Professors Antonia Lant and Howard Besser
H72. 1801. 719: The Culture of Archives, Museums, and Libraries (4 points)

Class meets in 721 Broadway, Room 652, Wednesdays, 12:30-4:30 pm.
• Lant office hours: 721 Broadway, Rm. 627, Mon, 9:30-11:30 am Tel: 8-1612,
antonia.lant@nyu.edu
• Besser office hours: 665 Broadway, Rm. 612, Wed 11:15-12:15 and by appointment. Tel 2-9399, howard@nyu.edu

Course Description:
This course studies the different kinds of institutions that collect and manage moving image material: museums of art, natural history, and motion pictures; libraries, archives, and historical societies; corporate institutions. It compares and contrasts these types of institution to reveal how they differ from one another. It also looks at how the various institution types may handle similar material in significantly different ways (from what they acquire, to how they describe it, to how they display or preserve it). It examines theories of collecting, the history of moving image archiving, the organizational structures of institutions that house moving images (including trends in staffing and the roles of individual departments), and their respective missions and operational ethics. Experts who are professionally concerned with moving image collections will visit the seminar, or we will visit their institutions. The course is required for students in the MA in Moving Image Archiving and Preservation.

Student requirements for those students who did not take Contemporary Cultural Institutions:
--an observational study of two cultural institutions for in-class presentation (for details, see last page of syllabus) (20%);
--a detailed study of a non-US institution of the moving image (a museum, archive, or cinémathèque), to be presented in class at the end of the semester and written up. Your project should include a comparative focus in which you discuss a particular challenge, issue, or part of the history of your chosen archive in relation to another institution with which you are familiar. (35%)
--At least 4 times during the semester you must bring in to class a current news article related to cultural institutions, and orally explain this to the rest of the class. Topics might include private collectors, contested objects, hirings/firings, cultural institution expansions, etc. You should aim to present 2 of these before midterm, and 2 by the end of the semester (10%).
--class attendance, keeping up with the readings, presenting readings, participation in class discussion, including during field trips (25%).
--contribute at least 6 observations to a class blog discussion within the 2 weeks following each of the fieldtrips to MMI and AMNH (at least 3 within the first week after the trip) (10%).

Student requirements for those students who did take Contemporary Cultural Institutions:
--an advanced user study of two cultural institutions for in-class presentation (25%).
Examples of more advanced user studies that you might do: (1) a more advanced
observational study citing and building upon what you learned from the observational studies done last year; (2) Interview staff of a cultural institution about user studies they have done; (3) read at least 2 pieces on user studies and report back on the implications of these for cultural institutions.

- a case-study comparison of one type of collection at at least 2 separate types of organizations (such as documentary films at a research library and at science museum, or botanical prints at an art museum and a library, or home movies at a conventional archive and at film archive), for presentation in one of the the last 2 classes (35%); to be turned in in written form.

- At least 4 times during the semester you must bring in to class a current news article related to cultural institutions, and orally explain this to the rest of the class. Topics might include private collectors, contested objects, hirings/firings, cultural institution expansions, etc. You should aim to present 2 of these before midterm, and 2 by the end of the semester (10%).

- class attendance, keeping up with the readings, presenting readings, participation in class discussion, including during field trips (25%).

- contribute at least 6 observations to a class blog discussion within the 2 weeks following the fieldtrip to Lincoln Center (at least 3 within the first week after the trip) (5%).

No incompletes are accepted for this class.

NB: The readings and topics on this syllabus may be added to, and change during the semester. Students are responsible for following such changes. In addition, due to variations in the lengths of discussion, questions, and visual materials, we may not actually discuss all the readings listed in the syllabus. However, they are important and their content supports the class assignments.

Readings: All required books have been put on reserve at Bobst. Articles will be posted on Blackboard.

Required texts (should be available at NYUBookcenters; selected core excerpted readings on Blackboard):


2) Paolo Cherchi Usai, David Francis, Alexander Horwath, Michael Loebenstein (Eds.), *Film Curatorship: Archives, Museums, and the Digital Marketplace* (London: Wallflower Press, 2008). (Abb below: FC). (a copy will also be available in the Film Study Center)

3) Penelope Houston, *Keepers of the Frame: the Film Archives* (British Film Institute: London, 1994) (frontal matter until page 77)

4) *Film History* 18:3 (2006), Special Issue on Film Museums (available online as an NYU Libraries resource—through NYU Home)

Recommended Texts:

2) Roger Smither and Catherine A. Surowiec, eds *This Film is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film* (FIAF: Brussels, 2002)


**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is the presentation of somebody else’s work as your own. This is a very serious fault, and against NYU rules, whether it is unintended (e.g. occurs through poor citations and confusion about how to reference somebody else’s scholarship), or derives from out and out copying (such as downloading essays from the internet). Plagiarism includes using portions of a previously published work in a paper without citing the source, submitting a paper written for another course, submitting a paper written by someone else, and using the ideas of someone else without attribution. Plagiarism is unacceptable in this class and is punished severely. Please ask for help, by email or in person, if you are unclear as to how to cite others’ work. Anybody who is caught plagiarizing will fail the course and be subject to disciplinary action through the university.
NOTE: Readings with an * should have already been done by students who previously took the CCI course, and are required of all students who did not take that class. (If you took that course and didn’t previously do these readings, do them now!) Readings with an # are required of students who took the CCI course, but optional for others. Readings without a * or # are required of everyone.

Class 1) Wed 21 Jan. **Memory Organizations**.(Besser & Lant)

- Introductions to Course and to individuals
- Current News articles
- Comparative analysis of different types of institution.
- What institutions collect moving images?
  - What is the history of cultural institutions?
  - How are their histories similar and different?
  - How do their histories shape what an institution collects, how they organize their collection, and how they provide access to it?
- Western civilization has relied heavily on surviving written accounts to interpret the past. How has that affected how we see various groups that didn’t have the capability to create written accounts, or to make sure that those accounts persist over time? Can we do more justice to those groups by studying artifacts rather than written accounts?
- Is history objective?
- Museums and Libraries assert systematic organizations upon their works, and to some degree, all knowledge. What effects does this have outside the walls of these institutions? Are there both positive and negative effects?
- Suzanne Briet's “What is a Document?”
- Archives
- Museums
- Libraries

--Assignment of user studies (due Feb 18).

Films/Video/DVDs:
- Alain Resnais, *Toute la mémoire du monde* (1956, 21 minutes, black and white, VHS)
- DVD on Library of Congress

Read:

- Read over the minutes from at least one recent CALM meeting (http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/hqops/library/CALM/calmmeetingminutes/alasa aaamminutes.cfm)
- Look over goals and background of “Europeana: think culture” (http://www.europeana.eu/portal/aboutus.html), then do some searches
The Culture of Archives, Museums, and Libraries (Lant/Besser, Spring 2009), v 3.1

  - pp. 9-25 "The Historical Dimension: From Print to Script."
  - pp. 35-60 "The Information Marketplace."

Ethics Readings
- FIAF Code of Ethics (http://www.fiafnet.org/uk/members/ethics.cfm)
- ALA Code of Ethics (http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/codeofethics/codeethics.htm)
- SAA Code of Ethics for Archivists (http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/app_ethics.asp#code)
- AMIA Advocacy Task Force 13 November 2008 minutes (on Blackboard site) | draft ethics guidelines (on Blackboard site)

Recommended
- *Alain Resnais, Toute la mémoire du monde (1956, 21 minutes, black and white, VHS) view in Study Center

**Film:** The Librarian (1947) downloaded from Prelinger Archive (http://www.archive.org/details/Libraria1947)

**Guest:** Michael Stoller, Director of Collections and Research Services, Bobst Library

**Topics**
- Discussion of syllabus versions, bookstore issues, …
- Student presentation of news articles
- Howard’s handouts from this weekend’s “Cool Fusion” conference (Cleveland) and ALA Conference (Denver)
- National Institutions
- Who invented Hypertext?
- Types of Museums, Libraries, Archives, Historical Societies, etc.
- Job titles & Departments & Responsibilities
  - Museum (Registrar, Curator, Exhibition, Education, Conservation, Installation, Development, …)
  - Library (Cataloger, Reference, Systems, Conservation…)
  - Archives (Curator, Archivist, Processor, …)
- What are the different departments within any type of cultural institution, and how do they relate to one another?
- How does the type of library (research, public, school) or type of museum (history, science, art) affect its policies on collection development, organizing, providing access, and preservation?
- Following Suzanne Briet's assertions (as cited by Buckland), does an object have documental properties merely by moving it into a collecting institution? Does everything collected by an institution automatically have documental properties? Do objects outside collecting institutions have documental properties before they enter that institution?
- Archives
- Museums
- Libraries
- View “The Librarian”
- Stoller

**Class 3) Wed 4th Feb. Theories of Collecting (Lant [Besser away])**

Read:
- Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting” [1931]
### Class 4) Wed 11 Feb, *Site visit to Museum of the Moving Image (Lant & 1st years)*

-- We are due at MMI at 12:30. Museum entrance is on 35th Avenue at the corner of 36th Street in Astoria. (The former entrance, on 36th St, doesn't exist anymore. Signage on the exterior of the building now directs you to the correct entrance on the 37th Street side of the building.) Use the R or V to Steinway subway stop in Queens. There is an R station opposite TSOA. Allow at least 40 minutes travel time from TSOA.

-- You must review MMI website before this trip


--- *(FC Chapter 5) “Presentation and Performance”

--- *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions* ed. Suzanne MacLeod (Routledge: NY, 2005), Ch. 9 (Lee H. Skolnick, “Towards a New Museum Architecture: narrative and representation”). Ch. 16 (Peter Higgins, “From Cathedral of culture to anchor attractor”), Ch. 17 (Stephen Greenberg, “The Vital Museum”).

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### Class 4) Wed 11 Feb, *Further Work on Types of Institutions and Functions within them (Besser & 2nd years)*

**Read:**


Class 5) Wed 18 Feb **User Studies, Student presentations.** (Lant away)

Read:

---*Trope, Alison, “Le Cinéma pour le cinéma,” The Moving Image 1:1 (Spring 2001): 30-67 (first years need this to prep for final project)


--Dervin, Brenda, Building Big User Studies out of Small Encounters: Making Every User Contact a Micro-User Study ([http://communication.sbs.ohio-state.edu/sense-making/art/artabsdervin05ww.htm](http://communication.sbs.ohio-state.edu/sense-making/art/artabsdervin05ww.htm)) (review Powerpoint slides)


Recommended:

Class 6) Wed 25 Feb The Birth of Museums of the Moving Image (Lant & Besser)

Read:
• Barry/Abbott, “An outline of a project for the founding of the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art”
• Barry, “Film Collecting at the Museum of Modern Art, 1935-1941.”
• Film History, special issue, 274-287.
• Houston, Keepers of the Frame: 1-77.

Recommended
• Rotha, “A Museum for the Cinema” [1930]
• Sargeant, “Wanted—A Museum” [1916]

Screen: The Gleaners and I (Agnes Varda, 2000, 82 min, clip)
God’s Comedy (João César Monteiro, Portugal, 1995, clip)

Class 7) Wed 4 March. Guest Speaker: David Francis,
Consultant to Library of Congress, Former Chief,
Motion Picture and Recorded Sound Division, LC.

Read:
• Francis, “Challenges of Film Archiving in the 21st Century.”
• Brownlow, Kevin. “Magnificent Obsession; A Collector and the Archives.”
o FC, Chapter 3, “What’s the Problem?”

No screening

Topics
  o Ernest Lindgren & early Film Archives
  o Collecting Lantern Slides

11 March NO CLASS (MIAP Kulpeper trip)
18 March NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Class 8) Wed 25 Mar The Archive Movement  (Lant & Besser)
Read:
  o History of Television Archives
  o Myrent/Langlois, Henri Langlois: First Citizen of Cinema, Ch.1-3.

Week of 25 March, if not before, required visit to Lant or Besser office hours.

Class 9) Wed 1 April. Guest Stefan Droessler
Read
  • FC, Chapter 4 and Chapter 6

Topics
  o European Funding
  o Munich Museum background, PR
  o Archives within Art Museums
  o Edition Filmmuseum DVD series
  o The Museum’s view of the Digital Future

Class 10) Wed 8 April Visit American Museum of Natural History (Lant and 1st Years)

Read: Review the website for American Museum of Natural History.
Class 10) Wed 8 April Visit Lincoln Center Performing Arts Library (Besser and 2nd Years) (not yet confirmed)

- hosted by Tanisha Jones. Meet at the Library at xxpm. More precise instructions to follow by email.

Class 11) Wed 15 April. Ethics, Privacy, Collectors, Funding, and other things we didn’t get to (Besser) (Lant away) The Collector: Privacy and/or the Collector

Review these Codes of Ethics

- AMIA proposed Code of Ethics (see readings for week #2)
- FIAF Code of Ethics (http://www.fiafnet.org/uk/members/ethics.cfm)
- ALA Code of Ethics (http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/statementspols/codeofethics/codeethics.htm)
- SAA Code of Ethics for Archivists (http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/app_ethics.asp#code)

Read:

- Pearce, “Body and Soul,” Ch. 7 in Collecting in Contemporary Culture
- Forrester “Freud and Collecting” (CC)
- Ethics & Values
  - Why Ethics?” in Marie Malaro, Museum Governance: Mission, Ethics, Policy, pages 16-21
  - Lipinski, Tomas A.. ((2002). "Legal assuals Involved in the Privacy Rights of Patrons in 'Public' Libraries and Archives" in Lipinski, Tomas
- Fundraising

Optional:
- Torgovnick, “Entering Freud’s Study”
- Davies, “The Secret Collection of Dr. Barnes”
- Nieves, Evelyn, “Archaeologist of Himself.”
- Armstrong, R. H. A Compulsion for Antiquity Freud and the Ancient World
- Bright, “Warhol’s Collecting”
- Schor, “Collecting Paris” (CC)

Screen:
- A Higher Standard, American Assn of Museums, (as part of their Accreditation Resource Kit) 10 minutes

Topics
- **Guest:** John Mhiripiri, Anthology Film Archives, on both fundraising and career issues (not yet fully confirmed)
- Privacy of the Collector
- Ethics & Values
- Fundraising

Class 12) 22 April. **Final student presentations**

Class 13) 29 April. **Final student presentations**

Final paper due in Prof. Lant’s and Besser’s mailbox Monday 4 May, noon.
Observational Study

Guidelines:

Choose two or more contrasting cultural institutions, eg. a public library and an art museum, or a science museum and a local historical society.

Visit these institutions for at least 45 minutes each.

In each institution, observe what people do there: what they look at, what they consult or read, who they talk with, how much time they spend with artifacts, how long they stay in one place, etc.. Note if/how digital technologies/moving images are being used in the public areas of the institution you are observing.

Consider how precise you are able to be in making your observations. Will you use a stopwatch? Categorize the visitors? By socio-economic bracket? Nationality? Age? Gender? Approximate mean age? You might consider positioning yourself in a similar type of room, in the two settings.

Note the time of day and day of week you visit, and, if possible, hypothesize how things might be different at different times.

Compare as clearly as you can what happens in each of the places you visit, and write a 2-5 page paper, comparing and summarizing your observations. The paper should be turned in when you present your observations to the class, on 18 February.

Details you might to pay attention to:

1) Methodology--How did you make your observations? Were you seated, did you write on the spot? Did you interact with visitors? Did you use a stopwatch?
2) Do visitors read labels first, or look at objects first? How long do they read for? Look for?
3) Moving image displays: is seating given? Are running times displayed? How is the illumination?
4) Are there guards? How many? Are they trained in the art on display (as they are at the Met)?)
5) If an exhibition, is there a pre-determined pathway through it? Is there a central object of the exhibition? A central room?
6) Audio tours. Are visitors listening to curated information using headphones? Cell phones?
7) Are there any interactive displays? Are they being used?
8) Are visitors part of larger groups, families, or visiting in couples, singly?
9) Are there leaflets, flyers, to take away?
10) Is there a cell-phone policy? If so, how is this communicated?
11) Is there a café. A gift shop? How are these positioned in relation to the room you have been observing?