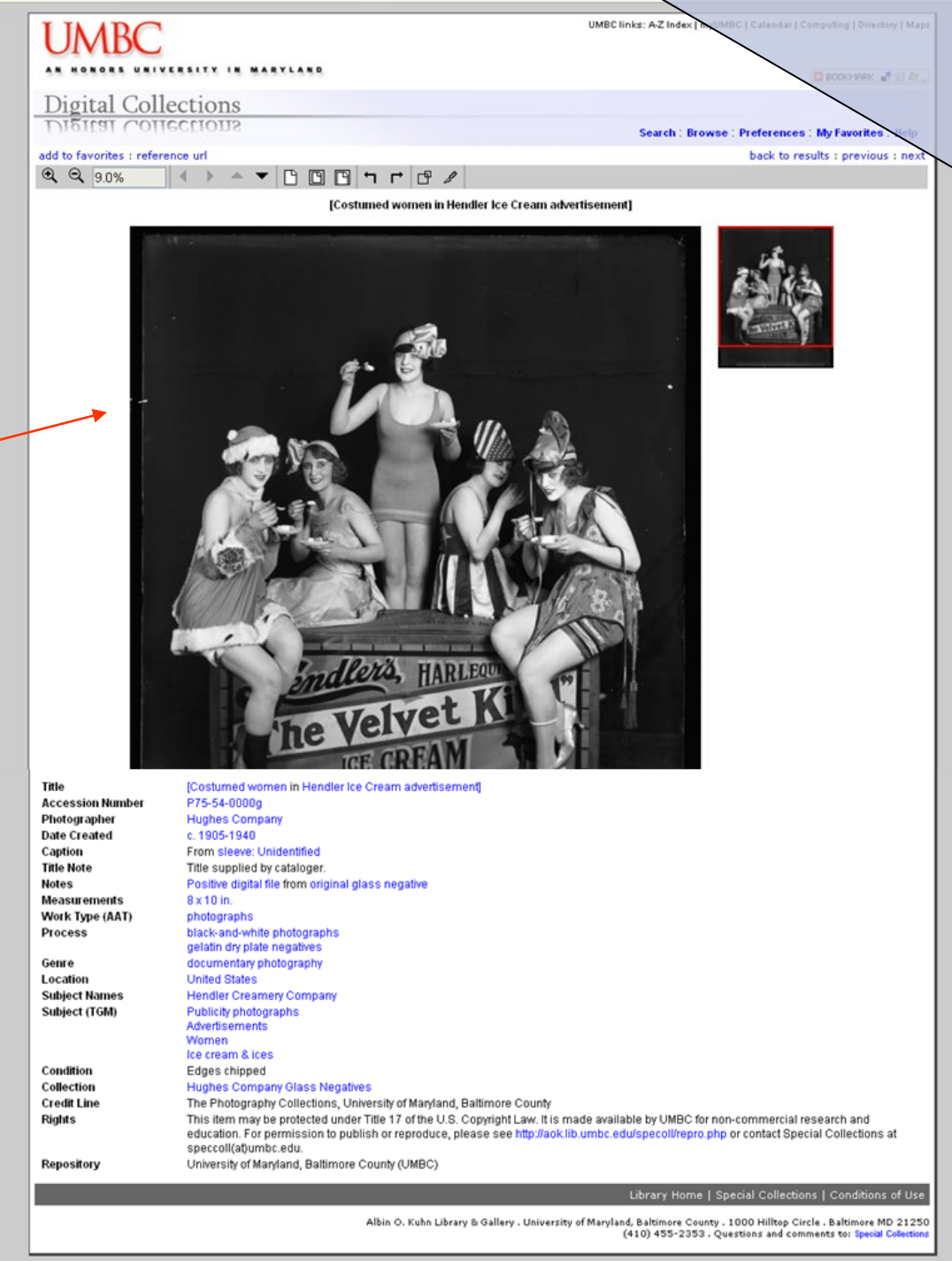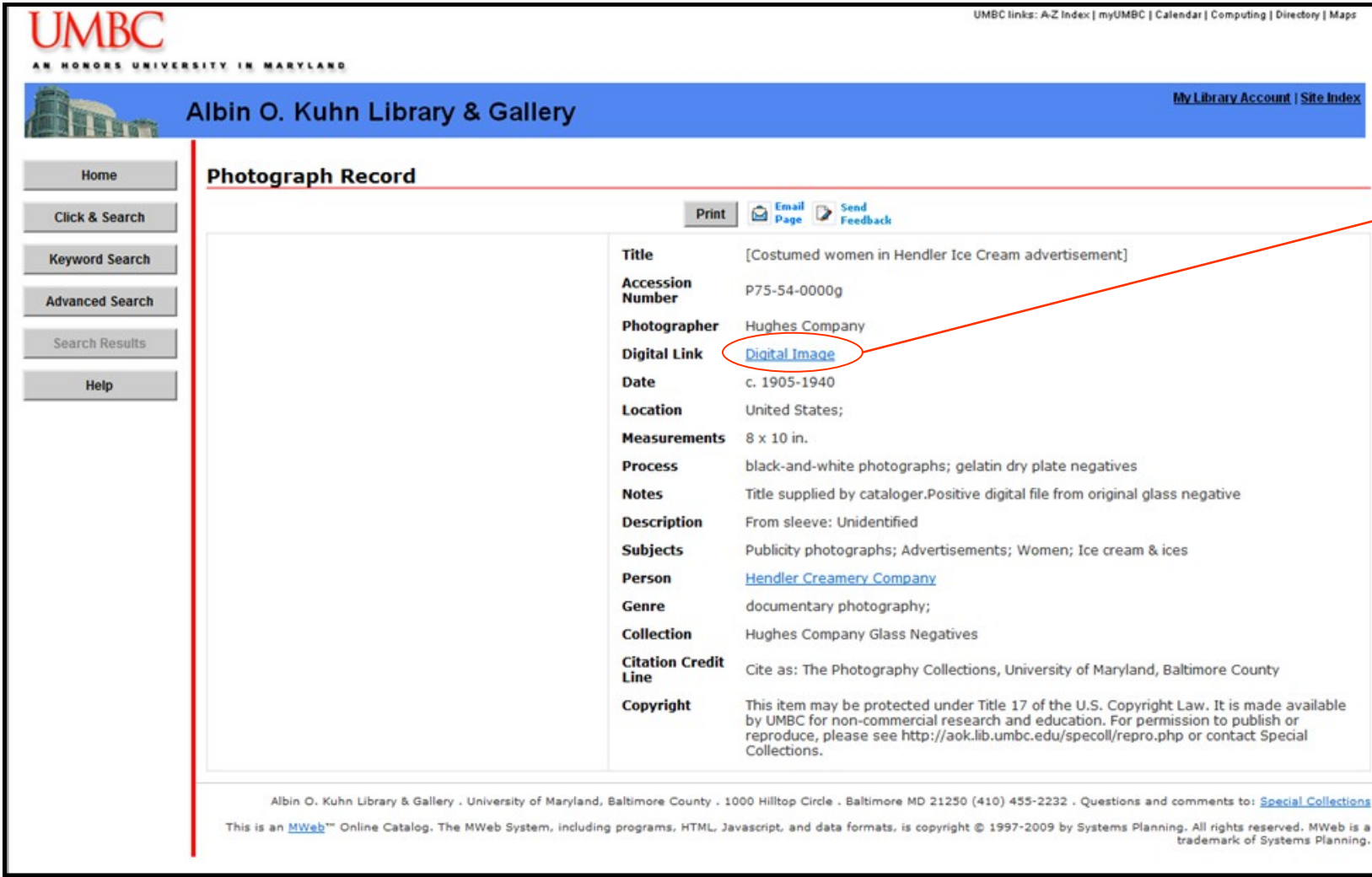
We took this opportunity to put into place standard scanning practices. Items are scanned according to the standards and are then uploaded to CONTENTdm. In CONTENTdm's Project Client, each item is described using either natural language, a controlled vocabulary or thesaurus assigned to metadata field. It is then approved and indexed and becomes part of the online collection

CONTENTdm	Dublin Core	PastPerfect
Title	Title	Title
Accession Number	Identifier	ObjectID
Photographer	Creator	Photographer
Date Created	Date-Created	Date
Measurements	Format-Extent	Film Size
Process	Type	Processing Method
Location	Coverage	Place
Collection	Relation-Is Part Of	Collection
Credit Line	Rights	Legal

The Excel file needs minimal manipulation before importing into PastPerfect. Field names must be changed and technical metadata is excluded.
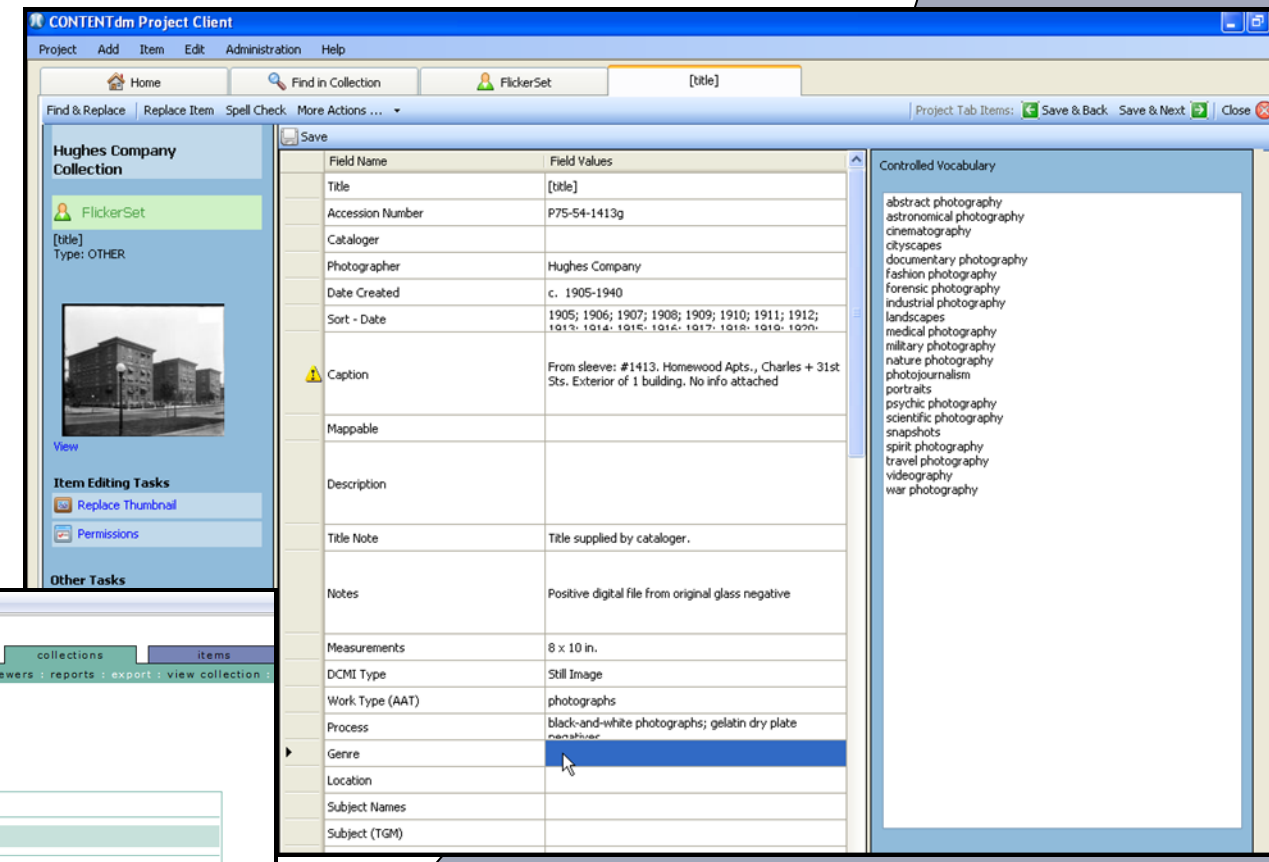
Items are then exported to MS Excel so that they can be imported into PastPerfect and become discoverable through the PastPerfect Online search interface.

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