

AIC 27th Annual Conference Tips and Tricks Write-up

Universal Clip Type LED Cellphone Microscope: An Affordable, Handy Tool for any Conservator
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A universal clip type cellphone microscope is a small, portable, and affordable way to examine objects up close and on the go. It works by clipping over the camera of any standard smartphone, turning on the built-in light and using your camera's own zoom. There are many variations available for purchase online, but the one I use achieves a x60 zoom and is very effective at getting a close look at paper accretions or stains on paper.



The major advantages of these microscopes are that they are extremely affordable. A quick internet search of retailers such as Amazon or eBay shows many options for under \$10.00. They are convenient to carry around and easy to use. Mine even comes with a black light for additional materials testing. Finally, if you don't find yourself using it in the lab it makes for a really fun party trick to amaze your friends and family.

It is important to keep in mind that the microscopes have a limited range of magnification, so may not be effective in all situations. Due to cheap manufacturing, the light can be difficult to use and sometimes gets stuck. The microscope requires contact with an object in order to focus, but a clear barrier can be used on sensitive media. Finally, the clarity of the image is heavily reliant on the quality of the camera being used, so the latest iPhone or Android would be recommended.

Overall, this little device is a handy tool that can be carried around for quick and easy magnification on the go. It satisfies the question "what is that?" while examining objects and allows on the spot documentation via a cell phone camera. With all this goodness, there is no excuse for any conservator to go without one in their toolbox.