Symposium on Teaching with Digital Collections in the Liberal Arts Curriculum

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SNOWBALL EFFECT
INTENDED AND UNINTENDED BENEFITS OF GOING DIGITAL
Going Digital

- **Benefit:**
  - Vortex, Snowball

- **Danger:**
  - Flattening effect

- **Standards:**
  - Architecture of digital archive should provide tools to overcome ‘flattening effect’ disassembled images
Lafayette College Digital Archives: Five sub-collections

- 台湾写真帖 "Taiwan Photographic Monthly"
- Michael Lewis Colonial Taiwan Postcard Collection [link]
- 台湾の風光 "Scenic Taiwan"
- The Gerald and Rella Warner Collection [link]
- Gerald Warner Taiwan Image Collection [link]
"Snowball Effect"

- **Upside**: Build Collection
- **Downside**: Staffing/Labor
Organic Growth

- Lewis Postcards
- Warner Postcards
- Warner Negatives
- Scenic Taiwan
- Taiwan Photographic Monthly
Images from the colonized world

- "Center of Calculation" (Bruno Latour)
  - Remove phenomena from local (particularistic) context; re-classify by standardized nomenclature
  - Problem: reifies categories; turns human beings into specimens; loss of local context (esp.: race/ethnicity)

- Compounding the Problem:
  - Websites aggregate information from aggregators
"Commensuratization"
2d-order centers of calculation

- Image Websites re-aggregate pictures that are already re-aggregated from centers of collection
  - Taiwan National Library
  - Formosa Savage on Flickr
  - Taipics: Headhunters
Digital Archive v. Website

New Possibilities for:
- Re-centering calculation
  - Reconstruction of photographic 'social biography'
- De-centering calculation
  - New combinations Ex. 1 Ex. 2
  - Documentary Transparency
Benefits of going digital

- Intended
  - public access
- Unintended
  - positive feedback loop for acquisition/research
    - picture postcards, photographs esp. difficult
- Unrealized
  - potential for collaborative research
  - classroom use