

Moving Image Collections

A Window to the World's Moving Images

MIC is a collaboration of organizations and individuals in moving image archives, information technology, and digital education. Participants are committed to the preservation and use of moving images to support people and societies around the world.

What is MIC?

- **MIC** documents moving image collections around the world through a catalog of titles and directory of repositories, providing a window to the world's moving image collections for discovery, access and preservation
- **MIC** provides a technology base and informational resources to support research, collaboration, preservation, and education for archivists, exhibitors, educators, and the general public
- **MIC** is a portal for integrating moving images into 21st Century education
- **MIC** is a key access program of the Library of Congress' National Audio Visual Conservation Center.

Presumed Lost

In the early part of the twentieth century, most people, even those in the film industry, considered movies to be only a cheap and disposable form of entertainment. Now we realize that a moving image is many things: a form of entertainment, an art form, an historical record, a cultural artifact, a commodity and a force for social change.

More than a reflection of society and culture, moving images are primary documents that can serve a wide range of research purposes. The director Sydney Pollack has said that cinema is "*the most vivid and valuable record of who we were and what we were, and what we thought and what we believed. And it continues to be that.*" As our culture is increasingly shaped by visual images in the digital age, historians may soon rely on moving images as much as on the printed word to understand 21st century culture. In a sense, by relying more and more on moving images to understand the times in which we live, society is increasingly reverting back to its roots grounded in oral tradition.

Whether it's classic Hollywood feature films, 20th century newsreels, documentaries, classic television or home movies of Billy's fifth birthday, it is important to preserve our visual heritage.

This remembrance wall is created to highlight some of the treasures from our past that are presumed lost. The majority of titles listed on the wall are silent films because the greatest loss occurs in films made before 1930. While no one knows the exact number of films that have been lost, it has been estimated that only 10 percent of the films made between 1910 and 1920 still exist and that only 20 percent of the films made in the 1920s survive today.

There are several reasons why so many films from the silent era have disappeared. Cellulose nitrate (commonly referred to as nitrate) was the standard film stock used for motion picture production until 1949, when Eastman Kodak introduced acetate-based, or safety, film. While unmatched for its vivid tones and ability to capture light and shadow, nitrate is an unstable and combustible medium. Nitrate is dangerous to store and numerous nitrate fires and explosions occurred in the first half of the 20th Century. One of the most costly to film history was the explosion and ensuing fire in Little Ferry, New Jersey in 1937 that destroyed

many of the Fox Film Corporation's silent films. In addition to its combustibility, nitrate film decomposes if not stored in optimum conditions. Decomposition begins with the film becoming brittle and shrinking, then discoloring and fading. The film then softens, becomes sticky and exudes a thick brown liquid. Finally, the film congeals into a solid mass and turns into a fine powder.

But the biggest cause of the disappearance of silent films was not nitrate deterioration, but the systematic destruction of films by studios. Movie studios did not foresee a reason why films would be worth the danger and expense to store. Films were considered of little value beyond their theatrical run. There were no markets for films after exhibition. Television, videocassettes and DVDs did not yet exist. Studios did not think it was worth the expense and the risk to store films. Also, because they were thought to be virtually worthless, prints were often destroyed to retrieve the silver contained within nitrate stock. Low budget producers would sell films for their silver content to finance the next project.

Studios also often destroyed prints to prevent piracy. Piracy was a concern even in the early days of motion pictures. Because the films were silent, they could easily be recut, given a new name and reissued. Release prints would be cut in half or chopped into pieces to prevent illegal duplication.

Today, film libraries are considered to be the prime assets of movie studios and media conglomerates. Film libraries can generate income in several ways, DVD releases, cable channels or pay-per-view services, and in the future downloads to the home computer.

Found Films

"Found" films are films that were once considered lost, but have since been discovered in archives, a private collection, or even buried in a swimming pool in the Canadian Yukon.

Foreign archives often saved prints that were long forgotten by U.S. distributors. In 1994, Australia's National Film and Sound Archive donated over 1,500 U.S. titles to major U.S. archives. Many of these films, dating from the 1900s to the 1950s, were thought to be lost, including a previously lost Harold Lloyd short, "Peculiar Patients' Pranks" (1915) and trailer footage from the Academy Award nominated "The Patriot" (1925).

When films were censored in the United States, uncensored versions were shown internationally and saved by foreign film archives. The 1919 film "Within Our Gates" was thought to be lost until a Spanish-release print was acquired by the National Center for Film and Video at the American Film Institute. The Spanish print was titled "La Negra" and contained lynching scenes that had been censored in the United States.

Private collectors are also sources for lost elements and prints. In many cases prints were sold for the show-at-home market, were throwaways, or were obtained through studio auction. One such example is William Buffum. Buffum was a projectionist in Portland, Oregon between 1938 and 1947 and an avid film buff and collector. For thirty years he had in his collection a fairly worn copy of "When Bearcat Went Dry" (1919) and a nearly pristine print of Shakespeare's "Richard III" (1912). In 1996 Buffum donated these two films to the American Film Institute. No other prints of either film were known to exist. "Richard III" is the first known feature-length Shakespearean film and is the only film made in 1912 known to exist in its entirety.

Dawson City is a small town in Canada near the Arctic Circle. In 1979, a bulldozer breaking ground on a new recreation center dug up a trove of film buried beneath a parking lot.

Dawson City was once a gold rush town and there wasn't much entertainment besides the movies. Because Dawson City was the last distribution stop for most films, the films stayed in Dawson City and were stored in the local library. In 1929, the flammable nitrate film reels were used to fill in a condemned swimming pool, which was eventually paved over. The films were remarkably well preserved because of the cold climate.

Television - Film's forgotten cousin

Television programming has frequently been left behind in reference to preserving our moving image heritage. Yet television has played an important role in shaping the political, cultural, social, and economic trends during the second half of the 20th century. Part of the issue in gaining wider acceptance to preserving our past as reflected on the small screen is that unlike film, television is not perceived widely as an art form. As a result, television programming has suffered much the same stigma as early silent film – as an ephemeral product that is easily disposable. Another issue involves the preservation of a medium that suffers from technological obsolescence. As an example, three Fred Astaire specials from 1958-1960 could not initially benefit from intervention since it took some hunting to find a machine that could playback the 2 in. color videoreels that had been used to tape the programs.

source of text : Moving Image Collections (MIC).

Moving Image Collections
<http://mic.imtc.gatech.edu/index.php>

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd-nc/1.0/>

...a few links...

Alaska & Polar Regions Collections

<http://library.uaf.edu/apr>

Alternative Film Guide

<http://www.altfg.com/blog/>

Alternative Film Video

<http://www.alternativefilmvideo.org/>

American Memory Collection

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/mopic/ndlmps.html>

Avant-Garde (Experimental) Films

<http://www.miracosta.cc.ca.us/home/gflore/f-avant.htm>

British Universities Newsreel Database (BUND)

<http://www.bufvc.ac.uk/databases/newsreels/index.html>

Documentary Educational Resources

<http://www.der.org/>

Filmbase

<http://www.filmbase.ie/>

Film Studies - University College Cork

<http://www.ucc.ie/en/filmstudies/>

Galway Film Centre

<http://www.galwayfilmcentre.ie/>

History Matters

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/>

Irish Film Institute

<http://www.irishfilm.ie/>

Knowledge Network Explorer - 21st Century Literacies

<http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/21stcent/>

Internet Archive Moving Image Library

<http://www.archive.org/details/movies>

Irish Film Archive

http://www.irishfilm.ie/archive/index_07.asp

Making Sense of Evidence

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/browse/makesense/>

Media Anthropology Network

<http://www.media-anthropology.net/>

MediaEd

<http://www.mediaed.org.uk/>

Museum of the Moving Image

<http://www.movingimage.us/site/site.php>

National Anthropological Archives

<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/naa/>

Public Moving Image Archives & Research Centres

<http://www.loc.gov/film/arch.html>

Jay Ruby

<http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/ruby/>

UNESCO Archives Portal

<http://www.unesco-ci.org/cgi-bin/portals/archives/page.cgi?d=1>

Visual Anthropology

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visual_anthropology

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