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Appraisal of Audiovisual Records in the Documentation of Popular Culture, Collective Memory and National Identity

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The last time I was granted the privilege of presenting a paper at an ICA Congress was at the London Congress of 1980. I was then the founder and first Chair of the ICA's Working Group on Audiovisual Documentation. It was supposed to be a full address on the need to acquire and preserve audiovisual records, the first time, I believe, that the ICA had placed the subject on the program.² I was originally allotted an hour, but when the schedule was finalized the time was reduced to half an hour. When I arrived at the Congress I was informed that there was no longer any time for my paper in the formal program, but I could make an intervention from the floor. As I recall, I had five minutes!

By 1980 the value of audiovisual records was well established and many national and regional archives had accepted responsibility for films, videotapes and audio recordings, or at least for those that were produced by government departments and agencies. The Public Archives of Canada, as it was known when I first began my career as an archivist in 1954 (now the Library and Archives of Canada), was one of them. In many ways audiovisual records complemented the written records of government and were essential records of the way in which departments and agencies attempted to communicate with the public. In a modern democracy they had become essential tools to inform citizens about policies and programs. As I was writing this paper there was a general election in progress in Canada. The television screens were full of political campaign advertisements, and the candidates had just finished a televised debate. All these are essential records of the democratic process. In an age when more people get their news from television than from any other medium, it is no longer possible to study the electoral process, and public understanding and reaction to the issues, without these records. Anymore than it will be possible to understand world reaction to the war in Iraq without some of the sounds and images that have been filling television screens every night since the invasion began. Paul Rutherford, a Canadian historian, describes the coverage of the war as "a torrent of lies, half-truths, infotainment and marketing," what he calls "weapons of mass persuasion."³ He may be right, but it is all part of the public record.

I left Canada in 1957, to study and to work as an audiovisual archivist in England and the United States. When I came back to the National Archives in 1973 it was to establish a division charged with creating a national audiovisual collection for Canada. The concept of a national collection now included records that documented popular culture and collective memory, the basis for national identity. In the sixteen years that I had been away the country had changed and the Archives had moved beyond documenting the actions of government and the cultures of the two "founding" nations, the French and the English. It had embraced the concept of "total" archives, including records from all sources in all media that met the criteria of "national historic significance," the key phrase in our collecting mandate. This ranged from the records of native peoples, with claims on the land dating back 20,000 years, to ethnic communities that had only been established in Canada in the twentieth century. The concept of collective memory was giving way to the concept of a "collection of memories", often at odds with one another, especially where victimization of an ethnic community was involved. The internment of Japanese-Canadians during World War II is an example from relatively recent Canadian history. The amateur films of life in the internment camps that came to light in the 1990s intensified the impact of memoirs and televised interviews that finally led to a government apology and compensation. National identity appeared to depend less on a shared history embodied in archival records and more on shared images of the recent past: archivists as more shapers of memory than keepers of evidence.

Archivists have historically been reluctant to accept responsibility for moving images because of technical problems related to the long-term storage of the images. At the same time the value of the moving image record was obscured

¹ Much of what I have to say in this paper on appraisal is included in my recent work *Appraising Moving Images: Assessing the Archival and Monetary Value of Film and Video Records* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2003).

² Wilhelm Kohte submitted a report entitled *Archives of Motion Pictures, Photographic Records and Sound Recordings* to the Moscow Congress in 1972.

³ Paul Rutherford, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Marketing the War Against Iraq* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004)

by the commercial exploitation of film by an industry more interested in quick profits than the documentary potential of images that move. The followers of the Lumières, recording life as it was lived in front of the camera lens, did battle for a time with the followers of Méliès, the magician fascinated by the ability to manipulate image, time and space, but eventually they were relegated to a marginal role in the entertainment industry. It was relatively easy to dismiss the product that played in the music halls and in street front arcades as worthless. In many ways the almost universal popularity of “the movies” – think of Chaplin as an international icon bypassing all language and cultural barriers – worked against their acceptance as records worthy of archival protection. The fact that they quickly became “product” of an enormous international industry was a further factor

It is remarkable, given the history of the relationship between archives and audiovisual records, that in 1898, just two years after the first public exhibitions of cinematography in Paris, London, Berlin and New York, Boleslaw Matuszewski, a Polish cinematographer in the employ of Nicholas II of Russia, published a manifesto in Paris calling for the establishment of a worldwide *network* [my emphasis] of archives to acquire and conserve this new marvel of technology, this “new source of history”⁴ In Matuszewski’s view cinematography, to fulfill its historic mission, would first have to move from the “purely recreational or fantastic subjects toward actions and events of *documentary* [my emphasis] interest; from the slice of life as human interest to the slice of life as the cross-section of a nation and a people.”

Note that Matuszewski proposed a *network* of archives rather than one gigantic repository for world production in his prophetic manifesto. He was aware that much of what was photographed would be “ceremonies arranged in advance and posed in front of the camera.” What Daniel Boorstin would, much later, term *pseudo-events*. Matuszewski conceded that “the camera will not perhaps give us complete history ... but it has a quality of authenticity, exactitude and precision that is unique to it. It is the honest and infallible eye witness,” or as Jean-Luc Godard was to describe it some sixty years later, perhaps tongue in cheek, as “truth at 24 frames per second.” Because of this, Matuszewski argued, “it is necessary to give this source ... the same authority, the same official existence and the same possibilities as the other recognized archives.” Matuszewski may have been prophetic but he was not naive: he not only recognized the limitations of cinematography, but he was also aware of the limitations of governments in responding to new opportunities. “I have no illusions,” he concluded, “that my project will quickly be made effective.”

It was to be almost thirty years before the first archives for motion pictures were established and the stimulus was the arrival of *talking pictures*, and did they ever talk! By 1930, silent film, recognized internationally by art and cultural critics as an art form in its own right, no longer had any commercial value and was in danger of being lost through neglect or deliberate destruction. Literally tons of silent prints were melted down for their silver content, or just plowed into the ground as industrial waste. In Raymonde Borde’s justifiably outraged words, it represented a “pitiless destruction of the human heritage that can only be compared to the burning of the Library at Alexandria.”⁵ As a result of this reaction some of the great collections were established in the thirties, in Stockholm, Paris, London, New York and Berlin, but almost all of them as private, non-profit organizations. In 1938 they set some elementary rules governing the international loan and exchange of films and established FIAF, the International Federation of Film Archives. It was, however, the fiction films, the comedies and dramas that constituted the ‘seventh art,’ that the new archives were most anxious to save. The factual film found its way into the collections, but it was never the primary objective.

In the years following World War II the audiovisual archives *movement* spread throughout Europe and North and South America, with slower expansion in Asia, the Pacific and Africa. The list of acronyms for associations in the field is now formidable - FIAF, FIAT, IASA, SEAPAAVA, AMIA - all linked, along with IFLA and the ICA, through UNESCO’s Coordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations. If you log on to the Coordinating Council’s website, CCAA.org, there are links to all the member organizations.

⁴ Boleslaw Matuszewski, *Une Nouvelle Source de l’histoire: Creation d’un Dépôt de Cinematographie Historique* (Paris: 1898)

⁵ Raymonde Borde, *Les Cinémathèques* (Paris: 1984) 78.

The cultural significance of moving images was formally endorsed by UNESCO in October 1980, with the adoption of the *Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images*.⁶ It is a useful starting point for a discussion of appraisal policies and practices. The first premise of the *Recommendation* was that *all* moving images are “an expression of the cultural identity of peoples ... and form an integral part of a nation’s cultural heritage, as well as constituting important and often unique testimonies, of a new dimension, to the history, way of life and culture of people.” Therefore, it argues, the “safeguarding [of] *all* moving images of the national production should be regarded as the highest objective.” To accomplish this, each nation should establish an “officially recognized archives”, or a network of officially recognized archives, to safeguard and preserve “any part or all” of the national production. The legal and administrative measures necessary to achieve this objective could include “voluntary arrangements with the holders of rights for the deposit of moving images, acquisition of rights by purchase or donation, or the institution of mandatory deposit systems through appropriate legislation or administrative measures.” The history of the relationship between archives and the holders of rights for moving images (and recorded sound) over the past century has involved all three modes of acquisition, sometimes all three in the history of one organization. The *Recommendation* moves cautiously on the subject of mandatory deposit because of the vehement opposition of the industry (as Chair of the UNESCO drafting committee for the *Recommendation* I have the scars to prove it!), and even more cautiously on the issue of selection. While safeguarding *all* moving images of the national production remains the objective, until such time as the technology made this feasible, archives should “establish principles for determining which images should be recorded and or deposited for posterity. A high priority should be accorded those recordings whose “educational, cultural, artistic, scientific, and historical value” form part of the nation’s cultural heritage. Selection, when necessary, should be based on the “broadest possible consensus of informed opinion,” should take particular account of the “appraisal criteria established by the archival profession,” and should only take place after “sufficient time has elapsed to allow for the necessary perspective.”

Those of us who have been struggling with appraisal criteria established by the archival profession can only smile at the assumption that there is any real help to be found in the archival literature. I first attempted to develop a set of appraisal criteria for moving images twenty years ago when I accepted the challenge of writing the RAMP study on the archival appraisal of moving images that was published by UNESCO in 1983.⁷ I found practically nothing of relevance in the literature then, and when I went back to the literature for a full assessment of the archival and monetary value of film and video records (published last year by Scarecrow Press)⁸, there was very little more. I could draw on a body of established policies and practices with regard to government records and even for audiovisual records, but appraisal theory remained as elusive as ever and, in relation to audiovisual records, largely irrelevant.

The concept of appraisal has always been a controversial element in archival theory and practice and in recent years it has become one of the central topics in the literature. Judging by the literature it is shifting from a means to an end, essentially acquisition, to an end in itself, defining what archivists *do*.⁹ Based on the thoughts of the some of the archivists writing on appraisal theory, there is some confusion as to what archivists do! What the literature offers is primarily a wringing of hands on appraisal: “Is there any other field that has such a broad mandate with a selection process so random, so fragmented, so uncoordinated, and even so accidental?,”¹⁰ writes one; there are “no guidelines of professional standards for reaching appraisal decisions or documenting the decision making process,”¹¹ writes another; “it is comparatively easy to select records of permanent value, relatively easy to decide

⁶ UNESCO, *Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images*. Adopted by the General Conference, Belgrade, 27 October 1980 (Paris: UNESCO, 1981)

⁷ *The Archival Appraisal of Moving Images: A RAMP Study with Guidelines* (Paris: UNESCO, 1983)

⁸ Sam Kula, *Appraising Moving Images: Assessing the Archival and Monetary Value of Film and Video Records* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2003)

⁹ There are useful overviews by Terry Cook, “Mind Over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal” in *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor*, Barbara L. Craig, ed. (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992) 60-69, and by Luciana Duranti, “The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory,” *American Archivist* 57 (spring 1994) 328-343.

¹⁰ Gerald Ham, “The Archival Edge,” in *A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice*. Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch, eds. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1984). Ham’s article was originally published in 1975.

¹¹ Margaret Hedstrom, “New Appraisal Techniques: The Effect of Theory on Practice,” *Provenance* 7 (fall 1989) 1-21.

on those of no value ... the great bulk of records are border-line.”¹², writes a third. Felix Hull summed up the fundamental paradox of selection this way: Appraisal is “a schizophrenic dilemma that we feel would not face us in an ideal world”.¹³ In an ideal world, of course, everything would be saved. If we are to believe the technocrats, we are poised on the brink of an era where it *will* be possible to save every document, whether print or audiovisual, in a digital format in a virtual archive with a capacity so enormous it approaches the infinite. Appraisal will not be necessary due to practical considerations of physical processing, storage space or access: the question then will be *should* everything be saved, and will we be responsible for drowning the researcher in a sea of irrelevant records.

As this is evidently less than an ideal world, appraisal is still necessary, and it is generally defined for archivists, at least in English, as “the process of determining the value and thus the disposition of records based upon their current administrative, legal, and fiscal use; their evidential and informational or research value; their arrangement; and their relationship to other records.”¹⁴ The key word in the definition is, of course, value. This is a loaded word. The problem is that archivists do not merely identify value they also create value when they attribute it to a document and then add it to a national collection. Or as Terry Cook observed, “values are not found in records, but rather in theories of value of societal significance which archivists bring to records.”¹⁵ We cannot, alas, stand outside our own time. Our perspective is rooted in our education and our culture. If our perception of value is flawed we run the risk of distorting the collective memory for the communities we serve.

The founding fathers of modern archival theory argued that it was the archivist’s task to conserve *all* the records entrusted to the archives; that the archivist should act as an impartial mediator between record creators and record users. This position could no longer be defended given the volume of records being produced by the middle of the twentieth century. The necessity to select gave rise to principles of appraisal such as those presented by Theodore Schellenberg in his influential manual, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*, published in 1956. Schellenberg believed that appraisal was so important it should be implicit in the definition of *archives themselves* which he defined as “as records that are *adjudged worthy* [my emphasis] of permanent preservation for reference and research purposes.”¹⁶ The *archivist* judges the value of the records, *not* the agency that created them. Schellenberg looms large in my thinking because he directed the course at the National Archives in Washington when I obtained my certificate in archive administration in 1956. That the course only lasted six weeks is testament to either how clever we were to absorb the basics of archival administration in so short a time, or to the sad state of professional archival education in North America in 1956!

Schellenberg divided all records into two broad groups: *evidential*, in that the records informed on the organization and function of the administrative entity that produced them; and *informational*, in that the records informed on people, places, conditions and events, in the society in which the administrative entities functioned. In assessing the value of the records in the second group Schellenberg was prepared to rely on the *diverse judgments* of professional archivists, accepting the fact that while there was consensus on general appraisal principles in relation to records of *evidentiary* value, when it came to the much broader and less clearly defined group of records of *informational* value, which includes almost all audiovisual records, there was little or no consensus. Audiovisual records can be evidential, of course, when produced by agencies in the conduct of their business, and when they are produced in the conduct of a judicial or official inquiry. There are many examples to illustrate the evidential value of such records: the audiovisual records of the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Israel, which became an inquiry into responsibility for the Holocaust; the voluminous videotape records of the three-year Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, which documented native oral histories and languages from Northern and Western Canada in considering opposing economic and environmental arguments on the construction of an oil and gas pipeline; the audio and video records of testimony before the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda on the 1994

¹² Margaret Cross, in *Norton on Archives: The Writings of Margaret Cross Norton on Archival and Records Management*, Thorton W. Mitchell, ed. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975) 240.

¹³ Felix Hull, “The Appraisal of Documents-Problems and Pitfalls,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 6 (April 1980) 289.

¹⁴ Frank B. Evans, Donald Harrison and Edwin A. Thompson, comps. “A Basic Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators and Records Managers,” *American Archivist* 37 (spring 1974): 417

¹⁵ Terry Cook, “Mind Over Matter” in *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor*, Barbara L. Craig, ed. (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992) 41.

¹⁶ Theodore R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1956) 16

genocide – some 10,000 hours of video tapes and 20,000 hours of audio tapes are already in the archives!. There is also a substantial archive of audio-visual records documenting testimony before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, and as in Uganda those records also document the language and personal histories of people who live lives that are pre-dominantly non-literate.

It is interesting that feature films are now emerging based on these testimonies: **Forgiveness** (2004), directed by Ian Gabriel, deals with a South African police officer who seeks out the family of his victim; **Hotel Rwanda** (2004), directed by Terry George, is based on the story of a Hutu who saved the lives of many Tutsis during the genocide. In many ways the reaction to these films, and the films themselves, and are part of the healing process and should be part of the public record. Another notable example is **S21: The Killing Machine of the Khmer Rouge** (2004), in which Cambodian filmmaker Rithy Panh brings together some of the surviving victims and the perpetrators of Pol Pot's genocide.

Although the underlying principles for archival selection such as authenticity, reliability and unbroken custody date back to the archivists of ancient Rome, for our purposes we can begin with H.O. Meissner, whose maxims on appraisal were published in 1901. The first of these, and one that rings particularly true for me, is that "old age is to be respected." It recognizes the obvious connection between scarcity and value; that records of the past tend to diminish in volume the further back in time the archivist penetrates. For audiovisual records, with a history of little more than a century, this maxim still applies with full force. More than half the motion pictures produced before 1930 are no longer known to exist, so that any film made prior to 1930, whether fact or fiction, whether made by amateurs or professionals, should be regarded as worthy of protection and preservation. The same holds true for all television productions before 1960, as the loss rate in the first ten years of television - "live" television for the most part without film or tape copies - was as great as that for film in the silent era, about fifty percent. For theatrical motion pictures the loss rate for 35mm films on a nitrocellulose base, the standard in the industry until roughly 1950, is about twenty-five percent. The effects of nitrate decomposition (the base is inherently unstable unless storage conditions are ideal), the deliberate destruction of nitrate prints as a fire hazard, particularly during World War II, all combined to threaten the survival of thousands of titles, despite the existence of multiple prints and international distribution.

Meissner also appealed for moderation in developing appraisal policies; that many interests should be consulted, and that due consideration was to be given to the source of the documents to be appraised. Documents are not created in a vacuum and should, therefore, be assessed with an analysis of the structure of the organization or administrative unit that created the records and the nature of its activities: the "why" as well as the "what" of records.

Applying "functional analysis" to the appraisal of audiovisual records is important. The conditions governing the production of an audiovisual production may be more significant than the content in assessing value. While it is obviously possible to admire the skill and artistry that Leni Riefenstahl brought to **Triumph of the Will** (1934) or **Olympiad** (1936) without knowing anything of the background of their production, a complete assessment of their value must include the circumstances under which they were made and the role they played in National Socialist Party propaganda. To take another example from the lower end of the artistic spectrum, it would be difficult to appreciate the value of **I Was a Communist for the FBI**, produced by Warner Bros in 1951, without some understanding of the U.S. Congressional investigation into Communist infiltration in Hollywood in 1947, and the need for Warner Bros. to demonstrate their Americanism after producing the pro-Soviet **Mission to Moscow** in 1943. It would be equally difficult to appreciate the political and sociological significance of films such as **Big John McLain** (1952), in which John Wayne hunts communists in Hawaii, or **Red Dawn** (1984), a remarkable film by John Milius, in which Soviet, Cuban and Nicaraguan troops invade a small mid-western American City, or any of the 50 anti-communist films produced in the United States between 1947 and 1990, without understanding the paranoia engendered by the perceived threat of communist infiltration during the Cold War. Probe the American psyche a little deeper and even horror films like **The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms** (1953) can be interpreted as a sign of this fear of the threat from within.

Whether produced by private corporations or by government agencies, audiovisual productions reflect the perspectives, the prejudices and the objectives of the producers at a given moment in societal development. Even if the profit motive appears to be the only motive behind a production it is still a reflection of the producer's perception of the popular culture of the day. Let us leave aside the issue whether the current obsession with sex and violence is a cause or a result of market demand for such product. Even if the feature films and television broadcasts of our time are perceived as indications of the decline of civilization, and in an era when the worst excesses of *reality* television are immensely popular this is understandable, it will still be the duty of the archivist to preserve at least representative examples of the national production, for the record. One assumes that Roman archivists continued to carry out their duties with the Barbarians at the gate!

One value in moving images that is impossible to ignore is the ability of the camera to capture life as it is lived in a world that is constantly changing. The followers of the Lumières went around the world in the early years after the invention of cinematography simply filming the places and the peoples that presented themselves to their cameras. When simple scenes of everyday life would no longer attract or hold an audience the cameras looked for more exotic locales and the lives of people that appeared remote and strange to audiences in New York, Paris or London. By accident or by design the cameras began to capture ways of life that were undergoing very rapid change. It is again prophetic that an Ethnographic Congress in Paris, as early as 1900, adopted a resolution that "all anthropological museums should add suitable film archives to their collections. The mere possession of a potter's wheel, a number of weapons, or a primitive loom is not sufficient for a full understanding of the functional use; this can only be handed down to posterity by means of precise cinematographic records."¹⁷

There are now millions of hours of audiovisual records documenting the cultures of the world with varying degrees of verisimilitude. We are now sadly aware that the "honest and infallible eye witness" is not always honest or infallible. In fact, dissimulation was born with the cinema. Francis Doublier in Paris was fabricating a film on the Dreyfus affair, and James Williamson in London was simulating an attack on a Chinese mission during the Boxer Rebellion before the end of the nineteenth century. The eruption of Mount Vesuvius was filmed on a tabletop in New York. Even Louis Lumière *directed* his family to act as passengers in **Arrival of the Train**, the first film to be projected in 1895. (Next time you watch it notice that no one looks at the camera except one of the children who obviously would not take direction.) Despite reservations on reliability - with the impact of television images on public opinion so well established every demonstrator plays for the camera - the news film libraries are still a rich resource for twentieth century history, as the archives of television news productions will be for the history of this century. The growing recognition of the value of this resource can be seen by the action of the National Archives of the United States to preserve the entire Universal Newsreel Collection (1926-1945) (now being *published* as a set of DVDs) and the decision of the Australian government to nominate the entire Cinesound Movietone Australian Newsreel Collection, 1929-1975, for the Memory of the World Program last year.

One of the special challenges in our time is to safeguard the radio and television news broadcasts of dictatorial regimes which may have been incitements to genocide. The vicious distortions of fact in their oral and visual hate campaigns are the evidence of crimes against humanity. For example, one of the important holdings in the archives of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda are the radio broadcasts that promoted hatred against the Tutsis and called for violent attacks against them. [One of the chilling stories I was told was that after the restoration of democratic government in Greece in 1974 the authorities ordered the destruction of all the television news broadcast under the military regime on the grounds that it was all lies and propaganda.]

There is a growing body of studies from organizations such as the International Association for Media and History, IAMHIST, that probe the relationships, sometimes tenuous, between factual film resources and the historical facts established by other records. They expose the bias and the errors often found in such records, but they also document the role such records play in molding public opinion and influencing government policy. Mined creatively these audiovisual resources can be edited into sweeping historical narratives for presentation on television to audiences of millions: two of the most successful were the British series, **World at War** (1975), twenty-six hours on World War II; and the American series, **Victory at Sea** (1952), thirteen hours on the naval battles of World War II.

¹⁷ Francis Speed, "The Function of the Film as Historical Record." *African Notes* 6 (1968) 45-41.

This is the way that millions of people, in a sub-literate age, will remember those events, just as this generation will probably remember the invasion of Normandy more from Steven Spielberg's **Saving Private Ryan** (1998) than from anything they may learn at school. (Spielberg's 10-hour television series on the Normandy campaign, **Band of Brothers** (2001) was even more memorable). Epic television events such as Ken Burn's **Eyes on the Prize** (1987-1990), fourteen hours on the American civil rights movement and the struggle for equality by Black Americans, or the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's **Canada: A People's History**, seventeen hours on the nation's history, are not only powerful educational tools but they reach millions of people whose only access to the history is through television. **Canada: A People's History** was consciously marketed in the context of national identity, and was presented in English and French as a view of the shared past that both language groups could accept. Whether it achieved *that* objective is debatable, but close to ten percent of all Canadians watched this version of their history and it is widely used as an educational resource.

Even when the format is drama the attempt to interpret a nation's history can be a significant factor in defining national identity. Edgar Reitz's **Heimat** (1984), sixteen hours, and **The Second Heimat** (1994), twenty-five hours, is a portrait of Germany in the 20th Century that influenced millions of viewers in many countries.

This may be as appropriate a place as any to consider that the issues in appraising audiovisual records for their wider societal significance are reflected in the changing paradigms of archival science in the post-modern era. As always, I am grateful to my ex-colleague Terry Cook, for guidance in dealing with changing paradigms. As archivists shift "from identifying themselves as passive guardians of an inherited legacy to celebrating their role in actively shaping collective (or social) memory,"¹⁸ they must learn to deal with context as well as text ... the ideology that governs the structure of documents as well as their content. I am not too sure that archivists are celebrating this shift in their function, but they are trying to cope. It is challenging and it can be frustrating. Nothing is objective. Everything is shaped, presented, re-presented, symbolized, signified, signed, constructed by the speaker, writer, director, cinematographer, for a set purpose. The fact is that the postmodernist approach of taking nothing at face value, or always looking beneath the surface, is ideal for decoding the "message" of audiovisual documents, in discovering the "politics of memory" embedded in the words and images. Even the deliberate manipulation of the images – in our digital age anything is possible including "virtual history" in which actual footage of historical figures are re-edited for appearances in historical events which were never filmed (the assassination attempt on Hitler in 1944 is the showpiece of this project) – is part of the message.

Like all archivists, audiovisual archivists are concerned about *provenance*. But like postmodern custodians of any type of record we believe that the office or place of origin is less significant than the process and discourse of creation. This is particularly true of audiovisual works that have been produced outside the "industry," works that are acts of opposition to the prevailing ideology, weapons of guerilla warfare against the authority of the state. In the United States Michael Moore's polemic against the Bush administration, **Fahrenheit 9/11** (2004) is rapidly becoming a factor in the current election campaign, just as his **Bowling for Columbine** (2002) was a factor in the debate on gun control in that country. This is even more significant in considering works that function as combatants in the war for hearts and minds in the midst of ethnic conflicts. Two sharply opposing views of the Israeli military operations in Jenin in 2002 can be seen in **Jenin, Jenin: A One-Sided Movie** (2004), by Muhammad Bakri, a Palestinian who alleges that more than 500 Palestinians were "massacred" and the town was destroyed; and **Jenin: Massacring the Truth** (2004), in which a Canadian filmmaker, Martin Himel, challenges Bakri's allegations and presents the findings of a United Nations investigation that found no massacre had taken place. There are further perspectives in Eric Scott's **Checkpoint: The Battle for Israel's Soul** (2003), and Simone Bitton's **Wall** (2004), both on the security barriers and their effects on both sides of the border and both, to some degree, offensive to authorities on both sides of the border. These and other documentaries will be as vital to an understanding of the conflict as any other segment of the public record.

Postmodern archives appraisal focuses on the creator's societal functions and activities and citizen interaction with them. Of necessity this has always been the approach of audiovisual archivists. There has never been a "top down" concentration on records appraisal because the institutional framework was either non-existent or totally

¹⁸ Terry Cook, Archival science and postmodernism: new formulations for old concepts, *Archival Science* 1 (2001) 3-24.

uncooperative. What is of interest is the postmodern focus on marginalized or even silenced voices in society, a more radical extension of the documentation strategy of the eighties. Outstanding feature films can focus more public attention on the underclass in society than the work of a dozen government commissions. Consider just four of many: **Shoeshine** (1947), Vittorio De Sica on children living in the margins of society following the liberation of Rome; **Los Olvidados** (1950), Luis Bunuel on the desperate lives of youth in the slums of Mexico City; **Salaam Bombay!** (1988), Mira Nair on the struggle for life in the slums of Bombay; and **City of God** (2002), Fernando Meirelles's controversial drama, based on a true story, on the struggle to escape life in the slums of Rio de Janeiro. All these films use non-professional actors and were filmed on the streets.

There have always been "non-industrial" audiovisual productions by amateurs and by professionals in other fields using moving images as analytical tools in their work. The costs of equipment and production began to fall in the videotape era, and in the digital era the means of quasi-professional production are even more affordable. The good news is that this has allowed sectors of society that were under-represented in audiovisual archives to document their views and their activities; the bad news is that, along with the millions of hours of "home movies" produced every year, the volume of such records add to the challenges of appraisal. The Association of Moving Image Archivists is attempting to establish the 18th of August as Home Movie Day, a day when those with home movies can learn how to protect their films and tapes, and archivists can assess their value in documenting the community.

In the early years of the twentieth century the intention of many American and European filmmakers was to exploit the exotic elements of encounters with native peoples purely for their entertainment value. The films of Osa and Martin Johnson such as **Captured by Cannibals** (1919) or **Head Hunters of the South Seas** (1922), are typical of the period. They document the seriously distorted and often prejudiced view of other cultures presented to European and American audiences. Even the most highly praised and influential "ethnographic" film of the silent era, Robert Flaherty's **Nanook of the North** (1922), a study of Inuit life on the shores of Hudson Bay in Canada's far North before European contact, used a "cast," the carefully selected family who represented the community, and had them "play" out certain scenes (going to bed during daylight hours so he could film the interior of the igloo, re-enacting a seal hunt with weapons from their past) for his camera. The difference, of course, lies in Flaherty's motivation which was a sincere desire to capture the way of life of a people he had lived among and had come to admire.

Flash-forward to 2003 and the Cannes Film Festival is awarding the Camera d'or for best first feature to **Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)**, directed by Zacharias Kunuk, an Inuit filmmaker. **The Fast Runner** is an account of an Inuit legend, with a script based on eight different versions of the legend recalled by elders from the oral tradition. It is shot in digital betacam and illustrates the great strides that the Inuit have made in using the new technologies in telling their own stories and recording their own lives. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Northern Service provides a daily opportunity for natives in Nunavut, the North West Territory, the Yukon and Northern Quebec to tell their stories in their own language and to use the medium in pursuit of community development. In a short time this has become an immensely important archive of local history, legend and language.

The documentary and feature films on historical themes became a prime means of building national identity, especially during wartime or in nation building following a civil war or after achieving independence from a colonial power. Forced by the circumstances of limited means after 1917 the Russian filmmakers made newsreels (**Kino-Pravda**) and documentaries in innovative ways to mobilize support for the revolutionary changes taking place in the Soviet Union. These techniques developed by directors like Dziga Vertov, **The Man with a Movie Camera** (1929), **Three Songs of Lenin** (1934) influenced a new generation of filmmakers, notably Eisenstein, in making the historical epics (**The Battleship Potemkin** (1925), **October** (1928), **Ivan the Terrible** (1944) that were very instrumental in establishing the Soviet perspective on Russian history. Under Stalin, building on Lenin's declaration "that for us cinema is the most important of all the arts," the cinema became a direct instrument of state policy.

In Germany, when they seized power in 1933, the National Socialists were very quick to nationalize the film industry and used it very effectively in building support for the party and for Hitler's expansionist plans and war aims. The power of the cinema for government propaganda had been clearly established during World War I, with the British Government taking over newsreel production to control the flow of war images to the public and re-

editing news film into extremely effective feature-length presentations – the classic is **The Battle of the Somme** (1916) - that had a major impact on the perception of the war. The lessons of the Great War, “the war to end all wars,” were not lost on governments in the next war. In the United States the Office of War Information commissioned the celebrated **Why We Fight** series produced by Frank Capra with contributions from a host of Hollywood directors, and Canada’s National Film Board produced the widely popular **Canada Carried On** and **The World in Action** series to inform and to mobilize support for the war effort. Following the war, governments in almost every country, with or without a commercial film industry, supported film productions designed to educate, inform, persuade or promote civic and community development, and to develop national pride.

Another value in moving images is the way they enhance the impact of oral testimony on historic events. Two examples: Marcel Ophul’s **The Sorrow and the Pity** (1971) records the experiences of both ordinary and leading French citizens during the German occupation and opened a debate on the extent of French collaboration with the Nazis (the filmed coverage of the trial of Klaus Barbie in 1987 re-kindled the debate); Claude Lanzmann’s **Shoah** (1985) provides almost nine and a half hours of eyewitness testimony on the Holocaust. In both cases the testimony is more credible because one can see the faces of the interviewees and their physical surroundings, augmented by the use of maps and historic footage to place the testimony in context.

One way that “historic significance” has relevance to the appraisal of fiction films is, of course, through the direct portrayal of historic events: **The Alamo** (1960 – the John Wayne version, and 2004 – the more balanced, albeit still American version); **The Charge of the Light Brigade** (1936 – the heroic American version, and 1968 – the revisionist British version); **Gallipoli** (1981 – the Australian account of their lasting memory of World War I) can serve as examples that influenced public perceptions of those events. The biography of an historical figure is another way of presenting history: Abel Gance’s massive and technologically innovative study, **Napoleon** (1927) is a classic of the genre, but there are hundreds of examples, dozens of Napoleon alone, ranging from the fairly factual to the purely fanciful. The historical accuracy of the portrayal is not the issue. It is the significance of the production in the public perception of the character and his or her role in the life of the nation.

In 1947 Siegfried Kracauer pioneered the study of the sociological and psychological impact the cinema, and now, of course, television, is presumed to have on its audience by linking the feature films produced in Germany with the concept of the *national will* and the rise of Nazism.¹⁹ Germany’s Minister of Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels, discovered that pure propaganda was less effective than drama in molding attitudes and reinforcing prejudices, making points through emotion rather than reason.²⁰ Films like **The Old King and Young King** (1935) and **Bismarck** (1940) promoted the cult of leadership and unquestioning loyalty to the leader; while films like **The Rothschilds** (1940) and **Jew Suss** (1940) were virulently anti-Semitic and designed to justify the ‘final solution’ to the Jewish question.

Although Kracauer’s work has been criticized as overstating the impact of the cinema as opposed to the other economic, political and social forces at work both inside and outside the country, there is a growing body of studies that link feature films to the currents and undercurrents at work in the society. In the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, three feature films, John Frankenheimer’s **Seven Days in May**, Sidney Lumet’s **Fail Safe**, and above all Stanley Kubrick’s **Dr. Strangelove: Or How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb**, all released in 1964, tried to deal with the threat of nuclear annihilation. There appears to be no question that continuing negative news film coverage in the later stages of the Viet Nam war, especially news film on the Tet offensive of 1968 which provided dramatic images that were unrepresentative of the situation in general, and widely disseminated through television, had a profound effect on American public opinion and played a very significant role in eroding public support for the war effort. Documentaries such as Emile de Antonio’s highly controversial **In the Year of the Pig** (1968) re-worked these images into indictments of government policy.

In Canada, with a feature film industry that has been marginalized through competition with Hollywood productions, it has been the non-fiction film that contributed most to nation building. The National Film Board, with

¹⁹ Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947).

²⁰ Jeffrey Richards, *Visions of Yesterday* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973) 288-357.

the broad mandate to “interpret Canada to Canadians and to other nations,” has produced some 9000 productions over the past sixty years. Operating in both English and French, it has been an important component in the process of building a sense of national identity in a vast territory with a diverse population. The Board’s productions deal with every aspect of life in the country, in every region. They show the impact of industrial and resource development and the environmental concerns associated with that development. They show the challenges of rapid urbanization and the problems of those living in the margins in our great cities. **Challenge for Change**, a National Film Board series initiated in 1967, actually used the documentary filmmaking process itself as a way of stimulating dialogue to solve community problems.

There are very few sports, crafts, folk arts, cultural festivals, dancers, singers, musicians, artists, native people’s ceremonies, and national, regional and local celebrations that have not been the subject of a National Film Board documentary. And there are very few social issues that have not been the subject of a filmed inquiry. For example, for 22 years, between 1974 and 1996, the Board’s Studio D focused exclusively on women’s issues, providing an opportunity for women filmmakers to explore many aspects of the changing role of women in Canadian society.

What this rich and varied collection exemplifies is the ability of moving images to document popular culture both as practiced in the main stream and as nourished by ethnic and racial minorities. Along with the production of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, it also documents great performances in the other performing arts, whether it is ballet, opera, symphony orchestras, rock bands or circus artists. To take only two examples from dozens: the audiovisual recordings of dance performances are an immensely important adjunct to dance notation in passing on this art form from one generation to another; more people have seen the plays of Shakespeare, Molière or Chekov on screen, interpreted by our finest actors, than have ever seen a performance in a theater, and the productions will make those performances available forever.

The events and celebrations that are the subject of many of these documentaries helped shape national consciousness. Shared images are vital building blocks in the process. The one single visual event that most Canadians can recall is Paul Henderson’s winning goal in the final game of the series between Canada and the Soviet Union in 1972. A nation unified by a hockey game! Thirty years later, along with the Act of Confederation in 1867, the Repatriation of the Constitution in 1982, and images of the first man to walk on the Moon, the Henderson goal was still voted as one of the top ten defining moments in Canadian history. The search for a “Canadian identity” is a national obsession that has consumed miles of forests to make paper for our literature and thousands of hours of screen time for our film producers and television broadcasters. Audiovisual productions have contributed to the search both directly and indirectly for the past sixty years as they have in many countries. (Before you conclude that the Canadian fixation on a hockey victory thirty-two years ago is a little odd, I should point out that a new German feature film by Sonke Wortmann, **The Miracle of Bern** (2004), chronicles the impact of the victory of the West German football team over Hungary in the World Cup in 1954, an event which is widely credited to mark that nation’s re-acceptance into the community of nations.) And on the subject of sport and nation building can anyone deny the impact of Greece’s victory over Portugal in this year’s World Cup combined with the hosting of the Olympic Games, now being recorded in thousands of hours of videotape, on the psyche of the nation.

It is relatively easy to justify the acquisition of outstanding feature films that deal with historical events and have generated a strong and voluminous critical response from scholars in many disciplines. **Birth of Nation** (1915), D. W. Griffith’s monumental and controversial epic on the American Civil War, the Reconstruction, and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, is impossible to ignore in any study of racism in America (advertised screenings of the film can still arouse violent opposition, as in Los Angeles just this month), and there are examples of films that have shaped perceptions of key social issues in every country with a developed film industry. There are, however, relatively few motion pictures that have the artistry and the universal appeal to condition public understanding of historical events (**Schindler’s List** (1993), on the Holocaust is an obvious example) and it raises the question of what one is to make of all those thousands of movies that blatantly distort history, wallow in the gore of battle, and present totally implausible heroics on the part of their ‘stars.’ And what is one to make of the hundreds of Westerns that play out rituals in a highly mythologized American West?, and there are mythologized ‘frontiers’ in films from many countries or historical periods in which the rule of law is either dysfunctional or non-existent.

There are those that would maintain that the program films, the “B” pictures from Hollywood and elsewhere, are even more valuable than the feature films because they unconsciously reflect societal mores and morals. In much the same way as the commercials that interrupt television programming are more revealing, and probably more valuable than the programs they interrupt! The position of purist cinémathèques is that no appraisal is possible, and that a world-wide network of archives should preserve every work, just as a world-wide network of libraries protects every book.

Because the pioneers in film archives were primarily attracted to film as art, and because aesthetic judgments are notoriously inconsistent and controversial, the official position of the International Federation of Film Archives, insofar as they admitted any position, was that all films should be saved. Henri Langlois, the legendary founder of the Cinémathèque française, once proclaimed that “no archivist had the right to play God!” The problem was that in deciding to collect *this* film rather than *that* film, with the knowledge that the film not selected probably would not survive, the effect was the same. Even Langlois lamented some of his earlier ‘choices’ at the end of his career. Audiovisual archivists, until the digital era, faced severe practical limitations on how much material they could accept. Environmentally controlled storage facilities were always at a premium, processing costs were expensive, and the downstream costs in transfers to more stable formats were considerable. The cost of storing one reel of nitrate film can be ten times the cost of storing a cubic foot of paper records. And if the archivist collected more film than could safely be stored the results, as the losses at the Cinémathèque française under Langlois demonstrated so sadly, could be devastating to the national, if not the world’s, audiovisual heritage.

It is easy to criticize Langlois’ acquisition policy but it is much more difficult to develop a workable policy. When I started building a national audiovisual collection for Canada in 1973 we took the position that everything produced in Canada was of value and should be collected and preserved. This was, of course, the UNESCO position later adopted in the *Recommendation* of 1980. This was possible because only a small proportion of the historic production in Canada had survived and the level of recent production could be accommodated in the storage facilities available. We were thus able to avoid the “schizophrenic dilemma” of selection and the need to predict what future generations of Canadians would expect to find in the national collection. Meissner had warned that decisions should not be based on *potential* value as “prophecy was suspect.” It is, perhaps, inevitable that acquisition decisions by archivists will come back to haunt them. Consider the decision of the curators at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the early thirties: offered all the films of Buster Keaton they decided that two films would be sufficient to document his comic genius. In their defense they were working in the context of a museum of fine art which had just recognized motion pictures as works of art and in which the acquisition criteria revolved around aesthetic qualities and the representative character of the works in question. A policy of acquisition based on identifying works that are “culturally significant” will always be open to challenge as it is almost impossible to provide a definition to which more than two cultural historians at any one time would agree.

When the National Archives of Canada looked at world production the policy was to select only works that were acknowledged masterworks that had been widely seen in Canada, and had influenced Canadian filmmakers. Our position was that Canadian works should be viewed in the context of world production, much as Canadian art was viewed in the National Gallery, as part of the cultural heritage of all Canadians. Assuming that there was a world-wide network of moving image archives there should be no need to preserve the national production of other countries. Unfortunately, the recent losses in archives through civil wars and insurrections argues that the world patrimony in moving images would be better served by having more than one copy protected in more than one country. The moving image archives of Iraq are believed to be a casualty of the recent war. Even a natural disaster in an archive can devastate the moving heritage of a nation. Fires in Mexico City and Buenos Aires, among others, led to severe losses in the national production. And even if they were preserved elsewhere, would they be accessible? I worked for Ernest Lindgren at the British Film Institute’s archives in the late fifties and he used to remind me that the English Channel had been closed twice in his lifetime!

In appraising television broadcasts the National Archives relied on the broadcasters protecting their own archives, but because access to these resources is difficult – broadcast archives are generally closed to outside researchers - the Archives has been acquiring copies of important broadcasts and has been selectively recording off-air for some years. Selection was on the basis of news and current affairs, programs of social and political interest, and coverage

of events broadcast live where the broadcaster would not have recorded the entire program. The International Federation of Television Archives, FIAT, recommended that everything broadcast should be retained for a period of five years to allow time for some perspective in selecting programs for permanent retention. Others have argued that a retention period of twenty years, or a generation, should be mandatory. FIAT also recommended that an entire day of broadcasting, to document presentation, should be recorded for every channel at least once a year.

It should be clear by now that this paper will not provide an appraisal policy for any archival institution. Conditions vary so much from country to country in terms of what other archives and institutions, both official and unofficial, are collecting, the size and significance of the national production, and in the capacity of the national archives to take on additional responsibilities, that generalizations are useless. I can only offer a few general principles, drawn from my work, *Appraising Moving Images*, which should be considered in developing a policy.

The first is that you cannot appraise what you do not know. You should know the work in context, in relation to other works, in relation to the producers or sponsors of the work, and in relation to the economic and social conditions and the ideological mindset in which the work was produced. Only then will you know whether the work has *value* for your archive, or even whether it falls within your collecting mandate. This implies that the archives has staff that have formal training or acquired knowledge of the moving image industries

No single factor of a potential acquisition should be a determining factor if it stands alone. Old age is to be respected, but if is an inferior copy of a work that is well protected elsewhere old age may not be enough. The relationship to other works or to other documents in the collection may be enough, but if it adds nothing to our knowledge or our understanding it may not be a significant factor. The work may be unique, but so banal in subject matter and so poor in execution that it has no discernable value, except perhaps to the person who created it. It is usually a combination of factors that tip the scales in favor of retention or disposition.

To the vast bulk of works that lie between those that obviously have value and those that have no apparent value (at least to the objective appraiser – all moving images have some value to someone) the archivist must bring knowledge, experience and an open mind willing to learn more about other people's lives and other world's outside his own.. Whether fiction or fact, moving images have surface realities and contextual realities, a relationship between the image-maker and the work, and the audience and the work, that may be more important than the images themselves.

Archivists sometime refer to the "image of society" that results from the interaction of citizens and their government that is revealed in the records of transactions. It is the responsibility of the archivist to capture and convey that image to future generations. Moving image archivists work with more concrete images, but they can just as easily distort the record with poor choices as do their colleagues working with the written word. If the archives assume a passive attitude to acquisition, "what will come, will come," the image of society they will preserve will inevitably be skewed by official images from big government and big business. What will be missing is what Patricia Zimmerman calls "micro-histories", the stories told by those using moving images at the margins of society and outside the industrial mainstream.

What will also be missing will be the mythologies, the ritualistic behaviors, the tales commemorating the common heritage of a people, that are the building blocks of collective identity. All are also under threat from the homogenizing effects of mass media globalization. Audiovisual records are one of the principle means of preserving these identities and communicating them over time.

Archivists will be debating appraisal theory and practice for years to come in the hope of raising appraisal out of that gray area between science and art. It has been described as a craft, but it is more that that: it is bound up with the key ideas in the philosophy of archives and the historic role of the archivist as the custodian of memory. In an age of abundance, in the volume of records if not in the budgets of archives, and in the age of digital conversion and media integration that is upon us, the theory and practice of appraisal will continue to be the archivist's greatest challenge.