Methodology of education and forms of scientific collaboration using audiovisual archives in multidisciplinary environment

Our research project is focused on the mutual exchange of discourse concerning audiovisual documents between various scientific communities. It studies the collaboration using advanced software collaboration tools, publishing archive interfaces, opening institutional processes to another participants and allowing access to internal audiovisual information sources. Different annotation types used in archives make the exchange of produces among scientists, science adepts, educators and audiovisual industry possible.

The cooperation between education and research nowadays does not consist of conveying "completed" knowledge, but lies in the ability to share it in the process of its formation enabling dialogue and interpretation between various fields. Consequently, new knowledge is gained as well as more effective problem solutions. The objective is to find such a combination of technologies and methodology of work which would facilitate the development of unique capabilities and interests while reinforcing the meaning of collaboration and communication as such in a heterogenous community.

This can be achieved through quantitative and qualitative analysis of existing Czech and international archives and identifying suitable combination of tools that will reinforce the aforementioned components – partly formation of individual space for preserving knowledge of individual participants and its processing as well as creation of a virtual community – a social network as a collaborative space.

Audiovisual archives with advanced communication infrastructure are a rapidly developing instrument whose singular potential within the field of education has not been sufficiently explored yet. Our research aims to select the best available on-line technologies for scientific collaboration concerning audiovisual content, and research of specific types, such as function for annotation of audiovisual content and personal knowledge management. These methods are not usually accessible, and are in the development phase in special systems. The majority of scientific archives is still developed in form of databases and is primarily utilised when searching for material. The blueprint for our archive is a shared space for research that can be utilised by students, educators, curators, critics, scientists, programmers and so on, wherein the interpolated material will be invariably enriched by collectively created context.

This approach determines the hitherto unchartered area of research. The research as such is also interdisciplinary because it incorporates various fields including mass media, cinema studies, pedagogy, informatics and law. Provided that the selected approach proves successful, it will not only raise interest in scientific work but also help facilitate new scientific fields and specializations.

Centre of Audiovisual Studies FAMU

The Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU) is a leading film school and academic institution that facilitates learning, artistic practice, reasearch and other related fields in both theory and practice. The catalyst and inspiration for these activites are artistic and intellectual creative works that have spawned the development of national and international culture within audiovision and photography.

The study programmes at FAMU provide its students with education and stimulate development, creativity and experimentation. The school's alumni will be able to continuously transform the exisiting practice as well as create their own work; in the doctoral study foster theoretical reflexion and research in the areas of audiovisual creation.

A team of researches based at the Centre of Audiovisual Studies (CAS) is participating at the research project. This research and pedagogical department is the centre of historical and theoretical synthesis of study programmes that are taught at the Faculty. Apart from pedagogical activity in the areas of theory and history of photography, cinematography and audiovisual media, the Centre represents the transposition of knowledge in between these fields in particular, and their effect on the society at large. Among its objectives is also the development of a methodology in teaching audiovision at other schools of all types, and creation of general communication schemes suitable for collaboration based on audiovisual tools.

Another ongoing project that is based at CAS is Hyperkino led by Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship researcher Nataša Drůbková. The project interconnects text-based criticism with innovative hypermedia technologies. It combines traditional principles of annotation with digital technologies and their descriptive languages using hypertext principles of commentary on the film medium. The objective of research is, among others, to develop a standard for academic releases of annotated films on DVD's.

FAMU Studio

The Studio has traditionally provided students of FAMU with a facility that fosters tuition and creation. The building, where the whole FAMU faculty was located previously, is renowned for its history and hence has witnessed the development of creators, cinematic technologies and Czech cinema per se. Inevitably also television came later and both film and TV found refuge within the premises of the Studio, successfully coexisting in the tuition framework.

In 1964, FAMU as the first school in the world obtained its own television technology – the vidicon tube studio. Between 1972 – 82, it was the black and white super orticon transistor device; in the years 1983–86 the colour device in BVU format. Currently, the Studio utilizes the DigiBETA digital technology. Since 2008, the technologic chain for archiving and streaming is seated in the Studio, with data storage designed to carry several years of production that is ongoing here in various formats – from professional broadcasting quality to web previews with low dataflow. From this storage, student films streams are accessible with other educational audiovisual material within the whole computer network of the Academy of Performing Arts, so they can be utilized in seminars and lecture halls as well as in the individual study.

The Association for Perfmance and Publishing in Digital Media, o.s.

The non-profit civic and legal entity association is focused on digital media within Czech culture. It supports the realization of audiovisual performances, installations and interactive environments predominantly utilizing media digitally processed in real time. It creates digital recordings and documentation of current audiovisual production and important historical cinematic works reaching public by publishing DVDfs and other media, internet streaming and electronic publishing in the aforementioned areas, gathering collections in digital archives and making them accessible.

The association helps organize specialist meetings focused on digital media, conducts research in this area as well as standardization. Among its objectives is the improvement of communication, collaboration and mutual exchange between various fields and forms of cultural usage of digital media as a specific expression of humanity in present era and social acceptance of digital media as an original and significant part of our culture and a bridge to other cultures.

Michal Klodner

Graduated in Informatics at the Brno University of Technology in 1999 with a Master thesis entitled "Information Structures of Visual Communication". The thesis dealt with various ways of signifying imaginative and associative processes of visual communication through grammatical systems. At the Office of the Government of CR, he participated on the introduction of website publication system, preparation of information system for e-Government and organizational changes concerning using semantic documents and direct publishing on the world wide web. He is currently based at the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague where he works on the development of a film archive at the FAMU Studio and also undertakes the doctoral programme focusing on media typology and the structural study of changes in their information and emotional languages in various semiotic spaces. The representation of knowledge in networks of semantically interconnected text-based, graphic and audiovisual information together with people and patterns of (self) organization of knowledge and social networks, which subsequently trigger the inception of ecosystems and organisms, are among his current areas of academic and professional interest.

Lenka Dolanová

Studied Art History at the Faculty of Philosophy & Arts, Charles University in Prague (1997–2004), since 2006 PhD. Student at Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague. Her thesis deals especially with the cultural and technological aspects of electronic arts avant–gardes. In 2005–2006 Fulbright researcher at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Host editor of a special issue of Iluminace journal dedicated to the work of Woody Vasulka (2/2006). Writes for specialized and non–specialized journals (Iluminace, Umělec, Týdeník A2 and others). Conference talks: re:place 2007, Second International Conference of the Histories of Media, Art, Science and Technology, 2007 Berlin; X. Czecho–Slovak Film Conference, 2006, Poněšice. Co–author of video documentary and website "It's Fun to Be Bohemian" (2005–today). Co–organizer of the discussion series "From Analogue to Digital", 2008, Institute of Intermedia. Presently completing book on Woody Vasulka. Lives in Smíchov neighborhood in Prague and is inhabitant of Víska village in east Bohemia.

Lucia Udvardyová

A Charles University Master graduate in the field of Media and Communications, Electronic Culture and Semiotics specifically. The title of the MA thesis was "Sampling – From Regression to Transgression in Listening" and dealt with the dichotomy of production and consumption, placing the emphasis on the gradual transformation of theoretical paradigms that accentuated the inherent passivity of consumers (Frankfurt School), to active consumers (French literary theory, Birmingham School, new media theory). The theretical milieu of active vs. passive consumption ("prosumers" as agents of change) is the crux of my theoretical interest in the area of audiovisual archives, in particular the increasingly fluid threshold between active consumption, prosumerism and production that has been omnipresent since the arrival of web 2.0 and user-generated content.

Woody Vasulka

Belongs to the first generation of researchers in analogue video, is author of audiovisual performances, creator video installations, moving images using analogue and digital tools or the combinations, robotic installations operating at the border between virtual 3D and actual, physical space. Studied documentary film at and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, in 1965 with his Icelandic wife Steina emigrated to the USA, where in New York in 1971 co-founded "electronic media theater" The Kitchen. In 1973 – 1979 lectured in Centre for Media Study at SUNY in Buffalo. Co-curator of the exhibition "Eigenwelt der Apparatenwelt: Pioniere der Elektronischen Kunst" for Ars Electronica festival in Linz, Austria (1992), dedicated to the tools of early video makers. Co-author of the project "Art and Science Laboratory" (1999) at College of Santa Fe (with David Dunn and James Crutchfield). Co-curator of the exhibition "MindFrames. Media Study at Buffalo 1973 – 1990" (2006–2007) for ZKM in Karlsruhe. Dedicated archivist of experimental film and video art (e.g. OASIS project).

Platform for people and activities converging towards audiovisual archives

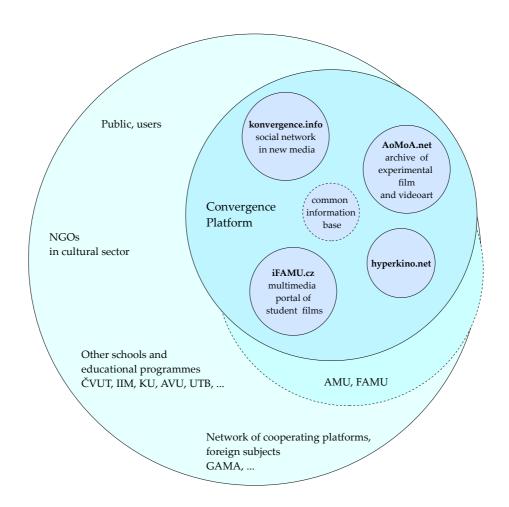
Convergence Platform is a shared on-line platform for extensive internet projects, inter-university and extra university communication and collaboration and implementation of free software into a complex system for content management. The system possesses a block functionality; the individual projects consist of components that are mutually developed within the platform as a whole.

Current utility components include user profiles including blogs, personal information facility, notes accompanying text, video, discussion, comments, collaboration utilities, project management, various search methods, etc. Unlimited modifiability of content categories (metadata structures) and presentation design is suitable for emerging projects.

Why this platform in particular? In the Czech Republic it is necessary to further develop a good information and communication infrastracture between them. This is not possible with small separate websites, administered for only a limited amount of time which remain in their first development phase and are updated sporadically without enabling outsiders to participate on the process of their formation. We do not want to constantly overcome limitations such as information ownership and organisational bureaucracy that is encountered when accessing it, which subsequently hampers active cooperation and further phases of knowledge aggregation in a wider context.

Convergence reflects the development of social technologies, propensities towards sharing of content and involvement of users into production. The project is sufficiently extensive to be able to provide a thorough array of instruments for on-line collaboration which is specific in its focus. The development of individual websites in return enhances other websites; all the input content can be shared between the various websites; archives can be integrated and more extensive units comparable with foreign ones created. These units can become important partners in international collaboration. What is more, it is enough to have one user account for all the participating websites, the inter-connection thus facilitates a synergy effect of a social network and convergent activities across various specializations that would not be possible on individual websites.

The technology is administered by the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts (FAMU). The platform is based on open standards and free software. It can provide or accept content through XML, RSS and SOAP formats, and is fully documented and replicable on other servers. It the framework of the project Mobility and Sharing of On-line Resources, which defines operational parametres, it can be hardware independent and utilize external resources.



Archive of experimental film and video art

The archive Art-of-Memory-of-Art (AoMoA) to an extent draws from the archiving activities of The Vasulkas (Steina and Woody) and is focused on the context of origin and development of video art and experimental film since the 1960s. It contains heterogeneous audiovisual material, in particular moving images, texts, photos, drawings, sketches, sound files and documentation of the artists' tools. Its objective is to become a platform for interdisciplinary research, whose structure will be modified by user interaction; a space for collaboration of an international team of scientists, researchers, students, pedagogues and artists and a resource for developing communication based on shared interests.

The aim is to develop a structure that would be most suitable for interconnecting diverse materials and which would include collaborative tools for an international team of curators discussing the structure and content of the archive. The basis of the archive is formed by the works assembled for the exhibition MindFrames in Karlsruhe, ergo the works by the artists working at the MediaStudy in Buffalo in the period 1973 – 1990 (Steina and Woody Vasulkas, Paul Sharits, Hollis Frampton, Tony Conrad, Peter Weibel, James Blue, Gerald O'Grady), which will be gradually complemented by additional material from The Vasulkas archive. The archive will be also expanded with the material documenting the development of Czech and European experimental film and video art of the same period, and interconnected with other European audiovisual archives. Another objective is to search for parallels with contemporary audiovisual works which are related to the given context.

The historical image memory can resemble a fluid space composed of interconnected and interchangeable images-objects that are floating in the desert landscape in the video masterpiece Art of Memory (1987) by Woody Vasulka, after which this archive was named.

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