

THE FILM ARCHIVE FORUM'S STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

General Statement

Archives are the bequest of one generation to the next. A society's provision for its archives is a measure of its civilisation.

No society can develop and plan for the future without reflecting on the past and understanding the present. Archives provide raw material for such reflection and understanding. A UK-wide archives policy for preservation and consequent accessibility should flow from an appreciation of this fact.

Principle 1: **Moving Image Archives**

The care of film, video and other moving image materials must be recognised as a specialist activity which holds a distinctive place within the wider archive community.

i) The moving image has developed into our most potent art form and recording medium. This applies not only to 35mm feature films designed for cinema release, but also to television, amateur and corporate material on all film gauges, video and digital formats. This is a moving image heritage, which records everyday life and work as well as celebrations, ceremonies and our creativity. The moving image has uniquely recorded the history of our times and will continue to do so as we move into the new millennium.

ii) Moving image archives and archivists are the guardians of this unique heritage. The nature of moving image materials and their associated technologies requires a specialised approach to selection and acquisition, preservation techniques, documentation, access and curation not found in traditional archive provision. The Imperial War Museum's Film Archive and the British Film Institute's National Film and Television archive have been in existence for more than 65 years. Since the 1970's, the other national and regional archives have developed across the UK.

Principle 2: **Co-ordination of Policy**

There should be a complete network of mutually supportive public sector moving image archives throughout the United Kingdom.

i) The national and regional archives have been actively supporting the many initiatives to complete the network of public sector moving image archives covering the whole of the UK. This is the right time for central government to support the development of a UK-wide strategy for completing the network and developing the individual public sector moving image archives.

ii) To support this work, formal recognition should be given to the UK Film Archive Forum (FAF). Established in 1987, FAF represents the UK's public sector moving image archives and, with the help of central government, seeks to further the development of moving image archive services in the UK.

iii) Working in concert with the wider archive community in the UK, the FAF member archives should move towards agreed standards in all aspects of moving image archive provision.



Principle 3: **Legislation**

There should be comprehensive and consistent legislative support for moving image archives, nationally and regionally.

- i) The position of the moving image sector within the wider structure of UK public archive provision should be recognised in effective legislation. The law relating to all aspects of moving image archive work should be kept under review.
- ii) The need for a system of statutory deposit should be recognised to allow for the acquisition of appropriate moving image materials by FAF members for the purpose of preservation and public access.
- iii) The FAF should be involved in all reviews and changes in legislation which may relate to archive provision in the UK.

Principle 4: **Acquisition and Preservation**

Moving image archives should be committed to acquiring and preserving materials on the original medium, informed by internationally agreed standards for care and conservation.

- i) FAF archives recognise the need to develop and implement pro-active acquisition policies.
- ii) Restrictions placed by owners of material on public access should not influence acquisition decisions.
- iii) Film, videotape and other moving image carriers are inherently fragile and need specialist skills, technologies and controlled storage environments to ensure their preservation.
- iv) The characteristics of the medium used contribute to the nature of the moving images captured on it, therefore, FAF archives will respect the materials in their care by undertaking their long-term preservation on the medium of their production, wherever possible.
- v) All moving image archivists should be familiar with internationally agreed standards for the care, conservation and preservation of moving image materials and should keep abreast of the standards and new technologies as they develop.
- vi) Moving image archives will store preservation materials in the best conditions available to them and will strive to ensure that these conditions meet internationally agreed standards.
- vii) FAF members should seek to collaborate with each other to maximise the effectiveness of facilities, skills and specialisms in moving image preservation.

Principle 5: **Documentation**

To support the moving image collections in their care, archives should seek to acquire, create and preserve complementary documentation and other related materials.

- i) FAF archives are committed to creating and maintaining catalogues and finding aids to serve both archive and public needs. Catalogues unlock the collections by describing each item, its subject matter and production context. They cross-refer to relevant materials both within the collection and, in some circumstances, in other public sector collections. FAF members support moves towards a set of common principles governing cataloguing, and recognise the need to work towards common metadata protocols as we enter a new era of digital networking.



ii) FAF archives recognise the need to acquire, preserve and make available related documentation and materials (eg still photographs, posters, set designs, published and unpublished papers) and audio-visual technology, to enhance the context and understanding of the moving image collections in their care.

Principle 6: **Access**

There should be the widest possible public access to all preserved materials.

i) FAF archives will not sacrifice the long-term materials in their care in the interests of short-term access. Material for which there is an access demand should be prioritised for preservation.

ii) Access to material may be restricted either by the terms of acquisition or because of its physical condition.

iii) FAF archives will seek to be pro-active in the creation of outreach programmes in order to bring their collections to the widest possible range of audiences.

iv) FAF members recognise the importance of exploring and using digital technologies and networks to expand and enhance their access activities and to improve inter-archive and inter-heritage sector collaboration.

v) FAF archives will liaise with users and potential users to set priorities and explore potential for increasing the accessibility of their collections.

vi) FAF Archives should include in their access activities presentations which will recall the original context for which the preserved materials were made.

Principle 7: **Education and Research**

Moving image archives should seek to further the use of their collections in teaching, learning and research.

i) Many of the FAF archives are either based in or have strong connections with the UK higher education community. The collections of the moving image archives inform teaching, learning and research in all aspects of life and work since the 1890s. The advent of digital technologies increases the potential for the FAF archives to work with partners to create educational materials on the histories of the recent past.

ii) Specific research on moving image preservation standards and practices must continue to be conducted in the UK, informed by parallel work within the international moving image archive community. These investigations play an important role in determining our collective sense of best practice. This research is particularly appropriate in the current transitional period between analogue and digital media.



Principle 8: **Professional Education**

All those with curatorial responsibility for moving image archives should have relevant archival qualifications or appropriate professional experience.

- i) FAF members recognise the importance of training in the specialist techniques and knowledge required by their activity, and should engage in the professional development of moving image archivists.
- ii) The FAF has worked to establish the parameters of post-graduate training of moving image archivists in the UK and provides a benchmark for all future initiatives in higher education. The Society of Archivists also supports training through its diplomas and certificates.

Principle 9: **Funding**

There must be adequate funding at national and regional levels to enable moving image archives to meet all core curatorial responsibilities.

- i) The FAF members are aware of the long-term cost implications of their work.
- ii) The public sector moving image archives are the product of successful public partnerships. However, these partnerships can only provide support for project and access work. What is needed is new and consistent revenue funding for core responsibilities.
- iii) Central government has the main responsibility for funding the public sector moving image archives, as part of its remit to fund archives, libraries and, more specifically, film heritage.
- iv) Central government needs to recognise the different, but complementary, roles played by the national film archives and the regional film archives and honour its responsibility to make adequate funding available at both levels to secure the core work of acquisition, preservation and access.
- v) Funders must recognise that there are both capital and revenue costs associated with archival activity and that these are perpetual and fundamental.



Principle 10: **Ethics**

The work of all moving image archivists must be underpinned by adherence to an established professional code of ethics.

All FAF members support the 1998 FIAF Code of Ethics. Extracts from this document outline the Code's five distinct aspects:

1. The Rights of Collections:

Archives will respect and safeguard the integrity of the material in their care and protect it from any forms of manipulation, mutilation, falsification or censorship. Archives will not sacrifice the long-term survival of material in their care in the interests of short-term exploitation. They will deny access rather than expose unique or master material to the risks of projection or viewing if the material is thereby endangered.

2. The Rights of Future Generations:

Mindful of their responsibility to preserve materials in perpetuity, archives will resist pressure to remove or to destroy material already in their collections, or to refuse or accept material on offer to their collections, for any reason outside their institution's declared preservation or selection policy.

3. Exploitation Rights:

Archives recognise that the materials in their care represent commercial as well as artistic property, and fully respect the owners of copyright and other commercial interests. Archives will not themselves engage in activities which violate or diminish those rights and will try to prevent others from doing so.

4. Rights of Colleagues:

Archives believe in the free sharing of knowledge and experience to aid the development and enlightenment of others and the development of the archival ideal. Their staff will act in a spirit of collaboration, not competition, with fellow archivists in their own and kindred institutions. Archivists will not knowingly be party to the dissemination of false or misleading information, and will not deliberately withhold information (except where the confidentiality of a third party is involved), relating to their collections or areas of expertise.

5. Personal Behaviour:

Archives will ensure that their staff do not indulge in activities which may compete or conflict with those of their institution or confuse outsiders as to the nature of their involvement in a given issue.

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