Re-Imaging archives for the Digital Scholar of the Future

Howard Besser
Director, NYU Moving Image Archiving & Preservation Program
http://besser.tsoa.nyu.edu/howard/

Re-Imaging archives for the Digital Scholar of the Future

• Hazards of predictions
• Methods we use to predict
• Looking at Digital Humanities for inspiration
• Looking around us to societal info trends, allied fields, small projects w/i our field, ...
  • -----segmentation
  • -----crowd-sourcing for tagging
  • -----geo-referencing
• --intervening when the work is being created, to save both content and metadata

Imagining the Future
--never a sure thing

Imagining the Future (1888)

• Predictions that were borne out:
  • Unregulated stock markets
  • Ab/use of credit cards
  • Rise of big box stores
  • Socialism
  • Music downloading

Sometimes our Predictions come a little later than predicted

TODAY'S UPDATE
THE MINISTRY OF TRUTH

BROUGHT TO YOU IN NEWSPEAK
LEARN UNDERSTAND ACCEPT

Newspeak:
not 1984, but 2 decades later

• surgical strike
• collateral damage
• smart bombs
Newspeak: Iraq War

Predictions enter popular culture and actual work environment

- "transition consultant"
- "reengineering"
- "right-sizing"

Dystopian views of info purposely hidden (Jocasta Nu, Jedi Archivist)

ALA Imagineers--using SciFi to predict/invent future libraries

What did ALA Imagineers give birth to?

- Today's and tomorrow's digital libraries
- Melvyl, CNI
- Standards for interoperability: Z39.50, Dublin Core, METS
- Vision of an interconnected world of cultural information
Where do we look to help our predictions?

Lang looked around him, and extrapolated from existing conditions

A good place to look for ideas to feed predictions is Digital Humanities

• A relatively newly-recognized field of study
• A field that relies upon scholarly access to a large body of material housed in archives
• A field that has attracted recognition from important power sources (funding agencies, university administrators, academic publishers, ...)
• A field that appears to be rapidly growing

NEH now has an entire office devoted to Digital Humanities

Many Digital Humanities Organizations

Many Digital Humanities Journals (print journals only, courtesy of Matt Kirchenbaum)

• 1. Computers and the Humanities, (U.S.) [X]
• 2. Computers and Texts, (U.K.) [X], journal/newsletter of the CTI Centre for Textual Studies.
• 3. Jahrbuch für Computerphilologie (München, Germany).
• 4. Literary and Linguistic Computing, (U.K.) [X], the official journal of the Association for Literary and Linguistic Computing.
• 5. Office for Humanities Communication, Publications (U.K.) [X], currently 10 titles in print.
• 6. Revue. Informatique et Statistiques dans les Sciences Humaines (Belgium) [X]. Articles in French and English concerning the applications of computing techniques and statistics to the humanities.
• 7. Text Technology (Canada) [X]. A journal dedicated to computer technologies and their applications to text.
Digital Humanities Landscape

- Large and amorphous
- Most branches rely upon bodies of content, and computers to help analyze that content
- My own biases--towards branches that attempt a close analysis of text

1973-74 I studied film in Paris

Did close analysis

diagrammed shot by shot

And only midway through did I realize that I was following a “new” cinema theory

So when I look at Digital Humanities

- I notice structural approaches
- I look at deconstruction
- And adding my library background, I look at each cinematic object as something to diagrammed and indexed
- I look at…
The Text Encoding Initiative

- Works are marked up for structure using XML (much like EAD mark-up)
- Makes it easy to find the right place within a work
- Allows a computer program to help analyze the work and its component parts

TEI Light (Ben Jonson poetry)

- Tools for operating on digital movies
- Annotates a digital movie in consistent ways (and with multiple categories of animation)
- Segments a movie, breaking it into its component parts
- Has geo-referencing built-in

OXDB-browse film list

- Contains film lists
- Can be annotated

OXDB-full record (can be annotated)
OXDB-shots w/i film

OXDB-segmentation w/i film

Pad.ma

- Implementation of OXDB tools
- A repository of digital movies
- A tool today to consistently annotate a digital movie and break it into its component parts
- Has geo-referencing built-in
- Expects crowd-sourcing of annotations/metadata

Pad.ma—opening screen

Pad.ma—browse repository

Pad.ma—segmentation linked to metadata
Pad.ma—locations, keywords, descriptions change w/segment

Geo-referencing will become easier and easier

Need to integrate with other ubiquitous applications (google maps)

Lower granularity: Geo-location within the scene of a film

Need to take advantage of GPS built into cameras
British Library’s SoundMap

Sally Potter Archive (SP-ARK)

Archive Contents

SP-ARK—can look through scenes, shots of Orlando

SP-ARK—screenwriting notes (pre-draft)
SP-ARK—every item has catalog info and can also be tagged by users

SP-ARK—development sketches

SP-ARK—Screen Test—Quentin Crisp

SP-ARK—pre-production costume design

SP-ARK—location sites

SP-ARK—location notes
SP-ARK-Festival Interviews

ON TOUR WITH ORLANDO

A great shock of the jump of the nail on the optical track played very loud. That's how I remember it. Pure elation. So, we sailed excitedly about this kind of film-making, the silent film. In London, we were met by a man who had seen the film at the Cannes Film Festival. The audience was in awe, and we were greeted with a standing ovation. The audience was so responsive, and we were thrilled to receive such a positive reaction.

Friday 30 April 1993

This morning, Orlando's production office was busy working on the film. The director, Christopher Sheppard, and his team were working hard on the set. A beautiful morning, with clear skies, and the trees in full bloom, seemed like a perfect setting for a film shoot.

SP-ARK-Sally Potter Diary

SP-ARK Pathways

List of Pathways

- From lists to narratives...
SP-ARK Pathways—...to essays

Broad issues we must be aware of

- Future audience (and even scholarship) will be much wider group than film scholars (just look at the experience art museums)
- Future content will be much broader than narrative film (newsreels, unedited footage, home movies, other Orphans, ...)
- Future uses will be much broader than typical critique of a single film (clip re-use and appropriation, examining left-handedness, ...)

Elements to prepare for

- Users will want to find ever smaller units of granularity (and expect us to help with segmentation)
- Users will want to go beyond looking, and to bring clips into their own creations/appropriations
- Geo-referencing will be low-hanging fruit
- User participation (crowd-sourcing) can allow us to do more for less, provide multiple perspectives, etc.
- Interoperability with other info resources (google maps, ...) is critical
- Relationships with content creators (to obtain material and metadata that they might throw away) is critical

Future we imagine has its own future; process of imagining is never finished

Of course, our predictions can always be wrong!

Further Information

- http://besser.tsoa.nyu.edu/howard/
- http://0xdb.org/
- http://pad.ma/
- http://www.sp-ark.org/
- http://sounds.bl.uk/uksoundmap/index.aspx