

# Let the Archives Thrive!

Rick Prelinger

Internet Archive / Prelinger Archives

SURA/ViDe

27 March 2006

# Your Name Here!

- Your Programs Here
- Your Audience Here
- Your Infrastructure Here
- Your Revenue (if any) Here
- Your Archives Here
- Your Migration Path Here...

# The Opportunity

- Enrich our public sphere by making educational, scholarly and archival resources freely available to all
- Make archives as freely accessible as the law permits
- Anticipate emerging and future areas of interest by establishing open media repositories that can support new queries

The public sphere:  
unpredictable, but rewarding

Amazing things happen when you  
unburden primary resources of  
restrictions and make them available  
to ordinary people

# “Wholesale” vs. “Retail”

Researcher/scholar users have given  
way to an increasingly broad  
community of users

# “Legacy” archival access

- Sticky door rather than open door
- Door gets stickier as media gets richer
- Potentially illegal (copyright restrictions)
- Violates contracts (e.g., donor or distributor restrictions)
- Expensive (staffing, inadequate budgets)
- Risky (material held in secret)
- Impossible (lack of screening copies)
- Poor use of resources (“I want to see a movie”)

# Expansive access

- We need to redefine access as a broad spectrum of possible interactions between archives and users to the full extent that law permits
- Viewing
- Downloading
- Sharing and redistributing
- Quotation, excerpting, recontextualization
- Free to crawl, index, navigate
- Anywhere, anytime
- Digitization on demand?

## Browsable, searchable, grazeable archives

- Moving image archives rethought as visual encyclopedias
- Revalidation of empiricism through serendipity
- Anticipate and point to new fields of interest to scholars and teachers
- Remediate problems of dealing with time-based media
- Segmentation (a lecture in itself)

## Archives: a few little-known characteristics

- Archival moving image material extends from 1894 to a few minutes ago
- Bundles of rights, but often fewer and less tangled than you might think
- Once marginal, now mainstream
- Potentially competitive with current and new productions
- Archival access has multiplier effect: media businesses, public literacy, more access events

Today's argument:

Openness:  
not an elective position,  
needs to be our default

Archives are justified by use

# The Problem(s)

- Openness begets opposition (DRM, monetization)
- Media industry problems affect archives
- Archives lack robust tradition of openness (in contrast to libraries); anti-populism
- Tradition of archival invisibility
- Minimum standards tend to become maximum standards
- Perfectionism (let's wait awhile till we get it right)
- “Video is different” than text, stills, research data

## ... *and* The Dangers

- Our constituencies, funders and the public will conclude that archives are irrelevant to their needs
- Social and cultural consensus that keeps archives in existence will wither away
- Potential users will see us as obstacles to, rather than facilitators of access (some do already)
- Ahistoricity will become the standard
- Archives will serve a declining number of aging patrons  
and...

# The Your Name Here Story?

- Premature adoption of apparent one-stop solutions
- Primary public access to archival materials shifts over to privately controlled web services
- Heavily promoted commercial services create perception that libraries, archives and even educational institutions are superfluous
- Unequal partnerships in digitizing and distribution
- Noncommercial institutions become unduly dependent on commercial or closed technologies

Model of scarcity  
vs.  
model of plenty  
(Lessig)

# A small openness case study

Prelinger Archives/Internet Archive  
online partnership, 2001-present

# Prelinger Archives

- Historical film archives & stock footage library
- Organized 1983, incorporated 1985
- 48,000 titles + 30,000 cans unedited footage
- Approx. 29,000 titles in public domain
- Approx. 1,000 copyrighted titles owned outright
- Repped by Archive Films (now Getty Images) since 1994
- Collection acquired by Library of Congress in 2002, but stock footage sales rights retained

# Prelinger Archives, 1983-2000

- Strict physical control of air-quality copies
- Time-coded screeners
- Rigid reporting requirements
- Occasional, sparse “freebie” usage by artists, community mediamakers, scholars, students, filmmaker friends
- Laserdisc & CD-ROM releases on Voyager

# Internet Archive/Prelinger Archives partnership

1999: “Want to put your archives online?”

January 3, 2001: 270 films go up on IA website

Summer 2002: 1,001 films

Summer 2004: 2,000 films



# Characteristics of IA/Prelinger films

- Downloadable, shareable, reusable
- MPEG-2 “master” format (28 MB/minute)
- DivX, MPEG-4, QT & Real access formats
- Each film has “detail page” and metadata
- Files easily converted to DV for editing
- Creative Commons “public domain” license
- Many available thru Open Video Project

# Two-tier licensing system

## FREE

- downloads
- Creative Commons licenses
- self-indemnification
- user does own research
- automated
- DIY

## FEE

- physical copies (high-res)
- specific written agreements in producer's name
- reps/warranties/indemnities
- user gets research services
- lots of human intervention
- value added

Internet Archive: Prelinger Archives

http://www.archive.org/movies/prelinger.php

Firefox Help Firefox Support Google TheCounter.com: Log... The New York Times... craigslist: san franci... San Francisco Bay Ar... Main Page - Wikiped... T-Mobile - BlackBer... Snap >>

**INTERNET ARCHIVE**

[Web](#) | [Moving Images](#) | [Texts](#) | [Audio](#) | [Software](#) | [Patron Info](#) | [About IA](#)

[Home](#) | [Prelinger Archives](#) | [Open Source Movies](#) | [Feature Films](#) | [Game Videos](#) | [Computer Chronicles](#) | [Net Café](#) | [Election 2004](#) | [Independent News](#) | [Youth Media](#) | [SIGGRAPH](#) | [MSRI Math Lectures](#) | [Open Mind](#) | [Shaping San Francisco](#) | [Brick Films](#) | [Film Chest Vintage Cartoons](#) | [Mosaic Middle East News](#) | [AV Geeks](#) | [SabuCat Movie Trailers](#) | [Media Burn Archive](#) | [Movie Theater Newsreels](#)

Search:  Prelinger Archives  [Advanced Search](#) Hello Rick Prelinger (not you? [sign in](#) or [log out](#))

### About the Movie Archive

[More about the Internet Moving Images Archive](#)

[Terms, Privacy, Copyright](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

### Welcome to the Prelinger Archives

2,002 movie files

[Prelinger Archives](#) was founded in 1983 by [Rick Prelinger](#) in New York City. Over the next twenty years, it grew into a collection of over 48,000 "ephemeral" (advertising, educational, industrial, and amateur) films. In 2002, the film collection was acquired by the [Library of Congress, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division](#). Prelinger Archives remains in existence, holding approximately 4,000 titles on videotape and a smaller collection of film materials acquired subsequent to the Library of Congress transaction. Its goal remains to collect, preserve, and facilitate access to films of historic significance that haven't been collected elsewhere. Included are films produced by and for many hundreds of important US corporations, nonprofit organizations, trade associations, community and interest groups, and educational institutions. [Getty Images](#) represents the collection for stock footage sale, and some 1,600 (soon to be 2,000) key titles are available here. The collection currently contains over 10% of the total production of ephemeral films between 1927 and 1987, and it may be the most complete and varied collection in existence of films from these poorly preserved genres.

["NEW" - A number of messageboard regulars are [using the Movie Of The Week forum](#) to pick a movie (often a Prelinger collection movie) every week, and have the group members watch and collectively discuss it.]

[Browse for Recent Additions](#) - [RSS](#)

[Browse the Prelinger Archives](#)  
[Browse Alphabetical List](#)

### Top Batting Averages

(what's this?)

- [Why Not Live?](#)  
Batting Average: 45.6%
- [Newport Cigarette Commercial #4](#)  
Batting Average: 41.1%
- [Lucky Strike Cigarette Commercial: Marching Cigarettes](#)  
Batting Average: 41.0%
- [Wonderful New World of Fords, A \(1960 Ford Spot\)](#)  
Batting Average: 40.5%
- [In My Merry Oldsmobile](#)  
Batting Average: 40.4%

[More...](#)

### Contributors


Charlie Churchman  
Greg Allen  
JD Samson  
Josephine Chuang  
Keith Sanborn  
Megan Shaw Prelinger  
Rick Prelinger  
Skip Elsheimer  
Tim Ries

[Top Level Contributors](#)  
[Movies Contributors](#)

### Movie Spotlight

[Down the Gasoline Trail](#)

Cartoon showing what happens to a drop of gasoline from the time it flows into the gas tank to when it is expelled in the engine cylinder. This



### Most Viewed Films

- [Duck and Cover](#)  
185,646 downloads
- [Perversion for Profit \(Part I\)](#)  
104,468 downloads
- [Are You Popular?](#)  
87,001 downloads
- [Lucky Strike Cigarette Commercial: Square Dance](#)  
63,732 downloads

### Rights

Rick Prelinger and [The Internet Archive](#) hereby offer these public domain films from [Prelinger Archives](#) to all for free downloading and reuse.

You are warmly encouraged to download, use and reproduce these

Program Details for Seeing London

http://www.archive.org/movies/details-db.php?collection=prelinger&collectionid=31774

Firefox Help Firefox Support Google TheCounter.com: Log... The New York Times... craigslist: san franci... San Francisco Bay Ar... Main Page - Wikiped... T-Mobile - BlackBer... Snap >>

**INTERNET ARCHIVE**

[Web](#) | [Moving Images](#) | [Texts](#) | [Audio](#) | [Software](#) | [Patron Info](#) | [About IA](#)

[Home](#) | [Prelinger Archives](#) | [Open Source Movies](#) | [Feature Films](#) | [Game Videos](#) | [Computer Chronicles](#) | [Net Café](#) | [Election 2004](#) | [Independent News](#) | [Youth Media](#) | [SIGGRAPH](#) | [MSRI Math Lectures](#) | [Open Mind](#) | [Shaping San Francisco](#) | [Brick Films](#) | [Film Chest Vintage Cartoons](#) | [Mosaic Middle East News](#) | [AV Geeks](#) | [SabuCat Movie Trailers](#) | [Media Burn Archive](#) | [Movie Theater Newsreels](#)

Search:  Prelinger Archives  [Advanced Search](#) Hello Rick Prelinger (not you? [sign in](#) or [log out](#))

The Guildhall where the Lord Mayor's banquets are held - - -

[View movie scenes](#)  
Run Time: 13:06

[Batting Average](#): 32%

**Stream** [?](#)  
DSL: [QT](#)  
[Real](#)

Modem: [QT](#)  
[Real](#)

**Download** [?](#)  
[MPEG2](#) 385.7M  
[DivX](#) 45.2M  
[MPEG4](#) 35.8M  
[MPEG1](#) 145.5M  
[MP4](#) 15.6M  
[XML](#) 882.0B  
[XML](#) 3.6K  
**Editable** [?](#)  
[MPEG4](#) 194.9M

[Download options](#)

**This item is on:**  
movies03.archive.org

NO RIGHTS RESERVED

**Seeing London** [\[Edit\]](#) ca. 1920s

Tour through central parts of London.

**Sponsor:** N/A  
**Producer:** Holmes (Burton)  
**Audio/Visual:** Si, B&W  
**Keywords:** [London](#); [United Kingdom](#); [Travelogues](#)

**Creative Commons license:** [Public Domain](#)

**Added:** July 16, 2002 at 12:00:00  
**Last update:** January 13, 2005 at 09:36:44

**Average User Rating:** [★★★★☆](#) Viewed 2,001 times

**Reviews**

[★★★★☆](#) August 29, 2004 [Write a review](#)

**Reviewer:** [Spuzz](#)  
**Subject:** Where's the London Eye?  
Nice overview of 1920's London, starting with the Parliament buildings, then going around to St. Pauls Cathedral, the Tower of London, and downing street. The film promises we'd get to see royalty too, but all they could muster was a VERY low ranking Duke. Otherwise, pretty randy!

[★★★★☆](#) February 11, 2004  
**Reviewer:** [Steve Bell](#)  
**Subject:** A Londoner's View  
As a born and bred Londoner, I though I'd add my thoughts about this very worthwhile 15 or so minutes.

The primary thing that strikes me is how "little" has changed during the last 80 years! Most of the places shown look identical today. Sure there's probably a few high rise offices blocking some of the views shown in this film, but nothing is unrecognisable.

I wish I could have been there in 1922 to help them write the captions! "The Towers of Parliament" - what? Though they're right about 'St. Stephen's Tower' being the

Transferring data from movies02.archive.org...

version 0.8.7 x version 0.8.6 x version 0.8.5 x

# Access events, 1999 vs. 2004

	Stock sales events	Unpaid production usage	Public screening events	Films distributed to public
1999	200	20	10	5
2004	400	≈ 800	≈ 100	800,000

Jan 2001-Mar 2006: ≈ 4 million films downloaded

# Unpaid production users

- Independent & social-issue mediamakers (no-budget) (IMCs; cable access; Creative Commons contest entrants)
- Documentarians (low-budget) (*The Corporation*; *Fed Up*; *Tupperware*; *Phantom of the Operator*; NPR)
- Artists (People Like Us; Eric Saks)
- Educators (Liz Cohen, Harvard; Brian Balogh, Virginia)
- College students
- Adolescent experimenters
- Museums (Minnesota Science Museum)
- Government agencies (State of Alaska)
- Communities of interest (railfans; telephone collectors)
- Stock footage festivals (Stockstock; UTK; Hopkins)
- Cheap DVD publishers selling DVD-Rs on eBay

# Prelinger Archives net revenue\*

$$2000 = x$$

$$2004 = x + 62\%$$

\*commissions received from Getty Images

# ubiquity = value

- 3-D audience: most often pirated, often emulated
- Let archive users promote collection
- Free tier promotes pay tier
- Trends move up, not down
- Today's remixer, tomorrow's licensee
- Create cadre of young archival devotees
- Historicity doesn't alienate younger producers
- Augment value for creators, create value where there was little or none

# Defining a licensing threshold: a social decision

Paid commercial use

---

Unpaid personal, educational, group use

What triggers a billable event?

Can stakeholders concur?

# Protection strategies

- Physical (worked for analog, sort of)
  - Legal (costly, inefficient, works best within predictable territory, such as b2b, fails for p2p)
  - DRM (functional and consumer issues, see Doctorow)
  - Fee vs free formats (e.g., HDTV threshold)
  - Timeouts
  - None or almost none
- and*
- Value of experimentation (try small pieces)

We have not changed the world, but we  
have performed a successful experiment

What have we learned?

# We feel a bit lonely

- While there has been huge growth of consumer-authored videosharing sites, few archives are online
- Emphasis is still on streaming rather than downloading
- We worry about ongoing public access to the public domain
- We worry that public institutions are going to embrace closed, private and limited online access solutions

# Openness may be sustainable and thrive in a shared environment

principles

interoperability

robust public (“open”) sector

competes with private resources and

keeps them honest

ensures continuing public access to

the public domain

# Open Content Alliance (OCA)

- Currently a project of Internet Archive (IA)
- Coordinating body to build joint collections
- Active working groups
- Aim: to bring digital and newly digitized materials online under principles of openness
- Not media-specific, but focusing on books in Year One

# OCA contributions

Can be:

- Collections (e.g. UC “Americana”, Toronto)
- Funding (Yahoo, MSN, Sloan, libraries)
- Tools (IA, RLG, search engines)
- Services (RLG)
- Facilities (UC, Toronto)

# OCA Principles

1. The OCA will encourage the greatest possible degree of access to and reuse of collections in the archive, while respecting the rights of content owners and contributors.
2. Contributors will determine the terms and conditions under which their collections are distributed and how attribution should be made.
3. The OCA need not be obligated to accept all content that is offered to it and may give preference to that which can be made widely accessible.
4. The OCA will offer collection and item-level metadata of its hosted collections in a variety of formats.
5. The OCA welcomes efforts to create and offer tools (including finding aids, catalogs, and indexes) that will enhance the usability of the materials in the archive.
6. Copies of the OCA collections will reside in multiple archives internationally to ensure their long-term preservation and accessibility to all.

(<http://opencontentalliance.org>)

# OCA Contributors

Adobe Systems Incorporated

Biodiversity Heritage Library, a cooperative project of:

American Museum of Natural History

Harvard University, Botany Libraries

Harvard University, Ernst Mayr Library of the Museum of  
Comparative Zoology

Missouri Botanical Garden

Natural History Museum, London

The New York Botanical Garden

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Smithsonian Institution Libraries

Boston Public Library

Columbia University

Emory University

European Archive

HP Labs

Internet Archive

Johns Hopkins University Libraries

McMaster University

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Missouri Botanical Garden

MSN

National Archives (United Kingdom)

National Library of Australia

O'Reilly Media

Prelinger Archives

Research Libraries Group (RLG)

Rice University

Simon Fraser University

Smithsonian Institution Libraries

University of British Columbia

University of California

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, School of  
Information and Library Science

University of Ottawa

University of Pittsburgh

University of Texas

University of Toronto

University of Virginia

Washington University

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Xerox Corporation

Yahoo!

York University

# OCA Working Groups

- Contributions
- Book Formats
- Description and Digitization Coordination
- Scanning and Data Transfer Protocol
- Digital Preservation
- Video [?]

# OCA Priorities

- Launch an open, joint library with thousands of freely available books (Oct 06)
- “Certify” and label nonbook collections
- Name Executive Director (pending)
- Address workflow issues and toolbuilding through working groups
- Joint + interoperable collections
- Help build partnerships between collections, service providers, toolmakers, funders

# Content as infrastructure

- Build open repositories of unencumbered content
- Material available to all to reproduce, index, and add value
- Innovation and competition happen on service layer
- Openness should function the same way the Internet handles the exchange of bits

# Beyond Copyright Consciousness

- Lawyers do law. Archives and libraries provide access to knowledge and culture. Let's not fetishize copyright and treat the present as eternal
- We need to have a conversation about the legal regime in which we would like to live and work and do what we can to help bring that world into being
- Though we may disagree, our discussions should be fearless, imaginative and unbounded
- Generational shifts probably favor freer culture

From service providers  
to cultural producers

Openness: an ethical issue

# We are no longer passive entities

- People used to come to us first -- now access events can be initiated by archives
- We don't need intermediaries to push our holdings out to the public
- To disavow the roles of producer, distributor or publisher may be to renege on our commitment to provide access
- Archival privilege is ending (so is info scarcity)
- Like other institutions, we are part of an ambient media landscape, which has succeeded the program-centered world

# Two modest proposals

- Consider the best ideas and traditions that librarianship and archival practice have to offer, then treat them as minimum standards
- Eyes on the periphery (outsider archives, individual initiatives)

In five or ten years today's issues  
will appear quaint

What will we have done by  
then to enable our institutions  
to do what we do better?

rick@archive.org

[www.prelinger.com](http://www.prelinger.com)

[www.archive.org/details/prelinger](http://www.archive.org/details/prelinger)