



Scottish Television

Are those who work in television libraries and archives to be classed as critical workers? This was the question facing management at Scottish Television (STV), a public service broadcaster based in Glasgow, as the UK went into lockdown when the Coronavirus crisis hit. STV's Media Centre Manager, John McVie, has the challenging role of servicing broadcast, STV Player (an online hub for STV content), newsroom operations and production needs at this difficult time. In normal circumstances, the Media Centre team is based on site, managing a collection of physical and digital video assets and providing services to all parts of STV. As an office-based operation the team has quickly had to adapt their services, with transmission the main priority (keeping STV on-air), alongside ensuring that the daily news output continues to be captured to STV's archive systems and catalogued to usual standards. However, one consequence of the current news cycle is that the demand for archive material to be used in news bulletins has reduced, as the journalistic focus is on one story only, which has little need for archive footage to illustrate it.

The Media Centre has introduced a roster system (and, as a consequence, a reduced service for news), with only one member of the team based on site each day, while others in the team work from home. Working on site now presents new challenges, as the rostered person cannot mix with other teams and must maintain social distancing, remaining isolated as much as possible while in the building. In addition, archive workers in transmission and news environments handle multiple tapes and machines per day. Something once so simple is now to be looked at differently, with great emphasis placed on the cleanliness of the office environment and what that means for archive logistics. For those working from home, there is the new challenge of ensuring they have access to the systems and information needed to do their work (for example, access to STV's digitised content held in the MAM) and the team has had to quickly adopt entirely new processes to ensure that any task that can only be done while on-site, such as digitising archive content still held on tape, is allocated to the rostered on-site individual to carry out. Strong communication within the team, and adopting the use of online tools such as Zoom, WhatsApp and Slack, has been key, as has the need for transparency with archive customers about the level of services that the archive can offer when only one person is on site each day. Equally, some archive content which is only

held on tape at an off-site facility may not be accessible in the short-term, and the archive team is working to find alternative sources of content or suggest different footage to use. Similar applies to rights information, which is needed to know if television content can be rebroadcast, re-used or licensed to third parties. Much of this is held in paper files which, if not accessible due to restrictions on physical access to buildings, will mean a reliance on experienced members of the archive and legal teams to give a view or undertake risk assessments. STV's Footage Sales Executive, Francesca Pillberg, highlights that the current situation exposes a need to have more rights information and scanned contract documents accessible in systems for remote workers, as this information underpins many aspects of the archive operation.

In essence, following a rapid shift to mainly remote working in an operation where this is not the norm, the Media Centre has successfully ensured a continuity of service against the backdrop of a wider STV organisation challenged to provide daily transmission and news services to Scotland at a time when these have never been so important for delivering vital information to the viewing public, but with technology and organisational infrastructures geared to on-site working. The longer-term outcome of this may be a cultural shift to more flexible ways of working as gaps in access to archive and rights systems are exposed and fixed as a result of the coronavirus crisis.

Explore the STV Archive at <http://www.stvfootagesales.tv/>

Note: in the time since this case study was conducted, only a skeleton staff of 4 remains on site on a rostered basis with most STV Archive staff having now been furloughed under the UK government scheme.