

To Choose or Not to Choose: Appraisal and Selection in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives Video and Sound Recordings Project

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives are undertaking a two-year grant funded project to provide unprecedented access to our unique collections of film, video, and sound recordings. These collections document the Guggenheim Museum's influential and vibrant history of exhibitions, artist interactions, performances and public programs from the 1960s to present.

POSTER ABSTRACT

Our grant funding enables us to digitize 400 out of 7,500 recordings, or 5% of the total. To make these selection decisions, the project team established an appraisal and selection criteria for weeding and digitization to assign values to each record, according to media type, copyright status and content of the recordings.

COLLABORATIONS

In-House Discussions & Impact:

- Interactive, Digital Media, Marketing: enhance discoverability and provide more access
- IT: ensure long term digital storage and preservation
- Theater: improve in-house digitization standards and workflow
- Museum-wide: implementation of metadata and archives submission workflow for future video productions

Collaboration With Other Institutions:

- New York Public Library for the Performing Arts : continue discussion to minimize duplication in digitization efforts
- Works & Process: review permissions and initiate plans for dissemination and expanding access

LESSONS LEARNED

- Not all about the numbers: institutional knowledge and research are invaluable for determining significant recordings
- Communicate early and frequently across departments and with vendors
- Determine the role of the consultant early in the project
- Allow ample time for inventory stage
- Get your data in one consistent format: maintaining a master spreadsheet is time consuming but goes a long way
- Do not underestimate item-level processing
- Note maximum recording time of media (when duration is unknown) to help estimate budget for digitization
- Not all brands are created equal: some are more prone to deterioration

WEEDING CRITERIA

Duplicates:

- Keep maximum 3 items per media type
- Keep 2 copies of NTSC and 1 copy of PAL when available

Out-of-scope:

- Commercially produced and widely released
- Non-Guggenheim related material
- Artwork derivatives (viewing copies transferred to curatorial)

Non-AV materials:

- Presentation slides, images, floppy disks with documents (accessioned to appropriate collections in the archives)

SELECTION CRITERIA RESOURCES

- FACET—Indiana University Field Audio Collection Evaluation Tool
- Columbia University Survey Instrument for Audio & Moving Image Collections
- National Library of Medicine—Selection Criteria for Digital Reformatting
- *Copyright and Cultural Institutions* by Peter B. Hirtle, Emily Hudson & Andrew Kenyon

DIGITIZATION CRITERIA

Main categories and priorities in ranking scale:

Media Type

High risk: DAT, Betamax, U-Matic, Hi8
 Low risk: DVD, CD-R, Digital Betacam

Copyright

Guggenheim produced footage and owns full copyright; points added if item is one of limited recordings made

Content

Documentation of historical event in museum history; rare or one-time appearance in a performance; exhibition tour featuring senior curator or artist (older than 15 years)

Duplication effort

Has the same performance or lecture been digitized in the past in-house or by NYPL?

Quality

Points deducted if recording has too much background noise or pauses

Categories are relative to each other, and generations (i.e. master versus dub) play a significant role in the selection process

