

---

# Moving Image Preservation and Cultural Capital

KAREN F. GRACY

---

## ABSTRACT

This article examines the changing landscape of moving image archiving in the wake of recent developments in online video sharing services such as YouTube and Google Video. The most crucial change to moving image archives may not be in regard to the collections themselves, but rather the social order that sustains cultural institutions in their role as the creators and sustainers of objectified cultural capital. In the future, moving image stewardship may no longer be the exclusive province of institutions such as archives and libraries, and may soon be accomplished in part through the work of other interested individuals and organizations as they contribute to and define collections. The technologies being built and tested in the current Internet environment offer a new model for the reimagined moving image archive, which foregrounds the user in the process of creating the archive and strongly encourages the appropriation of moving images for new works. This new archetype, which in theory functions on democratic principles, considers moving images—along with most other types of cultural heritage material—to be building blocks of creative acts or public speech acts. One might argue that the latter represents a new model for creating an archive; this new democratic archive documents and facilitates social discourse.

## INTRODUCTION

The quickly accelerating integration of moving images on the Web in the last year brings us ever closer to the goal of building digital collections that are rich in multimedia, thus adding to the collections of documents and images that are already well-established. Video clips have become

a central feature of many Web sites, which are taking advantage of new technologies that make it easier to stream high-quality full-motion video. Refined streaming capabilities, the growth in the number of households with broadband connections, and the strong interest by users to create and share content have fueled the growth of Internet video sharing sites such as YouTube and GoogleVideo.<sup>1</sup>

These new developments suggest fascinating implications for the cultural heritage community involved in the work of moving image preservation and access. Finally, cultural institutions will be able to bring the riches of moving image archives to the masses, and to connect their collections with other moving image material. Through various methods, such as union catalogs or metasearch techniques, links can be made with not only those materials found within institutional collections, but also the material available via the burgeoning video sharing sites. The meta-archive of moving images seems to be finally within our reach.<sup>2</sup>

This article focuses on an interesting problem that emerges in the wake of embracing and connecting with these new resources. One must consider the implications of this blurring of the lines between the traditional archive and the new Internet moving image collections that are emerging. While the established institutions and organizations have established processes and practices for the management of collections, and have the tacit authority to make decisions about such things as acquisition, appraisal, and preservation, the newly emerging collections growing exponentially have few such structures in place to shape the direction of the collection. One might suggest that the latter represents a new model for creating an archive; this new democratic archive documents and facilitates social discourse by encouraging users to submit their own video creations to be shared by others in the community, to organize material by “tagging” them with keywords and linking them to related clips, to appropriate material from the archive through downloads and links to material in the archive placed on other sites, and last, to create additional documentation of clips through the addition of comments.

This paper attempts to explore the ramifications of the distinction between established cultural institutions and the newer forms of digital moving image collections now emerging. For institutions, does the appearance of these new archives force the old guard to reexamine and redefine themselves? If cultural institutions no longer muster the same authority to curate collections—and by curate I mean shape them through the activities of acquisition, appraisal, description, deaccessioning, and all the other processes in which such institutions engage—what is their role within society and in regard to cultural heritage? Are we now seeing the ascendancy of a new order, one in which users and creators take a more proactive approach to shaping the content and structures of moving image collections? More pragmatically, does the average user understand or

even care about the difference between the “archive” as such, and other formal collections?

### MOVING IMAGE ARCHIVES AND THE SOCIAL ORDER

In the digital age, moving image preservation continues to evolve beyond its origins in the care of analog motion picture and video media. As more and more moving images are created, distributed, and maintained in digital form, moving image archives will no longer match the stereotypical image many of us have of stacks of rusty cans and boxes filled with quickly decomposing films and videos in need of salvation. Instead, the moving image archivist of the twenty-first century will face the even greater challenge of managing enormous collections of digital files, containing dozens of formats (most of them obsolete) and residing in networks maintained far from the archivist’s actual location. While many of today’s archivists are preoccupied with the preservation and restoration of individual titles (somewhat like conservators treating works of art or individual volumes), tomorrow’s archivists will be much more concerned with the management of component parts of the work that may in fact be reused in other works (Besser, 2001).

Given the changes that moving image archivists will face in their daily work, it is not surprising that many in the profession are preoccupied with the technical challenges accompanying the transition from analog to digital. Few archivists have given similar consideration to the social implications of this evolution. As digital video formats are now well on their way to becoming the primary medium for moving image content, the information disciplines are just beginning to assess the impact of these digital media on the primary functions of cultural heritage institutions. Initially, we are most likely to recognize that digital media improves the accessibility of cultural material; the potential for democratization of access, and through that democratization process, facilitating the appropriation of cultural material for consumption and creation of new works. All of these trends tend to occupy the writers and thinkers about digital media.

We also extol the benefits of digital media for facilitating the development of social networks. Virtual communities build around common points of interest, both for work and leisure activities, using tools ranging from electronic mail and newsgroups to weblogs to virtual gaming environments. In some ways, it is inevitable that social networks should extend into the work of cultural institutions, as they have infiltrated other institutions (such as education and government).

Yet, when we consider digital media and its surrounding culture for its potential to provide new methods for preserving and extending the longevity of our cultural record, the problems surrounding digital preservation seem to overwhelm the potential benefits. While digital media holds the promise of comparatively unlimited storage potential and ease

of making copies of material, the issues of format obsolescence, authenticity, integrity, scalability, and economic incentives for providing preservation services weigh down the community in complex challenges (Harvey, 2005). While these problems, faced by cultural institutions, corporations, governments, and other organizations demand much attention and resources as we search for solutions, individuals and families also share these concerns about preserving material (Bergeron, 2002). The solutions must be scalable both upwards to accommodate the largest, most complex collections, and downwards to collections of individuals and smaller repositories.

Moving image archivists fully engaged in the process of maintaining digital objects will in fact be reinventing themselves, relinquishing one archetype—that is, custodian of physical objects—for another. While it is true that they will continue to fulfill their custodial obligations as required of their positions—whether those objects be legacy material or digital material, many actions, such as acquisition and preservation of materials, may become less visible and require less contact with creators and users as these processes are automated and regulated. As institutionally-based collections intermingle with user-built collections, those stewardship activities that defined the identities of archives, libraries, and museums may no longer be seen as the unique realm of cultural institutions. Thus, the curatorial or archival authority with which cultural heritage institutions are invested may diminish to the point where society may question the need for such entities to perform such work.

The above statement may seem a radical suggestion, particularly as user-built moving image collections are still in their infancy and do not really threaten the primacy of established cultural institutions as of yet. It is worthwhile, however, to examine the nature of moving image archives and the phenomenon of user-built archives more closely. Does the new model of the digital moving image archive modify the essential role and functions of the archive, and therefore of moving image archivists themselves? That question lies at the heart of this discussion.

### CULTURAL HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS AND THE STEWARDSHIP OF MOVING IMAGES

As articulated previously, the most crucial change to moving image archives will not necessarily be in regard to the collections themselves, but rather to the social order that sustains cultural institutions. Moving image stewardship may no longer be the exclusive province of institutions such as archives and libraries, and may soon be accomplished in large part through the work of other interested individuals and organizations. Creators, whether they are individuals, organizations, or corporations, are bound to become more directly involved in heritage activities as they contribute material to networks and create their own archives.<sup>3</sup>

In our current worldview, society relies largely upon cultural heritage institutions to select which material is most worthy of expending limited resources on its care. In the new model being considered, selection for accessioning becomes less relevant as collections of significance may not ever officially enter into an institution's care in the first place; rather, selection of which collections to link to becomes more important. The individual creators (or the network where the content resides) may be the sole possessors of moving image material, and transfer of material to institutional custody may not occur. The actions of creators or service providers to perpetuate or destroy material of value (either consciously or through benign neglect) will determine the shape and scope of cultural heritage in the decades to come.<sup>4</sup>

In the distributed environment of the Internet, preservation efforts may be diffuse and disjointed, reliant upon a multitude of individuals and organizations that may not be coordinated with one another. Can preservation exist in an environment where the responsibility for preservation is distributed among many people and organizations rather than being the purview of a select number of institutions? We have not yet built an infrastructure or mentality of preservation among creators, thus preservation as the field currently conceives it would be quite difficult.

### ARCHIVAL POWERS

It is worthwhile to examine briefly the traditional role of cultural institutions and how society confers upon them the power to preserve and provide access to cultural heritage. By understanding their powers, we may be better able to analyze how stewardship in the digital domain may be transformed.

The Web offers the opportunity for individuals with digital moving image material to build and maintain their own collections, and share them with whomever they choose. These activities, traditionally the purview of cultural institutions (archives, museums, and libraries), are no longer the exclusive domain of a few recognized organizations. The advent of moving images on the Web with the concurrent development of video-sharing services, offer a new avenue for storing and managing such material, one that bypasses the traditional route of preserving such material within archives, libraries, museums, and other types of heritage institutions.

The culture heritage profession, of which moving image archiving forms a part, is in fact reliant upon a social contract in which institutions are created and sustained to perform particular types of cultural work, that is, the identification, collection, description, and sustenance of culturally significant objects.<sup>5</sup> One might assert that such institutions have been imbued with the authority to control this work, and that many of their practices are actually designed to keep other "unqualified" individuals and institutions from performing the same work (Crimp, 1993;

Douglas, 1986). The degree of control over certain types of work, such as preservation or distribution of the work, may be tempered by other variables such as its copyright status (in which case, the authority of the owner trumps that of the cultural institution). Preservation is a particularly important function of the cultural heritage institution, as it is where the authority of the curator or archivist is invoked to determine the value of an object or collection and allocate resources toward its care based on that valuation. The concept of value also bears further investigation.

### PRESERVATION AND VALUE

One may summarize the central tenet of preservation most simply in the following statement: We preserve what is of value. Yet, who determines the value of cultural objects? And what do we mean when we use the term “value”? While the latter question is certainly broader than could be addressed adequately here, I would like to offer the definition of value suggested by Randall Mason, who recommends that the cultural heritage community use the term in the following sense: “in reference to the qualities and characteristics seen in things, in particular the positive characteristics (actual and potential)” (Mason, 2002, p. 7). This definition assumes that value is extrinsic to the cultural object, being produced solely “out of the interaction of an artifact and its contexts; they don’t emanate from the artifact itself” (Mason, 2002, p. 8). In simplest terms, what this definition establishes is that value is entirely a construct, and one must “buy into” a particular system of valuation before finding something to be of value.

Returning to the first question, who determines the value of a cultural object? With the above definition, a seemingly sensible derivation would be that anybody or any community could designate something to be of value. If one accepts this proposition, it is then possible that someone could assign a value to an object that may be in direct opposition to the value imposed by another individual or group. The concept of extrinsic value allows for multiple definitions of value for a cultural object; cultural heritage is multivalent—any number of values can be ascribed to an object simultaneously.

Yet, it is often the case that one type of value is foregrounded, on the basis of the judgment of one particular set of experts or authorities. Thus, while an object might have spiritual value in one community, its aesthetic, economic, or scientific value might override the consideration of its spiritual value. Often, it is stakeholders with power that establish value, differentiating among a multitude of objects to separate the permanent from the ephemeral according to their definitions. Usually, these stakeholders function as part of a larger institution upon which has been granted the authority to establish value. As Pearce notes, “In the modern state the operation of power is linked with a range of disciplinary and surveillance

procedures which draw on knowledge in all its attributes, including the development of the necessary institutions and technologies. We see from this that not merely religion or moral codes but also scientific knowledge, the operation of human reason, and *all value judgments are to be seen simply as strategies of power, as ways of not perceiving reality, but of creating social relationships* [italics added]" (Pearce, 1992, p. 231). In many ways, cultural institutions are articulations of particular worldviews of certain segments of society. Communities, particularly those in the developed world, rely upon trusted cultural institutions to perform the task of cultural heritage valuation for us. These institutions are often the cultural entities with which we are familiar, for example, libraries, archives, and museums. They also may be other types of forces such as the market, which determines economic value of cultural objects, or religious institutions, which designate certain objects with sacred value.

### MOVING IMAGES AS CULTURAL CAPITAL

When discussing issues surrounding valuation, it is particularly helpful to consider the related concept of capital. One might assert that cultural heritage is a form of capital that can be accumulated, shared, transferred, and otherwise manipulated by both individuals and institutions, and that the control of significant amounts of cultural capital confers a certain power to the possessor. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu first articulated the concept of cultural capital in *Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction* (1973), and later refined the concept in his essay "The Forms of Capital" (1986). In the latter work, Bourdieu defines three types of cultural capital: embodied, institutionalized, and objectified. Individuals may embody cultural capital through development of what Bourdieu calls "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body," meaning that through the process of enculturation, individuals in a particular group (often a socioeconomic class) acquire and sustain a body of cultural knowledge and particular preferences in art, literature, and other aspects of culture. A person's particular embodied cultural capital is known as his or her *habitus*.

While embodied cultural capital is often transmitted within the family environment, institutionalized capital is transmitted through schools, universities, and other educating bodies. Persons who possess institutionalized cultural capital have been "academically sanctioned by legally guaranteed qualifications"; that is, they have an earned degree or certification that grants them a particular status, and separates them from practitioners who do not have the qualifications. Thus, society has established a method to separate the physicians from the quacks, and the professors from the ardent amateurs. One may also apply this concept of institutionalized cultural capital to the institutions themselves, as society tends to recognize those cultural institutions that have affiliations with accrediting

bodies. Examples of these bodies in the cultural heritage area might include the American Association of Museums or the International Federation of Film Archives.

Cultural institutions invest in objectified cultural capital, the third type of cultural capital that Bourdieu designated. It encompasses collections of cultural goods, including all types of art, artifacts, books, and archives, all of which contain the traces or realizations of human endeavor. Moving images reside within this realm of objectified cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). According to Bourdieu, the method by which society recognizes such objects as having value as works of art, that is, as having symbolic value, includes not only recognition of the artists themselves, but also those who collect, analyze, and otherwise perform actions upon those collections:

Given that works of art exist as symbolic objects only if they are known and recognized, that is, socially instituted as works of art and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognizing them as such, the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work, i.e., the production of the value of the work, or which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work. It therefore has to consider as contributing to production not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer, etc.) but also the producers of the meaning and value of the work—critics, publishers, gallery directors and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such. (Bourdieu, 1993)

The key actors in this valuation process are the “arbiters of taste”: people and institutions selecting, preserving, and facilitating access to works contribute directly to the creation of value within the work. These players, who populate a sphere that Bourdieu refers to as the “field of cultural production,” organize the process of valuation and determine who shall have influence within the field and who will not. Our cultural institutions are created primarily to reflect the dominant opinions of the “tastemakers”; while it is true that value is a social construct in flux and capable of redefinition at any time, the stability of cultural institutions relies upon the difficulty in dislodging the dominant paradigm. Often, it requires external forces such as economic crisis or political regime change to “shock the system” and effect a change in the status quo. An example of this sort of complete paradigm shift would be the transformation of the cultural landscape in Russia after the revolution brought the Soviets to power. After such a transition, cultural institutions rebound to reflect the new paradigm, or new institutions are established to take the place of the old. The function of the institution remains the same: to control the valuation of cultural objects and their appropriation by individuals into embodied cultural capital.



An interesting question to consider in respect to the topic at hand (moving images and cultural capital): what would happen if cultural institutions were bypassed, allowing others the opportunity to identify, manage, and preserve cultural objects of value without having to go through an intermediary? Would we make cultural institutions less relevant if their authority as intermediaries in the heritage endeavor was circumvented?

The idea of encouraging individuals and communities to assert their own power to control heritage objects is not necessarily a new one. Many countries have reexamined the formerly standard practices whereby museums appropriated and assimilated objects into their collections from other cultural groups (e.g., Native Americans, indigenous Australians). As museums and other cultural institutions have come to recognize the alternate values of these objects for these communities, their policy has increasingly been to return such material to its rightful owners. The native cultures were recognized for the first time as being significant stakeholders in the valuation process. While the objects were recognized as potentially having significant historical, scientific, or aesthetic value, their value within the community of creators and users was given primacy.

The notion of multivalent cultural heritage, leaving heritage open to infinite manners of interpretation, has been explored further by others such as Rick Prelinger. Prelinger began an intriguing project in 2000 that aims to encourage individuals to consider the value of the landscapes in which they live and work. He and his wife, Megan Shaw Prelinger, drop coins at selected sites that are imprinted with the following sayings: "Landscape is our memory; A map of hidden histories; value me as you please." The sites are chosen for a variety of reasons, however, the goal is to "recognize and mark places that we believe deserve our attention and thought." The concept is simple and straightforward—we as individuals and communities shape landscapes, and assign value according to our own value system; hence, the coin reads "value me as you please" rather than telling us what value system to use. Further elaborating on this concept, Prelinger posits that

We are makers of the landscape around us, and the landscape we inhabit influences the shape of our lives and our view of ourselves. We ask those who find a coin to value it in their own way, and at the same time consider how the place where they found it has been valued by others. Are land and landscape ultimately properties, commodities to be bought and sold? Or, in the final analysis, do they belong to all of us? How does an ordinary, everyday landscape like a highway or an abandoned industrial tract compare in value to a venerated historical site or a pleasant suburban neighborhood? And who is it, anyway, that [*sic*] decides the value of the money we carry in our pockets and purses? (Prelinger, 2006, Description of Project section, para. 5)

This spirit of encouraging individuals to refute dominant value paradigms finds its articulation on the Web through do-it-yourself ventures

like Wikipedia and other user-generated content sites. These new developments offer amateurs the opportunity to challenge the dominance of experts and seems to be gaining traction as authoritative sources in certain fields (Read, 2006). In the cultural heritage arena, similar activities and projects vie with cultural heritage institutions for the power to define and control cultural capital.

### NEW MODELS OF MOVING IMAGE ARCHIVING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The concept of cultural capital becomes somewhat problematic when applied to moving images. Primarily seen as a medium of popular entertainment, our ability to recognize moving images as a type of cultural capital is often overwhelmed by the commercial nature of much of the material; as with many other media dominated by popular genres, its economic value often overshadows other types of value. Until fairly recently, it was not even considered under the rubric of "cultural heritage," particularly in the United States. In a sense, this lack of recognition for moving images galvanized and drove the film preservation movement. The *raison d'être* of moving image archives and archivists has been predicated on the idea that moving images are often unloved and unprotected cultural expressions, doomed to oblivion save for the efforts of a small, yet growing band of enthusiasts who step in at the final hour to save them (i.e., from deterioration, destruction, or even just neglect). These efforts have largely been successful, in that a number of moving image archives have been established and worked to gain recognition for the value of audiovisual heritage. Through their collecting activities, these institutions have made great strides preserving significant objects of moving image heritage (i.e., cultural capital).

Despite this progress made in establishing themselves as cultural institutions, moving image archives now face the same challenges as other institutions brought by creators and users building their own collections of material. What happens if moving images no longer primarily exist as objectified cultural capital held by institutions but as something else entirely? What if the individual creators and users became the primary arbiters of value and created their own structures and systems to store, preserve, and access moving images?

The technologies being built and tested in the current Internet environment offer a new model for the reimagined moving image archive, which foregrounds the user in the process of creating the archive and strongly encourages the appropriation of moving images for new works. This new archetype, which in theory functions on democratic principles, considers moving images (along with most other types of cultural heritage material) to be building blocks of creative acts or public speech acts. A digital archive in the democratic mold encourages the deposit and use of

any and all material that belongs to the public, or which may be seen as being key to an understanding of the society as a whole. While this archive strives to work within the current framework of intellectual property law (i.e., it will not knowingly distribute material currently under copyright), civil liberties such as freedom of speech and expression are cornerstones to its approach, and thus it will foster open access to cultural heritage.

A prime example of this model of digital archiving manifests itself in the Internet Archive; in the words of founder Brewster Kahle, “Do you know what’s carved above the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh?—‘FREE TO THE PEOPLE’—what a goal! I can believe in this! At the Internet Archive, we think of our mission as universal access to all knowledge” (Benson, 2005). The Internet Archive, and the Open Content Alliance—the larger entity that the Internet Archive helped foster—typify the democratic digital archive. The democratic digital archive encourages users who donate material to the site to use the Creative Commons license, which gives others varying degrees of freedom to appropriate material in the creation of new works as long as the original creator retains attribution to the source material.

Democratic digital archives can feature collections digitized and donated as a corpus by organizations and individuals as well as individual works uploaded piecemeal by users. Some sites, such as YouTube, focus almost exclusively on the latter. YouTube describes itself as “a place for people to engage in new ways with video by sharing, commenting on, and viewing videos” (YouTube, n.d.). Other sites that offer similar services include Google Video, Metacafe, and Veoh. These sites function in such a way that they become what could be called a “social mirror” of current events and concerns in daily life, where users function as both users and creators. They are outgrowths of other social media such as social networking sites, weblogs, and podcasts. The primary user base has thus far been teenagers and young adults (ages 18–24), however, this audience appears to be broadening as broadcast and cable networks, corporations, government agencies, and political action committees have discovered the power of this new communication outlet.

Social mirror archives have generated a significant amount of attention in the last two years for two reasons; first, they are designed to encourage the deposit of content and appropriation of that content among users of the site. A key to YouTube’s success has been its technology that enables users to embed links to video content on other sites, allowing them to play YouTube content in their own blogs. Second, users have regularly uploaded material to the site that is under copyright, such as clips from DVDs and recently broadcast television shows. The popularity of YouTube has grown so much in its first year of existence that by late summer of 2006, there were approximately six million videos archived on the site, and one hundred million videos were being viewed every day (McGrath, 2006).

While YouTube and other video-sharing sites preclude users from uploading work for which they do not own the rights, as per its user agreement, users have regularly done so anyway. Although several corporations, most notably the television networks NBC-Universal, ABC, and CBS have complained about such copyright infringements, few companies appear to want to pursue litigation. Instead, most companies have recognized the power of these sites for promoting their product and seek to enter partnerships with the sites. YouTube and NBC-Universal entered into a partnership in which YouTube hosted videos promoting the network's 2006 fall slate of television programming (Goo, 2006).

With the latest breed of democratic digital archives, the emphasis appears to be on creation of the archive itself by user-creators. Curatorial direction is often minimal or nonexistent. Members of the YouTube community provide their own curatorial commentary by making posts to discussion boards linked to the videos. While videos are often simply diaries of creators' lives, many YouTube users take copyrighted material and reedit it into new works.

Although the emphasis has often been on the humorous, quirky, or simply weird, captured on low-tech webcams, camera phones, or home video cameras, political commentary often makes an appearance in the archive. Comedian Stephen Colbert's scathing denouncement, couched in satirical rhetoric, of President George W. Bush, his Republican administration, and the media at the 2006 White House Correspondents' Association dinner appeared briefly on YouTube before being removed at the request of C-SPAN, the copyright holder. Other politically-tinged clips that have circulated on YouTube include former President Bill Clinton's attack on Fox News while being interviewed by Chris Wallace on the cable network, and the amateur footage of Senator George Allen at a campaign rally shot by the employee of Allen's opponent (James H. Webb), who was present to film the event; Allen used the racial epithet "macaca" to refer to the campaign worker, S. R. Sidarth, who is of Indian descent.

The recent acquisition of YouTube by Google indicates the power of this new model for moving images collections; clearly the latter saw the former as a significant competitor to its own service, particularly as YouTube began to branch out from its initial user base to seek partnerships with corporations seeking to promote content online. Unfortunately, the innovative, free-wheeling character of YouTube had begun to be diluted as the service struck deals with broadcast networks, movie studios, and music companies to establish separate "channels" to push certain film, television, and music video content at users. The need to "pay the rent" meant that these sorts of partnerships were inevitable. Unfortunately, these partnerships also allow content owners to patrol the YouTube site for potential copyright infringement, and more quickly remove those videos posted illegally (Goo, 2006). More and more, content is being manip-

ulated by YouTube in the way in which the site is organized and through videos featured on its home page; users have little to no control over these aspects of the service.

Ultimately, the idea of the self-generated democratic archive founders on the shoals of incommensurability with current copyright law and the need for such a service to be sustainable over the long term. Would such a model work if subsidized by the government or other noncommercial entities? The Internet Archive is one example of a non-profit entity that seeks to encourage user-built collections. They do not partner with corporate content owners. They also attempt to provide an indication of user-assigned value through the tracking of something called “batting averages,” which they define as the percentage of people who download a particular clip after having viewed details about it. Their collections staff do perform some curatorial work through the featuring of certain moving images on their “What’s New?” weblog, spotlights, and staff picks, however, these features of the Archive seem more in the spirit of community-building rather than pushing or selling particular clips as commodities. The balance is somewhat different, as the content of the Archive is not simply built by user-creators but also consists of previously existing collections that have been digitized. In the wake of the YouTube phenomenon, it will be interesting to see if the Archive foregrounds user-generated content even more than it has already done so. While the Internet Archive clearly wants to promote the use of digitized and digital collections already online, their proactive stance vis-à-vis the comprehensive documentation of electronic social discourse (through, for example, the Wayback Machine and other collections focused on major events such as September 11 and Hurricane Katrina) indicates that they are leaning in this direction.

## CONCLUSION

In the wake of these recent developments in social mirror archiving, cultural heritage institutions such as moving image archives, must reflect on whether or not it represents a new model for collection building. Will cultural heritage institutions be willing to create systems to acquire and maintain content directly from users, allowing them to define the value of the material through the practices of description, usage, and critical commentary? Does doing so mean that they relinquish curatorial control, and thus have diminished powers as arbiters of value? It would require a tremendous leap of faith for these institutions, yet it would go a long way in showing users that we do in fact believe in the multivalent character of cultural heritage. By embracing multiple systems of valuation, inviting everyone to the table as stakeholders in the process of creating heritage, we would enrich our collections immeasurably.

Cultural institutions still hold an important position in society, as they exist to do much of heritage management work that cannot as of yet be

easily accomplished by most individuals, and they have a responsibility to serve particular functions in society (such as government and corporate archives, which must act as instruments of accountability). Not all cultural institutions will see user-defined value as of primary importance, yet many should consider how to incorporate it within their own systems. It may provide important information that will be invaluable as archivists, librarians, and other professionals with curatorial powers make the decisions about how to spend valuable resources to sustain collections.

## NOTES

1. According to the most recent Pew study on home broadband adoption, by March 2006 forty-two percent of American households had a broadband connection (Horrigan, 2006).
2. Obviously, the availability of much copyrighted material via these sites may be restricted, however, this new endeavor offers the cultural heritage community another opportunity to continue the discussion with content owners about related intellectual property issues, particularly fair use.
3. Because of the creator- and user-driven nature of these archives, they will accumulate differently than traditional archives. In the Society of American Archivists' *Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, archives are defined as:

materials created or received by a person, family, or organization, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in the information they contain or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control; permanent records. (Pearce-Moses, 2005, p. 30)

Whereas archives in the above sense presumes a single creator, for the purpose of establishing and tracing provenance, this new breed of archive relies upon multiple creators—in some sense, these creators form a community that itself forms the *fonds*. The self-generating archive or library, where users build and organize collections as a by-product of other social activities, represents a new concept that has yet to be integrated into archival discourse. Yet these types of collections are in the ascendancy.

4. The concept of “trusted digital repositories” works well for those materials that cultural institutions have the responsibility to administer, however, one cannot assume that all collections will come under the care of such organizations (RLG-OCLC, 2002).
5. In this article, I will use the phrase, “cultural heritage stewardship,” as an umbrella term for these types of activities.

## REFERENCES

- Benson, H. (2005, November 22). A man's vision: World library online. *San Francisco Chronicle*, p. A1.
- Bergeron, B. (2002). *Dark ages II: When the digital data die*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Besser, H. (2001). Digital preservation of moving image material? *The Moving Image*, 1(2), 39–55.
- Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In R. Brown (Ed.), *Knowledge, education, and cultural change: Papers in the sociology of education* (pp. 71–112). London: Tavistock.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital (R. Nice, Trans.). In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook for theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature* (R. Johnson, Ed. & Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Crimp, D. (1993). *On the museum's ruins*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Douglas, M. (1986). *How institutions think*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

- Goo, S. K. (2006, June 28). NBC taps popularity of online video site. *Washington Post*, p. D01.
- Harvey, R. (2005). *Preserving digital materials*. Munich, Germany: K. G. Saur.
- Horrigan, J. B. (2006). *Home broadband adoption 2006*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project.
- Mason, R. (2002). Assessing values in conservation planning: Methodological issues and choices. In M. de la Torre (Ed.), *Assessing the values of cultural heritage* (pp. 5–30). Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute.
- McGrath, B. (2006, October 16). It should happen to you: The anxieties of YouTube fame. *The New Yorker*, 82, 86–95.
- Pearce, S. M. (1992). *Museums, objects, and collections: A cultural study*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Pearce-Moses, R. (2005). *A glossary of archival and records terminology*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists.
- Prelinger, R. (2006, August). The landscape coin project. Retrieved October 24, 2006, from <http://home.earthlink.net/~alysons/coin.html>.
- Read, B. (2006). Can Wikipedia ever make the grade?. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 53, p. A31. Retrieved October 28 from <http://chronicle.com/temp/reprint.php?%20id=z6xht2rj60kqmsl8tlq5ltqcshc5y93y>.
- RLG-OCLC. (2002). *Trusted digital repositories: Attributes and responsibilities*. Mountain View, CA: RLG.
- YouTube. (n.d.). About YouTube. Retrieved March 6, 2007, from <http://www.youtube.com/t/about>.

---

Karen F. Gracy is an assistant professor in the School of Library and Information Science at Kent State University. She teaches courses in digital preservation and archiving, and directs the Digital Preservation Certificate for Kent State. Dr. Gracy's recent articles include a study of preservation education programs, published in *Library Resources & Technical Services*, an analysis of the film preservation process in *The Moving Image*, and an examination of ethnographic methods for archival research for *Archival Science*. Her book, *Film Preservation: Competing Definitions of Value, Use, and Practice*, was published by the Society of American Archivists in 2007. She currently serves as interim editor of *The Moving Image*, journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists.