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Audiovisual Collections in Fales Library and Special Collections and the Mulberry Street NYPL

I. Introduction

Non-paper based materials can present problems for libraries and special collections.

Traditional library cataloging was originally intended for organizing paper documents and it can be difficult fitting audiovisual materials into a rubric for which they were not originally intended. This paper attempts to compare the way two different kinds of libraries deal with audiovisual material:

The Mulberry Street Branch library of the New York Public Library and the Fales Library and Special Collections. Each library has a different methods of cataloging, organizing, and maintaining their collections. The differences stem largely from the varying purposes of their collections and the demographics of their users. Below is a list of categories for comparison followed by a comparison chart based on discoveries resulting from this project.

II. Collection and Library Overviews

The Fales Library is a special collections library within New York University's Bobst Library. Fales houses three collections: a collection of food and cookery books and materials, a collection of English and American Literature, and the Downtown Collection, an archive documenting the art, performance, and literary scene in New York from 1975 to the present. The Downtown Collection contains the personal papers and effects of artists and organizations that were instrumental in the artistic explosion in downtown New York and it contains a surfeit of non-paper based materials. For example, the Mabou Mines items in the collection includes correspondence, production files, photographs, slides, scripts, production books, video recordings, audio recordings, costumes, and

stage plots. Mabou Mines alone contains about 250 1/4" open reel audio tapes and 450 cassette tapes, but there are currently finding aids for 52 separate collections within the Downtown

Collection and many of those collections also have various multimedia items.

The Mulberry Street NYPL Branch is the newest branch in the New York Public library system, opening in 2007. The branch opened in a renovated candy factory in SOHO at 10 Jersey Street between Lafayette and Mulberry Streets. The collection contains books and audio visual material. There are approximately 260 audio CDs available for loan and approximately 600 DVDs. The material is wide and varied. The music is mostly popular and some classical and the DVDs are mostly Hollywood movies and classics. There are about 20 VHS tapes and there is an attempt by the library to make CDs and DVDs available to certain ethnic minorities that still live in the neighborhood. The Mulberry Street NYPL carries a small section of Chinese and Italian language DVDs and CDs. There are also language teaching kits with CDs and DVDs. The 20 video games that came with the collection when Mulberry Street opened two years ago, have now all been stolen. The branch does have some say about what is in their collection so they can somewhat cater to their community. For example, they have more Chinese, Italian, and Spanish titles, both on DVD and in print form, than other branch libraries.

III. Intellectual Property Rights

Copyright ownership is neither assigned nor transferred to The Fales Library or Mulberry Street when either acquires archival collections or lending materials. Both Fales and Mulberry own the physical property and neither library waives their rights regarding their collections covered under United States copyright laws, including but not limited to, Sections 10, 108, 109, and 110.

Both libraries can preserve and make accessible the collections as they see fit, provided their access practices conform to all applicable copyright laws. The Fales Library plans to make audio objects accessible in a digital format via a secure library network. These digital audio files are only available within the walls the New York University Library and will not violate any applicable copyright laws. Although Mulberry Street does not have an exclusive digital distribution system, they are a part of the NYPL system. Users of digital material can 'checkout' online content such as eBooks and music with their library identification number and a unique pin number.

The Mulberry Street NYPL has a relationship with intellectual property rights that is similar to the Fales Library in some respects and different in others. For example, Mulberry Street is covered by library exceptions for reproduction of copyrighted material. Branch libraries do not attempt to control reproduction of their materials. Fales, however, has a long list of forms that must be filled out by a patron if, for example, they want to reproduce a photograph, quote a passage of a paper documents, or read a manuscript. It is interesting that although Fales library is acquiring more and more non-print material, there is very little information about the rights of patrons to reproduce non-print material. This is most likely because audiovisual content is mired with copyright problems – third party rights is one example – that would be difficult to manage.

III. Physical Conditions

Audiovisual objects in the Fales Library collections are stored with on the third floor of the NYU Bobst Library. The material is kept in the same room as the rare books and manuscripts – although some material is kept in cold storage off-site. The room temperature has a range of 65°F to 68°F with a relative humidity between 20%-60%. The lighting is typical fluorescent office lighting and the floors are tiled. On the micro scale, the audio and video is stored in various ways. Most archival cassettes are stored in their original containers and kept on the shelves with other materials associated with that particular collection. Newly produced backup and access DVDs and audio CDs are kept in clear archival quality containers. Older audio formats are typically kept in their original containers, unless those containers are in such bad condition that the media has to be put into another container. All the film elements in Fales library are stored at Northeast Historic Film at a temperature of 45°F and 25% relative humidity.

Because Mulberry Street has no archival material in their collection, they do not rehouse their CDs or DVDs. However, there are security cases with locks on the media to prevent theft. The storage conditions of the audiovisual material is similar to the conditions in the Fales library; regular office type lighting, 65°F to 68°F, and carpeted flooring. The upstairs has the most amount of natural light and the bottom two floors are more dimly lit.

IV. Organization and Cataloging

There is a two tiered approach to the way Mulberry Street organizes their collection. The first and more obvious way is that multimedia is separated according to age group – adult material on the top floor and children and young adult on the second floor. The children's multimedia is organized by type (DVDs, CDs, and interactive books all have their own sections) and then by the Dewey decimal system. Library systems may be fairly obvious to frequent library users, however there are some complexities, especially with the advent of on-line resources. For example, aside from the traditional Dewey number, catalog items also have Dynix numbers, an on-line proprietary cataloging system of numbering. Each branch library has some flexibility as to how the collections are

organized within the physical space. Mulberry Street's Children's Librarian Susie Heimbach

explains

All the nonfiction books (adult, young adult, and children's) are classified by Dewey Decimal system, but all fiction is arranged alphabetical by author. The only exception in the Children's Room is that folk and fairy tales, as well as DVDs, are alphabetical by title. CDs are alphabetical by the artist's last name. The Dynix # is an in-house NYPL number that's assigned to each item record--sometimes staff use it to find a record before it's been entered into the system (if it doesn't have a barcode yet) or to make sure we're pulling the correct edition of a book for a hold (for example, if there's a request for Huck Finn, there are lots of editions, but the Dynix number will match whatever edition has been requested by the patron), but patrons would never really need to know these numbers.

Fales library has a completely different set of cataloging and organizing standards. As a special collection with archival materials, Fales does not adhere to the traditional Dewey system, rather each collection is organized together as it comes in. It is important, for example, for an archive to organize collections this way because the provenance helps researchers get a better understanding of the history of the collection they are studying. Within each collection of materials, the content is broken up into series. An example of a group of series could be files, notes, photographs, or audiocassettes. Series are then divided into subjects, for example, by production title. Each series has numbered boxes and within each box there are numbered folders.

V. Preservation and Retention

Because Fales library is a special collection with unique materials, they have a mandate to preserve the audiovisual materials in their collection. Preservation means two things: firstly, Fales must make sure the audiovisual material in their collection is stabilized and kept in a way that will not hasten further physical decay; secondly, Fales must create access copies of the audiovisual material in their collection. If an original item is damaged or unusable, it may be sent out for repair or recovery and most likely the item will be kept unless it is so damaged that there would never be any hope of recovery.

This policy is very different than the preservation and retention policy at Mulberry Street. Here,

if an item is damaged or unusable, it is deleted from the record and not repaired and usually not replaced. If an item is no longer available, it is still possible that a patron can check out the item via inter library loan. It is possible that Mulberry Street has some unique materials, although this is unlikely. There is a central branch of the New York Public Library that holds the main collection of children's materials, and they would be more likely to have unique items than a branch library.

VI. Outreach and Exhibition

Although the Fales Library is a restricted research library, it still makes an effort to reach out to the community that may want to make use of its resources. The library has a gallery space that is open to the university community and there is a rotating schedule of exhibition material from their various collections on display. Most recently, the gallery featured archival materials from the AIR gallery from 1972 to the present day. The library also hosted a panel discussion on the future of the literary novel. The AIR exhibition featured several video pieces from the archive.

Mulberry Street is much more focused on access to their materials. The librarians have created programs to get people into the library and they encourage the use of the space for more than just reading. Adults often come during the day with their laptops, and teens are offered an array of programs that seemingly have nothing to do with reading; open mic nights, movie nights, talent shows, and poetry slams. There is a community center in the young children's section of the library with a television and a DVD player. Homeschool students can use the room and a special program called 'R.E.A.D. with Mudge', places a trained dog with little children to help them read out loud.

VII. Access and Access Restrictions

As a special collection within the research libraries at NYU, Fales places certain restrictions on their materials. The materials must be viewed within the designated research reading room. No bags or pens are allowed into the room and a modicum of silence is expected. Researchers and Students are allowed to view the materials, but they must have an appointment.

At the Mulberry Street NYPL branch there are also certain restrictions. There are several computer stations throughout the library but they are not all open access. For example, the electronic card catalogs in the children's section can only be used by patrons whose library cards are tagged aged 2 - 12. There is an entire wing of the library that is only open to teenagers, 13-17. NYPL has placed these age restrictions in order to keep the after school crowds from disturbing the adult users and also to give younger patrons the opportunity to carve out their own space within the library. The reason for the restrictions at Fales and Mulberry Street stem from different reasons. Because researchers are viewing and handling unique, one-of-a-kind materials, it is imperative for the Fales staff to safe guard them from unnecessary wear and tear.

VIII. Checkout policies

At Fales library, audiovisual materials cannot be checked out. However, the library is taking steps to create better access within the walls of the library. Currently, there are playback decks that are taken out and brought into the room on an as needed basis. Fales is planning on creating permanent audiovisual stations within the library where researchers can listen to digital surrogates of the audiovisual material. Fales has begun digitizing video material and storing jpeg2000 files with the NYU digital library system. They have also digitized many of their audio materials. The digital material is currently unavailable outside of the Fales library (for example a research could not login remotely and listen to a clip from audio in the Fales collection).

Mulberry Street's checkout policies are very different than Fales. Firstly, there is no in house available playback equipment there. Users can only access the material if they check the CDs or DVDs out and have playback equipment at home. This is rather surprising because it puts the onus on the user to have proper and up to date playback equipment in their house. This begs the question: what do users do who can not afford CD and DVD players? Because Mulberry Street is a new NYPL branch – about two years old – they have very little media that exists on older formats. Susie Heimbach, the Mulberry's Children's Librarian, said that when the branch opened, there were only given DVDs and CDs . There are no cassette tapes and only about 20 VHS tapes available for checkout – as opposed to about 250 CDs and about 600 DVDs. Fales library, however, has more than just DVD and CD in their collection. They have cassette tapes, 1/4” open reel, and vinyl records and for the material that is not digitized, Fales must have the appropriate playback equipment for these older formats. When Fales makes a preservation or access copy for their collection, they retain the original. When Mulberry Street acquires media in a newer format, they would typically deaccession the same content if it is on an older format.

IX. Conclusions

Although moving image and audio elements are still a small part of the materials in both the Fales Library and the Mulberry Street Branch of NYPL, they are becoming an increasingly important part of their respective collections. It seems, however, that although both institutions are collecting more audio visual material they are still having difficulties providing complete access. Fales Library has finding aids but they are incomplete. Often the records that are posted have little information and the metadata for audio visual elements is currently only accessible via an in house Microsoft Access database. It is not clear when Fales will install permanent viewing and listening

stations. It is also problematic that there is currently no off-site access to digitized elements in the collection.

Mulberry Street NYPL also has some issues with providing access to moving image materials. The library loans out DVDs and CDs, however they do not provide in-house listening and viewing stations. Heimbach has said that it is relatively easy to steal audiovisual material and theft has become a problem in the branch libraries. The stolen collection of video games is also disheartening, and if there were resources, the library might consider creating places in the library where users could watch and listen to CDs and DVDs and perhaps play video games.

The responsibilities of libraries, archives, and special collections are changing, in part because of the kind of material they are collecting. Handling and managing audiovisual materials requires special care and expertise. Fortunately, Fales library has a staff of trained employees, but often institutional hurdles can create roadblocks to access. Funding and planning centers where patrons can listen to and watch audiovisual materials is difficult but it is also a necessary step in creating greater access to collections.

Comparison Chart of Audiovisual Elements at Fales Library and Mulberry Street NYPL

| | Fales Library | Mulberry Street NYPL |
|----------------|--|--|
| Storage | No special temp or RH, light or dust control; CDs and DVDs stored in clear archival cases; cassettes stored in original cases. | Stored on shelves no special temp or RH control; stored in commercial cases. |

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| Accessibility | Open to researchers, by appointment. Closed stacks, need photo ID | Open stacks and open to the public, but there are age restricted areas. |
| Organization | Organized by collection; partially mixed in with other media. | Media organized by age groups (adult, child, young adult) and then by Dewey Decimal and alphabetical by author. |
| Cataloging | Series, finding aids, original cataloging, Access database. Collections are not entirely cataloged. | Leo/CATNYP, MARC, little original cataloging, every item in library is in the database. |
| Exhibition/Special Events | Panels discussions, gallery space, various websites. | Community room, special events for adults, children, and young adults. |
| Rules | No bags, food, drink, pens. | No food, drink. |
| Copyright/Reproduction | All copyright laws apply. Digital cameras, with permission, fee structures for scanning, photocopying, usage. | All copyright laws apply. Library does not closely monitor, cameras, scanning, photocopying. |