PacRim4Collins: Best Practices

A guide for contributing photos to the Pacific Rim digital project at the Collins Library.

The most important aspect of this project is to ensure that we have a record of the people, places, and events of the PacRim experience. Think of the future and how the images you capture now will impact future PacRim students. During the planning phase of the PacRim trip, we will work with you to identify specific targets for each area you visit. Different locations may warrant a different emphasis on the types of images.

In general terms you will be responsible for:

- Images that showcase daily rituals such as meals
- Images that capture social events
- Images that document guests, meetings and teachers
- Images that showcase living conditions and residences

How it works

Images will be loaded on Flicker. Images that meet criteria and quality will be added to the Collins Library Digital Collections. If you want your picture from your personal Flickr account to go up in the Collins Library Digital Collections, please tag it PacRim4CollinsLib. Email if you want to use an alias in Flickr, so we can credit your real name in Artstor. You should receive credit for your photographs and this is something to put on your resume or Eportfolio. Remember to keep bandwidth in mind. And I mean both Internet speed and your time. It is better to upload fewer photos of quality that are well described.

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Pointers for interesting photos:

- Think “people, places, and things”.
- Get closer
- Be in the thick of it
- Think about the lighting
- Turn the camera on its side
- Fill the frame
- Capturing a moment in history; tell a story through your photograph
- Pay close attention to composition, color, and lighting
- Try different angles to achieve a sense of “exclusivity” or give the viewer a new perspective
- Use your intuition. Ask, “What am I going to remember?” Be interested in your subject matter

Photographs are dynamic and artistic tools for storytelling. Viewers naturally identify themes, moods, and characters from photographs. To draw a viewer into a photograph there must be an intriguing element about it. People are typically attracted to composition of photographs, whether consciously or unconsciously. Carefully composing a photograph can help a viewer focus their attention on a certain element of interest. The photographer can use composition to direct the attention of their viewers.

The most beautiful photographs are taken when the photographer feels free to pursue subjects of personal interest. Be inspired and fearless in your exploration of subjects for photography. Some intuitive knowledge is required for composing a captivating photo. Most viewers will gravitate their attention to photos that feature human subjects, faces, interesting expressions, character dynamics, colors, and contrasts. Interesting photography methods such as time-lapses, panoramas, and photo-spheres are used to add different dimensions to photography.

Practicing photography can train one’s artistic eye, and attention to detail. Take your time when photo-graphing a subject and don’t be embarrassed. Professional photographers, for magazines or newspapers, often take hundreds of photos of one subject and choose the best moment captured during the editing process. It may be motivating to give oneself photography assignments.

This guide is online: http://research.pugetsound.edu/pacrim4collins
Writing a great caption:
- Include the 5 “W’s”: who, what, when, where, and perhaps most importantly, why should I care?
- Explain the significance of this moment of scene. This is the why should I care part.
- Think story, not dry descriptions.
- Two sentences to a short paragraph is best.
- Give credit where credit is due (that means proper attribution to the photographer or source, in other words you).
- Use tags: tags are great, particularly if they are key words for people to find a place, thing, or activity
- Give readers information that is not immediately available by looking at the photo.
- Identify key players; naming the people involved. Use “from left”, and never “from left to right”
- Use clear, concise language and active verbs
- Use tone of voice to present a new perspective, and intrigue viewers

Although photographs can tell stories on their own, they cannot convey detailed information to a reader. Captions provide information that the photo itself may be unable to say such as names, places, dates, significance of an event, & background information.

Good captions redirect a reader from the caption, to the photo again, and peak their curiosity. Captions should be reader friendly; use clear, concise language to quickly convey meaning.

Writing a good caption requires good language skills. Always write in active voice, use active verbs, and in present tense. Use prepositional phrases (i.e. with, behind, in the, by the) to draw relationships between a noun or pronoun and another word in the sentence. Write as though the story conveyed in the photograph is happening in the present moment to aid composition in active voice. Other unnecessary phrases are “above” or “pictured here”, do not offend readers by presenting obvious information. Instead, use the caption as an opportunity to complete the picture and add a sense of immediacy.

Practice quality control to ensure that throughout the revision process the caption is still related to the photo content. For better caption writing, keep detailed notes on the subjects that are photographed, so you still have a foundation to build on.

A Note About Accessibility
You might ask: Why do I need a caption if a picture if worth a thousand words? Search engines search text. Screen readers used by people with visual impairments read text. To make this accessible to people who might find it interesting, give it as much description as you can for them to be able to search on. Usually it’s easier to do this at the time rather than later, particularly names, places and dates. Do not put it off. It is also a good exercise in reflecting on your experiences.

A Note About Permissions
In order for the Collins Library to add this to our Digital Projects, we will require a permission form to be signed, in addition to the photos and descriptions meeting our criteria and standards for quality.
Comments about the Photo

This photo is visually interesting for the following reasons:

- It is colorful!
- The woman is interesting, but also offers scale for the wall.
- The mosaic is beautiful.
- The mosaic has historic interest.
- The woman is off center. This encourages the eye to move around the photo and also she is not covering up the mosaic.

Comments about the Description

The good:

- The title describes the photo.
- The description answers where and what, plus describes the mosaic with great keywords.
- The photographer is credited.
- The location is geotagged and displays as a useful map.
- The tags are descriptive.
- The tag "Tomb of I’Timad-Ud-Daulah" was added in quotation marks, which kept the phrase together.

Could use improvement:

- What, when, and where are answered, but who is in the photo?
- Why are they there?
- Is the date the correct date it was taken? It would be better to confirm that in the description.