Matting Prints

Calculating Dimensions for Matting a Print

Assumptions:

1. You intend to frame the print (eventually.)
2. You want the outside dimensions to be whole numbers, rather than fractional numbers, so you don’t need a custom frame.
3. You intend to “mat over” the paper your print is on rather than “floating” the print in a shadow box frame.
4. You have titled, numbered, and signed/dated your print just below the bottom of the image (printed) area.
5. You have a sharp utility and/or X-Acto knife, some gummed tape, a piece of matboard (archival 4-ply), and a piece of mountboard (archival foam board.)

Step 1: Measure the width of your print (the printed area, not the papers’ width.) Write this number on a sheet of paper.

Step 2: Decide what size reveal\(^1\) you want and multiply that number by “2.” (For example: a \(\frac{1}{4}\)” reveal times two equals \(\frac{1}{2}\)” [one half inch].) Write it down.

Step 3: Decide what nominal\(^2\) mat size you want and multiply that number by “2.” Write it down.

Step 4: Add the three numbers you have written down (you will, at this point, probably NOT have a whole number. If you do have a whole number, skip to Step 5.) If you have a fractional number (such as \(16 \frac{3}{4}\”) round up, or down, to a whole number. Take what you added or subtracted and divide that number by 2 (this sum is to be added to the “nominal” size of each mat side.)

Step 5: Repeat steps 1 through 4 for the height of the mat/image/reveal. If needed, always add any excess to the bottom of the mat. See Step 5 (on the right) for an example of how this is done.

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\(^1\) Reveal: The amount of paper, beyond the image, that will be revealed by your mat window.

\(^2\) Nominal: An approximate, rather than an actual, number that is more or less than the actual final number.