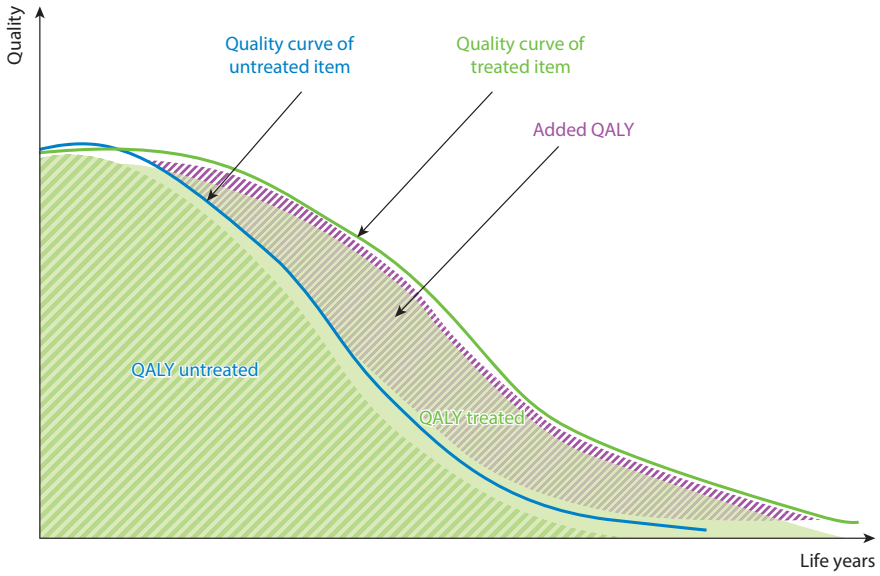

Figure 2. 'Quality graph' showing QALYs as a product of collection quality and life expectancy for two situations: without treatment (blue), and after treatment (green). The surface area under the curve equals the number of QALYs. QALYs added as a result of a treatment that slows down the rate of decay are indicated as the difference in area under the two curves (purple).

Application in case studies

To illustrate the application of cost-effectiveness analysis to the decision-making process in collection care, the QALY approach was adapted and tested on two case studies dealing with the dilemma of storage of photographs (The National Archives, London) and slides (The National Museum of Ethnology, Leiden). The latter, described here in more detail, looked at competing storage requirements of a slide collection against a collection of black and white photographs (B/W). It involved 46 000 slides in the museum's *mediatheek*, stored in nine slide cabinets in the non-climatised attic of the museum, of which about 25 percent were described and their significance assessed. They were in reasonable condition, yet some 40 percent were discoloured. The B/W prints were stored in boxes in climatized storage facilities. They have been designated as a historic collection at national level due to their informational and artistic values. The prints are catalogued at item level and can be found without assistance. They were digitized and put in metadata form for the 'Memory of the Netherlands' project (www.geheugenvannederland.nl) and the surrogates can be found and retrieved easily with content and context.

The plan was to rehouse all slides in slide boxes in a climatized storage room at 20°C/50%RH (option 0). The dilemma was whether it would be cost-effective to continue with that plan, which would expect a clearly visible discolouration in the next 40 years under those conditions, or to make space in the cool and cold storage areas occupied by the B/W prints (option 1). Moving the less susceptible B/W prints to 20°C/50%RH would influence their quality over the next decades very little, whereas lower temperature storage of the slides would slow down their rate of degradation. Another option was to leave the B/W prints in their current locations and place the slides in their boxes in refrigerators that could be placed anywhere in the