

Visual Materials from the Margaret Sanger Papers: An Exercise in Planning for Processing

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Normally, the first step in preparing a collection for use by researchers is to write a processing plan. For this example, we'll gather information about the visual materials from the Margaret Sanger Papers at the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs (P&P) Division. Not every collection needs a hand-tailored plan. The Sanger plan can serve as a model for processing many collections that fit a similar profile: small groups of pictures, primarily black-and-white photos that need little conservation treatment.

Documentation

Does P&P have enough documentation to determine:

- Where did the material come from?
The Transfer Memorandum states that the material came to P&P from the Manuscript Division.
- Are there any restrictions on the visual materials?
The Instrument of Gift states that the Manuscript Division got the photographs from Margaret Sanger, and there are no longer any access restrictions. (During her life time we needed her permission to use the materials, but she died in 1966.) The lifting of the access restriction does NOT free the material from copyright restrictions.
- What are the papers about?
"Margaret Sanger: A Register of Her Papers at the Library of Congress" gives us an overview of who Sanger was and what her papers include. The finding aid is available online for ready consultation: [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?faid/faid:@field\(DOCID+ms998010\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?faid/faid:@field(DOCID+ms998010))

Research Value

- How is the collection going to be used? What is important about the collection?

As with most visual materials associated with personal papers or corporate records, provenance is the major factor. The primary importance of the collection is that it tells us something about who put it together--in this case, Margaret Sanger. Secondly, the content of the pictures is important. In this case, the photographs document the activities of various birth control advocacy organizations, including the National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control. The less predictable materials such as postcards of H.G. Wells residence and photos of Hiroshima should be mentioned in the catalog record.

The Photographs

After reviewing the documentation, look over the collection to determine:

- What type of material is included?
The documentation tells us that there should be 72 photographs and 1 glass negative.

- Based on the documentation, is all the material on hand?
We have 68 photographs, 3 half-tone postcards, and 1 glass negative. Eight of the photographs are duplicates. We also have 3 copy negatives made by P&P and 1 poor quality copy negative that came with the papers.
- Does any of the material require special attention?
One picture is in the “pictorialist” style and may be of interest to the Library’s specialist in photography. We can consult with her to determine if the photograph merits special attention. (The specialist examined the photograph and decided that it did not require any special attention.)
- What is the condition of the material? Does any of it need conservation treatment?
The glass negative is broken. We decide to print the negative to include its image in the material served to researchers and then retire the negative.
- How is the material currently organized?
The Visual Materials from the Margaret Sanger Papers arrived in P&P in four folders. The first has photos of Sanger; the second has photos of other people; the third has photos of Sanger’s activities; and the fourth has miscellaneous photos. The photos in the “Sanger activities” folder seem to be somewhat chronological, and the photos in the “other people” folder seem to be in alphabetical order by name. Materials usually don’t come to us this well organized.

Proposed Arrangement

Determine how to arrange the material.

- Should the material be kept in its original order?
Yes; original order is preferred when it exists. But the Visual Materials from the Margaret Sanger Papers are typical of pictures in family papers and are probably not in original order. Based on the handwriting on the folders, a staff member grouped the images by topic to help people who consulted the collection pre-processing.
- Should the material be in one series, or more than one series?
Because the group is small, we can keep it in one series.
- Should it be organized within the series?
To help minimize the handling, we decide to divide the series into four file units and house each file unit in a separate folder, identified by the letters A through D. We won’t try to sequence the photographs within each folder, because a strict order at the item-level is hard to maintain and not necessary to decipher or track this small amount of material.
- Should there be a finding aid?
No finding aid is needed in this case. We can easily convey all information about the material in a catalog record, because there is relatively little material and the subject matter is cohesive.
- What do we do with the duplicate prints?
The duplicate prints can be marked with the call number and stored with other duplicates held for exchange. (The deed of gift allows the Library to dispose of duplicates as appropriate.)
- Do we need to process or keep all the material?

“Marginal” material such as the poor quality copy negative and multiple half-tone reproductions of the photos can be weeded or placed in a supplementary reference file or in the collections file. In this case, the copy negative can be discarded but the half-tone reproductions are retained to show how the photographs were reproduced.

Marking and Housing the Prints

Identify and house the photographs following division standards outlined in the processing manual.

Write a call number on the back of each item. Also stamp each item with an LC ownership stamp.
Example: LOT 13246-A (*a photo in the first subdivision category*)

Put each print in an appropriately sized plastic sleeve.

Place all the photos from one subdivision in one labeled folder, and all four folders can fit in an upright, flip-top document box. The last step of processing is labeling the box with its call number and custodial division name.

Cataloging

A cataloger can create a series-level catalog record in the Library’s central catalog. For the images with copy negatives, the cataloger can create an item-level brief access record.

LC Control Number: 97519829

Type of Material: Photograph, Print, Drawing (Part of Collection)

Main Title: Visual materials from the Margaret Sanger Papers [graphic].

Published/Created: ca. 1900-1965.

Description: 61 photographic prints : gelatin silver, b&w ; 8 x 10 in. or smaller.
3 photomechanical prints.

Organized/Arranged: Organized into four categories: Portraits of Sanger; Portraits of family and associates; Groups; Miscellaneous.

Use/Repro. Advisory: Publication of some images may be restricted. For information see LC P&P Restrictions Notebook.

Summary: Images include formal and informal portraits of Sanger, her family, and associates; activities of various birth control advocacy organizations, including the National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control; and postcards of H.G. Wells' home and photographic views of Hiroshima after the atomic bomb explosion.

Notes: Includes some preservation photocopies of brittle caption and textual materials found with the images.

LOT title devised.

Various photographers are represented in the LOT.

Forms part of: Margaret Sanger Papers (Library of Congress).

Source of Acquisition: Transfer, Manuscript Division (Margaret Sanger Papers), 1982, (DLC/PP-1982:014).

Collection: Sanger, Margaret, 1879-1966. Papers (DLC) mm7638919

Subjects: Sanger, Margaret, 1879-1966.

National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control--1920-1940.

Birth control--1920-1970.

Organizations--Women--1920-1970.

Genre/Form: Portrait photographs--1900-1970.

Gelatin silver prints--1900-1970.

Photomechanical prints--1900-1970.

Call Number: LOT 13246

Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.
20540 USA dcu



LC Control Number: 2002722517

Type of Material: Photograph, Print, Drawing

Creator: Underwood & Underwood, photographer.

Main Title: [Margaret **Sanger**, full-length portrait, standing by fence, facing front] [graphic] /
Underwood & Underwood.

Published/Created: [between 1930 and 1940]

Description: 1 photographic print.

Use/Repro. Advisory: Rights status not evaluated. For general information see "Copyright and Other Restrictions..." (http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/print/195_copr.html)

Notes: Title devised by library staff.

Forms part of: Margaret Sanger Papers (Library of Congress).

Collection: Sanger, Margaret, 1879-1966. Papers (DLC) mm7638919

Subjects: Sanger, Margaret, 1879-1966.

Genre/Form: Portrait photographs--1900-1970.
Photographic prints--1900-1970.

Call Number: LOT 13246-A [item]

Repro./Stock Number: LC-USZ62-132322 (b&w film copy neg.)

Electronic File Info.: b&w film copy neg. cph 3c32322

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c32322>

Repository: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.
20540 USA dcu