

retroVisions

archiving artists' film and video

yorkshire **film** archive



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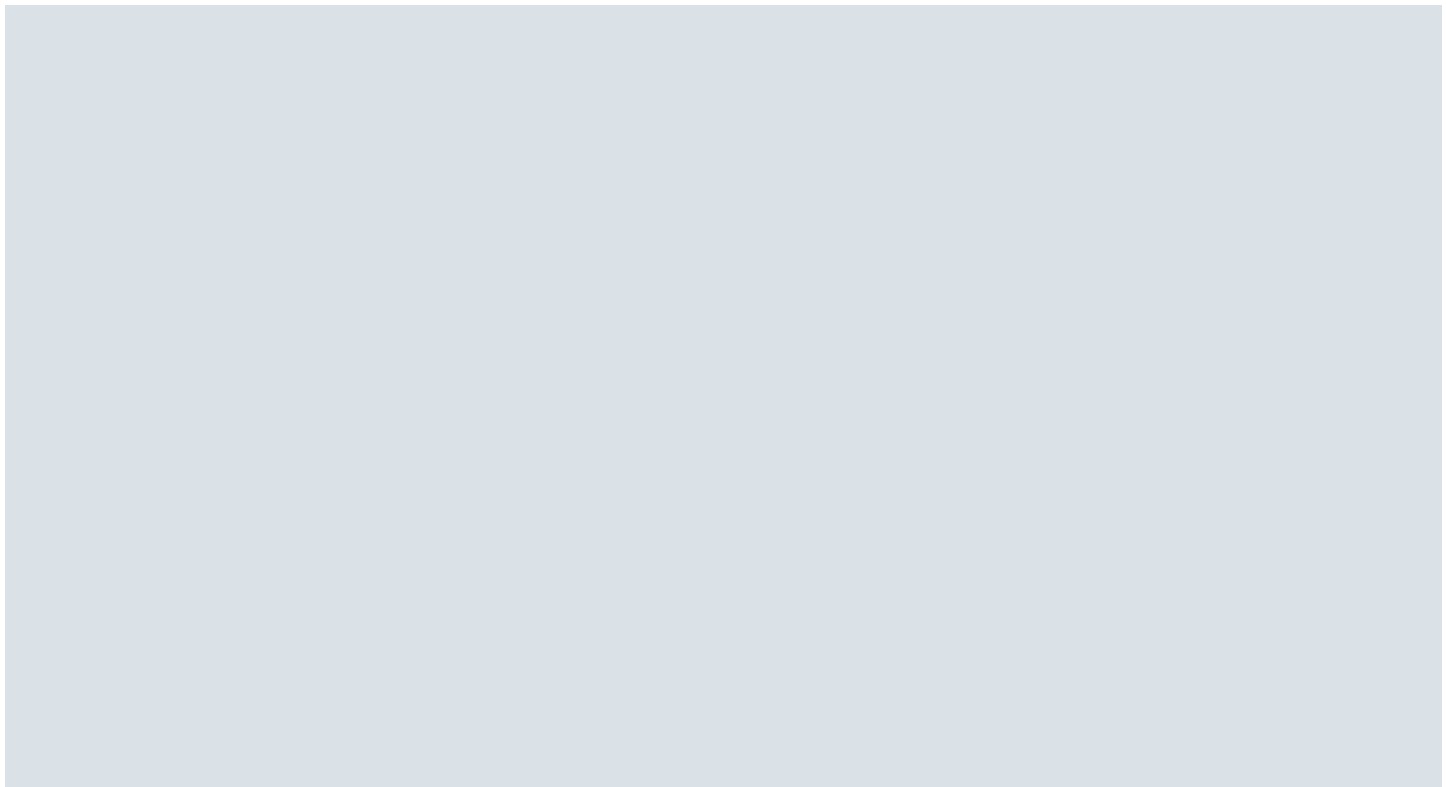
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preface

Michael Harvey
Chair, Yorkshire Film Archive

One of the notable features of art practice over the last two decades has been the use by artists of moving image media either in single discrete works or in more complex installations. Over that same period, the technical means at an artist's disposal has changed considerably – from various gauges of cine film to different video formats, which have developed from tape to hard disk to DVD and online streaming. A characteristic of much of this artistic practice has been a tendency to use the most up-to-date technology, with earlier works being stored away until such time they are required for exhibit again: that is when problems of recovering them come to light. Time moves on and so does technology: there may be no simple retrofitting solution.

The aim of the Yorkshire Film Archive is to find, preserve and show film and television material made in and about Yorkshire. Currently, though, artists' film and video is not represented in the collection. The Archive wished to gain an understanding of this specialised field so that it can provide an effective way of preserving such work produced in the region. This report is the result of research conducted both in Yorkshire and beyond. It examines the main issues surrounding the preservation of artists' film and video – artistic, technological and legal – and has uncovered the divergent approaches of artists, curators and archivists that have to be bridged if such work is to be preserved for our own generation, let alone those to come.

It is evident that this area requires a dedicated approach whereby artists and those who seek to preserve their work appreciate and understand each other's needs. This report offers one way of tackling the issues, albeit on a small scale in one part of Britain. However, these issues are common across this field both nationally and internationally and it may be that with this research the Yorkshire Film Archive has contributed to the development of good practice in archiving the work of those artists who make use of the moving image.

The logo for the Yorkshire Film Archive, featuring a stylized film reel with a central hub and two reels, rendered in a light, semi-transparent grey.

yorkshire **film** archive



retroVisions

archiving artists' film and video

RESEARCH REPORT

commissioned by the Yorkshire Film Archive

Olivia Stross
October 2005

I INTRODUCTION

This paper reviews and makes recommendations concerning the prospects for archiving artists' film and video at the Yorkshire Film Archive (YFA). The report forms part of a project to inform YFA on how to go about providing an effective service for the region. The context for the report can be summarised as follows:

- The framework for collecting artists' film and video – identifying and locating original materials created over the past 30 years and ensuring that systems for acquisition and storage are appropriate for dealing with original works;
- The preservation issues – in particular, the technical complexities of dealing with a variety of fragile media formats and locating specialist expertise, in relation to YFA's current resources;
- The curatorial role – issues of selection and definition in relation to creating the historical records of a continuously evolving practice;
- The advocacy issues – the need to raise awareness amongst artists and encourage them to make use of the specialist preservation services of the regional film archive, so as to enable audiences to experience and access their work in the future. This aspect involves both practical and ideological change for artists and commissioners in terms of their responsibility and involvement with publicly-accessible preservation services such as regional film archives. This research has identified the issues, but looks to Arts Council to implement the necessary advocacy policies.

This report has been prepared for YFA and hence uses archival terminology. The term 'acquisition' relates to established practices for formal deposit, (ie., placing works for safe-keeping and future access), and does not imply any transfer of ownership or copyright, nor of any monetary exchange. Similarly, where reference is made to 'collections' held by YFA (or any film archive), this is in relation to archival practice and the collection and preservation of all moving image work for the future.

II ARTISTS' WORK AND CURRENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH REGIONAL FILM ARCHIVES

This research has examined different approaches both in the UK and abroad, through a combination of visits and desk-based (web) research. From this, it seeks to examine whether a case can be made for using the YFA's existing facilities as the starting point for long-term archival preservation of artists' work. As expertise for film archiving is already available and established, much of this research has focussed on the need for specialist skills to deal with the multiplicity of video and other new formats.

The project was initiated by YFA, the public access repository for moving image in the region, and funded by Arts Council England, Yorkshire, who also assisted with providing an overview of the development of the new media sector in the region. The aim was to review existing systems and facilities at YFA, identify areas where artists' needs might call for different or additional facilities and make clear recommendations of how this work should be approached in terms of future policy.

Artists' work in moving image media is now established within mainstream visual arts practice and has an active history of some thirty years. Its growth has been assisted by practical as well as creative developments – including decreasing equipment costs, portability, technical advances and social and political change. Within this context of rapid change, long term archival considerations have not been prioritised by the majority of artists and commissioners.

Video formats are especially fragile, due in part to the nature of magnetic formats and how images are stored on tape, but further complicated by the proliferation of formats. These are almost invariably non-compatible and require unique equipment to play each format - and the maintenance of the supporting equipment forms an integral part of the issue.

Once video begins to decay there is currently no process for retrieving the work, yet the urgency of protecting early work in relation to the history of an artist's practice is not widely understood. Greater curatorial understanding of an artist's practice can be illuminated by study of early works and transitional pieces as for example the movement from still photography into moving image. Some of the artists contacted by the researcher knew of losses of early video works, whilst others assumed that copying to digital formats resolved all retrieval issues. This highlighted the live-ness of issues relating to artists' practice.

As technologies have advanced, the ease of duplication and the variety of new and improving formats has to some extent lulled artists, curators and collectors into a false sense of security. It is only when artists encounter the inevitable decay and loss of their earliest works that the need to work with professional archives becomes apparent. Today, at a time when artists are expanding into other formats and new presentations of moving image, the ambition to make use of archival services has increasing implications for future resources. One of the artists consulted in this study commented that, 'By having the opportunity to have my own work archived in the correct conditions, it allows work to live on and be accessible for future study or curatorial purposes.'

Outside the film archive sector there is limited understanding of the requirements to ensure the long-term survival of original material created on film, video, DVD and related formats. Second- or third-generation back-up copies are not suitable for long-term archival purposes, hence the need for deposit of the original formats. As few artists or curators work directly with film archivists, what will happen to a work more than five or ten years ahead is seldom investigated. By contrast, the recent collaboration between LUX and the Scottish Film Archive over the Margaret Tait 'Subjects and Sequences' project (www.lux.org.uk/margarettait) has been a most notable exception, bringing together active archival involvement, public presentations, publications and events and demonstrating the potential for new ways of working.

The debates shared internationally about the technical problems of preservation and the development of best practice for conservators form part of the growth of professional practice. In the UK, Pip Laurenson's work archiving Tate's moving image collections is becoming increasingly well-known and can be accessed through published articles (www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/conservation). Unless a work is purchased by for example a major museum such as Tate, or by a collector (thereby demonstrating its commercial value) it tends to remain in the possession of the artist and outside the scope of standardised archival assessment and care.

In theory, there are no formal barriers to artists depositing moving image work with an archive - for example, YFA's facilities and collecting policy is open to all with material of relevant regional context. YFA's limited involvement to date with a project aiming to archive artists' work, (working with The Culture Company and partners, 2001-03), has already demonstrated a few of the differences in relation to artists' practice. One example is the way in which artists often revisit work over time, so that the concept of a finished item is not as straightforward as with other material deposited in YFA's collections.

The reality is that the services at YFA are rarely utilised by the arts sector, and not understood as a specialist resource open to creative practitioners. In an ideal world, both artists and commissioners should be able to deposit work within a publicly accessible regional resource, secure in the knowledge of future access for themselves and others.

III REGIONAL FILM ARCHIVES AND YFA'S POSITION

As a public access regional film archive, YFA holds membership of the UK-wide Film Archive Forum (FAF). Established in 1987, FAF's core members include eight regional public access film archives, the BFI/National Film and Television Archive, the Imperial War Museum, Scottish Screen Archive, National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales. 'The Film Archive Forum represents all of the public sector film and television archives which care for the UK's moving image heritage. It represents the UK's public sector moving image archives in all archival aspects of the moving image, and acts as the advisory body on national moving image archive policy'. (www.buafc.ac.uk/faf/).

As the lead body for the sector, FAF takes an interest in all archival aspects of the moving image, with particular interest in the preservation of nitrate film, acetate film, and videotape; the training of archivists, acquisitions policy, standards for archives, copyright, co-operation with film laboratories, and contacts with foreign archives.

The regional film archives (RFAs) find, collect, preserve and make accessible material that is relevant to their region. The majority of their collections are of non-fiction material, much of which is sourced from amateur filmmakers, industry and education. Many of the RFAs also hold significant regional television collections. All RFAs share a common set of activities, which include:

- Finding and acquiring material;
- Cataloguing;
- Preservation and conservation in controlled environments;
- Selling clips and items to production companies for use in television programmes;
- Publishing information about their holdings;
- Offering research facilities for the academic sector and for private study;
- Providing access to their collections via public screenings and other means including the production of videotapes/DVDs for retail sale;
- Educational activities; mainly in an informal or community context, but increasingly with a focus on curriculum-specific use of archive film.

In May 2005 a detailed overview of the sector was compiled and presented to DCMS by FAF.

Film archivists find themselves facing many of the similar problems encountered by other archivists, conservators and librarians, with the added complication of having to deal with a wide variety of formats in film, video, new media and audio. Like all guardians of collections, they are particularly concerned with finding the most appropriate forms of access to the material, whether for study purposes, public screenings, education use or inclusion in new combinations of media production and presentation.

YFA plays an active role at national level through the UK FAF. Its expansion over the past three years from a one-person organisation to the present staff team of 6.5 came about as part of a planned relocation, with support from new funding partners who provided YFA with opportunities to invest in equipment and resources on a previously unattainable scale.

YFA's new premises include specialist temperature- and humidity-controlled vaults, with film vaults (three rooms at 10C, relative humidity 30 to 35%), and a video vault (15C, relative humidity 40 to 45%). The film vaults have capacity to store approximately 30,000 cans, with a further 10,000 in the video vault. All these, together with a public access viewing room, in-house facilities for viewing, repairing, cataloguing and transferring a range of film formats, provide a unique resource for the region. There are currently about 14,000 titles in the collection; these include the BBC regional news collection of some 8,000 items.

The expansion of staff and facilities has made it possible for internal debates to develop about the areas of relative strengths and weaknesses in the collections, and the variety of subject matter, geographical spread and representation. Prior to this expansion, the area of artists’ work could not have been addressed on a strategic regional basis. The recognition that archiving artists’ film and video requires a strategy for care, and that the scale of production over the past fifteen to twenty years had reached significant levels of regional activity, brought Arts Council England, Yorkshire and YFA together to investigate the area.

This research has sought to establish if archiving artists’ work could fit within existing policies of acquisition, preservation and access, as understood within the film archive sector, as well as to identify the parameters for the creation of a service to artists that represents a good practice model. As concerns about the likely quantity of work mastered on video formats emerged from consultations, it also became apparent from discussions within YFA that building up professional skills and expertise could have wider benefits for future work.

IV MANAGING THE GROWTH OF A CULTURAL LEGACY

The way in which artists use film and video makes it difficult to give a precise definition – it covers artists’ production of moving image work and now encompasses digital media as well as film and video. Nor has the preservation of such work been addressed in a coherent fashion in the past. Since the creation of the UK Film Council (UKFC), the situation has been further complicated by the division of funding responsibilities for film and moving image practice between national bodies, (primarily Arts Council England and UKFC), as well as a growing awareness of sectoral interests held in common with Museums and Archives. As a result, we must now address the twin problems of the fragile nature of the media coupled with the limited access to the legacy of artistic production nationally.

At best, collection and preservation have been inconsistent across the UK. Some major institutions have started to collect works – the BFI holds deposits in relation to Arts Council funded titles; other collections (mostly academic-based) exist for study purposes only. Of these, the establishment of the British Artists Film and Video Database, part of the Study Collection at the University of the Arts London, managed by David Curtis, is perhaps the most widely known, consisting of an extensive range of reference materials including video copies of artists’ works, still images, historical posters and publicity materials, paper documentation and a publications library (www.studycollection.org.uk). Overall however a consistent approach is now needed: this report offers a way forward for the development of regional collections of artists’ film and video by utilising the existing regional film archive infrastructure.

There are some strong advantages to this approach. By providing a physically accessible infrastructure, regional film archives avoid the hurdle of a ‘national’ collection that is often an emotional block for artists/individuals considering deposit of their work. Regional film archives support a broad spectrum of film and video production, thereby avoiding the narrowing definitions of museum acquisition policies.

At the same time encouraging the promotion and advocacy of preservation issues at local and regional levels will have long term benefits. This approach will create an invaluable resource for future research and curatorial interpretation of the histories of artists’ film and video production. It enables a variety of alternative histories and interpretations to emerge over time. This is particularly important as definitions and perceptions of the artform are challenged and expanded, and the use of moving image practice becomes increasingly central as a component of artists’ practice.

Arts Council England has responsibility for managing the cultural legacy of artists' film and video, and in the course of this research it became very clear that solutions need to be found which will be both broad ranging and consistent. The following will be some of the key issues in relation to future policy:

- An understanding of the impact of policy which makes deposit a prerequisite of Arts Council or other government subsidy of film and moving image, ie., requiring definitions, estimates of numbers, etc., and hence instigating a new relationship between the film archive sector and Arts Council England;
- Making sure that the requirement to deposit is understood by artists and commissioners to be an additional benefit regarding future access and not a replacement for the requirements of public exhibition and presentation in relation to funded works of art;
- Identification of the requirements for an acquisitions policy for retrospective deposit – how to address the issues of collecting past work, as well as the implications both for selection, prioritization and the range of material previously covered by Arts Council England (ie., short film, documentary and artist film and video);
- Understanding and planning for the impact in terms of resources and costs (preservation and duplication, as well as storage);
- The expectations Arts Council will then have regarding the role of an archive to undertake to distribute or make work accessible for re exhibition, touring or sales, either alone or in partnership with other bodies (subject to the artist's permission);
- The implications of collecting artists' film and video and the process of archiving in relation to the established national and regional collections of contemporary art (eg., national museums, larger local authority museums, etc.);
- The likely expansion of the future requirements for archives to support film that documents work also supported by Arts Council England policy, for example, performance and live art practice, new media, emerging web-based artforms, etc.

V IMPLICATIONS FOR YFA

The process of undertaking this research has identified three central areas that need development in order to create a resource for archiving artists' work in Yorkshire. These include the legal implications in relation to existing deposit and acquisition agreements; technical expertise and resources; and the curatorial skills required in relation to the artform. Specialist external reports were commissioned to address the legal and the technical areas. The findings of this report have been informed by:

- Consultation over the legal and copyright implications of the current acquisition processes employed by YFA. A report was commissioned from Henry Lydiate, Visiting Professor, University of the Arts Westminster;
- Consultation over technical and conservation standards, staff development and resources, with organisations including Tate, BFI, LUX, FACT, YTV, North West Film Archive and the National Sound and Screen Archive of Wales. A report with particular reference to YFA's needs was commissioned from Brian Pritchard, independent film and media consultant;
- Consultation with a small sample of practitioners selected through research at Arts Council England, Yorkshire. Artists' contributions will be made available via YFA's web site (www.yorkshirefilmarchive.com);

- Consultation with commissioning agencies and curators across the Yorkshire region, including HTBA, Impressions, Lovebytes, Lumen, Pavilion and Site, establishing clearly that none have facilities or access to facilities suitable for long term care of moving image work;
- Presentations to regional groups in Yorkshire including new media commissioning agencies and projects, and film sector exhibitors, festivals, etc. Also to FAF, (February 2005), Arts Council New Media officers (MinMAP, June 2005), and others.

Further details are presented as appendices to this report, the main findings and recommendations are given below.

V (I) LEGAL ADVICE

YFA requested advice and information on the legal issues that could affect the terms of current deposit and acquisition agreements, and on related aspects of archiving artists' work such as the commercial value and copyright issues arising in connection with producing preservation and/or viewing copies. Overall, Henry Lydiate's assessment confirmed that accommodating deposits by artists would fit reasonably within YFA's current systems. His report appears in full as supporting documentation, page 24, and identifies the following key legal and management implications:

- Acquisition of material for archiving artists' film and video should include gathering the fullest (reasonable) range of relevant documentation, particularly with reference to the history of the creation and public presentation of each work, copyright ownership and licences;
- Where documentation or original materials are not available, the information provided to YFA at the time of acquisition would need to become part of a background file on the acquired work;
- Amendments would need to be made to YFA's standard Deposit and Acquisition agreements to ensure that wherever possible, YFA is given a copyright licence and a waiver of the statutory moral right d'intégrité to authorise the processing of the archive material and/or the servicing of would-be commercial and non-commercial users;
- Additional training for YFA staff, both for archivists and technical staff involved in work on these items, would need to include information on intellectual property laws (such as copyright and statutory moral rights), both regarding acquiring information as well as processing the archive material and servicing future users. The training would need to be reviewed annually to ensure up to date knowledge of changes in relevant intellectual property legislation.

By addressing these aspects, some of the barriers to future deposits at YFA could be removed.

Advice was also sought from Arts Council's Monitoring and Compliance Unit. This established that there are currently no legal blocks to requiring deposit as a condition of grant. It would however have a cost implication for regional film archives, and an agreement between Arts Council England, Yorkshire and YFA would be necessary to ensure the provision of a regional service.

V (II) TECHNICAL ADVICE

Currently there is an acknowledged national shortage of dedicated video preservation specialists which impacts on the ability to undertake planned preservation programmes, with their associated costs and real time implications. These aspects are compounded by the concerns about the

stability of formats for preservation masters (even Digibeta is expected to become obsolescent with time); the massive variety of video formats (upwards of 29 formats available by the late 1980s, hence the multiplicity of retrieval systems); and the potential for mechanical failure with storage on computer hard drives. The experience of others such as the National Sound and Screen Archive of Wales (currently managing a major video preservation project) can be an invaluable guide to understanding the scale of the problems involved building up technical skills, in-house expertise and knowledge of specialist facilities. In the longer term, building up such a resource at a film archive would create an important regional asset.

Initial project research was conducted with leading organisations, including the BFI and other members of the UK FAF – Scottish Film Archive, South East Film Archive, National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales, North West Film Archive and others. Other organisations working with artists and moving image, including Tate, LUX and FACT, have provided ongoing support and information.

More detailed assessment of YFA's position in relation to potential future technical needs was obtained from Brian Pritchard's commissioned assessment, which focussed on video preservation aspects; his report appears in full as supporting documentation, page 31.

Key recommendations include:

- The need to develop expertise, supported by training, in relation to maintenance and control of collections – this could be realised by employing a skilled engineer, and by initiating a substantial training programme;
- The importance of gathering appropriate playback equipment, supplies of spares, backup machines – both at individual archives and across the sector;
- Understanding of outsourcing options to inform both management and curatorial decisions;
- Continuous evaluation of the information regarding formats for use as preservation masters, their relative longevity, etc.;
- Storage options and regimes;
- The need for gathering contextual information about each work, in order to facilitate preservation, and the significance of curatorial guidance.

V (III) CURATORIAL ROLE

To ensure that the wide range and variety of emerging practice can be reflected in collection and preservation decisions undertaken in the early stages of building up the regional holdings, it will be desirable to create an open mechanism for attracting deposits. An in-house curator working in combination with an external advisory group would provide a strong starting point, so that a number of views could be voiced. This model would also assist with the practical requirements to seek out both recent and historic works, providing an overview and contacts in a sector where ownership often remains with individuals, some of whom will be outside the visible networks of gallery, museum or funding agencies.

One of the most challenging aspects of the curator's role lies with the individuality of these works, each having very different and specific requirements in relation to presentation. This will have implications for access to playback equipment, contextual and interpretation material as well as preservation strategies, and part of the curatorial role will be to work closely with the archivists to ensure that information is correct for the future legacy. How this information is collected and presented will impact on future study and re-presentation, making it vital to understand each artist's ambitions for a work at the point of collecting. Statements from the artists consulted during this research give some indication of the wide variety of starting points.

There is clearly a strong argument for considering an external academic partnership, to further strengthen the framework for future study. Following from this, the curatorial advisory panel model could be developed to include YFA representation (director, in-house curator, etc.), an established practitioner, a representative from an external organisation such as an HE institution, along with a further external representative from an exhibiting and/or commissioning agency.

Curatorial insight would be particularly important in the decisions about which works should be prioritised for acquisition and, if necessary, for preservation; and vital in relation to establishing a framework for retrospective collecting. It would also assist the preparation of access formats for audiences to include higher education research, the general public, curators, film programmers, etc. The model for engagement of curatorial expertise recognises the specialist nature of the artistic work, bringing appropriate knowledge of the sector into YFA, yet also having access to YFA's technical resources and their development.

VI CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings which emerge from this report indicate that it is both possible and desirable for YFA to be able to develop a service for artists. It would broaden the richness and variety of the collections and fit comfortably into the regional infrastructure. At the same time, it should be noted that archiving artists' film and video will only ever form a limited part of the work which YFA undertakes: it would take place alongside ongoing collections management and film preservation, education and access services, supply of commercial television content and related programmes.

YFA's present position has a number of strengths when considered as a possible starting point for future activity in the region. YFA can provide bespoke storage and conservation facilities, an expanded staff team with expertise in particular areas and the vital resource of a public access study space. It forms part of an increasingly active and well-informed network, together with the other regional and national film archives, and will be well-placed to draw on partnerships for technical advice and management of resources as well as the sharing of experience in working with artists' materials. It is also increasingly well-positioned through established relationships with key regional agencies such as YMLAC, Screen Yorkshire, and Yorkshire Culture. It is not possible however to take these strengths in isolation, so the following recommendations fall in two parts, those particular to YFA and other aspects with broader regional and national policy implications.

VI (I) RECOMMENDATIONS TO YFA

The proposed model for YFA's development of a service would need to bring together several elements, including video expertise, curatorial input, a curatorial panel and external partnerships to deal with supplementary (non-moving image) materials. These would then need to be placed in an agreed and consistent framework, ensuring compliance with legal and copyright issues within YFA's own procedures, and clarifying the relationship with Arts Council England, Yorkshire and the extent of support, through resources and through advocacy.

i.i Legal compliance

The legal implications for YFA would include recognition of copyright and representation issues in relation to visual creators. It should also be noted that the variety of practice means that each case may have different legal and curatorial implications for YFA. In most cases, access will be limited to research and study only, since public presentation/exhibition would involve external partnerships. The recommendations contained in the commissioned legal report provide an

excellent starting point for YFA and provide details relevant to both artists' practice and YFA's broader Acquisition and Deposit procedures.

i.ii Video expertise

The technical requirements for dealing with video formats break down into two main areas, skills and capital equipment. The professional skills, both technical and archival, could be held in-house by employing a skilled engineer and/or building up the ability to correctly identify where these skills can be sourced elsewhere. The equipment implications are complicated by the wide variety of formats and hence the possible range of resources that could be called upon. This raises numerous issues with associated costs, implications for capacity, and such, since these aspects are entirely related to originating formats and the artist's presentation preferences.

Aspects covered by the commissioned technical report provide a detailed starting point and an assessment of the complexity of the technical aspects in relation to YFA's current position. YFA would need to consider investing in, and maintaining, a wide variety of both redundant and historic technology for playback and potential presentation purposes, as well as ongoing repair and maintenance programmes. As spare parts for redundant technology become increasingly harder to find, contacts with other regional film archives will be an essential aspect of planning for future-proofing. The scale of such an undertaking is too great for a single regional film archive, and would need to be developed through discussion within the FAF and beyond, to avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure the most effective sharing of expertise.

i.iii Curatorial input

The specialist nature of the artform, combined with the complexities of dealing with emerging practice, indicates the importance of including a curatorial strand. YFA has a relatively small core team and the proportionate level of activity compared with the scale of the existing collections would need to be taken into account. YFA should consider the extent of the input needed to establish and effectively make a meaningful impact.

A curatorial post would need to be initiated for a minimum of three years in order to assess the impact and longer term value of creating a dedicated regional resource of this kind. The specific requirements for curatorial expertise and the resources needed would reflect the scale of collecting, and establish the service and its context. It would also require specialist understanding and discernment of evolving artists' film and video practice and methodology, within the boundaries of YFA's resources. Tackling the historic backlog could then be addressed separately, as a related aspect.

A curatorial panel is recommended as one way of dealing with the different perspectives in the sector and their changes over time. Its membership needs to reflect archival and curatorial viewpoints as well as the perspectives of academics/historians, gallery curators, commissioners and artists. As a group, it would expect members to commit to a minimum two year term and its membership would be necessarily expanded if YFA set up an external partnership as part of the work. There are already several possible candidates who have expressed interest and support for YFA from amongst individuals contacted during the research.

i.iv Working partnerships

Collecting artists' film and video is likely to include at least some proportion of non-moving image material, whether as part of original installations or as documentation of activities. An external partnership could offer a way of both sharing resources for storage and gaining assistance with the development of study facilities and contextual material. Academic partners in particular may be appropriate to this project and could bring the additional benefit of opening up access to new

sources of funding. The options for setting up a secure medium term external partnership, for example with an HE institution, museum, gallery or similar body from the contacts established by the research project should be further explored.

VI (II) REGIONAL/NATIONAL POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In order to move these recommendations forward, YFA’s relationship with Arts Council England, Yorkshire requires an understanding of three main areas of concern. These are essentially advocacy, further involvement in accessing the cultural legacy through the film and video archiving processes, and funding.

YFA’s relationship with Arts Council England, Yorkshire will be central to future development of the work, in order to follow through logistically in relation to existing archival practice. YFA would need clear guidance from Arts Council England, Yorkshire and an agreed understanding both in terms of resources and responsibilities: both partners would benefit from the establishment of an agreed and understood national policy framework.

The requirements for funding are indicated throughout this report and would need to be defined if the organisation chooses to develop services to support archiving artists’ film and video. The following recommendations address the issues of advocacy and longer term development.

ii.i Advocacy

The limited awareness of the technical complexity of preserving artists’ work on film and moving image media has already demonstrated a crucial aspect of the need for further advocacy, both to the artists creating the work as well as to the commissioners and funders. By raising awareness of the legacy that could be lost in the future, there is an opportunity to move beyond visual arts collecting policies which acquire work based on a present value within contemporary curatorial understandings of the artform. The advantages of working with film archivists can thus be seen both in the preservation aspects, as well as in their long term approach to safeguarding work for the future.

This document and its findings need to form part of future advocacy beyond the film archive sector, regarding both the fragility of the media and the time constraints that form the imperative for preservation. Targets groups include practitioners, educators, commissioning agencies, galleries, funding bodies, collecting and heritage agencies.

ii.ii Looking to the future

Whilst action in relation to both policy and practice recommendations would support progress in archiving artists’ film and video in the region, the ongoing need for advocacy should not be underestimated. As one of the artists reflected, when recalling his earlier attitude towards preservation issues, ‘Looking after the early work was coloured by a view that video was a fairly disposable medium, capable of being copied and therefore democratic and uncollectible (how wrong can you be). Now I do want to preserve some key pieces, but am defeated by the technical difficulty of doing it properly. I need some help, basically.’

Arts Council England needs to undertake awareness-raising with individuals as well as organisations at the point of their applications for funding, to signpost the route towards safeguarding new works for the future. Artists and commissioners at the point of creating new work need to be made aware of the importance of the originating format as an element for archival care. This necessarily has funding and/or budgetary implications for all new commissions, whether by Arts Council England or through others, as well as for all those involved with professional development across the sector.

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INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS

Jay Arnold, Screen Yorkshire
Mark Bodner, North West Film Archive
Simon Bradshaw, FACT
David Curtis, British Artists' Film & Video Study Centre
Charles Fairall, BFI/ National Film and Television Archive
William Fowler, BFI/National Film and Television Archive
Frank Gray, South East Film and Video Archive
Professor Vanalyne Green, University of Leeds
Jackie Hatfield, Rewind, University of Westminster
Marion Hewitt, North West Film Archive
Tom Holley, The Media Centre
Denis Hopkins, Lumen
Janet Jennings, Lovebytes
Patrick Keiller, Royal College of Art
Debra Klomp, Pavilion
Steve Manthorp, City of Bradford MDC
Carol Maund, Site Gallery
Janet McBain, Scottish Screen Archive
Roger McKinley, FACT
Anne McNeill, Impressions Gallery
Professor Stephen Partridge, University of Dundee
John Reed, National Sound and Screen Archive of Wales
Lisa Roberts, Blink Media
Will Rose, Lumen
Gary Thomas, Arts Council England
Walter Van Der Crusjen, Hull Time Based Arts
Charlotte Vincent, Vincent Dance Theatre

PUBLICATIONS

'The English Regional Film Archives: Film Archive Forum briefing to DCMS Film Branch', Richard Taylor, May 2005.

'Film Heritage and the Regional Investment Fund for England', Paul Habbershon, Dec 2004.
Unpublished report to UK Film Council.

'Digital Dancing', John Reed, National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales, September 2004. See www.bufvc.ac.uk/faf/digital

'Developing Strategies for the Conservation of Installations Incorporating Time-based Media: Gary Hill's Between Cinema and a Hard Place', Pip Laurenson, Tate papers, Spring 2004. See www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/tatepapers/04spring/

'Film and Video Study Materials with particular reference to Digital Video and DVD', Malcolm Le Grice and Steven Ball, British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection. See www.studycollection.co.uk

'Institutional Support for Artists' Film and Video in England 1966 – 2003', Michael Maziere, November 2003, British Artists' Film & Video Study Collection. See www.studycollection.co.uk

OTHER REFERENCE SOURCES

There is an increasing range of resources about aspects of archiving artists' film and video online. The following were particularly relevant to the research for this paper, and several include comprehensive guides for further reading.

www.movinghistory.ac.uk
www.lux.org.uk
www.luxonline.org.uk
www.studycollection.org.uk
www.bfi.org.uk
www.anthologyfilmarchives.org/
www.imappreserve.org/
www.cinovid.org
www.montevideo.nl