

INTERNATIONAL INDEX TO FILM PERIODICALS

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EDITOR'S REPORT

Office

The lease expired on the Shaftesbury Avenue office on September 30th. Our solicitor has informed the landlords that we shall quit on or before December 30th. No reply has been received so far.

Infodoc is still in residence and will leave by the same date. They are prepared to meet their share of the increased rent for this quarter when we are called upon to pay it.

I have looked at a number of offices in central and inner London. It is very difficult to find offices of under 500 sq ft such as we need. Rents for "standard accommodation" are around £17 per sq ft in the central area which is more than we can afford. I found one or two offices in N1 and NW1 which would have been suitable at £10-£12 psf, but because of our present situation I was unable to take possession.

The move is bound to involve us in some expense which has not been budgetted for, estimated at:

Redecoration of old office	500
Legal costs	1500
Removal and new office costs	1000
	<u>£3000</u>

Annual volumes

The arrangement with St James Press has not worked out as well as hoped. The revenue comes through very slowly, especially from the USA. From the information they supply it is hard to tell what the true position is on sales, but the number of sales in the USA seems now to have been restored to what it was before the collapse of our arrangement with the American Film Institute. But there is no sign yet of the substantial increase in UK and US sales we hoped for.

Following an approach by Alfred Krautz, I went on Nov. 13th with Eberhard Spiess to see the Munich publisher K.G.Saur who publish the Cinematographers and Set Designers Directory. Mr Saur is definitely interested in publishing the annual volume, but I do not yet know if we can work out a satisfactory deal. He is also keen on publishing the microfiches, but this may not be so desirable for us since we would then be totally dependent on Saur for our income. Anyway any arrangement over fiches is impossible for 1987 since we have already invoiced our subscribers. Mr Saur is coming to London shortly, and I hope to have another meeting with him.

Computer

Oriel, the company who were going to provide our software and process our computer-produced fiches, have ceased trading and may be taken over by another company.

However Saur put us in touch with another computer company (Computaprint) in London with whom they do a lot of business. The British Library also use Computaprint to produce their big retrospective catalogues in volume form and on microfiche so they are very familiar with our type of work. I had a discussion last week with their Senior Account Manager and I am confident that they can provide us with a better service than Oriel. It would also be quite convenient if the deal with Saur goes through.

I shall be meeting their Technical Director next week and they will then submit an estimate for our work.

Staff

My assistant Susan Oates has accepted a post with the British National Film & Video Catalogue at the BFI. She leaves on December 19th. I have already advertised for her replacement in the Guardian.

Future prospects

The Interim Accounts and Budgets 1987-1990 show the present position and future outlook. Even if the income from St James which is still due on the sales of 1984 volumes is received this year there is a deficit of £3885. To this must be added estimated moving expenses of £3000. It must also be borne in mind that we have been obliged to invoice subscribers earlier each year and defer payment on as many bills as possible for as long as possible.

After fifteen years of sustained effort by successive editors the PIP has yet to become self-supporting. Whenever the PIP Working Group meets we consider every possible strategy to save money or generate income. In Pordenone this year we discussed the following:

1. More cooperation with the BFI
2. A fresh approach to Film Literature Index
3. Relocation of the editorial office
4. Grants from outside sources
5. The approach to the Council of Europe
6. Possible new publishers
7. To ask the supporters if they are willing to pay an increase for inflation as envisaged in Rapallo
8. Some form of subsidy

Most of these ideas have already been rejected as impractical or have been tried and abandoned.

Yet in every respect except the financial the PIP must be regarded as successful. Our present crisis has come at a time when there are signs of hope for the future. We have acquired eight new subscribers this year, though we have done very little publicity recently. Six of them were for TV only. Many of our TV subscribers would seem to be likely customers for the film service. Is the reason that they do not subscribe to both services the fact that the film service costs over twice the TV? With our own computer we will have greater flexibility e.g. we could produce an English/French version and offer it to TV subscribers at a reduced price. The computer will also give us a better designed fiche, easier to read and with more entries to the fiche. The system will dispense with cards and the sorting that goes with them, and will enable us to produce the author and director indexes automatically and save days of staff time.

However some solution must be found to our financial difficulties and our increasing debts. The suggested price rises for volumes and subscriptions are I think on the limit of what is possible before we start to lose sales. Some hopeful lines of action have been mooted, but not yet realised. Unless costs can be reduced drastically, or another source of income found, we shall need some form of continuing subsidy in the region of £5000-£6000 per year in order to survive.