

FILM CAN WAIT (IF YOU DON'T THROW IT AWAY)

The FIAF 70th Anniversary Manifesto

Motion picture film forms an indispensable part of our cultural heritage and a unique record of our history and our daily lives. Film archives, both public and private, are the organizations responsible for acquiring, safeguarding, documenting and making films available to current and future generations for private study and public pleasure.

The International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) and its affiliates comprising more than 140 archives from 70 countries have rescued over two million films in the last seventy years. However for some genres, geographical regions and periods of film history the survival rate is known to be considerably less than 10% of the titles produced.

On the occasion of its 70th anniversary, FIAF offers the world a new slogan: “**FILM CAN WAIT (IF YOU DON'T THROW IT AWAY)**”. Film is culturally irreplaceable, and can last a long time, especially in expert hands. If you are unable to keep film yourself, then FIAF and its members will gladly help you locate an archive that can.

While fully recognizing the great possibilities that the continuing progress of digital technology offers for enhancing audiovisual access and might eventually offer for preservation, the members of FIAF are determined to **continue to acquire film and preserve it as film**. FIAF affiliates urge all those who make and look after films, whether they be professionals or amateurs, and the government officials in all nations responsible for safeguarding the world cinema heritage, to help achieve this goal.

The slogan “**FILM CAN WAIT (IF YOU DON'T THROW IT AWAY)**” means that film must not be discarded, even though those who hold it may think they have adequately secured the content by transferring it onto a more stable film carrier or by scanning it into the digital domain at a resolution which apparently does not entail any significant loss of data. Film archives and museums are committed to preserve film on film because:

- A film is either created under the direct supervision of a filmmaker or is the record of an historical moment captured by a cameraman. Both types are potentially important artifacts and part of the world's cultural heritage. Film is a tangible and "human-eye readable" entity which needs to be treated with great care, like other museum or historic objects.
- All digital information carriers are vulnerable to physical and chemical deterioration and all hardware and software to obsolescence; and digital information has value only if it can be interpreted. Although film can be physically and chemically fragile, it is a stable material that can survive for more than a century, as long as it is stored under the recommended conditions of temperature and humidity and receives regular visual inspections. Its life expectancy has already proved much longer than moving image carriers like videotape that were developed after film.
- Film is currently the optimal archival storage medium for moving images. It is one of the most standardized and international products available and it remains a medium with high resolution potential. The data it contains does not need regular migration nor does its operating system require frequent updating.
- The film elements held in archive vaults are the original materials from which all copies are derived. One can determine from them whether a copy is complete or not. The more digital technology is developed, the easier it will be to change or even arbitrarily alter content. Unjustified alteration or unfair distortion, however, can always be detected by comparison with the original film provided it has been properly stored.

Never throw a film away, even after you think something better comes along. No matter what technologies emerge for moving images in the future, existing film copies connect us to the achievements and certainties of the past. They will continue to do so as long as they are kept safely in proper archival conditions. FILM CAN WAIT. DON'T DESTROY IT.

Paris, April 2008

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Note:

After the submission to EC meeting, the finalized draft of this document is planned to be officially adopted at the General Assembly of the 64th FIAF Congress held in Paris in April, 2008.