

## FIAF Cataloguing Commission

### REPORT TO THE ANNUAL CONGRESS

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This year has been a most busy one for the Cataloguing Commission:

#### Newsreels

Just following our report of last year, Commission member Roger Smither co-hosted the Mo-i-Rana Newsreel Symposium with Wolfgang Klaue. The Commission's contribution showed how catalogers working in different archives cataloged a single newsreel issue--an example from the Imperial War Museum which was issued shortly after the conclusion of the Second World War and featured views of the Paris Peace Conference, various sporting events, and other popular interest stories. The resulting cataloging records demonstrated alternative but strikingly similar solutions to problems of identification, indexing and materials' control. All participants stressed textual identification as the most labor-intensive and time-consuming aspect of cataloguing work. They further emphasized the importance of secondary sources in reducing the time taken for identification tasks to more manageable levels. The application of computer technology in assisting the organization and accessibility of cataloguing records was also emphasized. While organized access to images without the intervention of symbolic language (either written or spoken) is still in early stages of experimentation, Mr. Smither demonstrated a more readily accessible technology of optical scanning for scripts, coupled with component word search for subject access. While clearly inferior to cataloger identification/indexing processes, these new technologies offer possibilities for archives who cannot afford more labor-intensive methods.

Following the symposium, the Commission was asked to prepare a special manual for newsreel cataloging. Designed as a subset of the Commission's generalized descriptive rules, the FIAF Cataloguing Rules for Film Archives, published in 1991, the manual will base its descriptive bibliographic recommendations on that text. Subject access provisions will need to break more new ground.

#### Corresponding Members

During the past year we also continued our program of corresponding membership for the Commission. The plan has now effectively expanded our membership to include nearly 40 members from some 25 countries on 6 continents. Corresponding members participate in the work of the

Commission by contributing to specific projects, by writing papers for publication through our Cataloguing Commission Occasional Paper network and by contributing ideas for future activities. We are especially proud of them, and this year, one of them, Olwen Terris of the National Film and Television Archive in London, has agreed to join the Commission as a full member. We welcomed her at our meetings last September in Prague, and already she has been hard at work on several projects. The list of corresponding members is attached.

### **Occasional Papers**

Since last spring, two new Cataloguing Commission Occasional Papers have been issued. Occasional Paper No. 4: The ways of Cataloguing in the Cinematheque of Macedonia, explains by example how individual archives can develop specialized cataloging programs which accommodate specific needs while at the same time remaining well within the realm of world standards. Corresponding Commission member, Igor Stardelov, explains how his archive worked together with the Institute of Informational Science at the University of Maribor in neighboring Slovenia to design a filmographic database. The result, DATAFILM, contains filmographic and exhibition data, lists of credits and cast, technical records, and subject content and analysis. A separate specialized database, under internal control, manages the archive's film holdings utilizing Unesco's CDS ISIS.

In her paper, Occasional Paper No. 5: Cataloguing from Secondary Sources, Olwen Terris explains the rationale and methods of cataloging based on information found in reference sources of varying types. While every film cataloger recognizes that there is no real substitute for examining a film in the achievement of accurate cataloging, we all also accept the fact that economic necessities often demand exceptions. Ms. Terris explains that cataloging from secondary sources requires a special set of skills. These include an intimate knowledge of secondary sources and of their relative levels of accuracy. Furthermore, judgements must be made as to which films best lend themselves to the exigencies of secondary source cataloging and which absolutely require viewing. Problems to be anticipated from secondary source cataloging include inaccuracies and variations in titles and in names of companies, credits and cast. Cataloguing documentary materials from secondary sources frequently means that subject indexing will often be accurate but inadequate -- missing many specifics which a screening would have enabled the cataloger to identify.

### **Collections/Selections Policies**

The Commission wishes particularly to thank all those members who participated in our survey on collections/selections policies. Since the end of the year, we have received a total of 39 responses, incorporating 12 written policy statements. An initial review of these documents reveals--not surprisingly--that most archives choose to concentrate on collecting films of their own national production. Only sixteen archives indicated that they were subject to any statutory or regulatory type limitations. More than half the respondents indicated that economic concerns -- financial, space limitations, etc. -- force them to limit collections, but an encouragingly large number (15) said they did not experience such limitations. Other interesting issues relate to censorship and quality judgements, of which it is hoped we will be able to report more in Bologna.

## Genres

Commission Presidents, Ron Magliozzi (Documentation) and Harriet Harrison (Cataloguing), have agreed to collaborate on the creation of a preliminary draft list of genre terms for use in film archive work. The list will be used by the Secretariat in Brussels to provide provisional advice on genre issues. Olwen Terris has agreed to oversee the more long-term task of collecting and reviewing lists of genre and form terms variously in use by our FIAF archives.

## Computer Formats

Commission member, Carlos Roberto de Souza, reports that he has had a good response to his Occasional Paper No. 1: Formats, Formats, Formats. His examination of the submissions reveals a far greater disparity between elements and methods of defining, separating and organizing them than any of us had anticipated. This, of course, complicates the task of creating a specialized FIAF format -- one which could meet all our members' needs. Mr. de Souza is writing a report on his findings which he will issue as an upcoming Occasional Paper. His next step is to conduct a test utilizing a sample format to build a database with contributions from project participants.

## "Treasures" Database

In recent months, the Cataloguing Commission has begun working with the Documentation Commission on its project to build a database of FIAF archive holdings. The project is named the "Treasures" Database on Silent Cinema and is being built at the National Center for Film and Video Preservation in Washington. The database uses Cuadra STAR system software and is under the direction of National Center Archivist, Susan Dalton. Recently, the Commission supplied Ms. Dalton with additional archive member codes to be used in the database. We have likewise submitted this additional list to the Secretariat in Brussels and would like also to see it published in the Journal of Film Preservation. The new list supplements the one already published as Appendix F in the FIAF Cataloguing Rules for Film Archives.

## Commission Meetings

A special thank you this year to our colleague, Vladimir Opela of the Czech Film Archive, who splendidly hosted the Commission in Prague for its 25th Anniversary. Former members, Jon Gartenberg, Wolfgang Klaue, and Ani Velchevska joined us for both the work and the festivities.

**In Memoriam**

This year we also take time to mourn the death in January of our beloved colleague and long-term Commission member, Dorothea Gebauer of the Deutsches Institut für Filmkunde/Filmarchiv in Wiesbaden. Ms. Gebauer led a life dedicated to the welfare and professional advancement of fellow archivists. A selfless teacher and advisor, her concern for the welfare of her fellow human beings inspired all her extensive work for the Commission. We miss Dorothea and remember her life with admiration and joy.

FIAF Cataloguing Commission members:

Harriet Harrison (LC, Washington)  
Rolf Lindfors (Stockholm)  
Vladimir Opela (Praha)  
Roger Smither (IWM, London)  
Carlos Roberto de Souza (São Paulo)  
Olwen Terris (NFTVA, London)