

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF FILM SOCIETIES

ACOFs BULLETIN

NUMBER 13

JULY 2007

NSFA FILM STUDY COLLECTION STAGNANT

As reported in the previous Bulletin the ACOFS Executive has spent a great deal of effort in attempting to facilitate new additions to this collection which is the main source of films for the film society movement.

The stumbling block to all our efforts is that the collection is still owned by the National Library, and the NFSA have been reluctant to spend any money at all until they are legally the owners.

There were no purchases made for the collection in 2005-6, the only additions were donations, and none are planned for 2007-8.

Since the AGM I have written to Jan Fullerton, Director General of the National Library, and been assured that funds were available from the NLA for the purpose of renewing rights and purchase of new acquisitions.

The NFSA have denied that funds have been made available but have actually renewed all the outstanding rights to the end of this financial year at a cost of \$100,000 but are not able to fund any new purchases.

I have also written to the AFC but only received assurances that the transfer of ownership is imminent. In fact both the NLA and the NFSA agree that ownership cannot be transferred before June 30th 2008, at the earliest.

I have now written to the Department concerned (letter is printed in full, overleaf) in order to try and get the matter resolved. The aim is to make funding available for acquisitions and staff for this financial year and beyond, if the transfer does not take place.

If we do not get a favourable response to this letter we will make a stronger appeal and also we will then be asking all societies who use the collection to contact their representative in both federal houses of parliament to bring the matter before the minister.

John Turner

25/07/07

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22 July 2007

Senator The Hon Helen Coonan
Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

Re: NATIONAL FILM STUDY LENDING COLLECTION IN JEOPARDY

The National Film Study Lending Collection, a world class collection containing many cultural icons of Australian and international film and the envy of students the world over, is in serious jeopardy of becoming moribund. The collection managed by the National Film and Sound Archive is under ownership of the National Library of Australia but is to be fully transferred from the NLA to the NFSA. We have been repeatedly told that this change of ownership was imminent.

Despite the adoption of a curatorial approach two years ago very few titles have been added to the collection. Maintenance has gone backwards because of reduced staff levels. The service to our members has remained at a very high level due to the dedication of the remaining staff.

We have been recently informed by the NFSA (and confirmed by the NLA) that the transfer of ownership will now not take place for at least another year and that no new acquisitions will be made in this period. This is despite a letter from Jan Fullerton (Director General of the NLA) that states that the NLA will 'support the purchase of new titles and renewal of license fees for existing titles during the 2007-08 financial year'. In reply the NFSA stated that 'the NLA have not yet supplied the NFSA with funds that can be used for any purpose, even though the NFSA has recently renewed the licenses that it was agreed should be renewed'. The NFSA also states 'Any decisions on adding to the NFVLS collection will have to wait until the transfer has been formalized and appropriate funds allocated.'

We now appear to be caught in a vicious circle which if not broken, risks irreparable damage to this uniquely important part of film culture in Australia and recognized internationally.

We commend the NFVLS on its service to our members and are extremely heartened by the recent expenditure of \$100,000 on renewing existing licenses. However, it is quite obvious that if the collection is not sustained it will become increasingly less attractive to borrowers and will eventually die.

We appeal to you to resolve the matter of the conflicting statements by the NLA and the NFSA and request that funding be directed to the purchase of new titles to the NFVLS collection in the financial year 2007-08. We wish to see this unique and valuable resource, remain at the forefront of world collections and used by all Australians.

Yours faithfully

John Turner
President.