Points of Origin
Discovering Ourselves through Access

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> Just as librarians promote the use of books, and as teachers defend before the public the value of education, so archivists have as a part of their duty to give stimulus and guidance to the use of archives, and to their use not by the few but by the many. The objective of archival policy in a democratic country cannot be the mere saving of paper; it must be nothing less than the enriching of the complete historical consciousness of the people as a whole. . . . [T]he archivist is and ought to be concerned with the most distant futures, and less than any other professional man in the country can he afford to be hesitant in defining long-term objectives
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> — Robert C. Binkley, 1939

UNSAID AND UNDONE

So much has been said and written about archival access that another article seems almost superfluous. And yet, as we tiptoe toward opening our collections to a world of ready eyes and eager makers, much remains unsaid and even more undone. As a longtime advocate of broadly expanded access to moving image collections, I continue to be struck by the divergence between our theoretical acceptance of access as a goal and the poor state of access that actually reigns. While expanding access has become a relatively uncontroversial objective, its implementation is roadblocked by constraint, uncertainty, and ambivalence.

Archivists labor in a field where critique isn't necessarily tied to remediation. While many archivists, scholars, and moving image users have remarked on the difficulties of archival access, few have moved beyond complaint to advocacy. Quite a number of archivists, librarians, and curators have contributed significantly to an evolving discourse of access (in the moving image field, I must especially note the contributions of emerging archivists and archival students). Regrettably, few innovators hold decision-making positions in their institutions, and breadth of vision does not guarantee change: most archivists lack fiscal authority to fund proverbial "bold, new initiatives." There is little incentive to question rules, traditions, and hierarchies and become advocates for change. Even more disappointing, calls for greater openness all too often elicit defensive responses, which might sound like the following (imaginary) statements, chosen, of course, for polemical effect:

We already provide access to our collection! Researchers and scholars are welcome to make an appointment to come in and view a film on the flatbed (as long as a reference print is available); we maintain a regular public screening schedule; and we lend screening prints to other qualified institutions. While archival moving image access encompasses a broad spectrum of modalities, legacy modes of access no longer address the needs of current and future moving image users. In contrast, many museums, libraries, and textual archives are working to develop user-centered access models, in so doing leaving moving image collections far behind.[1]

Lack of funding, staff, and resources make it impossible for us to mount a digitization project or serve legions of new users. Though this correctly describes the situation most institutions face, it's also a self-fulfilling prophecy

without alternatives. There are, in fact, numerous responses: reallocating internal resources to support user-centered services; coordinating access projects with potential partner institutions; using inexpensive, commodity-based tools and services to expose holdings and enable their use; collaborating with user communities and the public to digitize and contextualize materials; turning the archives into producer and publisher; and many others.

Archival ethics and best practices prevent us from providing access to materials that haven't been preserved. Once-well-intentioned restrictions instituted to protect unpreserved physical materials mean much less in an age of infinite digital surrogates. Many archivists have learned that nondestructive copying of unpreserved materials enables vastly expanded access and materially aids in the quest for preservation funding. It is untenable for an archive to maintain a smaller collection of accessible, preserved materials and a larger collection that is inaccessible pending preservation.

We can't expose or furnish material without permission from the copyright holders. True, of course, in many cases; unclear or untrue in just as many others. Most moving image archives actually possess significant reserves of potentially unencumbered material whose extent and characteristics are unknown because of the expense and difficulty of determining rights status. (Archives often also refrain from overpublicizing collections subject to few or no restrictions in order to avoid a land rush of access requests.) In any case, indiscriminate application of the precautionary principle that leads to mass enclosure is an indirect and inappropriate response to uncertainty of ownership and resource constraints.

We can't risk expanding digital access to our collections because of the threat of widespread piracy and loss of control. This deceptively simplistic statement is rooted in an antiquated mindset that holds that copies degrade originals and ubiquity lessens value, and ignores the rapidly evolving state of digital access to cultural materials. It forecloses the possibility of engagement with innovators in digital humanities and the social sciences, and tosses down the gauntlet to emerging generations of digitally focused students, scholars, and authors, all of whom expect (and deserve) digital access to the world's heritage so that they can create new knowledge, new works of art, and develop future directions in scholarship.

As archivists, we function as gatekeepers and contextualizers of our holdings, and providing indiscriminate access to uncredentialed individuals is an abdication of our responsibilities. Peremptory statements of this sort, whether spoken, unspoken, or covertly reflected in institutional policies, quickly broach complex ethical questions that we have yet to honestly address. Whether or not we consciously acknowledge it, archives make historical interventions. We intervene in the present by foregrounding the past and infusing contemporary culture with the historical record. We cannot deny a process that exists whether or not we embrace it.

In this era of constraints, our primary goal is survival. We are here for the long haul and cannot try to solve every issue immediately. Constraint is the archival attribute least likely to change, and we must find ways to work around it rather than concede to it. Archives cannot tolerate mere subsistence while rapid cultural, economic, and technological changes occur around us and archival functions shift to other entities. We can best escape involuntary scarcity and constraint by looking squarely at our own goals and practices at the same time that we look to our users for legitimacy and

support. The social and cultural consensus that sustains archives is built on the perception that we fulfill a valuable cultural role. This perception will strengthen or weaken largely in relation to the character and depth of the access we provide. While a host of survival strategies may come and go, I believe that access will largely determine whether archives flourish or stagnate in the coming years.

ROUTING AROUND ROADBLOCKS

> Using the word "access," as in "we need to increase access," assumes some sort of barrier, or a right of entry.
> —George Oates

For years U.S. moving image archives worked quietly, receiving only sporadic publicity. Since there was little tradition of public access to archival holdings, few besides a small group of film buffs, scholars, and media producers interacted with archives or used their holdings. Several concurrent developments, beginning in the late 1970s—a growing interest in social, cultural, and everyday history; the public history movement; the emergence of new media platforms (especially cable TV and home video) that were eager for inexpensive airtime—helped to spawn greater interest in historical media materials. However, all of this access was intermediated: people consumed derivative works—programs, books, or exhibits using archival material—made by "wholesale" users such as producers, writers, and exhibit designers. Since the 1990s, this situation has changed. We may now say that archives have gone "retail." The canonical users have been augmented by members of the public, independent scholars, and citizen scientists, an aggressive army of commercial clients, and even a growing cadre of "archival fans."

While the intermediation model of archival use persists, and is in fact flourishing— more media is now being made than at any other time—production has moved from being institutionally based to individually based. The tools are cheaper and easier and have proliferated. People no longer need funding or sponsors to make media, and many of the new makers are turning to archival materials.

Whether remix, *détournement,* compilation, "conventional" documentary, family history, or nostalgic revisitation, popular use of archival materials has increased to the point that it will, I believe, become an enduring and robust sector of media culture.

Almost all of this production has occurred outside archives' control. But characterizing the degree of control archives exercise over collections quickly brings us into uncertain territory. While we are often sole sources for physical materials, it's hardly new for others to route around us. Every day millions of potential users resort to YouTube and similar "unofficial" sources rather than obtaining moving images directly from us. At the same time, established media companies have also routed around archives by leveraging their control over copyrights to market films and TV programs directly to the public on tape, disk, and now online, rather than empowering archives to engage in distribution on their own. Now, commercial on-demand distribution of high-quality digital surrogates again threatens to marginalize moving image archives and turn them into warehouses for materials controlled and distributed by others. Archives are left with the position of painstakingly preserving and storing film and tape originals on behalf of other entities (typically copyright holders) who can themselves migrate, reformat, and distribute digital surrogates in a few mouse clicks. While YouTube symbolically deprived archives of control over access, expensive digital technologies coupled with long-term copyright protection may well deprive us of control over preservation. Although neither of these changes are in themselves negative, they might cause some to wonder what it is that archives actually do. And though archives define themselves as perpetual repositories of unique physical materials and loci of preservation expertise (often involving the preservation of scarce skills as well as scarce footage), we can no longer expect to survive by these functions alone. The functional split between custody and distribution, which dates back to the very beginning of organized moving image archives, poses increasing dangers for our future.

While archival users are in a powerful position to agitate for greater openness, they have

instead generally chosen to treat established archives as roadblocks to circumvent. (I'm not talking about the thousands of users who work personally with archives every year, but the millions who access archival material through nonarchival channels.) Many users (including not simply cinephilic citizens but scholars, researchers, and media producers as well) have elected not to approach established moving image archives and instead have defaulted toward obtaining materials through unofficial or unauthorized sources such as collectors, online video Web sites, and peer-to-peer communities. Aside from coordinated efforts by some Washington, D.C.–based archival researchers to preserve certain on-site access privileges at the National Archives, I am unaware of instances where groups of users have challenged archival enclosure.

It might seem important to draw a distinction between "classical" archival access events and clicking PLAY buttons at online video sites. But how in fact can we separate them? YouTube, the largest single public repository of online video materials, is widely believed to be a scrappy, informal collection of footage that's mostly derived from broadcast and home video sources. This is not in fact true. Michael Wesch's research group at Kansas State University found (as of March 2008) that out of 78.3 million videos then resident on YouTube, 80.3 percent were "unambiguously user-generated."[2] What this suggests is that members of the public are using YouTube as a personal archival and distribution service as well as a time-shifting utility for videos originally produced by commercial media organizations. According to YouTube's corporate fact sheet, "People are watching hundreds of millions of videos a day on YouTube and uploading hundreds of thousands of videos daily. In fact, every minute, ten hours of video is uploaded to YouTube."[3] Add to this an August 2008 estimate that the total number of videos on YouTube was approximately 141 to 144 million,[4] and an unofficial revelation in June 2009 that in fact YouTube streams 1.2 *billion* videos per day.[5]

Plugging in a few terms into YouTube's search box yields the following unscientific but potentially interesting results:

"archival footage": 1,950 videos
"old footage": 14,100 videos
"archival": 66,000 videos
"archive": 92,000 videos[6]

Since the end of 2000, Internet Archive (IA) has hosted a collection of more than 2,100 files digitized from video transfers of archival films and footage from the Prelinger Collection. Its official viewing/downloading counters indicate that, as of early July 2009, the one hundred most frequently downloaded files had been downloaded 6.3 million times, and the remaining two thousand another 6 million times. Until 2008, these counters did not count films downloaded via deep links from other sites, nor have they ever counted file copies distributed by other means, such as mirror sites or via peer-to-peer exchange. Counters indicate that one of IA's most frequently downloaded films, *Perversion for Profit* (Part I), has been downloaded 214,430 times, but interestingly enough YouTube indicates that similar files have been viewed an estimated 315,000 times. Similarly, *Design for Dreaming* shows 56,320 downloads at the Internet Archive and, in a variety of complete, fragmented, and remixed versions, 96,722 at YouTube.[7] It's therefore possible to estimate that 12 million downloads from IA have been supplemented by at least as many downloads or viewings elsewhere.

I cite these statistics not to imbue YouTube or Internet Archive with undeserved merit but as evidence that much of what we might construe as archival access occurs completely outside the realm of "established" physical archives and their embryonic online projects. Aside from the Library of Congress's pioneering American Memory project, in which the ratio of moving images to other media offered is relatively small, no "established" archives has ever experienced so many access events, and no "established" archives collects even a fraction of the largely born-digital material hosted by the online video services. As Karen Gracy asks, "does the average user understand or even care about the difference between the 'archive' as such, and other formal collections?"[8] Still, a user's decision to bypass or ignore "established" archives constitutes an individual solution to a systemic problem, and does little more to contribute

to paradigmatic change than does a single archives' decision to go with the flow and expose moving images to the public via YouTube.[9]

TO CRITICIZE, BUT ALSO TO PRAISE

When we think about the legacy culture of film archives that has dominated until very recently, we might simultaneously applaud and criticize its model of guardianship. Society reveres archives for what it believes archives do. While this reverence is often founded on naive expectations that archives can save everything and will forever be accessible, whatever respect archives may enjoy is hard won. Pioneering archives struggled to establish legitimacy in the face of skepticism about the value of moving images. Many acquisitions were sourced under unconventional circumstances, leaving archives vulnerable to exposure and sanctions. Political censorship, ideological cleansing, and the conspiratorial psychology of private collectors also made archival work difficult and risky. Preeminently cinephiles, the earliest moving image archivists dared to collect physically endangered works and films of uncertain provenance. They ignored cultural disdain for the populist medium, flouted copyright laws whose interpretation was Draconian then as now, and risked nitrate fires. They loved cinema and achieved much despite their cautious culture and the external limitations on their activities.

In such a problematic context, collecting took priority over preservation and preservation over access. Access was reserved for trusted parties under controlled conditions. At one time, conditions may have justified such enclosure, which, even if no longer warranted, still characterizes the practice of many archives. Especially with respect to copyright, archival culture became rooted in a precautionary mindset. This too has persisted: we are excessively deferential to unmade claims from unidentified rights holders who may not even exist. Most archivists are socialized from the beginning of their professional training to assume that archival materials are all someone else's intellectual property, which may not always be the case.

So while use ultimately justifies archives' existence, archives and their users have become frozen in an unfulfilling relationship. Despite their manifest popularity and historical and cultural significance, most moving images remain very difficult to access and reuse. While we've built an impressive infrastructure of public, private, and personal archives, our users have very little guarantee that they can see, hear, or use the majority of our collections, now or in the future. Unlike public libraries, which have long-established traditions of access, we lack a strategy that might help move us toward greater openness.

Nor do we have a culture that encourages entrepreneurialism and risk taking. This seems surprising, given that U.S. moving image archives are still in a comparatively early stage of evolution and that most have accidental roots. Until recently, few were founded specifically as moving image repositories—at some point in their existence and for whatever reason, they assumed responsibility for collecting, preserving, and making accessible moving image materials. And aside from the growing cadre that's been trained in new archival education programs, most of us are accidental archivists as well. Coming out of a wide range of experience and disciplines, we're united less by common ethics and goals than by a shared sense of cinephilia, albeit in a variety of flavors, and it isn't clear that cinephilia, no matter how deeply felt, has the power to sustain our organizations through thick and thin.

In the absence of defined, field-wide missions and goals, we have little experience working in concert. While archivists may agree on many issues, it means little when their employers do not. Business plans, workflows, and budgets are negotiated on higher levels; archivists typically lack control over the destiny of their collections. Few of us would have the power to prevent our parent organizations from divesting or even destroying the collections we manage, if this were to happen (and it has indeed happened).

While there is a rich level of collective self-awareness and discussion among our colleagues in the library, museum, and textual archives fields, we haven't yet reached this level in the moving images field. Our discussions on cataloging, description, and many technical aspects of preservation are productive, often highly so, but as a group we are mostly new

to archival theory and our practice is often idiosyncratic (although I confess I prefer idiosyncrasy to monoculture). In the United States, our work is mostly uninformed by discourses of archives and social justice, active discussions that have strongly affected the practice of textual archivists. Perhaps most important, few of us have the necessary time and resources, and perhaps even the inclination, to reorient our workflow toward the needs of our users, which I find ironic when we acknowledge that moving images are among our culture's most desired and popular records.

The contradictions sometimes seem overwhelming. We overvalue moving images as an income-producing commodity with potential to earn at the box office, on television, or as stock footage, and undervalue them as a catalyst of historical intervention, popular authorship, and community awareness. We protect our physical collections from "unauthorized" use at the same time that literally hundreds of millions of digital/digitized moving image works have become available for free, largely unregulated viewing. We safeguard our holdings for the proverbial rainy day, but there are rarely clouds on the horizon. We struggle to preserve the small fraction of our holdings that our budgets permit, and wait for a tiny number of qualified users to come in and view them on-site. Like authors, musicians, and media companies, we find ourselves immobilized on a spectrum between extreme polarities: unconstrained, unsettling plenty and reassuring, rule-bound enclosure. Between such contradictions there is little room to innovate.

I have often argued that expanding access to moving image collections benefits both users and archives, but I have come to believe that it can indeed do more. Opening up access is essential but only part of a broader process of repair and rethinking in which we must engage. We should ask more of access than that it simply be open. Donald Waters has thoughtfully criticized reflexive assumptions about open access: "what is worrisome about many arguments in favor of open access is the lack of strategic thinking about how open access material will actually be used once it is made available, and the faith-based assumptions that only beneficial consequences will follow from providing open access."[10]

Redefining and expanding archival access through a culture of openness and experimentation can be a route to discovering the common missions and goals that validate our work. It is also, I believe, the best insurance against institutional irrelevancy in a time when so many organizations are disappearing from the map. Openness and experimentation in the realm of access can also migrate archival practice beyond cloistered rituals into a more public engagement with our users. Institutional survival is far from the only concern. Replacing caution and uncertainty with a culture that's open to change and experiment will also dramatically enrich our personal practices and experiences.

There are differences between the change I advocate that comes from within and change that's imposed on us. Archives (and cultural institutions in general) have few defenders in the public sphere, and archival access even fewer. The issues are complex and don't make good sound bites, and few outside our field are conversant with them. In the library world, we've recently seen massive change largely precipitated by outside entities, especially around the prospect of mass digitization of library holdings and their delivery by nonlibrary entities. Absent significant reversal of existing trends, we are likely to see library users deserting libraries (and books) in favor of search engines and Web services. This was not an inevitable outcome—had librarians engaged in self-examination before the fact, it could have been averted or modified. And archives may have even less control over their destiny. While externalities may enable long-awaited revolutionary developments in preservation and access, it is most likely they will change archives irretrievably without attention to whether the changes are positive. It would be better for us to manage change than have it forced upon us.

ACCESS AS A FORMATIVE PRACTICE

While preservation may have been archives' original raison d'être, access is their connection with the world. Access is more than simply providing user services. It's a formative practice without a logical endpoint, merging the internal activity of the archives with scholarship,

historical awareness, cultural production, and public discourse. Expanding access exposes archives and archivists to changing cultural and social practices outside the repository's walls, and counters the traditional isolation of the profession. Finally, as I've proposed, building accessible archives will help us discover what we are only beginning to articulate for ourselves—why, how, and for whom we pursue archival activity.

What are some attributes of the accessible archives? As an evolving practice, access resists being frozen into long-term definitions, but here are a few provisional thoughts.

The Accessible Archive:

Fully integrates access into its mission and goals. Access is a primary mission, not an incidental result. Use justifies archives. Though many moving image collections may have begun by accident, access can help us discover and define our missions.

Expands access to enable preservation. Exposing our collections to larger and more diverse groups of users is essential to build and sustain support for preservation. Showing what we might preserve rather than withholding it until a date when it might be preserved ends opacity and turns the preservation process into a compelling public narrative.

Digitizes for access as well as preservation purposes. While preservation-quality digitizing is a understandable goal, financial and technical considerations may make this difficult to achieve in many instances. We shouldn't forgo the benefits that result from making collections accessible as early as we can. Preventing interested parties from seeing and using materials because they have not yet been preserved also raises ethical issues that cannot be easily dismissed. Finally, access adds context and value. We learn more about our holdings by witnessing how others use them.

Accepts that neither preservation or access are static, unitary concepts. Definitions and practices of "preservation" and "access" have evolved over time and will continue to do so. Long-term archival objectives are not necessarily served by eternalizing the present. In a hybrid analog/digital era, archivists must constantly rebalance legacy and emerging prac-

tices. Archival work is continually evolving, and evolutionary seeds sprout everywhere.

Sees archival access as a spectrum of possible practices that can and do coexist. No single set of rules and procedures can govern every holding or use scenario. It is perfectly natural for an archive to hold both material that is universally accessible for all purposes and material whose existence cannot even be divulged.

Reconfigures workflows to privilege access and enable its expansion. Archival workflows are not sacred. Today's "best practices" embody ritual and ideology as deeply as they may embody lessons learned from experience, and it's essential to subject them to critical assessment. Do existing workflows limit or expand access to collections? Has access been built into the core of relevant workflows? Many new ideas originate at the periphery and re-invigorate the center. In the same way that emerging collections look to established collections for professional and technical guidance, established collections might also investigate emerging trends like collaboration with users, do-it-yourself (DIY) archival practice, the use of commodity equipment and services, and exposing complete collections online.

Limits access to its collections only as required by law, ethics, and material constraint. Many archives tend to impose restrictions above and beyond those dictated by law. Alternatively, they may interpret potential legal restrictions in an overbroad manner. Accessibility should be the default condition, as Barack Obama stated with regard to Federal government information in his January 2009 memo on the Freedom of Information Act: "In the face of doubt, openness prevails. . . . The presumption of disclosure also means that agencies should take affirmative steps to make information public. They should not wait for specific requests from the public."[11] Too often we restrict entire collections when in reality we only need to restrict certain materials. Access and use restrictions are best applied homeopathically, in small doses commensurate with specific issues that must be addressed. It is also inappropriate to flatly restrict access to collections in the early years after they are accessioned and at other times when users may have the greatest need for them.

No matter how well intentioned, access

restrictions, like secrecy classifications, have an uncanny ability to self-renew. It is easier for objects to accrete restrictive membranes than it is to slough them off. Without a system of regular review and justification, minimum standards of access tend to evolve into maximum standards. Archival initiatives that limit access upfront risk freezing it into paradigms that will be hard to break. Cautious or uninformed custodians may settle for a pinched menu of possible uses rather than considering the benefits of greater openness. Finally, access projects combining fee-based services with more limited free access may find little incentive to expand services they cannot charge for. Limitations on access cannot simply be justified by caution or by business models based on insecurity rather than actual experience.

Proactively makes holdings accessible rather than simply waiting for requests. Moving image archival access has traditionally been piecemeal, based on specific user requests. We now need to move into anticipatory mode, to make aggregations of moving images available before they are requested. Anticipating future access requests enables them at the same time. When we expose broad swaths of our collections, scholars, and the public can compare, assess, contextualize, review, and remix, exercising privileges that only a few scholars have enjoyed but many others would, had collections been available. It is hard to imagine this occurring without rapid digitization on a mass scale. Computer scientist Roger Needham is said to have remarked that "Good research is done with a shovel, not with tweezers; you should find an area where you can get a lot out of it fast." Let us find the shovels that can enable expanded access without undue delay.[12]

Facilitates new modes of use and distribution of its holdings. Access is a largely unexplored realm in which archivists should be free to exercise imagination and innovate. As new media platforms, new modes of scholarly communication, new public preoccupations, and new issues emerge, archivists are assessing them as possible avenues for providing access. It is now possible for archives to push holdings out to users rather than requiring users to visit physical collections. Some wonder why many librarians, curators, and archivists have been early adopters of instant messaging, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and other networked practices. The answer is simple: they are experimenting with new means of reaching and serving users. Kate Theimer, an archivist and blogger, has drafted "An Archivist's 2.0 Manifesto," an adaptation of Laura B. Cohen's "A Librarian's 2.0 Manifesto"; her formulations, which have been widely discussed in the textual archives community, are worth reading.[13]

Adopts a dynamic perspective on open access. Many words have been expended on what open access might be, but most of these words arise in opposition to a perceived closed world. We might instead conceptualize open access not as a counterdiscourse to enclosure but as a perspective that access must scale to meet the evolving needs of users and support new kinds of use as they appear.

Sees consumptive use as a prime measure of the value of its services. If use justifies archives, consumption ennobles them. Archival records are not exhausted by use; on the contrary, use augments their value. The usefulness, relevance, and cultural value of a collection is dramatically enriched by a large number of inbound citations, by a high level of quotation and reuse, by the presence of its materials in many derivative works, and by the number of would-be users knocking on its doors. Cultural capital founds itself not on scarcity but on abundance. We must ensure that the most significant collections are the most readily accessible to consumptive users.

Recognizes that museums, libraries, archives, nontraditional institutions, and even individual collectors are engaged in parallel and often kindred activities, and seeks to engage in a reciprocal process of learning and discovery. As I've said above, there is much to learn from the experience of others, and we have much to teach other kinds of institutions. Established archives are only just beginning to pay more serious attention to materials like home movies and ephemeral films, which regional, specialized, and personal collections have concentrated on for some time. Concurrently, smaller entities and many private collectors are rapidly "professionalizing" their activities. As Robert C. Binkley noted in 1935, "The care of the records of contemporary civilization is a task so vast that neither the personnel nor the funds of our institutions of research can shoulder the

burden. Many records will be preserved by amateurs or they will not be preserved at all."[14]

Partners with other organizations to enable expanded access to holdings and ameliorate constraints. The decentralization of archival collections in the United States has made it possible for many smaller institutions to collect in specialized or idiosyncratic areas, to maintain their own models of governance and organization, and to orient themselves toward particular user groups. At the same time, smaller and specialized institutions are often much less able to inaugurate new initiatives, let alone secure their own survival. Partnerships of like-minded (or if not like-minded, like-intentioned) organizations can enable coordinated digitization efforts and access projects, eliminate duplicated effort, share skills, and enjoy economies of scale. Online resources that contain material from diverse repositories can, if thoughtfully built, deliver more than the sum of their parts.

Assesses commercial and fee-based partnerships with care; do they further the archival mission? Scarcity and financial constraints encourage many institutions to consider partnering with commercial or fee-based organizations. Although commercial–institutional and public–private partnerships can do wonders to make holdings more accessible, their effect is quite often to enclose publicly owned or nonprofit collections behind paywalls and to render institutions more responsive to their distribution partners than to the public. While fee-based and free access don't necessarily negate one another, accepting this may be out of the scope of some business plans. At the moment we have few case studies and very little information to quantify the contributions that commercial organizations have made to moving image archives over the long term. Organizations considering such partnerships have an ethical duty to carefully and thoughtfully assess their impact.[15]

Assesses the impact of its access and preservation activities. We might consider taking a leaf from the environmental movement and formally assess the effects of new projects, initiatives, and partnerships on our preservation and access activities. One format to explore, again drawn from the environmental sector, would be "preservation impact statements" and "access impact statements." Although not in the form of impact statements, these are precisely the kinds of impacts that commentators are trying to assess in their responses to the proposed Google Book Search settlement, which indicates to me that increased public scrutiny of archival activities would be likely to elicit similar assessment of their potential impact on preservation and access.[16]

Seeks out new users and new user communities; works to bring archives into communities and communities into archives. As we expand access, we are very likely to draw new communities of interest to our holdings and equally likely to discover other groups who might find use for our collections. As in other fields, innovation happens at the periphery and trickles in to reinfuse the center. Addressing new users (and listening to them) opens the door to ideas and practices of which we might previously have been unaware.

Archives can also be conveners of community. Home Movie Day has garnered worldwide attention as an event and made an untold number of people aware of the importance of these marginalized records. Many archival institutions hold open houses, often on a citywide basis, to introduce repositories and their collections to the public and to offer advice concerning materials that visitors may hold. At our own library, we have found that an open-door policy and receptivity to the needs of visitors has dramatically increased attendance and created a community of regular visitors, attendees at special events, and fans. One striking and unsuspected insight gained from this experience has been that the project isn't simply about the collection—it's just as much about the transactional relationships that construct themselves between users, librarians, and materials. Although all civil-minded individuals are welcome to visit and use the collection in any manner they please, the sense of the place is that of a workshop where historical materials inform new works and where old materials filter out of the collection through the agency of our visitors and infuse the present and future.

Yale University's Family and Community Archives Project brought a group of high school students into a manuscripts and archives collection in an attempt to introduce them to the profession through talks and hands-on projects

involving hitherto unarchived records. While the first year was not considered a complete success, a bridge was established to the New Haven community, and efforts will continue.[17]

Works cooperatively with users to add value to the collection, especially in the areas of annotation, curation, description, contextualization, and sourcing. Users can add considerable value as they use and interpret records. Properly attributed, user notes and description can constitute valuable metadata, and user products that incorporate archival material themselves add context to the records they reproduce. George Oates, creator of Flickr Commons, a collaborative project between the photo-sharing site and a number of established cultural institutions that contributed still images for free online use and user tagging, notes that in the first sixty hours after the Commons went live, users contributed some 20,000 tags describing the images. Contributing institutions, such as the Library of Congress, harvested these user-generated tags to enrich their own catalog data: the Library of Congress, for example, updated 3,266 records in its Prints and Photographs catalog.[18]

Finally, users are also quite often collectors themselves, and it may often behoove archives to engage in targeted cooperative acquisition efforts, especially when time and funds for acquisitions are limited.

Encourages access as an accelerator of literacy and authorship. Archival images are now widely used to describe and renegotiate relationships between present and past, individuals and authority, events and their documentation. Easy access to archival collections enables increased historical discourse absent the imprimatur of prominent cultural gatekeepers, and a greater consciousness that images and sounds are editable into new works encourages archivally based production. George Oates characterizes the new archival audience as "actors, creators, and participants."[19] We are the ones best capable of shifting the attention of millions of amateur producer/editors from the quotidian to the historical.

Sees archival activity as a public function, and archivists as citizens. Access isn't only the process of exposing collections to potential use; it also articulates a set of social relations between holdings, custodians, and users.

Many of these relations exist in the open and construct peoples' perception of archives and what they do. At the same time, discourses of history, memory, and heritage engage people not simply as individuals but also as members of a collective public. How we maintain the records that support these discourses impacts the public sphere. It would behoove us to carefully and critically assess new paradigms, whether they appear as utopian open-access initiatives, revenue-generating business models, or technological bridges to the future. Let us look outward rather than inward, move from cinephilia to citizenship, and advocate for expanding access throughout our field.

Positions itself not simply as a repository but as a cultural producer. Classically archives channeled materials to the public through intermediary producers, such as distributors, producers, authors, and exhibit designers. Now some archives are making holdings (typically complete films) directly available to the public online, on DVD, and via live screenings. I would argue that we need to take distribution a step further: why can't we furnish raw materials directly to the public, for free or for fee, depending on type of usage? To take it further, why can't we build workshops within repositories? Do all new works have to be made outside archives? Can we build physical and virtual venues in which production occurs, akin to WGBH's "Sandbox" but incorporating simplified editing tools?[20]

Is, above all, open to experiment. Experimentation won't destroy archives—it's a prerequisite for their survival. The realm of access offers near-unlimited ground for experimentation, and experiments can both bring us closer to our users and enrich our own work experiences. They're typically much less expensive, and often more productive, than full-scale reinvention. Holding archives and archivists to a small number of restrictively defined practices doesn't foster our evolution and leaves us vulnerable to surprises and coercive externalities. Future observers will credit today's rule breakers for developing the strategies and practices that allow archives to thrive.

Sees itself not as an endpoint but a point of origin. On its surface seemingly a trivial distinction, this is in fact a key attribute of the accessible archives. Consciously or unconsciously,

we tend to think of archives as reposing places for works that have reached the end of their lifecycle. Even as we recognize that access will expose some material, we imagine more inward than outward traffic. An access-oriented regime proposes that we measure the success of an archive by how much new work and study it facilitates. We might therefore consider (and actively promote) archives as a point of origin rather than a terminal zone, and imagine a new life stream for archival material that begins promptly at accession.

NO GHOSTS

We are approaching a future where grand schemes and small experiments will likely coexist. Both flourish today: in Europe, the cultural-ministry-funded national heritage digitization projects; in the United States, regional, special-interest, and do-it-yourself personal archives. Ever so slowly we move toward a diverse culture of archival projects. Although we can and must break new ground in preservation, there is far greater space for innovation in the field of access. Expanding access to our collections gives us and our institutions a choice between relative stasis and eternal emergence. Access brings us closer to our users in the present and ensures that we will continue to have users in the future. And finally, access offers a process by which we can come to terms with what we do and why we do it.

There have never been so many interested in historical documentation, never so many makers, and never so many distribution outlets for their works. Cultural producers enjoy a kaleidoscope of options, which is one of the reasons this is an exciting time to be alive. Although we have been committed to protecting and preserving media records for a long time, it's now time to open ourselves up to a world that will otherwise leave us behind. Canadian First Nations artist Jackson 2Bears speaks of "the ghostly presence of archival footage."[21] We must do what we can so that future commentators do not also speak of "the ghostly presence of archives."

NOTES

Epigraph is from Robert C. Binkley, "Strategic Objectives in Archival Policy," *American Archivist* 2 (July 1939): 162–68; reprinted in *Selected Papers of Robert C. Binkley,* ed., Max H. Fisch (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), 273.

1. Museums and libraries, followed to some extent by textual archives, have acutely felt the necessity for reinvention in an era of networking and decentralized authorship. Such resources as the Smithsonian 2.0 initiative (http://smithsonian-webstrategy.wikispaces.com/); Nina Simon's Museum 2.0 blog (http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/); digital humanities discussions such as The Humanities and Technology Camp (THATCamp), most recently at http://thatcamp.org/; the work of OCLC's RLG Programs group, frequently blogged at http://hangingtogether.org/ (all accessed September 21, 2009) are just a few examples of a rich, ongoing dialogue that has so far not found echoes in the archival moving image community.

2. "YouTube Statistics," Digital Ethnography Project Wiki, updated August 13, 2008, at http://ksudigg.wetpaint.com/page/YouTube+Statistics (accessed July 6, 2009). It is important to note that the method Wesch and associates used to calculate the total number of videos resident at YouTube no longer works, and we can only guess at what the total is now.

3. At http://www.youtube.com/t/fact_sheet (accessed July 5, 2009).

4. Artem Russakovskii, "How to Find Out the Number of Videos on YouTube," *beerplanet,* August 14, 2008, at http://beerpla.net/2008/08/14/how-to-find-out-the-number-of-videos-on-youtube/ (accessed July 7, 2009).

5. Michael Arrington, "YouTube Video Streams Top 1.2 Billion/Day," *Techcrunch,* June 9, 2009. At http://www.techcrunch.com/2009/06/09/youtube-video-streams-top-1-billionday/ (accessed July 5, 2009).

6. Results retrieved on September 22, 2009.

7. As of September 21, 2009.

8. Karen Gracy, "Moving Image Preservation and Cultural Capital," *Library Trends* 56, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 183–97.

9. I address the consequences of YouTube's rapid rise to power on established moving image collections in "The Appearance of Archives," in *The YouTube Reader,* ed. Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau, 268–74 (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2009).

10. Donald J. Waters, "Doing Much More Than We Have So Far Attempted." Position paper for the NSF/JISC Repositories Workshop, Phoeniz, Ariz., April 17–19, 2007. Retrieved July 5, 2009, at http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~repwkshop/papers/waters.html.

11. Barack Obama, "Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies," at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Freedom_of_Information_Act/ (accessed September 18, 2009).

12. In quoting Needham, I am following the example set by Greene and Meissner in their celebrated article proposing that textual archivists modify their processing workflow so as to expand the accessibility of collections to users. Many of my thoughts have been informed by their piece, which continues to be heavily discussed in the textual archives field. See Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing," *American Archivist* 68 (Fall/Winter 2005): 240; also at http://ahc.uwyo.edu/documents/faculty/greene/papers/Greene-Meissner.pdf (accessed September 21, 2009).

13. Kate Theimer, "An Archivist's 2.0 Manifesto?" August 20, 2007, at http://www.archivesnext.com/?p=64 (accessed September 18, 2009).

14. Max H. Fisch, ed., *Selected Papers of Robert C. Binkley* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948), 197. Archival educator, critic, and erstwhile blogger Richard Cox addresses the emergence of personal record keeping and personal archives in a useful, wide-ranging book. See Richard J. Cox, *Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling: Readings, Reflections and Ruminations* (Duluth, Minn.: Litwin Books, 2008).

15. A number of resources exist that may be useful to institutions contemplating commercial partnerships. A good starting point is Peter B. Kaufman and Jeff Ubois, "Good Terms—Improving Commercial–Noncommercial Partnerships for Mass Digitization," *D-Lib Magazine* 13, no. 11–12 (November–December 2007), at http://www.dlib.org/dlib/november07/kaufman/11kaufman.html (accessed September 18, 2009).

16. More than four hundred responses to the proposed settlement assess it from a wide variety of perspectives. All can be found at http://thepublicindex.org/documents (accessed September 21, 2009).

17. Molly Wheeler et al., "Family and Community Archives Project," slide show presented at Society of American Archivists, San Francisco, 2008, at http://www.slideshare.net/mollywheeler/yale-fcap-saa-2008 (accessed September 21, 2009).

18. George Oates, "Into The Wild: Breathing New Life into Collections," slides 29–103, slide show presented at Society of Archivists meeting, Bristol, U.K., September 9, 2009, at http://www.slideshare.net/georgeo8/society-of-archivists-presentation (accessed September 21, 2009).

19. Oates, "Into The Wild," slide 4.

20. At http://lab.wgbh.org/sandbox (accessed September 22, 2009).

21. Quoted from Jackson 2Bears, presentation at Interactive Screen, Banff New Media Institute, August 2008.