

- History and Historic Photographic Technologies
- Archival Management and Preventive Conservation

Introduction:  
the photographic archive



The Italian archival discipline defines an archive as a complex of documents which is produced, or acquired, during the course of activity of State bodies and offices, of public agencies and private institutions, as well as of families and individuals.

Over the centuries, to allow producing bodies to carry out their functions in an orderly manner, techniques have been developed for the classification, registration and preservation of records. This way things can be found more quickly, when they need to be researched.

This is a complex subject which is organized within each institution, authority, or body, according to the characteristics of the type of records produced. The logical and formal connection between the records that make up single archives, is what links them together through a “bond of necessity”, which is called archival bond. Although it is more evident in the case of archives for structured entities, the archival bond is present in any complex of records formed for the practical purposes of a subject.



Conditions in which an archive can be found:

- in the same order in which it was found
- in an order which is the result of following changes
- in disorder

The correct preservation of an archive addressed to public use, requires from those who take care of it, preserve it, and order it, to investigate some themes in depth.

- Study of the institution which produced the archive
- Understand the systematic organization of the archive
- Research on pre-existing related material

The Archival discipline in Italy uses the **historical method**, which is based on the principle of origin, and history of institutions. Each archival fund, inseparable and indivisible, must faithfully reflect the organization of the institution that produced it.



“The study of diplomatics and the history of archivistics, highlight how the evolution of the form of documents and the archival organization have been influenced by two different factors: the evolution of law and **the evolution of communication systems**".  
(Paola Carucci).



"The scholar of contemporary history often has a very large quantity of documents available for his work. Among these, there are the new types of sources. These new sources are a product of technological evolution over the last two centuries, and they are becoming increasingly important. (...) These sources can be traced back to essentially three types: photography, cinema and sound recording. (...) The starting point for any consideration, is the difficulty of identifying a proper regulation for these new **sources**. The causes are essentially the following: *their recent birth, **their characteristics**, the particular forms of accumulation and deposit they adopt, the difficulty of technical access to the sources, as well as the cultural difficulty of historians in relating to them.*" A. Mignemi, 2003



Documentary photography or photographic documentation?



Bologna, Loggia della Mercanzia, façade before demolition in 1943





Roger Fenton, , 1855  
Sevastopol – Crimean War (1853-1856)  
Salt Paper, 35x27,3 cm  
GFN, Lattanzi Fund, inv. F16

London, P&D Colnaghi & Co. Paris, Moulin, 23 Rue Richer. New York, Williams & Co.  
The Valley of the Shadow of Death - Depose - Photographed by R. Fenton.  
Manchester, Published by T. Agnew & Sons, Nov. 19th, 1855.

Photography as a **heuristic source**, meaning not rigorous, but approximate, almost intuitive.  
As if a photograph was a document which highlights a fact, that later must be reviewed and confirmed by other sources.

Tiziana Serena



The **heuristic** approach makes it easier to concentrate on the production of still images, meaning it is easier to concentrate on making descriptions as detailed, and as thorough as possible. This is done by paying attention to many things, starting from the analysis of the support, to the identification of its author. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first approach to cataloguing this type of material, was through the description of the single photograph as if it were the description of a work of art; whose unique characteristics are, however, different from those distinctive of a document.

Photography suffers from this approach which introduces formal criteria of analysis to each photograph. This approach ends up separating photographic documents based on the nature of the image's production, hardly ever paying attention to their function.

**The description of an image, the identification of its author, the dating of its different "editions", the analysis of its support, are certainly essential to allow the passage from "image" to "document", but not to give it the necessary completeness as a source.**

The individual disciplinary fields have constructed historical narratives using photography, often extracting it from these sedimentary contexts, and considering it only as a surface image.





The science of archives was reached through the construction of diplomatics, and through the critical interpretation of documents relative to the Renaissance period. This path led to the application of the **historical method** in the 19th century.

By looking carefully at that experience, which shows many elements in common with that of photography today, we could avoid repeating mistakes, (consider the contrast between the **order by topic** and the **reconstruction of the original order** which is the **order by historical method**) so as to allow photography to fully enter into the universe of documentary sources.



The sedimentation of photographs in collections and institutional archives, is a phenomenon that we can trace back to an upper-class positivist culture. The ways in which photographs have been accumulated have involved many authors and operators, curators and conservators, all of whom, in a little less than two hundred years, have composed these complex objects:

- the world of **scientific research institutions** of various disciplines, as well as art galleries and museums. (#archive of National Photographic Cabinet #archive of Ministry of Education)
- the **photographers** (#Cugnoni fund)
- **collectors** (#Becchetti archive), who either collected for artistic taste, or had a great **interest in taxonomy**.
- The **private and family dimension**. The one of the albums of personal objects; the secret treasure boxes full of photographs, which today are gaining the attention of Institutions which organize projects of systematic collection of this vernacular photography. (#scenes from a heritage)



In Italy there are few institutions that have produced, or which are producing, photographic documents.

Photographic archives are often created without the documentary organization that we find in traditional archives. This means that within them, there aren't any funds, series, sub-series, archival units, which have the same characteristics of a traditional archive. It is difficult to attribute the characteristics of classical archives to the various stratifications of photographic archives.

They are often made up of a large number of objects: negatives, positives, unicums, made by one or more authors, as well as photographic equipment, inventories, accounting records, diaries, brochures, books and magazines.

In the luckiest of cases, the photographs are placed in the archive according to criteria elaborated by the producer.



## order

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Rearrangement of the original order based on the available information and on the existing tools. To proceed with the reorganization of a fund, we need:

- Study the producing subject
- Verify the existence of accompanying tools, lists of consistency, inventories, registers, and catalogues.
- Verify the presence of complex funds, meaning if the documents belong to different archives and they have merged, for any reason, into a single fund, and decide if we need to order them separately or remove them (verification of stamps, markings, and conditionings)
- Attribute a temporary marking to each envelope or image
- Positioning the material in a definitive order



During the phase of reorganization, the materials, either gathered or intentionally ordered by the collector, author, or institution, could be divided according to theme, subject or other criteria. These divisions should never be dismembered or divided.

## order

The arrangement of the materials may have a systematic order, assigned by the author, the archivist or the collector. In the case of a collection, or of materials collected without an order, the archivist can proceed by choosing the most suitable order.

Among the sorting criteria that can be adopted, the most commonly used are:

- alphabetical by photographer/author
- chronological
- geographical
- by subject-matter

In a fund created by a single author, the sorting criteria could be:

- Type of material (unicum, negatives, positives, etc.)
- By size of format (24x30 cm, 13x18 cm, 6x6 cm, ecc.)
- Subjects and topics (landscapes, portraits, place names, etc.)
- Toponyms (Florence, Rome, Venice, etc.)
- Date of execution (1920, 1930, etc.)



The need of subdividing the documentation into groups, or series, makes it necessary to recognize homogeneous formal characteristics of the documents, in our case photographs, even when they are not ordered due to subsequent manipulations and rearrangements.

Identifying and recognizing formal elements which characterize a particular type of document, leads us to consider two types of characters that in diplomatics are indicated as **“intrinsic characters”** and **“extrinsic characters”** of the document.

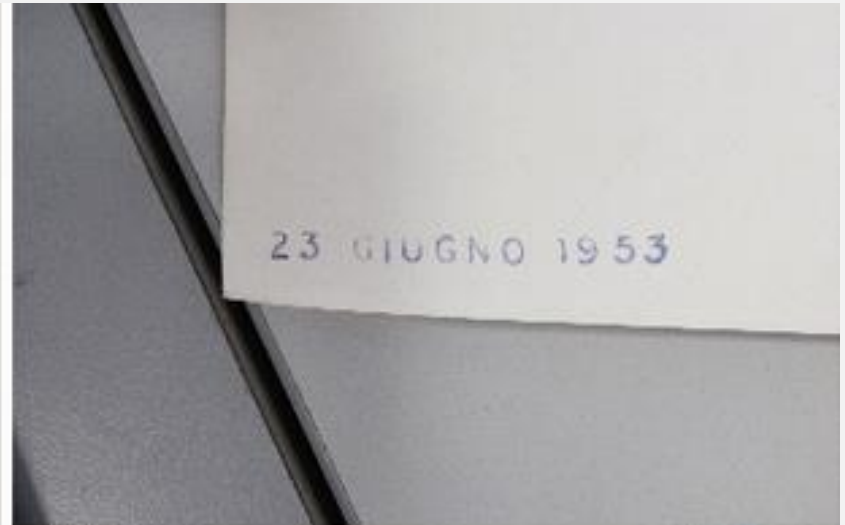


We define as **“intrinsic characters”** those which refer to the content of the document, where content does not mean the object examined, but what is narrated through certain expressions.

While we define as **“extrinsic characters”** those which refer to the material characteristics of the document, and represent its external appearance. These can be examined independently from its content.

Alessandro Pratesi, *Generi e forme del documento medievale*, Rome 1978

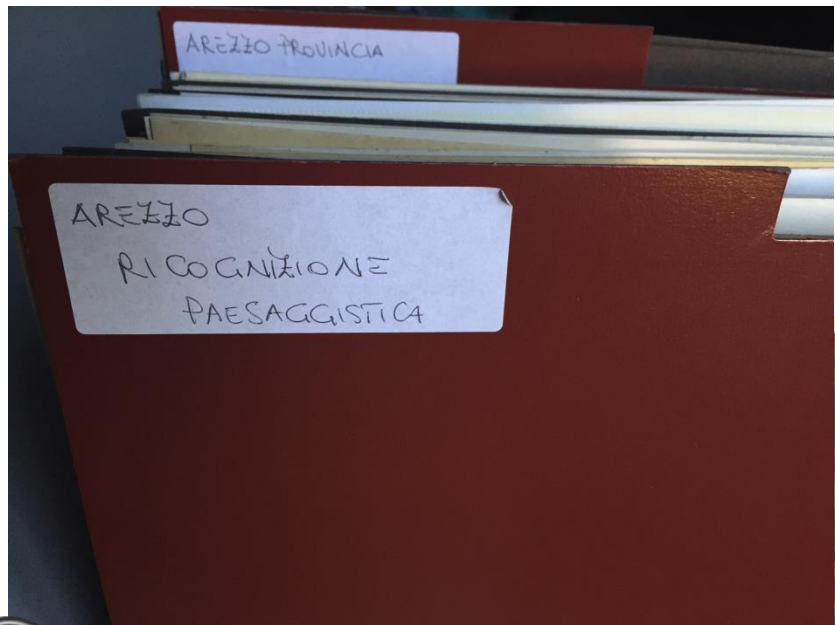






# Arezzo – Landscape Verification

Lo Torre del **U.C.G.**  
Castelluccio  
1601, 3 (buss)  
MINISTERO DELLA PUBBLICA ISTRUZIONE  
ARCHIVIO FOTOGRAFICO  
Fot. 15607  
GABINETTO FOTOGRAFICO  
**CAPOLONA (AR)**  
Via. CASTELLUCCIO  
MPI 308594 Dig.



## The National Photographic Cabinet

The Photographic Cabinet was founded in 1895 on the initiative of engineer Giovanni Gargioli, and became National in 1923 when his student, Carlo Carboni, was its director. The goal was to document the Italian cultural heritage for the purpose of cataloguing and safeguarding it

The archive is composed of:

- 220.000 negatives, in black and white (plates and films of different formats: 40x50; 30x40; 24x30; 21x27; 18x24; 13x18; 10x15; 9x12; 6x9; 6x6; 4x6)
- positives, historical and modern, which represent a good portion of the negatives
- 35.000 photocolour, starting from 1954, composed of slides, and color negatives, of different formats (from 18x24 to 35mm films)
- 25.000 digital photographs, from 2005

The group of phototypes represents the result of the photographic campaigns dedicated to the Italian cultural heritage. The documentation therefore includes the entire national territory, in all its regions.

The negatives, placed in a special deposit, are ordered by format and in chronological order. The positives are fixed on cardboards, placed in drawers, and are arranged topographically, by alphabetical order.









Although it is orderly and can be consulted in a photo library, it was necessary to study and reorder the archive according to its photographic campaigns, In fact, the consultation happens through the prints that have been topographically ordered.

It was necessary to reconstruct the ties between each photographic campaign, the places where it was carried out, any ties to the historical and institutional context which produced it.

Any historical reconstruction, systematically puts the archival documents in relation to the photographic production of the relative years.

This way, it was possible to bring up the intentions of the commissioners, their relationship with the photographers, the relations between the institutions, the protagonists of the historical events, as well as any circumstances in which the photographs were produced.



## Inventory registers

Number	Location	Description	Notes	Status
1	Alatri	Chiesa S. Maria Maggiore - Madonna di Col. <sup>leg. - sec. XIII</sup>	Restaurato	X
2	"	Idem	Idem	X
3	"	Idem	Idem	X
4	"	Idem	Idem	X
5	(Alatrium) - Ferentino	Alatri - Museo "ciclopico" (opere poligonali) Lato Nord-Est		X
6	"	"	"	X
7	"	"	"	X
8	"	"	"	X
9	"	Lato Nord. Porta Minore, detta "Città del Lemniano"		X
10	"	Altre "ciclopiche" (opere poligonali) part. Lato Nord-Est		X
11	"	"	"	X
12	"	Lato Nord. Porta Minore, detta "Città del Lemniano"		X
13	Panorama			X
14	Alatri	Particolare della mura ciclopiche		X
15	"	Altre "ciclopiche" Lato Nord. sostegno del Lemniano		X
16	"	"	"	X
17	"	"	"	X
18	"	"	"	X
19	"	"	"	X
20	"	"	"	X
21	"	"	"	X
22	"	"	"	X
23	"	"	"	X
24	"	"	"	X
25	"	"	"	X
26	"	"	"	X
27	Panorama			X

Number	Location	Description	Notes	Status
28	Alatri	Museo "ciclopico" (opere poligonali) (particolare)		X
29	"	"	"	X
30	"	"	"	X
31	"	"	"	X
32	"	"	"	X
33	"	"	Lato Sud (particolare)	X
34	"	"	"	X
35	"	"	Lato Nord-Est (particolare)	X
36	"	"	Lato Sud (particolare)	X
37	"	"	Lato Nord (particolare)	X
38	"	"	" Sud "	X
39	"	"	" Nord "	X
40	Scanzano	Particolare dell'antica Badia <sup>sec. XII</sup>		X
41	Marsicana			X
42	"			X
43	"	Madonna con bambino <sup>sec. XIV</sup>		X
44	"			X
45	Nagliano	Nagliano de' Marsi. Cattedrale - Prospetto		X
46	San Marsino	Finestra S. Sofia		X
47	Roma	S. Cosimato - Musici <sup>sec. XVII</sup>		X
48	"			X
49	Roma	Via Latina. Basilica di S. Stefano		X
50	"			X
51	Castellana	Castellana Grotte <sup>sec. XIV</sup>		X
52	Castellana	Castellana Grotte <sup>sec. XIV</sup>		X
53	Cozzano	Museo Braccio - Incoronazione <sup>sec. XIII</sup>		X



**UFFICIO REGIONALE  
PER I MONUMENTI DI ROMA**

Roma, addì 28 luglio 1895.

**REGNO D'ITALIA - CHIETI**  
D. N. 100 Pos. 20

DELLA  
**ISTRUZIONE PUBBLICA**

DIREZIONE GENERALE  
per le Antichità e le Belle Arti

DIVISIONE  
MONUMENTI E SCUOLE D'ARTE

Sezione Monumenti

N. di Protocollo \_\_\_\_\_  
Classifica d'archivio 6. Caverta  
N. di partenza 9747  
Risposta a \_\_\_\_\_ del \_\_\_\_\_  
Divisione \_\_\_\_\_ N. \_\_\_\_\_

OGGETTO  
Chiesa di S. Pietro in  
Menturano

Al Direttore  
dell'Uff. Regionale  
per i monumenti  
Roma.

N. N. Indicare sempre, nella risposta, la Divisione od altro ufficio del Ministero revestito, nonché la data ed i numeri di archivio e di posizione.

Con recente lettera ho pregato la S. V. di incaricare l'ing. Gargioli di recarsi a rilevare alcune fotografie della cripta di S. Vincenzo al Volturno in provincia di Campobasso.

Tornando con il suddetto ingegnere portarsi nelle provincie meridionali munito degli apparecchi fotografici, sarà opportuno che egli si valga dell'occasione, e si reci a Menturano (provincia di Caserta) per eseguire riproduzioni fotografiche dell'acquedotto romano e della chiesa di S. Pietro.

Dell'acquedotto egli dovrà ritrarre una veduta d'insieme ed un particolare

del tipo murario.

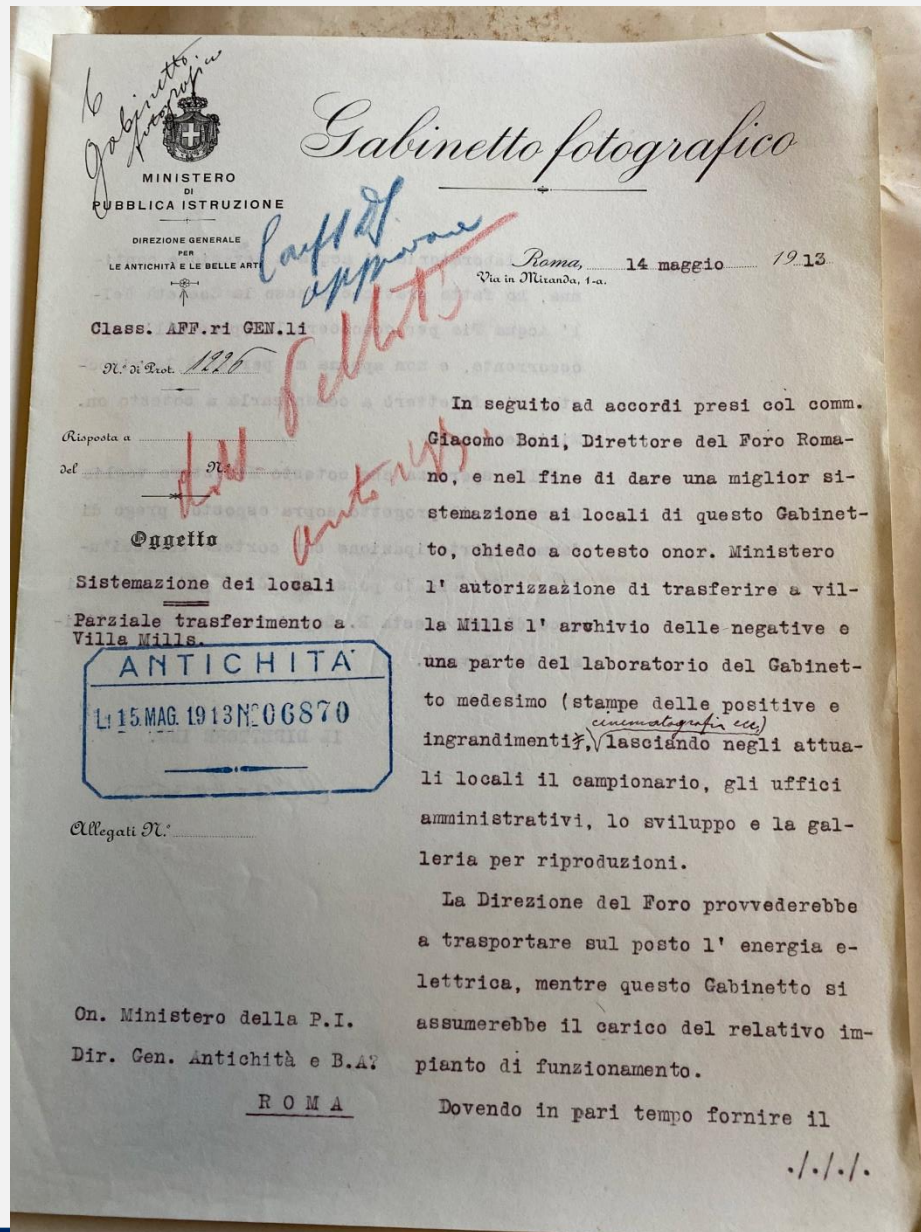
Della chiesa di S. Pietro si dovrà riprodurre la facciata, l'interno, un particolare degli archi medievali, uno dei capitelli, del pulpito, del cancellato, e uno degli stucchi e delle pitture che decorano la parte mediana della chiesa.

Prego la S. V. di comunicare quanto sopra all'ing. Gargioli, in modo che nel viaggio di andata a S. Vincenzo, o in quello di ritorno possa fermarsi a Menturano.

Il Ministro  
Bianchi







Stipendio . . . . . L. 600  
 Indennità residenza, ecc. » 3/6 L. 6/60

INDENNITÀ

(1) *San Carlo Carboni Di Boni incaricato*

GIORNO e MESE	INDICAZIONE DELLE PERCORRENZE	NUMERO d'ordine della scrittura comparsata l'acquisto a tariffa ordinaria dei biglietti ferroviari	GIORNI impiegati per la visita	CHILOMETRI a percorso fra andata e ritorno sulle vie ordinarie	GORNALIERA	DI VIAGGIO			CAPITOLO del bilancio sul quale va imputata la spesa (colonna riservata al Ministero)	OSSERVAZIONI			
						sulle vie ordinarie	sulle ferrovie, tramvie, piroscafi e automobili	Aumento di due decimi sulle spese di viaggio			TOTALE		
23	da Roma a Lucera.					53	57	10	24	64	26	Fotografie di San Carlo e Lucera, Trani, Campobasso e Frosinone.	
24	da Lucera a Trani					6	80	2	36	8	16		
26	da Trani a Frosinone					14	87	2	87	17	62		
27	da Frosinone a Roma.					19	87	8	89	53	84		
	Branca 1916.		6								162	00	
						6					27	00	
											12	15	
											27	00	
											312	18	

(1) Cognome, nome e grado del funzionario.



*Thank you for your attention*

*Goodbye*



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