

Institution: Royal Holloway, University of London
Unit of Assessment: 36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
Title of case study: Broadcast Television Archives: Access and Contextualisation
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research into the cultural value and potential meanings of archival television has been applied to the development of a new access route to the holdings of European broadcasters, changing their culture and developing new forms of cataloguing, search and discovery techniques. Research into everyday television has alerted archivists to the value of their neglected holdings and to the need to refine their preservation policies. The research includes the action research project VideoActive which led directly to the development of the first metadata schema for archival material held by European broadcasters for the current EUScreen project</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Research by Ellis (Professor and co-PI VideoActive and EUScreen projects, Royal Holloway, 2001-present), Johnson (Lecturer/Senior Lecturer and co-PI VideoActive and EUScreen projects, Royal Holloway, 2002-10) and Turnock (Senior Research Fellow, VideoActive and EUScreen projects, Royal Holloway, 2001-12 and 2013-16) has established the importance of all television output as a resource for the future, demonstrating the partiality of existing models of classification and cultural valuation of television material. Ellis (2007) and Johnson (2007), as well as Ellis in Johnson and Turnock (2005), exposed the foundations of predominant judgements of value around television programming. Ellis (2006 and elsewhere) argued for the importance of the most undervalued of output, interstitial material (such as adverts, announcements, trailers and so on), as valuable historical data as well as for the preservation of television flow rather than just isolated programmes. Ellis (in Johnson and Turnock 2005, pp. 36-56) and Johnson (2007) both reject the idea of 'best programme lists' in favour of everyday programming with great personal importance for large numbers of contemporary viewers. This research explored the difficult relationship between cultural values and the practice of archival preservation and classification. It argued consistently for the embedded nature of historical evidence in audiovisual material, which is often not obvious at the time of production or of archival selection and cataloguing. The research established the need for context and curation of everyday television, particularly if the material is to be reused in ways that differ from its original broadcast use by those with no particular knowledge of broadcasting history.</p> <p>This work led directly to the involvement of Ellis, Johnson and Turnock in the VideoActive project from 2006-9, a research project that made the first attempt to create an online, universally accessible collection of material from the archives of broadcasters across Europe. The project established both selection criteria and cataloguing protocols, created an initial collection and was important in refining and developing the work of the Royal Holloway group. Johnson (2008) and Turnock (2008) offer a pioneering approach to the comparative study of popular television forms across Europe, presenting ideas of national specificity and transnational comparison that have informed the group's perspective and method. The VideoActive research project itself enabled the testing and dissemination of the group's ideas to the TV archive community across Europe. The project consisted of an innovative combination of three university groups (Royal Holloway; Utrecht; Greek National Technical University) and 13 broadcaster archives involving the integration of television research and audio-visual material. A general description can be found at http://videoactive.wordpress.com/workplan-2/. At the outset, Turnock developed the project criteria for content selection based on the group's approach (http://videoactive.files.wordpress.com/2007/10/23_content_selection_strategy_report.pdf). This involved detailed decisions about the commonalities amongst very different local practices in areas as diverse as genre definition, series and magazine formats, and titles in multiple languages and Turnock oversaw the implementation of this schema for VideoActive. In this way, the</p>

VideoActive research project developed **the first common cataloguing criteria for TV archives across Europe**, and established the prototype for a universally-accessible website of European archival TV. This has been successfully applied to the EUScreen online archive (see www.euscreen.eu). Turnock (2010) reports on the experience of the VideoActive action research. VideoActive established both a prototype and a viable form of co-operation amongst disparate broadcaster archives which has been much extended for EUScreen. VideoActive brought these archives together to create a common platform for the display of material from their collections. This project was based on a consensus among the archive partners (which developed during the project on the basis of the selection criteria developed by Turnock) about both the cultural and political value of everyday TV, and the role played by television in the formation and development of a shared European identity. VideoActive also established, again based on the selection criteria, the first common metadata schema for archival material held by European broadcasters.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

ELLIS, JOHN

1. **Output type:** Chapter in book

'Is it Possible to Construct a Canon of Television Programmes? Immanent Reading versus Textual-historicism', *Re-viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, ed. H. Wheatley, London: I.B.Tauris, 2007, pp.15-26.

ISBN: 978-1-84511-188-5

2. **Output type:** Chapter in book

'The Past as Television: Are Television Programmes More than Nostalgic Ephemera?', *Fare la storia con la television*, ed. A. Grasso, Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2006, pp. 167-172.

ISBN: 978-8834313244

JOHNSON, CATHERINE & TURNOCK, ROB

3. **Output type:** Edited book

ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years, London: Open University Press, 2005.

ISBN: 978-0335217304

JOHNSON, CATHERINE

4. **Output type:** Chapter in book

'Negotiating value and quality in television historiography', *Re-viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, ed. H. Wheatley, London: I.B.Tauris, 2007, pp. 55-66.

ISBN: 978-1-84511-188-5

5. **Output type:** Chapter in book

'Searching for an Identity for Television: Programmes, Genres, Formats', *A European Television History*, eds J. Bignell and A. Fickers, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008, pp. 101-126.

ISBN: 978-1405163392

TURNOCK, ROB

6. **Output type:** Journal Article

'VideoActive and the challenges of developing online access to compare European television programmes from the archive', *Media History*, 16: 1, 2010, pp. 125-134.

DOI:10.1080/13688800903395585

7. **Output type:** Chapter in book

'European TV Events and Euro-Visions: Tensions between the Ordinary and the Extraordinary', *A European Television History*, eds J. Bignell and A. Fickers, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008, pp. 184-215.

ISBN: 978-1405163392

Research quality indicators:

The outputs listed above have generally undergone a process of peer review and, in a number of

cases, have become points of reference for subsequent discussion and debate about canon formation, cultural value and archiving. The *European Journal of Communication* (21: 2, 2006, p.257) praised the *ITV Cultures* book (Output 3) for blazing the trail of detailed historical research on Independent Television. Ellis is identified as a 'shrewd analyst' who, in his essay entitled 'Importance, significance, cost and value: is an ITV canon possible?', raises serious questions about the construction of an ITV 'canon' given the heterogeneity of the television medium. Ellis's contribution to the Wheatley collection (Output 1) is also singled out in a review in *Screen* (50: 2, 2009, pp. 257-9) for the way it identifies how television research is complicated by the 'endless and everyday' character of the medium. 'His list of questions that television historians may need to ask', the review goes on, 'does not just "create a clear means of discriminating between the vast swathes of material that exist" but, more importantly, helps us to reexamine the ways in which "the idea of the canon concentrates on specific texts (rather than structures or history)"'.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Royal Holloway's team have been central to bringing about the first successful co-operation between European TV archives to open up their holdings to the general public, represented in the successful launch of EUscreen in 2010. The research has shaped **the new co-operative culture amongst European broadcaster archives**, enabling substantial public access and defining the terms of engagement with audio-visual content for the European digital library, Europeana. VideoActive paved the way and made possible the far larger www.euscreen.eu project which now encompasses 22 broadcaster archives. Ellis and Turnock continue to guide this project. EUscreen provides universal public access to already-digitised historic television material. It enabled many archives to develop an access policy for the first time; and some (like RTBF in Belgium) to develop their first systematic digitisation. The project is unique in its comparative aspect, promoting searches across output from different European broadcasters.

The **EUscreen website is universally accessible** and averaged 41,550 unique visitors per month in 2013 (up from 9000 per month in 2012) with almost 120,000 page views per month. EUscreen has been referred to in 108 print and online publications, as well as 1684 mentions on Twitter, where EUscreen has 445 followers. There have also been 101,000 web references via Google, 1,080 on Bing and 7,290 through Yahoo. It is currently included as an integral part of courses at 36 educational institutions across Europe, and has reached target stakeholders in 196 Higher and Further Education institutions. The EUscreen collection will contain more than 45,000 items by 2016. The design of a straightforward interface involved the Royal Holloway team who articulated the needs of different potential users based on the underpinning research into judgements of cultural value. The software developers also substantially altered their 'advanced search' design to accommodate the requirements of scholarly as well as generalist research at the urging of the Royal Holloway team.

Europeana (the EC-funded digital library and museum) appointed **EUscreen as its sole aggregator for audiovisual content**, despite the existence of other sites such as the European Film Gateway. EUscreen will provide one million metadata items to Europeana by 2016. VideoActive's metadata model was adopted by EUscreen with only minor changes, and is now the standard for participating broadcasters from most of the new accession states of Eastern Europe. EUscreen has become a unique forum for archives across Europe, ranging from the INA in France, with its advanced access programmes, to Romania, Poland and Denmark with no other sustained public access programmes. Royal Holloway's research reputation in this area led to its selection, along with co-ordinators Utrecht University, as the sole research institution partners in these projects. The majority partners are broadcaster archives (now almost 30 are involved) and two technology providers.

EUscreen developed and expanded the VideoActive prototype by adding research-informed commentary on its holdings through the creation of 'virtual collections'. Royal Holloway took responsibility for the development of a series of themed **'virtual exhibitions' of EUscreen material**, applying in practice the findings of the underpinning research to develop curated collections drawing on a wide range of academic research and the work of archivists. This co-

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operative working has been further developed by the creation of *VIEW: Journal of European Television History and Culture*, an online peer-reviewed journal with both Johnson and Ellis on the editorial board (<http://journal.euscreen.eu/index.php/view>). In both cases, archivists are central contributors, using and developing the overall perspectives on TV history developed by the Royal Holloway group. VideoActive and EUscreen have therefore enabled a direct dialogue between Royal Holloway's research in the field and the preservation and cataloguing practices of the archives of public and commercial broadcasters across Europe.

As previously indicated, the underpinning research emphasised the enduring cultural value of archival television, arguing for the **preservation of television flow rather** than just isolated programmes. As a conference paper, Ellis (2006) (Output 2) led directly to a change in the preservation practice of the UK National Film and TV Archive (NFTVA). The NFTVA now includes examples of interstitial material (trails, idents, adverts and so on) as well as sampled nights to demonstrate the nature of broadcast flow.

Ellis has also led the team developing a **consolidated search interface** for the nine separate databases of more than 13 million records of audio-visual content (particularly news content) held by BUFVC. The search interface has many novel features (e.g. indication of how easy it is obtain the footage) and at launch in April 2012 showed a marked increase on the first three months of the year: 81,635 page views compared with the previous high of 5,035 in February; 82,953 total searches against 12,163 in March; and 17,891 unique visitors compared with 284 in January 2012. Extensive user testing demonstrated the utility of the concepts developed in the underpinning research to the development of search criteria.

In 2001 it was possible for one commentator to write: 'It is doubtful... that the publication of TV archives on the Internet will soon become a general practice: copyright issues, not to speak of the technical costs, will still be the major obstacle for on-line transmission of such material... it is not difficult to bet that the access to archives will remain for a long time the privilege of a small number of researchers.' (André Lange, *The Historian, Television and Television History*, 2001, p. 43). The impact of Royal Holloway's research has been to prove this wrong.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. The importance of EUscreen to the overall Europeana project can be corroborated by the Executive Director, Europeana
2. EU user statistics and Royal Holloway's involvement with EUscreen and VideoActive can be corroborated by the Manager of Research and Development of Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid
3. Royal Holloway's involvement in VideoActive/EUscreen can be corroborated by Cinecitta Luce, Fondazione Rinascimento Digitale
4. Improved search statistics and performance for BUFVC can be corroborated by the Chief Executive of BUFVC
5. Changes in archiving practice as a result of the research: National Film & TV Archive can be corroborated by the Head of Television, British Film Institute