

## **Scholarly Information in a Digital Age**

### **VCA FILM TV SUBMISSION**

#### **CENTRAL QUESTION**

The central question for the University is not whether we determine access to our collections as either a producer rather than user of copyright materials – for we are both.

The question is rather, how may we best preserve our future digitising options until an effective, equitable, and internationally subscribed model of monetising IP transfers via public networks is agreed upon by major world groupings of libraries and universities.

These groupings are likely to be OECD-defined, and may very well emulate existing international royalty collections and payment protocols, that effectively makes collection an institutional rather than individual matter.

It is important to note there is no such thing as completely free access to knowledge in either traditional or digital media scapes. Use of the term ‘free’ in our debate is not accurate, when all transactions incur production, carriage, and storage charges even if only at micro-level where large enough scales allow. In practice, ‘free’ means owner-subsidised, and usually at the expense of future research and production.

Our twin key concerns then, must be in preserving the potentially commercialisable integrity of self-produced copyright material from premature and owner-subsidised digital distribution, whilst not breaching the copyrights of others’ materials we hold in trust until effective net monetising protocols are established.

Until widely agreed protocols are established, it will be useful for the University to classify new digital materials into its current practices of tiering access to knowledge, that already allows public browsing, but restricts borrowing to enrolled students and staff. Within this classification process, qualitative decisions about appropriate levels of public access to specialist knowledge may need to be considered on a discipline-by-discipline basis.

Topical knowledge about an issue like diabetes and public health in medicine for example, may well have no bars to public access – by web or any other means. In this case, further research funding may well be dependent upon the knowledge producer initiating public debate. The public good is served by access.

Where further research funding is conditional upon restricting public access in the case of certain pharmaceutical clinical trials for example, it is unlikely these restrictions will be removed now or in the future. In this case the public good may still be served if conditional access to knowledge is the price we pay for potential cures.

## VCA FILM ARCHIVE

The University through VCA Film and Television now owns a comprehensive film archive that is not currently listed as a University asset.

The collection is Australia's oldest and largest collection of short films, amounting to over 3,600 works archived over 40 years. It represents the early work of many of Australia's leading filmmakers. The University now owns all copyright in these films. Over 160 new films are added each year.

Immediate distribution of the collection via public web networks is currently constrained by union agreements with performers and crew whose services were given at low or no cost for educational purposes, but at agreed extra costs if the material is sold or charged for by carriers or exhibitors. We are currently reviewing these agreements.

- VCA FTV asks that Information Services lists this archive as a cultural asset
- VCA TFV asks that Information Service digitise this asset.
- VCA FTV asks that IS preserve the IP integrity of this asset until practical means of monetising this asset for digital distribution and fulfilling existing IP agreements is determined.

Professor Ian Lang, Head, VCA FTV