An Archivist WALKS INTO A FILM VFX COMPANY...

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IDCC 19 LIGHTNING TALK
AGENDA

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03 Research Project
04 Conclusion
Evanthia has worked in the Australian archive sector since 2013 and is currently employed at Public Record Office Victoria. She is undertaking her doctoral studies at the University of Technology Sydney’s Animal Logic Academy.
Film visual effects (VFX) is a creative and technical field of film production. It utilises digital filming technologies and computer-generated imagery (CGI) in situations where visual elements such as a scene, character or effect is required for a film, yet, cannot be achieved during live-action shooting.
Ant-Man & the Wasp

VFX by DNEG © Marvel Studios
compositing & effects

3d modelling & animation

texture & lighting

VFX by DNEG © Marvel Studios
My doctoral research is a unique industry-centred project based at the UTS Animal Logic Academy.

My research aims to improve archiving practice within the industry to ensure that significant VFX materials are digitally preserved over time.
The industry does not employ digital curation or archiving specialists. They instead rely on IT to manage all data archiving and curation.

**CURRENT Practice**

Much effort is made during production to manage data sets and CGI files through production pipelines from concept to final shot.

However, once the shots are delivered to the client, limited resources are allocated to the ongoing curation of data and digital objects for future use and research.
The industry does not have consistent archiving practices in place besides writing data onto passive Linear Tape Open (LTO) formats.

New standardised, open source formats and tools are being introduced such as Pixar’s USD format which will support data exchange between VFX and animation applications and vendors. There’s nothing yet in place to consistently address archiving long-term preservation.
ARCHIVING Challenges

COMPLEX
VFX assets and records are diverse in format and large volumes of data are generated on each project.

COPYRIGHT
VFX studios and artists do not usually own rights to their work. They are “work for hire”. Generally film studios own the rights to VFX materials.

OBsolescence
VFX materials are produced within evolving production pipeline environments using tools, software and hardware that constantly change from project to project.
RESEARCH Approach

PARTNERSHIPS

To learn about current practice and determine solutions, I am partnering with various VFX studios to conduct interviews, surveys, and observational research with experienced VFX practitioners.

COLLABORATION

I am also collaborating with digital preservation specialists in Australia and abroad to learn about the archiving and curation of other types of complex digital objects.
process

**SELECTION & Appraisal**
Identify digital assets and records that have historical and/or cultural value and which warrant ongoing retention and preservation as archives.

**ARRANGEMENT & Description**
Determine which archival and metadata standards and models could be applied (or created) to arrange and describe archived VFX industry assets and records.

**RESOURCE Co-Development**
Co-develop a resource/tool that outlines archival concepts and recommended approaches to support digital archiving and preservation practice in the film VFX industry.
ARCHIVING Benefits

**PRESERVATION & Access**

Ensures first-hand evidence about the how, why and who of various film projects is preserved and accessible over time.

**PRODUCTION Support**

Provides valuable evidence and knowledge to support current and future VFX production decision-making and processes.

**FUTURE INSIGHT & Research**

Offers historical and cultural insights into general filmmaking, visual storytelling, technical production and digital design practices.
THANK YOU

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About UTS ALA: https://animallogicacademy.uts.edu.au/

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