

## **ADVICE ON SLIDE CLEANING AND CONSERVATION**

As more and more movie film and still photographic collections are passed over to OTA the directors are becoming increasingly aware of the damage which has been caused over time to these invaluable collections by projection, poor handling and inadequate storage facilities.

Most of these films, slides and negatives, from a variety of manufacturers, are handed over to the Archive in good condition. Some unfortunately have suffered from the results of poor handling and display a variety of defects such as finger prints, grease marks and scratches. In exceptional circumstances these can be dealt with by careful cleaning as set out below. Those damaged by fungal growth, due to storage in conditions of high humidity and temperature, require special treatment.

Because the fungus has become an integral part of the emulsion it cannot be removed by mechanical methods, such as cleaning with liquid soap and water. Indeed such methods can exacerbate the damage which has already been caused to the emulsion by the fungus growing within it and in the worst case can cause permanent damage and remove the emulsion altogether. In short the use of liquid soap and water should **never** be used to clean delicate colour slides and negatives

There is **no safe method of mechanically cleaning colour slides** particularly those damaged by fungus or mechanical damage such as scratches. Nevertheless those concerned with the conservation of film archives recommend, when the cleaning of slides is regarded as essential, the use of soft camel hair brushes to remove dust and loose dirt from the slide which should always be handled with clean cotton gloves. It is important that if fungus is present that precautions are taken to prevent it being spread to other uninfected slides. Regular cleaning of brushes and gloves is recommended. Once fungal damage has occurred it can only be controlled by proper storage but never eliminated.

When, as a consequence of poor handling, cleaning is needed to remove grease and finger prints, isopropyl alcohol, **used sparingly on a clean cotton bud**, has been identified by major film manufacturers, such as Kodak, as the safest mechanical method to clean the backing of the film when there are fingerprints or greasy/oily deposits. In exceptional circumstances the emulsion side of the film can be cleaned with isopropyl alcohol provided that it has not been allowed to absorb moisture which could be left behind in the emulsion once the alcohol has evaporated. Films should be handled with clean cotton gloves and good quality cotton buds used, which should be changed for each slide cleaning task.

*(Isopropyl alcohol readily absorbs moisture if the container is left open to the atmosphere. It should be used sparingly in a well-ventilated room. **Fotospeed FC50 Film Cleaner** is one of the recommended*

*products and can be obtained from any Photographic retailer or online. Use a small amount at a time and keep the can tightly capped when not in use.)*

The safest method to preserve colour slide images is to have them scanned as high resolution files, such as JPEGs. It is usually possible at the scanning stage to electronically remove accumulated dust and dirt on the surfaces of the slide.

Slides damaged by fungus, should, both before and after they have been cleaned, be stored separately and away from undamaged slides, in darkness and away from ultra violet light. All slides should be stored in containers which should be acid free and chemically inactive. Ideal conditions for archive storage require humidity below 35% with cool constant temperature conditions. Wide temperature variations should be avoided to prevent moisture condensing on the surface of the slide. Achieving this is near impossible in a domestic situation so the best solution is a room within the house, where wide temperature variations and high humidity are unlikely. A loft or garage with the risk of high humidity or wide variations in temperature should be avoided.

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