

# What is the Hyman Archive and why is it significant?

James Hyman faces up to all the tough questions about his rapidly-growing archive

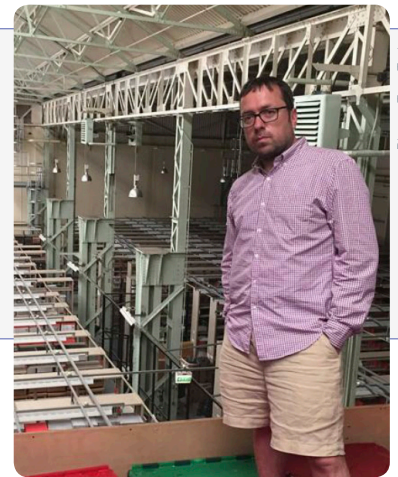


Photo: Tony Turk

**Q.** What is the Hyman Archive?

**A.** The Hyman Archive (HA) is the world's largest collection of popular culture in print, principally magazines, but also books and ephemera. In terms of magazines, HA has over 75,000 unique issues covering approximately 3,000 unique titles. Approximately 80% are English language. HA is growing at over 20% per annum, thanks mainly to donations from collectors and members of the public. The collection is curated for 'popular culture', covering film, fashion, music, entertainment, counter-culture, politics, design, etc.

**Q.** Is it your intention to digitise HA, and if so, how are you dealing with copyright issues associated with magazines?

**A.** Yes, it's central to our objectives. Magazines have very complex copyright. In many cases, publishers, authors, visual designers and photographers all have copyright claims within each issue. For this reason, a relatively small number of magazines have been digitised to date. Extended Collective Licensing (ECL) is the only viable way of dealing with the myriad of copyright issues pertaining to magazines. We are working with the Copyright Licensing Agency (CLA) – with the support of the key stakeholder representative groups – to obtain an ECL allowing us to digitise and make the collection available commercially.

**Q.** Many copyright holders are opposed to ECL. Why do you think HA's ECL will be in their best interests?

**A.** It is our intention to commercialise HA through a subscription-based model, whereby subscribers can search the content, principally for research, reference and inspiration, alongside some cutting-edge cultural and social analytical tools which will assist users in not only answering questions about the past, but more importantly, about the future.

This is the key 'value add' in the service we want to provide. We want to make the content owners partners in our business by giving them a share of our revenues, aligning our interests with theirs. In addition, we want to provide a platform for them to sell other services and assets, such as direct licences over their content. We are working with Copyright HUB, DACS, BAPLA, PicScout, ImageRights and PLUS Coalition to identify and allow content owners to sell direct licences to our subscribers (and others) through the HA platform.

While FOCAL International admires the breadth and richness of this collection of text and still images, and the ambition of this project, we have to express our very real doubts about the potential impact of ECL on the audiovisual footage commercial business. We are concerned that our members' footage may get licensed without their knowledge or permission, thus making optout impossible and damaging their business.

We will also profile authors, photographers and other creatives to our subscribers which might lead to new commissions. Our job will be to maximise the value of the content and create more opportunities for content providers to earn directly from their works. This will be truly transformational, a 'win-win' for all parties.

**Q.** For publishers who are already trying to monetise their own archives, why should they not 'opt out' of your ECL?

**A.** We believe our subscribers will be creatives and researchers from the creative industries (music, film, fashion, marketing, design, brands, agencies, etc.) and 'academia' (schools, academies and universities). The reason that they will be prepared to pay the subscription fee to access HA is in the huge aggregation of content, the specialist in-depth tagging of that content, and the cultural and social analytical tools that we will be building around the data. Any one issue, title or even publisher, is virtually unimportant and of little value to our subscribers.

It is the 'whole' that has value, not the constituent parts. Therefore, we will not be cannibalistic or competitive to any publisher trying to monetise their archives, as their potential audience of subscribers will be very different from ours. As such, their share of the ECL royalty (based upon a share of our revenues as previously described) will be 'newfound money' for which they will not have had to incur any new costs themselves. Also, we believe that HA will raise awareness in the value of magazine content and magazine brands in a way that is not possible by individual publisher's attempts to monetise their digitalised archives.

**Q.** Do you think your future subscribers will be more interested in the mainstream publications or the independents? In the articles or the images? In the older or newer content?

**A.** It will all depend on the individual subscriber's use case. From meeting many potential users as part of our on-going due diligence for the platform build, it's clear that everyone will have different interests. Academic researchers might be very interested in the older content, for instance, if they are writing a historical article, whereas a fashion buyer might be more focused on the here and now. Those in music might be particularly interested in the independent content, whereas those in PR might be more interested in mainstream publications. University students might focus more on the articles, whereas those working in the design field might be drawn to the images.

**James Hyman**

Founder, The Hyman Archive  
james@hymanarchive.com.