

# Digital Film Archiving in Practice

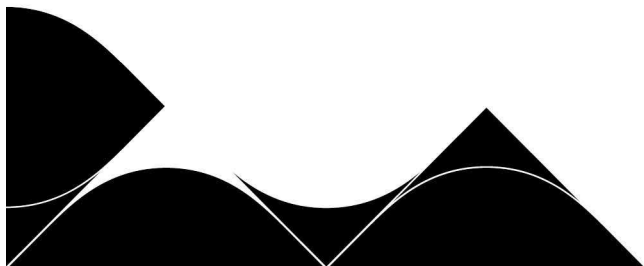
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## Topics

The effects of the transition to digital technology in film archival practice.

- topics and goal of my work as a scholar
- archival bipolarity: the archivist and the scholar
- a model archive of the future and the challenges to get there
- archival dizziness: the digital long-term



## The Scholar: research topics and goals

A plea for dialogue and for a renewed mindset that will influence how we understand, preserve, and present our film heritage.

A proposal for a new theorization of film archival practice:

- Suitable for this transitional phase
- A common ground for dialogue
- A look at film's nature from the perspective of transition: 'film has never been one thing'
- Acknowledgement of the tension between the material film artifact (e.g. the nitrate film, the Super8, etc.) and the conceptual film artifact (e.g. the film performance, from the early travelling cinema to emerging urban screens)



## **Archival Bipolarity: the scholar and the archivist**

Euphoria and melancholy

Film and media archivists caught up in everyday challenges

Film scholars (film and media studies, archive and heritage studies, and IT) moving at a faster pace than practice

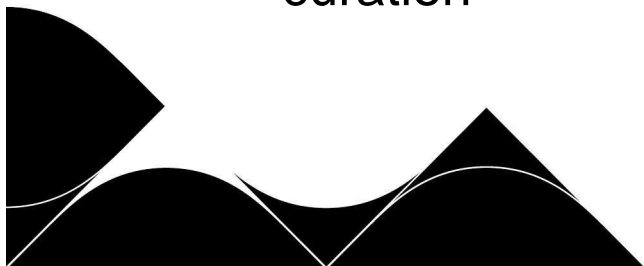
The audio-visual field at large

Relevancy and urgency of a theory of (archival) practice and of a renewed dialogue



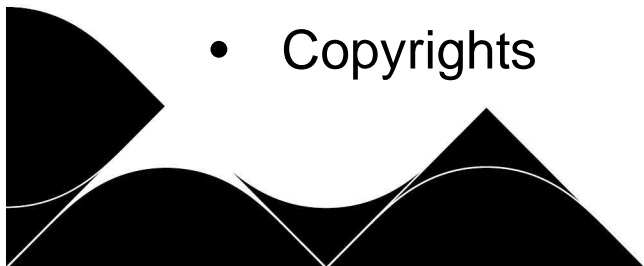
## A Model Film Archive anno 2020

- the freezer: for the long-term preservation of the historical (pre-digital) collection
- the cloud: for the long-term preservation of the digital collection
- the virtual Steenbeck: haptic experience of material artifact (Minority Report style)
- the reenactment of historical dispositifs (Crazy Cinematograph style, IMAX style, etc.)
- the visible collection: on-site, on-line, on the road
- the reconciled Curator: curatorship AND crowd curation



## A Model Archive: the challenges

- Heritage (analog and digital)
  - long-term
  - migration
  - standardization
  - obsolescence
  - costs
  - expertise and know-how (new digital to be created and old analog to be 'preserved')
  - infrastructure
- Digitization and Restoration
  - equipment (convergence/divergence: keep the analog alive while improving the digital)
  - expertise and know-how
  - standards
- Exhibition
- Access
- Copyrights



## A Model Archive: the challenges

Change in mindset of all players involved in the process

- archivist
- scholars
- crowd
- Politicians
- (public and private) funding entities
- right holders



## **Archival Dizziness: the digital long-term**

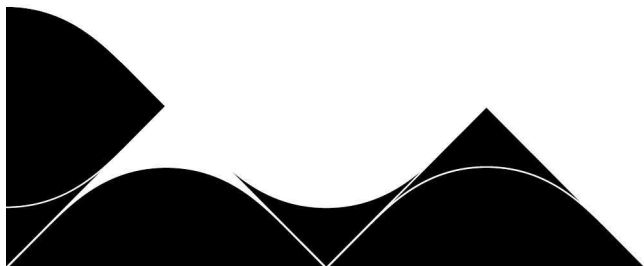
Shift in preservation policy: acceptable and necessary

Digital collections are growing

Analog service providers and equipment is being discontinued, and know-how is decreasing

Film will sooner or later become a niche product

(Too bad it is such a good medium for long-term preservation)



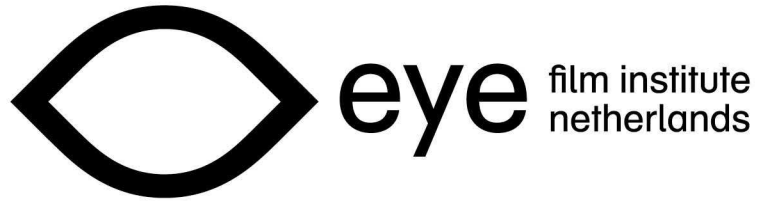


## Archival Dizziness: the digital long-term

The challenges of creating a new digital archive:

- Reliability and costs of the digitization process
- Lack of stability of the digital carriers (life expectancy and obsolescence/lack of standards)
- Radical change in workflow and tasks
- Changing role of film archives and of the film archivist





**Thank you**

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