

# Notes and Communications

## *The Moving Image* Premieres

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Moving image archivists now have their own peer-reviewed journal, *The Moving Image*, the journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA). The appearance of *The Moving Image*, featuring articles, shorter opinion pieces, and reviews, gives moving image specialists a better opportunity to publish work about film and video archiving. Readers interested in the subject will no longer have to rely on the occasional articles that appear in general archival journals or in journals on the history of film, video, and broadcasting.

AMIA, formed in 1991, now has 768 members including individuals and institutions covering a broad range of interests, from one-person archives to the major American television networks and motion picture studios. Most members are from American institutions, but there is a growing number from other countries. International organizations such as the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) and the International Federation of Television Archives (FIAT) provide an international forum for the exchange of ideas, but these organizations function primarily on an institutional level. AMIA members have set up an internationalization task force to find ways to set up AMIA branches in Europe and the Asia-Pacific region so that archivists there can benefit from the grassroots model that has proven successful with AMIA in North America.

From the beginning, Canadians have been involved in AMIA and its predecessor organization, the Film and Television Archives Advisory Committee (F/TAAC). This is a testament to AMIA's success in meeting the needs of institutions of varying sizes and mandates. Canadians in the business of archiving moving images have generally found that organizations such as the Association for the Study of Canadian Radio and Television, most active in the 1970s and 1980s, never grew to sufficient size to attract the range of conservators, archivists, producers, and academics that AMIA does. Some AMIA members

also participate in umbrella organizations such as the Society of American Archivists and the Association of Canadian Archivists, but moving image archiving is of sufficient technical complexity that we need specialist organizations such as AMIA and a specialist journal such as *The Moving Image*.

The first issue of *The Moving Image*, published in spring 2001, has articles on the history of film archives and film museums, the contentious history of the restoration of the paper print collection of the Library of Congress, the existence of various versions of the 1928 French feature film *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, the value of amateur film as a locus of creation on a highly personal level but with universal human significance, the development of genre terms that encompass the ever-broadening range of film and video production considered of archival value, and an annotated listing of Black lesbian and gay film and video. In addition to these peer-reviewed pieces, *The Moving Image's* forum section prints opinion articles, some based on papers given at conferences, and its review section covers films, videos, and television, as well as books.

Most moving image archivists pride themselves in being at least somewhat creative and non-linear, like the films and videos they love. It may be coincidence, but a number of the articles quite candidly portray the history of film archiving and film restoration in the twentieth century in terms of clashes between strong personalities. In particular, the articles about the creation of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library in New York City and film museums such as the Musée du Cinéma in Paris and the Museum of the Moving Image in London, and Jan-Christopher Horak's profile of James Card, founder of the Film Department of George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, prompt questions about collectors versus archivists and museums versus archives. The players in these stories have cared passionately about motion pictures and believed that they needed to be saved, sometimes as artifacts, sometimes as documents to be studied by individual researchers in the protected confines of an archives, and sometimes for screening in theatres as they were made to be experienced. Given the roots of film archives in these competing views of why films should be saved, it is no wonder that moving images still have a difficult place in archival institutions, especially in archives that privilege traditional, textual archives over moving images and other products of popular culture. A certain skulduggery, intended or otherwise, is also a feature of the article on the paper print collection of the Library of Congress. Early American film producers fortuitously copied their films frame by frame onto perforated rolls of paper, thereby ensuring that copyright laws governing works on paper would also protect motion pictures, until the 1912 *Townsend Act* decreed that motion pictures could be copyrighted. These paper prints lay forgotten at the Library of Congress for decades, prompting efforts that continue, as technol-

1 The paper prints include a number of Canadian scenes restored by the Library of Congress and the National Archives of Canada, with the assistance of the Canadian cable television channel *Moviepix*, under the title "Centenary Snapshots."

ogy improves, to copy them to motion picture stock.<sup>1</sup> The story of the rediscovery of the paper prints and the various people who have claimed credit for this rediscovery and their restoration belies the undeserved image of the archivist as self-effacing, and archives as dusty places where nothing exciting ever happens.

The editor of *The Moving Image* promises that filmographies will be a regular feature of the journal. Even in moving image genres as well-studied as feature films, archivists and researchers do not have enough basic reference tools such as lists of film titles with production credits, synopses, and technical details. Such lists will be particularly welcomed by archivists if they extend to lesser-documented moving image productions such as industrial documentaries.

*The Moving Image* is published twice a year. According to advance notice in the fall 2001 AMIA Newsletter, the fall 2001 issue includes pieces on the evolution of moving image preservation in the United States from 1967 to 1977, a history of the testing and storage of nitrate film between 1910 and 1945, whether and how moving images should be preserved on digital formats, home movies presentation and preservation in museums, the archiving of moving image records of regional significance, and reviews of works about data storage technology, the cataloguing of moving images, and Ken Burns's television documentary "Jazz." The theme of the Fall 2002 issue will be small gauge film, building upon the work done at the 2001 AMIA annual conference to explore the selection, acquisition, identification, documentation, and preservation of films on gauges smaller than 16mm, designed primarily for amateur use, namely 8mm, Super 8mm, and the rare 9.5mm.

Although the journal is directed at film and video specialists, it addresses issues of concern to all archives professionals, such as the means of assessing the authenticity of documents and the potential of digital media as means of widening access and making preservation easier.

For moving image professionals, using the printed word to communicate about our work makes us acutely aware of the limitations of filtering visual information through text. Many of us feel more comfortable presenting papers during which we use film and video clips to illustrate our points. Until peer-reviewed electronic journals capable of incorporating moving images become practical and accepted, we have *The Moving Image*, formatted in attractively presented text, with photographs, graphics, and film and video frame enlargements.

Members of AMIA receive *The Moving Image* as part of their membership. For non-members, the subscription rates are \$30USD for individuals and \$75USD for libraries for one year (two issues), payable to the University of Minnesota Press. The rates for countries outside the United States are higher by \$5USD.