

Arrangement Schemes for Photographs

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This “how to” tip sheet outlines typical categories (also called series) for arranging photographs within collections. A sample container list for a fictional collection illustrates the presentation of the physical arrangement.

Typical series for photographs

Physical format is a frequent primary criterion for establishing photographic series. Original order is often based on format distinctions, because material such as prints and slides have different storage needs and uses even before they reach an archives. The archives might further separate material by format, especially negatives, to ensure preservation of fragile material. When only a few items are in a special format, references to separate storage locations can suffice rather than establishing an entire series.

Photographic series listed in finding aids often appear to be subject based, because topical words begin the series name. The primary criterion for such series, the physical format “prints,” is implicit. Series for other formats such as negatives, albums, or cased photographs tend to have the format term stated explicitly in the series name.

Within each format-based series, the subseries can rely on such “unifying elements” as function or genre, subject, or chronology. Series may also be divided into file units or items based on format such as a single album.

Examples:

Format-based series	Prints Negatives Slides Oversize
Function or Genre series	Advertising photos Book illustrations Campaign photos Exhibit prints Landscapes Portraits Public affairs photos Staff identification photos
Subject-based series	People Culture groups Employee photos Family members Friends and acquaintances Organizations

	Things
	Buildings and structures
	Architect
	Client
	Construction site location
	Type of structure
	Products
	Type or date
	Events
	Anniversaries
	Conferences
	Manufacturing activities
	Parades
	Training programs
	Places
Chronology	Year
Creator-based series	Names of photographers or sponsors of images

Sample Container List (Fictional Collection)

The following container contents list for a finding aid illustrates a typical arrangement scheme using a fictional photograph collection. The broadest categories are based on type of material, such as prints, albums, and negatives. The subcategories rely on genre and subject matter. Most material fits into document boxes, but special storage locations are noted for daguerreotypes, panoramas, and supplement archives.

Milagro Family Photographs, 1855-1981, bulk 1890-1966

Container

Box 1	Portraits
	Family
	Milagro, Concepcion, 1863-1888, n.d.
	Milagro, Hermione, 1887-1972
	Milagro, Marco Polo, 1909-1966
	Milagro, Maria Guadalupe, 1862-1942, n.d.
	Milagro, Minnie Corazon, 1916-1980
	Milagro, Simon Bolivar, 1876-1936
	Milagro, Yabasta, 1895-1966
	O’Neal, Carmen Milagro, 1937-1966
	O’Neal, Seamus, 1936-1965, n.d.
	Friends and associates
	Bayard, Thomas Francis, 1894-1942
	Farragut, David G., 1862
	Harte, Bret, 1876
	Paul, Alice, 1914-1953
	Scott, Randolph, 1936-1942
	Unidentified, n.d.

DAG CABINET 1	Daguerreotypes Concepcion Milagro, 1855 Maria Guadalupe Milagro, 1857
Box 2	Yabasta Milagro lantern slide lecture on women's suffrage, 1922
Box 3	Hermione Milagro as actress and playwright, 1924-1936 Rush to Madness, 1924 Guadalajara Rebel, 1924 Four on the Run, 1925 Tender Embrace, 1926 On the Rocks, 1936
<u>Container</u>	
Box 4	Simon Bolivar Milagro ambassadorship to Xanadu, 1932 Official activities and travel Presenting papers, Feb. 2, 1932 Ribbon Cutting, Styx Bridge, March 15, 1932 State dinner, March 21, 1932 Conference on Xanadu oxygen production, April 1-4 Good will tour, May 2-22 Audience with Grand Vizier, May 24 Departure ceremonies, May 28
Box 5	Presentation album from the Grand Vizier
PANORAMA 176	Panorama of Xanadu Royal Palace
	Albums
Box 6	1875 – 1921
Box 7	1922 - 1948
Box 8	1948 - 1953
Box 9	1954 – 1962
Box 10	1959 Disneyland vacation
Box 11	1963 - 1966
Box 12	Milagro family art collection Painting Photography Sculpture
SUPP ARCH 33	Campaign button of Senator Marco Polo Milagro, 1956
Drawer 14	Negatives