

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### The reservations of the editor: the routine work of showing and knowing the film in the edit suite

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The editing suite is one of the hidden spaces of film – a place where complex forms of embodied collaboration around screens take place. In this paper we present video-recorded data of an editor and director assembling a short documentary. From it we begin to describe editing work in terms of being aware of what media there are, assessing those materials and making them visible. We move on to consider the joint task of assessing clips once they are visible and making proposals about possible sequences. These actions are spatially arranged in a side-by-side format in front of multiple screens with asymmetric access to the controls. The editor's reservations are the areas of film-making for which they are accountable – their characteristic role of caution around the quality of media and intelligibility of a film for its audience. Much of the work on media and interaction assumes that the media are pre-formed and that these interactions are at a distance. Here we study the place where media are still in the process of being made, and while the work of editing is intimately dependent on video it is nevertheless accomplished in the local orders of the editing suite.

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#### Making the movie visible

The academic sits at their computer editing their current journal submission. They have a first full draft, rather too quickly completed and twice the length of the word limit. If one of the empirical sections can be deleted without damaging the argument then that will be a thousand words taken out. They read and compare the two sections – yes that can probably go – with that section deleted they re-read the introduction, realising some re-writing will be needed and some extra deletions. Similarly, the conclusion will require a few extra words now to compensate for the removal. While editing of this kind will be familiar to the journal's readers, quite what editing is as a practice remains relatively understudied apart from a few notable exceptions (for example, Becker 1982).

If we add a co-author to our initial scenario the situation is subtly changed. Sitting at the word processor they discuss what to do, they read aloud certain sections, one operates the keyboard while the other makes suggestions. At various crucial re-wordings they both keep their eyes on the screen so they can see exactly how the new

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wording reads. The editing situation has become more complicated yet, in the requirement of both parties to remain aware of what they are doing, more accessible to an outsider. This is also the case with film-makers editing a documentary. There are more screens, yet the work of excision, addition, revision and trimming might be similar. We should be careful in our comparison to remember that the object for film-makers is a filmic object and not a textual one.

A generation ago, the analogue media of celluloid and beta tape meant radically different machines were used in editing. Film editors worked on flatbeds with strips of negative, blade and specialist sticking tape and video editors with two video recorders and corresponding buttons and shuttles. In the succeeding 30 years, digital video has brought windows, keyboards, mice and cursors to both cultures while also merging their workplaces. Software has converted a linear process into a “non-linear” process that allows editors to cut and paste video and audio just as academics cut and paste text in word-processing packages. Professional editing software like Avid, Premiere and Final Cut Pro have grown in increments out of the work of editors and the project structures of film-making (Caldwell 2008).

Yet even with the greater ease provided by digital video, the professional editing of even short films takes place over several days, weeks, months or years (Crittenden 2005; Thompson and Bowen 2009).<sup>1</sup> To assemble a feature-length film, editors will draw upon hundreds if not thousands of video and audio clips. Editors have numerous technical jobs to perform with this abundant collection of material: logging footage as it comes in, assembling dailies (the day’s footage for directors to review in the evening), repairing problems from the shooting, picture-editing, sound-editing, responding to notes, and, in a general sense, assembling first cuts and numerous further versions of a film (Caldwell 2008; Koppelman 2005). Avid, and systems like it, collect together the bewildering array of labelling devices, specialised tools, shortcuts, viewers and playback possibilities that editors may call upon. Our aim here, however, is not to study the historical development of the software or the cultural practices of the production industry, important though they are; our focus is on providing a rudimentary description of what is actually involved in the lived work of video editing.

While the director’s tasks are certainly fascinating and we will attend to them in what follows, it is the hidden work of the editor collaborating with the director that we want to concentrate on. As a first gloss of what the editor’s work with the director is, it is *making the movie visible and audible* – this can seem an odd idea for academics used to working with documents that, aside from scrolling them on screen or flicking the pages, only seem to require reading.<sup>2</sup> During the production process a film slowly emerges as an object, like the pot of the potter’s wheel: from the three-minute pitch that begins to say what a movie might be like, to two-page treatments, to storyboards if they are made, to scripts, to shooting schedules, and so forth. What is being done is shaped by what has been done and will shape what will be done later. Documentaries, in some senses, happen backwards and, more than any other form, are shaped in the edit (Rabiger 1998). The documentarist has shot a lot of material on a topic and the story then has to be found in the footage. Backwards is perhaps a slight exaggeration because there is always a rough story which the film-makers are pursuing, yet it serves to mark the significant differences in the editing process between documentary and other film forms. As you might imagine the editor’s task is

all the greater in making a documentary visible because there is no script or storyboard to follow or diverge from in the editing.

When a director and editor work in collaboration in the editing suite there is a distribution of knowledge as much as there is a distribution of work (Crabtree et al. 2000; Harper 1998; Sharrock 1974). A second gloss is then around what the editor's knowledge is, it is *knowing what footage we have, where it is and what it is like* (similar work on textual editing can be found in Clayman and Reisner 1998). In the academic scenario one could imagine a paper where one author might know the empirical material better, whilst the other knows their theory. The director for their part may have supervised or directly recorded much of that footage but they may not have yet seen how the shots or sound "came out". Or may not yet have scrutinised, ranked and judged the picture and sound in the manner that the editor has. When the director is collaborating with the editor they will be expected to know what the argument of the documentary is, what they were recording at the time, what they were trying to achieve in recording an event or person or scene, and so forth, and other surrounding facts pertinent to the documentary. It is the marrying together of these two sets of knowledge of the emerging film that is the ongoing challenge.

### Working around, with and in screens

The approach we will use to describe the video-analytic, work that is at the heart of editing, grows out of conversation analysis (CA). Early work in the field of CA was mono-modal, having the benefit of drawing upon tapes of telephone calls or other audio-recordings, for its primary data (Sacks 1972; Schegloff 1972). Telephone calls became the prime site for investigation because callers, like the researchers, were reliant upon entirely on what they could hear and could effectively bracket out gestures, objects, movement within the environment and the varied array of resources that constitute multimodal communication elsewhere. As scholars involved in the development of CA began to analyse a wider variety of settings (e.g. medical consultations; Heath 1986) and turn their attention toward the importance of gaze and body movement in speech exchange (Goodwin 1986; Schegloff 1998), a number of aspects of communication that had been bracketed out were gradually brought back in. While the first studies tended toward considering gesture and body movement, over the longer term various objects (Goodwin 2003; Hindmarsh and Heath 2000b) and spaces (Haddington 2010; Llewellyn and Burrow 2008; Mondada 2009a; Neville 2004) have, by necessity, been re-integrated into the study of talk-in-interaction.

What has been a particularly challenging area of study has been when the multimodal doubles up; when we have people doing activities amongst, based upon and or indeed creating multimodal objects. For instance, surgeons teaching surgery while also using live video to display the surgery they are teaching (Mondada 2003), underground railway staff using video to monitor crowds while also controlling those crowds (Heath and Luff 2006), and school students visualising Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (Greiffenhagen and Watson 2009). In each of these cases, screens (and speakers) bring into play a further set of features that have to be made sense of in coming to understand what the activities in question are. This is not to say that the materiality of the screen or speaker itself is the phenomenon in question (Introna and Ilharco 2006; Tutt and Hindmarsh 2008), just as paper is not at the heart of most newspaper activities. What studying video editing requires of us is, from time to time,

the double focus of following courses of actions of following courses of action, analysing the analysing and, as Macbeth (2011) puts it, understandings of understandings. In addition, because in our research we have utilised video to record activities, this results in scrutinising, on a screen and through speakers, other workplace analysts scrutinising other people, activities and events on a screen and through speakers. In trying to understand what is happening around computer, television and other forms of audio-visual production technologies, there is this double duty of following the actors (e.g. director and editor) recorded by the researcher while also attending to the course of action that they are not only following but also producing as the point of what they are doing (e.g. an interview in the documentary).

Of particular pertinence to understanding the multimodal complexities of screen work and editing are Broth's (2004, 2008, 2009) and others' (Engstrom et al. forthcoming; Perry, Engstrom, and Juhlin 2010) studies of television live editing. Drawing upon video recordings of a debate show, Broth (2004, 2008, 2009) documented the collaboration between the live edit suite and the camera operators. While the environment was exceedingly complex the camera operators only used a mono-modal channel to communicate their proposed shots to the editing suite: the camera feed itself. With this one mode of communication they were able to offer shots to the editors by using both zooms and sweeps of the camera to indicate they were about to select a fresh shot as a candidate camera angle for the production team to cut to.

Where we depart from Broth's work and other studies of editing (Engstrom et al. 2009; Mondada 2003, 2009b) is that, in following the work the documentary film-making, the editing team have several weeks, after shooting, to edit the short video they are making. Because the video they are making is not the coverage of an event while it is happening, what is required to make the documentary visible and audible to the editing team is of a different nature also. Not least because the camera crew have usually finished their shooting, although there may still be late requests for extra footage (which we will return to in a moment). There is time in hand to dwell upon shot selection, placement of audio, revising previous versions, overall structure of the short film and more. Unlike the rapid-fire cutting of the live event, what we will see in the empirical materials of this paper is cutting and re-cutting in a contemplative mode.

Working "around" screens brings with it a common spatial arrangement, whether it is two academics re-writing their article together or a director and editor recutting their film. By contrast with face-to-face interaction, the actors are arranged side by side facing toward the screens. A format that ranges across a number of activities involving screens such as watching television at home (Taylor and Harper 2002), controls of distributed settings (Luff, Heath, and Jirotko 2000), computer game-playing (Reeves, Brown, and Laurier 2009), design work with CAD (Ivarsson 2010), diagnosis using mammograms (Hartwood et al. 2001), and so forth. It is a format, however, that needs to be differentiated from working around screens where the screen is acting as the link between two spaces, such as we find in teleconferencing, mobile video telephony and other computer-mediated live visual communication (Heath and Luff 2000; Tutt et al. 2007). Where parties are working together around a screen, central to that work is, at significant points, seeing what the other sees or that the other person has failed to see. In multi-screen and multi-window settings like

video editing this requires parties to display the current focus of their attention and others to recognise and make available their search-for, recognitions or misrecognition of that reference point (Hindmarsh and Heath 2000a). How this happens is through gestalts of actions such as leaning toward or away, pointing at, cursor movements, and so on, and the central resource of audible speech in its deixis of “this”, “that”, “those”, “here”, “there”, “on their left”. Although they sit side by side in front of their screens, the access to those screens is, in significant ways, asymmetrical because only one person handles the controls of interface and editing software and, normally, this will be the editor. Whether it be the editor or the director that is handling the controls, it is only this person that can direct their attention through moving the cursor, playing an audio or video clip, playing through a sequence, and so on.

Having reminded ourselves of existing studies of workplaces that are organised in, around and through screens, let us now turn toward an instance of an editor and director working together.

### The lived work of editing

Oscar and Jo (Figure 1) are working on a short documentary to open a conference on young children’s involvement in the arts through the activities of a number of local arts organisations (e.g. several galleries, a storytelling centre, a mobile art studio). The documentary has been made, in large part, by a group of older young people as part of the operations of community video resource centre. Planning, for the few minutes of editing we are about to examine in more detail, has come about from months of previous meetings and, more recently, through a number of discussions in the editing suite between Jo, the director-producer, and Oscar, the editor. Moreover Oscar, as is common editing practice, has been working by himself over a number of days re-editing some of the sequences from the first cut of the short film.

The editing suite they are working in is in a long-running community video centre, so long-running that it now provides a video archive for local historians of the city. From its outset the centre has offered up the opportunity for film-making to those who otherwise would find it difficult or impossible to do so. Jo and Oscar themselves have been involved for several years in the centre’s youth work. Oscar growing up, and out, of their young film-makers group and, in making this



Figure 1. Oscar (left) and Jo (right).

documentary, graduating into the role of paid-up editor. Jo, as a youth worker, recruited the people that shot the film they are editing while also working as producer-director.

The editing suite that Oscar and Jo are using is laid out in a common spatial arrangement of off-line and on-line editing suites (see Figure 2) (Button 2002; Dancyger 2002). Its flickering cathode ray tube (CRT) screens are perhaps a little dated and a little small compared with contemporary flat screens. The studio-quality speakers (confusingly also called monitors) are placed to the left and the right (not visible in Figure 2). Indeed as current flat screens have grown in size they have the space to include the windows previously spread over two CRT monitors.

To provide a brief explanation of the geography of the three screens in Figure 2: the two in the middle and on the right are for the editing tools, and the one on the left is a monitor for displaying and examining the final output. The latter serves an important purpose for displaying the product of the editing work because it is colour and aspect accurate while the other two screens are not. The former pair displays the object being worked on with the editing software along with the timeline, the clip viewer, the canvas, audio monitor and bins. The timeline provides an overview of the video and audio clip arrangement (we might compare it with the table of contents of an academic book). Clips that are currently being trimmed or manipulated in one way or another are displayed on the clip viewer. The canvas displays the images of wherever the play-head is on the timeline (and is the mirror of the monitor on the right-hand side if much smaller). The “bins” are comparable with the folders where we, academics, organise and store all our documents. An Avid station is thus an elaborate geography of windows, tools and levels that takes most beginners several weeks to find their way around, thus we do not expect readers to take it all in, just to take away a basic sense of its layout.

A large part of what Jo and Oscar do when they are together in the edit suite (as against when Oscar works by himself) is to plan, review what they have just done and, on the basis of what they have achieved so far, further plan what they will try and do next. For the time being we want to set aside these planning conversations because they are “tools down” (the editor takes their hands off the controls and the work on-screen halts). While such tools-down discussions are a key part of the job of editing any film and shape up much of the work that follows, it is the *hands-on* work



Figure 2. Three-monitor arrangement and documents in front.

that we want concentrate on in this article. We want to examine a hands-on moment in more detail because these are the times when we have the intertwining of multi-modalities of talk, gesture, objects and environment with the ongoing selection, addition, removal, adjustment and re-arrangement of the sound and vision of talk, gesture, objects and environments in the medium.

The editing we will examine closely is in the midst of producing a second assembly of the documentary. Completed in the previous week, the first assembly of the documentary was around 20 minutes long (the final cut should be less than four minutes). Given that the director and editor have a version that is five times too long for its final purpose, making the second assembly is thus going to be a dramatic abbreviation process. We might imagine this will then simply be a case of a massive trimming and removal of audio and video. Except that a curious and endemic property of editing down a movie, noted by a number of editors,<sup>3</sup> is that it requires the introduction of *new* clips.

For those unfamiliar with film editing, this routine requirement for additional footage late in the production process appears odd, if perhaps more so in fictional films than documentary. One explanation for this requirement for additional materials lies in the medium of film's inherently sequential properties. To pull out one clip, just like pulling out one turn of talk in a conversation, will probably cause problems of, at least, intelligibility and possibly begin to endanger the overall narrative or argument of the final filmic object. Further, in looking at an assembly, editors and directors almost always see ways of improving the film they are making. In fact they can *only* see it at the point where they have the majority of the film's elements in place. For instance, now that they look at an assembled sequence, they will need one more close-up of this building but from a different angle that shows its recognisable roof outline. To get from the story from one location to another, they need a shot of someone leaving the building. A number of these editorial problems are anticipated by experienced professional camera crews who share professional knowledge of the editing process. Consequently, camera crews shoot exit and entrance shots of characters even when they appear to serve no purpose in the script as it stands and seem wasteful of film and actors' time (amusingly explained in Mamet 2007). They also do multiple takes in interviews, they shoot numerous cutaways (e.g. scenes or images from the location that can be used for wallpapering over edits or audio). For documentary, above all, they record a lot of picture and audio (e.g. 100 hours material for a one-hour documentary is a common ratio). In the editing suite, a further common solution, which will see in a moment, is to trawl through the "bins" to see whether some unused clips might serve a new purpose within the assembly.<sup>4</sup> We are going to join Oscar (editor) and Jo (director) as they run into just such a moment in their second assembly. It begins with the director noticing a clip in the bin that might be able to be used in the section they are working on. We are providing a transcript of the entire sequence to give a sense of longer course of action before then concentrating on shorter sections in detail (Excerpt 1).

Oscar, the editor, is in the midst of another task when the director notices (line 1) a bin of interior shots on the screen on the far right. The editor switches from his task and brings up the interiors as requested (line 15). They watch them together and eventually the director finds a shot of Van Gogh posters on the wall (line 31) that she

## Excerpt 1

1. Jo: OH!
- 2.
3. Oscar: What
- 4.
5. J: School interior. There should be some [quite really ni'
6. +
7. O: [They're very shakey
- 8.
9. J: Are [they
10. +
11. O: [As I recall I think it was all handheld, the school  
interiors and exteriors
- 12.
13. J: Shouldn't be
- 14.
15. O: Wait. Is it. It's all right actually
- 16.
17. I: I think some of it is handheld
- 18.
19. O: It's pretty-
- 20.
21. J: I- is this bit handheld well I mean that's classrooms so we  
don't need that anyway
- 22.
23. J: This- is this bit all handheld
- 24.
25. O: Looks like it. Wait maybe that bit isn't actually no: No you're  
°right actually, it's not °
- 26.
27. J: >It's coz I jist< I just remembered this interior being  
absolutely amazing
- 28.
29. ((some lines removed where J & O are examining a shot of a model bus))
- 30.
31. J: I think the shot of Van Gogh by P6 is perfect [obviously
32. +
33. O: [Yes b' it's  
good really good but I don't- Where can we put it
- 34.
35. J: When she's saying I'm at the school
- 36.
37. O: Mhm
- 38.
39. J: Exterior shot, school sign, interior shot, into the classroom
- 40.
41. O: Hhmm
- 42.
43. J: Which means that you can cut some of the front of this out as  
well
- 44.
45. O: Pfwow yeah mhm

likes. In the face of some apparent reservations from the editor (line 33), she formulates a sequence of shots into which the Van Gogh posters will fit (line 39).

A first thing to note here is the almost unavoidable asymmetry in the mutual monitoring (see Figure 3). Gaze plays a significant role in the confirming or querying of understanding, in emphasising, in attending or dis-attending, in turn-offering and requesting and more (Goodwin 1980). As we noted in the Introduction, in workplaces and everyday situations where participants are not orientated face to face, how we pursue a response or indeed respond by a subtle move such as a raising of the eyebrows (Peräkylä 2004; Streeck 2009) has to be adjusted and adapted. When working hands-on, the editor operating the keyboard and with their gaze upon the Avid interface cannot look extendedly at the director without stopping their work on Avid. The director who has no software tools in their hands or direct tasks to perform can look at the editor whenever it is sequentially appropriate in terms of her conversationally and gesturally communicated tasks. From lines 35–45 we have this situation and it is a common one throughout editor–director collaboration. Having noted this common asymmetry, what we have at the outset of fragment above is both the editor and the director looking at screens, although at different screens. Let us look at this in a little more detail now (Excerpt 2).

While the director is waiting on the editor to complete his current task (displayed to him on the central screen), the director can of course do other things such as examining the bins that are displayed on the right-hand screen. In common with a number of collaborative situations around an interface, such as searching for solutions together at an interface (for example, Heath and Luff 2000; Ivarsson 2010), the person without their hands on the keyboard and mouse has to find appropriate points in the ongoing flow of the other’s task to intervene. In Excerpt 2, we have the initiation with the free-standing “oh” (line 3) of a noticing (Heritage 1998) by the director. Meantime the editor is already busy with a task both had agreed upon and his somewhat blunt “what” and absence of immediate cessation of his task marks what the director has done as interruptive (Sacks 1992). However, the director’s awareness of interrupting and the need to secure the director’s attention is handled by her breaking apart the “oh” noticing token, from the thing noticed “school interior” (line 9). Space is thus given for the director to find the place where he can pause and then re-orient to what she has spotted. “School interior” is the label for



Figure 3. Asymmetry of editor–director pair.

## Excerpt 2

1. Oscar: ((speaking quietly to himself))
- 2.
3. Jo: OH! ((taps A's arm and points toward the bins on the right hand screen ))

- 4.
- 5.



- 6.
7. O: What ((still rushing through sequence))
- 8.
9. J: School interior (1.0)
- 10.
11. J: [There should be some quite really ni'
12. + +
13. O [h:..... They're very shake:y
14. +
15. (((stops scrubbing finally))

a collection of clips of “cutaways” mentioned earlier, identifiable as such by “interior(s)”, is a member of the family of cutaway terms (along with “exteriors”).

What we should not forget in the director's reading aloud of the label “school interior” is that it is the editor who has created the clips that fall within that label, so there is no news for him in its discovery. In a simple sense it is part of the visualisation of the movie through text and also part of the organisation of the movie as work project. It is available not only for himself as a resource to draw upon, but also open for (over-the-shoulder) reading by the director. It thus is part of the work of making the movie visible for both, but connected to a different awareness of what further footage of what quality is indexed by such labels. Although the labels are generally available, “School interior” has not been brought to the director's attention by the editor for working on at this juncture. The director has picked it out because it happens to be lying open on the right-hand screen rather than because it has been made relevant to what they are currently working on. Accordingly, of course, the director goes on to provide an account of her noticing's potential relevance for their current task. For the editor, not only is the “school interiors” collection not a noticing, it triggers a long audible in-breath from him in overlap with the director's account of its relevance (lines 11 and 13). This does several things, perhaps most

significantly pre-figuring a negative assessment (that will undermine the director's discovery even as it accounts for the school interiors' absence). Moreover, the editor displays hearing the director's noticing as consequential for the task at hand and competing, before the turn closes, to provide his assessment of those clips. Indeed the director cuts off her turn before it reaches completion on the very assessment term "nice", which only makes it to "ni-", thus marking it as abandoned. Quite why the director might abandon on the word "nice" turns upon "what the editor knows" since, as we have noted already, the editor collected these clips and thus has the epistemic upper hand (Raymond and Heritage 2006).

In a disagreement marked in a parallel construction in overlap, we have "really nice" and "very shaky". Not having the space to do more than draw on the larger ethnographic work on editing this comes from (Laurier, Brown, and Strebel 2010), we can add that "shaky" is a negative assessment that brings into play editors' professionally consequential criteria (Ivarsson 2010; Lymer 2009; Phillabaum 2005). Editors in video and film take responsibility for, and in various ways enforce, certain qualities – stable shots rather than shaky hand-held ones, fixed shots rather than zooms. Through the term "shaky" the editor is thus providing editorial reasoning for the absence in the current assembly of a shot selected from the interiors that the director has just noticed. The array of routine terms used by editors to formulate and assess problematic clips are not only "shaky" but "jerky", "jumpy" and "whippy" (to name a number that we have come upon during time spent in a number of editing suites<sup>5</sup>).

## Excerpt 3

31. J: I think the shot of Van Gogh by P6 is perfect, [obviously  
32.  
33. ((Oscar leaves timeline to return to clip viewer))  
34. +  
35. O: [Yes b' it's  
good  
36.  
37. O: really good but I don't- ((leaves the Van Gogh visible in  
clip viewer))  
38.  
39. O: Where can we put it ((begins to move through timeline))  
40.  
41. J: When she's saying I'm at the [scho:ol ((chopping toward  
screen))  
42. +  
43. O: (((Oscar takes playhead to  
school shot))  
44.  
45. O: Mhm

What we will move on to now is a more detailed look at the end of the fragment where the editor does provide a positive assessment of one of the interior shots.

Jo provides a first assessment of the Van Gogh posters by P6 as “perfect” (Excerpt 3, line 31). Moreover she provides this assessment in what Pomerantz (1984) calls a final position assessment (i.e. the assessment term comes at the end rather than the beginning). Final position assessments, as Pomerantz shows, prefer agreement and are thus harder to disagree with. That her assessment expects no disagreement is underlined by her qualifying her assessment with “obviously” (line 31). This makes Oscar’s expression of his doubts “yes but” (lines 35 and 37) all the more interesting. He provides a second assessment that “does the work of claiming to agree with the prior while marking, and accompanying, a shift in assessed parameters which partially contrasts with the prior” (Pomerantz 1984, 63). In other words, through making a second assessment rather than simply agreeing with her, his downgrading “good” maintains his affiliation with the director while also edging in a disagreement through the downgrading. This affiliation appears to be further developed in his delayed, upgrade on his initial “good” with “really good”, with its “but” problem upcoming. As Pomerantz (1984) argued, assessments are usually not done for their own sake but are lodged within other action sequences such as praising, complimenting, complaining and so on. We should thus also then examine Jo’s first assessment in terms of its place within another course of action.

The editor’s overall extended response of his two assessments and question helps us see what the course of action might be. He provides an agreement through his assessment on one part of her assessment: the aesthetics of the clip. The absence of a matching upgrade to “perfect” indicating his reservations over something else: the action that will be done with the “Van Gogh”. “Where can we put it” he asks at line 39 (see Excerpt 3 above), and thereby we see that overall course of action here is inserting the shot into the sequence they are currently working on. Let us move on to examine what happens next.

With the insertion problem now raised by the editor, the director formulates the insertion point using the voice-over or audio-track “when she’s saying I am at the school” (Excerpt 4, line 41) to locate it. After which we have a gesturally-supported sequence of shots to which “Van Gogh” is reconnected with its initial labelling by the editor as part of his stock of interiors. Moreover we have an interior located within a sequence of professionally meaningful membership categories (Hester and Eglin 1997) belonging to establishing shots: “exterior, school sign, interior, into classroom”. The sense of why and how the shot is “perfect” becomes more apparent in what it is perfect *for*. It is not shaky, looks good and fits into their establishing shots sequence. With no revised assessment or agreement from the editor, the director adds a final flourish, which is that the sequence could be cut down slightly and thus achieve their overriding goal here to trim the first assembly down in length.

Throughout the editor appears to be continuing to have his reservations about the three-part list (e.g. (1) where to insert, (2) what video sequence is produced and (3) what additional benefit this carries). Each of these assessments that form part of the director’s overall proposal are all receipted with the minimum continuer of “mhm”s by the editor. At this point we might expect the editor, if he is agreeing with the director, to show a positive acceptance of the proposal (e.g. “good idea”, “so it will”, “yes will do”, etc.). In fact as the final recommendation for the insertion of the

## Excerpt 4

41. J: When she's saying I'm at the school  
 42.  
 43. O: Mhm  
 44.  
 45. J: Exterior shot, school sign, interior shot, into the  
 classroom  
 46.  
 47. O: Hhmm  
 48.  
 49. J: Which means that you can cut some of the front of this  
 out as well  
 50.  
 51. O: Pfwow yeah mhm

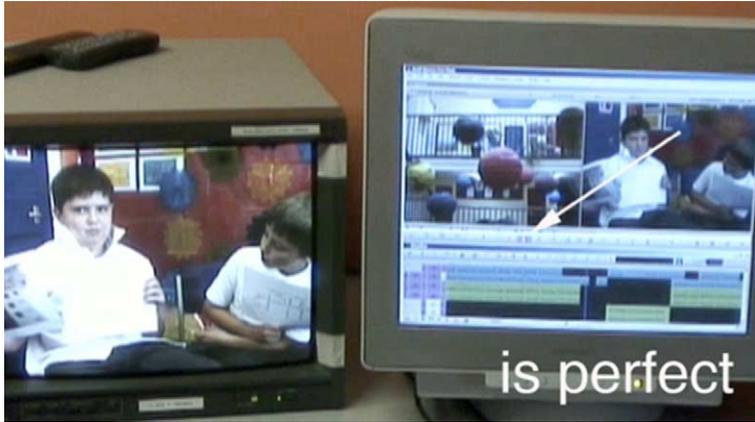
clip comes to an end, the editor offers a distinctly tentative “yeah”, prefaced with a puff, concluded with an “mhm” and marked gesturally with a frowning of the brow.

What we have done up until now, however, is to overly concentrate on the talk and ignore what is happening on, and with, Avid. What is visually available to participants changes something of how we understand the import and uptake of the editor's responses from the first assessment of the clip in question as “perfect” (Goodwin and Goodwin 1992). Let us turn to the actions taking place on the Avid interface.

Returning to the “good” that is upgraded to “really good”, the editor is also getting the actual shot they are talking about on-screen. In fact his work begins even earlier when the director says “I think the shot of Van Gogh by P6” at which point he finishes deleting a clip (see Avid Clip 1) and the cursor begins to move away from the timeline to the clip viewer (see Avid Clip 2). Once in the clip viewer he scrubs through the clips from the stairwell with its globes (see Avid Clip 3) until he has the



Avid Clip 1.



Avid Clip 2.



Avid Clip 3.



Avid Clip 4.

Van Gogh shot on screen, in time for his second “really good” (see Avid Clip 4). Until the shot is on-screen, their assessment of it is in an important sense limited. Or rather, the editor’s re-assessment is limited. He is able to, and can, display as a *re-assessment* what he is doing by bringing the image back up on the monitor and clip-viewer. So while we still have a downgrade in response to “perfect” we begin through examining what is happening on Avid to understand that the assessment is being re-shaped by the work of making the documentary visible for the director and editor’s current purposes.

Having re-examined the sequence assessments in the light of the visual materials on Avid we can now turn to the sequence of minimal “mhm”s from the editor during the director’s suggested insertion. These minimal receipts also take on a different character as we watch what the editor is doing as the director is speaking. By the close of “scho:ol” the editor has brought the playhead to the point on the timeline where the interview is saying “school”. In itself, jumping to the relevant point so quickly so as to furnish the director with the actual materials she is talking about is a remarkable if commonplace accomplishment of an editor. As the director finishes her description of the establishing shot (Excerpt 4, line 45), the editor has moved on to running the playhead back and forth over the timeline, re-examining the existing establishing-shot briefly before deselecting the tracks in order to begin inserting the Van Gogh clip. In other words, when we follow his actions with Avid – a following that the director is also doing – then we see that his on-screen actions are the concrete responses to her proposals. When the director’s third and final recommendation of the insertion actually comes it is actually *after* the editor has followed through on her suggestions.

It thus takes on a *post hoc* character rather than being part of a continuing attempt to convince the editor to insert the Van Gogh clip. In turn, the editor’s “mhm”s then come to be seen, when dealt with as a whole, as expressing that he is busy already getting on with the suggested insertion. When the director says “Which means that you can cut some of the front of this out as well” (Excerpt 4, line 49), the puff the editor makes comes to be understandable as one that displays the quantity of tasks piling up as he hears her recommendation as a further direction for the editing. One might puff in this way to help the person giving us more work to do appreciate that we need a little time. So rather than being doubtful about the director’s suggestion, he is dealing with the work pace.

Finishing our analysis of selecting a clip in the editing suite by concentrating on what is happening in Avid (and this is where our editor and director are focused) returns us to the slightly cryptic remark at the outset that the editor’s work when working with the director is making the film, as it is now, visible. The editor is busy in manipulating footage in order to make just the right section of a clip or sequence of clips and more available for their visual analyses of these clips as director and editor. Moreover you may still be thinking that the edit was not made in the midst of this re-examination of the qualities of this clip’s perfectness. Having unlocked the appropriate tracks on the timeline (at line 43) to set the in and out points (lines 49–51), within a few more seconds the clip is inserted and they move on.

## Conclusions

Existing studies of assessments and screen work have been based in educational settings (Lymer 2009; Phillabaum 2005), in this article we have presented the peer pairing of director–editor rather than student–teacher or tutor–tutee. Working together and on equal, if distinct, footings, the editor’s reservations push in creative ways against the director’s vision. From the unexceptional materials presented we have hopefully given a flavour of the distribution of labour in the editing suite and how these jobs interweave with one another. To successfully edit a documentary, and many other film genres, what the editor and director need to know is what they have available to assemble the movie with, but audio-visual materials are not at all a straightforward collection of material to do so. In the instance we have examined, the director is recalling a scene they liked during the shooting and querying as to whether there were corresponding clips. The editor is expected to be the one that knows whether certain shots exist or not. As we have already mentioned, the editor’s knowledge is one that they have acquired through logging clips, categorising clips into bins, building selects of such things as “school interior”, “children holding up pictures”, “interviews on music”, and so forth. All of this preparatory work being done over the preceding weeks leading up to being ready and prepared to edit in collaboration with the director. In the edit room, collaboration is about bringing the editor’s knowledge into dialogue with the director’s vision for the documentary. This dialogue routinely takes the mundane form of interruptions, indeed we might say that interrupting and being interrupted are at the heart of editing. The ongoing achievement of such collaborations is to maintain affiliation when it is common knowledge in the industry that the editing suite is a notorious site for disagreements.

The central section of the article provided a typical example of what decision-making looks like in film-making. And there are thousands of these sorts of episodes during the editing of any film. The sheer profusion of intense thoughtfulness around these thousand cuts is not recovered by film studies. Nor should these decisions be, since an overarching ambition of film studies is in the work of instructed viewings of cinema (Livingston 1995). However, the point of the study we have reported on here is not to limit the interpretative work done by film theorists with finished filmic objects. Our ambition is instead to recover the lived work of making those objects, work that precedes and is irretrievably lost in the final product.

Working on screens and with speakers is at the heart of film and video editing in a double sense because the final object is one that is to be consumed on screens with speaker systems. This isomorphism contrasts with otherwise comparable studies of how work is assessed on screens by architects (Heath and Luff 2000; Lymer 2009). Rather than working with sketches or plans of the final object displayed on screen, videos and films are entities that are made with *and* for screens and speakers. Nevertheless the essential quality of film and video is that it needs to be “rolled” (as it used to be called) or played on screen and with speakers. The work of playing just the clips that we need now, to talk over, before or with those clips, is central to the work of editing. Without being able to see and hear what they are working on, the process of editing begins to unravel. In this article we have begun to see how the editor makes the film available visually and audibly for both themselves and the director as their routine work.

## Notes

1. There a number of professional editing situations where editing happens much faster. Most obviously live editing, but also a number of other television formats such as news packages, sports highlights, and so forth.
2. Although, of course, reading a text outside the editing setting gives birth to huge academic enterprises as well as other more practice-based studies (Gallacher 2010; Livingston 1995; McHoul 1982).
3. See for instance Stephen Mirrione's commentaries on the special editions of *Go DVD* (dir. Doug Liman, UCA, 2004) and *Traffic DVD* (dir. Steven Soderbergh, Criterion Edition, 2002). Also the late stages of editing of *Cold Mountain* (Koppelman 2005).
4. There are yet more solutions for documentary editing such as library footage, stock footage as well as sending the camera crew out to record the missing sections. These can leave a documentary's temporal factuality open to defeat under conditions of opposition when this asynchronous collection is discovered. The controversy over the editing of "Chavez – The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" provides a perspicuous case (Stoneman 2008).
5. It is hard to resist seeing a certain sound shape in these adjectives that can provide a resource in hearing an editor's negative assessment with economy.

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