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Article: The Platinum and Palladium Initiative: Tools and Strategies for Interdisciplinary Collaboration (Abstract)

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## **Abstract: The Platinum and Palladium Initiative: Tools and Strategies for Interdisciplinary Collaboration**

**Matthew L. Clarke, Alisha Chipman, Constance McCabe,  
Christopher A. Maines, and Sarah S. Wagner**

*Presented at the 2013 AIC & ICOM-CC Photographs Conservation  
Joint Meeting in Wellington, New Zealand.*

Platinum and palladium prints are among the most rare and highly valued photographs in today's collections, yet their chemical nature and their degradation processes are not completely understood. The photograph conservation program at the National Gallery of Art has initiated a comprehensive collaborative investigation of platinum and palladium photography, which will culminate in a 2014 symposium and subsequent publication. An international group of conservators, scientists, curators, historians, and photographers is currently pursuing research on the history, chemistry, materials characterization, connoisseurship, preservation, and conservation treatment of these materials.

This expansive collaboration requires the partners to develop standardized research methodologies for gathering and sharing information, and to coordinate research efforts to minimize duplication and maximize limited resources. Various types of research, which include scientific analyses, imaging, and study of technical literature, require different approaches to gathering and sharing information.

Cross-institutional scientific analyses must be performed using instruments and protocols that yield comparable data. Imaging methods, including copy photography and microphotography, must be standardized between collaborators for ease of comparison and to ensure high quality. The historic literature, such as journals, handbooks, and other publications, includes vast amounts of technical information, illustrations, advertisements, and product samples; gathering and sharing these resources poses significant challenges.

The presentation will summarize several approaches for standardizing and sharing research, including:

- Imaging and scientific analyses, including X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy, microtomy, light and electron microscopies, and cross-section preparation.
- Fabrication of platinum and palladium prints as analytical standards and in aging studies
- Procedures producing comparable photomacrographs taken with various microscope set-ups
- An electronic database to record data files for all scientific analyses and photographic documentation
- An electronic database to track and describe historic literature, advertisements, and samples and a virtual cloud-based reference library for global sharing of resources among project collaborators

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