Building The Archives

PENN PROFESSORS BUILD A DIGITAL ARCHIVE OF POETRY PERFORMANCES AND READINGS

Bernstein Hopes People Will Rethink Role Of Live Readings

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like universities have a reputation, often deserved, of misgiving from the communities that surround them. Poetry often has a similar reputation for being obscure and disconnected. So, combining the two might seem ill-advised.

But the University of Pennsylvania’s new project, PENNSOUND, has managed to engage the poetry community on a global scale. Launched in January of this year after eighteen months of planning, PENNSOUND provides MP3 files of poetry, all fully downloadable and shareable, provided that they are used exclusively for personal, non-commercial use.

Under the direction of Penn professors Charles Bernstein and Al Fileas, the project has assembled over half a terabyte of material on its servers — or in iPod terms, the equivalent of about 125,000 songs.

Along with fellow professor Al Fileas, he is editor of PENNSOUND, a large archive of poetry readings and performances available for free on the Internet.

...Bernstein, co-founder and executive director of Buffalo’s Electronic Poetry Center, came to Philadelphia to teach at the University of Pennsylvania. Along with fellow professor Al Fileas, he is editor of PENNSOUND, a large archive of poetry readings and performances available for free on the Internet.

Fileas says that people are downloading about 12 gigsabytes of poetry every day — enough poetry to fill an iPod Nano more than three times over. Although Fileas is not sure what to expect, he is pleased with the project’s progress.

In his own words, the project is about taking poetry beyond the confines of the classroom and making it available to the public. It’s a way of engaging with poetry on a more accessible level, allowing people to explore and experience it in their own time and space.

The project is also a way of giving back to the community, by making available a wealth of poetry readings and performances that are otherwise inaccessible. It’s a way of connecting with poetry in a way that is both exciting and profound.

...Fileas says, “It’s a wonderful experience for any poet who doesn’t feel like they have a place in the public sphere. It’s also wonderful for the public to have access to poetry in a new way.”

The project is a testament to the power of poetry, and to the importance of making it accessible to everyone. It’s a way of connecting with poetry in a way that is both exciting and profound, and it’s a way of giving back to the community, by making available a wealth of poetry readings and performances that are otherwise inaccessible.