ARCHIVING VFX

a research project to preserve evidence of film digital VFX production

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AGENDA

ABOUT FILM VFX
Brief introduction to film VFX and the current state of archiving in the industry.

ABOUT MY RESEARCH
Introduction to UTS ALA and outline of research thesis, aims, objectives and approach.

Q&A
Question time.
PART 1

FILM VISUAL EFFECTS

NTTW3 LIGHTNING TALK
EVA NTHIA SAMARAS | 25 OCTOBER 2018

Visual effects (VFX) are one of the many creative toolsets available to filmmakers to visually represent concepts, themes, environments, characters and performances to audiences via the big (or small) screen.

VFX work spans from pre to post production. It includes such tasks as pre-visualisation, tracking, modelling, rigging, texturing and surfacing, lighting, matte painting, effects and digital compositing [1].

The industry is made up of over 500 companies situated all over the world. VFX companies bid on film VFX work to work on “shots” in film projects. Much of the industry relies on work from Hollywood film studio projects.

VFX ARCHIVING
CURRENT STATE

VFX practitioners presently view archiving as a process of back up and ongoing maintenance; as opposed to a series of managed activities designed to facilitate the long-term digital preservation of their records.

Film studios, the content “owners” of many VFX records, do not stipulate consistent requirements for VFX records delivery and archiving.

As a result:
- there are no established archival and preservation practices within the VFX industry
- the records are currently at high risk of becoming unmanageable and lost over time.

CHALLENGE #1 Complex
VFX records are diverse in size and format and are created and stored in vast volumes on varied mediums

CHALLENGE #2 Multiple agents
VFX records are manifested and controlled by multiple creators and owners situated in varied global locations.

CHALLENGE #3 Obsolescence
VFX records are destined for obsolescence. They are produced within evolving production pipeline environments using tools, software and hardware that constantly change from project to project.
CASE STUDY

PART 2

DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROJECT

NTTW3 LIGHTNING TALK
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UTS Animal Logic Academy (ALA) is a professionally equipped studio providing experiential learning in animation and visualisation, located at the University of Technology Sydney. It was established to respond directly to the challenges of the VFX, animation and visualisation industries. UTS ALA works very closely with the VFX industry to provide up-to-date knowledge and skills to the academy’s cohort. Currently I am one of three PhD Candidates at the Academy.
RESEARCH

THESIS

The ongoing digital preservation of significant records (including computer generated imagery) produced by the film VFX industry requires the application of archival methods—appraisal and selection, preservation, arrangement and description.
RESEARCH AIMS

01
Improve records management and archiving practice within the VFX industry

02
Ensure that significant VFX records are digitally preserved over time as culturally rich film VFX archival collections.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

01
Identify records that have historical and/or cultural value and which warrant ongoing retention and preservation as archives.

02
Determine which archival and metadata standards and models could be applied (or created) to arrange and describe archived VFX industry records.

03
Co-develop an industry resource that outlines archival concepts and recommended approaches to support archiving practice in the film VFX industry.
WHY ARCHIVE VFX RECORDS?

- Ensures first-hand evidence about the *how, why* and *who* of various film projects is preserved and accessible over time.
- Provides valuable knowledge to support current and future VFX productions and process.
- Offers historical and cultural insights into general filmmaking, visual storytelling, technical production and digital design practices.
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More on UTS ALA: https://animallogicacademy.uts.edu.au/

THANK YOU