1. Give a general description of the media (dates, used, date when obsolete, if applicable) as well as how to identify it. Albumen prints were used between the 1850’s through the 1920’s and were widely used between 1855-1895. Some characteristics of identifying albumen prints is that they are faded, have chemical produced spots and blemishes and are yellowed in some parts or yellowed all over. You can typically see yellowing or yellowish-brown in the whites and highlights. There is also a shift in image color from purple or purplish-brown to a sickly yellowish-brown. They are sharp, finely detailed and glossy (although some can be matte too) and sometimes contain cracks from expansion stressors.
2. For photographs, what technology/methods were
used to produce? The paper is dipped in the albumen, dried then dipped into silver nitrate to make it sensitive to UV light, then dried hidden from UV light. This type of print uses a “print-out” method. A negative is placed on top of the albumen paper and is exposed to light until the desired level of darkness is achieved. Sodium thiosulfate is used a fixer, then washed in water. Gold is sometimes used as a toner.

3. What are the materials from which it is composed? It is made of lightweight rag stock for the paper with an emulsion of egg white and salt.

4. What are the possible effects of:
a. Temperature

High temperature causes the traces of silver and Sodium thiosulfate that have not been washed out to react faster. This can causes fading and color change.
b. Humidity

High humidity is bad because the egg retains water and is hygroscopic; its expands and contracts and this causes brittle paper and fading

c. Light

Silver that remains is sensitive to light; causes fading

d. Air pollution/dust

Air pollution causes a reaction with sulfur that causes the images to change color, fade and become less dense.

e. Poor handling- Since this paper can become fragile, poor handling causes tears, creases and holes. inproper storage, mounts adhesives also speed up deterioration can can cause fading and yellowing.

5. Name the three biggest risks for damage of this media

1. Chemical damage from traces of silver and Sodium thiosulfate not being washed out completely. The retention of silver is also caused by an interaction with the egg proteins and silver. The silver turns into silver sulfide, which yellows the highlights and whites.

2. Moisture and Humidity causes fading

3. poor handling

6. Name three important preservation strategies or considerations for this media

1. Keep it in a cooled (less then 18 Celsius) dark environment to slow down the chemical damage.
2. Must be kept in 30-40 percent humidity
3. Proper storage in paper enclosures that are neutral, high alpha-cellulose paper without carbonate buffering

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