

Film Archives in Africa

A joint project between the Goethe Institute, Johannesburg
and the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF)

Final Report

After the completion of the project two conclusions could be drawn. On the one side it had been a great success – on the other side it revealed the urgency for more, continuing support.

While the training projects for archivists in archives with audio-visual collections and the support with technical equipment has been a success, it became quite clear that political, official support for the preservation of the national audio-visual heritage does not exist in many countries in Africa. This creates a very difficult situation for those archives with audio-visual collections. Much of the material in these collections is threatened with destruction. The non-existence of vaults with air conditioning, the non-existence of the necessary technical equipment, and the lack of professional archivists are the chief reasons the national audio-visual heritage is likely to be lost.

Requests have been made for national conferences with the participation of all people concerned – the politicians, the archivists, the filmmakers, the producers - at which joint guiding principles and possible solutions could be discussed.

The project included the following activities:

- Visit by Karl Griep, Head Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin, to the archives in Cameroon, Ghana, Tanzania and Kenya from 27 January-5 February 2010 and 29 March-9 April 2010.
- Financial support for the participation of five archivists – from Ghana (two), Kenya (one), Tanzania (two) – at the “NFVSA/FIAF Summer School” and the FIAF Congress organised by the National Film, Video and Sound Archive in Pretoria, 28 March-8 April 2011.
- Financial support for the Head of the National Film, Video and Sound Archive in Jos, Nigeria, to attend the FIAF Congress in Pretoria, 2011.
- Organisation of a “School on Wheels” in the Kenya National Archive and Documentation Service, Nairobi, 7-11 May 2012.
- Organisation of a “School on Wheels” in the National Film and Television Institute, Accra, Ghana, 13-18 August 2012.
- Purchase and transport of a 35mm Steenbeck editing table to the Kenya National Archive and Documentation Service, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Financial support for an internship at the Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Berlin/Hoppegarten, for the Head of the film archive at the National Archive of Malawi, 18 March-7 April 2013.
- Financial support for the Head of the film archive at the National Archive and Documentation Service, Nairobi, Kenya, to participate in “Le Giornate del cinema muto” in Pordenone, Italy, 5-12 October 2013. Mr Mwangi was given the chance to see examples of digital film restoration, to participate in the workshops, and to develop a wider contact with film archivists from all over the world.
- Financial support for the Head of the film archive at the National Archive of Malawi to participate in the ESARBICA (Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives) Conference in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 8-12 June 2015.

It is important that the work begun by this project should be continued and FIAF could play a vital role in its future. Further activities had to be postponed since the finances had all been spent. The hope of our African colleagues is that there will be a continuation. Help is needed especially in the areas of training and of detailed information about technical possibilities for long-term preservation. The archives also have a great need for technical equipment.

Many thanks go to the Goethe Institute in Johannesburg who helped to initiate the project and financed it. The assistance of the Goethe Institutes in Nairobi, Accra, Dar es Salaam, and Yaoundé has been vital to the work done with the archives in these countries; their help and their enthusiasm enabled the realization of the projects with the necessary professionalism.

Many thanks also to FIAF, especially to Christian Dimitriu and Christophe Dupin (Senior Administrators) as well as Jacqueline Renaut; their assistance with communication and co-ordination helped to realise the many tasks involved. And thanks to FIAF experts Luca Giuliani, Karl Griep, Egbert Koppe, Thelma Ross, and David Walsh who with great enthusiasm and professional expertise made a change in the lives of some of the film archivists in Africa.

A special thanks goes to Wolfgang Klaue who helped to develop the project, who added his experience and his knowledge to the different agendas, and who never lost his patience.

Eva Orbanz
Project coordinator
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