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IS599 MPA Film Practicum | Assignment 4

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The original purpose of the practicum – and how well the completed practicum met that purpose, both in terms of your goals and the benefit to the hosting organization.

My practicum was in the Modern Political Archives working specifically on the Estes Kefauver Film Project. The collection included approximately 95 - 16mm, 15 - 8mm, and 3 - 35mm films. The purpose of this project was to identify the films in the Kefauver collection, catalog the films' physical characteristics and assess the films' physical condition. This information was then used to prioritize digitization, thus making the Kefauver film collection more findable, and house them properly.

How completely did the actual activities of the practicum fulfill the original objectives developed by you, your Advisor, and your Supervisor?

The objective was to identify, rehouse, and catalogue the Kefauver film collection by the end of the practicum. I accomplished this and more. I even had enough time to start the Howard Baker Sr. Films. To catalog the films, I used AVCC. AVCC is an open-source database management system designed specifically for audiovisual collections.

I have included a screen shot of what the AVCC system database [pictured below] along with the Acid Detection Strip Report which AVCC automatically generates based on the information I have inputted throughout the semester. Later in the paper I will explain the importance of A-D strips and how their results are critical to the long-term perseveration of the film collection.

Characterize the level and the quality of the mentoring and support given to your needs and activities by the practicum Supervisor (or other involved staff at the hosting organization).

Louisa Trott Reeves trained me on all things film. I am incredibly honored and thankful to have the opportunity to learn from her. She mentored me, checked-in with me throughout the course of the project, and was available via email if I ran into any issues with the film. Kris Bronstad is the modern political archivist at the MPA and my practicum supervisor. She too was

extremely supportive from a management standpoint. If I needed anything, from leader to canisters, she was on it no questions asked. Kris was also extremely helpful at providing guidance when it came to descriptions for the films. Some of the films had old watch reports that documented everything on the film which was really helpful, however the films that were just labelled with numbers were harder to identify. Kris' knowledge of the collection was useful here. For the films that I had no identifiers on them, I realized how hard it was to identify film that has been shot in the same place (i.e. the Senate Recording Studio) without hearing the audio.

One of my objectives going into the practicum was to learn the "language" of audiovisual archivists. I definitely think I have accomplished this objective. As I have stated earlier the team is composed of Kris, Louisa, and I. Kris, however, was my supervisor. Kris did not have much experience with film, however was extremely supportive from a management point of view. As I progressed through the practicum I found myself being able to explain more of the issues that would arise and why a product was needed.

List the tasks, processes, and activities of the practicum and how much each helped you to meet your objectives or personal goals. What did you learn that was especially valuable? How will you apply it in other settings?

As stated earlier, Louisa trained me on all things film, and completed the identification of approximately 75 percent of the Kefauver film collection. Identification included assigning each film a unique ID, Project Name, Collection Name, etc. and entering the information into AVCC. Some of the films were previous inventoried and assigned numbers, so Louisa had to connect the new and old numbers together when creating a new record. The new record also included basic information about the reels such as the reel diameter and format, content creation date, edge code date, and more. I did a quality control, double-checking the information already entered into AVCC. Then I added information to each record as it was found while transferring the film to a core.



Image 1. Film Processing Station

The film processing station [pictured left] shows the winder, a dummy winder, a split reel, and splicer which was used. Both winders are screwed down to the board and the board is clamped using the blue clamps shown. Without the clamps, the board moved while winding the film which made the film wind unevenly. This is how the film was transferred from reels to cores.

Prior to winding the film onto a new core I would conduct an A-D Strip Test on each of the films. The A-D Strip tests are dye-coated paper strips that are left in the films can for at least 48 hours. The strip will turn a color depending on the amount of acid detected on the film. To find the A-D Strip Results a pencil is used to determine the corresponding number based on the color of the strip [pictured right]. The results are used to determine which films are need to be moved to cold storage and rate the films in order of need for digitization. An A-D Strip Test Result of 3.0 usually correlated to the film having a slight to strong vinegar smell. Figure 1 (on page 1) displays the A-D Strip test results in a report.



Image 2. A-D Test Strip Reader

Then, I would not only inspect the film for preservation issues, but also checks for a title and edge code which would give me additional information about the film.

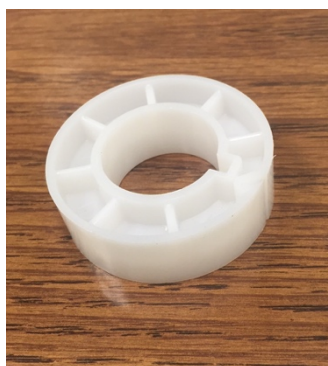


Image 3. 2-inch film core

Some of the films had titles and descriptions from a previous inventory however the information did not always match up with what was on the film. Next I would carefully transfer the film onto a new plastic core [pictured left]. During the transfer process I would look for tears in the film, and missing perforations. about the film into AVCC [pictured below]. AVCC is an open source web application for cataloging audiovisual materials.

Project Name	Format	Unique ID	Title	Collection Name	Location
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0001	[Shows Filmed at Senate Recording Studios, 1960]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0002	[Kefauver Family at Home in Washington]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0003	[Kefauver Wins VP Nomination]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0004	[Shows Filmed at Senate Recording Studios, 1958]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0005	[Shows Filmed at Senate Recording Studios, 1958]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0006	[Shows Filmed at Senate Recording Studios, 1960 - Part 1 of 3]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0007	[Shows Filmed at Senate Recording Studios, 1960 - Part 2 of 3]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0008	[Shows Filmed at Senate Recording Studios, 1960 - Part 3 of 3]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0009	[Shows Filmed at Senate Recording Studios, 1960]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0010	[Shows Filmed at Senate Recording Studios, 1960]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0011	[Shows Filmed at Senate Recording Studios, 1959]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0012	[Shows Filmed at Senate Recording Studios, 1959]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0013	[Crime Investigation, N.Y.]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0014	[Kefauver with Lt. Gov. Sherwood Dixon]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0015	[Interview with Lady Elliott at Conference in Paris-1960]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0016	[Washington Spotlight #28]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0017	[Washington Spotlight #8]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0018	[Senator Kefauver in Korea]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0019	[Senator Kefauver in Korea]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0020	[Follansbee]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0021	[Educational Material]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0022	[Educational material - Follanbee Special]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0023	[Educational material]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks
Kefauver	16mm	EKAV0024	[NATO Duplicate]	MPA,0144	MPA Stacks

Image 4. AVCC

The final steps in processing the film include measuring the film’s footage, housing the film in a new archival film can (along with marking the can with its unique identifier), and entering information. A good wind on a film can also dramatically reduce the size of the film in the container. For example, the film [pictured below] measured 12.5 inches in diameter and it was not on a reel and did not have core. After rewinding the film onto a 2-inch core and replacing the excess leader, the film now measures 10.5 inches in diameter [pictured below]. In other words, that is 2 inches in diameter difference! Schon (1983) defined the term frame experiment as, “finding a new way to set a problem” (p. 63). In the film archiving practicum I have found myself dealing with many different problems with film. Specifically, with the Kefauver collection the issues have been limited to film being put in containers without a core or on a reel (as shown in the pictures above), film put on reels backwards, and multiple films put together that the heads and tails are mismatched. The techniques written for best-practice of film preservation are not always realistic. The best-practice techniques are good to know because they are the principles of film are techniques every film preservationist should strive use (i.e. the ideal situation), however, depending on the working conditions, materials available, funds, and the condition of the film the ideal situation becomes more of a realistic situation. For example,

always wear gloves. When cutting and taping film, also known as splicing, if I am wearing gloves on both hands the gloves will stick to the tape.

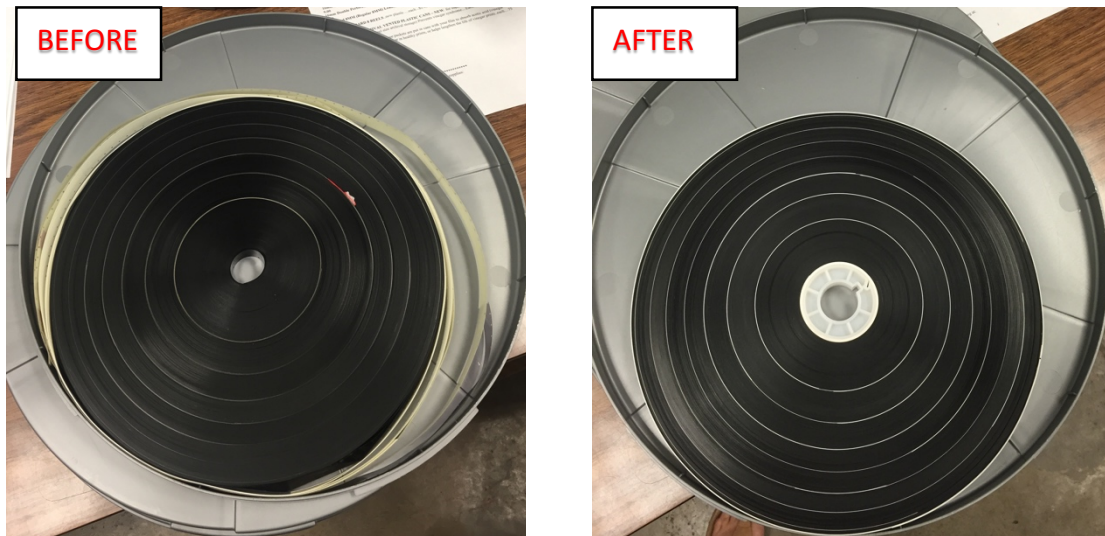


Image 5. Before & After transfer to core replacing leader and properly winding

I will use what I have learned in this practicum hopefully in my future jobs. Before starting this practicum, I was 75 percent sure I wanted to pursue a career in audiovisual archives. After completing the practicum, there is no doubt in my mind that I want to pursue a career in audiovisual archives. The benefit of having the flexibility to preserve audiovisual materials is that it allows archivists the ability to archive their own materials in-house, which benefits that everyone in the long run. The archivist that is most familiar with the collection will be the one that will be able to provide the most detail and description about events on film, where as if the film were contracted out, the person working on the film is completely disconnected from the rest of the collection.

Assess the effectiveness of communication, instruction, supervision, feedback, and evaluation you received from the supervisor.

While the Modern Political Archives was extremely fortunate to have access to in-house expertise regarding questions about film preservation (thanks to Louisa Trott Reeves), I was keenly aware that I was the one that bear the responsibility for “making it happen.” What has made this project successful thus far is Kris’ trust in me and willingness to attempt (and fail at) different approaches, and a high level of communication between Kris, Louisa, and I. I always

felt like I was in the loop, both in regarding to the film project and Kris' daily schedule. In other words, if Kris had a meeting, researchers to attend to, or would be away from the office part of the day when I was scheduled to be there she would always let me know.

Provide a sense of your overall satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the experience. Would you recommend it to other students or not, and why?

I was extremely satisfied with this practicum and experience, and would most definitely recommend it to other students who are passionate about audiovisual archives. I do not think the experience would have been as great as it was if I were not as passionate about audiovisual archives. Prior to this practicum, I was unaware in the amount of preparation required prior to digitizing an audiovisual collection. It is hard to pick one particular aspect that was valuable to my learning experience, since everything was valuable. After I learned the steps from Louisa of how to identify, inspect, transfer the film from reels to cores (or in some cases put them on a core), and how to add leader to the "head" and "tail" of the film.

References

Schon, Donald. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. Basic Books, Inc. 1983