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Out of Print: The Changing Landscape of Print Accessibility for Repertory Programming

May HaDuong

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FILM FORUM

Out of Print

The Changing Landscape of Print Accessibility for Repertory Programming

MAY HADUONG

Unlike the giant wave in the conversion to digital projection that Godfrey Cheshire portended in his essay “The Death of Film/the Decay of Cinema,” the change in borrowing film prints for repertory film programming could best be described as a slowly sinking ship in shallow waters.¹ For the past few years, programmers have seen a steady decline in the accessibility of film prints from distributors and studios. This change in supply has caused programmers to lean heavily on archival collections to bridge the gap. As a result of concerned conversations with colleagues on both sides of the print loan process, a panel at the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) conference in Austin was convened to discuss the future of borrowing film prints. In preparation for the panel, titled “Out of Print: The Changing Landscape of Print Accessibility at Film Archives,” an informal questionnaire was distributed to programmers and loan officers at studios and nonprofit archives. Responses were frank, passionate, pragmatic, and imbued with a sense of urgency. Although these changes in supply have been in the works for many years, this shifting tide became readily apparent in 2011. Programmers who were once able to secure prints through studio contacts have found that the well is drying up. Entire retrospectives, previously hinging on the cooperation of studio sources, now rely more on archive and collector sources. In short, repertory programmers currently face an extraordinary challenge: to work in and

rely on a 35mm world while the model for film exhibition moves to digital.

Though the discussion on the conversion from film to digital projection has largely focused on its effect on theaters showing first-run films, only some have addressed the concerns of programmers of repertory work and film archivists. This report aims to offer an urgent snapshot of the perspectives of these two roles—working together during this transitional period to provide access to films on film—and the struggles they are currently facing. What follows here details the responses to the survey to address the current state of borrowing archival prints, the changes that professionals speculate for the immediate and long term, and some potential models that would enable archival print loans to continue for the foreseeable future.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Shared with roughly forty programmers of repertory work and seventeen archival professionals at studios and nonprofit archives, the questionnaire was in reality three separate surveys, each tailored to the vocation of the respondent. Thirty programmers, most of whom curate contemporary work in addition to repertory films, responded to the survey. Sixteen archive professionals responded to the survey, and all of the six major studios were represented.² A total of six respondents were based outside of the United States—five programmers and one archivist. Because the survey addressed the concerns of those working with archival prints, only programmers who worked at venues with changeover projection were surveyed.³ Responses reflected the relationships that have been built over time between the Academy Film Archive (where the author serves as a loan officer) and repertory

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programmers, studios, and film archive professionals. Although no formal scientific methodology was applied to the survey, the responses represent the varied perspectives, insights, and philosophies of contributors to the repertory film market.

Given the general geographic uniformity of the respondents, this report will focus on the current landscape of repertory programming and archival print loans in the United States. The few international responses included in this report are meant to contextualize the current situation rather than serve as concrete representations for film exhibition around the world.

STATE OF AFFAIRS: PROGRAMMERS

Though booking and screening repertory film has always required some form of coordination, creativity, and detective work, recent years have brought new challenges to this enterprise. Programmers remarked nearly unanimously on the difficulties of borrowing film prints from studios. Ninety percent of respondents indicated that they noticed a marked reluctance among many of the studios to loan film prints. Programmers also stated that they saw an increase in Blu-ray discs and digital cinema packages (DCPs) being offered for screenings in lieu of 35mm prints.⁴ Whereas Universal, Fox, and Sony were listed by a handful of respondents as remaining still quite open to lending prints, other studios were repeatedly cited as having a sharp decline in print loans. Gwen DeGlise, programmer at the American Cinematheque, stated that

the past 7 years have seen a drastic change in access to prints. . . . The access to the studios' archival prints became more difficult as loan policies changed,

and passionate individuals retired. . . . We still have access to archival prints, but most often when talent from the films attend the screening. Overall, studios have [fewer] titles available . . . or prints are in poor condition and not replaced.⁵

In addition to being concerned about the change in supply, programmers lamented that studios often took longer periods of time to confirm bookings. This delay has also affected archives. In the case of the Academy Film Archive, programmers will sometimes request to reserve a print from the archive's collection as a backup in case the studio cannot offer a print for screenings. Some programmers expressed frustration with the lack of consistency in responses from studios. One programmer at an archive that is a member of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) noted their fortuitous situation compared to other programmers, stating,

In the last few months I've gotten a few e-mails from venues asking about print source information for titles we screened, and in some cases the venue has been told that a print isn't available for the title they are looking for, when in fact we used a studio print for our screening. We've also in some cases been initially denied a print loan from a studio and been able to negotiate its borrowing through our relationships with the studios. I imagine venues without those relationships might have less leeway in such situations.⁶

As DeGlise suggested, inconsistency in print condition was cited as a concern for programmers. The great cost and effort expended to secure a 35mm print can seem pointless when coupled with the frustration and

difficulty of screening a print in poor condition. DeGlise added,

We've had a few major embarrassments recently as a direct result of the studios' cost-cutting: receiving a print in non-screenable condition, another print missing almost an entire reel, and a pan and scan. These were for screenings at which directors and actors were in attendance. As [studio] staff [is] replaced, there is a critical loss of institutional knowledge and knowledge of the collection.⁷

The process of borrowing from film archives appears to have remained the same, according to most programmers who responded to the questionnaire. However, a few respondents observed a striking disinclination from archives to lend (even to other archives) for screenings. A programmer at a FIAF archive noted,

It also seems like archives are more reluctant to loan prints—archival loan policies seem to be reducing or more tightly regulating the frequency with which a print can be screened. One of our programmers says that they have noticed that archives have instituted more restrictions in terms of requesting prints farther in advance and tighter limits on the number of prints loaned at any given time.⁸

A majority of respondents noted that about 20 percent of the material that they programmed was sourced from archives, an increase from previous years. Though the survey did not inquire about the issue, some programmers made a point of indicating that they were showing more items on video or digitally than in previous years. Archives with programming components often heavily sourced from their own collections or from other archive collections.

Once a print is located and confirmed, the financial burden of sourcing the print from an archive can be onerous for programmers. Most archives charge venues and even other FIAF members to screen film prints. Only two responding archives required no fee: the Academy Film Archive and the Library of Congress.

For the Library of Congress, moving image curator Rob Stone stated that it “literally would take an act of Congress to change” the current policy to provide prints at no charge.⁹ At the Academy Film Archive, the Academy’s Board of Governors would need to approve a change in its current policy. In addition to archive loan fees, which vary depending on FIAF membership status, length of film, number of screenings, and geographic location of the borrower, archives also often have specific shipping requests, including using air transport and securing insurance. Programmers also indicated that studios were charging more fees for borrowing their own film prints. Jed Rapfogel, programmer at the Anthology Film Archives, noted that “a couple of the studios have raised their archival print rentals to a point where it’s very much on the edge of being unfeasible for us . . . and there are also cases where the combination of a substantial archival loan fee and a rights clearance fee add up to more than we can afford.”¹⁰

STATE OF AFFAIRS: STUDIOS

Economic concerns were at the forefront in responses from studio representatives. Lending officers at studios frequently cited financial and internal staff changes as major agents in the ability to lend film prints. Layoffs at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), Paramount, and Disney, among other studios, have resulted in reduced staff time devoted to the time-consuming task of coordinating print loans. Until January 2012, the contact for print loans at MGM juggled the coordination and billing for all studio titles, while also serving as an assistant to two individuals.¹¹ Programmers, who often spend years developing relationships with studio representatives, consistently cited changing studio contacts as a barrier to securing film prints. When a studio representative is laid off or leaves the company, these relationships must frequently be fostered once again. Connections of this sort are contingent on the amount of support the studio and its representatives can provide to the programmer. Laurence Kardish, curator at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), explained in *Cineaste* that

good quality prints are a sometime thing: some studios have repertory divisions,

and some small independent distributors are headed by men and women who care about the quality of the work they handle, while others do not. The quality of the print now seems to be contingent on the concern of the individual in charge, and it is no longer a given.¹²

Studios frequently noted that the cost of making prints was burdensome when compared to the revenue generated by booking the films. Respondents noted that DCPs, though costly to create, are easier to ship and handle. A representative from a major studio indicated that

the main challenge is that the business itself isn't profitable. Our archival prints are costly to make and reproduce and the revenues earned do not cover these costs before the print is worn out. We have budgetary restrictions the same as everyone does, and our restoration budget can't afford to make release prints solely for loans. We strongly believe in access to our library so we do it as much as we can while we are still making prints as [a] normal course of restoration. But at some point, as photochemical costs rise and lab access is limited, it'll be a financial burden. Since we're a public company with profit and loss responsibilities, we can't justify losing any money to make loans happen long term if the financial model doesn't support it.¹³

Another representative from a major studio addressed the concerns that programmers had expressed around slow answers to requests, indicating that multiple databases and limited staff working on bookings sometimes resulted in a delayed response. According to this representative, the studio's objective was for the studio to respond with accurate information, even if this meant a slow reply.¹⁴

While Warner Bros. and other studios inspect prints when they return from screenings, some studios do not factor inspection into their lending workflow. Studios that do not inspect their prints when they return expect the venues to inspect the prints and report any inferior prints to their representatives. Unfortunately, relying on venues and programmers to inform

studios of damage puts the paying audience in the involuntary position of serving as quality control. This lack of scrutiny can result in less accountability for venues to have proper projection. Insufficient oversight sometimes results in a cycle in which specific venues consistently damage prints, rendering them inaccessible to reputable venues. In addition to working with limited resources, minimal staff, and unreliable venues, loan officers representing the major studios cited other difficulties when lending film prints, including recouping fees and dealing with last-minute requests. Many of the challenges that studios face seem to parallel those reported by archives.

STATE OF AFFAIRS: ARCHIVES

Of the eight loan officers from FIAF member archives who responded to the questionnaire, six noted an increase in requests for prints ranging from 15 to 25 percent. Even if requests are not fulfilled, generating responses is time consuming and labor intensive. Among institutions that saw a swell in requests, print loans increased between 10 and 20 percent in recent years.

The only archives that observed a decrease in fulfilled loans were MoMA in New York and the UCLA Film & Television Archive (UCLA). Todd Wiener, Motion Picture Archivist at UCLA, theorized that their decrease in loan requests could very well be attributed to the recession. He noted that the archive's loan fees, in conjunction with the studio licensing fees, likely slowed programmatic interest in their collection as many institutions and venues were hit with significant budget cuts.¹⁵

According to the responses from the FIAF archives in the United States, the three institutions that lend the most in the nation—UCLA, the Academy Film Archive, and the Library of Congress—have limits on the number of prints they lend per month. UCLA, which lends the most prints, at about six hundred a year (including short films), has a restriction of twenty features a month. The Library of Congress changed its limit from one hundred reels a month to seventy-five per month in December 2011. At the start of 2011, the Academy Film Archive began lending a maximum of twenty features a month after a 40 percent increase in loans the previous year.

Archives seemed to encounter similar challenges as studios in recouping fees, last-minute requests, and internal budgetary and staffing issues. Increased wear on prints presented dilemmas for archives with strong lending practices. Lynanne Schweighofer, preservation specialist at the Library of Congress, indicated that damage to prints played a part in the library's decision to lend only to FIAF-affiliated institutions after its move to the Packard Campus in Culpeper in 2007. The program reopened in 2009 after a new loan agreement and revised guidelines were implemented.¹⁶ Damage is the obvious concern for studios and archives alike, as both struggle with lending to disreputable venues and ensuring that unique prints are conserved. The responses from archives made apparent the institutional differences in attitude toward the cultural and economic value of prints. Some archives, such as MoMA, viewed their film print loan processes as an extension of their fine art loans. Other archives, such as UCLA, had a more relaxed approach toward lending film prints. This variation in attitude seemed apparent during informal discussions with programmers, who noted the lack of uniformity in the archival print loans process.

CHANGES FOR PROGRAMMERS

While studios and archives identified challenges arising from infrastructure changes and financial constraints, programmers reflected on the philosophical, creative, and logistical complexities of showing film prints. Programmers were asked to disclose their intentions to show film in the future, their thoughts on borrowing prints in the future, and whether showing film was a priority. In general, most programmers expressed that their mission and desire was to continue exhibiting film prints, if possible.

A small percentage of programmers indicated their reluctance to show anything other than film. John Ewing from the Cleveland Cinematheque wrote,

It is important for us, both philosophically and aesthetically, to show films in the format in which they were shot, which tends to be 35mm. We liken ourselves to an art museum that would not hang

reproductions on the wall—only original works of art. Film prints are like original works of art.¹⁷

In Gabrielle Claes's "Musée du Cinéma/Cinémathek," she notes that the Musée du Cinéma "prefers to show a scratched and unsteady film print rather than a pristine DVD, with its clarity and steadiness, in the hopes of attracting audiences to the lively qualities of the original celluloid."¹⁸

Conversely, most programmers also expressed their openness to showing high-quality digital copies if they were available when high-quality prints were not accessible. Paul Rayton, projectionist at the American Cinematheque, responded,

We hope to be screening film prints throughout the next decade . . . a "good" print would always be the preferred medium . . . assuming it's available. As the home viewing experience has increased in technical quality and in the wide variety of films available, the audience expectation for a high-quality viewing experience in a movie theater has made it not acceptable to show prints in lesser condition. When the existing prints are bad, we must go digital . . . assuming it's in good condition and available. DCP presentation can be superb but also we are at the mercy of cranky computers. Digital presentation equipment becomes easily outdated, and cost is an issue. However, if the print sources diminish or discontinue circulating 35mm prints, we may have to show something digitally.¹⁹

This sentiment was expressed by other programmers, including Lars Nilsen from the Alamo Drafthouse, at the print loan panel at the 2011 AMIA conference. He indicated that although he has a strong nostalgia for seeing films on film, he is inclined to show a film using digital projection so long as it is of high enough quality.²⁰ The question of what constitutes high-quality projection seems currently undefined among programmers. Julie Pearce, head of program planning at the British Film Institute (BFI) Southbank and the BFI Imax, stated that they are "happy to screen digital if available.

However it is important this is 'high-end' digital, that is, DCP and HDCAM. Far too often Digibeta and Blu-ray are being treated as 'digital,' and they are not of the same quality."²¹ Some venues in Los Angeles, such as the Cinefamily and the American Cinematheque, are currently working closely with studio archives to generate Digibeta copies for screenings. This question of quality and appropriate standards seems to shift depending on the venue and the type of film screened.

Jed Rapfogel, programmer at Anthology Film Archives, offered his perspective on repertory programming that focuses on work outside the canon of classic Hollywood cinema, stating, "The important thing from my point of view is showing works in their original format—but since a great deal of Anthology's purpose is to promote the history of avant-garde cinema, and hence to show films from throughout the history of film, this comes to the same thing."²²

Some programmers responded that they would be put in the position of changing their programs owing to the lack of film prints, such as the Northwest Chicago Film Society, whose programmer Rebecca Hall indicated that the society's sole mission is to show film and that they would have no purpose if film were unavailable.²³ Dave Filipi of the Wexner Center for the Arts in Ohio stated that they

would likely change our programming if [repertory] prints aren't available. If everyone (bars, libraries, commercial theaters, etc.) are all showing Blu-ray or DCP then we're really not offering anything unique by playing *The Maltese Falcon* on Blu-ray instead of a 35mm print. We'd focus even more attention on contemporary films, experimental work, new docs, and so on.²⁴

Godfrey Cheshire saw this potential challenge for programmers in 1999:

It strikes me that, *after* the revolution, the two most important factors for movie programmers will be 1) that digital theaters will have all the capacities of television, including live transmission and 2) the need to give people something sufficiently different from the home TV experience to justify the admission charge. If those

things suggest a new definition of "cross purposes," I'll wager that their reconciliation will alter what's offered in movie theaters in ways that moviegoers today can scarcely imagine.²⁵

In addition to the creative and ethical implications of showing titles released on film in a nonfilm format, the programmer must also answer to its audience. Programmers were asked if their audiences could tell the difference between film and digital projection and if these differences seemed to matter to the paying public. For the most part, the responses were mixed. Some programmers felt that audiences did care about film and were more attuned to the distinct qualities that film projection offered. David Reilly from the Brooklyn Academy of Music stated,

We have a discerning audience who care deeply about seeing films on film. During our recent Vincente Minnelli retrospective (thirty-five films, all shown on 35mm or 16mm), for example, we received great audience feedback about the quality of the prints and how much better they looked than digital versions, and particularly the color temperature on Minnelli's Technicolor films.²⁶

In cases in which the programmers felt their audiences were more discriminating, audience frustration or lack of engagement were cited as a result of showing DVDs or other formats. Other programmers seemed less convinced that their audiences saw the difference between screening DVDs versus screening film. For example, Kyle Westphal, chief projectionist from the George Eastman House's Dryden Theatre, noted,

We always take care to announce relevant print whereabouts before our screenings (that is, "This is a brand-new 35mm print and it's never even been through a projector before!" or "Hey, this is a really rare screening and the only surviving prints of this film are ragged and faded, but we hope you can appreciate it in spite of that"), but our patrons rarely engage us in any discussion about these issues.

I cannot remember a complaint when something has been shown digitally—which we do only as a last resort, when there is positively no print available or we face a shipping catastrophe beyond our control. We screened one title on DVD when the print did not arrive on schedule, and the audience seemed confused by our apologies about the lack of a 35mm print. Didn't we always just screen DVDs in the first place?²⁷

Programmers felt that their roles were fulfilled so long as they educated their audiences and were honest and forthcoming with their sources. Education was listed as an important tool for keeping audiences devoted to seeing film prints. Bruce Goldstein, from Film Forum in New York, introduced screenings of classics on DCP to his theater in 2012 in a series titled "This Is DCP" and invited Grover Crisp of Sony Pictures to do a side-by-side comparison of a DCP and a 35mm print of *Dr. Strangelove* (1964). Goldstein felt that

our audience will embrace the new format, as in some instances the quality of the image is actually superior to what's available on 35mm. This does not mean the end of 35mm for us, but will give us more programming options, as we're discovering that many of the newest restorations will not be available as film prints. But access to 35mm prints will always be extremely important to us: without it, we can't do the kind of extensive film festivals we're known for.²⁸

For Goldstein, having both options of showing DCP and screening film prints allows him greater access to library holdings and greater creative latitude.

When a venue is forced to choose between digital projection and film projection, accessibility to fewer titles is inevitable. In his article "Rollover Blues," Edward E. Crouse includes a story told by Bob Endres, a projectionist at Dolby, of a theater in the Midwest that had to replace its new digital projectors with 35mm projectors. The theater, then, "had put 35mm back in because you can't get digital on a second-run basis at the moment."²⁹ In other words, despite

having already converted to digital projection, the venue returned to 35mm projection owing to the limited number of titles available as DCPs. The expectation that converting to digital would open the programmers to more options seems to be a fallacy, at least at the moment, particularly when applied to repertory cinema. The now-defunct UK Film Council noted in its optimistic account of the United Kingdom's conversion of cinemas to digital that "many of the historical barriers which have made it difficult for audiences to gain access to a wider range of film are beginning to tumble."³⁰ In fact, converting completely to digital projection, at the time of this writing, puts repertory programmers in the position of selecting from a small percentage of a studio's library. Steve Seid, video curator at the Pacific Film Archive, whose views are his own, echoed what many programmers reported in response to the survey:

What I see happening at the moment is a vacuum formed between we curators and the studios we've always relied on. Right now lost access to libraries and prints is accelerating at a speed much greater than the reasoning behind it. In other words, the studios have started converting their libraries to digital assets with DCP the crowning achievement but with lax commitment. In the interim, they have locked us out while they decommission prints which are very, very slowly replaced by DCP equivalents. Some studios offer up amateur alternatives like DVDs thinking that is some kind of short-term solution. Because of this, we curators have had to rely on the archives more and more while the studios slowly and sluggishly reevaluate their collections and what they will transfer.³¹

The gap between supply and demand has caused a burden on archives, as Seid mentioned. Will that gap ever be filled? In his article "The Ballad of Blu-ray and Scratchy Old Film" for the *New York Times*, Dave Kehr points out that "many . . . titles disappeared in the transition to DVD because studios felt that more obscure films wouldn't be profitable enough to justify striking new prints and preparing new digital transfers."³² Will studios

be willing to have DCPs available for all titles in their collections despite the cost of such an endeavor? Charlotte Crofts discusses the conversion to digital pragmatically: "It is more about re-platforming profitable archive material in order to sell a digital infrastructure for which there is not currently enough native 'content,' than about the moral imperatives of moving image conservation."³³ This shift in supply of content may ultimately have an impact on our cinema culture. As David Bordwell notes in his blog series "Pandora's Digital Box," "we may get less repertory programming on the whole. Audiences that don't live in a town with an archive or cinemathèque will have less chance to discover film history."³⁴

CHANGES FOR STUDIOS AND ARCHIVES

The questionnaire asked the studio representatives and archivists what changes they thought might take place in the future. Most studio representatives offered that they would supply prints when feasible and available. However, the sentiment from the studio representatives was that they had little control over the fate of 35mm print distribution. For example, one studio representative discussed struggles in working within the company:

I don't really have control because I am again at the mercy of the studio. I go to them to get the approval and permission because I'm accessing their print inventory. They are not making new prints from what I have heard. It's so expensive to make new prints.³⁵

Representatives at studios acknowledged that they were expecting print loans to be reduced. One representative stated that their studio's focus for the next five to ten years was to have DCPs created for every title in the studio's library.³⁶ The long-term reasoning for limiting print loans pointed to a future when the entire studio's collection would presumably be available to license. Another studio representative echoed this, stating that digitizing the studio's entire library was the main goal to increase access.³⁷ One representative laid out the studio's plan directly:

We are now making digital cinema packages during the restoration process on all digitally restored titles. I suspect that once we sort out the internal workflow to service digitally, we will limit loans on those restored titles to digital cinema only and not loan the new 35mm prints. We may not make new negatives or prints on certain titles because of budgetary issues. Theaters that want to run these titles will have to be capable of digital cinema projection. Also, I predict that we will further restrict loans on certain types of prints which are virtually impossible to replace or reprint, that is, 70mm.³⁸

Most archives that responded indicated that they expected to increase loans of items on video or as DCPs. Respondents noted that if they did not have those systems in place, they would likely be considering those options for loans in the future. Andrew Lampert, preservationist at Anthology Film Archives, stated that the archive would likely see a decrease in print loans and an increase in providing content online.³⁹ Archives and studios uniformly cited the need to streamline and tighten the loan process. Some archives, such as the Library of Congress, have already established more standardized loan processes and require more forms and documentation to be filled out.

Overall, the archives and studios had similar outlooks on their future lending practices. While archives remained steadfast in having some form of loans program (albeit sometimes limited), studios seemed to lean more toward the inevitability of highly restricted print access. On the whole, archives and programmers who were mission based had more attachment to film, whereas studios and programmers who had concerns about their bottom lines were reluctant to continue with the current model of borrowing archival prints. On a few occasions, the studio representatives who responded indicated that prints would likely always be available to specific venues in the United States, such as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and MoMA in New York, but that some repertory theaters would receive no such treatment.

A MODEL

This dire outlook for access to 35mm prints was one that some respondents felt could change course if action was taken soon. Each survey requested that the respondent propose a model to keep film prints in circulation. Whereas some respondents demurred from answering, others offered some interesting insights into the possibility of archives, studios, and venues working together. Programmers suggested that they continue to work together to have new prints made by the studios. This practice, which involves programmers effectively guaranteeing a set number of bookings for a new print to be made, would ensure that the studios see a return on their investment. One studio representative from a major studio agreed that this practice could be a viable model for the immediate future, while prints were still being made. However, in the long term, the representative believed that

you will be looking at film in the same way as nitrate. It will be protected. It will have to be something special to pull those prints in the coming years. Those prints will probably be used more for research. The biggest problem is that theaters are going to have to go digital because the studios' hands are going to be tied to the point where we will have to say no to some prints that are requested. And our hands will be tied. It will be straight-up policy, it could be five years from now, it could be ten years from now. The future is going to be satellite or digital, and there's no stopping right now.⁴⁰

The finality of such statements runs counter to the actions and goals of some in the archiving and programming fields to keep film prints in circulation. The importance of educating stakeholders in film projection was cited numerous times by programmers and archivists as a way to create and meet expectations of high-quality film projection. While the archival community seemed concerned about the training of archivists and projectionists, programmers were keen to educate their audiences on the importance of screening film. Archivists on AMIA's Projection and Presentation Committee have

already begun working on this topic, having previously proposed the Venue Information for Archives, an extensive application created for the loans approval process. The elective form would potentially be available to archives and venues through the AMIA website and would allow for a more consistent and transparent process for borrowers and lenders alike. In addition, the Projection and Presentation Committee recently created a basic guide for borrowers of film prints as a primer—but not replacement—for training projectionists of archival film. Brittan Dunham, a member of Sundance's Art House Convergence, reported back from this year's summit of art house programmers and operators that many attendees were concerned about the future accessibility of film prints:

The mantra of the entire convergence seemed to be, "Let's not just sit around and talk, let's make things happen." I had people asking me when and where they can get archival-safe projection training and if we could provide them with a curriculum to host their own workshops. . . . They also really liked the idea of an archivist touring with a print to educate the audiences and even projectionists. Some really good ideas came out of the panel, and people seemed willing to volunteer their time and resources to help find solutions, at least to get us through this "conversion" period.⁴¹

The tools created by volunteers and organizations vested in the future of film projection, including workshops and publications, would be aimed at securing the longevity of the art form of film projection.

Anne Morra, of MoMA, suggested that archives and their programmers work with one another to ensure that their prints are available to each other, suggesting that "North American FIAF archives devise a joint loan protocol, so we are not compared or pitted against each other by non-FIAF users."⁴² Programmer Quentin Turnour, who works on both the programming and lending sides for the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, suggested that archives should generate stricter rules for print loans, while maintaining relationships with microcinemas and local cinematheques. He

expressed concern that FIAF archives would be too limiting to local and passionate film programmers and that they restrict access to those who are knowledgeable and adept at handling film:

FIAF members have to get tough on loaning out their prints, but also get more community-minded so that it just doesn't become too hard and too elitist, especially those funded by their national governments that should be more responsible to tax-payers. . . . They will have to find a relationship with the microcinema, as they will do what FIAF members often can't and they will be where future audiences and curators will come from.⁴³

With Kodak filing bankruptcy in January 2012 and numerous film labs shutting down during this latest financial crisis, a handful of programmers, including Turnour, suggested that the community needs a benefactor to underwrite film labs and access prints for programmers around the country.

Many programmers recommended that film archives expand on their current role of supplying prints to the point of being the outright distributors for film prints of studio libraries, a role that loan officers at archives seemed reluctant to fill. It seems infeasible that archives could, in their current state, execute such a massive undertaking. The three most frequently lending archives in the United States (UCLA, the Library of Congress, and the Academy Film Archive) would struggle to fulfill the requests of just one studio, such as MGM, which lent more than thirteen hundred prints in 2011.⁴⁴ This insurmountable challenge, compounded by financial and infrastructural needs, would be too onerous for archives. Moreover, although providing access to studio titles may be important, archives would likely prefer to lend prints of titles for which they had an active preservation role. A representative for a major studio responded to this proposed model:

I've heard about the model that archives should take over 35mm print loans. In order to do that, [the archive] would have to have some revenue to do that and [the studio] would have to give up

some revenue and it would be a difficult conversation here to have. I do think that that would require creation of preprint elements and that's another investment that—I'm not sure how that would work.⁴⁵

Whatever model is created in this time of changing accessibility, it seems that the views from programmers, studio representatives, and archive loan officers run counter to one another. At the AMIA conference, the "Out of Print" panel sparked a lively discussion that closed with the Academy Film Archive's director, Michael Pogorzelski, passionately entreating the audience and the panelists, as members of the archival community, to take the turning tide that we've observed and adapt and overcome, as film archives and archivists have for nearly a century.⁴⁶

It came as no surprise to many when, during the AMIA conference, a petition sprang up from someone who worked closely with the New Beverly Cinema in Los Angeles. The petition begged studios to retain the model of 35mm exhibition, outlining arguments for 35mm film to stay alive. At the time of writing of this report, there are over ten thousand signatures on the petition.⁴⁷ In a response to the petition, Leo Enticknap, a university lecturer and former moving image archivist, remarked on the AMIA Listserv,

We can no more stop the wholesale transition to DCP projection in 2011 than we could have prevented silent films going away in 1931. The emphasis now has to be on developing ways to produce high-quality DCPs of existing titles cheaply and efficiently (and ideally proactively, in response to theaters' and programmers' demands), and of mitigating the cost of equipment and the disappearance of projectionists' jobs—not on delaying the inevitable.⁴⁸

Janice Allen of Cinema Arts Inc., a self-described "die-hard film-crazy person," argued that "4k digital projection has reached the point where it certainly displays just as well or better than typical 35mm film projection." She believed that there are six reasons to embrace high-quality digital projection:

(1) It apparently offers a locked focus; once the equipment is focused properly there is no need for anyone to be concerned with the constant focus tweaking that often is required (and not always done) in film projection. (2) There are no splices or jump cuts from prior film breaks or cuts. (3) There are no black, colored, or clear base or emulsion scratches. (4) There is no white negative dirt and no black print dirt. (5) There is no vertical weave or horizontal unsteadiness. (6) It is a much “greener” alternative.⁴⁹

As it stands, AMIA itself is struggling to locate conference venues based on the needs of film projection for Archival Screening Night, the conference’s annual screening of archival gems from around the world. This logistical issue has forced archivists to address their own archival positions and philosophical perspectives. What impact does this have on the archival community and the users it serves? Mark Paul-Meyer wrote that

the new technologies urge archives to review the old concepts of collection policy, preservation, access, and programming. They have to serve the old and the new. They have to respect the past but also have to stand with one foot in the world of today and be able to cope with new productions, new demands, new audiences.

... “Digital” is just a new emulsion. And this new emulsion will also create a new visual language. Here lies the critical factor for film archives. Must films not be presented in the format—i.e., the aesthetic framework—in which they were originally intended? Will the “look and feel” of *Ossessione* [1943] not change in digital projection? Of course, in our present time, when audiences are getting used to DVD quality, and digital cinema at home, they probably wouldn’t bother to think about digital projection in a film museum. But this is a tendency that we should strongly oppose. In this context, I think it is very serious that some major studios intend to restore and release their films only in a digital format. If *Casablanca*

[1942] is available in the future only in a digital format, archives are to blame if the cinematographic appreciation of this film disappears.⁵⁰

In twenty or thirty years, what will cinema culture look like? Film prints will likely be available to cinemateques and archives for the next decade, but what about the decade after? Will the experience of seeing film on film continue to be specialized and unique? What happens to all those films that studios won’t have available for exhibition through digital means? If archives have the role to preserve and to provide access to this material, should they consider the option of providing DCPs to those venues that only have digital projection? Is nostalgia over film so strong that archives can’t consider digital projection when it might ultimately allow for greater access?

How will archives remain relevant? It seems that a combination of all the models suggested would allow for film prints to remain in circulation in one form or another. Because film stock is still available, at least for the near future, it seems immediately vital that archives create prints of inaccessible titles in their collection for future access. Archives should incorporate the creation of DCPs in the workflow of preservation (much like access prints are incorporated) and generate DCPs for unique titles in their collections. As cinemas convert to digital, archives will be forced to create greater modes of access to their material. Although it is important to produce prints for exhibition, it would be self-limiting not to include the formation of DCPs alongside that process. Above all, archives need to be flexible and inventive to ensure that film prints are seen in the future. Though the proliferation of digital projection seems unstoppable, the future of access to film prints at film archives is uncertain. If archivists continue to argue the philosophical and ethical concerns of digital projection without playing more active roles in providing access to their film collections in all forms, they may very well be the only ones left on this slowly sinking ship.

APPENDIX

Questions for Film Archives That Lend

- What is the size of your collection?
- Do you charge print loan fees? How much?
- How many prints do you lend a year?
- Do you have a cap or limit on the number of prints that you lend per month or per institution? What is the cap/limit that you impose?
- Have print loan requests increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the past few years? By what percentage?
- Have your print loans increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the past few years? By what percentage?
- Have you made any significant changes in your print loan policies for lending in the past few years? What changes were made?
- Do you foresee any significant changes in your print loan policies in the coming years? In the coming decade? What changes do you think might need to take place?
- What logistical, institutional, or financial challenges do you encounter when lending prints, if any?
- Will lending prints remain a part of the access provided by the archive? In what capacity?
- Is there a model that you would propose to keep film prints in circulation?

Questions for Studio Archives

- How many prints do you lend a year?
- Do you have a cap or limit on the number of prints that you lend per month or per institution? What is the cap/limit that you impose?
- Have print loan requests increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the past few years? By what percentage?
- Have your print loans increased, decreased, or stayed the same in the past few years? By what percentage?
- Have you made any significant changes in your print loan policies for lending in the past few years? What changes were made?
- Do you foresee any significant changes in your print loan policies in the coming

years? What changes do you think might need to take place?

- What logistical, institutional, or financial challenges do you encounter when lending prints, if any?
- Will lending prints remain a part of the access provided by the studio? In what capacity?
- Is there a model that you would propose to keep film prints in circulation?

Questions for Programmers

- Does your venue have changeover?
- How many films do you show a year?
- What percentage of films shown annually is shown on film versus digitally?
- Of the prints that are borrowed, what percentage comes from film archives?
- Have you seen a change in recent years in borrowing film prints? From studios? From archives?
- Do you think you'll be screening film prints in the next few years? In the next decade? Why?
- Is it financially feasible to borrow film prints for you?
- Does your audience notice and care about the difference between film prints and movies shown digitally?
- Is screening film prints a priority for your venue? Why or why not?
- How do you think borrowing film prints will change in the coming years?
- Is there a model that you would propose to keep film prints in circulation?

May HaDuong is an archivist in Los Angeles, where she serves as the public access coordinator at the Academy Film Archive. The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Academy Film Archive.

NOTES

1. Godfrey Cheshire, "The Death of Film/the Decay of Cinema," *New York Press* 12, no. 34 (1999), <http://nypress.com/the-death-of-film/>. *Repertory film programming* refers to the selection and exhibition of titles that are no longer in their first release.

2. The six major studios that were represented in responses were Twentieth Century Fox, Paramount Pictures, Sony Pictures, Universal Pictures, Walt Disney Pictures, and Warner Bros. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer also responded.
3. *Changeover projection* refers to the projection of a film print using two projectors. Rather than building up the reels of the print onto a larger reel or a platter, the projectionist changes from one complete reel to the next during the screening, leaving head and tail leader intact.
4. A digital cinema package (DCP) refers to a collection of files relating to the exhibition of a moving image. A DCP can be stored on a hard drive or an electronic network.
5. Gwen DeGlise, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 8, 2011.
6. E-mail correspondence from a programmer, November 9, 2011.
7. DeGlise, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 8, 2011.
8. E-mail correspondence from a programmer, November 9, 2011.
9. Rob Stone, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 10, 2011.
10. Jed Rapfogel, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 6, 2011.
11. Kent Youngblood, personal discussion with the author, November 7, 2011. MGM now works with Park Circus, a third-party contractor, to coordinate their print loans.
12. Jared Rapfogel, "Repertory Film Programming," *Cineaste* 35, no. 2 (2010): 46.
13. E-mail correspondence from a studio representative, November 8, 2011.
14. Telephone conversation with a studio representative, November 8, 2011.
15. Todd Wiener, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 3, 2011.
16. Lynanne Schweighofer, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 10, 2011.
17. John Ewing, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 2, 2011.
18. Gabrielle Claes, "Musée du Cinéma/Cinematek," *Journal of Film Preservation* 79–80 (2009): 27.
19. Paul Rayton, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 8, 2011.
20. Lars Nilsen, "Out of Print: The Changing Landscape of Print Accessibility of Film Archives," panelist, November 17, 2011.
21. Julie Pearce, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 2, 2011.
22. Rapfogel, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 6, 2011.
23. Rebecca Hall, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 7, 2011.
24. Dave Filipi, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 1, 2011.
25. Cheshire, "The Death of Film."
26. David Reilly, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 7, 2011.
27. Kyle Westphal, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 7, 2011.
28. Bruce Goldstein, e-mail correspondence with the author, January 19, 2012.
29. Edward E. Crouse, "Rollover Blues," *Film Comment* 2 (2011): 58.
30. UK Film Council, "Film in the Digital Age: UK Film Council Policy and Funding Priorities," April 2007–March 2010, 3, http://www.ukfilmcouncil.org.uk/media/pdf/7/r/FITDA_FINAL.pdf.
31. Steve Seid, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 4, 2011.
32. Dave Kehr, "The Ballad of Blu-ray and Scratchy Old Film," *New York Times*, January 3, 2010.
33. Charlotte Crofts, "Digital Decay," *The Moving Image* 8, no. 2 (2008): 17.
34. David Bordwell, "From Films to Files," *Observations on Film Art* (blog), February 28, 2012, <http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2012/02/28/pandoras-digital-box-from-films-to-files/>.
35. Telephone conversation with a studio representative, November 10, 2011.
36. Telephone conversation with a studio representative, November 1, 2011.
37. Telephone conversation with a studio representative, November 8, 2011.
38. E-mail correspondence from a studio representative, November 8, 2011.
39. Andrew Lampert, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 1, 2011.
40. Telephone conversation with a studio representative, November 8, 2011.
41. Brittan Dunham, e-mail correspondence with the author, January 26, 2012.
42. Anne Morra, e-mail correspondence with the author, November 10, 2011.
43. Quentin Turnour, e-mail correspondence

with the author, October 31, 2011.

44. Youngblood, personal discussion with the author, November 7, 2011.

45. Telephone conversation with a studio representative, November 1, 2011.

46. Michael Pogorzelski, "Out of Print: The Changing Landscape of Print Accessibility of Film Archives," participant, November 17, 2011.

47. Julia Marchese, "Fight for 35mm" petition, November 15, 2011.

48. Leo Enticknap, "Reply: Fight for 35mm, Petition Targeting Major Film Studios," November 17, 2011, <http://lsv.uky.edu/archives/amia-l.html>.

49. Janice Allen, e-mail correspondence with the author, January 21, 2012.

50. Mark Paul-Meyer, "Traditional Film Projection in a Digital Age," *Journal of Film Preservation* 70 (2005): 15–16.

Restoring *The Spanish Dancer* (1923)

ROB BYRNE

POLA TAKES THE STAGE

Pola Negri was already an international star when she arrived in Hollywood in 1922. The Polish actress boasted a brilliant résumé, having starred in five features by German director Ernst Lubitsch, most notably the sensational *Madame DuBarry* (1919), released in 1920 in the United States as *Passion*. Regardless, her first American productions, *Bella Donna* (1923) and *The Cheat* (1923), both directed by George Fitzmaurice, met with only lukewarm success, sending Famous-Players in search of a stronger vehicle for its exotic actress. The studio settled on an adaptation of *Don César de Bazan*, a novel by Adolphe Philippe Dennery and Philippe François Pinel, which had been originally purchased as a vehicle for Rudolph Valentino. However, the Sheik's legal dispute with the studio precluded his participation in the project, leaving the studio with the property on their hands. Writers Beulah Marie Dix and

June Mathis reworked the story, transforming the gypsy dancer Maritana into the central focus, and cast Negri in the role. The star hoped for a reunion with the recently imported Ernst Lubitsch, with whom she had so successfully conquered Europe, but the studio had already loaned the director to Mary Pickford for *Rosita* (1923), a film based on the very same novel. Famous-Players instead assigned Herbert Brenon to direct Negri in their version, titled *The Spanish Dancer*.

The photoplay for *The Spanish Dancer* features Pola Negri as Maritana, a gypsy dancer in love with Don César de Bazan, a penniless nobleman played by Antonio Moreno. Intrigue in the Spanish court arises when the king (Wallace Beery) must decide whether to sign a treaty with France. His wife, Queen Isabel (Kathlyn Williams), advocates in favor but is opposed by courtier Don Salluste (Adolphe Menjou), who conspires to sow discord between the royal couple. Don César is arrested in violation of the king's edict against dueling and is sentenced to the firing squad. Maritana pleads with the queen to spare Don César, but the king has designs on the "gypsy wench" and delays the pardon. The plot reaches its climax when the king dupes Maritana into a rendezvous at his hunting lodge, while Don César escapes and attempts Maritana's rescue and the queen arrives to confront her husband with his infidelity.

Principal photography for *The Spanish Dancer* began June 4, 1923, and concluded two months later, on August 2. According to Glendon Allvine, 75,000 feet of film were exposed, which Hector Turnbull edited into a nine-reel release length of 8,434 feet.¹ The film premiered in New York on October 7, only one month after Mary Pickford's *Rosita*. *Photoplay* proclaimed Negri's performance "magnificent," observing that "after being wasted in 'Bella Donna' and 'The Cheat,' Pola Negri comes back to her own in this picture."² Comparing her performance to Mary Pickford's *Rosita*, the *Tribune* characterized Negri's performance as "more colorful, more vigorous, more dazzling, and [a] gaudier one," while the *San Antonio Express* described the production as "not only spectacular, but is dramatic in its small moments," adding that "Negri comes back and is again the Negri that so electrified the world in 'Passion.'"³ Taking