

INFORMATION ON SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES**Seminar on enhancing capacity for the “Conservation of at-risk glass plate negative collections in Asia”**

From July 28 to August 1, 2025, in Hanoi, the Institute of Social Sciences Information under the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Japanese Funds-in-Trust (JFIT), held a seminar titled “Enhancing capacity for the “Conservation of at-risk glass plate negative collections in Asia”.

The seminar featured a series of presentations and activities focusing on four main areas: (i) Surveying and identifying signs of deterioration in glass plate negatives; (ii) assessing their current conditions of storage and conservation; (iii) analyzing potential risks to archives and collections; and (iv) proposing recommendations for future conservation and storage of glass plate negative collections in Asian archives and libraries. According to the participants, glass plate photography was most widely used between the 1850s and the 1920s, capturing images of people, landscapes, and customs for various purposes such as ethnographic research, archival documentation, international exhibitions, and postcard production.

Having been digitized and made available on the Google Arts & Culture platform, the royal glass plate negative collection of the Kingdom of Siam (now Thailand) has been inscribed in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. The National Museum of Cambodia currently holds approximately 3,150 glass plate negatives, primarily related to archaeology and ethnography, which have been recognized by UNESCO as a Representative Intangible Cultural

Heritage of Humanity. The Sonobudoyo Museum, under the Cultural Office of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, currently preserves around 500 glass plate negatives. The National Archives of Mongolia currently holds approximately 10,000 glass plate negatives and positives. The Social Science Library, managed by the Institute of Social Sciences Information, preserves a collection of more than 23,400 glass plate negatives, most of which were taken by researchers from the École Française d’Extrême-Orient (EFEO) between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The collection was handed over to Vietnam in 1957. It encompasses a wide range of subjects, such as Oriental studies, ethnology, archaeology, history, and cultural studies.

Due to harsh climatic conditions, limited human resources and inadequate facilities for both physical and digital preservation, as well as restricted efforts to improve access to materials, glass plate negative collections in Asia have been deteriorating, many items of which have severely damaged. In response to these challenges, the participants engaged in in-depth professional discussions and analyses on the conservation of glass plate negatives from a specialized perspective, while also sharing their knowledge and expertise in preserving this type of material. These exchanges aim to enable preservation staff at archival and library institutions across Asia to apply the acquired knowledge and techniques in their professional practice, thereby preventing further deterioration of glass plates and, more importantly, safeguarding and promoting the value of this unique cultural resource.

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