

THE MOTION PICTURE,
BROADCASTING AND RECORDED SOUND DIVISION
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
WASHINGTON, DC

F.I.A.F. Activities Report, Fiscal Year 1984

ACQUISITIONS OF THE YEAR

The collections of the Division continue to be enriched by materials received from a variety of sources. Several important gifts of films and television programs were received, and motion pictures and television programs were deposited for copyright purposes at a record rate. To supplement these acquisitions the Division purchased a number of important films which would not be acquired otherwise. For the first time, recordings were made off-air of television broadcasts originating from PBS.

For the past several years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of motion picture and television titles registered for copyright. In 1976, the total registrations were only 3,316 titles; in 1980 this increased to 7,314, and reached 12,187 in FY1984. By far, the largest increase has been in the category of television programs (2,091 in 1976 to 4,977 in 1982), increases having occurred in every category of material selected except 8mm, a format which is becoming obsolete. The number of feature films registered increased from 215 in 1976 to 540 in 1982, the increase being the result of the registration of foreign feature films being distributed in the U.S.

The number of titles available for selection has been reflected in the number of titles actually added to the collection. This figure grew to an all-time high of 12,975 titles added during FY1984. Of this total, 3,791 titles were for motion pictures, and 9,184 were for video items. Among the feature films received were: ZELIG, THE RIGHT STUFF, DINER, TERMS OF ENDEARMENT, GREMLINS, GHOSTBUSTERS, and INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM. Among the foreign films received were: LES VACANCES DE MONSIEUR HULOT, WILD STRAWBERRIES, THE SEVEN SAMURAI, LA TRAVIATA, GERVAISE, I VITELLONI, and LOLA MONTES.

The Library's collection of broadcasts of news on television was increased by the transfer from National Archives of all of their copies on videotape of NBC news from July 11, 1976 through March 31, 1982 and ABC news from April 11, 1977 through March 31, 1982. We have received taped archival copies of the news broadcasts of the major US networks which have been recorded by the Television News Archive, Vanderbilt University.

In March Paul Spehr, Assistant Chief, visited the Field Offices operated by the Library of Congress in Pakistan, India and Egypt to discuss acquisition of motion pictures and television broadcasts through these offices. As a result of his visit, and an earlier visit to our office in Brazil, orders have been placed for copies of a number of Indian feature film productions, mostly films made by India's so-called "new wave," and several Egyptian documentary films, Rede Globo, Brazil's major television network, presented to the Library a gift of programs, and we are discussing a possible exchange which will result in films from LC being given by Globo TV to the Cinemateca do Museu de Arte Moderna.

This year the American Film Institute gave the Library more than 240 motion pictures on nitrate film. Most of these films were rare early film productions made by pioneer American and French companies during the first thirty years of film production. AFI also acquired and gave the Library a number of copies of television broadcasts from the 1950's and 1960's as well as viewing prints of several feature films. The most unusual gift from AFI was a copy of STREETS OF NEW YORK, an experimental television broadcast made by NBC-TV in 1939. It is one of the earliest surviving television broadcasts.

PROGRESS IN THE FIELD OF PRESERVATION

The construction of new cold storage facilities have been delayed and work on the planned facility will not start until 1985. The planned facility will have a capacity of 250,000 cans.

The Curatorial Section of M/B/RS is working with the National Archives and Records Service, the LC Preservation Office, the National Bureau of Standards, and private industry to design an archival container for storage of motion pictures. Tests are being conducted on various plastic materials.

In 1984, 1,334 titles (7,526 reels, c. 6,000,000 ft) were selected to go to the laboratory. The laboratory copied 1,018 titles (4,321 reels, 3,598,446 feet, of which 3,052,371 feet was nitrate-to-acetate master positive or acetate duplicate negative and 546,095 was acetate negative-to-acetate positive projection print). The sprocket-drives on two printers are being converted to accept greater amounts of shrinkage

evaluate the condition of the nitrate before more expensive film-to-film copying is done. We are also testing whether video transfer may prove satisfactory for preservation of travelogs, training films, and other productions whose subject matter may be interesting but whose production values may not justify the expense of conversion to safety film.

CATALOGING - DOCUMENTATION - RESEARCH

A special project to load minimal records into an automated database for every title in our nitrate collection was completed on September 30, 1984. Records for 18,200 titles were put into the system, and only a small number of titles requiring special examination by the nitrate vaults staff has not yet been input. The staff at the nitrate vaults is creating more complete records for titles selected for preservation, and the Quality Control staff and Laboratory staff have begun to use the system as they work on the film. The nitrate control system has already improved the efficiency of the nitrate preservation program. Even before half of the titles were loaded into the system the procedures for shipping films to the laboratory were changed, eliminating paperwork and reducing staff time by about one half. The process of selecting titles to go to the lab is now done more quickly and accurately. The vault staff is immediately informed of the selection of a title and the work done by the vault is immediately known to the staff in Washington. This has resulted in a greatly improved flow of film into and out of the laboratory.

The burgeoning acquisitions of copyrighted film and television programs has created problems for the staff of the Processing Section. Backlogs grew at an alarming rate while the staff moved to the Madison Building and worked with the Curatorial Section to build the nitrate control system's database. In order to speed up processing, Pearline Hardy and Michael Godwin of the Processing Section developed procedures to use the Copyright Office computer data for films by "capturing" their records and adding shelf location, provenance information, and minor format modifications, for use as catalog cards. This information is now recorded on the word processing equipment used to produce 3X5 catalog cards for the Division's records. Several meetings were held to plan for including cataloging by M/B/RS in the Library's MARC/MUMS database, the on-line system used to catalog all of the Library's collections. It is hoped that we will begin to use this sophisticated system in early 1985.

The number of persons using our research facilities has increased 9% this year. In all, 8,953 people used the Division's two reading rooms. Of these, 1,610 researchers viewed films and television programs (an average of 9 reels each) in our film study room. M/B/RS' Reference Staff provides two levels of reference service: service to the general public who want to use the Division's resources and expertise in our study areas, and more specialized service for researchers who need to view or listen to items from the collection. Our new study facilities which opened in 1983 and are very accessible to the public, and are providing service to many more people who come to consult a periodical, find a review, seek

guidance in order to buy or rent something, satisfy a curiosity about a program, event, film or tape. These are new researchers who represent a major growth in our service to the public. The "newer technologies" have spawned a new kind of demand--from the home video enthusiast looking for copies of his favorite show, to the cable television production company looking for inexpensive footage to fill those many program hours.

Researchers come to M/B/RS from many parts of the globe and from many distinguished organizations. This year we had researchers from Australia, India, Brazil, Venezuela, West Germany, Turkey, Portugal and Japan; from Central TV (London), the National Democratic Campaign Committee, the U.S. Information Agency, and ARD television (Germany).

EXHIBITIONS

This was the first full year of operation for the Mary Pickford Theater, which opened in May 1983. The theater showed 101 films, primarily from the M/B/RS collections, on 71 evenings throughout the year. Three calendars announcing these programs were published to provide descriptions and other information about the films.

Among the primary series formulated for the theater were "Paramount Silents," a major, two-part retrospective drawn from LC's extensive holdings of silent films produced by Paramount Studios between 1914 and 1930; "Canadian Documentaries;" "Technicolor Cinematographers," which showcased a number of the Library's irreplaceable Technicolor prints;

"Neglected Recent Features" and "American Society in the Korean War Years." A series of Mary Pickford's own films was also shown, prints for most of which were lent by the Mary Pickford Company. Special events included live piano accompaniment for a silent film, *The Caveman*, a new feature from the People's Republic of China, and "The Library of Congress on Film." Guest speakers included Peter Biskind, editor of *American Film* magazine, discussing American film in the Korean War years, John Schuchman of Gallaudet College, discussing silent film and the deaf community, Chi Wang, Head of the Chinese and Korean Section in LC, discussing filmmaking in the People's Republic of China, and--from the M/B/RS staff--David Parker, discussing the career of director Lewis Milestone; and Paul Spehr, discussing archival problems in color preservation.

In February Buddy Rogers and Jane Withers appeared at the Pickford Theater to talk about their movie experiences to an invited audience. In September we hosted a reception on the occasion of the opening of the film series, *FLIGHT IN FILM*, which is being jointly presented by the Library and the Air and Space Museum.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Mr. Rudy Buchel, Laboratory Supervisor, attended the summer school sponsored by the International Film Archives in East Germany, and visited preservation labs in: Berlin (DDR), Koblenz (FDR), Bois d'Arcy (France) and London. The experience has broadened his outlook and increased the perception of the entire laboratory staff, giving new excitement to the preservation process.