

Saving the past for the future

‘ULU‘ULU: HENRY KU‘UALOHA GIUGNI MOVING IMAGE ARCHIVE OF HAWAI‘I

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The Need for Hawai‘i’s Moving Image Archive

For generations, Hawaiians passed down history and culture through oli and dance. The arrival of other peoples to the islands disrupted this process.

In the 20th century, audio and visual equipment helped capture these oral and dance traditions to transmit them to future generations. The new media recorded all aspects of life in the islands across cultural communities. But these captured moments on film and tape are disappearing due to the deterioration of materials and obsolescence of devices that can play them.

In a 2009 report, archival media consultant David Rowntree concluded:

The current condition of Hawaiian film and moving image heritage is in a precarious state. There is no institution that focuses its effort on preserving moving image materials and with each new paradigm shift in media communication and technology, older formats are neglected, destroyed, or discarded. In the transition from film to videotape, a large amount of early Hawai‘i film was neglected. Coupled with the tropical environment of high temperatures and humidity,

the overwhelming majority of film materials have been lost. What is left is of paramount importance to preserve regardless of its content. We find ourselves again in the midst of another paradigm shift as digital technology has eclipsed analog formats making them obsolete. As a result, *massive amounts of rich and valuable Hawaiian history are endangered and need immediate attention.*

Rowntree conducted a survey of local filmmakers, media outlets, and historical archives and found that most respondents lacked the resources and best practice information to store their moving image materials properly to protect them for posterity. He also found that these recorded remnants of the Islands' history were nearly impossible to access. In most cases, they were gathering dust and mold on shelves at television stations or in filmmakers' homes.

At that time the majority of acetate films were stored in conditions between 60-80 percent relative humidity and at temperatures between 70-80 degrees. In these conditions new film will show signs of decay within nine years. As humidity and temperature increases so does deterioration. With the first acetate films of Hawai'i dating back 100 years, the need for preservation is dire.

'Ulu'ulu to the Rescue

The mission of 'Ulu'ulu: The Henry Ku'ualoa Giugni Moving Image Archive of Hawai'i is "to perpetuate and share the rich moving image heritage of Hawai'i through the preservation of film and videotape related to the history and culture of Native Hawaiians and the people of Hawai'i."

As the organization's website states, "'Ulu'ulu is a Hawaiian word meaning collections, assembly, or gathering. Our archive is not just a collection of moving image items, but also an assembly of voices, communities, and stories; a gathering place for people to share Hawai'i's culture, traditions and collective memory."

'Ulu'ulu is located in the new UH West O'ahu library. A work in progress, the archive's 11,000 square feet will eventually contain an exhibition space, screening area, and computer terminals where individuals can view entire collections of digitized materials. This is in addition to restoring, preserving, cataloging, and digitizing moving images that are the heart of the archive.



To date, the archive has digitized over 650 videotapes and films and stored more than 400 hours of material on servers. This includes a Maui county fair in the '20s, an early flight of Hawaiian Airlines, the 1968 and 1978 constitutional conventions, Crater Festival concerts, a film that recorded the restoration of 'Iolani Palace, and many news casts. As a staffer points out, "If news casts are our daily journal, we can go back to 1978." Glimpses of these collections can be seen at 'Ulu'ulu's website: <http://uluulu.hawaii.edu> (<http://uluulu.hawaii.edu>).

More than 700 boxes containing nearly 16,000 videotapes and film reels are in the process of being saved. As boxes of reels and tape arrive they are quarantined in the receiving area to be sure they won't contaminate other parts of the collection with mold or infest it with bugs. After material passes that stage, it reaches the processing area where it's cleaned and if necessary sent to the mainland to be restored. Then it's catalogued and then digitized. Once it's fully processed, the collection is placed in the vault for long-term storage in climate-controlled conditions.



Many reels of film and video footage of Hawai'i's history remain hidden in closets and attics and back storerooms across the islands. The staff continues to encourage museums, media outlets, libraries, and filmmakers to consider donating their films and videos to the archive to be preserved and digitized before they are lost. Lyman Museum was one of the first to do so and the recovered images have inspired new exhibits and added another component to sharing Hawai'i's stories.

There are several heroes involved in this quest to save Hawai'i's past through moving images.

The Driving Forces



Heather Giugni



Chris Lee



Koa Luke



Janel Quirante



Robert Omura

Local filmmaker Heather Giugni and Founder and Director of the Academy for Creative Media Chris Lee have been instrumental in saving this moving image history. The archive remains a project of UH Mānoa's Academy for Creative Media and UH West O'ahu. Lee is in charge of the strategic direction, funding, budgets, capital improvements and staff hires. He values this archive for what it represents in the past but also what it will inspire in the future.

“These are the stories of Hawai'i,” Lee has noted. “They will be a great resource for documentaries, but I've always believed that these pictures and words will inspire narrative filmmakers to create original stories based in our collective memory and community.”

Giugni is the archive's consultant for collection development and community outreach. While she shares Lee's passion for the archive and its role, her awareness of the dire condition of many films makes her a pragmatist: “We are in a race against time. We need to save what we can, digitize the media, and have that content identified – especially the oldest material – so that we can grow into a robust visual library and become an important primary educational resource.”

Lee adds, “While preservation is important to us, public access is just as important as saving these films and video tapes. That's why we encourage people to view the film and video clips available at 'Ulu'ulu's website and contact us if they need to see more of the collection than what's on-line.”



For years Giugni and Lee talked to filmmakers and lawmakers to convince each of the need to collectively protect moving image materials for the good of Hawai'i. The advent of digitization and a federal earmark brought the project to life. Today 'Ulu'ulu: the Henry Ku'ualoha Giugni Moving Image Archive is the Official Moving Image Archive for the State of Hawai'i by legislative action.

The first funding came through an earmark courtesy of Senator Inouye to honor the memory of Henry Ku'ualoha Giugni, the first Polynesian sergeant-at-arms of the U.S. Senate, long-time friend and adviser to the Senator, and Heather Giugni's father. The first funds were used to study the state of moving image preservation in the islands and develop a plan to establish an archive. (A copy of the report can be found on the archives' website at <http://hkgarchives.org/consultants-report-2009> (<http://hkgarchives.org/consultants-report-2009>).

With a starting point and road map, the dynamic duo of Lee and Giugni hired Head Archivist another hero. She oversees the daily operations of the archive and brings order to the chaos of taking dusty, dirty, moldy reels of film and making them viewable and accessible. Quirante puts her UH Mānoa Masters in Library and information Science and her experience as a videotape preservation technician at the Bay Area Video Coalition in San Francisco and the Visual Materials

Archivist at the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University to good use at ‘Ulu‘ulu.

Two lesser known but no less important champions are Cataloger/Assistant Archivist Koa Luke and Digital Media Specialist Robert Omura. With a BA in Political Science focusing on Hawaiian and Hawai‘i politics and working on his Masters in Library and Information Science from UH Mānoa, Luke plays a key role in making the materials that have been archived searchable. By properly documenting what the archive has on its shelves and in its digital banks, students, researchers, and the general public can find material that had been lost or inaccessible for years. Luke uses accuracy, consistency, common sense, and good judgment to identify the terms that best reflect the archived material so that it will be easily retrieved when needed. Because of our islands unique topics and cultures, Luke is adding new terms to the catalogue lexicon that best reflect Hawai‘i’s experience.

Omura is a graduate from the Academy for Creative Media (ACM) at UH Mānoa and is responsible for digitizing archival videotapes, managing those digital files, and editing clips for the archive’s website. He transfers tape to digital in real time and in three different levels of resolution:

1. Uncompressed for preservation
2. An intermediate level of resolution for editing
3. Streaming on the web.

More than 400 hours have been digitized to date.

Cleaning and restoring videotape and film, cataloguing, and sitting at a machine to digitize these images may sound tedious and mundane, but the images that they are saving tell exciting stories of these islands we call home. And these images of these stories will be there for generations to come.



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