

Bill Miles: Independent Producers and the State of the Archive

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I first became acquainted with William Miles in the summer of 2009 while working at Washington University's Film and Media Archive. The archive had acquired his personal collection in 2006 and I was tasked to process and inventory Miles' paper materials. In order to understand Miles' work I was shown four of his seven documentaries. I quickly fell in love with Miles' work and recognized its importance to African-American history and documentary. As a filmmaker working in the late seventies up to the nineties Miles' collection presents several interesting challenges to the archivist. The scope and volume of material required a balancing act for the archive in terms of preservation. The Film and Media Archive was still in the process of cataloguing Henry Hampton's collection, which consists of over 30,000 items. The staff at the Film and Media archive were tasked with a troubling problem: how to provide access to this material and how to preserve it with the resources available? I identified several risk factors for the collection and set to work researching Miles' work, his creative process, and his collections at other institutions.

Through this research I identified three main issues surrounding the collection: provenance/original order, authenticity, and the sheer size of the collection. This thesis sets out to not only prove the importance of Miles' body of work, but also to identify and provide solutions for these archival issues. The thesis is composed of four main sections: a background on Miles and his films, examining the issues of provenance and original order in archives,

determining authenticity of archival materials, and finally weighing the risks and benefits of acquisition an entire filmmaker's collection.

## I. Background

William "Bill" Miles was born in 1931 in Harlem, New York. His mother ran a boarding house on 126th Street which often catered to the entertainers of the Apollo Theater (located at 125th Street). From an early age, Miles became familiar with the luminaries of the Harlem Renaissance. Miles describes: "[taking] 16mm film and roll it up and use it as a telescope," as his first introduction to film. He began running errands for the Apollo's projectionist who took a liking to him. The projectionist taught him to splice and re-wind 35mm film which began a life-long love affair with film. He joined the 369<sup>th</sup> Armory at 17 eventually attaining the rank of Sergeant. The 369<sup>th</sup> Armory and their archive became the impetus for his 1977 film *Men of Bronze*. He went on to work at Killiam Shows, a distribution company for archival films, repairing their collection. He says: "Killiam shows was a great place to work. We used to call it the fun factory." Though he began in the shipping department Miles eventually moved on to editing. It was here that he became familiar with editing 16mm film as well as the legacy of silent era films.

While working at the 369th Armory Miles came across their archive. As a native Harlemit, Miles felt connected to the regiment known as "The Harlem Hellfighters." He also cites the lack of African-Americans on the screen as one of the main reasons he began making films. From an early age Miles had a compulsion to "save things" he thought were "valuable or

historical,” (Interview with Miles). Many of Miles’ early documentaries arose from the notion of finding the lost or exposing the unknown.

He spoke with Hamilton Fisk, the white officer in charge of the regiment, and tracked down the few surviving members still alive in the 1970’s several members of the regiment who fought in World War I. The 369th was one of the only African-American regiments to serve in the front lines of World War I. The film premiered at the 1977 New York Film Festival and was picked up and aired on WNET that same year.

WNET approached Miles with a project on the history of Harlem, another deeply personal subject. Initially slated to be an hour-long Miles quickly realized that that time frame would not encompass all of Harlem’s history. He approached WNET again and awarded money from the Station Program Cooperative, a new initiative specifically designed to fund minority programming. The series was four hours and was first broadcast January 1, 1981 on WNET/13.

Miles and WNET shared a fruitful relationship throughout the eighties and into the early nineties. He was even given his own office space at the WNET/13 building. Miles directed six documentaries broadcast on WNET, and produced three others. All of his films examined the African-American experience in the United States in diverse fields such as the military, the space program, and sports. He has won numerous awards, including an Emmy, and has been nominated for an Academy Award. Miles currently resides in Hollis, Queens with his wife.

In order to place Miles and his films into the documentary tradition it is important to understand the television climate of the early 1970’s. Though Miles began research for *Men of Bronze* in the late sixties, the film itself would not premiere until 1977. Television programming experienced a large shift in content during this period. While the fifties and sixties proved to be

fertile ground for documentaries on American experiences, especially African-American experiences, (Black TV). the seventies began the transition away from relevancy. Television as a medium was a powerful advocate for the Civil Rights movement, broadcasting the effects of segregation and discrimination to the American Public (Black TV)

However, with the election of Richard Nixon television experienced several changes in nature. Nixon viewed “activism as disloyal...[and] blamed television for the social disorder that marked the United States,” (Black TV, 151). Vice-president Spiro Agnew began a campaign to paint the television news reporting as biased and controlled by “a small and unelected elite,” (Black TV, 151). Agnew implied that images of campus violence and race riots were a constructed narrative by biased reporters and their networks (Black TV, 151). He called on the American public to challenge networks for “straight and objective” news (Black TV, 152). Agnew condemned networks for elevating “obscure”, and sometimes volatile, African-American leaders like Stokely Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver to national prominence (Black TV, 152). Rather than “recognizing such anger as an expression of black frustration and social impotence, the vice-president assailed television news for giving the false impression that ‘the majority of black Americans feel no regard for their country’.” (Black TV, 152).

The Nixon administration continued their aggressive campaign to moderate television news. Nixon installed Dean Burch as chairman of the FCC. The FCC had already limited primetime programming to three hours, eliminating network attempts to offer news programming for a full hour (Black TV, 152). The FCC also began to rigidly enforce the Fairness Doctrine: a rule that “compelled stations to present counterarguments to every controversial subject covered,” (Black TV 152).

In the era of the Vietnam War, campus riots, race riots and general turmoil every important subject quickly became controversial in the view of the Nixon administration. What is especially important is that these rules were all an effort to eliminate criticism of Nixon's policies regarding Civil Rights and the Vietnam War. Networks quickly found it "easier to avoid controversy" rather than spend the lengthy research time preparing all sides of a topic.

This meant that African-Americans, already an underserved minority in television, soon began to disappear from the screen entirely. Documentaries related to African-Americans dropped significantly. In fact, documentaries themselves were also featured less on all networks. In the 1971-72 season only 16 documentaries were aired and only four of these related to African-Americans (Black TV, 158). Underscoring Nixon's policies was the fact that the American public had less interest in the sometimes harsh realities of the 1970's. Many Americans began to demand "good news" and advertisers expressed less interest in sponsoring African-American programming (Black TV, 156). This relegated African-American actors and actresses back to the sphere of stereotype and removed many African-Americans from television production.

In the absence of African-American programming several producers set out to document the African-American experience. Henry Hampton was also compiling his exhaustive study of the Civil Rights Movement which aired in two separate parts in 1985 and 1988. Melvin Van Peebles and Tony Brown were also producing films during the 1980's and into the nineties. William Greaves along with Tony Brown were producing the award-winning Black Journal series. Greaves went on to make several documentaries about African-American culture and experience. Alex Haley's *Roots* also premiered in 1977 and caused a national phenomenon marking it as the most widely viewed miniseries of all time. See also pioneer NYC filmmaker

William Greaves and Martin, Michael T. *Cinemas of the Black Diaspora: Diversity, Dependence, and Oppositionality*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1995.

Filmmakers during this time at least were attempting to break out of the constraints of the FCC and Nixon administration and provide African-Americans with relevant programming. In the public broadcasting arena the Corporation for Public Broadcasting established the Station Program Cooperative, a system that allows independent producers to screen their programs with the possibility of national broadcast. The SPC chooses 25 to 30 programs for air, which are financed by the station itself (Eastman, 472). Without a corporate underwriter programs can be more controversial or daring and it also provides a platform for minority programming (Eastman, 472).

Miles equates filmmaking to “being bitten by a bug” and his mantra became “just keep moving forward.” Beset by funding issues for most of his productions, Miles worked exhaustively to complete his films. Miles also had trouble finding the research and primary source material necessary for his work. Through all these trials Miles kept moving forward, becoming a prolific director and providing rare and unique footage of the African-American experience (see Appendix D for a complete filmography).

## II. Current State of Collection

## The Film and Media Archive at Washington University, St. Louis

The foundation of the Film and Media archive in 2002 set them apart from many media archives in the country. The Archive was expressly built to house all of Henry Hampton's production material including finished films, outtakes, interviews, transcripts, contracts, and other documentation. Mona Jimenez (Professor at New York University) became aware of another collection the archive might be interested in: that of filmmaker William Miles. Jimenez had known Miles from her previous work at WNET/13 and knew he was looking for archive to purchase his materials.

In 2006, David Rowntree (then head of Washington University's Film and Media Archive in St. Louis, Missouri) approached Miles about selling his collection to the archive. Miles had begun making inquiries with several New York archives to gauge their interest and ability in acquiring his materials. Miles spoke with Columbia University, New York University's Tamiment/Wagner Labor Archive, The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, as well as the Library of Congress. However, Miles' collection presented a challenge for a number of reasons. His collection contained a large portion of audio/visual materials in a variety of different formats. He also had a large paper collection and no inventory of his materials. Miles was heavily invested in keeping his collection together at one archive rather than dispersing its materials. The Film and Media Archive presented Miles with three key benefits: they would be able to purchase his collection, they would acquire his entire collection, and they did not require Miles to produce an inventory. Rowntree also suggested that the very act of "courting" Miles may have impressed him and made him more inclined to receive their offer positively. Rowntree spoke with New York University librarian Dr. Michael Nash prior to approaching Miles to ensure he would not be stepping into a deal between NYU and Miles. Nash told Rowntree that

Tamiment/Wagner was only interested in a portion of Miles' collection (the oral histories of Harlem he made during production of *I Remember Harlem*) and was also not in a position to deal with the disparate formats in Miles' collection.

Columbia University required an inventory list from Miles of his materials, which he could not provide. Miles evinced a lack of trust of the Schomburg in regards to their ability to maintain and preserve his entire collection. After only two meetings Miles agreed to sell his collection to the Film and Media Archive, which prompted Rowntree to make the necessary preparations for its removal to St. Louis, Missouri.

The rights agreement between the Archive and Miles stipulates that Miles retains the rights to his finished programs, but allows the Archive to license material. The underlying rights in a program (such as music or stock footage) must be cleared by the licensee prior to use. Any profits from the use of footage are to be split between the Archive and Miles.

The Archive has a similar arrangement with its Henry Hampton materials, the other major collection in the archive. Though not living at the time his materials were donated, the managers of his estate (in this case his two sisters) retain the copyright on all his finished works, but Washington University does own the right to raw footage, outtakes, camera originals, and interviews.

In order to accession Miles' material it first had to be located and prepared to journey to St. Louis. The collection was housed in several places in the New York area. Miles' audio/visual material was located at an Iron Mountain facility in New Jersey. Miles stored some of his material at the 369th Regiment Armory and the rest was found at the office of Harlem Heritage Tours. Rowntree, working with MIAP alum Tanisha Jones, produced a rough inventory of his collection and shipped it to Washington University. As of this day no item-level catalog has been

generated for these materials, but a count has been made (see Appendix A). Miles' collection totals about 9,000 items of audio/visual material and between 100-200 boxes of paper material. Miles has a range of formats including: 35mm film, 16mm film, 2" tape, 1" tape, 3/4" tape, VHS, DAT, mini-cassettes, audio cassettes and 1/2" and 1/4" open reel audio (See Appendix B for photos of the vaults).

Though the audio/visual material is not extensively catalogued, Miles' collection of photos (both from production and research) is cataloged and searchable in the MAVIS database. Some are even viewable as thumbnails.

#### The Arthur A. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

A part of the New York Public Library system the Schomburg Center collects material about Harlem and the African-American experience. Miles said the Schomburg purchased several of his films from him in the eighties, though could not give an exact date. He says he gave them 16mm film prints of his films *Men of Bronze* and *I Remember Harlem*, which is confirmed through the catalog record. There are several derivative formats of these films though it is unclear when and why they were made. The Schomburg also has another film Miles produced *The Price of the Ticket: James Baldwin*. An interesting note is that this seems to be original material including negatives, internegatives, and outtake reels. Some preservation work may have been done to this film, but it is unclear when it occurred.

#### The Black Film Center Archive at Indiana University-Bloomington

The Black Film Center/Archive collects material related to the African diaspora and the African-American experience. The archive currently holds a collection about Miles' film

*Liberators: Fighting on Two Fronts in WWII* (1992). The film was initially received with great praise by critics, but was soon involved in controversy over its factual accuracy. The collection includes press clippings, news reports, and a copy of the film. The collection also features several television appearances by Miles. Emails with Mary Huelsbeck detailed the genesis of the collection stating that it was donated in 1997, but a Deed of Gift was not signed until 1999. The Deed does not indicate why the collection was donated but suggests: “ It could have been that Miles came to IU for a screening and was asked/convinced to donate something to the BFCA. He and Phyllis Klotman, the founder of the BFCA, knew each other so maybe the request came from her.” (Email between Mary Huelsbeck and Candace Ming April 4, 2011).

The BFC/A also has posters for three of the parts of *I Remember Harlem* one of which is signed by Miles. The BFC/A has a 16mm print of *I Remember Harlem*, which has an unclear origin. Mary believes Klotman may have purchased a print or they may have acquired it through a library that was getting rid of its film collection (Email). The Miles collection fits nicely in BFC/A’s collection policy as they also have a William Greaves collection and the works of other pioneering African-Americans in the filmmaking world. I initially contacted the archive in order to ascertain the exact nature of their materials and formats, essentially trying to determine if they had original or unique material. While they do not, both the BFC/A and the Schomburg represent the diverse ways Miles materials can be used and distributed.

#### WNET/13

The archivist at WNET/13 Winter Shanck informed me that the only Miles films in the archive are 1" copied of *I Remember Harlem* and *The Liberators: Fighting on Two Fronts in WWII*. Shanck informed me that WNET/13 does not retain material that it does not hold the

copyright too, but that these items are legacy materials that have "slipped through the cracks." WNET/13 does hold the legal files for these programs. The contracts for these programs were enlightening as they laid out the exact nature of the relationship between Miles and WNET. Though WNET/13 did not directly fund his documentaries, Miles essentially licensed the finished programs to WNET/13 for a defined period, as well as allowing WNET/13 to make distribution copies. After the contract expired Miles retained the rights to his finished programs. Though I had not expected to find anything of relevance relating to Miles' workflow I did hit a jackpot of information in the contract for *Black Stars in Orbit* (1990) discussed further below.

### III. Television Production Workflow

During the seventies and eighties television workflow changed rapidly with the advent of new formats. Most stations and producers also had very different workflows and processes. What is important for archivists is to understand first how did a filmmaker master their own programs, second how did they edit, and third what did they shoot on. Understanding their workflow will provide context and information on the relationship between media. It can also provide clues about labeling since there are a variety of names for similar types of tapes.

A variety of tape formats appeared in the early eighties for both broadcast and amateur use. Most broadcast stations were using 1" tape as broadcast masters up until the nineties. In a contract dated February 22, 1989 for Miles' film *Black Stars in Orbit* WNET/13 lays out the deliverables required for broadcast. From the contract: "Four one-inch videotapes of program, fully packaged, ready-to-air...four three-quarter inch videos of the program...[and] two one-half inch VHS of program," (WNET legal files). Miles had 40 one-inch tapes in the collection, which are presumably duplicates of the deliverables to WNET/13. I spoke with Miles on May 4, 2011

and he told me that he shot and edited on 16mm. This is corroborated by another interview he gave at the Schomburg as well as by the number of 16mm reels in his collection. Already, we have a sense of what each item is in his collection from knowing his workflow. Though this can only be confirmed through labeling or checking the tapes it can be assumed that the 16mm films in his collection are original materials including outtakes, workprints, and final edits.

Though this type of footage is unique and valuable still more examination must be done into the other formats in Miles', or any other filmmakers collection. The film elements may not be the only material that makes up a production. David Rowntree provides a helpful chart (Appendix C) of the relationships that make up a finished program and it includes a variety of formats in different uses that may not always be obvious to the archivist. i.e. original interview, work print, demo reel (for fund-raising), rough cut, promo reel, "series tease" as Blackside called the 5 min intro to each series, festival version, broadcast version, and international version. All of these versions have merit for the scholar and provide insight into the production workflow of the filmmaker. While most archives place camera originals at a higher priority, the importance of this other related footage goes under the radar. These materials can provide context to the production and will most likely be important primary materials for scholars later on.

#### IV. Provenance

T.R. Schellenberg defines the provenance as a principle "which means that records should be arranged according to their origins in an organic body or an organic activity," (42).

Essentially, provenance entails keeping records from one source together rather than

dispersing records according to subject, time, or person. Another standard principle for archivists is original order; keeping and cataloging materials in the original order they were received. Often this can help the archivist understand the filmmaker's process and better serve cataloging needs. However, some filmmakers do not arrange their items in any particular order (like Miles) so further research into the collection must be done before cataloging can begin. This usually entails completing a visual survey of the items noting down as much information as possible. From this the archivist can decide series level identifiers (in media archives this is usually by title of production) and group items accordingly.

Schellenberg makes another point that “[records] should not be removed from archival groups in which they are embodied and scattered among various repositories,” (97). For archives this means that an entire collection should be kept whole and together in one repository. Though Schellenberg is referring to manuscript archives in his book (as well as government archives), the principles can still be applied to media archives. However, the history of media archives in this country is short and there is a lack of standards and guidelines available for media archivists. Schellenberg's principles are sound, but with the variety of formats and forms media can take they should not be taken as gospel, but rather referred to in archival practice. As Sam Kula writes: “all moving image archivists should recognize the fact that no document is produced in a vacuum and thus the textual documents associated with the production of a moving image may be as significant as the moving image itself,” (Kula, 53).

The lack of an original order for Miles' paper materials necessitated that the archivist (at that time Nadia Ghasedi) impose an order after completing a survey of the contents of each box in the collection. However, Ghasedi was hesitant to both remove and exchange items since we quickly learned that while some boxes were indeed a hodgepodge, others seemed to be carefully

arranged by the filmmaker. It would be a waste of resources here to apply Schellenberg's principles to the boxes of random material as they could be removed or placed elsewhere providing better access for the archive and scholar. Moving image archivists should heed Kula's words and create the necessary associations between textual documents themselves or retain them if they already exist. Textual documentation fills in the gaps left by moving image material in the "how" and "why" of a production, (Kula, 53), which are generally the most important questions asked by the researcher and archivist.

When moving image material must be arranged the questions of provenance and original order become even more convoluted. Kula notes three aspects of provenance for moving images: "The...identity of a document as part of a series or group...the symbiotic relationship of images and documentation...[and] the relationship of the work being appraised to the entire corpus of the image-maker," (Kula, 55). In practice, archivists must not only understand the origins of a particular item, but also its relationship to other items (paper or moving image) in the collection in order to properly identify it. Just as you wouldn't separate chapters from a book, you cannot divorce moving image material from its various instantiations. Doing so could cause irreparable harm to your collection and limit the knowledge to be gained about a filmmaker and their body of work.

The other portion of provenance, as explained by Kula, also contextualizes moving image and paper material within a filmmaker's entire body of work. This helps the archivist in a number of ways. Obviously, understanding what films a filmmaker has produced will aid in future research, but it can also be helpful in cataloging and prioritization. More obscure works may be higher on a preservation priority work as opposed to those that are ubiquitous or held at other archives. When the processing of the Miles collection began there was not an exact count of the

films he had participated in or directed. It was only going through the paper documentation that the Film and Media archive was able to provide a concrete list of his films. For scholars researching Miles his work now becomes more accessible and for the archivist more easily organized.

Another challenging portion of moving image archiving is the actual housing of materials. If an archivist were to respect the Schellenberg model, paper and moving image material would be housed together. Moving image material and paper require vastly different housing needs and it is inadvisable for an archivist to store them both together unless they can both be properly maintained. The vault at the Film and Media archive has a median temperature to accommodate film, video, audio, and paper materials. However, the archive was only able to achieve this by building a vault from the ground up, something many archives cannot afford.

Even at the Film and Media archive the materials are stored in separate shelving areas and thus we have the problem of maintaining the relationships between materials. A reel of camera original could have an accompanying workprint, on film or video, a reel of outtakes, a separate audio reel, a final print (again on film and video most likely both), and preservation copies made by the archive. How to relate all these different materials while storing them appropriately presents a major challenge for the archivist.

In this case, a database known as MAVIS is used that can relate items and give formats. A proper database can note down instantiations of a work providing an ID number and information on the original item and then showing each derivative or duplicate copy associated with it. These items receive unique identifiers as well to make them easily searchable. In this way an archive can store film and video in separate vaults, but still be able to relate items without storing them on the same shelf.

The paper documentation proves the most difficult to catalog. Culling through every single piece of paper in a box can be time-consuming and energy draining especially when there are hundreds of boxes. The Film and Media archive has arranged the paper documentation in the same series as the moving image material. In this way if you search *The Liberators* in the catalog not only will moving image material show up, but also accompanying paper documentation and photographs. By giving a broad survey of each box, the archivist can point to related material without identifying every single piece of paper.

## V. Authenticity

Once the basic origins of the material have been established now the archivist is faced with the questions: what to preserve and what to preserve first? Since Miles' films were broadcast they have different requirements than a theatrically released film. As mentioned above a single item can have many manifestations, to quote David Rowntree: "...the various sources of the materials used in a film and the relationships between materials and the various iterations of a work change and are used differently over the course of a production. A single piece of footage can have various manifestations in both format and content," (Rowntree, 175).

For the archivist this means examining not just how a film was produced, but also how it was released. Since Miles worked in broadcast television a number of different versions may exist for a single film. Miles may have kept a longer version of his film for himself that was not limited by broadcast restraints. WNET/13 may have edited his material after receiving it to play in different markets or time slots. In fact, WNET/13 contracts with Miles point to this very fact. Found in the same contracts for *Black Stars in Orbit* and dated February 22, 1989 it reads: "EBC [Educational Broadcasting Corporation] shall have the right to cut, edit, alter, and modify the

program in order to comply with (i) censorship requirements, (ii) time requirements, (iii) rules and regulations of PBS...and all other legislative and judicial legal requirements,” (Contract). While it is not known whether any of Miles’ films were edited, a re-broadcast of *Eyes on the Prize* cut out someone cursing for either censorship or political reasons.

These different versions of a work can give the archivist a headache. What should be preserved? The film as Miles saw it? The film as viewers saw it? Should alternate versions that have been truncated or censored be considered for preservation? Frank Boles points out that: “Traditionally, archivists held that the photographic negative is the "original"; it is the "true" representation of what the camera "saw." A strong counterargument can be made, however, that the distributed image, what people actually see, is the "original...." (Boles,134). The distributed image, in Miles and Hamptons case could be effectively called the original since it was not released in any other way, but for broadcast. If an archivist were to preserve the broadcast master then more decisions must be made as well.

Typically, a broadcast master would include ads or commercials which many television scholars find useful in examining demographics and the history of advertising. Should these be included in an access copy or should a title card be placed indicating that the original distribution contained ads. The same question applies to how it should be seen. How important is it for the scholar to view the material as it was originally shown? For some of Miles’ films, and Hamptons, this means that viewers would tune in for several consecutive nights to an hour long program. Should researchers and scholars be given the same experience? Should the archive require them to come back before viewing the subsequent parts of a documentary?

There are not easy answers, but it is important for the archivist to at least document the original viewing experience either in a title before an access copy or in the catalog record itself.

This will provide information to scholars and also contextualize the work in the era it was released, especially as society moves toward onDemand programming and time shifting. Future researchers may never experience the feeling of having to wait for another part of a program. With the advent of Netflix and Hulu, entire seasons of shows can be watched in one sitting. It is important to convey to the scholar that these programs were shown over several nights with commercial breaks to place in their appropriate era.

While versioning is a major issue in determining authenticity another is determining what an item actually is. Even though we know Miles shot and edited on film there are still over 6,000 reels to identify and catalog. Determining what is what can be a task that takes long hours of research and time at a film bench. Every filmmaker has a different workflow from when they shoot to the final film. A filmmaker may go through several edits of a film before they decide it is ready for release. These can be called anything from “workprints” to “rough cuts.” Determining nomenclature of a filmmaker will help the archivist in identifying material.

Generally, an archivist is looking for the camera original-the footage that came out of the camera. This footage can be a negative or it can be reversal stock. There were a number of 16mm reversal stocks available during the period Miles was working mostly made by Kodak and Fuji. By using reversal stock Miles could cut down lab costs since a positive print would not need to be ordered (when developed reversal stock is positive).

Another way to cut costs would be to edit your camera original rather than ordering another print (often called a workprint). Editing the camera original usually results in a reel of discards and selects for the film. The selects would then be assembled and another print would be ordered until the filmmaker is satisfied. Most filmmakers called their edited footage a “workprint,” but that does not tell the archivist whether the footage edited was from the camera

original or another print. Archivists value the camera original highly since it is usually the best quality footage which is excellent for later transfers. The further away from the original a print is the more wear it may have on it for a variety of reasons. Using the camera original also limits the amount of damage that would be reproduced in a transfer. Developing and processing prints is a complicated business and different types of errors can manifest themselves. Hair or dust present on the footage can be processed onto the film. The lab may make an error while or the chemicals might be unstable resulting in the film being under/overexposed or obscuring the frame.

By using the camera original when making preservation copies the archivist limits the likelihood of major damage on the film. Going back to the paper documentation, such as camera logs and edit decision lists, can help the archivist determine which material is closest to the original as possible.

Often the only way to determine what a piece of footage is is to check against a known item. In examining prints of a film checking them against a videotape copy or each other can provide the clues necessary for identifying the “finished” film. Though the broadcast masters delivered to WNET/13 are clearly identified, 1” videotape is not the best quality and may result in a poor preservation transfer. It would be advisable to go back to the film elements to determine if Miles print or version of the film is the same. If it is not then raises other questions discussed above. Most archives would not have the resources to transfer both materials, so again the archivist is faced with the question: what to preserve?

The film elements would most likely provide a better quality transfer and would be sustainable for a longer period of time. However, if the film is substantially different from the broadcast version then an archivist may choose to transfer the tape as the more “authentic” version of the film. Much of this discourse boils down to what will you honor? Will you honor

the filmmaker's version or the viewer's version? Scholars would certainly be interested in both, but what has the higher priority?

This question often comes down to the institution and its resources. While both types of transfers (film and video) are costly, video transfers tend to be less costly. Transferring the video may be a short-term solution until the funds for a film transfer can be made. Since Miles videotape format are obsolete the Film and Media Archive might transfer those to a more modern format like BetaSP (which it has already done for some of the tapes) and save film transfers for later. As long as the film is stored properly and there are no major disasters the film could last for the next hundred years, while the videotape formats (particularly 1" and 2") may only be playable for the next decade or less.

The archivist must balance all of these issues and weigh the needs of the collection based on available resources, obsolescence, deterioration, and publicity value. The Film and Media Archive has already transferred all of the *Eyes on the Prize* interview tapes, which are available online. Though other formats or items may have needed preservation these interviews are extremely sought after and can bring researchers and scholars to the archive. The more use the archive receives the greater case it can make to increase funding and staff, which can fund future preservation projects for less well-known materials.

## VI. Entire Collection vs. Part

Since moving image material is a relatively new medium, traditional archives have found it hard to keep pace with the rapidly changing technology in their selection and appraisal

policies. Many institutions policies “took on the character of accident, or administrative convenience, or allegiance to fashion in selecting the critical and/or popular successes of the day,” (Kula, 2). With the advent of television broadcasting cultural institutions began to think seriously about preserving moving image material (Kula, 3). However, the change in formats has made acquisition difficult for many cultural institutions. This is the very reason why a collection policy has become vital to the preservation of archival materials.

Manuscript collections have historically accepted an entire person’s papers. For authors, rough drafts and edited copies are prized as primary source material for scholars and researchers. However, for the media archive community this practice has only extended to a handful of archives. This is often because of monetary, space, and staff limitations. In order to acquire an entire filmmaker’s collection, an archivist must have expertise in several different film or video formats (usually both) as well as audio elements. They must also have a basic understanding of paper preservation techniques. Actual preservation of films and video (making either film masters or digital copies) is often prohibitively expensive and requires outside grants to complete just for one film. Many archives do not have in-house capabilities for video transfer to either digital or tape formats so these must be sent out to other vendors. The storage requirements for digital files also requires a large infrastructure and asset management system to ensure authenticity and to prevent corruption of data.

For the analog materials a large temperature controlled vault is ideal for storage, but many archives do not have the necessary facilities to acquire thousands of items from a filmmaker. Temperature control also becomes an issue for different types of media since film, video, audio, and paper all have different humidity and temperature environments. However, one vault with

proper temperature can store all types of materials if monitored daily and set to an temperature that provides proper storage for all materials (ie not too cold or warm, with low humidity).

The ideal conditions for materials are often not feasible for archives and as a result archivists must carefully select materials to be included. Different institutions also have different collecting policies. A stand-alone archive (i.e. not affiliated with a university, library, or government) might be very selective and only collect finished films due to space and monetary constraints. University archives might collect more material since they may be more well-funded and have the space set up for acquisitioning larger amounts of material. Library based archives are generally limited in their media holdings due to their long-standing of paper based collection. Only now are libraries starting to collect media and often they are finished films donated by a filmmaker. Generally they do not contain original material, although this is slowly changing (or may be part of a collecting policy). Note that the value of the outtakes, unedited footage, preprint materials, research materials, photos, etc, is perceived to be much higher at a research institution such as Wash U. These materials are primary source materials both unseen and unknown. Primary source material forms the basis of academic scholarship and these materials would represent a potential for new research.

A collection policy is the first step in deciding what materials your archive will acquire. This differs based on the mission of the institution, the capabilities of your archive, and the staff required to manage a collection. Many University archives request a catalog of materials before acquisition in order to know what they are dealing with. Only once they see the amount and types of material will they decide to ingest all or part of a collection. Other archives may only collect based on a institution mission. The Labor archives at NYU collect material from union and labor activities. Generally institutions make their collection policy available on their website.

The best collection policies not only state the institutions mission and collecting goals, but also what types of material they are willing to collect (i.e audio, video, film and the formats) as well as if they will accept public donations. Many archives will not, as this runs the risk of duplicate materials or they may have reached a quota in one area of their collection and are unwilling to accept any more material pertaining to it.

For the institution that accepts an entire filmmaker's work there are many factors to consider. It requires commitment and "buy-in" from the various units. The collection policy at Washington University's Film and Media Archive is as follows: "The Archive collects photos, interview outtakes, stock footage, producers' research and notes, correspondence, treatments, and scripts, all of which provide a distinctive look at the filmmaking and storytelling process for scholars, teachers, filmmakers, and students," (Website About). Embedded in the archives policy is the collection of all of a filmmaker's material. In fact, the Film and Media archive was established precisely to acquire all of Henry Hampton's production materials. Washington University funded the building of a climate-controlled vault large enough to house Hampton's materials.

Accessioning an entire filmmaker's collection can be a vast undertaking. From coordinating the move of material to processing the disparate elements in the collection, it is often a task that can take years to finish. However, the benefits for scholars might outweigh the cost and time required to maintain the collection. With an entire collection in one place scholars receive access not only to finished films, but to the materials and research that built those films. For the Hampton collection the interviews were prized as primary source material that was unique and previously inaccessible. Hampton's production process usually included a pre-interview that was not limited to the subject of the documentary. Interviews are often cut in

length to fit a finished film as well, so the full interviews often provide greater insight for the scholar.

Non-filmic materials, such as photographs and documentation, can also provide scholars with clues to how a film was made or assembled. Photographs of both the production and for reference are often used by scholars in their own works. Scripts, camera logs, and other documentation show how a film evolved and provide insight into the mind of the filmmaker, which is not only important to the scholar, but to the archivist as well.

The spatial location of all the materials is also of great benefit to researchers. Rather than having to view certain materials at archives scattered across the country, a researcher can come back to the same archive working there for weeks culling through material. It becomes a less costly endeavor for the researcher to travel to one place. You also have the benefit of an archivist who knows the entire collection rather than just a part and can provide greater assistance in finding materials. The Film and Media Archive provides a helpful tutorial on their website to aid researchers in knowing what to expect when viewing a collection.

Relationships are also easier to identify when all the material is available in one place. Archivists can more easily make associations between different formats and productions by having the materials stored together. Archivists might also be able to tell what materials might have been lost more easily when cataloging an entire collection. If an archivist finds a tape labeled “dub from 16mm” and that reel cannot be found then that tape becomes a priority for preservation. Or in the case of some Eyes interviews, 16mm neg is missing but there are sync reels. 1/4” audio reels missing but there is cassette tape, etc. Without the entire collection, the archivist might have discarded or placed less priority on the tape possibly assuming some other archive had more original material.

Having the documentation on a film also aids the archivist in identifying rights issues, license agreements, and distribution of the film. Often the paper documentation proves vital in identifying moving image material through camera logs or other inventory lists. By matching material to paper documentation the archivist can find as much information about a particular item—a crucial step in ensuring long-term preservation. Rights agreements can also be helpful should the archive or a scholar wish to license segments of footage. They are also useful in identifying where stock footage came from and how much was used in a film.

However, the risks in collecting this amount of material are numerous. The space required to accession thousands of items and maintain them is often impossible for most archives. The staff must also be trained in handling film, video, audio, and paper materials. There must also be enough staff to actually process the collection, catalog it, and digitize or provide access to it. Funding can be an issue for these collections as well. Actually maintaining the vault is costly, more so if a new vault must be built to house the material. Preserving the material is often cost-prohibitive. Many archives apply for outside grants to preserve just one film. However, only preserving the final films does a disservice to scholars and future archivists. An archivist might also want to digitize material (as the Film and Media Archive has done) which requires sending tapes out to a vendor. It also requires buying a digital storage infrastructure to house the digital files.

Aside from these concerns, actually finding out what materials are requires many hours of research. This is especially true of Miles whose work is largely undocumented. When I began in the summer there was not an exact count of the films Miles had made or their titles. This requires the archivist to do research outside the archive in order to determine what materials are how they should be catalogued.

## Conclusions

The importance of documentation seems to be the major lesson of this project. Before accessioning materials documentation on what is included and type of materials can provide archivists with important clues in later processing. The location and condition of items can also inform preservation priorities. The Miles material is largely unprocessed today, because of its size as well as the needs of other collections in the archive. Any documentation recieved prior to the accession will provide information for scholars and researchers.

Knowing the basic workflow of the filmmaker can play a vital role in processing the collection. The difference between outtakes, answer prints, and workprints helps the archivist form relationships between the material and provides valuable information for the cataloging record.

# Appendix A<sup>1</sup>

	Hampton	Miles		MAVIS-	MAVS-Miles
35mm	31	6			
16mm--rehoused	6.600	1.153			
16mm--not	3.100	5.760			
8mm	0	6			
8mm film	0	4			
Microfilm	0	1			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9.731</b>	<b>6.930</b>		<b>4.019</b>	<b>1.402</b>
3/4" U-matic	6.250	351			
1"	170	40			
2"	5	6			
Digi-Beta	366	0			
Betacam/SP	3.220	0			
D1	9	0			
D3	24	0			
DVCAM	20	0			
Mini-DV	160	0			
VHS	2.176	960			
DVD	5	0			
Hi-8	85	0			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12.490</b>	<b>1.357</b>		<b>3.746</b>	<b>2.077</b>
Audio cassettes	4.908	320			
Mini-cassettes	9	2			
DAT	735	12			
8-track		2			
1/4" audio	2.530	571			
CD	110	47			
1" audio	32	62			
2" audio	7	0			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8.331</b>	<b>1.016</b>		<b>5.581</b>	<b>18</b>
10-bit quicktime	50	0			
DVCPro 50	96	7			
MPEG2 (video)	245	5			
MPEG4 (video)	49	1			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>440</b>	<b>13</b>
WAV	262	0			
MPEG1 (audio)	262	0			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>524</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>31.516</b>	<b>9.316</b>		<b>14.310</b>	<b>3.510</b>

<sup>1</sup> From Washington University Film and Media Archive. Sent by Irene Taylor, Archivist

## Appendix B<sup>2</sup>



Top Left: Rehoused 16mm film cans

Bottom Left: Film Boxes-label reads Gordon Parks and Robert Mangum (*I Remember Harlem* interview footage)

Right: Miles Manuscript Collection

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<sup>2</sup> Washington University Film and Media Archive Vault; Miles Materials. Sent by Alison Carrick.

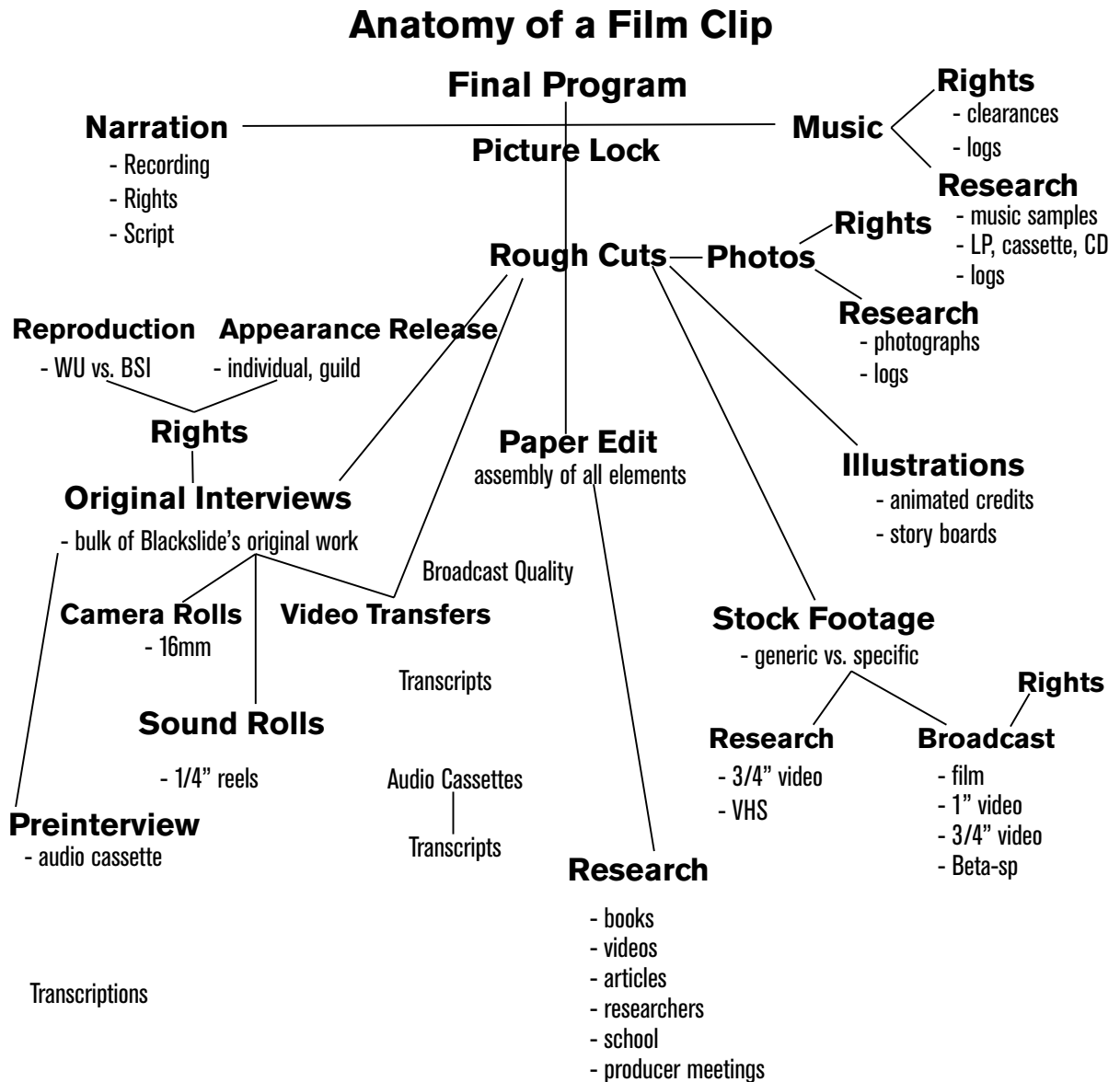


Figure 1. Schematic designed to demonstrate the complex interrelationship between materials in the documentary production process. Created by David Rowntree 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Rowntree, David. 2009. Out of the archive: Challenges and opportunities for new scholarly access from old media collections. *Black Camera* 1 (1) (Winter): p. 176.

## Appendix D

### Bill Miles Filmography

#### *Men of Bronze* (1977)-Director, Producer

First premiered at the New York Film Festival it won several awards and was eventually distributed by WNET/13. Miles spent 12 years researching the history of the 369th regiment known as the “Harlem Hellfighters.” The regiment was an all-black unit under the command of a white officer, Hamilton Fish, who is interviewed for the documentary. Miles interviews several other veterans of the unit and makes use of archival footage to showcase their achievements during World War I.

#### *I Remember Harlem* (1981)-Director, Producer

Broadcast on WNET/13, this four-part series traces the roots of Harlem from its beginnings as a Dutch colony into the 1980’s. Again Miles makes use of archival film and photos to examine the history of the historic neighborhood. Miles also interviews such notables as James Baldwin and Gordon Parks about their experiences growing up and living in Harlem.

#### *The Different Drummer: Blacks in the Military* (1983)-Director, Producer

A three-part series detailing African-American contributions to the military starting in World War I. Profiles of African-American war heroes, regiments, and generals are featured. Interviews with several high-ranking African-American officers.

*Paul Robeson: Man of Conscience* (1986)-Producer

Miles partnered with Janus Films to produce this hour long documentary about African-American singer, athlete, actor and scholar Paul Robeson.

*Black Champions* (1986)-Director, Producer

A three-part series illumination African-American contributions to the world of sports. Includes archival footage of and profiles of Jackie Robinson and Jack Johnson. Broadcast on WNET/13.

*Preaching the Word* (1988)-Director, Producer

A documentary on the importance of religion and the church in African-American culture. Includes archival footage of speeches from Dr. Martin Luther King, Marcus Garvey and Jesse Jackson. The film also includes a discussion about education at the Union Theological Seminary.

*James Baldwin: Price of the Ticket* (1989)-Producer

Part of the American Masters series on PBS, this documentary examines the life and career of Harlem Renaissance author James Baldwin.

*Black Stars in Orbit* (1990)-Director, Producer

An hour-long documentary about African-Americans in the American space program. Includes interviews with Dr. Mae Jemison and Ronald McNair.

*The Liberators: Fighting on Two Fronts in World War II* (1992)-Director, Producer

Miles' last feature film tells the story of the 761st tank battalion, an African-American unit, that liberated Buchenwald during World War II. Miles spoke with several veterans of the unit as well as Holocaust survivor Ben Bender. Though the film initially received positive reviews it was quickly mired in controversy over its factual accuracy and pulled from distribution.

*The Untold West: segment The Black West* (1993)-Producer

Miles produced the second part in a three-part series by TBS on western frontier. Miles profiled several key African-American figures in westward expansion.

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