

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## THE LILLIE P. BLISS INTERNATIONAL STUDY CENTER

### DEPARTMENT OF FILM

In 1935, six years after The Museum of Modern Art was founded, it established a curatorial department to trace, catalogue, assemble, exhibit, and circulate a library of film programs so that the motion picture could be studied and enjoyed as any other one of the arts. In its early years, the Film Library, as it was then called, was housed in the C.B.S. building on Madison Avenue. When the Museum's permanent building was opened in 1939, which included an auditorium for film showings, a regular program of daily screenings was inaugurated.

Today the Department of Film, now under the direction of Willard Van Dyke, presents nine different motion pictures each week, in a total of 17 regularly scheduled public screenings. Like other Museum departments, the Department of Film is not only responsible for collecting works of art and related material, but also for conserving them. The latter is a particularly severe problem because until the '50s all films were made on nitrate or inferior acetate stock which disintegrates; a recent grant from the American Film Institute will assist with the preservation of American films in the Museum's collection by transferring them to permanent triacetate stock, but the Department of Film must continue to seek funds for the preservation of the foreign films in its archive.

The Department of Film archive contains 3,500 films from all over the world. About 800 titles are constantly circulated to schools, colleges, universities, and film societies throughout this country and Canada.

#### New facilities:

Two 16 mm and one 35 mm library readers (Moviolas) equipped for both silent and sound films have been installed in small carrels in the Film Study Center. Films can be stopped, run backward, or run at any desired speed on the 5 x 6" screens of these machines. A new projection room, which contains storage facilities for the

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16 mm archive films for use by small groups of students, is equipped with a self-threading 16 mm projector, and supplements the larger projection room on the same floor where up to 45 people can see 35 or 16 mm films.

Stills and other archival material:

The original nucleus of the Department's archive of more than 1,000,000 stills was acquired in the late '40s by the gift from Photoplay magazine of their 30-year collection. It is constantly supplemented by gifts, and is used by students, scholars, and filmmakers. About 600 stills are distributed to publishers and advertising agencies each month. Examples of the archival material include production notes on Robert Flaherty's Louisiana Story; the D. W. Griffith archive, including all his canceled checks, as well as mementos; the Thomas H. Ince archive; location production shots for many films; and more than 190,000 reviews from 1911 to the present. Additional archival material on the film is available in the Museum's reference library, including such rare material as the only complete set of Motion Picture World, which documents all films made between 1905 and 1920.

Formerly this material was stored in another building, not easily accessible to staff, students, or scholars.

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Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.