Etv Archives and the user: working within a digital archive system
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In 2008, etv implemented a digital archive system in preparation for the launch of enews, South Africa's first 24-hour television news channel. This system would facilitate conversion of etv's tape-based archives, processed on analogue workflows, to a file-based computerized system, supported by a digital library and workflows. The system would facilitate simultaneous organisation of digital footage, as well as effective search and retrieval - a major advantage in the fast-paced 24-hour news environment. A year since implementation, etv has, in essence, made that transition, with most archive processes either fully or partially digitized. More specifically, the digital system has democratized search and retrieval processing, previously functions wholly performed by archivists, acting as intermediaries between the archive and the news production team. By enabling on-demand access to footage by all users within the news team - journalists, bulletin writers and producers - archivists are no longer the sole end-users with direct access to footage. Yet, while 'access for all' is what should be happening, it has not yet become a practical reality, mainly because news production staff expectations of the archival resource remain embedded in the old analogue ways of working (when the text-based database could not support multiple users). Thus, persistent, outdated user expectations function as a cultural drag on the potential benefits of the digital system. Accordingly, the system is not being utilized to maximum capacity, with costs to archive operations (with 80% of archival staff time still spent on servicing persistent footage requests from news staff, and only 20% spent on ingesting and archiving digital footage). This presentation proposes to explore the relationship dynamic between the etv digital archive system and its users in the context of the following points: The contrast of this relationship between pre-digital and post-digital archive system implementation; How user expectations have changed since the implementation of the digital archive – The benefits of using the system to its maximum potential in terms of the production of news content and in fulfilling archive roles. The gap that exists between user expectations and the digital archive system. How this gap between the user and the digital system is being addressed by etv archives so that the system is used to its full advantage.
This presentation would be of specific interest to broadcast industry archives (locally and globally) seeking to implement (or who have already implemented) digital archive systems. It could potentially offer valuable insights into user expectations and behavior when working within a digital archive system.