

Alt-Archives: Community-Based Video Collections (discussion session) Thursday, March 12, 2015, 1:30-2:30PM

- **Rachel Mattson**, Archives Project Manager, La MaMa ETC
- **Yvonne Ng**, Senior Archivist, WITNESS
- **Rebecca Fraimow**, National Digital Steward Resident, WGBH

How can archivists support community-based content providers who have created/are creating collections of digital video?

AGENDA

1) Introductions.

2) Discussion Activity.

3) Debrief and Discussion

4) Next steps

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1) Intros (10)

Rachel Mattson - LaMama ETC,

Rebecca Fraimow - WGBH NDSR, XFR Collection

Yvonne Ng - WITNESS

Jack Brighton - Digital Director, WILL Illinois. Interested in configuration for collaboration - what is his role in the media ecology, ?

Allie McCormack, Baylor University. New to position, working with video and oral history collections.

Paul Constantine, U Washington. Film and video collection, negotiating with Seattle TV station and municipal archives.

Rosemary Davis - interested in methods to highlight communities, documentation of rise of amateur theatre, especially women. How make more available.

Sadie - WGBH. Interested in supporting projects like Cambridge Community TV collection, digitized their VHS.

Krista White, Rutgers. Helping faculty digitize oral history collections.

Jim - Dickinson College. Starting to tackle AV materials. Community based project Central Penn LGBT group's oral history project.

Naomi Steinburger - have lots of non-digitized films and videos. Want to start recording oral histories with curators at org

Margery - Temple Univ., archives for many Philly-based community organizations, the go-to place for help for a lot of these organizations

Mark Williams - Dartmouth Media Ecology Project - online AV archives. How to get users to contribute metadata back to archives. Thinking about small localized professional organizations; home recordings of people in early television studies.

Karen Cariani - WGBH. American Archive. A lot of media! How help smaller stations move their materials forward.

Annie Johnson - CLIR Post Doc Fellow - student video assignments.

Nicky - CLIR, new digitization project

Cheryl - Boise State

Imogen Smith - Dance Heritage Coalition. Digitization hubs, figuring out metadata, access, storage. Outreach to dance community whose primary mission is not to be an archive.

2) Discussion Activity (15)

Scenario: A small group of videographers has amassed a valuable video collection documenting a series of street performances that took place in their city over the past 15 years. They have analog and born-digital material. One of their members has been taking care of the material over the years as an informal archivist, but this person doesn't have professional archives training.

- Who are the potential stakeholders in this scenario?
 - the community of performers, documentarians/the people who shot the video, users writ large (scholars, students) local arts agencies, economic development agency, tourism board, the NSA, the rights holders, geographers + the people who live on those streets, real estate agents, cultural historians.
- What would be the needs/concerns of xxx stakeholder regarding this material/collection?
 - who is going to administrate the intellectual property rights? personal rights? ethics? discoverability? how will it be used? what specific restrictions might the creators wish to place on the material? who should be permitted to view it?

was there consent to shoot this video? there's a conflict at times between interests and richness of materials. the COST and capacity and expertise. storage, migration. who's making decisions about who's making decisions about what to keep and how? security and surveillance concerns.

- What are some possible ways that archivists might help address these concerns / support the stakeholders?
 - approach the group and facilitate conversations about these issues. (this scenario assumes there's interest in preservation among the group.) archivists can share their methods with each other, vis a vis e.g. rights issues. create + publish guides, workflows, guidelines for how to deal with these issues. (See bostonlocaltv.org for an example.) support organizations to manage their own media (in part so that the media makers can continue using their materials and in part so that your institution doesn't have to accumulate huge amounts of video and make decisions about it. (WITNESS has published a guide for doing this kind of work: archiveguide.witness.org). archivists can conduct workshops for community based groups. trust is an issue for archivists who want to work with community groups. Another model for working with community-based groups: xfrcollective.wordpress.com/ (another Issue: maintaining working decks for legacy analog video formats. note WGBH finds ¾ inch tape dissolves upon playback) Perhaps: create a collaborative to join together to get bulk digitization rates. work with AMIA.

how to reverse engineer assumptions?

do outreach to folks who hold this material to get them to understand the risks.

once you start asking questions, UIUC just did a survey based on what Indiana did, and found that when you start asking people about their media collections suddenly they want to give it to you. Then you have to figure out how you're going to handle that. How to bring in resources to help? Peel the layers of the onion to figure out ways to combine and scale. You have to measure the size and shape of the problem before you can solve it. Perhaps an archival team can come into an environment to do prep work so then you can fit it into the larger framework.

3)Debrief and Discussion (20)

- What are some interesting / innovative projects / approaches that are working / have worked that you've seen or been involved with?
 - DHC developing templates to do description and inventory of their collections. Don't want people to just bundle up their stuff and hand it to a vendor, digitizing things that might not be valuable, missing valuable material. Guides on what to think of BEFORE you digitize. How to select, costs, prioritizing.
 - XFR working with DHC templates with one organization
 - ATAP
 - WGBH inventory project - 120 stations participated. Minimal records, but 2.5 million records. Funding enabled stations to basically know what there is. Not viewing the tape, just the very minimal key data. Despite training, data still needed a lot of normalization - challenges of normalization. People don't have time, resources.
 - Used spreadsheets - something that everyone knows how to use, don't expect people to use metadata standards, etc, scare them off
 - If you don't know what you have, you don't have it --Jack Brighton.
 - Talking to people, language. Not clear to non-archivists what archival terminology / concepts / shorthands mean. Need to lose jargon and understand what these terms mean to other people.
- What gaps + challenges still exist? What options / tools don't yet exist (or don't exist in a way that is accessible to smaller groups)?
 - Small organization could never use Hydra. Interested, go to sessions at conferences, but can't ever use it at her organization.
 - When we say "affordable" "underresourced" - means different things to different people.
 - Is there a way to collaborate regionally with institutions that do have resources, but to maintain some community control. Sometimes hard to balance desires of institution (e.g. access, rights, etc) and community. First step is to know what are the requirements.
 - Sometimes small orgs can be taken advantage of. Ex. org that donated to institution for digitization, their stuff is not being prioritized. Now they lost their collection, and it's not digitized.
 - Occupy Philadelphia - reconciling activist culture with legalistic culture not always easy.

- Cultural clash over concepts. West coast tribes concepts of intellectual property - who has the right to sign? who has right to view. Mukurtu. <http://www.mukurtu.org/>
- LOCKSS - expensive
- Pressure should be put in Hydra community to make more accessible system. Turn key solution. Except developers all work at the large institutions.
- What are examples of challenges from your own experience that you would like help solving?

4) Next steps (5)

--Share these notes

--J. Brighton volunteers to write a blog post on this discussion.

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Proposed discussion DESCRIPTION:

This session considers the archival challenge posed by video held by grassroots arts and activist organizations or in personal collections. In the past decade, moving image archivists have made great strides in developing tools to assist in the custodianship and management of both analog and born-digital video. However, many of these tools remain unavailable outside of large cultural heritage organizations -- that is, they are too expensive, too reliant on technical expertise, or too esoteric for small organizations and individuals to access. In this session, participants will discuss the alternative ways in which community-based initiatives are reaching and empowering grassroots artists and activists with video collections. What questions does this work raise? What opportunities does it provide? How might existing tools be made more accessible? Are there ways that large institutions might adapt their practices and policies to better serve the needs of community-based video collections?

This session will be led by archivists working on a range of grassroots video archival projects. At the human rights organization WITNESS (witness.org), Yvonne Ng has developed a set of strategies, materials, and trainings designed to help human rights activists implement solid archival practices; as a member of the XFR Collective (xfrcollective.wordpress.com) Rebecca Fraimow has helped develop a cost-effective, membership-based model to assist under-resourced artists in transferring legacy video to digital; and at the Archives of La MaMa ETC (lamama.org) Rachel Mattson is piloting cost-effective tools and partnerships designed to improve the in-house video archival practices at small arts organizations.

Participants in this session will consider the challenges and opportunities embedded in this kind of work, and will contribute to a public, shared set of session notes. These notes will

summarize the broad themes raised during the discussion, and will include list of existing tools and ongoing initiatives. Some participants may additionally choose to contribute to a blog post about these issues to be published shortly after the UnConference.

[LINK TO CLIR CONNECT DISCUSSION THREAD](#)