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## **A Wiki on the Materials of Imaging**

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I have a report of an important 1<sup>st</sup> step we are making at George Eastman House. Here's what leads up to it. First, as Eastman Kodak Company abandons unneeded buildings, Antonio Perez, CEO and Chairman and a George Eastman House trustee, has made an unprecedented act of generosity and conservation wisdom, namely to allow curators access to comb through the buildings to be sure nothing of historic significance is left behind. And we have found significant records of photo science that are critical to historic understanding.

Simultaneously Jack Naylor, the great collector and George Eastman House trustee whose holdings several weeks ago went to auction, donated to George Eastman House rare 19<sup>th</sup> century process manuals and the lab notes from Leopold Godowsky who with Leopold Mannes developed Kodachrome. This is access to transformative technologies that have escaped our thorough understanding – an understanding ultimately necessary to adequately preserve and conserve these things that comprise the history of photography and of media and ultimately the history of meaning and significance in the 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Another George Eastman House trustee, the Los Angeles collector, Manfred Heiting, is sponsoring a series of meetings among global leaders in the field of photo conservation, chaired by Grant Romer of George Eastman House and Paul Messier, the Boston freelance conservator. Their task is to survey strengths and weaknesses regarding material data.

Already, Eastman House has amassed unparalleled archives and associated fields of catalog text records, manuals, published literature on the milestone imaging equipment and processes, so our next step is to take the gathering of Kodak data and the data on 19<sup>th</sup> century process, the gathering of George Eastman House research and collections of the past 60 years, plus the wisdom of the field and create an Eastman House controlled Wiki on the material aspects of imaging.

Antonio Perez has promised access to scientists and data not under proprietary protection. This is so important since the creators of the process of even the near past are getting away from us. And already this is true of digital, as one event overlaps the next. So George Eastman House applied for and received a federal Institute of Museum and Library Services leadership grant to create a modified Wiki dealing with photography up to digital – our next step will be to take on digital.

The Wiki fulfills a need for a comprehensive method of recording the characteristics of photographs as physical objects, as well as the instruments of their production. Features of both digital and traditional image production data that is key to their preservation are being lost. An authoritative, globally accessible information recourse that can be edited in an ongoing fashion will help provide for the ongoing care of these objects in history and in culture.

George Eastman House will assemble a professional project staff who will begin by populating and editing the photography wiki. A Photography Material Research Group of experts in photographic conservation will assemble to advise the work; additional experts in the field will be invited to attend colloquia to continue to shape the project to audience needs.

At the close of two years, a populated Wiki will be evaluated and introduced at relevant conferences and workshops. Upon its launch, members of the imaging field along with academic and recreational scholars will be able to access and continue to update the wiki.

Essentially, as our next step, we are talking about a bit of high-level social networking – reaching out to leaders in digital photography, enrolling the best minds in the field to contribute to a second open ended authoritative resource: A Wiki in digital imaging. In this way, future historians of science and technology will have to do a little less techno-archeology as they sort through the products that happened to survive.

We are mining the history of ideas that inhere under the skin of objects.

Our objective will be to insert your work into the historical narrative.

Please be in touch regarding ideas to shape a digital imaging Wiki. Please give us advice – opinions – heads up on what not to miss. We need to be sensitive to emerging technologies. Thanks to Alexis Gerard and Future Image for their involvement in this effort, and for pledging the donation of critical objects and manuals that tell the story of the finest days in digital and electronic imaging.