



# TIME STANDS STILL

PRESERVING THE MANAKI LEGACY

Endangered Archives  
Programme



ARCADIA  
A CHARITABLE FUND OF  
LISSET RAUSING & PETER BALDWIN



## EAP 1470 TIME STANDS STILL: PRESERVING THE MANAKI BROTHERS' PHOTOGRAPHIC LEGACY

### TIME STANDS STILL METHODOLOGY REPORT

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BITOLA, 2024

## **1. About the material**

The Manaki brothers collection, kept in the State archive of the Republic of North Macedonia – Department Bitola is the most substantial group of photographic materials in the Macedonian archives. It was brought to the Bitola's archive in 1965, granting the wish of Milton Manaki himself. Most of the photographic materials have descriptions, some of them given by Milton or Sterjo Manaki and some of them were described during the arranging and processing of the material by the archivists during the years. The significance of this collection for the Balkans is of immense importance. That is why this particular collection was declared cultural heritage in October 2023, by the Macedonian government and it is first case of an archival collection receiving that status.

## **2. The beginnings of the project**

The first idea regarding the process of applying for this project came from Milton Manaki himself, 58 years after his death. He was a passionate collector of every personal and business document and took care for their preservation. His letters clearly speak about his high awareness about the role that he and his brother had been documenting the most important events of the human history. He personally worked with an archivist from Bitola's archive for three years to give description of the glass plate negatives that he was preparing to give to the archive. And last it was his personal wish to give all of his and his brother's work to the Macedonian archives so they will be available for the public. Every fact stated above draw to one conclusion – it was time to give the Manaki brothers legacy to the world. That is what Milton would have wanted. That is one of the main reasons for starting this project. The physical preservation of the archival materials was also an additional reason. This material is the most researched in Macedonians archives, and continuous manipulation with the original material is risk of further damaging it.

## **3. Aims and objectives**

The goals set by this project were to digitize the full collection of the Manaki brothers kept in the Bitola's archive. This activities were supposed to deliver 20 000 digital items from the material. With the digitization, the scanned copies would be available for the users, according to the Law for archival material. Also, a basic conservation and preservation of the original materials was planned. With this process, all of the materials were supposed to be repacked in new PH neutral casings. A new system of describing the material and creating metadata on English and Macedonian language, according the ISAD (G) standard was also in plan. The grand task was to fully protect the original materials of the Manaki brothers in the Bitola's archive depot, and to make a digital copy of it available for the world.

#### 4. The team

The entire activities within this project was done by a team of 10 archivists from the Bitola's archive: the project leader Goce Stojanovski, the project coordinators Dimitar Gjorgievski and Maria Durlova and the team members Nurten Alijevska – Omerova, Dushan Bozhinovski, Jasna Veleska, Maria Vrangaloska, Katerina Gruevski, Hristina Koteska – Drijovska and Ivana Hadjievska. The team went under a series of training sessions and was qualified for primary cleaning and basic preservation of photographic material, scanning and photographing of archival material, processing the scanned material and creating metadata according the ISAD (G) standard. The assigned tasks were performed with high quality and every team member contributed towards achieving the main goals of the project. The experience and practices learned from this process, in the past two years, contributed towards creating even more professional archive workers. The Bitola's archive now has a team that can face even bigger challenges.

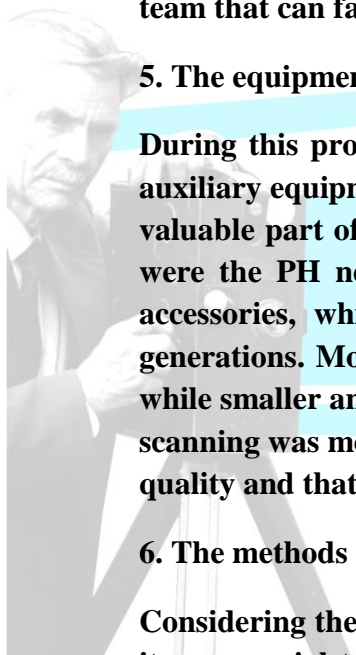
#### 5. The equipment

During this process, three flatbed scanners and one photo camera were used, along with auxiliary equipment like copy stands, light box, color checkers and HD projector. The most valuable part of the items used in this project, regarding the preservation of the material, were the PH neutral casings used to repackage the archival material and the cleaning accessories, which provided better preservation of this original legacy for the future generations. Most of the materials, which were digitized, went under process of scanning, while smaller amount of them, the one in bigger formats, were photographed. Although the scanning was more complicated and more time-consuming process it delivered better image quality and that is why it was preferred compared to photographing of the materials.

#### 6. The methods

Considering the fact that this collection is consisted of different types of archival materials, it was crucial to access in this process using the right methods for each different type of material. For every single large group of materials like glass plate negatives, sheet film negatives, positive prints and documents a system of working activities was established. Also, the team leaders prepared guidelines for the entire process starting from cleaning and basic conservation, scanning, packaging the originals, checking the digitized images and creating the metadata for every different type of archival materials. For every of this working activities record -keeping documentation was created. This documentation, one standard archive box, was added to the file of the collection and will provide tracking of the full process of digitization and preservation of the material.

#### 7. The results



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The project ended according the schedule. The outcome were 25 865 digital files, or around 5 000 files more than were planned. However, the project leaders made a decision to exclude some of the original materials from scanning. Those materials, which are not arranged and processed, are not included in this process due to the internal regulatory acts. Around 1000 glass plate negatives, 1000+ sheet and roll film negatives and several hundreds of original photographs – positive prints are not scanned in this process because they are not described, arranged and processed.

Type of material scanned	Number of items of archive material scanned	Number of digital files	Entries in the metadata
Glass plate negatives	6563	6563	6451
Sheet film negatives	1351	1351	206
Positive prints	10 981	12 853	116
Documents	3 867 sheet of paper	5 098	113
Total:	22 762	25 865	6886

The digital files, beside the British library web site, are ready to be used in the Bitola's archive by researchers and every other user. For the digitized items, a metadata was created, on English and Macedonian language according the ISAD (G) standard.

But the most important outcome from this project is that the original material, which was scanned, the great legacy of the Manaki brothers, went under process of primary cleaning and basic conservation. It was repacked in fully PH neutral materials and casings and it was relocated in metal cabinets in the Bitola's archive depot where it shall remain forever, just as Milton wished.