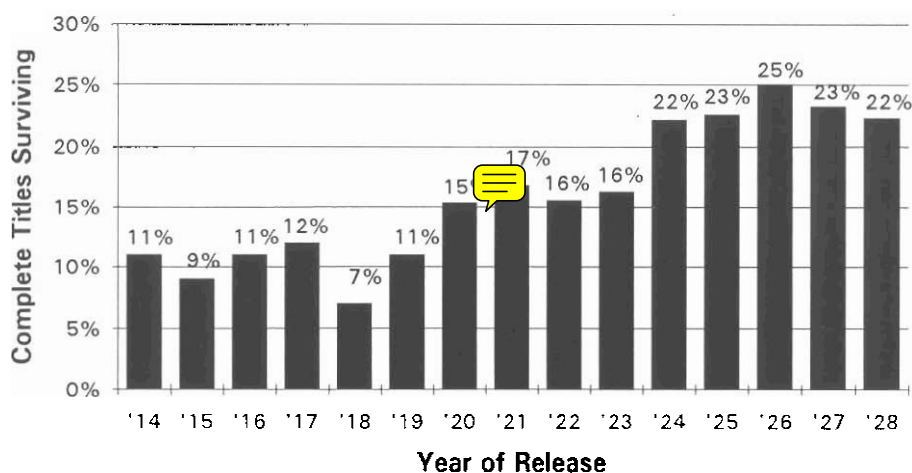


film became the industry standard. Features of the 1930s have been recently documented to survive at a rate of no less than 80%, probably closer to 90%<sup>7</sup> However, fewer than 20% of the features of the 1920s survive in complete form; for features of the 1910s, the survival rate falls to slightly above 10% (and those in copies generally made from projection prints, not negatives, which are almost entirely lost). Figure 1 details approximate survival rates for American silent features. Third and last, the familiarity of that 50%-before-1950 statistic also implies, by omission, that there are few preservation problems with films produced after that year--something which is not the case, as will be discussed.



**Figure 1: Survival Rates of American Silent Feature Films<sup>8</sup>**  
(Based on working lists of holdings in U.S. and foreign archives)

<sup>7</sup> For research on *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States: Feature Films, 1931-1940* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), the AFI Catalog staff were able to view 79% of the 5,250 feature films produced in America in those ten years and to confirm the existence of more. Their experience reinforces the expectation that losses in the sound era are most severe among independent productions. Of the major studio features (from Columbia, MGM, Paramount, RKO, Twentieth Century-Fox, Warner Bros., Universal, and the distributor United Artists), 91% were viewed or confirmed to survive in U.S. studio vaults or public archives. Among minor studios and independent productions, 62% were confirmed to survive. These are minimum survival figures. Additional titles certainly survive among private collectors and in foreign archives. The quality of this surviving material is another matter: A number of these titles probably exist only as 16mm television prints. (Figures provided by AFI Catalog editors Patricia King Hanson and Alan Gevinson.)

<sup>8</sup> These rates are approximate percentages of titles that survive in complete form, computed from unpublished working lists of holdings of the members of FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives). An additional 3.5% of silent feature titles (1914-28) survive as fragments and incomplete prints. In a reversal of the situation in the 1930s, the major studio features of the silent era seem to have a lower survival rate than independent productions, whose frequent distribution on a "state's rights" basis resulted in more opportunities for prints to survive across the country.