

Genevieve Havemeyer-King  
Access to Moving Image Collections, Fall 2013  
Assignment #1: Presentation of Information

## The Barnard College Archive Vs. The Kinsey Institute

### BARNARD COLLEGE ARCHIVE

The Barnard College Archive houses a small collection of moving image materials consisting of 21 reels of silent 16mm film, dating from 1925 through 1966, and several boxes of video tapes (VHS, Digibeta, DV Cam, ¾ U-Matic) that document notable events, lectures, activities and performances at Barnard College. A full catalog of items in the collection can be browsed on their website. Search results redirect to records within CLIO, the Columbia University Libraries Online Catalog. Items are listed both individually and by group, and paired with links to full inventory and finding aid documents detailing the items within smaller collections. The system is simple and easy to navigate, but requires in-depth reading of inventory lists to find specific materials. The limited subject matter of the archive's holdings makes finding information relatively easy, and research requests can also be made by phone or email. Most moving image materials must be viewed on-site (with few exceptions for distant researchers, depending on the request).

On-site access to the moving image collection (or any materials from the archive) is free of charge, but requires an appointment. A small portion of their 16mm films were transferred to low-quality digital video files several years ago, and these files are available for viewing on a laptop. The files are in varying formats, and required some trial and error experimentation with different video players to view them without errors during playback. Tapes and films are also available to view

with advanced notice to allow for arrangement of a separate viewing area. The basic research area provided is a large desk within the office.

Born digital recordings of current and recent events and school activities are now processed through an IT department and stored on a server devoted to archival materials. The archive has created assessment guidelines for the department to decide which materials will be kept in the archive and which will be deleted. They have become very selective due to lack of server space. Any attempted submissions of student moving-image work and recordings of non-ticketed Barnard performances are directed to a public web server that is not affiliated with the archive.

The archive is currently struggling with issues of permission for licensing and reproducing most of their video materials, specifically videos of performances (theatre, concerts, dance) that take place at Barnard. According to Shannon O'Neil, who recently began overseeing the archive, the school has never created a rights agreement that authorized the archive to distribute the materials. Because of this, anyone requesting copies of performances, whether they personally appear in them or not, must also seek permission of every other participant in the recording. The archive is actively working with the college to develop an enrollment-based agreement that solves this issue for future moving image and audio recordings.

Future expansion plans for the school and the archive will include demolition of the current building which houses the archive and subsequent overhaul of the current digital file-storage system. This will require the creation of a ready-reference collection for use while the bulk of the archive's materials are relocated

during construction. They also intend to re-digitize their 16mm films and begin digitizing their analog videos.

The archivist and assistants were all very helpful and knowledgeable about the collection. After viewing the digitized portion of the 16mm film collection, I was invited inside the temperature-controlled vault to observe how on-site materials are stored. Overall, my visit to Barnard was enjoyable and I learned quite a bit about how a small archive operates to provide access to a very specific collection of materials. Although their presentation area left much to be desired in terms of privacy and space, it seems like the new generation of archiving staff will work to improve the research experience.

### THE KINSEY INSTITUTE

The website for the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction provides access to an online catalog of their full collection via IUCAT, Indiana University's catalog system. In addition to the catalog, a selection of books are available in full-text online. Their moving image collection consists of over 20,000 films and 4000 videos. All moving image materials must be viewed in-house. They have a system of fees for research, which can be waived depending on the nature of the research, the researcher's relationship to the subject material, and any potential research benefits for the Institute. Research appointments must be made at least two weeks in advance.

Navigating the website and browsing the catalog are straightforward, and one can do broad or advanced searches and yield accurate results. The quality of

individual records varies within the collections, with seemingly more detailed information for video materials than for film. Many film records lack summary descriptions that are present for most of the video materials. In records that do provide summaries, descriptions are vague. Titles and dates are the main source of information, and occasionally notes about information that may accompany a given film will indicate important details that are left out of the summaries (e.g. a film record with a note, 'J. Gillis written on leader', which might indicate the appearance of the notable adult film actor Jamie Gillis, but no more information is listed).

## CONCLUSION

Comparing the two online catalogs, it is easy to say that Barnard College provides more access to detailed finding aids, even if they must be viewed as separate documents from the online system. If Kinsey institute make finding aids that described specific films and materials within groups of collections, their online system would be more helpful for browsing their moving image collection.

Conversely, I can imagine that the on-site research experience at Kinsey would be much more rewarding than what is provided at Barnard. Kinsey has a much larger collection and detailed cataloging of their entire moving image library may not be possible with their staff and funding, but according to others who have visited their research area, they do provide viewing areas and private space for research, which Barnard does not. Both archives have limitations that reflect the relationships between staff size, collection size, and priorities, considering the resources they each have to enable access.

## SOURCES

The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction

<http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/>

Barnard College Archives

<http://archives.barnard.edu>