

Studies in Documents

Shrouded History: The Canadian Film and Photo Unit, Records Creation, Reuse, and the Recontextualizing of “Lost” Audiovisual Heritage



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RÉSUMÉ Cet article présente un historique des documents d'archives créés par l'unité de film et de photographie de l'Armée canadienne pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale. En examinant les documents d'archives (photos, documents textuels, etc.), l'auteure rétablit le contexte de création des documents audio-visuels, l'historique de leur conservation après la guerre et celle de leur « post-conservation » (« *postcustodial experience* »). L'historique du contexte de « post-conservation » (« *contextualizing postcustodial history* ») est pertinent afin de comprendre non seulement le patrimoine de l'Unité de film et de photographie de l'Armée canadienne, mais aussi d'autres aspects de l'histoire audio-visuelle canadienne. Les archives des premiers documents audio-visuels du Canada ont été très affectées par leurs conservateurs et leurs centres d'archives. Ainsi, cet article se veut l'histoire de la création d'archives historiques pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, aussi bien que l'histoire de la tenue de documents dans l'après-guerre.

ABSTRACT This article provides a history of the record created by the film unit of the Canadian Army during the Second World War. Through a reading of the records (photos, textual records, etc.), the author rebuilds the context of creation of the audiovisual records, their custodial history after the war, and their postcustodial experience. The contextualizing postcustodial history is relevant to understanding not only the Canadian Film and Photo Unit heritage, but also other aspects of Canada's audiovisual history. Canada's early audiovisual historical record is very much affected by its later custodians and archives. As such, this article is a history of the making of a historical record during the Second World War as well as a history of recordkeeping after the war.

Introduction

During the Second World War, the Canadian government anticipated that motion pictures would develop into one of the “most important media for the dissemination of information and for propaganda.” Moving images, said Frank Badgely, then head of the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau (the precursor of the National Film Board of Canada), were being used for training and entertainment, and were seen as “the best means of recording events of

historical interest for posterity.”¹ Much of the audiovisual memory of Canada’s experience overseas during the Second World War was captured by the soldiers of the Canadian Film and Photo Unit (CFPU), and most of what the Canadian public saw in the civilian wartime newsreels, and what it now sees in countless television productions about the Canadian Army’s participation in the war, is from footage shot by these soldier-cameramen.²

The CFPU created a deep and rich legacy of records, but these were not limited to the finished audiovisual products that were seen by millions. There are also textual records, photographs, and a unit newspaper, all of which tell the story of the film unit and its approach to documenting Canada’s wartime audiovisual heritage. Although the film unit recognized that its records were of historical and archival value, the preservation of audiovisual records was not well established in Canada in the 1940s. As a result, the original raw footage shot by the cameramen did not survive for long after the war, and much was ultimately destroyed in a fire. What is left of this audiovisual heritage comprises mostly produced films that are scattered over a number of fonds and collections at LAC and other institutions, with much of the context connecting it to the CFPU lost to time. The surviving film records are but a fraction of what was created during the war.

This complex story of the CFPU audiovisual heritage can be traced through a history of the record. Several archivists have analyzed the history of the record, including record creation and archival care and custody, which, as Terry Cook asserted in his article on northern records, is essential for a greater understanding of the records themselves.³ Robert McIntosh, in speaking of the records of the Great War, which were created by the Department of Militia and Defence, wrote that “the production and reproduction of the archival record – the flux of the documentary landscape – warrant the same close scrutiny from archivists that the writing of history has received from historians.”⁴ The value of re-examining and reconstructing the provenance of collections through a reading of the record has been demonstrated by Michael Eamon, specifically with regard to the James Sholto Douglas papers at Library and Archives Canada (LAC), where Eamon rebuilt and reassigned the

1 Library and Archives Canada [hereafter LAC], Records of Boards, Offices, and Commissions, Wartime Information Board, RG36-31, vol. 16, file 9-A6, Memorandum on the Organizing of a Special Film and Photographic Unit for the Canadian Expeditionary Force by Frank Badgely, n.d.

2 Although the CFPU shot both film and photographs, this article focuses on the film unit.

3 Terry Cook, “Legacy in Limbo: An Introduction to the Records of the Department of Interior,” *Archivaria* 25 (Winter 1987–88): 73–83.

4 Robert McIntosh, “The Great War, Archives and Modern Memory,” *Archivaria* 46 (Fall 1988): 4.

provenance of these papers.⁵ Bill Russell, in his study of the Indian Department headquarters' records, tracked the records of the superintendent general of Indian Affairs as they moved from the hands of the creators to successor agencies for their use, and eventually to their current custodial context at LAC. He underlined the importance of tracing not only the history of the record creation context but also the subsequent use of the record prior to its transfer to an archive. Once records become part of an archive, the impact of the postcustodial arrangement and description demonstrates the challenges archivists face when making "arcane recordkeeping practices understandable to today's users."⁶ Lori Podolsky Nordland and Tom Nesmith also analyzed the history of a record, furthering the point that provenance and the history of the record are intertwined.⁷ In terms of the audiovisual record, Caroline Forcier Holloway and Peter Geller have explored the record creation process of films documenting Canada's North, and there are other theoretical explorations and historical discussions of audiovisual records that have influenced this article.⁸ Studies of media, photographs, and films created during the Second World War have also been useful in reconstructing the contextual history of the CFPU.⁹

- 5 Michael Eamon, "Finding 'Enlightenment' in the National Archives of Canada: The Commonplace Book of James Sholto Douglas," *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001): 155–88.
- 6 Bill Russell, "Indian Department Headquarters Records, 1844–1861: A Case Study in Recordkeeping and Archival Custody," *Archivaria* 75 (Spring 2013): 223.
- 7 Lori Podolsky Nordland, "The Concept of 'Secondary Provenance': Re-interpreting Ac ko mok ki's Map as Evolving Text," *Archivaria* 58 (Fall 2004): 147–59; and Tom Nesmith, "The Concept of Societal Provenance and Records of Nineteenth-Century Aboriginal–European Relations in Western Canada: Implications for Archival Theory and Practice," *Archival Science* 6 (2006): 351–60.
- 8 Caroline Forcier Holloway, "Exercise Musk-Ox: The Challenges of Filming a Military Expedition in Canada's Arctic," *Films on Ice: Cinemas of the Arctic*, ed. Scott MacKenzie and Anna Westerståhl Stenport (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 245–54; Peter G. Geller, *Northern Exposures: Photographing and Filming the Canadian North, 1920–45* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2004); Rosemary Bergeron, "A History of the Newsreel in Canada: A Struggle for Screen Time," *The Moving Image* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 25–54; Rosemary Bergeron, "Archiving Moving Image and Audio-Cultural Works in Canada," *Archivaria* 63 (Spring 2007): 55–74; Randal Lucknow and James M. Turner, "All Singing, All Talking, All Digital: Media Windows and Archiving Practice in the Motion Picture Studios," *Archivaria* 65 (Spring 2008): 165–86; and April Miller, "Exhibiting Integrity: Archival Diplomats to Study Moving Images" (Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 2001).
- 9 Peter Robertson, *Relentless Verity: Canadian Military Photographers since 1885* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972); Timothy Balzer, *The Information Front: The Canadian Army and News Management during the Second World War* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2010); and Sarah Klotz, "Shooting the War: The Canadian Army Film Unit in the Second World War," *Canadian Military History* 14, no. 3 (2005): 21–38.

Reconstructing the history of a record becomes even more important when a set of records was destroyed, as was the case with the CFPU's original, raw film footage. How the remnants of the CFPU films, whether productions or footage that was offered to or used in civilian wartime newsreels, are represented through archival description and how they are contextualized by archivists are essential to the understanding of these records. Thus, this article will trace the history of the records created by the CFPU by examining the wartime creation process, the types of records created by the film unit, as well as the records' use and repurposing by contemporary secondary creators and custodians. This study includes a broad analysis of the CFPU's records, both the audiovisual records and non-audiovisual records that have been preserved as well as the documentary heritage that has been lost. This analysis will then lead to a discussion of the postcustodial context of these records and how this documentary heritage remains largely shrouded owing to its disaggregated state and complex provenance. Ultimately, the purpose of this article is twofold: to be a history of the records created by CFPU, and to serve as an example of the need for improved approaches to archival description in order to reflect more fully the complexities of a record's context. In the case of the CFPU's audiovisual records, to borrow Tom Nesmith's observation, the "overall history of the record *is* the provenance of the record."¹⁰ The key to revealing the full provenancial links of the films can be found in the contextualizing records generated as part of the record creation process.

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The Department of National Defence (DND) established the CFPU in October 1941. The purpose of the film unit was to create an official record of the Canadian Army's role in the war and to publicize its acts and deeds.¹¹ While there were other civilian organizations creating a visual record at the time, the soldiers of the CFPU were different from the war correspondents and civilian newsreel cameramen because they were in uniform and had more privileged access. They were attached to military units and shot real-time footage of Canadians in battle.

Led by Lieutenant Jack McDougall, a former cameraman and director with one of Canada's largest film production and distribution companies, Associated Screen News (ASN), the initial unit of four grew to over 200 as the Army expanded into new theatres of battle. Field film units were

10 Nesmith, "The Concept of Societal Provenance," 359.

11 The unit was officially called the Canadian Army Film Unit (CAFU), a name it maintained until 1943, when the government merged it with the public relations photography section, which had been created in 1940. Throughout this article, the unit is referred to as the Canadian Film and Photo Unit (CFPU), which was its name after 1943.

created as the CFPU sent cameramen to the front lines to document the campaigns in Sicily (July 1943) and Italy (September 1943). An editing team in London, headed by Captain (later Major) Gordon Sparling, who had also been employed by ASN, reworked the raw footage into 10- to 20-minute-long theatrical shorts, Army training films, and the *Canadian Army Newsreel* series. Sparling's team also compiled its best footage and stories to be offered to the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) and various commercial film companies for reuse in their own newsreels. In keeping with the CFPU's role as creators of an official record, Sparling's team indexed and stored in their own library the raw footage.¹² Cameramen landed in Normandy on D-Day, 6 June 1944, and then continued to record the Canadian Army's fighting experience in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. The combat cameramen secured a series of scoops in promoting the achievements of the Canadian Army, but they also recorded non-combat aspects of the war: training, parades, commemorations, investitures, sports, and social gatherings.¹³ The CFPU documented the experience of soldiers and units in and out of battle, and by the end of the war the unit had suffered 21 casualties while capturing approximately 1.5 million feet of film.¹⁴

The CFPU footage was a visual record of the Army's activities from 1941 to 1946. Even though there was no formal documentation strategy for the film unit, there was a desire to document the activities of the Canadian Army as completely as possible. The CFPU learned in Sicily and Italy how difficult it was to anticipate where the action would take place and how to capture it. Sparling suggested to cameraman Bud Nye that "it will just mean some very careful planning so that none of your available talent is wasted and so that the important story of what is now going on in your theatre will be adequately recorded for posterity."¹⁵ However, cameramen on occasion ended up attached to a particular unit that did not see action, and there was nothing newsworthy to shoot. Transportation was also a problem, as the Canadians were short of vehicles in Sicily; many had sunk en route overseas when a U-boat attacked the vessel transporting them. With limited mobility, the cameramen called it a game of "catch as catch can," but most of these soldiers were devoted to securing good footage.¹⁶

12 The contents of these film libraries were often referred to as stock shots.

13 For more information about the CFPU's scoops, see Sarah Cook, "Scooping the War," *Canada's History* (October/November 2016): 31–37.

14 LAC, Department of National Defence Fonds, RG24, vol. 12330, file 4/film/1/2, Notes on the History of the Canadian Army Film and Photo Unit, n.d.

15 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11/2, Letter from Major Gordon Sparling to Captain CE Nye, 6 September 1944.

16 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11, Letter from Al Fraser to Jack McDougall, 19 August 1943.

In the quest for the best footage, CFPU cameramen opted for proximity to the action and followed the troops in battle as closely as possible. They thrust their way forward, often deep into firefights, to capture the action through the smoke, dust, and explosions. Nye described the difficult conditions in north-west Europe in a letter written to Sparling: “This has been a much tougher show to cover than we had first anticipated, the fighting has been damn tough and getting in and getting out has been a proper – well, something or other.”¹⁷ The surviving footage offers little insight into the difficulties of filming at the front, amid shell bursts and small-arms fire. In an October 1943 letter, field unit head Al Fraser complained that “the public do not realize under just what conditions films are often taken, it is a bit discouraging on our parts, to shoot the stuff under tough conditions and not have these conditions understood by the public.”¹⁸ During the First World War, it had not been uncommon for cameramen to wait out the action and recreate events that had just taken place, but the CFPU, in its quest for authenticity, refused to do so. As Fraser explained to McDougall, “On the faking angle I can assure you that we all will miss up on a picture rather than fake it, and this is a principle on which we all plan to stand.”¹⁹

While the footage was by its nature selective – because the cameramen had limited film, were in the wrong place, or were in danger on the battlefield – CFPU cameras captured reels of unique silent film. Once the footage was shot, the cameramen were expected to provide some context from which the editing team in London could create a story. At the most basic level, each film can was labelled and each section of footage was identified through the filming of a slate that had the cameraman’s name and a sequential identification number written on it. This slating and numbering – an early form of embedded metadata – made it possible to insert into the film the identity of the cameraman, the time period, and the sequence in which the footage was shot.²⁰ Dope sheets (summaries of a film’s contents) were also considered essential; cameramen wrote up dope sheets for each reel. Sometimes these sheets were very detailed, indicating every scene or shot, along with additional notes from the cameramen about how the various pieces could be fit together into a story. At other times, they included little more than a date and the name of a battle or geographical area. Dope sheets detailing the content of the footage were also created for film provided to the NFB and commercial film companies,

17 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11/2, Letter from CE Nye to Gordon Sparling, 8 September 1944.

18 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11, Letter from Al Fraser to Captain JER McDougall, 26 October 1943.

19 Ibid.

20 Examples of slating are available in LAC, Canadian Film Institute Collection, acc. no. 1975-0206, Royal Canadian Engineers at Work Overseas: [out-takes], ca. 1942/1943, ISN 45223.

as well as for CFPU productions. While most of the dope sheets have not survived, we know of the existence of them because they are discussed in the textual records in the DND fonds. For example, McDougall cites the sheets in a letter to Fraser when relaying the popularity of cameraman Alan Grayston's Sicily landing footage in the newsreels: "Give the little corp a pat on the back from me; his landing stuff was really lovely and he is getting a big play in all the newsreels. I gather from his dope sheets that he was having the time of his life that day."²¹ With so much material coming into the London film unit headquarters, and some of it travelling by plane from halfway around the world, it was easy for a roll to become misplaced. "A roll of undeveloped film without an identification is a pretty mysterious business," concluded Sparling, and "a dope sheet is like a label on a bottle of poison."²²

Sparling's unit selected footage to be presented to the NFB and commercial film companies for use in their newsreel stories. The unit also produced over 100 short films. These productions and the footage for the civilian companies were reviewed by censors for fear of presenting information that was damaging to the war effort or that could be of use to the enemy. Censors had a significant effect on the CFPU's historical record, and their work resulted in the removal of particular scenes. There was a standard list of material that would be expurgated, which included, for example, identification patches, equipment on the "secret" list, prisoners being searched, identifiable images and names of officers over the rank of lieutenant colonel, the official name or location of a unit, and any mention of combined operations.²³ Captain W.J. Hynes, a member of the film unit, complained about the overzealous censors in a letter to Sparling: "The censoring is so severe the best part of the stories are cut. In some cases there are so many cuts, the material released is useless, so the whole story has to be held."²⁴ Because of this intrusive censorship, the film unit adapted. In order to broaden the historical record, Sparling suggested in September 1944 that the men shoot scenes twice, once with the censored object and once without. "It seems a shame to miss a good subject for permanent record, merely because it is currently stopped," he noted.²⁵

After the end of the war, when censoring was less harsh, productions such as *Antwerp Story*, which focused on the liberation of the port of Antwerp

21 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11, Letter from JER McDougall to Lieutenant JA Fraser, 23 July 1943.

22 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11/2, Letter from Major Gordon Sparling to Captain CE Nye, 6 September 1944.

23 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11, Letter from Al Fraser to Jack McDougall, 30 September 1943; vol. 12331, file 4/film/6, Memo from MOI Censors, 3 March 1944.

24 LAC, RG24, vol. 12331, file 4/film/6, Letter from Captain WJ Hynes to Sparling, 23 March 1945.

25 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11/2, Letter from Major Gordon Sparling to Captain CE Nye, 6 September 1944.

in 1944 and which was released in January 1946, were issued with never-before-seen footage of the terrain and equipment.²⁶ There was no longer any reason to hide information from the enemy (or the public), and so the public was presented with haunting images of the muddy and flooded Scheldt battlefield and the cruel effects of battle. As a result, this film, and others like it, presented a more accurate visual record of the Canadian Army in the Scheldt campaign, which is all the more important now since the “uncensored” raw footage that was once in the CFPU library has been lost.

The CFPU created a number of products, both for the soldiers in the Army and civilians worldwide. Training films were developed in co-operation with the Army Training School or training formations, and the CFPU was responsible for securing the required shots and then creating the finished product to be shown to soldiers.²⁷ By enlisting the CFPU to produce these movies instead of a civilian company, the Army was able to secure top-secret footage.²⁸ In teaching films like *Ronson Flame Thrower*, animated diagrams were used to describe the physics behind the flame throwing, and there were close-ups of the equipment and live action shots of soldiers using the flame thrower.²⁹ A complete list of all the training films created by the CFPU is not available, but some titles can be extracted from the official records in the DND fonds, including *Smoke of Battle*, *Surprise Tank Obstacle*, *Army Mining Methods*, and *Chain Fitting and Winching*.³⁰

Also created for a military audience was the *Canadian Army Newsreel*, a series comprising 106 10-minute motion pictures documenting the activities of the Canadian Army.³¹ Each edition contained five to 10 separate short film stories of one to five minutes in length, with the exception of the special editions, which comprised one 10-minute story. Covering the period 1942 to 1946, the newsreel stories provide a detailed visual representation of the history of the Canadian Army.

26 LAC, RG24, vol. 12330, file 4/film/4/3, Letter from Lieutenant-General JC Murchie to Department of National Defence, 12 February 1946.

27 LAC, RG24, vol. 12331, file 4/film/3/2, Letter from Lieutenant-General K Stuart, Chief of Staff, Canadian Military Headquarters, 18 May 1944.

28 Jon Farrell, “History in the Taking: Some Notes about the Canadian Army Film and Photo Unit,” *Canadian Geographic Journal* 30 (June 1945): 277–87.

29 LAC, J.P. Rigby Collection, acc. no. 1973-0162, *Ronson Flame Thrower* (Canadian Army Film Unit, 1942/1943).

30 For example, see LAC, RG24, vol. 12330, file 4/film/2, Report on Canadian Army Film Unit Activities, 2 Oct. 1941 to 2 Oct. 1942.

31 LAC, RG24, vol. 12330, file 4/film/2, Memorandum from Lieutenant McDougall to Major Abel, 19 December 1941.

The *Canadian Army Newsreel* included non-combat stories (inspections, dignitaries, parades, training, sports, and commemorations) as well as battles. They provided the opportunity for faraway units of the Canadian Army to see firsthand their latest engagements and achievements. For example, *Canadian Army Newsreel* no. 13 contains a single story, entitled “Sicily.”³² The film begins with shots of the convoy carrying the Canadian forces toward the Mediterranean while the narrator proclaims, “At long last Canadian troops were to go into action.”³³ Grayston’s footage of the Canadians landing at the beaches of Pachino in Sicily was a great scoop for the film unit, and his role as cameraman was mentioned in the narration of this production. Although the CFPU attempted to distinguish its product from propaganda, the *Canadian Army Newsreel* became an essential semi-official tool for delivering and supporting the messages the Army and the government wished to convey. Because it was intended for a military audience, the *Canadian Army Newsreel* did not receive the same level of censorship as the films intended for the general public. As a result, it contains a more complete audiovisual record of the raw footage shot by the CFPU. It also gave the CFPU an opportunity to use some of its out-takes – footage that was not included in civilian newsreels or other productions. It should be noted that from 1944 onward the *Canadian Army Newsreel* included stories from Canada produced by other creators, such as the NFB and ASN. These stories generally concentrated on demobilization, sports, news, and other political events, and while they were varied in content, the underlying themes were the prosperity of Canada and the bright future awaiting the men and women in uniform who would soon return home. Sparling noted that these stories from the home front “are very much appreciated by the troops in the field, who apparently have an avid desire to know what Canada is like now and what goes on there.”³⁴

In contrast to the *Canadian Army Newsreel*, the theatrical shorts distributed to civilian audiences were scripted. The theatricals gave the film unit the opportunity to disseminate the activities of the Canadian Army as well as propagate a positive view of it to audiences in Canada and abroad. For example, the D-Day footage resulted in the creation of a number of theatrical pieces, including *Green Fields Beyond*,³⁵ which told the story of D-Day from the perspective of the individual soldier. This first-person approach demonstrated the CFPU’s changing and maturing film-making style. The lead

32 LAC, J.P. Rigby Collection, acc. no. 1973-0162, *Canadian Army Newsreel* no. 13 (1943), ISN 33074.

33 Ibid. Quotations are from the narration of the film, transcribed by the author.

34 LAC, RG24, vol. 12330, file 4/film/4/2, Letter from Captain Sparling to Lieutenant CJ Quick, 5 July 1944.

35 LAC, RG24, acc. no. 1982-0246, *Green Fields Beyond* (Canadian Film and Photo Unit, 1945), ISN 193970.

Canadian assault force, the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, had not fought in a major battle before D-Day, and so the narrator presented the Canadian soldiers as being “green in experience” as they “watched and fought with mixed feelings of alarm and curiosity the sight and sound of real war.”³⁶ The narration personalized the landing for the audience: “You are groggy, seasick all the way over. In seconds you will be in, the door will open, and it’s on to the beach – and may the bullets miss you.”³⁷ By individualizing the battle and the soldier, this production emphasized the human side of war. The theatricals had a worldwide circulation, and many were translated for foreign audiences.

The most-watched CFPU footage was not seen by audiences viewing the theatricals but by those seeing it reused in the various civilian newsreel stories of the time. The commercial newsreel companies, such as Fox, Paramount, Universal, and Pathé, among others, as well as the non-commercial NFB, had better distribution access to theatres and non-theatrical venues, and they relied on the war cameramen to supply footage with which to create their weekly news productions. Each newsreel typically comprised three or four stories, including topical news from the home front as well as from the front lines. These were shown to movie audiences before the main feature played.³⁸ Footage offered to the civilian film companies reflected the best the CFPU had to offer.³⁹ The companies used individual shots or entire stories to which they added their own sound and narration. The Canadian Paramount News story *Sicily Invasion* is a good example of a commercial newsreel that uses CFPU footage. The film emphasized how the Canadians, who had spent the last “two and a half years of battle training in England, two and a half years of playing soldier, two and a half years of waiting for the right moment,” had invaded and captured “more than half of Sicily in 10 days.”⁴⁰ While this was not the Canadians’ first action in two and half years – the narrator had seemed to forget the Canadians’ fateful involvement at Dieppe and Hong Kong – the appearance of the footage in civilian newsreels allowed for the propagation of Canadian wartime service and success to civilian audiences, thereby furthering the CFPU’s mandate. However, the second key mandate of the CFPU, that of creating an official record, was muddled by this sharing, since these companies, through their reuse of CFPU footage and addition of narration, altered the original record. Paramount News created a new product

36 Ibid. Excerpt from narration of film, transcribed by the author.

37 Ibid.

38 Bergeron, “A History of the Newsreel in Canada,” 44.

39 LAC, RG24, vol. 12330, file 4/film/4/3, Letter from GA Wells NFB to Major Gordon Sparling, 23 February 1946, and vol. 12331, file 4/film/5/2, Letter from Colonel FX Jennings to Colonel WG Abel, Canadian Military Headquarters, 14 September 1944.

40 The narration of the film was transcribed by the author. LAC, Norman Gunn Collection, acc. no. 1973-0171, *Sicily Invasion* (Canadian Paramount News, 1943), ISN 24075.

with a new title and new authorship, and although the scenes featured in *Sicily Invasion* comprise mainly CFPU content, the segment became known as the product of Paramount News.⁴¹

The CFPU footage was well received by those producing the civilian newsreels.⁴² Its use in the newsreels was tracked through weekly reports and was shared with the senior officers of the operational units featured in the shots, which helped to ensure that the cameramen's participation would be welcomed during future operations.⁴³ "We were all ever so pleased to get your recent Signal telling us of the good uses to which the Leonforte [and] Agira material is being put," wrote Fraser from Sicily, referring to the No. 1 Film Unit. "It certainly peeps us up an awful lot, and at this stage of the game when it is vital for us to sell ourselves as Film and Photo Sections compared to the general press setup. Such news is a wonderful sales argument."⁴⁴ These reports not only describe the scenes shot by the CFPU, indicating which ones were reused in civilian newsreels, but they also helped the CFPU to tailor its footage as it could see which stories were used and which were not.

The most sought-after footage was that of combat.⁴⁵ The American Signal Corps, which was responsible for recording the overseas activities of the United States Army, made use of recreated shots and scenes and thus was able to provide a dramatic sense of a given battle, even if it was simulated. In response to the claim that CFPU footage of the Mediterranean front lacked action and thus news value, Sparling stated, "It must be remembered that quite a bit of the material our men shoot is not necessarily intended as news, but is for record purposes."⁴⁶ The creation of an archival legacy was at the forefront of Sparling's mind, and the soldier-cameramen were not willing to risk their reputation by faking footage.⁴⁷

41 This demonstrates the record's multiple layers of provenance. I will return to this question later in the article.

42 These reports, and the letters related to the reports, can be found in various files in the Department of National Defence Fonds. An example is located in LAC, RG24, vol. 12231, file 4/film/5/2, Noteworthy Points of an Analysis of Newsreel Content from April 1 1944 to June 30 1944.

43 For an average three-month period in 1944, the percentage of Canadian service stories in the US-produced newsreels was 21%. See LAC, RG24, vol. 12331, file 4/film/5/2, Noteworthy Points of an Analysis of Newsreel Content from April 1 1944 to June 30 1944, and Letter from Colonel FX Jennings to Colonel WG Abel, 16 August 1944.

44 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11, Letter from Lieutenant JA Fraser to Captain JER McDougall, 14 August 1943.

45 LAC, RG24, vol. 12330, file 4/film/4, Letter from Colonel WG Abel to Major George Stevens, US Army Pictorial Services, 10 March 1944.

46 LAC, RG24, vol. 12330, file 4/film/2, Memorandum from Sparling to DDP, CMHQ, 26 November 1943.

47 It should be noted that the film unit scripted scenes for its theatrical and training films but not for actuality footage shot in the field.

Fulfilling their dual role of promoting the Canadian Army and creating an official historical record, the CFPU painstakingly catalogued each segment of raw footage in its film library. “A very complete and detailed library has been maintained,” wrote a CFPU member in a draft official history, “with a cross-index system which makes it possible to find any scene on any subject within a matter of minutes.”⁴⁸ The library, kept at Sparling’s London offices, also contained documents, pamphlets, and books to assist with creating story-lines. This library extended the use and value of the footage as the editors were able to reuse scenes that had been previously shot for other productions. The film unit placed enormous importance on its raw footage and went to the effort of maintaining any that had been rejected by the newsreels as well as the out-takes and censored segments. The CFPU was also concerned about the postwar custodial future of its films, and while it had provided copies of all footage to the NFB during the war, it was Colonel W.G. Abel’s “suspicion” – he being the head of the Public Relations Office at Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ), to which the CFPU reported, and who was instrumental in the development of the unit right from its establishment – “that some of these had been used and consequently lost to permanent records.”⁴⁹ The CFPU had maintained this library, essentially a duplicate of all film that had been sent to the NFB, to guard against this problem. Although the library’s primary function was to facilitate the wartime production of film, the CFPU also built a documentary archive with an eye to its use by future generations.⁵⁰

Custodial History

While cleaning up the CFPU film library at the end of the war, Sparling wrote that “any continuing organization should do all in its power to protect it. As it stands it is an invaluable film record of the Canadian share in the war. If carelessly handled or neglected it can easily become only a pile of old film.”⁵¹ Such careless handling is exactly what happened to this unique archive, and unfortunately much of the film and textual library was destroyed, while the rest was, for a long time, reduced to a “pile of old film.”

48 LAC, RG24, vol. 12330, file 4/film/1/2, Notes on the History of the Canadian Army Film and Photo Unit, n.d.

49 LAC, National Archives of Canada Fonds, RG37-A, vol. 312, War films, Letter from WG Abel to G. Lanctôt, 28 February 1946.

50 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11, Letter from CFPU, Public Relations Office, CMHQ to Lieutenant JA Fraser, 24 June 1943.

51 LAC, RG24, vol. 12230, file 4/film/4/3, Letter from Major Sparling to Department of National Defence, 4 February 1946.

The responsibility of preserving film was not clear in the postwar world of archives. The Public Archives of Canada (PAC) had become formally involved in acquiring film and sound recordings in the 1930s, and in 1937 it established a section devoted to film.⁵² However, PAC was not well equipped to store or preserve this machine-readable format, and PAC's role became less clear when the *National Film Act* established the NFB in 1939. PAC's cinematographic section appears to have been cut in the 1940s; it was likely impacted by tightening budgets during the wartime period and by the new mandate of the NFB, which included the responsibility to preserve Canada's historic film. However, this did not stop Abel from contacting Dominion Archivist Gustave Lanctôt in 1945 to request the transfer and preservation of the CFPU's wartime film to PAC.⁵³ With the film unit in the process of disbanding, Abel was "fearful that these records will now be shipped to a military office in Ottawa and that the disposition of them may defeat our purpose in having taken the precaution to preserve them for Archives."⁵⁴ After some consultation with DND, PAC agreed to take the collection. Upon receiving the news that the transfer would take place, Abel wrote jubilantly to Lanctôt: "This is the end of a long fight and I hope that the Records as they now stand will, in time, serve a useful purpose. In any event, the purpose of Public Archives is being met when it has been given an opportunity of preserving a worthwhile historical record."⁵⁵ Despite Lanctôt's assurance of the collection's survival, PAC had no suitable storage facilities. After the war and the disbandment of the CFPU, the films were initially sent to the DND in 1946 and then moved to the NFB in 1947 as it had become the storage repository for early films in the custody of PAC.⁵⁶ They were first placed in vaults at the Rockcliffe Air Station in Ottawa but were later moved to an abandoned hangar in Pendleton, Ontario. The hangar was not suitable for long-term storage or for preventing the deterioration of the fragile and flammable nitrate film. The films were all but abandoned for a decade, until they were processed and catalogued by the NFB during the making of *Canada at War*, a 13-part television series aired by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 1962. But many of the motion pictures were no longer identifiable, and at some point the dope sheets that had accompanied them from

52 Gustave Lanctôt, *Report of the Public Archives for the Year 1937* (Ottawa: J.O. Patenaude, 1938).

53 This request is referred to in LAC, RG37-A, vol. 312, War films, Letter from WG Abel to G. Lanctôt, 28 February 1946.

54 Ibid.

55 LAC, RG37-A, vol. 312, War films, Letter from WG Abel to Gustave Lanctôt, 7 May 1946.

56 LAC, RG24, vol. 12230, file 4/film/4/3, Letter from Major Sparling to the War Office, PR 2, 4 February 1946, and LAC, RG37-A, vol. 516, Films Correspondence re: acquisition 1947–1962, Letter from Colonel HET Doucet to Dr. Gustave Lanctôt, 27 June 1947.

London became separated from the film cans and were lost. Also, many of the films were badly damaged after the years of neglect and poor storage.⁵⁷ Upon completion of the documentary series, they were transferred to the NFB's storage repository in Kirkland, Quebec. A nitrate fire broke out at the facility in July 1967, and the films stored there, including most of Canada's cinematic history and those of the CFPU, were all destroyed. *The Globe and Mail* reported that a million feet of film had been consumed in the blaze.⁵⁸ Through neglect, Canada's priceless early film history had been lost.

As a direct result of the fire, in 1969 the Picture Division of PAC established units dedicated to the archiving of film and sound; three years later, the National Film, Television and Sound Archives (NFTSA) was formally established, with a focus on building (and in some cases rebuilding) a national collection.⁵⁹ To recreate the war film archives, the archivists acquired and copied CFPU films held by other institutions and collectors. The Canadian Second World War films currently preserved at LAC are a direct result of those efforts. As such, the majority of the CFPU audiovisual records at LAC are not part of the DND fonds but, having been disaggregated, are part of multiple collections and fonds across LAC's government and private holdings.

Other official records created by the CFPU have a different custodial history. The textual and photographic records followed a different path. After the war, the majority were transferred to the Directorate of History and Heritage at DND (called the Army Historical Section and later the Directorate Historical Section) to be used in the writing of the Army's official history of the conflict. By the mid-1950s, upon the completion of the first two volumes, the archivists at DND began the transfer of textual records to PAC.⁶⁰ The photographs, including those taken by the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Royal Canadian Navy, were transferred in 1967.⁶¹ These records became part of the DND fonds.

57 "Canada's Camera Commandos Scored World 'Scoop' on D-Day," *Ottawa Journal*, 4 April 1962.

58 "A Million Feet Lost: Vintage Canadian Film Destroyed by Blaze," *Globe and Mail*, 26 July 1967; "Irreplaceable Film Destroyed by Fire," *Hamilton Spectator*, 26 July 1967; "Film Loss Blamed on Government," *Ottawa Citizen*, 26 July 1967.

59 David Lemieux, "A Film Archives for Canada," *The Moving Image* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 15–16.

60 Tim Cook, *Clio's Warriors: Canadian Historians and the Writing of the World Wars* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2006), 168–69.

61 The transfer also included photographs taken between 1919 and 1953. LAC, RG24, acc. 1967-052.

CFPU Records

The CFPU records in LAC's DND fonds include photographs, war diaries, memos, and correspondence between CMHQ, the Public Relations Office of the DND, the film unit, and the NFB. They detail the records creation process of the CFPU. In terms of creating an "official record," these government records explain and document some of the informal documentation strategy for filming footage and for the selection of footage to be included in CFPU productions and/or offered to civilian film companies. Because the unit was small and because there were likely different expectations of discipline and hierarchy, with all the soldiers being prewar civilians rather than professional soldiers, the documentation is at times chatty and always filled with anecdotal asides and observations. The correspondence is also highly descriptive of the unit's activities, providing insight into the records creation process. Although the main function of the official letters, documents, and war diaries was to keep superiors abreast of the units' actions, they were also used as a basis for writing scripts for CFPU productions. The editing team turned to the letters and the war diaries to build stories from the footage they were receiving from the front lines. These records, therefore, were essential not only for the unit's general operations but also for the production of its motion pictures.

Official photographers worked alongside the cameramen in the field. Because the film unit collaborated closely with the public relations photo section and later merged with it to form the Canadian Film and Photo Unit in 1943, there is photographic evidence of the film unit in the process of filming or editing, and in the act of creating their film record. These official Army photographs depict the use of tripods and show other techniques, such as placing cameras on tanks.⁶² Still shots taken during the creation of the now-lost *Smoke of Battle* are the only visual records we have of this training film.⁶³

While the vast majority of the official records of the CFPU are part of the DND fonds, some textual records related to its official records creation function are now in the hands of individuals or still held at the Directorate of History and Heritage at DND; these include a few examples of the dope sheets.⁶⁴ The records stored there are still considered by the department to be active records and have not yet been transferred to LAC. Sparling's team in London also created narration notes and scripts for each CFPU film. A full

62 For examples, see LAC, RG24, PA-136212 and PA-140097.

63 Six photographs from the filming of *Smoke of Battle* can be found in LAC, RG24, PA-132432, PA-132433, PA-132440, PA-132441, PA-152094, and PA-152095.

64 Department of National Defence, Directorate of History and Heritage, A Description of the System used by the Canadian Film and Photo Unit for Identification and Classification of Motion Picture Material, file 159.6013 (D3).

collection of the narration sheets was not preserved as part of the DND fonds, but about a dozen copies of sheets for a few productions are available in a private collection.⁶⁵ Had a full run of the narration, scripts, and/or dope sheets survived, a complete list of CFPU titles could have been compiled, including the intended message and content of each film. Nonetheless, the surviving documents provide evidence of the rich contextualizing work carried out by the CFPU as part of its creation process and also reveal the important textual records that underpin the finished audiovisual product.

The CFPU unit newspaper, *The Viewfinder*, also exists as part of a personal collection. As was the case during the trench newspaper craze of the First World War, soldier-editors published their fellow soldier's jokes, narratives, and poetry.⁶⁶ While there was a lesser movement in the Second World War to create unit newspapers, the CFPU, like other Canadian units, wrote and printed its own newspaper.⁶⁷ *The Viewfinder* was published by the unit for the unit and was a way for the distant sections of the field film and photograph units to stay informed about each other's activities and achievements. All of the field units were represented in the publication, and it is possible to glean from the reports much anecdotal information about their work. Included in *The Viewfinder* are jokes, poems, and stories relating humorous or perilous escapades. There were also moments of great poignancy, such as when cameraman Sergeant Lloyd Millon, who was covering the landing at Walcheren in October 1944, went missing after his landing craft suffered a direct hit. "Although it is realized that wars cannot be waged without losses," reported one grieving comrade, "it always comes as a shock and a feeling of deep and sincere regret to hear that another one of the gang has left our midst."⁶⁸ It is assumed that each member of the CFPU would have received his or her own copy of *The Viewfinder*. The family of a former CFPU member recently donated a full run, a total of 36 editions dating from February 1944 to January 1946, to a private collector.⁶⁹

Although there are rich textual records for the CFPU, its audiovisual record is incomplete. Since the fire destroyed any raw footage preserved at the archives, the productions that remain become even more important as they represent the surviving film record. This record is for the most part a polished product. However, the CFPU productions and footage supplied to or reused by the NFB and commercial companies, when broken down into individual parts,

65 Private collection in Ottawa.

66 Alex Souchen, "The Culture of Morale: Battalion Newspapers in the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, June–August 1944," *Journal of Military History* 77, no. 2 (April 2013): 543–67.

67 Tim Cook, *Fight to the Finish: Canadians in the Second World War, 1944–1945*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2015), 166.

68 Private collection, *The Viewfinder*, roll 17, 15 November 1944.

69 Private collection in Ottawa.

are composed of segments of raw footage. Because the original footage is no longer available, these sources represent the closest we can come to the original record. It is difficult, though, to identify how many or what films were created by the CFPU since any final catalogue that may have existed in its original library has long since disappeared. One must then examine and read the records to obtain an accounting of these films.

By examining the textual records and matching them with surviving film, it is estimated that what has been preserved is half of the CFPU theatrical productions, only one training film, and the entire *Canadian Army Newsreel* series. In addition, there exists some CFPU footage that was offered to commercial film companies (and which has been preserved in the collections of the wartime civilian newsreels) as well as various editions of newsreels that reused CFPU footage to create stories. A number of examples of these two types of films have also been preserved at LAC and at other institutions. Owing to the disaggregated nature of the CFPU audiovisual records, only a selection of the most significant fonds and/or collections will be discussed in this article.

The largest collection of CFPU productions is available in the J.P. Rigby Collection at LAC.⁷⁰ Ottawa collector J.P. Rigby, aware of the attempt by PAC to rebuild Canada's lost film heritage, located from an unknown source(s) various productions and production elements that had been created by the CFPU.⁷¹ The collection comprises not only all 106 episodes of the *Canadian Army Newsreel* but also a number of soundtracks from them, some theatrical productions, and the only known copy of the training film *Ronson Flame Thrower*.⁷²

More issues of the *Canadian Army Newsreel* are available in various archival collections and fonds, including the Andrew George Latta McNaughton Collection, the NFB Fonds, and the DND Fonds.⁷³ Fewer than 10 theatrical shorts have so far been located at LAC.⁷⁴ Four of the productions, *Wood for War*, *You Can't Kill a City*, *Left of the Line*, and *Antwerp Story*, have been preserved in the NFB Fonds (including a version dubbed in Arabic), as well as in other LAC collections.⁷⁵ Other films, such as *Green Fields Beyond*

70 LAC, J.P. Rigby Collection, acc. no. 1973-0162.

71 There is limited information related to Rigby in the LAC acquisition file, so little can be discerned about Rigby's connection to the CFPU.

72 LAC, J.P. Rigby Collection, *Ronson Flame Thrower*.

73 LAC, Andrew George Latta McNaughton Collection (MG30-E133); National Film Board Fonds (RG53); and Department of National Defence Fonds (RG24).

74 *Sports Day*, *Case Histories*, *Muscle Menders*, and *Back to Battle* are known only from discussions in the textual records. This list is not exhaustive; through a closer reading of the records, more film titles could be identified.

75 LAC, RG53, acc. no. 1973-0132, *Wood for War* (1941/1942), ISN 19681 and ISN 20222; acc. no. 1979-0210, *You Can't Kill a City* (1944), ISN 28240; acc. no. 1977-0205, *Left of the Line*

and *Fifth Christmas*, can be found in the DND Fonds.⁷⁶ Recently, a Dutch-language version of *Victory in the Netherlands* (1946), which had previously been unaccounted for and was known of only through the textual records, was located by the author at the National Liberation Museum in Groesbeek, Netherlands.⁷⁷ Further research into the records will likely reveal more film titles and possible locations of other copies or versions.

Other CFPU footage, sometimes referred to as out-takes, is preserved at LAC in the DND Fonds and the Canadian Film Institute (CFI) Collection. *Canadian Dry Pin Track – Demonstration of Modified Sprocket*, likely part of a training film, contains footage of the Canadian Ram tank in England. *Royal Canadian Engineers at Work Overseas*, shot in 1943, documents the work of that unit.⁷⁸ While the transfer from the DND is logical in terms of a custodial history, the CFI collection requires an explanation. In 1963, prior to the establishment of the NTSFA, the CFI established the Canadian Film Archive (CFA).⁷⁹ When it closed after approximately a decade, the CFA collection was acquired by PAC. This “out-take” of the engineers was originally preserved at the CFA. More out-takes may exist at LAC, unattributed to the CFPU, or in other archives or stock footage libraries. CFPU items are also located in the stock footage libraries of the Second World War commercial film companies. When footage was sent to these companies, it was sometimes catalogued and retained as part of the commercial stock footage library. In some cases, accompanying contextual information was retained with the films.⁸⁰ As such, some CFPU footage and complete stories, although without sound and narration, may be located in current stock shot libraries or in archives of commercial film companies. The Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation Fonds, currently held at LAC, is rich with CFPU footage. The fonds comprises over 100,000 feet of footage (19 hours) copied from the Fox Movietone

(1945), ISN 26704; and *The Antwerp Story* (1945/1946), ISN 52360. Other copies of theatricals can be found in LAC, Ken Woodbridge Collection (R8940-0-5-E); Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Collection (R8981-0-5-E); and Philip Plastow Collection (acc. no. 1984-0195).

76 LAC, RG24, *Green Fields Beyond* (1945), acc. no. 1982-0246, ISN 193970; and *Fifth Christmas* (1944), acc. no. 1984-0010, ISN 27203.

77 National Liberation Museum, 1944–1945, <http://www.bevrijdingsmuseum.nl/basis.aspx?Tid=746&Sid=1997&Hmi=1600&Smi=1997>.

78 LAC, RG24, acc. no. 1973-0131, *Canadian Dry Pin Track – Demonstration of Modified Sprockets*, 1945, ISN 18470; and *Canadian Film Institute Collection*, acc. no. 1975-0206, *Royal Canadian Engineers at Work Overseas*: [out-takes], ca. 1942/1943, ISN 45223.

79 Lemieux, “A Film Archives for Canada,” 14.

80 Evidence of the accompanying contextual information can be seen in some LAC descriptions of the films. These descriptions refer to the dope sheets that included the following statement: “Please credit Canadian Film and Photo Unit.”

News Collection.⁸¹ Through a lending and copying arrangement set up by PAC in the late 1970s, the institution received unprecedented access to this American collection in order to rebuild its national collection. It contains not only CFPU footage, but also other items from Canada's early film history that had been lost. Titles such as *Tanks and Infantry Moving up to Roquancourt* and *General Montgomery at Canadian Army Hockey Game* represent original CFPU stories that were presented to Fox for reuse.⁸² This is but one example of CFPU footage stored in an archive outside Canada. Others include the Pathé, British Movietone, and Critical Past stock footage libraries, among others.⁸³ In many, if not most, cases the stock footage is not identified as having been shot by the CFPU. However, if the soldiers depicted in the films are from the Canadian Army, then it is very likely the original work of the CFPU. These audiovisual records then have a complex yet unacknowledged original provenance. Because of the worldwide distribution, reuse, and subsequent storage of the CFPU's footage, CFPU records are now scattered among many locations, and the connections to their original creators have been lost. How does an archive make sense of this tangled web of forgotten multiple creators and multiple custodians?

Recontextualizing Film Records

It is not uncommon for records to have a complex history and to be in a disaggregated state. In the case of the CFPU, the loss of the original context occurred continually throughout the history of the audiovisual record. The raw footage was used to create CFPU productions, and copies were shared with the NFB and commercial film companies. This footage was then reworked by these secondary creators, entirely or in part, for new productions. The NFB and film companies maintained the contextual links to the CFPU in different ways. As mentioned earlier, the original footage that was shared was

81 The Fox Movietone News Collection is now located in the University of South Carolina's film archive in Columbia, SC.

82 LAC, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation Fonds, acc. no. 1980-0175, *Canadians in Italy = Tanks and Infantry Moving up to Roquancourt*, ISN 21137; and acc. no. 1981-0152, *General Montgomery at Canadian Army Hockey Game*, ISN 22190.

83 While this study does not go into detail about the CFPU footage available in stock footage libraries, this would be a worthwhile exercise. See the British Pathé (<http://www.britishpathe.com>); Critical Past (<http://www.criticalpast.com>); and AP Archive (<http://www.aparchive.com>). Some identification work has been undertaken in the Gaumont Pathé Archives (<http://www.gaumontpathearchives.com>); see Dale Gervais, "Risen from the Ashes – The British Pathé Archive Reveals Lost Canadian Footage," *Canadian Film & Photo Unit: We Recorded History* (10 November 2014), accessed 13 March 2017, <http://canadianfilmandphotounit.ca/2014/11/10/risen-from-the-ashes-the-british-pathe-archive-reveals-lost-canadian-footage>.

sometimes stored in the stock footage libraries of their custodian institutions, often without any acknowledgement of the original provenance. However, as demonstrated in the example of the Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation Fonds, the footage and accompanying dope sheets were kept together, maintaining the link between the footage and its original metadata. In most stock footage libraries, only the barest of information is recorded in the metadata, perhaps a location or battle, meaning that even the identification of Canadian units is difficult. Whereas once there were detailed dope sheets and shot lists indicating date, location, and unit depicted, as well as the cameraman responsible, now we have only the footage, decontextualized and sometimes unidentifiable. Much research has gone into identifying the units in the most famous CFPU combat footage, that of the D-Day landings, but this level of deconstruction and recontextualization is not always possible.⁸⁴

In some cases, the NFB and commercial film companies made notes on footage sources, even going so far as to embed this metadata into the soundtrack. For example, a Canadian Paramount Newsreel story about the D-Day invasion cited all the military camera units from which it received footage.⁸⁵ *Sicily Invasion*, another Paramount story, began with text on the screen, stating that audiences were about to see the first pictures of the Sicily invasion and that the footage was “official Canadian Army films flown by bomber across the Atlantic and pre-released throughout Canada.”⁸⁶ This accreditation was presented to Canadian audiences at home as a true scoop with an authentic provenance, and this has also aided contemporary archivists and researchers in attempting to reconstruct the provenance of film records.

These citation occurrences are rare for audiovisual records. It is far more common to find CFPU footage interspersed among civilian newsreels with no attribution. In one example, a single frame was reproduced from a civilian newsreel and printed in the Montreal *Gazette*. The image was of a Canadian soldier who had just recently been killed, and the headline read: “Parents see son in War Newsreel after getting word of his Death.”⁸⁷ Since the screen shot was taken from an Empire Universal News Reel film, that organization was cited as the source. In this case, and in many others, the original context – the

84 Marc Milner, “The Riddle of the D-Day Footage,” *Legion Magazine* (26 April 2010), accessed 27 March 2017, <https://legionmagazine.com/en/2010/04/the-riddle-of-the-d-day-footage>; and Sarah Cook, “Scooping the War,” *Canada’s History* (October/November 2016): 31–37.

85 LAC, Norman Gunn Collection, ISN 18403, *No. 1, Battles in France: D-Day Landings*, 1944.

86 The narration of the film was transcribed by the author. LAC, Norman Gunn Collection, *Sicily Invasion*, 1943, no. V1 8702-0010.

87 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11, Letter from JA Fraser to Captain Gordon Sparling, 13 April 1944.

CFPU – was obscured. The CFPU, as a film-maker, was not immune to undertaking this type of appropriation itself. As noted earlier, some of the home-front stories in the *Canadian Army Newsreel* were sourced from the NFB and ASN, and were shown under the banner of the *Canadian Army Newsreel* without any indication of the original creators.⁸⁸

Examples of the reuse of footage in other productions likely exist in the NFB wartime newsreels *World in Action*, *Eyes Front*, *Canada Communiqué*, and *Canada Carries On*. A review of a selection of NFB dope sheets for its *World in Action* series films *Fortress Japan* and *Inside France* demonstrates the use of CFPU's footage as well as footage from commercial newsreels like Pathé and Fox.⁸⁹ While formal acknowledgement of the CFPU in the NFB's film productions did not occur, John Grierson, head of the National Film Board, credited the CFPU as its source during a CBC Radio show in August 1944, stating that its cameramen "are fine soldiers, and up there where any other man will go." He spoke frankly, observing that "no one should think as they see the newsreels of *Canada Carries On* or *World in Action*, or listen to CBC news reports, or read the stories of the Canadian war correspondents, that any of it is done without danger and without great determination."⁹⁰ Grierson's generous statement has mostly been forgotten.⁹¹

Although it was common during the war to reuse CFPU footage, thus obscuring the contextual connection between it and its creator, modern archivists should attempt to reclaim it by unravelling and highlighting the many layers of context. These facets of the record's contextualizing history must be accounted for in our descriptions of these records.⁹² Without this metadata related to the complicated history of the CFPU documentary heritage, the records continue to appear decontextualized or simply lost to history. As audiovisual records are digitized and made available online, they are still further decontextualized. The complete *Canadian Army Newsreel* series is available on two different YouTube channels – War Amps and LAC – and

88 The first such story was "War Brides Arrive in Canada," *Canadian Army Newsreel* no. 29; see LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/11, Letter from Gordon Sparling to Lieutenant JA Fraser, 19 April 1944.

89 Only a few examples of the National Film Board dope sheets were located in the LAC acquisition file.

90 LAC, RG24, vol. 12332, file 4/film/10/2, Talk on a Visit to Normandy and Brittany by John Grierson: CBC, Sunday, 20 August 1944, 8:45 pm.

91 The CFPU and the work of other military camera units in the Navy and Air Force during the Second World War have mostly been forgotten or only receive passing references in most histories of the NFB in Canada. See Gary Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984); and Jack C. Ellis, *John Grierson: Life, Contributions, Influence* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000).

92 While it should be noted that this manner of description is not likely feasible for all records and archives, there is value depending on the set of records.

individual stories from it, including one on Dieppe, are available through the Canadian Army YouTube channel, albeit with the addition of French subtitles and with the *Canadian Army Newsreel* title removed.⁹³ The footage remains unaltered, but these additions and edits change the record, creating a new version by yet another creator.

New non-film records related to the CFPU continue to be created as well. Oral accounts of members of the unit, taken at a commemorative reunion in 1986, are preserved at LAC and in a personal collection.⁹⁴ Even though the very nature of the event no doubt affected the focus of the stories being told and remembered, the recordings describe the filming process, some of the footage shot, as well as behind-the-scenes information about the creation of a number of films produced during the war. There is also a community website devoted to the CFPU, which provides an online forum for gathering information related to the unit, repurposing of content, and sharing stories and personal memories.⁹⁵ With each new creation and reuse, the context of the CFPU's documentary heritage continues to evolve and the audiovisual record needs to be read with the possibility of discerning the many and often intertwined layers of context.

A renewed focus on robust description gives archivists the intellectual tools to create links between CFPU records in various fonds, collections, and film productions and to explain this complex contextual history. LAC, in its Film, Video and Sound database, has the ability to accommodate the various facets of film production, including more than one record creator. The database describes each audiovisual record at the item level, and many of the CFPU productions, regardless of what fonds or collection they are part of, can be retrieved by searching under the "producer" field.⁹⁶ Not all CFPU footage supplied to commercial film companies or included in the wartime newsreel stories is outlined in this way in the LAC descriptions, but there are some examples in the Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation Fonds that

93 War Amps of Canada, YouTube channel, Playlists: "The Canadian Army Newsreels," accessed 13 March 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2JgcMwXkEE&list=PL04CC43B7CD63C686>; LAC, YouTube channel, Playlists: "Newsreels," <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLleZTAHrKS4EH5jAa50iRfipt0015HlmW>; "Reflecting on the Sacrifices of Canadian Soldiers at Dieppe," YouTube video, posted 17 August 2012 by Canadian Army, <https://youtu.be/FEwplnYf9bA>.

94 The sound recordings are part of the Dan Conlin Fonds held at Library and Archives Canada. There are, however, more recordings contained in a personal collection that have been excerpted in a book. Dan Conlin, *War through the Lens: The Canadian Army Film and Photo Unit 1941–1945* (Niagara Falls, ON: Seraphim Editions, 2015).

95 *Canadian Film & Photo Unit: We Recorded History*, accessed 13 March 2017, <http://canadianfilmandphotounit.ca>.

96 A search in the producer field for "Canadian Film and Photo Unit" yields descriptions of 263 audiovisual items. However, this search does not capture all records created by the CFPU nor the various audiovisual items that mention the CFPU in the notes or description fields.

demonstrate the value of teasing out the history of a record to provide this context.⁹⁷ However, because of the complexity and age of LAC's descriptive databases, the audiovisual item-level descriptions are currently segregated from their fonds or collection descriptions in LAC's Archives Search database. Adding to this confusion for researchers, the majority of the CFPU films are also decontextualized from their companion DND fonds records, which are also described in Archives Search. This means that although the Army photos and films were created by the same unit, the majority are now, owing to their different postwar custodial arrangements, intellectually separated from one another. Even though this important information related to the original creator and the location of other related materials can be added in a notes field, it seems that for such a disaggregated set of records, improved description is a necessity to ensure the discoverability of the Canadian Army's wartime film heritage.

If multiple creators were consistently listed in the descriptions of audiovisual records, researchers wishing to consult the documentary film heritage created by the CFPU would then have more complete access to the CFPU footage, not just the films that it produced. By the same token, any editions of the *Canadian Army Newsreel* that included stories from other film companies, like the NFB and ASN, would list those companies as additional creators, where appropriate. The result would be a web of interconnected films, producers, and distributors, intellectually rebuilding the Canadian Army's Second World War film heritage. With this new descriptive web, researchers would have an enriched and dynamic display of archival description, bringing together previously scattered pieces of Canada's wartime heritage. Researchers would be better able to reconstitute the CFPU's records creation context and see it as a record producer within the DND and within the civilian film world. If all the footage (production, out-takes, supplied footage reused in newsreel stories) in which the CFPU possessed a creator role were properly denoted, thousands of feet of footage would be unshrouded, revealing the richness of Canada's Second World War audiovisual heritage.

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The finished CFPU productions currently preserved at LAC present only one aspect of the audiovisual historical record of the Canadian Army during the Second World War. The surviving records mostly represent what was

97 For example, the CFPU has been added as a secondary creator (producer) in the following film: LAC, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation Fonds, acc. no. 1980-0197, *Canadian Troops Skating in Holland = Canadian Troops in Holland Take Time for Skating*, ca. 1945, ISN 21077. There are five other films in this fonds that have been identified in this manner, but there are others that list the names of individual cameramen in the producer field rather than the general unit name, or that list the CFPU in a note field instead.

edited, what was thought to be popular with audiences, and what made it past the censors. With the NFB fire, the historical record was significantly reduced, and we will never be able to see or reconstruct much of it. However, CFPU footage presented to the NFB or commercial film companies and reused in the wartime newsreels may contain shots and stories that are different from what was used in the CFPU's own productions, thus increasing the extent of preserved CFPU footage. To properly describe and provide access to this documentary heritage, one needs to understand its contextualizing history, which includes the records creation process, use, reuse, accumulation, and custody. By representing this complex context through a web of interconnected archival description, archivists and users would better understand that the documentary heritage of the CFPU encompasses many media types, government and private sources, many institutions, as well as different versions and products, including original raw footage. Such an act would take an archivist beyond simply acquiring and collecting, leading him or her into the realm of hunting, researching, deconstructing, and recontextualizing. This is a profoundly crucial aspect of the archival mission as these enhanced descriptive links, connections, and histories would enrich the CFPU's archival records, unshroud its history, and ultimately provide the tools to rebuild parts of Canada's lost film heritage.

Sarah Cook is an archivist at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) where she has worked in various aspects of the profession, from appraisal and disposition to how LAC makes content available for researchers through descriptive standards, research tools, digitization, and web exhibitions.