

Artmob SSHRC ITST Grant Meeting 2

Oct 20, 2006 – Video Cabaret, Queen Street West, Toronto

In attendance:	
Artmob	Rosemary Coombe Darren Wershler-Henry Christopher Innes
Artmob Research Staff	Brady Curlew, RA David Meurer, RA
Artists/Researchers	Deborah Fels (Ryerson University) Michael Hollingsworth (Video Cabaret) Deanne Taylor (Video Cabaret)
Stop 14 Media/Coach House/Scream Developers	Bill Kennedy

Video Cabaret Overview

Started in A Space: a 2-Story coach house

- Not many institutions, so people gathered in those institutions that were separate
- The arts scene was starting to get into multidisciplinary practices
- Began Plays that were embroidered with video, e.g. in the midst of 70 TVs and a rock band
- Possibly one of the first new theatre modes since WWII, using video tape to enact live performance
- Canada's own original theatre format – resented and unacknowledged due to the Toronto origins, not London or NYC
- Use of technology for live performance is/was cutting edge

Artmob is building research network of artists and scholars, bringing parties together

- Hybrid theatre form + Internet: How do you plug these artistic ventures into an online framework?

Christopher Innes - ModernDrama.com

- Standard theatre chronology;
- Archive of resources for street theatre video clips;
- Lots of video not yet up on the website;

- Preserving and recording the event, but also making street theatre available for study as an art form;

Canadian Foundation for Innovation – funds infrastructure

- In this case the software and CMS are the infrastructure that makes more materials available for study, enables connections between artists, researchers, students, etc.

Bill Kennedy – Stop14/Scream/CoachHousePress

- Every arts group in the country has a collection of shared basic needs e.g. mailing lists, CMS, etc. Expertise is being pooled, under the open source model, to make tools usable and sharable by other arts groups;
- Gathering the information on what arts groups need the software to do – then stand back and see how it works: what does, what doesn't? Where do problems arise e.g. with IP issues, copyright, etc?
- Tools not being monetized;
- Artmob is a sophisticated, database-driven tool that enables web development without technical knowledge;
- From the research perspective, can see what kinds of content, what people are accessible, how it's being used;

Deanne Taylor – VideoCabaret

- Actors, equity contracts can pose obstacles – up to 1985 is non-equity, but later work is equity and could cause issues – most want the material up there, but aren't sure about the union implications;
- Always able to tape a show, in television quality (archival tapes – not meant to be used in for-profit scenarios);
- Artmob can develop new licenses that address these issues to make it easier to access;
- Gathering permissions, getting money, and then distributing funds to a large group can be a nightmare;
- User types and accounts could enable the ability to flag items;
- Research of legal tools and software tools to solve problems: e.g. methods for posting online, but enable automatic approval e.g. "This is me and I give my permission" or, "If you were in this performance, please contact us", etc.;
- Eventually, hopefully the Toronto Reference Library can post their Canadian Theatre Archive content online using this system.

Deborah Fels – Education, Accessibility

- Have a CMS for education materials, especially arts space;
- Resources for high school and other teachers/instructors;
- Techniques and software to make resources accessible to people with disabilities;

- E.g. video description – for visually impaired to watch TV – descriptions of what’s important visually, inserted between dialogue elements;
- Available in Canada, required, but no live work;
- E.g. Ryerson fashion Show;
- Ideally the Video Description will be lively art on its own, something to augment, not just transliterate in a pale way:
 - More like sports commentating – add a layer to the performance;
 - E.g. also describe costume, aspects of set design that are not evident to the visually impaired, age of characters;
- For Hamlet – the director is taking responsibility for the describing, not offloading the task to someone else e.g. “Accessibility is someone else’s job”;
- (Provides a layer of metadata)
- Tool for sign language – ability to link inside videos;
- Link content within video to other videos (kind of visual hypertext);
- Enables hearing impaired to build their own websites;
- Also has a speed control for the sign language to slow down;
- Video hyperlinking, also “videolets” for moving backwards, or forwards;
- Enables the ability to put sign language on the web – since there is no spoken or written form, the only way to have it on the web is as video or animation;
- Also working on a video-based bulletin board;
- Exemplar site is www.ASLpah.ca;
- Can download software;

Video Cabaret

- Bernice is working at CCAC Centre for Contemporary Arts in Canada (?)
- Will be digitizing early VideoCab video, editing into pieces;

Demo

- In the context of 3-day tech set up, it was difficult to get enough time to properly set up black box works, or works with much stagecraft;
- Michael wrote 5-15 works in his History Play series;
- Began remounting plays, easier than doing new plays;
- Began concentrating on students and teachers – more demand than capacity;
- New ways to bring shows into schools:
 - Productions within schools of the plays, rich schools even using the VideoCab set designer;
 - First 8 plays lead up to WWII – Cold war;
 - Because the number of characters is so high, can involve a whole department of actors, lighting, sets, etc.;
 - Innes: Perhaps VC could put their own productions online as references for the original creative and dramatic intent?;
 - Would not be difficult to take what is online and deploy within a Drupal / CMS environment;
 - Some of the videos of performances are useful just as is – without the live feel – as long as the teacher can use the video as a way to engage and excite students;

- VC would also like to make the plays available online for purchase e.g. \$10;
- What is the banner under which these projects will be flying? Artmob?
- No: there are multiple front doors, each participant can have multiple entry points; it's the same database, but one user might access it via the VideoCab home page, another might source some information from the Artmob website where various culture groups are featured;
- Artmob wants to develop showcase projects: VC has text, programs, images, video, "rock and roll" – lots of great content of interest to those studying history, English, drama, theatre;
- Artmob has money for development – not for digitizing; Artmob can help find funding sources for the arts organizations, but can't apply for them;
- Making resources available online can help support expanding the performance portion of VC's activities e.g. providing resources for follow up assignments and viewings;
- Can post bibliographies for the plays on the website;
- Funding for making more Canadian content available online for study and as resources is very available;
- Putting up the history plays is the best starting point; pre-equity material is easiest in terms of licensing and permissions;
- Bernice starting with the first plays; after 5-6 years she will be getting into the history plays;

What does Video Cabaret have?

- 3 cupboards.
- Currently Sony Reel to reel (being digitized – just started, 200 hours (up to 1980), starting with 50 hours which might be 10); selection process e.g. best-preserved, then best performances;
- How are you digitizing and in what order (VTape is converting)?
 - Has to be viewed, then cleaned (becomes stable for another 20 years, goes off to storage);
 - Digitized to DV format (becomes new source/master);
 - Then stored on hard drive;
 - Logged;
 - Viewed;
 - Edited.
- Would be prudent to locate an archivist to have on board, to take the reel to reel copies, and to backup the DV files to a hard drive as well;
- There will be challenges in presentation – short clips? Full-length streaming copies?
- \$75/hr gets them to ½ inch tape;
- Where can money be found to increase the hours of video that are digitized? Or to build a playback space?
- VHS can be converted at VC space – not a problem (though could look for an RA to do this potentially);

- Once reel-to-reel has been digitized, the materials can be donated to an archive for cash or a tax credit;

- **Would whoever wants the reel-to-reel material for archive also fund the digitization?? U of Guelph? TRL?**

- Artmob to explore funding sources

** Artmob's policy portal is an Engine for Policy Reform