

INTERNATIONAL INDEX TO FILM/TELEVISION PERIODICALS

Oct 29 1992

EDITOR'S REPORT

1. Publications

The 1991 film volume was published on time in July this year. We included as a supplement to this volume the 1990 bibliography of members' publications. This added to the costs of the volume without generating any income, however in discussions with the Documentation Commission we agreed that it was a worthwhile service to FIAF. We intend to make more of a feature of the bibliography in the next volume by mentioning it in publicity and on the title page, and to bring the dates into line by including both the 1991 and 1992 publications.

The 1987-90 television volume, being the first tv volume to be produced from the computer, is experiencing some technical problems at Computaprint. We expect these will soon be overcome and the volume published, though later than planned, in December.

I am personally delighted to report that we have at last published the second edition of the FIAF Classification Scheme for Literature on Film and Television. Although to some extent the use of computers has superseded the need for classification, the discipline of thought imposed on the subject by the scheme should make it an essential requirement for all archives who collect literature on film and/or television. Not all archives however have yet ordered copies of the scheme!

2. Office

Our second three year term at Canalot Studios expires next March. The rent we are paying at present is very high for the depressed state of the London property market, and it is quite likely that the landlords will reduce the rent for the next term. However it is probable, based on the experience of other tenants I have talked to, that the reduction we will be able to negotiate will not be adequate, especially considering that parking restrictions are about to be imposed in the area. In any case London Transport being what it is, Anthony Blampied has a very long and tiring journey every day and, if I can no longer travel by car, I shall be in the same position. I intend to give notice in December that we shall not be renewing the lease and am already investigating properties in areas more accessible to both of us.

3. CD-ROM project

Infodoc have transferred our 1983-86 data from their Ontel computer system onto 5 1/4" diskettes in a form which our consultant from Computaprint has been able to convert into a format compatible with our Revelation software. Unfortunately there are unavoidable elements which have to be corrected in most entries. Consequently each of the four years' data has to be printed out, proofread and corrected manually. This is time-consuming work but we hope to be able to complete it in time for the first CD.

When this part of the project is completed our database will span the period 1983 to the current year. This means that there will be an undesirable overlap between the CD and our microfiche cumulation of 1972-86. To avoid this I am proposing to have the 1982 data keyed into our current database, and hence included on the CD, and we will then be able to use a previous microfiche cumulation of 1972-81 to complete our service.

We have supplied the Open University with some sample data and I shall be visiting them next week to review a demonstration of the pilot proposal. Providing the development of the CD goes according to plan we envisage producing the first commercial discs, covering 1982-92, in April next year.

4. Office equipment and computer

Our present computer, a 386SX 16Mhz machine, is proving quite incapable of dealing with the increased size of our database. Many processes now have to be run overnight, and even the simplest, such as producing a printout for proofreading, can take all day. We are therefore obliged to replace it with a faster machine with a bigger hard disk, at a cost of about £1500.

I believe that the time has come for us to invest in a fax machine. It will be of particular value in checking details of information, for which a letter is too slow and cumbersome.

Our photocopier has had to be replaced after 10 years hard labour.

5. Finance, subscriptions, etc.

As can be seen in the attached financial chart the costs for hardware have almost wiped out any positive balance that could have helped next year, which will be a particularly difficult year both financially and in the extra work to be faced in order to achieve the CD-ROM.

I am however confirmed in my opinion that our future can only be made secure by the success of the CD. The payments for the 1991 volume are unusually slow in coming in. Many agents and booksellers are not taking up their pro forma invoices. The following subscriptions have been cancelled:

Birmingham (UK):Martineau	£745.00
Lund: Studenters FS	£485.00
Marburg: University	£745.00
L.A.: American Film Inst.	£990.00
Wellington: Listener Ref. Libr.	£235.00

This makes a total of £3200. The AFI cancellation, which includes their support, was received without warning, explanation or apology. One new subscriber (Taipei) has been acquired.

Indexers, which are always a worry, continue to fall out, not to be replaced. I think this is probably one of the less obvious effects of the world recession in that documentation staff are being cut down and staff time is not being allocated to this task. It can only result in a less effective PIP, with us falling behind on our coverage, and unable to take on new periodicals. We now have exactly no indexers for television periodicals, not to mention many film periodicals. Without the efforts of a very few archives, notably The Museum of Modern Art (Ron Magliozzi) and the Cinematheque Quebecoise (Rene Beauclair), who do far more than their share, we could not continue.

Consequently I have come to feel that the PIP now has no alternative but to accept this state of affairs, and by making a success of the CD-ROM, use the income generated to employ a full-time third member of staff. This will enable us to cope with indexing a large proportion of the major language periodicals, as we are trying to do now with insufficient resources.

Beyond allowing £5000 for development costs this year and next I have not yet included the CD-ROM in the budget. I will produce a detailed budget for next year after further discussions with the Open University, but at this point I anticipate that we shall probably encounter cash flow shortages. I would like to ask if FIAF could help us to face these with short term loans if necessary.

Michael Moulds
Editor