

Indigenous Representation and Preservation Challenges in Audiovisual Archives

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Abstract and Purpose

- Archivists in the indigenous communities learn to balance community access with accurate representation of communities.
- Intellectual property matters and self-representation lie at the core of researching and addressing concerns with indigenous audiovisual material in tribal archives.
- Reappropriating indigenous materials to empower marginalized tribes and to tell their side of history.



from the exhibition Nuestra Comida/Our Food by the Chiapas Photographic Project

Photo Credit: Emiliano Guzmán Meza

Acknowledgments

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Findings

- Reappropriation of Archived Films: The Tribesourcing Southwest Film Project takes the striking imagery of 20th century films about indigenous communities and replaces the often disparaging narrative, replacing it with community voices that give accurate representations of community values and daily life.
- Self-Representation and Improved Relationships: Projects, like the Chiapas Photography Project, work to not only have artists contribute their creations, but also to manage the projects' metadata, exhibitions, and preservation.
- Working relationships between the the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association help define best practices in preservation.



from the exhibition Nuestra Comida/Our Food by the Chiapas Photographic Project

Photo Credit: Juana López López

Discussion

While this paper was initially designed to reflect upon first-person perspectives through interviews with tribal repositories, indigenous filmmakers, and artists, the present state of global affairs at the time of researching this paper helped shift the focus of this project to the preservation efforts and representation of tribal communities in audiovisual archives.

Returning the archival autonomy to marginalized communities can benefit both the communities represented in collections, as well as the wider community, leading to improved relations, greater understanding, and increased creative expression. When conservation and cultural values meet, we see a change in the face of audiovisual archives.

Methodology

- A comparative analysis was conducted, investigating the methods of three different projects across the Americas that best represented the collective challenges in tribal archives.
- Several projects from Central and South America, the Caribbean, Canada, and the United States were researched and selected, based on the challenges they encountered and their unique solutions.

Select Bibliography

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For full references, questions, or access to the research paper, please contact Bárbara Carrera at Barbara.carrera@simmons.edu.



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