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A Brief Evaluation of the Moving Image Archives at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality and the Girl Scouts of the USA

For this assignment, I chose two organizations that appeared on the National Film Preservation Board's list. One of these organizations, the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality (IASHS), is located in San Francisco California. The other, the Girl Scouts of America, is headquartered in New York City. Due to its proximity to me, I physically visited the archive at the Girl Scouts, while I searched online through IASHS's website for information. This survey will briefly examine and compare what each of these institutions are, what they hold, and look at the physical, virtual, and intellectual access each allows for.

The IASHS and the Girl Scouts of the USA are fundamentally quite different organizations. The Girl Scouts headquarters in New York, for example, is primarily used as a hub for coordination between regional troops, as well as functioning as a repository for all the records of every girl scout there ever was. Furthermore, in conjunction with the Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace and Museum in Savannah, Georgia (Low is the founder of the Girl Scouts); it acts as the keeper of the history of the Girl Scouts of the USA. It is a non-profit organization funded primarily by government grants. In contrast, the IASHS is a graduate level school, approved by the State of California Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education. According to its website, it offers courses dealing with Sex Education, Clinical Sexology,

AIDS/STI Prevention, and Erotology. The organization exists to provide graduate level training for people in the field of human sexuality (IASHS Home Page).

Despite the differences between the organizations, they both hold extensive moving image archives. As a repository of the history of the Girl Scouts, they are responsible for everything from theatrically released 35mm prints of recruitment films from as early as 1918 (such as their copy of *The Golden Eaglet*) to digital videos taken on cell phones and uploaded to YouTube. The IASHS holds over 100,000 videotapes and over 300,000 films as part of their special collection. In fact, the Girl Scouts hold moving images in a variety of formats, including 8mm film, Super 8mm film, and 16mm film, as well as VHS and Umatic videotape. This is due to the majority of their collection being produced as home movies by girl scouts themselves. Pamela Cruz, the head preservationist of the Girl Scouts, informed me that they even have film of Eleanor Roosevelt visiting a girl scout troop. In contrast, the IASHS's holdings are primarily used for scholarly research and as in-class teaching aids. However, both collections are available for access.

Since each organization's holdings are uniquely specialized, their accessibility is carefully regulated. This part of the survey will first compare the physical access between the institutions, followed by the virtual access, then examining the intellectual access. Since I visited the Girl Scouts headquarters, I will start there. Located in Midtown Manhattan on the 17th floor of a building at 420 5th St., the headquarters of the Girl Scouts of the USA is a mixed-use office, museum, and archive. However, the archival material housed in this building is all paper and textile (i.e., Girl Scout uniforms, sashes, and badges). The moving image material is housed off-site at a storage facility called Dataguard in Stamford, Connecticut. Both Archives are climate and humidity controlled. Although the public is encouraged to visit the museum, physical access

to materials is limited. In order to view moving image materials, a researcher must fill out an application. Since the film and videotape is located off-site, a researcher is instead encouraged to view a DVD at the museum which has several different examples of the Girl Scouts' holdings. A researcher can still request a film or videotape to be delivered from Stamford, but according to Ms. Cruz, no one has ever done this.

Physical access at the IASHS is much more restrictive and complicated. This is primarily due to the lack of accessibility on their website (more on this below). I ended up being forced to call the librarian, Jerry Zientara, to inquire about physical access. According to their website, the school incorporates eighteen specialty libraries, including the Erotic Heritage Museum in Las Vegas, Nevada, as repositories of their various holdings. According to Mr. Zientara, however, the main library on-campus has a large portion of their moving image collection. None of this collection is available online due to the graphic content in it. However, if a researcher submits a letter, subject to approval, requesting access, they will most likely be allowed to use the collection if they travel to San Francisco. Otherwise, the collection is primarily intended for students, faculty, and staff. Furthermore, if an outside researcher came to the library, a library staff member would be required to obtain any items requested by the scholar. The librarian did not inform me as to whether or not they have the ability to screen film at the library, but they do have VCR's and DVD players on-site to view material. This library is a closed library, in other words, with absolutely no virtual access.

Both the Girl Scouts and the IASHS offer incredibly poor virtual access to their collections. The Girl Scout website provides a history of the girl scouts as well as dedicates a page to the museum. This page provides a picture of the interior of the museum and indicates that there is a moving image collection, among those which are paper and textile based. The

website does not offer links to any of the materials that are archived. The only thing the website does include is a link to a pdf of the application form that researchers can print up and fill out in order to view materials. Aside from this, the Girl Scouts have their own “channel” on YouTube that is dedicated to material produced by and for the Girl Scouts. I found the virtual access at the Girl Scouts of the USA to be unaccommodating and disappointing for a publicly funded institution.

The IASHS website is even less accommodating than that of the Girl Scouts. Although the graphic adult nature of their holdings makes the lack of accessibility understandable, they do not list any of the eighteen libraries that they are affiliated with. They do not list their on-campus library hours. They do list Jerry Zientara in the faculty list, although they do not provide any contact information. I had to contact the registrar’s office first in order to get Mr. Zientara’s contact info. I was quite disappointed in this at first until I realized that this is not a public organization and that this specific material could conceivably be offensive to some.

The lack of virtual access at each institution was indicative of the general lack of intellectual access provided to outside researchers. At the Girl Scouts, I discovered that they do not actually have a digital catalog of any of their holdings. They still use a card catalog. They do have an Excel spreadsheet containing titles of films and videos that have actually been checked, but the bulk of the moving image collection has not even been looked at yet. Therefore, they have been reluctant to publish this digital list online.

Similarly, the IASHS does not include any kind of catalog of their holdings online. In fact, they do not indicate that they are affiliated with the Erotic Heritage Museum, nor do they indicate which other libraries they are linked to. There is no link to an on-campus library catalog,

such as Bobcat, the one used here at New York University. Therefore, there are no finding aids or any kind of online source that can help a researcher locate a particular item. For each institution, an outside researcher must first contact either the head preservationist or the head librarian and either asks what their holdings are or asks for specific items and hopes the institution has it.

Since the Girl Scouts of the USA and the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality carry such specialized collections of moving image material, a researcher may be led to believe that these materials would be more readily accessible. Both collections contain rare items that should be advertised as accessible in order to generate enthusiasm for the archives. In the case of the Girl Scouts, they are a non-profit public institution that simply struggles to afford the archive that they have due to the lack of grants being approved in the recently depressed economy. In talking with Pamela Cruz, I believe that accessibility is at the forefront of all the preservation work that she does. However, they are stifled by their lack of funds. In the case of the IASHS, they are not a public institution. They are a school and the students' tuitions pay for access. As an academic entity, they are willing to entertain requests to use their archives by outside researchers; however, what is contained in these archives is uncertain. Unfortunately, the adult content of this archive is also potentially offensive and inappropriate for certain age ranges which also contributes to the lack of a web presence. In talking with Jerry Zientara, accessibility is less an issue than the material's content. At the same time, the institution is reluctant to let the material leave the premises of the school. Personally, I think each collection deserves to be more accessible. The Girl Scouts need volunteers to help assess and catalog their moving image holdings in order to let these titles be shown online. The IASHS would be well-served in simply

providing library hours and some contact information. Until this happens, each collection is essentially invisible and therefore inaccessible.

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