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Independent Study & Mentorship

Mr. Speice 4A

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Research Assessment #1

Date: Sept., 2, 2016

Subject: Jobs in the Film Industry- Career Outlook

MLA Citations:

Piccirillo, By Ryan A. "Career Snapshot: The Film Director, A Human Lens." *RSS*. 2010. Web. 02 Sept. 2016.

"Career as a Director | Study Film in the US." *International Student*. Web. 05 Sept. 2016.

"The Hot New Trends in Film...." *Goldfinch Entertainment*. 28 Oct. 2015. Web. 05 Sept. 2016.

Assessment:

While the field of film production can come with great success and rewards, it is more often than not a hard, grueling, daunting field to break into. Before doing research, I already knew that it takes a ton of networking and time to even get a foot in door, but now I have a deeper knowledge of how each job in the film industry works and what specific skills and characteristics I need in order to be successful. In the field of film production, there are many different careers, some involving more creativity and artistic direction than others. Within the field is a hierarchy of different professions; the more experience one gains and how much they grow determines how fast they will rise on the ladder to their desired profession. A specific

career I want to look into is directing because I believe it is the perfect balance of creativity and organization.

In the article, "Career Snapshot: The Film Director, A Human Lens" tells a lot about the work that a director does, what training is needed, and recommended post-high school courses. In addition, it also talks about the input a director has and what it is like to work with others in different positions. One thing I learned is that film school at a university is a great way to get started because students learn from the best professionals and gain invaluable experiences. Some of the best film schools such as the University of Southern California says while getting to technical aspects is a good thing to learn, it is more about letting people find who they are and what they are good at. It allows for first-time directors to build their portfolios and start getting work. Not to mention that film school allows students to build relationships with their professors and soon acquire connections to others in the business. I also learned that a director is highly influential in all other aspects of filmmaking included costume design, set design, producing, and casting because all of these factors make up a specific vision. A director also needs to be active during production, telling actors their objectives, capturing shots, and effectively leading an entire production crew. The director also works with the editor in trying to get a specific feeling across when the audience views it. A related field that the director answers to is the producer who is in charge of bureaucratic matters and makes the decision on how much funding can go into a project. A producer has to be able to take risks and put their neck on the line all the time when approving a project. I hope to explore this profession in the future because I find it extremely tedious and interesting.

The second document, "Career as a Director | Study Film in the US" was very informative in giving a salary and career outlook of being a film director. It also elaborates on training that would better prepare you for the job. According to the article, the median wage for

directing was \$64,430 in 2008 in the US. However this salary varies on country, type of project, and how big a director's name is out there. For example, an academy award-nominated director is sure to be paid more than double that wage because they are so well-known and successful, whereas a newcomer to that film would be paid substantially less because they are less experienced and not as many people know of them. In addition, the article predicts that a career as a director is expected to grow "11 percent during the next decade in the US" because the "film industry is alive and well" as sales are up around the world. For training, going to a college in a huge city such as New York or Los Angeles is good as well as getting an entry level job or internship in field. The more training one has, the better chance they have at making it big in the area.

Lastly, the final article I read was "The Hot New Trends in Film...." which I found was the most interesting of articles to me because it not only gave unique terminology, but it also tells of what kind of films are trending and the kind of technology used. It mentions how films are trending on streaming services such as Netflix or Amazon because they are available to such a large amount of people and how the use of drones, GoPros, or even smartphones are becoming more and more popular in the use of filmmaking. Whether it is an artistic choice or just a decision to save on money, it makes the film seem more authentic and current with today's world. Aside from trends, the article also names terms such as "Super-Docs", documentaries with a huge response and being well-known worldwide like regular films. The article is very important to me because it will help me know what will work with audiences as I plan to make an original work of my own for ISM.

After researching numerous articles about the field of film production, I feel more prepared on the career path of directing, a profession which I feel suits both my artistic and managerial needs. I know now that the job itself is more hands-on than I originally thought and

that it takes a lot more than natural raw talent to become a success in the industry as one needs to have connections. While the field of film production is difficult to work in, I do believe this field is definitely for me as I am very ambitious and am willing to work as hard as I can to get to the top. Reading these articles definitely gave me some tips of what I can input into my future film projects and what step I should take next on my career path. At the end of the day, I want to gain a deeper insight of all the different professions in this career so I can really understand what I am getting myself into. I hope to go beyond and above in my research to figure out what else this career has to offer besides what I have read in an article.

Articles:

1. "Career Snapshot: The Film Director, A Human Lens"

Piccirillo, R. A. (2010). "Career Snapshot: The Film Director, A Human Lens." *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, 2(03). Retrieved from <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/a?id=196>

Career Snapshot: The Film Director, A Human Lens

By **Ryan A. Piccirillo**
2010, VOL. 2 NO. 03

The scene is set for another take: the actors and extras are in costume and in place; the set decorator has set the stage just as the vision of the film entails; the director of photography has the lights and cameras ready to capture the action. However, before the scene begins, they all turn their attention to one person on set – the director.

It is the director's job to translate the script to the screen as he directs the array of people working under him on how to best capture his artistic vision for the film. Director Christopher Nolan (*Memento*, *The Dark Knight*) says of his job, "I'm a sort of human lens through which everyone's efforts are focused. A big part of my job is making decisions about how all the great talent that I'm working with blends into a single consciousness" (Rabiger 5). A great director is a great leader with drive, patience, inspiration, and imagination. He is responsible for working with a cast and crew of creative individuals, before, during, and after production, to see that his vision is played out and captured on film as his heart desires. Directing is an appealing and competitive career field which requires unflinching dedication, balanced leadership skills, ingenious creativity, and a keen knowledge of the business of making movies.

Becoming a Director

Directing is a glamorized profession, and though rewarding, achieving this distinguished position requires a large amount of hard work and dedication. While inexpensive digital video cameras and websites like YouTube make it easy for anyone to be a director, to find success in the professional field requires years of experience and training. Film school is an expensive and important investment, but the experience of being trained by accomplished professionals in the field is invaluable. University of Southern California film professor Jean-Pierre Geuens emphasizes that film school is about more than gaining technical know-how: "Film school is about finding out who you are, it's not just about acquiring a specific amount of knowledge or the latest techniques. You need to learn who you are, what you stand for and how good you are" (Geuens).

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Comment [1]: Film school helps build connections as it offers opportunities for jobs and internships.

Film school graduates don't simply jump from their seat at graduation to the director's chair. Cities like Los Angeles and New York are hot spots for the film industry and offer opportunities for graduates to gain experience and build portfolios. In these big cities it is unlikely to find a job right away, so many aspiring film makers use internships, often unpaid, to gain experience and recognition. The Director's Guild of America sponsors the Assistant Directors Training Program which allows prospective directors to receive experience as assistant directors. Many first-time directors begin by directing small productions such as commercials, television episodes, or independent films. Newcomers to the profession need to concentrate on developing and demonstrating their skills with different, often independently produced, projects to earn recognition essential for success. When a fledgling director has built a strong resume and secured relationships with professionals in the field, he is on his way to making movies.

Making Movies

The director is intimately involved with the planning and design of the film he is to create from initial conception to final product. Though a film will likely have professionals responsible for casting, screenwriting, set and costume design, and countless other pre-production jobs, it is not uncommon for a director to have considerable influence in these crucial areas. Because the director works so closely with actors during production, leading their movement and honing their performance, it's important for the director to be involved with the selection process. In his instructional book on film direction, Michael Rabiger emphasizes the importance of casting: "You need actors enthusiastic about the character they play, who will work well with you and other cast members, and whose loyalty will be to the project" (Rabiger 258). Additionally, a director may want to select actors who are in line with his aesthetic and tonal vision for the film. Pre-production rehearsal with the actors is a useful way for the director to prepare them for a scene. Director Roman Polanski (*Rosemary's Baby*, *The Pianist*) reflects, "my direction comes from actors' rehearsals. I rehearse and I let them free in the beginning rather than the other way around" (Montague). One of the most important aspects of pre-production for a director is planning the look and feel of the film. Storyboarding, sketching a sequence of pre-visualized graphics picturing how the scene will play out, is a common planning method used by directors. When the many stages of pre-production are completed, the director is ready to lead his team onto production.

Production is the time when director's vision materializes on film. On set, the director is the highest authority and the crew is there to help him capture his vision for the story. The notion of a passive director comfortably shouting orders from his chair is a misconception; his role is more active, demonstrating to the actors how they should move and behave within a scene and helping the director of photography to capture the desired shot. Though the crew ultimately answers to the director, his focus should be on the performances of the actors more so than the technical details of production. Rabiger suggests that, "the director, who should engage a director of photography (DP) able to effectively lead the crew, should concentrate on directing the action, and

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Comment [2]: It is cool that directing has an input in so many areas. Makes them seem like the leaders because they are in charge of the vision.

never lose sight of the preeminent needs of the cast” (Rabiger 329). He emphasizes the importance of having an experienced, professional crew capable of efficiently and effectively performing their roles. With so many departments involved in production, from cameras to sound to art, the director can’t be expected to babysit each individual. Rabiger laments that many first-time directors become distracted with overseeing the crew, and neglect “the human presence on the screen, the only aspect the audience really notices” (Rabiger 424). A good leader knows how to delegate duties so that he can focus expressly on what is most important, and the same is inherently true of a director: “A check of composition [...] is absolutely necessary, but the director must be willing to give technicians and production personnel control of their areas” (Rabiger 424). So though he is the highest authority on set, the director’s primary role is not personnel management, but rather visionary management. He dictates his vision and it is the crew’s job to make it happen. When the story is captured on film, the movie is far from complete, for that film now goes onto post-production.

When production wraps, the director is left with a series of out-of-sequence bits of untouched video and audio; it is the editor’s job to pull these elements together into the sequential story the audience will enjoy. This tedious process is known to take sometimes take longer than the actual shooting of the film. Because editing a film determines so much about how it looks, feels, and flows, it is common for the director to be present in the editing room, helping to see that the film is accurately cut together. A 2006 Boston Globe article focuses the goal of this partnership between director and editor: “From a daunting surfeit of footage shot out of sequence, the editor works with the director to extract and weave together the best material, their every decision shaping the film’s rhythm and mood” (Winter). The director’s initial vision is sometimes limited in the editing room by creative disagreements with producers, production companies, and distributors, which can lead to special “director’s cut” versions of certain films. This highlights the importance of the relationship between the director and the producer.

The Director and the Producer

While it is true that the director is in charge of the artistic vision of his film, everyone answers to *somebody*; the director answers to the film’s producer. The producer’s job can sometimes be ambiguously defined, but in most cases he supervises the production of the film, much like the director, from beginning concept to final product. It is a producer who green lights a creative project for production after determining whether or not it has an audience and a studio willing to fund it. Because the producer is in charge of bureaucratic business such as funding, budgeting, hiring workers, studio relations, and distribution, all of which ultimately affects the director’s ability to create the film he wants to make, producers and directors work closely together. FilmMakers.com further defines the importance of this relationship: “It is much easier for the director to do their job when they do not have to deal with the constant pressures of the studio. In this respect, if the producer can assure the studio that all is going as planned and within budget, the director will be able to keep their

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Comment [3]: Editing is something I really enjoy but do not want a profession in. It’s really exciting that the director gets to help in editing because that’s a HUGE part of filmmaking to me. Gives the director their own personal signature.

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Comment [4]: Producing is a related job I would really like to explore. Does one rise from being a director to a producer? What are the differences? Also, how much of a creative say does a producer have in a project?

concentration on the film itself” (FilmMakers.com). The producer communicates the progress of a film to the studio so the director can focus his attention on his art.

Final Remarks

Becoming a film director requires unmatched passion, vision, and dedication, all three of which are virtues to be channeled into high-quality films. Directing is a high pressure job and demands firm leadership and untamed imagination. A director must know how to manage people as well as how to be managed, two aspects of the job on which a film’s success hinges. Though achieving success in the field is no easy task, no other career would quell the artistic needs of a born film director.

2. "Career as a Director | Study Film in the US"

Career as a Director



Is it your dream to yell "Action!" on a movie set? Do you want to command the show, and execute your vision for a big screen production? Are you a natural born leader with artistic capabilities? Then a career as a director might be the job for you. For international students, there are many different ways to go about getting a career as a director.

How to Become a Director

There is no right way to become a director. No formal education is required, however it does help. There are many benefits to attending film school at a college or university. Many of the professors are still working in the industry and are well connected with other professionals in the industry. This opportunity to network could give you your big break. Professors could know the perfect person to pitch a screenplay or hand over your student film. Another benefit of international students attending a film schools is that you can learn the business. You learn who does what in a crew, how to produce a film, how to operate equipment and understand the technical basics of lighting, sound, as well as editing.

Choosing to go to a college or a university in New York City or Los Angeles would be wise. Just getting an entry level job or internship in production is getting your foot in the door and giving you the much needed experience that will be

helpful upon graduation. A possible entry level job or internship can be an assistant director. Assistant directors can then move up the ladder by becoming a second assistant director and then a first assistant director.

The Directors Guild in New York City also has a training program to help you become a second assistant director. However, it is only open to candidates who have a bachelor's degree. The program selects a limited number of students and is two years long with up to 350 days of on the job experience.

If you don't have the resources to live in Los Angeles or New York City, finding a school that has a good film major around the U.S. isn't hard. For example, [Florida State University](#), across the nation from California has a very good film program. You can also find local production companies in the city of your college and university to work for and gain valuable internship experience.

Director Duties

Having a career as a director means you will be doing a lot of different tasks. Often a producer will come to you and ask if you would like to direct a film they believe in. During the pre-production stage, you will consult with the producer(s) and writer(s) on the vision for the film, locations, crew, casting, storyboarding and revising the script. But during production is where you play the biggest role. You direct the cameramen on angles and shots you want, advise the actors and pretty much run the show. The director also decides if a scene needs to be reshot.

Hours and Salary

Any type of job in the film industry is going to have irregular hours. Directors often work long hours for weeks at a time. Since productions are not long term commitments, after the production is finished, directors could be without work for months. You have to actively search for other productions to work on.

Median annual wages of directors were \$64,430 in 2008 in the U.S. But it varies from country to country and what kind of production you are working on. For example, in the United Kingdom, the average salary is 35,677 euros.

Job Outlook

Competition to have a career as a director is fierce. There are many directors out here with more experience and a better reputation. However, a career as a director is expected to grow 11 percent during the next decade in the U.S., according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Internationally, the film industry is alive and well too. Film production and movie attendance is up in the European Union. Bollywood outsells Hollywood in ticket sales and also produces more films than Hollywood does in a year.

Conclusion

A career as a director may seem like a glamorous job. However, it takes a lot of hard work to make it to the top of Hollywood, Bollywood or any other production company and industry throughout the world. Directors work long hours and international students just out of college will not be a director of a large production starting out. Instead search for entry level jobs such as a second assistant director, in the industry and work your way up. Or, if you are feeling creative, direct your own small film or independent film.

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Comment [5]: Even getting an internship is a very important step to become successful in this industry. Taking ISM for this field gives me an advantage because I am going to gain some experience and it will help my career.

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Comment [6]: It may be the median salary, but I find it hard to calculate the average since it involves a variety of factors including how well a director is known.

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Comment [7]: I find it interesting that movie attendance is up considering a lot of popular movies and television shows are streaming. It makes me think that going to the movie theater is more an experience and that is why it is always popular.

3. “The Hot New Trends In Film...”

The Hot New Trends in Film...

October 28, 2015 / Sarah

Streaming Services v Studios

Leading on-demand outlets like Netflix and Amazon Prime have shifted their focus into distribution & production of original feature films following their success conquering TV shows. Cary Fukunaga’s child-soldier drama *Beasts of No Nation* in collaboration with Netflix is the biggest example of this. Netflix picked the film up for \$12m last year and released it at Venice Film Festival to a great response. It was then released simultaneously as an online & theatrical release earlier this month prompting criticism from several cinema chains who disagreed with the violation of the traditional 3 month window of big-screen exclusive rights.

‘Super-Docs’

When ‘Amy’ – Asif Kapadia’s documentary about Amy Winehouse showed at Cannes this year it received an ecstatic response. When it was released, it had the biggest-ever opening weekend for a British documentary in the UK and has since become one of the biggest documentaries of all time with over \$20m in worldwide sales. Look out for more directors aiming for “super-doc” status with full theatrical releases where there might once only have been a limited roll-out.

Independent Horror Films

A new breed of filmmakers are tackling the stereotypical clichés of the horror genre head-on & are stepping away from excessive CGI and franchises adding a new level of weird eeriness to the genre. Revenge horror ‘Unfriended’ strikes hard at this social media obsessed generation as it takes place entirely online within a group Skype chat. Others like Jennifer Kent’s *The Babadook* takes influence from 70s horror classics such as *The Omen*.

Go-Pro Hardcore Action

‘Hardcore’ is the world’s first action movie shot in Russia entirely from the protagonist’s perspective using GoPro cameras. The film was funded on

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Comment [8]: Up-and-coming terminology I should know about or look into.

Indiegogo by more than 2k backers and is something totally new for filmmakers. Time will tell whether Hardcore will inspire a new genre of POV filmmaking the same way that *The Blair Witch Project* did for shaky ‘found footage’ movies but it certainly doesn’t look like it’ll be as easy to replicate.

70mm returns with a vengeance

‘The Hateful Eight’ – Tarantino’s new western has been shot entirely in 70mm. The rarely used film, which was used for epics like Ben Hur will ensure that the film has an authentic feel. The Civil War-era period piece, which was shot on a rare form of the 70mm film format called Ultra Panavision 70 – which results in a very wide image – will be shown at 50 cinemas worldwide in analog format. The release will mark the widest 70mm release the industry has seen in more than 20 years, according to the film’s distributor, The Weinstein Company.

Smartphone Filming

Sean Baker’s ‘Tangerine’ drew so much attention at Sundance earlier this year, not only because it was ‘of the moment’ focusing on a day in the life of two transgender sex workers, but also because it was shot entirely on 3 smartphones. Saving money was mainly the motivation behind this choice and he also used Vine & Instagram to cast some of his actors and searched for most of the movie’s score on SoundCloud.

Use of Drones

For the past few years, directors of films like big budget films Harry Potter and Bond have been using drones to shoot aerial footage. Compared to helicopters, they are more flexible, quick to set up, relatively safe to utilise and crucially, much cheaper – a 1/5 of the price in Hollywood! Unfortunately, there are still issues which stop wider use of drones like restrictions of use, low battery life & problems with ‘wonky’ footage but technology is ever developing with industry experts believing drones could have a revolutionary effect on filmmaking.

Growing power of the ‘Grey Pound’

When *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* hit the box office in 2012 taking £83m worldwide despite only costing £6.2m to make, the industry heralded the rise of the ‘grey pound’ and that theory hasn’t changed since then. Studios are increasingly investing in intelligent, well-crafted films in which older actors

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Comment [9]: Cool how films are become more and more technology savvy to relate to the new generation. It makes films seem more indie and hip.

take centre stage. One such success story is Andrew Haigh's '45 years' starring Charlotte Rampling & Tom Courtenay as a couple dealing with a ghost from the past in the run-up to their 45th wedding anniversary which received rave reviews across the board not just from the older generations. Reports also show that older audiences show strong support for arthouse and independent movies which is always great news for a diverse film industry.

Girl Power!

A key theme of London Film Festival this year has been the role of women in film with Geena Davis headlining a symposium on gender imbalance in the media, and festival director Clare Stewart highlighting the need to "support women directors across the chain – not just in development but all the way through to making sure there is equity in opportunities for the films to be screened".

There is no doubt that the film industry has a history of male bias – It took the Oscars 80 years to award their top prize to a female filmmaker, with Kathryn Bigelow & her film Hurt Locker scooping Best Film & Best Director in 2010. In 2015, so many of this year's most exciting films like Suffragette & Carol which have been helmed by women, maybe the industry's long-established 'sexist glass ceiling' is finally starting to crack?