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MAINTENANCE CONSULTING & TRAINING

How to and why for a maintenance scrap book

The advent and acceptance of digital photography has significantly improved the ability to take historical photos and manage those photos after they are taken. The questions I would like to address are what photos should be taken, how to take them and why.

For most maintenance departments (who don't have one) a digital camera is high on the priority list. Like computers the quality has improved and the cost has come down. In the US good cameras can be purchased for \$500-\$1000.

There are several major categories of reasons for keeping an historical record with photographs

1. General condition: To see if the asset has deteriorated or in any other way changed over time (such as moved, sunk, twisted, etc.).
2. The second issue in construction is to determine accurately where things are located (such as where the sewer line was actually run), or to document the particulars of construction (was there re-bar in place when they poured the footer). There will be a large number of shots and all have to be described (who, what, when, where, etc.) for the scrapbook to have maximum value. The toughest issue with construction documentation is that the work has to be retrievable 5-10 or 20 years after construction. No one may still be around to tell the current people that this documentation project is available.
3. After specific damage, accident, claim or potential claim. Photographs for this category will become evidence for a claim or to defend a claim. A higher level of care is necessary including
 - a. Documentation of time and date of shots,
 - b. Location from which shots are taken,
 - c. Name, affiliations and contact information of photographer,
4. To document large repairs the photographs should tell the whole story of the repair. Shots taken every hour, shift or day need to be accompanied by a narrative. It is important that the book made up for the repair is stored so that it can be found in a year or two (even 5) when the repair is to be done again.

Guidelines for taking these photographs

1. Before you shoot, think what would I like to know 5 years from now about how the asset looks today. If you don't know some likely answers to this question find someone who does.
2. For the first of a series stand back to show the asset in its correct place. Document who is shooting, when the shot is taken and where you are standing. Write down any other useful information such as weather (if that is relevant).

3. Use good photographic skills to center the asset and move close in (by zoom or by walking!) so that the important parts of the asset full the frame. The biggest complaint is that the meat of the picture is too small to see anything useful.
4. Be sure the lighting is adequate to show the level of detail necessary for the asset. Add flash or artificial lights as needed.
5. If there is a front and back, top and bottom shoot from a variety of angles.

Always complete the job by building a document, catalog, printing a scrapbook and publicizing its existence. Large organizations are starting to have thousands of photographs that are uncataloged, undocumented and impossible to find and use.

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