

HUMAN STUDIES FILM ARCHIVES
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

FIAF 1986 Activities Report

The Human Studies Film Archives is administratively located in the Department of Anthropology, Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. The Director of the Film Archives is currently the chairman of the Department of Anthropology; however, the assistant director is responsible for overseeing the Archives' daily operations and long term planning.

1. Acquisitions

Acquisition activity for the year was slowed as the Human Studies Film Archives staff dealt with the substantial backlog of films and video acquired in previous years. Nonetheless, some sizable and notable collections were accessioned. Among those are:

- edited films and outtakes from TIBETAN BUDDHISM: CYCLES OF INTERDEPENDENCE (1982) and PRESERVING THE MONASTIC TRADITION (1981)
- edited archival video series totalling 16 and a half hours entitled THE INITIATION INTO THE KALACHAKRA TANTRA BY HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA OF TIBET (1982).
- edited film entitled RASTAFARI VOICES and a related video documentation project concerning women in the Rastafari movement.
- 1923 Italian actuality film entitled I GIGLI A NOLA documenting the Giglio Feast in Nola.
- Film dating from 1912-1928 of Eskimo life in Point Barrow, Alaska.
- film outtakes from two film projects shot in India entitled A ZENANA: SCENES AND RECOLLECTIONS and TRAGADA BHAVAI: A RURAL THEATER GROUPE OF GUJERAT.
- film outtakes from the American Universities Field Staff film project shot in Bolivia in 1973.

2. Preservation

Approximately 40,000 feet of 16mm and 35mm motion picture film was preserved. Major preservation undertakings included: two preservation projects for 35mm nitrate film collections, one of Northwest coast American Indians (1926-1932) and the other of Alaskan Eskimos (1912-1918) were begun. We anticipate completion in 1987. Reconstruction of the original camera rolls was continued for the Turkana Conversations Film Project, 1974, an important ethnographic film project shot in Kenya, Africa. Preservation work continued on the 700,000 feet of 16mm film shot of the !Kung Bushmen in the Kalahari Desert between 1951-1982. The staff also coordinated for the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution a major project to preserve all the films of India's well-known ornithologist, Salim Ali.

The HSFA's new cold storage vault is non-functioning. The vault is not able to hold the designed humidity requirements. It is now thought that an additional and substantial expenditure is required for retrofitting the vault. Unfortunately, the present location of the vault--and offices--will be undergoing major construction in the next five years necessitating removal of the Film Archives. Until a permanent site can be identified, the vault will not be upgraded. The National Archives has granted us courtesy storage for a large portion of the archival collections and the remaining is stored in an older vault which maintains minimal acceptable environmental conditions. At this time there appears to be no immediate solution for this serious problem.

3. Cataloging/Documentation

Unfortunately, due to the loss of the Human Studies Film Archives Cataloger and a Museum-wide hiring freeze, very little was accomplished in the area of cataloging. Collaboration with other Smithsonian archives using the Smithsonian Institution Bibliographic Information computer system continued throughout the year. A synchronized sound annotation was recorded by Allison and Marek Jablonko for their footage on the Maring people of Papua New Guinea.

The Film Archives staff responded to more than 175 telephone and written inquiries during the year. Nearly 100 researchers used the Film Archives' collections or consulted with the staff. Six requests for research duplication of footage in the collections were granted.

4. Film Showings

Through the "Human Legacy" series, the Human Studies Film Archives continued to work in cooperation with the Natural History Museum's Office of Education in presenting diverse anthropological films and video to the general public.

The Film Archives joined with the Smithsonian's Office of Folklife Programs and the Museum's Office of Education in planning a film festival featuring films documenting traditional craft. Several films from the HSFA collection appeared in the festival program.

6. Budgetary Matters

The Human Studies Film Archives is federally funded through Congressional appropriation to the Smithsonian Institution. In spite of threats from the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, the Film Archives managed to maintain an operating budget equal to that of the previous fiscal year.

8. Special events

The Human Studies Film Archives sponsored an international scholarly conference entitled "Researching Dance Through Film and Video". 125 participants attended the two day conference held in April at the Museum of Natural History.