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Media-Centered: Documentary Film

Winifred Fordham Metz

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, freddie@email.unc.edu

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Consider for a moment the way current STM publishing largely exists. Universities (and the government in the form of grants) pay faculty to conduct research. They then write up that research and give it away — largely to commercial publishers, either directly or via learned societies allied to them. Those publishers then either impose all their charges on the author and/or his institution to edit, design, hyperlink, and ultimately publish the piece OR just sell it back to a much broader spectrum of institutions and individuals for smaller fees. That is, they disseminate the piece by either an open access or end-user — perhaps penultimate end-user since libraries buy and house but don't use — pays model.

Now consider how the model would work if university presses were publishing science. Instead of either giving or paying to give scholarship to for-profit entities whose first responsibility is to enrich investors (I don't condemn enriching investors — my retirement is built upon the idea!), the university would invest the money within the university. Presses would have a new source of capital and depending on the dissemination model used, libraries would have lower or much lower charges. Even in a subscription model system, a university press would be very unlikely to charge the same fees that for-profit publishers are charging. At minimum their margin requirement would be much lower. There are no investors to enrich.

But how can university presses, with little or no experience, begin to publish science journals? What incentives could be offered to faculty, who want to publish in the most prestigious outlets in order to achieve broad dissemination and, yes, career advancement? How can administrators be convinced to make the initial infrastructure investments that would surely be required?

There are several potential paths forward. First would be taking on already-existing journals currently being published by units within the same university. These have to be found, which is not always as easy as it sounds — few universities have a current census of all the journals owned or edited on their campuses — but there are obvious economic and editorial

advantages in publishing already-established journals, especially in one's own backyard.

Taking an almost-opposite tack, it is also true that science is exploding globally, including in many non-English-speaking countries. Those places will surely want to disseminate their own scholarship to a broad English-speaking audience (we're blessed in using what has become the world's *lingua franca*) and it's not hard to imagine putting together a package that would involve translation and/or editing services as well as distribution for foreign-language journals.

It's also possible to envision starting new STM journals that emerge organically from departments and centers within the home university. This is hard — faculty will be anxious to establish themselves as quickly as possible — but with appropriate incentives from administrators and perhaps some moral suasion from librarians, it may occasionally be possible.

It also is time for learned societies and universities to recognize that the latter indirectly subsidize the former every time their library buys a society journal or provides a stipend for a faculty member to join the society. One of the most bitter experiences I had when working in social science journals in the early 2000s was the discovery that even those journals would flock to commercial publishers based on the promise of more lucrative financial returns to the society, even when that meant increasing the cost to subscribers, both institutional and individual. This is a very hard nut to crack, but couldn't a task force of university press publishers, faculty, librarians, and societies try to find a way to at least start forward?

That semi-cooperative idea brings me to my last idea. Why don't university presses, faced with high start-up costs and higher-than-accustomed risk in making a move toward STM journals, take a page from library colleagues and begin to behave consortially? If university presses could band together on various aspects of an STM journals publishing program, they could surely achieve scale more quickly than if each tried to invent the wheel itself. All could take advantage of various vendor platforms, linking systems, subscription management software, peer-review systems, and all the other back-office needs of a journals program.

Editorially, perhaps each press in a consortium, when starting new journals, could focus

on areas of expertise within their universities, more swiftly bringing together overlapping but not identical strengths. One university's strength in obesity studies could be paired with another's in nutrition and another's in diabetes or vascular disease. Soon a critical mass in a broad area could help shorten the time needed to be recognized as a force in publishing around an intellectual area.

Such a consortium would be university-press based, but by including the other constituencies in the university — faculty, librarians, administrators, IT staff, and the like — it would be consortial within the university as well as outside it.

It is possible, even likely, that much of the above is harebrained to one degree or another. But I think not all of it. If university presses don't start developing new revenue streams and if universities don't start taking better care of theirs and their faculty's (and the U.S. government's) intellectual property, then what is the future of university presses?

All presses can and have made incremental improvements in both reducing cost and generating revenue through the use of digital technologies. Larger international markets do offer hope for our traditional programs. But if presses continue to serve only the least powerful constituencies on their campuses (let's be honest about it), how will we survive? It seems unlikely we'd be able to generate enough revenue to free us completely from some university support, but if we continue to rely on that support, then the relative lack of financial clout the humanities and social sciences wield will inevitably keep that funding minimal and continue the hand-to-mouth existence that most presses face today.

Let me end optimistically. Science and medicine are wondrous fields. On intellectual grounds alone university presses should engage them. The fact that our future economic stability may mandate that engagement is actually encouraging.

Science is part of what I see as a three-legged stool supporting university presses in the future. Textbooks and an end to the free-rider system of disseminating scholarship are the others. We have no desire and no need to abandon our old friends. But finally, let's also go where the money is. 🐘

Media-Centered — Documentary Film

Column Editor: **Winifred Fordham Metz** (Media Librarian & Head, Media Resources Center, House Undergraduate Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Phone: 919-962-4099) <freddie@email.unc.edu> <http://www.lib.unc.edu/house/mrc>

The use of film in the classroom is ubiquitous. Visual theses are on the rise. Interest in documentary studies is growing at an exponential rate. Resultantly, the importance of a rich and varied media resources collection is essential to academic institutions, public libraries, and K-12 media centers. It takes a lot of work, development, and research to maintain and grow a collection like this. Resources that aid in this process are invaluable...

Resonance of the Documentary Form...

"I've only ever cried at three movies in my life," my friend **Melissa** pronounced last year as we left the early screening of "Beasts of the Southern Wild" at the Varsity theater and strolled down Franklin Street to grab a slice at Pepper's. Such an incredulous comment stopped me in my tracks and I asked, "Really, only three?" She turned to me and

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replied with her list, “*Charlotte’s Web* on DVD, when I was home with the flu in second grade, *Ragtime* in the theater when it played at a festival my freshman year in college, and a documentary I saw a couple of years ago called *The Loving Story*.” Of course this conversation was entirely predicated by my bawling like a baby only minutes before — throughout the film we’d just seen... [For me, *Beasts of the Southern Wild* offered a profound narrative charting extreme loss, redemptive awakening, and quiet reconciliation, all the while celebrating the displaced and the place that made them its own.] Later, over dinner I asked her, “Why these three?” She told me in short order that the first two “...seemed SO real to her at the time...” and resonated with her on a very personal level with “...issues of loss, identity, and fitting in.” She spent more time reflecting on the documentary film and credited the authenticity and truth of the story to her emotional reaction. As I’ve experienced similar reactions to documentaries over the years, I couldn’t agree more.

Certainly, the documentary form reflects a rich genealogy in which each film refers back to or remembers in some way the films before them in a lineage created by a unique yet somehow collective process. But even in remembering, they forge something new. Times past and futures skillfully comingle, leading to different appreciations of history and culture, often reflecting events experienced at their most personal level. At their essence, documentaries can make you think differently about what you watch and what you think you know. When we watch these films, we absorb some small or intimate part of the narrative. It can register in the familiar or the completely foreign, but it registers nonetheless. I think this is one of the more salient reasons documentaries resonate in the classroom. And why it is such an accessible commodity for instruction.

Beyond Aesthetics, Uses of Documentaries in the Academic Landscape...

Without a doubt, interest in and the use of media resources to support academic instruction and research at institutions of higher learning continues to expand at an extremely rapid pace. I have certainly experienced this in my work at UNC and with colleagues at other institutions. Films, documentaries, and educational media are widely used across the curricula at UNC. Each semester, we see an ever-increasing number of undergraduate and graduate film and documentary studies courses being taught across a diverse range of departments and centers (last year’s count included more than 65 individual courses). Beyond these specific courses focused on the study of cinema and documentary film, these media materials are used in classrooms across the curricula to engage critical thinking, provide contextual evidence and historical perspectives, engender creativity, entrepreneurship, and activism as well as hone visual and media literacy skills.

Although many of the films are shown in class, instructors are requiring that students view an increasing portion of these films outside of class. While sites and services like **Amazon Prime**, **Netflix**, **Hulu**, **Vudu**, **Redbox**, and **Snagfilms** are certainly helpful — we have found that they do not typically offer all of the documentary and educational film content needed by faculty and students, making our collections and services at the Media Resources Center essential. As assigned viewing continues to increase, so does the importance of our locally curated collection of media materials.

Discovering Documentaries...

I approach collecting documentary and educational film much the same way I collect for fictional narrative film; utilizing a number of valuable resources, participating in or following festivals, as well as reading and writing film reviews. For documentary and educational films — I also preview films for fit within the collection and contact filmmakers and vendors directly. Documentary and educational films often vary widely in content and production value as well as cost (commonly ranging between \$295-\$495 per title), making previewing at festivals, online or at markets essential. With the prevalence of documentaries in the classroom, and the continued interest in using them for campus

programming (with appropriate public performance permissions), it is extremely important that the production value is good and the content clearly relevant.

The following are a list of suggested resources to help you in researching and finding documentary films (this list is by no means exhaustive).

Top Documentary Festivals

There are many, many international film festivals that include documentary films (**Cannes**, **TIFF**, **SXSW**, **Sundance**, **Tribeca** to name a few), but these following six festivals are dedicated to screening documentary alone:

International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (<http://www.idfa.nl>)

Full Frame in Durham, NC (<http://www.fullframefest.org>)

Hot Docs in Toronto, Ontario, Canada (<http://www.hotdocs.ca>)

AFI docs (formerly Silverdocs) in Silver Spring, MD (<http://afi.com/afidocs/>)

True/False in Columbia, Missouri (<http://true-false.org>)

Documentary Film Review Sites

Variety, the *New York Times*, and the *Guardian* undoubtedly remain among the top go-to resources for film reviews. *Hollywood Reporter*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Boston Globe* also rank extremely high. While each of these sites offers opportunity to search by title, the following sites and aggregators are either dedicated to documentary and educational film reviews or provide a searching by documentary category:

EMRO or Educational Media Reviews Online (<http://emro.lib.buffalo.edu/emro/>)

indieWIRE (www.indiewire.com)

Rotten Tomatoes (<http://www.rottentomatoes.com>)

Metacritic (<http://www.metacritic.com>)

Educational and Documentary Distributors

By no means an exhaustive list, the following distributors offer educational and documentary films in many formats, some with public performance rights, and many geared specifically for library collections and academic use:

Alexander Street Press/Filmmakers Library (alexanderstreet.com)

Bullfrog Films (www.bullfrogfilms.com)

California Newsreel (<http://newsreel.org>)

Cinema Guild, Inc. (www.cinemaguild.com)

Icarus Films (www.icarusfilms.com)

Landmark Media (www.landmarkmedia.com)

Media Education Foundation (www.mediaed.org)

New Day Films (www.newday.com)

Passion River Films (www.PassionRiver.com)

PBS Educational Media (shopPBS.org/teachershop)

ro*co films (www.rocoeducational.com)

Third World Newsreel (<http://www.twn.org>)

Women Make Movies (<http://www.wmm.com>)

Zeitgeist Films (www.zeitgeistfilms.com)

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If I had world enough and time, this coyness with **Facebook** and **Linked in** and **Twitter** and **Goodreads** would be no crime! (apologies to **Andrew Marvel**)! I swear I go through times that I try to do better and it’s a lot of fun! I just found out, for example, that **Andrew (Hec-tic) Pace** recommended an inspiring story of how a Mormon kid with

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