

**Statement by Lisa R. Wood
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The Current State of American Television and Video Preservation
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The State of the University of Kentucky's Audio-Visual Archives

Description of the Audio-Visual Collection

The University of Kentucky's Audio-Visual Archives contains one of the largest, university based collections of archival film, video and audio recordings in the country. The collection also includes 400,000 photographic images, utilized by media producers throughout the nation. With 22,358 films and 3,264 videotapes, the Audio-Visual Archives includes university generated educational, athletic and public affairs programming, the works of Kentucky related independent film and video makers, and the state's only broadcasting archives consisting of extensive collections of local television and radio programming.

Appraisal Criteria

In an effort to collect, preserve and provide long term access to Kentuckiana and materials of interest to Kentucky scholars, the appraisal criteria used in accepting materials for deposit or collection includes any audio-visual materials that document people, events and issues relating to Kentucky. Due to space and resource restraints, the Audio-Visual Archives has traditionally focused the collection on the materials of three influential Kentucky television stations and the television programming produced by the University of Kentucky. These collections are unique to the state and contain documentation extremely important to the present and future historians of the Commonwealth. While there are other state wide television collections which we would like to collect, we are limited by space, time and resources. Since we are the only archives in the state with the broad collecting policy of preserving all media relating to Kentucky, we collect all formats of audio-visual materials. This includes all television film and video from the beginning of the use of such media through the 1980's, including six million feet of 16 mm film, 300 2 inch tapes and over 3000 1/2 inch, 3/4 inch and Beta videotapes. The major difficulties we have encountered in enhancing, managing and preserving these resources lie primarily in providing the staff, funding, space and equipment needed to support this effort.

Staffing

The Audio-Visual Archivist is not only responsible for the administration of the Library's Audio-Visual Archives but also for the acquisition, organization, preservation and use of the photographic collection. Reference use of the photographic collection takes up 70% of the archivist's time. This does not leave much time to research proper archival methods, inventory the television collections, write proposals and grants, impress the importance of the collection on the administration of the University, or work with the local broadcasting community. Audio-visual collections housed within universities are often maintained by people with responsibilities for multiple areas, which combined with time consuming reference responsibilities, leaves little time for developing funding, preservation, access or collection management programs.

Funding

In addition to being maintained by staff with varied responsibilities, audio-visual archives within larger institutions often do not have a separate budget, so any needed equipment, supplies and operational funds must be weighed against the rest of the needs of the library or organization. At the University of Kentucky, the Audio-Visual Archives are encompassed in the Special Collections and Archives budget, which is only one area of the over-all library budget. External funding has great competition and would only allow for a small start in a very large collection. Such funding may come with restrictions, and generally must be allocated to specific projects instead of to hire an additional staff member or expand storage. In this day of complex application procedures, decreased funding sources and increasing competition, applying for external grants must be weighed against the odds of obtaining such funding.

Storage and Preservation

The University of Kentucky's Audio-Visual Archives has been successful in collecting unique television and video materials, and in storing them in an environmentally controlled area. Yet these films and videos are stored in the same storage area as many of the other Special Collections, including papers and artifacts, and the air filtration and fire protection systems are inadequate for archival media. In addition, the Special Collections storage area has reached its storage capacity and there is little chance that an additional storage facility will be built. This situation has led us to limit acquisition and turn away some materials which are in desperate need of adequate storage conditions. The achievement of establishing the Audio-Visual Archives and the collection of materials that would have otherwise been discarded should not be overlooked as a great step towards preserving the television and video materials of Kentucky. Unfortunately, the preservation of these materials has not moved beyond this basic step. Presently, our preservation priorities include efforts to develop any funding for preservation activities, equipment and staff.

Information and Access

Information about 75% of the television and video holdings has been entered into a database built from inventories provided by either the producer at time of donation or by the labeling on the items. Unfortunately, there is no controlled vocabulary, and no quality control for the records in the database. This computerized database is not available outside of the Special Collections Department. As a result of this limited cataloging and documentation, the use of our collection is relatively low. However each reference request can take hours to fulfill as a result of inadequate indexing and finding aids. Reference service is also hindered by a lack of proper equipment. Originals are viewed as information is needed, leaving us with the inevitable destruction of the collection as it is used. Some formats are copied as they are used and patron copies can be made at an electronics supply store in downtown Lexington. Yet a strategy for charging additional fees, which could help preserve the collection, has not been developed. Since any fees charged flow back into the Library's general budget, there is little incentive to develop such fee based services.

The University of Kentucky's Audio-Visual Archives has taken the initial steps towards preserving that part of Kentucky's heritage which has been captured on film and video. To move beyond the basic functions of collecting and storing, the Audio-Visual Archives must seek out ways to enlarge its staff and increase its funding. Currently, access and preservation activities are initiated as needed and staff bounces from one urgent issue to another, as there is little time or money for properly planned projects. Such steps to improve the Audio-Visual Archives' situation must be taken soon. Storage space is becoming increasingly limited as the production of television and video proliferates. As the video and film sits on the shelf, uninspected and not reformatted, the materials will continue to degrade. Each use of the original materials runs the risk of destroying our only copy of the information. In addition, without

proper documentation, finding aids and equipment, retrieving the information is ineffective and inefficient at best. This will eventually result in a loss of information about Kentucky culture.

The Importance of Regional and Local Television and Video

Documentation of Social History

The value of local and regional television and video materials as resources for research, teaching, audiovisual production or other educational use is significant. Research can be done in a number of subject areas documented on the films and videos contained in the University of Kentucky Audio-Visual Archives. A student recently visited the archives to study protest songs that were sung during the Blue Diamond Miners' strikes. An employee from Lexington's government services came to investigate former mayor Foster Pettit's role in the merger of the city and local government. Scholars of Kentucky history might find much of our news footage valuable, including stories on the Kentucky Derby, area flooding, development of education reform and the impact of tobacco on the local economy. Social historians will find a great deal of material on issues that have effected our national consciousness, including the awareness of domestic abuse, early computing history, the tightening of health and safety regulations, the development of environmental concerns and student demonstrations during times of international unrest.

Just as newspapers, manuscripts and personal papers play a significant role in understanding history, regional television news, special reports and interviews are essential to our understanding of the recent past. Local stations act as filters through which Americans get their world and national news, shape their political opinions, their understanding of current events, their sense of culture and their measurement of the quality of life. People's aspirations are both reflected and influenced by the television and video they watch. A well rounded representation of our national culture and attitudes depends on the preservation of our audio-visual materials. It requires that programs produced by and for local communities are granted an equal chance of surviving time as those produced by the national media.

Primary Source Materials for the Creation of Educational Programs

In addition to aiding scholarly research about our time, archival footage held in local and regional repositories can enhance the quality of both purposeful and casual educational media programs. The University of Kentucky's Audio-Visual Archives has been accessed for a variety of uses in current media productions. WAVE television often calls us to gain access to their old footage of stories they would like to update, for example, the anniversary of a church fire and a story on a heart transplant patient. A documentary film maker viewed footage on the Frontier Nursing Service as background research for an up-coming project. HBO Sports has contacted us regarding footage of the 1966 NCAA championship game between Kentucky and Texas Western, which marked a turning point in college basketball's acceptance of black players. The primary source materials included in the University of Kentucky's Audio-Visual Archives could be used to enhance exhibits in the new Basketball Museum in downtown Lexington, in Kentucky Historical Society's Exhibits and Kentucky Educational Television's productions. Subject studies of mining, college basketball, agriculture, medicine, horse racing and Kentucky history would be incomplete without the footage contained in our archives.

Personal Use

Finally, there are the many levels of personal use of the television and video materials in our archives. A former UK football player ordered some footage of the games in which he played. A woman called requesting footage of her father who had died when she was young, but whose image had been captured on film as an occasional voice from the farming community on the local news. Another patron wanted footage of an old local television show in which her father was one of the kids whose birthday was

celebrated on the air. A student accessed our news footage from the WAVE television archives to complete a multimedia sculpture commenting on the violence of our time. Such personal uses of regional footage enable people to revisit their past and enrich their understanding of their lives. The local television materials in our archives contain valuable personal memories as well as the collective memory of a city, region and state. Again preserving such footage has a value that might be irrevocably lost if we are not able to improve the state of our regional audio-visual archives.

The Needs of Regional and Local Television and Video Archives

Funding

Enhancing traditional funding for preservation and access programs would help regional and local archives significantly, but even more valuable would be funds for increasing audio-visual archives staff and operations. Additionally, wider distribution of information on grants and other opportunities would increase the ease of applying for additional funding. Greater support of PBS stations could open a showcase for footage that is stored in regional repositories. The most significant need is for funding that is specifically focused on the needs of regional audio-visual archives.

Public and Private Cooperation

Corporate and private assistance with funding and sharing of resources should be encouraged and would enhance the variety of opportunities available for audio-visual archives. Cooperation between public and private sectors would require that the main networks and their affiliates begin to take a more direct role in video and television preservation. Local affiliates should be encouraged to assist operationally and financially in the effort of preserving the footage they produce, not only as a profitable opportunity but as an informational service to the community. Media producers and audio-visual archivists should become aware of the need to collect obsolete equipment and to develop a nation wide equipment saving and maintenance program. A national resource for the donation and acquisition of equipment will assist producers in disposing of obsolete machines while providing a source of equipment needed to play archival materials.

National Awareness of the Problem

There is a very real need for national attention from producers, broadcasters and the viewing public regarding the preservation of history as it is recorded on television and video materials. National awareness efforts like the National Film Registry Tour and American Movie Classics Film Preservation Week can act as models for programs that could enhance the understanding of the value of preserving television and video resources. Such efforts could partner large video rental chains, telecommunication companies, video producers and broadcasters with audio-visual archives to not only enhance financial resources for preservation, but also to make the American public aware of the eminent loss of moving image productions. A wide scale campaign throughout the country can support and encourage greater public efforts and commitment to public service, volunteerships, and donations by private individuals and companies. The preservation of this aspect of our national culture depends on the development of a community oriented environment, support of public programs and an understanding of how individuals benefit by supporting public endeavors and institutions.

Education

Finally, the regional audio-visual archives' greatest need is for a collaborative effort to educate the people who have found themselves in charge of media collections. This is particularly true regarding regional

and local archives. Audio-visual archivists within universities, state governments and historical societies generally have not been through formal film and video archives training. Their duties are split between various kinds of materials and they find that they can not afford to concentrate specifically on film and video. Therefore, regional audio-visual archivists may not even be aware of the literature, the professional groups and the funding possibilities available to assist them in maintaining their moving image collections. Meanwhile, their collections deteriorate and become sources of frustration because they are not familiar with the problems and solutions facing institutions with media collections.

Wider communications of standards, funding possibilities and educational opportunities would empower audio-visual archivists with the knowledge of the potential available to them. AMIA, archival programs and library schools provide an important framework for audio-visual archivists, but education could be continued through traveling workshops, regional societies and available publications. Public archives and institutions should be encouraged to allow for more professional education in their budget and to encourage their employees to attend the needed workshops and meetings. Archivists need to have more through training in project management skills, promoting the needs of their collections and professional standards for non-print materials. With the proper knowledge of the needs of their collections and the potential opportunities that may be available, audio-visual archivists will begin to create their own standards, education and funding opportunities. Overall, the moving image archives profession needs to learn how to do more with less, to identify priorities and to develop greater opportunities.

Statement Summary

In considering the state of preservation of video and television materials in the United States, it must be recognized that local and regional repositories of such material tend to be underfunded, understaffed and underutilized. Yet these same archives hold some of the richest moving image material documenting the history and culture of the United States over the past 50 years. Additional funding opportunities, national awareness of the preservation situation, collaboration between the public and private sectors, increased educational opportunities for television and video archivists are fundamental to the efforts to preserve the nation's heritage as it has been captured on a wide variety of television and video materials.