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# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BUFVC GUIDELINES ON AUDIOVISUAL CITATION

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▪ Despite the exponential increase in the use of audiovisual material in teaching, learning and research in higher and further education, existing guidelines for the referencing of sound and moving image are often insufficient. The British Universities Film & Video Council (BUFVC) has now addressed that lack with *Audiovisual Citation: BUFVC Guidelines for referencing moving image and sound*, offering clear, consistent and comprehensive advice on how to cite every kind of audiovisual item from a *YouTube* mash-up to a video game. This article explains the evolution of the project, and how it addresses the specific requirements of academics, archivists and librarians with regard to sound and moving image materials.

▪ Bien que l'usage de matériel audiovisuel augmente de façon exponentielle dans les activités d'enseignement, d'apprentissage et de recherche dans l'enseignement supérieur et dans la formation continuée, les normes pour référer à des documents sonores ou à des images sont souvent insuffisantes. Le British Universities Film & Video Council (BUFVC) a maintenant comblé cette lacune. L'ouvrage *Audiovisual Citation: BUFVC Guidelines for referencing moving image and sound* propose des conseils clairs, cohérents et complets pour citer tout type de document audiovisuel, du mashup composite *YouTube* au jeu vidéo. Cet article explique comment le projet a pris forme et de quelle manière il répond aux besoins très spécifiques de chercheurs, archivistes et bibliothécaires en matière de documents sonores et d'images.

▪ Ondanks de exponentiële toename in het gebruik van audiovisueel materiaal in onderwijs-, leer- en onderzoeksactiviteiten in het hoger en volwassenenonderwijs, zijn de bestaande richtlijnen om te refereren naar beeld en geluid vaak onvoldoende. Het British Universities Film & Video Council (BUFVC) heeft deze leemte nu ingevuld door onder de titel *Audiovisual Citation: BUFVC Guidelines for referencing moving image and sound*, een helder, consistent en volledig advies aan te bieden om elk type audiovisuele bron te citeren, van een *YouTube* mash-up tot een videospel. Dit artikel legt uit hoe het project tot stand kwam en op welke wijze het tegemoet komt aan de specifieke eisen van academici, archivisten en bibliothecarissen i.v.m. geluids- en beeldmateriaal.

Readers of *Cahiers de la Documentation* will recall Dr Sian Barber's article from earlier this year<sup>1</sup>, which provided an update on the British Universities Film and Video Council's (BUFVC) Audiovisual citation project. Having been successfully launched on the 27th March, *Audiovisual citation: BUFVC Guidelines to referencing moving image and sound* is now available free to download<sup>2</sup>. Compiled over more than eighteen months by a steering group of academics, archivists, librarians and journal editors, these guidelines are specifically designed to meet the lack of appropriate guidance with regard to citing moving image, audio and new media materials, and provide clear, concise and comprehensive advice on how to reference every kind of audiovisual item from a *YouTube* mash-up to a video game.

## Evolution

The initial impetus for the *Audiovisual citation* project was provided in 2011 by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)/Jisc report, *Film and sound in higher and further education: A progress report with ten strategic recommendations*. In this document, Paul Gerhardt and Peter B. Kaufman highlighted the lack of appropriate referencing standards, stating that "For academics to gain greater confidence in the use

*of moving image and sound content in research and publication, they will require the standardisation of citation and the assurance that collections will hold materials and sustain collections on the same basis as print material"*<sup>3</sup>.

The BUFVC set about meeting this challenge, establishing a steering group as part of its HEFCE-funded Shared Services project. This committee was tasked with creating a set of guidelines that would establish a consistent referencing model for anyone interested in citing audiovisual material. The results, while seeking to establish best academic practice in this area, will also be of interest to archivists and librarians around the world. Included as a key feature is a level of detail rarely found in existing citation systems, which enables ease of locating materials referenced without becoming cumbersome or overloaded with information.

In deciding how best to approach the compilation of the guidelines, a number of complex issues had to be negotiated. An early resolution was that, while it was desirable that the referencing system be compatible where possible with established models, any attempt to emulate those existing audiovisual referencing standards already judged to be inadequate would be self-defeating. To this end, a new set of criteria was gradually

created. After much discussion, five main categories emerged as being directly relevant to audiovisual citation: film, television, radio, other Audio (e.g. archival recordings) and new media. The latter could refer to purely online or digital content, or materials such as video games which would be difficult to reconcile with other media. Each of these categories had its own conventions, yet could be referenced in a manner that provided a strong sense of overall consistency. Certain information was designated as mandatory – dependent on the nature of the material being cited – while other, additional details could be included as and where appropriate or desirable. Another early decision was to dispense with the "author" designation traditionally employed for print referencing; instead, all items would be listed by title. Creative personnel such as directors, writers and performers would still be featured, but the priority assigned to each would be left to the person providing the reference, dependent on the context in which the text was being cited. Although it is traditional, for example, to list the director for feature film citation, there might well be occasions on which it would also be appropriate to highlight the lead performers. While decisions such as this distinguished *Audiovisual citation* from existing standards, they also provided greater internal consistency; for the first time, a radio programme or archival recording could be referenced on the same footing and in a manner consistent with film or television texts.

One of the most significant questions to be resolved by the group was the "nature" of material being cited. For example, does a segment from a feature film that had been made available on *YouTube* belong in the "film" category, or that of "new media"? Upon consideration it was proposed that, for the purpose of clarity, the item "type" should be clearly distinguished from its "format", i.e. the form in which it was accessed or experienced. Of these two, the former provides the key when deciding into which category an item should be placed. For example, a feature film (type) that was designed to be experienced as such belongs in the "film" category, even if accessed online (format) via a streaming site. However, a user-generated mash-up created online – which could consist of segments taken from an existing film – should be designated as "new media", as this is its sole intended mode of consumption or access.

It is via distinctions and refinements such as this that *Audiovisual citation* distinguishes itself from existing print standards, ensuring for example that any and all material referenced can subsequently be found and utilised by others. Modes and points of access are key features of the bibliographical referencing system, from commercial

DVD and audio releases to archival materials, online sources and off-air recordings, making the accessibility of materials cited a prime consideration; a facet not always adequately addressed in print referencing. While Harvard, for example, treats DVD releases in a similar manner to a printed text such as a book, featuring the place of publication (i.e. release) and publisher (commercial production company), *Audiovisual citation* takes a more relevant and pragmatic approach, including instead the date of the DVD release and the production company's catalogue number; a unique identifier that can be found on the spine or sleeve of any commercial release (and usually on the face of the disc). In this way, anyone interested in accessing a particular iteration of a DVD or VHS release (for example extended versions or director's cuts) is able to locate it with a greater degree of ease and precision that would be possible with citation systems not designed to address this facet. It is often the case that older films and television programmes have been subject to commercial re-release on a number of occasions, and in different formats. The opening four episodes of long-running British television series *Doctor Who* (BBC, 1963-89) have, for example been made commercially available in the UK on no less than three occasions. Initially released on VHS in 1990 under the title *An unearthly child*, catalogue number BBCV4311, this serial was subsequently re-mastered and issued on video cassette again in 2000, this time with the catalogue number BBCV6959. In 2006, these episodes were made available on DVD for the first time, now packaged as *The beginning* alongside two other *Doctor Who* serials, using catalogue number BBCDVD1882. In addition to newly improved sound and picture quality, a variety of extra features such as cast and director commentaries and "making-of" documentaries – plus an unedited and un-broadcast (in this form) "pilot" version of the original episode – were also included on the latter release. Using Harvard's audiovisual rules, only the original broadcast year of 1963 would be included in the reference, making it unclear which of the three possible versions had been used for the original citation. Any researcher wishing to follow up on this work by using exactly the same source material would be left in a quandary as to which version to select – yet with *Audiovisual citation*, any such uncertainty is avoided.

The difference between the year of production/transmission and that of release or access, while seldom addressed in print citation, is particularly relevant to audiovisual items, and can lead to potential confusion. As someone currently teaching film and television in Higher Education, I can confirm that students are increasingly seeking to cite resources such as DVD commentaries

and bonus materials – yet are often discouraged from doing so by the lack of clarity pertaining to their use, especially with regard to dates. For example, if an essay quotation derives from Robert Altman's 2001 DVD commentary on his 1992 feature film *The player*, which date should the student provide for their in-text citation? Harvard's insistence on the date of original production would make it seem that Altman was speaking nine years earlier than was in fact the case – at a time when he might well have held contrasting opinions. With *Audiovisual Citation*, adequate provision is made for the distinction between the two dates.

Similar attention to detail is provided for items not accessed in a commercially available format. For online archives, the URL and date of access are included, as is standard for other citation systems. In addition, provision is made for the inclusion – where possible – of a DOI (Digital Object Identifier)<sup>4</sup>. Whereas many URLs are ephemeral, a DOI provides a permanent and unique reference point for any digital item, and will increasingly come into use in the years ahead. For items found in non-virtual archives, as much information should be included as is necessary to enable subsequent access; for example, the name of the archive or collection in question, plus the individual item reference number or code (where available); date of access is not, however, required.

It is of course not always possible for a referencing system such as this to guarantee the availability of any particular item. A non-archive, off-air videotape recording of a particular television programme that is part of a private collection is unlikely to be accessible to researchers unless its owner chooses to make it so. However, the degree of attention to detail provided in *Audiovisual citation* aims to promote and encourage best practice in this area. While not intended as a catalogue, the quality of metadata included for audiovisual materials is designed to eliminate, where possible, any ambivalence with regard to the nature, type and mode of access for items referenced; clarity, consistency and comprehensiveness are its chief aims.

## User testing

Lest it be thought that the decisions described above were arrived at as a result of individuals' agendas, it should be pointed out that they were in fact the result of a lengthy, collaborative process of consideration and discussion. The advantages and disadvantages of existing forms of audiovisual citation were carefully gauged in a series of meetings that began in the summer of 2011 and culminated in a final, pre-publication review in February 2013. Rather than being the

work of the steering committee alone, *Audiovisual citation* was subject to extensive user testing from late 2012, and several revisions were subsequently made based on the suggestions and feedback received. These came from a variety of sources: an online survey generated 315 valid responses, of which 41% were from librarians, while academics and researchers comprised 31%. Students made up 17%, and some 10% were from professional bodies with interest in the area of sound and moving image citation. Additional focus group meetings were held and a task-based questionnaire circulated among volunteers, including representatives of the BBC, the British Library and the Wellcome Library. Overall feedback was positive, participants agreeing that the guidelines represented an important step forward in meeting a notable lack in referencing standards. A basic citation order for each media type was identified as a priority by 88% of online testers, while online access to the guidelines and a comprehensive list of illustrative audiovisual examples were also key requests.

## Launch

All these factors were ultimately incorporated into the version of the guidelines that was made available both in print and in an interactive online form in March this year. Feedback received thus far has been extremely positive, with a huge amount of discussion taking place on *Twitter* and other blog sites. Perhaps inevitably, various points have been raised and suggestions made on how to further refine the schemata, and these are due for discussion at a follow-up meeting of the steering group later this year. It is important to stress that, while designed to encourage best practice among users, the guidelines are in no way intended as prescriptive. Rather than being a definitive, finished product, they remain open to future feedback via the <avcitation@bufvc.ac.uk> address, with updates to be agreed periodically by the steering group, ensuring that the guidelines can effectively respond to advances in technology, the development of new media platforms and – above all – the needs of the user. Grateful thanks are due to the various members of the steering group and volunteer testers, all of whose contributions helped make *Audiovisual citation* such a significant milestone in the referencing of sound and moving image materials.

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*April 2013*

## More information

- British Universities Film and Video Council. *Audiovisual citation project* [on line]. <<http://bufvc.ac.uk/avcitation/guidelines>> (consulted on 1st April 2013).
- Join the discussion on *Twitter*.  
Twitter. *@bufvc* [on line]. <<https://twitter.com/bufvc>> (consulted on 1st April 2013).  
Twitter. *#AVcitation* [on line]. *#AVcitation*. <<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23AVcitation&src=hash>> (consulted on 1st April 2013).
- Or email : <[AVcitation@bufvc.ac.uk](mailto:AVcitation@bufvc.ac.uk)>

## Bibliography

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- Pears, Richard; Shields, Graham. *Cite Them Right: the Essential Referencing Guide*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Barber, Sian. Audiovisual citation: a project update. *Cahiers de la documentation = Bladen voor documentatie*, March 2013, vol. 67, n° 1, p. 31-34.
- <sup>2</sup> Hewett, Richard; Berber, Sian. *Audiovisual citation: BUFVC Guidelines to referencing moving image and sound* [online]. <<http://bufvc.ac.uk/wp-content/media/2013/03/BUFVC-AV-Citation-ONLINE.pdf>>
- <sup>3</sup> Gerhardt, Paul; Kaufman, Peter B. *Film and sound in higher and further education: A progress report with ten strategic recommendations*. HEFCE, June 2011.
- <sup>4</sup> *DOI* [online]. <<http://www.doi.org/>> (consulted on 8 April 2013).