

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES



SAMPLE APPLICATION NARRATIVE

Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions

Institution: Chicago Film Archives

NOTE: This sample narrative conforms to a past set of grant guidelines. Please consult the revised guidelines for 2009 at: <http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/pag.html>.

What activities would the grant support?

This grant would support the purchase of horizontal shelving and preservation supplies needed to fulfill recommendations made in a Chicago Film Archives Collections Assessment created in 2007. This assessment was funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant.

What are the content and size of the humanities collections that are the focus of the project?

The CFA film collection is comprised of approximately 6,500 titles. The production of these films spans from 1911 to 1990. This project would give priority to the collections representing the uniquely Chicago and Midwest histories - The Core Collections, but would also serve a portion of CFA's first acquisition - the Chicago Public Library Collection. The Core Collections films are documentary, home movie, amateur, industrial and educational films that include approximately 1,800 items made up of distribution prints; negatives; work prints; original camera reels; and sound tracks.

Margaret Conneely Collection (169 titles and elements)

Amateur fiction films, as well as the more traditional domestic or travel "home movies," provide unique cultural commentary of a place and an era. Margaret Conneely, an award winning and prolific amateur filmmaker, began making films when she joined a local amateur film club in 1949. She shot and directed 16mm films at a time when women in these clubs were typically delegated to the role of acting. Her films are well crafted, clever and subtly subversive, confronting the misconception that amateur films are limited in scope, ambition and craftsmanship. In 2005, the National Film Preservation Foundation awarded CFA a grant to restore one of her films, *The Fairy Princess*, that used early stop motion photography. The new archival elements and print reside at CFA. More recently, the Women's Film Preservation Fund awarded CFA a grant to restore three more Conneely films. One of them, *A City to See in '63*, is a poetic and unusually well-paced city symphony, produced to promote the Photographic Society of America's annual conference in 1963 Chicago. This newly preserved print premiered at the Chicago Cultural Center on May 10, 2007 [*Out of the Vault*]. Chicago Film Archives has all of the original and existing prints and elements of Conneely's work.

Jack Behrend Collection (103 titles and elements)

Jack Behrend was an industrial filmmaker who worked in Chicago from the 1950s until the 1990s. His work represents a genre of film that is distinctively Midwestern and that flourished with the advent of the 16mm format. Among Behrend's films are thirteen reels of raw footage from an unfinished documentary of historical inns of America and time lapse photography that depicts the construction of two significant Chicago buildings, the Equitable Building and Lake Point Towers. This collection includes industrial films about Midwest steel foundries, the making of railroad wheels and a film about the teacher's strike at Niles North High School in the 1970s.

Within this collection are ten films made by Gordon Weisenborn, a Chicago filmmaker whose representations of the streets of Chicago and the communities throughout the state of Illinois were some of the best from the 1950s through the 1970s. Weisenborn's *People Along the Mississippi* (1952) is a depiction of the diverse communities that inhabited the shores of the Mississippi River. It is a film that precedes the civil rights movement and quietly comments on the humanity that is common to all people the filmmaker encounters.

Bill Cottle Collection (8 titles)

The Film Group was a commercial film company that eventually spearheaded a movement to document the social and political upheaval of the '60s and '70s in Chicago. This collection includes the entire *Urban Crisis* series (7 components) and *American Revolution II*, a feature length documentary about these turbulent times in Chicago. Over the last year and a half the National Film Preservation Foundation has awarded CFA two grants to restore all seven film components in the *Urban Crisis Series*. Among them is *Cicero March*, a stunning document that records a volatile civil rights march into an all white blue-collar neighborhood in 1966. Robert Lucas, then president of Congress of Racial Equality, led the march. In September, 2006, CFA hosted a program that included four of these films. Mr. Lucas was a panelist at the screening.

Chuck Olin Collection (32 titles and elements)

Chuck Olin was a Chicago documentary filmmaker who passed away in 2005. Olin had a film career that spanned from the mid sixties to 2000. He was part of the Film Group in the late '60s and then created his own film company to make commercial, industrial and documentary films. This collection of 17 titles includes prints of *In Our Own Hands: The Hidden Story of the Jewish Brigade in World War II*, and a print and negative of *Box of Treasures*, a film made by Olin about the U'Mista tribe of Northwest Canada. Within this collection are trailers to *The Murder of Fred Hampton* and *American Revolution II*, two feature length documentaries made by the Film Group. Olin was an important filmmaker from the era of the Chicago social movement documentary and applied this style of filmmaking to other educational and industrial films he produced. His film, *8 Flags for 99 Cents* will screen at Anthology Films in New York on May, 30, 2008.

Ron Doerring Collection (53 reels with 6 audio tapes)

The Doerring collection is comprised of 8mm and 16mm films, both professional and amateur. Of the 43 home movies, 15 are by John and Evelyn Kibar. The Kibars were prominent in the Kenosha/Racine amateur clubs for many decades (30s to 60s) and won many awards for their films. Among these is one honorable mention in the international Amateur Cinema League's annual 'Ten Best' amateur films competition for *Autumn Glory* (1946). Their collection shows a range of local subjects, and is interesting because it represents a rare case of extant silent 8mm amateur films, accompanied by sound tracks on reel to reel magnetic tape. This kind of sound accompaniment was common among amateurs but appears to be rarely found in archives. Six films are accompanied by these audio tapes.

Berolzheimer Collection (99 reels)

This collection was donated by the Berolzheimer family in Evanston, IL. It contains both 16mm

and 8mm films totaling 99 reels of home movies that date from the early '30s to the early '60s. Within this collection is footage of professional sports activities at Soldiers Field in the mid 1930s, bar mitzvahs, weddings and travel. This collection has attracted the attention of the Jewish Museum in Fuerth, Germany, where this material was considered for an exhibition on Heinrich Berolzheimer, a great-Uncle of the donator.

Soucie Home Movies (87 reels)

Travel films made at a number of historical sites throughout the United States that range from the 1920s to the 1960s. Included are the *Chicago Railroad Fair* of 1948 and 1949 and the *Chicago Industrial Fair* of 1950.

How are these humanities collections used?

Films from these collections have been exhibited in public programs at the Chicago Cultural Center, The Music Box Theater in Chicago, the Block Cinema at Northwestern University, the Film Center at the University of Chicago, The Gene Siskel Film Center, LaSalle Bank Cinema, The Willie Dixon Blues Heaven Foundation and various neighborhood theaters throughout the Chicago area. The Magic Lantern Experimental Film Festival in Providence, Rhode Island, screened three CFA films in 2005, and in 2008 Anthology Films in New York will reprise a 2007 CFA program called *Chicago: My Town*. In 2006 the City of Chicago chose a Conneely film to exhibit at an outdoor film festival in Grant Park. Additionally, the University of Chicago and Northwestern University have rented films from CFA for classes.

CFA periodically sponsors panel discussions to accompany these films in order to interpret and clarify past cultural and political events that are regionally significant. At our benefit on May 13, 2005, Haskell Wexler, Edward Bland, Mike Gray and Rick Prelinger participated on a panel created to discuss the significant film work that has come out of Chicago and the importance of its preservation. In September of 2006 at our program *To Bear Witness: The Question of Violence*, CFA premiered three newly preserved films: *The Cicero March*, *Black Moderates* and *Black Militants*, and *The Peoples' Right to Know: Police vs. Reporters*. Activists appearing in these films took part in a panel discussion that expanded upon the unrest surrounding the civil rights movement and the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago.

Our films have been screened at conferences across the country, adding to the growing scholarship aimed at the amateur and industrial film genre. In 2004, Ms. Watrous presented a 1930s Firestone promotional film at the annual AMIA Conference, (*Accidental Archives*). Mr. Tepperman and Ms. Watrous presented Margaret Conneely films and a paper at the 2005 Summer Film Symposium at Northeast Historic Film (*Amateur Fiction Films*). In 2007, at the Society of American Archivists annual conference in Chicago, CFA was part of the panel, *Labor Beat: Chicago Film Archives and Labor Media*. CFA presented *Chuck Hansen: One Guy*, a 1950s film that addresses prejudice in the work place.

Researchers from the Chicago History Museum (CHM) have researched the history of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago and have located in our collection rare footage of Catholic School girls' basketball from the 1950s, as well as children's re-enactment of the Eucharist from that era. In addition, the CHM has used CFA footage to create a children's exhibit in the newly renovated museum.

Some of the CFA collections form the basis for scholarly research. Charles Tepperman, a former PhD candidate from the University of Chicago, researched amateur film clubs from the Chicago area for his dissertation. While locating and acquiring collections for CFA, he found a wealth of material that is

now part of CFA holdings. The Conneely films and papers and the Doerring collection will serve as a resource for his dissertation. In addition, researchers from the Jewish Museum of Franconia in Fuerth, Germany, explored the possibility of using some of our footage for an exhibit on Heinrich Berolzheimer, and a PhD candidate from UCLA used films from the Cottle collection to research his dissertation on the Chicago Chapter of the Black Panthers.

What is the nature and mission of your institution?

Chicago Film Archives (CFA) was formed in late 2003 to house, preserve and care for the Chicago Public Library's collection of 4,500 16mm films - a collection the library could no longer keep. These films were a springboard for CFA to develop a regional film archive committed to the acquisition, preservation, study and exhibition of films that reflect the character and heritage of the Midwest. Over the last four years, the collection has grown to 6,500 films, all donated by Chicago-area filmmakers, collectors and institutions.

CFA's mission is to serve institutions and filmmakers of this region by establishing a repository for institutional and private film collections; to serve a variety of educational, cultural and academic communities by making the films available locally, nationally and internationally for exhibition, research and production; and to serve our culture by restoring and preserving those films that are rare or unique.

One of CFA's most valuable assets is the talented and committed staff and advisory board that works regularly and energetically on the growth and development of the organization. Nancy Watrous, Executive Director of CFA, holds a full-time salaried position. Four other staff members work part time, typically spending an average of five hours a week working at the archive, keeping the archive open to the public approximately 1,000 hours during the year. Between three and four volunteers/interns work at the archive periodically each year. Advisory Board members provide in-kind legal, bookkeeping, graphic arts, marketing and film archival services. CFA's 2006 operating budget was \$80,000 in 2007 with receipts that totaled over \$100,000.

Has your institution ever had a preservation or conservation assessment or consultation?

Chicago Film Archives, NFP completed a preservation assessment, underwritten by the National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant. William O'Farrell, the former Chief of Moving Image and Audio Preservation at the National Archives of Canada, completed the assessment in May, 2007, with the assistance of moving image archivist, Carolyn Faber. This current grant application is to fulfill recommendations outlined in the assessment report.

What is the importance of this project to the institution?

The Chicago Film Archives (CFA) Core Collections Project is a new initiative. In its four short years, CFA has acquired more than 25 collections, totaling 6,500 films while two to three more collections are expected to arrive before the end of 2008. Currently most of the films are stored on vertical shelving donated by the Chicago Public Library. In order to effectively process these collections and create access to them, CFA established the multi-phased Core Collections Project. Its first phase is aimed at stabilizing the uniquely Midwestern films described above. Our goal is to put standard collections management in place that will ensure the longevity of the collections while making them safely and easily accessible. Subsequent phases will focus on access through cataloguing, database development and digitization as well as folding the larger Chicago Public Library Collection into the process already begun with the smaller collections (the Core Collections).

In response to the 2007 Collections Assessment funded by the NEH and with the support of the Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation grant, CFA has begun the first phase by rewinding the Core Collections films onto archival cores, re-canning them in archival plastic vented cans, labeling them and placing them on new horizontal shelving. With a follow-up National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant, CFA would be able to complete this process by providing additional horizontal shelving to store the remainder of the Core Collections and begin to migrate the Chicago Public Library Collection to horizontal shelving as well. Also, this NEH grant will allow CFA to purchase a shrinkage gauge and updated temperature and RH logger equipment which was strongly recommended in the Collections Assessment of 2007.

What are the names and qualifications of the consultant/staff involved in the project?

Director Nancy Watrous and CFA advisor/moving image archivist Carolyn Faber will coordinate the acquisition of the equipment.

Nancy Watrous, who has twenty years experience as a film producer, is the founder and executive Director of CFA. She negotiates contracts, writes grants, manages the budget, contacts organizations and businesses to create mutually productive relationships, designs programs and sets goals to ensure the sustainability and growth of CFA. She will administer the grant.

Carolyn Faber works independently as a moving image archivist in the Midwest region with eleven years of experience that includes work as a film archivist at WPA and database manager for a pilot project with the Smithsonian Network. She has worked as an advisor to CFA on many preservation issues. She is Director of Midwest Media Archive Alliance and will advise on the purchase of furniture and supplies as well as coordinate the transition of the films that will follow. CFA archivist, Michelle Puetz will work with Carolyn Faber to migrate the films to the new shelves and containers.

What are plan of work and timetable for the project?

Week one and two

- Research current pricing for shelves and shrinkage gauge (Watrous)
- Site visit from potential shelving vendors/recommendations (Watrous, Faber)
- Order shelving and shrinkage gauge (Watrous)

Week three and four

- Identify films to be re-canned and re-shelved (Watrous, Faber)
- Organize films to be processed (Puetz)

The following portion of the project (the labor) would be funded by another grant

Week five – twenty-five

- Re-core and re-can films (Faber, Puetz, Wells)
- Re-shelve films (Faber, Puetz, Wells)

Note: The use of consulting services, vendors, or other trade names is being provided for the information and convenience of potential applicants. Such use does not constitute an official endorsement, approval, or favoring by the U.S. Government, or by the National Endowment for the Humanities or any of its employees, of any product, service, or business to the exclusion of any others that may be available. The views and opinions of document authors do not necessarily state or reflect those of the U.S. Government, or the National Endowment for the Humanities or any of its employees.