EIDR: BEST PRACTICE – DOCUMENTARIES AND ACTUALITIES

This document details the best practice for registering EIDR IDs for use with documentary programs and actualities.

1 Introduction

Documentaries differ from fiction in a number of ways that impact the key EIDR operations of disambiguation (match and register) and discovery (search), including:

- The relationships with the people and companies involved in their production (EIDR "participants")

- Their production budgets and revenue potential (which correlate to the effort that commercial organizations invest in the collection and maintenance of descriptive metadata, shifting the burden to non-profits)

- They are more likely to be orphan works (leading to a diffuse metadata community rather than a clearly defined authoritative metadata source)

- Existing practices for EIDR Referent Type and Country of Origin do not align well with common documentary metadata conventions

A special case of documentary film is the actuality, generally associated with the early days of cinema, but conceptually similar to contemporary stock footage.[1] They are typically short, single-shot works that depict an event or location rather than tell a story; they do not have traditional titles, on-screen credits, or other linguistic content. In addition, a significant number of early actualities have been documented using copyright claimant data, which does not necessarily reflect the original production company, creative participants, or creation date.

The challenge is to accommodate these works in the EIDR Registry through carefully crafted practice and minimal modification to the Registry itself.

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[1] In particular, shot-as stock footage, rather than stock footage extracted from longer works (EIDR Clips).

2 EIDR Registration Practices

2.1 Referent Type

2.1.1 Documentary

Use the EIDR Referent Type most closely associated with the work's original presentation:

- Movie (theatrical feature presentation)
- Short (theatrical short subject)
- TV (produced for/originally presented on television or similar home entertainment platform)

2.1.2 Actuality

EIDR will introduce a new Referent Type for use with actualities. Until then, register them with the Referent Type of "Short" and include "RT: Actuality;" in the Registrant Extra Field. When the new Referent Type is released, all such records will be converted automatically.

2.2 Structural Type

For EIDR title-level records, this is always "Abstraction." However, when a library or archive registers a work from their catalog, they are often in possession of one or more particular versions (an EIDR "Performance" Edit) of the work. In this case, best practice is to register (or match) the abstract Title record **and** the EIDR Edit record(s) for the version(s) in hand.

2.3 Title

Follow the standard EIDR practices for recording work titles and alternate titles for works named by their creators. For actualities, which do not generally have formal names, use the most commonly accepted descriptive names. Set the Title Language to the language of the title string (**not** the language of the work or the language of the Country of Origin).

NOTE: If a work has a fanciful title, such as *Jumanji* (1995), is a proper noun, such as *San Andreas* (2015), or is otherwise language-neutral, such as *1984* (2006), then use the dominant language in the Country of Origin.

NOTE: Because actuality descriptive names are more variable than traditional film titles, it is important that common variations, including language translations, be included as alternate titles. This may occasionally include misnomers that have achieved wide dissemination.

2.4 Release Date

Follow the standard EIDR practices for recording the original public presentation of the work. For older works, this may not be known with any certainty. Cataloging systems often qualify such dates with "before," "after," or "circa." EIDR

accommodates uncertainty by accepting years when precise dates are not known and by using fuzzy match logic during de-duplication.

NOTE: In many cases, the recorded date for a work may be the date a particular copy was acquired or the release in an ancillary market or distribution channel. In this case, use the earliest available year or date.

2.5 Approximate Length

Follow the standard EIDR practices for recording the approximate length of the work.

NOTE: If the registrant only has direct knowledge of a particular Edit of the work or possesses an incomplete copy, then it is fine to estimate the approximate length of the abstract work. (After all, "Approximate" is built into the name.) In any case, the length should be rounded to the nearest minute. Any greater precision is not meaningful at the Abstraction level.

2.6 Mode

If the work was originally released with a synchronized soundtrack, even if there is no linguistic content, record the Mode as "AudioVisual." If the work did not originally have a soundtrack, record the Mode as "Visual."

NOTE: If there is a later version of a "Visual" work that includes a synchronized soundtrack (as is the case for *Metropolis* (1927), for example), record the abstract Title record as "Visual" with a child Edit record that is "AudioVisual" (using the new version's release date in the Edit record, not the Title record's original release date).

2.7 Country of Origin

Follow the standard EIDR practice of using the home country of the principal production company(ies) as the Country of Origin for the work. If that is not known, then use "AQ"[2] to indicate "unknown."

NOTE: For actualities where the production company is not known, you may use the country that the work depicts, since this is a common identifying characteristic of actualities.

2.8 Original Language

Record the most prominent languages in the work, if any. Audible language has a Language Mode of "Audio," while visible language (including sign language and on-screen text and titles in a silent work) has a Language Mode of "Visual."

NOTE: For works that have linguistic content, but where the specific language is not known (either because it cannot be identified or because it has not been catalogued), record the language as "und" (the ISO code for "undetermined") and match the Language Mode to the work's Mode ("Audio" if "AudioVisual" or "Visual if Visual").

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[2] In a future EIDR release, the country code for "unknown" will be changed to "XX" (a valid ISO user-defined country code). All existing registrations will be converted automatically.

NOTE: For works with no visible or audible language, such as actualities, record the Original Language as "zxx" (the ISO code for "no linguistic content") with a "Visual" Language Mode.

2.9 Director

We will relax the common definition of Director to include the principal creative decision maker(s) during production. This includes:

- Anyone credited (or generally acknowledge) as director

- Creative producers, when no director is credited.

- The camera operator for actualities

2.10 Actor

We will relax the common definition of Actor to include anyone who appears in the work, whether seen or heard (a.k.a., a participant in the work). This includes:

- Individuals appearing as themselves (not playing a part or working from a script)

- Narrators and other voice-over performers

- Presenters, hosts, interviewers, etc.

- Recreation actors

- Organized groups of people (credited as the group name)

2.11 Associated Org

When available, list the work's production companies. Distributors are not generally identifying at the abstract Title level (they are of more use at the Edit and Manifestation levels), but may be included if production companies are not available.

NOTE: When possible, use the EIDR Party ID for each Associated Org. If the Party ID is not known, then the organization's name will suffice.

NOTE: In the early days of cinema there were few established production companies and even fewer that are still known to this day. This was the era of the cinema impresario, where a work was the product of an individual rather than a company. In these cases, a person may have performed the role of production company and may therefore be listed as an Associated Org in contravention of the rule that only companies may be Associated Orgs.

2.12 Alternate ID

Include as many Alternate IDs as are available, including internal/house IDs (identified with a Type = "Proprietary" and the Domain set to the source organization of the ID).

2.13 Description

Description is not considered in automated de-duplication, but can be helpful in both manual de-duplication and subsequent discovery. This is ***not*** a synopsis of the work, but rather a clarifying note to help distinguish this work from other, similar works.

2.13.1 Actualities

In many cases, the descriptive Title for an actuality is not sufficient to distinguish it from similar works (for example, the multiple actualities produced in the aftermath of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake). In this case, the only way to tell one from another may be a detailed description of the visual contents of the work – in some cases, down to the frame level. The standard Description and Registrant Extra fields (limited to 128 characters each) are not large enough to hold this information. In a future EIDR release, a new 1024-character field will be added that will be available when the Referent Type is "Actuality" that will be able to hold these detailed descriptive notes.

NOTE: Data submitted in this field will undergo standard whitespace normalization, which includes converting tabs and carriage returns to spaces, trimming leading and trailing spaces, and converting multiple consecutive spaces to a single space.

2.14 Metadata Authority

For most actualities and many documentaries, the registering library or film archives is likely to be the sole (or primary) source of information about the work and may be the only entity to possess a copy of the work. In these cases, it is strongly recommended that such organizations list themselves as Metadata Authorities when they register these works so EIDR staff knows they can be relied upon for authoritative information and the general public has an identified resource for further research.