
Basic Image Requirements for HMML Studio Projects

Copyright©2011 Wayne Torborg, Director of Digital Collections and Imagery, Hill Museum & Manuscript Library

In creating images of manuscript pages for the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML), certain basic quality control requirements need to be met in order for the images to be qualified for payment by HMML to the technician(s) producing the images.

-Images need to be in focus. The technician can choose to use the camera's autofocus system or focus the camera manually, either by sighting through the eyepiece or using the “live view” function of the camera and software. In either case, images that are out of focus will be rejected for payment. It is also crucial to use an appropriate F-stop (f11 to f16 or so) so that there is sufficient depth-of-field to render all parts of a manuscript page in acceptable focus.

-Basic composition must be good. The framing of photographs is covered in other HMML documents. What HMML does not want is images with lots of empty space around the manuscript page. This wastes pixels in the final image file and limits how large the image file can be when viewed or printed out.

-Manuscripts must sort in reading order. If proper procedures are followed, a folder full of manuscript pages will sort by filename so that the book can be read in the proper order. The manuscript pages sort first; the “additional” photos of the spine, covers, etc. will end up last. With books photographed as two-page spreads, this is pretty easy to accomplish. If the user is photographing books one page at a time (recto and verso), special care must be taken so that when the rectos and versos are finally combined after renaming (outlined in “Foliation and Filenames3”) the book will read properly when sorted by filename.

HMML recommends photographing books as two-page spreads if at all possible, as this is faster and is far less error-prone. If books need to be photographed a page at a time, it is recommended that the folios be numbered in pencil at the upper corner (as is often the case with manuscripts in collections) so that the filenames can be checked against the images to verify that it is indeed the right folio number. If this can't be done, it may be necessary to photograph the book in order, alternating between recto and verso. This is slower, but will ensure that the files are in order.

-Basic exposure and color balance must be good. The studio setup is generally put together and tested to produce images in accordance with HMML's image standards for color balance and exposure. Images that stray too far from the standards outlines in other HMML documents will be subject to payment discounts or the need to rephotograph.

-Hard drives shipped to HMML need to be in proper order and structure. “Foliation and Filenames3.pdf” outlines how data needs to be arranged on the external hard disk drive to be sent to HMML. This is important for HMML's archiving and backup activities.

-Metadata “slate” must be photographed. Whether it is generated by a database program or filled out by hand, HMML needs to have a metadata sheet as part of the manuscript images.

-Images must have grayscale/metric scale in each photograph. Without this, proper color balance cannot be ascertained and there is no size reference if the dimensions somehow become lost.