Video & Audio: Preventive Conservation

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http://www.tisch.nyu.edu/preservation

Video & Audio: Preventive Conservation

- Review & Extension
  - Repositories and collections
  - Physical Deterioration
  - Obsolescence
  - Reformatting & Ethics
- Preventative Conservation
  - Facilities and infrastructure
  - Monitoring micro and macro environments
  - Collection Assessment tools
  - Disaster recovery
- Summary

Videotape Repositories-

Univ of GA
Walter J Brown Media Archives

Univ of GA
Walter J Brown Media Archives
Storage-Smithsonian History Museum

Hogan Jazz Archive
Tulane Univ Library

Cinemateca Brasileira (video storage)

Hampton Collection (interviews)

Various Formats Intermixed (Hampton)

Vidipax Storage
Video Storage (Paper Tiger)

MIAP Projects (Paper Tiger)

MIAP Projects (Paper Tiger)

Internship Project

Amer Museum of Natural History

Orphan Works

Home Movies--Emanuel Goldberg
Amateur Film-- UGA
Walter J Brown Media Archive

- Athens GA, 1947
- Shows contrast between White and African-American neighborhoods
  - http://www.libs.uga.edu/media/collections/homemovies/neighborhood.html

Wolfson Florida Moving Image Archive

- http://youtube.com/watch?v=vhWa307owQ0

Palmour Street (1957)

- Gainesville, GA
  - http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpgWZceH3X0
- Educational film from Southern Educational Film Production Service
  - Prelinger Archives

Technical Composition & Deterioration of Video & Audio Tapes

- Binder—Functions as a carrier for the recording material & bonds it to the substrate
- Substrate—Base material on which the recording material is coated (e.g., an aluminum platter or a thin ribbon of polyester film)
Tape Substrate

- Early tape used cellulose acetate
  - Moisture/hydrolysis
  - Vinegar syndrome
- More recent tapes are polyester terephthalate (PET) or polyethylene naphthalate (PEN)
  - Chemically stable
  - Resist hydrolysis and oxidation

Magnetic Particles

- Store recorded information
- Change in magnetic properties can result in loss
  - Magnetic remanence - ability to retain a magnetic field
  - Coercivity - ability to resist demagnetization
  - Magnetic deterioration of the metal particulate and chromium dioxide materials

Binder Layer

- Holds the magnetic particles to the base
- Where the problems are likely to occur
  - binder-base adhesion
  - oxide shedding
  - dropoff
  - hydrolysis
    - sticky shed
    - magnetic head clog
- Tape baking as one solution

Video Cleaning Machine

VidiPax Video Preservation

Longitudinal Recording

Van Bogart  
http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub54
Helical Scan Recording

Van Bogart

http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub54

Tape Pack Problems

Van Bogart

http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub54

Packing problems can lead to playback problems

• Tracks for helical scan can be skewed

Storing Tapes

• Tapes should be stored fully wound in one direction or the other
• Store tapes upright (like a book)
• Do not store near potential magnetic fields
• Storage cases should be opaque and kept away from source of light and humidity
• Do not store tapes in plastic bags
• Exercise the tape every few years

Vinegar Syndrome Deterioration

Image Permanence Institute
Signs of Vinegar Syndrome

• sour smell
• Shrinkage
• buckling of the emulsion
• the appearance of crystals that obscure the image

Tape-Sticky Shed Syndrome

Lost Tapes, Found Sounds Exhibition
Harold Schellinex

Lost Tapes, Found Sounds Exhibition
Harold Schellinex

Lost Tapes, Found Sounds Exhibition
Harold Schellinex

Color Restore (VidiPax)
Difficult Materials become obsolete relatively quickly

- The physical carriers decay or become obsolete
- The technology required to view the carriers changes frequently
- The encoding formats needed to decode the content shift

Obsolete Carriers & Info Techn
Kodak stops making some films

List of old Audio Formats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Years in Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wax Cylinder Records</td>
<td>2- or 4-minute formats, wax or wax compound</td>
<td>1888–1929</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recordable Wax Records</td>
<td>(Direct or Acetate Discs) 33 or 78 revolutions per minute (rpm). Generally vinyl on a paper, glass or metal base</td>
<td>1929–1960s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recording Wire</td>
<td>Spoolueba, usually in 55 or 60 minute lengths, one direction only</td>
<td>c. 1945–1955</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open-reel recording tape</td>
<td>1/4”–2” reel at 7.5, 15, 30, 45 or 75 revolutions per second (rps) speed</td>
<td>c. 1945–50s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital disk, MP3, and other digital recorders</td>
<td>Audio recorded directly in digital files to optical disks or internal hard drives</td>
<td>2000–Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Old Video Formats (www.vidipax.com)

RCA-WBTV

Douglas Edwards News

Jeff Martin – The Dawn of Tape

Early Quad tape was easy-to-use
Re-formatting is not a new idea

What is Reformatting?

- A form of copying
- Usually copied onto a medium having different physical characteristics than the original physical strata
- Examples
  - Document on acidic paper onto non-acidic paper
  - Newspaper microfilming
History of Conservation & Preservation Reformatting

• In ancient times, in the library of Pamphilus at Caesaria, badly damaged papyrus manuscript pages were replaced with parchment (which was stronger) - Saint Jerome

• The Bible was hand-copied for millennia

• 1964 - US Newberry Library (Paul Banks) began 1st US institutional preservation program

• 1987 - US NEH begins funding massive microfilming of brittle paper (mainly newspapers)

Why do we Reformat?

• Because we cannot sustain the original object (its physical characteristics are deteriorating too fast)

• Because continued access and handling of the original object will rapidly decay its physical characteristics (so we create a surrogate for users and store the original in very good conditions, away from users)

• Because viewing the work requires some kind of technology, and we can’t keep that technology working very far into the future.
Limitations of Reformatting

- Authenticity issues (more later)
- User behaviors (newspaper, book, video game, …)
- Users mistaking the reformatted work for the original

Critiques of Reformatting

- Can’t view outside the library
- Only sequential access
- Viewing and studying is awkward
- …
But unless we Reformat, we totally lose some kinds of works
(particularly audiovisual works like film)
• 50% of all titles produced before 1950 have vanished (approximate number as of late 1970s)
• This reflects full-length features; survival rates are much lower for other types (studio newswires, shorts, docs, independent, ...), and these "orphans" are particularly in peril
• Fewer than 20% of features from 1920s survive in complete form; survival rates of 1910s is <10% (and none of these are negatives)


And sometimes we have to reformat because of technology changes
• We don’t have video players to play tapes made 25 years ago
• We don’t have 8-inch floppy disk drives, syquest drives, zip drives
• We don’t have Windows 3 operating systems
• But this is something that conservators have always dealt with...

Authenticity Issues with reformatting-
• Is the work what it purports to be?
• Commercial reformatting examples
• Media archivists and interpretation
• Beyond Film & Video

Churchill Speeches
• http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/churchill-hour.htm
• The voice of Norman Shelley?

Commercial Reformatting Issues:
PR at 1967 re-issue of GWTW
• “Spherical Blow-Up”
• “In the Splendor of 70mm. Wide screen and full stereophonic sound!”
• “For the thousands who remember its unparalleled drama, action and romance! For the new thousands to whom the wonders will be revealed for the first time! Breathtaking spectacle, inspired acting by the greatest cast ever assembled! The screen’s most exciting love story! The most-talked about picture ever made!”

But most people didn’t know that 70mm widescreen is different shape than 35mm
Change in Aspect Ratio forces cutting

Pan and Scan example

• 7 Brides for 7 Brothers, Stanley Donen, MGM, 1954 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan_and_scan

This meant eliminating part of the frame

Eliminating even in famous scenes

But the re-release wasn’t governed by artistic concerns

• Intellectual Property is owned by MGM, not by Fleming or Selznick
• MGM is motivated maximizing profit, not in maintaining artistic integrity
• Bigger is always better
• Not radically different than another blow to artistic integrity/originality in Atlanta 20 years later…

Atlanta was also home of 1980s Colorization movement
Sometimes even the Director wants to go back and change their original film

Star Wars 1977 vs 2004

Someone needs to maintain the integrity of artistic works

- This means preserving original versions
  - even when commercial interests want to replace the older version with something new and fancy
  - even when the “artist” wants to use more recent technological developments to “improve” their work

Media Archivists

- Preserve original works
- Provide access to older versions
- Maintain the integrity of the “original” in any restoration process
- Champion works that do not have commercial entities pushing for their preservation and distribution
- Try to make sure that works are viewed within their original context-

Viewing Context (images like in Dayton-Hudson)

Be concerned about ©

- For preservation you may need to re-format, but with recent changes in copyright laws, you may not have the right to re-format
- Intellectual property rights are very difficult, particularly considering that most films and videos have extensive underlying rights that you could never get prior permission for (stock footage, historical footage, music composition, music performance, …) [“Eyes on the Prize”]
- And even if you have the right to re-format for preservation, you might not have the right to show what you have preserved
Possible endless need for reformatting implies

- Possible loss with each generation
- Requires managed environment
- Can lead to © violations

Managed Environment

- More than temperature & humidity control
- Periodic monitoring of the works
- Periodic monitoring of the technical environment for viewing the works (software, systems, hardware)
- Trusted repositories

Preventative Conservation

- Facilities and infrastructure
- Monitoring micro and macro environments
- Collection Assessment tools
- Disaster recovery

Hampton Collection (atmosphere cntrl)

Academy-Atmosphere

IPI Storage Guide
Temperature & Humidity for Tape Storage

- Variance of less than 2°C and 5% RH per 24 hours
- Ideally 8°C and 25% RH
- Other options
  - 20°C (68°F) and 20-30% RH
  - 15°C (59°F) and 20-40% RH
  - 10°C (50°F) and 20-50% RH
- Never store below 8°C

Ideal Temperature/Humidity

Improving storage outside the Can

- Lowering temperature and/or relative humidity can help reduce the rate of acidification in degrading film
- Trying to remove acid within the can does not outweigh the benefits of low temperature and humidity
- The greatest improvements in chemical stability can be achieved with cold temperatures
Monitoring Micro & Macro Environments

Improving storage inside the Can
Jean-Louis Bigourdan, AMIA 1998

- zeolites, silica gel, and low relative humidity preconditioning help mostly by reducing moisture content
- acid adsorbents retard further decay
- acid adsorbents do not reduce the acid content of degraded film
- the use of cardboard disks is not recommended

IPI A-D Strips

Acid Detection Strips at NYU Library

NYU University Archives Internship Project

Acid Detection results/autocatalytic point readings

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<th>University Archives Collections</th>
<th>Total # of items</th>
<th>% of 0–1.0</th>
<th>% of 1.5–3.0</th>
<th>% of &gt;3.0</th>
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<tr>
<td>Audio Visual</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Brademas Papers</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>Classics Dept. Tapes</td>
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<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>Dept. of Athletics</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>Misc. Materials/Demos</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous Tapes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thermohygrograph
Setting Collection Priorities

• You collection will always need more time than you can give
• Triage—setting priorities

Methodology for Setting Priorities (1/3)

Identify different groupings within your collection

• By sub-collection
• By age
• By where they’ve been stored
• By video format

Methodology for Setting Priorities (2/3)

Survey a Random Sample in each grouping

• Physically inspect each of the random samples, looking for metal oxide, tape packing problems, breakage, edge damage, stretching, curling, housing damage, or other signs of deterioration
• [play each tape]

Methodology for Setting Priorities (3/3)

Analyse the data you gathered

• Extrapolate from your sample to project how many total tapes in each category are likely to have each problem
• Combine this data with other information (relative value of each sub-collection, replace-ability of particular groups of tapes, how unique certain groups are, © issues with reformatting, special funding available for certain sub-groups
• Set priorities based on the above

Collection Assessment Tools

• New York University Visual and Playback Inspection Ratings System (ViPIRS): Tool for Evaluating Audiovisual Magnetic Media
http://library.nyu.edu/preservation/movingimage/vipirshome.html
• Columbia University Libraries: Audio/Moving Image Survey Database
http://cups.ecn.columbia.edu/cupscollections/aids/bts/preservation/projects.html

Other policy issues

• Limit on what you agree to accept (numbers, conditions, uniqueness, rights issues, …)
• Access issues
  – Who can view; how often; restricted items?
  – When can copies be made (& under what conditions)?
  – What should be available online?
Other important resources for collection maintenance (1/2)


Planning for the future

- Track where field is going
- “Environmental Scans”
- Technological Obsolescence

Today, peoples’ home collections are increasingly digital

Storage Media

- Removable media (like CDs) is not a long-term answer
- The long-term answer requires ongoing management, and involves regular migration or emulation. This solution is only viable with storage on spinning disks.

Storing on CDs becomes a big problem over time
Consumers replace their CDs with a hard disk (& so should archives)

Plain DVDs are no longer the latest format

Which should be reformatted to digital today?

• Born digital--need to be kept in digital form
• Video--probably; at least soon
• Film-Not very soon
• A guessing game; we need more R&D, as well as education

New distribution:

iTunes-U UCB Oral Histories

iTunes-U UCB Campus Events

iTunes-U Duster Video
Do we trust iTunes to preserve these?

The Re-Mix generation

Dueling Videos: Scholar Creates Remix of Another Academic’s YouTube Hit

Chronicle report on Center for Social Media Re-Mix project

Some Re-Mix Videos

• Baby Got Book
• Bush vs Zombies
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzq8tXtrPQ8
• George Bush Don’t Like Black People
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9517rzRg5B8
• Victory in Iraq
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V89nS53Oe7o
• Fox News Edits a Democrat to Make Him Look Worse
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njJiLgP3Jpg
• XX

Born-digital images

• Where is the “original”??
Born-digital works are both easier and harder to preserve than analog works

- With a born-digital work, we don’t have to worry so much about the “original artifact” (there really isn’t one)
- We know that digital works face a whole range of obsolescence problems, so they must be reformatted at least once per decade

New technologies will let us do new things

Phonautograph

- Invented by Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville
- Recorded sounds onto paper, blackened by smoke from an oil lamp
- But there was never a method for playing these back

Phonautogram

- Using archival sources (letters, patents, old laws), LBL researchers decypher patterns in the 1860 blackened paper and create a “virtual stylus” to play it
- Au Clair de la Lune (1860)—oldest known recording
- Lesson—don’t throw away blackened paper!
Previous LC/LBS research interpreted record grooves, allowing us to play broken records

But new technologies require us to figure out how to handle and preserve new things

Ideal Sound Format

- WAV files at faster bit-rate for music than for speech
- Store on spinning disks and have a long-term migration plan
  - avoids the problem of managing too many removable media, but requires rigorous long-term planning

What can you do now?
For both Film & Video

- Label elements as well as you can
- Try to keep things at a low humidity and temperature
- Limit the number of formats as much as possible
- Save important production elements

Risk Management

- We can’t say definitively that we can make every digital work persist
- What we CAN say is that the more a digital work conforms to standards and best practices, the greater the likelihood that we can assure persistence
- Our preservation repositories can even accept deposits of non-conforming works, but the less they conform, the less likely that they’ll be salvageable
- Persistence is most likely for works that share standards, metadata, and best practices

Reformatting Best Practices (still images)

- Think about users (and potential users), uses, and type of material/edition
- Scan at the highest quality that does not exceed the likely potential users/uses intended
- Do not let today’s delivery limitations influence your scanning file sizes; understand the difference between digital masters and derivative files used for delivery
- Many documents which appear to be bitonal actually are better represented with grayscale scans
- Include color bar and ruler in the scan
- Use objective measurements to determine scanner settings (do NOT attempt to make the image good on your particular monitor or use image processing to color correct)
- Don’t use lossy compression
- Store in a common (standardized) file format
- Capture as much metadata as is reasonably possible (including metadata about the scanning process itself)
So, with electronic works, the focus should be less on stable temperature (Helsinki underground vaults)

And less on the construction of Vaults (Helsinki underground vaults)

Disaster Recovery-New Orleans

http://www.nyu.edu/tisch/preservation/research/

We looked at preventative techniques & their limitations

Univ of New Orleans Library Special Collections
Some General Observations

- New Orleans damage was more from electricity being off than direct water damage
- Works in institutional collections survived; works in private collections and smaller community organizations didn’t
- Most Disaster Preparedness plans assume that the larger infrastructure stays intact (phones and email will work, cultural workers will be able to enter the building soon after the disaster, etc.)
Your Challenges as an Archivist

- You are custodians of our Heritage
- You need to make sure that that heritage endures (preservation)
- You need to make sure that that heritage can be used for research, education, etc. (access)
- We live in a media-saturated era, and media records pose continuing challenges for us

So, with electronic works, the focus should be less on stable temperature (Helsinki underground vaults)

Summary

Your Challenges as an Archivist

- http://www.nyu.edu/tisch/preservation/
- http://www.prdigitalarchive.org/
- http://www.iasa-web.org/tc04/

And less on the construction of Vaults (Helsinki underground vaults)
### Paradigms Shifts needed

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
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<td>What to save?</td>
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- http://www.amianet.org/  
- http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub54/  
- http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Longevity/  
- http://www.imagepermanenceinstitute.org/  

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### Archivists in the News

**Giant puzzle exposes Germany's communist secrets**  
http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5h_UQJgTk-R2vP9Yh4H4NLOZiwGMQ

- BERLIN (AFP) — It is painstaking work, almost a labour of love, but help is close for the nine people who have spent years piecing together millions of pieces of paper to decipher the workings of East Germany’s once feared Stasi secret police.
- Almost two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the actions of the communist government still fascinate and scare Germans. Who worked with them? And why?
- Stasi employees started to destroy their secret files as the Berlin Wall fell. Initially they shredded them. But as the machines broke down under the strain, they were forced to tear documents by hand.
- The waste was to be pulped or burnt, but “citizen committees” stormed Stasi offices across East Germany, seizing millions of files, along with 15,500 bags of torn-up documents.
- “One of the main reasons why the citizen committees occupied Stasi offices was to prevent the destruction of these archives,” said Andreas Petter, a chief archivist at the office now responsible for their preservation.
What can you do now?
For Film, Video, and Digital

- Label and annotate elements as well as you can
- Keep your content as accessible as is reasonable (for digital, try to keep it on spinning disks)
- Try to keep things at a low humidity and temperature
- Limit the number of formats as much as possible
- Be serious about Preservation Administration and Plan, Plan, Plan
- Save important production elements

We’re always reformatting, and dealing with wide variety of formats

- Nitrate
- Super8
- Cinemascope
- 3-D
- Cartridge
- …
Digital Preservation

- Requires new file formats and new physical strata at regular intervals
- Needs a serious Managed Environment
- Main InterPARES finding--the need for complete lifecycle management
  – archivist needs to be involved when record is created and throughout active life

Careful Circulating Collections have minimal problems with physical deterioration

- 2005 NYU study of AFC showed only 3.3% of VHS tapes had visible physical deterioration, and only 8% had any kind of packing problem (less than 1% of them were serious) – + caveats
- Frequency of use doesn’t correlate with physical deterioration
- Statistically valid sampling (634) of over 14,000 VHS tapes (33% produced in 1980s, 42% in 1990s, 2% after 2000)

Why does AFC have such little physical signs of deterioration?

- Commercially published VHS tapes, mostly bought directly from the publishers
- Have spent their lives in very good atmospheric conditions
- Public doesn’t physically touch the tapes; staff mount them behind circ desk, and users access with remote controls. Staff instructed to carefully rewind, and to regularly maintain the tape players.

But many tapes in our circulating collections are actually rather rare

- 24% of the distributors were not found with Google searches (but titles might still be out-of-print even at distributors still in business)
- For 9% of the titles (extrapolated to 1260 videos) both no distributor could be found, and less than 20 holdings showed up in WorldCat

What seems to be ok © now

(With caveats, like legal copy ownership, genuine library/archive)

- You can make up to 3 back-up copies of an unpublished video for security or preservation, and can even put one of these into another library/archive
- You can make up to 3 copies of a published video only if it is deteriorating or stolen or becoming obsolete (meaning that any machine to play it isn’t reasonably available in the commercial market) and only after you have determined that you can’t find a replacement copy at a reasonable price

© Activities NYU has been working on

- Studies of international laws that inhibit moving image preservation
  – InterPARES study of laws inhibiting digital preservation
- IFLA survey of mandatory registration of moving image material
- Study of massive underlying rights inhibitions within a single public television program (as much as 350/hr)
- Lucas Hilderbrand (now UCI), Inherent Vice: Bootleg Histories of Videotape & Copyright
IMLS grant received this month

- Provide Internship and Fellowship opportunities in libraries for moving image preservation specialists
- Examine impediments to libraries & archives hiring A/V preservation specialists

NYU IMLS Grant:

- Examine impediments to libraries & archives hiring A/V preservation specialists
  - Document key characteristics of the current status of moving image preservation specialists in libraries
  - Initiate discussions with administrators through professional association sessions and meetings
  - Publish white papers on the subject of the role of moving image preservation specialists in libraries and archives, including core competencies and the issue of certification

NYU IMLS Grant:

- Use Interviews, focus groups, and online discussion to identify
  - What are the range of projects undertaken by library staff, fellows and interns working on moving image preservation projects in libraries, and within what contexts do they exist? What is working and what needs changing?
  - What are the obstacles to initiating and continuing moving image preservation programs in libraries, and what facilitates their creation? What will lead to the creation of new positions for library staff with expertise in moving image archiving and preservation? Is there a relationship between factors (staff size, equipment, leadership, innovativeness, etc.) in a library conservation program and their propensity to undertake digital or moving image preservation?
  - What is the substance and status of certification efforts in the Assoc of Moving Image Archivists and elsewhere, and how do they relate to the needs of libraries?

NYU IMLS Grant:

- We plan to begin community discussions in Jan 2009
  - If you or one of your colleagues is interested in participating, please email Zack Lischer-Katz <zlkatz@nyu.edu> with the subject line “IMLS grant participation”

Unfunded Grant Proposal

- Expands on the previous grant findings that many VHS tapes were rare and difficult to replace
- Examine routine maintenance, preservation, and © issues in circulating A/V collections

Unfunded Grant:

- Examine routine maintenance, preservation, and © issues in circulating A/V collections
  - Develop methods to try to predict deterioration /obsolescence (surveying conditions, use statistics)
  - Develop procedures for replacing or reformatting BEFORE the material becomes unplayable (incl pushing at © restrictions)
  - Develop checklist procedures for determining whether replacement copy can be legally obtained (Orphan Works type procedure)
Unfunded Grant:

Modeling processes for replacement and reformatting in circulating A/V collections

- One segment of this work will involve a group discussion with people from circulating collections confronting similar problems
- If you’re interested in participating in such a discussion, please sign the sign-up sheet

As I’ve written about repeatedly

- Electronic formats are different than books, paintings, sculptures because the equipment to view them quickly becomes obsolete
- Previous formats required little ongoing intervention (remote storage facilities, Iron Mtn)
- Electronic formats require intense ongoing monitoring and planned management

Issues with Circulating Video Collections

- Paula De Stefano and Mona Jimenez, Commercial Video Collections: A Preservation Survey of the Avery Fisher Center Collection as of 1991: The Moving Image 7:2, Fall 2007
- Subject “IMLS grant participation” emailed to Zack Lischer-Katz <zlkatz@nyu.edu>
- Sign-up sheet for circulating A/V collections facing difficult reformatting/placement issues
- http://www.section108.gov/
- http://besser.tsoa.nyu.edu/howard/Papers/interpares-copyright.pdf
- http://www.copyright.gov/orphan/