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DOCUMENTATION COMMISSION: PERIODICAL INDEXING

On behalf of the Documentation Commission, I wish to present a project for international cooperation in the indexing of film periodicals.

Such international cooperation has been established in many other fields (notably in the field of music)^{and}. We of the Commission feel that it is urgently needed in our field as well.

As we all know, a lot of valuable information is collected in periodicals, and film periodicals are no exception to ~~this~~ the rule. But as we also know, this information is of little or no use to us, unless it can easily be located. The film periodicals standing on our shelves contain an immense amount of information necessary for film research and documentation, but most of this information is never used because of the difficulties involved in locating it.

At present most of our archives, especially the ^{younger} ones, are not indexing the content of their film periodicals, due to manpower limitations. A few archives are doing this work, and they are to a great extent duplicating each other's efforts. International coordination of this necessary bibliographic work will therefore be of great benefit to all the archives, large and small, and of invaluable assistance to film research in general.

As I have already sent some material to you concerning this project, including a detailed project description; I do not think it is necessary for me to go through our plans in complete detail here. Instead, I shall just indicate the general outlines and principles which have guided us in elaborating the project.

For some time now The Documentation Commission has been concerned with the problems of periodical indexing. A few years ago the Commission started, on an experimental basis, an exchange of indexing information on sheets (like these), covering the content of only 14 film periodicals. Each sheet covers the content of one issue of one publication only. These sheets are regularly sent to the archives taking an active part in indexing the periodicals.

An important drawback with sheets, however, is that the information on a given subject, a given film or a given person, cannot be located without going through all the sheets. For this reason they have had very little success. Let me quote the librarian of the Film Department of the University of California:

"I found the sheets to be awkward and ineffectual due to the number of sheets it was necessary to consult; also the sheets cumulated, but the information did not".

In fact using the sheets is not much easier than going over the table of contents of each periodical issue.

After careful consideration, the Commission has decided that the best possible solution at present ^{is a combination of file cards} and an annual printed catalogue. This combination will afford us all the advantages and eliminate all the drawbacks of both methods.

The only system, barring computerization, in which information can be stored according to subjects, and in which new information can readily be incorporated is a card filing system. That is the enormous advantage of the index cards. The disadvantages are that a card system takes up a lot of space after some years, and is not especially appropriate for private persons.

These disadvantages can be eliminated by publishing an yearly printed catalogue, which contains all the information from the cards. A printed catalogue takes up very little space, and it can be sold to a broad public of film-interested people. I emphasize the word sold because the sale of the yearly catalogue can finance the entire project.

The index cards are to be issued in a different colour each year, enabling those archives who wish to do so, to eliminate last year's cards from their files when the annual catalogue is published. This is the solution to the space problem.

After some years there will a slight disadvantage resulting from having to consult several annual catalogue - this disadvantage can be decreased by the publishing of cumulative catalogues at say 5 or ten yearly intervals, perhaps with the help of computer technology.

I have had two sample pages of the printed catalogue made to give you an idea of what this catalogue will look like (distribute these) Unfortunately, it is the second proof, that I ^{can} present to you, and not the final printing. This is due to time pressure.

I will distribute some sample cards as well.

The entries have been arranged with a view to making it easy to find the desired references, an essential quality, but one which is notably lacking in many works of reference. We are using a standardized system of abbreviations, which will make both the cards and the catalogues accessible to users in all language areas. Both cards and catalogue entries will in addition contain a short

description of content in English. The cards are marked with keywords in English, but there is room for applying a keyword in your own language as well.

The catalogue will contain subject indexes in several languages.

This project can of course only be realized if member archives are willing to collaborate actively in collecting the information involved. By indexing a limited number of periodicals, each archive will gain access to information on a much larger number.

The Commission has prepared a list of 57 film periodicals of international interest. This list has been sent to you with other material on the project. It is not a final list, as we realize that relevant periodicals may exist of which we are not aware. Likewise it can be changed from time to time to correspond to changes in the world of film periodicals.

The most practical procedure is to have each archive index a small number of these periodicals, preferably those published in its own country. As each new issue of a film periodical is published, the archive responsible for that periodical fills out an indexing form for each article, interview and review in that particular issue. I have prepared a draft of the indexing form together with some indexing rules. The completed forms are mailed to the project office, preferably within a fortnight after the publication of the issue concerned. The Danish Film Museum has volunteered to establish this project office in Copenhagen. Here the information on the indexing forms will be transferred to file cards, which will be duplicated and sent to the member archives.

Information collected during a year will be accumulated into the annual printed catalogue.

On April 20 of this year, the Commission sent a description of this project to all 47 F.I.A.F. members, ^{archives} together with a questionnaire soliciting their opinions on the project. So far we have received replies from ²⁶ archives. ²⁴ of these are quite positive toward the project. One archive (The National Film Archive in London) states that the project will be of no help to them, since they are already indexing their periodicals in their own way, using cards of a different size than the one adopted by the Commission. Only one archive is negative toward the project as a whole: The Swedish Film Archive.

We asked 28 of the 47 archives whether they would be willing to participate actively in the project by indexing a specified number of periodicals published in their own country. ~~16~~¹⁷ of these archives have answered. ~~15~~ are willing to index all or some of the periodicals which we requested them to index. Some are even willing to index more than these. Only one archive refused completely to participate in the indexing work: The Swedish Film ARchive. This creates no problem, however, since the two Swedish periodicals on our list can easily be indexed in Denmark.

Some of the archives which were not requested to participate actively have indicated their willingness to do so. For instance the Uruguayan Film Archive volunteered to index 5 South American periodicals.

So far ~~30~~ of the 57 periodicals have been distributed among member archives. I am sure that at least a few more archives will answer our questionnaire and be willing to undertake to index some of the other periodicals. The periodicals left over (and it looks as if these will be British and French) will almost certainly be accepted by the more interested archives, as they ^{re}present almost no language problems.

Of the ~~27~~²⁶ archives which answered the questionnaire, ~~25~~²⁴ would like to receive the file cards. The ~~British~~^{NTA} do not, and the Swedes are hesitant.]

Then I would like to turn to the economic aspects of this project. It is estimated that the project can finance itself through the sale of the annual printed catalogue. I am personally convinced that the catalogue will interest a rather large public - both institutions and private persons.

Naturally certain initial funds will be necessary to operate the project until the first catalogue is issued.

I have made up budgets for the distribution of cards, the publishing of the printed catalogue together with a sales budget. (Distribute these).

These budgets are prepared on a basis of 8.000 references yearly. This number has been obtained by multiplying the number of issues per ~~year~~ periodicals on the list with the average number of references in each issue, calculated on the basis of one or two representative issues.

Page one contains four alternative budgets for the distribution of cards: 1) including all F.I.A.F. members (47) and all periodicals (57), 2) including all F.I.A.F. members and A-periodicals only (29), (the Commission has divided the periodicals into A and B periodicals depending on their degree of interest to an international public), 3) including full F.I.A.F. members only (34) and all periodicals and finally 4) including full F.I.A.F. members only and A-periodicals only. The expenses are given in Danish Crowns as well as in Swiss Francs.

Page two contains three alternative budgets for the publishing of the printed catalogue, depending on the number of copies printed: 10.000, 5.000 and 2.000.

Page three contains an estimated sales budget. There are three different price calculations depending on the number of copies printed. As you might see budget two and three operate with 2 different prices per copy: one for libraries and institutions and one for individuals. This is common practice when publishing bibliographical works, since the ordinary price tends to be too high for private persons.

CINEMATOGRAFIA IN PRESA:

At this point I should like to mention a publication which is already dealing with this kind of work, i.e. Cinematografia in Presa published 6 times per year by the Rumanian Film Archive. This ambitious publication is indexing the content of approximately 165 periodicals, ^{about} ~~less than~~ ^{less} half of which are film periodicals. Many of the miscellaneous periodicals are of purely local interest; the comments are in Rumanian only (with key words in Rumanian and French); and the publication# has no index, so that one has to go through all the issues in searching for material on a given subject.

In short, Cinematografia in Presa is no substitute for the kind of bibliographic system we need, ^{on an int. basis} However, the Rumanian Archive must have a lot of experience from which we could benefit; and the possibility that some of the work spent ~~on~~ in editing this valuable publication could be put to use internationally, must not be ignored.

For some time the Documentation Commission has been attempting to get in contact with the Rumanian Film Archive to discuss these matters, but to no avail.

RIFM ABSTRACTS.

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THE DANISH FILM MUSEUM

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