

# Cataloguing artists' videos

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Artists' videos present some challenges to cataloguers. How to select the source of information, how to describe them in ways which will help library users to find them, and particularly how to facilitate subject access are matters addressed in this article. With reference to the artist's video collections at Goldsmiths, the author considers interpretations of the rules for cataloguing art documentation and moving image material and discusses how they can be applied to video works and art documentation from contemporary art practices.

## Cataloguing artists' videos

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Increasing numbers of artists make videos. In libraries such as that at Goldsmiths, University of London, where I work, and in art libraries in museums and galleries, artists' videos are being collected assiduously and demand from art students, lecturers and researchers is high, both for canonical artist's film and video and for contemporary work. Art videos may be produced as artist's videos, as art works, or they may be components of installations, documentation of performance or projects, or documentaries about artists including interviews and samples of their work. They are a rich source material for study, learning and research into artists and art practices.

This article is based on a presentation made to a group of art librarians from the UK Higher Education sector;<sup>1</sup> with some experience of cataloguing art documentation<sup>2</sup> they nevertheless found themselves presented with particular difficulties when cataloguing artist's videos and related items. The discussion which follows is based on AACR2 rules,<sup>3</sup> and LC rule interpretations.<sup>4</sup> The main chapter of AACR2r that addresses video cataloguing is Chapter 7 'Motion Pictures and Videorecordings'; Chapter 9 for computer files is used for CD-ROMS and some DVDs. Although these rules cover all kinds of moving image materials, art documentation has particular qualities that may cause consternation when we come to apply them.<sup>5</sup> I refer in this article to other helpful guidelines that have been produced by institutions and groups familiar with cataloguing moving image

material and which help to shed light on these problems. And I bring together interpretations of the rules for cataloguing art documentation and moving image material and apply them to video material from contemporary art practices and their documentation.

At Goldsmiths, we have around 20,000 videos and DVDs in our audio-visual collection; of these about 350 are indexed as 'video art'. We have been collecting from the early 1980s, but the collection has grown as we have been able to source more commercially published material since about 2000. The main library collection of mainstream films too is used by artists, to keep informed about visual conventions and for pleasure. In addition we have 250 artists' videos in the Women's Art Library/Make collection, most of which are unique to that collection.<sup>6</sup> The examples used in this article are from the Goldsmiths catalogue<sup>6</sup> and I have included comments on use of the collections and catalogue at Goldsmiths.

## What are the issues?

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When we think about cataloguing artists' videos, we should first identify what it is about them that makes cataloguing them a challenge. The source of information, artists as creators, titles, publication, formats and how to provide subject access all demand some diversion from the more well-documented guides to cataloguing mainstream film on video.

The video itself contains information which can

be used to compile the metadata record, but packaging may contain information too. Fortunately, in some ways, AACR2 is more flexible with regard to source of information for video and film materials than for some other items. The AACR2r rule for Motion pictures and videorecordings 7.0Ba says that, in general, this material should be catalogued from the title screen, if it has one, from the video itself, then from the container if that is an integral part of the item. Information for notes and areas other than title is often taken from the container and, failing that, from other sources. Many people catalogue from the container; if this is done, then it should be made clear in a general note, e.g., '500 ## a Catalogued from label/container/publisher's information'. A consequence of there being no title page as such may be that various titles and versions of titles, titles with advertising in them, etc. exist. The cataloguer may include, as appropriate: alternative titles or parallel title (e.g. title in another language), variant title (e.g. re-release title), translation or other title information (e.g. subtitle).

Because we are dealing with a visual genre, the artist or artists should be treated as responsible for the concept of the work. Standards for films and television assume that moving image works are collaborative works and that the chief access point will therefore be the title. AMIM2<sup>7</sup> states that 'the 'title proper' is the chief name of any moving image material and is the primary access point to the material'. And that 'Standard cataloguing practice for archival moving image material is to give the production company as the first statement of responsibility'. In this regard artists' videos are often exceptions, because they are primarily the work of an individual, who is responsible for the overall creation of the work. However, in many respects AMIM2 is relevant and helpful, especially in the notes referring to archival moving image collections and in pointing out that credits and their functions are synonymous with the concept of the statement of responsibility and so, for this reason, the 508 credit notes field can be used as an extension of the 245 \$c. AMIM2 is also good at disentangling statements of responsibility from other aspects of the description. It describes some more quirks the cataloguer may come across, such as possessive titles, when credits for the artist, performer, producer, etc. may precede or follow the title in the chief source, but should be distinguished from the title proper. However, sometimes the credit might be within the title, the credit might be a 'fanciful statement aping a credit' (AMIM2), or 'the credit is represented by a possessive immediately preceding the remainder of the title'. Other people involved in

different roles, for example in production or filming, are therefore included and indexed in the record.

How artists' videos are produced is significant because publication details may not be evident. An increasing number of artist's videos is being produced for commercial distribution – for example Lux<sup>8</sup>, EAI<sup>9</sup> and VDB<sup>10</sup> have extensive catalogues – but we can also acquire unpublished material, for example from people associated with the collecting institution. Many items in the Women's Art Library/Make collection are individual copies recorded by the artist and as libraries increasingly act as repositories for research output in practice-based fields such as visual art, more of this kind of material will become part of our collections. If they are unpublished, the cataloguer should not record a place and name, but simply a date (AACR2r 7.4C2 and 7.4D2). Off-air television broadcasts are also collected. Commercially published videos too pose some problems, for example when older works are produced in new formats. Bruce Nauman's *Stamping in the studio* was originally filmed in 1968, but was published on video in 2001 by Electronic Arts Intermix. In such cases the date of publication, distribution, release, etc. of a published item should be given in the 260 field. If the date of original production differs from the date of publication, distribution, etc., this may actually be of more interest to the researcher, and should be given as a 500 note (AACR2r 7.7B9).

As visual works, artists' videos share the conceptual problem of image indexing in that what they depict may not be what they are about, and subject headings for topics, or genre headings and free text descriptions, may be more helpful for people searching the catalogue. Artists using the collection will often prefer to search by browsing the shelves, using the image, title and text on the cover to choose which videos will be of interest to them. Including cover images in the catalogue would be an advantage, for such visual collections.

Video recordings are made on various media. It is necessary to describe both physical format and technical specifications, because this affects their use. Specific MARC21 header codes are required, so a different template may be set up. Depending on the individual automated system, part or all of the leader and directory, and some variable control fields, may be system-supplied. The GMD, to be included after the title (but this is optional) is '[videorecording]'. At Goldsmiths we do not include a GMD because collection codes indicate whether an item is a DVD or video.

Because different media have been used to hold videorecordings over the past 30 years or so, the

material description area of the catalogue record is strewn with different terms. AACR2r, 7.5B1 states that the term 'videocassette' is used in MARC 21 field 300a. Fortunately the 2004 revision of AACR2 7.5B1 seems to allow the use of 'DVD' in the physical description, saying

7.5B1. Record the number of physical units of a motion picture or videorecording by giving the number of parts in arabic numerals and one of [a given set] of terms as appropriate...

Although DVD is not one of these terms, it continues: 'Optionally, use a term in common usage to record the specific format of the physical carrier'. In practice, both the obsolete 'videodisc' and 'DVD' are often found in the 300 field in records downloaded from OCLC,<sup>11</sup> etc. The playing time is given in parentheses following, e.g. (4 min., 30 sec.). Aspect ratio and special projection characteristics, sound characteristics, colour, are given in field b, e.g. 'sd., b&w'. In good quality records, the dimensions of a videotape may be included, however there is a sort of precedent in other chapters of AACR2 where measurements are only given 'if other than the standard' (e.g. 6.5D5 on sound cassettes) as the format implies the size.

The OLAC *Guide to cataloging DVD and Blu-ray discs using AACR2r and MARC 21* is a clear and helpful guide to cataloguing DVDs,<sup>12</sup> particularly those that are enhanced. Because it deals with AACR2r Chapter 9 for computer files as well as Chapter 7, it clearly distinguishes between their requirements. Some DVDs contain additional material needing the use of a computer. The guide advises that the predominant component of the DVD can be identified as the film itself ... therefore one should catalog enhanced DVDs as videos. It also advises that 'Equipment needed for the computer portion of enhanced DVDs is included in a note borrowed from AACR2r Chapter 9, either as part of the DVD 538 or as an additional 538'. The code for regions of the world is explained here, too. Extensive advice on identifying developing formats and media is given.

AACR2r also recommends that notes on the physical description are made when appropriate. These include the 538 field for 'system requirements' (VHS would appear here, and computer requirements for DVD or CD-ROMs intended to be viewed on a computer). 500 notes are used for other aspects such as special features and/or additional material included on a DVD. The UCLA Film and Television Archive Cataloging Procedure Manual<sup>13</sup> includes an 'extensive glossary of terms for

use in the physical description of archival moving image materials' which could be put in 538 or 500 if relevant to catalogue users. This manual's section 5 gives guidance on describing television programmes.

## How can cataloguers facilitate subject access?

The simplest representation of the requirements for a catalogue record is described by the Library of Congress/Program for Cooperative Cataloging's *Core bibliographic record for moving image materials*.<sup>14</sup> The mandatory fields are: title; publication/distribution date; physical description; subject access field/s.

An artist's name is the thing that most catalogue users are likely to search for and which they find a reliable term. Art works are usually the work of an individual subject, and the artist will usually appear as the main author. If not, or if several artists are involved, added name entries can be used, in both 600 (person as subject) and 700 (person as author/creator) fields.

Topical subject headings from LCSH<sup>15</sup> such as 'Video art' or 'Performance art' can be used. Alternative tactics for providing subject access to film and video materials exist; these are 'genre-form' headings and textual summary notes.

Genre studies is a theoretically-developed system for identifying types of moving image works that is used by scholars and filmmakers as well as archivists. The Library of Congress, Motion Picture/Broadcasting/Recorded Sound Division, *Moving image genre-form guide* (MIGG)<sup>16</sup> lists genre-form headings and describes their use, so can be a helpful aid to access:

Genres contain conventions of narrational strategy and organizational structure, using similar themes, motifs, settings, situations, and characterizations.

The appendix includes sublists on experimental film, animation and advertising which are particularly relevant to art collections. At Goldsmiths we have used local keywords to note genres and have found these useful for broad searches.

Students are likely to search the catalogue for complex themes, such as a search for performance art in, or outside, museums which addresses the commodification of the cultural experience provided by those institutions. In order to attempt to provide material in the catalogue which would provide

relevant results for this kind of search, we can use a 520 summary note. This can 'contain useful information that cannot be incorporated into other areas of the description' (AMIM 7A4). In Stephen Johnstone and Graham Ellard's work *Passagen*, the summary note is taken from the pamphlet accompanying the CD-ROM:

*Passagen* traces a series of pathways through Paris, London and Berlin, taking as the starting point Walter Benjamin's use of the metaphors of panoramic vision and the labyrinth in his *Passagenwerk*. ... (F)uses the pre-cinematic spectacle of the panorama and the post-photographic technology of digital media.

This text contains a range of helpful keywords used in the literature of visual culture and art criticism. Quotation marks are used, 'Quotations – give these in quotation marks. Follow them by an indication of its source, unless that source is the item itself' (AMIM2 7A3).

Video art is frequently made available with accompanying material, which should be described in the 300 field. Compilations of works or excerpts require contents notes to aid retrieval by work

name, and artists' names. A formatted contents note (505:?) should be supplied for 'collections, compilations, or for any multi-part work' (LC/PCC, see also AACR2r 7.7B18, contents note). Multiple-disc sets containing different titled works should also be listed in a formatted contents note (AACR2r 7.7B18). Series entries at 490 and 830 can provide an 'if you liked that, you might like this' effect and should be included.

A complement of added entries should be made to cover at least the primary relationships associated with the work. Artists teaching at Goldsmiths who have deposited their work in the library have been concerned that all the people they worked with, i.e. all contributors to a work, are indexed in the catalogue. 'Credits and cast can be given in a note (511 participant or performer note, or 508 credits note), if they do not appear in the statement of responsibility or the contents note' (AACR2, 7.7B6). These notes can be used to elucidate roles more clearly: 'When recording notes which further describe data elements already found in the catalog record, follow that sequence wherever possible' AMIM2 7A3. MIGG comments that such added entries might include 'added entry for the director of a film, related work entry for an adaptation of a



NEED IMAGE

Graham Ellard and Stephen Johnstone. *Passagen*, (Electric art). London: Ellipsis, 1997. CD-ROM, boxed + 1v. (45 p., ill., col.: 15 cm.) + postcard.

dramatic work, related work entry/ies for works of music or dance if the works of music or dance are closely related to the content and purpose of the moving image work'. This comment would apply in the example of *Passagen* given above, where a related title should be used to associate the work with Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-werk*.

Search methods remain unsatisfactory though. An artist/researcher commented that results (from the catalogue) were often too many or they were books, and suggested that if, further to literary description, the audio-visual collection was also catalogued in terms of visual excerpts (still or moving) that were arranged in subjects that would be a more visual way to search. She recognized that of course the arrangement/cataloguing of the images in subjects would be prone to interpretation of the film.

## Using generic standards and addressing local needs

In a local context cataloguers may need to provide basic records quickly, or to provide access on the basis of specialised knowledge, or to produce extensive, good quality records for unique materials. In a wider context, standards for cataloguing are changing and cataloguing is becoming a dynamic process.<sup>17</sup> New cataloguing guidelines such as Cataloguing Cultural Objects<sup>18</sup> and Resource Description and Access (RDA) are more generic and flexible than previous editions of AACR. This new standard was designed for the digital environment, to provide more consistency across different formats and media and incorporate FRBR (Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records) concepts of relationships between expression and manifestation, work and item.<sup>19</sup> When RDA is introduced, it will be necessary to review how artists' videos are catalogued.

Artists' videos may be visual artists' time-based work, which may operate by using qualities of sound, movement and light, they may be recordings of events, they may be cinematic narratives or they may create other kinds of experience. The exact relationship of the video recording to the art work may be subtle and significant. There may be other related forms of documentation of the same art work. Ideally, some description of the relationships between expressions of a work would be included in the catalogue record but until FRBR-ised catalogues are available, comments on versions and their relationships will be found predominantly in the notes field.

There are many sources of advice on cataloguing artists' videos. Records for videos and DVDs are increasingly available on OCLC, and also from Z39.50 sources. Local procedures can to some extent be based on local needs and practicalities, so cataloguers should decide what procedures to follow, based on standards, and document any local decisions or interpretations where they differ from those standards.

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