

REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ON THE EXERCISE
1954 - 1955

EXHIBITION FOR THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF CINEMA

Following the last Congress at Lausanne the main work of the office was in the preparation of the Exhibition for the 60th Anniversary of Cinema organised by the City of Paris in collaboration with the Cinematheque Francaise and under the Patronage of the FIAF. Numbers of letters were written to official representatives and private persons all over the world with the excellent results that many of you have been able to see. The Exhibition has marked a date in Film History and been a major contribution to the work of Archives generally.

BULLETIN OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Letters were also written to those who might be interested to contribute to the proposed Bulletin of Historical Research, but without very encouraging results. A meeting was held at Cannes on the initiative of Mr Gaffary, and further discussions took place during the meeting of the Executive Committee at Wiesbaden, when the project took more concrete shape. Mr Lavies will give a full report on this during the Congress

SYSTEM OF CATALOGUING AND FILING

Other letters were sent out to members inviting suggestions and reports on the systems of cataloguing and filing films. These were to be sent to Mr Lindgren, who will give us a full report during the Congress.

FILM CATALOGUE

Members were also invited to keep the office supplied with a list of the new films they acquired during the year, so that the Catalogue prepared by the British Film Institute could be kept up to date. Apart from one list from Mr de Vaal and one from Mr Langlois, both of which appeared in a recent number of the Bulletin, nothing has been received.

VOYAGES AND ENTERTAINMENT

The allocation for voyages and entertainment in the Budget was spent on several journies made by Miss Iris Barry to Paris, where she had been charged by the Executive Committee in company with Mr Thirifays to supervise the work of the office during a period of three months. On the entertainment side, the FIAF participated in a reception given to Madame Melies by the Cinematheque Francaise.

NEW PERSONNEL

In February, the Executive Committee appointed me as Technical Secretary for a period of three months, dating from March 1st. And following the resignation of Mr Gaffary in June, the Committee did me the honour of appointing me as Executive Secretary in his place. I took up my present duties on July 1st.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

A change of locale was rendered necessary by the displacement of the Cinematheque Francaise from 7 Avenue de Messine. A letter was addressed by the Executive Committee to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the question of providing new offices, and a reply to this letter was

subsequently received informing us that instructions had been given to the Cinematheque Francaise to provide us with offices in its new headquarters. Copies of this letter were sent to the members of the Committee, and the original is available.

The Cinematheque Francaise first provided us with an office at 3 Avenue de l'Opera, from where we moved to our present address 19 Rue Spontini during July. Our installation there involved a financial outlay for cleaning which exceeded that allowed for in the Budget.

A difficulty which arose as a result of our change of address was that of registered letters. As we were not registered with the Post Office we were unable to touch them. Miss Iris Barry requested a legal opinion on the possibility of regularising our status from Maître Bouthoul. To date we have received no direct communication from Maître Bouthoul, but a letter received from the Cinematheque Francaise informed us that Maître Bouthoul had verbally communicated the results of his study of this question, and a legalisation of our status would involve considerable changes in the Statutes. The Cinematheque wrote that it had asked Maître Bouthoul to give us his written report, but reminded us that the lawyer charged with all legal matters for the FIAF is Madame Suzanne Blum. Considering that a change of Statutes would involve us in considerable difficulties, we let the matter drop, particularly as since we have been installed Rue Spontini registered mail has reached us regularly.

DESTRUCTION OF FILMS

At the Executive Committee meeting in February the problem of the destruction of films was discussed, and it was decided that a plan of action should be drawn up at the meeting of Wiesbaden. As the minutes of the meeting at Wiesbaden refer to this matter only in respect of an article which Mr Card promised to write on the subject for the Bulletin of Historical Research, a plan of action remains to be formulated, and can perhaps be discussed at the Congress.

AUSTRIAN ARCHIVE

Another question which it has been left to the Congress to decide is that of the Austrian Archive, and on this a report has been prepared by Miss Iris Barry who had the occasion to visit Vienna in August. Dr Bleier-Brody, an observer from the Archive, will also be at the Congress and give us a report on their work.

INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY

In place of an International Library an International Book Catalogue was proposed at Wiesbaden. On this subject a further proposal was submitted by Miss Prolo, which appeared in the last number of the Bulletin, and should come up for discussion at the Congress.

COMMENTARY ON THE STATUTES

The proposed commentary on the Statutes has not yet been prepared, as members of the Committee who alone are capable of this work have found it impossible to free themselves from their other activities and responsibilities.

AFFAIRE SALES GOMES

A difference arising between Mr Sales Gomes and Mr Langlois was referred back to Mr Langlois, who will give a report on this matter.

ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

At the Wiesbaden meetings of the Executive Committee expressed a wish to see a more active rotation in the election of Committee members, and asked the Paris office to prepare a report on the members, and functions of members holding office since 1938. Copies of this report are available.

NEW MEMBERS

We have received demands for membership by the Cinemateca Colombiana and the Federal Cinematheque for Children at Belgrade. The files and reports on these demands are available.

NEWS BULLETIN

In May the first number of a News Bulletin appeared, which apart from the number covering July and August, has appeared each month since. With these as a basis for discussion, I would appreciate having the opinions of the members on the future development of the Bulletin. The Bulletin has generally been received enthusiastically, but there have been certain criticisms. For example, it has been said:

1. The Bulletin should confine itself to strictly impersonal ~~articles~~ reports of news items provided by our members, and avoid all journalistic articles.
2. The Bulletin should be a strictly internal organ of information and not distributed outside members. In the past the Bulletin has been sent to a restricted group of individuals and organisations, and we have received various requests from others for it to be sent regularly.
3. The Bulletin has been welcomed as a valuable way of keeping members informed of their mutual activities, and as such should be enlarged with the appointment of regular correspondants sending in reports on activities, films which have been found and how, new acquisitions etc. In this case short and more personal articles would be welcomed.
4. The Bulletin should be a quarterly instead of a monthly.

These, in general, are the reports we have received.

FINANCE

The question of finance has proved one of the fundamental problems of our work. Mr Lauritzen's financial report will give you the position of the payment of annual subscriptions, a situation which is far from brilliant. A number of Archives have found it impossible to pay the 120,000 francs established as the subscription at last year's Congress. Some have paid what they could, some nothing at all. The situation so far as the Cinemateca Argentine is concerned, has been made particularly difficult by the restrictions on exchange. In a letter we received recently from Mr Roland, he reports that they have found the solution for the payment of their 1954 contribution of 60,000 francs and have given instructions to the services of UNIFRANCE to pay this sum to us in Paris. For the future they would like to find a solution which would weigh less heavily

on their resources, and they propose that the Cinematheque Francaise or other Archives might be interested in acquiring copies of films in their Archives or from other local Archives, or getting certain work such as the making of copies or lavenders done by them. Their payment could then be placed in a Paris account in their name and would serve to pay their annual subscriptions in the future.

But whatever the reasons for the non-payment of subscriptions, it has meant that the Paris office has had to live from month to month, often without sufficient funds to pay salaries at the end of the month, and up to date always without sufficient means to pay the sums due for social insurance. Both Miss Catala and I have paid our contributions regularly, but it has been impossible to pay those due from the FIAF. This is particularly grave in the case of Miss Catala, since the whole sum for 1954 is still outstanding.

There is no need for me to stress the difficulties of such a precarious financial position. Had it not been for the full payment of their subscriptions by four members, it would have been impossible to carry on with the money we have received.

A further difficulty has been the need to send cheques to be signed by the Treasurer, which has often involved undue delay. I propose therefore, that the Committee consider the re-inauguration of a practice which existed in the past, when Madame Malevsky was authorised to sign cheques up to 80,000 francs. Any cheque for sums over this amount had to be authorised by the Treasurer. 80,000 francs would ensure the smooth running of the office, and the monthly financial reports sent to the Treasurer would serve as a check on how the money was employed.

The Committee has asked me to draw up two budgets - a minimum budget which would simply cover the expenses of an office of liaison, and an ideal budget designed to cover the extension of office activities. I have taken the liberty of preparing only the first, which is wholly realistic and based on the expenses of this year. I felt that an ideal budget would have been entirely fictive, since it would depend so much on the decisions of the Congress on the kind of work which it considered should be undertaken by the office. With the minimum budget as a basis, however, it will not be difficult to prepare an amended budget should this be found necessary.

I should like to point out that the minimum budget is a strict minimum, far too strict in my opinion, since it allows for absolutely no extension of activity nor for unforeseen commitments. It makes no allowance either, for telephone, heating, lighting and daily cleaning which, up to date, have been paid by the generosity of the Cinematheque Francaise. It represents therefore, approximately what has been spent this year, with the exception of the salary of Mr Gaffary. Even so, it reveals that with a membership of 21, each Archive would be required to pay an annual subscription of 80,000 francs. As, in fact, only six Archives have paid such a sum, the Congress will have to decide whether it is realistic to envisage a higher budget, or if so, how the difference can be made up either by larger subscriptions from wealthier Cinematheques, or a special levy on the exchange of films through FIAF, as was proposed by the Committee in February.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In general, the work of the office has continued satisfactorily during the last few months. Our new office is spacious and has been comfortably equipped by the Cinematheque Francaise. There has been a steady flow of correspondance with the membership, which we have received regularly. I have been particularly happy in my association with Miss Catala, whose knowledge of the work of the Federation has been an immense help to me. She has been responsible for the French version of the Bulletin, and has in every way shown herself a devoted servant to the FIAF. When we were in urgent need of a typewriter and were without the means to pay for it, she advanced the money personally, a sum of 80,000 francs. I am glad to report that this has now been refunded, and that the office possesses a modern and efficient machine. The second machine is on hire, and provision for its continued hire has been made in the Budget, rather than buying a second one.

I shall be glad to receive any criticisms or suggestions on the work of the Office. Much of the regular work of the Archives is best served by direct contact, but the office of the FIAF has an important international function which, will no doubt, be underlined in the reports heard during the Congress. My wish is to continue to build on the solid foundations that have already been laid down, and in this work I count on the members for guidance and support.

Paris, 8 September, 1955

Catherine Duncan,
Executive Secretary