

FOR JULY 2010 AIC NEWS

## FAIC and the Hermitage Museum

FAIC launched a four-year initiative this spring to establish a photograph conservation department at the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia. The initiative, funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, has six components:

1. Provide essential staff education and training in photograph conservation.
2. Expand and improve photograph cataloguing practice.
3. Implement standards and best practices for digital conservation documentation
4. Provide accessibility to essential photograph conservation literature
5. Provide advice on the design of a new, dedicated photograph conservation laboratory
6. Provide materials and equipment for the new laboratory

The resulting photograph conservation laboratory would be the first of its kind in Russia. The initiative grows out of a Mellon-funded survey of photograph collections at the Hermitage conducted in 2008-2009. Initially, the activities will focus on the collections of historic photographs in the History of Russian Culture Department, but will eventually serve the estimated 472,000 photographs held by at least 44 departments within the museum.

The project manager for the initiative is Paul Messier, conservator in private practice in Boston, who conducted the initial survey. An advisory committee guides the activities, and is comprised of Paul Messier, Viacheslav Fedorov of the State Hermitage Museum, Robert Burton of Harvard University Library, Franziska Frey of Rochester Institute of Technology, Debra Hess Norris of University of Delaware, Bertrand Lavédrine of the Centre de Recherche sur la Conservation des Collections in Paris, and Eric Pourchot of FAIC.

An initial meeting of the advisory committee was held at the Hermitage in April. A workshop by Hugh Phibbs of the National Gallery was conducted in May at the Hermitage on matting, hinging, and housing of photographs. Three conservators and a curator from the Hermitage will come to the U.S. in July for training at the University of Delaware, the Center for Conservation of Artistic and Historic Works in Philadelphia, and the Metropolitan Museum in New York City. Additional training will take place in Russia, Paris, and the U.S. in the coming year.

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