

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS—Washington

FIAF Annual Report, 1986

1. Acquisitions of the Year

In addition to the regular acquisitions of films, TV programs, documentaries and other moving image materials which are received through registration for U.S. Copyright, the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress received three major gifts in 1986 which greatly enhanced the collection. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC) Television Network donated a significant collection of kinescope negatives for approximately 20,000 television broadcasts from the beginning of television broadcasting in the 1940's through the late 1960's, a period when NBC was one of the prime television broadcasting organizations in the U.S. Turner Entertainment Company, which recently purchased the MGM/UA library of motion pictures, gave the Library new, projection-quality 35mm prints of more than fifty of the greatest feature film productions made by MGM between 1920 and 1950. These titles, which were not previously in our collection, are a "hit parade" of well-known classics such as HALLELUJAH, THE BIG PARADE, GREED, CONQUEST, ANNA CHRISTIE, ANNA KARENINA, DAVID COPPERFIELD, THE WIZARD OF OZ, GONE WITH THE WIND, FLESH AND THE DEVIL, THE MERRY WIDOW, CAMILLE, THE CAMERAMAN, RED DUST, MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY, GRAND HOTEL, DINNER AT EIGHT, NINOTCHKA, THE SCARLET LETTER, THE WIND and other equally recognizable titles. Several independent television producers in the United Kingdom gave the Library video copies of recent programs and sometimes whole series. Among them were UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS, THE BATTLE FOR THE FALKLANDS, CRIME INC., JEWEL IN THE CROWN, KING LEAR, and THE UNKNOWN CHAPLIN.

Wesleyan University loaned M/B/RS the kinescopes for the pioneer cultural television series OMNIBUS, which not only broadcast the first televised

opera and ballet, experimental cinema and live television but also dramatized many important works of literature. The series, which ran during the 1950's, is specially remembered for introducing Alistair Cooke and Leonard Bernstein to U.S. audiences. It is uniquely valuable to M/B/RS because it was produced by our Division Chief, Robert Saudek, who was assisted in the production by our new Acquisitions Specialist, Mary Ahern.

2. Progress in the Field of Preservation

New cold-storage vaults with a capacity of 120,000 cans were completed this year. After a test period, we began moving in film from our growing collection of acetate black-and-white pre-print material, including the Kinescope negatives in the NBC collection. The vaults have been operating with consistent levels of temperature and humidity, 55° F (12C) and 45% RH, with virtually no fluctuation over a 24-hour period. We are continuing the test with the FICA system. All newly received 35mm color feature films are now prepared for cold storage by staging them through the FICA machine. Unique film and videotape originals are now being protected by making service copies on videotape for researchers. The unique original copies are stored in the cold vaults.

Although the nitrate preservation program was affected by the severe budget situation this year (see below) we still managed to process nearly 3,000,000 feet of film in our preservation laboratory. Most nitrate is now routinely copied on immersion printers which remove all but the worst scratches. A new movement designed to handle the non-standard perforations used in the early days of film production was added to our optical printer,

making it possible to produce improved images from early Edison productions and many other turn-of-the-century films. We believe that the image quality and resolution of our current preservation is the best that our lab has ever produced. We copied several color films: *GYPSY SWEETHEARTS* (Vitaphone, 1935), a three-color Technicolor short made about the same time as *BECKY SHARP*; *SONS OF LIBERTY* (Warners, 1939), an Academy Award-winner directed by Michael Curtiz; *BABY BOTTLENECK* (Warners, 1945), a Looney Tune directed by Bob Clampett, and the *GAY PARISIAN* (Warners, 1941); a rare filming of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo performing Gaité Parisienne. Hollywood companies have been very cooperative and supported preservation projects. Through MGM/UA (now Turner Entertainment) we bought copies of several color features for our Collection, which they were copying from our nitrate film. Internegative and projection prints were ordered for *GOLD IS WHERE YOU FIND IT*, *DESERT SONG* (1942), *SHINE ON HARVEST MOON* (last reel) and *ELIZABETH AND ESSEX*. MCA/Universal loaned the surviving pre-print material for three of Preston Sturgis' classics: *THE GREAT MCGINTY*, *SULLIVAN'S TRAVELS* and *HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO*. New acetate masters and theater-quality projection prints were made.

3. Cataloging, documentation, research

After a long period of planning, the Processing Section, which catalogs all of our collection, began to enter records for moving image materials into the MARC/MUMS Visual Materials Online System (VM Online), the Library's online database which is compatible with the catalogs of the Library's book, periodical and non-book materials. It is a uniform system, exchangeable with other institutions which use the same system, MARC. In anticipation of

this long-awaited occasion, the Division's staff was reorganized to eliminate a previously-existing middle-level processing position and to increase the number of basic level positions (accessioners) and professional catalogers. The VM Online system allows the entry of both minimal records, with only certain required information entered, or more sophisticated records with detailed cast, credits, production information, physical description, summary and subject headings. Training is underway and the first records have already been entered into the system.

The number of readers using reference facilities continued to increase. This year nearly 4,000 persons used the study facilities. 1,700 of these researchers viewed films or TV programs from the collection. These researchers continue to come from all parts of the world as well as from the U.S.

Reductions in the Library's acquisitions budget forced a 25% cutback on the purchase of foreign periodicals, including film periodicals. On a brighter note, funds were found to increase the microfilming of the collection of scripts, press books, and plot synopses which were sent to the Library as descriptive material for films and television programs registered for copyright. The collection contains material for more than 200,000 titles which have been registered since 1912. The records for Class L (Motion Picture Photoplays) have been microfilmed from 1912 through 1955. This is a remarkable resource for the study of films distributed in the United States as it includes most of the major Hollywood films, many independent, non-theatrical films and some important foreign productions released in the U.S.

4. Film Showings

This year 247 film and television productions were shown in the Pickford Theater, beginning with a traveling series, "Before Rashomon: Japanese Film Treasures of the '30's and '40's." This opening series was presented jointly by the Library and the Japan-American Society of Washington. Introductory lectures by experts were provided. Charles Dickens, in rare adaptations from American and British films and television, filled the following month's programs. A varied selection of Shakespeare on film under the title, "Acting it Many Ways: Shakespeare on Film and Television" marked our first collaboration with the Folger Shakespeare Library, and featured introductions by leading scholars. "Noir Landscapes" supplemented that series. In the second half of the year, 78 evenings were devoted to showing 141 films and programs on "American Satire," "Real Life America," and "Movies and Music." Dr. Scott Simmon, Curator of the Theater, planned the programs and wrote notes for all these events which are widely and deservedly heralded.

The circulating of films from the M/B/RS collections to universities, museums, festivals, and other archives has met with welcome positive response. Among the 43 institutions which drew on the Library's film and television collections were the Museum of Modern Art, the Pacific Film Archive, Cinémathèque Française, the British Film Institute, Filmoteca Española, the Amon Carter Museum, the Black America Society, and Cinemateca Portuguesa, Festival of Festivals (Toronto), Festival d'Avignon and the Cinémathèque Québécoise.

5. Exhibits and Publications

An exhibit, Charles Dickens and the Performing Arts, was presented in the foyer of the Mary Pickford Theater in conjunction with the series of films based upon Dickens' works. A catalog of our collection of films about President Theodore Roosevelt and those associated with him was published this year, THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT ASSOCIATION FILM COLLECTION: A CATALOG. It was edited and compiled by Wendy White-Hensen and Veronica Gillespie.

6. Budgetary Matters

This was a year of severely limited budgets for all parts of the U.S. government because of the effects of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1958 (Gramm-Rudman-Hollings) and other budgetary cutbacks. The nitrate preservation program was particularly hard hit as the budget was cut by one-sixth. In addition, one vacancy in the Library's motion picture laboratory went unfilled and we were not able to hire a much-needed staff person for quality control. In spite of these cutbacks, the quality of laboratory work remained at a high level and the lab output was only slightly below that of the previous year. The so-called Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill cut back the budgets of all governmental agencies by 10% from their previous years' levels. The Library of Congress budget, which is part of the budget of the U.S. Congress, was even more severely cut. No new positions were authorized, and when positions became vacant they could not be filled.

7. International Relations

Harriet Harrison continues her important work on the FIAF Cataloging Commission. Ms. Harrison chaired the Commission meeting in Amsterdam and attended the annual Congress in Canberra. Staff members Patrick Sheehan and Sarah Rouse also attended the Canberra Congress; in addition they visited the film archive in New Zealand. Paul Spehr attended the FIAF Executive Committee meeting in Glasgow and the FIAT meeting in Montreal. Michael Godwin, Assistant Head of Processing Section, also attended the FIAT meeting. While in Canada, Mr. Spehr visited the National Film and Video Archive in Ottawa. Robert Saudek visited London in September, discussing acquisitions of British television productions and feature films with the National Film Archive and several British film and TV organizations.

8. Special Events and Misc.

In May, 1986, the M/B/RS Division hosted the semi-annual meeting of the Film/Television Archives Advisory Committee. More than 90 persons from more than 50 institutions in the U.S. and Canada attended. Several films from the Library's collection are included in the American Federation of Arts' new touring program, BEFORE HOLLYWOOD. We took the occasion for this tour to remaster several of these films, and the new copies are substantially improved over previous versions.