# THE DANCE PRESERVATION AND DIGITIZATION PROJECT:

# THE TECHNOLOGY SUMMIT AND BEYOND

## A White Paper for the Dance Heritage Coalition

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## INTRODUCTION

Dance Heritage Coalition (DHC), a nonprofit consortium of archives and dance organizations holding collections of materials documenting dance, has a mission "to preserve, make accessible, enhance and augment the materials that document the cultural and artistic legacies of dance."[1] To serve this mission, DHC has taken a leadership role in preserving dance-related video and making it accessible for scholarly research. Heeding the warnings of audiovisual preservation experts about the vulnerability of videotape to physical degradation and format obsolescence, and recognizing the unmet needs of dance researchers for robust primary sources to study this diverse and ephemeral art form, DHC has made dance moving-image preservation and access one of its top priorities. One of DHC's initiatives to create preservation and access solutions for the dance field's moving images is the Dance Preservation and Digitization Project (DPDP). Work began on conceptualizing the project in 2006 and in 2009 The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (Mellon) funded a collaboration between DHC and the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC). At the heart of DPDP are the regional digitization hubs, or "digihubs," where dance videos are digitized.

In 2013, DHC convened a national meeting, the Technology Summit (Summit), to examine the DPDP model, determine its strengths and weaknesses, and prescribe next steps for its continued progress. Held at the University of California, Los Angeles, on November 21-22, the Summit brought together technologists, digital librarians, moving image and performing arts archivists, legal specialists, and managers of archiving business operations to scrutinize the technical, economic, and functional aspects of DPDP. As someone not involved in the project but with the professional background in archives and digital preservation, I was invited to attend the Summit as an outside observer, to report on its work and conclusions, and to describe changes in DPDP that respond to Summit discussions in the months following the gathering.

The digihub model brings a community archives ethic to the preservation of moving images in dance. Working directly with dance organizations of all sizes, staff at the digihubs complement related DHC initiatives that provide assistance and guidance for dance organizations in the management of their own

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[1] Dance Heritage Coalition website http://www.danceheritage.org/mission.html.

assets. At the same time, the digihubs provide an opportunity for dance organizations to make a vital contribution to dance scholarship by helping to fill the void in available primary resource research materials in dance.

## BACKGROUND ON THE DPDP PROJECT: CRITICAL NEED FOR DIGITIZATION OF DANCE MATERIALS

Experts in audiovisual preservation have warned that the lifetime of magnetic media, which include videotape and audio cassette tape, is limited. For example, in its *National Recording Preservation Plan* report of 2012, the Library of Congress makes this observation about sound formats: "Many endangered analog formats must be digitized within the next 15 or 20 years before further degradation makes preservation efforts all but impossible."[2] Magnetic media, including the videotape formats that hold so much of the visual record of dance, are prone to unique kinds of physical deterioration in which the binder holding the magnetic particles to the base tape degrades, causing permanent loss of data.[3] These mechanisms are exacerbated by the conditions under which much videotape is often stored. Moreover, in recent years videotape has become vulnerable to format obsolescence: the equipment used to play videotape has ceased to be manufactured and thus cannot be repaired or replaced when it malfunctions. In a series of meetings convened by DHC in 1999 and 2000, concerns about the vulnerability of videotape were articulated by members of the dance, archives, and other communities, including artists, dance history scholars, and dance archivists from a range of organizational types, including curators, catalogers, audio/visual and digital humanities experts.[4]

In 2003, DHC created the National Dance Heritage Videotape Registry, a database providing information about dance video held by repositories as well as choreographers, dance companies, and other organizations. The registry data, gathered in a DHC survey, indicated that the 300 respondents held

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[2] *The Library of Congress National Recording Preservation Plan*, 2012, 2, http://purl.fdlp.gov/GPO/gpo37398.

[3] "Magnetic Tape 'Sticky Shed' Research: Characterization, Diagnosis, and Treatment - Research Projects - Preservation Science (Preservation, Library of Congress)," web page, accessed September 22, 2014, http://www.loc.gov/preservation/scientists/projects/sticky_shed.html.

[4] "Sustaining America's Dance Legacy: How the Field of Dance Can Build Capacity and Broaden Access to Dance in the Next Ten Years," issued in October 2000 as a report on the DHC's first National Dance Heritage Leadership Forum. Background on the Forum is available here: http://www.danceheritage.org/leadership.html#first. Publication is available here: http://www.danceheritage.org/sustainingdancelegacy.pdf.

more than 180,000 videotapes recorded between 1956 and 2003, a formidable figure that was believed to represent only a tiny fraction of the existing dance video. Moreover, the survey found that more than 25 percent of respondents felt at least a portion of their videotape collection was physically damaged and less than 50 percent of respondents had the playback equipment for all of their formats. Less than 20 percent had preservation procedures in place for their videotapes.[5] Clearly, there was a need to take action. A 2009 field survey conducted by DHC explored the full range of issues and challenges associated with the documentation of dance. Again respondents, primarily dance scholars, archivists, and librarians, but also dance artists and others, stressed that preservation of dance archives was a high priority, with technological change ranking very high as one of the leading external and internal forces affecting the field.[6]

## THE DIGIHUBS MODEL

DHC conceived of the digitization hub concept while working on a 2004 Mellon-funded project to determine a standard for reformatting analog videotape to digital format for preservation. In a report on the project, DHC's then-Executive Director Elizabeth Aldrich introduced the hub concept, noting, "Funding must be secured so that the larger repositories may begin the work of reformatting their holdings; funding is also necessary to maintain digital files. Hubs need to be established so that independent choreographers and dancers as well as smaller organizations can avail themselves of this technology."[7]

The digihubs model, in which digitization labs are established at multiple sites, was designed to maximize the chance that digitization services would be accessible to a diverse constituency across the United States. To date, three digihubs have been established: in 2010 in San Francisco at the Museum of

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[5]  Media Matters, LLC, *Digital Video Preservation Reformatting Project: A Report Presented to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation* (Washington D.C. and New York City, June 2004), 10. http://www.danceheritage.org/digitalvideopreservation.pdf.

[6] Cathy Maciariello, *National Dance Heritage Leadership Forum: Results of Field Survey 2009* (Washington, D.C.: Dance Heritage Coalition, 2009). http://www.danceheritage.org/fieldsurveyreport.pdf.

[7] Media Matters, 5-6. Since this report was issued, many larger repositories have developed processes for reformatting their holdings; what has become the most critical concern is the extensive among of magnetic media still retained by smaller organizations and individuals, who are least able to preserve and digitize videotapes.

Performance + Design; in 2011 in New York City at the Dance Notation Bureau; and in 2012 in Washington, DC, at DHC.  These hubs have been in continuous operation since the project began (although the San Francisco hub was temporarily installed at BAVC, a nonprofit media education and preservation organization while the museum was relocated).[8]

Videotapes are brought to the digihubs from archives, dance companies, and other organizations. The original recordings arrive in a range of formats, including VHS, Betacam, ¾-inch U-matic videotape, and digital formats such as MiniDV tapes and DVDs. Once at the digihubs, videos are reformatted on specialized equipment. The most challenging and rare formats, along with materials needing special treatment, are typically handled at BAVC, which as of July 2014 acts as a fee-for-service vendor.[9] As of late December 2014, a total of 1026 recordings (855 total hours of recording time) had been reformatted for preservation and access, of which 835 recordings (678 hours of content) were digitized since January 2013 thanks to improvements implemented for tape submission and digitization workflows. The digihubs prepare electronic packages containing digital video files and metadata and transfer them via portable hard drive or network connection to DHC technical consultants (initially BAVC and later David Rice) for ingest into a repository system with nightly backup to an off-site data center with spinning disk storage and a system for periodic data integrity checking. The technical consultant creates access files for streaming and uploads them to a secure cloud service.

The digihubs operate much in the same manner as initially designed, with the digital conversion taking place at the hubs and the digital objects and associated metadata being centrally managed for both preservation and access. However, there have been some responsibility changes and equipment upgrades during 2014 in response to Tech Summit discussions. BAVC has ceased playing its asset-management and preservation role, and moving image archivist Dave Rice took on these responsibilities for DHC as a consultant. The NYC digihub has implemented a centralized LTO storage system. Equipment upgrades support a wider range of formats: an ED-Beta deck was installed at the San Francisco digihub, U-matic and Betacam decks were installed at the NYC hub, and a Betamax was purchased for the DC

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[8] DHC has funding to establish digihubs in two more regions in 2015.

[9] Lauren Sorensen, "Discovering Moving Images of Choreography in the Archives: Dance Heritage Coalition's Dance Preservation and Digitization Project" (presented at the Congress on Research in Dance Annual Conference, Riverside, California, November 2013). http://www.slideshare.net/laurensorensen2/dpdp-cord-lsorensen.

hub. Current protocol is to use JPEG2000, a lossless compression format, for preservation masters, and recently the digihubs have also begun to digitize directly to this format. This cuts processing time over the previous practice of capturing video in an uncompressed format and transcoding to JPEG2000.[10] Overall, the capacity and output of the digihubs has expanded with a greater emphasis on practicality and efficiency.

Descriptive metadata for the digitized videos is mapped to PBCore,[11] the metadata standard for audiovisual media developed by the public broadcasting community, and added to DHC's Secure Media Network, a searchable database of moving images—films, analog and digital tapes, and digital files— held in dance collections. Currently, the database holds information on more than 28,000 items. The network also provides, on a prototype basis, controlled access to a limited number of streaming images.[12]

## TECHNOLOGY SUMMIT DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

DHC convened the Technology Summit "[t]o define sustainable technology avenues (including technology choices and partnerships) that will become components of a long-range business plan" for DPDP.[13] Invitees included DHC member archives and their staff, business plan advisors, digital library budget staff, digitization and general technology experts, metadata/discoverability specialists, legal experts, digital humanities librarians, and LIS educators. The Summit was called to forge a path forward on DPDP, with participants examining the operation and progress of DHC's digihubs in light of its mission

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[10] Author email from Dave Rice, September 3, 2014.

[11] In the absence of a metadata standard specifically for performing arts materials, PBCore was chosen in part because it offers the capacity to link multiple instantiations of the same work including the streaming video file and backup file, a thumbnail still image, and the physical instantiation of the recording. Metadata can also be linked to descriptions of related materials, including performance ephemera and reviews. Additionally, PBCore allows for the digihub managers to map to PBCore fields where possible while adding field attributes for costume designers, composers, and other creative collaborators. See Bryce Roe, "PBCore and Dance Heritage Coalition's 'Media Network' | PBCore," accessed August 8, 2014, http://www.pbcore.org/news/pbcore-and-dance-heritage-coalitions-media-network/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=pbcore-and-dance-heritage-coalitions-media-network.

[12] http://archive.danceheritage.org/

[13] Dance Heritage Coalition Dance Preservation and Digitization Project Technology Summit, Revised Agenda, November 6, 2013.

to simultaneously preserve recordings while using streamable derivatives of the preservation files to create access for teaching and research. Among the agenda items discussed at length at this meeting were developing strategies to increase the acquisition of content (that is, getting videos to the digihubs), devising a collaborative and sustainable model for the delivery of digitized content for use in education and scholarship, determining the criteria for an optimally functional user interface, finding the best long-term preservation and data storage options, and addressing issues of intellectual property management. Also discussed were concerns related to the sustainability of DPDP, including governance and building partnerships.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIGIHUB SYSTEM

There was fairly widespread agreement on the need to continue the digihub system and to establish more hubs in a greater variety of geographic locations around the country (although a "recommender" system for vendors, described below, was offered as an alternative to the digihub system). At the same time, participants emphasized the need to explore new ways to accomplish the outreach necessary to increase the number of tapes moving through the hubs. Additionally, there was a suggestion to establish a volunteer review board to send out an RFP for new hub sites.

Indeed, a crucial task for DHC in the near future is to identify new sites for digihubs. There is currently funding for two additional hubs. Along with finding sites, DHC needs to develop a new model for managing the digihubs in partnership with the host site. The goal is to find host institutions willing not only to provide space for the digitization equipment and its operation, but also to take on ownership of the equipment including its upkeep and insurance, and to share with DHC its use and, in some cases, the technical staff required for its operation. DHC will continue to coordinate DHC project activities at the hubs, supervise maintenance of standards for digitization, monitor output of DHC projects, manage the technicians doing DHC work, locate materials for digitization, and manage storage and proper maintenance of access files.

Several participants at the Summit noted the advantage of a college or university hosting a digihub and providing key resources and management as well as possibly training for their own students. For example, an academic library may be able to fund a half-time position to run a digihub, and train and supervise students and staff, with the result of disseminating extended professional digital/technological

education and standards and infusing long-term sustainability within the academic institution. In the months following the Summit, a few professionals associated with academic libraries at state institutions have shown interest,[14] and DHC is exploring models that involve DHC's providing the expertise and coordinating training. One of the drawbacks of this approach is that large educational institutions, often state-affiliated, may require a long planning process and face bureaucratic obstacles.

The service hubs of the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), which offer digitization as well as metadata services, were considered as a possible model or source of some guidance for further development of DHC's digihubs. The broad scope of DPLA's work and widespread subject matter, however, make it distinct from DHC's limited focus on dance. Nevertheless, there was significant interest in a digitization model developed independently of DPLA by Emily Gore, DPLA's Director for Content:  "Scannebago" (not yet fully realized) envisions a process in which digitization professionals drive a recreational vehicle built out with scanning equipment and a satellite feed visit cultural institutions to provide onsite digitization services.[15] Some participants saw the potential for mobile hubs that could make the rounds of dance companies. One participant, however, suggested that the weight, size, and unwieldiness of video digitization equipment would pose an obstacle to this approach. Further exploration of the viability of mobile hubs, especially as a community-based resource, is recommended.

DHC digihubs have served as a model for community video digitization programs in fields other than dance. For example, with David Rice as a consultant, the Seattle Municipal Archives is providing space for a cooperative video digitization station for cultural heritage organizations in the region; the initiative is called Moving Image Preservation of Puget Sound (MIPOPS). Options are being explored for the maintenance and care of the digitization equipment in this model. In the MIPOPS model, staff from each of the participating cultural heritage institutions will receive training and perform the digitization tasks. While this approach advances knowledge of video digitization among museum, archives, and library

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[14] Notably, Arizona State University, University of Minnesota, and UCLA. California Institute of the Arts (Cal Arts) already had set up an in-house video digitization initiative similar to DHC's digihubs, it was discovered.

[15] Trevor Owens, "Digital Stewardship and the Digital Public Library of America's Approach: An Interview with Emily Gore | The Signal: Digital Preservation," webpage, (October 28, 2013), http://blogs.loc.gov/digitalpreservation/2013/10/digital-stewardship-and-the-digital-public-library-of-americas-approach-an-interview-with-emily-gore/. Also, see "Scannebago," Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scannebago.

professionals, it may not be a practical solution for a hub serving small dance organizations, who may not have staff with interest in learning these skills or the time to do so. DHC is looking at the MIPOPS model (even as MIPOPS takes inspiration from DPDP) for features DHC might adopt rather than incorporating the model as a whole and will be monitoring the outcomes of using cultural heritage staff in providing staffing for the digihub in Seattle.

One suggestion made at the Summit involved moving away from the digihubs model and toward a system of using commercial digitization vendors, with DHC leading a program to assess, rank, and recommend vendors. This approach became known as the "Angie's List" idea. The suggestion was considered seriously, but its appeal was not widespread.  While acknowledging that digihubs cannot handle certain materials, such as images on film and more unusual formats, and that these materials must be sent to a specialized vendor, participants noted several problems with the Angie's List approach:

- The vendor approach could lessen the amount of material delivered for digitization. For dance entities and individual dance artists, videos play a crucial role not only in documenting history, but also in providing resources for restaging older productions, teaching roles to new dancers, and spurring creativity for new work. Dance organizations have expressed reluctance to trust a commercial vendor with their videos. DHC's work with such organizations and artists in preparing archival assessments and inventories and providing preservation advice has created personal relationships and a basis of trust.
- Commercial vendors are not in a position to offer advice on or perform curation activities. There is much material in dance collections that should not be digitized (e.g., numerous copies of the same performance, extensive but unindexed rehearsal footage).[16] DHC and the technicians trained by DHC support the selection process.
- Developing and attaching useful descriptive metadata to digitized videos is a critical feature for the discovery and documentation objectives of a digitization project.  DHC and its technical personnel are able to recognize when information is missing, elicit the necessary information from contributing artists, and formulate appropriate metadata.

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[16] Less than 30 percent were found by DHC to be preservation-worthy in one test batch of 36 VHS recordings of two dance works that one dance company held, because of duplicates, compilations of excerpts from multiple tapes, severely worn derivatives, and tapes whose original content had been taped over.

- The digihub system is able to integrate digitization with the process of moving the digital files and metadata into appropriate storage, maintenance, and access systems. Even if preservation storage becomes distributed rather than centralized, having preservation activities directly integrated into the digitization workflow greatly increases the chance that preservation will be successful.

- It is doubtful that outsourcing would be more cost effective than a hub approach. As Scott Cline, Seattle City Archivist, writes in a letter to the NEH in support of DHC and IMAP's proposal to the Education and Training Grant program, "Hosting a digitization station is a more cost-effective and reliable solution for us than sending our materials to an outside vendor."[17]

## STORAGE AND PRESERVATION

One of the goals laid out by Summit participants was to develop a "robust LTO plan," including a dedicated server and a smaller staging server, and possibly a robotic system. At the time of the Summit, the process of moving preservation copies of digitized material from external hard drives at BAVC to LTO tape storage at the New York hub had begun.

Since the Summit, DPDP has begun reformatting preservation files to JPEG 2000, a format that will reduce the storage requirements by 20 percent or more through lossless compression and increase efficiency. Additionally, following Summit participants' suggestions, the digitization process now involves the creation of a mezzanine file in addition to preservation and access copies. This mezzanine file can be used to create additional types of derivatives and its creation fills a previously unmet need of the companies and artists holding the original materials.

Following a wide consensus at the Summit that DHC seek partners for long-term preservation, the DHC approached the Library of Congress as a possible provider of a "dark archive" space and a migration plan. Although the total amount of space the Library of Congress may be able to provide has yet to be determined, this is potentially a promising avenue for long-term preservation. Other potential partners or service providers identified by Summit participants for long-term preservation included the Audiovisual Archive Network (AVAN), the Internet Archive, Indiana University, Portico, and Amazon; and

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[17] Scott Cline, Letter in Support of the Proposal of DHC and IMAP to NEH's Education and Training Grant Program, April 30, 2014.

NYPL's Dance Division has indicated willingness to take on storage responsibilities for digital files related to their collections priorities.

While DHC concurs that resolving storage and long-term preservation issues is crucial, as evidenced by its pursuit of the storage actions noted above, it also cautions that in light of the critically endangered condition of dance videos, the immediate focus should be on digitizing as much important material as quickly as possible.

DISCOVERABILITY

Before digitized dance videos can be used for scholarly research, education, or public enjoyment, their existence must be known. Summit participants discussed the various factors required to make it possible for an individual to discover dance videos: metadata guidelines, authority control, search engine optimization, the creation of linked and shareable data, and data visualization. They also discussed how to gather usability data and how to measure success of access and discoverability features: should the crucial metric be a large number of unique visitors, the amount of time spent viewing videos, or some other factor?

One outgrowth of the discussions on measuring success was a usability study of DHC's Secure Media Network (SMN),[18] conducted by graduate students as part of the course Access to Moving Image Collections taught by Linda Tadic in the UCLA Department of Information Studies.[19] A key finding of the study was that the site resembled a catalog for use by librarians more than it did an online search tool designed for researchers. The report included suggestions and recommendations for how to make the Network more user-friendly and efficient for researchers. A theme that surfaced repeatedly was the limitations presented by the quality of the metadata. While the study authors did not recommend

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[18] An early approach to handling the access challenge was DHC's creation of the Secure Media Network (SMN), a website and database that was designed and implemented when the first digihub was established in San Francisco. SMN, a prototype with a limited inventory, functions as a central access point for digitized videos held by many institutions. To protect intellectual property rights, access to view videos is restricted by IP address.

[19] Kelle Anzalone, Megan Gruchow, and Staci Hogsett, *Report for the Dance Heritage Coalition Secure Media Network Site* (University of California, Los Angeles: MIAS 250: Access to Moving Image Collections, Professor Linda Tadic, March 12, 2014).

changing from PBCore to another standard, they noted that the PBCore fields could be better used. One source of problems was that the metadata provided by contributors of videos was not in PBCore, but in standards such as MARC 21, causing inconsistencies in the data. Moreover, for those contributors who are practitioners rather than libraries or archives, sufficient and accurate metadata may not be available in any form. Recognizing that it would be an extremely time-consuming and expensive project, the study authors recommended a cataloger be employed to standardize the metadata.[20] There was quite a bit of discussion at the Summit about the potential for user-contributed metadata, as well as enacting quality control and compiling controlled vocabularies.

In order to move beyond the limitations of SMN in terms of user experience, DHC has tasked its technical consultants with developing a digital object management system to support an end-user search interface. Two open-source platforms were explored: Avalon and CollectiveAccess (CA).[21] CA was chosen because of several advantages it holds over Avalon: CA is used by institutions similar in size and budget to DHC, while Avalon, which is based on open-source Hydra repository software that requires significant institutional developer support, is currently in use by only a few large universities in the prototype phase.  Moreover, CA is a well-established and quickly-evolving project that is both more adaptable to modifications and closer to DHC's functional needs including those regarding the API,[22] digihub integration, and security.[23]


## DISTRIBUTION AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

A major goal of digitizing dance materials is to increase their potential for use in scholarly research, education, and enjoyment by the general public. Because of the complex rights issues involved in using dance video (for example, composers, choreographers, and others may retain or claim rights), there must be limits on access to much of the dance material digitized. At the Summit, discussion of

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[20] Kelle Anzalone et al.

[21] "Avalon: The Project," accessed August 24, 2014, http://www.avalonmediasystem.org/project. "CA\Collective Access," accessed September 22, 2014, http://www.collectiveaccess.org/.

[22] Acronym for Application Programming Interface.

[23] Author email from Dave Rice, September 3, 2014.

distribution began to coalesce around the creation of a subscription database that could be marketed to institutions of higher education and public libraries, rather than an open-access system. Participants agreed that the legal burden of copyright management must be shifted to the content contributor. While metadata would be open access, contributors should be able to manage item- and/or collection-level control: for example, a contributor could determine that the video of a rehearsal was to be publicly accessible, while the recording of the performance would be available only to the authenticated users of a subscribing institution. This system, which would be combined with a takedown policy in instances where rights issues were raised, is premised on the idea that restricting dance video to a scholarly audience provides wider latitude in terms of fair use.[24] It requires the contributor to decide whether to restrict content, seek licenses from appropriate creators represented in the video, or pursue another avenue. Other legal considerations brought up at the Summit had to do with who has the rights to the metadata and who bears liability for inaccurate metadata in the system. Participants noted that issues of cultural sensitivity would surface in the course of distributing videos of a wide-ranging cultural form such as dance. Distribution of certain videos might require careful framing.

Another aspect of distribution is the potential for aggregating content so that a researcher may access materials held by different institutions from a single online portal. Potential models for centralized access suggested by participants included the contribution of content and metadata; the contribution of metadata only, which may include links to external content and/or the embedding of videos not stored within the system; and the potential for additional user-contributed metadata with some form of review. HathiTrust was mentioned as an example for managed distribution, although participants noted that with the content being dance video, both media format and copyright would pose added complications over those faced by HathiTrust.

## OUTREACH AND CONTENT

A prevalent theme at the Summit was the importance of the leadership role of DHC in outreach and education about dance video preservation and access. DHC's ongoing programs of archival services and

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[24] DHC with the assistance of intellectual property expert Peter Jazsi, J.D., issued a fair use statement in 2009, which includes an analysis of fair use of online and digital resources. http://www.danceheritage.org/fairuse.html

online support such as the Artists' Legacy Toolkit[25] forge relationships with contributors and provide a critical avenue for gathering good metadata from contributors for the video database. Creating standard metadata for its video assets is not part of a dance company's core mission, and yet it is only these holders of the content that have the knowledge required to create robust metadata to support scholarly access to these materials. While this is not an unfamiliar problem for archivists, who frequently acquire materials with little contextualizing information, it is one that DHC must address going forward as part of its outreach efforts.[26] DHC envisions an even broader concept of and role for contextualizing information within DPDP. Including in the database not just video, but related materials such as photographs, textual documents, notation scores, finding aids, and oral histories is an important method for improving scholarly output and engaging public interest.[27]

Another aspect of DHC's relationship with artists and dance companies contributing DPDP content is providing curatorial assistance in selecting the important and unique materials out of the mass of materials proffered by an organization. In addition to the problem of artists storing numerous copies of the same material, much of dance video is completely raw, unedited footage that is difficult to watch, understand, and use for research.

## FUNDRAISING/DEVELOPMENT

Technology Summit participants suggested fundraising and development activities to fund the DPDP program: developing a strategic plan to outline priorities and articulate the core mission, identifying potential donors, hiring a development professional, exploring options for partnerships and resource/cost sharing (including not just financial resources but also intangibles such as intellectual capital), and determining costs and conducting cost/benefit analyses of activities. A suggestion to make DHC a membership/subscription organization has been implemented in the months following the Summit.

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[25] http://www.danceheritage.org/artisttoolkit.html.

[26] DHC already addresses this issue in part via its Fellows programs, which trains dancer-archivists who have the content knowledge and metadata skills. http://www.danceheritage.org/fellowships.html

[27] Author interview with DHC Executive Director Libby Smigel, June 5, 2014.

Summit participants returned repeatedly to the question of which among the activities, responsibilities, and areas of expertise required for developing and implementing DPDP are dance-specific and which of these are shared among other cultural heritage communities. What collaborations and partnerships could and should DHC build to assist in its digitization, preservation and access activities? To answer this question some participants felt there was a need to more clearly articulate DHC's goals, mission, role, and expertise, and then to identify what is wanted in potential partners with an eye toward meeting specific, definable needs. Participants wanted DHC neither to go-it-alone nor reinvent the wheel when it comes to the technical aspects of its work. There was some concern that DHC's core mission and its important role as a dance-specific institution not be compromised by its becoming too involved in administering the technical side of preservation and access. As articulated by participants, DHC's value and expertise lie in building relationships of trust between the cultural heritage and dance communities, coordinating activities, providing education, making resources known and available where needed, supporting dance companies (particularly smaller ones) in preservation of their legacy, and putting groups in touch with expert advice on intellectual property and other issues.

## BUILDING ON THE COMMUNITY ARCHIVES ETHIC

In the several years since DHC first began working on DPDP, it has become clear that major repositories holding dance collections, and even some large dance companies, will be able to handle the digitization of their dance-related videos with their own resources. Thus, the most pressing need for DHC to address is helping smaller organizations to digitize and preserve their materials. To accomplish this, DHC will need to reach out to the smaller, varied, and under-resourced dance organizations that are vital to their communities.[28]

This focus on outreach is commensurate with an overall change in the governance and by-laws that took place at DHC in the months following the Summit. When DHC was formed in 1992, its bylaws stated that membership in the organization "may be offered to institutions that have significant collections of dance materials that support research. … Such collections must have nationally or internationally recognized

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[28] Author interview with DHC Executive Director Libby Smigel, June 5, 2014.

strengths in specific subject areas."[29] Following from this, throughout its history DHC members have been major repositories with dance holdings. By-laws updated by the DHC Board of Trustees in April 2014, however, extend membership to organizations and individuals who serve and support the mission of DHC, effective upon the payment of dues.  This opens the door to membership and governance by representatives from a much wider range of institution types. Including member dues as a funding source acknowledges suggestions for new funding models offered at the Summit. By focusing on outreach and including in its governance structure representatives from a wider range of dance organizations, DHC plays to its strengths in connecting and supporting all sectors of the dance community.

Both the focus and the nature of its activities underscore that DHC is engaged in community archiving. DHC programs empower members of the dance community to preserve, understand, and share their own legacy without necessarily working with large, established repositories. DHC has a strong record of providing resources for dance practitioners and companies of all sizes to help them manage their assets. In addition to its online and print publications, DHC has a longstanding program of sending early-career archivists or students as consultants to dance companies to help preserve legacy records.[30] Working directly with staff in dance organizations, the consultants provide assistance with assessment, creating inventories, and rehousing materials. These consultancies help organizations manage their own assets and depend on working with host staff who have the content expertise, thus building trust through these one-on-one relationships.

Even though many community archives projects are organized around categories such as locality, race, ethnicity, class or sexual orientation, *community* can be defined outside of these parameters: "The emphasis is on the community or group's own self-definition and self-identification by locality, ethnicity, faith, sexuality, occupation, ideology, shared interest or any combination of the above."[31] Even with all

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[29] Dance Heritage Coalition Structure and Governance, revised 2000.

[30] Kat Bell, "When Communities Perform Their Own Documentation: The Do's and Don'ts of Building a Community/Family Documentation Project" (presented at the Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, Washington, D.C., August 16, 2014).

[31] Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens, "'It Is Noh Mistri, Wi Mekin Histri.' Telling Our Own Story: Independent and Community Archives in the UK: Challenging and Subverting the Mainstream," in *Community Archives: The Shaping*

of its diversity, the world of dance can certainly be said to comprise a community of shared interest. Also, community archives are sometimes organized around a common subject, and not necessarily around a community identity. Andrew Flinn and Mary Stevens write: "In general our research adheres to broad and inclusive definitions of what community archives or community history activity might comprise – the (often) grassroots activities of creating and collecting, processing and curating, preserving and making accessible collections relating to a particular community or specified subject."[32] Given that the subject of dance is difficult to document and not well-represented in the historical record, it provides a natural focus for a community archiving initiative.

A defining factor of community archives projects and initiatives is that they put the essential power and control in the hands of the records creators rather than in the hands of professional archivists working in an institution. The direction comes from within the community itself. Flinn writes:

> Community histories or community archives are the grassroots activities of documenting, recording and exploring community heritage in which community participation, control and ownership of the project is essential. This activity might or might not happen in association with formal heritage organisations but the impetus and direction should come from within the community itself.[33]

As a membership organization representing the dance community, DHC is in a position to drive preservation and access activities in such a way that they meet the needs of this community.

Community archives projects may or may not include working with established collecting institutions— as long as the projects are driven by the community. Stevens et al. write, "In our view, the defining characteristic of a community archive is not its physical location, inside or outside of formal repositories,

*of Memory*, ed. Jeanette Bastian and Ben Alexander, Principles and Practice in Records Management and Archives (London: Facet Publishing, 2009), 5.

[32] Flinn and Stevens, 5.

[33] Andrew Flinn, "Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28, no. 2 (October 2007): 153, doi:10.1080/00379810701611936.

but rather the active and ongoing involvement of members of the source community in documenting and making accessible their history *on their own terms*."[34] Indeed, in some cases, the materials of dance companies who work with DHC may eventually end up in the custody of a collecting institution. In other instances, this will not be the case. The reasons for the latter situation may be many-fold, sometimes relating to the fact that the materials may be outside the collecting focus of any institution. But often the reasons have to do with a common view by members of the dance community that archives are barriers to access and the related fact that the companies need ready, continuing access to their assets. This was a sentiment echoed at the Summit, and this notion that members of under-represented communities perceive archives as barriers to access is a common theme in the community archives literature.

The digihubs model contributes to the community archiving character of DHC's work. It provides a new way of thinking about whether a dance company must donate their materials to a collecting institution in order for its work and contributions to be entered into the scholarly and historical record. Along these lines, Stevens et al. observe that new technologies provide greater opportunities for a range of custodial models that facilitate community archives endeavors:

> . . . [I]magining the custodial models that might serve the ends of a democratised heritage has been facilitated by the technological innovations associated with digitisation and the prevalence of born digital records, which call into question traditional assumptions about the need for all records to be held in a single physical location.[35]

Working with dance organizations to digitize their videos through the digihubs and contribute them to a shared scholarly resource represents an ideal example of how digital technologies pose opportunities for members of an under-documented community to take advantage of new ways of preserving and providing access to their work while still maintaining a large amount of control over how their legacy is understood and shared. Working with DHC removes barriers to digitization while ensuring a quality

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[34] Mary Stevens, Andrew Flinn, and Elizabeth Shepherd, "New Frameworks for Community Engagement in the Archive Sector: From Handing over to Handing on," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, no. 1–2 (2010): 60, doi:10.1080/13527250903441770.  Emphasis in original.

[35] Stevens et al., 61.

product that meets professional standards. Moreover, this process provides a vital opportunity to enlist creators in the curation of dance research collections.

Given its unique position as an advocacy organization and think tank that brings together both collecting institutions and dance organizations, DHC actually has the capacity to play a role akin to an independent community-based archivist. As Stevens et al. note, "Independent community-based archivists have valuable roles to play as mediators between professional heritage services and community groups as vectors for both practical knowledge and more theoretical understandings of the importance of preservation."[36] By not being affiliated with any particular institution, but rather lending their expertise and serving as a facilitator between members of the community and established archives or archiving initiatives, DHC can play this valuable mediator role.

Given its dual role representing both the archives profession and the dance community, and with its focus on small and under-resourced dance organizations, DHC should keep in mind the responsibilities of archivists who take part in projects specifically designed to document under-represented communities. Richard Cox suggests that archivists must be aware, when engaging in community archives projects, that this process will be open to criticism along the same lines that archives have been criticized in other contexts: exclusivity, questionable assumptions about objectivity, and embodying Western notions of power and authority: "There is much to be gained from more aggressive partnerships with the diversity of the communities constituting society. However, these efforts need to be made carefully and with sensitivity. As we work with one community, we risk losing or offending another."[37] As DHC expands its outreach efforts, it will need to enlist strategies to ensure that it contributes, to the extent possible, to the broadest representation of dance that is possible.

Another note of caution to be considered by DHC is that the shift in focus away from technical considerations and toward outreach could take it too far away from its commitment to professional standards of digital conversion and metadata. Commenters on community archiving have expressed

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[36] Stevens et al., 72.

[37] Richard Cox, "Conclusion: The Archivist and Community," in *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory*, ed. Jeanette Bastian and Ben Alexander, Principles and Practice in Records Management and Archives (London: Facet Publishing, 2009), 262.

concern about what occurs when a community establishes its own archives only to dismiss professional archives standards and focus too heavily on concerns about identity and community.[38] DHC must continue to serve equally as professional archivists and dance advocates.

Drawing on the important work and insights that resulted from the DPDP Technology Summit, along with its strong record of dance heritage advocacy, DHC is in a perfect position to expand the digihubs program and facilitate the preservation of the vital assets of dance organizations and individual artists, making them available for both scholarly and community uses. By continuing to work in the spirit of the community archives movement, DHC can continue to provide resources and guidance in a way that is empowering and invites dance organizations to be full participants in preserving the legacy of dance.

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