CHAPTER 4: HOW RHETORICIANS MAKE FILMS AND VIDEOS

When arguing that "[t]echnology needs to be what we do," in Rhetoric and Composition, Adam Banks introduces the idea by saying, "I admit that change is dizzying." He is right to point that out. In our particular case, the change from alphabetic writing to film and video production is not only dizzying but also disorientating and aggravating. Steven Krause explains it this way: "In contrast to our abilities as writing professionals, we are all multimedia amateurs, dabblers and improvisers borrowing from a few web sites for advice and throwing our work against walls to see if it will stick" ("Amateurs"). I don't agree with his portrayal of our field's film and video production. Lifers, in particular, are neither amateurs nor dabblers. And yet, the vast majority of rhetoricians working with moving images have not been formally trained in film and video production. There are exceptions. Jamie "Skye" Bianco, for example, explains, "Prior to academia, I worked in film and theater production, as well as media design." Unlike her, most of us at first are indeed hoping our moving images will stick to the wall, as Krause states.

The amount of filmmaking training lifers and casual offenders receive varies. Don Unger took a film production course while getting his undergraduate degree in Professional Writing. While Sarah Arroyo, Geoffrey Carter, and Steph Ceraso learned film and video production in graduate school through theory seminars with a digital component. I too learned during graduate school. In my case, I audited two film production courses. When bonnie kyburz started working on films and videos she was already a faculty member and worked with a student intern with film production experience to help her make a documentary. These different trajectories leave us with considerable holes in our abilities. Professional filmmaking takes years to learn and people usually focus on one aspect of the production process, becoming cinematographers, editors, and so on. Filmmaking rhetoricians, however, tend to work with little training and tackle all or most aspects of the production process.

As Alex Reid explains, "There is clearly a significant gap between having the basic technical skill and equipment to make a video and having the skill and equipment to make a *professional* video" (italics in original). Learning to make professional quality videos is a long process that becomes more complicated if we're not formally studying moving-image production but rather finding our own way through the maze. We don't need to make the kind of professional moving images that play at multiplexes, but our work does need to be of a certain quality. I conclude this chapter with proposed guidelines for our field's film and video production. Before getting there, however, let's look at how rhetoricians tackle the filmmaking process. We'll begin with:

Getting Acquainted with the Technology

Whether we're making video essays, remixes or documentaries, we need to learn how to edit moving images. Ceraso and Bahareh Alaei used online tutorials to learn editing. Alaei discusses her process this way: "At first, I just searched for iMovie tutorials on YouTube. Then, I started picking up some terms, such as cloning, and searched with those keywords. I'd find myself watching for hours based off of the YouTube suggestions." Though the self-taught method can be time consuming, it teaches us to navigate the web to find answers to technological questions, an invaluable skill for anyone engaging in digital production.

Both Carter and Krause use the term "trial and error" to describe how they learned filmmaking ("Interview"). Though Krause feels he doesn't "know a whole lot," he believes that iMovie, which he learned on his own, is "remarkably easy" ("Interview"). I learned Final Cut Pro by taking a course of video tutorials from lynda.com. It took me 80 hours to learn the software but it gave me a strong basis for editing. Previous experience with different technologies is helpful. Abraham Romney worked with sound for a decade and he found switching to video editing "[n]ot a big leap." However, being proficient in sound, not images, Romney feels that he should "do more work on lighting, which has been one of my weak points."

Those of us shooting our own footage need to learn not only lighting but also framing, sound, and how to move the camera. We also need to learn to use the camera itself. While Alaei and Arroyo use their iPhones, which are fairly self-explanatory, kyburz, Romney, and myself use a range of consumer to professional cameras that take longer to figure out. I spent a long time poring over the manual for my first camera. It took me years to figure out its quirks. Although the learning process was shorter for my second, a professional camera, it was not instantaneous. Mics are easier to use but figuring out how to record good sound is tricky. Playing with filming and then editing the footage to see what worked and what didn't is the best way to figure out how cameras and mics work, as well as how to light and frame a shot.

While some lifers and casual offenders wait to have a grasp on filmmaking before diving in, kyburz invites us to "[g]o make your film. Go do it. Now. Don't wait to get a fancy camera or a crew or to learn special skills. You will learn them as you go" ("Interview"). That is what Megan Fulwiler and Jennifer Marlow did for *Con Job*. They explain, "we borrowed two different cameras and external microphones that we didn't always know how to use, had one lesson from a friend on lighting and framing, taught ourselves three different video editing platforms, accumulated five external hard drives, and traveled the United States and Canada interviewing adjuncts and labor leaders." Whatever approach one takes, it is important to share our strategies with others. The feminist filmmaking principle of mentorship is key to getting lifers and casual offenders over the technological hurdle. Besides teaching each other how to work a camera or light a room, sharing our strategies for learning

the craft—from useful video tutorials to what editing software we use—can make other rhetoricians' journeys much easier and lead to:

Collaborative Filmmaking

Unlike alphabetic writing, which evokes images of isolation, we envision filmmaking as being made by groups. Except for videos of ourselves speaking into the camera (a popular YouTube genre), the films and videos we make are products of our collaboration with others at the very basic level of what we see and hear onscreen. If we're editing footage shot by others, as rhetoricians often do in remixes and video essays, we're bringing the vision and ideas of those whose work we're featuring into our own work. It is key to use strategic contemplation as we decide how to use footage by others in our work. We need to consider our own feelings and place as researchers, as well as how those whose work we're using may be affected by our creations when deciding how to use images made by others.

On the other hand, those of us filming our own footage collaborate with the people we interview by making our arguments through their words. While strategic contemplation is key here, so is the ethics of interdependence. Showing participants questions in advance and collaborating on filming location selection makes for a better process for everyone. Rhetoricians are more careful about their filmed images than other populations I've worked with, which makes sense given our training. I am often contacted by rhetoricians wanting to make sure I don't use certain things they said on camera, a request I always honor. Because of our ties to colleges and universities, the ethics of interdependence, which result in participants who are satisfied with how they're represented, are particularly important for rhetoricians and for the institutions that house us, helping us avoid anywhere from minor resentment to libel lawsuits.

Using a crew as I did for *Vanishing Borders* is still rare in our field. More common are pairings of rhetoricians working together on a project. Fulwiler and Marlow describe their collaboration on *Con Job* by saying, "What you're about to see is the result of what happens when you put two writing teachers behind the camera," giving us a sense that they played similar roles in the production. In other collaborations rhetoricians play different roles. Arroyo often writes and performs the narration for her collaborations with Alaei, while Alaei researches the images, which they edit as a team. Todd Taylor and Bump Halbritter describe their collaboration for "Remembering Composition," their 2003 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) panel, this way: "Bump sang and played guitar live... Todd hid behind screens and curtains, pulling levers and pushing buttons" (390). Similarly during CCCC 2015, Matthew Levy played live music, accompanying Cynthia Haynes's video presentation. The ethics of interdependence is key to these collaborations so that everyone engages with the project at a formative level.

Collaboration can also be a way to hone our filmmaking craft. Film Studies faculty member Peter Johnston works as consultant and assistant editor for my film and video projects, and while we discuss a project, he teaches me new filming and editing techniques. I have also learned from undergraduate students whom I've hired to do cinematography, sound editing, color correction, and scoring. Because the students have a formal education in particular areas of filmmaking that I don't, they mentor me in their specialties, and because I've made films that screen at festivals, I mentor them on questions about production and distribution. Through mentorship and the ethics of interdependence, students and faculty learn from each other's particular skills and benefit from the resulting films and videos' trajectories, whether it be festival screenings, peer-reviewed publications, or online success.

Now let's turn to our strategies for:

Financing Academic Filmmaking

When interviewed about receiving the honorary Palme d'Or at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, Agnès Varda discussed how difficult it is for women filmmakers to find funding for their projects. She says that in spite of her many awards "'people still don't give me funding. As fishermen say, 'A little less thanks, and a little more money'!" (Keslassy). Like feminist filmmakers who are often forced to work on shoestring budgets, rhetoricians must figure out how to make moving images with limited funds. In terms of equipment, Arroyo says she uses "an iPhone, [a] macbook, and iMovie." Unger, who at the time of the interview was a Ph.D. student, used the university's cameras and computers. He explains, "The most common problem I experience relates to storage space on the university's servers. I bought an 80 GB hard drive to work around that."

Most lifers and casual offenders use a mix of personal money and institutional funding. Fulwiler and Marlow state that *Con Job* was "made possible on a Visa card and a small grant from the College of Saint Rose." Arroyo's department purchased Adobe Premiere for her, while kyburz received funding from various campus sources, and Krause was awarded a university grant for purchasing "higher-end video equipment" ("Interview"). When discussing his funding requests, Halbritter explains that the "task … was always infinitely easier when I could describe not only what I needed but why I needed it and how I intended to employ it" (207). I used the same strategy when requesting and being awarded three internal Michigan State grants to help me complete my film projects by covering student and professional labor. None of the interviewees mentioned having received federal or privately funded grants, but Arroyo says, "a team of us is contemplating applying for a Digital Humanities start up grant" ("Interview"). Newly hired faculty can use their startup funds to purchase equipment. I used mine for purchasing equipment and for covering film festival submissions, an approach I negotiated before accepting my offer.

It is harder for graduate students to receive university funds to purchase equipment but there are ways around it. Ceraso's institution purchased Adobe Premiere for her because she needed it for a course she was teaching. Graduate students also use the university's technological resources. Unger asserts that the main hurdle with using Purdue's equipment is the three-day loan time limit. There are also limitations in the actual equipment available. He states, "[T]he university doesn't own any lighting gear, at least nothing made available to students."

Crowdsourcing, a technique that feminist filmmakers like Donna McRae and Karen Skloss have successfully used to fund their films, has yet to be attempted by lifers and casual offenders, perhaps because of how time consuming it is. Moreover, as filmmaker Aurora Guerrero warns, "I fear that Kickstarter and other crowdfunding sites have been played out too much. It seems people are burnt out on donating and I don't want to put a campaign out and not meet my goal" (Hidalgo). All the same, crowdfunding may be a viable option for lifers and casual offenders, especially for graduate students who have fewer funding options.

We also need to decide how to spend our funds. The more technically inclined pore over consumer reports and reviews. Others, like myself, talk to fellow lifers and to technology staff and filmmaking faculty to figure out what to purchase. As with learning to use the technology, mentorship is key when it comes to receiving and spending funds. Once we know how to make films and have the required funding to do so, we often find ourselves:

Navigating Copyright
Halbritter and Taylor explain that it took three years from the time they presented "Remembering Composition" at CCCC 2003 to its publication as a DVD through JAC. The reason for the delay was copyright. They learned that "the guidelines for use of protected material in a live, non-commercial performance venue are vastly different than those for publication" with the studios requiring "$1000 for every ten seconds of material" (392). They ended up recreating the project with non-copyrighted footage and music. In 2008, Virginia Kuhn also found herself battling copyright when one of her students' videos, which remixed *The Daily Show* and other programs, was removed from YouTube. Kuhn fought to have the video reinstated, explaining that it had been made for analytical purposes and posed no commercial threat. After briefly reinstating it, YouTube took the video down again due to different footage belonging to NBC Universal.

Filmmaking for rhetoricians has changed significantly since Halbritter, Taylor, and Kuhn's experiences. We now have enough digital publication venues that we no longer need to rely on DVDs to distribute our work and the culture at large has shifted in terms of how they handle copyrighted images and sound. In 2010, YouTube gave copyright holders whose work has been posted without permission the choice to have ads placed on the clip and to share the revenue with YouTube

(Miller). Not all copyright holders are choosing ad revenue, but it has made a big difference in how much work gets taken down. YouTube's new policy is only one aspect of a whole movement to monetize copyrighted material posted by others. From a feminist perspective it can be problematic to have ads placed on our work, especially since we have no control over what the ads are and they may advocate something we are against.

This give and take between the material needs of making moving images and our control over our projects is something that feminist filmmakers, who rarely have large budgets for their films, have been grappling with for decades. Leah Meyerhoff shot her film, *I Believe in Unicorns*, in16-milimeter film stock. The stock was being discontinued so it was donated to the production. She explains, "Because we were shooting on film, working with a lower budget, and film is a finite resource, we had only so much donated … We didn't do a lot of takes" (Johnston). Dawn Davis explains that for *Harmony*, she "came up with the tiniest of micro budgets that I could feasibly fund with my bi-weekly paychecks and without going into debt." Filmmaking is a constant struggle between what we want to accomplish and the cost of accomplishing it. Lifers and casual offenders will need to decide whether their desire to use copyrighted images outweighs the risk of having ads placed on them.

There are also ad-free alternatives, such as Vimeo. Media artist Elisa Kreisinger, who remixes T.V. shows, has moved her work to Vimeo. However, she asserts, "'YouTube is a larger engine, and art and artists need to be there … If we're relegated to this ghetto on Vimeo, it doesn't have the same effect.'" We could say the same about scholarship, but while the culture figures out how to handle re-workings of copyright images and sound, Vimeo is a good, ad-free alternative.

I am confident that copyright issues will improve. As Lawrence Lessig explains, the war against repurposed content counters the American tradition of cultural production. There is a "distinction between republishing someone's work … and building upon or transforming that work" (19). The latter is protected under fair use, which as Kuhn explains "covers the use of footage as an object of analysis, as well as re-editing footage to show some point that is not evident in the original, both of which are very traditional academic practices." Besides fair use, it is important to practice strategic contemplation as we engage with copyrighted images and music. Just was we ask ourselves how those we're representing on screen would respond to our work, we need to take into account the needs and desires of those whose copyrighted work we're using.

As I argued in Chapter 1, the films and videos of others I've been featuring throughout this video book are citations, just like the quote by Kuhn I just read to you. These citations constitute fair use by bringing the featured films and videos into the arguments this video book is making and by helping us see them in a new

light as they engage with the ideas I'm presenting. Moreover, being cited in scholarly pieces does not hinder a film or video's ability to make money, one of the key questions for fair use. On the contrary, for images produced by scholars in particular, being cited in video essays, remixes, and documentaries helps them make arguments for the value of their work to the field and can be used to strengthen their merit, tenure, and promotion cases. In order for our use of images produced by others to function as citations, we need to mention them on Works Cited pages. For this video book, I chose to reinforce that practice by having each work's title and creator appear alongside it as we watch, and my hope is that viewers will be inspired to seek out some of the work featured here.

Copyright also affects the music we choose for our soundtracks. Due to exorbitant music sharing lawsuits, rhetoricians tend to be more careful with music than they are with images. Byron Hawk created a remix using "The Hand that Feeds," a song Trent Reznor posted on his website, giving fans permission to remix it. There are also thousands of artists who share their work through Creative Commons licenses on sites like Jamendo where I found the music I used for Chapter 2. Lifers and casual offenders also create their own music. Romney composes and performs the soundtrack to some of his videos, as does Halbritter. Non-musician Robert Leston "used the preset loops in [GarageBand] to do all the music [composition] and arranging" when creating music for "Into the After.Word with Victor Vitanza."

Having gone through the maze of copyright questions for other people's work, filmmaking rhetoricians end up with a product of their own that needs a copyright. Unlike feminist filmmakers, who are often tied to traditional copyright licenses because they share ownership of their films with investors, lifers and casual offenders tend to have more freedom over how to license their projects. The more open Creative Commons licenses help films and videos battle restrictive copyright laws by being available to others who want to borrow from, play with, and recontextualize our work.

Let's now look at how we address:

Accessibility, Closed Captioning, and Transcripts

Having had two children in the last four years, I have gone from avid stairs-taker to knowing all the handicapped entrances on campus as I navigate the world behind a stroller. Although the ramps and elevators can be hard to find, they are in every building I've visited at Michigan State. The battle to reconceptualize public buildings was fought by handicapped people, but it benefits those, who like me, find themselves temporarily tied to wheels. The same goes for the moves we make toward accessibility for video essays, remixes, and documentaries.

Although closed captioning is primarily aimed at those who are hard of hearing, it also helps people like my Venezuelan mother, who reads English well but struggles

to understand it when spoken onscreen. In other words, closed captions benefit groups we may not even know use them. However, because closed captions can be distracting to some, it is best to make them optional, as we have done here. Lifers and casual offenders can either add the closed captions themselves through their editing software or upload the transcript to YouTube and let the site take care of it.

Another way to improve accessibility is by providing a transcript with time stamps to help viewers correlate the writing with what they're hearing. While transcripts are useful for documentaries, they are vital for video essays. One limitation of video essays is our inability to mention page numbers. While page numbers don't break the flow in reading, they would be disruptive if I were to mention them here. It is also harder to demarcate direct quotes without using quotation marks. Transcripts, then, help clarify whatever confusion a viewer may feel when watching the piece.

Transcripts also play a different role. In their study of peer-reviewed digital text citations from 1996-2004, Colleen Reilly and Douglas Eyman found that the more mediated the text, the less likely it was to be cited (371). At the time of the study, they concluded that "[t]he form of many of these sources violates generic norms, thus making them unappealing or difficult to cite" (371). They suggested having citation information accompany each piece, a practice most digital venues have undertaken (373). Moreover, saving fellow scholars the trouble of transcribing our work makes them more likely to cite it and prevents citation errors. In that way, transcripts help facilitate the engagement of others with the ideas presented in our work.

Let's end this section by looking at:

Navigating IRB

The guidelines for the Institutional Review Board, or IRB, were, as William Banks and Michelle Eble explain, "[I]nitially written to protect human participants in biomedical and behavioral research [and] experience a problematic transfer when applied to the humanities" (28). Banks and Eble go on to explain that IRB's key goal is to avoid research that causes harm to participants, but defining harm is a complicated task (37). As they assert, IRB guidelines "are invariably interpreted at different institutions in different ways" (42). While remixers and video essayists don't necessarily work directly with human subjects, documentary filmmakers do.

Some universities view oral histories, a genre documentaries can fall under, as IRB-exempt. As a result, I needed no IRB approval for my documentary "PERFECT," where women discussed topics as personal as choosing to have breast implant surgery, but for the interviews I've drawn from in this video book, I went through the IRB process. On the other hand, as social scientists Derry et al. assert, "The mere addition of video collection may require in some institutions that the research proposal receive a 'full review' from the IRB" (36).

25:00 Each institution has its own way to interpret the needs of human participants in research and the protection they require. As a result, it is best to contact our institution's IRB administrators before embarking on a project to see whether they think the process is needed. In that way both our participants and ourselves are protected.

And now I would like to propose some:

GUIDELINES FOR RHETORICIANS' FILM AND VIDEO PRODUCTION

Reid explains that "[t]he issue of technical production standards becomes a rhetorical concern… as video scholars must decide what existing filmic techniques are appropriate for scholarship." As our film and video production matures, we'll have a stronger sense of the kinds of images and sound that work best with the arguments we're making. In the meantime, however, we need to come up with realistic guidelines for beginning lifers and casual offenders as they embark on their filmmaking efforts.

Krause explains that "[t]here is almost no discussion of 'production values,' and this makes a lot of the academic videos I've seen (including my own!) nearly unwatchable" ("Interview"). Romney concurs, arguing that "we do need some standards. I see people touting the virtues of digital scholarship of various stripes, and sometimes when I see digital scholarship that counts for promotion, I'm surprised at its low quality." Arroyo, who says she has "seen some pretty bad videos submitted for publication," recommends having "[r]igorous peer review and some sort of loose conventions for review." She has some suggestions toward that end: 25:40 "videos should take advantage of the medium and not just replicate what can be done in an offline setting (panels, interviews, lectures, etc.). If these things are featured, they should be edited to hold people's attention and keep the video moving. Pace and timing are crucial." In terms of their overall effect, she argues that "videos should have some rhetorical significance, should be aesthetically appropriate for the topic, and should create an overt mood." The suggestions she is making are more a matter of rhetorical skill than of mastery of the technology and equipment, making them accessible to lifers and casual offenders. While Arroyo's suggestions are holistic, I want to propose guidelines addressing the different pieces involved in moving image production:

1. Cinematography

The camera can be kept on a tripod or moved. If the latter, it should move with purpose. Random zooming, pans, and tilts are distracting, as is very shaky camera work.

2. Lighting

We need to be able to clearly see the focus of a frame. More adventurous lighting is welcome, but the key goal, unless the mood of the film calls for a different look, is to be able to see the persons, places, or objects we're meant to see. Basic white balance to counter different light's hues is recommended.

3. Framing

It should be clear to us what the focus of a frame is, so that if someone is being interviewed, they should take up a significant portion of the screen. Backgrounds should fit the scene's topic or at least not distract from the center of attention.

4. Sound

27:25 Sound should be clean and loud enough without too much background noise competing with what we're meant to hear.

5. Music

The soundtrack should be at a level that doesn't interfere with what participants or narrators are saying and it should fit the mood and topic of the piece.

6. Transitions

Transitions shouldn't call attention to themselves but simply move us from one section to another. Unless there is a clear rhetorical purpose for using flashy transitions, we should work with traditional ones such as fades and dissolves.

7. Text

Text should be readable by using colors that contrast with the background and adding drop shadows. Text should also be on screen long enough for even slow readers to be able to read it.

Some of my own moving image work does not follow all of these guidelines. We don't want to be too strict. Some videos are indeed unwatchable as Krause mentions, but there is also work that in spite of slippages in production values excels at the rhetorical, aesthetic level Arroyo espouses. Our guidelines should not be absolute or we'll shut the door on innovative work. I am sure that other lifers have ideas that complement or contradict the suggestions I just outlined. My hope is for this section to open up that discussion and for the guidelines we select to help us improve the quality of the work being produced without restraining our ability to experiment and find our particular creative vision.

And now that we have a sense of the filmmaking process and guidelines for production, let's find out how to make our hard work count for tenure and promotion in Chapter 5.

FILM AND VIDEO

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NOTE

Behind-the-Scenes footage of *Vanishing Borders* by Michelle Mueller. Additional photography by Josie Keefe.

Unattributed footage throughout the chapter by Alexandra Hidalgo. Additional photography by Nathaniel Bowler, Lindsey Spitzley, Jefferey Ivey, Gustavo Cardier, and Erin VanSloten.

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SOUNDTRACK

"Constellation" and "Ant Farm"
by Podington Bear

Downloaded from soundofpicture.com

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