Film Archives Must Digitize! - and become leaders in digital preservation and access of film heritage.

Belogna, 30 June 2011 Thomas Christensen



The (Digital) Future is Now!

- Analogue film laboratories are closing
- Analogue film screenings will soon only happen in archive theatres
- Archive film theatres must be equipped to screen digital film elements to be able to screen new films
- Archive holdings must be digitized to provide access



Film Archive Activities

- Collection
- Preservation
- Restoration
- Access and Programming



Collection

- Collection building of new international films will cease, since storage of encrypted DCPs is a dead end.
- Legal deposit will ensure a steady flow of digitally born elements into national archives.
- The analogue film collection will become a unique ressource to be digitized on demand.



Preservation

- Analogue films can be stored cold and dry for centuries without need for migration/duplication.
- Digital preservation is a parallel activity to passive storage of analogue film and will require additional funding.
- Digital and electronic media are prone to hardware, software, file format and runtime obsolescence.
 Migration and refreshing is an ongoing activity.
- Digital preservation is a complex activity and not cost efficient compared with analogue preservation.



Restoration

- Digital restoration offer many magnificent tools, which allow powerful manipulation.
- Film archives must strive for authenticity.
- Film archives have a moral obligation to retain the link to the film as a heritage element and to not over-restore or re-master.
- Film archives must engage in digital restoration and production of digital film elements in order to develop a professional discourse on ethical standards in digital restoration.



Access and Programming

- Online access through EFG and Europeana can create new users and uses, generating new cultural value beyond imagination.
- DCP distribution might open up wider distribution of heritage films, also to non-FIAF venues.

However:

- This requires film archives to actively create authentic digital cinema quality elements, especially of public domain and orphan films.
- Analogue film archive ethics still apply, they must just be translated into digital.