



NDSR Project: Adapting Preservation Standards to Meet the Information Needs of Time-based Media Conservation

Goal Summary

The goal of this project is to use The Museum of Modern Art's new digital repository as a test-bed for serving the information needs, documentation practices, and preservation standards of media conservation in a manner compliant with international digital preservation standards. The project aims to produce deliverables that document workflows for physical media carriers and metadata, content standards, application profiles, ontologies and controlled vocabularies for actionable use in MoMA's digital repository. With this work, the repository and associated standards would be available for potential re-use by institutions stewarding similar collections.

Specific Objectives

To survey existing metadata standards/initiatives for the description of analog videotape and other tangible media carriers and their relationship to their digital masters.

To engage in the documentation, capture, and ingest of a set of collections materials.

Document gaps between currently implemented digital preservation standards and information needs within media conservation.

To provide recommendations for the application of existing standards, taxonomies, and controlled vocabularies that may bridge identified gaps.

To assist in developing taxonomies for breaking down the complex relationships between tangible media, dedicated equipment, and digital materials.

To research how MoMA's digital repository may facilitate preservation and access of born-digital conservation and artwork records produced by other areas of the Department of Conservation (i.e. sculpture, paintings, photography, paper).

Timeframe & Deliverables

Overall — 9 months

Months 1 through 3 — Orientation and research

- Introduction to the Museum, media conservation's responsibilities, and

the current workflows and systems for the cataloguing and preservation of MoMA's collection.

- Shadow Assistant Media Conservator on the capture and preservation of a subset of the Museum's single-channel analog videotape collection materials
- Test ingest and cataloging of single-channel works in digital repository, identifying gaps between employed standards and museum community's information needs and preservation requirements
- Research metadata standards that may meet gap

Months 4 through 6 — Hands-on testing and implementation pilots

- Adapt identified standards to application profile for MoMA's media conservation documentation needs
- In collaboration with Digital Repository Manager and mentor Ben Fino-Radin, design and test workflow that applies the recommended standards to a range of video and complex software-based works
- Begin documentation of proposal to Museum staff for the implementation of identified standards, application profiles, and workflows

Months 7 through 9 — Revision and formalization

- Consider how MoMA's digital repository may facilitate preservation and access of born-digital conservation records being produced by other areas of the conservation department (i.e. sculpture, paintings, photography, paper)
- Complete work on documenting the set of complex time-based media pieces within the collection, which include audio, film installations, video, and computer-based art
- Solicit feedback from mentors and MoMA staff on the identified workflow and methodologies
- Complete proposal for full implementation of identified strategy into media conservation's current workflow and present findings to key MoMA stakeholders

*Resources
Required*

2 mentors (Kate Lewis and Ben Fino-Radin), 1 Resident

MoMA will provide workspace and support to the resident in its midtown Manhattan offices. The resident will also work with members of MoMA's Media Working Group, which includes staff from the Conservation, Registrar, Curatorial, Exhibitions, Information Technology, and Audio Visual departments.

Context

MoMA has a long history of collecting and exhibiting time-based media art since its founding in 1929, as one of the first memory institutions of any kind to collect celluloid film. Time-based media art differs from other more "traditional" works in the collection in that it is dependent on technologies to be properly cared for and exhibited. The Museum's commitment to its historically significant and

expansive collection of works of this nature necessitated the creation of a media conservation team in 2007 to safeguard this material. In recent years, the team has grown considerably (from one media conservator to a group of three) to meet the needs and challenges presented by these artworks.

MoMA has necessarily begun to focus more attention on the care of its growing born-digital collection as artists have shifted significantly from working in the analog to the digital and the needs of analog works in the collection face various forms of obsolescence. Media conservation—collaborating with internal colleagues and other institutions grappling with similar questions about these collections (specifically through Matters in Media Art; a collaborative project between the New Art Trust and its partner museums: MoMA, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Tate)—began developing the functional requirements for a digital repository for time-based media artworks. MoMA is now in the final stages of development of an OAIS-based digital repository that employs the best practices established by the broader digital preservation community in libraries and archives, but also integrates the concepts, practices and needs of time-based media conservation. This unique system will meet a significant need within the museum community, not only for effective digital preservation, but conservation management for complex time-based media artworks. To that end, MoMA specifically built the repository as opensourced software and will make it publicly available for sister institutions.

The Museum anticipates the repository will be deployed this autumn, which would align well with the start of an NDSR residency and present an exciting opportunity for an emerging digital stewardship professional. The resident would work collaboratively with two mentors—Media Conservator Kate Lewis and Digital Repository Manager Ben Fino-Radin—and other MoMA staff to help identify where there may be gaps between the employed standards and the use cases and needs of conservation. This work is essential to providing a more effective tool both for MoMA, as well as other institutions that wish to adopt the system.

Required Knowledge and Skills for Resident

The successful resident will have a graduate degree in Library and Information Science, Audio Visual Preservation, or equivalent. Additionally, the successful candidate will have the following:

Specialized Knowledge:

- Analog and digital media preservation
- General knowledge and understanding of analog and digital video and audio formats
- Familiarity and understanding of ISO 14721:2003 (OAIS)

General Knowledge:

- Art history / contemporary art

*Preferred Knowledge or
Experience*

- PREMIS
- METS
- BagIt
- Python or similar scripting language(s)