

CANADA

THE PRESERVATION OF MOVING IMAGES:  
STUDY OF ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES (1)

Submitted by Sam Kula, Director, National Film Archives

National 1. Feature films - 50 (20 receive theatrical distribution)  
Production Short films - 1000 (excluding advertisements)  
TV films - 50 (60 minutes or more in length)

2. Policy of producers re. preservation

estimate 2.a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) (English Language Service in Toronto,  
of holdings French Language Service in Montreal) - 800,000,000 feet of films; 20,000 hours  
of videotape.

CTV Television Network - 50,000,000 feet of film, 5000 hours of videotape.

National Film Board (NFB) - 8000 titles, primarily short documentaries.  
Crawley Films - 6000 titles, primarily short documentaries.

Private producers - 100,000,000 feet of film, shorts and features.

policy 2.b Material is generally retained for immediate and projected production requirements.  
NFB and Crawley hold master material and/or prints of all productions. NFB has  
program to recondition, restore and re-print older material - all nitrate films  
held by NFB was destroyed by fire in 1967.

CBC currently retains material that meets criteria as 'archival' - of permanent  
value to CBC or of long term historic value. CBC erases and re-uses videotape  
from programmes that do not meet criteria - this policy varies in application  
between production units, aq: 'entertainment' as opposed to 'public affairs'.

CTV Television Network erases videotapes judged of little value for future pro-  
ductions; films are re-cycled for stock shot value or retained for future use.

Private producers allow laboratories to hold masters and prints - material is  
occasionally destroyed when there are no claimants. Feature film production is  
not stable - material has been lost or destroyed through dissolution of companies  
and actions of individuals associated with productions.

In general both the 'public' (CBC and NFB) and 'private' producers do not 'preserve'  
material in a conscious, planned archival program. It is not in the mandate of  
the public producers (although some work has been carried out in recent years to  
make older films and programmes accessible) and the private producers lack either  
the interest or the funds or both. Material is occasionally destroyed deliberately  
to satisfy legal obligations; more often losses are accidental due to corporate  
changes and financial reverses, particularly in the feature film industry.

Material is not 'selected' for preservation. It is retained as a record of pro-  
duction and as a future production resource - the criteria is potential use.

- (1) It was not impossible to include in this survey notice of the very  
limited programs to be found in provincial archives and museums.  
The programs are of little significance at the moment and they  
do not incorporate any expertise or techniques that add anything  
to the field.

location of  
preserved  
material

2.c

conditions  
of deposit

2.d

The National Film Archives (NFA) (a division of the Public Archives of Canada) (Ottawa), La Cinémathèque québécoise (CQ) (Montreal), provincial archives, and certain regional and local archives.

Deposits in the two major collections (NFA and CQ) vary from outright gifts with all rights to highly restrictive agreements allowing very limited access on the premises of the archives.

Material deposited varies from master elements (original negative-picture and track) to sub-standard worn prints (distribution copies in 16mm, etc); videotape varies from 2-inch quadraplex masters to  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch or  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch reference copies.

Wherever possible the archives also secure documentation in the form of scripts, press books, posters, stills, reviews and correspondence relating to the productions deposited. Both NFA and CQ also collect and compile documentation and data on all Canadian productions.

The standard deposit arrangement for recent material restricts use to research on the premises of the archives. The archives normally attempts to secure the right to manufacture master material and additional reference copies. All other use normally requires authorization in writing by the depositor or the owners of copyright, or both as the case may be. A copy of the NFA's standard deposit agreement in English and French is attached as Appendix A.

2.e

technical  
conditions  
under which  
material is  
preserved by  
producers

There are wide variations in conditions for material held by producers both as regards to physical environment and intellectual control (cataloguing, retrieval, description).

At the National Film Board conditions are good with regard to temperature and humidity control (approximately international standards at 60°F and 50%RH). Access is by title - the NFB's published catalogues offer access to title by broad subject areas.

At the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation the physical conditions are good at the French Language Service in Montreal, and relatively poor at the English Service Language Service in Toronto because the holdings are stored in several buildings. Intellectual access varies - some of the material is catalogued, indexed or listed by the production unit, but there is no central catalogue of the holdings.

Material under the control of private producers or distributors is generally stored in poor environmental conditions - especially for colour film - and intellectual access is generally restricted to title cards entries, or a broad subject approach if the material is organized by subject for marketing purposes.

Access to 2.f  
the public

Material held by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is not generally available to the public, with the exception of certain broadcasts transferred to film and cleared for educational use in what is known as "the further use program". This has been in operation for two years and over a hundred

English and French language broadcasts are now in distribution. Material not in distribution is not generally available to researchers.

The National Film Board has roughly one-quarter of its productions since 1939 in current distribution. These are available to researchers and the public through the Boards 27 distribution offices throughout Canada. Material withdrawn from distribution is not generally available to the public or researchers.

Material held by private producers and distributors is not generally available to the public or researchers unless it is in active distribution or is otherwise being actively marketed, eq: direct sales.

**3. Institutions responsible for the preservation of moving images**

3. There are only two institutions in Canada whose primary objective is the preservation of moving images: The National Film Archives (NFA), Ottawa; La Cinémathèque québécoise (CQ), Montreal. Provincial archives and museums acquire and hold some material, but acquisition is not systematic and there is little or no conservation. The same is true of several local and regional museums and libraries holding limited collections.

The National Film Archives and La Cinémathèque québécoise are both members of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) and have undertaken to cooperate in carrying out their conservation programs. CQ has a special responsibility for french language productions. NFA is a national (both official languages) and international collection. Both institutions cooperate by sharing information, exchanging films, and through joint consultation before engaging in conservation work that may duplicate work already carried out or which may be less efficient in terms of quality and/or cost.

**A. Status, function and decision-making**

legal 3.A i NFA is a division of The Public Archives of Canada, a department of the  
status federal government charged with the conservation of government records and all records of "enduring value to all Canadians". The Public Archives is administered by the Dominion Archivist who reports to Parliament through the Secretary of State (The Film Commissioner who is the chief executive officer of the National Film Board and the President of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation also report to Parliament through the Secretary of State). The authority of the Dominion Archivist is embodied in the Public Archives Act, which is currently under revision - film and videotape will be specifically treated in the revised statute).

The chief executive officer of the NFA is the director who has exclusive authority over access to the collections, exchanges, acquisition priorities, and conservation practises.

CQ is a private, non-profit organization chartered in Quebec and administered by a Board of Directors. CQ derives support from a federal grant giving body in the arts, the Canada Council, and from the Province of Quebec. No consultation is available.

3.A ii Neither the NFA nor the CQ is profit making.

- 3.A iii a NFA - national and international, all types of moving images, feature length and short films, fiction and actualities, with emphasis on documentaries.  
CQ - national and international, all types of moving images.
- 3.A iii b Both NFA and CQ seek to preserve the version that most closely approximates the film-makers' original intention.
- 3.A iii c As far as possible both NFA and CQ seek to acquire the original negative for conservation purposes and a positive print for reference purposes. Increasingly  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch videotape copies are being acquired or manufactured for reference purposes.
- 3.A iv a/b NFA - 35,000,000 feet of film, 1000 hours of videotape.  
CQ - 4000 titles, features and shorts.
- 3.A v. a Legal deposit does not exist in Canada except for books and phonograph records published in Canada as specified in the National Library Act.
- 3.A v b There is no existing mandatory right to purchase material. (Such a right has been proposed in the revision of the Public Archives Act).
- 3.A v c Both NFA and CQ acquire material through voluntary deposits and occasional purchases. There is a right to reject material that does not meet selection criteria.
- 3.A v d Most voluntary deposits are the result of negotiations and are generally concluded with the signing of a deposit agreement.
- Both NFA and CQ select material that meets established criteria. There is no selection committee. Staff establish criteria and make selections with the occasional advice of subject experts.
- 3.A vi At the expense of the archives.
- 3.A vii Use of material acquired is generally restricted to conservation and reference on the premises of the archives. Deposits are generally of the physical material only. Rights are seldom transferred as well. No general agreement has been concluded with producers.
- 3.A viii Material is generally acquired at the end of commercial exploitation. Film may be available commercially, but is no longer actively distributed. Videotapes and TV films are acquired after broadcast and re-broadcast in accordance with contracts.
- 3.A ix Primary function of NFA and CQ is to conserve. Exhibition, reference and distribution (if any) are secondary functions
- 3.A x a NFA does not regularly exhibit films. Exhibition program is carried out in collaboration with and through the Canadian Film Institutes' National Film Theatre.
- a) projection to the general public.

CQ has a regular exhibition program - Annual attendance roughly 25,000.

Permission of copyright owners always sought prior to exhibition. Entrance fees are very modest - roughly one-third normal commercial cinema prices. Master material (prints, fine grains) are never projected. All projection prints have been protected by master material in conservation.

access 3.A x b  
to scholars

Researchers have access to all material for which there are viewing prints. There is no charge at either NFA or CQ.

loan of 3.A x c  
material

Neither NFA nor CQ distribute films, or loan out material (with a few exceptions - film classics - on the part of CQ). Both institutions collaborate with organizations that do distribute films by making the physical copies available once the rights questions have been cleared.

exchange 3.A x d  
of material

Under the rules and regulations of FIAF both NFA and CQ exchange films and loan prints with fellow members of FIAF, and with each other.

status and 3.A x e  
shots made

Both NFA and CQ will duplicate material for stock shot purposes, but neither one organizes nor catalogues the collection to facilitate stock shot sales.

reproduction 3.A x f  
of material

Material is reproduced for conservation purposes, for the manufacture of reference prints, for the purposes of exchanges, and to satisfy the requirements of donors and copyright owners with access to master material held by the archives.

preservation 3.A x g  
purposes

Both NFA and CQ will acquire material restricted to preservation and research purposes only, but the intent is to make the material as readily accessible as possible to the greatest number of people consistent with donor restrictions and copyright and other legal rights.

**B. The means used to collect and preserve moving images**

technical 3.B i  
conditions

Conservation methods vary with the original material. Nitrate stock films are transferred to acetate stock. Colour prints are transferred to three-colour separations in some cases. Videotape to film transfers are effected in some cases - videotapes are shelved and stored as videotapes in other cases. There are few hard and fast rules that govern conservation of moving images.

Material is generally stored in 50% RH and 50°F for black and white acetate stock film. Nitrate stock films are stored separately at roughly same conditions. Colour films at the CQ are stored at 35%RH and 38°F. NFA does not have cold storage facilities. Metal containers, are used, but containers made of an inert plastic have been introduced.

staff 3.B ii

NFA has ten staff members in technical services. Senior staff have technical college and/or extensive commercial laboratory experience. CQ relies on the National Film Board for technical and laboratory services.

3.B iii  
cataloguing

Neither NFA nor CQ has a catalogue of holdings. A card catalogue must be consulted on the premises of the archives. Film and videotape is generally catalogued by title, with references from major production and artistic credits. Actuality material (newsfilm and documentaries) is catalogued by subject. All significant personalities, events, etc., are referenced.

C. Financial Resources  
3.C i a  
buildings

NFA has 30,000 square feet in an office building opposite the Public Archives/National Library Building on Wellington St. in Ottawa. This houses administrative offices, documentation center, cataloguing unit, technical services, and an acetate store. NFA also has a nitrate store (capacity roughly 10,000,000 feet) and film printing unit (35mm and 16mm) at Rockliffe.

CQ administrative offices, documentation center and museum are located in an office building on McGill Street in Montreal. CQ vaults, 2800 square feet, nitrate and acetate, are located at Boucherville.

Cost of facilities and maintenance for NFA facilities are covered by Department of Public Works and Public Archives.

Cost of CQ facilities are met by CQ budget and partially subsidized by Province of Quebec.

3.C i b  
equipment

NFA has viewing equipment (Steenbecks, Vedettes), film printing equipment, 35mm to 35mm, 35mm to 16mm, (Bell and Howell),  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch videotape recorders and playback units (Sony), a 2-inch quadruplex videotape recorder/playback unit (Ampex), a 2-inch helical scan recorder/playback (IVC), and film to  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch videotape transfer equipment (Hitachi). NFA also has sonic film cleaning equipment, synchronizers, table viewers, and 35mm, 16mm and 8mm projection equipment.

CQ has viewing theatre equipped with 35mm and 16mm projectors, and access to viewing equipment (Prevost).

staff  
costs  
total  
budget

3.C i c

Staff costs met by overall budget.

3.C i d

NFA has non-salary operating budget in FY-77/78 of \$915,000,00. Funds from federal appropriation to Public Archives.

NFA has permanent staff of 27 plus four on contract.

CQ total budget is \$176,000 in FY 77/78. CQ has staff of 8 plus 2 half-time.

3.C ii

NFA allocates roughly \$50,000,00 for acquisitions.

3.C iii

NFA allocates roughly \$250,000 to nitrate/acetate transfers.

income 3.C v

NFA has no income from any activities.

CQ derives roughly \$20,000 per annum from exhibition program.

Description 3.D  
of problems

All archives face severe problems in colour conservation. Three colour separations are extremely expensive, triple the storage costs, and present new problems in registration when re-constituting the print. Cold storage (below freezing) is also very expensive and untested over the long term. At the present time videotape to film to videotape transfers involve shifting the image from a carrier with known severe limitations (all films shrink and buckle over time, the plasticizer dries out, the emulsion can be attacked by micro-organisms in the air) to a carrier with known limitations (the bonding agent in all tapes deteriorates over time, the oxide coating flakes off, some print-through will occur distorting the signal, the signal is at risk from accidental damage or complete loss through erasure). The challenge to the archives is to investigate and apply the new technologies of optical memory systems (videodiscs, etc.) and digital recordings to develop a long term (300-500 years) storage medium for moving images.

Such a system should involve miniturization (at least to the magnitude of standard microfilm and paper records) to reduce escalating storage costs, particularly energy costs for environmentally controlled stores.

At the same time the archives must learn to cope with the sheer volume of moving images produced for film theatres, television and, increasingly, for communications in business and education. Improving information networking so we know what has been produced is essential, as is the refinement of selection criteria. The archives must also work cooperatively to cover world production as it is manifestly impossible for any one archive to even attempt to be comprehensive.

Along with this rise in volume, particularly if television production is included, is the need to develop automated, or semi-automated retrieval systems for both internal use and public service. Catalogues that can be easily replicated and continuously updated are also essential, and since the technology has been readily available for at least fifteen years, this is obviously an economic rather than a technological problem.

What should be apparent to any objective observer of the world archive scene is that there has been practically no significant change in basic technology in the handling and storage of moving images since the invention of cinematography. The advent of videotape has complicated the situation, but since most archivists simply store videotape as film, or transfer videotape to film; the presence of videotape has not forced any changes. The key question in my mind is whether we conserve film qua film because of our historical association with the carrier, or do we conserve moving images, stored in the format that is most efficient for our purposes, with due respect for what we ultimately see on the screen. Electronic storage need not imply electronic display. A radical shift in the underlying technology need not mean the abandonment of the phenomena, social, cultural and aesthetic, that we associate with the film going experience.



National Film Archives

Archives nationales du film

Public Archives Canada Archives publiques Canada

This is an agreement for the deposit of films for conservation purposes with the National Film Archives (hereinafter called the Archives) by

.....  
.....  
.....  
(hereinafter called the Depositor)

1. The Archives acknowledges the receipt of the films listed below from the Depositor.
2. The Archives affirms that these films have been deposited in the care of the Archives for preservation purposes only and for bona-fide study and research on the premises of the Archives.
3. The Archives affirms that no public screenings of these films will be permitted while the films are in its custody without the express written permission of the Depositor.
4. The Archives acknowledges that title in the films listed below remains vested in the Depositor and that the Depositor has the right of access to them and may withdraw them from the custody of the Archives.
5. The Archives reserves the right to make duplicate materials from the deposited films if it finds it necessary in order to continue their proper preservation. The uses to which these duplicates will be put will conform entirely to the general agreement.

Signed for the National Film Archives

Date.....

.....  
Sam Kula  
Director  
National Film Archives

Receipt of the above Deposit Agreement acknowledged by the Depositor:

.....

Date.....

395 Wellington  
Ottawa K1A 0N3  
613 992-1383