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Metadata for Moving Image Collections

Assignment #3

Metadata Creation for Digital Animation Collection

The collection I have chosen to catalogue is my own digital library of animated short films. I began this collection a few months ago with the intention of digitizing the best available copies of animated shorts produced by major studios during the "golden age" of animation, lasting roughly from the 1920s through the 1960s. Many of these films have been remastered so many times that it has become difficult to keep track of the best available copies in terms of completeness, resolution, proper aspect ratio, and print quality. Others are simply very difficult to find in any form and have never been made available commercially, with extant prints usually in the hands of collectors who occasionally make them available online. As a major animation fan and amateur film historian, having access to digital copies of these films is of great value for both viewing and research purposes. My ultimate (and likely impossible) goal is to have a complete collection of all the animated shorts from this era, available to both myself and other interested parties.

The qualities I wish to record for each film in my collection can be divided into two sets of elements. The first set would be descriptive information about the work itself, and the second would be the technical properties of the digital file that represents the work. I have identified the following ten qualities as being the most vital to have for each film:

1. **Title:** The primary human-readable identifier for each film. As several shorts were re-titled for television distribution, alternate titles would need to be recorded as well.

2. **Studio:** The animation studio which produced the film. This is distinct from distributor, which would often change during the life of a studio. For example, films produced by the Disney Studio have been distributed by Universal, Columbia, United Artists, RKO and Buena Vista, but all are still considered Disney cartoons.

3. **Series:** Studios would typically release each cartoon as part of an overall series. Warner Bros. had both Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies. Disney had Silly Symphonies, Mickey Mouse, and Donald Duck series, among others. Often the distinction between these series was very pronounced, making it important to record the series name for each film.

4. **Director:** As with live-action film, the director of an animated short is able to leave a distinct imprint on their work which separates them from their peers. A film directed by Chuck Jones will be unmistakably different than one directed by Walt Disney. The ability to identify films by director is vital to understanding the nature of each film.

5. **Date:** Animation styles evolved over time, from the rubber-hose looseness of the 1930s to the sophisticated designs of the 1950s. Knowing the release date of a short is the key element for placing it in its proper context.

6. **Source:** One of the key factors to determining the audiovisual quality of a film is its source. A Blu-ray source would likely be of higher quality than a DVD source. A video sourced from YouTube video would likely be of lower quality than both. By recording this information it is easier to determine when a superior source has become available.

7. **Codec:** A video file's codec determines the quality of its compression. H.264 is more efficient than MPEG-2, for example. The goal for my collection is to have each file encoded in H.264, so this element is vital to knowing when a file is not at that standard.

8. **Resolution:** The file's resolution is another key factor in determining its quality. A 4:3 short may be in standard definition (720x480) or high definition (1476x1080). A YouTube video may be at a very low resolution such as 240p or 360p. A higher resolution file would almost always trump one at a lower resolution, making this an important element to record.

9. **Frame Rate:** The majority of animated shorts were created at 24fps, but the frame rate for the file depends on the source it was taken from. A file created from a PAL DVD may be at 25fps, while one from a VHS tape may be at 30fps, both of which are undesirable. By identifying each file's frame rate, it becomes easier to recognize when a more accurate version has become available.

10. **Aspect Ratio:** In addition to the obvious change in aspect ratio from standard Academy to the various widescreen processes which took place in the early 1950s, another lesser-known change took place in the late 1920s. The initial introduction of optical soundtracks (such as Fox Movietone) reduced aspect ratios to approximately 1.2:1 for several years, until the Academy set the standard at 1.37:1 in 1932. It is important to note which shorts are available in the aspect ratio in which they were originally produced.

In attempting to choose a metadata content standard to apply to my collection, it was important that it be granular enough to capture each of the technical elements I identified above. I knew from Assignment #2's data mapping exercise that PBCore had all the elements I would

need and then some, and so I have chosen it as my standard. Since this is a widely-used standard, particularly for broadcasting moving images, it is very appropriate for the community that would be likely to utilize my collection. PBCore also has required fields such as pbcoreIdentifier, pbcoreDescription, and instantiationLocation that are not vital to my needs, but are included in my XML files nevertheless. I have also chosen the Library of Congress Name Authority for recording the names of each film's director. Many directors were credited with different variants of their name during their career (Charles M. Jones for Chuck Jones, Isadore Freleng for Friz Freleng), and so it is essential that these names stay consistent within the collection, regardless of their appearance on-screen. In addition, several PBCore elements such as creatorRole and essenceTrackEncoding have their own controlled vocabularies, and I have used these when appropriate.

Desired Elements	PBCore Element
Title	pbcoreTitle
Studio	pbcorePublisher
Series	pbcoreTitle titleType=Series
Director	pbcoreCreator
Date	pbcoreAssetDate
Source (DVD, BD, YouTube)	essenceTrackAnnotation
Codec	essenceTrackEncoding
Resolution	essenceTrackFrameSize
Frame Rate	essenceTrackFrameRate
Aspect Ratio	essenceTrackAspectRatio