

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF FILM ARCHIVES

A F R I C A N P R O J E C T

The International Federation of Film Archives (F.I.A.F.), founded in 1938, is an association of 43 film archives and film museums throughout the world. The aims of the Federation are as follows :

- a) to promote the preservation of the artistic and historic heritage of the cinema and to bring together all organizations devoted to this end.
- b) to facilitate the collection and international exchange of films and documents relating to cinematographic history and art, for the purpose of making them as accessible as possible.
- c) to develop co-operation between its members.
- d) to promote the cultural development of cinema art and culture.

Among recent publications undertaken by the Federation are the F.I.A.F. MANUAL ON FILM PRESERVATION prepared with the collaboration of specialists from leading archives and treating all aspects of the problem (construction of vaults, preservation of nitrate, acetate, color film, tapes, etc..). This book is available in German. English and French translations are under way. The F.I.A.F. CATALOGUE OF SILENT FEATURE FILMS IN MEMBERS' COLLECTIONS has been edited, and a Supplement is planned for the near future. The Program Commission has made a selection entitled 150 FILM CLASSICS, 1895 - 1930, indicating the archives in which these films can be found. Two further projects which will be ready shortly are ARCHIVE PUBLICATIONS, including books, brochures and programs published by members of F.I.A.F. available for distribution or sale, and finally a brochure entitled HOW TO FORM A FILM ARCHIVE which is being written with the view of informing and aiding developing countries towards this aim.

The principal goal of the Federation's African Project is to aid in the formation of film archives in the developing countries in view of the cultural and educational facilities which such institutions can offer in the domain of screen education and professional

training, and also in order to assure the preservation of the material filmed in these countries. The Federation would like to aid in avoiding a repetition of the errors of the past, where even in Europe, where the film archive movement is considerably developed, many priceless early documents are already lost to posterity. We cannot overemphasize the importance of preserving all these early films, for it is not possible to ascertain in advance which ones will be of greatest importance in the future. Therefore, one of the urgent needs which will be answered by the Federation's Project is the preservation of the beginnings of the African production, with the prospect of setting up archive centers of mechanical documentation which will include along with national film production, basic international film classics, international scientific and educational films, eventually photographs, music bands and other national and international audio-visual archive material.

The Federation considers it feasible to put this project into effect by selecting 3 or 4 African countries where such archive centers are desired and can effectively be established within the near future. It is to be noted that this project is limited to non-Arabic Africa as contacts have already been established with a number of Maghreb countries in several of which film archives are already in formation. It will eventually be of considerable value if such Archive Centers were to be set up in every independent African state, and there is no doubt that their existence in several of these countries will encourage their establishment throughout the whole of the African territory.

Practical help envisaged by the Federation's project can be listed under the following headings :

Preservation and Storage : The construction of film vaults, especially in tropical countries presents a considerable problem, and until these are set up, the Members of the Federation will be willing, if so requested, to undertake the storing of negatives and prints in their own vaults. (The institution desiring to store its national production can make its own choice according to convenience among the F.I.A.F. membership).

Distribution : The Federation, through the activities of its member archives can, if it is so desired, help in the popularization on other continents of the African national production.

Training of Personnel for Archive Centers : The Federation is willing and ready to help in the further specialized education of personnel if qualified persons already exist in these countries, and in the training of apprentices for the various branches of archive activity : preservation, cataloguing, programmation, etc..

Basic Collection of Films : The Federation will indicate and in so far as possible provide a basic collection of international film classics necessary for the establishing of an archive center. Even before these archive centers will be established, this basic collection can be supplied at laboratory costs for circulation in those countries interested and can later serve as a nucleus for the archive's collection along with all films of national or foreign production available in the country. Through the Federation's affiliation with the International Council of Film and Television (admitted to the Consultative and Associate Relationship with Unesco, Category A) it will be possible to approach the problem from a broader angle permitting the inclusion of basic selections in the fields of educational films, scientific films, etc..

Before finalizing the project we would like to collect further information from those who have a first hand knowledge of film problems in Africa. If reactions to the project - or a modified version of it - are forthcoming, we would like to investigate with Unesco the possibility of financing the sending of an expert or experts from the Federation to selected countries. The task of this expert should be to undertake on-the-spot research with the aim of partial or full realization of the project, and if conditions permit to help local authorities in the setting up and organization of such archive centers.

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