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The Trouble with Archie: Locating and Accessing Primary Sources for the Study of the 1970s US Sitcom, All in the Family

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1970s U.S. Sitcom *All in the Family*

Abstract:

The American television program *All in the Family*, produced by Norman Lear and based

on the U.K. comedy *Till Death Do Us Part*, was groundbreaking in its social relevance

with regard to contemporary issues of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and politics,

among others. The interest in *All in the Family* continues into the 21st century, and

television historians and fans continue to seek out elusive historical video of the show.

With a focus on United States resources, the author addresses the challenges in

discovering, locating, and accessing primary source visual material for study of *All in the*

Family and speculates on the future of accessibility of historical broadcasts, the impact on

television studies and potential solutions.

In the middle of the 1970-71 television season, the American television network

CBS aired the first episode of *All in the Family*. The sitcom, produced by Norman Lear,

was groundbreaking in its social relevance and in its mission to take on the hot button

issues of the day. Critical and popular reaction to the show was mixed - some believed

that satirizing its central character and the real-life Archie Bunkers of the world was a

useful way to confront and deflate bigotry, while others feared it would act as a cathartic

release and legitimization of intolerance.[1] Despite a shaky start, *All in the Family* was a

top-rated show for most of its run and remains one of the most critically acclaimed shows

in U.S. television history.

While the show was still in its prime of popularity in the 1970s, scholars were

already deconstructing it.[2] The interest in *All in the Family* as an exemplary television

series continues into the 21st century, perhaps even more keenly today as television

critics, scholars, archivists, and viewers experience cultural history nostalgia in the face

of a rapidly changing technological environment as well as an increased availability of

television memory as a result of the very same factors (e.g. online television archives and

commercially-available TV-DVDs.)[3] The importance of studying historical television

fictions as a means of understanding society and television itself has been well

established, so this article will present *All in the Family* as a case study and emblematic

example of a noteworthy historical American artifact and the obstacles and challenges

presented in studying it.

A New Sitcom for a New Audience

The genesis of *All in the Family* was not unusual. The politically minded, liberal

Norman Lear was inspired by the popular British television comedy, *Till Death Do us*

Part, which Lear first came across in 1968. That show, created by Johnny Speight,

featured a bigoted, opinion-spewing, working class man living with his family in

London's East End. After securing the rights to create an American version, Lear

conjured the bigoted, opinion-spewing Archie Bunker and his family and situated them in

a working class neighborhood of Queens, New York.[4] The more interesting and significant part of the show's origins was its initial reception, first by executives, then by audiences.

Deemed too provocative, the pilot (originally titled *Those Were the Days*) was at first rejected by ABC.[5] Paradoxically, the same network that just a year earlier had killed the popular variety show *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* - because it often pointedly critiqued the American political and cultural status quo and habitually vexed the network censors[6] - decided it was now a good idea to take on the delicate subjects of race, class, feminism, sexuality, politics, and generational conflict. CBS president Robert Wood, the very person who had fired the Smothers Brothers, acknowledged that the network could no longer resist the forces of cultural change. The order of the day was sacrificing the solid but staid programming that had worked for years, especially the rural-based comedies of *Hee Haw*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Mayberry R.F.D.*, and *Green Acres*, in favor of attracting a younger audience with the bait of more contemporary fodder.[7]

This time period from the end of the 1960s to the beginning of the 1970s in television is particularly critical to document because it represents a turning point in audience targeting (as well as the rise of the independent television producer with Lear's company, Tandem Productions, as a stand out in the 1970s [8]). As Jason Mittell explains, the concept of capturing a 'quality audience' took on great importance, an industry term referring to young, upscale, educated viewers.[9] *All in the Family* was the quintessential example of this type of programming, and its success was unequivocal - by its second season the show was ranked at the top of the Nielsen ratings and captured a majority

share of the viewing audience - a figure that translated to a much greater number of viewers than what the same calculation denotes today.[10]

Just as Tom and Dick Smothers had attempted to use television as a vehicle for social change, so Norman Lear hoped to use the medium for creative expression as well as commentary on American society. Prior to the airing of the first episode, CBS preemptively addressed expected negative reactions to the show's content by issuing a message stating that the series 'seeks to throw a humorous spotlight on our frailties, prejudices, and concerns. By making them a source of laughter, we hope to show - in a mature fashion - just how absurd they are'.[11] Humorous as it was, the show was painfully realistic at times, and much of the laughter would be tinged with disheartening acknowledgment of that reality. Lear described himself as having 'a great proclivity for placing tears and laughter side by side' because of the way he dealt with conflict in his own family growing up. He explained, 'I've always considered that an audience laughs hardest when they're concerned most'.[12]

In addition to serving as perhaps the flagship show in attracting new, key audiences, *All in the Family* was a watershed program in several other ways. It revived the 1940s-50s practice of recording in front of a live studio audience (audience reaction comprised a dynamic element in the presentation of *All in the Family*'s controversial subject matter); it presented realistic characters and plots and topical events and issues; it was distinctly more verbal than other contemporary sitcoms, relying more on conversation and less on heavy-handed plots or visual gags. It was, as Derek Kompare writes, among 'the first comedies - as opposed to news and live drama - to be legitimated as historically significant to both television *per se* and American culture'.[13] *All in the*

Family - and consequently other sitcoms that succeeded it in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. *Family Ties, The Cosby Show, Roseanne, The Simpsons*) - provided 'moral instruction'[14] and a civic educational forum for information about current events and contemporary social issues, at the very least raising issues for discussion that could potentially lead to action or changed behavior and attitudes on the part of viewers. For these reasons alone, *All in the Family* warrants the continued attention of scholars, and the show provides the potential for numerous themes to investigate. These compelling reasons aside, the program is part of American cultural heritage and warrants preserving by simple virtue of this fact.

The Search for Archie

Finding scholarly books, articles, and reviews addressing *All in the Family* does not present undue challenge for most students and scholars of the show. Locating primary video sources, however, can. *All in the Family* ran for nine seasons, from 1971 through 1979. Seasons one through six are commercially available on DVD (distributed by Sony Home Entertainment) and can be rented, for example, via DVD rental-via-mail company Netflix. These collections were released beginning in 2002. Seasons seven through nine (consisting of 65 episodes) are still not available to the general public as of this writing. The show's scripts are elusive, too, as they are not collected in one place and are difficult to locate in disparate manuscript collections.[15]

Approaching *All in the Family*, I presumed that my access-related challenge would be paying the cost of the DVDs and waiting for the package to arrive in my

mailbox. If I had chosen to study the sitcoms *Seinfeld* or even *Mary Tyler Moore*, that would have been the case as both are commercially available in complete series. I initially fell victim to an unspoken expectation of the digital age - at least this seems to be true anecdotally in the U.S. - that one can get anything one wants whenever one wants it. That expectation thrives with those who are digital natives in the U.S. as well as with many of us digital immigrants who ought to know better, but it is not the case.

After quickly realizing that I would not have easy access to the entire series, I began searching special collections. As I live in the U.S. and was seeking a U.S.-produced program, I did have some good fortune on my side given the relative wealth of moving image archives relative to other countries. And as I live in New York City, the Paley Center for Media (formerly the Museum of Television and Radio and now named for CBS pioneer William S. Paley) was a natural first step. The Paley Collection holds ten episodes of those final three seasons. My next step was searching the online database WorldCat, a worldwide network of thousands of library catalogues.[16] Of those items whose records are included in WorldCat, the UCLA Film & Television Archive proved to be a bonanza, holding 42 episodes from the final three seasons. Not incidentally, while the Paley Center is fairly well known (there are locations in New York City and Los Angeles) and probably one of the places a television researcher would initially think to look, their holdings are not included in WorldCat. This indicates that there are inevitably other archives and repositories around the U.S. that I and other researchers would miss in what might feel like an exhaustive search. My search in the online catalogues of other video collections such as the Museum of Broadcast Communications, the Wisconsin

Center for Film and Theater Research, and the Library of Congress' Moving Image Collections, (MIC) resulted in no further records of the show's recordings.

It appears that there are only three viewable episodes from the final season remaining and 20 episodes from the final season that are not accessible anywhere, [see fig. 1] or at least not anywhere that a hearty, resource-aware researcher would easily find them. Even the UCLA collection, though impressively robust and accessible, is somewhat illusory. The episodes from the final three seasons of *All in the Family* held in the collection were acquired from various sources in differing formats, and not all episodes are readily viewable. The majority of those 42 episodes is on tape and would require advance notice for viewing so that they can be transferred to digital format. As a UCLA archivist explained, items that are only held on 3/4" tape are especially problematic, as they are increasingly confronted with 'shedding issues' (wherein the oxide coating separates from the tape) that require special conservation efforts. While the staff is willing and usually able to put in that effort, it is extremely time-consuming and a researcher could expect a very long turnaround.[17]

There are clips of a several episodes from the final seasons of *All in the Family* on the video sharing website YouTube. In fact, one user has curated an impressive collection of *All in the Family* clips at http://www.youtube.com/user/Mynjunkyard. There are scarce bootleg copies of the complete series and the final three seasons on the eBay shopping and auction website. The existence of these clips does provide a certain undeniable value. As Kimberly Springer writes, 'the editing of clips for contemporary consumption, the composition of DVD box sets, and user-edited YouTube postings provide important indicators for contemporary approaches, or avoidances, of the social issues Lear brought

to the American table for discussion'. Yet the very fact of impure or pastiche collections can be problematic. 'What one finds most often in YouTube clips and TV Land excerpts', writes Springer, 'are Archie's more virulent and sensational racist expressions…[E]xcerpting the series for YouTube and other web-based contexts gives the impression that Archie's bigotry is a resolution and point of closure for the viewer. Mike's, Gloria's, and Edith's response along a continuum of liberalism are generally excised or overridden without Lear's closing shot of Archie's comeuppance'.[18] Such sources inevitably also offer poor video quality, incomplete episodes and series, or potentially risky customer transactions. These are not optimal solutions to gaining access to historical video for scholarly purposes.

All in the Family, then, is problematic on two levels: First, knowing what items exist in the world which involves someone having catalogued, processed, and made that catalogue or finding aid available; and second, getting to those items, which involves physical accessibility and geography. While these problems are by no means unique to this particular search, it is confounding that such an admired and important program is so difficult to locate in its entirety. Finding information about and physical embodiment of older or less popular shows would present such challenges on a much greater level.

Outside of academia, fans and series completists are waiting for Sony Home Entertainment to release the final three seasons of *All in the Family*. Their anticipation is observable on various Internet forums. In early 2009, a customer service representative at Sony explained to me that seasons one through six were not selling well and that Sony would wait to see the results of lowering the price of the existing collections.[19] Sony is likely aware that it can take advantage of pent up demand. They may also be holding out

to see what might be the most lucrative way to distribute - with entertainment formats currently in extraordinary flux, it may be that the company hopes that some imminent but yet unknown system or format will better work in their favor.

Plus ça Change

A review of the literature on the state and fate of television archives reveals that the situation of fragmented resource availability has been thus for some time and has not improved significantly, even with the advent and growth of television studies in the last thirty years.[20] Indeed the world is vastly different a quarter century after Daniel Einstein and Robert Vianello lamented, in their 1984 'Guide to Researching Television Programming', that there was 'no source of rentals'.[21] But many problems persist. For one, there was and is the intractable problem of irretrievable loss. 'The fact is that at least half of programming produced well into the 1960s has been already lost forever', wrote Einstein and Vianello in their introduction to the guide. 'Convinced that the value of their property was not worth the cost of storage, producers and the Networks have systematically disposed of programs representing a cultural goldmine for the student and the scholar'.[22] Irretrievable non-existence is not so much a problem as an inescapable fact - many programs, especially in the 1940s and 1950s, were produced live and never recorded.

The same problems still hamper television archives today: volume of material, varying and deteriorating formats and preservation, indexing, funding, staff resources, ownership and copyright, market forces, and technological flux. Just as there is a

common mistaken assumption that we can find all visual material that we want, there is

an assumption that preservation and access obstacles will fall away now that storing

digital objects is easy and practiced as a matter of course. Besides the fact that digital

media are convenient for access but precarious for preservation, how *can* it get better

given such a litany of challenges? For historical material (historical having a fluid

definition), there will always be a lack of resources to process, catalogue, and make items

available for access. As time goes on, lost or hard to find episodes will become further

buried - either in archives or in media companies' non-priority, non-lucrative backlog.

The Question of Responsibility

While U.S. museums and libraries (notably the institutions referred to earlier),

would seem the most likely to bear the responsibility of collecting, preserving, indexing,

and making available programs that originated in the U.S., they are beset with challenges

and cannot in fairness be relied upon solely to take up the cause. Moving image archivists

are not to blame; they have practical concerns. They cannot collect everything - in fact,

some cringe when they feel compelled, for political, economic or etiquette reasons, to

accept everything a donor offers.[23] The more there is, the harder it is to make it

accessible. As Paley Center for Media television curator Ron Simon explains regarding

the Center's *All in the Family* collection policy, the focus was on finding pilot and early

shows as well as those significant episodes that originated spinoff characters. Later

episodes were not as critically acclaimed as the early ones, so the viewer and patron

demand is assumed to be absent.[24] Time passes, collective memory fades, and critical

mass interest wanes. Archivists' and curators' attention moves to other subjects and tasks due to institutional mandate, donor stipulation, financial strain, or public demand.

This raises the issue of selection. Archivists are charged with making difficult decisions about what to collect and acquire, often requiring case-by-case judgment calls. As Margaret Compton, University of Georgia Peabody Collections media archivist, writes, 'Archivists generally do not suffer from the "bad object" syndrome…We want to save as much television material as we can whether "low" culture (cable access) or "high" culture (PBS, Bravo), public service spot or prime-time sitcom'.[25] I would argue that, in addition, there is a distinction made between episodes in the same series - which were good or important, which were bad or repetitive. UCLA archivist Dan Einstein (co-author of the above-mentioned 1984 research guide) describes the Paley Center's collection policy as going after the 'greatest hits', for example,[26] but UCLA itself does not see the need to hold all the episodes of 1970s-80s sitcom *Three's Company* because the show essentially has the same premise in each episode. If a scholar wished to do a content analysis to illustrate this point, she would be met with the obstacles I have been describing with *All in the Family*.

Fans of *All in the Family* are familiar enough with many of its hallmark episodes: the African-American Jefferson family moving in next door; the visit from Sammy Davis Jr.; the visit from Edith's liberated cousin Maude; Edith experiencing menopause; the branding of the Bunkers' door with a swastika; Archie unknowingly donating blood to a black woman. Episodes from the final three seasons may not be as well established in our collective memory, however, given their absence in the marketplace. These include a visit from Mike's draft dodging friend, Archie engaging with the Ku Klux Klan, the death

of Edith's cousin whom she discovered was a lesbian, and Edith's attempted rape. These episodes may not be widely considered among the greatest hits, but they are important to the series as a whole.

Filling in the gaps of accessible video and program details often requires consulting prosaic (and sometimes contraband) sources in addition to Netflix and online media retailer Amazon.com. Derek Kompare, in his study of American television reruns, refers to the 'ubiquity of past television'.[27] Indeed, much of American TV runs on reruns, which are a boon to cultural memory, but for the researcher such practice is often of limited use. Cable channel TV Land has the rights to air the entire *All in the Family* series and was even broadcasting some of the rarely available episodes that I went to see at UCLA during the same month. Ron Simon cites that presence in the television-viewing sphere as one of the reasons the Paley Center does not make undo effort to acquire later episodes of *All in the Family*.[28] While it might behoove me to subscribe to a cable package that includes TV Land, unless I am able to record all of them, I am still unable to control if or when I see specific episodes.

This aspect of selection and accessibility speaks to the concept of the long tail, a term whose business/retail use was coined by *Wired* magazine editor Chris Anderson to describe the commercial availability of unique items for niche audiences.[29] Netflix and Amazon.com are the most commonly cited examples of the long tail, for films and books respectively, but even Netflix cannot scratch the surface of the inventory of television shows produced in the U.S. The long tail - and access to its caudal vertebrae - is made possible by technology, especially the ability to digitize text and visual materials. Now that most artifacts can be easily saved and stored, what happens to selection and decision-

making? While technology may allow one less headache for the moving image archivist who can now store large quantities of material going forward, digitizing old formats, digital rights management and resource limitations continue to hinder the availability and access of those materials. The common assumption is that everything can and should be available, but as we can see, it is not.

While improvement has not been vast in recent decades, the for-profit sector has indeed made research easier in many cases. In 2005, Jeff Ubois, then a research associate at the School of Information Management and Systems at University of California Berkeley, wrote an article called 'Finding Murphy Brown: How Accessible Are Historic Broadcasts?' wherein he attempted to find several episodes of the American sitcom *Murphy Brown* that were criticized in a speech by then U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle for lacking family values (the main character was a single, unwed mother). As Ubois writes, reissues of *Murphy Brown* programs 'might be counted a successful, market-driven expansion of access to archival television. As program owners find new, profitable ways to offer old footage to the public, some access problems may be solved by commercial entities rather than by libraries or archives'. He makes a point about program owners' reluctance to make some programs accessible, as we see with *All in the Family*'s final three seasons. 'If the market demand is small', he writes, 'why bother?' But because owners have no definite method of determining the value of such programs, 'if there is residual value, it's sensible to protect it'.[30] As Amy Holdsworth writes, 'the phenomenal growth of the TV-DVD market, and the development of online television archives…for public consumption clearly mark the currency of television memory'.[31]

While it is frustrating to wait for a corporate entity like Sony to come through

with releasing material they have in their control, Ubois rightfully intimates that we researchers should not take for-profit endeavors for granted. A multitude of old television series is now available on DVD, and that number will undoubtedly rise. However, the commercial sector cannot entirely solve the problem. As Sony Entertainment's standstill with *All in the Family* proves, DVD release decisions are made based on market demand, not scholar or discrete niche collector demand, so there are still many television shows that are difficult or impossible to find.

What's the rest of the answer?

Demand can have an effect in the non-commercial sector, too. Researchers might take heed, as they could be a relatively small but critical part of the solution. While a handful of researchers will not push Sony into action, for many programs the hope is not simply to have a complete set of a program on one's bookshelf but to be able to view them at all, wherever that might be possible. As University of Georgia Peabody Collections media archivist Compton writes, 'in order for archives to succeed in their missions, they need patronage and support of scholars. The number of annual research inquiries and visits can drive or enhance existing archival budgets'.[32]

A Possible Solution: Collective Knowledge

Rather than relying on corporations or institutions to deliver desired results, the combined efforts of a large number of researchers and viewers may be a more realistic and effective route to achieving the goal of resource collection and integration. In an ideal world, there would be a complete catalogue of a nation's television programs and

episodes, a centralized repository and one-stop shopping. (A film researcher's equivalent wish might be for a shot list catalogue.[33]) For books and films there are the successful models of WorldCat and the Library of Congress and the American Film Institute and British Film Institutes respectively (notably a mix of public and private entities involved in the endeavor). It would be a Herculean project to catalogue and index all American-produced television programs in the same way. This is surprising on one level given that U.S. television comprises a sixty year history, a relatively short time in historical terms (as opposed to millennia of manuscripts, for example). Because of the volume of television episodes and the lack of detailed records, however, (in an ideal world, the catalogue would also include unproduced pilots), it presents an effective impossibility. It is both interesting and disheartening to note that television history research is complicated, as Michael Curtin and Christopher Anderson point out, by both surpluses and deficits.[34]

Vetted sources like those previously mentioned, while essential, lead to limited progress. Karen Gracy discusses the rise of non-institutional archives such as those generated by interested individuals and groups. 'Moving image stewardship may no longer be the exclusive province of institutions such as archives and libraries', she writes, and 'this new breed of archive relies upon multiple creators'.[35] Likewise, in his comparison of YouTube and Australia's National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) as tools for television history research, Alan McKee writes that 'many researchers have noted…that digital democratic archives offer an accessibility that traditional archives cannot hope to match'.[36] McKee notes that NFSA tends to be stronger for 'serious current affairs' and older programs whereas YouTube is more useful for lighter and newer

programs. He makes a strong case for the importance and expected permanence of both traditional and digital democratic archives and concludes that despite significant obstacles in moving image access, it would not be impossible 'for traditional publicly funded audiovisual archives to develop in ways that would increase their accessibility and map more closely with popular history'.[37]

It should therefore come as no surprise that collectors, fans, and peer-to-peer resources with the aid of new technology are fostering historical research. Such crowd sourcing and the sharing of grassroots, user-generated information mirrors the social networking information environment on a larger scale and may well be a large part of the answer to many historical artifact problems. We could not have relied on this method ten to fifteen years ago. A tool along the lines of a television program wiki may be the best chance there is of a complete inventory. If one person patched together a list of *All in the Family* episodes and their locations helped along by the knowledge of her peers, imagine many people doing so and documenting the information on an exponential scale, with much greater detail and - where legal and feasible - actual video clips.[38] As each researcher toils along assembling bits and pieces, the information could be documented not just in her personal notes but also in an online repository for others to use and add to from their own treks. Two well-established models of collaborative online projects are the encyclopedia Wikipedia and the genealogical information repository USGenWeb.[39] Such activity, enabling non-professionals to participate in information production and distribution, has been explored in related contexts where many people can collaborate on and contribute to large-scale projects.[40]

One of the best - and perhaps overlooked and undervalued - informational resources currently available is the Internet Movie Database (IMDb). This enormous database of film and television information was started in 1990 by a few film hobbyists and has expanded impressively over the years (it was acquired by Amazon.com in 1998).[41] With its links to programs, production and cast information, and more recently, television episode synopses, the site provides an auspicious model. Richard Adler's *All in the Family: A Critical Appraisal* includes an appendix listing the episodes through the last season, which I used to confirm episode titles so I would know what to look for in archives and on WorldCat.[42] While the Adler appendix may be a more traditional source, substantial value was added when used in conjunction with the IMDb episode list.

IMDb is a potentially powerful democratic archive space of great value to television history as well as an admirable catalogue and discovery tool, even garnering kudos from information science professionals for its laudable cataloguing protocol.[43] In 2006, the U.S. version of the site (there are versions in Spain, France, Germany, Portugal and Italy) began including television shows and episodes and now provides a full-fledged TV arena (begging reconsideration of its name – Internet Moving Image Database?). At the bottom of the pages of many television programs in the 'related links' section, there is an 'episode guide' link. Because of IMDb's submission requirements when users post new episode information (like Wikipedia, USGenWeb, and many other sites, IMDb relies on users for its content), there are details about producers, network, airdates, writers, directors, cast, and plot.

IMDb might consider adding a new field to its series and episode pages labeled something along the lines of 'video access' or - in keeping with the popular tone of the

site - 'where can I watch it?' A general note about the show's archival holdings could be included in such a field on the series page, and specific location/access information could be provided at the episode level since most archives do not hold complete series and episodes may be scattered among several. On the series level page of *All in the Family* the field might say (with relevant hyperlinks): 'Seasons 1-6 are available on commercially-available DVD, and seasons 7-9 can be found at the UCLA Film & Television Archive and the Paley Center for Media (see individual episodes for details); various episodes can be seen on TV Land; a selection of clips are available on YouTube.' As researchers acquire more information in their work, they might be willing to post information there for the sake of history and scholarship.

This vision by no means offers an ideal solution to one-stop shopping for TV research. IMDb's historical TV representation is spotty, and the database does not currently include locally produced programs. Foreseeable future generations are not likely to witness a seamless digital integration with the object described and the object itself. Changes afoot in the realm of intellectual copyright, digital rights management, and what we even mean by 'television' put everything in a murky light. Attracting scholars to a source like IMDb might prove to be a challenge as well.

Over the last fifty years, 'nontraditional' sources such as moving images have slowly made their way into the purview of historians as legitimate source material. [44] While the same elitism that once (and in some cases still) stood in the way of scholars using film or television as sources might still stand in the way of scholars using IMDb and other nontraditional resources as tools, but such boundaries are bound to become perforated as their value is proven. Traditional catalogues would do well to open

themselves to user-generated metadata as it partially solves the time and money problem. Even the U.S. Library of Congress is open to integrating interactive user-created data with traditional structured catalogues.[45]

As UCLA TV archivist Dan Einstein told me, 'For every TV show there ever was there's somebody who's nuts for it, and a lot of these people do something about it'. The BBC Archive is counting on the kindness of such people as evidenced by their 'Treasure Hunt' where they ask visitors to their web site to contribute film footage of notable people and events.[46] The Paley Center for Media issues a similar request for 'lost programs', including a list of specific episodes that they deem to be missing from collections anywhere,[47] and the Library of Congress' Moving Image Collections provides information on donating to their collections.[48] Much of the sought-after material and information is out there (likely in the form of off-air recordings), but we need a virtual place to deposit both the objects and their descriptions. Perhaps one or more of the interested organizations - AFI, Paley Center, Museum of Broadcast Communications, the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, the Library of Congress, the Library of American Broadcasting - would be willing to join forces and partner with and/or sponsor such a project in the way that the Moving Image Collections, sponsored by the Library of Congress and the American Moving Image Association, hopes to be 'a window to the world's moving images' (MIC is partnering so far with only North American collections but allows searching the archives of 17 other countries).[49] These venerable institutions, in collaboration with commercial outfits like Internet Movie Database (IMDb) and TV Land, individual collectors[50] and their disinterested heirs, scholars, and haphazard

gleaners, have the potential to construct a powerful and essential discovery tool and catalogue.[51]

Until such a supreme database exists, scholars will still need to take the time to identify episode information for whatever program they are researching and then schedule and secure funding for research trips to see rare material. They can see clips on YouTube or issue queries to collectors. Or they will do without. While I could write about *All in the Family* having only watched seasons one through six, I would feel at best a nagging sense of incompleteness and at worst borderline fraudulent. Not researching the final three seasons of *All in the Family* would be the equivalent of writing a biography without exploring the final third of the subject's life. I am far back in a long line of researchers who are confronted with these problems. In the first issue of this journal, television historian Jason Jacobs recounted the frustrations and delights of his archival trajectory.[52] He writes, 'It would be far more convenient for my constitution and demeanour if I concentrated my research on *Australian Big Brother*'.[53] While there is certainly a good reason for researching current and recent programming, it is a fraction of what can be explored. As Margaret Compton writes in her 2007 *Cinema Journal* article, 'if scholars write only about the programs that are available on DVD or currently being broadcast, then they miss out on most of television's history'.[54]

In 1984, Einstein and Vianello wrote in their guide to researching television, 'There is presently no central information source as to what has been preserved for posterity and research. Hopefully, this type of information will be provided one day'.[55] Twenty-five years later, there is still no such source. In his 2006 article, Jason Jacobs described the persistent gap and offered the vision of a fantasy world where all archival

video is available online, erasing every obstacle we have dealt with thus far.[56] He concedes, however, that there is a sense of loss, that of the potential for serendipitous discoveries and a particular pace and mindfulness in archival research.[57] The way we television researchers look for information now is by finding disparate pieces in various places and in effect creating our own repository index. This can provide untold satisfaction for the right person. I would not relinquish the experience I have had in searching for all of *All in the Family*. Had the entire series been available on DVD, I would have written my article or book chapter about Archie Bunker and have been done with it. But thanks to my confrontation with the gap in episodes, I thought about the show, and other sitcoms and television history, in a more encompassing way.

The ending of *All in the Family* was mitigated by the debut of its sequel, *Archie's Place,* but for all intents and purposes, April 1979 marked the end of a galvanizing era in television history. During the past thirty years, American television viewers have seen radical changes in the content of the entertainment medium. For this reason, among others, it is crucial for researchers to continue to study shows like *All in the Family*, which may be an example of a bygone television genre and which dealt with issues that are still relevant today but are unfortunately less visited on television in the same forthright manner. Such study includes being able to access full episodes and complete series.

The trouble with Archie and his ilk is manifold. While technological advances have made the ideal repository more possible than ever, is it worth the effort on the part of any individual or institution to create it? For those things that are under our control -

indexing and sharing information - I believe it would be a valuable and valiant effort to embark upon it.

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[1] Richard P. Adler, *All in the Family: A Critical Appraisal*, Praeger, 1979.

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[5] Adler, *All in the Family*, p. xx.

[6] David Bianculli, *Dangerously Funny: The Uncensored Story of The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour,* Simon & Schuster, 2009.

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[9] Jason Mittell, *Television & American Culture*, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 80-83.

[10] Adler, *All in the Family*, pp. xxvi-vii.

[11] Ibid., p. xxiv; First episode of *All in the Family*, 'Meet the Bunkers', written by Norman Lear, 12 January 1971.

[12] Gitlin, *Inside Prime Time*, p. 212.

[13] Derek Kompare, *Rerun Nation: How Repeats Invented American Television*, Routledge, 2005, p. 122.

[14] Christopher Anderson and Michael Curtin, 'Writing Cultural History: The Challenge of Radio and Television,' in Niels Brügger and Søren Kolstrup, eds, *Media History: Theories, Methods, Analysis*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2002, p. 26.

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[16] The online open access catalog is available at http://www.worldcat.org.

[17] Telephone interview with Mark Quigley, Manager, UCLA Film & Television Archive's Research and Study Center, 2009 January and subsequent emails in 2010 February.

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[21] Robert Vianello and Daniel Einstein, 'A Guide to Researching Television

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[24] Telephone interview with Ron Simon, 2009 January.

[25] Margaret A. Compton, 'The Archivist, the Scholar, and Access to Historic Television

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[26] Telephone interview with Dan Einstein, 2009 February.

[27] Derek Kompare, 'I've Seen This One Before: The Construction of "Classic TV" on

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[28] Simon interview, 2009 January.

[29] Chris Anderson, 'The Long Tail', *Wired*, 12, 10, 2004, pp. 170-77. The article was

expanded to a book, Chris Anderson, *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is

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[30] Jeff Ubois, 'Finding Murphy Brown: How Accessible are Historic Television Broadcasts?' *Journal of Digital Information.* 7, 2, 2006. (Available at http://journals.tdl.org/jodi/article/viewArticle/172)

[31] Holdsworth, '"Television Resurrections": Television and Memory', 139.

[32] Compton, 'The Archivist, the Scholar, and Access to Historic Television Materials', 132.

[33] Kevin Andreano, 'The Missing Link: Content Indexing, User-Created Metadata, and Improving Scholarly Access to Moving Image Archives', Moving Image. 7, 2, 2007, 84.

[34] Anderson and Curtin, 'Writing Cultural History', pp. 23-24.

[35] Karen F. Gracy, 'Moving Image Preservation and Cultural Capital', *Library Trends*. 56, 1, 2007, 186 and 196 (n3).

[36] Alan McKee, 'YouTube versus the National Film and Sound Archive: Which Is the More Useful Resource for Historians of Australian Television?' *Television & New Media*, April 15, 2010, p. 5, DOI: 10.1177/1527476410365707.

[37] Ibid., 17.

[38] An admirable example of this is the Museum of Broadcasting in Chicago that has a good number of episodes and clips embedded in their online catalog records at http://museum.tv/.

[39] The USGenWeb Project, http://usgenweb.org/

[40] See Yochai Benkler's work on 'commons-based peer-production' in Benkler, 'Coase's Penguin, or, Linux and "The Nature of the Firm"', *Yale Law Journal.* 112, 3, 2002, 369-446; more of Benkler's related work found at benkler.org; also Tom Nesmith,

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[41] IMDb background and history: http://www.imdb.com/help/show_leaf?about

[42] Adler, *All in the Family*, pp. 272-318.

[43] Chew Chiat Naun and K. C. Elhard, 'Cataloguing, Lies, and Videotape: Comparing the
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[44] Kevin Andreano addresses the changing relationship between the scholar and the
moving image in 'The Missing Link', 84.

[45] Ibid., 92.

[46] See the BBC's 'Treasure Hunt' call here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/cult/treasurehunt/

[47] See the Paley Center's 'Lost Programs' call here: http://www.paleycenter.org/lost-
programs/

[48] Moving Image Collections donations and acquisitions page,
http://mic.loc.gov/public_portal/pub_donate.htm

[49] Moving Image Collections home page, http://mic.loc.gov/index.php

[50] One particularly active collector of television audio, Phil Gries, founder of Archival
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interview archived here: http://www.atvaudio.com/ata_arsc.php; Detailed profiles of
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2004, 217-246.

[51] There is a burgeoning body of scholarship on convergence and collaboration among libraries, museums, online entities and users. For instance: Max Evans, 'Archives of the People, by the People, for the People', *American Archivist.* 70, 2, 2008, 387-400; Günter Waibel and Ricky Erway, 'Think Globally, Act Locally: Library, Archive, and Museum Collaboration', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 24, 4, 2009, 323-35; Jenn Riley and Kelcy Shepherd, 'A Brave New World: Archivists and Shareable Descriptive Metadata', *American Archivist*, 72, 1, 2009, 91-112; Scott R. Anderson and Robert B. Allen, 'Envisioning the Archival Commons', *American Archivist*, 72, 2, 2009, 383-400.

[52] Jason Jacobs, 'The Television Archive: Past, Present, Future', *Critical Studies in Television.* 1, 1, 2006, 13-20.

[53] Ibid., 15.

[54] Compton, 'The Archivist, the Scholar, and Access to Historic Television Materials', 131.

[55] Vianello and Einstein, 'A Guide to Researching Television Programming', 253.

[56] Jacobs, 'The Television Archive', 16.

[57] Ibid., 18.

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