

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
September 13, 2022

Columbia University Libraries
Rare Book & Manuscript Library

The Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Columbia University invites proposals for professional services to perform conservation treatment and archival processing of the Jack and Irene Delano papers, a 300+-box collection documenting mid-century Puerto Rican life in documentary, photographic, and art forms.

SPECIFICATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

1. Collection description

- Jack Delano is one of the most important 20th-century photographers to emerge from the Farm Security Administration, amassing a significant body of work about the living conditions of working and minoritized Americans. Furthermore, as artists and arts administrators, both Jack and Irene Delano had a transformative impact on mid-20th-century Puerto Rican culture on the island and in New York City in the areas of photography, filmmaking, graphic arts, music, and public education.
- The Jack and Irene Delano papers consist of 222 manuscript boxes; 32 record storage cartons; and 65 other containers (flat boxes, oversize containers, binders, small and large custom boxes) of paper, art, and photographs.
- All materials were stored in a tropical environment, and must be assumed to have mold, which we can not assume is all inactive. Some mold is visible, other materials are musty or suspected to have mold. There is evidence of past insect damage, but not current infestation. Many of the photographic materials are curled and stiff, with some warped and channeled.
- A proposed arrangement and conservation recommendations are available. The collection is under basic intellectual control, with varying levels of description available.

2. Specifications

Mold Treatment

- Every item must be carefully inspected for evidence of mold. If any evidence is found, the item must be cleaned according to cultural heritage best practices¹ appropriate for the physical format, typically using a vacuum cleaner fitted with a

¹ Ritzenthaler, Mary Lynn. Preserving archives & manuscripts. (2010) Society of American Archivists.

HEPA filter². Chemical treatments must be avoided; if the need arises during assessment, Columbia staff must be contacted.

- After inspection and treatment, all existing housing must be discarded and replaced (boxes, binders, folders, sleeves, etc.)
- For material that continues to emit an odor after treatment, microchamber paper³ must be placed next to/interleaved in the item, and the item noted on the inventory.

Archival Processing

- Collection to be arranged and described at the folder level in accordance with standards (DACS⁴) and best practices⁵. Spanish-language titles and names must include correct diacritics.
- Reading knowledge of Spanish and familiarity with Puerto Rican history is needed to properly describe the material.
- An overall processing plan shall be developed, in consultation with RBML, and approved before processing begins.
- A detailed processing plan for the photographic material, including consultation with a photograph conservator, shall be developed and approved before processing begins.
- Description to be delivered in a text document (front matter) and an ArchivesSpace-ready Excel spreadsheet⁶ (container list).
- Materials must be physically re-arranged to track intellectual arrangement, unless proper housing requires separate containers. A proposed series outline will be provided.
- All housing materials must be acid-free (boxes and folders) and pass the photographic activity test (PAT) as specified by the International Organization for Standards (ISO), standard 18196
- Regular-sized materials must be housed in manuscript boxes and legal-size folders.
- Oversized materials must be housed in appropriately sized boxes and folders. Very large items (larger than 20"x24") must be housed in folders, and will be housed in map cases when the material returns to RBML.

² Mould Prevention and Collection Recovery: Guidelines for Heritage Collections – Technical Bulletin 26. Canadian Conservation Institute (2020).

<https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/conservation-preservation-publications/technical-bulletins/mould-prevention-collection-recovery.html#a4bb>

³ Hollinger, William K. Jr. Microchamber papers used as a preventive conservation material. Conference Paper. Preventive conservation: practice, theory and research. Preprints of the contributions to the Ottawa Congress, 12-16 September 1994, p.212-216 (1994)

⁴ Describing Archives: A Content Standard

<https://www2.archivists.org/groups/technical-subcommittee-on-describing-archives-a-content-standard-dacs/describing-archives-a-content-standard-dacs-second->

⁵ Meissner, Dennis. Arranging and describing : archives and manuscripts. (2019) Chicago ALA Editions. The RBML processing manual will also be made available.

⁶ Template available: https://github.com/cul/rbml-archivespace/tree/master/aspacer_excel_importer

- When duplicate items are found, the best two copies must be kept in the collection, and the remainder removed and returned.
 - *Photographic material*
 - i. Photographs must be grouped following the existing organizational scheme wherever possible. Description must be intellectually grouped together, e.g. by subject or project.
 - ii. All photographic housing must pass the photographic activity test (PAT) as specified by the International Organization for Standards (ISO).
 - iii. Housing for photographs must be appropriate to the size and format of the photograph.
 - iv. Groups of related photographs may be stored in a single labeled sleeve.
 - v. Fine art photographic prints must be placed in appropriately sized Mylar sleeves and be stored in individual folders.
 - vi. Negatives must be stored in separate boxes.
 - vii. Slides must be housed in sleeves.
 - viii. Curled photographs must be flattened.
 - *Art material*
 - i. All art must be intellectually arranged by project and then by medium.
 - ii. Fragile artwork or any artwork in a friable medium, e.g. charcoal, graphite, chalk, or pastels, must be identified and placed in appropriate housing.
 - iii. Oversize items must be placed in individual oversize folders. No more than 10 oversize items must be stored in one box.
 - iv. Art must be physically stored with other items of roughly the same size. Intellectual arrangement must reflect the project and medium arrangement noted above.
3. Project timeline: FY23 (July 1-June 30) budget of up to \$200,000 with an opportunity to renew in FY 24.