

Women's broadcasting histories and the archive: National, transnational and transmedial entanglements

Critical Studies in Television:
The International Journal of
Television Studies
2025, Vol. 0(0) 1–27
© The Author(s) 2025



Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/17496020251330853

journals.sagepub.com/home/cst



Sarah Arnold 

Maynooth University, Ireland

Janet McCabe 

Birkbeck, University of London, UK

Kylie Andrews

Macquarie University, Australia

Alec Badenoch

Utrecht University, the Netherlands

Jeannine Baker

University of Newcastle, Australia

Vicky Ball

De Montfort University, UK

Elisa Hendriks

Radboud University, the Netherlands

Vanessa Jackson 

Birmingham City University, UK

Kate Murphy 

Bournemouth University, UK

Ipsita Sahu

Independent Scholar, India

Kristin Skoog

Bournemouth University, UK

Kate Terkanian

Bournemouth University, UK

Helen Warner

University of East Anglia, UK

Abstract

This provocation details varied perspectives of the International Women's Broadcasting Histories (IWBH) network on researching the role of women in broadcasting. The conversational form allows us to roam across the topic widely, to express a range of discrete positions and distinct arguments, with the desire to bring dilemmas to the surface and explore their implications without reduction. Responding with a series of interventionist statements around the issues and challenges of doing archival research into women's work, we opt for retaining different viewpoints in a raw state, with the aim of provoking discussion about the methodological opportunities and limitations when working within and outside of archives.

Keywords

Broadcasting, women, history, feminist, archive

Introduction

The International Women's Broadcasting Histories (IWBH) network formed after a workshop on 'International Perspectives on Women's Television Production Histories' organised by Vicky Ball and Jeannine Baker at the 2021 'Doing Women's Film and Television Histories V' conference at Maynooth University in the Republic of Ireland. Participants expressly sought to network, collaborate and promote research on the historical role of women in television and radio. The group's main objective was to create a global nexus for scholars researching women's work in broadcasting, for existing networks had too narrower a geographic focus: United Kingdom and Ireland (Women's Film and Television History Network – UK/Ireland), or Europe (Women's Radio in Europe Network [WREN]). In addition, because these organisations coalesced around scholarship on either film and television *or* radio, there was a desire to bring together researchers of radio *and* television. The Pioneering Women of the BBC website curated by Baker with Kate Murphy, as part of Sussex University's Connected Histories of the BBC project, had already emphasised this interconnectedness of radio and television, highlighting numerous women, who by necessity or design, had transmedial careers. The increase in videoconferencing technology during the pandemic further enabled international colleagues to meet online (albeit negotiating time differences) and the network was born. IWBH's expansion has enabled collaboration on publications and conferencing, thereby increasing the visibility of women's broadcasting histories in the scholarly community.

Corresponding author:

Sarah Arnold, Maynooth University, Iontas Building, North Campus, Maynooth +353 14747702, Ireland.

Email: sarah.arnold@mu.ie

IWBH is transnational in its location and locatedness, its identity and practices. This complex situatedness extends to our varied geographies, our positionalities – for example, working in second or multiple languages – our transnational careers and/or employment outside our original home countries, and our work and research across borders. Transnational research and networks are, therefore, central to the group, creating and generating a truly international dialogue on the historical dimensions of transborder and transmedial flows which informed the career profiles of the women studied. Focussing on women's labour rather than representation, we research gender hierarchies and power structures in production, structures that also exist in archives, which routinely neglect and invisibilise women's work (Martin, 2018). We, therefore, adopt feminist approaches to archival research proposed by Katz (2008), as well as Moseley and Wheatley (2008), to recognise that archival research is a feminist issue that often necessitates researching around our subjects given the limited inclusion of women in broadcast archives. We look within and beyond the archive to understand women's broadcasting work, identifying gaps in the historical record and adopting methodological frameworks that address such fissures.

The very first issue of *CST* (2006) identified key challenges in television scholarship. Jacobs (2006) anticipated digitisation of audiovisual materials and catalogues as a game-changer for archival researchers. Lacey (2006) noted the problematic gaps in British regional television drama history and the focus on 'golden ages' and 'great men' to the detriment of other areas. Finally, McCabe and Akass (2006) emphasised the role of feminist scholars in developing television studies as a discipline, including a research focus on marginalised groups like women. These themes – the archive, historiography and feminism – interweave in what follows. This collectively penned provocation addresses the problems of researching television through a singular lens, whether by medium, methodology or individual focus. For limiting research runs the risk of further marginalising women and diminishing their role in broadcast histories. Doing women's broadcasting research is necessarily entangled with other media and other organisations, such as the labour movement, women's organisations and other broadcasting institutions, all of which will be discussed amongst the group.

What follows is a curated conversation amongst several members of IWBH, some of whom write in pairs, reflecting their collaborative research practice: Kylie Andrews (Macquarie University), Sarah Arnold (Maynooth University), Alec Badenoch (Utrecht University), Jeannine Baker (University of Newcastle), Vicky Ball (De Montfort University), Elisa Hendriks (Radboud University), Vanessa Jackson (Birmingham City University), Janet McCabe (Birkbeck, University of London), Kate Murphy (Bournemouth University), Ipsita Sahu (Independent Scholar), Kristin Skoog (Bournemouth University), Kate Terkanian (Bournemouth University) and Helen Warner (University of East Anglia).

Collectively, we identify key challenges and opportunities in researching women's broadcasting histories, beginning with the 'limits of the archive' – the gaps and omissions in institutional and organisational archives regarding women's work. A related issue is the archival focus on key creatives and other decision makers, and pioneers and firsts, which often overlooks women's contributions to broadcast history. Further, understanding the

different national, linguistic and regional contexts in which women worked is crucial. We recognise that women's work was often transnational, shaped by necessity or opportunity. Women moved across national as well as media borders and we draw attention to their transmedial careers, especially across radio and television, broadcasting and non-broadcasting roles. While this mobility often advanced women's careers, it also poses specific challenges for researchers, requiring careful navigation across various archival sources.

We end this provocation by reflecting on methodological approaches to the telling of women's broadcasting histories, noting the ways in which researchers can work within institutional archives' constraints to uncover women's stories. We highlight the increasing availability of data, including public datasets and digital sources, which serve as counter-archives when official ones are so lacking (see [Chaudhuri et al., 2010](#); [Römkens and Wiersma, 2017](#)). Our discussions here are framed as responses to questions related to archives, 'entanglements' and methodological perspectives. We begin by focussing on the archives.

Q: What are the current challenges and limitations in undertaking archive research on women's broadcasting histories?

One of the profound issues raised by IWBH members is the substantial lack of materials on women's broadcasting in institutional and organisational archives. Collectively, we find this to be an assault against the acknowledgement of women's role in broadcasting history, especially given the persistent calls from researchers, archivists and the public to give such women and their work proper recognition. In what follows IWBH members highlight various reasons for this neglect, including the exclusion of those on short-term contracts from broadcasting staff records, the female bar from trade union membership, a focus on pioneers and exceptions rather than the ordinary day-to-day technical and administrative work often carried out by women, and omission of their materials and records from archives. In other words, researchers must navigate incomplete and biased archival collections and records, search beyond broadcasting and institutional records to source women's histories and perform a delicate balancing act between championing individual women's contributions (without leaning on reductive *auteurist* historical frameworks) and valuing the many other forms of work undertaken by women, even if those histories take time to be valued.

We start with some of the issues researchers of women's histories face in the archive.

—Vanessa Jackson (VJ). It is easy to assume that institutional archives are neutral spaces, but of course that is not the case. They reflect the culture and politics of the organisations which have established them. Their acquisition strategies may be opaque to those outside the institution, and they frequently prioritise preservation over access, or commercial over academic visitors. Catalogues can be difficult to navigate and reflect industry biases, for example listing assets by director/producer/writer, but not including other roles. The 'important' is privileged over the everyday, the canonical over the 'flow' of television and radio. Women have worked

disproportionately in production roles, in craft roles such as costume and makeup, and editorially on programmes described as 'ordinary television' (Bonner, 2003), often with a female address, meaning that their work is frequently absent from the archive. All these aspects combine to minimise the visibility of women in the broadcast archive.

Following this, we explain the challenges in locating women's work in broadcast archives, and the perpetuation of women's invisibility through archival collections policies and cataloguing practices.

--Vicky Ball (VB). To date, sustained research on women creatives (along with women in other production roles) has been hampered by the fact that there are few extant historical sources. Tracking the participation rates of, for example, writers has been particularly challenging since they are often missing from industry-produced reports and key institutional documents such as BBC staff lists. Such staff lists are produced annually and provide key data regarding the makeup of production departments and hierarchies. However, groups such as writers who were employed on short-term contracts remain missing from view. These absences have made it challenging to track women's participation as writers (as well as producers and directors) across its 80-year history.

--Alec Badenoch (AB) and Kristin Skoog (KS). Our work exploring the intersections between the international women's movement and women broadcasters highlights the extent to which broadcasting institutions, and with them, what is generally considered 'the broadcasting archive', have tended to erase women's activism, not to mention women's work (Badenoch and Skoog, 2019; Skoog and Badenoch, 2016, 2020, 2024). Some of this is due to existing neglect for archiving women's activities, or women's own view of their life work as going beyond broadcasting. This is the case for lesbian activist Jackie Forster (1926-1998), whose personal archive at the Glasgow Women's Library features 'television works' alongside 'activism' and a range of other activities, and Lilian van der Goot (1897-1989), activist, broadcaster and co-founder of what became Atria Centre for Women's History and Gender Equality in Amsterdam. Ironically, Atria holds most of van der Goot's pioneering broadcasting work, including a vast collection of radio manuscripts, as well as early records of the International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT, co-founded by van der Goot in 1951) while in the broadcasting archive (the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision) traces of her are mostly in programmes where she was interviewed about her feminist activism.

--Helen Warner (HW). The gendering of archival practices has long been a particular problem for women's labour historians, as surviving documents/artefacts are often held by trade unions which excluded women members. As Anna Davin observes, 'well-paid workers are more likely to be in organisations, women are rarely regular or well-paid workers' (1981: 176). This is certainly the case for women's labour histories of the creative industries (see Ball and Porter, 2018; Bell, 2021; Galt, 2020). As such there is a tendency to trace the careers of 'exceptional' women who have made their name in male dominated professions as they are more visible. While this is an important pursuit for feminist research, we risk reproducing the misconception that women are largely absent from creative industries.

--VB. By focusing on women who managed to break into television drama production in the more prestigious, masculine-aligned roles of writers, producers and directors, my research, for instance, could be accused of reinforcing rather than challenging established (masculine-aligned) hierarchies of value that inform existing historiographies. Focusing on the 'exceptional' status of such female creatives subsequently risks minimising the contributions of the swathes of women disproportionately employed in 'below-the-line' grades such as secretaries, production assistants, costume, hair and makeup. Moreover, exploring the work of women writers with recourse to notions of authorship would appear to adopt critical tools which have been problematised in television studies given the collaborative nature of production and how programmes are the culmination and negotiation of many voices and institutional pressures.

However, to avoid researching the production histories of women creatives because they occupy roles aligned with masculinity, it would be to throw the baby out with the bathwater. If women have been underrepresented in these key creative roles historically, questions need to be asked about how and why that is the case, particularly as gender inequalities continue to structure the television industry. Alexis Kraeger and Stephen Fellows' 'Gender and Screenwriters Inequality' report commissioned by the Writers Guild of Great Britain and The Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society, suggests that women have written only 28% of episodes of drama over the past 10 years (2018: 9). This number drops to 14% for prime-time drama with most women 'ghettoised' to writing for feminine genres like children's drama and soaps (ibid.: 52). The 'Gender and Screenwriters Inequality' report is important for it identifies those factors which inform the self-sustaining loop of gender inequality that keeps gendered dynamics in play. Crucially, however, it lacks any sense of history. How many women have made it into these male echelons of production previously? How and why have gender dynamics shifted or remained unchanged over television's 80-year history? Have the opportunities or experiences of women creatives differed depending on role (writer, producer, director), department (play, serials, series), or production company? Researching women's creative roles does privilege the roles and grades that are prestigious in television. This is precisely why they are important to address: so that the gender politics and 'patterns of discrimination' that block or shape women's experience in key decision-making roles are brought into view.

Fundamentally, to neglect the work of women writers would be to perpetuate the cultural violence against women whose histories and 'authorial signatures' have been hidden and obscured (Cobb, 2014: 2). As Hallam (2000: 148) argued over 20 years ago, the absence of research around women writers of television means they are left without a critical home.

--VJ. My work exploring the careers of women in television production confirms that they have worked disproportionately in craft roles such as costume and makeup, and editorially on programmes described as 'ordinary television' (Bonner, 2003), often those with a female address, meaning that their work is frequently absent from the archive. These aspects combine to minimise the visibility of women in the broadcast archive. This has long been observed by scholars, with Wheatley and Moseley arguing that 'archiving is a feminist issue, given the relative absence of texts traditionally coded as feminine from publicly accessible archives'

(2008). The same is true regarding the paucity of documentation in institutional archives concerning women's careers in television, meaning that we must find their stories in other collections.

Advancing this discussion about challenges for researchers, we turn to broadcasters' own efforts to represent the histories of its workforce through projects such as Connected Histories of the BBC (albeit a very male perspective). However, such endeavours raise urgent concerns about new BBC Written Archives Centre policies that risk limiting the access researchers will have to women's histories.

--Kate Murphy (KM) and Kate Terkanian (KT). The Connected Histories of the BBC was an AHRC-funded project (2017-2022) that created a publicly accessible collection of documents, ephemera and recordings related to BBC's history that included oral histories of figures who worked at the BBC. It is an extraordinary new resource for BBC researchers, but there are several issues when it comes to locating female voices, most evidently the paucity of women who worked in production or administration positions. Out of the 431 interviews on the website, only 77 are with women, although more recent interviews conducted by the Sussex University project team have aimed to be equally balanced between men and women. The predominant voices in Connected Histories are of senior men, but within these interviews, allusions are sometimes made to the women with whom they worked. For example, Mary Adams' name is mentioned within five of these, Nesta Pain only once. Again, the search engine is only as good as the metadata. But with perseverance it is possible to discover some of the Producer's Secretaries and personal assistants who worked at Alexandra Palace in the 1940s and 1950s. One important interview which shows the fluidity of BBC careers that spanned both radio and television is with Monica Sims (recorded 1986), who was both Head of Children's TV (1967-78) and Controller of Radio Four (1978-84). Sims was born in 1925, so her staff file should be available for view imminently, enabling cross referencing between her memories and the facts of her BBC life. Sims also recorded three interviews (1986, 1987 and 1989) available on the Connected Histories website.

However, recent reductions of staffing and research hours at the BBC Written Archives Centre reminds researchers that current levels of access are subject to budget constraints and changing archival policies. As we finish writing, a new policy may be coming into place which would end access to any files which have yet to be opened for research. This means, for example, that any BBC woman whose personal file is yet to be explored – such as Monica Sims whose file would have become available this year – could remain closed until the policy is changed.

Our discussion about archives and the urgent challenges of researching women's broadcasting histories inevitably prompted discussion of the geographic and media specificities that in many ways shape what kind of research can happen in the first place. Given the international membership of IWBH, we recognise important local concerns and localised issues, as well as transnational and transmedial ones, which brings us to our next question.

Q: Through which national, transnational and transmedial entanglements can researchers examine women's contributions to broadcasting?

Broadcasting histories are dominated by Anglophone, especially US and British, contexts and the purpose of this section is to extend understanding and explore other national contexts including India, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands and Australia. In the Netherlands and India, non-broadcasting archives and sources sometimes better preserve women's broadcasting work, while in Ireland, limited numbers of audiovisual archives make research on women challenging; but given television's recent arrival in the Republic (since 1961), this means that many former media women still have the opportunity tell their stories for the archive. In Australia, research reveals that women found early opportunities in television or leveraged their Commonwealth mobility to forge careers and develop skills in British television.

While transnational mobility provided opportunities for women, it also complicates the work of research, requiring those researching women's work to reach beyond conventional broadcast archives. Smaller and often uncatalogued archives, generally difficult to navigate, can prove invaluable, especially since traditional cataloguing and metadata standards within more conventional media archives can erase women's work. Other non-broadcasting archives can also offer more nuanced and detailed histories of women who worked across sectors. Finally, in line with the theme of mobility, we consider the movement of women working across television and radio roles.

First, our discussion of national contexts of broadcasting in Ireland, India, Australia and the Netherlands emphasises the importance of attending to national specificities and localised contexts of television.

--**Sarah Arnold (SA).** Ireland has a public broadcasting service model of television which means that at least some materials are guaranteed to be archived, and this makes access to women's histories somewhat easier than in the case of commercial television. National broadcaster RTÉ has foregrounded topics related to women and the media on its online platform, for example, streaming clips from programmes where women's relationship to and role in media was debated.

However, Ireland is a small nation with limited resources made available at the State level for audiovisual archiving and limited public and research access to them. The Irish Film Institute Irish Film Archive, which holds television materials, is not yet a State-funded national archive. Access is also an issue. For example, recent State-led efforts to legislate for increased public access to the RTÉ television archives paid little attention to the reality that archives, even public service ones, have finite and scarce resources. Further, given the underrepresentation and undervaluing of women and their work in television, as in Irish society more generally, women's histories are less likely to have been preserved in the archives.

--**Ipsita Sahu (IS).** Building on the concerns raised by others in this discussion, I emphasise the significance of audiovisual archives (in tandem with paper archives) from unofficial sources as a

way to access long-lost, forgotten, marginalised media content. For example, *Tabassum Talkies* (2016-2023), a YouTube channel run by former television anchor Tabassum, until her death in 2022, serves as an invaluable archive of daily entertainment programming by women producers and anchors in early Indian television. Her programmes are however conspicuously absent in Doordarshan's (India's public service broadcaster) official archive, which prioritises news and information content.

The proliferation of amateur archives online reveals the 'systemic erasure' in official methods of archiving television histories. In the Indian context, Prasar Bharti Archive, the official television YouTube archive, showcases its content through categories of art and culture, science and technology, documentary content and various national events, wherein television is linked to the creation of nationhood. In contrast *Tabassum Talkies* presents archival content as fragments of the past, repurposed to speak to the present through digital storytelling (see Bolter and Grusin, 1999; Russell, 2018). The amateur digital archive is a participatory, non-linear, personal, sentient counter-history to official 'storage archives' (Assmann, 2011).

--Jeannine Baker (JB). My current research explores the connection between gendered labour and technology in British, Australian and New Zealand broadcasting, especially early television. In Australia, there is evidence of women's avid interest in the new medium from as early as the 1930s, well before the start of regular broadcasting in 1956, although published histories ignore or minimise their contribution to the development of the medium. For example, one of the first films made in Australia for television was conceived and produced by Grace Gibson, who ran a wildly successful Australian radio transcription business, and would go on to advise Frank Packer as he prepared his bid for Australia's first television licence. Numerous Australian women undertook training at, or reported on, broadcasting organisations in the United States, United Kingdom and Europe, and their expertise contributed to the development of the Australian industry. Early Australian television also depended heavily on skilled migrants from the United Kingdom, Europe and United States. For example, British-born Molly Brownless, who was the control room operator at TCN-9 Sydney on the first night of regular broadcasting in September 1956, was valued for her unique experience in television engineering at the BBC, including as a camera operator and vision switcher in the post-war television service. Brownless's pioneering role in British and Australian television only came to light through an oral history interview for the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia that I conducted with Brownless when she was 89; crucially, her personal archive included compelling photographs and scripts that supported her account. While the historiography has largely focused on male owners, managers and well-known personalities, in recent years feminist scholars have begun to bring to light women's work across technical, creative and production support areas (Andrews, 2020, 2022, Baker, 2018, 2019; Baker and Connors, 2020; North, 2016; Wilcox, 2021). However, women who did not work in key creative or decision-making roles are much harder to trace in public archives, and public oral history collections also have gaps in relation to women's work, as noted by Kate Terkanian and Kate Murphy above in relation to Connected Histories of the BBC, meaning that scholars have to turn to alternative sources and methodologies to foreground women's voices and stories.

--SA. In speaking about the Irish context, there are several opportunities and issues related to the study of women's work in television. Firstly, as a small nation with a recent television history, we are fortunate enough to have access to first-hand accounts of women who worked with or in television. This means that there isn't as much dependency on audiovisual archives that there might be in the case of much earlier television histories. Morgan Wait's article on the impact of the Marriage Bar on women producers and production staff at RTÉ, for example, drew on interviews with those workers (2024). To date, there has not been a systematic oral history project that captures women's experiences of television work in Ireland so there is an opportunity there to do so.

--**Elisa Hendriks (EH)**. My research focuses on those who made women's radio in the Netherlands during the 1970s and 1980s. These were community radio stations that employed disparate feminist methodologies and primarily intended for a local female demographic. While some were driven by the desire to create a radio station for their own community, others had a more specific focus on working-class women and/or housewives. These radio stations operated in contravention of the law, but were not commercial, unlike some of the better-known pirate radio stations in the Netherlands. Among other things, I try to research how women's time on women's radio impacted the rest of their career. In seeking to answer these questions, I encounter the same issues as discussed above. Information about women working in media is dispersed throughout various archives, or there is no information at all in institutional archives about them. Furthermore, they operated across different media and in diverse roles, engaging in transnational practices that complicate the archival search. Investigating the women behind feminist illegal radio stations in the Netherlands illuminates additional challenges inherent to researching the labour of women in media. No payment for their work often means no archival material. Despite the lack of remuneration for these roles, many women were able to secure paid media positions, such as technician or journalist, when unemployment rates declined in the 1990s. In Den Bosch, women who had organised the technical aspects of the protest radio established a 'women's only workshop'. One of these women subsequently secured employment at the Dutch Broadcast Organisation (NOS) as one of the first female technicians.

Nonetheless, it is more difficult to study women in the media outside the geographical and ideological periphery. The centre of the media in the Netherlands is in Hilversum and Amsterdam, and the centre of feminism in this period is also in Amsterdam. It is in these places that material is archived, and even the grassroots women's archive can feel distant to women outside Amsterdam. Materials of women of colour and migrant women are even harder to find even in the counter-archives. Chandra Frank argues that this is partly caused by the lack of knowledge about women of colour and migrant women (2019, 2020). This is also reflected in the historiography, which focuses on women who were active on a national level and who were based around Amsterdam.

The concept of boundary-crossing is discussed next by the group, this time in relation to the geographic mobilities of Australian women broadcast workers, as well as the

challenges of researching across archives, collections and digital spaces, and the various research entanglements that inevitably emerge as a consequence.

--**Kylie Andrews (KA).** My research works to resuscitate women's contributions to the development of Australian public broadcasting in the post-war era. Combining feminist methodologies with an integrated, transnational approach made it possible to identify how a cohort of the ABC's most senior women enacted transnational mobilities to their advantage. Because broadcasting is inherently transnational, institutions like the post-war ABC did not function as insular entities (despite their national designations). It was therefore necessary to view ABC as a dynamic and active transnational organisation, to focus, as [Dahl \(1994\)](#) suggested, on the interconnected nature of media systems. As the ABC's fibrous network of relationships became visible, it was possible to trace and contextualise the transformative international sojourns undertaken by the protagonists of my study. As for many ambitious women of the post-war era, international mobilities improved their careers and helped them overcome the discriminatory constraints of their local environments ([Curthoys and Lake, 2005](#); [Pesman, 1996](#)). Aspiring producers were commonly motivated—or forced—to pursue alternative avenues of opportunity, many embraced the opportunities afforded them by ABC's global public broadcasting connections. When they moved beyond the national, they attained assets, opportunities and skills that the local production environment was not providing, and in the process, gained greater status, agency and confidence.

--**AB and KS.** Women's archives such as Atria, the Women's Library at the LSE (with some records of the International Council of Women (ICW), founded in 1888), and the Archive and Research Centre for Women's History in Brussels (with many records of the ICW) have proven far more valuable than the archives of broadcasting institutions in revealing both women's activist work and transnational networks in major broadcasting institutions. Women's archives tend to have a wide collecting remit focused on women's activities and experiences, increasingly oriented toward diversity (see for example [De Haan and Mevis, 2008](#)).

--**VJ.** I have been researching women working in costume and makeup, and whilst the BBC's Written Archives at Caversham (WAC) is a fantastic resource, none of the women I was researching had archived personal files despite many being heads of department. Their work was not considered important enough. However, I could find traces of these women in memos, in documents, in programme files, in production photographs and sometimes in end credits. I could also find them in wider searches, in talking to living subjects through oral histories and in personal collections.

--**HW.** For those of us interested in the 'anti-auteurist' agenda of feminist production studies, there are a number of organisations that are exceptions to this rule and worthy of our attention. My specific research focuses on areas of US media production in which women are well represented (i.e. costume departments). Costume unions not only hold the histories of women in leadership, but the experiences of rank-and-file members. There are, however, challenges when it comes to accessing these histories. First, these smaller organisations often hold private archives that are unwieldy. Rarely have they been subject to a formalised and systematic information management programme. In other words, the records are not searchable and there is no metadata

to assist searches for key material. Consequently, sifting through the material to select relevant data is incredibly time consuming. However, this also provides an opportunity to practice feminist/critical principles of ‘disrupting’ knowledge production ([Digital Women’s Archive North, 2017: 158](#)). In addition, research is not limited by implicit biases in metadata. These biases have often led to women’s experiences being difficult to detect in documentary sources. However, in my experience, I have found private collections to include rich documentary resources: specifically, organisations’ newsletters.

I’ve been working with the Motion Picture Costumers’ Union (IATSE Local 705) to digitise their quarterly newsletter, *Costumers News/ The Costumer* (1941–). The newsletters include minutes of the organisation’s meetings and therefore have revealed the union’s structure, members roles, activities and areas of conflict. Crucially, they also contain Local News stories. These stories include news of weddings and children’s births which are vital clues for those of us reconstructing the histories of women in media production, as we must try to pick up the threads after career breaks and name changes. In addition, they provide more qualitative data that can be useful in understanding the working lives of practitioners in a particular historical and cultural context. Obituaries, for example, are qualitatively rich documents, as they provide insights into the career trajectories of women in the industry. As women’s careers have long since been mobile, these summaries allow us to identify any ‘migration patterns’ as women move between industries and geographies. Moreover, obituaries tell the stories of those women with ‘unremarkable’ careers, who have not enjoyed public visibility of those ‘exceptional’ women and therefore allow us to better understand the experience of women working below the line. They serve as a space in which other practitioners reflect on the skills and contributions of one of their colleagues. This often reveals assumptions about the values held by the organisation and help construct a sense of professional identity.

--SA. An additional concern regarding women’s broadcasting histories in Ireland is the extent to which women moved across different labour, public and/or activist spheres. Women often held multiple identities and engaged in many different practices, whether within the wider media industries, or across different fields of interest. For example, activist Nell McCafferty, who was central to the feminist movement in Ireland and started the Irish Women’s Liberation Movement, was a broadcaster on television and radio, as well as a journalist among her many roles. How might we consider her significant role in and use of broadcasting, without attending to her other activities and roles? In other words, the history of many women who worked in broadcasting often extends to other important political and social histories. This requires researchers to navigate multiple public and private archives to access such histories.

--AB and KS. In the inaugural issue of the journal, *Feminist Media Studies*, Annabelle Sreberny called for transnational study of women and media and warned that it ‘must not become overly media-centric’ (2001: 64). As transnational and transmedia ‘entangled’ approaches to media history take hold ([Cronqvist and Christoph, 2017](#)), they also challenge our definitions and boundaries of women’s television work. In fact, this approach was explicitly taken in the 2025 ‘Doing Women’s Film and Television History’ conference, entitled ‘Entangled Media: Past and Present’. Looking for transnational connections in broadcasting has not only highlighted transnational networks among pioneering women broadcasters, but also the extent to which these networks ran well beyond

broadcasting institutions and into organisations of international feminism, particularly the ICW. Exploring these entanglements reveals networks of what we might call institutional activists: women whose activism was embedded in broadcasting institutions, women's organisations, or—often—both. From the point of view of these institutional activists, the distinction between the medium of television and especially radio, as well as the distinction between 'broadcasting' and 'activism' work was often not meaningful. Ironically, given these women's public mission and overt aims of visibility (or at least audibility) within the media and political spheres, archival structures based around these distinctions have tended to obscure such work. It takes considerable research and curation to re-entangle these spheres and identities (see [Badenoch and Skoog, 2019](#); [Caspari, 2024](#)).

In exploring the historical case, the distinction between 'broadcasting' and 'activism' is especially blurry and has had more lasting archival consequences. A simple, yet recurring, example of the entanglements of broadcasting and activist work is that women corresponding with, but also on behalf of, women's organisations such as the ICW and IAWRT often did so on the letterhead of their broadcasting institutions. Besides the momentary blurring of boundaries such correspondence shows, it is also part of a larger life pattern we observed among many of the women we studied, in which involvement with broadcasting institutions, and being a broadcaster, was only one part of a broader range of activities: for example, the case of Gabriele Strecker (1904–1983) broadcaster, politician and trained physician whose archive sits across multiple sites. Indeed, looking from the direction of activism also questions what we consider broadcasting expertise or broadcasting work: women such as American Laura Dreyfuss-Barney (1879–1974), who between 1927 and 1936 led the ICW's first initiatives in broadcasting and convened its joint cinema and broadcasting committee, and Swedish Margareta von Konow (1897–1999), vice-convenor of the ICW's broadcasting committee in 1936, were not broadcasters at all.

—**IS.** My research examines the importance of amateur-curated online archives in recovering the histories of women in early Indian television. The digital landscape is continuously seeing a proliferation of audiovisual fragments from the past, often drawn from private collections. However, there is a sense of uncertainty regarding the durability of these archives in their 'original' form, and in many instances, they are removed or become dormant and 'undiscoverable'. Building on the concerns raised by others in this discussion, I emphasise the significance of audiovisual archives (in tandem with paper archives) from unofficial sources as a way to access long-lost, forgotten, marginalised media content.

Continuing the topic of 'trans-ness', the transmedial careers of women in broadcasting will be addressed next by the group, to look at women's 'transmedial flexibility' in Australian broadcasting, the transmedial careers of women at the BBC following the establishment of the television service, and the research skills required to trace these women as a consequence.

—**KA.** Broadcasting production cultures have historically encouraged an interconnectivity with other creative formats and spheres; it is therefore important to widen the field to search for alternative engagements of other mediums. In my case, adopting a transmedial focus made it possible to recognise that ambitious producers were able to advance more smoothly if they could

move between television and radio. Thanks to their transmedial flexibility, the female producers in my study were more capable of sidestepping trouble when their authority was compromised; they could better protect their hard-won independence and sustain the continuity of their public voices. This expanded research scope makes it more possible to overcome the blind-spots that occur when the framework remains solely on one nation or one medium (Cronqvist and Christoph, 2017). Rather than appearing disjointed and inconsequential, the careers of my ABC cohort were instead revealed as dynamic, strategic and substantial.

--KM and KT. Certainly, for the BBC, the early history of women in television could not be traced without an understanding of women in radio (Murphy, 2022). As Medhurst (2022) has shown, it was a frustration for the new television department, set up in 1935, that it was not granted more autonomy from the then dominant broadcast medium of radio. In terms of female staff, while television created some areas of work that were brand new, such as makeup, wardrobe and 'hostess', predominantly it was radio women who peopled the early BBC television service, based at Alexandra Palace, and there are many examples—continuing today—of careers that span both radio and TV. As others in this provocation have stated, archives are only as good as what was deemed worthy to retain and, as with all media organisations, BBC women are harder to track often because their jobs were more invisible. While the BBC Written Archives do have separate indexing for television and radio, because of fluidity, details of women's working lives can be found in a host of complementary BBC documentation including programme, contributor, departmental, administrative and individual staff files.

As Martin (2018) proposes, although women's presence here is fragmentary, women's roles and importance can be discovered through these types of files. Those with longevity in senior roles are more likely to have their staff files retained, although this is not always the case, for instance Jeanne 'Johnny' Bradnock has no BBC staff file, despite being Head of Make-Up and Wardrobe from 1946 to 1964. The same is true for her predecessor in the pre-Second World War TV service, Mary Allan.

Three highly significant BBC television women started their careers in radio: Grace Wyndham Goldie, Mary Adams and Joanna Spicer. Wyndham Goldie and Adams both deposited their personal files/private papers at the BBC Written Archives Centre, while information on Spicer's career comes from her staff file (Wyndham Goldie and Mary Adams BBC/WAC:L2/5/1–3: 1930–1961; Grace Wyndham Goldie Special Collection. BBC/WAC: S135; Mary Adams Staff Files. Personal papers BBC/WAC: S322: 1–261). Other radio women like Barbara Burnham and Nesta Pain had briefer television production careers, but their journeys between radio and television are instructive. Both Burnham and Pain have personnel files. Burnham also has a contributor file for work on temporary contracts and Pain also has deposited her personal papers at the BBC Written Archive Centre (Burnham, Pain, Left Staff. BBC/WAC. Barbara Burnham Contributor Files. BBC/WAC: R94/1093/1&2; Barbara Burnham, Copyright and Scriptwriter (1946–1962) files. BBC/WAC RCONT!; Nesta Pain Special Collection. BBC/WAC: S300.) Pain's personal papers are extremely valuable in understanding her television career as the BBC retained very little material concerning her television productions. The special collections of Wyndham Goldie, Adams and Pain reflect what they believed was important, and are instructive

when used in consultation with their personal staff files and other radio and television documentation. Although Adams lived until 1984 and Pain 1995, neither were recorded for the BBC's Oral History Project, started by Frank Gillard in 1972 ([History of the BBC, 2024](#)). The interview with Spicer was recorded in 1984 and Wyndham Goldie 1986. Both have multi-hour interviews now available online thanks to Connected Histories of the BBC ([BBC, 2022](#)).

Concern about the lack of oral histories of women at the BBC leads us to our next discussion regarding methods, which starts with a consensus about the usefulness of oral histories, before turning to other methodological practices relevant to the research of women's broadcasting histories.

Q: What are the methodological innovations and limitations associated with researching women's broadcasting histories?

Research on women's broadcasting histories presents many challenges, which results in IWBH members utilising feminist methods and resources that extend beyond official archives, as well as prioritising gaps and invisibilities. These approaches – often called 'histories from the margins', 'counter-histories', 'radical histories' – challenge or reject dominant histories. Oral histories, for example, can intervene in official broadcasting histories, by providing cultural and personal histories that may contest official ones. Oral histories can also foreground lesser-known and valued broadcast workers and reclaim histories from which women may have been actively excluded.

Counter-histories are also facilitated by community-led digital repositories that exist outside of formal archives. The *Kaleidoscope* database, discussed here, was created to fill the gaps left in television history by institutional archives. Feminist scholars have worked with its custodians to increase women's visibility. Further, the digital archival turn offers new ways to democratise television history in order to benefit women and other marginalised groups. However, digitisation of broadcast materials should not be taken as 'the archive' itself, since women's histories often exist in paper traces and ephemera not easily digitised. Finally, researching women's broadcast histories requires patience and a patchwork approach that draws from unconventional sources. In an age of instant information, research to locate histories of women's work in the archive remains time-consuming, laborious and often protracted. In recent years, slowness has been proposed as an antidote to standard (read: patriarchal, colonial) research, methodological and archival practice ([Christen and Anderson, 2019](#)). For slowness refuses the demand for quick and easily available data, for example, in broadcast archives that traditionally prioritise men's work. Slow research *is* feminist research insofar as it concerns searching for what is often ignored, undervalued, underrepresented and even disregarded as not worthy of much attention in the first place. Women's histories often necessitate slow research approaches. This is because of the way women present in the archive, often becoming invisibilised with name changes for example, through marriage or divorce. Women's roles are also less likely to be as well archived and aspects of their labour – emotional and affective – difficult to categorise, if not impossible to adequately capture in the archive. Months

and years can be spent tracing women's work across different national broadcasting contexts, as researchers intricately trace the different roles as well as the changing terminology and nomenclature associated with them. Because of these challenges, feminist slow research also benefits from collaboration and sharing knowledge, something which we advocate for and practice amongst ourselves.

We now discuss the experience of using oral histories in different national contexts and within various research projects. Oral histories are incredibly valuable to researchers of women's role in broadcasting because they help offer first-hand perspectives of those who may otherwise be neglected in broadcast archives. Oral histories fill the gaps left in official records. They also capture women's experiences of working cultures and environments and provide a specifically gendered lens on broadcast history and work. However, we recognise that oral history interviews present challenges and require additional labour on the part of researchers. Interviews can take place long after the events under discussion, with interviewees' memories incomplete, imprecise, even prone to misremembering. The contemporary lens on historical times may also change interviewees' perspectives on past events, as it can shape the agenda of the interviewer (for example, around sexual politics). Not everyone who worked in broadcasting is available or much less willing to be interviewed, resulting in information gaps. Nonetheless, oral histories give us access to voices and perspectives that may otherwise be lost.

--JB. Oral history is an important source and research methodology for feminist scholars to fill the gaps in official and institutional archives, and to redress erasure or marginalisation in published histories (Ball and Bell, 2013: 551; Cobb and Williams, 2020: 892). For example, there were at least five women news camera operators working in the first decade of Australian television; one woman camera operator, Ella Gason, was contracted by the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) soon after the start of regular broadcasting in 1956, challenging the widely held view that no women worked on camera in television before 1980. Stringer cameramen—as they were known, even though they were women—were employed on a freelance contract basis to a broadcasting organisation and were paid by the job to film a specific event or subject, usually to illustrate a news story. They worked alone, carried their own 16 mm camera equipment, and were often required to cover disasters such as bushfires, aeroplane crashes and floods. The work of women camera stringers was invisible not only to audiences but also to most of their colleagues, and no documentation about them has been located in published histories or in public archives. In recent years oral history interviews with former women camera stringers and other women who worked in technical areas of television production have been deposited in the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA), strengthening the collection's representation of women television workers in technical roles.

Private correspondence is another valuable source of information about aspects of women's careers not contained in the official archive, as they often provide details of the colleagues, mentors, and other enablers who aided women's career mobility. For example, like other women media workers, Australian Peggie Broadhead exploited personal and institutional connections to build a transmedial and transnational career across Australia, Malaya, and Britain from the 1930s to the 1970s (Baker, 2019). While researching Broadhead it was frustrating to discover that while

her ABC personnel file was available via the Australian government repository, the National Archives of Australia (NAA), her BBC file had not been retained. Fortunately, comprehensive personal papers held by her family in the UK contained rich material about her professional and national identity, her relationships and networks, and her attitude towards colonised peoples in Malaya. The British Empire and Commonwealth Collection in Bristol provided additional information about Broadhead's time at the Malayan Broadcasting Corporation. It is worth noting, however, that international primary research is time-consuming and largely the preserve of privileged, able-bodied scholars with access to research funding. In addition, budget constraints have led to access to collections in many countries becoming more limited, presenting particular challenges for researchers who have to travel. The British Empire and Commonwealth Collection in Bristol announced in November 2024 that reduced staff capacity meant they could no longer respond to research enquiries. In Australia, over 35 years of 'efficiency dividends' imposed by successful governments led to cultural institutions including the NAA and NFSA unable to 'meet their statutory obligations to collect and preserve materials and make them publicly accessible in a reasonable timeframe' (Black, 2023). These challenges make international networks of scholars such as the IWBH vitally important for knowledge transfer and the sharing of resources.

--IS. The value of oral histories resonates strongly in the Indian context as well. While preliminary observations suggest groundbreaking opportunities for women during television's emergence, similar to studies of the BBC and Hollywood, personal accounts reveal a more complex reality. In the case of early Indian television, testimonies by women producers complicate the celebratory narrative of innovation and opportunity, through compelling accounts of fatigue and 'bureaucratic exhaustion' (as stated by one of my interviewees). Personal experiences convey a conflict with 'recognition' in a highly bureaucratic environment resulting in deliberate career exits at supposedly 'peak' moments. Such accounts challenge tendencies for mounting homogenous narratives of institutional progress and gender opportunities without taking into account diverse subjective experiences.

--EH. Solutions to the problems of tracing women's labour in the Dutch archives would be more oral history projects, such as the one recently started by the Dutch Film Archive (EYE), which has started an oral history project to preserve the history of a grassroots women's film collective, Cinemien. This was an activist group that later became a commercial organisation. Another solution would be for archives to be more open to groups that historically have not fitted into the archive because of their activism. Archives that want to collect grassroots media and information about the work that goes into making these media should expand their knowledge about grassroots media collectives, women, race and sexuality (Frank, 2019). By acquiring more knowledge, they will be able to archive the material in a way that makes it easier to trace. They will also be able to convince people that there is a place in the archive for their own archives and stories.

--KA. During the course of writing a history of the ABC's trailblazing women producers I inevitably engaged with the organisation's archival collections (see Andrews, 2022). Unsurprisingly, although extensive, the ABC's archives were androcentric. In order to locate references to women and their contributions, traditional records had to be interrogated, and alternative

sources sought. For example, my predominantly utilised records are kept by the National Archives of Australia, the National Library of Australia, the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, the British Film Institute, the BBC Written Archives Centre and the Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University. I also adopted group biography as a key mechanism to counter evidentiary absences. By drawing four protagonists together (Therèse Denny, Kay Kinane, Catherine King and Joyce Belfrage), I was able to substantially expand the archival scope and weave disparate pieces of evidence into a more cohesive landscape. Thanks to group biography, the cohort's shared experiences, strategies and achievements could be discovered. Events from one woman's career pointed to another's. Patterns of discrimination became evident, and subsequently, so did the patterns of women's resistance. It also became possible to use the four producers' collective experiences to highlight the obstacles confronting women working in broadcasting more generally. It became apparent how often these obstacles would prove insurmountable, explaining why so many ambitious women were unable to become 'trailblazers'.

Open access and digital sources are also cited as key resources, particularly when broadcast or organisational archives are inaccessible (often behind a paywall), incomplete and/or highly selective in what histories are preserved and made available. Digital archives and repositories such as [Archive.org](https://www.archive.org) have facilitated more public online access to hard-to-reach broadcast histories. Platforms such as YouTube have been used as unofficial or 'rouge' archives, often making available television programmes and ephemera that otherwise may have no home. However, while access is a key benefit of such informal or ad hoc digital archives, materials held in this way can quickly disappear, taken down to become, once more, inaccessible. Changes in practices and policies on platforms like YouTube, copyright enforcement, decisions by individuals or groups to cease hosting content on their channels are some of the risks that unofficial archives pose. Ultimately, such online sharing services are a hugely valuable resources, albeit incredibly vulnerable ones.

We next discuss working with open access sources, for example, collaborating on the *Kaleidoscope* database to implement gender search functionality, how user-produced digital archives evidence feminist praxis of Indian television history, and caution that digital archives need to complement analogue ones rather than replace them.

--VB. As a way of tackling the gaps in tracing women writers of British television drama, and with considerable help from colleagues in British television drama studies, I have been collaborating with the *Kaleidoscope* regional archive to make their Drama Research Guide database searchable by gender. This has been done with the support from Lez Cooke, Ian Greaves, Julia Hallam and Billy Smart in identifying figures in the database. The database contains key production data: programme title, production credits (primarily: writer, creator, director, producer) as well as cast details, transmission details (date, channel, prod co.) and archival holding information. By adding a new field that captures the gender of creative personnel, this database allows identification and tracking in both quantitative and qualitative terms, of the female and male writers (along with producers and directors) of British television drama production between 1936 and 2014.

Further resources (time and money!) are needed to fully interrogate the *Kaleidoscope* dataset and bring a history of women in creative roles in British television drama to fruition. Nonetheless, my existing work with the dataset tracks women's employment rates and patterns in creative roles in British television drama (Ball, 2022). What's more, the dataset challenges certain assumptions about the employment patterns of women wherein more women have written for single plays historically than soap operas (Ball, 2022). Furthermore, by identifying the women who created television in 'above the line' roles, this project allows individual and collective career journeys to be traced and mapped via further oral histories and archival research.

Finally, researching the career pathways of the women included in the *Kaleidoscope* database attests to the way women worked across a range of positions ('below the line' to 'above the line') and media forms (radio, theatre, and literature) during their working lives and a more holistic and indeed entangled approach to women's production histories is thus required. Such an entangled approach is required to fully flesh out *her*stories and to recast television histories and the teaching canon.

–IS. Several studies point to the immense feminist possibilities brought about by the digital archival turn. This entails how the digital environment enables connections, co-productions, and mediations through human and non-human agency; new forms of archive and access, and how digital tools enable us to see things differently and critically (Callahan, 2010; Casado, 2024; Verhoeven, 2016). A feminist approach also allows for asymmetrical and tangential digital archives to include subjects excluded from dominant historical narratives. The term 'rogue archives' is used by Kosnik (2016) for amateur run counter-institutional archives that allow for horizontal dynamics of collectivity, memory and access, and emotionally powered 'archives of feelings' (Cvetkovich, 2003). These studies reveal the complex symbiotic relationship between feminist historiography and digital practices.

To add to this line of enquiry, I suggest that the intersection of digital and feminist practices is especially critical to television. Television constitutes a unique media artifact in the present as a conduit to past generational memories and identity (Holdsworth, 2011). In the Indian context, the disappearance of single-channel broadcast television, Doordarshan, has led to its resurrection as a memory object across various digital platforms including Facebook forums, blogs and Instagram channels. These informal public platforms function as alternative, constantly expanding, popular and community archives of television history. It is in this larger context of television's nostalgic resurgence in the digital that *Tabassum Talkies* could emerge as a transgenerational archive, run by a septuagenarian woman, offering a personalised history of Indian television and cinema from the margins. While the future of such archives remains uncertain, Blom (2016) argues that digital technology redefines memory's relationship to society. Instead of describing changes in memory in terms of crisis and loss, Blom suggests understanding new forms of human and non-human agencies and technologies of time involved in digital 'sharing', 'transferring', 'influencing', and 'contact', as new vectors of collectivity. With collective memory now constantly 'in motion', the archive can also no longer be seen as a fixed, static, somewhat permanent repository of content, but as existing in more dynamic forms. Amateur digital archives thus become important, as their impermanence can itself serve as a critical basis,

in how they affect social memory, challenge traditional distinctions between individual and collective memory and enable new ways of producing and recognising media and television histories including women's histories. As Vicky Callahan notes in her envisioning of a digital future, Feminism 3.0, the archive is 'not the last edifice standing in a received history, but a dynamic agent of change and a space of becoming' (2010: 6).

--**AB and KS.** Supposedly in the age of digital convergence and online access, it should be easier to bring [paper-based archival] materials into the same frame. This is far from the case, however, and at a moment when digitised broadcast content comes to stand increasingly for 'the broadcasting archive', both in the approach of audiovisual archives and the consciousness of users, the largely un-digitised and mostly paper-based collections in women's archives are in danger of re-erasure through a digital re-bordering of the archive (Badenoch et al., 2023).

Given the complexities of undertaking such entangled research on women's broadcasting histories, we finish our discussion with reference to 'doing women's broadcasting histories' that have been at the heart of IWBH's endeavours. We advocate for slow research as a feminist archival practice, since the very stories that IWBH are concerned with are often hidden and obscured. Slow research is a feminist principle and process in which researchers reject the straightforward, dominant histories readily available in the archives, and prioritise labyrinthine and circuitous research on women's broadcasting histories, whatever routes researchers may take and however long those histories take to reveal themselves.

--**VJ.** A feminist research approach will be slow, because to find women in the archive we must compile what I term a 'patchwork' of archival sources, drawing on Katz's (2010) advice that feminist historians must 'research around our subjects'. For example, I had not heard of Miss Jeanne Bradnock, affectionately known as 'Johnny', before I conducted an oral history interview with Joyce Hawkins, a retired BBC Costume Designer, now in her nineties. Joyce told me what an impressive figure 'Johnny' Bradnock was, and how she had been trained by her in the 1950s. I was intrigued and wanted to find out more on a trip to the BBC WAC. Johnny was Make-Up and Wardrobe Manager at the BBC from 1946 to 1964. She had joined the BBC in 1937, working in makeup and wardrobe prior to WWII, and during the war had worked in Monitoring in Caversham. I found minutes of meetings between the BBC and the ABS Union, which she had chaired, and a memo she had written in 1947 about the unfairness of some [male dominated] departments (Properties, Commissionaires and Call-boys) claiming overtime whilst Make-up and Wardrobe could not, suggesting Johnny was a champion of equal pay, decades ahead of the legislation. Interestingly, although she is referred to in memos as Miss Jeanne Bradnock, she was married, but separated, then divorced, with Bradnock being her married surname. Kate Terkanian mentions her in her PhD (2018) as being one of the few married women hired in the late 1930s, despite the marriage bar. In addition to what I could find at WAC, an online search threw up additional documents about Johnny, including photographs and mentions in various BBC publications, and numerous press articles in national and local papers. For someone whose work is little documented directly in the archives, she is visible in a number of places, in snapshots which enable us to piece together an impression of the woman and her work. This is what a patchwork of archival sources looks like.

--HW. I would simply add that gleaning this information takes time. To recover these women, and excavate their histories, from private and uncatalogued collections often means starting from scratch. Feminist historical research is slow by nature. Feminist research requires diligence and conscientiousness. In other words, it should be slow, and we should not be penalised for doing necessary, important research, in a setting that often demands speed.

We would like to end with this pragmatic outlook, and by considering the opportunities as well as the challenges in undertaking such research. The concepts of ‘sharing’, ‘transferring’ and ‘collectivity’ (Sahu) and ‘conscientiousness’ (Warner) are also useful for understanding the motivations and practices of IWBH, which we will return to one last time.

Doing women’s broadcasting histories: final thoughts

This article’s form itself—a curated conversation—nods to the reflexive point that researching and telling women’s entangled broadcasting histories is best done as an entangling practice: that is to say, crossing boundaries of nation, medium and archive. In this, we consciously echo recent work that has highlighted curation as a potentially feminist practice aimed at expanding and enhancing the archive of women’s history (Freeland and Hodenberg, 2024; Hennefield and Horak, 2024). Curation happens ‘in-between’ and beyond institutions, developing new relations between things and people and potentially resisting dominant modes of storytelling, while at the same time suggesting care of the voices and traces touched in curation (Caspari, 2024). Curation is thus also a call to community. IWBH emerged out of a concern with absences: of women’s place in broadcasting histories; of an international lens on such histories; and of research collaboration across national and media contexts. It has carried out several networking, conferencing and publication activities aimed at recognising women’s broadcasting work and creating a sustainable collaborative research environment that is necessarily entangled. After all, it takes entanglement to research entanglement. The very fact that IWBH is dispersed *and* collaborative, with researchers operating independently while driving towards a common goal, evidences the benefits of cross-border solidarity and the agility of the IWBH structure and research. Even as we trace histories of marginalised and often precarious work in the past, it is impossible to lose sight of the precarities and marginalisations in our own work.

Nonetheless, we recognise the current limitations of IWBH and foreground future possibilities. Firstly, the ‘international’ lens through which we explore women’s broadcasting histories is too narrow and is, in many ways, reflective of the very power dynamics that we critique. There is more representation from Global North and Anglophone regions and scholars than representation of Global Majority, postcolonial and peripheralised regions and researchers. We are keen to expand our network of scholars to include more representation from the Americas, Africa, South-East Asia and Central Europe.

A further issue is that much of our work is undertaken and published in the English language and we recognise that there is a wealth of scholarship in many other languages

that explores women's broadcasting histories. There may be far more resources available to translate English language work into other languages than there are for translations into English, perpetuating the inequalities in access to scholarship and unevenness in availability of scholarship relating to many other territories and regions. *Critical Studies in Television* has acted upon this issue through its 'In Translation' section of the journal that translates and publishes non-English language research (see Bengesser, 2022). Further, advances in real-time translation technologies may assist scholars in identifying valuable literature that exists, but it does not have the capacity to fully translate works. Nor should we undermine the work carried out by skilled translators.

Finally, although video-conferencing technologies have been crucial in facilitating IWBH networking and collaboration, our meetings have all taken place in the English language, thus perpetuating language hierarchies. Also, members are located across very different time zones, but because many are located in Europe, meeting times have tended to favour those, leaving other internationally based scholars meeting at less-than-ideal hours. Where physical networking has taken place, it is often in the United Kingdom, specifically in England. These are all concerns that we aim to address as IWBH develops and we end on these as a call to action to support and encourage networking and research on women's broadcasting histories across time and space.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iDs

Sarah Arnold  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9774-2550>

Janet McCabe  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2916-9876>

Vanessa Jackson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6663-2762>

Kate Murphy  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3309-2784>

References

- Andrews K (2020) Broadcasting Inclusion and Advocacy: a history of female activism and cross-cultural partnership at the post-war ABC. *Media International Australia* 174(1): 97–108.
- Andrews K (2022) *Trailblazing Women of Australian Public Broadcasting, 1945-1975: A History of Women Who Defied the Odds and Produced Ground-Breaking Radio and Television at the Post-War ABC*. London: Anthem Press.
- Assmann A (2011) *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Badenoch A and Skoog K (2019) Lessons from Lilian: is transnational (media) history a gendered issue? *Feminist Media Histories* 5(3): 9–35.
- Badenoch A, Clark E and Jancovic M (2023) Re-Bordering the Archive: European transnational archives and transnational entanglements. *VIEW Journal of European Television History and Culture* 12(24): 1–10, Available at: <https://viewjournal.eu/articles/10.18146/view.326> (accessed 1 February 2025).
- Baker J (2018) Once a typist always a typist: the Australian women's broadcasting Co-operative and the sexual division of labor at the Australian broadcasting commission. *Feminist Media Histories* 4(4): 59–183.
- Baker J (2019) Australian women working in British broadcasting in the 1930s and 1940s. *Feminist Media Histories* 5(3): 140–167.
- Baker J and Connors J (2020) 'Glorified Typists in No-man's Land': the ABC script assistant's strike of 1973. *Women's History Review* 29(5): 841–859.
- Ball V (2022) Women writers and writing women into histories of *Play for today*. *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 19(2): 150–172.
- Ball V and Bell M (2013) Working women, women's work: production, history, gender. *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 10(3): 547–562.
- Ball V and Porter L (2018) Editors' Introduction: gendered patterns of discrimination in the creative industries. *Feminist Media Histories* 4(4): 1–7.
- BBC (2022) Connected histories of the BBC. Available at: <https://connectedhistoriesofthebbc.org/> (accessed on 1 February 2025).
- Bell M (2021) *Movie Workers: The Women Who Made British Cinema*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Bengesser C (2022) Why translations matter—an introduction to *Critical Studies in Television's* new section 'in translation'. *Critical Studies in Television* 17(1): 76–83.
- Black J (2023) Not Neglecting, Strangling: a short history of a most inefficient policy. *Australian Policy and History*, Available at: <https://aph.org.au/2023/04/not-neglecting-strangling-a-short-history-of-a-most-inefficient-policy/> (accessed on 1 February 2025).
- Blom I (2016) Rethinking social memory: archives, technology and the social. In: Lundemo T, Røssaak E and Blom I (eds) *Memory in Motion. Archives, Technology, and the Social*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 11–40.
- Bolter JD and Grusin R (1999) *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Bonner F (2003) *Ordinary Television: Analyzing Popular TV*. London: Sage Publications.
- Callahan V (2010) *Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film History*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.
- Casado LL (2024) Building a feminist and activist archive: challenges, discussions, and reflections. *Feminist Media Histories* 10(2-3): 271–282.
- Caspari M (2024) Forms, Voices, Networks: feminism and the media—contingent curation, archival activism, frictional relations. *Women's History Review* 33(1): 131–511.
- Chaudhuri N, Katz SJ and Perry ME (eds) (2010) *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Christen K and Anderson J (2019) Toward slow archives. *Archival Science* 19: 87–116.
- Cobb S (2014) *Adaptation, Authorship, and Contemporary Women Filmmakers*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

- Cobb S and Williams L (2020) Histories of now: listening to women in British film. *Women's History Review* 29(5): 890–902.
- Cronqvist M and Christoph H (2017) Entangled media histories: The value of transnational and transmedial approaches in media historiography. *Media History* 23(1): 130–141.
- Curthoys A and Lake M (2005) *Connected worlds. History in Transnational Perspective*. Canberra, ACT: ANU ePress.
- Cvetkovich A (2003) *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Dahl HF (1994) The pursuit of media history. *Media, Culture & Society* 16(4): 551–563.
- Davin A (1981) Feminism and labour history. In: Samuel R (ed) *People's History and Socialist Theory*. London: Routledge, pp. 176–181.
- de Haan F and Mevis A (2008) The IAV/IAM's archival policy and practice—seventy years of collecting, receiving, and refusing women's archives (1935-2005). In: Wieringa S (ed) *Traveling Heritages: New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Women's History*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp. 23–46.
- Digital Women's Archive North (2017) Available at: <https://dwarchivenorth.wordpress.com/> (accessed on 1 February 2025).
- Editorial (2006) *Critical Studies in Television* 1(1): 1–2.
- Frank C (2019) Sister Outsider and Audre Lorde in The Netherlands: on transnational queer feminisms and archival methodological practices. *Feminist Review* 121(1): 9–23.
- Frank C (2020) *Can the Archive Speak? Mapping Feminist and Queer Genealogies of Colour in the Netherlands*. Doctoral thesis. Goldsmiths: University of London.
- Freeland J and Hodenberg CV (2024) Archiving, exhibiting, and curating the history of feminisms in the global twentieth Century: an introduction. *Women's History Review* 33(1): 1–6.
- Galt F (2020) *Women's Activism behind the Screens*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- Hallam J (2000) Power plays: gender, genre and lynda La Plante. In: Bignall J and Lacey S (eds) *British Television Drama: Past, Present and Future*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 214–223.
- Hennefeld M and Horak L (2024) Editors' introduction: why we curate feminist film archives. *Feminist Media Histories* 10(2–3): 1–9.
- History of the BBC (2024) Background to the project. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/100-voices/entertaining-the-nation/background-to-the-project> (accessed on 1 February 2025).
- Holdsworth A (2011) *Television, Memory and Nostalgia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Jacobs J (2006) The television archive: past, present, future. *Critical Studies in Television* 1(1): 13–20.
- Katz SJ (2008) Researching around our subjects: excavating radical women. *Journal of Women's History* 20(1): 168–186.
- Katz SJ (2010) Excavating radical women in progressive-era California. In: Chaudhuri N, Katz SJ and Perry ME (eds) *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 89–106.
- Kosnik AD (2016) *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Krager A and Fellows S (2018) Gender inequality and Screenwriters. Available at: <https://writersguild.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Gender-Inequality-and-Screenwriters.pdf> (accessed on 1 February 2025).
- Lacey S (2006) Some thoughts on television history and historiography: a British perspective. *Critical Studies in Television* 1(1): 3–12.
- Martin C (2018) Archival research as a feminist practice. *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 16(4): 454–460.
- McCabe J and Akass K (2006) Feminist television criticism: notes and queries. *Critical Studies in Television* 1(1): 108–120.
- Medhurst J (2022) *The Early Years of Television and the BBC*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Moseley R and Wheatley H (2008) Is Archiving a Feminist Issue? Historical research and the past, present, and future of television studies. *Cinema Journal* 47(3): 152–158.
- Murphy K (2022) ‘In on the Ground Floor’: women and the early BBC television service, 1932–1939. *Critical Studies in Television* 17(3): 240–253.
- North L (2016) Behind the Mask: women in television news. *Media International Australia* 160(1): 89–100.
- Pesman R (1996) *Duty Free: Australian Women Abroad*. Melbourne, VIC: Oxford University Press.
- Römkens R and Wiersma A (2017) The archival turn: archiving as a tool for empowerment. In: Buchheim E, Bultman S, Groot M, et al. (eds) *Gender and Archiving: Past, Present, Future*. Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, Vol. 37.
- Russell C (2018) *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Skoog K and Badenoch AW (2016) Networking women: the international association of women in radio and television. In: Medhurst J, Nicholas S and O’Malley T (eds) *Broadcasting in the UK and US in the 1950s: Historical Perspectives*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 189–218.
- Skoog K and Badenoch AW (2020) Women and Radio: sounding out new paths in women’s history. *Women’s History Review* 29(2): 177–182.
- Skoog K and Badenoch A (2024) Mediating women: The international council of women and the rise of (trans)national broadcasting. *Women’s History Review* 1–21. DOI: [10.1080/09612025.2024.2415735](https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2024.2415735).
- Sreberny A (2001) Gender, globalization and communications: women and the transnational. *Feminist Media Studies* 1(1): 61–65.
- Tabassum Talkies (2016–2023) Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUMYdI0IqYVrUuqTD3-j6uA> (accessed on 1 February 2025).
- Terkanian KR (2018) *Women, Work, and the BBC: How Wartime Restrictions and Recruitment Woes Reshaped the Corporation, 1939–45*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Poole: Bournemouth University.
- Verhoeven D (2016) As Luck Would Have It: serendipity and solace in digital research infrastructure. *Feminist Media Histories* 2(1): 7–28.
- Wait M (2024) ‘Well they weren’t married!’: the marriage bar at radio/Telefís Éireann 1962–72. *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 44(4): 689–709.
- Wilcox F (2021) Composing women of Australian television. In: Wilcox F (ed). *Women’s Music for the Screen: Diverse Narratives in Sound*. London: Routledge, 192–211.

Author biographies

Sarah Arnold is Associate Professor of Media Studies at Maynooth University, Ireland. She is author of *Gender and Early Television* (2021). She researches women's film and television production, the marginalisation of women's work in media history and contemporary media workers and inequality.

Janet McCabe is Reader in Television and Film Studies at Birkbeck, University of London in the United Kingdom. She has published extensively on television drama including co-authoring (with Kim Akass) *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond* (2007) and *TV's Betty Goes Global* (2012). She is on the editorial board of *Critical Studies in Television*.

Kylie Andrews is a Macquarie University Research Fellow, currently working on the ARC Linkage project 'The ABC, its Archives and its Audiences', in partnership with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the National Archives of Australia. She is also the author of *Trailblazing Women of Australian Public Broadcasting, 1945–1975* (2022).

Alec Badenoch is Assistant Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. He is author of *Voices in Ruins: West German Broadcasting across the 1945 Divide* (2008). In addition to work focussed on broadcasting history and digital archives, together with Kristin Skoog he researches on the intersections between the international women's movement and broadcasting in the 20th Century.

Jeannine Baker is a Lecturer in Media and Communication at the University of Newcastle, Australia. She is the author of *Australian Women War Reporters: Boer War to Vietnam* (2015). She researches women's labour in the British and Australian media industries, especially the relationship between gendered labour and technology.

Vicky Ball is Senior Lecturer in Cinema and Television Histories at De Montfort University in Leicester (UK). She researches and publishes on histories of women in television. She was recently the investigator on the BA/Leverhulme project entitled 'Play for Today at 50: Women Writers and Writing Women into Histories of British Television Drama'. She is currently writing a book about British female ensemble dramas for Manchester University Press.

Elisa Hendriks is a PhD candidate at the department of History, Art History and Classics at Radboud University, the Netherlands. She is writing her dissertation about feminism and radio in the seventies and eighties in the Netherlands.

Vanessa Jackson is a former BBC series producer and now an Associate Professor at Birmingham City University, UK. Her research interests include the history of television production, women's roles in the television industry, as well as the uses of social media in community history projects. She has also published on enhancing student employability and engagement.

Kate Murphy is a Visiting Fellow at Bournemouth University. Prior to her academic career, she was a BBC producer, predominantly on Radio 4's Woman's Hour. Her book *Behind the Wireless: An Early History of Women at the BBC* was published in 2016.

Ipsita Sahu is an Independent Scholar who recently completed her PhD thesis, 'Television before Colour: Intermedial Networks and Imaginations', examining the changing audiovisual context of 1970s India linked to the entry of television. Her research has appeared in peer-reviewed journals such as *History of Film, Radio and Television* and *BioScope*.

Kristin Skoog is a Principal Academic in Media History, in the Faculty of Media and Communication at Bournemouth University, UK. She researches broadcasting history with particular interest in entanglements between radio broadcasting and the women's movement.

Kate Terkanian is Senior Lecturer in History in the Humanities and Law Department, Faculty of Media and Communication at Bournemouth University, UK. Her monograph on women at the BBC during the Second World War will be published by Bloomsbury Academic in 2025. Her research interests concern women's experiences in the workplace, gendering in employment and public history.

Helen Warner is an Associate Professor in Media and Digital Cultures at UEA. Her research interests include gender, feminism and the creative industries. She is the author of *Fashion on TV* (2014) and co-editor of *The Politics of Being a Woman* (2014 with Dr Heather Savigny).