

Rachael Stoeltje: When we get all of our panelists up here, we're going to open it up for conversation, and we'll just start with questions and answers. I think it's really, really, important, over and over again, the number of people when they ask have you digitized your whole collection, is it all accessible, is it all online, like not only do we need the tools to work that through, and there are about 4,000 extra conversations to have about how are you scanning, what are your file formats, but seeing what you have to go back to so the physical object, and looking in the dirt in a shed in a thousand degree Compton heat ...

Jan-Christopher Horak: It's only 100.

Rachael Stoeltje: Oh, just 100? Okay. Or going back to these film labs, so historically film labs have held on to material, especially for artists and filmmakers as we were talking about earlier, filmmakers don't always understand the whole preservation idea and final archiving of material. So there are so many steps, so that was really crucial I think to this part of it. But I'll just open it up to anybody for starters. Or we can have a big debate here.

Barbara Ann O'Leary: So I do have a question then about what role preservation has in film programs? Are students learning that when they're making a film it's not just post-production but it's keeping the film alive long-term? Do you have anything to say? I mean is that a part of a program or is that just something that you have to catch on the fly?

Jan-Christopher Horak: This is a huge issue. We, along with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences have been trying to develop a program to educate filmmakers about exactly this issue. We at UCLA, and at NYU, they had, there is a program for training moving ... a graduate program for training moving image archivists. So the field is professionalized in that sense. But the filmmakers themselves, because again, especially independent filmmakers, they're always worried about the film they are just about to make. They're never really worried about what they've done in the past. And so we're trying to put together literature, etcetera, to hand out to film schools to tell students who will become professional filmmakers or independent filmmakers, once your film is done, it's not going to last forever, and especially now where we're in the digital realm where there's even less certainty about the longevity of the material, so that filmmakers really have to be concerned about their own work and be proactive in terms of making sure either to put it into an institution and let them take care of it or do it themselves. And it's really tough because a lot of filmmakers hate the thought of losing control. And when they give into it, put it into an archive, it's they equate that with losing control.

Mike Mashon: Which I think is, I agree with you, it's sort of a wrong way to think about it, on the filmmaker's part. And of course, one thing that we're finding now, we've been involved with UCLA and a couple of other, our sister archives, in a rescue of film from DuArt Film Laboratories. And as we've done our spelunking within their collection, you find a tremendous number of student films in there, elements that people didn't realize were there and now we're contacting the filmmakers and they're very surprised to find out that their film elements are there. Maybe they've forgotten about them. Maybe they

never knew how to get them back. And DuArt is going out of business. And the material that the archives and others are not going to claim will be destroyed. So, we've got a little bit of a race against time there. But the material, it's out there. And the people who are currently making films, video, digital, today, really need to be more aware of the archival imperative.

Gregory Waller: Chris [Jan-Christopher Horak], do you think there's a gap between when dealing with living filmmakers who want to see the best product up on the screen, so you're talking about blowing up something from 8 to 35 to get the best image, or showing *Daughters of the Dust* in a way that it's never been shown, with the historical argument about the materiality of prints and all of that information as being absolutely crucial, how are you retaining that information? Would you want to retain that or is that just in the archival purview?

Jan-Christopher Horak: What, in terms ...

Gregory Waller: The stuff about print history, the stuff about how it was circulated. It's crucial that the stuff came out on 8, right?

Jan-Christopher Horak: Yes. Well, when we, in our preservation records, which are part of the cataloguing record, each preservationist takes detailed notes so that, and that's the first point to make. So we do have a documentary kind of paper trail. Secondly, I think it is one of the guiding principles in the archive is that nothing is not reversible. In other words, even if you're going to make new material, you are going to save and protect the original because, again, as has been pointed out, the original document, whether it's a 35 millimeter nitrate or an 8 millimeter film, will have information in it that you don't want to lose. So we will continue to keep those, even nitrate, as long as possible, which is not the case in all archives but it is in ours.

Gregory Waller: No, I think that's crucial. I meant like let's say you come up with a teaching version of this, and extraordinarily important. It's going to be Canon determining, what you guys come up with, with LA Rebellion. If it's distributed free, it's going to become, it's going to set the tone for how people deal with that material. So if I'm teaching, I'm not going to go to UCLA to look at their records. Is there going to be something in that document that says to me this thing ... I want to see the best version possible for my students, but at the same time I want students to know this was an 8 millimeter print, it circulated this way, this is who distributed that, like all of this other great material history of that stuff, not knowing that it's kept somewhere, but knowing that that's part of the best way to present that material to the public, and to think about teaching the history of that. Material seems to be crucial keeping that information not in the archive but actually on the delivery, like somehow making it part of the deliverable would be really important. I don't know.

Jacqueline Stewart: It seems like actually you're talking about different sets of audiences. So I would love to be able to show this beautiful new print of *Daughters of the Dust* in a classroom setting and then also show the material that had been circulating before and have students engage with that and think about it. If you're talking about a larger audience of people who are not necessarily interested in those questions, I don't know if it's the best way to show the film by showing what they will

think is an inferior image quality. I mean one of the big issues that was coming up with the LA Rebellion project was Chris [Jan-Christopher Horak] kept saying 16 is a dying medium, it's a dying medium, and he meant that in terms of exhibition. So that, retaining the original formats for these things would have really severely limited the venues in which we could have shown this work. So there's a tradeoff between getting at some of these kinds of original materiality questions, and image quality questions, and exposing people to whatever we're calling like the content of the work. So I think we just have to image the audience as more diverse and I guess one of the things we can think about is how to optimize the options for different kinds of audiences to see different types of material.

Gregory Waller: ... digital delivery to allow for that, demand it.

Jacqueline Stewart: Right. And I would just quickly add that for many of these filmmakers, getting something blown up to 35, some of them were really involved in working with Ross step by step in how the films were preserved and so on. But it was this incredible honor for them to be able to finally sort of reach a sort of big time that 35 millimeter represents. So there was also this question of sort of honoring the work that they had done, which again is a way of violating I guess some kind of pure historical materiality, but it's doing a different kind of political work, I guess.

Leah Kerr: I have a question for you. Didn't some of the filmmakers also want to make changes in their films, which would also...

Jacqueline Stewart: We didn't really get that, that much.

Leah Kerr: No?

Jan-Christopher Horak: This is endemic with filmmakers. But in this particular case, it was not. It was not.

Jacqueline Stewart: Thank god.

Doug Reside: I've become, in the couple of years that I've worked at New York Public Library, painfully aware that the limitations of space and time mean that we're always choosing what we're okay with losing. And I think that the sort of rule of thumb at most archives in the past have been to try to preserve, when you put something in the queue for preservation to try to pull out of that artifact every little bit of information that you could, thinking that we'll probably not go back to it, but I think that is also a choice to lose those things that we'll never get to if we continue to take such care with every single artifact that goes under it, because we're, every hour that we're spending on that, there's another 500 objects that are rotting away and dying, and that we're losing. So I wonder, and I think part of the reason for that try to pull every bit out is in part because of the sort of commercial drive that has helped specify the preservation specifications for a lot of digital migration, but to try to re-release something on DVD or Blue-Ray for the new cleaned up and restored version, you want that *Wizard of Oz* or that *Gone With the Wind* to look really, really, good, and better than it did on VHS or on BETA, or on 16 millimeter, or whatever. But I wonder if we as an archival community need to really, and a scholarly community, need to really start saying we'd rather have breadth rather than

depth for a lot of these collections, that we really need something even if it's the quality of a YouTube video, of most of our collection, rather than just sort of passively deciding that three-fourths of our collection will cease to exist altogether. Yes.

Mike Mashon: Well, I'll take that one. The decisions, we don't, I always say that we monetize our collection about as well as you would expect a federal agency to do. So we do, we're not particularly interested in making money off of it. It's difficult for us to do that. We do have an agreement with Kino [Lorber]. We have a branded series of Library of Congress restorations that include Stanley Kubrick's *Fear and Desire*, and *King: A Filmed Record*, and the forthcoming *Hell's House* with Betty Davis and things like that. But by and large, the preservation decisions that we make are driven, in a lot of ways, in terms of the nitrate, on physical condition. So if it's really rapidly deteriorating, we can only get one more pass at the film, then that's what we're going to decide to preserve first. But there are other considerations, things, films that we think might be shown theatrically, we want to be able to maintain, we also want to preserve the theatrical experience of 35. But, we're also, I mean I could talk about this for the rest of the day, but we're also limited by the availability of film stock now. So we're certainly having to think about that as well. There are some films that we're going to preserve on 35 all the way to a show print. There are other nitrate that we're going to scan and that's it, it will never see film. All of the videotape in our collection, Chris [Jan-Christopher Horak] mentioned three-quarter inch tape, that's what we prioritize for digitization. We have 200,000 U-matic tapes in our collection and we've been digitizing those for several years, and we can actually see the end of that because we have robots that digitize it, and we're migrating those digital files. But at some point, we're going to throw those videotapes away, and it's scary. It is really scary. And I don't want to personalize it but I worry about being the guy who threw away the videotapes and then some massive electrical storm happens and the files go away. But we can't ... we don't have the storage to store everything. Fortunately, and we're collectively running out of space for nitrate. There's a lot of nitrate out there. UCLA, you don't have very many empty vaults left. We've got like no empty vaults left. And we would collectively love, for example, to be able to bring back American nitrate that's stored in foreign archives. There's millions of feet of film over there they're not doing anything with, and we'd like to have that back but I don't know where the hell we'd put it. I'm sorry; end of rant.

Jan-Christopher Horak: Just a quick addition. The good news is that, and I do a blog. My blog today is about nitrate. And, the thing about nitrate is, yes, there will be losses as there will be losses with everything. But the good news is when I started in this field in the early 80's, the kind of parole was nitrate can't wait. In other words, we thought we'd have to preserve every single foot of nitrate within the next ten years, until 1990, or it would be all gone. Then we found out in the early 90's, after they did chemical aging tests at Rochester Institute of Technology, that in fact if you've stored nitrate very cold and very dry it's going to last a long time. In fact, it will last hundreds of years. It will last much longer than anything that you have digital right now. I mean, by a mile, a longshot. And that theoretical test is now proving to be true. We opened up our new nitrate vaults in 2008, and everything we put in there was clean nitrate. In other words, we went through, inspected it, cut out the decomp, and moved that in, and we have found in the now since, 5 plus years virtually no new decomp in that, because we're storing it literally just above freezing and 30 percent RH humidity, and that is the ideal.

And so we do have more time, and I think, yes, there will always be losses, but you know.

Mike Mashon: So just imagine Chris [Jan-Christopher Horak] now dropping the mic and walking off the stage. No, I won't even ... but it's very true. A lot of the, I don't want to wander too far afield here, but we frequently in the archives employ, sometimes with good cause, sometimes with not, alarmist rhetoric about how our collections are in danger when, you know, we're trying to get money from people to help us preserve those collections. So it would not help you to go to a funder and say this is going to be gone in a hundred years. You've got to shorten that time frame. But there are some. I will tell you. I totally agree with Chris [Jan-Christopher Horak]. I don't worry about the nitrate nearly as much as I worry about the videotape.

Audience: Yes.

Mike Mashon: Nearly as much. And even, but even there, we've got lots of 2-inch quad in our collection from the 50's and 60's, play spectacularly. We do. No, you hit on it. He said do you have the machines to play them back. That's the key. That's the key. Well, you know, we actually have some youngins who have really gotten into video and know how to do that. But if you don't have playback heads for this stuff, I mean nobody's making it anymore. Now, there are also scientists, really smart people out there, who are looking for ways to be able to preserve videotape, magnetic media, without ever touching it. So there's a guy recently, Carl Haber Lawrence Berkeley Laboratories, recently won a MacArthur grant. One of the projects that he works on with us, is he's got a way for us to be able to preserve broken discs, sound-recording discs. So he takes microphotographs of the grooves, and then stitches them back together, and those photographs are converted into sound waves. It is magic. And Carl [Haber] is working now. There are other scientists that are looking at ways to be able to read magnetic media without ever touching it, which would be amazing.

Rachael Stoeltje: So I think we only have time for maybe one more question. And you've been waiting so patiently.

Charlene Register: Yes, I had a comment; it wasn't so much of a question. I just wanted to say that being at a southern school that's far away from a lot of archives, in the early years of my work, all I had access to were bad videotapes. And unfortunately, I didn't actually see the actual print of the films, so I had to rely on what I had access to, and of course some of those films have been improved. Now I know that the flower was a piece of cotton, which I thought it was initially. So I'm just saying that it impacted what I was writing because I could only interrogate things, but so far, because I couldn't actually see it, because the videotape was so bad. But I'd rather have had the bad videotape than nothing at all. So, I'm just sharing that to say certainly having the enhanced version is very valuable, but even in those earlier, particularly doing stuff on Micheaux, we were just trying to get anything on Micheaux, and we worried about the enhancement of it much later. So anyway, just the value of both.

Rachael Stoeltje: Sorry, Ally [Allyson Nadia Field].

Allyson Nadia Field: Really quickly, I just wanted to add an addendum to Leah's [Kerr] question about filmmakers wanting to make changes. One of the things that we did come across as filmmakers not wanting their films screened, or part of it. And so to Greg's [Waller] point about canon formation when you're dealing with living filmmakers, if their desires run conflict to what your scholarly or archival impulses is, that will affect what people understand the LA Rebellion to be.

Rachael Stoeltje: Thanks to everybody. I wanted to make one quick note about DuArt, since I was also there this summer and walked through it. They're actually an exception to the rule of what's being done. So they brought a guy, Steve Blakely, out of retirement to help track down all of the people who've made the films. So historically, I've known people how have scavenged labs that shut down; people go in and scavenge it. You can't find it again. I've tried to track stuff from WRS labs. You can't find it. So I would just say the owner is walking around. There's five floors in New York. They're only shutting down their film production unit. They're actually probably not going out of business. They're renting to MTV half of the floors, I think. But they are doing an admirable job because I think all of the major archives have been there and tagged stuff. People are helping them find stuff. And I think it's pretty amazing that they didn't throw it out before because most of these have gone with these invoices unpaid for years.

Jan-Christopher Horak: Decades.

Rachael Stoeltje: Decades. So they're actually also when they find these filmmakers, they're actually asking them to pay their bill, which ...

Mike Mashon: That's going over really well.

Rachael Stoeltje: Yes, it's going over really well.

Jan-Christopher Horak: Actually, yes, it's stopped.

Rachael Stoeltje: Oh, has it?

Jan-Christopher Horak: Yes.

Rachael Stoeltje: Well, even, I found a home for some films in Brazil, and they actually helped assist with the payment. But I just wanted to say DuArt is actually really, really, doing an impressive job and unlike sort of historically film labs, so I just wanted to clarify that.

Mike Mashon: I did not mean to impugn the reputation, but thank you, Rachael [Stoeltje].

Rachael Stoeltje: Well, thanks so much. And I think, so is it at the Neal-Marshall, a lunch? So do you want to announce it?