



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

DIVISION OF PRESERVATION AND ACCESS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the NEH Division of Preservation and Access application guidelines at <http://www.neh.gov/divisions/preservation> for instructions. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Preservation and Access staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Assessment and Plan for Chicago Film Archive's Digital Collections

Institution: Chicago Film Archive

Project Director: Anne Wells

Grant Program: Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions

What Activities would this grant support?

This grant would support the services of a Digital Collections Management Consultant. CFA is finding that digital Master Preservation Files are becoming a large and growing part of our collections. This growth began in 2012 when CFA began conservation interventions on the 950 moving image items in the Ruth Page Dance Collection¹. Within the collection were approximately 350 videotape and audiotape reels that needed immediate attention. Various levels of deterioration had already set in among the videotapes, and it became clear that these original tape objects could never be considered archival materials. Through funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Donnelly Foundation, CFA began stabilizing the films and digitizing the tapes. CFA's Morrison Shearer Dance collection also contains a number of videotapes and hundreds of audiotapes that are currently being transferred to digital masters. CFA needs to establish a clear, safe and efficient plan to manage these files.

To this end, Bertram Lyons, Sr. Consultant - AVPreserve, will come to CFA's facilities in Chicago and meet with CFA's staff. He will:

- **Meet and interview staff at CFA** to determine goals, capabilities, needs and concerns around digital preservation and digital collection management that will form the basis of the needs analysis and recommendations.
- **Gather data points** that will contribute to technological and operational preservation planning (eg. formats, storage technologies, capacities, software analysis, workflows and growth projections.)
- **Assess existing storage and preservation practices** at CFA.
- **Report recommendations** for a preservation plan that represents scope, goals and objectives of the project as well as its limitations.

CFA will then begin to plan for and implement the recommended maintenance and organization of these files based upon the reports created by Bertram Lyons.

What are the content and size of the humanities collections we are focusing on?

Currently CFA's AV collections number just over 100 containing a total of approximately 25,000 media items that include film elements and prints, videotapes, audiotapes and ephemera. These collections include: documentaries, travelogues, educational and industrial films, dance, experimental, student and art films, feature, foreign and silent films and home movies. All of them have been inventoried and all of the collections are represented on CFA's website in the form of a Finding Aid. All reflect in some respect the Midwest - whether in content, distribution or production. They span (in production) from 1903 to the late 1990s.

As mentioned above, videotapes and/or audiotapes make up a portion of these AV collections. Many of those tapes have been transferred to digital Preservation and Access files. The following is a content description of those various files.

¹ The Dance Heritage Coalition named dancer/choreographer Ruth Page one of the first 100 "American Dance Treasures".

Digitized Videos (Preservation Files): approximately 350 files (8-8.5TB ; Quicktime 10-bit Uncompressed)

Approximately 310 of the Video Preservation Files are from the Ruth Page Collection containing performances, rehearsals and interviews with Ruth Page, and other dancers, choreographers and dance critics from the 1960s through the 1980s. More than half of these videotapes and their corresponding digital masters are unique to CFA's collection, existing nowhere else. A few more are Video Preservation Files from the Lawrence Janiak Collection. These files of Janiak's work were created for the yet-to-be-released *Masterworks of American Avant-Garde Experimental Film 1920-1970*

Digitized Videos (Access Files): approximately 350 files (22GB ; MP4)

These files are compressed access files that correspond with the above Preservation files. They are used for reference and for streaming from CFA's website.

Digitized Audio: approximately 900 files (30.05GB ; Mix of preservation .wav files and access .mp3 files)

The 900 audio files are comprised of original musical compositions from the Ruth Page Collection and Morrison-Shearer Collection. They have been used for live performances of current dance companies utilizing the choreography created by Sybil Shearer.

Digitized Films (Access Files): approximately 3,400 files (10-10.5TB ; Standard Def Tobin telecine transfers - Quicktime DV)

These are Master Files of films that reside throughout CFA's more than 100 collections. They are broadcast quality but not to Preservation standards. (At this time, CFA must go to outside Preservation houses to get "Preservation-standard" digital files.) These 3,400 files are most representative of the many collections preserved at CFA. They are used for presentations, exhibitions, stock footage sales and classroom screenings.

Files Streaming from CFA website: approximately 1700 files (approx. 175GB; MPEG4-AVC)

These are curated samplings from each collection as well as films that have been photo-chemically restored and then digitized.

How are these humanities collections used?

Our Ruth Page and Sybil Shearer films were exhibited in a dance program CFA created and presented in May of 2014 at Columbia College - Chicago's Film Row Cinema. *First Steps* explored the early years of each dancer using performance footage, home movies, newly created audio accompaniment, and recorded voices of the dancers. A segment of this program was also screened in New York City for a celebration of Ruth Page's career by Dancers Over 40. Some of Page's films were also exhibited at the Noguchi Museum in a program highlighting collaboration between Isamu Noguchi and Ruth Page. *Space, Choreographed: Noguchi and Ruth Page* was exhibited from September, 2013 through January, 2014 in Astoria, New York. Thodos Dance Chicago used segments of Morrison-Shearer footage for a dance performance

at the Auditorium Theater in Chicago on November 29, 2014, and CFA created a Sybil Shearer Dance Film Program for Cinema Project in Portland, Oregon on April 15, 2013.

Routinely CFA loans out many of its films to universities, museums and other humanities organizations for programming throughout North America and the rest of the world. Another service CFA offers is licensing of footage for current production. Recently CFA licensed an audio segment of THE MURDER OF FRED HAMPTON for D'Angelo's newest release, *Black Messiah*. In 2013, the Film Group's CICERO MARCH was entered into the National Film Registry as a "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant film." This film along with several other civil rights films were CFA's earliest conservation efforts that were funded by the National Film Preservation Foundation.

Some of CFA collections are used for research. In 2014 Professor Liz Czach at University of Alberta visited CFA's site for a week to research the Robert and Terry Davis Travelogue Collection in preparation of her book on Travelogue filmmaking and presentation. Joellen Meglin is currently writing a definitive biography of Ruth Page, and the dance videos that stream from CFA's website have been an enormous help in her research².

What is the nature and mission of your institution?

Chicago Film Archives (CFA) was formed in late 2003 to house, preserve and care for the Chicago Public Library's (CPL) collection of 4,500 16mm films - a collection the library could no longer keep. These films were a springboard for CFA to develop a regional film archive committed to the acquisition, preservation, study and exhibition of films that reflect the character and heritage of the Midwest. Over the last ten years, the collection has grown to over 25,000 films, videotapes, audiotapes and ephemera all donated by Midwest filmmakers, collectors and institutions.

CFA is dedicated to identifying, collecting, preserving and providing access to films that represent the character and heritage of the Midwest. Our purpose is to serve institutions and filmmakers of this region and elsewhere by maintaining a repository for institutional and private film collections; serve a variety of cultural, academic and artistic communities by making the films available locally, nationally and internationally for exhibition, research, and production; and serve our culture by restoring and preserving films that are rare or not in existence elsewhere.

There are two full-time and one part time staff at CFA. Nancy Watrous is Executive Director, Anne Wells is CFA's Collections Manager and Rebecca Hall is head of Technical & Customer Services. In fall of 2012, CFA completed the creation of an online Collections Management System that facilitates the online display of collections finding aids and streaming videos from CFA's website, providing world-wide access to CFA's collections and media.

The archive is open to the public at least 1,600 hours during the year. Two unpaid summer interns work at the archive each year. Over the past eight years, CFA has trained and supervised interns from library and film preservation programs at New York University, the University of Texas, the School of the Art Institute-Chicago, Columbia College Chicago, the

² "The digitized Ruth Page Collection of streamable films and videos provides an invaluable research and educational tool for scholars, professors, and students. This is the way of the future. Thank you CFA for leading the way." Joellen Meglin 4/25/2015

University of Amsterdam and Dartmouth University. Seven Board of Directors and nine Advisory Board members provide CFA oversight and in-kind legal, accounting, metadata and graphic arts services. CFA's 2014 operating budget was \$200,000.

Has your institution ever had a preservation or conservation assessment before?

Chicago Film Archives, NFP completed a preservation assessment, underwritten by the National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant in May of 2007. Consultant **William O'Farrell, the former Chief of Moving Image and Audio Preservation at the National Archives of Canada**, completed the assessment with the assistance of moving image archivist, Carolyn Faber.

In 2010 CFA engaged **M. Claire Stewart, Head, Digital Collections at Northwestern University Library**, to develop a plan for CFA's entire technology environment before embarking upon the creation of our online Collections Management System (CMS). In 2011, CFA hired metadata consultant **Amanda Robillard** to help us create a means to organize and describe our holdings, providing CFA staff greater access and understanding of our materials while making them public on our website. CFA launched its new website with a searchable database in the fall of 2012. It currently streams over 1500 films from the over 100 collections in CFA's vault.

What is the importance of this project to your institution?

We have arrived at the point in CFA's development when organization, quality control, back up and access to CFA's digital collections are all extremely important. We have spent resources and an immense amount of time on our Collections Database while establishing the workflow required to process and create metadata for the thousands of films in CFA's vaults. In addition to these database records, we create (in-house) digital *access files* of our films that ultimately are the instantiations from which derivative files are made for streaming off CFA's website. But in the last few years, CFA has also supervised the creation of *Preservation-standard files* from videos and audio materials in the Ruth Page and Morrison-Shearer dance Collections. These files were made (and continue to be made) by outside laboratories specializing in the preservation of old format videotape. The transfers are expensive. If those files become corrupted or lost, we have no in-house equipment to replace them. Care for these preservation files is critical. Finally, in anticipation of purchasing an archival film scanner in the coming year, CFA needs policy and standards guidelines to advance our work involving our digital collections.

What are the names and qualifications of the staff involved in the project?

Executive Director Nancy Watrous will coordinate scheduling and oversee creation of policy recommendations by the consultant. **Anne Wells, CFA's Collections Manager**, will be an integral part of the assessment and recommendations. She currently organizes and oversees the organization, maintenance and tracking of CFA's digital collections/files. **Kevin Roemer** is an IT programmer who is currently on retainer with CFA to troubleshoot and advise on technology issues around CFA's operations. He also will be integral to the assessment and plans going forward.

Nancy Watrous, who has twenty years experience as a film producer, is the founder and Executive Director of CFA. She negotiates contracts, writes grants, manages the budget,

designs programs and sets goals to ensure the growth and sustainability of CFA. She will oversee and administer the grant. **Anne Wells** has worked with CFA for over nine years. Her work has included accessioning and inspecting films, transferring the films to video and organizing and curating the digital assets for easy access. She was a part of the team that designed and implemented CFA's Collection Management System launched in 2012. She also programs for CFA. Ms. Wells has a MLIS degree from the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign. **Kevin Roemer** is a graduate of the Illinois Institute of Design and Lead Developer at Strategia, a branding and web development company.

What is the plan of work for the project?

If CFA receives funding for this project, we will schedule a visit with consultant Bertram Lyons in February. Kevin Roemer, CFA's IT person will be in attendance as well as Nancy Watrous and Anne Wells. Lyons will meet and interview staff, listen to goals we have for the immediate future and two years out, and gather information regarding the digital environment at CFA. This will be done over one days time.

Bertram Lyons will then write an assessment of CFA's digital infrastructure and recommendations of actions to take around inventory control, format obsolescence, storage, workflows, file space requirements and other infrastructure issues to support CFA's particular needs and visions. Watrous, Wells and Roemer will be available for any discussions with Lyons as these documents are being created.

CFA would expect to receive these reports by spring of 2016.