

SOCIETY FOR FILM HISTORY RESEARCH

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PURPOSES

The cinema is now well into its seventh decade of existence. Compared with other art forms that is not a very long time; but with the increased speed of modern life and the accelerated development of all forms of activity in society today a great deal of development has been shown during those 65 years. One great revolutionary change took place in the late twenties when the talkies arrived, and several other important changes have occurred since.

The film has become established as a major cultural force of the twentieth century, and as such, as well as for its own sake, it is important that we understand why it takes the form it does, the influences that have been at work upon it, the influence it has had on other branches of society and on the other arts, the development of the organisation of the film industry and the effect of its power upon the artistic endeavour of the cineaste. We must know why certain countries produced great films at particular periods, and why other countries did not. And above all, we in this country should seek to discover the relationship between the British film industry and the rest of the world, how much it has been affected by movements abroad, both artistic and organisational, and how much it has ignored them.

For all this a study of history is necessary. There has been precious little historical writing on the cinema in Great Britain and just as little research. Indeed British writers and publishers seem in general to fight shy of anything serious on the cinema, unless it has already been published abroad. It is to remedy this situation that the Society for Film History Research was born. It is the Society's purpose to encourage, or even undertake, the basic research necessary to enable satisfactory historical writing

to take place, and to accumulate an adequate and accurate knowledge of the facts about the cinema, in Britain especially but also elsewhere, for good critical standards to become established. Its field is the whole period of the cinema in all countries and in all its aspects, from the development of optical toys and apparatus in the 19th century to the Free Cinema and Nouvelle Vague movements in the 1950's.

ORIGINS

Late in 1957 Mr. Ernest Lindgren, Curator of the National Film Archive in London, wrote a letter to *Sight and Sound* asking those who were interested in research on the cinema to write to him. The response was encouraging, and he called a meeting of those who had replied in November, 1958. This meeting discussed the situation and set up a committee to examine ways and means of forming a society and to prepare a constitution. It was apparent that there were already a number of people engaged on original research, but it was unco-ordinated and had little hope of being published.

The preparatory committee submitted a report and draft constitution to another meeting in January, 1959, at which the draft was voted into force and the Society for Film History Research was born. The members of the preparatory committee were elected to the Committee of the Society which was charged with the task of working out a plan of activities which would enable the purposes of the Society to be fulfilled. Progress was slow, for this was an entirely new venture and the groundwork had to be laid very carefully; and it was not until the Spring of 1960 that the main lines of development of the Society began to appear.

ACTIVITIES

The Society's main task is to encourage research. And for this its chief instrument must be its publications. A *Newsletter* was inaugurated during 1959 and is published approximately every two months. This contains news likely to be of interest to members, details of useful new publications and books, and information about the activities of other bodies working in similar fields. A journal, *Cinema Studies*, appeared in March, 1960, and is published twice a year; this is shortly to be increased to four times a year. It publishes articles about or embodying cinema history research, notes about research in progress, and reviews of important books.

The Society has already been able to put into contact people who are engaged in research into related fields of the cinema, thus helping the researchers and avoiding duplication of effort. A list of sources of cinema history is being compiled which will further aid researchers in this respect.

The Society is also able to initiate research itself. A comprehensive bibliography of British books on the cinema is being prepared, and a history of the film society movement in Great Britain has been started. Other projects are under consideration.

In addition to the above a number of lecture meetings will be held throughout the year addressed by people who are engaged on research or who have some special link with the cinema. Programmes of films are also envisaged, although these will normally be the concern of the National Film Archive.

The Society collaborates with archives abroad, the International Federation of Film Archives, film societies in Britain and abroad, the British Film Institute and National Film Archive, and the other bodies specialising in particular aspects of the film industry.

Membership is open to all, whether individuals or groups, who are interested in the aims of the Society. A membership application form is attached to this brochure and may be sent, together with the subscription, to the Hon. Secretary at the address indicated.

SOCIETY FOR FILM HISTORY RESEARCH

I wish to become a member of the Society for Film History Research and enclose the sum of £1, being my subscription for the year 196 .

and 5s.

NAME

PROFESSION

ADDRESS

[THE ABOVE IN BLOCK LETTERS PLEASE]

SIGNATURE..... DATE.....

I am engaged on/interested in the following lines of research:
I have in my possession a collection of material comprising:

[This information would be most useful to enable the Society to compile a list of sources of material and sources of knowledge for other researchers. The information will be treated as confidential if desired.]

Please send this form together with your subscription to:

MISS R. HEAWORD, Hon. Secretary, Society for Film History Research, ~~3 Hollybroke, Bull Lane, Chislehurst, Kent.~~

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