

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

NATIONAL FILM COLLECTION

REPORT 1973

The year has been a significant one, not only for the National Film Collection but also for the Australian film industry and for the study of film in Australia. The staff structure and funding of the National Film Collection have been reviewed and increased. The development of the Collection has also been marked by the development of closer associations with other film bodies in Australia and with FIAF members overseas. The Australian Government has undertaken a major review of the Australian film industry and has announced the establishment of the independent Australian Film Commission with increased support for film production and distribution. Professor Jerzy Toeplitz, President of FIAF in 1948-72, has been appointed Director of the Newly established Film and Television School.

ACQUISITIONS

Australian feature films acquired for preservation during the year included THE GLENROWAN AFFAIR (1951), TIME OFF (1947) and MARCO POLO JR. VERSUS THE RED DRAGON (1973). The latter title is of particular importance as the first Australian feature-length cartoon film.

Agreement was reached with Twentieth Century-Fox Corp. for the deposit of 75 feature films and approximately 100 shorts produced by this studio in the 1930's and 1940's. This collection includes TALES OF MANHATTAN, SONG OF BERNADETTE, HOW GREEN WAS MY VALLEY, DRAGONWYCK, A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN and many other notable Fox releases of this period, and is by far the largest group of American films so far added to the National Collection. The material is in nitrate dupe negative form; the production of viewing prints and preservation copies will be undertaken as part of the copying programme.

Continuing cooperation of film collectors and private individuals enabled us to add a number of other significant individual items, including some interesting examples of American animation in the 1920's and 1930's, and some Australian newsreel fragments of the 1920's and earlier. Australian independent film maker Mel Nichols deposited the original negatives of documentaries which he produced during the 1940's. These include material shot in Indonesia as well as in various parts of Australia.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The work of transferring to 35mm safety film some 2 million feet of Australian newsreels produced prior to 1951, begun at the end of 1972, is now well underway with about 400,000 feet completed. This project is being undertaken in cooperation with the company concerned and is in addition to the normal preservation work.

When the copying is completed in 1976, the National Film Collection will hold a fairly complete coverage of AUSTRALIAN MOVIE TONE NEWS and CINESOUND REVIEW newareels produced between 1931 and 1950 and will become the nation's major documentary film repository of this period.

During the year, a National Television Collection was inaugurated and the groundwork laid for acquisition and preservation on a wider basis of Australian television productions. Programmes of historical significance are being acquired in 16mm kine form. Programmes acquired include FEDERAL FILE, FACE AUSTRALIA and CHEQUERBOARD.

Staff of the National Film Collection worked closely with the Australian Commonwealth Film Unit (now Film Australia) in compiling early footage for THE PASSIONATE INDUSTRY: AUSTRALIAN CINEMA 1920-1930. This 60 minute film traces the fortunes of the Australian cinema industry in the years before the coming of sound and was largely made from actuality and feature film footage selected from the resources of the National Collection. The film was conceived as a sequel to the CFU'S earlier film, THE PICTURES THAT MOVED.

PRESERVATION AND RESTORATION

During the year approximately 100,000 feet of nitrate film was transferred to acetate, including a number of silent Australian feature films in danger of disintegration for which adequate preservation materials did not previously exist. These included A GIRL OF THE BUSH (1920), THE LIFE'S ROMANCE OF ADAM LINDSAY GORDON (1916) and Charles Chauvel's early films MOTH OF MOONBI (1926) and GREENHIDE (1927).

Restoration of Charles Chauvel's feature film JEDDA (1954) was undertaken, involving reconstitution of the film on Eastmancolor stock from the 20 year old separation positives and matching of the visuals with the best surviving sound track. The project was undertaken both to restore an important film as closely as possible to its original state, and as a means of making a practical assessment of the technical difficulties involved.

Delivery was taken of a four plate interline viewing table early in the year, and this has expanded our film viewing and examination capabilities.

OVERSEAS VISITS

Two members of the Library's film staff undertook important overseas visits: The Chief Film Librarian (Mr. Edward Vellacott) participated in the Congress in Moscow, and subsequently was able to visit FIAF member archives in London, Washington, Ottawa and Los Angeles. The Film Archive Officer (Mr. Ray Edmondson) completed a five month study tour in which he was able to visit twelve member archives in England, Europe and North America, and attend the Summer School at Staatliches Filmarchiv, Berlin. Both officers were deeply grateful for the help and co-operation so readily extended to them by FIAF members. It is hoped that as a result of these visits, active contacts and exchanges can be developed with FIAF colleagues overseas.

STAFF AND FINANCE

Following an organisational review, the number of staff positions has been augmented to a total of seven, of which five were filled at the end of 1973. The remaining positions - that of Technical Supervisor and assistant - are being filled early in 1974.

The budget of the National Film Collection has been significantly increased during this year. The total expenditure in 1973/74 for the acquisition and preservation of film and television materials will be A\$100,000 (US\$140,000). All staff and administrative expenses are met by the National Library.

ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER AUSTRALIAN FILM BODIES

During the year there has been much activity and examination of the roles of the various film bodies in Australia - in particular, of the Film and Television School, Australian Film Institute, National Film Theatre of Australia, Film and Television Board of the Australian Council for the Arts as well as of the National Film Collection. As a result, much closer ties are being established between each of these bodies.