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## The Bicycle Film Festival Collection

The Bicycle Film Festival Collection holds unique material that often comes straight from the hands of the creators. The method of “submit and screen” encourages new ideas, mediums, and growth among individuals creating independent films. BFF's collection of raw and unconventional footage, physical characteristics, and associated materials spur an interesting challenge for archiving: how to care for, store, and preserve an accumulating collection of handmade moving images from around the world. My aim in working with BFF is to present ideas about how to archive the multifaceted collection and set in motion plans and recommendations for storage and preservation. For the first part of my project I gathered the collection, assessed the range and present condition, and evaluated current storage methods. In the second part of my project I conformed pre-existing records, organized the physical materials and began inventory, and proposed plans for future storage and donation.

The Bicycle Film Festival was founded in 2001 by Brendt Barbur, a cyclist and bicycle enthusiast whose passion is to bring together bike culture from around the world through art, music, and film.<sup>1</sup> BFF began in New York City with its headquarters based in Chelsea, and has since achieved global growth and recognition. The Festival currently holds programs in the United States, Europe, and Asia and brings together different cultures with one common interest: bikes. BFF creates a singular platform for artists and athletes to explore and present international bike communities while simultaneously recording an innovative, inspiring, and valuable part of history. The collection holds...

### **I. Gather and Assess the Collection**

The primary mission of BFF is presentation and staff is often occupied with coordinating festivals, thus, attention to the archive does not always fall in the forefront. The complete collection has never undergone a full assessment, and the inventory and tracking of backlog and incoming materials has become secondary to the programming priorities of the festival. The function of the on-going Festival and yearly submissions have effected both the records and physical holding of the collection, and materials have begun to occupy most of an already modest space. BFF's annual accumulation of new and various materials makes inventory and storage imperative to preserving the integrity and condition of the collection. I soon learned that boxes and materials were stored in Brendt's office and apartment as well as the storage closet, shelves, cabinets, and drawers in the main office. Following this realization, the collection was gathered from various storage

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1 Bff website

locations to take a proper assessment of the range and condition of the materials.

Once the physical collection was brought together at the main office, I began to assess the various formats and associated materials. Each year the Festival brings new film submissions with accompanying materials, such as programs, magazine articles, flyers, posters, and more. Similar to the films, these materials are in need of inventory and improved storage methods. However, because of time restrictions, I will primarily focus on moving images and make brief suggestions for associated materials, such as paper and photographs. BFF's moving image collection consists primarily of DVDs, MiniDV's, and VHS as well as some film and a growing number of digital works held on USB and backup drives. This part of the project consisted of looking through numerous boxes to uncover the various formats inside and discovering that most of the media was contained inside manilla mailing envelopes with an assortment of metadata, such as submission forms, synopses by the creators, unique packaging, festival information written on the envelopes, and more. It quickly became apparent that these envelopes held extensive value for the inventory and preservation of the collection. Yet, the envelopes also presented a serious storage issue that involved space and damage concerns since the folders did not fit in the available boxes and the media inside was vulnerable to physical and chemical harm.

## **II. Evaluate Current Storage Methods**

First, I evaluated where and how the materials are stored to determine any possible deterioration or damage that may result from the physical nature of the storage. For the purpose of time, I mainly focused on tape and disc formats, rather than digital and film, because a majority of the collection is made up of analog material and my project centered around the boxes of submission envelopes holding media that included mostly VHS, MiniDV's, and DVDs. Therefore, the remainder of this paper will be primarily concentrated on these formats. At the office, I observed that tapes and DVDs were stacked laying flat and were stored in the main area of the office that includes windows, a radiator, numerous electronic devices, and a kitchen. I was then able to ascertain that light, heat (and temperature fluctuation in general), information loss, and air pollutants, among other types of damage, should be considered<sup>2</sup>.

One way to preserve media is to consider the way it is positioned while it is in storage. Tapes at the BFF office are currently stacked both vertically and horizontally to utilize all available space. However, tapes stacked flat on top of one another can result in warping of the case or distortion of the tape<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, DVDs and other discs should be stacked horizontally to avoid flexing, which is when the disc becomes bowed and may disable playback<sup>4</sup>. Another issue resulting from a lack of storage space is that much of the media at BFF, excluding materials found in boxes, is placed on cabinets directly facing windows. For DVDS, strong UV light can degrade the dye properties and reflectivity of discs that results in

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2 Video and DVD

3 CCI website

4 Byers, 22

the inability of the laser in the disc drive to read the data.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, for VHS and MiniDV's, heat resulted from sunlight increases tape pack tightness. A tape pack that becomes too tight can result in distortion of the tape backing and dropouts<sup>6</sup>. Heat derived from sunlight as well as humidity causes considerable harm to both the content and physical structure of tapes and discs. The office does not have a system in place for temperature and humidity regulation and media can be found in compromising areas, such as tapes and discs in proximity to radiators. It is best to store media in a cool environment with low temperature and humidity.<sup>7</sup> DVDs can be harmed by high levels of humidity in which moisture is absorbed into the disc with the potential to leave contaminants, such as dye and other materials, in the disc's polymer composition<sup>8</sup>. VHS and MiniDV are also effected by humidity, and strong exposure to moisture can lead to permanent dropouts due to degradation of the tape binder, distortion of the tape backing, and mold in the tape binder<sup>9</sup>. Additionally, high humidity can result in binder hydrolysis in tapes that causes sticky shed, head clogs, and stick slip playback<sup>10</sup>.

Further, BFF's valuable material lacks a designated location because of available space, thus the collection is held in the same area as office equipment and communal spaces, such as the kitchen and lounge. Tape, in particular, can be damaged if it is not isolated from regular office and leisure spaces since exposure to magnetic fields found in electronic equipment can result in information loss<sup>11</sup>. Additionally, media can be contaminated by harmful particles that end up in the air as a result of food, dirt, and dust<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, if possible, moving images should be separated from environments, such as offices and kitchens, to ensure longevity and a clean space.

Specifically, micro storage is a concern for the large amounts of media that are retained in acidic folders in non-archival boxes as well as not secured in cases or enclosed in faulty cases. Potential damage that could result from this type of storage, includes higher vulnerability to environmental changes, deterioration from harmful marker and ink solvents, scratches, moisture and acid deterioration from paper, and harm caused by dust, dirt, debris. A particular issue for DVDs in folders as a result of improper or no cases have been scratches, and in some cases cracked or broken discs. Further, the folders have accumulated much dust and dirt at the bottom which has most likely come in contact with the magnetic tape and can result in dropouts and signal loss<sup>13</sup>.

Fortunately, the materials at BFF are mostly contemporary pieces and there may not be the immediate need to treat damage, but methods to prevent future harm will need to be explored. The average lifetime for video tape is considered to

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5 Byers, 14-15

6 Bogart, 54

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8 Byers, 18

9 Bogart, 19

10 Bogart 5

11 Bogart, 16

12 Bogart, 17

13 Bogart, 29

be from 30 to 50 years<sup>14</sup> while DVDs are expected to live for 100 years<sup>15</sup>. Playback and recording equipment obsolescence is also a threat to the preservation of the materials since archival life of the media may outlive the technology required to play it. Thus, preservation of both the formats and associated equipment is necessary<sup>16</sup>. Additionally, the life expectancy of the media is also determined by the quality of the format, for instance rewritable discs such as RW and RAM discs may have a shorter life expectancy depending on the number of times they have been written on, which weakens the alloy film layer in the disc.<sup>17</sup> In response to the media's dependency on playback equipment, a possible future plan for the collection is digitization, but this plan will be largely determined by the condition, content, ownership (by both the repository and copyright owners), and the question of analog vs. digital preservation.

### **III. Develop a Starting Point**

Subsequent to gathering, assessing, and evaluating current storage methods of the collection, I searched for an appropriate starting point that was beneficial and practical for both the organization and this project. My priority was to organize a project with clear beginning and end points that would prepare the organization to continue working on the project with interns and volunteers. During my assessment, I surveyed areas of the collection in need of immediate attention. One of the major issues is the current storage of media and associated documents inside manila submission envelopes in boxes, as previously stated. There are numerous boxes with these envelopes and current storage methods are space consuming and potentially damaging to the collection. I decided to focus my project on these boxes because of space issues, combined metadata and associated materials included in the folders, and immediate preservation and damage concerns. Each of the submission folders in the boxes holds valuable metadata both inside and written directly onto the folder. Storing media inside of these folders has enabled the organization to keep films and associated materials combined, although this method is neither practical nor archival. In order to preserve the materials and consolidate storage, metadata within the folders needs to be recorded to enable proper storage of the media and accessible files of information. BFF has taken some initiative to record the holdings by using Excel sheets and Google Docs, but this has been an intermittent process resulting in inconsistencies in format and procedure. After discussion with the director, I learned that many of the Excel sheets coincided with the submission folders and I decided to use both of these materials to conduct a basic inventory.

### **IV. Merge Existing Records**

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14 Bogart 22

15 Byers, 21

16 Bogart 22-23

17 Byers 22

My task was to merge previously created Excel sheets and documents to create a superset. After locating and downloading all existing records, I evaluated the various formats and information displayed in each. The Excel sheets included fields such as festival year, film stills, language, contact, address, archive number, description, format, standard, running time, country, year submitted, year produced, additional notes, filmmaker, additional filmmakers, premiere dates, accepted or denied, and many more. For some fields there were multiple columns by different names, such as description, synopsis, or notes. Throughout the sheets, there was no standard order, format, or type of information and the process of merging the sheets was at times confusing and laborious.

Before creating the superset, I considered the future of the information and how it might be used. Primary factors included whether the sheet would one day be imported into a database, how the organization might use the information, and what format would be most useful and appropriate for the needs and mission of the organization. I chose fields depending on the information I had and how efficiently I could merge the documents, such as designating a creator field that would include all the directors for each film in place of separating them in different columns. I standardized terminology and grammar throughout the spreadsheets as well as reformatted color, capitalization, and order throughout the sheets. Additionally, I located multiple rows for the same films and merged existing information into one row. In the end, I was able to determine that sheets held information for 1,511 films. I decided to keep the sheets separated by festival year, the previous method used by BFF, due to previous organization methods and so the project could continue in a manner of year-by-year completion. Thus, future interns and volunteers that work on the project will have clear starting and stopping points.

## **V. Organize the Boxes**

After the Excel sheets were successfully merged, I moved on to physically organize the folders within the boxes. I first conducted a brief overview of the boxes and learned that most of the folders were already sorted by festival year, with about a quarter of the films out of place. Then, I decided to continue to arrange the folders by festival year so the boxes and Excel sheet would coincide. When all the boxes were organized by festival year, Brendt and I discussed the order of inventory that would best suit the organization. A plan for inventory was laid out to begin with the most recent year and work backwards to 2001. Meanwhile, because the collection is held at a functioning office, temporary storage in the walk-in closet was provided for the boxes while the project was being completed. While organizing the boxes, I carefully re-packed the folders to avoid incurring further damage to the media.

## **VI. Begin Inventory**

Upon beginning the inventory, it was apparent that inventory of all the boxes would not be accomplished in the time I had. Thus, my steps were calculated and recorded so that proper instructions could be provided for the future. Starting with the festival year 2013, I went through two boxes full of folders and compared what was physically there to what was

recorded in the spreadsheet. The original spreadsheets contain extensive metadata that is now included in the superset, so it was practical to work off of what had already been recorded than create a new document. Films that were not recorded in the superset were added and the appropriate fields for each film were completed on the sheet. During this process, I noticed that the same films appeared in multiple sheets in the superset, an indicator that the films were screened in multiple festivals, and that film would be in a box for one year but appear on another year's spreadsheet. For example, a film might not appear in the 2013 sheet but would be included in the 2009 sheet, even though all documents in the physical folder indicated that the film was also screened in 2013. Yet, the project depended on this year-by-year process, so I would first check the other sheets if a film was missing from the sheet for 2013 before entering the information. If the information was included in another year's sheet, I would copy and paste it into 2013. Although the efficiency of the project was somewhat slowed by the need to check various sheets before data entry, continuing to process the films by festival year seemed like the right step to retain the structure of the project.

## **VII. Write Instructions for Future Use**

A priority for this project is that it may be carried out by interns and volunteers and remain beneficial to the organization after I complete my work there, as previously mentioned. A list of instructions has been written to complete the project with careful consideration taken while composing the steps to record the data and the transition into the next phase following inventory. The instructions are attached at the end of this paper.

## **VIII. Recommendations**

It is important that efforts to preserve the BFF collection continue and that a clear plan is made available to staff and volunteers at the organization. Due to time limitations, I am not able to provide detailed instructions for future steps but I am able to offer suggestions for paths BFF may want to take. Improved storage methods have been partially addressed earlier in this paper while assessing current environment conditions. Additionally, investing in archival storage materials may extend the lifetime of the media as well as aid in organization and tracking. A list of specifications for possible equipment, shelving, cases, and more is provided at the end of this paper. To maximize storage space, a plan may be drawn out for future arrangement of the materials. Before looking at new types of storage, the organization can also focus on completing the processing and inventory phase of the collection assessment. Steps to integrate films without submission folders may be taken and a plan for assessing associated materials can be outlined. How to combine the entire collection may be determined by the future of the organization and if the records will imported to a database. If a database is considered, BFF can look into link databases that may allow finding aids to link the films with their accompanying flyers, programs, etc. To complete inventory of the entire collection, staff or volunteers can continue to enter all available metadata into the superset, such as text written on the tapes or discs. Another possible option is community archiving which could

provide an immense benefit to the collection. BFF can raise awareness about the needs of the collection and gain community interest in aim to recruit volunteers to work on recording the metadata and/or implementing new storage means.

Further, another present consideration for BFF is donation and the future home of the collection. BFF can look at similar film festival collections, such as Sundance and Tribeca film festivals, and determine plans and priorities for public access, keeping the collection together, copyright issues, and more. Donation of the collection is an important decision which will require time and thought about the future of the Bicycle Film Festival, places where the organization can imagine the collection, and people and communities that might be interested in it.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

The Bicycle Film Festival holds diverse and historically and culturally valuable material. One of the greatest advantages of the bicycle film festival is that most of its artists and contributors are still active members of the community. Thus, decisions about preservation and possible issues with copyright can include a dialogue between the organization and the artist.<sup>18</sup>The artist can be used a reference point to determine the future preservation of the collection and the movement. Ultimately, the BFF archive is an example of a collection in need of a plan, which is why my project focused on the necessary steps to organize, preserve, and maintain access to the archive, and implemented as much as possible.

### Instructions for Basic Level Inventory

1. Conduct inventory of the next appropriate year. The process should be from 2013 to 2001. So, if the last year to be recorded was 2013, you should be working with boxes from 2012.
2. Be sure to document the year you are working on and today's date.
3. Use the provided spreadsheet and make sure that you are entering information in the appropriate sheet for the festival year.
4. Go through each folder in the box. Check to see if the film is already recorded in the spreadsheet.
  1. If it is, make sure that the information is the same in both the excel sheet and the physical folder. Then, move to the next folder.
  2. If it is not, check the rest of the sheets for the film. If the film appears in another sheet, copy and paste the information into the sheet you are working in. If the film does not appear in another sheet, enter the information in the appropriate fields. Then, move to the next folder.
5. When you have completed a box or an entire year, document that the year has been completed and the date of completion.

### Important Points to Remember

- Return folders to appropriate boxes
- Remember to document your work so that others will know where to start
- Be sure that you save your work in the excel sheet
- Be careful when handling the folders
- Check before entering. You don't want to spend time entering information that may already be in the spreadsheet.



## Spec List

### Cases for VHS-Gaylord

#### **Cases, Videocassette, 1-Capacity, Polypropylene, Gaylord Semi-translucent for at-a-glance identification**

##### Features:

1 cassette capacity

No sleeve

Universal hub holds cassettes securely in place

Positive locking latches shut tight to keep out damaging dust and dirt

##### Description:

Case is made from sturdy, 1-piece molded polypropylene for durability.

##### Colors & Finishes:

Available in clear only.

##### Dimensions:

8H x 4 3/4W x 1 1/8"D

##### Ordering Information:

Item No. WW-U1-31

Description: Sleeveless dust free video case 8H x 4 3/4W x 1 1/8"DClear

0.2 lbs.

##### Prices:

1 for \$2.99

6 for \$2.89

12+ for 2.79

<http://www.gaylord.com/adblock.asp?abid=2062>

### Cases for DVD-Archival Methods

#### **Archival Jewel Case**

##### Features:

Cases are constructed of durable clear polypropylene; inert ensuring no contamination of disc and resilient to cracking or shattering unlike traditional jewel cases. A floating hub design protects disc from scratches or abrasions. The patented release system actually "pops out" your CD/DVD when you press down on the hub preventing flexing or bending that can cause stress and loss of data. A vented design allows heat and humidity to escape the case and safely protect your discs from environmental hazards. Disc stored in cases should be placed vertically, like a book, on a shelf for long-term storage, not horizontally.

##### Dimensions:

5-7/8"W x 5-5/8"H

##### Ordering Information:

Item No. 70150

Prices: Packages of 10

1 package for \$18.00

2-9 packages for \$15.30

10+ packages for \$14.40

<http://www.archivalmethods.com/product/archival-jewel-case>

## Storage Boxes-University Products

### **CD Storage Boxes and Accessories**

Make the most of your shelf space while at the same time, protecting your CDs from dust, dirt and environmental pollutants. Both of these boxes store up to 25 CDs and accompanying literature in either the original jewel cases or our polypropylene replacement cases (see above). Constructed of 60 pt. lignin-free tan board that has a smooth, low-dust surface. Lids are 2" deep. Choose the portrait version that allows you to read titles on standard CDs, or the landscape version that leaves room for divider guides (sold separately). Divider guides allow you to identify and divide your collections within the box. Please note: Divider guides are not compatible with 800-5• 60 pt.

- Buffered
- Tan
- Drop Front
- Metal Edge
- Acid-Free
- Lignin-Free 512

[http://www.universityproducts.com/cart.php?m=product\\_list&c=721&primary=1&parentId=1266&navTree\[\]=1266&navTree\[\]=1460&navTree\[\]=721](http://www.universityproducts.com/cart.php?m=product_list&c=721&primary=1&parentId=1266&navTree[]=1266&navTree[]=1460&navTree[]=721)

### **Archival Video Box**

Store 12 video cassettes in their original cases or in polystyrene video cases in this archival quality box. Constructed of 60 point blue/gray boxboard, this box has a 2.5" deep lid so it stays securely on, protecting the contents from dust and rapid changes in the outside environment. Use can use our foil back labels on the exterior to identify contents.

Overall dimensions: 15.5" long x 8.5" wide x 5" high. Price per box.

Item No. 735-1555

Prices:

1 for \$12.80

5 for \$12.10

10+ for \$11.75

[http://www.universityproducts.com/cart.php?m=product\\_list&c=920&primary=1&parentId=1266&navTree\[\]=1266&navTree\[\]=1460&navTree\[\]=920](http://www.universityproducts.com/cart.php?m=product_list&c=920&primary=1&parentId=1266&navTree[]=1266&navTree[]=1460&navTree[]=920)

## Storage for magazines-University Products

Ready-to-assemble shelf files

These ready-to-assemble shelf files allow you to quickly construct a rugged, efficient shelf file that will help to organize all your periodicals. Made of 200# test 0.125" thick corrugated Kraft board. Two sizes are offered to ensure a size that fits your needs. Price per package of 12.

Item No. and Dimensions:

540-0950 9.5" x 4" x 9"

540-1275 12.75" x 4" x 10.75"

Prices:

Vary depending on quantity and size (most around \$25.00)

[http://www.universityproducts.com/cart.php?m=product\\_list&c=601&primary=1&parentId=&navTree\[\]=1271&navTree\[\]=1430&navTree\[\]=601](http://www.universityproducts.com/cart.php?m=product_list&c=601&primary=1&parentId=&navTree[]=1271&navTree[]=1430&navTree[]=601)

## Storage for posters and flyers

### **Archival Movie Poster Box**

Each of these specifically designed archival boxes are custom manufactured to house specific movie related memorabilia. Made from our exclusive Perma/Dur B-Flute Single Wall Corrugated Board (which by design is extremely strong, lightweight, acid free and lignin free). The box is also buffered with 3% calcium carbonate for an alkaline reserve in all three layers for maximum protection against acids. This exclusive board is made of fully bleached virgin fibers and is very durable. The board is single wall (0.125") with a pale blue/gray color. The two smaller boxes feature metal edge construction while the largest box is a ready-to-assemble design which provides more structural integrity for its large size. All feature fully telescoping lids. Price per box. Oversize shipping rates may apply.  
[http://www.universityproducts.com/cart.php?m=product\\_list&c=716&primary=1&parentId=&navTree\[\]=1271&navTree\[\]=1442&navTree\[\]=716](http://www.universityproducts.com/cart.php?m=product_list&c=716&primary=1&parentId=&navTree[]=1271&navTree[]=1442&navTree[]=716)