



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Memory of the World

# AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVING

## PHILOSOPHY AND PRINCIPLES

by Ray Edmondson  
Third Edition 2016





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Published in 2016 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France,  
and  
UNESCO Bangkok Office

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ISBN: 978-92-9223-536-9 (Print version)

ISBN: 978-92-9223-537-6 (Electronic version)



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Coordinators: Iskra Panevska and Misako Ito

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## Executive Summary

### Why do we do the things we do, and why do we do things the *way* we do them?

In the profession of audiovisual archiving, there is a need to constantly ask these questions in the context of changing practices and technology. Philosophies guide, shape, question and challenge the development of the profession and practice through constant review, but also by holding in tension the temporary, fleeting factors that too easily occupy us.

Among the major current issues are digitization and format obsolescence. The standard question – “have you digitized your collection yet?” – misunderstands the complexities wrought by the changing paradigm, requiring not only the expansion of skills, technology and budgets, but exacerbating the divide between those archives who can, and cannot, adapt to the changes. The challenge is not only to migrate analogue works in danger, but to keep pace with the flood of new born-digital productions – all the while preserving the technology and skills of an analogue era that in some ways is surprisingly resurgent.

Audiovisual archiving is treated as a profession in its own right, not as a specialized subset of an existing profession. In developing this theme, the book documents *what is actually the case*, rather than inventing or imposing theories or constructs by analogy from the other memory professions. It seeks to be *descriptive* rather than *prescriptive*. Historically, the label “archive” was adopted not in deference to the field of archival science but for unrelated pragmatic reasons: the terms suggested reliability and solidity.

The clear definition of terms and concepts are fundamental to everything else. Terms like *film*, *tape*, *record*, *digital* and *analogue* have both precise meanings and wider nuances. Audiovisual archives have a variety of organizations descriptors, and institutional names are also brands which describe and position the organization, yet also evoke intangible qualities and values. Broader concepts like *audiovisual heritage*, *audiovisual document*, *audiovisual archive* and *audiovisual archivist* are defining ideas which merit discussion at length. Characteristically, audiovisual documents are not perceived directly but must be mediated by a technological device, and their content has linear duration: it is perceived over time.

*Preservation* is an often misused term. In the profession it is a precise and fundamental concept: *the totality of things necessary to ensure the permanent accessibility – forever – of an audiovisual document with the maximum integrity*. It is not a discrete process. In the digital context, more than ever, it is a never-ending management task. Nothing has ever *been* preserved – it is only *being* preserved. Yet preservation is never an end in itself: without the objective of *access* it has no point.

Audiovisual archiving had no formal beginning. It emerged from diffuse organizational environments. Only in the 1930s did it begin to take recognizable shape and develop international groupings. The present landscape embraces a variety of non-profit and for-profit entities with varying degrees of organizational independence. It includes government or quasi-government bodies, subsets of broadcasting organizations, production studios or universities, community and on-line archives. Some have highly specialized themes and coverage; some focus on particular media; some have broad ranging national briefs which embrace the entire audiovisual spectrum of television, film, radio, recorded sound, on-line and computer based media.

All memory institutions and professions have a paradigm – a world view which they bring to bear on the material of interest to them. It allows them to select, describe, arrange and provide access to material in meaningful ways: for example as information, record, history or art. These worldviews

are not essentially determined by the physical or digital format of the material: memory institutions in general collect across paper-based, digital and audiovisual formats. Characteristically, *audiovisual archives* perceive works such as films, television programs, songs or symphonies holistically *in their own right*: not principally as information, art or record but as *all* of those things simultaneously.

Since their invention and marketing in the 1880s, the audiovisual media have been in a state of continuous evolution, of which the current digital formats and technology are just the latest iteration. To preserve their collections and make them accessible, audiovisual archives have to maintain obsolete carriers and technology as well as keeping abreast of new technology, and retain the relevant skill base for both. Content is migrated to newer formats to maintain its accessibility, while older carriers may still need to be maintained for their artefact and informational value. The link between content and (original) carrier may be very meaningful.

Digital formats are not simply replacing analogue formats. The equation is more complex, and both have a future. All technological predictions should be approached with scepticism: the only sure guide is accumulated experience. It is unlikely that there is any “ultimate” format.

Collection management rests on the concept of the “work”, the stand-alone intellectual entity which is the basis of cataloguing and collection control systems. This is also a foundational concept in copyright and patent law, which governs the way audiovisual archives can provide access to their collections. This approach serves the needs of users as well as practical management. Collection management embraces a range of practical disciplines, including detailed housekeeping, prioritized content migration, documenting and cataloguing.

Audiovisual archives need a sound and publicly declared range of policies governing collection development, preservation, access and collection management. They are the ‘rule of law’ on which the archive works. They should be keyed to the archive’s mandate and to relevant external reference points, such as those established by UNESCO or the international audiovisual archiving federations.

As in the other memory professions, adherence to professional codes of ethics are the mark of a skilled professional pursuing a vocation. A well developed conscience will be needed to deal with the potential conflicts of interest and other dilemmas that may arise.

Given its pivotal importance in the history of humankind, one might expect that the task of preserving the world’s audiovisual memory would have a commensurately large profile and resource base. Not so. The number of people engaged in the task worldwide barely reaches five figures. This small community, committed and tenacious, yet largely unknown and unsung, carries an immense responsibility. As a profession, though they may little reflect on it, the audiovisual archivists of the world also possess great power. How they use it will determine much of what posterity knows of this age



## Foreword

Audiovisual heritage comprises a large part of our cultural legacy. The primary records of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century cultures from around the world are captured in its myriad forms – from films and radio and television programmes to audio and video recordings. Sounds and images can transcend local borders and language barriers, making this heritage an essential complement to traditional archives and documents. The immediacy and immersion offered by audiovisual materials also make them indispensable in the teaching of history. It is for these reasons that the safeguarding and preservation audiovisual heritage is of vital importance.

Published under UNESCO's Memory of the World programme, this third edition of *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principle* provides the rationale and theoretical basis of audiovisual archiving and has been updated to reflect the contemporary realities faced by practitioners in the field.

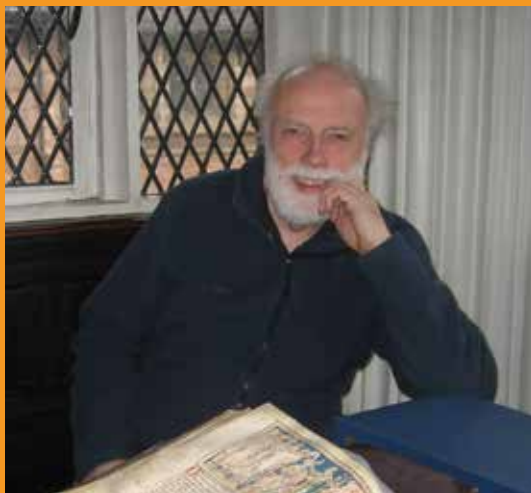
Audiovisual archiving is a widely recognized field among memory institutions, industries and academia, and has a sound range of policies governing collection development, preservation and access. However, the increasing volume of audiovisual documents and the rapid obsolescence of the technologies used to create them pose immense challenges for audiovisual archives and archivists. The third edition of *Audiovisual Archiving* speaks to these challenges and examines questions raised by the migration of image and sound from analogue to digital and broader concepts of preservation and access.

In line with UNESCO's 2015 *Recommendation concerning the Preservation of, and Access to, Documentary Heritage including in Digital Form*, the Memory of the World programme aims to protect the documented, collective memory of the peoples of the world and make it accessible to all. It is my hope that this publication serves as both a repository of the wisdom and knowledge of those in the audiovisual archiving profession and a resource for them in their work to preserve this rich cultural legacy for the benefit of present and future generations.

Gwang-Jo Kim  
Director  
UNESCO Bangkok



## Preface to the third edition



◇The author © UNESCO

“Philosophy”, according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, is “the love of wisdom or knowledge, especially that which deals with ultimate reality, or with the most general causes and principles of things”. Like other aspects of collecting and preserving the memory of humanity, audiovisual archiving has at its base certain “general causes and principles”. To place them open to scrutiny and general recognition, they need to be conveniently codified.

Addressing this need was the motivation for the first edition of this publication in 1998, arising out of the discussions of Audiovisual Archiving Philosophy Interest Network (AVAPIN). Feedback from that publication prompted a

second, enlarged edition in 2004. This third edition is its extensively revised and augmented successor, attuned to the contemporary realities of audiovisual archiving, and honed by the reflections and experience of an International Reference Group of experts, several of whom had already worked on the translation of the second edition from English into separately published versions in French, Spanish, Farsi, German, Japanese, Macedonian and Portuguese.

In the past two decades, the field of audiovisual archiving has grown into a profession that is now more confident of its identity. It has become widely recognized among memory institutions, the information and audiovisual industries, and within academia, where it is now the focus of several postgraduate and undergraduate courses around the world. At the same time, the rise of digital technology has brought a new paradigm and new complexity to the field of archiving, as old certainties and assumptions have given way to new realities.

I wish to thank the members of the International Reference Group for their hard work in refining and debating the content of this book. They have brought a wide range of professional and institutional backgrounds to the task, along with their connections to the various CCAAA federations. I also wish to thank past and present colleagues in UNESCO, including Joie Springer, Iskra Panevska and Misako Ito; without UNESCO’s support this publication would never have appeared. Finally, I express my appreciation to innumerable colleagues around the world – some of them acknowledged in previous editions – whose advice and feedback over the years have enriched this book in its various iterations.

As I have commented in previous editions, there is a sense in which a work like this is never finished, especially in such a dynamic profession. Comment and feedback is always welcome. Any opinions, errors and omissions in the text are, of course, my own.

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## Editorial notes

**AV or audiovisual:** Throughout this document the word *audiovisual* is used in preference to the abbreviation *AV*. Within the field of audiovisual archiving both terms are used interchangeably, but it was felt desirable in this publication to be consistent, and to standardize on one or the other.

**Media, documents or material:** Similarly, the term *audiovisual document* has been generally preferred to the terms *audiovisual media* or *audiovisual material*, though the choice has depended on the context. To many, the terms are interchangeable, though there are subtle differences in their connotations. Moreover, *document* is used in the sense of a recording created by deliberate intent, **not** in the sense of fact as opposed to fiction.

**Libraries, archives, museums** are, where appropriate in the text, collectively referred to as **memory institutions**.

In the following pages, extensive reference is made to various professional organizations, international associations and individual archives. Most of them maintain websites and many produce publications, including journals and newsletters. Their listservs are easy to join.

The Coordinating Council of Audiovisual Archive Associations (CCAAA, [www.ccaaa.org](http://www.ccaaa.org)) is the forum of those international federations which have formal links with UNESCO as non-government organizations, and provides hotlinks to their respective websites.

## International Reference Group

The following are the members of the expert International Reference Group which participated in the preparation of this book, as readers and advisers, in their personal capacities.

**Albrecht Haefner** (Germany) - International consultant and teacher in AV archiving. Former manager of radio sound archives at Suedwestrundfunk, Germany, who globally pioneered the introduction of digital mass storage in a radio archive. Former Secretary General of IASA from 1996 to 2002 and recipient of the IASA Recognition Award for Training and Development in 2004 and 2005.

**Kae Ishihara** (Japan) - Archivist and lecturer, graduate of the L Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation (George Eastman House, New York); founder of the Film Preservation Society (Tokyo), and a driving force behind Home Movie Day as well as film restoration and community based archiving projects in Japan. Member of AMIA, IASA and SEAPAVAA.

**Irene Lim** (Singapore) - Principal Archivist, National Archives of Singapore; Secretary General of SEAPAVAA; M.Sc (Information Studies), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore; B.A. (History and Japanese Studies), National University of Singapore.

**Violet Matangira** (Namibia) - Archivist at the University of Namibia, formerly audiovisual archivist at the National Archives of Zimbabwe. Has published on records and archives management, particularly on AV archiving in southern Africa. Current doctoral research is on the state of records and archives in Africa, and solutions specific for the African scenario.

**Mick Newnham** (Australia) - Manager of Conservation and Research, National Film and Sound Archive of Australia; President of SEAPAVAA; contributor to technical and standards working groups and committees of AMIA, FIAF, ISO; consultant to ASEAN, UNESCO and ICCROM.

**Benedict Salazar Olgado** (Philippines) - Multi-awarded audiovisual archivist and film historiographer. Assistant Professor, School of Library and Information Studies of the University of the Philippines

Diliman, teaching archival theories, audiovisual archiving and digital preservation. Inaugural head of the National Film Archives of the Philippines. Chairs the International Outreach Committee of AMIA.

**Dra Perla Olivia Rodriguez Reséndiz (Mexico)** - Researcher of the Instituto de Investigaciones Bibliotecológicas y de la Información de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Author, radio and television producer and trainer. Contributor to the creation and start-up operations of the Fonoteca Nacional de México.

**Dr Carlos Roberto de Souza (Brazil)** - Vice President of the Associação Brasileira de Preservação Audiovisual, late of the Cinemateca Brasileira and the FIAF Cataloguing Commission. Doctorate on the work and history of the Cinemateca Brasileira, and post-doctoral research on the effects of the coming of sound in cinema in Brazil.

## About the author

**Dr Ray Edmondson OAM** is a consultant in audiovisual archiving and has been active in this field since 1968. He is the former Deputy Director, and current Curator Emeritus, of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia. In recognition of his career achievement he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1987, and internationally he has also received such awards from several professional federations. He writes, teaches and speaks on audiovisual archiving topics. Since 1996 he has served in various capacities in UNESCO's *Memory of the World* Program, including authoring its current *General Guidelines* and *Companion*, and chairing its Asia Pacific Regional Committee from 2006 to 2015.

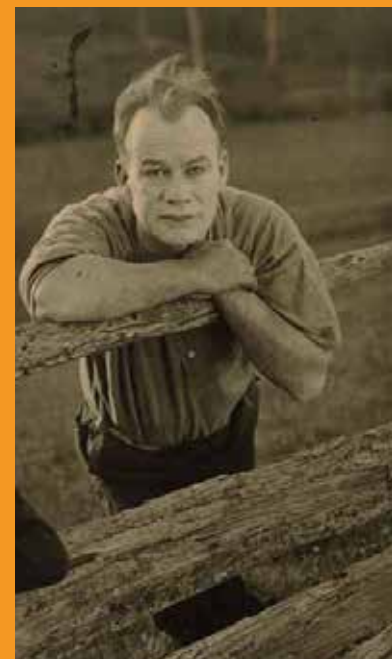
Copies of his articles and other professional writings can be found on [www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu) or [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)

# Chapter 1: Introduction: Fundamental Principles

## 1.1 What is philosophy?

1.1.1 All human activity is based on values, assumptions or knowledge of certain truths, even if these are perceived instinctively and not articulated (“if I don’t breathe, I’ll suffocate”). All societies, likewise, function because there are common values or commonly applied rules, often expressed in written forms, such as laws or constitutions. These in turn are based on values, which may or may not be articulated within them, but which underlie them and their application.

1.1.2 Philosophy takes the matter of values and assumptions a stage further, asking questions like “why?”, “what are the fundamental principles and nature of .....?”, “what is the whole of which I can only see a part?” and expressing the answers in a logical system or worldview. Religions, political systems and jurisprudence are expressions of philosophies. So are the fields of activity which we usually call “professions” – the practice of medicine, for example, has a philosophical basis which recognizes the sanctity of life and the well being of the individual as a normal and desirable state.



◇ From the lost Australian film *Joe* (1923)  
© National Film and Sound Archive of Australia

1.1.3 Philosophies are powerful, because the theories, worldviews and frames of reference they create are the basis of actions, decisions, structures and relationships. Audiovisual archivists, like librarians, museologists and other memory professionals, exercise a particular kind of power over the survival, accessibility and interpretation of the world’s cultural memory (further explored in Chapter 7). Recognizing the theories, the principles, the assumptions and the realities influencing their work therefore becomes a matter of some importance, not only for the professionals themselves but for society at large.

1.1.4 Theorizing is a tool for exploring and understanding this professional terrain, and those objectives are the purpose of this text. Its starting assumption is that audiovisual archivists *need* to understand and reflect on their philosophical foundations if they are to exercise their power responsibly, and be open to discussion and debate in defending their principles and practices, while avoiding the temptation to retreat into inflexible dogmas. Otherwise, action in archives runs the risk of being arbitrary and inconsistent, based on unchallenged intuition or capricious policies. Such archives are unlikely to be reliable, predictable or trustworthy places.<sup>1</sup>

1.1.5 Hence, we could express our enquiry in the form of two questions: why do we do the things we do, and why do we do things the way we do them? We need to constantly ask these questions in the context of changing practices, technologies and politics. Philosophies guide, shape, question and challenge the development of our profession and practice through constant review, but also by holding in tension the temporary, fleeting factors that too easily preoccupy us.<sup>2</sup>

1 The term *audiovisual archiving*, defining a field of activity, is discussed in Chapter 3, along with other terminology used in this text

2 “Our conversations about archives suffer from an excess of practicality. For the most part, moving image archives exist in a kind of teleological vacuum. It’s good that we exist, but I’ve yet to see much thoughtful examination as to why... To actively consider the reasons for our existence is also to ask: could we, as archivists, point ourselves toward an agenda that we wish to make real?” Rick Prelinger speaking at the FIAF Congress, Sydney, April 2015

## 1.2 Philosophy and principles in audiovisual archiving

- 1.2.1 It was during the 1990s that the development of a codified theoretical basis for the profession finally became a concern, for several reasons. Firstly, the obvious and increasing importance of the audiovisual media as a part of the world's memory had led to a rapid expansion of archiving activity, most notably within commercial or semi-commercial settings beyond the ambit of the traditional institutional archives. Large sums were being spent, but because of the absence of defined and accepted professional reference points, perhaps not always to best effect. Decades of accumulated practical experience in audiovisual archives had by now provided a foundation from which to signal more strongly, by codifying this experience, the possibilities of maximizing the potential gains - and the consequences of missing the opportunities.
- 1.2.2 Secondly, individual practitioners in audiovisual archives had long lacked a clear professional identity and recognition within the memory professions, government, the audiovisual industries and the community in general. They also lacked a critical reference point vital to that recognition: a theoretical synthesis of the defining values, ethics, principles and perceptions implicit in the field. This made them intellectually and strategically vulnerable. It also detracted from the public image and status of the field, and resulted in an apparent vacuum at its core. Even though the various audiovisual archive associations<sup>3</sup> as well as individual archives had developed policies, rules and procedures, there had traditionally been little time to step back and ponder the theory on which these were based. The emergence of organizations<sup>4</sup> aimed at meeting these personal professional needs was a sign of change.



◇ In poor storage, decay is never far away © Maria Teresa Ortiz Arellano

- 1.2.3 Thirdly, the lack of formal training standards and courses for practitioners had emerged as a significant issue, and had prompted UNESCO to set up processes resulting in publications<sup>5</sup> on the role and legal situation of audiovisual archives, and the development of training curricula for

3 In this document the terms “associations” or “federations” usually refers to the CCAA associations which operate exclusively within the audiovisual spectrum - IASA (International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives), FIAT/IFTA (International Federation of Television Archives), FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives), AMIA (Association of Moving Image Archivists), SEAPAVAA (South East Asia-Pacific Audiovisual Archive Association), ARSC (Association of Recorded Sound Collections) and FOCAL (Federation of Commercial Audiovisual Libraries International). Where the context indicates, it also includes the relevant committees of IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) and ICA (International Council on Archives).

4 Such as AMIA, IASA, SEAPAVAA and the Philippines’ Society of Filipino Archivists for Film (SOFIA)

5 The publications are *Curriculum development for the training of personnel in moving image and recorded sound archives* (1990) and *Legal questions facing audiovisual archives* (1991)

their staff. Such courses<sup>6</sup>, as they emerged, would need theoretical texts and reference points as well as the means of teaching practical skills. Several such programs are now well established. .

- 1.2.4 Fourthly, rapid technological change was challenging old assumptions as the then so-called “information superhighway” advanced. The “multiple media” archive<sup>7</sup> was increasingly supplementing, and sometimes evolving from, the older film, television and sound recording archives, and the field was showing a widening diversity of organizational forms and emphases.
- 1.2.5 This concern crystallized in, among other things, the setting up of AVAPIN in early 1993, as well as the increased visibility of theoretical and philosophical discussion in the professional literature. Although the first audiovisual archives came into existence over a century ago, and the field may be said to have developed some self-awareness from the 1930s onwards, sustained growth is basically a phenomenon of the second half of the 20th century. It is therefore a young field, developing rapidly, with resources and skills very unevenly spread around the globe.
- 1.2.6 The vision of the pioneering generation that established the separate concepts of the film archive, the television archive and the sound recording archive has been enriched, modified and tested by time and experience, trial and error. Today’s audiovisual archivists are a much larger circle, pioneers still, facing more complex tasks, and with new needs that time and circumstance have added. The challenge is to meet those needs in a vastly changed and constantly evolving audiovisual environment in the 21st century.

### **1.3 Current state of the audiovisual archiving profession**

- 1.3.1 In the face of rapidly expanding need, the federations and CCAAA endeavour to develop policies, stances and a variety of short workshop and seminar options for individual archives or groups or archives around the world. A major difficulty is cost, and the availability of qualified and experienced trainers who can be released by their employing institutions for sufficient periods of time.
- 1.3.2 While now more visible, audiovisual archiving is still emerging as an academic discipline. The options are diversifying. Dedicated postgraduate programs are still few, but growing. Typically they involve one or two years of full time study or equivalent, followed by practical placements. They are being complemented by on-line training modules, such as those launched by AMIA in 2015. Audiovisual archiving is featuring as a subject or elective in an increasing number of broader courses in archival science and librarianship.
- 1.3.3 The difficult but inevitable question of formal accreditation of audiovisual archivists still faces the federations. While it seems unlikely to be quickly resolved, it is as necessary a step in this field as it has proved to be in other professions.
- 1.3.4 The literature of the field, which includes “how to” manuals, substantial case studies, journals, dissertations, corporate histories and a variety of technical resources is considerable and is growing steadily. Much material can be accessed, or at least its existence discovered, by on-line

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6 Intensive, international “summer school” style courses and workshops were pioneered by FIAF in 1973 and continue to operate. Short workshops and seminars organized by the federations or individual archives have followed around the world: for example the FIAT/IFTA-sponsored *International Seminar on Sound and Audiovisual Archives* in Mexico in 2001. At the time of writing, the author is aware of permanent postgraduate programs in audiovisual archiving being offered by the L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation at George Eastman Museum, New York University’s MIAP course, Tainan National University of the Arts Graduate Program in Documentary and Film Archiving, University of Amsterdam’s Masters’ in Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image, and Charles Sturt University’s Graduate Certificate in Audiovisual Archiving, the last offered by distance learning over the internet.

7 The term *multiple media* is used to avoid confusion with *multimedia* which usually means a mixture of sounds, moving images, text and graphics, originated from a digital source.

enquiry and searching the websites of the CCAAA federations, among others. The dearth of material in languages other than English, however, remains a serious limitation – for example, in Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Latin America where archivists have to actively lobby authors or publishers for translations.

## 1.4 Major current issues

- 1.4.1 In most – though perhaps not all – countries it is no longer necessary to plead that moving images and sound recordings are worthy of preservation and require proper management for their survival: at least lip service is given to the argument, even if the resources don't follow. Without diminishing the reality of the latter, it is worth noting some issues at the outset. Most are covered in context later, but are summarized here, in no particular order, for the sake of attention and convenience.
- 1.4.2 **Digitization:** “Have you digitized your collection yet?” is a simplistic question regularly put to archivists by, it seems, politicians, administrators and other overseers of archival budgets. The questions and the underlying assumptions are often ill-informed, but the embracing of digital technology has profoundly reshaped the audiovisual archiving paradigm, requiring not only the expansion of skills and technology, but also exacerbating the divide between those archives who can, and cannot, adapt to the changes. The question also misses a major point: digitization of analogue materials is one thing, but the management of digitally-born audiovisual works from production to preservation is quite another. When digitizing analogue materials, the option to go back to the original format to repeat the process remains. For digitally-born works, there is no such option. If they are missed, they may be quickly lost.
- 1.4.3 **Obsolescence and “legacy formats”:** The corollary of digitization is the dilemma of increasingly rapid format obsolescence, with archives needing to cope with the unknowns of digital preservation on the one hand, and the continuing preservation and access demands of the older “legacy formats” on the other as technological options diminish.
- 1.4.4 **Artefact value:** Film prints, shellac and vinyl discs and other carriers once thought of and managed as replaceable and disposable consumables are now perceived as artefacts requiring very different understanding and handling. This shift in thinking has given a new status to, for example, surviving nitrate prints and the whole question of projection standards, capabilities and skills. Quite quickly, as cinemas move to digital systems, witnessing the projection of film prints is becoming a specialist archival experience.
- 1.4.5 **Developing countries:** Audiovisual archiving has traditionally followed a largely Euro-American agenda which has given little attention to realities in developing countries. Facilities, standards and skills available in the former may just not exist in the latter, where simpler, cheaper and sustainable solutions need to be found. Crossing that divide, sharing resources, and sharing skills and insights in both directions, are major challenges for the profession. Standards, rules and recommendations developed in Europe and North America are relevant to other countries, and where possible are adopted by them, but as with professional literature, language is a problem. Unless they are translated they cannot be used.
- 1.4.6 **Regionalization and proliferation:** The older international federations are being complemented by regionally-based federations and groups, encouraging re-thinking of roles and agendas. Archival-related events – such as festivals of silent films – have increased and add to the complexity of the field, as well as its visibility and its possibilities.

1.4.7 **Marketing and access:** The provision of access, in its many analogue and digital forms, is the visible evidence – and often the political justification – of publicly-funded audiovisual archiving. It is also the *raison d'être* of archiving, and the status of the profession depends to a large extent on how well it is provided. Pressure on archives to generate revenue, to be conscious of their image, and to introduce “user pays” strategies are signs of an age in which heritage preservation seems increasingly expected to pay its own way. The fashions and dictates of the marketplace add ethical and managerial challenges. Taking into consideration the “use value” of the collection is a component of developing a sustainable vision.

1.4.8 **Statutes:** Unlike other major memory institutions, many of the world’s audiovisual archives lack a statutory base, charter or equivalent authority which defines their role, their security and their mandate. They are therefore vulnerable to challenge and change, and their permanence can be illusory. This highlights the need to achieve appropriate decrees, laws and long-term policies to sustain these institutions. UNESCO’s normative instruments can be used as effective international reference points in this process.

1.4.9 **Ethical challenges:** In everything – from the politics of access to the capacity to change history through digital manipulation – the audiovisual archivist faces an increasing array of ethical dilemmas and pressures.

1.4.10 **The internet** has reshaped access services and research. Along with the expanded possibilities it offers, it has brought its own ethical, presentational and practical dilemmas. Researchers who once trawled patiently through card or printed catalogues now expect to find everything on the net – if it isn’t there, it can be easily assumed it doesn’t exist! The internet makes possible new forms of creation, exchange, storage and accumulation of digital content. The creative “mashup” is an example: it’s a new work. Or is it?

1.4.11 **Intellectual property:** New technology and more diverse means of distribution and access have created new commercial opportunities for old moving images and sounds. Public right to free access is retreating as legal constraints become wider and more complex, and governments extend the duration of copyright control in response to corporate pressure. There has been a corresponding increase in audio and video piracy. Should archives have a right to preserve an audiovisual work, even against the wishes of the copyright owner, on the basis that it is part of the public memory? Or again, should works that are clearly in the public domain or available under creative commons be prioritized for digitization so they will be readily accessible?

1.4.12 **Orphan works** are films, programs and recordings which for a variety of reasons sit outside the circle of clear intellectual property ownership – and there are millions of them. Although once copyrighted, the rights holders are now indeterminate or uncontactable. *Prima face*, while such works cannot legally be used or exploited, legislatures in many countries are grappling with the issues surrounding them. They still require archival preservation – and the objective of preservation is access. Archives need to deal with the moral as well as the legal dimensions of these issues.



◇ Disorganized storage  
© Fabricia Malan



1.4.13 **Preserving the technology and skills:** The story of the audiovisual media is told partly through its technology, and it is incumbent on archives to preserve enough of it - or to preserve sufficient documentation about it - to ensure that the story can be told to new generations. Allied to this is the practical need, which will vary from archive to archive, to maintain old technology and the associated skills in a workable state. The experience of (for example) listening to an acoustic phonograph or gramophone, or watching the projection of a film print<sup>8</sup> instead of a digital surrogate, is a valid aspect of public access.

## 1.5 Historical context

1.5.1 The concepts of the library, the archive and the museum are inherited from antiquity. The accumulation and transmission of memory from one generation to another is a sustaining motivation of human society and unique to it. It is the 20th century that has been characterized by a new, technological form of memory – the sound recording and the moving image. Now its preservation and accessibility depends on a new discipline synthesized from these three traditions, and the institutions which practice it. This is contemporary history: the philosophy and principles of audiovisual archiving, of guarding and sustaining that new kind of memory stands on this foundation. The philosophy in audiovisual archiving – what is done and not done, and why – is the consequence of these foundational principles and values.

1.5.2 This document may be seen as an addition to a vast and venerable body of writings, discussion and debate on the philosophy, principles and practices of the memory professions, and the roles and responsibilities of archives, libraries and museums in society. If it serves as the reader's entry point into that wider world, part of the author's intention will have been fulfilled.

1.5.3 The following chapters first explore the values and principles, and then the defining concepts and terminology, of audiovisual archiving. Their application within the organizational context is then discussed and related to the nature of the audiovisual media. Finally, the ethical and advocacy basis of the field, at both the personal and institutional level, is considered.

1.5.4 It is not, however, an entirely detached or clinical discussion. Passion, power and politics are as inseparable from audiovisual archiving as they are from the older disciplines. The desire to protect memory also coexists with the desire to destroy it. It has been said that 'no man and no force can abolish memory'.<sup>9</sup> But history has shown, and no more dramatically than in the last hundred years, that it can be distorted and manipulated, and that its carriers are tragically vulnerable to both neglect and willful destruction.

1.5.5 In other words, the conscientious and objective preservation of memory is an inherently political and value-laden act. "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution and its interpretation."<sup>10</sup>

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8 There are few places left in the world where nitrate prints can be safely and publicly screened, and invariably they are in archives. Such prints are at least 60 years old, and as they slowly shrink their projectability declines. Yet seeing the "real thing" while it is viable, instead of watching a later copy, is the archival equivalent of a live performance or the careful showcasing of a precious artefact in a museum. It is a valid form of public access to a disappearing memory. Having witnessed nitrate screenings, the author can attest that the screen image has a quality which cannot be exactly replicated in later copies, because the original technology – such as the Technicolor dye transfer process – did not long outlive the nitrate era, and the optical characteristics of nitrate and acetate film are different.

9 "Books cannot be killed by fire. People die, but books never die. No man and no force can abolish memory.... In this war, we know, books are weapons. And it is a part of your dedication always to make them weapons for man's freedom." Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Message to the booksellers of America*, 6 May 1942

10 Jacques Derrida, *Archive fever: a Freudian impression*, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.4, n. 1

## Chapter 2: Foundations and history



◇ Modern film vaults and conservation facility © George Eastman Museum

### 2.1 Basic assumptions

- 2.1.1 This document is necessarily based on certain assumptions which need to be made clear at the outset.
- 2.1.2 It attempts to synthesize the views of individual professionals speaking in their personal capacities, rather than as formal representatives of institutions or federations (which would have required a different and much more complex process). It therefore does not automatically present an “official” stance unless an organization specifically endorses it as such.
- 2.1.3 The document adopts the stance of UNESCO in conceiving of audiovisual archiving as a single field, within which several federations and a variety of institutional archive types operate, and which it is valid to regard as a single profession with internal plurality and diversity. (It is acknowledged that some espouse other views - seeing, for example, film, television and sound archiving as traditionally separate fields.)
- 2.1.4 Irrespective of how universally it is yet recognized academically or officially, audiovisual archiving is treated here as a profession in its own right. *It follows that it is not seen as a specialized subset of an existing profession*, such as the other memory professions of archival science, librarianship or museology, although it is closely related to them. This is explored later in section 2.4.
- 2.1.5 The relevant federations are appropriate forums for the discussion and further development of the philosophy and principles of audiovisual archiving. However, it is recognized that many audiovisual archives and archivists, for various reasons, do not belong to one or other of these groupings: this document is no less relevant to such institutions and individuals, whose views are no less valid.
- 2.1.6 Discussion on theory and principles proceeds against the background of worldwide landscape of constant change in which the federations, old and new, are always adapting. Both principles and practice are always being tested by these developments – as they should be.
- 2.1.7 The intention is, as far as possible, to document what is *actually the case*, rather than invent or impose theories or constructs: to be descriptive rather than prescriptive<sup>11</sup>. The philosophy

<sup>11</sup> In setting forth ethical principles, I have gone beyond description into value judgments about desirable behaviour, albeit based on the descriptive approach followed elsewhere in this document.

of audiovisual archiving may have much in common with the other memory professions, but it is logical that it *should arise from the nature of the audiovisual media, rather than by automatic analogy from those professions*.<sup>12</sup> By the same token, audiovisual documents deserve to be described in terms of *what they are*, rather than *what they are not*, and traditional terms like “non-book”, “non-text”, or “special materials”, which are common parlance in those professions, are inappropriate. Would it not be equally logical to describe books or correspondence files as “non-audiovisual” materials? The implication that one type of document is “normal” or “standard”, while everything else, defined in reference to it, is of lesser status, is illogical.

2.1.8 The field has its own terminology and glossaries (and this is addressed in Chapter 3). “AV-speak” is a dynamic and evolving vocabulary as times and conditions change. Words like *film*, *cinema*, *audiovisual*, *programme*, *recording* and *digital* can have richly and subtly different meanings and connotations, depending on context and country.

## 2.2 The memory professions

2.2.1 Audiovisual archiving is one of the memory professions. The nomenclature differs from country to country, but these professions include:

- library science, or librarianship
- archival science
- materials conservation
- documentalism
- information science
- museology, art curatorship and their subsets

This is not an exhaustive list!

### *Popular perceptions*

2.2.2 Popular perception looks for simplicity. Hence, the *archivist* is the person who looks after archives, retrieving the papers or files. The *librarian* is the person behind the loans desk or putting books on shelves. The *sound archivist* or *film archivist* does not yet, perhaps, present so obvious or distinctive an image.

2.2.3 The way professionals define themselves to governments, authorities, or among each other can be important to the professionals, but fine points of definition may matter only within small circles. Audiovisual archivists as a group share the problem of a low key public image. Within professional circles, they too have the need, and right, to be recognized as distinct from *archivists* and not become a victim of semantics.

2.2.4 Sometimes the identity of these professions is manifested at an institutional level, and is closely related to the character, name and philosophy of that institution. Examples are national libraries, archives and museums. Sometimes they are manifested at a sub-institution or section level, where the profession in question coexists with others but maintains its own integrity and philosophy within that context. Examples are libraries within art galleries or museums, archival manuscript collections within many types of institutions, in-house document archives within commercial organizations.

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12 This idea can be further explored. Verne Harris argues “I would question the notion of a philosophy emerging from the nature of media. No record speaks for itself. Their ‘speaking’ is mediated, by individuals, institutions, discourses etc. So, rather a philosophy emerging from the mediations specific to AV.” This contrasts with Marshall McLuhan’s classic argument that “the medium is the message,” asserting that there is a philosophical determination arising from the very media we deal with. Hence, the emergence of digital audiovisual documents demands that we re-evaluate philosophies and principles that have been shaped by the analog media over the last century and more.

2.2.5 Overlaying this, the professional person operates as an individual practitioner in various contexts, relating his/her skills, knowledge and philosophy to that context. Professional autonomy - i.e. the freedom to express professional identity and integrity, apply one's skills, and operate ethically and responsibly, irrespective of the setting - may be easier in some places than others, but is relevant to all.

## 2.3 Values

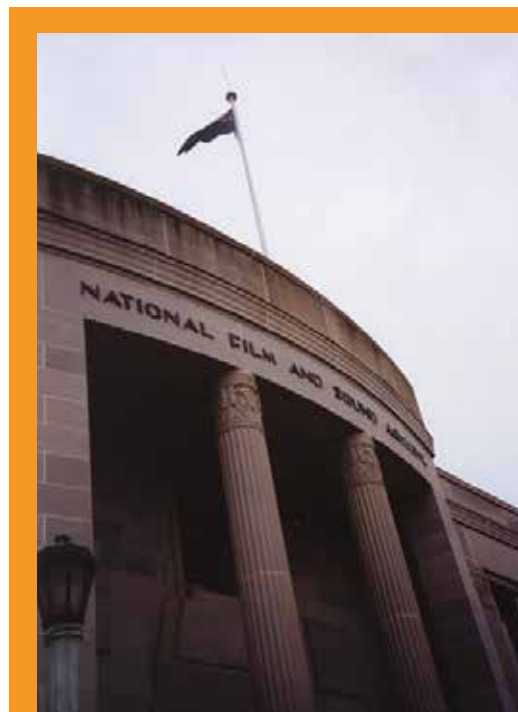
2.3.1 Audiovisual archiving shares the standard values of the memory professions, and of the UNESCO Programs and normative instruments (recommendations, charters and conventions) which relate to the protection and accessibility of documentary and cultural heritage, such as the *Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form* (2015), *Convention for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage* (2003), *Charter on the preservation of digital heritage* (2003), *Memory of the World: General guidelines to safeguard documentary heritage* (2002), and the *Recommendation on the safeguarding and preservation of moving images* (1980). Hence, the following are among the values characteristic of the profession: their ethical aspects are further explored in Chapter 7.

2.3.2 Audiovisual documents are *no less* important, and in some contexts *more* important, than other kinds of documents or artefacts. Their relative youth, their often populist nature and their vulnerability to rapidly changing technology, does not lessen their importance. Their preservation and accessibility should be resourced and provided for accordingly. The cost and complexity of resourcing these activities should not be used as an economic excuse not to.

2.3.3 Audiovisual archivists have, amongst other responsibilities, the task of maintaining the authenticity, and guaranteeing the integrity, of the works in their care. It follows that for this to happen, they need to be protected from damage, censorship or intentional alteration. Hence selection, protection and accessibility in the public interest should be governed by publicly declared policies - not by political, economic, sociological or ideological pressures. By definition, the past is fixed. It cannot be changed.

2.3.4 While these things may seem self-evident, they do not always match working reality for many audiovisual archivists. In society there are always forces who *want* to rewrite or censor history, creators who want to reinvent and suppress their earlier work ("directors' cuts", re-releases, etc), vested interests and prevalent notions of political correctness. Audiovisual documents are often fugitive by nature, and active advice or (where authorised) involvement by archivists during the production chain - as opposed to waiting passively for the end result to be delivered - may be essential in ensuring acquisition and preservation.

2.3.5 In an environment where the ownership and exploitation of intellectual property is big business, audiovisual archivists seek a balance between such legitimate rights and a universal right of access to the public memory, the latter including the right to ensure the survival of a published work without necessarily referring to the former. This value is supported by the concept of legal deposit, traditionally applied to books and printed media acquired by libraries, and now being progressively extended to digital documents including audiovisual documents.



◇ The portico of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia © Ray Edmondson

- 2.3.6 As befits a relatively small and youthful profession relating to a worldwide industry, there is among audiovisual archivists an international consciousness: the perception of the local or national audiovisual output in the context of an international heritage. They are also aware of the historical context in which resources and opportunities have been inequitably distributed between the “first world” and the “third world”, resulting in a loss of audiovisual memory in many parts of the world<sup>13</sup>.
- 2.3.7 So much of an audiovisual archivist’s work can never be checked or validated, and the potential for conflicts of interest are considerable. A strong sense of personal ethics and integrity, therefore, underlies the profession. Clearly visible lines of accountability, transparency, honesty and accuracy are all elements of this.
- 2.3.8 Audiovisual archivists work in both commercial and non-commercial contexts. These are not mutually exclusive domains, and archivists must often juggle judgments of cultural value against the imperatives of commercial exploitation. Some commercial organizations take audiovisual archiving very seriously: protecting corporate assets is, in fact, enlightened self interest. Others give it low priority. The context creates its own ethical and practical issues.
- 2.3.9 In the acquisition and use of collection material, audiovisual archivists, like other memory professionals, work in a realm where rules, relationships and ownerships are not always clear, and the privacy and confidentiality of individuals must be honoured. The ability to merit trust and keep confidences is expected.
- 2.3.10 The field of audiovisual archiving rarely shares the glamour or profile of the industries whose output it protects. It is neither well funded nor well known, and is often very demanding of time and energy. It attracts and holds motivated individuals with a sense of vocation, for whom the achievements of their work are their own reward.

## 2.4 Audiovisual archiving as a profession

- 2.4.1 In asserting the professional status of the audiovisual archiving field it is necessary to define the term as it applies in practice to the existing memory professions. As a working definition, it is proposed that a profession exhibits its own distinctive:
- body of knowledge, and literature
  - code of ethics
  - principles and values
  - terminology and concepts
  - worldview or paradigm
  - written codification of its philosophy
  - skills, methods, standards and codes of best practice
  - forums for discussion, standard setting, and issue resolution
  - training and accreditation standards
  - commitment: members invest their own time pursuing the best interests of their field

13 The “Singapore Declaration” adopted at the 2000 IASA/SEAPAVAA joint conference said in part: “IASA and SEAPAVAA support the principle of the adequate and equitable development of audiovisual archiving skills and infrastructure in all countries of the world. The audiovisual memory of the 21st century should be truly and equitably reflective of all nations and cultures; the failures of the 20th century to secure this memory in many parts of the world must not be repeated. This principle is consistent with the development of mutual support and encouragement which are part of the *raison d’être* of both associations”.

Professionals are, by definition, paid for their work. The amateur, also by definition, works purely for the love of the task or the field – but may well work to the same standards with the same motivation.

- 2.4.2 As this document goes on to demonstrate, audiovisual archiving is clearly defined by these elements, even if one or two of them – notably, accreditation standards – are still at an emergent stage.<sup>14</sup> Before discussing these elements, some points of history and perception should be noted.
- 2.4.3 Audiovisual archiving originated in a variety of institutional environments. It was natural for its practitioners to interpret their work from the viewpoint of their own mother disciplines and parent institutions. These disciplines variously included formal training in librarianship, museology, archival science, history, physics and chemistry, administration and the technical skills involved in the broadcasting, film and sound recording fields. Sometimes there was no formal training at all – the background of the self-taught and the enthusiast<sup>15</sup>. Pressed to state their professional affiliation, audiovisual archivists may fall back on their formal qualification – if they have one – or identify with the epithet of sound/ film/ audiovisual / television archivist or conservator, or similar. Some may cite their links with one or more of the federations as evidence of professional status.
- 2.4.4 Accordingly, audiovisual archivists, whether collectively or in their specialist callings, are still far from having a clear and unambiguous professional identity. Even the historic adoption of the term ‘film archive’ arose from pragmatic, rather than professional, considerations<sup>16</sup>: far from imputing any connection to archival science, it was selected to demonstrate solidity and safekeeping. Similarly, many university-educated practitioners in responsible positions have a strong perception that they are not librarians, general archivists or museologists, and this includes those who actually hold formal qualifications in those fields. The frequent personal identification with phrases like film archivist or sound archivist is a way of stating perceived identity.
- 2.4.5 So when does a new field become a valid profession, and cease to be – or be perceived as – part of something else? Lacking any external defining circumstance, it ultimately turns on self-perception and assertion: we are what we believe are, say we are and demonstrate we are. In a world of proliferating audiovisual production, audiovisual archivists are today well placed to be heard and recognised as a distinct group among all the related professions.
- 2.4.6 Part of the process is to respond to reactions from existing professional groups and individuals who do not agree that audiovisual archiving is a distinct profession. The debate is legitimate and can have a beneficial and clarifying effect on both sides of the argument if truth is being sought. A new profession inevitably changes the status quo and asserts that old analogies do not fit a new paradigm. Respondents may argue the opposite by fitting new evidence to an

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14 Accreditation standards may be independent of academic qualifications. In the field of art and materials conservation, for example, professional societies established their own certification examinations *before* university courses caught up. In audiovisual archiving it probably the other way around.

15 For the record, the author has a postgraduate diploma in librarianship, acquired in 1968 when film archiving was a responsibility of his then employer, the National Library of Australia. However, the theory and practice of audiovisual archiving was self taught – or, perhaps more accurately, discovered – on the job over many years.

16 “The word ‘archive’ rings with a deathly sound in the world of cinema, which is so young and vital and dynamic, eager for the future and impatient for the past” said Ernest Lindgren, curator of the British National Film *Library* in 1948, quoted by Penelope Houston in *Keepers of the frame* (pp 2,3). She adds that eight years later, the National Film Library had become the National Film *Archive*; the word *library* suggested books, and film libraries existed mostly for commercial purposes. To maintain an often precarious and difficult relationship with the film industry, the archives had to demonstrate their distance from the profit motive...they chose a name which suggested solidity and safekeeping.

existing paradigm. Sometimes the views may be put in direct debate; sometime the 'new' may be represented as an aberration of the 'orthodox' and discussed in those terms<sup>17</sup>. Here the view is taken that audiovisual archivists should argue for their paradigm objectively and evaluate responses on their merits. Inevitably there are politics as well as principles involved.

### ***Subject specialisms***<sup>18</sup>

- 2.4.7 As in the other memory professions, specialisation, both in subject and media, is traditionally a feature of audiovisual archiving and will no doubt continue to be so, both because of personal predilections and to support institutional needs and objectives. Hence, there are *film*, *sound*, *television* and *radio* archivists who find their primary professional identity in those terms. There are individuals who specialize in particular subject areas, in combinations of media, in skills such as presentation or a technical discipline. Such specialisations have been a matter of both preference and necessity. The field of knowledge is so vast, and so rapidly expanding, that there can no longer be any universal experts.
- 2.4.8 A few examples will illustrate. Sound archivists might specialise in nature sounds, ethnological documents, oral history, or one of the music genres. Film archivists may choose feature film genres, documentary genres, animation. Areas in radio and television include drama, news, current affairs, and commercials. Film repair, printing and processing, audio and video playback and signal processing, optical and digital restoration, and equipment maintenance are among many technical specialties. Functional and management skills in service provision, acquisition, collection management, presentation and marketing are yet another layer. Skills in information technology and digitization intersect with many of these.
- 2.4.9 Yet these specialisations can only flourish where circumstances and economics allow. In the developing world, few memory institutions have formal audiovisual departments or designated positions for audiovisual archivists. The profession remains hidden behind "traditional" archivists who often lack expertise to manage audiovisual collections.

### ***Recognition***

- 2.4.10 The gaining of formal recognition of the profession by relevant academic, government and industry bodies is an important sign of maturity, and a work still in progress. Until this is achieved in the civil services of relevant countries, for instance, audiovisual archivists have to be aligned, by analogy, to the most suitable reference points<sup>19</sup>. Situations vary greatly, but this can result in inappropriate alignments that may undervalue the complexity and responsibility of the work, or require audiovisual archivists to have inappropriate or unnecessary formal qualifications (and thereby exclude some potentially good recruits).

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17 For example, the final section of the Australian Society of Archivists' manual, *Keeping archives* (2008 edition) is devoted to what it styles "other stuff", which includes digital and audiovisual 'records'. In the chapter on sound recordings, it describes audiovisual archiving as an "emerging discipline" with "differences in philosophy and practice". In the context of a "total archives" approach for institutions that collect all kinds of media, the section is full of useful practical advice, and also touches on the ethics of audiovisual archiving.

18 A subject of recurrent debate is the proper accreditation or qualification for heads and deputy heads of audiovisual archives. It has been argued that such people should be professionally expert in the field, either holding a relevant degree or with a background as a technician, a historian or a curator and subject specialist, and therefore with an adequate frame of reference for the administrative task. "Expert" and "administrator" are not mutually exclusive categories.

19 Everyone has their favourite anecdote. Here is mine. In 1913 the Australian Government appointed its first official cinematographer, a job without precedent. How to classify him? Easy. He was paid the same rate as a surveyor, because they both used tripods.

### *Literature and knowledge base*

- 2.4.11 By the 1970s, an audiovisual archivist's professional library would have occupied little shelf space: a few manuals and technical studies, and not much more. Today, an exponentially growing literature base is now beyond the capacity of any one individual to master comprehensively. Wide ranging issues of history, theory and practice are documented and debated in a range of monographs, manuals and compendiums, technical data bases, dissertations, research articles, UNESCO guides and standards, as well as a variety of professional journals and newsletters. The latter includes the publications of the CCAA federations.
- 2.4.12 The spread of the internet has greatly stimulated the growth of knowledge, with a range of catalogues, websites, data bases and other resources becoming readily available. In addition, the growth of some major listservs<sup>20</sup> has encouraged a sense of professional community, stimulated awareness, and greatly increased the immediacy of information sharing and problem solving.
- 2.4.13 The immense literature and knowledge base of the memory professions in general is, of course, available to audiovisual archivists and is obviously relevant in areas of shared skills and needs: the fields of materials conservation, cataloguing and collection management are cases in point. Audiovisual archivists make their own contributions to it, especially where areas of their experience have some application in more traditional environments – such as the preservation of microfilm or oral history recordings.
- 2.4.14 The broad fields of film, television, radio, recorded sound and digital media scholarship are now heavily reliant on the resources and services of audiovisual archives, whose staff increasingly make their own contributions to the monographs and journals<sup>21</sup> which now constitute a large and distinct literature genre. Regrettably, of course, this wealth of knowledge is not equally available to all. To the extent that much of it is written in English, non-English-speaking professionals are at a disadvantage. Further, access to the internet is distributed unequally around the world.

## **2.5 Training of audiovisual archivists**

- 2.5.1 The existence of academically accredited training courses is one mark of a profession. The memory professions have long-established university courses all over the world, and a diploma, bachelors or master's degree is an entry-level requirement for a professional post in many institutions. Such qualifications also serve as the basis for membership in relevant professional societies, which in turn provide the forums for accreditation, debate and development of their profession, and support for the collective interests of their members.
- 2.5.2 Historically, audiovisual archivists have grown in a very different environment. They came from a wide variety of backgrounds, with or without formal qualifications in a memory discipline, but more importantly with skills and knowledge which could be turned to advantage within their archive. They were largely compelled to learn on the job in situations which required primary attention to the practicalities of archive operation, with little attention to the theoretical. Intermittent short term courses and workshops offered a degree of formal in-service training,

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20 The number and specialisation constantly increases, and includes listservs operated by the federations and various professional societies. Possibly the largest and busiest is the AMIA listserv, which typically carries dozens of postings daily. ([www.amianet.org](http://www.amianet.org))

21 The PIP database maintained by FIAF indexes over 200 film and television journals worldwide.



as they continue to do.<sup>22</sup> While such events will always fill a crucial need, by their nature they can never provide a comprehensive professional grounding.

2.5.3 The tertiary level courses in audiovisual archiving that have been slowly multiplying since the mid 1990s are supplying this need. Over a one or two-year period they offer practical and theoretical training leading to a postgraduate award. At the same time, broader courses in librarianship, archival science and cultural materials conservation are beginning to embrace audiovisual elements, as such materials grow in importance within the collections of memory institutions at large. For new entrants to the field, such formal qualifications are a strong advantage in the eyes of prospective employers. It should be only a matter of time before such qualifications become mandatory for professional positions in audiovisual archives.

2.5.4 But it is not a level playing field. Most training courses are in developed countries and come with a hefty price tag. This may be a barrier for candidates from the developing world.<sup>23</sup> While there are programs that try to alleviate this disparity, a profession that is also a vocation needs to have entry points that are cost-effective for the next generation of professionals it aims to develop. In developing countries, the situation may be exacerbated by lack of demand from the audiovisual industries, the absence of formalised audiovisual departments or units in memory institutions, and a lack of awareness that these skills are needed. Many memory institutions are still trying to establish systems to manage paper records.

2.5.5 There are broad areas of knowledge which could be considered as “basic equipment” for all audiovisual archivists, whether acquired formally or informally. These include:

- the history of the audiovisual media
- the history of audiovisual archiving
- an understanding of contemporary history
- knowledge of the recording technologies of the various audiovisual media
- basic media-related physics and chemistry
- basic understanding of digital concepts and technology
- technological basis for preservation and access
- collection management strategies and policies
- understanding of intellectual property law and concepts
- understanding of advocacy and ethics

2.5.6 As in other professions, a broad and versatile grounding is a foundation for later specialization and allows the audiovisual archivist to place her/himself in the context of the memory professions generally. The historical background is essential to an understanding and personal evaluation of the social significance of the audiovisual media - to answer the question ‘why am I training for this?’ The technical nature of the media bespeaks the need for universal technical training: one cannot otherwise be familiar with one’s stock in trade, nor interpret it to others. An understanding of contemporary history in general and of one’s own country in particular, provides a framework for evaluating individual films, programmes or recordings. An ability to appreciate critique and form judgments about them ties these threads together.

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22 The 1973 FIAF Summer School in Berlin, hosted by the Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR, pioneered a concept which continues today, whether under the auspices of UNESCO or the various federations, or on the initiative of individual archives utilizing internal and external specialists.

23 The high cost of tertiary education is also a disincentive for potential students in developed countries, since the prospects of a well paying job in the field are uncertain.

- 2.5.7 One might see the training of audiovisual archivists as overlapping the common areas of information and archival science, conservation and museology, so that existing courses in these fields become part of the armoury of audiovisual archivists. Beyond that, elements specific to the field need to be addressed in their own right. And as technologies converge, the established memory professions need to adapt.



◇ Film inspection © *George Eastman Museum*

## 2.6 The professional associations

- 2.6.1 Compared to the other memory professions, each of which has a single international peak body, the audiovisual archiving field is fragmented.<sup>24</sup> International federations or associations for film archives (FIAF), television archives (FIAT/IFTA), commercial stock shot libraries (FOCAL), sound archives and archivists (IASA and ARSC), individual moving image archivists (AMIA) all have separate historical origins. In parallel, regional associations cater for a different order of interests. These include SEAPAVAA, the Association of European Cinematheques (ACE), the Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC) and the Council of North American Film Archives (CNAFA). Some of them are forums for organizations, others for individual archivists. Some are both.
- 2.6.2 While this fragmentation has a number of historical causes, perhaps it is most obviously a legacy of changing perceptions. What were once seen as separate media, requiring distinct organisational types and fields of expertise, have, over time, found common ground, so that individual associations have broadened their scope.<sup>25</sup> Technological change and evolution within archives has refocused perceptions on similarities, not differences.
- 2.6.3 While they provide forums for debate, cooperation and development, and are part of the identity of the audiovisual archiving field, none of the federations yet has the role of accrediting individual archivists. Possibly an existing federation will develop this role: possibly the CCAAA will encourage some other structure. The role and potential of this peak body as a voice for the

24 The International Council on Archives (ICA), International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and International Council of Museums (ICOM) are the UNESCO-recognised NGOs for the three traditional professions.

25 The International Association of Sound Archives (IASA) broadened into today's International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives, though the IASA acronym was retained.

global profession is still unfolding, as ways are sought to overcome the limitations of traditional fragmentation, without losing the benefits of diversity.

2.6.4 In 2006 UNESCO established the *World Day for Audiovisual Heritage*, a global opportunity under the UNESCO brand for audiovisual archives to publicise their activities, hold special events, and draw attention to their services and needs. Held on 27 October each year, the World Day is coordinated by the CCAAA, and events around the world are documented on a website created specifically for the event.

## 2.7 Producers and disseminators

2.7.1 Depending on the nature of their collection and activities, audiovisual archives may have very close working relationships with various sectors of the audiovisual industries: indeed, they exist because of those industries, even if they do not share their affluence and pervasive presence.

2.7.2 Like other industries, the structures of the broadcasting, recording, film and related industries are neither neat nor monolithic, nor particularly easy to define, so any schema is arbitrary and inevitably incomplete. The one below is simply offered as a guide:

- **Broadcasters and disseminators:** TV and radio stations and networks, whether broadcast, cable or satellite, and their subsets.
- **Production companies:** The makers of feature films, sound recordings, documentaries, radio and television series
- **Record and video companies:** The creators and marketers of consumer CDs and DVDs
- **Distributors:** the “middlemen” - companies which handle the marketing, sales and rental of cinema films, sound and video recordings and television series
- **Exhibitors:** the cinemas
- **Internet-based service providers:** offering music and movie downloads and streaming
- **Retailers:** record and video shops and rental outlets
- **Manufacturers:** makers and suppliers of equipment and consumables
- **Production facilities** including specialty houses, large and small
- **Support infrastructure:** the huge range of industry support services, including hardware and software suppliers, publishers and advertisers
- **Government agencies:** Support, financing and promotional bodies; censorship and regulatory authorities; training agencies
- **Associations and forums:** Craft guilds, professional associations, unions, lobby groups
- **The ‘amateur’ industry:** non-professional moving image makers and program producers, cine clubs
- **The ‘culture’ sector:** cultural groups, magazines and journals, festivals, universities

Archives may relate to several of the above categories.

2.7.3 The industry may also be described, from another viewpoint, as comprising the following skills or areas of work (in declining order of relevance):

- Creative activity (Artists, writers, directors etc.)
- Programming (Content and editorial policy)
- Promotion (marketing, sales, branding)
- Technical services (engineering, operations)
- Management (Production, Planning, policy)
- Support services (administration, finance)

## 2.8 Bridging the divide

- 2.8.1 Capacities for managing the audiovisual heritage are unequally spread across the world. The economic shorthand is to talk of “developed” and “developing” countries; the information technology shorthand is to talk of the “digital divide”<sup>26</sup>. The divide is not just a matter of economics: it is a confluence of politics, education, advocacy, context and perspective.
- 2.8.2 The scale of the heritage at risk is truly daunting. For example, the task of digitizing all the obsolescent magnetic audio and videotape in the world’s collection may have already passed the tipping point where there are not enough workable machines and skilled operators left to do the job, even under ideal circumstances. The situation is worst in developing countries. Again, few institutions in the developing world are winning the battle to keep old equipment running, for want of spare parts or technicians.
- 2.8.3 Solutions that are applicable in the developed world may not be applicable in developing countries, especially if they involve building expensive infrastructure and calling on skills and equipment that may be in short supply or non-existent. The lack of resources in limited situations will be exacerbated if measured by the standards of the affluent, and simply lead to inaction and paralysis brought about by helplessness and fear. A different paradigm is needed.
- 2.8.4 The “best practices” of the developed world, evolved in their own different contexts, may need to be put aside for the moment, in pursuit of options specific to more limited situations – buying time and keeping things going, while exploring divergent solutions. Limitations force one to focus better, identify priorities, decide faster, and do the best one can under the circumstances. If the best equipment is not available, and a lower grade digital copy from an endangered carrier is possible, it is better than doing nothing. Physical rearrangement of a collection to improve security and findability is always possible and costs little.
- 2.8.5 International cooperation can make a difference. Whether it is external funding for a project, or partnering with another archive which can mentor skills and knowledge, or using the contacts available through professional associations and UNESCO, one never has to be entirely alone.<sup>27</sup> This is a field where personal contacts and stories matter, and which still has a pioneering flavor. Even in developed countries, every archive had to start somewhere, and more often than not began as a tiny, impoverished entity. Most archives can remember their own growth stories.

## 2.9 Reflection

- 2.9.1 Why, after a century of audiovisual archiving activity, have questions of professional identity, philosophy and theory, formal training and accreditation now come into focus? In a field pioneered by passionate individualists, generational change towards a greater reliance on formal theory and structures has been slow. But as institutional archives have grown, the days of intuition, idiosyncrasy, personality archiving, learning-on-the-job and making-it-up-as-you-go have passed because ultimately they are self-limiting. The day of the passionate *individualist* may be over, but the day of the passionate *individual* is here. It is only individuals working together who can build the stable and secure institutions needed to ensure the ongoing protection and accessibility of the audiovisual heritage.

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26 At one end of the spectrum, in rich countries like Denmark, Sweden and Norway, over 94% of the population use the internet. At the other end, in Myanmar and Timor-Leste, the corresponding figure is just over 1%. (Source: Wikipedia, accessed 29 September 2015)

27 UNESCO’s *Memory of the World* program merits the attention of every audiovisual archive. Financial assistance options include The British Library’s “Endangered Archives Program”. The “Albanian Cinema Project” is a good example of multi-faceted international assistance to a specific archive by involving a professional network.



## Chapter 3: Definitions, terms and concepts



◇ Historical audio archives of the National Radio of Uruguay © *Fabricia Malan*

### 3.1 The importance of precision

- 3.1.1 Audiovisual archiving has its own concepts and terminology, but they are often used – and misused – with little regard for precision, so that communication is not always clear. This chapter considers these crucial reference points and proposes a number of definitions and principles.
- 3.1.2 A glossary and index of some common terms is at Appendix 1. Larger glossaries are available as separate publications. They do not all agree, and terminology also differs according to language. Not all concepts – especially abstract ones – translate precisely. The reader is urged to approach the topic with care, both in analysing the concepts and in applying them in the course of daily work.
- 3.1.3 Terminology and nomenclature send messages, intentional or otherwise. Words have connotations and emotive power; they mean different things to different people. Think, for example, of the many connotations, to different groups in society, of the simple word ‘archive’. We are well advised to use terms carefully with a full understanding of what will be read into them.

### 3.2 Terminology and nomenclature

#### 3.2.1 *Archive, library or museum?*

- 3.2.1.1 The title of this publication describes the profession as audiovisual archiving. What do these two words mean? The qualifying term audiovisual is explored below. The active term *archiving* merits primary attention.
- 3.2.1.2 The word *archive* derives from the Latin *archivum*, denoting a ‘public building’ and ‘record’, and the Greek *archeion*, literally ‘place of the *archon* [superior magistrate]’. Both in turn derive from the word *arche* which has multiple meanings including ‘origin’, ‘power’ and ‘beginning’.
- 3.2.1.3 In Chinese the word for archives is *dàng àn guǎn* 档案馆, first used in the Qing dynasty in about 1680. Each of the constituent characters has numerous alternative meanings, some of which may enrich understanding. 档 means wooden shelf, 案 means small table and has by extension come to mean files. 馆 means a hall or an institution to keep centralized collections.

3.2.1.4 So the modern term has a variety of connotations within, and between, individual

languages and cultures.<sup>28</sup> These include:

- A building or part of a building where public records or historical documents are kept and arranged: a repository
- A receptacle or container in which physical documents are kept, such as a filing cabinet or box
- A digital location, such as a place in a computer directory, where computer documents are retained
- The records or documents themselves, which are assumed to be non-current and may relate to the activities, rights, claims etc. of a person, family, corporation, community, nation or other entity
- The agency or organization responsible for collecting and storing the documents

3.2.1.5 The terms *record* and *document* are considered below. The verb *to archive* can also, by extension, have a variety of nuances which include the placing of documents in a receptacle, location or repository; the guardianship, organization, maintenance and retrieval of those documents; and the administration of the agency or place in which the documents are kept.

3.2.1.6 *Audiovisual archiving*, then, is a field which embraces all aspects of the guardianship and retrieval of audiovisual documents, the administration of the places in which they are contained, and of the organizations responsible for carrying out these functions. It has gained its own particular nuances as the field has developed, and as the terms *preservation* and *access* have taken on particular meanings within it.

3.2.1.7 Against this background, it is important to note two other terms, also central to the collecting and custodial professions: library and museum, each with its own world of meaning. In the Greco-Roman tradition, library is derived from the Latin *librarium*, a place to keep books; museum is a Latin word derived from the Greek *mouseion*, the seat of the Muses, or a place of study. The modern concept of a library is perhaps a study or reference resource of published materials in a variety of formats, not just books: that of a museum a place for the keeping, study and presentation of objects of historic, scientific or artistic value.

3.2.1.8 It is a matter of history, though not necessarily of direct logic, that our field has chosen to identify primarily with the generic term archive rather than either of the two alternatives (although see 2.4.4 and 3.2.4). All three terms, however, are powerful and evocative, suggesting alignment with worldwide professions, standards and ethos, cultural guardianship, reliability and continuity.

### 3.2.2 *Carriers and media descriptors*

3.2.2.1 A wide range of terms are used to describe the physical objects which contain the moving images and recorded sound in the collections or holdings of audiovisual archives. Some terms are evolving; some are institution-specific or country-specific. Here are some key ones.

3.2.2.2 The discrete physical objects – whether discs, rolls of tape or film, cassettes, floppy discs, flash drives, hard drives and so on – are generically referred to as *carriers*. The particular type of

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28 The author's reference sources in this section include *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1951), *The Macquarie Dictionary* (1988), *The Oxford paperback Spanish Dictionary* (1993), *Roget's Thesaurus* (1953), *The Chinese Encyclopaedia* (accessed 13 August 2015). Adrian Cunningham's essay on 'Archival institutions' in *Recordkeeping in Society* (ed. Michael Piggott et al, 2004, Wagga Wagga, Charles Sturt University Press) traces the growth of the concept since the dawn of recorded history.

material used – vinyl pressing, photographic film, videotape etc – is the *medium*. The typical collection contains a variety of *media* in various sizes, shapes, configurations – or *formats*. For digital files, the term *format* refers to the particular way information is encoded in the file.

- 3.2.2.3 *Film* refers in a physical sense to the perforated nitrate, acetate or polyester strip carrying sequential images and/or sound track. It refers also to the various forms of transparent negative or positive used in still photography.
- 3.2.2.4 *Tape* denotes the polyester strip with magnetized coating carrying audio and/or video information. It exists in a wide variety of open reel and cassette formats.
- 3.2.2.5 *Disc* or *disk* denotes the vast range of sound and/or image carrier formats developed over more than a century, ranging from the 78 rpm analogue sound recording to digital compact disc (CD) and digital versatile disc (DVD) formats. It also refers to the various floppy and hard disc formats used in successive generations of computers.
- 3.2.2.6 Some carriers are best known by commonly understood or proprietary acronyms, like CD, CD-R, DVD, VCD, VCR or Compact Cassette.
- 3.2.2.7 Groups of related, technically identical carriers forming a cohesive whole – such as several reels of film comprising the complete picture negative of a feature film – are sometimes referred to as *elements* or *components*.

### 3.2.3 Conceptual descriptors

- 3.2.3.1 There are several ways of describing moving images and recorded sounds in a conceptual sense. Again, the nuances of particular terms vary with different countries, languages and institutions.
- 3.2.3.2 *Audiovisual* – ‘directed at the faculties of seeing and hearing’ – has gained increasing use as a convenient single word covering both moving images and recorded sounds of all kinds. With some variation in connotation, it is used in the titles of some archives and professional groupings in the field. It is the term adopted by UNESCO to draw together the separately originated fields of film, television and sound archiving which have found increasing commonality through technological change.
- 3.2.3.3 Originally *document* applied to the written word – a recording of information, evidence, creative or intellectual activity. In the 20th century, especially in relation to the audiovisual works, it has broadened to include the factual presentation of real events, activity, people and places – the *documentary* is a particular type of film, television or radio programme. UNESCO’s Memory of the World Programme recognizes that documents, including audiovisual documents, have two components: the information content and the carrier on which it resides. Both are important.<sup>29</sup>
- 3.2.3.4 *Record* is a related term and can equally apply to any medium or any format. As traditionally used in archival science it has the sense of lasting evidence of transactions, often in the form of unique original documents.<sup>30</sup> Separately, it is also familiar shorthand for *sound recording* (gramophone record, phonograph record, pressing, digital file) – both the object and the verb.

29 For an extended discussion on the terms *document* and *documentary heritage*, see *Memory of the World: General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage* (UNESCO, 2002) [www.unesco.org/webworld/mdm](http://www.unesco.org/webworld/mdm)

30 Records are ‘information, created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organization or person in pursuance of legal obligations or the transaction of business’. *Keeping Archives, 3rd edition, 2008*, p. 120.

- 3.2.3.5 Originating as the term for a clear cellulose nitrate support base carrying photographic emulsion (*photographic film*), *film* has accrued broader meanings evoking moving images in general as well as particular types of works, such as *feature films*, regardless of carrier. Television presentations use some filmic terms like *footage* and *filming*. Related terms like *cine*, *cinema*, *motion picture*, *moving image*, *screen*, and *video* to varying degrees share the same territory.
- 3.2.3.6 *Sound* is literally the sensation and perception triggered by vibrations in the surrounding air impinging on the ears of the hearer. It can be recorded and played back to reproduce those sensations.
- 3.2.3.7 *Broadcast* denotes television and radio, irrespective of whether transmission is by air or by cable. Both media have in common the capability of live immediacy – for example, in news, current affairs, phone-in or interview programmes – which is not, and cannot, be characteristic of studied creations like pop music recordings, feature films or documentary programmes.
- 3.2.3.8 *Video* may denote an electronic (as opposed to photographic) moving image displayed on a television or computer screen, or projected onto a surface, or be shorthand for a related medium or format, such as *video recording*, *videotape* or *videocassette*.
- 3.2.3.9 *Digital* refers to discrete, discontinuous representations of information in the form of binary code formatted as computer-accessible files. It might be described as an idealized abstraction of physical reality.
- 3.2.3.10 *Analogue* (or *analog*) is in a sense the opposite of digital, referring to signals that behave in a continuous manner and are stored *in* or *on* a carrier, for example in the physical texture of a gramophone record, a fluctuation in field strength of a magnetic recording, or light-sensitive crystals randomly distributed in the gelatin emulsion of a film.
- 3.2.3.11 *Content* is the sonic, visual or textual information, in either analogue or digital form, resident in the *carrier* and which is normally migratable to another carrier. The relationship between content and carrier may range from incidental to integral.
- 3.2.3.12 *Special materials*, *non-book*, *non-text* and similar terms are commonly used to identify audiovisual carriers in the parlance of libraries and sometimes traditional or ‘total’ archives. From the point of view of the audiovisual archivist these are not useful terms, and (depending on context) may even be disparaging or offensive. (See also 2.1.7)

### 3.2.4 Organizational descriptors

- 3.2.4.1 In the sense that audiovisual archives are organizations, or parts of organizations, they are usually identified by a descriptor. The descriptor is sometimes neutral (e.g. organization, institute, foundation) but more often is a professionally specific term like archive (or archives), library or museum. This has the effect of declaring the nature of the organization (or its relevant department) as well as evoking the associated values.
- 3.2.4.2 In some countries, audiovisual archives have used a specific type of descriptor evolved from the French or Spanish terms for library (*bibliothèque*, *biblioteca*). Hence, *cinemathèque* (*cinemateca*, *sinematek*, *kinemathek*) for film archive, *phonothèque* or *discoteca* for sound archive, *médiathèque* for audiovisual media archive.<sup>31</sup>

31 One of the earliest film archives, the *Cinematheque Francaise* in Paris, probably originated this style in the 1930s



3.2.4.3 By the same token, the word *museum* has been employed by a number of archives. There are, for example, several *film museums* in Europe. In some, but not all, cases there is an emphasis on the collection and display of objects and artefacts such as costumes, props and vintage technical equipment.

3.2.4.4 As an administrative entity within a larger organization, an audiovisual archive may sometimes be labeled as a *collection* – literally, a group of objects or documents assembled together. Depending on context, the term can have several connotations, including the sense of items selected individually according to a policy, as opposed to an archival *fond*, or a group of related records making up an organic whole. Organizationally, the term emphasizes subservience to a larger organization or concept, rather than suggesting an organization in its own right.

### 3.2.5 Organizational names

3.2.5.1 Organizational names for public memory institutions fulfill several important functions:

- They *describe* the institution, declaring its professional character, status, mission and perhaps other attributes
- They *inform* and *communicate*. They are the reference point by which the institution is found (in directories, web searches and so on)
- They *position* the institution vis-à-vis peer bodies, nationally or internationally, and claim its “territory”
- They *evoke* intangible qualities, such as professional values, reliability, prestige
- They are *symbolic*, ‘owned’ and valued by a constituency, representing relationships, history and sentiment

They are therefore valuable assets, being both the institution’s ‘brand’ and a declaration of identity. The formalizing of names in legislation recognizes their long term significance and serves to inhibit ill-considered change.

3.2.5.2 Accordingly, these organizational names tend to have certain characteristics:

- They are unambiguous, unique and self-explanatory
- They are translatable and follow a standard pattern (see below)
- They are stable: change is rare and, when it happens, incremental – unless there is fundamental change in the character or status of an organization (such as an amalgamation, or change of role or status)

3.2.5.3 The standard pattern comprises a professional descriptor (*library, archive, museum*) and qualifier (*sound, film, audiovisual* etc) – or a word combining both (*cinemateca, phonogrammarchiv*) plus a status definer (*state, national, university* etc). and/or the name of a country or region. Examples:

- Cinémathèque Française
- National Film, Video and Sound Archives (South Africa)
- UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) Film and Television Archive
- Österreichisches Phonogrammarchiv
- National Library of Norway/Sound and Image Archive
- Gosfilmofond of Russia

- Ngā Taonga Sound and Vision (New Zealand)<sup>32</sup>
  - National Archives of Malaysia/ National Centre for Documentation and Preservation of Audiovisual Material
  - Discoteca di Stato (Italy)
  - Library of Congress: Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division (MBRS)
  - Institutional names, like other names, are often abbreviated. This can be useful shorthand, especially if it results in a euphonious and memorable acronym. By definition, the shorthand indicates the existence of a full name and invites its discovery.
- 3.2.5.4 Some archives are named after individuals (such as past benefactors). Examples:
- Walt Disney Archives
  - George Eastman Museum/ Motion Picture Department
  - Smithsonian Institution
  - Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive
- 3.2.5.5 Finally, some archives use corporate brands for various reasons, perhaps mandated by a parent organization, or where a descriptive name is difficult to devise, or where the contrast with traditional formulas is intentional. Corporate names are not self explanatory, so they require explanation and promotion, and the task cannot be entered into lightly. *Memoria* is the group brand of an association of Swiss audiovisual archives. The venerable Nederlands Filmmuseum was merged in 2010 with three other bodies and re-branded as the *Eye Institute*, which in English reflects the Dutch word *Ij*, the name of the river fronting its building. In 1999 the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia was rebranded as *ScreenSound Australia* but reverted to its original name five years later.<sup>33</sup> There is an extensive literature on the theory and practice of branding and positioning.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.2.6 *Preservation and access*<sup>35</sup>

- 3.2.6.1 Preservation and access are two sides of the same coin. For convenience they are considered separately in the following discussion, but they are so interdependent that access can be seen as an *integral part* of preservation. Indeed, the widest definition of *preservation* embraces almost the totality of an archive's curatorial functions and skills, both contemporary and legacy.
- 3.2.6.2 Preservation is necessary to ensure permanent accessibility; yet preservation is not an end in itself. Without the objective of access it has no point. Both terms have a wide spectrum of meaning, however, and tend to mean different things to professionals in different situations. Further, the relatively fragile and fugitive nature of the audiovisual media and its technology, and the legal and commercial complications which overlay accessibility, place these functions at the centre of the management and culture of audiovisual archives.

32 Full title: New Zealand Archive of Film, Television and Sound Ngā Taonga Whitiāhua Me Ngā Taonga Kōrero. It was formed by the amalgamation of the New Zealand Film Archive, Sound Archives Ngā Taonga Kōrero and the Television New Zealand Archive between 2012 and 2014.

33 For a detailed case study on the experience of this re-branding and its subsequent reversal, see the author's PhD thesis *National Film and Sound Archive: the quest for identity* (University of Canberra, 2011)

34 A contemplated rebranding merits careful consideration, as there are many classic failures. A well-referenced example was the British Post Office Group which became *Consignia* in 2001. Public outcry forced a reversal the following year.

35 The author gratefully acknowledges Karen F Gracy's doctoral dissertation. *The imperative to preserve: competing definitions of value in the world of film preservation* (University of California, Los Angeles, 2001) and especially its extended discussion on the definition of the term 'preservation'

3.2.6.3 Accordingly a general audiovisual definition would be:

- **Preservation is the totality of things necessary to ensure the permanent accessibility – forever – of an audiovisual document with the maximum integrity.** Potentially, it embraces a great many processes, principles, attitudes, facilities and activities. These may include *conservation and restoration* of the carrier, *reconstruction* of a definitive version, *copying* and *processing* of the visual and/or sonic content, *digitization* to create surrogates for access or preservation, *maintenance* of the carriers within appropriate storage environments, *recreation* or *emulation* of obsolete technical processes, equipment and presentation environments, *research and information gathering* to support these activities.

3.2.6.4 There have been various proposed definitions of *digital preservation* and I quote an example:

- **Digital preservation combines policies, strategies and actions to ensure access to reformatted and born digital content regardless of the challenges of media failure and technological change. The goal of digital preservation is the accurate rendering of authenticated content over time.**<sup>36</sup>

3.2.6.5 However, for historical reasons, the term is widely used – even by archivists – simply as a synonym for copying or duplication.<sup>37</sup> This unfortunately tends to reinforce the misleading idea that making a new analogue or digital copy from a threatened carrier is the end of the story when, in fact, it is only the beginning. Preservation is not a discrete process, but rather a never-ending management task. How well the recording or film survives in the long term – if it survives at all – will be determined by the quality and rigour of that process, under a succession of management regimes, into the indefinite future. **Nothing has ever been preserved – at best, it is *being* preserved!**

3.2.6.6 This misuse of the term *preservation* while ignoring the underlying practicalities presents a communication challenge for archivists, because it is also open to commercial exploitation. For example, the common use of the phrase “digitally remastered” on the packaging of DVDs or internet download websites suggests much more than the basic and unrefined copying process that has probably occurred. Commercial services offering to “preserve” one’s 8mm home movies by having them copied to DVD imply more than the simple format change being offered and can be misleading to the public.

3.2.6.7 *Access* is, correspondingly, also a term of great scope:

- **Access is any form of use of an archive’s collection, services or knowledge, including playback in real time of sound and moving image holdings, and reference to related sources of information and the subject areas they represent.** It can be *proactive* (initiated by the institution itself) or *reactive* (initiated by users of the institution). A subsequent stage may be the provision of copies of selected material created to the client’s order.

3.2.6.8 The only limit to *proactive access* is imagination. It may include the regular broadcast of collection material on radio or television; public screenings; the lending of prints, recordings or digital packages for presentation outside the archive; the making of reconstructed versions of films or programmes that exist only in partial or damaged versions; the creation of collection-based products (CDs, DVDs, downloads) to increase the universal availability of material; the digitization and delivery of material on-line; and exhibitions, lectures and

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36 American Library Association medium definition of digital preservation (2007)

37 Ironically this may arise from a campaign by film archives, in an earlier era, to sensitise the public with a strong and simple message that the only way to preserve (i.e. save) threatened nitrate film was to copy it to acetate-based film: “nitrate won’t wait”. While a valid and effective cry at the time, we now know the truth to be more complex – and correspondingly harder to communicate. Old ideas die hard.

presentations of all kinds. In all of these activities, the role of the *curator* in interpreting and providing context to the material is crucial. The unmediated use and misuse of archival material – for example, the broadcasting or sale of poor quality copies, or the cliché of running of old footage at the wrong speed in television documentaries – devalues it and creates erroneous perceptions of its character and significance.<sup>38</sup>

- 3.2.6.9 Perhaps more than other memory institutions, audiovisual archives have to build their access services around the commercial realities of copyright control. The provision of public access often involves the prior gaining of permission from a copyright owner, and – frequently – the resultant payment of fees. Many films and recordings are commercial products with considerable revenue-earning potential (for the copyright owner, not necessarily the archive!) and archives need to be vigilant about the potential contravention of these rights. It is a complex area, becoming rapidly more complex with technological and legislative change, and archives need to regularly have recourse to legal advice.
- 3.2.6.10 Perspectives on both preservation and access differ between non-commercial and commercial archives. The former tend to view their collections as cultural objects: the motivation to preserve and provide access arises from perceptions of cultural value and research demand, and these notions figure largely in the setting of priorities. The latter are engaged in a form of asset management, and preservation priorities are determined by marketing imperatives, such as release schedules for products and programs.

### 3.3 Key concepts

#### 3.3.1 Definition of audiovisual heritage

- 3.3.1.1 Audiovisual documents – the recordings, films, programs etc as defined in 3.3.2 below – are part of a larger concept which can be styled as the audiovisual heritage. The connotations and scope of this concept varies across cultures, countries and institutions, but its essence is that audiovisual archives need to contextualize their holdings of recordings, programs and films by collecting or nurturing a range of associated items, information and skills. The following definition<sup>39</sup> is proposed:

The audiovisual heritage includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- ***Recorded sound, radio, film, television, video, digital or other productions comprising moving images and/or recorded sounds, whether or not primarily intended for distribution to the public***
- ***Objects, materials, works and intangibles relating to audiovisual documents, whether seen from a technical, industrial, cultural, historical or other viewpoint; this shall include material relating to the film, broadcasting and recording industries, such as literature, scripts, stills, posters, advertising materials, manuscripts, and artefacts such as technical equipment or costumes***<sup>40</sup>

38 Herein can lie some lengthy and interesting debates about the ethical and accurate re-use of archival material. For example, the internet mashup re-purposes clips of footage by taking them out of context to create a new whole. Is it a valid new work? Does it do damage to the intent of the original creator?

39 Based on a definition originally published in *Time in our hands* (National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, 1985), and revised by Birgit Kofler in *Legal questions facing audiovisual archives* (UNESCO, Paris, 1991, pp 8-9)

40 Another wording for the second part of clause (b) has been suggested by Wolfgang Klaue: ...this shall include materials resulting from the production, recording, transmission, distribution, exhibition, and broadcasting of audiovisual media such as scripts, manuscripts, scores, designs, production papers, stills, posters, advertising materials, press information, censorship documents, artefacts such as technical equipment, sets, props, objects from animation films, special effects, costumes.

- *Concepts such as the perpetuation of obsolescent skills and environments associated with the reproduction and presentation<sup>41</sup> of these media.*
- *Non-literary or graphical material, such as photographs, maps, manuscripts, slides and other visual works, selected in their own right*

3.3.1.2 It follows that most, if not all, audiovisual archives would put this definition through their own particular parameters to adapt it to their situation - for example, by giving it a geographic qualification (say, the heritage of a country, a city or a region), a temporal limitation (say, the heritage of the 1930s as an era), or a thematic or subject specialization (perhaps, the heritage of pre-television radio as a social phenomenon).

### 3.3.2 Definition of audiovisual media/ document/ time based media

3.3.2.1 There are many definitions of, and assumptions about, these terms, which are variously seen to encompass (a) moving images, both film and digital (b) audio-slide presentations and powerpoints (c) moving images and/or recorded sounds in various formats (d) radio and television (e) still photographs and graphics (f) video games (g) anything projected on a screen (h) anything manifested on a computer screen (i) all of these. Some quoted examples of definitions are given below: no doubt there are many others. They are offered as examples purely to illustrate the range of perception; no endorsement or comment is given.<sup>42</sup>

3.3.2.2 The spectrum ranges from anything with images and/or sounds on the one hand, to the elaborate PowerPoint presentation or the interactive computer game on the other. In their respective contexts such definitions may be useful, but in philosophical and practical terms audiovisual archives need a definition which accords with working reality and positively asserts the character of the audiovisual media in their own right.

41 suggests here production, reproduction and presentation

42 Definition 1  
[audiovisual media are:]

- visual recordings (with or without soundtrack) irrespective of their physical base and recording process used, such as films, filmstrips, microfilms, slides, magnetic tapes, kinescopes, videograms (videotapes, videodiscs), optically readable laser discs (a) intended for public reception either by television or by means of projection on screens or by any other means (b) intended to be made available to the public.
- sound recordings irrespective of their physical base and the recording process used, such as magnetic tapes, discs, soundtracks or audiovisual recordings, optically read laser discs (a) intended for public reception by means of broadcasting or any other means (b) intended to be made available to the public.

All these materials are cultural materials.

The definition is intended to cover a maximum of forms and formats. ....moving images..... constitute the classical form of audiovisual material and are the principal form explicitly included in the UNESCO 1980 Recommendation ....in reality, [they] necessarily include sound recordings as well. (From Kofler, Birgit: *Legal questions facing audiovisual archives* Paris, UNESCO, 1991, pp 10-13)

Definition 2

[An audiovisual work is one] which appeals at the same time to the ear and to the eye and consists of a series of related images and accompanying sounds recorded on suitable material

(From World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) *Glossary of Terms of the Law of Copyright and Neighbouring Rights* )

Definition 3

[The audiovisual heritage] comprises films produced, distributed, broadcast or otherwise made available to the public .....[film is defined as] a series of moving images fixed or stored on a support (whatever the method of recording and the nature of the support used initially or ultimately to hold them), with or without accompanying sound which, when projected, gives an impression of movement.....

(From an early text of the *Draft Convention for the Protection of the European Audio-visual Heritage*, drafted by the Committee of Experts on Cinema at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. This is the present writer's translation from the French text )



◇ Overcrowded shelving compromises good housekeeping and access © *Fabricia Malan*

3.3.2.3 Terms like *media*, *material* or *documents* tend to be used interchangeably. From their plain meaning, however, *media* and *material* most strongly suggest *carrier*. *Document*, as used by UNESCO, contains the sense of both carrier *and* deliberately-created content.

3.3.2.4 Accordingly, the following is advanced as a professional definition of audiovisual documents:

*Audiovisual documents are works comprising reproducible images and/or sounds embodied in a carrier<sup>43</sup> whose*

- *recording, transmission, perception and comprehension usually requires a technological device*
- *visual and/or sonic content has linear duration*
- *purpose is the communication of that content, rather than use of the technology for other purposes*

3.3.2.5 The term *works* implies an entity resulting from a deliberate intellectual act, and it could be argued that not all moving image or sound recordings have deliberate intellectual content or intent - for example, a sound recording of a streetscape, whose content is incidental. (The converse could also be argued: that intentionality - the mere act of placing a camera or a microphone to make such a recording - is itself sufficient evidence of intellectual intent).

3.3.2.6 The notion that an audiovisual work can only be made and perceived diachronically - over a lapse of time - is difficult to define, especially - for example - when the work may be perceived as part of a website where the user chooses the order in which the content is played. Nevertheless, image and sound recordings, no matter how short, are by their nature linear. They cannot be perceived instantaneously.

3.3.2.7 Accepting the likelihood that a sharp definition is impossible, this definition is meant to decisively *include* conventional recordings of sound and/or moving images (sound or silent) and broadcast programs, both published and unpublished, in all formats. It is meant to decisively *exclude* text material per se, regardless of the medium used (whether paper, microform, digital formats, graphics or slide presentations, etc. - the distinction is conceptual rather than technological, although to a large extent a technological divide exists as well). *It is also meant to exclude the popular connotation of the term media* which includes hard copy

43 A single work may comprise one or several carriers; sometimes a single carrier may contain more than one work.

and digital newspapers as well as broadcasting. Radio and television programs - including news programs - would, of course, be *included* within the definition of audiovisual media, as would sound and moving image content embedded in websites, e-news and e-journals.

- 3.3.2.8 Positioned between these two groups is a spectrum of materials and works which are less automatically the preoccupation of audiovisual archives, and which, depending on one's perception, may or may not fully meet the above definition. These include photographs, multimedia, piano rolls and mechanical music, even the traditional tape-slide 'audiovisual'. Computer games, websites, and other digital creations are, by definition, non-linear in their construction, and the capacity to 'shuffle' or randomize the presentation of content from audio or image files is a standard aspect of the technology. Even so, the resulting fragments of moving image and sound, no matter how brief, remain linear within themselves, and a sequence of fragments - intentional or otherwise - is also linear.
- 3.3.2.9 Cultural variations, too, need to be recognized. In parts of Latin America, for example, the term *audiovisual* tends to connote a very wide range of non-literary visual media including maps, photographs, manuscripts, websites and other imagery, collected both in their own right and as material relating to audiovisual documents as defined in 3.3.2.4 (see also the definition of audiovisual heritage above). In Europe, on the other hand, the connotation is narrower.

### **3.3.3 Definition of audiovisual archive**

- 3.3.3.1 Perhaps for historical reasons, there is no succinct, standard definition of an audiovisual archive in current use. The constitutions of FIAT/IFTA, FIAF and IASA describe many characteristics and expectations of such bodies as members, but provide no such definition for the institutional type itself. SEAPAVAA's constitution (1996) defines both *audiovisual* and *archive* in relation to its own membership qualifications. It is worth quoting:

*Article 1b: Audiovisual refers to moving images and/or sounds, recorded on any medium including but not limited to film, magnetic tape, or disc, or any other medium now known or yet to be invented.*

*Article 1c: Archive refers to an organization or unit of an organization which is focused on collecting, managing, preserving and providing access to or making use of a collection of audiovisual and related materials. The term includes government, non-government, commercial and cultural organizations which pursue these four functions. This Constitution may further provide for the precise application of this definition in determining eligibility for membership.*

- 3.3.3.2 As a point of departure, therefore, the following definition is proposed:

***An audiovisual archive is an organization or department of an organization which has a statutory or other mandate for providing managed access to a collection of audiovisual documents and the audiovisual heritage by collecting, preserving and promoting.***

- 3.3.3.3 This definition refers back to 3.2.6 and the notion that preservation is not an end in itself but a means to an end, which is permanent accessibility. It also asserts that the functions of collecting, managing, preserving, promoting and providing access to audiovisual heritage are its *focus* - not just one incidental activity among many. The operative word is *and*, not *or*: the archive does all, not some, of these things, and this in turn implies that it collects, or aspires to collect, material in the range of formats suitable for *both* preservation *and* access.

- 3.3.3.4 The definition needs to be applied with insight, not dogma. For example, there is a difference between an audiovisual archive with its preservation function, and a retail or distribution operation or stock shot library where the primary intent is accessibility, not preservation. In practice, the latter might evolve over time into the former if its holdings turn out to be precious or unique, and the perspective changes. Again, private collections - if they are managed in accordance with this definition - are archives in practice.
- 3.3.3.5 The typology of audiovisual archives (see next chapter) shows that within this definition there are many types and emphases. For example, some audiovisual archives concentrate on individual media - such as film, radio, television, sound recordings or digital content - while others cover several media. Again, some cover a wide range of content while others are highly focused or specialized in their subject interest. Finally, they may be publicly or privately owned, and may be commercial or non-commercial in intent. The point here is the *focus* on the functions, *not* on the policies guiding them. For example, some corporate audiovisual archives do not provide public access, being limited by corporate policy to serving only 'in-house' clients. Conversely, some public or institutional archives elect to provide access to non-profit, but not commercial, users. In both cases, the access function, per se, is the same.

### 3.3.4 Definition of audiovisual archivist

- 3.3.4.1 While terms like film archivist, sound archivist and audiovisual archivist are in common use in the field and its literature, there appear to be no agreed definitions of these terms adopted by the professional associations, or UNESCO, or even among practitioners. Traditionally, they are subjective and flexible concepts which evidently mean different things to different people: a statement of personal identity or perception, rather than a formal qualification.
- 3.3.4.2 To illustrate, it is noted that AMIA membership is open to 'any interested individual, institution, organization or corporation' without further qualification.<sup>44</sup> Individual membership of IASA is open to 'persons involved in the work of archives and other institutions, organizations, corporations, business enterprises which hold, manage or preserve sound or audiovisual documents and are dedicated to the purposes of IASA'<sup>45</sup> (the term *archives* is not further defined). SEAPAVAA offers membership to those who 'subscribe to the objects of the Association and abide by its rules'. Intending individual members must give details of relevant interests and career background<sup>46</sup> FIAT/IFTA puts no qualification on individual eligibility for membership. FIAF does not offer membership to individuals.
- 3.3.4.3 Academic courses are now producing graduates in moving image and audiovisual archiving. For these graduates, identity is a matter of formal qualification as well as personal perception. So against this background, the following definition is proposed:

***An audiovisual archivist is a person formally qualified or accredited as such, or who is occupied at the level of a skilled professional in an audiovisual archive, in developing, preserving or providing managed access to its collection, or the serving of its clientele.***

To place this in context, a professional archivist in the broader sense is defined as a person with an appropriate tertiary qualification who is eligible for membership in a relevant professional society.<sup>47</sup>

44 Source: AMIA website accessed 16 October 2015

45 Source: IASA constitution as accessed on 16 October 2015

46 Source: SEAPAVAA constitution as accessed 16 October 2015

47 For example, the Australian Society of Archivists requires an archives study qualification from an accredited university plus the equivalent of one year of full-time experience as an archivist, or any university degree plus two years of relevant experience. (*Keeping Archives*, 2008, p.14)



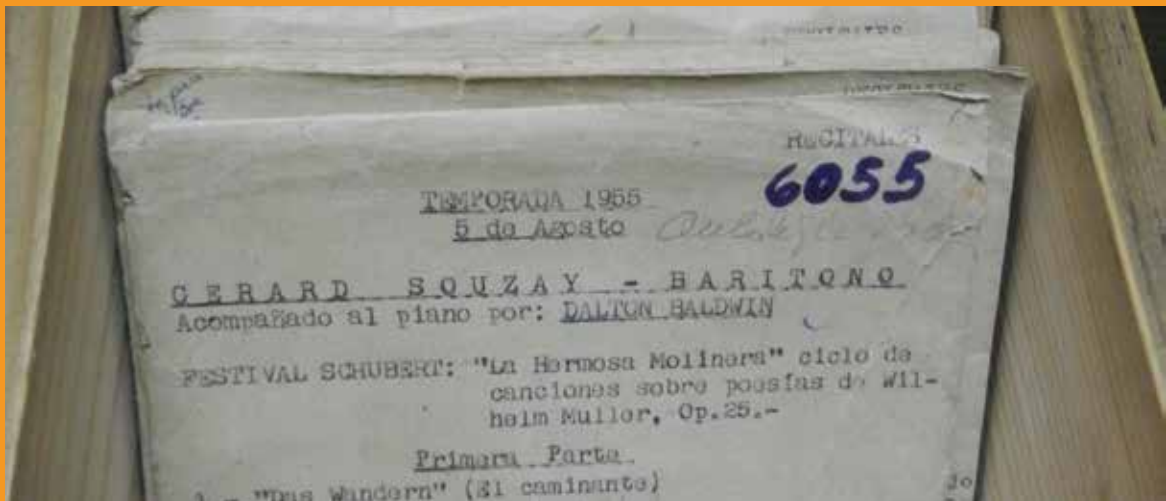


◇ Consistent labelling and numbering is part of good housekeeping © *Fabricia Malan*

- 3.3.4.4 Practicing audiovisual archivists come from a variety of backgrounds. Some are academic; some have learned their profession on the job over many years. In the long run, though, the proportion of those with formal qualifications in the field will increase, and the question of formal accreditation of individual practitioners by the federations will have to be faced, as it has long since been in the other memory professions: a postgraduate degree, or the experiential equivalent, would logically represent the minimum eligibility.
- 3.3.4.5 Here we confront the meaning of the widely used term professional. For a librarian, traditional archivist or museologist it would imply a relevant academic qualification, and eligibility for accreditation and membership in their professional association. In the less mature structures of audiovisual archiving, it implies a comparable level of training, experience and responsibility – including judgment and qualitative decision making in any area of archive operation.
- 3.3.4.6 Like general archivists, librarians and museologists, audiovisual archivists would be able to follow whatever specializations suit their opportunities, preference and subject knowledge, and identify themselves accordingly. So they might, for example, share a common grounding in theory, history and technical knowledge, but elect to pursue careers as sound, film, broadcasting, digital or documentation archivists – or, as in some institutions, all of them.
- 3.3.4.7 They might also choose the areas of administration, promotion and management. There is an eternal debate about whether “management” and a professional discipline like audiovisual archiving are separate skills, even mutually exclusive ones. Is it easier to make a manager out of an archivist, or an archivist out of a manager? Many in the field (including this author) believe that the executive skills of management, promotion, fundraising and administration *are* indivisible parts of the worldview and professional toolkit of audiovisual archivists, and not separate from it. There is evidence to suggest that memory institutions are most successfully run by such professionals.



## Chapter 4: The audiovisual archive: typology and paradigm



◇ Paper documentation complements audiovisual carriers © *Fabricia Malan*

### 4.1 Historical emergence

- 4.1.1 Audiovisual archiving had no formal beginning. It emerged from diffuse sources, in part under the auspices of a wide variety of collecting, academic and other institutions, as a natural extension of their existing work. It developed in parallel to, though rather lagging behind, the growth in popularity and reach of the audiovisual media themselves. Sound, film, radio and later television archives at first tended to be institutionally distinct from each other, reflecting the distinctive and separate character of each medium and their associated industries. From the 1930s on, they gained a more visible identity by setting up international professional associations to represent the respective media.<sup>48</sup> Progressively, too, the international organizations for general archives, libraries and museums recognized them.
- 4.1.2 Audiovisual archivists, as a professional group, similarly had no formal beginning. As the field evolved, they gravitated from many backgrounds: the memory professions, academia, the film, broadcasting and sound recording industries, the sciences and the arts. Some had formal qualifications in their field of origin; many did not. What seemed to be held in common was a perception of gathering loss and catastrophe; and a motivation, and in some cases a missionary zeal, to stem the tide.
- 4.1.3 In the early years of the 20th century it was by no means self-evident that sound recordings and motion pictures had any enduring value at all. While their invention was, to a degree, the result of scientific curiosity and endeavour, their rapid growth was due to their exploitation as a medium of popular entertainment.
- 4.1.4 There were very early attempts to impress the value of audiovisual materials on custodial institutions of the day. For example, in Vienna in 1899 the Osterreichische Akademie der

<sup>48</sup> While nominally FIAF, FIAT/IFTA and IASA represent film, television and sound archives respectively, relative roles are more complex. FIAT/IFTA is, in effect, a television industry association. FIAF is a forum for non-commercial film and television archives that pursue a more autonomous role as public institutions and cultural guardians. IASA's membership includes organizations interested in sound and, often, other audiovisual media. Some archives belong to multiple federations. ICA and IFLA provide forums for audiovisual archives which have linkages to the general archiving and library worlds

Wissenschaften established its Phonogrammarchiv to collect ethnographic sound recordings (possibly the first deliberately established sound archive in the world, still active today).<sup>49</sup> At the same time, in London, the British Museum tried to come to terms with the collection of moving images as historical record, while in Washington the Library of Congress agonized over what to do with the paper prints of the first reels of motion picture film lodged for copyright registration.

#### 4.1.5 A contemporary British journal records the dilemma:

*“The film was neither a print nor a book, nor – in fact, everybody could say what it was not; but nobody could say what it was. The scheme was not exactly pigeonholed. The real trouble was that nobody could say to which particular pigeonhole it belonged”.* (The Era, 17 October 1896)

In addition, a few months later the Westminster Gazette (20 Feb. 1897) saw it like this:

*“...the ordinary work of the print-room of the British Museum is quite disorganized by the collection of animated photographs that have been pouring in upon the bewildered officials ...the degradation of the room consecrated to Durer, Rembrandt and the other masters... [in which the staff] unwillingly catalogue “The Prince’s Derby”, “The Beach at Brighton”, “The Buses of Whitehall”, and the other attractive scenes that delight the great heart of the music-hall public.... seriously, does not the collection of rubbish become a trifle absurd?”*

#### 4.1.6 The audiovisual media did not easily fit into the working assumptions of the libraries, archives and museums of the early 20th century, and although there were exceptions<sup>50</sup> their cultural value was widely disregarded.<sup>51</sup> In 1978, the pioneering film archivist of the National Library of Australia, Rod Wallace, recalled the 1950s:

*“Public attitudes to historical material were very different then, particularly in the film world. We met with a lot of apathy at first. We were regarded as nuts, and we were told so on many occasions. I’ll never forget the time a theatre full of film industry people watched a programme of old films recovered by the Library and then one man told me we should have thrown the lot on the tip. And the others agreed with him too!”*

#### 4.1.7 Claims to be the “first” in any field should be tentative, lest they be proved wrong. Film archives, as entities distinct from traditional memory institutions, seemed to emerge first in Europe and North America, and were a visible phenomenon by the 1930s<sup>52</sup>, while sound archives, in a variety of organizational forms, had been evolving separately. A contemporary attempt to combine the two concepts appeared in Australia.<sup>53</sup> After World War II, the movement spread to the rest of the world disparately – place by place, institution by institution. Slowly, and in stages, the cultural value of the audiovisual media gained legitimacy and widening acceptance. The development of radio from the 1920s onward, with the accompanying recording and syndication of programs, created entirely new genres of material for potential preservation,

49 From its outset, its brief was to achieve *permanence* of the recordings, create *documentation* to aid research and pursue a *programme*. That is, it meets the definition of an audiovisual archive in 3.3.3.2

50 Such as Britain’s Imperial War Museum, which definitively collected film from 1919 onwards.

51 A key factor in the neglect of audiovisual materials by the library and archival mainstream was the textual bias of both professions. Canadians Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz (in *Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory* Archival Science 2, 2002 pp 1-19, and elsewhere) are among those who have researched this phenomenon.

52 Among pioneering archives may have been the Netherlands Central Film Archive that began in 1917 – but the concept was defined by the four founding members of FIAF in 1938.

53 The National Historical Film and Speaking Record Library was established by the Australian Government in 1935. It was the forerunner of today’s National Film and Sound Archive of Australia.

while the popularization of television from the 1940s onward did the same for the moving image. It also did something else: it brought back to public view the forgotten contents of studio libraries and it sensitized a generation to the importance of preserving the disappearing film heritage. Changing sound recording formats, and the move from cellulose nitrate to cellulose triacetate film stock, reinforced growing concerns about survival and future accessibility.

- 4.1.8 It was this dogged action by audiovisual archives, often in the face of indifference - even downright opposition - from film, television and record producers fearful of their copyright material passing into custody other than their own, which ultimately resulted in revenue windfalls for the same producers. This began to happen as television networks, and later the consumer audio and video distributors, began mining the riches of the world's film and sound archives, and demonstrating the beginnings of an economic rationale for audiovisual preservation.
- 4.1.9 The landscape today is very complex, as the typology below indicates. Audiovisual archiving takes place within a large range of institutional types: it is constantly developing as the possibilities of physical and digital distribution expand. Production houses and broadcasting networks understand the commercial value of protecting corporate assets and many have set up their own in-house archives.
- 4.1.10 The history of audiovisual archiving differs greatly from country to country and region to region, and is far from completely researched or recorded (a task beyond the scope of this document). Its emergence did not happen simultaneously across the globe. The movement seemed to grow steadily in post war Europe and North America, while in South East Asia, Australasia, Africa and Latin America it did not really begin to gather impetus until the 1970s or later, despite the long established presence of film, radio, television and audio production in those regions. Of course, there were exceptions, such as the early establishment of archives in China, Vietnam, Mexico and some other parts of Latin America.
- 4.1.11 The difference cannot be fully explained by differing resource levels, environments and political landscapes. It is also largely a matter of time: time to grow awareness, advocacy, support and political will. Consciousness may have developed more easily and earlier in the cultural landscapes of the northern hemisphere. And development remains uneven: in many countries the work still has yet to seriously begin. As it always has, the work still requires committed pioneers.

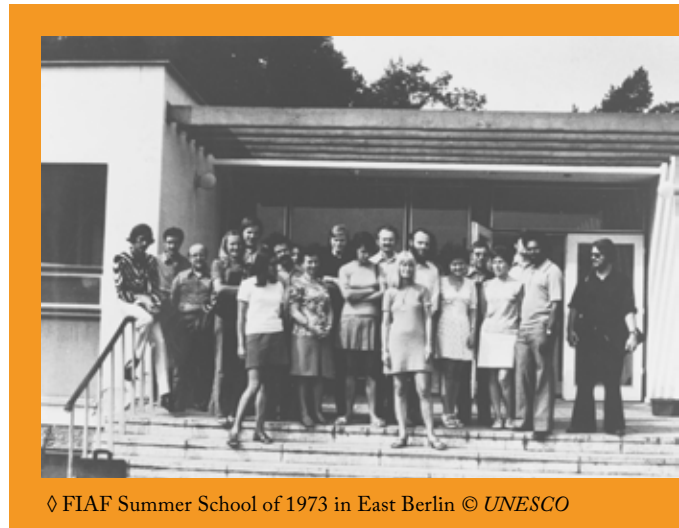
## **4.2 Scope of activities**

- 4.2.1 Audiovisual archives, as a totality, embrace much the same range of activity as other memory institutions. The function of building, documenting, managing and preserving a collection is central, and with that comes the natural presumption and intention that the collection will be accessible.
- 4.2.2 The scope and character of the collection will be defined by a policy – desirably a written one! Subject matter, media type, technical description, origin, chronological period, genre and copyright status are among the many elements that may define the scope of a collection. Its documenting, housekeeping, physical and virtual management and access arrangements will be provided for. While its management is the responsibility of the archive, the collection will not necessarily be stored in a building under its control: storage may be contracted out.
- 4.2.3 Preservation will likewise be the archive's responsibility, though again certain activities or processes, such as digitization, may be outsourced to specialist service providers. Where this

happens it is incumbent on the archive to apply a quality control regime to ensure that the standards it has set are being observed.

4.2.4 Built around these activities are a host of other programs which vary with the individual archive, its policies, priorities and circumstances, but which are nonetheless expressions of its essential character. Here is a partial list:

- Public research facilities, library and services
- Public screening and presentation facilities and programs
- On-line catalogue
- Oral history program
- Professional teaching program
- Marketing of collection-based products
- Publications program
- Lending of carriers and objects for external presentation and exhibition
- Public events program: lectures, presentations, festivals, exhibitions
- Public facilities: shop, cafeteria, meeting places



## 4.3 Typology

### 4.3.1 Explanatory

4.3.1.1 Audiovisual archives embrace a plurality of institutional models, types and interests. While recognizing that every organization is unique, and that any typology is to a degree arbitrary and artificial, categorization is a useful way of trying to give some shape to the field.

4.3.1.2 As one way of doing this, several reference points are posed below against which any archive can be 'positioned':

- non-profit or for-profit
- level of autonomy
- status
- users
- media range and capability
- character and emphasis

4.3.1.3 None of the categories in this typology coincides with the membership of any of the professional associations, though it does represent factors which some take into account in determining eligibility. Many archives do not belong to any professional association.

### 4.3.2 Non-profit or for-profit

4.3.2.1 Audiovisual archiving began as a culturally-motivated movement, preserving material because of its intrinsic worth, regardless of commercial potential – sometimes working, in fact, against a prevailing commercial ethos which drove the destruction of 'outdated' and apparently worthless films and recordings. This fundamental altruistic value remains paramount, although in this as in other fields of cultural preservation, such activity is not economically self-sufficient and is reliant on public or charitable funding.

- 4.3.2.2 Increasingly, non-profit archives are being complemented by another model: the self-sufficient archive, which is able to sustain itself by generating revenue from its collection, through licensing, segmenting, repurposing and other ways of exercising its own, or its principals', copyright control. Such archives are typically subsets of larger production bodies such as record producers, film studios or television broadcasters. The proliferation of outlets for retrospective program materials has made some once-neglected assets valuable again.
- 4.3.2.3 A government-run national archive is the classic example of the non-profit model: an in-house radio or television archive, or a stock shot library, of the for-profit. The former is serving altruistic objectives, which are seen as publicly meritorious, irrespective of financial return, and may provide access on a non-profit basis. The latter is engaged in asset management with a view to income generation or its in-kind equivalent and may have profit strategies. These differing perspectives and values bear on everything from selection policy and access services to preservation standards and methods.
- 4.3.2.4 The difference is fundamental to the structure of the field and its professional associations. FIAF, for example, does not accept for-profit institutions as full members, while IASA and AMIA are open to both non-profit and for-profit bodies. Since both types of archive are engaged in a shared task ensuring the survival of the audiovisual heritage, there are commonalities and cooperation. Individual archivists may move between both types in the course of a long career, and the issues and tensions created by the two sets of values are an important area of professional discussion.
- 4.3.2.5 The two approaches are not entirely mutually exclusive. Non-profit archives face the reality that collections and programs are growing faster than subsidies. They therefore engage in commercial activities (such as the marketing of rights or the releasing of collection content in consumer formats) or sponsorship raising as a way of supplementing their grant income – and by so doing learn the useful skills and perspective of the commercial entrepreneur. On the other hand, for-profit archives may be able to introduce a degree of altruism in implementing their selection policies, perhaps by carrying out a gentle process of internal education across their parent organization.
- 4.3.2.6 The introduction of digital preservation programs has underlined the problems faced by non-profit archives. These programs require a continuity of financial resourcing on an entirely new level. Some archives have been forced to develop strategies to generate their own income to sustain them. More fundamentally, digital preservation has permanently increased the need for audiovisual archives to have larger resource bases.

### **4.3.3 *How autonomous?***

- 4.3.3.1 Some archives are independent organizations in every sense of the term: they are legally constituted as such, have secure funding, have charters and governance arrangements that make them independently accountable to a council or board and to their support base, and have complete professional discretion in the carrying out of their functions. Others are very clearly subordinate divisions of larger entities with tied funding and limited scope for professional discretion. Most archives sit somewhere between these two extremes.
- 4.3.3.2 Autonomy is a prized archival attribute, and a minimum level of professional autonomy is essential if the archive is to operate effectively and ethically. Nor is the degree of autonomy immediately obvious: apparently independent institutions may prove to be divisions of larger organizations and have little in the way of legal or practical autonomy. Conversely, divisions of larger bodies can sometimes be allowed considerable de facto independence.

#### **4.3.4 Status**

- 4.3.4.1 This term is not meant in a pejorative or elitist sense: it is a purely practical descriptor and an essential part of the archive's terms of reference.
- 4.3.4.2 *Geographic* status defines the territory the archive covers or represents. A national archive has a broader, but perhaps less detailed, collecting and service scope than an archive working at regional, provincial or local level. It may also have other roles, for example as a coordinator or trainer, appropriate at the national level.
- 4.3.4.3 Many government or quasi-government archives have *official* status: their role and mandate is recognized in some way by government, whether in legislation or in practical administrative arrangements. This status may be expressed in funding mechanisms (a reliable annual subvention from government), accountability mechanisms and exposure to public scrutiny. They may benefit from legal deposit or other compulsory arrangements.
- 4.3.4.4 Archives *accrue* status and authority over time. This may be due to the combined effects of institutional age, quality and prestige of the collection, range of activities, general visibility and the leading personalities involved. It may also be due to the role played by the archive in the wider professional world, and its perceived effect on the field in general.

#### **4.3.5 Users**

- 4.3.5.1 Archives are defined by the publics they serve. One obvious definer parallels the for-profit/not-for-profit dichotomy referred to above. The in-house archives of broadcasting networks, for example, may primarily serve the internal production needs and strategy of the parent body, and to a degree be integrated into the daily production and technical workflow of the organization. Material may be provided to a wider user base in a way that reflects the profit motive, as well as the likelihood that the broadcaster concerned also controls the copyright. Access may even be withheld if it conflicts with other agendas (for example, a re-releasing strategy.)
- 4.3.5.2 The not-for-profit archive will be motivated by cultural and public interest values, but within that field, there is a wide spectrum of users. University-based archives, for example, may consciously cater for the academic user, with collection development and services being curriculum-driven. Others may be attuned to the needs of the audiovisual production industry, cultural appreciation, research or tourism, for example. The larger the archive and the wider its scope, the more it may need to cater for a variety of audiences, including international audiences through platforms like Europeana.

#### **4.3.6 Media range and capability**

- 4.3.6.1 While most memory institutions today hold a wide range of media, most audiovisual archives (and their professional associations) have a history of specialization in film, television, radio or audio that is as much conceptual and cultural as it is practical. While the audiovisual media have converged technologically, the range of practical and subject specializations has, if anything, widened. Film repair and restoration are different skills to the aural restoration of acetate disks or early tape recordings. Expertise in the history of Chinese opera is a different field to knowledge of pre- television Hollywood film animation.
- 4.3.6.2 Archives vary enormously not only in their areas of focus and expertise but also in their facilities and capabilities. There are large archives with state of the art collection storage repositories, image and sound processing laboratories, specialized theatres and auditoriums, digital mass storage systems, public research facilities and more. On the other hand, there are

small archives that have few or even none of these things, even though they may aspire to them, and so are reliant on contracting out their collection storage, digitization or other work, whether to specialized commercial facilities or to other archives or institutions. In the latter case, there is a need to develop quality control regimes to ensure their own standards are applied.

- 4.3.6.3 Since each archive has evolved in particular economic, political and cultural circumstances, range and capabilities are as much products of pragmatism as of idealism. What is covered by a single national institution in one country may be covered by several in another, and there are politics between institutions as well as within them!

#### 4.3.7 *Character and emphasis*

- 4.3.7.1 At the risk of applying over-simplistic labels, the following is a method of grouping archives by their differing characters and emphases. Some archives belong to two or more of these groups. Some have grown from small beginnings through methodical, policy-based selection and acquisition. Some have been started by acquiring major private or corporate collections. Some bear the mark of a founding personality whose preferences have shaped the collection and the archive's character.
- 4.3.7.2 **Broadcasting archives:** these contain primarily an inventory of selected radio and/or television programs and commercial recordings, held for preservation (usually as corporate assets) and as a resource for broadcasting and production purposes. They can be public or commercial organizations. With some significant exceptions, many are departments of broadcasting organizations, ranging from major networks to small public radio and television stations, while others have varying degrees of independence. Collections may also include 'raw' material, such as interviews and sound effects, as well as ancillary material such as scripts or program documentation. Many broadcast archives have an internet presence offering podcasts, downloads and view-on-demand streaming.
- 4.3.7.3 **Programming archives:** some archives are particularly characterized by well-researched and curated programs in their own cinemas, auditoria or listening rooms as a means of public access for cultural or educational purposes. These may be introduced by talks from specialists and allow audiences to experience old audio technologies or obsolete film formats. Sound presentations can feature songs, radio or historical recordings. Film screenings may feature live accompaniment for silent films and a striving after the best print or digital quality. These archives are able to nurture disappearing skills such as film projection or acoustic recording. An emphasis on cinema as an art form can be characteristic.<sup>54</sup>



◇ Flat storage of discs spreads weight but can cause breakage © Fabricia Malan

<sup>54</sup> Following the operational emphasis of the likely originator of the term, the *Cinematheque Française*, some film archives are often – though far from exclusively – traditionally styled as *cinematheques*. More recently, though, this term has been appropriated by other organizations which, while not archives themselves, present curated and repertory-style film screening programs.



- 4.3.7.4 **Audiovisual museums:** the emphasis for these organizations is the preservation and display of artefacts, such as cameras, projectors, phonographs, posters, publicity and ephemera, costumes, and memorabilia, and the presentation of images and sounds in a public-exhibition context, both for educational and entertainment purposes. Artefacts such as magic lanterns and optical toys - the prelude to advent of sound recording and cinema - are often included to give historical context. Within this category, film museums form a recognizable group, while others emphasize the broadcast media or recorded sound. There are some very large and spectacular collections and displays. To some degree most audiovisual archives, since they maintain obsolescent technology, are working audiovisual museums.
- 4.3.7.5. **National audiovisual archives:** these are wide ranging bodies, often large, operating at the national level, with a mandate to document, preserve and make publicly accessible the whole, or a significant part, of the country's audiovisual heritage. They are often government-funded and include many of the world's largest and best-known film, television and sound archives. If legal deposit arrangements apply in the country concerned, these archives are most likely to be the beneficiaries. Access services may be wide ranging, and cover the whole spectrum of public exhibition, marketing, professional support and private research service. These may include specialized technical and advisory services: they often complement, service and coordinate the audiovisual archiving activities of other institutions in the country. The role is analogous to that of national memory institutions: in some cases, these archives are departments of such bodies, in other cases they are separate institutions of comparable stature and autonomy.
- 4.3.7.6 **University and academic archives:** worldwide, there are numerous universities and academic institutions which host sound, moving image or general audiovisual archives. Some were founded through the need to service academic courses, others to preserve the heritage of the institution's geographic locality and community. Some do both. Several have grown over time into substantial operations with a national or international profile. Some have developed a diverse funding base and major preservation, restoration and outreach programs. Some have pursued the 'programming' path and developed great expertise in this area. Still others have remained small, focusing on a niche role and developing a depth of specialization in it.<sup>55</sup>
- 4.3.7.7 **Thematic and specialized archives:** this also is a large and varied group of archives, which do not deal with the generality of the audiovisual heritage, but rather have opted for a clear and sometimes highly focused specialization. It may be a theme or subject, a locality, a particular chronological period, a particular moving image or audio format. It could be on material relating to specific cultural groups, academic disciplines or research fields. Examples are oral history collections, folk music collections, and ethnographic materials. Most are likely to be departments of larger organizations, though some are independent. An emphasis on servicing private or academic research is characteristic.
- 4.3.7.8 **Studio archives:** some major production houses, for example in the film industry, have taken a conscious approach to the preservation of their own output by setting up archival units or divisions within their organizations. As with most broadcasting archives, the underlying purpose is usually asset management in the service of larger corporate objectives, but such archives sometimes have significant resources to devote to the restoration and reconstruction of films, programs and recordings perceived to have proportionate commercial potential.<sup>56</sup>

55 These are distinct from audiovisual resource collections, a common feature of universities, which may have no archival intent.

56 One well known example in the 1990s was the pioneering, digitally based restoration of Disney's 1937 classic *Snow White*. The investment was recoverable by Disney from re-releasing arrangements, a pattern repeated by many producers since. The cost of the restoration would have been prohibitive for a public institution.

- 4.3.7.9 **Regional, city and local archives:** there are many archives that operate at the sub-national level. Their formation may arise from particular administrative or political circumstances - such as decentralization of government programs - and their objectives will tend to be focused accordingly. They have the particular advantage of being able to mobilize support and interest from local communities, who can relate to the activity in a way that they cannot relate to more remote national or specialised institutions. As a result, priceless and privately-held material can become known and find its way into such an archive. They are hosted by a range of sympathetic institutions, such as libraries, cultural and educational bodies, or local municipal authorities.
- 4.3.7.10 **Community Archives** are perhaps a related grouping, linking collections of materials held in private hands, local history societies and other community bodies. These are diverse in character, and digitized moving images and sounds are easy to incorporate into the larger network of holdings. Communities take many shapes, and concern for the survival of private home movies is creating other networks and preservation strategies.<sup>57</sup>
- 4.3.7.11 **On line digital archives** do not have physical repositories but build on line collections from various sources, including inviting the donation of digital files by the public. They are less prescriptive about the technical quality of the images and sounds they assemble, since the method of acquisition applies its own limitations, than about the subject or theme of the collection. Long term sustainability may be an issue for these archives.<sup>58</sup>
- 4.3.7.12 **Memory institutions generally:** perhaps the largest category of all. Many institutions have significant accumulations of audiovisual materials intended for permanent retention. Sometimes these may be acquired as an integral part of a formed collection or *fonds*. However, there may be no audiovisual department or even any specialist staff or facilities to care for them at all, so in the longer term the preservation and accessibility of the material presents a dilemma.

## 4.4 World view and paradigm

### 4.4.1 Introduction

- 4.4.1.1 A defining feature of the various memory professions is the particular perspective, paradigm or world view which they bring to bear on the vast amount of material of potential interest to them, and which allows them to select, describe, arrange and provide access to material in meaningful ways. They have much in common: the disciplines of collection building, the management and conservation of collection material, the provision of access to users are standard elements. There are cultural motivations and ethics, which transcend the mechanical or utilitarian; there is the management of competing demands on slim resources. Differences arise in the way these functions are addressed.
- 4.4.1.2 Although influenced by tradition and history, these worldviews *are not essentially determined by the physical or digital format of the material*: libraries, archives, museums and audiovisual archives all collect paper-based formats, audiovisual formats and digital formats, for example, and increasingly all are delivering and acquiring material electronically. At the risk of oversimplification, some comparisons are suggested<sup>59</sup>. Beyond the comments given here, they warrant further examination.

57 The Center for Home Movies and the international Home Movie Day is a case in point [www.centerforhomemovies.org](http://www.centerforhomemovies.org)

58 For example, the September 11 Digital Archive [www.911digitalarchive.org](http://www.911digitalarchive.org) and the MASE platform [www.mase.es](http://www.mase.es)

59 A grid setting out the essential differences between archives, libraries, museums and audiovisual archives is included at Appendix 2.

#### **4.4.2 Libraries**

4.4.2.1 Libraries, traditionally the repository of the written and printed word, are information providers in all formats. They deal with material that is for the most part published and/or designed for dissemination, created with conscious intent to inform, persuade, move, and entertain. The basic unit of the library collection is the discrete published book, periodical, program, recording, website, map, picture, digital file etc. Although a given book may be included in the collection of hundreds of different libraries, each collection is unique in character, reflecting the institution's users, responsibilities and governing policies, and the quality of its selection skills. The disciplines of cataloguing and bibliography provide for control and accessibility, significant information fields being the publisher, author, subjects, date and place of publication.

#### **4.4.3 Archives**

4.4.3.1 Archives deal with accumulated records of social or organisational activity in both analogue and digital form. Traditionally these have mostly been original, unpublished materials, though the mix today is more complex. Their interest is in the nature of the records as the collective residue of activity, rather than as stand-alone works, whether or not intended for publication. This material is arranged in context - the linkage to its creator, activity, or other related records are the prime considerations and holdings are developed, managed and accessed accordingly. For example, an archived correspondence file may be part of a particular series created by a particular government body in particular circumstances or at a particular time. Knowing this and using the material within that context is essential to a full and proper understanding of it. Finding aids, not catalogues, provide the user entry point.

#### **4.4.4 Museums<sup>60</sup>**

4.4.4.1 Museums may be said to deal in objects rather than documents or publications per se: collecting, researching, documenting, displaying. Conservation is a central skill and discipline, and the skills of contextualized public display under controlled conditions for educational purposes are a fundamental *raison d'être*. The use of audiovisual technology for display purposes is frequent.

#### **4.4.5 Audiovisual archives**

4.4.5.1 It is self-evident that the totality of audiovisual archives, of necessity, embraces aspects of all three concepts. For example, the material they deal with may be published or unpublished, though the distinction is not always obvious or important; the concept of an 'original' (like a film negative or a master recording) is also meaningful. The skills of cataloguing and inventory control are as essential in audiovisual archives as in libraries, museums and archives. Because they deal with a technological medium, it is conceptually impossible to separate the technology from its product, so the disciplines of museology are relevant. The mechanics and avenues of access, whether to individuals or groups of various sizes, are manifold. In addition, there are distinctive features that arise from the nature of the media (see next chapter).

4.4.5.2 Equally, within this amalgam, there are aspects of each of the older professions that are not so relevant. For example, the archival science concepts of the record, original order and respect des fonds can be confining ones for the audiovisual archive and not always relevant

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60 ICOM (International Council of Museums) defines a museum as a "non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment." (.icom.museum accessed 16 October 2015)

to its needs. The library science concepts of information and collection management have limitations. Access services can be very costly, so the ethic of free public access traditionally common in archives and libraries can be impractical, and is complicated by the realities and politics of copyright control.

- 4.4.5.3 The comparisons are instructive and would repay study. A hypothetical example will illustrate. The same television program might legitimately find a place in all four types of institution. Within a library, it may represent information, historical record or an intellectual or artistic creation. Within an archives, it may comprise part of the records of a particular organization, the outcome of administrative process. Within a museum, it may be a displayable work of art or an artefact. Each concept is legitimate and appropriate within its respective context, the same work being viewed from different perspectives - from the worldview of the profession involved - and treated accordingly. Audiovisual archives see this differently again from their own worldview, which is equally legitimate and appropriate: a synthesis of these disciplines.

#### 4.4.6 *The audiovisual archive paradigm*<sup>61</sup>

- 4.4.6.1 The audiovisual archive is, instead, in a position to view the hypothetical program *in its own right and not as an aspect of something else*. Therefore, it may not see it primarily as information, or historical record, or art, or organizational record. *It can see it as a television program that is all these things, and more, at the same time* and let that fact inform its methods and services. The character of the audiovisual media and its products are a primary reference point for audiovisual archives: just as, centuries ago, the character of the book, as a phenomenon, was a primary point of reference for libraries as we now know them.
- 4.4.6.2 To amplify this, one can consider - for example - how those audiovisual archives which also collect paper materials - periodicals, posters, photographs, scripts and the like - deal with them. In many archives these items are not perceived in their own right, but in that aspect which serves to amplify the value of the recordings, films or programs to which they relate. A film poster has value and significance in an audiovisual archive *because of the film to which it relates*. It may have quite different value, as art, in an art gallery<sup>62</sup>.
- 4.4.6.3 The extent to which this paradigm operates in practice varies according to the circumstances and choices of the audiovisual archive. Autonomous audiovisual archives - be they single or multiple-media - which have independence and status comparable to major libraries, archives and museums are in the best position to exhibit it, for in such cases audiovisual documents are seen to have the same cultural status as their older cousins. Audiovisual archives which are part of larger organizations find an accommodation between this paradigm and the worldview of their parent institution. Obviously audiovisual documents, like other documents, retain their whole character regardless of their organizational context: the question is how far that context can, or should, reflect that whole nature. (Professionals in libraries, archives and museums which are parts of larger organizations face comparable issues.)
- 4.4.6.4 **Sustainability in society:** Just as the worldview of memory institutions is not determined by the physical or digital format of the material they collect (4.4.1.2), neither is it determined by its physical and technological infrastructure. We may expect that audiovisual archives

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61 The paradigm arises from the author's own analysis, but it by no means precludes the possibility of other views and conceptual constructs in a debate that is surely worth pursuing. Among writings impinging on this area is Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of television*, Polity Press, 2002.

62 This does not mean that an audiovisual archive ignores the artistic dimension any more than (say) a library might ignore the artefact or artistic value of a rare book or manuscript. Rather, it indicates the particular paradigm which shapes the collection and sets the priorities.

will possess and preserve characteristic technology, but as a socioeconomic system they need to be agile and adapt to the changing technology and changing user expectations which surround them. An archive may be a physical place but it also needs to be a virtual place, visible and engaging and advocating in a constantly evolving environment of services, users, networks, collaborations and stakeholders which in turn will impact on the adequacy of the archive's resource base. The internet has dramatically expanded the visibility and accessibility of audiovisual collections to a generation that assumes that if it isn't on the internet it doesn't exist.

## 4.5 Key perspectives of audiovisual archives

### 4.5.1 *Defining features*

4.5.1.1 Every profession has its own distinctive way of looking at the world – its own perspective on the subject matter and the issues of particular importance to it – which marks it as being different in this respect to the community at large. These characteristic perspectives are sometimes subtle, sometimes stark. Audiovisual archives are no exception to this. In considering the following set of distinctives, the reader might compare them to the perspectives of the other memory professions, and note the differences.

### 4.5.2 *The audiovisual industry*

4.5.2.1 **The industry.**.... Audiovisual archives are part of the world of memory institutions, conscious of the social responsibilities and ethos of public service that characterize that world. But they are also, to varying degrees, part of another world: the international audiovisual industries and their culture. They recruit staff from it, they speak its language, they service its needs. They reflect its entrepreneurial spirit and passion for the media. At the same time, especially for audiovisual archives which are part of larger for-profit organizations, the imperatives of (for example) generating revenue or servicing the priorities of the corporate parent may of necessity take precedence over more altruistic questions of social good.

4.5.2.2 **And its history.** While there are some notable exceptions, the lesson of experience is that the audiovisual industries are primarily focused on their current production agenda, so there is often little time, resource or inclination to dwell on corporate history and see yesterday's product from a cultural or historical viewpoint. Nor are their interests necessarily coincident or compatible with those of a public archive. The value of assets has often not been understood until it is too late to save them. Therefore, it is the audiovisual archives and archivists, whatever their institutional setting and ethos, which have to provide and promote a larger and longer vision if the public memory is to be preserved, and "popular" culture (as distinct from "high" culture) kept accessible. The challenges and tensions for audiovisual archivists can be profound.

### 4.5.3 *Corporate culture*

4.5.3.1 The fragility and fugitive nature of the audiovisual media, the pioneering flavour of audiovisual archiving, the frequent lack of resources and insecurity of employment, the rapid development of the technological and organizational landscape, and their small numbers relative to the size of the task give audiovisual archives and archivists a sense of mission and urgency: "so much to do, so little time". They are constantly confronted by the implications of their own actions, inactions and limitations: they need to convince, change attitudes and mould their environment.

- 4.5.3.2 This reality is expressed in a sense of *vocation* and a sometimes passionate *commitment* to a young field that is still working towards the status, the formal recognition and the settled training, accreditation and advocacy structures of its sister professions. Audiovisual archiving, so far, does not seem to offer a path to fame or riches even though it exists in the milieu of an industry so strongly identified with those qualities in the public mind. Nor does it enjoy the more settled and traditional legalities of the publishing trade or government bureaucracy familiar to national libraries and archives: it works within the shifting commercial and legal sands of an industry preoccupied with the control of its own intellectual property.
- 4.5.3.3 This tends to make versatility one of the hallmarks of an audiovisual archivist. People skills are crucial in a field so dependent on personal relationships, both formal and informal. So are the skills of the politician and advocate. Working in the milieu of show business calls forth the creative capacities of showmanship – the ability to think and present creatively and entrepreneurially, to think like a program producer or filmmaker and to empathise with them. If one does not enjoy the audiovisual media for their own sake one is unlikely to empathise with its nature or with those who devote their careers to the creation, exploitation and collecting of audiovisual works.
- 4.5.3.4 These qualities complement the more traditional and scholarly elements of the culture of memory institutions. For example, a basic general technical knowledge, and a historical knowledge of the audiovisual media and audiovisual archiving, is necessary background regardless of one's own area of specialization. A sensitive and scrupulous approach to ethics is essential in a field where commercial-in-confidence information is constantly handled, access or acquisition transactions may involve considerable sums, judgment is constantly needed and many important suppliers (such as private collectors) prefer to trust individuals rather than institutions.
- 4.5.3.5 In such a relatively small professional field, and where individual institutions may also be small, succession planning can be difficult. Contextual factors can add to the difficulty. For archives that are part of a larger organization, wider corporate priorities may determine succession planning and this may not necessarily work in the best interests of the archive. In some countries, a change of government may mean a round of new appointments to head public institutions, with consequent effects on staff tenure elsewhere in the archive. Again, economic pressures sometimes force skilled people to take better paying jobs in other fields and their skills are lost to the archive.
- 4.5.3.6 As the history of the movement shows, archives have often been built by crusading pioneers who have gathered and mentored a staff group over many years. Sometimes those key individuals have prepared for their own eventual exit by good succession planning. Sometimes this has not happened, or else a key person departs prematurely for some reason and the organization can be left unprepared.<sup>63</sup>

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63 The obvious case study is the Walt Disney Company. Few organizations have been so fundamentally built around a dominant personality who was literally irreplaceable. Disney's death in 1966 faced the organization with a very difficult transition.

#### **4.5.4 Preservation**

- 4.5.4.1 The centrality of preservation has been discussed in the previous chapter (3.2.6). The tension between preservation and access is relevant to most memory institutions. Access carries risks and/or costs, however great or small: yet preservation without prospect of access is pointless. It might be said, however, that while in many institutions preservation is conceived as an 'added extra' to the functioning of the organization, it is conceptually central to the functioning of an audiovisual archive.
- 4.5.4.2 Because audiovisual media are technologically based, the realities of preservation impinge on all the functions of an audiovisual archive. They are integral to day-to-day operation. Preservation shapes the archive's perceptions and decisions: access to material always has technological and cost implications, small or large. Possible modes of access, both analogue and digital, are many. If an access copy already exists, it is a simple question of retrieval and delivery. If one has to be made it will almost certainly be in a digital format<sup>64</sup> agreeable to both user and archive, and may or may not involve a negotiation on defraying the cost. Whatever the choice, the mode of access must be such that it does not put the survival of the work at unacceptable<sup>65</sup> risk.
- 4.5.4.3 Indeed, because of their technological base, audiovisual archives are often distinguished by their character as centres of specialized technical expertise and equipment: as places where obsolete technology and processes are, of necessity, maintained and nurtured so that material in all audiovisual formats can be restored and, as far as possible, faithfully reproduced. How far this will always be the case, since archives are dependent on a wider industry infrastructure for such supplies as film stock and equipment spares, cannot be foreseen in the long term. Archives have to manage both the ethical and economic imperatives confronting them as the analogue and digital options evolve, and formats proliferate. Certainly, the inertia effect of storing, maintaining and copying ever increasing quantities of audiovisual materials in obsolescent formats will discourage rash judgments for the foreseeable future. Further, the aesthetic skills, historical knowledge and ethical judgments involved in preservation work are integral to the character of the audiovisual media and will always be needed<sup>66</sup>.
- 4.5.4.4 The centrality of preservation leads naturally to a related characteristic: the technological mindset of audiovisual archivists. This is the capacity to think constantly in technological as well as aesthetic terms, to operate a variety of technical equipment, to understand the direct consequences for collection material of inappropriate storage, mishandling or misusing equipment in a variety of circumstances. It means that archivists who go to the cinema, listen to a sound recording, watch television or a DVD, or access on-line sources such as YouTube are innately aware of the technical characteristics of what they are seeing or hearing: the digital artefacts on the television image, the dynamic range of the recording, the visual quality of the computer image and condition of the film print.

#### **4.5.5 Evidential approach**

- 4.5.5.1 Logically and validly, audiovisual archives use methods and principles of acquisition,

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64 Including access copies of films. Because of cost, absence of capable laboratories and projection facilities, new film prints are rarely made. If theatrical screening is envisaged the current format of choice would most likely be a compliant DCP (Digital Cinema Package).

65 'Unacceptable' is a *relative* concept. There can be no absolutes: only degrees of risk, especially if a user wishes to access a copy which has significant artifact or preservation status. Each archive decides for itself how to manage the risks.

66 This is an area of ongoing ethical and practical debate. Can a digital clone ever be acceptable as a true substitute for an original analog artefact?

collection management, documenting and service provision that arise from the nature of the audiovisual media and its context - physical, aesthetic and legal. These may therefore differ, in degree or in kind, from the corresponding approaches of the other memory professions. While this statement may seem self evident, the fact that audiovisual archiving has grown out of those professions means that their differing (and sometimes mutually incompatible) assumptions have been applied, by automatic analogy, to the practice of audiovisual archiving.

- 4.5.5.2 A simple example<sup>67</sup> of this is the past practice of book librarians insisting that film prints be catalogued according to what was found on a title frame or written on the can. Film archive cataloguers had to argue long and hard that films should be catalogued according to what research determined they actually were, citing the ease with which films could be attached to misleading title frames, put in the wrong can, and so on. This was all unfamiliar territory to those whose artefacts came with title pages bound in!
- 4.5.5.3 Again, the need to work back to first principles has sometimes become apparent later, and for many is still in the process of emerging. For example, the differing approaches to collection organization and description between archival science and library science have both been applied to audiovisual archiving. Many audiovisual archives have developed other approaches that, while drawing signals from both, have different base assumptions and are different in practice. One widespread approach is to treat collections as an inventory with a cataloguing overlay, allowing housekeeping and intellectual description to be approached as separate activities, often at different times.

#### **4.5.6 Collection development**

- 4.5.6.1 Like libraries, museums and archives generally, audiovisual archives acquire material by a variety of means, and they develop and apply selection or appraisal policies and mechanisms. The means may include purchase, exchange or gift and, in some instances, legal deposit arrangements. But collection development has additional and characteristic dimensions. These include, for some, systems of voluntary deposit (where the audiovisual archive has custody but not legal ownership of copyrights and/or physical material), off-air recording of broadcasts, downloading of files, the creation of new recordings (such as soundscapes and oral histories), and the skills of detecting and chasing fugitive materials whose commercial shelf life may be a matter of weeks rather than decades. Organized searches or 'treasure hunts' in likely hiding places are sometimes the only practical way to seek older material. Audiovisual archives need to be active and selective seekers rather than passive acceptors.<sup>68</sup>
- 4.5.6.2 Private individuals, including collectors, are a major source of material and relationships with them are accordingly very important. The audiovisual industries themselves rely very much on person-to-person contact. The capacity to develop and sustain personal relationships and inspire trust is essential in a field where sensitivities can be acute and trust is easily damaged. Ethical questions of ownership and use arise frequently and require careful judgment.

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67 In this author's experience in a library setting, it was once *de rigueur* to physically arrange a 16mm film collection, vertically on shelves in round cans, by Dewey classification. Of course, VCRs, CDs and DVDs are easier to integrate into an open access library system because their physical shape is much closer to that of a book.

68 The pattern depends on the organizational setting of the audiovisual archive and the policy of the parent body. Some may exercise little selection and may need to be less active in their approach. Official Government archives, for example, may receive the compulsory transfer of materials from other government entities.



#### 4.5.7 Collection management

- 4.5.7.1 By their nature, many analogue audiovisual carriers are both costly and environmentally vulnerable. Within the economic resources available to them, audiovisual archives maintain a variety of *humidity/temperature controlled* storage environments, have regimes for examining material upon acquisition, and later for periodically checking out the condition of their stock. Inventory type control systems that allow each carrier to be uniquely identified, and division of material by form, status and size are aspects of audiovisual archive housekeeping systems. The building up of detailed technical information on individual analogue carriers is necessary to permit monitoring of condition over time, and to guide correct conservation treatment if it is necessary. In this setting, the key unit is the individual carrier<sup>69</sup> linked to a work identified by a title. In its concept and application, the approach grows out of the nature of the audiovisual media, both physical and conceptual.
- 4.5.7.2 For digital files, storage and management structures are still evolving and extending the skill set required in an audiovisual archive. Descriptions of content and provenance are similar to analogue carriers but there are also differences in approaches related to metadata management and the crucial need for cyclical maintenance of the files. Here the focus is less on management of the individual carrier than on the management of the entire environment that allows the work to be accessed. For example, even if a CD as a carrier is physically managed properly, that does not ensure that the file it contains will be safe from bitrot or corruption. And even if the file is kept viable, that doesn't automatically mean that the hardware, software and system required to open it are also viable.

#### 4.5.8 Access

- 4.5.8.1 Because of the nature of the audiovisual media, there are different kinds of access, both actual and potential. These range from the *reactive* – such as responding to one-to-one enquiry, research and retrieval needs – to the *proactive* activities of public presentation, screening, broadcasting, product marketing and so on. The skills and knowledge required are correspondingly broad: detailed technical, collection, subject and historical knowledge on the one hand, and curatorial, entrepreneurial, presentational and creative attributes on the other. Knowledge of copyright and contract law underpins all: access to so much of the holdings of any audiovisual archive is constrained by the legal entitlements of the owners of copyrights, distribution and broadcast rights.
- 4.5.8.2 It is ironic that in an era where the average person can easily disregard copyright law by off-air capture or downloading, and where piracy is internationally rampant, the archives that preserve so much of this material must be scrupulous in observing those rights. In practice, access is constrained by the constant need to obtain clearances for a multiplicity of uses of collection material that might conceivably infringe on the prerogative of sometimes multiple rights owners<sup>70</sup>. In many cases, especially for older material, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to establish rights ownership with certainty (see orphan works 1.4.12). On such occasions, archives have to consciously decide whether to take calculated risks in permitting the public use of a work, and they take such considerations into account in setting digitization priorities. It makes sense to promote the accessibility of works in the public domain or available under creative commons license.

<sup>69</sup> *Carrier* means the individual physical unit – i.e. tape reel, film reel, disc, cassette etc. A work may comprise many carriers in logical groups. For example, a single film title may comprise several elements: picture negative, sound negative, master positive, composite print, etc. Each of these elements could, in turn, consist of several carriers. On the other hand, several works may be contained on a single carrier; such as individual music tracks on a CD.

<sup>70</sup> Aspects of a single work – such as script, music, design – can have separate owners, and ownership or control may be further diversified by duration, geographical territory and delivery medium

- 4.5.8.3 One can browse a book or a set of manuscripts. One does not browse a sound recording, film, videogram or even artefact in the same way. *Intellectual control* through catalogue entries, sometimes highly detailed, is traditionally the most efficient entree for the user. Since cataloguing is labour intensive and expensive, and many collections are therefore still poorly catalogued, the accumulated collection knowledge of the audiovisual archivist becomes an essential alternative information source. Finding the correct balance remains a dilemma: as many institutions have discovered to their loss, individuals can die or leave unexpectedly, taking their knowledge with them. Because the use of auditioning/ viewing equipment, and the retrieval of material for viewing, can be expensive, archives also face the dilemma of charging for public access beyond a certain 'free' threshold.
- 4.5.8.4 Limited access to information may be the current reality, but is certainly not the aim, for audiovisual archives. Options for browsing catalogue data bases, images and sounds on line (subject to copyright clearance!) are available. This, in turn, changes the nature of traditional textual cataloguing, allowing icons, images and sounds to become part of the catalogue entry itself. In addition, the simultaneous searching of multiple catalogue databases across institutions is also possible. As these systems evolve they profoundly influence both cataloguing and access practice and expectation. It offers much greater scope and choice to the user, but can encourage the assumption that there is no further to look.

#### **4.5.9 Context linkage**

- 4.5.9.1 The context for which images and sounds are designed is vitally relevant to their appreciation. It also represents perhaps the most difficult demand of all for audiovisual archives to fill.
- 4.5.9.2 It might be argued that reading a book in either its hardback or E-book version is much the same experience, just as examining an archival file in hard copy, microform or digital form may make little difference to understanding the content and retrieving the required information. Largely, they retain their integrity and information value even when accessed in a variety of different formats in wildly differing surroundings. By comparison, audiovisual media are much more context-dependent.
- 4.5.9.3 For example, to watch a feature film or cinema newsreel on a TV screen in a lighted room or viewing carrel is a very different experience to watching the same film projected on 35mm in a darkened cinema built in the period in which the film was made. The film was designed to be experienced in the latter, not the former. It is not just a question of image and sound quality, though that is significant enough; it is also a question of the technology employed and the environment in which the experience occurs. That is one reason archives maintain acoustic phonographs and gramophones: a CD copy of the same item played through a modern reproducing system may try to emulate but does not equate to the experience of seeing and hearing recordings played through the original technology.
- 4.5.9.4 The preservation and accessibility of moving images and sound recordings eventually involves copying or migration. Copying is not a value-neutral process; a series of technical judgments and physical acts (such as manual repair) determine the quality and nature of the resulting copy. It is possible, in effect, to distort, lose or manipulate history through the judgments made and the choice and quality of the work performed. Documenting the processes involved and choices made in copying from generation to generation is essential to preserving the integrity of the work: the audiovisual equivalent, perhaps, of the archival concepts of *respect du fond* and original order. The same logic applies to the restoration and reconstruction of audiovisual works: only if the choices are documented can the 'new' version

be judged fairly, in context. Meanwhile, as the creators of the works themselves re-work their original productions<sup>71</sup> the need to acquire and preserve their documentation on their revision projects also arises.

## 4.6 Supporters, constituencies and advocacy

- 4.6.1 Like other memory institutions, every audiovisual archive has a natural constituency: that is, a community of friends and stakeholders to whom the archive's success is important and to which, to varying degrees, it may be accountable. Its composition is specific to each archive, and will, of course, include the authority or organization to which it reports. But the constituency is almost always larger than that, because successful archives draw on various kinds of voluntary assistance, sponsorship and advocacy, and may well represent certain values, sentiments or ideals in the larger community. So the support community might include users, donors, volunteers, professional associations, current and potential sponsors, academia, sections of the film/broadcasting/ sound industries, "friends" organizations, kindred memory institutions, cultural bodies and possibly politicians or opinions formers of various kinds. In other words, it might be regarded as a subset of the whole constituency which the archive serves, and which has an active interest in its well being.
- 4.6.2 Audiovisual archives often are, or at least perceive themselves to be, below other more traditional institutions in the list of priorities for funding or government support. They need, accordingly, to be adept and persuasive in advocacy, often working from first principles because the legitimacy and importance of their needs may not be taken for granted. Lobbying is a learned skill like any other, and fundamentally involves making your own opportunities and fully understanding the position of the other party. Can you give them a persuasive, cogent reason for including you in their agenda? Can you offer them a potential solution, rather than a problem?
- 4.6.3 Support communities are potentially grown by publicity because more people thereby become aware of an archive's existence and mission. Audiovisual archives relate to the media industries – they *are* news, so all the avenues of free publicity are open to them. These include radio and television interviews, press editorial, magazine articles, social media, blogs and e-journals. Showmanship is part of archiving, and the most articulate and effective advocates are usually the archivists themselves – because they communicate knowledge, conviction and – most important of all – enthusiasm. Publicity skills, also, are learnable and based on fundamental, commonsense rules about simple and clear communication, along with an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the particular medium being used.
- 4.6.4 "I need all the friends I can get" is a famous line from the classic *Peanuts* comic strip<sup>72</sup> and archives neglect this truism at their peril. The circle of friends may be wider than is immediately obvious, and it may include the various international associations and their members, among whom there may be authoritative individuals willing to be identified with a particular need or cause. There are on record many instances of the fortunes of individual archives being influenced in this way, and of collective advocacy, such as letters and petitions, averting the closure or downgrading of an institution, or the destruction of a collection. A benefit of the internet is that needs can be quickly and widely communicated by email and listservs, and responses can be comparably swift and widespread.<sup>73</sup>

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71 For instance, George Lucas's updating of the first *Star Wars* trilogy with new footage and effects.

72 Spoken on occasion by the perpetually insecure hero of Charles M. Schulz's strip, Charlie Brown, with whom most of its readers seem to identify!

73 A case study is the range of advocacy groups, individuals, politicians and media which coalesced around the defence of Australia's National Film and Sound Archive on various occasions. See the author's thesis *National Film and Sound Archive: the quest for identity* (2011)

4.6.5 It may seem like stating the obvious, but supporters need to *be* supported and – in the best sense of the term – cultivated. It is not just a matter of market research: it is more a matter of building continuing two-way relationships. Intelligent and committed friends of an institution deserve and require more than a diet of newsletters and press releases. They need to know they are valued, and to be taken into an archive management's confidence on important issues, through workable consultation mechanisms. Their ideas – and criticisms – need to be sought, heard and taken seriously. Experience has shown that the investment in friends will be amply repaid. It is the surest way of guarding against the insularity and complacency which so easily besets institutions: and it may even be crucial to an archive's survival.

## 4.7 Governance and autonomy

### 4.7.1 *Practical context*

4.7.1.1 In most countries the governance structure of companies, charities and other non-government entities must conform to legislated requirements concerning accountability, transparency, autonomy and competent administration. Governance documents define the organization's objectives, powers and basic structure. Ultimate authority and accountability normally rests with a board or council of some kind which represents the stakeholders in the organization.

4.7.1.2 Memory institutions in the public sector desirably have equivalent arrangements. Typically, for example, national libraries, museums and archives will have their mandates, powers and character defined by a piece of legislation or equivalent in which the governance arrangements are also defined. This makes the institutions accountable to public authority on the one hand, but correspondingly secure and professionally autonomous in the discharge of their mandate on the other. The arrangements may include such things as legal deposit provisions, which place a specific public responsibility and measure of recognition on the institution. At other levels – for instance in the case of university libraries or archives – there may be equivalent documented arrangements under the supreme authority, which in this case would be the senate or other governing entity of the university.

4.7.1.3 Perhaps because of the relative youth of the movement, audiovisual archives often exist in less defined and less secure circumstances. Relatively few enjoy a comparable level of legal recognition or autonomy at the national level. A number exist and operate essentially at the whim of the larger authority or entity to which they belong, and ultimately have little or no guarantee of professional autonomy. Most non-profit archives sit somewhere between these two poles. For-profit archives, of course, are normally parts of larger commercial entities and are subject to the governance arrangements of those entities. This means they may ultimately have little real autonomy.

### 4.7.2 *The desirable minimum: semi autonomy*

4.7.2.1 Given that the governance arrangements for many audiovisual archives must be less than ideal, is there a list of basic essentials?<sup>74</sup> And why is it so? Experience suggests the following as a list of minimum requirements.

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74 Originally FIAF statutes and rules required a high degree of organizational autonomy as a precondition for membership. In 2000 this stance was softened somewhat and the focus turned towards formal commitment to a new Code of Ethics by each member archive. Nevertheless, membership applicants must still provide considerable information to demonstrate the degree of professional autonomy which they enjoy.

- 4.7.2.2 The archive must exist as a recognizable entity. It has a distinctive name, a place, an organization structure, staff, a collection, an infrastructure of fittings and equipment. It also has an organizational status, whether as a legal entity in its own right, or a division or program of a larger entity. Without these fundamentals, supporters have nothing concrete to relate to.
- 4.7.2.3 It has publicly promulgated governance documents which define its character, purpose, mandate, status and accountability. These are a reference point of good faith for users, supporters and staff. These are issued by and/or carry the weight of its highest authority (legislature, corporate board, council, university senate etc.)
- 4.7.2.4 It has publicly promulgated, written policies which define at least its collection development, preservation and access activities. These are based on the governance documents, and are regularly tested and updated, as circumstances change, in consultation with staff and stakeholders. Policies are *observed in practice* and the archive's work is reported and accounted for against them. Without a policy-driven culture there is the risk that the archive will develop and manage its collection in arbitrary and unaccountable ways.
- 4.7.2.5 The archive has control of the development and management of its own collection. Its professional judgment in selection, acquisition, description, preservation activity and access provision is final and is not overridden by any higher authority. Without this surety, supporters can have no confidence that professional standards will be observed.
- 4.7.2.6 It is represented by its own staff in dealings with its stakeholders, including the media industries, other memory institutions and national and international professional forums. It has direct access, and desirably reports directly, to the Board or the Chief Executive Officer of any larger organization of which it is part. This is essential for clarity of communication and its capacity to relate to professional peers and stakeholders.
- 4.7.2.7 It has a written, publicly available ethical and philosophical base, whether this be a declared adherence to existing professional codes and statements, or those of its own creation. Supporters and staff alike have a right to be aware of the guiding values on which the archive operates, and for which it can be held accountable.
- 4.7.2.8 It has "arms length" funding – its actual working priorities are determined by internal professional judgments and not by external sponsors, authorities or a parent organization. (This is admittedly difficult to achieve in an environment where the archive may be dependent on many funding sources, sponsors and grant-giving bodies who may impose their own conditions and priorities.)
- 4.7.2.9 If it is not governed by its own executive board or council, it at least has an effective representative advisory body, or equivalent consultative mechanisms, through which it can be kept attuned to the views and needs of its constituency and maintain the confidence of its support base.
- 4.7.2.10 The archive is led by a director or executive team with a professional background in the audiovisual archiving field. This ensures that the archive is managed within an appropriate frame of reference.

### 4.7.3 *And beyond*

- 4.7.3.1 In an ideal situation an archive would have some additional characteristics guaranteeing its autonomy, continuity and sustainability.
- 4.7.3.2 It would have a separate legal personality as defined by an act of the legislature, a constitution, a charter, articles of association or some equivalent document. Such a document would provide the best guarantee of continuity, stability and accountable governance. If thoughtfully devised, such documents can go a long way to ensuring that the governing board or council is made up of appropriately skilled and representative individuals and that the collection is protected by “perpetual succession” – if the archive ceases to exist as an organization a like-minded body assumes custody of its collection.
- 4.7.3.3 Secure, arms-length funding which is both adequate and disposable at the complete professional discretion of the archive is certainly desirable and an ideal, if in practice probably unattainable.<sup>75</sup> But an archive which can secure the bulk of its funding on these terms from government authorities, and top it up with other sponsorship and grant funds with conditions attached, many come close to the ideal.
- 4.7.3.4 To have complete professional freedom to research, set and implement policy is likewise an ideal. Though many institutions may like to feel that they have this freedom, the reality too often is that it is easy to promulgate a policy, but its implementation may have many unspoken strings attached to it, and what is proclaimed is not always what is observed in practice.



◇ Audio disc formats © UNESCO

<sup>75</sup> The late Sam Kula, as president of AMIA, once put it more picturesquely: “‘Give me the money and get the hell out of the way!’ might make a great button (the ‘anarchivists’ could work on this) but it will probably not go over too well in the corridors of power.” AMIA Newsletter #61, Summer 2003, page 2

## Chapter 5: Preservation and access: exploring nature and concept

### 5.1 Fundamentals: objective and subjective

5.1.1 In this chapter we consider the defining characteristics of the audiovisual media which, in turn, shape both the profession and audiovisual archives themselves.

5.1.2 Moving images and sounds are subjective by nature - they have no objective existence as such. Sound is a series of disturbances in the air impinging on our auditory senses which we *interpret* in meaningful ways – as music, speech, noise and so on. Likewise, images in motion are *created in the mind* if a sequence of still images is revealed in rapid succession beyond a certain frequency threshold (sometimes erroneously called “persistence of vision”). The cause of these sensations is information transmitted to our eyes and ears from a recorded source (such as an audio disc, computer file or film) mediated by appropriate technology (such as a gramophone, computer or projector). The technology is the essential link: one cannot hear a disc by looking at it, nor watch a motion picture by unwinding a film and looking at it. In this way, audiovisual documents differ fundamentally from text based media, which communicate through a code that is intellectually interpreted.

5.1.3 The sustainable transmission of audiovisual works over time depends upon a host of social, economic and technical factors, only some of which are likely to be in the control of an archive. A film premiere in (say) 1930 or a radio play broadcast in 1946 are “live” experiences in a specific context which cannot be captured or repeated. Viewers and listeners in 2016, far removed in time, life experience and social circumstances from the original audiences, can never entirely recapture that “live” experience despite an archive’s best efforts to contextualize their presentation or present the works in their original formats.

5.1.4 The starting point for preservation should be the acquisition of a copy of the work as close as possible to the most complete and best “original”. In the audiovisual context, “original” can be a flexible term. In the case of a film, it may be the original negative – or a copy, not necessarily in the original format, which may be some generations removed. In the case of a digital file, it may be an uncompressed clone of the original. In the case of a gramophone disc, it may be a master tape or a production stamper but is more likely to be a pressing. The chosen carrier(s) may be in pristine condition – equally it may be damaged, faded or incomplete. Further, the work may exist in variant versions: television dramas are edited to suit timeslots or censorship requirements, and ‘director’s cuts’ or re-engineered versions of feature films are common. Archives exercise judgment in choosing their preservation copies but may have to be content with the best they can get.



◇ Nitrate film storage with close shelving pitch  
© George Eastman Museum

- 5.1.5 The survival and accessibility of the work will be dependent on the management of the preservation carriers and files over time, the making of access copies suitable to needs of the archive's users, and the availability of the technology needed for both. Audiovisual technology has constantly developed over more than a century, continually reshaping the capacity to reproduce older formats and requiring decisions about the migration of content to newer carriers and formats. These decisions are specific to each archive, its networks of colleagues and stakeholders, its technical capabilities and its economic circumstances. Some carriers, such as shellac and vinyl pressings and some film stocks, may have a potential shelf life of hundreds of years. The life expectancy of CDs, DVDs and magnetic audio and videotape is far less certain, as is the market life of the playback technology, especially for magnetic media.
- 5.1.6 It is tempting today to see this migration in stark terms – from “old” analogue formats to “new” digital formats – as if one is in the process of comprehensively replacing the other. Content migration is never an entirely benign process, because it involves trade-offs and on-balance decisions about the quality and character of the result. In any case, the digital/analogue dichotomy is false and the reality is far more complex. Digital recording using binary code has been around for at least two hundred years (for example, paper piano rolls are such digital recordings) and while some analogue technologies are retreating, others, like vinyl audio discs, are resurgent. The preservation of motion picture film recognises that it has both analogue and digital aspects: the image, comprising randomly distributed crystals in gelatin, is analogue, but the sampling of the photographic subject at the rate of 24 frames per second is digital in concept and execution.
- 5.1.7 It is more accurate to view audiovisual technology as an evolutionary process, driven by social and market forces, in which technical excellence does not always prevail, options both increase and diminish, and where there are also evolutionary dead-ends. A classic case study is the 1970s “war” between the consumer videocassette (VCR) formats VHS and Betamax, which the technically superior Betamax lost to its more astutely marketed rival. Both of them have since effectively been superseded in the market by the pre-recorded DVD – which, unlike the videocassette, lacks the potential to record as well as play back.
- 5.1.8 The evolution began with the dawn of audiovisual technology in 1888, when Thomas Edison commercialized his Phonograph and began to market cylinder recordings. The Gramophone, a rival disc-based technology, soon appeared and the two systems vied for public favour until the disc format had won out by the 1920s. Discs were easier and cheaper to manufacture and to store at home, even though the cylinder Phonograph had two distinct advantages. It could record as well as play back, while the Gramophone could only play back; and, within the limits of acoustic recording capabilities, the cylinder system arguably produced better sound. Discs had the further disadvantage that, as the spiral groove moved towards the centre of the disc, the signal to noise ratio decreased, and with the wear and tear of repeated playings, the sound quality progressively deteriorated.
- 5.1.9 The same trade-offs continue today. For example, the motion picture film is retreating as both a production and distribution medium, being replaced by digital equivalents. There are practical reasons for this: digital technology offers far more versatile options in production, editing, distribution and marketing. It also offers distribution companies more direct control over cinema screenings, and it is much cheaper to create a DCP than a traditional 35mm or 16mm release print. The aesthetics of the digital versus analogue image are a matter of debate: they have different visual textures.<sup>76</sup> In archival storage, though, film is relatively risk tolerant:

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<sup>76</sup> Digital images comprise geometrically arranged pixels; analogue photographic images comprise randomly distributed grains suspended in gelatin.



it may be subject to gradual fading, shrinkage or other deterioration but experience suggests its potential life can be measured in hundreds of years. By contrast, digital files have to be constantly managed and refreshed in the face of bit rot, software and hardware evolution and other threats. Films slowly fade away. Digital files don't: losses can be sudden and total.

5.1.10 As formats evolve, so does the recording and playback technology – both analogue and digital. Even if they survive in good condition, the ability to reproduce obsolete or obsolescent analogue carriers depends on the survival of the associated technology in working order. Likewise, the retrieval of data from older file formats and carriers becomes more difficult with the passage of time, not least because digital obsolescence can be deliberately driven by commercial software providers seeking to control aspects of the marketplace. Archives are faced with the problem of maintaining obsolete technology which has been abandoned by the audiovisual industries.

## 5.2 Decay, obsolescence and migration

5.2.1 The expectation of carrier decay, combined with the seeming inevitability of continuing format change, have an ultimate consequence: image and sound content can survive and continue to remain accessible only through migration: the copying or transfer of content from one carrier to another. On this experience and expectation is based the copying programs undertaken by audiovisual archives throughout the last 70 years or more: the transfer of the content of nitrate films onto triacetate or polyester based film, the copying of audio from degrading discs and tapes onto fresh analogue or digital carriers, migration from obsolescent to current carriers while the old technology was still operational.

5.2.2 At the same time, optimistic popular assumptions about “digitization” have tended to obscure some home truths about its survivability. It is now clear that files can degrade in various ways: leakage in solid state devices, software rot, and breakdown in optical digital media like CDs. For data to remain accessible, files and software have to be refreshed on a regular basis. The situation can be further complicated if files are compressed into “lossy” formats. Proprietary owners of software can also exert market power to control access to data recorded under their patents<sup>77</sup>, so archives need as far as possible to resort to open source software which avoids that risk.

5.2.3 Data survival also runs up against the concept of entropy, which arises from the second law of thermodynamics:

*Entropy is a measure of the internal state of molecular disorder of a system. Digital storage media are a highly complex and very ordered means of information storage: very vulnerable to entropy. In print, celluloid, vinyl and shellac media entropy is slower. Analogue seems to be comparatively neglect tolerant.*

5.2.4 Overlying these realities, the mismatch between the viable life of a carrier and the commercial life of the technology is often considerable. In practice, the process of migration usually entails some degree of loss or distortion of the image or sound information, and a change in the viewing/listening experience. Decision making is of necessity based on inadequate knowledge: predictions are not always confirmed by subsequent experience.

5.2.5 Archives have responded to these dilemmas in a variety of ways. By storing and managing collections in benign environments they have lengthened carrier life and so delayed the need for migration. By developing ways of keeping obsolete technology and skills functional they have ‘bought time’ for continued carrier accessibility and longer migration programs. By taking

<sup>77</sup> A case in point is Apple's prohibition of Adobe Flash technology on its iPhone and iPad.

conservative approaches they have allowed time for the accumulation of knowledge through practical experience, and this has led to changes in strategy.

- 5.2.6 The classic example of this dilemma has been the changing approach to the preservation of cellulose nitrate film. It was adopted in the 1890s as the standard professional film base, despite its flammability, because it was a tough, flexible, transparent – and relatively cheap – support for photographic emulsion. Little was known about its stability over time; nor does this appear to have been an issue, though assumptions about its long term viability were sometimes made. When its propensity for chemical decomposition later became clear, film archives began to make preservation copies on non-flammable triacetate film, which was then believed to have a life of several centuries.
- 5.2.7 In the 1950s, film stock manufacturers progressively abandoned nitrate in favour of triacetate, for both practical and economic reasons. As a result, nitrate film soon came to be perceived as “dangerous goods”, generating a widening syndrome of institutional and official reaction which at times verged on panic, and which favoured the destruction of nitrate stocks. It became received archival wisdom that all nitrate film would decompose by 2000, so that finding and copying the surviving heritage became an increasingly urgent crusade. Practicality and politics encouraged both archives and film companies to destroy their nitrate holdings after making acetate copies, thus avoiding the costs and risks of storage.
- 5.2.8 We now know that such destruction was a mistake. By the 1980s, triacetate film had begun to reveal its own form of self-destruction – “vinegar syndrome” – and it became apparent that nitrate film, well stored and managed, lasted much longer than first thought (there are reels over 100 years old still in good condition). Continuing improvements in film printing technology allowed increasingly better results. Where nitrate material has been retained it is now often in better condition than the sometimes inferior triacetate copies made from it just 20 or 30 years ago. Moreover, public perceptions about the viability of nitrate film – the “nitrate won’t wait” message promoted, in good faith, by archives for so long – need to be changed.<sup>78</sup>
- 5.2.9 Audiovisual archives, therefore, must continuously manage the *inertia effect*. On the one hand, they are pressed by both practical necessity and popular perception to constantly ‘upgrade’ to the newest and most fashionable format. “Have you digitized your collection yet?” is a familiar recurrent question. On the other hand, repeated migration of large quantities of collection material not only becomes a physical impossibility: it makes neither curatorial nor economic sense. Rather, archives have to manage an increasingly complex equation which keeps the physical viability of their collection in balance with their ability to maintain the obsolescent or ‘legacy’ technology and associated skills which permit access and maintenance. Creating access copies in current digital formats, while maintaining preservation copies in older formats where they can be satisfactorily supported, is part of that equation.
- 5.2.10 Historically, audiovisual archiving has constantly adapted to the shifting realities of the marketplace. As a group, archives lack the critical mass to decisively influence the development agendas of the audiovisual industries. They can propose and encourage, and their concerns are sometimes heeded in the refining of carriers and systems, or in making company policy more sympathetic to maintaining limited support for old technology. But ultimately archives and archivists, with their limited economic and legislative power, must react to change as best they can. This reality imposes great strains and uncertainties on forward planning and staff training.

78 *This Film is Dangerous*, ed. Roger Smither and Catherine A Surowiec (Brussels, FIAF, 2002) is a 700- page compendium on all aspects of nitrate film, and to date the definitive reference work on the subject

Format evolution is driven by marketing, not archival, values. It can be argued that such rapid historical change is neither necessary, nor does it always result in the best systems winning market dominance.

### 5.3 Content, carrier, context and structure

- 5.3.1 The nature of the audiovisual media is a topic that has been explored by several theorists, including Marshall McLuhan, who proposed that the medium itself, not the content it carries, should be the focus of study; the medium affects the society in which it plays a role not only by the content delivered over the medium, but also by the characteristics of the medium itself. His catch phrase, “the medium is the message”, has entered the language.<sup>79</sup>
- 5.3.2 Adding to the definition at 3.2.3.4, the International Council on Archives (ICA) Committee on Electronic Records defines **record** as “recorded information produced or received in the initiation, conduct or completion of an institutional or individual activity and that comprises **content, context** and **structure** sufficient to provide evidence of the activity”.<sup>80</sup> This section applies some of these ideas to the character of audiovisual works.
- 5.3.3 Audiovisual documents, like other documents, have two components: the audio and/or visual content and the carrier on which they reside.<sup>81</sup> The two can be closely related and, where possible, access to both is important. The migration of content from one carrier to another, for purposes of preservation or access, may be necessary or convenient, but in the process critical information and contextual meaning may be lost.
- 5.3.4 The increasing ease with which content can be migrated and re-purposed has tended to obscure the importance of this relationship. Many of those who use archival collections seek access to images and sounds in a form convenient to them, and where such convenience outweighs other considerations. For example, a piece of silent 35mm newsreel footage may have passed through a variety of film and video copying stages before being included in a television documentary. What goes to air may be in the wrong aspect ratio and shown at the wrong speed. It may have been re-cut and rearranged and used in an inaccurate context. It may bear little resemblance to the visual clarity of the original material. But it suffices for the purpose of the production. What’s more, it may well reinforce clichéd views about ‘old film’ looking grainy and washed out, and moving too fast – especially if scratches and other artefacts have actually been *electronically added* as special effects to make it ‘look archival’.
- 5.3.5 Change in format, therefore, can also result in change in content. The loss of image or sound quality is, by definition, a change in content. Manipulation of the content in the process of migration can also change the intrinsic character of the work – ‘enhancement’ of the sound, or colorization of a black and white image, are examples. A video or digital image differs in texture to the film image from which it was derived (and vice versa). A CinemaScope film shot at a 2.35 to 1 aspect ratio became a different work when it was cropped and reformatted to 1.33 to 1 for standard definition television use or video release – effectively discarding half of its visual content and disrupting its grammar and visual composition.

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79 Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding media: the extensions of man*. McGraw Hill, 1964.

80 In further defining **structure** it adds “there must be an inherent logic to the way in which the information it contains – and the metadata which is likely to define its context – are laid out...” [www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk](http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk) accessed 17 October 2015. It appends the qualities of **authenticity, completeness, reliability** and **fixity**.

81 See also the fuller definition of a document in *Memory of the World: General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage* (UNESCO, Paris, 2002), section 2.6

- 5.3.6 Like other objects, audiovisual carriers are *artefacts* and attributes intrinsic to the object cannot be migrated. They can, at best, only be approximated on the new carrier. Looking for examples from the pre-1950 era, one might cite the visual characteristics of silver-rich film emulsions, chemically-based tinting and toning, and obsolete colour processes such as dual emulsion Cinecolor or dye-transfer Technicolor which can only be accurately experienced by projecting the original prints. Shellac and vinyl gramophone records, and their packaging, are tactile objects often intended to be looked at as well as listened to. Essential discographical information may be physically etched into the carrier. The provenance of a film and the mechanics of film production, editing and processing can only be fully understood by examining the artefacts themselves.
- 5.3.7 It may be argued that magnetic media – such as audio and video tape and floppy discs – have less artefact value than phonograph cylinders, discs or films. To the extent that they are not ‘human readable’ this may be true, but it is a difference of degree. They have artefact value as representatives of their formats, and if designed as consumer products they also have visual and tactile artefact value like their older cousins. Even in the apparently carrier-less environment of image and sound downloads from the internet the dichotomy holds true. The carrier is the hard disk or flash drive – the content is what you see and hear, mediated through the software and the characteristics of your computer. Successive generations of software and hardware may subtly or even dramatically change the audiovisual content as you perceive it.
- 5.3.8 In the practical environment of archives and collections where insufficient curatorial expertise is available, the discarding of original carriers and packaging after migration can result in the loss of vital provenance and other information. Dates, for example, may be encoded on the original film stock. Descriptive information may be written on the original tape box or on labels adhering to the tape reel.
- 5.3.9 Audiovisual works are not made in a vacuum. They are the products of a time, a place, a social and industrial structure and can only be fully appreciated as such in their proper *context* and *fixity* (that is, unaltered from their completed form at the time of creation). Just as vintage wine tastes different in a crystal glass than a paper cup, an Edison cylinder recording is best appreciated when replayed on the original technology – an acoustic phonograph. A 1930s sound feature film is best viewed by projecting a 35mm print in a large theatre with sound reproduced through a contemporary system, not a modern one. A 1930s radio show is best enjoyed in a home environment on a mantel or cabinet radio, not on an iphone or other technology which did not exist at the time. It is, of course, often impossible or impractical to recreate the original presentation context, not least because people in the 21st century have a different life experience to the original audience. But that does not diminish the need to fill the contextual vacuum – by explanation and audience preparation, if in no other way.
- 5.3.10 Whether the work has *fixity* – that is, exists in its original, unaltered form – is not always easy to establish. Analogue discs may contain internal information, such as matrix number moulded into the surface, which can help establish this. For digital files, reference must be made to the metadata. For films and television programs it is perhaps hardest of all, because they are easily edited, recut and re-titled.
- 5.3.11 The availability of the original *technology* is an essential element in re-creating context and here, over time, archives are faced with profound dilemmas. When playback technology becomes obsolete, maintenance becomes increasingly difficult as the supply of spare parts diminishes and finally stops. To keep equipment operational, archives have to resort to other expedients, such as ‘cannibalizing’ parts from spare machines, or devising ways of manufacturing parts

themselves. This can buy time, but there are limits. While the relatively simple technology of film projectors and mechanical-acoustic record players can be maintained more or less indefinitely, electronic technology cannot. It relies on the availability of large and complex industrial infrastructures; so, for instance, the manufacture of such items as audio and video record/ playback heads and laser assemblies for CD players are beyond the present capabilities of audiovisual archives.

5.3.12 Nor is operational but obsolete technology much use without the *skills* to run and maintain it. Once they are no longer part of the industry mainstream, such skills become esoteric: the province of the individual enthusiast and the audiovisual archive. Accordingly, it is strategic for archives to nurture such skills in-house and well as to network with skilled individuals in its wider constituency. A small but increasing number of specialized service companies maintain both the equipment and skills to do migration and restoration work for archives, particularly those with very limited infrastructure of their own. In addition, some larger archives use their own technical infrastructures to offer services to smaller colleague institutions. Such interdependence seems increasingly the only answer to these dilemmas.

5.3.13 The difficulties of contextual integrity also need to be held in tension with a contrasting reality. Audiovisual works presented in a contemporary environment can often speak for themselves in new ways. Compare films like *The Wizard of Oz* or *Los Olvidados* with Shakespearean plays.<sup>82</sup> Both the films and plays are widely viewed today in contexts far removed from those originally intended, or indeed imagined, by their creators. They are accepted on their own terms, without contextual background, by modern audiences. To that extent they create a new context of their own and are perhaps speaking to contemporary audiences with new meaning.

5.3.14 In a fundamental sense, **content** is shaped by **carrier** and **context**. Computer graphics and advertisements in websites exploit the limitations as well as possibilities of the on-line medium. Pop songs still last for about 3 minutes because this was the playing time of an Edison cylinder or 78 rpm disc. Sound cinema newsreels lasted no more than 12 minutes because this was by then the maximum running time of a standard 35mm film *reel*. Numerous gags in feature films and cartoons involve actors breaking the “third wall” and talking directly to an audience *in a movie theatre* who are also familiar with movie conventions. Outside this context the gags become inexplicable.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, the content of some sound recordings is shaped by the physical character of the disc with a centre hole.<sup>84</sup> Examples of this kind could be multiplied: readers might like to look for other examples in their experience.

5.3.15 The results of ignorance can be serious as well as embarrassing. There is an apocryphal story of an academic who wrote a scholarly paper developing a theory about Sergei Eisenstein's insertion of subliminal written messages in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). The theory was based on a mistaken assumption. He had failed to realize that the messages were actually flash frames, place markers for the splicing in of narrative titles printed on different film stock. Had he understood the provenance of the print or video he was watching, and the working methods of film laboratories in the 1920s, he would not have made the mistake. He was too far removed from the original carrier to correctly interpret what he was seeing.

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82 *The Wizard of Oz*, 1939, directed by Victor Fleming. *Los Olvidados*, 1950, directed by Luis Bunuel

83 A classic instance is the Warner Bros. Daffy Duck cartoon *Duck Amuck* (1953, d. Chuck Jones) in which all gags are based on the physical nature of the film strip, the colour process and the mechanics of the cartoon medium itself.

84 The Beatles' best-selling album *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (EMI, 1967) in its original vinyl form contains a brief sound sting on the centre play-out loop, which the turntable pick up arm will track repeatedly until removed. Having fun with the medium and turntable mechanics was in keeping with the unconventional character of the recording. Transferred to CD or cassette or digital file, the whole point of the sound sting is lost.



◇ Standard quarter-inch/6 mm audio tape reel © George Eastman Museum

## 5.4 Analogue and digital<sup>85</sup>

- 5.4.1 The most far-reaching debates in the field of audiovisual archiving concern the impact of digitization. It invites populist questions like: are we facing the death of the photographic film strip itself? Will *everything* be kept on computer mass storage systems? If digital-to-digital copying is lossless, is this the ultimate? Will we even need audiovisual archives if everything is digital content which can be called up at will?<sup>86</sup>
- 5.4.2 The history of our field *should* have taught us to approach all technological predictions with scepticism. The only sure guide we have is accumulated experience. It is unlikely that there is *any* 'ultimate' format. On the basis of past experience we can expect that something else, whatever it is, will come *after* digital media, even if we can't imagine that at present. But perhaps the onset of digitization, with its opportunities as well as problems, challenges us to examine some philosophical fundamentals.
- 5.4.3 It is perhaps ironic that the current pressure to digitize – for access if not necessarily for preservation – can easily overshadow efforts to capture for preservation contemporary digital production, which of course needs to be preserved in its original digital form. The “aesthetic of pixels” matters just as much for born-digital moving images as does the “original grain of the celluloid” for film. As contemporary music is increasingly distributed by download rather than on CDs, acquisition becomes more complex and new works are easier to miss.
- 5.4.4 Because of the inertia effect, if for no other reason, we can expect that archives will be managing large collections of carriers in all historical formats – together with the associated technologies and skills – for the foreseeable future. This would be true even if the industries became totally digital file-based tomorrow. The management problems may become more complex, and the migration programs larger, as time goes on. But we are also likely to pay more attention to the artefact value of our collections and the museum-related aspects of our work. There are experiences – such as listening to acoustic recordings on original technology, or viewing silent films with the correct musical ambience – whose enjoyment now relies largely on archives and related organizations. These possibilities and responsibilities will grow.

85 The reader's attention is drawn to the UNESCO Charter and Guidelines on the preservation of digital heritage (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001300/130071e.pdf>)

86 A challenging, some have said chilling, analysis of digitization and the future of film preservation is found in Paulo Cherchi Usai's book *The death of cinema: history, cultural memory and the digital dark age* (London, British Film Institute, 2001)

- 5.4.5 Analogue-to-digital migration is often lossy: some content is lost in the process<sup>87</sup>. Digital-to-digital migration is *lossless* in *theory*, though not necessarily always so in practice. The world's archives and libraries face the collective challenge of preserving almost unimaginable quantities of digital data, and the prospect of long term preservation, at this stage, raises as many questions as answers. What will be reliable and feasible in the long term, in a world where digital resources, like other technical resources, are distributed very unevenly, remains to be seen. Issues of software and hardware progression, commercial versus public interest, economic sustainability and risk management, among others, lie ahead.
- 5.4.6 Audiovisual archives are increasingly using digital technology to provide access to their collections, since this is the form in which users increasingly seek it. The migration to digital of analogue content from obsolete audio and video magnetic carriers, for both preservation and access, has been underway for years: now the same is happening for obsolescent film gauges. Digital techniques are being used in the restoration of audio and moving images. At the same time, both access and preservation material on the more stable analogue carriers, such as film, and vinyl and shellac discs, is being maintained in that form.

### *Philosophical challenges*

- 5.4.7 If audiovisual archives move entirely to preservation in the digital realm by ultimately converting all their analogue audiovisual content, it will end the association with human readable records – the form in which almost all documents have been created from the dawn of recorded history up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Film, cylinder and disc mechanical recordings are relatively stable carriers whose integrity can be monitored independently of any playback technology. The integrity of audiovisual recordings on magnetic tape and computer files, which are not human readable, can only be monitored via the relevant technology. Their retrieval, and the knowledge of their continued existence, depends upon the maintenance of increasingly complex technologies with associated risks. Are the risks acceptable? How long will the technology survive the apparently inexorable tide of obsolescence?
- 5.4.8 Migration to the digital domain ends the connection with the analogue carrier and the associated technology. The content is separated from its physical context and meaning. There is no longer a physical aspect to be experienced, whether that be the tactile experience of handling or examining the carrier or experiencing its reproduction through the original technology. To that extent, the sensory and aesthetic experience disappears.
- 5.4.9 So does the ability to educate the senses in the difference between the analogue original and the digital copy. How will future generations *know* what the difference is – whether it be in visual texture or the subtleties of sound quality? How important is it that they *do* know?
- 5.4.10 Some would argue that audiovisual archives have long since failed the test of scholarship in this regard. A reputable museum, for example, would not pass off a Roman copy of a Greek statue as if it were a Greek original; nor would the Louvre display a digital copy of *La Gioconda* and deem it to be equivalent to the analogue original. Why, then, should an audiovisual archive be content, say, to project acetate or digital copies of a tinted nitrate film without carefully explaining how they differ from the original? It may be argued that the viewer is not interested in the difference; but perhaps the viewer is not aware that there is a difference, nor why the

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<sup>87</sup> This can depend on the variables, carriers and equipment involved and is a technical discussion. Potentially digital technology can have much greater resolving capacity than the analogue original. Analogue-to-analogue copying can also, to some small degree, be lossy. This is also true, by definition, for film-to-film duplication

difference might matter. It falls to archives, like museums, to set a minimum scholarly standard and educate the public proactively. Otherwise we prejudice and pre-empt the rights of the researcher to have access to all relevant information.<sup>88</sup>

5.4.11 It may therefore be that the greatest challenge of digitization is not one of technology or economics, but of scholarship, education and ethics. Researchers and audiences have the right to be educated and fully informed about the content/carrier relationship, to have what they see and hear accurately contextualized. To achieve this, archives and archivists themselves will have to fully understand the differences in the structure of the various media: and the automatic desire to contextualize will need to be part of their value system.

5.4.12 Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the way audiovisual works are cited in scholarly writing. Citations for books, articles, and dissertations routinely include sufficient details to identify the actual copy of the work referred to – by date, edition, publisher, page numbers and so on. Web references will show the URL alongside the date accessed. But in the case of an audiovisual work, it's often just the title. How does a reader know what copy the writer accessed? Was it analog or digital? Was it complete? What was the provenance? Where was the copy held? This information is vital, and if the copy in question was held in an archive it should not be difficult to cite the correct identification data.

5.4.13 In the digital domain, the metadata related to the work can contain much of this information if it is either added manually or is created automatically and progressively as the work is managed within the archive's system, and therefore will always be available when the work is accessed. In the analogue domain, however, the information may be kept in a variety of paper files, catalogue cards or similar places – if, in fact, it was created at all at the time migration was undertaken.

## 5.5 Concept of the work

5.5.1 The management of any collection must rest on a logical conceptual basis for defining its component parts. In a physical sense, audiovisual collections comprise a number of discrete carriers and files. In an intellectual and content sense, the logical base unit is the concept of the *work*.

5.5.2 The concept of the individual work – the stand-alone intellectual entity – is traditionally the one most widely used in audiovisual archives as the primary 'building block' in catalogues and collection control systems. Each work is uniquely identified by a title – and, if necessary, by sub-identifiers such as release or production dates – and to this anchor point is linked all subordinate information. This may include, for example, inventory and condition information on the relevant carriers, metadata for digital files, a content analysis, details of the relevant acquisition transaction and copyright information, provenance information, data on holdings of related material, a record of examination and copying, and details of multiple copies for access use. The amount of information accumulated on each work is a function of the resources available and priorities involved. The concept is a practical expression of the capacity of an audiovisual archive *to perceive a program, recording or film in its own right*, and to organize its information around that perception. The approach appears to adequately serve the needs of users as well as practical collection management.

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88 "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.... The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity." Walter Benjamin, *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction* (1936) <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm> (accessed 17 October 2015) The concepts of "original", "copy", "surrogate" and "simulacrum" have been explored in the writings of Benjamin, Jean Baudrillard and others.



- 5.5.3 There is, of course, room for debate. A work can take many forms: for example, a symphony, a pop song, a feature film, an episode of a television or radio programme, a newsreel, a television or radio commercial, an oral history recording, a soundscape. On the other hand, whether a 24-hour video record of the images from a building security surveillance system might be termed a work in an intellectual sense may be a matter of discussion. Objects, such as gramophones, projectors or costumes, are not audiovisual media but they form part of the collections of many archives and usually are, likewise, deliberate intellectual creations.
- 5.5.4 The concept of the individual work is the basic unit of general cataloguing and collection organization practice in libraries, as well as being the foundational concept in copyright and patent law. A different idea, the concept of the *fonds*, governs collection structures in document archives. Here an individual document (such as a piece of correspondence) is perceived as organically linked to other documents (as part of the sequence of many letters on the same file, or the file as one of a group of related files) and is not identified or treated individually. The *work* is often, though not always, published or publishable; the *fonds* is usually unpublished. Audiovisual archives collect both published and unpublished material and use elements of both approaches.
- 5.5.5 Accordingly, they catalogue their collections using library-based concepts and rules, albeit somewhat modified for their needs. At the same time, their underlying inventories group related materials into larger wholes and also link them to their contexts. These larger groupings may, for example, be collections from particular donors or producers which carry shared contractual obligations or access restrictions, or the *oeuvre* of a particular director or the output of a studio, broadcasting network or government department. Managing both concepts and documenting such relationships among individual works is facilitated by computerised collection control systems.



◇ Humid storage encourages mould and decay © Maria Teresa Ortiz Arellano



## Chapter 6: Management principles

### 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 Like other organizations, audiovisual archives give effect to their mandates through administrative principles, procedures and cultures. All archives are different, and principles are not always formally enunciated. This chapter endeavours to set down some key principles.

### 6.2 Policies

6.2.1 All archives have policies, but they are not always articulated and documented to the same degree of detail, if they are documented at all! Without a documented basis of policy and consequent procedures, there is the risk that decision making will be arbitrary, inconsistent and unaccountable. Policies provide both guidance and constraints, and both are needed. Without documented selection, acquisition and preservation policies, an archive's constituency has no basis for confidence that the archive is competently assembling or preserving its collection. The process of articulating a policy is itself an internal test of the archive's competence, as well as its culture and intellectual rigour.<sup>89</sup>

6.2.2 It follows that all key areas of an archive's operation – including collection development, preservation, access and collection management – should have a deliberate policy basis. It follows equally that the policies need to be so integral to the archive's culture that they are understood by all staff and are observed in practice: that they are the 'engine' and provide the 'rule of law' on which the archive works. Unfortunately it is not always so: it is very easy to write policies which are essentially works of fiction, which are not integrated into the life of the archive, and which are ambiguous and vague rather than informative and specific. In such cases, they may serve as public relations documents, while the *real* policies are undeclared. The effects of the dichotomy can be intellectually and ethically insidious.

6.2.3 Policies are logical and cogent explanations of the archive's stances, perspectives and intentions. Typical ingredients of a well-articulated policy include:

- A reference to the archive's mandate or mission statement
- The invocation of relevant external authorities or reference points (such as those established by UNESCO or the audiovisual archiving federations)
- An explanation of relevant principles
- Based on the above foundation, an explanation of the archive's intentions, stances and choices.
- Sufficient detail to avoid ambiguity - but also simple and brief enough to allow the development of separate application guidelines for staff (which, like the policy, should be public documents).

6.2.4 Good policies are living documents. They are the result of adequate research and stakeholder consultation, and need to be updated regularly to stay practical and relevant.

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89 There are many comparative reference points. Memory institutions frequently put their policies on their web sites, and a comparative study of a range of existing institutional policies is a good way of starting the policy development process. Policies have ethical dimensions (as discussed in chapter 7), as for example signaled in the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics <http://icom.museum/professional-standards/code-of-ethics> (accessed 18 October 2015)

## 6.3 Collection development: selection, acquisition, deselection and disposal

6.3.1 Collection development is an omnibus term which embraces four distinct procedures:

- selection (an intellectual process involving research and judgment, leading to acquisition)
- acquisition (a practical process which may involve technical and physical choices, contractual negotiation and transaction, shipment, examination and inventorying of carriers )
- deselection (a judgmental process based on later circumstances, including changes in selection policy)
- disposal (the ethical divesting of carriers from a collection)

An archive may have separate policies for all four, or may combine them in a single policy document.

6.3.2 While it may be desirable to collect and preserve comprehensively, it is often a practical and financial impossibility. There is no nexus between industry output and the size of archive budgets! It therefore becomes necessary to make value judgments about what will, and will not, be collected. Because selection and acquisition judgments are subjective they are never easy: it is impossible to reliably view the present with the eyes of the future. However, it is best that these judgments occur deliberately, rather than by default, and essential that they be policy-based.<sup>90</sup>

6.3.3 One starting point is the *loss principle*:<sup>91</sup> “if there is any reason of form, content or external association why the loss of a particular item would be regretted in the future, there is a *case*<sup>92</sup> for preservation”. More a cautionary statement against thoughtless destruction than a reference point for hard decisions, it is context for the difficult task of making well-based, well-informed and defensible selection judgments. It is an area of curatorial responsibility which audiovisual archivists are expected to be good at. There may be a need to be comprehensive in some areas, selective in others.

6.3.4 So in practice, audiovisual archivists have to apply individual qualitative judgments. It is an expert and time critical task. They will be influenced by their own artistic, technical and historical knowledge of the audiovisual media and of their subject specialties, their personal perspective, and their practical limitations. It is a heavy responsibility, for good material passed over now may not be recoverable if there are second thoughts in future: unlike the printed word, an audiovisual document may exist in only one copy, and may not survive long enough for second thoughts!

6.3.5 Selection and acquisition policies can be keyed to many reference points, but one common and crucial one is the concept of *national production*.<sup>93</sup> What parts and what percentage of the national production are being preserved? For this question to be reliably answered, that production must itself be documented systematically. From time to time audiovisual archives in some – but still relatively few – countries have produced national filmographies, discographies and the like, a counterpart to the concept of national bibliographies produced by many national libraries.

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90 A useful guide to selection and acquisition is Sam Kula's book *Appraising moving images: assessing the archival and monetary value of film and video records* (Lanham, Scarecrow Press, 2003). It begins by stating 'In archives, the only thing that really matters is the quality of the collections; all the rest is housekeeping.'

91 The writer recalls that it was first enunciated by Ernest Lindgren, founding Curator of the National Film Archive, London, but cannot locate the reference.

92 Writer's emphasis. Many items may have a case for preservation, but not all will have the same priority.

93 See the UNESCO *Recommendation for the safeguarding and preservation of moving images* (1980). It defines national production as “moving images, the maker or at least one of the co-makers of which has his headquarters or habitual residence within the territory of the state concerned.”

Data bases can be linked and this rationalises the load of cataloguing work across institutions, thus improving prospects for the comprehensiveness of future documentation. Nevertheless, audiovisual archivists may not be fully aware of *all* areas of their national production.

- 6.3.6 A complementary concept which includes, but goes beyond, that of national production is the wider *audiovisual heritage* of any country (see 3.3.1). No country is an island, and the totality of moving images and recorded sounds distributed and broadcast within any country is to a greater or lesser extent a broad international mix. The presence of this material impacts the national culture and public memory and provides the context for national production, hence there is a case for its continued accessibility. Many archives see their task as being one of both preserving and providing access to a defined part of this larger heritage. This international perspective has long been a standard feature of the selection and acquisition policies of major libraries and art galleries, for example, all over the world.



◇ Controlled environment storage © George Eastman Museum

- 6.3.7 If the archive is the direct or indirect beneficiary of legal deposit arrangements, should it accept everything it is entitled to? Depending on the terms of law, of course, there may be no choice, and along with indiscriminate acceptance of material may go the continuing obligation to provide for its preservation. If the archive has discretion to refuse, however, it can apply a selection policy. The law has recognized the *right* of the archive to ensure preservation - a crucial principle<sup>94</sup> - and the archive has made a *judgment* about what merits preservation, a professional responsibility. If the archive is only an indirect beneficiary - for example, in some countries the national library or national archives may be the formal legal deposit beneficiary, while the audiovisual archive is the actual repository of both the material and the expertise - the process adds a layer of complexity.
- 6.3.8 Over time, and regardless of the basis of acquisition, a judgment about deselection and disposal may be necessary. There can be many reasons for this: better copies of a particular work may be acquired, so inferior ones can be deleted; the archive's mandate or its selection policy may change; selection judgments may be reviewed with hindsight. Whatever the reason, the deselection judgment is just as important - in some ways more important - than the original selection decision. It needs to be carefully documented, and approved by the archive's highest authority. Likewise, the disposal process needs to be carefully managed and ethically irreproachable. Devices like public sales of deselected materials can send mixed messages and damage an archive's credibility.<sup>95</sup>

94 The UNESCO *Recommendation for the safeguarding and preservation of moving images* enshrines the concept of legal deposit. Most countries have yet to legislate for it. In some countries, even the right to preserve - that is, to make whatever copies or other provisions are necessary to support the survival of a work - is not an automatic right of archives to decide at their professional discretion. It may require the prior permission of the copyright owner.

95 This point is strongly made in Section 2 of the ICOM Code of Ethics. There is a general public presumption that collections are 'permanent', and large scale deselections and disposals invite questions about the competence and integrity of the archive's overall collection development regime.

6.3.9 For the most part, audiovisual archives collect material rather than create it - but there is no reason that it must be exclusively so. The creation of recordings directly by, or at the instigation of, the archive may permit identifiable gaps to be filled. The most common form of archive-instigated recording is the oral or video history interview. The degree to which an archive should be “producer” as well as “collector” is an interesting area of debate.

## 6.4 Preservation, access and collection management<sup>96</sup>

6.4.1 Permanent access is the goal of preservation: without this, preservation has no purpose except as an end in itself. While there may be practical constraints on both preservation and access, there should be no artificial constraints. This is consistent with the United Nations’ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and its *Convention on Civil and Political Rights* (1966). Everyone has the right to an identity, and therefore the right of access to their documentary heritage – including their audiovisual heritage. This includes the right to know it exists, and where to find it. The following notes summarize some basic principles of preservation and access practice, drawing together some points also made elsewhere in this document.

6.4.2 **Careful documentation and collection control** - “good housekeeping” - is a precondition for preservation. It is a labour intensive task but, beyond that fact, is not necessarily an expensive task in itself. It involves the creation of an inventory down to the level of individual carriers and files and should preferably be in computerized form<sup>97</sup>. Labelling and documenting the nature and condition of individual physical carriers so they can be securely managed and retrieved is an important aspect of “housekeeping”. Equally, having a logical protocol for assigning file names is crucial to prevent data becoming unfindable in the system. Good documentation and collection control takes time and discipline, but it saves unnecessary losses and double handling.

6.4.3 **Storage environments** – including attention to temperature, humidity, light, air pollutants, animals and insects, physical security - should, as far as possible, maximize the life of the carriers being stored. The “ideal” requirements vary greatly depending on the type of material concerned: for example, different types of paper, film, magnetic tape and audio discs have different, optimum levels of temperature and humidity. Unfortunately, most archives have to operate with less-than-ideal conditions, so it is often a matter of buying time - doing what is possible with the means available and working towards future improvement of facilities. Factors such as leaking roofs, broken windows, unstable foundations, fire detection/ suppression systems, disaster preparedness and environmental monitoring are all relevant. Good management and surveillance practice can still be applied in less- than-ideal conditions.

6.4.4 The old maxim that “**prevention is better than cure**” is a truism for audiovisual carriers. Practices and techniques that slow down deterioration and potential handling damage are far better and cheaper than any recovery process. Not the least of these is the observance of good storage, handling and shelving procedures, good security, and care in transport. *The culture of prevention should be as important in a heritage institution as the culture of user services.*

6.4.5 **Disaster planning** is the way a cure is ready if, with the best of care, things go wrong. Fire, flood, earthquake, electrical faults, system failure, structural collapse are among the hazards of maintaining collections. *Such disasters can and do happen unexpectedly*, even in the best run archives. They can be anticipated and prepared for.

96 Attention is drawn to the *General Guidelines* of the UNESCO Memory of the World Program and the FIAF *Code of Ethics* [www.fiafnet.org](http://www.fiafnet.org) from which this section is partially adapted. (Accessed 18 October 2015)

97 Data entry in multiple languages, where practical and appropriate, is useful to facilitate international access and data exchange.

- 6.4.6 **Internal selection for conservation or digitization** is a major part of the management regime. On the one hand, there is a need to monitor the condition of analogue carriers to a sufficient degree to identify and prioritise those that need conservation work to stabilize them and extend their lives, or which are reaching the point where the content needs to be migrated if it is to survive. This is time consuming and therefore expensive manual work, especially for magnetic tapes, but it is dangerous to neglect it. This continuing process can be supported by an appropriate electronic inventory system which, day by day, can produce lists of carriers needing inspection.
- 6.4.7 On the other hand, there is the need to establish a priority order for digitization. This can be based on many variables, such as the condition of the carrier and a calculation on how much longer a particular technological path for digitization is likely to remain open. It also takes into account access demands, copyright status and potential for cultural and educational re-use.
- 6.4.8 Articulated from a different perspective, the collection manager needs to consider both the cost of taking action and *the cost of inaction* in relation to digitization. Time is not on our side. While obsolescent analogue carriers may have a very long potential shelf life, the technologies necessary for the digitization process may have a much shorter life, because the economics of maintaining them are unfavourable.<sup>98</sup>
- 6.4.9 **Content migration or reformatting** is therefore both useful and necessary for access purposes and is unavoidable for preservation purposes when the original carrier has deteriorated or become unstable. However, content migration should be approached with due caution as a preservation strategy. It may involve the loss of information and the closing off of future options, and may open up unpredictable risks in future when the copying technology used becomes obsolete. This caution applies to both digital and analogue paths. As far as possible, the new preservation copy should be an exact replica of the original: the content should not be modified in any way.
- 6.4.10 **Conserving an original carrier** and protecting its integrity means that no information is lost, and all future options for preservation and access are kept open. Many archives have now regretted the premature destruction of originals after making copies that proved to be inferior in quality or longevity. Discarding an original, no matter how many copies have been made, should never be undertaken lightly.
- 6.4.11 **Putting long-term preservation at risk** in order to satisfy sudden, short-term access demand is can be a temptation, and sometimes a political necessity, but it is a risk that should be avoided if possible. In cases when there is no duplicate access copy, saying “no” is usually a better strategy than exposing a fragile original to possibly irrecoverable damage.
- 6.4.12 **One size doesn't fit all:** different types of carrier not only require different types of storage environments but different methods of handling, management and conservation treatment. Each requires its own kind of vigilance. The development of agreed international standards – for example, for the transfer of digital data – often lags behind the speed of technological change, but where agreed standards exist they should be observed.
- 6.4.13 For born-analogue works there is no substitute for **physical, on-site** access to the ‘real thing’, on those occasions when it is desirable, possible and affordable to access the original carrier as well as its content in an appropriate environment. But it is often impracticable, because of geographic, conservation and technical considerations. Some preservation copies, such as original negatives or studio master tapes, may be in a technical format unsuitable for viewing or auditioning. Accordingly, access copies are acquired or made both to reduce pressure on the

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98 One commercial provider currently offers a “cost of inaction” calculator! <https://coi.avpreserve.com> (accessed 18 October 2015)

preservation copy, and to overcome these other limitations. This is known as the *paralleling* of collections, and while in theory it is desirable to automatically have access copies to complement every preservation copy, this is rarely possible – both because of the *inertia effect* and the sheer economics involved.

- 6.4.14 **Access copies** can be created in a diversity of formats. They should, by definition, be replaceable if lost or damaged, although their economic value can vary greatly: a newly made 35mm print will cost far more to replace than a DVD and needs to be stored and managed accordingly. As the variety of formats increases, so does the need to provide contextualized explanation so that users fully understand how the copy they are viewing or auditioning differs from the original form of the work. With appropriate safeguards, access copies can – in theory – be sent anywhere or used anywhere, whether this happens physically or electronically. As digitization of collections develops, the ‘anywhere’ will increasingly be the computer screen and speakers, as well as smart phones – with all the attendant benefits of instantaneous data-base searching and downloading, along with the limitations of quality and environment imposed by the technology.
- 6.4.15 **Documentation and artifact collections:** Generally speaking, the organization, storage, conservation and access arrangements for analogue documents and artefacts follow the same principles and methods common to memory institutions, although inventory control and cataloguing will be institution-specific and reflect the paradigm of an audiovisual archive (4.4.6): that is, that such items are collected *because of the audiovisual works to which they relate*.
- 6.4.16 After the access possibilities of data-base searching have been exhausted there remains, now as always, the **human element** – the guidance and advice of archive curators familiar with their collections. There can never be any substitute for this: such people develop a depth of knowledge and lateral thinking which no catalogue, data base or search engine can replace. This knowledge can be communicated to both on-site and remote users but depends on personal interaction.

## 6.5 Documenting

- 6.5.1 Like other memory institutions, audiovisual archives need to observe high standards in the documenting of acquisition, access and other transactions so that they are, and can be seen to be, accountable and trustworthy in their dealings. Because of the complexity of their collections, precise housekeeping records are essential. Because of the nature of the audiovisual media, what audiovisual archives do *internally* with their collections also needs to be precisely documented.
- 6.5.2 Once discerned, the technical characteristics, generation and condition of each analogue carrier needs to be appropriately recorded.<sup>99</sup> This is particularly crucial for preservation copies. To be able to monitor over time the degradation of a magnetic tape roll, or the fading of colour dyes in a film roll, requires clear concepts and terminology, and accuracy and consistency in documenting. To get it wrong – for instance, to wrongly identify a particular film stock and as a result to give it a treatment which results in irrecoverable damage – can have serious consequences. Many archives have developed effective systems of coded information to allow this information to be recorded efficiently.
- 6.5.3 The vaulting and internal movement of individual carriers, and systems of loan where they apply, need to be managed with precision. Different institutions have, perhaps, varying tolerances of loss for different types of material. Audiovisual archives generally have little tolerance: it is difficult to give an acceptable explanation to an owner for the loss of a reel of original

<sup>99</sup> For example, a digital file derived from a two inch broadcast videotape and a VHS cassette recorded off air may have the same content but vastly different characteristics.



◇ Orderly storage of 35mm acetate film © George Eastman Museum

negative or master tape in your custody if it means the integrity of his film or program is now commercially compromised. It is impossible to replace the irreplaceable.

- 6.5.4 In all copying, conservation and restoration work, whether analogue or digital, documenting what is done and the choices that are made is essential, in order to preserve the integrity of the work in the long term. Succeeding curators may need to base their own choices for action on what was done in the past; they may need to undo past choices, where possible, if superior solutions have since become available. The principles and ethics of **materials and photographic conservation** have relevance in audiovisual archiving. Since subjective choices are always involved, and another individual approaching the same task may have made different choices, to neglect this step is to reduce or negate the possibility of future research.<sup>100</sup>

## 6.6 Cataloguing<sup>101</sup>

- 6.6.1 Cataloguing is the intellectual description of the content of a work, done according to precise and consistent rules. As in libraries and museums, an audiovisual archive's catalogue is the key access tool: the starting point for research. In libraries, the processes of cataloguing and accessioning/ registration are often integrated. In audiovisual archives, they are more often separate: cataloguing follows accessioning or registration, since carriers cannot easily be made accessible until they are brought under inventory control. Pragmatically, a work may not be catalogued until long after it is accessioned: it's a question of priorities. Cataloguing resources are concentrated on areas of the collection where demand is perceived to be greatest.
- 6.6.2 As in libraries and museums, cataloguing in audiovisual archives is a professional discipline. Catalogues are developed according to international professional standards and the work is desirably executed by appropriately trained staff. These standards are usually modified according to the cataloguing rules developed for moving images and recorded sounds by FIAF, IASA, AMIA, FIAT/IFTA and other associations to meet the needs and character of audiovisual documents, as well as the needs of users. Hence, there are variations in emphasis, standards, and the range and content of information fields. Archives will often add to these international reference points some further variations adapted to their particular institutions needs or national context, including their national language and cultural requirements.<sup>102</sup>

100 The Code of ethics and code of practice of the Australian Institute for Conservation of Cultural Material (AICCM) is one of many reference examples on these matters. [www.aiccm.org.au](http://www.aiccm.org.au) (accessed 18 October 2015)

101 In archival science, finding aids instead of catalogues provide the way into collections. They may include registers, guides, inventories and indexes, and hence focus on context rather than on the intellectual description of an individual work.

102 For example, check the IASA cataloguing rules [www.iasa-web.org/cataloguing-rules](http://www.iasa-web.org/cataloguing-rules) (accessed 18 October 2015)



- 6.6.3 Cataloguing may be described as a sub-profession which reaches across the various memory disciplines. It has its own extensive literature, and practitioners may devote their entire working lives to this field, a phenomenon which is equally true of some other areas of audiovisual archiving work. Accordingly, individual cataloguers – who must view and audition material in order to prepare intellectual descriptions – can develop an immense depth of knowledge of their collections.
- 6.6.4 Increasingly audiovisual archives are placing their catalogues on line, so they can be interrogated by search engines such as Google or Yahoo, or through gateways specifically devised by memory institutions.<sup>103</sup>
- 6.6.5 The harmonization of the various cataloguing rules within the audiovisual field, which have separate historical origins, and the evolution of manuals, minimum data and metadata standards, is an ongoing cooperative task for cataloguers worldwide.

## 6.7 Legalities

- 6.7.1 Audiovisual archives operate within a framework of contractual and copyright law. Access, and to some extent preservation, activities are governed and constrained by the legal entitlements of copyright holders. In general, archives are not free to publicly exhibit, perform or exploit material in their collections without the agreement of the relevant copyright holders.
- 6.7.2 An archive is obliged to observe the “rule of law” and honour the legal entitlements of copyright holders. Where the ownership of rights is clearly established (and this is normally the case with recently created material) there is no formal complication in complying with this obligation. However, the further back in history one goes, the less clear the situation becomes. As rights are sold and resold, as production companies disband, as creators of material die and their assets pass into the hands of others, it becomes increasingly difficult to establish with certainty the present ownership of rights, resulting in an ever-increasing number of “orphan” works. Sometimes there is no apparent claimant: sometimes there is a claimant, but no hard evidence of ownership. Archives need to deal with these ambiguities in the interests of their stakeholders, and their values may differ from those of such a claimant.
- 6.7.3 Here archives have to refer back to their mandates, which often include an obligation to serve the public interest by providing access to their collections. Some archives play it safe by withholding access where rights ownership is unclear. Others decide to take a calculated risk, by making an item accessible after reasonable attempts to find the rightful claimant have proved fruitless. If later challenged – though this rarely seems to happen – their defence is that they have acted reasonably in the public interest, and can turn over to a rightful claimant any financial proceeds resulting from such access.
- 6.7.4 “Legal deposit” regimes – the compulsory deposit of a copy of published material in a public institution, usually a national library - have traditionally applied to the printed word, but in most countries they still do not apply to audiovisual archives. The underlying principle – that published documents of any kind become part of the common memory and should be preserved for future access – is supported, for example, by the 1980 UNESCO *Recommendation for the safeguarding and preservation of moving images*, but implementation has often been resisted by governments and the audiovisual industries. The principle remains valid.
- 6.7.5 **Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property (ICIP)** is an umbrella legal term that has come

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<sup>103</sup> For example, the National Library of Australia’s TROVE gateway interrogates the data bases of memory institutions throughout Australia to produce a consolidated result <http://trove.nla.gov.au> (accessed 18 October 2015)

to be used to identify indigenous peoples' rights to protect their specific cultural knowledge and intellectual property. Many countries have found it difficult to reconcile local indigenous laws and cultural norms with a predominantly western legal system, often leaving indigenous intellectual property rights unprotected. This has become a concern of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and is the focus of many declarations.<sup>104</sup> All archives need to be sensitive to the application of these rights in their own national context.

6.7.6 In many parts of the world, such as Latin America, censorship regimes apply to the public performance, broadcasting and sale of audiovisual works, and to what may be accessed on the internet. These vary from country to country. In some cases these regimes also apply to what may be acquired by archives. This is a complex area of moral and legal debate.

6.7.7 In a field of growing complexity, all archives need access to legal advice to help them tread warily within a potential minefield. But they also need the confidence to make on-balance judgments based on their knowledge of the way their audiovisual industries work – and on the personal contacts they have developed.

## 6.8 No archive is an island

6.8.1 It's an apparent truism: all audiovisual archives are interdependent. They rely on each other, and on their international associations, for services, advice and moral support. Even large institutions find the need to network, and to share facilities and expertise. Some archives develop specializations so they can service other institutions cost-effectively. No one can *afford* to be an island. Archives grow especially by the cross current of ideas – picked up from one another at conferences or by cross-visitation.

6.8.2 There is also a relationship of interdependence between archives and the fast moving audiovisual industries. They need each other. It may seem, at times, an unequal relationship between two fields with different priorities and world views, with archives very much the poor relation. But archives have a part to play in fostering relations and working to influence the industries' agendas – and demonstrating their worth and relevance.

## 6.9 The “digital divide” – an umbrella term

6.9.1 Nowhere is the interdependence of archives more important than in helping to bridge the “digital divide” between developed and developing countries. Archives in developing countries are losing a greater percentage of their digital heritage each year than developed countries because they lack the skills, infrastructure and funds to change the situation – to buy new equipment, to keep old equipment operating, to train staff and to hold onto them. There is every indication that with the speed of development in digital technology, the divide is getting worse instead of better. For audiovisual archives as a movement it is as much an ethical as a practical issue. The challenge is – what can they do about it?

6.9.2 Yet a more accurate term might be the *technological divide*. “Digital” only really describes part of the problem. The larger divide is about access – financial, logistical, educational and skilled – to all the technologies used to manage collections.

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<sup>104</sup> For example, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf) (accessed 18 October 2015)



◇ Compact shelving is space-efficient © *George Eastman Museum*

## 6.10 Environmental impact<sup>105</sup>

- 6.10.1 Audiovisual archiving contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, to the extent that it uses energy derived from fossil fuels, deals in toxic chemicals, and produces non-recyclable waste. Ethical management minimises the effect on the environment.
- 6.10.2 As content is progressively transferred from obsolescent magnetic tape formats, archives will decide whether to keep or dispose of the tapes. Rather than sending them to landfill, recycling options should be explored. Recycling of plastic, such as tape cassettes and containers, is an established industry; these can be disassembled and fed into a recycling chain. Magnetic tape can be shredded and/or incinerated, a possibly better option than burying in landfill, where their long term biodegradability and effect is unknown, though there appears to be no completely benign disposal option at this stage. This reality should be taken into account when deciding whether to keep or dispose of tapes.
- 6.10.3 E-waste is an expanding global problem, as mountains of redundant hardware are disposed of. Although there are options for recycling, these avenues tend to be followed only when the process is profitable: the reality is probably that most goes into landfill. E-waste is also exported to developing countries where the hardware frequently is not repurposed and reused, but burned to salvage raw materials like copper wire. This process is itself highly damaging to the environment and to the health of those who work in the industry.
- 6.10.4 As an archive's digital hardware expands, so does its power consumption. It makes environmental and economic sense to choose and configure hardware to maximise efficiency, and minimise cost. Where choice is available, "green" electricity can be selected instead of electricity from a coal-fired source. Renewable energy technologies are rapidly developing and the possibility of an archive generating at least some of its electricity from solar panels can be explored.
- 6.10.5 A check list of options available to an environmentally conscious archive might, therefore, include the following:
- Minimize energy use. Source clean, not coal-generated, electricity. Check out renewable options.
  - Be selective. Digitize fewer items
  - Use the most energy-efficient options in acquiring hardware and configuring its performance
  - Store large and infrequently accessed files off line.
  - Recycle where possible: check the credentials of the recyclers

<sup>105</sup> This section draws on research by Linda Tadic of Audiovisual Archive Network



## Chapter 7: Ethics and advocacy

### 7.1 Codes of ethics

7.1.1 The ethics of a profession arise out of its underlying values and motivations (see Chapter 2). Some matters are specific to the field itself; some are based on more widely acknowledged norms of life and society. Characteristically, professions codify their ethical standards, creating written statements for the guidance of their members and the reassurance of their stakeholders. Professional bodies frequently have disciplinary mechanisms designed to enforce binding standards: the medical and legal fields are obvious examples.

7.1.2 Within the memory professions, including the audiovisual archiving profession, codes of ethics exist at the international, national and institutional levels. They deal with both personal and institutional behaviour and emphasize some common themes. These include:

- Protecting the integrity and preserving the context of collection materials
- Probity in access, collection development and other transactions
- The right of access
- Conflicts of interest, and private benefit
- Observing the 'rule of law' and policy-based decision making
- Integrity, honesty, accountability and transparency
- Confidentiality
- The pursuit of excellence and professional growth
- Personal conduct, duty of care and professional relationships

The reader is encouraged to explore these issues by referring to the current codes of the major associations and their members.<sup>106</sup> All are relevant as reference points in constructing an institutional code for any audiovisual archive. Since it is neither possible nor necessary to here discuss these shared issues in their generality, this chapter focuses on aspects specific to audiovisual archiving.

7.1.3 Among the audiovisual archiving federations, FIAF, AMIA and IASA have so far adopted formal codes of ethics. The FIAF Code ([www.fiafnet.org](http://www.fiafnet.org)) was adopted in 1998, and adherence to it is obligatory for FIAF members. AMIA and IASA<sup>107</sup> have since adopted aspirational codes attuned to the working environments of their members.

### 7.2 Ethics in practice

7.2.1 A written code, whether international or institution-specific, is a framework providing general guidance. It cannot predict every situation, nor give ready-made solutions to dilemmas requiring on- balance value judgments. Characteristically, professionals accept the responsibility of making their own judgments in ethical, as in other, matters.

7.2.2 At the institutional level, codes accrue meaning and respect only if they are central to an archive's life, and are actively promoted and transparently honoured from the top down. This may involve a process of staff education, monitoring and investigative mechanisms, and administrative routine which personalizes the application of the code to each staff member. In

<sup>106</sup> The websites of ICOM ([www.icom.org](http://www.icom.org)), ICA ([www.ica.org](http://www.ica.org)) and IFLA ([www.ifla.org](http://www.ifla.org)) offer both international codes, and the codes of national associations in the museum, archives and library fields.

<sup>107</sup> [www.amianet.org/about/code-of-ethics](http://www.amianet.org/about/code-of-ethics) and [www.iasa-web.org/ethical-principles](http://www.iasa-web.org/ethical-principles) (both accessed 19 October 2015)

some institutions, for example, all staff members are required to read and discuss the corporate code, to commit themselves in writing to observe it, and to declare any existing and potential conflicts of interest. Where such active implementation is neglected, institutional codes pale into background formalities which are observed only when convenient, or used as mere public relations devices.

- 7.2.3 At the personal level, there is a point beyond which ethical behaviour cannot be policed, and turns on the integrity and conscience of the individual. This applies independently of how well (or otherwise) one's employing institution or professional association observes its own ethical standards. Inevitably, there are personal dilemmas. They can sometimes be risky as well as lonely. They may involve taking an unpopular stance, being a "whistleblower" or – on a different plane – even putting one's career (or more) at risk.<sup>108</sup>
- 7.2.4 However much we may wish it were otherwise, the preservation of, and access to, the past is an assertion of values and hence of a viewpoint. In other words, it is an intrinsically political activity. Professional debate, as well as the record of deliberate heritage destruction over the last century, amply illustrates that there are always those who, from a variety of motives, will seek to suppress or destroy what has been kept. Archivists must continually confront the politics of selection, access and preservation, and the ethical questions they raise.<sup>109</sup> The survival of the past is constantly at the mercy of the present.<sup>110</sup>

## 7.3 Institutional issues

### 7.3.1 Collections

- 7.3.1.1 Additionally to points made in the previous chapter, and to principles set out in the FIAF, AMIA and IASA codes (much of which can be extrapolated for audiovisual archives in general) the ethical management of collections raises several issues.
- 7.3.1.2 There is behind all collection development the assumption of permanency, so that deselection of material should not be done lightly. Accordingly, the deselection decision is best made by the archive's board, council or comparable authority – not by individual curators. The disposal process should first take into account the rights and needs of other collecting institutions who may welcome the surplus material. If, after these steps, the deselected material is offered for public sale, there should be sufficient public explanation to avert unhelpful perceptions about motive or process. Staff members should not, and should not be perceived, to personally benefit from the process.<sup>111</sup>

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108 There are known instances of archivists putting life and liberty at risk in order to save collection material from destruction: surely the ultimate professional commitment. More prosaically, the author acknowledges that he, like many colleagues, has struggled with lesser ethical dilemmas. Some are analyzed in his essay *You only live once: on being a troublemaking professional* (in *The Moving Image*, Vol 2 No 1, Spring 2002 pp 175-184). Whistleblowing – drawing official or public attention to malpractice – is now, in some countries, protected by law in principle, though not necessarily in practice. Whistleblowers Australia is one of many organizations documenting case studies.

109 The UNESCO Memory of the World publication, *Lost memory – libraries and archives destroyed in the twentieth century* (1996) makes devastating reading. South African experience in the politics of archival preservation and access is documented in Verne Harris' essay, *The archive is politics: truths, powers, records and contestation in South Africa*, keynote address at the conference 'Political pressure and the archival record', University of Liverpool, Liverpool (UK), July 2003)

110 "Far from standing as enduring monuments to the past, archives instead appear somewhat fragile, eternally subject to the judgment of the society in which they exist. Neither temporal nor absolute, the meaning they convey may be manipulated, misinterpreted or suppressed .....the archives of the past are also the mutable creations of the present..."  
Judith M Panitch: *Liberty, equality, posterity? Some archival lessons from the case of the French Revolution* in *American Archivist*, vol 59, Winter 1996, p 47

111 A public access database of all deselected, or potentially disposable, material might not only provide a public service to institutions interested in acquiring surplus items. It may have a sobering effect on decisions made too lightly.

7.3.1.3 Given the many migration possibilities now open, and the political and practical pressures facing archives to contain costs and collection size, the retention of original carriers for their viable life spans – regardless of what copies have been made – becomes a fundamental matter of curatorial integrity. It follows that the potential for future research and yet unrealised migration possibilities should never be closed off by their premature disposal or destruction.

7.3.1.4 The nature of the digital media opens up entirely new possibilities for manipulating sounds and images to falsify history, without leaving any trace of such action. This action strikes at the heart of archiving and so cannot be countenanced. Archives may need to take preventive measures, including staff education, against such possibilities.

7.3.1.5 It is in the nature of the audiovisual industries that collectors and other private individuals play a major role in ensuring the survival of audiovisual material, often by unconventional means. In the paramount interest of ensuring the preservation of precious materials, archives will work, with due confidentiality, to reconcile any differing interests between such suppliers and parties who have legitimate rights of intellectual or material ownership to assert. Archives will not exploit such material without due observance of the rule of law.



◇ Vinyl discs at risk in casual storage  
© Maria Teresa Ortiz Arellano

### 7.3.2 Access

7.3.2.1. Subject to the primary duty to preserve, public archives acknowledge the public *right* of access to their collections (see also 3.2.6). Within the means available to them, they will respond to research enquiries and will pro-actively present their collections to the public, in contextualized ways, in accordance with a stated access policy. In all cases, the legitimate rights of owners of copyright and other commercial interests shall be fully respected. One of the challenges facing archivists is to create digital platforms with openly accessible content that does not violate copyright. Another is to explore ways of being included in their country's legal regime on open access to information.

7.3.2.2 In the interests of public access and education, archives may not only *restore* material – that is, remove the effects of damage and age – but also create *reconstructed* versions of films, programs and recordings that have survived only in incomplete form, thereby making them more easily comprehensible. This is done by bringing together incomplete or fragmentary elements from multiple sources and rearranging them into a coherent whole, sometimes with considerable manipulation of images and/or sound to fill in gaps in the surviving source material. Such reconstructions are, in effect, new productions aimed at contemporary audiences, and may differ significantly from the original work.

7.3.2.3 Such work needs to be carried out with integrity by skilled curatorial staff in accordance with objectives, principles and methods that are publicly stated, so that the character of the reconstruction is understood by its audiences. A reconstruction statement needs to be prepared to ensure that this information is fully documented (see Appendix 3). The preservation of the source elements of the reconstruction *is not disturbed* by the project. They continue to be held and stay potentially available in their original form.



◇ Radio Madang in Papua New Guinea houses the local audio archive © Mick Newnham

- 7.3.2.4 In providing access to their collection materials, archives will, as far as possible, draw the attention of users to contextual information, help them to understand original form, context and structure, and encourage them to use with integrity any copies supplied. Archives will not knowingly be complicit in the deliberate alteration or public misrepresentation of such material, whether through the manipulation of its image or sound content or otherwise.
- 7.3.2.5 In devising and providing public presentation environments, archives will create context with integrity. They will resist commercial or other pressure to subordinate presentation standards, styles and environments to current expedients or fashions, remaining as far as possible true to the ambience and original intent of the works being presented. (See also section 5.3)<sup>112</sup>

### 7.3.3 *Ambience*

- 7.3.3.1 The ambience and culture of an archive bears on the quality of all its functions. Archives should work to develop an internal culture and community which values individual scholarship, intellectual rigour and enquiry, and the capacity to make and accept responsibility for curatorial judgments. It should encourage the professional development of its people, and value and protect its corporate memory.
- 7.3.3.2 Every archive has an institutional history and it is perhaps stating the obvious to say that all staff members should be aware of it, at least in outline, whether it is published or not. To know *why* an institution was born and *how* it came to be where it now is – sometimes through difficulties and struggles – is essential in order to arrive at convictions about where it should be heading. Where such histories are available in published form they can be fruitful reference sources, as well as sources of inspiration.<sup>113</sup>
- 7.3.3.3 An archive's dealings should be characterized by accuracy, honesty, due consultation, consistency and transparency. It will not knowingly be party to the dissemination of false, misleading or inaccurate information, nor avoid reasonable questions. It will offer cogent explanations in writing for its decisions and policy stances.

112 This relates especially (but not exclusively) to archive cinemas and related screening environments, and raises issues ranging from correct aspect ratios and projection skills and standards to the use of screen advertising and atmospheric music. It is a subject on which the federations and individual archives could usefully develop guidelines (for example, the *FLAF Digital Projection Guide* and the *FLAF Advanced Projection Manual*). Even though contemporary screen advertising in an archive cinema may raise much needed income, it is out of context: a little like putting a corporate logo on the Venus de Milo.

113 A recent example is *The Adventures of Jonathon Dennis* by Emma Jean Kelly, tracing the creation of the New Zealand Film Archive. Again, the history of Australia's National Film and Sound Archive has been covered in various articles and theses, some by the present author.

### ***7.3.4 Relationships***

- 7.3.4.1 Archives should freely share their knowledge and experience to promote the profession, and aid the development and enlightenment of others in a spirit of collaboration. They accept that by bearing one another's burdens, the whole profession is enhanced and advanced. Wherever possible, the provision of information, the loan of collection material, participation in joint projects, the exchange of staff and the visitation of external colleagues will be facilitated.
- 7.3.4.2 Where permitted, corporate sponsorship should be negotiated and accepted on the basis of fair and mutually beneficial partnerships. Agreements should be in writing, of limited duration, compatible with the archive's character, code of ethics and objectives, and offer a net benefit to the archive.

## **7.4 Personal issues**

### ***7.4.1 Motivation***

- 7.4.1.1 Audiovisual archiving is not a lucrative field, and relative to the other memory professions it is too small to offer great opportunities for promotion, status, security and career development. Its practitioners tend to be motivated by other things: an affinity for the audiovisual media, a passion for its preservation, appreciation and popularization, and the intrinsic satisfaction of being part of a pioneering field. They also need to be motivated by a willingness to serve the creativity, projects and agendas of others.

### ***7.4.2 Conflicts of interest***

- 7.4.2.1 Potentially, this affinity can lead to conflicts of interest. These can arise in several ways, such as a financial interest in organizations supplying goods and services to the archive, being a dealer in collectible materials, membership of groups with conflicting aims, or the building of private collections in ways that are – or could appear to be – in conflict with the archive's own collecting activity. Such perceptions can be very damaging to an archive's reputation, and if an acceptable accommodation of interests cannot be found, it may be necessary for the individual to end the relevant relationships or activity. The archive's good name must come first.
- 7.4.2.2 Other areas of potential conflict include the giving of advice or valuations in a personal capacity which may nevertheless be perceived to be given in an official capacity. If an individual is closely identified with an institution, it becomes hard for him or her to write, teach or speak publicly in a private capacity: the perception will inevitably be otherwise. Such conflicts must be faced for what they are, and managed to avoid any unhelpful perception. Again, the interests of the archive will be paramount.
- 7.4.2.3 Trustful personal relationships between an archivist and (say) collectors or suppliers are among the greatest rewards and obligations of an audiovisual archivist. Knowing that they are open to abuse, and that some people will prefer to trust the individual rather than the institution, such relationships must be characterized by absolute honesty, institutional loyalty and the absence of personal gain. Real dilemmas can result: for example, where gifts and mementos are offered to the archivist with the best of intentions, and it is necessary to avoid hurt or offence. In such cases, an archivist must work through the situation with a supervisor.



### 7.4.3 Personal conduct

- 7.4.3.1 The conscientious carrying out of a task to professional standards is ultimately a matter of personal honour and probity. Many tasks, such as the careful handling of collection material so as to avoid damage, are reliant on this: mistakes or damage, if not promptly reported and dealt with, may not be discovered for years.
- 7.4.3.2 In the course of daily work, archivists accrue a considerable amount of confidential information. This may range, for example, from the contents of a private collection which the owner does not want publicly known, to confidences revealed in an oral history recording to which public access is restricted. Such confidentiality must be respected without exception.
- 7.4.3.3 Neither collection material nor the general resources of an archive should be appropriated for private use or benefit, even though as a staff member it may be easy for an archivist to do this. This matters as much for the actual benefit as for the messages it sends: there is no justifiable basis on which staff should have privileged use of public property.
- 7.4.3.4 Audiovisual archivists recognize and observe cultural and moral responsibility towards indigenous people, observing the requirement that relevant collection material is handled and accessed in ways compatible with the norms of their cultures. Often the only person who will know whether these requirements are being observed is the archivist: it is a matter of personal integrity.
- 7.4.3.5 As guardians of the audiovisual heritage, archivists respect the integrity of the works in their care. They do not mutilate or censor them, misrepresent them, improperly suppress access neither to them nor in any other way attempt to falsify history or limit access to the unadorned record.<sup>114</sup> They resist the efforts of others to do so. They hold in tension their personal tastes, values and critical judgments against the need to responsibly protect and develop their collection in accordance with policy.<sup>115</sup>

### 7.4.4 Dilemmas and disobedience<sup>116</sup>

- 7.4.4.1 *There is no reason to accept the doctrines crafted to sustain power and privilege, or to believe that we are constrained by mysterious and unknown social laws. These are simply decisions made within institutions that are subject to human will and that must face the test of legitimacy. And if they do not meet the test, they can be replaced by other institutions that are more free and more just, as has happened often in the past. (Noam Chomsky)<sup>117</sup>*

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114 The issues are fundamental and complex. On the one hand, the legitimate rights of copyright holders and community groups (such as indigenous peoples) to exercise fair controls over access and use must be honoured; on the other hand, censorship and access control can take many insidious forms - in the interests of political correctness, economic advantage or otherwise. For an exploration of these and related issues, see Roger Smither's article *Dealing with the unacceptable* in FIAF Bulletin #45, October 1992.

115 Every sizeable audiovisual archive collection probably contains enough material to offend everyone! Almost certainly, archivists will not share the values, moral standards and viewpoints inherent in at least some items in their collection. But racism, sexism, paternalism, immorality, violence, stereotyping and the rest are facts of human history, and they are evident in the products of society, including audiovisual products! The question is: by giving access to this item, am I endorsing - or perceived as endorsing - the values it contains? Or am I endorsing the right to access? (See also the previous footnote).

116 In drafting this section I am indebted to Verne Harris's article *Knowing right from wrong: the archivist and the protection of people's rights* in *Janus*, issue 1999.1, pp 32-38. and commend it to readers for a larger exploration of this topic.

117 Quoted in [www.thirdworldtraveler.com](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com) (accessed 19 October 2015) and other websites but the source article or book is not referenced.

- 7.4.4.2 Occasions will arise where an archivist finds a conflict between what he or she is instructed to do on the one hand, and considers responsible and ethical on the other. There are many possible scenarios: political censorship (“destroy this: it never happened”), economic pressure (“we can’t afford to keep all this stuff: get rid of it”), strategic choices, arbitrary and uninformed directives, discouraging or suppressing access to “politically incorrect” or “inconvenient” material, and so on. Or a particular state of affairs may exist in the archive which an individual considers so wrong or potentially damaging to the institution that it must be exposed, and he or she must consider becoming a “whistleblower”.
- 7.4.4.3 Such decisions are among the hardest dilemmas an archivist can face. One might say that the right solution is to discern the highest of the competing principles and serve it (for example, perhaps the saving of threatened collection material is the highest principle in a given situation.) But the situation may be complex, the choices not clear cut, and disobedience or whistleblowing may have serious personal consequences which have to be carefully weighed. Moreover, none of us is completely impartial.
- 7.4.4.4 There is no facile answer, but there are some logical steps to take. Analyzing the situation to discern the rights, motives and assumptions of all the interested parties can help clarify one’s own motives and concerns. Blind obedience and going with the flow is always the easiest course but, as history shows, it is often the wrong one. What is the real agenda? What self-interest is involved (including my own)? Am I deceiving anyone or covering up? Do I know the right answer but don’t want to face it?
- 7.4.4.5 Having done this, one can try to weigh the competing claims in the circumstances. The boundary between right and wrong may be blurred. There may be no ‘good’ outcome: just a choice between differing evils, based on the information available.
- 7.4.4.6 Testing one’s conclusions with respected colleagues or friends can help to clarify the issues. Sometimes others can see a situation more clearly and dispassionately and perhaps see new angles to it. Sometimes a creative win/win solution will become apparent. Sometimes it will not.
- 7.4.4.7 Finally, in the light of these self-accountable steps, one must pay heed to one’s conscience. Trusting one’s own better judgment and ‘gut feeling’ when circumstances don’t affirm it is difficult; it is easier to rationalize nagging doubts. Even then there’s no certainty: two archivists facing the same dilemma, and weighing the same issues with the same rigour, can rightly and sincerely get different answers. We are all subjective beings, seeking what is right for us. We can only ask: as professionals, what outcome could *I* live with? What outcome is *unacceptable* to me?

## 7.5 Advocacy

- 7.5.1 It is a truism, but it needs to be said: *In business as in life, you don’t get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate.*<sup>118</sup> And it is true for memory institutions generally. As audiovisual archivists we may feel that money and influence in society seems to flow to skewed priorities, while important causes struggle for air. The value of our work may be obvious to us, so with a sense of entitlement, we believe that it should be equally obvious to the world at large. But archives belong to that group of activities which can always be put off until tomorrow. It’s always the squeaky wheel that gets the grease, and we and our institutions need to constantly negotiate for our place in the sun.

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118 Title of the classic book by Chester L. Karrass, Stanford Street Press, 1996



◇ Traditional music from the region is archived in Radio Madang © Mick Newnham

- 7.5.2 Yet psychological research indicates that memory professionals are reluctant advocates. It's not that they lack the ability – far from it. It's just that, on the whole, advocacy work is not high among the personal preferences of those who are attracted to this field. They would rather be “guardians”: dependable, process-driven, reliable back-room people, intuitive and introverted. They are not political animals and they shy away from confrontation.
- 7.5.3 The skills of advocacy – such as they are – can be learned. It is nothing more complicated than reaching out to others, and rationally arguing a case with accuracy, skill and conviction. All professionals should be capable of doing this: in writing, in the media, in one-to-one meetings. In the writer's experience, politicians or journalists are more likely to listen to a professional archivist who believes passionately in her work, than to a professional lobbyist who has no such commitment or depth of knowledge.
- 7.5.4 There are resources to turn to, even guerilla guides<sup>119</sup>, but the will to do it has to come from the individual – perhaps with help from their professional association.<sup>120</sup>

## 7.6 Power

- 7.6.1 It perhaps comes naturally for archivists to think of themselves as relatively powerless: at the mercy of governments and bureaucracies, or of huge industrial organizations whose strategic decisions, made on a larger canvas with scant regard for archival consequences, will constantly re- shape their tasks and add to their challenges. Yet such thinking obscures the larger picture:

*Archivists wield enormous power, loathe as many archivists are to admit this... Yet power – power to make records of certain events and ideas and not of others, power to name, label and order records to meet business, government or personal needs, power to preserve the record, power to mediate the record, power over access, power over individual rights and freedoms, over collective memory and national identity – is a concept largely absent from the traditional archival perspective.<sup>121</sup>*

119 As in the author's article *Advocacy and the power of one*, *Archifacts*, Journal of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand, April 2013.

120 AMIA has an Advocacy Committee, as do a number of other professional associations.

121 Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook: *Archives, Records and Power: The Making of Modern Memory* *Archival Science* 2: 1-19, 2002

Audiovisual archivists – like other memory professionals – exercise a profound power and responsibility in society.

- 7.6.2 They are the keepers, the ‘archons’, of the world’s memory.<sup>122</sup> They define the places, institutions and structures in which it is kept. They make life or death choices about what shall be saved or discarded. They decide timing and the form in which it will survive. They are the custodians of the memory – the guardians who keep watch over its well being and its viability.
- 7.6.3 It is they also who determine the accessibility of the memory; the way it is organized and kept; the form and quality of the cataloguing and other records by which access will be gained; the priorities assigned to this work; the choice of what is promoted or suppressed, and how it is presented.
- 7.6.4 The memory resides not just in things, but in people.....the creators, the distributors, the technicians, the entrepreneurs, then administrators, the researchers and historians, the archivists themselves. They determine what oral histories will be recorded, what relationships maintained, what information is important.
- 7.6.5 Not everyone will passively accept the way archivists and collecting professionals exercise their power. The Nazis publicly burned the world’s great books and no power stopped them. The Taliban and ISIS each set out to destroy the cultural memories of nations. At great risk, the ‘archons’ resorted to subterfuge to frustrate them - and sometimes their power prevailed.
- 7.6.6 In any archive, power relationships operate internally as well as externally and not always in ethical ways. The challenge for audiovisual archivists is to understand their power and to use it ethically – for the good of society, their fellow professionals and the world’s memory.

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122 “...since the archive doesn’t consist simply in remembering, in living memory, in anamnesis; but in consigning, in inscribing a trace to some external location – there is no archive without some location, that is, some space outside. Archive is not a living memory. It’s a location – that’s why the political power of the archons is so essential in the definition of the archive. So that you need the exteriority of the place in order to get something archived” Jacques Derrida: *Archive fever in South Africa* in Carolyn Hamilton et al, *Refiguring the archive* (David Philip, Cape Town, 2002). The word archive has its origin in the Greek archeion (the office of the magistrate or archon). The archon’s control of records legitimized his power.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

- 8.1 Little more than a century after the advent of sound recording and the motion picture, and after less than a century of broadcasting, these technologies have come to dominate communication, art and the recording of history. The cataclysmic changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries – wars, political transformation, space exploration, the global village – have not only been recorded, transmitted and shaped by them: they could not have happened without them. Collective memory has moved from a manual to a technological concept. The audiovisual media intrude everywhere: *every moment introduces the elsewhere and the world-wide into the home... this permanent intrusion... of the other, of the stranger, of that which is far away, of the other language.*<sup>123</sup>
- 8.2 The third edition of this work differs from its predecessor, for in the intervening years much has changed and much has been learned. The move to digital technology has reshaped preservation practice and the nature of access. The typology of audiovisual archives has expanded. The range of needed skills has widened, as have the challenges. The philosophy and principles of audiovisual archiving will always be a work in progress. Perhaps by the time this present edition is replaced by whatever comes next, the field, in its constant evolution, will have outgrown some of its present resource inequities, and the global task will be more evenly shared and supported. Let us fervently hope so and strive to make it so.
- 8.3 Given its pivotal importance in the history of humankind, one might expect that the task of preserving the world's audiovisual memory would have a commensurately large profile and resource base. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. The number of people engaged in the task worldwide barely reaches five figures, and even that is probably an overestimate. This small community, committed and tenacious, yet largely unknown and unsung, carries an immense responsibility. As a profession, though they may little reflect on it, the audiovisual archivists of the world also possess great power. How they use it now will determine much of what posterity knows of this age.

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*<sup>124</sup>



◇ Flat storage of audio tape packs © Fabricia Malan

123 Jacques Derrida, *Echographies of television* (Polity Press, 2002)

82 124 Margaret Mead, anthropologist (1901-78)



# Appendix

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FIAT/IFTA	International Federation of Television Archives
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ICOM	International Council of Museums
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## Appendix 2: Comparative table: audiovisual archives, general archives, libraries and museums

This table shows, *in very simplified form*, some comparisons between four types of collecting institutions. In practice, of course, particular institutions may have elements of some or all of these strands, or vary from the model shown. The purpose is to broadly illustrate the institutional type associated with each profession.

	Audiovisual archives	General archives	Libraries	Museums
What do they keep?	Image and sound works, associated documents and artefacts	Selected inactive records: any format, usually unique and unpublished	Published materials in all formats	Objects, artefacts, associated documents
How is the material arranged?	Imposed system compatible with format, condition and status	In order established and used by creators	Imposed classification system (eg Dewey, Library of Congress)	Imposed system compatible with nature and condition of items
Who can have access?	Depends on policy, copy availability, copyright and contract agreements	Depends on policy and legality, donor/ depositor conditions	Depends on policy, general public or defined community	Depends on policy, general public or defined community
How do you find what you want?	Search catalogues, lists, staff consultation	Search guides, inventories, other finding aids	Search catalogues, browse, internet, consultation	View displays, staff consultation
Where do you get access?	Depends on policy, facilities and technology. On-site or remote.	On institution's premises or internet	On library premises, borrowed, remote	In display areas
What is their objective?	Preservation and accessibility of audiovisual heritage	Protection of archives, and their evidential and informational values	Preservation and/ or accessibility of materials and information	Preservation and accessibility of artefacts and information
Why do you visit?	Research, education, enjoyment, business	Proof of actions and transactions, research, enjoyment	Research, education, enjoyment	Research, education, enjoyment
Who looks after the material?	Audiovisual archivists	Archivists	Librarians	Museum curators



## Appendix 3: Reconstruction statement

The following checklist is a recommended guide to the compilation of reconstruction statement which documents, for public and internal reference, the work done in creating a reconstructed version of a moving image or audio work.

### *Definition*

A reconstruction is a new version of a work accomplished by bringing together incomplete or fragmentary elements from multiple sources and rearranging them into a coherent whole, sometimes with considerable manipulation of images and/or sound and the use of bridging devices, for a defined access purpose and usually for public presentation. It may differ significantly from any “original” version of the work. Because it is aimed at a contemporary audience its usefulness may decline over time as audience tastes change, technology evolves and/or if new source material is discovered.

A *reconstruction* differs from a *restoration*, which involves the removal of the accretions of age – such as surface noise, visual artefacts, scratches and damage – from a preservation copy, but does not involve manipulation of its content in any way.

The preservation of the source elements used in the reconstruction *is not disturbed* by the project. They continue to be held in their original form.

### *Parameters*

The reconstruction statement should define the parameters of the project including:

- The purpose and objectives
- The intended audience and use of the reconstructed version
- Precise details of the source elements, including their nature, condition, accession numbers and the names of the source archives or collections
- Full accessioning details for the reconstruction
- Details of necessary copyright or other clearances obtained
- Identification of project supervisor(s)
- Time frame – commencement, completion and significant progress dates.
- Complete credits for all participants, identifying their roles
- Authorisation and end endorsement by the archive’s board, council or equivalent body

### *Process*

The statement should include a precise documenting of the reconstruction process. This would include all technical and artistic decisions, research undertaken, judgments made, and the underlying reasons. It would add other pertinent information, such as reference to associated publications, publicity materials, products and so on. It should be possible to study the final result, with the statement, and understand exactly how the result was achieved.

### *Public information*

Public presentations or distribution copies of the reconstruction should be accompanied by full contextual information which:

- Identifies the work as a reconstruction
- Explains how it differs from the original
- Succinctly explains the reconstruction process
- Provides historical context
- Declares the existence of the statement and advises its availability.

## Appendix 4: Selected reading list

The literature of the audiovisual archiving field is large, diverse and rapidly growing, and extends to cultural and management topics as well as technical and practical issues. This list is simply indicative:

**Australian Society of Archivists** *Keeping archives* 3rd edition, 2008

**Benedict, Karen M** *Ethics and the archival profession* Society of American Archivists 2003

**Bradley, Kevin** *Riesgos asociados con el uso de los discos compactos y Videodiscos (DVDs) como medios confiables de almacenamiento para colecciones de archivo. Estrategias y alternativas.* UNESCO, 2007. Editado en español por la Fonoteca Nacional, México.

**Brown, Adrian** *Practical digital preservation : a how-to-guide for organizations of any size* Facet Publishing, London, 2013

**Brownlow, Kevin** *The parade's gone by* London, Secker and Warburg, 1968

**Cunningham, Adrian** *Archival institutions* in Michael Piggott et al. (ed.) *Record keeping in Society* Wagga Wagga, Charles Sturt University Press, 2004

**Cherchi Usai, Paolo et al** *Film curatorship: archives, museums and the digital marketplace* Vienna, Österreichisches Filmmuseum, 2008

**Cherchi Usai, Paolo** *The death of cinema: history, cultural memory and the digital dark age* London, British Film Institute, 2001

----- *Silent cinema: an introduction* London, British Film Institute, 2001

**Coelho, Maria Fernanda Curado.** *A experiência brasileira na conservação de acervos audiovisuais: um estudo de caso.* In: <http://www.teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/27/27153/tde-19112010-083724/pt-br.php>

**Danielson, Elena S** *The ethical archivist* Chicago : Society of American Archivists, [2010]

**Derrida, Jacques and Stiegler, Bernard** *Ecographies of television* Polity Press, 2002

**Edmondson, Ray** *National Film and Sound Archive: the quest for identity* PhD thesis, University of Canberra, 2011

**Fossati, Giovanni** *From grain to pixel; the archival life of film in transition* Amsterdam University Press, 2009

**Frick, Caroline** *Saving cinema: the politics of preservation* New York, Oxford University Press, 2011

**Gracy, Karen F** *Film preservation: competing definitions of value, use and practice* Chicago, Society of American Archivists, 2007

**Hackman, Larry J (ed)** *Many happy returns : advocacy and the development of archives* Chicago : Society of American Archivists, c2011

**Harrison, Helen (ed)** *Audiovisual archives: a practical reader* Paris, UNESCO, 1997

----- *Curriculum development for the training of personnel in moving image and recorded sound archives* (PGI.90/WS/9) Paris, UNESCO, 1990

**Houston, Penelope** *Keepers of the frame: the film archives* London, British Film Institute, 1994

IASA TC series including *TC03. La salvaguardia del patrimonio sonoro: ética, principios y estrategias de preservación*. (2003) Asociación Internacional de Archivos Sonoros y Audiovisuales (IASA)-Radio Educación, México.

**James, Russell D and Wosh, Peter J (ed)** *Public relations and marketing for archives* Chicago: Society of American Archivists, New York: Neal-Schuman Pub., 2011

**Jay, Antony** *How to beat Sir Humphrey: every citizen's guide to fighting officialdom* [UK] Long Barn Books, 1997

**Kelly, Emma Jean** *The Adventures of Jonathan Dennis* New Barnet, John Libbey Publishing, 2015

**Kula, Sam** *Appraising moving images: assessing the archival and monetary value of film and video records* Lanham [Maryland], Scarecrow Press, 2003

**Lanman, Barry A and Wendling, Laura M (writer and eds)** *Preparing the next generation of oral historians: an anthology of oral history education* Lanham, MD : Rowman & Littlefield, c 2006

**McLuhan, Marshall** *Understanding media: the extensions of man*. McGraw Hill, 1964.

**Machiavelli, Niccolò** *The Prince* 1513 (many editions and translations)

**National Film and Sound Archive Advisory Committee** *Time in our hands* Canberra, Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment, 1985

**Newnham, Mick** *Film Preservation Handbook* Canberra, National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, 2015 [www.nfsa.gov.au](http://www.nfsa.gov.au)

**Oh, Sungji** *Stories of the film archives* Seoul, Korean Film Archive, 2009

**Parkinson, C Northcote** *Parkinson's law, or the pursuit of progress* [UK] Penguin, 1975

**Rodríguez, Perla** *El archivo sonoro. Fundamentos para la creación de una fonoteca nacional*. Library Outsourcing, 2012.

**Schüller, Dietrich** (2006). *La preservación de la herencia digital*, en Rodríguez, Perla (Comp.). *Memorias del Tercer Seminario Internacional. La Preservación de la memoria audiovisual en la sociedad digital*. Radio Educación, México, 2006.

**Slide, Anthony.** *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1992.

**Smither, Roger and Catherine A. Surowiec (ed)** *This film is dangerous: a celebration of nitrate film* Brussels, FIAF, 2002

**Souza, Carlos Roberto Rodrigues de.** *A Cinemateca Brasileira e a preservação de filmes no Brasil*. In: <http://www.teses.usp.br/teses/disponiveis/27/27153/tde-26102010-104955/pt-br.php>

**Theimer, Kate ed** *A different kind of web : new connections between archives and our users* Chicago : Society of American Archivists, 2011

**Townsend, Robert** *Up the organization* London, Hodder Fawcett, 1971

**Van Bogart, Jhon** *Almacenamiento y manipulación de cintas magnéticas. Guía para bibliotecas y archivos*. National Media Laboratory, 1998.

### ***UNESCO: selected normative instruments and reports***

*Recommendation for the safeguarding and preservation of moving images* (1980)

*Lost memory – libraries and archives destroyed in the twentieth century* (1996)

*Memory of the World: General Guidelines to safeguard documentary heritage* (2002)

*Convention for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage* (2003)

*Charter on the preservation of digital heritage* (2003)

*Report by the Director-General on the implications of the proclamation of a world day for audiovisual heritage* (2006)

*Mitigating disaster* (2007)

*Vancouver declaration* (2012)

*Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form* (2015)

### ***Journals and other sources***

The journals, newsletters, websites and occasional publications of the CCAA federations are recommended as current reading and as a retrospective resource. These include:

*Archive Zones* (FOCAL)

*LASA Journal* (IASA)

*Journal of Film Preservation* (FIAF)

*The Moving Image* (AMIA)

In addition, in the wider memory professions and the fields of audiovisual and media studies, there are many journals worth monitoring for articles of relevance and value. Examples include:

*The American Archivist*

*Archives and Manuscripts*

*Archives and Records*

*The Oral History Review*

*Records Management Journal*

*SMPTE Motion Imaging Journal*

Further useful gateways for articles, reports and dissertations are the websites ***academia.edu*** and ***researchgate.net*** which can be searched by subject or author.

## Appendix 5: Format change and obsolescence: selected formats

Format	Production period	Status
<b>Film</b>		
70 mm Imax format polyester	1980s-present	Obsolete
35 mm nitrate	1891-1951	Obsolete
35 mm acetate	1910-present	Current
35 mm polyester	1955-present	Current
28 mm acetate	1912-1920's	Obsolete
22 mm acetate	c. 1912	Obsolete
17.5 mm nitrate	1898-early 1920's	Obsolete
16 mm acetate	1923-present	Obsolescent
9.5 mm acetate	1921-1970s	Obsolescent
8.75 mm EVR	1970s	Obsolete
8 mm standard acetate	1932-1970s	Obsolete
8 mm super acetate	1965-present	Obsolescent
8 mm single 8	1965-c.2010	Obsolete
<b>Analogue audio - groove carriers</b>		
Cylinders (wax or moulded)	1876-current	Surviving
Cylinders (instantaneous/ dictaphone)	1876-1950s	Obsolete
Coarse groove disc (78 rpm and similar)	1888-c.1960	Obsolete
Transcription disc (pressed)	1930s-1950s	Obsolete
Instantaneous lacquer disc	1930s-current	Surviving
LP (long playing) microgroove	1950s-present	Resurgent
<b>Analogue audio - magnetic carriers</b>		
Wire	1930s-late 1950s	Obsolete
Magnetic tape reel-to-reel	1935-present	Obsolescent
Compact cassette	1960s-present	Obsolescent
Cartridge	1960-present	Obsolete
<b>Audio - digital carriers</b>		
Compact disc (CD)	1980-present	Current
Piano roll (88 note)	1902-present	Surviving
DAT	1980-present	Obsolete
<b>Video</b>		
2 inch quad	1956-1980s	Obsolete
Philips format (half inch reel to reel)	1960s	Obsolete
Umatic	1971-2000s	Obsolete
Betamax	1975-1980s	Obsolete
VHS	1970s - present	Obsolescent
Betacam	1984-present	Obsolescent
1 inch A, B, C, D formats	1970s- 2000s	Obsolete
Video 8	1984-2000s	Obsolete
Analog laser disc	1980s-2000s	Obsolete
Digital Versatile Disc (DVD)	1997-present	Current
Video Compact Disc (VCD)	1990s-2000s	Obsolete

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