Are We Reduced To Using Scraps Of Cut Film?

Sterling Newberry

Kent Christensen documents the values of glass photographic plates[1] and also their demise[2]. As a former user of glass plates for microscopy, radiography, autoradiography and spectroscopy, I sympathize with Kent. Today there are substitute sheet and or roll films for most of the glass plate applications. For example, I have found Kodak's "Tmax"* films as sensitive as lantern plates for soft X-rays and nearly as good for resolution. Tmax is also a good general purpose emulsion for the laboratory, with the possibility of reversal development for slides and availability in a range of formats including 120 and four by five. Perhaps we should recognize the passing of the glass plate as part of current times and inscribe "RIP" over our hallowed collection of glass negatives. After all, many predict that electronic photography will eventually replace all forms of chemical photography.

Well, for the present, and possibly considerable future, chemically processed film will not politely bow out of the scene. The needs of microscopy will have little import on the decisions of the film makers. It is the large markets such as commercial movies, advertising and family photos which will drive this market. However, so long as films are available, many microscopists will make good use of them. See for example Kremer et al on test for suitable film for high-voltage microscopy[3]. Furthermore they are going to have specialized needs, not answered by the "available products".

A point in question is raised by Jan Ryerse[4] who cuts film sizes he needs from larger sheets of Kodak 4489 EM film. Thus the whimsical title which got you involved in this note. Now this author must confess that he is also a dark room cutter of unexposed and exposed film, even film which must be handle in total darkness. For example, it is very helpful for aligning 3D views made on older equipment. Also many of us like to use the super 2X2 slides but find there is no available two by two (50 mm square) film. In fact there aren't any super slide (2"X 2") masks or glass binding materials available anymore from local suppliers.

So what can we do about it? First we can pass on good ideas for tools and techniques in the practical hints column of this magazine. The problems include film damage, loss of identification and indication of the emulsion side. Cost effective sources of bulk film and films which meet unusual needs will also be of general interest. Finally our needs may present business opportunities for some of our suppliers. ■

1. Christensen, A. Kent, "Preparation of 2" X 2" Projection Slides From EM and Other Negatives", Microscopy Today 1994 #2.
2. Christensen, A. Kent, "Projector Slide Plates" A note on difficulty of Procuring them. Microscopy Today 1994 #4.
3. Kremer, James R. et al, "Analysis of Photographic Emulsions for High-Voltage Electron Microscopy", MSA Proceedings 1993 pg 452 & 3.
4. Ryerse, Jan S., "A Simple Method to make High Resolution Projection Slides of Electron Micrographs" Microcopy Today 1994 #6.

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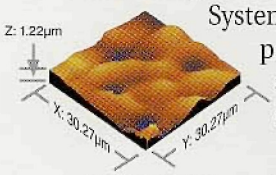

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