

# Public History

## A Textbook of Practice

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## 7 Radio and Audio-Visual Production

Audio-visual history production has become one of the most popular means for accessing the past. David Thelen and Roy Rosenzweig explained in *The Presence of the Past* that movies and television broadcasts are far more successful than academic texts in reaching broad and non-specialist audiences (Thelen and Rosenzweig 2000). For instance, 40 million individuals in over 24 million homes watched Ken Burns's *Civil War* documentary during the week of its initial broadcast in September 1990 (Glassberg 2001, 92). In spite of its popularity, historians do not usually participate in the production of history through radio, film, or documentaries. Most historians remain "outside of the picture" and act as film critics (Carnes 1995). Historians are often absent from one of the most influential and popular sources of historical knowledge.

Public historians, however, seem more intrigued – and perhaps more armed – to deal with this media. For instance, *The Public Historian* – the journal of the National Council on Public History – published an entire issue dedicated to "History, Historians, and Cinematic Media" in 2003. This chapter explores the ways history is produced through sound and audio-visual media. In doing so, we might consider the qualities of "good" audio-visual history, what part the historian should/can play in the overall production, and what skills public historians must have to launch such projects.

### History on Air: Radio and Sound Archives

History programs are popular on radio. The Organization of American Historians curated significant radio programming through the summer of 2006, and the archived episodes continue to provide historians with podcast materials and the opportunity to study the medium (Talking History 2012). In Europe, *This Sceptred Isle* was a popular 216-episode program about British history broadcast on Radio 4 (UK) in 1995 and 1996, and which generated a large audience.

The asset of radio programs comes first from their relatively – in comparison with audio-visual media – inexpensive production. In the 1980s, David Dunaway – who produced radio history programs – stressed, "whereas professionally produced film or television documentaries cost from \$1,500 to \$5,000 per minute of finished product, radio's costs are approximately an eighth of that amount" (1984, 80). What is more, radio is a fantastic medium for public historians. Radio stations are often very interested in stories from local communities, which also serve as a basis of interest for public history. On radio since 1972, Dunaway has produced history programs and documentaries such as *Writing the Southwest* (1995), *Across the Tracks: A Route 66 Story* (2001), and *Pete Seeger* (2009). Despite such successes, historian producers remain the exception. For instance, *This Sceptred Isle* was produced by Pete



Atkin, a songwriter and radio producer who had no history background. Most of the time radio producers come from journalism or communication, not history, and their background focuses on technique and technology. It is crucial, therefore, that public historians gain familiarity with the techniques and specific issues of radio production.

Public historians willing to produce radio programs should study the ins and outs of oral history and sound archives.<sup>1</sup> Sound archives can provide lively materials for history programs. In 2003, American RadioWorks broadcasts of *The President Calling*, for example, featured excerpts from the informal, taped conversations of former U.S. presidents (Lyndon Johnson conversing with Kennedy's widow Jaqueline, for instance) (American RadioWorks undated). Also notable was the 2002 collaboration between American RadioWorks and Washington University (St. Louis) for a project on African American veterans of the Korean War. Entitled "Korea: The Unfinished War," the project utilized many oral history sources.

The use of oral history through radio programming gives access to voices people rarely hear. Migrants, ethnic minorities, and ordinary people become voices to the past and tell compelling stories that deepen and make more complex traditional historical interpretations. Radio programs can bring life to and reconstruct the atmosphere of the past to create an effect of intimacy for the listeners. Another advantage of radio is the possibility to transport "the listener to distant, imaginative terrain the way great travel writing delivers the reader to a faraway land" (Biewan and Dilworth 2010, 135). In addition to facts and primary resources, public historians involved in radio programming must consider the use of emotional components. In order to give a sense of being there (in the past), producers can use first-person narratives and interviews with people who lived through the events.<sup>2</sup>

Although historical radio programs and oral history may work together, they also maintain distinctive methods. As seen in Chapter 3, historians who interview witnesses for the creation of oral history archives tend not to intervene in the story and leave the floor to their narrators. Radio producers work differently. They make choices and select the parts of the interviews they want to broadcast according to the themes and format of the program. Besides, pacing is crucial. If the interview or recorded sound archive is too slow or too fast, it may very well not match the radio format. The quality of the media does not matter much for archives but it is crucial for broadcasting issues. Too much hesitation, such as "hmm" or silences, and strong accents may render the interview unfit for radio. As Dunaway argues, "Preparing a program for the general public involves balancing faithfulness to historical content with the need for an effective, moving presentation" (1984, 86). Oral historian Michael Frisch notes that when oral history is used as a mere source of data, it undercuts ordinary people as shapers and interpreters of their own experience (1990). Historians-producers should certainly know about how to communicate the past but should not forget that sources have to be interpreted and contextualized. Too often, oral testimonies are seen as mere illustrations, although they should be discussed to provide meaning about the past. This is why public historians should not limit themselves to the role of consultants, but should aim at producing their own programs as well.

### **Film and Documentary: Introduction to History on Screen**

While dealing with "unofficial sources of historical knowledge" British historian Raphael Samuel gave television "pride of place" (1994, 13). Television and movie theaters give access to aspects of the past that would barely reach popular audiences. For instance, *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* – a movie about 16th century France – has been seen by millions of people "who otherwise would have only the vaguest idea about the sixteenth century and



how peasants lived and felt in the past" (Zemon Davis 2003, 45). In spite of the success of history on screen, historians are at best advisors and more often only critics who review movies. When we consider history on screen "it is easy to be critical of what we see ... But ask what we expect a film to be or do, and basically we, historians, don't know, other than to insist that it adhere to 'the facts'" (Rosenstone 2003, 65). Very few producers have history backgrounds. The absence of historians is not necessarily due to academic mistrust. Most of the time, production companies want historians to validate facts, not to produce a scenario (Smith 2003, 44).

Misunderstanding arises from the different goals of filmmakers and historians. As Gilden Seavey explains in her essay on history and audio-visual media, "The task for historians is to arrive at some kind of truth ... the goal for the filmmaker, on the other hand, is to first and foremost ... create a filmic reality that allows the audience to believe a story as if it were true" (2006, 118). Historians and filmmakers, therefore, have contrasting agendas. Filmmakers seek to entertain, to connect past and present, and ultimately to make money (Beck 2011, 173). Besides, their definition of truth differs from traditional historical practice. "The 'truth' for the historical filmmaker lies in the idea of a 'general truth about the subject' not in its specifics" (Gilden Seavey 2006, 124). Filmmakers use historical sources to provide general representations – a sense – of the past. Historians are used to dealing and writing about historical complexity, and this does not fit history on screen. Indeed, history on screen rarely fits the detailed presentation of complex events (Gilden Seavey 2006, 121). Conveying history to a broad audience inevitably involves a degree of simplification or, in the case of most Hollywood films, downright distortion. The question for historians is to know how – and to what extent – they can produce entertaining and historically accurate representations of the past on screen.

Historical films are produced for TV or cinema. Topics of historical films often deal with war (*The Pianist*, Roman Polanski, 2002; *Schindler's List*, Stephen Spielberg, 1993) or its consequences. Rachid Bouchared explored the conduct and aftermath of the Algerian War in *Outside the Law/Hors la loi* (2009). Another widespread type of historical film deals with biography, especially about monarchs – see Stephen Frears's *The Queen* (2006) or Patrice Chereau's *La Reine Margot* (1994). Films, much more than documentaries, add fictional parts and sometimes reinforce the representations of the past in terms of "goodies and baddies" and simplistic interpretation (Beck 2011, 175). Films are certainly not the best media to represent the past with academic accuracy but they can help the public better understand emotions, interpersonal relations, and personal motivation (Toplin 1996, 2).

Over the past two decades the production of historical documentaries has exploded. A documentary is a work that derives its contents from actual (rather than imagined) events, persons, and places (Juel undated). Unlike historical fictions for which the past is staged, documentaries are fact-based and show what once was there or would have been there even without the camera. A crucial difference between film and documentary is the use/absence of sources and historical materials. In addition to American documentaries such as *The American Experience*, or Ken Burns's documentaries, British producers – especially the BBC – have a long tradition of historical documentaries (*The Great War* (1964), *Grand Strategy of World War II* (1972), and more recently Simon Schama's *History of Britain* (2000)).

### Making History on Screen

"Quit complaining about bad films; write your own" (Smith 2003, 28). Making history on screen forces historians to reconsider their role and position and to move from their



comfort zone – as critics – to become part of historical production. There are two main options for historians. First, they may produce their own film/documentary. For instance, Daniel Walkowitz, a specialist in U.S. labor and social history, produced *Molders of Troy*, about industrial workers in New York State, a fiction film based on his research for *Worker City, Company Town* (Toplin 1996, 8). The second and more common option is for historians to develop consulting services for production houses. Due to the capital investment and specialist crews that film production requires, it can be worthwhile for historians to learn how to work with already existing production companies. Consulting historians can have a major role in the selection of historical sources, the historical arguments, and the overall narrative of the film/documentary. In order to produce history or to act as historical consultants, historians must have a few critical skills and clear ideas about what fiction can bring to the understanding of the past and about the limits to invention (Toplin 1996, 2).

### *Study, Review, Advise the Works of Others*

Historians who intend to produce history on screen should start by studying and reviewing the works of others. Historians can write short film reviews for local/online journals, or might write op-ed pieces in which they analyze the kind of historical narratives produced through film, series, or documentaries. Instead of complaining about the difference between academic writing and history on screen, they can focus on how sources are used by producers. Mark Freeman's *Guide to the Study of Documentary Film* invites historians to concentrate on a few key issues like cinematography, sound, *mise-en-scène*, and editing (Freeman 1997).

Regarding cinematography, it is important to pay attention to the framing (what is included and excluded), the composition (angle of view, visual distortion), and color (black and white for historical documents versus color to give a sense of realism). Attention should also be paid to sound and voices in the way the story is narrated, the importance of dialogue and silence in the construction of the narratives, and the place given to music. Ronald Blumer particularly encourages historians to pay attention to "the narration that sets the background and attempts to explain to the audience what exactly is going as clearly and succinctly as possible without color" (2002). Regarding documentary films, historians should discuss the use and presentation of "primary witnesses" and other primary sources such as photographs, artifacts, and films. *Mise-en-scène* refers to the setting, costuming, décor, lighting, and acting. Re-enactment or re-creation of sites is particularly relevant to give life to the past. Blumer explains how, in order to re-create scenes of the 18th century urban landscape of London and Paris, he had had to shoot in Vilnius, Lithuania, which still had un-renovated 18th century urban streets (2002).

The last, but very important, element of the initial review is the role given to historians in the narratives. Historians have two different roles. They can be interviewed by the producer or serve as advisors. Producers are usually keen to interview historians to bring authority to the narratives. Historians also help to set the subject into broader historical contexts. However, as Nina Gilden Seavey reminds us, these interviews are also a matter of "casting the right character for the role" (2006, 123). The producer may choose historians according to his/her conception of the topic. Gilden Seavey thus takes the example of Ken Burns, who chose Shelby Foote for his Civil War documentary partly because of his "lyrical southern drawl, his scruffy comportment, and his verbal facility with the intricate detail of Civil War life" (2006, 123). Reviewing all these aspects should help historians become familiar with the different styles and possible ways to represent the past on screen.



### Production of "Good" – and Popular – History on Screen

Historians may have more impact on film production as advisors. Natalie Zemon Davis – who worked as advisor for *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* – argues for a strong acknowledgment of the role of historical advisors and suggests that they should be part of "all the visual and sound perspectives and aspirations of filmmakers, the qualities and movement of actors, and costs." This allows, "first, constructing an image of a past time and place that is plausible, and second, following the lines of the historical plot so that it does not do serious violence to what evidence we have" (Zemon Davis 2003, 47). However, historical advisors do not directly produce narratives. In order to produce popular history, historians should understand what audiences like about history on screen.

In 1991, for research on documentaries about the Civil War, David Glassberg and one of his students analyzed the multiple letters received by Ken Burns for his Civil War documentary. The objective was to understand what people had liked and how this could be applied to other historical production. "What did Americans see when they watched *The Civil War*? What did they learn from the series?" (2001, 95). The study of the letters revealed three key issues: the role of direct and emotional connection, the relevance of real places, and family history. More than one out of every four letters praised Burns for offering a sense of direct, emotional connection with the past (Glassberg 2001, 99). One challenge for public historians is therefore to produce an accurate yet also lively account of the past.

In order to do so, historians must be aware of the different formats. Will the story follow one specific character? Will a single narrator, an actor, or a historian tell the story? Historians should be aware though that this format personalizes the representation of the past and makes any complex interpretation more difficult. If Burns adopts the multiplicity of voices, Simon Schama assumes "the instrumental role of 'author-presenter' seeking to engage, inform, educate and entertain a television audience" (Beck 2011, 102).

Historians should not abuse description and analysis. In order to maintain the interest of the audience, narratives should not consume more than one-quarter of the program's length (Gilden Seavey 2006, 127). Like public history writing in general, the beginning of the script is crucial. Smith argues that there "is often a '10-10' rule: if readers aren't hooked by the first and last ten pages of a script, the rest never gets read" (Smith 2003, 32). Furthermore, Donald Watt reminds us that "the tempo is different, there can be no recall, no flipping back of the page, no elaborate parallel themes by footnotes or parenthesis" (Gilden Seavey 2006, 126). The story must be straightforward and not confusing to the readers/viewers.

The main difference between films and documentaries is the use of primary source materials to construct the narrative. Historians can use different archives, letters, diaries, photographs, footage, artifacts, objects, works of art, eyewitness testimonies, or sounds. This broad range of materials allows producers to give life to the past. According to Glassberg, the use of photographs contributes to the reality effect in Burns's documentary (2001, 100). As he revealed, the proximity with the past can be even more powerful when the past is placed in the context of family history (2001, 104). Family history serves as a lens through which to understand the past.

Sites are also very important in history on screen. Documentary and film rely a lot on re-enactment and visual reconstruction. In these instances, producers may turn to film techniques (Computer Generated Images/Computer Assisted Design) to create scenes or places from the past. Frequently these scenes are quite effective in creating a sense of mood or place, drawing the documentary away from the traditional use of evidence and bringing the viewer into experiencing the past (Gilden Seavey 2006, 125). Nevertheless what most



persuaded Burns's viewers that the history they saw was real were the present-day scenes of battlefields such as Antietam and Gettysburg. It was important for people that Burns went to the "places where the past happened" and listened "for ghosts and echoes of the event" (Glassberg 2001, 101). Burns filmed his contemporary footage at exactly the same location, season, and time of the day as the important historical event he was narrating. Materials and sites gave spectators a sense of proximity with the past.

Finally, as Toplin stresses, "Excusing any manipulation in the name of artistic license is indefensible" (1996, 10). Historians must be aware of the danger of producing pure fiction. Having said that, it is extremely difficult to judge the part that fiction and historical facts should play in history on screen. It really depends on the objectives, and historians and producers may have conflicting agenda. What is certain, though, is that public historians may play the role of intermediary.

It is also important that historians help producers consider sources not as mere illustration of the narratives. As in any historical production, each piece of evidence should be weighted alongside others to determine its veracity in the broader historical context (Gilden Seavey 2006, 122). This critical analysis of historical materials is often omitted in documentaries since the producer may only seek to find the right kind of documents to support the narratives. Historian-producers should at the very least place the materials into a historical context and not take for granted information extracted from the sources. It is especially important for witnesses whose voice may sound like the uncontested – and unique – interpretation of the past. The visual representation of the past is even more problematic when historians face a shortage of documents as, for example, on Greek or Roman Antiquity. Historian producers must then use art works, lithographs, etchings, archaeological findings, artifacts, and other sources – sometimes even not contemporary from the period under consideration – to help create a sense of reality. Those sources are often indirect and require even more contextualization.

The struggle over historical accuracy on screen presents enduring challenges for historians. Zemon Davis gives two examples of historical compromises she made for the movie *Le Retour de Martin Guerre*. She stresses that, as historian, she could accept a minor mistake about the color of the judges' clothing during a trial scene but criticized the fact that the movie presented the trial as a public event rather than a more accurately private event because it gives a false representation of 16th century public life. She explains, "If major anachronisms are introduced, they should be evident and funny or creative, opening horizons for audiences" (2003, 47). We touch here upon a crucial aspect of history on screen. Inaccuracy may be tolerated in certain cases. Toplin invites us to question whether the "manipulation of evidence is developed out of genuine and laudable efforts to communicate broad truths" (1996, 12). What matters ultimately – especially for films – is the capacity to convey a particular historical message about the event, and not the few historical inaccuracies. Rosenstone argues that to be judged "historical," "a film must somehow engage the discourse of history, the already existing body of writing, arguments, debates, memories, images, moral positions, and data surrounding the topic with which it deals" (2003, 76). However, very few films meet this expectation. Public historians should focus and strive for films and documentaries to provide a historical understanding of the past.

### **History on Screen as Public and Participatory History?**

Public history invites public participation. One way to do so for historians involved in audio-visual production is to create links between the past and the present. Producers



can punctuate films and documentaries with contemporary debates. Another option is to allow – as Simon Schama did for *History of Britain* – contemporary witnesses to become an integral part of the narrative (Beck 2011, 105). Similarly useful are productions that foster public historical debates. Public debates that followed *Schindler's List*, *Lincoln*, or *Selma* are part of the public history production. Another example is *Days of Glory* (*Indigènes* in French) produced by Rachid Bouchared in 2006 that brought light to men from the French colonies who got drafted to fight during World War II. In spite of their service, those veterans faced systematic discrimination and successive French governments even froze their pensions. The film and the debates that followed contributed to a public acknowledgment of the colonial troops and to the changing pension system.

### Entertainment and Reality (History) Television

British producer Simon Schama argues that television has contributed to the downfall of “the usual hierarchy of authority” and has provoked “a democracy of knowledge” (Schama 2004, 27). To some extent, the public can now participate in history programs. If radio programs can animate live discussion with audiences, television is more conservative in the role of its audiences. Too often, the public only passively consumes what television producers provide them with. This passivity demonstrates the problems innate in using television as an education medium (De Groot 2008, 152).

Television can offer a broad range of historical programs. Certain channels like The History Channel (USA), Discovery History (UK), or Histoire (France) specialize in history programs. As for screened history in general, historical programs on TV often favor certain topics such as wars and military history, monarchs and “great men,” or sports. Mostly encountered in the United Kingdom, costume drama is a fictional story based on romance or adventure. Costume drama, like *Jane Eyre* (BBC, 2006) or *Anna Karenina* (Channel 4, 2000), is often an adaptation of novels from, for instance, Dickens, Tolstoy, or Flaubert. Although fictional, the genre relies on reconstruction of the past through visual aesthetic. Other series based on history emerged in the 2000s. Produced by the American HBO network, *Rome* was broadcasted from 2005 to 2007. This very expensive (\$100 million budget) series depicted the city of Rome in the years 49–31 B.C.E. Composed of detailed visual representation of the city, *Rome* contains bad language, violence, and sex. According to Jonathan Swamp, consultant and co-producer of the series, the most important thing to do was to “evade the clichés of Holy Rome, all white pillars and white togas” (De Groot 2008, 199). Historical fictions provide – through emotions, adventure, and drama – the entertaining aspect of television.

Entertainment might also lead to audience participation. Quiz shows such as *Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader?* (Fox, 2007) or *University Challenge* (BBC, 1994–) have increased in popularity since the 1990s. Game shows present history as a set of facts that are correct or not, with right and wrong answers. History has to match the marketing presentation of the game, to be fast, straight to the point, and entertaining.

A new sort of program emerged in the 2000s. In relation to the strategy to foster emotion, experience, and reality, television producers attempted to increase interaction with audiences through reality TV. Reality TV became famous with the production of *Big Brother* in Holland in 1999, and started to diffuse into many different sub-fields, among them reality-history programs. De Groot defines reality-history as:

the suite of programmes which somehow involve and enfranchise the audience into historical experience, either by allowing them to participate in history through the



game-style re-enactment of the "House" format (in which a group of people are placed in a particular setting for a set amount of time and forced to act in the style of a historical period), or through interactivity of various forms such as voting, nominating, or commenting.

(2008, 165)

The purpose is not to reach accurate interpretation of the past, but to provide "experiences" of the past based on re-enactments and to invite viewers to identify with the protagonists (De Groot 2008, 165). Shows like *100 Greatest Sporting Moments* in the UK (1999), or *The Greatest Frenchman of all Time* in France (2005) asked audiences to vote and to participate in the creation of history. Endemol, the company responsible for *Big Brother*, also produced *Restoration* in 2003 on the BBC (UK), in which the public chose and voted for which historical building should be saved. Other shows directly involved participants.

The BBC produced *Destination D-Day: The Raw Recruits* in 2004 in which volunteers participated in the reconstitution of the Normandy landings. Emphasis was put on experiencing the past. An important feature of reality-history is the connection with the present. The BBC produced *The Trench* in 2002 as a recreation of the World War I trench experience, through the 10th Battalion of the East Yorkshire Regiment on the Western Front in 1916. The volunteers came from the same area as that of the 1916 regiment and spent two weeks in a trench system in France created for the show.

One interesting aspect for public historians is the current attention paid to everyday life history. In the United States, *Colonial House* was broadcasted on PBS in 2004 and attempted to recreate daily life in 17th century Plymouth colony. Reconstructing the past implies serious research for historical advisors on furniture, food, hygiene, clothing, and work. British public historian, Juliet Gardiner, worked as historical advisor for *The 1940s House*, a 2001 show produced for Channel 4 (UK) that asked a modern-day family to experience the life of a family in London during World War II. Reality-history TV can obviously be criticized in its attempt to re-create the past. Despite historical details, participants of *The Trench* hardly experienced what World War I soldiers went through. The relevance of the shows should not be fully rejected, however. Supporting and interactive materials – especially websites presenting historical documents, quizzes, and interviews – can help non-specialist audiences to better understand the past.

### *Partners, Training, and Tools*

Perhaps even more than for other types of historical production, history on air and on screen requires collaboration. Producing a radio program, a documentary, a film, or a TV series involves many different production roles and positions that historians must engage and collaborate with. For instance, a historian who intends to make a documentary for a radio or TV program should discuss his/her needs with an array of technicians and be ready to deal with sound and visual issues. Productions, for example, require extensive content, sound, and effects editing. As Dunaway stresses regarding radio programs, "it is not unusual to use only a minute of an hour's interview in the final production." (Dunaway 1984, 83). Editing is achieved through a variety of techniques, including montage, the superimposition of sounds, interviews, and narration. Video editing for a documentary may require weeks or months of work. Dunaway points out that 10–25 hours per minute are necessary for radio documentary editing (1984, 87). Depending upon the size and budget of the production, video editing can range from the use of relatively simple and free editors (such as iMovie for Mac), to more



elaborate software (such as FinalCut Pro, Adobe Premiere), to the hiring of documentary/video editing companies, yet it remains a crucial aspect for all productions.

Public historians can also contact various organizations that promote video editing. The Visual History Summer Institute (VHSI) at Georgia Southern University provides special training for historians to learn the basic tools of media production (Georgia Southern University undated). The VHSI has sessions such as "Working with Camera" and "Working with Natural and Artificial Lights." In Figure 7.1, Graciela Cano practices different techniques that historians must learn if they want to move from advisor to producer of historical documentary films. It is particularly relevant to understand how primary sources can be filmed and represented.

Historians can also follow and attend The World Congress of Science and Factual Producers (WCSFP), or the International Documentary Association (IDA), The Credits and the Documentary Educational Resources that provide resources, showcase, courses, and funding. Furthermore The International Association for Media and History is an organization of filmmakers, broadcasters, archivists, and scholars dedicated to historical inquiry into film, radio, television, and related media. The Documentary Center sponsors a wide range of programs devoted to documentary film, an annual six-month Institute for Documentary Filmmaking, the International Emerging Filmmakers Fellowship, a Center Screen documentary showcase, and a course outline that help users to sharpen their approach to documentaries at large.

Public historians should talk to others with experience as historical advisors or filmmakers. Historians may also consult websites of historical advisors, or consult different books on the production of documentaries (Freeman 1997; Barnouw 1993; Barsam 1992). The *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* also offers very useful advice and case studies. *Current* is a website that covers public television and radio with information about legislation, future events, links to sites, professional organizations related to the media, journals, and media activist organizations.

Historians who want to produce their own films face additional constraints. Daniel Smith details the steps he encountered and warns, "one of many lessons we learned in dealing with

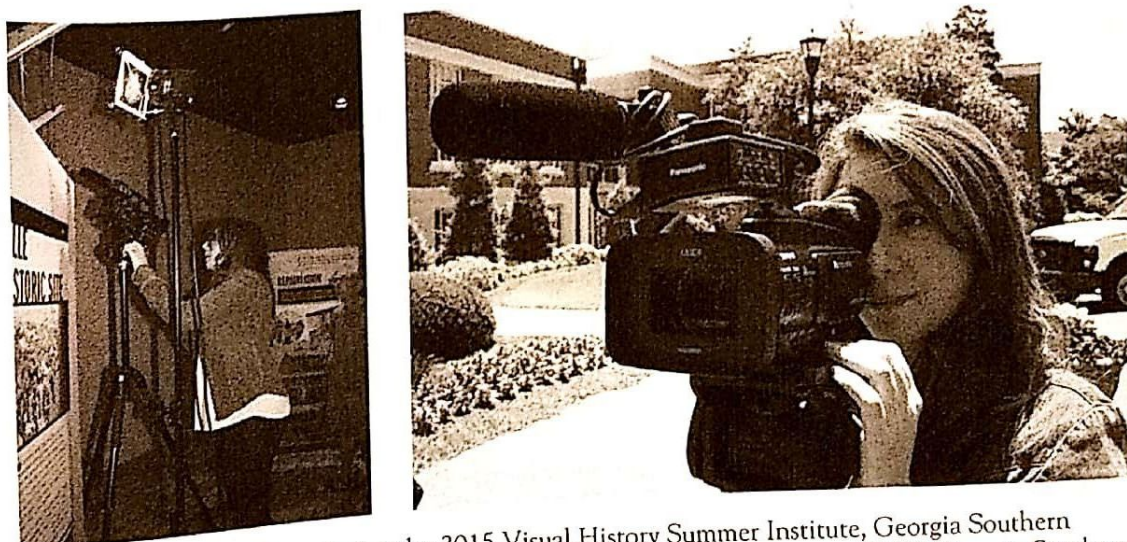


Figure 7.1 Graciela Cano during the 2015 Visual History Summer Institute, Georgia Southern University. Courtesy of Graciela Cano, Michael Van Wagenen (VHSI/Georgia Southern University).



Hollywood is that unless you have a hugely attractive high-concept movie, development and decisions take a lot of time" (2003, 36). Historians have to find producers and submit the script to "development executives" who "figure out whether they can risk pursuing a project" (Smith 2003, 36). Smith used the *Hollywood Creative Directory*, which lists producers, their projects, and their contacts, to find a director for his project. Once the historian has found a director and a production company, (s)he enters the stage of development. Smith explains that "Development is the time when a screenplay gets read in very serious ways – perhaps for the first time – by everyone from network executives to prospective directors and actors." This process involves different partners with different roles:

Executives read a script with an eye toward targeting a large audience while keeping the budget low; directors are trying to visualize the story, eliminating excess dialogue and exposition; actors are looking for juicy characters to play with dramatic "character arcs" and stunning snatches of dialogue.

(Smith 2003, 39)

The road leading to the production of historical films is long and this is why historians are usually limited to the role of advisors whom producers consult and – sometimes – listen to.

To conclude, historians may use and take advantage of radio and audio-visual production to increase public access to the past. Sound and audio-visual media allow historians to vary the format of historical interpretation and make the past alive. It is also critical for historians to encourage contextualization and historical analysis of sources so that the latter do not remain pure illustrations. In doing so, historians can participate in the creation of entertaining and accurate historical productions.

## Notes

- 1 See Chapter 3.
- 2 See Chapter 9.

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