Online Survey of Video Collections: Summary Results

This survey conducted by Michael Brewer & Meghann Matwichuk, Spring 2007. There were approximately 220 responses. Listservs on which librarians were recruited to take the survey on behalf of their institutions included VRT, Videolib, Publib, Collib-l, AASL, SLA, OLAC, CJCLS, CCUMC, NextGen, NMRT, and AMIA.

Institutional Information:

- The majority of the collections represented by the respondents (52%) were at academic libraries (17% of the total were ARL libraries). The other two groups that made up a sizable portion of the responding institutions were public libraries (26%) and community colleges (14%). A small portion of respondents (7%) identified their institutions as "Other", which includes film archives, news and broadcast collections, government agencies, and other corporate and non-profit collections.
- Nearly all collections are located in the United States (96%). Some (2%) are located in Canada, several respondents chose not to answer (1%), and one collection is in Australia.

Collection Demographics & Access:

- 37% of collections represented hold between 1,000 and 5,000 titles. Only 11% hold less than 1,000 titles, while the majority (52%) contain more than 5,000 titles. 20% hold between 5,000 and 10,000; 11% hold between 10,000 and 15,000; 5% hold between 15,000 and 20,000; 9% hold between 20,000 and 30,000; whereas the remainder (6%) hold more than 30,000 titles.
- Formats housed and actively collected include Umatic, Betamax, 1/2" VHS and DVD (including international formats and high definition DVDs), online digital formats, video game formats, laserdiscs, and 16mm and 35mm film.
- The only formats actively collected by the majority of respondents are VHS and DVD. The most common distribution of formats within a given collection appears to be 60-70% VHS and 30-40% DVD. The only other formats listed above that are collected by more than 10% of respondents include: online digital formats (28%), multi-region and NTSC VHS and DVDs (26% and 28%), and video game formats (10%).
- Only 3% are now actively collecting high definition DVDs.
- The most common distribution of categorized media appears to be 50-70% feature films, 30-50% educational or documentary films, 1-10% opera or theatrical productions, and 1-10% "Other". "Other" categories were defined by respondents as follows: television series, children's programming, historical footage and home movies, experimental and short films, training videos, campus / local events, exercise and self-help videos, and audio (CD and cassette) materials.
- Media collections are shelved separately from other collections by 70% of responding institutions. 44% of collections are housed in open stacks, while 31% are housed in closed stacks. Other respondents report a combination of open and closed housing for media items.
- Most collections are classified using the Library of Congress system (34% for DVDs and 32% for VHS), with Dewey as a close second (31% for DVDs and 30% for VHS). Other respondents utilize a home-grown system or some combination of these three systems.

Staffing:

- Most collections (57%) report having at least one full-time librarian working with the media collection. 55% report having at least one full-time staff member (non-librarian). Only 33% report having at least one student assistant working with the media collection.
- 27% of collections report a significant change in staffing of the media department. While many institutions report that they are adding staff (usually due to changes in organization / policies or an increase in materials), an equal number report staff downsizing due to budget reductions and reorganization. Some media collections staff are being retrained, with the increasing addition of digital media production facilities in libraries.
- Media departments are often responsible for more than the daily maintenance and service of the video collection. Other areas of responsibility include: audio collections (66%), in-house viewing equipment (61%), transferring / dubbing services (25%), viewing equipment for non-library classrooms (24%), digital media development support (23%), and general computer / IT support (18%).[*]
- The management of most (58%) media collections is *not* under the purview of a video librarian.

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[*] Please Note: Respondents were given the option to reply to most questions with "Prefer not to respond." Therefore, some percentages do not total 100%.

Purchasing Rights:

- Most institutions report that they do not *routinely* purchase additional rights for films if they are available. 17% report purchasing non-theatrical PPR; 23% report purchasing "educational" rights; and 11% report purchasing digital / streaming rights.

Acquisistions and Budget:

- The majority of collections (80%) are not restricted by way of policy in regards to the purchase of media / video titles (i.e. no unrated films, no 'mature' video games, etc.) Those that are restricted report a variety of criteria, most of which pertains to 'mature' content and ratings. Other criteria reported include that media must be curriculum-related, and feature films must be award-winning or literature based. Several respondents reported that they do not acquire television series.
- Estimated yearly budget (non-inclusive of operations) for video / film ranges widely. 22% of respondents report a budget between $1,000 and $5,000. 21% report a budget between $5,000 and $10,000. 16% report a budget between $10,000 and $20,000. After this, percentages begin to decrease, however 28% report a budget of $20,000 or higher. On the other hand, 7% report an annual budget of less than $1,000.
- 40% of institutions report that their budget for media has remained stagnant (no adjustments for inflation). 45% report a budgetary increase, and the majority of these respondents report an increase beyond the rate of inflation. 11% report a decrease in the media budget.
- A number of respondents report that there is no budget specific to media; rather, video purchases are made via subject funds or overall materials budgets. Materials budgets are decreasing for many, and several respondents note that decreasing support is thus unrelated to any kind of media bias. Others note an increasing reliance on donated materials for the growth and maintenance of the collection.

Perceived Support:

- The vast majority of respondents assess the level of support (not budgetary) at their library for media / film as a format as strong (39%) or adequate (34%). A number, however, report the perceived level of support as being token (14%) or minimal (8%).
- There is a breadth of opinions regarding support for media as a format; some respondents reflect that media is the "most heavily used" part of their collection and thus receives proportional support, while others note that they must fight the perception that media as a format only has recreational value (some respondents use phrases such as "ghettoization" and "step-child status" to describe the treatment of the collection).

Interlibrary Loan:

- Half of the libraries included in the survey perform some kind of interlibrary loan lending (ILL) services. 19% ILL media outright; 24% ILL 'selectively'; and 4% ILL but only to certain institutions. 48% categorically do not ILL their own media.

Networked Content:

- One-fifth of the media libraries surveyed facilitate delivery of video content via a network or online.
    - Of those, 60% deliver to desktops for electronic reserves and other uses, 45% to classrooms, and 25% to viewing rooms.
    - Also of those, the majority (58%) use a homegrown delivery system. 42% utilize a proprietary system, such as Blackboard, Video Furnace, Quicktime, Real Helix, FMG On Demand, and state consortia.
    - Most institutions (55%) purchase or lease digital rights to stream media content. Other legal justifications for providing networked delivery include: institution owns copyright of content (48%), the TEACH Act (30%), Fair Use (43%), and public domain (18%).

Booking System:

- Only 30% of respondents utilize an electronic booking system to schedule media for future use. Of those, 30% use a homegrown system. Most use a proprietary system that is integrated with the OPAC.