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Cinéma et audiovisuel :
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LES SITUATIONS EUROPÉENNES [L'EUROPE, LA NATION, LA RÉGION] – 2

A national policy for the moving image

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Thank you to Marc for inviting me to speak today. I found the last presentation fascinating because that is where we all want to be; at the cutting-edge. But unfortunately, although the BFI is sometimes at the cutting-edge, a lot of our work is basically to make sure the infrastructure is in place so that the material we can digitize and make available to the world is still there for the future generations.

This is a time of incredibly concentrated work on the “screen heritage strategy” for the UK.

The title has changed slightly; it is not a national policy for the moving image, that is the responsibility of the UK Film Council. I will be talking about the UK's moving image archives.

The following will be discussed:

- *National policy development areas.*
- *Issues – the big issue that is a recurrent theme in all archives throughout Europe and probably the world is funding and persuading people to fund it, that it is important.*
- *Strategy and our current situation.*
- *Summary - Where we are going.*

The landscape in the UK

The BFI national archive was founded in 1935, two years after the BFI was first formed. We have archives in both the devolved nations; Scotland and Wales. Northern Ireland is slightly different in that they do not have a film archive. In addition, there is a network of regional film archives which have emerged since 1976 and there are nine of those throughout England. The regional film archives are all in England. Six of them are funded by the university sector.

In addition is the Imperial War Museum which holds all war footage relating to Britain, and Britain seems to have been at war most of the last century. They are indeed the oldest archives, probably in the world. Of course there is also the BBC, ITN source among others.

From a government point of view we are newcomers in the cultural heritage landscape. Film is very undervalued in Britain as an art form, and we have been under-funded. Although I heard that the CNC is in the same position. I always use the British Library as an example. This library looks after books

and important manuscripts such as the Magna Carta, it gets twenty times the funding that our archive gets. The argument often put forward to the government is: Their work is important but so is ours.

The key element which has pushed us into the lobbying which went on after 2003 was a critical report of the BFI archive by the National Audit Office. The National Audit Office in Britain examines how public money has been spent and they found an appalling state of technically and in terms of preservation in the BFI archives in 2003. There are many reasons for that; under-funding is a main reason. It led us to change the way we had been doing things. Since the mid-seventies there had been a program of duplicating nitrate material (what early film was made on) onto safety stock. Unfortunately this was the acetate which then started to turn into vinegar (the vinegar syndrome). There was a decision made after the archive review to change our approach from being preservation by duplication to first preventative conservation and then identifying that material which was important. Curate it, interpret it and begin to make the archive more accessible to the world. Film archives were traditionally in the 1990's driven by one thing which was that they wanted to preserve the films for posterity. The trouble was that posterity was some time in the future and then technology changed and it became possible for posterity to be available today because of the aforementioned elements.

The collections

We look after film and television, there are the English regional archives which have a lot of non-fiction and television, and then there are the broadcasters and others as previously mentioned.

Conservation Issues

The first is preservation by copying, which started to be seen as not working because of the on-set of the vinegar syndrome where material has been transferred to acetate. Video and digital formats become obsolete, so you always have to leap across formats, migrating from one format to another.

This was the problem we have been facing up to. The "cusp" is the point at which, concerning acetate film, the autocatalysis sets in. This is when the layer of acid on the surface begins to accelerate and begins to eat into the film. Three years ago we found by testing a test validated by the Image Permanence Institute in the United States, we found 12% of the acetate collection was at that point. Eighteen months ago it was 30%; six months ago it was 40%. So we are in danger of losing the acetate collection in the archive, which is an awful situation to be in. We moved into a different mode. The key thing is to go into deep-freeze; freeze it all and arrest the problem. The other material which is okay can be maintained in good conditions. That was the basis of our application to the government.

In terms of active conservation this is what we are doing. We have a cultural program which supports digitization but there are high costs involved.

There was a storage crisis; there was too much material which was not catalogued as it came in. The nitrate film was stored in atomic war-head bunkers in a place called Gaydon in Warwickshire. The air conditioning consisted of the person who was in charge of the site arriving in the morning opening the door at the front, the door at the back and when he went home he closed them. The environmental conditions were therefore horrendous. The 30% figure is now 40% and we were beginning to store film because there was so much arriving in warehouses. We are getting so much material because the laboratories which had previously been holding this film were forced, in the 1970's, along with the distributors, to move their nitrate stock out of urban areas after a disaster. New rules were introduced for any volatile materials in urban areas, so we ended up taking it all. The laboratories which have closed one by one told the BFI there was material available and would we like to come and get it. Therefore, a huge backlog was created. There were no resources from the government to do anything about it.

Some advantages:

- *Over the 75 years we had built some significant information resources such as a filmographic database which forms the core of the IMDB which many people use. Cardiff University students used to turn up at the BFI, copy down the records from our own electronic records and take them away and someone from Hewlett-Packard managed to turn it into a very successful commercial entity which made them millionaires. If only the BFI had the foresight to realize that was what might happen.*
- *Technical records are good and we have a subject index which is also good. However, these are legacy databases, they are not integrated and this is a continuing problem which will hopefully be resolved over the next eighteen months.*
- *We have had some innovative products. We launched Screenonline in 2003 which gives access to British education institutions; all the schools, universities and libraries in the UK. Screenonline is the British history of film and television.*
- *We have just begun opening Médiathèques in the country which are different from Screenonline in that Screenonline provides clips from films including British films which were funded by American majors. The Médiathèques give access to full-length material and it has been very successful. One was opened two months ago in Derby and one will be opening in Cambridge next February.*
- *We have a YouTube channel which is getting lots of hits.*

There are also a number of negative points:

- *The inventory documentation is poor. We have not integrated our databases.*
- *Scholarship was allowed to lose the cutting-edge it used to have in the 1980's and 1990's. A lot of members of staff have been lost to universities. Half of the university professors of film in Britain about five years ago had worked at the BFI.*
- *Storage issues. The good thing was that material was made accessible and therefore there is a good story to tell even though behind the scenes the story was not as good.*

What can we do in this situation? We have had a critical report from the National Audit Office. A committee of the Houses of Parliament called the Public Accounts Committee which gave the BFI a hard time. Their report led to that recommendation that we should take the lead with the community and promote good curatorship and increasing accessibility.

Members of parliament are interested in making sure that what they do counts in their constituencies. Bear that in mind because there are two things going on here: one is that you must persuade your political masters that what you are doing is useful, but at the same time you have to ensure that you are doing something which has a long term outcome, that you are protecting, conserving, preserving the film and television heritage.

So we formed a group drawn from the BBC, BFI, MLA (Museum and Libraries Association), NCA (National Council of Archives), RFA (Regional Film Archives), RSA (Regional Screen Agencies) and the UKFA (Film Council). A paper went to James Purnell who was the Minister of Film in 2005. This is a situation where you have a Minister for Film who is actually interested in film, previously unheard of. He had been a member of the National Film Theatre for many years. His girlfriend was a film-maker, he understood about archives. These are circumstances which are unparalleled. The trouble is that he is intelligent and the trouble with intelligent MP's and Ministers is that they get promoted. He got promoted to become Minister for Working Pensions but in terms of the hierarchy of government it was higher up the chain and he is ambitious. He might become Prime Minister one day. The paper went to him and he was very positive about it. He encouraged us to put forward a bid for money. By the time the bid went in, he had left but the campaign continued.

There are other elements other than the BFI. There are regional film archives and there is an interesting tension and I would be interested to see how this reflects in France and other countries. There is a tension between the centre and the periphery. The regional archives are very suspicious of the BFI. Historically there may be a reason for this, but at the moment there is not. We were never able to give them money because we did not have enough. They often started because of local enthusiasts and their funding was increasingly inadequate. They made up the difference between what they got from the university or the local authority with commercial activity and project funding. It was totally uncoordinated, so there was no national policy. This was a major factor in the lobby and in the arguments which subsequently followed. We worked with them on the so-called screen heritage strategy and that is what the outcome was: People should be able to access the screen heritage wherever they live and wherever the materials are held.

The Economic Case

The economic case was completely unproven. Economies of scale would suggest that you only need one archive and then access points at many places, but this argument did not get an airing; if it had it would have been shouted down by the regional collections.

The key element in terms of the vision is that the screen heritage collection should be available online, that we have got to demonstrate the value and that we needed a coherent plan for going forward.

The Consultation Document

We published this consultation document and this is what it said: heritage is rich; it serves a lot of agendas. We are very big on identity and inclusion at the moment in Britain, so we need to engage with the creative economies. There are huge opportunities which you know about. There is awareness and an appetite for archived film. There were a few series based on our archive on BBC Two, there is one called the Mitchell and Kenyon Collection which was some material shot by fairground entrepreneurs in the early part of the twentieth century in Northern England. It was found in a basement of a garage in Bradford and was in pristine condition. These fairground showmen would go ahead of their fair to towns around Britain; they would shoot the local population and then use that as a way of bringing people to the fairground. It is a very good marketing/PR method and it worked. It is fascinating material. The BBC made a serie based on this "The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon", available on DVD. It got a huge audience which actually out-rated the Simpsons at nine o'clock on a Thursday evening. This has been used as a calling card with government.

A two-phased plan was put together with national collections initially and the English Regional Film Archives, and then we would come to the other nationals at a later stage, as well as local and private collections. A bid went in for phase one. The Media Studies Association for Universities is one among others. We had a good response; 200 individuals, 114 written responses and the response was taken account of when formulating the bid. The bid went in under five headings:

- *Securing the national collections*
- *Revitalizing the regions*
- *Delivering digital access*
- *Demonstrating educational value*
- *Steering group.*

That was the bid that went in. Thirty-four million one-off capital spent and an on-going revenue funding of six million pounds broken down as shown. We were sort of successful because the twenty-five million pounds which was awarded to us under the comprehensive spending review is not a considerable amount of money. But it is twenty-five million pounds of capital and capital is no good in terms of running something once it is built. It is the same problem as with project funding. We get the money and it all has to be committed by March 2010, so effectively it must all be spent by

March 2011. Taking some of the elements such as delivering digital access and securing the national collections both require huge amounts of money to make it possible to run the archive and pay the added electricity bill because of the deep-freeze volts. Regarding delivering digital access, the cost is in the hosting and the bandwidth. So there is good news and bad news.

The Governance Structure

Because it is public money they have to make sure it is well spent. So we have too many committees and too many documents. We have a program board which draws in the great and the good who recommend the final decisions on how the money shall be spent. The program management groups which basically look after the recommendations which go to the program board, and then the program working groups, of which there are four and I am the project executive of the digital one. Although we have been given it, we haven't quite got it yet because we have to do all these other things. We have to comply with the OGC (Office of Government Commerce) approach to how public money is spent and the Green Book which details every hurdle we have to leap to get any money. We have to put a strategic business case together, then we have to put an outline business case together, and then we have to put together a full business case in order to draw down the money. We have to agree on budget priorities and all of this has to be approved by either the DCMS and/or the Treasury according to how much money is involved.

This is a lot of work which can be very tedious. Project teams were formed from across the stakeholder institutions; they are the ones doing the hard work. Options appraisals had to be done in building these business cases and it is important that we integrate, that it is seen as one project and not four. This has been an interesting experience.

Securing the National Collections

The key is the storage; we are going to build a new sub-zero facility. 10.8 million is the estimated price. We have had no less than 660 applications based on the Official Journal of the European Union which have to be marked, due process has to be followed so it could take a long time to come up with a short-list to interview. We are going to refurbish and upgrade our existing facilities and we are investing in IT to improve our business process and we are also going to invest in curatorial work.

Revitalizing the Regions

Each of the nine English regions is going to get 275,000 pounds to do work in various areas of preservation and access. To begin with, they had to be nominated so various surveys have been conducted and they will be contributing to the access program by doing curatorial work. It is important to say that this is to create a national policy for moving image archives, a UK national network.

I am responsible for digital access. We started prototyping a Union catalogue of all British screen heritage. We started that a month ago having gone through all the tender processes and we will have a prototype up and running by March. We already have an alpha prototype for four of the archives. This will include the BBC. We are leaping ahead on the basis that if you are going to standardize, you should standardize with those who will be part of phase two. The BBC will be part of this, as will the Imperial War Museum. The question is how much it will cost to build this, which will form the basis of the outline business case which I will be writing in the New Year.

Alongside that we need an editorial proposition about what the users want. With Screenonline we have done this for education. This project is for everybody in Britain. Although we haven't made a final decision, we have decided on the themes of people, place and time. I want to make sure that every parliamentary constituency in England has five pieces of film which relate to it, so that when we come to ask for more money, we can tell the MP's that they have something on the "Portrait of

Britain” that relates to their constituency. You can see the pragmatics coming in here; we have basically got to force people to recognize that this is important for their constituents because in the past we have often been asked “what is in it for my constituents?” We are going to answer this question for them.

There are a number of issues there: common data standards, common digital media standards, the whole issue of cataloguing, including the kind of cataloguing is necessary. This is where the sin process becomes relevant and important, but it needs to go beyond the basic cataloguing data to include subject indexing. So we need to be able to find films about sailing off the Isle of Wight or Trains in the Lake District, as well as the Ken Loach films that are held.

The issue of Web 2.2: how and whether we will use the user community to add metadata to our cataloguing, and the extent to which we moderate that.

The issue of rights: we will focus on material we either own, which is out of copyright or which is orphaned.

Whether to have a portal or platforms: this is a big issue; we want to have a portal but can we afford it?

The users are critical and also the issue of affordability which is the most important thing.

Educational Value

This will get very little money because there is not enough. The idea is to persuade the department for children, schools and families (DCSF) to give us more money.

The next steps are the following:

- *Try and find additional sources of funding. There are some such as the lottery funds which we have traditionally relied upon. But we have a problem in that London won the Olympics over Paris; because of this there is less funding for other activities in culture in the UK. We have got to work with national partners; particularly the BBC because they get 3.5 billion pounds each year. This is looking promising in terms of the possibility of cooperating with them. They have something called the iPlayer which is hugely successful online. It is a way of making the tool available and so if we can we would like to adopt that technology and ideally work with them on creating a portal.*
- *Copyrights,*
- *Legal deposits: we do not have it and you in France do.*

Collections policies such as YouTube for example. Should we be collecting it? If we are then who is going to pay for it?

Un intervenant de la salle

Don't you think it's rather unfair? Rovi has a lot of money, a lot of very valuable things he can put online and on the other hand not so many preservation problems such as nitrate, melting and diacetate. When they convert to digital they dispose of the original material. You have everything, you have to preserve for an eternity where they obviously do not care, they care about the present. You care about the future but you are not even sure there is a future for you. Isn't this bizarre?

Richard PATERSON

Yes it is. We do try. Screenonline was there five years ago but the BFI has a habit of doing things the wrong way round. I mentioned the filmographic database, how somebody else made money from it. We finally made some money from our filmographic database by selling the rights to a company called Gracenote; when you download your tracks for your iPod, all the information behind that, the metadata, is provided by Gracenote. We have sold them the rights to the graphic database so that if the iPod begins to use material we have catalogued, they have that information available. It spoiled an opportunity for them to remove us from the market but they did pay a lot of money for it.

At the beginning of the century we got very excited as an organization during the dotcom bubble, but we got excited for the wrong reasons. We did not get excited with the data we had, we got excited with the possibilities of making material available online. We did provide Screenonline using lottery funded money to education. This proves we can do things but we get caught by the fact that we have all this material.

I'm not sure that is entirely true because I know the BBC is in a similar situation in that if it has acetate material it transfers it to digital, but is that adequate? Is it adequate just to digitize? You also refer back to the campaign in the 1980's called Viz News which was basically a news agency. It had all its news footage on film and transferred it all to D1; which is not a very good medium to transfer to.

What do you move your film onto? If you just digitize it, do you compress it or do you use a fifty megabyte frame? There are big issues.
