CAMERA LUCIDA:
THE MOVING IMAGE AS EVOCATIVE DOCUMENT

FILM FORM, FILM MEANING AND THE
GRAMMATOLOGY OF ARCHIVAL SELECTION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the characteristics of moving image documents such as they pertain to the selection of films for archival preservation. It is advanced that both the physical nature of the film record and the nature of the evidence it presents are prime considerations in the development of archival selection criteria. Furthermore it is argued that the structure and content of film are interrelated factors which impact significantly upon the determination of archival value, and the suitability of the film record for permanent preservation. Finally, a major factor affecting selection involves accounting for the impact of film as a reflector and purveyor of popular culture. Given the powerful influence of film in moulding popular ideas, attitudes, and value systems, archival selection criteria must take into account film of all types if there is to be any future prospect of assessing the impact of film on society in a given period.

The sources used for this study include the writings of historians and archivists concerning film as historical evidence and the archival selection thereof, as well as traditional film literature. The study proceeds from a consideration of the technical and structural aspects of film to a content-oriented discussion involving the reflective and influential nature of the moving image document. Archival selection is considered in terms of its necessity and justifiability with regard to the nature of the film record, and alternative modes of selection are investigated.
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A NOTE REGARDING THE TITLE

Camera lucida is Latin for a light or clear chamber. The use of the term in this title is intended to be evocative rather than specific, in a manner similar to the usage of Roland Barthes in his work of the same name.

It is a mistake to associate Photography, by reason of its technical origins, with the notion of a dark passage (camera obscura). It is camera lucida that we should say (such was the name of that apparatus, anterior to Photography, which permitted drawing an object through a prism, one eye on the model, the other on the paper); for, from the eye's viewpoint, 'the essence of the image is to be altogether outside, without intimacy, and yet more inaccessible and mysterious than the thought of the innermost being; without signification, yet summoning up the depth of any possible meaning; unrevealed yet manifest, having that absence-as-presence which constitutes the lure and the fascination of the Sirens' (Blanchot).¹

Interpreted as a clear chamber, camera lucida also invokes the idea of "light through"² which informs both the physical structure and psychological nature of the film medium.

As archivists we have always been less concerned with 'shedding light on' the surface of our record from a fixed point of view than historians in the past have sought to do. We try to illumine the whole corpus of our collections and allow the light of relatedness to penetrate through our intricate archival reconstructions as through the interlace of an illuminated manuscript or a stained glass window. We have also re-entered an era of 'light through' in a physical sense as we recognize the power of the film, and the transparent slide which may be just as involving as the stained glass window and the stone tracery.³

The term grammatology has been appropriated from Jacques
Derrida, and is employed here as being expressive of situating an analysis of film value within the terms of film reference; of attempting to establish a framework for a discourse of film value within which a meaningful discussion of selection criteria can take place.


3Ibid.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The historian of the twentieth century "faces not a scarcity but an embarrassment of evidence."\(^1\) The new media-dominated information age has inundated society with a seemingly endless universe of information recorded in a variety of formats. Despite the proliferation of historical sources, historical researchers and archivists alike have clung with tenacity to the media of print and paper as the prime representative of historical "fact." This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that the current generation of archivists and researchers came to maturity in an age characterized by a preponderance of textual media and appear to exhibit a predilection for the printed media of record. This situation has resulted in a certain amount of academic "snobbery against the new media, a feeling that print is the only place where 'truth' hangs out."\(^2\) Information recorded on other media has been regarded with reservation or dismissed as being too much oriented towards popular culture to be of historical significance. Contemporary society exhibits a lamentable tendency to marginalise the importance of products of popular culture on the basis of their mass appeal and consumption. This has been illustrated by the lengthy tradition of relegating such mass phenomena as popular music and film to the periphery of contemporary history instead of subjecting them to the serious scrutiny they demand, if only in view of the sheer numbers they reach.

There seems to be a widespread and general oblivion of the
degree to which the media- and technology-oriented information age has permeated all strata of society, transmuting the form and nature of historical evidence in the process. The archival community, entrusted with the task of preserving records of historical significance, has traditionally sought out material representative of the "interests of historians of centrist political history." In fact, the very language of archives has evolved from the medium of textual records, particularly those produced by an organization or individual in the course of personal or corporate activity.

Some liberal-minded archivists, speaking from the new frontiers of the "archival edge," are calling for a re-evaluation of the archivist's role in society. Hugh Taylor has spoken of the archivist's duty to take on the role of a modern-day prophet, acquiring and preserving material with a sense of prescience. If the record of contemporary history is to be preserved, the archivists of today and particularly of tomorrow "may have to assume the shaman's role as keepers of the tribal memory in our global village." This belief would appear to be especially pertinent to the area of the so-called "special" media, which, because of their essentially ephemeral physical nature, are in danger of passing permanently out of the archivist's grasp if steps are not taken to save such records of the post-industrial information age.

In order to preserve such records for posterity, the idiosyncratic physical nature of the new media will need to be considered insofar as physical form will by necessity influence content. It is therefore important that archivists "try to understand the
characteristics of the media in . . . (their) custody which are expressed in 'messages' beyond their literary content, and pass on this awareness to the user." 7

A record that needs to be considered in this light is that of the moving image document, a source that has traditionally been viewed as a phenomenon of mass culture, but has largely been ignored as a source for serious research. That film is a popular art form seems to have worked against its recognition as a viable historical source, while the very fact of its popularity should have insured it legitimacy at the very least as a source affecting vast numbers of people. The very fact that film has existed as a popular entertainment for close to one hundred years would seem to imbue it with some sort of historical status.

The present study will seek to present an overview of the medium of film, or moving images, in light of its nature as a cultural and historical record, capable of both reflecting and influencing society. Considered as such, the implications for the appraisal and selection of film in archival repositories will be investigated. The study will attempt to present film as a highly reflective and influential medium, and will consider such characteristics as they impact upon the development of selection criteria. The very issue of selection will be presented as one demanding justification in light of the nature of the medium, and various alternatives to the traditional modes of selection will be considered. The study will concentrate specifically on the medium of film; the archival preservation of television will not be discussed.

The discussion will proceed from a structural investigation into the nature of the film medium, its capabilities, limita-
tions and characteristics, including film typologies and avenues for historical research, to a more content-oriented analysis, focussing on the medium's potential to reflect and/or distort various facets of society, as exemplified by both actuality and feature film. Elements of bias and distortion, propaganda, sponsorship, and areas of common abuse will be discussed as they pertain to film in general, and with specific reference to the newsreel and documentary. Feature film in particular will be investigated as a reflector of both overt and covert societal values and attitudes, as well as a form of mass entertainment. The expression and source of the attitudes expressed in film, the concept of film as an indicator of national consciousness, and the reflective phenomenon of the box office are among the topics to be discussed. The ways in which moving images impact upon viewing audiences and society in general will also be considered, including the nature of the viewing experience, and the issue of film censorship.

Finally, the medium's physical characteristics and reflective nature will be considered in terms of the implications held for the selection of moving images for permanent preservation in archival repositories. Aspects of structure, influence, and moreover the nature of the evidence contained within the film document, will be seen to impact significantly upon the issue of archival selection. The issue of selection itself will be considered in terms of its necessity, justifiability, and practicality in light of both the volume and nature of the moving image document.
NOTES


2 James Quinn, The Film and Television as an Aspect of European Culture (Leyden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1968), p. 79.


4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 5.

7 Ibid., p. 3.
CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF THE MEDIUM

AND AVENUES FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH

If film is to be collected and retained in archival repositories, a basic knowledge of the medium will be required of both archivists and potential users. When approaching film as a source for historical research, due consideration must be paid to its form and the unique cinematic language by which it communicates, as the physical nature of the medium impacts upon its potential for research use. This chapter will examine film structurally, first examining the physical characteristics of the medium, and then categorizing film into typologies and outlining potential avenues for historical research.

Before the researcher can maximize the information contained within film and understand the ways in which structure influences both content and meaning, certain technological and theoretical elements of the medium need to be considered. Just as the researcher approaches the textual document with a critical mind, questioning all aspects of its content, context, and creation, so must the film document be approached, bearing in mind that the technology of film will by its nature be more complex than that of print and paper.

Image technology had its beginnings early in the nineteenth century with the invention of a number of optical toys exploiting a characteristic inherent in human vision known as persistence of vision. This physiological phenomenon was first described scientifically by Peter Mark Rogôt in 1824. As a result of
this "defect" in vision, "the brain retains images cast upon the retina of the eye for approximately one-twentieth to one-fifth of a second beyond their actual removal from the field of vision." This phenomenon makes the illusion of motion possible, for when another image takes the place of the first in quick succession, the brain superimposes the two images over the blank space between them. Film is composed of a number of still images which are concatenated into an illusion of continuous motion by the brain. Although the illusion of motion can be created at film speeds as low as twelve frames per second, a standard of twenty-four frames per second eventually became accepted as a general norm for optimal image quality. Until motion picture technology was able to record and project film at speeds sufficient to produce a seamless semblance of motion, a flicker effect was visible on the screen. This effect in early films draws attention to the fact that the image is not continuously upon the screen; in fact, when watching a film, we are actually fixing our eyes on a darkened screen for as much as fifty percent of the time. Thus the projected film illusion exists only in the mind, by means of a flaw inherent in human vision. Operating in conjunction with persistence of vision is a psychological phenomenon known as "phi effect," defined as "the psychological perception of motion which is caused by the displacement of two objects seen in quick succession in neighboring positions." The combination of these two phenomena makes film "the first communications medium to be based upon psycho-perceptual illusions created by machines."
tifically established as a series of still images projected at a speed sufficient to create the illusion of motion. The next crucial structural element to be grasped by the user of film is the manipulation of these images. Through editing, literally the "cutting" of the film, the filmmaker manipulates images to produce a desired effect. One of the most basic theories operative in the art of editing is that of montage, a concept operating at the level of psychological awareness. The theory of montage was first advanced by Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948), who was active in the experimental Proletkult Theater in Moscow in the 1920s. Eisenstein's theory of montage operated along the lines of Marxist dialectic: "The dialectic is a way of looking at human history and experience as a perpetual conflict in which a force (thesis) collides with a counterforce (antithesis) to produce from their collision a wholly new phenomenon (synthesis) which is not the sum of the two forces but something greater than and different from them both."\(^5\) According to Eisenstein,

\[
\ldots\text{ in film editing the shot }\ldots\text{ is a thesis which when placed into juxtaposition with another shot of opposing visual content - its antithesis - produces a synthesis (a synthetic idea or impression) which in turn becomes the thesis of a new dialectic as the montage sequence continues. This visual opposition between shots may be a conflict of linear directions, planes, volumes, lighting, etc., and need not extend to the dramatic content of the shot.}\(^6\)
\]

Eisenstein favoured the example of the Japanese ideogram to illustrate the process behind dialectical montage:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>child</th>
<th>mouth</th>
<th>= scream</th>
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<tr>
<td>bird</td>
<td>mouth</td>
<td>= sing</td>
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<tr>
<td>knife</td>
<td>heart</td>
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<td>water</td>
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<tr>
<td>door</td>
<td>ear</td>
<td>= listen</td>
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A more sophisticated example can be seen in the following example, wherein the process of montage synthesizes an entirely new meaning arising out of the juxtaposition of unrelated elements:

man tree sun sun tangled in the tree's branches, as at sunrise, meaning now the east.

The theory of montage is illustrative of the depth of control exerted over material by the filmmaker, the element of selection or omission, and the psychological ramifications such decisions can hold for the viewing audience. Since one of the major criticisms levelled at film as a potential source for historical research has always been its potential for distortion, an understanding of the possible forces operative behind such distortion could perhaps better equip the researcher to detect and account for such biases in the film document.

Other elements enter into structure as it affects meaning, elements including composition, framing, camera lenses, lighting, the type of emulsion used, focus, and camera placement, all of which impact upon the single frame, and the shot. The most basic visual unit of film (after the individual frame) is the shot, defined as "a single uninterrupted action of a camera." Shots are combined into scenes, scenes into sequences, and so on. All elements which impinge upon the make-up and composition
of a shot or scene must be considered as a potential element of distortion, including the possible affecting presence of the camera in actuality film, or film which purports to record empirically "real" events in a truthful manner.

From the beginnings of film technology the medium's capacity for acting as a recorder of historical evidence has been recognized, both by those involved in its inception, and contemporary critics. Following the invention of the kinetograph in 1895, W.K.L. Dickson wrote:

The advantages to students and historians will be immeasurable. Instead of dry and misleading accounts, tinged with the exaggerations of the chroniclers' minds, our archives will be enriched by the vitalized pictures of great national scenes, instinct with all the glowing personalities which characterized them.10

Similar sentiments were expressed by contemporary film critics who described the pioneering work of the Lumière brothers in France, recording events such as workers leaving a factory or a train arriving at a station, as "nature taken alive" or "nature caught in the act."11 Writing in 1898, Boleslaw Matuszewski was struck by the motion picture camera's novel potential for physical mobility, and the implications this capacity held for the recording of history. What is more prophetic for the film archivist of today are Matuszewski's remarks about the inability of the cameraman or filmmaker to correctly predict which events would have historical significance conferred upon them by the passing of time.12

In the 1920s, interest in the use of film for historical documentation spread to historical circles. In the United States, the Iconographical Commission (1926-1934) embarked on
a mission that is still being carried on today -- the quest to categorize film into a hierarchy of typologies useful to historians and historical research. The term "historical film" was employed to describe films "which record a person or period from the time after the invention of cinematography and without dramaturgical or 'artistic' purposes: those films which present a visual record of a definite event, person or locality, and which presuppose a clearly recognizable historical interest inherent in the subject matter." The Commission was anxious to exclude from this definition fictional or feature films and documentaries, genres which involved a certain amount of "personal interpolation" by the filmmaker. Actuality film, already widely disseminated through the standardized format of the newsreel, was considered to be of most interest to the historian as "illusions of objective reality, of events and people, a visual version of newspapers."

The Act establishing the National Archives in the United States (approved 19 June, 1934), recognized the historical capacity of film by including a provision for the preservation of film of historical merit. "Indeed, the unique ability of the motion-picture camera to record events for historical purposes was especially recognized by a provision in the act which authorized, in addition to the motion pictures to be accepted from governmental agencies, the acceptance from non-governmental sources of motion pictures illustrative of American history."

Both John Bradley, motion picture consultant to the Library of Congress, writing in 1948, and Sir Arthur Elton, writing in 1955, compare the recording of images and sound on
film to other more ancient forms of recording information. Elton likens the film document to other modes of record-keeping employed throughout the ages: "I want to consider the film as source material for history in the sense that palimpsest and parchment, hieroglyph and rune, clay tablet and manorial roll are source materials - fragments, sometimes fragments of fragments, often defaced by time, and applied to purposes of historical reconstruction rarely contemplated by the original authors."18

In the years following the Iconographical Commission, there were several attempts to classify films according to their significance to the historical researcher. In 1939 the National Archives of the United States arrived at standards to define categories of film that would be collected for research purposes. The major classifications were: factual per se (including newsreels and other record film of historical significance): factual-expository (factual films constructed according to some set mode of composition, including travelogues and educational films); art-craft (films documenting major technological developments in the motion picture arts or industry); and "historic" films (those which have exercised a considerable influence on public opinion and have in that sense become historic, as, for example, Uncle Tom's Cabin).19 This system of classification covers a wide range of film, but is something less than satisfactory as much of the classification hinges on the concept of American "historical significance," which in most instances is bound to be an arbitrary or subjective decision.

Christopher Roads of the Imperial War Museum, England, has developed a classification of film into five categories, which
focuses more on the form and structure of the film as it affects its value as historical evidence. The first category includes original actuality or record film in a totally unedited form. The second category involves the same film in a semi-edited condition with excess footage and technically flawed portions excised. Thirdly, there is record film which has been edited into the newsreel or some similar format. The fourth category comprises documentary films, which involve the manipulation of original footage into a single-purposed format and as such are of little value to the historian as primary historical evidence. The final category includes feature films, which are very much secondary sources, according to Roads. This mode of classification is likely to be of more use to the historical researcher, with its emphasis on form and structure rather than on decisions regarding the subjective nature of film content. A similar classification scheme is advocated by William Hughes, who likewise divides actuality film into edited and unedited formats. News-film is distinguished from newsreels on the basis of not being distributed on a regular schedule. In addition to documentary and compilation films, the latter being constructed out of extant footage, Hughes includes what he calls "magazine films," which he defines as being released in series on a regular basis, similar to newsreels, but featuring greater length and depth of coverage.

From the preceding attempts to classify film according to its usefulness to the historian, it would seem that the film of record is generally considered by many to be the most useful form of film document for historical research purposes. The use of feature film as a purveyor of historical evidence is not as
widely accepted, and will be discussed separately.

Present-day historians were for the most part educated in a print-oriented culture and tend to view the film record with distrust, accusing it of a partisanship which does not allow for unbiased communication. The written record has traditionally conveyed a sense of "impartiality" which is rarely attributed to film. But film has the capacity to make a unique contribution to the field of historical inquiry, as exemplified by what J.A.S. Grenville refers to as a "kind of eye-witness quality," referring to the motion picture camera's ability to record events occurring in front of it. A number of unique attributes making film a valuable form of historical documentation have been outlined by Arthur Elton:

1) It can show as nothing else the routines of procedure and process, of custom and craft;
2) Film's peculiar command of movement results in its ability to record more or less unselectively everything taking place in front of the lens;
3) Film's ability to record the comparative study of personal and crowd psychology in terms of movement, gesture, attitude and set of muscle;
4) Film can also be used directly to present history and an historical point of view.

Elton does modify the fourth point somewhat by pointing out the inevitability of selection and condensation, and how these factors can result in an acquired symbolic value through emphasis and/or distortion. For Elton, the greatest attribute of film would seem to be its ability to act as an unbiased recorder of events taking place in front of the camera, and in this sense, the camera does not lie.

Using film as a source for historical research, Martin A. Jackson has advocated two potential avenues which can be taken:
the viewing of film as simply a visual record, or the viewing of film as a reflection of public opinion at a given moment in history. Historians have traditionally been biased towards the former approach, in which film approximates "reality" by recording straightforward visual information. The latter avenue of research deals less with the issue of historical or visual authenticity and more with the reflection of public attitude at a given time. As such, it is an approach more suited to the feature film in many ways, and will be discussed in that context.

While much discussion has centered around the issue of how historians can use film as an historical record, less attention has been given to the question of just what historians can expect to contribute to the field of historical inquiry through their use of the film document. There has been some discussion concerning the historian's potential role as a mediator in bringing together the diverse elements communicated by the film record into some sort of broader overview of history and society. Stuart Samuels and Robert Rosen write that "given the historian's primary concern with the processes of social development, he is particularly suited to specify the mediating factors that enter into film production - the role of the market, government, political pressures, and mass ideologies, to mention only a few examples." They go on to state that

... we could bring our preoccupation with the processes of change to bear on two levels. The first could present a synthesized picture of the process of filmmaking itself to demonstrate the structural links between systems of production, distribution, consumption, criticism and social control. ... The
second level would relate both thematic content and film technique to the specific historical context in which they are developed and consumed.\textsuperscript{30}

Others feel the historian is not suited to be the catalyst of such a synthesis. Frans Nieuwenhof feels that

\[ \ldots \text{the intellectual tradition stands in the way of the movement towards synthesis, towards overall pictures. The wide approach is repudiated since it is unfeasible with modern specialization in method and research.} \textsuperscript{31} \]

Nieuwenhof further states that while it is "doubtful whether historians are the right men in the right place for the ultimate compilation of such 'picturizing' through mass communication media . . . still it is obvious that recognition of the relevance of the mass communication media for the historical picture-making may lead to a totally different attitude of traditional historical research and the presentation thereof."\textsuperscript{32}

Whether or not the historian is suited to synthesize a new picture of society through the use of film and similar media, there are further matters to consider when using the moving image document for any serious research purpose. Approaching film as an historical document, the researcher will find it important to be able to establish his source contextually, and may find it necessary to date the film in order to verify its authenticity or establish an appropriate historical context within which to view the film. Both visual internal elements and external evidence may provide clues to establish the period of production. Physical features such as film stock, development process, spacing of sprocketholes, manufacturer's codes
imprinted on the film stock, the presence of a soundtrack (and whether or not it is synchronous), and the type of equipment used (such as zoom lenses, whose appearance in the industry can be accurately dated), all assist in establishing a period of production for a film. The projected film often reveals names of the cast, director, date of copyright, and so on, in the credits. Internal stylistic elements can also provide information derived from styles of editing, lighting, directing, acting, camera placement, and depth of field, as well as more overt visual indicators in the form of architectural styles, landmarks, technological development, clothing styles, and patterns of language and behaviour.33

A final consideration is that of textual documentation. This is an important area both for archival repositories which collect film, and potential users of those films. Certain information, if available, can illuminate many facets of the film document which may otherwise remain in obscurity. Textual documentation can include the "dope sheets" that newsreel cameramen kept on every shot, and shooting scripts, which reflect the filmmaking process. Collections such as the British Board of Film Censors script files, accumulated in the pursuit of exercising control over film content, may be of significance to the researcher. Film treatments and scenarios are likewise valuable for tracing the preliminary form of a film through to its definitive final form. The treatment is the first outline or proposal presented to the producer, while the scenario is a more detailed outline, containing a full list of shots and a sequential description of stage and technical actions.34 Infor-
mation regarding film directors, studios, distributors, writers and editors, can often be gleaned from film company records, if available for consultation, and from film magazines and journals. Back issues of distributors' catalogues can also be consulted to establish the content of individual films and their respective running times. Film timing can be a critical factor in determining which copy of a film is being dealt with, particularly when the film exists in multiple versions as a result of a complex production history or re-cutting for foreign distribution.

The physical nature and structural aspects of the medium impact significantly upon the film document's value and potential as an historical record. Full utilization of the medium's informational capacity is only possible in conjunction with a thorough understanding of the document's structure, and the ways in which form can influence content. Such knowledge is critical not only for researchers wishing to use the medium, but also to the archivists who must select and care for the film documents in their custody. As the issue of selection hinges upon the intrinsic value of a record, all elements which may potentially impact upon value must of necessity be recognized. Inasmuch as form influences content, it is the first element to be considered when assessing the film record's value and usefulness. Next, the moving image document will be considered in terms of content and the implications content holds for its use as a record for historical research.
NOTES


2 Ibid.


4 Cook, *A History of Narrative Film*, p. 2.

5 Ibid., p. 171.

6 Ibid., p. 172.

7 Ibid., p. 173.


13 Ibid., p. 6.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., p. 3.


17 Kuiper, "The Historical Value of Motion Pictures," pp. 385-386.


21. Ibid.


23. Ibid., p. 56.


30. Ibid., pp. 32-33.


32. Ibid., p. 316.


CHAPTER III
THE MOVING IMAGE DOCUMENT
AND SOCIETAL REFLECTION

In today's visually-oriented society the creation of images and their mass consumption has become an increasingly significant activity. The moving image record has evolved into a highly sophisticated medium capable of recording information about real events, and about society and its perception of itself. The medium functions in a multi-faceted role stemming from its context of inventive creation, its capacity to create an image of society and also project the image back to society, and the degree of influence it wields over the viewing audience. Film has the ability to reflect, distort and affect the way in which society perceives contemporary issues, and itself. The reflected image has the potential for distortion, and it is this characteristic which has resulted in a good deal of distrust directed at the medium both as a recorder of empirically "real" events and as a purveyor of works of creative imagination. Both actuality and feature film can be viewed as a reflection of a given society at a particular moment, and although both are inherently biased in one way or another, they remain valuable if largely untapped resources for historical, societal, and cultural investigation.

The type of film record traditionally considered by the historical researcher to be the most reliable for research purposes is that of actuality film, or film that purports to convey an accurate record of reality as it was recorded by the camera.
Historically speaking, the most common form of actuality film is the newsreel. During the first half of this century newsreels packaged current events into an extremely rigid and standardized format which reached a wide viewing public. While the newsreel was once a major source of news and information for a large number of people, it is today regarded as a highly biased and distorted source of record film, due to its limitation of coverage and manipulation of content. In addition to examining the nature of the newsreel's distortion and propagandizing, perhaps one of the main values of the newsreel as a source of actuality film is the opportunity to view what contemporary cinema audiences actually saw themselves.

Newsreels have come to be regarded as being biased towards the entertaining rather than the educational or informative. Many of the newsreel companies were subsidiaries of the feature film conglomerates, and it was the feature film with its potential for monetary gain that the conglomerates were concerned with promoting. Hence the newsreel preceding the feature was subjected to a certain amount of self-imposed censorship by the industry, in order to present topics calculated not to annoy the customers, or to inflame public opinion.

... The newsreels show us today what their producers thought yesterday's audiences wanted to see as entertainment; the newsreel is also a primary source for what the controlling elite, whether through formal censorship or through informal influence, wanted the movie audiences - the popular masses - to know or believe ... It was entertainment and not education that motivated the newsreel makers.

Humourist Oscar Levant has described the newsreel generically
as "a series of catastrophes, ended by a fashion show," view which seems indicative of some sort of popular consensus. In 1937 a Paramount news editor offered an explanation for this phenomenon:

The theatre managers who have to show our newsreels do not think their function is to educate. They go to great effort in their theatres to set up the desired atmosphere of romance, happiness, music and soft light, and along comes a newsreel with the latest race, riot or something else that makes the audience hot.

As an entertainment item, newsreels were forced to concentrate on the ceremonial side of life, with the emphasis on "sports, fads and fashions, parades, bathing beauties, ship launchings, and mere curiosities." While such subjects may not always be what the historian is seeking, newsreels may constitute a rich source of documentation concerning popular influences upon public taste and attitude, as well as a rich source for documenting contemporary trends in self-imposed censorship. The newsreel may also be considered as a form of mass communication and studied for its implications as such.

The editing of "news" items into an entertainment package should lead a researcher to treat newsreels as distorted or "directed" images of society, rather than as strict representations of historical "fact." The researcher using newsreels as source material needs to consider the elements of selection, omission, and sequencing that contribute to the evolution of a news "story," as well as the subjective and possibly misleading nature of voice-over commentary.

A further element contributing to distortion constitutes
what Christopher Roads refers to as a "bias towards a record of what occurred by day under reasonable weather conditions," drawing attention to the fact that film is a vulnerable and ephemeral medium and is thus better suited technically to periods of calm and favourable physical conditions. This fact often works against the survival of records made in the arenas of war and natural disaster.

The very presence of the camera in a given situation may also result in a certain amount of distortion. Arthur Marwick, however, feels the camera has an important involuntary function in recording an event, however biased the message it intentionally wishes to convey. Where newsreels are concerned, Marwick states that "the message that such a film wishes to put forward is described as 'the witting testimony,' and the term used to describe the amount of information a film might contain is 'the unwitting testimony.'" Unwitting testimony could conceivably include such features as the physical environment, lifestyles, and patterns of behaviour, portraiture (that is, how people actually appeared at a given time), the concrete reality of particular situations, and what Marwick refers to as the "crash course" function of archival footage, alluding to film's potential to reveal in an instant what would require pages in print. The nature of unwitting testimony reinforces the camera's capacity to function as a neutral observer in a given situation. As a "witness to the catastrophic events of our epoch, it retains a level of objectivity that is often beyond the capacity of the agitated human participant." Examples of this can be seen in contemporary news coverage.
As a neutral recorder of visual images, actuality film has the further capacity to record those social groups traditionally ignored until recently by conventional historical sources. The historical researcher will surely benefit from film's ability to capture the culture and iconography of the "man in the street," the underprivileged, ethnic minorities, women and children; in short, those social groups who have for the most part been deprived of a written history. Actuality film also has a similar role to play in anthropological and ethnographic studies.

At the opposite end of the spectrum lies the potential of actuality film to create symbols evocative of a particular era. "Cameramen have provided us with a kind of shorthand visual imagery for this century: a British political crisis means a crowd in the rain outside Number Ten; the Depression means cloth-capped men on street corners; the General Strike, a shot of idle machinery or empty railway lines; the Battle of Britain, that shot from *Fires Were Started* of fire-hoses snaking away down a London street after a raid." The power of film to fashion such potent visual imagery for an age has influenced us to such a degree that it has become difficult to envision the early part of this century in anything other than black and white. It is this power which makes actuality film a difficult historical source to dismiss, whatever its shortcomings as an unbiased record.

Apart from contemporary newsfilm, and with the demise of the newsreel, the most common form of actuality film being produced today is the documentary. The French who first used the term *documentaire* were referring to travelogues or educa-
The term "documentary" was first used in the contemporary sense by John Grierson, in an anonymous review of Robert Flaherty's *Moana*: "Being a visual account of the daily life of a Polynesian youth, . . . the film has documentary value." Gradually came to be described as "the creative treatment of actuality." "Creative" should perhaps be considered the operative term here, for regardless of the filmmaker's intentions, some degree of bias is always imparted to the documentary film. "Formally structured" is also a crucial term; documentaries are not simply hundreds of feet of footage tacked together arbitrarily. They are organized and structured in a manner that will best serve to promote the filmmaker's intentions. The fact that documentaries are compiled from actuality footage has often imbued them with an undeserved aura of authenticity and respectability. Those who see through the veneer of "reality" that many documentaries purport to convey, often react violently to the documentary's claim of superiority over the fiction film. Marcel Ophuls, director of *The Sorrow and the Pity*, writes:

As I've pointed out whenever and wherever I can, documentaries - or whatever their directors care to call them - are just not my favorite kind of movie watching. The fact is that I don't trust the little bastards. I don't trust the motives of those who think they are superior to fiction films, I don't trust their claim to have cornered the market on truth, I don't trust their inordinately high, and entirely undeserved, status of bourgeois respectability.

The extreme example of manipulation in the documentary
context is the use of the documentary format as a tool for spreading propaganda. While the historian may peremptorily dismiss such film as being blatantly manipulative and a highly distorted version of "reality," the propaganda film can provide societal insights of a sociological and psychological nature. Propaganda films are

... consciously made to promote certain goals, to persuade, to unite, and to stimulate to action. It is this consciousness, this purposiveness, which gives to the propaganda film its distinct value for sociopsychological analysis. ... In the propaganda film, the attitudes and values of a society, normally the backdrop for dramatic action, come into the foreground to stand naked for analysis.18

Another issue closely related to propaganda is that of sponsorship, an element that also must be taken into account when ascertaining the veracity of the film record. Sponsorship has traditionally been more of an issue with the documentary and compilation film than with the feature film industry, as neither the documentary or compilation are particularly commercial in nature. Because of this fact, an element of compromise in the form of sponsorship has often entered into their production. Considered as record film, sponsored film does provide some degree of insight into the motives of the sponsoring interest by "revealing the views which they wanted the public to hold on the vital issues of the day."19

Film would seem to possess the capacity for recording aspects of reality with a degree of veracity unparalleled in the textual record. By the same token it possesses an almost equal capacity for falsification:
Contrary to some popularly held beliefs the camera does lie and it can lie very consistently and for the general public very effectively. It is this facility that film has for not telling the truth which creates the greatest abuse of film as an historical source.20

All documents invite falsification. The film record, because of the number of hands involved in its creation and its manner of production, has long been regarded by historians with a great deal of suspicion. One of the major reasons for this suspicion, and one of the more frequent areas of abuse in actuality film is the use of stock-shots, wherein a totally unrelated shot is substituted for the real thing (usually for reasons of convenience and expense, and not necessarily to deliberately mislead), without acknowledging the source or the misrepresentation involved. Stock-shots have a long history of use and abuse in all types of films, as do reconstruction sequences, whereby an attempt is made to re-enact an historic event without acknowledging its removal from reality. Such patterns of falsification have confounded historians for years, leading many to advocate methods of identifying the offending shots and sequences. Christopher Roads has suggested filmmakers employ colour tinting of reconstructed sequences, to distinguish them from actual record film. 21 Penelope Houston advocates the use of footnotes to accompany compilation films for the same purpose.

Reconstruction should be identified, not allowed to masquerade as the real thing. Doubtful attributions might be acknowledged; distinctions might be drawn between firsthand material which can be exactly identified, and material which has already been put through one propagandist mincer or another... . . 22
Historian William H. McNeill is even more adamant on this point, which he carries to its somewhat illogical extreme: "Only if an historical idea is used to dictate how footage should be arranged and selected can the wisdom and insight of our profession find expression in this kind of filmmaking." A similar sentiment is echoed by J.A.S. Grenville and Nicholas Pronay: "Ideally both the 'technical' and 'scholarly' halves of... a film project should both be historians by training." Perhaps the most extreme view on this point is that expressed by Fritz Terveen, who states that an analysis of form and technique should be determined for every shot.

... and must be attached as accompanying text or critical apparatus in a written form in order to enable it to be used for research purposes. Only thus can a sequence of shots be placed exactly in its appropriate historical context. This is a task which can be carried out only by the historian in collaboration with scientifically trained experts.

The foregoing discussion has outlined what constitutes the most common form of abuse in record film, that of the falsification of the film record which is presented as a representation of "reality." At the other end of the spectrum there is a confusing situation which occurs when shots are extracted from fictional films and presented as historical fact. This situation more typically arises with a historical re-creation film such as Eisenstein's *Strike* (1924), which looks so old and "real" that it has become imbued with a false aura of authenticity. This has resulted in a certain amount of confusion and has propagated a continued pathology of abuse:
"Sequences from his (Eisenstein's) historical recreations of revolutionary Russia have been presented, in documentary and compilation films as authentic footage." Another case involves footage supposedly of the Russian Revolt of 1905 depicting the events of "Bloody Sunday" (09 January, 1905). In reality, the footage was from a 1925 film, 9th of January, by V.K. Viskovskij. The complete 1925 film was not discovered until 1956, revealing a long tradition of misuse of the Bloody Sunday footage as actual footage of an historical event.

If a researcher is attempting to seek out and compensate for areas of abuse and distortion, or to ascertain a filmmaker's particular mode of selectivity, it may be of benefit to consult precisely that footage which is absent from the final edited form. A good deal more footage is shot than ultimately appears on screen, and it is sometimes the excised footage that may be of more historical interest to the researcher. The existence of such out-take material (known simply as "outs" in the industry) can provide valuable evidence in order to construct a more comprehensive picture of the filmed event. The removed footage may have been excised for reasons of political or social sensitivity, as well as for the more mundane reasons of length or technical inadequacies. Whatever the reasons, this type of material, if available for consultation, should not be overlooked by the researcher seeking to complement existing footage.
In contrast to actuality film, fictional film, constituting the creative treatment of some situation or event, either real or imagined, demands a considerably different approach on the part of the researcher to extract information captured in the process of conscious or unconscious societal reflection. Like actuality film, the fictional or feature film has the capacity to both reflect and distort various facets of "reality." In the case of the feature film, the reflection applies to the value systems and attitudes of society, as well as to more overt iconographical displays. The value of the fictional film may not lie in what the historian would necessarily consider to be strictly "historical," but rather in a broader sense of societal and cultural documentation. Arthur Elton advocates an approach to the feature film which posits it as a valuable artefact of popular culture, existing within an anthropological context:

The fiction film gives a clue to the point of view of its time, and the popular attitude towards life. Fiction films are today's folklore, and will be as useful to the historian, or at least to the anthropologist, as the ballad and the fairy tale. 28

Reflection in the feature film can take many forms, and can operate on many levels, from unconscious manifestations of prevailing societal concerns to self-conscious presentations of propaganda, ranging from mild suasion to blatant coercion. As in the actuality film, the feature film can bear unwitting testimony to immutable physical "truths." For example, on the strictly physical level, the camera may consciously or unconsciously capture the iconography contained within the environment.
In the course of their spatial conquests, films of fiction and films of fact alike capture innumerable components of the world they mirror: huge mass displays, casual configurations of human bodies and inanimate objects and an endless succession of unobtrusive phenomena. As a matter of fact, the screen shows itself particularly concerned with the unobtrusive, the normally neglected.  

In addition to capturing the physical reality of a given society at a given time, the subject matter of fictional film can function as a barometer for current public concerns and the prevailing attitudes regarding these concerns. Whether or not such information can be regarded as "historical fact" is likely to be the stumbling block as far as historians are concerned. Paul Smith laments the unfortunate tendency of historians to seek out only the types of films which purport to present fact and "reality;" the fiction film is "held to be of its nature antithetical to fact and reality, to be make-believe and invention, in which fact and reality can be shadowed but not directly conveyed."  

Fiction film not only suffers from the so-called stigma of creative invention, but also from a long tradition of triviality resulting from its widespread dissemination throughout the strata of society. It has already been remarked that contemporary society exhibits an unfortunate proclivity towards marginalising the significance of products of popular culture because of their mass appeal. The continued tradition of pushing such mass phenomena as popular music and film to the
periphery of contemporary history has caused film to have been recognized as a popular phenomenon while it has largely been dismissed as an historical source. Because of this, only actuality film has gained some respect for itself as a purveyor of historical evidence, while "the fiction film has borne longer and more deeply than other types of film the stigma of being merely trivial and ephemeral popular entertainment, a vehicle of diversion and escape for uneducated or semi-educated masses brutalised by their toil, which could have no relevance to the concerns of serious history." Only the historical re-enactment has been considered to fall within the historian's sphere of interest, but this too has usually been rejected as "falsifying and distorting historical reality." The so-called "problem" of relating the content of films to reality is not confined to fiction films, but applies to all categories of film, and thus should not be touted as a reason for ignoring the fictional film as an historical source. Film does not always purposively attempt to reflect reality, but more often than not "refracts" it.

In order to utilize fictional film as source material a broader framework of reference is needed. The feature film must be considered within the context of its creation and production as well as its reception in order to realize its full potential and maximize the amount of information that can be gleaned from it. Of course, the same can be said of conventional textual documentation.
It is a fundamental principle of historical work that documents are evidence not only of a more or less mediated reality to which they have explicit reference but also of the process of mediation itself and of the mentality and intent of their originators, as well, perhaps, as of their receivers. . . . Film itself is a part of reality, and films are the products of real actions and processes, mental and physical, capable of exercising real influence on those who see them. The reality constituted by film is just as much a proper object of the historian's attention as that apparently perceived on film.  

Considering fiction/film as the product of a mediation process, a crucial factor to take into account is that of whose attitudes are being expressed in the film product. Film is not so much an individual art, although films are made by individual filmmakers, as a corporate art, and the product of a community. To this end, there has been considerable discussion concerning the concept of a national consciousness, as reflected in a nation's filmic output. This concept is in direct opposition to the auteur theory, which has traditionally conceived of films as the exclusive products of an individual, "seen as existing largely outside history, expressing a vision which owed little to social formations, to geographical or political boundaries." Edward Buscombe argues against this theory, stating that the individuals creating the films, regardless of how unique their vision, have themselves been formed in a social process. "American films are neither simply the unmediated expression of a collective consciousness, nor individual acts of self-expression, but the products of
some possibly rather complicated relationship between the two." On the other hand, Paul Smith feels films need to be considered within the framework of a collective consciousness in order to obtain not only some idea of how films were created, but also how they impacted upon their audiences. He goes on to assert that it will not suffice to simply detect films illustrative of society's preoccupations, but that it is "necessary to go further and to examine what it is that their specific appearance in film can tell us about the provenance, nature, dissemination and influence of those ideas." Smith offers no answers, but feels it is important to at least ask how films can help historians to define, locate, mediate and disseminate such ideas.

Buscombe does not believe in the idea of a national consciousness, and cites the traditional divisions in America which Hollywood has perpetuated rather than transcended, such as the "northern and protestant tradition," which has resulted in a separate cinematic tradition for minority groups. On the subject of class divisions, the assumption that film was created as a mass entertainment pandering to the "ordinary" majority is also rejected by Buscombe, who states that there is no evidence as to whether middle and working classes in fact attended the same films, and whether Hollywood was acting on the demands of a single audience or a divided one. During the heyday of Hollywood in the first half of this century, those involved in the production of films, or in the regula-
tory institutions controlling film production and content, hailed mostly from the middle class, as did the critics who reviewed the films. These facts, according to Buscombe, point to the absence of any sort of collective consciousness operative behind the creation of American films.

The seminal work in this area is still Siegfried Kracauer's study of German film from 1918 to 1933, which has been blamed for "helping bring on Hitler through sheer morbidity." Kracauer writes: "It is my contention that through an analysis of the German films deep psychological dispositions predominant in Germany from 1918 to 1933 can be exposed - dispositions which influenced the course of events during that time and which will have to be reckoned with in the post-Hitler era." The expressionist films made between the wars, characterized by morbid psychological subjects presented in a grotesque and highly stylized manner, came to be epitomized by Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari (The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Robert Wiene, 1919). The film was described by one critic as "the first significant attempt at the expression of a creative mind in the medium of cinematography," while another critic wrote:

It has the odor of tainted food. It leaves a taste of cinders in the mouth.

The nightmarish decor and lighting effects of expressionist film sought to "portray subjective realities in objective terms, to render not simply narratives but states of minds, moods, and atmosphere through the medium of the photographic image..."
The resulting films were felt by Kracauer to expose the German soul in all its depravity, ultimately to bear fruit in the rise of Hitler. According to Kracauer,

What films reflect are not so much explicit credos as psychological dispositions - those deep layers of collective mentality which extend more or less below the dimension of consciousness. Of course, popular magazines and broadcasts, bestsellers, ads, fashions in language and other sedimentary products of a people's cultural life also yield valuable information about predominant attitudes, widespread inner tendencies. But the medium of the screen exceeds these sources in inclusiveness.48

An approach to feature film antithetical to the idea of film as a reflection of collective consciousness is that which views film as an escape valve through which society seeks relief from its overwhelming pressures and preoccupations. Many argue against this view, believing that even in seeking relief from everyday pressures society will unconsciously reveal its innermost secrets. Andrew Sarris cites social critics of the left who argue against just such a theory. They state that even the most escapist films are revealing in what they covertly say about society.

Hence the old King Kong was presumed to be the unconscious product of Freud's Civilization and Its Discontents, whereas the new King Kong has been reportedly programmed to illustrate Fanon's Wretched of the Earth. The Graduate was considered 'significant' precisely because it evaded the ills of Vietnam, and poor Caligari was blamed by Kracauer for helping bring on Hitler through sheer morbidity.49

This opinion is backed up by Hugh Gray (in the introduction to
André Bazin's *What is Cinema?* vol. 1, 1967), who sees in the cinema the opportunity to anticipate the ultimate confrontation between man and automation. This opportunity will occur only as long as film functions in the capacity as a reflector and not merely as a purveyor of escapist pleasure.

Too many for too long, notably in the United States, have preferred to think of it simply as an avenue of escape *par excellence* from a high-pressure life, for which we are ever seeking - a new world, as it were, to live in. But such so-called paths of escape, pleasant as they are to wander in, are in reality each but a cul-de-sac. The more we see the screen as a mirror rather than an escape hatch, the more we will be prepared for what is to come.

Returning to the issue of considering film as just such a reflector, the question to be asked is exactly what is the screen reflecting? It would seem to be reflecting the attitudes and values of some social group, but there is no easy or simple answer to the question of whose attitudes are expressed in films, or to what extent such attitudes correspond to those of society in general. In the narrowest sense, it could be assumed that the attitudes expressed are those of the social aggregation involved in the production of films, and in the context of the American mass film, those attitudes in most cases would have their origins in the Hollywood film factory. The question to be asked in this context is to what extent do the attitudes and values of Hollywood correspond to those of society in general? Sociologist Leo Rosten has studied the Hollywood film industry of the 1930s and 1940s, and found Hollywood to be "an index of our society
and our culture," casting the values of American society into stark relief. Whether or not this tenet is accepted, it would appear logical to assume that the creators of a film should assume some responsibility for the content of a film, whether or not the content is a reflection of an individual or society in general.

As a reflector of society and a purveyor of attitudes, feature film can be approached in two ways, according to Eugene C. McCreary. It can be considered as the work of one man, usually the director, whose total work can be examined to reveal recurrent themes, formal styles, and "elements of film language revelatory of one man's relationship to the society and epoch in which he lives or lived." In this approach, the researcher must come to terms with the role of the director and his potential function as a distiller of public awareness:

The director's is rarely, if ever, a seminal mind. His importance lies elsewhere - in popularization, in vulgarization of contemporary intellectual currents, or in bringing to essentially mass audiences a heightened awareness of a contemporary situation and its implications.

Thus the director is considered as an individual shaped by society, and reflective of the undercurrents operative in that society, rather than as a creative and original mind operating outside the boundaries of society.

McCreary's other approach involves an examination of the total film production of a society at a given moment, to
reveal a common body of attitudes, values, and concerns; film as a societal mirror, as it were.

Feature films can also act reflectively in a more subtle manner, in their function as "indicators of covert culture values." As a product of popular culture, film can be studied for what it betrays both overtly and covertly, sometimes revealing underlying contradictions or tensions through covert values in direct opposition to openly acknowledged values. An example of this can be seen in the depiction of blacks in early American films, particularly in D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), in which malicious portrayals of racial stereotypes had to be excised from the original film, while at the same time there was no desire to present "assertive, competent, virile black heroes." The result of this conflict between overt and covert cultural values was the evolution of the neutral, harmless image of the black, epitomized by the "Aunt Jemima" stereotype.

As a medium of reflection, a mirror of socio-cultural attitudes and iconography, film as a visual record needs to be subjected to specific analyses in order to maximize the value of the information contained therein. The major contemporary approaches to the analysis of film can be roughly classified into two categories, according to whether the analysis is centered on content or structure. The structural analysis approach examines larger units of cinematic meaning, while the sign analysis approach (centered on content) examines single units of meaning within both the visual and
audio components of film (what Karsten Fledelius refers to respectively as the "macro-plane" and the "micro-plane"). A complete film analysis would have to combine both approaches.

According to William Hughes, we rarely explore the content of visual images beyond the level of mere recognition, and ignore the capacity of film to present a plethora of imagery which can be subjected to the above outlined forms of analyses. Film considered as a recorder of such images is an important source of study for semiologists, who analyse film in terms of the symbols it contains. Peter Wollen (in his influential *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*, 1969), has borrowed a trichotomy of cinematic "signs" from philosopher C.S. Peirce:

- The Icon: a sign in which the signifier represents the signified mainly by its similarity to it, its likeness;
- The Index: which measures a quality not because it is identical to it but because it has an inherent relationship to it;
- The Symbol: an arbitrary sign in which the signifier has neither a direct or an indexical relationship to the signified, but rather represents it through convention.

This type of film analysis has been termed a "structuralist reformulation of the theory of authorship," in which "film is no longer posed as a communication but as an artefact which is unconsciously structured in a certain way; the author is no longer seen as the creative source but as an effect of the film text." According to this view, film is not so much a product to be consumed by culture, but is a product
of meaning in which the "reading" of the film is emphasized.\textsuperscript{63}

The structural approach seeks to provide a larger framework within which to perform an analysis of the micro-plane. The analyst looks for patterns or structures which impinge significantly on film content, patterns which may or may not have been consciously included by the filmmaker. In such analysis the rhythm of the film's edited structure may act as a guide by emphasizing or anticipating key elements of expression or content.\textsuperscript{64} In these analyses, the reflective nature of film is taken as a given, and this nature is exploited by subjecting the visual information contained within a film to rigorous scrutiny and classification.

A further avenue for the study of the feature film as a reflective phenomenon is that of critical reactions. The box-office success is often panned by critics, while the box-office failure is often of more merit in terms of the cinematic medium. Both the success and failure can be significant in documenting societal concerns; "whereas the exceptional film will point to the soft spots of a society, the unexceptional run-of-the-mill movie testifies broadly to that society's political, social and economic consensus."\textsuperscript{65} The term "consensus," however, conjures up visions of Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany and their respective propaganda machines, which churned out films "indicative of what the totalitarian regime wanted its population to believe, reinforcing acceptable latent convictions about other nationalities while supporting
the basic ideals and policies of the governing elite. In Soviet Russia, historiography followed a development paralleled by the depiction of Russian history in feature films. "The 'truth of the past' was to be communicated to the present so that Russia's people could be motivated by it, as in the case of Sergei Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky.*"67

Returning to the role of the box office, it would seem that films cannot be considered as purely unmediated reflections of any sort of mass or individual consciousness due to the context of their creation and production. In any discussion of film as a reflective medium, the role of the box office must be considered a critical element. The film industry is a corporate art concerned primarily with monetary gain. Thus films are viewed more as a product than art, and moreover, as a product which must cater to an existing market in order to sell. If the film industry can be assumed to operate under a system of patronage, the ticket-buying public would have to be considered the ultimate patron. Therefore, in order to ensure its survival, the industry must of necessity concern itself with providing a satisfying product for its consumers.

It has long been felt that success at the box office "was to be obtained by giving the people what they wanted; i.e. something to which they could relate and which therefore reflected themselves." Dissenters from this opinion doubt the value of the box office as a barometer of public preference for a variety of reasons.
Firstly, because it cannot tell you whether the audience might like not only what it is getting but also other things which it is not getting. Secondly, people pay for a film before they have seen it. Box office receipts therefore strictly only record how many people have seen a film, not how many people liked it, or thought it expressed what they felt. 69

This argument raises some pertinent and seemingly irrefutable points. However, it was in fact countered by Siegfried Kra-cauer some thirty years or so before it was written:

It has occasionally been remarked that Hollywood manages to sell films which do not give the masses what they really want. In this opinion Hollywood films more often than not stultify and misdirect a public persuaded by its own passivity and by overwhelming publicity into accepting them. However, the distorting influence of Hollywood mass entertainment should not be overrated. The manipulator depends upon the inherent qualities of his material . . . 70

It is Kracauer's belief that public discontent with what is being served up by the filmmaking industry will be immediately be reflected by decreasing box-office receipts, a situation which the industry will quickly attempt to remedy by altering its tactics. But even Kracauer admitted that a box-office hit may cater to only one of several co-existing demands, and not necessarily to a particularly specific or even prevalent one. 71 What Kracauer believes to be ultimately of more importance than box-office popularity is the popularity of the specific motifs of films, particularly those motifs which recur both in box-office successes and box-office
flops alike. It is these motifs which testify to the broad consensus of society and which reveal the most about the society which produced them.

The film medium has thus demonstrated its ability to function as a sort of societal mirror. As a document revelatory of cultural iconography as well as the conscious and unconscious manifestations of societal attitudes and desires, the moving image record occupies an integral part of the fabric of modern society and as such unquestionably constitutes a component of the archival record of contemporary society.
NOTES


4 Ibid.

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16 Hardy, Grierson on Documentary, p. 11.


19 Hughes, "The evaluation of film as evidence," p. 64.

20 Roads, "Film as Historical Evidence," p. 184.


22 Ibid.


31 Ibid., pp. 201-202.

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36 Ibid.
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39 Ibid.
40 Buscombe, "America on screen?", p. 27.
41 Ibid., p. 28.
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44 Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler, p. v.
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63 Ibid., p. 85.

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CHAPTER IV

SOCIETY AS AUDIENCE:
FILM INFLUENCE AND IMPACT

Viewing the film medium as a sort of societal mirror, a further issue worthy of consideration is that of the impact of the reflection constituted by the moving image document. Does the message conveyed by film impact significantly upon those who partake of it? Opinion on this issue ranges from that of it being a non-issue to the more commonly held belief, at least in sociological circles, that "feature films exert the most powerful influence in our lives, an influence which in all probability is stronger than that wielded by press and radio."¹ Thus wrote J.P. Mayer in 1946, adding that "value patterns, actual behaviour, (and) the outlook on life generally, are manifestly shaped by film influence."² Over twenty years earlier, the impact of film upon audiences had been proclaimed in positively Victorian tones by Donald Ramsey Young: "Social standards are influenced by motion pictures . . . and . . . by the fact that the audience, often young boys and girls, are packed in narrow seats, close together, in a darkened room."³ This attitude, focussing as it does on the physical environment of the theatre-going experience, was still being echoed in 1942 by U.E. Harding: "We are defaming our morals, corrupting our youth, inflaming our young people, exciting
passion, debauching our children, making prostitutes and criminals through picture-going!"^4

Today, a more rational view is being propagated through a sociological approach, as exemplified by the work of I.C. Jarvie, who focuses on the social significance of film-going, and the influence of films on groups of people.^5

Their unintended social significance stems from . . . the fact that they tell stories; stories convey information and ideas; information and ideas affect the way people act; and stories meld people together into audiences -- this too affects the way they act. The social consequences of being an audience are the most important and usually underrated.^6

Jarvie interprets the story-telling aspect of film content as a form of social control, and supports this tenet by outlining the three major categories of social interaction, as defined by social psychologists, which can potentially be influenced by film-going: "the initiation of both children and adults into the rules, obligations and privileges of social groups (socialization); the effects of social groups on the development of the individual (personality formation); and the unique characteristics taken on by people in groups (collective behaviour)."^7 According to Jarvie, there are two facets to film as a social phenomenon: content and context. In terms of the sociological model, Jarvie believes context to be more influential than content: "learning, socialization, personality formation, and even the way people form
into and behave in groups may be influenced by movie content; while socialization, personality formation and group behavior are certainly affected by movie context." Contrary to the views of Ramsey Young and Harding, Jarvie believes that the context of film-going can contribute in a positive way towards "normal and healthy socialization, personality formation and group behavior." The extent of film's psychological impact is determined not only by the social context of film-going, but also by the nature of the film-viewing experience itself. The conditions under which a film is viewed may at first seem to confer a passive role upon the film-goer, but the very illusory nature of film as perceived by the viewer involves participation, both voluntary and involuntary, conscious and unconscious:

Film is founded upon an illusion and the illusion is achieved only through the spectator's unwilled and unconscious participation. Most cinematic effects depend upon the spectator entering the theater with a whole series of visual reactions formed by his daily experience.

The evolution of the spectator's increasing participation can be traced throughout the early history of film, via the work of Edwin S. Porter, D.W. Griffith, and the Soviets.

The Brighton School in Britain and Edwin S. Porter in the early years of the twentieth century ... decomposed the continuous scene into its component shots and the spectator was asked to create the temporal and spatial continuity himself. Then Griffith in alternate montage ... asked the spectator to achieve the psychological unity of two
spatially separated but temporally parallel events. The next step was taken when the Soviet school of documentary realism systematically extended Griffith's practices of alternate montage to symbolic parallels. The conceptual unity was to be created and emotionally enlarged by the spectator himself through his identification of two factually quite distinct events possessing parallel implications.

Thus it can be seen that the film-goer has had an increasingly active role in the film experience, first through the juxtaposition of opposing shots which had to be combined to achieve the unity of the story line, and then through the Soviet system of symbolic montage.

Existing quite separately from the filmmaker's power of manipulation of images and the psychological ramifications such manipulation holds for the audience, and yet operating in tandem with such effects, is the actual physical environment of the cinema which makes the total film experience possible. The audience enters into a realm of darkness and isolation, becoming more susceptible to manipulation and suggestion.

In a movie theater, the only source of light, sound, and motion is the screen. This means that the spectator's attention is automatically and almost forcibly concentrated upon what the screen is conveying. The eye may wander, but very little; it is almost impossible to ignore motion or light.

The high resolution of the big screen image in conjunction with the dense amount of information film is capable of conveying, has created a very "hot" medium in McLuhanesque terms, a medium which is capable of wielding a powerful influence
over its audience. The viewer enters into the film experience willing to suspend disbelief, willing to give up individual identity for a time in the darkened theatre, to enter a trance-like state. The cinema has become "a shrine at which modern rituals rooted in atavistic memories and subconscious desires are acted out in darkness and seclusion from the outer world." The cinema audience takes on an identity that is something more than the sum total of its parts; it becomes a mass entity capable of acting collectively.

The audience in the cinema is plural. . . . At the same time, the audience is singular: It is the impacted solidarity of so many individuals congregated to give up or escape their uniqueness . . . . Only a mass as hardened as a fighting unit could endure the implacability of a screen pretending to be an animated wall, but actually an inert surface.

The mass aspect of the film audience enables the powers behind the production of films to manipulate en masse. "The audience in the movies typifies the modern crowd, that shambling mass of humanity, so large that it is measured in statistics, a herd that authority tends, feeds, pacifies, and regulates: This is the crowd that goes to the factory, the supermarket, and the bank, the material of armies and mobs." This crowd that has been observed in such complimentary terms has itself become a commodity that is sought out by the mass film industry. Because of the crowd's collective nature, it is capable of being manipulated in terms of statistics by those who are behind the production of films, and the crowd reflects the effects of such manipulation through the phenomenon
of the box office. The box office becomes a barometer of public preference, indicative of the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the film-going mob with the product it has been served.

Recent discussion on the film-going experience has centered on the purported kinship between the state of the film-viewer and the state of dreaming, or the state "between waking and sleeping, in which he (the viewer) abandons the rationality of daily life while not yet completely surrendering to his unconscious." The darkened environment of the cinema, the continuous yet rhythmically interrupted nature of the projected image, and the lack of social contact work together to create a semi-hypnotic state in the viewer, in which inhibitions are suppressed, and the unconscious is more susceptible to suggestion. Paul Monaco has described films as "dreamlike reflections of shared, collective concerns of the mass, national audience." This view is not entirely shared by Edward Buscombe, although he agrees there is a kinship between films and dreams. "For just as, according to Freud, dreams are not the direct expression of our unconscious desires, but a distorted representation of them after the work of repression has been performed, so with movies, whatever in them does correspond to the audience's own thoughts and feelings has been worked upon by other factors."

The relationship between films and dreaming has been carried even further, by comparing the physical characteris-
tic of rapid eye movement (R.E.M.) in sleep to the "flicker" effect sometimes discernible on screen, as well as to the eye movements of the film viewer as he or she watches the film.

The eye movements of the dreamer are not random but are "associated with the visual characteristics of [his] dream." The same is true of watching a movie: "The film spectator occupies a fixed seat, but only physically. . . . Aesthetically he is in permanent motion as his eye identifies with the lens of the camera, which permanently shifts in distance and direction."19

Similarly, the instantaneous cuts in film have been likened to the instantaneous nature of transitions in dreaming.20 Amos Vogel sees a further powerful determinant operating upon the unconscious in the darkness which lies at the very heart of image technology:

The very darkness enveloping the viewer is more complete than he realizes; for the essence of cinema is not light, but a secret compact between light and darkness. Half of all the time at the movies is spent by the transfixed victims of this technological art in complete darkness. . . . Could it be precisely during the periods of total darkness . . . that our voracious subconscious, newly nourished by yet another provocative image, 'absorbs' the work's deeper meaning and sets off chains of associations?21

Thus the periods of darkness which interrupt the projected images could be viewed as a powerful influence which causes the subconscious to absorb the images it is presented with on a deeper level. Reinforcing this power of darkness is the primitive influence of the image, which pre-dates verbal
communication and is assumed to act upon a deeper level of the subconscious. Vogel states that

... In man's evolution, images antedate words and thought, thus reaching deeper, older, more basic layers of the self... As holy today as in man's pre-history, the image is accepted as if it were life, reality, truth. It is accepted on a feeling- rather than mind-level.

From the foregoing discussion there would seem to exist some degree of consensus regarding the power of the film medium to exert a certain amount of influence over its audience, be it through the power of the image, the power of light and/or darkness, the nature of the theatre environment, or the social context of film-going. It is perhaps this very potential for power and influence that has worked against the medium where the issue of controlling the content of film is concerned. If there was not some concern about the influence of film content, there would be no need for the institutions which seek to regulate film content. The very fact of the existence of such institutions would seem to reinforce the idea that film influences its audience in no uncertain terms.

The regulation of film content can take two forms: censorship, and control. The distinction between the two has been defined as follows:

Censorship constitutes the legal imposition of restraints upon the production, publication, and sales of some photograph, film, art object, book, magazine, or other reading material in order to
make it unavailable to the general public as well as upon the production or performance of any public entertainment. . . . Control is practiced by those who have no legal authority to censor or threaten to censor but use persuasion and even coercion to restrict freedom of speech.23

There are several problems arising from the issue of film censorship regarding the dual position of film as an art form and a popular cultural artefact. In addition, there are problems arising from the position in society of the persons or regulatory agencies which seek to restrict the content of film.

The first law of censorship - and probably the only important one not inscribed on the statute books - is this: in a democracy, the more popular the art form, the greater the demands for censorship of it. This theorem has two corollaries. First, the quality of the art has little to do with the matter. Second, those who arrogate to themselves the privilege of exercising censorship may or may not be cultured, unbiased and/or sincere.24

In 1948 the United Nations passed the original version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the embodiment of the concept of freedom of expression, as contained in Article 19: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to see, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."25 Since this declaration was passed restrictions dealing with libel, national security, war propaganda, and the advocacy of hatred have been added.26 Such restrictions would appear to have little to do with film as an art form or popular enter-
tainment.

Film censorship can range from the cutting of a single image, a scene, or a script, to radical re-editing of an entire film. Why are films subject to this kind of censorship? According to Judy Wolfe, it is because films are believed to be the most influential of today's media, and it is assumed that people...

...tend to believe what they see on the screen more readily than what they read in books or hear on the radio. The corollary of this is that behaviour will be modified as a result of seeing certain emotions or beliefs or actions portrayed on the screen.27

The power of film to influence behaviour has been translated into different modes of action by various governments at different times. The cinema has been widely used for propagandizing in both the eastern bloc and the third world, while in the western hemisphere censorship has been concerned more with portrayals of pornography and violence, "in the hope that this will reduce perverse, contrary, or abusive behaviour in the population."28 I.C. Jarvie has accurately pinpointed a basic flaw in the so-called logic of censorship, in that while it is assumed that people have no defenses to resist blatant suasion, it is nonetheless assumed that "a privileged few ... can resist manipulation and hence can and should protect the rest."29 Jarvie also advocates the belief that the influence film is capable of wielding over an audience is extremely limited due to varying audience reactions arising out of diverse social, cultural, political and economic contexts of
film, and that no two audiences will react in the same way to a given film because of the nature of the audience's composition. Andrew Tudor puts forward an argument against censorship by stating that at best the viewer's response to film is mainly emotional, and is therefore only a temporary effect:

Indeed, if the medium can be said to have any characteristic in and of itself it is surely this high dependence on a predominantly emotional effect. ... It does not follow that the movies are therefore an outstandingly powerful medium of persuasion. Long-term attitude change is very different to short-time emotional involvement.

The degree of influence of film thus seems to be an issue of dispute where censorship is concerned.

Whatever the influence of the film medium, censorship itself remains an undisputed fact. Many arguments in favour of censorship have been presented, but the main reasons behind the practice of censorship would seem to fall into three broad categories: "protection of community standards, morality, or religion;" "enforcement of a dominant culture;" and "protection or promotion of a given political regime." According to Judy Wolfe, there seems to be a somewhat incestuous relationship between these competing imperatives:

Where there is censorship to protect a political regime, the first two reasons for censorship will also be found. Where there is discrimination, there may or may not be political censorship but there will be an insistence on the maintenance of community standards.

Censorship seems to exist in its most severe form during and directly after periods of instability, upheaval, and revolution.
For example, under the Allende government in Chile many films were produced by Chile Film. Following the overthrow of the Allende government, the military destroyed the film industry by dismantling Chile Film. Many of the country's leading film directors, including Eduardo Paredes, were killed, while several others fled into exile. A similar situation exists even today in South Africa, a country currently besieged by widespread civil and political unrest. Rigorous control is maintained over films and "unpleasant truths" are routinely excised.

'Miscegenation is, of course, not permitted, and a major character - the black secret agent - was cut from *Live and Let Die* by the distributors before it was sent to South Africa, because of her relationship with James Bond.' Violence of any kind is not permitted in films that are to be shown to black audiences.

Although the major impetus for censorship usually stems from state authorities, there also exists a good deal of self-regulation within the industry itself, either in anticipation of what the authorities would perceive as objectionable, or so the film receives a less restrictive audience rating, or because it in fact supports the status quo. Hollywood is obviously a good illustration of this model, as censorship is often operative during the pre-production process itself.

In conclusion, it would seem that there exists some sort of consensus concerning the ability of the film medium to not only reflect certain facets of society, but also to wield considerable influence over those who partake of the reflections,
Despite the opinions of dissenters like Andrew Tudor. Why else would censorship exist, if not to "protect" certain elements of society from unpleasant or unpalatable "truths" about itself? If film did not demonstrate a considerable impact upon its audience, censorship would not be an issue. It would appear that censorship seeks to compromise the reflective nature of the film medium by darkening a portion of the mirror's surface and interrupting the intended message.

If the filmmaker is a member of society and if the message presented in a film is a product or a reaction to the society then it may be fairly said that the film is a reflection of that society. The message may not be a pretty one, but the question must be asked: is the pain in the message about that society caused by the film or by the society? It seems rather than attempt to improve the face of society, the censor would rather break the mirror.

The debate over censorship would seem to reinforce both the reflective and influential aspects of the film document. As a peculiarly powerful and integral component of the tissue of society, the film document must be considered for archival preservation with specific reference not only to its physical nature, but moreover to the reflective and influential nature of its content.
NOTES


2 Ibid.


4 Ibid.


6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., pp. x-xi.

8 Ibid., p. xi.

9 Ibid.


11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., p. 64.


15 Ibid., pp. 97-98.

16 Vogel, *Film as a Subversive Art*, p. 10.


Monaco, Cinema and Society, p. 8.

Ibid., pp. 8-9.

Vogel, Film as a Subversive Art, p. 10.

Ibid., p. 11.


38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., p. 6.
40 Ibid., p. 7.
CHAPTER V

ARCHIVAL SELECTION OF THE MOVING IMAGE DOCUMENT

If film can be viewed as a medium of reflection, the problem for the archives concerned with preserving film becomes one of selecting which moving image documents to retain as a valuable representation of such reflection. The issue of selection is complicated by the fact that, having come of age in an era characterised by printed media, many archivists today are either unfamiliar with the characteristics of other media, or consider it too ephemeral or popular to constitute a major research resource for the twentieth century. The significance of the so-called "special" media in the context of the new information age needs to be clarified for the benefit of archivists and researchers alike, but in the meantime, steps must be taken to preserve such records in order to complete the historical "picture" of contemporary society that is being created by the holdings in archival repositories.

The moving image document has demonstrated itself to be capable of recording diverse facets of contemporary culture and society, from empirically "real" events and popular iconography to the conscious or unconscious manifestations of societal values. As such, the medium must be considered to constitute a major informational record of this century, a record which could reasonably be assumed to be of considerable histori-
cal significance. Therefore it would follow that such a record should be preserved for the future benefit of researchers.

Given the quantity of moving images produced by society, the issue for archives is how much to retain. If all moving images can be considered as reflective of society in some way, how is the archivist to decide which to preserve for posterity and which to reject? This is a crucial issue for the archival community, and is an issue on which there has to date been little consensus. The extremes of current opinion run the gamut from the view that absolutely everything should be preserved, to the advocation of modern records management techniques to designate production elements and related documentation for archival retention during the film production process itself.¹

One of the basic problems thwarting the development of selection criteria is the widely-held belief that "the present is singularly ill-equipped to decide what will prove to be of historical significance in the future."² Indeed, it is nearly impossible to predict accurately which events or cultural artefacts will have the mantle of historical importance conferred upon them by the passing of time. The alternative to such acts of near-prescience which by necessity cast the archivist into the role of a modern-day prophet, is to cover all conceivable bases by collecting everything. This is an alternative supported by many archivists and historians.
As far as the historian is concerned, film and television are media of mass communications first and foremost. The historian needs, ideally, the whole of what the . . . public was given through the media in order to be able to apply statistical/analytical methods.  

This view is supported by Clive Coultass, who believes that the entire process of selection could be avoided by preserving as much as possible:

Decisions about what to preserve and what to reject are so arbitrary and suspect that it is better in principle to keep everything. Any kind of film in time becomes interesting to someone.

Coultass believes that even the most mundane films can have informational value, and that this sort of value must be differentiated from a film's potential artistic value. In terms of mass communications, and in an effort to preserve the totality of events recorded by the media, Coultass advocates universal retention on international terms in order to maintain "a visual record of contemporary events on an international scale."

The main drawback of selection would seem to be that by its very nature it throws the archivist into the unenviable position of having to make godlike decisions of life and death for films, whether or not such powers are deserved. This argument against selection has its origins early in the history of film archives. Indeed, Henri Langlois, one of the
original founders of the International Federation of Film Archives (F.I.A.F.), "maintained that any selection criteria was indefensible, that no archivist had the right to play God in determining which films would live and which would die." This sentiment was also voiced by some of the early propagators of general archival theory, who, while acknowledging that some amount of selection was necessary, felt that selection by the archivist was incorrect.

Some archival theorists argued that triage, or selection, while evidently necessary, should be the responsibility of the administrators directly involved in generating the documents in the first place. Hilary Jenkinson held that this reduction should take place before the documents reached the archives, and that it was the archivist's task to conserve all the records entrusted to the archives. This type of selection as it pertains to film will be discussed later.

In addition to the overt informational value contained in film, it has been argued that "all films . . . have some sociological value, regardless of how prosaic the subject matter or the treatment." Sociological value potentially embraces not only the reflective quality of moving images, but also the impact and influence film exercises over its audience.

In the Manuel d'Archivistique (Paris, 1970), film is classified into three major categories: oeuvres dramatiques, oeuvres artistiques, and documents d'historiques, and it is proposed that only documents historiques should be retained by archives. However, in the course of defining the term
"historical," the manual concludes that

... not only do actualities qualify ..., but fiction films that reflect the manners, mores, and language of the society that produced them qualify as well. Such an interpretation could embrace all moving images, particularly when the impact of the images in relation to the mass audience they attract is considered.\(^\text{11}\)

This approach, supporting as it does the concept of total retention, has been attacked in terms of the possible consequences it would have if put into action: filling the vaults "with material of marginal value (ephemera in terms of content and form) until there is no storage capacity left for records of obvious value (based on form, content or association) ... ."\(^\text{12}\)

An alternative to total retention is what could be termed "modified total retention." This approach, which has not gained much popularity, involves the retention of all moving images for a certain set period at which point it is presumed that the passing of time will have provided some semblance of historical perspective.\(^\text{13}\) While such an approach would relieve the pressure on present-day archivists, otherwise forced to make godlike decisions concerning selection, it would likely pose extreme and possibly insurmountable difficulties regarding storage space, at least initially, not to mention problems arising from establishing some sort of consensus on retention and disposal schedules. Such practical obstacles to total retention have caused some film archivists, grappling
with the morality of destroying moving images, to advocate the establishment of a "world-wide network of archives," to make it both possible and practicable to preserve all moving images and eliminate the contentious issue of selection.

However attractive the proposition of total retention may seem, at least in theory, it seems unlikely to translate into universal practice due to overwhelming problems concerning storage space, international coordination, and mounting costs. It would seem that the concept of total retention is workable only in the "ideal world," and that selection of some sort is the only really feasible alternative at present, despite the possibility of new storage technologies in the not so distant future. "Even with the possibility of applying the emerging technologies of the videodisc and the digital encoding of moving images to the development of new, low-cost storage mediums and instantaneous modes of diffusion, this generation of moving image archivists will still have to apply appraisal policies to prevent the archives from sinking under the weight of accessions, and the researcher of the future from drowning in a sea of redundant, and trivial images." This last issue raises the one overwhelmingly positive aspect about selection: the elimination of so-called "ephemera" from valuable storage space, a cost-effective measure which has always been one of the key arguments on the side of selection.

Implicit in the concept of selection of moving images is the issue of appraisal, in order to determine the suitability
of the document for retention or disposal. To date no specific definition for the appraisal of moving images has been presented, but there is something to be gained from examining the concepts contained in a standard definition of appraisal as it applies to textual records. Appraisal has been defined as "the process of determining the value and thus the disposition of records based upon their current administrative, legal, and fiscal use; their evidential and informational or research value; their arrangement; and their relationship to other records." This definition has more relevance to textual records of corporate, government, or private creation, but some points of significance can be gleaned by ascertaining areas of relevance to the film medium. Appraising the historical significance of moving images is problematical because moving images themselves cannot always be categorized as having evidential value in the Schellenbergian sense, that is, those records "necessary to provide an authentic and adequate documentation of its the creating body's organization and functioning," nor can they always be judged for their value to administrative or legal use, although fiscal use could perhaps be loosely translated as pertaining to the potential of the feature film for monetary gain. The arrangement of moving images is not usually a significant factor, unless this concept is applied to the edited structure within the film or the accompanying textual documentation. Moving images can have significant relationships with other film records, either in subject matter, context, or treatment, or by being
the products of the same filmmaker or director or cinematographer. While moving images themselves are most likely to be of informational value (that is, containing information on persons, places, subjects, and so on), and hence have high research value, they are intimately linked to textual records of high evidential value.

It should be clear, based on any understanding of the way in which moving images are produced and distributed throughout the world, that the end product, the images themselves, have little or no evidentiary value. The related documentation - production files, financial and personnel records, contracts and correspondence - may reveal how the production company or administrative entity functioned, but the value of the end product, while it may speak volumes to the producer's purpose, is primarily informational.

At the 1980 Belgrade Conference UNESCO formulated a "Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images" designed to cover "those moving images which are intended for communication or distribution to the public or are made for documentation purposes." The Recommendation was "to protect moving images from being destroyed." The introduction of a mandatory system of deposit for nationally-produced moving images was recommended, although no details on such a system were given, apart from specifying such productions be preferably deposited in the form of pre-print material. The Recommendation lamented the subjective nature of selection and the fact that sheer volume often necessitated a denial of the ideal situation in which all moving images
would be preserved. While specifics are avoided, particular mention is made of those moving images "which, because of their educational, cultural, artistic, scientific, and historical value, form part of a nation's cultural heritage should be retained on a priority basis." A provision is also made to the effect that moving images should not be disposed of until a future date allowing for some degree of historical perspective. Such guidelines do not state much that is not already known by archives involved in collecting film.

Few archives have developed fully articulated guidelines concerning selection, rejection, and disposal of film material. Even international authorities like Unesco and F.I.A.F. would appear to be hedging the issue when they state that "every archive must develop its own criteria for acquiring films," bearing in mind the proposed shape of a repository's collection, including the types and physical formats of films to be acquired. The preservation of nationally-produced films seems to be an agreed-upon priority, but the basic problem of selection would appear to be an issue that has to be resolved by the individual repository, in accordance with its general mandate and facilities. The function and purpose of a film archive will be significant in developing selection criteria, although the matter of determining a repository's function may be less than clear. Ken Larose has categorized the general purposes of a film archive into three basic functions:

... to document an art form; to record a mass medium; and to be the repository for motion picture
images of real people, events, and places. It is tempting to add a fourth function, that film archives are expected to house visual records for future use by historians.  

The application of this type of definition could conceivably constitute a call for total retention, embracing as it does films judged valuable for artistic merit, as well as those films documenting both actualities and a contemporary mass phenomenon. It has already been stated that such mass retention seems only practicable in the ideal situation, while in the real world some degree of selection will have to take place in view of the volume of available material. The repository's aim in this respect has been described by Vladimir Opela of Czechośskovatia as the attempt "to preserve all records of permanent documentary value while leaving out less valuable documents," with documentary value being determined by both the importance and range of the content of the film record, as well as the form and degree of authenticity of the record. According to Opela, any assessment of moving images has to take into account "their future practical utilization, the period in which they were made, and in the case of foreign-made records, the copyright and the possibility of acquiring the record from its originator." Examples of further criteria used to determine what moving images are worthy of retention include: content and treatment; aesthetics; those films documenting the history and technological develop-
ment of the industry; films illustrative of milestones, "firsts," box-office successes, trends, "stars," the work of certain directors, producers, cinematographers, and so on; films "reflecting the political and social character of a period and environment;" film adaptations of famous works of literature; remakes of successful films of the past; films awarded at important film festivals; and films illustrative of certain genres and national "schools" of filmmaking, and their development. Still other criteria include: films reflecting the influence of other media and the completion of existing collections; films documenting ethnic or racial minorities; films which "challenge contemporary community standards and/or censorship laws on what is acceptable in subject matter, treatment or form;" and those films which "explore the relationship between the audience and the screen, or which reflexively examine the image-making process." Also considered are "variant versions of moving images regarded as 'classics' which are valuable for film study and for the purpose of film restoration; 'outtakes' from such productions if significant in documenting the process of production; and 'cuts' made from such productions on demand of censorship authorities."36

The development of selection criteria can be made less arbitrary for certain periods in film history for which all or most films are preserved for reasons of rarity and poor representation in existing collections. For example, any
film produced prior to 1920 is always acquired, and it is usually only for films from the period later than the mid-1920s that selection becomes operative. The American Film Institute (Library of Congress) bases its principles of selection on survival rates for certain periods of film development:

a) 1894-1920: Perhaps 15% of the features survive and possibly 10-20% of the shorts. Therefore all film from this period, regardless of country of origin should be preserved.

b) 1921-1930: The survival rate for features has grown from 12% to 20% over the past twelve years. Using the AFI Catalog as a base, some selection should be made when encountering routine B features of obscure companies whose output is adequately represented, and no socially redeeming elements can be discerned.

c) 1930-1935: With a number of notable exceptions, the bulk of the studio output still exists and is more or less under control, and virtually all of the b/w films will end up being preserved from these companies. Some selection is needed for the B product and small company productions.

A further selection issue involves the physical makeup of the film base itself, particularly those films on a nitrate base. Because of its inherently unstable chemical composition cellulose nitrate deteriorates quickly and must be stored under strictly controlled conditions in order to retard deterioration of the image, and possible ignition. This type of film stock was phased out and replaced by a more stable acetate base in the early 1950s. Therefore all films produced before circa 1950 on nitrate base (only 35 mm stock is involved) should be collected and transferred onto acetate "safety" stock before the image has deteriorated beyond salvage.
Certain categories of film have traditionally been rejected by archival repositories. These include: stock footage lacking proper identification or textual documentation; out-takes (because of sheer volume); pre-production and distribution elements including subtitle bands, main and concluding titles; material already present in the holdings or duplicated in other archives; amateur compilations, productions and home movies; material which is incomplete or in poor physical condition; material available only at unreasonable cost or with heavy restrictions on use; and foreign films otherwise available in the country which are already preserved in the F.I.A.F. archive of the country of production.\(^4^0\)

Some revision of the above-outlined classification would seem to be called for, at least with regard to out-takes, certain production elements, and amateur footage, where content may reasonably be seen to override the intractable nature of the footage's format. Rejection of film material should not take place without due consideration of the content of the material contained within a cumbersome form. A case in point is that of out-takes, which often constitute a valuable record of censored or otherwise sensitive or "undesirable" material, as well as technically inadequate or repetitious footage. For example, the present author recently spent several weeks at the National Film, Television and Sound Archives in Ottawa, organizing a collection based on Allan King's Warrendale (1966), a documentary filmed in a residential treatment center.
for emotionally disturbed children. The collection, consisting of 615 cans of film (containing over one thousand rolls of 16 mm film), was almost entirely comprised of out-take material, most of which was to be retained by the repository based on the content of the material. The documentary had originally been commissioned by the CBC, who refused to air it upon completion for reasons of profanity. Warrendale, despite the controversy surrounding it, went on to a limited theatrical release, and shared top honours at the Cannes film festival with Antonioni's Blow-Up. The controversial nature of the treatment depicted in the film (Warrendale director John Brown's "holding" therapy, wherein children vented their rage while being pinned down by two or three staff members) resulted in the closure of the clinic shortly after filming was completed. Thus, the record constituted by the outs was valuable for a variety of reasons: the documentary was a Canadian production by an eminent Canadian documentary filmmaker; it won international acclaim; it was controversial in nature, both in terms of its production history and the treatment depicted; it was noteworthy for the time in terms of the shooting ratio (some forty hours of original footage were eventually edited down to approximately one hundred minutes); and today still stands as a landmark in cinema verité documentary history.

It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that outs and similar film material should be judged by content, and not solely by their physical structure. The same could be said of amateur film, which, while it is sometimes less than optimal in technical
terms, may contain unique or otherwise undocumented material. Certain production elements may also prove valuable. If the repository does not already possess a reasonable copy of a certain film title, it may be more cost-effective to make a composite print from the appropriate printing elements, if it has such at its disposal, than purchasing a composite release print commercially.

Many of the decisions involved in carrying out the types of selection outlined above, subjective and arbitrary as some of them are, could be avoided altogether if a certain amount of selection was exercised before material reached the archives. There has been some call for the implementation of modern records management techniques during the production or even pre-production stage of filmmaking.

All production elements (negatives, prints, videotapes, etc.), and related documentation, should be identified, designated, and scheduled so that the disposition of the elements can be controlled at every stage of the production/diffusion process. The short term (3-5 years) retention of the broadest possible selection of moving images should be the objective, to provide opportunity for a final selection with some sense of historical perspective.41

Such a system would appear to satisfy both the proponents and opponents of the practice of selection. It would retain a broad sample of valuable material while weeding out the more ephemeral elements before anything arrived at the archive, while taking into account the fallibility of contemporary judgements concerning historical significance. However, this system would require close cooperation between film archives
and the film industry, and such coordination seems to be the exception, rather than the rule. One such exception is the Films Archives of the Czechoslovak Film Institute. "All national film productions are systematically monitored, and all production elements, whether negatives or prints, domestic or foreign, in all categories of production, are scheduled either for retention for a period of years, and then disposal at the end of that period, or for deposit with the Archives for long term retention." This program controls all significant production elements from the time they are created to the point of their ultimate archival disposition. Control to such a degree is likely possible only in countries where film production is centrally controlled by the state. Difficulties possibly encountered in such a system include both the time involved in itemized scheduling, as well as reaching a consensus on periods of retention and the ultimate disposition of film elements. In addition, related textual documentation should ideally be included in the scheduling process, including material created during production (production files, correspondence, receipts, scripts, graphics), as well as the by-products of distribution (critical reviews, interviews, press books, and so on).

In conclusion, the alternatives regarding the selection of moving image documents in an archival setting would appear to fall into two broad categories: to select, or to not select. By far the easiest to justify in terms of satisfying
all potential needs of future users would be to practice no selection and preserve everything. This practice would eliminate the need to second-guess the needs of future researchers. It would also remove a good deal of responsibility from the shoulders of the beleaguered archivist, who is forced to act presciently by the very nature of selection, and is the one who will be blamed when future users discover the record they need was not preserved. The reflective nature of the moving image document would also seem to count in favour of saving everything, as every film record reflects something about society, and thus could conceivably be of interest to someone, sometime.

The main problem lying in the way of total retention is that of inadequate storage space and lack of funds to ensure the facilities necessary for the maintenance of such a collection. In the face of cut-backs and decreased archival spending, it seems unlikely that this situation will change in the near future, so unless there are drastic improvements in low-cost storage technology, the only viable alternative would seem to be to practice some degree of selection while attempting to preserve the broadest and most comprehensive sampling of the available moving image informational universe. The nature of a repository's collection will have to be determined by the repository's overall mandate, bearing in mind the general criteria established by authorities like Unesco and F.I.A.F. concerning the significance of the moving image document, and such preservation imperatives as the documentation of national
film production.

The issue of selection could be considerably simplified by the utilization of records management techniques to cull ephemera before it ever arrived at a repository to confound the archivist. The scheduling of production elements would not only be an efficient way to control a substantial portion of the film record, but would also allow for the development of some semblance of historical perspective before the ultimate disposition of the record was reached. The implementation of management of this type would require close cooperation with the film industry itself, and while it would initially involve a good deal of effort to set up, in light of the savings in time and money it would bring to archives, it would seem to be well worth the effort. This type of endeavour appears to work best in a nation where filmic output is centralized under one authority, and there is one national film archive. Although this system could be implemented in a country such as Canada which does not have a centralized film industry, it would be much simpler to implement in conjunction with a single national film archive. The existence of one major national film archive per country would seem to simplify other matters as well. If a nation houses several competing film repositories there will be a greater risk of duplication of effort and competition, both of which would result in a less than optimal use of available resources. In this situation, individual repository mandates would increase in prominence and importance, and would necessitate the evolution of clearly-developed, arti-
culated and specific selection criteria. As the development of such seems to be impossible with just one major film repository currently in Canada, it would appear that for reasons of resources and expenditure, the idea of one major film archive per country is the most viable at present. It would not be in the best interests of cost-effectiveness to duplicate the sophisticated equipment necessary to house and access film all across the country, when a centralized film archive could adequately preserve those film records representative of a nation's filmic output.

In the final analysis, it would seem that the nature of the film document should dictate the most appropriate mode of selection. The development of any selection criteria will of necessity have to take into account not only the physical structure of film (including condition and film base, and moreover, age), but also the typology of the film and its informational content. For certain categories of film, such assessment may be sufficient. For others, like the feature film, appraisal must also take into account the position of film in society, particularly with regard to its reflective nature, popular appeal, and influence.
NOTES


3 Ibid.


5 Ibid., p. 89.

6 Ibid., p. 92.


8 Ibid., p. 23.

9 Ibid., p. 44.


11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., p. 34.

13 Ibid., p. 45.

14 Ibid., p. 49.

15 Ibid., p. 98.


17 Ibid., p. 422.

18 Ibid., p. 424.


21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., p. 17.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Kula, The Archival appraisal of moving images, p. 27.
28 Ibid., pp. 10-11.
29 Ibid., p. 12.
32 Ibid., pp. 17-18.
33 International Federation of Film Archives, Problems of Selection in Film Archives (Brussels: F.I.A.F., 1980), pp. 134-135.
34 Kula, The Archival appraisal of moving images, p. 95.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
38 International Federation of Film Archives, Problems of Selection, p. 134.
40 International Federation of Film Archives, Problems of Selection, pp. 135-136.

42 Ibid., p. 31.

43 Ibid., p. 32.

44 Ibid., p. 89.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Society is presently overwhelmed by an efflorescence of information recorded in a variety of diverse forms. The characteristics and morphology of the special media constituting the records of the post-industrial information age are effecting a change in the form and nature of contemporary historical evidence. The preservation of historical records has traditionally fallen to a nation's archival repositories, which increasingly find themselves in a position of having to act prophetically in order to preserve records which may become imbued with historical significance by the passing of time. The capacity to act with prescience may be crucial in saving many of the new media which are in danger of disappearing due to their ephemeral nature, combined with a general lack of regard for their research potential. In order to preserve such media, archivists and researchers alike need to be cognizant of the extent to which the new media of record have permeated society, as well as the degree of their influence. The present study has concentrated on one such medium, that of filmic moving images, with specific reference to issues concerning the medium's physical morphology, as well as how the reflective nature of content impinges upon the selection of moving images for permanent archival preservation.

In the case of film, a long tradition of benign neglect due to its position as a product of mass popular culture has
significantly impaired its acceptance as an historical record. Film has long been recognized as a mass phenomenon, but the so-called "stigma" of mass popularity has thwarted its recognition as a societal document of historical import. As a phenomenon of mass culture, the film document occupies a unique dual role in the fabric of contemporary society due to its reflective nature, and the influence it wields over its audience. Throughout its history, film has demonstrated the ability to not only reflect or "refract" manifestations of societal concerns, but to also influence and manipulate its audience through the message it conveys. The following present-day example is offered to illustrate both the reflective and influential nature of film. In recent years Hollywood has produced a number of films reflecting the anti-Soviet sentiment resulting from strained East-West relations. Films like *Red Dawn*, *Rambo*, and *Rocky IV* were recently cited at a Soviet press conference as having spawned a pathology of hatred against the Soviet Union. The reaction to such condemnation is already apparent in the American film industry, as exemplified by the announcement of production of *The Russkies*, in which a Soviet spy submarine is stranded in a small town on the American coast. The film is being touted as the antithesis of those films which have traditionally portrayed the Russians as maniacal enemies of the West.

This example is illustrative of film's potential for both reflection and distortion. A knowledge of the nature of the medium should make apparent those factors contributing to
distortion and thus make it possible to account for such when utilizing the film document as a research tool. If film is to be preserved for future use, those who select and care for it will need to understand the physical characteristics of the medium, as well as the ways in which physical structure influences content. As the medium itself can operate as an informational factor of the record, an awareness of both form and content will enable the archivist to convey pertinent information to the user. Selection criteria cannot be developed without first understanding the physical nature of the document, as well as the nature of the evidence presented by the document. In the case of the film record, structure is operative in determining content, and as such, the two elements are crucially interwoven and cannot be considered in total isolation.

The ramifications the nature of the film document holds for the development of selection criteria are manifold. Perhaps the primary factor hindering the articulation of concrete selection criteria is the impossibility of endowing contemporary judgements of historical artefacts (particularly those of popular culture) with any semblance of historical perspective. Contemporary value judgements are often marred by bias and subjectivity, and in many cases are just plain wrong. Because of this factor, as well as the fact that any film could conceivably be of importance to someone, sometime, selection becomes a moot point. A further factor hindering selection concerns the reflective nature of the film document. If all film can
be considered to constitute some form of societal reflection, how can it be possible to dismiss summarily a portion of that reflection as being irrelevant, ephemeral, or trivial? Selection therefore cannot be reasonably justified, at least on such grounds. Ideally, then, the archival repository should concern itself with collecting all moving images, representative as they are of some aspect of society and human endeavour. If such a scheme of total retention is not practicable, either in terms of storage space or expenditure, steps could be taken to increase the possibility of its realization. Possible modes of action could conceivably include international cooperation to avoid duplication of effort, and cooperation with the film industry to earmark essential film records while dismissing obvious ephemera.

Leaving aside the most obvious impracticalities of total retention, a further critical element would be the determination of exactly what constitutes "everything." Obviously, "everything" would not be a literal term, and would perhaps be more indicative of a philosophy of selection rather than a dogmatic hoarding of everything celluloid. The archival value of film documents will have to be determined by an analysis or appraisal expressly designed for the celluloid record, an appraisal that takes into account the physical make-up of the document and the nature of the information contained therein. The concept of no selection would therefore be indicative of a philosophy of selection which would retain all film of intrinsic archival value, after having determined exactly
what constitutes archival value in terms of the moving image document.

Determining the value of the film record is a problematical point, involving as it often does subjective and/or arbitrary value judgments. While there appears to exist a general lack of consensus among the world's film archive authorities regarding specific selection criteria, certain points seem to have emerged to function as guidelines, however vague. Selection appears to be regarded as a necessary evil, undesirable and ultimately indefensible, yet necessary under present-day conditions to implement certain preservation priorities, such as the preservation of film of national production, and the filmic output of certain historical time periods. For film covered by these areas, the concept of selection seems to be largely inapplicable. For these categories, the term "everything" is indeed literal. In the case of film not covered by these categories, issues of form and content appear to govern decisions regarding archival value, with form often winning out over content where certain production elements and the sedimentary by-products of filmmaking are concerned. The present author would like to suggest that content is deserving of more careful consideration in those cases where an intractable physical structure threatens to negate the potential value of the record's content. Such is the case with out-takes, amateur footage, and certain production elements, where technical inadequacies or an unedited structure have traditionally assumed priority over informational value, regardless of the
potential research value of the record.

The position of film in society, its function as both purveyor and reflector of popular culture, its influence and vast popular appeal -- these are all elements which have significant impact upon the selection of film for archival preservation. The nature of the evidence presented by the film document is intimately intertwined with the physical structure of the record. The physical form which encompasses the informational content of film will necessarily affect film content to a very high degree, but it should not be allowed to completely overwhelm the intrinsic value of content. If selection is necessary, film must be evaluated according to its physical structure (including its age, condition, and stock), typology, and content (including both "witting" and "unwitting" information). This limited assessment may be sufficient for actuality footage, but for other categories, such as fiction film, additional elements of appraisal will enter into the picture, such as the role of film in society, particularly its reflective nature, popular appeal, and degree of influence. For example, a repository constrained by budget limitations may decide to concentrate on box-office successes, in order to retain a representation of those films which testify in the broadest sense to mass public preference. Another repository may focus instead on only national film production with the realization that if the archive does not preserve the nation's filmic output, comprehensive preservation will not be guaranteed by any other collecting body. Space and budget permitting, a repository should ideally concern itself with retaining as broad a sampling as
possible of all types of films produced, in order to maintain a representative sampling of the cinematic product consumed by the populace at a given time. Such sampling could conceivably include not only box-office successes and films deemed to be of artistic value, but also the box-office "flops," independent productions, films that have been the subject of controversy and censorship, films elevated to "cult" status, and the endless run-of-the-mill B grade films (including horror and exploitation products) which cater to a specific but sizeable common interest group typifying sub-genres of public taste.

The goal of selection should ultimately be the retention of the broadest possible sampling of the available moving image universe, in order to insure the widest coverage of contemporary society for future research use.

If there are several repositories in a given country collecting film, the issue of selection is bound to be further complicated by overlapping preservation imperatives, and the need for clearly-articulated selection policies, if only to avoid competition and duplication of effort. Therefore, the simplest solution would seem to be the establishment of one major film archive per country, possessing the equipment necessary to properly maintain and access moving images. The cost of such equipment alone would seem to necessitate such a move. Local and provincial archives need not be prevented from acquiring small collections of local interest which fall under their mandate, although they may find it necessary to utilize the technical resources of the national archive from time to
time.

The preservation scenario which envisions one major film archive per country would increase the feasibility of implementing film records management techniques in conjunction with the film industry. While such a program would ideally work most efficiently in a country housing one film archive and a centralized national film industry, it could conceivably be implemented in a nation with a decentralized film industry. Problems of coordination and cooperation would likely be insurmountable if both the film industry and film archives were decentralized.

Taking into account the realities of decreased archival spending and the remote possibilities of new low-cost storage formats, it would appear that for the majority of film archives some form of selection may be the only viable alternative in order to cull the more ephemeral records and thus insure the survival of the most valuable moving image documents. Determining what constitutes value would appear to be the biggest challenge for film archives seeking to establish selection criteria. Such judgements are by nature likely to be somewhat subjective, but contemporary value judgements can be made more objective by considering the moving image document in terms of both physical structure and informational content, as well as the interrelationship between the two. In addition, the role of film in society, particularly the feature film, with its capacity to manifest both conscious and unconscious value systems and to sway its audience, must be considered a
critical element in ascertaining the value of the film document. Value can take many forms in the film record, some more obvious than others. Selection criteria must take into account both films of obvious value, such as artistic and box-office successes, propaganda and film of high informational value, as well as films of less obvious value, such as the popular "B" product, horror and teen films, which cater to a specific and sizeable market, and as such, testify to some sort of mass consensus.

Once decisions regarding what constitutes "value" have been established for the individual film archive, the goal of selection would ideally embrace the retention of the entire universe of "valuable" film documentation, in order to best serve all conceivable future research needs.
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