

# **Guidelines for Promotion and Tenure for Electronic Media Faculty Involved in Creative Work**

## **Statement of Purpose**

The Broadcast Education Association affirms that creative work that meets established criteria, is reviewed by recognized peers, and is disseminated to others both within and outside the academy is important to the development of the field of electronic media and should be recognized as equal to scholarly publication in promotion and tenure review for faculty in the creative areas of the discipline.

## **Intellectual Foundations of Creative Work**

A major function of traditional research is to add to the field through discovery of new information or insight. Creative endeavors often involve traditional research methods of information gathering, literature reviews, synthesis of information, and analysis. However, one of the major differences between media productions is that the unknown being explored may be form – the medium. Far from simply recording what occurs before the camera or within range of the microphone, creative faculty through their choices of form reveal a pattern and context to the material that goes beyond mere recording. Thus, the intellectual function of discovery is the foundation of creative work, just as it is with traditional scholarship.

A second intellectual function that is central to both traditional research and creative work is integration. Not only must creative faculty integrate research from a variety of disciplines, but they also must integrate aural and visual strategies with the content to illuminate the conclusions of the research.

Further, the functions of discovery and integration are enhanced through creative application and teaching. Reading an instruction manual for a piece of equipment or type of software will never provide the insights into its full artistic and communicative possibilities as will applying those principles of instruction in a production. New understandings, both for the creator and the students who participate in the production, arise from working through production challenges.

Creative work is intellectually demanding in similar ways to that of traditional research, including the collection, analysis, and synthesis of content. The creative process also involves discovery in the development of effective aural and visual forms and provides integration as these forms are united with content to create the final work.

### **Evaluation of Creative Work**

As with traditional research, acceptance of creative work as an important intellectual activity involves review and evaluation by peers. Contests and festivals provide one avenue for review, because they normally employ panels of expert judges to select the work that will be honored or screened. Because those outside the communication field may not understand the reputation of these events, information about the contest or festival would be important for the dossier. The information to include would be the year the festival or contest was established, the number of entries in the event (if known), the number of works selected to receive recognition or prizes, the venues in which the selection was screened, etc. If available, a copy of the evaluation criteria would also be helpful to reviewers both inside and outside the field. In addition, subsequent reviews of the work that might appear in either scholarly or popular publications could provide insight into the value of the work and should be included in the dossier.

Another indication of the value of the work is the decision to televise a creative work to the community outside the university through established commercial or public media channels. In the realm of traditional scholarship, this is akin to the selection for anthologies and is recognition of excellence. These selections are generally made by a number of very knowledgeable professionals at various levels, who are experienced in evaluating creative work and can readily recognize excellence, discovery, and innovation in the use of media form and the value of content for the society at large.

### **Evaluation Considerations**

While published research articles tend to be standard in length, the same cannot be said of creative work. The medium for which the production is created has strengths and challenges, and the length of the final work and its structure may vary greatly from one work to the next. Assessment should take into account the scope and length of the production and the challenges posed by the medium.

Second, while published research tends to follow a traditional form, aesthetic conventions vary for each medium and are constantly changing. Assessment of the work should address the appropriateness and integration of the aesthetic conventions and the content. In addition, originality and innovation in the use of aesthetic or technical processes should be noted.

Third, since one person working in isolation completes few media projects, evaluators should expect the participation of others (including students). For example, the role of executive producer is often analogous to a researcher in traditional scholarship that leads a team of assistants in a project. The faculty member's input into the work under evaluation should be addressed.

Finally, while having a great deal of creative latitude, faculty often must work under budgetary and equipment limitations. The ability to use limited resources innovatively to address creative problems should be given consideration in an evaluation.

### **Dissemination**

While the hallmark of intellectual activity within the academy is review and evaluation by one's peers, it is through dissemination that traditional research becomes of value to others in and outside the academy.

- One means of dissemination for creative works is through winning and subsequent screening at competitions.
- Another is through invited screenings at recognized festivals. In the past, a work that was presented to a contest or festival audience was not as readily available or as permanent as a publication that could remain on the shelf for years. However, many festivals and contests are beginning to offer anthologies of their winning entries for later distribution. The increase in digital storage capacity makes it possible for large files of images and sounds to be stored on disks or disseminated by other means, such as the Internet.
- Another avenue of dissemination is through established television, radio, or cable outlets at the national, regional, or local level. While not permanent, this form of dissemination makes the work available to a sizable and diverse audience.
- A fourth type of dissemination is through an invited presentation at a recognized, prestigious event – scholarly convention, museum program, etc. Thus, the audience for works presented via established festivals/contests, the Internet, media outlets, and recognized events are often large. Even when ephemeral, the work may make a significant contribution to the field and/or the society.

### **Evaluators**

Blind peer review is important in the judgment of the quality of traditional research, and it is equally important for the creative candidate to note which contests or festivals are judged blind. Also, unsolicited reviews, after the work is disseminated, should be included in the dossier.

However, it may be necessary to identify qualified outside reviewers to provide additional competent evaluations. Depending upon the requirements of the university, these evaluators may be academic or professional.

Academic reviewers, particularly those who have been involved with contests or festivals, will be able to place the work in context with other work in the field, will know the reputations of the contests and festivals, and will be more sensitive to traditional academic tenure and promotion requirements. However, the ability to identify innovative content and techniques is not limited to academics.

While industry professionals may or may not be aware of traditional academic criteria, they are experts in the use of media and can readily recognize excellence, discovery, and innovation in its use. Thus, qualified professionals, who are well established, also may be able to provide important evaluative feedback. A list of the judges on the Review Board for the BEA Festival of Media Arts will be provided to BEA members if additional, outside reviewers are needed.

### **Candidate's Promotion and Tenure Dossier**

Although the candidate for promotion and tenure should develop his/her portfolio or dossier under the guidelines established by the university, to make the strongest case possible the candidate may want to include information that will illuminate some of the functions cited above.

#### **Important elements of the dossier include:**

- 1) Formative material that will illuminate creative and innovative choices in content links to other disciplines, patterns established, or choices of media techniques.
- 2) Information about festivals, contests, and other dissemination opportunities, including the reputation of the organization making the selection and/or dissemination, the criteria for selection, the number of entries in the event or the contest (if known), the acceptance rates, if available and the number selected to receive recognition, prizes and or dissemination.
- 3) Written evaluations from contest or festival judges, if available.
- 4) Reviews of the work that subsequently appears in both scholarly and popular publications.
- 5) Creator's input into the creation of the work and the elements of the work that the creator believes to be central to advancing knowledge in the field.
- 6) Budget and equipment availability for the creative process.