

Challenges in using technology to manage the royal glass plate negatives of The National Archives of Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The royal glass plate negatives in the National Archives of Thailand are 35,427 pieces, covering a long and continuous period from 1855-1935. The images on this collection were made by the King, royal family, Thai, and foreign photographers during the reign of King Rama IV to King Rama VII, which have been both wet plates and dry plates. They recorded photographs of important people, places, and events that occurred in Central and local of Thailand. The royal glass plate negatives were gathered and collected by Prince Damrong, who was the president of the Royal Library of Phra Nakhon Council. He initiated the establishment of the Picture Gallery in the Royal Vajirayana Library. Prince Damrong requested the private collections of the royal glass plate negatives from their Majesties, King Rama V and King Rama VI. Moreover, he added his own photographic collection and included some glass plate negatives from the Chaya Norasingha's Photo Studio. When the Royal Vajirayana Library was restructured, the glass plate negatives were transferred to the National Museum and later to the National Archives.

The National Archives manages them by identifying each box with a number and keeping every glass plate negatives, in storage where has a temperature and relative humidity control system for safety. At first, the National Archives had print-outed the images on the photo papers but could transform less due to the budget limitation.

In 2003, the National Archives started preserving the images on the glass plate negatives. They were scanned and stored as digitized images. Besides, the National Archives of Thailand has used ACDSee for zooming in on the detail of images, Google Search for finding information, Google Lens for finding images which are similar, and Google Map for finding locations in the present time. The information from searching is used to make a description for the user.

The challenges of the archivists is using the new technology for researching and working. These programs might be tricky to get started, but they could help you work easily and wisely.

Keywords: glass plate negatives, royal vajirayana library, preservation, technology