

2.3. Programming and Access to Collections Commission

Report to the FIAF congress 2003
from the Programming & Access to
Collections Commission

The report will be on the following 4 issues:

- The Advanced Projection Manual
- Electronic subtitling
- Music for silents
- The Digital Film Archive

1: The Advanced Projection Manual

Torkell Sætervadet has been engaged to do the following three chapters according to the table of contents:

- 2: Designing and equipping a cinema for the presentation of historic and modern films.
- 5: 3D film presentation
- 8: Sound format and sound processing.

All in all some 55 pages delivered in text format. The designer at NFI are these days making it into pdf-files with illustrations. Hopefully we are able to demonstrate it in Helsinki.

This work has also resulted in a demand for Sætervadet's expertise. He was invited by Archimedia to Bologna last year to do a lecture on sound systems which resulted in his engagement as this years technical consultant at the Bologna festival. We think this gives credit to FIAF and the value of the manual.

However, we are short of money since the amount granted by FIAF last year only covers these three chapters. Torkell has applied for a scholarship to write the whole manual, but the result will come in a couple of months. If negative we have to discuss other means of financing it.

Furthermore we have to discuss how it should be presented on the web. If it should be free for everybody on the FIAF homepage or not?

Table of contents – main chapters

Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	Designing and equipping a cinema for the presentation of historic and modern films
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Chapter 4	Picture formats and aspect ratios
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Chapter 6	70mm film presentation
Chapter 7	Narrow gauge film presentation
Chapter 8	Sound formats and sound processing
Chapter 9	Presentation of video and other electronic/digital images
Chapter 10	Maintenance of projection equipment
Chapter 11	Maintenance of sound equipment
Appendix	List of suppliers of equipment and parts
	List of films, Dolby A, SR, SR-D, DTS, SDDS
	List of films, 70mm formats
	List of films, 35mm formats
	Industry standards and norms
	Further reading
	References

2: Electronic Subtitling

Starting preparations of a FIAF collaboration in electronic subtitling (We propose the abbreviations e-subtitling and e-subtitles) the first observation has been the huge difference in the practices in the programming of the various archives and festivals. Such practices include:

- no translation at all
 - simultaneous spoken interpretation without prepared translation
 - professionally prepared spoken translation
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- e-subtitles arranged by the archive
 - e-subtitles provided by an external professional film translation company

The spoken translation may take place be via loudspeakers or via earphones. The earphones may function via infra-red signals or radiowaves.

The e-subtitling procedure may be for instance:

- a system belonging to the professional film translation company (Spanish archives and festivals)
- a system developed by the archive itself
- Powerpoint (MoMA, Beograd, Bologna, etc.)
- Sublime Software (Helsinki, Lisboa, Centro Colombo Americano, etc.)

Electronic subtitling is a natural step with big advantages for archives and festivals with a tradition of prepared translations for films. It is a much bigger step for those who have no tradition of translating films or are used simultaneous spoken interpretation without a prepared translation.

Those who are already used to electronic subtitling and use it extensively, such as many Spanish-speaking archives, are extremely happy with the result. For instance, in Madrid, the average attendance has risen to an astounding 175 spectators per screening due partly to the fact that all films have Spanish subtitles. In Helsinki, the audience and the translators are very happy with electronic subtitling, which is so far only used for films which do not have Finnish, Swedish, or English speech or titles.

Cinema is also speech and text

Cinema is not only image and sound, but also speech and text. From the silent days, elaborate texts have been a part of the cinematic experience: florid intertitles assigned to D'Annunzio, omniscient narration by Griffith,

agit-prop exclamations by Vertov. Since the advent of sound, genres such as a Shakespeare film, screwball comedy, and commedia all'Italiana stretch the capacity of even native speakers.

But very often even in prestigious film historical festivals films are shown with only a simultaneous translation by a person who has had no chance to prepare in advance. However, even a silent film may contain a poem by Baudelaire, which no genius can ad lib into another language. Good translation is mandatory for the full appreciation of a film for those who are not native speakers of its language.

Initiative for an electronic subtitling network

Since the 1990s there are various affordable options for electronic subtitling. The total cost of the devices needed for electronic subtitling is a fraction of the cost of the installation of an earphone commentary apparatus. The total initial installation cost need not exceed 5000 EUR / USD (software + computer + video projector). A good electronic subtitling arrangement is simple and robust; the earphone commentary machinery is fragile to disturbances. A further advantage of electronic subtitling is that it ensures full enjoyment of the film's soundtrack (compared to earphone commentary) and makes it much easier to follow dialogue and difficult names and expressions.

For archives and festivals with a practice of prepared professional translations for earphone commentary the transition to electronic subtitling is smooth and instantly advantageous.

For archives and festivals with no such practice, the first step is the transition to prepared professional translation of films. It may seem expensive at first but is well worth it. It is a good idea to start gradually, preparing translations first of the big classics, which are repeated often. The idea is to build a library of translations. After some three to five years, more and more films will be repeated in the programme which have already been translated.

To make it more efficient for everybody, a network of film textlists, translations and electronic subtitling could help in many ways. Original language textlists are extremely valuable for the translator: they save a lot of time and cost and ensure accuracy. Translations themselves are hugely helpful when the language is a common one (English, French, Spanish, etc.); in Nordic countries, Swedish is accepted by all. At best, the electronic subtitles themselves can be shipped simultaneously with the print, either on diskette or as E-mail attachment. Usually, the electronic

subtitles are to be operated manually by a translator (with a silent film, just an attentive person). In an advanced stage, the electronic subtitles are time-coded: this is sensible when the same print tours extensively; this practice is already taking place in Spanish-speaking countries. The time-coded subtitles are valuable even when language is switched, as the time-code is valid for the print in any language.

Each interested partner should:

- name contact people
- make available information or catalogues of its library of textlists, translations and subtitling
- store textlists, translations, and subtitles in its database in a format to be easily forwarded on a diskette or E-mail attachment (preferably as a Word document)
- encourage exchange of professional translations
- emphasize native films, collect as data files translations of them in various languages and store systematically textlists, translations and subtitles of them
- take care of the copyright arrangements for the translations

Seoul proposal 2002

"We will do research into the different systems and if possible recommend one as a standard.

We also want to create a simple database for the titles that exist in translated forms in the different systems, and a recommendation to use English or another widely used language when translating so that it can be used by other archives when screening the same print.

When we have established these two projects, the commission will look into the access both regarding traditional film archive questions and the new media situation."

Comments, May 2003

- No standard seems sensible, as archives already have very different established practices.
- Titles that exist in translated forms in the different systems are best consulted in each archive's database. A network of contact people can be created. With the help of such a network it is easy to check quickly whether subtitles already exist. A joint database might be redundant and cumbersome to update. Besides translations, original-language textlists are equally valuable. Availability of them as data files (preferably as Word documents) should be encouraged.

- It is obvious that Spanish-speaking countries want to keep in Spanish, etc. However, many countries accept English subtitles, and English translations for, say, Japanese films help everybody.
- The survey questions have been discussed in Commission meetings 4 July 2002, 18 October 2002 and in communication with experienced users of electronic subtitling. The initial result: the practices vary deeply. On one extreme, it is quite common to have no practice of professional prepared translation at all. On the other extreme, in a country like Spain with an established tradition of electronic subtitling, there are seven companies, all mutually incompatible. An archive may have to re-translate films when switching companies.

ELECTRONIC SUBTITLING SURVEY (TEST VERSION)

1. In your film screenings do you have
 - no translation at all
 - simultaneous spoken interpretation without prepared translation
 - professionally prepared spoken translation
 - e-subtitles arranged by your archive
 - e-subtitles provided by an external professional film translation company
2. Do you have a system that can be easily operated by a person who does not understand the language?
3. Is it just possible to strike a button and have it done automatically?
4. Is it easy to skip lines?
5. What happens if the film is damaged?
6. What system does your archive use?
 - a system belonging to an external professional film translation company
 - a system developed by yourself
 - Powerpoint
 - Sublime Software
 - other
7. Can your archive use English subtitles?
8. Are you interested in participation in a electronic subtitling network?
9. Who would the contactpeople be?
10. Can you make available information or catalogues of your library of manuscripts, textlists, translations and subtitling?
11. Do you store textlists, translations, and subtitles in your database in a format to be easily forwarded on a diskette or E-mail attachment (preferably as a Word document)?
12. Do you translate all films that do not have your native language(s) in them?
13. How many translations do you need per year?

14. What kind of a copyright arrangement do you have for the translations?

15. What are the costs involved?

a) The hardware and the software costs of the system?

b) Translation (possible extra fees if there is no dialogue list / videotape / audio cassette)

c) Operator's cost during the screening

A nucleus of the network

Catherine Gautier (Madrid)

Ramón Font (Barcelona)

José Antonio Hurtado or Marlys Caillet (Valencia)

Guy Borlée (Bologna)

Julie Pearce (NFT, London)

Antti Alanen and Satu Laaksonen (Helsinki)

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Centro Colombo Americano

is building a network of circulating Spanish subtitles in Latin America

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3: Synchronizing music for silents

Silent films have always been a cherished part of film archive programming. Since the 1980s, there has been a veritable silent film revival. The standards for prints and exhibition practices have risen.

Silents were hardly ever silent, and music was even more important in the cinema of the silent era than ever afterwards. In the good cinemas of the silent era, the performances were actually cinema concerts. During the silent era, there was a huge corps of experienced musicians trained to

accompany the films from special scores, standard theme scores, or cue catalogues. At best, big orchestras accompanied the important films. It is impossible to revive this profession, but there is now a high awareness of how a silent film should "sound", and in special events and festivals this can be experienced. The great model and standard-setter has been the Photoplay Company. Its magnificent productions have fired enthusiasm for many classic films in unexpectedly large audiences.

Besides de luxe presentations such as Photoplay's, there are professional musicians trained to accompany silents. But all too often, absent-minded piano improvisation is offered. It can even have a distracting, even grating impact. In my opinion it is as a rule impossible to succeed in improvising a good accompaniment to a silent feature film. (There are exceptions, such as classical Indian music to Indian films.)

Almost all silents need a musical accompaniment (there are exceptions: films like *Nosferatu*, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* and *Zemlja* are at best without music), and the silents with brilliant original scores should be made available with those scores:

- *Cabiria* (Manlio Mazza)
- *The Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance* (Joseph Carl Breil)
- *Sången om den eldröda blomman* (Armas Järnefelt)
- *Nibelungen* and *Metropolis* (Gottfried Huppertz)
- *Entr'acte* (Eric Satie)
- *Ballet mécanique* (Georges Antheil)
- *Napoléon* (Arthur Honegger or Carl Davis)
- *Le Joueur d'échecs* (Henri Rabaud)
- *Bronenosets Potjomkin* and *Berlin, die Sinfonie einer Grossstadt* (Edmund Meisel)
- *The Wedding March* (J.S. Zamecnik)
- *Novyi Vavilon* (Dmitri Shostakovitsh)
- *Erotikon* (Machaty) (Jan Klusak)

Some late silents have always been easily available in prints with music, such as *The Wind*, *Sunrise*, *Queen Kelly*, *Fazil*, *The Four Sons*, *The Man Who Laughs*, *What Price Glory?*, and *Un chien Andalou*. They are often charming if played back properly; but even in prestigious events there have been horrible experiences as the projector has not been properly adjusted for Movietone.

CNC Bois d'Arcy has prepared a special print with soundtrack of *L'Assassinat du duc de Guise* with the classic original score by Camille Saint-Saëns.

There have been high profile projects to produce music versions of silent classics, most notably Charles Chaplin's personally composed

versions of all his feature films and the post-Mutual silents. In the USSR, many Soviet silent classics were released with soundtracks, often with beautiful results (such as *Statchka* with a Prokofjev compilation score).

Whenever a good score or musical arrangement exists originally or is specially commissioned for a silent film, it should be recorded and made available to be shipped together with the film print, if a soundtrack is not an option.

Negotiating rights for existing silent film scores

Photoplay's main objective is to promote Live Cinema, but it offers even a special licensing arrangement for using its recorded soundtracks for its restored prints. However, in regular daily film archive programming the current fees and practices demanded by the Photoplay Company for its recorded sound are impossible. Interested FIAF partners should negotiate with Photoplay a mutually attractive arrangement for using its magnificent catalogue.

A lot of expert attention has been paid to prestigious releases of silent classics on TV, VHS, laserdisc, and DVD. It would be worth it to negotiate options to use the recorded sound of those releases in film archive programming.

Models of synchronizing music to silents

In all models, the copyright has to be arranged.

1. The simple model: the film can be shown at a set speed, and no exact synchronization is necessary. The music is simply played back from the DAT tape, CD, DVD, etc.
2. Simple manual synchronization with music on DVD: the film and the music are synched on DVD. Exact synchronization is needed (explosions, etc.). During the film projection, the projectionist follows both the film on the screen and the DVD image on the monitor and makes manual adjustments to keep the sound in synch. If there are variable speeds, there is a running control information on the DVD screen (16 fps, 18 fps, 20 fps, etc.), perhaps even a preparatory warning of approaching change of speed.
3. Complex synchronization: the Photoplay model with adjustments to the projector machinery.

A project of collaboration in Helsinki

In Helsinki, there have been many approaches to providing silents with live music.

Lately, there has been a successful collaboration with the RSO, the Radio Symphony Orchestra of the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation. For the Centenary of the Cinema, a special score was commissioned from Yrjö Hjelt for the silent film *Mustalaisyurmaaja* (The Gypsy Charmer, Finland 1929). The RSO, conducted by Sakari Oramo, made a professional DAT recording of the performance, and the Finnish Film Archive has an arrangement by which that recording may be used. Each time, permission has to be cleared and a fee paid.

In 2004, the RSO will perform the Photoplay restoration of *The Thief of Bagdad* with the Carl Davis / Rimsky-Korsakov score.

For 2005, the project is *Sången om den eldröda blomman* (The Song of the Scarlet Flower, Sweden 1919), with the original magisterial Romantic score by Armas Järnefelt (a Finnish composer who was for a long time a conductor at the Swedish Royal Opera). It was the first Nordic feature film score, and a real trend-setter. The original notes survive in extenso at the Finnish Broadcasting Corporation, and as they are for the original long version, special arrangements are necessary for the surviving version, and have been already been researched by the Swedish experts Jan Olsson and Håkan Carlsson. Although the music has been performed in Sweden, no professional recording is available, with the exception of the film's 1930s sound reissue with the inevitable speed problem. – When the music is performed in 2005, it should be professionally recorded for eventual television, DVD – and programming use. The rights for the sound on DVD should be cleared and an eventual special DVD release prepared to be shipped together with the film print.

4: The Digital Film Archive

More and more archives are stepping into the digital area by placing or planning to place archival material on the net.

This way of access raises a lot of questions, for instance:

- what kind of material?
- for whom (a broad public versus academic researchers)?
- national or international access?

- should it be free on or a payment base?
- the etical problems of changing formats
- the tecnical side, how high resolution?
- how to overcome the insecurity of the rightholder?
- how to convince the director and cinematographer?
- how to secure the base towards dowloading?
- the easy to forget, but very important documentation side

These are just a few of the questions every archive has to answer if they want this form of access to their archive.

The Norwegian Film Archive has been granted money to start what we call THE DIGITAL FILM ARHIVE. It will officially open this autumn and out there will be some 100 hours of Norwegian featurefilms, shorts, documentaries and commersials.

For the next FIAF congress we suggest that the comission make out a report on the experiences the different film archives have on this issue. Maybe there can be a session with on-screen examples?

May 2003
P & A Commission

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