SAŽETAK
U članku se iznose osobna iskustva kustosice u umjetničkom muzeju s nekoliko “pomoćnih” arhiva muzejskih zbirki, u kojima su najzastupljeniji različiti fotografski objekti. Tekst podnosi problem stručne nepripremljenosti muzealaca za upravljanje i skrb o fotografskoj gradi, što je još već i izazov kada ona egzistira unutar heterogenog dokumentacijskog klastera koji je više puta iznova sastavljan. U nastojanju da se očuva koncepcijski integritet novog/istarog arhiva, koji bi u što većoj mjeri održavao sve dosadašnje primjene, intervencije i manipulacije građi, kao trag njezine pre- i poakuisitivne biografije (Edwards, Morton), a jednako tako i povijesti muzeja, pribjeglo se arhivističkim opisima prema principu odozgo prema dolje koji dosežu razinu pojedinačnog primjera. Na taj se način nije iznevjerio arhivistički imperativ uvažavanja provenijencije i prvobitnog reda, a ujedno se osigurala vidljivost svake pojedine fotografije, koja se opisuje kao dokument i artefakt. Uzimajući u obzir činjenicu da takav pristup nije univerzalno provediv, izložene su sve njegove prepoznate prednosti i inherentna ograničenja. Na kraju, u članku se ukratko raspravlja o izazovima preslikavanja takvog pristupa u digitalni kontekst.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI
ostavštine likovnih umjetnika, arhivi umjetničkih zbirki, fotografski objekti, muzejska fotografija, fotografije izvan muzejskih zbirki

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ABSTRACT
This paper describes a curator’s personal experience in a museum of art with several “auxiliary” archives of museum collections, in which various photographic objects are the most numerous. The paper underlines the issue of experts’ unpreparedness within museum institutions for managing and preserving photographic material, which is especially challenging when it exists in a heterogeneous documentation cluster that has been reassembled multiple times. In an effort to preserve the conceptual integrity of the new/old archive, which will as much as possible mirror all earlier uses, interventions, manipulations, etc. of the material, as a sign of its pre- and post-acquisition biography (Edwards, Morton), and equally the history of the museum, it has been resorted to a top-to-bottom archival description that will reach the level of each individual item. In this way, the archival imperative of acknowledging the provenance and original order is not being betrayed, while at the same time we are ensuring the visibility of each individual photograph, which is described both as a document and as an artifact. Taking into consideration the fact that this kind of approach is not universally applicable, all of its recognized benefits and inherent limitations are presented. Finally, the paper briefly discusses the challenges of applying the same approach to a digital context.

KEYWORDS
visual artists’ estates, art collections’ archives, photographic objects, museum photography, non-collection photography
In art museums, the acquisition of a visual artist's estate frequently includes accompanying documentation and personal items: private writings, correspondence, diaries, journals, sketches and notes, various documents, books, small objects, and photographs, which are not necessarily and always linked to the artist's professional practice. Such material, being a secondary aspect of the artist's legacy, is (at best) placed in associated archives, or filed under “document” of respective museum art collections. In practice, this means that the institutionalization of such material does not necessarily result in its greater visibility and availability, as it all too frequently remains un inventoried, let alone catalogued. In a considerable number of cases, these types of assets are seen only as an additional research tool and, as such, are subject to the volitional treatment of curators. Photographs, because of their very nature, are especially sensitive in this kind of context. They are — sometimes due to easier storage and preservation, but more often because of a utilitarian approach pushed to the extreme — arbitrarily separated from their original context and embedded into a new one, often at the expense of their material integrity and original appearance.

This paper outlines a curator’s personal experience in a museum of art with several such “auxiliary” archives of museum collections, in which various photographic objects are the most numerous. Among these objects, we can find examples of a variety of photographic processes, some of which date from the earliest history of the medium. In the grey area between public and private property, such material is frequently taken out of the institution, often without a written trace. This material is sometimes returned to the museum in the form of new intellectual and material assemblages in bizarre turnabouts, such as reacquisitions from the private archives of former curators. Photographs, as the most heterogeneous photographic objects acquired as an integral part of the artist’s legacy, are especially sensitive in this kind of context. They are subjected to a variety of uses, interventions, manipulations, etc. of the material as a kind of context. They are — sometimes due to easier storage and preservation, but more often because of a utilitarian approach pushed to the extreme — arbitrarily separated from their original context and embedded into a new one, often at the expense of their material integrity and original appearance.

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What is absurd, however, is that we do not really know when
what we do have preserved, however, is correspondence
with several hundred documents and photographs followed.

ŽIVOT UMJETNOSTI IVANA GRŽINA OD PRIVATNOG ARHIVA DO JAVNOG MUZEJA FROM A PRIVATE ARCHIVE TO A PUBLIC MUSEUM

who was, precisely for those reasons, assigned the task of
these improvised physical-intellectual units are formed by
units—sometimes freely inserted into ad-hoc folders, other
to identify. Furthermore, the donator added to his father’s
in the meantime deceased donor “enriched the
in museum, remained a part of the family’s
property for two more decades. The curator who
dedicated himself intensively to exploring the collection
recorded in one of the museum catalogues that the wife
of the in the meantime deceased donor “enriched the
collection” with valuable documents, without specifying,
however, when this occurred. From his expert texts, some of
which date back an entire decade before the donation
of the artworks, it is obvious, however, that he used the
accompanying archival material profusely in his research.
In it, we can see the donated archival material in the possession of the deceased being claimed in
a delicate manner. The material was indeed given over to
the museum shortly after, this time along with a handover
report, which is, however, quite generic and concise. After
bropos, the widow donated her husband’s personal archive to
the Croatian State Archives. When I took on the task of
ranging the Čikoš art collection archive some ten years ago,
a part of the archival records was systematized into larger
units—sometimes freely inserted into ad-hoc folders, other
times affixed or even glued into improvised albums, whose
creator or the time of origin are more often than not difficult
to identify. Furthermore, the donator added to his father’s
estate some of his personal documents and sketches, as well
as written records of his father’s career, which he himself
had collected. Alongside those, we have to mention the ma-
terial that was collected or created during his research by
his successor, who secured the return of the archive into
the museum shortly after, this time along with a handover
report. In it, we can see the donated archival material
that was collected or created during his research by
the aforementioned long-standing curator and, after him,
his successor, who secured the return of the archive into
the possession of the museum. Although there is a slew
of indications that most of the folders, which sometimes en-
courage very diverse and chronologically disparate materi-
al, were formed by the first curator, it is conceivable that
the distinctly oldest ones— with newspaper clippings—
might have been formed by the donator. Furthermore, many
of these improvised physical-intellectual units are formed by
an additional series of subunits, for which it is also difficult
to determine whether they originate from the same period.

Even though I am not an archivist, the depicted complex
unit structure and unclear genesis of its individual compo-
ents have logically led me to follow the archival concept of
respect des fonds, i.e. to apply the principle of provenance and
the principle of original order. As an introduction to the
archive inventory, a passage is composed in which the ra-
tionale behind the material arrangement is explained; what
follows after this is the analytical inventory. A top-to-bottom
description provides us with an insight into the architecture
of the archive and all the complexity of its individual com-
ponents. It has been consistently carried out to the level of
individual items, which have initially been recognized in
the museum as the only legitimate subject of interest for
users. This is a partial consequence of the inherent logic
of a museum professional accustomed to cataloguing mu-
seum objects and partially that of the practical experience
with numerous documents and photographs from the ar-
hive being controlled in research and used in exhibitions
and publications. Around a hundred postcards within this
material, among which dominate photomechanical repro-
ductions of different works of art, have no clear provenance.
From both curators’ eras originate the entire series of pho-
tographs, which surpass in number the originally donated
photographic material. Photographic prints prevail among
them, but the share of diverse negatives and slides is also not
negligible. The family donation included only prints taken
within the 1880s–1920s timespan, which represent all the
commercially prevalent photographic processes typical of
particular periods within that era. Amongst them, there is
an equal portion of amateur shots and professional pho-
tographers’ work. Fortunately, as the photographic prints
were not glued into the folder, which was the case with some
other types of material in the archive, their description and
storage were facilitated significantly. Individual series of
photographic objects were formed while sorting out the
material based on its content and physical characteristics,
which were then individually described in the manner in
which photographs are normally catalogued within photo-
graphic collections in museums.

In terms of processing photographs, the Maximilian Van-
ika (1889–1965) art collection archive posed a much greater
challenge. Vanka was a Croatian artist from the generation
that came after Čikoš. The backbone of the archive is made up of
photographic material that arrived as a part of a donation of artworks in the early 1960s. For the purpose
of forming his Memorial Collection in his homeland, the
painter’s family also donated a part of his correspondence
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graphic collections in museums.
Apart from the fact that such an environment contributes to the deterioration of the photographic material in the long run, it also aggravates the procedure of its processing, storage, and preventive conservation. Gluing the photos onto secondary support makes it impossible for us to see the back of the photographs, whether we are discussing the original cardboard of the oldest photographs or potential handwritten inscriptions. Such a procedure is also problematic in terms of preserving the material integrity of the photographic objects as well as from the perspective of their content analysis. As an additional peculiarity, there is also the fact that the creator or the last user of the album from the ranks of the museum employees added their titles in pen, which sometimes resulted in following a completely false lead. In a sizeable number of cases, through insight into related material in possession of other institutions or private owners, it was determined that the photographed people and episodes were misidentified. The notorious album finaly turned out to be a conservation challenge. Experts in photography conservation indicated that it would be unfeasible to potentially separate the prints and return them to their original state, but was also preoccupied with an additional ethical dilemma: the awareness of the fact that while arranging the archive, I should follow not only the imperative of maintaining the material traces of the pre-acquisitional life of individual items and archives in their entirety but also all traces of institutional practices that molded them once they reached the museum.

The fact that in the case of both described archives—and the same goes for all the other photographic material (both analogue and digital) that originated in the museum from both within and around its core art collections—the photographs of museum objects were stored totally carelessly and without keeping track of their physical or virtual location, or the author and the time of inception, speaks volumes of these practices as well as the discourses which dictated them. In these concrete cases, their processing required a comparative study of countless illustrated museum publications, researching archival material about the history of the museum, as well as informal surveying of the oldest employees who might have been able to witness its hidden and undocumented side and the practices that were orally transmitted from one curator generation to another for lack of a prescribed procedure.16 This way, we have come a full circle: penetrating the archaeology of institutional practices was an important prerequisite for understanding and processing the material, which, in turn, led to a description that, through its structure and content, amongst other things, and to the maximum possible extent, tries to mirror both the known and the still unwritten history of the museum. Finally, let us just assert that the described approach to processing the material, apart from some minimal competence in understanding photography, requires good background knowledge of the history of the parent institution, as well as long-standing and often frustrating research work in unraveling the internal logic that dictates the architecture of one such archive. This, in turn, means it is difficult to apply it in institutions with a far greater amount of similar material.

Translating the approach outlined in this paper into a digital context carries with it a whole slew of conceptual and technical challenges. For this reason, we have to first consider whether it is always, or at all, justified. Taking into consideration opposing arguments about the advantages and limitations of digitizing physical archives, a remark by Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert on the matter stands out: “physical and online archives are in fact two different yet interconnected ecosystems in which photographs behave differently and tell different stories”.17 In other words, perhaps it is best to take into account in advance the awareness of users, at least those more experienced ones, of the fact that digitized physical archives are not supposed to aspire to be a true reflection of the materiality of the original and the pre- and post-acquisitional biography embedded in it.

16 Caraffa, “Manzoni in the Photothek”, 133. (“[…] much of the current work on the Photothek is possible thanks to the “calligraphic” expertise of some of its longer-serving staff members.”)
17 Stylianou-Lambert, “Photographic Ecosystems and Archives”, 385. Summarizing the various arguments in this debate, the author refers to some, in this sense, paracritical texts, e.g. Sassoon, “Photographic Materiality in the Age of Digital Reproduction”, Cameron, “Beyond the Cult of Replicant”, Conroy, “Modes of Seeing”. At this point, it is worth mentioning that, at the conference Photo Archives XIX, The Digital Photo Archive: Theories, Practices and Rhetoric (May 2022, University of Basel), the doyen Joan M. Schwartz made a recent contribution to the topic.