

Report to AFS for Short-Term Consultancy, Dutch Hop Film Documentary Project: Developing Plan to Prepare Video Materials for Deposit to Archives

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Boulder Community Media (BCM) has for the past three years been involved with the production of a documentary film on Dutch Hop, the polka tradition unique to descendants of the Germans from Russia who immigrated to northeastern Colorado, southeastern Wyoming, and western Nebraska. It still is a living, breathing, (stomping) tradition in those areas. Organizations collaborating with BCM on this project are the Wyoming Arts Council, Nebraska Folklife Network, and Sageland Media. Folklorists working on the effort are Anne Hatch (producer and advisor), Chris Simon (director and principal filmmaker), Gwen Meister (advisor), and Georgia Wier (associate producer and advisor).

Benefits of Consultancy

As a result of this consultancy sponsored by the American Folklore Society, our video production team took several steps that helped form a plan for preparing our video footage and related materials for archival deposit: 1) developed a method for logging video footage and other digital images collected, 2) created a plan for producing short segments of each filmed interview to be featured on the archives website, 3) timed processes required to do the logging described above (thus enabling us to budget funds for this work), 4) began the process that will lead to the completion of our formal donation agreement with the archival repository for our video materials, 5) developed good communication channels with the archival staff at the archival repository for the Dutch Hop documentary video footage and 6) established contact other professional consultants associated with the Library of Congress. We hope that the progress we made can serve as a guide to others in our field who plan to donate their video documentary materials to archival repositories.

Recognizing Our Needs

We had already made the arrangement for copies all film footage, as well as copies of the family photos and home movies we collect, to be deposited into the Special Collections at Colorado State University (CSU). Janet Bishop (Associate Professor and Coordinator of Special Archives there) and other interested members of the university community are enthusiastic about our planned donation as an addition to their existent German Russian materials. Because CSU is the largest university in eastern Colorado and has long had clout among our rural German Russian constituents as an agricultural college, the Dutch Hop dancers and musicians who have played, danced, and been interviewed for the film also are excited about this institutional connection. They have expressed interest in eventually visiting the University archives and viewing themselves playing, dancing, and/or talking.

Our immediate archival need was to develop a plan for preparing our materials for deposit into the archives. We have over 120 hours of raw film footage, hundreds of still photographs taken during our shoots, and an even greater quantity of scanned copies of historical family photos. We also have a few copies of Dutch Hop enthusiasts' home movies and dance footage produced by other documentarians—at least two of which are of Dutch Hop weddings!

Developing, Testing, and Timing our Process

Because I had initiated and maintained our connection with the CSU archive, the Dutch Hop film team requested that I conduct the research for this project. We decided that the obvious person whose help to seek was John Bishop, a filmmaker who has worked extensively with the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress in documentary projects and who has prepared his own footage for deposit into those two institutions. John was particularly appropriate as the choice for this consulting work because he had served as a guest videographer for a Dutch Hop interview conducted for this project in Oregon. Throughout the five months of this consultation project, John and I communicated electronically and had three in-person meetings.

As our test case, we used materials from the Oregon interview that John had filmed. I created a log in which I listed actions (such as the interviewee playing three instruments and recordings) and summarized the interview content. At John's suggestion, I included song titles when possible. In addition to reviewing my log for this sample interview, John suggested inclusions important for our dance & music video footage including 1) location, names of dance band and all musicians, 2) identification of as many dancers as possible (using their physical characteristics or clothing as ID markers), 3) as many song titles as possible. John also recommended including the videographer's notes for each filming event when making the donation to the archives.

Along with the main Oregon video footage, I prepared the following related materials for donation: 1) a set of scanned images of family and other Dutch Hop-related photographs, 2) one historic wedding film and two video interviews conducted about 20 years ago with acclaimed Dutch Hop musicians by the Oregon interviewee himself, and 3) still images taken before and after the Oregon interview. For new and old still images I created photo logs and for the older video footage I created brief summaries.

A critical element of this project was to figure out the time required to prepare the video materials for donation. I discovered that it took 2 ½ hours to log one hour of interview video footage, counting some identification of song titles and research on spellings of German words, etc. I found that logging the still images (scanned historical photographs or original contemporary photographs) took about 2 hours for a set of 43 (counting some name spelling checks, etc). One more part of my task was to provide a short summary or log for the historic film or video footage. I

found that I could produce this document in the same amount of time that it took me to view it (one hour of footage=one hour of processing).

Visiting the Archives

My trip to visit the Special Collections at Colorado State University (CSU) proved extremely useful. Janet Bishop arranged a tour of the facilities and meetings with archival staff who will be involved in processing and using the Dutch Hop materials, including Mark Shelstad, Coordinator for Digital Collection Services. It was clear that the archives had the institutional support to maintain a large digital collection and that the staff had both technical expertise and the commitment to assure the collection's preservation and access. It was also exciting to see examples of other related materials to show how the collection could be featured on the archives website.

Janet said that my sample video and photo logs looked completely satisfactory for the library's needs. Janet also described ways that the library could offer access to the collection. She explained that the CSU archives, like many in this country, emphasized access to collections as well as preservation. I confirmed with Janet our intention that all of the video footage would be available to researchers who visited the library in person. We also began a discussion of what portion of the footage would be placed online. Janet showed me other CSU library collections in which complete video oral history interviews are streamed online, but she also proposed the alternative of preparing about 10 minutes of footage from each interview for posting.

I traveled the short distance from Greeley (where I stayed while in Colorado) to Cheyenne, WY, where I met with Annie to discuss what I had learned at CSU and what Janet had proposed. Both Annie and Chris liked the idea of having our edited interview segments available online. Our filmmaking team also discussed providing the archives with short edited segments of the dance/music events. Upon hearing our plan, John Bishop said that that a 10-minute interview segment would be very appealing to the website users.

As a time saving method, I proposed that I choose segments to include on the online posts while logging the video footage. Using my test interview footage, I discovered that it would take an extra 45 minutes while logging each hour of video footage. We therefore know now that the total time required to log the footage and select segments to use would be 3 ¼ hours per hour of footage.

Recognizing Next Steps

As an addition to the original scope of the project and before my trip to Colorado, our video team members began a discussion about the deed of gift form for Archives and Special Collections of Colorado State University. We knew that amendments would be necessary but needed help on deciding what they should

be. Georgia consulted with John to find out about his previous archival arrangements and his suggestions for us. One issue we needed to address was how to limit use of the actual video footage while allowing access by the archives and the public. John suggested the phrase, ““People wishing to license footage should contact the donor,” meaning “If you’re going to publish part of film, you need permission to do so.”

John also suggested that I contact the American Folklife Center (AFC) at the Library of Congress for its folklife staff recommendations. During a conference call, AFC folklife specialists Guha Shankar and Todd Harvey explained that the most unusual aspect of donating folklife materials to an archive was that a portion of the copyright remains with the “community of origin” (as the creators of the art form) and other parts remain with the filmmakers. (They noted that the release form we used for our video project addressed this issue with the phrase “by giving your permission, you do not give up any copyright or performance rights that you may hold.) Guha and Todd also began explaining fair use as it applies to video materials and suggested options for possible specifications about copyright changes after the time when the filmmaker/donors are not living or available.

By phone and while visiting CSU in person, Janet and I discussed donation agreement alternatives. Janet explained the importance of our agreement not becoming so complex that the collection would be difficult for her current staff and her successors to manage. I shared several issues related to the archival agreement with my filmmaker colleagues. All parties agreed that we needed to spend more time and to communicate carefully with each other in crafting an agreement that will serve the needs of the filmmakers, the Dutch Hop community, and the archives. Because we are working toward completing the documentary in the fall of 2016 and plan to make the archival donation afterwards, luckily we have ample time for this important work.