

Assignment #1 Access to Moving Image Collections, Fall 2012  
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The Whitney Museum of American Art and the Paley Center for Media in New York both have substantial moving image collections but have different approaches to access those collections. The Whitney is more of a traditional art museum that features painting, sculptures as well as audiovisual art with limited access to any part of their collection, while the Paley Center is dedicated to exhibiting their full collection of radio and television broadcast media. The Whitney also acquires their artwork and retains rights over them, while the Paley Centers collection of television and radio shows are all donated; the only programs they rights over are their own filmed discussions about various aspects of television programming.

The Paley Center was founded William S. Paley in 1975 and was originally called the Museum of Television & Radio. The mission of the Paley Center is to provide for research and discussion about media as well as an archive for thousands of radio and television broadcast media. The Whitney Museum of American, founded in 1914 by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, is a museum that is dedicated to collecting, preserving, interpreting and exhibiting 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Art, with a focus on living American artists. They seek artists that are out of the mainstream study or art world especially. They are more likely to have experimental film rather than a Simpsons episode. Neither institution have access copies of their moving image collections online, just descriptions of the work themselves. The two institutions were compared in their information about and ability to access their moving image collection. I visited the Paley Center and was able to see if the information available virtually was accurate in terms of site access to their moving image collection.

For their specific moving image collection pieces and facilities the Paley Center provides a lot more uncluttered information virtually. Two of the most prominent links on the homepage are the collection and screening room, which contains audiovisual files of their filmed discussions about television and radio programs available online. The collection link leads to a search engine of their online database. It is sortable by keyword across content types that are TV, radio and their advertising and five fields that are title, people, summary, date and network or country. Type Simpsons into the keyword field and a display set of all Simpsons episodes in their collection are shown. The information about a specific episode is a detailed synopsis, credits, network, original airdate, some technical aspects and run time. There are no linked works by the authors or similar subject matter from their catalog entry or visual information about the episode. Unlike the Whitney, the Paley Center contains an online catalog that is readily accessible.

The Whitney does not have a user-friendly way to access information about their moving image collection. The Whitney first shows their permanent collection with a randomly created showing of works in their collection, which can be organized by authors name alphabetically and by decade of the work. A picture thumbnail represents each individual work in their collection with information about the author, title and year created. Unfortunately the only moving image works shown online as part of their general collection is an installation piece that also could be classified as a sculpture. One has to go into the research section of their website as opposed to their collection section.

The research section of the Whitney website has four major parts, the Andy Warhol Film Project, Independent Study Program, Library and Technical studies. The Andy Warhol Film Project just gives information about the program and the types of

works it embodies, but the only in depth data for the project is a catalog only available for purchase. Some titles are shown, but it unclear if physical access is available.

The Library section is where detailed information about moving image works is located. They use a library search engine called WhitneyCat. The catalog has a simple search, which is keyword based, and an advanced search, which has Boolean operators and multiple fields for input. Without a specific work or title it is difficult to find video or film recordings, but once located they have information about the work itself as well as related works. For the *American Masters* television series about Alexander Calder in 1998 they show limited production credits, format, runtime, multiple linked subjects, a brief description, location and call number, availability and connected authors for production crew and subject. The metadata allows for easy research on the subject of the work and those involved in the works production. It leads more easily to directly related works than the Paley Center. The Frances Mulhall Achilles Library at the Whitney Museum of American Art has appointments for visiting scholars and members that must be made at least a week ahead of time. There is no information regarding their viewing stations or other physical attributes. Also there is no sense that one would be to access information or their whole moving image collection.

The author visited the Paley Center in person and saw their catalog at their Edward and Patricia McLaughlin Library, which has a digital room and an analog room to access their 150,000 holdings. With a donation of \$4.00, I was able to go to the library on the fourth floor and was given access to their database and collection in the digital library. The access point is a more advanced search engine that includes Boolean operators and more fields for user input that linked to the file itself. The same

information online is available with the files, but they also allow scenes to be selected every couple seconds into the program once started. This way one can see the actual visual data itself, in terms of shot selection and visual composition. When I asked for a research or finders guide, they handed me popular titles by genre and popular or helpful programs for the foreign visitor to engage with American media.

I watched a Simpsons episode from 1989 in the digital library and heard a radio broadcast of the Friar's Roast of Frank Sinatra featuring Howard Cosell in the analog room. The digital library is much better maintained and allows for continuous searching of the catalog, while the analog room is falling apart and only allows for the specific access to the file or files to be accessed. It took about three tries to pull up the program I wanted in the analog room, but it eventually worked. Each section of the library had individual workstations, with the analog part being fully cordoned off and the digital library not.

Staff was on-hand the entire time of my visit in the digital library, and was prepared to answer questions and give suggestions. When I was moved upstairs, there was no support staff for about 15 minutes and I had to trouble shoot on my own. Their reference services leave something to be desired, they have limited print material and bibliographic material not contained in their database entry. The staff was knowledgeable and more than willing to point in me in the right direction for additional information with Paley Center. I was even able to get the e-mail addresses of their web design team to ask them questions about their goal with their online catalog. The Paley had the ability and facilities to let me access the totality of their 150,000 works.

Overall, I would recommend the Paley Center as a facility to view moving images, they have the ability for anyone to access any part of their collection. As a center to see moving image works for a nominal fee in a comfortable environment, the Paley Center excels. Access to the collection and facility is amazing, but the lack of books and other materials regarding their works is the one downside. If I research a particular artist or program to write a book, I would prefer the library of the Whitney. I can search their library moving image collection, related works and subjects virtually and intellectually, but I might not be able to actually see them or some of their important moving image works. The biggest problem for the Whitney is actually physically accessing the collection. The moving image works have to be part of their regular or special exhibits to be seen. Unless I make an appointment for their library I might not see any moving image works at the Whitney.