Film history in the making

Film historiography, digitised archives and digital research dispositifs

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2.0 Film Heritage Digitisation Between Europeanisation and Cinephile, Curatorial Agendas

In this chapter, I analyse how the conceptions of film as a source for film historiography, discussed in Chapter 1, have informed and reflected in debates on film heritage digitisation and access in Europe since the early 1990s. This analysis will take place against the backdrop of a historical overview of the field's professionalisation from the 1970s and onwards. In my discussion, I attend in particular to three different organisational frameworks/contexts against which film archives increasingly define their priorities; first of all the European network of film archives ACE and the archival film festival Il Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna, second the political body of the European Commission (EC), and finally the respective missions on the individual institutional level. Attending to these frameworks I discuss how especially the current agenda for increased Europeanisation within the EC has played a significant role in recasting historical discourse in film heritage institutions to subsequently analyse its consequences for digitisation. The chapter falls into two parts, focusing respectively on the discursive field of European film heritage institutions and on their DVD and Blu-ray releases as a case study.

Part one, “Film Heritage Digitisation in Europe: Agendas, Debates, Platforms”, begins by taking a historical look at film archiving in Europe through an account of the field's professionalisation between the late 1960s and the early 1990s; a period which saw the emergence of a wide range of regional institutions, scientific reference literature and pan-European collaborations subsidised by the European Commission. Against this historical backdrop, I contend that this development fostered an intersection between the agendas of the European Commission and the new organisational framework of the European Association of Cinematheques, which today frames digitised film heritage within an agenda of European identity building. Analysing the discourse of the reports written as part of the European Union's 'Digital Agenda for Europe'-initiative and its conception of a shared European identity, the last section of this part discusses how especially online platforms such as Europeana and the European Film Gateway emphasise film heritage as documents of a shared European history. Engaging also with polemics around this tendency I go on to investigate how individual institutions negotiate, confront and/or counter it in their digitisation work.

The chapter’s second part, “Taste-Making and the DVD Repertory of European Film Heritage Institutions”, analyses how representations of film history in archival DVD and Blu-ray catalogues differ from the agenda of European identity and, instead, reflect institutional missions. This analysis
sets out to elucidate the historical discourses which shape digital access on the individual institutional levels in European film heritage institutions. The choice to take the DVD repertory as a case is rooted in the circumstance that there currently exists only sparse official data on the scope and scale of film heritage digitisation. Given that the task of collecting such data would far surpass the scope and time available within my project, I decided to focus on and create a dataset on the DVD releases of the discussed institutions within the period from April to August 2014. By analysing patterns of for instance nationality and period within the dataset, I argue that it can be taken to reflect the current priorities and models of history which are privileged in the digitisation work of European film heritage institutions. Beyond the case study's descriptive statistical component, I also do close analysis of DVDs, released by respectively the Austrian Filmmuseum and the Danish Film Institute from the perspective of film restoration theory. In doing so I reflect on how film archives, through distinct digitisation procedures and DVD presentation strategies, suggest specific approximations to films from their collections in their digital access formats.

As a background for my analysis of the DVD repertory of European film heritage institutions, I first discuss how video distribution formats since the early 1980s have fostered a plethora of publishers releasing classic and rare titles which have been embraced by cinephiles and film historians as a repertory for studying film history. Subsequently, the part regards the creation of an annual event such as Il Cinema Ritrovato's 'DVD Awards' and the continued release of DVDs and Blu-rays by film heritage institutions as a reflection of this culture, which constitutes a particularly cinephile repertory devoted mainly to the classics and hidden gems. To analyse the repertory created with these formats, the part provides an overview of the releases of 30 institutions with attention to their representation of different national cinemas and periods.

In a concluding section, I contend that the observations made in the chapter's key examples and case study should lead us to focus increasingly on the specific underlying policies and procedures of individual collections, their shared characteristics and regard them as very limited reflections of analogue collections. I observe that even though digital access is increasingly defined in relation to a European identity project and increasingly professionalised codes, institutions maintain a strong agency of their own. Therefore I argue that principles of provenance and source criticism remain

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294 Perhaps the most sustained effort to produce statistics about film heritage digitisation is the Enumerate project (2011-2014) funded by the European Commission (EC). The project indicates that approximately 22 percent of European audio-visual heritage - including both broadcast and film institutes in its survey – has been digitised. Following the advice of then responsible of the Film Heritage subgroup of the European Commission's Cinema Expert Group, Mari Sol Pérez Guevara, I chose not to use the statistics produced by the Enumerate project. As she pointed out to me, she considered the project's numbers misleading because they mix many different AV collections with film heritage collections. Mari Sol Pérez Guevara in e-mail to the author December 4, 2013. See: http://www.enumerate.eu/en/statistics/, last accessed January 24, 2017.
significant concepts in digital research, in order to understand how the digital material which researchers make use of condition and frame it. Furthermore, based on my results, I argue for a reorientation of the currently prevalent premise of abundance which inform contemporary discussions.

2.1 Film Heritage Digitisation in Europe: Agendas, Debates, Platforms

Cinémathèques today are film clinics. Technicians in white coats evaluate, diagnose and restore the material left on the roadside by cinema. A blistering objectivity directs their work. They operate on computers. They are neither treasure hunters nor partisans. They see their collections unwind on their machines, as the authorised signatories of power look after and survey the assets of a bank. This gigantic evolution, from the original cinémathèque to the modern Archive, has not passed without conscientious debates nor without rough mutations. Something has been gained. Something has been lost. But while it is still time, we would like to retrace the transition from the picturesque banks of subjectivity to the rational administration of memory.295

In 1997, Raymond Borde and Freddy Buache suggested in their La crise des cinémathèques... et du monde (L'age d'homme, 1997), that a transition had occurred in cinematheques which implied a fundamental reorganisation of their administration and professional skills. An era of subjectivity in which film archives and cinematheques were run predominantly by autodidact cinephiles and “treasure hunters” had been replaced by rational, modern institutional procedures reflecting the priorities of political stakeholders and scientific, computer-aided information management. Written at the juncture of the late 1990s, La Crise reflected the perspective of two ageing cinephiles belonging to an era of subjectivity, painting a pessimistic picture of this transition and polemicising against it. At the same time, its account provides crucial coordinates for understanding the forces which have shaped film heritage institutions and digitisation, particularly in Europe. It highlights the professional, political and commercial forces brought into play in this transition which, I would argue, are key for elucidating today's European digitisation policies and surrounding debates.

Since the early 1970s, European film heritage institutions have increasingly developed

Raymond Borde and Freddy Buache, La crise des cinémathèques... et du monde, (Lausanne: L’Age d’Homme, 1997) 6. Original quote: “Les cinémathèques sont aujourd’hui des cliniques du film. Les techniciens en blouse blanche évaluent, diagnostiquent et restaurent du matériel laissé sur le bord de la route par le cinéma. Une objectivité foudroyante préside à leurs travaux. Ils opèrent sur ordinateur. Ils ne sont ni des chercheurs de trésors, ni des partisans. Ils voient les collections qui se déroulent sur leurs machines, comme les fondés de pouvoir entretiennent et surveillent les actifs d’une banque. Cette gigantesque évolution, de la cinémathèque des origines à l'Archive moderne, ne s’est passée ni sans débats de conscience, ni sans mutations houleuses. Quelque chose a été gagné. Quelque chose a été perdu. Mais tant qu’il en est encore temps, nous voudrions retracer le passage des rives pittoresques de la subjectivité à l’administration rationelle de la mémoire.”. 95
standardised work protocols in closer collaboration with each other and with political authorities. This has given rise to a professional culture sustained by scientific reference literature and formal training which to a greater degree depend on national and international cultural policies. At the same time, the very status of film archiving as a profession has on several occasions been fundamentally questioned within the field, also at an advanced stage in the history of film archiving as late as in the 1990s. In 1995 for instance, media preservationist Ray Edmondson questioned the field's professional status by highlighting that many central concepts and values needed further codification and shared standards in order for it to qualify as a profession.\textsuperscript{296} Yet, in spite of such debates, there are in these years, several typical organisational patterns and developments in the film preservation field which can be taken to reflect an increased professionalisation. As sociologist Andrew Abott has pointed out, established theories of professionalisation tend to point to a range of typical events which indicate increased professionalisation.\textsuperscript{297} For instance the development of a shared code of ethics upon the establishment of an association is a clear marker of professionalisation.\textsuperscript{298} FIAF began to develop its first code of ethics in 1993 as a guiding set of principles for member institutions and released it in its first version in 1998.\textsuperscript{299} Beyond this, there are also a set of other typical steps, such as the development of professional training, first within the context of an association, then at university-level, as well as the establishment of professional journals and a wider cultural legitimation of the professional field.\textsuperscript{300} Drawing on such theories, I would like to discuss and suggest below how film preservation professionalised in a rather straightforward manner since the early 1970s, marked by several typical events.

An epitomic example is the 'Langlois affair', which saw Henri Langlois removed from the position as Secretary General of la Cinémathèque française in early 1968. This event can be seen as highly illustrative of how a cinephile era was replaced by and conflicts with a later professional culture of film archiving. The ‘Langlois affair’ refers to the events which followed the French Ministry of Culture’s decision in 1968, then headed by art historian André Malraux, to replace Langlois with film critic Pierre Barbin. Due to mistrust in Langlois’ management and preservation of La Cinémathèque Française’s holdings in order to secure that the institution conformed to


\textsuperscript{298} Ibid., 10.

\textsuperscript{299} For the FIAF Code of Ethics, see: \url{http://www.fiafnet.org/pages/Community/Code-Of-Ethics.html}, last accessed January 24, 2017.

\textsuperscript{300} Andrew Abbott, op.cit., 15.
national preservation policies. While this decision caused the mobilisation of massive protests by famous film directors and actors worldwide in favor of Langlois allowing him to return to his position, the affair's consequence was that la Cinémathèque française would no longer receive state subsidies. These subsidies instead went into the creation of le Service des archives du film of the Centre Nationale de la Cinématographie in 1969, that had newly constructed vaults designated to the Cinémathèque's française's holdings, but which the latter refused to take into use under Henri Langlois' direction.

This particular example can be said to sketch the contours of a transition which has occurred from the early 1970s to the 1990s. In this period, film heritage institutions within FIAF developed best practices and professional standards, through the publication of professional journals and manuals, inter-institutional collaboration, annual conferences, workshops and educational initiatives. The first edition of the professional publication the *FIAF Information Bulletin* saw the light in 1972 (since 1993 published as the *Journal of Film Preservation*), providing a forum for FIAF members and affiliates to develop and discuss shared standards and vocabularies as well as publishing original historical case studies. Since then, the professional literature on moving image archiving has continued to grow significantly from addressing mainly technical issues to cover a wide range of historical and theoretical subjects. In 1973, FIAF held its first film preservation summer school, hosted by the Staatliches Filmarchiv der DDR and held at different institutions with intervals of one, two or three years before gaining a continuing host institution in La Cineteca di Bologna in 2007.

In these transitional years, FIAF also experienced a significant expansion outside of the Occidental world seeing the Federation grow significantly in the period from 1961 to 1987 - as pointed out by FIAF’s current director Eric le Roy – to count 77 member institutions in 55 countries by 1977. Part of this expansion can be said to reflect that FIAF became more successful in advocating for a wider recognition of film preservation as cultural heritage preservation in particular to an organisational framework such as UNESCO. UNESCO's 1975 General Assemby

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301 Patrick Olmeta, op. cit., 135.
303 Patrick Olmeta, op. cit., 158.
supported the need to preserve moving images and in 1980, the document *Recommendation for the safeguarding and preservation of moving images*, recognised moving images as cultural heritage, stating in one of its opening paragraphs that “moving images are an expression of the cultural identity of peoples, and because of their educational, cultural, artistic, scientific and historical value, form an integral part of a nation’s cultural heritage”. The latter document has become a strong reference point for film archivists as a way of legitimising their professional activities. Also in 1980, the ties between the two organisational frameworks were further strengthened when UNESCO granted FIAF NGO status.

It goes beyond the scope of my research to discuss the implications of this global expansion with attention to the manifold, distinct societal realities within which FIAF member and affiliate institutions operate. What is important here is to underline that, due to this development the majority of FIAF institutions have created closer ties to national or regional political bodies to define their policies and missions of preservation, if not being founded upon the direct initiatives of such bodies. Consequently, with this transition, political authorities to a greater degree determine and condition preservation policies to arguably imbue film heritage institutions anew with official conceptions of (film) historiography. For this reason, it is crucial to analyse contemporary digitisation policies against the backdrop of this transition and its implications for the profession sketched above. This is what I propose in the next section with regard to discussions of digitisation between European film heritage institutions and political stakeholders in the European Commission. This will contribute to a more detailed understanding of the ways in which European policies mobilise film archives in a process of European identity construction to provide digitised film heritage historicity. To this end, I first discuss how this transition manifested itself in Europe through the emergence of regional cinémathèques, professional journals and pan-European collaborations subsidised by the European Commission, before analysing the historical discourse which permeate current European digitisation initiatives such as Europeana and the European Film  

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310 As perhaps the most ambitious attempt to date to break with euro- and anglo-centrism in film archiving history in the post World War II era I refer to Caroline Frick, op.cit. See also Ramesh Kumar, *National Film Archives: Policies, Practices, and Histories. A Study of the National Film Archive of India, EYE Film Institute Netherlands, and the National Film and Sound Archive, Australia*. (PhDiss, New York University, 2016).

311 Raymond Borde, op.cit., 151. As Borde remarks in this regard: "U.N.E.S.C.O. ou pas, nous sommes entrés dans un monde où l’on crée des cinémathèques sur décision des Etats. Avant même d’avoir le premier mètre de pellicule, les ministères de la Culture construisent des voûtes, engagent du personnel et mobilisent des crédits. C’est une autre filière, strictement administrative, où les futures archives sont engendrées par les planning et les organigrammes".
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Gateway.

The Expansion and Professionalisation of Film Archiving in Europe

FIAF's expansion between the 1960s and late 1980s, manifests itself in Europe in the foundation of a range of smaller film heritage institutions. In the European countries of the "Big Four", regional film archives emerged out of local ciné-clubs, film societies or archives of which several would later become FIAF members or associates. In France, cinémathèques were founded in Toulouse (La Cinémathèque de Toulouse, 1964), Marseille (La Cinémathèque de Marseille, 1975), Lyon (l’Institut Lumière, 1983), Nice (Cinémathèque de Nice, 1976), Perpignan (l’Institut Jean Vigo, 1983) and Brest (La Cinémathèque de Bretagne, 1986). In Germany a film museum was founded in Munich (Filmmuseum München, 1963) and later in 1993 in Düsseldorf (Filmmuseum Landeshauptstadt Düsseldorf) and in the UK in Manchester (North West Film Archive, 1977) London (the Cinema Museum, 1986) and Aberystwyth (Wales Film and Television Archive, 1989, since 2001 National Screen and Sound Archive of Wales). Also in Italy, where film archives had traditionally emerged as regional initiatives since the 1930s, did new cinémathèques appear with for example the foundation of La Cineteca di Bologna in 1963 and La Cineteca del Friuli in Gemona in 1977.312

To a certain extent, this expansion gave rise to a renegotiation of the balance between definitions of film as an art form and as a historical document. On the one hand, as products of local ciné-clubs, a large part of these institutions relied on internationalist, cinephile repertories in their collection building, ensuring the inclusion of the classics and masterpieces. On the other hand, as local initiatives - some subsidised by regional political bodies - they showed a stronger commitment to a conception of film as historical document than national institutions, by collecting for example locally produced documentaries, ethnographic film and amateur films, which only few national film heritage institutions would take into their collections. La Cinémathèque de Toulouse is illustrative as an institution which stands in-between the internationalist canon and the regional focus showing a strong commitment to both, by being at the same time an institution with a strong anchorage in its region and one of two cinémathèques in France with status of national institution (alongside La Cinémathèque française). The institution occupies a special place in the archival community for a part of its collection which it build up through fruitful connections to the Gosfilmofond in Moscow, from which the institution acquired for example the unique camera negative of Jean Renoir’s La

règle du jeu (1939), a wide range of Soviet silent classics as well as rarities such as the sole known existing print of Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer’s Die Gezeichneten (Love One Another, Germany, 1922). At the same time the institution traditionally shows a strong commitment to the documentation of regional culture and local habits in Southern France by actively promoting the collection and preservation of regional amateur film production in small gauge formats and to make them widely accessible, most recently for example in a collaborative project with l’Institut Vigo in Perpignan, La Mémoire filmique du Sud launched in 2013.

Yet, apart from their greater emphasis on this type of material, these institutions also contributed substantially to a professionalisation of film archiving beyond their regions, by nurturing debates on film archiving and historiography through publishing activities. Around the time of the first appearance of the FIAF Information Bulletin in 1972, a small number of specialised journals dedicated to discussions at the intersection of film archiving and film historiography, emerged from regional film archives, attracting contributions and attention from historians and archivists worldwide. The journal Les Cahiers de la Cinémathèque was first published by la Cinémathèque de Perpignan (now l’Institut Jean Vigo) in 1971. Dedicated in particular to original historical case studies, it was in part this journal that fuelled the debate on the versions of Porter’s The Life of an American Fireman, by hosting, in its fifteenth issue from 1975, a discussion between film historians Roman Gubern and Barthelemy Amengual over the film’s different versions. This debate provided a direct incentive for film historian André Gaudreault to write his post-Brighton article “Detours in Film Narrative: The Development of Cross-Cutting” for Cinema Journal in 1979. In his article, Gaudreault discussed the film’s different versions by providing a meticulous, comparative shot outline analysis of both to subsequently follow and discuss the lines of reasoning of respectively Gubern and Amengual which had been put forward in Les Cahiers de la Cinémathèque.

The bilingual (Italian-English) journal Griffithiana, founded in 1978 by film collector Angelo R. Humouda of the Cineteca del Friuli, emphasised the historical study of silent and animation cinema. From the 1980s onward it would provide a forum for archivists and scholars for discussing the discoveries made at the festival in Pordenone, thinking along the lines of the Brighton symposium's display of archival material. La Cineteca di Bologna’s Cinegrafie - a trilingual journal in Italian, English and French - founded in 1990 was instrumental in theorising film restoration. By discussing procedures for the reconstruction of film versions through detailed case studies it formed what, as

313 Eric Le Roy, op.cit., 149.
315 André Gaudreault, op.cit., 1979, 1.
mentioned in Chapter 1, has been dubbed a ‘Bolognese’ school of restoration theory, which promoted the philological study of different versions as the basis for restoration work of especially silent cinema classics. Each in their own way, these journals contributed to an invigoration of debates on the uses of film archives in film historical study, and to the development of professional ethics and standards which, while representative of only a small number of the new regional institutions, resonated widely within the field of film archiving. It was only slightly later, that a national institution, La Cinémathèque Française, would take the initiative to launch a journal with a similar profile, the English-French bilingual Cinémathèque published between 1992 and 2003.

The professionalisation of film archiving in Europe is reflected in the emergence of a publication culture with a very different focus than ‘first wave’ cinephile journals, sustained by institutions from outside the large metropolises. Where, as discussed in Chapter 1, early processes of canon formation, collection building and patrimonialisation of film were sustained in the 1920s by high-profile magazines such as Close-Up, Cinéa-Ciné Pour Tous or Vogue in conjunction with repertory programming in the large urban centres, European debates on the relation between film archiving and film historiography from the late 1960s and roughly up to the turn of the millenium relied in larger part on the discussions among film archivists and historians in Les Cahiers de la Cinémathèque, Griffithiana and Cinegrafie, published by smaller regional institutions, and Cinémathèque. While these journals were deeply informed by both the early canons and film theories in their discussion of what to preserve and restore, they nurtured a shift in the conceptualisation of film heritage by developing scientific best practices, ethics and restoration theory, regarding especially the programming of the festivals in Pordenone and Bologna as vital in revising and challenging the canons. Moving from the early film archiving movement's central concern of legitimising film as an art form worthy of collection and preservation, film archivists became increasingly concerned with screening lesser known parts of their collections in the best possible restored versions. To recall Borde and Buache's quote at the beginning of this chapter, they began scrutinising archival elements in “white coats” before taking their preservation and presentation decisions.

Reflecting the specialised reference literature's increasingly professional culture, the 1990s witnessed a strengthening of ties between national and regional film heritage institutions through European organisational frameworks and collaborative projects, backed by the European Commission. In 1991, 31 European film heritage institutions went together to form the Association of Cinémathèques of the European Community (ACCE), which that same year embarked on the
collaborative LUMIERE project subsidised by the European Commision’s MEDIA programme. The LUMIERE project formulated and worked towards three common goals of primarily the European Union's film heritage institutions.\(^{316}\) First of all, it aimed at developing joint film restoration projects between archives, relying on the exchange and comparison of different archival elements to create as complete as possible restored versions of films. Second, the project strived to compile a European filmography – also known as the Joint European Filmography (JEF) - to facilitate such exchanges and to improve access for researchers. And finally, the project promoted the search for lost European films.\(^{317}\) According to Eric Le Roy, these efforts led to the restoration of approximately 1000 films, mainly from the silent era, and the identification of approximately 700 films.\(^{318}\)

This development reflects that the number of film heritage institutions in Europe had reached a critical mass, which could sustain its own professional organisation outside of FIAF. From this perspective, the previous decades' regional expansion in part fuelled international collaboration within a European regional sphere, which have continued in different projects after LUMIERE's conclusion. In 1996, the ACCE changed into the Association of European Film Archives and Cinematheques (ACE) expanding its membership base to comprise a wider range of institutions in especially Eastern European countries, which would become members of the European Union throughout the 2000s. Yet, in spite of this expansion beyond the European Union, ACE has continued to be substantially subsidised by the European Commission in a number of pan-European, collaborative projects, remaining embedded primarily in the political context of the European Union and its agendas.

Thus, since 1996, LUMIERE has been followed by different projects of a duration of two to four years, ranging in focus from the development of cataloguing standards to restoration techniques and archival access. For example, the project Film Archives Online (FAOL), completed between 1997 and 2000, developed online learning tools on film restoration for students, scholars and archivists to disseminate such skills more widely.\(^ {319}\) Film Restoration and Conservation Strategies (FIRST), running from 2002 to 2004, aimed at creating recommendations and guidelines for the digitisation, digital restoration and cataloguing of archival film.\(^ {320}\) And the current project Moving Image

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316 José Manuel Costa, op.cit., 9-10.
317 Ibid.
318 Eric le Roy, op.cit., 130.
319 Gregory Lukow, "Beyond 'On-the-Job': The education of moving image archivists – a history in progress", in *Film History*, volume 12, number 2 (2000) 147n16
320 Paul Read, "‘Film Archives on the Treshold of a Digital Era’: Technical Issues from the EU FIRST Project”, in *Journal of Film Preservation*, no.
Database for Access and Re-Use of European Film Collections (MIDAS), which has resulted in the portal Filmarchives online (not to be confounded with FAOL), shares the ambition of the Joint European Filmography to combine the databases of film heritage institutions across Europe to facilitate access to them. These projects have been and are presented and discussed at special events at the yearly editions of the film festivals in Pordenone and Bologna, in seminars that run parallel to the film screenings. In this way, the collaborative efforts of European film archives closely intertwine with the EC's cultural policies in the very forums that today perhaps most prominently nurture the rediscovery and rewriting of film history, for historians and archivists.

Arguably, this intertwining was integral to the collaborative projects from the very beginning in the early 1990s and can be said to have nurtured a definition of a particularly European film heritage. An account of the LUMIERE project's results from 1996, by José Manuel Costa, then Head of Film Archive at the Cinemateca Portuguesa, suggests this when stating that collaboration among European institutions, beyond the restoration of canonised works and rediscovery of hitherto marginalised material, may lead to a rewriting of European history:

…the list of restorations contains new restored versions of the great classics (such as NOSFERATU, FAUST, CALIGARI, CABIRIA, QUO VADIS...), collections of early films which used some non-standard formats (28mm and 68mm), and documentaries spanning the 1910s to the 1960s, all of which will help rewrite the history of European cinema, if not of Europe tout-court.

While Costa's remark reflects a concern both for a classic, cinephile canon as for more marginalised material, it can be said to indicate that, as pointed out by Borde and Buache, the reality of film archives begins to intermingle more with that of political decision makers in the transition to professional cultural heritage institutions, in particular with the European Commission's agenda to create a shared history and identity.

To conclude, it can be said that cinephile values of film history continue to provide a canon for collecting and preserving cinema as an art form. However, the network of film clubs and its associated journals have been replaced by regional cinematheques and scientific discussions in specialised journals and at festivals which emphasise film historical revisionism through access to hitherto neglected archival material. Since the early 1990s the ACCE/ACE, in tandem with the

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322 José Manuel Costa, op.cit., 11.
cultural policies of the European Commission and the MEDIA programme, have also gained significant influence in the discussions within a larger European network. Through its involvement in the European collaborative efforts, the European Commission partly conditions the policies of film heritage institutions and the definitions, discussions and scopes of their projects. As the collaborative projects of the late 1990s and 2000s show, this also concerns recent and current digitisation projects prompting a closer look at how the European Commission conceives of film heritage digitisation today, as a conditioning factor for digital film historiography.

In the next section, I discuss how current policies of film preservation and historiography relate to an agenda of European identity building. I do this by analysing the political and historiographical underpinnings of the European Commission's reports on cultural heritage digitisation and of the general responses to digitisation by film archivists and curators, while attending to the online cultural heritage platforms Europeana and European Film Gateway as key examples.

Digital Access to European Cultural Heritage and Europeanisation

The closer ties between the European Commission and the European film heritage institutions have nurtured a notion of a collective, European film heritage. Today the collaboration between the European Commission and the European film heritage institutions is embedded in an increased political interest in creating digital infrastructures in Europe to stimulate economical growth and to build a strong European identity. The Commission’s “Digital Agenda for Europe”, launched in 2010 as part of the “Europe 2020” strategy, aims at improving internet access for European citizens, online availability to cultural heritage and to further a European digital economy. As part of this agenda, cultural heritage digitisation projects subsidised by the European Commission contribute to a process of Europeanisation, which considers cultural heritage institutions and film heritage institutions instrumental in sustaining European identity and history.

The Digital Agenda for Europe comprises a focus area on ‘Digital Culture’. Within this area, work and reflection groups seek to further digitisation in European cultural heritage institutions and provide access to them via the web portal Europeana. Europeana functions as an aggregator which brings together digitised, online heritage collections from archives, libraries and museums around Europe. Launched in 2008, it currently provides a single access point with a simple search function to collections from 141 European cultural heritage institutions, comprising national and

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regional libraries, archives and museums of varying size. Through Europeana, users can browse more than 30 million image, text, video, sound and 3D items, and, depending on the rights situation of individual items, download and appropriate them according to their wishes. In extension of Europeana, a number of sub-portals have been launched devoted to specific historical periods and media types such as Europeana Regia for Middle Age and Renaissance manuscripts, Europeana Newspapers, the Europeana Collections 1914-1918 dedicated to material relating to World War I, Europeana Photography and the two film portals European Film Gateway and EFG1914.

The role of cultural heritage digitisation in European identity building is articulated in a number of recommendation reports penned in work and reflection groups as a part of the Digital Agenda. In recent years, especially the ‘Comité des sages’ report titled The New Renaissance (European Commission, 2011), has provided a central reflection for the Digital Agenda's objectives regarding cultural heritage digitisation. In line with the Digital Agenda's overall goals, the report sees digital access to cultural heritage as highly beneficial for educational purposes and digital business initiatives, foreseeing that non-digitised archives may become inaccessible due to technological obsolescence of its storage formats. A non-digitised archive, the report suggests, can therefore be considered a loss for European culture and history and for the creation of a digital knowledge economy. In addition to technological obsolescence, the report identifies a number of obstacles for digitisation, such as frequently complex copyright situations or lack of sustainable digital preservation models. Consequently it endorses the development of practices which may help overcome issues of obsolescence, copyright and preservation through increased funding for digitisation in member states and a strengthening of Europeana as the primary digital access point to European culture. Indeed, as the site of Europeana suggests to its users it is via this site that one should expect to have 'Europe's culture' available only a mouse-click away (see Fig. 6).

Taken as an indication of the Digital Agenda's objective for cultural heritage digitisation, the ideal goal for the European Commission is a complete digitisation of European cultural heritage to the benefit of European citizenship. As the report's title enthusiastically suggests, digital access to cultural heritage could foster a “new renaissance” in Europe, in which citizens can acquire

326 For a list of the content providers to Europeana, see: http://www.europeana.eu/portal/nl/browse/sources.html. Last accessed, January 24, 2017.
329 Ibid., 17.
knowledge freely across a broad range of disciplines.

![Image](image.png)

**Fig. 6** 'Europe's culture in your newsfeed' is the promise of Europeana to its users. Aggregating digitised material from 141 institutions it reflects the Digital Agenda for Europe's key objective to bring cultural heritage online to nurture Europeanisation.

In this regard the report strongly propagates the notion of a shared European identity and history, sustained by a unique cultural heritage and of which the future preservation will depend on digitisation and online accessibility. This notion is put forth in a celebratory tone in the report’s introductory statement, which, referring to political economist and one of the European Union’s founding figures Jean Monnet, contends that European cultural heritage is one of the world’s most important:

As Jean Monnet said, if "Europe were to be reconstructed, I would begin with culture rather than the economy". The cultural heritage of the old continent nourished the education, the formation, the spirit of the generations which preceded us and we feel the responsibility to transmit this rich (indeed, one of the richest in the world) heritage to future generations and to make sure it will be preserved, enriched and shared. With no exaggeration, we can state that what is at stake is a common good of humanity and not just of Europe.\(^{330}\)

Building on the founding ideals of the European Union, it can be argued, that from the perspective of European policy makers, digitisation is crucial in constructing and sustaining a common, European identity, along the lines of the Union's initial ideals. Yet, the recommendations for European digitisation formulated by the report are not stimulated by entirely new ideas on the function of cultural heritage within the European Union. On the contrary they can be said to be anchored firmly in especially the past three decades of European cultural policy making.

As historian Hartmut Kaelble has argued, from the early 1980s onwards discussions among

\(^{330}\)Ibid., 1.
philosophers and historians gave rise to the idea of a shared European history and sphere which contributed to its very construction by historicising its cultural products in a European frame. \(^{331}\) Furthermore, the construction of a European identity in this period became increasingly driven by the creation of shared cultural symbols rather than the expansion of traditional industrial sectors, as it had happened in the immediate post-World War II years. \(^{332}\) It is for example in the mid-1980s that the European Union creates its own flag, chooses an official anthem and a Europe Day. \(^{333}\) Building on this point, social scientist Monica Sassatelli has pointed out, that the very statement by Jean Monnet used in the quote above, has obtained, since the early 1980s, the status as a crucial and returning reference point in European policy making, although the context in which Monnet should have pronounced it cannot be identified and appears mythical. \(^{334}\) According to Sassatelli, the quote has been instrumental in shifting focus in policies of Europeanisation from being driven primarily by economy, in a climate where European economic policies have proven less successful, to provide a unifying strategy of identity building rooted in culture. \(^{335}\)

The ‘Comité des sages’-report, and Europeana, can be regarded as the products of a common mechanism since the early 1980s, in which cultural heritage is called upon as the fundament for European unity and as a catalyst for Europeanisation. \(^{336}\) Acknowledging this perspective, one may also suggest that, as in late-nineteenth century conceptions of the historical archive (Chapter 1) the Digital Agenda makes the archives at large central in sustaining an official political body. While the report does not primarily endorse the preservation and dissemination of records which document state affairs or transactions between state leaders, it unambiguously frames digitised European cultural heritage collections as a driving factor for the sustainability of European history and identity. European projects of film heritage digitisation are part of this agenda, and film heritage institutions negotiate with policy makers within this particular discursive field. In the next section I look closer at how this agenda is articulated in the reports which concern European film heritage digitisation, and how it circumscribes platforms such as the European Film Gateway and EFG1914 and their repertory, addressing at the same time some of the controversies surrounding them, which

\(^{332}\) Ibid.
\(^{333}\) Ibid., 213-214.
\(^{335}\) Ibid., 47.
\(^{336}\) Ibid., 46.
their digital agenda of access has given rise to.

The European Film Gateway as Repertory of (Film) History

The Digital Agenda for Europe defines film heritage as a sub-focus within the area of 'Digital Culture'. It has a special work group devoted to it, the Cinema Expert Group which hosts the Film Heritage subgroup, as well as its own web aggregator, the European Film Gateway, which is a sub-project of Europeana. In spite of its separate focus, film heritage digitisation intertwines closely with the Digital Agenda's vision of cultural heritage access. This is visible in how the report *Challenges of the Digital Era For Film Heritage Institutions* (2011) - edited by the director of the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique Nicola Mazzanti - which formulated possible future scenarios for film heritage access and preservation, seeks common ground with the ‘Comité des Sages’-report. First of all, the *Challenges...* -report shares the ambition to avoid a digital ‘dark age’ due to technological obsolescence in film heritage institutions, by suggesting that a rough estimate of approximately one million hours of European film heritage - excluding film-related collections – should be digitised. While underlining that analogue film remains the only durable preservation carrier, it emphasises that digitisation becomes imperative for film archives with commercial cinema distribution's transition to digital and that the preference of a broad range of user groups to work in digital environments should prompt film heritage digitisations to digitise.

Second, the report highlights the importance of film heritage for European identity, arguing that citizens must be secured digital access to it. It makes this argument by framing the history of European film heritage institutions in a specifically European sphere, emphasising them more as historical archives than cinephile institutions. As the report states with regard to the European film heritage institutions and their history: “With a history dating back to the 1930s, the hundreds of European FHIs are the guardians of most of the European Film Heritage, a key to the history and culture of Europe from the late 19th century”. Along the same lines, the report regards the digitisation of film heritage as instrumental in educating citizens, making a case for media literacy by arguing that the ability to

338 The report is based on research by the consulting company Peacefulfish and edited by Nicola Mazzanti, co-founder of Bologna’s Immagine Ritrovata laboratory and current director of Brussels' Cinematek.
340 Ibid., 70 & 26.
341 Ibid., 125.
understand cinema as an audio-visual language of 20th and 21st century societies, is comparable to the ability to speak one of the world’s most spoken languages:

This is one of the most used languages in the contemporary world, far more important, in a way, than English, Spanish or Chinese for whole generations of Europeans. How can we expect them to understand our world if they ignore its most largely used language?[^342]

By making these points, the report forges a link between digital access to film heritage and to European identity and citizenship, which emphasises the role of cultural heritage in the process of Europeanisation. Harkening back to Costa’s suggestion to regard film heritage as European history, these examples suggest, that at the intersection of the visions of the European Commission’s political bodies and European film heritage institutions, a definition of film as a historical source tends to be emphasised to a greater degree.

The main platform for digitised film heritage in the context of the Digital Agenda is the European Film Gateway, developed between 2008 and 2011 as a sub-project of Europeana, which gathered thirtytwo film heritage institutions in a collaborative project to make digitised collections available online.[^343] With a slightly different target audience than Europeana, the European Film Gateway is conceived predominantly for scientific researchers as well as interested audiences providing access to ”hundreds of thousands of film historical documents as preserved in European film archives and cinémathèques”.[^344] Currently, the EFG comprises 676,976 items, of which 36,979 are videos, 597,975 images and 42,330 text items, which can be browsed through a simple search interface, that allows users to filter the content through parameters such as ‘Provider’, ‘Year’, ‘Language’ and ‘Media’.[^345]

The material covers very diverse types of items and periods; from photo documentation of optical devices from before the emergence of cinema such as La Cinemathèque Française’s digitised collection of magic lantern slides, to the Cineteca di Bologna’s collection of newsreels, animation and documentary films produced by the Italian company Corona Cinematografica from the 1960s to the 1990s. The website does not have curated sections which directs the visitor toward certain themes, directors or stars, but instead seems to encourage visitors to explore the content on their

[^342]: Ibid., 110.
own. However, it is a general feature that the items which the contributing institutions provide for the European Film Gateway, belong to specific sub-collections grouped together for example by a theme, production company, type of film-related material or period. These sub-collections are listed in a section on the site - "Collections” - which contains short presentations for each of them and their material.346

As such, the composition of the content provided by the different institutions may appear eclectic and can be said to be glued together mainly through their qualification as European film heritage, which, while not free of copyrights, is material which the contributing institutions have been able to clear rights for to put online. In this sense, the European Film Gateway shares the ambition of Europeana to bring together as much digitised content as possible, to the extent that copyright legislation allows it, from all periods and genres. This creates a repertory which is characteristically devoid of a classic cinephile frame of reference as over-arching principle. Via the European Film Gateway, users will not be introduced to for example the canonical stylistic currents of the 1920s or New Wave cinema. While visitors may find production stills for a film such as Robert Wiene's Das Cabinet des dr. Caligari or photos of François Truffaut at the 1959 Cannes Film Festival, they are not steered towards this material through the pages' design, but may just as well stumble upon an early newsreel by clicking on the front page's 'Video of the Day' recommendation.

Yet, while the site levels this diverse material without an apparent hierarchy, it also reflects an emphasis on film heritage as a source for learning about European history by incorporating the results from the later follow-up project EFG1914 launched after the EFG project's initial three year period. Approximately 2800 films consisting mainly of newsreels and non-fiction, or around 8 percent of the video items which the site offers access to, relates thematically to World War I or was produced in the years of the war. The theme of World War I was chosen for the European Film Gateway's follow-up project EFG1914, which ran from 2012 to 2014, to mark the war's centenary, for which twenty-one European film archives provided content resulting in online access to 701 hours of films, 6100 film-related documents and a virtual exhibition on the war as seen through the film archives.347 Different from the European Film Gateway the EFG1914 project not only functioned as an aggregator for already digitised collections, but also subsidised the digitisation of films and related material as one of the tasks defined in its work plan.348 In this sense, a significant

feature of the European Film Gateway projects has become to underscore significant events in a shared European history, around the years that mark their commemoration by directly ensuring its digital access, reflecting the Digital Agenda's conception of film archives as sources for a shared European history (see fig. 7).

In addition to sustaining a shared European history through digital access and digitisation, the EFG projects also serve the purpose to develop shared standards between institutions and make their databases and digitised collections interoperable, as did the collaborative projects which followed LUMIERE. Within the initial European Film Gateway project a number of the contributing institutions were attributed a specific role to ensure that the project could be carried out in collaboration between them. For example, the Filmarchiv Austria would conduct user requirements studies to determine which functionalities the site's user groups would need, while the Danish Film Institute defined the typographical characteristics needed to develop common, functional filmographic standards, and the ACE was responsible for dissemination and networking in order to promote the project. In this sense, the collaborative projects have continued to nurture a dynamic between European film heritage institutions which has increased since the early 1990s, in which the development of professional shared standards within a European sphere goes hand in hand with constructing European history and identity.

This development towards increased digital access has not occurred without controversy. As argued by Buache and Borde in the epigraph, it risks implying a handover of decision making to political stakeholders at the cost of cinephile core values, creating image banks that potentially render the expert curator superfluous. While a project such as EFG1914, which is highly curated, does not seem to fully support such a criticism, Borde and Buache's criticisms recurrently resonate in European debates on film heritage digitisation and need to be addressed to understand the implications of this process. The next section discusses these criticisms while reflecting on them against the actual scope of digitisation in film archives.

Controversies of Access and Digital Realities in European Film Archives

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, prior to the EFG initiatives, the European Commision’s interest in making film heritage institutions more accessible was perceived in debates among film archivists as a development which undermined cinephile core values, while strengthening the priorities of political authorities. Borde and Buache, addressing the field of film preservation at large, suggested this with their blunt comparison between the institutional procedures of the modern film archive to those of the bank or the clinic.³⁵⁰ In relation to the LUMIERE project, former deputy director of the Nederlands Filmmuseum (now EYE Filmmuseum) Eric de Kuyper, put forward a similar critique, arguing that increased access for researchers in the name of “public service” and use of film archives as “image banks” reflected the creation of an alliance between political authorities and market forces.³⁵¹ As de Kuyper wrote:

This new form of ‘research’ almost always has a commercial aspect, which is doubtless why the political authorities responsible for funding cultural institutions to a greater or lesser extent tend to regard such demand in a favourable light.³⁵²

By the same token, in a more recent critique from 2005, director of the Austrian Filmmuseum Alexander Horwath polemised against digital access by likening the digitised film archive to an ‘image bank’ where the curator no longer mediates between the museum visitor and the collection to create meaningful interpretation, but operates according to a commercial, neo-liberal logic which

³⁵² Ibid., 234.
dematerialises films to a form of free-flowing capital. According to Horwath, as a consequence of
digitisation, film heritage institutions could risk being deprived of performing a critical, curatorial
function within society, neglecting their cinephile origins in the poetic collection building of their
founding figures – Henri Langlois, Iris Barry and Jacques Ledoux – as well as their responsibility to
make users aware of especially analogue film's material and technological specificities.\textsuperscript{353}

While put forward in very different contexts, these criticisms sketch the contours of an
oppositional stance towards increased (digital) access, which questions the closer relation between
political authorities, market forces and film heritage institutions. Following this line of thought, one
could certainly characterise the European Commission's Digital Agenda, as it is reflected in the
introduction to the 'Comité des Sages' report, as promoting the interests of the European Union,
above those of the film heritage institutions. Its offset in Jean Monnet’s much-cited remark and its
statement that digital access to European cultural heritage concerns a “common good of humanity”,
suggests the European Commission's imperative to instrumentalise cultural heritage institutions
within this agenda. And indeed, the Digital Agenda’s strong emphasis on digitisation as a fundament
for creating new economical growth, seems to justify the likening of the digital archive to a bank
account, making cultural heritage institutions increasingly driven by market logic.

Such criticisms can certainly appear pertinent as an argument against governmentality when
considering the discursive field constituted by the European Commission’s reports and discussions
among European film heritage institutions. Yet, for two particular reasons, these criticisms urgently
call for a pragmatic response rooted in a closer analysis of the actual practices and scope of digital
access to film heritage. First of all, the critiques by Borde, Buache, de Kuyper and Horwath seem
premised in the assumption of a direct correspondence between political and institutional priorities.
By regarding film heritage institutions as part of a complex together with political authorities and
the market, they attribute little agency to the former in this process. They do not reflect that film
heritage institutions contributing to European projects may have manifold and contradictory
motivations for participating and digitising in the first place. Though political authorities provide a
frame, the selection and digitisation of material, while indeed relying partly on commercial and
political considerations, still predominantly lies with the film heritage institutions. For instance,
within EFG1914, the Austrian Filmmuseum digitised and offered online access to rarely seen
\textit{Kinonedelja} newsreels by heralded director Dziga Vertov preserved in its collection. As a director
whose work is integral to the museum’s history and vision of film art, this material was

simultaneously presented in a curated section of the Austrian Filmmuseum's website to reflect its tradition, and within the EFG1914 where it supported a historical focus on the period of the first World War.\textsuperscript{354} This can be seen as an example of how institutions negotiate and give prevalence to their own focus areas within EC-subsidised projects. Beyond this example and the debates on analog vs. digital curation, there is a need to analyse in greater depth how institutions, use the rhetorics of Europeanisation to their own ends to provide digital access to their collections in manners which challenge this frame.

Second, these criticisms consider digitisation as an all-pervasive force which creates abundant digital archives, in line with a political wish for complete access. In doing so, the critiques seem to exaggerate the scope of current digitisation, especially since the statistical data concerning the scope of film heritage digitisation unambiguously indicates that mass-digitisation has generally not taken place. The European Commission’s \textit{Film Heritage in the EU}-report (European Commission, 2014) concludes this when stating “[t]hat there is a \textit{lack of precise statistics about the progress of digitisation of film heritage}” and that “…\textit{the figures point to a very low level of} digitisation, indicating that \textit{little progress has been done}…”\textsuperscript{355} The report lists eight countries of which the different percentages - which are imprecise because some of them cover both film and related material - are the following: the Czech Republic less than 1%, Estonia 20%, Germany less than 0,5%, Latvia 15%, Lithuania 13%, the Netherlands 20%, Slovakia 1,25%, UK 3,8%\textsuperscript{356} And, as the report adds, since only a very small part of EU countries currently allots budgets for digitisation, this situation is unlikely to change significantly in a near future.\textsuperscript{357} With regard to the oppositional stance towards digitisation, these numbers suggest that we should develop new premises for the debate surrounding film heritage digitisation. First of all, they should invite us to abandon the idea of abundance of digital film heritage and its view of the film archive as an “image bank” openly accessible to general users, in which current discussions seem premised. Instead, there is a need to consider digital collections as rather restricted and highly curated entities that only very partially or fractionally mirror analogue archives. It is telling that many prominent film scholars and archivists in a petition launched at the University of Udine’s FilmForum in 2013 called for increased digitisation of film heritage collections for research to avoid a dark age in which the large majority


\textsuperscript{356} Ibid., 17-18.

\textsuperscript{357} Ibid., 37.
Moreover, these numbers also complicate making general assumptions about whether digitisation can be said to privilege specific types of film histories and/or research traditions, as they do not provide specific data on which sources and/or periods digitisation gives prevalence to, nor consider the broad variety of collection types held in film archives. To give an impression of the material heterogeneity of film heritage collections one needs only consult the FIAF's 1997 *Journal of Film Preservation* special issue 'Manual for Access to Film Collections' which, apart from film collections, lists: Visual resources such as photos, posters or for example visual formats such as lantern slides; Publications in the form of articles or brochures; Unpublished documents related to film production such as manuscripts, shooting scripts or private notes; Clippings that document advertising or press releases for example; Sound recordings; Artefacts, meaning collections of film technology such as cameras or projectors or for example optical devices predating cinema’s emergence. As discussed in Chapter One, different scholarly traditions emphasise different source materials. In this regard, by not distinguishing between different collection types, current statistics on film heritage digitisation only offer a vague idea of what archival material has been digitised and how it is made digitally available to film historians.

These two aspects - low digitisation numbers and the lack of a general overview of digitisation - have not been prominently represented in current debates. Consequently, we know little about the underlying institutional procedures that shape them, the composition of the repertories they produce as well as their uses by film historians and general users. Therefore, while acknowledging that criticisms of digitisation raise pertinent questions that cut through to some of the underlying - and in some aspects problematic - political mechanisms of cultural heritage digitisation in Europe, I would argue that they need to be complemented, and countered, by a more detailed analysis of how institutional procedures shape and create digital repertories. Otherwise they can only aspire to appear as straw man arguments. It goes beyond the scope of my dissertation to produce an extensive overview of digitised film and film-related collections in European film heritage institutions. As pointed out before, there are no complete data available and collecting them would be too large an effort. Furthermore, institutions outside of the EC, such as FIAF and the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) do not produce such statistics. As pointed out to me by respectively Christophe Dupin, FIAF's Senior Administrator, and André Lange, then the EAO's Head of Department for


Information on Markets and Financing, film archives have traditionally been very restrictive in providing such information, partly because of unclear copyright situations. However, I believe it is still possible to give an impression of how film heritage institutions mirror their collections, negotiate and transmit their respective institutional missions and deontologies by considering their various digital access formats, in particular their DVD releases.

In the following part I would like to elaborate on this discussion with regard to the creation of archival DVD and Blu-ray editions by European film heritage institutions. I argue that the video releases of film heritage institutions can be regarded as a form of circulating library for scholarly study, in order to yield a more detailed insight into digitisation's consequences for scholarly access to films. To this end, I seek to elicit which films, genres and periods archival DVD releases represent and how they in this way reflect the traditions of the institutions that release them. In doing so, I hope that while I may not provide a comprehensive survey of the scope of digitisation I will at least offer a glimpse of the values and histories which digital publication formats transmit.

2.2 Taste-Making and the DVD Repertory of European Film Heritage Institutions

The Repertories of Video Distribution Formats and Taste-Making

Film archivists and historians have been paying great attention to DVD releases since the early 2000s, where an increasing number of film heritage institutions began releasing DVD editions of archival material from their own and other institutions' collections. In the past decade, around 35 film heritage institutions in Europe have launched DVD editions to disseminate archival films which archivists and historians critically judge the quality of. It testifies to this development, that the archival film festival Il Cinema Ritrovato in 2004 began organising a yearly DVD Awards ceremony for releases of archival films. This ceremony takes place just across the court yard, the Piazzetta Pasolini, of the locality which hosts the yearly presentations of ACE and FIAF. At this ceremony a committee composed of high-profile film preservationists, critics and historians such as for example film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum, Alexander Horwath and in previous years also Peter von Bagh, former director of the Finnish Film Archive and artistic director of Il Cinema Ritrovato, decides which DVD releases from both commercial and state-subsidised archival DVD publishers are to be honoured as for example the ‘Best DVD’, ‘Most Original Contribution to Film History’,

360 Interview with Christophe Dupin at the FIAF Secretariat, Bruxelles, November 25, 2014 and André Lange in e-mail to the author November 28, 2013.
‘Best Rediscovery’ or ‘Best Bonus’ (see fig. 8).361

To make their decision, the committee shows utmost attention to a DVD release’s technical specificities, taking into consideration the quality in which a film is transferred, its restoration and to whether the selection of a title makes an original addition to film history by either making a classic available, or challenging the canon by unearthing a film which remains to be discovered. To receive the price for ‘Best DVD’ is considered a great honour by a DVD publisher, and as a stamp which approves the merits of its work. It can be said, that by appraising DVDs in this forum, the jury’s members act as “agents of consecration” who legitimise the status of a film as a classic and discerns which DVD release renders it’s qualities in the best way.362

Fig. 8 The DVD Jury Committee in action at Il Cinema Ritrovato 2014’s awards ceremony. From left to right: Alexander Horwarth, Paolo Mereghetti, Peter von Bagh, Jonathan Rosenbaum and Marc McElhatten.

The example of Il Cinema Ritrovato's DVD Awards Ceremony reflects a mechanism of taste-making which has emerged among cinephiles and film historians around specialised film editions in video formats such as VHS, Laserdisc, DVD and Blu-ray.363 Since the late-1970s/early 1980s, cinephiles have increasingly begun to develop and discuss their tastes of film and its history with

363 Ibid., 66.
these formats, attentive to among others, the technical aspects of a release, the version of a film included on a DVD – whether a director’s cut or a cut theatrical version – and the selection of titles. Cinephiles buy DVD editions of films with a demanding attitude towards the technical specificities of its transfer and reproduction of a film’s physiognomy – what media scholar Barbara Klinger has dubbed the "hardware aesthetics" of a release. Moreover, they display personal taste in the selection of video releases of classic and rare titles to form personal film collections, carefully organised into classificatory categories such as for example country of origin, director or genre. This culture is sustained by a myriad of video publishers and labels which form a niche market for classic and rare films and which began emerging in the early 1980s. Arguably the most widely esteemed video distributor of film classics is the American label Criterion Collection, initially founded as the company Voyager in 1985 in collaboration with the art-house cinema distributor Janus Films to release technically advanced laser discs of films from the latter’s catalogue, focusing on auteur, indie and experimental cinema. Moving from Laserdisc to DVD in 1997, The Criterion Collection’s catalogue is underpinned by a politique des auteurs-approach boasting releases of for example classic and new wave directors such as Sergei Eisenstein, Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni, Ingmar Bergman, Orson Welles, Jean Renoir, Max Ophüls and Akira Kurosawa. In the UK, the DVD-series Masters of Cinema published by video distributor Eureka Classics has a similar catalogue profile.

Beyond these labels a plethora of publishers have emerged which each cover specific niches; French video distributor Re:voir is dedicated to classic experimental and avant-garde cinema, British label Second Run focuses on Eastern and Central European new wave directors and the Italian labels NoShame and RaroVideo mix auteur releases with exploitation and trash cinema. These are but a few examples from a long list of specialised video distributors which one can get an overview of by visiting review websites and discussion forums such as dvdbeaver.com or the Criterion Collection’s web-forum criterionforum.org, where the discussion board ‘Boutique labels’

365 Barbara Klinger, op.cit., 80 & 83.
366 Ibid.
has a unique thread devoted to each of the large majority of existing labels.\footnote{369} The DVD and Blu-ray market for classic films has also proven more stable than the market for contemporary films and in general does not experience as dramatic a decline as the latter.\footnote{370} In addition, it is a market which is experiencing a burgeoning professionalisation with the creation of international platforms such as for example the annual 'Marché du film classique' held in Lyon since 2013.\footnote{371} The 'Marché du film classique' gathers VoD platform representatives, DVD and Blu-ray editors from around the world, including private and FIAF member archives.

![Fig. 9 Cover illustration to film archivist and historian Claude Beylie's Vers une cinémathèque idéale (Henri Veyrier, 1982).](image)

Because of the development of a specialised, historically informed video market, film historians and preservationists have embraced video formats since an early stage as providing archival source material for their research and as creating a solid fundament for studying film history. As discussed in the previous chapter, throughout the 1970s Jean-Luc Godard advocated for video technology and


\footnote{370} Frédéric Mercier, "Le film de patrimoine croit en son avenir", in Cahiers du cinéma, No. 706 (2014) 54.

\footnote{371} Ibid.
Likewise, VHS was at an early stage perceived as providing the opportunity to build strong collections of reference titles, gradually becoming accepted as formats for teaching in academic settings. This was for example the stance taken by film critic, historian and preservationist Claude Beylie, founder of the university cinémathèque of the Panthéon-Sorbonne University in Paris - also present at the FIAF round table discussion in Lausanne with Jean-Luc Godard in 1979 discussed in Chapter 1 - who regarded VHS as a convenient entry point into film history. In his *Vers une cinémathèque idéale* (Editions Henri Veyrier, 1982) Beylie proposes a personal, cinephile list of favourite film classics as an introduction to film history based on the availability of film titles on VHS to create, as the title suggests, an ‘ideal cinémathèque’.

To underpin this stance, the cover of Beylie’s book eloquently evokes the transition from film to video as a technology for studying film history. On a silver background one sees a photo of a 35mm film can in which a video cassette lies on a lining of red satin, to seemingly suggest that the format, just as an analogue film print, is capable of evoking intense cinematic passion in the cinephile collector opening up the gates to film history as in the glory days of the silver screen (see fig. 9).

In the late 1990s, film theorist Dominique Païni, then director of the Cinémathèque Française, proposed to speak of an “effet-magnétoscope” - a “VCR effect” – with regard to video collecting among cinephiles and film historians. Païni argued, that by collecting VHS tapes, cinephiles had become ‘cassettophiles’ who could establish ample reference frames through collection building outside of cinémathèques and repertory cinemas with the effect of becoming more demanding in what they wished to see in cinémathèque programming and increasingly eager to unearth hidden gems and neglected films. According to Païni, this development also yielded unprecedented scholarship, by broadening the reference frame for film historians and allowing for repeated viewings in university settings. Responses among film archivists, critics and historians to DVDs and Blu-rays can be seen in extension of these stances, having equally been perceived to sustain a classic repertory of films and to broaden it.

Also today, guides to film history or written accounts of personal cinephilia are developed

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372 Michael Witt, op.cit., 29.
376 Ibid.
around releases from the home video market. For instance, Jean Douchet, one of the cinephiles par excellence whose work bridges the generations of second generation and contemporary cinephilia at Il Cinema Ritrovato and La Cinémathèque française, based his introductory guide to film viewing *La DVDéothèque de Jean Douchet* (Cahiers du cinéma, 2006), on the availability of classic titles on DVD. In addition, compared to earlier video formats, DVDs and Blu-rays are widely considered to offer a more stable and satisfactory rendition of film material which creates a closer approximation to the experience of analogue film, for which reason they have been more willingly accepted into academic settings for teaching, as an alternative to film projection, and for historical research.\(^{378}\)

Jonathan Rosenbaum, a member of Il Cinema Ritrovato’s DVD Awards committee, is perhaps one of the foremost voices to enthusiastically pinpoint these features and argue that DVDs are instrumental in sustaining and reshaping classic film repertories at large, contending that digitisation revivifies collective cinephilia.\(^{379}\) This is encapsulated in his praise of the Criterion Collection’s DVD edition of Sergei Eisenstein’s *Ivan Groznyy. Skaz vtoroy: Boyarskiy zagovor* (*Ivan the Terrible, Part Two*, 1958) and its reproduction of the film’s colors as well as historical contextualisation conceived by two noted film historians:

> Today, for instance, it’s possible to see the beautiful colors of the second part of *Ivan the Terrible* correctly, accompanied by superb historical documentation, anywhere one has a DVD player and the Criterion edition of the DVD, with commentaries by Yuri Tsivian and Joan Neuberger.\(^{380}\)

Elsewhere in the same article, highlighting again the central role of DVDs in developing film historical insights, Rosenbaum suggests that:

> The basic point is that there are still cinephiles much younger than myself who are full of excitement about films made even before the glory days of Louis Feuillade and Yevgeni Bauer (whose mise en scène in the 1913 *Twilight of a Woman’s Soul* and the 1915 *After Death* are elegantly described by Tsivian on a new American DVD called *Mad Love*); and this situation isn’t likely to change, even if the places and contexts where these films are seen and understood become radically transformed.\(^{381}\)

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\(^{378}\) David Bordwell, "A Celestial Cinémathèque. Or, Film Archives and Me: A Semi-Personal History", in Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique/Koninklijk Belgisch Filmmuseum (ed.), *7500 Films*. (Bruxelles and Crisnée: Cinemathèque Royale de Belgique/Koninklijk Belgisch Filmmuseum & Yellow Now, 2013) 77-78.


\(^{381}\) Ibid., 7.
In emphasising the names of directors such as Louis Feuillade and Yevgeni Bauer, Rosenbaum suggests, that DVDs are instrumental in passing on cinephile traditions to younger generations and challenge them by making early cinema titles that precede them available. Implicitly, Rosenbaum’s praise can also be said to suggest that the accumulated tastes of different generations of cinephiles are represented in DVD editions. While a director such as Feuillade and his serials Fantômas (France, 1914) and Les vampires (France, 1915) have been closely associated with the tastes of ‘first wave’ surrealist cinephilia which emerged out of Paris’ ciné-clubs in the 1920s, a director such as Yevgeni Bauer is today known among cinephiles in large part because of the rediscovery of his films in Pordenone and Bologna in the late 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, Rosenbaum’s praise of the Criterion edition of Ivan the Terrible almost echoes Moussinac’s pleas for film preservation and repertories in the 1920s discussed in the previous chapter, which bemoaned the bad print quality of Eisenstein films. Playfully, one may suggest that the archetypal cinephile, now as then, measures the quality of a repertory on the availability of Eisenstein films striving for the best possible viewing conditions in any situation, also beyond traditional distribution circles. Rosenbaum’s praise is however far from isolated, but highly representative of the crucial role which especially the DVD format has come to occupy in cinephile circles and among scholars as a catalyst for contemporary taste-making processes. As I discuss below, it is striking to note how consistently many film heritage institutions continue to release DVDs, while others have abandoned the format, also after its decline as a popular consumer format.

Yet, there are also highly critical voices, which do not share the enthusiasm. Director of the UCLA Film and Television Archive Jan-Cristopher Horak, has recurrently criticised the practice of teaching and researching film history primarily from DVD, arguing in 2003, that the DVD repertory limits the range of available titles for film historians in comparison to analogue film libraries. To support this argument, Horak’s 2006-article, “The Gap Between 1 and 0. Digital Video and the Omissions of Film History”, gave a concrete example from the US context by systematically comparing the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress, which is the list of American films selected by the National Film Preservation Board for conservation at the Library of Congress, with the availability of the Registry’s individual titles in digital, commercial video formats. In this study, Horak reached the conclusion that especially titles of silent, independent and experimental
cinema from the National Film Registry have not found their way to DVD releases, as they are not deemed profitable. With regard to this development, Horak contends that, rather than broadening the panorama of film historians by making a larger variety of titles available, digitisation has, on the contrary, narrowed it down.

Because of these contrasting responses and the prominent role which DVDs, increasingly in tandem with Blu-ray, still occupy at the film history festivals, in film heritage institutions’ dissemination and in scholarship, it appears urgent to develop a more detailed overview of the repertory which these digital video formats create. With regard to the releases of the Criterion Collection, film critic James Kendrick describes the selection of classic films for release on DVD as a ‘historical filtration process’, which through a dynamic of exclusion and inclusion confines our understanding of film history. As suggested especially by Horak, this filtration process also characterises the release of archival DVDs. For this reason – and to provide a more detailed counter-point to European debates surrounding film heritage digitisation - the next section analyses the repertory which film heritage institutions in Europe have established through their DVD releases as a conditioning factor for digital film historiography. The repertory of DVD and Blu-ray editions may give a particularly useful insight into understanding how digitisation establishes a repertory of reference titles, and provide a basis for elucidating how it reflects and challenges classic notions of film history.

The Shared DVD Repertory

In the period between April and August 2014, I created a dataset listing the DVDs released by 30 European film heritage institutions. With this dataset I wished to yield an impression of how the titles released on these DVDs have come to constitute a shared repertory. I regarded this dataset as a case study which could elucidate broader tendencies in current digitisation in lack of more extensive statistics. There were several particular aspects I wished to shed light on. First, I wanted to understand whether DVD releases favor specific periods. In this regard, I had been inspired by the online chronological “Film History”-listing of the publisher of the Germanophone film archives, Edition Filmmuseum, which suggests that its releases altogether constitute a film history. Second, I wished to discern the geographical origins represented by the released titles. I was particularly curious to see whether film heritage institutions, now having multiplied and working increasingly as

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state-subsidised institutions, tend to privilege national film heritage through their DVD releases or
stick to the internationalist ideals of its founding figures and establish different categories. Finally, I
hoped to yield insights into the frequency of archival DVD releases, to see when institutions
adopted the format and if there has been a noticeable decline in releases – and in its importance - in
recent years. As mentioned above, beyond being primarily a case study of archival DVD releases,
my hope was also to see this repertory as reflecting broader tendencies in digitisation and access
policies. At the end of this chapter I will discuss and conclude on that particular aspect of the data
which I created in the case study.

To create the dataset, I first compiled a list of European FIAF-affiliated film heritage institutions.
I did this by comparing the list of institutions which the EC's Film Heritage subgroup has created
for their activities with FIAF’s membership database. The Film Heritage subgroup's list counts 102
institutions of which the majority of institutions are FIAF member or associate institutions but
which also includes non-FIAF institutions, such as state archives, television archives and film
institutes with a predominant emphasis on film production. To be able to maintain a comparison
between contemporary and historical practices of FIAF institutions, I excluded the latter three types
by checking for each institution if it was a member or associate. This resulted in a list of 53 FIAF
institutions, of which 36 are member institutions and 17 associate institutions. I narrowed this list
down further by checking if an institution had released DVDs. Subsequently, during the process of
data collection, I excluded three institutions. Two institutions - the Národní filmový archiv and the
Cinémathèque suisse – were excluded because I could not find enough elaborate data on their
releases' content at that point in time. One institution on which I did collect data, the European
Foundation Joris Ivens, was also not considered in my final case study because it is dedicated to one
director's oeuvre.

While my list reflects my dissertation's focus, it is important to stress that a FIAF-affiliation as a
sole criterion hardly provides a clear-cut definition of what makes a film heritage institution. This
criterion for instance excluded several small, regional cinémathèques in Spain and France – located
in Santander, Murcia, Marseille and Saint-Étienne. These institutions have been founded in a
traditional way as off-springs of film clubs developing collections for programming and

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389 However, this has since changed. The Národní filmový archiv has launched a new website with a more elaborate presentation of their DVD
releases. For the information I had access to online when collecting my data, on the basis of which I decided not to include the institution in my
Cinémathèque suisse's website did contain elaborate details on some releases while others were not described in great depth.
preservation, but not to an extent where it is feasible, realistic or desirable to implement FIAF's requirements and code of ethics. It also excluded the historically significant case of the Cinémathèque Robert Lynen, or the Hamburg-based research centre Cinegraph, which has been instrumental in shaping German film historiography. On the other hand, one non-FIAF institution does appear in my overview as a consequence of a collaborative DVD project with FIAF a member institution. This concerns the Filmmuseum Potsdam, which has published in collaboration with the Bundesarchiv and the Deutsche Kinemathek in the Edition Filmmuseum imprint.

Through these steps, my list ended up comprising 30 institutions of which 29 are either FIAF members or associates and 23 ACE members (see Appendix 2). For each of these institutions I subsequently went through their websites or, when available, DVD catalogues to gather information on their DVD releases and to the greatest possible extent include information on each released title's year, country of production, director or production company. For some releases, I was not able to find information on which titles exactly they contained while having an indication of their decade of production. For instance the Filmarchiv Austria's Jahresedition DVD-series of newsreels had a clear indication of production year for each edition but not of the number of titles they contained. Furthermore, a few releases contained compilations for which it was not possible to verify whether it comprised one or more titles. In these cases I let a release count for one title, while they are likely to contain more. In the results which I discuss below I indicate the proportion of unverified titles or compilations. When collecting information on the titles I also gathered data on recently produced extra-material featured on the DVDs such as making-of documentaries. Yet, as I did not regard this as archival material I chose to exclude it to the greatest possible degree in my final overview.

The overview I compiled does not aspire to yield an exact, accurate insight into the representation of specific institutions’ collections on DVD and Blu-ray. While some institutions indicate the provenance of their released titles, it is generally not possible to establish provenance consistently and precisely nor to assume that a title released by an institution is also preserved in its collection. Moreover, a digitised film from a FIAF member institution may very well have been licensed and released by a private, specialised publisher, a circumstance which my overview does not account for. Finally, a number of film archives may have created extensive DVD catalogues of films from their collection for library distribution only, but not for sale, as is the case with for

390 Especially since the early 1980s, Cinegraph's publications of encyclopedias and unearthing of rare, archival films from FIAF member archives through its annual cinefest and associated DVD series has made significant contributions to German film historiography. Yet, as a research centre without a film archive nor a stated preservation mission, it appeared logical to me not to count it in.

391 Furthermore, as discussed in the previous section, the increasingly specialised restoration procedures through which restorations are made out of elements from different archives also complicates the very concept of provenance.
example the Danish Film Institute. While library edition DVDs are particularly relevant for educational purposes, they tend to fall out of the broader cinephile circuits of taste-making, such as for example Il Cinema Ritrovato’s DVD Awards. Hence, I left them out.

Mindful of these limitations, I consider my dataset productive for understanding the listed institutions' releases as a shared repertory reminiscent of the distributing libraries for programming, which have always been integral to FIAF activities. It gives an impression of the tendencies in DVD publications and allows for an understanding of the institutional emphases on periods or production, be it local, national or international. To recap Beylie, the repertories created by different institutions constitute “ideal cinematheques”, in that they reflect what film heritage institutions deem important to release on DVD. By taking on the effort and investment associated with making a film available on DVD, an institution signals that a certain release or title has importance or popularity and deserves to be seen by a wide audience.

Local Traditions and the Shared DVD Repertory of European Film Heritage Institutions
As I discussed in my dissertation's introduction, referring to de Certeau, the place in which a historical source is produced and studied tends to show bias towards its region's language or cultural context. Yet, as discussed in Chapter One, film archives have traditionally acted differently. Collection building in the 1930s' emerging cinephile film archives had a strong emphasis on an internationalist canon of masterpieces which did not confine themselves to primarily national cinema. The recent tendency in old and new film heritage institutions in Europe to create closer ties to national funding bodies and consequently nurture, or confront, ideas of national or European identity building is a relatively new development. Attending to this development, I was interested in understanding how institutions situate themselves in relation to classic reference frames and their regional context of film production through their releases. To this end, I used my dataset to analyse the relation between the listed institutions’ location and the nationality of the titles released.

In order to do so, I had to rely on a simple definition of national cinema, which, given long-standing debates in film studies on this topic, could not aspire to fully reflect its complexity and

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392 To my knowledge the only educational, non-commercial DVD to win a prize at Il Cinema Ritrovato’s Awards to date was the compilation of films from the seventh edition of the Orphans Film Symposium in New York, Orphans 7 – A Film Symposium, which won for “Most Original Contribution to Film History”. As the jury’s decision pointed out: “For bringing to the attention of DVD watchers a rich and fascinating area of film history: so-called ‘ephemeral’ films, including amateur films, activist filmmaking, industrial films, etc., with magnificent, in-depth commentary.” See: http://www.cinetecadibologna.it/cinemaritrovato2011_eng/ev/dvdawards2011_en, last accessed January 24, 2017.

393 A couple of decades ahead, the many accounts of film screenings without subtitles, at for instance Hollywood film noir at La Cinémathèque Française in the 1940s and 1950s, testifies to internationalism and a willingness to appreciate cinematic beauty regardless of language barriers being a crucial aspect of cinephile film culture.
necessarily had to be reductionist.

![Occurrences of National (co-)Productions in Titles Released by European Film Heritage Institutions](chart)

**Fig. 10** The bar chart above shows the number of titles released on DVD by each institution and the occurrences of national (co-)productions in them. The first bar for each institution shows the number of titles and unverified releases or compilations stacked. The second bar for each institution shows the number of national (co-)productions in the merged number of released titles. See Appendix 3 for breakdown of numbers. The institutions are listed alphabetically according to their country of origin.

As film scholar Andrew Higson explains, national cinema is most frequently defined in three ways; first, in economic terms with regard to its country of production; second, in textual terms
understood as its representation of national identity regardless of country of production; third, as a nation's film consumption and exhibition.\footnote{Andrew Higson, “The Concept of National Cinema”, Screen, 30:4 (1989)} I defined the nationality of a title uniquely based on its country of (co-)production. This had evident limitations for some of the releases I included in my dataset. For instance, in the case of the Filmoteca de Catalunya's release of works by early cinematographer and director Segundo de Chomón in 2011, the double-DVD set \textit{SEGUNDO DE CHOMÓN (1903-1912): EL CINE DE LA FANTASIA}, it is safe to assume that one of the important motivating factors, was the director's Spanish origins and importance for Spanish cinema history. Yet, out of the 31 titles included in the set, only six of them are Spanish (co-)productions while the rest are French Pathé productions. Thus, while one could plausibly argue the films' relevance as Spanish cinema because of Chomón's origins, the numbers which I produced do not reflect this. They were calculated by taking the list of titles released by each institution and noting the number of its nationality's occurrences.

The bar chart above (see fig. 10), shows the results for each institution. From these results I went deeper into the data to see if different types of institutions followed different patterns and labelled their different strategies. From these numbers I discerned four categories for the institutions listed which I would like to elaborate here, which are respectively (1.) Internationalist, (2.) National, (3.) Regional and (4.) Combined regional and internationalist.

In the first category I have placed institutional DVD repertories which reflect a classic, cinephile canon but at the same time promote contemporary art and independent cinema to perform a critical, taste-making function and develop new aesthetic sensibilities. The DVD catalogue which seems to fall into this category in the most clear-cut way is the British Film Institute's, which is and remains the most prolific publisher among the listed institutions. By the time I stopped counting I had registered 2174 titles released by the BFI, of which 1622 were non-UK productions. Considering that three quarters of BFI's DVD catalogue is UK production it may seem surprising to qualify it as internationalist. Yet, in many respects, I see this repertory as remarkably consistent with the institution's traditional emphasis on national film production – including educational film – alongside an international cinephile canon, which – as discussed in Chapter One - did differ slightly from other institutions. The catalogue's three quarters of UK-produced titles boast a great variety of educational films on Britain's transport system – in particular the DVD compilations of train films released in the popular \textit{The British Transport Film Collection}-series – as well as on a wide array of other subjects. Yet, the remaining quarter shows an exceptional variety and breadth of classic and
contemporary art cinema which none of the other institutions can match in geographical range nor come close to in number. On the one hand, among the catalogue's first releases are canonised classics from the late silent era first wave cinephilia – Murnau's *Nosferatu* (Germany, 1922), *Un chien andalou* (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, France, 1929), *L'age d'or* (Luis Buñuel, France, 1930) and Dziga Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* (USSR, 1929). In addition, it contains a great variety of films from the most famous Japanese, French, Italian, Danish and German post-World War II and New Wave auteurs. In this sense, the catalogue clearly reinstates a classic reference frame of auteurs. On the other hand, the catalogue goes beyond the canonical reference frame by presenting a wide array of more recent and/or contemporary art house, independent and exploitation cinema. These titles are included in the catalogue's sub-section *BFI Flipside*, where for instance high-profiled contemporary directors present their selections of forgotten genre and exploitation gems such as the DVD release of Andy Miligan's youth drama *Nightbirds* (USA, 1970) presented by Nicholas Winding Refn. In this sense, BFI's DVD catalogue upholds a classic, canonical cinephile reference frame for contemporary audiences, in a way reminiscent of the circulating libraries of the 1920s and 1930s. At the same time, it fulfills a taste-making function by releasing contemporary titles, or having contemporary directors praising the gems of other, sometimes obscure, directors to bring attention to their works and give them an opportunity for reappraisal.

Another institution's catalogue which I place in this category is the Austrian Filmmuseum's. The Austrian Filmmuseum consistently uses its DVD releases in line with its founding principles to transmit a view of film art, which draws on classic and contemporary experimental cinema on the 16 releases I counted, which included 43 titles. For instance, it is telling that the Filmmuseum's first two releases also highlights two directors – Dziga Vertov and Eric von Stroheim – who have historically been integral to the institution's programming and vision of film as a (political) art form. This was marked by making two versions of rare films by these directors preserved in the collection widely available through DVD. These titles were Edith Schlemmer's and Peter Kubelka's 1972-restoration of Vertov's first sound film *Entuziazm* (Soviet Union, 1930) as the first release in the Edition Filmmuseum imprint in 2006 (Edition Filmmuseum 01) and the institution's Austrian distribution copy of Eric von Stroheim's *Blind Husbands* (USA, 1919) titled *Die Rache der Berge*

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395 These releases represent canonical directors such as Jean Renoir, Jean Cocteau, Robert Bresson, Jean-Luc Godard, Roberto Rossellini, Luchino Visconti, Carl Th. Dreyer, Michelangelo Antonioni, Jacques Demy, Jean Rouch, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Yazujiro Ozu, Werner Herzog and Jean-Pierre Melville.

Film Heritage Digitisation Between Europeanisation and Cinephile, Curatorial Agendas

(Edition Filmmuseum 03) equally released in 2006. In addition, the Filmmuseum has been committed to preserving and promoting the work of contemporary directors, often in combination with the preservation of their work or book publications. The institution's commitment to preserving and promoting the work of independent filmmaker James Benning can be seen as emblematic. His work was the subject of a monograph co-published by the Austrian Filmmuseum, *James Benning* (SYNEMA, 2007) edited by Barbara Pichler and Claudia Slanar, containing contributions from a broad variety of international scholars and artists. A part of the Austrian Filmmuseum's DVD releases are also dedicated to presenting Benning's work as it is gradually restored by the institution, counting nine titles when I went through the catalogue. Thus, the institution, in ways similar to the BFI uses the DVD format as a highly curated format to highlight the works of specific directors. Yet, different from the BFI its DVD repertory has a clearer provenance in its collection. For the most part, the institution’s releases draw material from its own collection or are new acquisitions undergoing preservation.

For a number of institutions which have a predominantly, if not entirely, national outlook I suggest the second category. Among these can be counted the Cinémathèque française, the Danish Film Institute, the Cinematheque in Bruxelles, the Slovakian Film Institute and the Hungarian National Digital Archive and Film Institute. Again, on the individual level, these institutions show different patterns. While the first two emphasise silent fiction production, the latter two include a broader variety of genres and periods. The DFI's Archive & Cinémathèque and the Cinémathèque française publish almost uniquely national, silent production. As the title of the former's DVD series *Danish Silent Classics* (Danske Stumfilmklassikere) suggests the releases make accessible the institution's famous films from the silent period, in particular from the period up until the end of World War I, when Danish cinema, due to the dominance of the production company Nordisk, was among the most popular and widely distributed. The series comprises some of the most prominent titles and names in early Danish cinema – Urban Gad’s *Afgrunden* (*The Abyss*, Denmark, 1910) starring Asta Nielsen, Benjamin Christensen's *Det Hemmelighedsfulde X* (*The Mysterious X*, Denmark, 1914) and Carl Th. Dreyer's *Blade af Satans Bog* (*Leaves From Satan's Book*, Denmark, 1920). Along similar lines, the Cinémathèque française, as co-publisher/collaborator with the specialised, American DVD publisher Flicker Alley, has released primarily French late silent titles from the 1920s. As the Danish series it focuses on canonical names of the period such as Jacques Feyder, Marcel L'Herbier

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Arguably different from the BFI and the Austrian Filmmuseum, these institutions use the DVD format mainly to consolidate established national film historical reference frames. Yet, there are also exceptions in these catalogues, which challenge the conventional reference points. For instance, the DFI's release *Det Første Filmarkiv / The First Film Archive* of, among other titles, the early films produced for the Statens Arkiv for Historiske Film og Stemmer makes accessible a rarely seen part of its collection, which may suggest a different history of film production and archiving in Denmark. Likewise, the Cinémathèque française, in collaboration with Pathé and the Jérôme Seydoux Foundation has also used the DVD format to bring the work of director Albert Capellani into the spotlight through its release of a box set of his work in 2011. This release appeared at a time when Capellani's work was receiving renewed attention at Il Cinema Ritrovato after the two-part retrospective of his work in 2010 and 2011, *Albert Capellani: Un cinema di grandeur*, meticulously prepared after archival research by film historian and programmer Mariann Lewinsky. This release can be said to reflect the dynamic interplay between the archival film festivals, the culture of specialised DVD editioning and scholarship to dig out neglected directors. In this sense, while these institutions give prevalence to corpora of national cinema, they do so in a manner which also seeks to challenge established canons and/or produce new ones.

In a third category, I placed the releases of primarily smaller regional cinémathèques and film archives which were part of the later expansion of the cinémathèques' emergence in Europe and which joined the FIAF as members or affiliates throughout the 1980s and 1990s. This category counts institutions such as la Cinémathèque régionale de Corse, la Cinémathèque de Bretagne and la Cineteca del Friuli. Characteristic of the titles released by these institutions – whether fiction or non-fiction – is a strong connection to their respective institutions' region. The Cinémathèque régionale de Corse has only released one title, in 2010, *Casabianca* (Georges Péclet, France 1951). A war film based on historical events depicting the heroic escape of the French submarine *Casabianca* from the harbour of Toulon and the French army in 1942 to fight for Corsica's

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398 Yet, it should be noted that La Cinémathèque française has since broadened its DVD profile to include international *auteur* cinema. In 2016 it released a 10DVD box set of the work of Hungarian director Miklóis Jancsó together with DVD editor Clavis Films and Ciné + Classic.


400 François Albera, "Albert Capellani: deux coffrets, treize + onze films", in *1895*, No. 64 (2011) 207.
liberation in 1943, the title has a clear relevance and significance for the region's history.401 The Cineteca del Friuli’s DVD catalogue equally has a predominantly local focus. On the one hand there are several releases of non-fiction films – from the silent era and beyond - which documents the Friulian nature and surroundings as well as significant events such as the earthquake on May 26, 1976. Two DVD sets - Gemona prima del 6 maggio 1976 and 6 maggio 1976: il terremoto in Friuli – respectively compile historical documentary footage of the city of Gemona and its region prior to the earthquake as well as from the day of the event. Moreover, a large number of the fiction films in the Cineteca del Friuli’s catalogue have a strong regional theme or component. For instance, the film Gli Ultimi (Vito Pandolfi, Italy, 1963), a drama set in the Frioul region at the eve of World War II – considered by some a precursor to the gritty realism of the Taviani brothers' and Ermanno Olmi's 1970s films - which depicts a young boy's struggle to take on the responsibility of becoming master of the house. In addition, a more recent film such as the drama Le prime di sere (Lauro Pittini, Italy, 1993) stands out by being a film spoken entirely in Frioulian dialect. Finally, also its release of the silent classic Novyi Vavilon (New Babylon, Grigori Kosintzev and Leonid Trauberg, USSR, 1929) has a strong regional component. The edition presents the film with the recording of the live score performed by the FVG Mitteleuropa Orchestra at the film's screening at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto in 2011. Thus, while focusing on film classics and film as art these institutions also seem to regard the DVD repertory as a strong opportunity to strengthen the knowledge of their regions' local history. In doing so they reflect to a great degree a conception of film as historical document, through their releases of fiction and non-fiction films.

Finally, in a fourth category I have placed institutions whose DVD catalogues reflect a combined regional and internationalist approach. This comprises for instance La Cinémathèque de Toulouse and La Cineteca di Bologna. As La Cinémathèque française, the Cinémathèque de Toulouse has not released a great variety of DVDs and has done so mostly in collaboration with specialised DVD publishers, in this case Carlotta Films. Yet, the released titles do suggest that the institution’s simultaneously regional and internationalist emphases extend into its DVD publishing activities. On the one hand, Jacques Davila’s comedy drama La campagne de Cicéron (France, 1989) set in the region around Perpignan not far from Toulouse, suggests an emphasis on local cinema production. On the other hand, as discussed above, the catalogue also includes Soviet silent classics such as Eisenstein’s Strike (Soviet Union, 1924) and Yuri Zhelyabuzhsky’s comedy The Cigarette Girl of Mosselprom (Soviet Union, 1925), reflecting the institution's emphasis on Soviet cinema.

La Cineteca di Bologna equally publishes regionally themed releases and an international repertory of classics and rarities. Of regionally themed releases the Cineteca di Bologna in particular publishes documentaries about its region’s political and cultural history by young independent filmmakers as well as more established, internationally renowned directors. As an example of the former, one can mention the documentary *La febbre del fare. Bologna 1945-1980* (Michele Mellara and Alessandro Rossi, Italy, 2010), on the city’s intertwining history of business, entrepreneurship and progressive leftist politics. From more established directors one finds Ermanno Olmi’s recent documentary on viticulture, *I rupi del vino* (Italy, 2009) and hitherto rarely seen documentaries by Pier Paolo Pasolini such as *Appunti Per Un'orestiade Africana* (Italy, 1975).

Looking at the international repertory of the catalogue, the Cineteca releases both highly prestigious editions of archival (re)discoveries, conceived in collaboration between an array of European archives as well as more canonical titles. Since 2009, the Cineteca has for instance released the series *Cento anni fa / Hundred Years Ago*, which reflects the titles in Il Cinema Ritrovato’s yearly programme section of the same name, curated by Mariann Lewinsky. *Hundred Years Ago* brings together contributions from film archives across the world to offer a diverse panorama of the state of film production a century ago and propose a stepwise reevaluation of, and alternative corpora for, film history. Moreover, as the Cinémathèque française, the Cineteca has also released titles of Albert Capellani following the retrospectives at Il Cinema Ritrovato. With these releases, the Cineteca equally reflects a conception of the DVD as a format for challenging and revising established canons, drawing on the specialised edition culture.

Beyond this, the Cineteca’s catalogue counts more established titles, for instance *Les enfants du paradis* (Marcel Carné, France, 1945) or Jean-Luc Godard’s *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and titles which have been subject to increased scholarly attention in recent decades such as Italian diva films. Thus, the Cineteca’s DVD repertory both fulfills a strong regional function reflecting both the city’s traditionally progressive and liberal political legacy, while using the format, in particular through its *Hundred Years Ago*-series and release of Albert Capellani titles, for historical revisionism among film scholars.

With regard to these different institutional applications of the DVD format, one might conclude that there is, for many of them, a strong tendency to maintain and expand upon the individual collection and presentation philosophies, for some institutions more rigorously than others. For

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403 François Albera, op.cit., 207.
other institutions, especially those in the second category, the format is used uniquely to instate and disseminate notions of national film heritage. There might be varying reasons and motifs for this – reasons that might pertain both to the requirements of funding streams or to recent policy documents. Ultimately, I cannot aspire to elucidate the reasons for this beyond observing that for some film heritage institutions the DVD repertories do not reflect the internationalist reference frame of their cinephile foundations. However, it is safe to assume that these institutions, in addition to their DVD publishing activities, show greater diversity through their film programming on-site.

Periodising the DVD Repertory

If one zooms out from the perspective of the individual institutions and their philosophies, one might try to understand the dataset to discern patterns of periodisation, to see whether the DVD repertory privileges certain years over others. This might productively be done by ordering the dataset into decades, something which was possible to do as I had included the year for each title in the set. Arguably however, the decade as a periodisation can be seen as problematic. As Michèle Lagny comments, the ”decennial system” which is widely used by film historians to delimit corpora of films or aesthetics is in its very nature an arbitrary periodical delimitation, because it cannot promise to encapsulate or refer to a clearly delimited historical phenomenon.\footnote{Michèle Lagny, op.cit., 1992, 109-110.}

For example, film historians often tend to regard New Wave cinema as a 1960s phenomenon, but start their historical accounts of it in the late 1950s.\footnote{Ibid., 111.}

Taking all the 4586 titles and counting the decades they represented, this showed that especially the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s are the most represented decades in the shared DVD repertory of the European film heritage institutions, followed by the 1900s (see fig. 11). Also contemporary cinema has a strong presence, seeing the 2000s represented by 375 titles, arguably driven by the strong emphasis on contemporary cinema in the BFI’s and the Filmarchiv Austria’s catalogues. The latter in particular contributes to this with its DVD release series of both historical and contemporary films in collaboration with the Austrian newspaper Der Standard.\footnote{For an overview of this release series see: http://derstandard.at/r5085/Der-Oesterreichische-Film, last accessed November 17, 2016.}

This can be taken to indicate, as I discussed above, that the DVD fulfills a strong taste-making function also for contemporary titles. Yet, in spite of different institutional philosophies of film history, it is clear that the decade of which the number of titles peaks is the 1960s. As a mythical decade which is continuously highlighted as the pinnacle of cinephile film culture in the twentieth century and the increasing institutionalisation
of film studies, this reflects some of the fundamental theoretical underpinnings of the DVD repertory as strongly rooted in *politique des auteurs*, which highlights the classics and the exceptional directorial efforts.

This demonstrates that the DVD releases of film heritage institutions do show a bias towards mainly classic auteur cinema, in spite of the continuous persistent efforts of especially the Austrian Filmmuseum, BFI and the Cineteca di Bologna to dig out more obscure titles of contemporary cinema and from cinema’s earliest years, which do have a strong presence.

*The Rise and Fall of a Format?*

Changing perspective again, it is interesting to consider how the DVD has risen as a format for archival films and to see whether it is in decline. In my dataset I included information on the release year of the DVDs when possible. In total, I could attribute release year to 633 DVDs released by 23 institutions either individually or in collaboration. In this figure, a DVD release counts the number of times it has been re-edited, when it was possible to establish this, as was the case with the Edition Filmmuseum DVDs and a few BFI DVDs. The table I produced from this data shows that the DVD

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**Fig. 11** Bar chart showing the representation of decades in the DVD releases of European film heritage institutions. See Appendix 4 and 5 for breakdown of numbers.
format has slowly become integrated into film heritage institutions, with the BFI as an early adopter in 2000 (see fig. 12).

Fig. 12 Bar chart showing the number of DVD releases by 23 European film heritage institutions per year. NB In this overview I have left 2014 out as I did not have data for the complete year. For data on 2014 as well as a breakdown of numbers and list of institutions see Appendix 6.

Producing around 60 releases from 2007 onwards, the numbers peaked in 2010 and 2011 with respectively 77 and 87 releases. Judging from these numbers there is no suggestion that there is a dramatic decrease in the number of releases in recent years. Rather, some institutions have abandoned the format – such as the EYE Filmmuseum and the Danish Film Institute - while others – such as the British Filmmuseum and the Germanophone institutions behind the Edition Filmmuseum imprint - seem to be maintaining or increasing the pace and frequency of their release schedule. In this sense the DVD is a remarkably persistent format, when considering that there is, as discussed above, a strong contemporary narrative about its disappearance. I would argue that, specifically for archival DVD releases, this can be explained from the circumstance that the attention given to the format at an event such as Il Cinema Ritrovato keeps it in high regard among film historians as a format for scholarly study and taste-making. As I shall discuss in Chapter Three, the format has been further developed for scholars in order to also enter the field of film philology, giving it an even stronger credibility among film historians as a research format.

To conclude, my dataset and the four categories I discerned in them, shows that the DVD
catalogues of the European film heritage institutions tend to closely reflect their respective institutional priorities and conceptions of archival film as a source of history. In general, there is a close correlation between the institutional foci on specific periods, œuvres, or genres - as discussed in the previous section - and the scope of the titles put to DVD. Perhaps the only tendency which does not fall into this pattern is that a small handful of the older institutions use the DVD format uniquely as a display format for national film histories, reflecting that at least in this area of their activities, they stray away from the internationalism of the founding, cinephile movement.

Notwithstanding their focus on existing cinephile film repertories, a general feature which characterises all of the institutions’ catalogues is that the DVD format appears to be considered a highly suited format for archival discovery and research. All of the institutions analysed in this dataset publish rare or neglected titles as a way of encouraging rediscovery, research and revisionism. Perhaps the most emblematic case in this regard is the work of Albert Capellani of whom the releases of selections of films in the slipstream of the Bologna retrospectives have reinvigorated the scholarly study of his work significantly. In this sense, the DVD format can be considered a technology which has become deeply embedded in scholarly and archival research into film history, providing – or perhaps rather consecrating - source materials for new articles and monographs. As my survey of the frequency of DVD releases showed, I believe it is plausible to assume that some DVD labels, especially BFI and the Edition Filmmuseum imprint, will uphold the format’s central position within scholarship at least for some years to come, before the format becomes replaced by other formats, such as curated websites and/or VoD platforms.

Going beyond the statistics produced here, it is also important to consider DVD releases not simply as giving access to a title, but also as formats which make titles available in specific versions which suggest specific approximations to a material archival object, drawing on different traditions of restoration theory and conceptions of “hardware aesthetics”. By presenting a digitised version of a film with a specific sound and image quality, following carefully defined restoration procedures, archival DVD presentations condition historical understandings of the objects they make available. Such aspects are difficult to quantify and require deeper analysis of specific DVD presentations of digitally transferred films, in order to understand how they correlate. In the following section I would like to do this, by considering a couple of DVD presentations by respectively the Austrian Filmmuseum and the Danish Film Institute which reflect remarkably different stances on preservation.
As in the case of many commercial releases, archival DVDs include contextual information about a film's digital transfer and/or restoration, presented in the form of a short documentary or technical notes. For film heritage institutions the hardware aesthetics of DVDs plays an important part in defining how to render the image quality of archival film with digital technologies. However, the parameters of film heritage institutions, while closely related to those of amateur cinephiles who tend to favour primarily clean, crisp images, also differ slightly by reflecting to a greater degree how a digitised film is defined as a historical object through institutionally specific restoration practices. This can be seen in the circumstance that a small number of archival releases offer more advanced reflections on the restoration philosophies underpinning the digital transfer process and their institutional deontologies. In doing so they create what I would suggest labelling archival hardware aesthetics. The following discussion of the diverging practices of two institutions, the Austrian Filmmuseum and the Danish Film Institute, can serve to illustrate how very different archival hardware aesthetics produce remarkably different historical objects.

As sketched in my discussion of Horwath's position on digitisation, the Austrian Filmmuseum has approached digital access and restoration reluctantly emphasising the need to understand film's analogue manifestations. Co-founded by filmmaker Peter Kubelka in 1964 with Peter Konlechner, the Austrian Filmmuseum has traditionally placed great emphasis on preserving and showing films not merely as content but above all as material entities whose specific and unique physiognomy directs the historical understanding of the object's pastness. In this regard, Kubelka argues that content and carrier remain inseparable, as producers of a meaning which will be lost if transferred to digital media which, he stresses, have a shorter life expectancy than film carriers and do not share the same material characteristics. Moreover, the Austrian Filmmuseum has traditionally emphasised contemporary and historical traditions of avant-garde filmmaking while nurturing close ties to American post-world-war II independent filmmaking and screening culture. According to

408 Peter Kubelka, "The Responsibility to Preserve", in Eva Orbanz (ed.), Archiving The Audio-Visual Heritage. A Joint Technical Symposium. (Berlin (West): Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek: 1988) 140. As Kubelka has stated: “The only way to answer future questions is to preserve the original as an original, with one's full strength, until it slips through our fingers as a white powder, and then to keep this in a box”. As Kubelka argues further on in the same text: “Compare Kristina Söderbaum with Jane Russell. These two actresses illustrate and represent different ideologies. But these ideologies were not in the person of Kristina Söderbaum, nor in the person of Jane Russell, but in Söderbaum on Agfa-Color and Russell on Technicolor. Here the pastel colours, the cleanliness of the German petty bourgeoisie – and there the roaring colours of Jane Russell.”

409 Ibid.
Chapter 2

Fossati this accounts to a large extent for the institution's "film as art" archiving philosophy which defines film as a unique art object and artefact tied to a singular authorial vision. The institution also aligns with especially Paolo Cherchi Usai's anticipations in the 1990s and 2000s that increased digitisation can be regarded as a force which decreases the reproducibility of analogue film and thus renders analogue artefacts more 'unique' and 'original' making the task of mediating their material aspects increasingly urgent. Beyond the reference frame of film restoration theory, one may also draw on classic restoration theory in the tradition of Victorian art critic John Ruskin, to characterise this stance as a preservationist proposition which locates the historicity of an object in its signs of ageing and therefore counters the use of modern restoration interventions to remove them. The Austrian Filmmuseum's approach implies that this stance creates a closer approximation to the historical meaning of the original archival material.

Along the lines of film preservationist Paolo Cherchi Usai's observation that each analogue, archival element becomes an even more unique object as the infrastructure for film stock production and development dissolves, the institution extends this approach into its DVD releases. In contextualising DVD liner notes and documentaries, the Austrian Filmmuseum’s releases under the Edition Filmmuseum imprint discuss how a digital version should reflect the physical characteristics of the archival element rather than hiding them. Curators Michael Loebenstein (now National Film and Sound Archive of Australia) and Alexander Horwath underline this in their introductory text “Analogue Landscapes – Digital Dreams” in the booklet to the double-DVD set of filmmaker James Benning’s American Dreams (lost and found) (USA, 1984) and Landscape Suicide (USA, 1986). As they stress, only a minimum of digital restoration techniques have been used for image cleaning in the digital transfer of the films to maintain material characteristics such as “signs of use, stray light, contrast, grain and color properties”. This, they argue, should ideally remind the spectator that the films were made as analogue works and generate interest in the museum context it derives from and its preservation mission. A similar point is made in the documentary Peter Kubelka: Restoring Entuziazm (Austria, 2005) on the DVD release for Dziga

410 Ibid., 125 and 54.
Vertov’s *Entuziazm: Simfonija Donbassa* (USSR, 1930). Seated in front of the editing table, winding through a print of *Entuziazm*, Peter Kubelka goes through his and Edith Schlemmer’s groundbreaking 1972-restoration of Vertov’s film which resynchronised the film’s sound and image, explaining how the digital version should reflect the film’s problematic archival life. For this reason, the transfer consistently includes signs of wear (see fig. 13). That this image aesthetic can diverge from cinephile expectations for crisp images can be seen in how a reviewer, Maikel Aarts of the website dvdbeaver.com, when reviewing the DVD contacted Peter Kubelka for an explanation of this choice. Aarts received the answer from Kubelka that the Austrian Filmmuseum had wished to “…preserve and present the film-as-an-artifact, a mutilated and battered testimonial to the fragility and durability of the celluloid medium.”

![Fig. 13 An example of visible damage in the Austrian Filmmuseum's DVD release of Dziga Vertov's Entuziazm (Simfonija Donbassa) (USSR, 1930), included in dvdbeaver.com's review.](image)

The Austrian Filmmuseum’s hardware aesthetics thus include signs of ageing to convey the pastness of the films presented. This is primarily visible in the image of the digital transfers but also reflect in a number of other smaller details of the institution’s DVD presentations. The films are for example not divided into chapters but can only be playbacked as one entire videofile. This seems sympathetic to the critique which for example Dominique Païni has put forward of the ‘chapter’ practice of commercial DVD editors as imposing a segmentation of the film which was never

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perceived as providing structural coordinates for film interpretation. If the viewer wishes to segment a film released by the Austrian Filmmuseum, he or she will have to do it using editing software following a subjective interpretive scheme. Moreover, it is also possible to choose – as a specific option – to play the silent films released by the Austrian Filmmuseum without musical accompaniment. A feature which can be said to reflect and underline the legacy of the institution’s (often contested) curatorial policy to present silent films without music.

In several aspects the Danish Film Institute's restoration and preservation philosophy shares the Austrian Filmmuseum's stance by committing to the preservation of the analogue film as an "original" artefact and irreplaceable entry point to film history. The DFI has one of the most advanced preservation programs for analogue film in Europe, having developed one of the first sustained, rigorous attempts to implement a long-term preservation strategy for its nitrate elements which foresees a life expectancy of approximately five-hundred years. While this program only covers the institution’s nitrate collection, it is the stated goal that all of DFI’s collections achieve such a life expectancy. Yet, contrary to the Austrian Filmmuseum, DFI’s approach to film projection, scanning and DVD presentation has embraced digital techniques in a manner which regard them as potentially allowing to improve the image quality of archival films under some circumstances. For example, at an early stage, the DFI to a limited extent adopted HD video screening at the DFI’s cinémathèque, instead of the projection of film prints. As Curator at DFI Thomas Christensen has argued, in comparison to often rapidly struck analogue prints, digital video can provide an opportunity to heighten the level of quality of what is projected and distributed from the institution’s collections if the institution takes an active role in shaping the process. Furthermore, the DFI has also embraced the possibility of making digital transfers from negative elements to create releases of silent films in colours suited to a DVD hardware aesthetics. This

418 Giovanna Fossati, From Grain to Pixel. The Archival Life of Film in Transition. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009) 158-164.
419 Jean-Louis Bigourdan, "Environmental Assessment and Condition Survey: A Strategic Preservation Plan for DFI’s Motion Picture Film Collections" in Dan Nissen, Lisbeth Richter Larsen, Thomas C. Christensen and Jesper Stub Johansen (eds.), Preserve then Show. (Copenhagen: The Danish Film Institute, 2002) 108.
421 Giovanna Fossati, op.cit., 2009, 162.
422 Thomas Christensen, op.cit., 2008, 2.
implies skipping the analogue intermediate process to instead work from HD scans made from negative elements and add colours and intertitles digitally. This procedure was applied in the restoration of August Blom’s *Atlantis* in 2006 for commercial release in the institute’s *Danish Silent Classics* series (see fig. 14). As Christensen has remarked, “[s]ince the purpose of this restoration was to produce as good a DVD master as possible, it was decided to aim for the best possible electronic image”. With regard to the possibilities of the electronic image, Christensen further highlighted that while the result was not entirely unproblematic nor satisfactory for cinema projection, especially the film’s black and white segments “[show] better quality and tonal range than a transfer from a tinted print”. This stance reflects a conception of hardware aesthetics which can be more closely aligned with its conception in specialised DVD editions, which uses state-of-the-art technology to suggest that film may look sharper or cleaner by using present-day digital transfer techniques to eliminate analogue intermediate steps.

**Fig. 14** Frame grab from the DFI’s DVD release of August Blom’s *Atlantis* (Denmark, 1913). By scanning from restored negative elements the DFI obtains cleaner, crisper images. According to critics this betrays the historicity of the archival object.

Using digital transferring as a way to skip analogue, intermediate steps to achieve a better image quality this stance has been heavily criticised by archivists, historians and curators who take a

424 Ibid.
preservationist, materialist stance for creating an a-historic approximation to the original object. For example, Paolo Cherchi Usai, Michael Loebenstein and David Francis have underlined that negative elements, being elements never intended for projection, do not show the same material characteristics of projection prints – for instance the grading which the latter are given in the analogue intermediate process - and therefore fail to render their historicity appropriately. In this sense, the approach proposed by the Danish Film Institute aligns more closely with high-end, commercial DVD distributors. At the same time, it remains more archivally informed than commercial DVD distributors, by outlining the steps of the process, providing historical background information on the archival element used for the transfer and by stressing that “[e]specially in cases when the object of study is not studied in original form, the path of representation should be considered when attempting to analyze a film at face value”.

To conclude, archival hardware aesthetics bring into play considerations of restoration ethics and theory much more actively than commercial distributors. Often practices are suspended between preservationist and restorationist stances; where the former favours only a minimum level of intervention with digital tools the latter engages more intensely with contemporary technology to render the historicity of archival moving images. In this sense, the ways in which DVD releases present archival material rely on remarkably different conceptions of historicity and technology. In Chapter Three I will return to the consequences which these approaches hold for scholarship in analysing digitised sources.

2.3 Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, the film preservation field's increased codification, professionalisation and intertwinement with political bodies from the 1970s onwards, bears upon today's film heritage digitisation insofar as it privileges a definition of film as historical document. This is particularly evident in the Europeanisation discourse of projects such as Europeana and EFG1914, which assigns film archives the role of nurturing a shared European history, citizenship and economical growth. With regard to the polemics surrounding this development, as expressed by Buache, Borde, de Kuyper and Horwath, I argued that film archives, also when working on European projects, find ways of securing their own institutional interests. Especially the digitisation of Vertov newsreels within EFG1914 illustrates that film archives continue to act as “treasure

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426 Ibid.
hunters”, to recap Borde and Buache's words, and find ways of negotiating the relevance and meaning of (the same) archival material in remarkably different organisational contexts.

As I further argued, by pointing to the low percentages of digitisation indicated in the European Commission's 2014-report, these polemics overemphasise the degree to which mass-digitisation has actually occurred. Consequently, I contended that in order to yield a more detailed insight into the current scope of digitisation, it is necessary to abandon the strong notion of abundance which nourishes current debates and attend to the digitisation efforts and curatorial decisions of individual institutions to produce more elaborate data. I analysed the DVD catalogues of European film heritage institutions in relation to their different institutional models of history and deontologies of restoration. This analysis showed that institutions generally tend to stick to established models and reference frames, for the most part following their distinct programming philosophies or collections' scope – whether internationalist, national, regional or combined internationalist and regional. Only few institutions seem to focus uniquely on national film heritage in their DVD publishing (and arguably also digitisation policies) while showing greater diversity in their programming. Beyond these analytical observations, my dataset may provide the basis for further studies and deeper analysis. If coded and analysed using additional categories such as individual years, genres, technical specificities of DVD releases (for example playback mode and segmentation), one could possibly discern additional patterns in priorities and hierarchisations of archival material.

Whereas my case study of DVD and Blu-ray releases does reflect the different institutional digitisation priorities, it ultimately does not allow for making in-depth inferences on their work at the intra-institutional level, as DVD catalogues do not (necessarily) represent digitised collections. Archives may well have digitised entire subcollections of films and related materials without releasing them on a home video format or a website due to for instance copyright restrictions or lacking budget, while making them available on-site for consultation with restricted access. Furthermore, another significant limitation of my study is that it did not consider digitisation of film-related sources and thus remained film-centric. Notwithstanding, the database is useful to elucidate the priorities, values and models of history which underpin these institutions' digitisation work and to see how these releases reflect their individual, institutional patterns more broadly. However, in order to obtain more comprehensive statistics, I would argue that FIAF and the European Audiovisual Observatory should ideally invest more time and effort into collecting data about the digitisation activities and policies of European film heritage institutions.

By interpreting the DVD format's technical capacities according to specific institutional
restoration philosophies, some institutions, develop an archival hardware aesthetics in their releases premised in restoration practice and theory and the expertise accumulated through the field's professionalisation. In doing so, institutions provide digitised films historicity by arguing that the digital appearances resulting from specific transfer and restoration processes also help convey the pastness of the digitised films most adequately. A digital transfer's archival hardware aesthetics, as I have dubbed it, plays an immensely significant role in conditioning scholarly research. The transfer process is crucial in determining features such as colour, contrast, light and may reflect restorational interventions such as dirt removal or deflickering. While digitisation makes new forms of analysis possible, the digital image's characteristics produced through such procedures condition the range of analytical interventions which scholars may make with digital techniques of visual analytics, especially in style analysis. Equally, although I did not discuss digitisation of film-related text sources in this chapter, the transfer process is crucial also with regard to such material. Through my discussion of respectively the Austrian Filmmuseum's and the DFI's DVD releases I brought some of these aspects to light and will expand upon them in the next part's discussion of the digital tools and research dispositifs which have emerged in the past approximately fifteen years.