

An Experiential Curriculum in Media Archiving and Preservation

Summary: The University of Colorado Boulder Libraries' Collections of Distinction and Department of Cinema Studies and Moving Image Arts request \$482,667 for the creation and implementation of a course curriculum and internship program for graduate and undergraduate students in Media Archiving and Preservation. This program will expand on existing courses in film preservation to introduce students to the theories and practices of archiving and preserving time-based media in both analog and digital formats. These specialized skills are increasingly in demand in cultural heritage professions, where the survival of archival media is imperiled by the rapid obsolescence of technology and the well-documented rate of deterioration for photographic and magnetic media. Though an existing annual budget of \$198,020 has covered the cost of relevant staff and faculty within Cinema Studies, the requested funds will expand curriculum course offerings by University Libraries' archivists. Media Preservation students will receive intensive practical training with archival materials in the University Libraries' Collections of Distinction, contributing directly to the preservation, description, and enhanced accessibility of the CU Boulder Archives' diverse historical media. Additionally, a community-oriented internship program will provide media preservation students with self-directed professional projects, while serving the needs of public institutions and community heritage organizations throughout Colorado's Front Range.

Statement of Broad Need: The pace of technological advancement in the 20th century has left libraries, museums, and archival repositories with a critical mass of analog film, video, and audio objects, often in physical formats that are quickly deteriorating. At the same time, digital media technologies for moving image production are equally prone to decay and obsolescence, and the volume of born-digital media entering archives since the early 2000s demands immediate attention and a dedicated set of skills. The faculty, equipment, and moving image collections at the University of Colorado Boulder offer a unique environment for introducing undergraduate and graduate students to the skills and professional standards of moving image archivists and preservationists, to meet the growing demand for professionals trained in archiving and preserving analog and digital media.

This curriculum of courses will be the only program of its kind in the state of Colorado and the Rocky Mountain region. The program will enable students from CU Boulder's Department of Cinema Studies to combine their critical, historical, and theoretical study of cinema and visual arts with intensive training in film, video, audio, and born-digital media preservation and curation within the CU Boulder Libraries' collections, as an experiential introduction to the field of media archivism. The program will also open elective courses for undergraduate and graduate students from many other relevant disciplines, including media studies, history, and art history, who are also inclined toward careers in archivism and librarianship. The curriculum will expand the media and digital literacy skills of these students in ways that are vitally important in archival and heritage professions, yet rarely covered in traditional MLIS training programs.

Project Design: The Media Archiving and Preservation curriculum builds on the strengths of the University of Colorado Boulder Libraries and the Department of Cinema Studies and Moving Image Arts. Cinema Studies' moving image preservation lab, established in 2017, includes both a state-of-the-art archival film scanner and digital-to-film printer. In 2018, the Department hired professor Sabrina Negri, a preservation specialist with extensive training and professional experience in the field, who has piloted a widely popular course in Film Preservation for several semesters. Concurrently, the University Libraries' Collections of Distinction, which includes over 50,000 linear feet of archival material, hired its first Moving Image Archivist in 2019 to develop a dedicated program for the identification, description, and preservation of their nearly 10,000 analog film and video items.

The proposed curriculum will include five 3-credit courses, designed to introduce the theories, practices, and curatorial and ethical principles of the archival discipline through seminars, invited speakers, site visits, written and oral presentations and assignments, and intensive hands-on training in both analog and digital preservation of time-based media. The course sequence will include Intro to Film Archiving and

Preservation, Audio and Video Media Preservation, Archiving and Preservation of Born-Digital Artifacts, Moving Image Collection Management, Moving Image Preservation Practices, and a guided research thesis in service to the advancement of the field. Instructors include Cinema Studies faculty and preservation lab staff, the CU Boulder Libraries' Moving Image Archivist and Digital Archivist, and a visiting professorship from practicing media preservation professionals. Courses will be designed to fulfill degree requirements in the Cinema Studies BA and MFA programs, and to serve as electives for related degree programs.

In addition to classroom instruction, the program will allow for semester-long archiving and preservation internship projects, both within the CU Boulder Libraries' Archives and in other cultural heritage organizations in Colorado's Front Range. Modeled on contemporary MLIS practicum programs, internship projects will provide students with experiential, self-directed learning opportunities to process and preserve physical collections, create descriptive resources, digitize material, and make material accessible to patrons through digital collections, digital exhibits, or other means. At the same time, students trained in the specialized skills of media preservation will help to meet the needs of under-resourced repositories and organizations, with guidance from CU Boulder Libraries in building trusting and collaborative community partnerships.

Diversity Plan: This curriculum program is developed in an effort to recruit, train, and empower a more diverse generation of media archivists. Through experiential class projects and community-focused internships, students will directly contribute to the collection and preservation of underrepresented cultural heritage material from across the state, with particular attention to indigenous, Latinx, and Black histories.

The University of Colorado Boulder and College of Arts and Sciences and the CU Boulder Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are devoted to the recruitment and support of diversity in the student body. The Department of Cinema Studies and Moving Image Arts also has a demonstrated commitment to teaching film history, theory, and production from a global and interdisciplinary perspective, attracting over 850 undergraduate students and graduate students each year with courses that include women and gender studies, science and anthropology, indigenous studies, and the cinemas of Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, Mexico, Central America, and the Arab world. At the same time, the CU Boulder Libraries' Collections of Distinction has a formal commitment to the stewardship of a diverse and inclusive historical record, by prioritizing underrepresented voices in collection development, processing and digitization priorities, instruction, and outreach. For this program, the Archives will leverage relationships with diverse community and professional organizations in the Front Range to identify collaborative internship project opportunities for media preservation students that meet the needs of under-resourced repositories and community groups.

Broad Impact: Between 2021 and 2024, we will pilot a curriculum of courses in media archiving and preservation at the University of Colorado Boulder, as well as a guided thesis and community-oriented internship program for media preservation students, to directly serve the needs of under-resourced heritage organizations in Colorado. In 2024, participating faculty in the CU Boulder Libraries' Archives and Department of Cinema Studies will collaborate on a white paper and conference presentation reporting on the process of developing the program and offering replicable guidance on integrating experiential archives and preservation training into diverse undergraduate humanities curricula. In the long term, we aim to develop a generation of new professional specialists to preserve and curate the nation's imperiled media and digital history and to enter the cultural heritage profession with the practical, theoretical, and ethical knowledge to advance the field of media preservation toward greater innovation, diversity, and inclusivity.

Budget summary: CU Boulder Libraries and Department of Cinema Studies request \$482,667 for a 3-year grant, including \$216,000 in salary and wages, \$57,420 in fringe benefits, \$40,000 in student support costs, and \$169,247 in indirect costs. The University of Colorado Boulder will provide \$594,060 in matching funds, covering \$474,000 in salary and wages and \$120,060 in fringe benefits.