

Jasmyn R. Castro
NYU Tisch: Moving Image Archiving & Preservation
Access to Moving Image Collections
September 27, 2013

The Paley Center for Media is located in New York City and Los Angeles, and serves to examine the connection between society and media. In New York City, The Paley Center for Media's library is called the Edward John Noble Scholars Room. The library is equipped with 20 flat screen monitors and 2 tape decks so researchers can view and listen to the Paley Center's collection. Headsets are provided at each viewing station, and two of the viewing stations are set up to allow small groups to search the collection together. If a researcher or scholar would like to visit the Scholars Room, they must purchase a researcher's pass and make a reservation at least two days in advance to secure a console. Researchers may arrive at the Scholars Room without a reservation and still search the catalog if one of the consoles is available. One can also find a 'Press Kit/Logos' section on their website, which provides Paley Center stills and logos, that asks researchers to credit the Paley Center for Media where appropriate. The Paley Center for Media has a very knowledgeable library staff who provide information on the content of the collection, how to search the catalog, and various programs and events that are held at the center.

Research conditions at the Edward John Noble Scholars Room are more than suitable, and Wi-Fi is provided in case researchers or scholars would like to bring a laptop to aid in their research. The Center provides consoles for on-site searches of their collection, and a brief tutorial on the layout of the catalog is given by one of the staff members when researchers are logged in to the console. The layout of the database is very user friendly with tabs as follows: My Collection, Search the Collection, Collection Highlights, Curator's Guide, Special Collections, Upcoming Events NY, Curator Blogs and Become a Member. In the "Search the Collection" tab, inquiries can be narrowed down by original airdate, decade, category (TV, radio, TV Advertising and Radio Advertising) and keywords. When

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viewing a video from the collection, thumbnails are on the right hand side of the screen so viewers can see highlights of the entire video clip while still watching the video. Each video is accompanied by a description and some metadata, which usually consists of the title, names of important or famous people, the length of the video, television network and airdate.

Most of the content in the catalog is digitized and can be instantly viewed; however, some of the collection is only available in tape format. Pieces that are only available in tape format still show up in the database, but are outlined in grey. In the case where a researcher or scholar would like to view something in the collection that is not available in digital format, they must be a scholar or a member of The Paley Center for Media in order to view their selection on the tape decks provided. One advantageous perk of being a member, is access to the “My Collection” section of the database. This section allows members to save videos they would like to revisit.

As for online access to their collections, select clips are available for preview in what they call the “screening room” section of their website. However, full programs can only be seen in person at the Edward John Noble Scholars Room and they are not available for download or use in productions. There is plenty of information about memberships, collections and the screening room available on their website. And lastly, while there is ongoing access at the Paley Center for Media, researchers must contact the original license holder on their own and request permission to use a video (or part of a video) from the collection.

Another archive collection, WITNESS, is a nonprofit organization that, for the past 20 years, has used video as their primary means of exposing human rights abuses to the world. The Rodney King Jr. incident was the driving force behind the emergence of WITNESS and it’s use of video

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advocacy as a principal component for engaging people to create change. WITNESS uses video as a catalyst for change in policies, law and human behavior; “*exposing the truth, one video at a time*” (Our Mission).

The WITNESS Media Archive consists of over 4,000 hours of video ranging from witness and victim testimonies to abuses caught on tape through hidden camera investigations. They have over 12,000 items in their collection, all of which are shot on various types of digital video and magnetic videotape. “*We strive to provide open yet responsible access to the collection, serving as a model for how archives can make human rights media available to users in ways that respect the rights of creators and subjects, and protect the authenticity and integrity of the materials*” (Media Archive). Being able to access their collection is a fundamental goal and core value of the WITNESS Media Archive. Even though WITNESS has expressed that access is an important part of why they do what they do, access is only available at a secondary level. Currently, there is no direct access to their video collection.

When it comes to the WITNESS Media Archive, inquiries to view the video collection go through WITNESS Media Archive staff members. A Media Archive request form must be filled out with a detailed description of the project, the type of footage requested, as well as the format and standard in which the footage is needed. On their website, they provide a “rate card” PDF that lists the various distribution options and their license fees by duration of footage. The archive staff are available to aid and support researchers, however; researchers only provide complimentary assistance for up to a half hour. Any further assistance is billed at \$50 per hour. This can make it a little difficult for researchers to feel empowered in their fieldwork since they have no direct access to the catalog and

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must rely on staff. If researchers choose to use video from the Media Archive, they are required to give on-screen credit to WITNESS as outlined in the license agreement and they must provide WITNESS with a copy of the finished piece within 30 days of it being completed.

Although the present protocol for accessing the archive takes some time and planning, WITNESS recognizes the researcher's need for direct access. In response, they are planning to launch a searchable online database in the near future, allowing researchers to remotely access the collection and bypass the request form. In the meantime, their website provides very detailed information on the Media Archive, what their collection consists of (in terms of numbers- not descriptive content) and how to license footage.

The Paley Center for Media and WITNESS are two organizations that have a passion for media and viewership. Each organization may have different policies and procedures with varying levels of access to their media collections, but they both serve as a resource for researchers, scholars and media enthusiasts.

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