

Voices of Film: Enriching Moving Image Collections through Oral History

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Abstract: Moving image archives are collectively responsible for the access and preservation of film and video heritage. Building on the preservation mission of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences' state-of-the-art film archive, the Academy has begun a new initiative to record and preserve personal spoken accounts that provide insight into the art, science and craft of motion picture creation. An essential component of this initiative is to bring together dispersed oral history collections about filmmaking craft by providing storage, cataloging and access assistance through the Academy Film Archive. Collaboration between the Academy and other entertainment craft guilds, labor unions, historical societies, and archives will strengthen oral and video history practice and standards, encourage the development of shared vocabularies, and increase access to collections.

This poster presentation will look at two key research factors that will inform the new initiative: collecting data about existing collections, and understanding the intersection between oral history and film scholarship through better knowledge of users. To date, the Academy has gathered survey data that has highlighted important access and preservation issues facing these audiovisual recordings. However, there is also a real desire to respond to the needs and interests of users as access to collections is expanded. For example, how do archives index and describe oral histories to make them more useful and findable in the context of film study? And how can we draw connections between existing archival resources and oral histories in innovative and meaningful ways?

About the author:

Genevieve Maxwell is the Archivist/Coordinator of Oral History Projects at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. At the Academy she helped to create a Moving Image Craft Oral & Visual History Survey that allowed for the gathering of collection information from a wide range of film related organizations. She also designed and created a database to better organize and provide access to important interview data about filmmaking craft oral history collections. Prior to her work with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences, she has worked in both sound and moving image archives, most recently with the Directors Guild of America's Visual History Program. She has lectured and presented on audiovisual preservation and assessment. She holds a B.A. in Women and Gender Studies from San Francisco State University and an MLIS from San Jose State University.