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Cinéma et audiovisuel :
quelles mémoires numériques pour l'Europe ?

**LES SITUATIONS EUROPÉENNES
[L'EUROPE, LA NATION, LA RÉGION ?] - 1**

An example of collaborative catalog

Werner SÜDENDORF,
Berlin Filmmuseum.

Jürgen KEIPER,
Berlin Filmmuseum.

I am the head of the non-film collections of the Kinemathek in Berlin. These non-film collections include apparatus, posters, photographs, scripts, set designs and everything that goes into the archive except for film. There are a lot of advantages concerning digitization, but there are also problems. The obligation of the film archives is to acquire material, documentation, restoration and it spreads the available information. In film archives there are usually reading rooms and people can come there. The dream is that everything is on the Internet. The administrator has the dream to close the reading room and use the room for another administrator.

A film archivist's job is not very glamorous. You are not regarded as a wonderful person because you restored a paper or a photograph. You are living in a sort of "ghetto" because film archive museums are regarded as old-fashioned, simply "an archive" and slightly behind the times. It is your job; you do not have to be glamorous in your job. But with the coming of the Internet and digitization you might be able to come out of the "ghetto" in that you could publish your collections worldwide. You could reach more people and be proud of your work. If you do not do this, you are not regarded as successful and so it is necessary. Success makes you attractive. You could also make more money; money makes you sexy. As a film archivist are you supposed to be sexy? I do not think so. You must invest a lot of money into digitization; money from institutions for example. What are the disadvantages of this? You cannot estimate the cost in terms of money but you can see the disadvantages. Until about 10 years ago in our archive, we used to preserve photographs by making negatives and duplicate photographs, we do not do this today, we just scan these photographs. Is this done in a film archive? In a film archive a duplicate is usually made. Therefore, why do we scan them? Because access is made more easily; access is a tool for success. Preservation becomes old-fashioned. Still, it is being done by us for exceptional, precious photos. We could say it is done secretly. If you look for money for your archive, which application will be successful? The one for digitization or the one for preservation? It is always the one for digitization but nobody knows how long this can survive. We get material from script writers on floppy disks and we do not know what to do with these old disks. Should be use old apparatus? Should we archive other programs to read these? There are a lot of problems caused by digitization.

We all know that film will last for a very long time.

The reverse side of old photographs tells you the history of the photograph and sometimes if you can understand it, there will also be some information about the production of the film. Have you ever seen the reverse sides of old photographs on the Internet? They are usually only seen for selling purposes on eBay. They are not seen on the Internet because they are not very attractive.

Films

It is a great advantage that you can take films showing the Kinemathek legacy of your home country and screen them at your home. We discussed whether videos should be collected and shown. This is an old-fashioned discussion as today we do not discuss this topic. The films are archived so you can show them when you want, without discussing it beforehand. Last Monday, we screened a Nazi film in our institution for our high-school students, followed by a very lively discussion. Imagine you showed the Nazi film in a school on a flat screen; half of the students would have been falling asleep and so there is no great impact on the public if it is shown on a big flat screen or at home.

Who will be bored and who will be fascinated by films shown on the Internet? The screen is even smaller and so you do not concentrate. I do not watch films on the Internet. This is a fascinating medium and I know the arguments. You should know that this film is in our archives. Will the art form of cinema be communicated in the form of posters? In other words, are film archives still following their cultural mission or are they simply building up a business plan? There is a lot of business surrounding digitization and the Internet.

We prepared an exhibition on Marlene Dietrich in Moscow; Moscow is very special. We got a strange request for clips and sounds from our colleagues in Moscow. I wondered where they got this information; some is wrong and some is very strange. I realized that they got it from YouTube. My answer was that we do not do exhibitions on the level of YouTube; this type of information is on the Internet and you have the possibility of saving it. If that is the reason why we put our archives online, people should get better information. You think you could persuade any users to use your sites. You Tube is used for entertainment; it is a showcase of small clips. Who is archiving YouTube? Who holds the rights for YouTube? It is very interesting. After three months, clips which appeared on YouTube are gone. There could be some commercial companies who do this.

Dynamics of digitization and the Internet inside an archive

There are three phases in making collections available for the public:

1. *Thirty years ago: film archives use index cards, there are conditions and standards for the index film entries but if you do not follow these conditions there is no harm done. The aim was to make your archive "bulk". As long as you and every user could find what once was filed, there were no problems.*

2. *Twenty years ago: with the coming of the PC and normal database programs one would simply transfer index cards to a database program such as Access. This presents new possibilities, new chances to make your work more effective. The more data files you can build up, the more complex your system will be, the more you require database experts. The archivist began looking at how other archives solved this problem. There is a possibility of working together, to learn from each other.*

3. *Ten years ago: with the databases things really became complicated. At this time you could also add digital photos and all the files could be moved onto the Internet. The three dreams of the archivist could be fulfilled: everyone could see your archive on the Internet and nobody would come to you to see the photographs, everything would be on the Internet. If only things could remain simple. Computer experts needed to establish themselves as a new power in the archive world, in every corner of the world. Disaster was on its way. The computer experts transform your data into a system which is so complex that you really do not understand how it works from the inside, if you are not a computer expert yourself. For*

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the experts with all their apparatus, money is required; money which you do not get from the computer system. With this money, small empires are built; empires which are called "online resources", or "portals". The more online resources and portals which are built, the more power was established. Why power? This is the power of growing data, the everyday routine of experience, know-how and the network which goes with it.

As a summary, there is the archivist, the administration and there is a completely new group of administrators who are taking care of information systems.

Here is an example of power which is based on a real-life story:

Good posters become very expensive, nobody can afford to buy all these precious film posters, nobody has to. I had an idea: I had all the wonderful and impressive posters which were in the form of photographs and big transparencies. I converted them into digital data and offered the data to an online film resource. I gave them the opportunity to publish these for free and I felt this was generous. The reason I did this was to create more work for our own museums, other museums would want to display these posters for exhibitions, other collectors could show an interest; they may think this is a good museum because the posters are preserved and so they may entrust their collections to that museum. This may also help other archives save money, they do not need to buy the posters you already have, but they could buy other ones and so enlarge the country's collection. Of course, I equally wanted to benefit from the online resource, I did not have to build this from scratch, I could simply use it. About six months to a year before they told me they wanted to use it. Instead of a warm welcome they said they would only take the posters with documentation which would be based on their database system. Therefore, I would have had to change our in-house system with documents of about 70,000 film titles and several hundred thousand entries. This was another film archive I spoke to; I regarded this person as a friendly colleague who shared my goal of sharing the knowledge of film history. But this person was spoiled by all the money involved in the making of the website, by the many meetings with administrators, by the smell of power. The person who was once a film buff became a film administrator; a bureaucrat. The person was transformed into somebody I regard as sitting on the other side of the table; not somebody who cares about film but who cares about their own power.

I was desperate, helpless and angry. The solution was Jürgen. Jürgen found an Internet-based system which allowed everybody to maintain their in-house system and use the system for uploading their own archives to the Internet. It is an open-source system, it is called "open collector" and it works for everybody. It is based on the old spirit of sharing and communicating knowledge. Who owns this knowledge which derives from the money given to the archive by the European Community? Is it sold? I do not know.

We first used this system for a database based on cameras preserved and differently presented. Strangely enough, nobody wanted the old technique on the Internet; nobody is interested in the film archive using our technique. This was a harmless field, but then prop masters found them and they use our equipment for films based in the 20's and 30's, the new Quentin Tarantino film for example. They also use a lot of our equipment from the Cinémathèque Française. Publishing this can create a nice extra income. It is not a business plan; it is something which just happens.

To develop the system and to reach a valuable audience we have worked on another project called "Lost Films". The idea is that there are so many which are lost or presumed to be lost, to get an idea of what one of these films would have looked like, you need photos and documents (the only things which survive). It may be that someone in Alaska or South America looks at one of the photos and remembers having seen this film. The good thing is that everybody can take part in this process of re-creating the lost memory of film history. This is something which film archivists should be interested in. Producing a book does not require large sums of money; you just need a scanner, computer and Internet access. This is not power, it is sharing. Everybody is capable of being involved. These two sides will now be presented by Jürgen.

Jürgen KEIPER

Up to 90% of feature films are lost and in my opinion this subject concerns also television productions and documentaries among others. I am not speaking about the Internet material as we have no strategy to acquire or store it. The idea of "Lost Films" was mentioned as part of a discussion. We believe that we should think about the strategy for the issue surrounding "Lost Films". We are being told that we only have very limited experience in film history (half of the film history) and I think the archives should develop strategies and tools in order to reconstruct this film history.

What does this mean?

The idea of this project is to reconstruct the context. To do so we need content. The archives have a lot of documents, information and expertise to provide these documents and so this project was started. We will provide film fragments, production documents, press items, censorship records and so on.

How can this content be located because it is distributed all over the world?

Another problem is that accessing this content can be very time consuming, the cost is high and there are problems surrounding archive policies and copyright situations.

Finally, how can the content be combined?

Different approaches have been considered. You may be familiar with the famous book by Alexander Howard about the case of Lena Smith. You may also be familiar with the book by David Meeker, Missing Believed Lost which deals with the subject. However, we cannot integrate motion picture clips for example. We have some experience with film and DVD's have been made such as Metropolis in the study edition. A problem with DVD is that it is not dynamic and its knowledge is difficult to update and so we decided to make it on the Internet.

The project itself is part of collaboration with two archives. There are also European partners such as the CNC film archive in Austria, the Prague State Archive and the projects funded by the German Federal Culture Foundation.

For me digitization means defining a new collaboration approach.

Internet Cooperation

- *Acquiring information.*

After asking film experts, archivists and so on we decided to set up a wiki. We were not sure that it would work but after a few months it proved to be very successful. Contributions were made from Japan, Hungary and so on. People were adding film titles and informing us of the source of the film titles. Sometimes information is corrected and used as a print in Tokyo for example. This is checked and in this case it was true.

A wiki is used for the first step of the collaboration process.

- *Establishing the database*

The user can add documents. If something is digitized you can contribute by adding further documents related to these lost films.

- *Identifying film fragments*

The third idea came from talks with Martin Koerber who told us that the film archives have the problem that they have a lot of unidentified film material. We decided to use the Internet as a platform to identify film fragments. The Lost Films platform was therefore also used as an identification platform. You can upload film fragments and interested users can add information on the film or the person.

- *Open-source*

Finally, something which is very important for us and the Kinemathek is using open-source software. This was a nice development because we used software called "collective access", an open collection which has a user group derived from the film archives. Special features are available for the interest and the focus of the film archive. It is completely open-sourced, licensed and has a cheaper tool which means that if money is put into the development, the next step of the software would be used completely free of charge. You can download from the website and use it for your own film archive. It is completely web-based which means that it can be used anywhere, as long as there is an Internet connection. It supports various digital formats, key metadata standards and it is fixed on controlled vocabularies. Using networks, we are able to use modern archive initiatives, protocol and metadata harvesting, meaning that you can link the database with research engines, you can harvest the data from this database and you can also easily export the data from this database.

<u>*Problems which may be encountered*</u>

- *Copyright: we try to check the copyrights. Checks are recorded in the database. It was interesting that the copyright owners were very friendly regarding this project. This may be due to culture.*

- *Digitization: this is always difficult because we had to deal with very old books for example, the apparatus to digitize the books without completely opening the book. It can be very difficult to check the sources of filmographic data concerning lost films.*

<u>*Alteration overview*</u>

This will completely change. At the moment it is to identify and contributing the development which will be completed next month. As an example you can now search and you will then see a short overview of different documents, filmographic information, content description and notes on the content, as well as some comments coming from the wiki.

We discussed whether we should choose a very detailed filmographic model but the problem is that if you are dealing with this user contribution, it does not make sense using a very detailed filmographic information structure because it would be too difficult for the users. Therefore, we decided upon a very simple one. There are also different document types. You have the possibility of adding clips and a reconstruction was made of a fragment of lost films which can be played from the database.

We also integrated another feature called faceted search which allows you to limit your search depending upon different keywords. For example if you are looking for forest films you can select the year and the results will show the different films and some short filmographic information.

The last example is a short preview where you can select the right film title with filmographic information, content descriptions and so on. You also have different document types, for example pictures such as posters and catalogues. If you then click on documents, you will see the related documents and you can then switch between the different pages, click on the page. You have the possibility of enlarging the page or the text within the page. This is all open-source which is a nice feature of the archives.

The next project was the camera database which is also dealing with collective ideas. Six archives are involved in this project. They contribute information and photos. We are also considering opening this database for private collectors and for small archives as a lot of information is in the small archives, and so it makes sense for us to make this project available for all kinds of contributors.

It is very easy to make entries for content descriptions. You also have the possibility here to export the data into other portals. This export function is used for editing and integrating information into the German portal. There is also information from libraries (manual) and this shows the idea of portals

which combine different sources. On the other hand, there is a description of the camera which will be integrated into the Europeana.

You can limit your search depending on different criteria. If you click on an entry and you have this camera you can also enlarge it in order to see the details.

What did we learn from this project?

It is very useful to document a project for more transparency. You should integrate a broad range of interested contributors, minimize the copyright restrictions especially by using open source software, the idea of long-term sustainability and we should carry on with this collaborative activity.

Un intervenant de la salle

About the copyright restrictions, most of the promotional material may still be under copyright. But the idea is that this material was used for the promotion of the film in the first place. Could we consider that putting those elements and non-film documents online is part of the search of the film, the rediscovery of the film and so the promotion of the film itself? And therefore, should this not be restricted to copyright matters?

Werner SÜDENDORF

I agree. I think it is more or less a formal question. If you raise the question of the copyright of this material, you can discuss it for two years, ten years, twenty years, you will never find the copyright holder, which is the problem. The advantage is that is nobody claims the copyright, if nobody sues you for using this then why don't you do it? In twenty or thirty years I have never had anybody who sues the institution for publishing something. The lawyers and legislation do everything to keep themselves alive. They say that if you publish something to find the copyright holder you are violating the law, you should not do this. But if you do not publish it, nobody will know that this material exists.

My opinion is that you should go ahead. You cannot publish everything. If you know there is a copyright holder then contact him/her, if you know there is someone who is the legal successor to the artist then contact him/her. But if you do not know anything then go ahead. Somebody may call you and claim the copyright, in which case they will claim their royalties or on the other hand you will have to remove it. This is the advantage of the Internet; you can take it away, unlike a book. There can be many problems.

Likewise for the apparatus, someone can claim to be the copyright holder for the design of a camera. Do not raise unnecessary problems, do not contact too many lawyers, just do it.

Thomas CHRISTENSEN

Concerning the lost films, the Danish Film Institute would love to participate but we do not have any resources to participate with. Do you have any ideas or strategies for harvesting information so that participating institutions would not have to maintain another source of information but could rather make information which already exists and is maintained in an existing system available?

Jürgen KEIPER

Regarding documents, it makes sense to establish a mechanism for harvesting the documents from other archives. Concerning adding film titles of lost films or identifying film fragments it does not make sense but Kinemathek decided to look into this subject and create this project so I think something will be established in this field.

Regarding the aspect of sustainability we had some project funding for eighteen months. It is a problem because after eighteen months a project no longer exists. In this case Kinemathek decided to use their own resources but I have had experience with other projects and they stopped. The archive has responsibility and opposition for YouTube. In a way this is a large archive of video clips. You may have seen the YouTomb portal; it is a website launched by the MIT which shows all the clips which have been deleted from YouTube. It is a virtual cemetery.

I searched for information about film digitization and I remembered the first project. The website for this first project has not been available for very long and the documents are all on it. It will be a problem if the project comes to an end, how will we progress from there?

Werner SÜDENDORF

There is a quite natural hostility between administrators and Cine Fields. When this project was showed, the creator thought that damage had been done because the institution wanted to participate. How can we do this? That is the idea. If a project is put forward and it does not progress forwards for a long time then you are doing the wrong thing. The administration should get pressure from external parties saying it is a good project and that they want to continue with it. If you give a project a determined time period, nobody will draw up a business plan.

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Werner SÜDENDORF / Jürgen KEIPER