



**DLF ENVIRONMENTAL  
SCAN  
BY JEN MOHAN**

# WHO?

- Lot 49 Group
- Digital Library Federation, led by Peter Brantley and Barrie Howard
- Mellon Foundation, specifically Don Waters from the Scholarly Communications Division

# WHY?

- To Determine the Overall Condition of Moving Image Collections
- To Document What Collection Repositories Have
- To Document the Main Obstacles to Digitizing
- How to Construct Better Public-Private Relationships
- To Figure Out How We Craft the Bill of Rights (more on this later)

# HOW?

- A comprehensive Environmental Scan
- Phone Interviews with Archivists
- In-House Visits
- Studying and Reviewing Other Work That Has Been Done on This Topic and Related Topics

# WHEN?

- October, 2007—April, 2008
- **October—November:** Creation of the scan, locating the contacts, sending the scan
- **December—January:** Follow-up questions, collection of data
- **January—Mid-March:** Writing of the paper

# TARGET INSTITUTIONS

- Archives with Substantial Audio-Visual Holdings
- Public Libraries
- Public Television Stations
- Museums
- Colleges and Universities (Special Collections)

GuggenheimMUSEUM

 Smithsonian



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARIES

# **Institutions That Responded**

- 17 from film and television archives
- 5 from historical societies
- 3 from public television stations
- 22 from colleges and universities
- 13 from museums
- 4 from Presidential libraries
- 2 from state archives
- 4 from public libraries

# QUESTIONS ASKED

- Size
- Funding
- Condition
- Content
- Preservation concerns
- Access Issues
- Preservation Assessments
- Cataloguing
- New Projects in Development
- Formats and Obsolete Formats
- Copyright
- Digital Projects
- Digital Standards
- Public-Private Agreements



# Size of Collections

- 4 have between 1—250 items of moving images in their holdings
- 9 have between 250—500
- 1 has between 500—1000
- 24 have over 1,000 items
- 11 have anywhere from 10,000+ to over a 100,000+
- The smallest participating collection has 200 items and the largest has 112,000

# STAFF

- Along with funding, the biggest obstacle
- Senior Archivists are retiring, valuable information goes with them
- 1-5 Staff Members: **61.4%**
- 6-10 Staff Members: **21.4%**
- 11-15 Staff Members: **4.2%**
- 20+ Staff Members: **0%**
- 30+ Staff Members: **8.5%**
- No answer: **8.5%**

# FUNDING

- All surveyed institutions rely heavily on grants, private donations, or budget allotments from mother institutions, especially colleges and universities
- The funding is usually a bare minimum and covers basic needs such as storage, staffing, and supply costs

# CONDITION

- An overwhelming number of institutions said their collections varied in terms of condition
- Most at risk for video: reel-to-reel, U-Matics and various beta tapes
- Most at risk for film: 8mm, 16mm, nitrate
- Home movies are of particular concern
- Most important determiner of condition is cold storage
- Vinegar syndrome, magnetic tape decomposition, lack of storage/improper storage
- Backlog of cataloging
- Lack of staff to handle all repairs

# CONTENT

- It is my hope that archives will be valued for the uniqueness of their holdings than for their size
- **Most common genres:**
  - Documentary (75%)
  - News film and video (33.3%)
  - Educational material (25%)
  - Feature Films (23.3%)
  - Oral History (23.3%)
  - Television Programs (23.3%)

# PRESERVATION COSTS

- Some of the most common costs are: Staff, supplies, storage, reformatting obsolete formats, film-to-film preservation, processing collections and server space for digital materials
- Many do not have a preservation team or conservator in-house; must send materials to an outside vendor
- Many must send their materials to a conservation center within their mother institution; these conservationists may know little or nothing about moving images

# ACCESS ISSUES

- Access and content are the heart of this project—what do we have, how do we get it to people?
- Too many issues to state here, but the major ones are lack of viewing copies, backlog of cataloguing materials, inadequate/outdated finding aids, and **copyright**
- This is where the knowledge of senior staff is critical; where the finding aids fail, they fill the gap

# **PRESERVATION ASSESSMENT**

- Most materials are assessed as they are processed, and few archives perform large-scale assessments
- Many archivists cannot launch large-scale assessment due to time constraints and many of the assessments are outdated



# CATALOGUING

- Most popular cataloguing standards are MARC and Dublin Core, although many institutions create their own cataloguing records that contain similar fields and information
- Virtually none upload records to MIC but they have heard of it and have debated uploading
- Majority of archivists accept materials if they have little or no cataloguing information, stating it is part of their archival mission to accept any materials that relates to their organization

# New Projects in Development

- Many moving image archives are part of larger collections that also contain paper, audio, books, paintings and other media; moving images are only one responsibility
- 13 institutions stated that they are currently engaged in projects with some digital aspect, either for in-house access or for general use on their website, such as streaming clips
- Cataloguing new collections, merging catalog records into one uniform system, transferring obsolete media to newer, more stable formats

# FORMATS

- The diversity of film and video formats (especially video) cause particular preservation obstacles as archivists need to ensure that they have the personnel, supplies and materials, equipment, and know-how to consistently and effectively take care of the various formats in their collections
- 8mm: 51.6%
- 16mm: 75%
- 35mm: 56.6%
- Super 8: 31.6%
- VHS: 81.6%
- DVD: 73.3%
- Betacam SP: 61.6%
- Umatic: 55%

# OBSOLETE FORMATS

- Virtually every institution surveyed stated they had either obsolete media or media that played on obsolete or outdated machines
- Lack of equipment is a major problem
- Most commonly mentioned formats were DAT tapes, reel to reel video, Hi8, UMatics, various Beta tapes, 2" quad, 1" quad, 8mm, super 8mm, and 16mm film



# COPYRIGHT

- Out of the 70 institutions surveyed, only 5 said they had completed a copyright assessment
- Like the preservation assessments, this information is taken when cataloguing
- Serious preservation consequences as preservation work cannot be done if the donor requests to be contacted beforehand



# DIGITAL PROJECTS

- Not substantial right now
- Most projects must be funded by extra grants or fundraisers
- Money is mostly concentrated on infrastructural stabilization, such as transferring copies to stable formats, cataloguing work, and creating more viewing copies
- Larger, richer and prestigious institutions fare better in terms of having funding and

# DIGITAL STANDARDS

- Roughly half the institutions have adopted digital standards, but for images and text
- Common types of preservation copies: Digibeta and DV
- Common types of access copies: wav, mp3 (audio), tiff, Jpeg200 (photos), and Windows, Real Media, Mpeg-2, Mpeg-4, .mov, Quicktime, and Flash (moving images), as well as DVD access



# PUBLIC-PRIVATE AGREEMENTS

- Roughly half have been contacted
- Almost all had substantial concerns regarding various control issues:
- Who would be handling the material?
- Copyright—doubtful they could get clearance
- Many believed there would be too many issues to overcome, including staff constraints, and basic labor



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# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Columbia University Library  
Project/Survey the Audio and Moving  
Image Collections
- Reframe Project, Renew Media
- Money for stabilization of collections
- Continue taking materials with inadequate  
information
- Update donor agreements

# BILL OF RIGHTS

- Main goal is to improve archives' positions and influence when negotiating public-private partnerships
- Google-NARA, Smithsonian-Showtime deals were made with virtually no input from the archival community
- We need to explore all avenues of distribution but we also need to protect our collections and our mission as cultural repositories

# **BILL OF RIGHTS (CONT)**

- Archive will have the right to control digital copies of their works
- Right to pick digitization lab
- Right to have archival professionals deal with the materials
- Archives should never be forced to relinquish copyright control
- Control over storage
- Right to post public domain materials on website

# ANALOG ORPHANS

- So far, all the deals have been between single archives and companies
- Because of this, elite institutions have the most opportunities when it comes to entering digitization partnerships
- If this trend continues, the split in the archival community will be based on finances and size—leaving perhaps millions of materials as analog orphans, with no access to larger audiences

# GROUP FUNDING

- A possible solution is to require private funding via group contracts, rather than through singular contracts. The size of the group (the smallest should probably be three) would be determined by the funder, who would be required to include smaller archives in the funding process. This model is based on the insurance industry, which usually issues insurance to people through groups

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- Interested archives should form a union in order to craft new updates to the Bill of Rights and discuss issues moving forward
- Reach out to private companies
- Embrace orphan legislation