

Praxis is Paramount: NYU MIAP's Approach to Educating Media Archivists Today for Collection Stewardship Tomorrow

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Introduction

Since its founding in 2003, the Moving Image Archiving and Preservation (MIAP) program at New York University (NYU) has trained nearly 200 students for careers in the archival profession. Housed within the Tisch School of the Arts' Martin Scorsese Department of Cinema Studies, MIAP's graduate-level training program collaboratively models ways to support student development, the growth of cultural heritage initiatives, and community-driven archiving projects. Hands-on, practical work with archival film, video, and audio has been core to the program's pedagogical foundation since its inception. This article argues that archival studies programs must cast practical skills as an essential component of the training curriculum to ensure graduates are armed with the real-world experience to care for collections.

To support the expansive collections of media recorded on analogue and digital carriers, training programs must not only provide opportunities to engage with the theoretical elements of film archiving, but simultaneously offer students a practical forum to develop the competencies essential to archival stewardship. Critically, programs must go beyond just theory and practice and build in opportunities for ongoing reflection. The increased need for specialized pedagogy and training results from the proliferation of archives. This article will explore the factors that have promoted the increased need for training and discuss recent changes within the education and training field. Illuminating key aspects of the NYU MIAP program, this article will further interrogate how its dialogic approach and emphasis on praxis trains professionals to steward collections. I base this article partly on my own experience as an alum of the program, as the instructor of the program's "Directed Internship" seminar since 2012, and in my role as associate director of the program between 2018–19 and 2023–25. Over these decades of experience, I have seen first-hand

how effective training—and thoughtful reflection—can support the development of audiovisual archival professionals.

A Growing Need for Trained Professionals

Advanced training programs focused on audiovisual archiving and preservation have emerged over the past decades to address the staggering number of film, video, and audio recordings in collections worldwide. Since the publication of *Synoptique*'s special issue, "Institutionalizing Moving Image Archival Training: Analyses, Histories, Theories," in 2018, ongoing shifts and tremors continue to mould and reshape the training landscape (Keidl and Gosvig Olesen 2018). The ubiquity of digital video and audio recording technology, compounded by the two-headed issue coined "degralescence"—a portmanteau fusing degradation and obsolescence—conspire to create a growing demand for trained professionals (Casey 2019, 10).¹ The ease of use, availability, and quality of born-digital video technology have expanded the narrower film archiving niche into a broader field of audiovisual archiving, preservation, and digital stewardship. Archives of all stripes must now contend with the seemingly endless creation of new content—cell phone camera video, law enforcement body camera recordings, security footage, as well as event and performance documentation—while also responding to the rise in demand for access. At a moment in time when the public expects all content to be accessible online, how are archives shifting practices to meet these needs? According to a recent study, the global digital asset management market size is projected to grow from \$3.96 billion in 2023 to \$16.18 billion by 2032 (Fortune Business Insights 2025). The demand for digital asset managers and associated digital asset management systems (DAMS) is at an all-time high.

The 2020 global pandemic and resulting shutdowns limited the opportunities for hands-on training, as health and safety were rightly prioritized over *in situ* work and gave rise to new considerations on working remotely on AV collections, while also providing an opportunity to reevaluate how Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing might impact the field. The staggering increase in the volume of media to care for, a rise in demand for digital access, and the new challenges of AI percolating alongside the decades-old obstacles related to degradation and obsolescence make praxis an essential framework for training future media archivists.

Praxis and Critical Archival Theory

The staggering volume of audiovisual materials and digital data provides an opportunity to contemplate growing collections and (re-)consider the significance of this growth historically and culturally. Whose lives are represented in (or absent from) the collections amassed, and who has the power to determine collecting policies, priorities, and preservation? Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire developed the pedagogical approach of praxis which can be defined as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (2014, 51). In a dialogic approach fostering praxis, theoretical understanding informs practice, which is then followed by reflection. Without integrating opportunities for reflection, practice remains just that: practice. Purposeful reflection, guided by a theoretical and value-based framework, is the key element that elevates practice and is a foundational element of the MIAP education.

Reflection can take many forms, such as seminar discussions during audiovisual archiving training, reviewing workflow and program documentation, and reflective writing and evaluation of institutional practices. Dialogue and reflection are foundational elements of praxis, and threaded throughout the MIAP program.

Freire's approach, in tandem with the essential archival-specific scholarship of recent years, grows out of Hannah Arendt's landmark work in developing her "theory of action." Arendt viewed participatory democracy, among other things, through a threefold *vita activa* (labour, work, and action), with the action not just reflecting plurality but being dependent on it. Her scholarship revived the Aristotelian concept of *praxis*, but she endowed it with an inherently political dimension. To Arendt, it is through considered action that the actor's true self is revealed, and the pluralism she emphasizes stands in contrast to the "bureaucratized and elitist forms of politics so characteristic of the modern epoch" (Tömmel and d'Entrevés 2025).

We see clearly how Freire's scholarship on praxis, his foundation of "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it," is a continuation of Arendt's articulated approach. So, too, have those archivists who have contributed so much to the notion of praxis over the past decade. They might ask: how do we bring into being this virtuous cycle where a student learns theory, skills, principles and values; learns to apply all of the above through mentored fieldwork; and is given the space to adequately reflect on the entire process, thus beginning the cycle again? How does Arendt's notion of praxis in participatory democracy, and Freire's notion of transformation through praxis, extend to the critical mission of archiving in a universe with finite resources trying to preserve seemingly limitless material?

First, we would do well to acknowledge the history of archival practice which we have inherited. J.J. Ghaddar and Michelle Caswell (2019) articulated a critical archival theory that Boyles et al. later built upon, as "reproducing the ways in which archives reinscribe existing settler colonial power structures" (Boyles et al. 2022). We are looking not at the inert collection of mislabelled audiovisual materials that inevitably awaits us in a collection. We are "dealing instead with a complex of human communities, tacit knowledges and techno-cultural assemblages, calls also for a deeper understanding of gender, race, class, labour, geopolitical inequalities, and to which extent they are implied in the archiving, access and distribution of resources and data" (Università degli Studi di Udine. n.d.).

Though the term dates back to the 1940s, "community archives" as credible institutions capable of ensuring the long-term preservation of audiovisual materials truly emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, as the widespread availability of film and open-reel video enabled marginalized groups (including women, people of colour, and the LGBTQ+ community) to cement their own narratives without the hierarchical (and restrictive) decision-making of larger cultural institutions (Poole 2020, 658).

The emergence of community archives has served as a counterweight to the behemoths of well-funded archives within museums and universities, though the only constants amongst community archives have been a lack of resources and concerns of co-optation. Archivists have faced the paradox that, try though they might, their work inherently undermines the marginalized groups whose work they

are trying to preserve: “Through traditional community-engaged academic projects, extractive practices have been positioned as ‘empowering’ or ‘enfranchising’ communities, reifying hierarchical relationships and positioning archives as the sole expert of what constitutes cultural heritage” (Boyles et al. 2022).

In recent years, critical archival studies has emerged as a topic in archival theory and practice, urging practitioners to interrogate what is unjust with the current state of archival research and practice and how the field can be critiqued to activate change. Archival students train to accession, process, arrange, describe, preserve, and provide access to collections containing film, video, audio, and digital files. But the development of these collections—and the items that comprise the collections—was not created in a vacuum. In this way, “critical archival studies, like critical theory, is emancipatory in nature, with the ultimate goal of transforming archival practice and society writ large” (Boyles et al. 2022). Having inherited the legacy of hidebound approaches to archiving, contemporary scholars have tried with urgency to forge a way forward, informed by philosophers like Arendt and Freire.

A Rising Tide: The Collecting Landscape

“Audiovisual materials are the fastest-growing segment of our nation’s archives and special collections,” reported the Library of Congress in 2012 (Nelson-Strauss et al. 2012, 6). In addition to maintaining paper and photographic materials, archives that collect twentieth-century personal papers and institutional records regularly encounter audiovisual materials. Accessioning film, video, and audio in more traditional “paper” archival repositories may have once been an anomaly; now, archives may encounter reels of super-8 home movies, answering machine microcassettes, or performances captured on VHS videotapes when accessioning collections. For example, audiovisual holdings in New York University Special Collections represent an average of 23 percent of archival collections accessioned since 2019.

Universities in the U.S. collect and maintain audiovisual materials within many corners of the broad academic setting. Special collections and archives, university producers (such as campus television or radio stations), and academic libraries are all entities that have become increasingly interested in caring for their materials and thus seek support from those trained in handling and preserving audiovisual materials. Some universities maintain archives dedicated to the care of film and video, such as the University of California, Los Angeles’ Film and Television Archive or Indiana University’s Moving Image Archive. In recent years, Preservation Departments within academic libraries—historically the home of book, paper, and object conservation—have expanded to include media preservation units, reflective of the volume of AV materials now held in these institutions. Furthermore, the field’s early exhortation “nitrate can’t wait!” has faded as the volume of the urgent pleas to care for the plethora of twentieth-century recordings on magnetic media drowns out concerns about the early nitrocellulose film base.

Arts organizations, such as dance- or theatre-focused institutions, which have utilized film, video, and audio technology to document their events and performances, now face the challenges of preserving both their legacy holdings, and

considering ways to grapple with digital content. Many of these organizations have established internal archives and are developing systems to digitize, describe, and make their historic and artistically rich collections available. Production companies and distributors, invested in their archives for cultural value and potential back-catalogue and reissue revenue streams, are also strategizing on storage, reformatting, and reissuing. Considering the abundance of institutions with audiovisual materials in their “collections,” the field has expanded to include not simply theatrical motion picture film, but all kinds of audiovisual recordings, agnostic of carrier.

As the creation, collection, and desire to continue exhibiting time-based media art has increased in the last decades, many art museums now grapple with these late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century media artworks. Time-based media artworks may include video, film, slide, audio, or computer technologies that have “duration as a dimension and unfold to the viewer over time.” (Guggenheim n.d.). Time-based media conservation has evolved into its niche, albeit overlapping and allied with audiovisual archiving, and requires the support of curators, conservators, registrars, and technologists.

The Twentieth Century Film Archive

Film archives and museums that collect motion picture films have contended for decades with the deterioration and degradation of photochemical film bases—nitrate and acetate deterioration—and associated magnetic soundtracks. Film collectors created the first film archives in the 1930s. Many of the early film archives were “created and established thanks to the altruistic work of a few talented, farsighted individuals who realized the importance of collecting their national heritage of moving images” (Wibom 1988, 23). Ernest Lindgren, curator of what would become the British National Film Library, and Henri Langlois, head of the Cinémathèque française, are the two names most synonymous with early film archiving (Sterritt 2012, 55).² In 1938, four founding members—including Lindgren and Langlois—created the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP), with the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) Film Library and the German Reichfilmsarchiv. For these early film archive players—primarily national archives and museums—membership in FIAP supported their development and collaboration. Many of the early film archives were directed by their founders for decades and a professionalized workforce did not begin developing until the last decades of the twentieth century.

UNESCO’s “Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images,” issued in 1980, was the “first instrument to recognize the cultural necessity of preserving moving images, then primarily embodied in film and analogue videotape” (FIAP n.d.), and thus supported the creation and proliferation of national film archives. Ray Edmondson’s seminal *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophies and Principles* codified the field’s principles while arguing that subjectivity and value pervade the work of “custodians of the memory” (2004, 81). One’s philosophies and values inherently, if unconsciously, guide this work, and attention needs to be paid to *how* and *what* we collect and preserve, as well as what cultural heritage is potentially overlooked in this endeavour.

The opportunity to reflect, and to allow such reflections and dialogue to further inform practice, is the praxis-orientation inherent to MIAP. Interrogating Freire's theory, Mayo argues that "praxis finds its place in any organisation or movement striving for the greater democratisation of society" (2020, 1). The MIAP program seeks to foster this approach globally in its work with partner institutions and through its international collaborative project, the Audiovisual Preservation Exchange (APEX).³ As Freire asserts, "It is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. They must act together upon their environment in order critically to reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection" (2014, 106).

In the early years, training programs focused more explicitly on identifying and caring for motion picture celluloid films. Some programs keenly focused on film, while others addressed other media types, such as audiovisual content on magnetic, optical, and digital media. The first university-based MA degree in film archiving was the School of Film and Television Studies at the University of East Anglia (UEA). The UEA program, which was able to take advantage of the rich collections held in the East Anglian Film Archive (EAFA) for pedagogical and practical purposes, was Europe's first professional qualification in moving image archiving, although the program shuttered in 2011 due to budgetary constraints. The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) has offered a two-year MA program since 2002, but due to administrative changes, the program no longer exists in its original form. The Media Archive Studies (MAS) concentration can now be pursued within UCLA's Library and Information Science program; the resulting degree is a Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS), as opposed to the previous MA.

Founded in 1996, the George Eastman Museum's L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation is the longest-running training program in the U.S. However, only the one-year (non-degree conferring) certificate program was offered until the Selznick School partnered with the University of Rochester in 2005. The first-year curriculum remains consistent for both the certificate and MA students; while the second year of studies takes place in the Film and Media Studies unit of the Department of English at the University of Rochester.

NYU's Moving Image Archiving and Preservation (MIAP) Program: Bridging Theory and Practice

New York University launched its MIAP program at the same time as the University of Amsterdam launched its Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image program, and both celebrated twenty-year anniversaries in 2023–25 (Elsaesser 2018).⁴ Mapping the current landscape for audiovisual archival training, it must be noted that two early seminal programs—the University of East Anglia in the U.K. and the University of California, Los Angeles Moving Image Archival Studies (MIAS) program in the U.S.—have shuttered or altered dramatically since this time. A review of the new and burgeoning programs will be provided later in this paper.

From its early days, and at its founding director Howard Besser's prescient advocacy, MIAP has always interpreted the "moving image" broadly and trained stu-

dents on the array of formats one may encounter when working with audiovisual materials. From nitrate to DCPs, wire recordings to Digital Audio Tape, and two-inch Quadraplex to Apple ProRes digital files, the MIAP program aims to provide students with a broad foundation in all audiovisual formats.

Field Work and Internships

With a cohort size of an average of ten students, nearly 200 students have graduated from the program since its founding. Each MIAP student completes two semester-long internships and one full-time summer internship, which total approximately 700 hours of critical fieldwork experience. Since the program's founding in 2003, MIAP has arranged over 500 internships, the majority of which have been paired with stipends funded by public or private sources, including the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, and the Robert David Lion Gardiner Foundation.

MIAP has partnered with more than 150 institutions to support their essential work caring for audiovisual materials. As part of a site application to serve as an internship host, MIAP faculty and administrative staff conduct site visits. In such meetings, the MIAP team considers the potential work activities; seeks to better understand the day-to-day operations; assess potential supervisors' experience overseeing internships and mentoring students; and gauges whether the proposed project is feasible in the available timeframe, considering the cohort's academic training to date. As graduate students are required to complete three internships over the course of the MA program, scaffolding is intentionally developed around the internship projects, allowing the activities to build upon one another requiring increased oversight and expanded skills to complement the students' progressive training. For example, as students gain experience with analogue-to-digital reformatting of magnetic media in year two of the MIAP program, internships that require such skills are often reserved for the student's third semester in the program.

Defining clear goals, establishing structure, and ensuring accountability are the key components of the internship relationship. In advance of the internship start date, supervisors and students develop an Internship Agreement, a document template which the student completes with the supervisor, reviewed by department staff and faculty before the internship start date, which is then counter-signed by the intern and supervisor. Toward this end, the student and supervisor meet in person, or via phone or teleconference, to discuss the semester's goals and planned activities. This initial meeting allows students to introduce themselves and share their background and experience. At the same time, the supervisor provides a broad overview of the internship site's history and defines how the planned work aligns with the internship site's short- and long-term goals.

MIAP internships require supervisors to have training in archival studies or previous experience supervising MIAP interns. Twenty-four percent of MIAP internship sites have MIAP alumni on staff, demonstrating the program's professional reach. MIAP alumni proceed to lead archival efforts within institutions following

their MIAP tenure and frequently advocate to bring an MIAP intern on board. In the event that an on-site supervisor does not maintain the required qualifications, MIAP can pair a paid archival consultant to serve as an external advisor. In these instances, the external advisor meets regularly with the intern and site supervisor to address questions and work through any issues specific to working with AV materials.

At the internship's end, the intern and supervisor each complete a brief survey. The intern also produces a summary report that includes a background and overview of the internship site; an overview and history of the collection(s) worked on; physical description of the collection(s); description of projects and tasks performed; skills developed or strengthened; and an explanation of any changes made to the goals or tasks outlined in the internship agreement. MIAP faculty and staff review the summaries and explore ways in which work at partner institutions may be further supported in the future.

Over the last two decades, internship sites have included archives and special collections (21 percent), arts organizations/artist studios (15 percent), museums (14 percent), public and research libraries (12 percent), production studios (10 percent), distributors (5 percent), film archives (5 percent), vendors (4 percent), regional archives (3 percent), and national archives (3 percent). In addition to receiving course credit for completing a required number of hours per semester, most students also receive monetary compensation for their work from previously-noted funders and/or local institutional support to offset living expenses in the NYC metropolitan area. Compensation in the form of a stipend, hourly wage, or tuition remission is essential to the MIAP internship program.

Placements within and outside New York City provide practical training, mentorship, and professional networking that complement classroom learning. Funded MIAP interns also make a deep and lasting impact on the condition and accessibility of audiovisual collections locally, nationally, and internationally. Following graduation, many alumni become mentors to newer cohorts of students and early career archivists, sustaining a cycle of training and career support in a small yet broadly impactful field.

Since 2012, I have led a seminar course concurrent with MIAP's semester-long "Directed Internships" to complement the students' practical experience with reflective discussion. In this seminar, the students and I have attempted to unpack the thorny complications that emerge when students attempt to make sense of best practices while interning. Real-world budgets, limited physical and digital storage space, sourcing the essential yet obsolete equipment required for digitization, incompatible collection management systems, and uncertainty—or sometimes antipathy—toward the audiovisual collection materials all challenge students' progress. A dialogic approach in seminar discussions—emphasizing meaningful dialogue and interaction as a "core method of learning and knowledge construction"—allows students to surface issues in a supportive environment, among peers and with the experienced audiovisual archivist instructor as the facilitator in that "both are simultaneously teachers and students" (Mayo 2008, 43). In seminar sessions, we collaboratively seek to democratize knowledge in our demonstrating conservation

treatments, sharing of out-of-print resources, defining acronyms for universal understanding, and eliminating jargon. Students are invited to present their in-progress internship projects and regularly participate in “skill shares,” which may include command-line tutorials or tips on identifying film generation. Sessions are tailored to the students’ current needs and priorities, many of the topics emerging from their real-world priorities at internship sites. If students struggle with a particular skill, or observe a gap in their understanding, I nimbly integrate these lessons and activities into an upcoming class session to address the learning gap.

The internship program’s goals have always centred around the development and education of students; however, another outcome of the program has been the development and expansion of the infrastructure at cultural heritage institutions across New York City due to the MIAP program and interns’ support. In some instances, MIAP interns are tasked with unpacking a box of analogue videotapes left untouched for decades or winding through films that staff feared were too degraded to have any remaining value. Because the students arrive on-site with the training and skills to work with these vulnerable formats, they can be privy to content that may have been previously unknown to other staff. Two key supervisor-intern dynamics have been observed in the last two decades. The first is “AV ambassador”: current staff may have limited or no familiarity working the specific media types and thus lean heavily on the student’s training to advise on collections’ care, storage, reformatting, transfer specifications for digital reformatting, and access strategies. These institutions may be familiar with traditional archival practices but have limited experience with film, video, and/or audio. Such internships can be broad in scope, and interns can find support in classroom seminar discussions. Waves of imposter syndrome can be common in such internships. The seminar course explicitly identifies this issue and how students build confidence in their abilities and knowledge through communication and program support. As opposed to serving as “AV ambassadors,” some internships are guided by a supervisor steeped in the field, often a MIAP alum. These relationships allow interns to dive headfirst into a project stewarded by staff familiar with the vocabulary and intricacies of the film, video, audio, and digital collections.

During his internship at the Indiana University Libraries Moving Image Archive, MIAP alum Rob Anen (Class of 2017) discovered a home movie while processing the Edward Feil collection. Due to the student’s observation and attention, the discovery helped the Library of Congress (LoC) restore a landmark multimedia production. Anen visited the Library’s National Audio-Visual Conservation Centre as a first-year MIAP student and remembered that LoC was restoring *Think* (1964), a multimedia production by Ray and Charles Eames that had been shown across 22 screens of various sizes in the IBM Pavilion at the New York World Fair. A 16mm reel in the Feil Collection, labelled *NY Fair 1964–1965*, included shots of *Think* that the Library of Congress team had not seen, and proved essential in completing the restoration project. Mike Mashon, then-Head of the Moving Image Section at the Library of Congress, noted that “[i]t’s hard to find a better example of organizational cooperation than the nexus between IU’s Libraries Moving Image Archive, NYU’s MIAP program, and the Library of Congress. Sometimes it really does take a

village to restore a film” (NYU Tisch 2016). Later, this remarkable discovery—and the MIAP student’s role in supporting the project—was highlighted in *The New York Times* (Barron 2016). Another film on which Anen worked during the course of his summer 2015 internship, a 1968 medical education film, *The Inner World of Aphasia* (Naomi and Edward Feil, 1968), was later added to the United States National Film Registry.

In Fall 2017, Frannie Trempe (MIAP Class of 2018), interned at the Girl Scouts of the USA. During this internship, Trempe identified a 1926 nitrate film, *World Conference of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts*, featuring the earliest known moving images of an African-American Girl Scouts troop, as well as some of the latest recordings of Girl Scouts of the USA founder Juliette Gordon Low (1860-1927). Trempe’s handling of the nitrate reel, research on its history, and guidance on reformatting, exemplify the power of the MIAP internships. Presented at the Orphan Film Symposium in 2018, the footage is relevant to multiple intersectional fields, including gender studies, African-American studies, and international relations. It epitomizes the technological and scholarly contributions MIAP students can provide.

Threading Practical Projects into Course Work and Labs

In addition to the required internships, students also experience the practical application of theory in courses such as “Collection Management,” “Handling Complex Media,” and “Film Preservation.” Collections care is central to the work of any library, museum, or archive but determining how to provide the best care in all settings and circumstances is not always evident. The “Collection Management” course encourages students to weigh best practices against financial costs, the availability of resources, the desired use of collections, and the probable long-term effects of their choices to determine the best working solution with the least risk. The primary responsibility of a collections care professional is to make sure that these compromises are the result of careful assessment and decision-making, and are not allowed to happen merely through inaction or neglect.

This course examines the daily practice of managing collections of film, video, audio, and digital materials. With an emphasis on project planning, budgeting, and fundraising, students serve as “student consultants” to various cultural heritage institutions in the New York City region. Recent collection assessment sites include the Asian American Arts Alliance, Jacob Burns Film Center, Videoart Foundation, Visual AIDS, and independent experimental filmmakers. Attention is placed on supporting institutions whose holdings may expand an understanding of the region’s diverse people and creative output. A seminal course since the program’s inception, former MIAP associate director Mona Jimenez’s instrumental work in designing the course still today allows the course’s emphasis to focus on supporting real-world institutions. As emphasized by Freire, pedagogical activity is examined not in isolation, but through the lens of power dynamics and their structural expressions. The political nature of educational activities is encapsulated in this approach, as the MIAP faculty seeks to support a wide array of institutions, thereby supporting audiovisual collections that may exist on the margins or periphery, including within community

archives.

Taught *in situ* at New York City’s Museum of Modern Art, “Handling Complex Media” students embrace the opportunity to learn in the Conservation Department as they consider conservation strategies for time-based media. The cohort delves into both conservation and exhibition, routinely puzzling through, for example, wiring complexities for various multi-channel analogue video works. The seminar increases students’ knowledge of primary issues and emerging strategies for the preservation of media works that “go beyond single channels/screens,” per the course instructors and MoMA conservation staff Peter Oleksik and Amy Brost. In this dynamic course, the instructors model learning as a dialogue between the teacher and the students, rather than a mere transmission of information from the instructors. The Handling Complex Media projects are rarely prescriptive and developing a conservation plan for each artwork may introduce an array of software, hardware, and concomitant ethical choices that students dynamically work through with the instructors. The de-hierarchical structure of the exploration is indicative of the praxis philosophy.

Students gain practical skills with identification and risk assessment for works as a whole and their component parts, particularly in the areas of audiovisual media and digital, interactive media projects that are stored on fixed media, presented as installations, and existing in networks. Case studies are woven throughout the semester and allow students to grapple with complex media in a museum context, identifying preservation and storage needs of media installations (including slide, film, video, and sound), video games, and interactive media. Documentation plays a key role in time-based media conservation, and this course allows students to review existing documentation and consider avenues for expansion, including developing artist interview questions to capture elements of a specific artwork.

In 2022–23, instructors anchored coursework around the exhibition “Never Alone: Video Games and Other Interactive Design,” and MIAP student Brian Dunbar (Class of 2022) then further delved into software artworks as an intern, allowing him to apply the knowledge gained in the course in a practical context developing signal and wiring diagrams for the exhibition of the work “Prayer Companion” (Interaction Research Studio, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2010). The success of these past projects in “Handling Complex Media”—both for student learning and for the museum’s time-based media conservation efforts—contributed to the development of a Spring 2024 independent study project, allowing three MIAP students to research the history of three software-based artworks, explore the artists’ intentions, and the works’ technical components; understand the function and characteristics of the technologies utilized in the works; design and implement potential solutions with contemporary software and hardware; and develop potential interview questions for the creators, curators, and conservators.

Since 2003, artist and film preservationist Bill Brand has served as the instructor for the “Film Preservation” course. As established in his classroom, film preservation is not simply relegated to written texts; instead, the student cohort addresses film preservation projects in progress. With support from the National Film Preser-

vation Foundation (NFPF) and other funding sources, these class projects are not abstract exercises but instead real-world jobs that will require, for example, timely notes back to the lab following a review of the current answer print. Each student is assigned a film project on which they will focus over the course of the semester. Even if the film preservation projects have already been funded, Professor Brand requires students to engage in the task of developing a film preservation grant application. Modelled on the NFPF Basic Preservation Grant application, each student researches their assigned film's cultural and historical significance; inspects the existing film elements; proposes a course of action; contacts photochemical laboratories for cost estimates; and develops a project workplan. This assignment models a common task that archivists charged with caring for motion picture film may encounter post graduate school and allows students to gain acumen in proposing technical plans, communicating with real-world vendors, and developing preservation summaries. In the classroom setting, Professor Brand provides a student-centred learning experience, actively listening to students' ideas, responding to their needs, and adjusting instruction accordingly.

Taking the Pulse of the Field: Expansions and Contractions within the Training Landscape

The training landscape has diversified in the last decade, as certificate- and degree-conferring programs have emerged to support the need for trained professionals to steward collections, curate exhibitions of archival films, digitize magnetic media, develop digital preservation solutions, and advocate for the care of cultural heritage recorded on deteriorating and degrading formats. Situated within various departments within their home institutions, some programs are embedded in film schools, cinema and media studies departments, library and information science programs, and conservation/materials science departments. It is worthwhile to shine a light on the training landscape to identify changes since *Synoptique's* discussions of AV preservation and archiving training in 2018. In 2023, following the Eye Film Institute's Activating the Archive conference, EYE and the University of Amsterdam organized the inaugural Audiovisual Heritage Education group to support global collaboration and promote a shared understanding of AV training programs. Over 25 institutions participated in the initial meeting (with remote and in-person meeting options in Amsterdam) to outline their respective programs and identify opportunities for collaboration. This newly created group has the potential to further inform the field's development through reflective conversations and ongoing dialogue.

In July 2019, the American Archive of Public Broadcasting (AAPB) and the University of Alabama (UA) collaborated to provide public media preservation fellowships. The UA EBSCO Scholars Program in audiovisual preservation and archiving within the School of Library and Information Studies places student fellows in public media broadcast stations to gain practical experience to support the online MLIS program.⁵ "By prioritizing public broadcasting organizations holding under-represented content as host sites for Fellows, the Fellowship will play a key role in ensuring that these voices are represented in the AAPB as well as providing the Fel-

lows with the opportunity to work with unique, valuable, and at-risk material,” noted the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program Public Broadcasting Preservation Fellowship grant application.⁶

A number of training initiatives have emerged in the U.S. to provide archival studies students with the opportunity to gain hands-on AV experience. Funded by the Community Catalyst Project Grant from the IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program, the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) Pathways Fellowship developed a program “to forge pathways in the media preservation field for people from groups historically underrepresented in the profession.”⁷ The Pathways Fellowship offers paid internships in combination with mentorship and professional development training, with a specific emphasis on diversifying and expanding the workforce. Additionally, AMIA first initiated its Online Education program in 2015 and, over the course of the pandemic, expanded its offerings through its Continuing Education Task Force offering webinars and virtual training opportunities.

A statewide initiative in the U.S., California Revealed introduced a Post-Graduate Fellowship in 2024, a program that supports two paid internships for recent archival or library degree graduates. Collections that reflect traditionally underrepresented communities in the historical narrative will be prioritized. California Revealed Director Pamela Vadakan noted that this professional development opportunity was designed for “early career librarians and archivists to gain experience in the field and to support collections care for organizations in need” (California Revealed 2024). The inaugural cohort will begin work in 2024 and the archival projects may include writing or implementing a collection assessment and preservation plan; processing and rehousing a collection; and selecting, arranging, and preparing materials for digitization. Fellows work with an archivist, librarian, or preservation professional who serves as the Project Lead and mentor.

Programs Launched Since 2017			
MA	Film Preservation Studies	Elías Querejeta Zine Eskola (EQZE)	Spain
MLIS	EBSCO Scholars Program in Audiovisual Preservation and Archiving	School of Library and Information Studies, University of Alabama	U.S.
BA	Conservation and Management of the Audiovisual Heritage	Fondazione Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia ⁸	Italy
MA	Archives and Records Management	School of Library and Information Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman (UP SLIS)	Philippines
MA	Film and Photography Preservation and Collections Management	Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University)	Canada

Globally, the expansion has been more pronounced as programs in Spain, Italy, the Philippines, and Canada have all emerged since 2017. In Germany alone, a proliferation of training opportunities currently in operation and in development may soon be available at five separate institutions, totalling eight programs (2 BA, 5 MA, and one PhD).

Program	Institution	Degree
Stuttgart State Academy of Art and Design (ABK Stuttgart): Institute of Conservation - Art History	Conservation of New Media and Digital Information	BA, MA, PhD
HTW – University of Applied Sciences, Berlin	Conservation/Restoration/Field Archeology (BA); Conservation/Restoration (MA); Audiovisual Cultural Heritage track	BA, MA
DFF – Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum, Frankfurt am Main, Germany	Film Culture: Archiving, Programming, Presentation	MA
Goethe Universität Frankfurt	Filmkultur: Archivierung, Programmierung, Präsentation	MA
Film University Babelsberg	Film Heritage	MA

The following institutions are currently exploring opportunities to develop new audiovisual archiving and preservation training programs:

- Národní filmový archiv, Prague in collaboration with Film and TV School of Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU), Czech Republic
- Department of the Arts, American University in Cairo, Egypt
- Department of Media and Communication, ELTE Institute for Art Theory and Media Studies, Budapest, Hungary
- Cinema and Media Studies, Università degli Studi di Torino, Italy⁹
- The British Film Institute, Education / Fundraising & Enterprise / Knowledge & Collections, United Kingdom

Conclusion

Economic forces and administrative decisions have prompted shifts in the audiovisual archiving and preservation training field. Some programs have shuttered, but even more training programs have launched, or are in the early stages of planning and development. The field is not immune to the vicissitudes of economic downturns. Although a decade ago, questions about the field’s ability to absorb an increasing number of graduates emerged on professional listservs, today 85 percent of MIAP graduating classes of the last five years are employed in the field (Frick 2014). The

field is both niche and expansive, with MIAP alumni securing jobs as art conservators, digital preservationists, collection stewards, curators, and audiovisual archivists. The benefit of applied theory—and the dialogic approach to explore best practices superimposed on real-world scenarios—prepare audiovisual archiving students for the working world.

The development of the nascent Audiovisual Heritage Education Task Force—launched by University of Amsterdam in 2023—may further promote this goal, offering program leadership the opportunity to exchange ideas to strengthen curriculum in the task of training students to preserve cultural heritage. Having trained hundreds of professionals for work in the field, the MIAP program models praxis in action. Burgeoning programs can learn from and build upon the decades of experience of the training programs that have come before, codifying praxis as a key element in the classroom and in the development of the field.

Notes

¹ The neologism portmanteau coined by Mike Casey, formerly of Indiana University, to identify the twin factors of degradation and obsolescence.

² The National Film Library was founded in 1935; its first curator was Ernest Lindgren. In 1955, the institution became the National Film Archive. In 2006, it was renamed the BFI National Archive. <https://www.bfi.org.uk/features/history-archive>

³ For a detailed exploration of the APEX project, please see Vizner, Pamela and Juana Suarez. 2017. “Education through International Collaboration: The Audiovisual Preservation Exchange (APEX) Program.” *Synoptique* 6 (1): 102-112.

⁴ For a detailed history of the University of Amsterdam program, see Elsaesser, Thomas. 2018.

⁵ EBSCO, a leading provider of research databases and electronic journals, maintains an office in Birmingham, Alabama, in close proximity to the university. “EBSCO is a leading provider of research databases, e-journal and e-package subscription management, book collection development and acquisition management, and a major provider of library technology, e-books and clinical decision solutions for universities, colleges, hospitals, corporations, government, K12 schools and public libraries worldwide.” <https://www.ebsco.com/about/mission>

⁶ <https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/project-proposals/re-250145-ols-21-full-proposal.pdf>

⁷ “Intentional Transformation: AMIA Pathways Fellowship,” <https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/project-proposals/re-250174-ols-21-preliminary-proposal.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.fondazioneccsc.it/en/corso/corso-di-conservazione-e-management-del-patrimonio-audiovisivo/>

⁹ Currently only offer a single course in Film Preservation, but exploring Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage, located in Venaria (TO) as a collaborative partner.

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