

Editors' Introduction

Archives and Archivists

In its simplest definition, a traditional film or media archive was a repository that offered physical access to documents, media, and resources that were substantially different from the secondary sources that referenced and interpreted them. Materials could be accessed only after a formal protocol (including correspondence, bookings, and often payment) had been followed, and frequently researchers were not permitted to photograph, photocopy, or reproduce them. Scholars of film and media history consequently had a uniquely difficult task: they had to watch films in archives on Moviolas or Steenbecks, and they had to make notes during viewings that would allow them to later recall not just narrative and intertitles, but also a film's aesthetic design, shot sequences, acting styles, lighting, camera movements, and so on. Furthermore, they had to understand and interpret silent films—particularly the mood of a given scene or the meaning of an actor's gesture—without the aid of live musical accompaniment.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the archive allowed historians to see film history from a new point of view. Siegfried Kracauer's retreat into the Museum of Modern Art's newly established Film Library¹ is famous not just because his *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Cinema* (1947) changed the way film was mobilized as a primary resource in historical research, but because of Kracauer's immersion in the archive.² Thirty years later, in 1978, the symposium "Cinema 1900–1906" at the International Federation of Film Archives' (FIAF) Brighton conference was another significant event that highlights the impact that primary-source material has had on the way we have written and thought about film history. At Brighton, the whole available corpus of early films was screened to a receptive public. It was this great movement of original film footage out of the archive and back onto the big screen for a scholarly audience that prompted new understandings of silent film as a source of historical evidence in the young discipline of film studies.³

Today the physical presence of the film archive, which was imperative to the stories of both Kracauer and Brighton, has diminished. Those of us with

cultural and social capital in the West work from homes, offices, and workspaces that are often countries (if not continents) away from the archives that house the materials we examine. As long as we have access to the internet and the use of a computer or mobile screen, we can generally see digitized materials freely and at any time. Our own books, articles, lectures, and notes are also online; they are no longer spatially separate or temporally successive to the primary sources they explore. Consequently—and as this issue of *Feminist Media Histories* makes clear—questions about online access to media history, digital research infrastructure, and cultural and political pedagogy have come to the fore. A host of related questions has acquired a new urgency: What is lost and gained in the shift from physical to digital archiving? What and how do archives preserve, and how do they curate public access? How do we search for digital material? Which tools are used to modify and limit our search options, and what does this tell us about digital networks and our relationships to them? Who or what is featured and findable in the databases we use today?

It is not only the changed mediascape of the archive that is directing these questions. As each contributor to this issue makes clear, gender is implicated at every step of our engagement with the archive. In her article “As Luck Would Have It: Serendipity and Solace in Digital Research Infrastructure,” Deb Verhoeven cogently argues that in the digital era, women’s historic absence from film industries can no longer be redressed through the traditional process of serendipitous historical inquiry. Much greater attention needs to be given to questions of methodology and epistemology. Feminist research, she argues, needs to be enabled through interactional processes of generative data networks such as HuNI (the Humanities Networked Infrastructure). As she explains, this platform refuses the fiction of networks and archives functioning as chains of depersonalized transmission. Sarah Atkinson makes a similar point in her discussion of two similarly transgressive digital archives: SP-ARK (the Sally Potter Archive) and DFAP (the DEEP FILM Access Project). These offer alternative archival ontologies that are collaborative, inclusive, and, she argues, feminized. In this way, they generate knowledge otherwise silenced about women’s presence and labor in the film industry.

Such historic silence has been, and continues to be, central to investigations of gender and the archive. Feminist scholars need to understand the prejudices that are embedded in analogue archival processes and practices before they are able to recognize where and how they are reiterated and repeated when sources are reproduced or created in the online environment. Liz Clarke returns

discussion to the forgotten work of early American scenarist writers, noting that female labor has been elided and dismissed in the focus on male film directors. As she explains, the published memoirs of women such as Lenore Coffee and Frederica Sagar Maas give evidence of the female labor that film history has otherwise “hidden-in-plain-view.” As well as rediscovering lost sources of media history in her article about the *gentō* films of 1950s Japan, Hana Washitani traces gender prejudice in its content. She notes that *gentō* is a media that is almost unknown to us today—a still-image projection on 35mm film, it visually corresponds to the magic lantern but remains uncategorized and unsupported in local libraries and archives in Japan. While its politics of opposition to U.S. military bases in Japan has been occasionally noted, this generally overlooked resource reveals an ongoing condemnation and isolation of female sex workers even as local communities cohered in protest movements against the establishment of the bases.

As feminists and historians, we lament the incommensurability between the fluidity and focus of our own research methods and the paucity of relational databases and archives online. Significantly, however, we do not depersonalize the digital archive so that it emerges as some kind of Apparatus, a digital abstraction that merely modernizes traditional thinking around mechanical ideology and visual display.⁴ Indeed, what marks our musings about media and film content does not emerge from observing an apparatus abstractly from the outside, but rather from being critical participants in a dialogue about research from within. The traditional solitary researcher confronting her sources is now aware of and engaged with the technicians and curators of archives and their databases. Their research, with its processes of acquisition, selection, and interpretation, has already been embedded in the archive, has indeed produced the archive. The historian needs to recognize that her research is already a collective process begun and shaped before she got there. It is for this reason that the second half of this issue comprises Victoria Duckett’s interviews with six leading international archivists, curators, and programmers, which reveal the structures and work processes of film archives. Their selection was based on our recognition that these women—Bryony Dixon (British Film Institute), Giovanna Fossati (EYE Film Institute, Amsterdam), Karola Gramann (Kinothek Asta Nielsen, Frankfurt), Meg Labrum (National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra), Mariann Lewinsky (Il Cinema Ritrovato, Bologna), and Elif Rongen-Kaynakçi (EYE Film Institute, Amsterdam)—have been innovators in integrating gender into archival outreach and access today. With no fanfare—and certainly with no centralized coordination among themselves—these women quietly ensure that

both their own work and that of previous generations of female filmmakers, writers, and performers are no longer hidden-in-plain-view.

In 1992, Giuliana Bruno's groundbreaking study of filmmaker Elvira Notari (*Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari*) described historical research as a series of "inferential walks" through novels, paintings, photographs, and architectural sites. Bruno speaks of an "erotics of knowledge" in which "cultural theorists, like *flâneurs*, stroll alongside other voyeurs or walkers."⁵ This sense of leisurely examination, where the exploration of feminist film history is described in spatial and physical terms, indicates a relationship between research and scholarship that predates the ubiquity of the search option on the Internet. Bruno envisions the researcher as a solitary figure walking alongside other imagined *flâneurs* from over a century ago. Today we are more often digital *flâneuses*,⁶ women who work fluidly and collaboratively to join Web 3.0 to what Vicki Callahan calls "Feminism 3.0." As Callahan notes in the prescient ending of her 2010 introduction to *Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film History*, when feminism contributes to discussions of digital infrastructure and access, the archive becomes "not the last edifice standing in a received history, but a dynamic agent of change and a space of becoming."⁷ ■

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JILL JULIUS MATTHEWS is an emeritus professor at the Australian National University. She is a historian whose research focuses on gender, modernity, sexuality, silent cinema, and popular culture. Her major books are *Good and Mad Women: The Social Construction of Femininity in Twentieth Century Australia* (1984), *Sex in Public: Australian Sexual Cultures* (ed., 1997), and *Dance Hall and Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity* (2005). She has been a member of the Board of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia.

NOTES

1. The Museum of Modern Art Film Library was established in 1935, with Iris Barry as director and curator. Kracauer arrived in New York in 1941 and very quickly became involved in the Film Library project. See Robert Sutton, *Lady in the Dark: Iris Barry and the Art of Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

2. See Kracauer's opening comments in his preface, where he speaks both of "the use made here of film as a medium of research" and of his indebtedness to "Miss Iris Barry, Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, New York, to whom my work

literally owes its existence.” *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), v.

3. Much has been written about Brighton as a watershed event. See, in particular, Wanda Strauven’s explanation in her introduction to *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, where she states: “Both [Tom] Gunning and [André] Gaudreault relate in their respective contribution in this volume the importance of the legendary 34th FIAF conference held in Brighton, England, in 1978. More particularly, they both stress the importance of the screening of all the surviving and in FIAF archives preserved films [*sic*] that were made between 1900 and 1906. It was this extensive and systematic viewing process that radically changed (Old) Film History.” Strauven, “Introduction to an Attractive Concept,” in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 15.

4. See, for example, Jean-Louis Baudry, “The Apparatus: Metaphysical Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Early Cinema,” in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 299–318.

5. Giuliana Bruno, *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 3, 4.

6. Cf. Marion Dörk, Shelagh Carpendale, and Carey Williamson, “The Information Flaneur: A Fresh Look at Information Seeking,” *CHI 2011: Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (May 7–12, 2011), 1215–24.

7. Vicki Callahan, “Introduction: Reclaiming the Archive: Archeological Explorations toward a Feminism 3.0,” in *Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film History*, ed. Vicki Callahan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 6.