

***Community Archiving Workshop -  
On the way to preserving DCTV productions***

**4 November 2015** - The *Community Archiving: Media Collections* class, supervised by Associate Arts Professor Mona Jimenez in collaboration with DCTV – the Downtown Community Television Center- organized a workshop in their office space in downtown Manhattan in order to archive part of DCTV media collections. Jimenez is part of the Moving Image Archiving and Preservation Program (MIAP) at New York University, and students were from MIAP, Cinema Studies and Latin America and Caribbean Studies.

The goal was to make an inventory of documentaries (and their production elements) that DCTV has been producing since the creation of the media center in 1972. Keiko Tsuno, co-founder of the DCTV explains: "We had not time or power to really start the archiving process (...) the workshop will help us thinking about the future of our productions."

**A collaborative work between experts and volunteers**

The event gathered around 25 people, both experts and those who had never been involved in the archiving process in the past. Another particularity of the event was that it brought together people from all over the world (USA (including the mainland and Puerto Rico), Mexico, Uruguay, Ecuador, Spain, Iceland, France, Serbia, Taiwan and Australia), providing an interesting intercultural perspective. A team of five people were in charge of documenting the event through pictures, videos and texts.

After a short training conducted by some of the students, the group gathered around four different tables and worked for five hours archiving diverse video formats (mainly Betacam and Mini-DV). They began by assigning a new barcode identifier to each item and its container. For each item, information such as content and condition were added to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. A template for the Excel spreadsheets was prepared by the organizational team in order to create a controlled vocabulary that would serve as a basis for the inventory process.

In total, 258 videos were inspected, inventoried, and re-boxed into 14 boxes. In another room, five of the collections were directly re-boxed and information about the box contents were entered into a different spreadsheet.

In the middle of the afternoon, the group took a break, after which Catherine Martinez, DCTV Managing Director introduced a short selection of DCTV media collections and explained the history of these productions. All of them document social events and stories that are rarely seen on mainstream TV networks. Among the videos shown were excerpts from the Emmy Award winner *Third Avenue: Only the Strong Survive* - a milestone cinema verité documentary that tells the stories of six "ordinary" people who lived or worked along New York City's Third Avenue in the late 1970s.

## **New skills and hopes for the future**

The volunteers gained new skills in archiving and a better understanding of part of the processes that institutional archivists carry out every day. Mona Jimenez stated: "In this event, we are demystifying the process in archiving and sharing the skills to preserve the work (...) this is our social history, this is what people will be looking for – scholars, educators, students. They need to be able to access to this kind of information." Many of the volunteers expressed their interest in DCTV productions and in using the work for their research or in their teaching practice. Others wished to repeat the experience and to gain more skills in the processes of archiving and preservation.

## **What's next?**

To promote the project, the documentation team has put together a set of pictures, texts written by some of the participants, and a video.

A follow-up activity was held on December 9th to present the results of the project to DCTV staff and to continue the box-level inventory of the rest of the collection. Following these first steps, DCTV is going to prioritize the collections taking into consideration content and condition, and will apply for grants programs in order to start preserving some of the work through digitization.

Through upcoming *Community Archiving: Media Collections classes*, events such as this one will continue to raise awareness of the importance of preserving these independent media collections that remain one of the most precious parts of the history of our communities.

– Leonard Cortana