

**Intellectual Access to Moving Images of
Work Life, 1916-1960**

Assessment of Project Outcomes

David Rowntree, February 5, 2011

Summary Overview

The move to expose Northeast Historic Film (NHF) collections to discovery through public searches is a huge but necessary endeavor. To remain relevant as an institution dedicated to “sharing northern New England’s moving image heritage” providing a robust and intuitive online search capability is central to that mission.

While there is still work required to fine-tune the system, the successful adoption and application of two cataloging standards, has laid the foundation for discovery of unique and valuable moving image collections. Moreover, the abundance of primary source materials at NHF, coupled with developments in technology, offers the promise for use in new and exciting forms of research, education and scholarly communication.

1. Addressing the Public Finding Aid

In assessing the finding aids created for the Work Life project I used both Safari and Firefox browsers as well as an iPad. I had no problems however; I was unsuccessful conducting searches on my iPhone. This is not entirely insignificant given the recent article from the Chronicle of Higher Education which showed colleges and universities failing to keep pace with students rapid increase in mobile use.

<http://chronicle.com/article/Colleges-Search-for-Their/126016/>

Before searching the collections I conducted some basic searches in all three major search engines to determine the extent the NHF Collections were being crawled. Results are beginning to appear in an anticipated fashion – general term and subject searches or searches using popular names or locations yield nothing (at least that any general user would find). However, with specificity the results improve dramatically. On the whole Google produced better results (see example of a couple search results in Table 1.)

TABLE 1.

Search Term	Google	Yahoo	Bing
<i>Ice Harvesting</i>	#73 NHF Sampler (store)	#72 NHF Sampler (store)	#72 NHF Sampler (store)
	Nothing else in top 200 results	Nothing else in top 200 results	Nothing else in top 200 results
<i>Ice Harvesting New England</i>	#15 – NHF Sampler	#14 – NHF orphaned page (see link)	#14 – NHF orphaned page (see link)
	#40 – NHF page (seems orphaned) http://www.oldfilm.org/content/ice-harvesting-sampler	#29 Sampler from store	# 40 sampler from store
	# 119 Big Reveal Blog # 124 Ernest Groth Collection	Nothing else in top 200 results	Nothing else in top 200 results
<i>Ice Harvesting 1926</i>	#3 Ernest Groth Collection	#9 Ernest Groth	#10 Ernest Groth
<i>Ernest Groth *</i>	#4 NHF Collection	#16 NHF site	#16 NHF site
<i>Hiram, Maine *</i>	#191	Nothing else in top 200 results	Nothing else in top 200 results
<i>Harvard* Forest</i>	#54	Nothing else in	Nothing else in

		top 200 results	top 200 results
--	--	-----------------	-----------------

* Wikipedia was in top of result in all browsers

Turning my attention to the Work Life materials specifically my impression was mixed. The navigation and main page is not immediately intuitive, in part because of it labels and tabs, and the search box is also faint and somewhat hidden. I felt the page needed to be overhauled and made clearer for the first time user in its organization and presentation. I recognize that it is a technical glitch that will be remedied but the preponderance of errors I was receiving was very frustrating and off-putting i.e.[an error occurred while processing this directive].

When the search did perform correctly, I was quite pleased with the results. Terms such as “forestry” and “fishing” produced an abundance of great collections and item level lists. The descriptions were quite robust and detailed. I also liked the ability to browse the collection with some of the options provided. However, I thought that the “Places” page was a bit cumbersome and found I was constantly scrolling up and down the page. Could this be three drop down options (country, city, state)? This might also allow a search for everything from one state. Also, since NHF has footage from across the globe are there any non-English language materials? IF so, can you search by language? I didn’t see the option.

More detailed examination of some of the results showed a clearer picture and revealed some of the problems inherent in the design of any database. For example, my search “train” resulted in 31 collections and 53 films. I realized as a finished reading the description of the first collection that I thought I was getting all results for railroad trains but was also getting all “training” lessons, and “trained” people results as well. It might save the user some time sifting through results if the search word can be highlighted in the description. This would immediately show context.

It was wonderful to find something that had been digitized and available for viewing. Is there any way to flag a record to indicate to a user that it contains a video or photos? One other note, the video looked great on the iPad but the image did not look like it was a video (no activating or play button). The video could not be blown up in Safari (however Firefox was fine).

While it is a challenge, and time-consuming to ensure all records have all relevant subjects or descriptions I did notice a few inconsistencies. Identifier 2261.0007 had footage of a stone house, cathedral, and brick buildings but did not have the subjects architecture or city and towns. Similarly, the Great Cranberry Library Collection home movies have been described as capturing essential details of “maritime life” but when I searched “maritime life” in the catalog the collection was not listed.

There are a number of minor issues I was finding in the database and I think that you really need to have someone go through the database in detail. Small things like offering a “return to search” option after looking at a film record or returning back to the film results tab instead of the collections tab will keep searches smooth and easy.

However, apart from the error messages, I believe that you have the major issues worked out well. The results are logical and presented well and the interactivity of maps and video are great features!

2. Process and Tools

Despite the immediate shortcoming and bugs in the system NHF should be commended for its efforts. First, in selecting CollectiveAccess, NHF has recognized the particular cataloging and management needs of moving image collections and has selected a system that appears (from my limited poking around) to be quite powerful and robust. One of the limitations of many databases and digital asset management systems is that they are usually only good at managing one aspect of a collection (the physical materials or digital files) while CollectiveAccess with the PBCore standard are proficient with both.

NHF has also made a bold decision in its adoption and application of the standards DACs and PBCore. The adoption of DACs is relatively unheard of in the moving image community despite being format neutral. In choosing DACs, NHF has uniquely applied the traditional Society of American Archivist standard with the distinct moving image metadata standard PBCore. This is a first to my knowledge... and it works.

Standardization is key to cross-platform sharing, dissemination of collections, and access. Often, success in the application of a metadata standard on a mixed media collection (such as NHF’s) comes from the combination of more than one standard coupled with customization to

address local needs. NHF has successfully done this by using DACs for collection level records and integrating PBCore for item level records. Item level description is necessary for these kinds of collections. The scalability and ability of PBCore to capture technical metadata arising from digitization and born-digital assets ensure a longevity and adaptability in the records that are being created.

As noted in the “conversation about accomplishments” document provided to me by Karan Sheldon, by adopting standards “familiar among archives and special collections” NHF may have taken a step at bridging a gulf between two distinct cataloging communities. Given the increase in media materials in libraries and archives the Work Life project may be a model for these groups.

NHF has taken several steps to expand the reach of the collection. Results from the NHF catalog will be readily recognizable to the more numerous scholars used to working with traditional paper and manuscript collections. Similarly, inclusion in the library union catalog WorldCat is a significant enhancement to visibility internationally.

Lifecycle Management

The adoption of the systems employed in the Work Life project requires policies and procedure be put in place to ensure continuity going forward. Other issues include:

- Written documentation going through the steps of cataloging (possibly with screen shots) should be clear so that a new person can understand.
- Periodic assessment of the process will be necessary to ensure the maintenance of efficiency and accuracy.
- Periodic checks for quality control will also be necessary to ensure accuracy of descriptions and search results
- Scheduled reports should be created to identify trends, rate at which collections can be processed and are useful for sharing with larger audiences, funders, etc.
- Feedback from catalogers will help improve processes (i.e. templates, pre-populated fields, automation etc.) and balance the need for item level description and time/resources.
- Feedback from users will help identify problems, inconsistencies, and means to improve the catalog i.e. exit survey
- The limitation of batch uploads to WordCat will require a schedule be created to remain current in the system

- The ability to bring in-house more of the technical skills necessary to manage CollectiveAccess overtime will be both more efficient and cost-effective
- Overtime a full-time cataloging position will be required to maintain the system. It will be difficult to maintain on a project basis.

3. Suggested Next Steps for NHF – Going Forward

There are two main paths the NHF should follow as it goes forward from the Work Life Project. The first focuses on the activities around the dissemination of the newly created resource and encouragement of scholarly access. The second path is derived from the lessons learned and experience of the project to position the institution as a center of excellence and leader in the profession.

Dissemination of the Moving Images of Work Life

Long gone are the days when putting a resource online was sufficient. In a saturated online environment of competing information, NHF must also make efforts to ensure that its collections are findable to those looking and to educate potential users of its existence. Similarly, users expectation have been raised, once found, the collections value should be readily evident to a user – searches should yield applicable results and be clearly presented for viewing. Otherwise, the user will move on.

There is a gap between traditional scholarship and media archives that needs to be bridged. Therefore, a strategy should be well thought-out and planned, not haphazard. Strategies for outreach should first prioritize what can be accomplished by NHF relatively easily then expand to larger more complex activities.

- Post on all relevant list-servs and forums (scholarly, education and archival). Post a second time a month later. With the prevalence of instant communication it is easy to lose a message or bury an email. A second post will remind people who are interested and reach those who had missed the first post.
- Although a bit of a buzz word, search engine optimization strategies help to improve search rankings. This includes updating

blogs and posts. The University of Washington Special Collections posted an excellent study that used Wikipedia to extend their collections online

<http://www.dlib.org/dlib/may07/lally/05lally.html>

- “Word of mouth” through tweeting, facebook, etc. It may be worthwhile looking at the ability for someone to share a resource in your collection through social media applications? Similarly, can a user embed your video on their website/blog?
- Do some homework: find out the scholars conducting research and teaching in areas represented in your collections – particularly in nearby institutions. Contact them directly.
- Contacting particular departments at universities or research institutions is also a good way to promote the collection. I have attached small flyers that the Black Film Archive at Indiana University send to the mailboxes of all faculty in specific departments (see below)
- Participation at conferences can be hit or miss although a select well-targeted conference audience can bring good results. Printed documentation should be left on the conference information table.
- There are grants for traveling exhibitions. Is the recent Work Life screening replicable?
- By encouraging digital and media literacy amongst scholars they will have the skills necessary to use NHF collections
- While one of the more exciting components to access is that you never can fully predict how collections will be used. Nonetheless, understanding trends in academia and uses of visual media can help target relevant associations and groups. For example, see Peter Kaufman’s article about video use in higher education
http://library.nyu.edu/about/Video_Use_in_Higher_Education.pdf
- Continue providing research grants and other incentives to use NHF collections. Washington University had student “essay” contests and offered cash prizes for the best project that utilized the Archive. This could take the form of best film made from the archive.

- Create videos about the collections at NHF. See examples from Washington University Henry Hampton Collection and William Miles Collection (both created by students)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FsaYrdSWzY>
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Tar47yn2Zg&feature=related
- Be sure to use analytics (such as Google Analytics) to see how the collection is being accessed. It provide important information about entry points, search terms, and popular items. Transfer this knowledge to action such as increased blogging about popular topics.

Front of two different flyers giving examples the collections content. Used to target faculty/scholars in these areas.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY-BLOOMINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN
AND AFRICAN DIASPORA STUDIES



Black Film Center/Archive

DANCE

RESEARCH/TEACHING AID

SELECT TITLES FROM THE COLLECTION...

Black and Tan (1929) Fredi Washington is the ill but courageous dancer in this film designed mainly to display the talents of Duke Ellington (his first appearance on film) and his music. In love with Ellington, Washington dances as she dies, but the last sound she hears is Duke's "Black and Tan Fantasy." Musical performances by Duke Ellington and His Cotton Club Orchestra. (Black and White)

Burlesque in Harlem (1954) Dewey 'Pigmeat' Markham stars in this dance/musical burlesque, which includes an all-black cast of dancers and musicians. (Black & White)

Capoeira of Brazil (1980) Warrington Hudlin's film features a dance performance of Capoeira, which was originally devised by Brazilian slaves as a fighting art of revolt and escape. When the Portuguese slave owners outlawed the practice, the slaves disguised Capoeira as a dance in order to continue its practice. (Color)

Charleston (1927) A man in blackface travels in a silver bubble and lands on Earth where he meets a dancing girl and a man in a monkey suit and the girl teaches him to dance. (Black & White)

Dance in America: Dance Theatre of Harlem (1977) Originally aired by KCET, Los Angeles on March 23, 1977 as part of the *Dance in America* series for *Great Performances*. Dances performed include: "Forces of Rhythm," "Bugaku," "The Beloved," "Holberg Suite," and "Dougl." (Color)

Four Women (1975) Nina Simone's music is the basis for Julie Dash's experimental film depicting the experiences of four black women. Choreographed and performed by Linda Young, the four roles trace the lives

INDIANA UNIVERSITY-BLOOMINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN
AND AFRICAN DIASPORA STUDIES



Black Film Center/Archive

LGBT/SEXUALITY

RESEARCH/TEACHING AID

SELECT TITLES FROM THE COLLECTION...

Affirmations (1990) The film affirms the homosexual black community as a vital part of society. While marching, many black gay men confront hatred and stand together. (Color)

Alma's Rainbow (1993) Alma Gold (Kim Weston-Moran) is the owner of a popular beauty parlor. Her daughter Rainbow (Victoria Gabrielle Platt), is struggling to find her own identity and deal with her awakening sexuality. Alma and her sister, Ruby (Mizan Nunes), a free-spirited chanteuse, present the alternatives which Rainbow must come to terms with in order to find her own way. Ronald Gray is director of photography. (Color)

Anthem (1991) This short film explores how the homosexual community is depicted in society and serves as a weapon of empowerment for its members. (Color)

Badass Supermama (1996) This lyrical video explores the critical questions of race, gender, sexuality, beauty, body image and representation through the 1970s Blaxploitation movie actress Pam Grier, especially her famous character, Foxy Brown. (Color)

Black Nations/Queer Nations? (1995) Shari Frilot directs this experimental documentary that chronicles the groundbreaking 1995 conference on lesbian and gay sexualities in the African Diaspora. The film highlights the conference and the various topics discussed by the panel of scholars, activists, and cultural workers. (Color)

Brother to Brother (2004) Set in contemporary New York City and during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1930s, *Brother to Brother* is the story of Perry Williams (Anthony Mackie), a young black artist living

Back of flyer

of black women from slavery to present. (Color)

Jeni LeGon: Living in a Great Big Way (1999) A look back on the life and career of dancer Jeni LeGon told through interviews with Jeni, friends, and professionals. Includes archival footage of Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, Fats Waller, Paul Robeson, and Cab Calloway. (Color)

Lemonade Suite (1981) A dance performance of the “Lemonade Suite” by Kenneth L. Ware, produced by the Afro American Arts Institute at Indiana University. (Color)

No Maps on My Taps (1979) George T. Nierenberg’s film is a portrait of three surviving hoofers, Sandman Sims, Chuck Green, and Bunny Briggs. Rare film footage and personal interviews provide insight into the social history and performance development of jazz tap dancing. (Color)

Remembering Thelma (1982) Kathe Sandler uses photographs, rare film footage, and interviews as a tribute to the late Thelma Hill, an influential dancer and instructor. (Color)

Stormy Weather (1943) This semi-biography of Bill “Bojangles” Robinson features Robinson as a black dancer who woos a beautiful woman, Selina (Lena Horne), and wins her after the usual complications. Most of the time is spent with the musical/dance performances of the entire cast. Cab Calloway and his band perform; also Katherine Dunham and her Troupe provide choreography. (Black & White)

Studies in Nigerian Dance No. 1: Tiv Division (1966) This short film includes documentary footage of Nigerian women dancing with drum accompaniment. (Black & White)

Studies in Nigerian Dance No. 2: Jos Plateau (1966) This short film includes documentary footage of Nigerian men dancing with drum accompaniment and singing. (Black & White)

Studies in Nigerian Dance No. 3: Kamberi Dances – Yauri Emirate, North West State (1970) This short film includes documentary footage of Nigerian dances, including Akiapa, Maranji, Leku, and Wasan Biri. (Color)

Zou Zou (1934) Josephine Baker showcases her singing and dancing talent in this 1934 French musical as a laundress who seizes her chance for success when the star of the show abruptly leaves with her lover. In French with English subtitles. (Black & White)

Shades of Love: Black Homosexuality Volumes 1, 2 & 3 (2007) This trilogy of documentaries by Tressa Sanders examines the experiences and challenges faced by black homosexuals including racism in the LGBT community, HIV, and living proudly as a gay black person. (Color)

She Hate Me (2004) This Spike Lee Joint features Jack Armstrong (Anthony Mackie) as an executive who is fired from his position after being labeled a whistleblower. His assets are frozen due to an impending insider trading investigation, making Jack financially desperate. His ex-girlfriend who is now a lesbian, asks him to be the father of her baby, which opens the door to a lucrative business.

To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar (1995) Three drag queens—Vida Boheme (Patrick Swayze), Noxeema Jackson (Wesely Snipes), and Chi Chi Rodriguez (John Leguizamo)—start a journey from New York to Hollywood. When their car breaks down they end up adding zest to the life of a small Nebraska town. (Color)



Chi Rodriguez (John Leguizamo)—start a journey from New York to Hollywood. When their car breaks down they end up adding zest to the life of a small Nebraska town. (Color)

Tongues Untied (1989) Marlon Riggs captures the dilemma faced by black gay men with dual loyalties and identity conflicts regarding being black and being gay. The film uses poetry, anecdote, historical footage, and dramatic reenactments to explore concerns such as racism, homophobia, crack and AIDS. (Color)

Vintage: Families of Value (1995) This documentary depicts three sets of Black lesbian and gay siblings; the director and his brother, three lesbian sisters, and a lesbian sister and gay brother. Using archival and documentary footage, interviews, and conversations between the siblings—who also film one another—the film talks about what makes a family a family of value. (Color/Black & White)

Watermelon Woman, The (1996) Cheryl Dunye (as herself) makes a documentary about Fae Richards (Lisa Marie Bronson), a fictitious African American actress from the 1930s who played degrading roles in Hollywood films, while having a secret affair with a white female director. Dunye interviews feminist historian Camila Paglia (playing herself). (Color)



EMAIL: bfca@indiana.edu
WEBSITE: www.indiana.edu/~bfca



EMAIL: bfca@indiana.edu
WEBSITE: www.indiana.edu/~bfca



Other potential directions for NHF

As previously mentioned, the experience gained from the Work Life project and successful integration of different metadata standards put NHF in a position to take a leading role in sharing strategies with other similar institutions. It would be a coveted position to be thought of as a leader in the profession as IPI is thought of for storage and preservation.

Establishing mechanisms to transfer generated knowledge and increase scholarly/ informational output in the form of white papers, panel presentations, and articles in professional journals can enhance the reputation of NHF in the profession – both as a place that is generating scholarship from study and use of its collections, and as a place that is a leader in moving image archiving. This can include applying for grants to conduct research and create recommendations and best practice guidelines.

AMIA and its member organizations have not aggressively integrated themselves with the much larger and older archival associations such as SAA. Similarly, the well-established practices of these organizations see little need for outside influence. Nonetheless, AMIA member institutions should be at the forefront of educating and partnering with the programs, research, and activities of these organizations. By adopting standards by both communities NHF has established a unique position.

Participation in archival conferences, both national and regional, will have a greater impact on outreach for the organization than one for scholarly outreach. SAA regularly hold workshops on a variety of topics. Archivists to retain certification with the Academy of Certified Archivists also use these workshops. By Deepening competence in important areas, NHF can be the “go to” organization like Ipi. NHF may be able to insert itself as an expert on cataloging moving image materials (this may even generate a small revenue stream for the organization).

Expanding this on a global scale the International Council of Archives (ICA) could provide a forum where NHF can assert itself as an “international regional leader”. See also the ICA: Section on University and Research Institution Archives. Opportunities to partner with international archives on research initiatives should also be seen as appealing.

Potential activities:

- White paper that shares experience (the “conversation about accomplishments” is a great start)
- Generate best practice procedures in areas such as cataloging and processing, moving image archival management; best practice standards for copyright issues in archives
- Become a host institution for research based solution to issues (see SAA)
- Develop a portal of information, publications, resources, etc
- Develop programs to increase digital and media literacy education (teachers workshop, educator conference, or as one of the NHF summer institutes)
- Establish a formal program that promotes collaboration between archivists and colleagues elsewhere. Look to new communities. For example, the Professional Archive Group (on Linked In) has reached over 1000 members and recent discussion have centered around the possibility of a meeting.
- Include aspects of peer review in your work
- Be sure to include funds for outreach and scholarship in all future project grants
- Like WGBH, take the lead on collaborative projects – this will result in addressing issues most relevant to you
- Presentations at local libraries. May also result in potential acquisitions.
- Integrate existing NHF loan program into existing inter-library loans in the New England Library systems.

Conclusion

The Intellectual Access to Moving Images of Work Life, 1916-1960 project is a great accomplishment for Northeast Historic Films. While much work is still required, the process and product has laid a great foundation for the future activities of the organization. Although all of the potential strategies and activities outlined in this paper may not be applicable or practical, it is hoped that they provide much food for thought and inspiration for adopting an innovative and thoughtful strategy for success in the future.

Northeast Historic Film's Work Life Collection: Its Uses and Benefits in Digital Education

Jim Wells, Maine Learning Technology Initiative

June 2011

For educators and students, the 'Moving Images of Work Life 1916 - 60' collection of Northeast Historic Film represents an unparalleled resource in understanding processes and patterns of the past, and provides a remarkable working database with which to develop digital literacy skills and practices that will be of great use in their work as students and beyond.

The accessibility and availability of the multitude of films provide excellent opportunities for remixing and developing new film products, and the varied subject matter is a wide vocabulary for creating detailed and exact interpretations of the past. Students can use the archive to learn the whys and wherefores of archiving and cataloging, engaging tools on the MLTI and other devices to create new methods of accessing the database. With this in mind, NHF can engage Maine students in helping to create and deliver new methods of accessing the collections, especially using geospatial technologies.

For the past 10 years, the Maine Learning Technology Initiative has provided Maine students, initially in grades 7 and 8, and recently expanded to include high school, with access to digital tools both essential to education and current to the digital world in support of the learning standards adopted in Maine's public education system. In addition, MLTI provides support and development of skillful educational use of digital tools and practices. Partnership with various organizations around the state have been essential to the success of the MLTI,

providing students and educators with real world research, work practices, information and communication. By engaging with NHF, students in Maine gain valuable insight into the past, as well as an understanding of the importance of preserving Maine's heritage.

Social Studies teachers have a strong interest in having students work with primary source material. As more social studies curriculum shifts to a standards assessed format centered around essential questions, the emphasis on the 'established' material dealing in chronological and government centric history and geography needs supplementing to enliven the curriculum and add relevancy to student investigations. Therefore, primary source material that encompasses the range of human experience becomes much in demand. The Work Life collection fills in many gaps that become evident when students investigate questions around economy, geography and culture, as the 'traditional' primary sources tend to be government papers and newspaper articles (themselves a dubious form of primary source material). Being able to view people at work through the past century using the Work Life collection can answer more questions in depth, produce new questions in an investigation, and deliver detailed examples that can be used to great measure in student projects.

One example of a project in which the collection would be used to great effect is from a social studies teacher at Telstar Middle School, in Bethel, Maine. The project is an interdisciplinary venture that encompasses history, language arts and math, and takes the form of creating a comprehensive trip around the state. For the social studies component, students are asked to investigate one of the

traditional industries of Maine, and to survey the changes to that industry over time. By using the Work Life collection as a resource in this investigation, it is likely that students will be able to produce a more in-depth, personal history than other materials available to them. For instance, watching the featured video in the Phillip Hussey collection on welding in a workshop, students will be able to make observations on the increasing level of automation in manufacturing, as well as reflect on the dangers of early automation, which gave rise to many health and safety legislation.

With the ability to search the collection by place, students can utilize the collection in a historical comparison study. A ‘Then and Now’ study of place reveals much about the ebb and flow of history, and being able to accurately visualize a place through a film snapshotting a moment in time can produce great understanding. By witnessing the change in use of buildings in a town, the use of labor on a farm and development in transportation by comparing the historical film to present day knowledge gives students a connection to the past, a story to invent to fill in the gaps of the intervening years, and a picture of the future to come.

As described above, the ability to find relevant information from a collection is an important skill for the twenty-first century learner. The ability to sort through the database by different criteria, such as place, industry, decade etc as given on the Work Life homepage enables the student to find information faster, with more accuracy and with confidence.

The ability for students to comment upon films in the collection indicates another important skill for digital learners: being able to communicate ideas and contribute to an extended learning network. For instance, as part of a themed study on aeronautics, a student may comment on the featured film in the Dana Gregory Pond Collection that the aircraft filmed taking off from Portland airport are Brewster Buffalo, and seem to be sporting the markings of the British Royal Air Force. This comment may in turn lead to further investigations from other students, aeronautics enthusiasts and others with information to share on why and how the RAF were operating from Portland airport in the early stages of the Second World War.

Access to the metadata and notes on the films through the website adds another level of investigation for student projects. Far from being an anonymous collection of clips, from which students must extract meaning and understanding, they are provided with detailed notes on contributors, dates, places and notes found with the films. In terms of citing the source this is invaluable, contributing to a deeper academic level earlier in the grades system. In addition, as research using the web becomes more exhaustive, the more detailed the source notes are aids the researcher and the subsequent work produced. More than in the past, students are asked to cite sources, evaluate their validity and provide a rationale as to the inclusion of material. The details and notes on the NHF site help the student in this task greatly.

Next Steps

Students with MLTI devices (laptop computers) possess very sophisticated tools for video production, and the ability to download video from the collection

would represent a great leap forward in the use of primary source material in student projects. Students could select material that illustrates the point they need to detail, get hold of the clip from NHF and use this in a video essay, overlaying the video with audio commentary and music from the period, or that enhances the video in some way. Further from this, students can use the video production tools to focus in on details, create still images from the video, slow down the action and many other enhancements that extend the value of the film. Piecing together more than one film clip, based around a theme, time period or other narrative can also add to the usefulness of the collection.

As material is entered in to the database with georeferences, there exists the possibility for students to map the collection using Google Earth and other geospatial tools available on the MLTI devices. By creating a Google Earth layer, the exact position of the material can be through placemarks, essentially an access point to the NHF database. By clicking on a placemark, which may be titled for instance by the description of the film it is mark, a 'bubble' of information appears over the Google Earth image where a viewer can access all of the information for that film clip, much as seen on the website itself. This represents one further access point to the collection. A Google Earth layer can be made available through many outlets: the website itself, through the Google Earth community (and therefore the Google search engine) or linked from other websites, such as the Maine Historical Society or the MLTI site. An example of this type of access can be seen on the Gulf of Maine research Institute's Vital Signs project, where citizen scientists are tracking the spread of invasive species.

<http://vitalsignsme.org/explore/map>

In summary, the Northeast Historic Film's Work Life collection is a valuable addition to an educator's resource collection, and by applying a digital toolbox to its many features, it can greatly aid a student's learning. The accessibility of the website, in terms of navigability, ease of understanding, and depth of detail make it an attractive destination for the student. The ability to access and download resources adds great value to students working on historic, geographic, cultural and sociological projects. By working with the database, students may extend and contribute to the access of the collection for many outside of the current website's reach.

**[Jim Wells](#), MLTI Integration Mentor jwells@mlti.org
Maine Learning Technology Initiative**

Jim has been involved in education both in and outside of the classroom since 1993. Specializing in Social Studies, his work in high schools and middle schools in both the US and the UK has given him a wide perspective on teaching and learning which he brings to his work with the MLTI. With a strong belief in the success of student centered learning models, and a commitment to inquiry based learning, he views the opportunities provided by the MLTI project as essential to student success in Maine.

Education

Kingston University, London, BSc Geography, 1992

University of London Institute of Education, Post Graduate Certificate in Education, 1994

Additional Data

- Taught in Middle and High Schools in both London and Maine
- Member of Consortium for GIS Education in Maine
- Presenter at many conference in Maine and nationally, including ACTEM, MAMLE and ISTE

Tidbits

- I live in Western Maine with my wife and two growing sons.
- USA Archery Level II Coach, training many archery coaches along the way.
- City destinations are my favorite getaways, as an antidote to rural living.



View Jim's [blog postings](http://maine121.org/author/jim-wells/) <http://maine121.org/author/jim-wells/>

Assessment of the Project *Intellectual Access to Moving Images of Work Life, 1916-1960*
Northeast Historic Film Archive
Bucksport, Maine

Mark Williams
Department of Film and Media Studies
Dartmouth College

I am writing in full support of the achievements and considerable progress made by The Northeast Historic Film Archive in their one-year CLIR Hidden Collections project, titled *Intellectual Access to Moving Images of Work Life, 1916-1960*. Northeast Historic Film is widely renowned in the archive community and in the field of Film and Media Studies, as an industrious, forward-thinking, and innovative archive. The *Moving Images of Work Life* project will only add to their considerable reputation. This project succeeds in relation to both a stalwart commitment to preservation, and a progressive commitment to establish new modes of access and study, by working to realize standards that conjoin both analog and digital sets of tools for access, annotation, and the futures of moving image scholarship.

It is important to underscore how diligently the project extends the historical and historiographic purchase on the rare materials it preserves and describes. Archival work on early cinema can be regularly surprising and even delightful, and this collection matches that description with consistency. Via these materials, we can better understand the popularity of early cinema not only as an industrial product, but also in terms of its emergent ubiquity as a local, regional, and even personal medium. The films preserved here illustrate a range of activities, everyday life, and events considered significant to record if not document via the relatively new medium of cinema. In this way, the collection works like most all of the best interventions in our knowledge of the past: it reconfigures and opens the past to new and often unanticipated questions and interrogations. From depictions of significant industry and labor practices that might today seem obscure and antiquated, to a chronicle of activities within artist colonies, to activities within children's camps, and even to scientific research and expeditions, the scope and quotidian definition of "motion pictures" changes after experiencing the materials made accessible here. And this access is provided in a manner both recognizable/familiar and clever in design, which greatly expands the potential audience for the materials and also exposes the

materials in a fashion that affords new traction regarding the emergence of our contemporary “new media”.

Before offering more detail about the claims above, let me add that part of what I find marvelous in this particular collection is its attention and focus on the local and regional. The archive has worked diligently for many years to collect available films pertinent to their regional mission from an era of motion picture history that is notoriously difficult to research and secure. The original elements are literally unstable, which of course contributes to the scarcity of extant films. The local and non-industrial character of these particular films makes them even less likely to survive, let alone be preserved. As a result, part of the achievement here is the implicit archival fortitude and nobility of purpose in pursuing this collection and its preservation. The results of this particular grant project enables a wider and more intensive audience awareness and appreciation of the collection, which can only benefit the further growth and maintenance of these special historical documents.

But studies of local and regional culture and dynamics also have their own significant purchase on our notion of and experience of history, including motion picture history. Perhaps especially today, in light of the extraordinary collapsing of physical distance that media seem to effortlessly perform at any instant, our awareness of and mindfulness about the local can be casually devalued and sometimes ignored. Indeed, the famous local/global pivot often seems to emphasize only the furthest point of the axis. Attending to the local and the regional, especially from an intentionally historical perspective, disturbs and pushes against such a widespread but nearly subliminal contemporary economy of interest and attention. From this perspective, one can recognize what might be called purposeful and progressive ironies regarding this project, in that 1) this archive project is successful precisely as a collection of moving image media, and that 2) because of the digital reach of the collection—which has been fully realized as a product of this grant—such an attention to the local and regional will be more widely experienced and recognized.

The Northeast region of the U.S. has its own distinctive landscape, topography, cultures, occupations, and preoccupations, and many of these characteristics are extremely well realized in

these materials. A great many of the films feature views of the natural world, and several examine and exalt this world and our relationship to it, across different emphases. Many films feature scenes of foliage and wooded areas, rivers and lakes and oceans, natural wonders and also natural disasters (e.g., floods). But most also document human engagement with these natural scenes: business opportunities (e.g., monetizing ice flows); outdoor sports, such as water-skiing; even schools of representation (e.g., lessons in landscape painting at an artist's colony). Indeed, one might suggest that several prominent tropes of New England identity can be discerned within and across a number of these apparently disparate texts. There is, for example, a decided respect for education, knowledge, instruction, and the explication of complex process evident here. It does not seem too great a stretch to suggest that these emphases might even be read as implicitly conjoined to a legacy of historical awareness about the significance of nature in realizing a sense of true self: modern takes on Emersonian principles of discovery, and vivid illustrations of industry toward a purposeful direction in life, and even perhaps a life of the mind.

To be sure, most films are not overtly concerned with such matters, and many even serve to refute deeper aspirations, with notable pleasure. As impressive as the various scenes of work and labor and industry, are the many examples of leisure pursuits, vacation activities, and active fantasy. Especially notable here are the multiple examples of the "Movie Queen" format, which engaged local communities to "star" in serial-like episodes about a fictive female film star who happens through their town and meets with adventure. These are among the most delightful and resourceful of early local film productions, and serve as their own set or sub-genre of indelible early film culture. Yet even in these cases, there is a palpable engagement with a spirit of community, cooperation, and participation that signals a powerful purchase on the local (and perhaps specifically New England).

The "Movie Queen" series is also the most self-reflexive among the many depictions of modernity evidenced in the collection. If scenes of the natural world offer one key pole of representation here, scenes of technology and its allure offer another. In a few cases, such as films of Worlds Fairs, this emphasis may reach an apotheosis. But a great many films offer a preoccupation with the growing ubiquity of machines (including motion picture devices), especially as they exist in community life, whether depicting "modern" forms of industry and

power (e.g., the manufacture of ice blocks, the construction of electrical plants, etc.), or a variety of depictions of transportation (automobiles, railroads, fire engines, even horses!).

The historically emergent conditions of the local, as depicted in the collection, are also keenly available to very contemporary fields of scholarship and academic inquiry. Several films address what has been called inter-medial relations, such as films that involve or reference community theater groups, or a fascinating combination documentary/advertising film about various apparatuses of writing, which features a bi-lingual address to the audience. This latter detail illustrates that many films might also be positioned in relation to a nascent set of identity politics issues: representations of suffragettes; films intended to help “Americanize” immigrants; theatrical depictions of “genuine” Native American culture, etc. Indeed, if we recognize the validity of the old bromide that all politics is local, this collection can also be interrogated for the implicit and explicit dynamics of power that might support or belie each film’s evident or intended goals and aims in relation to local and regional formations of political and ideological history, national and international institutions of power formations, etc.

All of these critical questions and emphases are newly elaborated by the importance of the digital aspects of the *Work Life* project. Let me conclude by referencing several key factors in this aspect of the assessment. The format and design of the site is clean and recognizable, despite (or rather, clearly because of) its conceptual innovations. The stills selected to represent each film are distinctive and noteworthy, attracting attention and interest. Each is paired with a brief video excerpt that further elaborates the regional, period, and indexical value of each film. (Indeed, this paired format seems to echo the very spectacle of early film screenings, as still images that might seem of interest at one level, spring into motion and take on a “life” both unexpected and familiar.) The descriptive work for each entry is well-researched, copiously detailed, insightful, and elegant. A map feature for each entry is especially notable, literally “placing” the film in its local context, and therefore re-locating the text in a manner that accents and highlights both its historicized site of production and its relation to the mission of the archive.

The online dimensions of the project have been remarked upon earlier, regarding their canny negotiation if not transposition of many of the complaints about online culture and its attention to a wired elsewhere. Certainly the expanded access to this collection promises to afford new

insights from within the regional community itself. This audience may help to identify the names and backgrounds of people who appear in the films, or structures and locations, historical contexts and insights, etc. The larger community awareness of the collection that will be derived from its availability online could readily lead to additional materials to be collected and preserved, including newly discovered films that have been otherwise forgotten or misplaced.

But the online and digital dimensions of the project may also portend, or at least make possible, additional and unforeseen capacities regarding the supplementation of networked scholarship, which would enhance the film texts themselves, the *Work Life* project, and the NHF archive in general. One could for example posit a set of research potentials between this project and other online archival projects, such as the Library of Congress site titled *America at Work, America at Leisure* [<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awlhtml/awlws1.html>]. It is not difficult to imagine capacities for crowd/cloud annotations in relation to this project and the cluster of projects to which it will exist in relation. Various additional and related mappings and historical geospatial overlays are clearly within reach, as new scholars and audiences (or newly digitized older scholarship) are brought into interface with these materials. Indeed, this collection and project beg us to imagine the future and alternative functionality of research, and even entirely new areas of research that online access and networked capacities may generate. Which other “locals,” other pasts, other lives of work and industry might directly relate to these film texts? What insights will be gleaned from scholars for whom such imagery and contexts are fundamentally unfamiliar? Which aspects of visual culture might be revealed to be surprisingly uniform or idiosyncratic, as individual frames and shot compositions are studied via digital tool sets? What new inquiries will be realized in relation to edited sequences, the use of close-ups, varieties and patterns of depth of field, etc.? How will these areas of research inform or challenge the vicissitudes of the local and regional as we now understand them?

In closing, I want to highlight the combination of diligence and sagacity that NHF has demonstrated and fulfilled in their completion of the *Working Life* project. They have secured established archival infrastructures and worked to build up new ones, in ways both practical and innovative.