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Access to Moving Image Collections
30 September 2013

Physical, Intellectual, and Virtual Access: An Evaluation of Two Institutions

One can explore access services in various cultural institutions and find that there are endless opportunities for research in archives and collections. When we gain interest in an institution we may not be made aware of these opportunities thus leaving it up to the researcher to discover both the services and the policies of an establishment. This process can prove to be challenging as well as convenient depending on the institution. This paper will evaluate the physical, intellectual, and virtual access at The Museum of the Moving Image and The Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Archives to compare the two institutions' services and policies to show both practical and impractical approaches to access.

I will begin by examining The Museum of the Moving Image's facilities, catalog, and website. This review will be based solely on the Museum's website without a site visit. Upon first glance at the website's section for researchers, I was surprised to find that there are currently no accommodations for on-site research requests. I anticipated a study area considering the variety and manner of the materials – such as props, equipment, costumes, furnishings, etc. – might require on-site access. To supplement the lack of on-site access, the Museum has a collections research service that charges \$35 per hour for members and \$75 per hour for non-members, a steep fee that may discourage some patrons. This method of research can either bring advantages or disadvantages depending on what the researcher is hoping to gain, whether that is the expertise of a Museum specialist or the ability to browse and come upon unexpected materials in the process. Therefore, as result of the interim collections research service the success of one's research is contingent on the efficiency of the digital catalog.

The Museum's online collection provides a comprehensive database to search for objects by categories and sub-categories. The success of online accessibility to collections can be largely attributed to the advent of new web-based software titled "Collectionspace." Through this software, the Museum is able to provide a descriptive and managed virtual catalog to the public that is approachable and quickly navigable. This catalog provides a critical tool for researchers by outlining the institution's holdings thus providing an alternative, though not of equal value, for on-site access.

The online catalog is designed in conjunction with research requests through the "Artifact Class" category in the search options. Researchers are encouraged to provide full information regarding requests by utilizing the Museum's downloadable overview of the collection titled "Collection Artifact Class and Work Types." The overview includes categories such as animation materials, apparel, drawings, editing equipment, and more with subcategories such as lenses, computer game software, screenplays, posters, etc. This step in the research process allows the patron to contextualize his/her inquiry within the collection. In addition to the overview, the website offers instructions for research inquiries. In a step-by-step process, the researcher is given directions for requests as well as how to obtain copies. The Museum mainly relies on email to service requests, which can be a drawback since it removes the opportunity for in-person dialogue with a specialist. The patron is instructed to email a request to be answered with a summary of available materials as well as a fee quote. If the patron accepts, advance payment for copies of the materials is required. This formal process can be deterring for patrons because it forms disconnect between the researcher and the specialist and collections. However, detailed copy instructions ease the off-putting inquiry process enabling patrons to explore the different opportunities for obtaining the materials. The website lists photographic services, image preview copies, ordering photographs, commercial use, original photography, and delivery information. The patron benefits from this conveniently collected information available on one page with downloadable reproduction and rights and permissions forms. While the Museum's services may hinder research by lacking on-site access and formal inquiry processes,

it also benefits patrons through resources such as its digital catalog, which illustrates that although the Museum may fall short in some aspects, it excels in others.

The Tamiment Library and Robert F. Wagner Archives offer significant study areas that provide patrons with an experience unavailable at The Museum of the Moving Image. The Tamiment Library is based within the Elmer Holmes Bobst Library and the facilities are conveniently located in proximity to associated collections and libraries thus allowing the use and combination of materials and equipment. Tamiment provides considerable equipment for viewing materials and studying that I found to be productive and conducive to research because sometimes a space to review materials is critical. When I entered the library, the reference librarian at the front desk greeted me and was helpful in identifying the materials and research inquiry process. Hard copy information brochures, request forms, and patron registration forms were available prominently at the front as well as related materials such as complementary magazines and journals. On-site the viewing equipment includes computers, printers located around Bobst, microfilm readers and printers, and self-service photocopiers. In comparison to the lack of study space at the Museum, the flexibility of resources and funding may be greater in a private university run archive rather than a non-profit institution depending on restrictions or grants. In addition to Tamiment's available equipment, a self-service photography policy stands that allows researchers to photograph materials on personal cameras, therefore eliminating the need to copy. An interesting research quality at Tamiment is the access to audiovisual materials where the library staff can make user audio copies and moving image materials can be viewed at the nearby Avery Fisher Center for Music and Media. Overall, the services provided at Tamiment appear to be concentrated on research rather than exhibition, unlike the Museum, although there are several public programs, exhibits, and teaching sessions that occur.

To request materials at Tamiment patrons are required to fill out either a call slip or an Archival Request Form depending on the type of material requested, this process can also be conducted via email as the librarian informed me. The materials are intended for on-site use and patrons are encouraged to

explore the reference titles in the reading room as well as the online catalog system. Tamiment provides several sources for browsing and searching the collections such as the Collections List/Guides exclusive to the Tamiment Library and Wagner Archives, NYU's library catalog BobCat, and multitude of associated databases. The Collections List contains descriptive metadata as well as the location of the material, if off-site, which is helpful to researchers who may need to give advance notice for requests. Other beneficial aspects of Tamiment's catalog system include guides, collections overviews, and alphabetized subcategories to search through.

In addition to digital catalogs, Tamiment provides vast and accessible information on its website about hours, research visits and policies, current projects, accompanying centers and collections, public programs, and news. A complete list is available for researchers to learn more about the inquiry process, study room protocols, public access (non-NYU affiliated patrons), off-site storage, and copyright and permission policies. The information available on the Tamiment website is consistent with the instructions I received by the reference librarian. By gaining knowledge through both a site visit as well as the website I was able to experience the quiet and welcoming space and review information online.

In my evaluation, I conclude that the physical, intellectual, and virtual aspects of access all play critical roles in the research process yet not all institutions are capable or willing to devote time and funds to building these elements. The Museum of the Moving Image offers limited facility resources but an advanced digital catalog and a complete website whereas The Tamiment Library provides a productive study space, an expansive digital database, and a clearly outlined website. While both institutions contribute to the success of researchers as well as access, there is the underlying issue that there is no ideal institution that can accommodate all of a researcher's needs.