

INTRODUCTION

When a film archive is young, every step in its development, every film received or exchanged or shown, is something new and exciting and worthy to be reported. But when an archive is as old and as firmly-established as the National Film Archive, with many specialists pursuing different tasks, its activity becomes too complex to be contained in detail within a brief report. This present report, therefore, will be confined to only a few of the more notable developments of the year.

AMERICAN FILMS

Since it was founded in 1935, the Archive has always had difficulty in obtaining all the American films it wants. This year we have been in negotiation with the Motion Picture Association of America, by correspondence and by personal visits in both directions, and as a result we hope to reach a formal agreement with the Association putting an end to our difficulties.

ACETATE FILM STORE

The Archive's present film store has been designed exclusively for nitrate film. During the year, our Technical Committee and our architect have prepared detailed plans for a new acetate film store, which we hope we shall soon be able to start building.

CATALOGUING

By completing a new form of Provisional Catalogue, an important advance has been made in our cataloguing system. Now every film is entered in the Provisional Catalogue at the moment it is deposited, so that this Provisional Catalogue gives us a complete record of our collection. When the cataloguers have completed their research on each film it is then entered in the Permanent Catalogue.

TECHNICAL

Our Technical Staff have carried out successful experiments in film copying by liquid-layer printing, and also (with much help from Technicolor) in the copying of stencil-coloured primitive films. We have also had valuable advice from our Technical Committee on the preservation of magnetic tapes.

TELEVISION

Much progress has been made in establishing good relations with the television companies, and many television films and programmes have been deposited in the Archive for preservation. We have created a Television Committee, consisting of television critics and producers, to help us with this work.

NATIONAL FILM CATALOGUE

It has been suggested that the British Film Institute should undertake the publication of a British National Filmography, giving information bi-monthly of all films produced in Great Britain, and if it materialises this publication will be undertaken by the Archive. At the present time 15,000 copies of a brochure are being circulated to appeal for subscribers to this Catalogue.

NEED OF REFERENCE FACILITIES

The development of the National Film Archive is far from complete, and we must constantly press for money to meet our needs. We have been especially concerned this year with our lack of viewing equipment on which students (or even our own cataloguers) can study the films in our collection. As a result, we have just been given the money to buy one more viewer, but this will still not be sufficient.

FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE

Last year I reported the formation of The Friends of the National Film Archive, founded by its Chairman, Sir Arthur Elton. The Friends have already given us valuable help. They have organised demonstrations of early projection apparatus, have provided the money to employ a research worker to put our collection of film posters in order, and have given us two additions to our Library: namely, a first edition, in excellent condition, of Kircher's Ars Magna Lucis et Umbrae (published Rome, 1646), and a copy of the original shooting script of Hitchcock's film SPELLBOUND.

STAFF CHANGE

Mr Sam Kula has now resigned from the Archive, and returned to North America. His place as Deputy Curator has been taken by Mr David Francis, who for the last two years has been our Television Acquisitions Officer. Mr Francis will accompany me at the Rome Congress in order to meet FIAF members.

OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

Not long ago, we heard from Mr Jan de Vaal that members of the Dutch Royal Family had visited the Nederlands Filmmuseum. Mr Jacques Ledoux now has the proud distinction of calling his archive the Belgian Cinematheque Royale. Among the constitutional monarchies of north-west Europe these events are important and valuable forms of official recognition for our film archives. The National Film Archive has this year also received a recognition of the same kind; in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of June 2nd, it was announced that on the recommendation of the Prime Minister the Curator of the National Film Archive had been appointed an Officer of the British Empire (O.B.E.). These things are perhaps worth mentioning as an encouragement to new and young members of FIAF. The film archives of Belgium, Holland and Great Britain also started with very small resources and facing great difficulties, and they still have much to achieve; but gradually throughout the world film archives are coming to be accepted, even in the most conservative official circles, as important new museums of the future.