

Representations of performance

Developing its research ideas beyond the *Digital Representations of Performing Arts* Summer School (<http://www.nesc.ac.uk/esi/events/784/>), AHDS Performing Arts offers a panel session considering the nature of performance documentation and the merits of various representations. The panel members will discuss the challenges faced when trying to document performance and the ethical implications involved. The panel will comprise three strands, addressing methods of documenting performance, the implications of appraisal decisions and the meaning of authenticity in a performance context.

Daisy Abbott, AHDS Performing Arts Services and Outreach Officer, will report back on the findings of the summer school, summarising current research on performance documentation and considering how representations of performance can be created. She will discuss the usefulness of different forms of documentation, such as audio and video recordings, photography and writing, and will debate how successfully each method captures the key elements of performance. Drawing on performance literature she will question the role of documentation, considering whether it functions as a reproduction of a live event or simply as a way to engage with and re-inspire the experience. Daisy will consider the importance of the creative process, advocating documentation from the initial concept of performance through to the live event and beyond in order to open up avenues of access to digital collections. She will also discuss the role e-Science has to play in documenting performance, examining the opportunities it offers to performing arts scholars and the ways it can support the creation and use of meaningful representations of performance.

Sarah Jones, AHDS Performing Arts Collections Development Officer, will go on to discuss appraisal, questioning whether traditional archival strategies can be applied to Performing Arts digital collections. Following on from Daisy's presentation she will consider how the enduring traces of performance are selected and what losses there are, intentionally or otherwise, due to documentation decisions. She will consider appraisal in terms of the image artists wish to project through the work they choose to document, as well as how archivists distort meaning by choosing to keep only a selection of material. Picking up on the Jenkinson / Schellenberg debate she will question who has the right to make appraisal decisions, and whether in the performing arts context, artistic intention is undermined by granting information professions this right.

Finally, Hannah Little, an archive PhD student based in HATII, will consider the concepts of reliability and authenticity. Drawing on her information management background, Hannah will question whether the archival meaning of these terms is relevant to the performing arts. Does the performance community also think of authenticity in terms of establishing provenance and maintaining integrity or are they more concerned with the emotional reception of the material and the truth value the audience finds in the experience? She will pick up on the issues raised in the previous presentations by questioning whether documentation can ever be 'authentic' given the loss that is inherent in the process or if representations can only ever be something quite separate to the performance they seek to reflect.

Dr Barry Smith, Director of the Digital Performance Archive and research fellow at University of Bristol, will chair the panel (TBC). Research projects currently ongoing at Bristol, for example digitising the live art video collection and the Great Western Research Fellowship exploring how documents of performance are used for inspiration, will provide a background for discussion. Drawing on his work with the live art and performance communities Barry will use provocative examples to steer discussion and challenge each viewpoint in what promises to be a lively debate.

Sarah Jones, Collections Development Officer, AHDS Performing Arts
Daisy Abbott, Services and Outreach Officer, AHDS Performing Arts
Prof. Seamus Ross, Head, AHDS Performing Arts

May 2007, HATII, University of Glasgow