**Television history: archives, excavation and the future. A discussion**

Billy Smart

Royal Holloway, University of London, UK

Amanda Wrigley

University of Westminster, UK

**Abstract**

 This article considers possible futures for television (TV) studies, imagining how the discipline might evolve more productively over the next 10 years and what practical steps are necessary to move towards those outcomes. Conducted as a round-table discussion between leading figures in television history and archives, the debate focuses on the critical issue of archives, considering and responding to questions of access/inaccessibility, texts/ contexts, commercial/symbolic value, impact and relevance. These questions reflect recurrent concerns when selecting case studies for historical TV research projects: how difficult is it to access the material (when it survives)? What obstacles might be faced (copyright, costs, etc.) when disseminating findings to a wider public?

 The relationship between the roles of ‘researcher’ and ‘archivist’ appears closer and more mutually supportive in TV studies than in other academic disciplines, with many people in practice straddling the traditional divide between the two roles, combining specialisms that serve to further scholarship and learning as well as the preservation of, and broad public engagements with, collections. The Research Excellence Framework’s imperative for academic researchers to achieve ‘impact’ in broader society encourages active and creative collaboration with those based in public organizations, such as the British Film Institute (BFI), who have a remit to reach a wider public. The discussion identifies various problems and successes experienced in collaboration between the academic, public and commercial sectors in the course of recent and ongoing research projects in TV studies.

**Keywords**

Television studies, archives, accessibility, copyright, impact

**Introduction**

 The following is a round-table discussion involving some of the leading figures in television (TV) history and archives, conducted via email over the summer and early autumn of 2015. As it marks its 10th anniversary, *CST* invited us to reflect on the considerable achievements of TV studies over the past decade whilst also looking ahead. This request has encouraged us to consider possible futures for the discipline, imagining how TV studies might evolve more productively over the next 10 years and what practical steps are necessary to move towards those outcomes. The discussion focuses on the critical issue of archives and the discussants were asked to consider and respond to questions of access/inaccessibility, texts/contexts, commercial/symbolic value, impact and relevance. These questions reflect concerns that are always at the back of our minds when selecting case studies for historical TV research projects: how difficult will it be to access the material? What obstacles might we face (copyright, costs, etc.) in disseminating our findings to a wider public?

 Those who contributed to the round table are involved in a rich variety of relevant activities, from academic research projects on TV history (principally funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)) to organizing and making accessible diverse collections related to TV’s past. Notable is how the relationship between the roles of ‘researcher’ and ‘archivist’ appears closer and more mutually supportive in TV studies than in other academic disciplines. Perhaps this is due to the relative newness of the field and the critical matter of loss and preservation of the source material. It may also relate to the fact that many people in practice straddle the traditional divide between ‘researcher’ and ‘archivist’, working on a range of mutual activities, collaboratively combining specialisms that serve to further both scholarship and learning on the one hand, and the preservation of, and broad public engagements with, collections on the other. Moreover, some are also involved in producing DVDs of TV programmes from the archive, thus bringing another critical dimension to the discussion. Of course, the Research Excellence Framework’s imperative for academic researchers to achieve ‘impact’ in broader society encourages active and creative collaboration with those based in public organizations, such as the British Film Institute (BFI), who have a remit to reach a wider public.

 It is suggested at several points below that the most powerful way of addressing the critical difficulties surrounding access to, and use of, archival materials (both in research and by the public) may be to establish an even broader framework of collaborative activities, common practices and shared privileges across different sectors. In terms of what is possible now, it is, for example, crucial that for us to work effectively within our academic discipline we should not have to rely on the ‘who you know’ principle. We should instead collectively work to secure common rights of access and use of materials for researchers at all levels. Over the next 10 years we would like to see the formation of a group equivalent to that of the UK Radio Archives Committee, in order to create dynamic and ongoing conversations with all the top-level stakeholders implicated in the issue of establishing greater access to the TV archives. In the medium term, there is a need to create a network, either formal or informal, which will enable us to explore such issues: how can the expertise of academics and postgraduate researchers contribute to the cataloguing of materials in archives, in Genome, and so on? How can we best pool our expertise to create a comprehensive guide to TV archives and research resources for those starting postgraduate studies or studying TV from within other disciplines? Are there ways in which private investment could finance preservation and dissemination, through commercial–archive partnerships? Or research council funding for archive–academic partnerships? For sure, there are some identifiable opportunities mentioned in this discussion that would benefit from a combination of all three sectors – academic, public and commercial.

 As one of our discussants observes, the situation is far better than it was a decade ago. Nevertheless, let us see how we can improve further over the next 10 years, by amalgamating common interests with our considerable energies and complementary areas of influence and expertise.

**Access**

How practical and reasonable do you currently find it to access TV from the predigital era and associated documentation in print?

Steve Bryant (senior curator, TV, BFI): Working in an archive does give one a privileged position regarding access to material, but it is not without problems, especially in an age of austerity. Where access requires transfer from obsolete video formats or master film, it does not come without a cost and that cost must be justified, which militates against ‘browsing’. Disseminating material also has its problems. Whilst the BFI has some very useful platforms, we must, as custodians of material, be especially careful that rights are cleared – we cannot claim ‘fair dealing’ easily.

Sue Malden (secretary, BECTU History Project): I think there are large collections of TV material in non-commercial archives that are not easily accessible for a host of reasons: not catalogued in detail, no online database, not digitized, copyright complications. Commercial archives are more proactive in promoting and marketing their holdings for obvious reasons.

Richard Hewett (lecturer in media theory, University of Salford): The survey con- ducted for the Jisc report that I researched [Academic Requirements for Pre- 1989 Archive Content, accessible at http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/5659] showed that, whilst greater use is made of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) audiovisual (AV) material for teaching, written materials feature more heavily in research, and the BBC Written Archives Centre in Caversham is the Corporation archive of which greatest use is made. With regard to AV, there was a consensus among those who completed the survey that they currently use what is readily available (e.g. via commercial releases), rather than what they would like to use.

John Wyver (senior research fellow, University of Westminster; writer and producer, Illuminations): Clearly, the situation is far better than it was, say, a decade ago. BBC Genome [the publication online of the listings information in the *Radio Times*, 1923-2009: http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk], especially in the full form of the internal version that offers the pages of *Radio Times* as PDFs, has been transformative. As documented, it is a resource of unparalleled significance and is a great and wondrous thing.

 Clearly we need a comparable resource for the *TV Times*, even though TRILT in its present form is immensely valuable [the British Universities Film & Video Council’s (BUFVC) Television and Radio Index for Learning and Teaching: http://bufvc.ac.uk/tvandradio/trilt]. It should be a priority for us to get a full version into a publicly accessible context.

 Of singular importance, too, has been the digitization of *The Listener*, even though access (which some of us can secure via our institutions) comes at a cost. Online digital versions of newspapers, including *The Times* and *The Guardian*, are vital too. All of this documentation is exceptionally welcome and starting to change how we all do our research.

 The Written Archives at Caversham is a great and wondrous thing too, but its priorities continue to be concerned with preservation rather than access. Everyone there individually is unfailingly knowledgeable, welcoming and helpful, but as an institution it feels protective of what it has and lacking both the resources – and perhaps also the will – to be as open as we might all wish. I continue to be amazed that, as far as I know, the only copy of the index of files is in the ring binders in the reading room. If just these lists were put into a spreadsheet and made available online, our entry into the ocean of information held at Caversham would be eased immeasurably.

 As for the programmes themselves, whilst the BBC has made some progress towards enhanced access – and those involved in this are people of great worth – it remains simply and straightforwardly scandalous that we have as limited access as we do to the BBC’s programmes.

 Do I need to say that together these programmes, for all their lacunae and losses, are one of the great British social and cultural resources of the past century? In part, because the programmes were paid for with public money but also simply because they are our common history, we should have unfettered access to them. No ifs, no buts, no obfuscatory twaddle about commercial sensibilities, copyright, market impact or whatever. We all – not just scholars or researchers – should be able to see, engage with, comment on, share and make use of these programmes. For all of the really good work of the BFI and the National Archive and all of those who organize screenings, put shows online, publish DVDs and the rest, the efforts we make are laughably inadequate. And it continues to astound me that so little material is properly available and we make so little noise and trouble and bother about it.

Sue Malden: I could not agree more. The BBC catalogue should be available for academic study purposes. Perhaps the BBC could enter into a partnership with a university or organization like Kaleidoscope [http://www.kaleidoscope.org.uk] to provide an academic access service, possibly on a subscription basis. Of course this is the role of the BFI, but their emphasis on film is so much greater than for TV. I think that the French model, Institut national de l’audiovisuel [htpp://www. ina.fr], is worth examining.

Steve Bryant: We used to do this and could easily do so again. The BFI recognizes that it has an important and growing role in TV.

John Wyver: The case is not quite the same with Independent Television [ITV] programming. Some of the same arguments apply, but perhaps – because of the commercial context – not with the same force, and we also have to recognize the astonishing achievement of Network Distribution [http://networkonair.com]. And then there is Channel 4 and the services that have come after, where access is patchy and so too is preservation. Amanda Wrigley and others will know of an example of a major Channel 4 production from the mid-1980s that we wanted to screen at BFI Southbank – and for which it now appears that the only copy of part of it anywhere in the world is an off-air Video Home System recording. In all of our arguments about access, we should also not be complacent about preservation issues, especially beyond the duopoly institutions.

**Obstacles**

What obstacles have you experienced in accessing and disseminating predigital TV and associated print documentation, and how might these be avoided?

Sue Malden: Sometimes the whereabouts of a lot of TV and associated print documentation is unknown and, therefore, obviously difficult to access. There should be a national TV archive website/portal pointing to the different locations and sources of TV archive content and related material.

Lez Cooke (senior research officer, Department of Media Arts, Royal Holloway, University of London): Finding out about forgotten, neglected or lost programmes is a time-consuming process and is often dependent on knowing the right people to ask who might be able point you in the right direction. Even then you may draw a blank or come up against a brick wall, such as the programme only being available on a film master and there being no resources available to make a viewing copy.

 To give credit where credit is due Kathleen Dickson (BFI research viewings officer) and Steve Bryant’s team of TV curators have been very helpful in trying to access material, but the BFI’s resources are limited and I can’t get to see early ITV dramas such as Southern TV’s *A Matter of Principle* (1961) or Television Wales and the West’s *Interview for Wives* (1962), because, whilst the BFI has them on film masters, there are no viewing copies available. The BBC Archive (as it is now called – no longer the Film & Video Library, or even Information & Archives) has also been helpful, even transferring obscure half-hour regional dramas from film to provide a DVD viewing copy, but it’s frustrating not being able to access the BBC’s catalogue to find out what’s actually there.

 Trying to track down ITV material can be even more difficult. Given the fragmented nature of the ITV network from the 1950s to the 1990s, trying to find programmes produced by the various regional companies is often very difficult. The BFI is a repository of much material from the ITV companies and Network do a great job in releasing forgotten ITV programmes, but there is often much investigative work required in trying to track down programmes produced by these companies, espe- cially the smaller regional ones in the early years, even if they have survived at all.

Lisa Kerrigan (curator, Television, BFI): In disseminating archive TV we face the issue of copyright at every point. It is unavoidable. Recent orphan works legislation is welcome but doesn’t have much impact on TV works. The BFI has several access points for TV – the BFI Southbank programme, the Research Viewing Service, DVD releases and mediatheques, but I appreciate that we can only reach a certain number of people with these and they can be restrictive. The Unlocking Film Heritage programme, which the BFI is currently undertaking, might point to a slightly different way forward, which is collaboration with rights holders with a joint outcome that is available to the public (as opposed to previous initiatives that have required an academic subscription). Through this, several non-fiction programmes have been made available to view on BFI Player. Not many, but it’s a start. Some are free, some are paid; but I think the fact that we have some TV on our video-on-demand platform is great and I really hope to see more of it in future.

Richard Hewett: The Jisc survey highlighted the problems of availability – items which exist in the archives, but are not publicly accessible – and discoverability, that is, potential users not knowing which items exist in the archive, and in some cases not being aware of those which are already publicly available (e.g. on DVD or CD). About 21.5% of TV items requested in the survey were in fact already in circulation, either commercially or online (where there is, of course, no guarantee that material will not suddenly be removed).

John Wyver: I wish that the National Archive viewing costs were not as high, that the BBC did not charge the fees that it does for reproducing historical photographs in academic journals (GBP£100þ each if you include VAT, even at the most dis- counted rate) and I really wish that the BBC was more committed to, and less commercially focused about, possible DVD releases of archive programmes.

**Scale and significance**

The deep archive of TV is vast and impossible to view to its full extent. How does one select? How much room is there to trawl through streams of old programming in the hope of serendipitously coming across the most valuable example?

Steve Bryant: As somebody who selects what goes into the archive, I (and my team) have effectively been making an initial choice on behalf of those who will later use it. Our hope is that we have all the things they will likely want and examples of everything where examples will be enough, and that this will be helpful. I’m not sure that ‘the most valuable example’ is a valid concept – if there is something about it that gives it such value, then it is probably exceptional rather than exemplary. Randomness is important here. We may make mistakes (judged with hindsight), but at least we can present a collection assembled by people with a reasonably informed opinion. We are about to change our policy to one where we will retain everything we can record for easy access and only take in a small fraction of output at high quality for long-term preservation. We intend to flag up what we think is important in the general mass of output as guidance for future researchers, though.

Sue Malden: How much time do scholars have to do this research? Can researchers give their notes to archives to add to their database/catalogue to help contextualize the programmes? Archives need more help to catalogue their holdings in depth and index them to common standards of TV history taxonomy.

John Wyver: There’s definitely a place for purely serendipitous trawling, but surely the way to approach this is to follow good practice in other areas where there are comparably vast archival resources. Researchers choose specific areas that interest them. They explore those in depth and then they share their discoveries in journals and books, in blog posts, at conferences, and so on. Plus, there are obvious dangers in looking for ‘the most valuable example(s)’. Every trace of the past has some- thing of value to offer, when seen in appropriate contexts, understood in sympathetic ways, and related to other elements both audiovisual and beyond.

**Memory**

How can the social history of predigital TV best be captured for posterity?

Steve Bryant: I’d like to think our ‘One Day in the Life of Television’ project from November 1988 is a valuable resource. It was a conscious attempt to document the social history of TV at a moment before it changed radically, but was just one day – and we didn’t manage to repeat it, despite trying.

Sue Malden: There should be a national archive strategy devised by representatives of major TV collections with government endorsement to set standards, exchange experience and information, create a common database, contextualize history of the programmes, and so on.

John Wyver: Clearly, we need to pay far more attention to audiences, to capturing and collating their memories, and to exploring the contexts in which they recorded their thoughts in the past – and not just in ‘official’ records like the BBC Audience Research Reports, but in diaries and letters. David Kynaston’s multivolume general social history of post-war Britain [*Tales of a New Jerusalem*], which makes great use of diaries, has a lot to teach our field.

Helen Wheatley (associate professor in Film & Television Studies, University of Warwick): There is great work going on in this field (Hazel Collie’s work on the AHRC-funded ‘Television for Women’ project is a good case in point), but this absolutely needs to be a research priority in the next 10 years.

**Development**

How do you see the availability of predigital TV and associated print documentation developing over the next 10 years? How might this differ from what you yourself would wish to happen?

Steve Bryant: 10 years is a long time in terms of the developing technology and most access developments are driven by technology. There’s no lack of will on our behalf, though with funding cuts probably coming our way and the BBC’s, it would be unwise to present an overly optimistic scenario.

Sue Malden: There is a danger of more fragmentation in the future that will make access even more difficult, because of the growing number of independent production companies with more rights in the future. ITV is reviewing its holdings; private organizations’ holdings; lack of funding in general; the BFI is brilliant at promoting film but less resources or events seem to be focused on TV; the future of the BBC is currently in debate.

Lez Cooke: One of the objectives of the ‘History of Forgotten Television Drama in the UK’ project at Royal Holloway [https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/mediaarts/ research/thehistoryofforgottentelevisiondrama] is to collaborate with regional and national archives. Nearly two years into the project we still have a lot to do to fulfil that objective, but I feel we’ve made some progress, not least in inviting a number of key people to be on our advisory board where some useful discussion has taken place. For example by inviting people such as Tony Ageh, Steve Bryant, Sue Mal- den, Marion Hewitt, Dick Fiddy, Linda Kaye from the BUFVC and Chris Perry from Kaleidoscope onto the advisory board, we have brought some key players together. As a result of which Kaleidoscope have provided valuable input to the BBC’s Genome project and we have begun to discuss with the BUFVC the possibility of an event, which will bring archives and higher education institutions together to explore some of the issues around archival access and the availability of material. The BBC and North West Film Archive are also in discussion about a regionally produced drama series (*Sense of Place*) that was only partially networked and sporadically archived.

 The more I attempt to research ‘forgotten’ TV dramas the more I become convinced of the need for a catalogue or database that would list every drama produced by the BBC and ITV, in every region and nation, since 1936. The Kaleidoscope guides are an invaluable resource and testimony to the dedication of Chris Perry, Simon Coward and the late Richard Down in doing a lot of (unpaid) donkeywork, consulting with a network of archivists and others who share their enthusiasm for old TV. Together with the work of Tony Ageh and his team at the BBC, the team at Bournemouth University who worked on the *TV Times* project and other initiatives such as the ‘Screen Plays’ database (from the AHRC- funded project, ‘Screen Plays: Theatre Plays on British Television,’ led by John Wyver), there is now a lot of information available, some of it online, some of it in electronic form or in other publications.

 What seems necessary now is for a project that will build on these initiatives to produce a comprehensive catalogue, accessible online, which will not only provide detailed information about the programmes, but will indicate any archival holdings and the public availability of material.

 Hopefully by the end of our project (September 2016) we will have made further progress in bringing interested parties together and in unearthing some forgotten TV dramas. There are certainly many people working to achieve similar goals, so where there’s a will there’s a way.

Linda Kaye (head of research, BUFVC): This touches on an issue that I think is important in relation to many of these questions but tends to reside in the shadow of content – metadata.

At the heart of much TV research are fundamental questions: what was produced, where was it shown and when? That essential listings information provides the metadata skeleton for online delivery now but also the driver to locate lost con- tent from the past. In terms of research it’s a springboard for comparative analysis and opens up areas such as scheduling. At BUFVC the aggregation of this has always been a priority through TRILT and we continue to work to fill in the gaps in the past. For the future, a comprehensive database that also meets the needs of researchers is our priority and forms the bedrock for research going forward.

Richard Hewett: The Jisc report demonstrated that there is a huge amount of demand for predigital materials to be made available in a digital format, preferably online via a service such as BoB National [http://bobnational.net]. If changes were made to the ERA licence [which permits staff at educational establishments to copy, access and use broadcast output for non-commercial educational purposes], this could be possible over the next 10 years. Stumbling blocks include the cost both of digitization and rights clearance, though a framework now exists, which could potentially address the latter in the form of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (2013).

John Wyver: I would like to see a major step-change in the approach and attitude of the BBC at the very highest level in relation to access and availability. This may come – certainly there are signs in the rhetoric of the future of the Corporation debate – but I fear that it is not sufficiently high up the agenda of those who make the decisions. And for that, we as scholars and researchers and fans bear some responsibility, because we have failed to make this case with sufficient force and persuasiveness.

Helen Wheatley: An anecdote here might help express some of the frustration of dealing with the BBC around historical TV research. The AHRC-funded ‘Television for Women’ project was forced by the legal Department of the BBC to remove reproductions from the *Radio Times* from a pop up exhibition we ran in 2012 about the history of pop music programming. (They had picked this up via coverage in the local press.) However, when we were invited to speak about the project with senior figures at the BBC in 2013 and told them about this, they were appalled – the head of fair trading at the BBC said, ‘That’s ridiculous – if that happens again, I’m sure we can sort it out for you.’ It is frustrating and annoying that it appears that the old adage ‘it’s not what you know, but who you know’ remains firmly true in relation to the BBC. Those researchers with access to more senior figures in the institution are more able to do their research than those who have not. We should make it a priority in our dealings with the BBC and others to widen access for all rather than trading on ‘privileged’ access that might make our own work look great but doesn’t make a difference to the opportunities available to other researchers in the field.

John Wyver: A similar story to Helen’s: early this year I wanted to reproduce two *Radio Times* covers from consecutive issues in 1960 in an academic book to illustrate a point about continuities at various levels between *An Age of Kings* (1960) and the broadcast presentation of the marriage of Princess Margaret. I must have asked more than a dozen colleagues and BBC people about who I should go to seek this permission. I was advised to contact Immediate, which now owns, among much else, *Radio Times* back issues, and since it was unclear from their website who to go to I sent emails to around 10 of their executives. Eventually, after some follow-up prompting, I got a kind email from one of their number apologizing for not having responded and saying he thought it would be fine to reproduce the covers and ‘not to bother’ about paperwork. It would, my correspondent suggested, only make more problems than it was worth.

 And then, unsolicited, I received an equally kind email from Ralph Montagu, head of heritage for *Radio Times* (who knew?), explaining that he could easily and happily license these covers for me at a cost of £1 each. I filled in his simple licence form for Immediate and concluded the agreement – although I am still waiting for Immediate to invoice me. I have since sent him a further request of this kind. Which is a happy outcome, of course, and I am truly grateful to Ralph and to Immediate. But it’s bonkers if we collectively, and openly, without any kind of privileged access, don’t know how to do such a simple and essential task for our research and dissemination.

**Impact**

What initiatives work best in bringing significant material from the archives to a public audience? What degree of curating and contextualization is appropriate?

Steve Bryant: For us, curating and contextualization is the point, and is the unique thing we bring to the table. The most impactful thing we do is ‘Missing, Believed Wiped’ (recovering programmes thought to be lost), though anything which ‘re- discovers’ forgotten programming is good in this regard.

Sue Malden: Archive initiatives that make the content their theme, marking anniversaries of events, or profiles of personalities and places’ histories.

John Wyver: Clips programmes on TV can be great, even when minimal context is offered. At the same time the BFI’s Visions of Change initiative – screenings, DVD releases, press interest, discussions and eventually a book – is an essential project too. In simple terms, we need more of both of these, of everything in between, and of radically new ideas as well.

Helen Wheatley: The 2015 Story of Children’s Television exhibition (which Rachel Moseley and I worked on with the curators from the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum) is a good example of what can be achieved in terms of bringing material out of the archive and back into the public domain with the help of the BBC (particularly Robert Seatter) and Kaleidoscope (Chris Perry was amazing at helping us secure footage and deals on rights). The exhibition, which is now touring until the end of 2018, brought in the biggest visitor numbers the museum has ever seen. We nearly quadrupled our target visitors and there was unprecedented press and public interest. In my opinion, this is partly testament to a widespread public interest in TV history and archive TV. Rachel, Amy Holdsworth and I are currently writing up the research we did in the exhibition, which looks at how people experienced and interacted with exhibits. This research is shot right through with the fact that visitors openly and frequently acknowledged that their TV history is important to them, enabling them to access aspects of their personal, familial and social history, and that there was a deep appreciation for the craft and artistry in programme making on display in the exhibition.

**Academic value**

What value can academic research bring to TV archives? Would you like to see more direct collaboration between archivists and historians?

Steve Bryant: We have regularly enjoyed collaborations with academic researchers – sometimes giving access in exchange for help with documentation. Talking to academics also helps with identifying interesting things we don’t have.

Lisa Kerrigan: There is immense value in collaboration and I welcome it. Academic research can contextualise our collections and enrich them with added knowledge, as well as highlighting areas which may benefit from further archival work. I would like to see more work in this area, perhaps through further AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Awards, and the exploration of other ways for researchers to work directly with collections. Several academic research projects in recent years have had related seasons at BFI Southbank, which is a useful way of presenting research for the public. If it were possible in future to take this type of collaboration one step further and use project funding for re-mastering or making rare archive materials more accessible as an outcome of academic research, then I think that would be worth exploring.

Sue Malden: We definitely need more collaboration—both ways. The developing relationship between the Media Archive for Central England and the University of Lincoln is one positive example of how such partnerships can work.

Linda Kaye: I think much of this happens in the spaces-in-between, through conversations and dialogue, but is neither recognized nor articulated. We are in danger of viewing this in narrow terms, adopting convenient criteria rather than increasing our awareness and understanding of the impact one sector has upon another. One academic value of the metadata case study is our collaboration with the University of Portsmouth on the AHRC-funded Channel 4 and British Film Culture project. As part of this we digitized the hard copy run of Channel 4 press packs from 1982 to 2002 [http://bufvc.ac.uk/tvandradio/c4pp]. As part of this project I developed an XML structure for the listings data with a view to eventually extracting and adding it to TRILT. As a result, Channel 4’s innovative approach to scheduling has been preserved and is now visible since the listings data was integrated into TRILT. The value and impact are clear, but this work was done at the periphery of the project. Academic value may take time to come through and only become apparent within a different sector. So the relationship and understanding between those sectors is paramount if this is to be articulated.

John Wyver: There is enormous value to be created from closer collaboration, from better mutual understanding, and from a greater sympathy and interest all round. There are clearly models from which we can learn—Amanda’s and my ‘Screen Plays’ project at the University of Westminster has benefitted hugely from a relationship with the BBC. I hope we have, and will continue to, feed back elements of utility, but I suspect that neither ‘side’ (although I am reluctant to see the field in those terms) commits sufficient energy and focus to working together. And this is less about a lack of willingness and more to do with the usual constraints of time and resources, and also perhaps the absence of contexts in which discussions and debate can develop and from which specific projects might come. Many academic conferences do not try to reach out to those professionally involved in the archives, and the industry’s gatherings, like the Edinburgh International Television Festival, are not especially welcoming to academics.

Helen Wheatley: This is very much a priority for the newly formed Centre for Television History, Heritage and Memory Studies at the University of Warwick. Rachel, Joanne Garde Hansen and I continue to look for ways to build research projects with archives. The work that Joanne and Kristyn Gorton are doing on the TV archive will be invaluable in pushing this agenda forward.

**Relevance**

Is predigital TV, by its nature, always going to be a fairly niche interest amongst both academics and the wider public? Should we be worried about relevance? How can we make archive TV relevant?

Sue Malden: Using archive TV more as a learning resource for music, drama, social history, and so on.

Steve Bryant: We shouldn’t ‘worry’ about relevance, but should attempt to make archive TV relevant wherever possible (that’s what contextualisation is, I guess). If archive TV is a niche interest, then it’s a big niche.

Lisa Kerrigan: Possibly if asked specifically about predigital TV many academics and members of the public would struggle to say they had a definite interest in the area. But that’s asking people to consider TV as a subject rather than a medium, which is what we do (and that is fairly niche as far as things go). I don’t think people would struggle to express their interest in history, art, science, comedy, drama or documentaries on any subject—all of which they would find in predigital TV. It’s a vital component of our cultural history. It comes down to presentation and curation. To return to the BFI’s ‘Britain on Film’ project, I think if you make archive material easily available to the public and demonstrate its relevance you’d be surprised just how interested people can be.

John Wyver: Predigital TV is not a ‘niche’ interest. Collectively it is one vital component of our shared social, cultural and political histories and a key element in the composition of our individual and collective identities.

 Make TV’s past more available, make it simple to see and searchable and sharable, and people will create their own kinds of relevance – and many of these will be surprising and significant and richly interesting to the rest of us.

**Acknowledgements**

This article is a joint outcome of two research projects funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council: ‘The History of Forgotten Television Drama in the UK’ (2013-16) and ‘Screen Plays: Theatre Plays on British Television’ (2011-15).

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding**

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**References**

*An Age of Kings* (1960) BBC.

*Sense of Place* (1978) BBC2. BBC North West.

*Thirty Minute Theatre: Interview for Wives* (1962). First broadcast 30 May by ITV. Directed and produced by David Boisseau and written by Leo Lehman.

*Thirty Minute Theatre: A Matter of Principle* (1961). First broadcast 31 October by ITV. Directed and produced by Stuart Burge and written by Lukas Heller.