FOCAL International Chair Sue Malden talks to another senior executive in the archive industry – Bobby Dicks, Director of Sales & Licensing at CNN Collection. As a veteran licensor, his clients include major and independent film and multimedia production companies on every continent. ‘CNN Collection’ footage is often seen in feature films, television shows, museums, educational materials, music videos, advertising commercials, and other public outlets.

Bobby recently worked with Laura Poitras’ documentary Citizenfour, which earned an Oscar® in the ‘Best Documentary Feature’ category. He earned a nomination for the ‘CNN Collection’ at the 2015 FOCAL International Awards in the ‘Footage Library of the Year’ for his contribution to the project.

**SM:** So, to begin at the beginning, Bobby – how did you get into this business?

**BD:** About 15 years ago, I started my career in the content licensing industry as a Sales Assistant at a small licensing agency called FPG. FPG was acquired soon after and I was promoted to Account Executive at Getty Images. Some years later my wife and I moved to Atlanta, GA, where I began the second half of my licensing career at CNN, where today I serve as the Director of Sales & Licensing at CNN Collection (cnn.com/collection).

**SM:** What do you see as the current major challenges in these difficult times for our footage industry in the face of the credit crunch and general down turn in business?

**BD:** I don’t see the need for content dwindling at all, in fact I see it growing. The biggest challenge for producers today is effectively allocating their budgets within today’s changing media landscape and evolving business needs.

**SM:** So, how are you planning to grow the business in the face of reduced production budgets?

**BD:** My team’s focus, as it always has been, is to work really hard at helping productions license footage with the correct rights. Everyone always asks for ‘All Rights, All Media’ which is great and gives the production the broadest rights, except ‘broad’ is not always what the production truly needs. Helping our clients select the correct rights package, creates trust and long-term relationships and also enables our clients to actually get more content with the already squeezed budget they’re working with.

**Is clip footage dead?**

**SM:** Do you think there will be a need to be any significant changes happening in the archive world in the face of these issues in the near future? For example at a FOCAL International seminar in Dublin, many of the speakers announced “the death of the clip footage business” Do you agree?

**BD:** I don’t think the footage business is going anywhere. As long as creative endeavours like films, documentaries, shorts, corporate presentations, shows, etc. are being made, there will always be a need for footage. However libraries that are not unique and exclusive in their form, will become commoditised. We have also focused heavily on enabling footage researchers with the ability to quickly reference and comp our footage collections online with few to little technological obstacles. At the end of the day, the customer wants a great user and customer experience, and that’s what we provide.

**SM:** What about High Definition (HD) commissions? How prepared is the archive world for this technological change?

**BD:** While I cannot speak for the archive world, we at CNN have taken the necessary steps to air and archive our content in HD. We even have editorial and commercial content in 4K fidelity.

**SM:** The looming threat of piracy that hit the music business so hard – is Internet piracy a serious threat to audio-visual footage?

**BD:** The music industry was caught off-guard because they were not prepared to evolve with technology that made it so easy to quickly search and download music on the Internet. Unlike audio, displaying pirated video looks exactly as described… ‘pirated’. Serious storytellers are focused on creating content that does not visually distract their audiences and so they obtain licences through the proper channels – which make available the highest resolution possible – whether HD or archival SD. For students or storytellers that have not yet decided on which clip they’d like to use, we make available (for free!) comps to download on our website cnn.com/collection.

**SM:** So, what do you think FOCAL International can do that would help your business?

**BD:** I would like to see, or be made aware of, more domestic events that can help me be visible with current potential clients. FOCAL International does a great job putting together events across the pond! Domestic FOCAL Events would be a hit Stateside!

**The CNN Collection**

The ‘CNN Collection’ is the content licensing arm of CNN Worldwide and includes more than 3 million video assets, including CNN Branded, B-roll & Archive footage – coverage spans the early 1980s through today’s biggest global and local news events.

CNN Collection

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