Grantee Name
New York Public Library

Project Progress and Successes

The New York Public Library's (NYPL) $198,612 grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation has transformed the Library's ability to serve our audio and moving image collections. As a result of this grant, the Library is, for the first time, able to deliver audio and moving images in a digital format anywhere in the world, and to limit access to particular locations in accord with intellectual property and other applicable rights restrictions. In addition, the funds enabled the Library to develop, test, and reconfigure a system that allows dance scholars, creative professionals, and students to more easily discover archival treasures from the collections of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, and to interact with them more easily using a ground-breaking web-based video editing suite designed especially for our collections.

Content
The Library's grant from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation realized a number of successes. With the Foundation's generous support, the Jerome Robbins Dance Division and the Library's Barbara Goldsmith Preservation Division team were able to preserve as digital files over 1,000 hours of dance video from approximately 1,300 new and legacy collection videos and make them publicly available for viewing via the Library's new online video display platform.

This new delivery system represents a major improvement: previously, patrons visiting NYPL's Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis Cullman Center (LPA) had to request access to analog videos, which a staff member in the basement would have to retrieve and put into a deck so that the video information would be sent by cables to the viewing station on the third floor. Now, patrons can access these videos on LPA computers simply by clicking a mouse. For those materials for which the Library has rights clearances, this revolutionary upgrade allows patrons to freely watch videos from their home computer. The wide array of materials now available online are described in more detail below.

First, the videos include the Dance Division's newly-acquired large collections, which staff now automatically preserve and deliver as digital files. As they are preserved and cataloged, these materials become available for immediate viewing. A few examples of such new collections include the Mikhail Baryshnikov Archive, which contains approximately 600 videos; the Ronald K. Brown Video Archive, with approximately 40 videos; and the Merce Cunningham Archive, which contains over a hundred boxes of digital files, films and videos.

The project also focused on legacy collections that needed preservation and migration. These include 162 of the Dance Division's camera original recordings of the New York City Ballet's performances in 1993, called the Balanchine Celebration, and 78 camera originals from 1990 performances during the New York City Ballet's Festival of Jerome Robbins' Ballets. All of these wide- and close-shot recordings were unedited at the request of the choreographers, and the Library's new interface has the capacity for a user to view these wide-shots at the same time as the close-shots.

Other legacy collections include more than 60 films from the collection of Victor Jessen, who surreptitiously recorded various ballet companies in performance in the 1940s and 1950s. He recorded these performances on a wind-up 16mm camera, which only captured a few minutes at a time, so he returned multiple times to the performances (even as the

casts varied) to capture the entire dance work. In the New York Times on August 28, 2013, Alastair Macaulay wrote, "In recent years, Jessen's vast film legacy -- legal problems kept much of it secret long after his death -- has not only come to light, but it has been digitized. Thanks to him, you can see Danilova and other ballerinas in the 1940s in the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo three-act productions of 'Raymonda' and 'Coppélia.'"

Although the recordings above may only be viewed within the walls of the Library, a growing subset of the Dance Division's collection can be viewed without restrictions on the Internet. The Khmer Dance Project (KDP), for example, contains nine performances and rehearsals of the Royal Ballet of Cambodia, and over 40 interview recordings from Cambodia--all of which are freely-available on the Library's public site. The KDP was launched in 2008 when the Center for Khmer Studies partnered with the Dance Division to interview and film the three generations of artists (including dancers, musicians and singers, as well as embroiderers and dressers), who kept dance alive during and in the wake of the Khmer Rouge regime. Funded by a grant from the Anne Hendricks Bass Foundation, the resulting videos have greatly expanded upon existing knowledge and awareness of this endangered and celebrated art form.

Other open-access collections include more than 300 hours of video of dance from the Kingdom of Bhutan, a result of the Dance Division's partnership with Core of Culture on its project to record and preserve Bhutan's disappearing dance traditions; videos from the Dance Division's Original Documentation Program, a project to record live dance performances, which features modern dancers and companies such as Eiko & Koma, Amy Sue Rosen, and Carolina Ballet; early films, such as the hand-colored 1897 film, titled Annabella, by Thomas Edison; and five videotaped Speaking of Dancing interviews with Wendy Whelan, Julie Kent, Kevin McKenzie, Alastair Macaulay, and Ethan Stiefel.

Technology
The videos above could not be shared without the innovative new online portal the Library created to display these materials. Not only does the portal revolutionize access to the Dance Division's collections, but the software also represents a significant technological breakthrough--not only for NYPL, but for all video on the web. Along with simply streaming video, the web application allows users to combine videos from multiple sources (YouTube and NYPL archives, to start) into a single presentation, allowing scholars, educators, practitioners, and fans to edit and annotate endless combinations of individually-curated multimedia content.

The Library selected a commercially-available media platform, BrightCove, to be the backbone of its new online platform. Other organizations, such as The New York Times and Showtime, also rely on this platform, which is adept at managing content with various rights restrictions. As a result, the Library is able to automatically restrict viewing rights for individual videos, ensuring that artists' intellectual property rights are protected. The result of this work was the simple, yet powerful, viewing platform integrated into NYPL's new Digital Collections site: http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/dancevideo

Building on top of this platform, NYPL Labs software developers incorporated code that extends the JavaScript video library "Popcorn.js," creating an easy-to-use multi-source video editor that allows users to juxtapose, sync, and annotate dance recordings side-by-side from any Internet browser. This tool is the first of what NYPL hopes will be a suite of virtual workspaces where researchers can do advanced comparisons, annotations and other analysis of digital materials. The video tool prototype, along with a gallery of published compositions, can be explored on its own via: http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/tools/video/

In the library tradition of freely sharing information for the public good, NYPL has both contributed enhancements to Popcorn.js and released all of its code to the public under an open source license. Moreover, the search and browse interface designed for this project worked so well with test users that it was eventually adopted as the basis for the larger Digital Collections Platform used to serve all digital content across the Library.

Testing
Throughout the development of the project, NYPL staff tested the user interfaces for searching and browsing, viewing, and juxtaposing/annotating, with the specific goal of connecting with anticipated core user groups (dance practitioners, educators, scholars, etc.), and receiving their feedback on the prototype. For the first phase of testing, users were tested through a combination of one-on-one sessions, remote surveys, and at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, and their feedback was incorporated into the development of the interface for Phase 2 and ultimately, the final product.
Phase 1 testing, which ran from December 2012 - March 2013, was generally positive--reinforcing the need and demand for this project--but patrons had specific comments and expectations for search and other tools, in addition to a predicted focus on content. After considering the results, NYPL's developers focused more deeply on the faceted search, creating user tutorials, and integrating user accounts so that individuals can save information created with the tools.

Following these changes, Phase 2 user testing began in May 2013 and continued through June 2013. For this phase, the Library focused on one-on-one sessions, which had proved to be the format in which the most information could be obtained. Most importantly, feedback was often incorporated into the interface changes right after a session, so users often assessed different versions of the online platform. Testing was remarkably successful: one of the participants remarked that the new interface was a "great gift to ballet." Following this final round of testing, various Dance Division viewing stations were set up for users to access the platform on July 31, 2013.

Plans for the Future
The Library's platform allows individuals to search for videos by categories; this process is known as faceting. Although most facets are easy to generate, Company, Venue, and Style are more complex, since these are not always cataloged in the same fields. In the months ahead, the Library will explore the way in which it facets this information and makes it accessible to the public. Second, the Library will continue to refine the powerful compose tool built into the online platform, which already allows users to find internal and external videos, juxtapose and annotate them, and then save them for future use or sharing.

Finally, although the over 1300 videos digitized for this project represent an impressive array of dance video, there remain almost 24,000 titles that are accessible only on legacy formats. In the years ahead, the Library will move forward aggressively with preserving and making available the 5,000-6,000 obsolete-format U-matics in its collections. In addition, NYPL will continue to add its newly-acquired videos to the online platform using this new system. As migrating video from these obsolete formats is a matter of some urgency, the Library will continue to fundraise to speed this work, as it is only through additional funding that these future plans can be implemented.

Challenges / Obstacles / Failures Encountered in the Project
The project faced a few challenges, primarily relating to the time necessary to assemble the final project team. Doug Reside, the Library's Digital Curator for the Performing Arts, joined as Project Director in Spring 2011, and Jane Aboyoun, NYPL's Chief Technical Officer, joined the Library several months later. During this period, NYPL established its

research and development unit, NYPL Labs, which oversaw the overall software development, and hired a part-time Metadata Specialist and Project Manager.

Further, moving from an almost entirely analog workflow for processing and preserving videos to an almost entirely digital one took some adjustment and a great deal of collaboration with units across the NYPL system. While most of the work of preservation and service was formerly handled within the walls of the library, the workflow involved teams from the curatorial units, cataloging, metadata, the digital repository team, the digital innovation group (Labs), and legal/rights. Keeping work moving through this very cross-institutional process required constant communication among units.

Although staffing and establishing workflows took more time than anticipated, the Library exceeded its promised total of 1,000 hours of digitized dance content. As a result, all of this content can now be accessed through the new NYPL Digital Collection Portal, which was built from designs originally created for this project.

What was learned from these that might be of benefit to others?

As the grant progressed, the Library recognized that it needed to address the question of how to facilitate communication among the many project stakeholders. Although NYPL had initially hired Eugenia Kim to act primarily as a metadata specialist, she gradually adopted a dual role that focused on both metadata and cross-partner coordination. Having a single staff person who acted as the primary contact for the growing number of stakeholders was key to the success of the project, and the Library strongly recommends that other institutions with similar projects consider budgeting for such a position.

Early in the project, the Library also spent a good deal of time investigating long-term storage options that could satisfy all potential future needs, which slowed the project. Once staff made the decision to begin uploading service copies to BrightCove while continuing to work out long-term storage plans, the Library was able to place material in front of the public at a much faster rate. The workflows that emerged from this "service-first" approach, with preservation copies to the repository, will continue to inform NYPL's digital preservation processes in the months and years ahead.

Links to relevant website(s) and/or project publications, reports, etc.

Please see the following links to access the Library's video collections online:

http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/dancevideo and
http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/tools/video/

If someone wishes to speak with your organization further about your project, would there be a willing contact? Y/N

If yes, please provide contact name and information for preferred method of contact (email, phone, etc).

Yes. Please contact Doug Reside, Digital Curator for the Performing Arts, at dougreside@nypl.org.