INTRODUCTION

The Glossary of Filmographic Terms was first published by FIAF in 1985 primarily as a tool intended to assist film catalogers in identifying credit terms appearing both on screen and in documentation sources. Prepared by the FIAF Cataloging Commission and under the editorship of Jon Gartenberg, the first edition contained 219 terms, with definitions in five languages (English, French, German, Spanish, and Russian). The original entries can be classified into two categories: on-screen credits (Directed by, Written by, Cast, etc.), and terms that do not appear on film but are important for the construction of a moving image cataloging record (e.g., Literal Translation Title, Date and Place of First Public Showing, etc.). The selection of the terms for the Glossary was based on credit listings in FIAF’s Film Cataloging (Burt Franklin & Co., Inc., NY, 1979). The definitions had already been drafted by the Commission at that time (mid-1970s), or were selected by the compilers of the Glossary from a number of reference sources (see Glossary of Filmographic Terms, Bibliography, p. 140–141).

In 1989, a second edition of the Glossary appeared, again under the guiding hand of Jon Gartenberg. While both the selection and definitions of the terms remained unchanged, the new edition added corresponding terms in seven new languages: Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, Hungarian, Italian, Portuguese, and Swedish. In 2002, the second edition was reprinted by the Korean Film Archive on the occasion of the FIAF Congress in Seoul.

In the twenty years since the first publication of the Glossary, major developments—technological, economic, and structural—have occurred in the global motion picture industry. As a result, many jobs in the field have evolved, and a large number of new professions have moved in. Union rules, copyright laws, and other professional and political considerations have contributed to the expansion of on-screen credits to previously unimaginable lengths. Film catalogers today are faced not only with the difficult task of sorting through the convoluted terminology of seemingly endless credit sequences, but also understanding how a specific term may have evolved over time to signify a changed or completely new job description. The second point is especially important as archival collections often encompass moving image material ranging from the early days of cinema to the present.

The FIAF Cataloging & Documentation Commission has for some time been acutely aware of the need to update the Glossary to reflect the changes outlined above and address some of the inconsistencies in the previous editions. Our approach has been twofold. The first phase involved revising existing and adding new terms. Following the methodology adopted by the compilers of the first edition, the new and revised definitions are based on the Anglo-American film industry and as such prepared in
English. The linguistic differences, as well as variants in the structures of individual national film industries, were dealt with in the second phase, consisting of translating the definitions into other languages. We have also addressed some of the original Glossary's inconsistencies by eliminating several entries unique to broadcast television, which in our view is out of the scope of this project, and limiting the technical terminology to physical properties that most commonly define a film title (as opposed to a specific print or pre-print element) in filmographic works and other types of documentation.

The present version adheres to the original volume's basic arrangement of entries by function (Direction, Cinematography, Editing, etc.) and listing of individual terms in the hierarchical order of responsibility (e.g., “Director” preceding “Assistant Director”).

A few words on term selection: As a starting point, we have examined the on-screen credits for almost three dozen post-1989 U.S. theatrical releases, from small, independently made films to big-budget Hollywood productions. This enabled us to compile a composite list of U.S. credit terms indicating which ones are more or less consistently used across the board and which are project specific. For example, every film we looked at included a credit for a "Script Supervisor," replacing the older, and somewhat more familiar terms "Continuity by" or "Script-Girl.” Most listed a "Music Contractor," the person who hires the musicians for recording a film's music score, in the past one of the duties of the “Music Director.” On the other hand, terms such as "Leather Craftsman," "Veterinary Surgeon," and "Music Playback Operator" had only a single occurrence, on projects which required these specialized roles. Once the list of consistently used terms had been finalized, a determination was made as to which of these should be added to the existing Glossary entries (with or without changes to the present definitions). As a result, almost all of the existing term definitions have been revised (many completely rewritten), and more than fifty new terms have been added.

We are presenting the new Glossary of Filmographic Terms in spreadsheet format. The current edition includes 13 languages, seven (English, French, Spanish, Chinese, German, Italian, and Portuguese) with complete terms and definitions, two (Finnish and Lithuanian) with complete terms (without definitions), and another four (Danish, Dutch, Hungarian, and Russian) with partial terms and no definitions. The spreadsheet will be updated as additional content (including additional languages) becomes available. In the near future, we also hope to make the Glossary accessible in a simple, easy-to-use database format, enabling quick look-up and cross-referencing of specific terms from one language to another.

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