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Access to Moving Image Collections
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PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION
The Film-Makers' Coop and Electronic Arts Intermix

This paper will compare the access to and presentation of information of one film collection and one video collection: the The Film-Makers' Coop and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI)'s video library. Both are primarily distributors of "experimental" works geared to both public screening and educational rentals. Though neither are nominally libraries or archives, they both contain unique holdings and function as sort of de facto archives of sorts. However, there are stark differences between their apparent philosophies to public access and education as well as the ease of accessibility to their catalogs.

Established 1961, The Film-Makers' Coop houses a collection of 5,000 artist-deposited materials consisting primarily of 16mm films, but also 35mm, videotapes and DVDs. It functions primarily as a distributor of experimental work for public programs and educational presentations. The collection does not circulate to individuals.

Having recently received an upgrade, the collection website is considerably easier to search than in previous years. That being the case, the basic "Quick Search" option simply produces a long, alphabetical list of titles, which in most cases are not particularly descriptive and contain no information about date, artist or runtime. Likewise, searching by the first letter of a title on the right-hand pulls up expanded listings with synopsis of every single title with that letter, which makes it cumbersome for effective searching. The simplest way to produce results is an advance search, which has basic fields—author,

title, description, date range, runtime—and a number of other useful parameters to limit results by format and genre. On the downside, there is no way of obtaining a permalink for search results or catalog entries. However, one may click on an artist name or year to bring up appropriate results.

The viewing room at the Film-Makers' Coop is a small room full of folding chairs and outfitted with a small projector. Their viewing policies are not very friendly to public, research or curatorial purposes, as one must "rent" the screening room for $35 an hour and pay an additional $4 per minute of film viewed. The collection is housed onsite, yet due to limited staffing appointments must nevertheless be booked far in advance. Though I did not book a viewing appointment, I was able to browse the physical collection itself. For the number of purported titles, it seems remarkably small, with titles stacked horizontally on top of each other in general, but not precise, alphabetical order by artists' last names.

EAI's catalog is much easier to approach. All their collections are available to browse via a fairly intuitive, graphic online database. Titles may be easily searched by title and artist. There are also sections for "New Artists" and "Featured Artists." Author and title pages contain a short bio or synopsis as appropriate and a small headshot/still. A left-hand column contains related links, such as artists' collaborators who are also part of the collection or other titles by the same artist.

My initial approach to viewing was through online access to the collection. This is highly restricted to select curators on a case-by-case basis and not a publicized feature for researchers. I had been given access by EAI's distribution director while researching a public film program I am arranging. Nearly all titles have been digitized from various

tape formats and are stored in an online server. In order to view, one uses a special link to enter a unique login and password emailed by EAI. One then searches the catalog exactly as the public would, only there is a small link to "view video" on the description. One then views a compressed, digitized version of the video with an EAI watermark.

Most people view the collection by free physical, onsite access. Appointments must be booked in full, two-hour blocks at predetermined times shared on the EAI website. One emails an info@eai.org address to arrange a viewing—their website suggests 3 to 4 weeks advance notice, though I was able to arrange an appointment within a few days.

Surprisingly, the viewing setup is remarkably similar to viewing online. The small viewing room contains a large CRT monitor and room for only a few folding chairs. Next to the monitor is a Mac computer system connected to a hard drive. At the Mac terminal, one simply accesses the collection through the website as the public or a registered user would and clicks on the same "view video" option. A Quicktime file is rapidly downloaded and automatically plays on the monitor. The primary difference compared to online access is the quality appeared less compressed, and there was no watermark.

If one has online access, it is likely preferable to view from one's own home or desired environment without geographical or transportation restraints. There is also a greater level of service. The key difference is that at the Film Coop one essentially views the "primary" object—film—whereas at EAI one is viewing a digital transfer of what in most cases likely originated as analog video. EAI is not officially a library or archive, but rather a non-profit distributor, albeit one which has made education and access part of its mission; conversely, the Coop seems primarily concerned with generating revenue to

keep itself afloat without considering the long term benefit greater public accessibility to

its collection may afford.

<div align="center">WORKS CITED</div>

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