

Report on the FIAF School on Wheels, Accra, Ghana, August 13-18, 2012

by Stanley Opoku-Yeboah and Naomi Karimu.

Opening Event

The International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) in conjunction with Goethe Institut and the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI) organized a five day workshop dubbed “Film Archives in Africa” from August 13 to 18, 2012 at NAFTI. Participants of the five day workshop were invited from various media houses and archive related institutions in the country. The detailed list of participants is attached to this report.

In his opening remarks, Prof Linus Abraham, Rector of NAFTI indicated that the School on Wheels brings together experts from around the world to one location to teach best practices in audio visual archiving.

Prof. Abraham indicated NAFTI’s commitment to preserving Ghana’s audio visual heritage. “NAFTI as a training institution in Film and Television, and in the creative arts, is committed to this course, and we will always make our resources available, not only for training purposes, but also to host an office for a national organization that will be committed to organizing and doing the necessary advocacy work on behalf of our national preservation”, he said.

As part of the long-term plans for NAFTI’S growth and development, space has been allocated to house a national audio-visual archive and museum for the country at the institute.

Prof. Abraham advocated for a system that will preserve audio visual resources and the need to develop the essential organizational structures to enable government to provide the necessary resources to build an archive and national museum.

Mr. Kwaw Ansah, CEO of TV Africa and the special guest of honour at the opening ceremony said this was not the first time a program of this nature had been organized. Previously, those who worked with archives were committed to preserving the country's resources but the same thing cannot be said for contemporary times. According to Mr Ansah, "we can only be remembered if we preserve what we have. "Ghana has a history but I wonder how we sometimes want to be remembered."

He further stated that the youth lacked confidence today because they do not know what their forbearers did fifty years ago for them to improve upon. This is because the nation does not have a proper archival system for proper preservation of our heritage for the younger generation.

Mr. David Walsh, from Imperial War Museum expressed his profound gratitude to NAFTI for hosting the workshop and to Goethe Institut for funding and finding facilitators within such a short time. He was of the hope that the workshop will lead to future collaborations with FIAF. The vision of FIAF is to promote a code of ethics for the preservation of film to promote cultural research in the study of film and the art of film to audience and to provide training in one way or the other. He said the workshop was not to teach participants about film archiving but to learn from participants the challenges they face.

Publicity

The news of the workshop was carried on the national networks featuring on prime time news at 7pm on Ghana Television and Radio Ghana. Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), Ghana News Agency (GNA) and NAFTI also published the news item on their corporate websites.

Following the publicity, other institutions called to enquire whether it wasn't too late to join the workshop. Two participants from the University of Ghana and Ghana Museum joined the workshop.

Familiarization Tour

After the opening ceremony, the team of experts including participants tour NAFTI studios, postproduction studios, Library and archives. They also visited NAFTI's digital viewing centre where archives are digitized for access to students and the public.

The team also visited the Information Service Department (ISD) where national audio visual archives are located. The team could not visit GBC archives as planned due to security reasons.

The workshop

Approximately 37 participants attended the school represented educational, broadcasting, museum and government institutions, responsible for a variety of information resources including AV materials.

Over the five days, Luca Giuliani conducted a detailed (and highly interactive) discussion of collection policy and curatorial responsibilities, Thelma Ross provided a densely-packed series of presentations on cataloguing, and David Walsh surveyed the technical and preservation aspects of audiovisual archiving from film to digital media.

Though most of the participants have already attended similar workshops and many had higher education in archival studies, they enjoyed the workshop and it showed in the level of participation, participants made a lot of contribution, comments and asked variety of questions during the entire course. Participants remarks were encouraging as they commended the experts of comprehensive and good job done.

During the evaluation period, participants made positive comments about the workshop and made suggestions and recommendations among others as stated below

- Small group discussion and practical cataloguing is a better option than a total lecture
- Practical hands on fund driven project such as proposal writing or writing archival policy for the various institution
- Take at least one institution as a case study and go through the steps and use that as a model for the other institutions to follow
- The workshop should be organized at least twice a year
- The need for participants to come together as a body to make their voices heard and for public awareness
- The need to have discussions with heads of institutions before the end of the workshop as a means of getting them committed to audio visual archiving in their various institutions
- The need to include prints and stills pictures archiving in future workshops
- The possibility of sending out questionnaire to participants ahead of time to know their educational background, what their needs are etc. so as to tailor future workshops towards participants particular needs.
- Handout should be sent ahead of time for participants to read through before the start of future workshops.
- The need for a press launch to create awareness on the importance of audiovisual archiving during future workshops.

Resource Persons Response

- FIAF does not have the funding to support these workshops, there is therefore the need to get funding from other organizations
- The primary am of the workshop is to update archival topics and not a meeting to help or rescue an organization.

At the end of the workshop, participants were given participation certificates whilst experts were given appreciating certificates in a closing ceremony. Soft copy of materials and photos were distributed on CDs for each participant.

NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION INSTITUTE
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32	Augustine K. Botwe	NAFTI-Broadcast	***	
33	Ellis Brenni	GBC	***	
34	Dr. Sarah Dsane	NAFTI-Broadcast	***	
35	Mary Ayim Segbefia	NAFTI-Broadcast	***	
36	John Kojo Denanyo	NAFTI-Broadcast	***	
37	Selorm Ahadzi Adogla	NAFTI-Broadcast	***	

***** Participants attended part of the workshop**