



International Federation of Film Archives

M.M.

INTERNATIONAL INDEX TO FILM/TELEVISION PERIODICALS

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EDITOR'S REPORT

Computer/Microfiches

I was warned that no new computer system is adopted without problems and our experience has certainly borne this out. Our main difficulties have centred on the conversion of the output from our computer to a tape format which can be used by the microfiche bureau to produce the fiches. This conversion has not so far been achieved first time and delays have resulted in the production and dispatch of the fiches.

Additionally we have not yet found a bureau capable of processing the accents and diacriticals. These are all coded in as we input the entries, but the bureaux do not have the software or the expertise at present to deal with them. It is only a matter of time before this problem is solved, but in the meantime the fiches are going out without accents. I am assured that Computaprint will have no problems in this respect when they come to set the annual volume.

Up to now the fiches have been produced in the 24x reduction as before. In a letter to subscribers in May I asked that anyone who would not be able to read the 48x reduction should get in touch with me. Only one subscriber wrote to say they would not have the correct equipment, and they have now, I believe, sorted this out. The only other reply reported that the subscriber was quite happy with the proposed change. (This ratio of response is fairly typical of any communication with subscribers.)

Staff

There has been a big change in the relatively stable staff situation of the past few years. This year, for one reason or another, we have had six different people in the two part-time positions. It has involved much interviewing and training during this very difficult period in our history. I am hoping that the two assistants I now have, each working for three days a week, will stay for a reasonable length of time.

Annual volume

Largely as a consequence of the staff changes work on the 1986 volume has been much delayed. However the final task, typing the author index, is now in progress and the volume should be printed and published in January.

St James Press

There has been some improvement in the flow of income from St James since their 'partnership deal.' has gone through, but not much. In total we have received £9747 from St J(UK) for the sale of the 1984 and 1985 volumes, with approximately 200 standing orders. £1118 is still owing for sales from February to October 1987. When we have received the full amount this will represent an income of about £23 per book according to my guesswork.

The US position however is quite different. With 300 standing orders they have distributed the 1983, 1984 and 1985 volumes and have remitted to date £8006. By my calculations we must be owed at least \$10,000 (note: last year this would have given us about £7140, today it would make £5490). One difference between the UK and US is that their service charge in UK is £5 and in the US it is \$15. The service charge difference should have been wiped out by the fact that at the rates in force at the time we charged much more for the volume in the US.

The arrangement is obviously unsatisfactory, but what are the alternatives? A straightforward commercial deal with a publisher would bring in much less than St James promised, and probably no more than they will have actually delivered. But at least they would pay up regularly one hopes. But if we are to get anything like the income we need from the books, we shall have to take over the distribution ourselves. I am reluctant to suggest this as the staff are already over-burdened, but I think we have no choice. I am investigating the possibility of using a warehouse to handle the storage and shipment of the volumes, as we have very little room to cope with that here.

One thing bothers me. I understand that some US libraries are reluctant (or not allowed) to make payments outside the USA. If we had an organization in the US to whom payments could be made this would overcome this problem. They would not be concerned with the books themselves, nor with the invoicing, but simply record and bank the payments and pass the income to us. I look forward to suggestions on this.

It is regrettable that we should have to change our distribution arrangements yet again, since this always has a bad effect on sales but, as I say, there seems to be no alternative. It is important to make the decision now, since two volumes will be published in the next six months.

Financial outlook

It was always evident that 1987 would be a difficult year. The heavy costs of terminating the lease on the Shaftesbury Avenue office and the expense of the move and the setting up of the new office, plus the necessity last year of deferring payment on many bills: all this meant that the benefits of cheaper rent and rates, and the new comfiche system would not be felt this year. I feel greatly relieved in fact that we have only had to borrow £2000 from FIAF this year. I feel reasonably hopeful that in 1988, providing we do not lose too many standing orders and that the cash flow enables us to meet the volume printing costs, we may succeed in achieving our budget without any of the usual crises.