

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
COURTAULD INSTITUTE OF ART

Slide Collection

The slide library at present consists of about 100,000 slides (none coloured) on all aspects of art history.

It is divided into sections on architecture, painting, sculpture, manuscripts and applied arts. These divisions are clearly indicated by the use of coloured labels and index cards; pink labels and cards for painting, blue for sculpture, white for architecture, etc. The labels on the front of the slide boxes follow this same scheme, so that the position in the library of the different subjects can be seen at a glance.

The slides are arranged in open boxes on open shelves. The use of open shelves and separate wooden boxes was adopted after very careful consideration following the inspection by the Head Librarian of methods in use in Germany and elsewhere. The boxes used, which are in fact not boxes in the normal sense, but similar to small drawers with a raised front (such as drawer of a card index cabinet) are 10 inches long by 4 inches wide (inside measurements) and hold about 50 slides and cards with plenty of play for easy access. To prevent slides from slipping down, two cross partitions of very thin wood divide the boxes. On the front is a small metal frame for a label. The shelves on which the boxes are stored are 6 inches apart and a rack of five shelves is a convenient height. A roll-up front, similar to a roll-top desk, is the ideal way of closing the shelves; failing this, doors fitting into sockets at the bottom and with ball snaps at the top are quite convenient, since they can be lifted off. Normal cupboard doors are not satisfactory, as they block movement from one section to the next.

The great advantage of this system is that single boxes can be taken out and put on the top of the rack, where the slides can easily be seen. Fixed shelves in a filing cabinet have the advantage of being more dust-proof, but this, in our opinion, was completely outweighed by the much greater ease and comfort of handling. Moreover, the insertion of additional slides in the middle of a section is much less laborious if a

new box can be added and the others pushed forward, than if slides have to be moved from drawer to drawer.

The Courtauld Institute boxing system may appear at first sight less professional than some others, but in the opinion of those who have used it most, it has amply repaid its adoption. In the boxes each slide is placed in front of its index card and, on the label of slide and card are details of artist, painting, collection, or, for architecture, country, period, place, and on the right hand corner of the card and on the back of the slide is the accession number (see below). The cards are 4" square, so that they project above the slide, the information thereby relating to the slide being easily readable without removal of slide.

The arrangement into subject is not always straightforward: for example, engravings are labelled and carded green and drawings orange, but included with paintings. In such cases these are placed behind the paintings of each artist. Again there is a certain overlap between sculpture and architecture. Sculpture is a separate section on its own, but where it may be regarded as 'architectural', that is, as part of the building internally (i.e. stone choir screens) and externally as at Chartres, it is filed with architecture while retaining the blue labels and cards of sculpture proper. It should, by this means, be a simple matter to select the sculpture slides of any particular building.

The first division of slides within all sections is into countries, taken in alphabetical order. The further sub-division varies according to the section, since it was found, after experience, that a uniform arrangement was impossible to work.

1. Painting

In each country the slides are arranged in the alphabetical order of artists, the boxes running consecutively according to convenience, i.e. A-CA, CE-D. Where, however, a large number of slides is given to one artist, these are in separate boxes labelled with his name and following the box containing his initial letter, e.g. 'Hogarth' follows box 'F-H'. Such a number of slides under one artist requires further division into

subject, i.e. religious, history, mythology, allegory, genre, landscape, still-life, portraits. Where subjects are Biblical, the arrangement is not alphabetical but according to the narrative; Old Testament, New Testament, Life of Virgin, and Lives of Saints being distinct divisions.

Further sub-division, as a collection grows, is constantly required, and experience has shown that it is well to approach this in a flexible way. For instance, in some cases it is more convenient to separate the boxes according to the grouping of the originals, even if this means ignoring a strict religious sequence - i.e. Mantegna: Eremitani Chapel has its own box, labelled accordingly, and a cross-reference card to it should appear in the religious box under S. James. In the case of Raphael, for instance, it is more convenient to keep each of the Stanze together than to split them in their proper subjects.

Broadly speaking, each case is treated on its merits, boxes being added where they are needed. Portraits are generally separated into male, female, children and groups and filed in these sections alphabetically under sitter. The further division into full-length, half-length, etc. has not so far been found necessary, and on the whole it has seemed better to avoid too many small categories. Identified landscapes are filed in their appropriate boxes alphabetically under place, with unidentified landscapes at the end.

If the collection will always be supervised by trained assistants, there is much to be said for adopting a rough chronological classification in e.g. Madonnas by Raphael or Giovanni Bellini, or still-life paintings by Cezanne, as this naturally makes the choice of slides by lecturers easier and quicker, but it is better not to begin such a system unless it can be kept up.

2. Architecture

The slides are, in addition to being divided according to country, also divided into periods:-

- 1) British Isles: Saxon, Norman, Gothic, Mediaeval Domestic, Mediaeval Military, Tudor and Jacobean (Domestic and Ecclesiastical) Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries (Domestic and Ecclesiastical), Nineteenth century (Domestic and Ecclesiastical), Twentieth century (Domestic and Ecclesiastical).
- 2) France, Italy (and European countries where there are sufficient slides to require this arrangement): Romanesque, Gothic, Mediaeval Domestic, Mediaeval Military, Renaissance (Domestic and Ecclesiastical), Twentieth Century (Domestic and Ecclesiastical).
- 3) Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Middle Eastern examples according to place names alphabetically only.

(The term 'Renaissance' is held to cover Renaissance proper, Baroque and 18th century. It is unsatisfactory, but has been adopted as a compromise to avoid the constant argument likely to arise out of a more precise stylistic classification.)

Where the number of slides require it, one or more boxes are given to a particular building, and these fit in with the general alphabetical arrangement which, in architecture, is according to place names. For each building the slides are separated into plans, exterior, interior, and details. At the beginning of the whole architectural section there are boxes specially for a) Maps, b) Diagrams and architectural drawings of buildings not executed to distinguish from those in the main section, and c) Comparative Diagrams, i.e. where there are plans and sections of more than one building on a single slide. In such cases cross-reference cards for the respective buildings are put in the main section. (The cross-referencing is always decided on use, i.e. the Pugin drawing of the interior of St. Paul's is classified under architecture, but cross-referenced 'Pugin' under painting.) At the end of the architectural section is a card index of architects to show the range of slides of any particular architect's work.

3. Sculpture

This is also divided according to country and then, as in painting, to sculptors in alphabetical order. This is a general division. There

are obviously certain groups that cannot be included in this scheme. For instance, in England, tomb sculpture and fonts are treated separately and alabasters are further separated. In these cases the slides are grouped according to place names (as in architecture), which is the plan for all anonymous church sculpture which is not part of the building. Classical sculpture again has its special division into periods and then type of subject; single figures, groups, named sculptors, etc.

4. Manuscripts are divided according to country, then chronologically in centuries and alphabetically within the centuries. If sections are large enough, there is further division into type of subject, e.g. Gospels, Bibles, Psalters, Books of Hours, Secular Manuscripts, Known Illuminators. Occasionally a whole box is given to one manuscript.

5. Other Sections

Furniture, armour, costume, ceramics, ivories, metalwork, mosaics, and textiles are all divided according to country and period, and then sub-divided into Ecclesiastical and Secular, or according to the type of object.

6. Further Section, which falls into none of the above classifications.

This contains slides on mainly contemporary work other than painting, including such subjects as interior decoration, town planning and poster designing, and also a little on pre-classical work (at which stage the collection as a whole begins) and negro art.

Apart from the general lay-out other main considerations in the slide collection are the recording of slides as added to the library and the storage of negatives.

Each new slide made from photograph, book, print, etc., has a corresponding negative. Slide, index card and negative are given a number which is entered in the accession book, each entry made in numerical order. Accession books are of the loose-leaved type, so that additions

can be made easily as the collection grows. This numbering also means a quick system of entry of borrowed slides. Numbers alone need be noted, as each slide can be identified in the accession book by its number.

The contact-plate type of negatives are filed in envelopes (coloured according to subject to match slide labels and index cards) in numerical order in boxes in a separate section of the library. Leica negatives are stored in special Leica cases. If slides with no corresponding negative are given to the collection, the slide is accessioned and carded in the ordinary way, but 'No Negative' is stamped on card and slide. In certain cases where negatives alone, possibly of rather obscure subjects, have been presented, these are accessioned, and filed in the negative boxes, and a card is filed in the correct slide box, according to the subject of the negative, so that a lecturer can see that the negative exists, and if a slide is needed it can quickly be made.

This system of entry means that the collection is capable of expansion, an essential where lecturers are using new material each session.

Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

Arşiv ve Dokümantasyon Merkezi

Jale İnan Arşivi



JALARC0800107