

THE DANISH FILM MUSEUM

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Mr. Jacques Ledoux
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→ Helsinki

November 20, 1973

Dear Jacques,

Thank you for sending me a copy of the correspondence between you and Michael concerning the indexing project. In my capacity of ex-editor of the project and as a member of the Documentation Commission I would like to comment on some of the points in your letter.

Re 1) No one would be happier than I if I could believe that we should not have any worries about the backlog of work. However, I am not quite sure that you realize how serious the situation is right now. The backlog is not going to be easy to deal with. Here are some statistics to show what I mean:

At this time last year we had sent out 105 dispatches with an average of 50 cards in each. This year 82 dispatches have been sent out so far with an average of 40-45 cards in each.

We are counting on about 175 dispatches altogether this year, against 140 last year. This increase is due to the fact that 1) some of the 1972 periodical issues are included in this year's dispatches, as they appeared after the editorial deadline, 2) more periodicals have been added this year, and 3) the average number of cards in each dispatch this year has been less than last year.

Deadline for the last 1972 dispatch was February 8, 1973. After this date only one dispatch was sent out with corrections and additions. It was necessary to stop at this date in order to have time for finishing the editorial work on the annual volume. The edited card set was delivered to Bowker at the end of February 1973.

If we are to keep the same deadline this year it means that we have got altogether 12 weeks left to complete the work in. This means 93 dispatches ($175 \div 82$) in 12 weeks = between 7 and 8 dispatches per week. Do you really think that this can be

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accomplished by the new arrangements you have made in Brussels? As far as I understand another girl has been hired to replace Josseline. This girl has started working already and Josseline stays on till December 15. However, I am afraid that one person will not be able to cope with the backlog in the months which are left.

I agree that it is quite normal that somebody should be ill from time to time & take holiday etc. However, the unfortunate thing about this year's arrangement (which was the only solution at the time) is that the practical and the editorial functions take place in two different cities and thus the editor has no possibility for assisting in getting the cards out when an emergency situation arises, something I was able to do last year. I must confess that I feel terribly guilty about the off-set machine, being the person who suggested to use it. From all the investigations I made in Copenhagen I did not get the impression that it would be slower to work with than the Minigraph duplicator. As it turned out it obviously is.

I am afraid that you are completely wrong in your assumption that the backlog of work is mainly due to the fact that so few indexing forms for 1973 were received in January and February. This was completely normal and will happen every year. Because: 1) from Jan 1 to Feb 8, 23 dispatches were sent out from Copenhagen covering the 1972 periodicals, 2) the first 1973 periodicals were not published right after Jan 1, and you must also allow time for the indexers to do the indexing as well as time for mailing the forms, so you could not expect to receive more 1973 indexing forms in Brussels than you did. Every year the months of January and February will mainly be used for sending out cards for the previous year's periodicals.

Re 2) The Executive Committee's idea about having a half-time assistant editor sounds very good indeed. However, I have my doubts that it will be possible to find a person who is capable of doing the editorial work and who is at the same time willing to do a dull typing job 95% of the time and be paid the salary of a typist. If it is possible it would definitely be a very good thing for the project, of course.

However, according to my experience 1/2 a person would not be enough to do all the typing. I would estimate that a 3/4 person to do the typing and a 3/4 person to do the duplication and assembling of the cards would be a more realistic division. In order to get the maximum use out of the relatively small staff I must stress the necessity for having all the functions brought together in London from March 1, 1974. If the two 3/4 persons (or 1 1/2 persons) were working together with the editor in London the work could be done in a much more flexible & rationalized way.

Re 3) Here again, I must confess that I feel responsible for the wrong estimation of the editorial work-time involved. But working as I did last year, doing most of the work for the project in my spare time, it was extremely difficult to make a correct estimate. However, this mistake was very quickly brought to FIAF's attention and I think it was only fair to offer the editor a new contract.

I realize that FIAF has quite a heavy machinery and I also realize that budgets cannot continuously be changed. But considering all the difficulties the project has encountered

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during this first year of standing on its own feet economically, I should have thought that it was only fair to present new figures to give a better picture of the situation as it developed. I realize, however, that we should not have called these figures "budgets". Thus, forgive us for being amateurs in bureaucracy!

Re 4) I agree that the best solution would be to have an office near the National Film Archive and I am very happy to learn that FIAF is prepared to pay rent for such an office. It will mean a lot for the future of the project to get a fixed set-up in London.

I see FIAF's point of view in wanting to have some kind of supervision, although I think that this supervision ought to be of a formal kind rather than a day-to-day supervision. The editor, in my opinion, ought to be responsible for the daily work but should have somebody to turn to in case problems should arise, economical, staff or otherwise.

I am afraid that this letter turned out to be a long and dreary one, but this project is so close to my heart that I am very concerned with the future of it. If it should fail now because of practical difficulties, I would have wasted almost two years of my life on nothing, and I don't think I could bear that.

Finally some practical suggestions for a solution to the problems:

1) A 3/4 (or 1/2) typist should be hired in London from January 1, 1974 at the very latest. At this time our typist here, who has done all the typing since mid-August is going to attend a 6 weeks course at the Danish library school and will not be able to do any more typing for FIAF. At that point I also think that the Danish Film Museum cannot be expected to invest more man power in the project than it has already done.

I think it is essential that the typist should be hired in London, as the final work period before the cards have to be delivered to Bowker will be so hectic that the time delay in mailing everything London-Brussels, Brussels-London could be fatal.

2) The type-writer should be moved from Brussels to London and converted to English current. This could be done right away, as all the typing is being done in Copenhagen until January 1.

3) A "budget" should be worked out on the costs which would be involved in setting up an office in London: rent, furniture, equipment, stationery, etc.

4) Office space should be rented in London from January 1 or by March 1, at the latest. If office space is not found from Jan 1, it should be investigated whether Michael Moulds could house the typist as well, for the first two months of 1974.

5) The duplication and assembling of cards will have to continue being done in Brussels till March 1, in order to sustain the uniformity of the cards for 1973.

If the one person cannot cope with the backlog an emergency plan must be worked out, such as immediately hiring extra help for e.g. assembling the cards.

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6) From March 1 another 3/4 (or 1/1) office girl should be hired in London and the duplication and assembling of cards moved from Brussels to London.

7) A decision should be made as to whether the Secretariat would like to keep the off-set machine, or whether it should follow the project to London. If it is decided that the Secretariat should keep the machine, other reproduction methods must be investigated. One possibility would be to acquire a Minigraph duplicator in London, but there might be other possibilities as well. Also Bowker will have to be consulted about what card quality they demand to get. Some practical problems will arise if we switch from one method of reproduction to another in connection with the first dispatches of the 1974 cards, but I suppose that this problem can be solved somehow.

I think all these items should be worked on immediately. Anything I can do in this connection I would gladly do, but I suppose that the "practicalities" must be taken care of by cooperation between you, Michael Moulds, Kevin Gough-Yates and Jon Stenklev.

I am very grateful and glad to hear that the Executive Committee appreciates the value of the indexing project to such a degree that FIAF has accepted to "lend" the project money to survive the expected deficits in 1973 and 1974. I am still optimistic about 1974 and believe whole-heartedly that there will be no deficit then, but that is a matter of belief, I suppose. Anyway, once the royalties on the sale of the annual volumes start coming in regularly, I think that our economy will balance quite well.

I sincerely hope that the immediate crisis the project is in will be resolved, and I believe that you will do what you can to help solving the problems.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance.

Cordially,


Karen Jones

PS. Has the 1972 volume been dispatched to the FIAF members from the Secretariat yet?

c.c. Eileen Bowser
Kevin Gough-Yates
Michael Moulds
Jon Stenklev