Crossing Boundaries Between Media Art Conservation, Archiving, and Preservation: the NYU MIAP Experience

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Moving Image Archiving & Preservation

• 2 year rigorous MA degree
• Focus is on both old media (film, video) and new media (interactive works, games, web-based art, ...)
• Training in history/aesthetics of moving image media, handling & repairing, preservation administration, conservation, metadata, chemistry/electronics/computing, ...

(2004) Interdisciplinary; students need to

• learn the context in which each of these cultural artifacts were made
• know the history of changing formats
• need to be scientists and technologists who understand:
  • the process of color changes
  • how certain stocks become too brittle to provide a flat focus for copying
  • how magnetic particles are laid on videotape and what causes the various types of deteriorations
  • how different computer files (bit and intertext, and how certain compression algorithms cause various types of loss) so that they can anticipate preservation problems of compressed and hyper-linked digital works
• strong organizational and classification skills so that they can manage these collections and help others find things they want in them.
• administrative skills to manage these large preservation repositories (whether they be film, video, digital, or others)
• understand that preservation does not exist in a vacuum, and that they may have to become activists to prevent outside political forces from inadvertently trampling on our ability to preserve

Competencies (2004)

• Handling film, video, new media, and understanding how these artifacts are made
• Collections assessment, risk assessment
• Selection & appraisal
• Collection management (labeling, storage, cataloging)
• Repair and transfer
• Navigating through different institutional cultures
• Programming and exhibition
• Budgeting, justifying projects, and grant-writing
• Donor relations and intellectual property
• Research & access

Ethics (2004)

• Readings touching on ethics and values in both our domain (Philosophy of A/V Archiving) and related domains (Sistine Chapel, Enola Gay)
• Examination of daily occurrences for ethical and value-based responses (news articles, “wardrobe malfunctions”, Lucas’ “restoration” of THX, sound “restoration”)
• Extensive discussions on contemporary incidents, and the role that the professional community should play in these
  • Screensound Australia
  • BFI
Target employment for our graduates
• museum conservation departments
• preservation managers in libraries
• media archivists in both conventional and media archives
• collection managers in arts organizations
• digital asset managers in cultural organizations or media industry

Where do our graduates work?
Art Museum Conservation Depts
• Assistant Conservator, Denver Art Museum
• Assistant Media Conservator, The Museum of Modern Art
• Associate Media Conservator, The Museum of Modern Art
• Fellow in Media Conservation, The Museum of Modern Art
• Fellow in the Conservation of Computer-Based Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
• Media Art Conservator, Smithsonian American Art Museum
• Post-Graduate Research Fellow, Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution
• Time-Based Media Conservation Fellow, Art Institute of Chicago
• Time-Based Media Contractor, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution
• Contract Conservator, Yale Art Gallery

Where do our graduates work?
Other Museum settings
• Time-Based Media Specialist, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution
• Media Conservation & Digitization Specialist, National Museum of African American History and Culture
• Media Archivist, National Museum of African American History and Culture
• Media Preservationist, National Museum of African American History and Culture
• Time-Based Media Archival Specialist, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution
• Media Preservation Specialist (Ind. Contractor), Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution
• Film Preservation Specialist, The Museum of Modern Art
• Audiovisual Archivist, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
• Collection Information Specialist, Los Angeles County Museum of Art
• Collection Specialist, Media & Performance Art, The Museum of Modern Art
• Project Cataloger, The Museum of Modern Art
• Research Assistant, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Where do our graduates work?
Private Collectors/Artists
• Media Conservation Associate, Kramlich Collection & New Art Trust
• Conservation Associate, Kramlich Collection & New Art Trust
• Archives Assistant/Audiovisual Specialist, Studio of Cai Guo-Qiang
• Collection Archivist, Joan Logue Collection
• Media Archivist, Todomundo
• Archivist, Vito Acconci
• Media Archivist, Parkwood Entertainment

Where do our graduates work?
Selected other positions
• Director, California Audiovisual Preservation Project
• Executive Director, Independent Media Arts Preservation
• Time-Based Media Consultant, Small Data Industries
• Time-Based Art Conservator/Moving Image Archivist, Archival Moving Image Consulting
• Digital Content Management Graduate Full-Time Intern, Getty Research Institute
• Founding Director, National Film Archives of the Philippines
• Director, Museo del Cine Pablo Ducrós Hicken
• ...
Where do our grads work?—Libraries/Museums/Archives

- NYPL – Library of Performing Arts, Dance Division, Reformatting Division, Wilson Project (Archivist, Technologist, Special Formats Specialist)
- NYU – Bobst Library, Preservation Fellow, A/V Lab Mgr, A/V Preservation Specialist, Digital Archivist
- UCLA Library Preservation (A/V Specialist)
- Univ of Michigan Library (A/V Reformatting Specialist)
- Univ of Virginia Library Info Tech (A/V Preservation Specialist)
- Washington University Libraries, (A/V Archivist)
- Northwestern University Library (Moving Image and Sound Preservation Specialist)
- National Library of Medicine (Digital Preservation Research Fellow)
- Stanford University Library Preservation (A/V Specialist)
- American Museum of Natural History (Mammal Muzzle Festival Coordinator)
- Exploratorium (Cinema Arts Program Coordinator)
- Museum of the Moving Image, (Registrar)
- Smithsonian History Museum (Lemelson Archivist)
- NYC Transit Museum (Archivist)
- Canyons Cinema (Archivist)
- Electronic Arts Intermix (Media Collection Manager)
- The Kitchen (Archivist)
- Gloria Steinem's Office (Archival Assistant)
- StoryCorps Oral History (Historias Archive Coordinator)
- Standby Program (Preservation Coordinator)
- Roundabout Theatre Company Archives (Project Archivist)
- US Tennis Association (Archivist)

Where do our grads work?—Other Non-Profits

- Bay Area Video Coalition (Preservation Technician)
- WNYC Radio (Archives Manager)
- Pacifica Radio Archive (AACIP Cataloger)
- PBS (Project Archivist & Preservationist)
- Democracy Now! (Digital Archivist)
- ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archive (Archivist)
- Applesauce (Archivist)
- Human Rights Watch (Multimedia Mgr)
- Witness Media Archives (Archives Department)
- Canyon Cinema (Archivist)
- Electronic Arts Intermix (Media Collection Manager)
- The Kitchen (Archivist)
- Gloria Steinem’s Office (Archival Assistant)
- StoryCorps Oral History (Historias Archive Coordinator)
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Curriculum includes

- Laboratory Techniques (video signals, chemistry)
- Software concepts and tools (authenticity, digital forensics, …)
- Digital Preservation
- New/Complex Media
- Outsourcing & vendors
- Preservation Administration and preventative conservation
- Legal Issues and Copyright
- Metadata
- Media History/Historiography and Style/Aesthetics
- Curation

Pedagogical Approach

- Focus is on
  - Theories—Why do we do something?
  - Methods—How do we analyze a situation?
  - Practices—How we perform specific functions today?
  - Mentoring—a combination of apprenticeship with several professionals, good role models, and have the mentor work with the student on actual situations involving complex questions (such as Ethics)
  - Learning involves both concepts and hands-on activities, with the aim that the concepts will be applicable to media that hasn’t even been invented yet
  - Hands-on experience in extensive class projects and 3 required intensive internships for each student
  - MA Thesis required

Pedagogical Style

- Blending theory & practice
- Emphasis on group work and project management (& project-based learning)
- Encourage engagement with working professionals, professional societies, …
- Most assignments have real-life benefit to an organization or to the field (work directly on problems in collections; produce “new work” that will benefit the field)
Some Class Projects

- Handling Complex Media (MoMA)
- Film Preservation (different every year)
- Copyright (WNET)
- Curating (Orphans)
- Collections Management (assessment of variety of sub-collections)
- Media Handling/Training (write up research on an obsolete format)

Other Aspects

- Strong alumni network and mentoring
- Expectation that grads will be change agents
- All student work is published on our website (except highly confidential work)
- Faculty/student engagement with the newest research/developments (digital privacy, web archiving of streaming media, video as data, VAR, PDPTV, artist interviews, …)
- Students organize multiple annual events encouraging engagement with public [UNESCO World Day, HMD, Preservation Week, …]
- Students organize rescue efforts for media art collections

Eyebeam & Hurricane Sandy

(Nov 2012)


Hurricane Sandy

(Nov 2012)
### Initial Triage Actions

- Isolate biological contamination (mold), and other health hazards
- Separate wet and dry materials
- Separate types of materials
- Record label and content identification info
- Remove damaged, compromised containers and any paper wet paper inserts
- Remove effected materials from compromised environment

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- [http://tisch.nyu.edu/cinema-studies/miap/](http://tisch.nyu.edu/cinema-studies/miap/)