

Abstract

The main mission of the Filmoteca de Catalunya is the recovery, conservation, research and dissemination of films and audiovisual works and materials, documents, equipment and any other element of interest to the study of cinema and audiovisual art in general and Catalan cinema in particular. In essence, the conservation and dissemination of film culture. A description is given of the areas that contribute to achieving this objective and a reflection on the need to offer the public, institutions and businesses with interests in the film industry a reliable professional service.

Resum

La Filmoteca de Catalunya té com a missió principal recuperar, conservar, investigar i difondre les

pel·lícules i les obres audiovisuals, així com els materials, documents, equips i qualsevol altre element que sigui d'interès per a l'estudi del cinema i l'audiovisual en general, i del cinema català en particular. En essència, conservar i difondre la cultura cinematogràfica. Es descriuen les àrees que contribueixen a aquesta fita i es reflexiona sobre la necessitat d'oferir un servei fiable i professional a la ciutadania, les institucions i les empreses amb interessos en el sector cinematogràfic.

Resumen

La Filmoteca de Catalunya tiene como misión principal la recuperación, conservación, investigación y difusión de las películas y las obras audiovisuales, así como los materiales, documentos, equipos y cualquier otro elemento que sea de interés para el estudio del cine y el audiovisual en general, y del cine catalán en particular. En esencia, conservación y difusión de la cultura cinematográfica. Se describen las áreas que contribuyen a esta meta y se reflexiona sobre la necesidad de ofrecer un servicio confiable y profesional a la ciudadanía, las instituciones y las empresas con intereses en el sector cinematográfico.

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1 Introduction

In July 2011, at the **Cubitt Gallery (http://cubittartists.org.uk/)**, London artist **Ruth Beale** (http://www.ruthbeale.net/) presented a series of events exploring relationships between the social purpose and cultural significance of the library and archive as public spaces for the collection, preservation and distribution of knowledge. Lindgren & Langlois: The Archive Paradox (http://www.ruthbeale.net/images/Lindgren_Langlois.pdf) is a dramatized exchange of letters between two film archivists who influenced film library policy the world over from 1948 onwards. One, Ernest Lindgren (1910–1973), director of the **British Film Institute (http://www.bfi.org.uk/)** for forty years: his institution compiled films selectively while maintaining a strict policy of not screening original films and additionally developed conservation and cataloguing techniques that have become international standards. The other, Henri Langlois (1914–1977), cinephile and cofounder of the Cinémathèque Française (http://www.cinematheque.fr/), collected, saved, and screened as widely as possible all the films he could. We owe the anecdote to a scholarly article by García-Casado and Alberich-Pascual (2014), which bears witness to and summarises two opposing ways of understanding the film library phenomenon, combined by the authors in the dichotomy archive versus exhibition, that is, the conservation of film heritage and everything related to the world of film, versus the pedagogical dissemination of filmmaking to all audiences.

Just one year before Beale's performance, in Catalonia the Catalan Cinema Act (http://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2010/08/07/pdfs/BOE-A-2010-12709.pdf) was passed, consolidating through regulations a sector that, following the transfer of authority planned in 1980, had been only partially regulated. In both the preamble and its articles, the Act recognises the authority of the Filmoteca de Catalunya (http://www.filmoteca.cat/) in matters of 'the preservation and dissemination in film heritage and culture; the recovery, preservation, cataloguing and restoration of film and documentary heritage; and support for the dissemination of film culture, paying special attention to Catalan film production and culture'. The Catalan Parliament integrated in the philosophy of the Act the two schools of thought represented by Lindgren and Langlois: preservation and dissemination, in accordance with the hybridising tendency of the film libraries of neighbouring countries, while including, de *jure*, that which had been carried out at the Filmoteca de Catalunya from 1981 onwards, the date on which it was officially created, heir to the Barcelona branch of the Spanish Film Archive as of the midsixties.

In 2012, the Filmoteca de Catalunya received a final boost when, in an ambitious project, it was moved from its old site to two new centres: the building in El Raval, which contains offices and repositories with areas open to the public (screening rooms, exhibition rooms, specialised library); and the Conservation and Restoration Centre (2CR), in the Catalonia Audiovisual Park (http://www.parcaudiovisual.cat), in Terrassa, designed and built to guarantee the conservation of film heritage, both analogue and digital.



Catalunya, Barcelona © Guillermo Rivera, Filmoteca de Catalunya



Figure 2. The Filmoteca de

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Catalunya's 2CR in the Catalonia Audiovisual Park (Terrassa) © Guillermo Rivera, Filmoteca de Catalunya

Organically dependent on the **Catalan Institute for the Cultural Companies**

(http://www.gencat.cat/cultura/icic/), under the Catalan Ministry of Culture, the Filmoteca de Catalunya has been directed by Esteve Riambau since 2010. It is structured into four areas (Administration; Dissemination; Documentation; 2CR), and has a staff of forty-three. In regard to its impact, 176,660 people have enjoyed the institutions' service in person, attending film screenings (1,109 films in 1,423 sessions) or, to a lesser degree, by using the specialised library (14,098 consultations by researchers), the educational services (8,900 people) and the two programmed exhibitions (1,656 visitors). It has large film holdings (28,415 titles) and documentary holding (some 550,000 copies). The Filmoteca is a full member of the **FIAF (http://www.fiafnet.org/)** (International Federation of Film Archives) and as such organised its 69th international congress. Present in the social media, the Filmoteca website receives 520,344 visits a year and has 27,800 followers on its corporate **Facebook** page and 12,400 on its **Twitter** profile.

With this background and as established by law, the Filmoteca de Catalunya's main mission is the recovery, conservation, research and dissemination of films and audiovisual works, as well as materials, documents, equipment and any other element of interest in the study of cinema and audiovisual art in general, and Catalan cinema in particular. In essence: the conservation and dissemination of film culture.

In this article, and for the interest of readers of BID: textos universitaris de biblioteconomia i documentació, we will focus on the task and services of the two units responsible for presentation and dissemination of the film and documentary holdings: the Conservation and Restoration Centre (2CR), and the Documentation Unit, which includes the Film Library.

2 The Conservation and Restoration Centre

The Conservation and Restoration Centre (2CR) has as its mission the conservation of film heritage. It is a reference for this type of service in Catalonia and aims to become the same internationally.

It strategy includes the following objectives:

- 1. To recover lost historic Catalan films, promoting national and international research and investigation, implementing current film conservation policies by means of funding orders and the Legal Deposit Act.
- 2. To conserve the reels of film in fridges with strict temperature and humidity control, and the digital holdings thanks to the implementation of a robust, stable system. When conservation problems are detected, preservation and restoration work is carried out.
- 3. To promote the research, cataloguing and processing of the holdings, in compliance with international standards.
- 4. To publicise the holdings, facilitating and promoting access to collections, presenting copies at film libraries and festivals, and editing in DVD.

The film holdings comprise 28,415 titles, distributed on 186,291 reels in cans, and 13,194 digital titles. Noteworthy amongst these are:

- 1. Catalan production since 1896, including *Panorama du port* (1896), *Gent i paisatge de Catalunya* (1926), *La proclamació de la República* (1931), *Vida en sombras* (Llorenç Llobet-Gràcia, 1948), *Los Tarantos* (Francesc Rovira-Beleta, 1963), *La plaça del diamant* (Francesc Betriu, 1982) and *Pa negre* (Agustí Villaronga, 2012).
- 2. The newsreels and documentaries of Laya Films (1936–1939), the Catalan Government's production company during the Spanish Civil War. The most noteworthy film of the time was *Catalunya màrtir* (Laya Films, 1938) which bore witness to the attacks on civilians during the war, and is considered essential in the use of cinema as a weapon of defence and denunciation.
- 3. Clandestine, amateur, experimental and scientific cinema, revealing the plurality of Catalan cinema.
- 4. The nitrate collection from the early days (1896–1914) made up of original documents, of great historiographical value to the study of the origins of cinema, and representative of the importance of Barcelona as a centre of world distribution during this period, with unpublished titles by Méliès, Smith, Zecca and Guy; and came from the major turn-of-the-century production companies with offices in Barcelona: Lumière, Pathé, Gaumont, Star Films, Urban, etc.
- 5. The Segundo de Chomón collection. Chomón (1903–1917) was an internationally renowned filmmaker who began his career in Barcelona. With over 100 titles, he shows the capacity for invention and adaptation of the new medium in its early stages. *L'hereu de Can Pruna* (1904) is considered a masterly film adapted to the context of the Barcelona of the time. *Superstition andalouse* (1912) demonstrates the ability to introduce narrativity in cinema, while leaving room for attraction.

The 2CR pays attention to the conservation of the photochemical and digital films. In regard to the former, the centre has designated areas for their reception, inspection, viewing and treatment, for both negatives and positives, and chambers with temperature, humidity and air renewal control, adapted to the needs of plastic media, whether cellulose acetate, polyester or cellulose nitrate. For the first time, Catalonia has an institution capable of preventing the loss of film heritage entailed in any technological change —in the change from silent to talkies, 80 % of pre-1930 world production was lost; in Catalonia the figure reached 90%.

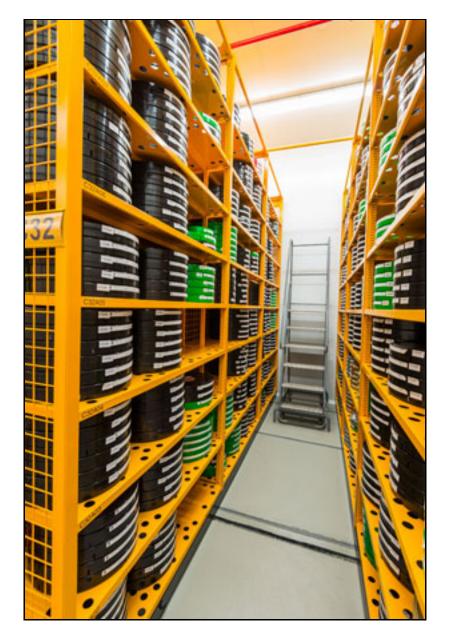


Figure 3. Repositories in the Filmoteca de Catalunya's 2CR

© Guillermo Rivera, Filmoteca de Catalunya

In the case of digital media (HDcam, hard discs, DCPs), the challenge is met in terms of conservation, but also restoration and dissemination, as digital technology offers magnificent new tools in this field. The digital conservation system consists of a reliable repository, in which data is ingested and migrated from original media (native digital cinema, generally) with an anticipated annual growth of 100 TB. The system is designed so that the contents deposited on the digital platform may be consulted remotely. The Filmoteca de Catalunya pioneered high-quality digital restoration (4K) in 2005 and today has a cinematographic scanner (Northlight

(http://www.filmlight.ltd.uk/products/northlight/overview_nl.php)) capable of working with resolutions of up to 6K (6,144 x 3,160 pixels per frame), considered very high. To further conservation, the collection is disseminated on high-resolution digital copies —DCP— of Catalan films and editions on DVD.

Finally, access to digitalised copies of the 2CR film collections is via the visitor service at the Filmoteca, where users may query the records management system, or be attended personally in answer to a request for information. The viewing and selection of materials is also undertaken at Filmoteca facilities made available to researchers and professionals.

3 The Documentation Unit

The Documentation Unit, which includes the Film Library, has the mission of supporting the Filmoteca de Catalunya in its aim of being the benchmark centre for the preservation and dissemination of film culture.

Its strategy includes the following priority objectives:

- To recover, conserve and disseminate heritage documentation on Catalan cinema.
- To make the Filmoteca's holdings and collections available to the Filmoteca de Catalunya, as well as to all scholars and researchers in film culture.
- To promote the role of the Film Library as a benchmark centre in Catalonia for film information and research.
- To contribute to the efforts made by the Filmoteca de Catalunya to educate and raise awareness of cinema amongst the various audiences.

These are complemented by these instrumental objectives:

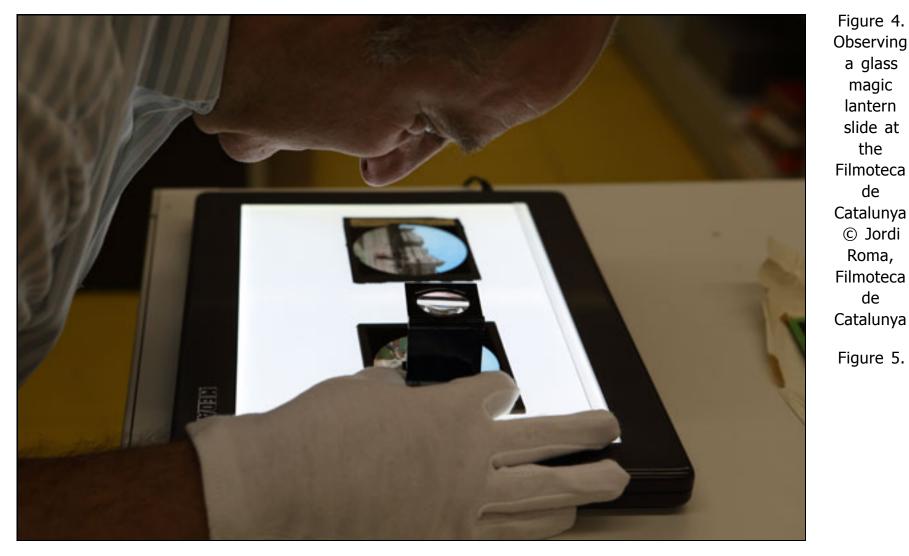
- To work across the board with the Filmoteca de Catalunya's other services, and whenever possible with other national and international institutions and cultural agents.
- To incorporate in the planning of activities the need to reach the media and the general public, in accordance with Filmoteca's communication policy.
- To make its services available to the Filmoteca, the Catalan Ministry of Culture and the Government of Catalonia, the public services, Catalan cultural industries and agents and to the general public.

The holdings and collection comprise some 550,000 items, including:

- 62,000 copies of books and magazines, that make up the core of the library specialised in cinema and the audiovisual arts, with an acquisition policy based on the constant updating of the holdings by acquiring new material on this subject from major international publishers. The collection also includes some pre-cinema gems: *Ars magna lucis et umbrae* by Athanasius Kircher (Amsterdam, 1671), *Magia naturalis* by Ioannis Baptista Portae (Rouen, 1650) or *La instantaneidad de la fotografía* by Jaume Ferran (Tortosa, 1879); and from the early days of cinema: *Photoplay Writing* by William Lord Wright (1922), *Kinematograph Studio Technique* by L. C. MacBean (1922) and *Pour bien tourner: guide du cinégraphiste amateur* by Duclair-Northy (1924).
- 385,000 negatives, dating from 1932 onwards, of stills and still images, including the holdings from Reproducciones Sabaté, a Barcelona industrial laboratory which processed commissions from Catalan production companies, distributors and film industry photographers (Pintanel, 2008; 2010).
- 25,000 posters, amongst which we can highlight a collection of Italian posters from the early days of cinema, and a detailed trip through the history of film advertising.
- 20,000 programmes, which include the bills of the Catalan cinemas that distributed them.
- 16,000 films on Blu-ray disc, DVD and VHS, mainly cinema for general distribution, and audiovisual documentation for use in research.
- 6,000 soundtracks on CD and LP, which illustrate the history of film music through adapted musical works and music composed for films.
- 3.000 cinematographic novels, produced by publishers in Barcelona such as Bistagne, Editorial Alas and Publicaciones Mundial in the first third of the 20th century, an essential product in cinema research, because they are sometimes the only trace left of a film that once was, but of which no copies remain.
- 1,250 museum pieces, mostly from the holdings of Delmiro de Caralt and Pilar de Quadras, which includes a previously unknown collection of magic lantern glass slides, and a Praxinoscope (1877), invented by Emile Reynaud, the successor and an improvement on the zoetrope. Reynaud destroyed most of those he made.
- 78 bequests from individuals and businesses, including the documentation of director, screenwriter and

camera operator Ramon de Baños (Barcelona, 1890–1980); director of photography and film producer Fructuós Gelabert (Barcelona, 1874–1955); director Francesc Rovira-Beleta (Barcelona, 1912–1999); critic José Luis Guarner (Barcelona, 1937–1993); director and screenwriter Julio Salvador (Barcelona, 1906–1974); the film collection of Adrià Gual (Barcelona, 1872–1943); and the stills of Colita (Barcelona, 1940).

• Rare books, Catalan film posters, postcards, picture cards, pressbooks, etc.



Programme in the documentary collection of the Filmoteca de Catalunya © Jordi Roma, Filmoteca de Catalunya

Figure 6. Early 20th-century film posters in the Filmoteca de Catalunya © Jordi Roma, Filmoteca de Catalunya

As a member of the **Government of Catalonia Specialised Libraries** (http://cultura.gencat.cat/beg/) (BEG) network, the Filmoteca's film catalogue –created through the merger of three libraries specialised in cinema (Rueda, 2010)—, can be accessed remotely, and as of July



2014 it is part of the



University Union Catalogue of Catalonia (http://ccuc.cbuc.cat/*eng) (CCUC). The institution's **digital repository (http://repositori.filmoteca.cat/)**, developed by the Catalan University Services Consortium, provides access to 17,000 items, including a selection of graphic holdings, and has been incorporated in the portals **Digital Memory of Catalonia** (http://mdc1.cbuc.cat/index.php) (MDC), Hispana (http://hispana.mcu.es/en/estaticos/contenido.cmd?

pagina=estaticos%2Fpresentacion) and Europeana (http://www.europeana.eu/), and the cooperative site **ARCA** (http://www.bnc.cat/digital/arca/angles/index.html) (Old Catalan Serials Archive), by contributing Catalan cinema magazines in the public domain. Furthermore, the **Transcriu-me!** (http://transcriu.bnc.cat/) programme, developed by the Library of Catalonia, recently incorporated a collection of a thousand film posters from the Filmoteca that were able to be transcribed thanks to crowdsourcing, that is, public participation via the Internet.

The Documentation Unit focuses its efforts on the dissemination of and research on film culture by means of a permanent exhibition of part of the pre-cinema collection, a reading room providing direct access to the book and journal/magazine collection, along with booths for researchers, audiovisual viewing areas and access to cinema databases (FIAF (http://fiaf.chadwyck.com), AFI (http://afi.chadwyck.co.uk), **FII (http://fii.chadwyck.co.uk/)**). In regard to the conservation repositories, two small cold rooms maintain graphic documentation, heritage archives, negatives and special collections in optimum conditions.

4 Reality and challenges in the conservation and dissemination of film culture

Since they were created, the various services of the Filmoteca de Catalunya have made every effort to guarantee the preservation and dissemination of film and documentary holdings concerning Catalan culture and audiovisual film. The move to the new centres, in 2012, meant facilities better equipped for these purposes, while the staff have authority to offer services that are more focused on professionals, researchers and the general public, in a society that has spent the last twenty years supporting an area of the economy, audiovisual production, that is considered strategic to Catalan culture and industry.

Three challenges emerge to contribute to the responsibility bestowed on the Filmoteca de Catalunya by current legislation.

First of all, the need to act as an observatory and benchmark of film heritage conservation, in the film and audiovisual industry's transition from analogue to digital. As highlighted during the 69th FIAF Congress, which, as it turns out, was held in Barcelona, the days of motion picture film as a standard of distribution are numbered. For major US studios it will be replaced by the DCP (Digital Cinema Package) in 2015. The film industry, including the Catalan industry, has adopted the new medium, but there is agreement, in this new chapter, in highlighting the dangers —or rather, the unknown factors— involved in using digital media in terms of preservation (Riambau, 2013; 2014). And while a number of American production companies are storing their digital media in analogue format while there is no guarantee regarding the conservation of their digital material, Catalan small and medium-sized enterprises would find it difficult to turn their digital production over to 35 mm. Thus, the Filmoteca de Catalunya is charged strategically with monitoring the development of digital media preservation, and with acting as a benchmark and expert authority in what could be considered good practices to assess the Catalan film and audiovisual industry and contribute to conserving its contemporary production.

Secondly, the undertaking to provide access to and publicise the film and documentary collections and holdings kept in the Filmoteca de Catalunya, to enable their use and exploitation, with due respect for any intellectual property rights that may apply. In this regard, the GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums), memorial institutions, have responded to the various calls by the European Commission to add content to build up an open trusted source of European heritage; facilitate knowledge transfer, innovation and the promotion of the cultural heritage sector; distribute heritage to users wherever they are and whenever they want it; and attract users with new forms of participation in their own cultural heritage (European Commission, 2010; 2011). There are numerous examples of the active role film libraries are playing in the dissemination of their heritage the world over: the Dutch website, **Dutch Film History**, is one such example; the union catalogue of French film libraries and archives, **Ciné-Ressources** (http://www.cineressources.net), is another. The British Film Institute's search and access service (http://www.bfi.org.uk/archive-collections/searching-access-collections) is another fine example.

Thirdly, the opportunity to contribute to the training and employment of people who bring talent, creativity and expertise to the Catalan film and audiovisual industry. During the economic downturn it lost some muscle, but it is still solid, whether in the creation, production and marketing of traditional audiovisual content, for cinema or television, or in the use of such content on new media: video games, advertising, mobile apps, Internet, specialised design, photography, technology, and so on. Many small and mediumsized enterprises, along with future professionals currently in training, can find in the Filmoteca de Catalunya an ally in accessing content of heritage interest, as mentioned previously, but also in specialised research in the art of cinema and its techniques, completing the broad training offer in the subject in Catalonia, with unique specialised information.

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