

# A New Cultural Imperative

**Encouraging students to work with video with the same fluency they have with text is one of the key teaching and learning priorities for higher education. In recognition of this challenge, JISC has commissioned a Film & Sound Think Tank of experts to advise on developments in film, radio, music and television and how digital media will enable their use in an educational setting.**

**The Think Tank, and indeed this supplement, brings together and engages those responsible for national initiatives, cultural institutions, commercial companies and broadcasters of film and sound, to consider and construct ways in which the latent potential of this media can be fully realised.**

Increasingly we live and work in a world where the new vernacular is the image, moving and still – often combined with sound, and expressed through video, television and radio. Digital technology has not slowed down its growth, it has simply provided new platforms and faster opportunities for distribution. However, the popularity of these media is no guarantee of fluency of expression.

For centuries, scholarship and self-expression has revolved around text. The challenge today to educational centres is to produce students that can also express themselves, make their arguments, support their hypotheses, and cite and refer to television, films, radio and music – the dominant media of the last 100 years.

Providing facilities for students to become more adept at using these kinds of media is in many ways our new cultural imperative.

## Calls for New Strategies

The JISC Film & Sound Think Tank, co-chaired by Paul Gerhardt and Peter B. Kaufman, is one systematic effort to provide guidance in these areas by engaging a range of experts from cultural heritage to public service broadcasting.

The context is startling. Watching all the video that is posted on to YouTube on any single day would be a full-time job for someone for 15 years! And yet, neither YouTube nor any other resource has had legal access to such great cultural audio-visual libraries of the 20th century as the BBC or the US National Archives.

Our approaches to providing access for education have to change. The JISC Film & Sound Think Tank has commissioned



research and new productions (see p.4) that highlight and explore many of the key issues surrounding access to audio-visual collections and tools and current barriers to using them.

## Ongoing Efforts

As it explores the field, the Think Tank has highlighted the following areas for development:

- The need for sustainable and ongoing national and international content strategies
- The growing importance of close partnerships between major content holders such as the BBC, the BFI National Film and Television Archive and the UK Film Council
- The development of new purpose-built educational audio-visual repositories
- The encouragement of the growth of educational podcasting
- The need for comprehensive strategic services developed by producers and educators together – services that

distribute the productions and tools being created at educational institutions with content across subject interests

- The need to consider implications of the rise of video in widely used information sites such as Wikipedia

On this last point, special consideration is required as Wikipedia opens its doors to video – video that can be downloaded, annotated, used and re-used for any purpose. Not only will the world of access grow significantly richer, but the skills required to engage in that world will be more essential.

When we can explore freely, we produce marvels. In art, John Akomfrah has made visual poetry out of television archives. In journalism, Adam Curtis has used long forgotten moving images to reveal fascinating contemporary stories on his BBC blog. In education, Eric Faden demonstrates how students can begin to write and construct an argument with video.

There are many media interventions that JISC and others will continue to sponsor and, as a result, the number of rich-media projects will grow in absolute and relative terms. One thing is certain: equipping the next generation with skills in these areas will provide them with new ways of building knowledge in the 21st century.

## Links

On John Akomfrah's film *Mnemosyne*, see reviews by Ken Russell (<http://tinyurl.com/y9m4u4g>) and Sukhdev Sandu (<http://tinyurl.com/2w3rnl8>)

Adam Curtis, BBC blog: [www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/adamcurtis](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/adamcurtis)

**Eric Faden** is an Associate Professor of English and Film Studies at Bucknell University: [www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/efaden](http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/efaden)

**Paul Gerhardt** runs the UK-based media consultancy, Archives for Creativity: [www.archivesforcreativity.com/about.aspx](http://www.archivesforcreativity.com/about.aspx)

**Peter B. Kaufman** is president and executive producer of Intelligent Television: [www.intelligenttelevision.com](http://www.intelligenttelevision.com)

# Feature Film: SP-ARK, a Living Archive

The SP-ARK project is transforming and challenging the way in which film and sound content is incorporated into an active learning experience, initially using the archive of UK film-maker **Sally Potter** and her production company Adventure Pictures.

Sally Potter, UK film-maker and director of the film 'Orlando' amongst many others, has always looked to use new technology, both to enhance her work and allow her audience to interact with it as much as possible. Previous projects have included producing customised websites to accompany Potter's film 'Yes' and her production of 'Carmen' for the English National Opera.

Potter's reputation as one of the UK's foremost film directors has also meant that her work is taught across many disciplines, at schools and universities, and is also a popular research topic. Consequently Adventure Pictures, Potter's production company, receives many more requests for access to archival material than it can possibly handle. Hence the idea of putting these materials online and democratising access to them.

The SP-ARK project is an online education resource based on the working archive of Sally Potter...

As Adventure Pictures' Clare Holden explains, 'The SP-ARK project is an online education resource based on the working archive of Sally Potter, featuring unique content ranging from annotated scripts, screen tests and production diaries, to personal notes, production schedules, budgets and behind-the-scenes photographs.

'SP-ARK offers both film-makers and students an entirely new and pioneering approach to the use of archive material. Current development will see a revolutionary video browsing tool allowing



users to access individual frames and shots from the finished film ("Orlando" in this case) and link them to all the related production material, such as script pages and continuity reports.

'As such, the aim is to preserve Potter's entire archive to date, not only of her film work but also her writing and music, all contained within SP-ARK, which in turn will grow as the online community adds its own unique voices to the materials.

Acceptance of a film-maker to make their archive so openly available is one thing but including current content is quite another. However, in the pipeline, there are also plans to make it a 'real-time' archive with access to materials relating to current work-in-progress. Certainly, as far as Holden and her colleague Christopher Sheppard are aware, this has never been done before in a film archive or indeed with any current, ongoing material.

The opportunities for film students are clear and manifold. The SP-ARK project team wants students to also be able to 'contribute to the integration of moving image and media files into academic projects and student assessment through "pathways", allowing users to attach notes to a series of objects chosen from the archives and then saved as thumbnails. In this way, users are able to tag and blog their way around the SP-ARK database, as well as commenting on blogs by other users.

'The idea behind this feature is to create and build links between the archive and its users, resulting in a "living archive".'

In addition to this, the SP-ARK project team is developing other ways for students and other users to access video content, including the possibility of remixes. The idea would be to allow the resulting works or 'video essays' to be uploaded and shared with other users.

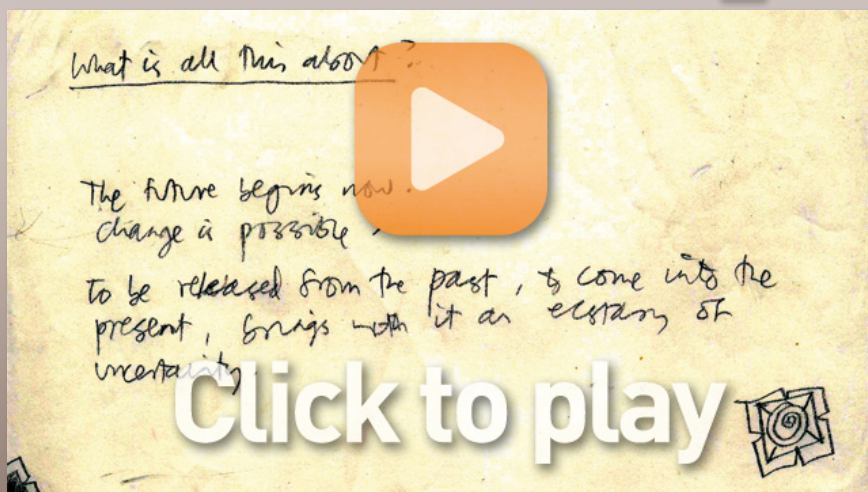
The benefits and wider implications of SP-ARK's *modus operandi* is not only limited to students. 'It also provides an attractive digital solution to preserving a wide variety of materials in a range of mediums.' In addition, new arenas for discussion and comment have meant that this valuable content is made accessible to an even wider and more diverse audience (outside the educational institution and to the public at large); as Holden puts it, 'instigating a dialogue that may completely change how audiences interpret a film.'

But SP-ARK may not just be confined to the film world, as the expectation is to make the platform available to documentary film-makers and artists of any description. For example, 'visual artists will be able to share first draft sketches and reference texts or objects that inform their work, and musicians will be able to show how a piece of music is constructed from initial concept to the final composition and recording.'

Holden concludes 'We see SP-ARK as an organic exhibition space which has the power to make the creative process itself accessible to the public as an open source resource.'

## SP-ARK Introductory Video

Duration  
06:52 mins



SP-ARK's approach to social learning based on the work of film-maker Sally Potter.

## Links

SP-ARK project: [www.sp-ark.org](http://www.sp-ark.org)

The film 'Yes' website:  
[www.yesthemovie.co.uk](http://www.yesthemovie.co.uk)

'Carmen' for the English National Opera:  
[www.sallypotter.com/taxonomy/term/37](http://www.sallypotter.com/taxonomy/term/37)

Sally Potter website: [www.sallypotter.com](http://www.sallypotter.com)

# What's That? New Ways to Access Audio-visual Heritage

Encouraging different ways to harness the 'power of the crowd' has long been a residing ambition for many working in the creation and management of audio-visual content. **Drs Johan Oomen** explains how the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision has implemented a series of ground-breaking projects to realise the power of this untapped potential.

The Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (Sound and Vision) is one of Europe's largest audio-visual archives. Sound and Vision is a front-runner in developing innovative access routes to its collection through a variety of targeted services and is a key partner in the EUscreen Best Practice Network and the PrestoPRIME Integrated Project. It boasts a fully digital workflow for annotation, storage and reuse that has been operational for four years. With its 'Images for the Future' programme, Sound and Vision is experimenting with new services that support active engagement with end-users.

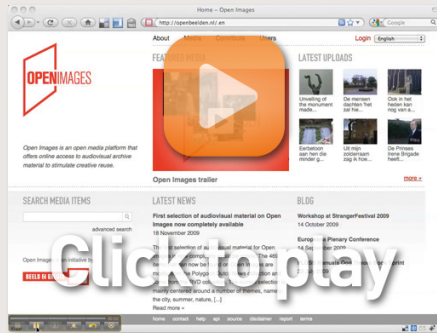


## Waisda? A Video Labelling Game

In order to bridge the semantic gap between professional annotations and queries by users, the goal of 'Waisda?', which translates to 'What's That?', is to collect user tags – the world's first video labelling game in the cultural heritage field. Using tags and their time-stamps, intra-video search is enhanced, offering people a new way of interacting with television programmes by inviting players to tag what they see and hear. In this way, Waisda? is creating innovative, new pathways for connecting with the television archive.

## Open Images

'Open Images' is an open media platform that offers online access to audio-visual archive material from various sources. The aim is to stimulate creative re-use, and so it allows footage from collections to be downloaded and remixed into new works.



In addition, users have the opportunity to add their own material to the 'Open Images', thus expanding the collection. Open Images also provides an API, making it easy to develop mashups. The platform currently offers access to over 750 items from the Sound and Vision archives, notably from the newsreel collection. New items will be uploaded continuously by Sound and Vision and third parties such as EYE Film Institute Netherlands and archives in the EUscreen Best Practice Network.

Fundamental to the operation of this service is that items are available under Creative Commons licences or are part of the 'Public Domain' and labelled as such. The 'open' nature of the platform is further underscored by the use of open video formats (Ogg Theora), open standards (HTML5, OAI-PMH) and open source software components. Furthermore, all software that is developed within the scope of Open Images is released under the GNU General Public Licence. Items published on Open Images and the accompanying descriptions (metadata) are accessible through an Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH).

## Future Plans

In 2010, further work will focus on:

1. **Video on Wikipedia.** In cooperation with Wikimedia Netherlands, 'Open Images' continuously contributes audio-visual content to the Wikimedia Commons. Currently, OAI-PMH-based technology is developed to fully automate the ingestion process. Already more than 200 items from Open Images have been uploaded and are used to enrich hundreds of textual Wikipedia entries with related

audio-visual content. In March 2009, these entries were viewed over 500,000 times. This shows the potential for the audio-visual heritage sector to collaborate with the Wikimedia Foundation to reach new and greater audiences.

2. **Open Video on Mobile Devices.** By the end of 2010, Sound and Vision will launch a new location-based service offering mobile access to relevant audio-visual heritage related to historical landmarks. This service consists of a mobile application that connects to a Drupal installation that is used to harvest relevant open repositories (Open Images, Wikipedia, Flickr Commons) and relate harvested items to landmarks (and their corresponding geolocations). Users of the application can consult these items on-site – based on their GPS location – and also contribute their own material to the landmarks.



Collaborating with online users can result in exciting new ways to interact with heritage. They stimulate audience interest and are thus instrumental in securing future sustainability for archives.

## Links

Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision: <http://instituut.beeldengeluid.nl>

Waisda? Project: [www.waisda.nl](http://www.waisda.nl)

Open Images: [www.openimages.eu](http://www.openimages.eu)

EYE Film Institute Netherlands: [www.eyefilm.nl](http://www.eyefilm.nl)

EUscreen: [www.euscreen.eu](http://www.euscreen.eu)

GNU General Public License: [www.openimages.eu/source](http://www.openimages.eu/source)

# A Thousand Pictures

As Murray Schafer put it, 'While a picture is worth a thousand words, a sound is worth a thousand pictures'.

**Richard Ranft**, Head of the Sound Archive at the British Library, describes the treasures of sound recordings and current efforts to make these accessible.



© Linguaphone

Today's 'media agnostic' researchers want access to all kinds of information, regardless of whether it is in the form of text, images or sound. Much of our collective memory and heritage of the 20th century and beyond is held in the medium of sound; however, most historical recordings are 'trapped' in obsolescent formats such as open reel tapes and 78rpm discs. This is also true of the British Library's sound collections, formed over 55 years ago, and holding over 3.5 million recordings of music, spoken word and environmental sounds dating from the pre-Edison dawn of sound recording in 1857 to last week's UK music chart hits.

However, the significance of collections like the British Library's is being transformed in the digital age thanks to digitisation. Already, 45,000 archive recordings are available on the JISC-funded Archival Sound Recording website to UK researchers in higher and further education (and half of these are accessible by anyone worldwide).

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The scholarly value of recordings is considerable. Sounds bring back to life fleeting moments from the past, giving a sense of time and place, documenting our culture, heritage, environment, region and national identity. Indeed, sound can give insights in ways that the printed word can not.

Recordings at the British Library are used in many ways. For example, biographer Nicholas Murray listening to Aldous Huxley's BBC Radio appearances at the British Library (in his researches for 'Aldous Huxley: An English Intellectual'), said 'If the person is deceased ... they offer the best opportunity to get close to your subject ... to form an intuitive way of understanding them from how they express themselves.'

But simply unlocking sounds is not enough. We need to help overcome technological barriers to access, to work with copyright owners to broaden access to recordings for research and education. Further, we must encourage the use of new tools to help integrate time-based media into scholarship i.e. tools that find and analyse recordings using automated speech-to-text or music matching and feature extraction. These tools could then subsequently reliably reference online recordings using universal, persistent identifiers down to sub-track level and time-based collaborative annotation features, that integrate audio and video

search alongside other documents. (The British Library's beta catalogue <http://searchbeta.bl.uk/> now includes 3.5 million catalogue details for sound and video alongside 13 million books, serials, printed music, maps and newspapers.)



To illustrate how digitisation can unleash unexpected lines of

study, consider this old recording made available last year with the agreement of Linguaphone, the publishers, which was originally a commercial release as an English-language learning aid: <http://bit.ly/shPGW>. The recording now has little value for the purpose for which it was originally created, but has increasing historical significances that simply could not have been imagined when it was created in 1929. The recording has interest for linguists in the development of English pronunciation, for social historians, as it describes, in an archaic delivery style, a once common activity for English gentlemen (the weekly visit to the tobacconists shop), as well as for writers – the tutor in this case was none other than 'Lords of the Rings' author and philologist JRR Tolkien!

## Links

JISC archival sounds case studies:  
<http://sounds.bl.uk/CaseStudies.aspx>  
Archival Sound Recordings:  
<http://sounds.bl.uk>

## JISC Film & Sound Think Tank productions:

All of these videos can be found at [www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/filmandsound.aspx](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/filmandsound.aspx)  
Podcasts can be found at [www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/filmandsound/meetings.aspx](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/filmandsound/meetings.aspx)

### Higher Education Broadcasting

Three visions for contemporary educational media. (28 min)

### Building Film & Sound Resources for Education

How JISC has built up its audio-visual collections. (8.5 min)

### Opening Documentaries for Teaching & Learning: The Brook Lapping Case Study

A major documentary company explores its relationship with educational resources. (11.25 min)

### Copyright and Moving Images in Education

OU staff tackle Open Access to resources. (8.14 min)

### Unlocking Artists' Rights

Bringing actors and musicians into open access media. (11.04 min)

### Using Audio in Higher Education

The growth of podcasting and audio recording. (6.17 min)

### Podcast: Think Tank Meeting 3

The JISC Steeple project. Using video in sports science.

### Podcast: Think Tank Meeting 4

BBC archives copyright strategy. Using Creative Commons.

### Podcast: Think Tank Meeting 5

Primary visual resources. The British Sound Library.

### Podcast: Think Tank Meeting 6

Wikipedia video.