Open Call for Researcher: Moving Beyond Search in Accessing Sound & Moving Image Archival Collections

Audiovisual Research Alliance & FIAT/IFTA Value, Use & Copyright Commission

Deadline extended: **December 2, 2022 @ 17.00 CET**

The Audiovisual Research Alliance (AVRA) from the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision and FIAT/IFTA’s Value, Use & Copyright Commission announce an open call for a temporary researcher position with the focus on commissioning and producing a new report.

This open call invites a researcher to focus on the ways in which cultural heritage institutions with audiovisual and audio collections are moving from common search interfaces to using and offering exploration as an expanded approach in their collection interfaces for surfacing content. This research also seeks to engage with how these expanded approaches interact with storytelling and information visualisation.

When looking to access materials from an AV archive, keyword search works well when the visitor has a rough idea about the content of the collection and can formulate their information need, in words, as a textual query - meaning they know what questions to ask the search function of the collection database in order to surface the kinds of content they are interested in accessing. However, visitors who don’t have an exact idea of what they are looking for and how it relates to the specific content of the archive, are poorly served by search interfaces.

One alternative approach to the model of keyword search lies in exploratory approaches, such as ‘generous interfaces’ which use interactive data visualisation to communicate the scale and diversity of the collection.

Another alternative is found in narrative approaches, such as interactive storytelling, data stories, narrative chatbots and narrated curator stories, which guide a visitor through (parts of) a collection and often allow for personalisation via interactivity.
This report aims to take a kind of case study approach, offering a number of examples where cultural heritage institutions are creatively engaging with collection exploration, offering description, analysis and reflection on these different examples. The report also aims to explore how people are addressing challenges and incorporating this work into archival practice, and as such will likely include conducting a number of interviews. Additionally, the report also seeks to potentially look to other fields for inspiration, including engaging ways in which artists and filmmakers are creating interventions that play with similar questions or technologies that cultural heritage institutions can look towards.

About the Research Position

The research conducted will commence on January 16, 2023 with a final text due May 22, 2023. As part of the research process, the selected researcher will develop and run a working session (online) with FIAT/IFTA’s VUC in early February 2023 in order to test initial thoughts and receive input/feedback from the FIAT/IFTA community. Additionally, the selected candidate will present the research (online or in person) at the FIAT/IFTA 2023 international conference in Locarno, Switzerland in autumn 2023.

This research position includes a total fee of 5,000 EUR (excl. VAT). We will also provide a maximum of 1,000 EUR travel and accommodations grant to attend the FIAT/IFTA 2023 international conference in Locarno, Switzerland.

The selected researcher will be supported by organisers of the AVRA & FIAT/IFTA Value, Use & Copyright Commission as well as meet three times with a Peer Review Team made up of experts in the field to initially offer insights on the topic, and the following two times to offer feedback on report drafts. The whole research process will take place remotely, including check-ins, mentoring and feedback sessions taking place online. Should the selected applicant live in the Netherlands, there will be opportunities to meet with the AVRA support team in person.

About the Commissioning Organisations

The Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision is the Dutch national institute for media and culture. Through its holdings of over a million hours of material and growing each day, its expertise, and activities, Sound and Vision aims to strengthen an open and free society. Today, it offers its holdings to the broadest variety of end users, including journalists, students, researchers, heritage organisations, and the general public.

The Audiovisual Research Alliance for Archivists & Cultural Heritage Professionals (AVRA) set up and supported by the Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision, is an initiative that seeks to openly engage with and produce research in collaboration with the wider audiovisual archiving and heritage community. The AVRA commissions and publishes research in the field of sound and moving image archiving and heritage, thinking forward to consider how the decisions, tools, strategies, and approaches enacted today are currently
and can possibly impact the field of AV archiving and heritage. In exploring current and future impacts on the field, the research of the AVRA focuses on asking research questions of an analytical nature; looking across institutions, projects, people, and places; bridging technical questions with more political, social and philosophical inquiries; and showing and bringing together different approaches and strategies to offer broader overviews.

The Value, Use and Copyright Commission (VUC) is one of the commissions of FIAT/IFTA, the world’s leading professional association for those engaged in the preservation and exploitation of audiovisual archives. The mission of VUC is to provide a forum of exchange for FIAT/IFTA members and experts in the field working together to support the value, exploitation and opening up of audiovisual collections focused on the end user, e.g. general audiences, education, research and other sectors. The core objective of VUC is to gather and share experience and knowledge on all aspects in the process of providing access to AV collections to increase users’ awareness and to grow the value of audiovisual archives worldwide.

**Basic Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open Call Released</td>
<td>October 27, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Deadline</td>
<td>December 2, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection Process</td>
<td>Early December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection Announced</td>
<td>December 8, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin Research</td>
<td>January 16, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VUC Working Session</td>
<td>Early to Mid February, 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft #1 Due</td>
<td>March 13, 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft #2 Due</td>
<td>April 24, 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Text Due</td>
<td>May 22, 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report Released</td>
<td>Mid June, 2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation at FIAT/IFTA Conference</td>
<td>Autumn, 2023</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Submission Requirements & Deadlines**

This research position is open to anyone whose academic and/or professional interests and experience intersect with the research approach and topic. We could, for example, envision people engaged with the digital humanities, sound and moving image archival research and exploitation practices, and library and information sciences being particularly interested. This however, does not exclude academics/practitioners from other disciplines such as design, art, etc.
No specific academic background is required, but demonstrated research and writing experience and skills academically and/or professionally is a necessity, as well as a demonstrated understanding of the key issues and concerns related to accessing and searching for archival content online and the use of archival interfaces. While there will be mentoring via the AVRA, Sound & Vision and the FIAT/IFTA VUC, the selected candidate must be able to work independently and develop and execute their research and writing plan to the assigned deadlines.

There is no restriction with regards to where the researcher is located, as the position is offered remotely, but will require flexibility in online meeting timing as the AVRA is located in the Netherlands and the peer support team will likely exist across different time zones.

TO APPLY, please submit your CV, cover letter, and some research writing samples. The writing samples can be of any subject matter, but please include those you think best demonstrate your research skills and analytical thinking.

The application deadline has been extended to: **December 2, 2022 @ 17.00 CET**.

A selection committee composed of Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision/AVRA and FIAT/IFTA Value, Use & Copyright Commission representatives will review the submitted applications and select a minimum of 3 researchers to be interviewed.

Selection is based on the following criteria:
- Demonstrated research and writing experience
- Interest in and some demonstrated understanding of the key issues in the field
- Has a global perspective on the research theme
- Has experience conducting research interviews and desk research
- Is an analytical thinker who can connect perspectives and examples across different disciplines, including from arts, interactive filmmaking and design practices to inform their perspective on the potential opportunities for AV and audio archives in terms of content exploration and visualisation.

Please send all of the above-mentioned materials to AVRA coordinator Rachel Somers Miles at: **avresearchalliance@beeldengeluid.nl** by **December 2, 2022 @ 17.00 CET**. And feel welcome to reach out to Rachel should you have any questions on the above.