

Title: Historical Documentary Video Production: An Innovative Teaching and Learning Tool
for Public History

Dr. Dan Morrill

Dr. Karen Flint, Director of Public History

History Department

Abstract:

The Public History concentration within UNC Charlotte's graduate history program seeks an SOTL grant as a means to add a video production component to our curriculum and public history media lab. Our program's new media focus (creating websites, CD-ROMs, digitizing images and collections) means that students not only learn historical skills but software programs that allow them to make multimedia presentations of their work and increase their competitiveness on the public history job market. Video production has become an increasingly important aspect of new media and necessary for our students' professional development. While historical documentaries have long been used for pedagogical purposes or popular consumption, short and medium length video clips are increasingly incorporated into historical websites, historical sites, museums, and oral histories. Historical documentary production requires both basic film and video production skills, but also requires skills that are unique to the history profession. Unfortunately, we learned our students could only acquire basic video production skills on a limited basis on our campus. In the fall of 2009, Dr. Dan Morrill taught a pilot course on "The Fundamentals of Video Production." We realized then that if students were to really gain exposure to this innovative publication tool, they needed access to better video production equipment that would allow them not only to create high quality footage, but to edit it and place it within a larger video narrative.

Project Budget: The Project proposes to acquire the absolutely essential equipment to support this pedagogical enterprise. All prices were obtained from B&H Photography in New York City.

3 Canon Vixia HD M300 Camcorders: \$2,474.85

Three consumer grade camcorders with external microphone jacks and high definition digital video recording capacity are essential. The most cost effective choice of equipment is the Canon Vixia series. Three cameras are needed to allow students to use multiple cameras on a shoot and to permit more than one group of students to work on projects concurrently.

3 Audio-Technica Lavalier Microphones: \$409.85

Wireless Lavalier microphones are the standard audio device to use for interviewing individuals. The microphone built into the camcorder does not produced acceptable audio.

3 Azden Shotgun Microphones: \$747

The shotgun or highly directional microphone is the standard audio device for recording multiple subjects or subjects who are a substantial distance from the camcorder. The microphone built into the camcorder does not produced acceptable audio.

3 Bescor Tripods: \$446.85

Tripods are essential providing adequate stability for camcorders, especially during panning and zooming.

3 Bescor 2 LED Light Kits: \$599.85

Lighting is critical for conducting shoots indoors. Also, one must have kits with sufficient lights to provide three-point lighting.

2 Final Cut Pro 7.0 Software: \$1599.98

Final Cut Pro 7.0 is the standard video editing software. It is essential to enable students to learn this software so that they might acquire the editing skills expected in videography.

2 Imac Computers with 8 megs of ram each: \$3000

Apple has proprietary ownership of Final Cut Pro, meaning that the software will only operate on Apple computers. 8 megabytes of ram is the minimum needed to run the software efficiently. Two computers are need so that more than one student or groups of students can edit video concurrently.

4 External Hard Drives: \$1000

External hard drives are essential for allowing students or groups of students to edit their projects without consuming major portions of the hard drive of the main computer. They will also enable students to transport their files to other locations for editing, such as WTVI.

Total: \$10,278.38

Letter of Support from the Dean: See attached email, I could not get signature to cut and paste.

Project Narrative

Established in the fall of 2002, UNCC's Public History concentration aimed to distinguish itself from other graduate programs around the country and to prepare its graduates by emphasizing skills in new media (creating websites, CD-ROMs, digitizing images, and collections). In addition to our core courses in new media, historic preservation and museum studies, students may also take public history electives and electives in other programs such as Public Policy, Architecture, and Arts Administration. The results are a combination of traditional history training with new media skills that offer graduates a variety of career choices in both public history, but also web development, public relations, and business. During the last eight years the public history component of our graduate program has grown substantially to the point that half of our applicants to the History Masters Degree now seek this concentration. As our program has become better known and distinguished in the field,¹ we have attracted more students from across the United States and Canada, we currently have about 25 active students. We therefore seek to innovate our curriculum by incorporating a historical documentary video production component into our new media focus. Including this focus seems imperative not only for keeping our graduates competitive on a tightening job market, but as a means to make our program more distinctive, and increase our reputation nationally.

Specific Aims:

The Public History concentration within UNC Charlotte's graduate history program seeks an SOTL grant to support this new media specialization in historical video production. While historical documentaries have long been popularly consumed and used for pedagogical purposes,

¹ The National Council on Public History granted the 2009 Student Project Award for Dr. Karen Cox's Museum Studies class project that created poster boards on Charlotte's history of the projected Northeast Light Rail corridor.

short and medium length video clips are increasingly incorporated into historical websites, historical sites, museums, and oral histories. Historical documentary production requires both basic film and video production skills, but also requires skills that are unique to the history profession. Unfortunately, we learned our students could only acquire limited basic video production skills on our campus.² We thus wanted to offer a course that could do both. In the fall of 2009, Dr. Dan Morrill taught a pilot course on “The Fundamentals of Video Production.” It became clear, that if we were serious about incorporating a historical video production component into our program, we would need the necessary equipment and tools to allow graduate public history students to become proficient in historical documentary video production. If funded, this initiative will help us set up a video component to our existing media lab and ensure that Dr. Morrill’s class (tentatively scheduled for Spring of 2012) and our public history students conducting their Masters Thesis projects will have the proper equipment.

We currently have a secure media lab located in the history department where students can work on new media projects, the SOTL grant would enable us to update our computers to handle the increased memory requirements of video production software and purchase external hard drives. We will also need to purchase video equipment to familiarize students with the basics of conducting interviews and collecting current footage. We seek to purchase three consumer

² Currently, there are two video production undergraduate courses that have 1 (maybe 2) high definition cameras, and rely on Final Cut Express for video production. This popular class is offered every semester, but limited to 18 people. I’m told that students in the advanced class, which is offered intermittently, usually provide their own cameras. Such courses are of limited use to our students as they cannot get graduate credit, and they would not necessarily have access to high definition cameras or Final Cut Pro which are both used by professionals and necessary if our students are going to be competitive on the job market, and disseminate their work more widely. Furthermore, Film Studies only allows access to their cameras for students enrolled in their production classes. Therefore our students who are writing and producing Masters Theses would not be able to access the filming equipment.

cameras that have the capacity to film in high definition—a format that would enable any student projects to be sampled, or expanded upon for a wider audience through such venues like WTVI or UNCC TV our local public television and cable affiliates. These cameras are less expensive than the professional cameras, but give students experience with the basics of recording while ensuring a compatible platform for future collaboration.

In addition to teaching the pilot course in video production, Dr. Morrill has been instrumental in establishing a successful internship program at WTVI. During the past year students from his pilot class were able to further hone their production skills and gain professional experience. Furthermore we are eager to take advantage of our unique partnership with WTVI. During this past year we have had three students complete internships and three others who are currently interning. Eric Davis, Vice-President of Broadcasting and Content, has expressed that he is particularly happy with our students, and has already hired one of these past interns for WTVI's Healthwise show. WTVI is eager to continue accepting student interns to learn the advanced skills of video production, but we need to provide the courses and equipment for students to learn the fundamentals of interviewing, videography, lighting, audio, editing, and script writing.

The pedagogical impact of training graduate students in the fundamentals of historical documentary video production has great potential on a variety of levels. First, in addition to providing students with skills suited to today's communication outlets, courses in historical documentary video production would, of course, reinforce the Department's commitment to such traditional scholarly skills of historical analysis, developing thesis statements, conducting research, compiling bibliographies, and writing cogent papers. But, just as importantly, students would learn how to conduct interviews, and combine word, image, and music into an evocative

teaching/publication tool that appeals to the emotional and passionate part of the cognitive process. Second, the pedagogy of the course itself involves the creation of historical documentary videos. Two of these proposed video projects are outlined below. In the future the instructor of this course may encourage graduate public history students to approach local historical agencies, such as Historic Rosedale, the James K. Polk Birthplace Memorial, Latta Place, Historic Rosedale, the Harvey Gantt Center, the Charlotte Museum of History, and the Levine Museum of the New South, to ascertain what historical documentary videos might be produced to enhance their instructional and education programs. Likewise students who have gained sufficient expertise in historical video production may offer these skills on a more limited basis or as a part of their public history internship. Third, all public history students write a masters thesis and then create a thesis project that is accessible to the public. Already we have had one student create a video for his thesis project, and a number of others have expressed interest in creating a historical documentary video short for their thesis projects.

Literature Review:

Academic literature is replete with monographs and articles that comment upon the fundamental transformation that is occurring in the field of publication because of the impact of digital media and the concomitant impact of that fundamental change upon pedagogy. Albert N. Greco, author of *The Book Publishing Industry*, reports that the amount of discretionary dollars spent on purchasing books is declining while the cost per unit to publish books is increasing. "The prognosis for consumer books . . . is unsettling," Greco asserts. He also states that television

and other electronic outlets account for an ever-increasing percentage of the total consumer spending for media goods and services.³

The impact of digital video upon media is also expanding, in no small part because of the advent of the internet and, more recently, by the arrival of such technological innovations as the I-phone and Youtube. Glen Bull, Director of the Center for Technology and Education at the University of Virginia, states: "On their home computers, kids are creating and publishing media in real time."⁴ To deny the consequence of this watershed in the history of communication and learning is to eschew the obvious. Higher education must train students to apply the same high standards of professionalism to these revolutionary forms of publication as it has done for decades to writers of scholarly books and articles.

Methods:

The pedagogical approach will be to closely supervise individual students and groups of students in the development of the academic and technical skills associated with historical documentary video production. Specifically, students will learn how to write scripts, which requires rhetoric tied to visual images. Students will be exposed to sources of audio and visual materials.

Students will learn video lighting, how to employ different microphones, and how to operate high definition camcorders. Students will learn techniques of oral interviews. Finally, students will learn Final Cut Pro, the video editing software used by most professional videographers.

Fundamental to the pedagogical philosophy of the program will be to have students work together in groups. Indeed, video production is essentially a collaborative process. Producers,

³ Albert N. Greco, *The Book Publishing Industry*. (Routledge. 2004).

⁴ <http://www.virginia.edu/uvatoday/newsRelease.php?id=6451>

directors, videographers, audio engineers, editors, researchers, and script writers must come together as a team to create the finished product.

The initial step is to decide upon a topic. This is followed by extensive research both in documentary and media archives. Next the team will have to schedule interviews with individuals who can contribute to the project. Script writing is next, followed by editing the video. Finally, the documentary will be distributed, sometimes on DVDs and sometimes on the internet.

It is impossible to predict precisely how many videos will be produced in the initial phase of the project and the topics that they will cover, because the intent is to respond to requests from the community and the region and well as to the video needs associated with M.A. theses.

Two initial projects have been identified.

Project One. The Impact of Camp Greene on New South Charlotte. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library and WTVI are joining forces to investigate the possibility of having a UNCC graduate public history student or students produce a video history of Camp Greene.

In 1917 the United States Army established a major training camp in Charlotte, named for Revolutionary War commander Nathanael Greene. Having a population roughly equal to that of Charlotte, Camp Greene profoundly impacted Charlotte's economic, social, and cultural life. Several books have explored World War I mobilization, including David L. Kennedy's *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*,⁵ Christopher Capozzola's 2008 *Uncle Sam*

⁵ David L. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen,⁶ and Jennifer's Keene's *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*. This last book contains a chapter on race relations in World War training camps – especially useful in understanding the nature of life in Army camps in the South, such as Camp Greene.⁷ Among the most compelling stories arising from Camp Greene are the tales associated with the influenza epidemic which erupted there. Historians have examined this pandemic on a broad scale, and it is treated briefly in the only monograph devoted to the history of Camp Greene.⁸

Project Two. The Battle Against Polio in Charlotte and its Environs in the 1940s. WTVI will work with the public history program to produce and distribute a documentary video on the polio epidemics in Charlotte and its environs in the 1940s.

Major outbreaks of polio occurred throughout the United States in the 1940s, including Charlotte and its environs in 1944 and 1947. In his major study of the impact of this disease and the efforts to treat the afflicted, David M. Oshinsky states that Hickory was the hardest hit of all municipalities in North Carolina and was given the nomenclature “Polio City.”⁹ The Catawba County Historical Association maintains an extensive photographic collection and some unedited video on Hickory's role in the polio epidemic of the 1940s. These materials will be an

⁶ Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁷ Jennifer D. Keene, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 82 - 105.

⁸ Dorothy Petit and Janice Billie, *A Cruel Wind: Pandemic Flu in America, 1918-1919* (Murfreesboro: Timberlane Books, 2008). Miriam Grace Mitchell and Edward Spaulding Perzel, *The Echo of the Bugle Call: Charlotte's Roll in World War I* (Charlotte: 1979).

⁹ David M. Oshinsky, *Polio An American Story* (Oxford University Press, 2006. Jerry Shinn, *A Great Public Compassion: The Story of Charlotte Memorial Hospital and Carolinas Medical Center* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

invaluable resource for the production of a documentary video, as will the materials held by Carolinas Medical Center Public Relations Department.

What is proposed here is to use the techniques of historical research and analysis with video production to complete and distribute at least two videos that document the history of Camp Greene and our local history of the polio epidemic. The undertaking of this course will have two immediate benefits. First, it will enlighten the larger Charlotte community about two significant aspects of its early twentieth century history. Second, graduate public history students will become proficient in historical documentary video production, including the research and writing associated therewith.

Evaluation:

Evaluation of the success of this initiative would proceed on two levels. First, the public history students participating in the production of historical documentary videos would submit written assessments of the program to the Director of Public History. Second, UNCC teachers and students who use or watch the videos as well as the staff of local historical agencies will be asked to evaluate the videos. Finally, documentaries will be evaluated in relation to the essential objectives of the project – to train students to work collaboratively to develop the full range of skills required for documentary video production.

Graduate public history students would begin using the equipment and developing documentary videos as soon as the equipment is in place. As stated, several students already plan to have a video component in their M.A. theses. Full utilization of the equipment shall occur during the offering of the graduate course in historical documentary video production in Spring 2012.

Knowledge Dissemination:

Ultimately public historians seek to share their love of history while also aiming to make complicated and nuanced histories accessible to the public at large. Consequently, our intention is to disseminate the historical documentary videos created by our classes and our public history students as broadly as possible. Given Dr. Morrill's intent to collaborate with WTVI for his class in Spring 2012, it seems likely that if the class is able to shoot video footage in high definition and edit the material in Final Cut Pro, that this material will be broadcasted widely throughout our region. As deemed appropriate, future documentaries will be sent to local and regional educational and cultural institutions, while others will be placed on the internet. Others could be made part of the materials for UNCC courses. Likewise graduate students producing videos for the thesis project are required to produce their work for public consumption. This can be done by coordinating student work for show at historical institutions or on associated websites.

We would also happily participate in UNC Charlotte's Teaching Week to talk about the implications of using historical documentary video production as an innovative teaching and learning tool. While the bulk of our dissemination to the public would be through the genre of video production, we understand that it would also be important to create a short pedagogical piece to share our experiences with a wider scholarly community. If granted this award, we would be sure to create such a work.

Human Subjects:

This is of course contingent upon the subject of the historical documentary video. As a department, we require all students conducting theses or classes where students conduct interviews to secure IRB approval before conducting their projects. For instance, in the previous video documentary class, which involved producing documentaries on the building of Independence Blvd and the music venue, The Double Door students obtained approval from UNCC's IRB board.

Extramural Funding:

No extramural funding is being pursued at this time.

Timeline:

Dr. Dan Morrill is on leave this semester and spending a substantial portion of his time at WTVI to develop his video production skills, to include proficiency in video lighting, operating cameras, audio production, and video editing with Final Cut Pro.

We would intend to purchase video equipment for the media lab as soon as funds became available in January. This would ensure equipment would be accessible to public history students wishing to complete a video component for their thesis projects in Spring 2011.

Our chair has already tentatively approved the offering of "Historical Documentary Video Production" for Spring of 2012.



Office of the Dean

9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001
t/ 704-687-0088 f/ 704-687-0089 <http://clas.uncc.edu>

October 26, 2010

SOTL Grants Committee
Center for Teaching & Learning
ctl@uncc.edu

Dear Committee Members:

I write in support of the SOTL proposal, "Historical Documentary Video Production: An Innovative Teaching and Learning Tool for Public History," submitted by Professors Dan Morrill and Karen Flint, Department of History. The proposal will enhance the Department's public history media lab and add video production to the public history curriculum, permitting graduate students to produce historical documentaries.

The aims of the proposal are aligned with the CLAS strategic plan, in particular, the objective of implementing new programming including 21st-century skills in the areas of discourse, media and culture. The grant will also help provide needed technological infrastructure and opportunities for community outreach and engagement through the planned dissemination of the films. As noted in the proposal, the equipment will build on an existing lab in the department and appropriate space is available. It is, therefore, my pleasure to recommend the proposal for your consideration.

Please let me know if you require further information. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Nancy A. Gutierrez, Dean
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences