

## **PRESERVING DIGITAL PUBLIC TELEVISION**

### **Notes from Scholars Focus Group**

Held on Thursday, Jul 19, 2005

Time: 9:00-10:30 am

#### Participants:

Deirdre Boyle, Media Studies Department, New School University  
Jerry Carlson, Media and Communication Arts (Critical Studies), City College New York  
Lisa Carter, Director of Archives, University of Kentucky  
Brian Larkin, Anthropology Department, Barnard College  
Shannon Mattern, Media Studies Department, New School University  
Laurie Ouellette, Media Studies Department, CUNY Queens College  
Maureen Ryan, Film Department, Columbia University  
Karen Young, PhD Candidate, Department of Political Science, CUNY Graduate Center and  
Visiting Scholar, Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, New York  
University

#### Hosts:

Nan Rubin, NDIIPP Project Coordinator (NR)  
Daisy Pommer, Archivist, Thirteen/WNET (DP)  
Winter Shanck, Assistant Librarian, Thirteen/WNET (WS)  
Tanisha Jones, Research Assistant, NYU Graduate of MIAP (TJ)  
Pamela Smith, Research Assistant, NYU Graduate of MIAP (PS)

#### Major Comments

- Anything that is useable and unavailable anywhere else should be saved in a high resolution without being duplicative (MR).
- There is the unique opportunity to preserve unique materials in visual culture. In selecting materials, ask to what extent has the material added to the visual culture (JC).
- Hire a curator who knows about the subject and the program to glean out the elements that are gems (KY). During this process, the person should think about the other ancillary purposes of the materials (JC). The assignation of ancillary purposes is a task for the catalogers (KY).
- A schema should be developed with the production people that will allow them to distinguish what kinds of materials should be saved and donated (BL).
- There has to be a condensation process: the curatorial process and then the archival process. Then there should be a tiered level of access (KY).
- There should be a cooperative between companies like AVID or Final Cut Pro to allowing logging materials with the editing process (MR). Cataloging is key because people will approach materials in different ways. Cataloging is multipurpose. AVID or Final Cut pro should provide a template that is recognized by LoC standards for cataloging.
- There are two typical users of the materials: the scholarly researcher and producers. At the extremes, the mainstream user of this collection is looking for the complete program. They are not going to want to access the underlying elements. Bring the focus of what can be accomplished in to something more mundane than pie in the sky. There should be levels of

cataloging and access. You can't skip the librarian and archivist because someone needs to think outside of the scope of the producer (DB). Preserving the finished program may be enough (LO).

- For non-documentary programs, you have to step away from the content of the particular show and choose shows based on the editorial principals and the production process involved. Preserve some material that is representative of the entire universe of information (JC).

#### Discussion after viewing *Broadway: The American Musical* raw footage

- Potential users
  - These materials can be used a primary research for Ph.D. candidates (SM).
  - There are two typical users of the materials: the scholarly researcher and producers (DB).
- What to Preserve/Discard:
  - Everything in relation to the production should be archived to preserve visual culture materials (JC).
  - Anything that is useable and unavailable anywhere else should be saved in a high resolution without being duplicative. If the materials can not be used, then do not keep them (MR).
  - In selecting materials, ask to what extent has the material added to the visual culture (JC).
- Cataloging & Access
  - With a schema, you may be able to go the filmmakers and get them to catalog their own materials (BL). Some of this work is all ready be done, but in an inconsistent format and is not in a software tool that is useful for migration (LC). There has to be a way to give standardized information in different formats (BL).
  - Right now, access is geared toward producers. It is not common for researchers to think about digital materials. The two major issues are: how to preserve the program, surrounding publicity, and institutional history and how to create a database that producers can use (LO).
  - Integrating the cataloging process with a meta version that would integrate with other organizations. Their will be a learning process with producers. The question is how, in a practical way, to integrate the basic cataloging process and the production process? Talk with producers to develop a schema with a drop down list (MR).

#### Other Comments

- The academy will go through tremendous changes in the next 25 to 30 years in terms of what the acceptable format outcome of research. Digital literacy is huge now. It's generational in how people think about research and how they use it (JC).
- These materials can be used a primary research for Ph.D. candidates. The materials should be approached by people from different disciplinary backgrounds (SM). Budgets are small and this approach is highly unlikely (MR).

- This is not just about what is being produced now, but what is historical that will have a value beyond when it was made (DB).

### Discussion after viewing *Religion & Ethics* raw footage

- Potential Users
  - This material would be interesting for a class studying how the editing process works (LO).
- What to Preserve/Discard
  - Over time, how do you justify one program over another (DB).
  - Preserve some material that is representative of the entire universe of information (JC).
  - The question of choosing materials which are worthy involves a sampling technique (SM).
  - One possible sampling approach is to ask how many ways can a show go and what are the different kinds of demands associated with the materials. Deal with the subject matter of the materials and the diversity of the subject matter (JC).
- Cataloging & Access
  - This is different from documentary style. This type of material would be easier to catalog and access (DB).
  - The notion is that you have to keep all the shows well cataloged. You have to step away from the content of the particular show and choose shows based on the editorial principals and the production process involved for this decision making to preserve those materials. It's not about the sensationalism, but looking at the editorial process and preserving the materials to emulate that (JC).
- Rights
  - Two questions broached: How do we make these materials available to the public and what is the permission for use of these materials?

### Other Comments

- What is the aim of the archive (BL)? The aim is for it to be used by as many different people as possible (NR).
- If you make it available, then people will know it is there and definitely use it and make it useful (BL).
- It is very important to coordinate with LoC and parallel institutions, like the BBC. On the other hand, it is the clip houses and people who have the commercial incentives who have the resources in a lot of ways to lead in how to do certain kinds of cataloging and how to present materials because in a sense, they make their money from them. It is important to also track the clip houses because this archive is going to end up being a hybrid of the two (JC).