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Introduction: Mapping Screen Heritage

Rinella Cere, James Fenwick, and Danilo Giglitto

Archives of film and media are being challenged, critiqued, and reimagined. The heritage that has been preserved and the knowledge production to which it contributes has typically reinforced systemic structural barriers and inequalities and privileged dominant histories, identities, and communities, whilst sidelining and marginalising others (Cade; Gaines; Gledhill and Knight; Hagener and Zimmermann; Sawadogo). But a paradigm shift is taking place. Film and media history is in flux and being reframed through, for example, women's film history (Ball et al.; Bell, *Movie Workers*; Galt; Gledhill and Knight; Hennefeld and Horak), queer history (Anselmo; Damiens; McKinney) Black film history (Cade; McLeod Cramer; Posner and Cifor), African film history (Mano et al.), object-centred approaches (Fenwick; Hastie; Stead), memory studies and oral history (Bell, '"I"'; Biltereyst et al.; Cobb and Williams; Kuhn), museology and media archaeology (Cere; Hall and Ellis; Huhtamo and Galili; Lameris), ethnography and early film history (Groo; Ingravalle; Porter), decolonisation (Cere et al.), and filmmaking and performance (El Hassan; *Dust & Metal*; Siewert). The paradigm shift has also been influenced by other disciplines from across the humanities, particularly critical theoretical frameworks that have increasingly been adopted to decolonise (Cere et al.; Stoler), decentre (Hamilton et al.), and contest the contents of archives and the knowledge-production process (Chaudhuri et al.), whilst creative practices are being used to disrupt, recycle, and reappropriate archives and thereby rethink the role they play in public history (Baron; Breakell and Russell; Russell). This paradigm shift has been influenced—directly or indirectly—by fields such as critical archive studies, which have questioned the dominant status of traditional archival praxis (Caswell et al.), and called for new approaches including community archiving (Caswell), cocreation (Popple et al.), archival activism (Flinn), and slow archiving (Christen and Anderson).

The above list is just a snapshot of the fast-evolving landscape of film and media history and the archival approaches underpinning it. Yet, the list demonstrates the breadth and scope of research being undertaken and the innovative methods being adopted, whilst also indicating how there are still clear gaps and a need to go much further in reframing film and media history. As such, it is vital to bring into conversation these disparate disciplines and professions, bridging the "archival gap" between researchers and archivists, for example, to share good practice, collaborate, and initiate new approaches. But the methods, perspectives, and frameworks outlined above are bringing into question long-held certainties within film and media history and the prevailing film canon.

This dossier brings together a selection of papers and articles that indicate the kinds of approaches and methods increasingly being adopted in the use of film and media archives and the ways in which film and media history are being reframed as a result. They build on ideas and concepts of activism, postcolonial critique, decolonisation, creative reuse and disruption, sustainability, and archival value. The dossier stems from the two-day international conference *Heritage, Community, Archives: Methods, Case Studies, Collaboration*, held in 2023. The

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conference brought together over one hundred delegates from across disciplines, professions, and career stages, with the contributions having a core focus on culture, media, and film. The papers and articles in this dossier were selected from the conference to serve as a lens onto some of the approaches that have been adopted, containing case studies that have challenged or contested archival methods and practices, or foregrounded overlooked aspects of film and media heritage.

Samantha Kountz, in her paper "Hollywood Shuffle: The History and Impact of Maya Cade's Black Film Archive", considers the role of archives in the knowledge production process, arguing that what is valued as being worthy of preservation influences the construction of the film canon and historiography. Kountz focuses on a case study of Maya Cade's Black Film Archive to critique "preconceived ideas of what films should be considered 'canon'" in film history. Kountz argues that Cade's archive not only brings into question concepts of archival value and film historiography, but also how the film industry and film history continue to overlook and undervalue Black American cinema today. For Kountz, the necessity of the Black Film Archive is due to what she terms "prejudicial loopholes" that have prevented certain films and history from being deemed worthy of preservation. These prejudicial loopholes continue to exist, and therefore, community-led grassroots archiving projects like the Black Film Archive are necessary to counter the biased dominance of existing archival praxis, film heritage, and film historiography.

Pablo Alvarez, in his paper "Confronting the Empire: Militant Archival Practices in *Testimonies from Fallujah* and *A Fidai Film*", examines how film archives can be reappropriated to counter dominant narratives and challenge imperialist archival and knowledge-production practices. Alvarez focuses on two films, each of which incorporates archival film footage from the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq and the subsequent war that engulfed the country: *Testimonies from Fallujah* (2004), directed by independent journalist and documentary filmmaker Hamodi Jasim, and *A Fidai Film* (2024), directed by Palestinian artist and filmmaker Kamal Aljafari. Through these case studies, Alvarez emphasises the violence of colonial archives and the contested value of film archives, emphasising who gets to decide and gatekeep what is preserved, what is valuable, and who can have access. What the case studies also indicate are the creative methods that can be adopted to resist and counter these forces, with archival material being reappropriated and reframed from the bottom-up. As Alvarez concludes, "the films not merely expose but also confront the imperial violence intrinsic in these materials. In other words, the violence of the archives is reversed in these two films and used against themselves and the powers that produce and preserve them".

Danilo Giglitto and Rinella Cere, in their article "'My Natives to Myself': A Critical Perspective on Ethnographic Films", examine early British anthropological films as a key component of the "colonial apparatus". They argue that the vast majority of anthropological films preceding the Second World War have still yet to undergo a postcolonial critique, but with this article, they commence that work. They do so through case studies of the work of two colonial-era anthropologists, Beatrice Blackwood—who worked at the Human Anatomy Department at the University of Oxford and later at the Pitt Rivers Museum—and Ursula Graham Bower—an amateur anthropologist who worked in Assam and later fought as a guerrilla resisting advancing Japanese forces. Giglitto and Cere apply a decolonial framework to Blackwood and Graham Bower's ethnographic films, which they define as being a type of documentary that were used to "convey the studied subjects' cultural practices, social interactions, and everyday lives". In taking this approach, the aim is to thoroughly critique the colonial contexts of the films and allow for a "deeper understanding" of how "intrinsic

historical biases shaped the portrayal of colonised cultures, informing contemporary discussions on colonialism and its enduring impact on media and cultural heritage".

Esther Johnson, in her article "Speaking With: Histories of Vietnam Explored Through Archive Film", examines the role of archives in her film *Dust & Metal* (*Cát bụi & Kim loại*, 2022). The film is a creative documentary in which Johnson mixes archive footage from the Vietnam Film Institute (VFI) with original footage and crowdsourced film to reveal "a plurality of unfamiliar social histories of Vietnam". Johnson's motivation for the film stemmed from a desire to engage more deeply with Vietnam's film heritage but finding it to be largely inaccessible beyond poor quality films uploaded to video-sharing platforms like YouTube. Johnson initiated a collaboration with the VFI, supported by funding from the British Council's FAMLAB: Film, Archive, Music Lab and Heritage of Future Past grants and working with Live Cinema UK to provide a live score for the film. Johnson also uses the article—and the film—to examine the tension of presence and absence within archives and explains how she used a "third pool of audiovisual material potentially missing from 'official' state archives, and a means of creating a new collection of film relating to Vietnam". This was achieved by inviting the wider public to upload their own film footage via an online portal. Overall, Johnson's creative approach to the use of archives like those in the VFI and in a country like Vietnam indicates how it is vital to form collaborative partnerships internally, particularly to ensure respect for sensitivities around footage from the war.

Lucia Di Girolamo, like Johnson, discusses a novel approach to the creation and use of archives. Her article, "Educational Film Archives: A Tool for Sustainable Tourism", stems from a larger project about revisiting the meaning of cultural heritage in the Campania region in southern Italy, one of the aims of which was to create a digital archive of media- and literature-induced tourism (*Campania Landtelling*). The article tackles the question of the shift from physical to digital archives and online interactivity and their implications for the present and future of archival memory. One of these implications is identified in the concept of "cultural amplifier", borrowed from Jerome Bruner, which Di Girolamo applies to the archive "because of how this highlights and reshapes the characteristics of a community's memory". *Campania Landtelling* is described as an archive with an educational purpose as students and researchers are asked to assemble images of places in which literature, films, and TV series are set. These are then compared with images of real places geolocatable via Google Maps. Through these digital archival journeys or "routes", the users navigate their personal and/or collective memories, whether these derive from direct knowledge of the cultural heritage or indirectly from its visual representations, in either case, as she writes, "enabling a process of individual appropriation of the memory of the territory." But for the author, this is insufficient and she therefore argues for a politics of archival care that engenders "critical awareness" and "actions of care" for the places at the centre of film-induced tourism. Hence the meaning behind *Campania Landtelling* as a "living archive".

The works published in this dossier offer only a snapshot of the wider research taking place across the humanities and archive studies that is challenging, reframing, and rebuilding our shared screen heritage. But what they indicate are positive, creative, and inclusive ways forward in the use of archives and the preservation of film and media history.

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