



# UCLA FILM AND TELEVISION ARCHIVE

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

March 17, 1993

Mr. Steve Leggett  
Motion Picture, Broadcasting  
and Recorded Sound Division  
The Library of Congress  
Washington, D.C. 20540

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MOTION PICTURE, BROADCASTING  
AND RECORDED SOUND DIVISION

RE: National Film Preservation Board Study:  
Information on UCLA Cataloging Program

Dear Mr. Leggett:

I am writing in response to your request for information concerning the UCLA Film and Television Archive's cataloging program and database. I understand that this request has been prompted by questions you have encountered about the need for data retrieval systems as an adjunct to film preservation, and that my response may be included in the National Film Preservation Board's final report.

I would like to respond to your request on two levels: 1.) By describing the cataloging program at the Archive, with special emphasis on our automated database; and, 2.) By commenting on the role that databases should play in the report which is being prepared for submission to Congress.

## THE UCLA ARCHIVE CATALOGING PROGRAM

The UCLA Film and Television Archive inventories and catalogs its holdings according to Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, 2nd ed., rev. (AACR2R) and Archival Moving Image Materials: A Cataloging Manual (AMIM). Data on the holdings is maintained and accessed by way of an online catalog which is housed in a private file on ORION, the UCLA Libraries' MARC format-based online information system. As of January, 1993, the Archive's ORION catalog contained 71,672 MARC format records for titles (as distinct from items), including 38,063 motion pictures and 33,609 television programs. New titles continue to be added to the catalog at the rate of about 750 per month.

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Many of these entries are full cataloging records, but most are inventory records. The Archive distinguishes between these two levels of cataloging in two ways: 1.) A cataloging record is based on actually viewing the film or program and transcribing the title and credits as they appear; an inventory record is based on information gathered during the initial processing of new acquisitions and from reference works and other secondary sources. 2.) A cataloging record provides access to up to 40 names on which full authority work has been done, as well as subject and genre headings; an inventory record does not.

In addition to bibliographic records for titles, the Archive's ORION catalog contains approximately 90,000 MARC format authority records for names. The Archive does full authority work on up to 40 names per cataloging record. All names not found in the National Name Authority File maintained by the Library of Congress are submitted via the National Co-ordinated Cataloging Operations (NACO) project. In this way, the fruits of our cataloging work are shared with other archives and libraries around the country.

ORION itself, including the Archive's catalog, can be searched from public terminals throughout the UCLA campus. It also can be accessed over telephone lines on any personal computer by anyone anywhere, simply by opening an account with the UCLA Office of Academic Computing. In the near future, the Archive plans to tape-load its records onto MELVYL, the University of California's union catalog. MELVYL is available throughout the world over Internet. The Archive also hopes to tape-load its records onto OCLC, so that they will be easily available to other archives and libraries for shared cataloging.

The ORION software was written and is maintained by the Library Information Services Department of the UCLA Libraries. It is run on a five-gigabyte IBM ES/9000 Model 900 mainframe with six vector facilities using the MVS/ESA and AIX operating systems. The mainframe is operated by the UCLA Office of Academic Computing.

Films preserved at UCLA can be identified online by using either of two ORION search commands: BSU UCLA Preservation or FSU UCLA Preservation. They also can be printed out or downloaded to a microcomputer disc by using the BIBL DOW command. A computer tape of the Archive's entire catalog in the MARC format can be produced at any time for about \$50.00.

Our goal at the UCLA Film and Television Archive is make our holdings information as widely and freely available as possible. To the extent that constraints exist, they are entirely financial and technical, not philosophical.

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#### THE ROLE OF DATABASES IN PRESERVATION

I assume from your FAX that the need for some kind of database to serve preservation interests has been raised during the course of the Board's hearings and research. I am sure you are aware that the idea of creating such a database is not new. It first emerged more than ten years ago when the National Endowment for the Arts and the American Film Institute established the National Center for Film and Video Preservation, with the National Moving Image Database (NAMID) as its centerpiece.

Unfortunately, NAMID has never worked. Despite hundreds of thousands of dollars which have been (and, as far as I know, continue to be) poured into the project, NAMID to date has failed to achieve its central goal -- the creation of a usable automated database of filmographic and holdings information which can serve the needs of (a) preservation, (b) research, and (c) shared cataloging. Arguably, all the time, energy, and money invested in NAMID has diverted, to some extent, the efforts of the National Center and the archival community away from preservation, rather than serving the interests of preservation.

Care must be taken not to repeat the mistakes of the past. I strongly urge that the Board's final report deal predominantly with the issue which most directly impacts preservation -- the need of the nation's archives to transfer millions of feet of deteriorating films to more stable formats. Related activities -- cataloging, research access, public exhibition, etc. -- must be considered; they are important. But I urge that the report not lose its central focus on preservation by getting sidetracked by other enormously complex projects, especially the creation of a national database.

Frankly, I do not believe a national database is essential at this time. It might be argued that such a database would help avoid unnecessary duplication by alerting archives to the existence of already existing preservation elements. However, the problem of duplicate preservation is not serious, and does not require a database to avoid. All the evidence I have seen indicates that relatively little work is being duplicated. Furthermore, most of the duplication taking place is highly desirable, often focusing on important "A" titles, which probably should be doubly protected, and almost always occurring when better quality preservation elements can be produced using alternate materials and/or new laboratory techniques.

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It might also be argued that such a database would help insure the best quality preservation by alerting archives to the existence of original materials which could be used in the preservation process. However, this investigative work is already being handled reasonably well by letters, faxes, and phone calls. A database, if well-designed, maintained, and updated, would certainly enhance these more mundane communication tools, but it could not replace them. Its role would be supplemental and its impact only marginal.

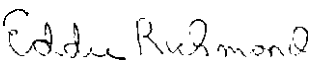
If however, a database is deemed necessary and is to be included as a recommendation in the Board's final report, I urge that it be conceived of as a streamlined and economical system -- one designed to serve only basic preservation needs, not the more complicated requirements of research and shared cataloging. In this way, costs can be kept at a minimum, and some level of useful service possibly can be initiated within a reasonable period of time.

In making this recommendation, I do not discount the importance of research and shared cataloging. I believe, however, that these needs can be better -- and far more economically -- served by relying on existing bibliographic utilities, such as OCLC. I know the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division at the Library of Congress is already entering its cataloging records on OCLC. As mentioned above, the Archive is planning to follow suit in the near future. If more archives could be encouraged to use MARC-based cataloging systems and make their data available through bibliographic utilities, a national moving image database finally could be created.

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I hope this information is useful to you. Please feel free to call me if you have questions or require additional information. The National Film Preservation Board's report is of enormous importance to the future of film preservation, and I greatly appreciate the work you, Annette Melville, Scott Simmon and others are doing to insure that it reflects the interests of the archival community.

Best regards,

  
Edward Richmond  
Curator

cc: Robert Rosen  
Martha Yee

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