

**MODULE 21**

**LIGHTS, CAMERA,  
ARCHIVES!**

**DANIEL J. LINKE AND TRAVIS H. WILLIAMS**

was unable to furnish a copy in a format that would be compatible with US video equipment.

As it turned out, Somethin' Else had dropped the ball by using Lincoln's images in the documentary without signing a licensing agreement with the university. The video had already aired in England when the BBC belatedly noticed the omission and requested that the production company obtain permission, as they were preparing to air the program elsewhere in Europe. Somethin' Else contacted Special Collections for the last time in August 2004 and were informed that they would have to work with the university counsel to conclude the agreement. At that point, it seemed quite possible that the BBC would edit the Lincoln images out of any future airings of the documentary, which was frustrating and disappointing for the university.

Ultimately, no agreement was ever signed between Lincoln University and Somethin' Else or between Lincoln University and the BBC, which perhaps explains why the documentary has never aired in the United States (although the entire documentary is available in six segments on YouTube). The documentary includes the Lincoln images but also acknowledges the university in the credits.

The following year, Special Collections began formulating policies where none had previously existed. It adopted both an image request form and a use agreement, which were routinely employed thereafter. While these forms probably would not have prevented the problem that arose with Somethin' Else, given the production company's requirement to follow British rather than US law, issues related to licensing could at least have been discussed upfront had the policy and forms existed at the time. As providers of information, librarians and archivists should never play the role of gatekeeper, approving or denying the use of materials based on how a patron may deploy them. In this instance, without any policy in place, the situation devolved to the point where the general counsel became a roadblock because of his concerns with public relations. By considering legal issues related to permission, copyright, and use in advance, such situations can be avoided.

### **Lessons from the Barnes Foundation Archives**

---

*By Katy Rawdon*

The Barnes Foundation, an educational institution best known for its remarkable art collection, has attracted its share of media attention.

Perhaps most notably, it was involved in a prolonged lawsuit to move its art collection from its original suburban home to a new facility in downtown Philadelphia. The Barnes prevailed in the suit and opened its new building in 2012. Both the lawsuit and the new building brought additional attention to the institution and to its remarkable archives.

The Barnes Foundation's archives contains amazing treasures, including Dr. Barnes's correspondence with famous artists and historical figures. Many journalists and filmmakers have told the Barnes's story through such media as *The Collector*, an hour-long HBO film; a television episode about the Barnes Foundation's famous mural by Henri Matisse, produced by a Philadelphia PBS arts show; and *The Barnes Collection*, a PBS film by independent filmmaker Glenn Holsten. Archives staff worked closely with the filmmakers on all three projects and were even interviewed on screen.<sup>21</sup>

Here are three lessons to share based on these experiences:

1. Understand how filmmakers work and what they need to do their jobs. Filmmakers can be challenging to work with, but understanding their needs is no more than we do for other patrons, though their needs may differ from the typical patron. Making a film is extraordinarily expensive, which is why filmmakers work on tight deadlines and often don't have time to do much (if any) in-person research. They need *your* help, expertise, and understanding. The Barnes archivist freely admits that she did not understand filmmakers' special needs when first working with HBO, so she encouraged them to research in the usual, time-consuming way. This worked so poorly that the film director went to a Barnes trustee and complained that she was "blocking" their work. Only then did it dawn on the archivist that the filmmaker did not realize the work required to use primary sources. When she worked with an independent filmmaker three years later, she filled binders with photocopies of selected archival material that he could review at his leisure outside of the reading room. He was thrilled because it let him work within his schedule.

---

21 The PBS documentary is not available online. However, the HBO film and the WHYY show are. See "The Collector: Dr. Albert C. Barnes," *Vimeo*, last modified in 2012, <https://vimeo.com/35217474>; and "Friday Arts for May 7, 2010," *PBS WHYY*, last modified May 7, 2010, <https://video.whyy.org/video/friday-arts-friday-arts-for-may-7-2010/>.

2. Navigating interviews successfully is a learned skill. It takes practice to be able to articulate historical stories without stumbling over them, making unsupported claims, or boring your audience to death. Early on, the Barnes archivist stumbled on the subject of Dr. Barnes's early life because there were many rumors and little concrete documentation about it. By the time *The Barnes Collection* was filmed in 2012, however, she had rehearsed how to tell the story without including unprovable assertions. In general, this documentary was (from an archivist's point of view) far more successful than the earlier HBO film. The filmmaker expertly interweaved images of archival materials, selections from archival letters, images of artwork from the collection, and a present-day interview to allow Dr. Barnes to tell his own story, the result of a successful archivist-filmmaker collaboration.
3. You cannot control the final product. Before a prominent psychiatrist was interviewed for the HBO documentary, he read letters the archivist had chosen for him from the Barnes archives, and he talked with her at length about Dr. Barnes, leaving her with the impression that he had a good understanding of what was and was not true about the man. However, the archivist did not think that his interview reflected a nuanced understanding of the collector. Almost nothing the psychiatrist said was verifiable; worse, the archivist knew there was nothing she could do. He had chosen what he wanted to say, just as researchers regularly choose what they want to write or use from our collections—and as archivists, we have to let it go. The best we can do is be prepared for the next journalist or filmmaker knocking on our door, wanting to ask questions of us and our collections.

### ***Titanic and the Independence Seaport Museum***

---

*With thanks to Megan Good Carrington*

Philadelphia's Independence Seaport Museum maintains collections relating to the area's maritime history, so it was only natural that museum staff assembled a commemorative *Titanic* exhibit in 2012, the one-hundredth anniversary of the steamer's maiden voyage and sinking. The exhibition drew upon the museum's archives, in particular