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This book began in 1999, on the terrace of a small café in Amsterdam, just around the corner of the Vondelpark, where the Nederlands Filmmuseum was located at the time. I was working there as a cataloguer. Frank Kessler, who supervised my MA thesis at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, came to the library for some research. We went for coffee and the first thing he said when we sat down was: ‘OK, so what will your PhD project be about?’ I thought quickly, and responded: ‘the Filmmuseum’, which was basically the first thing that came to my mind. He thought it was a great idea, and the research project on the interrelationship between film historiography and film museum practice was born.

After a period during which I combined work at the Filmmuseum with formulating a research project, I got the opportunity to embed my work into a larger research group at Utrecht University called ‘Scenarios for the Humanities’, with Frank Kessler, William Uricchio, and Nanna Verhoeff as my supervising team. I dug deep into all kinds of archives containing correspondence between the institute in its infancy and its partners. It was a most curious quest, following the traces of the institute’s first directing manager Jan de Vaal into the Stedelijk Museum, to chance upon his private mail that was sometimes intermingled with his professional correspondences. Simultaneously, all the work done by the people who were directly working with the films in Castricum and later Overveen also stole my heart because of the dedication and perseverance shown to build a safe house for these treasures at a time when only a few people were interested in these unknown (early) films.

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