Newsreels, News Footage, Documentaries, Home Movies, & Cellphone Movies as City Memory

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Value of these works in understanding past history, culture, and social relations of city life
My past attempts to use digital technology to represent and understand a city’s past
NYU Student Projects
Projects with a Community Focus
Today’s ephemeral works, and how to deal with them: Personal Digital Archiving
Interesting solutions and approaches to these problems; Lessons learned
- InterPARES
- Preserving Digital Public Television
- Activist Archivists & the Occupy Movement

Recognition of importance of moving image works not designed to circulate among cinemas
Ephemeral Films (Rick Prelinger)
Orphan Film Symposium (Dan Streible)
Increasing academic work focusing on Amateur films
Addition of these types of films to the Library of Congress’ very select “National Film Registry”

Hong Kong to Amoy [1929 student travel home movie in Iowa State University Library]

Reverend Harold Anderson’s Black Wall Street Film (Oklahoma 1948-52)
The Elephant will Never Forget (1952)  
(British Transport Films)

Harry Chuck—Chinatown Amateur

This weekend: 50th anniversary of Stonewall Uprising

REPRESENTING HISTORY

Opening the Gates of 18th century Montreal

• 1992
• Based on 20+ years of research assembling databases of birth/death records, property ownership records, city documents on building plans, zoning, and property use
1992 Montréal “Gates” Project—3D fly-over (1:52 research-cannons, 2:30 fly-over)

3D ground navigation

Plan view w/DB queries

Slices of time

1992 Gates Challenges
(now easier)
- Difficulties of joining together different text DBs—birth/death records, property ownership, plans & maps
- Lack of mapping tools, geo-location standards
- Processing power
- Lack of visualization tools
- Poor touch-screen interfaces
- No serious preservation plan

NYU STUDENT PROJECTS USING THESE WORKS
NYU Student Projects in Intro Class-

• Historical context for 1920s/1930s Fox Newsreels being preserved and presented at Orphans Symposium (as well as other unidentified works)

New York Street Scenes out-takes

Fox Newsreels

NY Street Scenes & Noises

Fox Newsreels (background):

NY Street Scenes & Noises

The Noise Abatement Commission

Fox Newsreels (shot locations):

NY Street Scenes & Noises
Community Focus

- Engage particular communities (ethnic, gendered, political, social) with images that represent their own lives (past and present)
- Get them involved with archiving their own works or their community’s works
- Where possible, have them partner with archives for long-term preservation/archiving
**VideoFreex (Lanesville 1972-77)**

- Reinvented the spirit of early itinerant filmmakers, but focused on a single community
- Built ongoing relationships to that community

**Home Video Day—NYC Chinatown**

- 2014
- Organized by NYU MIAP students
- Cooperative effort with Chinatown groups; held in Chinatown venue
Home Video Day—NYC Chinatown

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Home Video Day—NYC Chinatown
**Home Video Day—NYC Chinatown**

**Center for Asian American Media**

**CAAMchannel “Memories to Light”**

- “Home movies occupy a unique place in American culture. Though generally dismissed for their amateur qualities, home movies provide us with exceedingly authentic and honest moving images. Premised on the historic, cultural, and artistic value of the home movie, Memories to Light: Asian American Home Movies is a national participatory arts project that collectively and aesthetically constructs shared social, cultural, and political representations of Asian America directly from the community itself. Since the mainstream media has given us so few authentic images of the Asian American experience, home videos become the most real way to see how our grandparents, mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles lived their lives.”

**Memories to Light**

**Memories to Light-Outreach**

Do You Have 8mm, Super 8, or 16mm Film and a Story to Tell?  
Email: memorytolight@caamedia.org  
Website: caamedia.org/memorytolight

**PDA Covers born-digital**

- Correspondence/email  
- Personal photos/movies and group collections  
- Manuscript drafts, camera original footage, rough cuts  
- Personal documents  
- Diaries  
- Home movies  
- Anything recorded with a mobile phone  
And has been extended to encompass:  
- Family history  
- Community/Ethnic history & Movements  
- Genealogy  
- Digital humanities

**TODAY’S EPHEMERAL WORKS, AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM: PERSONAL DIGITAL ARCHIVING**
In what environments do we find PDA material?

• Archives and Library Special Collections
• Collections documenting a community
• Collections documenting an ethnic group
• Collections documenting a social movement
• Collections documenting the work of any other type of group (a group of Architects, a set of law-makers, etc.)

Where do people keep today’s ephemerally films?

• Where can we find today’s equivalent of these?
  • on YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, WhatsApp, email …
  • on personal cellphones, tablets, computers

• Archiving this will require
  — new interventions (like changing creators’ workflow, saving EDLs, or intervening in email handling software)
  — New tools (like for analyzing email)
  — New methods for getting individuals to contribute to archives
  — New ways of indexing and providing access to the huge number of videos created
  — new approaches like digital archeology, forensics

Stages of the problem

• Stage #1: People record on digital media instead of analog
• Stage #2: People no longer store their digital works in places over which they have absolute control
  — Email services (gmail, yahoo)
  — Cloud storage for documents (google docs)
  — Social network services (Vimeo, YouTube, Instagram)

Our Changing Environment

• Rise of Online Services and Social Media is changing where this content resides (and is imposing restrictions that go beyond the rightsholder)

Core Multi-location Problems

• It’s difficult enough when someone’s photos or movies are spread throughout their hard disk. But today some images there, but others on their phone(s), YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, Flickr, Facebook, in Tweets, etc.
• Similar problems plague email
• Most Social Network TOS policies prohibit the owner from giving their password to anyone else (even Library)
And how do we handle donations after an important person dies?

And these issues are also true for Community Grps & Assns

- w/Social Media, group activity is more important than ever
- But each person in the group is an individual collector. And frequently a set of individual collections forms the group collection.

Documenting Protests

When aggregated, many different personal collections form an important picture of:

- An ethnic group
- A community
- A social movement
- A set of architects
- A set of law-makers
- What is important to them, how they go about their business, ...

And we know from past works that aggregations create new meanings

- Aggregating all the photos and home movies of the Digital Diaspora is hugely more meaningful than a single photo
- One tweet says very little, but thousands of tweets can show trends or depict a particular event or day

But in the PDA world, aggregating items causes significant problems

- Vast quantity of user-contributed material
- Rights Issues
- No easy way to control for quality, file format, metadata (not even any consistency for any of these)
Every Image Collector has a Different Approach

- Different file-naming conventions
- Different file formats
- Different compression schemes
- Different metadata
- Stored in different arrangements/hierarchies
- Stored in different places (cellphone, personal hard disk, YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, ...)

PDA: Who Attends & Presents

- Citizen Archivists
  - People who want to step in and rescue content in peril
  - People who like to create software/Apps/Guidelines to help others facing similar problems
- Community or Ethnic groups and activists wanting to save portions of their heritage
- Professional librarians & archivists (and their programming support staff)
- Regular software developers
- Researchers (both academic and computer industry)

PDA Goals—Sharing knowledge

- What worked and what didn’t; what parts turned out to be more difficult than anticipated
- New and different types of content to collect
- Guidelines, procedures, workflows, methodologies
- Software

What I know from my prior work with other types of Digital Content

- InterPARES—If we hope to preserve electronic records, archivists need to be involved early in the life-cycle of that record, long before the record enters the archive
- Preserving Digital Public Television—Pushing metadata gathering upstream into the production cycle

SOME KEY IDEAS FROM INTERPARES, PDPTV, ACTIVIST ARCHIVISTS (HTTP://ACTIVIST-ARCHIVISTS.ORG/)
Preserving Digital Public Television Workflow in Production Process

- Site Visits to productions
- Interview Production staff
- Diagrams of Workflow

But much of the necessary metadata has already been gathered during production

- For each element/clip, production team usually notes source, date, place, people, and other descriptive info
- But this is treated as internal information, and often various parts of the info are distributed among the personal notebooks of different production assistants
- There is seldom a central location for this info, and the info is seldom turned over to the archive (which later tries to recreate much of it)

We need to find ways to push metadata access upstream

- Digital requires even more metadata than Analog
  - As the workflow becomes file-based, the need for robust and accurate metadata will become critical. File relationships, video codecs, bit rates, and rights information must be explicit, accurate, and immediately accessible. This will require a much deeper level of metadata than is currently captured in tape-based archives.
  - We can’t continue to supply this metadata at ingest; that won’t scale
    - Obtaining the necessary metadata at the end of production and broadcast life cycle is not feasible. Metadata will need to be systematically gathered during the production lifecycle and submitted with the programs to the preservation repository.

Examined Potential Points of Metadata Capture

Pushing Metadata Gathering Upstream: The Problem

TRADITIONALLY:
- Very little metadata required for preservation accompanies an object to a repository.
- Archives, librarians, and other repositories must create (or re-create) most of the necessary metadata.
- This requires many manual hours, and significant resources - both time and money.

IN THE DIGITAL WORLD:
- This doesn’t scale up. Repositories will be unable to continue in this manner, as more metadata than ever is required.

When the Archive tries to re-create this info, it is seldom successful

Producers know much more about the content of their productions than the archivists do. Archivists wanting accurate info must go back to the production staff (often years later) to start brainstorming over the info. "Once the (television) program is finished, it is passed on to the archive or library for safe keeping. Librarians will catalog and classify the content, possibly using a proxy copy, and enter the resulting informative metadata in their database so they can retrieve it in the future. However, rarely if ever is the metadata from the rest of the process passed onto them, except, perhaps, for the title, tape number, and basic technical information about recording formats. It has to be re-created, with all the associated risk of errors and lack of accuracy—not to mention the work and time involved."

- Cox, Tadic, and Mulder, Descriptive Metadata for Television (2006)
Examined Potential Points for Metadata Capture

- Much of the necessary metadata for preservation is already generated by the production unit, but discarded after their internal use. This needs to be captured throughout the workflow.

- “Those in the production unit are the creators and have first hand knowledge of who, what, where, when, and why the content was created.” -- Mary Ide and Leah Weisse, WGBH Archivists.

Proposed Solutions…?

- Preservation becoming a shared responsibility between content creators, distributors, curators, and preservationists.
- Partnerships are needed to come to unified solutions.
- Preservationists seek reliable metadata back upstream in the production workflow...

WorldFocus

- Nightly news program begun Oct 2008
- We began working with Workflows six months before program began
- Had ability to engineer metadata gathering into the creation/production process

Activist Archivists

http://activist-archivists.org/ (use Wayback Machine)
https://www.facebook.com/ActivistArchivists/

- NYU MIAP students and grads originally working on archiving media from the Occupy movement
- Guidelines both activist creators and archives
- Developed newer low-impact methods

How Occupy material resembles what we’ll be facing in the future

- Vast quantity of user-contributed material
- No easy way to control for quality, file format, metadata
  – no enforcing guidelines as with organizational records
  – no semi-consistency as in a single individual’s personal records
- Much of the material can most easily be found on Social Networks
- ...we need to find smart ways to harvest metadata and analyze files, as well as to influence behavior of potential contributors
Activist Archivists Projects-
- “Why Archive” postcard & video
- 7 Tips to Ensure Your Video Is Usable in the Long Term
- Study of metadata loss through uploading to services
- Best Practices for Creators/Collectors
- “Toolkit” for Occupy archiving
- Coordinating discussions among various groups archiving different parts of Occupy
- Exploring methods for obscuring identities

Lessons Learned for Archivists-
- Communicate well with your future Contributors
- Develop Cooperative Relationships
- Make it easy for future contributors to create “archival-friendly” works
- For Cooperative Projects, allow for instructions not being followed
- Find smart ways to deal with Scale
- Handle Privacy & Security responsibly

Communicate well with your future Contributors-
- Learn to speak their language
- Help them to realize the importance of archiving

“Why Archive” postcard
- ACCOUNTABILITY. Archives collect evidence that can hold those in power accountable.
- SELF-DETERMINATION. We define our own movement. We need to create and maintain our own historical record.
- SHARE. Archives are a point of entry to our movement’s rich record. We can use them to ensure transparency, generate discussion, and enable direct action.
- EDUCATE. Today’s videos, flyers, web-pages, and signs are material for tomorrow’s skill-shares, classes, and mobilizations.
- CONTINUITY. Just as past movements inspire us, new activists will learn from the experiences we document.
- RECORD & COLLECT what’s happening around you.
- PRESERVE the record.

“Why Archive” video

Develop Cooperative Relationships-
- Try to better understand what their aims are; get involved in their activities
- Develop partnering relationships
participated in Self-help activities:

Skill-shares for Occupiers
Workshop: OWS Archive Share Day

Other Archive Share-Day and Hackathon activities

• Batch download from FLICKR with selected attributes (#OWS, Creative Commons, EXIF metadata, tagged-text metadata)
• Re-mixing of older footage
• Creating a visual timeline
• Mining material for data (e.g., number of co-locations of an officer’s name with “pepper spray”)

Make it easy for future contributors to create “archival-friendly” works-

• Low-hanging fruit
• Easy instructional material that appeals to what they think is important
• Instructions for redundant metadata collection (to make sure that it is captured)

Low-Hanging fruit

• Turn GPS on
• Develop strategies for automating a profile and uploads (our ideal App)

7 Tips to Ensure Your Video Is Usable in the Long Term

• Collect details while filming
• Keep your original raw footage, unaltered
• Make your video discoverable
• Contextualize it
• Make it verifiable
• Allow others to collect and archive
• Or archive it yourself

Best Practices for Content Creators

• Security
  — Hidden camera laws, parties’ consent laws
• Capturing Content
  — Highest quality; set date and time-stamps, note location
• Offloading Content
  — Raw files directly onto computer, keep material organized
• Uploading Content
  — Importance of tagging, review of diff services
• Depositing with an Archive
• Copyright
Occupy Archiving Kit

- Why Archive?
- What is an "archive”? How do I create an archive?
- Creating archiving-friendly content
- How can I collect materials for the archive?
- What should I save?
- How should I organize my materials? How do I get it into the archive?
- Description/Metadata
- Media Management
- Storage & Preservation
- Access
- Exhibition and Presentation/Outreach
- Rights and Re-Use

WITNESS: Activists’ Guide to Archiving Video, Yvonne Ng
http://archivaguide.witness.org/

Collecting – Think Tank

- Tamiment YouTube collecting
  - Tamiment Archive was selectively browsing through YouTube Occupy videos, trying to choose which ones to keep, then cataloging them with
    - Title, Creator, Creation Date, Upload Date,
    - Description, URL, Youtube Username, License, Format, Codec, Source Media, On Internet Archive, CC License type
  - But they didn’t realize that this wouldn’t scale!

Think Tank metadata redundancies

- Guidelines stipulate that person holding recording device will check to see that time and date stamp are correct before beginning recording (mostly didn’t happen)
- Guidelines stipulate that a script be read verbatim at the beginning of the recording, with date, time, proposed subject, etc. (and would eventually allow voice-recognition software to create appropriate metadata). Script also stated that all participants agreed to Creative Commons licensing of the recording
- Guidelines requested that date/time be embedded in the applied file-name
March 24, 2012 YouTube stats (just 6 months after start of movement)

- “#Occupy” 169,000
- “Occupy Wall Street” 98,400
- “Occupy Protest” 70,500
- “Occupy Movement” 54,800
- “#OWS” 50,300
- “Occupy Oakland” 13,400
- “Zucotti Park” 6,690

Alternative approach to YouTube Selection process

- Develop categories of important YouTube videos
  - Celebrity visits, Internal workings (library, kitchen, media), Confrontations with police, Labor, Housing, etc.
- Have Occupiers fill in an online form listing the 5 most important videos in each category

Advantages of YouTube Collaborative Filtering Selection Process

- Scalable and manageable
- Consistent with Occupy ideas of inclusiveness and of managing own story
- Tamiment can still choose to be selective in collecting only a portion of what is voted in, but the total set for review is a manageable scale

Handle Privacy & Security responsibly-

Promoting Privacy Protection Example from WITNESS

- “ObscuraCam is a visual privacy app for photo and video, that gives you the power to better protect the identity of those captures in your photos, before you post them online”
- Developed by Guardian Project in conjunction w/Human Rights group WITNESS:
Discuss issues around commercial services with Creators/Recorders-
• Disappearance of embedded metadata from YouTube & Vimeo
• Give archives the IP right to download

Documenting the Now
https://www.docnow.io/
• Archiving social media of contemporary movements/events
• Focus on “the ethical collection, use, and preservation of social media content”

Study of metadata loss through uploading to services

YouTube User Agreement
• 5B “You shall not download any Content unless you see a ‘download’ or similar link displayed by YouTube on the Service for that Content.”

Creative Commons Guidance
• Creative Commons lets you mix-and-match four different conditions:
  – Attribution: You let others copy, re-use and distribute your video, but they must credit you.
  – Share-Alike: You let others copy, re-use and distribute your video, only if they do the same with the work they create.
  – Non-Commercial: You let others copy, re-use and distribute your video for non-commercial purposes only.
  – No Derivative Works: You let others copy and distribute your video, but not to create new works using it.
• You can use these conditions in different combinations to share your work in a controlled way. Creative Commons licenses are legal tools that depend on pre-existing copyright laws. Having a Creative Commons license on your video does not automatically prevent people from downloading and re-using your video illegally.
Marking Creative Commons licenses

• There are a few ways to mark your video with a Creative Commons license. One way is to include a Creative Commons "bumper" or text card in your video. Creative Commons has created some with graphics that you can download from their website. This method is useful if your video is going to be shared offline (e.g. on DVD, live screenings), as the license information is attached to the video itself.

• Another way to mark your video with a Creative Commons license is to publish your video on platforms that are Creative Commons-enabled, such as YouTube, Vimeo, or Internet Archive. These platforms allow you to easily select a license during the upload process. This method is useful because the license is machine-readable. A search engine, for example, can detect the license.

Tips for Archivists on Outreach to Communities

• Build trust
• Speak in their language (not archive-speak)
• Identify ways you can meet needs they already perceive
• Approach projects as collaboration whenever possible
• Don’t only focus on content and metadata, but also rights that can be an impediment to preservation

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