

MONACO NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVES

The Monaco National Film Archives were established in 1997. Our mission is to inventory, collect, restore, protect, hold, screen and promote:

- all sound recordings and still and moving images, both professional and amateur, remotely relating to the Principality of Monaco;
 - all documents linked to this legacy;
 - all films and audiovisual documents that have been deposited in the Archives;
- and to support audiovisual production by giving projects access to our archives.

THE COLLECTIONS

Since they were set up, the Monaco National Film Archives have implemented a policy of collecting cinema and audiovisual material from various Monegasque institutions, as well as private individuals. The collections are built up through gifts and voluntary deposits, and are added to on a regular basis. The Archives also liaise with international organisations to obtain courtesy copies of documents from their archives.

The collections consist primarily of material relating to the Principality of Monaco, but are also composed of other film, video and sound recordings held because they represent international audiovisual heritage. In addition, the collections include non-film material linked to the history of cinema: photographs, posters, periodicals, books and collectors' items (cameras, projectors, etc.). This collection is also put together through gifts, deposits and acquisitions.

50,000 documents are held, including short and feature-length fiction films, documentaries, newsreels, reports, television news, advertisements, corporate films, amateur films, radio programmes and show footage.

60% of the collections are digitised.

40% of the collections are catalogued.

The Audiovisual Archives hold all the fiction films that have been shot entirely or partly in the Principality since cinema began. Among this filmography are famous titles such as *Le Roman d'un tricheur* (Eng. title *The Story of a Cheat*) by Sacha Guitry, *The Red Shoes* by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, *To Catch a Thief* by Alfred Hitchcock, *The Racers* by Henry Hathaway, and *Max et Jérémie* by Claire Devers, as well as such rarities as *L'Étoile d'Or* by Lucien Jaquelux and *La Belle Vie*, Robert Enrico's first feature film.

Gaumont and Pathé newsreels form a highlight of the Archives' collections, with over 600 items inventoried and catalogued in our database. Other news archives inventoried in the collections include those of the Luxembourg National Audiovisual Centre, the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington and the Luce Institute in Rome.

The Archives also hold and promote the audiovisual collections of Monegasque entertainment television channel *Tele Monte-Carlo* and news channel "*Monaco à la Une*", as well as those of the Prince's Palace of Monaco, the Automobile Club and the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco. Around 30 Monegasque organisations have entrusted the safe-keeping of their audiovisual heritage to the Archives.

The Archives have also built up a unique collection of several thousand amateur films and family video footage items, which forms a living document of Monaco in the 20th century. Another key collection is the RMC (Radio Monte-Carlo) tape library. It consists of over 10,000 items held in safe-keeping by the Audiovisual Archives since 2001. The Archives also ensure the safety of the Monte-Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra's concert recordings.

PROCESSING THE COLLECTIONS

Processing the collections means all the methods, techniques and procedures needed in order to:

- maintain the integrity of the collections;
- clean or restore decaying items;
- inventory the collections;
- digitise the collections;
- store the collections in accordance with appropriate standards.

The Monaco National Film Archives are responsible for the careful keeping of all the audiovisual items entrusted to them. Holding film, video and sound material involves: knowing the collections; guaranteeing the best storage conditions to suit the items' diverse range of formats ; protecting and restoring documents to their original state to facilitate public access and screenings. On entering the Archives, the documents are systematically assessed according to two criteria: firstly the item's physical condition, and secondly its relevance to the Principality of Monaco's cultural heritage. The technical assessment reveals what preservation work might be needed, from a simple dust or clean, to a complete restoration in order to return the document to its original state. Repair work of a photochemical nature is entrusted to specialist laboratories along with precise restoration instructions.

Compiling the collection inventory is the responsibility of the Archives' technical department. Every time a new item is acquired, be it film, sound, photographic or printed material, primary identification information is gathered. This "technical" information is required for monitoring and managing the collections.

Cinema and audiovisual material relating to the Principality of Monaco is digitalized by the National Film Archives with the prior agreement of the copyright holders in order to make it accessible to a wider audience via consultation and screenings. The Archives boast telecine equipment for transferring 35 mm, 16 mm, 9.5 mm, 8 mm and super 8 film. The digitalized documents are then indexed per document processing unit using a framework that is common to all the material, whether professional or amateur. This is an essential step in processing and promoting the collections.

Audiovisual items are stored according to their format. The National Film Archives boast a storage facility that is separate from the Archives offices. In the facility, films shot on film stock are kept in a temperature- and humidity-controlled cold chamber (8°C & 30% RH), and video and sound archives in an air-conditioned, temperature- and humidity-controlled room (20°C & 50% RH). The facility is under constant surveillance in order to check the set points and be able to intervene if needs be. The photograph and poster collections are held in an air-conditioned room within the technical processing unit. The digital master copies are stored in the same room. Items on nitrate stock are stored at the Bois d'Arcy Film Archives, with which an agreement was signed in March 2000.

For Archives like ours, namely a modest-sized institution with defined, well-catalogued collections, the temptation to migrate to digital is very strong: these days, it is the most logical format for public film consultation and for promoting film heritage. We no longer talk of scheduling cinema, but of facilitating film consultation. Let's not be quick to set digital against traditional: it is not one technology replacing the other but, as is widely accepted, one method overlapping another. Although the processing chain remains more or less the same as in analogue video days, the undeniable leap in quality brought by digital technology opens up new and unexpected possibilities for archives and film libraries. On condition it is carried out using professional tools, the required transfer of these films (the process known as telecine) creates a safe copy that could be called a

“master video for keeping”. Note that the medium used is still “cassette” – i.e. digital recorded on magnetic tape.

The significant progress made by digital technology in terms of screening enables film libraries to entertain the hope at last of having access to films that used only to be available in single copies and were therefore often out of reach. Incidentally, digital's multiple-copy offer actually makes us extremely cautious and not bow to those who believe that DVD offers a new standard in storage, when it is at best a viewing aid – a very practical one at that – whose stability and longevity are unreliable to say the least. It also makes us wary of laboratories – today's moneychangers in the digital temple – which are increasingly incapable of transferring film correctly when it comes to archive film. There are as many forms of digital technology as there are ways of using it. Film libraries' and archives' financial resources are obviously a factor in technical disparity, and for that reason it seems difficult to envisage in the short term the Europe-wide implementation of France's archive digitalisation plan.

EQUIPMENT DEVELOPMENTS

The audiovisual world is currently experiencing massive technological change – similar to that in the 1970s that saw television drop film for analogue video. The technological revolution we have to address today is on the one hand that of High Definition (the need for quality “of image” is already becoming widespread from the producer to the consumer), and on the other that of video images being converted into digital files. This change is all the more inevitable given that some equipment is no longer guaranteed by manufacturers.

Nowadays, thanks to information technology, images can come in several “media” with different formats and qualities depending on their uses and applications. It is all about providing faster access to information and to the image in all its forms. Broadcasting, publishing, putting online: data access has become the obsession of all collection and catalogue holders. This technological change is also affecting archives insofar as they hold significant volumes of images that they are tasked with keeping as well as promoting. The Monaco Audiovisual Archives is among them, and our technological revolution is already scheduled for the end of 2013. The guiding principle is simple: creating digital files called “pivot” files and producing a whole range of new “media” that meet the Archives' needs: low-speed consultation, high-speed broadcasting, indexing, publishing, internet and intranet. Access to these media will be offered to users through a platform we will publish content to and that will enable us to formalise the Archives' document access procedures. These “pivot” files also enable what are called “heavy archives” to be created – i.e. maximum-resolution digital back-ups – because saving our legacy is at the heart of our work.

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