

**Written Statement for Hearing
National Film Preservation Board
Library of Congress**

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

FEB 19 1987

MOTION PICTURE, TV
AND RECORDED SOUND

I want to speak on behalf of the growing number of educators who use film as part of the classroom process, either as an aid or complement to a central subject matter, or as the central concern of their curriculum. The latter is of particular interest to me because my career is devoted to the study and teaching of film.

The number of cinema studies courses grows yearly. Colleges and Universities are either adding film studies departments and programs or situating course offerings in existing departments. Introductory courses are showing up in community colleges, and even high schools are expressing interest. The need to teach young people how to read, analyze, and understand the moving image--the form in which most people get the stories the culture wants to tell them--and the desire of young people to make such images on their own, is placing more and more institutions on alert.

As programs grow or are created, access to material becomes an increasingly serious concern. How do students get to see films and how do the teacher-scholars who teach film get to study the form and learn its history so that they can teach it well--not only to their students, but to the public at large for whom they write books and articles? How do those institutions--like community colleges and high schools--that do not have access to experienced film teachers, or budgets for expensive film rentals, provide the education their students want and need?

And what of the choices for preservation? The emphasis seems to be on 35mm theatrical features, which certainly are of central interest to many film scholars. But thought has to be given to the independent film, the work of the avant-garde, and the recent upsurge in films by and about women and minorities. The Board needs to direct some of its attention to these "marginal" works (because they are central to important

cultural issues) and think about them not only in terms of preservation, but of availability as well. Here are films with no corporate structure to help preserve or distribute them.

The National Film Preservation Board needs to confront a number of issues beyond those concerned simply with the preservation of existing theatrical films. It needs to be concerned with questions of scope and *access*. To say that a particular title has been saved from deterioration--that a color, nitrate positive has been transferred to three safety, black and white negatives and put in cold storage--is a triumph indeed, but an incomplete one. What is the value of an expensive act of preservation if the results are inaccessible? If scholars and students can't *see* the results, if the only access to the particular film is through a scratched and spliced 16mm dupe or, more likely, a poorly resolved videotape recording, who profits from the preservation? Pedagogy and the history of film do not. The unseen remains the unknown.

At the very least, the Library of Congress should be enabled to make viewing copies of every film that becomes part of the preservation process. Further, as copyright problems are worked out and negotiated, there should be a mechanism developed for larger public availability of these preserved titles. Right now, the Library offers, I believe, certain borrowing privileges to recognized archives. These privileges might be extended to accredited Universities. Efforts should be made to arrange traveling exhibits, perhaps of the programs presented at the Pickford Theater.

Finally, an educational outreach program should be instituted either as part of the Preservation Board or as a separate entity. No such program exists in the country at this time (the American Film Institute seems to have given up completely its obligations in this area): no central location for finding prints, arranging screenings, publishing study guides, filmographies, bibliographies. The Motion Picture Division of the Library of Congress provides a basic and wonderful reference service that could serve as the base of an expanded operation that could publish introductory and advanced materials, training in film studies pedagogy, and, perhaps viewing material in some usable form. I expect that

many of the country's leading film scholars would be interested in taking part in such an operation as part of the service component of their research.

Visual narratives are the fundamental transmission forms of our culture's immediate thoughts, beliefs, and fantasies. They need to be understood, and such understanding requires education and access. Preservation is the beginning of a process that can, with some of the additional elements outlined above, lead to the perpetuation of knowledge.

Robert P. Kolker
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University of Maryland, College Park

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UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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8 March, 1993

Mr. James Billington
Librarian of Congress
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Billington,

It was a pleasure testifying before the National Film Preservation Board on February 26, and I welcome your offer to think about and communicate ideas on how to overcome, or at least ameliorate, problems of copyright restrictions on films in order to achieve better distribution of the LC's material.

I have one idea, based on some research that I'm doing, which involves creating computer driven instructional modules for the analysis of film. The work was started by faculty of the film department at UCLA, and a few film scholars around the country are doing various projects with it. My work involves the use of digitized film clips along with text and graphics to demonstrate the basic components of shot construction and editing patterns.

The software involved is called Toolbook, a widely used construction package, and Video for Windows, which is PC based video compression software. The results are quite attractive and, because only clips are used, it might be a simple process (relatively speaking) to gain copyright permissions. This might start with negotiations with particular studios to use their films as examples.

I've been encouraged in recent years by a few people at some of the studios who feel that film scholarship and education should be encouraged. Peter Gardiner at Warner's and Philip Murphy of Paramount (who testified before the Board) have both expressed a willingness to listen to reasonable requests for material. The computer-based teaching module might meet with positive results. It uses clips only, it realizes the growing interest in multi-media on the part of the studios, as well as the LC's interest in computer/CD/laser disc technology. Most important, it would foreground the Library of Congress as a proponent of education in film.

Sincerely,

Robert P. Kolker

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