



**From the text and oral history to cinematography:
towards the rescuing and preservation of documentation
for posterity**

Luis Molina-Casanova
University of the Sacred Heart
San Juan, Puerto Rico

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160 — Plenary Session

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honored by your kind invitation to speak to you about something which I love very dearly, something about which very few know that it has been and continues to be my true passion: historical research.

I have devoted my life to making educational films, and one of the reasons for that is the wealth of fascinating discoveries I have made over the years in the dusty archives and wonderful libraries of Puerto Rico. There I discovered events, people and important matters no one taught me in school, or showed me on television, or put in my textbooks, but nonetheless produced in me an immense pride and respect for my ancestors and for this country that is so much bigger and greater than its geography. In short, doing the research for my movies led me a treasure trove of information which now I consider vital to the formation of creative, daring, and genial human beings.

So it was there in libraries such as the Historical Archives of Puerto Rico, perusing musical collections of the last century or microfilmed newspaper stories or the photos in the magazine collections that I decided to become a filmmaker.

I will never tire of giving my heartfelt thanks to the devoted caretakers of our national heritage, librarians and archivists, for the extraordinary amount and quality of the

information they have provided, thus enriching my life and my work in immeasurable ways. And that is one of the reasons I have asked myself the question:

Will libraries as we have known and loved them survive the digital revolution?

That is the often-asked question of many international discussion forums about libraries, given the proliferation of the electronic book and the so-called tablets that provide immediate access to texts, videos, photos and other primary sources.

My response is: The book is not disappearing, but merely undergoing a transformation.

By the same token, the library is not disappearing: it is being transformed.

Moviemaking was also transformed with the advent of computers and new editing software. New doors to unbelievable worlds were opened with the creation of new animation systems that allow us to film, for example, interplanetary voyages with amazing realism.

Change is inevitable. Change is necessary most of the time. As far as books and newspapers are concerned, we ought to be grateful that worldwide deforestation has been dramatically reduced, that not one more tree, should be cut down to create pages that eventually will turn yellow and filled with holes and stains made by moths and flies and age.

Libraries will not disappear...

First of all, because history itself has shown that for educators and laborers of culture like me, like you, like millions all around the world, the library is the primary source and depository of creativity for writers, poets, teachers, musicians, sculptors, moviemakers, actors, engineers, philosophers, and the rest. We need you to do your work.

It is so, because in the same vein as Einstein's words that "matter is not created nor destroyed, but merely transformed," information is not created nor destroyed either, but truly appreciated protected, restored, transformed, debated, and disseminated better in centers of historical preservation such as the Puerto Rican Collection of the José M. Lázaro Library at the University of Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican Collection of the Madre María Teresa Guevara Library; fulfilling the same heroic, patriotic and human function of showing us the evidence of our own identity, the beauty of our spirit and the infinite capacity of our imagination.