

FOCAL POINT

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THE LATEST EDITION OF FOCALPOINT

We're delighted to welcome you to the next edition of **FOCALPoint**, your go-to source for insights and inspiration from across the footage and archive community and latest updates from FOCAL.

In this issue, we shine a spotlight on the prestigious FOCAL Awards, celebrating the extraordinary talent and creativity in our industry. We also extend a warm welcome to Helen Walker from Reuters Screenocean, one of our new Executive Directors, who joins us in this edition of our ongoing series, **Meet the Executives**. Learn more about her journey and the vision she brings to the Board.

As we turn our attention to the future, we take great pride in presenting the FOCAL 2025 mentees, a distinguished group whose promise and dedication set them apart. Join us as we follow their recent away day, where they had the chance to meet and connect with our valued members.

As artificial intelligence continues to reshape our field, we bring you a must-read article: "**AI – Key Legal Issues for Footage Libraries**", unpacking the legal complexities and opportunities AI presents for our sector.

We're also thrilled to feature the Archival Ninjas' article, whose powerful and sensitive work in telling the story of Osama bin Laden's capture posed one of the most challenging archival storytelling tasks in recent memory, and they rose to meet it brilliantly.

Additionally, discover how IWM is improving access to its film archive with the launch of a dedicated Second World War category page, an exciting new resource for researchers.

All that and much more await you in this edition.

Happy reading!

The FOCALPoint Team

FOCALPoint is the journal of FOCAL International Ltd, the Federation of Commercial Audio Visual Libraries and is produced biannually. All opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the writers, and interviewee concerned and do not necessarily reflect the views of FOCAL International or its Executives.

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FOCAL
INTERNATIONAL

ACCESSING THE ARCHIVE: NEW FILM INITIATIVES AT IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS

Article by Charlotte Ross & Evangeline Rouse, IWM

For the past year, the Image and Film Licensing team at Imperial War Museums (IWM) has been developing a new initiative to make our vast film archive more accessible to researchers. At the heart of this project is a series of themed category pages, grouped by conflict and social topics. The first instalment is the launch of a dedicated Second World War category page, which is now available on our commercial film site.

THE HISTORY OF IWM'S FILM COLLECTION

The Imperial War Museum was founded in 1917 as the British Empire's memorial to the sacrifice and effort of the First World War. From the outset, its pioneering curator, Major Charles ffoulkes, expressed early concern that film be among the historical records to be permanently preserved. IWM began collecting film while the First World War was still ongoing, making it the oldest film archive in the UK and one of the oldest in the world. In 1919, Charles ffoulkes appointed a film custodian, Edward Foxen Cooper, and the pair set about collecting, preserving and cataloguing films from the War Office, Admiralty, Foreign Office and other government departments.

Over the past century, the collection has grown into one of the most significant repositories of conflict-related film in the world. IWM's vast collection encompasses everything from official films to narrative features, long-form rushes, newsreels, training films and amateur films. The collection includes films dating back to the mid-1890s, but some of IWM's best-known footage was shot by the Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU) during the Second World War. This includes imagery which continues to shape how the war is remembered on screen such as the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in April 1945 and the D-Day landings of June 1944.

Today, IWM is the repository of films from bodies such as the Ministry of Defence and NATO, and IWM's curators continue to acquire material from both past and contemporary conflicts. Alongside our reputation as an authority on conflict history, we are increasingly focused on highlighting the social

and cultural dimensions of our collection.



Film: IWM (A70 31-3)

CREATING THE CATEGORIES

Our first completed categories page focuses on the Second World War, which remains the most commercially popular area of our film collection. This page divides material thematically as well as by key events, offering a curated selection of digitised films that capture the breadth of the conflict. It does not attempt to present an exhaustive picture, but rather a core body of work, with larger sub-categories to follow. As ever, IWM curators in the Image and Film Licensing team are always on hand to advise commercial and non-commercial researchers on specific areas of interest.

Some categories cover well-trodden ground, such as major battles or political events, while others shine light on more esoteric subjects. A stand-out example is our [Animals in Conflict](#) category, largely drawn from newsreels and rushes to illustrate the surprising and moving roles played by animals during wartime.

Looking ahead, we plan to develop further conflict-based category pages, including the Cold War and the First World War, as well as social-history categories with themes such as art, cinema, craft and dance. These will showcase lesser-known aspects of IWM's film collection and reveal how conflict intersects with everyday life and culture.



Film: IWM (WPN 242)

Please do get in contact with the team if you have any questions about our collection and we will be happy to direct you to your area of interest.

LINKEDIN "CLIP OF THE WEEK"

Alongside the category pages, the team has also launched a weekly LinkedIn initiative: #IWMFilm 'Clip of the Week', designed to draw attention to the breadth and depth of IWM's vast film collection. Using a short clip, each post highlights an anniversary, social theme or unique hidden gem. We hope that by drawing attention to the diverse material that is available for licensing, this initiative will encourage wider engagement with the film collection and site.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, some of our most successful clips are from well-known films such as the AFPU's D-Day scenes or footage of the Berlin Wall shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union.



© NATO (IWM, NAT 3544)

[Check the LinkedIn post here.](#)

But we have also seen considerable enthusiasm for lesser-seen material, such as this clip of pioneering postal worker Jean Cameron, who campaigned for the right for

the right for female postal workers to wear trousers on the job.



Film: IWM (UKY 812)

[Check the LinkedIn post here.](#)

This initiative offers the opportunity to highlight unique newly digitised material, such as the amateur work of famous filmmakers like Ken Hughes. We are often thrilled by this opportunity to emphasise that, though our remit is conflict-related, the cultural breadth of our film collection is wide-reaching.

We have mapped out our full 2025 schedule and continue to reveal more diverse and fascinating stories each week. Keep an eye on [IWM's LinkedIn page](#), and please like, share and comment on our weekly clips so that we can continue to expand the audience for our collection.

CONCLUSION

Through our new category pages and weekly highlights, we are bringing IWM's film collection to new and existing audiences in the hopes of making research easier and more rewarding. Whether you are researching for a commercial project or simply want to learn more, we hope that these initiatives will help you discover both the known and the unknown stories that make IWM's film collection so rich.

If you have any questions about our collection, please contact us at filmcommercial@iwm.org.uk and we will be delighted to help and offer advice.





Get unparalleled access to **iconic archive content**.

Find unique, rare and inspiring clips and images from around the world captured from 1896 to the present day.

Includes content from:



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pa media



BAFTA

HISTORIC FILMS

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South China
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Reuters Screenocean

FOCAL EXECUTIVE

HELEN WALKER

REUTERS SCREENOCEAN ARCHIVE MANAGER



BRIEF EXPLANATION OF YOUR COMPANY.

After representing the Reuters archive for licensing since 2017, Screenocean came under the Thomson Reuters umbrella in 2023 when the news and media company bought our parent company, Imagen. As Reuters Screenocean, we license historical and contemporary video and photo content from the Reuters archive, as well as that of our content partners, such as Channel 4 and Clips and Footage. We are also devoted to the preservation of Reuters historic content, having launched a global project to digitise the tapes or Reuters news bureaux around the world and make the resulting content accessible to media professionals.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN AN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT FOCAL?

I've just joined the Executive board as of earlier this month, so I am really excited to get stuck in!

WHAT IS THE MOST FULFILLING ASPECT OR INSPIRED YOU FOR JOINING THE FOCAL EXECUTIVES?

Over the course of my career so far, FOCAL International has remained a constant source of connection and inspiration. I've greatly benefited from FOCAL's community engagement, which has enabled me to build valuable relationships and attend impactful events. I welcome the opportunity to give back to FOCAL by upholding its organisational values and further championing the use of archival footage.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT FOCAL SHOULD BE WORKING ON, FOR THE INDUSTRY AND ITS MEMBERS?

FOCAL's advocacy work as part of the Creative Rights in AI coalition is pivotal to sustaining the vitality of our industry in the age of generative AI.

In terms of member support, I believe it's important for FOCAL to promote networking, collaboration, and learning opportunities within our community. As someone midway through my career, I'm keen to support the interests of peers in similar positions and help nurture the next generation of industry professionals.

HOW DO YOU FEEL THE INDUSTRY HAS CHANGED?

Over the course of my career so far, I've seen three big shifts: the emergence of Streaming Video On Demand services, the reliance on archival content during the COVID pandemic, and the advent of generative AI. While we are no longer experiencing the same demand for archival footage as we did during the pandemic, I hope the SVOD services' unquenchable thirst for content will help our industry continue to thrive.

With the advent of generative AI, the authenticity of archival content needs to be championed more than ever. That said, there are plenty of useful applications of AI that can facilitate how we index and search content so it is more discoverable than ever before.

WHAT IMPACT DO YOU THINK FOCAL HAS HAD ON THE INDUSTRY NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE?

FOCAL's focus on community is crucial, whether it's bringing us together for networking events or providing training and development opportunities for the next generation of industry professionals.

I hope to see FOCAL continue to display thought leadership in emerging technologies by actively participating in discussions around AI and digital rights.

FUN QUESTIONS:

WHAT TALENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

I am agonisingly close to being able to hold a forearm stand in yoga – come back to me when I've cracked it and that will be my answer!

WHAT DID YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB LAST YEAR?

I was very lucky last year – I got to travel to different Reuters bureaux around the world to hunt through their archives for content to digitise. It was so exciting not knowing what kind of archival gems I might be able to find, and coming across unseen rushes from 9/11 was a particularly fascinating.

IF YOU COULD ONLY WATCH ONE MOVIE OR TV SHOW FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Sex and the City – I've already lost count of how many times I've watched!

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST RISK YOU'VE TAKEN? (EITHER IN YOUR WORK OR PERSONAL LIFE).

After finishing my undergraduate degree and with no immediate job prospects, I decided to move from my family home in Hampshire and run off to Paris. It was a chaotic but wonderful year, and an invaluable experience.

IF YOU COULD INVITE 3 PEOPLE OVER FOR DINNER DEAD/ALIVE, WHO WOULD IT BE?

I've been glued to Hilary Mantel's Wolf Hall series recently, so I'd like to have dinner with all the biggest personalities: Thomas Cromwell, Anne Boleyn and of course Henry VIII. Perhaps not the most relaxed company but certainly interesting!

AI – KEY LEGAL ISSUES FOR FOOTAGE LIBRARIES

Article by Anna Skurczynska, Open Plan Law

Artificial intelligence continues to dominate discussions and continues to pour into our lives through online search results, deepfakes (those humorous and those concerning) and our ever more obliging devices. So great is the AI promise that in recent weeks the word “bubble” has begun to appear on financial pages of newspapers, pointing to the possibility of the repeat of the dot-com crash. However, even if the bubble bursts, it will not reverse the trend: having experienced the superhuman speed of data processing, AI is here to stay.

Legal conversations around AI can, at times, seem like white noise. We are all aware that that AI poses legal risks especially to owners of copyrighted content, but the issues are so complex and overlapping that the longer we look, the less we see. We end up tuning the whole thing out.

This article aims to bring some clarity on the topic and discusses the key UK legal issues footage libraries should be considering, together with an outline of practical solutions. Organisations operating in the EU should also take into account the implementation of the EU AI Act about which we will write in the next instalment.

We do not define artificial intelligence, noting only that the term has become embedded in common parlance without much clarity as to aspects of software or hardware which determines that a system is “AI”, or clarity as to the actors within the AI ecosystem who are responsible for the outcomes of its use. This lack of transparency allows AI to be simultaneously glamourised and feared.

Instead of a definition, we will organise the legal framework around the basic idea that AI systems:

- use copyrighted works as **input** by harnessing the data-rich visual content; and
- can produce digital **output** resembling film and photography.

Input and output create distinct legal questions.

INPUT: PRESERVING THE VALUE OF FOOTAGE

Digital collections of footage and photography are rich repositories of data which are valuable in training of AI models. Their value often lies in the visual content being accompanied by well-organised metadata. In legal terms, the individual items of content are protected by copyright prohibiting copying without permission. Collections of content are protected by the database right prohibiting substantial extractions.

Given their value, archives rightly expect that AI companies will seek a licence for the use of the archives for AI training purposes. However, licensing agreements have been few and far between. Instead, AI developers have taken the position that the use of copyrighted content is either non-infringing, or covered by a copyright exception, or – to the extent it is not – that new laws should be put in place to exempt AI development from legal liability.

While the legislative discussions continue, owners of copyright have initiated a multitude of legal claims against technology companies around the world. The UK is awaiting the judgment in *Getty Images v Stability AI*. In the US, the New York Times, Disney, Universal and Warner Bros are suing Midjourney for unauthorised use of their content. In Japan – one of the more tech-friendly copyright regimes in the world, the publishers Nikkei and Asahi Shimbun are suing Perplexity.

Litigation is slow moving and prone to settlement without clarifying the law (e.g. the recent settlement agreement between Anthropic and US publishers and authors). While disputes are ongoing, there are certain practical steps that footage archives can be taking to protect the value of their content.

A. REVIEW YOUR WEBSITE TERMS AND CONDITIONS

If any of your content is online, it is essential to address AI use in website terms and conditions. Whether you permit wholesale copying for AI training, permit only certain kinds of AI (not-for-profit or supporting any specific public benefit), or oppose it, your archive's T&Cs should make the scope of your permissions clear. While in certain cases, T&Cs can be overridden, or may not be binding, T&Cs remain key to retaining control over any content posted on an archive's website.

B. PAY ATTENTION TO MODEL RELEASES

Individuals whose likeness, voice or other indicia of personality are used to train AI have certain rights under the data protection laws. While the recent UK Data Use and Access Act 2025 broadened exemptions for personal data processing including for AI research, the exception may not apply to content libraries whose content is mined. Consequently, footage archives may have to address AI use in their privacy policies and secure appropriate consents. If you seek to licence content for AI or develop your own AI models, model releases must expressly include AI uses.

C. WATCH OUT FOR TRAPS IN AI LICENSING DEALS

If your library is licensing content for AI training, review the terms of the licence carefully. As noted in the opening paragraphs of this article, AI comes with many unknowns. AI developers may be tempted to capitalise on the unknowns by seeking licences which secure rights for all possible ways in which the technology may develop. There is nothing wrong with an overly broad unlimited licence in principle, but broad grants should be appropriately remunerated.

D. WATERMARK YOUR CONTENT

Watermarking has fallen out of fashion given the ease with which it can be stripped by users. This is, to some extent, true for AI systems which are now trained to remove watermarks in the process of training. Despite this, watermarks can be extremely useful: it is through the recreation of Getty Images' watermark, that Getty was able to mount evidence against Stability AI. The claim based on trademark infringement by use of Getty's watermark was added to the copyright infringement claim and, between the two, the trademark claim looked to have better chances of success as the case drew to a close. The judgment in the case is expected in the coming weeks.

As part of ongoing discussions with the UK government, the creative industries are advocating that AI developers must meet certain transparency obligations. This is so that copyright owners can interrogate lists of content used in machine learning. The extent of the transparency obligation is still unknown, and it may require copyright owners to be able to find their own content in the huge volume of copied data. Watermarks and any other technological protection measures may become key in this effort.

OUTPUT: CREATING FOR THE FUTURE

The results produced by AI systems and, in particular, generative AI platforms, prompt a different set of legal considerations.

A. WHO OWNS AI CONTENT?

As more of us experiment with ChatGPT, Firefly or Midjourney, the law has been grappling with the question of whether copyright protects works created (i) with the assistance of, or (ii) solely by AI. Generative AI systems are capable of producing literary works, images, music, film. Are these "synthetic" works protected by copyright and who should own it?

The traditional test as to whether a work is protected by copyright is to determine whether the work is original. Originality in the copyright sense requires the work to be infused with human qualities – whether it is human skill, labour or judgement, or the author's own intellectual creativity. Books, images and music must be original to be protected.

Copyright system also protects works whose creation requires significant investment, such as films and sound recordings. These works do not need to be original as discussed above. They are protected as a matter of law, with the first author being designated by statute (the producer and the director in the case of the film, and the producer for sound recordings). The law takes the view that these are the persons whose investment ought to be rewarded with protection.

Synthetic works do not fit neatly into either category. English copyright does, however, contain a category of computer-generated works, meaning works created without human intervention. Under section 9(3) of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, literary, musical or artistic works which are computer-generated protected with the first author being the person who made the arrangement necessary for their creation.

On closer inspection, the application of section 9(3) to synthetic works creates more questions than answers. Footage/film and sound recordings are not included. The works included in the section (books, music, images) traditionally must meet the test of originality – who is the author infusing the works with originality if the condition for protection is for the work to be created without human input? Even if we were to omit the requirement for originality, who exactly makes the "necessary arrangements" – the AI developer or the platform user? In light of these difficulties, the Intellectual Property, the Intellectual Property

Office is considering repealing section 9(3).

Legal opinion is divided between those who say that synthetic works should not be protected at all, and that copyright should only protect human endeavour (this view assertively expressed by US courts). Another view is that synthetic works are no different from human creativity, and that AI is simply a tool – the creativity continues to come from humans. This view advocates that copyright ownership in synthetic works is awarded to persons making arrangements for their creation, much in the same way as producers and film directors.

Where does this leave us? Those involved in the creation of content should be ensuring that their creative efforts are well documented, with concept stages, narratives, story boards and prompts recorded so that, to the extent possible, creators can show originality in the output. At the same time, creators should be careful when using AI tools built unethically and without licensing training data. Platforms such as Stable Diffusion and Midjourney may seem creatively exciting, but they disclaim liability for copyright infringement. This means that a user who unknowingly uses someone else's work in their output may be liable for copyright infringement. Always check the platform's terms and conditions, and, ideally, engage with ethical AI developers.

B. REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

The question of liability leads to the final key point to consider from the legal perspective.

Archive content may be used for the creation of deepfakes. These may, for example, use voice, image or statements of celebrities, news anchors or politicians to recreate them. Recreations may be humorous and harmless, but they may also be offensive, indecent, defamatory and dishonest. While deepfakes will create issues for the individuals involved, content libraries may find themselves embroiled in a claim around security of the original content, and infringement of privacy rights.

In addition to individual claims, content providers, and news organisations in particular, may suffer reputational damage if their content is associated with deepfakes. Managing reputational impact may require a dedicated communication strategy addressing any harmful content from unauthorised sources.

FOCAL'S ADVOCACY

As is clear from the above, we are still shaping the laws for the AI age. Copyright law is one of several fields of law under discussion. The broader media law and the intense focus on the AI's impact of this on news organisations and the foundations of democratic institutions are all being discussed. The involvement of the creative sector is essential, and to contribute effectively, the creative industry must be clear as to what role it wants AI to play. Be wary of arguments that AI is so pervasive that we are powerless to re-write the rule book. Your voice matters and FOCAL will be advocating on your behalf. Please send your comments and concerns to info@focalint.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anna Skurczynska is a founder director of **Open Plan Law**, a specialist IP law firm with unique expertise in the law of artificial intelligence in the footage and photography sector. Anna has represented visual creators and businesses in several of the UK government's consultations on AI and copyright. She continues to advocate for the sector, most recently through a submission on the impact of AI on intellectual property and human rights.



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NEWLY-DIGITISED EUROPEAN HISTORY COMING SOON

FOCAL MENTORING PROGRAMME 2025

FOCAL is proud to continue its outreach activities with the 4th edition of the FOCAL Mentoring Programme, which offers support and guidance to individuals seeking to enter or advance their careers in the media archive industry.

This year we are pleased to welcome 11 exceptional people from the UK, Italy and the USA taking part in programme which runs through to October 2025. We wish to thank all the mentors who have been matched with the mentees who are supporting this programme, sharing their knowledge and invaluable advice.



Alex
Bingham

ALEX BINGHAM

*I am an Archive Researcher and former Producer specialising in History documentaries. Recent credits include **The Soldiers that Saved Britain** (Channel 4), **Britain Behind Bars: A Secret History** (Channel 4) and **Tsunami: Race Against Time** (Disney+). The films I love watching are overwhelmingly archive-driven, and I have always been drawn to the unique insights that audiovisual archive can offer. I am delighted to have been accepted onto the FOCAL Mentoring Programme for 2025, and I'm keen to explore wider opportunities within the industry, with a particular focus on footage libraries and archives.*



Alfie
Newson

ALFIE NEWSON

Hi! I am a TV technician, creator and all-around curious person. As a newcomer to archive, I am keen to learn about all aspects of it, from the art to the industry. This programme is a brilliant chance to see how it works from a seasoned professional, and apply their advice, with an aim to broaden my career options in documentary production.



Bea
Moyes

BEA MOYES

*Bea Moyes is an Archive Researcher and Producer working with documentary film and oral history. Bea has been a Research Associate at the Derek Jarman Lab at Birkbeck College since 2014, producing films including **The Hexagonal Hive and a Mouse in a Maze** (2024), directed by Tilda Swinton and Bartek Dziadosz and **The Seasons in Quincy: Four Portraits of John Berger** (2017), directed by Tilda Swinton, Colin Maccabe and Christopher Roth. Bea has developed a long collaboration as an Archive Researcher with the organisation On-the-Record including her work on **Hospital in the Mind: An Oral History of the Cassel**, directed by Rob Lemkin, and **Textures of Air**. She led the oral history project **Working River: A Living History of London's Boatyards** with Thames Festival Trust, including a documentary about its recent history made with digital:works, and several projects to document radical land uses on the Isle of Portland with B-side and Portland Museum.*



JAMES MADEJA

James Madeja is a British-American post-graduate student in film curation and programming, and Assistant Archive Researcher based in London. During his studies at the University of East Anglia, he volunteered with the East Anglian Film Archive, which inspired his pursuit of a career in audio-visual archiving. With an interdisciplinary approach focusing on the intersection of moving image, cultural heritage, and storytelling, James looks forward to the opportunities provided by FOCAL International's Mentoring programme.



LEROY KIRK

I'm from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and have a passion for film, music and the licensing process. I received my production start in Los Angeles from the comedy space working on late night television and then transitioned to working as a Clearance Coordinator and Archival Producer for historical and true crime documentary style television. I enjoy the research it takes to bring a story to fruition and the creative process of licensing and clearing footage and music to best serve the story

I believe the opportunity to learn from experienced mentors and be in collaboration with other mentees will give me the resources to excel in this creative career.



LUCA TOMMASINI

I work with archives to help transform memory into storytelling. I focus on audiovisual research, rights management, and coordination for documentary and cultural productions. My background is multidisciplinary, spanning sociology, photography, editing, and international cooperation. Every project is, for me, a process of listening, relationship, and care—an attempt to craft narratives that connect past and present in an authentic and mindful. I see the archive as a living space, where each image can reactivate forgotten stories and generate new visions that help us interpret this historical moment. This mentorship program offers me a great opportunity to nurture my strong desire to build an increasingly solid path—one that can meaningfully contribute to creating the connection I seek between memory and storytelling.



MARGHERITA MALERBA

*Margherita Malerba is an Italian filmmaker and archive researcher. She studied visual arts and filmmaking in Italy and Germany. She is one of the founders of the association Reframing Home Movies, dedicated to the study and reuse of family films. Margherita is currently working on her second feature film, **The Book of Hours**. As an archive researcher, she is working on different docu-series focusing on Italian contemporary history.*



MARY LANE

Mary Lane works in rights management and licensing, and is incredibly excited to gain insight into the industry and meet wonderful archive professionals through the 2025 FOCAL Mentoring Programme. Her work in public media distribution, particularly on rights renewals of archive-heavy documentaries, sparked her interest in archival research and producing. This led to her volunteering with the Image and Film licensing department at the Imperial War Museum, where the fantastic team further compounded her interest in historical content. Now based in Washington, D.C., she hopes to combine her love for archives with her experience in rights management and distribution.



MAY ZIADÉ

May Ziadé is a French-Lebanese filmworker and filmmaker based in London. She works as a post-production coordinator in film & television and is currently training to specialise in film restoration: binding her interests in post production operations and the histories of moving images. Her film practice often stems from archival research and interrogates the tensions that emerge alongside the recovery and rediscovery of subaltern histories.



NIALL GLYNN

*Niall Glynn is a digital film restoration technician working at Dragon Post Production in Cardiff, Wales. Since beginning his career in film restoration in January 2023, he has worked on commercial feature film restorations for the BFI, Arrow Video and Radiance as well as archival projects. He has worked on titles such as **Weird Science**, **American Gigolo**, **A Simple Plan** and **Don't Torture a Duckling** with many more currently in the pipeline.*



SHANNON SPROSTON

I'm currently working as an Image and Film Research Manager for the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, where I focus on copyright, metadata optimization, and workflow development for audiovisual materials. I also freelance as an archival researcher for documentaries and am eager to expand into music clearance and rights. Through the FOCAL Mentoring Programme, I hope to gain insight into the day-to-day realities of working in this field, explore new career paths, and connect more deeply with the international archival community.



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MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE: ARCHIVAL STRATEGIES FOR AMERICAN MANHUNT: OSAMA BIN LADEN

Article by Julia Palermo, Archival Producer at Archival Ninjas



© George W. Bush Presidential Library

Telling the story of Osama bin Laden's capture posed an extraordinary challenge. Unlike conventional historical documentaries, this series was built around the firsthand accounts of intelligence officers, CIA operatives, and military leaders. While their testimonies brought an unmatched level of detail and urgency, much of what they described had never been documented visually. As Archival Producers, we had to find creative ways to make the invisible visible.

We embraced a strategy grounded in what we called *plausible realism*. For moments involving covert operations or classified missions, we sourced open-source content, declassified training materials, and authentic yet abstracted visuals that could evoke the right mood without misleading viewers. The goal was never to recreate, but to support the storytelling with imagery that felt honest and immediate.

At the same time, we faced the opposite problem with well-documented events like 9/11. There was an abundance of coverage (live news broadcasts, air traffic control recordings, amateur video, official documents), and the risk wasn't a lack of material, but rather overwhelming the narrative. To maintain clarity and emotional resonance, every archival decision had to be deliberate.

For scenes with a heavily documented history, restraint became just as important as access. Instead of relying on the most familiar footage, we searched for quieter, more humanizing elements, such as raw phone calls or shaky handheld clips, that could help viewers emotionally connect to the moment, rather than simply observe it.

With a story spanning decades and continents, budget efficiency was also key. We worked closely with high-volume vendors like AP and Reuters to license multiple assets under broader terms, while leaning on public domain sources such as the Department of Defense and presidential libraries to round out the historical context without inflating costs.

Clearance posed another unique layer of complexity. Footage was often integrated into stylized recreations or layered into motion graphics, which meant that tracking the original source could be time-consuming and required tight coordination with post, graphics, and legal teams. Terrorist propaganda materials added further sensitivity and demanded careful vetting both from a legal standpoint and in terms of narrative responsibility.



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The result of this meticulous process was a series that deeply resonated with viewers. ***American Manhunt: Osama bin Laden*** became Netflix's #1 global series within days of release, drawing more than 12.6 million views in its first five days. Its blend of tension, humanity, and cinematic storytelling earned wide acclaim, and much of that impact came from how the archive was used to inform and immerse.

For me, the biggest challenge was not only sourcing the archive, but also contextualizing it. With emotionally charged material like 9/11, the temptation is to lean into the most recognizable or shocking footage. But what's often more powerful is finding the clip that helps people feel what it was like to live through that moment.

You have to strike a balance between emotional storytelling and historical responsibility. That requires knowing when to hold back, when to push forward, and how to use the archive not as decoration, but as narrative architecture. Staying organized, communicating early with the post and graphics teams, and questioning the emotional impact of every archival choice were the practices that kept us anchored through the scale and sensitivity of this project.

This series reminded me just how essential archival storytelling is, not only in illuminating the past but also in helping audiences make sense of it, one frame at a time.

American Manhunt: Osama Bin Laden is available on Netflix. To learn more about the work of the Archival Ninjas, visit www.archivalninjas.com



FOCAL INTERNATIONAL AWARDS 2025

The FOCAL International Awards celebrate the very best use of archival footage across the creative and cultural industries. From cinematic features to the use of footage in advertising or branded content, there is no doubting the immediacy and power that footage can bring, which this unique award competition recognises.

We also acknowledge leading archive restoration and preservation work, as well as the people and companies that make up the industry and whose hard work and vision make this possible.

The 2025 Awards gala evening took place on Thursday, 19 June, at the Church House Westminster, London, hosted by Lucy Porter. Congratulations to all the winners

Best Use of Footage in Advertising or Branded Content

Sponsored by:

[R3el](#)



Moncler x Roc Nation designed by JAY-Z
"City of Mountains"
Hinterland Films / Convicts

Best Use of Footage in a History Feature

Sponsored by:

[FOX Archives](#)



Nesjomme (Neshoma)
Family Affair Films

Best Use of Footage in an Arts & Cultural Production

Sponsored by:

[Global Imageworks](#) & [Footage.net](#)



Jim Henson: Idea Man
Disney Branded Television /
Imagine Documentaries

Best Use of Footage in a History Production

Sponsored by:

[Reuters Screenocean](#)



Vow of Silence:
The Assassination of Annie Mae
Laylow Pictures

Best Use of Footage in a Cinematic Feature

Sponsored by:

[British Pathe](#)



Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat
Onomatopée Films / Warboys Films /
BALDR Film / Zapomatik

Best Use of Footage in a Music Production

Sponsored by:

[Getty Images](#)

gettyimages®

One to One: John & Yoko
Mercury Studios / KGB Films / Plan B / Shanakee

Best Use of Footage in a Factual or Natural World Production

Sponsored by:

[Reelin' in the Years Productions](#)



The White House Effect
Actual Films / Department of Motion Pictures /
Impact Partners

Best Use of Footage in a Short Film Production

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The Ban
Unbecoming / Erica Starling Productions /
Northern Ireland Screen

Best Use of Footage in a Sports Production

Sponsored by:
[Memnon](#)



Moses - 13 Steps

BROADVIEW Pictures GmbH

Student Jury Award for Most Inspiring Use of Footage

Sponsored by:
[Sky Clip Sales](#)

sky clip sales

Clips And Footage Licensing

Vow of Silence:

The Assassination of Annie Mae

Laylow Pictures

Best Archive Restoration and Preservation Project or Title

With Thanks to:
[Piql](#)

PIQL

The Making of

Do They Know It's Christmas?

Filmfinity Productions LTD

Jane Mercer

Researcher of the Year Award

Sponsored by:
[The Associated Press](#)

AP

Sonia Khan

Atomic People

Footage Person of the Year

Sponsored by:
[Iron Mountain](#)
[Media & Archival Services](#)



Keiona Barnwell

CNN Collection



Collection

Company of the Year

Sponsored by:
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Sky Clip Sales







LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

DECLAN SMITH



And perhaps just as importantly, his legacy lives on through the many producers he has mentored. Always generous with his time, his knowledge, and his unwavering support, Declan has helped shape not only the stories we tell, but also the people who tell them."

On the night, Declan gave a heartfelt speech, thanking Kathy and FOCAL for the honour and expressing deep appreciation for the many colleagues he has worked with across archives and production:

"The people I owe the deepest gratitude to are my fellow archive researchers, archive producers, and film producers, who have given me their wise advice, their friendship, and their good humour. Without that, the job would have been much more difficult."

He also acknowledged the challenges currently facing the archive production field, adding:

"Archive research and production is going through a difficult time at the moment, but what you can rely on is the support and solidarity of your peers, which is hugely important."

Declan closed with a personal tribute to his partner, Jim:

"He's always given me good reason to get out of the office at a civilised time."

This award celebrates not just a remarkable career but a legacy of collaboration, mentorship, and quiet brilliance.

Congratulations to Declan Smith on this well-deserved recognition.

At this year's FOCAL Awards, the Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to archive industry pioneer Declan Smith by Kathy Manners, FOCAL's Executive Director. With a career spanning more than four decades, Declan has played a pivotal role in shaping how archival content is researched, sourced, and integrated into some of the most impactful documentaries of our time.

Beginning his career at the BBC Film Library in the 1980s, Declan helped define the role of the archive researcher, long before it was widely recognised as essential to television production. His work has contributed to standout programmes including ***The Media Show***, ***Reputations***, and major documentary series such as ***Endgame in Ireland***, ***Inside Obama's White House***, and ***Putin, Russia and the West***.

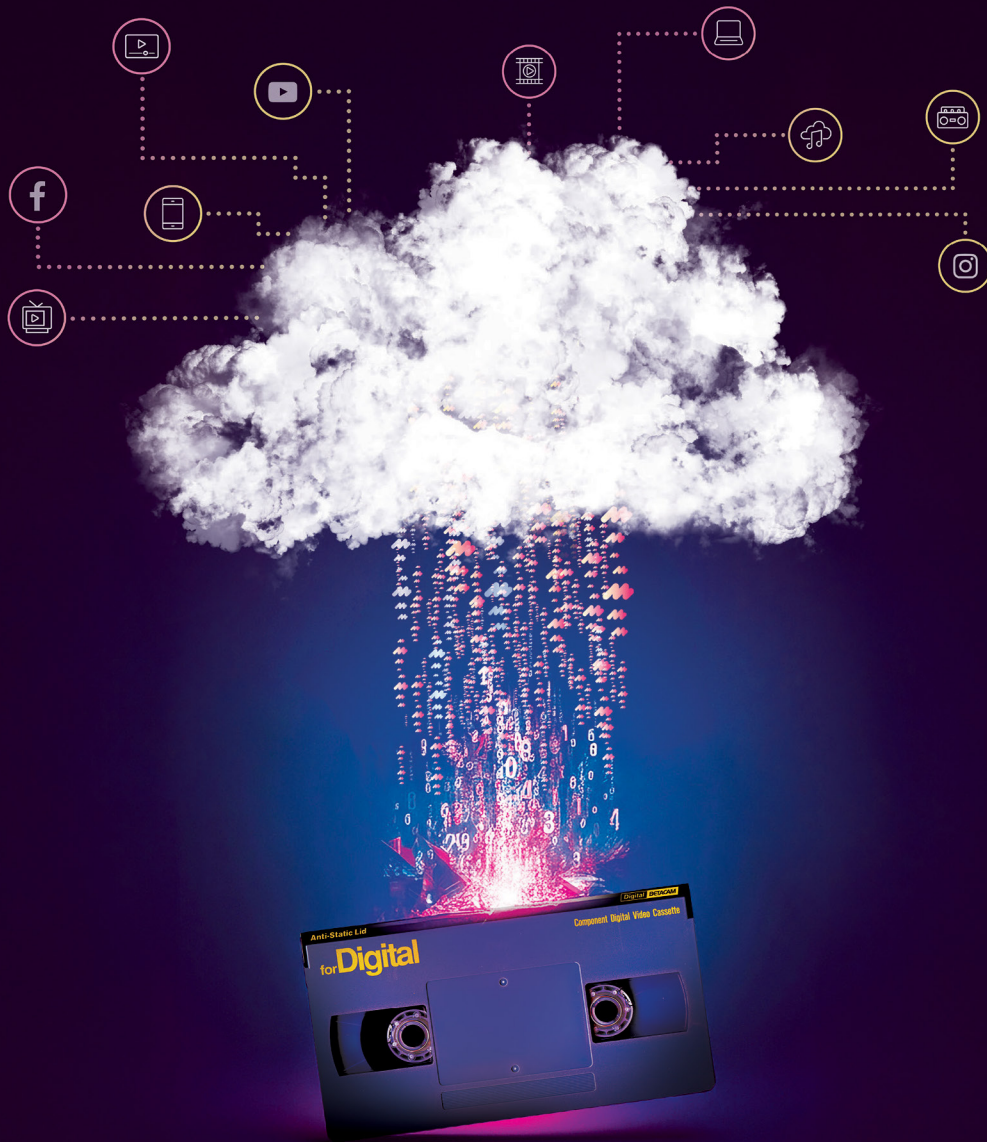
In her introduction, Kathy Manners remarked:

"But what truly sets Declan apart goes beyond the credits. It's his passion for history, for storytelling, and for the power of the archive. With an uncanny knack for unearthing the rarest, most revealing footage—and the linguistic skill to do so across borders and cultures—Declan has brought the past vividly, urgently to life for audiences around the world."



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PERSONAL VIEW OF THE FOCAL AWARDS FROM A WINNER

Article by Raelene Rawlings, Sky Clip Sales



SKY'S MANAGER OF CLIP SALES RAELENE RAWLINGS SPEAKS TO FOCALPOINT ABOUT RECENT WIN

The FOCAL International Annual Awards has long been a highlight of my work social calendar. It's a chance to leave the office early, dress up, reconnect with peers, clients, and friends—and marvel at how quickly the year has flown by since we last saw each other.

One of my favourite moments of the evening is settling in to enjoy the awards ceremony itself. I especially love watching the nominees' clips, quietly exchanging thoughts with my tablemates, and using the awards brochure to capture an ever-growing must-watch list.

This year, however, felt extra special—and a lot more nerve-wracking—knowing that Sky Clip Sales was in the running for Company of the Year. The competition was strong, with Archival Ninjas, GBH Archives, and PROGRESS also nominated in our category.

We were recognised for enhancing our MAM over the past year in response to client feedback. After months of collaboration, we improved the client experience, making our collection more user-friendly and enabling us to fully leverage and share the content in our archive. Our nomination also acknowledged the positive impact of our in-house digitisation efforts—because the more content we make available, the better programming we can support, contributing to the creative industries as a whole.

The moment Bobby Dicks, representing sponsor CNN Collection, took to the stage and announced Sky Clip Sales as the winner is one I'll never forget. Any nerves about speaking in front of a few hundred people quickly gave way to pride, as I took the opportunity to honour the efforts of our teams. There are hundreds of people working behind the scenes to support a broadcast archive—we couldn't do what we do without them.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our clients and industry peers for their continued support. To be recognised by FOCAL International, an organisation that has championed the use of archive content and its contribution to the creative industries for over 40 years, is a tremendous honour.

As we celebrate this recognition, we also look ahead. Winning Company of the Year inspires us to keep striving for excellence for our clients and to continue making a positive impact across the creative industry.

Sky Clip Sales represents the archives of Sky News, Sky Sports and Sky's Entertainment catalogue. You can contact the team on clipsales@sky.uk.

sky clip sales

Clips And Footage Licensing

sky clip sales



Welcome to Sky Clip Sales!

Sky Clip Sales is your destination for licensing clips and footage from Sky News, Sky Sports, and Sky Entertainment.

Since 1989, we have been the trusted source for Sky's extensive archive content.

Our collection includes:

**Global news footage
Exciting sports stock footage
Beloved entertainment show clips**

With thousands of hours of high-quality clips and footage, we have something for every production need. Finding the right footage is easy!

Simply email us at clipsales@sky.uk, and our experienced team will handle the rest.

Let us help you bring your vision to life with our unparalleled archive content

FOCAL MENTEES GAIN INSIGHT INTO ARCHIVING PRACTICES

Article by Mary Egan, FOCAL International



As part of the FOCAL Mentoring Programme 2025, mentees were given a rare opportunity to step behind the scenes of the film preservation world. From navigating the complexities of footage archiving to witnessing cutting-edge restoration techniques, the experience offered a deep dive into the often unseen but critically important work of safeguarding audiovisual heritage.

Despite the challenges posed by a London tube strike, several determined mentees, including Luca and Margherita, who flew in from Italy, travelled across the city to take part in site visits to leading restoration studios and archive libraries. What awaited them was an eye-opening journey into the inner workings of an industry where history, technology, and storytelling intersect.

PRESERVING THE PAST IN A FAST-MOVING FUTURE

In an era of rapid technological advancement, the urgency to preserve historical media, from 16mm and 35mm film reels to obsolete videotape formats, has never been more pressing. For our mentees, many of whom are emerging professionals in film restoration, research, and media archiving, these site visits offered invaluable real-world exposure to the challenges and innovations shaping the industry today.

DAY 1 – RESTORATION IN ACTION

The first day of visits took mentees to **The Flying Spot** and **R3store Studios**, where they observed the full lifecycle of media restoration, from analogue transfer to high-resolution digital scanning.

At The Flying Spot, Tim Emblem-English welcomed the group with an in-depth demonstration of film transfer using a Rank-Cintel Enhanced Mk3 4:2:2 Digiscan, a 1988-built machine that represents the last generation of BBC-designed telecine suites. Mentees also explored the art of colour grading and even got hands-on with the Digigrade-2 joystick panel, where being ambidextrous turned out to be a distinct advantage!

The second half of the day took place at R3store Studios, led by Jo Griffin and John Lloyd, who walked mentees through the critical steps of film preparation. From cleaning to the operation of four different types of film scanners, the team shared technical knowledge and practical insights. The visit also included live demonstrations of sound and colour grading, a look into their restoration workflow, and a comprehensive overview of their tape digitisation services.



The experience provided mentees with a clear, end-to-end understanding of what it takes to bring archival film and video materials back to life.

DAY 2 – INSIDE THE FOOTAGE LIBRARIES

If restoration is the science of revival, then archives are its guardians. The second day offered mentees the chance to explore both the technological and historical aspects of footage preservation.

The day began with a guided tour of **Sky's** campus in Osterley, where mentees explored everything from the tape vault to the state-of-the-art 'Glass Box' Studio, hovering high in the building's atrium. Raelene Rawlings shared stories of Sky's evolution in archiving and cataloguing, offering insights into how footage and researcher requests are handled in a fast-paced news environment. The tour continued with the digitisation team, who demonstrated the detailed process of converting and labelling news and sports content.

Next, dodging downpours and hopping between buses and trains, the group travelled to **The Associated Press (AP)** in Camden. Greeted by Veronique Foucault, the mentees took a well-earned break before diving into the fascinating world of news archiving.

Starting in the AP Newsroom, the group received an overview of how global news feeds are ingested, distributed, and archived in real time. From there, they visited the AP Video Archive, where they learned about cataloguing, format migration, and content delivery, including access to major collections like British Movietone and Bureau Rushes Archive. The tour concluded in the stills vault, where the mentees viewed a remarkable range of materials, from glass plates, negatives and indexed cards.

We are deeply grateful to all the professionals who generously opened their doors, shared their expertise, and inspired the next generation of media preservationists. These immersive visits offered far more than technical knowledge, they instilled a profound appreciation for the work being done to protect and preserve our moving image heritage.

For our mentees, the FOCAL Mentoring Programme 2025 has already proven to be an excellent experience, providing mentorship from industry professionals and equipping them with the insights, connections, and inspiration needed to shape their careers and the future of the audiovisual industry.



Mentees who took part in the two-day visit: Alex Bingham, Alfie Newson, Bea Moyes, Luca Tommasini and Margherita Malerba. Graham Relton, one of our mentors also joined us on the Footage Library Day.

Photos Copyrighted: FOCAL International

CNN COLLECTION PARTNERS WITH THE WEATHER CHANNEL

Article by Nia Taylor, CNN Collection



Archival footage isn't just about documenting the past — it's a lens through which we understand how coverage evolves and how audiences connect with critical stories. That's why CNN Collection's new partnership with The Weather Channel matters.

The Weather Channel has built its reputation as America's most trusted weather source, combining urgent reporting with innovative storytelling. Its archive captures not only the immediacy of hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods, but also the advances in broadcast technology, from live field coverage to mixed reality explainer segments.

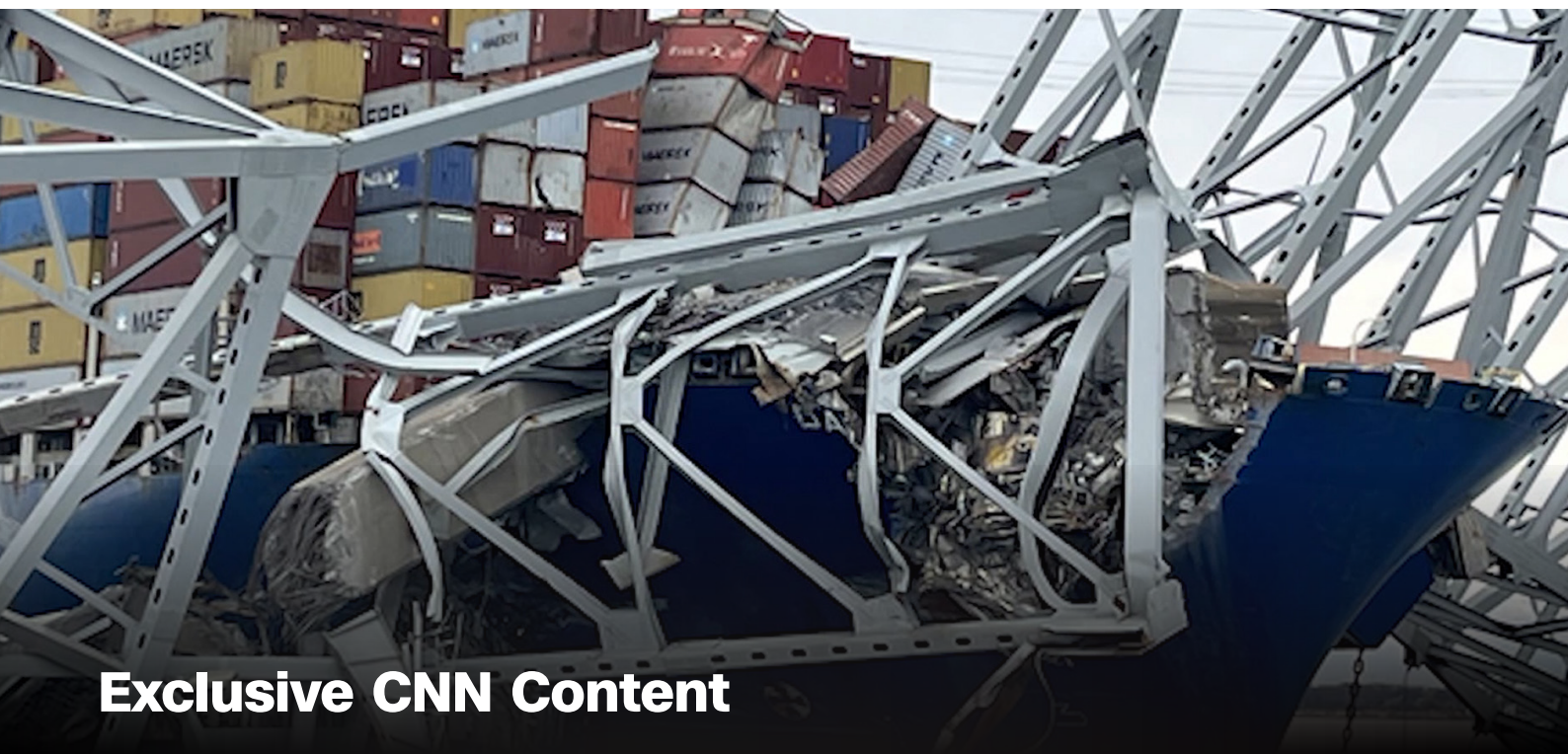
For producers, storytellers, and content creators, this material provides more than visuals. It offers insight into how weather shapes communities and how coverage itself adapts to changing technologies and audience expectations. By partnering on this archive, CNN Collection and The Weather Channel are helping storytellers contextualize both the science of weather and the craft of covering it.



To learn more or to request archival footage from The Weather Channel from CNN Collection, visit cnnnewsroom.com/collection/focal/twc



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cnncollection.com

WHERE IS MY DATA...AND WHY DOES IT COST THE EARTH?

Article by Simon Clark, Piql UK

Our data storage is costing the earth - through energy use and through unrecyclable waste.

We tend to overestimate the durability of our digital world. We assume "the cloud has it" or "it must be saved somewhere."

But digital data is fragile. Files become corrupted. Platforms shut down. Devices fail.

And unlike a torn photograph, digital decay is silent and invisible until it is too late.

Every lost story, every unread file, every overlooked recording is a fragment of heritage that disappears quietly. Not because it was unimportant, but because no one thought to preserve it.

Storing is not the same as preserving. Hard drives fail. SSDs degrade. Files silently decay through bit rot, often without visible warning.

By the time critical data is needed, it may already be corrupted, incomplete, or entirely lost.

HOW DO WE STORE OUR DATA?

Our digital data is stored on magnetic surface devices - Hard Disk Drives or LTO tapes, or Solid-State Drives.

However, **Google's** disk failure study highlighted just how often storage media can fail without obvious signs.

Few organizations run full operability tests on their storage systems and dependencies such as fonts, codecs, or proprietary viewers may no longer exist. Entire digital collections can become compromised without anyone realizing it (**Digital Preservation Coalition**).

One of the most overlooked challenges is data migration - formats become obsolete and software platforms change. Many organizations have no formal process for verifying data integrity through these transitions. **The Library of Congress** outlines this risk clearly in its sustainability framework.

The other problem with migration, of course, is that it rarely is 100% successful; it's quite common to lose at least 1% of data on each cycle.

Environmentally, the big issue with migration is that it produces tonnes of electrical waste - old servers, hard drives, magnetic LTO tapes etc. which, very rarely, can be recycled. So, it ends up in landfill, polluting the earth.



THE CLOUD

'The Cloud' is massive data centres drawing huge amounts of energy.

The UK alone has 477 data centres with another 100 due to be built in the next 5 years and it is estimated that, by then, around 10% of ALL the World's energy is estimated to be consumed by data centres.

And it's even worse if we consider the growth in A.I. energy use: Former Google CEO Eric Schmidt told the US Congress earlier this year that 99% of all Electricity will be used to power Superintelligent A.I. - *"We need the energy in all forms, renewable, non-renewable, whatever."*



Google's new data centre under construction in Hertfordshire. © BBC

"AN ESTIMATED 68% OF ALL WORLDS DATA IS ONLY USED ONCE. SOME IS 'DIGITAL GARBAGE' AND COULD BE DELETED. OTHER NEEDS TO BE KEPT FOR LONGER PERIODS OF TIME BUT SHOULD BE OFFLOADED TO MORE SUSTAINABLE STORAGE SYSTEMS".

Rethink Data Report from
International Data Corporation and Seagate

SO, WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES?

A number of companies have realised that our current magnetic storage devices are not reliable enough, are not environmentally friendly in any way, and do not offer any long-term migration-free solution.

One of these companies is Cerabyte (www.cerabyte.com) who are developing a data storage system utilising laser matrix writing onto ceramic layers on a glass surface. This promises no migration and no energy consumption as well as a lifetime of 100 years. Although a proprietary solution, this does show one way in which long term data preservation can be achieved using different technologies.

Another technology company is Folio Photonics (www.foliophotonics.com) who hope to release a new system soon using optical discs for long term data storage. A lifetime of 100 years is also promised and this seems like an encouraging evolution of the CD/DVD/BLU-RAY concept into a real potential for the future. Again, this looks to be a proprietary solution which may discourage some users.

One of the most exciting concepts for long term data storage is the use of synthetic DNA. This, potentially, could provide massive amounts of storage which could help us keep up with the demand from A.I. etc. However, it looks to be some way in the future and will only be a Read-Once solution (and quite frankly, I really don't understand how it works!).

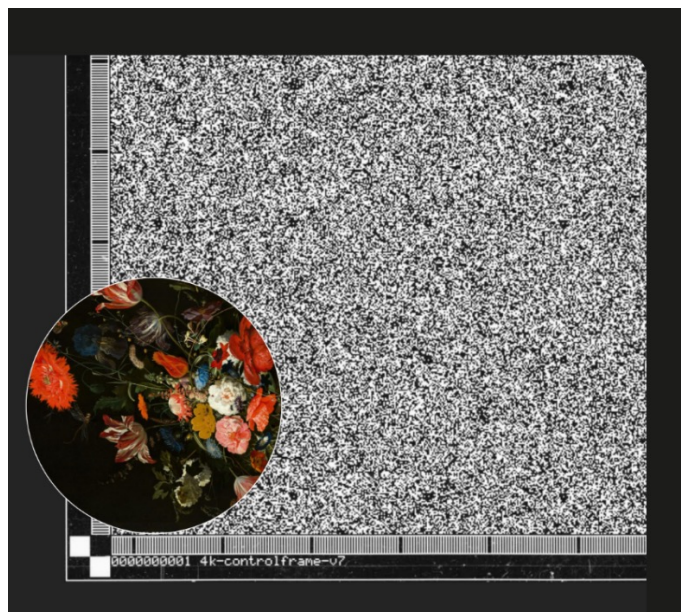
BACK TO THE FUTURE

One company which has a solution that ticks all the boxes is Piql (www.piql.com). Piql have been using 35mm black and white film stock to store data for almost 15 years and have a number of clients across many industries including banking, manufacturing, energy, defence as well as GLAM's and Media and Entertainment.

The system cannot be hacked, is permanent and immutable and never needs migrating. It has a lifetime of at least 1000 years and (this is

the key) has an open-source, non-proprietary data recovery system. All reels of piqlFilm are self-contained with instructions on how to retrieve data and the piqlConnect software platform offers a normalisation feature which ensures that all files are stored in a non-proprietary open-source format to ensure they will be available in the future (converting .DOC into PDF-A, for example).

Although photo-sensitive film has been used for almost 200 years, the fact that it has outlasted ALL types of videotape and is durable enough to last many lifetimes means it is well suited to carry our data into the future.



A partial frame of piqlFilm showing a high resolution "QR code" of digital information © Piql

CONCLUSION

Most organizations today are sitting on digital time bombs. Hard drives fail silently. Bit rot creeps in unnoticed. Cloud storage is mistaken for permanence. And archived data, assumed to be "safe," becomes unreadable just when it is needed most.

We are all reliant on magnetic surface technology which is never 100% reliable and which needs a lot of energy and constant migration.

Thankfully, there are companies who recognise this and who are working on alternatives which will lead to safer data and a cleaner earth.

PIQL



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