



PLATE 62
Kodak Sonochrome (c. 1929). Sample plate of tinted film stock from *Eastman Sonochrome Positive Film Tints* (Rochester: Eastman Kodak Company, no date). Actual size, 25.5 cm (George Eastman House).

4 Raiders of the Lost Nitrate

When does posterity begin?

Penelope Houston, quoted by Richard Roud in *A Passion for Films*, 1983

The Pioneers and the Institutions: Collectors, Collections, Archives
Towards the middle of the 30s, with the birth of the cultural movement that was to give rise to an international association of film archives, the wealth of film history already seemed little more than a confused mass of fragments, ignored by official culture and left to moulder in the warehouses. That this was not a universal rule is thanks to those individuals who – investing time, money, and commitment – laid the foundations of the archive collections which we are able to access today.

Their names are known to anyone who has been in contact, even superficially, with the changing galaxy of moving images they created: Henri Langlois in France, Ernest Lindgren in United Kingdom, Jacques Ledoux in Belgium, Iris Barry and James Card in the United States, Mario Ferrari and Maria Adriana Prolo in Italy, Einar Lauritzen in Sweden, and many others. All of them pursued their own particular trajectories, with passion and a sense of adventure, with unstinting opposition to institutional bureaucracy, involved in personal conflicts, great projects and burning defeats.

To understand the story of these people, and the reasons why general access to film archives is a relatively recent phenomenon, one must try to imagine the circumstances in which they had to act. At that time, it was an extremely arduous task to try to persuade most intellectuals that cinema was an aesthetic phenomenon with its own dignity, worthy of being spoken and written about with the same respect given to plays, paintings, architectural structures or musical works. This obstacle has been overcome today, in theory at least. In those days, the only way of prevailing over the general indifference was by relying on one's own initiative: to collect films from everywhere, store them somewhere, ensure, somehow, that they would survive, and screen them. If it were not for the drive and persistence of many an unknown Langlois, of anonymous collectors possessed by the nitrate demon, we would have very little to see today.

To assume that such people no longer exist would be a mistake. Collectors are a

secretive breed. They mistrust publicity and prefer sometimes to die with their possessions rather than abandon them to what they consider to be an impersonal institution, lacking the enthusiasm and the protective instinct which made it possible to save the films. Consequently, silent films are not to be found exclusively in the organisational structures called film archives: these are only the relatively better-known sector of a vast, mostly unexplored corpus. A fundamental aspect of archive work is making and maintaining contacts with collectors, in the hope of persuading them one day that bare, aseptic vaults are preferable to the dangerous heat of an improvised projection booth in the domestic living room. It is an exhausting, often fruitless task, which occasionally repays the many failures and endless hours of face-to-face discussions, telephone conversations and letters, though the resulting donation may involve only modest quantities of film. But this contradiction forms the basis of the existence of film archives: those in charge of the collections and their collaborators cannot by themselves search every shuttered cinema and every old house where the last reels of nitrate may lie. So, it is fortunate that this army of explorers exists around them.

There are collectors everywhere, and their number seems to multiply every time one makes contact with a new channel of information such as, for instance, a group of initiates interested only in the films starring Tom Mix, or the Italian comedies featuring Kri Kri. At first, these people tend to adopt an understandably defensive attitude. This can degenerate into an obsession when collectors prefer their films to decay under their bed – thus becoming potentially explosive devices – simply because they cannot bear to be physically separated from them.

But those are the rules of the game. One collector in ten may agree, one day, to deposit his or her copies in an archive while maintaining some kind of legal ownership of them (which is another problem, because nobody wants to let anyone else know how they managed to gain possession of the films). One in a hundred may be persuaded to donate the films altogether, and be content to see them gathered in a collection bearing his or her name, undergoing restoration and finally being returned to the screen and the public. People who find nitrate films in their basement often believe they can make a fortune out of it. Curators must use the most convincing arguments to explain that this is not the case, and that it is in their best interest to let the archive restore it in order to make it accessible. Pointing out that preserving films requires a major financial effort, and offering a viewing print of the restored film in exchange for the generosity of the donor, is often the best approach in the negotiation process.

Because films are to be found everywhere, as are those who look for them and collect them in the most picaresque circumstances, it is impossible to compile a reliable census of what silent films have survived the ravages of time and neglect. We can only presume that there are still thousands of them, hidden in the most unlikely corners of the world, and that – except for some miracle – they will not withstand for long the chemical processes of nitrate decay.

In the mid-80s an American archivist, Ronald S. Magliozzi, prepared a list of every short fiction film of the silent period in the member archives of the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film. At the time, FIAF had eighty affiliates. Thirty-three film archives were willing or able to take part in the project. Altogether, they admitted to holding a little over 9,000 titles. These were listed by Magliozzi in his *Treasures from the Film Archives: A Catalog of Short Silent Fiction Films Held by FIAF Archives* (1988), one of the books which any serious silent film researcher should always keep close at hand.

So, there are no less than 9,000 fiction shorts still extant, plus an unknown but presumably large number of titles not documented by the book. But what is a short film? Magliozzi's answer is flexible: it is a film no longer than 4,000 feet or some 1,200 metres (if a 35mm copy), running up to an hour on the screen. This is a rather generous definition (it is not easy to call a film on four reels 'short', since each reel can be 1,000 feet or 300 metres long), but there is no point in splitting hairs when trying to collect information on existing films. Fiction features and all non-fiction films are excluded from the list. The latter are as numerous and as precious as the fiction features, but are generally little in demand, regrettably, by collectors and researchers.

It is even harder to say how many feature-length films still survive, but a reasonable (though unofficial) estimate might come close to 8,000 titles. This makes for a total of 17,000 films. In addition, we must consider the material kept in archives which did not participate in the survey. In 1988, there were about fifty other archival institutions, but since then, the number of FIAF members has significantly increased, and in all likelihood will continue to do so. It is true that most of the large archives were represented in the survey, but almost all the other fifty, however small, own collections of a respectable size.

Other prints have come to light since Magliozzi published his inventory, and they probably outnumber the films which have disappeared in the meantime because of chemical decay. All things considered, it is not an exaggeration to suppose that institutions belonging to FIAF own about 30,000 films from the silent period. If the passion we have contracted is not ephemeral, we can relax: a whole lifetime will barely be enough to plough through a corner of this field.

In order to know how large the territory actually is, one must travel. From this point of view, European and North American spectators are in a privileged position: in these two geographic areas there are over fifty film archives of international reputation, various public and private collections which are relatively accessible to scholars, and a number of annual events devoted in whole or in part to the silent film heritage. In other words, seeing films from the first thirty years of the century is much easier in the European Union and the United States than it is in Africa, Asia, South America or Oceania.

This does not mean, however, that silent cinema can be found on any street corner. If we are not satisfied – and we shouldn't be – with a video or digital recording of *Nosferatu* or *The Birth of a Nation* bought in a shop, we have to make an effort

and know where and how to look. Those who have studied silent cinema for an article, a dissertation, or to organise a retrospective, soon learn that the probability of a great discovery increases proportionately to the wish to discover new archives, new collections, and films that have always been there but which nobody has bothered to watch and identify.

RULE 3

Do not limit the scope of your search for prints to the most obvious sources. Curiosity will be rewarded in collections outside mainstream archives.

European and North American archives hold titles from all over the world in quantities sufficient to satisfy most scholars' basic requirements. Sufficient does not mean optimum: as can logically be expected, archives usually offer researchers a large number of films produced within that country's national boundaries, and send them elsewhere if they wish to explore exotic territories. This means that some travel is required. Serious study in silent cinema is not something you can do without leaving your room. If you are a student, or if you have only the standard summer holidays available, every journey to a large city – Brussels, Washington, Prague – offers the opportunity to visit a film archive.

It is not even necessary to spend all day in the archive. Opening times often force or allow you (according to temperament) to begin relatively late in the morning, and to switch off the viewing table in mid-afternoon. The only problem may be the first contact with a collector who invites you to his or her private archive. Once mutual trust has been established, it may not be easy to interrupt the screenings. When they feel like it, collectors have no timetable. They will put you up in their own home, among the film cans, and if you let them, they will bring you sandwiches and beer as you sit in their armchair, in front of the portable screen.

In order to know what is available for viewing, you cannot rely on the subject catalogue often used in bibliographic research. First, you need to know what is likely to be available (which films are in the area, and in which archives) and to build a relationship with the so-called 'milieu': people, clubs, associations, university departments, film journals. In theory, one can manage without the milieu and look up the two or three written sources that signal the existence and availability of films: Magliozzi's book is one, and others are listed at the end of this chapter. But catalogues and lists rapidly go out of date. Dialogue with the people and institutions who inquire into the past of the moving image brings considerable advantages: there is a better chance of seeing the film without waiting for a festival or a video release and a greater possibility of transforming research or simple curiosity into a real intellectual adventure.

The most important of these institutions is the *Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film*: almost every major film archive belongs to it. Established in Paris in 1938, FIAF was the first formal organisation of disparate and heterogeneous currents which finally coagulated into a structure thanks to the efforts of Iris Barry, John Abbott, Frank Hensel, Henri Langlois and Olwen Vaughan in the name of the following common objectives:

- to coordinate the activity of institutions dedicated to searching for and preserving films in each country;
- to encourage the collection and preservation of materials relevant to moving images (in archive jargon, these are usually called 'non-film' collections);
- to encourage the creation of film archives in those countries where there are none;
- to develop cooperation between film archives, ensuring the availability of films and materials related to film for the Federation members;
- to promote and facilitate historical research on the moving image.

In its founding year FIAF consisted of four members: the *Reichsfilmarchiv* in Berlin, the National Film Library in London (now called the National Film and Television Archive), the *Cinémathèque française* in Paris, and the Film Department of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Since then, the number of institutions joining the Federation has constantly increased to well over a hundred at the beginning of the 21st century. Beyond the size of individual film archives, and the commitment each one shows to collecting, cataloguing, preserving and restoring film, the Federation's fundamental prerequisite is that its members shall not operate for profit. In this they are in line with the ideas of the great national libraries and of the institutions founded to preserve the local and international artistic heritage. From this point of view, FIAF is the equivalent of the United Nations in the field of moving images: it has the same problems where at times very different national realities must reach mutual agreement. But FIAF also has greater power to influence the policy of preservation of the materials collected by its members.

Models of Moving Image Archiving

The *Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film* has among its affiliates the archives of about forty countries worldwide, whose addresses are listed in Appendix 2. The greatest number are in the United States (a dozen film archives in June 2000); France follows with eleven FIAF archives, Italy with seven and the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain with five each. A few nations have three (Canada, Colombia and Mexico) or two (Austria, Brazil, China, Israel, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Uruguay, Venezuela). In each of the remaining affiliated countries there is only one film archive. Other nations, which are currently in the majority have none.

This outline is necessarily provisional, and somehow misleading. New film archives apply every year to join FIAF, while others leave it, due to financial difficulties or incompatibility with its aims. Most countries have national archives dealing with the moving image in a more or less systematic manner, and you would be surprised to see the amazing results achieved by preservationists operating in countries with financial resources close to nil and challenging climates, such as Papua New Guinea or the Philippines. We shall deal here with the organisations that are connected to FIAF, because their statutes almost always allow researchers to have access to collections, according to regulations under some kind of public control, but we cannot stress enough that the researcher should also turn to archives that do not belong to the Federation, as well as to private collections and in general to all those who collect films. Approaching these institutions and people is at times a challenge (even where you expect to get easy access to well-known collections), but it is no less gratifying than digging in a public archive, once we accept the idea that those in charge of the collections cannot afford to ignore the commercial aspects of their activity.

Most FIAF film archives own important collections of silent films; some are richer than others, but the value of a collection does not depend exclusively on its dimensions. Rather than setting down a list of the 'most important' film archives, which would be as ambiguous as it would be arbitrary, it is better to distinguish their objectives and structures, since these two factors govern access to the collections and the type of material which can be consulted in them. According to this approach, the following models of film archive may be identified. They are not mutually exclusive, in the sense that an institution may well belong to more than one category.

National Film Archives

Most institutions specifically dealing with the preservation of the national moving image heritage are state-controlled. Film producers are sometimes required by law to deposit a negative or at least a positive copy of their work in these organisations. This rule is applied in various degrees by institutions such as the Archives du Film in Bois d'Arcy, the Cineteca Nazionale in Rome, the Suomen Elokuva-Arkisto in Helsinki, the National Film and Sound Archive/ScreenSound Australia in Canberra, the Danish Film Institute/Film Archive in Copenhagen, the New Zealand Film Archive/Ngā Kaitiaki o ngā Taonga Whitiāhua in Wellington, and the Dövlət Film Fondu in Baku, Azerbaijan. The Svenska Filminstitutet/Cinemathek in Stockholm is among the best examples in this category: it has preserved and restored every surviving Swedish film and regularly receives copies of new films produced in Sweden. The Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, operates on a similar principle, even if the huge amount of material produced inside the United States compels it to be selective. The Library's fund of viewing prints may be consulted

free of charge by bona fide researchers. From 1895 to 1912, early films were deposited as 'paper prints' (see page 3) which have often been transferred onto standard film stock. Since 1942, a print of each film that is copyrighted must be deposited at the Library of Congress according to specific criteria and conditions (a little-known fact in this respect is that not all the films received are retained, as storage and conservation of every single item would be impossible at the current rate of incoming material).

The preservation of the national heritage of moving images is also the reason for the existence of the National Film and Television Archive in London, which, from 1935 to the present, has collected more than 175,000 titles from all parts of the world. There is at the moment no law in the United Kingdom requiring the legal deposit of films (as is the case, for instance, with books), but priority is given to collecting works produced in the United Kingdom.

The National Film and Television Archive is among those FIAF institutions which adhere to a 'non-restrictive' definition of 'national heritage'; this term indicates not only films produced in the archive's country of origin, but also moving images whose historical identity is tied to their commercial and cultural dissemination within that country's boundaries. This does not contradict one of FIAF's fundamental principles, according to which each member of the Federation undertakes to encourage the return of copies to their respective countries of origin.

Major Collections

Some large archives were initiated by a private organisation or a collector, gaining international recognition over the years. Two typical examples are the Cinémathèque française in Paris and the Cinémathèque Royale/Koninklijk Filmarchief in Brussels. The former, established in 1936, was brought to legendary status by Henri Langlois; the latter, set up in 1938, is a public body whose main aim is to preserve films produced in Belgium but is renowned for its impressive collection of foreign films put together by Jacques Ledoux, another founding father of the international archive movement.

Other archives of this type – particularly well-endowed with silent films – are the Národní Filmový Archiv in Prague, whose treasure of almost 30,000 prints is an endless source of discoveries; the Gosfilmofond in Moscow, whose vaults contain large holdings of Russian, Soviet, European and American silent films distributed in Russia before and after the 1917 Revolution; and the State Archives in Krasnogorsk, Russia, a major repository of non-fiction films.

Regional Film Archives

A number of relatively smaller institutions arise out of political decentralisation, or the growth of autonomous cultural and administrative entities. In some countries, like Italy, these processes have had uneven or contradictory results, leading to the

creation of institutes that exist on paper but have little operative or decision-making power. Elsewhere the same circumstances have had better results, with archives far from the capital helping state archives to find films and to spread moving image culture.

Two outstanding examples of this are the Cineteca del Friuli, co-organiser of the Pordenone Silent Film Festival (*Le Giornate del Cinema Muto*), and the Filmoteca de la Generalitat Valenciana, one of the most active institutions in Spain, a country with no less than ten moving archives, five of which are currently FIAF affiliates, the main one being the Filmoteca Española. Fostering the rediscovery of the local motion picture heritage is also the aim of two archives that are not strictly regional, the Scottish Film Archive in Glasgow and the Kinoteka na Makedonija in Skopje.

Municipal Film Archives

Other public and private institutions were established in a city context, following a similar principle of 'decentralisation'. Among them are the Cineteca del Comune di Bologna in Italy (co-organiser of *Il Cinema Ritrovato*, a festival dedicated to recent restoration work by film archives); the Cinémathèque de Toulouse, whose instigator was another great theorist of film archiving, Raymond Borde; the Cinémathèque Municipale de Luxembourg, the outcome of Fred Junck's dream of a cinephile sanctuary; the Münchner Filmmuseum/Stadtmuseum in Germany, where the films of Bavarian directors are collected and preserved.

Specialised Collections

An increasing number of institutions are focused not on the 'national cinema heritage' but on specific subjects. Examples are the Cinémathèque de la Danse in Paris, a part of the Cinémathèque française; the Musée du Cinéma de Lyon in Villeurbanne, devoted to the Lumière legacy; the Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive in Jerusalem; the Filmoteca Vaticana, dealing with works on religious themes; the Film and Video Archive in the Imperial War Museum, London, where material on the two world wars, produced in Britain, Germany, Russia, Italy and Japan is collected along with moving images of the military operations of British and Commonwealth forces from 1914 onwards.

'Programming' Film Archives

The strength of some institutions lies in their approach to access, which chiefly takes the form of public screenings of films collected and restored by the archive staff, or obtained from other commercial and cultural organisations. Among the most active venues for this kind of activity are the Cinémathèque Québécoise in Montreal, the Cinemateca Uruguaya in Montevideo, the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley, California, the Cinémathèque française in Paris, the Münchner Filmmuseum /Stadtmuseum in Munich (thanks to Enno Patalas, a prophet of the 'preserve, restore show' philosophy of moving-image archiving) and the Cinémathèque

Royale de Belgique, the only archive in the world with an auditorium devoted exclusively to the screening of silent films with musical accompaniment.

University Film Archives

Institutions for higher education have established collections of moving images in order to satisfy the needs of academic activity and education practices in general. Two excellent examples are to be found in the United States: the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research in Madison, and the UCLA Film and Television Archive in Los Angeles, whose aims soon broadened to include the restoration of films, just like the other major film archives. Being the result of a fashionable tendency in the 60s, which differentiated between 'film archives' and 'film libraries', the university film archive pays special attention to access to the collections. An increasing number of institutions in this category are providing access to their holdings through electronic and digital formats.

Film Museums

While some organisations are committed to preserving as much as possible (ideally, everything), others take a more selective approach and try to build their collections according to the criteria of historical relevance, cultural interest, and aesthetic excellence. This approach to film archiving is endorsed by the Department of Film and Video at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, active since 1935, and the Motion Picture Department at George Eastman House in Rochester, established in 1947 and opened to the public in 1949. Both institutions – under the impulse of curators such as Iris Barry, Eileen Bowser (at MoMA), James Card and George C. Pratt (at GEH) – have become extremely rich in rare or unique prints of silent films and written documents related to the period. Museums also preserve cameras and projectors, posters, sound equipment, scripts, publicity materials, ephemera, and the objects produced at the time which preceded the invention of the photographic moving image. A spectacular collection of pre-cinema artifacts can be found at the Museo Nazionale del Cinema in Turin; and George Eastman House has an impressive range of film equipment from the first thirty years of cinema, sometimes in prototypes which can no longer be found elsewhere. The Musée Henri Langlois at the Cinémathèque française and the Musée du Cinéma linked to the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique devote particular attention to education in film history. A similar role is played by the non-FIAF American Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria, New York; while London too had briefly (1987–1999) the imaginative but ill-fated Museum of the Moving Image, again a non-FIAF institution.

Finally, apart from the film archives in developing countries (born from the necessity to stop the systematic destruction of moving images from the colonial and postcolonial eras), there are the so-called 'spontaneous' archives and museums which have arisen from the passion and initiative of individual specialists. Among those institutions closest to FIAF's methods and aims, we should mention at least

the Cinémathèque Méliès in Paris, the Cinema Museum in London and the former Barnes Museum of Cinematography in St Ives, Cornwall, whose most important holdings are now divided between the Museo Nazionale del Cinema of Turin and a museum in Hove, England, dedicated to the beginnings of British cinema (in 2000, still nascent). Trying to compile a full list of them would be virtually impossible, but more importantly it would be unfair to those who are not exceedingly active in making themselves known or their collections accessible.

The Searchers

As we said earlier, in order to study silent cinema you must be prepared to travel. Little or no research can be completed in this subject – whether by way of articles, books or theses – without the aid of the archives that hold selections of period films and possess the equipment needed to consult these films. That these archives may be far away from your home is no reason to ignore them and neither should that discourage curiosity. Progress in this field is so fast that almost every film archive in the world is adapting, despite technical and financial difficulties, to the standards of the most prestigious European and American models. Everywhere, from Lisbon to Wellington, from Bangkok to Santiago, there is work enough to last for decades.

Outside Europe and North America, you must first choose the archive which corresponds most closely to your chosen research project. Getting to it will take time and money. If you manage to reach the national archives operating outside the FIAF pantheon, so much the better: the most remote collections hide treasures which few other people have been fortunate enough to see. Much also depends on what one can obtain from the archives that have little or nothing in common with FIAF: private collections and corporate companies. In the former, we shall find the kind of behaviour we have already mentioned: secrecy, suspicion, a personalised relation with the researcher, independence from (or hostility towards) film archives whose activity is controlled by public funds. Making contact with the raiders of the lost nitrate is not easy, but a regular attendance at the Giornate del Cinema Muto in Pordenone and Sacile, Italy, the Cinefest in Syracuse, New York, and countless, though little-publicised collectors' conventions organised yearly throughout the world (as well as reading two periodicals, *The Big Reel* and *Classic Images*, both published in the United States), usually guarantee a wealth of useful information.

There are also commercial companies which exploit the cinema of the past for profit by locating, reprinting and selling moving images. Such organisations may not wish to respond to the needs of the researcher, but nothing is lost by trying. Try, in particular, production and distribution companies. Their archives are sometimes vast and their addresses can be found in national corporate yearbooks. Try also firms specialising in providing stock footage, local historical societies and agencies which lend films for education purposes, where these still exist. In some large corporate firms there is often a historical archive of sorts, and it may be possible to find something useful in their offices. In addition, there are political, military, industrial

and trade organisations keeping films (especially non-fiction) which are often impossible to find elsewhere. Access to what could be one of the most important 'specialised' archives in the world, the moving-image holdings of the Pentagon, was virtually impossible until a portion of the collection was transferred to the National Archives in Washington, DC, but elsewhere there are good possibilities for doing research, especially if you have good credentials and a well-defined, realistic project.

Finally, have you ever tried asking your neighbour, relatives in the countryside, former cinema owners, the team working on the demolition or restructuring of your local theatre? Did you know that an extraordinary work such as *Kurutta Ippеiji* (*A Page of Madness*, Teinosuke Kinugasa 1926) was found in 1971, in the garden of the house where its director had once lived?

Further Reading

Collectors

The life and work of the founding fathers of the film archival movement is the object of an uneven literature, ranging from gossip to hagiography, consistent with their eccentric and often flamboyant personalities. A dazzling document on the transition from collecting to restoring silent films is provided by James Card, *Seductive Cinema. The Art of Silent Film* (New York: Knopf, 1994), presented as a book on film history yet to be read as an intellectual autobiography of the first curator at George Eastman House. Jacques Ledoux, curator of the Royal Film Archive of Belgium, is remembered in Anne Head (ed.), *A True Love for Cinema*, (The Hague: Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, 1988) and Dominique Nasta (ed.), *Jacques Ledoux, L'Éclairer*, special issue of *Revue belge du cinéma*, no. 40, November 1995. Two biographies have been published on Henri Langlois, by far the most written about of the group: Glenn Myrent and Georges P. Langlois, *Henri Langlois, premier citoyen du cinéma* (Paris: Denoël, 1986); translated into English as *Henri Langlois, First Citizen of Cinema* (New York: Twayne, 1995), and Richard Roud, *A Passion for Films* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). *Le Dragon et l'alouette: Correspondance 1948–1979*, edited by Sergio Toffetti (Torino: Museo Nazionale del Cinema, 1992) is a selection of the correspondence between Langlois and Maria Adriana Prolo, founder of a museum of cinema and pre-cinematic artifacts in Turin, Italy.

Moving Image Archives

A fascinating introduction to the world of film archives is provided by Raymond Borde – former curator of the Cinémathèque de Toulouse, and an authoritative voice of FIAF – in *Les Cinémathèques* (Paris: L'Âge d'Homme, 1983), followed by his startling critique of the field in *La Crise des cinémathèques... et du monde* (Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 1997) written with his colleague Freddy Buache, himself a former curator at the Cinémathèque suisse. *50 ans d'Archives du Film/50 Years of Film*

Archives (Brussels: FIAF, 1988) features descriptions of FIAF and its members (78 at the time): this book is an update of *International Federation of Film Archives* (Paris: FIAF, 1958), published for the twentieth anniversary of the Federation; see also Herbert Volkmann, *Film Preservation. A Report of the Preservation Committee of the International Federation of Film Archives* (London: National Film Archive, 1965), technically outdated yet still valuable as historical document and preliminary reading; Penelope Houston, *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives* (London: British Film Institute, 1994); Anthony Slide, *Nitrate Won't Wait. A History of Film Preservation in the United States* (Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland, 1992); David Francis, 'Definition et fonction des archives cinématographiques', in Emmanuelle Toulet (ed.), *CinéMémoire* (Paris: Centre National de la Cinématographie/Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, 1991), pp. 29–33. Two brief but illuminating accounts of the situation in Europe and in the United States can be found in the report edited in 1991 by Michelle Aubert on behalf of the Association des Cinémathèques de la Communauté Européenne, *Les archives et les cinémathèques européennes: état de leurs activités*, and David Francis, 'Film Conservation Center. A Pioneer in Saving Movies', *Library of Congress Information Bulletin*, vol. 50 no. 1, 14 January 1991, pp. 3–6.

Archival Holdings

Wolfgang Klaue, *World Directory of Moving Image and Sound Archives* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1993) features a list of 577 non-profit organisations worldwide, from Abu Dhabi to Zimbabwe. A comprehensive index of commercial and non-commercial archives can be found in *Footage. The Worldwide Moving Image Sourcebook* (New York: Second Line Search, 1997), a massive and invaluable research tool for any serious film scholar, also available on CD-Rom (contact: www.footagesources.com). Published lists of archives and viewing prints quickly become obsolete, and can be incomplete or inaccurate; a direct and responsible contact with the institutions relevant to your research is by far the best way to go. However, a limited number of written and electronic sources is likely to make your work easier. Several years after its publication, Ronald S. Magliozzi (ed.), *Treasures from the Film Archives: A Catalog of Short Silent Fiction Films Held by FIAF Archives* (Metuchen, NJ, and London: The Scarecrow Press, 1988) is still a key source on 9,033 silent short films held by thirty-three FIAF institutions. The occasional inaccuracies in filmographic data are mostly due to the inherent limitations in the cataloguing systems of the contributing archives, and by no means affect the importance of this pioneering work. The Federation compiled in 1987 an untitled book (known by the cognoscenti as the *FIAF Black Book*) with information on the archival holdings of 5,899 titles held by forty-seven archives. This document, available exclusively to the staff of the FIAF archives participating in the survey, has been for a long time the Holy Grail of researchers and was circulated for a long time in bootleg copies. The book was the last instalment of a series of indexes and catalogues which became

part of FIAF's Embryo Project, an ongoing census of silent films whose copies were held by the members of the Federation. In the 90s, a portion of the list became public with the *International Film Archive CD-Rom*, a compilation of databases and bibliographies which is an essential working tool for the earnest silent film researcher. The silent film database of this CD-Rom, available from Silver Platter, is updated twice a year.

Over the years, film archives have published partial lists of their holdings or catalogues of their restorations. Among them are the *National Film Archive Catalogue of Viewing Copies 1985* (London: BFI, 1984); *National Film Archive Catalogue. Part I, Silent News Films, 1895–1933* (1965); *Part II, Silent Non-Fiction Films, 1895–1934* (1960); *Part III, Silent Fiction Films (1895–1930)* (1966); *National Film Archive Catalogue, Volume 1: Non-Fiction Films* (1980); Elaine Burrows, Janet Moat, David Sharp and Linda Wood (eds), *The British Cinema Source Book. BFI Archive Viewing Copies and Library Materials* (London: BFI, 1995); Kemp R. Niver, *Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection, 1894–1912* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); *Catalog of Holdings. The American Film Institute Collection and the United Artists Collection at the Library of Congress* (Washington, DC: American Film Institute, 1978); Rita Horwitz and Harriet Harrison (eds), *The George Kleine Collection of Early Motion Pictures in the Library of Congress: A Catalog* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1980); *Restaurations et tirages de la Cinémathèque française*, vols. 1–4 (Paris: La Cinémathèque française, 1986–9); Jon Gartenberg (ed.), *The Film Catalog: A List of Holdings in the Museum of Modern Art* (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall & Co., 1985); *Circulating Film Library Catalog* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), updated in *Circulating Film Library Catalog, Volume 2* (1990). Information on surviving Russian and German silent films can be found in Yuri Tsvian *et al.*, *Silent Witnesses. Russian Films, 1908–1919* (Pordenone: Edizioni Biblioteca dell'Immagine/London: BFI, 1989; distributed in the United States by Indiana University Press); Paolo Cherchi Usai and Lorenzo Codelli (eds), *Before Caligari. German Cinema, 1895–1920* (Pordenone: Biblioteca dell'Immagine, 1990, distributed in the United States by the University of Wisconsin Press).

Legal Issues

Birgit Kofler, *Legal Questions Facing Audiovisual Archives* (Paris: UNESCO, 1991); Edith Kramer, 'Should a FIAF Archive ask for Copyright Clearance before Showing a Film?', *Journal of Film Preservation*, vol. 22 no. 47, October 1993, pp. 51–2; Michael Henry, 'Copyright, Neighbouring Rights and Film Archives', *Journal of Film Preservation*, vol. 23 no. 49, October 1994, pp. 2–9.

Festivals

Viewing silent films outside film archives – particularly for those who cannot afford frequent travel – is a rewarding experience at the annual silent film festival – Le Giornate del Cinema Muto – held in Pordenone and Salsomaggiore, Italy (contact:

www.cinetecadelfriuli.org), with a focus on history and the dialogue between archives and researchers. Silent cinema is also prominent in the schedule of Il Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna, Italy (contact: www.cinetecadibologna.it), a showcase for European archives and preservation projects. The *Syracuse Cinefest* in Syracuse, NY, *Cinecon* in Los Angeles (contact: 3405 Glendale Blvd, Suite 251, Los Angeles, CA 90039; website: www.mdle.com/Classic Films/) and *Cinesation* in Saginaw, Michigan (contact: Great Lakes Cinephile Society, PO Box 352, Frankenmuth, Michigan 48734; website: www.cinephiles.org) are the privileged forums of film collectors in the United States, with a strong emphasis on silent rarities and the trade of 16mm prints, posters and memorabilia. Scholarly research is at the heart of Domitor, the international society for early cinema studies (contact: domitor-admin@cri.histart.umontreal.ca) whose conferences take place every two years in different countries, with panels and screenings organised by archives and academic institutions. The above venues (together with Pesaro, Avignon, CinéMémoire in Paris) were for a long time the only places where silent films would see the light. Times have changed, and virtually every festival now features at least one 'special event' or retrospective, often surrounded by the aura of a live music performance. This may be the indication of an encouraging trend, or the evidence that viewing a silent film on a large screen with an orchestra is bound to become a wholly different kind of cultural phenomenon, more or less the equivalent of an opera house event.

The epigraph at the beginning of this chapter is taken from Richard Roud, *A Passion for Films. Henri Langlois and the Cinémathèque Française* (New York: The Viking Press), p. 92.

5 F for Filmography

Although our information is false, we do not guarantee it.

Erik Satie

Why Do We Need Written Sources?

A study of film history based exclusively on paper documents is almost bound to remain incomplete unless the subject in question is tangential to the production of moving images, such as distribution, the architecture and design of projection halls, the patent wars, and so on. In any event, even in such cases, it would still be useful to know which films were distributed; what was the relation between the images projected onto the screen and the space that surrounded them; to what model of perception the rival technologies and patented inventions referred. On the other hand, an analysis of silent films that does not take into account the publications available at that time and the in-depth studies derived from them is equally bound to remain inadequate. For research to stand a chance of success, we must have information that only books, articles and magazines can offer. It is true that the skill to identify a film and to recognise the particular style of a production company or a period is acquired only by watching and carefully studying hundreds of films. However, many secrets are buried in the pages of periodicals, catalogues, memoirs and legal documents. Without these, films are silent witnesses of indecipherable projects and ambitions.

Moreover, whenever we study the past, it is useful to have some basic knowledge of other disciplines such as literature, music, architecture, politics and economics relevant to the period. In addition, a familiarity with legal dimensions helps, as does a knowledge of the history of fashion, of uniforms and railway lines, of colonial wars and of car licence numbers. Having seen thousands of films is no reason to underestimate the importance of a wide-ranging general culture; the rest, the so-called 'specialised literature', is little more than a tool of the trade, like the viewing table and a well-organised filing system.

Although they are not always easy to find, the key preliminary texts on early film history are fairly few. A bibliography of about 100 titles published during the silent era, thoroughly examined, guarantees a sound basis. The number of specialised studies from recent times is vast, but on closer inspection of the roughly 500 books