

## **THE STANLEY KUBRICK ARCHIVE AT UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON**

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**Abstract – The Stanley Kubrick Archive is held in the University Archives and Special Collections Centre at the Elephant and Castle. It is made up of an astounding range of material including papers, props and scripts, Kubrick's personal research into films made, as well as those that were conceived but never visualised. By maintaining a high degree of control in the film making process, Kubrick was able to retain material generated by his pioneering techniques, research, and production work which renders this collection one of the most complete examples of film making practice world wide. The Archive is integral to the history of the cinema and film, but perhaps more poignantly demonstrates articulately the process of artistic creation, through a portrait of an individual who had a rigorous attention for detail in all aspects of his work.**

### **BACKGROUND**

When the family of a major film maker offers you his archive as a legacy, what do you do? University of the Arts London rose to this challenge, and achieved a major strategic goal – creation of a state-of-the-art Archives and Special Collections Centre, which would be a fitting demonstration of the University's mission, its legacy and its aspirations. Through project management and collaboration, in less than two years, the flagship Centre was established. It will be a beacon of good practice and inspiration for future creative practitioners in the arts.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2003, discussions began between Library and Learning Resources and colleagues in the University's research team to consider how best to manage the variety of rich collections held across the colleges of the University, so that they could be preserved for the future and used effectively to support learning, teaching and research. To achieve this, a proposal for a University of the Arts London research and study centre was endorsed by the University's Corporate Management Team and it became an element in the five-year medium term strategy. Following this, in 2005, an opportunity was presented to the University which seemed to be the key to turning this aspiration into reality. The family of the late acclaimed film maker, Stanley Kubrick, had confided in a family friend, who was also a lecturer at the University, that they were looking for a suitable home for the variety of papers, photographs, props and items that formed Kubrick's archive.

Discussions and investigations around this exciting opportunity began; a proposal was made to the family and in September 2005 an understanding was reached that the University and the Estate would come together to ensure that Kubrick's legacy was secured for future film makers and creative practitioners.

A revised proposal for a University archives and special collections centre was accepted by the University and in October 2005, and a project was identified to achieve this. The project brief was to:

- 1 establish a secure physical space for the University Archives and Special Collections, in an appropriate environment to ensure their preservation;
- 2 ensure that the Stanley Kubrick Archives are accessible and used to advance research, teaching, and practice in all aspects of filmmaking, associated disciplines, and the arts;
- 3 promote the Stanley Kubrick Archives and seek to encourage their expanding use through seminars, exhibitions, publications, conferences, and events;
- 4 ensure that all special collections are cared for and exploited to promote learning, teaching and research throughout the University and beyond.

## **VISION**

The opportunity presented by the Stanley Kubrick Archive gave us the lever to fulfil our stated ambition to create a state-of-the-art centre, with the donated archive as its cornerstone.

This was the first time the University had been able to consider a dedicated space for collection care and use. We wanted to be innovative, to demonstrate the University's vision to be 'at the forefront of learning, creativity and practice in our specialist subjects'. We also wanted to ensure that we were following the best practice recommended by the National Archives and shown by other leaders and peers in this area. It was our duty to ensure the long term preservation of all our collections, and the arrangements surrounding the University's acquisition of the Stanley Kubrick Archive had to provide for this and protect all parties from the uncertainties of the future. Effective communication was a further element of our vision for this project. In achieving these aims, we created a flagship for the University which required sensitive publicity and promotion.

## **THE CENTRE**

The project remodelled the lower areas of an existing block and underground car park at Elephant & Castle to support the creation of the new centre. In planning from October 2005, this was completed in January 2007 and complies with BS5454:2000 *Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents*. As far as possible, it also takes account of standards recommended by the National Archives, such as the *National Standard for Record Repositories* (2004). The facility includes a climate-controlled secure storage area, a public enquiry room, display space, collection management area and digitisation area.

The storage repository was prepared, initially, to house the Stanley Kubrick Archive and a selected range of existing University collections. The Archive was stored in approximately 1,000 boxes on the family's estate, including two portacabins. The Project Manager and colleagues made several trips to the estate during the planning period and liaised extensively with the family to plan the nature of the storage systems that would be required. At this stage, the key was to find a system which made optimum

use of the storage space available and allowed sufficient flexibility to accommodate the variety of media within the Archive.

The Search Room was designed to provide the functionality of a traditional archive centre, but not necessarily in the way one might expect. The architects were asked to take a theme from one of Stanley Kubrick's films, to inspire their design. They presented two schemes taken from *2001: A space odyssey* and we settled on the style of the Hilton Space Station. This resulted in a clean, bright space, predominantly white, with red chairs. The result is stunning, and no visitor has yet been disappointed by the effect of walking into the search room. The display cases are of museum standard so we can display original archive artefacts in them for a period of a week each. A plasma screen and shelving provide a facility to consult secondary resources and staff help is given from a desk behind a glass hatch. The remaining space is for staff and collection management and is flexible enough to accommodate additional researchers. Security is essential and is provided by an intruder alarm system, a door bell and clear visibility throughout the working areas.

In January 2007 the Centre was complete (see Figure 1 below) and staff moved in. The Stanley Kubrick Archive was transferred in March 2007. It took four days and six removal vans to transport the 977 boxes of material from the Estate to the University. Due to the careful planning, it fitted into the space that had been prepared for it, in large removal boxes. Over the next three months, one member of staff unpacked the boxes, added further shelves to accommodate the material and organised it so that we could begin the process of cataloguing.



Figure 1: University Archives and Special Collection Centre Search and collection management areas ([www.lukepotterphotography.co.uk](http://www.lukepotterphotography.co.uk)).

## **THE COLLECTIONS**

It is clear that the project has been driven by the Stanley Kubrick Archive. It is one of the most important cultural collections of the second half of the 20th century and embodies Stanley Kubrick's remarkable career in film and the arts, with its profound significance for late 20th-century British cultural history.

The collection spans scripts, productions notes, research notes, correspondence, storyboards, annotated books, sketches, photographs, 35mm film and out takes, videotape, scores, sound recordings, models, set design plans, props, costumes, lighting plans, equipment and other memorabilia. The collections testify to Kubrick's uncompromising vision, his rigorous attention to detail, his expansive preparatory research, and his remarkable technical and conceptual innovation. These materials have until now been stored at the Kubrick family home and, with the exception of a travelling exhibition, have not been publicly accessible. The donors have gifted this archive to University of the Arts London to ensure its long-term preservation and access to the public.

Also in the Centre are two further, smaller, collections relating to the film directors John Schlesinger and Thorold Dickinson; comic collections from the mid-20th century; the archive and ephemera collection of London College of Communication and the Eckersley Poster Collection. We have facilities for costumes and a separate area for photographs and film, which has its own environmental controls. We are discussing our collection development policy in the light of our recent experiences, and will define a new policy which will position future collecting in line with the aspirations of the University to lead in its specialist areas.

It is critical to ensure the long term sustainability and preservation of all our collections. The fact that, for the first time, the Stanley Kubrick material will be available to students, researchers and the public on an international scale will, of course, have an enormous impact on the use of the material and presents a great responsibility to the University as long-term curators of this material. To ensure we followed best practice in collection care, we made a successful bid for a collection care grant to MLA [1] in summer 2006 for a National Preservation Office Preservation Assessment Survey to be carried out on the Archive. This informs us of the short-, medium- and long-term needs of the Archive, and gives advice on any further specialist consultancy required.

In order to ensure that archive collections will be catalogued in accordance with national standards, an archival management system was procured for the University. CALM for Archives was selected as the most appropriate, and was initially installed for use at the Archives and Special Collections Centre. We purchased the image database as part of CALM, to support a programme of digitisation from all our collections, and to accommodate a range of existing images. The catalogue will be published on the internet in time, and this will enhance access to our collections via the World Wide Web.

## **RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES**

The Centre has a key role to play in both the research and curriculum activities of the University through its unique and diverse collections. Centre staff will interact with academic colleagues across the University on a range of academic-related endeavours.

By its very existence the Centre will strengthen the research infrastructure of the University. The collections in the Centre will offer an extensive and rare resource to support both internal and external researchers, and have immense potential to support a

wide range of research outputs, ranging from theoretical critiques through to the creation of new artistic works.

## COMMUNICATION

The project to create the Centre and acquire the Stanley Kubrick Archive was very high profile for the University. A significant University campaign promoted the acquisition of the Stanley Kubrick Archive through international press coverage. The University website [2] provides frequently asked questions giving information and contact details for the Archive and the Centre. An exhibition and event was held in March 2007 and two editions of the University's alumni magazine in 2006 and 2007 feature articles about the Stanley Kubrick Archive.

Within the University, the Centre has been a major attraction for visitors. In June 2007 we held the first open afternoon at the Centre, in response to many requests from individuals, and we received over 60 visitors. We were delighted that so many colleagues from around the University were able to engage with the Centre, even offering their expertise and help with our ongoing work. We hope to repeat such events during the forthcoming year.

Outreach activities offer new ways of involving a wide range of audiences in the Centre and the University. The first outreach project using the Stanley Kubrick Archive has been funded by MLA London's 2007–2008 regional Strategic Commissioning Programme for museums and archives, to support the development of new e-learning resources for schools and school-age children and young people, linked to citizenship education. Our project, *Squeezing the orange: citizenship through the films of Stanley Kubrick* will develop digital, online learning resources comprising lesson plans, information and activity sheets using material from *Clockwork Orange* (1971) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1981).

## CONCLUSION

The project to create the University Archives and Special Collections Centre has taken an interdisciplinary team on a challenging and rewarding journey. We have met our initial brief and have a Centre inspired by a Kubrick film, with state-of-the-art storage, and a research space which would grace any university, but which is particularly fitting for University of the Arts London.

Collaboration and innovation have been the buzzwords during this project, which has brought about institutional change through the use of space; our approach to collection management and development; our understanding of donations to the University; outreach and communication.

We have learnt important lessons and developed our skill set as a team, particularly in providing specialist facilities and handling complex issues of collection management. We have pushed the boundaries of design and created a facility which will enable us to move forward to achieve our long term objectives to further the use of the collections in this Centre and across the University, influencing the teaching, learning and research culture to benefit from the ambitious statement made by the Centre and its collections.

## References

- [1] Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), <http://www.mlalondon.org.uk>
- [2] Stanley Kubrick Archive, <http://www.arts.ac.uk/kubrick.htm>

