

THE DIGITAL ARCHIVES OF THE MOTION PICTURE PRODUCERS AND DISTRIBUTORS OF AMERICA

<http://mppda.flinders.edu.au/>

MPPDA

The MPPDA Digital Archives consist of a database of the extant records of the General Correspondence files of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America Inc., covering the period from 1922 to 1939. Established in 1922, the MPPDA was the trade association for the motion picture industry, and included all the major companies producing and distributing motion pictures in the United States in its membership. The association was popularly known as the Hays Office, after its first President, Will H. Hays, who remained in office until 1945. Hays was a leading Republican party politician, who resigned from President Warren Harding's Cabinet to take up the MPPDA position. After Hays' retirement, the association was renamed the Motion Picture Association of America.

Digital Archive History

In 1965, the Motion Picture Association of America copied some of the accumulated document archive of its predecessor organization, the MPPDA, onto 16mm microfilm, and disposed of the original documents. Although the documents in the MPPDA's General Correspondence files represent only a small fraction of the Association's output, they provide an immensely rich source of information about the political history of the industry and its key activities and decisions. The Archive comprises 35,000 digital images (18GB, in JPEG format) of documents describing the industry's organization and operation, including extensive information on industry policy, public relations, censorship and self-regulation. The great majority of this material is unavailable from other sources, and a substantial part of the original material has since been lost. Although the remaining microfilm is now securely stored at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' Margaret Herrick Library in Los Angeles, it remains effectively inaccessible to researchers because its storage material and the absence of a catalogue makes it effectively inaccessible.

Archive Contents

- Correspondence, memos & telegrams
- Agendas & minutes
- Speeches & press releases
- Bulletins & briefs
- Articles, book chapters & essays
- Court documents & legal proceedings
- Transcripts & reports
- Clippings, cartoons & advertisements

Just to name a few.....



Early Archive Digitisation

In 1984, while on an American Council of Learned Societies' Scholarship to study the origins of the Motion Picture Production Code, Richard Maltby gained permission from Jack Valenti to access the archive in New York and to make a copy of twelve reels, covering the period from 1922 to 1939, for further study. Some of the original microfilm reels were subsequently lost, and the copies taken in 1984 are the only surviving copies of most of the material. In order to make effective use of the archive, it was necessary to build up a catalogue of its contents, and this digital archive has its origins in the simple database Richard wrote in 1985 to catalogue the documents as an aide to his own research. The Archive continues to bear the traces of its origin as a researcher's tool rather than the work of an archivist or a librarian.



MPPDA Digital Archive Researchers

Chief Researchers for the MPPDA Digital Archive are Professor Richard Maltby and Dr Ruth Vasey from Flinders University, South Australia. Richard is Professor of Screen Studies and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education, Humanities and Law and a leading international authority on the social and cultural history of American cinema and its audiences. Ruth is Senior Lecturer in Screen and Media where she teaches topics on American cinema and global media.

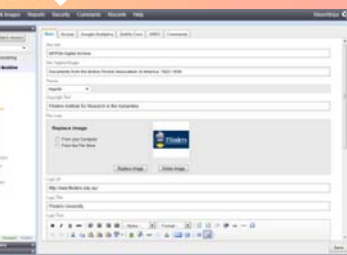
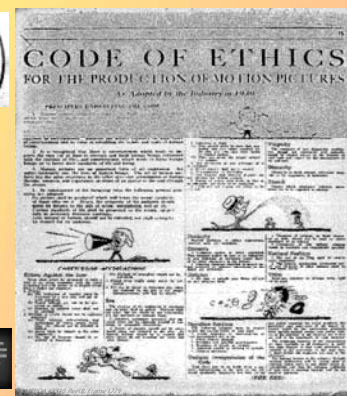
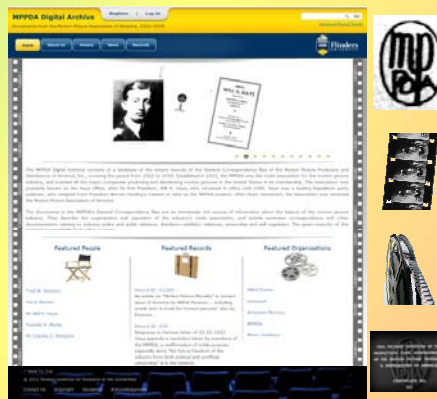
MPPDA Digital Archive in 2012

The development of digital technologies has made it possible to make the material much more accessible. With the aid of research grants from Flinders University, the Australian Research Council and the Australian National Data Service, a frame-by-frame digital copy of the archive has now been made.

This has allowed indexation of the archive's 35,000 pages in a fully web based version. Emphasis on a user friendly system has been built in to both front and back ends of the MPPDA Digital Archive of today. Users are able to view all records in the archive in "snapshot" view or, if they wish to download full versions, they can complete a simple on-line registration process (authenticated by Flinders University Library Special Collections).

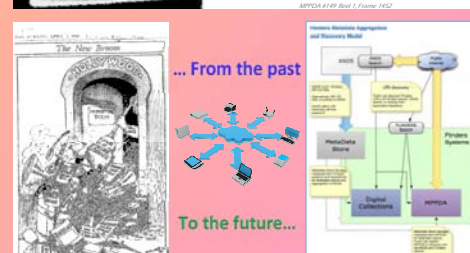


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Future Plans

An enormous amount of work has already been undertaken to create the MPPDA Digital Archive and we anticipate that this work will continue for many years to come. The addition of document transcriptions, biographical data and general refinements continue in 2012 and the number of registered users is increasing at pace. This project is one of the inaugural inclusions to the newly established Flinders University data repository and future funding opportunities may arise through further developments in eResearch and Digital Humanities.



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