

National Film Archives: Policies, Practices, and Histories
A Study of the National Film Archive of India, EYE Film Institute Netherlands, and the National
Film and Sound Archive, Australia

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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DEDICATION

For Lakshmi G. and Lakshmi B., who made this possible.

And for all the archivists who work hard to preserve the films we write about. You rock!

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a transnational study of national film archives, which explores how the idea of a national film archive manifests itself differently in three dissimilar national contexts. It narrates the critical cultural histories of three bricks-and-mortar institutions -- the NFAI in Pune, India, the Nederlands Filmmuseum (Netherlands Film Museum, or NFM), now rebranded as EYE Film Instituut Nederland (EYE Film Institute Netherlands, or EYE), and the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra, Australia (NFSA) -- with a focus on the history of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP) material in the case of NFSA. It combines empirical examinations of the three institutions with the conceptual underpinnings of their policies and practices over time, analyzing them as the loci of complex negotiations between various social, political, and ideological forces to produce holistic historical narratives of their rich cultural lives.

To achieve this, it uses the transnational nature of national film archives as a structuring device -- while treating institutional histories as palimpsests -- and mobilizing other such sensitizing concepts as bureaucracy in India, the emergence of cultural clusters in the Netherlands, and multiculturalism in Australia, so as to make meaning of various local iterations of the global idea of a national film archive. In the process, it hopes to make a significant contribution to cinema studies by reorienting the discipline's attention from analyzing cinema as a cultural institution to investigating the cultural institutions of cinema.

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SECTION I
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVES: TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Overview

In an interview I conducted in 2011 with Suresh Chabria, former director of the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) -- one of the case studies in this dissertation -- I asked him if he would have considered archiving films featuring the Hindi film actor turned politician Govinda at the NFAI during his tenure. Chabria replied:

Honestly, no. We didn't have space for that kind of stuff. I was trying my level best for New Theatres Films, [Satyajit] Ray, Mani Kaul and [Kumar] Shahani, [G.] Aravindan, Adoor [Gopalakrishnan] etc. [filmmakers from the Indian New Wave/Parallel Cinema]. Govinda negatives, why? To this day, I will tell you, you can't be so democratic. Ultimately, why are we appointed? We have some sense of standards. . . . A *patwari's* [village accountant's] record books are more historic records than Govinda's films!¹

Govinda is immensely popular in India, known especially for the comic roles he played through the 1990s. In an online poll conducted by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 1999 titled "The Greatest Star of Stage or Screen," visitors to the BBC website ranked him at number ten worldwide, a space he shared with Amitabh Bachchan, Lawrence Olivier, Alec Guinness, Charlie Chaplin, Homer Simpson, Robert De Niro, Cary Grant, Buster Keaton, and Marilyn Monroe.² However, this popularity comes with a catch: his identity is tied to a certain

I use acronyms for many recurring names of closely related organizations and institutions in this dissertation. For quick reference, please see Appendix 1, List of Acronyms.

Appendix 2, List of People, lists the names, designations, and short descriptions of the interviewees and allied stakeholders who find repeat mentions in this dissertation.

¹ Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011.

² "Bollywood Star Tops the Poll." BBC News. 2 March 1999. Web. 1 July 2016. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/381017.stm> >. In citing this poll, I am aware that it is not an academically sound and credible survey. However, it still acts as a good indicator of Govinda's popularity during the 1990s.

social class. In India, he is considered a star of the semi-literate masses, lower middle class and below, worthy of being enjoyed only by the likes of rickshaw pullers, truck drivers, and peons, so much so that most people from the educated and cultured upper classes would never admit to having watched his films and enjoyed them. Chabria is no exception, and having been assigned the task of safekeeping India's cinematic heritage during his tenure, was quick to decide that Govinda's films had no place in the national canon being built at the NFAI.

At stake in Chabria's response are ideas of high and popular culture, and notions of taste. His preference for the modernist works of Satyajit Ray, Kumar Shahani, and Adoor Gopalakrishnan is shared by many Indian cinema scholars (Chabria is also Professor of Film Appreciation at the Film and Television Institute of India, FTII), traditionally leaving little room for including the likes of Govinda even in academic discussions, thereby reinforcing the elitism that has long characterized academia as well as many film archives. Thus, Chabria's exclusion of Govinda from the NFAI is not without precedent, although the elitism characteristic of academia is now gradually giving way to many newer forms of engaging with popular Indian cinema.³ However, more significantly, Chabria's response brings into focus the functioning of film archives, the curators in these institutions, the power wielded by them in the production of knowledge, the illusion of objectivity ascribed to archival holdings, and the disputable neutrality of the histories they narrativize. It illustrates how the film archive, the point of origin of many film histories, is not a passive repository of records, even more so if it is national in nature, nor are its keepers mere facilitators of the public's access to the institution's collections.

³ Some notable works indicative of this engagement, although not an engagement with Govinda *per se*, include Vasudevan, Ravi. *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print; Mazumdar, Ranjani. *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. Print; Nair, Kartik. "Taste, Taboo, Trash: The Story of the Ramsay Brothers." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 3.2 (2012): 123-45. Print; Kumar, Akshaya. "Provincialising Bollywood: Bhojpuri Cinema and the Vernacularisation of North Indian Media." University of Glasgow, 2015. Print.

Jacques Derrida has suggested that the archive “produces as much as it records the event,” making it the locus of much social and political power. The archive and its keepers are also active participants in the process of “archivization” and “historicization,” determining which privileged records get archived, in what order, and to a degree, what meanings they are ascribed.⁴ In the process, the archive defines and limits the possibilities of knowledge that may be produced from it, acting as a site where power is negotiated, contested, and confirmed. Often, it works in tandem with the nation-state, and so great is its perceived power that feuding nations frequently attempt to take control over it and even destroy it, in the process seemingly erasing the culture and history of their rivals. The siege of the Abkhazian state Archives by Georgia in October 1992 and the taking over of the Afghan National Archives by the Taliban in the autumn of 1996 are just two of the many such examples of hostile archival takeovers and destructions.⁵

Chabria’s response acts as anecdotal evidence to support Derrida’s ideas, with Chabria playing the “arch-father” or its “patriarch” as described by Derrida, not only in inscribing the NFAI and the Indian film canon with his own unique imprint, but also in determining the direction of the film histories that the institution will allow being written,⁶

⁴ Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print. 17.

⁵ Hewitt, B George. *Discordant Neighbours: A Reassessment of the Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-South Ossetian Conflicts*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2013. Print. 44 Note 67; De Waal, Thomas. "Abkhazia's Archive: Fire of War, Ashes of History." *OpenDemocracy*. 22 October 2011. Web. 4 June 2016. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-caucasus/abkhazia_archive_4018.jsp>; Akbar, Arifa. "Jewel of Afghan Cinema Saved from the Taliban." *The Guardian*. 8 May 2009. Web. 4 June 2016.

<<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2008/feb/20/features.afghanistan>>; Clouston, Erlend. "'If I Find One Reel, I Must Kill You'." *The Guardian*. 19 February 2008. Web. 4 June 2016.

<<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2008/feb/20/features.afghanistan>>. A list of archives and libraries destroyed in the twentieth century can be found in van der Hoeven, Hans, and J. van Albada. *Lost Memory: Libraries and Archives Destroyed in the Twentieth Century*. Memory of the World. Paris: General Information Programme, UNISIST and UNESCO, 1996. Print.

⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print. 20.

histories in which Govinda is yet to find a mention.⁷ As Verne Harris puts it, “scholars are not, can never be, exterior to their objects,” whether they are conscious of it or not.⁸ Being a film scholar as well as a film archivist, Chabria would have been well aware of the larger implications of my question, but was still honest to acknowledge his prejudices, and in turn those of the archive.

An awareness of such power play and politics of the archive, which allowed me to question Chabria in the first place, is a relatively recent phenomenon in film and media scholarship. It stems from the many recent attempts at interrogating the archive across various disciplines, which are concurrent with a newfound enthusiasm about engaging with its material holdings in renewed ways.⁹ This “return to the archive” as Margaret Cohen has called it, began in history departments in the 1980s and has continued under the broad rubric of cultural

⁷ While this can by no means be ascribed to Chabria alone, Govinda is yet to be discussed at length in any major work, finding a mere mention or two in such works as Deshpande, Sudhanva. "The Consumable Hero of Globalized India." *Bollywood: Popular Indian Cinema through a Transactional Lens*. Eds. Kaur, Raminder and Ajay J. Sinha. London: Sage, 2005. 186-204. Print; Kumar, Akshaya. "Provincialising Bollywood: Bhojpuri Cinema and the Vernacularisation of North Indian Media." University of Glasgow, 2015. Print; Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. "The 'Bollywoodization' of the Indian Cinema: Cultural Nationalism in a Global Arena." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4.1 (2003): 25-39. Print; Kavoori, Anandam P., and Aswin Punathambekar, eds. *Global Bollywood*. New York: New York University Press, 2008. Print. ⁸ Harris, Verne. *Exploring Archives: An Introduction to Archival Ideas and Practice in South Africa*. Pretoria: National Archives of South Africa, 2000. Print. 96.

⁹ Such works are far too many to cite here comprehensively, but a few notable ones include Manoff, Marlene. "Theories of the Archive from across the Disciplines." *Libraries and the Academy* 4.1 (2004): 9-25. Print; Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002. Print; Hamilton, Carolyn. *Refiguring the Archive*. Boston: Kluwer Academic, 2002. Print; Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Cultural Memory and Performance in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003. Print; Biesecker, Barbara A. "Of Historicity, Rhetoric: The Archive as Scene of Invention." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9.1 (2006): 124-31. Print; Dirks, Nicholas B. "Annals of the Archive: Ethnographic Notes on the Sources of History." *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and Its Futures*. Ed. Axel, Brian Keith. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002. Print; Baron, J. "Contemporary Documentary Film and "Archive Fever": History, the Fragment, the Joke." *The Velvet Light Trap*. 60 (2007): 13-24. Print; Burton, Antoinette M. *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005. Print; ---. *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing, House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. Print.

studies in a number of intersecting disciplines.¹⁰ As Helen Freshwater has suggested, the rise of theories that foreground historical contextualization, such as new historicism and cultural materialism, has contributed much to this renewed academic fascination with the repository of the past, as have feminism, postmodernism, and the increasing focus on minor and marginal(ized) historical narratives.¹¹ At times, this fascination has almost bordered on obsession and fetishism, imparting old objects and its repository the archive with a new and often misplaced allure.¹² It has resulted in the production of much new knowledge about film and media in the recent past, while also allowing for a rethinking of knowledge production itself. For instance, in the specific context of Indian cinema, works by a number of scholars including Kaushik Bhaumik, Sudhir Mahadevan, Neepa Majumdar, Ravi Vasudevan, Debashree Mukherjee, and Rosie Thomas display a renewed engagement with the archive.¹³

This return has been marked by three broad and overlapping strands of scholarship -- one, theories about the conceptual archive such as the works of Derrida (1996) and Charles Merewether (2006), two, "against the grain" and "revisionist" histories that also discuss the extent of subjectivity involved in constructing narratives from the archive's often fragmented records as demonstrated by Tsuyoshi Hasegawa (2005) and Maryanne Dever (2009), and

¹⁰ Cohen, Margaret. "Narratology in the Archive of Literature." *Representations* 108.1 (2009): 51-75. Print. A similar argument is also made in Smoodin, Eric. "As the Archive Turned: Writing Film Histories without Films." *The Moving Image* 14.2 (2014): 96-100. Print.

¹¹ Freshwater, Helen. "The Allure of the Archive." *Poetics Today* 24.4 (2003): 729-58. Print. A similar argument is also made in Baron, Jaimie. *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History*. London: Routledge, 2014. Print. 1-5.

¹² Freshwater, Helen. "The Allure of the Archive." *Poetics Today* 24.4 (2003): 729-58. Print.

¹³ Bhaumik, Kaushik. "Cinematograph to Cinema: Bombay 1896-1928." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 2.1 (2011): 41-67. Print; Mahadevan, Sudhir. "Traveling Showmen, Makeshift Cinemas: The Bioscopewallah and Early Cinema History in India." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 1.1 (2010): 27-47. Print; Majumdar, Neepa. *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only! Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s-50s*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009. Print; Vasudevan, R. S., et al. "Editorial: Archives and Histories." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 4.1 (2013): 1-7. Print; Mukherjee, Debashree. "Notes on a Scandal: Writing Women's Film History against an Absent Archive." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 4.1 (2013): 9-30. Print; Thomas, Rosie. "Miss Frontier Mail: The Film That Mistook Its Star for a Train." *Frontier: Sarai Reader* 7. Eds. Narula, Monika and Smriti Vohra. Delhi: Sarai Programme, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 2007. 294-309. Print.

three, studies of the archive as an institution and the stories it narrates as undertaken by Richard J Cox (2000) and Samuel Kassow (2007).¹⁴ While the first concerns itself more with the conceptual archive and its symbolic significance, the second concerns itself with the material that may be found (or found missing) in an archive, and ways of (re)interpreting it. In this dissertation, I align myself with the third strand, which investigates the archive's empirical operations -- more specifically those of national film archives -- while also borrowing selectively from the first strand. In so doing, I concern myself with the institutional processes that go into the founding and functioning of national film archives -- their policies and practices -- which assume more importance for my purposes than the materials they hold or the meanings they generate.

This dissertation is a transnational study of national film archives, which explores how the idea of a national film archive manifests itself differently in three dissimilar national contexts. It narrates the critical cultural histories of three bricks-and-mortar institutions -- the NFAI in Pune, India; the Nederlands Filmmuseum (Netherlands Film Museum, or NFM), now rebranded as EYE Film Instituut Nederland (EYE Film Institute Netherlands, or EYE); and the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra, Australia (NFSA) -- with a focus on the history of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (ICIP) material in the case of Australia.¹⁵ It combines empirical examinations of the three institutions with the conceptual underpinnings of their policies and practices over time, analyzing them as the loci of complex negotiations

¹⁴ Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print; Merewether, Charles. *The Archive*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006. Print; Hasegawa, Tsuyoshi. *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005. Print; Dever, Maryanne, et al. *The Intimate Archive: Journeys through Private Papers*. Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2009. Print; Cox, Richard J. *Closing an Era: Historical Perspectives on Modern Archives and Records Management*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000. Print; Kassow, Samuel D. *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2007. Print.

¹⁵ A comprehensive social and political history of the NFSA has already been written by Ray Edmondson. See Edmondson, Ray. "National Film and Sound Archive: The Quest for Identity: Factors Shaping the Uneven Development of a Cultural Institution." University of Canberra, 2011. Print.

between various social, political, and ideological forces to produce holistic historical narratives of their rich cultural lives. To achieve this, it uses the transnational nature of national film archives as a structuring device -- while treating institutional histories as palimpsests -- and mobilizing other such sensitizing concepts as bureaucracy in India, the emergence of cultural clusters in the Netherlands, and multiculturalism in Australia, so as to making meaning of various local iterations of the global idea of a national film archive. In the process, it hopes to make a significant contribution to cinema studies by reorienting the discipline's attention from analyzing cinema as a cultural institution to investigating the cultural institutions of cinema.

Rationale

Cinema studies has traditionally engaged with film on both formal and stylistic levels, and has also examined it as a historically located industrial product. However, the point of origin of many film histories, the film archive, has been treated as given. Film theorists have concerned themselves with the materials it holds and the symbolic meanings they generate, but the physical institution that houses the materials has received less attention, in the process being relatively "understudied" and "undervalued" as Caroline Frick puts it.¹⁶ More often than not, its functioning has been seen as routine institutional management work that belongs with the practitioners -- the film archiving professionals -- and its policies, practices, and histories have not been interrogated sufficiently. To borrow from Eric Ketelaar, it is indeed surprising that those who attach much value to context in their own work have not adequately contextualized their own work.¹⁷

On the other hand, archival studies has also ignored the film archive. The discipline has again been traditionally split between theorists and practitioners, with archival theory

¹⁶ Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print. 6.

¹⁷ Ketelaar, Eric. "Archivistics Research: Saving the Profession." *American Archivists* 63 (2000): 322-40. Print.

being “despised and rejected” by professional archivists as being “much ado about shelving” as Ketelaar points out, their interests lying instead with the mechanisms of organizing and managing collections without an equal attention being paid to the ideas governing their operations.¹⁸ And archival theorists have rarely ever engaged with the film archive, which occupies a marginal position in their schema. Giovanna Fossati sums up the overall scenario as follows:

There is insufficient dialogue between film archives and academia. Caught up in everyday practicalities, film archivists rarely have time to reflect on the nature of film and on the consequences deriving from new technologies on the viability of film as a medium. On the other hand, researchers investigating the ontology of the medium theorize future scenarios at a much faster pace than practice can keep up with, often without considering the material and institutional realities underlying the medium. This situation is leading to an increasing estrangement between theory and practice.¹⁹

This dissertation is an attempt to address this estrangement and act as a bridge between the theorists and the practitioners of film archiving. Of particular interest to me are the institutional realities Frick mentions -- the policies, practices, and histories of film archives -- for film archives have become, to borrow from Simon Knell, “long-lived but with short memories,” which this dissertation wishes to correct.²⁰

Over the last fifteen years, this has already been undertaken to some degree through the works of such scholars as Paolo Cherchi Usai, Ray Edmondson, Caroline Frick, Karen Gracy, Fossati, and others, a growing tribe of film archiving professionals who are also film scholars, and vice-versa.²¹ Their efforts have been extended by The Moving Image journal

¹⁸ ---. "Archivistics Research: Saving the Profession." *American Archivists* 63 (2000): 322-40. Print.

¹⁹ Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print. 15.

²⁰ Knell, Simon J., et al., eds. *National Museums: New Studies from around the World*. London: Routledge, 2011. Print. 5.

²¹ Some illustrative examples of their work include Cherchi Usai, Paolo, et al. *Burning Passions: An Introduction to the Study of Silent Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 1994. Print; Cherchi Usai, Paolo. *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age*. London: British Film Institute, 2001. Print; Cherchi Usai, Paolo, et al. *Film*

published by the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA), and the Journal of Film Preservation published by the Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film (the International Federation of Film Archives, or FIAF). Assisting them have been the annual international gatherings of AMIA, FIAF, the Southeast Asia-Pacific Audiovisual Archive Association (SEAPAVAA), and the biannual Orphan Film Symposium. Some of these events, in particular the Orphan Film Symposium, bring together not only scholars and archivists but also filmmakers and artists, providing them with a common platform to discuss the plurality of perspectives available on the theme of film archiving and preservation.

Additionally, the activities of the graduate programs in audiovisual archiving and preservation offered by New York University, George Eastman Museum, Ryerson University, and the now discontinued program at the University of California at Los Angeles have contributed to the cause in North America, as have the programs offered by the University of Amsterdam, University of Udine, and the now discontinued program at the University of East Anglia in Europe, and the Charles Sturt University in Australia.

Furthering such efforts, this dissertation focuses on the histories of three national film archives, for they are never only buildings for researchers and archivists to work in, but also places where professional and public performances and scripted and staged. It asks what these performances are, what goes into creating them, and to use one of Ketelaar's terms, who the "union of scriptwriters" behind these performances is?²² Borrowing from Richard

Curatorship: Archives, Museums, and the Digital Marketplace. Vienna: Österreichisches Filmmuseum, 2008. Print; Edmondson, Ray. "A Case of Mistaken Identity: Governance, Guardianship and the Soundscape Saga." *Archives and Manuscripts* 30 (2002): 30-47. Print; ---. "National Film and Sound Archive: The Quest for Identity: Factors Shaping the Uneven Development of a Cultural Institution." University of Canberra, 2011. Print; Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print; Gracy, Karen F. *Film Preservation: Competing Definitions of Value, Use, and Practice*. Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2007. Print; Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print.

²² Knell, Simon J., et al., eds. *National Museums: New Studies from around the World*. London: Routledge, 2011. Print. 6-8.

Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown, it inquires when, why, how, and by whom were they created, and how do they operate on a day-to-day basis? Who controls and finances them? Where are they located, and why? Whose memories do they record, what histories do they narrativize, and what stories do they tell? How do they define *national, film*, and even the term *archive*, and influence national film canons, histories, and scholarship through inclusion, exclusion, marginalization, and censorship? And how do they transform over time to remain visible in the public sphere and relevant to their stakeholders?²³

This dissertation answers these questions by mapping the processes that go into constructing and operating a national film archive, and also sheds light on the impact they have on scholarship. It defines and analyzes ideas about the national film archive and grounds these ideas in empirical evidences to map their administrative concerns. It examines how these concerns -- bracketed by social, political and ideological forces of the nation on the one hand, and the tension between state intentions and independent actions by individuals on the other hand -- shape the film heritage of a nation. It studies how the need for visibility and digital technology are altering the film archiving and preservation landscape. And it explores the ways in which the interactions between various national film archives internationally influence their local functioning.

The dissertation demonstrates that in addition to being highly political cultural institutions that selectively collect moving images and regulate our access to them, national film archives are also conflicted entities, struggling to define and legitimize their roles and functions both internally and externally. The nature of their struggles and the values attached to their work varies considerably across different national and cultural contexts. And it establishes how they are Janus-faced enterprises that are simultaneously inward and outward looking, national as well as international, and local as well as global by being part of a rapidly

²³ Brown, Richard Harvey, and Beth Davis-Brown. "The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness." *History of the Human Sciences* 11.4 (1998): 17-32. Print.

growing transnational community of film archiving professionals and theorists -- centered around FIAF, AMIA, and SEAPAVAA -- who are more influenced by one another than is generally acknowledged. In the process, it aims to enable cinema studies to look more closely at its own foundations while also contributing to archival studies, museum studies, and cultural policy studies, with its findings being useful for archival management and cultural policy development in general, and to the three case studies and their parent nation-states in particular.

Definitions and Delimiters

Central to my dissertation are the terms *national*, *film*, and *archive*, in combinations thereof. Memory institutions -- by which I mean repositories of public knowledge such as archives, museums, and libraries -- are known to give symbolic form to ongoing discourses about the nation, acting as cultural brokers that help people remember and define one's sense of social, cultural, and geographical place, while harboring the potential to objectify various identities. They also function as moralizing spaces with specific goals as Tony Bennett has demonstrated, and as inculcating forces with the ability to transmit ideas to the visitors (despite the visitors not being passive receivers of such ideas).²⁴

National memory institutions are those that are considered to belong to the nation and serve a public function, institutions that express the power and prestige of a nation, and institutions that convey a difference between one's own culture and that of others by

²⁴ Bennett, Tony. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print; Fairclough, G. J. *The Heritage Reader*. London: Routledge, 2008. Print; Ashworth, Gregory John, and Peter J. Larkham, eds. *Building a New Heritage: Tourism, Culture, and Identity in the New Europe*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print; van der Hoeven, Arno, and Amanda Brandellero. "Places of Popular Music Heritage: The Local Framing of a Global Cultural Form in Dutch Museums and Archives." *Poetics* 51 (2015): 37-53. Print; Scorrano, Armanda. "Constructing National Identity: National Representations at the Museum of Sydney." *Journal of Australian Studies* 36.3 (2012): 345-62. Print; Brown, Richard Harvey, and Beth Davis-Brown. "The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness." *History of the Human Sciences* 11.4 (1998): 17-32. Print.

constructing and presenting a national identity.²⁵ They can be founded, funded, and managed by the state, but can also be private entities. As Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius define them, they are “institutions, collections and displays claiming, articulating and representing dominant national values, myths and realities.”²⁶ As such, they act as significant nodes on what Louis Althusser has termed the Ideological State Apparatus through which the nation-state is performed, articulated, negotiated, and visualized.²⁷ As described by Knell, they function as “key elements in the historical, mythological, aesthetic and political construction of the nation.”²⁸

Building on this understanding, my use of the term *national* refers to film archives that are representative of the nation, in line with the National Museum or the National Library, but are not always state run, for there exists a strong link between the archival project and the nation that is not necessarily routed through the state. While two of my case studies, the NFAI and the NFSA, exemplify state run institutions, the third, EYE, exemplifies one that is run privately, but is still generally recognized as the national film archive of the Netherlands.

By extension of such an understanding, many Hollywood studios that have internal archives of American films can also claim to be national even though they are not open to the public. This is especially true given that such studios have, in the past, even been known to engage in wars over national heritage, as was the case with the Japanese corporate giant Sony’s attempts to buy the American Columbia Pictures in the 1980s.²⁹ A similar case can

²⁵ Meijers, Debora, et al. *National Museums and National Identity, Seen from an International and Comparative Perspective, C. 1760-1918*. Amsterdam: Huizinga Instituut, 2012. Print. 5-6.

²⁶ Aronsson, Peter, and Gabriella Elgenius, eds. *Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010: Conference Proceedings from Eunamus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28-30 April 2011*. Linköping, Sweden: Linköping University Press, 2011. Print. 5.

²⁷ Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972. 85-126. Print.

²⁸ Knell, Simon J., et al., eds. *National Museums: New Studies from around the World*. London: Routledge, 2011. Print. xix.

²⁹ Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print. 80.

also be made for the Film Heritage Foundation and the Osian's Film House in India, institutions that have an expanding collection of film paraphernalia, especially film publicity material, centered on Indian cinema. Additionally, a nation can also have multiple national institutions operating in the same cultural sphere, for instance both EYE as well as the Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid (the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision) deal with audiovisual material, and both the NFSA as well as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) have collections of Indigenous films. In most such cases, only one institution is generally recognized as the national film archive by that nation as well as the international film archiving community -- EYE and the NFSA in these instances -- while the others are accorded other statuses, with the Sound and Vision being called the national broadcasting archive and the AIATSIS the national research center for Indigenous material.

The term *audiovisual archive* is broad, encompassing institutions that handle films, video tapes, optical disks, and hard drives of various formats. In using the narrower term *film archive*, I am referring to audiovisual archives that deal primarily with content traditionally created and/or supported on celluloid film as a carrier as opposed to any other medium such as a video tape. Often, the institutions also accord aesthetic value to such content for being cinematic or artistic (the same institutions only rarely accord a similar aesthetic value to other media). Carrier here refers to any media artifact that physically supports audiovisual information recorded on it in the form of images and sounds, such as nitrate films, video tapes, optical disks, and hard drives. Content, on the other hand, refers to the actual audiovisual information such as a feature film or a documentary supported by the carrier, which can be copied on to other carriers.

Film comes in many forms -- black-and-white and color, in various sizes (8, 16, and 35mm gauges, among others), positive and negative, and made of nitrate, acetate, or polyester material -- all routinely handled by film archives. Standard motion picture stock,

which began being produced in the 1890s, was originally made of nitrocellulose, also known as guncotton, a chemical compound used to make explosives. Commonly called nitrate film, it is known for its remarkable photographic qualities, physical strength, flexibility, and resilience, and became the most popular film stock in the first half of the twentieth century. But it was also highly inflammable and chemically unstable, burning uncontrollably and explosively once ignited, and even capable of spontaneous self-ignition at sufficiently high temperatures.³⁰ It continued to be used extensively by various film industries till the late 1940s, and sparingly through the 1950s as well, when it was gradually phased out by acetate based non-inflammable "safety film."³¹

However, by virtue of the film archive's interest in old films, nitrate film continues to be encountered by the institution. By the 1980s, after a series of nitrate film fires worldwide, most large film archives worldwide had put serious safety measures in place to minimize the risk, although a few sporadic incidents continued to take place even afterwards.³² Today, worldwide

³⁰ Rossell, Deac. "Exploding Teeth, Unbrakebale Sheets, and Continuous Casting: Nitrocellulose, from Guncotton to Early Cinema." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 37-51. Print; Slide, Anthony. "Introduction." *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992. 1-8. Print.

³¹ Enticknap, Leo. "The Film Industry's Conversion from Nitrate to Safety Film in the Late 1940s: A Discussion of the Reasons and Consequences." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 202-12. Print; "Safety Film: False Dawns." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 319-27. Print.

³² "A Calendar of Nitrate Fires." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 429-53. Print; Brenni, Ellis. *GBC Audiovisual Library Fire*. 2010. Video. Web. 20 December 2013.

<<https://archive.org/details/GhanaBroadcastingCorporationFire>>; Slide, Anthony. *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992. Print; Moore, Paul S. "Socially Combustible: Panicky People, Flammable Films and the Dangerous New Technology of the Nickelodeon." *Cinema and Technology: Cultures, Theories, Practices*. Eds. Bennett, Bruce, Furstenau Marc and Mackenzie Adrian. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 75-87. Print; Kula, Sam. "Mea Culpa: How I Abused the Nitrate in My Life." *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 1.1 (2001): 198-202. Print.

health and safety regulations do not generally allow a nitrate film to be handled or projected any more, excepting in a film archival space with special licenses. The aged and consequently fragile nitrate film also runs the risk of potential damage through wear and tear involved in the very act of projection, which makes it mostly suitable for only one purpose -- further copying -- and film archives the world over are essentially engaged in spending millions of dollars in deferring the moment of its eventual loss to a later date while hoping to find better ways of copying the film's content without any loss in quality.

Consequently, nitrate film has acquired a Benjaminian aura over the last few decades, having become a significant artefact -- not unlike a museum object -- even in instances when it might have historically only been a projection copy, especially if it is the only surviving one.³³ It has been fetishized *ad infinitum* by film archivists, filmmakers, and film historians alike (particularly if it is rare or belongs to a well-known film title), which has also led to the development of a whole sub-genre of found footage films including such acclaimed works as *Lyrisch Nitraat* (Peter Delpeut, 1991), *Film Ist.* (Gustav Deutsch, 1998), and *Decasia* (Bill Morrison, 2002) that celebrate its decay.³⁴

Meanwhile, nitrate film's more stable safety cousin was also found to suffer from decomposition because of the degeneration of the acetate base of the film, which is commonly referred to as vinegar syndrome for the pungent smell of vinegar that emanates from the degenerating film strips. Considered to be an irreversible degeneration, it also spreads to other films stored in the vicinity, thereby giving archivists much cause for concern. Additionally, the acetate film was also discovered to lose color over time, making its care in the film archive an equally complicated and labor intensive process. Therefore, film archives routinely store

³³ Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*. Eds. Benjamin, Walter, Arendt Hannah and Zohn Harry. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968. 217-51. Print.

³⁴ Delpeut, Peter. *Lyrisch Nitraat 1905-1915*. New York, NY. DVD. Zeitgeist Films, 2004; Deutsch, Gustav. *Film Ist.* Vienna, Austria. Film. Sixpackfilm, 2004; Morrison, Bill. *Decasia*. New York, NY. Plexifilm, 2004.

both types of films in temperature and humidity controlled vaults to arrest and decelerate their deterioration over time, and also invest heavily in technology to ensure their proper care and upkeep. Consequently, film archiving and preservation requires extensive resources, expertise, and infrastructure, making it an expensive process.

In film archiving parlance, there exists a distinction between film preservation, conservation, restoration, and reconstruction, all of which are parts of “the archival life of film” as Giovanna Fossati terms it.³⁵ Active film preservation involves “efforts towards keeping a film in a viewable form, with most archivists considering a film preserved only when it is both viewable in its original format with its full visual and aural values retained, and protected for the future by “preprint” material through which subsequent viewing copies can be created.” Film conservation, which is also called passive film preservation, “requires no physical copying, only the decision to treat film material with greater care because of its perceived use as a future preservation source.”³⁶ Restoration is a “process used to restore visual quality to images where optical losses have occurred, and reconstruction refers to a process of returning the narrative sequence, or scenes of the film, back to its original sequential structure,” at times from multiple source materials.³⁷ Unless specified otherwise, film archiving here signifies all these processes collectively.

However, my use of the term *film* archive does not suggest that such institutions deal only with film, but rather, it indicates how they self-identify themselves and their expertise. In practice, it is nearly impossible for any film archive to work only with film anymore. Most new “films” are now being produced and projected using digital means, which use video tapes, optical disks, and hard drives as their carriers, which film archives also deal with. And these

³⁵ Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print. 23.

³⁶ Melville, Annette, and Scott Simmon. *Film Preservation 1993: A Study of the Current State of American Film Preservation: Report of the Librarian of Congress*. Washington, DC: National Film Preservation Board of the Library of Congress, 1993. Print. 5-6.

³⁷ Read, Paul, and Mark-Paul Meyer. *Restoration of Motion Picture Film*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2000. Print. 70.

digital films also come with their own set of archiving and preservation problems including media obsolescence and issues with longevity.³⁸ The process of preserving older nitrate and acetate films also involves both preserving them in their original formats as well as scanning, copying, and storing them on newer digital formats. With many traditional film labs going out of business, copying older films onto similar film carriers instead of onto digital carriers has become very challenging, but the “romance of celluloid” as Caroline Frick calls it has motivated some film archives to build their own film labs.³⁹ For instance, the Library of Congress, the Royal Belgian Film Archive (now called Cinematek), and the film archive of the University of California at Los Angeles have all invested in setting up traditional film labs, but only few are able to afford such investments. Consequently, most film archives now employ a hybrid workflow that includes many different formats of films, video tapes, disks, and hard drives that are used as intermediaries, access copies, and even as carriers for long term storage of cinematic content, which also varies according to the significance of the titles being preserved.

Added to all this is the fact that not all film archives deal only with collecting and preserving film alone, or even just moving images. For instance, the NFSA also deals with sound recordings, and most film archives also hold large collections of film paraphernalia including books, scripts, posters, costumes, and camera equipment, among others, making the term film archive a general idea rather than a precise definition, at the core of which lies the safekeeping of films.⁴⁰

³⁸ Conway, Paul. "Preservation in the Age of Google: Digitization, Digital Preservation, and Dilemmas." *Library Quarterly* 80.1 (2010): 61-79. Print; Ongena, Guido, Erik Huizer, and Lidwien van de Wijngaert. "Threats and Opportunities for New Audiovisual Cultural Heritage Archive Services: The Dutch Case." *TELE Telematics and Informatics* 29.2 (2012): 156-65. Print; Evens, Tom, and Laurence Hautekeete. "Challenges of Digital Preservation for Cultural Heritage Institutions." *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 43.3 (2011): 157-65. Print.

³⁹ Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print. 153.

⁴⁰ Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print. 13-28.

My use of the term *archive* is similarly imprecise, as one of my case studies, EYE, sees itself as much as a museum as it does as an archive, and was even known as the Nederlands Filmmuseum until very recently. An archive is often schematically grouped together with the museum and the library, the three pillars of memory institutions, which are collectively referred to as LAM.⁴¹ Broadly defined, an archive is a collection of historical records, public or private, as well as the building or structure it is located in, which contains primary records that have accumulated over the course of an individual or organization's lifetime, which are mostly accessed by researchers.⁴² A museum is a building or an institution that houses and cares for a collection of artifacts and other objects of scientific, artistic, or historic importance, and makes them available for public viewing through exhibits that may be permanent or temporary.⁴³ And a library is a collection of sources, resources, and services built around books and other media, and the institution or building in which they are housed, available either for a select group of people or the general public.⁴⁴

In traditional writings on the MLA, each of these three institutions have often been explained and understood through comparisons and contrasts with the other two institutions,

⁴¹ Hedstrom, Margaret, and John Leslie King. "On the LAM: Library, Archive, and Museum Collections in the Creation and Maintenance of Knowledge Communities." *Mapping Innovation: Six Depth Studies* (2003). Print; Zorich, Diane, Gunter Waibel, and Ricky Erway. "Beyond the Silos of the LAMs: Collaboration among Libraries, Archives and Museums." OCLC Research. 2008. Web. <<http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2008/2008-05.pdf>>.

Other variations of the combination include MLA and ALM. Some scholars also add a fourth category, that of the gallery, to this schematic grouping and refer to it as GLAM. For instance, see Dorner, Daniel G., and Sophie Young. *A Regional Approach to Identifying Items of National Significance Held by Small Cultural Institutions in New Zealand: Final Report*. Wellington, New Zealand: School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington, 2004. Print; Lim, Shirley, and Chern Li Liew. "Metadata Quality and Interoperability of GLAM Digital Images." *ASLIB Proceedings* 63.5 (2011): 484-98. Print; Davis, Wendy, and Katherine Howard. "Cultural Policy and Australia's National Cultural Heritage: Issues and Challenges in the GLAM Landscape." *The Australian Library Journal* 62.1 (2013): 15-26. Print.

⁴² Trant, Jennifer. "Emerging Convergence? Thoughts on Museums, Archives, Libraries, and Professional Training." *Museum Management and Curatorship* 24.4 (2009): 369-87. Print.

⁴³ Alexander, Edward P. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979. Print.

⁴⁴ Trant, Jennifer. "Emerging Convergence? Thoughts on Museums, Archives, Libraries, and Professional Training." *Museum Management and Curatorship* 24.4 (2009): 369-87. Print.

which stems from the need felt for distinct labels that would demarcate the nature of their collections and roles, especially for the professionals working in them. The archive has been compared and contrasted more closely with the museum, and as per the traditional understanding reflected in a number of works, this comparison can be broadly represented as follows:⁴⁵

⁴⁵ These ideas appear as fragments in a number of articles. See ---. "Emerging Convergence? Thoughts on Museums, Archives, Libraries, and Professional Training." *Museum Management and Curatorship* 24.4 (2009): 369-87. Print; Beasley, Gerald. "Curatorial Crossover: Building Library, Archives, and Museum Collections." *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Cultural Heritage* 8.1 (2007): 20-28. Print; Angel, Christine. "A Comparison of Descriptive Tagging Practices by Library, Archive, and Museum Professionals Using an Inter-Indexing Consistency Approach." *NASKO* 4.1 (2013): 20-29. Print; Gibson, Hannah, Anne Morris, and Marigold Cleeve. "Links between Libraries and Museums: Investigating Museum-Library Collaboration in England and the USA." *Libri*. 57.2 (2007): 53. Print; Allen, Susan. "Nobody Knows You're a Dog (or Library, or Museum, or Archive) on the Internet: The Convergence of Three Cultures." The International Federation of Library Associations. 2002. Web. 24 April 2011. <<http://archive.ifla.org/IV/ifla68/papers/159-141e.pdf> >; Alexander, Edward P. *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979. Print.

Archive	Museum
Houses historical records, public or private, that have accumulated over time	Houses objects of scientific, artistic, or historical importance that have been curated over time
Keeps its holdings grouped together in relation to each other and to their creators, classifying them on a container or box level rather than on an individual item level	Classifies its holdings on an individual item level
Makes all its holdings equally available at all times	Only a small percentage of its holdings are made available for public viewing at any given time, which are showcased through exhibitions that may be permanent or temporary
Emphasizes the uniqueness of its holdings and their provenance	Also emphasizes the uniqueness of its holdings and their provenance, but emphasizes education and interaction with the public as well
Thinks in terms of users rather than visitors, who are mostly scholars and other researchers	Thinks in terms of visitors rather than users, most of who belong to the general public
Restricts access to those with the right credentials	Does not restrict access
Is non-interpretative and neutral	Actively mediates between holdings and visitors through interpretative descriptions and explanations
Holdings are not lent to other similar institutions	Holdings may be borrowed by other institutions for exhibitions elsewhere
Location, building, and the building's architecture, historicity, and visibility are generally considered to be of limited significance	Occupies large and centrally located spaces with the building and its architecture, historicity, and visibility being very significant
Does not occupy a place on the tourism map	Is located prominently on the tourism map

Table 1 -- Archive and Museum

However, such neat classifications dissolve in the day-to-day functioning of most memory institutions, and even while they may aspire to live up to the perceived characteristics of their chosen identities, they are rarely strict about it and readily deviate from the conventions. For instance, many art museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, have collections of unique historical objects, but also collect contemporary objects that are not unique but are cultural markers and icons of the time period they were produced in (for instance Herman Miller's Aeron Chair). And many archives, such as the Archives Nationales in Paris, are not only housed in prominent historically significant buildings but also hold temporary as well as permanent public programs and exhibitions (the Archive Nationales even has its own museum, the Musée des Archives Nationales). The list could continue.

Over the last three decades, in what has been termed as convergence of the three pillars, the differences between them have become even more blurred, leading them to become increasingly hybrid entities that have been in a state of constant flux and transition. Writing more specifically of the archive, Terry Cook describes how it is entering a post-custodian era with "a renewed focus on the context, purpose, intent, interrelationships, functionality, and accountability of the record, its creator, and its creation processes," thereby seeking interpretative and contextualizing tasks for itself that were previously thought to belong with the museum.⁴⁶ This transition process is not yet complete as Eric Ketelaar reminds us, but the shift towards hybridity in archives is now uncontested.⁴⁷

The film archive also dwells in this hybridity. On the one hand, it is similar to an archive by housing a collection of moving image records that have accumulated over decades and have historical relevance. But on the other hand, it is unlike an archive since the films it holds can be borrowed by other similar institutions or film festivals (unless they are particularly

⁴⁶ "What Is Past Is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift." *Archivaria* 43 (1997). Print. 48.

⁴⁷ Ketelaar, Eric. "Archivistics Research: Saving the Profession." *American Archivists* 63 (2000): 322-40. Print. 326.

rare), are not necessarily unique since each film can have multiple copies, and are not usually managed by grouping them together in relation to one another, or their creators, but by their own individual titles instead. Additionally, the curated nature of its collections, its educational mandate, its emphasis on public screenings and outreach programs, its treatment of films as artifacts, and its growing emphasis on visibility and prominence all bring it closer to a museum.

Added to this mix is also the library, and also the cinemathèque. The film library is guided by its mandate to lend films, not unlike a books library, rather than by a mandate for their long term safekeeping. Typically, the films in a library are access copies to be replaced after wear and tear, and their circulation is not limited only to other similar institutions but is also offered to the public. However, some film libraries make a further distinction between a lending library and a record library, the latter being called a library but essentially involved in long term safekeeping of films, which is not unlike a film archive. At times, as in the case of the NFAI, a film archive may also maintain a lending library that is distinct from a record library, operating both of them simultaneously. However, such activities can be understood as sub-functions of a film archive that do not require separate nomenclature.

The term cinemathèque, used more frequently in the European context but also elsewhere, is typically a film theatre engaged in film exhibition, which does not necessarily have a collection of films at its core, but has been known to do so historically.⁴⁸ Alternatively, the film theatre of a film archive has also been called a cinemathèque, as has the film archive itself, as in the case of Cinémathèque Française, the Deutsche Kinemathek, the Filмотeca Española, the Tel Aviv Cinemathèque, and the Sinematek Indonesia, to name but a few. Its roles and functions can again be understood in terms of the film archive identity already discussed.

⁴⁸ Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print. 23.

Such a hybrid mix of names, identities, and functions for a film archive has characterized the institution from its very beginning. Many film archives originated as sub-department of a museum or an archive, and even a library, before finally gaining autonomy subsequently, which contributed to their hybridity. However, the hybridity has become even more pronounced in the recent past, which can be attributed, in part, to the digital turn.

For memory institutions, the digital turn has been defined as “the set of changes in the use and application of digital technology [that] bring on changes in practice and in the relationships between institutions and audiences.”⁴⁹ For the film archive, this set of changes has increasingly led to the audiovisual content it holds becoming remotely accessible through digital means -- especially in the age of YouTube, the Internet Archive, and other such services -- giving it reasons to feel insecure about its physical existence, and leading it to rethink its roles and functions in order to legitimize its continued relevance for the society through closer contact with the general public.⁵⁰ In the process, access has become the new guiding principle for the film archive, with it also assuming more of the interpretative roles and public engagements Ketelaar describes for archives in general, as well as feeling the need for more visibility in the cultural life of the city it is housed in. Consequently, the film archive now aspires to the same Benjaminian aura for its films that the museum has traditionally enjoyed for the objects in its collection, a similar centrality in the cultural life of its host city so as to continue receiving support from the state, and similarly magnificent premises to house itself, all of which are certainly true for the case studies I examine.

Central to the digital turn for film archives is digitization. It is the process of converting analog information from films and tapes into a digital format stored on video tapes, optical disks, and hard drives, which helps facilitate access, and also assists in rescuing content

⁴⁹ Runnel, Pille, Pille Pruilmann-Vengerfeldt, and Piret Viires. *The Digital Turn: User's Practices and Cultural Transformations*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH, 2013. Print. 7.

⁵⁰ Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print.

before its carrier deteriorates with improper care or the passage of time. The transnational audiovisual archiving community -- through such bodies as the FIAF Technical Committee, professional publications, and conferences and symposia -- has been deliberating over the merits and demerits of digitization since the 1990s.⁵¹ The debates have centered on such issues as the quality of digitized content when compared to its original on film, longevity of the digital content and carriers, obsolescence of technology, costs and financial viability, the need for better infrastructure, skill development and manpower training, and very significantly, questions of copyright, which have been discussed at length by Fossati, Sabine Lenk, and David Bordwell.⁵² The debates are yet to be fully resolved, and for now, especially for film archives, digitization is best seen as means to provide access to archival films without disturbing the originals, and as means to aid the preservation and restoration of films, but still not as the most suitable means for the long term preservation of films in and by itself.⁵³

Nonetheless, digitization has become important for film archives because of its perceived associations with modernity and preparedness for the future, and the potential for near instantaneous and easy access to filmic content. In principle, anyone with an active internet connection can remotely access digital content from across the world, whenever convenient, thereby providing institutions and their parent nation-states with more opportunities to publicize and showcase their holdings. For institutions struggling to get funds - - which is true for most memory institutions including my three case studies (albeit in different ways) -- such associations allow them to appear more attractive to the state, its bureaucratic

⁵¹ Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011; Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.

⁵² Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print; Lenk, Sabine. "Archives and Their Film Collection in a Digital World; or, What Futures for the Analog Print?" *The Moving Image* 14.2 (2014): 100-10. Print; Bordwell, David. *Pandora's Digital Box: Films, Files, and the Future of Movies*. Irvington Way Institute Press, 2013. Print.

⁵³ Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print; Conway, Paul. "Preservation in the Age of Google: Digitization, Digital Preservation, and Dilemmas." *Library Quarterly* 80.1 (2010): 61-79. Print.

machinery, as well as to other stakeholders, making digitization a tool for them to generate more interest in their activities.⁵⁴ Added to this is the potential digitization harbors for such activities as linking various institutions and databases, which also enables the generation of new contexts and meanings, and facilitates the cross-pollination of ideas. Given these possibilities, asking the state for more funds to put “films on shelves” as Pelle Snickars calls it makes less logical sense than asking for money to digitize them, which most film archives adopt.⁵⁵

Guiding the institutions through such activities are two important figures, those of the film curator and the film archivist. Paolo Cherchi Usai describes the film curator as follows:

[He] is an intellectual bridge between the past and the future, endowed with the strategic vision necessary to decipher the traces of what has happened, to explain them for the benefit of his or her community, and to anticipate the ways in which his or her present will be understood and judged by those who will come after us. The curator is a messenger who has the authority and the obligation to ensure that the message itself will foster memory and creativity at the same time.

Cherchi Usai distinguishes him from the film archivist by suggesting that:

Archivists collect, organize, and maintain control over a wide range of information deemed important enough for permanent safekeeping. They maintain records in accordance with accepted standards and practices that ensure the long-term preservation and easy retrieval of the documents. Archivists often specialize in an area of history or technology. Their goal is to ensure that all the works and materials put under the care of the organization are treated according to coherent conservation, preservation, and access standards. From the viewpoint of an archivist, no work or material accepted as part of the collection (whether it is a preservation or access element) deserves a lesser degree of professional care than others, this does not contradict the archivist's prerogative of recommending acquisition and preservation priorities. Fluency in professional practice related to the conservation, preservation, identification and cataloguing of the works and materials is an essential requirement of an archivist.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Usai, Paolo Cherchi. "Are All (Analog) Films" Orphans"?: A Predigital Appraisal." *The Moving Image* 9.1 (2009): 1-18. Print.

⁵⁵ Snickars, Pelle. "Archival Transitions: Some Digital Propositions." *Media, Popular Culture, and the American Century*. Eds. Bolton, Kingsley and Jan Olsson. Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2010. 301-29. Print. 316-17.

⁵⁶ Cherchi Usai, Paolo. "A Charter of Curatorial Values." *NFSA Journal* 1.1 (2006): 1-10. Print.

Traditionally, there existed an overlap of desirable skills between film curators and film archivists. A number of film archives had the same staff members performing tasks associated with both the roles -- for instance Henri Langlois of the Cinémathèque Française, Ernest Lindgren of the British Film Institute National Archive ((BFI NA), Iris Barry of MoMA, Jacques Ledoux of the Royal Belgian Film Archive, and James Card of the George Eastman House (now George Eastman Museum) -- especially for the first few years of their careers.⁵⁷ With an expansion in institutional activities and a growth of the field, the two roles have now been defined and demarcated more clearly. However, the definitions still remain imprecise, and as Cherchi Usai suggests, the two roles are necessarily intertwined and must consult and complement each other. As he puts it, there exists a “reciprocal bind,” and at times “a creative tension” between the two, and “the collaborative nature of the relationship between them is the key to the life of a film archive.”⁵⁸

Closely related to this discussion on film archiving and curating is the long standing debate between two kinds of film archivists and curators -- exemplified by Henri Langlois and Ernest Lindgren, each of them the founding curators of their respective institutions -- which is often termed as the Langlois-Lindgren debate. Lindgren was known for privileging the preservation of films over access to them, and believed in strict adherence to institutional rules, systems, and mechanisms to ensure the long-term sustainability of film archives. As discussed by Leo Enticknap, Lindgren was of the opinion that any master copy of a film stored in an archive, the only copy the archive had, was not to be projected unless it had been copied further. He made no exceptions, not even within the archive, for he believed that each

⁵⁷ A discussion of Langlois, Lindgren, Barry, and Card’s contributions to the film archiving movement can be found in Houston, Penelope. *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives*. London: British Film Institute, 1994. Print; Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print; Slide, Anthony. *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992. Print.

⁵⁸ Cherchi Usai, Paolo. "A Charter of Curatorial Values." *NFSA Journal* 1.1 (2006): 1-10. Print.

projection endangered a film's preservation due to the risk of inflicting irreparable damage to it through scratches or perforation resulting from the very act of projecting it. Given that copying each film was not always possible because of the limited availability of funds and resources, he came under sustained criticism from those who believed that "his single-minded approach ignored one of the main reasons for a film archive's existence: to promote a greater understanding of moving image culture and heritage through access to its holdings."⁵⁹

On the other end of the debate was Henri Langlois, who believed that in order to justify an archive's existence, access to the films it held had to be proactive and widespread. As Enticknap puts it:

Langlois argued that the funding and the will to carry out preservation work could only be secured by generating interest in film heritage. To this end he developed the Cinémathèque Française into one of the world's leading museums and programming repertory cinemas, drawing on the archive's own collection. Furthermore, that collection was established by often-unorthodox methods. In contrast to Lindgren's acquisition criteria, selection committee, legally binding deposit agreements and undertakings to respect preservation and copyright imperatives, Langlois took an "acquire first, ask questions later" approach. A lot of the initial collection in the Cinémathèque Française was of questionable provenance. . . . At the Cinémathèque Française, master prints were projected with little regard to the long-term preservation of what were, in many cases, the only surviving copies of culturally and historically significant feature films.⁶⁰

Despite some continued support for Langlois' position (as revealed to me in informal conversations with various stakeholders), the international film archiving community now accepts Lindgren's take as being more valid, generally adopting the motto of "preserve, then show." As Enticknap points out, even the only textbook on ethical practices in moving image

⁵⁹ Enticknap, Leo. "Have Digital Technologies Reopened the Lindgren/Langlois Debate?" *Media Access: Preservation and Technologies* 27.1 (2007): 10-20. Print. For a dramatization of the letters exchanged between the two, see Beale, Ruth. *Lindgren & Langlois: The Archive Paradox*. London. Mixed Media. Cubitt, 2011.

⁶⁰ Enticknap, Leo. "Have Digital Technologies Reopened the Lindgren/Langlois Debate?" *Media Access: Preservation and Technologies* 27.1 (2007): 10-20. Print.

archiving firmly endorses Lindgren's line by asserting that archives "will not compromise the survival of collection material in the interests of satisfying short-term demand."⁶¹

Another distinction that is worth noting here is the one between film curating and film acquisitions, which are also essentially two separate but interconnected domains in the functioning of a film archive. Typically, acquisitions involve curating, but curating can also be done from the films already acquired, and from other non-film cinema related objects in an archive. Many such distinctions and related debates continue to resurface frequently in the day-to-day functioning of film archives, including my three case studies, which I discuss in later sections of this dissertation.

Each of the three case studies I examine here have a set of characteristics peculiar to them. However, they are also simultaneously representative of other similar national film archives from elsewhere in the world. These are discussed below.

The Three Case Studies: The NFAI, EYE, and the NFSA

The three national film archives I examine here -- the NFAI, EYE, and the NFSA -- may be seen as representative examples located in three different sociopolitical milieus with highly disparate sizes, governing bodies, sources of funding, operational budgets, and nature of collections. They also have varied understandings of their missions, operate with dissimilar ideas about the nation-state, emerge from contrasting colonial or postcolonial contexts, have different relationships to technology, exhibit varied understandings about institutional management, and have disparate interactions with the free market. At the same time, they are also similar in their basic concerns for film preservation, dealings with bureaucratic ministries, and struggles for funding.

⁶¹ Edmondson, Ray. *Audiovisual Archiving Philosophy and Principles*. Paris: UNESCO, 2004. Print.

The NFAI represents India, the largest and most diverse film culture in the world (1,724 films in 32 languages in 2013), with most films being made with private funding, while EYE represents a small film culture that is mostly state funded (44 films in 2013), and the NFSA represents a medium sized film culture but a very small film industry that enjoys moderate state support (15 films in 2013).⁶² However, the NFAI has a relatively small collection of approximately 10,000 films, most of them Indian and only encompassing a fraction of the national film output, while EYE has a relatively large collection of 40,000 films, only forty percent of which are Dutch, and the NFSA has a very large collection of 300,000 films that are highly international in nature.⁶³ The NFAI is an understaffed institution with limited funds, resources and technology (a budget of 1.5 million USD for 2014-15, and a staff of 49 people), while the NFSA and EYE are at the forefront of technological developments in film preservation and have comparatively large staffs and funds for research (EYE's annual budget in 2015 was 17.3 million Euros and it employed 165 people, while for the NFSA, the budget was 33.7 million AUD and it employed more than 250 people).⁶⁴

On the face of it, since India is a former colony, Australia a former colonial dominion now governed independently, and the Netherlands a former colonizer, their respective national film archives and their collections also appear to be symptomatic of three different facets of the colonial project. However, the years of their founding, 1964 for the NFAI, a postcolonial

⁶² Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. "Indian Cinema: A Vanishing Legacy." *Journal of Film Preservation* 91 (2014): 26-35. Print; "Australia Content Releases: Number of Australian Feature Films Released in Cinemas in Australia and Overseas, 1985-2014." screenaustralia.gov.au. April 2015. Web. 1 July 2016.

<<http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research/statistics/releasesfeaturescinema.aspx>>; *Film Facts and Figures of the Netherlands*. Amsterdam: Netherlands Film Fund, 2014. Print.

⁶³ As revealed in informal conversations with the NFAI staff. This estimate is discussed further in Chapter 2. "About the Collection." EYE. Web. 3 June 2016.

<<https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/collection/highlights/about-the-collection>>; "Film." National Film and Sound Archive. Web. 3 June 2016. <www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/film/>.

⁶⁴ "Ministry of Information and Broadcasting: Annual Report 2015-16." New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 2015. Print; Gant, Anne. Email communication. 4 August 2016. Amsterdam; "About Us." National Film and Sound Archive. Web. 5 May 2016. <<http://www.nfsa.gov.au/about/>>.

moment, 1935 for the NFSA, a newly independent moment, and 1919 for EYE, a colonial moment -- as well as the highly disparate sizes of their collections -- complicate this and demand careful consideration.⁶⁵

From the perspective of film archivists, contrasts between the three continue by way of the NFAI being representative of film archives in hot and humid climates located in South Asia, and the NFSA being representative of film archives in hot and dry climates located in the Pacific region, both of which face unique sets of film preservation problems. EYE is representative of cool Western European climates where film archives are relatively easy to maintain. The organizational nature of the institutions also offers contrasts, for the NFAI functions as an autonomous government body under the Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B Ministry), EYE as an umbrella organization of many state departments engaged in collection, restoration, research, education and promotion of film, all under the Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen (OCW, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science), and the NFSA as a statutory authority safekeeping both films and sound recordings, reporting to the Australian Minister for the Arts.

While the NFSA is administrated in a bureaucratic manner, EYE is much less bureaucratic with comparatively transparent functioning and a seemingly corporate work culture, and the NFSA treads the middle ground between state bureaucracy and corporate work ethics. Additionally, the NFAI maintains its state supported character strongly and has largely stayed away from working with the private sector, while EYE exhibits a flexible

⁶⁵ NFAI. "Research and Documentation Section." Government of India. Web. 20 May 2014. <<http://www.nfaipune.gov.in/documentation.htm> >; "National Film and Sound Archive Bill 2008." Parliament of Australia, Department of Parliamentary Services. 2008. Web. 13 August 2015. <<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/bd/2007-08/08bd077.pdf> >. EYE was founded on 1 January 2010 by merging four organizations, but the history of film archiving in the nation dates back to the Nederlandsch Centraal Filmarchief (Dutch Central Film Archive) that was set up in 1919. See Oomen, Johan. "Timeline Dutch Audio Visual Archives." Birth Television Archive. Web. 23 March 2011. <http://www.birth-of-tv.org/birth/assetView.do?lang=en&asset=1339149129_1129810991 >.

workflow and seamless interaction with the private sector, and the NFSA occupies the middle ground yet again.⁶⁶

Each of these case studies is exemplary of remarkable characteristics. For instance, the NFAI embodies multiple cinema cultures and the contested idea of national cinema in India, EYE displays unparalleled integration of its work with a commercial film lab -- Haghefilm Digitaal - whose predecessor was even housed within the same premises as EYE till recently, and the NFSA gives much importance to the preservation and safekeeping of recordings pertaining to Aboriginal culture while also emphasizing the repatriation of films.⁶⁷ However, these case studies also stand in for many more national film archives dealing with concerns similar to theirs. For instance, the hot and humid climate conditions found at the NFAI are similar to those at the Bangladesh Film Archive, the National Archive of Malaysia, and the Nigerian National Film Video and Sound Archive, while the NFAI's highly bureaucratic functioning is similar to that of the Cineteca Nacional in Mexico, the Egyptian Film Archive, and the Cinémathèque Algérienne.⁶⁸

The NFSA's large collection is reminiscent of the "archive everything" policies of the Kungliga Biblioteket in Sweden and the Nasjonalbiblioteket in Norway through legal deposits, the highly international nature of EYE's collection's similar to that of the BFI NA, while the focus on digital technology by both institutions parallels that of the Institut national de l'audiovisuel in France.⁶⁹ NFSA's emphasis on the preservation of films pertaining to

⁶⁶ For the NFAI, this has changed in the recent past with private companies being contracted for the digitization of films, but has generally been true through the history of the institution.

⁶⁷ "NFSA Repatriates Indigenous Films to Celebrate UNESCO's World Day for Audiovisual Heritage." National Film and Sound Archive. 2007. Web. 29 October 2011.

<<http://afcarchive.screenaustralia.gov.au/downloads/pubs/unesco.pdf> >; "Australia 'Repatriates' 1600 Old Hollywood Films." *The Spectator*. 20 August 1994. Print.

⁶⁸ As established through conversations with the heads of various national archives.

⁶⁹ Legal deposit for films, a term traditionally used for books, is the obligatory state requirement for copies of all the films produced in a nation to be submitted to a central film archive. The term has been at the center of many debates in both national and international film archiving communities for decades. Only a handful of nations, mostly with small national film outputs, have implemented blanket legal deposits, with most other settling for selective or no deposits. In the case of India, legal deposits have been proposed, mooted, and rejected

Aboriginal culture is similar to that of various film archives in Canada, its efforts at repatriating films similar to the efforts of the New Zealand Film Archive, the Czech National Film Archive, and Gosfilmofond of Russia, and its collection of rare films parallels that of such “end of the line” archives as the Belgian Cinematek and the New Zealand Film Archive.⁷⁰ Thus, the relevance of this dissertation extends much beyond the three case studies discussed here, making it an important work for both memory institutions in general and film archives in particular. And it is also interdisciplinary, borrowing from the literature of a number of intersecting disciplines as discussed below.

Literature Review

Given the film archive’s location at the intersection of archives and museums, the academic works dealing with the two memory institutions are directly relevant for my project. The literature from museum studies or museology is vast and overlaps with art history in places, with one strand of it being focused on the practical day-to-day concerns of museum administration and the skills needed to run them; in other words, museum methods. This includes overviews on museum management such as Tim Ambrose’s *Museum Basics* (1993) and Kevin Moore’s *Museum Management* (1994), narrower works focused on museum conservation such as *Managing Conservation in Museums* (2002) by Suzanne Keene and *Conservation Mounting for Prints and Drawings* (2004) by Joanna Kosek, and those focused on exhibition such as Christopher Cuttle’s *Light for Art’s Sake* (2007) and Elizabeth Bogle’s

multiple times in the NFAL’s history, for the state has neither had the resources to take up the responsibility of preserving copies of the huge output of films made in the nation, nor do many fund starved producers have the means to comply with such requirements.

⁷⁰ It is a common practice for distributors to pass on prints of foreign films to another nation after their limited run in the first one. For a combination of reasons, such nations as Belgium and New Zealand were historically the last ones to receive many films, marking an end of the line of film circulation and distribution for foreign films. Many such films eventually made their way to the national film archives of these nations, which now hold some of the rarest films from across the world.

Museum Exhibition Planning and Design (2013).⁷¹ Another strand explores models of museum education, such as *Learning in the Museum* (1998) by George Hein and *The Educational Role of the Museum* (1999) by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, while yet another deals with museum funding and business strategies, for instance Susan Pearce's *Museum Economics and the Community* (1991) and Fiona McLean's *Marketing the Museum* (1997).⁷² These provide important insights into the ways museums function, and have resonances with some of the practical concerns for the film archives I wish to engage with, for instance the questions related to generating funds for them.

A related body of works, which falls under the rubric of new museology, assumes more importance for my purposes by re-orienting museum studies from being a "how to" discipline of specialist knowledge about the physical preservation of objects and institutional management to an interrogation of the institution itself, investigating the ways in which meaning is made, communicated, and reproduced in and by museums. One of the earliest works to call it as such, Peter Vergo's edited volume titled *The New Museology* (1989), defines the field in opposition to more traditional discussions that focus on museum methods, simply calling it a re-examination of the role of museums within society in wake of the widespread dissatisfaction with existing works on museology. Deliberately avoiding a single viewpoint and a more precise definition, it presents us with a multitude of new perspectives through

⁷¹ Ambrose, Tim, and Crispin Paine. *Museum Basics*. London: ICOM in conjunction with Routledge, 1993. Print; Moore, Kevin. *Museum Management*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print; Keene, Suzanne. *Managing Conservation in Museums*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2002. Print; Kosek, Joanna M., and Christina Angelo. *Conservation Mounting for Prints and Drawings: A Manual Based on Current Practice at the British Museum*. London: Archetype in association with British Museum, 2004. Print; Cuttle, Christopher. *Light for Art's Sake: Lighting for Artworks and Museum Displays*. Amsterdam: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2007. Print; Bogle, Elizabeth. *Museum Exhibition Planning and Design*. Plymouth, UK: AltaMira Press, 2013. Print.

⁷² Hein, George E. *Learning in the Museum*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print; Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean. *The Educational Role of the Museum*. London: Routledge, 1999. Print; Pearce, Susan M. *Museum Economics and the Community*. London: Athlone Press, 1991. Print; McLean, Fiona. *Marketing the Museum*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.

worldwide case studies that shed light on the many diverse social functions of museums in different cultural contexts.⁷³

Building on his work are such edited volumes as Ivan Karp's *Exhibiting Cultures* (1991), which asks what do museum exhibitions represent and how do they do so, Susan Pearce's *Interpreting Objects and Collections* (2006), which looks at the processes through which objects become component parts of museum collections and acquire collective significance, and Saloni Mathur's *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying* (2015), which investigates the roles of museums in the social fabric of South Asia.⁷⁴ Rather than providing me with specific works to cite in my own analysis, they inform this dissertation through the central spirit of new museology -- which interrogates the institution's policies, practices, and meanings -- for my own inquiry into the nature of film archives also took root in them.⁷⁵

Archival studies is similarly vast. In *Archives in the Ancient World* (1972), Ernst Posner discusses the symbolic and functional roles played by the archives of Pharaonic Egypt, Greece, Persia, Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, and Republican and Imperial Rome based on archeological documents and records.⁷⁶ At the time of its publication, Posner's work was groundbreaking, adding a new dimension to the known history of archiving and giving modern archivists much reason to take pride in their professional lineage. However, it examines the ancient archives through the lens of present day archival practices, presupposing that the functioning of ancient archives paralleled that of their present day avatars, and partly validating the claim through fragmented evidences. Such work remains relevant in so far as

⁷³ Vergo, Peter, ed. *The New Museology*. London: Reaktion Books, 1989. Print.

⁷⁴ Karp, Ivan, and Steven Lavine, eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991. Print; Pearce, Susan M., ed. *Interpreting Objects and Collections*. London: Routledge, 2006. Print; Mathur, Saloni, and Kavita Singh, eds. *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia*. 2015. Print.

⁷⁵ In so saying, I am referring to my engagement as a primary researcher with the UCLA-JNU project titled *Museology and the Colony: The Case of India*, which eventually led to the book -- -, eds. *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia*. 2015. Print.

⁷⁶ Posner, Ernst. *Archives in the Ancient World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972. Print.

tracing the lineage of the institution is concerned, but an appropriation of ancient concepts for a discussion of contemporary archives -- especially for their physical realizations as I attempt here -- has been questioned by scholars revisiting his work.

In particular, Rosalind Thomas (1992) has corrected deficiencies in Posner's work and cautioned us against direct comparisons between the ancient and the modern archives.⁷⁷ Thomas implores us to move beyond "the rationalist view of writing" and argues that written records did not have the same meanings for the ancient world as they do for us today. She suggests that the archives that acted as repositories of these records, and their significations both literal and symbolic, need to be understood in the context of the cultures that produced them. In the process, her work liberates the concept of the archive from having a fixed and overarching meaning and identity, thereby opening it up to multiple realizations. It re-orientates the terrain from thinking of archives as intrinsically originary and authoritative institutions to enabling a discussion of their varied social instantiations and iterations in different "archiving cultures," which is in line with my own attempts here.

My dissertation, which deals chiefly with one non-western and two western film archives,⁷⁸ requires that I consider my European and Australian case studies to be indebted to the Greek *arkhē*, the point of origin of the concept, and see them as being part of its conceptual lineage, even while acknowledging that the archive's cultural significations and functions have changed over the centuries, across different western nations, and in the context of the medium of cinema that is only one century old. This would suggest that my dissertation presumes a different lineage for the NFAI, the modern non-western archive

⁷⁷ Thomas, Rosalind. *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens*. Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989. Print; ---. *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*. Key Themes in Ancient History. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992. Print.

⁷⁸ Australia, although widely considered to be a western nation, has a complicated "floating" position between the western and non-western worlds. For an insightful analysis of this, see Harada, Yoko, et al. "Floating between the Orient and the Occident Japan, Australia and Their Inferiority Complex." 2009. Print.

located in India, which may be traced back to ancient archival practices in India, and that such a lineage is essentially different from the western one. However, the concept of an archive does not have parallels in ancient India, and its closest siblings, the mythicized libraries of Takshashila and Nalanda, have only been subjected to limited interrogation.⁷⁹ I believe that the modern archive in India is essentially a western concept introduced into the nation by British colonizers. However, the same does not necessarily indicate that it is an institution with a colonial or post-colonial agenda, which I discuss later in this dissertation. Thus, the lineage from the ancient western archives to the modern ones is as valid for India as it is for the Netherlands and Australia. Consequently, my dissertation is not a comparison of western and non-western archives but a study of three different realizations of the same conceptual archive in geographically and culturally dissimilar spaces in the twentieth century.

For such an investigation, the socio-political interrogation of the archive offered by critical theory from a cultural studies perspective gains much relevance, with the often cited *Archeology of Knowledge* by Michael Foucault being an important work (1969, first translated into English in 1972).⁸⁰ Owing to Foucault's ideas being at the intersection of history and cultural theory, his work has allowed the archive to gain much currency in cultural studies since the previously discussed "return" to it. Foucault uses the term archive to describe the historic *a priori* of thought in a culture, the structures and systems that govern the possible enunciations, suppressions, classifications, and relations between different knowledges at any given moment. For him, the archive is not an empirical concept with real world realizations. [The archive does] not mean the sum of all texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past, or as evidence of a continuing identity, *nor . . . the*

⁷⁹ Mishra, Shiva Kumar. *Educational Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India: From the Earliest Times to 1206 A.D. With Special Reference to Mithila*. New Delhi: Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, 1998. Print; Trehan, G. L. *Learning & Libraries in Ancient India: A Study*. Chandigarh: Library Literature House, 1975. Print.

⁸⁰ Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993. Print.

institutions, which, in a given society, make it possible to record and preserve those discourses that one wishes to remember and keep in circulation” (emphasis mine).⁸¹ Rather, it is the sum total of the knowledge contained in the system that makes such institutions possible. He uses the term to undertake an excavation of the methodology of the human sciences, thereby commenting on the pre-discursive frameworks that govern the generation of any meaning or knowledge. The archival institutions I study here are only a small part of these frameworks. Nonetheless, Foucault’s archive is significant for my purposes, for instance, by being the *a priori* value judgment emerging from India’s class-based knowledge structure that informs the setting up of the NFAI and Chabria’s rejection of Govinda’s films from its holdings. Chabria’s response to my question and his choices for the NFAI are the enactment of this *a priori*, a single cultural enunciation, as are the curatorial choices made by EYE and the NFSA.

Foucault’s work has allowed a questioning of the system governing our cultural enunciations and a closer inspection of its structures, and an interrogation of power found in everyday regulatory practices of the state. The seminal *The Birth of the Museum* (1995) by Tony Bennett, which belongs as much with new museology as it does with critical theory for cultural studies, borrows from Foucault to offer us essays on the power and evolution of museums in the nineteenth century. It describes how they were endowed with the responsibility of transforming an unsophisticated public into adopting civilized behavior and the rules of social decorum by the social elites, exposing the classist and biased political and social agendas of museums and exhibit design.⁸²

A reworking of Foucault’s ideas in the postcolonial context has produced such works as *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and Fantasy of Empire* (1993) by Thomas Richards,

⁸¹ ---. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1993. Print. 146.

⁸² Bennett, Tony. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.

which explores the ways in which the Victorian organization of knowledge in fields like biology, geography, and geology was enlisted into the service of the British Empire, and how this eventually established an enduring link between knowledge and the state that made its way into the English novel -- in the form of colonial fantasies -- in the works of such authors as Rudyard Kipling, H.G. Wells, and Bram Stoker.⁸³ In the edited volume *Refiguring the Archive* (2002), Carolyn Hamilton and other contributors question the archive's traditional understanding as a neutral repository of memory and history to explore the ways in which it constructs, sanctifies, and actively buries parts of the past in post-colonial South Africa, exposing the power at play in it.⁸⁴ In *Along the Archival Grain* (2009), Ann Stoler dismantles the Dutch state's epistemic power and self-determination to reveal its anxieties through a discussion of colonial documents from nineteenth century Netherlands Indies. She demonstrates how the colonial state was not just engaged in the simple and straightforward manufacturing of consent through reason, but also sought to engineer morality and manage sentiments as reflected in a closer reading of its archives.⁸⁵

Foucault's ideas have also come together with British cultural studies -- which has its roots in the Frankfurt School and is exemplified by the works of such scholars as Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson, and Stuart Hall -- to develop the sub-discipline of cultural policy studies.⁸⁶ Cultural policy studies is by and large a reformist enterprise, which emerged in the 1990s out of the idea that cultural studies should not only be critical, but also try to be useful, i.e., not only reveal the power and politics of the media and cultural institutions

⁸³ Richards, Thomas. *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*. London: Verso, 1993. Print.

⁸⁴ Hamilton, Carolyn. *Refiguring the Archive*. Boston: Kluwer Academic, 2002. Print.

⁸⁵ Stoler, Ann Laura. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009. Print.

⁸⁶ Hoggart, Richard. *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special References to Publications and Entertainments*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1957. Print; Williams, Raymond. *The Long Revolution*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961. Print; Thompson, E. P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1964. Print; Hall, Stuart, David Morley, and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds. *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.

but also correct the policies enacting them. As Justin Lewis and Toby Miller put it, “a critical approach to cultural policy. . . involves both theoretical excavations and practical alternatives.”⁸⁷ The idea can be seen reflected in a number of articles, for instance “Putting Policy into Cultural Studies” by Tony Bennett, “Cultural Political Economy and Critical Policy Studies” by Bob Jessop, “Cultural Industries and Cultural Policy” by David Hesmondhalgh and Andy Pratt, “Culture, Government and Spatiality” by Clive Barnett, and in such books as *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration* (1993) by Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson.⁸⁸ My dissertation identifies itself closely with the reformist project of the sub-discipline, and hopes that it can also lead to concrete policy changes both in the case studies it deals with and the nation-state and bureaucracies they are a part of.

However, Foucault’s work has also implicitly made the concept of the archive too abstract and unwieldy. Derrida continues Foucault’s theorizing of the archive with *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995, translated into English in 1996), but brings the concept closer to its empirical realizations and locates it within existing knowledge networks.⁸⁹ “Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the term “archive,” he suggests. He argues that mankind suffers from “archive fever,” “a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive,” a psychological drive that underlines the universal processes of collecting and remembering, which is characterized by “an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute

⁸⁷ Lewis, Justin, and Toby Miller. *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003. Print. 2.

⁸⁸ Bennett, Tony. "Putting Policy into Cultural Studies." *Cultural Studies*. Eds. Grossberg, Lawrence, Cary Nelson and Paula A. Treichler. New York: Routledge, 1992. 23-37. Print; Jessop, Bob. "Cultural Political Economy and Critical Policy Studies." *Critical policy studies* 3.3-4 (2010): 336-56. Print; Hesmondhalgh, David, and Andy C Pratt. "Cultural Industries and Cultural Policy." *International journal of cultural policy* 11.1 (2005): 1-13. Print; Barnett, Clive. "Culture, Government and Spatiality Reassessing the 'Foucault Effect' in Cultural-Policy Studies." *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2.3 (1999): 369-97. Print; Bianchini, Franco, and Michael Parkinson. *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: The West European Experience*. Manchester University Press, 1993. Print.

⁸⁹ Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.

commencement.” Following Posner’s example, he traces the etymology of the term *archive* to the Greek term *arkhē* to suggest that it has dual significations: one, as a place of physical, historical or ontological *commencement*, the seat of the origin and the beginning, and two, that of *commandment* or political power, the seat of authority and the law.

He proceeds to deconstruct the term using a psychoanalytical framework, arguing that the archive is both a spectral site where individual and collective psychological impulses become manifest, as well as the locus of fairly elaborate games of power and politics, especially of the nation-state.⁹⁰ By locating his analysis in Sigmund Freud’s last house, the repository for Freud’s personal archives, and investigating the house’s relationship to the discipline of psychoanalysis, he also sheds light on the conceptual archive’s physical manifestations and its implications for knowledge production. He sees the physical archive as the site of localization and domiciliation of the conceptual archive, where the *archons* or the archivists function as guardians of important records and have the power to interpret them, thereby bringing us closer to the film archival institutions I wish to investigate.

With many large archives in the world being state funded institutions, Foucault’s and Derrida’s ideas resonate well with a number of cultural theorists, as well as with the many historians who use the archives. This is in no small measure because Foucault and Derrida reinforce the centrality of archives for their own projects, explaining to them their own fascination with archival material and reifying them as the interpreters of archival secrets for the public. As a result, the archive has been collectively romanticized and imparted with too much authority across disciplines, perhaps unwittingly and by no means a new phenomenon (see for instance even Walter Benjamin’s *The Arcade Project*),⁹¹ but pursued with renewed vigor by many scholars more recently through the aforementioned “return.”⁹²

⁹⁰ The individual in his case is Sigmund Freud, his daughter, and Yerushalmi, among others.

⁹¹ Benjamin, Walter, and Rolf Tiedemann. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999. Print.

⁹² For instance, see Merewether, Charles. *The Archive*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006. Print; Garde-Hansen, Joanne. "Mymemories?: Personal Digital Archive Fever and Facebook."

Addressing these limitations, and treating the ideas of Foucault and Derrida with skepticism, are members of the archiving community as well as some historians. These scholars prefer empiricism and literalism to overarching theories and grand narratives about the archive, which they are wary of. Many of them are practicing archivists who claim that abstract theories about the conceptual archive have little relevance for its real world realizations. Therefore, they treat the archive as a regime of fragmented practices -- as do I in this dissertation -- with some even positioning themselves in direct opposition to Foucault and Derrida through such works as "Rescuing the Archive from Foucault" by Linda Ferreira-Buckley (1999), "The Ordinariness of the Archive" by Thomas Osborne (1999), and "Intimacy in Research: Accounting for it" by Carolyn Steedman (2008).⁹³

Steedman's earlier work, *Dust: Archive and Cultural History* (2002), takes another interesting position by treading the middle ground between abstraction and literalism, a complex negotiation of the space between theory and the physical archive. She considers the theoretical implications of taking Derrida literally by discussing the experiences of physically undertaking archival work as a historian, only to find little power or authority in the archive, but a lot of dust, debris, and bureaucratic detritus, one that gives the researchers working in it real

Save as... Digital Memories. Springer, 2009. 135-50. Print; Withers, Charles WJ. "Constructing 'the Geographical Archive'." *Area* 34.3 (2002): 303-11. Print; Hegarty, Peter. "Harry Stack Sullivan and His Chums: Archive Fever in American Psychiatry?" *History of the Human Sciences* 18.3 (2005): 35-53. Print; Mawani, Renisa. "Law's Archive." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 8 (2012): 337-65. Print; Carroll, Nathan. "Unwrapping Archives: DVD Restoration Demonstrations and the Marketing of Authenticity." *The Velvet Light Trap* 56.1 (2006): 18-31. Print; Echevarría, Roberto González. *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*. Duke University Press, 1998. Print; Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Cultural Memory and Performance in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003. Print.

⁹³ Ferreira-Buckley, Linda. "Rescuing the Archives from Foucault." *College English* 61.5 (1999): 577-83. Print; Osborne, Thomas. "The Ordinariness of the Archive." *History of the Human Sciences* 12.2 (1999): 51-64. Print; Steedman, Carolyn. "Intimacy in Research: Accounting for It." *History of the Human Sciences* 21.4 (2008): 17-33. Print. Jaimie Baron also discusses some of these theorists versus practitioners approaches in Baron, Jaimie. *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History*. London: Routledge, 2014. Print. 1-5.

archive fever!⁹⁴ Consequently, she suggests that the archive is far less authoritative and interesting a place than Derrida makes it to be, and an encounter with it is a rather dull and ordinary experience. The self-reflexivity that such studies bring in debunk the myth of the archive's objectivity and shatter its claims to truth, while also putting the figure of the historian under investigation.

However, such works collectively reveal a tacit equating of the archive with the documents archive, and at best, include in it a photographs archive as well. The film archive is not directly addressed by them. Even Derrida makes no references to the archive fever one may have for collecting audiovisual material. The closest he comes is by way of calling a book of photographs "another species of archive,"⁹⁵ which he elaborates upon in later discussions on photography, but not specifically film.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, they have resulted in a reworking of the terrain and a further rethinking of the concept of the archive -- including the film archive -- which has impacted cinema and media studies in direct ways.

For one, the reworking has allowed a questioning of which film belongs in an archive. The previous understanding of an archivable film -- as only that is complete, from a well-known filmmaker, and with known provenance -- has been expanded to include lesser known titles, experimental films, home movies, ephemeral films, and film fragments that have been physically, culturally, commercially, and historically neglected, often collectively called orphan films.⁹⁷ It has also allowed the concept of the film archive to be liberated from the confines of

⁹⁴ Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002. Print. In particular, see chapter 2, "Something she called a fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust." 17-37.

⁹⁵ Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.

⁹⁶ Derrida, Jacques, et al. *Copy, Archive, Signature: A Conversation on Photography*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010. Print.

⁹⁷ Melville, Annette, and Scott Simmon. *Redefining Film Preservation: A National Plan - Recommendations of the Librarian of Congress in Consultation with the National Film Preservation Board*. Washington, DC: National Film Preservation Board of the Library of Congress, 1994. Print; Streible, Dan. "The State of Orphan Films: Editor's Introduction." *The Moving Image* 9.1 (2009): vi-xix. Print; van Gompel, Stef. "The Orphan Works Chimera and How to Defeat It: A View from across the Atlantic." *Berkeley Technology Law Journal* 27

its physical manifestations, and paved the way for it to be explored in other sites where cinema and media knowledge and history may be found, for instance, in junkyards, pawn shops, thrift stores, and antique shops selling cinema paraphernalia. Extending the sentiment, electronic data such as YouTube videos, blog entries, and emails -- which exist in every-place and no-place at the same time -- have also come to be elevated to the status of archival records, albeit ones not readily equated with dust and detritus. In some instances, as in the case of Indian cinema, such a liberal interpretation of the term has been necessitated by the lack of traditional archives, requiring urgent "rescuing" of histories before their scant remaining material evidences are lost forever, which is discussed in the works of such scholars as S. Theodore Baskaran, Debashree Mukherjee, and Kuhu Tanvir.⁹⁸

Consequently, what one calls the film archive is no longer just its bricks-and-mortar realizations but also all the non-state unofficial repositories of any and all records that can shed light on the cultural life of cinema, whether film based or otherwise. My work, focused on the physical national film archives, is in some ways a more conventional engagement with the concept, but one which argues that the traditional archives need to be examined alongside the liberated interpretations of the term, and their histories established, so as engage with the material dimension of not only cinema but also the memory institutions that house and safeguard films. The histories of these significant memory institutions need to be written before further analyses of their materials and meanings -- which can build upon such histories -- can be undertaken in more informed ways.

Other effects of the reworking of the term archive include oral histories and interviews gaining ground -- for instance works by Jo Labanyi (2005), Philippe Meers (2010), and Kortti

(2013): 1347-78. Print. 1347-78; Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print. 120-25.

⁹⁸ See Baskaran, S. Theodore. "Problems Faced by Film Historians in India." *Journal of the Moving Image* 9 (2010): 61-72. Print; Mukherjee, Debashree. "Notes on a Scandal: Writing Women's Film History against an Absent Archive." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 4.1 (2013): 9-30. Print; Tanvir, Kuhu. "Pirate Histories: Rethinking the Indian Film Archive." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 4.2 (2014): 115-36. Print.

Jukka (2009) -- which are predicated on an active human relationship between historians and their sources that goes beyond the written word or archival record.⁹⁹ As Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson describe it, “the most distinctive contribution of oral history has been to include within the historical record the experiences and perspectives of groups of people who might otherwise have been “hidden from history.” They have allowed for documenting “particular aspects of historical experience which tend to be missing from other sources, such as personal relations, domestic work or family life, and they have resonated with the subjective or personal meanings of lived experience.”¹⁰⁰ Given that national film archives are not just faceless structures but spaces inhabited and regulated through the human experience, I also employ oral histories and interviews extensively throughout this dissertation, piecing together institutional policies, practices, and histories as also seen from the perspectives of the people formulating and implementing them, i.e. the film archivists and the bureaucrats.

Alongside, there has been an increasing emphasis on historical empiricism that provides evidences for theories and findings, usually to be discovered in archives again. As a result, cinema and media studies scholars have also found reasons to re-assess and re-examine the archive and its holdings to find against the grain and revisionist narratives within it. Some examples may be found in the works of feminist film scholars who have shifted attention from theory to discovering material overlooked by previous scholars. Their new “lost and found” narratives tell hitherto unknown stories of the agency of women working in film industries, for instance such works as Cari Beauchamp’s *Without Lying Down* (1997), which

⁹⁹ Labanyi, Jo. "The Mediation of Everyday Life: An Oral History of Cinema-Going in 1940s and 1950s Spain." *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas* 2.2 (2005): 105-08. Print; Meers, Philippe, Daniël Biltereyst, and Liesbeth Van de Vijver. "Memories, Movies, and Cinema-Going. An Oral History Project on Film Culture in Flanders (Belgium)." *Film, Kino, Zuschauer: Filmrezeption = Film, Cinema, Spectator*. Eds. Schenk, Irmbert, et al. Marburg, Germany: Schüren Verlag, 2010. Print; Jukka, Kortti, and Mähönen Tuuli Anna. "Reminiscing Television: Media Ethnography, Oral History and Finnish Third Generation Media History." *European Journal of Communication* 24.1 (2009): 49-67. Print.

¹⁰⁰ Perks, Robert, and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral History Reader*. London: Routledge, 2016. Print. ix-x.

examines the lives of the Hollywood screenwriter Frances Marion and her many female colleagues who shaped filmmaking from 1912 through the 1940s, and Neepa Majumdar's *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only* (2009), which examines cinema stardom in India from its emergence in the silent era to the 1950s, especially focusing on Sulochana and Fearless Nadia who occupied the highbrow and lowbrow ends of the spectrum in the 1930s.¹⁰¹

Similar undertakings have also been attempted by queer studies scholars by revisiting the archive through such works as the groundbreaking *Now You See It* (1990) by Richard Dyer, which studies films by and about gay and lesbian people from 1919 to 1980.¹⁰² In a similar vein, M. Elise Marubbio's *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film* (2006) discusses thirty-four Hollywood films from the silent period to the present while drawing upon theories of colonization, gender, and race, and Priya Jaikumar's *Cinema at the End of Empire* (2006) studies, from a postcolonial perspective, how the intertwined British and Indian films of the 1930s and 1940s responded to the declining British empire and a nascent Indian nation.¹⁰³

There has also been an increasing emphasis on historical case studies in articles that rely on significant primary research to focus in detail on a relatively narrow period, subject, or institutional practice. Such "microhistories" (as they are often called) include Anuja Jain's "The Curious Case of the Films Division" and Efrén Cuevas' "Home Movies as Personal Archives in Autobiographical Documentaries," with the phenomenon itself also being discussed by

¹⁰¹ Beauchamp, Cari. *Without Lying Down: Frances Marion and the Powerful Women of Early Hollywood*. New York: Scribner, 1997. Print; Majumdar, Neepa. *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only! Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s-50s*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009. Print.

¹⁰² Dyer, Richard. *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.

¹⁰³ Marubbio, M. Elise. *Killing the Indian Maiden: Images of Native American Women in Film*. Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2006. Print; Jaikumar, Priya. *Cinema at the End of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain and India*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. Print.

Richard Maltby in "Explorations in New Cinema History" and Flavia Laviosa in "Francesca Archibugi's Cinema: Minimalism or Micro-History?"¹⁰⁴

Additionally, the reworking has allowed the material inside the archive to be explored as an archive in itself. For example, Ranjani Mazumdar's *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City* (2007) investigates the cinematic figures of angry young men, dangerous psychotics, street loafers, prostitutes, and gangsters to show how Indian cinema provided an archive of urban spaces and of the trauma of a deep social disillusionment through the social crisis of the 1970s and the globalized experience of the 1990s.¹⁰⁵ Paula Amad's *Counter Archive* (2010) offers a particularly interesting example, which combines film and philosophy to investigate the private photo-cinematographic archive of Albert Kahn -- a French banker and philanthropist (1860-1940) -- to ambitiously attempt a rewriting of the history of modernism and avant-garde cinema.¹⁰⁶

Amad's achievement lies in her suggestion that Kahn's 72,000 color photographs and 183,000 meters of film recordings of the everyday from across the globe (1909-1931), which appear to be intuitive Bergsonian "images from memory" with no utilitarian purpose and merely exist to be forgotten, now offer us a "view from below" of the invisible and the underrepresented; thereby constituting a counter-archive. Even more significantly, and unlike the other works cited above, she makes the audiovisual archive a direct object of her inquiry and not just a repository of records for evidences to support her arguments. She

¹⁰⁴ Jain, Anuja. "The Curious Case of the Films Division: Some Annotations on the Beginnings of Indian Documentary Cinema in Postindependence India, 1940s-1960s." *The Velvet Light Trap* 71 (2013): 15-26. Print; Cuevas, Efrén. "Home Movies as Personal Archives in Autobiographical Documentaries." *Studies in Documentary Film* 7.1 (2013): 17-29. Print; Maltby, Richard, Daniel Biltereyst, and Philippe Meers, eds. *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2011. Print; Laviosa, Flavia. "Francesca Archibugi's Cinema: Minimalism or Micro-History? Italian Cinema: 1980s-2000s." *Studies in European Cinema* 4.2 (2007): 99-110. Print.

¹⁰⁵ Mazumdar, Ranjani. *Bombay Cinema: An Archive of the City*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. Print.

¹⁰⁶ Amad, Paula. *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de La Planète*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010. Print.

simultaneously straddles film history, film theory, the institutional history of an archive, and the historian's encounter with the institution. She sees the fragmentary nature of Kahn's recordings, their inherent instability, and the infinite alternate arrangements they can be ordered into, as posing a challenge to archival order as well as modern historicism, thereby positing the audiovisual archive as being inherently unstable when compared to its traditional counterparts. However, her concerns still do not rest solely with the physical film archive I am interested in, nor more specifically with its national iterations.

Direct expositions of the film archive began from within the institutions rather than from the academia, and have a relatively short history. In 1992, Helen Harrison compiled a select bibliography of literature on the audiovisual archive for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).¹⁰⁷ In it, we find a section devoted to writings on the "History and Development of Archives: Archive Theory" (mostly European, and non-English language), followed by one on "Audiovisual Archives: General Policy," the latter presumed to be a subset of the former without any interrogation, and listing only a few fragmented preliminary policy documents. In 2004, another key UNESCO document, *Audiovisual Archiving: Philosophy and Principles*, by Ray Edmondson, a film archivist turned scholar, attempted to define and structure the field and its key theoretical, practical, and ethical concerns. Edmondson expresses the need to develop a philosophy of audiovisual archiving that is similar to other professions, for as he suggests, "even though the various audiovisual archive associations as well as individual archives have developed policies, rules and procedures, there has traditionally been little time to step back and ponder the theory on which these were based."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Harrison, Helen P. *Audiovisual Archive Literature: Select Bibliography*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 1992. Print.

¹⁰⁸ Edmondson, Ray. *Audiovisual Archiving Philosophy and Principles*. Paris: UNESCO, 2004. Print. 2.

However, Edmondson's philosophy and theory steer clear of deep engagements. Instead, the document develops as a series of logical statements that work towards defining the terms *audiovisual archiving* ("a field which embraces all aspects of the guardianship and retrieval of audiovisual documents. . ."), the *audiovisual archive* ("an organization. . . which has a statutory or other mandate for providing access to a collection of audiovisual documents. . ."), and the *audiovisual archivist* ("a person formally qualified or accredited as such. . . in developing, preserving or providing access to [an audiovisual] collection").¹⁰⁹ It proceeds to provide succinct summaries of the primary concerns of the field (scope of activities, clientele, decay, obsolescence and migration of media, content, carrier and context, analog and digital, management principles etc.), thereby treating philosophy and theory as the set of principles governing the functioning of audiovisual archives. In the process, Edmondson makes preliminary attempts at integrating theory and practice, but does not take it too far. Instead, in line with other UNESCO documents, his work is a concise reference manual that codifies the work of the audiovisual archiving profession and provides a blueprint for its activities.

By the time Edmondson put together the UNESCO document in 2004, another body of works had already contributed to the discussion on film archives by engaging with the highly combustible nitrate film that was discontinued in the 1950s after a series of accidental fires, but was (and still is) encountered in film archives. The fires lent themselves to aggressive media campaigns that brought much attention to film archiving, helping acquire some of the funds necessary for the expensive process of film preservation. Exemplifying such works is the suggestively titled *Nitrate Won't Wait* (1992) by the film historian Anthony Slide, which offers a history of film preservation in the United states, in the process also discussing the functioning of various institutions engaged in the process, most significantly MoMA and the Library of

¹⁰⁹ ---. *Audiovisual Archiving Philosophy and Principles*. Paris: UNESCO, 2004. Print. 15, 24, 25.

Congress.¹¹⁰ Supplementing Slide's book is Roger Smither and Catherine Surowiec's *This Film is Dangerous* (2002), the proceedings from the 2000 FIAF symposium "The Last Nitrate Picture Show." The book examines the life, death, afterlife, and the mythology of nitrate film, predominantly from a European perspective but with a few other international cases.¹¹¹ The former also references my case studies fleetingly, while the latter contains articles written by the heads of my case studies who narrate film preservation stories and achievements by the institutions under their leadership.¹¹² However, the institutions themselves are not the foci of these articles.

There exist no detailed works on the NFAI and EYE, but the institutional history of the NFSA has been discussed at length in Edmondson's PhD dissertation "National Film and Sound Archive: The Quest for Identity" (2011), as well as other articles by Edmondson, which also shed light on the institution's many controversial name changes and the identity politics associated with them.¹¹³ Other similar works include Penelope Houston's *Keepers of the*

¹¹⁰ Slide, Anthony. *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992. Print.

¹¹¹ Smither, Roger B. N., and Catherine A. Surowiec, eds. *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. Print.

¹¹² Slide, Anthony. *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992. Print. 163, 165, 166; Nair, P.K. "Not So Dangerous: Some Recollections." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 243-46. Print; ---. "How We Salvaged Kalia Mardan." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 388-90. Print; Chabria, Suresh. "The Cobra's Hoard." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 569-71. Print; Blom, Ivo. "Dutch Flames and Flickers." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 478-81. Print; Edmondson, Ray. "Wizards of Oz: Survivals, Losses, and Finds in Australian Film History." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 74-85. Print; ---. "The Last Film Search." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 396-98. Print.

¹¹³ ---. "National Film and Sound Archive: The Quest for Identity: Factors Shaping the Uneven Development of a Cultural Institution." University of Canberra, 2011. Print; ---. "You Only Live

Frame (1994), a thorough account of the founding and functioning of the National Film and Television Archive in the UK (NFTVA, precursor to the BFI NA). Houston also details the founding and functioning of FIAF and the international film archiving movement, and describes early film preservation policies and technological developments.¹¹⁴ While being informative, the book suffers from a journalistic tone (Houston was a film critic and the editor of *Sight & Sound*). It focuses only on British and European developments while peripherally mentioning some from the US. Nonetheless, it assumes much significance for me by being one of the earliest such book-length accounts on film archival institutions that paved the way for developments in the field. It also led to an eponymous film, directed by Mark McLaughlin (1999), which explores film preservation and restoration as then undertaken in the US.¹¹⁵

Caroline Frick's *Saving Cinema* (2011) extends McLaughlin's efforts towards reorienting the attention to the US, this time at the intersection of academia and the film archiving community. A trained archivist, she worked extensively in film preservation before entering academia. Her book discusses American audiovisual institutions and their functioning within the development of the transnational audiovisual archiving movement. It asks what enters the film archive and why, painting it as a highly political endeavor. Providing a basis for my project, it argues that "film archivists do more than just preserving moving image history, they actively produce and codify cinematic heritage." And it describes how digital technologies have produced an entirely new reality for film archives.¹¹⁶

Once: On Being a Troublemaking Professional." *The Moving Image* 2.1 (2002): 175-83. Print; ---. "When Governments Make Mistakes: Advocacy and the Long-Distance Archivist." *The Moving image* 8.1 (2008): 41-51. Print; ---. "A Long Day's Journey into - Light? Australia's National Film and Sound Archive in Transition." *Journal of Film Preservation* 25.66 (2003): 50-54. Print; ---. "A Case of Mistaken Identity: Governance, Guardianship and the Screensound Saga." *Archives and Manuscripts* 30 (2002): 30-47. Print.

¹¹⁴ Houston, Penelope. *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives*. London: British Film Institute, 1994. Print.

¹¹⁵ McLaughlin, Mark, et al. *Keepers of the Frame*. New York. Fox Lorber CentreStage. VHS. 2000.

¹¹⁶ Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.

The subject of digital technology, and of technology *per se*, is important indeed. Derrida, speaking of archive fever in 1994, the very early days of the digital era, and basing his theory only on emails and his portable Macintosh computer, foresaw the challenges to the archive posed by digital technology. He suggested that the “archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives,” which in turn is dependent on the technology of archiving. Not only does the archive preserve content from the past, but its technical structure also sets limits on what can be archived and how, thereby determining the structure of the archivable content itself and its relationship to the future. As he puts it, “archival technology no longer determines, will never have determined, merely the moment of the conservational recordings, but rather the very institution of the archivable event,” suggesting that instead of being the means of recording an event, the technology becomes the structure that governs the recording.¹¹⁷

His words have proven prophetic in more than one way for the film archive too, for instance in cases where digital archival management systems have simply been inadequate to record all facets of the original context of the archived film -- its metadata -- as in the case of many early systems that had no fields for the batch codes, the splices, or the nature of "heads" and "tails" of a film, missing which can have repercussions on future meanings that the film generates. However, with rapid technological developments, the terms of the debate around digital technology have now shifted from “whether digital technology should be embraced or not” to “how and when to make the transition, and what to do with the source material?”

Giovanna Fossati’s *From Grain to Pixel* (2009) attempts to answer the question by grounding it in case studies of specific film restoration projects, only to arrive at the implicit conclusion that the field is changing too rapidly for any definitive answers, and that they also vary from one institution and cultural context to another. However, in the process, she also

¹¹⁷ Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print. 17-18.

takes us from the larger politics of film archiving institutions to the concrete processes of film preservation and restoration. She asks what happens to the film after it enters the archive, in this case for the Nederlands Filmmuseum (EYE's precursor) and its allies. Written as a doctoral dissertation about her own simultaneous work in film preservation at the museum, the book is a somewhat awkward attempt at blending theory and practice. However, the value of her work lies in providing us with a remarkable snapshot of film archival institutions undergoing transitions through the digital turn. She also reveals how the restoration of individual film titles is strongly transnational and involves a multitude of stakeholders from across national borders. The fact that she does so at the Filmmuseum and its allies makes her work all the more relevant for my project.¹¹⁸

Looking beyond film archives to other memory institutions provides us with more works to engage, such as Haidee Wasson's *Museum Movies* (2005).¹¹⁹ Wasson discusses the Film Library of MoMA, its highly international collection, and its distribution of films to universities, other libraries, women's clubs, unions, departmental stores, and other nontheatrical venues. She suggests that MoMA's Film Library established an alternative to the viewing modes promulgated by Hollywood, and in the process, had the effect of "changing cinema's expanding discursive horizon." She argues that MoMA's most significant contribution came in the form of bestowing cinema with the status of high art, and in creating an institutional structure that professionalized cinema studies. In the process, her work also acts as a treatise on the audiovisual archive's complicated location in the LAM schema, for any suggestion that the MoMA Film Library is not a film archive would be an obvious mistake,

¹¹⁸ Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print. Juana Suárez also explores the digital turn through its effects on the film archive in her Master's thesis, focusing on Latin America. See Suárez, Juana. "Film Archives, Cultural History and the Digital Turn in Latin America: A Comparative Study." New York University, 2011. Print.

¹¹⁹ Wasson, Haidee. *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. Print.

especially given that it was one of the founder members of FIAF along with the British Film Institute, the Cinémathèque Française, and the Reichsfilmarchiv in 1938.

Peter Decherney's *Hollywood and the Cultural Elite* (2005) also makes MoMA part of its inquiry, tracing how the museum, along with the National Endowment for the Arts, Anthology Film Archives, and Columbia University, among others, was central to the formation of the American national identity forged through cinema, and how cinema, and by extension MoMA's Film Library, became a weapon of the Cold War.¹²⁰ Decherney's analysis also highlights the politics of archives and other memory institutions, and in some ways, acts as testament to Derrida's pronouncement that "there is no political power without control of the archive."¹²¹

The importance of Decherney's work also lies in bringing into prominence the roles played by individuals in the creation and functioning of memory institutions, which he does by foregrounding the work of Iris Barry, MoMA's film curator and a British national, who initially disapproved of American culture's influences on the world but later had an important part to play in furthering the same through the institution's Film Library. Robert Sitton's recent biography of Barry (2014) also helps us understand her life and contributions better.¹²²

Such focus on the individual is particularly relevant for my dissertation, for the relationship between the individual and the institution, which often becomes the "individual as institution," is central to the functioning of the film archive. In fact, the earliest non-academic studies of the field all developed as biographies and anecdotal chronicles of individual achievements.¹²³ Derrida's "arch-father," he who imprints the archive with his permanent

¹²⁰ Decherney, Peter. *Hollywood and the Culture Elite: How the Movies Became American*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. Print.

¹²¹ Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.

¹²² Sitton, Robert. *Lady in the Dark: Iris Barry and the Art of Film*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014. Print.

¹²³ Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print. 6.

inscription, is interestingly a matriarch in the case of MoMA, thereby rendering Freud's psychoanalytical basis, on which Derrida develops his theory, arguably unsuitable.¹²⁴ However, for my purposes, the arch-father resurfaces in the form of Paramesh Krishnan Nair at the NFAI, who is often called the Indian counterpart to the legendary Henri Langlois of Cinémathèque Française, and credited with being the driving force behind the NFAI as it stands today.¹²⁵ Similar cases can also be made for Jan de Vaal at the Nederlands Filmmuseum, and Ray Edmondson at the NFSA, albeit to lesser degrees, which I take up in later parts of this dissertation.

While there exist no studies on de Vaal and Edmondson, Nair has been the subject of a number of media reports and articles, and most significantly, the documentary film *Celluloid Man* (2012).¹²⁶ Langlois' contributions to the Cinémathèque and his fever for collecting films have also been mythologized in a number of works, some more balanced than others, the most significant of them being *A Passion for Films* (1983) by Richard Roud, and *Henri*

¹²⁴ I say largely because it may still be applied here, but does not concern my dissertation directly. Derrida himself is acutely aware of the problem inherent to Freud's schema, which he calls "a mistake" on Freud's part and attempts to destabilize Freud's paradigms in his analysis of the symbolic role played by Freud's daughter, Anna Freud, in her father's archive. Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.

¹²⁵ Barnouw, Erik, and Subrahmanyam Krishnaswamy. *Indian Film*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. Print. 251; Thoraval, Yves. *The Cinemas of India*. Delhi: Macmillan India, 2000. Print. 141; Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012.

¹²⁶ K., Bhumika. "The Keeper of Sepia Memories." *The Hindu*. 2 May 2013. Web. <<http://www.thehindu.com/features/cinema/the-keeper-of-sepia-memories/article4676536.ece>>; Bhaskar, C. Uday. "To P. K. Nair, the Neglected 'Celluloid Man' of Indian Cinema." *The Quint.com*. 7 March 2016. Web. <<http://www.thequint.com/opinion/2016/03/06/to-pk-nair-the-neglected-celluloid-man-of-indian-cinema>>; Bhasthi, Deepa. "The Legacy of Film Archivist, P. K. Nair, Can Be Found in a Village in Karnataka." *The Indian Express*. 13 March 2016. Web. <<http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/entertainment-others/the-legacy-of-film-archivist-pk-nair-can-be-found-in-a-village-in-karnataka/>>; Nair, Malini. "The Restoration Man." *The Times of India*. 14 July 2012. Web. <<http://www.timescrest.com/culture/the-restoration-man-8330>>; Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012.

Langlois (1995) by Glenn Myrant Georges and Patrick Langlois (Henri's brother).¹²⁷ Other similar works include those written on Jacques Ledoux, the founder of the Royal Belgian Film Archive, with Anne Head's *A True Love for Cinema* (1988) being particularly noteworthy.¹²⁸ These works, despite their eulogistic tones and occasional hyperbole, act as crucial reference points that allow me to contextualize the contributions made by Nair, de Vaal, and Edmondson, and compare them to other similar figures elsewhere.

As discussed previously, the roles played by such arch-fathers are not administrative alone, but also stretch into the curation of the films collected by the audiovisual archive, which in turn defines the national film canon built by the institution. As Foucault reminds us and Chabria's answer on Govinda's films demonstrates, the knowledge that originates in the archive has a selection process that is pre-archival and based on another set of knowledges about what can, and should, be archived. The curator is entrusted with enacting this pre-archival knowledge. Once inside, the records in the collection, originally from many different sources, also find new meanings consigned to them through associations and relations between them by way of being held together.

However, film curation is a relatively new terrain. There exists only one book-length work on it: *Film Curatorship* (2008), written as a dialog among four internationally well regarded practitioners.¹²⁹ Other investigations on the subject include a handful of journal articles, including a special issue of *The Moving Image* journal.¹³⁰ *Film Curatorship* is a

¹²⁷ Roud, Richard. *A Passion for Films: Henri Langlois and the Cinémathèque Française*. New York: Viking Press, 1983. Print; Langlois, Georges Patrick, and Glenn Myrent. *Henri Langlois, First Citizen of Cinema*. New York: Twayne, 1995. Print.

¹²⁸ Head, Anne. *A True Love for Cinema: Jacques Ledoux, Curator of the Royal Film Archive and Film Museum of Belgium, 1948-1988*. The Hague, Netherlands: Universitaire Pers Rotterdam, 1988. Print.

¹²⁹ Cherchi Usai, Paolo, et al. *Film Curatorship: Archives, Museums, and the Digital Marketplace*. Vienna: Österreichisches Filmmuseum, 2008. Print.

¹³⁰ Willis, Andrew. "Cinema Curation as Practice and Research: The Visible Secrets Project as a Model for Collaboration between Art Cinemas and Academics." *Screen* 51.2 (2010): 161. Print; Sandlos, Karyn, Deirdre Logue, and Franci Duran. *Waiting-- and Wanting: Curating, Pedagogy and the Media Arts: Works on Film and Video*. Toronto: K.E. Sandlos, 2005. Print; *Moving Image* 4.1 (2004). Print.

pioneering effort, a timely intervention into a largely uncharted terrain. Its format is also telling, presented to us as a series of debates and discussions between the authors rather than as well structured ideas, thereby revealing the volatile and dynamic nature of film curation which, as the authors suggest, makes any general theory or formulations about the terrain a premature task at the present moment. In some ways, my dissertation makes a similar argument for national film archives in general, which it does by employing a number of interdisciplinary methodological tools as discussed below.

Methodology

This dissertation is interdisciplinary and does not favor one particular disciplinary framework, methodological approach, or academic model. From media studies, it borrows the desire to understand the production, storage, and dissemination of films and their transformation through the digital turn. From cultural studies, it borrows the need to decipher the ways in which meaning is generated through various practices and socio-political structures within a given culture and amid transnational forces. From new museology, it borrows the self-reflexivity that has informed the interrogation of cultural institutions as being indicative of larger socio-political currents, and from anthropology, it borrows the ideas of thick description and participant observation. Additionally, it is informed by a historiographic awareness of the colonial pasts of India, the Netherlands, and Australia, and their postcolonial presents.

The contribution of this dissertation is more empirical than theoretical. More often than not, national film archives are sites of major disjuncture between theory and practice, the ideal and the real, and the concept and its realization, as this dissertation illustrates. Taking a cue from Matthew Connelly's ideas on writing transnational histories, it chooses sources and methods appropriate to the problem on hand -- unearthing the policies, practices, and histories of the national film archives in the three case study nations -- rather than working with prior

commitments to one or more theories. To achieve its objectives, it recognizes the transnational nature of national film archives as a sensitizing and structuring device, what Sven Beckert has referred to as a “way of seeing.”¹³¹ It treats institutional histories as palimpsests. It also mobilizes additional sensitizing concepts relevant to each case study nation, such as bureaucracy in India, the emergence of so called “cultural clusters” in the Netherlands, and multiculturalism in Australia. All are needed to make meaning of various local iterations of the general idea of a national film archive.

The histories this dissertation narrates examine the process of what Eric Ketelaar calls “archivalization,” the myriad of choices preceding, informing, and underlying the archiving of a film, which allow us to discover the values that transform it into an archival record. These processes comprise a “regime of practices,” responses to local challenges that vary considerably across national, cultural, and geographical contexts.¹³² They are complex local articulations of the idea of a national film archive. They reflect -- to borrow from Simon Knell -- the “local conditions of nationalism and wealth, international connections, identity and competition, individual and corporate interests, political and economic relationships, the ideological possibilities of culture, networks of appropriation and emulation, diplomatic efforts, and so on.”¹³³ Thus, the roles played by a film archive in the “imagined community” of that nation as Benedict Anderson terms it, the political values it operates with, the strategies it employs, the cultural currency it is accorded in that specific milieu, as well as the cinematic heritage at hand all follow trajectories that are contingent upon the master narrative of that specific nation.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Bayly, C. A., et al. "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History." *American Historical Review* 111.5 (2006): 1440. Print.

¹³² Ketelaar, Eric. "Tacit Narratives: The Meanings of Archives." *Archival Science Archival Science: International Journal on Recorded Information* 1.2 (2001): 131-41. Print.

¹³³ Knell, Simon J., et al., eds. *National Museums: New Studies from around the World*. London: Routledge, 2011. Print. 6.

¹³⁴ Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006. Print.

Thus, no two national film archives are the same. The terrain is inherently fragmented. Despite working with the same central idea about preserving national film heritage and basing themselves on similar knowledge and technical skills, there exists no progressive evolutionary journey of the film archive that is uniformly structured across nations and can explain them all. As Knell has observed, the traditional “grand narratives” of national memory institutions, in particular national museums, have been built out of “embedded ideas about the linearity of history, the evolutionary possibilities of institutions and teleological conceptions of state-making trajectories,” which are unable to stand up to their ground realities.¹³⁵ The same observations can be extended to national film archives too. As such, this dissertation works against homogenizing views and favors historical empiricism instead. To borrow from Knell’s ideas on national museums, “generalization is not particularly helpful” in understanding the functioning and agency of national film archives.¹³⁶ Nonetheless, putting together three dissimilar institutions in the same study allows us to understand them vis-à-vis each other, and in the context of the larger terrain of film archiving, so as to make sound observations about them that discuss their commonalities as well as differences.

The value of this study lies in its unearthing of hitherto unknown and often inaccessible institutional narratives that shed light on the inner workings of national film archives, in the process demystifying them and rendering them transparent. It is a study aimed as much at the practitioners working in these institutions as it is at the theorists using them, bridging the estrangement between the two and revealing to both of them the micro as well as macro structures of the machinery they are a part of. Alongside, it also brings into focus the labor that goes into building and sustaining national film archives, acknowledges the efforts of the individuals responsible for them, and recognizes their collective agency within complex

¹³⁵ Knell, Simon J., et al., eds. *National Museums: New Studies from around the World*. London: Routledge, 2011. Print. 31.

¹³⁶ ---, eds. *National Museums: New Studies from around the World*. London: Routledge, 2011. Print. 4.

systems of the state's bureaucratic machinery, governance mechanisms, and ideological underpinnings. An awareness of these processes empowers us in our encounters with film archival records as well as the institutions that house them, helping us give them better contexts and meanings.

Transnationality is a useful concept to mobilize in this context. Thomas Faist defines the term *transnational* as “sustained cross-border ties, events, and processes across the borders of several national states, [in which] both non-state agents and states participate.”¹³⁷ Its meanings are best understood in comparison to other similar and closely linked terms: *international*, *multinational*, *post-national*, and *global*. Simply put, *international* describes dealings among or between a defined set of nations, as in international trade or international flights with fixed nodes. *Multinational* describes entities with a central node in one nation, but with other linked nodes spread over multiple nations, as in multinational companies. *Post-national*, historically a relatively new term, describes a potential state of world affairs in which the national has lost its relevance, a stage that is understood to follow one in which the national assumed center stage. And *global*, derived from the word globe, involves the entire earth and has worldwide scope or applicability, as in global warming, with no local limiters.

The term *transnational* is different from them all. A transnational process or entity is characterized by liminality -- an in-between-ness -- for it is enmeshed within a nation, but also contains social and symbolic ties that cut across the borders of that nation but are not clearly defined. It differs from international and multinational in being open-ended outside the nation of origin. And it is different from post-national and global in still having the nation at its core, not claiming to embrace the whole world, and deliberately avoiding the pitfalls of a grand narrative. Instead, it involves “pluri-local” transactions, which opens up possibilities for understanding complex linkages between actors and networks across nations, and the

¹³⁷ Faist, Thomas. "Towards Transnational Studies: World Theories, Transnationalisation and Changing Institutions." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36.10 (2010): 1665-87. Print.

movement, flow, and circulation of ideas that have a nation of origin but are no longer limited to it. It also includes the local and the national within its ambit, which it does not attempt to transcend. Rather, a transnational process is often times the very product of local and national forces.¹³⁸ Additionally, it is also scalar, with processes or entities exhibiting varied transnationalities that may be strong or weak, which can also change over time.¹³⁹

When applied to a national film archive, the concept transnational helps explain how the institution, located within the bureaucratic state machinery of one nation, is simultaneously equally operational in the international film archiving community. The community comprises a network of actors from film archives the world over -- both state supported and otherwise, not all of which are national -- who share ideas and skills through their membership and activities in such organizations as FIAF, AMIA, and SEAPAVAA. The network shares a passion for film preservation, sets standards for the profession, assists its members in achieving those standards, participates in skills-development, and also trains them to perform as activists, ambassadors, and advocates for the cause internationally.

The individual actor in a national film archive adopts those standards and adapts them to his local circumstances, and through occasional movement of personnel across nations, also does the same in other nations. He serves and represents his nation in the international network, but ironically also seeks support from the network against the same nation's government on occasion when it fails to keep its cinematic heritage safe, which is extended to him through pressurizing and negotiating with his government to work more actively towards the cause. In the process, the actor serves a cause that is national only in the first instance, for it becomes a cause for preserving cinematic heritage *per se* -- or world cinematic heritage -- in

¹³⁸ Bayly, C. A., et al. "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History." *American Historical Review* 111.5 (2006): 1440. Print.

¹³⁹ Hjort, Mette. "On the Plurality of Cinematic Transnationalism." *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*. Eds. Durovicová, Natasa and Kathleen E. Newman. New York: Routledge, 2010. 12-33. Print.

the second, the third, and the nth instant, which cannot be defined or contained within one nation alone.

Transnationality has historically been embedded in the very idea of a national film archive, for very few national film archives exclusively hold in its collection the films made in its own nation alone. For instance, the BFI NA, the Cinémathèque Française, and the Belgian Cinematek have some of the most international collections of films in Europe, as do the Film Library of MoMA and the George Eastman Museum in the US, and the New Zealand Film Archive, among others. Two of my three case studies, EYE and the NFSA, hold more non-Dutch and non-Australian films than they do national ones, and the NFAI also has a collection of non-Indian films. Some such collections can be attributed to the colonial pasts of the parent nations of the institutions, but in the case of most others, the reasons for their transnationality lie more with their small national film outputs and the international circulation of films from the very inception of the medium of cinema.¹⁴⁰

Over the last three decades, the movement of films internationally has increased further, as has the interactions between various national film archives and the need for them to represent themselves more efficiently in the international film archiving community. Consequently, many national film archives today have become Janus faced entities, with one face turned towards the nation and the other towards the international arena, both being equally significant for its functioning.

Another useful concept for my purposes is that of the palimpsest, a multilayered artefact, usually a text that is “always in the process of becoming,” in other words, a text subject to constant writing, erasure, and rewriting.¹⁴¹ Literally, the term refers to the parchment texts or manuscripts of late antiquity whose surfaces were carefully effaced in order to be

¹⁴⁰ Blotkamp, Hoos. "The International Collaboration between European Film Archives." 1996. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague.

¹⁴¹ Pramaggiore, Maria. "History as Palimpsest." *A Companion to the Historical Film*. Eds. Rosenstone, Robert A. and Constantin Parvulescu. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 30-52. Print.

reinscribed. It derives its significance from the fact that even though the previous writings seemed to have been washed or covered over for reuse, the erasures were imperfect, reappearing in subsequent uses as substrata of residual texts that were entangled and interwoven with the newest text, interrupting and inhabiting it, and making it plural and incapable of being easily differentiated into separate past and present layers.

When used as a figurative entity, a palimpsest embodies the notion of history as ever-dynamic, with historical change being a cyclical process of construction and deconstruction, in which historical events serve as partial, fragmentary, and inevitably impermanent records that are eventually superseded by other texts, but in which traces of previous texts are left behind in inextricable ways. This averts a view of history as a purely longitudinal, chronological, or teleological concept.¹⁴² Similarly, in the context of policy, including cultural policy, the palimpsest analogy can be applied to demonstrate “the various ways in which “new” policy overwrites or imbricates existing practice as well as the ways in which policy implementers reproduce or change the meanings of policy.” Such a use challenges a functionalist and linear approach to policy, while also indicating “what might be buried beneath surface presentations.”¹⁴³ Each institutional history I discuss in this dissertation can also be seen to be comprised of multiple layers of written, partially erased, and progressively rewritten texts of a palimpsest resting imperfectly atop one another.

The uncovering of these palimpsests has been undertaken using three primary modes of information gathering: archival research, interviews (in person in most cases, with two of them being conducted through emails), and participant observation. The archival research has involved consulting mission statements, policy documents, budget reports, internal

¹⁴² Dillon, Sarah. "Reinscribing De Quincey's Palimpsest: The Significance of the Palimpsest in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Studies." *Textual Practice* 19.3 (2005): 243-63. Print; Johnston, Rosemary. "Time-Space: History as Palimpsest and Mise-en-Abyme in Children's Literature." *Orana* 34.3 (1998): 18-24. Print; Pramaggiore, Maria. "History as Palimpsest." *A Companion to the Historical Film*. Eds. Rosenstone, Robert A. and Constantin Parvulescu. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. 30-52. Print.

¹⁴³ Carter, Pam. "Policy as Palimpsest." *Policy and politics* 40.3 (2012): 423-43. Print. 424.

communication, and memos of the three institutions from different time periods, together with parliament debates, press releases, and reports from their parent ministries. Borrowing from Matthew Hull's ideas on understanding state documents, I have not only looked *through* them but also *at* them, so as to refrain from treating them as media that are allowed to disappear in the act of mediation.¹⁴⁴ Thus, I have actively taken into account the context in which these documents were created, and read them between the lines, examined them in conjunction with impermanent notes and scribbles on files, noted their inclusions and omissions, and considered the personalities of their writers, for they might have been produced to set the record straight and not necessarily as true records of functions performed by the institutions.

To fill in undocumented events, account for absences, and interpret the documents more effectively, I have supplemented these with interviews with past and present institutional heads, long-term staff members, ministry officials, and other stakeholders including film scholars, external experts, and friends of the institutions. And I have also foregrounded the methods I have employed for unearthing these records and conducting the interviews, for without this critical information, the discussions would essentially remain incomplete.

To achieve these, I spent considerable time in all three case study sites: a total of six months across three different visits in Pune and Delhi for the NFAI (in the summers of 2010, 2011, and 2013), one year in Amsterdam for EYE (May 2012 -- April 2013), and six months in Canberra for the NFSA (August 2013 -- February 2014). During these periods, I also visited other cities briefly in each site to gather more documents and conduct interviews: Mumbai and Kolkata in India, Rotterdam and The Hague in the Netherlands, and Sydney and Melbourne in Australia. Additionally, I spent ten days doing archival research at the FIAF office in Brussels over two visits (June 2012 and March 2013). I also attended the annual conferences of FIAF in Oslo (May 2010), AMIA in Philadelphia (November 2010), and SEAPAVAA in Kuala Lumpur

¹⁴⁴ Hull, Matthew S. *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. Print. 12-13.

(June 2011). Further, I attended the Orphan Film Symposium in New York (April 2010, and April 2012), Il Cinema Ritrovato (the Cinema Rediscovered Festival) in Bologna (June 2012), and was an Associate Collegian at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto (the Silent Film Festival) in Pordenone (October 2012), all of which have deep links with the international film archiving community.

In India, I conducted my archival research at the NFAI office in Pune, where I was also able to interact with the institution's employees at length and observe their work at close quarters over many weeks. I briefly visited and interacted with the Kolkata office too. Additional state documents, publications, and media articles were sourced from the National Archives, the Parliament Library, the I&B Ministry, the Publications Division of the Government of India, and the Information Center of the Press Information Bureau in New Delhi. Further information was also obtained from the libraries of the NFAI and the Film and Television Institute of India in Pune, as well as the library of the Films Division of India in Mumbai. The personal interviews were conducted in New Delhi, Pune, and Mumbai.

Conducting research in India was particularly challenging. The scattered nature of state records and the red tape involved in dealing with the Indian bureaucratic machinery dictated that much time was spent in building rapport with various officials, getting formal permissions to access the documents, and attempting to locate them across various departments and offices, but this was initially helped by a fortuitous meeting with the NFAI director at the FIAF congress in Oslo. A general sense of frustration with the NFAI and the Indian bureaucracy dictated most interactions, as did a hope that my work would somehow influence the Indian policymakers to get more active about safekeeping India's cinematic heritage. As a result of the generally secretive working of the Indian state, some of my interviewees chose to speak to me off-the-record in informal conversations, pointing me to valuable resources and sensitizing me to the institution's ways of functioning, but refusing to

be quoted so as to avoid trouble with the I&B Ministry. However, all these eventually resulted in the unearthing of an extremely rich and complex institutional narrative.

In the Netherlands, my archival research was conducted at three different locations of EYE: the new IJpromenade building next to the river IJ, the now vacated space on Vondelstraat near the Vondelpark Pavilion, and the space in Overamstel (all three in Amsterdam). To assist my research, I was affiliated as a visiting researcher with the Amsterdam School of Cultural Inquiry at the University of Amsterdam, where I worked under the supervision of Professor Julia Noordegraaf. For additional state documents, I visited the Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (Amsterdam Public Library) and the University of Amsterdam Libraries, which also allowed me to electronically access some of the documents from the Nationaal Archief located in The Hague. The personal interviews for EYE were conducted in Amsterdam, The Hague, and Rotterdam. From May to December 2013, in what may be termed as true participant observation, I also worked as an intern in the curators' department of EYE, with the chief curator Giovanna Fossati, where I refined and edited EYE's collection policies, participated in organizing the Economy of the Commons 3 symposium, and observed scholars Tom Gunning and Joshua Yumibe at work with the institution's holdings on color in silent film. I also reported on a number of European senior-management meetings for film institutions held in Amsterdam, Leuven, as well as Bologna, Italy. In July 2012, I gave a presentation of my observations on EYE's collection policy documents to the institution's entire senior management.

The research in EYE was helped by the transparency at the institution, which was in stark contrast to the working of national film archives elsewhere, for I was granted almost unrestricted access to internal documents by the institution's management. The same attitude also extended to the general nature of the institution, with its open offices that occasionally saw me share my workstation with the director, the non-hierarchical work environment that allowed me to not only collaborate with the chief curator but also be critical of the institution's

policies in front of the senior management without the fear of my research privileges being revoked, and the very supportive staff that was eager to answer my questions as well as facilitate my interviews with a range of stakeholders including those in the highest echelons of the state bureaucratic machinery. Although EYE communicates to the world principally in English and its staff are fluent in it, all documents were in Dutch, which proved to be a significant obstacle, especially when faced with thousands of internal documents (I read and speak no Dutch), but this was surmounted with labor intensive help from automatic internet-based translators.

In Australia, I conducted my archival research at the NFSA head-office in Canberra, where I was a fellow-in-residence at the institution's Scholars and Artists in Residence program (August -- September 2013). As part of my residency, I interviewed a range of stakeholders in Canberra, Sydney, and Melbourne who were concerned with the institution's handling and policies governing its Indigenous collection material, and these interviews were accessioned into the NFSA's oral histories. They were supplemented with documents from the National Archives and the National Library of Australia. To assist my research, I was also affiliated as a school visitor with the School of Cultural Inquiry at the Australian National University, where I was advised by faculty members Gino Moliterno and Roger Hillman. My residency and research period concluded with a public presentation of my findings in February 2014.

The research for the NFSA was restrictive since my work focused on a relatively narrow theme, and most documents pertaining to it were only available internally. For the institution, despite my status as a fellow, and despite the well-meaning and sincere efforts of the staff, the sensitivities involved in the handling of Indigenous material also extended to the documents pertaining to the material and the people mentioned in them, making my access to them a lengthy and contentious affair with each document needing to be vetted before being given to me. The same sensitivities also governed the names and contact information of the

stakeholders I wished to interview, as did the implicit fear of me embarrassing the institution or the Australian state through any unfavorable findings. The process did yield outcomes, but the resulting institutional narrative is inherently incomplete because of gaps.

Offering another point of entry into the narratives were the documents I unearthed at FIAF in Brussels, which again required considerable negotiations with the FIAF officials, including some time sensitive tussles. Permission for my research were only granted after senior administrators from my three case study institutions individually connected with FIAF and requested them to allow me access to the documents pertaining to them, which was then taken up in meetings of the FIAF Executive and eventually approved.

In all three case study nations, a series of health concerns for the interviewees, advanced age, and death formed an undercurrent to the research that is not evident in the outcomes. This was especially true for India, where, because of limited documentation, interviews with “old timers” became a critical component of the research. Some interviewees were in their late 80s and early 90s, and suffered from serious ailments. Even as I feared for their well-being, the director of the NFAI Vijay Jadhav, a relatively young man in his early 40s who I had met at the FIAF congress in Oslo, passed away suddenly as a result of a cardiac arrest in 2010. A new director was appointed only many months later, when the process of rapport building had to be commenced again, during which period my research endeavors were temporarily derailed. Another key interviewee Krishan Lal Khandpur, who was 89 at the time of the interview and had much trouble in communicating with me and recollecting events, passed away a few months after our interview. And the NFAI’s former director P. K. Nair, who was instrumental in building the institution, also passed away in March 2016. In the Netherlands, the highly spirited Hoos Blotkamp, former director of the Nederlands Filmmuseum, passed away one year after my meetings with her. In Australia, death manifested itself through the passing away of the wife of ethnographic filmmaker Ian Dunlop,

one of my interviewees, between two of my meetings with him, making the encounter painful for him. This dissertation is greatly indebted to them all.

Dissertation Structure

This dissertation is divided into five sections. Section I is comprised of this introduction, chapter 1. Section II is comprised of chapters 2, 3, and 4, focused on the NFAI, which narrate the institution's history and discuss its varying transnationality over time by examining its policies and practices through the lens of bureaucracy. Chapter 2 discusses the long drawn, halting, and convoluted process of the institution's setting up with help from various non-state and non-Indian forces. Chapter 3 discusses its struggles, achievements, and failings under Nair. And chapter 4 analyzes its troubled functioning after Nair retired in 1993, which includes the institution's encounter with a nitrate film fire in 2003 and its more recent experiments with mass digitization of films. Together, they demonstrate how the NFAI has only had limited success in the safekeeping of India's cinematic heritage, which owes itself to the nation's general apathy towards the preservation of its heritage, cinematic or otherwise, as well as the confines of its state bureaucratic machinery.

Section III is comprised of chapters 5, 6, and 7, which are focused on EYE. This section analyzes the institution's palimpsestuous history as the Filmmuseum, and more recent glamorous but turbulent transformation into EYE in 2010. Chapter 5 discusses the Filmmuseum's founding and relocation to the Vondelpark Pavilion in the 1970s under Jan de Vaal, where it initially flourished but later started floundering in the 1980s. Chapter 6 discusses the institution's turnaround under the new leadership of Hoos Blotkamp starting in the mid-1980s, and also analyzes its aborted move to Rotterdam in 2001 as part of the rise of cultural clusters in the nation. Despite being a failed attempt, this provided the institution with a blueprint to expand and flourish within the changing social and political landscape of the Netherlands, which it built upon to transform itself into EYE, which is discussed in chapter 7.

Together, these chapters establish how the institution has been bold, dynamic, pragmatic, and opportunistic in its management decisions over time, embracing change much more rapidly than most other national film archives do, in part because of its status as an autonomous non-profit institution that needs to showcase its achievements to the state and other stakeholders in order to receive support from them.

Section IV is comprised of chapter 8, which is focused on the NFSA. It discusses the history of the NFSA's engagement with Indigenous cultural and intellectual property, demonstrating how the impetus for the institution's policies and practices for Indigenous materials, which are considered to be landmark and pioneering in the film archiving community, initially came from many junior-to-mid-level non-Indigenous employees before being codified by the senior management. Examining these processes through the nation's complicated understanding of multiculturalism, it discusses how the institution's progress in such matters is more apparent than real. It also establishes how, despite the sincere efforts of the NFSA's staff members, the institution has not been able to break free of the institutionalized racism against Aboriginal people that is still characteristic of the Australian society and the state bureaucratic machinery, in the process illustrating how the institution's engagement with Indigenous culture tests the limits of the Australian nation and takes the institution into transnational territory.

Section V, comprised of chapter 9, is the conclusion that ties together the histories of the three case studies to outline the similarities and differences among them. It suggests that even as the trajectories of their individual histories vary considerably over national and cultural contexts, they all face similar challenges for funding, recognition, and identity. Enmeshed within the larger international film archiving community centered on FIAF, AMIA, and SEAPAVAA, they are national and international simultaneously, each one of them struggling to be called uniquely Indian, Dutch, and Australian, but while being recognized internationally

for preserving not only national cinematic heritage but cinematic heritage *per se*, which cannot be contained within individual national borders.

SECTION II
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE OF INDIA, PUNE

CHAPTER 2

INDIAN BUREAUCRACY AND THE MAKING OF THE NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE OF INDIA:

NOTES FROM THE ARCHIVE OF A NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE, 1951-1965

In this chapter, I describe the convoluted processes and events that led to the founding of the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) -- its prehistory from 1951 to 1964 -- by viewing them through the lens of bureaucracy. I delineate the irrationality inherent to bureaucracy's rational functioning in postcolonial India, which Akhil Gupta has termed as "the production of arbitrariness" and "barely controlled chaos."¹ And I demonstrate how the setting up the NFAI in 1964 -- in a period informed by the nation's investment in institution-building -- was characterized by a set of similar bureaucratic irrationalities.

I discuss how the long drawn, halting, and difficult process of the NFAI's founding involved the underappreciated labor of many state as well as non-state actors -- Krishan Lal Khandpur (bureaucrat), Harish S. Booch (film journalist), Indira Gandhi (politician), and various members of the film society movement from India, Marie Seton (film critic) and Earnest Lindgren (film archivist) from Britain, Henri Langlois (film archivist) from France, and the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAPF). I illustrate the strong transnationality the institution displayed in that early postcolonial time. And I show how the setting up of the institution was as much about preserving India's cinematic heritage as it was about being able to borrow and view films from other nations.

In the process, I demonstrate how the policies and practices of national film archives are not always motivated only by the desire to preserve films, thereby revealing them to be

A version of this chapter was published as Kumar, Ramesh. "The Making of the National Film Archive of India: Notes from the "Archive of the Archive"." *The Moving Image* 13.1 (2013): 98-128. Print.

¹ Gupta, Akhil. *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012. Print.

sites of major disjuncture between theory and practice, the ideal and the real, and the concept and its realization.

An Overview of the NFAI

The standards are maintained when the A/C actually works, when there is electricity, or you know diesel in the generator, but then they just switch it off. Not so much in the vaults but here where so many films are kept just like that. You saw them *na* [Hindi, meaning isn't it so]? Also the entire documentation center collection is here! . . . I have tried to bring this up so many times, but nobody listens. So many times when we leave the building, the A/C is also switched off. Also, screening over, A/C off. Even when the director tells them not to, they don't listen. You know, they *toh* [Hindi, used for emphasis, meaning the same as even in this context] even ask us, "why waste electricity," surprisingly even some seniors, because it's just easier that way, less work *na*. . . They don't care too much that the A/C is meant for the documents and films in the building and not for the people. What to do? We have just given up.²

Such is the disconcerting state of affairs at the NFAI -- India's only central, state-run film archive -- which is mandated to "safeguard the heritage of Indian Cinema for posterity and act as a center for dissemination of a healthy film culture in the nation."³ Fully funded by the Indian state with an annual budget of INR 10,34,00,000 for 2015-16 (approximately 1.5 million USD), it employs forty-nine personnel, and is one of the eleven institutions and related entities functioning under the Films department of the Indian I&B Ministry.⁴ Its main offices and vaults are located in Pune (previously Poona), where the institution operates from two sites, one on Law College Road and the other one in Kothrud a few kilometers away. It also runs

² A mid-level NFAI employee, who chose to remain anonymous, in an interview with me in 2013.

³ NFAI. "Main Page." Government of India. Web. 19 May 2014. <http://nfai.pune.nic.in/main_page.htm>. Other state organizations such as the Films Division and the National Film Development Corporation also have collections of films, but are not designated as publicly accessible national film archives.

⁴ "Ministry of Information and Broadcasting: Annual Report 2015-16." New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 2015. Print.

three regional offices in Bengaluru (previously Bangalore), Kolkata (previously Calcutta), and Thiruvananthapuram (previously Trivandrum).

It stands today as a modest institution with approximately 10,000 film titles in its collection, maintains multiple temperature and humidity controlled vaults, and manages a documentation center holding 130,000 still photographs, 16,500 posters, 11,500 song booklets, film censorship records, disc recordings, press clippings, and other cinema paraphernalia.⁵ It is primarily a feature film archive with only a handful of documentaries, predominately those shot on film, and also houses video tapes and discs but mostly as carriers for storing copies of the films it holds. The exact number of films in its holdings varies greatly between different press statements, state reports, and interviews, ranging from a low of 5,000 to a most likely inflated high of 18,000. This wide range can be partially explained through the difference between the number of titles and the number of films the institution holds (many titles have multiple copies, while others are fragments), and the cumulative addition of numbers from older records for favorable annual reporting without necessarily checking the existence of all the films and/or taking losses and deterioration into account. It also houses a library with 25,000 books, 25,000 film scripts, film journals, and periodicals, and manages three film screening spaces that can accommodate more than 500 audience members between them.⁶ And it publishes monographs on Indian cinema and grants research fellowships, runs regional Film Distribution Libraries that lend film prints to educational organizations and film societies, and holds film appreciation courses both in Pune and in many other centers nationwide.

However, despite an impressive array of activities, the NFAI is an institution that functions only when it does, inconsistently, problematizing the very idea that a film archive, similar to other memory institutions, is stable and sustainable through decades or even

⁵ As revealed in conversations with the NFAI employees.

⁶ NFAI. "Research and Documentation Section." Government of India. Web. 20 May 2014. <<http://www.nfaipune.gov.in/documentation.htm> >.

centuries of existence. It has a checkered history marked in equal parts by successes and failures, and is an idiosyncratic combination of a few driven officials working alongside many apathetic ones, where long periods of lazy quiescence alternate with spurts of frenetic activity, and where the gentle care of films goes strangely hand in hand with their crude neglect.⁷ As Kuriamplackal Shankar Sasidharan, a former director of the institution has put it, “the journey of the archive has been a saga of irregularities.”⁸

In the five decades of its existence, the institution has witnessed a difficult founding that was more than thirteen years in the making, growth from a tiny subsidiary of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) to a moderately large and independent department of the I&B, and many troubles as well as triumphs in the process of building its collection and expanding its activities. It has also had to navigate through state apathy for years, handle a major fire and gross mismanagement on occasion, and more recently, go through enthusiastic but inadequate experiments with digitization. Its activities have been affected by the will of a few state bureaucrats at the institution and the I&B -- mostly unseen -- whose duties, when changed erratically by their seniors and ministers, or by they themselves, also result in the fortunes of India’s cinematic heritage being altered considerably. I discuss these historical developments that have led to the current state of affairs in chapters 3 and 4 that follow, which, together with this chapter, comprises Section II of this dissertation that is focused on the NFAI.

In this chapter, I describe the institution’s prehistory and founding through ideas on bureaucracy in the context of postcolonial India, which also serves to frame all the other chapters in section II, and to some degree, can be found relevant for the discussion on the NFSA in section IV too. Bureaucracy -- for my purposes the specific bureaucratic machinery of the government rather than the seemingly unnecessary and complicated procedures of any large organization -- functions as a theoretical and structural lens through which to examine

⁷ In so saying, I borrow, in part, from an anonymous reviewer of one of my publications.

⁸ Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

the many forces that are at work in the NFAI. It is also the functional thread, in the form of red tape, which one encounters in the NFAI's day-to-day functioning, thereby assuming simultaneous external and internal import. As a concept, it works with an ideal model at its core which is seldom attained in actual practice, just as the guidelines and standards for film archives formulated by FIAF, itself a highly bureaucratic institution, only get partially implemented at the NFAI.⁹

Bureaucracy in Colonial and Postcolonial India: From the “government of paper” to “governance [only] on paper”

Ali Farazmand has defined bureaucracy as “the “machinery of government,” a system or complex of organizations and institutions – executive, judicial, and legislative – that makes the operations of government and governance possible, get things done, and “run the government.”” In its ideal form, it is considered to be “the most efficient form of organization for its blind implementation of laws, public policies, and decisions, and for its universal application of rules, standardization of operations, and task specializations leading to expertise and knowledge.”¹⁰ In the South Asian context, it is also “recognized in both academic and popular discourse as a more or less independent political actor alongside the army, elected governments, and political parties of a state.”¹¹

According to Max Weber, modern bureaucracies are principled on written documents, namely its many files, which are preserved in their original form, and are written and maintained by a staff of subaltern officials and scribes of all sorts.¹² Matthew Hull has added

⁹ For a brief discussion on FIAF as a bureaucratic organization, see Slide, Anthony. *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992. Print. 24.

¹⁰ Farazmand, Ali. "Bureaucracy and Democracy: A Theoretical Analysis." *Public Organization Review* 10.3 (2010): 245-58. Print. 247-48.

¹¹ Hull, Matthew S. *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. Print. 5.

¹² Weber, Max, Hans Heinrich Gerth, and C. Wright Mills. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946. Print. 197.

that while these files have long been recognized as significant for any form of bureaucratic governance, they assumed such centrality in the administration of pre-independence India that the British colonial government came to be known as *Kaghazi Raj* or document rule. *Kaghazi Raj* was developed by the English East India Company, the quasi-governmental trading corporation that eventually morphed into the government of colonial India, to ensure greater accountability from their colonial subjects. As Hull has pointed out, British officials transferred from London often noted that documentation was used far more extensively by their Indian colleagues than by their metropolitan counterparts, and that manuals seemed to have been prepared for everything. Such was the reliance of colonial India's governance on paperwork, designed primarily with control and surveillance in mind, that "only through a connection with a piece of paper could any action be construed as [having been performed]," leading Hull to call the colonial government a "government of paper."¹³

When India gained independence in 1947, the occasion marked not only a transfer of power from the British to the Indian National Congress, but also the handing over of the colonial legacy of governance to the new nation -- the structural, normative, and behavioral formations of its bureaucratic machinery -- carried forward through the newly constituted Civil Services of India that was directly modeled on the lines of the Indian Civil Service set up by the British in colonial India. M. Shamsul Haque notes that:

The continuation of the colonial legacy resulted from the fact that many of the postcolonial ruling elites themselves were products of colonial education and orientation. This legacy was perpetuated further through foreign study programs, establishment of administrative training organizations, employment of foreign experts, and adoption of bureaucratic reforms based on Western. . . technical assistance.¹⁴

¹³ Hull, Matthew S. *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. Print. 6-8, 10.

¹⁴ Haque, M. Shamsul. "Incongruity between Bureaucracy and Society in Developing Nations: A Critique." *Peace and Change* 22.4 (1997): 432-62. Print. 433.

However, the Westernized ruling elites tried to apply the UK's bureaucratic model to India far too eagerly without adequate attention to indigenous norms and the local work culture, leading to what Haque has described as "incongruity or incompatibility between bureaucracy and society" in postcolonial nations.¹⁵ He observes that:

[This] incongruity between the exogenous administrative norms and the Indigenous social culture is reflected in a gap between the formal official rules and the actual bureaucratic practices, which has been commonly described as "formalism." In other words, there is often a disparity between the formal administrative rules and codes of conduct representing Western model and the actual behavior of bureaucrats influenced by [local] societal norms and expectations. It is often mentioned that in postcolonial societies, the colonial administrative habits, styles, and values unrelated to local traditions continue to reproduce the symbolism, not the substance, of a British, French or American bureaucracy.¹⁶

This incongruity, formalism, and emphasis on symbolism more than substance can also be discerned in bureaucratic paperwork, for the *Kaghazi Raj*, which was also passed along as part of the colonial legacy, has in postcolonial India gradually and unintentionally contorted from its manifestation as the government of paper into a form of "governance [only] on paper." In other words, bureaucracy in India has increasingly acquired the tendency to accord paperwork more significance than its corresponding actions. This phenomenon is characterized by major disjunctures -- and at times even dissonances -- between the official document trails and their on-the-ground implementation, with the two now almost belonging to two related but distinct domains in which the paperwork symbolically makes things appear to be in order while the corresponding actions chart their own differently-organized course.

A derivative of this has been what Randhir Jain has called the "implementation gap."¹⁷ Akhil Gupta has illustrated this gap through case studies that demonstrate how even though

¹⁵ ---. "Incongruity between Bureaucracy and Society in Developing Nations: A Critique." *Peace and Change* 22.4 (1997): 432-62. Print. 434.

¹⁶ ---. "Incongruity between Bureaucracy and Society in Developing Nations: A Critique." *Peace and Change* 22.4 (1997): 432-62. Print. 444.

¹⁷ Jain, Randhir B. "The Role of Bureaucracy in Policy Development and Implementation in India." *International social science journal* 42.1 (1990): 31-47. Print. 42-43.

the models governing and developed by the Indian bureaucracy are rational and thoughtfully conceived on paper, their implementation is far from being so, underscoring that one should not confuse the spectacle of bureaucratic governance with its actual operations. To arrive at a better understanding of Indian bureaucracy, Gupta recommends taking into account “the production of arbitrariness” -- processes of planning and implementation, channels of communication (or lack thereof across official channels), the extent of rule-following by particular officials, their chaotic working conditions, as well as fortuitous accidents -- so as to “open up possibilities of interpretation different from those we might posit were we to look only at finished outcomes.” Such a look reveals the irrationalities inherent to the workings of Indian bureaucracy, and as he puts it, presents us with “a very different picture -- one in which the entire process is shot through with contingency and barely controlled chaos.”¹⁸

One can discern a clear increase in these chaotic disjunctures from the period immediately after independence to the current times, and while some of them have been instances of deliberate malpractices and scams by corrupt officials, this has not been the case for most others. They have now become an integral part and parcel of the Indian bureaucratic machinery, something that has come to be accepted as a way of lived experiences in the nation and can no longer be separated from the state’s workings. The NFAI has also functioned in similar ways, which is clearly discernable in such instances as the turning off of the A/C in the absence of people in the office complex while simultaneously claiming on paper to be maintaining standards, which has threatened major parts of Indian cinema heritage and is discussed again in chapter 4.¹⁹ It was a similar set of chaotic disjunctures that marked the

¹⁸ Gupta, Akhil. *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012. Print. 13-14.

¹⁹ Official reports released by the NFAI and the I&B routinely mention, and emphasize, that temperature and humidity control, and other film preservation standards, are maintained efficiently. As cases in point, see I&B. "Annual Report 2011-12." New Delhi: Government of India, 2012. Print; ---. "Annual Report 2012-13." New Delhi: Government of India, 2013. Print.

founding of the institution in 1964, but the process was informed as much by the bureaucratic machinery of postcolonial India as it was by a multitude of transnational forces.

The Transnational Film Archive in a Postcolonial Bureaucracy

The setting up of the NFAI in 1964 was informed by the larger history of the audiovisual archiving movement that began in Europe in the 1930s, consolidated itself with the founding of the FIAF in 1938, and in keeping with the worldwide heritage based rhetoric that emerged in the post-World War II era around the activities of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), spread to various nations across the globe through FIAF and UNESCO's activities in the decades that followed.²⁰ FIAF's growth and the development of its guidelines and standards were in turn closely intertwined with the worldwide growth of film clubs and film societies, especially in the US and Europe, which also inspired film societies in India and their demands for the founding of the NFAI.²¹ As Caroline Frick has suggested, the British, through their NFTVA (now BFI NA), played a pivotal role in this international movement, acting as its leaders and shaping its contours worldwide, so much so that its activities reminded one of Britain's imperial activities:

The United Kingdom . . . virtually colonized the world's moving image collections . . . by spreading its nation's film archiving theory, method and zeal around the globe. Ernest Lindgren, the influential, revered curator of Britain's National Film and Television Archive, and his International Federation of Film

²⁰ For an account of FIAF's genesis and the growth of the film archiving movement, see Houston, Penelope. *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives*. London: British Film Institute, 1994. Print; Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.

²¹ A discussion of the ways in which film appreciation was promoted worldwide, especially the US, can be found in Wasson, Haidee. *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. Print; Decherney, Peter. *Hollywood and the Culture Elite: How the Movies Became American*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. Print. For a discussion on the growth of film appreciation in India, see Rao, H. N. Narahari, ed. *The Film Society Movement in India*. Mumbai: The Asian Film Foundation, 2009. Print.

Archive (FIAF) Associates, helped institute guidelines and policies for the field through the twentieth century.²²

This was mostly true for India too, where the NFAI was set up by the state, through its bureaucratic machinery that continues to carry a British colonial legacy, with inputs from the NFTVA, its curator Lindgren, and his FIAF associates so as to successfully meet the guidelines formulated by FIAF.

However, Frick's statements should not be interpreted as efforts on the part of the UK to employ film archives in the service of its colonial conquests, whether covert or overt, despite such appearances, nor should the NFTVA and the NFAI be viewed as active agents, whether conscious or unconscious of their own nodal roles as ideological state apparatuses, in exercising cultural imperialism in postcolonial India as part of a grand design.²³ While it is indeed possible to trace the impact of the UK's colonial tendencies and their vestiges on defining the contours of audiovisual archiving in India, they must not be overstated or examined in isolation. All too often, colonialism becomes the overarching theme and the meta-lens through which a majority of scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences in South Asia is framed, and many a times the only lens, leading to abstract generalizations and theoretical exegesis, many of which, even while being intellectually engaging in and by themselves, cannot always stand up to empirical verifications.

A closer examination of the NFAI reveals that it shares a far more complex relationship with the NFTVA than that of colonized and colonizer institutions or nations, one in which the organizing principles derived from European rational thought -- evident both in the structures of the Indian bureaucratic machinery borrowed from the British, as well as in the FIAF and the NFTVA's standards and guidelines -- get used and applied at the NFAI, but only

²² Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print. 88.

²³ In using the term Ideological State Apparatus, I refer to Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972. 85-126. Print.

after “suitable local modifications.” The NFTVA becomes a significant reference point for the founding and functioning of the NFAI, but not one that needs to be emulated, for the word of the NFTVA becomes only one among many disparate and often conflicting force fields, both local and international, at the intersection of which the NFAI finds itself: India’s colonial heritage, independent India’s quest for nation building via institution building, FIAF and the NFTVA’s influences, the Indian state’s controlling impulses, the hierarchies, red tape, and idiosyncrasies of its bureaucracy, the Indian film industry’s indifference and hostilities, as well as the interventions by many individuals, Indian as well as foreign, from both within and outside the bureaucratic ranks, that provide the impetus and ongoing support for the state’s marginalized plans for film preservation in the nation to be actualized. Thus, the setting up of the NFAI, despite being a significant moment in the history of newly independent India, was a transnational process characterized by liminality that was limited neither by India’s national borders nor by the confines of its postcolonial bureaucratic machinery despite being enmeshed within them, which I demonstrate below. My uncovering of this history involved following many leads, and an encounter with the archive of the NFAI.

The Archive of the National Film Archive of India

On the upper floor of the elegant Jaykar Bungalow in Pune was a dusty room with a weary wooden roof, jaded windows, and cobwebs all over when I visited in 2011. Once home to the administrative office of the NFAI, the old bungalow served as a security post and a warehouse within the NFAI premises. The room remained locked for the most part, its surroundings cluttered with steel trunks, packing boxes, wooden boards, an old typewriter, and a framed poster of *Assoiffé* (Guru Dutt’s 1957 film *Pyaasa* in French) lying on its side. Gracing the poster were the captivating faces of the lead actors Waheeda Rahman and Dutt, knocked-

over, seemingly gazing at a battered chair close-by, a poetic testament to the apathy suffered by old films and their paraphernalia in the largest film producing nation in the world.²⁴

Acting as an archive of the national film archive, the locked room housed a collection of hundreds of old files from the NFAI. Small, unremarkable, and unlikely to get Walter Benjamin and his fans excited, this archive was a far cry from the image of a large state institution the term *archive* conjures. It neither corresponded well with the apriori of knowledge described by Michel Foucault nor the authoritarian repository of records described by Jacques Derrida.²⁵ Instead, it was a minor brick-and-mortar realization of the exalted ideal, more in line with Carolyn Steedman's abode of dust and bureaucratic detritus, and not unlike hundreds of other such incidental archives scattered across the globe, especially in developing nations.²⁶ Inside it, under an aging ceiling fan and a dim lamp, were files that had stayed undisturbed for decades, stacked atop one another on rows of steel shelves and in small piles on the floor all around, acting as senescent remains of the *Kaghazi Raj*.

These files contained crucial traces of the history of the NFAI from its earliest days. Many of them, despite being relatively new in archival terms, were torn and crumbling from years of neglect. The oldest files I was able to locate were from 1959, containing documents dating from 1955. Still, they existed, because in a culture yet to wake up to the importance of archiving, a particularly insolent film archivist at the NFAI -- P. K. Nair -- suffering from archive fever that extended beyond films, decided to disregard official procedures and retained old

²⁴ Chatterjee, Saibal, Govind Nihalani, and Gulzar. *Encyclopaedia of Hindi Cinema*. New Delhi: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2003. Print. 4.

²⁵ I refer to Benjamin's fascination with large archives, both public and private, as seen through such works as Benjamin, Walter, Esther Leslie, and Ursula Marx. *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs*. London: Verso, 2007. Print. and more famously, Benjamin, Walter, and Rolf Tiedemann. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1999. Print. Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. London: Routledge, 1992. Print; Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.

²⁶ Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002. Print.

records rather than destroy them selectively.²⁷ They also existed because his successors at the NFAI respected his decision without questioning his motives and continued to hold on to the records long after his retirement. And they came to light because some NFAI staff members, performing admirably under many constraints and general indifference from the state, rediscovered them and helped me sift through them to reconstruct the prehistory of their institution.

The archive of the national film archive assumes much significance, for as suggested by Jan Holmberg, the curator of The Ingmar Bergman Archives in Stockholm, with the fragile film decaying and dying a slow death despite the best of preservation efforts, in the long run, "the remains of cinema may very well be humble pieces of paper."²⁸ This might be especially true in the Indian scenario, for in addition to narrating the history of the NFAI and the individuals responsible for its founding and functioning, the archive of the NFAI -- along with other similar paper archives that contain documents relating to films as well as the institutions they passed through -- might become the only available sources of film history, narrating tales of the movement and circulation of films that no longer exist, an all too familiar situation for scholars of silent cinema.

²⁷ For reportage on the abysmal state of archiving in India, see Patel, Dinyar. "In India, History Literally Rots Away." *The New York Times*. 20 March 2012. Web. 30 September 2012. <<http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/20/in-india-history-literally-rots-away/>>; ---. "India's Archives: How Did Things Get This Bad?" *The New York Times*. 22 March 2012. Web. 1 October 2012. <<http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/22/indias-archives-how-did-things-get-this-bad/>>; ---. "Repairing the Damage at India's National Archives." *The New York Times*. 21 March 2012. Web. 10 October 2012. <<http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/21/repairing-the-damage-at-indias-national-archives/>>; ---. "The Parsis, Once India's Curators, Now Shrug as History Rots." *The New York Times*. 23 March 2012. Web. 10 October 2012. <<http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/21/repairing-the-damage-at-indias-national-archives/>>.

²⁸ Holmberg, Jan. "Archive Matters." Paper presentation. *The Archive: Memory, Cinema, Video and the Image of the Present* Conference. Udine, Italy, 2011. In so saying, Holmberg was perhaps also making a reference to the paper print film collection of the US Library of Congress, which contains more than 3,000 films, mostly American but some also from England, France, and Denmark, which remain the only records of many early films.

These files could not have been saved by Nair all alone, for a few predated his appointment at the NFAI in 1965 and some belonged to other state departments and should not have made their way to the institution.²⁹ Still others were unnamed and unnumbered, a compilation of linked documents held loosely together. Nair himself had little recollection of the oldest ones, making their exact provenance difficult to ascertain.³⁰ Supplementing them were more files belonging to the I&B at the National Archives of India in New Delhi, many of which were initially “Not Traceable,” but started making slow appearances after repeated requests spread over the course of months.³¹ Additional files and supporting documents were located in other archives and libraries, and in the FIAF archives in Brussels.

Understanding them required multiple interviews with Nair and other former employees and stakeholders, some aged ninety and sick when interviewed (and now deceased), who battled their aching bones and failing memories to patiently answer questions and fill the gaps. Together, these files and interviews narrated the incomprehensive and fragmented cultural history of the NFAI outlined below.

The narrative that follows is partly motivated by the desire to rescue the agency of minor actors, mostly bureaucrats and archivists, who get lost in India’s postcolonial histories of state initiatives, a subaltern micro-history if one may, but from within the framework of the

²⁹ Nair started working at the NFAI in 1965, which I discuss later. In addition to the files marked NFAI, some belonged to the Film Institute of India, of which the NFAI was initially a subsidiary, while many documents belonged to the Films Division of India.

³⁰ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 4 August 2011.

³¹ The National Archives of India, located in New Delhi, follows a system of responding to file requests from researchers with an “NT” or “Tracing” written on the request slip, or by making the file available. I was informed by the staff that NT can mean “Not Traceable” or in some cases “Not Transferred,” meaning that the file did not make its way to the National Archives despite its record being sent over by the concerned state department. During my research, more than half of my file requests were initially returned with an NT, and only started being found after I kept re-requesting them repeatedly. In all likelihood, this was nothing more than the staff finding it easier to mark my requests NT rather than trying to locate them, before finally obliging me.

For an account of the setting up of the National Archives of India and other related archival organizations in the nation, see Prasad, S. N. “Archives in India.” *Archivaria* 1.7 (1978): 52-60. Print.

bureaucratic machinery. As such, it destabilizes the polarity that exists in postcolonial scholarship between the state and subaltern histories.³² It moves beyond Weber's monolithic ideas on the alienating iron cage of bureaucracy to discuss the ambivalences, tensions, and subversions inherent to it, which can make it simultaneously coercive and enabling for the bureaucrat, who in turn is not necessarily devoid of individual motivation as has been conventionally argued.³³ Additionally, by focusing on state files, it engages with the material dimension of bureaucracy to shed light on its complexity in the Indian context, so as to rescue bureaucrats from the pejorative connotations their work has acquired -- that of red tape, delay, corruption, elitism, paternalism, despotism, distrust, secrecy, hierarchical rigidity etc. -- all of which are only partially true.³⁴

On another level, the narrative is in keeping with other similar "individual as institution" portrayals of such archivists cum curators as Henri Langlois, Ernest Lindgren, Iris Barry, Jacques Ledoux, and James Card that are familiar to the audiovisual archiving community, but with the intention of locating similar actors from India, in particular Khandpur and Nair, in the larger network of the Indian bureaucracy in which they found themselves enmeshed.³⁵ The

³² A succinct account of the Subaltern Studies project is offered in Prakash, Gyan. "Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism." *American historical review: a quarterly* (1994). Print.

³³ In so saying, I borrow from Adler, P. S. "The Sociological Ambivalence of Bureaucracy: From Weber via Gouldner to Marx." *Organization Science* 23.1 (2012): 244-66. Print. For a further rethinking of general assumptions about bureaucracy, see Clegg, Stewart, Martin Harris, and Harro Höpfl. *Managing Modernity: Beyond Bureaucracy?* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print.

³⁴ For a discussion on the negative connotations of bureaucracy, see Farazmand, Ali. "Bureaucracy and Democracy: A Theoretical Analysis." *Public Organization Review* 10.3 (2010): 245-58. Print; Haque, M. Shamsul. "Incongruity between Bureaucracy and Society in Developing Nations: A Critique." *Peace and Change* 22.4 (1997): 432-62. Print. Most works on Indian bureaucracy focus on the inefficiency of the Indian Administrative Services and problems plaguing their functioning, ranging from corruption to nepotism. See Das, S. K. *Public Office, Private Interest: Bureaucracy and Corruption in India*. New Delh, India: Oxford University Press, 2001. Print; Gould, William. *Bureaucracy, Community, and Influence in India Society and the State, 1930s-1960s*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Print; Misra, B. B. *Government and Bureaucracy in India, 1947-1976*. New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1986. Print.

³⁵ A discussion of Langlois, Lindgren, Barry, and Card's contributions to the film archiving movement can be found in Houston, Penelope. *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives*. London: British Film Institute, 1994. Print; Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of*

objective here is neither to extol nor debunk individuals, but rather to illustrate how in bureaucracy, individualization and collectivization are simultaneous processes that cannot be readily dissolved into the agency of individual actors or collective organizational mechanisms.³⁶

The Film Inquiry Committee Report and the Idea for a Central Film Library

When India gained independence in 1947, the newly constituted Indian government, led by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, set upon the task of building the nascent nation-state with much fervor. Part of Nehru's vision for India's development was an active policy for promotion of the arts. Cinema was also an extremely popular medium by then, but was generally considered lowbrow and frowned upon by the ministers and bureaucrats. As with other components of the colonial legacy, the rules put in place to control and regulate cinema in colonial India, especially with regard to the import of raw stock and censorship, also got carried over into the policies of independent India.³⁷ World War II had already demonstrated cinema's potential as a propaganda machine, and the state saw in it an ally that could prove useful in its nation building endeavors. The British had, towards the end of their rule, offered scholarships to promising Indian students to study filmmaking abroad, which the new government continued. In 1948, it set up the Films Division of India (FD) under the I&B, its primary task being to produce and distribute non-commercial documentaries and news magazines to publicize the government's work and "maintain a record of India's history on

Preservation. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print; Slide, Anthony. *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992. Print.

³⁶ In so saying, I borrow from Hull, Matthew S. "The File: Agency, Authority, and Autography in an Islamabad Bureaucracy." *Language & communication*. 23.3 (2003): 287. Print.

³⁷ Patil, S. K. "Film Enquiry Committee Report." New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1951. Print.

celluloid."³⁸ Some of the filmmakers who trained abroad on state scholarships found ready employment with the FD upon their return.³⁹

Despite these measures, the state was unsure of how to deal with cinema and was still struggling to harness it for the state's benefit. It was wary of the commercial feature films being produced by various film industries, positioning the non-fiction films made by FD largely as an antithesis to them.⁴⁰ In 1949, the I&B set up a Film Enquiry Committee (FEC), chaired by Sadashiv Kanoji Patil, to study the overall state of cinema in the country. Its objectives were threefold: inquire into the possibility of manufacturing film stock and equipment in India, inquire into the growth and organization of the film industry to indicate a future course of action, and most importantly, examine the measures needed to enable films in India to "develop into an effective instrument for the promotion of national culture, education and healthy entertainment."⁴¹

The idea for the NFAI, in the form of a Central Film Library (CFL), to be used for educational purposes, was proposed for the first time in the report submitted by the FEC in 1951. The FEC report noted that there was a small Central Film Library of the Department of Audiovisual Education (CFLDAE) in New Delhi and also film libraries in many states, but suggested that in order to meet the requirements of using film as a medium of education, each school in India should be able to make use of a library of several hundred films. However, it also remarked that an average school would be unable to meet the costs of such a library and each film would only be needed for a few days in a year, thereby lying unused for the most

³⁸ I&B. "About Films Division." Government of India. Web. 23 March 2011. <<http://www.filmsdivision.org/aboutus.php> >.

³⁹ For a further discussion on this, see Jain, Anuja. "The Curious Case of the Films Division: Some Annotations on the Beginnings of Indian Documentary Cinema in Postindependence India, 1940s-1960s." *The Velvet Light Trap*.71 (2013): 15-26. Print. 16.

⁴⁰ For an analysis of the statist and propagandist agenda of the Films Division, see ---. "The Curious Case of the Films Division: Some Annotations on the Beginnings of Indian Documentary Cinema in Postindependence India, 1940s-1960s." *The Velvet Light Trap*.71 (2013): 15-26. Print.

⁴¹ Patil, S. K. "Film Enquiry Committee Report." New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1951. Print. 1.

part. Perhaps as a solution to these problems, though not stated so explicitly, the report recommended the establishment and maintenance of the CFL.

The CFL is only briefly mentioned in the FEC report, nested under the recommendations for "Training Organizations" of cinema and receiving no further elaborations. However, the report was the first extensive effort by the state to map the nebulous terrain of cinema in independent India and suggest a future course of state interventions. The previous initiative, much narrower in scope, had been undertaken by the British more than two decades ago in 1928.⁴² As a result, the recommendations of the FEC were considered with earnestness, and although not acted upon immediately or followed all the way, served as a blueprint for many subsequent film related institution-building activities undertaken by the state, which included the setting up of the NFAI. The maturation of the idea of the CFL into the NFAI was the result of many distinct but closely intertwined developments, often running parallel to one another, chief among which was the rise of film societies. The growth of the film society movement in India was instrumental in spreading awareness about film appreciation, creating on the one hand a group of functionaries who advocated for preserving cinema from within the bureaucratic ranks, and on the other hand a group of film aficionados among the general populace, who together made public demands for the subsequent creation of the NFAI.

The Film Society Movement and Marie Seton

Film societies began in India as early as 1937 and gradually took the shape of a small nationwide movement, gaining more visibility with the setting up of regionally important centers in Bombay (now Mumbai, 1943), Calcutta (now Kolkata, 1947), Patna (1951), Delhi (1956), and Madras (now Chennai, 1957), among others. Although scattered in different parts of the

⁴² Rangachari, T. "Indian Cinematograph Committee." Calcutta: Central Publication Branch, Government of India, 1928. Print.

country and working independently of each other (occasionally even as rivals), all the societies had a similar threefold agenda: creating spaces for screenings and discussions of well-known world cinema that offered an alternative to run-of-the-mill commercial fare available in Indian theatres, creating growing groups of discerning audiences who could appreciate and debate the artistic merits of cinema, and bringing more recognition to cinema as a serious form of art.

Some of the founder members of these societies, especially those of the earliest ones, were people from elite “cultured” families who had studied or worked abroad and been active in similar societies outside India, bringing back with them a growing appreciation of cinema they found lacking in the Indian cultural milieu. They came together in small groups of ten to twenty, arranging private screenings, writing and circulating screening notes, and holding discussions. Among them were Satyajit Ray and Chidanand Dasgupta in Calcutta, Khandpur and Panna Rajji in Bombay, Vijaya Mulay, Arun Roy Choudhury, and Narain Singh Thapa in Patna, and Mauriel Wasi, Indira Gandhi, Inder Kumar Gujral, and Aruna Asaf Ali in Delhi (some of them relatively unknown till the 1950s, but who went on to become well-known filmmakers, critics, scholars, bureaucrats and statesmen in later years). Generating funds for their activities was always a challenge, as was finding venues for screenings and meetings. However, a bigger challenge was sourcing the films themselves, especially foreign, for which they depended primarily on the CFLDEA and networks with foreign missions and cultural centers, which usually obliged the film societies at the prospects of their national cinemas being promoted in India.⁴³

The first International Film Festival of India (IFFI), organized by the state in 1952, gave a major boost to the activities of film societies.⁴⁴ IFFI was largely a diplomatic endeavor aimed at strengthening India’s international ties, but it helped the film societies by exposing existing members to a rich fare of world cinema and allowing them to forge stronger international

⁴³ Rao, H. N. Narahari, ed. *The Film Society Movement in India*. Mumbai: The Asian Film Foundation, 2009. Print. Passim.

⁴⁴ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 2 August 2011.

networks, while also creating much awareness among uninitiated Indian audiences and bringing in many film enthusiasts as new members. A growth in their activities generated cultural currency for cinema and gave it more legitimacy as an art form, simultaneously leading to a gradual forging of ties between the film societies and the state. When Satyajit Ray, a founder member of the Calcutta Film Society, made his much acclaimed first film *Pather Panchali* in 1955, it was produced by the state of West Bengal, and when the film went on to win critical acclaim, it gave the state reasons to pay more attention to both cinema and film societies.⁴⁵

The same year, the I&B of Education invited the British film critic Marie Seton to India on a one-year assignment to advise them on the use of audiovisual material in adult education. Seton's father had served in the British Army in India and got wounded during the freedom struggle. She had learnt more about India's independence movement and grown sympathetic towards it through her association with the India League in London in the 1940s, where she had met the soon-to-be diplomat Krishna Menon, who later recommended her to the Nehru government.

As part of her assignment in India, Seton sought to supplement the use of audiovisual material in education with a promotion of the study of cinema as a form of art. She toured the country, showing critically acclaimed foreign films and giving lectures, and also held two extended courses on film appreciation at the universities of Bombay and Delhi, all of which brought her in close contact with members of film societies.⁴⁶ She also brought with her a small cache of foreign film classics, which were added to the collection of the CFLDAE and

⁴⁵ I mention a number of film titles in the body of this dissertation in different contexts, and include the year they were made and their director, but do not provide complete citations for them unless they contribute directly to the discussion on film archives. Since these films are not an object of my inquiry and I am not referring to any one particular version, say their DVD release copy, but to the film in general as it may have been released theatrically, a complete citation becomes irrelevant, in addition to which is the fact that a number of archival films do not have known provenances for many of the films they hold, making citations difficult.

⁴⁶ Rao, H. N. Narahari, ed. *The Film Society Movement in India*. Mumbai: The Asian Film Foundation, 2009. Print.

loaned to film societies and educational institutions across the country.⁴⁷ Her activities gave a new dimension to the state's idea of audiovisual education, since the state had for the most part eyed feature-films with suspicion and used shorts and documentaries commissioned by them as accessories to be used in the promotion of nationalist ideas. Seton's work also brought the state's endeavors in audiovisual education closer to the agenda of the film societies. In the years to come, she went on to become a major force in the film society movement, returning to India regularly and advising them in their programs, assisting them with procuring films, helping spread the movement to smaller towns, and writing two books on film appreciation for the state. She also became an important contact person between the film society movement and the state.⁴⁸

Seton is said to have been perceptive about the links between crucial people in the bureaucratic machinery, which when coupled with her diligence and much cited charm and dynamism, enabled her to forge close ties with many bureaucrats and statesmen. She was already well acquainted with Nehru, about whom she penned a book later, and was a close friend of his daughter Indira Gandhi, the future I&B Minister and later Prime Minister of India, who had by then emerged as an important political leader and started exerting her influence in matters of central governance.⁴⁹ The fact that Seton had originally been recommended by Menon, a close aide of Nehru, is also likely to have helped her stature. Added to this was the inspiration she became for Usha Bhagat, Gandhi's secretary, whose responsibility it was to keep Gandhi informed of developments in the arts and cultural sphere and facilitate interactions with artists and intellectuals. By some accounts, Seton, through Gandhi and Bhagat, was the one responsible for the state's decision to send *Pather Panchali* to the Cannes Film Festival, where it won the "Best Human Document" award in 1956. She also

⁴⁷ Mulay, Vijaya. Personal interview. New Delhi. 6 March 2012.

⁴⁸ Rao, H. N. Narahari, ed. *The Film Society Movement in India*. Mumbai: The Asian Film Foundation, 2009. Print.

⁴⁹ Seton, Marie. *Panditji; a Portrait of Jawaharlal Nehru*. New York: Taplinger, 1967. Print; Mulay, Vijaya. Personal interview. New Delhi. 6 March 2012.

prepared a special note on film societies and forwarded it to the state, urging it to support them.⁵⁰

Her visit, along with the success of *Pather Panchali* and the growth of the film society movement, acted as a catalyst for the founding of the Delhi Film Society (DFS) in late 1956. These film societies had by now, mirroring processes often witnessed in state bureaucracies, molded themselves into what Weber has described as power and prestige driven “status groups” that believed in preserving and developing certain national cultural values through cinema, but somewhat ironically, through screening and discussing more foreign films than Indian, so as to influence the latter to “get better.”⁵¹ Being based in Delhi, the seat of the Indian state, gave the DFS many advantages over the others, which included proximity to foreign missions and cultural centers, opportunity to participate in important film festivals held in Delhi, and the possibility of close interaction with bureaucrats and foreign diplomats. Its activities, when coupled with Seton’s, made film societies more visible to the political power-wielders in Delhi, and the DFS soon boasted many influential bureaucrats and diplomats among its members, who used the state machinery to source films and find screening venues at concessional rates.⁵²

In 1957, Gandhi also joined the ranks of DFS members at the behest of Vijaya Mulay, a founder member of the Patna Film Society and the DFS who later became a bureaucrat, which cemented the ties between the state and the film societies even further.⁵³ As Mulay claims, getting Gandhi to join was a strategic move on Mulay’s part to earn more status and

⁵⁰ Rao, H. N. Narahari, ed. *The Film Society Movement in India*. Mumbai: The Asian Film Foundation, 2009. Print.

⁵¹ Weber, Max, Hans Heinrich Gerth, and C. Wright Mills. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946. Print. 171, 76, 87.

⁵² Rao, H. N. Narahari, ed. *The Film Society Movement in India*. Mumbai: The Asian Film Foundation, 2009. Print.

⁵³ Mulay was not a qualified civil servant, but was invited to serve the state based on her enthusiasm for cinema and the networks she had established with influential politicians (not unusual in the Nehru government). Among other positions, she also worked for the Central Board of Film Censors during the 1960s.

influence for the film societies within the bureaucratic channels, but was also beneficial for Gandhi who was trying to gain more visibility in the public sphere.⁵⁴ Other film societies outside Delhi, especially the Calcutta Film Society, also helped the movement gain currency through a series of high-profile screenings and lectures involving internationally renowned filmmakers and critics. Over the next two years, they generated enough buzz for the I&B to conduct a survey of film societies and motivated Gandhi to send a fact finding mission to map their activities.

By 1958, some dominant film societies had gathered considerable clout and consolidated themselves to propose the setting up of the Federation of Film Societies of India (FFSI). They had also come up with a blueprint, a five-year-plan and a budget for the FFSI, which also announced the state's growing interest in the film society movement and called for it to shoulder more responsibility. The blueprint declared, among other things, that the FFSI could not be initiated until the state made firm arrangements for a steady supply of good films. It demanded a "small film library" for foreign films, and invited the setting up of separate "archives" that would house 16mm copies of any Indian films requested for screening by film societies, to be supplied by the producers once the necessary amendments had been made to state rules.⁵⁵

In effect, the film societies had made the first major public demand for a national film archive, and also requested that the state create a system of "legal deposit" by which any film produced in the country could be procured for the film archive when requested by them. What they had in mind was a film lending library for their screenings under the thin guise of a film archive, their request for 16mm copies being particularly revealing. Oddly however, they had made an unusual distinction between a film library and a film archive on the lines of foreign

⁵⁴ Gandhi was not particularly enthusiastic about cinema initially, but had a liking for the arts and gradually started enjoying her involvement with the film societies. See Mulay, Vijaya. Personal interview. New Delhi. 6 March 2012.

⁵⁵ Rao, H. N. Narahari, ed. *The Film Society Movement in India*. Mumbai: The Asian Film Foundation, 2009. Print. 35-38.

and Indian films. From a policy point of view, many of their demands appear lofty and ill-formulated, which they were themselves aware of, but they had intentionally aimed high in the hope of achieving partial success.

Predictably, their demands were not met, but were noted with some seriousness by the state, for in addition to its ministers, bureaucrats, and Gandhi being stakeholders in the film society movement, the activities of the film societies also fit justifiably well with the state's own ideas on audiovisual education and its larger nation-building endeavors. Notwithstanding their demand for the film archive remaining unrealized, the film societies founded the FFSI in December 1959, and in yet another strategic move a year-and-a-half later, elected Gandhi its Vice President and Inder Kumar Gujral, another emerging political leader who was also to become the Prime Minister later, its Treasurer.⁵⁶

Through such moves and honorary appointments, the film society movement and the state shared a small group of functionaries who had penetrated the ranks in both the setups, and were instrumental in the subsequent founding of the NFAI. However, by the time the FFSI made its public demands, some preliminary efforts for the NFAI's founding had already been initiated by the state -- mostly as a minor offshoot of other cinema related institution-building -- as part of its routine activities and Nehru's larger vision of having a network of cultural institutions that would help cement the nation together.⁵⁷

The State's Institution-Building and Krishan Lal Khandpur's Spadework for the NFAI

Running parallel to the growth of the film society movement was the state's cinema related institution-building, which began with the FD in 1948, and was resumed with more enthusiasm following the recommendations made by the FEC report of 1951. In 1952, the

⁵⁶ ---, ed. *The Film Society Movement in India*. Mumbai: The Asian Film Foundation, 2009. Print.

⁵⁷ The state's cinema related organization building was part of a larger network of cultural organizations for literature, visual arts, and performance arts that were created around the same time.

state passed the Cinematograph Act and started the aforementioned IFFI.⁵⁸ In keeping with the Cinematograph Act, it consolidated various regional film censor boards into the Central Board of Film Censors the same year (later renamed as the Central Board of Film Certification or CBFC), and also set up the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal.⁵⁹ And in 1954, it instituted the National Film Awards as an annual incentive to recognize filmmakers for making “artistic, competent and meaningful films.”⁶⁰

The resolution for the National Film Awards stipulated that producers submit a copy of their award winning films, free of charge, to the I&B in New Delhi for preservation in the proposed CFL, now called the National Film Library (NFL). Many producers complied, and the I&B directed the CBFC to temporarily store the films in its Bombay office, with the understanding that the NFL would eventually be the responsibility of the proposed film school, the Film Institute of India, which was to be renamed later to become the FTII.⁶¹ However, the founding of the FTII got delayed, as did the setting up of the NFL that was to be its subsidiary. Meanwhile, the state established the Children’s Film Society of India in 1955 and the collection of award winning films at the CBFC continued to grow every year.⁶² This was to subsequently become the core collection of the NFAI and dictate the state’s vision for the institution for years to come.⁶³

⁵⁸ "The Cinematograph Act 1952." New Delhi: Government of India, 1952. Print.

⁵⁹ I&B. "Annual Report 2011-12." New Delhi: Government of India, 2012. Print; ---. "Film Certification Appellate Tribunal." Government of India. Web. 23 March 2012. <<http://mib.nic.in/fcat/default.htm> >.

⁶⁰ ---. "National Film Awards." Government of India. Web. 3 March 2012. <<http://dff.nic.in/nfa.asp> >.

⁶¹ Ayyar, Krishna. Letter to D. L. Kothari. 5 January 1955. *Untitled File*. NFAI, Pune. The *Untitled File* that holds this letter is a compilation of unbound documents and Khandpur’s notes with its cover and first few pages in tatters, making its identification difficult. The NFAI staff was instructed by their director in August 2010 to keep it safe for future reference.

⁶² I&B. "About CFSI." Government of India. Web. 28 April 2012. <<http://cfsindia.org/about-cfsi/who-we-are/> >.

⁶³ Assorted documents. File No. 28/21/63-Est. *Procurement of Films from the Central Board of Film Censors, Bom for the National Film Archiv*. NFAI, Pune.

In 1954, the Indian Federation of Film Societies, a smaller precursor to the FFSI, got in touch with FIAF requesting its membership rules and statutes.⁶⁴ This was not the first time such contact had been established from India, for as early as in 1939, barely a few months after FIAF's founding, the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association had contacted it asking to become its member, with the explicit intention of procuring films with its member organizations on an exchange basis, and had been informed of FIAF's restrictive membership statutes in reply.⁶⁵ In October 1955, the Indian Ministry of Education wrote to Henri Langlois at the Cinémathèque Française expressing its interest in obtaining prints of significant French films, most likely at the behest of Jehangir Shapurji Bhowmagary (also Jean Bhowmagary), a senior official in the FD who had been brought in by the state from UNESCO in Paris, which was followed in 1956 by a similar request from the Calcutta Film Society.⁶⁶ Langlois responded to the requests by pointing them to FIAF and the possibility of exchanging films with its member institutions, while also inviting India to send its representatives to FIAF's annual congress.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Choudhury, Arun Roy. Letter to FIAF. *General Correspondence FIAF India 54-59*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; Gaffary, F. Letter to A.R. Choudhury. 3 November 1954. *General Correspondence FIAF India 54-59*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁶⁵ Gostay, Ram L. Letter to A.R. Choudhury. *1938-39 FIAF Correspondence: Copied MoMA Documents*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; Abbot, J. Letter to Secretary, The Indian Motion Picture Producers Association. 24 January 1939. *1938-39 FIAF Correspondence: Copied MoMA Documents*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁶⁶ S. Rahman, for the Secretary to the Government of India. Letter to FIAF. 31 October 1955. *General Correspondence FIAF India 54-59*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; Halder, R. Letter to FIAF. 24 March 1956. *General Correspondence FIAF India 54-59*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁶⁷ While Langlois' actual replies are not available, acknowledgments for them from India, which also note some of their contents, give us an approximate idea. See Sohan Singh, for the Secretary to the Government of India. Letter to Henry Langlois. 5 September 1956. *General Correspondence FIAF India 54-59*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; S. Rahman, for the Secretary to the Government of India. Letter to FIAF. 31 October 1955. *General Correspondence FIAF India 54-59*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

A parallel conduit of communication was opened between Nissim Ezekiel, a major figure of Indian literature in English who also ran a cultural center named Quest in Bombay, and Lindgren at the NFTVA, again with the intention of obtaining foreign films for screenings in India (with an interesting emphasis on experimental and avant-garde films). Lindgren also pointed Ezekiel to FIAF, and suggested that India should set up a national film archive and become a member of FIAF if it wants to avail of international film exchanges, an idea he had already discussed with his UK-based Indian friends previously.⁶⁸ Ezekiel corresponded further with FIAF's International Secretary Catherine Duncan, who suggested concrete steps for setting up the archive but asked for the state's close involvement in it, and repeated Langlois' suggestion about sending representatives to FIAF's annual congress.⁶⁹ In 1957, following a discussion with Indian representatives, FIAF wrote to the India Film Society of the India League in London, of which Seton's friend Menon was a key player, suggesting further steps that would allow it to set up a center in India to share, circulate, and exchange films with international organizations.⁷⁰

None of these correspondences led to immediate actions, but are reflective of the buzz that had already been created around the idea of a national film archive, which the Indian state was also a part of. They also demonstrate how the procurement of international films for screenings rather than the preservation of Indian films had unintentionally become the chief motivating factor behind the discussions for a national film archive, with FIAF's membership becoming the promised license for various Indian film societies and state bodies to obtain the foreign films they wanted for screenings. Additionally, they illustrate the centrality of Lindgren,

⁶⁸ Ezekiel, Nissim. Letter to E. Lindgren. 13 March 1956. *General Correspondence FIAF India 54-59*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁶⁹ Duncan, Catherine. Letter to Nissim Ezekiel. 19 March 1956. *General Correspondence FIAF India 54-59*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁷⁰ FIAF. Letter to Bridget Tunnard. 7 June 1957. *General Correspondence FIAF India 54-59*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; Tunnard, Bridget. Letter to The General Secretary, FIAF. 20 June 1957. *General Correspondence FIAF India 54-59*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

the NFTVA, and FIAF in both planting and promoting the idea of a national film archive in India as well as in facilitating its germination.

Following this buzz and the demands made by the FFSI, work on the FTII and the NFAI was resumed in 1959. Khandpur, an Executive Committee Member of the Bombay Film Society and a Founder Committee Member of the FFSI, was appointed Officer on Special Duty in the FD in Bombay and entrusted with the task of setting up the FTII.⁷¹ In addition to being among the functionaries shared by the state and the film society movement, Khandpur had also been one of the beneficiaries of the British government's scholarships to train filmmakers abroad in colonial India.⁷² At the time of India's independence in 1947, he had been in the United States completing a master's degree in filmmaking from the University of Southern California, and upon his return in 1948, found employment with the FD in 1949, moving through the ranks of Junior and Senior director to become an Assistant Chief Producer by 1959.⁷³

On 25 July 1959, while undertaking preliminary work for setting up the FTII, Khandpur received an urgent telegram from the I&B requesting him to send rough estimates of expenditure on the NFL for inclusion in the state's Third Five Year Plan (1961-66).⁷⁴ The telegram demanded the estimates by the afternoon two days later, and also specified that the NFL was to be a "record library" and not a "lending library," suggesting that at least some people in the I&B knew better than to mix a film archive and a film circulation library.⁷⁵ The

⁷¹ Khandpur's Bio. File No. 1/40/60-FI. *Appointment of Shri K.L. Khandpur as Officer on Special Duty in the Film Institute of India, Poona*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

⁷² Khandpur, K. L. Personal Interview. Mumbai. 12 August 2011.

⁷³ Khandpur's Bio. File No. 1/40/60-FI. *Appointment of Shri K.L. Khandpur as Officer on Special Duty in the Film Institute of India, Poona*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

⁷⁴ Lal, Shanti. Telegram to K. L. Khandpur. 25 July 1955. *Untitled File*. NFAI, Pune. Under Nehru's leadership, the economy of India started being based in part on planning through five-year plans, which were developed, executed, and monitored by the Planning Commission. The same model continues to be in use today.

⁷⁵ As discussed in the introduction, a "record library," similar to an archive, is understood to contain non-circulating records for long-term safekeeping as opposed to a "lending library" supplying films on loans for screening purposes. As revealed in the notes on many internal files available both at the NFAI Archive and the National Archives of India, the difference

reasons behind the importunity of the request are not clear, and Khandpur had no recollections during our interview either, but the nature of the telegram suggests that Khandpur had previously been briefed about the NFL and the I&B had already given it some thought, albeit off-the-record. He responded with a preliminary budget followed by documents and justifications for the budget three days later.⁷⁶

In September 1959, the I&B sent Khandpur further instructions to formulate detailed rules and regulations for the NFL, and also recommended that the rules confirm, as closely as possible, to the statutes of FIAF. In reply to Khandpur's inquiries about the earlier budget estimates sent by him, it indicated that a provision of only thirteen percent of Khandpur's estimates had been agreed upon for the NFL in the Third Five Year Plan. It added that the NFL might not be founded immediately, but advised Khandpur to undertake the preparation of the rules in advance nonetheless.⁷⁷ Simultaneously, it also sent two of its representatives, Mahabir Sahay, Press Attaché, Embassy of India in Sweden, and Pamela Cullen, Film Officer, High Commission for India in London, to attend the FIAF congress in Stockholm, where they gauged the possible benefits of India's membership to FIAF and gathered its membership rules and statutes, all of which were put together in a report submitted to the I&B and subsequently forwarded to Khandpur.⁷⁸

Khandpur informed the I&B that the budget allocations it had suggested were "so meager" that they would not be enough for the NFAI to function efficiently, which was

between the two was not always clear to the employees of the I&B. As a case in point, see Dasarathy, B. S. "Points to be Discussed with Principal, Film Institute of India." Telegram to K. L. Khandpur. 25 July 1955. File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

⁷⁶ Assorted documents. *Untitled File*. NFAI, Pune.

⁷⁷ Khanna, D. R. Letters to K. L. Khandpur. 3 and 9 September 1959. File No. 28/21/63-Est. *Procurement of Films from the Central Board of Film Censors, Bom for the National Film Archiv*. NFAI, Pune.

⁷⁸ "Report on the 1959 Congress of the International Federation of Film Archives: Stockholm, September 1959." File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

overlooked.⁷⁹ Between September and December 1959, he corresponded regularly with the I&B officials to seek clarifications on the proposed NFL, and with dozens of officials in other state departments to ascertain pay-scales, recruitment rules, budget allocations, and existing regulations, and also to collate information on film collections scattered across various state departments. He compiled a brief bibliography of literature on film archiving and preservation, and sought guidance from the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, the National Archives in Washington DC, the British Council in India, the British Film Institute (BFI), and a professor in Tokyo who was actively connected with the establishment of a film archive at the Japanese Museum of Modern Art. Additionally, he wrote to Kodak Limited and the United States Information Service to obtain technical literature on the long-term storage of films.⁸⁰ Alongside, he also revived discussions with Lindgren, and with Langlois at FIAF, again with the intention of making the soon-to-be founded NFL a member of FIAF, but the request was turned down by Langlois on account of insufficient details.⁸¹

Khandpur's work culminated in a detailed draft note sent to the I&B on 4 December 1959, which defined the nature and scope of the NFL's functions, indicated the types of films it should acquire, suggested ways to select and procure them, formulated guidelines on hiring staff, specified their pay-scales, and discussed the NFL's budget and its implications for the I&B.⁸² It also took into account copyright considerations, proposed a cataloging system, computed space requirements, and made recommendations for constructing temperature- and humidity-controlled vaults. The preliminary draft note, when considered together with his notes and correspondences, paints Khandpur as an extremely methodical individual who made earnest efforts to plan a long-term course of action for the NFL. For a person having no prior

⁷⁹ Khandpur, K. L. Letter to D. R. Khanna. 19 November 1959. *Untitled File*. NFAI, Pune.

⁸⁰ Assorted documents. *Untitled File*. NFAI, Pune.

⁸¹ Assorted documents. General Correspondence FIAF India 54-59. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁸² Khandpur, K. L. "National Film Archive." Attachment to letter to D. R. Khanna. 4 December 1959. *Untitled File*. NFAI, Pune.

experience with film archiving, his interventions and policy recommendations were astute, taking into account international practices and FIAF statutes while simultaneously paying close attention to budget constraints and the specificity of the Indian politico-cultural milieu.

Important among his recommendations, many of which were recorded in the letters he exchanged with the I&B but not in the draft note, was the suggestion that the NFL be renamed the “National Film Archive” (later renamed the NFAI). This was done in keeping with its intended role as a “record library,” and to ensure that it was not confused with the CFLDAE. He also reiterated the urgent need to salvage old Indian films and emphasized that the scope of the NFAI be expanded beyond National Film Award winning films to include other landmark Indian films, foreign classics, and even shorts, indicating precise numbers for acquisitions during the first few years and suggesting a ratio of 3 to 1 to maintain a healthy balance between Indian and foreign classics.

Following FIAF guidelines, he proposed a committee for selecting films comprised of critics, producers, technicians, artists, and scholars, and recommended that the NFAI’s functions include collecting production stills, shooting script, posters, and related paraphernalia, preparing synopses and background material for the films and maintaining a reference library of books. Additionally, he urged that the NFAI’s energies be channeled towards film preservation and not the distribution of films made by the state, as proposed by some. He also suggested that the study of film art be encouraged through screenings and discussions, lectures and courses, and by providing production library services, organizing exhibitions, and building a National Film Theatre at the NFAI with a capacity of five-hundred people.

Most significantly, borrowing from FIAF guidelines, he advised the I&B against affiliating the NFAI with the proposed FTII and suggested that it be granted functional autonomy so as to focus only on archival functions. Khandpur wrote:

The important film archives functioning in other countries for many years and which have gained considerable experience in this work have come to the conclusion that a film archive should confine itself to performing only archival functions. In this connection, I am reproducing below the resolution passed by the International Federation of Film Archives in their annual Congress held in Stockholm in September 1959 (Reference page 6 of Shri Sahay's report): "In order to carry out their objectives as defined in the statutes of the Federation, film archives and museums must have the fullest possible autonomy within their own field of work. Therefore, we recommend to all new film archives or to film archives in the process of reorganization to avoid, if possible, mixing of film schools or film institutes or other non-archive organizations."⁸³

However, the I&B chose to overlook his last advice and lumped together the NFAI with the film library of the FTII, calling it the "nucleus of the proposed film archive."⁸⁴ Nonetheless, his draft rules were approved in February 1960 and he was permitted to send a copy to FIAF for comments. He was also asked to prepare a list of "Indian films which would deserve to be placed in the library" and "a list of foreign films of a classic nature to be included in the library." He complied immediately, and sent further recommendations to the I&B, which included suggesting that the NFAI focus on obtaining master copies for Indian films, for which it was to act as the primary international repository, and contend with projection prints for foreign classics since their master copies would be preserved in national film archives elsewhere. He reminded the I&B that a necessary distinction be made between preservation copies and those used for projection, and also stressed that the archive only accept good quality 35mm prints rather than 16mm circulation copies that were popular with film societies and in bureaucratic circles.⁸⁵

From July to December 1960, Khandpur was asked to relocate from Bombay to Pune to undertake on-the-ground work for the FTII, which included some work on the NFAI as well. In a parallel development that was primarily a diplomatic endeavor, James Quinn, director of

⁸³ ---. Letter to D. R. Khanna. 19 November 1959. *Untitled File*. NFAI, Pune.

⁸⁴ "National Film Archives." File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

⁸⁵ Assorted documents. *Untitled File*. NFAI, Pune.

the BFI, presented Nehru with a copy of the British film *Panorama of Calcutta* (Warwick, 1899), at which time he also urged Nehru to support film societies in India, set up a national film archive, and is also reported to have cautioned him against combining the national film archive with the FTII.⁸⁶ However, his suggestions were noted without being acted upon, even as Khandpur was deemed too senior by the I&B to continue on the project a little later. He was asked to move back to Bombay at the completion of his assignment, promoted to the post of additional deputy producer, and assigned other projects.⁸⁷ After an illustrious career in various state departments, and a further thirty years of post-retirement engagements, he died of health issues at the age of 90 in 2011, barely a few months after my interview with him.

The FTII was formally founded in 1960 and began offering courses in 1961, but the founding of the elusive NFAI was to need still more efforts by motivated individuals from both within and outside the Indian bureaucracy.⁸⁸

Harish S. Booch, Indira Gandhi, Ernest Lindgren, and the Setting Up of the NFAI

Following Khandpur's spadework in Bombay and Pune, at the I&B in New Delhi during 1960-61, his draft note and suggestions were used to revise the budget allocations for the NFAI. In a meeting of the state's Expenditure Finance Committee held on 15 February 1961, a sum of 1.25 million rupees, a mere 27 percent of Khandpur's original estimates but twice the previous suggestion, was finally earmarked for the NFAI for the Third Five Year Plan.

⁸⁶ Dharap, B. V. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print; Whitaker, Sheila. "Obituary: James Quinn." *The Guardian*. 26 February 2008. Web. 3 August 2014. <<http://www.theguardian.com/film/2008/feb/26/obituaries.mainsection>>.

⁸⁷ Khandpur's Bio. File No. 1/40/60-FI. *Appointment of Shri K.L. Khandpur as Officer on Special Duty in the Film Institute of India, Poona*. National Archives of India, New Delhi. Also see Ranade, S. Y. Letter to Shri Bhagwan. 10 April 1961. File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi; Govil, R. K. 3 November 1961. File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

⁸⁸ I&B. "Film and Television Institute of India: Brief History." Government of India. Web. 3 March 2012. <http://www.ftiindia.com/brief_history.html>.

A condensed concept note was prepared, and many of Khandpur's policy recommendations were accepted. Much energy was spent on the finer points of the budget with the intention of minimizing the expenditure, and it was decided that to begin with, the NFAI would only operate with a skeleton staff of an assistant curator, a film preservation officer, and basic clerical and security personnel. Discussions were also initiated on whether the Cinematograph Act should be appended to make it compulsory for producers to deposit a copy of their films with the NFAI. However, all this was undertaken rather slowly on a low-priority basis, and some senior I&B officials displayed their unwillingness to take the NFAI seriously by exploring the possibility of postponing the proposal once more, which some of their colleagues overturned.⁸⁹

In the end, none of this led to concrete actions. As internal communication reveals, the NFAI never assumed centrality in the state's scheme of things. For a newly independent and developing nation, an investment in preserving cinema, a medium that was generally looked down upon and even considered a social evil, did not become a priority despite the best of efforts by various strategically placed individuals. Controlling and manipulating the film industry and spreading awareness about "good cinema" through film societies could arguably be justified in the Indian politico-cultural milieu of the 1950s, but the preservation of old films with no immediately demonstrable benefits did not seem important enough to most bureaucrats, and the project was left lingering.

However, notwithstanding the state's indifference, in November 1961, a second major public demand for the NFAI was made. Harish S. Booch, an established journalist and film critic, wrote to the Minister for I&B, Balkrishna Vishwanath Keskar, claiming that he had recently managed to salvage a copy of India's first feature-length film *Raja Harishchandra* (D. G. Phalke, 1913) along with other silent era films and associated material. Booch noted that he had also written an article on the urgent need for setting up a national film archive in the

⁸⁹ Assorted documents. File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

September 1960 edition of *Filmfare*, one of India's most popular film magazines.⁹⁰ Reminding Keskar about his announcement on the NFAI in a Parliamentary Constitutive Committee meeting the previous year, Booch urged him to give the matter his urgent attention.⁹¹

Keskar was a staunch nationalist with strong views about the evils of both Western culture and popular cinema, especially film music (he had previously effected a near complete ban on film songs on the All India Radio), but also had much appreciation for Indian classical music and old mythological films.⁹² The prospect of saving the mythological *Raja Harishchandra* struck a chord with him, for he wrote back to Booch on 8 November 1961, thanking him for his efforts and informing him that the process of setting up "a national film library" was underway. He also indicated that his officials had been instructed to help Booch preserve the old film material he had salvaged.⁹³ Less than a month later, Pandurang Nathaji Rajbhoj, a member of the Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of the Parliament of India, also

⁹⁰ Booch, Harish H. "Film Archives: Now or Never." *Filmfare*. 30 December 1960: 25-27, 34. Print. A brief account of Booch's efforts can also be found in Dharap, B. V. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print. 529.

⁹¹ Booch, Harish H. Letter to B. V. Keskar. 3 November 1961. File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi. In another letter soon after, Booch revealed that the films salvaged by him included *Shri Krishna Janma* (D. G. Phalke, 1918) and *Kaliya Mardan* (D. G. Phalke, 1919), among others. See ---. Letter to Jagat Murari. 9 January 1962. File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi. It is difficult to establish how many other similar demands were made from outside the state ranks. One noteworthy mention is the film producer J. B. H. Wadia's repeated requests for a film archive, which he claims he started making as early as in 1949. See Wadia, J. B. H. Letter to H. N. Agarwal. 18 August 1964. File No. 6/3/64-FI (FA). *The National Film Archive of India, Poona: Constitution and setting up of an Advisory Committee*. National Archives of India, New Delhi. B.V. Dharap also mentions similar demands by a film fan from Andhra Pradesh made in *Screen Weekly* in the 1960s. See Dharap, B. V. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print.

⁹² For an account of Keskar's ban on film music, see Lelyveld, David. "Upon the Subdominant: Administering Music on All-India Radio." *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World*. Ed. Breckenridge, Carol A. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. 49-65. Print.

⁹³ Keskar, B. V. Letter to Harish H. Booch. 8 November 1961. File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

demanded to know if the state had initiated any steps to open a “National Film Museum,” and was supplied with information about the proposed NFAI in the Parliament, blurring the conceptual lines between a film archive, a film library, and a film museum.⁹⁴

With pressure mounting from many different quarters, the I&B re-examined the NFAI proposal. It contacted Booch, instructed its officials to process the files faster, requested Khandpur to be associated with the project yet again, and assigned more NFAI related responsibilities to the newly recruited FTII staff, some of who -- in particular the professor of direction cum vice principal Jagat Murari, who had also trained at the University of Southern California, and the professor of film appreciation Satish Bahadur -- were to become significant actors for the founding and initial functioning of the NFAI. Additionally, on the nationalist Keskar’s behest, it investigated if there was a need to bring foreign films into the purview of the NFAI at all. However, the FD refused to spare Khandpur on a full-time basis, the overburdened Murari expressed his inability to shoulder more responsibility, and Khandpur insisted that foreign films must be included in the purview of the NFAI, and the project got stalled yet again.⁹⁵

In ways, this reveals a disjuncture between two sections of the state bureaucracy, one represented by the Minister Keskar and his aides who saw the NFAI essentially as a repository of “quality Indian films” -- judged on the basis of winning National Film Awards or by reflecting “Indian traditional values” as the mythological films were thought to do -- which underscored a nationalist and statist agenda at play, and the second represented by officials such as Khandpur, Murari, and Bahadur who were also film aficionados and close to the film societies, for whom the NFAI was to become a repository of critically acclaimed Indian as well as

⁹⁴ "Rajya Sabha: Starred Question No. 137." File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

⁹⁵ Assorted documents. File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

international films without necessarily subscribing to a nationalist agenda. Owing in part to these differences along with the I&B general lack of interest, no formal steps were undertaken to expedite the NFAl's founding for the next year-and-a-half, and the money allocated to it remained largely unused. Nonetheless, Murari, Bahadur, and some of their colleagues at the FTII went beyond their call of duty and continued to work on the project as a labor of love, primarily as their own undertaking.⁹⁶ They even wrote to the Nederlands Filmmuseum and FIAF for exchanging films, informing them of the decision to set up the NFAl, and seeking guidelines and blueprints on vaults etc.⁹⁷ And they kept pressuring the I&B to expedite the process, but to no avail.⁹⁸

Meanwhile, there grew an increasing confusion in the I&B about the roles of the NFAl, a central "record library" or repository of cinema, and the FTII's own film library, a "lending" or "circulation library" for the benefit of the students of the FTII.⁹⁹ As mentioned previously, despite the two having been planned as separate entities, the I&B had started clubbing them together in its internal communication, calling the latter the former's "nucleus," which the then FTII Principal Gajanan Jagirdar even cautioned against.¹⁰⁰ Sometimes as a mistake, but also

⁹⁶ Murari, Jagat. Letter to H. N. Agarwal. 21 July 1964. File No. 6(6)/64-F(I)(FA). *National Film Archives of India-Recruitment Rules of Class III posts*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

⁹⁷ de Vaal, Jan. Letter to Jagat Murari. 9 January 1963. *Candidature National Film Archive of India XX Congress Moscow*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; Murari, Jagat. Letter to The Curator, Netherlands Filmmuseum. 31 October 1962. *Candidature National Film Archive of India XX Congress Moscow*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; Dev, Ram. Letter to Executive Secretariat, FIAF. 6 May 1963. *Candidature National Film Archive of India XX Congress Moscow*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; Michell, Marion. Letter to H. N. Agarwal. 11 October 1963. *Candidature National Film Archive of India XX Congress Moscow*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁹⁸ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 2 August 2011.

⁹⁹ Jagirdar, Gajanan. Letter to B. S. Dasarathy. 2 August 1961. File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi. Also see "Extract from File No. 17/86/61-FI." File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁰⁰ ---. Letter to B. S. Dasarathy. 2 August 1961. File No. 1/74/60-FI. *National Film Archives-Approval of the Scheme by Expenditure Finance Committee-Budget Estimate for 1961-62*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

due to differences of opinion, this confusion was in line with the apprehensions expressed by Khandpur about not keeping the NFAI separate from the FTII. However, as elaborated below, this was to prove beneficial for the founding of the NFAI, which while eventually kept separate from the FTII film library, was to later assume the roles of both a lending and a record library.

After a period of silence on the subject, on 9 June 1963, Gandhi, probably urged by her film society friends and associates, wrote to a certain “Shri Reddy” (likely a high ranking official in the I&B) on the letterhead of the “Prime Minister’s House.” She noted that the FTII had been allocated some money for procuring “outstanding film classics” over the next five months for “teaching purposes and screening to University Film Appreciation groups,” and expressed that it should therefore become a member of FIAF immediately. Her letter referred to the report submitted to the I&B by India’s representatives at the FIAF congress in 1959, and indicated the address of Lindgren -- who was by then also serving as the secretary general of FIAF in addition to his charge as the curator of the NFTVA -- to apply to. “Only if our Institution joins this organization will they be able to secure 35mm prints of the finest film classics, otherwise they will have to purchase prints from commercial distributors at very high rates -- if the films required are obtainable in this manner at all,” she opined, and added that “by joining this international organization, it may be possible to secure some of the films needed on an exchange basis, as a number of the organizations affiliated to the FIAF have indicated that they are interested in securing prints of some of India’s best feature film productions.”¹⁰¹

Neither Gandhi’s politicization of bureaucracy nor her opportunism and the idea of exploiting FIAF’s membership for procuring foreign films was internationally new or radical, for obtaining FIAF membership for getting foreign films was a known tactic in the international audiovisual archiving community, which Frick has also discussed.¹⁰² Nonetheless, Gandhi’s

¹⁰¹ Gandhi, Indira. Letter to Shri Reddy. 9 June 1963. File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁰² Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print. 106.

letter is telling of the ways in which foreign films for screenings again became the main motivation behind wanting to put the NFAI's plans into action, which was in sync with the ideas of some of the film aficionados within the bureaucratic ranks, but different from Keskar's. The letter also illustrates how she used her clout as the Prime Minister's daughter to influence film policy in India even prior to holding any office, and also divulges her interest in using the state machinery in the service of the film society movement she was involved in, without mentioning it explicitly, under the broad rubric of film appreciation and the nurturing of a discerning film audience.

But she was not alone in these endeavors. The recruitment of Bahadur, the founder of the Agra Film Society, as professor of film appreciation at the FTII at the behest of Marie Seton already marked a marriage between the film society movement and the FTII.¹⁰³ Now, in addition to the confusion regarding the NFAI and the FTII film libraries, the NFAI was being seen as a source of foreign film classics not only for the FTII students but also for the film societies. The members of film societies could see little merit in any "record library" that would not allow them to borrow films for screenings, a sentiment seemingly shared by many in the I&B as well.¹⁰⁴

The specific reasons that motivated Gandhi to write the letter remain unclear, but the I&B, likely through communication conducted off the records, interpreted her reference to the FTII as the NFAI that was to be set up as the FTII's subsidiary, and began working on her request immediately. However, Gandhi had got her facts mixed-up, for as observed by an I&B official in internal notes on file, the money had been allocated for "export promotion of films" and not for procuring films, and the setting up of the NFAI had been "postponed on account of

¹⁰³ Rao, H. N. Narahari, ed. *The Film Society Movement in India*. Mumbai: The Asian Film Foundation, 2009. Print. 232.

¹⁰⁴ Mulay, Vijaya. Personal interview. New Delhi. 6 March 2012.

national emergency [referring to the Sino-Indian war],” leading him to note that the FTII was “not, therefore, in a position to derive the benefit suggested by Mrs. Indira Gandhi.”¹⁰⁵

But in line with the nepotism characteristic of Indian bureaucracy, Gandhi’s direct requests could not be ignored, and the I&B officials spent much energy scrutinizing FIAF membership statutes to see if the FTII film library could be made a member instead. That couldn’t work either, for it was not publicly accessible, and therefore fell outside the purview of FIAF membership. After three months of deliberation, the matter was finally left to FIAF through a letter to Lindgren, which stated that the state was “anxious that either the library of the Institute or the proposed National Film Archives should be affiliated” to the FIAF in due course, but in the meantime wanted to explore the possibility of the FTII becoming a “corresponding member,” a lower level of membership enjoying fewer privileges.¹⁰⁶

This led to a tricky situation, for based on the state’s original provisions for the NFAI in the Third Five Year Plan, the FTII staff had already informed FIAF of the decision to set up the NFAI, after which the proposal got stalled with the I&B, which FIAF remained unaware of.¹⁰⁷ Working with the understanding that the NFAI existed already, Lindgren, in his dual roles at FIAF and the NFTVA, had undertaken an exchange of films between the NFTVA and FTII, which he presumed was for the NFAI. This exchange was only one among many such acquisitions by Murari for building a collection of foreign film classics at the FTII during this period, some of which, like the films acquired from the NFA, were eventually meant to be a part of the NFAI.

¹⁰⁵ "S. No. 1 (Receipt)." [First acknowledged on] 4 July 1963. File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁰⁶ Agarwal, H. N. Letter to Ernest Lindgren. 11 September 1963. File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁰⁷ Dev, Ram. Letter to Executive Secretariat, FIAF. 6 May 1963. *Candidature National Film Archive of India XX Congress Moscow*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

Lindgren was surprised at the state of affairs, and expressing his displeasure in an emphatic reply, urged the Indian state “most strongly,” in its “own best interest,” to formally constitute a film archive immediately, even if it could “do no more than appoint one man, working in one room, to look after it.” He also promised cooperation to that one man from the enthusiastic film archiving community of FIAF’s members.¹⁰⁸

One might suggest that his letter was patronizing, its tone reflective of British self-righteousness and colonial arrogance that deemed it fit that he instruct the Indian state on what he thought was best for it, even if Indian state’s actions appear to have been inviting such a reaction. However, it is equally telling of the India’s servile attitude towards the British and other “foreign experts,” for even post-independence, their advice mattered more to it than that given by its own officials, a tendency that continues till date.

Expectedly, his letter made an impact, springing the state into action. Notwithstanding the emergency declared because of the Sino-India war, by November 1963, the state had revised its estimates for the Third Five Year Plan yet again and included the setting up of the NFAI in it once more. The thrust was very clearly on affiliating with the FIAF on an urgent basis, for even before undertaking other necessary measures, steps were initiated to obtain foreign exchange for the FIAF membership fee and attend its annual conference. The expenditure involved was justified by explicitly arguing that spending the money on FIAF affiliation will allow India to obtain foreign films on an exchange basis and avoid much of the expenditure earmarked for acquisitions in the Third Five Year Plan, which was a comparatively steep sum. Clearances from various state departments were obtained hurriedly, seemingly facilitated by the functionaries shared between the state and the film societies.¹⁰⁹ And in

¹⁰⁸ Lindgren, Ernest. Letter to H. N. Agarwal. 26 September 1963. File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹⁰⁹ Assorted documents. File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi. In addition to the functionaries shared by the state and the film societies, Mulay also credits D. L. Khanna and J. S. Bhowmagary, both senior bureaucrats, for taking personal

contrast to the state's lack of interest till then, a secret note was prepared for the cabinet led by Nehru, which approved it in a secret meeting held on 6 March 1964, which was attended by an impressive array of central ministers.¹¹⁰ In April 1964, a detailed formal application was made to the FIAF by Murari, who had by then become the principal of FTII.¹¹¹

The application was drafted in close consultation with Lindgren, and adapting Khandpur's draft note for FIAF's application format, contained detailed sections on the need for the NFAl and its functions, the types of films to be acquired and their selection process, the methods of procuring and preserving films, the cataloging system to be used, and a note on the commercial rights of films. It also contained a list of films already understood to be with the NFAl through Murari's and Bahadur's efforts at the FTII (87 titles), a statement on ongoing acquisitions, a note on the NFAl's relationship with other film institutions in the nation, its

interest in making the files move faster. See Mulay, Vijaya. Personal interview. New Delhi. 6 March 2012.

¹¹⁰ Agarwal, H. N. "Note for the Cabinet: National Film Archive of India-Affiliation to the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris." 27 February 1964. File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi. Marked "Secret," this note was later declassified and sent to the National Archives of India. Also see "Meeting of the Cabinet Held on Friday, March 6, 1964, at 10-00 A.M.: National Film Archive of India-Affiliation to the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris." File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

In attendance were Nehru, Gulzarilal Nanda (Minister of Home Affairs), T. T. Krishnamachari (Minister of Finance), Lal Bahadur Shastri (Minister without portfolio), Swaran Singh (Minister of Food and Agriculture), Y. B. Chavan (Minister of Defense), C. Subramaniam (Minister of Steel, Mines and Heavy Engineering), Humayun Kabir (Minister of Petroleum and Chemicals), Satya Narayan Sinha (Minister of Parliamentary Affairs), H. C. Dasappa (Minister of Railways), and M. C. Chagla, Minister of Education.

In all likelihood, the NFAl's FIAF affiliation was not the only item on the agenda, but the I&B correspondence does not shed light on the full agenda of the meeting. In fact, a "Secret" and "Immediate" memorandum circulated by D. P. Chopra, Under Secretary to the Cabinet, only mentions the NFAl's FIAF affiliation as the agenda.

¹¹¹ Murari, Jagat. Letter to The Executive Secretary, FIAF. File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi. Although undated, the letter refers to another one dated 19 March 1964, while yet another letter referring to Murari's application is dated 28 April, giving us an approximate date.

relationship with foreign national film archives, statements on budgets, and a note on the vaults needed for storing the films.

However, despite Lindgren's advice and months of deliberations on the subject among bureaucrats, neither had the NFAI been formally set up at the time of the application nor its rules and regulations approved, illustrating once again the symbolic formalism of British bureaucratic processes in India but not their substance. Instead, India's FIAF membership application contained carefully worded and almost contradictory statements which made the status of the NFAI's formal existence ambiguous. One section read: "The National Film Archive of India has been set up by the Government of the Republic of India in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Since it will function as a department of the Government, it does not need a deed of foundation, as might be necessary for a privately sponsored organization for the purpose of establishing its legal identity," while another read: "The principle of setting up the National Film Archive was accepted by Government of India in 1960, but work on it was delayed because of many unavoidable reasons. Now the government has decided to initiate the work of the organization again." In addition to claiming that there was no need for a formal deed of foundation, the first section suggested that the NFAI existed already, while the second indicated that it was being set up, both within the same document.

Notwithstanding such contradictions, a yet-to-be-founded NFAI was admitted to FIAF as a provisional member in its annual congress held in Moscow in June 1964, in no small part due to FIAF's own internal need for rapidly expanding its membership to non-European nations in keeping with UNESCO's film heritage initiatives, which Penelope Houston has also noted.¹¹² Following protocol, a representative from the Bulgarian National Archive proposed the membership after circulating copies of the application, which was seconded by Lindgren

¹¹² Houston, Penelope. *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives*. London: British Film Institute, 1994. Print. 67.

and unanimously accepted by the 33 delegates.¹¹³ On 28 October 1964, the founding of the NFAI was finally formalized in India through an office order issued by the Under Secretary to the Government, sanctioned by the President of India, which declared the NFAI as a "Subordinate Office" of the I&B, thirteen years after the idea was initially proposed. The office order also authorized Murari as the head of department, asked Bahadur to look after the preliminary work of the institution, and appointed Ram Dev, administrative officer of the FTII, as head of the office.¹¹⁴

This formalizing of the NFAI took place a few months after Nehru died and Gandhi assumed office as the Minister for I&B.¹¹⁵ As a number of people have testified, Gandhi was instrumental in ensuring prompt action on files pertaining to film policy following her appointment to the crucial post.¹¹⁶ However, a direct link between the two could not be established. Meanwhile, Lindgren's advice on appointing at least "one man, working in one room" to look after the NFAI was realized in 1965 through the recruitment of Nair -- the insolent film archivist responsible for the archive of the archive -- as assistant curator of the new institution, who not only defined, shaped, and headed the institution for 27 years, but also

¹¹³ Untitled Note by Embassy of India, Moscow. 13 July 1964. File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi.

¹¹⁴ "Order." 28 October 1964. File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi. Also available with the Administrative Officer, NFAI. It needs to be noted that most accounts on the NFAI indicate 1 February 1962 as the date of its founding, in all likelihood a date decided upon by the NFAI based on informal understandings, for my research has not revealed any founding documents to support the claim. As cases in point for the earlier date, see "National Film Archive of India Report 1964-65." *Candidature National Film Archive of India XX Congress Moscow*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; "Brief Summary of the Activities of the National Film Archive of India as a Provisional Member of FIAF 1964-1969." *Poona*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; Dharap, B. V. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print; Bennurakar, Chalam. "Film Archive - a Close-Up" *The Indian Express*. 19 November 1982. Print.

¹¹⁵ Nehru died on 27 May 1964, and under the Prime Ministership of Lal Bahadur Shastri, Gandhi assumed the post of the Minister for the I&B soon after.

¹¹⁶ Rao, H. N. Narahari, ed. *The Film Society Movement in India*. Mumbai: The Asian Film Foundation, 2009. Print. 50,57. Mulay, Vijaya. Personal interview. New Delhi. 6 March 2012.

became the Indian counterpart to Langlois, ruling his archive, and making its name synonymous with himself. Under Nair's management, the NFAI came to be colloquially known as the "Nair Film Archive of India" and the "Narchive," which is discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how the NFAI's founding in 1964 in postcolonial India -- which predicated itself on the institution obtaining the membership of FIAF -- was a highly convoluted process enmeshed within the nation's often chaotic and irrational bureaucratic state machinery. The process was motivated more by the nation's interest in gaining access to foreign films through exchanges with other FIAF members than it was by the desire to preserve India's cinematic heritage, revealing the national film archive to be a site of disjuncture between theory and practice. And it involved a multitude of state, non-state, Indian, and foreign actors, establishing the institution's strongly transnationality. The chapter also demonstrated how a number of actors operating at the intersection of India's bureaucracy and the Indian film society movement saw the NFAI more as a film lending library rather than as a film preservation archive at the time of its founding, revealing the national film archive's hybrid identity that borrows from multiple LAM institutions. And it shed light on the general apathy and lack of understanding of the importance of film archiving and preservation in India, which has continued to characterize the nation till date. In the chapter that follows, I discuss the institution's struggles, achievements, and failings under the leadership of Nair, its arch-father.

CHAPTER 3
THE NAIR FILM ARCHIVE OF INDIA:
SCAVENGING, SALVAGING, AND QUESTIONABLE INSTITUTION MANAGING, 1965-1991

In this chapter, I discuss the contributions made by P. K. Nair -- an arch-father to borrow from Jacques Derrida -- to the building and sustaining of the National Film Archive of India (NFAI), which came to be colloquially known as the Nair Film Archive of India and the Narchive during his tenure from 1965 to 1991. Furthering the discussion on Indian bureaucracy and the NFAI from Chapter 2, I demonstrate how the acquisition of each film title by Nair for the NFAI -- especially those on nitrate film and during its earliest years -- were complex processes that entailed dealing with much red tape, required a myriad of tactful and patient negotiations, and involved the combined efforts of many state and non-state actors in addition to Nair's efforts.

Additionally, I undertake a critical appraisal of Nair's legacy, a timely intervention in wake of his recent death in March 2016 and the uncritical eulogies celebrating his life and work that have followed. I discuss how his industrious work on building the institution was undercut in the later part of his career by his troublesome "one-man-show" management style and less-than-ideal adherence to rules, his tendency to work in cliques and extend special favors to people he considered worthy of such attention, and the nexus that was built between the NFAI and the Film and Television Institution of India (FTII). Such actions placed him closer to the passionate but disorganized maverick Henry Langlois than to the organized strategist Ernest Lindgren in the aforementioned Lindgren-Langlois debate on film preservation, and they also impacted the identity and long-term sustenance of the institution.

Nonetheless, Nair's contributions to building the institution and sailing it successfully through years of state apathy remain unparalleled in India, in the process also giving the figure of the film archivist an identity in the nation.

A Biographical Sketch

Nair is often celebrated as the most significant film archivist in the Indian subcontinent, an "individual as institution," and a quieter, less aggressive version of Langlois.¹ There are numerous accounts of his knowledge of cinema history, especially the earliest years of Indian cinema, as are anecdotal tales of the lengths to which he went to acquire and preserve films, some of which are well documented in the documentary *Celluloid Man* (Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, 2012) and the companion piece to the film published in the *Journal of Film Preservation*, both of which pay homage to his life and work.²

By Nair's own account, he was an avid cinephile since his early childhood days, which were spent in a village in Kerala, and also a collector of film memorabilia who frequently exchanged letters with filmmakers, distributors, and industry personnel from across the nation to further his interests during his teens. His professional links with cinema began as a programmer for a film theater in Trivandrum while pursuing a bachelor's degree in science from 1949 to 1952. He moved to Bombay soon after, and between 1956 and 1960, familiarized himself with most aspects of the film business in the Bombay film industry. His many low-to-no-pay jobs included working as an apprentice at Mehboob Studios during the production of

A section of this chapter was published as Kumar, Ramesh. "On Scavenging and Salvaging: NFAI and Early Indian Cinema." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 54.2 (2013): 152-57. Print. Some of the ideas and opinions expressed in this chapter were also originally published in ---. "Celluloid Man (Review)." *Journal of Film Preservation*. Autumn (2014): 133-35. Print.

¹ Thoraval, Yves. *The Cinemas of India*. Delhi: Macmillan India, 2000. Print; Barnouw, Erik, and Subrahmanyam Krishnaswamy. *Indian Film*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980. Print; Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012.

² ---. "Indian Cinema: A Vanishing Legacy." *Journal of Film Preservation* 91 (2014): 26-35. Print.

Paisa Hi Paisa (Mehrish, 1956) and *Mother India* (Mehboob Khan, 1957), assisting Hrishikesh Mukherjee with scriptwriting and editing during the production of *Anari* (Hrishikesh Mukherjee, 1959), working for a distributor of Italian films dubbed in English (for which IFFI had by then created a small market), and working in a film lab. In 1960, he also went to the Films Division of India (FD) looking for work, but was told there wasn't any. However, the bureaucrat J. S. Bhowmury saw potential in him and recommended that he apply for a position in the upcoming FTII in Pune, where he found employment as a reference assistant in 1961.³

His initial responsibilities at the FTII included working on building its library of books and films, and also assisting Jagat Murari and Satish Bahadur in doing the preliminary work for the NFAI. By the time the NFAI was formally founded in 1964, the three of them had already collected many Indian and foreign film classics, established contacts with other national film archives, arranged the exchange of films with the NFTVA, followed on the film journalist Harish S. Bouch's leads to acquire films from the descendants of Phalke and other early filmmakers, acquired the National Film Award winning films deposited at the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), and also started corresponding with other state institutions to acquire their collections of films.⁴ The NFAI may thus be seen as operating at the FTII since 1961, albeit informally. In fact, by October 1963, it was functional enough for the popular Indian film magazine *Filmfare* to publish an article describing its working in some detail.⁵

When the newly founded NFAI recruited staff members, Nair left his job at the FTII and joined the institution as assistant curator in 1965. Thus, despite most accounts of his life and work calling him the founder of the institution, he joined it one year later, and was not directly

³ Nair, P.K. "Union Public Service Commission: Form of Application for the Use of Candidates for Appointment by Selection." 22 February 1965. File No. 6(6)/64-F(I)(FA). *National Film Archives of India-Recruitment Rules of Class I/II posts*. National Archives of India, New Delhi., ---. Personal interview. Pune. 4 August 2011; Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012.

⁴ Assorted documents. File No. 6/31/62-S&G. *Procurement of Film "Sant Tukaram & "Sikandar" "Pathar Panchali" and "Ravindranath Tagore. For exchange arrangement*. NFAI, Pune.

⁵ Sultan, Ahmed. "Film Archives." *Filmfare*. 4 October 1963: 22, 41. Print.

involved in its founding despite assisting Murari and Bahadur in acquiring some of the earliest films for it.⁶ By the time of his appointment, he had become close to Murari and Bahadur and had already earned some clout at the FTII. He was only one among the 30 candidates who applied to be the assistant curator at the NFAI, but was found to be the most suitable one, quite likely helped by Murari being the one representing the Information and Broadcasting Ministry (I&B) on the selection committee.

However, Nair's recruitment was not without trouble. For one, he suffered from a medical condition that required surgery before he could be appointed, but more significantly, an FTII alumnus, who had lived with Nair, lodged a complaint against him alleging that he was of "questionable character" and was therefore unsuitable for the post. The complainant claimed that Nair had stolen money from him, stayed illegally in the FTII premises, abused his powers as reference assistant at the FTII to get his brother a job at the same institution, and defaulted on his rent elsewhere leading the landlord to take him to court. Nair was cleared of the allegations after the FTII got in touch with the complainant, who then wrote to the FTII claiming that the original complaint had not been penned by him but by some unknown troublemaker who had forged his signature.

The validity of the complaint does not concern us here, but the significance of these events lies in the efficiency and swiftness with which the FTII established contact with the complainant in response to questions from the Union Public Service Commission (the agency responsible for state recruitments), elicited a clarification from him, and also declared that Nair defaulting on the rent was a civil matter that had no bearing on his recruitment, all of which

⁶ As cases in point, see "Legendary Indian Film Archivist P.K. Nair Dead." *The Indian Express*. 4 March 2016. Web. 23 May 2016. <<http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/p-k-nair-legendary-indian-film-archivist-dead/>>; "P. K. Nair, India's 'Celluloid Man' Passes Away." *The Quint*. 4 March 2016. Web. 23 May 2016. <<http://www.thequint.com/entertainment/2016/03/04/pk-nair-indias-celluloid-man-passes-away>>; Nair, C. Gouridasan. "Legendary Film Archivist P. K. Nair Passes Away." *The Hindu*. 4 March 2016. Web. 23 May 2016. <<http://www.thehindu.com/entertainment/legendary-filmarchivist-pk-nair-passes-away/article8313638.ece>>.

appear to be activities aimed at quickly removing any “bureaucratic hurdles” for his recruitment by “getting the paperwork in order.” They are likely to have involved some unofficial and off-the-record dealings, which could not have taken place without Nair being in the know, and are indicative of the FTII and Nair’s attitude towards many such matters.

For the next 27 years, Nair was effectively the head of the institution, becoming its curator cum director in 1985, and building it from a small subsidiary of the FTII into the largest national film archive in South Asia.⁷ He was the only official appointed to the organization for many years and therefore had to handle most of the work singlehandedly, but was helped considerably by a handful of junior staff members and a small nationwide group of volunteers who called themselves Friends of the National Film Archive of India (FNFAI), which included journalists, film critics, scholars, FTII professors, students, film industry personnel, and film aficionados who provided him with information, leads, and various forms of informal assistance.⁸ By some accounts, one such individual, Abdul Ali, was responsible for as many as 350 films that were added to the NFAI collection over time.⁹

Functioning on a shoestring budget, inadequate resources, and only the most basic equipment, Nair initially operated out of a tiny shared room in the FTII until the NFAI was allotted independent space at the Jaykar Bungalow in 1970, but the latter, having previously

⁷ Immediately upon its founding, the NFAI was headed by the principal of FTII, and upon Nair’s recruitment as the assistant curator, he was made the person-in-charge of the institution and head of office in December 1967. There existed no curator post for many years, but Nair was later given the honorary designation of a curator in 1982 without revising his pay scales for it, and eventually made the director in 1985 when the new post was created. See Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 4 August 2011, --. Personal interview. Pune. 5 August 2011. Also see Dharap, B. V. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print.

⁸ A brief description of the activities of the FNFAI can be found in ---. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print, and they also find a mention in Bose, Derek. "Silver Jubilee of the Film Archive." *Anand Bazaar Patrika*. 10 June 1989. Print; "Restoring Old Film Classics for Posterity." *India Post*. 13 June 1989. Print.

⁹ Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. "Indian Cinema: A Vanishing Legacy." *Journal of Film Preservation* 91 (2014): 26-35. Print; Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013.

been a modest girl's hostel for the FTII, did not offer extensive facilities either. The thousands of films he procured were routinely stored in various tin sheds scattered across the FTII campus, or in other temporary godowns with no climate controls since the NFAI did not have any vaults of its own till the early 1990s. For copying films, he relied on private film labs -- which were not very keen on undertaking the NFAI's work owing to its low volume and even lower payments -- and the FTII film lab. While most national film archives in the world can offer similar stories for the first few years of their functioning, what makes the NFAI's case peculiar are the considerable delays caused in progressing to more evolved stages of operation, and more significantly, continued apathy towards film preservation by the state and the general populace despite otherwise being a nation obsessed with cinema, which had also set up a national film archive with some fanfare and put a man like Nair in charge of it.

A passionate and dedicated film archivist, Nair is reported to have routinely gone beyond his call of duty, frequently spending twelve hours or more at the institution -- and more at home reading about films and discussing them -- while skipping meals, ignoring his family commitments, and disregarding his health. He followed the tiniest of leads for films and cinema paraphernalia, spent many a sleepless night at the NFAI collecting and viewing them, made copies, organized and catalogued them, took copious notes, and prepared detailed condition reports. He also pursued I&B officials with requests for more facilities and resources, and communicated with fellow audiovisual archivists from across the world, especially FIAF officials and members who he consulted over matters of archival policies, governance, and technical requirements. Under his leadership, the institution's collection grew from a modest 87 films in 1964 to more than 10,000 in 1991, and it expanded its activities significantly. It built one of the finest film book libraries in India, set up the NFAI branch offices, started the highly successful Film Distribution Libraries in various centers nationwide, and held the well-regarded and popular Film Appreciation (FA) courses. It also commissioned and published monographs on such film directors as P.V. Pathy, Bimal Roy, Guru Dutt etc., instituted fellowships for

research, and completed the construction of a large new building next door containing office spaces and climate-controlled vaults, which was getting ready to be inaugurated in a few months' time when he retired in 1991.¹⁰

He also served as a successful film curator and jury member on various national and international film festivals, was elected to multiple FIAF Executive Committees and Experts Committee on the Preservation of Moving Images led by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), published articles on cinema regularly, and acted as a coordinator and occasional lecturer in the Film Appreciation (FA) courses. Additionally, he organized a regional seminar on film preservation in collaboration with UNESCO in February 1984, and attempted to organize FIAF's Annual Congress in India in 1991, which was ultimately unsuccessful due to the lack of funds.¹¹ Further, he played a significant role in training such individuals as Haimanti Banerjee and Gayatri Chatterjee in becoming future film scholars and instructors, guided and inspired many FTII students who were to become highly successful later, for instance the actress Jaya Bachchan and filmmaker Jahnu Barua, and lent a helping hand to many individuals in and around the NFAI and the FTII circles in various ways.¹² In the process, he bestowed the largely anonymous and thankless

¹⁰ "Enclosure to C: List of Films in the National Film Archive of India." 28 October 1964. File No. 6/5/63 FI/FA. *National Film Archive of India, Poona: Membership of the International Federation of Film Archives, Paris*. National Archives of India, New Delhi; "National Film Archive of India: Activities Report for 1991." *Annual Reports of FIAF Member Institutions*. Brussels: International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF), 1991. Print; Bennurakar, Chalam. "Film Archive - a Close-Up." *The Indian Express*. 19 November 1982. Print; Dharap, B. V. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print. It needs to be noted that while the list of films from 1964 mentions 87 titles, this does not seem to include the National Film Award winning films handed over by the CBFC, as well as some other titles that were acquired by the FTII around this time but were later handed over to the NFAI. Discrepancies between various reports on these numbers makes it difficult to arrive at any one conclusive figure on the number of titles the NFAI began its collection with.

¹¹ Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013; I&B. "Annual Report 1983-84." New Delhi: Government of India, 1984. Print; Assorted documents. Poona. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

¹² Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012; Banerjee, Haimanti. Personal interview. Pune. 12 May 2013; Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013.

tasks of a film archivist with a strong and distinct identity that was unambiguously his own in the Indian context.

Till his death in March 2016 at the age of 82, he continued to commit his life to the cause of film preservation, both from within and outside the state ranks: by acting as an official advisor, consultant, and collaborator after his retirement, but also as a trenchant critic of the NFAI's more recent policies and activities. Despite having retired from the institution more than 20 years ago, he commanded more respect than any of his successors and other film archivists in the nation, and was the Indian media and film fraternity's "go to" person for film archiving related information in India.

Nair's central task during his tenure, and his biggest challenge at the NFAI, was the acquisition of films for the institution's holdings, especially during its formative years. As with audiovisual archives worldwide, but even more so in the Indian politico-cultural milieu, it proved to be a difficult task.

Early Acquisitions: The Case of Birendra Nath Sircar's Films

Acquisitions for the NFAI often involved extended negotiations, long-drawn operations, and considerable delays owing to a number of factors, especially during its earliest days. At the institution, these included the lack of resources, teething troubles, and inefficient administration, at the state level, official regulations, and the delays caused by the bureaucratic machinery, and at the film industry level, a lack of trust between its members and the state, combined with the whims of individual producers. The earliest of NFAI's acquisitions predated the institution's genesis and Nair's employment, for they began in the mid-1950s with the aforementioned National Film Award winning films being received by the I&B and stored

temporarily at the CBFC in Bombay, which were handed over to the FTII in 1963 with the intention of passing them along to the NFAI once it was eventually founded.¹³

Between 1961 and 1963, through the efforts of Murari, Bahadur, and Nair, the FTII had also started acquiring films, both for its film library as well as for the future NFAI, which led to some of the confusions between the two institutions during the latter's founding. In keeping with the state's interest in procuring foreign films, the FTII initiated a number of film exchanges with foreign archives, missions, and educational institutions -- such as the Swiss Embassy, the University of Buenos Aires, the University of Kansas City, and Arte Et Cinema Society Anonyme etc. -- offering them a selection of 30 Indian films in return for titles from their nations.

The titles on offer from India included such features as *Sant Tukaram* (Damle and Fattelal, 1936), *Chandralekha* (Subramaniam Srinivasan, 1938), *Boot Polish* (Prakash Arora, 1954), *Kabuliwala* (Tapan Sinha, 1957), *Mother India* (Mehboob Khan, 1957), and *Pyaasa*, in addition to multiple titles by Satyajit Ray and such FD documentaries as *Radha and Krishna* (J. S. Bhowmgar, 1957), *Spring Comes to Kashmir* (Ravi Prakash, 1956), *Rabindranath Tagore* (Satyajit Ray, 1961), and *Music of India* (Bhaskar Rao, 1966). The FTII also made efforts to acquire documentary footage from the filmmaker J. B. H. Wadia who had been working on an anthology of Indian films.¹⁴

In March 1963, the FTII sent *Sant Tukaram*, *Rabindranath Tagore*, and *Pather Panchali* to the NFTVA in London in exchange for three unknown titles, most likely the Indo-British-German co-productions *Prem Sanyas/The Light of Asia* (Franz Osten and Himansu Rai, 1925), *Prapancha Pash/ Throw of the Dice* (Franz Osten, 1929) and *Shiraz* (Franz Osten,

¹³ Assorted documents. File No. 28/21/63-Est. *Procurement of Films from the Central Board of Film Censors, Bom for the National Film Archiv.* NFAI, Pune.

¹⁴ Assorted documents. File No. 13/47/61-62-L. *Exchange of Material Concerning films with other Educational Institutions, Purchase of film classics correspondences, Film Festivals.* NFAI, Pune.

1929).¹⁵ This exchange seems to be the one that triggered Lindgren's pivotal letter to the Indian state. The FTII also took over some of the films from the Central Film Library of the Department of Audiovisual Education (CFLDAE) in Delhi, most of which were found to be highly worn out and therefore deemed unfit for archiving.¹⁶

Through many such initiatives, by 1963, the FTII had already acquired dozens of titles spanning a list that was 22 pages long, while negotiations were underway for many more. The list details multiple categories, mainly classified based on the nation, with 27 Indian titles and negotiations being underway for 34 more, while the others included Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Russian, Italian, German, Japanese, Mexican, Danish, French, British, American, Canadian, and Swedish films. And these were in addition to the National Film Award winning films transferred from the CBFC earmarked for the NFAI.¹⁷ Incidentally, the list did not make a distinction between the films meant for the FTII and those earmarked for the NFAI.¹⁸

However, barring these international acquisitions and predominantly National Film Award winning Indian films, the institution did not have much success with the fragmented and multi-nodal Indian film industry, which did not cooperate readily. The antipathy that film producers and distributors felt for the Indian state, which often resulted in open hostility in meetings between representatives of the two factions, was the result of strict regulations governing the availability of raw stock for filming in India, the excise duty imposed on it, the

¹⁵ Assorted documents. File No. 6/31/62-S&G. *Procurement of Film "Sant Tukaram & "Sikandar" "Pathar Panchali" and "Ravindranath Tagore. For exchange arrangement.* NFAI, Pune. While these three films are not named in the documents in this file, other documents in other files mention them as having been acquired from the NFTVA during the same time period.

¹⁶ Assorted documents. File No. 6/4/65-Arch. *Procurement of Newsreel and Documentary Material Available with Government Agencies.* NFAI, Pune.

¹⁷ Assorted documents. File No. 28/21/63-Est. *Procurement of Films from the Central Board of Film Censors, Bom for the National Film Archiv.* NFAI, Pune. It needs to be noted that the number for these films varies considerably between different sources, from a low of 72 to a high of 127. It is likely that while 127 films might have won National Film Awards till then, not all of them had been deposited with the CBFC leading to these discrepancies.

¹⁸ Assorted documents. File No. 6/31/62-S&G. *Procurement of Film "Sant Tukaram & "Sikandar" "Pathar Panchali" and "Ravindranath Tagore. For exchange arrangement.* NFAI, Pune.

oppressive censorship laws, and most significantly, the heavy entertainment tax that the state imposed on box-office collections.¹⁹

None of these were new, for the state's regulation of the film business, or interference as the film industry saw it, had begun with the Cinematograph Act of 1918 and had continued to increase since then. However, in the period immediately after independence, when the film industry was flourishing, the taxes had also been made heavier. Nair recalled various taxes amounting to as much as sixty percent of the price of a ticket in the late 1950s, with the heaviest of them being imposed by the governments of individual states rather than the central government.²⁰ Consequently, the film fraternity was annoyed with the bureaucratic machinery in the early 1960s when the NFAI was being set up, and any state initiatives in the film sector were regarded with skepticism, creating a state vs. film industry binary that continues till date. In many ways, this illustrates Haque's observations that the people in postcolonial nations lack confidence in the state and its bureaucratic machinery.²¹

Added to this was the indifference and apathy with which a majority of the industry personnel treated old films that had completed their commercial run. In general, the film fraternity ignored worn out positive prints or sold them for scrap by weight, and left the negatives languishing with money lenders or various film processing labs. Film preservation was the least of their concerns, for it offered them no financial or other tangible benefits.²²

All these factors made acquisitions from the film industry a particularly complicated affair for the NFAI. The challenges involved are best illustrated through the case of the films received from the producer B. N. Sircar, owner of New Theatres Limited, a major film studio

¹⁹ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011.

²⁰ ---. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011.

²¹ Haque, M. Shamsul. "Incongruity between Bureaucracy and Society in Developing Nations: A Critique." *Peace and Change* 22.4 (1997): 432-62. Print. 447-48.

²² For a succinct discussion of the various reasons why filmmakers and producers chose to destroy films rather than preserve them in the American context, see Pierce, David. "The Legion of the Condemned: Why American Silent Films Perished." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 144-62. Print.

from Calcutta. The exchange between representatives of the two entities, spread over more than three years, is telling of the convoluted and often frustrating processes entailed, while also illuminating the workings of the Indian bureaucratic machinery.

The process began in April 1963 when Murari, the FTII Principal, was informed in a letter from the film historian Bhagwan Das Garga about the availability of dupe negatives of many New Theatres Limited films with Sircar.²³ This was not a common occurrence outside of some such big film studios, and was therefore major news for the FTII. Its administrative officer, following Murari's instructions but displaying the confusion between the FTII film library and the future NFAI, wrote to Sircar a few days later telling him about the "library" and requesting him for a list of films available with Sircar that could be acquired for it. The films would be used "exclusively for imparting training and will not be exploited commercially in any way," he assured Sircar, and sent him two reminders over the next two months. When Sircar failed to respond, the FTII staff tapped into its network of film industry personnel who approached him informally, following which another letter was sent to him in September giving the reference of the Secretary of the Eastern India Motion Picture Association of Calcutta who had spoken to him in person. Two more reminders later, Sircar finally responded in the first week of December indicating that he was going to visit Bombay for work and might come to Pune to "discuss the matter."²⁴

He visited the FTII the following week, and having established the sincerity of the cause, agreed to part with copies of some of his films on the condition that the costs of making copies would be borne by the FTII. More letters from Murari's representatives at the FTII followed soon after, enclosing a priority list of 30 films the institution was interested in acquiring, which included such titles as *Chandidas* (Debaki Bose, 1932), *Chirakumar Sabha*

²³ A dupe negative, also called an internegative, is a film duplicate from which release prints are printed.

²⁴ Assorted documents. File No. 6/7/63 Arch. *Procurement of films from New Theatre Films, Calcutta*. NFAI, Pune.

(Premankur Atorthy, 1932), *Puran Bhagat* (Debaki Bose, 1933), *Dhoop Chhaon* (Nitin Bose, 1935), *Devdas* (P. C. Barua, 1936), *Mukti* (P. C. Barua, 1937), *Bidyapati* (Debaki Bose, 1937), *Adhikar* (P. C. Barua, 1939), and *Zindagi* (P. C. Barua, 1940). Additional reminders were sent through January, March, and September 1964, before Sircar finally responded in November saying his representative “will see you [the FTII’s representatives] and deliver to you my message - personally.” Over the next few weeks, the two parties exchanged letters to work out when and where to meet, but Sircar’s representative failed to show up on the agreed date.

Not to be deterred, Murari sent Sircar another letter in February 1965, by when the NFAI had been formally founded, Murari had been temporarily put in charge of the nascent institution, and its request had transformed itself into “acquiring a selection of New Theatre’s films for eternal preservation in the National Film Archive of India,” finally leaving behind the confusion between the FTII library and the NFAI at long last. Yet another reminder followed in May 1965, in which Murari informed Sircar -- who had also been appointed to the FTII’s Advisory Committee, which would also have acted as an incentive for Sircar -- that he would be visiting Calcutta on work and would like to call on him. In their meeting in June, Sircar agreed once more to send Murari the negatives, but failed to act yet again.

On being reminded through a letter the following month, he wrote back re-requesting the list of films that had already been given to him once the previous year. A copy of the list was handed to him again, this time in person, when he came to attend the Advisory Committee meeting in August. Finally, in October, one of Sircar’s staff members dispatched the dupe negatives of *Devdas* and *Dhoop Chhaon* to the NFAI. It is worth noting that these were only two films out of the thirty that had been requested on a priority basis.

However, the institution did not have a lab of its own, requiring that the copying be done in the film lab of the FTII.²⁵ In an urgent note dated 8 November, the staff in-charge at the

²⁵ An in-house lab for the NFAI has not been sanctioned even today despite requests for it being made to the I&B a number of times over time.

FTII informed Murari and Nair, who had by then assumed office at the NFAI, that the copying would take more time as the speed of the “negative machine” available with them was very “low” and they did not have enough staff to run two machines at once. Additionally, there were no facilities to store nitrate film in the FTII lab, and owing to its highly inflammable nature, it was decided to store the films in the air conditioned vault of the FD in Bombay instead, and only borrow three reels at a time. This caused procedural delays. A week later, Nair informed Murari that the work had not been completed yet and further delays were expected as one of the copying machines had broken down. Meanwhile, some FTII staff raised concerns about film stock, of which they had a limited supply, being used for copying Sircar’s films for the NFAI rather than for the FTII’s own teaching purposes. Murari sorted this out internally utilizing a part of the funds earmarked for the NFAI.²⁶

By 23 November, it was discovered that one of the reels of *Dhoop Chhaon* had been accidentally omitted from the consignment sent by Sircar, prompting Nair to send multiple letters to Sircar’s staff requesting for the missing reel. To expedite the process, he also urged them to send him more films while they waited for work on the first two to be completed. However, Sircar’s staff politely refused to send further films (including the missing reel) until the two that were already with the NFAI had been sent back. They were eventually returned towards the end of December, making *Devdas* the first film to be successfully acquired by the NFAI from New Theatres Limited, a process that took more than two-and-a-half years. However, the NFAI’s copy of *Dhoop Chhaon* continued to remain incomplete.

Such procedural delays and inefficiencies did not always result from external reasons alone, but were equally characteristic of the Indian bureaucracy’s internal workings -- its infamous red tape as well as the *Kaghazi Raj* that has earned it much notoriety -- which were noticeable at the NFAI too. The first few years of the institution -- when its activities were

²⁶ Assorted documents. File No. 6/7/63 Arch. *Procurement of films from New Theatre Films, Calcutta*. NFAI, Pune.

technically split between itself, the FTII in Pune, and the I&B Ministry in New Delhi -- were particularly marred by such issues. For instance, in 1963, while trying to procure films on an exchange basis from other international educational institutions, a certain Herbert Farmer from the University of Southern California, who Murari held in high regard, sent an important reply to a letter from Murari regarding the exchange of films, which went missing at the FTII. The loss was noticed two months later after a reminder from Farmer, after which it took 23 signatures, four pages of internal notes, and five more months for the missing letter to be traced, and another eight months for the FTII and the NFAI to act on its contents. During this time, the note travelled back and forth, multiple times, between the principal's office, the reference assistant's office, the Stores and Godowns Section, the Library, the Establishments Section, and the Tutorial Section at the FTII, as well as Nair's office at the NFAI after he joined there. The paperwork involved in acquiring films from Sircar looks pale in comparison.²⁷

In January 1966, the correspondence regarding Sircar's films was resumed with more reminders from the NFAI, which included telegrams informing Sircar that Bahadur would be visiting Calcutta and paying him a visit. However, Bahadur failed to contact Sircar in Calcutta, prompting Sircar to write back saying he was disappointed as he was "keenly looking forward to meeting [Bahadur]" and "had something to discuss with him." The letter also informed the NFAI that the next consignment of films was ready to be dispatched. Notwithstanding the assurance, the films were not dispatched, seemingly because of a political disturbance in Calcutta, which Sircar indicated to Murari over the phone. Nair sent Sircar a reminder in March, and one further film, *Bidyapati*, along with the missing reel of *Dhoop Chhaon*, was finally sent to the NFAI in April. Only, this consignment went missing while in transit.²⁸

²⁷ Note regarding correspondence received from Herbert Farmer, USC. 13 May 1964. File No. 13/47/61-62-L. *Exchange of Material Concerning films with other Educational Institutions*. NFAI, Pune.

²⁸ Assorted documents. File No. 6/7/63 Arch. *Procurement of films from New Theatre Films, Calcutta*. NFAI, Pune.

Over the next few weeks, the NFAI and Sircar's staff made frenetic inquiries with the Indian Railways at their respective ends, followed by numerous phone calls, letters, telegrams, and further reminders to regional authorities, all of which yielded little result. Nair proceeded to threaten the Indian Railways with a claim for INR 5,000 in damages, which forced them to respond. They disputed the claim, urging the NFAI to wait a little longer while they continued to search for the missing consignment. A few weeks later, the Indian Railways agreed to process the claim, but asked the NFAI for written assurance that if the consignment were to be located at a later date, the money would be returned to them.

Around the same time in July, the consignment was finally located in a warehouse for unclaimed goods in Pune, three months after it went missing, and the claim was forgotten. The address label on the trunk had seemingly fallen off in transit, and in the absence of any other indicators that the trunk contained film reels inside, it had been mistaken for misplaced baggage carrying personal belongings until the lock had been forced open. The now reclaimed consignment contained new surprises, for this time, it was *Bidyapati* that had a reel missing, while the sound on another reel was out of sync. Thus, the exchanges and correspondence continued for the next few weeks in order to complete *Bidyapati*.

Remarkably, the possibility of the Indian Railways misplacing Sircar's consignments, as well as the issues the NFAI faced while copying and storing nitrate films, had been anticipated well in advance by Bahadur. In a note to his staff in 1963 a few months after the initial contact with Sircar, Bahadur had observed that:

Sircar promised to send negatives one by one. Since most will be on nitrate base and some of them may be in some dangerous degree of deterioration, need to ensure that: a) negatives not lost or damaged during transit from Calcutta to Poona and back. Ensure that railways would accept flammable nitrate stock for transit. b) Ensure that our lab is capable of handling nitrate stock safely and we have storage facilities, independent of film vaults, for its safe custody, while it is with us.²⁹

²⁹ Bahadur, Satish. Untitled note. 11 December 1963. File No. 6/7/63 Arch. *Procurement of films from New Theatre Films, Calcutta*. NFAI, Pune.

But despite such clear instructions by Bahadur, the NFAI staff could not manage to avoid these issues. It is not clear if the institution was able to acquire any further films from New Theatres Limited after *Bidyapati* in 1966, for the paper trail ends with it.

However, such challenges in early acquisitions were not unique to the case of Sircar's films. If anything, they were the norm rather than the exception, with Sircar being one of those producers who was in good terms with the NFAI, suggesting that these acquisitions were perhaps less complicated than many others. Nair's individual efforts towards finding nitrate films, which he started immediately after assuming office at the NFAI, were equally taxing if not more.

Nair recalls that it was only a handful of "old guards" from the film industry, who were past their prime and on the verge of retiring, who paid any attention to the NFAI's requests or obliged the institution with copies of their films.³⁰ Such films as Sircar's, which came from old and carefully managed studios that were still functioning, did arrive even if late, were generally of acceptable quality, and owed their eventual deposit at the NFAI, in part, to efforts that predated Nair's tenure at the NFAI, in particular those initiated by Murari, who got in touch with a number of filmmakers and production studios before the NFAI was formally founded. With Nair being appointed to the NFAI in 1965, the task on hand became more focused.

Nair's Scavenging and Salvaging Efforts, and Later Acquisitions

When Nair assumed office, he made the task of saving "early cinema" his priority rather than focusing on individual producers, interpreting the term loosely to mean all films that had been made prior to the year 1955, a rough date that marked the end of the use of nitrate film in India, and this period was further divided, although far less significantly, into the silent and sound eras. His decision was motivated by his familiarity with the practices of other

³⁰ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011.

international film archives (especially FIAF members), which had by then realized the limited lifespan of nitrate film. His interactions with the film fraternity in India, mostly through direct contact with producers and filmmakers but also facilitated through the goodwill earned by Murari and Bahadur, and the information provided by members of the FNFAI, indicated that more than seventy percent of pre-1955 films were no longer available.³¹ They had decomposed in the absence of proper care, had been recycled for their silver content, or used for making gunpowder, bangles, wallets, and handbags in cottage industries, dictating that he scavenge for anything on nitrate film and salvage it on an urgent basis.³²

The process entailed many largely unsuccessful wild goose chases, and in the absence of sufficient funds from the state, years of negotiations with the descendants of early filmmakers and a lot of coaxing, cajoling, and appealing to the better nature of moneylenders with whom film negatives had been mortgaged. Unlike Sircar, a number of early filmmakers had been fly-by-night producers who never came back to claim their negatives once their films were commercially unsuccessful even if critically acclaimed, while some others had migrated to Pakistan at the time of India's partition, leaving their prized negatives behind. The moneylenders tried to trace the producers in vain while clinging to faint hopes of recovering their investments, and a majority refused to part with the negatives or allow any copies to be made in exchange for the seemingly paltry sums of money the NFAI could offer them.³³

In the few rare instances when old film reels could finally be obtained, the NFAI staff had to employ such means as secret long-distance road travel, primarily at night, to avoid

³¹ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 2 August 2011.

³² Nair, P.K. "Not So Dangerous: Some Recollections." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 243-46. Print. Also see Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 2 August 2011. The process of destroying and recycling film was practiced with varying degrees the world over. For a discussion of such practices in the USA, see Pierce, David. "The Legion of the Condemned: Why American Silent Films Perished." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 144-62. Print.

³³ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 2 August 2011.

trouble with the authorities since they, ironically, did not have a license to store or transport the highly inflammable nitrate film. As mentioned previously, the NFAI functioned from the FTII premises for the first few years of its operation, which is housed in the old studios of the defunct Prabhat Film Company. As the story goes, Prabhat's original nitrate license could not be located at the time of the sale of the premises to FTII despite extensive searches. A new license could only be obtained by the FTII many years later, during which time the NFAI was technically violating state rules and could be fined for it, necessitating semi-clandestine operations.³⁴

Nair's scavenging efforts also involved other rule violations such as hiring spaces without the state's explicit permission and storing films in the open, on occasion, for a lack of space. Additionally, they entailed repurchasing films made by Prabhat at a premium much later. As he recalls it, when Prabhat's premises were acquired by the state, its films had also been offered for sale, but could not be bought due to the unavailability of funds. They were then sold to a trader in Pune and a majority got severely damaged due to flooding. The remaining were resold to a dealer in Madras, and had to be repurchased from him years later when funds finally became available. Similarly, some other early films were traced back to film labs that were willing to give the NFAI copies if it could produce permission letters from the copyright holders, and hand over the nitrate film negatives if it could produce a nitrate license. With neither being available, the films remained in sight but still out of reach, and were eventually lost.

Some fragments of Baburao Painter's films, which had been shielded from the sun only by a thin tin roof, were procured from the attic of a grocery store in Kolhapur, about which Nair had been tipped by a friend from the film industry. The aged and stubborn shop owner, with whom the film reels had been mortgaged by an unknown individual, refused to let Nair examine the condition of the reels unless he was given a fixed amount of money towards a

³⁴ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 8 August 2011.

bulk buyout. Since this was not possible for the NFAI owing to its limited budget and the risk involved in buying damaged unsalvageable film reels, a frustrated Nair left the premises, only to be hailed secretly from a side alleyway by the shopkeeper's middle-aged son who had overheard their conversation. He promised to hand over the films to the NFAI once his father died, and kept his promise a few years later when Nair followed up on it, but the film reels were badly damaged by then.³⁵ Procuring the remains of many Phalke films as well as Prabhat's *Sant Tukaram* involved similar challenges.³⁶

From the preliminary information provided by Nair and others, it had been surmised that of the 1700 to 1800 "story films" that were made in India in the silent era (1,313 titles as documented by some), the NFAI was ultimately able to salvage around ten, some of them only as fragments. Additionally, the institution was able to salvage a magic lantern along with some slides, and some orphan films, such as a safety film made by the Indian Railways in the 1920s, amateur footage of the activities of the maharajas of Jaipur and Jodhpur from the 1930s, and a film made by a Christian mission, acquired from the Irish Film Archive, on religious conversions in Tamil Nadu in the 1930s.³⁷ I have also reported these.³⁸

However, information obtained subsequently through internal documents suggests that that the total number of films from the silent era at the NFAI, both Indian and foreign, could in fact be as high as thirty titles, and include Phalke's *Raja Harishchandra*, *Lanka Dahan*

³⁵ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 2 August 2011.

³⁶ For similar accounts of the "rescue" of *Kaliya Mardan* and other early films, see Nair, P.K. "How We Salvaged Kalia Mardan." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 388-90. Print; Chabria, Suresh. "The Cobra's Hoard." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 569-71. Print; Dharap, B. V. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print; Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012.

³⁷ Chabria, Suresh, Paolo Cherchi Usai, and Viracanda Dharamasi. *Light of Asia: Indian Silent Cinema, 1912-1934*. New Delhi: Wiley Eastern, 1994. Print; Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 2 August 2011.

³⁸ Kumar, Ramesh. "On Scavenging and Salvaging: NFAI and Early Indian Cinema." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 54.2 (2013): 152-57. Print.

(1917), *Shri Krishna Janma* (1918), *Kaliya Mardan* (1919), *Simhastha Mela* (1921), *Tukaram* (1921), *Pidhache Panchei* (1922), and *Brick Laying* (1922), Osten's *Prem Sanyas*, *Prapancha Pash*, and *Shiraz*, Painter's *Murliwala* (1927) and *Sati Savitri* (1927), and such individual titles as *Sukanya Savitri* (Kanjibhai Rathod, 1922), *The Catechist of Kil-arni* (Thomas Gavin Duffy and Raghupathy S. Prakash, 1923), *Adventures of Tarzan* (Robert F. Hill, 1928), *Kaya Palat* (unknown, 1929), *Father's Love* (Harilal M. Bhatt, 1929), *Banga Darshani* (William J. Maylan, 1931), *The Fall of Slavery* (Shyam Sundar Agarwal, 1931), *Gallant Hearts* (G. P. Pawar, 1931), *Jamai Babu* (Kalipada Das, 1931), *Marthand Varma* (P. V. Rao, 1931), *Shortest and Best Route to South India* (unknown, 1932), *Bhakta Prahlad* (unknown, 1932), and *Whirlwind Vintollio* (J. B. H. Wadia, 1933).³⁹ Two further titles, *Panorama of Calcutta* (that was gifted to Nehru by James Quinn from the BFI) and *Visit to India* (unknown, 1930), listed under English language (perhaps for containing English inter-titles), may also belong here. Additionally, news reports on the NFAI also mention *Buddhu Ki Akal* (unknown, 1931), *Ayodhyecha Raja* (V. Shantaram, 1932), and *Puran Bhagat* (Pesi Karani, 1927) among its holdings.⁴⁰ However, it could not be established whether the NFAI actually acquired all the films mentioned here, how and when they were acquired, and if the institution was also able to preserve them till date.

Among the NFAI's holdings are also many films made between 1935 and 1955, originally on nitrate, many of which were again very difficult to procure. The film historian B. V. Dharap, who had been commissioned by the institution to compile a bibliography of Indian films, mentions in one of his progress reports from 1966 that he had, on behalf of the institution, approached R. H. Wadia and Hosi Wadia of Bombay Film Laboratories Limited with the intention of acquiring the nitrate negatives stored in their vaults. The Wadias had been contemplating disposing them off. "The nitrate negatives were almost a goldmine for the

³⁹ As mentioned in an internal list of films for digitization, which I was allowed to consult briefly during my visit to the NFAI in May 2013.

⁴⁰ Bose, Derek. "Silver Jubilee of the Film Archive." *Anand Bazaar Patrika*. 10 June 1989. Print; "Restoring Old Film Classics for Posterity." *India Post*. 13 June 1989. Print; Lele, Vijay. "NFAI: Entering a New Phase." *Maharashtra Herald*. 6 January 1994. Print.

archive," he suggests, "[containing] 499 films [made] between 1935 and 1955 in four languages -- Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati and Punjabi."⁴¹ However, these, along with other similar material located by the institution and its allies, do not seem to have made their way to the institution due to the lack of funds and copyright issues.⁴²

Films from the World War II period were particularly difficult to procure since the film stock that had been used to make them was of inferior quality. Nair claims that it was a known fact -- albeit still unacknowledged on record -- that the manufacturers had sent substandard stock to such colonial nations as India during this period, and therefore, the films made using it deteriorated rapidly.⁴³ Nonetheless, the NFAI still managed to build a more extensive collection of films from between 1935 to 1955 than their silent era counterparts. And aided by the FNFAI, the NFAI's scavenging and salvaging efforts continued for years, with the last bits of nitrate film being found in 1994, by Nair's successor Suresh Chabria, a little after Nair's retirement.⁴⁴

For collecting films made post-1955, of which the NFAI holds the largest numbers amounting to thousands of titles, Nair depended on the selection criteria suggested by Khandpur in the original concept note, and post-1980, the recommendations of the NFAI's Advisory Committee of external experts. Having seconded Nair's prioritizing of nitrate film material, the Advisory Committee built upon Khandpur's recommendations to suggest -- rather broadly and in that order -- that the institution should acquire all National Film Award winning films, films recognized by various state governments by way of awards and certificates, all

⁴¹ Dharap, B. V. Progress report No. 2 for August/September. 1966. *BV Dharap Re: Compilation of Bibliography of Indian Films, Progress Report - June/ July 1966*. NFAI, Pune.

⁴² ---. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print.

⁴³ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 2 August 2011.

⁴⁴ Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011. An account of some of these acquisitions can also be found in Dharap, B. V. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print.

films that have been successful at the box office, films shown in international film festivals, all the films financed by the Film Finance Corporation and the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), films based on famous literary works, films representing different genres, selected films by the FTII students, newsreels and short films produced by private and state agencies, and representative works of popular artists, technicians, and filmmakers.⁴⁵ The Committee's recommendations were only meant to serve as guidelines, leaving the actual curating for the institution's holdings to be handled by the NFAI autonomously. Since Nair was the man in charge of the institution, and also the only one to actually carry the title of curator, in effect, he was independently tasked with making value judgments about what films to acquire.

A number of titles in the NFAI's holdings also came (and still continue to do so) from the film material confiscated by the Indian Customs, deposits from the CBFC, unclaimed film reels from the Indian Railways, films discarded by the Indian Army after screenings for its soldiers at the frontiers, films from the Central Ordinance Depot, and films from other state agencies. Despite exceptions, most such material was of inferior quality, many a times incomplete, or contained multiple copies of the same film reels, effectively making the NFAI the graveyard of unwanted and forgotten feature films in the nation, especially for the state, but over which the NFAI mostly had no rights. They required extensive selecting and weeding too, which also had to be undertaken by Nair mostly alone. After his retirement, additional Selection Committees for Acquisitions were constituted, but until such time, despite the intensive work involved, Nair also had unbridled freedom to define and shape the contours of Indian cinema history preserved at the NFAI. His efforts towards acquisitions, together with the rest of his work for the NFAI, allowed him to leave a rich legacy behind, which cannot be overstated.

⁴⁵ "Minutes-NFAI Selection Committee for Films." 20 August 1980. National Film Archive of India, Pune.

Nair's Legacy: A Critical Appraisal

"Film appreciation [in India] could not have happened without Nair and the NFAI . . . The film society movement wouldn't have survived without the 16mm prints and the entire affair of duping them that Nair started. . . I couldn't have written a book on Ritwik Ghatak without the NFAI and its library." Such are the emphatic claims made by the film scholar and instructor Haimanti Banerjee when asked to comment on Nair's legacy, with similar sentiments being echoed by many others.⁴⁶ "Nair for me is a symbol of memory of cinema," the Polish filmmaker Krzysztof Zanussi has observed. "He is a custodian of Indian cinema. He is not merely an archivist, he was also a historian of cinema," the Sri Lankan filmmaker Lester James Peries has declared. And "Nair knew the value of preserving not only films, but memories," the author U. R. Ananthamurthy has exacted, paying heartening tributes to the passionate film archivist's life and work at the NFAI.⁴⁷ A similar case cannot be made for most of his successors in the Indian context.

Nair began his career as a state official at the FTII -- an institution that has been highly political and conflicted ever since its founding -- where he learnt quickly to extend and receive favors, operate in both official and unofficial capacities, and develop a clout (as also illustrated through the fiasco surrounding his appointment at the NFAI). In addition to being an avid cinephile, he was very good at forging alliances and handling official paperwork deftly, both of which made him noticeable fairly early on in the bureaucratic machinery, the latter being particularly valued by people from the film fraternity and film teaching circles who tended to view administrative work as a cumbersome burden. Once installed at the NFAI, he managed to remain undisturbed for almost three decades, which was unusual, for going by the rule books, a state official was not allowed to accrue the authority and power that comes with holding the same post for that long.⁴⁸ But Nair was not easily replaceable and an NFAI without

⁴⁶ Banerjee, Haimanti. Personal interview. Pune. 12 May 2013.

⁴⁷ Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012.

⁴⁸ Nair's designations did change during this period, but not his overall responsibilities.

Nair was inconceivable even to the Indian state, leading it to defer such a situation till his eventual retirement. As Nair himself has pointed out, there were serious attempts to oust him from the NFAI on more than one occasion, but they were not successful. Influential individuals from the film fraternity also started a campaign to retain him at the NFAI even after his retirement, but the I&B did not relent to their demands either.⁴⁹

Remarkably, despite operating from the fringes of the Indian bureaucratic machinery, Nair still managed to fit in comfortably within its functioning. In fact, the marginalized status of the NFAI appears to have suited him well, for he had few professional ambitions beyond serving as a film archivist, making him a perfect match for the institution. Nonetheless, his success and professional growth were no mean feats, especially given that archival posting in the Indian bureaucracy as routinely considered to be a means of punishing officials for insubordination and resistance.⁵⁰ Additionally, commenting on the nature of bureaucracies in postcolonial nations, Haque has noted that:

. . . although these countries have prescribed recruitment and promotion policies based on merit and achievement, in practice, many of them tend to use ascriptive criteria such as race, class, caste, language and status in this regard. . . In most of these countries, the formal criteria of merit coexists with the criteria of nepotism and friendship. Similarly, although many developing countries have formal provisions to determine job performance and compensation based on impersonal job criteria, the actual practices are often guided by personal loyalty, seniority, and status, while they have established an extensive network of administrative training, such training is structured and conducted to acquire knowledge and skills that are often imitative rather than need-based.⁵¹

Given this scenario, Nair's career as state official could not have been easy since he was essentially an outsider to the system, who possessed no particular advantages besides

⁴⁹ See Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 5 August 2011.

⁵⁰ As a case in point, see Siwach, Sukhbir. "Khemka Transferred for 44th Time, Shunted to Department of Archives." *The Times of India*. 5 April 2013. Web. 12 August 2013. <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Khemka-transferred-for-44th-time-shunted-to-department-of-archives/articleshow/19391908.cms?prtpage=1> >.

⁵¹ Haque, M. Shamsul. "Incongruity between Bureaucracy and Society in Developing Nations: A Critique." *Peace and Change* 22.4 (1997): 432-62. Print. 445.

his passion for cinema. He was a Malayali from the South-Indian state of Kerala, who was operating in the Marathi speaking West-Indian state of Maharashtra, which could not have earned him easy collegiality. And he could not boast of having advanced education and specialized training in cinema, belong to an illustrious upper class family with networks, or come from the upper castes (although the Nairs are known to have their own strong and distinct identity too). To put things in perspective, most of Nair's successors and closely-ranked colleagues, even though they joined the NFAI much later, were either well-known or well-trained filmmakers turned bureaucrats who had been working for the FD or allied departments in the I&B, film professors from the FTII, or civil servants from the highly selective Indian Information Service.

To compensate, Nair learnt how to use his identity as an outsider to his advantage, especially his Malayali-ness, but also his status as part-bureaucrat part-film-industry-person. It provided him with cultural access to non-Hindi and regional cinemas from across India, especially from the southern states, which in turn allowed him to curate a truly pan-Indian film collection for the NFAI. Notwithstanding some regional biases and gaps that would have been inevitable for any one individual, the collection he built was generally well representative of the multilingual, multi-nodal, and highly fragmented film industry India boasts of. This was an extremely difficult task, and continues to be so, with none of his successors having been able to match his success, or stake a claim to having a similar grasp of regional cinemas in India.

Given Nair's contributions to film archiving and preservation, it stands to reason that his fame rightfully belongs alongside the likes of Langlois, Lindgren, Iris Barry, Jacques Ledoux, and James Card, whose names are all too familiar to various stakeholders of audiovisual heritage internationally. But despite some recognition, Nair did not get his due in a manner similar to them, in part because of his status as a former state official, and that too in an underdeveloped postcolonial nation located at the peripheries of the seemingly international -- but essentially Euro-America centered -- international audiovisual archiving

community.⁵² Even though the likes of Lindgren and Ledoux also worked for the state, and had to face a similar lack of recognition for at least a part of their careers, their obscurity was in vastly different socio-cultural contexts and for relatively shorter time periods. Nair remained relatively unknown for much longer.

This can be explained in part by referring to Weber, who saw bureaucracies as monolithic and alienating iron cages, observed that they tend to be “dehumanized,” and commented that the individual bureaucrat or official is unable to “squirm out of the apparatus in which he is harnessed.” “The professional bureaucrat is chained to his activity by his entire material and ideal existence,” he adds, painting the picture of a lonely official, easily replaceable, who lacks any individuation and is weighed down by the tasks he is assigned to perform, seemingly an anonymous and insignificant cog in an unwieldy bureaucratic machine that only allows him to follow a prescribed course of action.⁵³ However, to evaluate Nair using only such ideas, although valid, would be unproductive beyond a point, and undermine his identity, motivation, and singular allegiance to the field of film archiving. Unlike a typical bureaucrat, but similar to Lindgren, Ledoux, and numerous other dedicated film archivists worldwide, Nair worked as a film archivist because he enjoyed it, and not only because of the bureaucratic machinery that held him in place.

The bureaucratic machinery did become coercive for him and impede his activities on occasion, for example in instances when he was refused permission by the state to travel to film symposia, film conferences, or film festivals abroad despite being fully funded for them, or

⁵² This is changing rapidly, especially through the participation of many non-Euro-American nations and the formation of SEAPAVAA in 1996. But the power imbalance is still very evident in any meetings of international institutions, and was even more so during Nair’s tenure at the NFAI through the 1960s to the early 1990s. He recalled how in FIAF gatherings, despite being an official invitee and treated with reverence, he was routinely also treated with indifference and even sidelined while the representatives of Euro-American audiovisual archives stuck together, for instance while dining between meetings. But he made light of the situation, indicating that he eventually made his way in through perseverance. See Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 8 August 2011.

⁵³ Weber, Max, Hans Heinrich Gerth, and C. Wright Mills. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946. Print. 28-29.

when it led to the nitrate film fire I discuss in the next chapter. Nair cites at least three instances when he was denied permissions out of professional rivalries, for foreign tours were privileges only a few officials enjoyed, and to be repeatedly invited to them with the expenses paid for many-a-times by the invitees rather than the Indian state raised some eyebrows. One official allegedly even ordered Nair to transfer an invitation to him, but the concerned international institution refused to entertain the request. Subsequently, by Nair's own admittance, some officials in the I&B even suspected him to have forged alliances with FIAF, its international member archives, and other bodies by selling them Indian films.⁵⁴ However, if anything, Nair's skillful handling of such impediments is illustrative of the simultaneity of bureaucracy being enabling as well as coercive for the bureaucrat as discussed by P. S. Adler.⁵⁵ And by his own account, he enjoyed a fairly good relationship with the state for the most part.⁵⁶

Following the critical success of *Celluloid Man* in 2012, Nair gained wider recognition for his work, but still remained less famed than his counterparts elsewhere. Even so, the massive media coverage he received in wake of the film's travels to more than 50 film festivals worldwide, it winning multiple awards, its theatrical and DVD releases, and Nair's felicitation by various institutions both national and international, gave him a new lease of life, especially in India. He became a forerunner for the Dadasaheb Phalke Award (the Indian state's highest award in cinema) for the year 2013.⁵⁷ However, as is typical in such cases, in the fanfare surrounding the celebration of his successes, and his recent death, he has been glorified and

⁵⁴ See Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 5 August 2011. While there is little merit in such accusations, Nair did put pressure on the I&B officials by instructing international institutions to write letters to the Indian ministers praising him, listing his achievements, and asking them to allow him to be present in various events. See Assorted documents. *Poona*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁵⁵ Adler, P. S. "The Sociological Ambivalence of Bureaucracy: From Weber via Gouldner to Marx." *Organization Science* 23.1 (2012): 244-66. Print.

⁵⁶ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 5 August 2011.

⁵⁷ The award eventually went to the veteran actor Pran.

idolized excessively, while his failings have largely been glossed over. They also need to be actively taken into account in order to have a holistic perspective on his work at the NFAI.

Nair took his place at the NFAI for granted, treating it less as a rule governed state institution and more as his personal dominion. He disregarded state regulations he found restrictive, for instance by striking unjustifiably large number of copies for films he personally liked. Gayatri Chatterjee remembers how Nair used to “vicariously live other lives through cinema” through such activities as “striking a total of 16 copies of a little-known B Grade English film about the hostel life of boys, some in 16mm and some in 35,” which was never requested by anybody for screenings.⁵⁸

He also acquired films illegally and off-the-record, actions he himself clarified as being based on “mutual understanding” with fellow archivists and officials both Indian and foreign.⁵⁹ Chatterjee also recalls Nair’s arrangements with certain officials of the French embassy who showed on paper that a consignment of French films that were screened in India had been destroyed after the screenings, which was then sent clandestinely to the NFAI. Such semi-legal activities were integral to the functioning of film archives worldwide and are all too familiar to the international film archiving community, as already discussed in the specific case of the Cinémathèque Française. In some ways, they were almost a necessity for a fledgling archive like the NFAI in wake of the highly convoluted international copyright laws. However, they have rarely ever been put on record. Given that this is how even the largest film archives the world over have functioned (and continue to do so), it can be argued that Nair’s main offence here is perhaps only admitting his actions.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013.

⁵⁹ Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012; Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013.

⁶⁰ It is indeed ironical that Ray Edmondson, former deputy director of the National Film and Sound Archive, Australia, but also the person responsible for codifying the field and writing first about the ethical obligations of the film archiving profession, is one of the few people to have admitted to something similar on record. See Edmondson, Ray. *Audiovisual Archiving Philosophy and Principles*. Paris: UNESCO, 2004. Print; ---. Personal Interview. 18 November 2013. Canberra. Similar accounts, although unpublished, can also be found in Blotkamp,

Nonetheless, there are numerous other accounts of irregularities at the NFAI under his directorship too, for instance failures in ensuring proper recordkeeping, omissions in condition reports upon the return of films from screenings, neglect in completing the catalogue of the institution's holdings, excessive reliance on his own memory rather than on records, or, in keeping with the general tendencies in the Indian bureaucracy, a symbolic maintenance of records just to ensure that they appear to be in order, not all of which can be explained by the staff and resource crunch he had to initially work with.

Nair also had a tendency to form and operate in cliques, extend and seek favors, and bend institutional regulations for his friends, in the process cultivating a group of grateful admirers around him. The film *Celluloid Man* documents similar testimonials from many of Nair's beneficiaries. FTII alumnus and professor Anil Zankar, as well as the founder-director of Aashay Film Club Satish Jakatdar, also recall how, because of their familiarity with the NFAI, it was possible for them to know and get the films the NFAI had in its holdings, but it was not the same for "outsiders."⁶¹ Through such activities, Nair consciously emerged as the NFAI's arch-father, who not only left behind an indelible impression on the NFAI's very character but also dominated the institution.

Despite his seemingly mild demeanor, Nair has also been described as an "autocrat" and an "authoritarian" who looked down upon his subordinates -- treating them disrespectfully, never acknowledging their contributions, and rarely ever trusting them -- and as someone who governed the NFAI with a "feudal mindset."⁶² Many have suggested that under his supervision,

Hoos. "The International Collaboration between European Film Archives." 1996. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague; ---. "FIAF Future: Part I-the Identity of FIAF." February 1995. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague.

⁶¹ Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012. Zankar, Anil. Personal interview. Pune. 12 May 2013; Jakatdar, Satish. Personal interview. Pune. 10 May 2013.

⁶² Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013; Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

the NFAI was a “one man show,” for he liked micromanaging.⁶³ Chatterjee remembers how his permissions were required by his subordinates even for such trivial things as buying hand towels for the washrooms, while Jakatdar recalls how he insisted on “twenty-four signatures a second,” all his own.⁶⁴ While some close monitoring might have been an unavoidable necessity in the institution’s earliest years, it reportedly continued unabashed even after additional officials and staff members were appointed.

The NFAI’s close ties with the FTII played a significant role in strengthening Nair’s position as the former’s arch-father. Despite the institution’s functional autonomy from the FTII, the symbolic umbilical cord between the two was never severed, which was helped greatly by their physical proximity. Through a series of joint activities and shared interests, they created an NFAI-FTII nexus that operated on both official and unofficial levels, in which Nair was a key player and the only one representing the NFAI for decades. Even though the nexus benefitted both the NFAI and the FTII, and also inspired and cultivated generations of cinephiles, it also had an adverse effect on the institution’s long term functioning.

The FTII’s own film library was small and comprised mostly of documentaries and a few 16mm feature film prints. From the mid-1960s through the early-1980s (at which time video established itself in India and the fervor surrounding the film society movement also abated), the NFAI became the main source of world cinema and rare Indian classics for film societies, retrospectives of Indian cinema held both nationally and internationally, other screenings by various institutions, and screenings for the FTII students.⁶⁵ *Celluloid Man* shows a number of FTII alumni recall with fondness their days of watching films supplied by the NFAI. The film also shows, albeit underplays, FTII alumni recall how Nair frequently accommodated

⁶³ Mulay, Vijaya. Personal interview. New Delhi. 6 March 2012; Jakatdar, Satish. Personal interview. Pune. 10 May 2013; Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

⁶⁴ Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013; Jakatdar, Satish. Personal interview. Pune. 10 May 2013.

⁶⁵ Dharap, B. V. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print.

their requests for screenings, allowed them to borrow film prints indefinitely, or watch censor cuts they were not authorized to view, tales of which are also supported by some of my interviewees.

In turn, the NFAI primarily gained from the storage space the FTII provided for its films, the expertise provided by the FTII professors, and the FTII's film lab facilities (which were used for making unauthorized copies too), while Nair gained personally from the satisfaction of encouraging sincere students of cinema, about which he was genuinely passionate. Being located next to the FTII -- which frequently found itself marred in various controversies thereby attracting attention -- also had other advantages, for it allowed the NFAI to maintain a low key existence and go about its tasks with less scrutiny.⁶⁶ But through such activities, the rules put in place for long term preservation of film prints at the NFAI were often relaxed for the benefit of the FTII, leading to the functioning of the institution becoming subservient to the needs of the FTII. Despite the best of Nair's intentions, the NFAI assumed the identity of a film lending library for the film societies and the FTII, rather than an autonomous film archive in its own right.

The bi-institutional nexus was cemented further when the NFAI started regular screenings of classics from its holdings at Pune and Bombay in May 1967. It also set up Film Distribution Libraries across its branch offices in 1968, which mostly lent out 16mm film prints to film societies and educational institutions after acquiring their non-commercial circulation rights. Following their success, the institution started FA courses in 1970, for which it acted as the coordinator and supplied the films, but for which most modules were taught by the FTII professors or additional instructors sourced through the NFAI-FTII networks. These courses were highly successful, and also found much favor with various film societies, which in turn encouraged people to attend them. Starting in 1974, the courses traveled to a number of

⁶⁶ Banerjee, Haimanti. Personal interview. Pune. 12 May 2013; Zankar, Anil. Personal interview. Pune. 12 May 2013.

centers across India, which included Bangalore, Delhi, Vijayawada, Chandigarh, Allahabad, Shillong, Sagar, Ahmedabad etc.⁶⁷ However, the annual flagship course -- the largest of them all, which has evolved to become a four week long immersive experience over the years -- remained in Pune.

With an increase in the demand for such courses during the late 1980s, not all of them could be officially handled by the NFAI. At the behest of various film societies and other private institutions that also funded them, some courses started being conducted unofficially, but involved many of the same people as those conducting the NFAI's FA courses. In return for their time and expertise, they were rewarded with the satisfaction of spreading film culture across the nation, and also an opportunity to supplement their incomes. The films required for such courses were again sourced from the NFAI, and Nair also coordinated many of them himself. By most accounts, Nair was very particular about not lending 35mm preservation prints for screenings, and only provided 16mm prints for educational and training purposes and 35mm copies for festival screenings. But occasional concessions, mostly unofficially, were made based on his own relationships with the FTII students and other individuals, which even involved the screening of unique preservation prints that could not officially be screened, but only as long as the screenings were held within the NFAI premises.⁶⁸

Through such activities, Nair, together with Bahadur and Chabria, emerged as key players in film appreciation in the nation who dominated the scene, dictating both the nature and scope of the courses as well as deciding on the people deemed suitable to teach them, thereby making and breaking careers. And as alleged by Chatterjee, they also gendered the courses and the film appreciation scene distinctly male, for no woman was allowed to assume decision-making responsibilities, although many were involved as instructors. Collectively, all

⁶⁷ Dharap, B. V. "National Film Archive of India." *70 Years of Indian Cinema, 1913-1983*. Eds. Ramachandran, T. M. and S. Rukmini. Bombay: Cinema India-International, 1985. 528-36. Print.

⁶⁸ Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013.

such activities had a negative impact on the NFAI's principal task of preserving film prints for posterity, mostly in line with FIAF's (and Khandpur's) anxieties about mixing film archives and film schools together.

Such claims of a negative impact invariably invoke the long standing Langlois-Lindgren debate over what to prioritize in a film archive, access or preservation. While the maverick Langlois often disregarded institutional procedures and paperwork for the sake of convenience, the fastidious Lindgren insisted on closely following procedures and laid much emphasis on keeping things well organized and documented. The NFAI under Nair seems to have located itself midway between the two ends of the debate, but because of Nair's own affinity with Langlois -- who he also credits as being his mentor -- the institution under Nair seems to have leaned significantly towards the Langlois end of the spectrum.⁶⁹ However, it needs to be noted that both Vijaya Mulay and Chatterjee see Nair as lacking the fiery passion for showing cinema as displayed by Langlois as well as the organized fastidiousness about its preservation that was characteristic of Lindgren.⁷⁰

In 1980, the NFAI's functioning came under close scrutiny after allegations surfaced about Nair having sent the only print of *Pukar* (Sohrab Modi, 1939) to commercial screenings in Paris without Modi's permission, and having lent a copy of *Young Frankenstein* (Mel Brooks, 1974) for a screening in Bombay without getting clearances from its distributors 20th Century Fox. While Modi lodged a formal complaint against the NFAI and Nair with the I&B alleging that their activities were tantamount to smuggling Indian films abroad, 20th Century Fox demanded to know how the NFAI had acquired a copy of the film in the first place since they had not sold the NFAI a copy. Some NFAI staff members and film societies lodged additional complaints with the I&B alleging that Nair frequently acquired films without the necessary

⁶⁹ Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011; Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012.

⁷⁰ Mulay, Vijaya. Personal interview. New Delhi. 6 March 2012; Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013.

permissions, acquired films of “questionable quality and of doubtful cinematic and historic value,” discriminated in giving out films for screenings, relaxed the rules for his friends, and did not always ensure the safekeeping of the films in his custody, activities that are again remindful of Langlois’ maverick ways.⁷¹

Nair refuted all the charges, blaming them on a “slander campaign against him and the institution launched by interested people.” A committee was set up to investigate the allegations, and a formal apology was sent to Modi “for the inconvenience caused to him.” The final outcome of the committee’s investigations is not known, but the allegations do not seem to have affected Nair or the NFAI in any significant manner.⁷² However, in the institution’s Advisory Committee meeting held around the same time, much time was spent on discussing issues related to the institution’s liabilities, and the possibility of legislative amendments that made exceptions for the NFAI in the nation’s copyright laws etc. At the same time, the Committee also advised the institution against acquiring films with unknown provenances unless accompanied by indemnity bonds, and insisted on formulating stricter norms for lending any films that were not a part of the institution’s Film Distribution Library.⁷³ A set of similar allegations also seem to have resurfaced in 1986, but their details, as well as the outcome of the state’s inquiries into them, remain largely unknown.⁷⁴

⁷¹ "Complaint against the Film Archive Causes Concern." *The Times of India*. 25 August 1980. Print; "Storm in the Film Archives." *The Statesman*. 17 September 1980. Print; "Film Archive Curator Refutes Charge." *The Times of India*. 3 September 1980. Print; "Apology to Sohrab on Film Print." *The Times of India*. 22 September 1980. Print; "No Probe into Film Archive Affair." *The Indian Express*. 12 October 1980. Print; "FAI Denial." *The Patriot*. 12 October 1980. Print; "Centre yet to Act on Film Archives Report." *The Telegraph*. 25 November 1980. Print.

⁷² It needs to be noted that some of the media reports on the issue offered conflicting accounts of the events, with some denying the complaints and formation of a committee, and others supporting them.

⁷³ "Minutes: NFAI Advisory Committee Meeting." 19 September 1980. National Film Archive of India, Pune.

⁷⁴ "Functioning of NFAI, Pune." *Written Answers*. Vol. XV. Lok Sabha Debates. New Delhi: Government of India, 1986. 36-37. Print; "Preservation of Films by National Film Archives of India, Pune." *Written Answers*. Vol. XV. Lok Sabha Debates. New Delhi: Government of India, 1986. 38-39. Print.

During the latter half of Nair's tenure, he is reported to have focused more on promoting himself while neglecting his work. He allegedly made himself more visible in international circles, collected only certain films that would get him noticed and were easy to acquire, ingratiated himself with Euro-American film archivists while sidelining South Asian ones, refused to pursue leads for some films because of a clash of ego with the concerned individuals, bickered with officials in neighboring countries, and built an aura around himself.⁷⁵ All these were done at the expense of the institution's efficient functioning. The efforts he put into curating also diminished substantially, affecting the quality of the films acquired, even though the numbers in the institution's holdings increased steadily. As Chatterjee puts it, "For him, it gradually became a matter of canon, convenience, and friendship."⁷⁶

As Nair approached retirement, he did little to ensure that the NFAI will continue to function efficiently in his absence. K. S. Sasidharan and Zankar point out how, despite having served at the institution for almost three decades, Nair failed to put sound administrative systems in place. The NFAI manual had been in the making since before he retired, but repeated requests for it from the institution's Advisory Committees and Nair's successors fell on deaf ears, and he was yet to finalize it when I saw him last in 2013.⁷⁷ He also neglected to train anyone to become his successor, was extremely reluctant to pass on his knowledge to others, and allegedly did not allow the recruitment of a deputy director during his tenure to avoid his authority being challenged. On his part, he insisted that despite repeated requests from him, the I&B did not recruit individuals worthy of being his deputies and successors, or did not recruit them in time for him to train them. This is supported by him mentioning to the

⁷⁵ Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013. Sasidharan attributes similar comments to Chabria, and agrees with him. See Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013. Chabria also insinuates the same in Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011.

⁷⁶ Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013.

⁷⁷ "Minutes: NFAI Advisory Committee Meeting." 8 July 1994. National Film Archive of India, Pune; "Minutes: NFAI Advisory Committee Meeting." 10 July 1995. National Film Archive of India, Pune; "Minutes-NFAI Advisory Committee Meeting." 15 November 1996. National Film Archive of India, Pune; Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 5 August 2011.

institution's Advisory Committee as early as 1980 that he was "terribly handicapped due to lack of administrative assistance at the senior level."⁷⁸ Nonetheless, others refute his claims, and the first deputy director for the institution was only appointed post his retirement, even though the post had been sanctioned years earlier.

It is essential to take these criticisms into account for a holistic understanding of the functioning of the NFAI under Nair's directorship. However, despite their validity, it is difficult to conceive of an NFAI without Nair, who was perhaps able to build and sustain the neglected institution in the Indian socio-cultural milieu precisely because of the character traits he has been criticized for. His commitment to the cause of film archiving in India remains unquestionable, and he rightfully deserves most of the recognition and adulation that started coming his way only recently. Once he retired, the institution started faltering further in its duties despite being provided with more manpower, additional funding, and extra resources. For such reasons, many have argued that the NFAI's functioning can be seen clearly divided into the Nair and the post-Nair eras, leading Shyam Benegal to even claim, rather hyperbolically, that "there was P.K. Nair, and after P.K. Nair, nothing!"⁷⁹ I discuss the institution's functioning after Nair in the chapter that follows.

Conclusion

Nair was not the founder of the NFAI as is commonly believed, nor was his tenure at the institution without its own set of failings and controversies. This chapter discussed how he struggled immensely with the collective apathy towards film preservation displayed in India by the state, the film industry, and the general populace, but still managed to acquire films for the institution bit by bit, meticulously building its collection one film at a time. And it described how

⁷⁸ "Minutes: NFAI Advisory Committee Meeting." 12 March 1982. National Film Archive of India, Pune.

⁷⁹ Zankar, Anil. Personal interview. Pune. 12 May 2013; Sasidharan, K. S. Pune 2013. Print; Jakatdar, Satish. Personal interview. Pune. 10 May 2013; Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012.

he, an outsider -- who belonged neither to the film industry, nor to the bureaucracy, and not even to Pune -- also managed to cleverly negotiate with India's bureaucratic as well as socio-cultural machinery to allow him to build his pan-Indian Narchive. He did this without being replaced by a less-competent individual for nearly three decades, no mean feat in the highly charged political climate of the nation. Despite his failings, which remain plentiful, it will be fair to suggest that the NFAI the nation might have had today, as well as the contributions it would have made to the cinema culture of the nation, could have been no more than a faint shadow of its present avatar if not for Nair. The cinema culture of India is truly indebted to Nair, but with caveats. Many of the caveats came to light only after his retirement, and are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE NARCHIVE AFTER NAIR: A CONTINUED SAGA OF IRREGULARITIES: SURESH CHABRIA, THE NITRATE FILM FIRE, AND THE WAY FORWARD, 1991-2013

In this chapter, I discuss the functioning of the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) after P. K. Nair's retirement from the institution in 1991, demonstrating how it has become home to an even greater saga of irregularities ever since -- in no small part because of the irregular functioning of the Indian bureaucracy it is a part of -- and illustrate how it has lost its original transnational character to become an increasingly insular institution. I describe the contributions of Suresh Chabria and other institutional heads towards correcting some of Nair's and the institution's failings, but with limited success. I analyze the incident of fire that destroyed the institution's entire nitrate film collection in 2003, and discuss why the fire is less consequential to the writing of Indian film histories than it appears to be. I discuss the institution's more recent experiments with digitization, and describe the parallel rise of other film archival institutions such as the Film Heritage Foundation and internet platforms such as indiancine.ma, which reveal the tension between the state and private enterprise in India. And I also question why Indian film scholars have not contributed more actively towards the cause of film archiving in the nation. In the process, I argue that even though national film archives might be built initially through individual undertakings such as Nair's, they invariably require the collective energies of a group committed to their cause in order to sustain themselves over time, which India lacks at present.

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Nair's retirement from the NFAI in 1991 left behind a void, from which the institution never fully recovered. What followed was a period of indecisiveness by its parent body -- the

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) -- about a worthy successor, during which time the institution witnessed the appointment of two acting directors -- P. B. Pendharkar and Y. N. Engineer -- even as the Indian media raised questions about the institution's seemingly uncertain future.¹ Suresh Chabria, Nair's most significant successor, the one who believes that Govinda's films had no place in the NFAI, was recruited as the director of the institution in July 1992, an appointment that was also endorsed by Nair with some enthusiasm through a letter of introduction to all FIAF members.²

Chabria arrived on deputation from the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), where, as mentioned previously, he had been professor of film appreciation. He served as the director of the NFAI for six years until 1998. Originally a lecturer of political science in St. Xavier's College, Bombay University, he also belongs to the first generation of film aficionados educated in and around the NFAI-FTII circles. Before joining the FTII and relocating to Pune, he had been an active member of the film society movement, and had also founded a Bombay chapter of the Friends of the National Film Archive of India (FNFAI). While serving at the FTII during 1989-1990, at the invitation of Goethe Institute, he also visited several film archives in Germany and the US.³ He is well informed of world cinema, especially from the silent era -- on which he has multiple publications -- but is less familiar with regional Indian cinema, which he himself also acknowledges.⁴

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¹ Contractor, Huned. "National Film Archives a Victim of Central Apathy." *The Times of India*. 2 November 1991. Print.

² Nair, P.K. "To All FIAF Members." 20 August 1992. *Poona*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

³ NFAI. Letter to FIAF. 15 May 1992. *Poona*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁴ Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013; Narvekar, Sanjit. Personal interview. Mumbai. 15 May 2013; Sasidharan, K. S. Pune 2013. Print; Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011. Chabria's publications include Chabria, Suresh, Paolo Cherchi Usai, and Viracanda Dharamasi. *Light of Asia: Indian Silent Cinema, 1912-*

Despite Chabria's disputable views on film curation for the NFAI, he was instrumental in expanding the institution's activities during his tenure, in the process also systematizing its functioning in line with the expectations from a rule governed bureaucratic state institution. Under his directorship, which is remindful of Lindgren's organized and fastidious style of working, the NFAI's film collections -- scattered across multiple locations till then -- were consolidated together, arranged better, and catalogs and databases created and updated from them. He ensured that lists for the "most critical" and "most wanted" films were made, and they were attended to on a priority basis. He also revived attempts to salvage old films, with some success. During his tenure, the institution also finally saw the appointment of a deputy director cum curator in K. S. Sasidharan, thereby disciplining some of the unruliness left behind by Nair, while also splitting some of the administrative and curatorial responsibilities Nair had handled all alone.⁵ Alongside, Chabria also served on various national and international film archiving committees and film festival juries, which included FIAF committees too, and continued the NFAI's regular correspondence with FIAF and its members, albeit to a lesser degree than Nair.⁶

Early in his tenure, Chabria realized that even though Nair and Satish Bahadur had earned much goodwill for the NFAI through the dissemination of film culture, an excessive and disproportionate percentage of the institution's time and energy were being spent on it, mostly at the expense of film preservation. He consciously distanced the institution away from the film societies and their activities, cut back the Film Distribution Library's 16mm reprints of popular films, and channelized some of those energies and resources back into film preservation.

1934. New Delhi: Wiley Eastern, 1994. Print; Chabria, Suresh. "Creating a Film Culture: The National Film Archive of India." *Museum International* 46.4 (2009): 32-36. Print; ---. "The Cobra's Hoard." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 569-71. Print.

⁵ ---. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011; Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

⁶ Assorted documents. *Poona*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

Such activities were not appreciated by Nair and the circle of cinephiles around the institution, making Chabria unpopular.⁷ He also initiated discussions on digitization of the NFAI's holdings with the I&B officials, revived discussion on legal deposits of films (with possible alternatives), and proposed that a percentage of the box-office collections be routinely diverted towards film archiving. His proposals were received with mixed feelings by the I&B officials. As he recalls it, for the most part, the I&B had no explicit ideological or political agenda of its own during this period with regard to the NFAI. It genuinely wished to rely on the judgment of Chabria and other NFAI officials and the institution's Advisory Committee to educate it, but was still hesitant to take any major decisions.⁸

The year 1994 proved to be significant for the institution, for it marked the centenary of cinema and also the publication of *Encyclopedia of India Cinema*, an important work, on which the NFAI was a major collaborator.⁹ Capitalizing on the worldwide celebrations around the centenary, Chabria convinced the I&B to organize a series of high-profile events to mark the occasion, both in India and abroad, which included collaborating on the Light of Asia Retrospective at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto (The Silent Film Festival) in Pordenone, Italy.¹⁰ Alongside, the institution's new office complex, which had been in the making for twelve years and included its own independent vaults, was finally inaugurated with some fanfare, all of which gave the NFAI much visibility and also delighted the I&B officials enough for them to approve substantial revisions to the NFAI's budget.¹¹

⁷ Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011. The distancing from the Film Societies, which had allegedly been "pampered" by Nair, had already started soon after his retirement when Y. N. Engineer started enforcing the rules for lending films more strictly. See Contractor, Huned. "National Film Archives a Victim of Central Apathy." *The Times of India*. 2 November 1991. Print.

⁸ Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011.

⁹ Rajadhyaksha, Ashish, and Paul Willemen. *Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema*. London: British Film Institute; Oxford University Press, 1994. Print.

¹⁰ Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011.

¹¹ Lele, Vijay. "NFAI: Entering a New Phase." *Maharashtra Herald*. 6 January 1994. Print; Ragunatha, T. N. "Resource Crunch Dampening NFAI Efforts." *The Indian Express*. 17 January 1994. Print.

Meanwhile, Nair, who continued to be associated with the institution as a consultant, made attempts to control and steer its functioning from the outside in ways that felt patronizing to Chabria and Sasidharan.¹² Bypassing them, he also made direct written requests to FIAF on various issues, describing himself in them as “Ex-director, NFAI,” which were politely declined by FIAF.¹³ His actions were viewed as unreasonable interferences and overstepping of authority by Chabria and Sasidharan, resulting in the relationship between him and the NFAI turning sour.¹⁴ In multiple Advisory Committee meetings of the institution, of which Nair was also a member, Chabria respectfully insinuated, and the other members of the committee supported, that Nair should let the institution handle its affairs on its own, to which Nair eventually agreed, albeit reluctantly.¹⁵

At the end of his tenure in 1998, Chabria professed an interest in getting “adsorbed” at the NFAI as the Indian state terms it, so as to maintain continuity at the institution, and also gain more authority in order to see some of his proposals through.¹⁶ However, his request was turned down by the state, ending the possibility of any continuity in leadership that was necessary for the institution. He went back to teaching at the FTII and distanced himself from the NFAI and its activities, but continued to play a key role in the Film Appreciation (FA) courses, over which he, and the FTII, gradually exercised increasing control.¹⁷

Around the same time, the NFAI found itself embroiled in yet another set of allegations, this time around favoritism in the I&B with regard to all matters pertaining to

¹² Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

¹³ Nair, P.K. Letter to The President, FIAF. 29 December 1992. *Poona*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; ---. Letter to FIAF. 9 November 1995. *Poona*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

¹⁴ Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

¹⁵ "Minutes: NFAI Advisory Committee Meeting." 15 March 1996. National Film Archive of India, Pune; "Minutes-NFAI Advisory Committee Meeting." 15 November 1996. National Film Archive of India, Pune.

¹⁶ Adsorption, in the Government of India, is a state mechanism by which officials on deputation can be transferred to the host institution permanently.

¹⁷ Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011; Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013.

cinema, in which the NFAI was also involved by way of the members selected for its Advisory Committees. As a particularly irate journalist put it:

The same members who serve on Festival of India committees, serve on the screening committees of Doordarshan [the state television], go on jaunts to Honolulu etc., have also lent their stupendous expertise and counsels for the Film Archives, flying down now and then for meetings from Delhi and other parts of India. It is one big cozy, happy family, the members of which have been scratching each other's backs for years and giving each other public thumps which should have deceived no one.¹⁸

The tirade reads largely true, for the NFAI's Advisory Committee meetings, which had become increasingly infrequent, had by now been reduced to perfunctory gatherings of well-known and well-connected people with little specialist expertise to offer, but a lot of general suggestions about all things film. Consequently, their discussions and recommendation had limited impact on the way Chabria and the institution functioned, but the Committee continued to exist as a feeble gestures of tokenism.

Chabria's successor L. K. Upadhyaya served as the director of the institution from 1998 to 2002. Not much information could be gathered about his tenure, but he continued the work initiated by his predecessors without any significant expansion or alterations to the institution's activities. By then, Nair was no longer serving in advisory capacity for the institution.¹⁹ In 2002, the deputy director Sasidharan was promoted to the post of director, who served the institution until his retirement in 2008.²⁰ It was under his directorship that the NFAI witnessed one of its biggest historical ruptures -- a nitrate film fire -- which illustrates the many idiosyncrasies of the Indian bureaucratic machinery and the saga of irregularities at the NFAI.

¹⁸ Malik, Amita. "The Curious Archives." *The Statesman*. 23 November 1998. Print.

¹⁹ "Minutes: NFAI Advisory Committee Meeting." 12 February 1999. National Film Archive of India, Pune; "Minutes: NFAI Advisory Committee Meeting." 1 April 2000. National Film Archive of India, Pune; "Minutes: NFAI Advisory Committee Meeting." 20 December 2001. National Film Archive of India, Pune.

²⁰ Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

The Fire, and Reported Losses

On 8 January 2003, a major fire broke out in an old film vault in the premises of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), which stored the nitrate film collection of the NFAI. Dating back to the 1930s, the vault was originally a simple cuboid structure belonging to the Prabhat Film Studio with no air conditioning or humidity control, but allegedly employing some ingenious local construction techniques that provided its interiors with active insulation from Pune's harsh climate. The vault had a single heavy metal door, a flat roof that had a full-length water tank built into it, and walls that were double layered with coastal pebbles filling the spaces in between, all of which allegedly kept it cool even in the hottest of weathers.²¹

For more than seven decades, the old vault had served its purpose well, initially protecting Prabhat's nitrate film reels from damage, and later those acquired by the FTII and the NFAI once they were set up in the early 1960s. However, sometime before the fire, the FTII had decided to upgrade its facilities and air condition the vault in keeping with the standards suggested by FIAF so as to enable the storage of its own films in the vault in the future, for which it had employed the services of the Civil Construction Wing of the All India Radio (CCW). The air conditioners had subsequently needed repairs, which were being carried out on January 8 at around 1 p.m. in the afternoon when the nitrate film reels stored inside the vault caught fire. The blaze was rapid and devastating, leading to an explosion. It led to no casualties, but damaged a few vehicles parked close by. And it destroyed the NFAI's entire nitrate film holdings that had been put together over decades by Nair and his associates, with the exception of approximately a hundred film reels that had been taken out for routine maintenance.²² The remaining reels now comprise India's total known nitrate film

²¹ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 8 August 2011.

²² "Around 1,500 Films Destroyed in FTII Fire." *The Economic Times*. 8 January 2003. Web. 10 June 2013. <http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2003-01-08/news/27548143_1_film-and-television-institute-ftii-national-film-archives>; "Fire at Pune Film Institute Destroys Hundreds of Films." *IndiaExpress.com*. 8 January 2003. Web. 11 June 2013. <<http://www.indiaexpress.com/news/entertainment/20030108-1.html>>; "Fire in FTII

collection, which fit into a single closet sized vault at the time of my visit to the NFAI in 2011.²³

The NFAI's substantial collection of acetate films, books, documents, and allied cinema paraphernalia was stored elsewhere and was not damaged.

As discussed previously in Chapter 1, nitrate film fires have punctuated the history of cinema worldwide regularly from the inception of the medium through the 1980s and beyond, typically starting in screening spaces, film labs, production studios, warehouses, and film archives. Even some of the biggest and the best-managed of such facilities internationally have not been spared by incidents of fire. Many of them have reportedly burned for hours, causing thousands of dollars' worth of damage to property and goods, and also resulted in hundreds of human casualties in addition to the obvious loss of historical film material.²⁴

Destroys Old Films." *The Hindu*. 8 January 2003. Web. 11 June 2013. <<http://www.thehindu.com/2003/01/09/stories/2003010904890100.htm> >; Sasidharan, K. S. Pune2013. Print; Katakam, Anupama. "Fire at FTII." *Frontline*. 18-31 January 2003. Web. 11 June 2013. <<http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2002/stories/20030131008813300.htm> >; Unnithan, Sandeep. "Over 600 Rare Films Reduced to Ashes in Fire Mishap at National Film Archives of India." *India Today*. 27 January 2003. Web. 10 June 2013. <<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/over-600-rare-films-reduced-to-ashes-in-fire-mishap-at-national-film-archives-of-india/1/207271.html> >; Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 8 August 2011.

²³ Sasidharan recalls that 98 nitrate film reels had been taken out for routine maintenance at the time of the fire, while some media reports mention 127 (Sasidharan, K. S. Pune2013. Print; Pate, Neil. "Celluloid Dreams to Ashes." *The Times of India*. 11 January 2003. Print.). At the time of my visit in 2011, I was only shown a single closet sized vault holding the NFAI's entire nitrate film holdings. Most of the surviving reels would either have to be really short ones for 98 or 127 of them to fit into that vault, or the nation has also lost further reels in the last ten years.

²⁴ "A Calendar of Nitrate Fires." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 429-53. Print; Brenni, Ellis. *GBC Audiovisual Library Fire*. 2010. Video. Web. 20 December 2013.

<<https://archive.org/details/GhanaBroadcastingCorporationFire> >; Slide, Anthony. *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992. Print; Moore, Paul S. "Socially Combustible: Panicky People, Flammable Films and the Dangerous New Technology of the Nickelodeon." *Cinema and Technology: Cultures, Theories, Practices*. Eds. Bennett, Bruce, Furstenau Marc and Mackenzie Adrian. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 75-87. Print; Kula, Sam. "Mea Culpa: How I Abused the Nitrate in My Life." *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 1.1 (2001): 198-202. Print.

India, too, had witnessed its own set of nitrate film fires at various venues since the silent era, but despite a few regulations put in place by the British Indian government, the nation did not get sufficiently sensitized to the dangers of handling and storing the inflammable object for decades, choosing to overlook the regulations for the most part. Many such fires were initially attributed to other causes such as electrical faults or human error. However, two major incidents, one at Birendranath Sircar's New Theatres Limited in Calcutta in August 1940, and another one at Ranjit Movietone in Bombay in the late 1940s, made nitrate film's dangers more evident to the Indian film fraternity as well as the authorities.²⁵ Even so, the material continued to be handled carelessly until it was gradually phased out in the 1950s, subsequent to which the FTII's vault became one of the select few places in India licensed to handle and store nitrate film, but where the unsafe medium's cavalier treatment seems to have continued much after the rest of the world had learnt to be more cautious.

At the time of the incident, the films had been held at the FTII vault since the NFAI did not have a nitrate vault of its own. During Nair's tenure, the films had been held grouped together in small clusters across multiple locations on the FTII campus (not in the vault). This was primarily for Nair's own convenience, but also, as he claims, to minimize the possibility of losing all of them in a single fire. Or, if such a fire were to indeed occur, reduce the risk involved since the affected vault was located too close to offices and people.²⁶ But he had relied too much on memory and paid inadequate attention to recordkeeping, leading to gaps in the institution's documentation of his arrangement. Once he retired in 1991, the FTII management had been unhappy with the nitrate film reels being "scattered" all over and had urged the NFAI to attend to them, even threatening with their destruction if adequate action

²⁵ Nair, P.K. "Not So Dangerous: Some Recollections." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 243-46. Print; Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. "Indian Cinema: A Vanishing Legacy." *Journal of Film Preservation* 91 (2014): 26-35. Print.

²⁶ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 8 August 2011.

were not taken. The seemingly ill-organized collections had been consolidated together with much effort by Chabria and transferred to the FTII vault during his tenure.²⁷

Alongside, both the institutions had also been requesting the I&B for exclusive nitrate film vaults for the NFAI, which had finally been approved in 1998. At the time of the fire, construction of the new vaults had already been completed in the nearby locality of Kothrud, but a debate between the NFAI and the Central Public Works Department (CPWD), ironically again involving air conditioning, had resulted in a two-year-long bureaucratic delay. The issue had eventually been resolved in 2002, and the films were scheduled to be shifted to their new location within the next few weeks.²⁸ A few weeks too late, as it turned out. Following the fire, the new nitrate vaults had to be scaled down and redesigned to house other types of film reels instead, for it could not be used further for its originally intended purpose. The fire damaged original vault was subsequently repaired and renovated to house a gym.²⁹

A full list of the nitrate films that were lost in the fire was never made public, resulting in the specifics of the losses remaining unknown, including how many of them were negatives, dupe negatives, or positive prints. It still remains unavailable at the NFAI, as does any other material surrounding the fire that seems to have been systematically erased from the institution's own archived history.³⁰ Official statements by the I&B, released four months after

²⁷ Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

²⁸ Katakam, Anupama. "Fire at FTII." *Frontline*. 18-31 January 2003. Web. 11 June 2013. <<http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2002/stories/20030131008813300.htm> >.

²⁹ Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011.

³⁰ My attempts at accessing any information on the fire at the NFAI yielded few results, and people were generally wary about sharing much on the incident. I was told the NFAI does not have the report or related material in its possession. The institution only had a thin forensic report which contained a one paragraph write up on the fire having been caused by an electrical short-circuit, and a few newspaper clippings. I was directed to inquire at the I&B instead, which again yielded no results. The report's absence from the institution is conspicuous, and the cloak of secrecy surrounding the incident at the NFAI strange if not unusual. Although unconfirmed, some informed sources close to the institution, who chose to remain anonymous, told me that the absence might be a later development involving the systematic destruction of records at the institution, the reasons for which remain unclear to me. However, as alleged by Gayatri Chatterjee, such erasures are not limited to the fire and

the incident, claim that a total of 5,059 film reels comprising 607 films were destroyed in the fire. Of these, only 544, mostly single reels and incomplete films, were unique, having never been copied.³¹ However, as those in the know point out, these numbers could only have been rough estimates since meticulous recordkeeping had never been practiced at the NFAI.³²

Various media reports on the fire suggest that it resulted in the loss of the nitrate negatives of India's first full-length feature film *Raja Harishchandra* (D. G. Phalke, 1913) and other Phalke classics such as *Lanka Dahan* (1917), *Kaliya Mardan* (1919), *Bhakta Prahalada* (1926), and *Setu Bandhan* (1932).³³ Also mentioned among the losses are V. Shantaram's *Ayodhyecha Raja* (1932), *Amrit Manthan* (1934), *Amar Jyoti* (1936), and *Aadmi* (1939), Wadia Movietone's *Hunterwali* (Homi Wadia, 1935) and *Bambaiwali* (Homi Wadia, 1941), and the Marathi classics *Sant Tukaram* (Damle and Fattelal, 1936) and *Ramshastri* ((Vishram Bedekar, Gajanan Jagirdar, and Raja Nene, 1944). Many of these films are canonical, used as examples to define the trends in Indian cinema during this period.

The fire is also believed to have destroyed the nitrate reels of *Chandidas* (Nitin Bose, 1934), *Acchut Kanya* (Franz Osten, 1936), *Brahmachari* (Master Vinayak, 1938), *Bharat Milap* (Vijay Bhatt, 1942), and *Aage Badho* (Yeshwant Pethkar, 1947), again extremely significant titles. Additionally, copies of a number of popular black-and-white films from the 1950s, as well as of such international classics as *The Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, 1915), *Nanook of the*

have also affected other areas of the organization's functioning, especially under Vijay Jadhav's tenure. See Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013.

³¹ I&B. "Short-Circuit Possibly Caused Fire at NFAI." *Press Information Bureau Press Release*. Government of India. 8 May 2003. Web. 10 August 2014.

<<http://pib.nic.in/archieve/lreng/lyr2003/rmay2003/08052003/r0805200318.html>>; "Fire in FTII and NFAI Pune." *Lok Sabha Debates: Deb 4*. Vol. XXXI. Lok Sabha Debates. New Delhi: Government of India, 2003. 126-27. Print; "Fire in NFAI." *Lok Sabha Debates: Deb 36*. Vol. XXXIV. Lok Sabha Debates. New Delhi: Government of India, 2003. 107-08. Print.

³² Multiple sources close to the NFAI who chose to remain anonymous.

³³ It is worth noting that the *Raja Harishchandra* mentioned here might not be the original 1913 version but the reshot and reedited version of 1917. For a brief discussion on this, see Nair, P.K. "Not So Dangerous: Some Recollections." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 243-46. Print.

North (Robert Flaherty, 1922), *Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925), *La Bandera* (Julien Duvivier, 1935), and *A Damsel in Distress* (George Stevens, 1937) are thought to have been lost in the fire.

Losses on the non-fiction side included many hours of footage of such political leaders as Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, footage of the coronation of the Maharaja of Manipur, such newsreel titles as *The Life and Message of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose*, *March of Freedom*, and *The Changing Face of India* (provenances unknown), and a few British documentaries including *The Army Lays the Rails* (Gerald Keen, Walter Tennyson, 1942) and *Australia is Like This* (director unknown, circa 1944). Additionally, there were fragments of various obscure films, newsreel footage of unestablished provenance that had made its way to the NFAI from other state agencies, and miscellaneous unlisted reels, most of which were supposedly of inferior material quality and therefore unsuitable for archiving, but had still been languishing in the vault since the NFAI did not have formal mechanisms in place to dispose of them.³⁴

In the absence of an authoritative publicly available list of all the films lost in the fire, the tentative list mentioned above, compiled from various sources, can potentially be helpful for scholars as a starting point. However, it remains largely speculative, and requires careful

³⁴ "Around 1,500 Films Destroyed in FTII Fire." *The Economic Times*. 8 January 2003. Web. 10 June 2013. <http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2003-01-08/news/27548143_1_film-and-television-institute-ftii-national-film-archives>; "Films Destroyed in Fire Were Inconsequential, Says NFAI Chief." *Outlook India*. 9 January 2003. Web. 10 June 2013. <http://www.outlookindia.com/pti_news.asp?id=110684>; "Fire at Pune Film Institute Destroys Hundreds of Films." *IndiaExpress.com*. 8 January 2003. Web. 11 June 2013. <<http://www.indiaexpress.com/news/entertainment/20030108-1.html>>; "Fire in FTII Destroys Old Films." *The Hindu*. 8 January 2003. Web. 11 June 2013. <<http://www.thehindu.com/2003/01/09/stories/2003010904890100.htm>>; Unnithan, Sandeep. "Over 600 Rare Films Reduced to Ashes in Fire Mishap at National Film Archives of India." *India Today*. 27 January 2003. Web. 10 June 2013. <<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/over-600-rare-films-reduced-to-ashes-in-fire-mishap-at-national-film-archives-of-india/1/207271.html>>; Katakam, Anupama. "Fire at FTII." *Frontline*. 18-31 January 2003. Web. 11 June 2013. <<http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2002/stories/20030131008813300.htm>>.

case-by-case research to establish the provenance and presence of each individual title at the NFAI before the fire, especially since the Indian media has taken to attributing any old untraceable film to the incident, often [mis]quoting the I&B Ministry and the NFAI staff members as sources of their information. The nation's first sound film *Alam Ara* (Ardeshir Irani, 1931) stands out as a significant case in point. As of March 2011, as many as 35 media reports and a Wikipedia article mentioned that *Alam Ara* had been lost forever after being burnt in the fire, a claim refuted vehemently by Nair and the NFAI staff who maintained that despite their best efforts since the setting up of the institution, a copy of the film had never been found in the first place.³⁵ Such confusions and rumors continue to persist, causing the NFAI and the I&B much embarrassment.

The Aftermath: Causes, the Blame Game, and Bureaucratic Cover-Ups

The initial anguish over the fire saw much pointing of fingers between the NFAI, the FTII and the CPWD, with the blame being placed mostly on the delays caused by the CPWD in completing the new vaults, without which, it was alleged, the films would have already been transferred to a safer place. "It was an accident waiting to happen. The films should have been moved to a vault ideally designed for the purpose a long time ago. Because they survived all these years people were complacent," alleged the director of the FTII.³⁶ Other authorities quickly clarified that only the nitrate film collection had been burnt and not the entire film holdings of the NFAI as had been initially assumed by the media. They also marked a distinction between the content of the films and their carrier the nitrate film reel. "Content-wise,

³⁵ Jain, Amrita. "Alam Ara Long Lost, Was Never with NFAI: Founder-Director." *The Indian Express*. 17 March 2011. Web. 11 June 2013. <<http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/alam-ara-long-lost-was-never-with-nfai-founderdirector/763632/>>. The error seems to have been rectified in subsequent Wikipedia edits, but still gets cited in discussions on the state of film archiving in India.

³⁶ Katakam, Anupama. "Fire at FTII." *Frontline*. 18-31 January 2003. Web. 11 June 2013. <<http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2002/stories/20030131008813300.htm>>.

nothing much has been lost," claimed the I&B joint secretary for film, but admitted that the loss of the original negatives was "tragic" since "archival heritage" could not be replaced.³⁷

Chabria, who had returned to working at the FTII by then, suggested that "even though we have made safety base films on acetate, it does not take away the fact that we have lost precious originals painstakingly collected over 40 years."³⁸

As news of the incident spread, the NFAI was flooded with letters, phone calls, and inquiries from the media, the general public, and various stakeholders including students, scholars, and filmmakers, many of who were also concerned about the safety of the films they had deposited with the institution.³⁹ Sasidharan was in meetings in New Delhi on the day of the incident. Faced with the stakeholders' collective ire upon his return, he tried to downplay the damage caused by the fire in public statements on the incident and his brief one paragraph letter to FIAF. He claimed that the fire was "rather inconsequential from the point of view of the Heritage of Indian Cinema" since 90 percent of the material had already been copied to acetate based safety film.⁴⁰ "Nothing has happened to rare and precious films like *Raja Harishchandra* and other Indian films," he observed, referring to their copies while mitigating the importance of the original nitrate film reels. "Incidents of fires breaking out in nitrate film storage vaults had occurred the world over," he added in his defence, maintaining that "even developed countries with their advanced technology have not been able to look after nitrate

³⁷ "Inquiry Committee on the NFAI Fire Soon." *Mid Day*. 17 January 2003. Web. 10 June 2013. <<http://www.mid-day.com/news/2003/jan/41922.htm> >.

³⁸ ---. "Fire at FTII." *Frontline*. 18-31 January 2003. Web. 11 June 2013. <<http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2002/stories/20030131008813300.htm> >.

³⁹ Pate, Neil. "I&B Ministry Begins Probe into FTII Fire." *The Times of India*. 30 January 2003. Web. 11 July 2013. <http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-01-30/pune/27275934_1_nfai-nitratebased-films-nitrate-based-films >.

⁴⁰ Sasidharan, K. S. "NFAI Fire." Letter. 17 January 2003. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; "Films Destroyed in Fire Were Inconsequential, Says NFAI Chief." *Outlook India*. 9 January 2003. Web. 10 June 2013. <http://www.outlookindia.com/pti_news.asp?id=110684 >.

films, so how much better can we do?"⁴¹ He also organized a film festival titled "Fire Chestered Memories" a month later in collaboration with a local film society Aashay Film Club, screening copies of a number of old Indian films from the NFAI's holdings. And at the FIAF Annual Congress held in Stockholm and Helsinki that year, he gave a long presentation to its delegates and fielded questions to "set the record straight" about the alleged "misrepresentation of facts" in various media reports.⁴²

However, such efforts did precious little to appease concerned stakeholders. The Indian media continued to demand explanations, calling for action against those responsible for the incident, and criticizing all involved parties, especially Sasidharan who was repeatedly quoted calling the losses "inconsequential." The NFAI's mistaken use in press statements of such erroneous terms as "silver nitrate base" in which the films had allegedly been "kept" even became a reason for jokes on international discussion boards on the subject.⁴³ And the veteran actress Shabana Azmi took up the issue with teary eyes in the upper house of the Parliament of India.⁴⁴

Under mounting pressure from many quarters, the Indian state set up a one-man Inquiry Committee comprising of the I&B joint secretary Sudhir Sharma to probe the incident, which reported its findings to the Parliament in response to a Member's questions about the fire.⁴⁵ Toeing the official line, Sharma also assessed that the damage had been "minimal,"

⁴¹ Katakam, Anupama. "Fire at FTII." *Frontline*. 18-31 January 2003. Web. 11 June 2013. <<http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2002/stories/20030131008813300.htm> >.

⁴² Iyer, Sandhya. "NFAI, Aashay Fest to Raise Films from the Fire." *The Times of India*. 29 January 2003. Web. 10 July 2013. <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/pune-times/NFAI-Aashay-fest-to-raise-films-from-the-fire/articleshow/35824944.cms?prtpage=1> >; Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

⁴³ Calvert, Bruce. "India: Films Destroyed in Fire Were Inconsequential, Says NFAI Chief." *alt.movies.silent*. Google Groups. 2003. Web. 10 June 2013. <<https://groups.google.com/forum/print/msg/alt.movies.silent/PawUk73v-7Y/0IDq4cOBjKgJ> >.

⁴⁴ Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012.

⁴⁵ "Fire in FTII and NFAI Pune." *Lok Sabha Debates: Deb 4*. Vol. XXXI. Lok Sabha Debates. New Delhi: Government of India, 2003. 126-27. Print; "Fire in NFAI." *Lok Sabha Debates: Deb 36*. Vol. XXXIV. Lok Sabha Debates. New Delhi: Government of India, 2003. 107-08. Print.

terming the incident an “accident,” and adding that the fire could not be attributed to negligence on the part of one or more individuals. "One can only take action against someone if one finds someone guilty," an I&B secretary was quoted saying to supplement the claim. In a 100 page confidential report submitted to the I&B, Sharma concluded that in the absence of any other evidence to the contrary, the fire may have been caused by an electrical short-circuit in one of the four window air conditioners that were installed in the vault.⁴⁶ However, unofficial versions of the incident place the responsibility with one or more electricians who were repairing the air conditioners but failed to take adequate safety precautions, which caused a short circuit and led to the fire.⁴⁷

Notwithstanding such discrepancies between different versions, all of them suggest that the cause of the fire was an electrical short circuit involving an air conditioner. However, the I&B and its representatives seem to have left a number of questions intentionally unanswered, including why the films had not been relocated to a safer space before the repairs were carried out, why they had been stored in the vault in the first place, why the vault had been upgraded at all, why the films had been scattered all over earlier etc. The Inquiry Committee's inquiries appear to have been perfunctory, designed to show stakeholders that “necessary steps” were being taken -- starting with the fact that the committee was a one man show demonstrating how the matter was not being taken seriously -- which the media also

⁴⁶ "Inquiry Committe on the NFAI Fire Soon." *Mid Day*. 17 January 2003. Web. 10 June 2013. <<http://www.mid-day.com/news/2003/jan/41922.htm> >; "FTII Fire Inquiry Report in 10 Days: Sharma." *The Times of India*. 31 January 2003. Web. 11 June 2013. <http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-01-31/pune/27262122_1_nfai-ftii-director-ccw >; Pate, Neil. "I&B Ministry Begins Probe into FTII Fire." *The Times of India*. 30 January 2003. Web. 11 July 2013. <http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-01-30/pune/27275934_1_nfai-nitratebased-films-nitrate-based-films >; ---. "Panel Submits Report on NFAI." *The Times of India*. 31 March 2003. Web. 25 May 2013. <http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-03-31/pune/27280291_1_nfai-film-storage-vaults-film-reels >; I&B. "Short-Circuit Possibly Caused Fire at NFAI." *Press Information Bureau Press Release*. Government of India. 8 May 2003. Web. 10 August 2014. <<http://pib.nic.in/archieve/lreng/lyr2003/rmay2003/08052003/r0805200318.html> >.

⁴⁷ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 8 August 2011; Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

pointed out.⁴⁸ Both Nair and Sasidharan insinuate that the Committee's report was deliberately kept vague and confidential by all involved parties, including the I&B, for it would have adversely affected many individuals, and resulted in the termination of the electricians who would have become easy scapegoats for the mistakes that had been made by a number of people over many years.⁴⁹ After the incident, the electricians continued to be employed with the CCW, as did all the others who could have been held responsible, implicitly or explicitly, for the "accident." The detailed official report on the incident continues to remain confidential.

However, any simplistic assertions about the incident that hold individuals or a group of people responsible, and/or refer to the NFAI or FTII employees as being incompetent or callous, presuppose a belief in following international guidelines, standard procedures, and best practices for film archiving formulated in western nations, which the Indian state's bureaucratic machinery is expected to emulate. They assume that bureaucracy always operates in rational ways as a well-oiled machine with a system of debatable "reasons" standing behind every act of bureaucratic administration -- a known fallacy --⁵⁰ while failing to take into account the "implementation gap" of Indian bureaucracy that Randhir B. Jain had discussed, and the idiosyncrasies inherent to its on-the-ground functioning.⁵¹ And they point fingers at the actions of a few individuals while overlooking the larger system they belonged to.

The events at the NFAI were the result of "the production of arbitrariness" and the irrational "barely controlled chaos" inherent to Indian bureaucracy that has been discussed by

⁴⁸ Pate, Neil. "Panel Submits Report on NFAI." *The Times of India*. 31 March 2003. Web. 25 May 2013. <http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-03-31/pune/27280291_1_nfai-film-storage-vaults-film-reels>. Such "one man committees" are not uncommon in India. Attributing fires to electrical short-circuits, whether real or imagined, also continues to be the most common reason given for fires in the nation.

⁴⁹ Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 8 August 2011; Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

⁵⁰ Crozier, Michel. *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964. Print.

⁵¹ Jain, Randhir B. "The Role of Bureaucracy in Policy Development and Implementation in India." *International social science journal* 42.1 (1990): 31-47. Print.

Akhil Gupta -- whether it be the build-up to the fire, the incident itself, its aftermath, the secrecy surrounding the losses and causes, the blame game, or the cover up -- and therefore, cannot be explained just by holding select individuals or institutions accountable.⁵² The functioning of all these entities was enmeshed within the large and unwieldy Indian bureaucratic machinery, which, owing to rampant corruption, nepotism, general inefficiency, and a host of complexities both internal and external, never allowed the individual bureaucrat or official, however noble and sincere his intentions, to achieve his desired goals despite being enabling at times.⁵³

Nair, operating initially from tiny rooms in the FTII and later the modest Jaykar Bungalow, built the institution's collection of films almost singlehandedly, and despite his failings, did not have the manpower, money, or physical space to adequately examine, accession, document, organize, and store them, necessitating that he made-do with stop-gap arrangements and relied on memory rather than careful and methodical recordkeeping until more permanent solutions could be found. His love for the films and their archiving remains unquestionable, as does the sense of deep personal loss he experienced from the fire.

Similarly, Chabria, stepping into the big vacant shoes that Nair had left behind, had the best of intentions at heart when he consolidated the scattered collections together despite the absence of proper documentation or an intimate personal relationship with individual film reels, which only Nair possessed. The films had become increasingly unmanageable in addition to being threatened with destruction by the FTII administrators, who were facing their own resource crunch and had kept up with the NFAI's use of their facilities for decades.

⁵² Gupta, Akhil. *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012. Print. 13-14.

⁵³ A number of academic works on Indian bureaucracy have focused on the inefficiency of the Indian Administrative Services owing to these factors. Some notable works include Das, S. K. *Public Office, Private Interest: Bureaucracy and Corruption in India*. New Delh, India: Oxford University Press, 2001. Print; Gould, William. *Bureaucracy, Community, and Influence in India Society and the State, 1930s-1960s*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Print; Misra, B. B. *Government and Bureaucracy in India, 1947-1976*. New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1986. Print.

Chabria had also been very sincere in his efforts to get the new vaults made in Kothrud, and faced with the state's unenthusiastic responses to his many demands for better resources for the institution, the best he could have done was storing all the films together in the FTII vault till they could be shifted to the new vaults.⁵⁴

While the same cannot be said with certainty about the CPWD since the specific reasons for the delays they caused remain unknown to me, Sasidharan merely allowed the existing arrangements to continue without making any drastic changes that were likely to be met with resistance from the I&B. As informed stakeholders suggest, it was incidental that he was the director of the NFAI at the time of the fire, for it could equally have been someone else heading the institution while maintaining status quo. With the safekeeping of the nitrate film reels being overseen by the FTII while he was away in New Delhi for meetings, there was very little even he could have done to prevent the incident on the eventful day.

The likes of Nair and Chabria cared immensely for the medium of cinema they were entrusted with preserving, but were neither allowed nor encouraged to work effectively, their ability to perform being undermined by the disorganised nature of the bureaucratic system they were a part of. More often than not, their diligent efforts to bring about any real changes to the functioning of the NFAI resulted in personal frustrations rather than triumphs because of the lack of responsiveness from the state, partially in line with Weber's ideas about the professional bureaucrat being chained to his work.⁵⁵ Additionally, the norm in Indian bureaucracy has traditionally been to operate on a highly subjective "priority basis," which the NFAI officials were also forced to follow, a practice that cannot be explained by rational means alone. For instance, it would be difficult to offer a simple explanation as to why the air conditioning delay at the new vaults had not been sorted out even eight months *after* the fire,

⁵⁴ Even Sasidharan is very appreciative of Chabria's initiatives in this regard despite their professional differences. See Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

⁵⁵ Weber, Max, Hans Heinrich Gerth, and C. Wright Mills. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946. Print. 228-29.

but yet, it happened, perhaps precisely because the vaults were no longer a priority for the state after the incident had already destroyed the films they were supposed to safeguard.⁵⁶

Undoubtedly, the losses at the NFAI, both of nitrate films as well as of property, were substantial. But despite bearing the appearances of an unforgivable scandal, they were relatively small when compared to many similar but larger incidents that have taken place in other nations.⁵⁷ The NFAI and the I&B were not alone in toning down the official version of such an incident.⁵⁸ And the NFAI was not alone in its selective disclosure of information either, for as discussed previously, film archives worldwide tend to be inherently secretive spaces, primarily because of the many different ways, both legal and illegal, in which a film finds its way into their holdings, making the public declaration of its name and tales of provenance a contentious affair. Consequently, very few film archives worldwide have publicly accessible catalogues of their holdings.

Weber has argued that bureaucratic administration tends to be “an administration of “secret sessions:” in so far as it can, it hides its knowledge and action from criticism.” “The concept of the “official secret” is the specific invention of bureaucracy,” he states, “and nothing

⁵⁶ For a report on the delay not being sorted out, see Pate, Neil. "Eight Months after Fire, NFAI Vaults Still Await AC." *The Times of India*. 25 August 2003. Web. 23 May 2013.

<http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2003-08-25/pune/27184131_1_vaults-nfai-ccw >.

⁵⁷ The dubious distinction for the largest loss of film in a fire, nitrate or otherwise, goes to the Cineteca Nacional in Mexico in 1982, in which 6,506 film titles are reported to have been burnt in a 14-hour long fire. See Smither, Roger B. N., and Catherine A. Surowiec, eds. *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. Print; Osorio, Fernando. "The Case of the Cineteca Nacional Fire: Notes and Facts in Perspective." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 140-43. Print; Villa-Flores, Javier. "Plotting a Fire: The Burning of Mexico's Cineteca Nacional and the Idea of a Self-Destructing Archive." *From the Ashes of History: Loss and Recovery of Archives and Libraries in Modern Latin America*. Eds. Aguirre, Carlos and Javier Villa-Flores. Raleigh, NC: A Contracorriente, 2015. 197-226. Print; Slide, Anthony. *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992. Print. 15.

⁵⁸ For the unfolding of a similar saga at the Cineteca, see Osorio, Fernando. "The Case of the Cineteca Nacional Fire: Notes and Facts in Perspective." *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film*. Eds. Smither, Roger B. N. and Catherine A. Surowiec. Brussels: Federation Internationale des Archives du Film, 2002. 140-43. Print.

is so fanatically defended by the bureaucracy as this attitude.”⁵⁹ The same is true for film archives too, especially those operated or subsidised by state bureaucratic machineries. In August 1980s, when a warehouse belonging to the Cinémathèque Française was burned in a large fire near Paris, a commentary on the incident in a French newspaper had the following to suggest:

It will never be known exactly what was lost in the disaster, because the fiercely independent-minded Cinémathèque refused at that time to publish a complete catalog of its collection. Officially, it claimed that only duplicate copies and out-takes were destroyed by the blaze.

It has been estimated in some quarters that about 15,000 reels of films were lost, including a large number of original prints. Film buffs familiar with the Cinémathèque’s collection point out that certain films shown before the fire have never been shown since, and that it can therefore only be assumed they formed a part of the [warehouse] collection.⁶⁰

The NFAI was acting in a similar vein through its many missteps, as were the media and various stakeholders in speculating about what exactly had been lost in the fire, and what had survived.⁶¹ While comparing the NFAI’s fire with those of other film archives does not absolve the institution of having mishandling its nitrate film collection, its actions in the incident’s aftermath also come as no surprise to those familiar with the workings of film archives and bureaucracies worldwide. The incident’s most troubling facet was not the cover up in its aftermath but its timing, for 2003 was really late for such a largely preventable “accident” to happen, especially when the NFAI and the I&B officials had been acutely aware of the risk for decades. All in all, they seem to have done precious little to avert the mishap.

⁵⁹ Weber, Max, Hans Heinrich Gerth, and C. Wright Mills. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946. Print. 233.

⁶⁰ Slide, Anthony. *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992. Print. 15.

⁶¹ The main difference between the Cinémathèque Française and the NFAI lies in the fact that the former was an autonomous institution deeply subsidized by state funds and could therefore get away with maintaining secrecy, while the latter is a publicly funded state institution that could be held more accountable for its lack of transparency, but nonetheless managed to escape close scrutiny by taking recourse to “official secrets.”

However, those of us wanting to arrive at the absolute kernel of truth about the incident will have to contend with the fact that the record may never be set straight. Similarly, a list of films lost in the incident may never be made public either, for all the facts may not even be known to the NFAI and I&B authorities. Additionally, revealing a complete list of lost films at the time of the incident would have opened a floodgate of lawsuits for copyright claims as well as liability damages, held the I&B and the NFAI authorities accountable for individual titles, cornered them into offering inadequate explanations put together from their limited understanding of film history, film archiving practices, and past workings of the NFAI, and derailed the institution's already dawdling functioning completely, especially given that many films made their way to the NFAI through unofficial channels. What was lost was lost already, and the resource crunched and ill-informed I&B and NFAI bureaucrats could do precious little to reverse the damages. However, they could downplay the incident, have faith in the Indian media and critics' memory being short lived, and sincerely hope that the future did not have any more such "accidents" in store, which is what they did. And lest we forget, the NFAI also benefited from the incident, for it allowed the institution to attract a little more funding and attention from the I&B and the Indian state.⁶²

It also needs to be recalled that such incidents of fire, whether major or minor, are not the only cause of loss of a nitrate film reel. While the graveness of the fire at the NFAI cannot be underestimated, the import of the incident and the losses resulting from it also need to be considered alongside nitrate film's inherent instability and loss through decomposition, for the humble object was never meant to last in the first place. Films worldwide were traditionally treated as trade goods and considered to be of no value following their theatrical runs, only occasionally graduating to becoming historical documents based on the merits of their content. A few discerning filmmakers, cinephiles, archivists, and scholars worldwide -- and to a far

⁶² Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

lesser extent Nair in India -- strategically affected a deliberate but gradual realignment of the humble nitrate reel with the historically revered artwork so as to impart the seemingly worthless and inherently ephemeral medium of cinema with more legitimacy as an art form that deserves serious preservation efforts, arguing that at stake in the nitrate film's safekeeping was film history itself.⁶³

However, the cinematic content and the nitrate film carrier will have to be artificially separated eventually, or to use relatively recent terms, "the story" must be "disintermediated" from its "archival medium," for in the face of limited resources and the nitrate film's eventual decomposition, the carrier cannot support the content forever despite many still desiring that it would.⁶⁴ Therefore, the future inevitably belongs to copies and not originals, rendering the very concept of the original redundant in the domain of cinema, also for film archives. In the recent past, the separation between the content and the carrier has become even more obvious with the progression to born digital films that cannot claim to have any original recordings apart from a series of data bits on an infinitely copy-able storage medium. Such factors, when examined alongside the NFAI's inefficient administration through the years, makes one question if the lost nitrate films would have actually survived for long even if they had escaped being burnt in the fire.

At the time of the fire, the NFAI had been generally aware of need for the content-carrier separation even if not well informed of all the subtleties involved, and Nair's many scavenging and salvaging attempts for nitrate had also been informed by international trends and an acute awareness of the medium's instability.⁶⁵ However, as one would recall, they only

⁶³ Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print; Slide, Anthony. *Nitrate Won't Wait: A History of Film Preservation in the United States*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992. Print.

⁶⁴ Cavena, David, et al. *Archiving Movies in a Digital World*. Santa Clara, CA: Sun Microsystems, 2007. Print. 10.

⁶⁵ Kumar, Ramesh. "On Scavenging and Salvaging: NFAI and Early Indian Cinema." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 54.2 (2013): 152-57. Print.

yielded limited results because of the institution's meager resources, bureaucratic impediments, lack of support from the film industry, and most significantly, because a majority of the nitrate films in the nation had already decomposed by the time the state consolidated its interests in film preservation and decided to intervene by setting up the NFAI. The process of this decomposition was accelerated by India's hot and humid climate. Such attempts were renewed after FIAF's initiatives created widespread awareness on the issue among film archives worldwide, resulting in the NFAI making public appeals in newspapers through the 1980s and 1990s asking film producers, distributors, exhibitors, laboratory owners, and film lovers to deposit all old film material with the institution, but again with limited results.⁶⁶

Nonetheless, the institution continued its limited preservation efforts. However, a general delay in India in recognizing the aesthetic merits of cinema, especially its material dimension, along with the expenses involved in caring for the nitrate film reels, never allowed the reels to acquire the status of highly revered objects at the NFAI the way they did in the film archives of other nations. Even Nair's scavenging and salvaging endeavors were not marked by an urgency to collect and preserve them as artifacts, but by the need to transfer their content to other carriers at the earliest before further deterioration damaged them. Despite being an avid cinephile and a dedicated film archivist, Nair had been less puritanical about the nitrate originals than his counterparts elsewhere.⁶⁷ Other well-informed NFAI staff members who arrived subsequently also followed his example, focusing their energies on acquiring and maintaining copies of films for the institution instead of making a case for the nitrate originals, a trend amply evident through the fire and its aftermath too.

⁶⁶ As a case in point, see "National Film Archive of India: An Appeal." *The Hindu*. 9 November 1980. Print.

⁶⁷ Nair did value the nitrate originals immensely, but not necessarily a lot more than their copies, for his loyalty also seems to have rested more with the content than with the carrier. However, the possibility of having been able to make better copies at a later date continued to plague him. See Nair, P.K. Personal interview. Pune. 8 August 2011.

Even so, they did emphasize the quality of the content and made the best possible copies, and also held onto the originals in their possession for as long as they could, so that the originals could potentially be revisited later for striking better copies after technological advancements. In many ways, this was a thoughtful strategy that had its priorities sorted out, especially given that the institution was acutely aware of the fetishization of the nitrate film reel that was the norm elsewhere, but chose to be pragmatic in the face of its relatively small size, resource limitations, and the Indian socio-cultural milieu in which they could not take such fetishization too far. This was not the most obvious thing for the institution to do, especially given its unimpressive track record that continues till date.

Thus, the institution's late genesis, limited resources, privileging of the copy over the original, and continued less-than-ideal handling of the films in its holdings, when coupled with the nation's huge output of films, the I&B's general apathy towards film archiving, and the nitrate film's inherent instability, makes one seriously doubt if the nitrate films at the NFAI would have survived for much longer despite the planned construction of the new vaults for their storage. The fragile objects were already being allowed to die a slow death at the institution even if not being actively killed. The nitrate film reels were always expendable at the institution and treated with indifference rather than reverence, even if the officials safekeeping them did not dare state the obvious. Whether their impending death would have happened before or after better copies had been made from them can only be speculated. Unfortunately, the institution's attitude and functioning did not change significantly even in wake of the incident and the attention it received because of it, as discussed below.

Recent Years of Continued Troubles

In the years following the fire, the NFAI's functioning did not improve significantly despite additional resources and an expansion of its facilities. Sasidharan attempted some

corrective measures but met with little success.⁶⁸ The rest of his tenure was uneventful, and he retired in 2008, but many of the institution's long standing troubles continued to gather cumulatively. The state's apathy and the unwieldiness of the bureaucratic machinery also remained.

Since Sasidharan's retirement, the institution has been headed, in relatively short-term tenures, by civil servants on deputation from the Press Information Bureau (PIB), leading to a lack of continuity and a crisis in leadership. Under Vijay Jadhav, who assumed office in 2008, NFAI Phase II became a further example of the Indian bureaucracy's incongruity, formalism, and emphasis on symbolism. Despite the building complex and newer vaults having been ready for a while -- and subsequently inaugurated with some fanfare -- the many kilometers long access road to reach them stayed isolated and unpaved, with yet another blame game being played between the NFAI and the CPWD. Simultaneously, while the institution's employees protested being shifted to the Kothrud complex since the commute was harrowing for them and could only be undertaken on sturdy private vehicles since there was no public transport connection, the circle of cinephiles around the institution started referring to the new building complex as its "unreachable drive-in theatre," choosing to stay away from the screenings arranged there.⁶⁹

Alongside, the institution also witnessed allegations of regionalism, favoritism, and prejudices. It reportedly focused only on high profile and glamorous activities while neglecting other essential ones, practiced tokenism, and destroyed films irresponsibly and indiscriminately in the name of weeding out old decomposed ones. It also systematically

⁶⁸ Cholia, Ami. "Precious Reels Could Be Lost Forever." *India-Forums*. 26 February 2005. Web. 10 June 2013. <http://www.india-forums.com/forum_posts.asp?TID=17953 >;

Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

⁶⁹ Kortikar, Sandeep. "Poor Approach Road Keeps NFAI's Kothrud Facility in Seclusion." *Dainik Jagran*. 16 February 2011. Web. 18 February 2011.

<http://www.jagrancityplus.com/city-news/poor-approach-road-keeps-nfai-s-kothrud-facility-in-seclusion_1297832993.html >; Jakatdar, Satish. Personal interview. Pune. 10 May 2013.

erased and altered some elements of its own history, especially those dealing with Nair, even as Nair was reportedly declared a *persona non grata*, allegedly because of his continued interference in the institution's functioning from the outside, but more significantly, his frequent criticism of Jadhav.⁷⁰ Additionally, official attitudes did not change much, for in violation of many norms, the institution allegedly turned off the power supply to Phase II in Kothrud on its own, to save on power bills, and made dehumidification an infrequent activity in the vaults, again to save money.⁷¹

Jadhav's death in 2010 silenced many critics who no longer wished to speak ill of a deceased person, making it difficult to ascertain the validity of some of the allegations that have been leveled against him. However, the fact remains that he had limited knowledge of cinema and film archiving, making him less than ideal for the job of heading the NFAI. Coming from the PIB, he brought with him an understanding of cinema as an educational and propaganda tool that provides information or misinformation, rather than as a form of art requiring aesthetic and historical appreciation. Also, he had been given the charge of not only the NFAI but also another state department in Pune alongside (termed as "additional charge" in Indian state parlance), dividing the time and attention he could give to the institution. Further, being a career bureaucrat, he pledged allegiance more to the state and its network of bureaucrats than to the film archiving community. As a result, he only took limited interest in solving the NFAI's many longstanding problems, treating it instead as another state institution to be administered by him in routine ways, for a short time period, before he moved on to his next posting.

⁷⁰ Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013; Jakatdar, Satish. Personal interview. Pune. 10 May 2013; Sasidharan, K. S. Pune 2013. Print; Dungarpur, Shivendra Singh. *Celluloid Man*. UK. DVD. Second Run, 2012. and various NFAI employees who chose to remain anonymous.

⁷¹ Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

Such factors also held true for his successor Prashant Pathrabe, who assumed office in early 2011, again on deputation from the PIB while also having to handle the charge of another office. Pathrabe did make sincere attempts to change things in the face of monumental challenges, none of which were his own makings, and even welcomed Nair back to the institution as a consultant, but was moved to the FTII by the state and replaced by yet another bureaucrat more recently.

As things stood in 2013, there were huge backlogs to the inspection of old films and the cataloging and physical examination of new ones, with the NFAI itself being unsure of what it held, although precise numbers are still recorded in annual reports without fail. The number of titles in its collection continue to remain disproportionately low considering that they are meant to represent India's long cinematic history and also the 1,200-1,500 theatrically released feature films India now produces every year. One still hears, albeit far less frequently, of films being mistreated, they not being available, and of red tape. And in recent state and media reports, the institution even earned itself the label of being "inefficient," especially with regard to silent cinema.⁷²

Of the 44 sanctioned posts at the institution, many had remained unfilled in 2013, including some of the most senior ones such as the deputy director cum curator. Of the four senior management posts, two were vacant, and of the three middle management posts, two

⁷² For instance, see Kumar, Prakash. "India Loses Alam Ara, Other Classics to NFAI 'Inefficiency'." *Deccan Herald*. 12 February 2014. Web. 10 April 2015. <<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/385855/india-loses-alam-ara-classics.html> >, which quotes a parliamentary committee report. Also see "Prints of Epic Films Alam Ara, Raja Harishchandra Not Preserved." *First Post*. 18 April 2013. Web. 23 May 2013. <<http://www.firstpost.com/bollywood/prints-of-epics-films-alam-ara-raja-harishchandra-not-preserved-709056.html> >; "Loss of Rare Cinematic Heritage Stares India in Face." *The Economic Times*. 18 April 2013. Web. 23 May 2013. <http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-04-18/news/38647409_1_bombay-talkies-shivendra-singh-dungarpur-nfai >; "NFAI Failed to Preserve Silent Era Films: Parliament Panel." *The Hindu Business Line*. 5 February 2013. Web. 25 May 2013. <<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/nfai-failed-to-preserve-silent-era-films-parliament-panel/article5657298.ece> >.

were vacant again, most of them having been so for a number of years. The same was also true for many junior posts, for instance film checkers who are required for the routine functioning of the institution, but were far fewer than needed.⁷³ Attempts to fill the posts by the state are rare, and when undertaken, come with unreasonable conditions attached. For instance, in the June 2011 efforts by the I&B to recruit a new director and deputy director cum curator for the institution -- which were finally abandoned -- applications were only invited from candidates who were already employed by the state in other departments and not from the general public. Also, they were again to be posted to the NFAI only on temporary deputation. This effectively excluded most experts of cinema, for the few who were already employed by the state preferred working for the more glamorous and well-resourced Directorate of Film Festivals, the Films Division (FD), or the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) rather than be on deputation at the relatively low-profile NFAI.

Over the last few years, curating has also taken a backseat at the NFAI. To begin with, it had never really matured at the institution after Nair's initial crusades and Chabria's silent cinema endeavors, for despite having a set of criteria for acquisitions as suggested by its Advisory Committee, the institution traditionally gave undue weightage to National Film Award winning and state sponsored films while neglecting popular film industry ones. The former were considerably easier to acquire through state channels and stipulations, and many even made their way to the institution on their own, while the latter were considered particularly difficult to procure due to copyright considerations, the non-cooperation of the film industry, and the non-theatrical afterlife such films enjoyed, which made the producers reluctant to deposit them anywhere. Added to this is also the suspicion and distrust with which the Indian film fraternity views any initiatives by the state, which are not baseless as has been demonstrated, but has witnessed an increase with the passage of time. For such reasons, the

⁷³ NFAI. "National Film Archive of India RTI Document." Government of India. Web. 5 March 2013. <<http://nfaipune.gov.in/rti.htm>>.

NFAI does not even have a copy of *Sholay* (Ramesh Sippy, 1975) in its holdings, one of the most iconic and historically important films from India, which the producers are not willing to part with even today.

It is true that no national film archive in the world can be comprehensive, and blanket legal deposits for all the films made in India, although contemplated many times through the NFAI's history, cannot be handled by the institution in actual practice. But in addition to such factors, at the core of the institution's functioning also lies the long-standing elitist bias that was revealed in Chabria's statement about Govinda, which serves as an excellent illustration of the gatekeeping practices of film archives, especially state run ones, where the curation and resulting narration of a certain kind of national cinema history is a continuous process. Curating, essentially a subjective enterprise, has traditionally placed the words "standards" and "value" at its core, although the high art vs. popular culture debate has seen the terrain change dramatically in the recent past as discussed previously. However, the NFAI is yet to update itself and attempt changes and corrections, and many NFAI employees echo sentiments similar to Chabria till date, despite the NFAI now being in a position to be more democratic and actively acquire a vast variety of films to represent the rich cinematic heritage of the nation. Consequently, one is left wondering what histories of Indian cinema, based on the NFAI, will be written hundred years hence if the only films available in its holdings will be those that have won state awards.

The institution does not automatically exclude all the films other than those that win awards, but largely relies on the initiative of the producers to deposit a copy with them, which rarely happens. Few producers and filmmakers beyond those who have been affiliated with the FTII, or those that have benefited from the NFAI's collection in some ways, ever do so. When the institution does actively acquire films, the nature of those acquisitions remains questionable. In the absence of a dedicated deputy director cum curator, and despite the existence of perfunctory committees for acquisitions, most decisions about them are in

practice taken by administrative people with no artistic, historical, or film industrial logic behind them, appearing instead to be acts of randomness exercised to successfully report an increase in numbers. This has given critics like Chatterjee reasons enough to claim that “curating at the NFAI died with Sasidharan.”⁷⁴

Similar issues can also be seen continuing in many other areas of the institution’s functioning. One particular area that has been hit is the institution’s strong transnationality, which weakened considerably with Chabria’s retirement, for the institution’s interactions with the international film archiving community ceased completely after that, making it extremely insular and parochial. Jadhav’s attendance at the FIAF meeting in Oslo in 2010 marked a return to the circuit after more than a decade of absence, and has been followed by some of the NFAI employees being sent to FIAF trainings soon after, marking a partial return. But for the institution representing the largest cinema culture in the world, this rare participation appears no more than perfunctory at present.

Thus, the NFAI is currently an institution in crisis. However, the lack of funding, which used to be cited by many of its staff members as a common excuse for its multiple failings, does not seem to hold true for its recent past. A look at the institution’s budget allocations reveals that over the last few years, even though it has not been funded too generously, it hasn’t been underfunded either. For the financial year 2012-2013, it had a reasonable budget of INR 96.8 million (approximately 1.5 million USD), which included both “plan” and “non-plan” expenditures.⁷⁵ The operating costs of climate controlled vaults and office spaces in two prime locations in Pune are substantial indeed, as are the additional resources, manpower, and technical expertise required for the long term preservation of films and the routine tasks of

⁷⁴ Chatterjee, Gayatri. Personal interview. Pune. 11 May 2013.

⁷⁵ I&B. "Annual Report 2012-13." New Delhi: Government of India, 2013. Print. Plan expenditure in the Indian bureaucracy is budgeted to be spent on productive asset creation through the state’s centrally-sponsored programs and flagship schemes, while non-plan refers to all other expenditure, including expenditure on establishment and maintenance activities such as salaries.

lending them and spreading film culture. But the institution seems to have these requirements covered, at least on paper. In fact, the issue it frequently encounters now is not insufficient funds but unspent funds instead, which get returned annually, irking the I&B authorities and leading to contestations over subsequent allocations.⁷⁶

Clearly, the NFAI lacks a long-term vision, a sincere will to preserve films, and a thorough understanding of the goals and functions of a national film archive, which were partially present at the time of its inception, Nair's initial functioning, and Chabria's tenure, but have been lost through the fifty years of its undulating history. The institution also lacks efficient administration, which has been the case through most of its existence. These, when put together with the state's marginalized treatment of the institution, and the apathy that both the state as well as the general populace display towards the cause of film preservation, has led to the disconcerting state of affairs one currently witnesses at the NFAI today.

Disappointingly, the principal measure the state has taken to solve the institution's many troubles is short sighted and flawed: a plan to digitize, *en masse*, thousands of films the NFAI and many other state film institutions such as the FD and the NFDC hold, while not paying attention to any of the other issues. Titled the "National Film Heritage Mission," the project was initiated in the late 2000s and has been in the making ever since. It is expected to cost a staggering INR 5000 to 6600 million (approximately 83 million to 109 million USD, an astronomical figure by Indian standards), but its details have been kept under wraps for years now. It has been touted as a panacea for all the film preservation needs of India, but without sufficient dialog and discussion with various stakeholders outside of the state's network of film institutions.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Sasidharan, K. S. Personal Interview. Pune. 13 May 2013.

⁷⁷ The amounts allocated for the scheme have varied between different statements by the I&B and various media reports that have emerged over time. For some notable examples, see "XII Five Year Plan (2012-17) on Information and Broadcasting Sector." Planning Commission, Government of India. 2011. Web. 10 August 2014.
<http://planningcommission.gov.in/aboutus/committee/wrkgrp12/cit/vol2_IB.pdf >; I&B.

As discussed previously, digitization is a contentious issue for the international film archiving community, and has been so for the last 30 years. As technology stands today, it is at best an expensive means to make the content of a film available for easy viewing and referencing, i.e. access, and should not generally be confused with the long term preservation of a film even though digital means are used in the preservation process.⁷⁸ Many developed nations have invested large sums of money into digitizing their audiovisual heritage, with limited success, while others are approaching the subject with extreme caution, for there are a number of technological, aesthetic, ethical, financial, and legal implications to consider, among others, which the Indian policymakers do not seem to be fully aware of.

It is of course critical that the Indian state addresses the many long standing crises at the NFAI and the nation's film preservation needs. However, this cannot be done through digitization alone, but by first accepting that there cannot be any easy resolution to them. The literature on Indian bureaucracy also does not offer any easy explanations for why things are the way they are, nor does it explain the apathy with which the Indian state as well as its people treat their heritage, of which film heritage is only a small part. What the NFAI needs is a multipronged and gradual approach to turn things around, for which it is imperative that the state displays the political will needed to make the NFAI perform its functions, and the institution channelizes its energies efficiently. At the same time, it is also essential that the nation's general disregard for film preservation be reversed through aggressive and extensive

"Planning Commission Approves Rs 660 Crores for National Film Heritage Mission." *Press Information Bureau Press Release*. Government of India. 2 July 2011. Web. 10 August 2014. <<http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=72979> >; IANS. "National Film Heritage Mission to Be Unveiled in International Film Festival of India." *NDTV*. 7 November 2013. Web. 10 August 2014. <<http://movies.ndtv.com/bollywood/national-film-heritage-mission-to-be-unveiled-at-international-film-festival-of-india-443087> >; Borpujari, Utpal. "Rs. 660 Crore 'Mission' to Restore Classics." *Deccan Herald*. 21 May 2014. Web. 10 August 2014. <<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/70873/rs-660-crore-mission-restore.html> >.

⁷⁸ Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print.

sensitization drives mounted through the most elaborate of media channels (may of which, ironically, the state controls already).

Ideally, the state needs to fill all the NFAI's vacant positions as soon as possible, on a priority basis, and not only from within its own ranks. With its current scale of operations and future growth potential, the director of the institution may very well be a career bureaucrat from the Indian Civil Services and not only an expert on cinema, for the latter may not be able to handle the Indian bureaucracy's many intricacies too well. But s/he needs to be someone who believes in the cause of film preservation, and has some knowledge of cinema. Additionally, s/he needs to have a tenure longer than the three years generally favored by the bureaucratic machinery, for the institution, being a long-term memory institution, needs stability and continued leadership for it to achieve any of its goals and cannot be treated like any other posting for the bureaucrats.

The director requires the assistance of able deputy directors cum curators -- but not just one -- who are experts in different areas of cinema, can curate it, and also have the freedom to take decisions independently (for instance one for Indian features, one for foreign features, one for documentaries/non-fiction, and one for experimental/ avant-garde films etc.). Alongside, the institution needs to start curating actively, both for acquiring more films for its collection as well as for performing a more active public function through specially created festivals, exhibitions, and events. And it requires many more film archiving experts to perform specialist technical tasks and/or train existing staff members to update their skill-sets. The international film archiving community is large, vibrant, and very active, and the NFAI needs to make its presence felt in the community's networks on various levels starting from the director to the film archivists and catalogers.

The institution needs to arrest its habits of allowing the films in its holdings to die a slow death due to negligence. It needs to evaluate the merits and demerits of digitization more thoroughly, and undertake the task systematically before spending millions on it. And it needs

to realize that merely digitizing all the films and documents in its collection is no solution at all, for it already has thousands of digital images from its documentation center but no way of searching through them because no one bothered to feed in the metadata required to make them searchable. Similarly, it needs to update and complete its catalog and undertake better organizing of the films and related documents, parts of which can even be performed by trainee students in return for credits or certifications. Its Advisory Committee meetings need to become much more than perfunctory gatherings. And it needs to realize that its pitiable cost saving efforts of switching off the air conditioner every time its buildings gets emptied of people -- with which I began this section -- are more detrimental to the health of the films and documents it holds than perhaps even leaving them outside in the sweltering sun.

However, as I have suggested all through, the irony of the situation is that many of these potential solutions are fairly well known to the state and the NFAI, at least on paper, but the need for their efficient implementation seems to have been lost in the alleyways of the bureaucratic machinery over the last three decades. As a consequence, an institute set up with much trouble using transnational efforts, operated in troubled but commendable ways by film aficionados turned film archivists and bureaucrats, and characteristic of the Indian bureaucracy's incongruity, formalism, symbolism, implementation gap, production of arbitrariness, and barely controlled chaos, now seems to be working towards its own obliteration.

However, if such a scenario were to actually become a reality, will it truly be as significant a historical rupture as it appears to be in principle? How has the loss of films from the NFAI, in such incidents as the fire or due to neglect, really impacted film historiography in India, and how is it likely to affect it in the future? Can we reconsider and rethink the value of the institution and its many films, both in their presences and absences, and in practical terms, for film history in the nation? And can we, as scholars of cinema, do anything to affect a change?

Archival Relics and the Writing of Indian Film Histories

Indian cinema scholars have often bemoaned the dearth of material for writing film histories, especially those dealing with the silent era. "A major impediment a film historian faces is the lack of films themselves, the basic source material," S. Theodore Baskaran has claimed, while Anupama Kapse has observed that "a striking aspect of the early cinema archive in India is its partial and truncated nature."⁷⁹ Similarly, the editors of a special journal issue on South Asian Archives and Histories have suggested that "absence appears to be a governing trope in the study of film history in the subcontinent: absent films, non-existent studio papers, intermittent, and mostly doubtful statistical series, [and] a lack, inability or wilful indifference on the part of government institutions to make records accessible."⁸⁰ The fire at the NFAI, along with the institution's routine callousness in dealing with the films and documents in its holdings, seems to have contributed to their collective anxieties by depleting the already tiny pool of cinematic sources available for their work even further.

However, Indian film scholarship has traditionally been dominated by textual analysis and theoretical exegeses that have ignored the material dimensions of cinema for the most part. Similar to the NFAI, the Indian film scholar has also concerned himself largely with the content of a film rather than the aesthetic, cultural, economic, or technological aspects of its carrier, in the process also sharing the state's apathy towards film preservation and its privileging of content over carrier.⁸¹ In some ways, this was a direct result of the limited film

⁷⁹ Baskaran, S. Theodore. "Problems Faced by Film Historians in India." *Journal of the Moving Image* 9 (2010): 61-72. Print. 62, Kapse, Anupama. "Melodrama as Method." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 54.2 (2013): 146-51. Print. 146.

⁸⁰ Vasudevan, R. S., et al. "Editorial: Archives and Histories." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 4.1 (2013): 1-7. Print. 1.

⁸¹ Amladi, Parag R. "New Apprehensions: The Ambivalence of Modernity in Early Indian Cinema (1913-1939)." PhD Dissertation. New York University, 1996. Print; Arora, Poonam. "Devdas: Indian Cinema's Emasculated Hero, Sado-Masochism, and Colonialism." *Journal of South Asian Literature* 30.1/2 (1995): 253-76. Print; Cubitt, Sean. "Phalke, Melies, and Special Effects Today." *Wide Angle* 21.1 (2001): 115-30. Print; Kapse, Anupama Prabhala. "The Moving Image: Melodrama and Early Indian Cinema, 1913-1939." PhD Dissertation. University of California, Berkeley, 2009. Print; Lutgendorf, Philip. "Is There an Indian Way of

holdings of the NFAI, whether on nitrate or otherwise, and the cumbersome processes involved in accessing them at the institution even before the fire. Consequentially, the Indian film scholar's restricted trysts with the revered "original" never matured into a relationship strong enough to reach fetishistic proportions as it did for his counterparts elsewhere, for the object of his study, in its primary form, remained mostly unavailable or inaccessible to him, forcing him to rely on any available copies, thereby never allowing him to develop a deep material connection with it.

Such tendencies could of course change over time, but going by the trends in academic work undertaken so far, there was not as much at stake in the lost films for the writing of Indian film histories as there was in the content they carried, which has indeed not been lost, at least not all of it. Till such time as Indian film scholars become more interested in carrier specific historical information in order to examine issues of a film's circulation, regulation, and censorship (think film leaders, missing bits, and splices on specific prints), film technology and aesthetic choices (type of color, sound, lighting, exposure, or film stock and processing techniques used), and the materiality of cinema through a physical engagement with the films (the merits of using nitrate vs acetate film, or a fascination with their decay), their significance for Indian film histories would remain limited.

This is not to support the claim that the losses were "inconsequential" as has been argued by the state and its agents, but to suggest that in actual practice, the loss of any filmic "originals" may not have had as much impact on the writing of Indian cinema as they might be expected to have, for faced with absences and limitations, film historiography in India has long moved beyond the official and authoritative archived record and its significance as the "basic

Filmmaking?" *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 10.3 (2006): 227-56. Print; Pande, Mrinal. "'Moving Beyond Themselves': Women in Hindustani Parsi Theatre and Early Hindi Films." *Economic and Political Weekly* 41.17 (2006): 1646-53. Print; Schönfeld, Carl-Erdmann. "Franz Osten's 'the Light of Asia' (1926): A German-Indian Film of Prince Buddha." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 15.4 (1995): 555-61. Print.

source material" -- whether in the form of a film, nitrate or otherwise, or paper-based cinema paraphernalia -- towards the writing of imaginative cultural histories achieved through mobilizing a host of unofficial ancillary sources.

Stephen Putnam Hughes has articulated the same in his refusal to feel restricted by the absences marking official archives, arguing that "the main problem that faces film historians now is not that there are too few, but that there are too many sources on film history in India that have not been fully considered or consulted." "The only way to address this problem," he has suggested while issuing a clarion call, "is by encouraging a more determined commitment to archival research using creative approaches to what counts as a source and a greater willingness to critically rework the corpus of ready-made historical narratives about early film history in India."⁸² Extending this sentiment, and in keeping with the worldwide enthusiasm surrounding the creation of online collections that have increasingly been referred to as archives, Kuhu Tanvir has suggested that the main source of much information on Indian cinema may very well come from what she calls the "pirate archive," which consists of cheaply published film dialogs and lyrics, locally produced posters, illegal music tapes, video cassettes, VCDs, DVDs and increasingly, online digital content.⁸³

As demonstrated by some excellent recent and ongoing scholarship, the Indian film scholar has already taken a cue from Hughes and Tanvir -- working around the absences, and reaching beyond the official and original holdings of the physical state archive as his primary source material to interpret the term archive very liberally. He has excavated and included almost every collection of historically relevant information, private as well as pirate, in its ambit -- ranging from newspaper reviews, leisure magazines, gossip columns, and fan letters, through oral histories, autobiographies, song-books, and production stills, to YouTube tributes,

⁸² Hughes, Stephen Putnam. "The Lost Decade of Film History in India." *Journal of the Moving Image* 9 (2010): 72-93. Print. 73.

⁸³ Tanvir, Kuhu. "Pirate Histories: Rethinking the Indian Film Archive." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 4.2 (2014): 115-36. Print.

remixed online content, and user comments on them. He has connected these barely related cultural fragments to function as a clue here and a trace there, weaving together remarkable historical narratives in the process.⁸⁴ And he has also combined the official with the unofficial and the academic with the anecdotal to create such resources as the website *indiancine.ma*, which also offers commentaries and annotations on hitherto difficult to access films, film fragments, photographs, and documents, perhaps a remarkable manifestation of a digital, remotely accessible, unofficial “archive” even if not truly pirate.⁸⁵

A more recent initiative by the filmmaker Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, named the Film Heritage Foundation -- founded in 2014 -- is also an attempt to revive film preservation in India. It has had more success in transnational collaborations with FIAF and other members of the international film archiving community -- such as the Film Foundation and the Cineteca di Bologna -- than even the NFAI has had in the recent past. Locally, it has also collaborated both with the NFAI on the one hand and the academic community in India on the other hand, making it a welcome initiative. In part, such initiatives are the result of the general dissatisfaction both scholars as well as filmmakers feel towards the inadequacies of the NFAI.

However, the seemingly unbound potential of these unofficial private and pirate archives, digital or otherwise, when combined with the frustrations with the absences and inaccessibility characterizing state institutions, have also led the Indian film scholar to treat the

⁸⁴ Bhaumik, Kaushik. "Cinematograph to Cinema: Bombay 1896-1928." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 2.1 (2011): 41-67. Print; Chatterjee, Ranita. "Film History through Fragments: The Aurora Archive and the Transnational Travels of Early Indian Cinema." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 5.1 (2014): 29-47. Print; Mahadevan, Sudhir. "Traveling Showmen, Makeshift Cinemas: The Bioscopewallah and Early Cinema History in India." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 1.1 (2010): 27-47. Print; Majumdar, Neepa. *Wanted Cultured Ladies Only! Female Stardom and Cinema in India, 1930s-50s*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009. Print; Mukherjee, Debashree. "Notes on a Scandal: Writing Women's Film History against an Absent Archive." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 4.1 (2013): 9-30. Print; Thomas, Rosie. "Miss Frontier Mail: The Film That Mistook Its Star for a Train." *Frontier: Sarai Reader* 7. Eds. Narula, Monika and Smriti Vohra. Delhi: Sarai Programme, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 2007. 294-309. Print.

⁸⁵ An interesting discussion on *indiancine.ma* can be found in Kapse, Anupama. "Producing Film Heritage." *South Asian Popular Culture* 13.1 (2015): 89-93. Print.

NFAI and other state archives as minor and almost insignificant nodes among the many nebulous, densely overlapping, and rhizomatic Deleuzian networks of cinematic information available to him.⁸⁶ In what seems over-compensatory, he now seems to be moving towards underutilising, undervaluing, and even ignoring the NFAI and its material in his enthusiasm to engage with the other nodes in these networks. For instance, Tanvir has argued that these networks appear not only to undermine the need for a state archive but also seem not to depend on its authority, stability, and sense of responsibility for their value and validation. “The pirate archive. . . might not be complete with reference to content,” she has stated, “[but] it is complete in itself, as in, it can function as a stand-alone archive, rather than a referent to a more solid, more approved official archive.”⁸⁷

Tanvir’s conception of a such a stand-alone unofficial archive, although sounding promising, seems to require an artificial separation of the NFAI and other state archives, and their disownment and ousting, from the larger network of archival sources. This might be unnecessary, premature, and ultimately unattainable, especially for academic purposes. While she does not seem to be intentionally rooting for the unofficial archive above the state archive, it is a trap one must be mindful of, especially given the Indian scholar’s long-standing bias against the state and its nodes.

True, the Indian film scholar’s encounter with a state archive is largely a tryst with bureaucratic hostility in addition to literal dust and film detritus, the NFAI being a significant case in point. But as important stakeholders, we are also strangely apathetic to the plight of film preservation in India and the institutions and people engaged in it. For various reasons, our visits to the NFAI are marked by arguably mutual distrust. We respond to the state’s neglect by undermining the importance of the institution and treating it as given while being

⁸⁶ Deleuze, Gilles Guattari Félix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. Print.

⁸⁷ Tanvir, Kuhu. "Pirate Histories: Rethinking the Indian Film Archive." *BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies* 4.2 (2014): 115-36. Print. 128.

indifferent towards the people manning it. Fearing institutional retribution through a revocation of our remaining access privileges, which could affect our research work even further, we remain silent, watching the scant remains of our research materials die a slow but untimely death.

Despite holding limited material, appearing unwelcoming, and being grossly mismanaged, has the NFAI ceased to be of any use for us with the growth of the unofficial archive? If not, then should we be working with an artificial NFAI vs. the rest binary while looking for sources? Does the unofficial archive really have to stand alone at all? Can the two archives not continue to coexist as they do today, increasingly referencing as well as reinforcing each other, with the NFAI, however limited in its offerings, acting as one of the larger and more important nodes on the network, and together, they providing us with a richer archive of sources to choose from?

If the unofficial archive were to become the only one left in the absence or potential ousting of the NFAI, what forces would determine the ordering, structuring, referencing, and responsible use of the many ephemeral and fragmented cinematic sources for academic purposes, especially in the face of cited URLs that might become broken even before the essay or article reaches the academic press, or digital data that might become garbled and the technology for accessing it obsolete, for there would be no central referent to fall back on? What would substitute for the stability, sustainability, and the semblance of a central historical narrative offered by the NFAI, which might be called a repository of the meta-history of Indian cinema, even if it is inherently limited, cleaned, controlled, and censored, and privileges only certain narratives?

The NFAI's attempts at controlling Indian film histories, both intentionally and unintentionally, have conventionally only been as successful as their endeavours at defining, preserving, and managing Indian cinema heritage, fairly limited to put it mildly. Not to mention that what the institution claims to do, officially, has rarely been the same as what it actually

does. But while anything “official” has always been viewed with scepticism by the astute Indian film scholar and dismantled to expose its biases,⁸⁸ it has also continued to provide him with a reference point to compare and contrast with.⁸⁹

Consequently, despite its many failings, the nitrate films at the NFAI, as well as the rest of its collection, whether missing or available, cannot be overlooked or forgotten in the processes of writing Indian film histories. Instead, their very presences, absences, gaps, and fiery losses need to be incorporated into our historical narratives more efficiently. The incident at the NFAI necessitates that we participate in building and sustaining the institution more enthusiastically -- similar to the ways in which we participate in such initiatives as *indiancine.ma*, or collaborate with the Film Heritage Foundation -- for despite the best of efforts by such individuals as Nair, the NFAI cannot be sustained either by one or two individuals or by the state

⁸⁸ Majumdar, Neepa. "The Nostalgia Industry and Indian Film Studies." *South Asian Popular Culture* 13.1 (2015): 85-88. Print; Roy, Srirupa. "Moving Pictures: The Postcolonial State and Visual Representations in India." *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India*. Ed. Ramaswamy, Sumathi. New Delhi, India: Sage Publications, 2003. 233-63. Print; ---. "Moving Pictures: The Films Division of India and the Visual Practices of the Nation State." *Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007. 32-65. Print; Sarkar, Bhaskar. *Mourning the Nation: Indian Cinema in the Wake of Partition*. Durham [NC]: Duke University Press, 2009. Print; Vohra, Paromita. "Dotting the I: The Politics of Self-Less-Ness in Indian Documentary Practice." *South Asian Popular Culture* 9.1 (2011): 43-53. Print; Woods, Philip. "From Shaw to Shantaram: The Film Advisory Board and the Making of British Propaganda Films in India, 1940-1943." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 21.3 (2001): 293-308. Print.

⁸⁹ Battaglia, Giulia. "The Video Turn: Documentary Film Practices in 1980s India." *Visual Anthropology* 27.1/2 (2014): 72-90. Print; Chabria, Suresh. "Creating a Film Culture: The National Film Archive of India." *Museum International* 46.4 (2009): 32-36. Print; Deprez, Camille. "The Films Division of India, 1948-1964: The Early Days and the Influence of the British Documentary Film Tradition." *Film History* 29.3 (2013): 149-73. Print; Hanlon, Dennis. "Making Waves: Anand Patwardhan, Latin America, and the Invention of Indian Third Cinema." *Wide Screen* 5.1 (2014): 1-24. Print; Jain, Anuja. "The Curious Case of the Films Division: Some Annotations on the Beginnings of Indian Documentary Cinema in Postindependence India, 1940s-1960s." *The Velvet Light Trap* 71 (2013): 15-26. Print; Jones, Timothy. "Animating the Archive: A Role for Creative Practice in the Animation Archive." *Animation Practice, Process & Production* 1.2 (2011): 273-83. Print; Khaparde, Vaishali, and Ramesh Sutar. "Evaluation of the Film Library of Films Division in Digital Era: A Case Study." *Collnet Journal of Scientometrics and Information Management* 4.2 (2010): 69-80. Print; Pandyan, Kanakasabapathy. "The Coming of Age of Indian Animation." *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication (John Benjamins Publishing Co.)* 23.1 (2013): 66-85. Print.

alone. We all need to contribute to its building, worry about its policies, practices, and prejudices, and make some noise, for there might be no NFAI available for us to work with in an alarmingly short time if we don't do so.

I suggest five preliminary areas of action: One: Start talking about film archiving in classrooms and conferences. Alongside the content and aesthetics of the medium, discuss the politics of the carrier and archival institutions, write about film archiving in public forums, establish networks with filmmakers, producers, and distributors, and actively elicit the support of all stakeholders. We are only one among them, but have a loud voice, which should be put to good use.

Two: Collaborate with the NFAI and other similar institutions to curate special exhibitions. Ask students to work with specific material in the NFAI to bring out co-publications. Open academic corridors to the wider public through outreach activities in partnership with the institution.

Three: Reverse the bias many of us have against the state, its bureaucrats, and the institutions they man. In the absence of large private funding in the cultural sector in India, state institutions are our best hope for long-term preservation of films and paraphernalia, for such initiatives as *indiancine.ma* and the Film Heritage Foundation, while being extremely significant and welcome, might not be able to sustain themselves in the long run without state support. Negotiate with the state rather than alienate it.

Four: Understand that archives are not merely repositories of information for our use, but collections that need to be actively built, bit by bit, and sustained. Be less territorial about our areas of expertise, share our (re)sources, and contribute to the building of institutions with the materials we have in our possession.

Five: Sift through the ashes and scant remains of the NFAI's holdings -- including the hundred odd nitrate reels that survived the fire, or more that are yet to be discovered -- in the hope of finding prized relics of cinema that will perhaps, one day, enable us to write *Indian*

histories on such themes as color in silent cinema,⁹⁰ the role played by women working in the film industry in the silent era,⁹¹ or the aesthetics of nitrate film.⁹² Perhaps we will also encounter a golden tooth here, a treasured bone fragment there -- in the form of rare frames, spools, and cans -- that will assume importance precisely because they are incomplete, and therefore function as nuggets of history. Most of history writing, after all, whether of cinema or otherwise, is nothing but a subjective reconstruction through fragments and remains of that which has already been lost.

What's lost is lost already, but through such steps and many more, let's do our bit to ensure that the losses don't continue. Without doubt, India deserves better care of its cinematic heritage than what the NFAI is currently being able to accomplish. And unless we are able to change the scenario dramatically through collective agency, Chabria's casual musings, however impractical, are perhaps worth considering in all earnestness: "Wouldn't it be lovely to give away our prints to [other foreign] archives for preservation? They would do a much better job of it than we do."⁹³

Conclusion

In this chapter, which concludes this section on the NFAI, I demonstrated how the institution's functioning after Nair's retirement has been plagued by a number of irregularities affected by the actions of many actors spread across the institution and the I&B. Discussing

⁹⁰ Gunning, Tom, et al. *Fantasia of Color in Early Cinema*. Amsterdam: EYE Film Institute Netherlands/Amsterdam University Press, 2015. Print; Flueckiger, Barbara. "Color Analysis for the Digital Restoration of *Das Cabinet Des Dr. Caligari*." *Moving Image* 15.1 (2015): 22-43. Print.

⁹¹ Gaines, Jane M. "Sad Songs of Nitrate: Women's Work in the Silent Film Archive." *Camera Obscura* 22.66 (2007): 170-78. Print; ---. "World Women: Still Circulating Silent Era Film Prints." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema & Media* 51.2 (2010): 283-303. Print.

⁹² Habib, André. "Ruin, Archive and the Time of Cinema: Peter Delpout's "Lyrical Nitrate"." *Substance: A Review of Theory & Literary Criticism* 35.2 (2006): 120-39. Print; Jackson, Victoria. "Reviving the Lost Experience of Kinemacolor: David Cleveland and Brian Pritchard." *Journal of British Cinema & Television* 7.1 (2010): 147-59. Print.

⁹³ Chabria, Suresh. Personal interview. Pune. 10 August 2011.

the fire at the institution in 2003 that destroyed its nitrate film collection almost entirely, I illustrated how it reflected the implementation gap of the Indian bureaucratic machinery, and also how it was less consequential for the writing of Indian film histories than might be expected.

I showed how the institution's strong transnationality from the time of its founding has now been replaced by acute insularity and parochialism. I described how its supposition that digitization can be a potential panacea for all its woes requires careful reevaluation. And I discussed how its authority is now being usurped by many private initiatives in the nation in the recent past. These initiatives are welcome but may not be sustainable in the long run without the support of the state. However, they have also found ready favor with the Indian film scholars while the NFAI has been increasingly marginalized by them. I questioned this marginalization, and imploring the Indian film scholars to revise their bias against the institution, reminded them that a national film archive cannot be built by the lone initiatives of such individuals as Nair, but needs to be a collective effort instead, in which the film scholar also needs to play his part. I also offered suggestions on what we can do to help the institution and its cause. Such steps are necessary for the future of the NFAI, and through it, the future of Indian cinematic heritage. In the next section, I discuss the history of the founding and functioning of the Nederlands Filmmuseum and EYE.

SECTION III

EYE FILM INSTITUTE NETHERLANDS, AMSTERDAM

CHAPTER 5

EYE FILM INSTITUTE NETHERLANDS, THE PRIVATE NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE: EARLY YEARS AS THE NEDERLANDS FILMMUSEUM UNDER JAN DE VAAL, 1946-1986

In this chapter, I introduce EYE Film Instituut Nederland (EYE Film Institute Netherlands, or EYE) and describe the gradual flourishing and later floundering of its chief predecessor the Nederlands Filmmuseum (Netherlands Film Museum, or NFM) under the aegis of Jan de Vaal, from its founding in 1946 to de Vaal's retirement in 1986.¹ Locating the institution against the backdrop of the Dutch arts and culture sector it is a part of, I discuss its status as a private non-profit institution competing for funds and visibility with other non-profits. And I analyze the institution's negotiations with its hybrid archive-museum identity, which characterized it from its very inception, while also suggesting that its status as a national film archive was more implied than explicit under de Vaal. In the process, this chapter demonstrates the institution's strong transnationality during this period, and also illustrates the many troubles of the "arch-father" and "individual as institution" model of administering national film archives represented by de Vaal's functioning -- not unlike the functioning of P. K. Nair at the NFAI in India -- which ceased for good at the Filmmuseum with de Vaal's retirement.

An Overview of EYE

On 1 January 2010, EYE, the Dutch national center for film culture and heritage located in Amsterdam, was founded as a new umbrella organization by merging four Dutch

¹ Throughout this section comprising of chapters 5, 6, and 7, I indicate the common English names of various Dutch institutions in parenthesis and use acronyms for recurring ones, but default to the Dutch names in cases where the English and Dutch names are close enough not to warrant separate expounding.

film institutions: the Filmmuseum, Holland Film (tasked with promoting Dutch cinema and culture internationally), Nederlands Instituut voor Filmeducatie (Netherlands Institute for Film Education), and Filmbank (a national and international distributor of contemporary Dutch experimental films).² Two years later, EYE moved into a new building in Amsterdam Noord (North), then an area considered to be the “wrong side of the IJ lake/river” because of its derelict factories, warehouses, and incidents of vandalism and petty crime, making it the first major cultural institution to take the leap across the IJ.³ A winner of multiple architectural awards, the landmark new building, described by many as stunning, bold, and futuristic, was built at the cost of 35 million Euros.⁴ It was inaugurated with much fanfare on 4 April 2012 by the Dutch Queen Beatrix in a glamorous and highly publicized opening ceremony involving national and international dignitaries and spectacular light and sound events.⁵

² De Meijer, P.L.E.M. Juridische Fusie Stichtingen. 31 December 2009. Dossier: PDM/2009.002335.01/mck (31-11-54). Lubbers en Dijk notarissen, Amsterdam.

³ Weickgenant, Joel. "The Noord District's Hip Rebirth." *The Wall Street Journal*. 8 July 2011. Web. 3 March 2012.

<<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304569504576405690067730056> >; Teffer, Peter. "Once Unfashionable, Noord District of Amsterdam Gains Cachet." *The New York Times*. 12 April 2012. Web. 15 April 2012.

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/13/greathomesanddestinations/once-unfashionable-noord-district-of-amsterdam-gains-cachet.html> >; "Experience the New Dutch Renaissance in Amsterdam." *CityAm.com*. 15 April 2013. Web. 15 April 2012.

<<http://www.cityam.com/article/experience-new-dutch-renaissance-amsterdam> >. IJ, pronounced [ɛj], is technically a lake, but is often called a river in popular parlance.

⁴ As cases in point, see McManus, David. "EYE Dutch Film Museum: Nieuwe Filmmuseum Amsterdam." *E-Architect*. June 12 2014. Web. 29 September 2015. <<http://www.e-architect.co.uk/amsterdam/eye-dutch-film-museum> >; Kushins, Jordan. "Amsterdam's EYE Film Institute Celebrates the Moviegoing Experience." *Fastcodesign*. August 7 2012. Web. 29 September 2015. <<https://www.fastcodesign.com/1670466/amsterdam-s-eye-film-institute-celebrates-the-moviegoing-experience> >; "EYE - New Dutch Film Institute / Delugan Meissl Associated Architects." *ArchDaily*. 10 April 2012. Web. 29 September 2015.

<<http://www.archdaily.com/223973/eye-new-dutch-film-institute-delugan-meissl-associated-architects/> >.

⁵ The City of Amsterdam alone gave EYE a subsidy of 70,000 Euros for the opening ceremony and the activities leading up to it, indicating the scale of the event. See de Hommel, Anne-Lies. Letter to S. Spijkerman. 4 June 2012. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam. For a video of the opening ceremony, see *Opening EYE: Het Nieuwe Filmmuseum aan het IJ*. 2010. Video. EYE. Web. 9 January 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDMEPuDXvNg> >, and for further reportage on the opening, see *EYE Film Institute Opens in Amsterdam*. 2012.

Within three months, EYE boasted more than 225,000 visitors and had sold tickets to a 100,000 of them, which met annual targets that had been set for four years after its opening.⁶ Today, media coverage, lived experiences, and the buzz among stakeholders suggest that the institution has become the most iconic cultural spot in Amsterdam North, has contributed immensely to the ongoing gentrification of the area, has come to occupy a central place in the cultural tourism circuit of the city, and has given the Dutch film sector a definitive identity both nationally and internationally. All this despite representing what can only be described as a relatively minor national film culture in terms of both the number of films produced as well as the centrality of films in the cultural life of the nation, especially when compared to such nations as India and the US. Few film institutions worldwide can boast of such fame, monumentality, and centrality in the local and national cultural landscapes.

EYE is a private non-profit institution managed by an autonomous board of directors. It is subsidized by central and municipal governments, but also generates part of its operational costs through entrance tickets, fundraising, sponsorship, and sales and royalties on films for which it owns the rights. In 2015, it operated with an annual budget of 17,372,138 Euros, held in excess of 40,000 film titles from the late nineteenth century to contemporary times, and also held film posters (65,000), film paraphernalia (1,600 objects), photographs (700,000), music (3,687 sheets), and housed the paper archives of 130 Dutch filmmakers. It also managed the largest public library of film-related books in the nation (26,898 titles), which housed 100,000 screenplays and publicity files, and subscribed to over 120 journals (2,018 issues). And it employed 165 people, operated four screening spaces with a combined capacity of 620 seats, maintained a large exhibition space,

Video. NOS. Web. 28 November 2012. <<http://www.rnw.nl/english/video/eye-film-institute-opens-amsterdam> >.

⁶ Den Hamer, Sandra. "Reactie EYE Advies RvC." 2012. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam. The discrepancy between the two numbers stems from the fact that only some parts of EYE's new premises -- such as the screening and exhibition spaces -- are ticketed, while others like the restaurant and the attached terrace can be accessed without tickets.

managed a floor dedicated to educational activities, ran a store, and also operated a popular bar-restaurant.⁷

EYE is a model national film archive, not only among my three case studies but also for the film archiving community in general, which works by example and actively shapes the field through pioneering practices. The institution stands remarkably well-recognized in the international film archiving community, especially for its pioneering work in preserving silent and experimental films. It is also admired for its emphasis on research and links with academia, and known for its events and publications that have impacted the disciplines of cinema and media studies in direct ways. It is also considered to be a much trusted collaborator on a range of national and international initiatives, and is the winner of multiple international awards, with many of its achievements having been carried forward directly from its largest and most significant predecessor the Filmmuseum.⁸

⁷ Gant, Anne. Email communication. 4 August 2016. Amsterdam.

⁸ EYE hosts scholars and researchers from across the world, and collaborates with them on various events and publications, especially around silent cinema (for instance, Tom Gunning and Paolo Cherchi Usai have been long term associates). Some of the conferences held at EYE include “Economies of the Commons 3” (October 11-12, 2012), “Orphan Film Symposium-The Future of Obsolescence” (March 30-April 2, 2014), and “The Color Fantastic-Chromatic Worlds of Silent Cinema” (March 31, 2015), while publications include Hertogs, Daan, and Nico de Klerk. *Disorderly Order: Colours in Silent Film*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1996. Print; Gunning, Tom, et al. *Fantasia of Color in Early Cinema*. Amsterdam: EYE Film Institute Netherlands/Amsterdam University Press, 2015. Print; Bloemheugel, Marente, et al., eds. *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press/ EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2012. Print; Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print. For a list of the curated exhibitions it has held, see “Exhibition-Archive.” EYE Film Institute Netherlands. Web. 29 September 2015. <<https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/exhibition/archive>>.

And in addition to being a very active and prominent member of FIAF, EYE’s predecessor the Filmmuseum was also a founding member, and Secretariat, of the Association des Cinémathèques Européennes (ACE, the Association of European Film Archives and Cinematheques), an active participant in international debates on copyright issues through a number of conferences and workshops, a part of the Gamma Group (an international technical committee investigating film archiving problems), a collaborator on such pan-European projects as Diament, FIRST, PrestoSpace, PrestoPrime, and the European Film Gateway, a co-organizer of courses and training programs for film archivists, a regular at a number of international film festivals and symposia, and a major stakeholder in the Netherlands-wide project titled Images for the Future (discussed later), among many other

However, it is not the only institution in the Netherlands with audiovisual holdings, particularly of film, nor is it the central one. A number of regional and municipal archives in the nation also collect audiovisual material, as do some museums, broadcasters, educational institutions, associations, and private companies.⁹ Its main contemporary is the much larger Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid (Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision), located in Hilversum, which is better known as a broadcast and documentary repository.¹⁰ Sound and Vision claims to hold “the complete radio and television archives of the Dutch public broadcasters, films of virtually every leading Dutch documentary maker, newsreels, the national music depot, various audiovisual corporate collections, advertising, radio and video material of cultural and social organizations, of scientific institutes and of all kinds of educational institutions.”¹¹

EYE and Sound and Vision have a history of rivalry (which includes their respective predecessors), which they underplay in favor of collaborations with each other while maintaining separate focus areas: namely films of artistic and historical relevance for EYE, and broadcast and documentary content for Sound and Vision. EYE places emphasis on curation and functions with a narrower mandate focused on significant films, while Sound and Vision acts more as a hold-all with a much wider mandate that also includes films not considered worthy of being collected by EYE. There are overlaps between their collections, in particular in the films and documents of non-fiction auteurs, and repeated attempts have been

such involvements. A list of the many national and international partners the Filmmuseum had in 2001 can be found in *Celluloid, Pixels en Publiek: Strategisch Plan 2002-04*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2001. Print. Some of the international awards received by the institution include the Jean Mitry Award in 1991 at the Le Giornate del Cinema Muto (The Pordenone Silent Film Festival), the Anthology Film Archives Film Preservation Honors in the year 2001, and the Henri Langlois Prize in 2008.

⁹ *Een Deltaplan voor de Audiovisuele Media*. Amsterdam: NOB, NFM, RVD, & SFW, 1994. Print. 11-12.

¹⁰ *Collection Policy 2014-17*. Amsterdam: EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2013. Print.

¹¹ "About." Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid. Web. 30 September 2015. <<https://www.beeldengeluid.nl/en/about> >.

made through the years to minimize the overlaps and resolve any disputes.¹² However, for a combination of reasons including EYE's curated film collection, its cultural capital in the cinema world both nationally and internationally, its well-networked board of directors and lobbyists, and its revered presence in the city of Amsterdam, EYE is the one able to stake claim at being the "Dutch national center for film culture and heritage" as well as "the cinematic memory of the Netherlands." These are statuses it earned for itself gradually over the course of many decades through the rich history of its predecessor the Filmmuseum.¹³

This history has been informed in part by the institution's hybrid archive/museum identity, with its administrators and board members participating in a recurring, almost perpetual, conceptual debate amongst themselves about which identity and the corresponding set of functions to privilege over the other at different junctures in time.¹⁴ Closely linked to this has also been the question of where the institution locates itself in the Henri Langlois -- Ernest Lindgren debate over what it considered more significant: the preservation of films, which is believed to belong more with the archive identity, or their presentation, which is believed to belong more with the museum identity.¹⁵ The institution has never been able to arrive at a

¹² An account of their separate mandates can be found in *Film Erfgoed. Nederlands Filmmuseum: Nationaal Centrum voor de Cinematografie*. 1998. Print, while attempts at dispute resolution can be found in RvC. "Conceptverslag Monitoringgesprek Filmmuseum." 29 August 2002. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam. 3.

¹³ "AMIA Institutional Members." AMIA. Web. 10 July 2016.

<<http://www.amianet.org/resources-and-publications/institutions-and-associations> >;

"Academic Courses on Film Preservation." FIAF. Web. 10 July 2016.

<<http://www.fiafnet.org/pages/Training/Other-Film-Preservation-Courses.html?PHPSESSID=3u93t4gonnlog7Irr9I4jgm8j5> >;

"About Eye." Eye Film Institute Netherlands. Web. 9 January 2015. <<https://www.eyefilm.nl/en/about-eye> >.

¹⁴ As cases in point of working with the two identities, see NFM. "Het Nieuwe Huis Van Illusies I: Het Hoe en Waarom Van Een Visioen, Bezien Vanuit het Perspectief Van de NFM Directie." 20 August 1998. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague; *Celluloid, Pixels en Publiek: Strategisch Plan 2002-04*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2001. Print; *Cultural Policy 2014-17*. Amsterdam: EYE, 2013. Print; Sorgdrager, W., and J.A. Brandenburg. "Beleidsplan Filmmuseum." Letter to De Staatsscreteris van Onderwijs. 1 August 2001. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam. The debate can be found discussed in Noorda, Sijbolt. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 17 April 2013.

¹⁵ For a succinct discussion of the debate and its contemporary relevance, see Enticknap, Leo. "Have Digital Technologies Reopened the Lindgren/Langlois Debate?" *Media Access:*

definitive resolution to the debate and its many ancillary questions (indeed, such a resolution may not be possible). Instead, in what may be seen as opportunism but has been a strategy rooted in pragmatism, it has often found short-term working solutions by adapting itself according to the immediate challenges it has faced, leaning one way or another to suit the needs of the hour (for instance to satisfy the criteria for funding laid down in the cultural policy plans), but also making sure that it compensates for each lean in the long run.¹⁶

And accompanying the institution's hybridity has also been its palimpsestuous nature, for its functioning over time can be seen as three layers of written, partially erased, and progressively rewritten texts of a palimpsest resting imperfectly atop one another. These three layers correspond to three distinct but related phases in its history: one, its founding, functioning, and move to the Vondelpark Pavilion under the direction of Jan de Vaal, which I discuss in this chapter. Two, the institution's reinvention under Hoos Blotkamp and the fiasco around the aborted Las Palmas Rotterdam plans, which are discussed in chapter 6. And three, the institution's transformation into the glamorous EYE under the direction of Rien Hagen, Riëks Hadders, and Sandra den Hamer, which is discussed in chapter 7. The institution's functioning through these three phases was also deeply enmeshed within the larger Dutch arts and culture sector, which the Filmmuseum is a part of.

The Dutch Arts and Culture Sector

In the Netherlands, the arts and culture sector operates as a subset of the larger non-profit sector, mirroring many of the trends that are true for Dutch non-profits in general. Dutch non-profits have a complex history that can be traced back to medieval charitable activities of

Preservation and Technologies 27.1 (2007): 10-20. Print. For a dramatization of the letters exchanged between the two, see Beale, Ruth. *Lindgren & Langlois: The Archive Paradox*. London. Mixed Media. Cubitt, 2011.

¹⁶ My use of the term institution here refers to both EYE and its chief predecessor the Filmmuseum. The other institutions that came together to form EYE are not a part of this discussion.

the church (a combination of Roman Catholic, Calvinist, and Lutheran institutions), and solidarity schemes of various guilds. In the early twentieth century, they developed through a process of "pillarization," in which groups of citizens organized themselves vertically along religious and political lines with little or no contact with other pillars, eventually founding various privately-owned public welfare institutions. These continued to grow after World War II, and since the 1960s, through a gradual process of "de-pillarization" that was in keeping with the humanist demands for parity and impartiality put forth by the bourgeois elites, separated from the church and lost much of their original religious and political character.¹⁷

Throughout this history, the Dutch state functioned with the belief that matters that could be handled by private institutions need not be brought under its purview, creating a political environment that stimulated the growth of non-profits and made the Dutch non-profit sector one of the largest in the world. Consequently, most services of the social economy that are typically considered to be domains of the state in other Western European nations -- ranging from education and healthcare to welfare work -- are administered in the Netherlands by private non-profits. In 1995, they provided 12.3% of the nation's employment, which was more than two-and-a-half times that of the world average at that time, and almost twice the average of other Western European and developed nations.¹⁸

¹⁷ Renooy, Piet H. "The Netherlands: Neighborhood Development Enterprises." *The Emergence of Social Enterprise*. Eds. Borzaga, Carlo and Jacques Defourny. London: Routledge, 2001. 236-41. Print; Burger, Ary, and Vic Veldheer. "The Growth of the Nonprofit Sector in the Netherlands." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30.2 (2001): 221-46. Print; Burger, Ary, Paul Dekker, and Stefan Toepler. "The Netherlands: Key Features of the Dutch Non Profit Sector." *Global Civil Society: Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector*. Eds. Salamon, Lester M. and S. Wojciech Sokolowski. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, 1999. 145-62. Print.

¹⁸ ---. "The Netherlands: Key Features of the Dutch Non Profit Sector." *Global Civil Society: Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector*. Eds. Salamon, Lester M. and S. Wojciech Sokolowski. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, 1999. 145-62. Print; Burger, Ary, and Vic Veldheer. "The Growth of the Nonprofit Sector in the Netherlands." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30.2 (2001): 221-46. Print.

However, despite their private ownership, Dutch non-profits have traditionally been financed through taxes, compulsory insurance schemes, and other collective public monies that make their way to the institutions through a series of central, provincial, and municipal level subsidies. The state offers them financial incentives for meeting policy recommendations, and encourages them to apply for additional funds through open competitions in priority areas. Notwithstanding such public financing, they are still, in principle, autonomous institutions that do not merely implement the state's instructions but work with their own agendas instead. They are regulated by the state through broad policy guidelines and directives tied to subsidies, and by its presence on their governing boards. These boards -- which are responsible for shaping the overall mission and direction of the institutions, and for acting as intermediaries between the institutions and the state -- are typically comprised of government representatives, non-partisan members of the civil society, and representatives from the institutions (mostly its senior managers). The board members are generally elected and appointed by the other members of the board, and are rotated frequently, thereby creating a system of self-governance.

Despite the state's presence on the boards, direct interventions by it into their affairs are relatively rare in the Dutch politico-cultural landscape that encourages non-partisan approaches and frowns upon confrontations. Instead, the legacy of pillarization and de-pillarization, together with the numerous successive coalition governments that have come to power in the nation, have produced a political, legal, and governance tradition that favors consensus building over majority rules and overt oppositional struggles, in which conflicts, including any with the state or the government in power, are generally dealt with by accommodating all the stakeholders rather than only a few with stronger voices.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the institutions do not enjoy unbridled autonomy since their financial fortunes are

¹⁹ van Reekum, Rogier. "As Nation, People and Public Collide: Enacting Dutchness in Public Discourse." *Nations and Nationalism* 18.4 (2012): 583-602. Print. 586.

closely intertwined with the state's policies. They are also subjected to many state rules and regulations, ranging from approved salary levels to caps on rent expenditure, all of which enable the state or the government in power to exert pressure, covertly as well as overtly, in some instances when they deem necessary.²⁰

The Dutch arts and culture sector operates in a similar manner, with most institutions having historically been set up as non-profits by wealthy individuals. Unlike other European nations in the modern era, the aristocracy in the Netherlands played little part in patronizing the arts or showing off its artistic and cultural treasures in public displays of power and splendor. In the absence of a vibrant court culture, it was predominantly the self-assured bourgeoisie and other private players that developed cultural initiatives. The state, initially at the municipal level but eventually also at the center, entered the picture with various subsidies, mostly beginning in the early twentieth century, and gradually became the largest patron of the sector. In 1918, it set up a ministry, which, in its current iteration, is called the Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen (OCW, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science).²¹

In 1945, the state appointed the first separate minister for it, who introduced the idea of a broad national cultural policy into its vocabulary. For a while, only a few high-art forms of cultural expression found favor with the state. But the de-pillarization that began in the 1960s corrected this, for accompanying it was a process of democratization, which led to almost all forms of cultural expression -- ranging from the critically acclaimed to the experimental and the lowbrow -- being considered equally worthy of state support and encouragement, a trend that

²⁰ Renooy, Piet H. "The Netherlands: Neighborhood Development Enterprises." *The Emergence of Social Enterprise*. Eds. Borzaga, Carlo and Jacques Defourny. London: Routledge, 2001. 236-41. Print; Burger, Ary, and Vic Veldheer. "The Growth of the Nonprofit Sector in the Netherlands." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30.2 (2001): 221-46. Print.

²¹ The ministry has witnessed a number of reshuffles, mergers, and name changes over the years. I use the acronym OCW to denote both the current ministry and its many predecessors.

has continued till date.²² It is against the backdrop of this socio-cultural milieu that the founding and functioning of the Filmmuseum under de Vaal also unfolded itself.

NHF, Stedelijk, and the Young Jan de Vaal (1946-1971)

The Filmmuseum had its genesis as the Nederlandsch Historisch Filmarchief (NHF, the Dutch Historical Film Archive), which was founded privately in July 1946 by Piet Meerburg (resistance fighter and founder of the student cinema Kriterion), Paul Kijzer (film producer and distributor), and David van Staveren (ex-chairman of the Board of Film Censors) as a minor offset of the Kriterion theater in a small residential building in Amsterdam.²³ In developments reminiscent of the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) in Pune, but predating them by two decades, it was granted the membership of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) even before it was formally set up, courtesy of the close ties the founders enjoyed with Henri Langlois, along with the relatively less rigid functioning of FIAF during that period.²⁴ Kijzer's relative Jan de Vaal, an avid cinephile and a passionate film collector, joined the

²² Van Dulken, H.P., and D.J Elshout. *Cultural Policy in the Netherlands*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen, 1998. Print; van Hamersveld, Ineke, and Cecilia M. Willems. *Cultural Policy in the Netherlands*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap; Boekmanstudies, 2009. Print; Burger, Ary, Paul Dekker, and Stefan Toepler. "The Netherlands: Key Features of the Dutch Non Profit Sector." *Global Civil Society: Dimensions of the Nonprofit Sector*. Eds. Salamon, Lester M. and S. Wojciech Sokolowski. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies, 1999. 145-62. Print; Burger, Ary, and Vic Veldheer. "The Growth of the Nonprofit Sector in the Netherlands." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30.2 (2001): 221-46. Print; Bodenstern, Felicity. "National Museums in the Netherlands." *Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010: Conference Proceedings from Eunamus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28-30 April 2011*. Linköping, Sweden: Linköping University Press 2011. 595-624. Print.

²³ Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. 71-80, Lameris, Bregt. "Opnieuw Belicht - de Pas de Deux Tussen de Filmmuseale Praktijk en Filmhistorische Debatten." PhD Thesis. Utrecht University, 2007. Print. 4, van der Burg, Jos. "Van Filmmuseum Tot Eye aan het IJ." *Ons Amsterdam*. 4 April 2012. Web. 2 March 2013.

²⁴ For a discussion of the NFAI's quest for FIAF membership, see Kumar, Ramesh. "The Making of the National Film Archive of India: Notes from the "Archive of the Archive"." *The Moving Image* 13.1 (2013): 98-128. Print.

founders soon after and assumed responsibilities as the institution's director in 1947. And similar to P. K. Nair at the NFAI, he also gradually became the institution's arch-father and its "individual as institution," who guided its operations until his retirement nearly 40 years later.²⁵ During this time, he emerged as an important figure in the international film archiving community, becoming a member of the original male-dominated club of FIAF office-bearers who defined and established film archiving as a worldwide practice.²⁶

In 1952, the NHF merged with the Uitzicht Archief (Outlook Archive), another Dutch film foundation that was set up privately in 1949 to bring together the holdings of some likeminded film collectors, which was also being managed by de Vaal at that time.²⁷ In June the same year, the now bigger NHF renamed itself as the Nederlands Filmmuseum, thereby switching to a museum identity, most likely to align itself closer with the already burgeoning museum sector of the nation that could guarantee more visibility and legitimacy. But it continued its ties to FIAF rather than seeking membership in a similar museum association, displaying closer affiliations with the archive identity, thereby demonstrating the hybrid archive-museum identity it assumed from almost the very beginning.

²⁵ In using the term arch-father, I borrow from Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Print.

De Vaal's functioning was similar to many other individuals who became synonymous with the film archival institutions they managed, for instance Henri Langlois, Iris Barry, Earnest Lindgren, Jacques Ledoux, and P. K. Nair. For a discussion of their work, see Houston, Penelope. *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives*. London: British Film Institute, 1994. Print; Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print; Kumar, Ramesh. "On Scavenging and Salvaging: NFAI and Early Indian Cinema." *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 54.2 (2013): 152-57. Print; ---. "The Making of the National Film Archive of India: Notes from the "Archive of the Archive"." *The Moving Image* 13.1 (2013): 98-128. Print.

²⁶ The "old boys club" I refer to is well-known in the international film archiving circles. With the exception of Eileen Bowser and Iris Barry, and later, Kashiko Kawakita, the first generation of prominent figures in these circles were all male.

²⁷ Lameris, Bregt. "Opnieuw Belicht - de Pas de Deux Tussen de Filmmuseale Praktijk en Filmhistorische Debatten." PhD Thesis. Utrecht University, 2007. Print. 29, Beerekamp, Hans. "Steile Passie: Jan de Vaal (1922-2001)." *NRC Handelsblad*. 11 April 2001. Web. 4 February 2013. <<http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Nieuws/2001/04/11/Kun/08.html>>.

Soon after, with assistance from Willem Sandberg, the director of the large and well-established Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam -- a museum for modern art, contemporary art, and design -- it moved into a modest new space on the second floor of the Stedelijk in the busy museum district of the city. The change of name and address were most likely motivated by the need for more recognition and funds that could be accessed with the museum identity, and were perhaps inspired by the Film Department at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York and its attempts to legitimize film as a modern art form, which the Filmmuseum's founders and de Vaal were acutely aware of.²⁸

The institution matured rapidly at the Stedelijk, and earned credibility and cultural currency by holding film screenings and discussions in the Stedelijk's auditorium. It also started a membership drive and attracted new members by the hundreds, thereby mirroring the exponential growth of film museums and film clubs across the world during this period.²⁹ Incidentally, one of the earliest international experts it invited to give public lectures was the British film critic Marie Seton, who went on to play an instrumental role in the setting up of the NFAI in India subsequently.³⁰ It also strengthened its international networks, playing host to

²⁸ For the ways in which MoMA helped the medium gain legitimacy through its film department during this period, see Wasson, Haidee. *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. Print; Decherney, Peter. *Hollywood and the Culture Elite: How the Movies Became American*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. Print.

²⁹ Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. For discussions on the growth of film clubs worldwide during this period, see Wasson, Haidee. *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. Print; Decherney, Peter. *Hollywood and the Culture Elite: How the Movies Became American*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. Print; Frick, Caroline. *Saving Cinema: The Politics of Preservation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. Print; Houston, Penelope. *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives*. London: British Film Institute, 1994. Print.

³⁰ Lameris, Bregt. "Opnieuw Belicht - de Pas de Deux Tussen de Filmmuseale Praktijk en Filmhistorische Debatten." PhD Thesis. Utrecht University, 2007. Print. 122, Kumar, Ramesh. "The Making of the National Film Archive of India: Notes from the "Archive of the Archive"." *The Moving Image* 13.1 (2013): 98-128. Print.

FIAF members for their annual congress of 1952.³¹ But despite the growth that accompanied the Filmmuseum's move to the Stedelijk, the institution remained a legally separate entity, with a distinct governing board.

By 1953, the Filmmuseum had received further legitimacy as a memory institution in the form of an annual subsidy of NLG 10,000 from the OCW, its first from the state, and a further grant of USD 1,800 from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a marker of its international reputation. Its film acquisitions continued to increase steadily, and were supplemented by a growing collection of approximately 5,000 film stills and allied material, making it one of the earliest film institutions in the world to focus on the collection of film paraphernalia in addition to the films themselves.³² By 1954, it boasted a membership of 2,300 individuals, while visitors for its screenings reached 10,000 per season.³³ In 1956-57, the Filmmuseum acquired the famed collection of the Dutch cinema owner and film distributor Jean Desmet (1875-1956), which comprised of around 900 films made between 1907 and 1916, film publicity material, and his business archive. This was to become the institution's defining collection in the years to come, even being inscribed into the UNESCO Memory of the World Register more recently in 2011.³⁴ The institution gained prominence within the international film archiving community through such activities, and

³¹ "Past Congresses." FIAF. Web. 20 April 2015.

<<http://www.fiafnet.org/uk/congresses/pastCongress.html> >.

³² "Nederlands Filmmuseum." October 1953. *Archives A - Archives, Amsterdam, Filmmuseum*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

³³ Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. 77, van der Burg, Jos. "Van Filmmuseum Tot Eye aan het IJ." *Ons Amsterdam*. 4 April 2012. Web. 2 March 2013. <<http://www.onsamsterdam.nl/tijdschrift/jaargang-2012/1396-nummer-4-april-2012?start=3> >.

³⁴ ---. "Van Filmmuseum Tot Eye aan het IJ." *Ons Amsterdam*. 4 April 2012. Web. 2 March 2013. <<http://www.onsamsterdam.nl/tijdschrift/jaargang-2012/1396-nummer-4-april-2012?start=3> >; Delpeut, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013. For a discussion on the provenance and significance of the Desmet collection, see Blom, Ivo Leopold. *Jean Desmet and the Early Dutch Film Trade: Film Culture in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003. Print; Delpeut, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013.

played host to the annual FIAF congress for the second time in 1960, making it the first institution to have hosted two FIAF congresses.³⁵

With an expansion of the Filmmuseum's activities, and a growing collection of films that numbered 30,000 by 1961, space became a concern. Coupled with Sandberg's retirement in 1962 and the Stedelijk's refusal to allow the Filmmuseum additional space, this led to its relationship with the Stedelijk's management becoming strained.³⁶ De Vaal began searching for new premises to house the institution, and took note of the relatively large Vondelpark Pavilion. Located in the heart of Vondelpark, Amsterdam's equivalent of New York's Central Park, the Pavilion was almost a century old, originally built as a beautiful catering facility with domed turrets, arched windows, and fluted half-columns, with a terrace and external open spaces overlooking the park and its placid lakes. It had a rich history, and had been home to a number of organizations and businesses over time. Through the 1960s, de Vaal mobilized the Dutch cinephile community and sections of the media in lobbying for the Pavilion to be lent to the Filmmuseum by its owner, the City of Amsterdam.³⁷

Meanwhile, by way of de Vaal's services to FIAF, his stature -- and consequently that of the Filmmuseum -- grew significantly in the film archiving community internationally. In 1968, he developed the blueprint for a film archive building in consultation with the Department of Architecture, Technische Universiteit Delft (Delft University of Technology), supplementing it with a study on the optimal conditions for passive nitrate film preservation in collaboration with the Nederlandse Organisatie voor Toegepast Natuurwetenschappelijk Onderzoek

³⁵ de Vaal, Jan. Letter to FIAF Members. 1960. *Congres 1960 Amsterdam 1*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; *50 Ans D'archives Du Film: 1938-1988*. Brussels: FIAF, 1988. Print. 28-29.

³⁶ Van der Burg, Jos. "Van Filmmuseum Tot Eye aan het IJ." *Ons Amsterdam*. 4 April 2012. Web. 2 March 2013. <<http://www.onsamsterdam.nl/tijdschrift/jaargang-2012/1396-nummer-4-april-2012?start=3>>.

³⁷ Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. 84-90, Beerekamp, Hans. "Het Paleis Van de Geniale Voddenraper." *NRC Handelsblad*. 30 October 1996. Web. 4 February 2013. <<http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Nieuws/1996/10/30/Kun/06.html>>.

(Netherlands Organization for Applied Scientific Research). This resulted in a publication that was translated into French, German, and English, and distributed to FIAF members internationally. He followed this with another report for FIAF on the preservation of film posters in 1970, and interestingly, also communicated with P. K. Nair the same year answering Nair's queries about optimal storage conditions and building designs for possible film vaults for the NFAI, which were originally addressed to FIAF.³⁸

Together, such endeavors by de Vaal demonstrate the leadership position the Filmmuseum assumed in research projects designed to benefit the field of film preservation, as well as in extending support to film archivists from other nations. Despite the Netherlands being the location for de Vaal's research studies and original publications, they were never meant for the Filmmuseum alone, or even just for the Netherlands. His concerns clearly lay beyond the needs of the institution he was entrusted with administering, and extended to the safekeeping of cinematic heritage *per se*, irrespective of its nationality, for he saw himself belonging more with the international community of film archivists than with any Dutch group, whether of archivists or museum professionals. The Filmmuseum's claim to being the national film archive of the Netherlands was implicit rather than explicit under de Vaal, an incidental claim by way of its location in Amsterdam rather than being part of a strategic or conscious design to represent the nation. This made the Filmmuseum's functioning during this period more transnational than national, which I also elaborate on again in Chapter 7.

In 1971, de Vaal finally managed to secure partial space in his dream Pavilion in Vondelpark, and started shifting the Filmmuseum to its new premises, giving cinema an autonomous and standalone "temple" in the Netherlands, but one that was not necessarily

³⁸ De Vaal, Jan. Letter to Sami Sekeroglu. 27 April 1970. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; ---. Letter to Jacques Ledoux, FIAF. 6 October 1971. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; Lameris, Bregt. "Opnieuw Belicht - de Pas de Deux Tussen de Filmmuseale Praktijk en Filmhistorische Debatten." PhD Thesis. Utrecht University, 2007. Print. 63, --. Letter to P. K. Nair. 23 April 1971.

Dutch.³⁹ His prolonged quest for space in the Pavilion was the Filmmuseum's first concerted effort at giving the institution's location considerable importance, in ways foregrounding its museum identity once more. While the need for more space was self-evident and easy to justify, his insistence on finding an attractive, monumental, and centrally located building, and then desiring the Pavilion, appears to be linked to the nineteenth century idea of a museum building that harked back to classical designs implying age and continuity through time.⁴⁰ For the underfunded and little-known Filmmuseum, de Vaal's choice of space can be seen as being unnecessary, since comparatively larger premises in less prime locations of the city or its outskirts would have probably saved him much money that could have been directed towards film preservation efforts instead, which would have been closely aligned with the institution's archive identity. However, having operated the institution from the Stedelijk and identified it as a museum, de Vaal was aware of the benefits of public visibility in the long run.

On the one hand, the centrality and monumentality of the Pavilion were expected to provide the institution with more footfalls, spread awareness, and legitimize cinema and its preservation even further, while on the other hand, the competition for state subsidies necessitated that the institution remained prominent and visible in the public sphere, which was more difficult to achieve with an archive identity. However, his adoption of the museum identity was limited to these two functions, with the exterior only being employed to make the collection at its core more attractive and presentable. He saw himself essentially as a collector of films rather than as a curator, and his interests rested more with catering to a small group of

³⁹ Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. 81-94, 100, Lameris, Bregt. "Opnieuw Belicht - de Pas de Deux Tussen de Filmmuseale Praktijk en Filmhistorische Debatten." PhD Thesis. Utrecht University, 2007. Print. 5, 109.

⁴⁰ Duncan, Carol. "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship." *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Eds. Karp, Ivan and Steven Lavine. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991. 88-103. Print; ---. "The Art Museum as Ritual." *The Art of Art History*. Ed. Preziosi, Donald. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. 473-85. Print; Lord, Beth. "Foucault's Museum: Difference, Representation, and Genealogy." *Museum and Society* 4.1 (2006): 1-14. Print.

cinephiles -- while appearing superficially attractive to the state and the general populace -- rather than fulfilling a clearly defined larger public function that is expected of a museum. In other words, under de Vaal, the Filmmuseum was essentially an archive and a film club, but adopted the identity of a museum so as to find funding and public appeal. But his strategy only yielded partial results.

The Ageing Jan de Vaal and Vondelpark Pavilion, from Temple to Mausoleum (1971-1986)

The period that followed, which began with the institution's move to Vondelpark in 1971 and ended with de Vaal's retirement in 1986, was tumultuous by all accounts. Moving the Filmmuseum took more than four years, with the institution transferring its functions to the new premises bit by bit, and the Pavilion being formally inaugurated on 14 October 1975.⁴¹ At the time of moving, de Vaal was able to generate enough funds and source the expertise required to partially refurbish the Pavilion, but making the institution fully functional from it required surmounting additional challenges.

The Filmmuseum was still not the Pavilion's only tenant and had to continue sharing it with a few other businesses and organizations.⁴² The ageing Pavilion was run down in many sections and required extensive repairs to suit the needs of the institution, which needed additional funds that were unavailable. Vacating the Stedelijk meant losing out on many ancillary benefits that the institution had enjoyed, for it now had no staff to manage publicity or even a full time clerk, and such functions as catering, ticketing, and cloak rooms had to be handled independently while battling insufficient resources. The central location of the

⁴¹ "News from the Members: Amsterdam, Netherlands Filmmuseum." *Information Bulletin of the International Federation of Film Archives*. Amsterdam: International Federation of Film Archives, December 1975. Print.

⁴² Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. 34-39, 95-103, Beerekamp, Hans. "Het Paleis Van de Geniale Voddenraper." *NRC Handelsblad*. 30 October 1996. Web. 4 February 2013. <<http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Nieuws/1996/10/30/Kun/06.html> >.

beautiful Pavilion and its charming surroundings proved advantageous, but also appealed to fitness enthusiasts who took pleasure in using the Pavilion's staircases for exercising, and vandals who damaged the building. The restaurant operating from the ground floor, managed by others, attracted rambunctious juveniles and drunken tourists, and the access roads became battlegrounds for parking wars. Vondelpark became a favored campsite for noisy hippies, who frolicked nude in the lakes close by, and frequently used the Pavilion's ledges for sleeping and relaxing. And added to these were minor incidents of fire. While sounding like routine day-to-day troubles, they took up a lot of de Vaal's time and resources, and also led to disruptions in the Filmmuseum's activities.⁴³

De Vaal is reported to have been a good administrator through all this, especially for the first few years. He converted one of the Pavilion's central halls into a 110 seat screening theatre and an adjacent space into a smaller viewing room for 15. He also created an exhibition hall next to the theatre, and set up film preservation and printing facilities, which many other institutions worldwide, including the NFAI in India, have not been able to achieve till date.⁴⁴ Inspired by a rethinking of film screening spaces especially in Italy, France, and Belgium, and by such experiments as Peter Kubelka's "Invisible Cinema" at the Anthology Film Archives in New York in 1970, he spruced up the Filmmuseum's décor to make the premises modernist, arty, and differentiated from commercial cinemas, and decorated them with film posters, two life sized female figures, and film cameras. For him, a visit to the Filmmuseum needed to be an immersive experience, for which he deliberately created physical as well as mental walls between his screenings for discerning cinephiles, and the general public and commercial cinemas. He did not take kindly to distractions, and is reported to have been so

⁴³ Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. 23-39, 95-103.

⁴⁴ "News from the Members: Amsterdam, Netherlands Filmmuseum." *Information Bulletin of the International Federation of Film Archives*. Amsterdam: International Federation of Film Archives, December 1975. Print.

particular as to insist on making the audience hear the gentle hum of the projector running during silent film screenings (only some of which could afford to have live music accompaniment, which was limited to a single piano).⁴⁵

Additionally, he located a library next to the office and screening spaces, thereby making study a part of the film experience and creating a continuum between the two. Added to this was his emphasis on film education and the cultivation of a cinephile community around the Filmmuseum -- not unlike the NFAI-FTII nexus -- which yielded slow but steady results.⁴⁶ But accompanying these developments was also the shifting of some of the Filmmuseum's back-end activities -- the film vaults, and restoration, preservation, and documentation work -- to new premises in the town of Overveen located 25 kilometers away sometime during the 1970s. This was mostly in response to space constraints, but was possibly also resulting from health and safety regulations, especially those concerning nitrate films. However, in the process, de Vaal effectively divided the Filmmuseum's hybrid identity into its archive functions that comprised of preservation activities, which were moved offsite, and its museum functions comprised of screenings, library and reading room facilities, and other public activities, which stayed at Vondelpark.⁴⁷ This separation of physical spaces between the archive and the museum identities and functions, not common among film archives, remains.

⁴⁵ Lameris, Bregt. "Opnieuw Belicht - de Pas de Deux Tussen de Filmmuseale Praktijk en Filmhistorische Debatten." PhD Thesis. Utrecht University, 2007. Print. 109-12, For a brief discussion, and images, of Kubelka's Invisible Cinema, see Jahn, Pamela. "Monument Film: An Interview with Peter Kubelka." *Close-Up*. Web. 10 January 2015. <<https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/library/documents/monument-film-an-interview-with-peter-kubelka/>>.

⁴⁶ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; Lameris, Bregt. "Opnieuw Belicht - de Pas de Deux Tussen de Filmmuseale Praktijk en Filmhistorische Debatten." PhD Thesis. Utrecht University, 2007. Print. 111-12.

⁴⁷ De Vaal, Jan. "Reconfirmation Status Members of FIAF." 24 April 1978. *Amsterdam reconf. 78 84 89 94*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; ---. "Reconfirmation Status Members of FIAF." 10 October 1984. *Amsterdam reconf. 78 84 89 94*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

Nonetheless, his diligent investment in collecting select films and paraphernalia from the most obscure of sources earned him the title of the “genius rag picker,” while the guest lectures and discussions he organized, although infrequent, garnered him further recognition.⁴⁸ In 1977, he also successfully steered the Filmmuseum through a controversy with the Polish National Film Archive over unauthorized copying of films by the latter.⁴⁹ Alongside, his contributions to FIAF and the international film archiving community were consistent. He served as FIAF’s deputy secretary general and treasurer, editor of FIAF bulletins, and a long-standing member of its Executive Committee.⁵⁰

However, between the late-1970s and mid-1980s, the Filmmuseum and its Pavilion gradually lost much of their sheen and went into disarray for reasons that are not well documented. Things began to deteriorate with a hiring freeze in 1978, squatters in the Pavilion in 1980, and the Pavilion being open for visitors only two days a week at the turn of the decade. Even while active acquisitions and unsolicited deposits continued, most films stayed in their cans and remained uncared for.⁵¹ In 1982, de Vaal himself reported a “serious decline” in all of the Filmmuseum’s activities to FIAF, and also called it a “difficult time” for the institution two years later, attributing it to the lack of funds and resources.⁵² He was also

⁴⁸ Beerekamp, Hans. "Het Paleis Van de Geniale Voddenraper." *NRC Handelsblad*. 30 October 1996. Web. 4 February 2013. <<http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Nieuws/1996/10/30/Kun/06.html>>; ---. "Steile Passie: Jan de Vaal (1922-2001)." *NRC Handelsblad*. 11 April 2001. Web. 4 February 2013. <<http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Nieuws/2001/04/11/Kun/08.html>>.

⁴⁹ de Vaal, Jan. Letter to Jacques Ledoux. 11 May 1977. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁵⁰ Klaue, Wolfgang. Letter to Jan de Vaal. 15 May 1980. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁵¹ Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. 95-103.

⁵² "News from the Members: Amsterdam, Netherlands Filmmuseum." *Information Bulletin of the International Federation of Film Archives*. Amsterdam: International Federation of Film Archives, December 1982. Vol. XXIII. Print; "News from the Members: Amsterdam, Netherlands Filmmuseum." *Information Bulletin of the International Federation of Film Archives*. Amsterdam: International Federation of Film Archives, December 1982. Vol. XXIII. Print; de Vaal, Jan. "Reconfirmation Status Members of FIAF." 10 October 1984. *Amsterdam reconf. 78 84 89 94*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

constantly at loggerheads with the state over issues ranging from funding, the rules and regulations governing the Pavilion and its surroundings, and the need for a deputy for him (again reminding one of P. K. Nair at the NFAl in India). He reluctantly agreed to the appointment of a deputy in 1984. Frans Maks was hired, but the two did not have a good working relationship.⁵³

De Vaal did not officially let his FIAF allies into the details of his troubles, choosing instead to paint a relatively positive image of the Filmmuseum to the international film archiving community. In annual appraisals, he focused on such "achievements" as an extra USD 35,000 grant from the OCW for film preservation work, his successful acquisition of World War II bunkers as vaults for the institution's holdings, the leasing of a new building in Overveen, and the hiring of new staff members. He suggested that while a financial crunch had prevented him from hiring additional staff, it was about to change soon, and even observed that the troubled times he had previously mentioned in passing had been resolved successfully.⁵⁴

Notwithstanding his efforts, he attracted severe criticism from within the Netherlands, with stakeholders lambasting the decreased frequency of public events at the Filmmuseum, the dull programming if and when screenings took place, the lack of transparency, the trouble

⁵³ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; Delpout, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013; van der Burg, Jos. "Van Filmmuseum Tot Eye aan het IJ." *Ons Amsterdam*. 4 April 2012. Web. 2 March 2013.

<<http://www.onsamsterdam.nl/tijdschrift/jaargang-2012/1396-nummer-4-april-2012?start=3>>.
⁵⁴ "News from the Members: Amsterdam, Netherlands Filmmuseum." *Information Bulletin of the International Federation of Film Archives*. Amsterdam: International Federation of Film Archives, March 1981. Vol. XX. Print; "News from the Members: Amsterdam, Netherlands Filmmuseum." *Information Bulletin of the International Federation of Film Archives*. Amsterdam: International Federation of Film Archives, December 1982. Vol. XXIII. Print; "News from the Members: Amsterdam, Netherlands Filmmuseum." *Information Bulletin of the International Federation of Film Archives*. Amsterdam: International Federation of Film Archives, March 1985. Vol. XXIII. Print.

It is unlikely that those close to him, such as Eileen Bowser, Jacques Ledoux, and even Henri Langlois were unaware of the issues at the Filmmuseum, but they all seem to have chosen to remain silent rather than discuss the issues openly at FIAF meetings, which they routinely did discuss for other member institutions.

in accessing the films in the institution's holdings, and de Vaal's ineffective and inflexible one-man-show management style (which was not unlike Nair's). During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Filmmuseum started being called "a mausoleum," "an ossuary," "a locked-down bastion," and a place that had receded into "a state of hibernation." De Vaal was castigated for "collecting junk," and accused of making the Filmmuseum an elitist club that had fallen apart: a secretive and "xenophobic" space where film cans "gathered dust," which he protected zealously "from the evils of the outside world."⁵⁵ Peter Delpout, one of de Vaal's successors at the Filmmuseum, who is also a writer and filmmaker, recalled the following about the Filmmuseum during this period in his interview with me:

When I came in and saw what was going on in the archive, it was really a mess. I was sitting at a desk, and at some point, thought "what's that in the corner?" Film cans! It was a famous 1912 film on the South Pole, but lying outside, with half of the film gone. Nitrate. No one was caring for it. . . It was horrible! I was angry. . . There must have been people here who could have looked at those cans. They were paralyzed for the lack of funds, but they had also stopped working! And this was despite the deputy coming in in 1984, not the right person in the right place."⁵⁶

Additionally, de Vaal's fascination and close personal ties with Joris Ivens, one of the most well-known filmmakers from the Netherlands, drew him considerable flak despite his success in procuring Ivens' films for the Filmmuseum in 1964.⁵⁷ De Vaal promoted Ivens unabashedly and extended him unusual patronage, but allegedly at the expense of many others. Ivens was one of the founder members of De Nederlandsche Filmliga (The Dutch Film League, popularly called Filmliga), an influential filmmakers collective that operated between 1927 and 1933, which advanced a form of avant-garde "pure cinema" that wanted cinema to

⁵⁵ Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. 95-103, Beerekamp, Hans. "Steile Passie: Jan de Vaal (1922-2001)." *NRC Handelsblad*. 11 April 2001. Web. 4 February 2013. <<http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Nieuws/2001/04/11/Kun/08.html> >.

⁵⁶ Delpout, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013.

⁵⁷ "Additional Report of Nederlands Filmmuseum for FIAF Congress Moscow." 1964. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

be free from all commercial influences, especially Hollywood's "evil" ones. Continuing with its cause, de Vaal allegedly invested disproportionate energies into safekeeping the Filmliga collection and similarly inspired avant-garde films at the Filmmuseum, even while ignoring many other genres of cinema. "He became a one subject expert -- Joris Ivens. That was his big thing. The archive became much more a Joris Ivens archive rather than a Dutch archive," opines Delpout.⁵⁸

Hoos Blotkamp, de Vaal's successor, on being asked by me about his tenure, suggested that many -- but not all -- of his failings during this period can be explained through copyright issues. These possibly forced him to work in increasingly secretive ways. "[He] didn't dare tell the world what he had in the vaults for the fear of them [producers and directors] coming to get them, because they could," she reckoned, which was especially true for commercial films. Simultaneously, the personal and largely informal agreements he had with some film distributors seem to have resulted in him receiving as many as 30-40 copies of select films, all of which he retained without having the means to manage them. "The first generation of archive people [including de Vaal] were very passionate," she stated, "but they kept their babies to the breasts and didn't want to throw them away. . . . Collect he did, and indiscriminately, but he could not care for the films properly," added Blotkamp.⁵⁹

She also suggested that as the community of first generation cinephiles around the Filmmuseum grew old, de Vaal failed to reach out to a wider audience and introduce them to the many treasures the Filmmuseum held. Additionally, he did not keep pace with the changing needs of the Filmmuseum. Delpout and his successor Ruud Visschedijk echoed similar sentiments in their interviews with me, adding that while the lack of funds was a significant reason for the Filmmuseum's decline, equally significant was de Vaal's lack of

⁵⁸ Delpout, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013.

⁵⁹ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013.

creativity in dealing with its many issues.⁶⁰ Additionally, he suffered from ill health, had met with a major accident in 1980 and a heart attack subsequently, and had been unable to visit the Filmmuseum from 1984 to 1986.⁶¹

However, despite de Vaal's many failings, as Delpout pointed out, "it would be unfair to say that Jan de Vaal created the mess. He did what he could, but the fact was that it was in a mess, and he could not have cleaned it himself."⁶² And as Visschedijk reminded me, de Vaal "did incidentally manage to save a bulk of the films he was sitting on, even if not actively." Additionally, his fascination with the Filmliga and allied film material contributed immensely to the building of the Filmmuseum's reputation and identity -- and subsequently that of EYE -- as an excellent repository for silent cinema as discussed later.⁶³

In 1986, after the sudden cancellation of a FIAF Executive Committee meeting that was to be held in Amsterdam (which de Vaal attributed to the state's "new restrictions concerning special financial expenses"), he made a low-key departure from the Filmmuseum, most likely due to mounting pressure from all sides.⁶⁴ The OCW had allegedly been unhappy with both de Vaal and "his board" for some time, and a study it had commissioned on the Filmmuseum (conducted by the Raad voor Cultuur, or RvC), had criticized the institution heavily and recommended major changes.⁶⁵ In a clear demonstration of the "arm-twisting" the OCW was capable of, it also ensured that the Filmmuseum's board was dissolved soon after

⁶⁰ Delpout, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013.

⁶¹ Klaue, Wolfgang. Letter to Jan de Vaal. 15 May 1980. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013.

⁶² Delpout, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013.

⁶³ Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013.

⁶⁴ De Vaal, Jan. Letter to Members of the FIAF Executive Committee. 13 June 1986. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁶⁵ Delpout, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013. The Raad voor Cultuur is the Dutch state's legal adviser for arts and culture, providing solicited recommendations as well as unsolicited periodic advice on the government's cultural policy, mostly to the OCW. Its recommendations are not binding, but carry considerable weightage, which is discussed later. See "Over Ons." Raad voor Cultuur. Web. February 20 2013. <<http://www.cultuur.nl/9/0/over-ons.aspx>>.

de Vaal's departure and an entirely new one instituted in place, with the aim of achieving "a broader approach to the general public."⁶⁶ This abrupt rupture in the Filmmuseum's functioning made it one of the select few cultural institutions in the Netherlands to have experienced such ire and a direct intervention from the state.

Even though there were some strong protests from the international film archiving community over de Vaal's departure, the Dutch cinephile community remained largely silent. "A tragic fate," as Delpout puts it, especially given that de Vaal had spent nearly 40 years of his life building the Filmmuseum and serving its cause.⁶⁷ While this may be seen as testament to how he remained better known outside the Netherlands than within the nation, it also evidences Dutch pragmatism and fairness that ensured that he -- despite being a long standing arch-father -- was removed from his position for that very reason, which dissolved the power he had accrued. He went on to win a special Gouden Kalf (Golden Calf) award at the Nederlands Film Festival in 1997 for a lifetime of contributions to cinema. Meanwhile, he also became an unofficial ambassador for Ivens and his films, an engagement that continued until his death in 2001.⁶⁸

The similarities between de Vaal's working and that of Nair are apparent, with both individuals giving their own personal preferences and personas more importance than the institution they steered. In the process, they failed to install guidelines and mechanisms in place that would enable the sustenance of the institution with or without them being at the helm of affairs, thereby failing to ensure continuity. However, unlike Nair, de Vaal was not privileging the presentation of films over their preservation -- i.e., leaning more towards Langlois than Lindgren in the debate between the two -- as his floundering was not only about some aspects of the film archiving project but about the project itself, which included both the

⁶⁶ "Nederlands Filmmuseum - Amsterdam." Memo. May 1987. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁶⁷ Delpout, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013.

⁶⁸ Assorted documents. Amsterdam. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

preservation and the presentation of the films in his care. While in the first three decades of his career -- from the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s -- he built the institution laboriously, in the last decade -- from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s -- he could not successfully adapt to the changing social and cultural landscape of the nation or make the institution he steered do so. Nair did not have similar trouble in negotiating with the system he was a part of.

But while India continues to mythologize Nair, the Netherlands was quick to realize it needed to steer away from such hero-worshipping. Instead, it gave credit where it was due, but also meted criticism where it was deserved. Separating the individual from the institution, the Dutch state replaced de Vaal with a more efficient administrator, Hoos Blotkamp -- a very wise and timely intervention even if harsh towards de Vaal -- who not only revived and revitalized the institution but also ended the arch-father era of the institution for good, Discuss this in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the founding of the Nederlands Filmmuseum, the chief predecessor of EYE Film Institute Netherlands, as a small private film archive that was enmeshed within the larger Dutch arts and culture sector comprised of many such privately owned but state subsidized non-profit institutions. It narrated how the institution flourished under the leadership of Jan de Vaal, its arch-father, who passionately expanded its activities by initially relocating the institution to the Stedelijk Museum of Art in the early 1950s, and later to its own independent premises in the Vondelpark Pavilion in the early 1970s, giving the institution much fame in the international audiovisual archiving community. And it also described how the move to Vondelpark Pavilion was strategic for de Vaal, based on giving the institution a museum identity and making it more attractive to the state and various other stakeholders. But this led to both its archive functions -- which comprised of film preservation activities -- as well as museum functions -- which comprised of film presentation activities --

being ignored during the last decade of de Vaal's tenure from the mid-1970s to mid-1980s. This resulted in the institution falling into a state of disarray, serving neither the national nor the international community well, which forced the Dutch state to intervene in its functioning and remove de Vaal from his position.

In the process, the chapter demonstrated the transnational functioning of the institution during the first phase of de Vaal's tenure, and also illustrated the flaws with the arch-father model of governing national film archives. The Dutch state was quick to notice and correct this unlike the Indian state with P. K. Nair, ensuring that the institution revived itself from the state of disarray. The ways in which this revival was undertaken by de Vaal's successor Hoos Blotkamp are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6

THE FILM MUSEUM'S REVIVAL UNDER HOOS BLOTKAMP: CULTURAL CLUSTERS AND THE ABORTED MOVE TO ROTTERDAM, 1987-2000

In this chapter, I discuss the Filmmuseum's successful revival under the aegis of Hoos Blotkamp starting in 1987, whose skillful negotiations with the state as well as other stakeholders -- and innovative film programming of "bits and pieces" through team efforts involving her deputies Eric de Kuyper, Peter Delpout, and Ruud Visschedijk -- allowed the institution to not only reclaim but enhance its stature both nationally and internationally during her tenure. I also examine how the Filmmuseum's aborted move to Rotterdam in the late 1990s -- a response to space constraints and the rise of cultural clusters in the Dutch social and political landscape -- led to a public battle between Blotkamp and the head of the institution's governing board Dig Itha, which resulted in Blotkamp's forced departure from the institution in 2000. Additionally, I continue to explore the ways in which the institution negotiated with its hybrid archive/museum identity.

In the process, this chapter demonstrates how the move from an arch-father to a collaborative team can be beneficial for a national film archive, ensuring continuity and stability despite changes in leadership. And it illustrates how a national film archive can assume a highly political character despite appearing to be marginal in the larger socio-political milieu of a nation. And further, it displays how central a role the location of a national film archive can assume in its functioning. However, in order to better understand the historical narrative that follows, it would be helpful to first discuss the changes that took place in Dutch cultural policy starting in the 1980s, and the subsequent emergence of cultural clusters in the nation starting in the 1990s, which impacted the Filmmuseum's functioning in profound ways.

Changes in Dutch Cultural Policy, and the Emergence of Cultural Clusters (1980s-2000s)

As mentioned previously in chapter 5, the Netherlands introduced a broad national cultural policy into its vocabulary in the 1940s, and democratized its understanding of culture from being elitist to all-encompassing through the 1960s. Since the late-1980s, the Dutch state has been working with narrow and well-defined cultural policy plans aimed at finding an optimum balance between one and more of three dominant ideas: freedom of expression for everyone, diversity (or “pluriformity”) in the cultural output, and a measure of quality, which are presented to the parliament every four years. These plans describe the economic, social, and political considerations underlying the state’s investments in the sector, and indicate which kinds of cultural institutions, societies, and artists are to be funded, and through what criteria.¹ They have a separate cultural heritage component, which is subdivided into four categories: museums, heritage conservation, archeology, and archives. EYE applies for -- and receives -- its subsidies under the museum category of these plans, as did its predecessor the Filmmuseum.

The rationale behind these four-year plans has been twofold: one, offer the cultural institutions, societies, and artists stability and respite from financial worries for a few years at a time so that they can focus on long term goals instead (as a general rule, the plans cannot be altered even if the government and cabinet changes before the four year period is over), and two, make cultural institutions, especially large ones with recurring funding such as the Filmmuseum/EYE, more accountable for the funds they receive by compelling them to reassess their plans vis-à-vis achievements every few years. In order to be included in the plans, cultural institutions have had to apply for funds one-and-a-half years in advance of the

¹ Van Dulken, H.P., and D.J Elshout. *Cultural Policy in the Netherlands*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen, 1998. Print; van Hamersveld, Ineke, and Cecilia M. Willems. *Cultural Policy in the Netherlands*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap; Boekmanstudies, 2009. Print.

policy formulations, explaining what aims they wish to realize against the criteria set by the state and with what means, based on which the nature and amount of their subsidies, or their exclusion from the plans, has been decided upon.²

The process of awarding these subsidies has been highly decentralized. Recognizing that the idea of quality is highly subjective, and in keeping with the trends in the non-profit sector at large, the state has borrowed from the nineteenth century Dutch statesman Johan Rudolph Thorbecke -- who stated that "the government is no judge of the arts and sciences" -- to deliberately keep itself at an arm's length from the sector. Instead, it has set up independent advisory bodies such as the Raad voor Cultuur (RvC, the Council for Culture), comprised of external experts from the field, so as to keep its own role limited to broad policy formulations while leaving their specifics and implementation to others.³ Consequently, it is the RvC and other independent bodies that act as the judges of quality rather than the state, and they also advise the state on the nature and extent of subsidies various institutions, societies, and individual artists should receive.⁴

However, despite its apparent merits, the system has been criticized for being ad-hoc, with the advisory bodies not being as independent of political interference as had been

² Van Dulken, H.P., and D.J Elshout. *Cultural Policy in the Netherlands*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen, 1998. Print; van Hamersveld, Ineke, and Cecilia M. Willems. *Cultural Policy in the Netherlands*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap; Boekmanstudies, 2009. Print; Blokland, Hans. "Planning in Dutch Cultural Policy: An Attempt at Mixed Scanning." *Acta Politica, Jg. XXVIII. 2* (1993). Print. For large institutions, towards the latter half of the 2000s, the process of applying for these plans was substituted with a process of visitations by state representatives every four years, but that was changed again in subsequent decisions. See den Hamer, Sandra. Letter to Staatssecretaris van OCW. 11 October 2011. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam.

³ The council came into being on 22 November 1995, while its predecessor Raad voor de Kunst (Council for the Arts) was set up in 1947.

⁴ Van Dulken, H.P., and D.J Elshout. *Cultural Policy in the Netherlands*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen, 1998. Print; van Hamersveld, Ineke, and Cecilia M. Willems. *Cultural Policy in the Netherlands*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap; Boekmanstudies, 2009. Print.

originally envisaged. As a result, most of the decision-making has been taking place in what has been called the “(grey) fringe area of state bureaucracy and interest group organizations,” in which lobbying plays a crucial role, especially since the Dutch arts and culture sector is a relatively small one in which “everyone soon knows one another personally, positions and duties readily change and mutual dependencies are great.”⁵

Alongside, since the 1990s, the state has also steadily reduced the subsidies it has offered in the sector, made criteria for funding stricter, and increasingly distanced itself even further from the sector. Simultaneously, it has brought the sector closer to the open market, and attempted to reorient it from being supply oriented to being demand oriented. It has implemented this by adopting a more business-like approach, aggressively pursuing public-private partnerships, seeking guidance from business consultancies in matters of cultural policy, and introducing market terminology into cultural policy documents.⁶

Consequently, cultural institutions have had to look for other sources of income, mainly from the open market, and incorporate revenue generating commercial ventures into their ambit. Professionalization, commercialization, business-like management practices, and market research have become more commonplace in their day-to-day functioning, and the lines between them and commercial enterprises have become increasingly blurred. Predictably, these developments have resulted in heated public debates about the relationship between the state and culture, which have continued unabashed for years, but have done little to reverse the trends. Additionally, the state has promoted mergers between various

⁵ Blokland, Hans. "Planning in Dutch Cultural Policy: An Attempt at Mixed Scanning." *Acta Politica*, Jg. XXVIII. 2 (1993). Print. 162.

⁶ Burger, Ary, and Vic Veldheer. "The Growth of the Nonprofit Sector in the Netherlands." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 30.2 (2001): 221-46. Print; Renooy, Piet H. "The Netherlands: Neighborhood Development Enterprises." *The Emergence of Social Enterprise*. Eds. Borzaga, Carlo and Jacques Defourny. London: Routledge, 2001. 236-41. Print; Bodenstein, Felicity. "National Museums in the Netherlands." *Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010: Conference Proceedings from Eunamus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28-30 April 2011*. Linköping, Sweden: Linköping University Press 2011. 595-624. Print.

institutions, guided by the general belief that such mergers would lead to an overall reduction of expenses and fragmentation in the sector in the long run, which has resulted in the creation of bigger cultural institutions and umbrella organizations that are able to stake claim to larger subsidies through their combined sizes and lobbying efforts.

It was against the backdrop of these changes in the Dutch arts and culture sector that the Filmmuseum's revival under the aegis of Hoos Blotkamp as well as its aborted move to Rotterdam in the late 1990s took place. The institution was being fully subsidized by the state from the mid-1980s, but competition for subsidies had increased, as had the pressure for generating additional funding from elsewhere, making it contemplate the move. Alongside, the idea of cultural clusters had also taken root in the Dutch political and cultural milieu.

Cultural clusters are loosely defined groups of arts & culture organizations, institutions, and businesses that operate in close proximity of each other, ranging from a single building or an office block to an entire street or more, which impart that area with a distinctive cultural identity. Such clusters exist across the globe, with the Temple Bar area in Dublin, the museums quarter in Vienna, the Custard Factory in Birmingham, the fashion and textile quarter of Ticinese in Milan, and the multimedia cluster of Hoxton in London being some prominent European examples. While some cultural clusters are restricted only to cultural establishments, most of them also incorporate additional businesses, ranging from bars and restaurants to retail spaces and entertainment centers, creating synergies between culture, leisure, and tourism.⁷

A majority of such clusters emerge on their own, but since the 1990s, the Dutch state has been practicing a conscious top-down approach to creating them. In what has been termed as "enterprise culture" by the scholar Hans Mommaas and explained as resulting from cultural globalization by the scholar Jan Nijman, the state has combined culture and economy,

⁷ Mommaas, Hans. "Cultural Clusters and the Post-Industrial City: Towards the Remapping of Urban Cultural Policy." *Urban Studies* 41.3 (2004): 507-32. Print.

and aggressively promoted the marketing of culture as commodity to stimulate the development of critical infrastructure, even issuing a report titled Culture and Urban Renewal in 2006.⁸

A popular method has been by adding city planning to the mix, usually through urban redevelopment projects that convert old warehouses, factories and dockyards -- the vestigial remains of industrialization that have fallen by the wayside in post-industrial globalized cities -- into new museums, cultural centers, and entertainment halls, thereby creating microcosms of cultural consumption, which enhance the creative economy by tapping into the cultural tourism market to recharge and gentrify the surrounding areas and give them a new identity.⁹ To borrow from Simon Knell's commentary on museums in general, "today, the old political strategy of highlighting the grandeur of a country has turned into an economic resource for attracting a good proportion of the rapidly growing tourism industry."¹⁰

Consequently, the traditionally autonomous arts and culture sector now involves actors such as economic development agencies, urban planners, and private investors in addition to the state and the non-profits, transforming it dramatically. By integrating the development of cultural clusters with the revitalization of derelict city spaces, the state has become an initiator rather than just a catalyst, thereby shifting its relatively simple redistributive role in a vertically organized arts and culture sector to a far more complex role involving horizontally articulated linkages of thinking and acting.¹¹ As Mommaas suggests, "at

⁸ ---. "Cultural Clusters and the Post-Industrial City: Towards the Remapping of Urban Cultural Policy." *Urban Studies* 41.3 (2004): 507-32. Print; Nijman, Jan. "Cultural Globalization and the Identity of Place: The Reconstruction of Amsterdam." *Ecumene* 6.2 (1999): 146. Print; *Cultuur en Stedelijke Vernieuwing*. Amsterdam: OCenW, 2006. Print.

⁹ Mommaas, Hans. "Cultural Clusters and the Post-Industrial City: Towards the Remapping of Urban Cultural Policy." *Urban Studies* 41.3 (2004): 507-32. Print.

¹⁰ Knell, Simon J., et al., eds. *National Museums: New Studies from around the World*. London: Routledge, 2011. Print. 46.

¹¹ For an example of the state's direct involvement in these initiatives, see *Cultuur en Stedelijke Vernieuwing*. Amsterdam: OCenW, 2006. Print. For the kind of initiatives the City of Amsterdam is making in this area, see *Cultuur Onder Dak: Kadernota Cultureel Vastgoed*. Amsterdam: Gemeente Amsterdam: Dienst Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, 2007. Print.

stake [in this trend] is an attempt to develop a more pro-active, outreaching attitude in the cultural field, able to attract alternative financial resources, link in to new cultural forms and appeal to a younger and multiethnic audience."¹² The museum quarter in Rotterdam, the Groninger Museum, the Veemarktkwartier in Tilburg, the Bonnefanten Museum in Maastricht, the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the museum and theatre quarters in Utrecht, and the Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam are all successful examples of this model. At first glance, this appears simple, but unfolds in great detail as an uneasy mixture of cultural, economic, social, and spatial interests. Blotkamp's revival of the Filmmuseum, but even more significantly, the institution's aborted move to Las Palmas in the late 1990s, was a direct manifestation of such interests as described below.

Hoos Blotkamp and the Pavilion's Reinvention

After a brief period following Jan de Vaal's departure, during which time Frans Maks directed the Filmmuseum, Hoos Blotkamp was appointed as its new director in November 1987. Blotkamp was a familiar figure for some members of the institution's newly constituted board, who talked her into accepting the position with the express intent of making the Filmmuseum stage a quick turnaround. She came from the now defunct Ministerie van Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Cultuur (the Ministry of Welfare, Public Health and Culture), where she was the head of visual arts and architecture. Previously, she had also been the curator of the Central Museum of Utrecht.¹³ De Vaal introduced her to FIAF through an enthusiastic and very supportive letter, and also assisted her in making the transition to her

¹² Mommaas, Hans. "Cultural Clusters and the Post-Industrial City: Towards the Remapping of Urban Cultural Policy." *Urban Studies* 41.3 (2004): 507-32. Print. 518.

¹³ Van der Burg, Jos. "Van Filmmuseum Tot Eye aan het IJ." *Ons Amsterdam*. 4 April 2012. Web. 2 March 2013. <<http://www.onsamsterdam.nl/tijdschrift/jaargang-2012/1396-nummer-4-april-2012?start=3> >; Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; "Remembering Hoos Blotkamp." Eye Film Institute Netherlands. 8 April 2014. Web. 5 February 2015. <<http://www.7www.eyefilm.nl/node/1127147> >.

new job by sharing his contacts and allied information, thereby continuing with the positive spin he had consciously given to the institution's public narrative.¹⁴ But in the process, he also contributed to the erasure of the Filmmuseum's troubled recent history (the details of which Blotkamp was largely ignorant about at that time), as well as masked any misgivings he may have had about her as his successor, which were never expressed.

Blotkamp, well known for her charm, and credited with infusing the Filmmuseum with energy and dynamism,¹⁵ recalled in her interview with me that she held two jobs for the six months prior to her joining date: one at the welfare ministry and the other one preparing for her role at the Filmmuseum. She spent them interviewing the Filmmuseum employees to understand their needs and concerns, communicating with experts in the field, and educating herself about various aspects of cinema and film preservation. Immediately upon taking charge, she set about making major organizational changes, beginning by reshuffling the ranks of employees, assigning them new tasks, and retrenching Maks, who was made to tender his resignation through "a silver handshake."¹⁶

Some of these were obvious moves. Her bigger contribution was made when she acknowledged her lack of expertise in cinema, but banked on her experience as an art historian and bureaucrat to persuade the noted cultural theorist, professor, and filmmaker Eric de Kuyper to become her deputy, who held the position from 1987 to 1992. He had himself applied for her position, which he disclosed to her subsequently. He was later joined by Peter Delpeut, who worked as de Kuyper's deputy from 1987 to 1992, and replaced him from 1992 to 1995. Delpeut in turn hired Visschedijk in 1992, who replaced him in 1995 and worked with

¹⁴ de Vaal, Jan. Letter to FIAF Members introducing Hoos Blotkamp. October 1987. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels; Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013.

¹⁵ Delpeut, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013; "Remembering Hoos Blotkamp." Eye Film Institute Netherlands. 8 April 2014. Web. 5 February 2015. <<http://www.7www.eyefilm.nl/node/1127147>>.

¹⁶ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013.

the institution till 2000. Together, they comprised a handpicked core team of strong and independent individuals, who hired and mentored other individuals with similar demeanors. A generation younger than de Vaal, they had a vastly different perspective on what cinema and its preservation meant, and believed in unbridled sharing and spreading of ideas, expertise, as well as the films they were in charge of.¹⁷ They became the writers of a new layer of text on the institution's palimpsest. The people they mentored continue to work at EYE.

The combination of their talents worked well for the Filmmuseum, with Blotkamp focusing on fundraising, administration, "cleaning the mess" as she called it, and liaising with the OCW and other stakeholders. De Kuyper and his team took charge of film preservation, curation, programming, and public events.¹⁸ The first few months were particularly challenging since they were only 13 employees in all. They were burdened with reminders on pending work, for most communication addressed to the institution, especially which had been directed to de Vaal, had gone unanswered for more than two years. But with the new board and the OCW supporting them and additional funds being made available, they transformed the Filmmuseum rapidly. Within two years, the institution increased its number of employees to 60, systematized and streamlined its functioning, and set its tone for years to come. Even

¹⁷ ---. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013; Delpeut, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013. Incidentally,

Delpeut was not in favor of Blotkamp's appointment to the Filmmuseum, and had been scathingly critical of the move in his article for the film magazine *Skreen*. But Blotkamp's selection of de Kuyper, who was also Delpeut's mentor, along with the other changes she promised to make, helped him change his mind, so much so that he readily agreed to join the team a few months later. The story of how Delpeut joined the team can be found in ---. "An Unexpected Reception: Lyrical Nitrate-between Film History and Art." *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*. Eds. Bloemheuvel, Marente, et al. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press/ EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2012. Print.

¹⁸ De Kuyper worked as Blotkamp's deputy till around 1992, at which point Delpeut took over and invited Visschedijk to join them. Delpeut assisted Blotkamp till 1995, and passed on the baton to Visschedijk, who worked together with her till the proposed move to Rotterdam in 2001. See Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; Delpeut, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013.

more significantly, and despite Blotkamp and de Kuiper's unique contributions, it gained an identity and reputation that was much larger than the people heading it. This was in sharp contrast to the scenario under de Vaal's tenure, and marked an end to the "individual as institution" and the "arch-father" era of the Filmmuseum.

The process began with what Blotkamp terms as "gold digging:" viewing, inventorying, and making condition reports on the backlog of hundreds of unopened and unexplored film cans, many of them from the Desmet Collection, and finding numerous hitherto unknown "treasures."¹⁹ "She sent us into the archive and asked us to start to look," recalls Delpout. "'I have a list here but don't know what's in there, so tell me,'" she said. So we saw piles and piles of films. Every week we came together and told Hoos what we had seen. And she discovered how enthusiastic we were, and also sad as many films were in such bad shape."²⁰ Alongside, Blotkamp took stock of the films that had been loaned to other FIAF member archives but not returned. And she also requested for reciprocal prints in cases where films from the Filmmuseum's collection had been copied by other film archives, but the other archives had not given the Filmmuseum copies of films from their own collections as originally agreed upon, thereby violating their agreements. When reclaimed, these added to their collection significantly.²¹

The Filmmuseum's hybrid archive/museum identity resurfaced during such tasks, for it dictated what the institution collected, how it curated and presented its collection, and also how much significance it imparted to the Pavilion. "In my view I was managing a museum and not an archive," claimed Blotkamp. "I was a museum woman and that was my baggage, so that was my philosophy in a nutshell. . . . So did I make it into a museum from an archive, perhaps yes," she added when asked about how she viewed the institution during her tenure.

¹⁹ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013.

²⁰ Delpout, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013.

²¹ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013.

In keeping with this understanding, the institution's collection policy was informally revamped to focus on representative samples rather than comprehensive collections. As Blotkamp put it:

We chose not to keep everything, or try to represent every country. We chose only some amazing films, so there were probably 100 from one country and only three from another. No need to be comprehensive. You wouldn't dream telling a museum to collect that way. Yes, archives don't do it that way.

Closely linked to this was the institution's decision to move away from canons and auteurs -- which most other film archives focused on -- and shifting its attention to film fragments instead, especially from the silent era. Blotkamp, Delpeut, and Visschedijk claim that the Filmmuseum's focus on silent cinema was not initially a conscious and strategic move but an incidental occurrence that gradually solidified into a curatorial mandate. The Desmet Collection, together with the Filmliga and allied material de Vaal had collected, made the Filmmuseum's silent cinema holdings especially rich and interesting for curatorial interventions. However, many of them consisted of incomplete films, unidentified films, and also contained footage from unreleased films, which had previously been given little attention. Even though most scholars, film archivists, and curators acknowledged the historical significance of such fragments for research purposes, especially those on nitrate because of the medium's instability, the question of how best to deal with them remained unanswered in a world dominated by ideas of completeness, canons, authorship, and restorations. The question was even more valid for programming and presenting films to an audience, which was mostly undertaken in other European film archives by committees of external experts working with lists of already known canonical feature films rather than viewing what was available in the archives.²²

²² ---. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013; Delpeut, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013.

Borrowing from her museum experiences, Blotkamp proposed to change this by encouraging her own staff -- instead of external experts -- to program films from available material as well as take decisions about what films to preserve, using their own tastes as a broad criterion rather than such ideas as authorship, canons, historical importance, or the importance of the people featured in the films, for instance the Dutch Queen.²³ Delpeut describes it more succinctly as a distinction between considering films first and foremost as a subject of viewing pleasure, including in fragments, and only at a second stage moving to such "archival tasks" as identification and classification.²⁴

The scholar-filmmaker de Kuyper, who was generally unbiased towards all genres of cinema and was especially fond of popular melodramas, was also one of the earliest proponents of semiotics and Christian Metz's structuralist film theory in the Netherlands. He found Blotkamp's approach to his liking and developed it further, for he was particularly interested in the reworking of Claude Levi-Strauss' ideas on bricolage, i.e. recombining whatever is at hand to create something new, as well as Roland Barthes' ideas on the obsolescence of authorship.²⁵ The fragments in the Filmmuseum collection, the bricoleur's building material that happened to be readily available, offered him an opportunity to conceptualize interesting bricolages and curate novel cinematic experiences, for compilations of incomplete film bits, many with unknown or questionable authorship, when put together,

²³ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013. An account of how the Cinémathèque Française became, for the Filmmuseum, "the example *not* to follow" in this regard can be found in Delpeut, Peter. "An Unexpected Reception: Lyrical Nitrate-between Film History and Art." *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*. Eds. Bloemheugel, Marente, et al. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press/ EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2012. Print.

²⁴ ---. "Bits & Pieces: De Grenzen Van het Filmarchief." *Versus 2* (1990). Print. 80, 83-84, as cited in Bloemheugel, Marente, et al., eds. *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press/ EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2012. Print. 72-73.

²⁵ Metz, Christian. *Language and Cinema*. The Hague: Mouton, 1974. Print; ---. *Film Language; a Semiotics of the Cinema*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974. Print; Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. Print; Barthes, Roland. "Death of the Author." *Image, Music, Text*. Eds. Barthes, Roland and Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977. 142-48. Print.

often displayed remarkable structural and thematic coherence, often appeared to be independent of the filmmaker's authorial intent, and led to the creation of newer meanings for the viewers.²⁶ Blotkamp and Delpout supported his vision. "We thought most of them [other film archives] were so dull, and they were not curating from their archive but from an idea of a canon. What we very quickly understood was that a film archive is not a collection of a film canon of the masterpieces," recalls Delpout.²⁷

De Kuyper's ideas were also received with enthusiasm by the academic community, for very few scholars were working on early cinema during the late 1980s, and fewer still had seen the actual films since most had remained unpreserved and inaccessible till then. This was a period marked by the excitement around film archival holdings in the aftermath of FIAF's Brighton Conference in 1978, the "Woodstock of film archiving" as it has been called by Jan Holmberg, director of the Ingmar Bergman Foundation. It is often seen as a historical turning point towards the creation of a new film historiography by way of refocusing the discipline's attention away from anecdotal and secondary forms of history towards "primary documentation, archival research and other historiographical tools of evidence and verification."²⁸ The institution's gold-digging initiatives unearthed early documentaries (actualities), modernist films, and significantly, early color films that most people did not even know existed. "With such individuals as Tom Gunning getting very eager to see these films, it

²⁶ Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013.

²⁷ Delpout, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013. An account of these viewings can also be found in ---. "An Unexpected Reception: Lyrical Nitrate-between Film History and Art." *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*. Eds. Bloemheugel, Marente, et al. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press/ EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2012. Print.

²⁸ Kuhn, Annette, and Jackie Stacey. *Screen Histories: A Screen Reader*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1998. Print. 5, as cited in Op den Kamp, Claudy Wilhelmina Elisabeth. "The Go-Between: The Film Archive as a Mediator between Copyright and Film Historiography." PhD Dissertation. Plymouth University, 2015. Print. 56. For further elaborations on the Brighton Conference and its historical significance, see Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print; Op den Kamp, Claudy Wilhelmina Elisabeth. "The Go-Between: The Film Archive as a Mediator between Copyright and Film Historiography." PhD Dissertation. Plymouth University, 2015. Print. 56-62.

became an alliance between scholars, historians of cinema, and us," recalls Delpeut. Alongside, academic discoveries about the extensive use of musical accompaniment in film screenings opened up further possibilities for the curation and presentation of silent cinema.²⁹

Added to all these was the Filmmuseum's sense of inadequacy when compared to its closest geographic and cultural contemporary, the Belgian Cinematek, as well as the Cinémathèque Française in Paris, both of which held formidable collections of canonical films. Being aware of the fact that they could not compete with the Cinematek or the Cinémathèque when it came to canonical films by auteurs, the fragments provided the Filmmuseum with a possible niche of their own, which they rapidly capitalized on.³⁰

The institution's public events were restructured with a focus on silent cinema fragments, which included many that were in color (a major attraction), which were complemented with ensemble musical accompaniment by accomplished musicians on a scale much larger than had been previously attempted. Since Delpeut was engaged in making his acclaimed *Lyrisch nitraat* (Lyrical Nitrate, 1991) around the same time -- a non-narrative film featuring a collage of clips from decaying nitrate films including shorts, documentaries, and travelogues from the Desmet Collection -- he took additional interest in such endeavors.³¹ The attention given to programming and public functions was increased, with the explicit intent of connecting with people and expanding the audience base, converting newer and younger individuals into cinephiles, and sensitizing them to the richness of the film history the institution

²⁹ Delpeut, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013.

³⁰ ---. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013. This was not unique to the Netherlands, for Susanna Pettersson offers a similar account of the feeling of inadequacy felt about visual art and its canons in Finland and ways in which the nation negotiated with it. See Pettersson, Susanna. "Producing an Art History of the Nation: The Origins of the Finnish National Gallery." *National Museums: New Studies from around the World*. Eds. Knell, Simon J., et al. London: Routledge, 2011. 138-50. Print.

³¹ Delpeut, Peter. *Lyrisch Nitraat 1905-1915*. New York, NY. DVD. Zeitgeist Films, 2004.

held. Alongside, the lectures and discussions were reinvigorated through newer approaches with enthusiastic speakers.³²

The changes were welcomed by audience members and cultural commentators, especially those in the Netherlands, who found the Filmmuseum's programming to be delightfully distinctive. The silent cinema programming received generous appreciation and attention, with curated segments also travelling to other nations and film festivals. Through the 1990s, the Filmmuseum became the only audiovisual institution in the world to assemble unidentified fragments of film and turn them into frequently used presentation collections and curated art shows on their own, which they called "Bits and Pieces."³³ They are still widely considered a benchmark. This in turn allowed the institution to reclaim its excellent reputation in the international audiovisual archiving circles.³⁴

Such accomplishments with the Filmmuseum's public functions eventually enabled the institution to draw attention to the preservation of films in its holdings. The task took time, and needed the Filmmuseum to first undertake token preservation projects, showcase the richness of its collection to the general public, and then seek additional funds for thorough film preservation work on a grander scale. Blotkamp tapped into her networks in the government.

³² Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. 107-15.

³³ An elaboration of the activities leading to Bits and Pieces can be found in Op den Kamp, Claudy Wilhelmina Elisabeth. "The Go-Between: The Film Archive as a Mediator between Copyright and Film Historiography." PhD Dissertation. Plymouth University, 2015. Print. 159-67.

³⁴ An account of the Filmmuseum's "against the grain" archiving and curating interventions during this period can also be found in ---. "The Go-Between: The Film Archive as a Mediator between Copyright and Film Historiography." PhD Dissertation. Plymouth University, 2015. Print. 63-71.

However, it needs to be noted that despite the Filmmuseum's focus on silent cinema, its collection was fairly large and did include canonical films as well as lesser known ones from across the world. Silent cinema was only one area of focus, especially its Bits and Pieces offerings, but one that gave the institution more recognition than the other films in its holdings. However, neither were its preservation nor presentation efforts limited only to silent cinema, with such events as a screening and discussion around the highly controversial *Jud Süß* (Veit Harlan, 1940) also helping it gain credibility.

As she described the process, she prepared a persuasive report for the OCW highlighting the Filmmuseum's urgent film preservation needs around 1990, made many "loud" demands and presentations for money in government corridors, and got a substantial reserve of funds -- originally earmarked for broadcasting activities -- to be redirected to the Filmmuseum.³⁵

In taking this approach, despite her own identification of the institution as a museum, she essentially extended de Vaal's strategy of cladding an archive in the garb of a museum and its public functions so as to attract attention and funding. However, she was much more successful at working the system to her advantage, primarily because she took the public functions that accompanied the institution's role as a museum far more seriously than de Vaal did. Delpout recalls the excitement of getting the first "big money" around 1990/91:

I still remember us getting a phone call from Hoos, saying "Come to my office tomorrow in Amsterdam" as we were in Overveen. We had to design a project, she told us, with a preservation plan for one million guilders, in total for six years we thought. "Not one million for six years, but one million every year," she said! Then we started working more actively on preservation reports, the Desmet Collection etc.³⁶

This first money, or "gold-ship" as Delpout and the scholar Annemieke Hendriks put it, came from the collaborative pan-European film restoration project titled LUMIERE, which was worth NLG 60 million.³⁷ It ran from 1991 to 1996, preserved approximately 1,200 films from across Europe and "rediscovered" 700 more, established a Joint European Filmography, and led to the creation of Association des Cinémathèques Européennes (ACE), a Europe-centered affiliation of national and regional film archives.³⁸

³⁵ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013. The report she mentions could not be located.

³⁶ Delpout, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013.

³⁷ ---. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013; Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. 109.

³⁸ A partial account of the project and its accomplishments can be found in Blotkamp, Hoos. "The International Collaboration between European Film Archives." 1996. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague.

Simultaneously, Blotkamp also opened sections of the Filmmuseum's functioning to corporate sponsorships, a relatively new but burgeoning possibility that was in keeping with the gradual commercialization of the Dutch arts and culture sector, but which de Vaal and the previous board had largely been averse to. It was under Blotkamp's aegis that the institution first understood the sentiment that was later echoed by David Cavena from Sun Microsystems, who stated that "[film] archiving is not only a religion but also needs to be a business."³⁹ She described the process as follows:

It's like a wheel. We started to work with practically nothing, but we kind of had success. And as soon as they [OCW] saw things were changing, we got more money. . . We got money from [the City of] Amsterdam, from the state and also from private companies with money to spare. We were also lucky to be living in the times of economic growth. . . We threw a special little party for the biggest sponsor, for which they paid for themselves. For them, it meant their name being mentioned in publicity etc. and they could also use these donations to get tax exemptions. . . Not a lot of publicity, or any other benefits as such, more social stuff [goodwill through philanthropic activities], but primarily tax benefits I guess. . . Their money did not come with any other strings attached. Not the same as it was in America.⁴⁰

Alongside, the Vondelpark Pavilion was renovated again, this time on a much grander scale, with more professional planning owing to Blotkamp's architecture experience, and with a clear mandate of linking cinema, history, and heritage together in keeping with the nature of the Filmmuseum's collection and activities. While de Vaal had undertaken something similar in creating his temple for cinema, his attempts were relatively undefined and limited in nature rather than being precise curatorial interventions, and were much less ambitious. Blotkamp took his endeavors forward by reorganizing the Pavilion to create two large screening spaces - one of them a recreation of Jean Desmet's Cinema Parisien theatre from Nieuwendijk 69 in Amsterdam down to the last detail, which included using old wood, old lamps, and old seats --

³⁹ Cavena, David, et al. *Archiving Movies in a Digital World*. Santa Clara, CA: Sun Microsystems, 2007. Print.

⁴⁰ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013.

while the annexure viewing room was also increased in size and capacity. In another intervention by Blotkamp that extended de Vaal's previous efforts, which also sheds light on the palimpsestuous nature of the institution, parts of the Pavilion were stripped of its more recent embellishments to reveal 19th century features that created a direct link with history and heritage. She also bought out the restaurant operating from the ground floor, increased its space, and re-launched it as Café Vertigo: paying tribute to Alfred Hitchcock, creating an extension of the Filmmuseum experience, and giving the Pavilion an all-cinema identity.⁴¹

The combined results of all these efforts impressed many, evidenced from the fact that the Filmmuseum was awarded the Jean Mitry Award in 1991 at the Le Giornate del Cinema Muto (The Pordenone Silent Film Festival) "for distinguished achievements in film history and film archiving."⁴² The newly restored and refurbished Vondelpark Pavilion also garnered much admiration and appreciation, came to be known as the "House of Illusions," and was placed on the list of Dutch National Monuments in May 1996.⁴³ Two years later, Blotkamp received the Sphinx Cultural Prize, awarded to her by the city of Maastricht for "making the Filmmuseum an institution of international repute."⁴⁴

However, Blotkamp's tenure was not without controversies. A major one concerned her treatment of the Desmet Collection. As part of her many endeavors, she negotiated with a number of other audiovisual archives to repatriate select "originals" from the markedly

⁴¹ Veronneau, Pierre. "Vondelpark, Cine-Parc." *la revue de la cinematheque*. September 1992: 30-31. Print; Lameris, Bregt. "Opnieuw Belicht - de Pas de Deux Tussen de Filmmuseale Praktijk en Filmhistorische Debatten." PhD Thesis. Utrecht University, 2007. Print. 113-16.

⁴² ---. "Opnieuw Belicht - de Pas de Deux Tussen de Filmmuseale Praktijk en Filmhistorische Debatten." PhD Thesis. Utrecht University, 2007. Print. 5.

⁴³ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; Lameris, Bregt. "Opnieuw Belicht - de Pas de Deux Tussen de Filmmuseale Praktijk en Filmhistorische Debatten." PhD Thesis. Utrecht University, 2007. Print. 109-17, Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print. 7.

⁴⁴ Rooijen, Van. "Sphinx Cultuurprijs voor Hoos Blotkamp." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 26 March 1998. Print; Hendriks, Annemieke. *Huis Van Illusies: de Geschiedenis Van Paviljoen Vondelpark en het Nederlands Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: Bas Lubberhuizen, 1996. Print.

international Desmet Collection back to their countries of origin, those that she and her team did not consider significant enough to be preserved at the Filmmuseum at substantial cost.

The process always entailed obtaining copies of the said films plus additional ones in reciprocal gestures -- which she ensured -- but her critics, mostly Dutch film historians, were livid at the disintegration of the famed archival collection. During a festival of Desmet films in Pordenone in February 1991, a group of such historians and journalists issued a pamphlet condemning the process, which caused a ruckus at the festival. The previous year, the premiere of Peter Delpout's *Lyrisch Nitraat* in Pordenone had also been booed by a group of Dutch historians who had used the opportunity to express their discontent about the Filmmuseum's policies. They felt that the institution was "squandering its collection on new-fangled and cheap popularization."⁴⁵ In the Netherlands, Blotkamp was confronted with an irate member of the Filmmuseum's own board, the film historian Karel Dibbets, who was not in favor of such practices.⁴⁶

These brought to the fore questions about the institution's hybrid archive/museum identity and expected functions once more, and the institution chose to lean towards the museum end yet again (even while calling itself an archive in this instance!). The ever pragmatic Blotkamp refused to subscribe to the idea that an archival collection needs to be kept together, undisturbed in the case of the Filmmuseum, and observed the following:

We had a choice, either make all of them [the Desmet films] rot together in our vaults, or split the collection and give back films to their homelands. The Desmet Collection was after all just what the distributor had kept, and not really a very curated collection that way. . . We had a choice, and for us it was easy not to let them perish but to return them to the homelands. Film historians in the Netherlands are a strange lot, they were unhappy. Now what we have is not the entire Desmet collection but is a very good representative

⁴⁵ Daudelin, Robert. Letter to Hoos Blotkamp. 1 February 1990. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels. Delpout, Peter. "An Unexpected Reception: Lyrical Nitrate-between Film History and Art." *Found Footage: Cinema Exposed*. Eds. Bloemheuvel, Marente, et al. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press/ EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2012. Print. 218.

⁴⁶ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013.

collection still. We were, and have always been, very systematic about viewing and selecting films, and the process is well documented internally too. I don't think any other *archive* was doing it as elaborately as we did [emphasis mine].

In a remarkable gesture of solidarity with the sentiments echoed by Blotkamp, the FIAF President Robert Daudelin also sent her an official letter to express his support, which read: “We know the quality and seriousness of the Netherlands Filmmuseum and we believe that the preservation work on the Desmet Collection is in accordance with the principles of respect for work and international collaboration put forward by FIAF.”⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the board, which was allegedly already troubled by Dibbets’ confrontational and militant ways in other matters too, successfully pressured him into resigning.⁴⁸

In 1992, de Kuyper moved on to pursue other interests, followed by Delpeut in 1995, but Blotkamp stayed in place and Visschedijk became her deputy. Blotkamp had to withstand another round of troubles during the mid-1990s, this time around with the OCW. In a sudden move that took both Blotkamp and the board by surprise, but in keeping with the trends in the Dutch cultural landscape, the OCW tried to pressurize the Filmmuseum into merging with other similar institutions dealing with audiovisual material, which included the Sound and Vision in Hilversum. Blotkamp dodged the idea, and the board supported her yet again, even presenting her as their representative for negotiations and meetings instead of the chairman of the board. In a process that took nearly one year, representatives from the OCW made repeated attempts to reach an agreement with the Filmmuseum, but Blotkamp did not find the proposal advantageous for the institution, and refused to yield. She cited numerous aesthetic, conceptual, financial, and logistical reasons. The OCW eventually scrapped the merger

⁴⁷ Daudelin, Robert. Letter to Hoos Blotkamp. 1 February 1990. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁴⁸ Blotkamp, Hoos. Letter to Robert Daudelin. 12 February 1990. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

proposal, but some discord remained.⁴⁹ Her biggest challenge, however, came in the late 1990s in the controversy surrounding the Filmmuseum's proposed move from the Pavilion to Las Palmas in the city of Rotterdam.

The News of the Move: Reasons and Reception

On 6 April 1998, Blotkamp and her team surprised the Filmmuseum's junior staff, the Dutch arts & culture community (especially cinephiles), and the City of Amsterdam by announcing that they were contemplating moving the institution to Rotterdam. The information came in the form of an internal memo to the entire staff, titled "New House of Illusions," which got leaked to the Dutch media two weeks before its scheduled public release and rapidly became national news. The memo discussed the possibility of the Filmmuseum collaborating with four Rotterdam based institutions -- Nederlands Fotoinstituut (NFI, the Netherlands Photo Institute), Nederlands Fotoarchief (NFA, the Netherlands Photo Archive), Nationaal Fotorestauratie Atelier (NFrA, the National Photo Restoration Workshop), and the Institute for Unstable Media V2 (V2) -- to create a new Nationaal instituut voor Fotografie, Cinematografie en Nieuwe Media (NIFCNM). The NIFCNM was also to be located in Rotterdam, suggested the note, with the Filmmuseum having to make the move in about two years.⁵⁰

The five institutions did not intend to merge with each other, the note clarified, for they all wanted to retain their individual characteristics. But in keeping with the many mergers that had been taking place in the Dutch arts & culture landscape, they wished to consolidate their energies and activities to create an umbrella organization that would allow them to operate

⁴⁹ ---. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; ---. "Some Afterthoughts on Film History in the Cinema Programme or Programming as Cinema History." 21 March 1998. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague.

⁵⁰ Bast, Truska. "Filmmuseum Mogelijk Naar Rotterdam." *Het Parool*. 7 April 1998. Print; "Persbericht." June 1999. *Archief: Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam; Ellenbroek, Willem. "Filmmuseum Wil Samengaan Met Foto Instituut." *de Volkskrant*. 8 April 1998. Print; "Voor Film- en Fotografie-Instituut: 'We Wachten Af Welke Steden Zich Melden'." *NRC Handelsblad*. 9 April 1998. Print.

from under the same roof, with the hope that physical proximity would lead to greater synergy of operations and better utilization of combined funds. The NIFCNM would offer the Filmmuseum “a unique opportunity” to “spread its wings,” the note reasoned, and justified the timing for the decision by arguing that the boundaries between different media had become increasingly blurred. The OCW had already been apprised of the proposal, it claimed, and the reaction had been very positive, with encouragement for the collective initiative shown by the collaborators.⁵¹

The proposed move was not as sudden as it initially appeared. The idea of shifting the Filmmuseum to a larger and arguably better set-up had been in the making, and owed itself to a number of overlapping developments. The institution had generally continued its good work and achievements, which had also been acknowledged and appreciated by the OCW, but its seemingly positive image in the policy circles belied the underwhelming reality of its long term sustainability at the Pavilion, which had been a cause of concern for both Blotkamp and the board for some time.

The Filmmuseum was not in any immediate financial crisis, but the state’s subsidies had not kept pace with an increase in the institution’s activities, and the additional revenue required to plan beyond routine operations had not been available. Additionally, the political climate in the nation had shifted, this time further to the right, and the government’s cultural policy documents for 1998 mandated that such institutions as the Filmmuseum had to fulfill a few requirements in order to continue receiving funding: operate on a national and international scale, make efforts to reach the widest possible audience, and also undertake activities targeted at youth and minorities. While the Filmmuseum already satisfied many of these requirements, competition for funding was fierce, and unless it was able to demonstrate

⁵¹ "Persbericht." June 1999. *Archief: Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam; ---. "Filmmuseum Wil Samengaan Met Foto Instituut." *de Volkskrant*. 8 April 1998. Print; Bast, Truska. "Filmmuseum Mogelijk Naar Rotterdam." *Het Parool*. 7 April 1998. Print.

a consistent fulfillment of the mandates, and also establish that it exceeded them when compared to its competitors, its future funding could be in jeopardy. Further, it had been facing political pressure to generate external funding, increase its footfalls, and expand its activities, especially in the area of education.⁵²

Also, space had become a major concern yet again. The institution had expanded its back-end activities -- mostly those pertaining to film preservation -- to branch-offices and was now operating from five locations, including a freshly leased building close to the Pavilion in Vondelpark in addition to its three addresses outside Amsterdam. It had already experimented with renting extra venues for some of its screenings, but most of its public functions were still concentrated in Vondelpark. Although spruced up, the confines of the Pavilion had become insufficient to meet increased demands, especially for semi-permanent exhibitions of film paraphernalia that had been discussed a number of times but not yet executed on the scale the Filmmuseum wanted. Despite all the renovations that had been undertaken, the Pavilion had no disability access, no meeting rooms, few quiet spaces, only small and shabby public facilities, and insufficient day-to-day storage for films, equipment, and office inventory. The Filmmuseum's staff, which had now grown to 140, also required additional office space. And the institution's collection was lying fragmented over ten different storage sites, making the logistics of managing both the collection as well as personnel extremely tedious.⁵³

⁵² NFM. "Het Nieuwe Huis Van Illusies I: Het Hoe en Waarom Van Een Visioen, Bezien Vanuit het Perspectief Van de NFM Directie." 20 August 1998. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague; "Persbericht." June 1999. *Archief: Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam.

⁵³ "Filmmuseum Wellicht Naar Rotterdam." *Trouw*. 8 April 1998. Print; Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; NFM. "Het Nieuwe Huis Van Illusies I: Het Hoe en Waarom Van Een Visioen, Bezien Vanuit het Perspectief Van de NFM Directie." 20 August 1998. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague; "Het Nieuwe Huis van Illusies: Bundeling van de Voornaamste Teksten van de Directie Over Dit Onderwerp". 24 February 1999. *Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; "Persbericht." June 1999. *Archief: Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam.

Further, the Filmmuseum had recorded a dip in its ticket sales, presumably because of competition from both home video businesses and specialist art house cinemas, which was in line with the general decline in cinema visits nationwide, but spelled bad news nonetheless. After the initial excitement surrounding its silent film screenings and renewed activities had died down, the institution had only been able to make minor inroads into expanding its visitor base to people outside the “cultured” sections of the society, which needed to change. The institution’s activities had started appearing dated yet again, being unable to attract enough attention from the next generation of potential cinephiles who preferred visiting multiplexes instead.⁵⁴

Alongside, the attractive design and structure of the Pavilion, which had previously made it into a well-known local landmark, had now started looking less desirable for the Filmmuseum’s purposes. It now appeared old, and lent the institution with an air of exclusivity and authority (barring Café Vertigo), which went against the idea of the contemporary and open welcoming space the institution needed to become, especially with changes in the cultural policy as well as audience preferences. “The pub below is more famous than us,” Blotkamp had once quipped, for visitors to the Pavilion were not necessarily coming in for the Filmmuseum anymore, nor were they getting sensitized to appreciate good cinema on the scale that had been originally intended.⁵⁵

Most significantly, the Filmmuseum lagged behind other cultural institutions in embracing and using innovations in technology, and appeared underprepared to keep pace with the digital turn. The institution’s board had noted its many troubles with seriousness, and had already begun discussing organizational reforms both among themselves as well as with external stakeholders, focusing not on the institution’s current functioning but on preparing it to

⁵⁴ “Persbericht.” June 1999. *Archief: Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam.

⁵⁵ Bosman, Andrea, and Mark Duursma. “Geen Moord Maar Een Mooi Visioen.” *Trouw*. 10 April 1998. Print.

withstand the vagaries of the future and endure the rapid economic, political, and technological shifts in the cultural landscape of the nation. The Filmmuseum's proposed move to Las Palmas in Rotterdam, in addition to being a response to the rise of cultural clusters, was also a direct offshoot of these developments.⁵⁶

The initial impetus for the move came from a bequest worth NLG 22 million that Hein Wertheimer, a wealthy lawyer, professor, and amateur photographer had made towards the creation of a new national museum of photography, to be executed through the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds (PBC), a major Dutch grant-giver.⁵⁷ The prospective money had sent many contenders clambering for their share of the pie, with negotiations over grand plans and potential mergers to make their claims stronger. As things stood at the time of the proposal, a number of Dutch memory institutions, including the largest museums, had extensive collections of photographs, but none of them dealt with photography exclusively, and the smaller regional ones that were dedicated to photography could not justify asking for the NLG 22 million all alone, making collaborations almost a necessity.

The NIF, NFA, NFrA, and V2 -- which had also been facing challenges of their own -- had already discussed plans for coming together to form a new institution, the initial idea for which predated the Wertheimer bequest, but which they had pursued with more enthusiasm following the promise of new money. The Rotterdam City Council had responded very positively by adopting a motion to promote a photography museum in their city, and had also offered a prominent building site to house it. In Amsterdam, fifty well known photographers had

⁵⁶ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; Delpout, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013; NFM. "Het Nieuwe Huis Van Illusies I: Het Hoe en Waarom Van Een Visioen, Bezien Vanuit het Perspectief Van de NFM Directie." 20 August 1998. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague.

⁵⁷ "Persbericht." June 1999. *Archief: Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam; Ellenbroek, Willem. "Samengaan NFI en Filmmuseum 'Moet Verder'." *de Volkskrant*. 9 April 1998. Print. Visschedijk claims that the Filmmuseum was unaware of the Wertheimer bequest during the initial period of their proposed move. See Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013. But media reports suggest that the impetus for the collaboration came from the bequest.

petitioned its mayor expressing their fears about Amsterdam “losing its cultural capital” if the proposed photography museum were to go elsewhere, and the city had reacted, albeit half-heartedly, by allocating some money for an undefined future plan.⁵⁸

For most stakeholders, the element of surprise came from the Filmmuseum joining this mix, for it had never been a contender for the Wertheimer bequest. But being larger than its collaborators, and also being uniquely responsible for representing the medium of cinema in the overcrowded museum world of the Netherlands, it had more cultural capital and clout when compared to many others, which its potential collaborators were well aware of. The space in Rotterdam was too big and imposing for them, which they slyly suggested to Blotkamp and her team. Together, they knew they could rely on the Wertheimer bequest as seed money that could attract further funding.⁵⁹

In an opportunistic move that again demonstrates the Filmmuseum’s hybridity, the institution and its collaborators readily chose to interpret the term photography very broadly to signify visual media in general. From film and video to new media, the institution understood all visual media in very technical terms as a series of photographed images, and claimed that photography was the basis of all subsequent visual media, so that it could stake claim to the money. Despite having an arguably weak basis for it, various categories of visual media were conveniently collapsed into one large amorphous mass under the guise of an umbrella organization working with different media types, citing “blurring of the lines between them” as the rationale, and giving the common archival and public functions of the institutions as further justification.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Ellenbroek, Willem. "Filmmuseum Wil Samengaan Met Foto Instituut." *de Volkskrant*. 8 April 1998. Print; "Filmmuseum Wellicht Naar Rotterdam." *Trouw*. 8 April 1998. Print; Bast, Truska. "Filmmuseum Mogelijk Naar Rotterdam." *Het Parool*. 7 April 1998. Print; Ellenbroek, Willem. "Samengaan NFI en Filmmuseum 'Moet Verder'." *de Volkskrant*. 9 April 1998. Print.

⁵⁹ ---. "Samengaan NFI en Filmmuseum 'Moet Verder'." *de Volkskrant*. 9 April 1998. Print; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013.

⁶⁰ "Persbericht." June 1999. *Archief: Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam. The Filmmuseum’s vision of a digital future through this collaboration can be found in Schoots,

The contemporary cultural landscape of the Netherlands encouraged such an interpretation while competing for funds, for it helped the state's interests of fostering more mergers among institutions. This, when coupled with the general cultural climate of the nation that favored fluidity and flexibility rather than rigid interpretations, left little room for public debates around the Filmmuseum's plans on grounds of aesthetics and materiality, especially with the collaborators maintaining that it was not to be an absolute merger but a partnership that would continue to deal with various media separately within the new institution, and the OCW also seemingly favoring the plans.⁶¹

However, the Filmmuseum's presence in the Vondelpark Pavilion and its rich history in Amsterdam, which had made it into a local cultural landmark, meant that the city and its inhabitants were unwilling to let go of the sense of ownership they felt for the institution. They were especially reluctant to accede it to Rotterdam, with which they shared a centuries old cultural as well as financial rivalry. While Amsterdam took pride in its status as a historical city that housed numerous museums and cultural institutions, the port city Rotterdam had increasingly attempted to project itself as a hub for modern architecture and cutting-edge innovation, had attempted to "poach" various institutions and businesses from Amsterdam on a number of occasions, and was already home to the well-known International Film Festival Rotterdam. Their rivalry had only become more acute through the decades, epitomized through the ugly clashes between the football clubs Ajax (Amsterdam) and Feyenoord

Hans. "Het Filmmuseum En De Digitale Toekomst." 29 June 1998. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague; ---. "Een Centrum Voor Foto, Film En Mediatechnologie." circa 1998-99. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague; ---. "Las Palmas Film and TV." circa 1998-99. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague.

The idea of a combined visual culture sounded attractive and was in vogue in the policy circles, which prompted the institutions to attempt coming together using this guise. It was not merely coincidental, but a strategic and premediated move in which the Filmmuseum was particularly aware of the deliberate collapsing of various categories, but chose to go with the flow as it appeared to benefit their cause at that time. See Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013.

⁶¹ "Persbericht." June 1999. *Archief: Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam.

(Rotterdam), with which the feud over the NIFCNM was repeatedly compared by the Dutch media.⁶²

Consequently, even as Rotterdam's supporters celebrated the news, the announcement generated strong negative responses from Amsterdam's supporters, who expressed their disapproval by calling the proposal "unacceptable" and "unthinkable," and accused Rotterdam of "shocking cultural imperialism" and committing an "eternal sin" by trying to lure away the Filmmuseum with money. The institutions proposing the merger welcomed this furor, for they knew that they stood to benefit from any competition between the rival cities. "We are waiting to see what the others do: perhaps Amsterdam, Rotterdam, or even Maastricht or Groningen will come up with a proposal? And we need to see what the OCW does. It's a nice dream, but the funding should also come along," said Blotkamp while speaking to the media. The state's response was more moderate, with officials from various ministries expressing that they were pleased at the prospects of better facilities and more space for all the institutions involved in the decision, and hoped that the collaboration would usher in a wave of other similar ones to ease their burdens.⁶³

⁶² For insights into the rivalry between the two cities, see Buursink, Jan. "The Cultural Strategy of Rotterdam." *Cybergeo: European Journal of Geography*. 12 May 1999. Web. 19 February 2015. <<http://cybergeo.revues.org/1203> >; Koelemaij, Jorn. "Second City Syndromes: Everlasting Rivalries?" *The Protocity.com*. Web. 19 February 2015. <<http://theprotocity.com/second-city-syndroms-ever-lasting-rivalries/> >. And for a report focused on the football rivalry, see Mitten, Andy. "Holland's Most Hate-Filled Fight Club: Ajax Vs Feyenoord." *FourFourTwo*. 27 April 2007. Web. 15 February 2015. <<http://www.fourfourtwo.com/features/hollands-most-hate-filled-fight-club-ajax-vs-feyenoord> >. For news reports comparing the NIFCNM feud with the football rivalry, see "Vier Nederlandse Beeldinstituten Willen Samenwerken." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 7 April 1998. Print; "'Rotterdam Beste Plek voor Centrum Beeldcultuur'." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 6 May 1999. Print; "Amsterdam Vecht voor Beeldinstituut." *de Volkskrant*. 23 June 1999. Print; "Vervagende Beelden." *Het Parool*. 4 December 1999. Print; van Wijnen, Harry. "Bewindsman, Staak Uw Stedenstrijd." *NRC Handelsblad*. 21 December 1999. Print.

⁶³ Ellenbroek, Willem. "Samengaan NFI en Filmmuseum 'Moet Verder'." *de Volkskrant*. 9 April 1998. Print; Bast, Truska. "'Schokkend Cultuurimperialisme Rotterdammers'." *Het Parool*. 9 April 1998. Print.

The city of Amsterdam, which was less concerned about the Wertheimer money and the NIFCNM, and more about retaining the Filmmuseum within its city limits, seemed most disadvantaged by the turn of events. Initially, it tried to maintain a civil public tone by promising to contribute positively to the NIFCNM while keeping its own priorities in mind.⁶⁴ However, behind closed doors, it responded with an urgent phone call to the Filmmuseum's management within hours of the news leak, offering them possible alternative sites within Amsterdam, which the strategizing Blotkamp received with polite caution rather than enthusiastic optimism.⁶⁵ The agitated city officials reacted by claiming surprise at the Filmmuseum's proposed move when speaking to the media later, and complained that they had not even been consulted over these grand plans.⁶⁶

However, the Filmmuseum had its own reasons for acting as it did. At the time of the proposed move, its principal dealing with the City of Amsterdam was the rent it paid to the city for the Pavilion. It was an amount that had remained modest and stable for many years, which in itself could be seen as a form of subsidy by the city. However, the rent had been hiked by more than 300 percent at once in the months preceding the potential move, and the city had paid no heed to the institution's requests to roll back the hike, putting additional financial burden on it and souring the relationship between the two.⁶⁷ Consequently, many opined that the leaked memo was a deliberate move by the Filmmuseum, designed to put pressure on Amsterdam to meet its needs more actively. "Perhaps they will act now," the media speculated. Blotkamp refuted the charges of a covert strategy, claiming that all the

⁶⁴ Ellenbroek, Willem. "Samengaan NFI en Filmmuseum 'Moet Verder.'" *de Volkskrant*. 9 April 1998. Print; "Raad voor Cultuur Adviseert Van der Ploeg: 'Rotterdam Beste Plaats voor Beeldinstituut'." *de Volkskrant*. 7 May 1999. Print.

⁶⁵ "Voor Film- en Fotografie-Instituut: 'We Wachten Af Welke Steden Zich Melden'." *NRC Handelsblad*. 9 April 1998. Print; Bosman, Andrea, and Mark Duursma. "Geen Moord Maar Een Mooi Visioen." *Trouw*. 10 April 1998. Print.

⁶⁶ "Filmmuseum Wellicht Naar Rotterdam." *Trouw*. 8 April 1998. Print; ---. "Geen Moord Maar Een Mooi Visioen." *Trouw*. 10 April 1998. Print.

⁶⁷ "Voor Film- en Fotografie-Instituut: 'We Wachten Af Welke Steden Zich Melden'." *NRC Handelsblad*. 9 April 1998. Print.

developments were merely coincidental, and even castigated her staff internally for the leak. But she drew the battle lines even starker by making the nature of the city's phone call public and referring to the city administration as "lax and unfriendly" while responding to the rent hike issue.⁶⁸

Internally, the Filmmuseum itself was divided about the proposed move. A number of staff members protested it, mostly since they did not wish to commute to Rotterdam daily or relocate their families. Blotkamp, Visschedijk and the rest of the senior management maintained an optimistic tone in public statements as well as memos to the staff, but were cautious in their choice of words and ambiguous about their decisions.⁶⁹ "We're not plotting murder, we are sketching a beautiful image, a vision!" they insisted.⁷⁰ They kept the staff apprised of key developments and also explained the merits and demerits of various possibilities, reminded everyone that the plans were still at the proposal stage, asserted that the site for the new institution had not been finalized as yet, and indicated that they were open to other options, but also signaled that the multiple problems the Filmmuseum was facing in the Pavilion would make continuing to operate from its present location quite unlikely in the long run.⁷¹ Additionally, they reminded everyone that the issue on hand was that of the institution's sustainable future that was being reduced to a battle between two contesting

⁶⁸ "Persbericht." June 1999. *Archief: Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam; "Filmmuseum Wil Toch in Amsterdam Blijven." *Trouw*. 4 June 1999. Print; ---. "Geen Moord Maar Een Mooi Visioen." *Trouw*. 10 April 1998. Print.

⁶⁹ Bast, Truska. "'Schokkend Cultuurimperialisme Rotterdammers'." *Het Parool*. 9 April 1998. Print.

⁷⁰ Bosman, Andrea, and Mark Duursma. "Geen Moord Maar Een Mooi Visioen." *Trouw*. 10 April 1998. Print.

⁷¹ Ellenbroek, Willem. "Filmmuseum Wil Samengaan Met Foto Instituut." *de Volkskrant*. 8 April 1998. Print; ---. "Samengaan NFI en Filmmuseum 'Moet Verder'." *de Volkskrant*. 9 April 1998. Print; "Vier Nederlandse Beeldinstituten Willen Samenwerken." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 7 April 1998. Print; "Voor Film- en Fotografie-Instituut: 'We Wachten Af Welke Steden Zich Melden'." *NRC Handelsblad*. 9 April 1998. Print; "Persbericht." June 1999. *Archief: Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam.

cities. Moving with the new institution would not necessarily mean that the Filmmuseum would have no presence in Amsterdam at all, they added, but the critics could not be appeased.⁷²

Over the next few months, multi-party negotiations continued in numerous closed door meetings, while the two cities tried to seduce the merging partners with a promise of additional investments and preliminary grand plans, but were ultimately unable to convince them to take a decision. The city of Almere also entered the fray briefly with its own proposal, but withdrew soon after, leaving Rotterdam and Amsterdam as the principle contenders yet again.

Meanwhile, the Filmmuseum, realizing its own untapped potential, commissioned its own feasibility studies from Berenschot, a leading research and consultation firm that regularly advised a number of Dutch cultural institutions and government departments, which also summarized that Amsterdam's plans were vague.⁷³

Alongside, the Filmmuseum attempted to improve its image and use it to attract additional investments from the open market. Capitalizing on a corporate social responsibility trend in the Dutch cultural landscape that was allegedly unique to the nation during this period, it secured the services of a business strategy firm for free, which advised the institution on a renewed brand identity and increased visibility in return for an expanded portfolio and further referrals.⁷⁴ Such business consultations had resulted in successfully raising the public profiles of a number of other cultural institutions as well as increased their revenues, practices that were already fairly common in other parts of the world, especially the US and the UK, but were relatively new for the Dutch arts and culture sector.

⁷² Bast, Truska. "'Schokkend Cultuurimperialisme Rotterdamers'." *Het Parool*. 9 April 1998. Print; Bosman, Andrea, and Mark Duursma. "Geen Moord Maar Een Mooi Visioen." *Trouw*. 10 April 1998. Print.

⁷³ "Persbericht." June 1999. *Archief: Naar Rotterdam*. Eye Film Institute, Amsterdam; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013.

⁷⁴ Van Dijk, Tjalling. "Kunstmanagers Geen Boze Droom, Kunst & Zaken Brengt Bedrijfsleven en Kunstwereld in Contact." *Algemeen Dagblad*. 14 January 1998. Print.

The Filmmuseum was initially skeptical about the consultation and refused to allow any populist changes to its acclaimed film programming to make itself more attractive to the general populace. It eventually learned to work with the consultant while keeping the programming unchanged, but built on it to create better brand awareness. "Grote films voor een klein publiek" (Great films for a small audience), read its campaign slogan, choosing to go with a confident underdog position targeting a niche segment rather than competing with the larger cinema chains and the blockbuster films they showed.⁷⁵ It discarded the word *Nederlands* from its name, opted to promote the term Filmmuseum as a standalone brand with a new logo (again a marker of how little it really cared for being emphatically Dutch), switched its stationary, and phased out the use of the older name including in the headers of the films it restored and presented.⁷⁶ Additionally, it set up its own video label and started working on co-productions for television broadcasts, pushing its new brand identity.⁷⁷ These developments did not please the already annoyed critics. "Netherlands Film Museum no longer Dutch," claimed one newspaper headline, while simultaneously also slamming the institution's underdog strategy and refusal to compete with the larger cinema chains as a mark of elitism.⁷⁸

As matters continued to hang in a limbo, the contending cities shifted their attention to pleasing the OCW, which assumed an active role as arbitrator between the feuding factions. By way of being the ministry regulating the functioning of the Filmmuseum, it became a de facto decision maker in the process, with the Minister for Culture Rick van der Ploeg, a Professor of Economics, having the final say. In January 1999, van der Ploeg requested the two cities to develop their plans in greater detail and formally bid for the NIFCNM through presentations to the stakeholders and the OCW. The Filmmuseum, which initially appeared to

⁷⁵ Duursma, Mark. "Exclusieve Underdogs." *NRC Handelsblad*. 25 September 1998. Print.

⁷⁶ Blotkamp, Hoos. Letter to FIAF. 1 December 1998. *Amsterdam*. International Federation of Film Archives, Brussels.

⁷⁷ Van Dijk, Tjalling. "Kunstmanagers Geen Boze Droom, Kunst & Zaken Brengt Bedrijfsleven en Kunstwereld in Contact." *Algemeen Dagblad*. 14 January 1998. Print.

⁷⁸ Duursma, Mark. "Exclusieve Underdogs." *NRC Handelsblad*. 25 September 1998. Print.

enjoy a seemingly privileged position from which it could choose its next home, was left waiting anxiously to see which way things might turn, with its future plans appearing highly uncertain behind a smug front.

Plans, Blueprints, Conflicts, and Blotkamp's Ousting

On 15 March 1999, Rotterdam and Amsterdam made formal bids for the new institution through elaborate concept presentations to the OCW. Rotterdam proposed Las Palmas, a large old vacant warehouse on the river Maas in the city's South Bank that could be spruced up anew, to be completed by 2001 to coincide with the city's bid for the status of European Capital of Culture for that year. The idea of developing Las Palmas as a cultural cluster was foregrounded in the proposal by referring to the building's "monumental dignity" and presenting it as an answer to van der Ploeg's call for such redevelopment projects in an older memorandum.⁷⁹ Amsterdam suggested the relatively smaller, already occupied Sweelinck Conservatory on Van Baerlestraat in its already bustling Museum District, to be completed by 2004. The former presented a project with a total budget of NLG 73 million, the latter NLG 60 million, both of which took into account the Wertheimer bequest.⁸⁰

What followed was a contentious conflict over the NIFCNM's location, which saw protracted negotiations, returns to the drawing board, increasing uncertainty and indecisiveness, ugly battles being waged between the two cities and their representatives, backtracking on many earlier decisions, and a high-tension political drama, a relatively rare occurrence in the generally non-confrontational cultural landscape of the Netherlands. The issue became much larger than the battle the Filmmuseum had initially anticipated embarking on, and the institution's own ideas were reduced to becoming only one voice among many,

⁷⁹ Consortium. "Las Palmas." 1999. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague.

⁸⁰ "Laatste Bod in Stedenstrijd Om Fotomuseum." *de Volkskrant*. 16 March 1999. Print; "Rotterdam Beste Plek voor Centrum Beeldcultuur." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 6 May 1999. Print.

which often found itself drowning in a deluge of oppositional opinions. The many strands of the conflict, some of which played themselves out in the public despite the best of efforts to the contrary, caused a lot of embarrassment for both the Filmmuseum and the Partij van de Arbeid (the Dutch Labor Party), which was in power at that time. On one side of the conflict were van der Ploeg, the RvC, the Filmmuseum's senior management, and the city of Rotterdam, while on the other side were the Filmmuseum's board, its Chairperson Dig Isthā, and the City of Amsterdam, with the events unfolding themselves in numerous twists and turns spread over the next one year, which may be simplified as follows.

After the initial formal bids, van der Ploeg appeared to favor Rotterdam, but requested the RvC for its specialist opinion on the feasibility of both plans. The RvC examined the plans thrice, which included reworked ones submitted by Amsterdam later, and reached the same conclusion on all three occasions: that Rotterdam was the better choice of the two. Basing its advice on the additional space, flexibility, clearer financial commitments, possibility of better synergy between the participating institutions, an earlier completion date, and the presence of the already famous Rotterdam Film Festival in the city, it also added that Las Palmas appeared more in sync with the futuristic vision for the new institution than the fin-de-siècle settings of the Sweelinck in Amsterdam's Museum District. Amsterdam's plans appeared "inchoate and unconvincing" to it, it stated, and reiterating its opinions in subsequent reviews, added that the city's reworked plans had no new insights to offer.⁸¹ Much to Rotterdam's delight, Blotkamp, Visschedijk, and the rest of the Filmmuseum senior management also

⁸¹ "'Rotterdam Beste Plek voor Centrum Beeldcultuur.'" *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 6 May 1999. Print; "Raad voor Cultuur Adviseert Van der Ploeg: 'Rotterdam Beste Plaats voor Beeldinstituut'." *de Volkskrant*. 7 May 1999. Print; "'Het Filmmuseum Gaat Mee; het Heeft Geen Keus Meer'." *Trouw*. 23 June 1999. Print; "Beeldinstituut Filmmuseum Amsterdam Onder Steeds Grotere Druk." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 9 December 1999. Print; "Beeldinstituut Raad voor Cultuur Geergerd door Filmmuseum." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 1 December 1999. Print.

continued to lean towards Las Palmas because of Rotterdam's genial and cooperative attitude that was allegedly a far cry from the snobbery displayed by Amsterdam.⁸²

However, Dig Istva, who headed the Filmmuseum's board and acted as its lone spokesperson, stated that the board preferred to make the institution continue to function from Amsterdam and maintain its own independent existence. The merger would lead to an undermining of the Filmmuseum's own unique identity, he argued, but added that the Filmmuseum was not averse to other collaborations with the participating institutions. A spin-doctor, crisis manager, and erstwhile spokesperson for the Labor Party and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Istva allegedly based his decision on the reworked plans submitted by Amsterdam, the Filmmuseum employees' reluctance to move, and the opinions of the working group of architects and experts advocating on behalf of Amsterdam, who warned other stakeholders that a hasty move to Rotterdam would inevitably lead to the institution having to return very soon.⁸³ "I admit, Amsterdam has long been very lethargic, which is what drove us in the direction of Rotterdam, but now there are two similar plans on the table, making the choice a lot easier," he stated.⁸⁴ However, it is generally believed that his decision was politically motivated, for he assumed this position only after months of work on the issue, during which time even he appeared to be interested in seeing what both the cities had to offer. Changing his stance mid-way, and doing so for reasons that were not entirely convincing, he suddenly appeared to favor Amsterdam without enough reasoning. His

⁸² Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013.

⁸³ "Filmmuseum Kiest Alsnog voor Amsterdam." *de Volkskrant*. 4 June 1999. Print; "Raad Blijft Bij Rotterdam Als Plaats voor Beeldinstituut." *de Volkskrant*. 22 June 1999. Print; "Beeldinstituut Istva: Iedereen Wist Dat We Nog Niet Besloten Hadden." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 3 December 1999. Print; Leupen, Kamilla. "Filmmuseum Zal Niet Wijken." *Het Parool*. 3 December 1999. Print; "Beeldinstituut Op Losse Schroeven." *Algemeen Dagblad*. 1 December 1999. Print; "Nederlands Filmmuseum Wil Niet Naar Rotterdam." *Trouw*. 1 December 1999. Print; "Amsterdam Vecht voor Beeldinstituut." *de Volkskrant*. 23 June 1999. Print.

⁸⁴ "Filmmuseum Wil Toch in Amsterdam Blijven." *Trouw*. 4 June 1999. Print.

decision was embarrassing for the Labor Party since both Istha and van der Ploeg belonged to it, and van der Ploeg had hired Istha himself, but they were now feuding in public.⁸⁵

The media repeatedly criticized the Filmmuseum for its many internal conflicts, reminded the institution that it had itself initiated the whole affair, and also criticized van der Ploeg for not taking an executive decision and delaying the affair endlessly.⁸⁶ Amsterdam and its cultural secretary applauded Istha for his stand, and committed themselves to the task of making the Filmmuseum's continued stay in the city an economic and cultural reality: offering additional space and perks, tweaking their plans to make other concessions, and promising additional funds and resources.

The other four Rotterdam parties to the merger were disappointed with Istha's decision as they did not intend to move to Amsterdam. They suggested to van der Ploeg that the Filmmuseum should perhaps collaborate with an Amsterdam based photography institution instead, and indicated their intention to go ahead with their own plans for the NIFCNM in Rotterdam, with or without the Filmmuseum.⁸⁷ An agitated Rotterdam also requested van der Ploeg to make room for alternate plans for the NIFCNM in the city, minus the Filmmuseum.⁸⁸ Not to be left behind, Amsterdam responded by announcing that it wished to continue planning for a more elaborate photography institution in the city, even if the

⁸⁵ Delpeut, Peter. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 April 2013; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013; Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013. For a profile of the "authoritative" Istha's political connections and work, see Marijnissen, Hans. "De Autoriteitenfluisteraar: Profiel." *Trouw*. 17 December 1999. Print.

⁸⁶ Van Wijnen, Harry. "Bewindsman, Staak Uw Stedenstrijd." *NRC Handelsblad*. 21 December 1999. Print; "'Directeur Filmmuseum Moet Zelf Consequenties Trekken'." *Trouw*. 15 December 1999. Print; Huijsmans, Linda. "Filmmuseum: Van der Ploeg Is Knettergek, Bestuur Dient Zelfstandig Beleidsplan In." *Algemeen Dagblad*. 14 December 1999. Print; "Beeldinstituut Filmmuseum Amsterdam Onder Steeds Grotere Druk." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 9 December 1999. Print; "Vervagende Beelden." *Het Parool*. 4 December 1999. Print; "Iedereen 'Boos' Op Filmmuseum." *Trouw*. 2 December 1999. Print.

⁸⁷ "Filmmuseum Kiest Alsnog voor Amsterdam." *de Volkskrant*. 4 June 1999. Print; "Raad Blijft Bij Rotterdam Als Plaats voor Beeldinstituut." *de Volkskrant*. 22 June 1999. Print.

⁸⁸ "Beeldinstituut Raad voor Cultuur Geergerd door Filmmuseum." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 1 December 1999. Print.

NIFCNM were to go to Rotterdam.⁸⁹ Van der Ploeg, trying hard to make everyone reach a consensus, dismissed the idea of an NIFCNM without the Filmmuseum being on board, but complicated matters further by suggesting that the new institution, including the Filmmuseum, could still go to Rotterdam if another photography institution could be set up in Amsterdam, and the Filmmuseum's public functions could also continue from Amsterdam (which the Filmmuseum's senior management had also previously suggested). This annoyed both Amsterdam and Rotterdam, which felt that splitting and duplicating efforts would only lead to further troubles and fund crunches.

Meanwhile, the PBC indicated a preference for Amsterdam, which those in favor of Rotterdam saw as partisan politics at play since Amsterdam's mayor Schelto Patijn served on its board. As matters turned increasingly muddled, PBC reminded everyone that the Wertheimer bequest was intended only for efforts in the field of photography, and needn't necessarily be directed only towards a museum. With no resolution in sight, it eventually decided to limit its contribution in either projects to just 20 percent of the bequest, choosing to invest in smaller amateur and professional photography projects instead, which sent everyone back to the drawing boards to figure out where the remaining money was to come from.⁹⁰

As the unwieldy deadlock continued, van der Ploeg warned Isha that he could not get full state subsidy and still pay no heed to its wishes, and suggested that he falls in line or faces the consequences i.e. drastic cuts in subsidy, along with other repercussions.⁹¹ In a letter addressed to the Lower House of Parliament of the Netherlands, van der Ploeg reiterated his

⁸⁹ "Beeldcultuur Naar Rotterdam." *Trouw*. 19 November 1999. Print.

⁹⁰ "Beeldinstituut Problemen Rond Beeldinstituut Groeien (Samenvating)." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 30 November 1999. Print; "Nederlands Filmmuseum Wil Niet Naar Rotterdam." *Trouw*. 1 December 1999. Print; "Beeldinstituut Op Losse Schroeven." *Algemeen Dagblad*. 1 December 1999. Print.

⁹¹ "Van der Ploeg Zet Subsidie Filmmuseum Op de Tocht." *Trouw*. 3 December 1999. Print; "Bestuur Filmmuseum Begrijpt Niets Van Kritiek Op Besluit." *Trouw*. 4 December 1999. Print; "Vervagende Beelden." *Het Parool*. 4 December 1999. Print.

earlier decision of setting up the NIFCNM in Rotterdam, Filmmuseum included.⁹² Meanwhile, a group of Filmmuseum employees also chose to write to the Lower House and van der Ploeg saying they wished to go to Rotterdam, and not everyone at the Filmmuseum opposed the move as had been projected by Isthā. But Isthā refused to reconsider his decision, imposed a gag order on the Filmmuseum and its senior management to control the negative publicity the institution was getting, banned internal meetings on the subject, and reminded both van der Ploeg and the Filmmuseum management that the Filmmuseum was still an autonomous institution governed by its board, which he headed. Blotkamp and her team, who now regretted having welcomed Isthā to the board just a few years back, were left unable to comment in public on their many troubles and differences with Isthā.⁹³

With no possible resolution in sight, Isthā is said to have put all his political might behind his decision, pulling many strings behind closed doors and filing an independent grant application for the Filmmuseum for next three years that made no mention of the NIFCNM.⁹⁴ Finally, on 20 January 2000, nearly two years after the Filmmuseum's internal memo was leaked, van der Ploeg -- who technically had the final say on the matter, and had indicated his continued preference for Rotterdam to Blotkamp that very morning over telephone -- succumbed to the pressure from his own party members and announced that the institution would continue to stay in Amsterdam as an independent entity.⁹⁵ A few days later, Isthā called

⁹² Duursma, Mark. "Bewindsman Negeert het Filmmuseum, Van der Ploeg Verbaasd." *NRC Handelsblad*. 2 December 1999. Print; "Beeldinstituut Van der Ploeg Houdt Vast aan Beeldinstituut in Rotterdam." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 2 December 1999. Print.

⁹³ "Beeldinstituut Spreekverbod Directie Filmmuseum." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 2 December 1999. Print; Leupen, Kamilla. "Filmmuseum Zal Niet Wijken." *Het Parool*. 3 December 1999. Print. Blotkamp maintained a personal log of daily developments on the Las Palmas debacle, which includes many additional details that were not revealed to the press. The unpublished document was shared with me. See Blotkamp, Hoos. "Las Palmas - De Grote Lijn." 1998-2000. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague.

⁹⁴ "Adviesraad: 'Filmmuseum Moet Wel Meewerken'." *Trouw*. 6 January 2000. Print; "Directeur Filmmuseum Moet Zelf Consequenties Trekken'." *Trouw*. 15 December 1999. Print.

⁹⁵ "Filmmuseum Blijft in Amsterdam: 'Definitief Besluit'." *NRC Handelsblad*. 21 January 2000. Print; "Filmmuseum Mag Amsterdams Blijven." *de Telegraaf*. 21 January 2000. Print;

the entire staff of the Filmmuseum to a gathering, explained his decision to them, chastised Blotkamp and Visschedijk for not cooperating with the board, and removed them from their posts.⁹⁶

In the days following their departure, support poured in from the film archiving community the world over, many in the form of letters addressed to van der Ploeg requesting him to set up an independent committee to mediate between Blotkamp, Visschedijk, and the board, and reinstate them to their positions in the Filmmuseum, which remained unanswered.⁹⁷ Reflecting on the debacle, Ista's successor on the board, Sijbolt Noorda, suggested in his interview with me that despite having a sound plan, Blotkamp's efforts were unsuccessful because of the need for consensus building in the Dutch work culture, her lack of sensitivity to the political situation in the nation, and her failure to consult the City of Amsterdam before embarking on such an ambitious project.⁹⁸ Both Blotkamp and Visschedijk individually admitted that it was a very difficult period for them, but in a gesture of continued solidarity with each other, each of them also suggested that it was perhaps more difficult for the other person.⁹⁹

In the aftermath of the incident, Blotkamp, who was already nearing retirement age, busied herself first at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Delft, and then with many smaller but significant film preservation related projects that she was offered by Gabrielle

Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013.

⁹⁶ ---. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013; Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; "Directeur Filmmuseum Stapt Op." *Algemeen Dagblad*. 4 February 2000. Print. A timeline of some of these events, albeit offered from Blotkamp's perspective, can also be found in ---. "Las Palmas Story." 30 January 2000. *Hoos Blotkamp's Personal Archive*. The Hague.

⁹⁷ "Internationale Steun voor Directie Van Filmmuseum." *Trouw*. 25 February 2000. Print; "Steun voor Directie Van Filmmuseum." *de Volkskrant*. 25 February 2000. Print; "Internationale Bezorgdheid Om Filmmuseum." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 24 February 2000. Print.

⁹⁸ Noorda, Sijbolt. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 17 April 2013.

⁹⁹ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013.

Claes, the director of the Belgian Cinematek. Visschedijk, who was still of mid-career age, had to remain without a job for two years.¹⁰⁰ However, in subsequent developments, the institutions that had come together to create the proposed NIFCNM regrouped themselves -- minus the Filmmuseum -- to create the Nederlands Fotomuseum. The project was supported in part by the Wertheimer bequest, and opened its doors to the public from Las Palmas two years later. And in a remarkable development, Visschedijk was chosen to be the Fotomuseum's new director, a position he holds to date. He also serves on the RvC, which he has headed for the last few years.¹⁰¹

Blotkamp died in April 2014, one year after she finally reconnected with her former workplace and visited EYE on the occasion of the retirement of a friend, which was for the first time since her ousting 14 years ago. While EYE claimed that she had severed all ties with the institution after her departure and not responded to its invitations for various events, making them eventually stop sending them, she claimed that she had never been invited back in until the retirement party. This tension between the two also affected my work initially, for I was told by EYE that it could not help me contact Blotkamp as in all likelihood, she would not wish to talk about the institution. However, this was the only such omission in the otherwise transparent and cooperative functioning of the institution, leading me to conclude that it was a result of misunderstandings on both sides, and assumed hostilities that had run their course, rather than a deliberate attempt by the institution to keep me from meeting Blotkamp.

Despite the significant contributions made by Blotkamp, her departure from the institution did not create as major a rupture in its functioning as might be expected. This was mostly because unlike P. K. Nair at the NFAI or de Vaal at the Filmmuseum previously, she had put a self-sustaining system in place that was not controlled by one individual alone. This

¹⁰⁰ Blotkamp, Hoos. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013.

¹⁰¹ ---. Personal interview. The Hague. 18 April 2013; Visschedijk, Ruud. Personal interview. Rotterdam. 16 April 2013; "Remembering Hoos Blotkamp." Eye Film Institute Netherlands. 8 April 2014. Web. 5 February 2015. <<http://www.7www.eyefilm.nl/node/1127147> >.

ensured continuity, which is a necessity for a national film archive as well as other memory institutions, indicating that Blotkamp's functioning is a better way of managing them than putting passionate but individualistic archivists or cinephiles, such as Nair or de Vaal, at the helm of affairs.

The board's clever separation of administrative and curating tasks between the director and her deputy is also commendable, as is its choice of the right people for the tasks. While appearing obvious, these continue to be a recurring problem area for many memory institutions that make experts in the field assume administrative duties, which they are unable to perform well, or ask able administrators to work as curators, again with undesirable results (as was the case at the NFAI too). Added to these were the collaborative efforts of Blotkamp and her deputies, who, despite being strong and independent individuals, worked as a team and gave the institution's functioning more importance than their personal preferences. Even the conflict between Blotkamp and Isha may be seen as stemming from differences of opinion about the direction the institution should take, and its political repercussions, and not one that was centered on individual personalities. And despite the conflict resulting in the move to Rotterdam being aborted, it gave the institution a basic blueprint to work with -- that of collaborations, private sponsorships, and creating a cultural cluster in tandem with the city -- which it expanded considerably through the 2000s to eventually reinvent itself as EYE in 2010. The process of this reinvention, in which the Dutch state's increasing emphasis on visible markers of nationalism played a significant part, is discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter described the processes through which the Filmmuseum revived itself under the aegis of Hoos Blotkamp -- a career bureaucrat with experience in administering art and architecture institutions and state departments rather than being a film archivist, film historian, or even a cinephile -- which ended the individual as institution era of the

Filmmuseum and put a self-sustaining system in place. It discussed how through the work of Blotkamp's deputies Eric de Kuyper, Peter Delpout, and Ruud Visschedijk, the Filmmuseum chose to focus on non-canonical shorts, film fragments, unreleased footage, and experimental films from the silent era to build a niche reputation for itself in the international film archiving community. It elaborated on how the rise of cultural clusters and the commercialization of the Dutch arts and culture sector, when coupled together with the space and financial constraints of an expanding Filmmuseum, led the institution to consider moving to Rotterdam as part of a consortium of similar institutions. And it described how this proposed move escalated into a nasty political battle that eventually made the institution abort the move, but also led to Blotkamp being ousted.

In the process, this chapter demonstrated the institution's continued transnationality and underplaying of Dutchness. It also illustrated how national film archives -- essentially hybrid institutions -- are better served by a combination of administrative and curatorial experts at the helm of affairs rather than only any one of them, and how they also need to be well managed businesses and exhibition centers in addition to being well-meaning collecting institutions. Following Blotkamp's ousting, the leaderless institution did not experience as major rupture in its functioning as might be expected -- a testament to the self-sustaining system she and the board had put in place -- and building on the blueprint it obtained from the aborted move to Rotterdam, it was able to transform and reinvent into the glamorous and high-profile institution that is known as EYE today. The processes through which this transformation took place are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

EYE-ING THE NEDERLANDS FILM MUSEUM:

DUTCH NATIONALISM AND EYE AS A FLAGSHIP OF DUTCH CULTURE, 2000-2013

In this chapter, I discuss the Filmmuseum's transformation into EYE, a process that began with the aborted move to Rotterdam -- which provided the institution with a blueprint that was developed further through the 2000s -- and culminated in the institution's renaming as EYE in 2010 and its glamorous relocation to a stunning new building on the banks of the IJ in 2012. Locating the institution's reinvention against the backdrop of Dutch nationalism, I argue that the new building's attractiveness and grandeur work towards making EYE a flagship of Dutch culture, which, in addition to giving Dutch cinema a material architectural form, also imparts Dutch ideas of freedom, tolerance, and modernity -- which characterize Dutch nationalism -- with a symbolic expression. However, I demonstrate how this expression on the part of the transnational EYE is more a performance than a deep ideological belief in nationalism or in prioritizing Dutch films over films from other nations, a pragmatic and opportunistic response to the shifts towards increasing conservatism in the discursive space of Dutch nationalism so as to continue finding favor with the state and other stakeholders.

I also discuss the complex processes that went into creating this flagship, in the form of a cultural cluster, which completed the institution's identification as a national institution. I describe how it entailed the coming together of various state, city, and private interests, the digital turn of film archives through the Images for the Future project, and the nationalizing of the Filmmuseum's collection. And I show how the institution's hybrid archive/museum identity was at work through these developments as well. In the process, this chapter illustrates the transnationality of national film archives, their complex negotiations with digitization, as well as their increasing functioning as commercial entities. However, in order to better understand

these processes and the historical narrative that follows, it would be useful to first discuss the shifting discourse of Dutch nationalism, and EYE's location within it.

Dutch Nationalism and EYE's Transnationality

Nation, nationalism, and national identity are now generally understood as social constructs and the products of modernity through the much discussed works of Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, and Benedict Anderson.¹ Building on this understanding, it has been suggested that nationalism is not a static construct but a dynamic discursive space instead, which keeps recomposing and reimagining itself with changes in socio-political circumstances.² This discursive space is fluid and malleable, and is "intrinsically flexible, adaptable, and able to galvanize or accommodate change," thereby shifting the very nature of a nation's self-identity over time.³ Dutch nationalism has undergone a similar shift over the last two decades.

Scholars Eric Larson, Wibo van Rossum, and Patrick Schmidt remind us that traditionally, the Dutch took pride in describing themselves through such adjectives as progressive, egalitarian, pragmatic, open-minded, multicultural, and peaceful. The myth of the moral superiority of the Netherlands was weaved together using such strands as the nation's consensus democracy that avoided conflicts, low incarceration rates, the upholding of human rights, near-libertarian tolerance of drugs, abortion, euthanasia, and alternate lifestyles, and

¹ Hobsbawm, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Print; Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983. Print; Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006. Print.

² Van Reekum, Rogier. "As Nation, People and Public Collide: Enacting Dutchness in Public Discourse." *Nations and Nationalism* 18.4 (2012): 583-602. Print.

³ Scorrano, Armanda. "Constructing National Identity: National Representations at the Museum of Sydney." *Journal of Australian Studies* 36.3 (2012): 345-62. Print. 346.

generous contributions to international development aid, among others.⁴ However, accompanying this superiority myth was a nationalism that has been described by the sociologist Rogier van Reekum as “weak, thin, procedural, pluralist,” and by social psychologist Geert Hofstede as “effeminate,” which allegedly did not believe in investing in the glory of the nation or celebrating Dutchness, especially when compared to such nations as the US, Japan, or the UK.⁵ Instead, Dutch nationalism was seen as being characterized by a disdain for national pride -- which has been referred to as “non-identity nationalism,” “anti-nationalism,” and one that “doesn’t exist.” It was understood to remain non-serious and leisurely, individualistic but civic, and something which “refrained from developing a hegemonic national morality to which everyone subscribed or submitted.”⁶

However, starting in the 1990s, in what has been termed variously as “the nationalist turn,” “resurgent nationalism,” and “new nationalism,” it is said to have moved from one polar end of the spectrum to the other with remarkable speed. It manifested itself into a “strong, thick, cultural, and monist” form, marked by an outburst of nationalist rhetoric, fear of foreign cultures and religions, the growth of right-wing political radicalism, and an urgent and jingoistic need to define and herald “Dutchness.”⁷ At the heart of this transition were two interrelated factors: one, the nation’s integration into the European Union in 1993 that led to fears of cultural homogenization, and two, the threat the nation perceived from immigrants, especially

⁴ Larson, Erik, Wibo van Rossum, and Patrick Schmidt. "The Dutch Confession: Compliance, Leadership and National Identity in the Human Rights Order." *Utrecht Law Review* 10.1 (2014): 96-112. Print.

⁵ Van Reekum, Rogier. "As Nation, People and Public Collide: Enacting Dutchness in Public Discourse." *Nations and Nationalism* 18.4 (2012): 583-602. Print; Hofstede, Geert H. *Masculinity and Femininity: The Taboo Dimension of National Cultures*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998. Print.

⁶ Van Reekum, Rogier. "As Nation, People and Public Collide: Enacting Dutchness in Public Discourse." *Nations and Nationalism* 18.4 (2012): 583-602. Print; Lechner, Frank J. "Imagined Communities in the Global Game: Soccer and the Development of Dutch National Identity." *GLOB Global Networks* 7.2 (2007): 215-29. Print.

⁷ Van Reekum, Rogier. "As Nation, People and Public Collide: Enacting Dutchness in Public Discourse." *Nations and Nationalism* 18.4 (2012): 583-602. Print.

Muslims, thereby making it a defensive response to the postmodern condition brought about by economic globalization.⁸

Marking this transition were such events as the repercussions of the 2001 attacks on New York's World Trade Centre in the Netherlands, the assassinations of the politician, sociologist, and populist leader Pim Fortuyn in 2002, the murder of the film director Theo van Gogh in 2004, the hiring and controversial dismissal of Tariq Ramadan at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam in 2009, and the rise of such political parties as Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV, Party for Freedom) and Trots op Nederland (TON, Proud of the Netherlands). Such events challenged the myth of the nation's moral superiority, for they were in conflict with its self-image of being tolerant and civilized.⁹ And accompanying them were politicians and public intellectuals actively seeking out markers of Dutch identity, emphasizing more strongly what it means to be Dutch by developing various national canons and a new national history museum, and making the teaching of Dutch history mandatory, through which Dutch nationalism was made visible in new(er) and more pronounced ways.¹⁰

⁸ Verkaaik, Oskar. "The Cachet Dilemma: Ritual and Agency in New Dutch Nationalism." *American ethnologist* 37 (2010): 69-82. Print; Lechner, Frank J. "Imagined Communities in the Global Game: Soccer and the Development of Dutch National Identity." *GLOB Global Networks* 7.2 (2007): 215-29. Print.

⁹ Larson, Erik, Wibo van Rossum, and Patrick Schmidt. "The Dutch Confession: Compliance, Leadership and National Identity in the Human Rights Order." *Utrecht Law Review* 10.1 (2014): 96-112. Print; Lechner, Frank J. "Imagined Communities in the Global Game: Soccer and the Development of Dutch National Identity." *GLOB Global Networks* 7.2 (2007): 215-29. Print; Verkaaik, Oskar. "The Cachet Dilemma: Ritual and Agency in New Dutch Nationalism." *American ethnologist* 37 (2010): 69-82. Print; Hurenkamp, Menno, Evelien Tonkens, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. "Citizenship in the Netherlands: Locally Produced, Nationally Contested." *Citizenship Studies* 15.02 (2011): 205-25. Print; van Reekum, Rogier. "As Nation, People and Public Collide: Enacting Dutchness in Public Discourse." *Nations and Nationalism* 18.4 (2012): 583-602. Print.

¹⁰ Verkaaik, Oskar. "The Cachet Dilemma: Ritual and Agency in New Dutch Nationalism." *American ethnologist* 37 (2010): 69-82. Print; Hurenkamp, Menno, Evelien Tonkens, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. "Citizenship in the Netherlands: Locally Produced, Nationally Contested." *Citizenship Studies* 15.02 (2011): 205-25. Print; van der Vaart, Rob. "Geographical Imagination in Dutch Historical Self-Representation - the Case of the Cultural Canon of the Netherlands." *TESG Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 100.3 (2009): 348-57. Print; Bodenstein, Felicity. "National Museums in the Netherlands." *Building National Museums in Europe 1750-2010: Conference Proceedings from Eunamus, European National*

Van Reekum argues for a nuanced understanding of these developments, suggesting that despite their appeal, such convenient terms as new nationalism and simple explanations about radical polar shifts are flawed in their hurried interpretation of the transition as a *resurgence* of nationalism. As he points out, such an interpretation supposes that nationalism was non-existent in the past or had been on the decline, basing itself only on the absence of highly visible and contentious political movements while ignoring the subtler social values that held the Dutch society together. Additionally, they are insensitive to the performativity of the discourse on Dutchness, which he considers to be a more suitable explanation for new nationalism, suggesting that it is an articulation of the plurality of positions and debates that characterizes the discursive space and cannot be reduced to simplistic polarities between the past and the present, or between no nationalism and high nationalism (even though such polarities can have political utility).¹¹ "In no sense do [the recent trends] break with the notion that the Dutch are exceptionally civic, open, tolerant, culturally progressive and should be proud of their anti-collectivism. It is precisely this repertoire that helps them to differentiate between Dutch and foreign, in particular, Islamic, culture," he states.¹²

Echoing similar sentiments, anthropologist Oskar Verkaaik also reminds us that the newer political parties, which appear right-wing in their national and racial conservatism,

Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28-30 April 2011. Linköping, Sweden: Linköping University Press 2011. 595-624. Print; Hasselt, Gwenny van. "The Dutch National Historical Museum." *National Museums: New Studies from around the World*. Eds. Knell, Simon J., et al. London: Routledge, 2011. 313-24. Print. Such developments are of course not unique to the Netherlands, and have been witnessed across the globe, but especially so in other European nations. For a brief mention of similar developments in Denmark, see Aronsson, Peter. "Explaining National Museums." *National Museums: New Studies from around the World*. Eds. Knell, Simon J., et al. London: Routledge, 2011. 29-54. Print. 49.

¹¹ Van Reekum, Rogier. "As Nation, People and Public Collide: Enacting Dutchness in Public Discourse." *Nations and Nationalism* 18.4 (2012): 583-602. Print. A similar argument can also be found in Hurenkamp, Menno, Evelien Tonkens, and Jan Willem Duyvendak. "Citizenship in the Netherlands: Locally Produced, Nationally Contested." *Citizenship Studies* 15.02 (2011): 205-25. Print.

¹² Van Reekum, Rogier. "As Nation, People and Public Collide: Enacting Dutchness in Public Discourse." *Nations and Nationalism* 18.4 (2012): 583-602. Print. 594.

essentially premise themselves on traditionally left-wing ideas of tolerance, gender equality, sexual emancipation, freedom of speech, and individualism in order to define their key values in opposition to the perception of Islam as a repressive religion that doesn't allow for such traditional Dutch ideas to flourish.¹³ Therefore, the discursive space of Dutch nationalism is far less polarized than what it appears to be on the surface, and the seemingly diametrical ends of its contours are closer together and more interlinked than is immediately evident. The Filmmuseum's reinvention as the highly visible EYE in the late 2000s also needs to be understood against this shifting discursive space.

Verkaaik makes an additional observation, that unlike some other nations, "Dutch nationalism lacks a key symbol that expresses the national core, is ceremonial, and has enough cachet. . . [It is] a matter of freedom, tolerance, and modernity, but how does one symbolize such concepts?" he asks.¹⁴ The very need for such an expressive icon in the Dutch sociocultural landscape -- which was felt more prominently only in the recent past -- is a product of the shift in the nationalist discourse, and there can of course never be just one singular entity that can perform the task in its entirety. But an institution like EYE -- in its prominent, majestic, and futuristic reinvention, and in its open and liberal understanding of cinema and its canons -- can be seen as an attempt at compensating for this perceived lack of an icon by performing one of the many visible articulations and displays of Dutch power and authority, a site where Dutch values and national identity are both produced and consumed. It is the fulfilment of one of the "flagships of Dutch culture" that van der Ploeg had previously called for, which the Filmmuseum had attempted to create at Las Palmas and could not, but which has now found a clear and mature expression in the new EYE's attractiveness and grandeur. As the institution itself put it while formulating plans for its reinvention:

¹³ Verkaaik, Oskar. "The Cachet Dilemma: Ritual and Agency in New Dutch Nationalism." *American ethnologist* 37 (2010): 69-82. Print.

¹⁴ ---. "The Cachet Dilemma: Ritual and Agency in New Dutch Nationalism." *American ethnologist* 37 (2010): 69-82. Print. 74.

At a time when state Secretary van der Ploeg speaks of “flagships of Dutch culture,” the Filmmuseum has the opportunity, more than in the past, of making visible such an excellent institution. The Filmmuseum wants to actively present itself as the flagship of Dutch film culture and as an example for institutions anywhere in the world that are working in the field of visual culture.¹⁵

Fulfilling this mandate, EYE stands today as a symbol of Dutch film culture, in the form of a well-known and stunning new building offering excellent views of Amsterdam, multiple theatres for watching both archival and contemporary films, a large space with specially curated film exhibitions, and a quality café/restaurant; a hip, happening, open, innovative, and futuristic space targeted especially at youngsters. It acts as a temple, a shrine, and a monument that gives the idea of Dutch cinema -- and by extension the Dutch nation-state -- a material architectural form, ritualizing a visit to the institution as an especially Dutch activity.¹⁶ It is a node on the Dutch Ideological State Apparatus, which proclaims, rather loudly, that the Netherlands “has a culture” -- a cinema culture in this instance -- which is linked to the idea of “having a history” a memory institution is supposed to represent, and echoes the sentiment that having a memory institution is akin to having an identity.¹⁷

However, EYE’s proclamations of Dutchness result from the institution’s negotiations with the shifts in Dutch nationalism, and are therefore performative utterances meant to appease resurgent nationalists within the state bureaucratic machinery and continue attracting funding than stemming from a deep belief in prioritizing Dutch films or culture over others. The institution’s high-visibility is only an instrument to attract attention, which it cleverly mobilizes to

¹⁵ *Contourennota 2001-04*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2000. Print. 5.

¹⁶ In so saying, I borrow from Carol Duncan’s ideas on art museums as ritual spaces Duncan, Carol. *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.

¹⁷ I borrow here from Sharon Macdonald’s ideas on museums articulating a cultural identity Macdonald, Sharon J. “Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities.” *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*. Ed. Carbonella, Bettina 2012. 273-87. Print. 2-3. The idea of the Ideological State Apparatus is borrowed from Althusser. See Althusser, Louis. “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation).” *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972. 85-126. Print.

mean different things to different constituencies. It continues to be more transnational than national even today, caring more about cinematic heritage *per se* rather than only Dutch cinematic heritage. It subscribes more to the traditional understanding of Dutch nationalism invested in openness, egalitarianism, and non-partisan approaches than the newer one requiring loud proclamations of Dutchness. Yet, being pragmatic and opportunistic, the institution positions itself cleverly to perform both tasks, becoming a new flagship of Dutch culture the state expects it to become, but under that bold shiny façade, remaining liberal and democratic in its understanding of cinema and its canons.

In truth, the institution bases its activities only on the economic necessities stemming from changes in the Dutch political and cultural landscape rather than on strong nationalistic sentiments. It uses the promise of nationalism it harbors only as an instrument to get what it wants. A number of illustrations support this argument. In its plans, policy documents, and communication with the state and other stakeholders while requesting for funds, one can see an increasing use of such terms as Dutch and national, and explicit expressions of how the institution contributes to the nation, which were not there previously. The trend began only in the early 2000s,¹⁸ became more explicit in the later part of the decade,¹⁹ and got solidified further in its 2014 policy plan.²⁰

However, the institution's activities through this period continued to be strongly transnational. For instance, in 2004, when the institution decided to undertake restorations of a select few silent era films from its collection -- an elaborate, expensive, and relatively infrequent activity -- instead of choosing two Dutch films, it chose to restore the Hollywood film *Beyond the Rocks* (Sam Wood, 1922) alongside the Dutch film *Zeemansvrouwen* (Henk

¹⁸ *Activiteitenplan 2002*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2002. Print. 11, RvC. "Conceptverslag Monitoringgesprek Filmmuseum." 29 August 2002. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam. 6.

¹⁹ *Het Nieuwe Filmmuseum: Bijlagen*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2008. Print; *De Internationale Positie Van het Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2008. Print.

²⁰ *Collection Policy 2014-17*. Amsterdam: EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2013. Print.

Kleinmann, 1930).²¹ Throughout the 2000s, the institution continued to maintain a strong presence in the international film archiving community despite feeling the pressure to focus more on local activities.²² And as recent as 2013, more than 60 percent of its collection was still comprised of non-Dutch films.²³ Additionally, it is one of the few national film archives internationally that frequently employs non-Dutch people across the board.

In many ways, such activities are a necessity for an institution representing a small national film output. EYE justifies them to the nationalists by calling them the markers of its “world-class” status, implying that they showcase Dutch capabilities to the world and the nation’s commitment to the safekeeping of cinematic heritage, which in turn promotes the nation internationally.²⁴ The various steps and processes through which it became such a national institution through the 2000s are elaborated below.

Amsterdam North, Collaborations with ING, and the Sector Institute for Film (2000-2006)

Following the Las Palmas fiasco, the City of Amsterdam, relieved over its supposed victory over Rotterdam, reassured the Filmmuseum that it would support the institution in all possible ways to make it grow and prosper within Amsterdam, even granting it additional housing benefits to offset the steep increase in rent for the Vondelpark Pavilion.²⁵ But the institution was left tense and internally divided under a third-party interim leadership that was hurriedly put in place until the next director could be selected. Despite Blotkamp’s exit not being a major rupture and the institution’s day-to-day functional continuity being largely

²¹ An account of this restoration can be found in Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print. 236-46.

²² *De Internationale Positie Van het Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2008. Print; *Activiteitenverslag 2002*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 2002. Print.

²³ *Collection Policy 2014-17*. Amsterdam: EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2013. Print.

²⁴ Den Hamer, Sandra. "Onderwerp: Instituten Wereldklasse." Letter to Gemeente Amsterdam. 29 April 2008. NFM, Amsterdam.

²⁵ *Jaarverslag 2000*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 2001. Print. 31.

maintained, the incident wasn't without consequence. The institution's collective morale appeared low, and employee absenteeism reached a record high.²⁶ And while Istha continued as the chairman of the board, half of its members were replaced with new ones, with some of the outgoing ones publicly denouncing the board's ways of working while tendering their resignations.²⁷ Among the new members was the theologian Sijbolt Noorda, described as an "administrative heavyweight" and a "visionary," who had previously served as president of the University of Amsterdam. He took over from Istha upon the latter's quiet retirement in 2004 and helped shape the institution's vision until 2012.²⁸

Under guidance from the new board, the Filmmuseum embarked on addressing the key issues that it saw as being the biggest impediments to its flourishing: the fragmentation of its physical facilities and their dated nature, the lack of a clear profile and vision, and the lack of a more defined public function. In April 2001, the institution appointed Rien Hagen, the head of the Hague Filmhuis (Film House), as its new director, selecting him especially for his calm but determined demeanor that was seen as a necessity for rebuilding the trust it had lost with its stakeholders, and for the consensus building it required to be able to work successfully in the Dutch socio-cultural milieu.²⁹ Hagen in turn appointed Rieks Hadders, a long-term Filmmuseum employee, as his deputy, creating a successful duo that is mostly discussed as a team.³⁰

²⁶ *Jaarverslag 2000*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 2001. Print. 33.

²⁷ "Conflict Filmmuseum Werkt Door in Rijksakademie." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 21 April 2000. Print; "Houwer Stapt Uit Bestuur Nederlands Filmmuseum." *Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau ANP*. 21 March 2000. Print; "Houwer Stapt Uit Bestuur Filmmuseum." *Leeuwarder Courant*. 22 March 2000. Print.

²⁸ Van der Laan, Medy C. "Benoeming Van de Heer Noorda Tot Voorzitter Van de Raad Van Toezicht Van het Nederlands Filmmuseum." Letter to Aan de Raad van Toezicht van de Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum. 20 July 2004. OCW, The Hague; Noorda, Sijbolt. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 17 April 2013; "Zwaargewichten in Nieuw Bestuur Van Filmmuseum." *Het Parool*. 1 December 2000. Print; den Hamer, Sandra. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 January 2013.

²⁹ Noorda, Sijbolt. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 17 April 2013.

³⁰ Den Hamer, Sandra. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 January 2013.

Under the Hagen-Hadders leadership, the institution's long-term vision underwent no significant changes. The basic blueprint for its future as envisaged in the Las Palmas plans -- that of larger spaces, more pronounced public profile, closer connections with the market, and mergers with other cinema institutions -- resurfaced and continued to inform its course of action. The same blueprint was directly responsible for its reinvention as EYE a decade later, albeit realized in new ways, involving a series of opportunistic moves, and with its actualization taking much longer than expected. The process initially involved two simultaneous strands of unrelated developments -- one, the Filmmuseum's continued quest for new premises and collaboration with ING-Real Estate (ING), which led to the designing and commissioning of the new building in Amsterdam North, and two, the state's incremental move towards the development of a unified single Sector Institute for Film -- both of which eventually came together in late 2005.

The former began in 2001 during the Filmmuseum's recovery initiatives, in which its hybrid archive/museum identity resurfaced yet again. The institution split its need for new premises into two separate spaces -- a "Collection Building" to house all of its holdings (except the highly inflammable nitrate film reels), library, archival functions, and most of its employees, and a distinct "Museum Building" to conduct its screenings, exhibitions, and related public activities -- rather than consolidating them together under the same bigger roof.³¹ As discussed previously, this physical split had first been introduced by de Vaal, almost three decades ago, mostly out of necessity resulting from space limitations and health-and-safety norms that had forced him to relocate many of the institution's bank-end activities offsite. But it had worked successfully over the years and become a part of the institution's internal organization and workflow, so much so that it evaded any serious rethinking even in the new vision for the future. Additionally, the institution seems to have continued feeling that it was

³¹ *Jaarverslag 2002*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 2003. Print. 24.

more practical to keep the collections separate from the offices and public spaces, which was both less expensive (lower rent for “storage only” spaces) and wiser from a health-and-safety standpoint.

The Filmmuseum initially chose to focus on the Collections Building rather than the Museum Building, in the process foregrounding its archive identity. While it was already grappling with the fragmentation of its storage facilities, an external impetus for the decision came from a 2001 report by the Instituut Collectie Nederland (ICN, a state institute for the management and conservation of movable cultural heritage). The ICN report stated that most of the Filmmuseum’s collection centers did not meet the best standards and practices of passive conservation. It recommended that a solution needed to be found within five to ten years, failing which the nation’s audiovisual heritage would suffer immensely. Given the apparent urgency of the situation, the Raad voor Cultuur (RvC) advised the Filmmuseum to come up with a reasoned proposal to tackle the issue at the earliest. Consequently, over the next two years, with support from the OCW and the City of Amsterdam, the Filmmuseum initiated collaborative efforts with the Stedelijk and the Amsterdam Historical Museum to create a shared Central Collection Depot for their holdings.³² Their combined search introduced them to Amsterdam North for the first time, where, excited by the potential it harbored, they got into a dialog with a few developers for a custom new building. The collaborative project eventually failed to take off, but the Filmmuseum’s individual efforts to find other similar spaces in the same area continued.³³

Meanwhile, the institution received additional advice and criticism from the OCW and the RvC, also between 2001 and 2004, repeatedly urging it to pay more attention to its

³² NFM. "Collectiecentrum/Museumgebouw." Letter to Ministerie van OCW. 12 October 2001. OCW, The Hague.

³³ ---. Letter to Raad voor Cultuur. 30 July 2004. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; Hagen, Rien. Letter to Ministerie van OCenW. 18 October 2004. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam.

“museum functions”, chiefly more public activities.³⁴ Alongside, it was also reminded that it was not a member of the municipal museum consultations, thereby putting increasing pressure on it to align itself more with the museum world.³⁵ This was in keeping with the general emphasis on public activities in the cultural policy plans of the nation for this period, but the institution did not have the requisite space to organize them. As an interim remedial measure, in 2001, the Filmmuseum started renting a well-known film theatre from Pathé in the Cinerama/Bellevue complex in the busy city center of Amsterdam, which also hosted the International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam, the Amnesty International Film Festival, and the Festival of Fantastic Films, among others. By 2002, when Pathé’s plans for converting the premises to newer facilities could not materialize and left them vacant, the institution availed the opportunity and hired the entire complex with three big film screening spaces, which gave it the luxury of catering to a large number of audience members for the first time in its history.³⁶ Its programming in the new space saw it attract between 100,000 to 150,000 audience members annually, enabling it to understand its potential for public activities within Amsterdam more clearly.³⁷

These numbers were much higher than what it had expected from Amsterdam, for during the previously aborted move to Rotterdam, one of the arguments that had been made in favor of Rotterdam had been the popularity of the International Film Festival Rotterdam and

³⁴ Sorgdrager, W., and J.A. Brandenburg. "Beleidsplan Filmmuseum." Letter to De Staatsscreteris van Onderwijs. 1 August 2001. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; RvC. "Advies: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum." 19 April 2004. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; *Aanvraag Amsterdams Kunstenplan 2005-08*. Amsterdam: Gemeente Amsterdam: Dienst Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling, 2003. Print; ---. "Conceptverslag Monitoringgesprek Filmmuseum." 29 August 2002. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam. 2-3.

³⁵ Cultuur, Raad voor. "Verslag Tweede Monitoringgesprek Filmmuseum." 11 June 2003. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam.

³⁶ *Activiteitenverslag 2004*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 2004. Print; Noorda, Sijbolt. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 17 April 2013.

³⁷ ---. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 17 April 2013; *Jaarverslag 2003*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 2004. Print.

the absence of a similarly large community of cinephiles in Amsterdam.³⁸ From its previous activities in Vondelpark, the institution was aware of the appeal of archival films even for general audiences, but had not expected the experience to be reproducible at a large scale, especially given that the Dutch cinema business had traditionally only focused on recent releases. This was similar to many other nations worldwide, but was unlike other art forms (such as theatre or opera) in which “old” content was regularly revived, which the Filmmuseum found out it could emulate. The encouraging audience numbers gave the institution’s management reasons to reorient its attention more aggressively towards the Museum Building, for which it could now demonstrate interest through hard numbers to the state and potential investors.³⁹

What followed was a series of meetings, investigations, and negotiations in tandem with various interested parties between 2003 and 2004, during which time the Filmmuseum considered twenty potential sites for new premises in Amsterdam. Through these explorations, the institution gradually arrived at the realization that the requirements it had for its public events, especially the iconic visibility and central location it desired, could not be met adequately by any existing buildings in Amsterdam, making it prefer starting over afresh by moving into a custom new building.⁴⁰ Such sentiments were most likely fueled further by the fact that its closest ally Sound and Vision had successfully reinvented itself through a merger, and was in the process of moving into a stunning new building in the Media Park in Hilversum. But with a budget that was just adequate to meet annual expenses, and in the absence of major surplus reserves, the Filmmuseum had little choice but to seek external help for realizing

³⁸ The equally well-known International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam was considered to be pale in comparison, one that could not be seen as a sure sign of a similarly large community of cinephiles in Amsterdam that the Filmmuseum could tap into.

³⁹ Noorda, Sijbolt. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 17 April 2013.

⁴⁰ *Activiteitenverslag 2004*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 2004. Print; *Activiteitenverslag 2005*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 2004. Print.

its vision, including partnering with private players, which was exactly what the state expected it to do.⁴¹

Noorda's interactions with various City of Amsterdam officials led him to the idea of the previously discussed cultural clusters the city was in the process of developing. The Filmmuseum had not been too aware of such redevelopment projects until then, but they appeared to be the most suitable way forward for its purposes. Of the three projects that were in their early stages at that time, the "Shell site" in Amsterdam North, located on the northern shore across the IJ from the Central Station, fit their needs the best, especially since it involved the construction of an entire new building that was being conceived more as a standalone cultural center rather than as a mixed use building with businesses, shops, and cultural facilities together, which the Filmmuseum did not favor. The Shell Corporation, to which the site originally belonged, had sold it to the City of Amsterdam, which in turn had given it to ING for redevelopment. ING wanted to transform the site into a premium "Triple A" location, which was difficult for them to achieve without a relatively high-profile ally from the cultural sector, especially given the site's generally listless surroundings that were a mix of old industrial facilities and simple no-frills housing.⁴²

But the site had clear potential with its attractive water-front location and the free ferry service from the Central Station that could bring in the visitors, which the Filmmuseum was eager to tap into. The fact that the institution was already considering moving its Collection Building to the same neighborhood helped matters further, which could bring both its future premises in close proximity to each other. With an evident overlap between the goals and ambitions of the Filmmuseum and the ING, things progressed rapidly, especially after the ING expressed its willingness to support the Filmmuseum in developing the Collection Building as

⁴¹ ---. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 17 April 2013.

⁴² Hagen, Rien. "Nieuwe Huisvesting Filmmuseum." Letter to Gemeente Amsterdam. 4 May 2005. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; ---. "Nieuwe Locatie Filmmuseum." Letter to Gemeente Amsterdam. 13 May 2004. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam.

well. In 2004, the two signed a memorandum of understanding for both the buildings,⁴³ and the OCW also started awarding the Filmmuseum an additional annual subsidy to facilitate its search for new housing.⁴⁴

In 2005, through an open architecture competition that the ING organized for the Shell-site, the designs of the Vienna based Delugan Meissl Associated Architects were selected for the Museum Building by a panel of external jurors. Alongside, parallel efforts were continued to similarly commission the Collection Building too, for which ING roped in YMere, its partner in many projects in Amsterdam North, as the executive developer. However, despite the excitement over these developments, the large financial investment needed for the projects could not be found.⁴⁵ The pressure for the Museum Building increased even further when the arrangement with Pathé over the Cinerama/Bellevue complex ended in December 2005, scaling back the institution's public activities to the much smaller theatres in the Vondelpark Pavilion.⁴⁶

Meanwhile, as part of the second strand of simultaneous but unrelated developments, the state's desire to move the arts and culture sector closer to the market and reduce its own financial burdens was extended to the film sector by the early 2000s, and the OCW commissioned studies on the film sector from various management consultancy firms, first from Cap Gemini and Ernst & Young in 2002, and then from Berenschot in 2004.⁴⁷ All three studies stated that the film sector in the Netherlands did not maximize output and guarantee efficiency, was less

⁴³ *Jaarverslag 2005*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 2006. Print. 20.

⁴⁴ Noorda, Sijbolt J. Letter to de Staatssecretaris van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap. 9 March 2011. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam.

⁴⁵ Hagen, Rien. "Nieuwe Huisvesting Filmmuseum." Letter to Gemeente Amsterdam. 4 May 2005. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; ---. "Nieuwe Locatie Filmmuseum." Letter to Gemeente Amsterdam. 13 May 2004. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; Noorda, Sijbolt. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 17 April 2013.

⁴⁶ *Jaarverslag 2006*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 2007. Print. 4.

⁴⁷ Hagen, Rien. "Betreft: Huisvesting." Letter to Ministerie van OC&W. 21 April 2004. NFM, Amsterdam; Drenth, Bart, Jan Willem van Giessen, and Marco van Putten. *Afwegingskader: Ondersteuningsstructuur : Cultuurbestel*. Utrecht: Berenschot, 2004. Print.

professional than desired, had issues with its image, and suffered from shortsightedness. While seeking such advice from private consultancies wasn't new for the state, these studies were considered with more than the usual earnestness this time around. Under the leadership of Medy Catharina van der Laan, state Secretary for the OCW from 2003 to 2006, the state based its new cultural policy plans for the film sector more squarely on these studies, for they were in line with the general direction van der Laan wanted the larger arts and culture sector to take, which she termed "less bureaucracy and more responsibility," which also appeared to assist her austerity measures in the sector.⁴⁸

Consequently, film institutions were instructed to participate more actively in revenue generating public-private partnerships, be more effective and efficient by achieving objectives and targets, justify their expenses in terms of value, be more visible in their service to the nation, and most significantly, reduce the fragmentation in the sector.⁴⁹ To achieve some of these objectives, the RvC advised the OCW to set up a new Sector Institute for Film -- not unlike the British Film Institute, the Danish Film Institute, and the Swedish Film Institute -- which was to act as a single entity that performed all film related tasks, thereby giving the sector a unified national identity.⁵⁰ Similar Sector Institutes had already been proposed and set up for other sectors in the Netherlands including music, libraries, and heritage.⁵¹ The Sector

⁴⁸ Van der Laan, Medy. "Meer Dan de Som." Letter to De Voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. 3 November 2003. OCW, The Hague; "Het Wordt Armoede Troef in de Kunsten." *Trouw*. 22 September 2004. Print.

⁴⁹ ---. "Meer Dan de Som." Letter to De Voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. 3 November 2003. OCW, The Hague; ---. "Uitgangspuntenbrief Cultuur." Letter to De Voorzitter van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. 1 July 2003. OCW, The Hague.

⁵⁰ Plasterk, Ronald H. A. "Advies Fondsen en Sectorinstituten." Letter to Raad voor Cultuur. 25 March 2008. OCW, The Hague; *Advies Cultuurnota 2005-08*. Amsterdam: Raad voor Cultuur, 2004. Print; Brakman, I., and T. Corman. *Een Nieuw Poot Onder de Nederlandse Filmproductie: Advies over het Ontwerp en de Implementatie Van Een Nieuwe Stimulans*. Wormer/Mijdrecht: OCenW, 2006. Print. 32-35. A similar proposal had previously been mooted in 1978, and later dropped *Advies Cultuurnota 2005-08*. Amsterdam: Raad voor Cultuur, 2004. Print. 219.

⁵¹ Plasterk, Ronald H. A. "Advies Fondsen en Sectorinstituten." Letter to Raad voor Cultuur. 25 March 2008. OCW, The Hague.

Institute for Film “must be visible, literally and figuratively,” the RvC advised, without which it would fail to achieve its objectives.⁵²

The OCW began by asking three relatively small but significant film institutions -- Holland Film, the Netherlands Institute for Film Education, and the Filmbank -- about their willingness to merge into one another, to which they agreed in principle, and their subsidies till 2009 were adjusted accordingly. However, it insisted that the merger needed to be budget neutral, meaning additional funds for it still needed to come from elsewhere, which were again not available. Added to this was the fact that this merger alone was incapable of creating the high visibility Sector Institute for Film the OCW had envisioned.

The Filmmuseum was not meant to be a party to this merger, for the emphasis was on uniting smaller institutions from the film sector into one single unit, and the many times larger Filmmuseum, primarily performing museum and archive functions, was not immediately considered to be a part of the film sector but of the heritage sector instead. However, seeing a window of opportunity here, the RvC suggested that the four institutions combine their efforts to form the new Sector Institute. It observed that the Filmmuseum -- with its public functions and already formulated plans for the high profile new building in Amsterdam North -- could integrate well with the overall plans for the new institution and its need for high visibility, thus bringing the two strands of unrelated developments together towards the end of 2005.⁵³

The institutions themselves were initially skeptical about the idea, with most of them being unsure about losing their autonomy and independence. Additionally, some of the smaller institutions feared, with good reason, that the much larger Filmmuseum would dominate the entire process and the resulting institution. On its part, the Filmmuseum was neither too keen

⁵² *Schets Ondersteuningsstructuur Cultuursector, II*. Raad voor Cultuur, 2005. Print; *Advies Cultuurnota 2005-08*. Amsterdam: Raad voor Cultuur, 2004. Print.

⁵³ *Schets Ondersteuningsstructuur Cultuursector, II*. Raad voor Cultuur, 2005. Print; *Advies Cultuurnota 2005-08*. Amsterdam: Raad voor Cultuur, 2004. Print; *Advies: Betreffende de Voorgenomen Oprichting Van Een Filmsectorinstituut*. Amsterdam: Ondernemingsraad Filmsectorinstituut, 2009. Print.

on letting the smaller institutions piggyback atop its partially successful growth ambitions and building plans unless it became the main player, nor was it interested in subscribing to the state's insistence on austerity measures and budget neutrality. Nonetheless, it was well aware of the potential benefits it could reap if it did become a part of the project that was fully endorsed by the OCW and the RvC, including attracting the funds required for the new building in Amsterdam North. It decided to proceed cautiously, initially joining the efforts only as an advisor to the proposed merger of the other three institutions, but agreed to cooperate with the OCW in exploring further possibilities. In 2006, they all joined hands to set up a foundation tasked with conducting feasibility studies, industry research, and stakeholder consultations to ascertain the viability of the merger and its advantages and disadvantages for each one of them (including the OCW and the RvC). The feedback they received was largely positive, and protracted negotiations followed, in which the anxieties and ambitions of all stakeholders were discussed and solutions proposed, but concrete agreements could not be reached immediately.⁵⁴

The project received a minor setback when the government changed hands in late 2006 and the cabinet was reinstated. But the new Minister for OCW Ronald Plasterk, who took over in February 2007, also came to share the RvC's enthusiasm about the project, in no small measure because of the Filmmuseum's lobbying efforts for its own building, and the City of Amsterdam also indicated its support in a letter to Plasterk soon after.⁵⁵ In late 2007, Plasterk appointed an independent supervisor Edwin van Huis to oversee the project, who

⁵⁴ Maassen, Gabriel. Email to Rien Hagen. 21 December 2005. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; Abrahams, Anna, Claudia Landsberger, and Gabriel Maassen. Letter to Bestuur van het Filmmuseum. 21 December 2005. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; Wolff, Joachim Ph., and Merel K. Gilsing. *De Oprichting Van het Sectorinstituut voor de Film: Eindverslag*. The Hague: Van Huis B&A, 2008. Print.

⁵⁵ Gehrels, Caroline. "Filmmuseum en Sectorinstituut Film." Letter to Ministerie van OCW. 30 January 2008. Gemeente Amsterdam, Amsterdam; Noorda, Sijbolt. "Sectorinstituut D25-60." Letter to Ministerie van OCW. 14 February 2008. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam.

again reported back to him favorably, but still could not make all the parties reach an administrative agreement.⁵⁶ Alongside, money continued to remain an unresolved issue.

Nonetheless, through all these developments, the Filmmuseum established itself as the chief player in the merger, and also continued its aggressive campaigns for funding its Museum Building through joint efforts with the ING. These yielded substantial results, but remained insufficient to cover the entire cost of the proposed relocation. Nevertheless, they were adequate enough for the institution to become certain of its impending move to the new building, which it decided to rent instead of buy, irrespective of its participation in the Sector Institute. The institution's confidence was inspired further by the OCW agreeing to offer ING a 25-year rental guarantee on behalf of the Filmmuseum in October 2006.⁵⁷ The same year, yet another development, the institution's involvement in the Images for the Future project, solidified its position further.

Images for the Future: Nature and Scope of the Project (2006-2012)

In 2006, the Filmmuseum joined hands with five other Dutch institutions to propose *Beelden voor de Toekomst* (Images for the Future), an ambitious seven-year "rescue operation" aimed at the preservation and digitization of Dutch audiovisual heritage initiated by the OCW, not unlike the proposed by the Indian state in the recent past.⁵⁸ The consortium consisted of the Filmmuseum, Sound and Vision, Centrale Discotheek Rotterdam (CDR, the Central Record Library of Rotterdam), Nationaal Archief (NA, the Dutch National Archives), Vereniging van Openbare Bibliotheken (VOB, the Association of Public Libraries), and

⁵⁶ Plasterk, Ronald H. A. "Film Beleid." Letter to De voorzitter van de Huis van Afgevaardigden. 30 October 2008. OCW, The Hague.

⁵⁷ *Ondernemingsplan: Het Nieuwe Filmmuseum*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2007. Print; van Kranendonk, Judith A. "Betreft: Huisvesting." Letter to Ontwikkelcombinatie Overhoeks CV. 12 June 2009. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam.

⁵⁸ The project website can be found at "Images for the Future." Web. 10 August 2015. <<http://www.beeldenvoordetoeekomst.nl/en.html> >.

Kennisland (KL, an independent think tank). Of these, EYE, Sound and Vision, CDR, and NA held the audiovisual material that needed preservation and digitization on an urgent basis, CDR and VOB held the knowledge and expertise to contextualize the digitized content and make it searchable, retrievable, and usable in the digital environment, and KL held the knowhow to provide support for copyright clearances, public engagement, and also act as the secretariat for the project. With a total budget of 173 million Euros, the project was meant to be the largest such undertaking anywhere in the world, with a planned digitization of 137,200 hours of video, 22,510 hours of film, 123,900 hours of audio, and 2,900,000 photos. EYE's share of the pie, which dealt almost exclusively with film, was to be 35 million Euros.⁵⁹

Images for the Future had its genesis in Een Deltaplan voor de Audiovisuele Media (the Delta Plan for Audiovisual Heritage), drafted in 1994, which was the first concerted national level proposal to grapple with the digital turn in the specific domain of audiovisual heritage.⁶⁰ As discussed previously in Chapter 1, the use of digital technologies in memory institutions worldwide initially began in libraries, percolating to museums after much delay, and finally reaching audiovisual archives later still. The Dutch case was no different, with the Delta Plan for Audiovisual Heritage being originally inspired by the Delta Plan for Cultural Preservation aimed at libraries and museums, which led to an advisory by the RvC in 1998 urging the nation to pay attention to its audiovisual collection, a nationwide survey and

⁵⁹ *Factsheet FES Applicatie Project Beelden voor de Toekomst*. Hilversum: NIBG, 2006. Print; *Beelden voor de Toekomst Projectplan*. Amsterdam: NIBG, 2006. Print; *Activiteitenverslag 2009: Beelden voor de Toekomst*. Hilversum: NIBG, 2010. Print; Leurdijk, Andra, and Sanne Huveneers. *Effecten Van Vroegtijdige Beëindiging: Beelden voor de Toekomst*. Delft: TNO, 2011. Print; Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print. 175. Even though the Images for the Future's claim of being the largest such undertaking in Europe was technically true, other similar initiatives in Europe had already been initiated years ago by such institutions as the BBC and the Italian RAI, among others, which had also committed to spending in excess of 100 million Euros each for digital audiovisual preservation. See Lauwers, Mieke. *Horen, Zien En Zwijgen: Conclusies Van De Nationale Inventarisatie Audiovisuele Collecties*. Amsterdam: NAA, 1999. Print. 60.

⁶⁰ For a comprehensive description of the plan, see *Een Deltaplan voor de Audiovisuele Media*. Amsterdam: NOB, NFM, RVD, & SFW, 1994. Print.

inventory of audiovisual material held by memory institutions in 1999, a further Film Preservation and Collection Development Plan in 2000, and eventually the Images for the Future after a further six year period of relative lull.⁶¹

As such, Images for the Future had been almost one-and-a-half decades in the making, and many years more if one were to take into account the discussion that took place before the first plans were formulated. Some of the consortium members had already dabbled with digital technologies by then. Even the Filmmuseum had experimented with digitizing approximately 1000 hours of content in 1996, and also digitized its catalog and made it accessible online using a relational database called DIVA in 2000.⁶² And by 2005, it had already set up internal workgroups for mass digitization of the content in its holdings,⁶³ and participated in Europe-wide digitization projects such as Diamant, FIRST, Presto Space, and Edcine.⁶⁴ Additionally, pan-European discussions for even larger projects such as Europeana and EUScreen, supported by the European Commission, were also underway already. The delay in bringing such plans to fruition at the Filmmuseum on a grander scale is reflective of both the relatively low priority accorded to audiovisual material even in the context of an advanced and developed nation as the Netherlands, and the complexities and uncertainties surrounding the preservation of audiovisual content using digital means.

⁶¹ ---. *Horen, Zien En Zwijgen: Conclusies Van De Nationale Inventarisatie Audiovisuele Collecties*. Amsterdam: NAA, 1999. Print; *Celluloid en Pixels: Film Preservation en Collectie Ontwikkeling door Filmmuseum, 2001-2004*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2000. Print. For a description of the idea of Delta Plans, see Lenk, Sabine. "Images for the Future: Will They Make TV Scholars Happy?" *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies* *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies* 5.2 (2010): 80-85. Print. Note 1.

⁶² Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print; *Contourennota 2001-04*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2000. Print. 174.

⁶³ *Digitale Werkomgeving 1*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2005. Print; *Digitale Werkomgeving 2*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2005. Print.

⁶⁴ ---. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print. 176, 202-07.

Images for the Future was an elaborate project, which identified several problem areas requiring strategic interventions: the rapid decay and deterioration of various physical carriers of audiovisual content, the lack of adequate cataloguing, accessibility, or even awareness about the collections, the absence of readily available solutions for digitizing audiovisual content in the open market, the need for massive initial investment, and issues related to copyright clearances, among others. It aimed to provide five end products: one, the preservation and digitization of the thousands of feet of audiovisual material as mentioned above. Two, its accessibility and contextualization for educational, knowledge production, and creative purposes. Three, the availability of material under different licenses for different categories of users. Four, a distribution infrastructure capable of unlocking and disseminating the material to the widest possible user base. And five, the development of new services related to audiovisual collections for the educational sector, heritage institutions, creative industries, and the society at large.⁶⁵

The project plan was well formulated, intentionally adopting an alarmist tone that highlighted the threat of collective historical and cultural amnesia if the nation failed to rescue its audiovisual heritage at the earliest. It described the sad state of audiovisual archiving nationally as well as globally, laid down criteria for selecting material for preservation, discussed the management, potential uses, and accessibility of preserved material, and talked about the material's educational, social, and cultural benefits. Additionally, it described the ways in which databases were to be created for the material's metadata, commented on their searchability, and discussed the standardization of database terms and structures. It also elaborated on the roles to be played by each consortium member, and presented a detailed budget that included subcategories for each institution, task, and year.

⁶⁵ *Beelden voor de Toekomst Projectplan*. Amsterdam: NIBG, 2006. Print.

Education was accorded center stage in the project plan, with the intention of realizing the potential of hitherto unseen and inaccessible audiovisual material that could be employed in a variety of dynamic ways, but also in order to present education as the most significant reason and justification for the state to make serious interventions in audiovisual archiving. The plan argued that there was a great need for multimedia literacy among students, and made a case for more audiovisual material to be integrated into their curriculum. Alongside, it also pledged a strong commitment to accessibility by claiming that limited accessibility was the chief impediment to unlocking the educational potential of archival material, going insofar as to suggest that inaccessibility of the material held in state supported audiovisual archives was akin to the state monopolizing knowledge and denying its citizens their right to information.

The plan also argued that the project was important for citizenship and national identity. Additionally, it maintained that any investments in the audiovisual archiving sector would also lead to a strengthening of the creative industries and pave way for new ways of using, repurposing, and engaging with the material, such as that dealing with World War II. And further, it presented the project as making a valuable contribution to the knowledge society of the Netherlands by helping the nation in realizing various international targets. These included the Lisbon Strategy of 2000 that aimed to make the European Union the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world. The Europe 2020 strategy of 2010 that aimed at the advancement of the European Union through smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. And the removal of the European Knowledge Paradox, the generally understood failure of most European countries to convert the significant investment carried out in research and development into economic benefits and jobs creation.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ *Facing the Challenge: The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment: Report from the High Level Group Chaired by Wim Kok*. Luxembourg: European Commission - Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2004. Print; *Europe 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth*. Luxembourg: European Commission, 2010. Print. Ala, Soraia, and Pedro Vilarinho. "Knowledge Valorization and the European Paradox: A Case Study." *Recent Advances in Applied Economics: 6th International Conference on Applied*

Guiding the consortium's agenda was the general belief that knowledge should be accessible for everyone to acquire, for free or at as little cost to researchers and non-commercial users as possible, which can be clearly evidenced from the project plan. In so doing, the consortium members aligned themselves with such contemporaneous developments in the world at large as Wikipedia and Creative Commons licensing -- around which the Access to Knowledge civil society movement is pivoted -- and also the general sentiment that informs the audiovisual archiving community's work internationally, i.e. the need for democratization of knowledge. Or, "the dream of making the Library of Alexandria a reality, the dream of having it all" as Brewster Kahle puts it in his conception of the Internet Archive.⁶⁷ This seems to have been borrowed directly from the Delta Plan, which had explicitly mentioned that it would be unwise to invest in the preservation of audiovisual heritage under a for-profit model, arguing that it was our generation's moral responsibility to make content available for posterity using advances in digital technologies which had fortuitously taken place during our lifetime.⁶⁸

However, to propose that all the material would be free for anyone to use -- for which the state should spend millions of Euros -- would not have taken the consortium's plans too far despite Dutch society's general commitment to free knowledge. Informed by the previously discussed commercialization and market orientation of the Dutch cultural sector, the consortium weaved the idea of revenue generation into the fabric of the proposed plan. It envisaged potential returns through the sale, licensing, and royalties on footage to users and broadcasters, by offering video-on-demand services, by selling DVDs, and by offering

Economics, Business and Development (AEBD '14). Eds. Mastorakis, Nikos E., Panos M. Pardalos and Michael N. Katehakis. Lisbon: WSEAS Press, 2014. 113-19. Print.

⁶⁷ *Beelden voor de Toekomst Projectplan*. Amsterdam: NIBG, 2006. Print; Kahle, Brewster. "Towards Universal Access to All Knowledgeinternet Archive." *Journal of Zhejiang University of Science* 6.11 (2005): 1193-94. Print.

⁶⁸ *Een Deltaplan voor de Audiovisuele Media*. Amsterdam: NOB, NFM, RVD, & SFW, 1994. Print.

packaged content to educational institutions and the general public. It worded its ideas cautiously, even while keeping the specifics vague, to suggest that:

Accessibility will not always be free. In addition to copyright issues, there is a need to strike a balance between the limited recourse to public funds and the advantage of the material being as widely accessible and available as possible, for which the users will have to pay. In practice, the payment will depend upon the background of the user. For example, where the intention is to use the material for educational purposes, as much as possible, it will be made available at limited cost. For use by private parties, there will be a market fee.⁶⁹

Alongside, the consortium engaged the services of SEO Economic Research Agency (an oft used partner for various government ministries that was previously affiliated with the University of Amsterdam but which now works autonomously) to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of Images for the Future. SEO's analysis, included in the plan, painted an optimistic picture, arguing that the total cost-benefit balance of the project, even with the most conservative estimates, would be a positive value of between Euros 7 million to 43+ million, the + signifying unquantifiable and intangible social benefits and indirect effects.

SEO's cost benefit analysis, when put together with the comprehensive project plan, made a compelling case for Images for the Future with the Dutch state, especially since it was also in line with similar Delta Plan initiatives in other related sectors. Despite general elections being held and a new coalition government being formed after the plan was submitted, the state agreed to support the project with minimal changes.⁷⁰ The funds required for such a large undertaking were not readily available, but with the economy in boom, a major portion of the money, 154 million Euros, was diverted from surplus revenue from the Dutch Natural Gas sector, which made its way to the consortium through the Fonds Economische Structuurversterking (Economic Structure Enhancement Fund, or FES), while the remaining

⁶⁹ *Beelden voor de Toekomst Projectplan*. Amsterdam: NIBG, 2006. Print.

⁷⁰ Fossati, Giovanna. *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011. Print. 174.

19 million were to be generated from the market. Of the 154 million Euros of FES money, 90 million were to be given to the consortium as government subsidy, and the remaining 64 million as loan, to be repaid by the consortium by 2025 from the revenue it would generate from the content it digitized.⁷¹ The project took off with much fanfare, and the Filmmuseum's participation in the project, and its close working relationship with the OCW, boosted the confidence of potential investors interested in the institution's plans for a new building. The project progressed successfully for a few years before being cut short in 2012, which I discuss below. Meanwhile, other related developments -- which included the recruitment of Sandra den Hamer as the institution's new director, and the recognition of its collection as a national collection -- finally brought the institution's plans for a new institution to fruition.

Sandra den Hamer and the Creation of EYE (2007-2013)

The year 2007 was pivotal, in which three simultaneous developments helped the institution move closer to realizing its ambitions -- the appointment of Sandra den Hamer as the Filmmuseum's new director, the signing of a collection management agreement with the state, and the change in status of the institution's board from a legal entity to a supervisory entity. By then, the Filmmuseum board had increasingly come to realize that the institution needed an even higher level of lobbying and mobilization of networks, as well as a new face, in order to attract the full-funding it needed, which Hagen and Hadders also agreed with. In the best interest of the institution, they stepped aside readily, and the board recruited den Hamer, the already well-known director of the International Film Festival Rotterdam, as the new

⁷¹ Lenk, Sabine. "Images for the Future: Will They Make TV Scholars Happy?" *Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies Critical Studies in Television: The International Journal of Television Studies* 5.2 (2010): 80-85. Print; Leurdijk, Andra, and Sanne Huveneers. *Effecten Van Vroegtijdige Beëindiging: Beelden voor de Toekomst*. Delft: TNO, 2011. Print.

director of the Filmmuseum in April 2007.⁷² Den Hamer brought with her years of experience with public programs and activities, as well as a vast network that extended both into the state bureaucracy as well as the open market, which she tapped into. Additionally, she put together a specialist team of people from business development, exhibitions, and marketing instead of working closely with just one deputy director, diversifying and corporatizing the institution's activities considerably.

Under den Hamer's leadership, the institution also played up the idea of the Filmmuseum's Dutchness, which was aimed at expanding the institution's already established international reputation into the local arena, a necessity for reaching out to the broadest user/patron base as well as appeal to the state. This was in line with her general belief in making the institution more open and friendly, in contrast to "closeness with FIAF and the perpetuation of closed-door culture" as she terms it.⁷³ But it also resonated with the OCW and the Dutch state's changed discourse on nationalism. As OCW senior policy adviser Maarten Mulder put it, "it was not about downplaying EYE's internationalism but shifting the balance more towards making the institution more Dutch."⁷⁴

Den Hamer's activities yielded dividends soon after, and in August 2007, the institution signed an agreement with the OCW that made the state responsible for the long term safekeeping of the Filmmuseum's collection, for which the institution had been lobbying unsuccessfully for many years. As a result of this agreement, the collection remained the property of the Filmmuseum, but the institution was given a status similar to that of the thirty independent national museums that existed in the nation, thus completing its claims to being a national institution. This meant that the basic management of the institution's collection would

⁷² *Activiteitenverslag 2008*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2009. Print. Both Hagen and Hadders agreed without much resistance since they understood how the move was necessary to take the institution's plans to the next level, and Hagen even worked as an external consultant to the institution for the next few years.

⁷³ Den Hamer, Sandra. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 January 2013.

⁷⁴ Mulder, Maarten. Personal interview. 18 April 2013. Amsterdam.

be subsidized by the state indefinitely, even if the Filmmuseum itself ceased to exist, allowing the institution to focus more on activities that built on and around the collection rather than worrying about the upkeep of the collection itself.⁷⁵

Alongside, the board's status was changed from being a legal entity that owned the institution to a supervisory body, a subtle change since it had been supervising the institution till then as well, but which meant that the Rotterdam fiasco with the board's chairman being the absolute authority could not be repeated.⁷⁶ However, even as such developments helped the institution consolidate its position further and inspire confidence in investors, the large initial investment needed for the relocation continued to remain just out of reach. Meanwhile, negotiations over the Sector Institute continued, and the four principal parties also explored the possibility of including other such parties as the film magazine *Skrien* and the European Foundation Joris Ivens to join them, which did not eventually succeed.⁷⁷

In October 2008, minister Plasterk gave the project a much needed forward push when he declared that the formation of the Sector Institute could no longer be separated from the Filmmuseum's relocation plans, even adding that the new institution needed to be organizationally and financially dependent on the Filmmuseum.⁷⁸ This cemented the Filmmuseum's position as the chief player of the Sector Institute, but also added to its financial woes, for it now needed to shoulder direct responsibility for generating the additional funds. In renewed negotiations, the institution managed to get all parties to eventually agree to the

⁷⁵ "Overeenkomst: De Staat Van Nederland en de Nederlandse Film Foundation." 27 August 2007. *EYE Film Institute Netherlands*. The Hague; "Overeenkomst: Staat der Nederlanden & Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum." 27 August 2007. Eye Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; Vogelzang, Monique. "Ontwikkeling Archief Depot Overhoeks / Zekerheidstelling Huurbetaling EYE." Letter to WAD Archief Depots B.V. 19 April 2012. OCW, The Hague; *Activiteitenverslag 2008*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2009. Print.

⁷⁶ Noorda, Sijbolt. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 17 April 2013.

⁷⁷ Wolff, Joachim Ph., and Merel K. Gilsing. *De Oprichting Van het Sectorinstituut voor de Film: Eindverslag*. The Hague: Van Huis B&A, 2008. Print.

⁷⁸ Plasterk, Ronald H. A. Letter Aan het bestuur van Nederlands Filmmuseum. 15 October 2008. OCW, The Hague.

merger, but they all collectively refused to formalize it unless additional funds were made available by the state.⁷⁹ "The establishment of the institute was intended to be a stimulus and reinforcement, not a stagnant or a cutback operation," they argued, adding that if the merger were to be really budget neutral, then "the activities of the Sector Institute for Film would be so pale that its goals and ambitions would never be realized."⁸⁰ After much back and forth, the state finally relented with more grants that were still short of the total requirements. As the plans of the merger and relocation were developed and detailed further, additional funding shortcomings were fulfilled by various parties including the Province of North Holland, the PBC, and additional last minute grants from the OCW.⁸¹

Meanwhile, the advertising agency Wieden and Kennedy was employed to design a brand identity for the new institution, another strategic move, for the agency was yet to expand its activities into the Netherlands. It agreed to become a partner and greatly subsidized its services in return for the exposure it would get from the process.⁸² At long last, on 12 June 2009, contracts for the construction of the new museum were signed and the construction began,⁸³ followed by the formalization of the Sector Institute in December the same year,⁸⁴ and the creation of the new institution -- EYE -- on 1 January 2010.

⁷⁹ *Advies: Betreffende de Voorgenomen Oprichting Van Een Filmsectorinstituut*. Amsterdam: Ondernemingsraad Filmsectorinstituut, 2009. Print; Wolff, Joachim Ph., and Merel K. Gilsing. *De Oprichting van het Sectorinstituut voor de Film: Eindverslag*. The Hague: Van Huis B&A, 2008. Print.

⁸⁰ Noorda, Sijbolt. "Filmsectorinstituut." Letter to Ministerie van OCW. 18 June 2009. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam.

⁸¹ Den Hamer, Sandra. Letter to Ministerie van OCW. 14 December 2009. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; *Verslag Van de Vergadering Van de Raad Van Toezicht Van het Filmmuseum Op 27-10-09 Om 08.30-10.30*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2009. Print; *Concept Verslag Van de Vergadering Van de Raad Van Toezicht Van EYE Film Instituut Nederlandop 07-12-10 Van 17.00-20.30 Uur*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2010. Print.

⁸² ---. "Bestuursverslag T.B.V. Vergadering Raad Van Toezicht Fsi I.O. D.D. 09-12-2009." 6 December 2010. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam.

⁸³ *Verslag Van de Vergadering Van de Raad Van Toezicht Van het Filmmuseum Op 30-06-09*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2009. Print.

⁸⁴ *Concept Besluitenlijst Raad Van Toezicht-Vergadering Filmsectorinstituut I.O. 9 December 2009, Nederlands Film Museum, 13-14.45 Uur*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2009. Print.

The term EYE has very little to do with cinema directly, only being one of the two sensory organs used to watch films, but sounding similar to the name of the IJ lake/river the institution is located next to. According to den Hamer, choosing it as the institution's name had no real rationale behind it, but offered the potential for recognizable brand value despite being of fairly common usage.⁸⁵ In fact, the term had already been trademarked more than 1,500 times in various combinations in the Netherlands, and therefore could not be registered as such. Hence, the institution chose the next best alternative: EYE Film Instituut Nederlands.⁸⁶ However, in yet another illustration of the institution's pragmatism, which also serves to define its general approach, a justification for the name, using a quote from Dziga Vertov's Manifest Kino Glaz from 1923, was found in retrospect and mentioned in policy documents to answer critics, giving us the name and brand identity with which we know the institution today:

I am the camera's eye. I am the machine that shows you the world as I alone see it. Starting from today I am forever free of human immobility. I am in perpetual movement. I approach and draw away from things -- I crawl under them -- I climb on them -- I am on the head of a galloping horse.⁸⁷

EYE moved into the new building in 2012, inaugurating it with much fanfare as described previously. In many ways, the institution's glamorous reinvention as EYE, and even more specifically its shiny new building, actually saved the institution from being shut down after the economic turndown of 2009 and simultaneous shifts towards increasingly conservative right-wing governments, a reading Mulder, den Hamer, and Noorda also

⁸⁵ ---. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 January 2013.

⁸⁶ Slaats, Maarten. "Advies EYE." Letter to Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum. 9 November 2009. Markeys, Enschede; ---. "Benelux - Aanvraaggegevens Woordmerk." Letter to Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum. 4 December 2009. Markeys, Enschede; ---. "Benelux - Publicatie Aanvraag Woordmerk." Letter to Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum. 15 December 2009. Markeys, Enschede.

⁸⁷ *Beleidsplan 2013-2016*. Amsterdam: EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2012. Print.

support.⁸⁸ By 2011, the state had done away with the very concept of sector institutions, which had enabled EYE to be created in the first place.⁸⁹ Mulder explained this as a response to a decision by the parliament after a new government came to power. "What we did was keep them the way they are, but just stop calling them sector institutes anymore," he elaborates.⁹⁰ But by 2013, further political changes had led to drastic subsidy cuts in the arts and culture sector -- varying between 25 to 35 percent for various sub-sectors -- creating a grave situation for many cultural institutions, which, in the absence of continued patronage from the state, had to close down. These included such significant institutions as the Theater Instituut Nederland, Erfgoed Nederland (Heritage Netherlands), and Nederlands Muziek Instituut (which managed to partially revive itself later).⁹¹ EYE was spared a similar fate because of its high-profile activities, at the center of which was its new building.

Interestingly, however, despite such drastic cuts, and unlike what the state's emphasis on public-private partnerships and revenue generation from the open market suggests, EYE continued to receive as much as 90 percent of its annual budget in the form of various state subsidies in 2013. As den Hamer explained, "for the heritage function, one can never depend on the market alone." "Our sponsorship money was never too sustainable," she added, "but it gave us visibility and acted as justification for us to continue asking the ministry for money."⁹²

Meanwhile, VOB and CDR left the Images for the Future consortium in 2010 because participation in the project yielded them few benefits and the financial risks and payback obligations were too big for them. Interim evaluations of the project in October 2010,

⁸⁸ Mulder, Maarten. Personal interview. 18 April 2013. Amsterdam; den Hamer, Sandra. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 January 2013; Noorda, Sijbolt. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 17 April 2013.

⁸⁹ Den Hamer, Sandra. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 January 2013.

⁹⁰ Mulder, Maarten. Personal interview. 18 April 2013. Amsterdam.

⁹¹ Siegal, Nina. "Dutch Arts Scene Is under Siege." *The New York Times*. 29 January 2013. Web. 23 May 2013. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/30/arts/30iht-dutch30.html>>; Mulder, Maarten. Personal interview. 18 April 2013. Amsterdam.

⁹² Den Hamer, Sandra. Personal interview. Amsterdam. 9 January 2013.

conducted by the independent research organization TNO, showed that the project met its targets for the most part. However, the report observed that the revenue generation opportunities for the consortium partners had become unrealistic by then, caused by market developments, obstacles in copyright clearances, and low willingness by educational institutions to pay for the content the project had digitized. Consequently, the OCW readjusted the total budget of the project to 115 million and removed the payback obligation, simultaneously decreasing the overall budget of the project but increasing individual grants for each institution since their payback obligations had been waived off. For EYE, this also meant that the project had to be aborted mid-way in April 2012, with it having to make many employees redundant, default on its contracts with some of its partners, and face a final shortfall of 1.5 million Euros in the ensuing confusion.⁹³

Additionally, the Collection Center plans fell by the wayside despite many of the agreements having been drawn to include both the buildings with a 2010 deadline. Initially, the delays were attributed to various factors like the same people and teams being responsible for both the buildings and therefore being unable to give time to the Collection Center, especially since the Sector Institute idea centered more on the Museum Building. Subsequently, however, with the economic downturn of 2009, Ymere, which had been handed over the independent responsibility of the Collection Center by ING in 2008, refused to shoulder the risk involved in developing it further and withdrew itself from the project, especially since the state expressed its inability to offer it any guarantees for long-term rental.⁹⁴ Nonetheless, the project

⁹³ Noorda, Sijbolt, and Sandra den Hamer. *Verslag Raad Van Toezicht en Bestuur EYE Film Instituut Nederland 2010*. Amsterdam: EYE, 2011. Print; Leurdijk, Andra, et al. *Tussentijdse Evaluatie Beelden voor de Toekomst*. Delft: TNO, 2010. Print; Zijlstra, Halbe. "Bieden Tussentijdse Evaluatie Van het Project Beelden voor de Toekomst." Letter to De president van de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal. 30 November 2010. OCW, The Hague; Mulder, Maarten. Personal interview. 18 April 2013. Amsterdam.

⁹⁴ Den Hamer, Sandra. *Verslag Raad Van Toezicht Vergadering T.B.V. EYE Film Instituut Nederland 7 April 2010*. Amsterdam: EYE Film Institute Netherlands, 2010. Print; ---. "Betreft: Collectiecentrum." Letter to Raad van Toezicht. 27 September 2012. EYE Film Institute Netherlands, Amsterdam; Vogelzang, Monique. "Ontwikkeling Repository Overhoeks /

was reopened with other developers later, which resulted in a new Collection Center for EYE -- also in Amsterdam North and just a few minutes away from the public building on the banks of IJ -- being finally opened in 2016.

The institution continues to thrive from its two locations. Its strength lies in its dynamism and humility in accepting and learning from the mistakes it makes, and its eagerness to share them with others to prevent their recurrence. While direct comparisons with the other two case studies would have limited value given the vastly different social and political milieus, contrasts between them by way of attitudes towards film archiving and preservation, especially between EYE and the NFSA in India, are too stark to ignore. Whether it be the value an individual is given within an institution, the embracing of new technologies, the investment in public-private partnerships, the definition of cinematic heritage, or the attitude with which cinematic heritage is treated by the nation as well as the archival institution, EYE offers a counterpoint to the flawed functioning of the NFSA in India. Its history and functioning offer lessons not only to the NFSA but to many other national film archives that still continue to operate in similarly flawed ways.

Conclusion

In this chapter, which concludes this section on the Filmmuseum/EYE, I described the Filmmuseum's negotiations with Dutch nationalism, and discussed the various process through which the institution transformed itself into EYE in the recent past. I demonstrated how EYE's nationalism is only performative, which it adopted mostly in order to appease resurgent nationalists in the state corridors, but also in response to the need for more public functions that required it to connect more with the local Dutch population in addition to the international

Garantie Huurbetaling EYE." Letter to WAD Archive Depots B.V. 1 September 2012. OCW, The Hague; den Hamer, Sandra. *Beheersverslag Namens de Vergadering Van de Raad Van Toezicht dd 12.02.2008*. Amsterdam: NFM, 2008. Print.

film archiving community. I discussed how Sandra den Hamer, former director of the International Film Festival Rotterdam, and before her, Rein Hagen and Rieks Hadders, facilitated the institution's transformation. And I elaborated on the role played by the institution's engagement with digital technology in enabling this transformation. In the process, this chapter continued explorations of the institution's transnationality as well as hybrid archive/museum identity, while also offering a counterpoint to the troubled functioning of such institutions as the NFSA, thus providing us with significant lessons on how national film archives can be managed more efficiently. The next section discusses how the National Film and Sound Archive, Australia, handles its Indigenous cultural and intellectual property holdings.

SECTION IV
NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE, AUSTRALIA

CHAPTER 8

THE MAKING OF A LIVING AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVE: INDIGENIZING THE NATIONAL FILM AND SOUND ARCHIVE, AUSTRALIA, 1993-2013

This chapter discusses the handling of audiovisual Indigenous cultural and intellectual property (AV ICIP) at the National Film and Sound Archive, Australia (NFSA) -- including films but not limited to them -- which imparts the institution with its reputation as “the nation’s living archive.”¹ It describes the idea of multiculturalism in Australia, which works by excluding Indigenous peoples from the imagined community of the Australian nation, while simultaneously splitting the national identity into white Australia and Indigenous Australia, “a fracture” as Jon Stratton and Ien Ang call it.² It argues that this fracture, which can also be seen at the NFSA, can be read as another kind of transnationality, characterized by the liminality of national identity that cannot be contained within the imagined national community of white Australia.

The chapter also describes the general concerns of handing AV ICIP in Australia and traces the development of policies for their management in various Australian memory

¹ "About Us." National Film and Sound Archive. Web. 5 May 2016.
<<http://www.nfsa.gov.au/about/>>.

Throughout this chapter, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) is used interchangeably with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) cultural material to mean the same. The inconsistency stems from the use of different terms by both the NFSA as well as allied institutions at various periods of their functioning, which is also reflected in the names given to their corresponding committees and activities. Similarly, Indigenous people and Aboriginal people are also used interchangeably to collectively refer to the members of the Aboriginal communities of Australia and Torres Strait Islands, who are also referred to as ATSI people. The need for consistency and correct terminology is extremely significant, but has not been possible in every instance while describing the names already used by various institutions, which vary across institutions as well as time periods.

The scope of this chapter moves beyond film to also include other audiovisual forms as a strict distinction between film and other audiovisual forms is not maintained within Indigenous cultures, or at the NFSA while dealing with AV ICIP. I elaborate on this later.

² Stratton, Jon, and Ien Ang. "Multicultural Imagined Communities: Cultural Difference and National Identity in Australia and the USA." *Continuum* 8.2 (1994): 124-58. Print.

institutions. Locating the NFSA against the backdrop of these developments, it elaborates on the institution's efforts towards formulating policies and guidelines to manage AV ICIP, and its struggles with implementing the policies.³ It demonstrates how the handling of AV ICIP has always been a difficult terrain for the institution to negotiate, and describes how -- through such initiatives as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group (ATSI Working Group), the Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC), the Indigenous Reference Group (IRG), and the creation of an Indigenous branch -- it has made some progress in the area, albeit only in limited ways. And it illustrates how most such initiatives were initially led by junior employees of the institution instead of its senior management, although the trend did change later.

However, rather than becoming an exercise in pinning the blame for partially successful policies and guidelines, this chapter hopes to highlight the challenges involved in managing AV ICIP in large film archives, especially if they are state owned or funded, and located in nations with long and complex histories of colonizing and racism. Additionally, it hopes to help such institutions to introspect and re-evaluate their own successes, failures, and shortcomings in order to draft better policies in the area, but even more significantly, help them implement the policies in more effective ways. Further, it hopes that the management of AV ICIP at the NFSA can be seen as a case in point for how marginalization of certain kinds of archival material takes place in film archives across the world, both consciously and

³ Unlike the chapters focused on the other two case studies in this dissertation, this chapter on the NFSA does not attempt to provide a history of the institution, which has already been written by Ray Edmondson. See Edmondson, Ray. "National Film and Sound Archive: The Quest for Identity: Factors Shaping the Uneven Development of a Cultural Institution." University of Canberra, 2011. Print. The political battles the institution has waged for its identity and autonomy have also been discussed by Edmondson. See ---. "When Governments Make Mistakes: Advocacy and the Long-Distance Archivist." *The Moving image* 8.1 (2008): 41-51. Print; ---. "A Long Day's Journey into - Light? Australia's National Film and Sound Archive in Transition." *Journal of Film Preservation* 25.66 (2003): 50-54. Print; ---. "You Only Live Once: On Being a Troublemaking Professional." *The Moving Image* 2.1 (2002): 175-83. Print; ---. "A Case of Mistaken Identity: Governance, Guardianship and the Screensound Saga." *Archives and Manuscripts* 30 (2002): 30-47. Print.

unconsciously, thereby raising questions about the presumed neutrality of the archive and revealing the institution's biases and prejudices.

The NFSA and Australian Multiculturalism

At the main storage vaults of the NFSA in Mitchell, a suburb of Canberra, Australia -- which I visited in September 2013 -- I encountered an innocuous looking multi-shelved vault with some films and videos in it. The vault marked a remarkable departure from the norm, both for the NFSA as well as for other audiovisual archives elsewhere, for it was clad in a protective steel lattice grille and reinforced with a separate lock. This "vault within the vault" housed the NFSA's collection of restricted AV ICIP material, which had been separated from the institution's other holdings. It contained AV ICIP of secret, sacred, and sensitive ceremonies (secret/sacred as the institution terms them), material that might be deemed distressing, racist, or offensive, material that had been placed under restrictions for any other reasons including ownership, and various combinations thereof.

This arrangement of a secure vault within the vault is highly significant since it becomes a site of convergence for many ideas and issues pertaining to AV ICIP, both at the NFSA as well as in similar cultural contexts elsewhere. It brings to the fore a number of related questions and concerns pertaining to AV ICIP. One, who gets to access this material, and who decides who gets to access it? Two, what is being preserved and safeguarded -- the AV content of these recordings, or their physical carrier the film, video, or audio tape? Can we make a clear distinction between the two? Three, what role does the NFSA play in this scheme of things -- that of a custodian, a facilitator for access, or merely a storage space for such material? Four, what does curating mean in the case of AV ICIP? Who curates, what is curated, and how? And five, what does this tell us about the identity of AV ICIP and ATSI cultures *per se*, vis-à-vis the identity of the Australian nation, of which the NFSA may be seen

both as a representative as well as a microcosm? This chapter discusses how the NFSA understands and addresses these questions.

The NFSA is a large institution, with offices spread across four sites -- two in Canberra (the head office in Acton and the vaults in Mitchell), one in Sydney, and one in Melbourne -- in addition to having limited presences in other state capitals of the nation. Fully funded by the state, it is Australia's national audiovisual archive, responsible for developing, preserving, promoting and providing access to the nation's moving image and recorded sound heritage, which reports to the Australian Minister for the Arts.⁴ It is recognized internationally as a center of excellence especially in technical matters pertaining to film preservation, and is known for its policies, guidelines, workshops, and presentations on the subject.⁵

The institution was originally set up as the National Historical Film and Speaking Record Library in 1935, a subsidiary department of the National Library of Australia (NLA). In the 1970s, it acquired a separate identity within the NLA, and through the late 1970s and early 1980s, sought autonomy from its parent body -- with which it developed an increasingly strained relationship -- through a multifold lobbying movement involving a number of stakeholders. It eventually gained autonomy as a new institution named the NFSA in 1984, which was accompanied by opening branch offices in Melbourne and Sydney and moving into a new building in Canberra. However, it remained an extension of the Australian Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) without gaining a separate legal entity - an "outrider" as it has been called -- which its staff repeatedly sought to change.⁶

In 1999, the Australian government renamed the NFSA as ScreenSound Australia, followed by downgrading it to a semi-autonomous institution in 2001, and merging it with the

⁴ NFSA. "Annual Report 2014-15." Canberra: Australian Government, 1984. Print; "Corporate Information." National Film and Sound Archive. Web. 5 May 2016. <<http://www.nfsa.gov.au/about/corporate/>>.

⁵ As revealed in informal conversations in such international audiovisual archiving gatherings as the annual conferences of FIAF, AIMIA, and SEAPAVAA.

⁶ Edmondson, Ray. "National Film and Sound Archive: The Quest for Identity: Factors Shaping the Uneven Development of a Cultural Institution." University of Canberra, 2011. Print.

Australian Film Commission (AFC) in 2003. These changes were not made in consultation with the institution's management and other stakeholders, leading to much conflict and unrest, which were accompanied by strong and sustained internal as well as public demands for the institution's independence from the AFC. The advocacy movements were led, in part, by a group of stakeholders from both within and outside the institution who organized themselves as Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive (FNFSa). As a partial response to their demands, the AFC appointed the internationally renowned film scholar, curator, and archivist Paolo Cherchi Usai from Italy/US as the director of ScreenSound Australia in 2004 (its first non-Australian head), followed by restoring its name back to the NFSA the same year. But the agitations continued, and in 2008, after years of sustained advocacy and lobbying, the institution was finally granted independence from the AFC through the National Film & Sound Archive Act, which also gave it the status of a fully autonomous statutory authority it had long desired.⁷ In 2011, the film curator and writer Michael Loebenstein from Austria was appointed as its CEO, giving the institution its second non-Australian head, who continues to hold the position.

In 2015, the institution operated with an annual budget of more than 33.7 million AUD, and employed more than 250 people. Its collection of more than 2.16 million works included moving images, which comprised of feature films, documentaries, newsreels, films commissioned by the state, ethnographic recordings, home movies, and commercial and community television. It also held recorded sound, which included ethnographic recordings, commercial recordings, community radio, oral histories, and spoken word performances. And it held documents and artefacts, including posters, scripts, equipment, scrapbooks,

⁷ "NFSA Timeline." National Film and Sound Archive. Web. 5 May 2016. <<http://timeline.nfsaa.com/page/2/?pid=115> >; "Corporate Information." National Film and Sound Archive. Web. 5 May 2016. <<http://www.nfsa.gov.au/about/corporate/> >; Edmondson, Ray. "A Long Day's Journey into - Light? Australia's National Film and Sound Archive in Transition." *Journal of Film Preservation* 25.66 (2003): 50-54. Print; ---. "National Film and Sound Archive: The Quest for Identity: Factors Shaping the Uneven Development of a Cultural Institution." University of Canberra, 2011. Print.

photographs, and costumes and props.⁸ It also operated multiple film screening spaces including the 248 seater Arc Cinema, a 114 seater Theatrette, an exhibition gallery, and a courtyard for gatherings, and managed a library of film books and allied material.⁹

AV ICIP at the NFSA are estimated to be around 25,000 titles including both film and sound records,¹⁰ which also include parts of the Strehlow Research Center Collection -- of which the NFSA acts as the custodian --¹¹ and parts of the Walter Baldwin Spencer Collection, among others.¹² The institution's AV ICIP collection complements other similar collections held by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the South Australian Museum, the National Archives, Film Australia, state libraries, and regional communities.¹³ It is not clear how many of these holdings are secret/sacred, as that information is not publicly available, nor does the NFSA specify what percentage of the institution's total collection AV ICIP represent.¹⁴

⁸ "About Us." National Film and Sound Archive. Web. 5 May 2016. <<http://www.nfsa.gov.au/about/>>.

⁹ "Venue Hire." National Film and Sound Archive. Web. 5 May 2016. <<http://www.nfsa.gov.au/visit-us/venue-hire/>>.

¹⁰ "Indigenous Collection." National Film and Sound Archive. Web. 5 May 2016. <<http://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/indigenous-collection/>>.

¹¹The Strehlow Research Center, with which the NFSA has close ties, manages one of the most important ethnographic collections of film, sound, archival records and objects relating to Indigenous ceremonial life found anywhere in the world. The collection is based around the field work and writings of Professor Theodor George Henry Strehlow, often referred to as T. G. H. Strehlow, who spent more than four decades, from the 1930s to the 1970s, recording the ceremonial customs and traditions of Aranda culture in Central Australia. These include 1,200 sacred ceremonial objects, 26 hours of 16mm film of over 800 ceremonial acts, 150 hours of sound recordings of stories and songs, 8,000 photographs and color slides, 61 field, office and personal diaries, and approximately 10,000 letters, some of which are held at the NFSA. See "The Strehlow Research Centre." Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory. Web. 5 May 2016. <<http://www.magnt.net.au/#!/strehlow-research-centre/c125s>>.

¹² Walter Baldwin Spencer was an English biologist and anthropologist, known for being the first trained and experienced scientist to enter the field of Australian anthropology.

¹³ Saunders, Wal. Letter to the AFC on behalf of the IRG. 03/0012-02. *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁴ In the late 1990s, the institution was criticized for a footnote in one of its policy documents that specified percentages of AV ICIP but could not justify on what basis it had arrived at that number or how it classified a record as AV ICIP. It now chooses to keep the numbers less specific. See Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 5 December 2013. Canberra, ---. Personal Interview. 16 December 2013. Canberra.

The task of managing AV ICIP is complicated indeed, and as such, not only the NFSA, but most memory institutions in the world are still struggling with it, especially given the racist histories of the nations the institutions are located in. Australia's settler colonialism and its violent history of victimization, persecution, and discrimination against Indigenous peoples makes the nation's relationship with them highly contentious. They are the members of the oldest surviving cultures in the world -- estimated to be between 45,000 to 60,000 years old -- who comprise 3% of the total Australian population.¹⁵ They are divided into an indeterminate number of groups and communities, estimated to be in the hundreds based on the languages they speak, and comprised of anywhere from a few dozen members in a group to many hundreds, with various levels of overlaps between them.¹⁶ Such diversity makes the very idea of Australian national identity tense and conflicted, bringing into focus what Homi Bhabha has called the "impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force," because built into the very efforts towards national unification is the suppression and repression of difference, in this case the difference of Indigenous cultures.¹⁷

Scholars Jon Stratton and Ien Ang have discussed cultural difference and national identity in Australia through the idea of multiculturalism -- i.e. the recognition of co-existence of a plurality of cultures within the nation -- which assumes a very peculiar meaning in the Australian context.¹⁸ Multiculturalism has been the centerpiece of state policy as well as public discourse in Australia since the 1970s, a popular trope that was widely mobilized after

¹⁵ "Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians." Australian Bureau of Statistics. June 2011. Web. 5 August 2016.

<<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001> >.

¹⁶ "Our People." Australian Government. Web. 15 May 2016.

<<http://www.australia.gov.au/about-australia/our-country/our-people> >.

¹⁷ Bhabha, Homi K. *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print. 1-7, as cited in Stratton, Jon, and Ien Ang. "Multicultural Imagined Communities: Cultural Difference and National Identity in Australia and the USA." *Continuum* 8.2 (1994): 124-58. Print.

¹⁸ ---. "Multicultural Imagined Communities: Cultural Difference and National Identity in Australia and the USA." *Continuum* 8.2 (1994): 124-58. Print.

previous policy attempts at assimilation and integration of immigrants into the Australian society failed to yield desired outcomes.¹⁹

Stratton and Ang contrast Australian multiculturalism with that of the US. They argue that in the US, the idea of multiculturalism has often been positioned as antagonistic to the national imagined community that emphasizes assimilation and normative American values rather than celebrate diversity. However, in Australia, since the 1970s, the national has been conceived as the space within which many imagined communities live and interact together even while maintaining their distinct cultural identities. For instance, the Italian and the Greek communities in Australia are allowed to retain their cultural practices without needing to necessarily become “typical Australian” in their beliefs and lifestyles, they suggest.²⁰

However, this multicultural space of the imagined nation is defined on the basis of ethnicity centered only on Europe, and conspicuously absent from its discourse are debates about race, as are any mentions of Indigenous Australians, exposing the political limits of Australian multiculturalism. The same exclusion also applies to such non-European communities as Chinese or Vietnamese. However, Indigenous Australians, who are the original inhabitants of the nation and therefore fundamentally different from all immigrant communities, are excluded in particularly complex ways, for Australia chooses to work with what Stratton and Ang have called “a fracture” in the national identity that gets split between white Australia and Indigenous Australia, which Australians have only just begun to come to terms with. As Jim Berg, a Koorie elder, accomplished lawyer, and former advisor to the NFSA on Indigenous matters stated emphatically in his interview with me, “Australia is multicultural, excepting us.”²¹

¹⁹ Koleth, Elsa. *Multiculturalism: A Review of Australian Policy Statements and Recent Debates in Australia and Overseas*. Department of Parliamentary Services Canberra, ACT, 2010. Print.

²⁰ Stratton, Jon, and Ien Ang. "Multicultural Imagined Communities: Cultural Difference and National Identity in Australia and the USA." *Continuum* 8.2 (1994): 124-58. Print.

²¹ Berg, Jim. Personal Interview. 3 February 2014. Melbourne. The Koorie (also Koori) People are Indigenous Australians of New South Wales and Victoria.

This fracture makes itself evident in various ways. The media scholar and filmmaker Hart Cohen, who has worked closely with the Strehlow Research Center, recounts an anecdote about a meeting with an Australian Ethnic Affairs Commissioner, who, while commissioning a film on racism in Australia, said “We don’t include Aboriginal people. That belongs to another department.”²² The same fracture is evident at the NFSA too, not only in its vault within the vault but also in its policy documents that contain a separate category for Indigenous collections, the only such separation.²³ As Ray Edmondson, scholar and former deputy director of the institution suggested in his interview with me, “The Indigenous sits here on its own. It doesn’t fit in into anything else.”²⁴

This fracture can also be read as a different kind of transnationality, characterized by liminality that is unable to contain the idea of a single nation within it, one that is not constrained by geographic borders but by its imagined community space. This liminality of the Australian nation, and by extension also of the NFSA that represents the nation and acts as its microcosm, has been described by the scholar Kay Anderson as follows:

Australia, in its current time-space positioning, belongs to neither its Anglo-centered past nor to an assuredly postcolonial or Asian future. Positioned somehow “down-under,” it is thought to sit tenuously on both sides of the North/South divide, as a “western” country under “southern skies” making a “push into Asia,” while occupying a “Third World environment!”²⁵

The ways in which the NFSA has negotiated with this liminality and the fracture are described later. However, in order to understand them better, it would help us to first discuss the range of issues that are encountered in the handling of AV ICIP across Australian memory

²² Cohen, Hart. Personal Interview. 28 January 2014. Sydney.

²³ National Film and Sound Archive, Australia. "Collection Policy." Canberra: 2006. Print; ---. "Collection Policy." Canberra: 2011. Print.

²⁴ Edmondson, Ray. Personal Interview. 18 November 2013. Canberra.

²⁵ Anderson, Kay. "Thinking Postnationally: Dialogue across Multicultural, Indigenous, and Settler Spaces." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90.2 (2000): 381-91. Print.

institutions in general, and in archives in particular, many of which are not unique to the NFSA but are mostly unparalleled for non AV ICIP holdings.

AV ICIP: General Concerns

To begin with, it is difficult to ascertain what counts as AV ICIP and what doesn't. While those AV records that feature ATSI peoples exclusively -- such as ethnographic sound recordings or documentaries -- are relatively easy to label as such, any records involving both non-ATSI people and ATSI peoples make matters difficult.²⁶ What percentage of an audiovisual record needs to feature an ATSI person for it to be called AV ICIP? What if the record features only one instance of a significant ATSI painting in the background? What about contemporary fictional representations of ATSI peoples, even in such mainstream films as *The Tracker* (Rolf de Heer, 2003) and *Australia* (Baz Luhrmann, 2009)? Are films featuring mixed-race people AV ICIP? And are all the films made or produced by ATSI peoples AV ICIP, even in instances when they don't feature any ATSI peoples?²⁷

Closely related to these are question of ownership of records. The Australian Copyright Law protects the interests of the authors and publishers of AV ICIP, but not the interests of the people and cultures they represent. While this is generally true for all kinds of audiovisual records, it does not account for the lack of consent involved in producing many of

²⁶ Some of the issues discussed here, but not all, can also be found in Rao, Nina. "Representation and Ethics in Moving Image Archives." *The Moving Image* 10.2 (2010): 104-23. Print, which discusses them using the New Zealand Film Archive and the AIATSIS as cases in point, and in Farbowitz, Jonathan. "Hybrid objects: Indigenous Moving Images in Archives, museums, and libraries." Unpublished Work (2016). New York University. A few related concerns can also be found mentioned in Usai, Paolo Cherchi. "Are All (Analog) Films" Orphans"? A Predigital Appraisal." *The Moving Image* 9.1 (2009): 1-18. Print.

My use of the term record here refers to any AV recording such as film, video, or audio that features an ATSI person, all of which can be seen as archival records.

²⁷ The questions and concerns discussed in this segment result from the many dozen conversations I had with a number of stakeholders during my extended stay in Australia, including but not limited to the interviews I conducted, and also the numerous policy documents I studied during this period. It is not possible to attribute each individual concern to specific sources.

the records featuring ATSI peoples (which is historically known to be the case in many instances). Also, in the absence of proper paper clearances, and with many of the people featured in such records being long dead, how does one establish whether consent was granted, or even sought? Additionally, copyright typically deals with individual ownership (e.g. director) or group ownership (production company), but has no provisions to account for community ownership of intangible cultural property expressed in traditional ceremonies, songs, dances, poems, stories, design elements etc. that cannot be attributed to any one individual or entity.

Over and above copyright, there are complex questions involving the moral rights of ATSI peoples. Do they not have rights over the records of their own cultures, which, in some instances, may be the only surviving glimpses into their histories, or in others, continuing practices that define and shape their cultures even in the contemporary times? Memory institutions answer some such questions by granting moral ownership of the records and the cultures they represent to the communities represented in the records, with the institutions only acting as custodians responsible for their safekeeping and maintenance. But often, this is in conflict with the copyright of the authors and producers of the records. In such instances, more often than not, the cultural interests of the communities are placed at par with the commercial interests of copyright owners, and it is mandated that clearances be sought from both copyright owners and communities for any use of such material. However, not all stakeholders find such arrangements agreeable, thereby complicating matters further.

Many times, AV ICIP feature secret/sacred ceremonies that are not meant for anyone outside the community, which may include secret/sacred paintings, songs and other cultural symbols, initiation ceremonies, and even sexual acts. Additionally, some AV ICIP may contain information that may not be restricted for the communities whose members are represented in them, but may be seen as secret/sacred by other ATSI communities. Even within a community, the AV ICIP may be meant only for some groups of individuals, perhaps only for

initiated male members of the community, with the norms of the community forbidding the females from ever accessing them. In such instances, do the female staff members of the memory institution -- or even the non-initiated male staff members -- have the right to view, process, and handle such material even if only for accessioning and routine maintenance?

One might wish to make a distinction here between the content and the carrier, and argue that as long as the content is not being accessed by non-initiated members, the carrier should be allowed to be handled. But that would fail to take into account the spiritual meanings ascribed to such records, which transcend the content/carrier divide to fuse them together hermeneutically, and impart them with a third layer of significance bordering on totemic value. In his interview with me, Cohen recalled how one community elder once requested from him a copy of an audiovisual recording so as to encase it in stone and bury it underground until his sons were old enough to see it when being readied for initiation.²⁸ Sue Davenport, Manager of the Culture and Heritage Program at Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ, a Martu organization engaged in building sustainable Martu communities) recalled another elder sleeping with a hard disk containing an audiovisual recording under his pillow and forbidding anyone else from touching it, thus taking their significance far beyond the importance of the content or the carrier individually.²⁹ And as Brett Galt-Smith, former director of the Strehlow Research Center and advisor to the NFSA pointed out, over and above spiritual meanings, the records can also have local political significance for their owners/holders in certain communities.³⁰ Such communities are unlikely to take kindly to the AV ICIP being handled by female staff members

²⁸ Cohen, Hart. Personal Interview. 28 January 2014. Sydney.

²⁹ Davenport, Sue. Email Interview. 30 January 2014. Canberra. The Martu (also Mardu) are an Australian Aboriginal people, who are part of the "Western Desert cultural bloc."

³⁰ Galt-Smith, Brett. Personal Interview. 16 January 2014. Canberra. Even in the case of the example mentioned by Davenport, as David MacDougall pointed out (see MacDougall, David. Personal interview. Canberra. 31 January 2014.), the gesture of the Martu elder may have been motivated by his desire to reinforce his position as a privileged and dominant member of the community, and may not necessarily only involve the spiritual meaning of the record. However, even for that to work, the spiritual meaning of the record would need to come into play.

of the memory institutions, by uninitiated male staff members, or by anyone who they do not consider worthy of handling the record. Additionally, in such instances, what happens to the distinction between the original and the copy? The concept of the original remains largely relevant only for memory institutions since the community members do not care much about it, treating each copy with the same reverence, but this again has exceptions.

Who decides what is secret, sacred, and sensitive, how, and who is granted access to such records? Are memory institutions not obligated to provide access to all records in their holdings without bias, prejudice, and discrimination, irrespective of one's race, ethnicity, gender, and initiation status? The same questions also pertain to material that may not be secret/sacred but may be deemed racist, sexist, derogatory, abusive, or factually wrong. While withholding access to such material may be seen as censorship, which the institution should ideally not participate in, not withholding access may be seen by others as continued racism and propagation of historically problematic practices. A museum may resolve this by providing a context in which certain offensive material may also be exhibited (for instance to illustrate systemic racism against the ATSI peoples), but an archive finds it more difficult to do so owing to its access policies generally involving far less mediation between the user/patron and the material being accessed. Additionally, what parts of the material should be restricted, only the offending bits or the entire AV ICIP? More often than not, such dilemmas are resolved by consulting community members and other experts to establish the sensitivities involved, and researchers are granted access to the whole AV ICIP record or to select parts from it only if they have been provided clearances by community representatives.

However, such practices bring in their own set of issues. For one, there is the risk of one or more persons becoming de-facto experts and representatives for many communities, giving them a position of power and authority that can be abused, especially given their own political allegiances that might result in them not taking the matter to the communities at all. Also, community representatives may occasionally refuse to acknowledge that the material is

relevant to them without offering further explanations, which may be because those individuals feel that they do not have the right to pass judgments, but also because they feel that the inquirer does not have the right to learn more, leading to confusing scenarios for researchers.

Additionally, in such cases where the community representatives themselves have divergent opinions about the material, it is difficult to decide which opinion to prioritize. For instance, community rights take a number of varying forms, with even individuals and groups exercising differential rights within overall collective ownership. Thus, there may be conflicting claims of ownership from within a community too. Also, what may appear as conflicting claims to ownership within a community may in fact be addressing different aspects of ownership, which exist simultaneously or in relationship with each other. Similarly, audiovisual recordings featuring dead people may be considered unacceptable by some elders who see them as being disrespectful towards the spirits, causing them distress. A number of institutions resolve this by including disclaimers before such records. However, ATSI cultures are not frozen in time but are also continuously evolving, and the younger community members may now feel that such representations are acceptable, with other restrictions and cultural sensitivities also undergoing similar changes over time, requiring periodic reevaluations.

Also, because of the staggering number of ATSI communities and the dissimilar multitude of their cultural practices, it is often times difficult to establish what belongs to which community, and equally hard to contact the communities themselves. Most memory institutions do not have the resources to do so for all the records in their collections, nor do they have the knowhow to guide the researcher who approaches them on how to obtain the requisite clearances, and from whom. The onus usually lies on the researcher to get the clearances from the communities after establishing how best to contact them from other sources. But he is required to get clearances for individual records without accessing them to know what is in them, based only on the details provided in the finding-aid for the archive's holdings, or such similar catalogues or indexes in other memory institutions. However, that

involves a further set of complexities in addition to the possibility of employing cheating and/or other unethical practices in the process of obtaining clearances.

Archival finding aids traditionally rely on titles for identifying individual records, but some titles are deemed too sensitive to be entered into the finding-aids. For instance, they may contain sacred or offensive terms. To resolve this, memory institutions employ one of three possible measures, or combinations thereof. One, they remove such titles from their catalogues completely. Two, they often use proxy titles. Or three, they maintain two sets of finding-aids, one with all the records mentioned in them, only to be accessed by archival staff with the necessary credentials, and another with some titles “shadowed” or obscured, which is available to the general public. But how can a researcher, interested in similar records, ever find out about the existence of the titles that have been shadowed? He can only be granted access if he knows the specific title of the record, is aware that the archive has a copy of the record, and has the requisite clearances from the community, and that information needs to come from elsewhere and cannot be provided to him at the archive. Thus, essentially, a researcher performing theme based searches cannot hope to “discover” the record in the archive.

For a researcher who might get the requisite clearances, it becomes a moral responsibility to give something back to the community in return for the generosity he has received from them. Often times, this also involves returning copies of the records to the communities in collaboration with the memory institutions that house them, which the institutions call acts of repatriation. But what is being repatriated here when all that the community receives in return is an inferior copy of that which the institutions hold? The institutions and many experts argue that it is not the carrier that is being repatriated but its content, and through it, the culture of that community. They cite many instances when the repatriated copy is screened repeatedly by the communities, educating them about their history, and is circulated widely by copying it further. In the case of older songs and rituals, the

screenings are even accompanied by community members going into a state of trance, or performing the rituals alongside, making each screening a unique performative iteration not unlike a theatre performance. For such repatriation, the distinction between the original and the copy again becomes redundant, and given that most communities neither have the resources nor the knowhow for the long-term safekeeping of AV ICIP, most stakeholders agree that the originals are better kept in the memory institutions.

In addition to researchers, community members themselves may also want to access AV ICIP held in memory institutions and repatriate it to their friends and families. Much of what exists in the holdings of memory institutions may have been lost through the processes of passing on oral traditions, may have been deliberately kept hidden from the communities for decades, or may have simply been forgotten. Memory institutions often feel obliged to assist ATSI peoples in making maximum use of their holdings and services and facilitate access to records of their cultural heritage and historical experiences, but not all of them understand how best to handle the task, or have the people and resources necessary to fulfill their obligations. The paperwork and bureaucratic procedures involved in accessing the material also tends to appear too complicated for many ATSI peoples. Additionally, even the monumentality of the buildings they are housed in, the location of the buildings, and their architecture and design may feel unfamiliar, intimidating, and even functionally incorrect to many ATSI peoples, necessitating that the spaces be made more welcoming and hospitable to their needs.

A number of the abovementioned issues pertain to matters of self-determination and increased presence of ATSI peoples in the memory institutions, which can take place in two ways -- one, through employing more ATSI peoples in the memory institutions, and two, through engaging them as external consultants. The former becomes challenging due to the paucity of ATSI peoples skilled and qualified enough to perform the duties required in an archive, whom institutions often struggle to find and retain. The institutions try to remedy this through special internship and training programs aimed especially at them. However, most

memory institutions are located in metropolitan cities, often times hundreds of kilometers away from the traditional homes of ATSI peoples, making them less likely to relocate readily. For those who do relocate or are born and brought up in the cities, once inside, they are often treated differently by their colleagues, making them feel socially and culturally isolated. The duties they are assigned often involve only dealing with ATSI material, effectively pigeonholing them and creating impediments to their professional growth, for most positions created for them do not have corresponding senior positions they can be promoted to. And their often underprivileged backgrounds and lack of experience do not allow them to compete with non-ATSI candidates at senior levels outside of their domain.

The NFSA's serious engagement with AV ICIP, which has a relatively short history that only began in 1993, also involved dealing with many of these issues and concerns. This history was also informed by the growth of general awareness about AV ICIP in the Australian political and cultural landscape before 1993.

AV ICIP in Australia Before 1993

In the international film archiving community, the NFSA is often seen as a worldwide pioneer in formulating policies and guidelines for the handling of AV ICIP,³¹ in no small part because of its own claims to that effect.³² The claim does hold true, but only insofar as film archives are considered exclusively without taking the AV ICIP held in other memory institutions into account, more so only in the case of Australia without considering developments in New Zealand and various North American institutions, and most significantly, only in codifying policies and guidelines on paper without necessarily implementing them as

³¹ As revealed in informal conversations in such international audiovisual archiving gatherings as the annual conferences of FIAF, AMIA, and SEAPAVAA.

³² For instance, see Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 27 November 2013. Canberra. Other such claims are discussed later.

effectively in practice.³³ If examined together with other memory institutions worldwide that had already been following informed practices for handling AV ICIP but without codifying them, the NFSA was generally late in waking up to their many concerns, starting the process only in 1993. By then, even within Australia, a number of big and small initiatives had already paved the way for it to begin its efforts.

One of the earliest among them was the setting up of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in 1964, which was renamed as AIATSIS in 1989. AIATSIS is a world-renowned research, collections, and publishing institution engaged in the promotion, preservation, and understanding of ATSI cultures, traditions, languages, and stories, both past and present. It also holds a large collection of ICIP, including a substantial collection of AV ICIP (4000 video titles and 6 million feet of film, many of them produced by their own Film Unit that operated between 1961 and 1991).³⁴ And it acts as the main national center for research and reference on all matters pertaining to ATSI cultures, a role it has played sincerely for the NFSA too.³⁵

Since 2001, it has been located in a large standalone building in Acton, the heart of Canberra, physically placing it next to the National Museum of Australia and close to the Australian National University, thereby allowing it to showcase ATSI cultures from a site of national prominence. The NFSA is also located only 1.5 kilometers away from this site, permitting both institutions to collaborate more efficiently as they have done from time to time. However, the collections of AIATSIS are only accessible to researchers with verified

³³ Koch, Grace. Personal interview. Canberra. 3 December 2013; MacDougall, David. Personal interview. Canberra. 31 January 2014.

³⁴ "Film." Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Web. 3 May 2016. <<http://aiatsis.gov.au/collections/about-collections/film> >; MacDougall, David. Personal interview. Canberra. 31 January 2014; Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

³⁵ "Our History." Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Web. 3 March 2016. <<http://aiatsis.gov.au/about-us/our-history> >; "About Us." Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Web. 3 March 2016. <<http://aiatsis.gov.au/about-us> >. I discuss the collaborations between the two institutions in greater detail later.

credentials and not the public, and while some may see the institution as an archive, it is not designated as one, with its main roles only being those of the creation and dissemination of knowledge pertaining to Indigenous cultures.

Additionally, despite the existence of AIATSIS, the handling of ICIP in memory institutions across Australia has remained problematic.³⁶ Australia's European colonizers began collecting ICIP ever since their first contact with Indigenous peoples in the eighteenth century, sending much of it to various memory institutions in their home countries and elsewhere, but also keeping some of it in the memory institutions they created within Australia subsequently. However, none of these institutions -- including the Australian ones -- were sensitive to the wishes, aspirations, and cultural norms of the Indigenous peoples until very recently, with many of them actively aiding in the colonizing processes through ethically and morally suspect practices that continued well into the twentieth century.³⁷ Unlike many native Americans with whom the US and Canadian states signed various treaties over time, the Australian state never reconciled with Indigenous Australians in similar ways.³⁸ Commenting on the general state of affairs in the specific case of museums up until the 1960s, scholars Des Griffin and Leon Paroissien paint the following picture in their 2011 book on museums in Australia:

The relationship of museums in Australia with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders for more than 150 years failed to recognize the validity of different peoples with distinctive cultures. This unfortunately positioned museums as an instrumental agent of the dominant white population derived from Europe that had settled the land without any regard for prior ownership and occupation. Museum collectors obtained artefacts and cultural material, including secret and sacred items such as stone *tjuringas*. Worse still, human remains were obtained, often from graves, and skulls and other skeletal material and soft body tissue were sent to museums in Europe and America.

³⁶ Berg, Jim. Personal Interview. 3 February 2014. Melbourne.

³⁷ *Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. Melbourne: Council of Australian Museum Associations, 1993. Print.

³⁸ Saunders, Wal. Letter to the AFC on behalf of the IRG. 03/0012-02. *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

Such practices regarded Indigenous peoples as 'primitive', a number of museums publicly displayed human remains, and disparate artefacts were densely arrayed in glass cases as late as the 1960s.³⁹

The first serious discussions on the subject only took place in the 1970s, not within Australia initially but in foreign conferences and seminars of various memory institutions communities. In keeping with the general nature of memory institutions, discussions on the subject were led by pioneering museum professionals, and anthropologists and ethnographers working in and around museums, which gradually trickled down to libraries and only much later to archives. These discussions centered on the role of museums in promoting the long-term cultural and spiritual survival of Indigenous peoples, and indicated an urgent need for deeper and more meaningful relationships between memory institutions and the ICIP they held. Such ideas were carried back to Australia by the participants in these forums, and put together with previously scattered concerns to affect a gradual change.⁴⁰

In 1973, the Australian state set up the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council, and one of its roles was to allocate public money for the promotion of "traditional" and contemporary ATSI arts.⁴¹ Soon after, Australia passed the Racial Discrimination Act in 1975, which outlined the nation's international human rights commitments, promoted equality between people of different backgrounds, protected people across Australia from unfair treatment on the basis of their race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin in different areas of public life, and made racial vilification unlawful.⁴² This was in line with a number of

³⁹ Griffin, Des, and Leon Paroissien. "Museums in Australia: From a New Era to a New Century." *Understanding Museums: Australian Museums and Museology* (2011). Print.

⁴⁰ Sullivan, Tim, Lynda Kelly, and Phil Gordon. "Museums and Indigenous People in Australia: A Review of Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 46.2 (2003): 208-27. Print; White, Peter. Personal interview. Canberra. 6 January 2014.

⁴¹ Berrell, Nina. "Inroads Offshore: The International Exhibition Program of the Aboriginal Arts Board, 1973-1980." *reCollections: Journal of the National Museum of Australia* 4.1 (2009). Print.

⁴² "Racial Discrimination Act 1975." Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Public Service, 1995. Print.

similar policies and legislations worldwide to establish the rights of ATSI peoples, and contributed significantly to raising awareness about ATSI affairs in the nation.

The Australian state also commissioned an expert report on museums chaired by Peter Pigott in 1973, which recommended a series of changes to the museum sector in its report released two years later.⁴³ The Pigott report did not deal with ICIP directly, but its main annexure, a separate committee report chaired by Derek John Mulvaney, discussed the possible establishment of a National Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, the first such attempt at formalizing a separate identity for the ATSI peoples within the memory institutions. However, while the Pigott report became a landmark reference document, its Mulvaney annexure gathered no traction.

Meanwhile, in the mid-1970s, AIATSIS engaged in numerous internal discussions about the handling of AV ICIP that were led by the scholars and ethnographic filmmakers David and Judith MacDougall, which included commissioning new films that pioneered a new style of collaborative ethnographic filmmaking, examining the institution's position on access and protection of Aboriginal cultures, and inserting warning messages on audiovisual material featuring ATSI peoples, especially dead ones.⁴⁴ These were accompanied by a reorganizing of the AIATSIS collections and a partial restructuring of the institution's internal mechanisms. Informed by the debates on salvage anthropology and the ATSI peoples' need for self-determination, the McDougalls and AIATSIS came to the conclusion that it was an anachronism that they were an all-white team making films on ATSIs. They recruited a

⁴³ Pigott, Peter. *Museums in Australia 1975: Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections Including the Report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia*. Australian Government Publishing Service, 1975. Print.

⁴⁴ Bryson, Ian. "Recording Culture in Transition." *Bringing to Light: A History of Ethnographic Filmmaking at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies*. Canberra, ACT: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2002. 52-73. Print; Leigh, Michael. "Australian Ethnographic Film." Australian Screen. Web. 3 May 2016. <<http://aso.gov.au/titles/collections/ethnographic-film-in-Australia/>>; MacDougall, David. Personal interview. Canberra. 31 January 2014.

younger Indigenous filmmaker and more trainee filmmakers to assist them and learn the craft in the late 1970s, before eventually handing over the reins to them completely.⁴⁵

In 1978, Adelaide played host to a regional seminar by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) titled Preserving Indigenous Cultures.⁴⁶ The following year, a number of stakeholders joined hands in Melbourne at the Conference of Museum Anthropologists (COMA) to discuss similar issues. However, most of the participants in these forums continued to be non-ATSI, with only a small number of them having gradually been initiated into ATSI groups or having assimilated with them in other ways through long-term associations. Meanwhile, agitations in central Australia regarding land rights gathered traction and led to more awareness on the subject, in which ATSI peoples themselves took center-stage, giving their need for self-determination a strong voice.⁴⁷

Through the 1980s, a number of similar events and developments focused public attention on how the dispossession from traditional lands, the disruption of cultural knowledge, the erasure of communal memory, and the breaking-up of families impacted Indigenous Australians and placed them at a social and economic disadvantage when compared to other Australian communities.⁴⁸ In 1980, Link-Up was formed in New South Wales as an agency designed to help “the stolen generation,” that is, Indigenous peoples who were forcibly separated from their families as children and raised in institutions or by foster parents. This led to a number of similar local agencies being set up across the nation over the next few

⁴⁵ ---. Personal interview. Canberra. 31 January 2014.

⁴⁶ *Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. Melbourne: Council of Australian Museum Associations, 1993. Print.

⁴⁷ White, Peter. Personal interview. Canberra. 6 January 2014.

⁴⁸ Sullivan, Tim, Lynda Kelly, and Phil Gordon. "Museums and Indigenous People in Australia: A Review of Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 46.2 (2003): 208-27. Print.

decades,⁴⁹ and also saw the making of a film titled *Link-Up Diary* by David MacDougall (1987) that was widely exhibited.⁵⁰

The year 1980 also saw the National Museum of Australia introduce an ATSI employment program, which was followed by the Queensland Museum soon after. The former also started repatriating ancestral remains in the early 1980s. Alongside, COMA continued to be held annually and kept pushing for reforms in the sector, encouraging a wide range of participants and creating a ripple effect.⁵¹ The Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act came into being in 1986, which provided for the return of cultural property, including ICIP, that has been illegally exported. This was closely followed by the Aboriginal Employment Development Policy of 1987 that had a stated goal of employment equality between ATSI and other Australians.⁵²

In 1988, the bicentenary of Australia was celebrated to mark the arrival of the first fleet of British convict ships at Sydney in 1788, but accompanying these celebrations were massive protest marches across the nation that triggered debates on Australian national identity and Indigenous rights. These were followed by the setting up of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in 1989 through which ATSI peoples were formally involved in the processes of government affecting their lives.⁵³

⁴⁹ Kennedy, Rosanne. "Stolen Generations Testimony: Trauma, Historiography, and the Question of 'Truth'." *Aboriginal History* 25 (2001): 116. Print; Kendall, Carol. "The History: Present and Future Issues Affecting Aboriginal Adults Who Were Removed as Children." *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal* 18.2 (1994): 18. Print.

⁵⁰ MacDougall, David. *Link-up Diary*. VHS. AIAS Film Unit, Ronin Films, 1987; Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

⁵¹ White, Peter. Personal interview. Canberra. 6 January 2014.

⁵² Altman, Jon C. "Indigenous Australians in the National Tourism Strategy: Impact, Sustainability and Policy Issues." *CAEPR Discussion Papers, ANU 37* (1993). Print; Koch, Grace. Personal interview. Canberra. 3 December 2013.

⁵³ Altman, Jon C. "Indigenous Australians in the National Tourism Strategy: Impact, Sustainability and Policy Issues." *CAEPR Discussion Papers, ANU 37* (1993). Print; Koch, Grace. Personal interview. Canberra. 3 December 2013; Cohen, Hart. Personal Interview. 28 January 2014. Sydney.

By the early 1990s, ATSI employment as well as educational programs were in place in many memory institutions, which Peter White, NFSA's Senior Manager of Programming and Indigenous Affairs, also benefitted from.⁵⁴ Further developments during this period led to the establishment of the Reconciliation Council in 1991, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991, and most significantly, the *Mabo vs. Queensland* judgment in the High Court of Australia in June 1992. The Mabo judgment was a landmark verdict that inserted the legal doctrine of native title into Australian law, which paved the way for "reviewing the implications of Australia's settled status, applying the principle of non-discrimination in the enjoyment of property rights, explaining the operation of the Crown's sovereign radical title, recognizing native title and the source of rights in Indigenous law and custom, and asserting the power of the state to extinguish native title rights."⁵⁵

In December 1992, this was followed by the Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating giving his historic Redfern Speech, in which he publicly acknowledged to ATSI Australians -- the first ever such acknowledgment in Australian history -- that European settlers were responsible for the difficulties ATSI communities continued to face. "We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practiced discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice," he said, finally.⁵⁶

It was against this rich politico-cultural backdrop in the early 1990s that the NFSA started addressing its ICIP holdings more directly. The institution's management was generally aware of the larger debates on the subject, was informed of some of the steps being taken by the National Library of Australia, AIATSIS, and other memory institutions in the nation, and was also participating in a few scattered discussions on the subject as well as in many low key

⁵⁴ White, Peter. Personal interview. Canberra. 6 January 2014.

⁵⁵ "Mabo Case." Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Web. 3 March 2016. <<http://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/mabo-case> >.

⁵⁶ "Transcript: Prime Minister Paul Keating's Redfern Speech." Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Web. 3 March 2016. <http://www.50yearjourney.aiatsis.gov.au/stage9/stage06_item3.htm >.

passive practices for handling AV ICIP internally. Additionally, it had been given custody of parts from the Strehlow Collection in 1991, which had led to it placing restrictions on some such material and referring researchers to the Strehlow Research Center or AIATSIS for further information on how to obtain access to it by contacting the communities directly. Further, it had been organizing occasional internal cultural sensitization sessions for its employees, which was in line with similar initiatives by other state departments.⁵⁷ However, such matters had not become a policy priority for the institution, it had no designated contact person or formal procedures in place to handle AV ICIP, and no employees who formally identified as ATSI.⁵⁸

The first few steps towards correcting these shortcomings were halting and uncertain, but picked up pace and certainty gradually. Significantly, they were not led by the senior management of the institution but by non-Aboriginal junior employees such as archivists and catalogers who frequently handled such material in their day-to-day work, making it more of a bottom-up approach than a top-down one. However, the two did meet midway eventually.

Uncertain Beginnings at the NFSA with the ATSI Working Group (1993-1997)

In 1993, Tom Eccles, an audiovisual archivist at the NFSA, was deputed to AIATSIS for six months as a consultant to help AIATSIS with the technicalities of preserving its AV ICIP. This was an incidental occurrence that took place at the behest of AIATSIS and the state, and had no particular motivation from the NFSA such as the need for it to familiarize itself with Indigenous matters. Eccles' time at AIATSIS was well spent under the supervision of Michael Leigh, its Aboriginal Film Preservation Manager with a reputation for being exacting, and upon his return, Eccles brought back with him some of the sensitivities he had acquired at AIATSIS, which he felt were missing at the NFSA at that time. "Indigenous content kept popping up in

⁵⁷ Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 5 December 2013. Canberra.

⁵⁸ Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 27 November 2013. Canberra, Edmondson, Ray. Personal Interview. 18 November 2013. Canberra.

various contexts in our daily functioning but we had no mechanisms to deal with it,” he recalled.⁵⁹

Eccles was received back at the NFSA with a mixture of curiosity and mild reverence by some of the younger staff members, recent graduates of Archeology and Anthropology who felt mystified by the goings-on at AIATSIS and were interested in learning more about how they handled things. In part, this was the result of Leigh’s reputation for keeping AIATSIS “closed” when it came to the AV ICIP it held, for he was wary of any non-ATSI attempts at entering the “Indigenous domain” unless one was an established expert, behavior that was not his alone but extended to the whole of AIATSIS in general (and rightly so). Eccles, enthused by his newfound status as a quasi ATSI expert at the NFSA who had had the privilege of spending time within the difficult-to-access AIATSIS, approached his manager to raise awareness on the subject within the institution and was received with a sympathetic ear but not actively encouraged.

Meanwhile, the Australian Parliament passed the landmark Native Title Act in 1993 as a logical successor to the Mabo judgment, which came into effect the following year to provide a national system for the recognition and protection of native title and for its co-existence with the national land management system.⁶⁰ And by December 1993, the Council of Australian Museum Associations released a key policy document titled *Previous Possessions, New Obligations*, which provided a set of thirteen defining principles with which individual museums could develop policies, procedures, and practices appropriate to their particular circumstances.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

⁶⁰ *Native Title Act 1993*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1994. Print; ---. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

⁶¹ *Previous Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. Melbourne: Council of Australian Museum Associations, 1993. Print.

In February 1994, these were followed by a survey by an unnamed external body that requested the NFSA to discuss its policies, guidelines, and practices for the ATSI material it held, all of which resulted in a general pressure on the institution to think about long term solutions in the area.⁶² The response to the survey questionnaire by Ann Baylis, Senior Manager of the Collections Branch at the NFSA, is indicative of the institution's awareness of the basic sensitivities involved (most likely a direct result of getting custody of the Strehlow Collection but not limited to it), as well as its dependence on AIATSIS for these matters, for she writes:

Sensitive/sacred material is examined, repaired, accessioned, and catalogued by male staff. Only male staff are involved in restoration work and preservation copying of collection material. Sensitive material is labeled accordingly. Sensitive material is referred to AIATSIS for comment as to appropriate access procedures/ restrictions. . . . ATSI is offered the opportunity to have access copies made of ATSI material and thereafter to provide any access to such materials.⁶³

It is unlikely that the NFSA was actually following such best practices for the rest of its AV ICIP excepting the Strehlow Collection as clearly as indicated in the survey response at that time, a fact also confirmed by Eccles.⁶⁴ But the nature of the responses hints at the institution having begun engaging with the subject in its own limited ways.

In October 1994, the state released a significant issue paper titled *Stopping the Rip-Offs*, which dealt with intellectual property protection for Indigenous peoples, but the NFSA remained unaware of it at that time.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, it sent Kerrie Ruth -- a cataloguer working in the Collection Development department who was interested in ATSI material through her

⁶² Assorted documents. 95/0256/01. *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. NFSA, Canberra.

⁶³ Baylis, Ann. "Survey on Policies, Guidelines and Practices for ATSI Information in Libraries, Archives and Resource Centers." Letter to Michele Parsons. 14 February 1994. Canberra.

⁶⁴ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

⁶⁵ *Stopping the Rip-Offs: Intellectual Property Protection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. Canberra, ACT: Attorney-General's Legal Practice, Commonwealth of Australia, 1994. Print.

awareness of the Link-Up initiatives from elsewhere⁶⁶ -- to a seminar at AIATSIS, which Ruth found to be extremely informative.⁶⁷ "[A speaker at the seminar] also spoke about the "custody" of cultural material with the museum and "ownership" of culture staying with the Aboriginal owners," an enthusiastic Ruth reported to Baylis, demonstrating how each one of them was gradually learning more about such ideas that now appear to be obvious but were very new to them at that time, and also sharing them. She also wrote about having learnt of *Previous Possessions, New Obligations*, of which the NFSA eventually procured a copy.⁶⁸

Baylis agreed for Ruth to join hands with Eccles to see what a pooling of their energies would lead to, and the duo started by looking more closely at how other memory institutions in Australia were handling ICIP, with a specific focus on AV ICIP. They discovered that while there were a few scattered efforts and some internal practices in place, no institution had formalized policies and guidelines specifically on handling AV ICIP in their collection, which they felt was a significant gap. In February 1995, they convened an ATSI Working Group, the first of its kind at the NFSA. It met soon after, and included Eccles, Ruth, Baylis, and two other employees, initially with the intention to discuss the "representation of ATSI culture in NFSA public programs."⁶⁹

A hand-written note from the Group's correspondence is revealing of how basic some of the initial discussions were, for it says: "I think that we could suggest the inclusion of more ATSI cultural representation in presentations. This may already be happening, but what do they do when they get a busload of Aboriginal children? Change the presentation? Perhaps

⁶⁶ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

⁶⁷ Assorted documents. 95/0256/01. *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. NFSA, Canberra.

⁶⁸ Ruth, Kerrie. Email to Ann Baylis. 14 October 1994. 95/0256/01 *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Assorted documents. 95/0256/01. *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. NFSA, Canberra.

⁶⁹ Assorted documents. 95/0256/01. *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. NFSA, Canberra; Assorted documents. 95/0256/01. *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. NFSA, Canberra.

we could check this out.”⁷⁰ The discussions soon progressed to “developing draft policies on how the NFSA may approach the variety of issues relating to how we store, manage, give access to and display materials of ATSI cultural significance.” Making a strong case for such initiatives, they wrote in the agenda for one of their meetings:

The archive has a responsibility to take an active role in the care, understanding and interpretation of its collection. . . As a national institution, the NFSA is obligated to address ATSI issues, especially the underrepresentation in our collection. . . This is in keeping with our corporate policy, and the government spirit of reconciliation. An ATSI visitor (or any visitor) to our exhibition would not find ATSI culture represented. . . [And] AIATSIS does not provide the general public with access to their film and sound collection.⁷¹

However, in the absence of clearly defined goals and outcomes, and even more significantly, lack of any guidance from senior managers, the Group’s activities progressed at an extremely slow pace. Even while some of the Group members were educating themselves in the process, most meetings only led to more meetings without any immediately tangible results. Nonetheless, Eccles and Ruth, both of whom had no experience of policy formulation, came up with what Eccles describes as an early “ineffective draft that was based heavily on cutting and pasting from other policies,” which proved to be of little use. In 1995, Eccles was deputed to AIATSIS once again for eight months. By then, Leigh had left AIATSIS, and in his absence, Eccles -- informed by his efforts at the NFSA -- took on more administrative duties that allowed him to think more strategically about policy formulation, and also educated himself further on ATSI heritage and the ways in which AIATSIS handled it.⁷²

Meanwhile, in May 1995, the State Library of South Australia organized a roundtable on Library and Archives Collections and Services of Relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait

⁷⁰ Eccles, Tom, and Kerrie Ruth. "NFSA ATSI Working Group." 95/0256/01 *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁷¹ Baylis, Ann. "Draft of Agenda for Meeting for Representation of ATSI Culture in NFSA Public Programs." 27 February 1995. 95/0256/01 *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁷² Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

Islander People, in which a set of *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services* -- developed by Alex Byrne of the Northern Territory University -- was formally adopted.⁷³ The NFSA was also one of the participating institutions of the roundtable, by virtue of which it became a signatory to one of its recommendations, which stated that all of the participating institutions would send annual reports to Byrne on the implementation of the protocols in their own institutions. This put further pressure on the institution to get its act together.⁷⁴ When a copy of the published protocols made its way to the NFSA later that year, the institution's director Ron Brent forwarded it to the deputy director Ray Edmondson with a handwritten note that read: "'Mr. Edmondson, I am still concerned about our effectiveness in handling ATSI material and related issues of access and equality. Can we discuss how we should handle this please?'"⁷⁵

This brief note is important, for it brings to the fore the conspicuous absence of NFSA senior managers -- most significantly Edmondson, an internationally renowned authority on moving image archiving and preservation, but also Meg Labrum, the other familiar figure in the international audiovisual archiving community -- from the ATSI Working Group's efforts towards dealing with the institution's AV ICIP holdings at that time. They were not unaware of the Group's efforts, but the issues the Group represented had not become very significant for them, a fact accentuated by Brent's use of the word *still*, highlighted by Brent's reminder to

⁷³ Byrne, Alex. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services*. Deakin, ACT: Australian Library and Information Association, 1995. Print. Assorted documents 95/0256/01 *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*; Assorted documents. 95/0256/01. *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. NFSA, Canberra.

⁷⁴ "Draft Recommendations: Roundtable on Library and Archives Collections and Services of Relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People." 4 May 1995. 95/0256/01 *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁷⁵ Brent, Ron. Handwritten note on letter from Alex Byrne to the NFSA dated 17 November 1995. 29 November 1995. 95/0256/01 *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

Edmondson on the subject a few months later,⁷⁶ and acknowledged by Edmondson and Labrum (as well as others close to the institution).⁷⁷

Even Baylis, the only senior manager from the institution who was directly involved in the ATSI Working Group, thought it was enough for her to depute Graham Evans -- Manger Collection Development who had not even been a part of the discussions of the Group thus far -- to the roundtable instead of attending it herself.⁷⁸ And Brent, although appearing more enthused than the senior managers in this instance, displayed a similarly detached engagement with the subject through the years, which also characterized the institution's overall handling of AV ICIP and related issues all the way up until recently.

Nonetheless, the ATSI Working Group -- led primarily by Ruth in the absence of Eccles while he was on deputation at AIATSIS -- continued to meet through late 1995 and early 1996 to work on a fresh policy document. It also made recommendations for better reference material on ATSI peoples, the need for training and employment for them at the NFSA (which included suggestions for external grants to make it possible), and placed requests for involving ATSI peoples in the policy formulation process too. Alongside, it explored the practices adopted by such institutions as the New Zealand Film Archive (which did not have any formal policies either), the National Library of Australia's ATSI Documentation Project, and AIATSIS's unpublished work-in-progress thesaurus for entries of ATSI descriptions into databases.⁷⁹ The minutes of one of the Group's meetings are telling of

⁷⁶ ---. Handwritten note to Ray Edmondson. 2 January 1996. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁷⁷ Edmondson, Ray. Personal Interview. 18 November 2013. Canberra; Pike, Andrew. Personal Interview. 11 February 2014. Canberra. Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 27 November 2013. Canberra, ---. Personal Interview. 5 December 2013. Canberra.

⁷⁸ Baylis, Ann. Email to Graham Evans. 11 April 1995. 95/0256/01 *Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁷⁹ "ATSI Working Group Meeting." 11 December 1995. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Collections Branch ATSI Working Group Meeting." 20 November 1995. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Ruth,

the senior management's attitude towards its demands for more Aboriginal participation during this period:

There was concern expressed at having Aboriginal consultation in the development of the policy concerning ATSI holdings. As the above principles [the CAMA publication *Previous Possessions, New Obligations*, which the NFSA used extensively as a reference document] were developed with wide Aboriginal consultation, it was thought that informal consultation with Aboriginal academics could take place once a draft had been arrived at after internal consultation with people such as the Director and Deputy Director. More formal consultations, if desired, could take place after those comments both internal and external were incorporated.⁸⁰

The senior managers got more interested in the Group's activities when they gradually started realizing the implications of the Mabo Judgment of 1992 and the Native Titles Act of 1993 for their institution. Guiding this change of tone was the fact that the NFSA had by then published a CD-ROM with a catalog of its holdings, which contained over 2,000 mentions of ATSI content, which was freely available. In the process, the institution had inadvertently placed itself in a delicate position as most of the information pertaining to these entries was incomplete, unverified, and might have contained inaccuracies, but could potentially be used by Indigenous peoples to stake claims over land titles in the court of law, especially given that it came from a national institution.⁸¹ AIATSIS had been inundated with similar requests for access to material to support land claims,⁸² which the NFSA was aware of, and it started

Kerrie, and Jane Steinhäuser. "Minute CD Rom and Native Title Claims." 22 December 1995. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "ATSI Working Group - Meeting." 12 February 1996. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁸⁰ "ATSI Working Group Meeting." 11 December 1995. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁸¹ "ATSI Working Group Meeting." 11 December 1995. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; ---. "Minute CD Rom and Native Title Claims." 22 December 1995. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁸² Koch, Grace. Personal interview. Canberra. 3 December 2013.

feeling the need for more clarity on how it should handle a similar situation, including understanding its own legal status with regard to such requests and claims.

As an immediate measure, it thought of employing ATSI peoples to make revisions and corrections to the catalog entries,⁸³ which was followed by detailed consultations with its legal team about the best course of action.⁸⁴ Brent requested Edmondson to look into the matter at the earliest,⁸⁵ and in a letter to Ruth, Edmondson finally acknowledged that “the points you make are both valid and timely. The issues impinge, potentially, on several areas of the Archive. I'll be raising them with the relevant branch heads, and seeking a plan of action. I'll keep you informed. Thanks for raising this.”⁸⁶

The legal team responded by making a distinction between moral and legal repercussions of the act, and observing that the Native Titles Act provided no relevant legal requirements in the cultural area. “Its relevance is simply that it will presumably increase the number of requests for access to material. In terms of providing access to collection items, or information about such holdings, the Act does not legally affect our position at all.” Thus, the institution was only covered by the Copyright Act 1969, the legal team reasoned, but also cautioned that restricting access to material or suppressing information about holdings “might raise difficult questions of discrimination and the reasonableness of the basis on which such decisions were made.”⁸⁷ Additionally, it drew the ATSI Working Group’s attention to a new act

⁸³ Ruth, Kerrie, and Jane Steinhäuser. "Minute CD Rom and Native Title Claims." 22 December 1995. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁸⁴ Cottier, Penelope. Letter to Ron Brent, Ray Edmondson, et al. 12 January 1996. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁸⁵ Brent, Ron. Handwritten note to Ray Edmondson. 2 January 1996. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁸⁶ Edmondson, Ray. Letter to Kerrie Ruth. 11 January 1996. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁸⁷ Cottier, Penelope. Letter to Ron Brent, Ray Edmondson, et al. 12 January 1996. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

that was under development, which would deal better with issues of communal ownership and oral traditions that were not adequately covered by the Copyright Act, as well as to the previously mentioned discussion paper titled *Stopping the Rip-Offs* that acted as the impetus for developing the new act.

This gave the NFSA management some relief, aided by the fact that it did not actually receive as many requests for information to support land claims as it had anticipated.⁸⁸ However, the relief was short-lived, for by June 1996, the institution was sent a questionnaire by Byrne regarding its implementation of the protocols accepted at the roundtable. When Ruth was asked to respond to the questionnaire, her answers were unambiguous, and did not resort to painting a defensive and partially true picture as had been attempted by Baylis previously. Even though this can be attributed to the nature of the questions themselves, her responses did revise the NFSA's prior position on the subject by acknowledging that the institution was ill-equipped to deal with its ICIP holdings:

The NFSA does not have any specific programs aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. . . The NFSA does not have any formal links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies. We do have contact with AIATSIS and other relevant bodies when required. . . The NFSA is presently reviewing the Protocols along with other documents such as Previous Possessions, to identify any implications for the NFSA's services. Some aspects of the Protocols will need to be rewritten in order to fit the needs of an audio-visual archive rather than a museum or library. I am able to pass on more specific comments once these are circulated within the NFSA, which should be happening this week.⁸⁹

It took a little longer than one week, but by July 1996, Eccles (who had returned to the NFSA by then) and Mary Miliano, a senior cataloger who played a significant role in the institution's handling of AV ICIP, came up with another policy draft with support from the other

⁸⁸ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

⁸⁹ Ruth, Kerrie. Letter to Alex Byrne. 11 June 1996. 95/0256/01. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

members of the Group, this time around with active encouragement from Labrum.⁹⁰ Other senior managers also reviewed and gave their inputs on the draft, as did the NFSA's legal team, resulting in a concise document (12 pages long including glossary of terms and acronyms, with only five pages dealing directly with ICIP). It laid out how the NFSA was to be proactive in seeking to address moral issues pertaining to the AV ICIP in its holdings, handle questions of access, address matters of training and professional integrity in the handling of AV ICIP, and recognize ATSI peoples and their cultures within the operation of the institution.⁹¹

The document was sent to more than 20 external individuals and institutions for feedback, most of them dealing with ATSI culture and/or ICIP in one way or another. Responses flowed in gradually over the next few months, and while some of them merely sent back perfunctory notes (such as the Australian War Memorial and the Queensland State Archives), many others corrected the smallest of phrasings, terminology, and their policy implications in elaborate ways (such as the State Records, Film Australia, the National Museum of Australia, and the Department of Communications and the Arts). Still others asked for further information, suggested more institutions the NFSA should seek advice from, recommended that the institution should wait for central guidelines from the state to avoid legal troubles, urged the institution to think more carefully about repatriation of ICIP as well as ATSI employment, and even used the opportunity to showcase the efforts their own institutions were making in the area.⁹² AIATSIS wrote back saying that since its own staff had been closely

⁹⁰ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

⁹¹ The final version of the document was subsequently made publicly available as *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy*. Canberra, ACT: ScreenSound Australia: The National Collection of Screen and Sound, 1997. Print. The 12 page length I refer to is of this final document.

⁹² Assorted documents. 95/256/02. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Assorted documents. 95/256/02. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. NFSA, Canberra.

involved in the drafting of the policy document (a fact supported by other communication), the institution believed that the policy document was sound and needed no further comments.⁹³

On the whole, the feedback was largely positive and constructive,⁹⁴ with the word that came back through the grapevine also indicating that the policy document had been well received across the board, including at AIATSIS, making the NFSA's senior management feel self-congratulatory.⁹⁵ However, the institution's wide circulation of the draft policy document as well as Brent's subsequent publicity of the "achievement" to every relevant state body in various forums makes it evident how, for the senior management, the policy document had more to do with being a good instrument for scoring political brownie-points in the corridors of the state bureaucratic machinery and less to do with the moral and ethical concerns surrounding ICIP that were being voiced by its junior employees.⁹⁶ It is the same kind of self-publicity in international circles that has earned the institution its reputation as a pioneer in the handling of AV ICIP.

Only one commentator (Lynn Allen, CEO of the Library and Information Services of Western Australia) shared the concerns of the junior employees and pointed out the main trouble with the policy document in very clear terms -- the issue of its implementation -- by writing that "the policy outlines the *intentions* of the NFSA as to how it manages to consult and make accessible the material in its care, but not the *actual mechanisms* for doing so"

⁹³ Daffen, Peter. Letter to NFSA. 23 October 1996. 95/256-02. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Koch, Grace, Carol Cooper, and Andrew Lawrence. Letter to NFSA. 28 October 1996. 95/256-02. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁹⁴ Assorted documents. 95/256/02. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁹⁵ Labrum, Meg. Letter to Mary Durkin. 26 November 1996. 95/256-02. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁹⁶ Assorted documents. 95/256/02. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra. Brent, Ron. Letter to Evan Williams, Convenor, Archives Working Group, Cultural Ministers Council. 19 May 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

(emphasis mine).⁹⁷ Allen's singularity is telling of the Australian politico-cultural landscape the NFSA was enmeshed within, in which the appearance of efforts towards proper handling of ICIP, a politically charged subject, seems to have been far more important than the actual implementation of those efforts, making most other respondents fail to observe what Allen did. Nonetheless, the policy was formally approved by the NFSA Council in March 1997⁹⁸ and subsequently endorsed by the Minister for the Arts in October the same year.⁹⁹ By then, despite the senior management's self-congratulatory mood, the issue of the implementation of the protocols had already surfaced internally in very prominent ways, again at the behest of junior employees, some of who had joined the cause only recently even as others such as Ruth had moved on to other responsibilities.

The Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (1997-1999)

In September 1997, a little before the policies were endorsed by the Minister for the Arts, two more junior NFSA employees, namely Amanda Reynolds from Collection Information (who was familiar with ATSI issues through her university studies)¹⁰⁰ and Sara Cousins from Collection Development, felt the need to come together and form a new Indigenous Policy Implementation Group to implement the policies formulated by the NFSA. They held a brainstorming session and initiated a scathing note to the institution in general but clearly

⁹⁷ Allen, Lynn. Letter to NFSA. 17 October 1996. 95/256-02. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁹⁸ Durkin, Mary. Letter to Diane Mutch and Graham Evans. 19 March 1997. 95/256-02. *National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) Working Group on Handling Indigenous Collection Material*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

⁹⁹ "NFSA Indigenous Policy Implementation." 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Minutes. ScreenSound Australia ICIP Reference Group Inaugural Meeting." 9 February 2000. 00/0472-07. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁰⁰ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

aimed at its senior management, which made a number of strongly worded statements challenging their belief in having addressed the handling of ICIP successfully:

The ATSI policy stood alone and only existed on paper, because it was not supported by specific procedures and guidelines, and other NFSA Corporate Documents failed to guide our work in this area as ATSI issues were either absent or in apparent conflict with statements in the ATSI policy. . . There are no goals, objectives, actions, targets or responsibilities outlined in the current Corporate and Business Plan which address the management of ATSI material within the NFSA. This absence is incongruous with the ATSI policy. . . The inconsistencies across NFSA policies in relation to ATSI cultural heritage have resulted in confusion and inaction. . . It is not acceptable to have an ATSI policy which simply exists on paper to satisfy the demands of "political correctness." The content of the ATSI policy is admirable. However, its value is limited, ATSI and their culture is not respected, and the NFSA will be potentially exposed, if the Archive continues to have no procedures nor any future plans to enable it to implement the Policy.¹⁰¹

To support their claims, they gave the examples of two recent cases within the institution that revealed the limitations of existing practices and procedures. In one instance, the research director of the Strehlow Research Centre approached the NFSA to add three restricted 16mm films to the collection and specifically requested the institution that the films should not be identified in the NFSA database, only interim working titles should be used to accession them, only one VHS copy should be made for all of them and sent to him without duplicating it for the NFSA, and only male staff members should handle the accessioning and copying of the films. However, due to the limitations of the accessioning software as well as lapses in procedures, the films ended up being identified, accessioned without proper restrictions being placed on them, and copied for the NFSA. The mistakes were identified and rectified later.

In the second instance, the institution received a donation of 78rpm shellac discs of ATSI music dating back to the 1940s, which came with no further instructions or restrictions.

¹⁰¹ Cousins, Sara, and Amanda Reynolds. Minute addressed to Executive, Meg Labrum, Graham Evans and Elizabeth Jamieson. 24 September 1997. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

However, the case holding the discs contained a note mentioning restrictions, which gave the collection development officer cause for concern. She consulted several people, including her supervisors, and received conflicting advice on how to handle the situation. The issue was taken up in further meetings, and it was agreed that the restrictions found with the discs should be transferred into the acquisition data for them at the next stage of processing. However, the collection information officer who received the discs from the collection development officer in the next stage found no mechanisms in place that would enable her to implement the decision. The key factors were the differences between restrictions placed by the donor and the restrictions as established by the NFSA, both of which had very different repercussions for access and copying clearances on the discs, the level at which the restrictions could be placed in the database i.e. at the item level or the container level, and other related issues. The collection information officer had some background in handling such material, and decided to approach AIATSIS for advice, but none of the three options resulting from the consultation proved to be adequate to handle the issue in its entirety. The NFSA eventually decided not to accession the material until appropriate methods and procedures were in place that would ensure that the material was not mistreated and mishandled.

Citing these two cases, the note initiated by Reynolds and Cousins made a number of corrective recommendations, many of which were repetitions of previous suggestions such as reiterating the need for involving ATSI representatives in these matters, and also mentioned the need for the NFSA ATSI policies to not just exist as a separate document but be integrated into the institution's corporate documents and made a permanent part of the institution's workflow. In the aftermath of the note, Eccles, Miliano and other such early initiators also joined the group, Labrum, Edmondson, and other senior managers started attending their meetings from time to time,¹⁰² and the NFSA made a few changes to the database

¹⁰² Assorted documents. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Assorted

management system to allow for better identification, tagging, and accessioning of ICIP.¹⁰³

The institution also initiated outreach programs and a travelling film and sound exhibition giving presentations and seminars on ATSI material held in the collection, completed work on a discography of commercially issued sound recordings and performances by ATSI peoples, produced a set of two videos titled *The Dreaming Reels: Aboriginal Images in Australian Silent Films*, which was presented at various festivals, and decided to take its Travelling Film and Sound Show to the Northern Territory (traditionally home to many ATSI communities) in May the same year (although some of these activities had already been initiated by the time the note was written).¹⁰⁴

In February 1998, the group's concerns were shared with the NFSA Executive, which received them sincerely and gave its endorsement to the group, formalizing its existence.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, the group changed its name to the Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC),¹⁰⁶ and in a major move, appointed Eccles as an indigenous liaison officer (ILO), the first such position at the NFSA.¹⁰⁷ This made Eccles a one-point-contact for all public matters

documents. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁰³ Cousins, Sara. "Enhancement to Job Booking System." Letter to senior management. 5 September 1997. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁰⁴ "NFSA Indigenous Policy Implementation." 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁰⁵ Edmondson, Ray, and Amanda Reynolds. Minute to Executive. 9 February 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Edmondson, Ray. "ATSI Group Goes Formal." Letter to Amanda Reynolds et. al. 16 March 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Minutes. ScreenSound Australia ICIP Reference Group Inaugural Meeting." 9 February 2000. 00/0472-07. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁰⁶ "Minutes IPIC." 26 March 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra. IPIC should not be confused with ICIP or Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property.

¹⁰⁷ Edmondson, Ray, and Amanda Reynolds. Minute to Executive. 9 February 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Edmondson, Ray. "ATSI Group Goes Formal."

related to ATSI affairs at the NFSA, thereby giving a face to the institution's dealings on the subject. However, his appointment came with a catch: it was only a titular position that did not exist on the payrolls separately, making it only an additional role for him.¹⁰⁸

The group continued to meet intermittently over the next few months, and even as the NFSA developed a workplace diversity plan, it decided to task Miliano in June 1998 with handling a Retroactive ATSI Collection Project with help from other members of the IPIC. The project was ambitious in scope, aimed at identifying all ATSI material in the NFSA collection, ordering and prioritizing it with a focus on access, researching copyright, moral rights, and sorting out data entry issues with ICIP. It also aimed at liaising with ATSI communities and bodies for advice and clarifications, and upgrading the quality of records, focusing in particular on restrictions information. And it attempted providing advice and assistance to the data entry guidelines officer on the development of a data entry guideline for ATSI material. It also targeted providing advice on accessioning and de-accessioning ATSI and related material, researching the feasibility of placing audiovisual access material in appropriate institutions/communities as part of a distributed national collection, developing a collection guide for NFSA holdings of ATSI material, and organizing cross cultural training seminars.¹⁰⁹

Miliano initially envisaged spending at least six months on the project alongside her routine duties,¹¹⁰ and in the absence of any ATSI peoples at the NFSA to seek guidance from, turned to Eccles for helping her identify secret/sacred material. He provided her with broad

Letter to Amanda Reynolds et. al. 16 March 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁰⁸ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

¹⁰⁹ "ATSI Retroactive Collection Project Draft Outline." 12 June 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Miliano, Mary. "Minute Retroactive Collection Project." 29 June 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹¹⁰ ---. "Minute Retroactive Collection Project." 29 June 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

general guidelines about how restricted ceremonies usually begin with a male from the group clearing an area where the ceremony is to be performed of unfriendly spirits, and asked her to look out for such indicators as body paint, ritual procedures, totemic objects, any body fluids, circumcisions, removal of front teeth etc. However, he warned her that such indicators were very basic and varied greatly between different groups, also adding that female secret/sacred ceremonies also existed but he would not know what they might be.¹¹¹

Even as Miliano worked on the retroactive project, Reynolds attended the National Conference of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Resource Network in November and reported back saying that the two most important things the NFSA could do were, once again, having ATSI employees on its rolls, and making ATSI culture more visible within the institution.¹¹² She also explored multiple options on how to make ATSI employment possible, which she passed on to her supervisors, but her efforts gathered little traction.¹¹³

Soon after, Miliano attended the annual conference of the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives in Paris and circulated a paper on copyright reform for ATSI material to her colleagues. However, unlike Reynolds' efforts, this prompted Brent to take some interest, but for the same reasons as before: he wished to know how the NFSA would handle any claims and issues resulting from the institution making its catalog accessible online, which they had been planning for a while, thereby revealing how the senior

¹¹¹ Eccles, Tom. Letter to Mary Miliano. 1 July 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹¹² Reynolds, Amanda. Letter to Kate McLoughlin. 11 December 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹¹³ ---. Letter to Lyn Jauncey. 15 January 1999. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

management's interests continued to rest more with avoiding trouble than with setting their ATSI affairs in order.¹¹⁴

Thus, despite the sporadic activity of some dedicated junior employees and occasional support from some senior managers, ICIP continued to remain a complex and unresolved issue within the NFSA, with the senior management never making it a priority during this period. Even though such senior managers as Labrum -- and less frequently Edmondson -- were generally involved in the IPIC's proceedings, there was a sense of frustration with all things ICIP for the junior employees. Eccles recalls how he kept sending documents up the chain but nothing came back down. As he puts it, "there was a very clear lack of feedback and engagement with the subject, and even the drafting of the policy felt only like the ticking of a box." Even his own appointment as the ILO made him very uncomfortable, especially since he was frequently asked during his interactions with various stakeholders if he were from an ATSI community, and his negative response often resulted in hostilities, with some ATSI peoples even challenging him openly in public forums.¹¹⁵

Miliano's ongoing retroactive project, despite being very thorough, also had to frequently err on the side of caution in the absence of clear guidelines and expert advice. The fact that she was a non-ATSI person, and a woman at that, working to classify restricted material that she did not have the requisite cultural clearances to even handle only made matters worse. In one instance of a film featuring Walbiri peoples, the expert she consulted both cautioned her against showing anyone the film as it would cause considerable distress to the community, and simultaneously also refused to share further contact details with her for community elders to seek clearances from, but without giving her any reasons why.¹¹⁶ This led

¹¹⁴ Brent, Ron. Letter to Amanda Reynolds et. al. 27 January 1999. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹¹⁵ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

¹¹⁶ The Walbiri, also called Walpiri, Warlpiri, Elpira, Ipara, and Wailbri, are a group of Indigenous Australians living mostly in Australia's Northern Territory.

her to feel disappointed and initiate a note to Labrum saying his “approach makes me feel painted into a corner.”¹¹⁷ As a result of many such general troubles, a number of titles were classified too strictly as secret/sacred and even restrictions placed on them somewhat unnecessarily,¹¹⁸ which was also in keeping with Brent’s general instructions on the subject to better be careful than sorry.¹¹⁹ Thus, confusion, uncertainty, and an overall sense of unease continued to pervade the institution’s handling of ICIP.

Consequently, in early 1999, when the IPIC marked its one-year birthday with yet another meeting and Brent responded to updates from the meeting with a casual remark saying “it seems well in hand,” Reynolds, who was growing increasingly frustrated with the lack of progress on the subject, refused to accept his assessment and argued that things were far from being “well in hand.” In a long and well-articulated email addressed to Brent but sent to the entire group, she laid out many hypothetical short term and long term scenarios with possible solutions to any issues resulting from them. These included making the details of all the ICIP material public and then apologizing if anyone pointed anything out, or alternatively, making everything restricted. She also cited percentages of how likely or unlikely certain scenarios were, made a strong case for including more ATSI peoples in this discussions yet again, and reminded Brent that the institution should not be taking decisions on behalf of ATSI peoples. Despite being a very junior and relatively inexperienced employee, her statements were courageous and strongly worded, challenging Brent head on:

Can I rewind past your last comment of 'the matter seems well in hand' (so I don't just respond with 'it may be well in hand - but who's hand is it in?) on you question of how are we going to deal with this? . . . I am unwilling to make a recommendation on whether or not to go 'not for public' until we have thoroughly scrutinized because I don't think it is my place to do the

¹¹⁷ Miliano, Mary. Handwritten note to Meg Labrum. 3 June 1999. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia - Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹¹⁸ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

¹¹⁹ Brent, Ron. Letter to Amanda Reynolds et. al. 27 January 1999. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

cost/benefit analysis outlined in my episode of hypothetical above. It is not a simple black/white issue (although we are managing to keep it very white!) We need to consult (but who I hear you all ask me) - our Indigenous Reference Group!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! . . . Let's stop for a minute to consider the irony of it all. We are so busy thinking of solutions that we overlook the most important question - how can we support Indigenous rights to manage their cultural knowledge? . . . We as an organization have rights to contribute to discussions, come up with solutions and strategies, highlight problems, work in co-operation. . . But we have no right to dominate the dialogue or to exclude Indigenous voices from the management of their cultural knowledge. Although the Archive is full of committed individuals who sincerely wish to do the right thing, it is monopolizing Indigenous rights. IPIC is not an authority - it is a starting point. We need to work in co-operation with Indigenous people - we need an Advisory Council - we need resources. How do we "Stop the Ripoffs" [referring to the title of the paper on copyright issues] in the Archive?¹²⁰

Labrum immediately attempted to control the situation by asking Reynolds and Eccles to drop by so as to discuss a firmer structure on deliverables.¹²¹ A week later, a defensive but courteous Brent responded by clarifying that by "well in hand" he meant being pleased with the issue getting due consideration and solutions being developed, and definitely not that the debate was over already. Expressing his ignorance of cataloguing practices, he acknowledged that he had no library qualifications, no accessioning experience, and didn't know much about access inquiries. He thanked everyone for the initiatives they had taken, and requested Labrum to assume responsibility for ICIP issues across the institution as had been decided upon in the last meeting of the Executive.¹²² In the process, he effectively distanced himself from the matter. Additionally, despite the earnest and humble tone of his response, conspicuously absent from it was any mention of Indigenous participation and employment at the NFSA, the main point of contention for Reynolds.

¹²⁰ Reynolds, Amanda. Letter to Lyn Jauncey. 15 January 1999. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹²¹ Labrum, Meg. Letter to Amanda Reynolds and Tom Eccles. 21 January 1999. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹²² Brent, Ron. Letter to Amanda Reynolds et. al. 27 January 1999. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

Nonetheless, Reynolds' email seems to have had some impact, for the next few weeks saw a flurry of meetings of the IPIC under Labrum's chairmanship that led to more directed activities on the subject, albeit most of it appearing token and still none that involved the participation of ATSI peoples as organizers. These included such decisions as celebrating the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee Week every year,¹²³ and upon discovering that the NFSA building is located in the general region of Ngunnawal peoples' original land, deciding to incorporate and acknowledge this information in future public programs of the institution.¹²⁴

Meanwhile, yet another junior employee, Julie Heffernan, sent a proposal to Labrum about undertaking research on the pre-1952 AV ICIP the institution held in its collections, which the IPIC eventually determined as requiring too many resources for it to be undertaken immediately.¹²⁵ Additionally, a debate raged internally over whether or not the institution should sanitize its older records of offensive words like *Abo*, *Blacks*, or *Aborigines*. Doing so was seen as a falsification of history by Edmondson, and it was recommended that the institution should avoid devising restrictions or categories for ICIP that may be subjective or "go out of fashion" subsequently.¹²⁶ And further, in consultation with external experts, as an

¹²³ "Minutes IPIC Meeting." 4 February 1999. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹²⁴ Edmondson, Ray. Letter to IPIC. 8 February 1999. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra. The Ngunnawal people (alternatively Ngunawal tribe) are some of the Indigenous Australian inhabitants whose traditional lands extended around Yass.

¹²⁵ Heffernan, Julie. "Project Proposal: Australian Aboriginal Material, Pre 1952." 3 March 1999. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "IPIC Reference Group Minutes of Meeting 2." 25 May 2000. 00/0472-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishments-Committee-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹²⁶ Assorted documents. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Assorted documents. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

interim measure, it was decided to mark all ICIP as "not for public use" until it was cleared by the appropriate people/groups.¹²⁷

The slow progress on these matters can be explained in part -- especially from the perspective of the institution's senior managers -- by their preoccupation with the construction of the institution's new building extension and its inauguration on 21 June 1999, which also brought with it the previously discussed set of challenges that threatened the institution's very identity because of its sudden, arbitrary, and problematic rebranding as ScreenSound Australia (SSA). The decision led to much bad blood between Brent and Edmondson, resulted in the creation of the FNFSAs, and kept the institution internally conflicted for months. However, even after the renaming and rebranding saga was somewhat settled, confusions on the AV ICIP front continued, leading an increasingly frustrated Eccles -- who had gradually been distancing himself from IPIC's uncertain activities -- to tender his resignation from the post of ILO in August 1999 and eventually leave the institution altogether to join AIATSIS as an archivist.¹²⁸

A minute circulated by Miliano to the rest of the IPIC around the same time is worth being reproduced here in its entirety, for it serves to illustrate the many small but significant issues plaguing the actual implementation of the ATSI policy, the ways in which she and her colleagues were grappling with a lack of guidelines and instructions from their senior managers, and the sincerity and dedication of their own efforts:

As you will see, I have more questions than answers. . .
1. SSA is now starting to implement our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy.

¹²⁷ Saunders, Wal. Letter to Mary Miliano. 26 May 1999. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia - Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Minutes of IPIC Meeting." 7 April 1999. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia - Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹²⁸ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013; "IPIC Reference Group Minutes of Meeting 2." 25 May 2000. 00/0472-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishments-Committee-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

- 1.1 Until now, whenever we were aware that footage was secret or sacred or could only be viewed/worked on by a male, we have honored this both in our handling of the material and in providing access to it.
- 1.2 Recently, new work to implement the Policy has commenced and new issues and questions of all types are arising.
2. All data base records which should not appear publicly are flagged so as not appear in our On-Line Catalogue.
 - 2.1 These data base records also have an internal role, explaining briefly to staff why they are flagged in this way.
3. To the best of our knowledge, all database records for restricted material now indicate that there is a restriction on the material. In each case, an up to date contact name (usually a collecting institution) is included in the data base record for consultation and clearance prior to access being given.
 - 3.1 We have not yet labeled as 'restricted' every related physical component, however.
 - 3.2 When the restriction simply says something like 'May be viewed only by initiated Aboriginal men' we do not necessarily know which Aboriginal peoples are involved.
 - 3.3 Ideally, data base records for restricted material should include a discreet explanation as to why the material is restricted, and an instruction on what Client Services staff should do when the material is requested. This is included to the best of my ability for restricted material especially where it appears publicly in On-Line catalogue.
4. In a small number of isolated cases (mostly for unrestricted material and generated through recent access requests), we have identified the Indigenous group shown/heard in the material.
 - 4.1 The name of the relevant Land Council or Media Association with the role of the Indigenous owner's contact has been given as an index point in the data base for these items.
 - 4.2 Having documented this information, we are now led into the question of: What should our Client Services staff do when responding to a request for this material (especially when it is not restricted)? Logically, we also need to include an instruction in the data base record stating the next step to guide our staff efficiently (see also 5 below).
5. Where material is not restricted, there is an idea that perhaps we should (?) have our client contact the community for clearance (?) or to advise (?) that the client would like to use some or all of the footage in a new production (usually documentary, but potentially could also be any type of production e.g. TV, news, feature, education compilation, etc.)
 - 5.1 In the past, we would have given access to unrestricted Indigenous content with clearance from the copyright holder only. We are now wondering if we should also have clients contact the Indigenous owners for clearance.
 What would be the implications/impact of doing this:
 - For the Indigenous communities
 - For the copyright owners (where they exist)
 - For the clients
 - For ScreenSound Australia's workflows
 - 5.2 To what extent should we pursue this? (E.g. with: Newsreels, Home Movies, Mission footage, material in Public Domain?)

5.3 We also need to identify which peoples are involved, and often this may not necessarily be known to us.

5.4 Are there particular Aboriginal peoples who are known to be especially sensitive and for whom we should be especially concerned in the light of this topic? (E.g. Warlpiri? Arrrente? Yolngu? and ???)

5.6 [5.5 appears to have been mistakenly skipped] Are there particular Aboriginal peoples where unexpected sightings of content may not cause distress to the community? (E.g. Koori? -- We understand from representatives of the Koorie Heritage Trust of Victoria, that Koori people are happy rather than distressed to see images of ancestors? and ???)

5.7 If we were to implement this level of information flow, what is the best way to encourage each Indigenous community to respond promptly to clients?

6 We perceive that there are different kinds of access given to material in our collection. These are:

6.1 Research (generally thought of as private viewing/audition) with a view to completing study, theses, etc. and where the researcher is generally informed as to the expected content,

6.2 Screenings to Indigenous communities,

6.3 Public screenings to the general public -- e.g. cinema societies or public release cinema,

6.4 Broadcast via radio or television transmission,

6.5 Use of complete footage or extracts in new productions such as documentaries, etc.

6.6 We perceive that each of these may attract a different response regarding responsible and appropriate handling of the content. We need advice on the most appropriate guidance to provide our Client Services staff (through the data base) for advice to clients for each of these types of use, and to confirm suitable guidance for individual titles as necessary.

7 We ask whether, and if so -- how to get copies of footage to Indigenous communities, (e.g. via Land Councils, Media Associations, any other appropriate contact point for the particular community involved) especially where the people may be unaware of this footage.

7.1 This would a) repatriate content and b) permit Indigenous communities to be informed about content which may be subsequently requested for use ("use" being defined here as use of footage in a new production)

7.2 We are interested to know of AIATSIS' and other institutions' experience in this.

7.3 We are also interested to explore possibilities for:

A proper approach to the communities,

Covering costs of making VHS copies,

Negotiating this with copyright holders (e.g. churches for mission footage, private persons for home movie footage).

8 AIATSIS as the 'copyright contact' for access to restricted material held by ScreenSound Australia.

8.1 If a client from the community represented in the footage visits us in person and asks to view the restricted material, may we give access to them, or do we need to clear this with AIATSIS first?

9. Other institutions/communities/community representatives/persons as copyright contact

9.1 The same question as in 8.1 applies to all other restricted material where an Indigenous community or its representative, a different institution, or a person is listed as the 'copyright contact' or 'Indigenous owners contact'.¹²⁹

Sharp and informed, Miliano's minute also sheds light on yet another issue that repeatedly resurfaced during this period: the NFSA's complicated relationship with AIATSIS. In meeting after meeting of the IPIC, the NFSA discussed ways of strengthening ties between the two institutions, and implemented many "mutually beneficial" measures in the form of collaborative projects, consultations, and knowledge and skill exchanges.¹³⁰ Brent also communicated with Russell Taylor, the CEO of AIATSIS, acknowledging the good work being done together by employees in both institutions, and sought further cooperation in the form of more help with handling AV ICIP at the NFSA. In return, the institution offered AIATSIS further technical expertise in the upkeep of audiovisual material in the latter's holdings.¹³¹

While appearing benign and symbiotic in principle, underlying such efforts was also an anxiety for the NFSA over the AV ICIP collections at AIATSIS, which, being the national repository of audiovisual material, it would have liked to count among its own holdings. From a purely logical standpoint, it made little sense to have two national institutions with large and

¹²⁹ Miliano, Mary. "Screensound Australia Minute: Screensound Australia's Indigenous Collection: Achievements, Issue and Questions to Date." 31 August 1999. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia - Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹³⁰ "Minutes - ATSI Working Group." 5 February 1998. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Assorted documents. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia - Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Assorted documents. 7 April 1999. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia -- Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹³¹ "Minutes of IPIC Meeting." 7 April 1999. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia - Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Brent, Ron. Letter to Russell Taylor. 15 June 1999. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia - Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

occasionally duplicate AV ICIP, especially in close proximity to each other. However, the NFSA neither had the expertise nor the resources to handle it all, which it was well aware of, and AIATSIS was not willing to part with any of its own holdings that readily either.¹³²

The delicate subject had been broached on a number of occasions in high level meetings between the two institutions, and a functional but unwritten solution, which gradually became the norm, had been found by way of taking recourse to AIATSIS's status as a research center as opposed to the NFSA's status as a publicly accessible national audiovisual repository. Consequently, NFSA concerned itself only with published AV ICIP material i.e. the final release tape or DVD, while AIATSIS held on to the rushes, unedited recordings, and unpublished AV ICIP material, a major portion of which came from the various research projects it had itself commissioned over time. Nonetheless, aberrations to these norms still existed, for instance with many historical ethnographic recordings held at the NFSA that had never been formally published, or with the published tapes or DVDs of a few research projects being housed in both institutions. However, they were politely overlooked even as the two institutions sought to find more ways to collaborate with each other without raising uncomfortable questions.¹³³

For the NFSA, such collaborations also meant having to deal with what they saw as an unhealthy dependence on AIATSIS for all things ICIP, which it did not know how to avoid. It eventually found a partial solution to the problem in the form of an Indigenous Reference Group (IRG), a body of external consultants for the institution with the sole task of advising it about the AV ICIP in its holdings, which had been previously discussed on a number of occasions (including a strong mention in Reynolds' email to Brent), but had not been taken forward. In March 1999, a few months before the institution's rebranding to SSA, the NFSA

¹³² Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

¹³³ Loebenstein, Michael. Personal Interview. 17 February 2014. Canberra; MacDougall, David. Personal interview. Canberra. 31 January 2014; Pike, Andrew. Personal Interview. 11 February 2014. Canberra; Cohen, Hart. Personal Interview. 28 January 2014. Sydney; Koch, Grace. Personal interview. Canberra. 3 December 2013.

Council finally agreed to set up the IRG. Reynolds received a special word of thanks from Labrum for having “energized this notion long ago,” but seems to have left the institution soon after.¹³⁴

Ironically, however, AIATSIS continued to be the point of reference and yardstick against which many subsequent NFSA policies and practices were also measured, both internally as well as by its IRG.¹³⁵ And as with any other bureaucratic process, the decision to set up the IRG took a few months to be implemented, during which time the IPIC continued to function alongside in the ways described above, but now also held discussions on who all to nominate for the membership of the IRG.¹³⁶

The Indigenous Reference Group (1999-2004)

Following the decision to form the IRG, between April and September 1999, the NFSA started making inquiries about institutions and individuals suitable to become its members and sought nominations from the IPIC, the institution’s own Council, AIATSIS, and the Australian Film Commission (AFC). In October, it sent invitations to a select few, seeking to establish a small core group representing diverse ATSI perspectives from the media industries, the ATSI communities, and the political corridors, which would meet once or twice a year while maintaining more frequent contact through other means and on a case-by-case basis. The tasks expected of its members were manifold: One, guide the institution in the physical management, storage, cataloguing, appropriate treatment, and security of ICIP. Two, provide

¹³⁴ Labrum, Meg. Letter to Amanda Reynolds and Tom Eccles. 21 January 1999. 99/0020-01. *National Film and Sound Archive. Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹³⁵ As a case in point, see "IPIC Reference Group Minutes of Meeting 2." 25 May 2000. 00/0472-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishments-Committee-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹³⁶ Assorted documents. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia - Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra. Assorted documents. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia -- Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

the institution with information required to identify, list, and maintain records of ICIP for its catalog. Three, advise on matters of organizing access to ICIP (including matters of protocol). Four, advise on dealing with specific collection items and access queries. Five, provide references, establish contacts, and forward representations to the ATSI communities for cultural rights and clearances. And six, advise on items which should be collected.¹³⁷

A total of six members eventually accepted the institution's invitations -- three as institutional representatives (Jim Berg from the Koorie Heritage Trust, Brett Galt-Smith from the Strehlow Research Center, and Jim Remedio from National Indigenous Media Association of Australia) and three as individuals (Wal Saunders (filmmaker), Justine Saunders (actor), and Ian Dunlop (filmmaker)). They came together with the principal of AIATSIS to form the institution's IRG.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Brent, Ron. Letter to Russell Taylor. 15 June 1999. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia - Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; NFSA. "Draft: Invitation to Join NFSA IRG." 20 October 1999. 99/0020-02. *National Film and Sound Archive/ ScreenSound Australia - Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC)*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Minutes. Screensound Australia ICIP Reference Group Inaugural Meeting." 9 February 2000. 00/0472-07. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Minutes. Screensound Australia ICIP Reference Group Inaugural Meeting." 9 February 2000. 00/0472-07. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹³⁸ "Minutes. Screensound Australia ICIP Reference Group Inaugural Meeting." 9 February 2000. 00/0472-07. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

My research could not reveal who all among them identified as Indigenous and who did not, and my interviewees -- various members of this IRG -- provided me with conflicting information when asked about this. Most interviewees stated that the IRG had more non-Indigenous than Indigenous members, a claim also supported by an email one of them wrote in 2003. See Dunlop, Ian. Email to AFC. 13 November 2003. 03/0012 *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; ---. Personal Interview. 30 December 2013. Canberra; Galt-Smith, Brett. Personal Interview. 18 December 2013. Canberra. However, the only Indigenous member of the board I could interview, Berg, suggested otherwise, claiming that only two of the committee members were Indigenous while all others were non-Indigenous, "so called Indigenous experts" as he referred to them. See Berg, Jim. Personal Interview. 3 February 2014. Melbourne.

The group held its inaugural meeting on 9 February 2000.¹³⁹ Around the same time, the institution also participated in the Mornington Island Film Festival, which led to its first official repatriation of AV ICIP. Meg Labrum calls this a turning point for the institution, as it enabled it to develop a better understanding of direct contact with Indigenous communities. It was also a significant political move because it showcased the institution as one of the few national memory institutions that were interested in on-the-ground efforts, which it was well aware of.¹⁴⁰

During the first three years of the IRG's functioning, the group met and communicated multiple times with members of the IPIC and the NFSA Council representative Janette Wright to discuss a range of issues and make recommendations. The points of discussion included such issues as the masking and shadowing of titles from the institution's catalog -- for instance the films known by such archival titles as *The Native Problem in Queensland*, *The Sex Life of Aborigines*, and *Stages Illustrating the Development of Human Erect Postures* -- some of which led to much debate on the withholding of information and censorship vs. the sensitivities of ATSI peoples.¹⁴¹ Linked to this was also a discussion on the serious and invasive abuse of

¹³⁹ "Minutes. ScreenSound Australia ICIP Reference Group Inaugural Meeting." 9 February 2000. 00/0472-07. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁴⁰ Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 5 December 2013. Canberra.

¹⁴¹ Cordell, Michael. "Notes on Draft Indigenous Materials Policy." 10 December 2001. 01/0996-05. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Wright, Janette. Email to Michael Cordell. 10 December 2001. 01/0996-05. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Briggs, Victor. Email to the IRG. 20 December 2001. 01/0996-05. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

Stages Illustrating the Development of Human Erect Postures was a particularly controversial film. Many members of the IRG felt that the film was so offensive that it should be destroyed. However, it was retained by the institution, and also shown outside Australia by its later director Paolo Cherchi Usai as an illustrative example of the kinds of films that become difficult for the institution to handle. The film also finds a brief mention in Usai, Paolo Cherchi. "Are All (Analog) Films" Orphans"? A Predigital Appraisal." *The Moving Image* 9.1 (2009): 1-18. Print.

privacy in such films, some of which were legally free of rights constraints, especially those made before 1967 when there was no legal recognition of ATSI rights.¹⁴²

There was general consensus that the institution should not list titles with secret/sacred content in its public catalog, including those that contained secret/sacred content in the title itself, but it should also not “cleanse” the catalog of potentially offensive titles. Instead, it should label them as “restricted” and put in place a rigorous process of screening requests for access to such material. The IRG agreed to temporarily perform the task of interrogating the reasons for each request and make recommendations until more robust internal mechanism were instituted.¹⁴³ On the NFSA’s request, the IRG also agreed to review “problematic” films proactively as a regular part of its meetings.¹⁴⁴

Much time was also spent in discussing the sometimes impossible complexities of confirming moral rights, and it was suggested that the only option in some cases would be to seek clearances in good faith and recognize the cultural integrity of the source material and the contacts being made. “This may not always result in a completely correct decision but it can be justified and would aid in building levels of trust between SSA and the communities involved,” the IRG noted,¹⁴⁵ and added later that “the fear of legal vulnerabilities should not be used as an excuse to avoid involvement.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² "Minutes. Screensound Australia ICIP Reference Group Inaugural Meeting." 9 February 2000. 00/0472-07. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁴³ "IPIC Reference Group Minutes of Meeting 2." 25 May 2000. 00/0472-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishments-Committee-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Screensound Australia Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC) Reference Group, Minutes of Meeting No 3." 2 November 2000. 00/0963. *National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound Australia), Indigenous Employment Program*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁴⁴ "IPIC Reference Group Minutes No 5." 17 October 2001. 01/0996-05. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁴⁵ "IPIC Reference Group Minutes of Meeting 2." 25 May 2000. 00/0472-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishments-Committee-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁴⁶ "Screensound Australia Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC) Reference Group, Minutes of Meeting No 3." 2 November 2000. 00/0963. *National Film and Sound*

Other points of discussion included the repatriation of ATSI material, the need for establishing local community repositories for it, and the possibility of developing NFSA presence in ATSI communities within existing office sites of other institutions.¹⁴⁷ Additional discussions involved the need for definitions and a glossary of terms for internal consistency on such matters,¹⁴⁸ the need for records relating to ATSI material being altered to identify both contact information for access as well as contact information for copyright separately, and the need for placing a disclaimer before all ICIP that would also need to be reviewed periodically.¹⁴⁹ Further, deliberations were held on organizing public events such as an exhibition titled "Dreamtime to Primetime,"¹⁵⁰ the screenings component of the event "Tracking Kultja, The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Festival,"¹⁵¹ and an exhibition titled "Deadly Movin' Pitchas".¹⁵² Also, the IRG recommended that the responsibility

Archive (ScreenSound Australia), Indigenous Employment Program. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁴⁷ "Minutes. Screensound Australia ICIP Reference Group Inaugural Meeting." 9 February 2000. 00/0472-07. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁴⁸ "Minutes. Screensound Australia ICIP Reference Group Inaugural Meeting." 9 February 2000. 00/0472-07. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁴⁹ "Screensound Australia Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC) Reference Group, Minutes of Meeting No 3." 2 November 2000. 00/0963. *National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound Australia), Indigenous Employment Program.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "NFSA Council: Minutes of Meeting No. 53." 12 June 2002. 02/1056-03. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment. Committees. Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Assorted documents. 02/1056-03. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment. Committees. Policy Development -- Indigenous Reference Group.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁵⁰ ATSI people have developed and are bound by highly complex belief systems that interconnect the land, spirituality, law, social life and care of the environment. The terms Dreamtime, Dreaming and Songlines are regularly used and interchanged to describe these important elements of Aboriginal cultures "Indigenous Australia: Dreamtime." *Tourism Australia.* Commonwealth of Australia. Web. May 15 2016.

<<http://www.tourism.australia.com/documents/Dreamtime-Aboriginal-Culture-Fact-Sheet.pdf>>

¹⁵¹ "Interim Council: Minutes of Meeting No 49." 27 July 2001. 01/0096-03. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment - Committees - Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁵² "NFSA Council: Minutes of Meeting No. 53." 12 June 2002. 02/1056-03. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment. Committees. Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Assorted documents. 02/1056-03. *ScreenSound*

for identifying ATSI owners for ICIP should rest squarely with the NFSA and not with the researchers.¹⁵³ And the institution was reminded that the IRC should not become a token body or a powerless entity whose recommendations the NFSA Council could ignore or override.¹⁵⁴

Not all of the IRG's recommendations were implemented immediately, but its creation and functioning made the NFSA senior management take ATSI matters far more seriously than before, with the issue finally appearing to get its due within the institution. This was most evident in the reformulation of its ATSI policies, which were reworked by members of the IPIC with meticulous inputs from Edmondson and Labrum to make them broader in scope, more agreeable to the state bureaucratic machinery, and geared towards long-term resonance ("timelessness" as Edmondson put it) before they were presented to the IRG for further comments. Of interest in their discussion was also the subject of whether to name the policy document "Policy on Indigenous Materials" or the "Indigenous Materials Policy." The latter was not limited to the institution's ICIP holdings but signified an engagement with a host of related issues such as ATSI training and employment, cultural awareness initiatives, and active assistance to ATSI communities.¹⁵⁵ After much deliberation including consultations with the IRG, the institution eventually ruled in favor of naming its document "Indigenous Materials

Australia. Establishment. Committees. Policy Development -- Indigenous Reference Group. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁵³ "Screensound Australia Indigenous Policy Implementation Committee (IPIC) Reference Group, Minutes of Meeting No 3." 2 November 2000. 00/0963. *National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound Australia), Indigenous Employment Program.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁵⁴ "Minutes. Screensound Australia ICIP Reference Group Inaugural Meeting." 9 February 2000. 00/0472-07. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁵⁵ Edmondson, Ray. Email to Meg Labrum. 9 October 2000. 00/0472-06. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Labrum, Meg. Email to Ray Edmondson. 9 October 2000. 00/0472-06. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Durkin, Mary. Email to Ray Edmondson et. al. 11 October 2000. 00/0472-06. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group.* National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

Policy,¹⁵⁶ which was approved by the IRG in December 2001,¹⁵⁷ forward to the Minister for the Arts in October 2002,¹⁵⁸ and finally published for the public in June 2003.¹⁵⁹ Despite being roughly the same length as the previous version, the new document was markedly more thoughtful and sharp in its formulation.

Interestingly, even before the policy was formally endorsed by the Minister and implemented, the institution's staff as well as the IRG members had already started promoting it actively in various public forums.¹⁶⁰ Among the forums it traveled to was also the "Regardes Comapres: Aborignese d'Australie" festival organized in Paris in October 2001 by the Comite du Film Ethnographique -- by some estimates the most comprehensive collection of films on ATSI peoples to have ever been screened at one time -- for which the institution provided many films after its IRG member Ian Dunlop got closely involved with assisting the organizers in procuring films for the event.¹⁶¹ Such participations cemented the institution's reputation in

¹⁵⁶ "IPIC Reference Group Minutes No 5." 17 October 2001. 01/0096-05. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Interim Council: Minutes of Meeting No 49." 27 July 2001. 01/0096-03. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment - Committees - Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁵⁷ "Screensound Australia Interim Council: Minutes of Meeting No 51." 6 December 2001. 01/0996-05. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁵⁸ Saunders, Pam. Email to IRG. 27 September 2002. 02/1056-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment. Committees. Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁵⁹ *Indigenous Materials Policy*. Canberra, ACT: ScreenSound Australia: The National Collection of Screen and Sound, 2003. Print.

¹⁶⁰ "IPIC Reference Group Minutes No 5." 17 October 2001. 01/0996-05. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Screensound Australia Interim Council: Minutes of Meeting No 51." 6 December 2001. 01/0996-05. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁶¹ Durkin, Mary. Email to Janette Wright. 9 October 2001. 01/0996-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Dunlop, Ian. "Regardes Comapres: Aborignese D'australie." October 2001. 02/1056-01. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment - Committees - Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

the international film archiving community as well as other film related communities for being a pioneer in formulating policies in the domain of AV ICIP.

The institution's biggest bone of contention internally, the issue of ATSI employment, was also taken up in IRG meetings and communication repeatedly, with the IRG endorsing the recruitment of ATSI cadets in the first instance, encouraging the institution to consider establishing ATSI-specific positions gradually, and suggesting that the institution should liaise with other memory institutions on collective long-term strategies to tackle the issue.¹⁶² The institution responded by sending its employees to attend sessions on the subject in conferences and report back to their colleagues,¹⁶³ organizing workshops internally to devise strategies,¹⁶⁴ and taking a lead in establishing a dialog with other memory institutions through structured training and employment program as part of the Indigenous Employment Policy launched by the state in 1999.¹⁶⁵ However, its efforts towards recruiting ATSI cadets, even by placing target advertisements in niche ATSI publications such as Koorie Mail, yielded no results initially,¹⁶⁶ forcing it to review its advertisements to make them more aesthetically

¹⁶² "Minutes of Meeting No. 43." 26 May 2000. 00/0472-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishments-Committee-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁶³ "Notes from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Information and Resource Network (ATSILIRN) 7th Annual Conference." 00/0963. *National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound Australia), Indigenous Employment Program*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁶⁴ "Minutes of Workshop on Employment." 2 November 2000. 00/0963. *National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound Australia), Indigenous Employment Program*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁶⁵ "Minutes of Meeting No. 43." 26 May 2000. 00/0472-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishments-Committee-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Assorted documents. 00/0963. *National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound Australia), Indigenous Employment Program*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Interim Council: Minutes of Meeting No 49." 27 July 2001. 01/0096-03. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment - Committees - Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Assorted documents. 00/0963. *National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound Australia), Indigenous Employment Program*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁶⁶ "IPIC Reference Group Minutes of Meeting 2." 25 May 2000. 00/0472-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishments-Committee-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

pleasing, remove public service jargon, and consider placing the cadets in the Sydney and Melbourne offices rather than the head office in Canberra to make the positions more attractive (even though this would have led to issues with their workflows).¹⁶⁷

In one of the workshops organized internally on the subject, the institution even clearly identified there being “philosophically two camps of thought,” one that saw the institution as being committed to ATSI employment because it wanted input from ATSI peoples to add value to and widen access to the collection, and the other that wished for the institution to be a “good corporate citizen” and desired to promote social change through an ATSI employment strategy designed to “open the doors of public employment” to ATSI peoples. The workshop concluded by recommending that the institution needed to be clear about the camp of thought under which it wished to engage with the subject and added that someone from among the Senior Managers be responsible for implementing the program.¹⁶⁸

While the camp of thought the institution finally decided to go with remains unclear from the documents trail, its efforts finally paid dividends when it was able to recruit its first two ATSI cadets around December 2001.¹⁶⁹ However, the same does not seem to have gone too smoothly, for just four months later, in April 2002, the IRG criticized the institution about the

¹⁶⁷ "Talking Points/Issues (for Mary Durkin and Meg Labrum)." 00/0963. *National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound Australia), Indigenous Employment Program*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Minutes of Workshop on Employment." 2 November 2000. 00/0963. *National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound Australia), Indigenous Employment Program*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; "Interim Council: Minutes of Meeting No 49." 27 July 2001. 01/0096-03. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment - Committees - Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁶⁸ "Workplace Diversity - Indigenous Employment Strategies." 2 November 2000. 00/0963. *National Film and Sound Archive (ScreenSound Australia), Indigenous Employment Program*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁶⁹ "Screensound Australia Interim Council: Minutes of Meeting No 51." 6 December 2001. 01/0996-05. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

lack of progress made on the subject.¹⁷⁰ Alongside, it also expressed its frustration at the lack of ATSI experience on the institution's Council.¹⁷¹

Meanwhile, Edmondson retired from the NFSA in 2001, with the increasing differences between him and Brent contributing to the move.¹⁷² The IRG's role also started diminishing around the same time, although nothing indicates that the two events were related. Later in 2002, the institution cancelled its September 2002 meeting of the IRG citing its inability to foot the AUD 11,000 needed for it due to budget cuts, and suggested that they meet only once a year in April from then on. It also put its planned *Deadly Movin' Pitchas* exhibition, for which it had spent much time and energy, on hold citing the same reasons.¹⁷³ However, even the April 2003 meeting could not take place eventually.

In December 2002, the state announced a major review of 17 cultural and memory institutions and named the NFSA among them, giving it cause for concern.¹⁷⁴ This was followed by the institution's integration with the AFC as discussed previously, which not only delivered a major blow to its ambitions for complete autonomy but actually took it one step backward. It led to much internal turmoil and anxiety, which was exacerbated by the almost

¹⁷⁰ "SSA Diversity Document: Human Resource Development and Workplace Diversity Sub-Committee: Minutes of Meeting." 18 April 2002. 02/1056-03. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment. Committees. Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁷¹ "NFSA Council: Minutes of Meeting No. 53." 12 June 2002. 02/1056-03. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment. Committees. Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁷² Edmondson, Ray. "National Film and Sound Archive: The Quest for Identity: Factors Shaping the Uneven Development of a Cultural Institution." University of Canberra, 2011. Print. 408.

¹⁷³ Cullen, Sue. Email to Meg Labrum, Pam Saunders and Mary Miliano. 23 September 2002. 02/1056-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment. Committees. Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Saunders, Pam. Email to IRG. 27 September 2002. 02/1056-04. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment. Committees. Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁷⁴ Edmondson, Ray. "A Long Day's Journey into - Light? Australia's National Film and Sound Archive in Transition." *Journal of Film Preservation* 25.66 (2003): 50-54. Print.

simultaneous and unforeseen exit of Brent from the institution while calling it merely a coincidence, leaving Pam Saunders as acting director.¹⁷⁵

Additionally, as an immediate measure after the integration, the AFC conducted an extensive review of the NFSA's functioning from July to November 2003, which was led by Sabina Wynn, head of the Industry and Cultural Development Unit for the AFC, which also included a separate review of the IRG and consultations with its members.¹⁷⁶ When the news of the impending review was first broken to the IRG in order to schedule a meeting with Wynn, it led to some unease among its members, especially because of the lack of communication from the institution over these matters, compounded by the IRG not meeting for almost 18 months, which some of the IRG members were unhappy about. Nonetheless, the group agreed that it also wanted to be closely involved with the process.¹⁷⁷

In October 2003, Wynn's circulated an internal discussion paper (unavailable) and additional questions to the IRG asking for responses.¹⁷⁸ A section of the paper, titled "Indigenous matters at ScreenSound Australia," voiced concerns about the absence of ATSI

¹⁷⁵ "Review of Programs." 17 July 2003. 03/0012 *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Edmondson, Ray. "When Governments Make Mistakes: Advocacy and the Long-Distance Archivist." *The Moving image* 8.1 (2008): 41-51. Print; ---. "National Film and Sound Archive: The Quest for Identity: Factors Shaping the Uneven Development of a Cultural Institution." University of Canberra, 2011. Print; ---. "A Long Day's Journey into - Light? Australia's National Film and Sound Archive in Transition." *Journal of Film Preservation* 25.66 (2003): 50-54. Print.

¹⁷⁶ Assorted documents. 03/0012 *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Assorted documents. 03/0012 *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁷⁷ Labrum, Meg. Email to the IRG. 16 October 2003. 03/0012 *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Saunders, Wal. Email to Meg Labrum and the IRG. 21 October 2003. 03/0012 *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁷⁸ Wynn, Sabina. Memo to ScreenSound Australia Indigenous Reference Group. 14 October 2003. 03/0012 *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

staff at the institution, the IRG's functioning, its infrequent meetings, and its inability to implement all of the IRG's recommendations effectively.¹⁷⁹

Dunlop and Miliano immediately protested its implicit meaning by sending responses to the section defending the IRG's functioning, the progress the NFSA had already made in the matter, and citing specific reasons why more could not be done (including the costs and budget constraints).¹⁸⁰ And after meeting with the review committee on 19 November 2003, the IRG collectively sent a detailed note to Wynn to further endorse the institution's activities in this area, strengthen their arguments, and present a united front. They acknowledged some shortcomings, but also suggested that the institution was focused more on policy development during that period while the implementation needed to follow later. They also asked for the IRG to be made a permanent feature with more frequent input and guidance.¹⁸¹

However, an unconvinced Wynn responded by pointing out that they "provide virtually no critique of the Indigenous collection or the relative importance given to the collection." She also asked some very pointed questions, which offer a succinct critique of the institution's failings in the handling of AV ICIP during this period:

1. The reference group stated that the only reason they hadn't met for over 12 months was because there were no resources for them to do so. However, SSA was able to continue to resource both the Friends of the Archive and the Oral History Group over the same period, even with the capitalization funding. The reference group seemed to feel there was an ongoing need for them to be involved in the "oversight" of the Indigenous collection. What is the rationale for providing funding to some stakeholder groups and not others?
 - 1A. Do you see an ongoing need for the Indigenous Reference Group?

¹⁷⁹ Miliano, Mary. "Review of Programs: Stage One: Internal Discussion Paper, 29 October 2003. Paragraph 2.8 (Indigenous Matters at Screensound Australia)." 2003. 03/0012 *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁸⁰ Dunlop, Ian. Email to AFC. 13 November 2003. 03/0012 *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁸¹ Saunders, Wal. Letter to the AFC on behalf of the IRG. 03/0012-02. *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

2. Wal Saunders made the comment that while many Indigenous people apply for jobs at the archive especially when they are advertised in the Koori Mail, they don't seem to get them because the applicants are not sufficiently qualified. Would you agree with this statement?

The reference group spoke passionately about the need for action regarding an Indigenous Employment and Training Strategy which was a policy, but hadn't been acted on. From SSA's perspective, what is the reason for the reference group's perception? What are the plans for implementing an Indigenous Training and Employment strategy?

4. [3 seems to have been omitted inadvertently] We clarified during the meeting that of over 30,000 items in the collection with Indigenous content of some kind, 7,500 items were catalogued. Meg stated that most of this cataloging work had been archived by Mary Miliano in the last 3 years and that she was the only person in the Collections consistently working on the Indigenous material. There was a discussion about how time consuming and difficult a process it often was to actually be able to identify material correctly, how it often involved a very complex and culturally sensitive process requiring the careful handling of many relationships with Indigenous communities, often remote communities, and/or elders or other Indigenous people who are in a position to assist with the identification of material, location, subjects and "ownership" of material.

Given these complexities, I am wondering:

4A. why there is only one person at SSA who is actually doing this work. Is there any reason why for example, there isn't a team of say two other people working with Mary, learning the skills of handling this material directly from her, and learning about the Indigenous collection from her, even if they cannot at this time be Indigenous?

What happens to work on the collection if Mary is away, sick or decides to leave SSA? While I know she has prepared detailed briefing notes on protocols for staff to be followed, has she trained up any other people in the organization to do her work if she is not there?

4B what happened prior to 2000 in terms of cataloguing the Indigenous material?

5. During the review, several staff have raised the desire to do touring exhibition programs, and in particular to find some resourcing for the Deadly Moving Pitchas exhibition. My impression from the reference group is however that there is still a level of discomfort about the philosophical basis to this exhibition and that despite heated debate about it, the reference group were still not agreed that it was ready to tour nor that these issues had been resolved. Could you advise on your reading of the status of this exhibition from a curatorial philosophical perspective rather than a resourcing one?¹⁸²

It is not clear how ScreenSound Australia responded to these comments, or whether it was even allowed to do so, but the period was rough and tumultuous for the institution, with

¹⁸² Wynn, Sabina. Email to Meg Labrum, Mary Riley, Kate McLoughlin, Sally Riley. 24 November 2003. 04/0786. *Australian Film Commission. Integration with AFC - Review of Programs (Program Review) Indigenous Reference Group Consultation*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

AV ICIP being only a small part of its larger concerns for autonomy. Berg, the only IRG member I interviewed who identified as Indigenous, was also very critical of the group, calling its efforts tokenism and unsatisfactory, and marred in what he called “Black Tape” of endless paperwork and policies that were only good on paper. “We didn’t do anything! We just sat there and drank coffee!” he stated emphatically, indicating that all the discussions, film viewings, and accompanying procedures did not really lead to much. He was especially critical of the lack of initiative on the NFSA’s part to make the films available to community members, claiming that the NFSA employees reacted to his demands for repatriation with such responses as “We can’t release this. This is too priceless. This is too delicate! What would the community do with it?” Other criticisms he leveled against the IRG included the institution’s lack of engagement with Indigenous communities at the grassroots level, the institution’s absence of initiative in curating more serious representations of Aboriginal cultures, and the institution’s treatment of Aboriginal cultures as being frozen in the past without following through to the present times.¹⁸³

Other IRG members were less quick to label the group’s efforts as tokenism, painting a very positive picture of their experiences in the group and praising its activities instead.¹⁸⁴ Similar sentiments were also echoed by Edmondson, Labrum, and Andrew Pike (film historian, film distributor, documentary filmmaker, and founder member of the NFSA) despite acknowledging that things were not always smooth.¹⁸⁵ All in all, despite some shortcomings, the group needs to be credited for introducing nuance into internal debates on the subject, for a number of procedural changes in the institution, and for reworking the institution’s Indigenous Materials Policy. And in subsequent developments, many of Wynn and Berg’s

¹⁸³ Berg, Jim. Personal Interview. 3 February 2014. Melbourne.

¹⁸⁴ Galt-Smith, Brett. Personal Interview. 18 December 2013. Canberra; Dunlop, Ian. Personal Interview. 30 December 2013. Canberra.

¹⁸⁵ Edmondson, Ray. Personal Interview. 18 November 2013. Canberra; Pike, Andrew. Personal Interview. 11 February 2014. Canberra. Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 27 November 2013. Canberra, ---. Personal Interview. 5 December 2013. Canberra.

criticisms were addressed through the creation of a separate Indigenous department, which took place under the aegis of Cherchi Usai, with his efforts being continued by Loebenstein more recently.

Paolo Cherchi Usai, Michael Loebenstein, and the Creation of a Living Archive (2004-2013)

Paolo Cherchi Usai took over as the new director of the institution in 2004. Within a short period of one year, through a series of strategic moves, he established the NFSA as a significant player in the international film archiving community by showcasing restorations, technical work, and research papers on various subjects, thereby alleviating some of the anxieties of the stakeholders demanding for its autonomy from the AFC.¹⁸⁶ Under his leadership, the institution took on the task of creating a separate Indigenous branch at long last, for he immediately recognized the need for “establish[ing] a specially identified area within the Archive to intensify efforts to reflect, through the collection, the role of Indigenous culture in the definition of Australian identity.” While thanking the IRG for its contributions in the area, he made it clear that with the setting up of this separate branch, the role of the IRG would change.¹⁸⁷ In subsequent developments, which included the creation of an Indigenous Working Party (IWP) within the AFC, an internal paper also recognized the significant contributions made by the IRG, but similar to Wynn, also surmised that:

It is of concern that, although the Indigenous Materials Policy includes provision for Staffing, Education and Training for Professional Practice, the Archive had managed neither to attract nor to keep any significant number of Indigenous staff. It is also a matter of concern that, in effect only one person in the Collection Branch has been allocated to work specifically on the Indigenous collection, making succession planning difficult. The Archive reports that of around 30,000 items in MAVIS with Indigenous content, only one third of these have been catalogued to a high level with details of ownership, description and content, location and rights issues accurately

¹⁸⁶ Loebenstein, Michael. Personal Interview. 17 February 2014. Canberra.

¹⁸⁷ Cherchi Usai, Paolo. Letter to IRG. 7 December 2004. 03/0012-02. *ScreenSound Australia Establishment-Committees-Policy Development-Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

noted. The Indigenous collection is unique and significant to this country's audiovisual heritage. Given the work of identification and cataloguing material is highly complex and time consuming and often requires significant communication between Indigenous communities, allocating more staff resources to this area would seem warranted.¹⁸⁸

Over the next few months, the IWP and Cherchi Usai's joint efforts culminated in the dramatically named *One Minute to Midnight*, a detailed proposal for the establishment of an Indigenous branch within ScreenSound Australia.¹⁸⁹ Accompanying this document was much internal discussion about the question of where the indigenous branch would fit within the institution -- which brought to the fore the fracture in Australia's national identity -- but it was decided to keep the branch separate from existing departments for unspecified political reasons.¹⁹⁰ However, all IRG activities were stopped meanwhile and the group quietly disbanded, marking an end to its functioning, but the group members were never formally informed about it.¹⁹¹ The fact that the AFC had its own internal Indigenous wing, with significant experience in producing Indigenous content (but not in archiving it), greatly aided the process of the IRG's closure.

The new branch was eventually founded in 2004, and around the same time, the institution's name was also reverted to the NFSA. Its first curator was Liz McNiven, a Barnba woman from the borderland of NSW and Queensland, who had previously also trained at AIATSIS, incidentally under Leigh and alongside the IRG member Wal Saunders.¹⁹² As Labrum puts it, her appointment "was the beginning of a more fundamental change for the

¹⁸⁸ "Directions Paper." 04/0329. *Australian Film Commission. ScreenSound Australia and the Australian Film Commission (AFC) - Indigenous Unit Working Party*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra.

¹⁸⁹ "One Minute to Midnight: A Proposal for the Establishment of an Indigenous Unit within Screensound Australia, the National Screen and Sound Archive." Canberra: National Film and Sound Archive, 2004. Print.

¹⁹⁰ Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 5 December 2013. Canberra.

¹⁹¹ Dunlop, Ian. Personal Interview. 30 December 2013. Canberra; Berg, Jim. Personal Interview. 3 February 2014. Melbourne.

¹⁹² Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013.

archive to start addressing Indigenous matters from an Indigenous perspective.”¹⁹³ Most interviewees painted McNiven as a very dedicated individual, who reworked the policy documents further, attempted many new ways of curating AV ICIP at the institution, established direct contact with many ATSI communities, and brought them to the institution for various public events.¹⁹⁴ However, her efforts did not receive as much support as she expected, especially since her mid-management designation did not allow her powers to affect significant changes in how the institution functioned, leading to frequent frustrations and her eventual resignation from the institution a few years later.¹⁹⁵

The position was upgraded to a more senior status after her departure, but remained unfilled for a while, and when filled subsequently, was unable to retain people for long.¹⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the institution gained its autonomy in 2008 after prolonged demands from the stakeholders, and Cherchi Usai also returned to Europe to pursue other interests. Lorena Allam, from the Gamilarai-Yawalaraay peoples of New South Wales, who had a background in media and policy development with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, took up the position sometime in the late 2000s. The specifics of her appointment also remain unclear, but Allam is said to have found the task more challenging than necessary as well, again because of institutional attitudes, leading her to move on too.¹⁹⁷ Other people who filled the position subsequently also did not stay.¹⁹⁸

This lack of continuity had consequences. Davenport, whose organization KJ had been working closely with the NFSA for over a decade, had also been trying to reach

¹⁹³ Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 16 December 2013. Canberra.

¹⁹⁴ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013; Davenport, Sue. Email Interview. 30 January 2014. Canberra; Pike, Andrew. Personal Interview. 11 February 2014. Canberra; Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 16 December 2013. Canberra.

¹⁹⁵ Eccles, Tom. Personal interview. Canberra. 10 December 2013; Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 16 December 2013. Canberra.

¹⁹⁶ Loebenstein, Michael. Personal Interview. 17 February 2014. Canberra; Davenport, Sue. Email Interview. 30 January 2014. Canberra; Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 16 December 2013. Canberra.

¹⁹⁷ Loebenstein, Michael. Personal Interview. 17 February 2014. Canberra.

¹⁹⁸ White, Peter. Personal interview. Canberra. 6 January 2014.

agreements with the institution over shared interests and resources. She described the troubles as follows:

Each time the position was filled we had to make a trip to Canberra to reintroduce ourselves and to start the process of the agreement again. This has resulted in no movement on the agreement with is still stuck in draft form 5 years after our initial conversations with Liz McNiven. This has resulted in an ambiguous access arrangement with all the materials we have lodged with the NFSA. This arrangement was tested a couple of years ago when films were released to a third party without proper consultation with KJ. To the credit of the NFSA the fault was rectified quickly and professionally.¹⁹⁹

Loebenstein was appointed the new CEO of the NFSA in 2011, a position he continues to hold. This was followed in 2012 by the appointment of Peter White -- a Gamilaroi Murri man from New South Wales with significant management experience, including at the National Gallery of Australia -- as the new head of the Indigenous branch of the NFSA. Together, Loebenstein and White have been working towards making the institution "Australia's living archive for the world's longest living culture" as White has termed it.²⁰⁰

Under their leadership, the institution refuses to treat ATSI cultures and AV ICIP as being frozen in time, insisting instead on keeping them alive through a direct engagement with Indigenous communities. White is invested in the idea of decentralizing the institution's AV ICIP holdings, and seeing the NFSA merely as their custodian and not as their owner. He wishes to make the institution a node on a network of other similar regional nodes, all of them working closely with Indigenous peoples to safeguard their cultures. He emphasizes the need to build relationships with them, treating the institution's holdings only as a vehicle for a much broader cultural engagement. As he has put it, "We are legislated to build the national collection of AV material, but nowhere does it say that it has to be here with us!"²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Davenport, Sue. Email Interview. 30 January 2014. Canberra.

²⁰⁰ White, Peter. Personal interview. Canberra. 6 January 2014.

²⁰¹ ---. Personal interview. Canberra. 6 January 2014.

Consequently, the curation of AV ICIP at the NFSA, undertaken by White and his team, now involves engaging with the communities and allowing them to use and interpret the materials as they deem fit, and not necessarily looking at the materials only through accepted western conventions. And it also means reinterpreting the materials in sync with the changes in the communities and their beliefs over time, while making them relevant to contemporary cultural practices. A significant example of White's efforts, with Loebenstein's support, can be found in the NFSA's 2013 collaboration with the Indigenous musical duo Stiff Gins (Nardi Simpson and Kaleena Briggs), who recorded a song on a wax cylinder for the institution after hearing similar recordings made by the Tasmanian Aboriginal woman Fanny Cochrane Smith in 1903. The song marked the first studio recording on wax cylinder since the obsolescence of the medium in the 1910s, and most likely the first song ever to be recorded in two Indigenous languages.²⁰² It was publicized widely by the NFSA, and followed up with similar recordings from two more artists Gotye and Keith Potger, which received some media attention.²⁰³

The vault within the vault also continues to exist under White's guidance, a welcome move that allows us to answer some of the questions with which I began this chapter, the nature of the answers having changed significantly as the institution has made more and more progress in the area. At the NFSA, access to AV ICIP is now restricted, regulated, and provided only to people with the necessary community clearances. Such practices as the vault within the vault keep out unauthorized people, maintain the sanctity of their secret/sacred nature, and also ensure that they are not handled accidentally, not even for routine maintenance. In so doing, the institution respects their physical as well as spiritual meanings.

This might appear to run contrary to the general understanding that a national memory institution is mandated to provide equal access to everyone irrespective of gender, age, race,

²⁰² "New Voices, Old Technology: Bringing Wax Cylinders Back." National Film and Sound Archive. Web. 11 July 2016. <<http://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/sound/wax-cylinder-project/>>.

²⁰³ Walker, Joseph. "Old Is New Again at the National Film and Sound Archives." *The Canberra Times*. 1 May 2015. Web. 4 June 2016. <<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2008/feb/20/features.afghanistan>>.

and other distinguishing features, but the institution also needs to take into account the cultural sensitivities of the people to whom AV ICIP belong, and cannot impose an essentially western understanding of archival records on them. As Galt-Smith has suggested, “Just because something sits in the archive does not mean it has be accessible.”²⁰⁴ Some of the institution’s activities do add to the nation’s fractured identity, but they give the Indigenous peoples a stronger identity, which they need at this juncture in Australian history in order to eventually achieve a power balance, at which point in time the fracture will become redundant. But how may we evaluate the institution’s overall handling of AV ICIP through many such developments?

The NFSA and AV ICIP: A Critical Appraisal

The NFSA’s handling of AV ICIP is only a partial success story, one that began late, progressed in halting and inconsistent ways, and led to some pioneering policy formulations, but the policies could not be matched with equally robust implementation. It can also be argued that the institution is complicit in what Cohen has called “below-the-surface” institutional racism, one that is not necessarily visible or made explicit but is present nonetheless, simply by way of not doing enough to reverse the disadvantaged status of ATSI peoples in the society.²⁰⁵

However, it is equally true that the institution has made sincere attempts to change this. Any evaluations of its successes and failures in the handling of AV ICIP need to take into account the fact that it remains a state institution, fully dependent on the state for approval of all administrative decisions, in an immigrant nation that continues to grapple with racism. It is a nation in which attitudes vary from prejudices against Indigenous peoples to empathy accompanied by uncertainty and confusion over how best to approach their concerns. Added

²⁰⁴ Galt-Smith, Brett. Personal Interview. 18 December 2013. Canberra.

²⁰⁵ Cohen, Hart. Personal Interview. 28 January 2014. Sydney.

to this is the marginal status of memory institutions in Australia in general, in which the handling of AV ICIP gets marginalized further still.

These factors, when coupled together with the institution's many recurring quests for its own identity through the 1970s to the 2000s, led to the battles that concerned the identity of only a small part of its collection -- its AV ICIP -- getting generally sidelined. Thus, as Cohen has suggested, one needs to be cautious against attributing all instances of the NFSA's less-than-ideal handling of AV ICIP to racist attitudes alone, for "often times, there are other demands on the people involved, including political or cultural ones, that are not necessarily racist."²⁰⁶ Given all these factors, it is commendable that the NFSA has been able to achieve even as much as it did, especially in terms of codifying its policies and practices governing AV ICIP, which most other Australian memory institutions and national film archives the world over are still to do. Nonetheless, a discussion of its many shortcoming is also in order.

The NFSA was indeed late in noticing that the AV ICIP it held needed special care and handling. And its senior management remained indifferent to such needs for longer than necessary despite being reminded about them repeatedly by many enterprising junior employees, none of who belonged to ATSI communities themselves. In my interviews with Edmondson and Labrum, when I asked them about the institution's slow progress on these matters through the 1990s, both of them attributed it to the institution's generally bureaucratic way of functioning as a government body, and did not think it was particularly different because it concerned AV ICIP. Labrum reminded me that the senior management still encouraged such people as Eccles and Reynolds even if that did not yield immediate results. And she attributed their frustrations with the delays to "idealism and naivety about what could possibly be achieved at that time."²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ ---. Personal Interview. 28 January 2014. Sydney.

²⁰⁷ Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 27 November 2013. Canberra. ---. Personal Interview. 5 December 2013. Canberra. ---. Personal Interview. 16 December 2013. Canberra; Edmondson, Ray. Personal Interview. 18 November 2013. Canberra.

Her reference to “at that time” is significant, for as Edmondson also pointed out, ATSI matters and awareness about them had just not gained prominence for the institution back then. He also compared the ATSI collection to the collections pertaining to the Greek or the Italian communities, which did not receive any extra attention either, adding that as an archive, there was an inherent resistance within the institution to the idea of privileging any one part of the collection. An awareness about the special needs of AV ICIP was a later development, which took place gradually, he explained.²⁰⁸ Labrum also cited instances of some other NFSA staff members having clumped together Indigenous peoples with Chinese and Vietnamese people internally, thus revealing that such an understanding was not Edmondson’s alone, but reflected the institution’s attitudes in general.²⁰⁹ However, Pike was more forthcoming in admitting the underlying prejudices. “I think you are right,” he replied. “Ray [Edmondson] and I particularly were concerned about the implementation of various policy levels but never the Indigenous one. I think it’s a fair point. It’s who we are. We are non-Indigenous and come from a very sheltered background in a way.”²¹⁰

Edmondson acknowledged this sheltered background in another context by reflecting on his own upbringing in Sydney through the 1950s and 1960s to suggest that he, as well as the community of people working around him, were all white, and had had minimal to no interaction with Aboriginal peoples or their culture till then. He understood the problems of their negative portrayal in films, which had started making him cringe as early as in the 1970s. And he had, on occasion, even withheld information from TV producers who had approached the institution for footage of Aboriginal peoples, which he felt was to be used in derogatory ways. However, a general bias against Aboriginal people pervaded how they all functioned together,

²⁰⁸ ---. Personal Interview. 18 November 2013. Canberra.

²⁰⁹ Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 5 December 2013. Canberra.

²¹⁰ Pike, Andrew. Personal Interview. 11 February 2014. Canberra.

as a system. They had been brought up to view Aboriginal people as inherently different, and it took time before that could change, he suggested.²¹¹

This bias was most visible in the area of Aboriginal employment, for the institution was late in employing them, lax in recruiting them more aggressively, and unsuccessful in retaining the ones it employed. Edmondson compared Aboriginal people to disabled people in this context. We all want them to be employed, but also “don’t want to employ [them] because they are less productive,” he said. “It only happens after governments mandate it,” he added. As of 2013, only four of the NFSA’s 240 employees identified as Indigenous, three of whom worked exclusively in the Indigenous branch, bringing to the fore concerns about pigeonholing. During my own presentation to the NFSA as the end of my research stay, when I pointed out these numbers to the institution, I was reminded that this was still more than what the state mandated!

As Edmondson pointed out on another occasion, underlying the limited success with Indigenous employment was also an assumption within the institution, as well as in Australia in general, that getting Indigenous peoples involved somehow “makes things messy,” but also that the non-Indigenous people were “not familiar with dealing with them.”²¹² Galt-Smith elaborated on this further:

When you are in an organization that does not have in-house expertise in these matters, and you get in the wrong people in the first instance, it can get you into all sorts of difficulties. The NFSA would have been thinking, where do we start? If they haven’t had any prior engagement with ATSI communities till then, it’s really difficult to know where to go and whom to go to. If you start talking to one person first and not another group of stakeholders, that can result in a lot of strife. You need to be very very careful.²¹³

Galt-Smith also attributed it to other factors including the slow moving bureaucratic machinery and the state’s attitude about such matters in general, aided by the fact that the

²¹¹ Edmondson, Ray. Personal Interview. 18 November 2013. Canberra.

²¹² ---. Personal Interview. 18 November 2013. Canberra.

²¹³ Galt-Smith, Brett. Personal Interview. 18 December 2013. Canberra.

creation of new positions requires approvals from the ministry, which are not easy to come by.²¹⁴ However, Berg offered a different take on the situation by suggesting that more positions will be created automatically if there is more demand, but institutions do not wish to create more demand because it will increase their work load.²¹⁵ However, adding another potential explanation to the mix, Galt-Smith pointed out how Indigenous communities themselves were also responsible for low employment numbers:

Governments have that problem across the board. AIATSIS has a lot of Indigenous people, but otherwise it's very difficult for Indigenous people to be the only ones working in an organization. One, you are dealing with a government organization. Already you are against it because of the government's history of dealing with you with hostility. And if you are an Indigenous person working for the government, your community will renounce you for working for them.²¹⁶

Pike also extended this sentiment by suggesting that most Indigenous peoples are averse to the idea of working in Canberra, the seat of the state.²¹⁷

Even while some of these explanations can be read as bordering on blatant racism and victim blaming, it is difficult to be dismissive of them all. This is especially true given the efforts the NFSA did make towards recruiting more people as revealed by various internal documents, as well as the sincerity of such people as Galt-Smith who have dedicated their lives to working closely with ATSI communities in various organizations, and therefore, do have a good understanding of such matters. Nonetheless, the NFSA's efforts did seem to be informed more by the need to "tick a box" as Eccles had put it rather than a deep commitment to giving ATSI peoples more opportunities to represent themselves. This is especially true for the period after the positions were successfully filled, for the institution repeatedly failed to provide Indigenous people with a supportive environment in which they could actually

²¹⁴ ---. Personal Interview. 18 December 2013. Canberra.

²¹⁵ Berg, Jim. Personal Interview. 3 February 2014. Melbourne.

²¹⁶ Galt-Smith, Brett. Personal Interview. 18 December 2013. Canberra.

²¹⁷ Pike, Andrew. Personal Interview. 11 February 2014. Canberra.

implement some of what the institution's own policy documents outlined, leading them to resign and move on. It expected them to fit into existing NFSA structures rather than alter the structures to better fit their needs, which did not help matters much.

The NFSA's Governing Council also suffered from a similar lack of Indigenous self-determination. Ray Edmondson recalled that the institution had an Indigenous person on its Council as early as in the 1980s,²¹⁸ probably Freda Glynn as Meg Labrum suggested,²¹⁹ which was in keeping with similar representations in the Councils of many other state institutions at that time. However, as discussed previously, the institution's AV ICIP holdings had yet to become significant for it by then, making Glynn's presence a token gesture that had no real import. Once she retired, despite the many related developments throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the institution did not have an Indigenous person on its council for the next two decades. However, Pike claims -- and internal documents also suggest -- that the Council did make repeated requests for an Indigenous person to be appointed to it during this period, even sending the ministry names of potential candidates, but the state chose to ignore all such communication, leading to much frustration for him and the other Council members.²²⁰ The situation changed only in 2011, when Wayne Denning was appointed to the institution's Council, by then called its Governing Board.²²¹

Galt-Smith has pointed out how a similar lack of Indigenous representation was an issue at the Strehlow Research Center as well. His explanations of the situation, despite not necessarily being convincing, offer us additional insights into understanding the environment in which these decisions are being taken, and the underlying beliefs and attitudes of the people involved. He claimed that for three decades, ATSI communities did not approve of an

²¹⁸ Edmondson, Ray. Personal Interview. 18 November 2013. Canberra.

²¹⁹ Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 27 November 2013. Canberra.

²²⁰ "Interim Council: Minutes of Meeting No 49." 27 July 2001. 01/0096-03. *ScreenSound Australia. Establishment - Committees - Policy Development - Indigenous Reference Group*. National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra; Pike, Andrew. Personal Interview. 11 February 2014. Canberra.

²²¹ Loebenstein, Michael. Personal Interview. 17 February 2014. Canberra.

Indigenous person being on the board of the Strehlow Research Center, with someone being allowed to finally join the Board only in 2012. On the one hand, many communities have an inherent belief in the neutrality of the white man, he suggested, for the white man exists outside the belief system of the communities, giving him an advantageous position. But on the other hand, any Indigenous person appointed to the board of a “white man’s institution” is often treated with suspicion, either being labeled a traitor for having colluded with the perceived enemy, or seen as attempting to grow too big for his shoes. As Galt-Smith summarized: “It’s not about a group of white men who didn’t want Aboriginal people on board, but that it was very difficult to have anyone on board without jeopardizing that person’s community status.”²²²

Similar explanations were also offered by Cohen,²²³ but Berg dismissed the idea of white neutrality as “a myth created by the white man to refuse the return of material to the community.”²²⁴ Thus, one cannot necessarily arrive at clear answers to what went wrong, and who was responsible. However, the underlying prejudices cannot be completely denied either.

Some of these prejudices have been corrected over time at the NFSA, and the institution has also become more aware of Indigenous matters. However, developments in the area have also left it with an unease about all things Indigenous, which continues. Loebenstein recounted an anecdote involving the archivist and scholar Rick Prelinger. When Prelinger visited the NFSA in 2013 as a researcher, a few months prior to my own eight-week residency at the institution, he addressed a group of its employees and asked them casually if there were anything out of bounds for his research endeavors. One staffer responded spontaneously: “Indigenous. Don’t touch it.” As Loebenstein elaborated further, “there is an underlying sentiment that Indigenous is complicated, tricky, contentious, and embarrassing. Just don’t go near it.” “There is a lack of broader awareness in the organization, or a lack of clear,

²²² Galt-Smith, Brett. Personal Interview. 18 December 2013. Canberra.

²²³ Cohen, Hart. Personal Interview. 28 January 2014. Sydney.

²²⁴ Berg, Jim. Personal Interview. 3 February 2014. Melbourne.

demonstrated, lived, and practiced protocols around Indigenous materials, and people are just afraid about them. The general feeling is that I don't want to make a mistake," he added.²²⁵

My own experiences at the institution also corroborate this reading. Despite me being in the institution specifically for studying their Indigenous policies, I was only provided limited access to its files and documents, all of which were vetted before being given to me. Further information about contacting members of the institution's own IRG was not forthcoming without repeated requests, while information on various external Indigenous stakeholders was never provided. My interactions with the institution's Indigenous staff were limited to White, who only met me twice during my six-month-long extended stay in Canberra, while his Indigenous colleagues politely declined my invitations for interviews and pointed me only to him. A majority of my research was routed through non-Indigenous senior managers, and my presentation at the end of the research period did not have even one Indigenous staffer or external stakeholder in attendance. On questioning the institution on some of their restrictive access policies during the presentation, I was countered with an example of a dispute stemming from the information provided by a legal record in another institution, which allegedly led to the death of an Aboriginal man. All such experiences, when put together, support Loebenstein's reading that a culture of fear and uncertainty continues to pervade the NFSA with regard to its handling of AV ICIP.

There is also something to be made of the fact that most significant progress in the handling of AV ICIP at the NFSA took place under non-Australian heads of the institution. Employing foreigners to head national cultural institutions is a relatively unusual occurrence elsewhere but is becoming increasingly common in Australia.²²⁶ Most of my interviewees

²²⁵ Loebenstein, Michael. Personal Interview. 17 February 2014. Canberra.

²²⁶ This does have exceptions, including in the audiovisual archiving sector, for instance in the Italian Nicola Mazzanti heading the Belgian Cinematek, the many foreigners employed by EYE including its chief curator Giovanna Fossati, Brit David Francis working as the Chief of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division at the Library of Congress, and the American David Pierce heading the NFTVA, but it still holds largely true for most national cultural institutions worldwide.

attributed it to a lack of suitably skilled people in Australia on the one hand and the “cultural cringe” the nation feels on the other, which leads to the downgrading of its own nationals and their achievements in comparison to other nations and their nationals, accompanied by a belief that the quality of foreign people and achievements is far superior to Australian ones. Labrum and Edmondson also added that the outsider’s perspective generally has more credibility and is more warmly received in the nation, without it being subjected to the same suspicion and skepticism with which the local perspectives are viewed.²²⁷

Despite being unsubstantiated, these beliefs seem to have aided the informed handling of AV ICIP at the NFSA by representing, as Labrum described it, “a touch of romance accompanied by ideas about the “noble savage”” for the institution’s foreign heads Cherchi Usai and Loebenstein. Loebenstein elaborated on it as follows:

The primary driver for Paolo [Cherchi Usai], and mine too, is a fascination with this cultural tradition that is radically different from the European tradition. When we come here from abroad, it’s a country where everybody laments there is never anything original here and we were looking for what is unique here, which Indigenous material offers. . . . We foreigners know more about these things than the Australians here. There is a fascination with Indigenous material that borders on exoticizing it. But it isn’t probably bad as it’s helping the organization. . . . [However], I keep revising my European question all the time too. The likelihood of people feeling that I am another white person who is a do gooder is high, and the least I can do is try not to romanticize. I do sometimes discuss privately with Indigenous people who have a great pragmatism on how to deal with white people. I have seen several types of responses here: genuinely naïve matter of factness about the interestingness of cultures I know very little about, which is where I am also located. It is otherness but not othering and exoticizing. Then there is the white guilt driven by a political agenda that attempts to do good and make up for the wrongs of the past but can also be very belittling. “You poor wretches.” James Cook’s diary entries. It is very difficult for a white person, particularly a foreigner, to not fall into any of those traps.²²⁸

²²⁷ Edmondson, Ray. Personal Interview. 18 November 2013. Canberra; Labrum, Meg. Personal Interview. 16 December 2013. Canberra.

²²⁸ Loebenstein, Michael. Personal Interview. 17 February 2014. Canberra.

Pike also supported this understanding, but enriched it by suggesting that “what we have is not only a foreigner issue but also that Paolo [Cherchi Usai] and Michael [Loebenstein] are entrepreneurial but others were not, as individuals.”²²⁹

The same entrepreneurship also characterizes Peter White, who has managed to navigate the institution’s racial hostilities -- both blatant and latent -- with dexterity and aplomb, primarily by being non-confrontational, not asking uncomfortable questions, and not demanding radical changes. Instead, he has focused on making positive contributions to the institution through such initiatives as the wax cylinder recordings, which turn around questions of loss on their head to reveal a richness and abundance of cultural material everyone can relate to. Meanwhile, the cataloging of all AV ICIP at the NFSA continues to be an ongoing task, as do many other such big and small initiatives. His response to my question on why the NFSA was not doing even more sums up the institution’s successes and failures in succinct ways: “I am a realist. I know we are only three people, but that is still two more than what I had previously! . . . When was the last time an Indigenous group came into a cultural institution and recorded something in Australia this way?”²³⁰

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the ways in which the NFSA developed policies and guidelines for handling its AV ICIP material, a halting and long drawn process that began only in the early 1990s, by when a number of developments in the Australian political and cultural landscape had already paved the way for the institution to initiate the process. I described how the institution’s engagement with AV ICIP can be understood as another form of transnationality, one that is characterized by the liminality of national identity that cannot be contained within the imagined national community of white Australia. And I described the

²²⁹ Pike, Andrew. Personal Interview. 11 February 2014. Canberra.

²³⁰ White, Peter. Personal interview. Canberra. 6 January 2014.

many concerns of handling AV ICIP, both in Australian cultural institutions in general and at the NFSA in particular. Additionally, I discussed how the institution has corrected many of its past mistakes to undertake a more informed handling of its AV ICIP, but has still not been able to implement all its policies and guidelines. Thus, the battle against institutional racism at the NFSA has failed to achieve satisfactory results, but it has been a valiant battle fought with sincerity by many foot soldiers, and it continues. In the process, this chapter demonstrated how certain kinds of archival records can become marginalized in national film archives despite the best of intentions, while also illustrating the disjuncture between policies and their implementation that characterizes most national film archives.

SECTION V
CONCLUSION

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

National film archives are complex institutions, which operate at the intersection of a number of overlapping force fields: cultural, political, social, economic, and personal. They all work with the same central idea of safeguarding national film heritages, but the ways in which this heritage is understood, and the importance it is given, varies considerably between any two national film archives. For instance, as this dissertation demonstrated, India, despite being the largest film producing nation in the world, never really woke up to the task of preserving its cinematic heritage, while such nations as the Netherlands and Australia took the task far more seriously.

The very idea of what constitutes national cinematic heritage also varies considerably, for some nations with smaller film outputs, such as the Netherlands and Australia, invariably find themselves caring not only for the films produced in their nations but also for cinematic heritage *per se*, irrespective of national origin, which also makes them more prominent players in the international film archiving community that is working for the cause of film preservation worldwide. In the process, they emerge as transnational entities characterized by liminality, which cannot contain their film preservation concerns or activities within the national borders of their parent nations or their cinematic heritages.

Even the very idea of cinematic heritage is not uniform across nations, with India interpreting the term only as a select few feature films and state-funded documentaries, but other nations such as the Netherlands, and to a degree, also Australia, interpreting it far more liberally to include shorts, experimental films, and orphan films in its ambit as well.

All national film archives are hybrids, borrowing features from archives, museums, as well as libraries. This hybridity has been on a steady increase, especially because of the

digital turn that had made bricks-and-mortar institutions feel insecure about their very *raison d'être*. They attempt to counter it by making their holdings more easily accessible, especially digitally, while also finding renewed ways of connecting with audience members so as to remain relevant for the national as well as local communities, and continue to receive funding from the state and other stakeholders. In the process, they have had to increasingly reinvent themselves as corporations, with specific targets to meet, funds to raise, and the need for them to become highly visible institutions with recognizable brand names.

However, despite working with the same central idea of safeguarding national film heritages, and grappling with similar issues such as the lack of resources, troubles with unwieldy bureaucracies, experiments with digitization, negotiations with the market in wake of increasing commercialization, the need for visibility and identity, and questions about the location of various sub-national groups within national narratives, no two national film archives are the same, making any generalizations about their typical characteristics and concerns a largely futile exercise.

Therefore, this dissertation has focused on unpacking what happens to the idea of a national film archive in three dissimilar cultural contexts. It has described the policies and practices through which they undertake their core tasks, traced their histories over decades, and discussed the roles played by key individuals in the functioning. In the process, it has also highlighted the mistakes made by the institutions, and how they have rectified them.

Such discussions carry considerable significance, for they allow film scholars to understand the contexts in which a number of film histories originate, i.e. the film archives that hold the films. They offer insights into the politics of film preservation -- as visible in the inclusions and exclusions by the institutions and their gatekeepers -- which define how film canons and film histories are defined and written. And they sensitize film scholars to the challenges of film preservation, which enable them to look beyond treating the archived film as an object to be accessed and forgotten, and consider it part of a larger network of linked

objects and actors that come together to make film preservation not only a task but a passion as well as profession.

These discussions form a bridge between film scholars and film archivists, two sets of individuals separated by years of mutual apathy, but who have increasingly come together to create newer ways of accessing, understanding, and interpreting films. They allow the film archivists to also feel acknowledged, and their efforts towards the preservation of films to be appreciated. They inform them about the histories of the institutions they work for, and in the process, make them more aware of their place in the larger film archiving and preserving networks. Thus, they benefit both film scholars and film archivists, while adding to the existing literature of not only cinema and media studies, but also cultural policy studies, archival and museum studies, and new museology.

APPENDIX A
LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFC: Australian Film Commission

AIATSIS: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

AMIA: Association of Moving Image Archivists, US

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

BFI NA: British Film Institute National Archive

BFI: British Film Institute

CBFC: Central Board of Film Certification, India

CCW: Civil Construction Wing of the All India Radio

CFL: Central Film Library, India

CFLDAE: Central Film Library of the Department of Audiovisual Education, India

Cinematek: Royal Belgian Film Archive

COMA: Conference of Museum Anthropologists, Australia

CPWD: Central Public Works Department, India

DFS: Delhi Film Society, India

EYE: EYE Film Instituut Nederland, or EYE Film Institute Netherlands, the Dutch national film archive

FA: Film Appreciation, courses on film studies conducted in India by the NFAI in collaboration with the FTII

FD: Films Division of India

FEC: Film Enquiry Committee set up by the Indian state in 1948, headed by S. K. Patil, which submitted its report in 1951

FFSI: Federation of Film Societies of India

FIAF: Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film, the International Federation of Film Archives, Belgium

Filmliga: De Nederlandsche Filmliga, or the Dutch Film League, an influential filmmakers collective

FNFAI: Friends of the National Film Archive of India

FNFSA: Friends of the National Film and Sound Archive, Australia

FTII: Film and Television Institute of India

I&B: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, India

IFFI: International Film Festival of India

ILO: Indigenous Liaison Officer, a temporary position created at the NFSA, Australia, in the late 1990s, which was held by Tom Eccles

Images for the Future: Beelden voor de Toekomst, a project for preservation and digitization of Dutch audiovisual heritage initiated by the OCW, which ran from 2007 to 2014

ING: ING-Real Estate, a Dutch company that collaborated with EYE to develop its new building

IRG: Indigenous Reference Group, external reference group for advice on Indigenous issues at the NFSA, Australia, which operated from 1999 to 2004

MoMA: Museum of Modern Art, New York

National Film Heritage Mission: An project by the Indian state to digitize the films held by NFAI and other state film institutions, initiated in the late 2000s and still in the making

NFA: National Film Archive, UK

NFA: Nederlands Fotoarchief, or the Netherlands Photo Archive

NFAI: National Film Archive of India

NFDC: National Film Development Corporation, India

NFI: Nederlands Fotoinstituut, or the Netherlands Photo Institute

NFL: National Film Library, India, precursor to the NFAI

NFM: Nederlands Filmmuseum, or the Netherlands Film Museum, EYE's predecessor

NFrA: Nationaal Fotorestauratie Atelier, or the National Photo Restoration Workshop, the Netherlands

NFSA: National Film and Sound Archive, Australia

NFTVA: National Film and Television Archive, UK, now called the BFI NA

NHF: Nederlandsch Historisch Filmarchief, or the Dutch Historical Film Archive

NIFCNM: Nationaal instituut voor Fotografie, Cinematografie en Nieuwe Media, the Netherlands

NLA: National Library of Australia

OCW: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschappen, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

PBC: Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, a major Dutch grant-giver

PIB: Press Information Bureau, India

Prabhat: Prabhat Film Company, India

RvC: Raad voor Cultuur, the Dutch state's legal adviser for arts and culture

SEAPAVAA: Southeast Asia-Pacific Audiovisual Archive Association, Philippines

Sound and Vision: Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, or the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision

Stedelijk: Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, a museum for art and design

UNESCO: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

V2: Institute for Unstable Media V2, the Netherlands

YMere: A Dutch developer, who partnered with the Nederlands Filmmuseum for its new collection center

APPENDIX B
LIST OF PEOPLE

- Bahadur, Satish: Professor of film appreciation at FTII, India
- Banerjee, Haimanti: Film scholar and instructor, India
- Barry, Iris: Film critic and curator of the film department of MoMA, New York
- Baylis, Ann: Senior Manager of the Collections Branch, NFSA, Australia
- Berg, Jim: Lawyer, founder of the Koorie Heritage Trust, and member of the IRG of NFSA, Australia
- Bhagat, Usha: Indira Gandhi's secretary, India
- Bhownagary, Jehangir Shapurji: Also Jean Bhownagary, a filmmaker and senior official in the FD, India
- Blotkamp, Hoos: Director of the Nederlands Filmmuseum from 1987 to 2000
- Booch, Harish S.: Film journalist, India
- Card, James: Film archivist who established the motion picture collection at George Eastman House, US
- Chabria, Suresh: Professor of film appreciation at the FTII, and director of the NFAI, India, from 1992 to 1998
- Chatterjee, Gayatri: Film scholar and instructor, India
- Cherchi Usai, Paolo: Film scholar, curator, and archivist who was the director of the NFSA, Australia, from 2004 to 2008
- Cohen, Hart: Media scholar and filmmaker, Australia
- Davenport, Sue: Manager of the Culture and Heritage Program at Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, Australia
- Delpeut, Peter: Dutch filmmaker, writer, and employee of the Nederlands Filmmuseum, who became its deputy director from 1992 to 1995
- Den Hamer, Sandra: Director of the Netherlands Filmmuseum, and later EYE, since 2007
- Dharap, B. V.: Film historian, India

Dunlop, Ian: Ethnographic filmmaker and member of the IRG of NFSA, Australia

Eccles, Tom: Archivist at the NFSA, Australia, and the institution's ILO, who later moved to AIATSIS

Edmondson, Ray: Deputy director of the NFSA, Australia, and founder member of FNFSa and SEAPAVAA, who served at the NFSA from 1984 to 2001

Ezkiel, Nissim: Indian writer and head of the cultural center Quest

Galt-Smith, Brett: Former director of the Strehlow Research Center and member of the IRG of NFSA, Australia

Gandhi, Indira: Politician, Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter, and member of the film society movement, who became the Minister of Information and Broadcasting, and later, the Prime Minister of India from 1966 to 1977 and 1980 to 1984

Gujral, Inder Kumar: Politician, and member of the film society movement, who became the Prime Minister of India from April 1997 to March 1998

Hadders, Rieks: A long-term employee of the Nederlands Filmmuseum, and its deputy director from 2001 to 2007

Hagen, Rien: Director of the Nederlands Filmmuseum from 2001 to 2007

Jakatdar, Satish: Co-founder of the Aashay film club, India

Keskar, Balkrishna Vishwanath: Minister for Information and Broadcasting, India, from 1952 to 1962

Khandpur, Krishan Lal: Bureaucrat, filmmaker, and member of various film societies in India, who was entrusted with the task of setting up the FTII and the NFAI by the state

Koch, Grace: Audiovisual archivist at AIATSIS, Australia

Labrum, Meg: Long term employee of the NFSA, Australia, now one of its senior managers, and also the Secretary General of FIAF

Langlois, Henri: Head of Cinémathèque Française, Paris

Ledoux, Jacques: Curator of the Royal Belgian Film Archive and founder of the Cinema Museum in Brussels

Leigh, Michael: Film Preservation Manager at the NFSA, Australia, in the 1990s

Lindgren, Earnest: Head of the NFTVA, UK, and secretary general of FIAF in the 1960s

Loebenstein, Michael: CEO of the NFSA, Australia, since 2011

MacDougall, David: Scholar and ethnographic filmmaker, Australia

Menon, Krishna: Indian diplomat based in London in the 1960s

Miliano, Mary: Cataloger at the NFSA, Australia

Mulay, Vijaya: Founder member of the Patna Film Society and the Delhi Film Society, who later became a bureaucrat

Mulder, Maarten: Senior policy adviser in the OCW, the Netherlands

Murari, Jagat: Filmmaker and principal of FTII, India, in the 1960s

Nair, Paramesh Krishnan: Long term employee of the NFAI, India, who headed the institution for 27 years from 1965 to 1991

Narvekar, Sanjit: Film journalist, India

Nehru, Jawaharlal: The first Prime Minister of India, who served from 1947 to 1964

Noorda, Sijbolt: Member, and later head of the Nederlands Filmmuseum's governing board

Pike, Andrew: Film historian, film distributor, documentary filmmaker, and founder member of the FNFSa, Australia

Plasterk, Ronald: Minister for OCW, the Netherlands, from 2007 to 2010

Reynolds, Amanda: Employee at the NFSA, Australia, in the late 1990s

Ruth, Kerrie: Cataloguer at the NFSA, Australia, in the 1990s

Sasidharan, Kuriampackl Sankar: Deputy director of the NFAI, India, and later the institution's director from 2002 to 2008

Seton, Marie: British film critic, who played an important role in the film society movement in India from the 1950s to the 1980s

Van der Laan, Medy Catharina: State secretary for OCW, the Netherlands, from 2003 to 2006

Vischedijk, Ruud: Employee at the Nederlands Filmmuseum, and later its deputy director from 1995 to 2000

White, Peter: Senior Manager of Programming and Indigenous Affairs at the NFSA, Australia, since 2012

Zankar, Anil: Filmmaker and instructor, India

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