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Introduction

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Introduction

Philipp Dominik Keidl & Christian Gosvig Olesen

To speak of moving image archiving as a professional field with practitioners who have completed vocational training is a recent phenomenon. For decades, after the emergence of film collections and archives, which had been created by cinephiles in the 1920s and 1930s, the training of moving image archivists happened on the job—most often without prior formal training. It could be argued that moving image archiving began to show signs of a professional codification in the early 1970s, when various key organisations sought to define best practices and develop professional standards and shared vocabularies via professional journals, manuals, inter-institutional collaboration, annual conferences, workshops and educational initiatives. For instance, if we take the activities of the International Federation of Film Archives in the early 1970s as emblematic, it is illustrative of this development that FIAF began publishing its FIAF Information Bulletin in 1972 (since 1993 the Journal of Film Preservation) and organized its first film preservation summer school in 1973. Moreover, other significant developments in this regard were UNESCO's acknowledgment of the need to preserve moving images at their General Assembly in 1975, which resulted in the penning of the document Recommendation for the safeguarding and preservation of moving images and granting FIAF NGO status in 1980. Ten years after, in 1990, the first university-based MA degree in film archiving

at the University of East Anglia was inaugurated. Yet, in spite of an increased codification and professionalization from this moment onwards, it was far from a given in the mid-1990s that moving image archiving was considered an independent field of study and profession. This was emblemized in the circumstance that one of the leading figures in the international audiovisual archiving community, film preservationist Ray Edmondson, penned an essay on the current state of film preservation which with its title raised the fundamental question “Is Film Archiving a Profession?” (Edmondson 1995). What could be answered with a firm yes nowadays was a more than justified inquiry twenty years ago. While the need for the organized collection and preservation of moving images had been widely approved and instigated by then, the systematic training and education of archivists had not. Archivists still acquired their skills and knowledge predominantly through hands-on experience at their workplaces and widely distributed codes of ethics and “how to” guidelines. Meanwhile, university-based training was limited to occasional seminars, local symposia, and informal internship programs - predominantly organized by FIAF, FIAT (International Federation of Television Archives), IASA (International Association of Sound Archives), ICA (International Council on Archives), and IFLA (International Federation of Library Association, and financially supported by the UNE-

SCO (Lukow 2000: 137). Today, the situation has drastically changed. Although the University of East Anglia has discontinued its archival MA degree, numerous specialized degrees emerged since the late 1990s and early 2000s that prepare their graduates to work with all kinds of moving images in diverse institutional settings, ranging from local and national archives and museums to software developers and media corporations, among others.

This institutionalization of university-based archival training stemmed from an increased interest in moving image heritage, the expansion of archival networks, and the need to equip students with applicable expertise for careers in the cultural industries. They also emerged in a publicized awareness of the alleged crisis of the moving image in times of the increasing digitization of cultural heritage (Cherchi Usai 2001; Elsaesser 2016). Echoing concerns over the possible—if not invertible—“death of cinema” stimulated scholars to position film within broader conceptual frameworks of media, and encouraged governments to increase funding for preservation programs and expand public access to archival holdings (Frick 2010). Thus, archival training programs developed at the juncture of widely diverse institutional and public realms and disciplines, and have become sites where these different forces meet to (re)imagine the role and study of moving image heritage in a digital age.

Looking back at this development, it is our hope with this issue to consider and reflect on the field’s status today and yield critical insights into its histories and current ramifications. In line with previous research on the history of film archival training of Edmondson and Gregory Lukow, as well as recent studies on the history of film studies (Polan 2007; Wasson and Grieveson 2008; Gauthier 2014), the issue aims to historicize and investigate the material, intellectual, and institutional history of archival training within and beyond university settings, while also offering an overview of new directions. Ultimately, the aim is to develop a better understanding of the social, political, and cultural forces that have shaped and defined archival training in the past and present and nourish continued critical reflection. More than the institutionalization of established “best practices”,

archival training’s different departmental homes within the humanities, social sciences, and sciences indicate differences in ontological and epistemological conceptualization of moving images and their role in culture. As such, this issue asks how archival training theoretically and practically impacts archives as sites of study as well as central spaces where moving image culture is collected, preserved, and displayed. Prominent practitioners and theorists provide answers to these questions by offering insights into the multifarious turns and directions that the field has taken in the past few decades, and where it may go in the future.

We have grouped the contributions to this issue in three thematic sections. In the first section, titled “Is Film Archiving a Profession Yet? Reflections 20 years on,” Ray Edmondson revisits his 1995-piece in his contribution with the same name, taking the cue from his argument in his Film History essay. Back then, Edmondson defined a profession as “a field of remunerative work which involves university level training and preparation, has a sense of vocation or long-term commitment, involves distinctive skills and expertise, worldview, standards and ethics. It implies continuing development of its defining knowledge base, and of its individual practitioners” (Edmondson 1995: 245). However, while such a definition acknowledged the emerging standards, training methods, and specialized knowledge among film archivists, Edmondson’s argues in his contribution that this did not automatically mean that people working in the field personally identified as film archivists. He traces how such an identification as an audiovisual archivist increasingly gained a foothold in the last 20 years through the further development of archival training and new career profiles that developed alongside the ongoing development and theorization of skills, methods, standards and codes of best practice. His article offers a detailed overview that highlights the achievements as well as the remaining gaps that have defined the field in the last twenty years and still represent significant challenges.

In this section, we also present the contributions of a number of scholars and archivists who we invited to present their own perspectives on the

development and current state of moving image archiving as a profession and education in response to Edmondson. Caroline Frick sheds light on the potential downside and exclusive dynamics of increased professionalization and institutionalization in “What Price Professionalism?” In particular, Frick expresses fears over the construction of an ivory tower, which shields off the work and contribution to audiovisual heritage by amateurs working outside established institutional and educational infrastructures. Raising the question who is able to define themselves as a film archivist, and on what grounds, she argues against institutionalization and for a continuing evolution and migration of the profession. A more critical perspective is also present in Benedict Salazar Olgado’s “What Do We Profess To?” in which he addresses insufficient infrastructure for audiovisual heritage on the Philippines. He also emphasizes that the professionalization of film archiving is often related to high financial costs, which might lead to marginalization of those who cannot afford the costs or would not be able to cover student loans with low prospective salaries. And, along the lines of Frick’s argument, he reminds readers that especially in developing countries individuals with any formal education or training carry out valuable work.

The section continues with “Interdisciplinarity, Specialization, Conceptualization. Archival Education Responding to Changing Professional Demands” by Eef Masson and Giovanna Fossati. Masson and Fossati’s reflection highlights the emergence of a seemingly paradoxical demand for a simultaneously interdisciplinary and specialized profile for future moving image archive professionals as a consequence of digitization, as well as the constant need for developing new conceptual and methodological models for old and new media technologies. Finally, the section is rounded off with a contribution by Caroline Yeager, offers a historical analysis of the institution and the development of its own training program from the 1990s onwards in “The Jeffrey L. Selznick School of Preservation: Changing the Field.”

The peer review section of the issue contains three highly diverse pieces on film pedagogy and education at the Austrian Filmmuseum, the Uni-

versity of Udine in Italy, and future perspectives for interdisciplinary exchanges in the profession. Each piece branches out to make fruitful connections to pieces in the issue’s first and final sections. Alejandro Bachmann’s article “Multiplying Perspectives” elegantly makes the case for a cinephile film pedagogy which aims at bestowing the experience of cinematic mystery and astonishment which museum presentation and curation can produce in film students into academia. Focusing on the Austrian Filmmuseum’s tradition and curatorial philosophy and drawing on film scholar Alain Bergala’s film pedagogy, Bachmann argues that by confronting students with the material aesthetics of film in a museum setting without the demand for immediate explanation, analysis and interpretation can contribute to multiplying perspectives based on personal experiences. By discussing the Filmmuseum’s work with film students in great detail, the article makes a highly compelling argument for enabling the sometimes conflicting epistemological foundations of film museums and universities to productively work together.

Simone Venturini’s article “Learn then Preserve” offers an in-depth history of moving image archiving education at the University of Udine. It discusses the role of key foundational figures—in particular Professor Leonardo Quaresima and the Bolognese school of film studies—in forging collaboration between universities and archives in Italy, while detailing the institutional infrastructure of moving image archiving education in Udine and its collaboration with local post-production (CREA) and restoration facilities (La Camera Ottica). By the same token, Venturini’s piece also discusses the epistemological foundations of Italian film restoration theory, highlighting its focus on film philology—or Filmologia as it is also referred to in Italy (not to be confounded with the early French film studies tradition of filmologie)—which proposes a historical approach to the study of filmic sources with a strong emphasis on their material characteristics and the ways in which these are conditioned by their respective distribution histories and archival lives. As a theoretical formation which is yet to be fully discovered in the Anglophone literature on film archiving res-

toration and philosophy, we hope that Venturini's history of the Udine program can serve as an entry point for more scholars and archivists to familiarize themselves with it.

Adelheid Heftberger's article, "Archival Promises: The Changing Landscape of Film Archiving and How Study Programs Can Contribute" makes, much in line with Frick's, Masson's and Fossati's contributions, a case for future moving image archivists to acquire an increasingly interdisciplinary skill set based on collaboration within the GLAM sector and current digital humanities practices. As Heftberger argues, digitisation has given rise to new and highly diverse forms of metadata creation and sharing online, which necessitate that film archives develop better insights into sourcing data in new ways and integrate them into their catalogues in order to rethink their ways of creating filmographic data. In this respect, although—and as Heftberger stresses—film archives and film and media studies more broadly may still be struggling with legitimising their professional identities, the time seems ripe for exploring interdisciplinary collaboration with other types of cultural heritage institutions, to be able to manage and benefit from contemporary data management and curation practices in more dynamic ways.

The forum section, which concludes this special issue, contains reflections on the histories and philosophies of four of the programs which have been setting the stage for moving image archive training in Europe over the past three decades, a report on NYU's Archival Exchange Program (APEX) and a history of moving image archiving in Italy.

Focusing on the creation of the University of Amsterdam's MA Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image launched in 2003, founder Thomas Elsaesser offers a succinct discussion of the intricate institutional, personal and political processes which play a part in establishing a specialized educational program in moving image archiving in his contribution "A Look Back - The Professional Master's Programme in Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image and How it Came to Amsterdam." Reflecting on his professional journey from the UK to the Netherlands, Elsaesser details how, among other things, recent

restoration initiatives by the Nederlands Filmmuseum (now EYE Filmmuseum)—in particular those involving the museum's Jean Desmet Collection—convinced him to move to the Netherlands to forge an interdisciplinary amalgamation between audiovisual archiving, media historiography and experimental practices of reuse. Giving a rare glimpse into the backstage operations of academia and university politics in Europe, Elsaesser's contribution offers more than a history of a particular program by also providing useful coordinates for scholars who aspire to establish new educational initiatives.

The forum section also contains three contributions which testify to the increasingly vibrant, rich and diverse variety of moving image archiving programs which have emerged in Germany in recent years. Ulrich Ruedel and Martin Koerber's "The Materiality of Heritage: Moving Image Preservation Training at HTW Berlin" details the curriculum and philosophy of the Conservation and Restoration curriculum at the Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Berlin, founded in 1993. They highlight the program's unique mix of scientific and philosophical approaches; from cutting-edge chemistry research in conservation science to classical conservation theory. "Minding the Materiality of Film: The Frankfurt Master Program "Film Culture: Archiving, Programming, Presentation,"" collaboratively written by Vinzenz Hediger, Sonia Campanini and Ines Bayer, details the program's pre-history, its current teaching philosophy and collaboration with the Deutsches Filminstitut. Taking the cue from the film preservation philosophy of the George Eastman House's Senior Curator Paolo Cherchi Usai, the article reflects on what it presents as the "Cherchi Usai paradox," namely the circumstance that "a film is an ephemeral medium in the sense that it can only produce cultural meaning at the price of impairment and ultimate destruction of its material base." Addressing this paradox, the piece makes the case for strengthening the ties between academia and archives further, eloquently presenting its argument in a poly-vocal style, which underlines the distinct perspectives and experiences of the piece's three authors. Finally, Oliver Hanley's contribution "Upholding Tradition: The MA

Program in Film Culture Heritage at the Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF,” provides an in-depth discussion of the most recent of the three German programs discussed in this issue, detailing the program’s foundations and prospective activities.

Offering a counterpoint to the forum section’s institutional histories, which are framed primarily within a national context, Juana Suárez and Pamela Vizner’s contribution focuses on the Audiovisual Preservation Exchange (APEX) program. While formally hosted by New York University’s MA Program in Moving Image Archiving and Preservation, APEX is a cross-border initiative which fosters non-hierarchical exchanges of skill sets and networking between NYU students and preservation initiatives in Latin America and Africa through trips, workshops and digital humanities projects. Reflecting on the opportunities for sharing experience and knowledge within digital environments in an increasingly globalized world, Suárez and Vizner’s report highlights—in line with several of this issue’s contributions—the interdisciplinary nature of their work and the multifarious groups it involves.

Finally, Rossella Catanese’s piece “Learning From the Keepers: Archival Training in Italian Cinematheques,” which concludes the forum section, can be read as a companion piece to Simone Venturini’s history of the Udine program. Complementing Venturini’s specific focus on the Udine program, it offers an overview of the Italian landscape of moving image archive education and its history—from the beginning of film studies in Italy to the current situation—while also outlining the contingencies of the institutionally complex funding environments in which Italian training programs must operate, and the remarkable achievements they make despite this. As in the case of Venturini’s piece, we are particularly pleased to be able to include this contribution in our issue because of the insights it gives into the Italian landscape of moving image archiving, which we feel deserves a more prominent focus in Anglophone discussions.

With the sheer diversity of approaches, histories and philosophies reflected in this issue it seems

difficult to synthesize one simple answer to the question of what moving image archiving is and should be today. Yet, if one thing transpires from the issue’s contributions, it is the apparent urgency of renewed interdisciplinary collaborations within academia and moving image archives, especially as moving image archiving has become a profession and increasingly needs to reconsider its skill sets because of digitization. In 2018, as moving image archive education has become institutionalized and can draw on a great variety of advanced theoretical formations and is characterized by a high level of professional codification, it seems to have gained a confidence which allows it to open up to other disciplines, without necessarily having to fear losing its hard-fought foundation.

With this in mind, it seems fitting to end our introduction by echoing a slightly provocative plea for interdisciplinarity targeted at the discipline of history, penned in the early 1940s by Marc Bloch (1984)—one of the great historians of the twentieth century—as a reminder of how impulses from other disciplines and outsider perspectives may enrich and challenge our field productively. As Bloch wrote in a appeal to historians seeking to carefully define the boundaries of their field through standardized practices too rigorously in order to legitimize their field:

Are we then the rules committee of an ancient guild, who codify the tasks permitted to the members of the trade, and who, with a list once and for all complete, unhesitatingly reserve their exercise to the licensed masters? [...] Each science, taken separately, find its most successful craftsman among the refugees from neighboring areas. Pasteur, who renovated biology, was not a biologist – and during his lifetime he was often made to feel it; just as Durkheim, and Vidal de la Blache, the first a philosopher turned sociologist, the second a geographer, were neither among them ranked among licensed historians (21).

Taking Bloch’s ethos as a coordinate for the future development of moving image archive education, we hope that this special issue of *Synoptique* will encourage readers to explore and discover new directions and open up to new perspectives—some

of which have been outlined by the contributions we present—while remaining rooted in a firm, critical understanding of the field’s origins.

On a final note, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for the hard work of the Synoptique managing editors Philippe Bédard, Giuseppe Fiddotta and Patrick Brian Smith as well as to the peer reviewers who generously devoted their time to commenting on and offering constructive input on the pieces for the peer review section.

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