



Consultation on Strategy for UK Screen Heritage

Moving images give us an extraordinary sense of the past. British film and television from 1896 to the present day is an astonishing resource that should be accessible to everyone, wherever they are. But the sheer scale of archive holdings across the UK and the issues of rights ownership bring their own challenges.

The archive of the 21st century has to deal with film, television, video and DVD, emerging digital media and a host of obsolete formats. The challenges of storing, preserving and making these collections accessible are common to all moving image archives, but until now we have lacked an overarching strategy for screen heritage in the UK.

Acting on a recommendation from the Culture Media & Sport Select Committee, the BFI was tasked by the UK Film Council in 2003 to lead on the creation of a strategy for UK Screen Heritage. Our aim is to create a truly national strategy, with the widest possible support.

This form is designed for feedback as part of a consultation on strategy for UK Screen Heritage.

Please ensure you have read the strategy document.

The closing date for submission is Friday, 7 September 2007.

Thank you very much for your participation.

1. What is your understanding of Screen Heritage?

Screen Heritage is that part of the national heritage which pertains to the film, cinema and television industries, and which is not limited to professional involvement but includes amateur and community practitioners and participants.

Whilst that might include buildings and equipment in its widest interpretation, the understanding is that in this context the material holdings of moving image archives are the media of film, videotape and digital files - and also the research and study materials which put the moving images into their historical and social context, in the form of posters, stills, etc.

2. Would the strategy for UK Screen Heritage make a difference to you/your organisation?

NCA welcomes the proposals contained in this consultation document - the outcomes would enhance the archives sector overall in the UK through proper recognition of moving image as a valid historical record alongside more traditional printed materials and modern paper and electronic records.

It has been an objective of the NCA, working with the Film Heritage Group, to support national and regional efforts to improve the level of resources available to the moving image archive sector in the UK - this document is a result of that combined effort and it is expected that it will make a real difference to moving the process forward.

3. We have proposed five initiatives to deliver the strategy, please comment on the relative value of each of these initiatives:

a) Revitalising the Regions

The proposals come at a time when a number of the English regional film archives are experiencing a lack of revenue resources which is becoming critical to their survival. New revenue funding at the level proposed would make an enormous difference to the ability of the RFAs to deliver the archive and access services needed to bring this material to public attention. Relative to the overall figure of over £52m, the £380,000 per region per annum has the potential to demonstrate value for money way in excess of the modest percentage of the whole. Once they have achieved a degree of financial stability through this investment of new revenue, the RFAs will have the ability to operate in a more strategic manner, which is impossible under the prevailing circumstances where there is constant pressure to apply for short-term project funding and small grants for survival. A scheme of 'Nominated Archives', devised with very careful attention to professional standards, will greatly extend the reach of new revenue funding for the benefit of the regions' filmed heritage and the users of it.

b) Securing the National Collection

Whilst it has to be recognised that the BFI: National Archive is in need of the resources proposed in this section of the consultation document, a wider definition of the National Collection needs to be made. There is strong support for a definition which links collections in the nations and regions across the UK as a distributed or dispersed national collection. If the largest part of the proposed total goes to the BFI this seems disproportionate while there are similar critical needs, for example in storage conditions, around the regions and nations. If the strategy is genuinely UK-wide, more information on proposals for public and private collections (eg IWM, BBC, ITN, etc) outwith the BFI and the English regions is essential.

c) Developing Digital Access

The Archive sector has embraced digitisation as an access tool to great effect - new investment on the scale proposed here would without a doubt greatly increase the opportunities for developing new and diverse audiences for the material. Care must be taken to ensure that there is no danger of digitisation becoming a substitute for long-term preservation however.

The objective of creating an online catalogue of the nation's holding is very attractive, and with this level of investment across the UK should be successfully realised.

d) Supporting Education and Media Literacy

Wider use of moving images in education at all levels is to be encouraged and developed - this initiative offers the opportunity to begin to embed it seriously in resources for learning and teaching, at a modest c2% of the overall costs across the three years. It is noted that there is considerable overlap with the area of Developing Digital Access to 'digitise key material'. As this funding is not included in that distributed to the regions directly, and further match funding would need to be sought, it is to be hoped that there will be some flexibility in allocation of resources across the initiatives to ensure successful delivery.

e) Steering the Strategy

A Steering Group with expertise and independence is vital to successful delivery of the strategy. The balance of representation must ensure that partners work collectively towards the common goals. Membership should be drawn from as high a level as possible and include a responsibility for advocacy to secure sustainable future funding UK-wide.

Do you feel the sum of these 5 initiatives will support the delivery of the Screen Heritage vision? Please delete as appropriate:

Yes

Further comments:

At the heart of the momentum behind the formation of the Film Heritage Group was the urgent need to improve the circumstances of England's RFAs through a substantial increase in, and subsequent stabilisation of, their current public revenue funding. 65% of the new money requested through this Strategy document is essentially one-off funding for the BFI, and less than 20% is revenue for 'Re-vitalising the Regions'. In the event of there being less new money than requested, pending the outcome of the CSR, it is essential that the revenue needs of the regions are given high priority as they cannot deliver against the objectives with less.

The strategy document as it currently stands makes only passing reference the involvement of national collections elsewhere, concentrating as it does on the BFI: National Archive and the English regions. More information on proposals, and a timetable, would be necessary for a more complete picture of a genuinely UK wide strategic approach, including provision in areas where there is currently none, eg Northern Ireland.

What role do you see yourself/your organisation having in the development and delivery of the Screen Heritage strategy?

The National Council on Archives would continue to take an active interest in the sector and to be involved in advocacy at national level.

Please enter your organisation details below:

Organisation

National Council on Archives

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Please send this response, preferably by:

Email to screenheritage@bfi.org.uk

Or if necessary by post to:

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