
**Imaging materials — Processed colour
photographs — Methods for measuring
thermal stability**

*Matériaux pour l'image — Photographies couleurs après traitement —
Méthodes de mesure de la stabilité thermique*



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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 18936 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 42, *Photography*.

Introduction

This International Standard covers the methods and procedures for measuring the long-term, dark storage stability (thermal stability) of colour photographs.

Today, the majority of photographs are made with colour dyes and pigments. The length of time that such photographs are to be kept can vary from a few days to many hundreds of years, and the importance of image stability can be correspondingly small or great. Often the ultimate use of a particular photograph may not be known at the outset. Knowledge of the useful life of colour photographs is important to many users, especially since stability requirements often vary depending upon the application. For museums, archives and others responsible for the care of colour photographic materials, an understanding of the behaviour of these materials under various storage and display conditions is essential if they are to be preserved in good condition for long periods of time.

Any change in density, contrast or stain, whether due to colourant fading, changes in colourant morphology or discolouration of residual substances will change the appearance of the photograph.

The most damaging change tends to be contrast balance distortions brought about by differential fading of the three image colourants. These manifest themselves as shifts in colour balance from highlights to shadows that are especially noticeable in a scale of neutrals, for example a shift from magenta to green due to fading of the photograph's magenta image colourant, or from yellow to blue or cyan to red due to fading of the yellow or cyan colourant.

The second most consequential change is that caused by an increase in stain. The result may simply be a discolouration of the D_{\min} areas or a change in the D_{\min} colour balance.

Cyan, magenta, yellow and sometimes black, red, green and blue colourants that are dispersed in transparent binder layers, or absorbed onto special receiver layers coated onto transparent or white opaque supports, form the images of most modern colour photographs. Colour photographic images typically fade during storage and display; they will usually also change in colour balance because the image colourants seldom fade at the same rate. In addition, a yellowish (or occasionally other colour) stain may form and physical degradation may occur, such as embrittlement and cracking of the support and image layers. The rate of fading and staining is governed principally by the intrinsic stability of the colour photographic material and by the conditions under which the photograph is stored and displayed. The quality of chemical processing or post-processing is another important factor. Post-processing treatments and, in the case of digitally generated photographs, post-production treatments, such as application of lacquers, plastic laminates and retouching colours, also may affect the stability of colour materials.

The three main factors that influence storage behaviour, or dark stability, are the temperature and relative humidity of the air that has access to the photograph, as well as atmospheric pollutants to which the photograph is exposed. High temperature, particularly in combination with high relative humidity, will accelerate the chemical reactions that can lead to degradation of one or more of the image colourants. Low-temperature, low-humidity storage, on the other hand, can greatly prolong the life of photographic colour images for typical materials. Other potential causes of image degradation are microorganisms and insects.

Most modern photographs degrade too slowly under normal room conditions to permit evaluation of their dark storage stability within reasonable periods. However, it is possible to assess the probable, long-term changes of some photographs under low and moderate keeping conditions with accelerated, high-temperature tests, because recognizable losses in image quality under high temperatures are apt to be generated also under milder temperatures, if at a slower pace. The effects of relative humidity on thermal degradation can also be evaluated with Arrhenius tests conducted at two or more humidity levels.

Long-term changes in image density, colour balance and stain level can be reasonably estimated only when good correlation has been confirmed between accelerated tests and actual conditions of use.

Density changes induced by the test conditions and measured during and after incubations include those in the support and in the various auxiliary layers that may be in a particular product. With most materials, however, the major changes occur in the image-bearing layer. An exception to this is found in some inkjet papers where the inks are thermally stable and substrate yellowing is the failure mode (see Reference [9]).

The tests for predicting the stability of colour photographic images in dark storage are based on an adaptation of the Arrhenius method described by Bard et al. (see References [2] and [3]) and earlier references by Arrhenius, Steiger and others (see References [4], [5] and [6]). Although this method is derived from well understood and proven theoretical precepts of chemistry, the validity of its application to predicting changes of photographic images rests on empirical confirmation. Although many chromogenic-type colour products yield image fading and staining data in both accelerated and non-accelerated dark ageing tests that are in agreement with the Arrhenius relationship, some other types of products do not. For example, integral-type instant colour print materials often exhibit atypical staining at elevated temperatures; treatment of some chromogenic materials at temperatures above 80 °C and 60 %RH may cause loss of incorporated high-boiling solvents and abnormal image degradation; and the dyes of silver dye-bleach images deaggregate at combinations of very high temperature and high relative humidity, causing abnormal changes in colour balance and saturation (see Reference [7] in the bibliography). In general, photographic materials tend to undergo dramatic changes at relative humidities above 60 % (especially at the high temperatures employed in accelerated tests) owing to changes in the physical properties of gelatine and other binder materials. Lower maximum relative humidities may need to be tested for some of the more humidity-sensitive inkjet materials because of phase changes such as melting point or glass transition temperature.

Imaging materials — Processed colour photographs — Methods for measuring thermal stability

1 Scope

This International Standard describes test methods for determining the long-term dark storage stability of colour photographic images.

It is applicable to colour photographic images made with traditional photographic materials. These images are generated with chromogenic, silver dye-bleach, dye transfer, dye-diffusion-transfer “instant” systems and similar systems. The test method specified in this International Standard also covers the dark-stability of digital colour images produced with dry- and liquid-toner electrophotography, thermal dye transfer (sometimes called “dye sublimation”), and inkjet printing systems.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 5-3, *Photography and graphic technology — Density measurements — Part 3: Spectral conditions*

ISO 5-4, *Photography and graphic technology — Density measurements — Part 4: Geometric conditions for reflection density*

ISO 11664-4, *Colorimetry — Part 4: CIE 1976 $L^*a^*b^*$ Colour space*

ISO 18911, *Imaging materials — Processed safety photographic films — Storage practices*

ISO 18913, *Imaging materials — Permanence — Vocabulary*

ISO 18920, *Imaging materials — Reflection prints — Storage practices*

ISO 18924, *Imaging materials — Test method for Arrhenius-type predictions*

ISO 13655, *Graphic technology — Spectral measurement and colorimetric computation for graphic arts images*

ISO 18941, *Imaging materials — Colour reflection prints — Test method for ozone gas fading stability*

ISO 18944, *Imaging materials — Reflection colour photographic prints — Test print construction and measurement¹⁾*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 18913 and the following apply.

3.1

operational control point

set point for equilibrium conditions measured at sensor location(s) in an exposure device

[ASTM G 113]

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